

products.

"Household Gods" speaks to the inherent fetishization of objects in a consumer society. This poem describes a female factory worker who, "disassemble[s] and reconstruct[s]," small appliances on an assembly line. However, when she looks at these same items on display in store windows, she barely recognizes her handy work, "in their bright packaging and suggestively cut cardboard . . . They seemed coy, the way the naked body when clothed or partially clothed is coy . . . She is momentarily baffled and aroused by the come-ons of appliances in the market place, shudders in the shameless steel." Producer and consumer have become one and the same—libidinally seduced by the very products s/he produces.

Piece Logic's closing poem "(Parabola)" critiques Enlightenment thought and scientific absolutism that was constructed, "to test the order of things." The poem is an apocalyptic piece and describes how through humankind's unending quest towards perfection (godhood?) through science, we have lost, "the ability to see through masks, the ability to walk on shifting ground the ability to read between the lines." In other words, like a parabola, so-called logic has come to the same exacting point. All things have become logic-centered, leaving little room for the intuitive, the imaginative: "Parable met parable and devoured it." Those stories which sustained us, "our shared prehistoric past," for the purpose of "illustrat[ing] the unknown," have caused "the page [to lie] absolutely still."

Hunt ends "(Parabola)" and *Piece Logic* on a skeptical yet hopeful note by recalling what we might regain from the recesses of the past and a redefinition or resistance to today's often illogical logic: the ability to see beyond and behind what is presented to us as reality, which might, if we are brave enough, give us, "[a] courage to face what lies around the bend in the road."



Threshold.

Shirley Kaufman.

Copper Canyon Press, 2003.

142 pages, \$12 (paperback).

Reviewed by Reginald Harris

Shirley Kaufman's work is an attempt to restore the reader's senses, to bring back our ability to take pleasure in small things. Closely observed and keenly felt, her latest book, *Threshold*, is filled with the finely-honed details of life. Kaufman's work as a translator, mainly of poems originally in Hebrew, has helped sharpen her eye for lan-

guage and how it works. She sums up part of her poetic process in "Little love poem" this way:

I collect these words
like coins
in the bowls of beggars

they add up to
just enough to
keep going

Originally from the United States, Kaufman has lived in Israel for the past thirty years. The poems in *Threshold* also range from Seattle to Jerusalem in its subjects and concerns, from the "projective verse" style poems of its opening movement to later sections dealing with family and long-term love, Biblical figures (Adam, Rachel, Jacob) and the poet's role as historian and witness. While there is a love of life and the things of this world in her work, there is always sadness, a haunted sense lurking behind Kaufman's poetry. Even a New Year's celebration at the millennium causes her to reflect:

the twenty-first century
nothing
but sparks and flashes
collapsed
into dust

too many zeros
ending with smoke

Quietly political, Kaufman's work does not take sides in the conflicts in Israel or anywhere—"good guys / bad / what's the difference / if everyone fights" she writes—her work comes down very strongly in support of humanity, and the lives of those caught up in the meshes of violence. Resonant and deeply satisfying, *Threshold* is a solid, serious and ultimately moving work by a consummate and compassionate professional.

