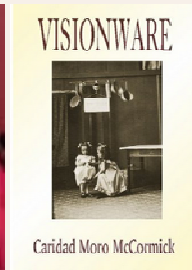




TUESDAY, APRIL 7, 2009

Visionware: Poetry as Testimony



In celebration of April as National Poetry Month, this is a perfect opportunity to spotlight the work of the gloriously talented Cuban-American poet Caridad Moro McCormick. Her newest collection *Visionware* (Finishing Line Press), is simultaneously heartbreaking and devious. The work is exquisite, but not so fragile that it cannot stand up to the rough-and-tumble of the reader's inspection. Her narrative poetry is a trip through time and history. Once you agree upon the voyage, you will discover universal truths on every page, challenging and pushing you along. The collection has a generous and cohesive selection, intertwining English and Spanish in its provocative verses.

My *Papi* was too cheap
and my *Mami* too weak
to celebrate my *quinces*

The themes of family, separation and sacrifice show up throughout and are tripping points and anchors for poet and reader. In the first few poems it is clear that this is McCormick's personal testimony of a life that has been riddled with disappointments and hard-won victories.

First night of our honeymoon
fists swirled around your head
like wasps in a paper nest.
You pulled me from my sleep
blow by blow

Food is also a starring player in this revealing collection. It is both love and prison. In the brave "Compulsion: A Chronology," food is all a 3-year-old is able to mark as a sign of her grandmother's love, by the time she is 15 she eats because *I cannot cry with a Whopper in my mouth*. And 30 offers nothing but canary yellow Phentermine and nose bleeds as a way of life.

In “Grilled,” McCormick’s diligence in describing the making of a grilled cheese sandwich allows the reader to fully understand and digest the larger stake at hand.

white-bread braving direct heat
for the sake of cheese
dependent on a
framework of flour
to keep from burning
on the unforgiving surface
of a wounded frying pan.

My favorite piece, “Coming out to Miami,” reveals her ability to deliver her work with precision and hope. The remaking of a life is never smooth, even when it feels so necessary.

She taught me to conceal irregularities
to pin them down
beneath the sting of a staple gun,
smooth skin over battered innards

What is most impressive about the collection is its ability to deliver on the promise of resilience. Doing the necessary work of pushing everything to the surface, despite the pain or circumstance, and standing in it to exam and determine what is worth keeping.

her pale sinking
into my weight
in that borrowed room
where bliss broke
into minutes

For those who distance themselves from poetry, I am happy to report that McCormick’s collection is accessible in a way that does not require an MFA to truly appreciate the stellar and truthful work that she has done here. At the center of it all *Visionware* is about love — recognizing it and finding a way to keep it.

Caridad Moro McCormick is a recipient of a Florida Individual Artist Fellowship from the state of Florida Division of Cultural Affairs. She was a finalist for the Rita Dove Poetry Award in 2006 and 2008. Her writing has appeared or is forthcoming in journals such as *The Sun*, *The Pedestal*, *Fifth Wednesday Journal*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *MiPOesias*, *The Seattle Review*, *CALYX*, *Slipstream*, *Spillway*, *Tigertail*, *A South Florida Poetry Annual IV*, *Her Mark 2009*, *Appleseeds*, *Or, How We Got Here*, *An Anthology of Americana Poems*, *Susan B. and Me*, *Just Like a Girl: A Manifesta* and others. McCormick teaches English for Dade County Public Schools and is a Professor of English at Miami Dade College in Miami. She resides with her partner and son in Miami.

<http://girlchildpress.blogspot.com/2009/04/visionware-poetry-as-testimony.html>