



The CER Lunchtime Lectures 2024 Nature and the American Mind: The Wild, The Pastoral, The Urban, The New

In 1967, the historian Roderick Nash published a foundational book about the American idea of wilderness entitled *Wilderness and the American Mind*. However, the American Mind contains more concepts of nature than just wilderness, and so, in 2024, we will explore the many aspects of **Nature and the American Mind**.

This is a complex story that threads through our history and shapes beliefs, policies, science, and management practices today.



Concepts of American Nature

Wilderness



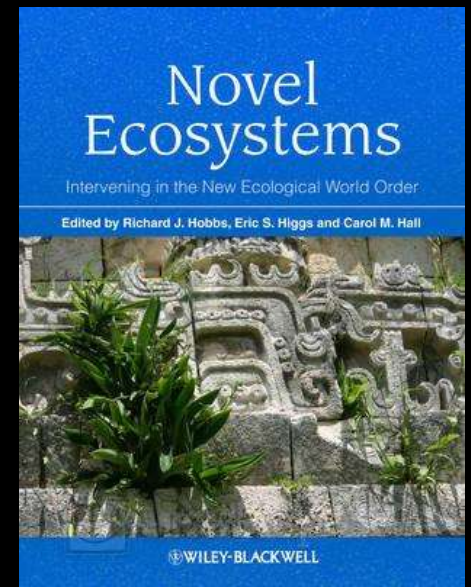
Pastoral



Urban



New





Concepts of American Nature

January	Wild Nature: The New World and Wilderness
February	Pastoral Nature: Agrarianism and Rural America
March	Urban Nature: Perspectives on Nature and the City
April	New Nature: Discordant Harmony and Ecological Resilience

Science and American Nature

May	American Natural History: Thoreau and New World Nature
June	American Biology: Natives, Immigrants and Humboldt's Progeny
July	American Ecology: Stability, Integrity and Leopold's Legacy
August	American Environmental Science: Carson and the Politics of Nature

Management of American Nature

September	Saving American Nature: Preservation, Conservation and the Wild
October	Farming with Nature: Sustainable Agriculture and the Pastoral Ideal
November	The Ecological City: Sustainability, Ecology and Urban Nature
December	The End of Nature: Prospective Ecology, Gaia and the Anthropocene



Center for Environmental Research at Hornsby Bend



The CER Lunchtime Lectures 2024

Nature and the American Mind: The Wild, The Pastoral, The Urban, The New

Free and Open to the Public – bring a lunch and learn!

Every 1st Tuesday (except January)

– University of Texas Peter O'Donnell Building (POB) Room 2.302 – 1230-2pm

Every 2nd Tuesday

– Austin Water Center for Environmental Research (CER) at Hornsby Bend – Noon-1pm

Every 2nd Thursday

– Senior Activity Center-Lamar (SAC-Lamar) at 2874 Shoal Crest Ave, South Room – Noon-1pm





Wild Nature: The New World and Wilderness



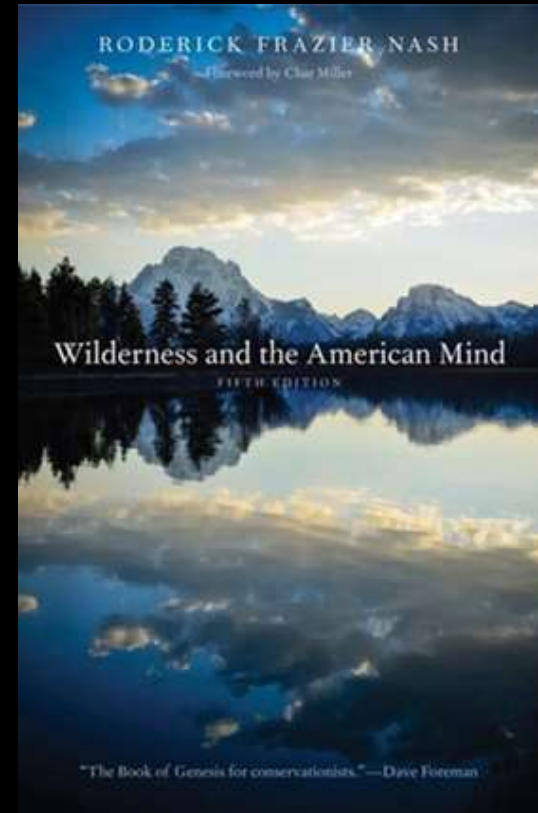
The New World Wilderness

America was seen as a wilderness by Europeans arriving in this New World – intent on subduing it and settling the land.

“wilderness is a matter of perception – part of the geography of the American mind”

Roderick Nash

Wilderness and the American Mind (1967)

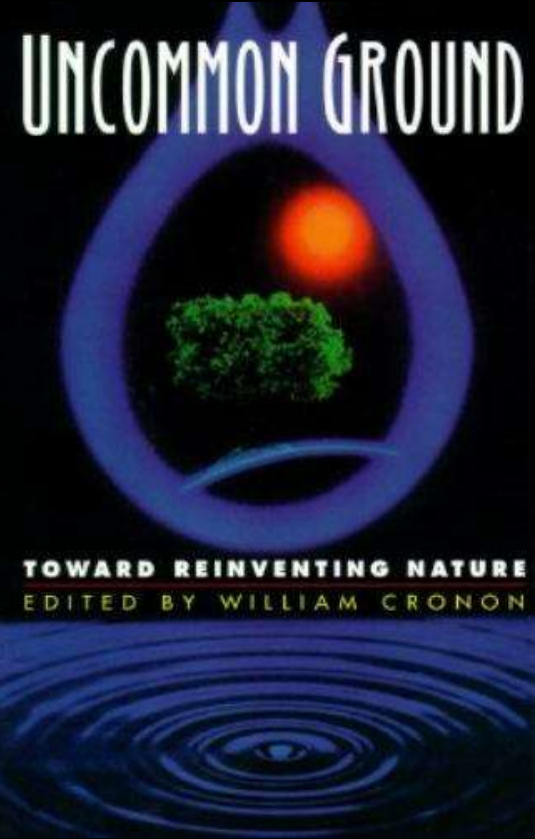


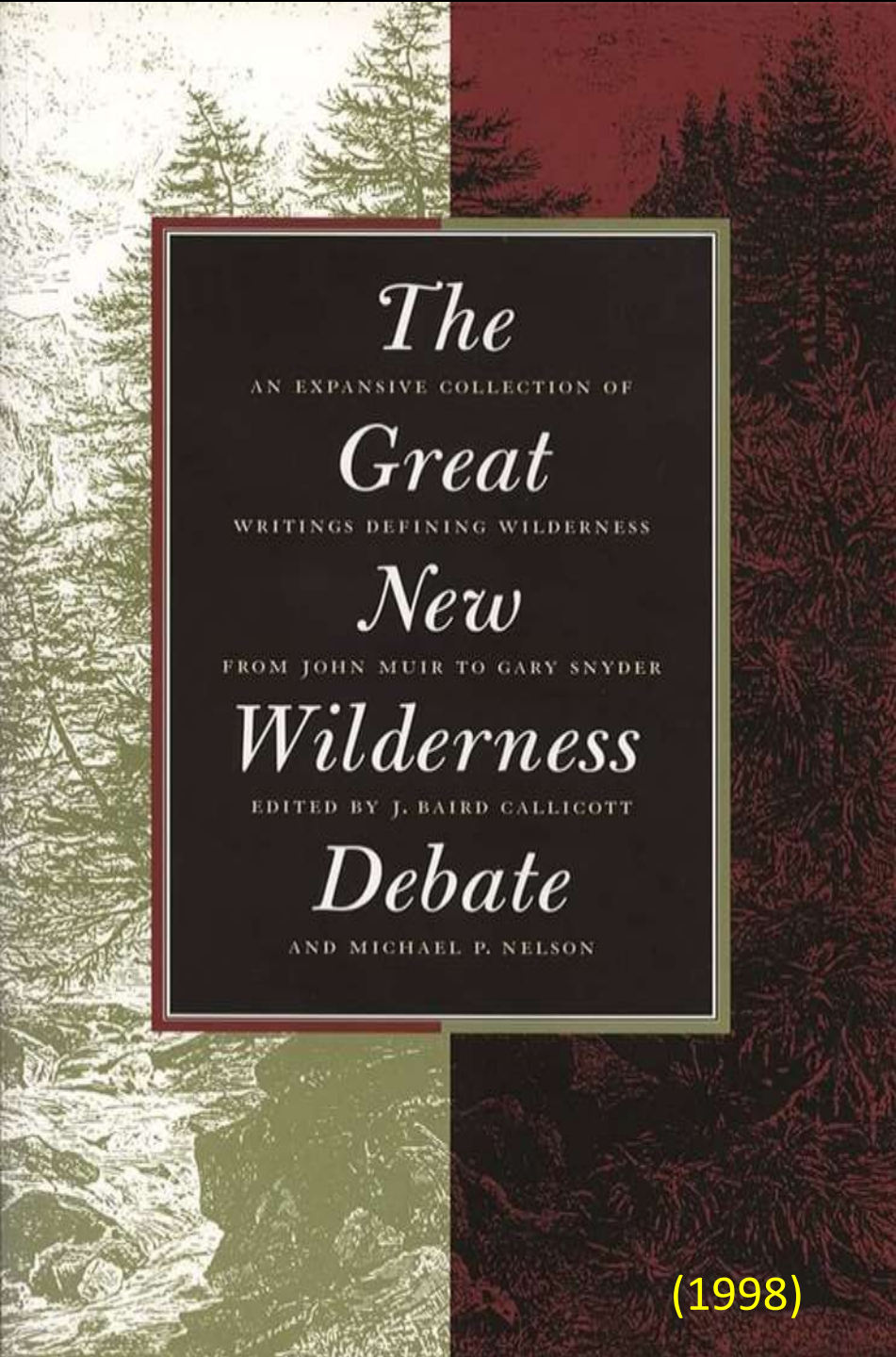
The Trouble with Wilderness

“We need to embrace the full continuum of a natural landscape that is also cultural, in which *the city, the suburb, the pastoral, and the wild each has its proper place*, which we permit ourselves to celebrate without needlessly denigrating the others.”

William Cronon “The Trouble with Wilderness or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature”

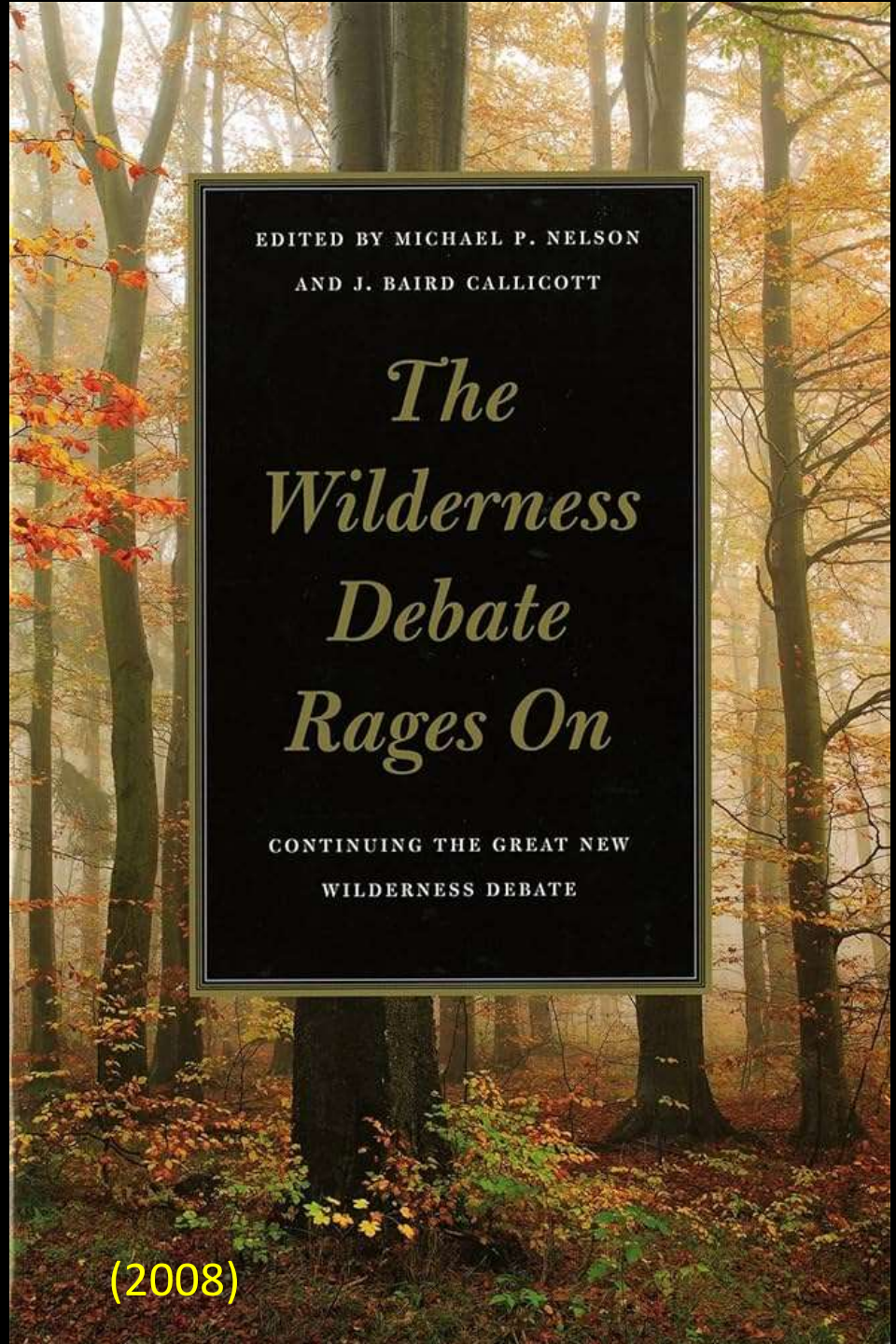
Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature
(1995)





The
AN EXPANSIVE COLLECTION OF
Great
WRITINGS DEFINING WILDERNESS
New
FROM JOHN MUIR TO GARY SNYDER
Wilderness
EDITED BY J. BAIRD CALLICOTT
Debate
AND MICHAEL P. NELSON

(1998)



EDITED BY MICHAEL P. NELSON
AND J. BAIRD CALLICOTT

The
Wilderness
Debate
Rages On

CONTINUING THE GREAT NEW
WILDERNESS DEBATE

(2008)

A Three-point Critique of the Received Concept of Wilderness

J. Baird Callicott

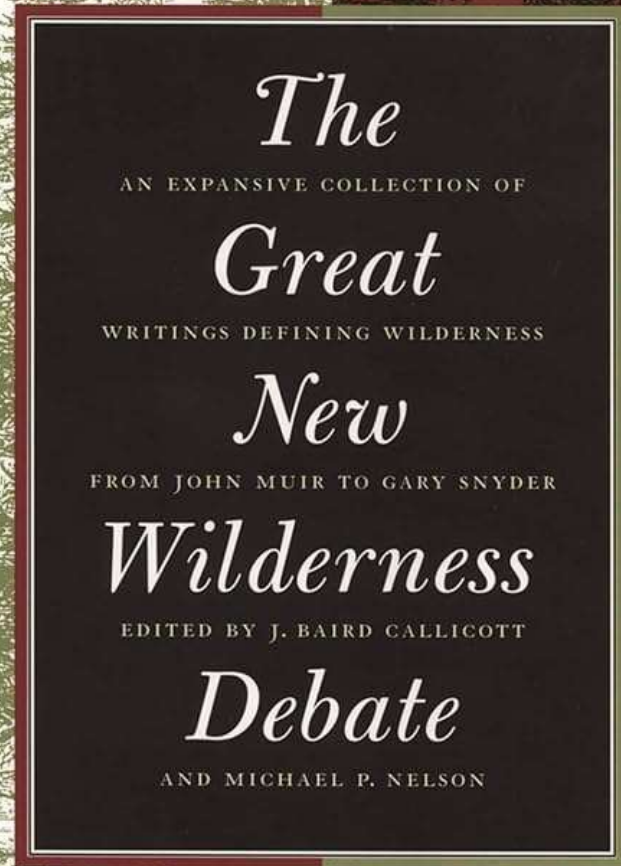
“First, the concept perpetuates the pre-Darwinian Western metaphysical dichotomy between “man” and nature.

Second, the wilderness idea is woefully ethnocentric. It ignores the historic presence and effects on practically all the world’s ecosystems of aboriginal people.

Third, it ignores the fourth dimension of nature, time. Trying to preserve in perpetuity...the ecological status quo ante is unnatural as it is impossible.

Change is as natural as it is inevitable.”

