86. However, there were also exceptions. In a remote northeastern region of Kainuu, where swiddening started fairly late, swiddeners were not conspicuously poverty-stricken at the turn of nineteenth and twentieth centuries compared to other local occupational groups. Samuli Paulaharju, *Kainuun mailta kansantietoutta Kajaanin kulmilta*, (Helsinki: Tietosanakirja Oy 1922), 137-149.
87. Colfer with Dudley, *Community Forestry Case Study Series 6*, 79; see e.g. Hurst, *Rainforest Politics*, 181-182; Peluso, *Community Forestry Case Study Series 8*, 65-66.
88. Conklin, *Hanunóo Agriculture*, 10, 146; the population density figures for Region 4, to which the island of Mindoro belongs, vary considerably: according to Kummer (*Deforestation in the Post-war Philippines*, 79) in 1948 there were 56 persons/km² and in 1980 130 persons/km² whereas according to Cruz (in *Man, Agriculture and the Tropical Forest*, 111) population density of Region 4 in 1960 was 25 persons/km² and in 1970 39 persons/km².
89. Dayak is a collective name referring to the tribal peoples of Borneo. Sunderlin and Resosudarmo, *Rates and Causes of Deforestation in Indonesia*, Table 3; Colfer with Dudley, *Community Forestry Case Study 6*, 69-70.
90. From 1840 to 1910, the average population density grew from 4.4 to 9.4 inhabitants per square km. *Annuaire statistique de Finlande 1929* (Helsinki: Bureau central de statistique de Finlande 1929).
91. Lynch, *Man, Agriculture and the Tropical Forest*, 280-282; Peluso, *Community Forestry Case Study Series 8*, 44, 67-68.
92. The law on private forests includes reservations that allow swiddening in certain favorable conditions. *Yksityismetsälaki 1928*, Helsinki 1928, 1-2.
93. Hurst, *Rainforest Politics*, 7-8, 12.
94. See also MacKinnon et al., *The Ecology of Kalimantan*, 370; for the impact of chainsaws see Peluso, *Community Forestry Case Study Series 8*, 61-62; Heikinheimo, *Kaskiviljelyksen vaikutus Suomen metsiin*, 27; Collins et al., *Conservation Atlas*, 31.
95. E.g. Jordan, "An Amazonian Rainforest" as mentioned before; e.g. Pyne, *Vestal Fire—An Environmental History*, 271.
96. Martti Sarmela, "Swidden Cultivation and Environment," *Svedjebruk och Röjningsbränning i Norden—terminologi, datering, metoder*, Ed. Bo Larsson, Skrifter om skogs-och lantbrukshistoria 7, (Stockholm: Nordiska museet, 1995), 148; Bo Fritzbøger and Poul Søndergaard, "A Short History of Forest Uses," *Multiple-Use Forestry in the Nordic Countries*, Ed. Marjatta Hytönen, (Helsinki Metla, 1995), 33-34; Kullervo Kuusela, Kaskeamalla vuorokasvua, *Helsingin Sanomat*, 25 January 1995.
97. See e.g. Dove, *Swidden Agriculture in Indonesia*, 5.
98. Angelsen, "Shifting Cultivation and "Deforestation," 1713; See also Collins et al., *Conservation Atlas*, 33; MacKinnon et al., *The Ecology of Kalimantan*, 370-372.

What Really Matters in History?

Environmental Perspectives on Modern America

Adam Rome

What really matters in history? In the introduction to *Perspectives on Modern America: Making Sense of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), editor Harvard Sitkoff addresses that question with unusual candor. To organize the conference that laid the foundation for the book, Sitkoff writes, the history department at the University of New Hampshire considered "the people, ideas, events, and developments that most mattered, and that most brought us to where we are now." Fourteen topics stood out. *Perspectives on Modern America* thus includes essays by fourteen scholars on the twentieth-century history of the presidency, liberalism, conservatism, foreign policy, work, poverty, consumption, the West, the South, African Americans, ethnicity and immigration, women, religion, and culture. That list of topics impressed the book's first readers. "Comprehensive and engaging," William Chafe writes in a blurb for the collection, "these essays offer a challenging overview of the major themes and contradictions of twentieth-century American history." For an environmental historian, however, *Perspectives on Modern America* is a great disappointment.

