Clarion Review

Poetry

Beacons, Prayers, and Processes: Pathways to Healing
Janice B. Holland
Trafford Publishing
978-1-4251-0292-0
Four Stars (out of Five)

A patchwork quilt of healing, as Janice Holland describes it, is not without stitches and scars. The poetry in *Beacons, Prayers, and Processes: Pathways to Healing* deals with difficult subject matter: the author's sexual abuse, her admission of the dark secret, and the slow and difficult healing process. Part prayer to those who have also been hurt, this book chronicles a survivor's guilt, healing, and triumph.

Each of the six sections focuses on a different aspect of the healing process. The first emphasizes turning to God for answers and comfort, and thanking Him for his guidance. The second section opens with the emotionally moving lines, "Children should be seen / and heard / and listened to." The weight of the statement is not lost on the reader.

A key section thanks Martha, the Christian therapist who guided Holland out of darkness. She was the "beacon" that offered "safe harbor." Holland relates how the two worked through a closet of secrets, and she details the hesitation and fear that went along with this process. Healing is not a placid body of water. Instead, the poet demonstrates how, at times, waves can be rough and cumbersome, but with guidance and trust a victim can find her way through.

Holland's poems pose difficult yet honest questions. She asks: "How will I know when I am whole and the past I've denied can no longer hold me in this self-imposed prison in my mind?" Inner demons take a long time to sort out and deal with. Holland does not sugarcoat the grief, shame, depression, and worry that come with disclosing sexual abuse or reclaiming a life. This creates a moving mix of poems that are sometimes hard to read. Victims of sexual abuse often blame themselves, and Holland does not shy away from this doubt, depression, and darkness.

Intimacy is built because many of the poems use first and second person. At times, it

feels as though the poet is speaking directly to the reader, and it is this familiarity that makes the triumphant ending effective. It is impossible not to feel the relief in poems like “Rejoined,” when Holland reunites with her “inner child,” looks her in the eye, and pulls her into a warm embrace.

Lisa Bower