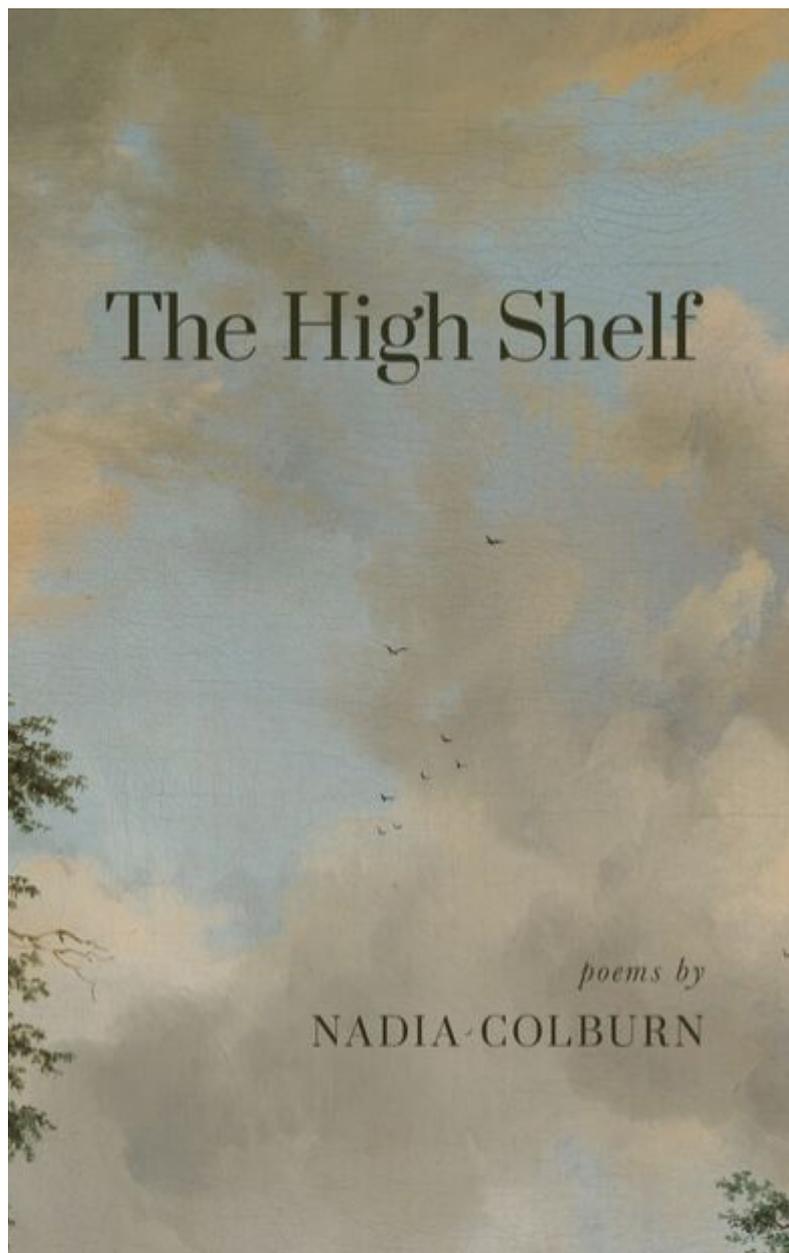


Reading Questions

for *The High Shelf* by Nadia Colburn



Reading Questions for *The High Shelf*

These poems are very spare. In her blurb about *The High Shelf*, the poet Andrea Baker writes that in this book “silence signifies both displaced traumatic experience and a search beyond and through that trauma.” How do you see silence working within the poems?

How does the sparseness and the open space on the page affect your reading experience? Does it make you to slow down, and if so, how? Does it demand that you bring more of yourself to the reading experience? Does it create a sense of insufficiency and lack sense or a sense of openness and possibility, or both at different times?

The first long poem is a poem about pregnancy and there are several other pregnancy poems in the book. How does the theme of pregnancy fit into the other themes of the book? How does the theme of motherhood fit into the other themes of the book?

How do beginnings and endings intersect, collide, reconcile in the book?

The book explores environmental destruction: what do the poems say about this issue and how does it connect to the other concerns of the book? In what ways can poetry take on this big issue? Is writing/reading poems about environmental destruction helpful to making change or to processing the situation?

How does the theme of the body and of the material world work throughout the book? In what ways do the material and non-material worlds interact in these poems?

One of the middle sections of the book is a series of poems about boxes. One of the poems is called "What Nature Cannot Make." How are boxes things that nature cannot make? Are these boxes places of safety or places of entrapment, or both?

Does the speaker move and/or grow over the course of the book? Does the long poem "The Open Page" at the end of the collection offer some resolution?

It's not traditional for a poetry book to include an Afterword, but *The High Shelf* does. What does the Afterword add to the experience of reading the book? Can our reading of poetry be helped/complimented by reading prose?