ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

POETRY

The Poetry in Yu
Sabrina B. Yu
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Two Stars (out of Five)

Encouraged by her mother's warm reception of a birthday poem, Yu began writing the poems collected here when she was a mere eight years old. The poems, befitting her age, are simple and warm, optimistic and bright as in this cinquain, "Clouds":

A cloud
Fluffy and wet
Let the rain go when full
Rains when sad; holds when it's blissful
Heavenly.

Computer-generated pictures accompany the poems adding to the flavor of a brief return to the fourth grade. Now a precocious ten-year-old, Yu writes about her family, her environment, her childhood. The poems reveal an early love of the genre which teachers and parents might use to encourage Yu's peers to pursue their own creative endeavors. Yu employs a variety of forms to house her largely autobiographical poems, and the book finishes, somewhat confusingly, with poems written by her sister and her mother.

Certainly to find a ten-year-old so enamored of writing is unusual. The desire to write cannot be taught; however, the age old techniques of poetic writing can be. With so willing a student, the results will likely be dazzling.

Poets create moments of exploration by employing the building blocks of poetry—the simile and the metaphor. These figures are scarce in the book, but the opportunity to compare with the simile and to become with in the metaphor could really open up Yu's imaginative potential. Of particular interest to Yu might be poet Kenneth Koch's work with children writing poetry. Koch taught in a New York City school and wrested from his students the flights of fancy that are missing here. In his book, *Wishes, Lies, and Dreams*, Koch gives students specific prompts that encourage students to write the world from their own unique and untutored

viewpoint.

Yu's poems, while sweet, could adventure more. In "Snowflake" she writes:

> *Each speck of a snowflake*
> *With it's [sic] stunning designs*
> *The texture of every petal it has*
> *Each sparkle embodies a special person inside*
> *The designs will match a gorgeous dress*
> *Foliages of it sway back and forth*

The poem contains some rich moments—snow as foliage, the petals of flakes. These are the kind of moments that engage the imagination and make a poem about the seasons into something new. However, the poem also has missed opportunities. What is the texture of the petal; who are the people inside, what are these gorgeous dresses; what does gorgeous even mean in this context and how is the reader to see it?

One of the joys of reading a child's poetry is the change in perspective it affords the adult audience, the unexpected metaphors, the analogies that make perfect sense to the child and a dawning, near forgotten kind of sense for the adult. Yu is just beginning to reveal her unique perspective.