



Ill Nature

Joy Williams

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Most of us watch with mild concern the fast-disappearing wild spaces or the recurrence of pollution-related crises such as oil spills, toxic blooms in fertilizer-enriched forests, and violence both home and abroad. Joy Williams does more than watch. In this collection of condemnations and love letters, revelations and cries for help, she brings to light the price of complacency with scathing wit and unexpected humor. Sounding the alarm over the disconnection from the natural world that our consumer culture has created, she takes on subjects as varied as the culling of elephants, electron-probed chimpanzees, vanishing wetlands, and the determination of American women to reproduce at any cost. Controversial, opinionated, at times exceptionally moving, **III Nature** is a clarion call for us to step out of our cars and cubicles, and do something to save our natural legacy.

III Nature Details

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Author : Joy Williams

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From Reader Review III Nature for online ebook

Prima Seadiva says

Library book.

As I sit and write this review across the street 5 houses are being demolished to make way for 23. Not a scrap of life remains on the lots because that would impede profit. Those doing the construction work will not be able to afford to live there. The developers and planners live some where else more classy. Those of us still living here are seen as potential development sites.

I agree with 99% of what the author writes. Many of today's norms are fatuous clichés, propped up by marketing. I can feel her frustration and anger too. She says it in a way that can make even those in agreement feel small and inadequate in their efforts to change things. I felt a bit hopeless on finishing. For me her own ego seemed to loom so large as to get in the way of what she writes. Rants can clear the air but rarely solve a problem. To be fair she does subtitle the book "Rants and Reflections" so she is not necessarily offering solutions.

Humans are destroying the planet for profit and comfort. Overpopulation is beyond belief. There are countless people living in the most extreme poverty, while a small number prosper beyond imagining. Those of us in between have an impact. Anyone who drives, travels, especially by air, buys anything shipped even from a small distance, eats, reads a book via paper or internet is inextricably entwined in the web of today's dysfunction. All actions have an effect both positive and negative. How do we alive right now make a difference? Not one of us lives without contradictions. The best we can do is try to have fewer and be mindful of those we do have.

I felt that those who are new to the ideas and concepts in the essays may not hear past her tone. Those who don't care won't care, will even scorn what she says as not true.

Geoff Wyss says

I loved the angry, alarmed, intemperance of many of these essays, which writers won't usually allow themselves even when alarm is the only rational response to, for example, the despoliation of the Everglades. My favorites here were "Animal People" and "Hawk."

Lorraine says

I am teaching a course on writing about nature. We've read some gorgeous meditations on the beautiful earth, books that move me. And then there's Joy Williams, who simultaneously makes me laugh out loud and shake my head in agreement--even when she's doing things like attacking folks who have children (and I'm one of them.) Williams is pissed off about what we've done to the environment, and this book is one well-written, Molly Ivins-razor sharp poke in the eye essay after another. I can't recommend it highly enough.

The other day, driving through town, I saw a bumper sticker that reminded me of this book. It said: "At least the war on the environment is going well."

Brad Watson says

Fans of JW's fiction should read this hellacious collection of essays for a different kind of but just as powerful head-on collision with her mind.

Robert says

Ill Nature is my third (!) Joy Williams of the year so far, and it was definitely in the league of her novels and short fiction. If you're a fan of her style—brusque, morbid, grotesque, funny—or her off-kilter, post O'Connor existential Christianity (barely recognizable as such), you won't be disappointed in *Ill Nature*. Most of the essays deal with environmentalism and animal rights, and Williams is quite radical on these issues (although also skeptical of many of the claims and strategies of environmental activists). I sympathize with her arguments, for the most part, but her essayistic style is totally devoid of citation and it's never clear if she's sarcastically making up dialogue or actually quoting a source. It's original—no plagiarism here—but these should be read as "rants" (which, to be fair, the subtitle promises) and not as essays in the usual sense. If you enjoy her style and find her causes sympathetic, it is an entertaining and challenging read. The exception would be the two longer essays that conclude the book, "Hawk" and "Why I Write," both of which are intensely personal, raw, and excellent.

Tara says

This was a mix of essays that included ones I really enjoyed, another few that were interesting, another that got me all fired up about the environment, another that made me cry, and another that wished I could talk to the author in person. I did not care for her style of writing.

Courtney Maum says

Not easy to read, necessary to read.

Potassium says

So these were intense.

I think my favorite thing about most of these was how much research she had clearly done. These are labeled as rants and she is definitely ranting but every rant is very thoroughly researched. It's impressive because who wants to do so much research into topics that are infuriating? But it's necessary to argue your case. I also liked her word choices and sentence structure. I found myself inspired to write my own essays about

topics that are meaningful to me.

