



Environment & Society Portal



The White Horse Press

Full citation:

Coates, Peter. "Emerging from the Wilderness (or, from Redwoods to Bananas): Recent Environmental History in the United States and the Rest of the Americas." *Environment and History* 10, no. 4, 10th Anniversary Issue (November 2004): 407–38.
<http://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/3211>.

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Emerging from the Wilderness (or, from Redwoods to Bananas): Recent Environmental History in the United States and the Rest of the Americas

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ABSTRACT

This essay charts and reflects on developments in the environmental history of the Americas over the past decade, arguing that the field has become more inclusive and complex as it tackles a broader spectrum of physical environments and moves beyond an emphasis on destructiveness and loss as the essence of relations between humans and the rest of the natural world. New approaches to traditional subjects such as conservation and national parks are examined too. While paying due attention to the United States, it also highlights progress in Canadian environmental history and (English language) coverage of Central and South America.

KEYWORDS

History of environmental history, United States, Canada, South America, The Americas

The recently published, three-volume *Encyclopedia of World Environmental History* – a pioneering American production with an international cast of contributors – includes entries for every major South American country. Peru even gets two – the second specifically for its coastal region. There are also listings for Mexico, Central America, the Andes, the Amazon, the Orinoco and the Rio de la Plata.¹ This attentiveness to the Americas beyond the United States is a fresh development, though, and the United States continues to dominate the

production of environmental history in the western hemisphere. I point this out to forestall familiar cries of ‘Yankee, go home!’ The United States looms largest in this anniversary essay because of the far greater output of environmental historians there than anywhere else in the Americas – not just over the past decade but ever since environmental history acquired an identity in the U.S. over thirty years ago. For every book or article on the Americas south of the Rio Grande (whether in English, Spanish or Portuguese), there must be at least a hundred about the United States. Moreover, much of the material on the rest of the Americas is generated in English by Americans.² Most of the South and Central American contributions to the aforementioned *Encyclopedia* are by U.S. scholars based in the United States.³ So I shall begin and end with the continent’s most powerful (if not largest) nation.

1. THE UNITED STATES

In the year that the first issue of *Environment and History* appeared, two seminal books pointed the study of relations between humans and the rest of the nature in the United States in new directions: William Cronon’s edited collection, *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature* and Richard White’s *The Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Columbia River*.⁴ Taking their cue from the observation (1972) of the British literary critic, Raymond Williams, that ‘the idea of nature contains, though often unnoticed, an extraordinary amount of human history’⁵ Cronon’s contributors emphasised nature’s socio-cultural construction. They were also strongly influenced by the demise of ‘climax’ ecology, which presented natural systems undisturbed by human action as balanced and tending toward a state of permanence. Questioning the dominant American idea of nature as something wild, remote and unchanging, they stressed the value of the ordinary nature to be found in everyday living and working environments.

Their aim (exemplified by Cronon’s oft reprinted essay, ‘The Trouble with Wilderness’) was to reclaim a more diverse range of meanings and places for ‘nature’.⁶ In his rear dust jacket blurb, the urban geographer Mike Davis hailed *Uncommon Ground* as ‘an uncompromising critique of an increasingly reactionary Wilderness metaphysic [that] frames a vision of a more inclusive, and populist, environmental politics’. In terms of triggering a big conversation about the American preoccupation with wilderness and how this has shaped (or skewed) environmentalist priorities, *Uncommon Ground* was a roaring success. Shock waves reverberated through the environmental and academic communities.⁷

The main bridge between *Uncommon Ground* and *Organic Machine* was White’s contribution to the former, ‘“Are You an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?”: Work and Nature’. Inspired by a bumper sticker he had seen in a logging town in western Washington state, White ruminated on the American preference for natural environments uncontaminated by traces of labour

and known essentially through leisure. Tapping away at his keyboard, White connected his own apparently harmless academic labour with the more clearly consequential forms of work and technology that environmentalists habitually criticise such as logging and damming. 'The lights on this screen need electricity', he reflected, 'and this particular electricity comes from dams...[that] kill fish...In the end, these electrical impulses will take tangible form on paper from trees. Nature, altered and changed, is in this room. My separation is illusion'.⁸

Organic Machine focused squarely on the shifting, blurred and blurring boundaries between human and non-human history through a case study of the Columbia River, which dominates the ecology and economy of the Pacific Northwest. Though thoroughly dammed and manipulated, this river basin serves White as a prime example of the impossibility of drawing meaningful distinctions between the natural and the unnatural and/or mechanical. By examining how interacting human and non-human forces created a 'new energy regime, a new geography, and a new relationship between human labor and the energy of nature' without obliterating the river's old energy regime and geography, this slim book provided a template for the study of other landscapes that highlights continuities and changes rather than the elemental before and after scenario integral to the declensionist narrative that had hitherto dominated the writing of U.S. environmental history.⁹ What White sees is not a lost or destroyed river but a different river that retains elements of the 'unmade world that we call nature'.¹⁰

Encapsulated in *Uncommon Ground* and *Organic Machine* are the core characteristics that have set the environmental history of the United States generated over the past decade apart from earlier manifestations: a far muddier divide between the non-human and human domains; a keener awareness of how the variables of race, class and gender shape the dialogue between humans and the rest of nature; greater attention to a wider spectrum of environments, especially those of the city; closer links with the history of technology;¹¹ a reduced emphasis on environmental change as synonymous with destruction and less stress on human misdeeds;¹² and, not least, a more complicated, arguably less intimate relationship between environmental history and environmentalism.¹³

1.1 Environmental history and environmentalist history

What is environmentalism? Who are environmentalists? What (and where) is the environment? What is an environmental threat? What is environmental history? Such fundamental, closely interlinked questions did not require much attention from environmental historians in the early 1990s. Yet over the last decade, they have confronted us all with far greater urgency.

The emergence of environmental history as a self-conscious sub-discipline within United States history was partly a product of the socio-cultural ferment of the 1960s that generated the environmental movement as well as the civil

rights, women's liberation and anti-war movements.¹⁴ As Jim Morrison of the rock band 'The Doors' sang in 'When the Music's Over':

What have they done to the earth?
 What have they done to our fair sister?
 Ravaged and plundered and ripped her and bit her.
 Stuck her with knives in the side of the dawn.
 And tied her with fences and dragged her down.¹⁵

The essential temper of first generation U.S. environmental history was a finger-wagging lament over loss and damage as people did awful things to flora, fauna and the land. Over the past decade, this censorious approach has been tempered by a more mature examination of a wider, more complex range of relationships with the rest of nature. Challenging the moral certitude of the old environmental history, which recast the heroic, civilisation-building pioneer of the venerable frontier narrative as a rampaging eco-villain (the real varmint rather than the wolf he sought to eliminate), Alan Taylor has reminded us of something that historians of the American frontier took for granted a century ago. Examining Euro-American settlement in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century upstate New York, he suggested that early settlers, far from being firmly in charge and throwing their weight around, often feared nature and were at its mercy. Unfamiliar plants could poison them when they went foraging. Or rodents might eat their painstakingly cultivated crops. Others drowned when they fell through river ice or were swept away by spring floods. Alternatively, they could be killed by falling trees whilst cutting them down. They were tough on nature, Taylor contends, because nature was tough on them.¹⁶ We are so accustomed to thinking of non-human nature as victim of Euro-American exploitation that it comes as quite a shock when the exploiters themselves are recast as victims.

Besides exposing the flagrant mistreatment of nature during frontier conquest, the environmental historian during those formative years was engrossed in tracing the origins of contemporary environmentalism. The path-breaking U.S. environmental historian, Roderick Nash, having recently published the now classic text on U.S. attitudes to wilderness, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (1967), did not shy from the fray.¹⁷ To mark the first anniversary of the spill that contaminated the beaches of Santa Barbara in southern California after oil spewed from a blown out offshore drilling platform (January 1969), Nash (who taught the nation's first environmental history courses at the local campus of the University of California) read out the 'Santa Barbara Declaration of Environmental Rights' on national television. Nash's rhetoric epitomised the sense of urgency, the movement's idealism and its apocalyptic tone.

Centuries of careless neglect of the environment have brought mankind to a final crossroads. The quality of our lives is eroded and our very existence threatened by our abuse of the natural world... We, therefore, resolve to act. We propose a revolu-

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tion in conduct toward an environment that is rising in revolt against us. Granted that ideas and institutions long established are not easily changed; yet today is the first day of the rest of our life on this planet.¹⁸

1.2 *The Call of the City*

Though the Santa Barbara spill brought the consequences of industrial pollution home to an affluent community, the city and the environmental problems that affected poorer urbanites occupied a low profile on the horizons of environmentalists and environmental historians alike. During the 1960s and 1970s, the wide open spaces where deer and antelope play – and efforts to protect them – drove the U.S. environmental movement and the work of environmental historians. Today, cities jostle for position in the vanguard.

