

eclectic mix of ideas that shed light on the multiple ways repression and resistance are played out in the spaces of white domination. Inner chapters look at the “Challenges of Blues and Hip Hop Geography” (Clyde Woods); “Memories of Africville: Urban Renewal, Reparations, and the Africadian Diaspora” (Angel David Nieves); “Freedom is a Secret: The Future Usability of the Underground” (McKittrick); “Henry Box Brown, an International Fugitive: Slavery Resistance and Imperialism” (Suzette A. Spencer); “A Realm of Monuments and Water: Lorde-ian Erotics and Shange’s African Diaspora Cosmopolitanism” (Kimberly N. Ruffin); “‘The Lost Tribe of a Lost Tribe’: Black British Columbia and the Poetics of Space” (Peter James Hudson); “Deportable or Admissible: Black Women and the Space of ‘removal’” (Jenny Burman); “Mapping Black Atlantic Performance Geographies: From Slave Ship to Ghetto” (Sonjah Stanley Niaah); and “Urban Revolutions and the Spaces of Black Radicalism” (James A. Tyner).

As the chapter titles suggest, this book has something for mostly everyone; I recommend *Black Geographies*, both in its depth and breadth, in its treatment of black geographies. The book succeeds in its major claim: “Black Geographies disclose how the racialized production of space is made possible in the explicit demarcation of the spaces of *les damnés* as invisible/forgettable at the same time as the invisible/forgettable is producing space—always, and in all sorts of ways.” I would have liked to have seen a chapter that focuses on the prison system as a black geographical space; nevertheless, this interdisciplinary collection will appeal to scholars interested not only in human geography, but also in the ways blackness and its knowledge challenge the notions of black folks as being “simply subjugated, perpetually ghettoized, or ungeographic.”

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SEVEN VALLEYS OF LOVE: A BILINGUAL ANTHOLOGY OF WOMEN POETS FROM MIDDLE AGES PERSIA TO PRESENT DAY IRAN

Sheema Kalbasi, Ed. and trans. Martinez, GA: PRA Publishing, 2008

REVIEWED BY DESI DINARDO

Seven Valleys of Love, compiled and translated by Sheema Kalbasi, is written with a piercing clarity and a profound intensity of emotion. Kalbasi’s ability to preserve the integrity and poetical sensibility of the work is evident in her mastery of language, editing, and translation. *Seven Valleys of Love* is a vibrant celebration of extraordinary women’s voices. The colourful and lively verses in this dazzling collection emerge as small, quiet explosions out of the shadows of hopelessness and seek to inspire and restore peace, hope, and harmony in its people. Many of the voices not only summon the reader or listener to take notice but also function as introspective inner dialogues for those who have been wrongly silenced or left to subsist on the outskirts of a male-dominated society. By acknowledging such disconsolate conditions, the hushed discourses offer words of fortitude and consolation to potentially assuage the conflict and turmoil festering within.

The poets in *Seven Valleys of Love* appeal to Mother Nature with the expectation she will act as a remedial force and help absolve the injuries humanity has inflicted on its people. Elements of the natural world are recurrent themes as characters are

often likened to fragile birds in search of freedom and escape: “This musky willow shade and I / These birds and I, do not sing!” Or, as in “The Lost Youth,” “Some thing is beyond this spring. / Those wandering birds will not find a nest.” Such characters become helpless creatures muted by societal pressure, timeless tradition, and violence or the dread of malicious conduct. And yet, in other instances, the female entity is also portrayed as a ravaging creature, embodying the dynamic of a beast that is both powerful and full of terror, “In me there is a woman pure / Who can lull Satan to sleep.”

The imagery of flowing water, streams, and springtime rains persists in the work, creating the assurance of that which cleanses and rehabilitates. The notion of active water as a purifying, rejuvenating source moving towards a buoyant state is suggestive of the possibility for optimism and renewal. Whether the pieces speak of the redeeming river or the stones, which soak up a great measure of the land’s burden, there is continually the notion of the idyllic garden as a central, underlying theme. In a poem called “Adam!” the poet assumes the persona of Eve and beseeches Adam to assist her in reclaiming a lost identity. Other poems share the same thought with lines like “Of the orange garden / Not much was left, days gone by . . . / The bitter taste of water / And I trust myself to the stream.”

In the face of isolation and tribulation, evidence of unending faith and undying sanguinity apparently thrives. A number of poems make reference to dreams or trance-like spells of reverie. Whether in an imagined state of wellness or at the threshold of reality there is always the presence of an intense hankering for the stuff that is reminiscent of the sublime, physical world. The humility of the poets, despite their mistreatment and sense of misplacement, lends this book to a purity of spirit and grace amid the most darkened moments of strife and suffering.