My favorite essays were probably One Acre (beautiful and descriptive - I felt like I lived there and I was encouraged to follow my dream to make my own One Acre somewhere one day) and Hawk (heart wrenching but beautifully written). I want to read the longer version of Sharks. Save the Whales, Screw the Shrimp; Safariland; The Killing Game; and The Case Against Babies were informative and amusing. The one I had the hardest time with was The Animal People mainly because it hit pretty close to home and I am still struggling about my own personal feelings on that issue.

Finally, Why I Write was inspiring for a young writer like me. I loved her brutal honesty and her lack of sugar coating.

Mel says

Joy Williams' nature essays present the stark nature of reality in the 21st Century. She often is caustic in her assault, abandoning any room in which the reader can be absolved from guilt and relax, even for a moment. Her prose, while very well written is off-putting. She is passionate about her subject matter, but her militant approach left this reader, an environmentalist, feeling attacked.

dara says

The first time I read this collection of essays, I was eighteen years old. Shortly after I became a vegetarian--partly inspired by the essay "The Animal People." There's something about the way she writes that drew me in even when nature was so far removed from my concerns. Perhaps it's the way she acknowledges how much easier it would be to continue to turn a blind eye to it all, to ignore the nagging guilt and sadness that is so easily pushed aside.

"You don't believe in Nature anymore. It's too isolated from you. You've abstracted it. It's so messy and damaged and sad. Your eyes glaze as you travel life's highway past all the crushed animals and the Big Gulp cups."

Whiskeyb says

She rant so nice and sharp that I cry a little.

David says

One of the best essay collections I've read. This is bracing, powerful, angry stuff. Often very funny, too.

Really the only downside was that experience of happening across a piece of writing that perfectly executes the sort of moves you were attempting in some pieces of your own. You smile, nod, and sigh. Okay. So, I can still maybe (probably not, but just maybe) pull that off, but it won't be new. Ah, the absurd pursuit of the

new at this late date.

Highlights: Save the Whales, Screw the Shrimp; One Acre; Hawk; Safariland; The Killing Game.

Trigger warnings: being made repeatedly aware of just how horrific the scale of suffering and death we humans are inflicting upon most other forms of life here on Earth. Joy will not pull her punches. That's okay. Feel them. It's our only hope.

Frances Chiem says

A beautiful, often tragic book for environmentalists looking for some cathartic rage and can stand a little cognitive dissonance.

Joy Williams is as angry as I want to be and often am about our disconnection from and carelessness toward the environment. I disagree with her on her views toward hunting, given that I live in a state where it is not uncommon for people to hunt for protein as an extension of the slow-food movement and where hunters are dedicated conservationists calling for shorter seasons and increased research in order to save beleaguered and diseased elk herds. However, I admire Williams' fearlessness in her anger given that environmentalists, and women writers especially, are often told that their anger is hysterical and inconvenient.

Chazzbot says

Joy Williams is angry and unrepentant, but also kind and sad. Though her primary topic here is the environment, or rather, what humans have done to the environment, mostly in ignorance, she also discusses the suicide of Wendy O. Williams, lead singer of the 80's punk band, the Plazmatics; the mauling she received from her beloved dog, Hawk; and Ted Kaczynski's cabin. In each of her essays, Williams expresses a deep curiosity (sometimes bordering on bafflement) and, more important, questions conventional wisdom, qualities any essay writer should have. Williams pushes this questioning to the extent of wondering why people continue to have babies in the face of a collapsing ecosystem. Hunters, real estate brokers, and eco-tourists will probably not feel welcomed by Williams, and at times even I became uncomfortable with her more strident declarations. But, more often than not, Williams comes across as a writer so in love with the world that she cannot bear to see it treated as it is, a sentiment similarly expressed when she writes about the decision to put down her dog who has inexplicably become violent. Speaking of her own essay writing style, Williams states, "It was unelusive and strident and brashly one-sided. [My essays] were meant to annoy and trouble and polarize. . ." Williams neglects to add that her essays reflect a deep passion for our planet, and her occasionally strident tone is meant to stir similar passions in her readers, and I cannot help but admire and respect her brave, uncompromising viewpoints.

Belinda Jonak says

Unsettling, thought provoking, acerbic- Joy's work is the antithesis of joyful; "The writer doesn't want to disclose or instruct or advocate, he wants to transmute and disturb." The collection of essays comprising "Ill Nature" makes the reader uncomfortably aware that humanity is the infectious agent of most of those ills. We

seem unwilling to undergo the treatment that could save our world and ourselves.
