FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Swan, What Shores?
Veronica Patterson
New York University Press
978-0-8147-6684-2
(April 30, 2000)

The relationship of this title and the poems within are intuitively connected to a line in a poem that reads “What country have you come from, swan, what shores are you flying to?” The poems themselves are grouped under five titles that are also lines from “The Enlightened Heart” by Kabir, translated by Czeslaw Milosz and Robert Haas. The groups subtly reflect the themes of each section title.

Patterson writes clear images that are fastened together with just enough understanding to tantalize the mind, trigger some memory or simply soothe the hunger for lyrical lilt. Seemingly simple words may describe everyday scenes from daily life. The author begins “Napping” (about a small child who plays during naptime) with “Outside, the world happens and dogs bark at it…” and then ends with the sweet irony of sleep. Other times, she uses a succinct language that is strung together to create an effect most becoming. The line “We stamp into boots/punch into jackets, run out the door…” from “Winter Desserts” is part of a complete scene that speaks of the author’s own leaps of reality as she observes a personal, poignant moment. The poems often open up to an awareness understood, yet unnamed. The author creates a tangible being who represents the uncertain state of perplexity in “Angel of Quandaries”:

> *He dreams worlds on the inside of my eyelid until I’m afraid to*
> *open my eyes. Blood moves through that thinnest flesh and I see*
> *the smiling of the cells…*

Many poems may be from the author’s personal experiences and relationships, yet they are described from a delicate distance. She occasionally uses flexible line patterns, keeping always a sturdy thread of thought-provoking mental pictures. Some poems consist of matter-of-fact realism, while others border on the metaphysical. All of it winds around an intimate world with transparent layers of symbolism and universal meaning.

Patterson is a delightful, strong poet. Her poems do not disappoint at the end and are consistently well-poised. This book has work worth sharing, reciting and remembering.

Aimé Merizon