

## Stitching Earth to Sky: A Review

By: Ashley Ehman

*Stitching Earth to Sky* is a unique collection of poems that was written by a group of nine women, known as the PaperBirch Poets. Each author pulls from their own experiences and memories of the Midwest to craft the words found in their respective sections. While change in voice may usually be seen as distracting, the differences that are seen through the pages of this book were meant to be celebrated. *Stitching Earth to Sky* is an engaging read that aims to show the reader that similarities can be found even amongst the differences.

Each author captures their own essence in their poems. The settings and subjects are all unique, with little overlap seen. However, the theme in which the authors adhere to is what brings the book together as a singular piece. Examining one's own mortality can be seen across the pages of *Stitching Earth to Sky*. The ever present balance of life and death is evident even in the titles. Poems in this collection garner names like "Stories from Katie's Funeral", "Love and Death Holding Hands", and "After the Funeral." Beyond the obvious nods to mortality that are spelled out on the page, the subject matter also supports this idea. As seen in "How to Live: A Dancing Lesson", this poem explores a final goodbye that their grandfather gives to his home. He leaves with pride, "// [refusing] all help leaving the house [he] built." The poem closes, with the narrator learning a lesson in "how to live, // and how to die." This poem is not alone in this sentiment, with other poems in this collection touching on how death comes to define us all.

As the reader continues through the pages, it becomes more clear that an overarching theme in this book is that we are all tied together through death. Elaine Hohensee touches on this in her poem, "Where I Come From." The narrator in this poem lists out everything that makes them who they are. Some of the things that they use to define themselves include fruit cake, girdles, and some character named Billy the Brownie. In its closing, the poem grows darker. The final lines read, "I am from the letters my father wrote, // each one a love poem to my mother // written too late for her to hear." While the narrator is defined by many other things, death is quite possibly the most important defining feature, since it is listed last. Poetically speaking, lines that are left for the end are meant to give more impact. The poem was written as such to illustrate the influence death has had on the narrator's life.

Much like the dandelion seeds on the cover, sometimes only beautiful things can come from the death of something else. This collection touches on life lessons, memories had, and the chance to grow as individuals in the wake of something seemingly negative, like death. *Stitching Earth to Sky* does a wonderful job at creating an introspective look at the reader's own mortality through the experiences of the PaperBirch Poets.