



Encompassing Nature: Nature and Culture from Ancient Times to the Modern World

Robert Torrance, Robert M. Torrance

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The first anthology of nature writing to include representative works from the worlds myriad cultures-- ancient and modern-- Encompassing Nature is a landmark work that will broaden the frame of reference through which nature writing is understood.. Encompassing Nature is a comprehensive collection of widely varied writings representing a host of the worlds cultures and their relation to nature. Tracing the development of ideas and attitudes about the natural world from the earliest narratives through works of the late 1700s, the anthology begins with childrens stories and tribal myths and contains generous selections from the civilizations of ancient Mesopotamia, Israel, India, China, and Japan. It ends in the eighteenth century with Western writers, including Gilbert White, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and William Bartram. A landmark work, Encompassing Nature will broaden the frame of reference through which nature writing is understood. The first anthology of nature writing to include representative works from the worlds myriad cultures--from the ancients through the Enlightenment-- Encompassing Nature is a landmark work that will broaden the frame of reference through which nature writing is understood. Since ancient times, human cultures have invented literary forms and traditions to express the mysteries and delights of living here on this earth, creating works that reveal experiences and concepts of nature that differ from culture to culture, epoch to epoch. Charting the history of these forms, Encompassing Nature opens deep wellsprings of tradition to us, proving that nature writing as a literary genre predates the influences we associate with Wordsworth and Thoreau. With broad vision and intellectual scope, Robert Torrance assembles a wealth of texts--many of them canonical, many too long overlooked--in an encyclopedic anthology that will stand both as an authoritative reference work and as an illuminating book of sheer joy. Encompassing Nature begins at the beginning, with the hymns, myths, and songs of ancient civilizations: Sumerian hymns to the stormy love goddess Inanna, the shamanistic Nine Songs of China, Hebrew psalms, and Homeric hymns to Demeter and Pan. There are invocations of divinities, tales of the origin of the universe, tribal myths, childrens stories, narratives of the travels and adventures of heroes, quiet poetic reveries, and songs of love, death, and seasonal changeall of which bring the intertwined human and natural realms into poignant conjunction. Through a host of historys civilizations, Torrance traces the development of ideas about the natural world, with generous selections representing the cultures of Mesopotamia, Israel, India, China, Japan, Europe, and America. The anthology concludes with writers in the Western tradition such as Gilbert White, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and William Bartram--the historical moment where other anthologies of nature writing only begin.

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