Clarion Review

Poetry

Poetry to Ponder
Rex. B. Valentine
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Four Stars (out of Five)

Rex B. Valentine began writing poetry at the age of four, when primitive living conditions on the family farm necessitated providing one's own entertainment. He continued to write during his long and colorful life, intending to leave a legacy for his eleven children, forty-two grandchildren, and thirty-three great-grandchildren. Now semiretired from his real estate career and living with his wife on their active cattle ranch near Elma, Washington, Valentine is an award-winning poet who has been inducted into the World Congress of Poets. *Poetry to Ponder*, a collection of poems created between 1997 and 2011, covers a wide range of topics, including reminiscences of childhood, family and farm life, religion, humor, and the beauty of the natural world.

Valentine takes his craft seriously, and he has devoted himself to the study and mastery of traditional poetic forms; included in this volume are examples of the villanelle, sonnet, haiku, hsinku, free verse, and narrative poetry. Each poem is prefaced with information on its background and date of composition, which helps to place it within the writer's life and creative output. Valentine has also included a description of each form, which will be most helpful to the uninitiated.

Depending upon his subject, Valentine's imagery can range from the strong and virile to the innocent and tender. His gift for seemingly effortless rhyme is especially apparent in works like the playful "The Beach Vendors of Mexico": "The beaches in Mexico are no place to send her / if she has some money to spend. / While sitting and sunning there's many a vendor / who's waving his wares like a friend." More effortful is this, taken from "Discipline and Love Conquers Self": "His love of sports infected me; / I hardened as I grew. / He sacrificed great hours to see I caught a ball and threw."

The self-deprecating humor of "I Am an Authority" will resonate with many readers who

are sure to see themselves or someone they know, in these examples: “I am an authority. I’ve always been one… / Just looking for a subject / to fit my knowledge…” and “I find it’s very difficult to get people / to ask the right questions to match my answers.”

There are a few minor grammar and punctuation errors in the book, but these do not detract from the overall quality of Valentine’s poetry.

With *Poetry to Ponder*, Valentine allows readers a glimpse into the world as he sees it, full of enchantment and wonder. Most beautiful of all is his description of the poet’s art in “Observations of a Poet”: “With poetry, one can write a whole chapter in one line: / especially if there is love between the words.”

Kristine Morris