

democracy and identity, raise consciousness, promote gender equity, stimulate imaginative power, challenge oppression and injustices and encourage women and men to take control of the decisions that affect their lives.” (p. 4)

Their list of objectives is long; the potential is great. Read the book and come away re-inspired as an adult educator.

Katherine McManus,  
Simon Fraser University

## ***POLITICS AND POETICS OF MIGRATION: NARRATIVES OF IRANIAN WOMEN FROM THE DIASPORA***

**Parin Dossa. Canadian Scholars' Press Inc., Toronto, ON, 2004, 189 pages.**

Canada enjoys a humanitarian, multicultural, egalitarian image within the international community. Canada accepts thousands of immigrants and refugees each year; the Canadian government funds numerous programs and services for newcomers; and Canada is signatory to United Nations conventions and protocols regarding refugees. However, Parin Dossa's powerful book ruptures the newcomer-friendly image of Canada by narrating the experiences of the “Other” immigrants.

Approximately 47,000 Iranian immigrants have landed in British Columbia since the Iranian Revolution of 1979. As Canada's international image as a humanitarian nation makes the arrival of these immigrants and refugees desirable, so too do the skills and cheap labour they provide. The gendered, racialized social location of many of these newcomers reveals the intricate workings of Canadian social institutions and organizations along their fault lines. *Politics and Poetics of Migration: Narratives of Iranian Women from the Diaspora* is the story of migration as seen through the eyes of four post-revolutionary Iranian women immigrants. On the surface, and to many service providers, the women have fled an oppressive, patriarchal nation and have arrived in a free Western democracy. They are now liberated; thus, any inability to integrate and succeed within this new society is due to their disadvantaged past and individual deficits—a concept that masks structural factors of exclusion, such as sexism and racism. Dossa aptly unmasks surface images of Canadian refugee and immigration policy to reveal how the policy plays out on the ground in the actual daily lives of the people most affected. For example, Sultan's story, told in Chapter 3, reveals a gender bias of Canadian refugee policy. Sultan, a single mother, could only gain legal status in Canada by entering as a visitor and then claiming refugee status because she and her daughter were conceived only as dependents according to the policy.

In this insightful book, Dossa uncovers the social relations of suffering, depression, and divorce—phenomena that are regarded as individual in our society. Dossa draws from the work of Das and Kleinman (2001) and Kleinman, Lock, and Das (1997)

to use the rubric of "social suffering" to view what we have been conditioned to look at as individualized problems. Social suffering implicates the impact of global capitalism and "insensitive bureaucratic and institutional responses" (p. 3) on everyday lives of people. Dossa is a virtuoso of linking the individual with the social and personal experience with theory. Each chapter poses a question in the beginning that expands beyond the individual woman's life to question and problematize social institutions. In presenting the story of one woman, she makes a case for the potential of narratives to inform larger issues on citizenship and nationhood. For example, Chapter 3, "Being a Refugee in Canada: Sultan's Story," asks, "What makes it difficult for us to implicate the system that is the root cause of displacement and suffering?" (p. 55). Chapter 4, "Looking for Work: Nadia's Story," asks, "Why is it so difficult for an English-speaking Iranian professional to work in Canada?" (p. 87). Chapter 5 poses a methodological question to the researcher: "Do we merely record stories of pain and suffering or should we engage in the act of witnessing? If the latter, how do we go about doing this?" (p. 114).

This is a beautifully integrated book. It is a testament of the power of qualitative research, which, when done expertly, can shed light on so much about social relations and how society has organized itself along gender and race. This book is a valuable contribution to the fields of medical anthropology and migration studies, and is being promoted as such. However, it also makes an important contribution to the field of adult education.

The study of social movements has gained much currency in the paradigm of radical adult education. Social movements are being conceptualized as important learning sites to be tapped into as they provide alternative discourse and suggest avenues for change. By the same token, women—such as Dossa's participants—who have survived the Iranian Revolution, dealt with displacement, and navigated through Canadian immigration and refugee policy to reconstruct new lives in the wake of multiple social barriers have much to reveal and critique about the social system. Their experiences suggest alternatives of a just society. What they have to say, from their social location, is of value to the larger society. As Veena Das and Deborah Poole (2004) state, margins engage with the centre, and in the process shift its pivotal points. The experiential knowledge and critical consciousness that these women have gained through their experiences dwarf any knowledge or skill transmitted through formal schooling.

Parin Dossa's *Politics and Poetics of Migration* skilfully integrates the experiences of marginalized women with social structures. However, this book does not sufficiently present data on agency. Although Dossa's participants are in no way passive victims, elements of resistance and alternative suggestions are not amply present in this work, nor are they theorized. Furthermore, it would be speculative to predict whether this book's theoretical and academic nature will or will not make it accessible for service providers or frontline activists. On a final note, attention must be paid to the picture on the cover of this book: an uprooted tree. It is a simple and befitting cover—very poetic.

### References

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Bahar Biazar,  
University of Toronto

## ***LEARNERS IN MIDLIFE: GRADUATE EDUCATION AND WORKPLACES IN CANADA***

**Jo-Anne H. Willment. Detselig Enterprises Ltd., Calgary, AB, 2008, 208 pages.**

*Learners in Midlife* offers a thoughtful assessment of the unique needs and concerns of adult learners who return to university as graduate students. The author, who herself left the workforce to return to graduate school in midlife, has used this book to feature the very real and personal experiences of adults as they meet the challenges of part-time graduate study, many while continuing in their workplaces in some capacity.

The book begins with an introductory chapter that presents the reader with a series of demographic and other data to establish an argument for the four dimensions that can be applied to learners in midlife. These dimensions—personal, workplace, community, and educational—are then used to create an effective framework of understanding. The author argues that for learners who can adapt this framework to their own needs, graduate school will provide an unparalleled learning opportunity.

The book then builds on this framework by illustrating, from several different perspectives, many of the issues midlife learners must confront. In Chapter Two, H. K. Morris Baskett, a pioneer and teacher in adult education, offers a lively description of the trials that most part-time adult learners face in graduate school. While his initial intent is to assist the reader with some useful criteria for selecting the most appropriate graduate program, Baskett, having supervised many graduate students, spends the majority of this chapter providing wise counsel on the graduate school experience itself.

Willment's book then takes on a different focus. Personal narratives by a series of midlife learners who have completed their graduate degrees in education are featured. The daunting tasks of deciding to return to school, finding a suitable program, and then somehow making it all work are described in detail. Most of the writers graduated with their bachelor's degrees some years earlier, and had been in the workforce for several years. For women with the added responsibilities of child-rearing, taking on the demands