Seven Valleys of Love calls us to

appreciate that though adversity and pity pertain to every human heart, the presence of loveliness and forgiveness also exists in the invincible human spirit. This is a superb book that demands to be held or cupped gently in the hand so not to spill its sumptuous beauty, light wit, and sharp-eyed acuity. Sheema Kalbasi elegantly captures the relationship between the troubled voices lamenting to the inner self and the enlightened voices delivering touching bursts of insight and joy. This stunning anthology of love and loss bears witness to a passionate and sorrowful longing, a pining that lurks like the wind, at times turbulent and smothering and in other moments soothingly obliging, as unexpected and stealthy as the warm breath or whisper of a lover or assailant on the neck, “panting at the night,” capable of anything.

Desi Di Nardo's work has been published in numerous journals and anthologies, performed at the National Arts Centre, featured in Poetry on the Way on the TTC and displayed in the Official Residences of Canada. Her poems have also been studied in schools across the country, translated into several languages, and printed on Starbucks cups. She is the author of The Plural of Some Things. Visit www.desidinardo.com.

THE IRON SHOES: POEMS

Elizabeth Greene
Brighton, ON: Hidden Brook Press,
2007

REVIEWED BY HOLLAY GHADERY

Elizabeth Greene's collection of poems, *The Iron Shoes*, evokes the integrity suggested by the title. From the first poem, her writing leads us into the space all the poems inhabit; a liminal world of waking and dreams, of love and loss, of “long/circuitous

routes, arriving or not arriving,” of the poignancy of varying shades of grey.

While Greene was a professor of contemporary Canadian women's literature at Queen's University for years, her writing avoids any overly didactic approach and doesn't try to arbitrarily reconcile or extract tentative meaning from murkier, more mysterious realms of our lives. Rather, her poems embrace absences with a moving combination of confidence, compassion, humour, and insight. Her poem, “Return of the Nobodies,” manages to address overwrought issues like weightism, sexism and ageism through a compellingly (and perhaps surprisingly) tender series of narrative sections. The last part paints a humorous and touching picture of a group of middle-aged women skinny-dipping late at night. What emerges from this exploration is a release from shame to laughter:

It's not far to the lake, a few
blocks though friendly streets
in summer-scented air.
Arrived, Leslie strips and plunges,
wine bottle in her hand.
She does that. Once in Rwanda,
she was stuck in traffic, right
near a lake.
She left the car, stripped and
swam,
and was back before the traffic
moved.
It's freezing! she says It's gorgeous!

After an internal flogging and to-and-fro over whether or not dropping one's essentials at the shore is a good idea, the speaker discovers unabashed freedom through an empowering external source—in this case, a friend. In fact, many of the poems draw on the inspiration of others. “Merlin” is a sad but beautiful reminder of the power others bring to our lives, especially when they're gone, leaving, “a hole where the smile of the street should be.”

The touch of Greene's language, while delicate, is not by any means reductive. It does not want force

or promote passivity. The passion of the writing is a dominant force throughout. “Bronwen's Lemon Balm” in particular speaks to the wild and free-spirited slant of her message. The poem, dedicated to Greene's friend—and Canadian feminist icon—Bronwen Wallace, details the breaking up, restructuring and regenerating of life—even and especially after life in the most haptic sense is over. When a friend dropping off a lemon balm that used to be in Bronwen's garden suggests the herb be contained, Greene opts to “Let it fight and twine/With oregano and mint/It took fourteen years/ to get here -/ Let it thrive.” Those last few lines could in fact be the credo for the entire collection of poems.

Greene's fluid and free approach is reflected both in her language and her treatment of subject matter. In addition to the poem for Bronwen, her poems about her son are a testament to her ability to shape language with a light hand. This technique in turn gives the subjects of her poems a life of their own by releasing them from many of the constraints that are often a result of formal language. A series near the end of the collection explores a trip to Banff with her grown son, who we are told in the beginning of the book may or may not be autistic. It is evident that the abject fear expressed earlier on has somewhat dissipated—that her son has grown, has thrived, is “so sturdy in front of me,” in spite of the consuming anxiety she felt years ago.

By the end of the collection one can actually feel the weight of her fears lift. The “iron shoes”—an image Greene evokes in the collection's title piece to describe an exigent relationship with her mother—have been removed. Though she does not attempt to insinuate that she is dauntless, the serene and natural language and imagery in the last section of the collection indicates that her anxieties have at least lessened. More than likely, it is precisely this uncommon quality that imbues her poems with grace and wisdom. She