



Crown of Weeds

©2010 eNotes.com, Inc. or its Licensors. Please see [copyright information](#) at the end of this document.

Amy Gerstler's collection BITTER ANGEL (1990) won a National Book Critics Circle Award in 1991, and since then her distinctive style has made itself known to a broad audience of poetry readers. CROWN OF WEEDS varies its subjects but continues in the same mode as her earlier work, and the direction is well worth continuing. These poems are mostly magical narratives that blend the daily with the extraordinary in such a way as to suggest a definition of the self. These poems celebrate consciousness in all its forms, and although they grieve for mortality, they tend to suggest the world is less limited than we think.

The topics themselves range from the conventional to the bizarre. Some of the poems cluster about beginnings and endings of lives—the perceptions of a young child, the diagnosis of a brother's brain cancer. Others create oddball personae to wrench the reader away from his usual perspective. Often the poems begin with a jolt—"Mixed Messages," for instance, starts off "Hi. I sketch dead fish for a living." If the poems do not begin with jolts they contain them, as they leap acrobatically from one situation to another that is tangentially related. What is delightful about these poems is that there is always a freshness balanced with what is expected. If the situation is common enough, then the person who finds himself in it, and through it, is wholly unfamiliar but pleasing to meet.

Gerstler relates events and characterizes speakers in a crackling style that yanks the reader into each mini-narrative. These are appealing, reader-friendly poems.

Sources for Further Study

The Antioch Review. LV, Fall, 1997, p. 501.

Atlanta Journal Constitution. April 6, 1997, p. 36D.

Commercial Appeal. May 4, 1997, p. G4.

The Hudson Review. L, Fall, 1997, p. 502.

Los Angeles Times Book Review. December 28, 1997, p. 2.

San Francisco Sunday Examiner and Chronicle. March 9, 1997, Book Review Section, p. 10.

The Virginia Quarterly Review. LXXIII, Autumn, 1997, p. 137.

Copyright Notice

©2010 eNotes.com, Inc.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

No part of this work covered by the copyright hereon may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, Web distribution or information storage retrieval systems without the written permission of the publisher.

Crown of Weeds: Crown of Weeds

For complete copyright information, please see the online version of this work:
<http://www.enotes.com/crown-weeds-salem>