

## Poems and Other Nonsense

**Dexter Satterwhite**

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*With lines that trip across a life well examined, Poems and Other Nonsense is a humorous and heartfelt collection.*

Dexter Satterwhite's poetry collection *Poems and Other Nonsense* is alternately funny and wise with its verses about love, faith, and the human condition.

More than 120 poems written over a period of three decades are included. Some address weighty issues, including aging, nostalgia, and impermanence. Everyday topics—a parent's love for their children; a spouse turning forty—are handled distinctively, with a strong sense of perspective and sincere emotions.

Other poems make humorous observations on matters like the Boston accent or on Brake for Moose signs in Maine, asking "Can man and moose ever be reconciled?" The collection's varied subject matters and tones don't keep it from feeling like the cohesive expression of a curious, engaged, and roaming mind, though.

Comedic sensibilities are expressed through sarcasm, irony, and quips. Hyperbole, such as in "The Killer Bees," where insects take over the world, adds laughs: "They'll find my body after my last stand, / Still clutching a flyswatter and a Black Flag can!!" Propulsive rhythms in poems like "Words" or "Our Little Sentry" accentuate the book's drollness.

Satirical poems give voice to a more cynical worldview. Random musings on current issues like flag burning feel less clever and emotional, while subjects like the hollowness of political rhetoric allow for deeper verses.

The book is organized chronologically, with little regard for subject matter. Early on, the book bounces between funny poems and serious ones, and the variation is jarring, whereas thematic sections may have allowed for more consistency.

All of the poems are brief—just long enough to make their points, as with one stanza-long poem that questions the use of a mountain bike when "there's not a mountain in sight." Rhymes are frequent, sometimes surprising (as with "antihistamine" and "hay fever gene"), and often sophisticated, and meters vary. Multiple poetic forms are used. There are sonnets in the book; "Alphabet Poem" employs the conceit of a one-line-per-letter arrangement, though it doesn't stick to this format entirely.

Lively imagery—of winds constantly reshaping "monoliths" of sand, for example, and of "a valley cloaked in snow"—arises here and there, but clichés are also not uncommon. Mixed metaphors and random capitalization undermine the work.

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JOSEPH S. PETE (October 12, 2018)

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