

a gratuitous Holocaust reference and it weakens, rather than strengthens, the ominous but vague sense of violence the poem builds up to and the powerful last stanza's "storm of blackbirds assaulting the ripe fruit."

Ultimately, though, the best thing about this collection is not its subject matter, but its language. Its trimmed-down lines and generally dark tone make it all the more exhilarating when contained energy flashes out, whether in a single surprising phrase or in a sustained roller-coaster ride of free association, as in "The Flight of Eve," where the phrases simply cascade one upon the next in a seemingly free, but ultimately predestined, flow:

faithless father  
of our father's father, what seeds you plant, you reap,  
you sow, we live with the pitted rock of ages, the ice age

here at our feet, bare feet, cut on the oldest stones on the planet, first  
day before rest, he constructed dirt, snow, hair of Eve, the blond witch of the  
clerical fantasy who bows and lifts her black wings.

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***Wild Moments: Adventures with Animals of the North.* Edited by Michael Engelhard. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2009. xv + 221 pp.**

Michael Engelhard's *Wild Moments* is a beautiful anthology of contemporary nature writing concerning animal encounters in the North. Divided into three sections that describe terrestrial, avian, and aquatic wildlife encounters, the collection traverses different habitats as well as political boundaries, with essays focused on Alaska, western Canada and the Yukon, Washington, and Montana. Engelhard's editorial process is not that of a mere collector, but of a curator who knows that a book about animals is a book, too, about human self-perceptions and worldviews, as well as language, climate, localism, and culture; that it is a measure of our own relationships—mysterious, ancient, and threatened—with the animals whose various habitats we share. Engelhard believes that North Americans, the bulk of whom lead lives set in "designed environments," are in need of "wild animals and their stories more than ever" and must "remember that beneath the veneer of our language, our civilization, something feral still purrs" (3). This anthology, released in an era of melting ice and what could well be the Bering Sea's last generation of wild polar bears, is a canary in the coal mine of our self-awareness as a species among species.

Although much of the book's power stems from the collective acuity of its contributors and the immediacy of their prose, several authors succumb to the usual traps and temptations of traditional nature writing. The anthropomorphism, romanticism, and didacticism evident in some of the essays, though, is tempered by more sensitive and politically aware contributions that provide essential context and serve to unify the anthology. In particular, Engelhard's own introduction and postscript, as well as a prescript written by Daniel Glick, help make the anthology both relevant and timely by placing its collection of personal narratives within a broader framework of global concern.

These essays portray a myriad of ways that humans encounter or interact with animals, including hunting, trapping, watching, photographing, listening, revering, mythologizing, and studying. They depict how humans gather and use products from still-living animals — muskox qiviut, sheep's wool, antlers, fish roe, bird eggs—and reveal how animals provide useful material for writers themselves. As readers of these encounters, we are reminded of the more-than-human world. While some of the writers offer literal and definitive interpretations of their experiences and others permit ambiguity to reign, the emphasis on environmental awareness established by Engelhard in his introduction is reinforced throughout the anthology by many of its authors.

Some may insist that this activist agenda runs the risk of trivializing the authors' shared awe of nature and sense of ecological responsibility. However, Engelhard has selected his pieces well in order to avoid this risk, offering up an excellent blend of earnestness and craft, sentiment without sentimentality. Hank Lentfer, in his well-wrought essay on sandhill cranes, speaks to the overarching importance of this kind of anthology when he writes: "It is easy to kill something we don't love ... Difficult to love something we don't know. Impossible to spend a fall day staring into a bowl of sky filled with wheeling cranes and not taste love" (109).

The collective weight of the essays in this anthology lies in the reminder they provide of all that we don't know. They point beyond language, sense-making, romance, and exploitation toward a fragility that is both fleeting and immediate; bloody, yet ephemeral; conceptual and visceral; animal and human in equal and complementary parts. Focused as it is upon human encounters with animals of the North, *Wild Moments* evinces something essential about our own nature as human animals.

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