

## **REVIEWS**

### **Brackish**

Jeff Newberry. Aldrich Press: Torrance, California. 2012.

Jeff Newberry has always wanted to be a rock star. He may just have to settle for being a rock star poet. Newberry's first full-length collection, *Brackish*, is a scrabbled, gritty blues song that does what good blues is supposed to do: it makes your bones hurt in the most beautiful ways; it makes you howl along with your head thrown back even if you're tone deaf; and it makes you laugh and cry at the same time.

Much of *Brackish* chronicles the poet's childhood and adolescence in Port St. Joe, Florida, as it is shaped by the landscape of a mill town. In the first poem in the book, Newberry writes: "To come of age in a mill town / is to know that smoke is constant, a haze / that hangs through the wet season / when rain turns ash & cinder." And even though he leaves Port St. Joe, and with it memories of his father and brother, the town always pulls him back, with "[t]he old sun rising over the bay, stinking of brine, / pulp wood, ammonia, black-gray foam on the water." Here Newberry serenades those who often don't get a song to call their own: the Baptist butcher, the cotton-picking sharecropper, the fisherman's son.

Landscape also takes center-stage for Newberry, as he devotes multiple poems to various Floridian cities. Thus we travel from Wewahitchka, Florida, where "Sons & daughters leave, rarely return. / Old timers pull channel cat from the lake," to Apalachicola, where "Ground oyster / shells form every bank & church / parking lot." The last section of the book, "North Florida: An Autobiography," blends the poet's biography with that of northern Florida. The two become inextricably linked. In "Coming Home," Newberry implores: "[P]romise // me if I plunge my palms / deep into the surf, edge fingers / down deep through sand & scallop, // I'll find a pearl left just for me."

Though Newberry will probably not don leather pants anytime soon, his poems will be the rock songs you play on repeat, the ones that get stuck in your head, the ones you blast in your car with windows down because you want everyone to hear how good they are; because when Jeff Newberry sings, "Music sounds off the blue green waves, / harmonizes with the eastern wind, / lifts salted hands into the brined night."

--Dominika Wrozyński

### **Satellite Beach**

Susan Lilley. Finishing Line Press: Georgetown, Kentucky. 2012.

As an admirer of Susan Lilley's poetry, I wanted to pick up this chapbook on my bedside table and breathe in just one wonderful poem. Though I was weary from the day, I could not stop reading the chapbook, cover to cover. Lilley's poems always have that effect. Every poem prompts a turn of the page. We can't get enough, which is exactly what you want your reader to feel.

With the first line of the book, “Not long after Jack Kerouac lived in misery / and squalor while typing *The Dharma Bums* / in a still, tiny room of a hot cracker box, / across town my parents dressed themselves up / as beatniks for a Halloween party.” Lilley sets up the scenario of an old time Orlando, Florida, the pre-Disney, small-town, middle-class-aspiration kind of place where oranges were the main source of income. Ah, and here comes not only the 60s revolution but the commercialization of Florida.

Lilley’s poems reflect so perfectly not only her era, but her personal experience in it as well. She does so with her story-telling style, spot-on imagery, and humor—sometimes absurd, sometimes acerbic, and sometimes sardonic. In “Oranges,” she grieves her fallen brother’s passing, but she doesn’t fail to see the humor in his philosophy: “Adulthood was a Halloween costume / he sometimes wore, but it got itchy, / he sloughed it off like snake skin. / His exploits are old riffs we still play sadly, / even the children know the milder stories.”

But these poems aren’t all about the Halloween costumes, or of watching your place and your people in it unravel, or of seeing the natural world waste away in age of fast urban development. These tiny lyrical stories are told by a mother, a middle class teacher, and a survivor. In “The Barber of Dove Drive,” the narrator has a flashback during a student production of *Richard III*. The leading man’s “hump, made of football pads” reminds her of her old neighborhood where “Down the block, a hunchbacked barber / shoots his wife in the driveway and runs, gun in hand, through the hedges, / navigating chain-link fences, a desperate / and suddenly very bad man.” And in the end, “We kids were inclined to either slow down / to stare at the blank windows / and look for bloodstains on the pavement / or look away and pedal faster.”

