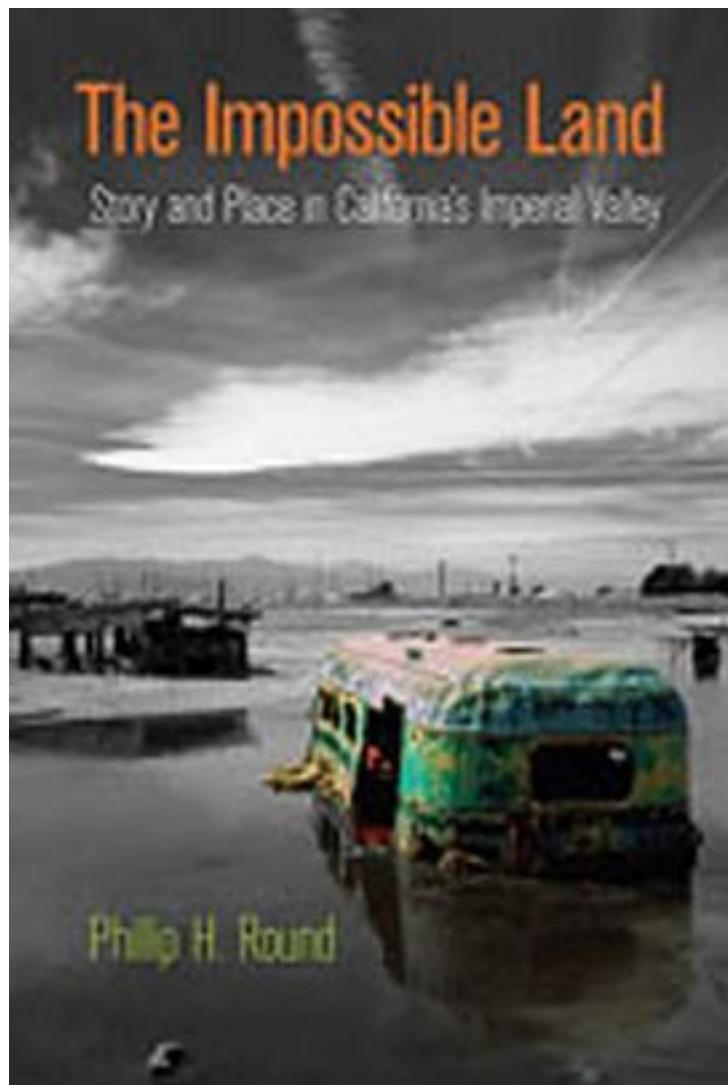


The Impossible Land



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In this study of the relationship between the natural landscape and human storytelling, Phillip Round brings together a century of stories produced in and about California's Imperial Valley, a 6,000-square-mile desert region along the borders of Mexico and Arizona. One of America's driest and most barren areas, the Imperial Valley was transformed at the beginning of the twentieth century when irrigation made it an agricultural oasis. The story neither begins nor ends there, however. In Round's investigation of storytelling in this valley, he finds a wide range of styles and subjects, from tales credited with establishing a "desert aesthetic" movement in America, to stories that mythologized desert reclamation as America's moral imperative, from memoirs of dustbowl refugees, Japanese-Americans, and Chicanos, to the migration stories of Native peoples. Round's analysis of the relationship between the regional and the national, the personal and the political, the romantic and the real in western American literature provides readers with a new vantage point from which to view such twenty-first century challenges in the West as illegal immigration, ecological disaster, scientific innovation, and cultural displacement.

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