Environmental history began to break out of its wild ghetto with a special issue of *Environmental History Review* (*Environmental History's* forerunner) in 1994 on cities.¹⁹ Since then, a number of ambitious syntheses have appeared. Joel Tarr's *The Search for the Ultimate Sink* (1996), which probes the production of waste products and attempts to dispose of them, reminded us that environmental change involves flush toilets as well as deforestation. Tarr also pointed out that resolving one problem often creates another: there is no such thing as flushing something down a plug hole into eternal oblivion.²⁰ Monographs with titles such as *The Sanitary City* (2000), *Effluent America* (2001) and *Garbage Wars* (2002) are appearing at a rate once reserved for books on hallowed national parks.²¹ The built environment is now firmly established as a legitimate province of environmental history.²²

Yet cities are by no means self-contained organisms. Nineteenth-century Chicago was the focus of Cronon's landmark book (1991) on the intersections between town and country.²³ But the most striking recent examples of a new, outward-looking urban-environmental history have been inspired by the improbable twentieth-century 'oasis' cities of the desert Southwest whose lifeblood is water appropriated from distant sources. Building on Lewis Mumford's notion of the greedy urban mega-machine and the idea of internal colonialism, Mike Davis offers Los Angeles – the non-city that New Yorkers (and many others) love to hate – as the supreme example of metropolitan arrogance and the epitome of the unsustainable. The City of the Angels is cast as a devilish place bitterly divided between affluence and deprivation, menaced by smog, mudslides, floods and fire (and, if you live in an upscale, 'gated' hilltop community, by coyotes and mountain lions). Yet when it comes to what Davis calls 'hydro-fetishism', nowhere beats Las Vegas, the nation's fastest growing city. The thoroughly unregenerate gambler's paradise – now replete with its own replica of Venice's Grand Canal – also emerges from Davis's apocalyptic, neo-Marxian scrutiny as a hell-hole teetering on the brink of ecological and social disaster.²⁴

1.3 Toward a More Social Environmental History and a Broader Environmentalism

Davis's work – like White's – shows how environmental and social history both benefit from a tighter association. Taylor has characterised the traditional differences between social and environmental historians by describing their mutual myopias:

Social historians are so preoccupied with the demanding business of reconstituting the multiple divisions and complex interrelationships within human populations that most treat the natural context as a given, as a constant, as an assumed but unexplored backdrop... Similarly, environmental historians face such a difficult task in analyzing the complicated and volatile relationship of humans to their ecosystems that they are often tempted to depict societies and cultures as homogenous wholes. Thereby, they mute the subdivisions and conflicts that so interest social historians.²⁵

This marriage of social and environmental history that Taylor proposed was consummated by Ted Steinberg in *Acts of God: The Unnatural History of Natural Disaster in America* (2000).²⁶ Think of the opening scene in *The Wizard of Oz*, blockbuster movies like *Twister*, and drenched correspondents reporting live against a backdrop of wildly lurching palms from coastal communities lashed by El Niño. Natural disaster is as American as anti-communism and apple pie. Yet rarely does natural agency work alone.

Steinberg reveals the social dimensions of natural disasters. His message, to quote a victim of the Mississippi River flood of 1993 that engulfed Mark Twain's hometown of Hannibal, Missouri, is that 'It's always the poor people that get screwed'. Through examples ranging from the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire to the regular death and destruction of the 1990s, Steinberg reveals how the poor, the elderly and the 'non-white' have suffered disproportionately. He also shows how the concept of 'natural' disaster has been constructed. The USA's economic and political elites, he argues, have scapegoated Nature to take the heat off themselves as 'architects of destruction' who have courted and exacerbated tragedy.²⁷ This is good old fashioned, materialist scholarship. The righteous indignation works too, confirming that some of the most savage critics of capitalism and its political handmaidens in U.S. academia today are environmental historians.

Acts of God is the perfect book to curl up with during the perfect storm – provided you don't live in a trailer park. But what of the suburbs, that closeted environment which, in Steinberg's view, has been shielded from the full force of the elements? The federal census of 1920 became famous for recording that urban Americans outnumbered their rural counterparts for the first time. The most recent decennial census (2000) constituted another landmark by revealing that more Americans now live in suburbs than anywhere else. Appropriately, we now have the first environmental history of this most typical of American environments. Adam Rome's award-winning study, *The Bulldozer in the Coun-*

tryside (2001) – whose title takes its cue from a classic work on the relationship between technology and the pastoral ideal in the United States (Leo Marx's *The Machine in the Garden* [1964]) – foregrounds the mass production of tract housing on the urban fringe and associated environmental impacts (among them, water consumption and pollution, alteration of flood regimes and attrition of farmland and woodland).²⁸ Yet a new environment was created in the process, whose leitmotif is the immaculate but sterile and positively eco-unfriendly lawn that sweeps down to the sidewalk, whether in moist Boston or parched Las Vegas. After spending so much time obsessed with wilderness, environmental historians are at last discovering the special American relationship with the lawn.²⁹ Collectively, they blanket an area the size of Pennsylvania. Moreover, to preserve their pristine condition, gardeners douse them with more pounds of chemical fertiliser and pesticides per acre than farmland receives, not to mention massive quantities of water.

The study of urban and suburban environments has often gone hand in hand with a more inclusive understanding of what constitutes environmentalism. Andrew Hurley set the trend in a 1995 study of the notoriously polluted steel-town of Gary, Indiana by establishing a common ground for environmental, social, labour, urban and technological history. Prior to 1945, largely due to residential patterns, all classes and races/ethnic groups suffered the ill effects of air, water and land pollution. Thereafter, wealthier whites increasingly avoided these hazards by moving out to Rome's suburbs. Hurley's historical perspective suggested that *environmental inequity* is a more accurate way of characterising relations between people and environmental hazards than the increasingly popular term *environmental racism*: for the disadvantaged have often been white people.³⁰

Nonetheless, in his presidential address to the American Society for Environmental History (ASEH) in 1995, self-styled 'garbage historian' Martin V. Melosi identified race as a glaring omission in environmental history (with the exception, that is, of a venerable body of work on Native Americans). This state of neglect, he believed, had been exposed by the advent in the early 1980s of the environmental justice cause (which coalesced in 1991 at the first National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit).³¹ These campaigns protested against the locating of hazardous waste dumps in or near 'minority' (and/or low income) neighbourhoods and were often spearheaded by non-white (and/or low income) women.³² Participants in this 'alternative' (or 'blue-collar') environmentalism sometimes portrayed the mainstream 'nature conservation' groups as more of an obstacle than the polluters themselves and identified more with the anti-segregation struggles of the late 1950s and early 1960s.³³

Environmental justice advocates are also assembling their own pantheon of heroic ancestors from figures such as Martin Luther King and Alice Hamilton rather than John Muir and Aldo Leopold. In an article marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of Earth Day (1970), Robert Gottlieb hailed Hamilton as the nation's 'first great urban-industrial environmentalist'. A Harvard physician at

the forefront of occupational medicine and health studies (not least the struggle against leaded petrol), Hamilton represented a variety of early twentieth-century 'municipal housekeeping' that confronted environmental misery as well as economic deprivation.³⁴

Also turning away from the urban-based middle classes and literati traditionally thought of as conservation's progenitors, Richard Judd has resurrected a grassroots variety of communitarian environmentalism in northern New England. This populist version is rooted in the traditional (utilitarian) stewardship practices of white rural residents involving forests, fisheries and game animals in an environment dedicated to productive uses. Work on organised labour has also diluted the image of the bourgeois, suburban environmentalist. Though opposition to NAFTA (North American Free Trade Association) and the neo-liberal economic ideology of globalisation has promoted closer relations between environmentalists and labour unions since the mid-1990s, it was commonly thought in the 1980s that the interests of workers and environmentalists, past and present, were mutually antagonistic. Challenging this conventional wisdom, Scott Dewey has indicated that, before the energy crisis and stagflation of the early 1970s, organised labour had been sympathetic to many environmentalist causes. In fact, he argues that they were an integral part of the environmentalist movement of the 1960s. He also identifies a 'precocious' *'proto-environmentalism'* between 1945 and 1965 that embraced public health issues like air and water pollution as well as inherited priorities such as wildlife and wilderness preservation. In an award-winning article, Chad Montrie further assaulted the received wisdom on conservation and environmentalism by foregrounding the 'versions' formulated by industrial workers and farmers.³⁵

Regardless whether race or class is prioritised, the holy trinity of race, class and gender that has dominated the writing of history as a whole over the past thirty years now also shapes environmental history decisively. Insofar as this has delivered a more sociologically sophisticated environmental history that moves beyond the monolithic juxtaposition of an undifferentiated 'man' and 'nature' that was once reflected in book titles, this is a healthy development.³⁶ Yet there's a danger of replacing this crude binary with another simplistic dichotomy – a David versus Goliath scenario that portrays a united community front that rears up to face down the threat.

As well as more sophisticated histories of environmental injustice, I would like to see greater attention to the interactions between 'minorities' and 'nature' traditionally defined. Latinos evidently value most the 'peopled and productive' environments of sea and garden.³⁷ African-Americans also have a relationship with the wild, yet 'landscape of freedom' meant something quite different to a runaway slave working his or her way north along the paths least trodden than it did to a white literary gent seeking respite from the suffocations of urban-industrial civilisation through an excursion into the primordial wilderness. It will make a refreshing change from dreary tales of woe involving toxic dumps

that essentialise African-Americans within cities to learn more about the ideas of nature held by rural African-Americans.³⁸

The attention given to urban environments and ‘new’ environmentalisms and environmentalists over the preceding pages is not meant to imply that environmental historians no longer study nature preservation or the sacred places that Euro-Americans embraced to serve the needs of cultural nationalism. Far from it. Books about Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon continue to appear. In many instances, though, new wine has been poured into old bottles. National park history once provided a grand opportunity for flag-waving. Places like Yellowstone were seen as sites of altruism and restraint that showcased the American spirit at its best, saying no, for once, to the Almighty Dollar (the buck stops here, at the park boundary). A new generation of scholars, however, is interested in an honest appraisal of the failings of national parks as well as their achievements. Non-heroic accounts stress nature’s commodification through tourism rather than its preservation.³⁹ They have also shifted the spotlight from the tourists and nature enthusiasts that parks and reserves served to those that they excluded: Native Americans, Hispanics, rural whites and immigrants (the so-called subaltern voices).⁴⁰

The re-packaging of conservation as neo-colonialism is typified by Karl Jacoby’s prize-winning reinterpretation. He examines the social costs of nature preservation by looking at the repercussions of the establishment of the Adirondack Forest Preserve/State Park in upstate New York for ‘working-class wilderness’; clashes between locals and park authorities at Yellowstone; and the impact of Grand Canyon Forest Reserve/National Park on the Havasupai tribe. These case studies are replete with examples of what he calls (with a nod to Eric Hobsbawm) ‘environmental banditry’: poaching, arson, tree felling, squatting and foraging. Jacoby avoids, though, the bald juxtaposition of heroic, disempowered local folks and impervious authorities: poachers turned gamekeepers and gamekeepers turned poachers.⁴¹

Being more inclined to regard it as a form of enlightened despotism, I feel that Jacoby is overly critical of the ‘new conservation order’. Early conservation may well have been elitist and insensitive to local interests but natural resources were in such a state (especially wildlife numbers) and the ideology of *laissez-faire* so rampant that something drastic, however imperfect, had to be done. How a more socially just regulatory system might have been achieved in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is not clear.⁴²