And Lilley does peddle faster, which makes her poetry so compelling. She tells the story, ruminates for a split second, and then moves to the next narrative she wants to tell. In “The Endless Boogie,” she’s in New York with a son who’s so grown up in the New South that mother can embrace the changes. In a bar with him, she states, “I am too old at first, / and the opening act, Endless Boogie, / nearly finishes me off. But / the boys from Sweden we have come to hear, / whose name is like a clump of trees, / start up an old mythology / we all recognize, even in another language, / Gold melted, and fire / passed from hand to hand, / lighting my son’s oceanic eyes, / eyes so worldly, even as a small boy / swinging a bat for the camera.”

And then the narrator slows down to be a ruminative daughter of a dying mother in “Mars.” She says, “Our fascination and sorrow / and relief mingled, melting / like all real wonders / into a new element.” Yet this narrator toughens and surrounds herself with her next generation. In “Home Free,” after her mother has passed, “my own / children arrive, rocking the house / to sleep each night, their young / blood and kind of music, a charmed week.”

The narrator pulls all the threads together in the last poem of the chapbook, “Champagne Road.” She’s packing up her mother’s old house and she says, “...it occurs to me / that driving to nowhere is impossible in Florida, / where water laps at every edge of the map.” In the poem, rains come, and in the end, “After the rain, jasmine breathes down the wet sidewalk, / the old road shimmers.”

I’m wondering why we don’t appreciate the chapbook more. This chapbook fulfills everything I need, and even though I’m left with, *Wow, what good writing*, I want to see more of Susan Lilley’s work. As good as, if not better than, a full length book, *Satellite Beach* takes the best of a life that brims over with experience, intelligence, and soul, and gives it back to us as if on a platter full of fresh oranges.

-- Mary Jane Ryals

### **Butterflies Under a Japanese Moon**

Helen Ruggieri. Kitsune Books: Crawfordville, Florida. 2011

One might say that the best known Japanese arts are meditative and evocative: the tea ceremony, *ikebana* or flower arranging, zen gardens, calligraphy. Many of the poems in Helen Ruggieri's *Butterflies Under a Japanese Moon* share these two qualities, but fortunately for the reader, other poems present different moods, enough that the book as a whole encourages a variety of responses.

*Butterflies* is divided into three sections: "Yesterday," "Today," and "Haiku for the Year." The first section, "Yesterday," opens in the world of Japanese fable, beginning with a creation story written in brief two-line stanzas. It then segues into examinations of people and events in Japanese history, though the element of the fabulous is maintained. The first poem, "Kami: Creation Story," is incantatory, with such lines as "all was the *kami* / nothing and dark / he reached out / without hands / and hands / became." The next poem is a poignant re-telling of a Japanese fable that asks the question, "Don't we all want to learn / who we share our dreams with." But five pages over we are reading of the fate of a court official who betrayed the Emperor Taigaichi, and how the execution was preceded by "the best poets of the empire / reading works specially composed / for the confidant." Ruggieri moves back and forth between the two perspectives. The interweaving of fable and history is beautifully done and piques one's curiosity about Japan and its history and culture.

The second section, "Today," tells of Ruggieri's experiences in Japan as a scholar at Yokohama College in 2000. She writes of her tiny apartment, her neighbors, of visits to museums and other famous sites, of finding her way around a foreign city and a foreign culture. She notices the people around her—the homeless "woman drinking tea in an alley / kneeling in the midst of her bags," the old man sitting next to her in the "silver section" of the bus she is riding, who may be a WWII vet. "I know you're a poet by the slope / of your shoulders. . . the reverence with which / you bend to your book" she writes of a fellow train rider. She brings a personable awareness of place and people to these poems.

Section three is a series of seasonal haiku. These poems have the brevity and immediacy required of haiku. Ruggieri demonstrates her mastery of the form with combinations of traditional and modern imagery: "sunset tints / the snow lavender— / headlights come on" and "sun block / the ocean's aroma / caught in it."

One persistent theme throughout the poems is the creation of beauty, in language and landscapes, and how personages in Japanese history created and lived with the aesthetics of their culture. Another recurrent topic is the women of Japan—the goddesses who were the subjects of reverence and poems, and the court beauties who were both subjects and authors of poetry. Much of the imagery of the poems is traditional in Japan—the moon, mountain views, flower blossoms, water, but Ruggieri evokes her own sensibility and, especially in the second section, tells her own stories.

There is a lightness to this book. Irony is present, but is not heavy handed. Humor is present, wry and gentle. There is nothing raw or painful or shocking here—but why should there be? All life is not messy drama, and all of us could do with some quiet time. *Butterflies* is an

excellent collection for matching or generating a reflective mood and for sharing Ruggieri's experience. Sit with these poems over a cup of tea, in a chair by a window, or in a summer garden. Accept Ruggieri's invitation: "We sit at a low table and / briskly fan ourselves / and are content."

