

Spring 1985

on Kathleene West

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Recommended Citation

Pughe, Bronwyn G. (1985) "on Kathleene West," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 24 , Article 59.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss24/59>

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Oyster Feed At Bowman's Corner"), an athlete ("Game," "Instant Replay"), as well as a hunter, fisherman, and Polish bareback bronc rider.

Zarzynski is a believer. When he tells us to ". . . pray/ for the impossible, or else/ lose all future dreams . . ." he is at once admitting the inevitability of defeat while insisting we believe otherwise. Zarzynski is a great believer in luck and the power of hope (a compendium of his work would reveal just how significant these two little nouns are to him), but most of all, he places his faith in friends and family. Nearly half these poems bear dedications to friends and acquaintances, and the vast majority deal with the relationships between friends, partners, family, and lovers.

Reading *The Make-Up of Ice*, we too become believers. Poems like "Finale," "Pete Briskie's Creel," "Dekes," "Vischio," have the depth, authenticity, and raw vitality to convince anyone that Paul Zarzynski is indeed a force to be reckoned with, in poetry as well as bareback bronc riding.

—Joseph Martin

Kathleene West

Water Witching

Copper Canyon Press

Port Townsend, Washington

1984

\$7.00

In her newest collection of poems, *Water Witching*, Kathleene West divines a depth usually reserved for the lengthier craft of prose. West repeatedly proves that she is capable of taking chances and succeeding both in the lives of her poems and in her language. She allows her overriding voice to remain female rather than the generic offshoot so commonly used. Her voice is a woman who ironically, and sometimes sardonically, examines life's scars, treasures and its magic. She employs everything from mermaids. Aphrodite and Cleopatra through the recency of hardscrabble farms and natural disasters to jab us, but not jolt us, with reality. In "Celebrating Disaster," whose epigraph reads, "The Sinking of Hood Canal Bridge, / February 13, 1979," she says,

No one thinks to mention fire.

Weeks later, a friend calls
to remind us.

What did you lose?

Everything.

Burnt with his cabin, books, manuscripts,
most of his past. And some of ours.

God's a harsh editor.

That's meant to be cheerful.

Nothing to give up

but delete *here*

and *here*.

What's difficult is finding what remains.
 leave on the bedside light
 and guess the dark patches—shadows
 or bruises. Someone will see
 which guess is right.

Water Witching is a quicksand of voice and rhythm. None of us can remain clean—the cadence of the memories is our own. In “Current Event,” West uses a traditional end rhyme contrasted with contemporary stress of fast-paced non-event and the stress of the words themselves. In “A New Decade: Watching the Digital Clock Advance Toward Midnight,” she juxtaposes “sing a song of love dear” (to the tune of “Sing a Song of Sixpense”) with free verse, all the while describing a regimented, near frigid couple. West’s humor is dry and scathing.

But *Water Witching* is not all nervous laughter. West can be serious, hopeful, forgiving. In “Some Thoughts on May/December Romances And Other Frustrations” she says, “The seasons are reversible.” In “For a Long Winter” she writes of canning, “Stir, turn,/ holding what we love. Now/ the compote melds its winter flavors./ Something settles on a shelf.”

West proves with *Water Witching* that she truly enjoys her work. She walks point through her jungle of scars and injustices, wallows in the irony. She builds castles with her words, divines potentialities—

She has grafted herself to this land
 where the cycle turns on harvest,
 not death.

A last look at the water lifts her spirit,
 reassures her that she shares
 the ache of return with earth and weather.
 Her breath quickens
 and she sings, her voice a counterpoint
 to the regularity of rise and fall,
 the lone melodic line of plainsong,
 a chant to celebrate the continuous ritual
 that enters her words
 that survives without her
 that she sings.

(from “By Water Divined”)
 —Bronwyn G. Pughe