



Things That Are

Amy Leach

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Things That Are takes jellyfish, fainting goats, and imperturbable caterpillars as just a few of its many inspirations. In a series of essays that progress from the tiniest earth dwellers to the most far flung celestial bodies—considering the similarity of gods to donkeys, the inexorability of love and vines, the relations of exploding stars to exploding sea cucumbers—Amy Leach rekindles a vital communion with the wild world, dormant for far too long. *Things That Are* is not specifically of the animal, the human, or the phenomenal; it is a book of wonder, one the reader cannot help but leave with their perceptions both expanded and confounded in delightful ways.

Things That Are Details

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From Reader Review Things That Are for online ebook

Elif says

<http://kitaplikkedisi.com/kitaplar/oy...>

Abby says

Not finished. So disappointed; I had such high hopes for this book. But it felt like reading a crazy person's diary, all of these disjointed, overwrought sentences about flora and fauna (par ex., "Stars are my bonfires, blue is my diaphanous land"). So annoyed. I want to read a real nature book that is also beautifully written (see: Annie Dillard, Barry Lopez), not flowery non sequiturs from a drunk poet. That's just the kind of curmudgeon I am.

Peter Rock says

This is a really confident, excellent sort of book. There's not another like it, and I really like how it pushes most notions of the essay far out to sea. The sensibility here is so rich, and so full of whimsy that it might flag or seem precious or even twee if it weren't so consistent, and the language so rigorous and energetic. I can't wait to have my students read some of this. Say, "Goats and Bygone Goats," where Leach opens by hypothesizing a world where sound waves don't decay and segues through the hypothetical goats into a full on investigation of goats, from which she doesn't really (does she?) return. The line between the metaphorical and the concrete is so wonderfully blurred or thrown out the window, so often (say, in "The Safari"), and the shape of the essays is so unpredictable, so attuned to what must be Leach's intuition. The structures feel as misshapen and organic as Montaigne's, in a way. So I'll change my 4 star to 5 star, since to what am I really comparing it?

Kerri Anne says

This collection of 26 eclectic, funny, and wonderfully whimsical essays about everything from salmon to flowers to pandas to the moon is maybe one of the strangest things I've ever read. It was also absolutely delightful.

The reason I bought it/read it in the first place, and my favorite paragraph:

“But perhaps nature needs us like a hostage needs her captors: nature needs us not to annihilate her, not to run her over, not to cover her with cement, not to chop her down. We can hardly admire ourselves, then, when we stop to accommodate nature’s needs: we are dubious heroes who create a peril and then save its victims, we who rescue the animals and the trees from ourselves.” —from “The Round-Earth Affair”

[Four-point-five stars for being relentlessly interesting.]

Jack O'Donnell says

Things That Are is the size of a prayer book. And you should have to put on those white gloves snooker referees wear when re-spotting a ball, when opening its pages. It should be treated with reverence and awe, because there is wisdom in these pages. It should become a religion with worshippers meeting up to discuss sentence and phrases such as the introduction to 'Silly Lilies', 'Most plants bend over backwards to cooperate with reality'. This is a book you can stay faithful to. Read every day, but only after a night of silence when the words are bright and your mind clear.

I could make promises, but I'm such a book slut. Really, anything with a cover lying open is fair game. But there was trouble with this book right away. First paragraph, opening page, 'In the seventeenth century, his Holiness the Pope adjudged beavers to be fish'. As a Catholic I know the Pope is infallible, but I didn't know when I was eating a fish supper I was eating beaver, after all I'm a vegetarian. The trouble wasn't with that sudden gift. Prayers can mutter themselves. The trouble is, if like me, you start making notes of the good, the true, the metaphors that dance, the similes that sing, phrases that go ping, then you'll find that you've copied out the whole book word for word as if the Angel Gabriel has been whispering it in your ear. Listen to this truth, 'The Moon also graces the water without getting floated off its feet, but effortlessly, while beavers have to work as hard as derricks'.

The mad disorder of order, just poetics, the wisdom of biology and mythology 'King of Babylon who was too proud' and for his penance roamed 'green of mind'. There are loose sentence in grammar that begins with the main idea at the beginning and periodic sentence that express the main idea at the end. 'Try climbing to the moon with only thirteen rungs in your backpack.' Sometimes the liminal, the transition between what is and what is not, you just can't explain, put into words, beauty in being, not unless you are Amy Leach. Genius you can genuflect to.

Perseus Q says

I don't like the taste of pumpkin and as such I don't like pumpkin soup (or any other pumpkin-based dishes). I am not saying pumpkin is intrinsically bad, or that people who like pumpkin are my inferiors; I'm just saying I don't like it.

