



Relatos Faunescos (Faunish Stories)

Author:

Fernando Mansilla

Reader:

Chris Moss

*This 152-page work of fiction is, as its prologue – written by a respected artist – advises us, a series of portraits as well as a collection of stories. But the “fauna” of the title are not mere images of animals; they are points of entry into prose-poems that attempt to get inside the heads and thought processes of individual species, and/or into stories in which the animal is principally a metaphor for human relationships.*

*The “I” of the text shifts between the gaze of a creature, who is anthropomorphized into a rational, emotional, reflective being who suffers encounters with other species, and more conventional human narrators. While the stories vary in setting and mood, they always take on a surprisingly gritty, contemporary turn – blending nature writing with realism in a way that is, as far as I know, rather novel.*

*... I won't run through all the plots; all are intriguing, surprising, full of twists and a but twisted too. As we read on, we grasp that Mansilla is not offering us a meditation on animals or their ways of seeing, but instead using the animals as motives –and motifs – to generate a story about the foibles of being human. The approach has elements of Ted Hughes' poetry, Borges' freeform “ficciones”, a touch of Aesop or Arabian Nights, as well as a very contemporary/crude realism*

*Original, vivid, full of energetic slang, sex and violence – and often taking a surreal turn – these highly literary parables are quite compelling. The question, really, is: does the overarching motif – fauna – hold them together and seem necessary, rather than merely incidental. Also, do the stories speak to one another? Do they hang together as a concept? In balance, I think they do.*