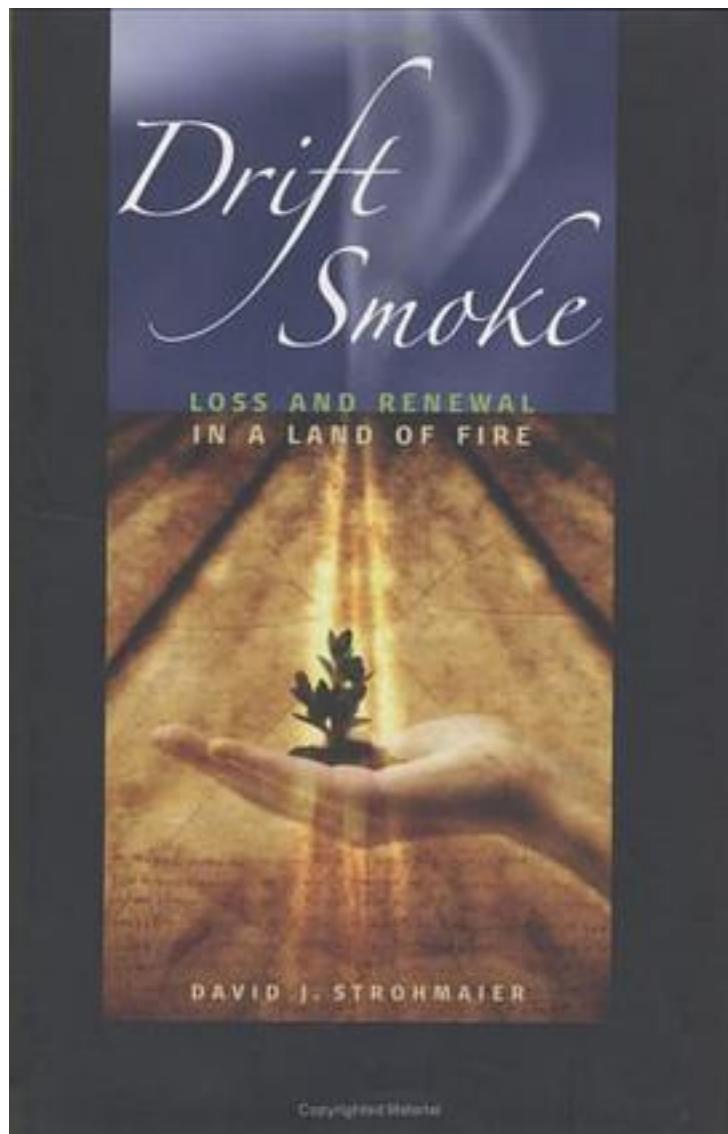


# Drift Smoke



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David Strohmaier's long career as a firefighter has given him intimate knowledge of wildfire and its complex role in the natural world of the American West. It has also provided him with a rare understanding of the painful losses that are a consequence of fire. Strohmaier addresses our ambivalence about fire and the realities of loss to it--"loss of life, human and animal; of livelihoods; of beloved places. He also examines the process of renewal that is yet another consequence of fire, from the infusion of essential nutrients into the soil, to the sprouting of seeds that depend on fire for germination, to the renewal of species as the land restores itself. Ultimately, according to Strohmaier, living with fire is a matter of choices, of "seeing the connection between loss on a personal scale and loss on a landscape scale: in relationship with persons, and in relationship to and with the land." We must cultivate a longer perspective, he says, accepting that loss is a part of life and that "humility and empathy and care are not only core virtues between humans but are also essential virtues in our attitudes and actions toward the earth."

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