Clarion Review

Spiritual

The Point: The Redemption of Oban Ironbout
William E. Jefferson
Port Estillyen Productions
978-0-9856621-2-7
Four Stars (out of Five)

Christian teachings and mystical coincidence magically mingle to create a change of heart.

In William E. Jefferson's book *The Point*, Hollie and Goodwin Macbreeze make a pilgrimage to the island of Estillyen, where they plan "to take a spiritual retreat" but are instead "swept up into a whole new world." In this story, a pleasant allegory relying heavily on symbolic naming, the Macbreezes realize they cannot simply breeze through the Estillyen experience.

Hollie has an incurable disease but gains perspective when an Estillyen nun teaches her about "the worth you discover, the worth you give, and the worth you leave." And Goodwin will see good win over evil as he uncovers the enigma of the Point, the only portion of Estillyen guarded by No Trespassing signs. Something from his childhood draws him to the Point and to its sole inhabitant, Oban Ironbout, whose name bespeaks harshness and conflict. As the monks (with names like Script, Plot, and Witness) present daily "readings" of biblical stories in modern language, Hollie and Goodwin become inspired by the spiritual lessons, calm Ironbout's fears, and help him confront his painful past.

Having a degree in theology and years of experience working for such organizations as the American Bible Society and the Billy Graham Evangelical Association, Jefferson has cleverly crafted *The Point* as a spiritual allegory. C. S. Lewis, the modern exemplar of that genre, has said, "To construct plausible and moving 'other worlds,' you must draw upon the only real 'other world' we know, that of the spirit." Jefferson wisely interweaves the experiences of real, empathetic humans mired in ordinary reality with the wisdom of mystical beings who inhabit the "other world."

Jefferson uses carefully modulated language that often waxes poetic: “In the shadows between Scripture’s lines is God’s face. Like a full-faced moon on a meadow’s pond, it shimmers there.” He also seems to recognize that some readers need their religious edification spiced with dashes of intrigue, love, and inspiration.

The book has a professional sheen, from the pleasant field on the cover to the well-edited text and intellectual tickle of the ideas presented. While the theological “readings” comprising about half the book may strike some readers as tedious, the didactic tactics of this unapologetically Christian work are balanced by Jefferson’s well-plotted, poignant tale of the redemption of Oban Ironbout and the concomitant spiritual growth of Hollie and Goodwin. In the beginning, the Macbreezes are naive, but they are open to experiencing whatever Estillyen offers. Through their eyes, we see Estillyen’s power and purpose; each has a destiny there. Hollie learns to look beyond the immediate health crisis that prompted her pilgrimage. By helping Ironbout accept outsiders, Goodwin finds not just a new perspective but also a new family at The Point.

The Point attempts, mostly successfully, to lead its readers toward “the point” of human existence by means of a tale of two lost souls who are looking for spiritual answers and who find those answers through a series of adventures that “point” to reintegration and redemption.

Barbara Bamberger Scott