

A PATIO OF POEMS FOR GROWN-UPS BY FRANCINE L. TREVENS

Reviewed by Oke Mbachu

A Patio of Poems for Grown-ups by Francine L. Trevens is a collection of poems tracing the poet's body of work, from some earlier poems to her most recent ones. The longevity and life experiences of the poet are illuminated by the variety of subjects that grace this book, including nature, human relationships (with other humans, and with nature), perception of time, gender, motherhood, memory, loss (and memory loss), etc. The book is divided into seven headings, each one named for a couplet of plants/flowers (and the entire, presumably, making up the patio) and adhering to specific themes. Some of the poems are reminiscent in nature, a looking back on the life lived. The 'hindsight is 20/20' adage rings out in these poems, strengthening their voices and filling them out. Yet other poems attend to contemporary occurrences and social dilemmas, such as war, nation, the environment, and others. Of these are some poems that are bold and glaring, shining light on the poet's particular perspective on things, while others are subtle and require some reflection for full ingestion, are food for thought.

The one mainstay, however, that runs throughout most of the poems is the incorporation of rhyme, of which the poet is clearly practiced and skilled at; her rhyme consciousness is high. The poems use internal and end rhymes, and other poetic devices are rampant through the book, including alliteration, assonance, consonance, the usage of metaphors, and adherence to meter. Some timely haikus are also included in the collection. The majority of the poems have an ear for rhyme, and the meter (composed mainly in iambic tetrameter and pentameter, among others) is not strict, allowing for a natural flow to the poems; there is musicality in the lines of these poems.

While there are many worthy poems here, "Devastation," "Recipe for Humanity," "Four-Letter Scourge" and "Invasion" are a few of the standouts, while "Ode to Shelley" perhaps reveals one of the poet's muses. The usage of metaphor and other devices in the aforementioned poems is well-done. The metaphor use in the poems "Invasion" and "Four Letter Scourge" is excellent—although the metaphors incorporated in these poems seem antithetic to the poems' subjects (for example, love as illness, or the visit of family as an invasion), they work flawlessly in the poems' execution of them. Consider, also, the following haiku: "Muse at 4 A.M./Awakens me, her bladder/Oozing poetry." This is a delicious, little poem that kills three birds with one stone: it manages to show a glimpse into the poet's life, pay acknowledgement to the poetry gods, while maintaining its syllabic form.

In addition, the metaphysical view in some of the poems (including the governing/delicate role of nature, the human purpose, among others) is refreshing. A poetic eye shining of experience, liveliness and wisdom is trained on the poems in this collection. Although the book seems to suggest a target audience in its title, the poems gathered within are quite accessible, even to a younger readership; a good chunk of the

poems should resonate across age groups. Lovers of rhyme and verse, and readers of poetry in general, will find *A Patio of Poems for Grown-ups* a delightful and worthwhile collection.

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