

Treasures of the Heart

Oliver Forward

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The excitement of initial desire, long-term admiration, and the devastation of loss are all addressed in the love-themed poetry collection Treasures of the Heart.

Oliver Forward's short poetry collection *Treasures of the Heart* celebrates intense romantic sensations and emotions.

Treasures of the Heart contains twenty-nine poems, all but two of which are dedicated to the subject of romantic love. They are composed in free verse and make use of subtle yet resonant rhymes and slant rhymes, as with "I've put your love on the bookshelf of my heart / I love you more than I love myself," and a description of guitars that make "riffs into the words that / turned into myths." Each romantic poem is addressed to a beloved. Different stages of love affairs are described, ranging from the excitement of initial desire to long-term admiration to the devastation of loss. Many poems revel in the sensuality of romantic love.

Repetition is the backbone of these poems, which also make frequent use of anaphora. When the repeated phrases are juxtaposed within different contexts, as in "Music to My Tears," interest is piqued and meanings are amplified. However, the reuse of poems' titles as their final lines is a too predictable throughline. Further, some phrases, including "I love you," appear with such frequency that their meaning is dulled. As the collection is already short, such instances of repetition take up space that would be better devoted to deeper explorations of themes or more original images.

In some poems, the diction clashes with the emotional centers. In "Oh My Arm Candy," suggesting a transactional, even superficial, relationship, there are also serious, emotional declarations, including "I still close my eyes like closed curtains / every time we kiss" and fresh images, as with a description of the speaker's heart as "a prosthetic heart designed only for your touch." The potential power of these fresh, sincere lines is diluted by their proximity to "arm candy." In another poem, a lover's breasts are described as "twin-towered"—a distracting, likely accidental callback to 9/11.

Surprising images do arise, though, as where the pain of disappointment in love is described as "like a woman's womb in reverse," where "blood runs in, not out." Herein, beauty as a concept is envisioned as framing a loved one's face to "hang it in the middle of your soul." These memorable images linger after the collection ends. Nonetheless, the bulk of the language in *Treasures of the Heart* is more accessible than expansive.

In the brief poetry collection *Treasures of the Heart*, romantic love is addressed with a singular focus.

MICHELE SHARPE (August 1, 2024)

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