



One River Many Creeks: Poems from all around the world

Books Reviewed:

[One River Many Creeks: Poems from all around the world](#) [1]

Issue:

[141](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Pam Harwood](#) [3]

News to Choose:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

2

If a net is spread too far and the mesh is too thin, the fish fall through and nothing much is caught. This is essentially the trouble with Bloom's new collection. **One River Many Creeks** is a multicultural collection carried to extremes. Almost every significant cultural grouping on the planet is allowed its voice, but drowned out by the presence of so many others. Although certain predictable themes appear and reappear - displacement, the stress of integration in a new country, nostalgia for homeland and for the past, celebration of loved places - there is no apparent organising principle of a thematic kind to give some purchase on the collection, so that diversity ceases to be a virtue and slips into disconnected randomness. Nothing accounts for the book as a whole except sheer cultural range, and nothing accounts for individual choices except that the editor clearly likes them. All readers will find some to like, too, but many of the poems are thin and inconsequential. The intrinsic simple depth and truth of such delightful poems as 'My House' by Annette Mbaye d'Erneville (Senegal) or 'Peace' by Yannis Ritsos (Greece) is rare, and the majority of the poems are too obvious and ordinary. A disappointing book, too widely and vaguely conceived.

Running Order:

19

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[1] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/one-river-many-creeks-poems-from-all-around-the-world>

[2] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/141>

[3] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/pam-harwood>