

The profusion of those other voices makes it impossible to mark all of the moments that moved and challenged me; almost as impossible to list all of the moments that bored me or made me cringe. Thankfully, there were more of the former than the latter. The pieces that struck me as particularly good and appropriate for the book were those that wrestled with the language they were using to tell their story—those pieces that refused, in some way, to participate in mainstream English, the High English of Literature. This starts with Douglas Stewart's explanation of ma-ka, and its importance. He eschews a coherent explanation, presenting the metaphor in snippets and words, refusing lengthy exposition for slices of definition and an imperative: "Mind this book. Mind ma-ka juk ya!" Mind: obey, or alternately, watch out. And it frames the collection perfectly.

This attention to the power of language, its abstractions and power to control, is fleshed out particularly in the work of Lawrence Ytzhak Braithwaite and T. J. Bryan. Both take liberties with narrative as well. In "Baggy Trousers" there's hardly any story to speak of, but fragment layered upon fragment of dialogue, until the relationship between the pieces causes the characters and meanings to emerge. There's no linear tale, no one meaning leaping out at the reader. The way he uses language disorients every sense of how identity is formed. As the first text, it gets to the heart of the collection immediately.

T. J. Bryan's "Melting my Iron Maiden" is a different kind of story, possibly the sexiest I've ever read. She combines porn stories and multiple voices to probe the link between sex and sexy and the tensions that produce both. Sex is intricately linked, she argues, to politics. To strip one from the other impoverishes both, and helps no one. Her writing is lyrical and precise, and Bryan writes intelligently to fill the lack she deplors.

Selections like Braithwaite's and

Bryan's are what make this collection so good. What keeps it from being excellent are selections like Terry R. Drayton's "Pink Curlers and Fluffy Slippers" and "Untitled" by Shamza Nya Akoma. The latter is a poem about masturbating, an interesting place to start, but with flat language, clichés and misplaced exclamation points, it is a cold poem about a sensual act. But it is inoffensive. This cannot be said of "Pink Curlers and Fluffy Slippers," which is virulently sexist, and is not saved by the stilted prose, or the characters, which are merely a series of stereotypes. It is the only piece in this collection that actually made me angry. But as I said above, with such a large number of stories, poems and essays, everyone is bound to dislike some; in the case of *Ma-ka*, the ones I disliked were outweighed by those that were well written and smart.

As a collection of voices, as the "elder sister" of a movement trying to disrupt the mainstream, this book is admirable. It provides a place from which to start speaking louder, and louder again. It presents a forum in which voices can be heard in reference and relation to each other, building text, documenting history. I may not have liked every selection, but I was more than happy to listen.

THE BUTTERFLY HEALING: A LIFE BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

Julia Ching. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998.

BY CHRIS KLASSEN

The Butterfly Healing: A Life between East and West is a courageous personal pondering of the multiple connections between spiritual and religious life, the physical body, social and political relations, and academic development. Through this pondering Julia Ching, a professor of East Asian philosophy and religion at the

University of Toronto, shares with readers her journey toward integration and wholeness.

In *The Butterfly Healing* we are given a story of transition and transformation on a variety of levels. We see geographical transitions as Ching travels the world from China to America, from Taiwan to Australia, and finally to her present home—Canada. Ching also shares with us her religious development, beginning with her conversion to Catholicism, followed by her joining and eventually leaving the Ursuline order, and ultimately to her integration of Taoist, Buddhist, and Confucian concepts within her Catholicism. Ching's physical transformations are addressed in a reflection on her multiple experiences with cancer and the resulting physical disabilities with which she must learn to live. Overall, Ching aptly demonstrates how being healthy requires a consideration of more than the physical body. Her physical health is connected to her spiritual life, which is dependent on her interactions with many cultures through travel, and which in turn affects her physical health. Health and wholeness depend on a circle of interconnections.

Ching tells her story with an impressive amount of respect for the past. As she looks back to her religious beliefs as a young nun, she is able to give validity to her early experiences without diminishing her decision to leave the order. She allows herself to be critical of the religious tradition she chose as a young woman without forsaking it completely. Thus, while she integrates other religious practices in her life, Ching remains strongly influenced by Catholicism.

Unfortunately the feminist questions Ching raises are insufficiently developed. For instance, she makes reference to the under-representation of women in the Catholic church leadership and in the academic world, but these are only briefly mentioned with the feel of an afterthought. Where she could have considered

how this under-representation affects her, as a woman, or what some suitable feminist responses might be, Ching instead implies that the problem is too big to be dealt with, and one is better served by not dwelling on it too long.