(1998)

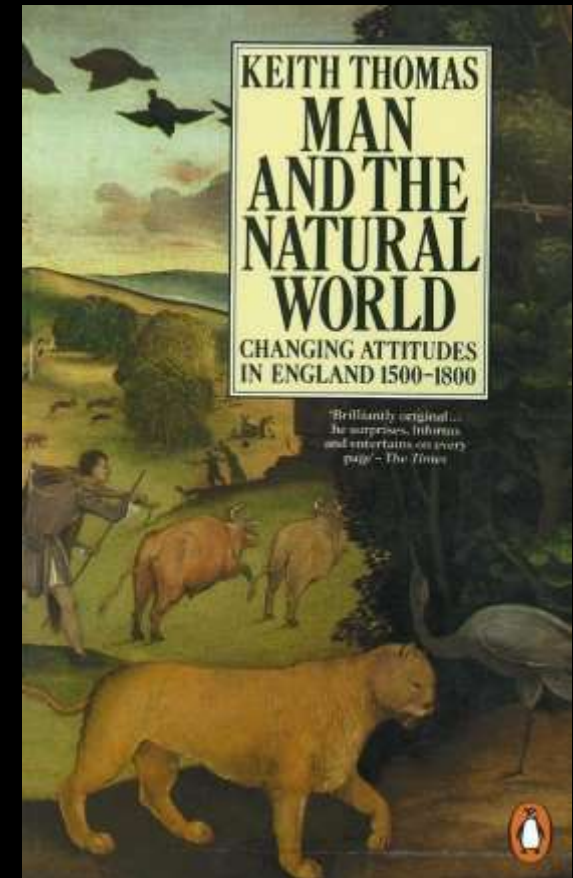
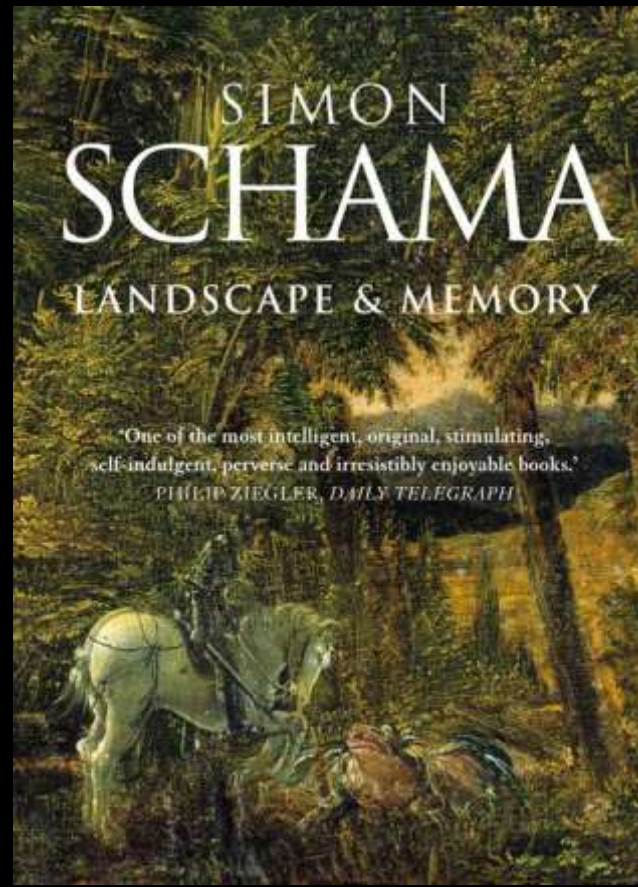
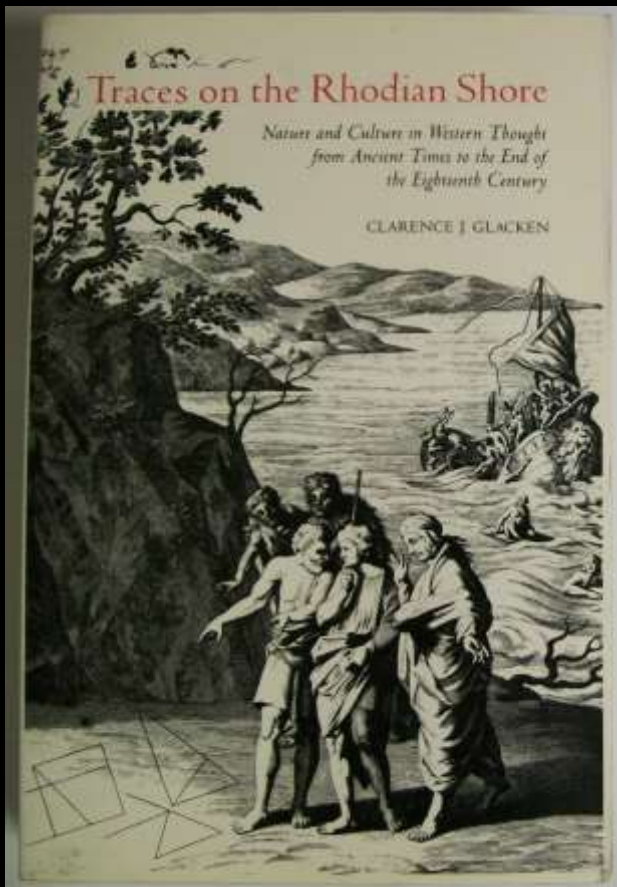


The Old World

Wild Nature and Wilderness

The idea of nature contains, though often unnoticed, an extraordinary amount of human history.

Raymond Williams, "Ideas of Nature" 1983



Old World Concept of Wildness Dichotomy - Humans vs. Wild Nature

Mythic Wild Nature

The Epic of Gilgamesh (2000BC)

The story of a wild man Enkidu in opposition to Gilgamesh who personifies civilization. In the story, Enkidu is defeated by Gilgamesh and becomes civilized.

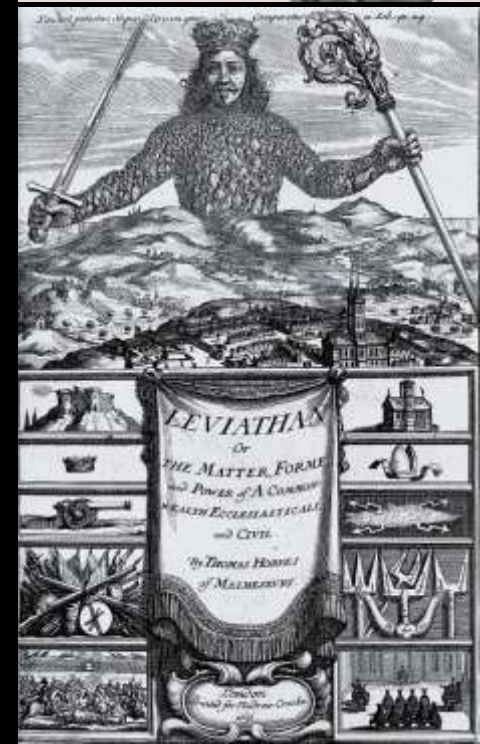
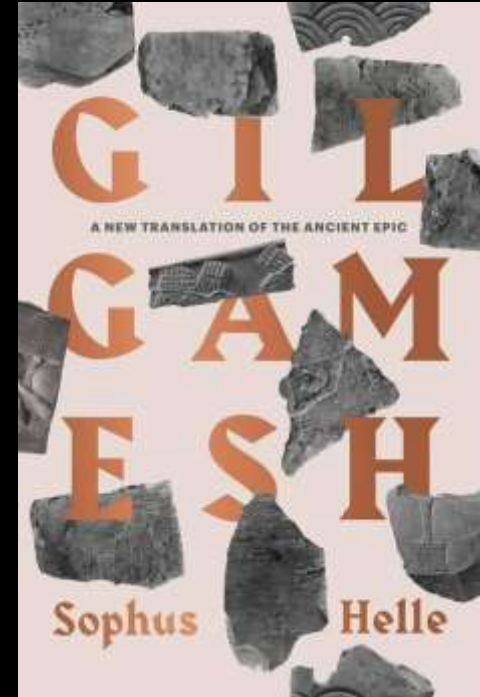
- Wild Nature - Violent, Chaotic, Uncontrolled, Untamed
- Control of Nature – God, gods - Greek God of Nature – Pan (pandemonium, panic)
- “Savages/Barbarians” - To become human we must tame ourselves

Political “State of Nature”

Leviathan Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679)

The “State of Nature” – that which is not controlled by “human society” or “human laws” (social contract)

Life is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short"



Old World Concept of Wilderness

Etymology - *wildeornes* meaning land inhabited only by wild animals, which in turn derives from *wildeor* meaning wild beast (wild + deor = beast, deer)

"solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (where humans are prey)



Abrahamic religions - Concept of Wilderness

Words translated as “wilderness” occur nearly 300 times in the Bible.

A formative Hebrew memory is the years of “wandering in the wilderness,” mixing experiences of wild landscape, of searching for a promised land, and of encounters with God.

Old Testament – *He findeth him in a desert land, in the howling waste of the wilderness.* Deuteronomy 32:10



New Testament - Jesus in the Wilderness – Temptation and finding your true self

Wilderness - “a desert; a tract of solitude and savageness”
Samuel Johnson *Dictionary of the English Language* 1755



Old World Iterative Ideas of Nature

Cicero (d. 43BC) and the Iterative Natures

First nature - wilderness - is the realm of the gods, wild animals, and it is also the raw material for second nature.

Second nature - In *De natura deorum* Cicero wrote,

"We sow corn, we plant trees, we fertilize the soil by irrigation, we dam the rivers and direct them where we want. In short, by means of our hands we try to create as it were a second nature within the natural world."

Third nature - Jacopo Bonfadio 1541 - formal gardens make a "third nature, which I would not know how to name."

A distant mountain (first nature)
then cultivated agricultural land (second nature)
then a formal garden (third nature).

Frontispiece to l'Abbé de Vallemont's
Curiositez de la nature et de l'art
(1705)



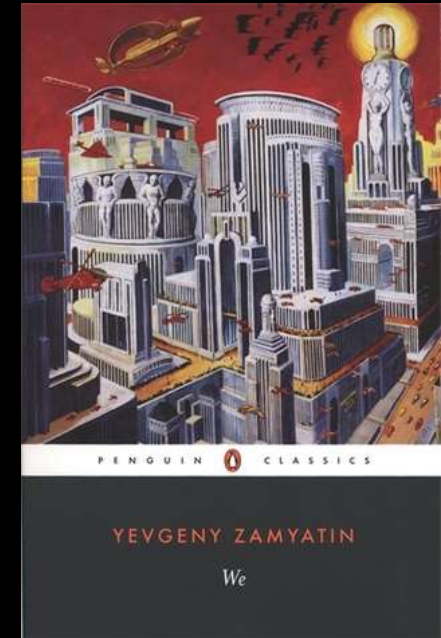
Western Culture and Wild Nature

Irrational, Ugly Nature vs. Rationalism and Modernity

“Oh, how great and divinely limiting is the wisdom of walls. This Green Wall is, I think, the greatest invention ever conceived.

Man ceased to be a wild animal the day he built the first wall; Man ceased to be a wild man only on the day when the Green Wall was completed, when, by this wall we isolated our machine-like, perfect world from the irrational, ugly world of trees, birds, and beasts.”

- Eugene Zamyatin, *We* (1921)



The Howling Wilderness

The wilderness is a locale for intense experiences—of stark need for food and water, of isolation, of danger and divine deliverance, of renewal, of encounters with God...and with predators, savages and Satan.



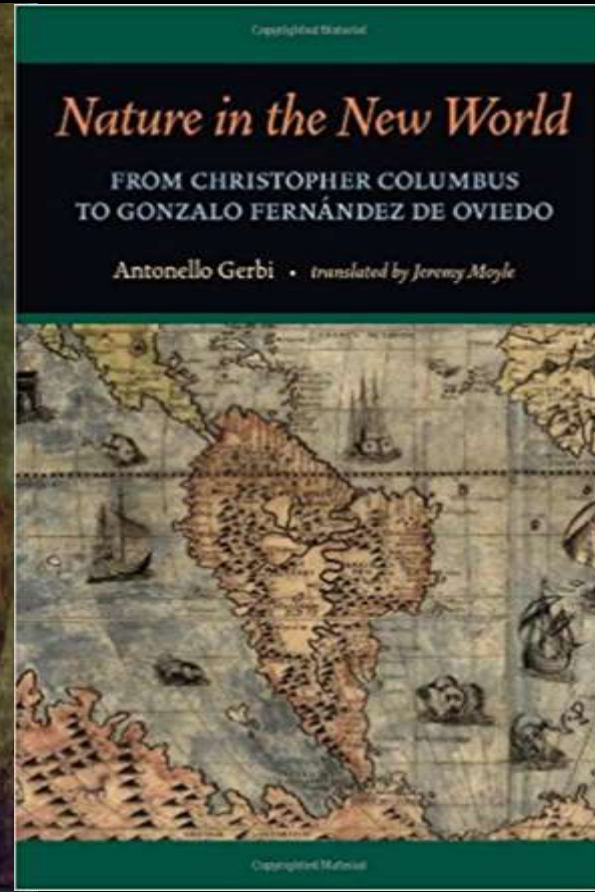
As well as a geography of wilderness, there is a mythology, a theology, a psychology and a commerce of wilderness.



Generally speaking, a howling wilderness does not howl: it is the imagination of the traveler that does the howling.

(Henry David Thoreau)

Encountering and Comprehending New World Wilderness



First Impressions 1500s -1600s

Howling New World Wilderness

The Pilgrim leader William Bradford's well-known description of the forbidding Cape Cod shoreline as seen from the deck of the Mayflower in 1620. He depicts it as

“a hidious and desolate wildernes, full of wild beasts and wild men.”



Outside the Puritan settlements there was nothing but,

"A waste and howling wilderness, where none inhabited but hellish fiends and brutish men that Devils worshipped."

- Michael Wigglesworth (1631–1705)



Changing Old World Idea of Wild Nature 1700s and 1800s

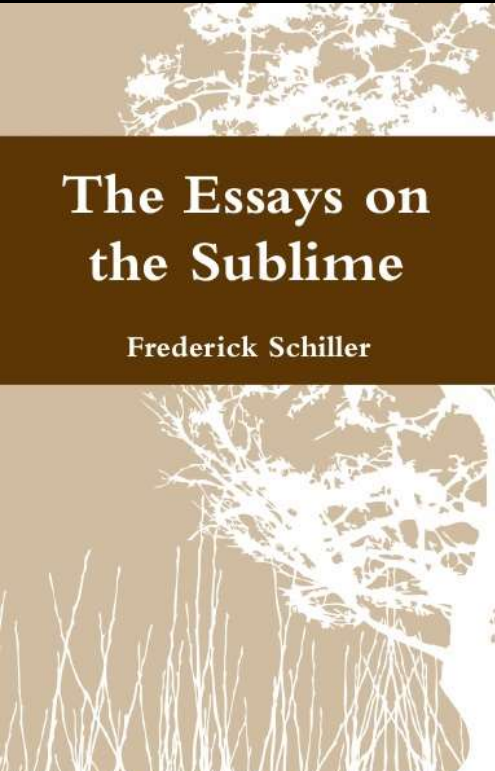
German Romanticism – A New Aesthetic of Nature The Sublime and the Beautiful

Beautiful – “Delight consistent with reason”

Sublime – Awe, Terror, overwhelm reason

“Only if the sublime is married to the beautiful and our sensitivity to both has been shaped in equal measure, are we **complete citizens of nature**, without on that account being its slaves, and without squandering our citizenship in the intelligible world.”

Schiller Concerning the Sublime 1796

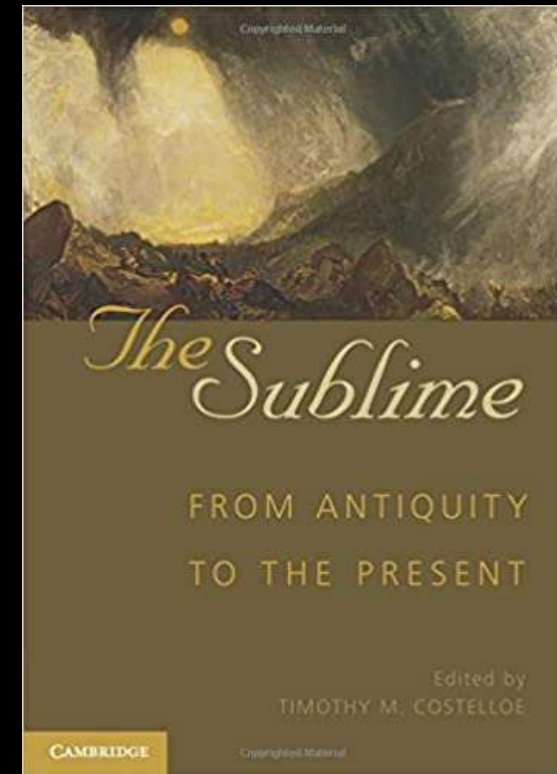


The Essays on the Sublime

Frederick Schiller



Friedrich Schiller
(1759-1805)



German Romanticism - The Limits of Reason

Intense emotional response to Wild Nature “a tract of solitude and savageness”

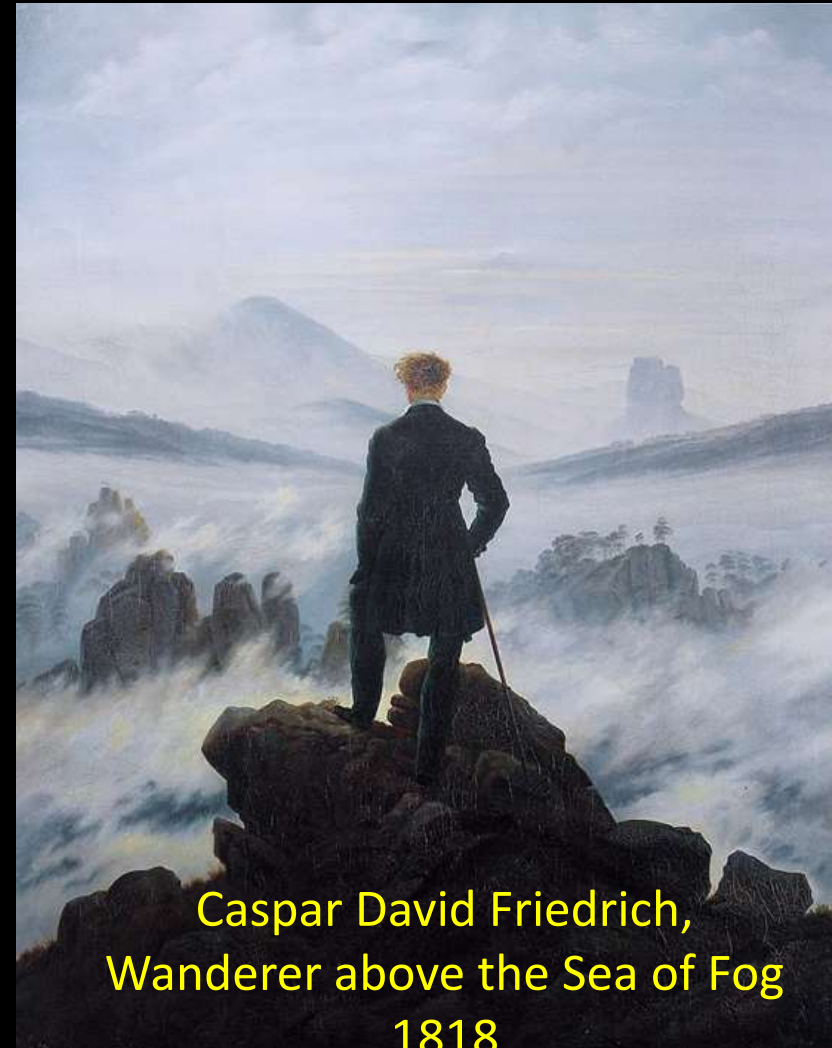
- An authentic source of aesthetic experience - apprehension, horror, terror, and awe
- The Will - "heroic" individualists and artists raise the quality of society.