-- *Melanie A. Rawls*

### **Crow Blue, Crow Black**

Chip Livingston. NYQ Books: New York, New York. 2012.

Chip Livingston's second poetry collection, *Crow Blue, Crow Black*, is a map of the self that one gets when surveying identity from a bird's eye view. Livingston takes the reader on an exploration of the interlocking landscapes of sexuality, religion, family, friendship, love, and loss. The key image of a migration is represented in both title and structure, as the collection is broken into two parts. "Crow Blue" (subtitled, "south turns north"), is a dedication to two poets who influenced the author, Tim Dlugos and Ai. And *Crow Black* (subtitled, "north turns south"), dedicated to Livingston's partner, Gabriel Padilha, and best friend, Gabriel Insiburo. The repeated bird references, the "eternally thirsty raven," the "pelican faced boy," the titular crow blue and crow black, reinforce and expand the migratory analogy, and help us cover the same territory with different eyes and a different perspective.

One of the poems in "Crow Blue" that drew me in was "Poem to My Boyfriend's Immuno-Deficiency Virus" dedicated to his first partner, Ash Jordan:

you are are a shy bloomer  
with neither petal nor sepal  
not tough, not easily grown  
not tolerant of his soul.

The poem encapsulates the will of family, friends, and in this case lovers, during a loved one's illness—the will to shrink the disease, the will to stunt the growth of that which is stealing precious time and energy, the hope that thinking good healthy thoughts will make some kind of difference. And, the poem itself is actually a spell as explained in the end notes for just that, the ordering of the virus to be "forgotten, sterile / ...not more of a bush or even a seed / ...not wild and free."

While it took me some time to connect to "Crow Blue" due to the internal references in that section, a second reading with the end notes in hand brought clarity and depth to the poems "Greenwich Avenue" and the series of astrological poems based on friends' Facebook statuses. I recommend reading the end notes before moving on "Crow Black," as the story behind "Greenwich Avenue" is surprising and explains Livingston's connection to a poet that some of us writers wish for.

"Crow Black" pulled me into a different, deeper level of emotional intimacy that relied more on poetic device than internal reference. It's no surprise that the warm tone of many of the poems in "Crow Black" resonate with me the most, as well as the recurring mytho-fantastic references in "Thirteen Crow Feathers," "Spider Medicine," "Trumpet," and "Septipus," as they

were written during a time that Livingston was migrating south to return home, and then further south as a North American in South America.

Perhaps my favorite, and the third to last poem of the collection, is “Inspired.” I like this poem because Livingston offers us a window into what it could mean to this poet to be inspired. It also dips into that mytho-fantasy as the nephew brings back his report of his muse, “the woman under water,” and the one who inspired him and tells him that he is going to be a champion and that he will never drown. It re-presents, through the voice of Livingston’s nephew, the childlike “urgency to speak beyond [our words]” and in that urgency, bringing new meaning to new words and new words to new experiences—the selfsame urgency that is continually being renewed in myself, as a writer.

*Crow Blue, Crow Black* is an initially short, but satisfying read that, once finished, invites a further retracing of the journey north and south.

-- Johana-Marie Williams

### **Keowee Valley**

Katherine Scott Crawford. Bell Bridge Books: Memphis, Tennessee. 2012.

Katherine Scott Crawford’s novel draws us into the life and times of Quincy MacFadden. Her character, an independent and feisty woman of 25, takes us on an adventure into the Appalachian region of the Carolinas.

The year is 1768 and the story begins in Charlestown, a port city in the British colony of South Carolina. Quincy has led a pampered life as the ward of her grandfather, but in the early pages of the novel she’s already preparing to embark on a search for her cousin, Owen, who has been captured by the Shawnee tribe. Her plan also involves a hope to purchase acreage and build a life free of the conventions of polite society.

Quinn, as the main character is called, takes her dowry and acquires a land grant from the Cherokee. This large tract of land, set in a beautiful valley surrounded by mountains, gradually becomes a community of settlers, as families buy homesteads or offer to trade services for land.

Political tension abounds between colonists and the British; however, Quinn manages to develop a good relationship with the neighboring Cherokee. In fact, after she hires a half-Cherokee scout, Jackson Wolf, to rescue her cousin, Owen, the relationship with Wolf grows into more than friendship and suddenly we have a historical romance.