Another drawback with this text is the excessive detail. Even though some detail is important to explicate Ching's experiences, the narrative tends to overwhelm the reader with information which seems superfluous. Do we really need to know what style of clothing people wore when they came to visit her in the hospital?

Despite these difficulties, *The Butterfly Healing* is a valuable account. Through telling her own story, Ching encourages all of us to consider our multiple influences and identities. As a cosmopolitan Chinese Catholic woman, now living and teaching in Canada, Ching must blend her many identities. This sometimes results in confusion and inconsistency, but these inconsistencies are neither positive nor negative. Ching has the choice of resisting them or embracing them, of fighting them or using them to enhance her life. In her search for healing and wholeness, she chooses to embrace all aspects of her identity. This makes her life much more difficult to pigeon-hole into the stereotypical definitions of what is Eastern or what is Western, what is Catholic or what is Taoist, what is academic, what is mother, what is wife, what is woman. This is what makes her life so interesting and even inspirational.

REMYTH

Kathy Fretwell. Windsor: Cranberry Tree, 1997.

BY BERYL BAIGENT

A strikingly attractive book produced by a small press, which does its utmost to combine essence and receptacle. What better way to accomplish this than to use the poet's own art work, which unfolds onto both sides

of the cover. Fretwell's watercolour *Old World Swallowtail* opens the reader to a soul journey as experienced by this poet whose life (she tells us in her Introduction) has been one of conflict and searching: "Reared a Presbyterian, baptized an adult Roman Catholic, [she has] been indoctrinated from many angles." Not finding her image in the male trinity, and understanding why, after recovering memories in 1990 of sexual abuse by her father, Fretwell proclaims the Great Mother in whom she is discovering her "higher self."

A "Prologue" pre-empts the psychic search with a suggestion that it will touch "all seven continents," as, like Ponce de Leon, she searches for the fountain—though not of youth, but of self-sustenance and peace. The poet hopes that all women will "slowly ... unfurl / out of burning times a new leaf."

Section 1, "Seeking my feminine," invokes "geese mothers" (Mother Geese) like "Lindsay Wagner," "Lilith," "Jeanne D'Arc," and others. She is one of them, with her rebellious "fledgling daughter," and previously, a "stay-at-home mother, / perennially plastered, / forced to shelve her law degree, [who] raised [her] to be a Fury." "Fury" is the ambiance cultivated in these defiant and thorny poems.

"Reviewing the whole shebang" Section 2, is the longest section with fifteen poems, beginning with the question "Am I what I digest?" A savvy and well-read writer, with an MSW and "most of" an honours English degree, Fretwell knows the signs and sorrows of abuse, just as she knows literary devices and how to effectively dislocate a cliché. She "tank[s] up on the Big Four / counting Cool Whip / an edible oil spill." She is the "prodigal daughter weaned off / smoke and firewater," writing seven (the number of spirituality) pieces which "revisit" legends and fairy tales of childhood in order to make them relevant to today's women. She addresses prose poems to the Forest witch whose "tale is

grim" and the battered children symbolized by Hansel and Gretel; to Cinderella's fairy godmother whose "magic serves the status quo"; to Red-Riding Hood's wolf-grandmother who is likened to other "rogues [who] devour women wholehog to be one with our bodies"; and to the Ugly Duckling who symbolizes the rejected Down's syndrome child.

According to Jung, denying the father (either physically or spiritually) makes one search for the Mother. On her spiritual travels, this is Fretwell's experience. But as Section 2 concludes with blessings to her Crone and Matron-Hood and moves into "Mothering my mother-tongue," the poet declares her freedom from women (as well as men) whose lives have been diminished by patriarchy. She is ready to "climb / Risk / Write." And although her journey continues through "flattened beercans" and "plans / to four-lane" a trillium-blushed wooded path, she sees "an Eastern Tiger Swallowtail" butterfly and is reminded to acknowledge the dark and the light on her psych(e)ic journey.

Fretwell's final words in the Epilogue remind the uninitiated that goddess belief and worship is "Not a fable." In fact, the final poem "Acropolis" offers graphic evidence of the worship of Athena Nike, a place where "Her spirit still / breathes in clouds, thunders on ground." The author is echoing one of her mentors, Riane Eisler, by suggesting that by re-visioning cultural underpinnings, western civilization may be transformed into a dynamic egalitarian society in which all may achieve spiritual potential.

This book can be perused poem by poem by all who wish to relate to the exploitation and domination of five thousand years of patriarchy. It can also be read as an on-going spiritual journey which begins with the need for external validation in the presence of a transcendent deity, and moves towards self-assurance and immanence.