

Traveling Music



Traveling Music by Eric Greinke

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*review by Irene Koronas, Poetry Editor:  
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Some of the poems in this full length book, "Traveling Music" take their last breath, leave the reader frozen in the reality of wilderness:

"...When they got to the car they saw it was wrapped like a fist on the staff of the steel-armed tree.

The children had come to earth. One was already dead. One gasped horrid breaths that wound down while they watched.

He was still in the car, his hands wrapped so tightly around the steering-wheel that they couldn't pull him away.

"Look at how his hands are grafted to the goddamned wheel." the young cop said. "Nothing could have pulled him from that wreck. Not a thing."

Each poem surprises the reader, each time I turn a page, expecting the ordinary, I have to grab at a pause. When I read the psalms in the Greek bible, at the end of some of the verse, there appears in small hyphenated print the word (pause). I never take that pause, but here, in 'Traveling Music' I have come to understand what the pause means:

"Every time we passed  
The old, gray barn  
On our way to the lake,  
We spoke glowingly  
Of its stark beauty.  
Inevitably,  
Someone would offer  
To photograph it  
The next time

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We came that way,  
But no one ever did.  
Now they've razed it.  
Now, all that's left  
Is a pile of ashes  
On a cement foundation,  
& the fieldstone silo,  
Standing alone,  
One last glaring erection."

For me, the best parts of this book are the narrative in nature poems. Greinke's persistence to be where he is and to record the deliberate:

accidents, weird wolves, mutants, even body snatchers who roam the front and back streets, "reckless beneath the moon."

"Walking through a broken woods,  
I came upon a cottage  
Which no one had called home  
Since the death of an old man.  
The key was easy to find,  
Hidden just beneath the sill  
Of the weathered front door.  
As I crossed the threshold,  
A hiss of "yes" echoed  
From the corners of the room,  
Chased by a silence so still  
You could have heard a tissue  
Flutter to the dusty floor.  
When I walked out the door  
Dust floated up & danced  
To the music of the past."

Hansel and Gretel? The poet gives us the present day tales, made from the now. We can enter the poems and believe we will come out of the houses safe and the same, but will we?