

## SI LOIN DES CYPRES

Lelia Young,  
Montreal: Cidihca, 1999.

BY JOHN STOUT

Lelia Young dedicates her new collection of poetry to “the familiar stranger who awakens metaphor.” The ties of love and empathy between people and the world around them is the main focus of the book. However, the poet also constantly acknowledges the presence of mortality, silence, and negativity in the world:

Chaque être est au bord de  
l’absence  
et sa voix flirte sur la faille du  
silence[...] Je me souviens de  
la peur de perdre  
les aimé-e-s et plus tard le souf-  
fle de ma terre.

Young divides the collection into three distinct parts. The first, “Between You and Me: An Oxymoronic Reading,” charts the evolution of the love between a female speaker and her male partner. This love provides the inspiration for writing poetry and celebrating life:

Avec toi passer dans la nuit d’être  
Avec toi jusqu’au bout de la vie  
Pour que le cauchemarse dénoue  
Et laisse passer le jour.

The second section of the book, “In the Body of the Python,” functions as the flipside of the first section. Here the poet is concerned with denouncing cruelty, evil, and violence—for example, violence resulting from religious fanaticism, which the python symbolizes:

O cruel  
[...] ta grife attend patiemment  
l’ultime mouvement espéré de  
ta proie  
[...]  
Le voila dans l’incohérence de  
sa folie

à tourner après sa queue  
à tuer au nom d’un irrationnel  
religieux  
livrant son humanité aux can-  
yons des vautours.

Finally, in the third section, “Torsades” (“Interweavings”), Young brings together the two domains of cruelty and love. She juxtaposes them in order to underscore the message that our survival depends on an altruistic and caring, charitable interaction with, and openness to, one another. In the end, her poems affirm a belief in the necessity of the evolution of humanity—above all, by means of a renewal of love in the broadest sense.

## WITHOUT CHILD: CHALLENGING THE STIGMA OF CHILDLESSNESS

Laurie Lisle,  
New York: Routledge, 1999

BY STEPHANIE DICKISON

I have never wanted to have children. I can’t tell you why exactly, only that I’ve felt that way for as long as I can remember. It’s not something I’ve talked about much, only because it makes others uncomfortable. I can’t say I entirely blame them. If a subject isn’t talked about openly, it’s difficult to be the one to break through the taboo.

Laurie Lisle, by telling her own story and struggle of living childless in a child-bearing world, has given a voice to all of us who, at one time or another, have wondered what is wrong with us, why are we like this, what could we possibly tell others the reason is and have them be okay

with that? This is not only an excellent book, but a true act of courage. It is also a fascinating exploration and sociological study into the lives of women who choose not to have children and the reasons that go along with it. In Laurie’s research, she “came upon the stories of numerous women who had avoided childbirth for reasons of adventure, romance, spirituality, ambition, art, idealism, duty, poverty, terror, or the desire for an education.” She bravely and unapologetically talks about issues heretofore rarely discussed: “The rejection of parenthood is a delicate and even dangerous topic; it has an element of subversiveness to it, especially when it is the chance of happily married couples.” The people she interviewed had never talked “in depth about non-motherhood before, and their speech was as often painfully hesitant as quietly triumphant.” This is something that women who struggle with making the decision not to have children, or who have made the decision but must go against the common view, can relate to down to their baby toes.

Lisle delves into historical and sociological data and from which she extracts a range of fascinating items. Talking about civil rights, equal rights, congress, history being made, demonstrations, laws passed and passed over, one feels the electricity and importance of these facts and they jump from the page right into your lap. Fascinating revelations such as “factors like birth order are surprisingly influential: firstborns, including only children, are twice as likely to be childless as other siblings,” move the book along with compelling speed. In contrast, the importance of the roles of mothers is discussed at length and gives pause for one’s own reflection: “Even though not all women are mothers, and all mothers do not have daughters, every woman is born a daughter, even if she is not raised by her natural mother.”

Lisle’s recognition of the complexity of this issue shows that it is not