Review of David Rothenberg, "Always the Mountains"

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Starting From Personal Experience

David Rothenberg’s *Always the Mountains* explores the human relationship to nature

**REVIEWED BY DAVID KELLER**

A central theme of the Western tradition (that is, the cultural tradition with roots in ancient Greek society, extending through the Roman empire into Europe and beyond) is the uniqueness of humanity in contrast to nature. The Greeks saw the civilization they created as absolutely distinct from the chaos of nature outside the city wall. Yet humans are inextricably linked with nature. We share the same double helix structure of DNA with all other organisms. Our nomadic forebears may not have even had the concept “nature,” as they were always in nature. There was no non-nature, no wilderness, from which they separated themselves. Perhaps it was with the advent of agriculture and the sedentary lifestyle that these notions were invented.

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the World

BY GRISTMAGAZINE.COM

been devastated by the November spill off the country’s northwestern coast. Protesters, many with black tears painted on their faces and mock oil stains on their clothes, demanded the resignation of government officials whom they accused of failing to coordinate effective cleanup efforts and misleading the public about the severity of the disaster. Meanwhile, Greenpeace is calling on the European Union to prosecute Spain for its mishandling of the oil spill, saying the Spanish government violated E.U. laws by letting the tanker sink and release its cargo into the sea.


Solutions to Bird Crash Problem

Up to 50 million migratory birds die every year from slamming into communications towers for cell phones, pagers, and radios, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Now, environmentalists are suing the Federal Communications Commission to stop a known bird killer. The suit was filed by the American Bird Conservancy, Friends of the Earth, and the Forest Conservation Council, which want the FCC to change its laws to protect bird populations. The affected critics include some of the nation’s most endangered songbirds — the black rail, Bell’s vireo, the golden-winged warbler, and Henderson’s sparrows.

MNNBC.com, Associated Press, 20 Feb 2003

Everybody Must Be Yellowstoned

Snowmobiles will be permitted in Yellowstone and Grand Teton under the National Park Service’s final environmental impact statement, released last month. The park service acknowledges that the plan is not the best one in terms of improving air quality, reducing noise, or protecting the health of park workers, visitors, and wildlife. The plan caps the number of machines allowed in the parks at 1,100 per day (about how many enter currently) and distribute the total load over different entrances to reduce congestion. Park officials said the plan strikes a balance between today’s unlimited use and the Clinton proposal to phase out snowmobiles entirely, but former National Parks Service Director Roger Kennedy criticized the proposal for giving equal weight to snowmobile access and human and environmental health: “It says to the world we are striking a different balance, and commerce will supersede the health of the world.”

Billings Gazette, Mike Stark, 21 Feb 2003

Crying Shaman

A new oil pipeline to run from the Russian region of Buryatiya into China is being hailed by industry officials and government leaders as a major economic boon, but many local residents beg to differ. Construction of the pipeline would cut through Tunykinsky National Park, where developers have figured out a way around that concern: It wants the park’s boundaries moved. The company claims Buryatiya’s grassroots environmentalists, who fear logging and oil spills, are financed by the U.S. in a secret plot to thwart Russia’s economic development.


Good Citizens of the North

Canada has set aside $1.3 billion over five years to slash its greenhouse gas emissions and another $660 million for other environmental initiatives. The government has also approved a tax break for cleaner diesel and agreed to prioritize infrastructure projects that will help reduce pollution. Ottawa has not yet decided how to spend most of the $1.3 billion earmarked to help the country meet the terms of the Kyoto Protocol on climate change. Options on the table include pumping money into alternative energy projects and backing initiatives to retrofit buildings to improve energy efficiency.

Toronto Globe and Mail, Steven Chase, 19 Feb 2003