

Bitten: My Unexpected Love Affair with Florida

Andrew Furman

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Furman eloquently weaves emotion and facts into his memoir to reveal his admiration of Florida's natural landscape.

Andrew Furman's *Bitten: My Unexpected Love Affair with Florida* is packed with reasons for appreciating the Sunshine State. It offers a persuasive account of why the author concludes, "Florida has seeped into my bones, gradually."

The book's twenty-one chapters, written as individual essays on the region's flora and fauna, might be read in any order. In fact, each essay presents one self-contained tale that might be savored while lounging in a beach chair or sipping mulled wine in front of the fire. But, if the book is not read from beginning to end, readers will lose the backstory of Furman's family life as it unfolds over time.

The author's purpose in writing *Bitten* is twofold: first, to convince readers that Florida's habitats provide rich grist for understanding and appreciating nature and, second, as the author says, "to offer me ballast against the extraneous and dizzying confusions of Cyberia," which is how he refers to that technospace that envelops so many people today—the younger generation, in particular.

As a professor of English and creative writing at Florida Atlantic University, Furman's writing skills are superb. Whether relating the tale of a hunt for the elusive fish known as the snook, describing a family trip to visit Florida's champion live oak tree, or chronicling the daily rituals of the ordinary squirrel, Furman crafts a good story. Too, he is candid about his trepidations: "But out in the middle of the choppy Atlantic during blackest night? A nineteen-foot length of molded fiberglass and a single gas engine between me and the unforgiving sea? ... Truth is, I'm afraid."

Woven into the tapestry of his narrative, Furman includes references to great literature and quotes from the writings of such naturalists as Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, and Marjory Stoneman Douglas. He also describes the careful research he conducts in order to authenticate facts related to the natural world of his beloved state, and he provides a variety of fun factoids, such as that snook are protrandic hermaphrodites, "meaning they reverse their sex from male to female as they age and grow."

The result is that *Bitten* is more than a memoir; it is an authoritative and literary source as well.

NANCY WALKER (Fall 2014)

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