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FOREWORD REVIEW ♥♥♥♥♥ POETRY

## The Bride Minaret

**Heather Derr-Smith**
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Derr-Smith takes us everywhere: Damascus, Iowa, Berlin, the Boundary Waters, Chicago, Virginia, Cairo, Sams Club. And everywhere she goes, she paints a world rich with image, scent, and desire. Named for the Minaret of the Bride in the Ummayad Mosque (also known as the Grand Mosque of Damascus), the place where Muhammads wife and children gathered after walking out of Iraq, this book collects poems of external and internal displacement. Derr-Smith is the fugitive bride who records place after place. Even when she describes a familiar scene, we feel the edge of dislocation, the sense that there is somewhere else to go, something else coming. In the poem "Evening, Mount Vernon, Iowa," for example, she creates a Midwestern evening after a storm:

> *Chimney swifts beat their alternate wings, or bats.*
> *Owen rescues worms from drowning in puddles.*
> *The wisteria smells like honey.*
> *I shake out the water from the plastic pool to ward off West Nile.*

Derr-Smith places detail next to detail, creating not so much a rhythm as an accumulation of layers and textures, where "Queen Annes lace and morning glories" seem like "pieces of lingerie caught on the barbed wire / fence." She places each detail in its own niche, as in the mosque, where "they framed the questions and the light / In niches, / *the place of appearing*, a lamp / Dangling above in unceasing desire" Her world is filled with desire, and with her son Owen, the scent of almond and diesel, oranges and broken glass. For her, and for the reader:

> *each tick of light*
> *each flash of beauty*
> *pitiless*

And what does it all mean? There is no answer, only "divine text, written over and over."

> *The minaret is a signal and a warning, time to go back,*
> *Time to go home. You can hold out against death*
> *With a story, thousands.*
> *There is no translation in the Umayyad mosque,*
> *Only divine text, written over and over -*
> *Listen, all it says is you.*

TERESA SCOLLON (July / August 2009)

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