

*Grazing the Fire: Poetry of Rangeland Science*, Editor: María E. Fernández-Giménez, ISBN: 978-1-937896-14-0, Wolverine Farm Publishing, 2018, Paperback, 72 pages, Price: \$15.95.

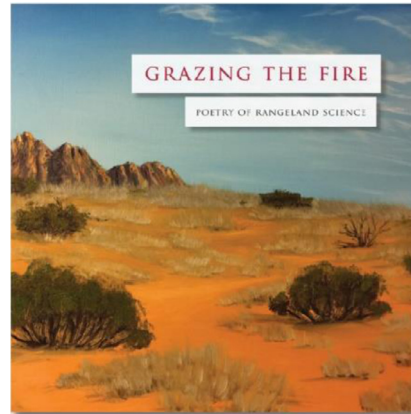
*Grazing the Fire* is a collection of rangeland poetry with a novel contribution to rangeland science. While we often speak of the science and art of range management, we rarely address the ‘art’ component, much less how to integrate the two. This book of collected poems is an effort to truly merge the science and art of range. Many of the poems in this collection are inspired by published scientific journal articles and were later transformed into poetry by a team of range scientists and professional poets. Through translating science into poetry, the authors evoke meaning beyond that spelled out in their scientific articles and remind us why we study and care for range in the first place.

I’ll start off by acknowledging that I am not a poet. I cannot speak to the quality of the prose in these poems, nor would it be appropriate to do so given that poetry is a highly personal and subjective art form. I will say that some of these poems resonated with me more than others; some were too abstract for my taste and others too literal. However, that’s why this book is a *collection* of poems, not every single contribution will hit the mark with every reader but, collectively, there’s something for everyone. In fact, the differences between the poems are a reminder that our experiences, and subsequent portrait of rangelands, are diverse and something to be celebrated.

The scientific articles that the poems are derived from span a variety of rangeland management topics – pyric herbivory, ecological thresholds, adaptive grazing management, tribal rangelands, participatory planning on public lands, and gendered range practices among others. Amusingly, one of the contributions is even the University of Idaho Rangeland Center Strategic Plan transformed into a poem, which brings me to another point; the contributions also vary in seriousness (or at least they did in my interpretation). For example, one of the poems grapples with tribal rights to rangelands and intergenerational trauma, another epitomizes the life of a Pyrenean pastoralist, and a third is a rangeland rendition of Allen Ginsberg’s “Howl”.

Overall, I found this collection of poems to be simultaneously an ‘easy-read’ as well as a thought-provoking one. On one hand, each poem or short poem series stands alone, which makes the book a quick read for those with little spare time. There is no discernable story arc across the book, and I think this is intentional. You can read the book in its entirety in one sitting or browse through and read poems (usually 1-6 pages in length with paired artwork) at your leisure. On the other hand, like most poetry, each contribution takes time to digest. Unlike scientific journal articles, in which you can generally take the words on the page at face value, poems may not come out and say what they mean. These poems are designed to paint a picture that evokes feeling from the reader, rather than tell the reader what they should feel or think. In that way, each contribution takes time to mull over and translate. Perhaps it is in this translation that I sometimes fall short in my interpretation. As previously mentioned, some of these poems I related to more than others, but I do not fault the writer, nor did it decrease my enjoyment of the book as a whole; we just have different lenses through which we’re viewing rangelands. Because, ultimately, the process of translating science into poetry is one of ‘meaning-making’ for the individual, our poems will differ. As such, this collection of poems serves as a reminder to merge the science and art of range management and find that ‘meaning’ that motivates each of us.

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# BOOK REVIEW