

while another poem pictures "Where We Live Now": "A white house, a wheelless car / in the backyard rusted / Mother drags a pail of diapers to the line." In many of these poems, one senses a child's point of view.

Entitled "Late Spring," the book's third section presents a more mature persona as its speaker. The poems crisscross national boundaries, resting momentarily in Hong Kong, Nagasaki, Oregon, Oakland; they explore love, sensuality, relationships, art; they ponder feminine identity, Asian American identity: "This wetsuit protects me / Wherever I go."

"American Rain" is the ironic title of the fourth and final section of the book which concludes on a mood of skepticism, if not pessimism. The long poem "American Rain" is a surrealistic and nightmarish vortex of imagery whirling between beautiful blooms and the marl of the dead, between Ben Hai in Vietnam and Seaside in Oregon, between life-giving rain and death-dealing bombs. Ultimately, the book closes on a pessimistic phrase ("another thwarted Spring") in a poem dominated by inkwash-like bleakness ("a black tree on a white canvas/and a black, black crow"), for though the speaker may strive "towards the Golden Crane Pavilion," she/he is also aware that "nobody escapes Oakland."

Marilyn Chin's *Dwarf Bamboo*, then, is an organically unified volume of poems that starts with the metaphor of Chinese bamboo nodes, progresses to a transplantation on American soil, continues to maturity in spring, and undergoes an ambiguous season whether of battering or of nurturing under American rain. The whole is the product of a subtle, gifted intelligence, a redoubtable maker of images; it forms a worthwhile and intensely persuasive portrayal of a woman's sensibility grappling with the perplexity and the experience of being Asian, and American, and woman.

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Lucha Corpi. *Delia's Song*. (Houston, TX: Arte Publico Press, 1989) 191 pp., \$8.50 paper.

Lucha Corpi's novel, *Delia's Song*, operates on several levels which remain basically disparate; that is, we seldom have a sense of complete integration. Perhaps, finally Delia herself, must be seen as symbolic of the Chicana in search of self, although even this falters at times. Finally we cannot be sure if Delia represents all Chicana women, the educated Chicana, or the emerging Chicana. Even her name, "Artemis, the one from Delos. . . . Delia, the beautiful huntress," compounds the dilemma.

Huntress of what? We've witnessed her sexual encounters with various males, Daniel, Mario, Fernando, Roger (the Anglo), Jeff, which suggest that a paradox exists even in her name. Artemis was not only a beautiful huntress, she was also *chaste*. Often the omniscient author suggests that perhaps Delia is schizophrenic. "Two people, equally strong, live in you," Cammille, the dabbler in astrology, tells her. Nor is this the first time the idea has occurred. The character herself eludes us, even though in Joycean style, the author allows us free access to Delia's mind. She claims she's always been subservient, but we see a unique individual behaving in unorthodox ways, a paradox again. And the title is no less difficult. What is her song? Is it a lament, a dirge? Is it a song of triumph? A lyric? We learn from Mattie that this is the title of one of Delia's poems that is "shaky at the end." The uncertainty remains.

The novel does indeed operate on several levels; one certainly is the history of the Chicano movement. Delia attends Berkeley from 1968 to 1977 when she completes her doctorate in literature. Coming to Berkeley as a Mexican American, she is soon involved with an organization called MASC caught in the throes of becoming MEChA, Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan. Redefining herself as a Chicana, she participates in the protest marches, witnessing the police brutality, disliking the violence but applauding the Chicano resistance. The dream of the protestors, Delia's dream, centers on establishing a University for Chicanos. Struggling for recognition, they ally themselves with the black and Asian movements, centering on the Vietnam War. Even though the pseudo-victory of a "Department of Chicano Studies" is reduced to "Chicano Studies," Delia's friend Mattie remarks, "You were able to shake down one of the most important institutions in the country." Ironically, neither Delia nor her lover, Jeff Morones, moves into a position that utilizes their doctorates. Moreover, Delia internalizes the defeat. Only later when she returns to the campus, does she realize that she helped to open doors for Chicanos that might have remained closed.

A second level emerges as that of feminism. Delia alone survives as an only child in a family of two sons and a daughter. Her siblings have died—Sebastian, a victim of drugs, and Ricardo, a casualty of the Vietnam War. She feels enmity against her mother and finds herself a prisoner of her father's dreams. She feels she exists subservient always to another's demands, dreams, goals. Buried in silence, a primary motif in the novel, she believes herself to be a puppet or robot. During the protest marches, she is pushed and shoved, guided usually by Jeff, propelled to a lower level. At one point, she has an affair with Fernando, who physically abuses her, but, masochistically, she goes back for more. Until at last, driven to retaliate, she would have killed him had he not fled. From the outset, her relationship with Jeff might be described as a D.H. Lawrence model, the repelling even while attracting of two strong individuals. She remains shrouded in a silence so pervasive as to be reminiscent of Gabriel Garcia-Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*;

from the beginning, she seeks to break through the silence and establish herself as a person—Delia's mind becoming the battleground of the war.

But primarily this is the story of a Chicana becoming a writer. The novel begins as Delia is on her way to her Anglo professor-mentor's house for a "literary" party to which individuals must come masked as their favorite literary character. Delia goes as Santa Teresa and has a sexual encounter with James Joyce (Roger), with whom she is obsessed. In fact, the novel exists on two levels of consciousness, the interior monologue/dialogue, and the moments of verifiable reality. Before entering Berkeley, she kept a journal for venting her frustrations; in the Chicano movement, she becomes the historian; finally, at Mattie's suggestion, she writes a novel which becomes her emergence from silence into personhood. Along the way, she has allowed us to catch glimpses of the poet at work as she experiences her world.

Lucha Corpi, herself, is an established poet, beginning each section with a poem, giving insight into the part. The novel abounds in metaphor; early, violence as a sharp edged blade dominates; the rose bush reoccurs as symbolic of Delia's obsession with James Joyce; the fog becomes almost a character, finally enveloping Berkeley itself. The novel vacillates between the present, the past, and the inner life of Delia. Her traditional customs and the Spanish language are interwoven well, so that we do not stumble over extraneous information. Yet the novel depends on coincidence, and the character we see in Delia does not square with what others say of her, what she does, and what her thoughts reveal.

Finally, choosing Jeff as her mate, she not only accepts her culture but moves beyond racism into a broader set of dreams.

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