Because the book does not include a chapter on environmental history, *Perspectives on Modern America* provides no insight into some of the most far-reaching transformations of the twentieth century. In 1900, for example, oil still was a relatively small part of the American economy—but, in the next fifty years, oil became the nation's principal source of energy. Oil also became a basic ingredient in the manufacture of thousands of products, including plastics, agricultural chemicals, and clothing. The rise of the oil economy had profound consequences. The production and consumption of oil contributed to almost all of the most pressing environmental problems of the twentieth century. In countless ways, the ability to use a powerful and cheap source of energy transformed daily life—what we eat, where we live, how we work, and what we do for fun. The rise of the oil economy also changed many of the structures of American society. Without some understanding of the history of energy use, scholars and students cannot truly compre-

the Sun Belt, or the unprecedented affluence of the decades after World War II. The list could go on.[1]

The disappointment goes deeper than the neglect of some critical topics. "If we had our way," William Cronon wrote in 1990, "historians would be no more willing to ignore questions about ecological context—about nature—than they would questions about gender or class or race." Yet *Perspectives on Modern America* suggests that many historians still do not recognize the value of an environmental perspective. In addition to opening up new areas of inquiry, environmental history provides a new way of seeing the terrain we think we already know well. It enables scholars to reconsider both the causes and the consequences of important historical changes. Though the contributors to *Perspectives on Modern America* make little use of the insights of environmental history, an environmental perspective adds to our understanding of every topic considered in the book. Let me give a few examples.[2]

In the chapter on the presidency, William Leuchtenburg notes the environmental initiatives of several presidents. Theodore Roosevelt used "the bully pulpit" to promote the conservation movement. Without congressional authorization, William Taft withdrew land from the public domain, and the Supreme Court upheld Taft's action in a decision that affirmed the wide scope of presidential authority. For Lyndon Johnson, legislation to improve the quality of the environment was essential to building a "Great Society." Richard Nixon created the Environmental Protection Agency by executive order. Jimmy Carter acted to save wilderness in Alaska, clean up the nation's most hazardous waste dumps, and encourage energy conservation. Leuchtenburg also might have noted Franklin Roosevelt's keen interest in the use and abuse of natural resources. But what is the point of those examples? The history of the presidency is a way to consider the history of the federal government, and environmental issues have played a key role in the growth of the state throughout the twentieth century.

Indeed, the environmental-management state deserves to join the national-security state and the welfare state as a central concern of political historians. In the twentieth century, after decades of selling and giving away the public domain, the federal government assumed a major role in managing forests and grasslands. The government has done much to make possible the growth of outdoor recreation. At different times, for different reasons, countless Americans have turned to the state for help in conquering nature. They have asked the government to predict the weather, control wild fires, protect cattle and sheep from predators, and keep floodwaters at bay. In the 1930s, the government sought to promote economic development in the South and the West by constructing vast systems of dams. Over the course of the twentieth century, the government also has worked to slow or halt the degradation of the environment. The Soil Conservation Service has given advice to millions of farmers, while the regulations of the Environmental Protection Agency have affected almost every business in the nation. The need for sanitary services also spurred the growth of city government.[3]

The environmental-management state grew most rapidly during the century's

the late 1960s and early 1970s. That is not a coincidence. Though Cheryl Greenberg's chapter on "twentieth-century liberalisms" gives little attention to environmental issues, arguments about the mismanagement of resources and the pollution of the environment were important in the liberal challenge to laissez-faire. Early in the century, city officials struggled to enlarge their power to regulate "nuisances," including smoke. As Christopher Sellers shows in *Hazards of the Job*, the first generation of activist social scientists sought to build the power of state government by investigating the environmental causes of occupational disease. The effort to protect workers from the dangers of noxious gases and poisonous materials ultimately provided the legal and legislative precedents for other important challenges to the prerogatives of management.[4]

