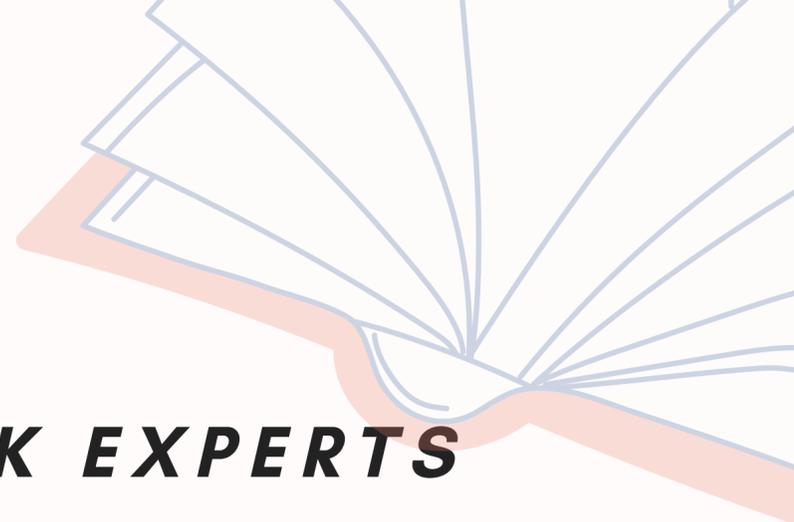




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PACIFIC BOOK REVIEW

In partnership with Bookside Press

Reflections

JERREL E. WOLFE

Reviewed by: Allison Walker



BOOKSIDE Press



Reflections

JERREL E. WOLFE

Jerrel Wolfe's poetry collection, *Reflections*, is aptly titled. It's not so much poems as short stories, each self-contained and neatly packaged into tidy stanzas. His subjects include all basic elements of an ordinary life: falling in love, losing in love, spending time with family, and celebrating Fourth of July. Any reader who picks up Wolfe's collection will find at least one poem that reaches into their memories and touches their heart.

Wolfe has wonderful consistency of tone throughout his collection. After reading his first poem, readers pretty much know what to expect from the rest. "The Heart Is on The Table" is a cheerful example of Wolfe's writing. It's both a poem and thank you letter to an open-heart surgeon. Its combination of playfulness and gratitude is a delight. About a quarter through "*Reflections*," Wolfe surprises readers with a sudden shift in structure with his poem "In God We Trust." This poem has very much the same tone but a radically different form than its counterparts. The poem is incredible in how much emotion Wolfe expresses just by his shift in structure.

Reflections makes even the saddest stories feel manageable. Often, Wolfe's tone of voice when relating a tragedy or loss is one of acceptance. The poems "Taken" and "Consumed by Social Pressure" are good examples of this. Both poems relate the loss of a child, in different ways. Rather than choosing to be hurt or angry, Wolfe writes with a soft tone. It's poems like these which serve to remind readers of the therapeutic effect of sharing experiences. Reading, writing, and sharing poetry becomes a kind of catharsis.

The rhyming feels forced at times; however, is remarkably effective at keeping the reader on tempo with the poem. For example, "I have closed my eyes and searched my soul / to find a man will not hide / One who can be close with you / and warm you deep inside." The poem itself, "Step Out Of The Shadow," is easy and pleasing to read. The themes of regret and longing are universally understood. It's the rhyming that may trip a reader, every now and then. Besides a few clumsy rhymes, there are basic spelling and punctuation errors throughout the poems. For a seasoned poet, and Wolfe's consistency in tone of voice and subject matter prove he is a seasoned poet, this is surprising.

Reflections is a lovely little collection. Wolfe doesn't try to confuse his readers with metaphor and subliminal meanings. His collection is about sharing experiences. *Reflections* is a book you can gift to your grandparents. Do not be surprised if the collection causes them to ponder their own reflections and share their own stories.

Reviewed by:

Allison Walker, Pacific Book Reviews