

Words of a Feather: The Mystic Musings of a Medical Man

JFW Ndikum

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This unique, playful book of poetry dances between poetic forms with skill.

In *Words of a Feather: The Mystic Musings of a Medical Man*, JFW Ndikum uses his perspective as a medical doctor to inform poetic themes, which results in a surprisingly lighthearted, technical, and accessible collection.

Ndikum's poems, which he states "were written as they 'arrived,'" marry poetics and medicine. This is an intriguing method, but the poet steers clear of the technical aspects of medicine in favor of a more spiritual approach. Balancing the emotional and spiritual with touches of the pragmatic helps to make the volume diverse and accessible to all readers.

The collection has strong Shakespearean leanings, and tackles stanzas with seeming ease. In poems like "Love's Shore," lines have a traditional lyricism:

*What wondrous ferments do arise
When poets from their skilled pens write
Such splendid verses that ignite
Young hearts and make young lovers wise.*

The pieces play with various rhyme schemes, including the classical *abab*, a tricky scheme to master that, here, achieves a balance of wit and language mastery. There are also offerings of couplets, rubaiyat (*aaba*), and slant rhymes, ensuring this large collection of poems offers something for all poetic appetites. The diverse volume also includes longer pieces, near-haiku, and even works nudging towards limericks, making for an enjoyable "rock and roll" reading of these lilting poems.

However, given that the title and the preface both strongly hint that the work will be rich with the insights of a medical doctor, the book could use more of a doctor's lens than that provided by these poems. While there are certainly pieces set in the medical profession, such as "Patients' Ache," overall the poems steer clear of anything too intricately connected to the field. Instead, the text is presented as an articulated collection that merely uses the medical landscape as an occasional setting, albeit an interesting one.

The work seems to approach and tackle poems much like a doctor would: with great forethought, practice, and mastery of skill. There's a strategy to the poems, which is evident in the careful application of the various and sometimes advanced poetic techniques. The font choices have a hint of experimentation as well. The sheer beauty of the book's design, as well as the writing prowess, make for a touching final collection.

JFW Ndikum's *Words of a Feather* is a unique, playful book of poetry.

JESSICA MEHTA (January 4, 2017)

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