

The Wishbone Dress

Cassandra J. Bruner

Bull City Press (Jan 28, 2020)

Softcover \$12.00 (40pp)

978-1-949344-09-7

The poems of Cassandra J. Bruner's *The Wishbone Dress* are a torrent on the page, attesting to the traps and triumphs of womanhood, to the liberation of self-naming, and the peace and harmony that come from acknowledging that no two beings are exactly alike, yet all fit.

Personal and communal, these poems read personal triumphs against the great tapestry of historical challenges to individuality, especially women's individuality. They resurrect personalities like Cora, accused of witchcraft because she cared for a child whose total lineage went unnamed: "Each mother I advised to hide yet cherish / the blasphemy they bled for."

Herein, women celebrate the legal recognition of their affirmed names in spaces where the powers that be just can't resist one last stinging annunciation of their deadnames; they recall, but ascend over, the cruelties heaped upon them by lovers who would not see or understand. They rage against injustices committed against women's bodies and denounce tendencies to blame the victims. And ultimately, because of their ferocity and their refusal to "contort [themselves] toward / an inevitable denial," they assume their places as wholly and beautifully themselves.

There's gorgeous, unbridled power in Bruner's lines, which traipse through nature and the self-singing celebrations, spinning toward and away from the realities of connectedness. Seeming contradictions are no such things. Even Bruner's treatments of the Bible and of ancient myths are an act of resurrection, finding power and equality where, reasonably, none may be said to exist:

*I've had enough of gods of dipping lips
to pondwater & receiving soundless ripples
in response Let this psalm call to my body
instead How she stiffened in his arms
Became phloem then marrow then phloem
again A field salting itself before being
plucked fallow*

The Wishbone Dress is a glorious collection.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (January / February 2020)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.