Jackson Wolf does rescue her cousin, Owen, who after recovering from injuries he experienced in his captivity, returns to Charlestown to join those who are ready to fight for independence from the British. The romance between Quinn and Jack Wolf simmers as the novel continues, and before long our heroine ends up as the bride of the man she calls Jack.

One of the strongest elements of Crawford’s writing is her lyrical descriptions of landscape and the difficulties of frontier life:

The sun had risen so that it lit the Blue Ridge with pink light, the one time of the day when it seemed the mountains were a true green. In this warming light the horse was gold, it’s black shorn mane and tail reminding me of drawings in my grandfather’s *A History of the Roman Empire*....

And another example:

... when the last of the winter leaves have left the budding trees for the soft death of molted earth and the sun begins to set, it lights the sky like a fire, moving along the ridgelines and down among the naked, black trees as if engulfing all of it in an orange, living glow.

More of Crawford's strong prose comes across in a description of Quinn being lost in the forest, where she's nearly captured by unfriendly Indians:

The cold seeped through my clothes and into my bones, and I felt fear tingling at the soles of my wet feet.... They dragged me across the ground my back scraping against branches and rocks beneath the snow....

Another passage that's equally strong describes another attack when Quinn travels with Jackson:

The forest exploded with screams, the flash of musket fire and bodies racing through the moonlight only to disappear into shadow again... A hand wrapped around a hank of my hair and my head was whipped back; pain burst at my skull and a strange Indian face, painted red, filled my vision.

Although Crawford paints a well-developed character in her Quincy MacFadden, I personally found the portrayal a shade unrealistic. Quinn seems a bit too undaunted by hardship, considering her patrician upbringing. On the other hand, perhaps the author is offering us a touch of the fantastic. This possibility might be true considering her character (who is called "Rides Like a Man" by the Cherokee) has a psychic gift. She sees visions of the future and possibilities for solving the difficulties that they reveal. Still I found this aspect of her personality the least compatible with her other traits.

In summary, Katherine Scott Crawford is to be commended for her historical research for this novel. Authenticity definitely adds to the story. She's created an intriguing frontier adventure filled with tension and poetic description.

-- *Margaret Howard Trammell*

### **You and Three Others are Approaching a Lake**

Anna Moschovakis. Coffee House Press: Minneapolis, Minnesota. 2011.

Anna Moschovakis forces her readers to question the society in which they live, as well as forcing them to question their own values throughout *You and Three Others are Approaching a Lake*. The simplicity of the cover leaves room for these questions to be brought up, and this writer's dark but powerful imagery fills the spaces left on the cover.

The book is filled with lengthy poems, each spread across multiple pages that tell scattered, but deeply connected theories. The physical location of the words throughout the book is half of the effect of the writing. Even when five or six pages past the beginning of a poem,

Moschovakis will repeat a stanza from the very first page, connecting all the thoughts brought up through the poem.

Moschovakis uses literal questions to influence her readers to question their beliefs and the world around them. In “Death as A Way of Life,” she opens with this:

It began:

1. Life is not fair
2. How can I be happy while others suffer
3. How can I not be happy while others suffer
4. Others will suffer whether or not I am happy
5. It is not the suffering of others that causes my happiness
6. It is not the not-suffering of others that causes my unhappiness
7. The not-suffering of others would not prevent my happiness

This unconventional list as the opening of the poem immediately inspires the reader to attempt to answer these questions. Filled with some confusing double negatives, it’s as if Moschovakis wanted the reader to go back and read this list multiple times, increasing the time spent considering the questions. This effect is something she includes within all of her poems.

Between the messages she’s trying to send the reader, Moschovakis includes beautiful and passionate description, as seen further into “Death as a Way of Life”:

Man dies, that is nothing.

but

When a woman sits on the edge of her bed... and lets down her red silken hair, threading it through her delicate fingers as it waves down her porcelain back, which reflects the moon’s silvery mood... Any man privileged enough to catch a glimpse of her falls directly to his knees... disgusted with anything he saw fit to consume before setting sight on this morsel of perfection... and the woman is gone, and her hair is gone, and her porcelain back is gone, and her slender fingers, and even her image is gone, and still he has no regrets, and he welcomes death, incites it, knowing as he’s never known anything before that his life wants for nothing  
now that is something

heaven

a sliver

In this scene, Moschovakis portrays the message that unless you have something in life worth living for, life may not be worth living at all—until you find the true beauty. Contrasting with her darker poems, some of her work studies aspects of the growth and power of the human race, as in “The Tragedy of Waste,” the first poem of the collection:

At the beginning of 1917 there were housewives  
children, old people, sick people  
fields, factories, stores, offices

food, shelter, and clothing.

