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Between Lives

Nilofar Shidmehr



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"In this stirring collection Between Lives, Shidmehr's direct voice and unflinching gaze puts her among such great activist poets as Martin Espada, Dionne Brand, and Pablo Neruda. With a clear gaze and arresting imagery, Shidmehr brings to light the violence and injustice of women's lives in Iran and in the diaspora. Fully wrought and deeply personal, this is a necessary book by an accomplished writer."

~Elizabeth Bachinsky, Governor General's Award Nominee

"Between Lives is a collection preoccupied with a life in exile from a country where 'you saw the tempest approaching/and if they stayed there, they, too/would drown.' These poems are the untold stories of contemporary Persian women's lives?lives portrayed with intimacy and lyricism, despite their subjugation. These are poetic meditations that only a poet simultaneously intimate with a place, and exiled from it, can offer. In this book, men and women are like 'fire and cotton,' and must be kept apart; they are 'flammable with the slightest spark.' Nilofar Shidmehr's poems burn with a fierce, haunting fire."

~Rachel Rose, winner of Audre Lorde Award for Lesbian Poetry 2013

"The voice of Nilofar Shidmehr's poetry moves restlessly between two imagined lives: one, a life rooted in the past and in Iran, a life of strict gendered expectations but also of continuity and familiarity; the other, a life in Canada, relatively uncompromised by gender segregation, but yet still troubled by the pain of exile and others' prejudice. These poems speak plainly of mothers, of daughters, of lovers, but always beneath each simple story is the pulse of an intelligent, sensous desire. These poems are feminist, moist, fragrant! Each word bursts, ripe in the mouth, like pomegranate."

~Sonnet L'Abbé (Canadian Poet and Critic, Winner of Bronwen Wallace Memorial Award, 2000)

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