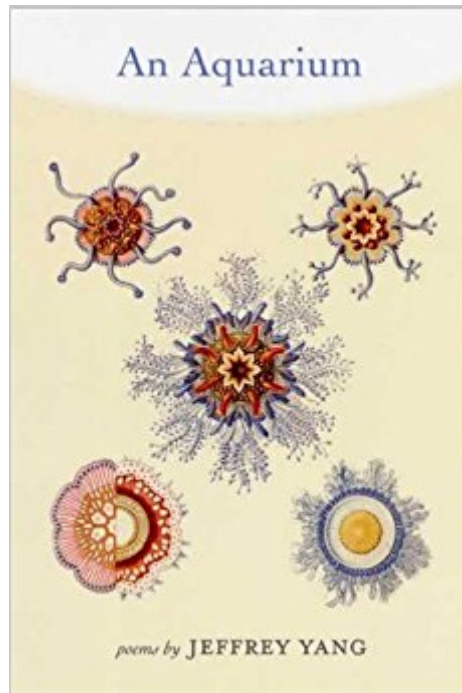




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An Aquarium: Poems



Synopsis

From "Abalone" to "Zooxanthellae," Jeffrey Yang's debut poetry collection *An Aquarium* is full of the exhilarating colors and ominous forms of aquatic life. But deeper under the surface are his observations on war, environmental degradation, language, and history, as a fatherâ••troubled by violence and human mismanagement of the worldâ••offers advice to a newborn son.

Book Information

Paperback: 80 pages

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Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 starsÂ•Â• See all reviewsÂ• (5 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

The book's conceit, an appealing one, is to write a series of poems on the fish and other ocean creatures one would come across in an aquarium, in alphabetical order. It's a sort of involute indexing of whims and amusements that would soon get ragged with repetition in heavier hands, but Yang's touch is light, and varies his approach, creature to creature, and what his musings land on, of course, are continued inquiry into how we know the world. We mirror, we model, we mimic, we claim credit for all the nobility that happens in domains that are, in fact, alien to our cities, countries and cultural ambiguities that Yang has the pleasure of gently yanking our chain. As usual, the real issue isn't so much the wonders of sea life as exhibited--and the phrase "exhibited" underscores the problematic nature with which human languages address the external world as if it depended on our giving it narration--as it is something else altogether. There is great appeal in the work of poets who can artfully contain a series of ideas in a brief piece of verse, the goal being to turn philosophical precepts into the glitter surface of a poem's allure and still address an issue quite beyond the more comfortable subjects of beauty or an aesthetically constrained idea of Truth, capital "T". Jeffrey Yang's first collection, *An Aquarium* (Graywolf Press) is a series of poems that at first seem like they

concern themselves exclusively with ocean life; indeed they do, but the author is shrewd in seeing what other areas, outside the aquarium tank, these creatures touch upon. Yang offers up a view on how we think about things.

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