

# Reader Views

Book reviews, for readers, by readers.

7101 Hwy 71 W #200  
Austin, Texas 78735  
[www.readerviews.com](http://www.readerviews.com)  
(512) 288-8555  
[admin@readerviews.com](mailto:admin@readerviews.com)

## *The Difference Now*

By Cherie Burbach

iUniverse (2004)

Reviewed by Linda Benninghoff for Reader Views (3/06)

"The Difference Now" by Cherie Burbach uses straightforward language and the rhythms of ordinary speech to convey its message in poems that are both powerful and accessible. This book of poetry's theme seems to be personal growth, a turning away from a childhood that may have been deprived and from boyfriends who reinforced a negative self-image. The poet forges a new, more confident identity. She develops the ability to talk back and fight back. She will express feelings rather than suppress them. She sees through the negative messages that were conveyed to her--she no longer internalizes them.

The first poem, which is also the title poem, announces the books message clearly.

The difference now  
is when pushed  
I push back.

The difference now  
is when I'm hurt  
I'll cry  
openly  
unashamed.  
Why should I hide it?  
Or pretend that I don't care?  
You knew you hurt me.  
My pretending only helped you,  
not me.

In these poems little extraneous imagery intrudes, but taken together their rhymes, rhythms, and the placement of words on the page build up a music of justified anger and sometimes harsh discoveries and independence. The poet will no longer be put down. The line breaks are carefully done and enhance the meaning of the poems.

As the book goes on, its theme expands to include more than just a message of self-actualization. A poem about an unnamed woman who is probably the poet's grandmother reveals depth of feeling.

### Angel In Waiting

Sometimes she'd remember me  
and be waiting at the door  
arms folded  
and frowning.  
She'd tell me I was late  
ask me where I'd been  
I'd say it was 6:00  
that I always came at 6:00  
she'd shrug  
then smile at the food I brought  
already forgetting why she was angry.

I'd set the table  
the good china from great grandma  
the good silverware.

As the book goes on, the poet seems to become more open to positive experiences and love.

This book of poetry will be interesting to poetry lovers, particularly individuals who are in the process of learning to assert themselves and have had to cope with a difficult childhood, abusive parent, spouse or lover. The sense I get from reading the book is that by feeling the negative and expressing it, one can then make room for the good to emerge.