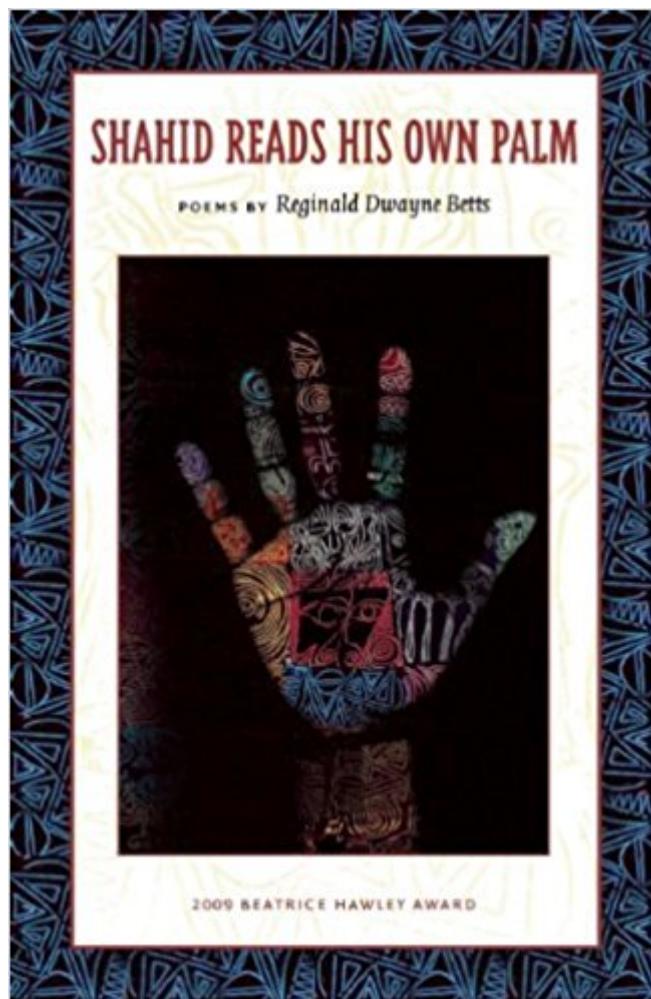


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# Shahid Reads His Own Palm



## Synopsis

Gripping and terrifying, eloquent and heartwrenching, this debut collection delves into hellish territory: prison life. Soulful poems somberly capture time-bending experiences and the survivalist mentality needed to live a contradiction, confronting both daily torment and one's illogical fear of freedom.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 3.0 out of 5 starsÂ  See all reviewsÂ (1 customer review)

Best Sellers Rank: #862,841 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #76 inÂ Books > Literature & Fiction > Poetry > Themes & Styles > Places #337 inÂ Books > Literature & Fiction > African American > Poetry #4041 inÂ Books > Literature & Fiction > Poetry > Regional & Cultural > United States

## Customer Reviews

Reginald Dwayne Betts, *Shahid Reads His Own Palm* (Alice James Books, 2010) This was a rollercoaster of a book for me. I started out not really feeling it; Betts is a solid poet, no doubt, and it's fantastic to see a poet using formal verse these days, but (a) one-author collections that deal with one subject throughout tend to sound more obsessive than expressive, and (b) Betts has a fondness for ghazals, a form so painfully artificial that it's next to impossible to get to sound natural. (That Betts never succeeds does not get him points off; I've read books of ghazals by acknowledged masters of the form who've been writing them for decades where not a one has been readable.) They're like the Boston Terriers of poetry; sometimes you can see where they came from, but are so badly mutated now they're only good for taking out and showing off now and again around other enthusiasts. All of which is going to make the next bit of this review sound entirely hypocritical, and so be it. You're not writing this review, you don't get to make that call, as long as I tell you up front I know how hypocritical it is, right? Because what finally sold me on this volume is another painfully artificial form, but one that's a little easier to do right: the pantoum, a

Malay-by-way-of-France form that consists of repeating full lines (ABAB BCBC CDCD ... ZAZA). It's still tough, but I've read a lot more workable pantoums than I have ghazals, so I have at least a point of reference. And the one time Betts tries it in here, it's the best poem in the book."The cracked walls of cell B8 sworebroken men peeled back tattoos to cryand some lean shoulders on past highsafter, clank! then yoke followed closed door.

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