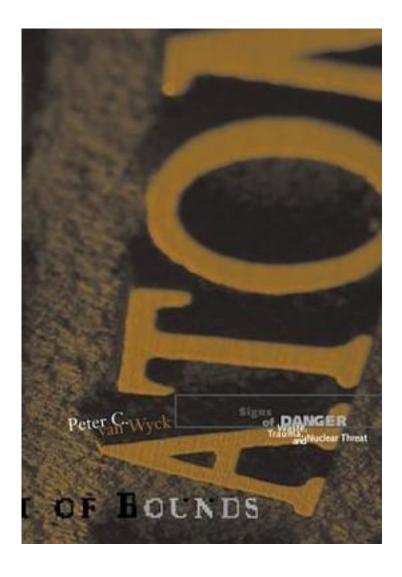
Signs of Danger



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A rising ocean. A falling building. A toxic river. Species extinguished. A nuclear

landscape. In a world so configured, the state of contemporary ecological thought and practice is woefully--and perilously--inadequate. Focusing on the government's nuclear waste burial program in Carlsbad, New Mexico, "Signs of Danger begins the urgent work of finding a new way of thinking about ecological threat in our time. The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in Carlsbad began receiving shipments in 1999. With a proposed closing date of 2030, this repository for nuclear waste must be secured with a sign, the purpose of which will be to keep people away for three hundred generation's. In the official documents uncovered by Peter van Wyck, we encounter a government bureaucracy approaching the issue of nuclear waste as a technical problem only to find itself confronting a host of intractable philosophical issues concerning language, culture, and history. "Signs of Danger plumbs these depths as it shows us how the problem raised in the desert of New Mexico is actually the problem of a culture grappling with ecological threats and with questions of the limits of meaning and representation in the deep future. The reflections at the center of this book--on memory, trauma, disaster, representation, and the virtual--are aimed at defining the uniquely modern status of environmental and nuclear threats. They offer invaluable insights into the interface of where culture ends and nature begins, and how such a juncture is closely linked with questions of risk, concepts of history, and the cultural experience of time.

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