

The Wind is a Tall Man Striding.

Slominski, Jim,

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I opened Jim Slominski's first volume of poems during a long car journey, reading a few poems, allowing certain phrases to linger quietly in my mind, then reading some more, interspersed with music, catching echoes of what he was saying.

The poems selected for this first volume, *The Wind is*

a Tall Man Striding, spring from life, from everyday incidents, pains and triumphs, from relationships, and a closeness to nature. They take us into a world of searching, of asking questions, of observing and wondering at the natural world, of taking joy in children and family outings. Writing in blank verse, sometimes almost akin to prose, Slominski opens his life, and our eyes, with poems that paint pictures we can easily see as we turn the pages, sharing in his concerns, hopes, and dreams.

This volume is divided into four complementary sections; the first and last about Slominski's family life, the middle two focussing on nature and on the desire and practice of writing. These are the three points upon which his life is fixed, around which his life revolves.

"How will I forever
embrace all the things
you'll ever touch?"

"The moon slips
deftly through the nets
of swollen chestnut tree fingers."

"The night ink presses down onto
the windshield of the car,
and my poem is up
against it."

At the beginning we learn, holding our breath against the reality, of the nightmare; "Night Before Diagnosis," tells of the illness of his son, Jake. Diagnosed with a form of muscular dystrophy, the child brings love, joy, even humour to his parents and sister. Jake is 'Master of the Kite':

"Jake carries it home,
and the whole sky swims under his
arm."

In the last poem "Kite Day," which provides the book's title,

"And then the sun lifts us,
all the grass, and the trees, beyond
the empty barns."

A sense of optimism, of living life to the full, is present.

Jim Slominski is sensitive to the moments and minutiae of life, such as "How to Peel an Orange." Sometimes this can result in poems that are mundane; words written almost as scribbles in a journal for the sake of, or occasionally forced. This occurs in "Plane Trees," "Anxiety," "Shopping with Kids." Other times, with a mere few lines, he captures the fundamental essence of a situation, encapsulates the moment. Such as hearing Miles Davis play beneath the sounds of teeth being brushed. Or the poignant corpse of a rabbit by the road:

"I pass each morning
and watch the small patch
of fur and dried blood shrink
like a hand that sinks out of sight.
Still speaking last words."

Often, as in some of the earlier quotes, the final two or three lines, are traditionally fully telling.

"She needs to capture
what we all change from."

All that we change from is what Jim Slominski is working to capture and express.

- reviewed by Joanna Manning