ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

POETRY

Journey to Enlightenment Revealed
Juliet Christie Murray
Trafford Publishing
978-1-4120-3623-8
Three Stars (out of Five)

Journey to Enlightenment: Revealed maps the territory between the individual's desire to improve and the limitations imposed by relative poverty and outside authority. The crafted free verse is largely unrhymed covering themes from classroom achievement to identity politics. The title piece compares the condition of illiteracy to the confinement of a slave ship's hold. The poet praises an uncle who raised her and earnestly pulls for the children whose futures she bolsters as a vice principal and teacher in Hanover Parish Jamaica. Murray's degrees in Sociology and Applied Social Relations were earned in the United States. Her observations of community structure made while abroad focus on the particular such as the lack of dogs in the Brooklyn streets or the ubiquity of cameras there.

The most personal pieces are driven by unresolved background tension between integrity and unrequited or impossible attraction a dilemma which proves too troublesome to haul fully into daylight for this edition. The net perspective however is assuredly more forward-facing than wistful. The poet holds hope for greater opportunities for Jamaicans at home and in expatriate enclaves and also expects a calm but usefully engaged life-stage ahead for herself backstopped by the promise of spiritual salvation the subject of "The Better Part":

After the business is over
The children all grown and gone
The wealth we have all stockpiled
The lovers we have kept or left
What next?"

Quite instructive is a side by side comparison of "No Easy Choice" first in Jamaican dialect then in standard English. Lines from "Jamaican Man" demonstrate that the differences amount to a superficial barrier: "Jamaican man dem a di best / Dem seh dem strong and / Hav

whole heap a stamina." A glossary clears up the few potential misunderstandings though precious little is left to wrongly interpret. Teacherly explanations of each poem's inspiration and intent intrude on readers who are accustomed to filtering poetry through prisms of their own experiences.

Journey to Enlightenment: Revealed *closes with an uplifting poem called "The Revelation" which invites the audience to action: "Get up harness that universal spirit / Buried everywhere and in every one." This offering has verve and a sense of patience. It's a respectable readable first collection from someone who came to the form in the middle of life blessed with a considerable head start in compassion for strivers thwarted and successful ones alike.[i]*