The history of national parks is evolving in other intriguing ways. In the 1980s, comparisons between national parks and the blighted landscapes of nuclear testing in the Southwestern desert would have been unthinkable. And analogies favourable to atomic sites would have seemed positively perverse. In the meantime, inspired by the idea of wilderness as an environment that was created rather than found, Rebecca Solnit has traced how the myth of the uninhabited wild transformed the identity of a once inhabited place – Yosemite Valley

– which was rendered empty by being emptied. She then compared Yosemite with another extensive federal property less than 200 miles away – the Nevada Test Site. And whether the ostensible Eden was the real paradise and the palpable hell the real monstrosity was not always immediately apparent.⁴³

Wild nature, it transpires, can flourish in the unlikeliest of places. Probably the best known are the Rocky Mountain Arsenal (Colorado) and the Hanford Nuclear Reservation (Washington), places that throw our received notions of nature and wildness into turmoil. The core of the former site remains seriously contaminated (not least with small bombs containing liquid sarin, a deadly nerve agent). But national security dictated the appropriation of a far larger chunk of land than the actual business of bomb making required (27 square miles in total). Five thousand acres of the chemical-free buffer zone has now been dedicated as the nation's newest (and most unusual) national wildlife refuge. The splendid isolation of this people-free and farm-free zone created hospitable conditions for wildlife increasingly marginalised as Denver's northward suburban onslaught consumes their habitat.⁴⁴

However stimulating and innovative, these new studies have been largely pursued within the confines of the nation state. In this respect, Jacoby's reassessment of conservation policy was notable for demonstrating an awareness of wider horizons. His perspective was clearly influenced by the emphasis on popular resistance to the conservationist state in the recent environmental history of imperial Africa and Asia. He was also alive to a class-conscious British rural history exemplified by E.P. Thompson's famous study of English game laws, *Whigs and Hunters* (1975). A more dramatic form of internationalism, though, is to re-position the United States within its hemisphere (or other parts of the colonial world).

2. PAN-AMERICAN HISTORY AND THE AMERICAS SOUTH OF THE RIO GRANDE

Efforts to promote a Pan-American history began with Herbert E. Bolton in 1932. His presidential address to the American Historical Association exhorted fellow United States historians to cast off their parochialism and locate their nation's experience within a shared hemispherical context (the 'Epic of Greater America'). Especially prominent among the common elements, in Bolton's view, was the frontier experience.⁴⁵ The Mexican historian, Edmundo O'Gorman, roundly condemned Bolton's notion of a 'Greater American' history because it prioritised geographical ingredients over what he considered to be more profound and revealing historical considerations. Insofar as 'larger historical unities' existed, O'Gorman believed these were 'unities of Nature and not of human nature, which is the essence of history'.⁴⁶

O’Gorman cannot be faulted for rejecting a crude geographical-environmental determinism as the basis for historical thinking. After all, the conquest of the lands that Alfred Crosby has dubbed the ‘neo-Europes’ and others refer to as the white settler colonies produced different outcomes for indigenous peoples. So-called frontiers of exclusion (North America and Australia) involved substantial elimination of native groups while frontiers of inclusion (South America) entailed greater absorption. Yet the relationships between non-human natures that O’Gorman scorned and the human natures he held so dear are the very stuff of a more mature environmental history.

Moreover, the sort of epic history that Bolton advocated for the western hemisphere is very much back in vogue. In 1994, the Institute of Early American History and Culture in Williamsburg, Virginia, expanded its brief to encompass Hispanic America and other parts of the Atlantic world and, a few years later, the John Carter Brown Library in Providence, Rhode Island, set up a Center for New World Comparative Studies. Historians of colonial America nowadays study Santa Fé as much as Boston, and recent studies located within an Atlantic world that spring to mind are Robin Blackburn’s *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492–1800* (1996), David Eltis’ *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (2000) and, not least, Felipe Fernández-Armesto’s, *The Americas: A Hemispheric History* (2003).⁴⁷

In the preface to *Civilizations* (2001), his entry into the realm of environmental history, Fernández-Armesto announced the indispensability of environmental history within the wider discipline.

History is a humane pursuit, rather than a ‘scientific’ one, in the conventional sense, because the past is not present to our senses: we can only know other people’s impressions and perceptions of it. Yet it ought to include everything science includes, because people are part of the awesome continuum of nature and you cannot encounter man except in the tangle of his environment and the mesh of eco-systems of which he forms a part. This book is a story of nature as well as of man. Its purpose is to change the way we think about civilization: to present it as a relationship between one species and the rest of nature.⁴⁸

Like Bolton, Fernández-Armesto is alert to the geographical-environmental-climatic framework that contains the human history of the Americas and how these material considerations have shaped that history (and, until relatively recent historical times, have largely benefited South America). Covering European colonialism, he cites the work of Alfred Crosby, William Cronon, Elinor Melville and Michael Williams on biotic transfers and changes in the land.⁴⁹ But we still await an explicitly environmental history of the Americas.

The environmental history of individual Central and South American countries and regions also remains under-developed.⁵⁰ The book with which environmental historians of other colonised regions will be most familiar is Elinor Melville’s study (1994) of a particular aspect of ecological imperialism: the impact of sheep

on sixteenth-century New Spain. Melville identified environmental mayhem in central Mexico as over-stocking led to chronic soil erosion and compaction and the depletion of ground water. The socio-economic consequences were equally drastic. As the bountiful Valle de Mezquital was converted into a wasteland, a handful of large estates replaced communal grazing lands.⁵¹

If pushed to name a second English-language work, environmental historians of the United States (or elsewhere) who are capable of doing so will probably nominate the late Warren Dean's sweeping, 8,000-year study of the denudation of Brazil's Atlantic Forest: *With Broadax and Firebrand* (1995; translated into Portuguese in 1996 and co-winner of ASEH's 1997 best book award).⁵² This forest once occupied about 12 per cent of the area that became Brazil (a country larger than the contiguous United States, incidentally, and the only modern nation whose name comes from a tree). Yet under 10 per cent survives more or less intact, and this overwhelming loss probably qualifies as the worst example of tropical rain forest destruction in world history.

The connection between deforestation in South America and what has become the U.S. consumer's favourite fruit has been fleshed out in John Soluri's award-winning study. Americans may revere apple pie and motherhood but they have been going bananas about (big) bananas since the early twentieth century (already by 1913, the only fruit they ate more of was the apple). Bananas shipped easily but were highly vulnerable to Panama disease (a fungus), which, in the 1890s, started spreading to all export-banana-growing areas of Latin America and the Caribbean. Half a century of forest clearance ensued as growers abandoned old sites and hunted for new plantations on which to grow the single variety that the U.S. consumer had come to know and love rather than develop disease resistant new varieties.⁵³

Frontier historians once stressed the contrast between the settler society and farming frontier that characterised North America and the (more backward) conquistadore (or *bandeirante*) society based on a *raubwirtschaft* (economy of plunder) that dominated the rest of the continent (not least Brazil).⁵⁴ More recently, though, the more internationally minded among the younger American historians of their nation's western frontier – more attuned to the extractive aspects of natural resource exploitation – have looked elsewhere on the continent for 'Other Wests' (rather than a Greater American history). Paul Sabin, for example, has compared petroleum frontiers in Alaska and Ecuador in the 1960s, examining the role of native communities and their land claims and the common thread of international capitalist expansion.⁵⁵

Regardless of differences between the United States/North America and South America – and some would argue that the basic feature of pan-American history is the economic and political success of the former and the latter's comparative failure⁵⁶ – do the Americas share a common history in terms of the human treatment of the non-human world? Leaving aside the question as to whether this shared experience has been essentially a failure or a success,

European colonialism substantially homogenised the hemisphere's diverse ecological systems through the continent-wide introduction of European microbes, flora and fauna – deliberate and inadvertent.

The horse, a Eurasian import, is now found throughout the Americas. So are Marlboro cigarettes. Yet the Argentine market is the only one in which the Philip Morris Company does not deploy horse and cowboy imagery to sell the world's best selling cigarette brand. There are still plenty of working cowboys in Argentina, but they lack the mythological stature that the horse-mounted embodiment of heroic Americanism has acquired in the United States (and which is just as appealing to European and Asian smokers). Though Marlboro sales in Argentina are perfectly healthy, the brand is associated with the thrill of Formula One motor racing rather than John Wayne. For, in Argentina, the cowboy's equivalent, the gaucho, has never been considered remotely glamorous. He is still a real cowboy and therefore a grubby and scruffy character languishing in the nether regions of society who does a shitty job (literally) for a paltry wage.⁵⁷

Notwithstanding this intriguing cultural foible, the ranching economy that nurtured the cowboy was an international phenomenon of the latter nineteenth century. The grasslands of the North American Great Plains, the Argentine Pampas, the South African veldt and the Siberian and Australian interior steppes were all occupied and exploited more or less simultaneously by neo-Europeans with neo-European crops and livestock.⁵⁸ And Latin Americanists are turning to topics familiar to their counterparts in North America's agro-ecological history.⁵⁹ British and Dominion troops subsisted on canned 'bully beef' from Argentine pastures in the trenches of Flanders during the First World War because capitalist producers also converted Argentina's grasslands into large scale farming units and sucked the region into world markets for grain and meat. With the U.S. Great Plains as a reference point (as well as Donald Worster's work), a U.S.-based Latin Americanist has examined a case of exceeded capacity in an area of unreliable rainfall after a temperate-zone cattle economy was transplanted to the semiarid savannah grassland of central Brazil's tropical highlands.⁶⁰ The clearance of Amazonian rainforest and the accompanying displacement of forest-dwelling native peoples – to supply timber, to make way for coffee and sugar cane planting and cattle ranching and to provide lebensraum for landless peasants and a swelling urban proletariat – appeared as a high profile global environmental issue in the late 1980s (thanks, not least, to rock singer Sting and the Body Shop's Anita Roddick). This has been accompanied by an emerging academic literature.⁶¹

