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The Credo Series: Language/Nature/Cherishing

Sue Ellen Campbell

Western American Literature

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REVIEW

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

The Credo Series: Language / Nature / Cherishing Sue Ellen Campbell Works Reviewed Bass, Rick. *Brown Dog of the Yaok: Essays on Art and Activism*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 1999. Portrait and bibliography by Scott Slovic. 170 pages, \$12.00. Deming, Alison Hawthorne. *Writing the Sacred into the Real*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2001. Portrait and bibliography by Scott Slovic. 140 pages, \$12.00. Elder, John. *The Frog Run: Words and Wildness in the Vermont Woods*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2001. Portrait by Scott Slovic. Bibliography by Lilace Mellin Guignard. 146 pages, \$14.00. Kittredge, William. *Taking Care: Thoughts on Storytelling and Belief*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 1999. Portrait and bibliography by Scott Slovic. 130 pages, \$12.00. Nichols, John. *An American Child Supreme: The Education of a Liberation Ecologist*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2001. Portrait by Scott Slovic. Bibliography by John Nichols and Patrick Barron. 196 pages, \$14.00. Pyle, Robert Michael. *Walking the High Ridge: Life as Field*

Trip. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2000. Portrait and bibliography by Scott Slovic. 193 pages, \$12.00.

Rogers, Pattiann. *The Dream of the Marsh Wren: Writing as Reciprocal Creation*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 1999. Portrait and bibliography by Scott Slovic. 141 pages, \$12.00.

Sanders, Scott Russell. *The Country of Language*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 1999. Portrait and bibliography by Scott Slovic. 131 pages, \$12.00.

Zwinger, Ann Haymond. *Shaped by Wind and Water: Reflections of a Naturalist*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2000. Portrait and bibliography by Scott Slovic. 160 pages, \$12.00.

Suppose you could invite nine serious landscape painters to join you in a familiar middle landscape, one neither too wild nor too built, sit them down facing the same direction, and ask them to paint what they see. Will you get nine identical paintings? No, every element will vary, colors and shapes, perspective and tone, all those details that make a distinctive style and vision. If you know your artists' other works, you'll easily

3 6 2 WAL 3 7 .3 F a l l 2 0 0 2 match painting to maker. Will you see nine completely different paintings? No, you'll recognize the same material world in each of them. Will any of them perfectly match your own vision? No. Yet you'll likely find in each one some perfect evocation of what you see — or learn to see. Or make a list of nine writers active in 1850, doing related work — domestic or sentimental novels, say, or narratives of exploration and settlement in the West, or serious treatments of slavery and race. Imagine you could bring them back to do a single task: write down why they did what they did. You'd be creating a treasure trove.

Now: Replace landscape painters and authors long dead with contemporary American nature and environmental writers. Ask them to describe, as the *Credo* series editors did, what they see, in a form of their choice, and to talk about their essential goals, concerns, and practices — why and how they do what they do. Find a leading literary historian and critic — say, Scott Slovic — to run the show, host and introduce the writers, and list everything else they've published. Then (by now you're not yourself but Emilie Buchwald, publisher of Milkweed Editions) collect and publish all of this in a set of books, one volume for each writer, and plan to continue the series with additional writers as long as you can. You'll have created the *Credo* books. The authors of these books, so far, are Rick Bass, Alison Hawthorne Deming, John Elder, William Kittredge, John Nichols, Robert Michael Pyle, Pattiann Rogers, Scott Russell Sanders, and Ann Haymond Zwinger. Soon John Daniel and Gary Paul Nabhan will join the list. Two to four volumes have appeared each year since 1999, and more are in the works. Inside each book, you'll find this: A paragraph stating the...

THE CREDO SERIES: LANGUAGE/NATURE/CHERISHING

SUEELLEN CAMPBELL

WORKS REVIEWED

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