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CLARION REVIEW ★★☆☆☆ POETRY

Make It Make Sense

Lynna Roane
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Lynna H. M. Roane's collection revolves around familiar themes in poetry: family, love, and faith. She writes in a style reminiscent of spoken-word poetry, with its rhythmic pulse and easy familiarity. The book contains three sections: "Thoughts Collecting Dust," "From Me, To You," and "Unanswered Questions." The first section reads like received wisdom on the nature of success, men, and stereotypes. The second, and most successful, section elaborates on familial love and relationships. The third section is a series of prose vignettes that expound on romantic and erotic love.

Roane, a licensed practical nurse, dedicates the book to her mother, an obvious source of inspiration as evidenced in the poem, "Once, I Did for You." In this poem, the parent-child relationship is inverted, with the speaker trying to feed and care for her dying mother. Unlike many of the musing poems, Roane's poem for her mother tells a specific story with a specific emotional investment and the results are stronger than her general commentary about a particular topic. Also in the second section of the collection, "Don't Have to Ask" works from another quiet moment, this one offered by a sister, seeing that her younger sibling has fallen behind on a chore, steps in to help: "Without a word, I turn / You stand and watch / As I quietly complete your row." These poems have a tenderness to them that is appealing. The second section also boasts the poem with the most concrete moment of imagery in the book, where the poet refers to another woman from whom she receives strength and support as "that knot at the end of a frayed rope." The rope image offers a vision and a broader conceptual impression than the lines that precede it, which characterize the poem's subject as "real" and "honest." Striving for specificity and detail throughout the book would have created more memorable and meaningful poems.

Roane's use of rhythm lacks uniformity, which makes it sound like chopped up prose instead of carefully wrought poetry. And she sometimes succumbs to cliché. For example, on the subject of success she writes: "Being there for someone who wasn't there for you, / Doing for someone who didn't do Enough for you." One of the joys of literature is being made to envision something in a new way; these poems don't do that. In addition, the poet employs random capitalization and a decided lack of punctuation to no discernible end.

While Roane does not invent new ways to address familiar topics, some of her poems have a lovely tender quality that she should explore.

CAMILLE-YVETTE WELSCH (April 27, 2011)

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