The Borderland school of 'greater American' history that Bolton pioneered early last century has been revived of late by a handful of U.S.-based Latin Americanists focusing on 'borderland' issues between Mexico and the United States. The extraction of Central and South America's subsurface resources has been of greatest interest to historians of the colonial epoch.⁶² This work pivoted

on precious metals. But gold and silver are not the only valuable metals mined. Another is copper. Moreover, as the late John Wirth emphasised, 'mining is rarely a local event'.⁶³ Wirth's work combined the perspectives of historian and policy consultant (he was a member of NAFTA's Commission for Environmental Cooperation) and his interest in environmental diplomacy focuses on institutional responses to trans-national pollution. One of his major case studies was the Gray Triangle dispute precipitated by pollution from the Phelps Dodge copper smelter on the Arizona-Mexico border in the 1980s.⁶⁴

Another lucrative subsurface resource hitherto neglected by Latin Americanists is oil. A special issue of *Environmental History* devoted to oil in 1998 included essays about the impact of oil development on native peoples in Ecuador and Mexico respectively. The first (by Paul Sabin) creatively borrowed the model of the middle ground that Richard White had developed in his seminal study (1991) of relations between native peoples and European colonists in the Great Lakes region of North America that generated hybrid forms of political, economic and cultural interaction.⁶⁵ Sabin's piece was notable for departing from the standard juxtaposition of invasive capitalist exploiters and their passive native victims (who either readily capitulated or mounted futile resistance).⁶⁶ Instead, he portrays a local population that retained its agency, refusing to become incorporated into an extractive economy on corporate terms (resisting, especially, proletarianisation).⁶⁷

Some environmental history of Latin America can be readily located within established U.S. genres. This is particularly true of Lane Simonian's *Defending the Land of the Jaguar: A History of Conservation in Mexico* (1995), the first book on the subject, which stretches from pre-Hispanic times to the early 1990s. Simonian locates a Mexican counterpart to Gifford Pinchot in the forestry and parks pioneer, Miguel Angel de Quevedo (in whom he sees shades of John Muir as well). He also situates the leading national parks advocate, Enrique Beltrán, within the framework of U.S. conservation ideas and policies.⁶⁸ One of Mexico City's metro stops is named for Quevedo. According to Guillermo Castro Herrera, however, equivalents to U.S. conservationists are hard to find in Latin America. In his view, the Americas south of the Rio Grande lack a 'green' intelligentsia akin to those found historically and currently in the northern hemisphere: 'middle class intellectuals of the kind of Gilbert White and Henry David Thoreau have never existed in our region'. He extends this observation, remarking that Latin America lacks a popular environmental movement firmly rooted in an extensive and influential middle class.⁶⁹ Because of the strong relationship between environmental thinkers, environmentalism and environmental history in the United States, he believes that these absences help explain the relative paucity of Latin American environmental history.

Given U.S. exceptionalism in these respects, Castro Herrera feels that the best indigenous foundation for a more structured and coordinated environmental history in Central and South America is provided by the time-honoured critique

of U.S. expropriation of the region's abundant natural resources and the human exploitation that complemented the ravaging of the soil by plantation staples like rubber, coffee and sugar cane.⁷⁰ This critical tradition is exemplified by the 'green' Marxism of Eduardo Galeano's *Open Veins of Latin America* (1971).⁷¹ The Uruguayan scholar's sub-title – *Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent* – encapsulated his argument and his first and second chapter headings – 'Lust for Gold, Lust for Silver' and 'King Sugar and Other Agricultural Monarchs' – evoked his tone.⁷²

3. OF MICE (BEAVER?) AND ELEPHANTS: CANADA AND NORTH AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

Resentment against the United States is less often associated with its northern neighbour. Yet though the phrase 'Yankee, go home!' may not have been coined by a Canadian, it was a Canadian prime minister (Pierre Trudeau) who memorably compared the experience of living next to the United States – despite Canada's far greater physical size – to that of a mouse sleeping with an elephant ('no matter how friendly and even-tempered the beast, one is affected by every twitch and grunt'). Many inhabitants of the Americas living south of the elephant object to the appropriation of the entire continent's identity when the United States calls itself 'America' and its citizens call themselves 'Americans' (some, indeed, insist that citizens of the United States confine themselves to the appellation 'United Statesian'). Canadians, however, can also be the victims of American appropriation of terminological identity: in this instance, the synonymous use of 'North America' and 'United States'. Carolyn Merchant's *The Columbia Guide to American Environmental History* (2002) aims to supply a 'concise "first stop" reference book on the history of the North American environment'.⁷³ Yet Canada does not receive a single index entry. On the other hand, Latin Americans are also guilty of subsuming Canada within its southern neighbour by referring to citizens of the United States as *norteamericanos*. (If Canadians are not North Americans, then what are they?)⁷⁴

Nonetheless, American environmental historians are demonstrating heightened awareness of Canada. Wirth also embraced pan-American issues involving Canada. In the 1920s, damage to trees and crops in Washington state from the smokestack emissions of a zinc and lead smelter ten miles north of the border at Trail, British Columbia, sparked a trans-border dispute that eventually became a matter for an international tribunal. The settlement of 1941, the first international ruling on trans-border air pollution, established the principle that in cases of cross-border damage, the polluter must pay compensation (if not the full cost of damage).⁷⁵

Reminding us that comparative history does not automatically downgrade the distinctiveness of specific national or cultural experience, Worster reinforces

notions of American exceptionalism grounded in the relationship between wilderness and U.S. identity. Though far more Canadian land is in a wilderness condition, much more wild land has been placed under some form of statutory protection in the United States (12 per cent versus 3 per cent). According to Marilyn Dubasak, the Canadian equation of too much wilderness and too few people explains the lower appeal of wilderness preservation there.⁷⁶ For Worster, though, the higher cultural cachet of wilderness in the United States is explicable largely by deep-seated cultural-historical factors. He regards the special mystique of wilderness in the U.S. as directly attributable to the American pursuit of freedom – itself inseparable from the myth of the frontier.⁷⁷ As such, the wilderness – like the frontier – has acquired a peerless reputation as a ‘landscape of freedom’ among (white) Americans.⁷⁸ Accordingly, just as Canada has the Mountie rather than Billy the Kid as mythic hero, there’s no equivalent to the Sierra Club and no John Muir.⁷⁹

Other environmental historians have been more alert to the comparability of the U.S. experience. The first comparative environmental history involving the United States appeared – conveniently for this essay – in 1995.⁸⁰ Though it omitted the white settler nation that was chosen for this comparison – South Africa – to date, the most ambitious attempt to reconnect North American environmental history with the experience of other frontier regions invaded by the British has been Tom Dunlap’s *Nature and the English Diaspora: Environment and History in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand* (1999). Dunlap’s central insight is that the U.S. environmental experience is best understood as part of a trans-national ‘Anglo’ settler phenomenon.⁸¹ Though alert to nuance and variation, his examination of the interplay between a common culture and four destinations stresses that settlers shared common goals and technologies that sought to reshape strange lands in a familiar mould (refusal to accept the restraint of aridity marks Australia as well as the western United States). Dunlap also identified a Jeffersonian-style settler ethos integral to all four countries, regardless of whether they were a brash young nation making it alone or content to maintain political and cultural ties with the motherland. Yet Canada is overshadowed by the United States in Dunlap’s account, with Australia emerging as the strongest and most illuminating point of comparison, especially for the American west (the dingo, it seems, was hounded as ruthlessly as the wolf).⁸²

There are far fewer Canadians writing environmental history (whether of Canada or elsewhere) than there are Americans. This is hardly surprising insofar as there are proportionately fewer historians of *any* kind in Canada. But the oversight is nonetheless puzzling, given that nature and natural resources have moulded Canadian history no less decisively than in the United States – not to mention national identity (think of all that maple leaf and beaver symbolism).

That small number of Canadians working on their nation’s environmental history is now undergoing a growth spurt. It is one thing, though, for historians to

be looking specifically at parks, nature tourism, wildlife, forests or conservation (remember that Canada's first national park, Banff, was established just thirteen years after Yellowstone).⁸³ A no less important sign of progress is that, as Alan MacEachern observes, 'there are more historians deciding that because their topic has an environmental angle – their politician made his money in forestry, their striking coal miners mined coal when they were not striking – environmental history must be part of what they do'.⁸⁴ Nonetheless, Canadian environmental history remains a fledgling compared to its American counterpart.

4. FROM THE PERIPHERY TO THE CENTRE: ENTERING THE U. S. HISTORY TEXTBOOKS

Environmental history in and of the United States is thriving (judging by the quantity of books and articles being published and the numbers attending professional conferences). How much, though, has entered the mainstream of historical study? Disappointingly little, concluded Adam Rome, the current editor of *Environmental History*, in a recent essay (2002) inspired by the almost wholesale inattention to environmental issues and an environmental perspective in a textbook edited by Harvard Sitkoff, *Perspectives on Modern America: Making Sense of the Twentieth Century* (2001). Individual chapters addressed the presidency, liberalism, conservatism, foreign policy, work, poverty, consumption, the West, the South, African Americans, ethnicity and immigration, women, religion and culture. Taking each of Sitkoff's themes in turn, Rome proceeded to make a powerful case for the importance of environmental topics and an environmental angle.⁸⁵

How do we get other historians to pay more serious attention to us? This question increasingly exercises young U.S. environmental historians like Ellen Stroud, who wants to transform the 'discipline of history' by carrying the fight to 'histories that are not intuitively environmental'.⁸⁶ The umbilical link between environmental history and environmentalism during their formative phases in the late 1960s and early 1970s may partly explain the indifference of other historians, who felt that environmental history's presentist thrust and advocatorial tone compromised any longer term or broader value. Those inclined to dismiss American environmental history as the picturesque tale of grizzlies and spouting geysers in Yellowstone or the green giants of conservation's hall of fame will be pleasantly surprised by the latest (and most ambitious) of a recent clutch of environmental history textbooks (the textbook being a reliable sign that a new form of history has arrived or, at least, is announcing its arrival).⁸⁷

Theodore Steinberg's *Down to Earth: Nature's Role in American History* (2002) endorses Stroud's view that it is 'not enough' for environmental historians to work on environmental 'topics'. His book exemplifies her belief that 'environmental history is not simply another subfield of history, taking its place

alongside political history, social history, and economic history. Rather, it is a tool for telling better histories in each of those fields, and others'.⁸⁸ Steinberg is primarily interested in the natural world's role as protagonist: only two chapters out of sixteen examine nature preservation and 'green' movements (and these are strongly revisionist treatments). He aims to 'try to change the way you think about American history' by showing how an environmental perspective affects our understanding of familiar events and experiences. Over the past quarter century, U.S. history textbooks have been invigorated by transfusions of social and cultural blood. But Steinberg refreshes those parts of American history that other textbook writers have failed to reach. Readers will search in vain for the Monroe Doctrine or Marilyn Monroe, and for Dolly Madison or Dolly Parton. Instead, they will find mules up to their ears in the mud of Virginia during the Civil War, the urban ecology of pig and horse manure, the suburban ecology of the lawn and sport utility vehicle, not to mention air conditioning and hamburgers.