FAUST



1790 - 1831

Johann Wolfgang
Von Goethe



Caspar David Friedrich,
Wanderer above the Sea of Fog

1818



Wordsworth & Coleridge

*Lyrical Ballads
& Other Poems*



William Wordsworth *S. T. Coleridge*

The Re-invention of English Wild Nature

English Romantic Concept of Nature

The Romantic period in England, begins in 1798, the year of the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads* by Wordsworth and Coleridge.

For the Romantics –

- Nature was closer to *a spiritual experience*, a natural religion of the sublime, as *opposed to traditional institutionalized religion*.
- Nature is *a vehicle for self consciousness*. The Romantic preoccupation with natural phenomena amounts to a search for *the true self, for one's real identity*.
- Nature is *a refuge* from the artificial constructs of civilization.
- “Complete Citizens of Nature”

Self Actualization

Romanticism - a new and restless spirit

Romanticism embodied -

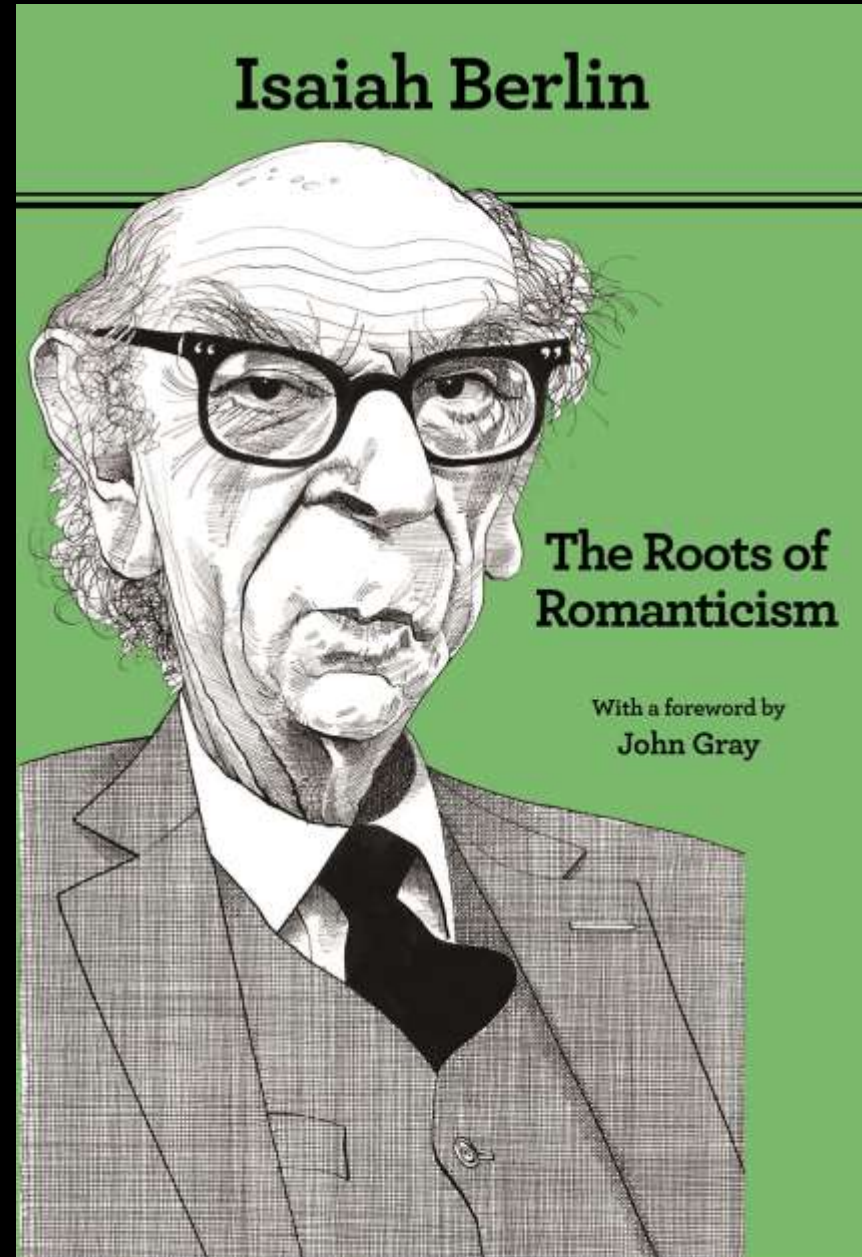
"a new and restless spirit, seeking violently to burst through old and cramping forms, a nervous preoccupation with perpetually changing inner states of consciousness, a longing for the unbounded and the indefinable, for perpetual movement and change, an effort to return to the forgotten sources of life, a passionate effort at self-assertion both individual and collective, a search after means of expressing an unappeasable yearning for unattainable goals."

“Complete Citizens of Nature”

Germany – Goethe, Schiller (Humboldt)

England – Wordsworth, Coleridge

America – Emerson, Thoreau, Muir



Edited by Henry Hardy

Transcendentalism – The American Concept of Nature

The Romantic idea of Nature transformed into the American Transcendentalist idea of Nature in Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay, "Nature" (1844).

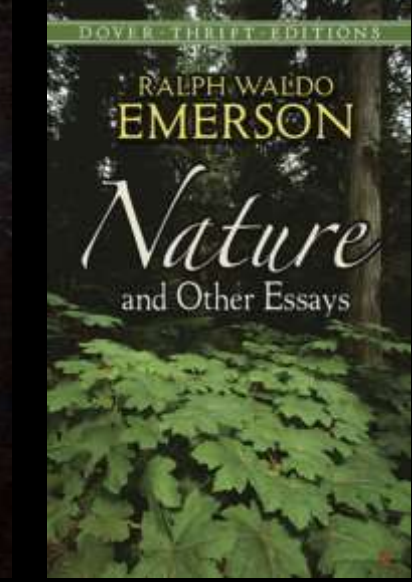
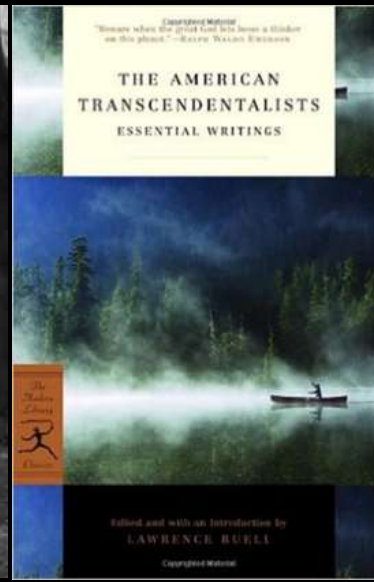
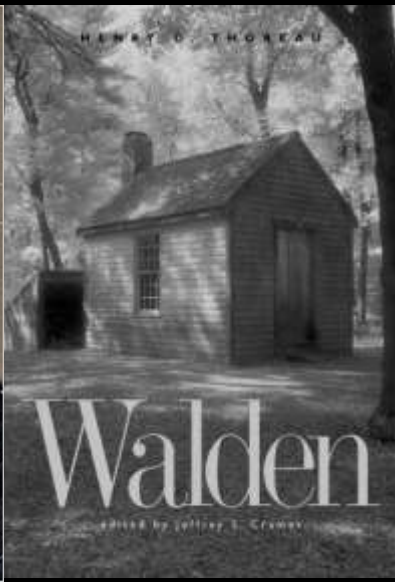
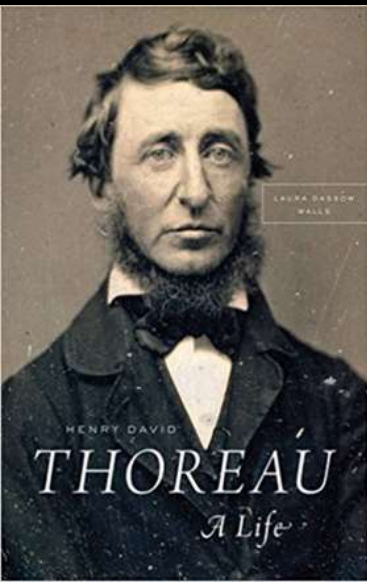
Nature contact as therapy for a diseased, over-civilized heart.

- Nature is a source of sensations--healthy feelings.
- Humans can discover emotional health in nature.
- Such health leads to moral and spiritual clarity.

Thoreau's *Walden* (1854)

Nature is a refuge from the artificial constructs of civilization – the Town and City.

“Complete Citizens of Nature”



As well as a geography of wilderness, there is *an aesthetic*, a mythology, a theology, a psychology and a commerce of wilderness.



Generally speaking, a howling wilderness does not howl: it is the imagination of the traveler that does the howling.

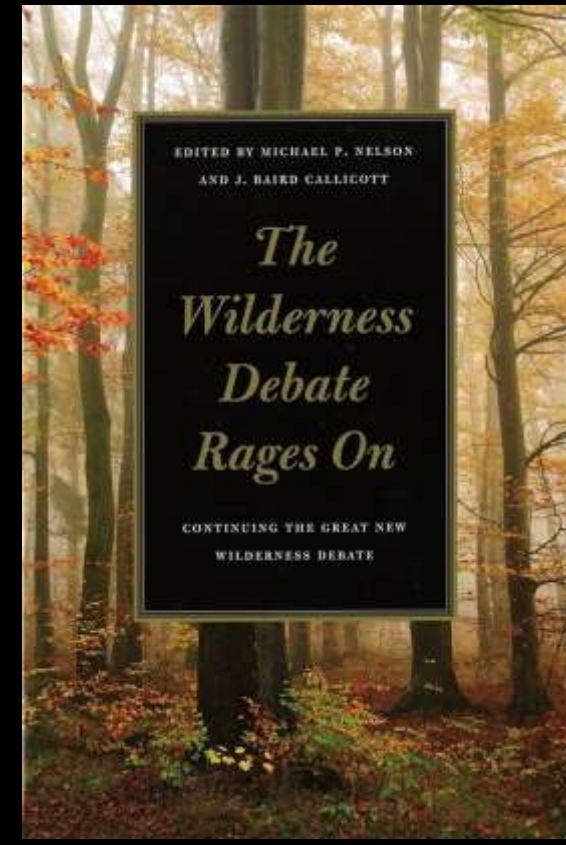
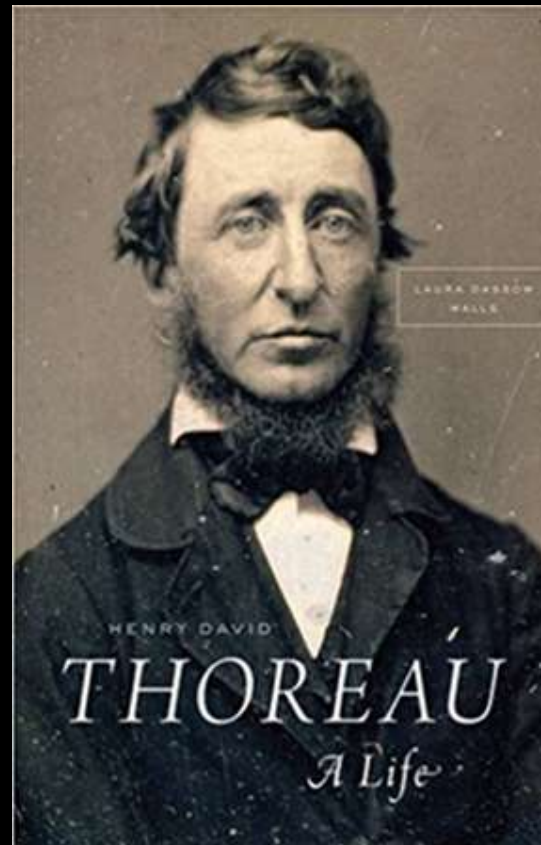
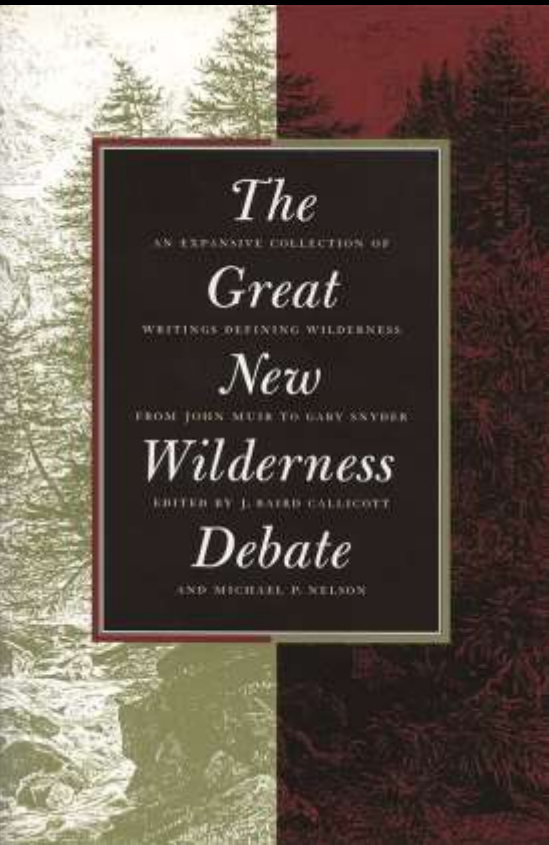
(Henry David Thoreau)

A Three-point Critique of the Received Concept of Wilderness

J. Baird Callicott

“The concept perpetuates the pre-Darwinian Western metaphysical dichotomy between “man” and nature.”

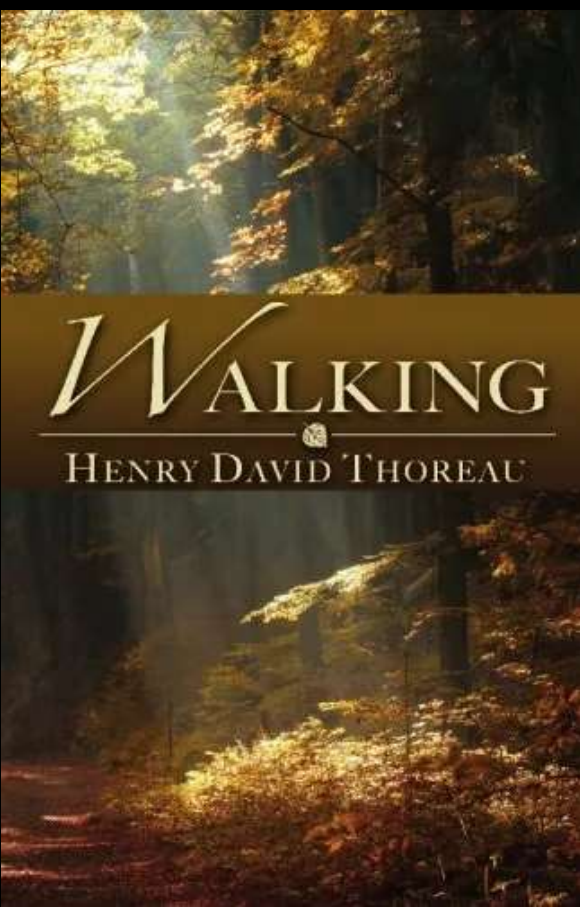
We go to wilderness for self actualization with that which is *fundamentally other than human.*