This book is pumpkin. If you liked it, good on you. You are my equal (unlike people who liked *The Kite Runner* or *Memoirs Of A Geisha*: you are my inferiors).

I didn't get past page 12. Others may love it though. She can certainly write, but I had no taste for her writing style or subject matter. It's a book of, umm, creative essays? Anecdotes? Vignettes? Observations?

Here are three of my own observations of page 11 and 12 (which has something to do with salmon).

She verbed a noun: "...the music starts to dance the people passing by."
That was ominous.

She is adjective heavy: "...you are the music's toy, juggled into its furious torrents, jostled into its foamy jokes, assuming its sparklyblue or greenweedy or brownmuddy tinges, being driven down to the dirgy bottom where rumble-clacking stones are lit by waterlogged and melancholy sunlight..."

Allow me to re-write that extract: "...you are a musical toy juggled into torrents, assuming its muddy tinges, being driven down to the dirgy bottom where stones are lit by a melancholy sunlight..."

I prefer my version, but I didn't write the book, Amy Leach did, and she is free to write it how she sees fit.

I had no idea what she was talking about: "...even if you have built masterful Aspen castles in your mind, have toppled whole forests to throttle the writhing elements into a liveably serene personal pond; if you have longtime sculled your ingenious fins to withstand the tumble-crazy currents, there is music that will dissolve your anchors..."

Even if I what? I'm not a salmon anyway so maybe it doesn't apply to me. But even if I appropriate salmon-brain, I'm still not interested or happy with the adjectives and metaphors. It all reminds me of new poems by 19 year olds at a Creative Writing night course.

Still, many people love this, so, you know, I'm sorry I didn't finish it, but the thing is, I like stories.

Graychin says

I hoped to like this book, but I was afraid that I would not. A brief perusal at the bookshop was enough to show me that Ms Leach is one of those writers who believe that language is supposed to be a form of ecstasy. Nature knows no restraint, so why should the prose of nature writers? But too much ecstasy, especially in a non-fiction author, can tend to obscure the subject matter. In terms of verbal inventiveness, Leach writes in the tradition of Annie Dillard, you might say, but an Annie Dillard raised on Sunday comics. Where *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* is broad in scope and nothing if not serious, *Things That Are* is a collection of miniatures and full of playfulness and humor. To be sure, I rolled my eyes more than once. But quite a few of Leach's bets are winning ones. I found myself caught up unexpectedly with a fresh enthusiasm both for the possibilities of nature itself and for the possibilities of nature writing. The pieces collected here are a little uneven, to be fair. Some of the later essays are more successful. But I never expected to read something that would teach me to see panda bears in a new way until I stumbled onto 'Radical Bears in the Forest Delicious.' And there's something magical and profound, I think, in 'The Safari.' I recommend that Ms Leach dial it down a bit next time around, but I look forward to reading more of her work in the future.

Heather says

This is such a delightful book; full of short sprinklings of poetic sugar. A lovely accompaniment to your morning coffee to stave off a general hatred of the world. Do not read all at once.

Amanda Witt says

A wonderful read, with flowing language and descriptive phrases of and about everything to do with nature, the earth and the universe.

Example: Once the tree was full of tree, now it is full of holes. It is not good to pour concrete in the holes. Would you do that to your own wounds?

Jenny (Reading Envy) says

In an attempt to find a muse for my Creative Non Fiction class, my professor suggested looking into a few writers. That list included Amy Leach. She is a deep muser, combining observations about nature into her own reflections. The essays are dense and often go places I don't expect. There is a lot of humor in the pieces I liked most.

from "Please Do Not Yell at the Sea Cucumber"

Jellyfish, on the other hand, are less accountable for wherever they are. Even great paroxysms of responsibility have little effect when you are made of mucus." and ...Perhaps being both [hyperacute and hypersensitive] would very soon melt your brain and leave you quiescent, hanging transparently in the giant dancing green waters of the world."

"God" is one of my favorites, and you can hear the author read it with a bluegrass background.

"The Same Old Joy" personifies warning sirens, and I had been struggling over a tornado piece so it really made me smile.

"Comfortless" is read in its entirety and the overdramatic narrator makes it perfect. Very funny, but not everyone could get away with it.

from "Oracle"

Who needs a priestess with the divinity at hand?"

Eh, just read the whole thing.

Kristal Kitap says

Daha önce hiç deneme okumadım. "Nedir bu deneme, sever miyim acaba?" diye düşünülere tavsiyem: @monoklkitaptan "Öyle şeyler ki". Okuması çok kolay, çok akıcı. Su gibi akıp gidiyor kelimeler sayfaların üzerinde sanki. Çok dokur gibi dokumu yazan kelimelerini. O kadar zarif o kadar... nasıl anlatılır? soft ki!

