

Way Leads onto Way: Life in Verse

Estelle M. Deshon

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Way Leads onto Way is a gentle, spiritual poetry collection that proffers answers to people's daily challenges.

In Estelle M. Deshon's collection of poems *Way Leads onto Way*, formal verse is the vehicle, and faith and gratitude are the destination.

These poems spring from the stages of life: childhood, young adulthood, marriage, motherhood, mentorship, and maturity. Their subject matter includes spirituality and relationships with God, personal relationship challenges, self-knowledge, and tragic environmental degradation resulting from human greed.

The poems are arranged in alphabetical order, with each letter of the alphabet (from A to W) used as a section heading. It's an empty organizing principle, though, that contributes to an arbitrary flow. The book's themes are disconnected from each other as a result, and the potential for resonance between poems is compromised. The alphabet as an organizing principle is also featured in the book's several abecedarian poems.

The entries have a good sense of rhyme and meter, helping to emphasize connected ideas or, when a pattern is broken, to emphasize disconnection. "Broken" intones:

*Your need to fight and always be right
To always have your own way
Regardless of who has to pay,
Has backfired!*

Elsewhere, "Dancing with the Devil" uses slant rhymes to create subtle musicality:

*Just a little dance, he said,
And it will not really hurt.
You can play with fire, he said,
And truly not be burnt.*

However, there are instances in which words are ordered only for the purposes of fitting a pattern, leading to stilted reading.

Many of the book's entries convey strong Christian beliefs, though they are compassionate in tone and make room for nonbelievers too. There's an overarching sense of gentle intention, with entries working to bring others into their spiritual fold. There are poems that pronounce curiosity about other people's lives, and about animal and plant lives too. Some stretch to see the world in a new way. In "Metamorphosis," for example, the speaker's consciousness projects into a caterpillar closed up in a dark cocoon, imagining the fear and loneliness that it might feel while being closed off from its previous life in a wider world.

Nonetheless, the poetic strategies deployed here are uneven. The entries that are direct are the book's most successful, evoking spiritual longing, emotional struggles, and concern for the health of Earth's environment in relatable ways. They help to make *Way Leads onto Way* a gentle poetry collection that envisions a spirituality that proffers answers to people's daily challenges.

MICHELE SHARPE (September 6, 2022)

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