Modern industrialism  
the slums of the great cities  
reasonable comforts

We entered with 40,000,000 workers  
warriors  
uniforms and boots

We made graphs  
were surprised on the home front:

The house went up faster with three men  
than with four

What miracle occurred?  
No miracle.

Along with making her readers think deeply, she also empowers them through passages like this one. Moschovakis wants to subtly reveal the secrets of the society that surrounds us.

-- *Karlin Reed*

### **The Long View Just Keeps Treading Water**

James Doyle. Accents Publishing: Lexington, Kentucky. 2012.

James Doyle allows the characters of his poems to lead the way; the work does more than just setting and description. With each poem, you either feel that you're right next to the main character or *you* are that character—whether the “character” is human or just a place. An example of this can be seen in the poem “Postcard”:

A few blocks from Paris,  
the little girl in the apron  
hands me a chunk of bread.  
Her mother is in the store

buying jam or seeds or cheese  
for the bread. The girl is four,  
maybe. Her fingertips are gray  
on lily skin. I ask her name.



This element of his poetry adds a form of escapism that can sometimes be overlooked or get lost in a description of surroundings. Doyle focuses on what his character is seeing and feeling—and remembering.

Along with the strong characters, Doyle's poems in *The Long View Just Keeps Treading Water* all seem to contain an element of magic—sometimes dark, literal magic, and sometimes the light and enchanting magic of memories. He opens the book with “In the Woods,” which references famous fictional pairs like Dick and Jane, and Barbie and Ken, that eventually come to a demise of some form. A witch waits for them in the woods, her apple cores trailing behind her victims:

The witch draped her best smile over the saliva  
  
to answer the front bell. Helen and Paris  
needing directions to Troy. She swept them  
  
right under her wing. A trail of apple cores  
behind them as far back as the beginning.

This visual seems to represent the author's views on eventual demise as a whole, whether in fiction or reality. The poem may also simply reveal his feelings on trust. Witches continue to be occasionally present throughout the collection, giving the book a lingering feel of more than a simple story—the reader feels as if they are memories of his or her own.

Contributing to the feel of magic is Doyle's strong sense of memory. The use of first-person combined with a strong element of history and recollection make the poems more personal. The characters, including parents, great-grandparents, and famous leaders from past centuries, make the stories quite powerful.

By capturing the memories of past decades so well, Doyle is able to transport the reader to those different times vividly. In his poem “A Flapper Drives a Red Bugatti Through the Twenties,” he does just that. He describes the young woman driving her car with white-rimmed tires through the elements of the decade: “Phonographs playing, World War I ending, the flapper's satin scarf blowing in the wind.” He ends the poem with the idea that this woman will never age. She will be frozen in the power of the time period forever. These elements of haunting memories—whether positive or negative—are what make Doyle's poems so powerful. No matter the focus of his poem, it's transporting.

-- Karlin Reed

### **Blood Red Dawn**

Jon Shutt. Kitsune Books: Crawfordville. 2012.

When I was first given this book to review, I sighed while sarcastically thinking *oh boy*. There is so much poetry out there, and most of it not very well-written, but this book of poems gave me pause.

This collection, written by Jon Shutt, is about his experiences in the army when he went to fight overseas in Afghanistan and Iraq. In the book, he doesn't just talk about what he

experienced, he also talks about how those experiences changed him and why he ended up writing the book in the first place—this is his version of therapy.

However, poems here transcend the “therapy poems” genre. The poems are very direct. There is no maze that the audience needs to navigate through in order to understand what Shutt is trying to say. The first poem “Therapy” spells out Shutt’s approach:

They say I should seek therapy—Well here it is.  
I’ll put it down on paper myself and skip the middle man  
I can prescribe my own diagnosis—PTSD  
I’ll prescribe my own treatment—Poetry.

These lines show a wonderful display of sarcasm, and yet the narrator indicates he can dust himself off and stand easily on his own two feet.

The first half of the book of poems is dedicated to his first tour. Everything from basic training, to his fire fights overseas, to how he tried to recover afterwards. The second half talks about his second tour and echoes the first—getting ready, living through it, daydreaming about returning home.