Without reinforcing the prejudice of those wont to dismiss the environmental approach to historical study as a form of crude determinism riding roughshod over human agency, Steinberg investigates the fundamentals of life: how Americans have fed, clothed and housed themselves, how they have moved around and how they have disposed of their wastes. Particularly memorable is the chapter supplying the first natural history of the Civil War (we all know that an army marches on its stomach: while Union troops were dining on tinned fruit and condensed milk, 'Johnny Reb' was dreaming of a fat roasted rat).⁸⁹ This all comes as a considerable relief to those of us who worry that postmodernist deconstruction has obscured the materiality of nature.⁹⁰

Steinberg also regularly counts the ecological costs of economic progress. This focus on commodification ('putting a price tag on the natural world') and his withering critique of corporate capitalism and the effluence of affluence is exemplified by the chapter entitled 'The Secret History of Meat'. Since this economic and cultural model has been briskly exported since 1945, the book closes, appropriately, with a chapter called 'Planet U.S.A'. *Down to Earth* offers a template for textbook writing that (unlike American fast food culture) can be recommended unreservedly for export to countries, not least Britain, for which there are no real equivalents to speak of.

So we now have three textbooks in American environmental history. And the range of environmental topics tackled by historians of the United States has become truly vast: the pink flamingo garden ornament, eco-stores in shopping malls, snow, and plastic.⁹¹ Crucial revisions and enhancements have taken place: the green halos have been shot off American Indians and past conservation policy has been exposed as socially damaging.⁹² Histories of nature conservation and recent environmentalism have become more gender conscious.⁹³ Histories of recent environmentalism have also become more outward-looking, more calculated to attract the attention of other historians.⁹⁴ Studies of traditional topics

– such as forest conservation – are less isolationist and not so wedded to the notion of American exceptionalism.⁹⁵ We know more about the United States' environmental footprint abroad too.⁹⁶

And yet, despite the conversion of so much of the natural world into the raw materials of human economies and the global pall of pollution, we also have a stronger sense that nature remains active and unpredictable, and that, for better or worse, the human element is and always has been thoroughly entangled with the rest of nature (though this latter insight is hardly striking from a European perspective).⁹⁷ We are also becoming attuned to the nature within us, alive and dead.⁹⁸

Having surveyed the current landscape of U.S. environment history and having identified some stimulating new trends, I would like to devote a few paragraphs to a path not taken. Like many other historians and lay people, I thrilled to the geographical breadth and historical depth of Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fate of Human Societies* (1999). Yet a book with a far more modest physical scale published twenty years ago has left a more lasting mental footprint. In *Ceremonial Time: Fifteen Thousand Years on One Square Mile* (1984), historical geographer John Hanson Mitchell duly delivered on his subtitle. He was concerned with a tiny patch of earth where he lives – Scratch Flat, Massachusetts. Thirty-five miles west of Boston, this is a rural spot in the process of becoming a suburb. Scratch Flat is a place that Mitchell described as being nowhere and everywhere. The population is one hundred and fifty people (the author also helpfully lists the populations of cows, horses, cats and dogs).

Mitchell summarised the views of his fellow residents as follows:

Wilderness and wildlife, history, life itself, for that matter, is something that takes place somewhere else, it seems. You must travel to witness it, you must get in your car in summer and go off and look at things which some "expert," such as the National Park Service, tells you is important, or beautiful, or historic.

But Mitchell is attracted to the ordinary and the banal, for this is where he finds the truly extraordinary and the special.

In spite of their admitted grandeur, I find such places somewhat boring. What I prefer, and the thing that is the subject of this book, is that undiscovered country of the nearby, the secret world that lurks beyond the night windows and at the fringes of cultivated backyards.

A study that may, at first sight, seem intensely parochial is in fact as cosmopolitan as Diamond's macrocosmic sweep: the processes that have operated across much of the world since the last ice age have left their mark on this tiny square mile of Massachusetts too and Mitchell is just as concerned with them as with his tiny fleck of earth. (He also feels that these fifteen centuries may simply be an interlude. Scratch Flat will eventually vanish under the ice again,

perhaps soon, for another sixty thousand years.)⁹⁹ Yet, as far as I am aware, this blend of the local and global, the microcosmic and the macrocosmic, has not been pursued by many others. A shame.

5. TOWARD A GREATER AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

An essay about the pursuit of environmental history in the United States over the past decade that concentrated exclusively on the environmental history of the United States would fail to do justice to the state of the art over there. For the practice of environmental history in the United States has always been more cosmopolitan than many non-Americans may appreciate.¹⁰⁰ One of the founding fathers of the American Society for Environmental History, J. Donald Hughes, works on ancient Greece and Rome (and his most recent book is a global environmental history).¹⁰¹ The society's immediate past president, Carolyn Merchant, made her name with a seminal book on early modern Europe (*The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* [1980]). The current president, Douglas Wiener, is an authority on the Soviet Union. And ASEH's president-elect, Stephen Pyne, is the world expert on fire, whether in Australia or Arizona. Not least, the most recent winner of the society's best book award is a study of environmentalism in France since 1945 (one of ASEH's prize committees doing its bit to repair Franco-American relations?).¹⁰²

As good a gauge as any of the distance that environmental history in the Americas has travelled during this journal's lifetime is the academic menu that was served up at ASEH's most recent annual conference. This year, ASEH (founded in 1977) held its first conference outside the United States. Victoria, British Columbia, admittedly, is only a stone's throw (well, short ferry ride) from the snowy peaks of Washington state's Olympic Peninsula. And there was a generous helping of wilderness (the great American wilderness debate has been good for business). But the programme dished up an unprecedented amount of material on the environmental history of the Americas beyond the United States. In addition to plenty of Canadian fare (no surprise), there were sessions on Latin American landscapes and forests, and on engineers and the environment in Brazil, Mexico and the U.S.A.

Nonetheless, perhaps the most enjoyable and instructive panel that I attended was on biotechnology (so often assumed to be something entirely new under the sun). Snappily sub-titled 'breeding, betting and burning', this session embraced nineteenth-century horse breeding for work in the United States and dog breeding for gambling in Britain. The final paper examined a recent controversy in New York City's Harlem over the environmental impact of cremation (think of all those toxic dental fillings and pacemaker batteries, not to mention coffin varnish).¹⁰³

Even as it deals with death – whether of people or other creatures – environmental history in the Americas is bursting with vitality. It is also teeming with fraternisation across borders as Europeans as well as Latin Americans increasingly attend ASEH’s annual conference. A post-conference conversation between two Canadian historians who were sitting a few rows behind me, overheard on the bus to Vancouver, may point the way ahead. As they walked past me to get off at the stop before mine, one of them asked the other how long he thought it might be before the American Society for Environmental History became the North American Society for Environmental History. I didn’t catch the answer. But I like to think that this pan-American development will occur before this journal reaches its twentieth birthday. And – who knows – by the time this journal has reached the age of thirty, there may be a Society for the Environmental History of the Americas encompassing this North American outfit. What’s more, in view of profound demographic changes already well underway in the southwestern United States, this hemispheric organisation’s official language might well be Spanish. Herbert E. Bolton would be gratified.

NOTES

¹ Shepard Krech III, John R. McNeill and Carolyn Merchant, eds., *Encyclopedia of World Environmental History*, 3 vols. (New York: Routledge, 2004). Uruguay and Paraguay are covered under the ‘Southern Cone’ entry. Yet there is no entry for Alaska.

² For this essay’s purposes, an ‘American’ refers to a citizen of the United States. But I avoid the cardinal sin (from the rest of the continent’s perspective) of using ‘United States’ and ‘America’ interchangeably.

³ Only one entry is by a Central/South American based in Central/South America (José Drummond on Brazil, vol 1, 161–9). As I can barely read or speak Spanish (let alone Portuguese), the non-English literature lies beyond this essay’s scope. That I am not uniquely ill-equipped in this respect offers some consolation. As Guillermo Castro Herrera has commented, ‘it is still rare to find environmental historians in the North Atlantic countries able to communicate in Spanish’. He also explains that geographers, economists and sociologists have contributed more than historians to the body of work on Latin American environmental history in Spanish since the 1970s. See Herrera, ‘Environmental History (Made) in Latin America’ (2001), page 10 of 11, in H-ENVIRONMENT Historiography Series at: <http://www2.h.net.msu.edu/~environ/historiography/latinam.htm>

⁴ William Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature* (New York: Norton, 1995); Richard White, *The Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Columbia River* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995).

⁵ Williams, ‘Ideas of Nature’, in *Ecology: The Shaping Inquiry*, ed. Jonathan Benthall (London: Longman, 1972), 146. Of the fifteen essays in *Uncommon Ground*, only one left the United States – Candace Slater’s exploration of ‘edenic narratives’ in Amazonia. Slater has since published *Entangled Edens: Visions of the Amazon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

⁶ Cronon, 'The Trouble with Wilderness: or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature', *Uncommon Ground*, 69–90. This essay appeared in *Environmental History* 1,1 (1996): 7–28, followed by three commentaries and Cronon's response (29–55). For an abbreviated version, see the *New York Times*, 13 August 1995, 42.

