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CLARION REVIEW ★★☆☆☆ POETRY

Patiently In Wait

Donnamay Stewart
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One of the best things about this poetry collection is the “chop wood carry water” stance of the poet who focuses on ordinary experiences objects and emotions eschewing elevated language and purple prose. She knows how to handle a line break and has done a nice job of shaping the physical appearance of the poems on the pages. Indeed the book’s gorgeous cover suggestive of afternoon tea implies meditation relaxation and the quiet elegance of word pebbles dropping into refreshing linguistic ponds. Unfortunately not all that rhymes in the English language is poetry particularly in the numerous instances here where it falls just short of true iambic pentameter leaving one to feel as if one’s dance partner had trod on one’s toes.

“In The Midnight Hour” for example contains clunky lines echoes obvious rhymes present/future tense confusion and superficial mundane images. (“In the midnight hour when everything got sour everyone / lost their power and we sat back bored stiff for hours.”) The final line which should be the strongest has a banality the author surely did not intend: “Mornings look so still and far away in this hour but the sun will rise again after the midnight hour.” This is the typical “so what” ending poets in particular must be careful to avoid.

Many of the poems contain forced word choices to “get” the rhyme which result in an unnatural voice inevitably reminding younger readers of a certain Star Wars guru. (From “Can I Survive?”: “In the end you will see that a stronger person you will be.”)

Some language is incorrect also. In “What is the Definition of Losing” the narrator says “To others who may have to give up someone close which then truly doesn’t leave you to boost.” (One suspects the word “boast” may have been intended here.) “Two Ships Sailing in the Night” could have been interesting if only the poem had spun around on a fresh tangent instead of re-sailing clichéd waters. (This poem in particular needed a proofreader: “Never the less There is a little phrase that goes like this everything in

life Happens for a wise purpose a reason and also for a season.“) “China Cabinet” with its interesting imagery of crockery waiting for humans to give it life has potential as does “Phenomenal Woman” an anthem to female power which admits with stark honesty that femininity isn’t as fulfilling as it should be. The plaintive “The Girls With the Frills” appeals with home truths about what men want versus who women are although the ending fails to surprise.

There is honest emotion here-the raw beating heart of poetry—but alas as the work is currently written it remains inaccessible to the reader no matter how personally moving it may be to the author. There are too many stylistic and grammatical barriers between the two parties at present for this collection to have the impact it deserves.
HOLLY CHASE WILLIAMS (November 10, 2006)

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