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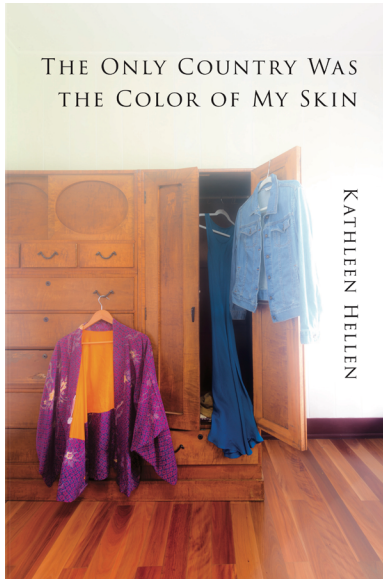
[Saddle Road Press](#) announces a new book of poems by [Kathleen Hellen](#):

The Only Country Was the Color of My Skin

Publication date: October 5th, 2018

\$18. Trade paper. 102 pages. ISBN 978-0-9969074-7-7. Distributed through Ingram.

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Like an ink-wash painting, *The Only Country Was the Color of My Skin* captures in its lines and tones the landscape of post-war America, personal history and a hybrid culture. In her second collection, Kathleen Hellen records the “things of beauty” and the “awful things,” as Sei Shōnagon described them in *The Pillow-Book*, evoking the tension between conformity and conflict. In poems and hybrid forms, she constructs a Japanese-American identity in the Rust Belt of America. Hellen experiments with traditional forms like haiku, haibun and zuihitsu and summons the ghosts of Noh to connect with family and ancestors.



Praise for *The Only Country Was the Color of My Skin*

“Kathleen Hellen is a bright voice in American Letters. Her poems are folklore, fairytale, myth, heritage, and crystal water. There’s a simple unadorned beauty in every syllable, and not one syllable is in the wrong place. When I read this work, I feel I’m in the hands of a natural poet who has complete control of her intuition and senses. These become the images making up the stories that I want to read over and again. In this world of flagging spirits, it’s lifegiving to find poetry that’s modest, beautiful and true. These poems in their sweet simplicity will bring pleasure.”

—Grace Cavalieri, “The Poet and the Poem,” Audio Podcast (Poetry and Literature Center, Library of Congress)

“*The Only Country Was the Color of My Skin* presents the world through the eyes of a speaker caught in layers of history and mythology. Kathleen Hellen’s poems, beautiful in their density and haunting in their breadth, defy silence as they tell stories of a family haunted by the spectres of war and relocation. In this book, Tojo and Hirohito must reconcile with Mothra and Mr. Moto, Tokyo with the effects of Manzanar—these poems don’t shy away from the complexities and contradictions of being Japanese American in our world. Hellen insists, ‘I have a mouth to tell my story.’ Thank goodness for her voice.”

—W. Todd Kaneko, author of *The Dead Wrestler Elegies*

“Kathleen Hellen’s poems remind us that reasons for migration are rarely simple or easy. For those whose migratory legacy is war, who live ‘in the collapse of silk,’ being multi-situated is a fact of life—a fragmentary labor, but also a sum force greater than national provinciality. The people of *The Only Country Was the Color of My Skin* are the children of war, ‘pretty as defense,’ and they also claim space, pushing against platitudes of race, gender, and nation even as they internalize them. Hellen’s *Country* is fleeting on one hand, and disastrous on the other—a ‘crafted Occupation’ born of a kaiju’s ‘o, monstrous egg.’”

—Kenji C. Liu, author of *Monsters I Have Been* and *Map of an Onion*

About Kathleen Hellen

Half Japanese, Kathleen Hellen was born in Tokyo in 1951, six years to the day after Japan's surrender to the Allies. Her father served as secretary to the U.S. Defense Counsel for Prime Minister Hideki Tōjō during the Tokyo War Crimes Trials. Her mother was born into the military nobility of the samurai and the daughter of a Shinto priest.

Hellen is the author of the award-winning *Umberto's Night* and two chapbooks, *The Girl Who Loved Mothra* and *Pentimento*. Nominated for the Pushcart and Best of the Net, and featured on Poetry Daily, her poems have been awarded the Thomas Merton poetry prize and other prizes.

You can find Kathleen at at [her own site](#).

If you're reading a print version of this press release, and would like an interactive version, or an image of the book's cover, you can find them at

<http://saddleroadpress.com/the-only-country-was-the-color-of-my-skin.html>

A digital cover image can be downloaded [here](#).

The Only Country Was the Color of My Skin is available through the Ingram distribution network. Individuals can purchase a copy at independent bookstores or through any online bookseller. A Kindle version will be available.

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