

Constructing New Objects of Reading

Stone no More

by Joan Metelerkamp

Durban: Gecko Books, 1995, 71 pp

ISBN 1-875011-07-2.

Betty Govinden

Department of Curriculum Studies

University of Durban-Westville

Joan Metelerkamp's new collection of poems, *Stone no More*, evocatively criss-crosses and connects time and space, history and myth and experiences both personal and communal through its spiralling, swirling words and images. I particularly loved the ironic sweep of people and places—from Aphrodite to Joan, from Princess Margaret to Adrienne Rich, from Sisyphus to Mandela, from The World Bank to Cato Manor to Taiwan—as she maps and remaps the world in telling configurations.

The image of weaving—threaded through Metelerkamp's poetry and so appropriate to her purposes—is an important one in women's writing. Nancy Miller (1988:116)¹¹ distinguishes between post-structural appropriation of mythic stories about women weaving and the feminist reappropriation of the artist. If we are to recover women's writing, Miller argues, we need to 'reappropriate' the story of Arachne—to read it not in terms of a 'web of indifferenciation' but as the construction of a new object of reading women's writing.

Like Ingrid de Kok, Metelerkamp speaks within the context of her class, her colour and her gender. Writing in this post-election time in South Africa, her concern is not that of 'legitimacy', of 'voice' against the inequities that persist, but that of the wrestle with words and meanings, with 'structures of feeling' that cannot contain nor adequately reflect that very struggle. Through her poetry, Metelerkamp explores the interplay of power, writing and gender, and the challenges of 'writing the feminine', when

¹¹ See her contribution in Ruth Salvaggio's *Enlightened Absence—Neoclassical Configurations of the Feminine* and published by University of Illinois Press, Chicago.

inscribed in the very discourse she is questioning. In this she resonates with a kindred contemporary, who ruminates:

Finding a voice, searching for words and sentences. say some thing, one thing, or no thing, tie/untie, read/unread, discard their forms, scrutinise the grammatical habits of your writing and decide for yourself whether they free or repress. Again, order(s). Shake syntax, smash the myths, and if you lose, slide on, unearth some new linguistic paths ...¹²

Metelerkamp's poetry, '... like painting—gaps between the words', is a challenge to readers hunting for meaning and relevance and I have written the following response to her collection rather than 'marking with the patriarchal pen' a traditional, linear 'review'.

Reading Joan Metelerkamp's *Stone no More*

turning the words
furrowed in spaces
between grandmother and
mother defying athena
as you weave yourself anew
in the warp and web of words
i see you refracted in elusive images

mosaic of blood and stone
against the grain academia tilling
tilling till nightfall
dreams of rhythm and sky are one
your strelizia wild with meaning
you struggle to sever the word
in subtextual bond swimming in streams
totem poles surreal shards
stoning you to silence

words dancing circling
blood in the womb
sift the decadence of commodity
in love and shopping malls
strelizia straining for air

¹² See Trinh T Minh-ha's *Woman, Native, Other—Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* and published by Indiana University Press, Bloomington, p. 6

Johannes A. Smit

women's voices breathing dying freedom
subvert the voice of reason
to be more than the tittle-tattle at tea
gestures but no body-rubbing thank you

soul-tremors as I intone the string of words
stone no more
but bread on the water
you in me and I in you
with the phantom child silent calling
and the dark man from your loins
[let the dead die
lie between the lines]
in the soul of your words
taut and tenuous thank god you write the
goddess weaving the ancient song
in the valley of the hills

Academic Writing

A Guide to Academic Writing
by C.B. Peter
Eldoret, Kenya. Zapf Chancery, 1994, pp 273.
Zapf Chancery, P O Box 4988, Eldoret, Kenya

Johannes A. Smit
Department of Biblical Literature
University of Durban-Westville

Where the improvement of research and academic writing as well as the development of distinct stylistic skills are of the utmost importance in academia, the Rev. C.B. Peter has provided an excellent resource. Not only does this book contain a wealth of information, progressively covering areas such as a discussion on what academic writing is, how to plan one's research, how to formulate and use research theory and methodology, the forms of discourse (exposition and argumentation) in terms of which one