Clarion Review

Poetry

The Bridge of Love
Kevin Clifford Burke
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Three Stars (out of Five)

Kevin Clifford Burke's poetry collection, *The Bridge of Love*, asks readers to take risks, live in the moment, and love without hesitation. These themes are skillfully threaded throughout the collection. Burke's "bridges of love" encourage readers to seek transcendence, happiness, and their own inner light. With sharp and memorable description, these poems push readers toward personal enlightenment: to love without hesitation; to understand the beauty of the sun, stars, and world; and to dare to dream.

As with all poetry, these pieces are open to interpretation. The poem "The Light" opens with: "His light has crashed my darkened hallways / Where darkness once seemed so sweet, sublime." "The Light" may be speaking of God's love, a lover, or the inner self.

Discussing something as profound as love is challenging. Though there are shining moments when Burke easily navigates such emotional waters, there are also times when the poet slips into cliché and makes overly dramatic or obvious statements. For example, the poem "You and I (and the Bridge of Love)" includes the following lines in the opening stanza: "A shining rising star / To illuminate my heart, / Where distances vanish / Between you and I." The rich metaphor of the bridge and of the space between lovers could be explored with more subtlety. Thankfully, Burke redeems himself in the final line of the stanza when he writes that the speakers cross the bridge to "breathe in the sky."

The universal nature of the poems make them well-suited for readers looking for inspiration and hope in a world full of chaos. Similarly, the poems' rich sound play, beautiful metaphors, and lyrical wrangling will reel in poetry enthusiasts. In such a slim collection, Burke manages to cover a lot of ground. He asks readers to take on the challenge of "wrestling with dreams and stars."

After all, what is this life without living? Burke's work exhorts readers to take part

in—rather than just observe—this “swan dance of the cosmos.”

Lisa Bower