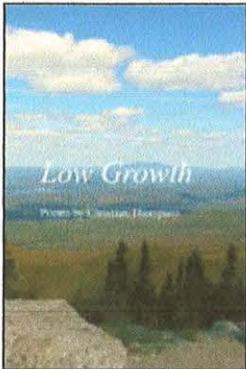


THE US Review of Books



Low Growth
by [Christian Thompson](#)
Word Poetry

reviewed by John E. Roper

*"Hope—
drained from his body,
opened him
to the dark
spotted with stars*

*that,
in its lack of intention
had been a brother all along"*

Poetry comes in a myriad of shapes and flavors. Bawdy limericks, nursery rhymes, rap lyrics, and the works of Dr. Seuss all qualify. But what most people consider true poetry is verse with more substance to it, a depth of feeling and expression that startles the reader into seeing the world differently. Thompson's poems, with their thought-provoking themes and carefully crafted images, fit solidly into this latter category.

Much of the appeal of this collection is found in its cohesiveness of mood. None of the poems are bright and cheerful, nor are any of them overtly depressing and gloomy. Rather the general ambiance is one of quiet introspection, a sort of view of the world on an overcast day where philosophical speculations on nature, history, and religion all hold an important place. And despite exploring a wide range of subjects and historical personalities, the individual pieces appear interlocked in almost a jigsaw pattern that seems designed to gradually reveal the poet (or his persona) in his many facets to the reader. For example, we see a man in love with the natural world in poems like "Shoreline." Then we discover in pieces such as "Breathing Hiroshima" and "The Equator of Curiosity" a character whose self-doubts are slightly reminiscent of T.S. Eliot's famous figure, J. Alfred Prufrock. "Nothing Seemed More Mundane" deftly reveals the complex emotions a person feels when watching an elderly loved one fade away, while "Uninformed & Angry" shows the natural disgust of an observer of history over the mindset of the people who approved of the book burnings in Nazi Germany.

Thompson's poems remind one of why poetry is such an essential part of our literature. Polished and insightful, they cause the reader to think deeper, which is the goal of all good writing.

RECOMMENDED by the USR

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