



Spirit Garden

Nattalie Saso Sanchez

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Love is the question and the answer in the passionate poetry collection Spirit Garden.

Nattalie Saso Sanchez's poetry collection *Spirit Garden* reflects on, and responds to, love.

Recognizing that love manifests in many forms—love of the self, love for a lover, and love of family—the collection moves thematically through its topic. It covers heartbreak and anger; relearning the meaning of love and how love should be; the excitement of new love; and self-acceptance. It opens with a series of poems working through realizations about a lover who has changed. “The Actor” reveals that infidelity led to the relationship's downfall:

*Tell me when her leg slid between yours
And her body drew close
Did you take a moment to rehearse the lies
So that they were delicious when you fed me them.*

In this poem and others, the language is so straightforward that it reads like that of a novel. Without any dialogue, the disconnect between the lovers and the self is clear, and the progression from a place of pain to a place of joy is without artifice. There's a real sense of how deeply being in a verbally abusive relationship can skew a sense of love and self.

When descriptive language is used, the poems draw their inspiration from art, the weather, and the universe; visual and auditory aids evoke and enhance the entries' emotions. This is most common in shorter poems, like “Unwanted Inspiration,” “Breakdown,” and “Black Hole.” “Breakdown,” in particular, uses a thundering hail storm as a metaphor for high, unpredictable emotions that need an outlet:

*I have empathy for the sky
That watches over this world of pain
I understand the storms
And the shaking clouded shoulders
The flashing of thunder
And hailing of ice
What else can you do
But let it out*

Neither experimental nor traditional in form, the poems use length to signal psychological states. The collection's shorter poems are its most raw and emotional, while its longer poems tend to be more introspective. In “Frogs,” past lessons about freedom through love become a touchstone in the present. In “Winter Swimmer,” a winter trip to a lake sparks new understanding of the self.

A few poems in the collection embrace bisexuality, coming out to parents, and the wonder of falling in love again. “My

Favorite Colors—Love, my Synesthesia,” which imagines a conversation between with a partner about a favorite color, seems out of place at first, but becomes a means of connecting the experience of assigning colors to numbers to the slow way one person falls in love with another. The book’s tonal shifts between introspection, high emotions, and giddy excitement ably reflect the roller coaster of love.

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DONTANÁ MCPHERSON-JOSEPH (October 5, 2020)

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