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Abandoned Homeland: Poems



Synopsis

Ohio Poet of the Year--2015 ~~Reading *Abandoned Homeland*, Jeff Gundy's new collection, left me with awe and envy. Such exquisite lines about belief, desire, small-town life, grief, grace, mercy, failure, and faith. As the collection's title poem claims, we may all indeed be exiles on a mutilated, imperfect planet, but it's a world where, paradoxically, "We'll sing/and sway, praise each other and walk back in the dark/holding hands. Then we'll gather what we need and head off again, for good." • Another poem asks, "How will you spend your small, strange, unrepeatable life?" • I've spent some of mine living in these poems, so worth every minute. ~Kate Fox, former editor of *Ohioana Quarterly*-----Michael Martone writes: "In the elegant and graceful meditations of *Abandoned Homeland*, Jeff Gundy pilots the levitational lyric like an ace. He demonstrates that it is still available to us, weightless even while embedded, as it is here, in the raw catastrophe of our basest histories. I am so drawn to the thickets of these long-lined couplets, breeched by the burble of percolating song. I am taken with the poem's shape, the checkerboard graphic of the Midwestern landscape." •

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Abandoned Homeland is a contemplative celebration that is both uplifting and thought-provoking. I can see why Gundy was chosen as Ohio Poet of the Year for 2015. The poems are often a delicious mix of nature poetry and commentary on personal and collective history. Disguised in beautiful renderings of frogs and waterfalls are observations of human experience that begin with the healing

of the poet's knee pain. The scope of ideas expands out from there. Trevon Martin makes an appearance in one of the poems, and I was intrigued by Gundy's treatment of the subject, which includes the line, "I've been failing at outrage for almost forty years, riding my bike in wide circles." He includes the phrase "numb acres" to describe the fields he passes, and yet goes on to evoke the beauty of the natural world that poetry often provides as the antidote to our pain. Nothing numb about that. And even though it is not a poem of outrage, it is a poem of noticing and naming what is. Gundy has a unique treatment of life's many challenges. In "Cookies," we see the narrator bent on breaking out of the norm of being a responsible adult, fantasizing about leaving the old self behind and creating something new. It's funny, original and endearing. "I'm tired of being available. And polite," he writes. "I'm ready to be invisible, grouchy and stupid." I love the punch of honesty that comes through in this poem. There are lines that I sat with for a while, just marveling. I loved these lines in particular: "Any road gives two choices, but when was that ever enough?" And "Praise for the mutilated planet is insufficient but essential." Then there is his riff on Rilke in "Being the Song," which makes you wonder about your own life. (What kind of song am I?)

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