



Kingdom Animalia

Aracelis Girmay

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The poems in this highly anticipated second book are elegiac poems, as concerned with honoring our dead as they are with praising the living. Through Aracelis Girmay's lens, everything is animal: the sea, a jukebox, the desert. In these poems, everything possesses a system of desire, hunger, a set of teeth, and language. These are poems about what is both difficult and beautiful about our time here on earth.

Aracelis Girmay's debut collection won the Great Lakes Colleges Association New Writers Award. A Cave Canem Fellow, she is on the faculty at Drew University and Hampshire College. She lives in Brooklyn, New York.

Kingdom Animalia Details

Date : Published September 20th 2011 by BOA Editions Ltd. (first published January 1st 2011)

ISBN : 9781934414620

Author : Aracelis Girmay

Format : Paperback 120 pages

Genre : Poetry

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From Reader Review Kingdom Animalia for online ebook

Michelle says

Phenomenal! I just love Ara's expansiveness...this book includes so much: self-reflection, family history, nature, dirt. For me, the line that sums up the book is "I want to know what to do/with the dead things we carry" from her poem "This Morning the Small Bird Brought a Message from the Other Side." These "dead things" are not just literal; they can be lost relationships, lost items, Aracelis' childhood self. And she carries them everywhere. They are ever-present. This book is at once haunting and beautiful.

Holly Wendt says

I loved this book. Read why here: <http://hollywendt.blogspot.com/2013/0...>

Andrew says

As this blog post says, it is almost impossible to single out one poem from this luminous volume, but I agree that this one is well-deserving:
<http://tuesdaypoem.blogspot.com/2012/...>

Chaneli says

I'm completely in love and in awe of this woman! love love love love

Fred Pelzer says

Death haunts this collection, and the closer it came to this topic the better the poems seemed to work for me. Not that I'm a particularly morbid person. It also felt very coherent as a whole, with similar images and sub-themes returning from poem to poem, which helped build the sense of resonance the further through the collection one traveled.

Carine Topal says

Fresh, original

Kawai says

As often as we talk about death in art, it still seems a concept that eludes us, much like love. KINGDOM ANIMALIA is chiefly concerned with knowing death in all its forms, whether experienced in a family, remotely through weapons of mass destruction, or through our relationship with nature. And while I'm still developing a taste for modern prose poetry--and more often than not reject the lack of form that persists the contemporary--I have to say I was pleasantly surprised and moved by this collection.

I hold "Kingdom Animalia", "Small Letter", "For Patrick Rosal...", "La Boda del Mar y Arena", "Self Portrait as the Snail", "Elegy in Gold", and "I am Not Ready to Die Yet" among my favorites.

Much to contemplate here, and re-read. Worth your effort.

Lauren says

Aracelis Girmay, winner of the 2011 Isabella Gardner Poetry Award for her work *Kingdom Animalia*, is a voice any of us would trust in the dark of the unknowable and the striving. She is clear, and writes with a hope-filled truth-force that will have your head cocked to hear every cherished word, in any language.

I was fortunate enough to hear Girmay read aloud at Wellesley College's Distinguished Writers Series. Her "Ode to the little 'r'" of this collection, and her poem to her elementary school student, from another, shook me awake, alive, living. Such profound movement.

After Aracelis and the renowned Martín Espada shared their words and conversation, I very nervously approached Espada to sign my copy of *Alabanza*, and more courageously introduced myself to Girmay. She is a light of a human being, the kind of person who stands in a pool of moveable wax, positively dripping with deep yearning to understand and connect with humanity, the origins of this earth, and those who inhabit it. She asked me to which class I belonged. I said none, I'm just here. Her smile broke bigger and she asked me if I was a poet. I said "I hope so." She said, "That's how I think of myself too." She signed her book for me, and I told her how much I loved her reading, how beautiful it was, how the way in which she speaks reminds me of Suheir Hammad. The wave of her smile spread wide across her face again as she uttered I know her, like I know her—oh Suheir, she's—fiery! Girmay told me how she could see exactly what I meant, and that she is going to tell Suheir about it.

I am enormously grateful for the experience of hearing this young, talented woman share her poems with a room of ears and hearts won not only by her skill and imaginary, but by her genuine, searching, sharing, spirit.

Craig says

I struggled a little between 4 and 5 stars with this one, but its fierce originality won me over to the 5 side. (Wow! Two five star books this month?)

The voice in this work is so fresh, so absolutely enthralling both in its darkness and its tenacious grip on hope. I honestly haven't encountered a poet who seemed so new (for lack of a better word), so wondrously

new in a long, long time. I feel like a walking cliché, trying to describe this collection, but it is just left me awestruck in its raw, intense power. This, it reminded me, is what language can do, can be... This is pure faith - faith in the words and the way they can carry us.

These poems take time - they aren't easily digested, nor are they meant to be. Each is a full, complex meal. You will not be left hungry.

Absolutely amazing. Pick this one up. You won't regret it.

Laurel L. Perez says

This startling elegiac collection digs into how life is honored, spent, and celebrates it all. Often while reading, I found myself pushed and pulled, coerced into thinking in intriguing ways about not only the content, but the play with form at times. Some of the sentiment, and certain lines are still repeating in my mind, hours later, and probably will continue to do so.

Stevie Edwards says

This is one of the most moving books of poetry I've read in the last year. Her voice has a great consistency and authority in these arrestingly beautiful, confessional poems. As a poet, I am highly jealous of this book -- it's doing all the things I aim to do, but better.

Sarah Hannah says

I was so excited about reading this book, and it certainly has some beautiful moments, but it was nowhere near as compelling or musical as *Teeth*. I found this to be a little too rambling, too esoteric without a lot of clarity or grounding.

Patti K says

This 2011 book of poems is very enjoyable. Girmay uses language like a lightning rod. She makes images that last. Several of the poems are called self-portraits. "Self-Portrait as the Airplane" and "Self-Portrait as the Pirate's Gold" are examples. It is a startling voyage of discovery and I recommend.

Catherine Pikula says

Absolutely stunning and beautiful. Many of these poems are elegies but they are very much full of life that comes from a voice that is still amazed and provoked into imagination when looking at the world.

Mark says

Girmay does a lot of things well here. Powerful, inventive poems.
