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Review of: *Writing on Water* (David Rothenberg & Marta Ulvaeus eds.)

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Review of: Writing on Water (David Rothenberg & Marta Ulvaeus eds.)

Abstract

Review of the book: Writing on Water (David Rothenberg & Marta Ulvaeus, eds., MIT Press 2001).

Introduction, Contributors, Sources. ISBN 0-262-18211-4 [288 pp. \$24.95. Hardbound, New Jersey Institute of Technology, Newark, NJ 07102].

Keywords

fiction, art, poetry, water, essays

Erratum

The citation for this review is *13 RISK 177 (2002)* in most commercial databases.

Writing on Water (David Rothenberg & Marta Ulvaeus, eds., MIT Press 2001). Introduction, Contributors, Sources. ISBN 0-262-18211-4 [288 pp. \$24.95. Hardbound, New Jersey Institute of Technology, Newark, NJ 07102].

Writing on Water, from the MIT Press, is most appropriately named: a distinctive collection of essays, fiction, art, and poetry. The Terra Nova Books mission is “to show how environmental issues have cultural and artistic components, in addition to the scientific and political.”¹ The editors aptly rose to the task and combined a thought-provoking assortment of work.

This creative assortment was collected from over fifty contributors and is translated from a multitude of languages. The collections range from nineteenth century photographs of tall ships, proud and desolate in icy water,² to one family’s struggle when learning the groundwater supplying their home was poisoned by a toxic chemical dump.³ One author tells of her work with a watershed in San Francisco’s Presidio National Park,⁴ while another tells of how he reconnects with his adult daughter when they take on a project working with sea turtles on India’s Orissa coast.⁵

Every selection is connected by a thread — water and the power it has over the earth and its inhabitants. The prose is all very readable. Even the small amount of data, formulas, and technical references will not offend the unscientific.

I submit that a percentage of readers will never have spent this much time concentrating on water, but offer that their interest will be maintained throughout the book. Water is complex, beautiful, life-

¹ Introduction *Writing on Water* (David Rothenberg & Marta Ulvaeus eds., M.I.T. Press 2001).

² See *id.* at 32.

³ See Arthur Versluis, *Waters Under the Earth*, in *Writing on Water* 81-88 (David Rothenberg & Marta Ulvaeus eds., M.I.T. Press 2001).

⁴ See Melissa Nelson, *Constructing a Confluence*, in *Writing on Water* 15-31 (David Rothenberg & Marta Ulvaeus eds., M.I.T. Press 2001).

⁵ See Kartik Shanker, *Blue Moon Tide*, in *Writing on Water* 122-146 (David Rothenberg & Marta Ulvaeus eds., M.I.T. Press 2001).

maintaining, friendly, and deadly. Readers will take with them an understanding of the human responsibility to care for this precious resource.

Writing on Water is a solid effort, with pages that turn easily. This collection of writings that reflect on the human encounter with water is presented in a way that should prove effective for different audiences. It is a “coffee table” book for the environmentally aware and will undoubtedly provoke much conversation.

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