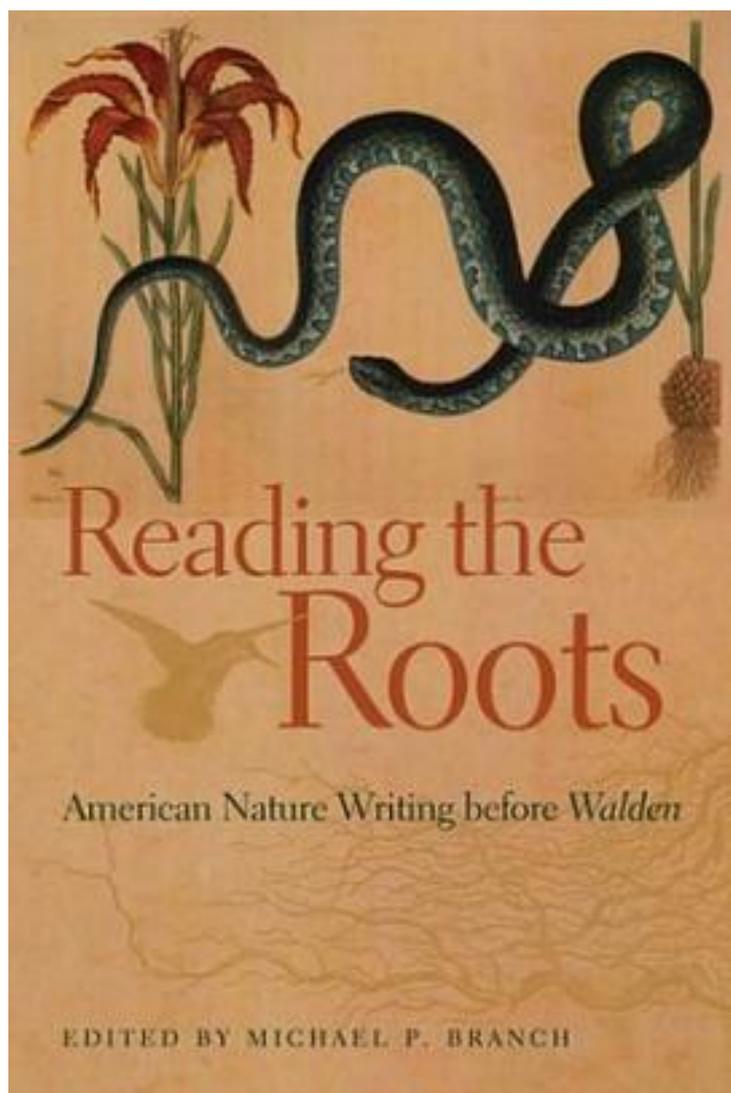


Reading the Roots



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"Reading the Roots" is an unprecedented anthology of outstanding early writings about American nature--a rich, influential, yet critically underappreciated body of work. Rather than begin with Henry David Thoreau, who is often identified as the progenitor of American nature writing, editor Michael P. Branch instead surveys the long tradition that prefigures and anticipates Thoreau and his literary descendants. The selections in "Reading the Roots" describe a diversity of landscapes, wildlife, and natural phenomena, and their authors represent many different nationalities, cultural affiliations, religious views, and ideological perspectives. The writings gathered here also range widely in terms of subject, rhetorical form, and disciplinary approach--from promotional tracts and European narratives of contact with Native Americans to examples of scientific theology and romantic nature writing. The volume also includes a critical introduction discussing the cultural, scientific, and literary value of early American nature writing; headnotes that contextualize all authors and selections; and a substantial bibliography of primary and secondary sources in the field. "Reading the Roots" at last makes early American landscapes--and a range of literary responses to them--accessible to scholars, students, and general readers.

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