



Iceland Imagined: Nature, Culture, and Storytelling in the North Atlantic: A Weyerhaeuser Environmental Book

Karen Oslund, William Cronon (foreword)

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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 18th 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 19th century related the stories and the languages of the "wild North" to those of their home countries.

Karen Oslund is assistant professor of world history at Towson University in Maryland.

The book is published by University of Washington Press.

"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 Atlantic - and that teach us more than we might think about the rest of the world." (from the Foreword by William Cronon)

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