⁷ Those who criticise the prominence of wilderness preservation in the environmentalist agenda and who point to change as the essential feature of natural environments have been accused of undermining the foundations of the environmental movement and compromising its political vitality. Responding to these charges, they insist that their objective is to strengthen the environmental movement by addressing weaknesses that have allowed their opponents to charge them with elitism and misanthropy.

⁸ In Cronon, *Uncommon Ground*, 184.

⁹ Marcus Hall has identified a 'sequel' to the traditional, three-part story of pre-European abundance, settler transformation and depletion that environmental historians of North America have traditionally told: restoration. See his award-winning article, 'Repairing Mountains: Restoration, Ecology, and Wilderness in Twentieth-Century Utah', *Environmental History* 6,4 (October 2001): 584–610.

¹⁰ White, *Organic Machine*, 29, 59, 111, ix. On working landscapes, see also Brian Black, *Petrolia: The Landscape of America's First Oil Boom* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000) and Mart Stewart, "What Nature Suffers to Groe": *Life, Labor, and Landscape on the Georgia Coast, 1680–1920* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996). Black's preliminary essay won the Aldo Leopold Prize (1999) offered annually by the U.S. journal *Environmental History* (hereafter, *EH*) for the best article in that journal: 'Oil Creek as Industrial Apparatus: Re-creating the Industrial Process Through the Landscape of Pennsylvania's Oil Boom', *EH* 3, 2 (1998): 210–29. Stewart demonstrates environmental history's potential for revitalising economic history and is also notable for being about the South – the U.S. region most neglected by the environmental historians. See Otis L. Graham, "Again the Backward Region? Environmental History in and of the American South", *Southern Cultures* 6, 2 (Summer 2000): 50–72.

¹¹ On the relationship between the history of technology and environmental history, see Jeffrey K. Stine and Joel A. Tarr, 'At the Intersection of Histories: Technology and the Environment', *Technology and Culture* 39, 4 (October 1998): 601–40. The Alice Hamilton Prize (2003) for the best article in environmental history published outside the journal *EH* went to William Boyd, 'Making Meat: Science, Technology, and American Poultry Production', *Technology and Culture* 42 (October 2001): 631–64.

¹² Also in 1995, Simon Schama protested against the main narrative of environmental history, which he characterised as a 'dismal tale...of land taken, exploited, exhausted....[by] the capitalist aggressor': *Landscape and Memory* (London: HarperCollins, 1995), 13. If change in ecological systems is the norm, though, is all change relative? Americans with a neo-conservative political agenda would certainly argue that a strip mine or clear cut is simply another chapter in a continuum of change.

¹³ On these changes, see Samuel P. Hays, Char Miller, Vera Norwood, J. Donald Hughes and Richard White, 'Forum: Environmental History, Retrospect and Prospect', *Pacific Historical Review* 70, 1 (2001): 55–111; Hal Rothman, 'A Decade in the Saddle: Confessions of a Recalcitrant Editor', *EH* 7, 1 (January 2002): 9–21.

EMERGING FROM THE WILDERNESS

¹⁴ On this under-appreciated facet of sixties radicalism, see Adam Rome, “‘Give Earth a Chance’: The Environmental Movement and the Sixties”, *Journal of American History* 90 (September 2003): 525–54.

¹⁵ From the album, *Strange Days* (Elektra, 1967).

¹⁶ Taylor, ‘Wasty Ways: Stories of American Settlement’, *EH* 3, 3 (July 1998): 291–310.

¹⁷ *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967). Now in its fourth edition (2001), the *Los Angeles Times* hailed it as one of the hundred most important books published in the last quarter of a century.

¹⁸ At <http://eastmeadow.k12.ny.us/caps/msdbq/environmentissues.htm>

¹⁹ ‘The Environment and the City’, eds. Joel A. Tarr and Christine Meisner Rosen, *Environmental History Review* 20, 2 (May 1994): 299–434. See also, Tarr, ‘Urban History and Environmental History in the United States: Complementary and Overlapping Fields’, <http://www.h-net.org/~environ/historiography/usurban.htm> [13 pages; late 1990s]

²⁰ Tarr, *Search for the Ultimate Sink: Urban Pollution in Historical Perspective* (Akron: University of Akron Press, 1996).

²¹ Melosi, *The Sanitary City: Urban Infrastructure in America from Colonial Times to the Present* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000); id., *Effluent America: Cities, Industry, Energy, and the Environment* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001); David Naguib Pellow, *Garbage Wars: The Struggle for Environmental Justice in Chicago* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002). *Sanitary City* received best book awards from the Society for the History of Technology, the Society for Urban History, the Public Works Historical Society and the American Society for Environmental History. Single city histories are emerging as once did histories of particular national parks. See Char Miller, ed., *On the Border: An Environmental History of San Antonio* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001) and Andrew Hurley, ed. *Common Fields: An Environmental History of St. Louis* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997).

²² See Jonathan Keyes, ‘A Place of Its Own: Urban Environmental History’, *Journal of Urban History* 26 (March 2000): 380–90.

²³ William Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: Norton, 1991). For a far western demonstration of the ‘imperial’ impact of cities on their rural hinterlands, see Gray Brechin, *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

²⁴ Mike Davis, *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster* (New York: Basic Books, 1998); id., ‘Las Vegas Versus Nature’, in *Re-Opening the American West*, ed. Hal Rothman (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1998): 50–73. On the hydro-profligacy of Southwestern ‘mirage culture’, see also Evan R. Ward, ‘Geo-Environmental Disconnection and the Colorado River Delta: Technology, Culture, and the Political Ecology of Paradise’, *Environment and History* 7, 2 (May 2002): 219–46.

²⁵ Taylor, ‘Natural Inequalities: Social and Environmental Histories’, *EH* 1, 4 (October 1996): 7.

²⁶ Elliott West’s multiple prize-winning *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), is another fine blend of social and environmental history. The environment pervades West’s account, but as a protagonist shaping human events since pre-history rather than hapless victim.

²⁷ Steinberg, *Acts of God: The Unnatural History of Natural Disaster in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), quotations on xvii, xxiii. For Steinberg, culpability resides in shoddy or non-existent regulations, infrastructure subsidies, boosters who minimise a disaster's severity for fear of prejudicing an area's economic future, uneven access to disaster funds, weather transmitters and sirens, and budget cuts that have disabled defences such as the gauging stations that monitor river levels.

²⁸ Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001). Among the prizes it has garnered, the Frederick Jackson Turner Award (2002) of the Organization of American Historians (for best first book in U.S. history) stands out.

²⁹ See Virginia Scott Jenkins, *The Lawn: A History of an American Obsession* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994); Georges Tyssot, ed., *The American Lawn* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999).

³⁰ Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945–1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

³¹ Melosi, 'Equity, Eco-racism and Environmental History', *Environmental History Review* 19, 3 (Fall 1995): 1–16.

³² For a Puerto Rican struggle against waste disposal since 1980, see chapters four and five of Matthew Gandy, *Concrete and Clay: Reworking Nature in New York City* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press 2002).

³³ Jim Schwab, *Deeper Shades of Green: The Rise of Blue-Collar and Minority Environmentalism in America* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1994); E.M. McGurty, 'From NIMBY to Civil Rights: The Origins of the Environmental Justice Movement', *EH* 2, 3 (July 1997): 301–23.

³⁴ Robert Gottlieb, 'Beyond NEPA and Earth Day: Reconstructing the Past and Envisioning a Future for Environmentalism', *Environmental History Review* 19, 4 (Winter 1995): 3. At the same time, interest in the well known, pioneering conservationists has by no means flagged. Linda Lear has supplied the first proper biography of Rachel Carson (which is also the first comprehensive biography of a female conservationist). More has appeared on Muir (and Donald Worster has a biography in the pipeline). We also have a rehabilitation of the now unfashionable Gifford Pinchot, the first new biography of John Wesley Powell in half a century, and a completely updated version of a renowned biography of George Perkins Marsh. See Linda Lear, *Rachel Carson: Witness for Nature* (New York: Henry Holt, 1997); Stephen Holmes, *The Young John Muir: An Environmental Biography* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999); Char Miller, *Gifford Pinchot and the Making of Modern Environmentalism* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2002); Donald Worster, *A River Running West: The Life of John Wesley Powell* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); David Lowenthal, *George Perkins Marsh: Prophet of Conservation* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000).

³⁵ Judd, *Common Lands, Common People: The Origins of Conservation in Northern New England* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997); Scott Dewey, 'Working for the Environment: Organized Labor and the Origins of Environmentalism in the United States, 1948–1970', *EH* 3, 1 (January 1998): 45–63; Chad Montrie, 'Expedient Environmentalism: Opposition to Coal Surface Mining in Appalachia and the United Mine Workers Of America, 1945–1977', *EH* 5, 1 (January 2000): 75–98. This latter article received the award for best article in *EH* (2000). Montrie also seeks to correct the new

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model of organised labour's environmentalist credentials propounded by some authors, by looking at an example of labour environmentalism shaped primarily by concern for jobs rather than for the state of the environment. See also Montrie, *To Save the Land and People: A History of Opposition to Surface Coal Mining in Appalachia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

³⁶ Arthur A. Ekirch, *Man and Nature in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963).

³⁷ Barbara Deutsch Lynch, 'The Garden and the Sea: U.S. Latino Environmental Discourse and Mainstream Environmentalism', *Social Problems* 40 (February 1993): 108–18.

³⁸ I look forward to Dianne Glave and Mark Stoll, eds., *'To Love the Wind and the Rain': Essays in African American Environmental History* (forthcoming).

³⁹ Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); Stephen J. Pyne, *How the Canyon Became Grand: A Short History* (New York: Viking, 1998); Chris G. Magoc, *Yellowstone: The Creation and Selling of an American Landscape, 1870–1903* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999); Mark Barringer, *Selling Yellowstone: Capitalism and the Construction of Nature* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002).

⁴⁰ Mark Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Theodore Catton, *Inhabited Wilderness: Indians, Eskimos, and National Parks in Alaska* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997) [co-winner, ASEH best book prize, 1999]; Laura Pulido, *Environmentalism and Economic Justice: Two Chicano Struggles in the Southwest* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996). For a broader survey of work on grassroots activism by marginalised groups, see Michael Egan, 'Subaltern Environmentalism in the United States: A Historiographic Review', *Environment and History* 8, 1 (February 2002): 21–41.

