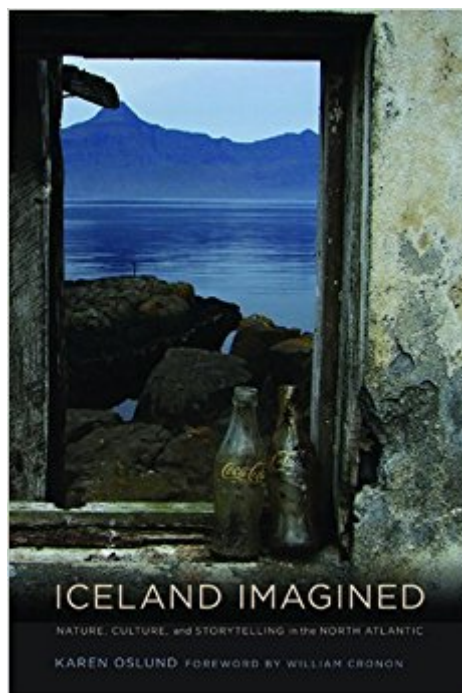




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Iceland Imagined: Nature, Culture, And Storytelling In The North Atlantic (Weyerhaeuser Environmental Books)



Synopsis

Iceland, Greenland, Northern Norway, and the Faroe Islands lie on the edges of Western Europe, in an area long portrayed by travelers as remote and exotic - its nature harsh, its people reclusive. Since the middle of the eighteenth century, however, this marginalized region has gradually become part of modern Europe, a transformation that is narrated in Karen Oslund's *Iceland Imagined*. This cultural and environmental history sweeps across the dramatic North Atlantic landscape, exploring its unusual geography, saga narratives, language, culture, and politics, and analyzing its emergence as a distinctive and symbolic part of Europe. The earliest visions of a wild frontier, filled with dangerous and unpredictable inhabitants, eventually gave way to images of beautiful, well-managed lands, inhabited by simple but virtuous people living close to nature. This transformation was accomplished by state-sponsored natural histories of Iceland which explained that the monsters described in medieval and Renaissance travel accounts did not really exist, and by artists who painted the Icelandic landscapes to reflect their fertile and regulated qualities. Literary scholars and linguists who came to Iceland and Greenland in the nineteenth century related the stories and the languages of the "wild North" to those of their home countries.

Book Information

Series: Weyerhaeuser Environmental Books

Paperback: 280 pages

Publisher: University of Washington Press; Reprint edition (February 14, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 029599293X

ISBN-13: 978-0295992938

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.6 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.9 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 3 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #294,194 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #17 in Books > Science & Math >

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Customer Reviews

"... compelling and richly detailed ..." • Kai Heidemann, H-SAE "The narrative moves swiftly and elegantly over unusual grounds. . . . The final chapter discusses two present-day controversies . . . Oslund argues convincingly that in both these controversies stories that travelers had written in the

18th and 19th centuries . . . were retold. In doing so she also demonstrates the present day relevance of studying how Iceland has been imagined in the past."â •Arne Kaijser, Technology and Culture, Vol. 53 July 2012"The book is well written and detailed. . . . The outcome is a mental journey in the vast and varying region of the North Atlantic, which brings forward surprisingly many details, even for someone raised and living in Iceland."â •Helga Ogmundardottir, H-Environment, April 2012"One should read this book for its history of ideas and perceptions and its grasp of the tensions that exist and have existed at cultural frontiers . . ."â •Russell Fielding, Geographical Review, Vol. 102(1)"The book is sure to be of interest to those studying Iceland and the North Atlantic's culture and environmental history and those interested in the European understanding of that region. Summing Up: Recommended."â •Choice, February 2012"Oslundâ ™s comprehensive critical analysis of the narratives and counter-narratives of the gradual evolution of Iceland and the North Atlanticâ ™s perceived exoticism into a regulated, normalized part of â ^ourâ ™ world is a valuable contribution to the fields of environmental, cultural and linguistic history, and to Scandinavian scholarship in general."â •John D. Shafer, European History Quarterly, May 2014

"The great contribution of Iceland Imagined is to help us understand the mental geographies that over the past quarter millennium have come to define the North Atlanticâ •and that teach us more than we might think about the rest of the world."â •William Cronon, from the Foreword"An excellent work, covering unusual ground. The author's mastery of a variety of contextsâ •Inuit, Faroese, Icelandic, Scandinavianâ •and different periodsâ •historical and modernâ •is admirable. Not only does Iceland Imagined nicely chart important historical contours in the North Atlantic region, it offers numerous useful and original observations on themes in history, anthropology, literature, and linguistics."â •Gisli Palsson, University of Iceland

This book has great information presented from a unique perspective with detailed references, but the language is so stiffly academic it rather detracts from the pleasure of learning about Iceland.

Loved the country! Love the book.

I read this book before going on a trip to Iceland, and felt like it did a really good job of preparing me in terms of history.

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