Clarion Review

Poetry

Un-rested Spirit: Visions in Poetry
Brian D. Hoerth
Xlibris
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Two Stars (out of Five)

Some people write poetry as an enjoyable pastime or hobby, others use it as a more creative form of journaling or a path to spiritual healing. Some find pleasure in engaging language as music and medium, some find the discipline is a good fit for their verbal impulses, others burn with urgent need to share their emotional and cerebral insights with the world. One trait they all seem to have in common is the need to communicate their deepest feelings, cogently and poignantly, to achieve contact with the reader on some profound level.

Brian Hoerth's *Un-rested Spirit: Visions in Poetry* would seem to lean toward gifted hobbyist, the wisdom of his verse is undeniable, if somewhat conventional. From the back-cover biography, the reader learns that he is a cop out of California. The topics of his poetry—unrequited love, death, disappointment, loneliness, alienation—would be recognizable to any reader. The poems in *Un-rested Spirit* rely more on expediency of content than the richness of craft. They have more of an editorial feeling to them, discussing the subject without using the tools endemic to poetry to explore and elucidate in original ways. The distillation one expects to find in poetry is lacking. Very often, simply using a careful eye to eliminate extraneous words can facilitate flow and immediacy.

Hoerth's strengths are frankness and imagination, which sometimes comes across as whimsical ("Howe's Bayou") and sometimes as fanciful and dark ("City at the Bottom of the Sea"). There's an endearing, genuine aspect to his poems. Hoerth needs to find more intriguing, provocative ways of expressing personal truths, beyond the familiar phrases known to most readers of poetry. He needs to be conscious of the power of breaking lines to his advantage, to focus the reader on an idea or image. Consider these lines from "Typical Night of a Lonely Man": "Because it seems he sits alone all night / Because no one wants to share." So much of what Hoerth leaves on the page delays the upshot of his text.

Un-rested Spirit contains a great deal of genuine reflection on the optimistic and excruciating sides of human experience. With a bit of effort to find fresh, internal details, rather than surmising them for the reader, these earnest poems could truly soar.

Christopher Soden