Comprehending and Defending “Fundamentally Other” Wild Nature

American Nature vs Old World Nature

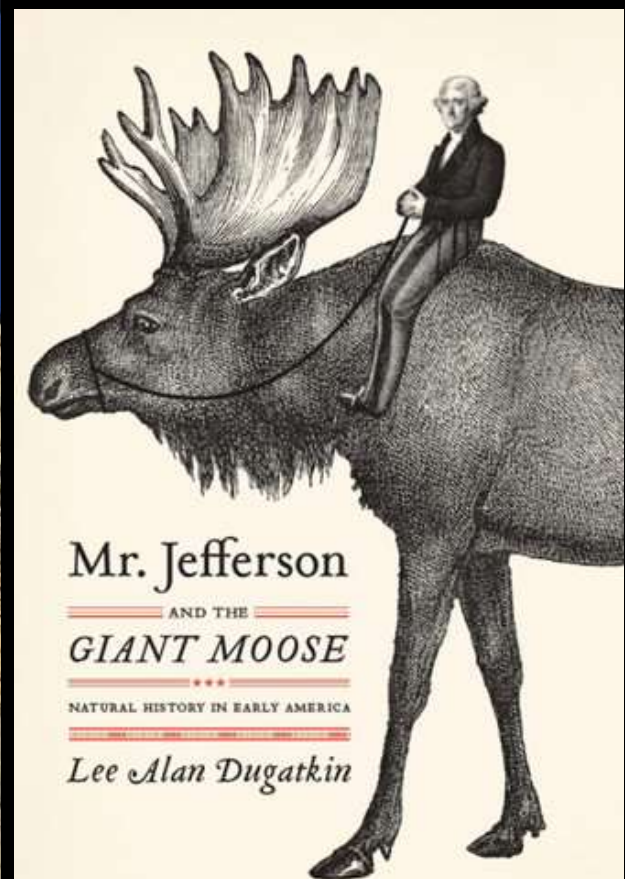
The Theory of Degeneracy



The Dispute of the New World

THE HISTORY OF A POLEMIC, 1750–1900

Antonello Gerbi • translated by Jeremy Moyle

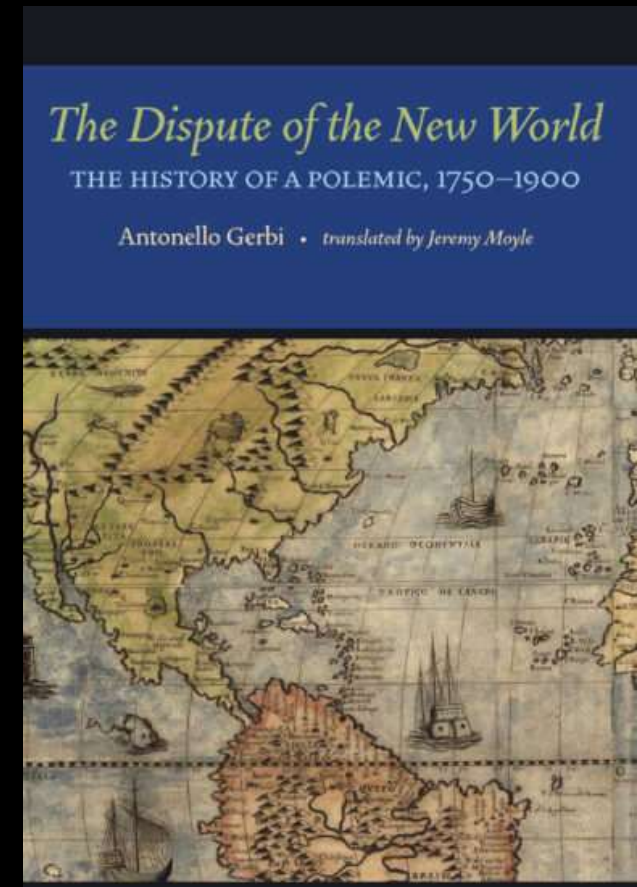
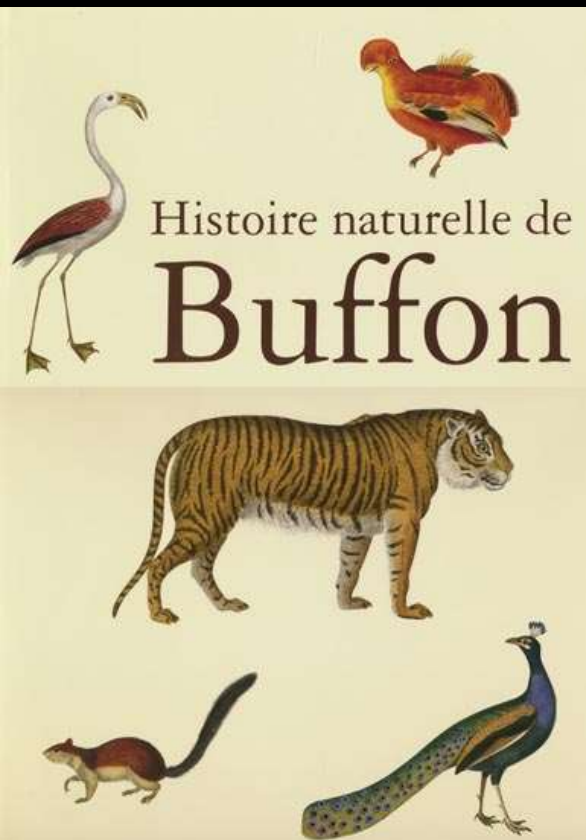


Theory of Degeneracy of American Nature - Comte de Buffon 1707–1788

Comte de Buffon 1707–1788

French naturalist, mathematician, cosmologist

In 1749, he began publishing volumes of what would become a 6,000-page, 44 volume encyclopedia of natural history called *Histoire Naturelle*.



Theory of Degeneracy of American Nature

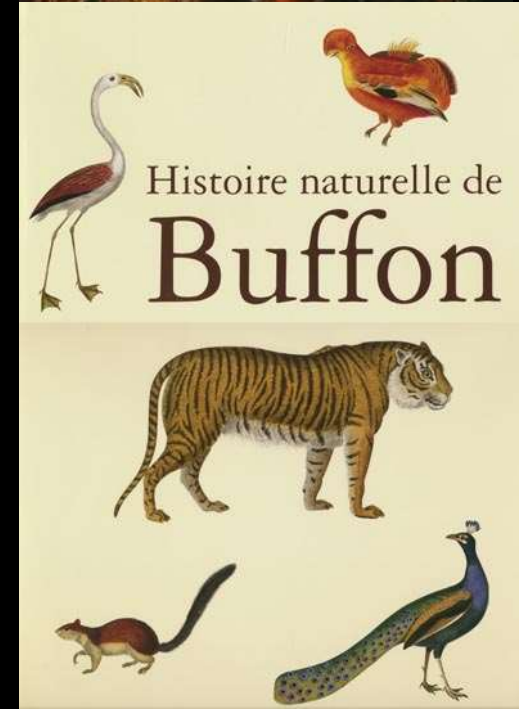
In the 5th Volume of *Histoire Naturelle*, published in 1766, he presented the theory of degeneracy of American Nature.

“Elephants belong to the Old Continent and are not found in the New...one cannot find there any animal that can be compared to the elephant for size and shape...

Living nature is thus much less active there, much less varied, and we may even say, less strong. The horses, donkeys, oxen, sheep, goats, pigs, dogs, and all these animals, I say, became smaller there; and...

...those which were not transported there...those, in short, common to both worlds, such as wolves, foxes, deer...are likewise considerably smaller in America than in Europe...

There is thus, in the combination of the elements and other physical causes, *something antagonistic to the increase of living nature in this new world...*”



Theory of Degeneracy of American Nature

Native Americans

“...here reduced, shrunken beneath this ungenerous sky and in this empty land, where man, scarce in number, was thinly spread, a wanderer, where far from making himself master of this territory as his own domain, nor tamed the waters, nor governed the rivers, nor worked the earth, *he was himself no more than an animal...the savage is feeble and small in his organs of generation; he has neither body hair nor beard, and no ardor for the female of his kind... he lacks vivacity, and is lifeless in his soul.*”

Degenerating New World

Any species imported into America for economic reasons would soon succumb to its new environment and produce lines of puny, feeble offspring, which applied equally well to transplanted Europeans and their descendants in America.



The Dispute of the New World
THE HISTORY OF A POLEMIC, 1750–1900
Antonello Gerbi • translated by Jeremy Moyle

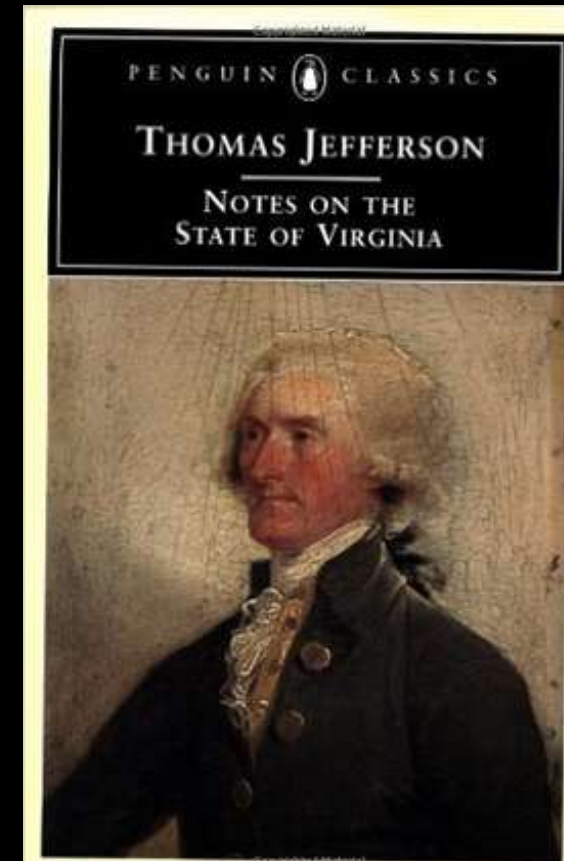


Theory of Degeneracy of American Nature

Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) - U.S. Minister to France 1784-89

If the theory of American degeneracy took hold in Europe the long-term consequences could impact trade with and immigration too the United States.

Engaged in scientific debate with the Comte de Buffon by demonstrating that American wildlife is as large or larger than their European counterparts.



Jefferson and the Defense of American Nature

In his *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785) Thomas Jefferson responded to Buffon's claims. His evidence included comparative tables of weights of animal species from America and Europe, lists of species endemic to each part of the world (the American list was four times as long)

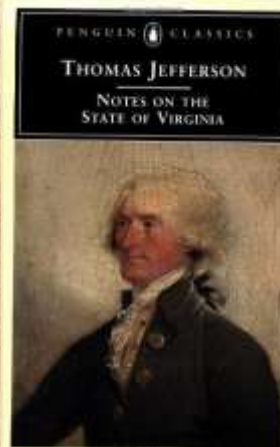
He also included a passionate defense of Native Americans and reprinted a speech by Chief Logan of the Shawnees that became much admired in Europe.

28

Comparative views of the Quadrupeds of Europe and of America

I. Aborigines of both.		II. Aborigines of one only.		III. Domestic animals.	
Europe	America	Europe	America	Europe	America
Mammoth.		Sanglier. Wildboar.	280.	Tapirol. Wild sheep.	534.
Buffala. Bison.	*1000.	Mouflon. Wild sheep.	56.	Elk. ^{same horned} same horned .	150.
White bear. Our polar.		Bouquetin. Wild goat.		Puma.	
Cambou. Renne.		Lievre. Hare.	7.6	Jaguar.	210.
Bear. Ours.	153.7 *410.	Lepin. Rabbit.	3.4	Cabiai.	109.
Elk. Blam. Original pale.		Putoris. Polecat.	3.3	Tamandua.	109.
Red deer. Cerf.	288.8 *273.	Genette.	3.1	Cougar of N. America.	70.
Fallows deer. Daim.	167.8	Desman. Muskrat.		Cougar of S. America.	59.4
Wolf. Loup.	69.8	Esquival. Squirrel.	12.	Ocelot.	
Roe. Chevreuil.	58.7	Hermione. Ermine.	8.2		

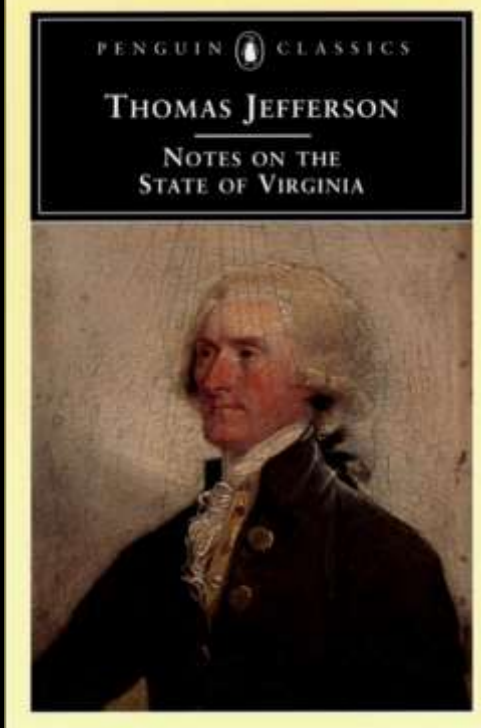
place these three tables successively one after another & not side by side



Jefferson – The Mammoth

Buffon - “Elephants belong to the Old Continent and are not found in the New...one cannot find there any animal that can be compared to the elephant for size and shape”

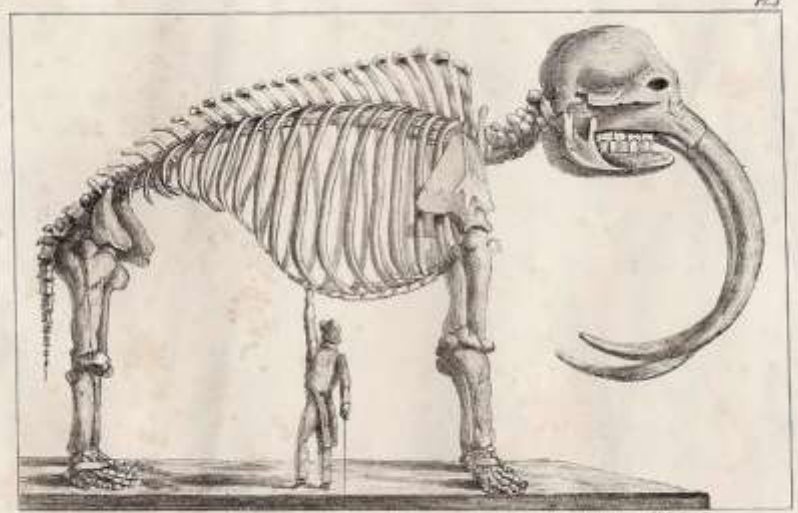
Jefferson - “The truth is, that a Pigmy and a Patagonian, a Mouse and a Mammoth, derive their dimensions from the same nutritive juices... what intermediate station they shall take may depend on soil, on climate, on food, on a careful choice of breeders. But all the manna of heaven would never raise the mouse to the bulk of the mammoth.”



A comparative View of the Quadrupeds of Europe and of America.

I. *Aboriginals of both.*

	Europe.	America.
	lb.	lb.
Mammoth		*1800
Buffalo. Bifon		
White bear. Ours blanc.		
Carribou. Renne.		
Bear. Ours.	153.7	*410
Elk. Elan. Original palmated		
Red deer. Cerf.	288.8	*273

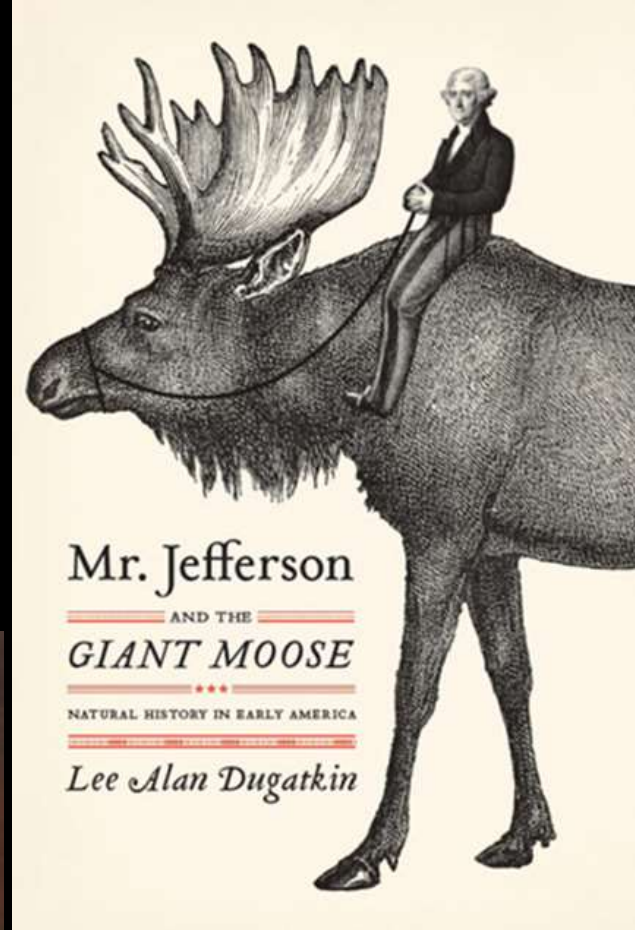


*Spuchette d'un jeune Mammouth
Dessiné en l'an 6 de Philadelphie*

The Giant Moose

Jefferson ships a very large, stuffed American moose
France to give Buffon.

“This moose became a symbol for Jefferson – a symbol of
the quashing of European arrogance in the form of
degeneracy.” Dugatkin, 2009

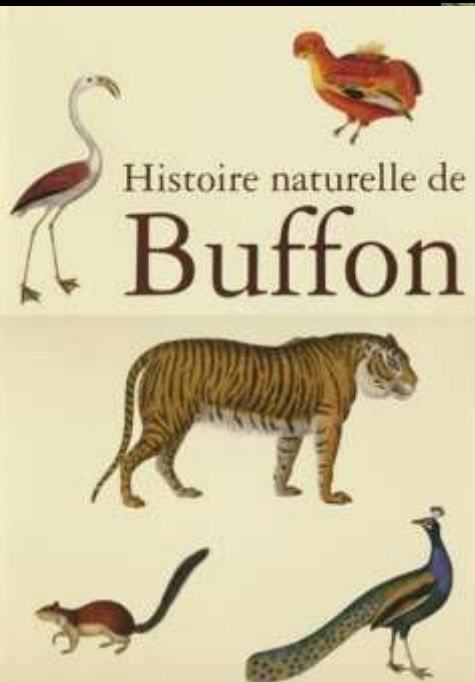


Theory of Degeneracy of American Nature – The American Swamp

Buffon “...the crude state in which nature is found...in this state of abandon, everything languishes, decays, stifles. The air and the earth, weighed down by the moist and poisonous vapors, cannot purify themselves nor profit from the influence of the star of life.

