

## Reviews

*The Carp* by Yun Wang, 1994. Bull Thistle Press, P.O. Box 184, Jamaica, Vt. 05343, 19 pages.

In Wang's *The Carp*, the speaker is a twenty pound fish quietly gliding through the streams of her own history and subconscious. Wang acquaints us with the creatures of her abyssal dreams, including a drunkard father, a gray-haired peasant woman, a shivering boy, and a woman with the "blood-stained pale face/ nested in tangles of black hair." Wang's poems operate on an intimate level, gracefully moving in and out of time, guiding the reader through a dream-like state, giving us glimpses of elusive, silvery truths. In a particularly disturbing poem, "The Buffalo Man," Wang's strong imagery creates a sense of drowning when she describes the life of an abused woman:

At the bottom of Night she shivers  
in her underwear over her the unmoving stars  
eyes of dead fish  
The town policeman behind his closed door  
told her to go home and have no fear  
Leaping off the bed with a bleeding forehead  
she had run away  
from her roaring husband

Since she lacks even the freedom to end her own life, it is not in the literal sense that we witness the drowning of the woman. Instead, the woman-- also the mother-- must live for the sake of her child and remain unprotected in a male-dominated culture. She is isolated by her husband, society, and nature itself; her husband is the bully she once "tried to push...off," the town policeman has turned her away, and Night itself "sprawls over her" like a shroud.

"The Buffalo Man" is more than just a story of one woman's struggle, however. Rather, like most of Wang's poems, it transcends time and place. Her poems send a strong message about the cyclical nature of abuse and dominance, reminiscent of Maxine Hong Kingston's *No Name Woman*.

Wang portrays the cycle passed to women and perpetuated by society:

Her breasts swell with milk  
She recalls Father's bad-tempered buffalo  
who knocked her over when she guided him  
her knees bled but he ploughed the field willingly  
She plucks herbs to cover her forehead  
starts downhill to look for her child

To label Yun Wang's poems feminist, however, is to underestimate their intensity and purpose. Wang's keen sense for detail gives her poems a picturesque quality, and reveals meaning through subtle impressions. The mosaic-like structure of her poetry and its hidden power is clear in a poem called "Childhood in China," in which the speaker talks about her friend, Hui:

Hui's Grandpa seemed not to have noticed her  
After his death they found a note recording  
the exact hour and horoscope of her birth  
under his pillow

Yun Wang's *The Carp* is a well-rounded collection of poems that dwell in the timelessness of memory and myth. Her poems will reward any reader with a careful eye.

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