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Bicycle Diaries by David Byrne, Viking, 2009

William Watts

Butler University, wwatts@butler.edu

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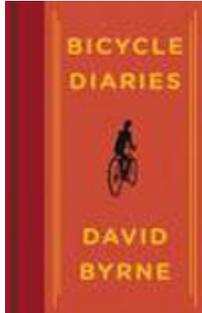
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Recommended Readings



Bicycle Diaries

by David Byrne, New York: Viking, 2009

Reviewed by Bill Watts

Bookstore owners will have a difficult time deciding where to place David Byrne's *Bicycle Diary* on their shelves. This book, by the talented musician and leader of the now-disbanded Talking Heads, does not fit readily into any of the established categories. It is part travelogue as it recounts Byrne's ramblings by bicycle through American cities, such as New York, Detroit and Buffalo, and cities abroad, including Berlin, Manila and Buenos Aires. The book is also an exercise in art criticism, as Byrne meets with artists and musicians in each of these cities, and contemplates the state of contemporary art around the world. And, finally, Byrne's book contributes to the growing body of bicycle advocacy, celebrating the advantages of traveling by bicycle and suggesting ways in which our cities can be adapted for the safety and needs of cyclists.

Some will no doubt find Byrne's book fragmentary and unsatisfying. Because the book does so many different things, it can be difficult to find its center. And, while Byrne shows himself to be a surprisingly deep thinker, he is not necessarily a systematic one.

But, as a life-long cyclist and long-time fan of Byrne's music, I find much to appreciate in this book. Byrne does manage to convey the exuberance of the cyclist, as well as the different perspective and the opportunity for reflection that urban cycling affords.

- William Watts is associate professor of English at Butler University.