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REVIEWS

TITLE INFORMATION

WALK-UP MUSIC

Watsky, Paul

il piccolo editions (80 pp.)

\$18.00 paperback

ISBN: 978-1771690263; May 15, 2015

BOOK REVIEW

Watsky (*Telling the Difference*, 2010, etc.) does the work of 10 poets in this excellent, slim collection.

An avid baseball fan, Watsky writes gorgeously of his passion for America's pastime. To borrow a term from the sport: he's a utility player. Watsky handles multiple positions with equal dexterity and skill. In fact, there's not much he can't do. Verse about Jungian archetypes? He's got it: "*Yes!!* shouts Shadow, *straight to hell!* / *Be nice*, admonishes Persona. / Partially disrobed, Anima at the mirror peekaboos her hair / first across one breast then the other." (Watsky is a trained clinical psychologist.) Verse about the Japanese poet Santoka? That's here too: "Sake / his favorite koan got him / into trouble and then got / him out before the bent / nail of his personality / was pounded / flat." How about a poem, out by out, of San Francisco Giant Matt Cain's perfect game? "June 13, 2012, a Wednesday night against / the Astros, we're down for one of Matt's trade- / mark gems, especially Houston being nearly / impotent on the road—not that *we're* entitled / to point fingers." And it's all good. Though he can ably write in a variety of forms, Watsky's favorite weapon is a sort of prose poem divided cunningly into sharp, un-rhyming couplets. One particularly effective example is "Squaw Valley Pan Shot": "white pine that nips / the heels of retreating / glaciers a mere ten / millennia ago this summer. God / knows, my timing / can be rotten but I haven't bought any / ski areas lately." In this form, the line breaks do the work; "God" is left out on a limb, separated from the knowing he will eventually do. Thus does an approachable meditation on a winter landscape become subtle, incisive theology. As if Watsky didn't already have enough on his plate.

Refreshing poetry that has a little something for everybody.

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