You can feel the emotion Shutt writes with in all of his poems. In the poem “Here, Between the Tigris and Euphrates,” he talks about how it was for him in the desert that never slept and never provided enough water:

The sand burns like fire.  
The children beg for water  
As the sand whips around their feet.  
Mr.! Mr.! Water! Water!

His words and the emotions behind them can really hit home. They are powerful. Reading “A Diamond Field of Smoldering Pasts,” I vividly imagine what he is talking about:

Charred remains  
Of nothing in particular,  
Just clumps of soldiers’ has beens really.  
Freshly dumped and still smoldering.

The poems in this collection are in chronological order and even though some of them are a little uneven in the flow, each one details the next series of important events, one after another. One will be detailing a battle, such as “Rival Factions”:

Equipped in full battle rattle, Ash and I  
Point our weapons out over the desert hillside.  
Alert. Ready.

and the next will talk about how he felt after it or what the aftermath looked like, such as “After the First Round”:

You don’t seriously think about death

Until after the first round explodes,

Shutt does an excellent job of making people understand what it was like to fight in a war. He makes his audience feel what he felt, and suffer what he suffered. He helps people understand that war can change you, hurt you, and mold you into a different person. At the same time though, he gives hope that coming back changed is not the end of a soldier's life. It is possible to heal, just as his poems are a way for him to heal.

*--Autumn Rosencrantz*

### **Night Radio**

Kim Young. The University of Utah Press: Salt Lake City, Utah. 2012.

From the winner of the Agha Shalid Ali Prize in Poetry, Kim Young, we have a gripping book of narrative poems telling the story of a young woman who was raped and the trauma she later suffered because of the event. Young also uses her work to show how the family and friends of the girl suffered alongside her and how they, over time, all helped each other to heal.

These poems really are quite vivid. The poem "Abduction" gives us:

It's my turn to tell this story—  
Startling as a black bug, shiny as bolt cutters, brittle as a palm frond,  
Just a fleck of blackness and then none.

The poems are so moving, I feel as if I am suffering as much as any of the characters. Every time I read the poem "Make-Believe with the LAPD," I feel a weight in my chest:

It was a game, a training.  
Are you afraid of the dark?

You'd say. I'm seven and  
Inside your arms.

Honestly, it makes me so sad.

The book is divided into three different sections: "What We Count On," "The Parting," and "Latchkey." The first section has poems describing the act, the abduction, and rape. The key poem in this section is "Too Much Text." It is the first poem in the book and sets up the story. The last couple of lines are the ones that speak out the most though:

I lose each small thing.  
This is important. I am not a child, and I remember everything.

This poem is a sort of reflection and a warning to the audience that the character is going to tell people what happened and that they need to be prepared because the event happened when she was an adult and she remembers everything from it.

The second section concentrates on the aftermath. Many of the poems are from other people's points of view, i.e. the sister of the girl who was raped or another family member. It helps to show how they too were affected by what happened, and it gives deeper insights into the woman herself. The key poem in this section is "Snapshot, 1993":

No. My sister, her sweater  
Pulled over her knees,  
Is picking off her own imaginary  
Black blood, hardened on the small of her ankle.

This poem is from the sister's point of view, and Young uses it to show how the woman is suffering and her sister is too.

The last section has poems that are from the victim's point of view. These poems talk about the long term effects she suffered. For example, the reader is given these details:

I didn't want to be a girl anymore.  
Not after I finally let him roll me over,  
Months later, and just a little blood. I'd cut what he said  
To his friends about my little cup, my bed, me never speaking.  
Twenty years later I still think sex  
Is something rough, a breaking.

Most of the poems are fabulous. However, with this many great poems put together there are bound to be one or two that cannot measure up to their companions. The only real criticism I would have to give this collection, is also its greatest strength. Young makes you feel everything that happens, as if it was happening to you which is strengthened by the coarse language that begins to show up in some of the poems by the middle of the book. The poem, "The Facts," from the second section of the book does an excellent job illustrating my point:

A white man in a Ford  
Slows to the young female teen  
Pulls his gun  
Get the fuck in the car  
Drives to the back of a locked-up auto repair  
Makes her suck his dick  
With his gun to her head

There are a lot of coarse visuals and scenes in this poem as there are in other poems from the second section. The coarseness adds to the sense of wrongness and defilement that is placed carefully throughout the book, but at the same time it intimidates the audience a bit.

This really is an excellent book of poetry in which Young does her job in making the audience feel every moment that the characters go through. Her story is heartbreaking.

--*Autumn Rosencrantz*