⁴¹ Jacoby, *Crimes against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001) [co-winner of ASEH's Marsh prize]. See also Louis Warren, *The Hunter's Game: Poachers and Conservationists in Twentieth-Century America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997). The most astute critique of U.S. forest management policies is Nancy Langston's study of the Blue Mountains of eastern Oregon and Washington, where wrong-headed fire suppression to serve the goal of maximum timber production resulted in the loss of enormous ponderosa pines and increased incidence of disease, insects and fire: *Forest Dreams, Forest Nightmares: The Paradox of Old Growth in the Inland West* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995).

⁴² Some would argue that Jacoby's perspective is ripe for exploitation by the neo-conservatives who control the Bush administration's environmental policies. 'Wise use' ideologues rant against an un-American, authoritarian environmentalism that 'locks up' land for well-heeled metropolitan recreationists and northern spotted owls. The forces of 'green backlash' are adept at cloaking the interests of corporate mining, logging, grazing and oil interests in populist rhetoric protesting conservation's 'criminalisation' of 'traditional' local users and uses. Fears of the political abuse of revisionist histories of conservation, however, are overblown. Moreover, it is patently absurd to expect environmental historians to engage in self-censorship for fear of inadvertently providing ammunition for anti-environmentalists.

⁴³ Solnit, *Savage Dreams: A Journey into the Hidden Landscape Wars of the American West* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1994). For an elaboration of these ideas, rich in ironies, see John Wills, "'Welcome to the Atomic Park': American Nuclear Landscapes and the 'Unnaturally Natural'", *Environment and History* 2, 4 (Spring 2001): 449–72.

⁴⁴ See Kirk Johnson, 'Weapons Moving Out, Wildlife Moving In', *New York Times*, 19 April 2004.

⁴⁵ The most comprehensive study of comparative American frontiers is Alistair Hennessy, *The Frontier in Latin American History* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1978).

⁴⁶ Edmundo O'Gorman, 'Do the Americas have a Common History?', in *Do The Americas Have a Common History? A Critique of the Bolton Theory*, ed. Lewis Hanke (New York: Knopf, 1964), 4. See also J.H. Elliott's essay, 'Do the Americas Have A Common History?' (1998).

⁴⁷ Other evidence of a more hemispheric perspective (and a broader meaning for 'American Studies') is the recent merger (with effect from August 2004) of the University of London's Institute of United States Studies with its Institute of Latin American Studies to form the new Institute for the Study of the Americas (Europe's first).

⁴⁸ Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *Civilizations: Culture, Ambition, and the Transformation of Nature* (New York: Free Press, 2001).

⁴⁹ Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *The Americas: A Hemispheric History* (New York: Modern Library, 2003), 47–53, 78, 94–6, 215, 218. The studies referred to are Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: The Biological Consequences of 1492* (1972) and *Ecological Imperialism* (1986), Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists and the Ecology of New England* (1983) and *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (1991), Melville, *A Plague of Sheep: Environmental Consequences of the Conquest of Mexico* (1994), and Williams, *Americans and Their Forests* (1995).

⁵⁰ Work on the Caribbean is even scantier than mainland coverage. The best-known study since Kenneth F. Kiple's *The Caribbean Slave: A Biological History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) is Louis A. Pérez, *Winds of Change: Hurricanes and the Transformation of Nineteenth-Century Cuba* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001). The central thesis of this study of the enormous economic, political and social impact of three major mid-19th century hurricanes (joint-winner of ASEH's best book prize in 2001) is that the collective experience of confronting a devastating natural force profoundly influenced how Cubans dealt with other (human) crises.

⁵¹ Elinor G.K. Melville, *A Plague of Sheep: Environmental Consequences of the Conquest of Mexico* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). This book sparked an extensive debate about the impact of sheep and the extent of pre-Columbian environmental change of a negative order. Andrew Sluyter has questioned the relevance of Melville's model to the rest of New Spain: 'From Archive to Map to Pastoral Landscape: A Spatial Perspective on the Livestock Ecology of Sixteenth-Century New Spain', *EH* 3, 4 (1998): 508–28.

⁵² Dean, *With Broadax and Firebrand: The Destruction of the Brazilian Atlantic Forest* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

⁵³ John Soluri, 'Accounting for Taste: Export Bananas, Mass Markets, and Panama Disease', *EH* 7, 3 (July 2002): 386–410. This article, which received the Leopold-Hidy Prize (2003) for best article in *EH*, marked a shift in focus within environmental history

from methods of production and resource extraction to patterns of consumption. See also Steve Marquardt, "'Green Havoc': Panama Disease, Environmental Change, and Labor Process in the Central American Banana Industry', *American Historical Review* 106 (2001): 49–80; Steve Striffler and Mark Moberg, eds. *Banana Wars: Power, Production, and History in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

⁵⁴ *Bandeirantes* were bands of Portuguese slave and gold hunters/raiders who penetrated the Brazilian interior. This approach was most famously articulated in Vianna Moog, *Bandeirantes and Pioneers* (New York: George Braziller, 1964).

⁵⁵ Sabin, 'Home and Abroad: The Two "Westes" of Twentieth-Century United States History', *Pacific Historical Review* 66 (1997): 305–35.

⁵⁶ Fernández-Armeesto refers to other countries in the Americas in the twentieth century, as mostly 'also-rans': *The Americas*, 181.

⁵⁷ John G. Blair, 'Cowboys, Europe and Smoke: Marlboro in the Saddle', in *The American West as Seen by Europeans and Americans*, ed. Rob Kroes (Amsterdam: Free University Press, 1989), 367.

⁵⁸ The socio-economic form that settlement took on Argentina's pampas diverged markedly, however, from the Great Plains. The large proprietorship (*latifundio*) and tenant farm were the norm rather than the homestead.

⁵⁹ See, for example, Adrián Gustavo Zarrilli, 'Capitalism, Ecology, and Agrarian expansion in the Pampean Region, 1890–1950', *EH* 6, 4 (October 2001): 561–83. For overviews of environmental themes in South American history, see Elinor G.K. Melville, 'Global Developments and Latin American Environments', in *Ecology and Empire: Environmental History of Settler Societies*, eds. Tom Griffiths and Libby Robin (Edinburgh: Keele University Press, 1997): 185–98 and J.R. McNeill, 'Environment and History in South America and South Africa', *South Africa's Environmental History: Cases and Comparisons*, eds. Stephen Dovers, Ruth Edgecombe and Bill Guest (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003): 240–49.

⁶⁰ Robert W. Wilcox, "'The Law of the Least Effort': Cattle Ranching and the Environment in the Savanna of Mato Grosso, Brazil, 1900–1980', *EH* 4, 3 (July 1999): 338–68.

⁶¹ For example, Robin L. Anderson, *Colonization as Exploitation in the Amazonian Rain Forest, 1758–1911* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999). For a broad survey of pre-1900 processes, see David Cleary, 'Towards an Environmental History of the Amazon: From Prehistory to the Nineteenth Century', *Latin American Research Review* 36, 2 (2001): 65–96. On precedents for current debates, see Regina Horta Duarte, 'Facing the Forest: European Travellers Crossing the Mucuri River Valley, Brazil, in the Nineteenth Century', *Environment and History* 10, 1 (February 2004): 31–58.

⁶² For a deeper perspective, see Elizabeth Dore, 'Environment and Society: Long-Term Trends in Latin American Mining', *Environment and History* 6, 1 (February 2000): 1–29.

⁶³ John D. Wirth, *Smelter Smoke in North America: The Politics of Transborder Pollution* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 142.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* For the transnational economic, social and environmental experience that copper mining and smelting forged, see Samuel Truett, 'Neighbors by Nature: Rethinking Region, Nation, and Environmental History in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands', *EH* 2, 2 (April 1997): 160–78.

⁶⁵ White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

⁶⁶ Sabin, 'Searching for Middle Ground: Native Communities and Oil Extraction in the Northern and Central Ecuadorian Amazon, 1967–1993', *EH* 3, 2 (April 1998): 144–68. For a similar approach, in a Canadian context, see Sabin, 'Voices from the Hydrocarbon Frontier: Canada's Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry (1974–1977)', *EHR* 19, 1 (Spring 1995): 17–48.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* See also, Myrna Santiago, 'Rejecting Progress in Paradise: Huastecs, the Environment, and the Oil Industry in Veracruz, Mexico, 1900–1935', *EHR*, *ibid.*, 169–88.

⁶⁸ Simonian, *Defending the Land of the Jaguar: A History of Conservation in Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 76, 77, 135, 143. A Spanish translation (from Mexico's Instituto Nacional de Ecología) appeared in 1999. Sterling Evans, *The Green Republic: A Conservation History of Costa Rica* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), explains the emergence of the special relationship between nature preservation and this small nation and why ecotourism has become such a distinctive feature of its economy.

⁶⁹ However, for an early critique from a cluster of politically influential Brazilian intellectuals, see José Augusto Pádua, "'Annihilating Natural Productions": Nature's Economy, Colonial Crisis and the Origins of Brazilian Political Environmentalism (1786–1810)', *Environment and History* 6, 3 (August 2000): 255–87.

⁷⁰ Castro Herrera, 'Environmental History (Made) in Latin America', pages 6 and 2 of 11.

⁷¹ Galeano, *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*, trans. Cedric Belfrage (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973; originally published as *Las Venas Abiertas de América Latina* [1971]).

⁷² Galeano also appreciated the role of introduced species such as the horse and of pathogens like smallpox as 'effective allies' that 'operated objectively for the victory of the invaders' (*ibid.*, 21, 28).

⁷³ Merchant, *The Columbia Guide to American Environmental History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), xviii.

⁷⁴ Geographically speaking (and from the standpoint of NAFTA), Mexico is also within North America.

⁷⁵ Wirth, 'The Trail Smelter Dispute: Canadians and Americans Confront Transboundary Pollution, 1927–41', *EH* 1, 2 (April 1996): 34–51; *Smelter Smoke in North America: The Politics of Transborder Pollution* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000). Wildlife is oblivious to national frontiers. Following canine paw prints across the forty-ninth parallel, British environmental historian Karen R. Jones has contributed to trans-border studies with her work on wolves and their management in four Rocky Mountain national parks – two in the United States and two in Canada: *Wolf Mountains: A History of Wolves Along the Great Divide* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2002), especially 205–10 for comparative reflections.

