

Poems from the Mind of a Madman: Passionate Works of Poetry for Modern Times

Don J. Metivier

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Often jubilant in its celebration of the everyday, there's much in this poetry to delight in.

Don J. Metivier's playful and enticing collection, *Poems from the Mind of a Madman*, expresses admiration for things both commonplace and fanciful. The poems combine the wonder and lighthearted rhymes that are characteristic of juvenile writing with an adult's sensibilities about the environment, war, and mortality. With sweet sentimentality and innocence at its heart, this collection is often delightful.

Whimsical poems that illustrate dazzling circuses and the joys of snow days are simple and charming. One particularly engaging work, "Simple Tree," offers a sweet appreciation of the humblest of natural scenes—a birch tree on the side of the road, passed by during the daily commute.

Likewise, "The Circus-Carnival" feels plucked right from a colorful picture book with its fun, singsongy rhyme scheme and quick stanzas. Childlike marveling and fable-like stories are the common thread in the collection, even in its more philosophical pieces. "Hemlock," for example, renounces anthropomorphism and reveres the resilience of trees in simple rhymed couplets.

"The Bike Game" is refreshing and hopeful, a nostalgic poem on childhood that proves that lighthearted literature doesn't have to lack depth. Still, at times the collection walks a fine line between cute sentimentality and heavy-handedness; for instance, several poems celebrate autumn, but capture a feeling on the greeting-card end of the spectrum.

"If Only I Could Live in a Dream" is an entertaining piece on having trouble waking up from a good dream, and reads like Dr. Seuss for adults. Lines like "My thoughts would make a shrink think / There's something in my cellar making a stink" are funny and catchy, even as they conceal layered commentary about dissatisfaction and the subconscious.

There are also odes to the odd here. "In Interest" uses tight rhymes to express lively fascination with eccentricities of all sorts, from aliens to Ouija boards and the Loch Ness Monster. Similarly, "Time to Pay" illustrates an encounter with the occult in creepy detail that is not overly gruesome.

Angrier antiwar poems—the direct and violent "Another Made Soldier" especially—are vastly different in theme and tone, taking away from the cohesion of the collection and its otherwise uncomplicated joyfulness.

Consistent rhyme schemes are often masterful, bringing effervescence to mundane topics. Rhyming also occasionally leads to drawn-out poems and clunky phrasing, though, dimming clarity. Not all images are specific enough to be memorable.

Poems from the Mind of a Madman offers a jubilant optimism about the everyday, and will delight even those who haven't read poetry since their school days.

PAIGE VAN DE WINKLE (November 21, 2016)

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