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, environmental problems also played a key role in liberal arguments for a vastly expanded public sphere. That argument was well expressed in two liberal contributions to a 1960 book on *The National Purpose*. In the view of political scientist Clinton Rossiter, the private sector was not equipped to deal with "the blight of our cities, the shortage of water and power, the disappearance of open space, the inadequacy of education, the need for recreational facilities, the high incidence of crime and delinquency, the crowding of the roads, the decay of the railroads, the ugliness of the sullied landscape, the pollution of the very air we breathe." Adlai Stevenson agreed. Though the nation's manufacturers were providing consumer goods in abundance, the booming private economy could not protect against "the sprawl of subdivisions which is gradually depriving us of either civilized urban living or uncluttered rural space. It does not guarantee America's children the teachers or the schools which should be their birthright. It does nothing to end the shame of racial discrimination. It does not counter the exorbitant cost of health, nor conserve the nation's precious reserves of land and water and wilderness. The contrast between private opulence and public squalor on most of our panorama is now too obvious to be denied."[5]

Because a part of the modern conservative movement was a response to the liberal attack on laissez-faire, a thorough understanding of the history of conservatism also requires a consideration of environmental politics. Yet Lisa McGirr's chapter on conservatism makes little mention of the conservative backlash against environmentalism in the years since 1970. Though titled "Piety and Property," the chapter does not discuss the anti-environmentalist roots of the modern "property rights" movement, which began in the early 1970s in response to efforts by environmentalists to regulate land use. In the West, especially, the Republican party gained strength from activists opposed to federal management of forests and grazing lands. The party also appealed to opponents of environmental regulation. In 1980, the backlash against environmentalism certainly helped to elect Ronald Reagan.[6]

In the chapter about "the American century," Robert McMahon writes at length about the importance of foreign markets and raw materials in the thinking of American policymakers. Until World War II, he argues, the nation's foreign policy aimed mainly to extend our economic reach abroad. After 1945, however, American policymakers were much more concerned with protecting American inter-

political threats. That surely is true. But the argument would be more compelling if McMahon considered the history of resource consumption. The nation's growing dependence on imported raw materials was not inevitable. Neither was the decision to make continued access to foreign resources a diplomatic and military priority.[7]

At the start of the century, Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot urged Americans to conserve resources at home in order to ensure the nation's future as a great power abroad. In very different ways, Herbert Hoover and Franklin Roosevelt both sought to advance the conservation cause. The demands of World War II led to dramatic efforts to conserve materials. The beginning of the Cold War intensified anxieties about the nation's supply of strategic resources. Harry Truman appointed a President's Commission on Materials Use. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Conservation Foundation and Resources for the Future were established by well-connected philanthropists to provide expert advice to citizens and policymakers. But the advocates of government-planned conservation lost the postwar debate about the best way to ensure that the country never lacked the "resources for freedom": The nation's leaders decided to bank instead on the cornucopian promise of technological progress. That decision went hand-in-hand with a more aggressive foreign policy.[8]

To truly write the history of America's engagement with the rest of the world, scholars need to consider the impact of American policy abroad, not just at home. The work of several environmental historians can serve as a model. In *Insatiable Appetite*, Richard Tucker shows how Americans have transformed the forest landscapes of tropical nations across the globe. Especially in the first half of the twentieth century, American entrepreneurs and corporations worked aggressively to develop foreign plantations for the production of coffee, sugar, bananas, rubber, beef, and timber. The United States government often acted to promote and protect the interests of American firms abroad. The tariff laws helped to make large-scale deforestation profitable. The United States also intervened militarily and diplomatically to aid American-owned plantations—in central America, most famously, but also in Liberia, which was dominated for years by Firestone.[9]

John Perkins offers another important example in *Geopolitics and the Green Revolution*. In the aftermath of World War II, a variety of intellectuals and policymakers argued that American national security required an effort to stop the cycle of population growth, resource exhaustion, hunger, and political instability around the world. That argument prompted the Point Four plan—a Cold War program of technical and scientific assistance initiated by President Harry Truman—as well as efforts by the Rockefeller and Ford foundations to modernize agriculture in developing countries. Though those initiatives are not as well known as the Marshall Plan or the Peace Corps, they were critical to the success of "the green revolution," which had profound social and environmental consequences.[10]

