

"Snapshot" opens with *The childhood illness I remember/is a strobe glimpse of you*. The poem mixes light, something untouchable, with the more concrete, yet still strong image of the "you" as a *red-hot poker in my bed*. Where is the speaker taking us? Hamilton pulls us along through an extended metaphor involving the process of photo development until we arrive in the darkroom where memory is *sluiced back and forth/in the developing solution, then lifted./dripping, a chance perfection caught*.

I came to *Shots On* fascinated by the look of the chapbook, and I came away satisfied with a poet and a publisher who put together a book that is beautiful inside and out.

Jessie Carty

TROUBLE AND HONEY

by Jilly Dybka

Bear Shirt Press (2008) 63 pages, \$7.77

ISBN 978-0-9706196-5-5, Poetry

While the title may bring to mind Eeyore and Pooh, the tales in this book aren't a stroll through the Hundred Acre Woods, nor are they an arduous hike up any mountain. The poems of *Trouble and Honey*, the first collection by Jilly Dybka, are a journey to explore the weird, mythic, and sometimes tragic American landscape.

The first section, *Honey*, begins with three poems about gambling, the first being the ultimate high stakes, apocalyptic poker draw. These poems contain the expected images of neon illuminating the passage of time and dollars with hints of anxiety, hints of regret, but all end with hope. As "The Last Big Bet" concludes, *There is/nothing that is left to lose: I am all in*.

In the sequence where "Here Begins the Book of the Tales of Circus Zimba," Dybka introduces us to a magician, a tattooed man, and a human blockhead. We learn the stories of the latter two in four sonnets each, discovering that for these men becoming a "freak" has been a means not only of survival, but also a second chance for a triumph in life. As the Great Omi says, *Man to "savage:" my grand transformation./Tattoos: my sharp, gilt, emancipation*. It's as sweet as tales of self-mutilation can be.

Sonnets are not the only form Dybka masters in this collection. One of her more impressive feats is a palindromic sestina, which is titled as such. My favorite stanza: *The soul, a fool aloof, sees/through the nimble wow-eye,/and woos the redder noon./Don't nod. Be as careful as a/tenet in these woods. Bird solos/each air an aria. They sing we few. Here. Aha*. It is visually and musically satisfying from beginning to end.

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In the second section, *Trouble*, things are exactly that. The poems
 here touch on the many faults of America: celebrity worship, fear, shaky
 economic times, and wars past and present. These issues are discussed
 directly in "Poem by an American," but where Dybka really stands out
 is with her use of fairy tale in "Once upon a time," a fable of democracy,
 and the allegorical characters she creates in "City Park" and "City Bus."
 In these two poems, we see Handiwork Woman, a crotchetier of skulls,
 and Bone Maker Women, a knitter of all skeletal matter, lost in their
 work of marking the living for destruction: *A mason jar half-full of fate*
is close by/ . . . /Bone Maker sings a lullaby./She knows the passengers
have lost their faith. These poems are both creepy and haunting.

The book does not end with trouble. Troubling thoughts, perhaps,
 but it ultimately ends with an appreciation of time and the memories lost
 with it. In the final poem, "Lost Things," the speaker explains, *As time*
unravels, the lost things sweeten/with simplicity, heighten with yearning,/
or are quickly dismissed. It's a poignant place to end. Please do take the
 time to read this lovely book.

Heather Jane Collings

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