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Poetry

Iteration Nets
Karla Kelsey
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The ghost of Sylvia Plath seems to hover gently over Karla Kelsey's newest offering, *Iteration Nets*. With a lyrical ease and an interest in linking and exploding traditional forms, Kelsey is clearly an heir to Plath's intensity. *Iteration Nets* is a playful (but rarely joking) collection of interconnected sonnets and deconstructed sonnets, prose poems, and lyric lines. Each poem flows from the one before it, leading the reader more deeply into Kelsey's lush, disturbing visions. "And yesterday the bee breath all day translated into the out and in of I am this and frustrated with the movement of weather, hot or cold or hot, on a walk jutting out lionized, shoulders in the sun, breath handled."

Themes of death and love, pain and beauty entwine through Kelsey's dazzling poems. She seems to deliberately obscure her subject, focusing instead of juxtaposition and syntax to bring the meaning through. It's a fearless way to write poetry, and Kelsey commits absolutely. Reading *Iteration Nets* is like walking through a strange city, where "a gun is a golden ringlet" and "the night goes broken as the leaves, fallen off their branches, have marked this spot." Romantic, reflective, and always rooted in the vision of memory colliding with reality, *Iteration Nets* is an enchanting collection that gives new meaning to the reader with every poem. The last line of one sonnet spurs the first line of the next—they are at least thematically or conversationally linked—and gives the reader the sense of listening to a conversation between the poet's past and present selves. Although the sonnets could easily stand alone, Kelsey has arranged them so that the thread of the poems draws the reader forward into an elegantly constructed maze.

Kelsey's poetry is true to itself, and to the art of poem-making. This is poetry for the sake of language, and it is dizzying, elusive, and seems happy to spin the reader in circles. Readers accustomed to more mainstream, easy-to-read poets may be uncomfortable with Kelsey's work. Her poetry makes the reader look closely at the lines, try to dissect the

meaning—and, even with effort, the poems do not always disclose their secrets. *Iteration Nets* is a reading experience, complex and sometimes unnerving.

A beautiful, luscious collection, *Iteration Nets* is poetry for those not afraid to examine the world in which they live—and to look again, and closer, at the threads that hold things together.

Claire Rudy Foster