Clarion Review

Poetry

Alpha State Writings
Lloyal High Cloud Walker
iUniverse
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Two Stars (out of Five)

Lloyal High Cloud Walker notes in *Alpha State Writings*, “Alpha State is that state often achieved in meditation, wherein the brain produces mostly Alpha waves.” Each piece in Walker’s collection of general musings, poems, and short prose reflects this meditative state.

Walker seeks spirituality within the mundane. While some of his poems are characteristic of traditional poetry with a repeated chorus and a pronounced rhythm, most of them feel like guided meditations rather than literary writing.

In the first section of the book, Walker explicates his theories about spirituality, which draw on a variety of religious teachings. While he makes a few indirect references to Christianity, Buddhism, and Carl Jung, he does not openly discuss the historical background of any of the concepts that he incorporates into his own form of new-age worship. Walker’s philosophy is summarized in these words: “God as the All and All within us.” The poems in the first section invite reflection on the creator, and as Walker puts it, “inspire realizations about spirituality in people and their relationships with themselves as a source.”

Throughout the book, the natural world seeps its way into Walker’s writing in intriguing ways. In the poem “Star Valley,” his language rings with vivid images of the heavens: “On either side, / With islands of tiny lights / twinkling in clusters / Many miles away, / Like little manmade galaxies / mimicking the sky above them.” In the short essay “Source of All, Within Us,” Walker tells the story of nearly drowning in a river as a youth. He describes the moment when he decides to fight against the river’s current: “My life force, the inspiration from source within, welled up and infused me with new strength.”

Unfortunately, the third section of the book, entitled “In Love, More Pretties,” is speckled with watered-down love poems that lean toward clichéd language. Because of the lack of imaginative imagery and phrasing, it is the weakest section in the book. In the poem

“Sparkling Laughter,” Walker’s language takes a pedestrian turn: “She makes me whole. / Dancing eyes creating magic, / Sparkling laughter, / *And love*.” The tone of these romantic poems stands in stark contrast to the more spiritually inclined pieces in the beginning of the book.

Walker also makes a few bizarre choices in the collection that may leave readers scratching their heads. For example, there is an oddly placed poem written by Walker’s wife. Due to its perfect rhyming scheme, her poem about her union with Walker doesn’t fit with the rest of the book. There are also several black-and-white images that detract from the writing. These problems, along with the occasional typos and mismatching tenses, give the collection a cluttered and disheveled feel.

Even so, with *Alpha State Writings*, Walker does try to dig deep into the human condition to find meaning and connection, and, in his own unique way, asks readers to look within.

Colby Cedar Smith