

Murmurings

Howard Giskin

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Howard Giskin's *Murmurings* is a hauntingly beautiful compilation. It includes poems, musings on the author's past, thoughts on ancient history, evocative pictures from Giskin's travels, and daily observations. Giskin's writing is intelligent, and his poems have a natural flow and cadence. *Murmurings* is a joy to explore, putting into poetic form the art of observation.

The book is divided into sections based on the pieces' inspiration. One section is like a multigenerational memoir, focusing on the author's childhood, family members, deceased grandparents, and ancestors. Other sections include observations on life in big cities and the characters who live there; views on art and other poets, philosophers, and artists; and treatments of history. The book plays with different cadences, and its poems are engaging as result of their variety.

The use of metaphors in Giskin's poetry is abundant, yielding poems that are well rounded and intrinsically beautiful. Spacing and verse shapes, as well as varying typographies, are explored, impacting how the poems are read and what feelings they conjure. Themes of death and uncertainty are meaningfully approached, evoking complex emotions and juxtaposing sorrow and beauty.

Imagery is descriptive and complex. Verbiage is intelligent but without pretension. Poems come in an appropriate free-verse style. Chapters are aptly divided and, along with their poetry, each includes artistic photography. Such images are engaging, if ultimately not necessary for achieving the understanding that Giskin's lines impart so well on their own.

This work is a celebration of words and their powerful combinations. In its turns, it functions as a ode to sounds and meaning. Experimentation, even when describing something mundane, makes the text's moments significant and exceptional. This is a collection whose works are healing, like medicine for life's pains.

Observations from Giskin's travels cover different cultures, customs, and people; these insights are fascinating, intuitive, and inquisitive. The work is beautifully observant and generates curiosity in an engaging way. Lines find charm even in the ugly. Musings on individual fragility and on major life questions are introspective and intriguing.

Written with clarity, experimentation, and obvious joy, *Murmurings* is inspirational, full of tiny flashes of simple beauty. Sorrow and delight coexist in perfect harmony in this stunning collection, wherein Giskin makes meaning from the simplest moments of daily life.

KATIE ASHER (January 13, 2018)

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