The sun vainly pours down its liveliest rays on this cold mass ... it will never produce anything but humid creatures, plants, reptiles, and insects, and cold men and feeble animals are all that it will ever nurture.”

America is a land of swamps, where life putrefies and rots.



Cultural Impact of the Theory of American Degeneracy 1800s

American Nature – “Great unerring Nature once seems wrong”

Hegel (1816)

“America has always been and still shows itself *physically and spiritually impotent.*”
and animals in the New World are “in every way *smaller, weaker and more cowardly*”

American birds were mostly mute and would only sing when they lived in a land that no longer “resounds with almost inarticulate tones of degenerate men.”

Keats – *Lines to Fanny* (1819)

Where shall I learn to get my peace again?
To banish thoughts of that most hateful land,

Whose rank-grown forests, frosted, black, and blind,
Would fright a Dryad; whose harsh herbag'd meads
Make lean and lank the starv'd ox while he feeds;
There flowers have no scent, birds no sweet song,
And great unerring Nature once seems wrong.

“the humanity of the United States can never reach the sublime”

The Dispute of the New World
THE HISTORY OF A POLEMIC, 1750–1900
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Thoreau's Defense of American Nature and Reinvention of Wild(er)ness

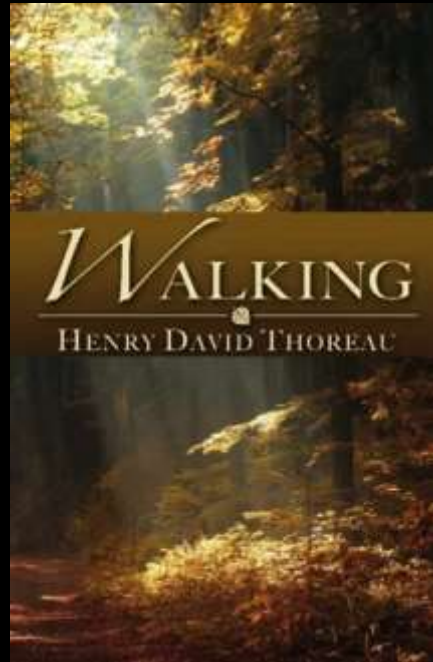
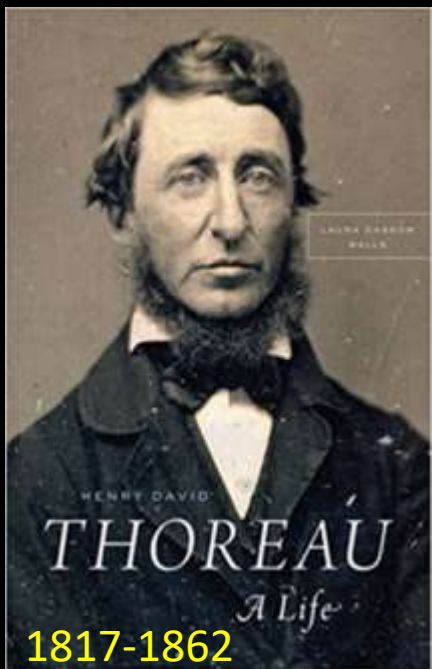
Henry David Thoreau

Wildness is the preservation of the world

“The West of which I speak is but another name for the Wild; and what I have been preparing to say is, *that in Wildness is the preservation of the world.*”

Every tree sends its fibers forth in search of the Wild. The cities import it at any price. Men plow and sail for it. From the forest and wilderness come the tonics and barks which brace mankind...Hope and the future for me are not in lawns and cultivated fields, not in towns and cities, but in the *impervious and quaking swamps.*

SWAMPS??

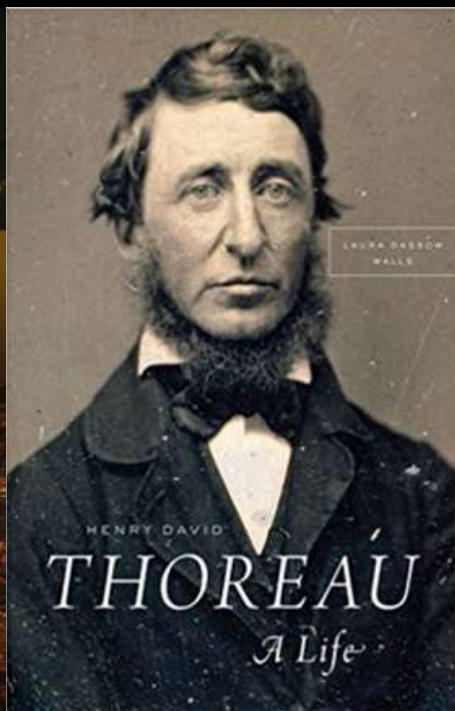
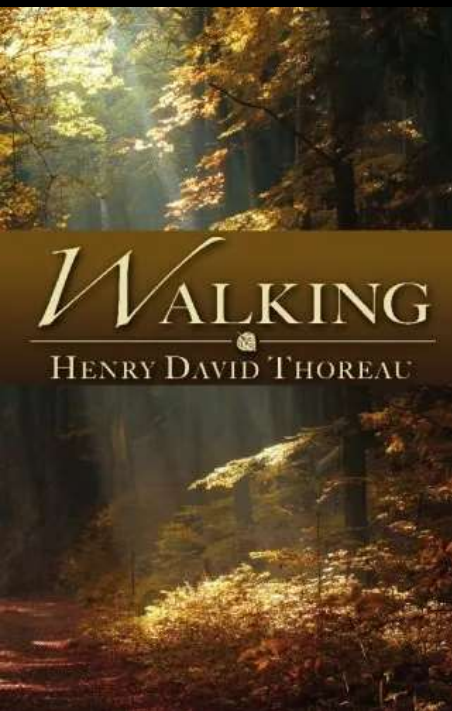


Thoreau's Defense of American Nature and Reinvention of Wild(er)ness

"This statement will do at least to set against Buffon's account of this part of the world and its productions.

For I believe that climate does thus react on man — as there is something in the mountain air that feeds the spirit and inspires. Will not man grow to greater perfection intellectually as well as physically under these influences?

Yes; though you may think me perverse, if it were proposed to me to dwell in the neighborhood of the most beautiful garden that ever human art contrived, or else of a dismal swamp, *I should certainly decide for the swamp.*"

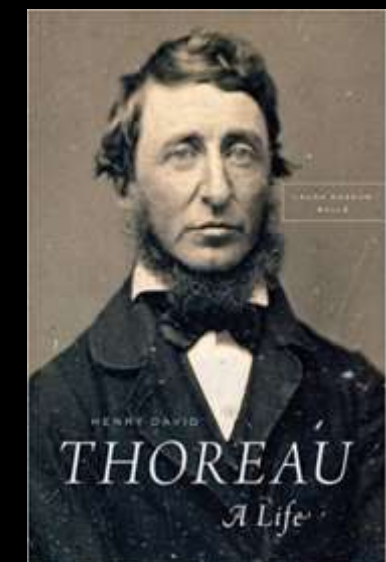
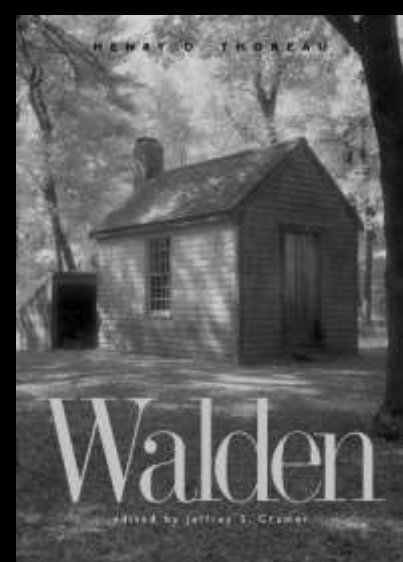
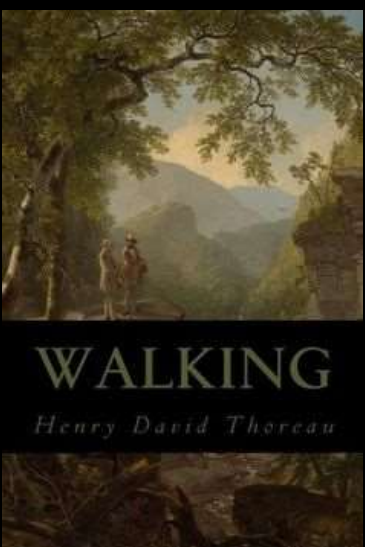


The Dismal Swamp and the American Geography of Mind – “Re-creation”

“When I would *recreate* myself, I seek the darkest wood, the thickest and most interminable, and, to the citizen, most dismal swamp.

I enter a swamp as a sacred place — a *sanctum sanctorum*. There is the strength — the marrow of Nature. The wild wood covers the virgin mould, — and the same soil is good for men and for trees.”

We go to wilderness for self actualization with that which is fundamentally other than human.

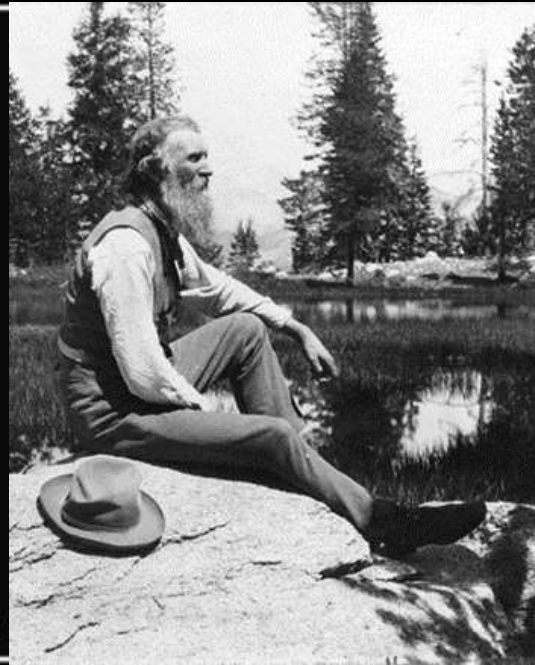
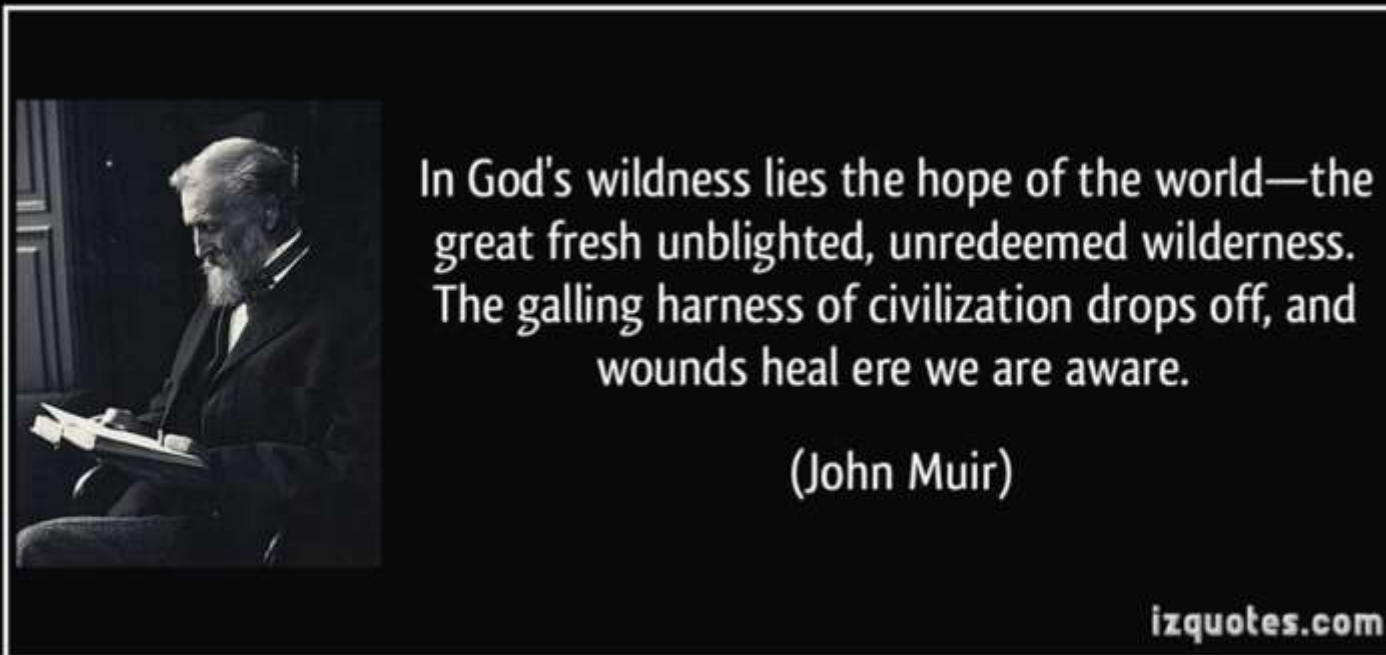


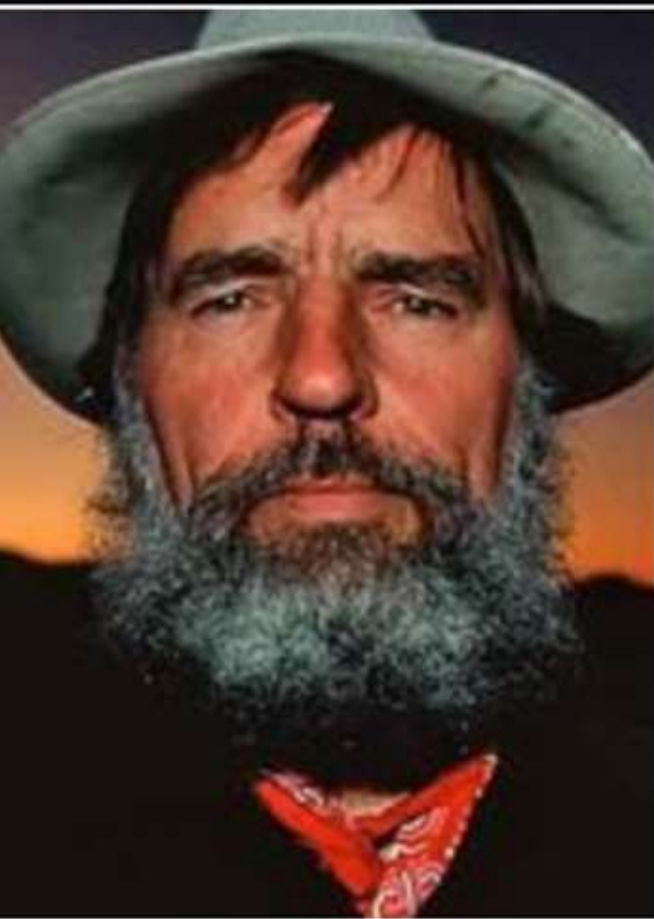
The American Natural Theology of Wilderness – The New Eden

The Prophet of Nature Preservation for Re-creation

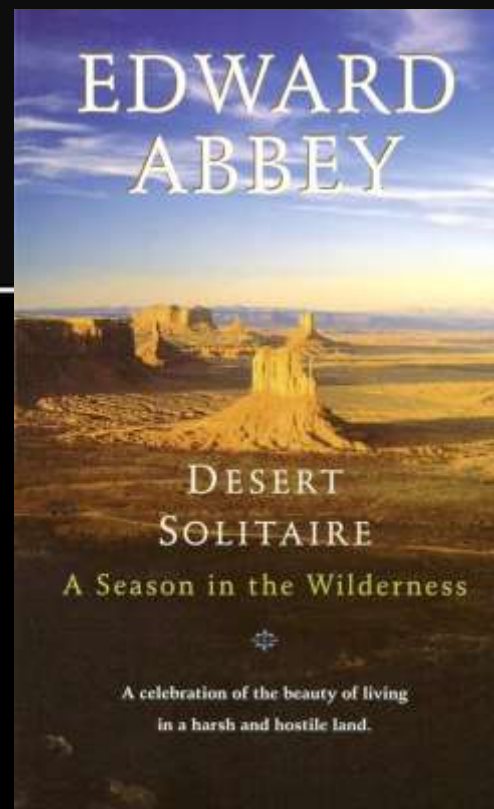
John Muir (1838 – 1914)

- Preserve the mountains as parks for re-creational, spiritual sanctuary from spiritually corrupted human society
- Yosemite 1890 National Park, founds the Sierra Club 1892
- Wilderness Salvation - Muir's spiritual embrace of "wilderness preservation" was a replacement of the "howling wilderness" with wilderness as a return to true Eden and communion with the Christian God





Wilderness is not a luxury but a necessity of the human spirit, and as vital to our lives as water and good bread. A civilization which destroys what little remains of the wild, the spare, the original, is cutting itself off from its origins and betraying the principle of civilization itself.

