

ALTERNATE ENDINGS

By: Mike James

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32 Pages/ 26 Poems

Review By: Charles P. Ries

Alternate Endings is Mike James fifth book of poetry and a nice collection it is. The majority of the 26 poems are thematically rich and well structured; and a few blew me away. "The Smiling Man: A Children's Tale" does an eloquent job of telling a complete fable in just 17 lines. I enjoyed its economy of language and image. James also writes a nice batch of message poems. Poems that render a defining and insightful meaning such as "Poem":

mother called crows
nothing birds

because she did not love them

because she knew
that magic of naming
what she did
not love

Another winner is "Homemade Routines":

i finished the last part of today's crossword puzzle
by throwing it in the trash

I need to waste some time every day

as surely as I need gossip and sandwiches

this morning I shaved at the sink
instead of in the shower

all day i've walked two steps slower than normal

too many days of this and my hair will grow long
I will begin to speak in riddles of broken syntax

too few days of this and not even my shadow
could find me beneath the sun

James brings wisdom to the common moment. There were only a few lines in this collection where I felt his work inched a bit too close to sentimentality, but this may be more a matter of my own tastes than any indiscretion on James part. All in all, a very fine collection of poetry.

- Charles P. Ries lives in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.