



Jesus Walks the Southland

Robert Gray

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In *Jesus Walks the Southland*, Robert Gray paints a triptych of the holy Trinity of the South—religion, racism, and politics. And, as “The Power of Prayer” signals, the painting is a personal prayer of a white Southerner offered as liturgy for others to recite. If before you devour the collection you want to know whether the prayer is lament, confession or thanksgiving, the answer is a powerful yes. Rev. O. Wesley Allen, Jr., author of *The Renewed Homiletic and Reading the Synoptic Gospels* Rob Gray’s poems rethink that holy relation of poet to place, as he offers what he calls fragments, a set of psalms to displace the old songs of the Southland. Rob is a product of his time, writing for his time, the Saint Paul of Alabama sitting at his keyboard “trying / trying” to decode the dialectic of despair and guilt, the tangle of race and complicity, the “whiteness / silently blinding us to the life of things.” He mingles metaphysics, mourning, reverse code-switching, and a haunted respect for what he understands but cannot know. A necessary collection of poems. Trish Harris, editor of *The Pea River Journal* *Jesus Walks the Southland* takes the reader on an emotional journey. In this collection, Robert Gray shows the reader just what it is like to be a white male struggling to make sense of the south he loves, in spite of some of its contradictory behavior as it relates to race, religion and politics. The poems in this collection are a mixture of irony, self-reflection and hope that will leave the reader pining for more glimpses into the mind of this talented, insightful poet. Angela Jackson-Brown, author of *Drinking From A Bitter Cup*

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