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Brian Swann, ed. *Poetry Comes Up Where It Can: An Anthology.* Salt Lake City: Utah State University Press, 2000. xix + 168 pp. $12.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-87480-644-1.

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"Nature" is often confused with that indefinable otherwhere, "wilderness." Take birds, for instance: clearly part of nature, even when nesting atop a city skyscraper. Yet in a recent issue of *Audubon*, where one would expect to see birds in all their varied and glorious geographical distribution, every photograph is absent human presence; even an article on ephemeral ponds near Chicago is illustrated by a scene that could be hundreds of miles, rather than dozens of yards, from surburban homes and roads. Such images reinforce the dangerous misapprehension that humanity is separate from, even antithetical to, the natural world.

This confusion deeply afflicts contemporary American poetry, so that "nature poetry" is typically "wilderness poetry" describing wild places unsullied by humanity ("virgin land," an interestingly proscriptive, gendered term). Part of this comes from the intensely private, even solipsistic, nature of most contemporary poetry, from which the public voice has been all but banished. Poetry about nature is even more private than that on other subjects, argues Bernard W. Quetchenbach, in *Back from the Far Field: American Nature Poetry in the Late Twentieth Century* (University Press of Virginia, 2000); such poetry typically describes intensely private experiences rather than shared or communal moments in nature. Private moments far from the city comprise the greater proportion of today's nature poetry, as though the very presence of another human on a distant mountaintop destroys the wildness of it all.

In the face of this dominant paradigm, this anthology offers a radically different view: one of a nature that, while far from domesticated, nonetheless surrounds and enfolds humanity. Editor Brian Swann has gathered 130 poems that previously appeared in *The Amicus Journal*, published by the Natural Resources Defense Council. [Ed. note: *The Amicus Journal* has recently been renamed *OnEarth*.] The selection includes poets both renowned (Wendell Berry, Ursula LeGuin, David Ignatow, Denise Levertov, Hayden Carruth) and more obscure but no less worthy (Constance Egemo, Steven Blevins, Faye George, Michael Spence). Especially of note are international poets including George McWirther (Northern Ireland), Denise Arnold (England), Richard Bringhurst (Canada), Eamon Grennan (Ireland), and Coral Hull (Australia).

However diverse their style and voice, the poets have in common an uncommon ability to see the nature that immediately surrounds them. Typical is Carrington McDuffie, who writes of a welcome rainfall "sealing/the ivy-enclosed yard" against even the poet's interior music, demanding complete presence in communion with its concrete reality. Or Brendan Galvin, whose bullfrog takes up residence in the garden, awakening a wildness that creeps into the dreams of nearby humans.

Some poets, like Charles Fishman in "Whapmagoostui," find in apparently empty landscapes memories of the ancient people who dwelt there:

"After sundown, a red hunter's moon rises Over the stalking grounds of the Cree nation. Lodges are fragrant with elk skins, with evergreen Boughs … ancestors are buried here."

Hayden Carruth similarly collapses time when he hears "a paleolithic/relentless whippoorwill" confiding an ageless commentary about life and humanity's place in nature, while David Ignatow collapses space by dis-

covering in a random suburban park "woods primeval dark" through which cars "timidly" pass as though aware of their irrelevance.

The single unsatisfying aspect of the collection is the almost monotone quality of the selections, which are unfailingly stately and discreet. Nothing wrong with that, of course, but the few exceptions stand vividly out: the righteously angry, almost strident tone of Robin Chapman, declaiming against a "chose-your future shop" of "perfectly shaped, tough tomato ... mute, immobile, meaty chicken" instead of nature's irregular beauties; the densely passionate language of Pattiann Rogers; the visionary whimsy of Nancy Willard. More diversity of style and voice would have been welcome in what is otherwise an exemplary and provocative collection.

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