ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

POETRY

Glow: Mystical Poems
Rehab Rivers
Balboa Press
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Two Stars (out of Five)

Many writers refer to some kind of relationship with a muse or "channel"—a source of inspiration or even a voice—as in Rainer Maria Rilke's famous *Duino Elegies*, which he claims were spoken to him while he wrote, as if in a trance. This seemingly mysterious connection to something outside the writer herself is what Rehab Rivers describes as the impulse behind her first book of poems. After a sixteen-year marriage ended, an "angel of hope entered her life"—she calls him Derrick—giving rise to a thin volume of "mystical poems."

In what sense the works in *Glow: Mystical Poems* are mystical, it's hard to say, but they do vibrate with a sense of urgency to live life authentically following a personal crisis. Throughout the collection the speaker addresses a "you," which initially seems to refer to the aforementioned divine source, as in a poem entitled "Agape": "You verbalize my knowing / And complement my melody with your words / My song is more meaningful / I can't help but sing it." Elsewhere, the addressee is perhaps the erstwhile husband: "There was a time / You gave to me freely / Of your spirit, soul & time // That was the beginning / Of the building / Of which the base was trust // That time is long gone / You don't ask why / & no longer take the time." A number of poems also address the reader, offering advice: "In time you'll know / You are a master not a slave / Following others / Will entrap you in a cave." It's a tricky thing to approach readers in this mode, which veers quickly toward preaching. But Rivers is earnest, and it's apparent she simply wishes to share her hard-won discoveries.

Still, too often, she misses the chance to invite the reader into her very personal and inward experience through imagery or original language. Instead, much of *Glow* reads like a diary and is beset with clichés and the stock language of self-realization and affirmation. Furthermore, the text would have benefited from an editor who might have caught the more egregious inconsistencies in punctuation and redundant content.

This collection is closest in tone and content to self-help or inspirational literature. It will be of most interest to readers looking for a creative rendering of how one woman's experience

of crisis can give way to what the author refers to as a spiritual rebirth. The three sections of the book—“Heart,” “Insights & Realizations,” and “Universal”—trace the arc of that journey, mining her encounter with a surprising and powerful connection to a source that spurs a healing, creative process. Addressing the reader as a fellow traveler in the Afterword, the author concludes: “Glow bright with wisdom and insight, as you consciously participate in the creation of your own life.” That is what Rehab Rivers has done.

Holly Wren Spaulding