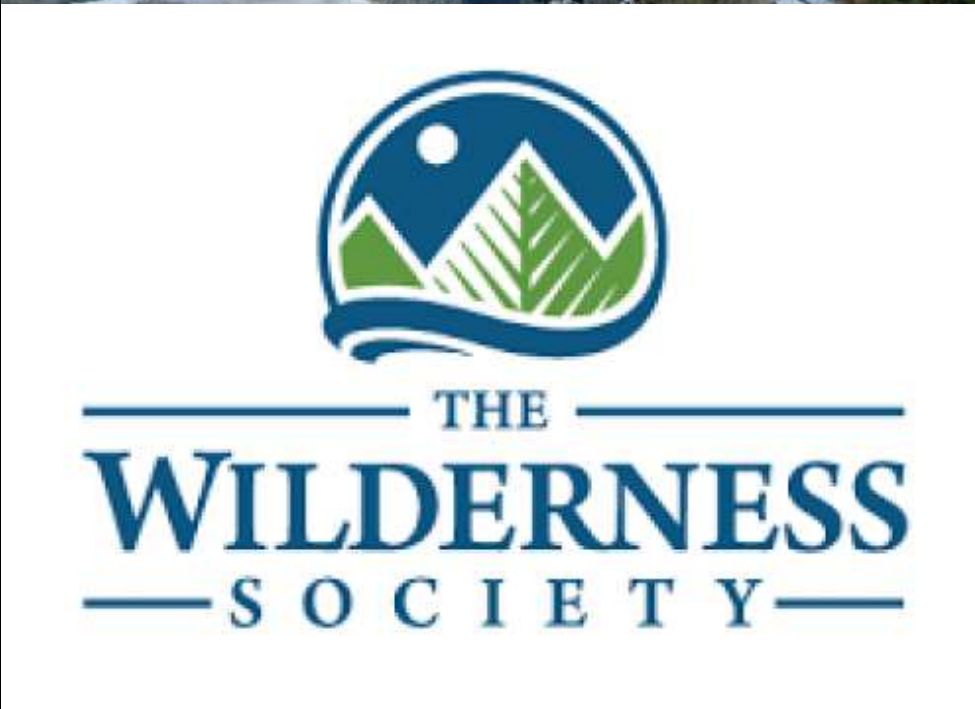


Wilderness as Pristine Nature

The Wilderness Act of 1964

“A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are *untrammelled by man*, where man himself is *a visitor who does not remain*”



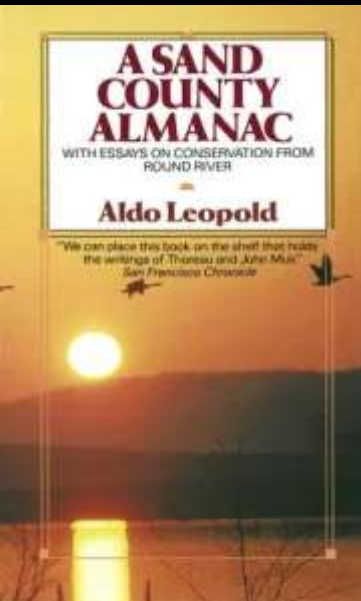


The Paradox of Wilderness

Preservation/Conservation and National Parks

Aldo Leopold

“All conservation of wilderness is self-defeating, for to cherish we must see and fondle, and when enough have seen and fondled, there is no wilderness left to cherish.”



In 1916, when the National Park Service was created, there were a dozen national parks, all of them in the West, visited by 326,506 people.

Today, 412 parks, national monuments and historic sites cover more than 84 million acres and were visited more than 307 million times last year.

Wilderness in the 21st Century



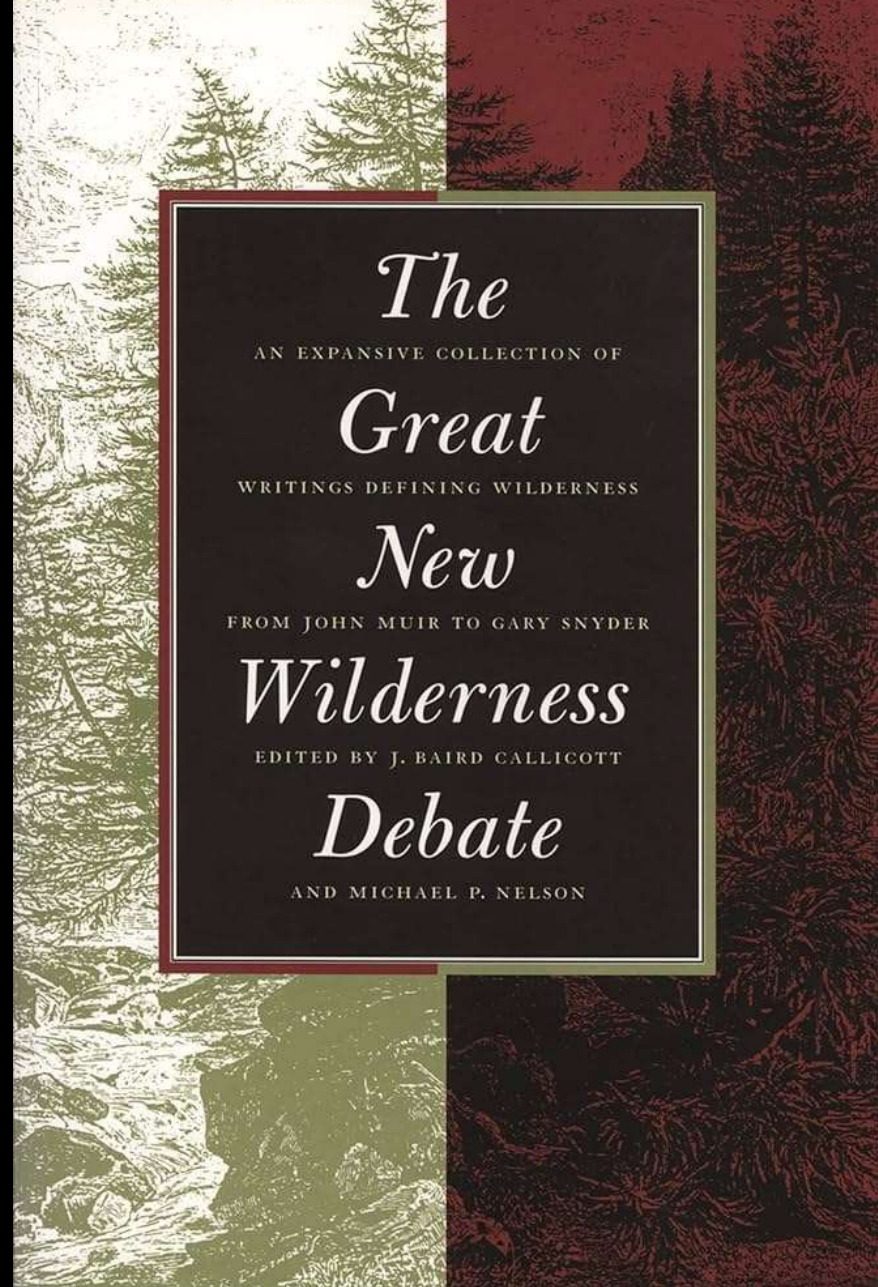
*A Three-point Critique of the Received
Concept of Wilderness*

J. Baird Callicott

Untrammelled Nature?

“It ignores the fourth dimension of nature, time. Trying to preserve in perpetuity...the ecological status quo ante is unnatural as it is impossible.

Change is as natural as it is inevitable.”



Ecological Change and the Lament for Pristine Nature

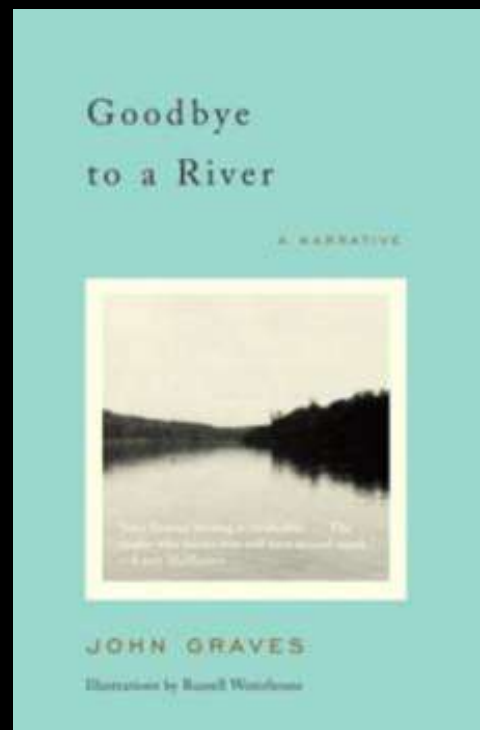
To Have Viewed It Entire – John Graves (1920-2013)

“In recent decades it has become customary, and right I guess, and easy enough with hindsight, to damn the ancestral frame of mind that ravaged the world so fully and so soon. What I myself seem to damn mainly though, is just not having seen it. Without any virtuous hindsight I would likely have helped in the ravaging as did even most of those who loved it best.

But God! To have viewed it entire, the soul and guts of what we had and gone forever now, except in books and such poignant remnants as small swift birds that journey to and from the distant Argentine, and call at night in the sky.”

- From *Self Portrait, with Birds: Some Semi-Ornithological Recollections* (1991)

Entire?

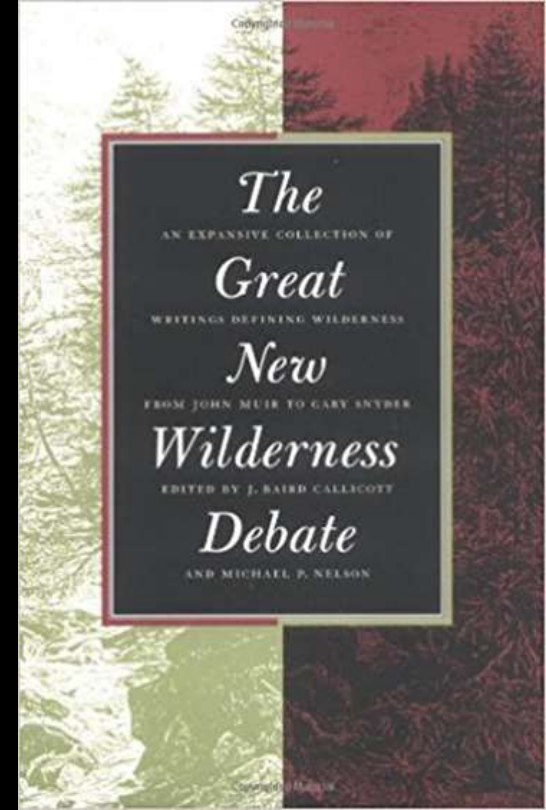


“Entire” - The Pristine Myth: The Landscape of the Americas in 1492

William M. Denevan

Department of Geography, University of Wisconsin

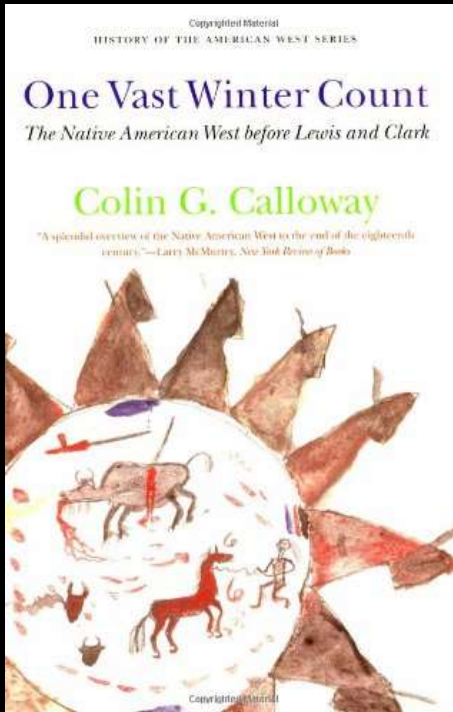
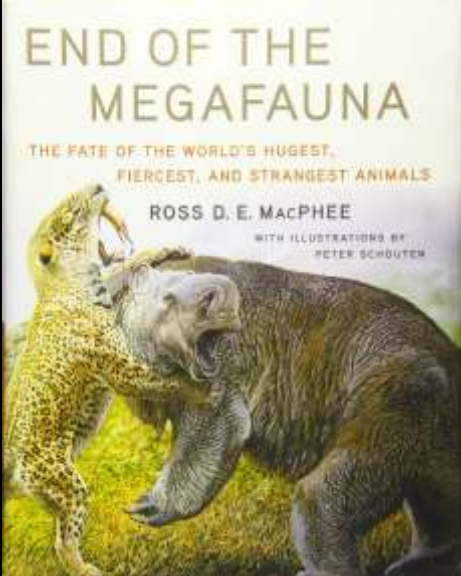
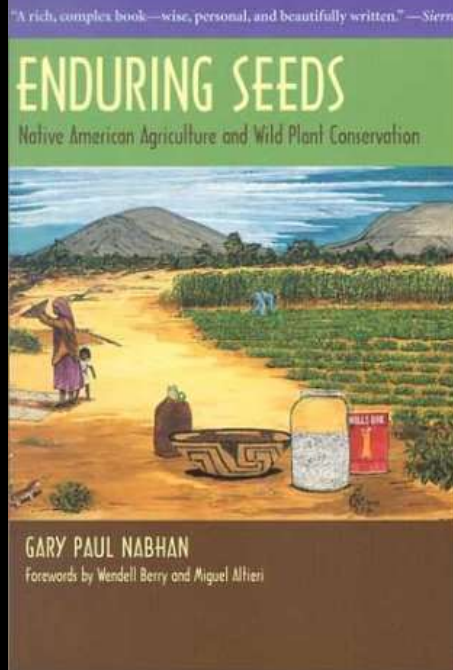
Abstract. The myth persists that in 1492 the Americas were a sparsely populated wilderness, “a world of barely perceptible human disturbance.” There is substantial evidence, however, that the Native American landscape of the early sixteenth century was a humanized landscape almost everywhere. Populations were large. Forest composition had been modified, grasslands had been created, wildlife disrupted, and erosion was severe in places. Earthworks, roads, fields, and settlements were ubiquitous. With Indian depopulation in the wake of Old World disease, the environment recovered in many areas. A good argument can be made that the human presence was less visible in 1750 than it was in 1492.



Annals of the Association of American Geographers, Vol. 82, No. 3, The Americas before and after 1492: Current Geographical Research. (Sep., 1992), pp. 369-385.

Native Americans – Fire and Other Ecological Impacts

- Fire - a vegetation and wildlife management tool
- Selective harvesting and use of various plants and hunting of animals probably had major influences on the local abundances of many species
- Encampments and settlements - produced disturbance patches of locally altered vegetation. Most of these early inhabitants were nomadic and hence served as effective dispersal agents for the reproductive propagules of many plant species.
- Agriculture – domestication, cultivation, irrigation – corn, beans, squash (Eastern Agricultural Complex), potato, etc.



Eastern Humanized Landscapes - Mississippian Culture

Beginning with the construction of Watson Brake about 3400 B.C. in present-day Louisiana, nomadic indigenous peoples started building earthwork mounds in North America nearly 1000 years before the pyramids were constructed in Egypt.

Serpent Mound in southern Ohio is a 1,348-foot mound built about 1070 A.D.



M. O. Hahn
Adapted from: "Mound Builders & Cliff Dwellers"
Lost Civilizations, Time-Life Books, USA 1992, page 11

MISSISSIPPIAN AND RELATED CULTURES



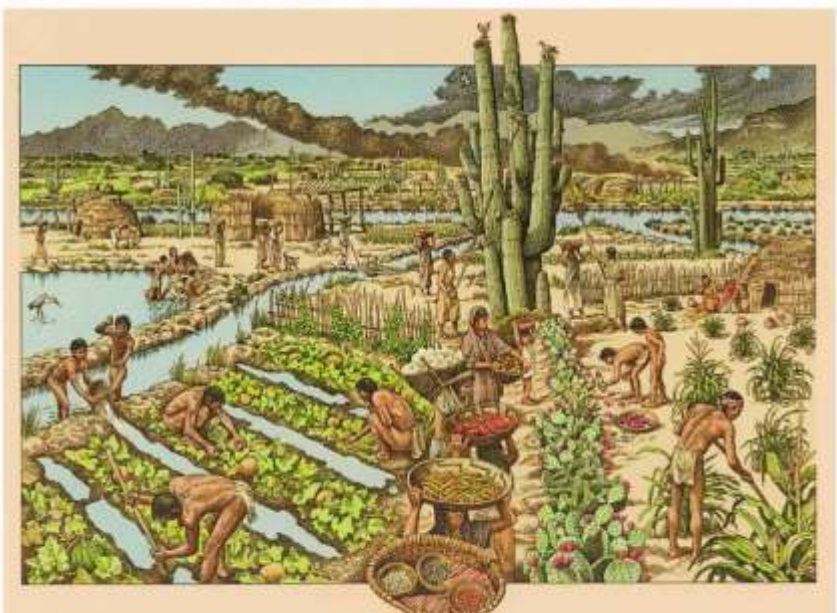
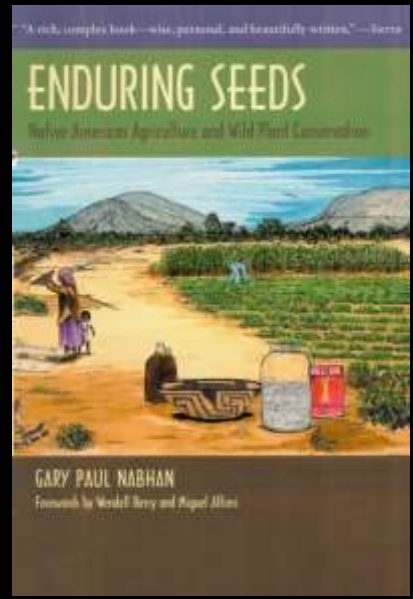
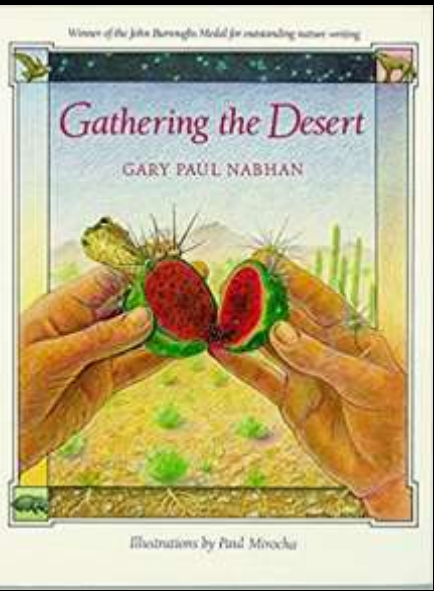
Cahokia – Urban Center of Mississippi

“Anyone who traveled up the Mississippi in 1100 A.D. would have seen it looming in the distance: a four-level earthen mound bigger than the Great Pyramid of Giza...Cahokia was a busy port...Covering five square miles and housing at least fifteen thousand people.

