

describes her mother's support while the speaker breastfeeds her infant daughter. "Backhand" often refers to being physically struck, but here Norman is struck emotionally by her mother's gentle support. Norman's poetry invokes the notion of a photo album, filled with images that are sharp and distinct as photographs, others that are fluid, alive, and extraordinary in their ordinariness:

Into This Poem

I want to freeze memory
in this poem
 halt change
 erase time
but the squirrels
tear the roof off the bird house
and finish off the seeds
the fingers come out of the mouth
the melodies end
the school bell rings

The Queen of Cups

Colette Yvonne.
Little Britain, ON: Panic House, 2006.

Reviewed by Kittye Delle Robbins-Herring

This satirical novel set in Canada is part comic quest, part cautionary tale: from the very first page the wisecracking narrator Pauline Parril lurches from quandary to quandary, disaster to disaster, in her search for a more satisfying life. Readers will laugh with her as well as at her (and themselves) as they follow her adventures.

Pauline Parril embodies many of the contradictory impulses that confront twenty-first century wives and mothers: "Becoming a mother means adopting ALST (Acceptably Late Standard Time)" (208), juggling personal, professional, and family needs. First, Pauline, unable to choose between two pairs of dress shoes she cannot really afford, buys both and minutes later steps into fresh concrete in her new wedges, leaving nothing but "the shiny gold buckles" visible (1) when she is forced to retreat to safer ground. Her dismay is ironically intensified by the fact that she had just ignored workmen's warning shouts, mistaking their cries for "vile and oppressive behaviours." Next, on return-

ing to the office, she receives “a severe blow to my working woman ego” (3) when she is laid off, yet quickly consoles herself with the idea that (thanks to unemployment compensation) she can now enjoy a paid vacation. Leisure, however, will prove elusive.

At her neighbour Bibienne’s house, Pauline sips Mai Tais and visits an Internet Tarot site. The reading there shows her “the Queen of Cups, the good woman card, seated in the terribly auspicious Position One” (5), representing Pauline herself. The specific site she visits is not mentioned, but a similar online site describes the Queen as “a woman who has more feeling and imagination than common sense” [<http://www.biddytarot.com>], a description that fits Pauline all too well. Although she has been trained in the military as a wilderness survival expert, she seems unlikely to survive the travails of work and family life.

Cups of coffee, cups of laundry detergent, even bra cups define Pauline’s life. She veers from fitful job hunts to make-over misadventures with henna powder to an encounter with a bear while camping with her two younger children, Jack and Olympia, to troubles with dog-sitting, to bridesmaids from hell when her old army friend Regina decides to get married. Motherhood brings her more exasperation than joy. She regrets abandoning her youthful motto: “Never have kids, pets or plants” (13). She worries that her husband Donald may be straying, envies the freedom of her teenaged daughter Serenity and her own widowed mother, and yearns for an affair with Michael, the handsome teacher with whom she shares “coffee and Camus” (82). With her worry about “fanny size” (11), her crush on Michael, and her daydreaming, this sardonic anti-heroine is like a much-married version of Bridget Jones, only funnier. She is aware of the women’s movement, without getting much benefit from it: “I adopted a radical feminist perspective on doughnuts and gained two sizes” (35). It is a tribute to her pluck and wit that she remains a sympathetic character to readers throughout her few triumphs and many misfortunes. Let’s

Seven Floors Up

Cati Porter.

Bay City, MI: Mayapple Press, 2008.

Reviewed by Dorsía Smith Silva

Cati Porter’s volume of poetry, *Seven Floors Up*, explores events of everyday life and meditates on the details of women’s diverse experience: raising children, caring for parents and pets, and balancing the responsibilities of household tasks. While most of the poems in this collection focus on domestic experi-