ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

POETRY

Siren of the Thief
Bahman Amidi
Lulu
978-1-300-31123-2
Two Stars (out of Five)

In *Siren of the Thief*, Bahman Amidi revels in portent and mystery. His collection of poems ranges in themes from unrequited love to the isolation of power. Amidi clearly loves words such as “frivoled” and “flummoxed,” though they often seem to be used out of context. Much of this book is encoded, carrying secret meaning for the writer, not always for the reader.

Bahman Amidi is an Iranian who writes poetry in English. He is the author of one previous collection, *The Yellow Dog, The Never War, The Sudden War and Death*. His new volume offers many suggestive images, including “As an orange inside its peels… / I’m swaddled in the doldrums” and “Gravity was a fallen angel.” Still, for every intriguing moment, there are others that are simply baffling: “Snow’s carbon lets him believe” and “Here the mirror weapon to infinite debt.” Some of the poems feature a king isolated from his people by virtue of a decision he must make and a queen who inherits in his absence. This may be an allegory of sorts, but the author leaves few bread crumbs to lead audiences back to his intended meaning. In other poems, Amidi raises questions about heaven and hell. Lucifer speaks with God, questioning His leadership. Hell is reenvisioned as a place void of thought and God.

Love also features in the poems—unrequited love, romantic love, betrayed love, religious love. Here, the poems might strive for more. In “I would die for you, I would live for you,” Amidi writes that, “Nothing pleases me as your smile. / I would live for you a thousand times, / I would die for you a thousand times.” These sentiments, though heartfelt, sound trite, which is a reoccurring problem. Some poems also feature endnotes with definitions of words. Unfortunately, some of the definitions don’t make a lot of sense. “Frivoled,” rather than meaning to behave frivolously, means “unclean, referring to the capability of cajoling,” according to the author. His definitions obscure rather illuminate meaning in the poems.

The design of the book is inconsistent. Toward the end of *Siren of the Thief*, the poems are double-spaced for no apparent reason. It is also unclear why the book ends with an author's note followed by an untitled poem.

The poems in Amidi's collection have a sense of mystery that may thrill some readers and frustrate others.

Camille-Yvette Welsch