Cahokia was the biggest concentration of people north of the Rio Grande until the eighteenth century.”



Western Humanized Landscapes



Wilderness and Humanized Landscapes of America



1491

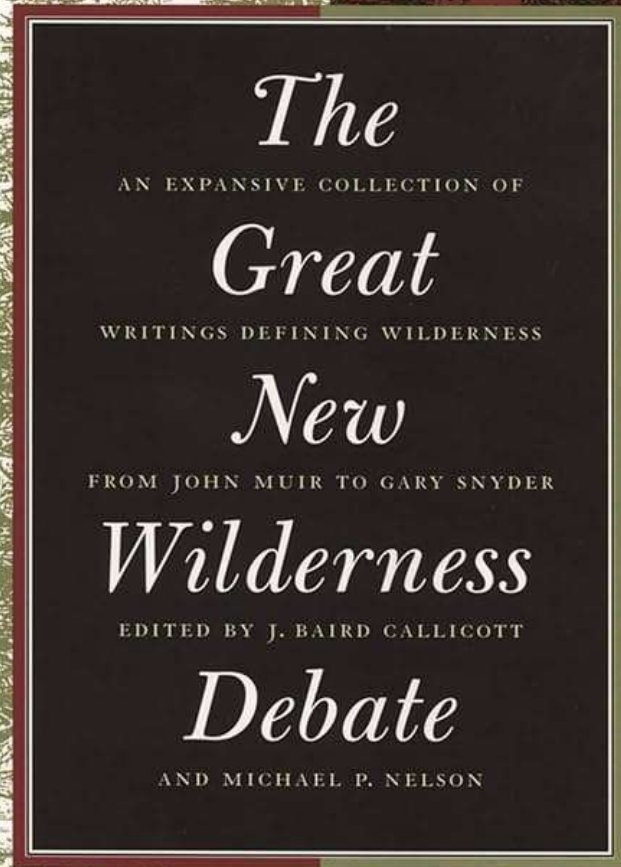
NEW REVELATIONS OF THE AMERICAS
BEFORE COLUMBUS



CHARLES C. MANN

A Three-point Critique of the
Received Concept of Wilderness
J. Baird Callicott

“The wilderness idea is woefully
ethnocentric. It ignores the historic
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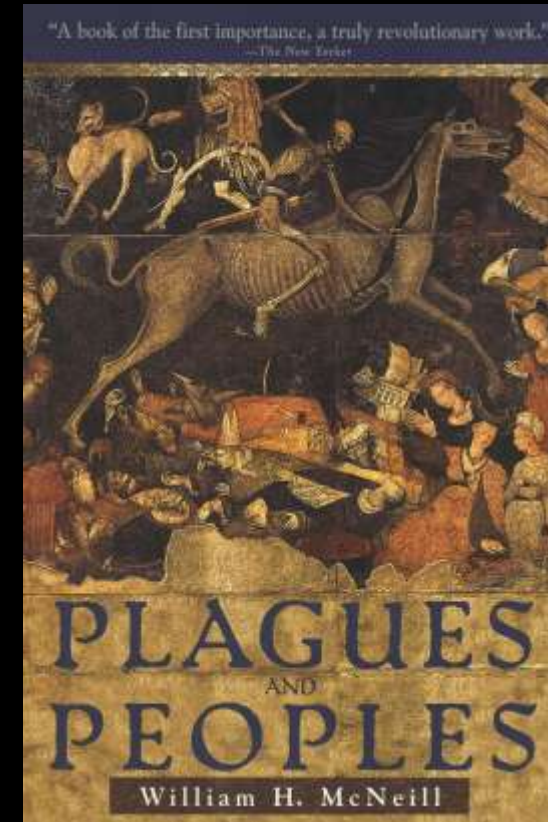
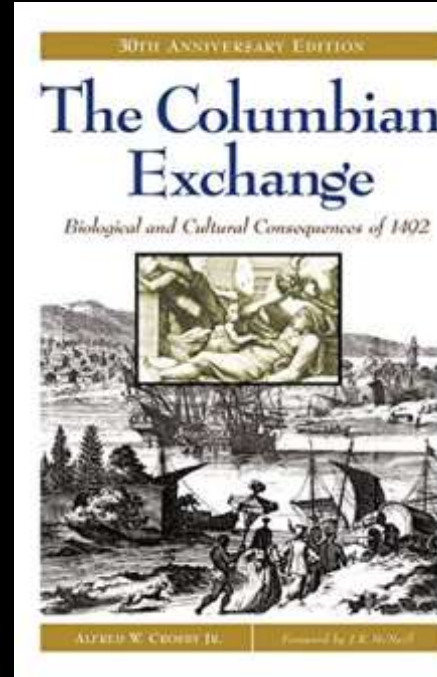
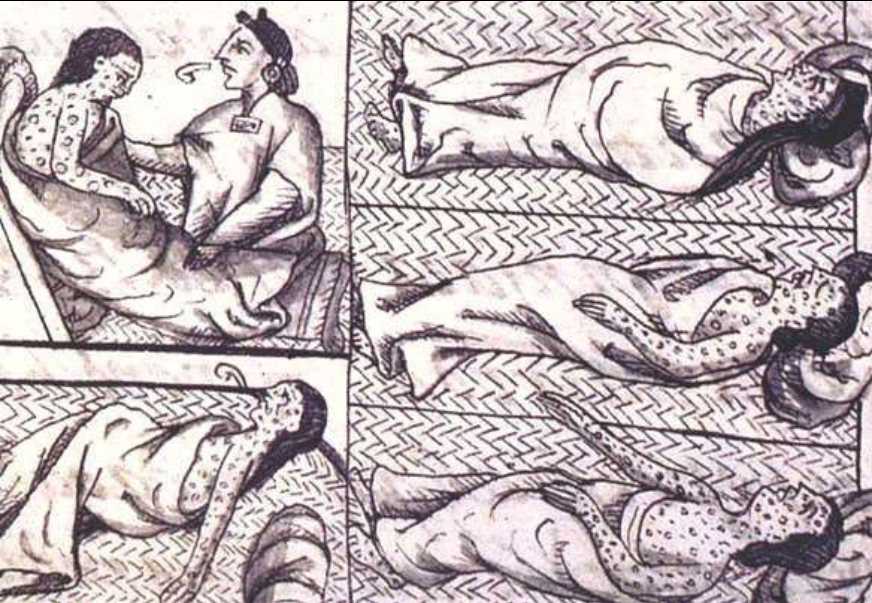


Discovery of New World Wilderness And the Columbian Exchange



The Columbian Exchange – 1492 onwards

Disease and Depopulation

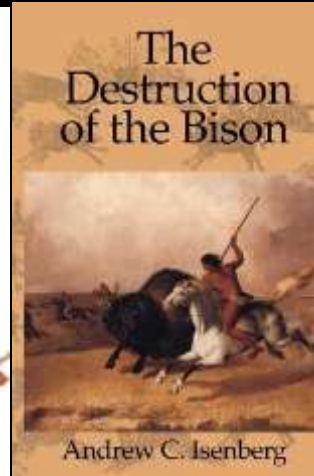
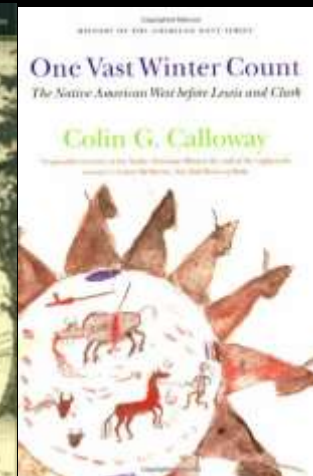
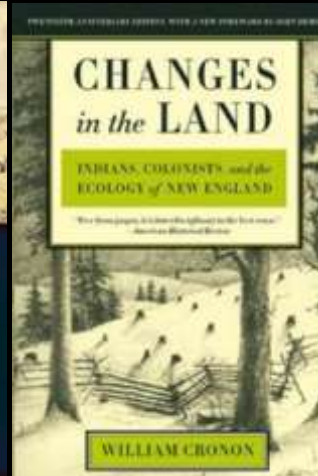
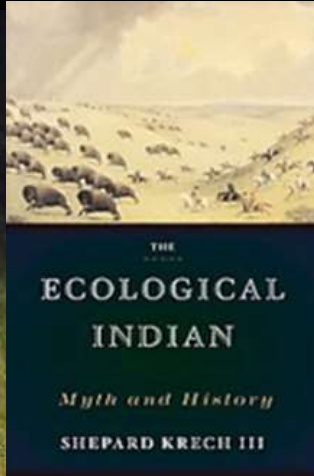
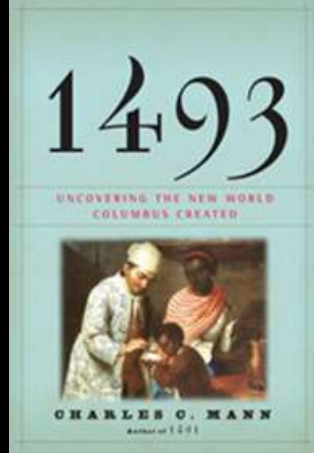
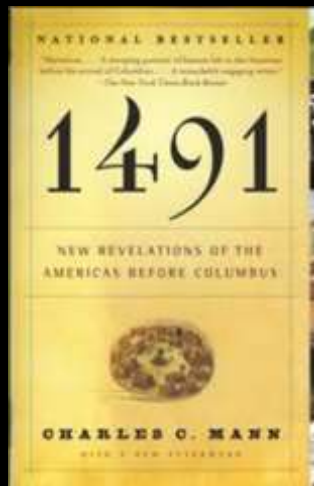


Depopulation of Native Americans in Florida, 1519-1617			
Year	Disease	Percent Decline	Estimated Population
1517			722,000
1520	Smallpox	-50	361,000
1528	Measles	-50	180,500
1545	Bubonic plague	-12.5	158,000
1559	Influenza	-5	150,000
1564-70	Influenza	-10	135,000
1585	Unidentified	-10	121,500
1586	Cape Verde Island fever	-20	97,200
1596	Measles	-25	72,900
1613-17	Bubonic plague	-50	36,450

Native Americans as Keystone Species

“Until Columbus, Indians were a keystone species in most of the hemisphere. Annually burning undergrowth, clearing and replanting forests, building canals and raising fields, hunting bison and netting salmon, growing maize, manioc, and the Eastern Agricultural Complex.

Native Americans had been managing their environment for thousands of years...But all of these efforts required close, continual oversight. In the sixteenth century, epidemics removed the boss... Not only did invading endive and rats beset them, but native species, too, burst and blasted, freed from constraints by the disappearance of Native Americans.” Mann, 1491

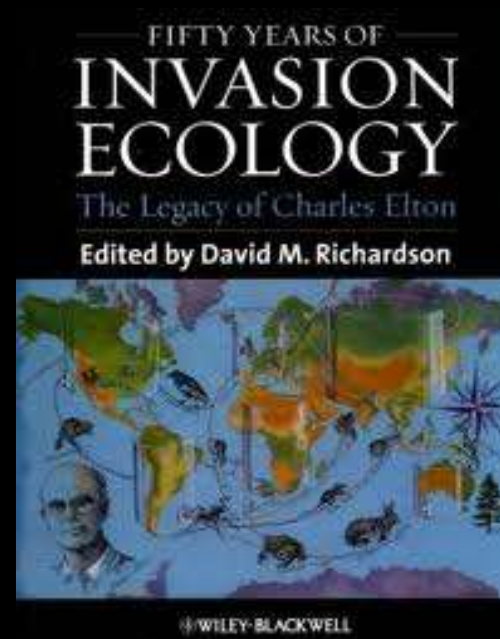
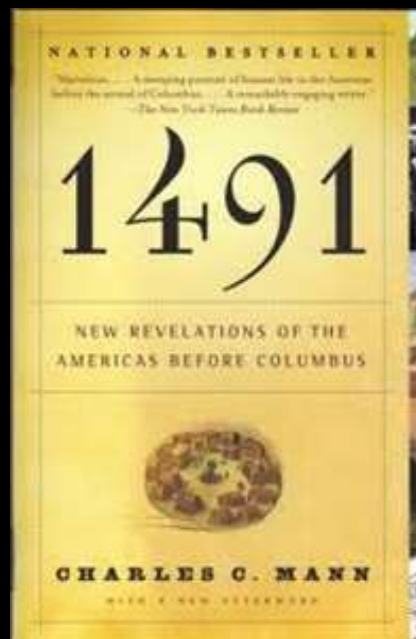
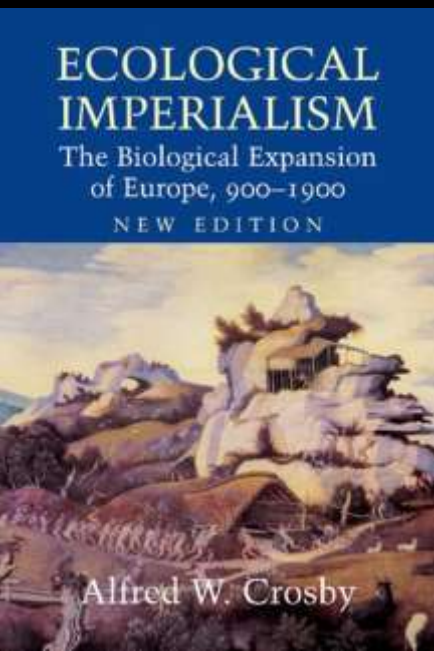


Ecological Imperialism – Ecological Release

“Columbus set off an ecological explosion of a magnitude unseen since the Ice Ages.

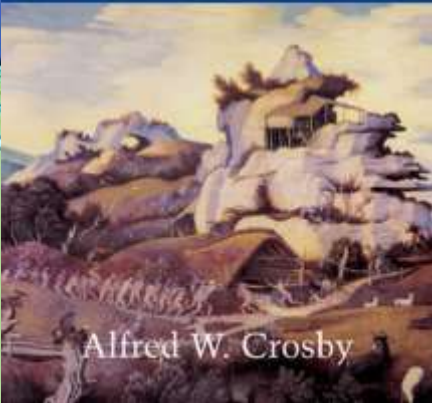
Some species were shocked into decline (most prominent among them *Homo sapiens*, which in the century and a half after Columbus lost a fifth of its number, mainly to disease).

