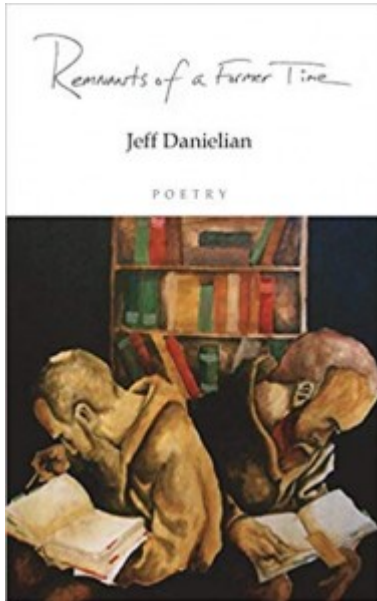


Book Review: Jeff Danielian's Remnants of a Former Time



Jeff Danielian does something a little different for his third volume of poetry. He digs deep into his archived writing, adding 40 poems (which he dubs “Ramblings of a Man Uncertain”) that he had written well over 20 years ago and left on a shelf, mostly untouched. He adds this to another 40 poems that he had written much more recently, making for a volume that shows who Danielian was and who he currently is. The most intriguing part of this is to learn that, while there has been growth and development, Danielian has basically been the same person all along.

A difference I’ve noticed was with his writing style. “Ramblings of a Man Uncertain” uses long lines with a good amount of words. “Remnants of a Former Time,” more akin to his other volumes, keeps things shorter and simpler. He gets to his points much quicker and it has more of a rhythm. This is not to say that one is better than the other, as the writing is strong in both.

Danielian uses a lot of the same themes in his older work. More so than that, he uses some of the same phrases multiple times. “Out of reach,” is a line that is used in a few of the poems, even having it be the title of one of his poems. Nature is prevalent throughout as well, which, while a common theme for many poets, is a departure from his newer material, showing the changes that can happen with growing older.

While I wrote that Danielian’s writing represents an individual who hasn’t strayed far from who he used to be, I do enjoy the differences I’ve noticed. A younger Danielian is one full of naivety; angry at the unknown world ahead of him, but also free of grown-up responsibilities. There is an obvious youthful voice throughout these poems, which leads to some darker and angsty themes. I like the contrast to his newer work, which shows a fully grown man treading through marriage, children, a house and other life expenses. He dedicates some words to yearning for the good old days (I like that there are 40 poems of those good old days he longs for). He writes about the vices that help him cope (tobacco and bourbon) with both his younger and current years, showing that few things ultimately change.

This is a robust volume of poetry. I appreciate the risk Danielian took in putting his old self out for those

to read instead of leaving those poems printed on a shelf collecting dust. It gives his fans a full sense of who he is, was and (probably) will always be. That aside, there are some fantastic poems that are (in typical Danielian fashion) quick, easy and enjoyable to read, along with some lines that need to be read multiple times for further enjoyment and meaning.