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All the Names Between by Julia McCarthy and The Girls with Stone Faces by Arleen Paré

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Review of *All the Names Between* by Julia McCarthy and *The Girls with Stone Faces* by Arleen Paré

***All the Names Between* by JULIA McCARTHY**

Brick Books, 2017 \$20.00

***The Girls with Stone Faces* by ARLEEN PARÉ**
Brick Books, 2017 \$20.00

Reviewed by **ERIN RENEE WAHL**

A powerful way to celebrate different realities, the poems in these two texts artfully exposed the rare environments the poets intended to share with their audience. Both place the reader very firmly in their word worlds. I felt grounded in these places, these moments. Both texts also revelled in a deep connection with their subject matter. As the last lines of Paré's first poem "Heart's Arrow" remind us: "you don't change art / it changes you" (7-8). It is the formation of a relationship in poetry-time; how we can walk into a room as one person and exit as another.

Arleen Paré's *The Girls with Stone Faces* is part historical poetry, part ekphrastic expression, part social commentary, all surrounding the lives and work of sculptors Florence Wyle and Frances Loring. This book made me desperate to know more about these two female artists. The telling of their story is so well-woven with responses to their work and insights into their inner lives that it is very readable. Paré recognizes multiple structures:

Point, line, and depth: these form
the dimensions of sculpture.
There is a fourth, which is time,
elastic, supple,

hard to predict, the classical
always trying to flatten it out.
("Technicalities of Neoclassical
Sculpture in the Beaux Arts
Tradition" 6-9)

The pages pass by too quickly. Paré is clever at pairing poems so that they managed to appear on opposite pages in the book, allowing these crafty comparisons to sit side by side. Thoughtful manuscript construction, to say the least, but this same attention to structure moves throughout the poems in her book. Paré confesses:

I could only memorize the shapes
sanctified the room a
basilica a concrete
space that transcended the concrete
each statue a prayer.
("The National Gallery: Unguarded I
Would Have Caressed Every
Surface" 9-11)

Art is composed, she reminds us, but so is the space that houses the art. We see this through her discussion of these artistic works and in the way she commands her own space on the page. Themes of female run throughout the poetry. Not just the biographical poems on the lives of these two artists, but poems grappling with the way love materializes, with how the maternal and the feminine blossom through art, the strengths of women, and the struggles of being women in time ahead of their time. Florence and Frances' lives are held up to us "as if teaching the right way to stand / demonstrating how to persevere" ("Torso" 10-11). This book is a story of women collecting women in all their various iterations. This book is a history of structures.

Julia McCarthy's *All the Names Between* is a prophetic text. McCarthy creates an environment, an entire landscape for her audience to walk through with her. It is a place where mist and shadows perch on the edge of reality, cloister us, and allow us space to be wholly new in ourselves. McCarthy prophesies: "our hunger has just begun / our days are numbered" ("Throwing the Bones: Moon Song" 14-15). Her poems seem breathy, and I felt as if I could not quite keep up with the silence between her words as I read, so frantically did I push on to the next line. Indeed, I felt as if

I'm walking where air shivers into
wind
and the wind folds like the tip of a
page
marking my place on a new trail.
("A Name I Once Wore" 1-3)

Her language is her landscape. As with a prayer, the completion of each poem seemed to demand me to pause and consider the world around me anew. As McCarthy suggests at one point: "I'm blank as a screen / for all your earthly needs" ("Substance to Ether" 7-8). What new lines and connections could I find there, if I looked closely enough? McCarthy's attention to these minute portions of our natural world is a welcome balm spread upon our daily rush. McCarthy understands this feeling:

a wounded beetle pulls
the earth like a rope
unable to free itself
completely from the wreck
from the cause and effect
with really sharp teeth.
("Disjecta Membra" 41-46)

Slow down, she says to me, look around
before you move out of this space, and

holding
this small life of mine
to the world like a note[,]
("Autobiography" 8-10)

connect to this world around you.

These two texts connect us to their environments so solidly that it is difficult to emerge fully into our daily reality. McCarthy puts this feeling into words, saying "It is not an official language, / which explains why poetry has fallen here, why poets must learn / to live in two places at once as you have done" ("The Fourth Bear" 4-6). This is poetry at its best: an encompassing shawl of perspective to wear into the world.

ERIN RENEE WAHL's work, creative and otherwise, has appeared in journals such as *Cirque*, *Spiral Orb*, *Mojave River Review*, and others. Her first book, a chapbook of poetry, called *Secure the Night*, was published in 2017 by Bitterzoet Press.