Dana Walrath
Book talk and Reading

Like Water on Stone

Dana Walrath is a writer, poet, artist, Fulbright Scholar and third generation Armenian. At Barnard College, she took biology and visual arts courses including painting with Milton Resnick, printmaking with Tony Smith. As a young mother struggling to find time to make art, she decided to get “practical” and wrote a dissertation on the anthropology of childbirth from the University of Pennsylvania. While teaching medical students at the University of Vermont’s College of Medicine, Dana used stories and art to explore sickness and health. Then her mother, Alice, and dementia moved in with her family. With that experience she produced a comic story Aliceheimer’s: Alzheimer’s through the Looking Glass. Also on her mother’s suggestion, she earned an MFA in writing from Vermont College of Fine Arts. Like Water on Stone is her first fiction book in verse.

Beyond Anatolia and into the Armenian Highlands, Shahen Donabedian dreams of going to New York. Sosi, his twin sister, never wants to leave, especially now that she is in love. At first, only Papa, who counts Turks and Kurds among his closest friends, stands in Shahen’s way. But when the Ottoman Pashas set their plans to eliminate all Armenians into motion, neither of them has a choice. Carrying their little sister Mariam, brother and sister flee into the mountains, Shahen, keeping their family’s fate a secret from his sisters. But they are not alone. Ardziv, an eagle, whose quill Sosi found, watches over them as they run at night and hide each day making their way across mountain ridges and rivers red with blood. In this story of the Armenian Genocide, Dana Walrath’s characters face cold, danger, and starvation with courage and imagination, as their journey becomes a path to strength, self-knowledge, and ultimately forgiveness.

Dana Walrath transports us to a lost world, the Armenian highlands in the late Ottoman Empire, and tells us the tragic and triumphant story of how some destined to die at the hands of their own government survived. Through images and words magical and evocative, she finds a way to convey what has elsewhere been said to be indescribable. This book reveals and heals at one and the same time.

Ronald Grigor Suny, William H. Sewell, Jr. Distinguished University Professor of History, The University of Michigan

Books will be available for sale

Prof. Mikhal Dekel
(English and Comparative Literature, City and GC) will be the discussant