Others stumbled into new ecosystems and were transformed into environmental overlords: picture-book illustrations of what scientists call *ecological release*.” Mann, 1491

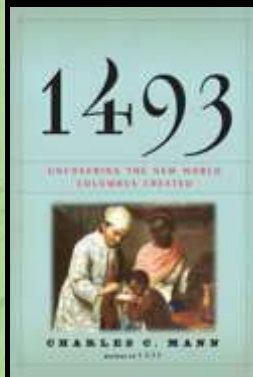
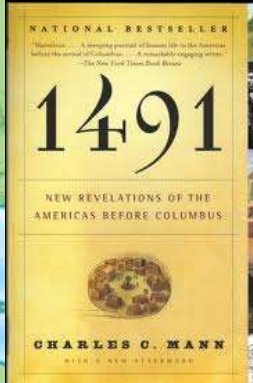
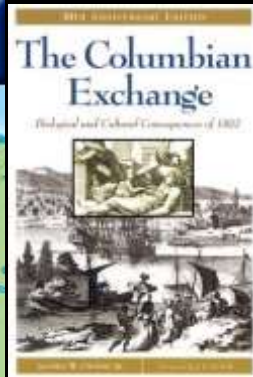


ECOLOGICAL IMPERIALISM

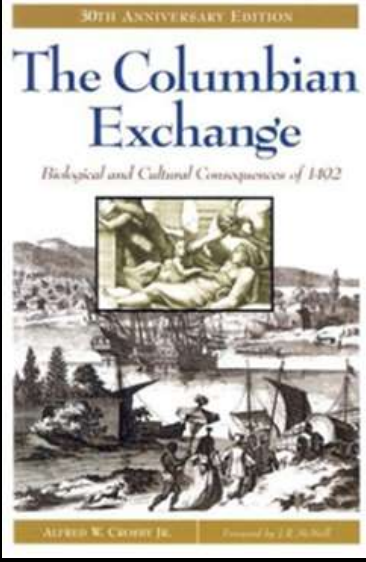
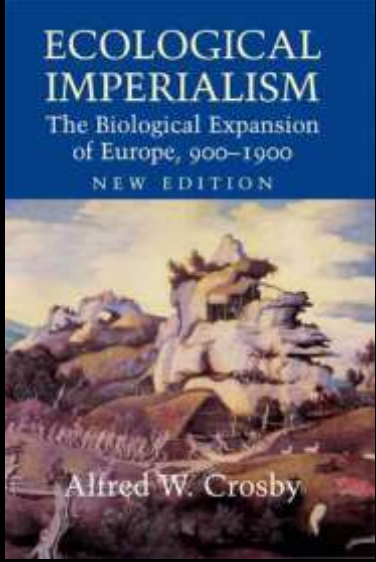
The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900
NEW EDITION



Reshaping Old World and New World Natural History 1492-1799



- Jamestown – rats, clover, bluegrass
- Endive and spinach escaped from colonial gardens and grew into impassable six foot thickets on the Peruvian coast
- Mint overwhelmed Andean valleys
- In the Pampas of Argentina Charles Darwin found hundreds of square miles strangled by feral artichoke in the 1830s.
- Darwin found that peach wood from invasive peach trees was the main supply of firewood for Buenos Aires.
- Peaches invade the Southeast – 1700s farmers worried that the Carolinas and Georgia would be a “wilderness of peach trees”



A Three-point Critique of the Received Concept of Wilderness

J. Baird Callicott

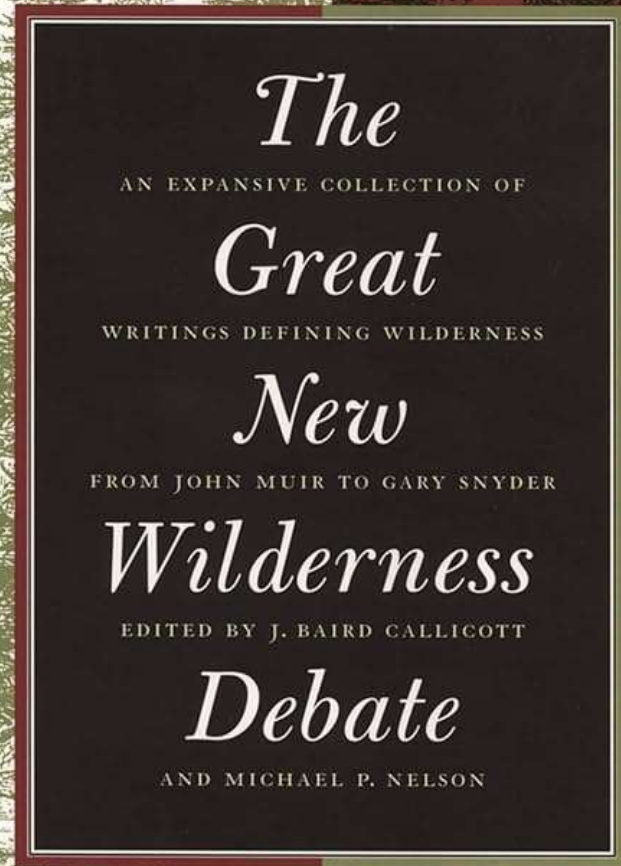
“First, the concept perpetuates the pre-Darwinian Western metaphysical dichotomy between “man” and nature.

Second, the wilderness idea is woefully ethnocentric. It ignores the historic presence and effects on practically all the world’s ecosystems of aboriginal people.

Third, it ignores the fourth dimension of nature, time. Trying to preserve in perpetuity...the ecological status quo ante is unnatural as it is impossible.

Change is as natural as it is inevitable.”

(1998)





Generally speaking, a howling wilderness does not howl: it is the imagination of the traveler that does the howling.

(Henry David Thoreau)

Wilderness or Wildness? Thoreau and Wildness

Wildness is the preservation of the world

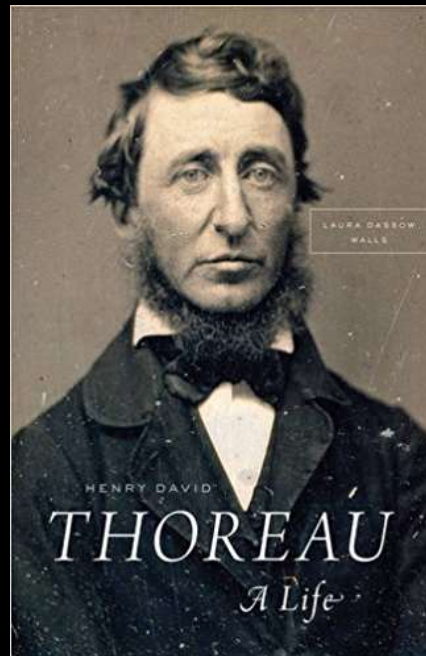
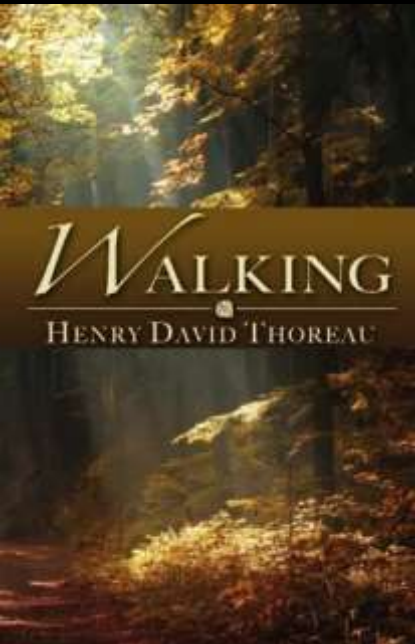
“I wish to speak a word for Nature, for absolute Freedom and Wildness, as contrasted with a freedom and culture merely civil,—to regard man as an inhabitant, or a part and parcel of Nature, rather than a member of society.

From the forest and wilderness come the tonics and barks which brace mankind. . . .

Life consists with Wildness. The most alive is the wildest. Not yet subdued to man, its presence refreshes him.

In short, all good things are wild and free.”

Thomas Cole
“Oxbow” 1836



Thoreau and Wild Nature

Physical Particular Nature

“I long for wildness, *a nature which I cannot put my foot through*, woods where the wood thrush forever sings, where the hours are early morning ones, and there is dew on the grass, and the day is forever unproved, where I might have a fertile unknown for a soil about me.” — Journal, 22 June 1853

Medicinal Nature

“We need *the tonic of wildness* — to wade sometimes in marshes where the bittern and the meadow-hen lurk, and hearing the booming of the snipe; to smell the whispering sedge where only some wilder and more solitary fowl builds her nest, and the mink crawls with its belly close o the ground.” — Walden

Otherness and Agency of Nonhumans

“What we call wildness is a civilization *other than our own*.”
Journal, 16 February 1859

Near-at-hand

“It is in vain to dream of a wildness distant from ourselves. There is none such.” — Journal, 30 August 1856



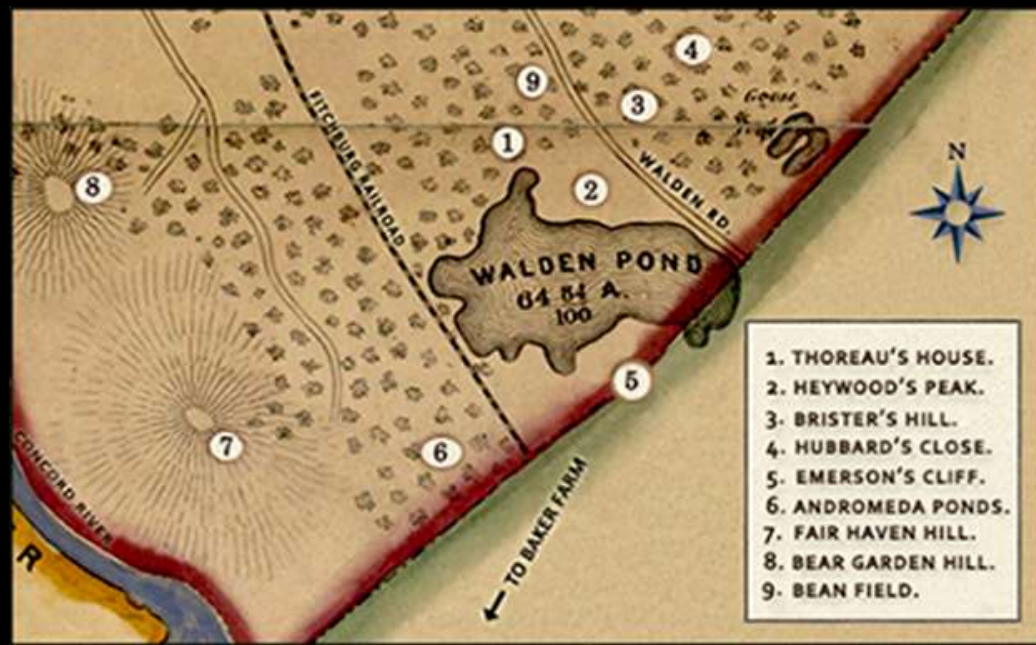
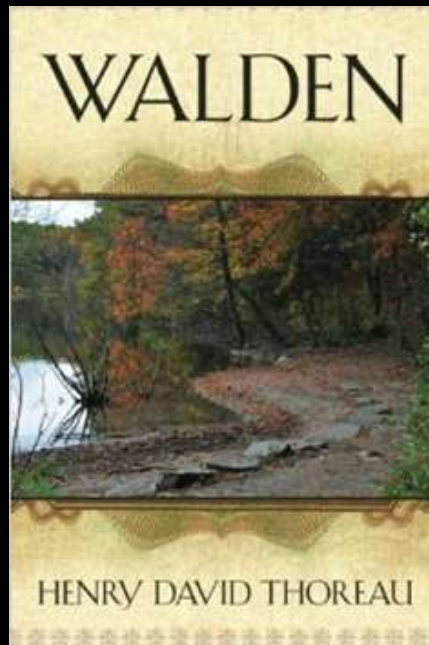
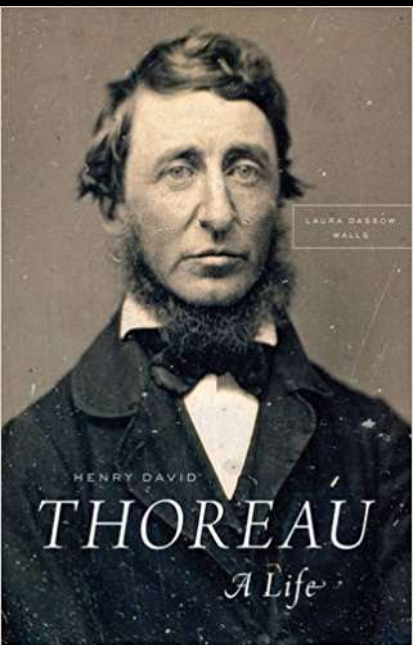
Henry David Thoreau - Wilderness and Cultivation (The Bean Field)

Trying to find a balance between culture (change) and nature

"I would not have every man nor every part of a man cultivated, any more than I would have every acre of earth cultivated: part will be tillage, but the greater part will be meadow and forest"

The Wild and The Pastoral Connected – Next Lecture!

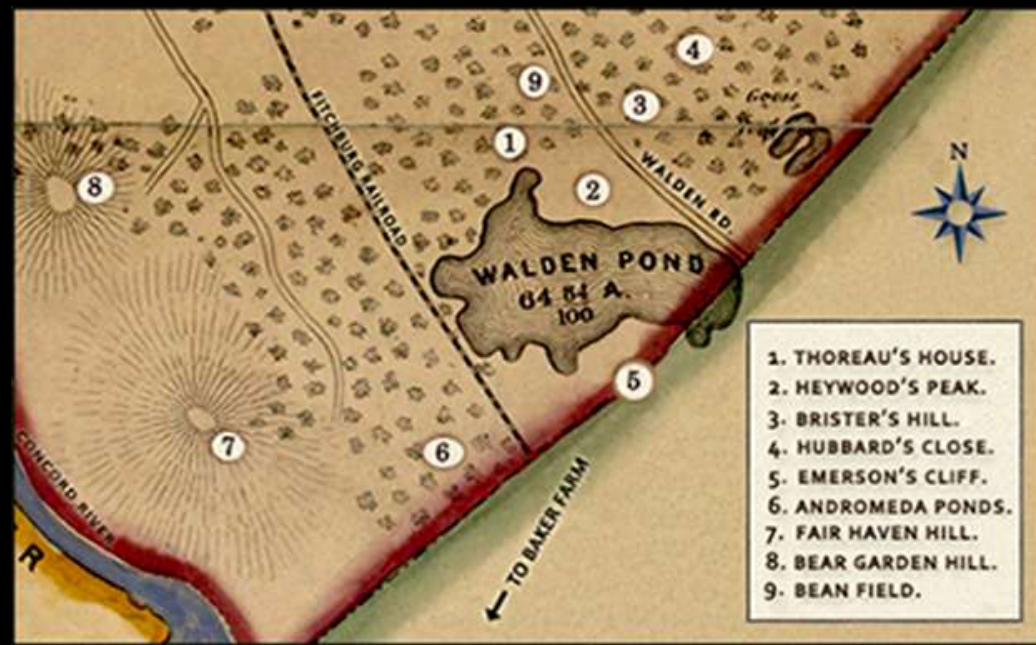
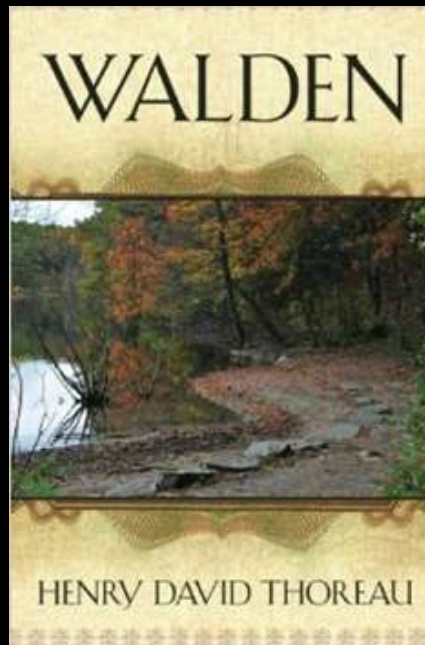
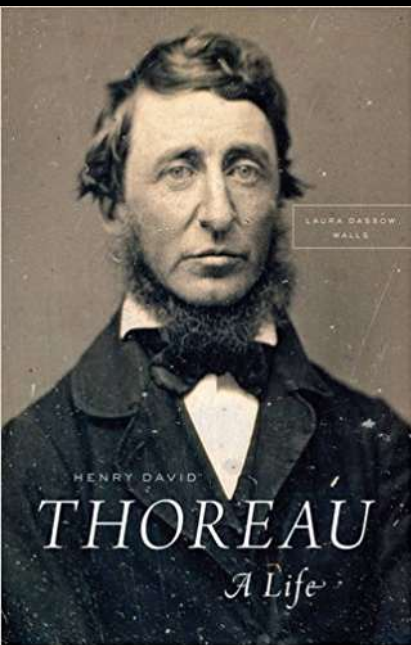
"We are wont to forget that the sun looks on our cultivated fields and on the prairies and forests without distinction. They all reflect and absorb his rays alike, and the former make but a small part of the glorious picture which he beholds in his daily course. In his view the earth is all equally cultivated like a garden."



Thoreau and Wild Nature

“How near to good is what is wild. There is the marrow of nature, there her divine liquors – that is the wine I love.”

- Agency – subjects shaping a world, not objects for human management and use
- Otherness – the non-human world which is god-like
- Autonomy/Freedom – apart from human intentions and control
- Particular and Individual – substantial beings to encounter



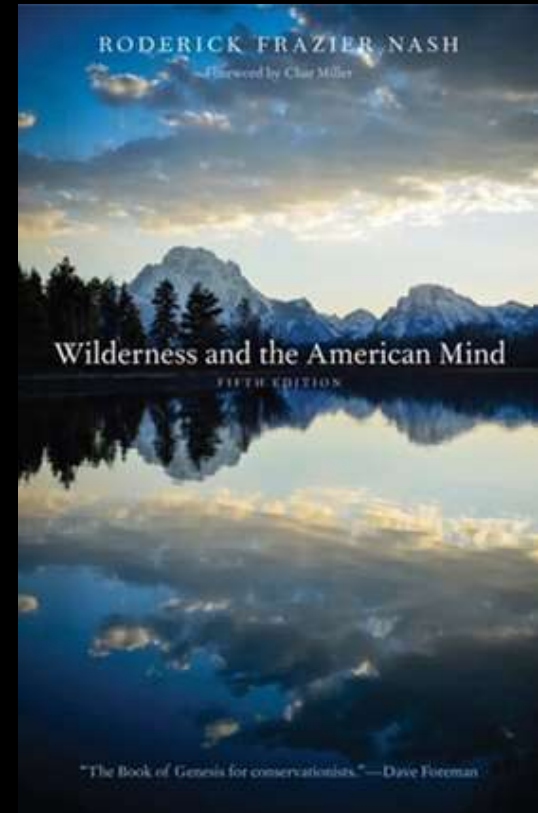
The New World Wilderness

America was seen as a wilderness by Europeans arriving in this New World – intent on subduing it and settling the land.

“wilderness is a matter of perception – part of the geography of the American mind”

Roderick Nash

Wilderness and the American Mind (1967)



Applause



Questions?





Concepts of American Nature

- January Wild Nature: The New World and Wilderness
- February Pastoral Nature: Agrarianism and Rural America
- March Urban Nature: Perspectives on Nature and the City
- April New Nature: Discordant Harmony and Ecological Resilience