⁷⁶ Marilyn Dubasak, *Wilderness Preservation: A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Canada and the United States* (New York: Garland, 1990).

⁷⁷ Worster, 'Wild, Tame, and Free: Comparing Canadian and American Views of Nature', in *Parallel Destinies: Canadian-American Relations West of the Rockies*, eds. Ken Coates and John Findlay (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 263. Presenting it as

a national cultural trait also gives Worster an opportunity to rehabilitate the cause of wilderness preservation. The wilderness ideal may well be ethnocentric, but, in his view, it is not as class-based and elitist as a revisionist conservation historiography increasingly suggests. Many prominent wilderness preservationists, he stresses, emerged from humble origins.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 247, 250, 260. By contrast, John Sandlos believes that the cult of wilderness and notions of pristine wilderness effectively straddle the border. Whereas Canadians mainly ploughed their own furrow in terms of socio-economic policies, in the case of nature preservation they followed the southern example. Sandlos, 'From the Outside Looking In: Aesthetics, Politics, and Wildlife Conservation in the Canadian North', *EH* 6, 1 (January 2001): 6–31.

⁷⁹ It should be noted, though, that the Sierra Club has a Canadian branch (American draft dodgers established a provincial chapter in British Columbia in 1969). Also, Canada has at least one conservationist of mythical stature – Grey Owl (a.k.a. Archie Belaney, the Englishman from Hastings who re-invented himself as a Canadian Indian).

⁸⁰ William Beinart and Peter Coates, *Environment and History: The Taming of Nature in the U.S.A and Southern Africa* (London: Routledge, 1995).

⁸¹ 'Anglo', Dunlap appreciates, is an awkward term, and is meant to incorporate non-English settlers from the British Isles too.

⁸² For incorporation of the United States within a wider world, see also various essays in Griffiths and Robin, *Ecology and Empire: Environmental History of Settler Societies*. In terms of ecological and cultural exchanges, Australian historian Ian Tyrrell detects more common ground between California and Australia than between California and the rest of the United States: *True Gardens of the Gods: Californian-Australian Environmental Reform, 1860–1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

⁸³ Patricia Jane Jasen, *Wild Things: Nature, Culture, and Tourism in Ontario, 1790–1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995); Alan MacEachern, *Natural Selections: National Parks in Atlantic Canada, 1935–1970* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001). The reissue of Janet Foster, *Working for Wildlife: The Beginning of Preservation in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998 [1978]) indicates growing interest. Foster's early twentieth-century focus (but not her national scope) is complemented by George Warecki, *Protecting Ontario's Wilderness: A History of Changing Ideas and Preservation Politics, 1927–1973* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000).

⁸⁴ MacEachern 'Voices Crying in the Wilderness: Recent Works in Canadian Environmental History', *Acadiensis* 31, 2 (Spring 2002): 215. For an outline history from an environmental angle, see Graeme Wynn, 'Remaking the Land God Gave Cain: A Brief Environmental History of Canada', Canada House Lecture Series, Number 62, 26 February 1998 (28 pp.). For a case study of a watershed in Ontario, by one of the new generation of Canadian environmental historians, see Neil Forkey, *Shaping the Upper Canadian Frontier: Environment, Society, and Culture in the Trent Valley* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004).

⁸⁵ Rome, 'Review Essay: What Really Matters in History? Environmental Perspectives on Modern America', *EH* 7, 2 (April 2002): 303–18.

⁸⁶ Stroud, 'Does Nature Always Matter? Following Dirt Through History', *History and Theory, Theme Issue* 42 (December 2003): 78, 81.

⁸⁷ John Opie, *Nature's Nation: An Environmental History of the United States* (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace, 1998); Merchant, *Columbia Guide to American Environmental History* (2002); Theodore Steinberg, *Down to Earth: Nature's Role in American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁸⁸ Stroud, 'Does Nature Always Matter?', 80–81. Stroud denies that nature/environment/ecology is on a par with race, class and gender as an analytical category, the latter all involving human interrelationships, whereas nature/environment/ecology is a locale for exploring considerations of race, class and gender, "just as politics, economics, warfare, and family life are such sites" (*ibid.*, 79).

⁸⁹ On the newly discovered theme of war and environment more generally, in the U.S. and wider world, See Edmund P. Russell, *War and Nature: Fighting Humans and Insects with Chemicals from World War One to Silent Spring* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Richard P. Tucker and Edmund Russell, eds. *Natural Enemy, Natural Ally: Toward an Environmental History of War* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2004).

⁹⁰ Some contributors to *Uncommon Ground* shared these fears. Ann Spirn, a landscape architect, regretted that 'we didn't fully engage the tangibility, the "reality" of nonhuman nature' and hoped that 'our book doesn't overemphasize the cultural construction of nature to the extent that readers come away with the impression that nature is only a construct'. Cronon also reminded his readers of nature's autonomy and otherness (*Uncommon Ground*, 448, 52). If 'nature' is thoroughly deconstructed and historicised, is there anything left to protect or any reason for protecting it?

⁹¹ Jennifer Price, *Flight Maps: Adventures with Nature in Modern America* (New York: Basic Books, 1998) (for malls and pink flamingos); Bernard Mergen, *Snow in America* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997); Jeffrey L. Meikle, *American Plastic: A Cultural History* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995).

⁹² For a study by an anthropologist that replaces romantic notions of ecological sainthood with a realistic appraisal of the diverse environmental impacts of natives, see Shepard Krech III, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999).

⁹³ Polly Welts Kaufman, *National Parks and the Woman's Voice: A History* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996); Glenda Riley, *Women and Nature: Saving the 'Wild' West* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999); Adam Rome, "'Give Earth a Chance": The Environmental Movement and the Sixties', *Journal of American History* (September 2003): 525–54. The focus of Kaufman and Riley on 'elite' white women (and rural nature), some would say, limits their value. For a comprehensive survey, see Elizabeth D. Blum, 'Pink and Green: A Comparative Study of Black and White Women's Environmental Activism in the Twentieth Century', Ph.D. diss., University of Houston, Texas, 2000; and 'Linking American Women's History and Environmental History: A Preliminary Historiography' (2001), at <http://www.h-net.org/~environ/historiography/uswomen.htm>.

⁹⁴ See, especially, Rome, "'Give Earth a Chance'".

⁹⁵ For the influence of colonial Indian practices on U.S. forest conservation, see Gregory Barton, 'Empire Forestry and American Environmentalism', *Environment and History* 6, 2 (2000): 187–203. On the benefits of internationalism, see Paul Sutter, 'Reflections: What Can U.S. Environmental Historians Learn from Non-U.S. Environmental Historiography?', *EH* 8, 1 (January 2003): 109–29.

⁹⁶ I have taken the phrase 'U.S. environmental footprint abroad' from the title of a session at the 2004 ASEH conference. This panel included talks by Marcus Hall on anti-malarial DDT spraying funded by the Rockefeller Foundation in Sardinia after 1945 and Paul Sutter on mosquito control in Panama. On the global environmental impact of U.S. corporate capitalism, see Richard Tucker, *Insatiable Appetite: The United States and the Ecological Degradation of the Tropical World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

⁹⁷ Some of the most treasured British environments are the product of livestock grazing. During the foot and mouth disease crisis of 2001, fears were expressed that, in the absence of sheep, iconic national landscapes such as the Lake District National Park would be ruined by reversion to a tangled wilderness of brush and trees. Yet Britain's fastest growing environmental organisation is the John Muir Trust, a body dedicated to the preservation and restoration of vestiges of wild land in Scotland (mostly) and to spreading the word of the world's most famous apostle of wilderness in his native land. The Trust was publicly launched in April 1988, the 150th anniversary of Muir's birth, in his birthplace, Dunbar (East Lothian), with the president of the leading American wilderness preservation organisation, the Sierra Club, in attendance.

⁹⁸ Conevery Bolton Valencius, *The Health of the Country: How American Settlers Understood Themselves and Their Land* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), recipient of the ASEH prize for best book (2003), applies a blend of environmental, medical and cultural history to the movement into and settlement of the frontier region that now constitutes the states of Arkansas and Missouri during the first half of the nineteenth century. Valencius investigates the complex relationship between the interior nature of the human body and the exterior physical environment. For more on connections between health and place, disease and ecology, see Gregg Mitman, Michelle Murphy and Christopher Sellers, eds, *Landscapes of Exposure: Knowledge and Illness in Modern Environments*, Osiris 19 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004). For dead bodies, see Ellen Stroud, 'Reflections from Six Feet Under the Field: Dead Bodies in the Classroom', *E H* 8, 4 (October 2003): 618–27.

⁹⁹ John Mitchell, *Ceremonial Time: Fifteen Thousand Years on One Square Mile* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1984), 7, 222. Ceremonial time refers to a single moment in which past, present and future can be glimpsed, usually during a dance or sacred ritual.

¹⁰⁰ An analysis of the national origins of attendees at the European Society for Environmental History's second biennial conference in Prague, Czechia (September 2003), revealed that Americans were by far the single largest category.

¹⁰¹ Hughes, *An Environmental History of the World* (New York; Routledge, 2002). Meanwhile, John McNeill's *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth Century* (London: Penguin, 2001), has received the World History Association Book Award. McNeill's 'Observations on the Nature and Culture of Environmental History', *History and Theory* 42, 4 (December 2003): 4–43, is a truly awesome global survey of the state of the field.

¹⁰² Michael Bess, *The Light-Green Society: Ecology and Technological Modernity in France, 1960–200* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

¹⁰³ Ann Green, 'Nineteenth-Century Biotech: Breeding Horses for Work'; Edmund Russell, 'Blood, Sweat, and Tears: Dogs as Gambling Technology in Nineteenth-Century

Britain'; Ellen Stroud, 'Ashes to Toxic Ash: Cremating the Modern, Modified Body', 3 April 2004, Victoria, B.C., Canada.