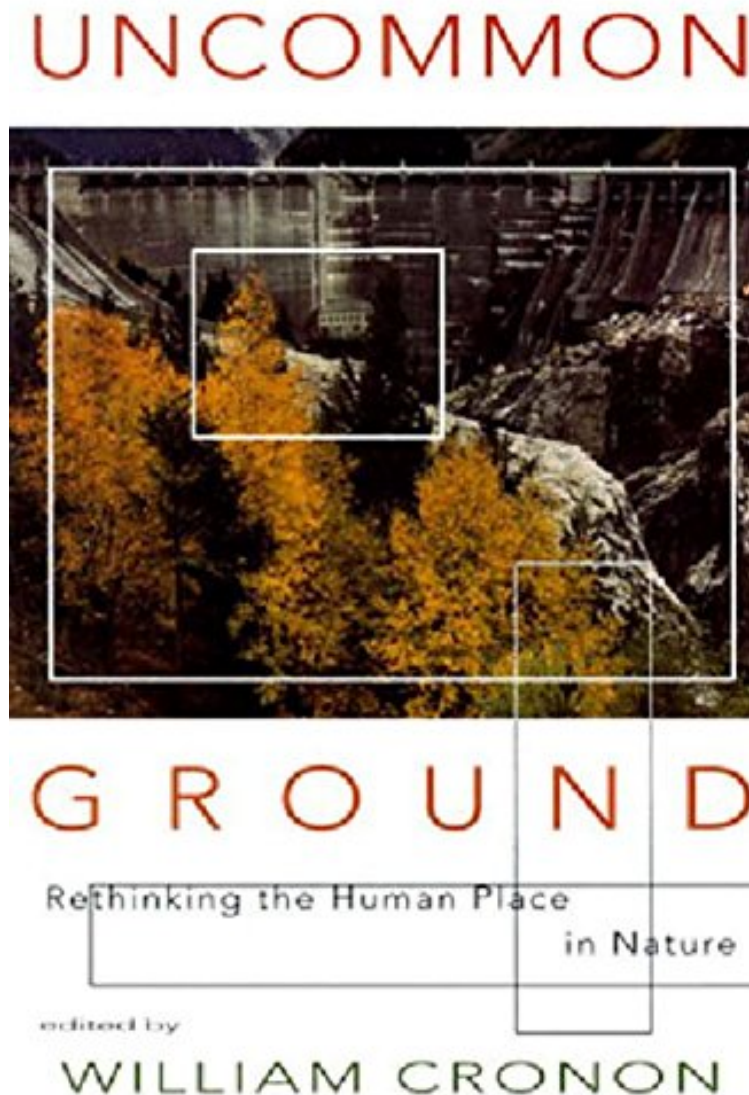


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Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature

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From W.W. Norton Co : Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Outstanding contribution to environmental studies!By Michael E. ZimmermanThis outstanding anthology is more than twenty years old, but nevertheless remains as important as ever. Cronon and the other authors in this anthology demonstrate that what nature "means" or "signifies" is by no means

universal, but instead depends on one's historical, cultural, economic, national, and personal perspectives. This anthology helped to generate a lengthy and informative debate about the "social construction" of nature, a debate that continues. Everyone in the field of environmental studies (history, philosophy, literature, anthropology, ecology, etc.) should read this anthology. 25 of 26 people found the following review helpful. **THEORIZING THE ENVIRONMENT: NOT JUST FOR SCIENTISTS** By Lara Chetkovich This book is indeed about "rethinking" the environment outside of the usual realms of political advocacy. The editor, William Cronon, is an historian, and this book is the result of a multi-disciplinary conference of scholars working in surprising niches of environmental studies. What makes this anthology so important is that many of the essays in it emphasize that our views of the environment, nature, and wilderness are "narratives" that are entangled with religion, culture, politics, and race--not just science. Cronon's introduction explores the concept of "wilderness" through time to the modern preservationist notion of a pristine, human-free zone, and the quandary that idea presents: wilderness preservation requires that all humans be removed from it. This anthology contains essays about: the "Eden narrative" in environmentalism (the Times reported today that the 's indigenous cultures are now extinct); architecture and green space; what the "work" of an environmentalist entails; the role of nationalism in the creation of the park system; a study of the cladistics of ecological thinking in the 1950s; environmentalism as social justice in the inner city, and an essay by Donna Haraway about the role of race and "nature" in science. My favorite essay, way ahead of its time, is by N. Katherine Hayles, "Simulated Nature and Natural Simulations." This essay addresses the epistemological problem in the distinguishing between the natural and the artificial, exemplified by two studies: the classical ethological modeling of animals as machines and the claim or right to aliveness for a-life computer parasites. "Uncommon Ground" is just a dip in the waters. Sorely missing from this volume is E.O. Wilson's theory of "biophilia," which has been forgotten by almost everyone but selfish-gene proponents. Also missing is an economist's perspective of how industry's "use value" of a resource explodes beyond the point where it can be gauged in an environmental context. Take Superfund sites or the current oil disaster in the Gulf of Mexico. A quick profit on a resource--boosting workers for a time--can ultimately destroy their property values, recreational and subsistence use of wildlife, and the priceless and unknown values of ancestral/family claims, biodiversity, and health for decades, if not all time. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Chuck Wedig Highly recommend this book; very interesting and informative.

A controversial, timely reassessment of the environmentalist agenda by outstanding historians, scientists, and critics. In a lead essay that powerfully states the broad argument of the book, William Cronon writes that the environmentalist goal of wilderness preservation is conceptually and politically wrongheaded. Among the ironies and entanglements resulting from this goal are the sale of nature in our malls through the Nature Company, and the disputes between working people and environmentalists over spotted owls and other objects of species preservation. The problem is that we haven't learned to live responsibly in nature. The environmentalist aim of legislating humans out of the wilderness is no solution. People, Cronon argues, are inextricably tied to nature, whether they live in cities or countryside. Rather than attempt to exclude humans, environmental advocates should help us learn to live in some sustainable relationship with nature. It is our home. Photographs

From Library Journal In this thought-provoking collection of essays edited by environmental historian Cronon, scholars such as Carolyn Merchant, Richard White, Kenneth Olwig, Donna Haraway, and others "contribute to an ongoing dialog about the environment." The book has its roots in an interdisciplinary seminar on "Reinventing Nature," held at the University of California, Irvine's Humanities Research Institute in 1994, and is similar in scope to another Reinventing Nature project entitled *Reinventing Nature?: Responses to Postmodern Deconstructionism* (Island Pr., 1995). This work explores our ideas of nature in a cultural context, for "if we hope for an environmentalism capable of explaining why people abuse the earth as they do, then the nature we study most become less natural and more cultural." By using materials such as photographs, advertisements, and paintings (termed "found objects" by Haraway) to stimulate fresh ways of viewing and responding to nature, the group has produced an enlightening work that challenges our very ideas of the natural world. Highly recommended. S. Maret, Univ. of Colorado, Denver Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. An intellectually pathbreaking book. -- Daniel J. Kevles An intellectually pathbreaking book.--Daniel J. Kevles An intellectually pathbreaking book. --Daniel J. Kevles "The best kind of book, one that shocks the reader into entirely fresh ways of thinking. --Michael Pollan" From the Back Cover Uncommon Ground is the best kind of book, one that shocks the reader into entirely fresh ways of seeing. Perhaps the most important work facing us over the next several years involves the reconception of nature and our relationship to it. This indispensable volume makes a bold start on that project attacking it with imagination, insight, originality, and wit.