Yazarın dünyasını takip etmekten büyük keyif aldım. Denemelere karşı ön yargım vardı. Okuyamam, sevemem derdim. Şimdi şans vermek için bir sebebim var. Nasıl ki öyküler de karşılamaya sağılayan bir Kurt Vonnegut varsa artık denemelerde de beni yüreklendiren bir yazar var: Amy Leach.

Jessica says

It took me a long time to finish this because I would read a handful of essays and then not pick the book up again for a while. But I did really enjoy reading it. My favorite essay was "God" - like many of the essays, the full impact of it is only felt as you finish it. My favorite quote, from the essay "The Round-Earth Affair": "But perhaps nature needs us like a hostage needs her captors: nature needs us not to annihilate her, not to run her over, not to cover her with cement, not to chop her down. We can hardly admire ourselves, then, when we stop to accommodate nature's needs: we are dubious heroes who create a peril and then save its victims, we who rescue the the animals and the trees from ourselves."

Sienna says

Amy Leach writes essays in the old style; these attempts are less concerned with making sense of the world around us — though they're rooted firmly in knowledge, love and familiarity — than with illuminating it, reminding us to wonder at our surroundings. I'm talking open-mouthed, awestruck wonder. Like Kipling's *Just So Stories* dressed smartly in science and naturalism, these short pieces of non-fiction marvel and meander and respect. Read them and find yourself in unexpected places, surrounded by life, lit up by stars in configurations that shift from bear to ladle to futuristic machine. After all,

*The air is a question and those who travel upon it travel in questions: When will I find what?
Where is who?*

Leach's ability to empathize — with animals, with plants, even with galaxies — is perhaps her greatest gift, and one of the greatest she gifts readers, as we understand what it means to have a different sort of heart.

Plants cannot stay safe. Desire for light spools grass out of the ground; desire for a visitor spools red ruffles out of twigs. Desire makes plants very brave, so they can find what they desire; and very tender, so they can feel what they find. Thus genips with hearts of honey-pulp; thus poppies with hearts of fringe, and pickerelweeds with hearts of soft pale purple frill, and tulips with tilting hearts, and foxgloves with downy freckled hearts, and the maddening-sweet hearts of the careening pea.

I feel like I know now, in some small, significant sense, what it means to be that pea, to be a panda, a goat, a field full of love-lies-bleeding, a jellyfish, the collective animals rejected from the ark in our future. Some of the language here is shiver-inducingly beautiful. "*Some memories are so fragile they bury themselves.*" Some made me laugh out loud ("*I have my mother's petals!*" "*I have my father's filaments!*") and some sent me off on mental tangents, forced to take a break before moving on to the next piece.

Because you see details, you cannot see hints of light; because you see hints of light, you cannot see details. You would need diverse eyes if you wished to be equally penetrating and sensitive.

I can't recommend this collection highly enough to anyone unable — and unwilling — to forget how connected we are to the non-human.

Maybe some people's minds are like libraries, with memories like books, and even if the exits were left open the memories would still be sitting on their shelves in alphabetical submission. Maybe some people's memories are like furniture, useful: chairs to sit in and desks to work at and urns to bequeath; and maybe among many normal memories, some people have an unsnuffable flame, which every several years gets aggravated and burns the whole mind down. You happen to have one of those minds inhabited by memories like wild animals, with wandering ways of their own: diffident giraffes, changeable mice, milling birds, clamouring

turtles, a few that harry you and many multitudes that skirt you.

Beyza says

Do?a hakk?nda, do?a gibi huzurlu bir kitap. Nas?l ki, bir ormanda, bir deniz k?y?s?nda, bir da? yamac?nda kendimize dönüyoruz, bu kitap da çe?it çe?it hayvan? ve hatta güne?i, y?ld?zlar?, ay? anlat?rken asl?nda bizden bahsediyor. Çok severek okudum - ama söylemeden geçilmemesi gereken bir ?ey de, çevirinin güzelli?i... Bazen yabanc? bir kitap okudu?umu hissettirecek kadar iyiydi. Yay?nc?s?ndan çevirmenine, editörüne, tasar?mc?s?na... Herkesin eline sa?l?k!

Melissa says

"I will miss the freshness of grass crushed under my feet, I will miss the wasp-sting, i will miss seeing the pale green praying mantis sway and hesitate and look around before jumping into the air and flying away. But who . . . who . . . does not miss everything?"

I really love the way science is given song and image and metaphor in these essays -- it's natural science meets poetry. Perfect. I find the description of things I know very original, and there is so much I don't know, that I learn about, and she makes it matter. I started entering words in my diction notebook again, because she makes me want to use better words. The essays are probably best read slowly, over time.