In the chapter on labor, Kevin Boyle promises to explore "all those places where Americans made goods, made money, made homes, made lives for themselves and their families." Yet Boyle neglects the leading occupation at the start of the twenti-

because the transformation of American agriculture in the last one hundred years is a story of world-historic significance. Decade after decade, the adoption of new technologies led to a revolution in the nature of farming. Hybrid seeds in the 1920s, tractors in the 1930s, chemical insecticides, herbicides, and fertilizers in the 1940s, and aquifer-fed irrigation systems in the 1950s—all allowed fewer people to produce more grain, more fiber, more meat. But the new productivity came at a tremendous environmental cost. The agricultural revolution also had profound social consequences. The greatest change came from 1940 to 1970. At a time when the U.S. population was booming, roughly 850,000 people left farming every year, and the number of Americans living on farms declined precipitously. Now only about a half million farms account for the overwhelming majority of the nation's agricultural output. Though the outmigration from the rural South has received considerable attention, social historians have barely begun to tell the story of the agricultural revolution elsewhere.[11]

In passing, Doyle notes that workers in 1900 typically had to endure a vile environment both at work and at home, but Doyle does not consider the role of organized labor in the century's campaigns to minimize environmental hazards. That subject has attracted a lot of attention recently. At times, unions have protested against pollution. As more members took up hunting and fishing in the 1950s and 1960s, several unions lobbied for legislation to stop strip mining and clean up rivers. Walter Reuther of the United Auto Workers was a prominent supporter of the first Earth Day in 1970. Yet a good bit of the recent work on workers and the environment points to the limits of unions as a force for social change. Throughout the century, workers often have sided with their employers in opposing demands to reduce industrial pollution. In some cases, union members who sought to challenge polluters were treated as dissidents by the union leadership. For a number of reasons, the record of organized labor in dealing with the environmental ills of the workplace also is mixed.[12]

At the start of the chapter on poverty, Jacqueline Jones sketches a number of factors that explain "who is poor, when, where, and why." She surely is right that economic and technological change, shifts in state power and social-welfare policy, and patterns of immigration and migration all have shaped the history of poverty. Except in passing, however, Jones does not acknowledge that poverty also can result from ecological change. She notes that overfishing, deforestation, and drought have impoverished some people. But her analysis would be much sharper if she drew more from the work of environmental historians. In Appalachia, for example, the destruction of the forest did not just mean that people no longer could make money from timber. Deforestation set in motion a series of environmental changes that undermined the subsistence economy of the region. Eroding soil from bare hills polluted streams, fires and floods became more common, and game habitat declined. As a result, fishing, hunting, and small-scale agriculture all became more difficult. The story of Native American poverty is similarly complicated. To understand the twentieth-century struggles of the Navajo, Northern Utes, Hupas, and Tohono O-odhams, Richard White and David Rich Lewis argue, historians must

An environmental perspective also would enrich the discussion of the consequences of poverty, because the poor have disproportionately born the burden of environmental degradation. That was true at the start of the twentieth century, and that still is true today. But the social geography of pollution has changed over time. In *Environmental Inequalities*—a study of Gary, Indiana, in the decades after World War II—Andrew Hurley shows that brilliantly. At work, the exposure to toxic hazards followed a clear hierarchy: Black workers bore the greatest burden, white-collar employees the least. But the inequities were not nearly so great outside the factory. In 1950, the worst air was downtown, where everyone shopped except the city's black residents. Though the neighborhoods closest to the steel complex housed blue-collar white families, the city's black section and one of the city's elite neighborhoods also suffered periodically from horrid smoke and fumes. Almost everyone in Gary drank water of terrible quality, and white people of both classes often encountered pollution while swimming, fishing, or playing. By 1980, however, the map had changed dramatically. In the intervening decades, the steel executives moved to healthier neighborhoods at the city's edge, while black families could escape the overcrowded ghetto only by moving into Gary's most polluted districts.[14]

As Ted Steinberg argues in *Acts of God*, the poorest and least powerful Americans also have suffered disproportionately from natural disasters. In the 1906 earthquake in San Francisco, for example, the loss of life was greatest in the city's overcrowded Chinatown. Because land in floodplains is cheap, the poor often have lived in places subject to inundation. The cheapest forms of housing have proven most vulnerable to the high winds of tornadoes and hurricanes. The extremes of summer and winter also have hit the poor most brutally. Yet the distribution of disaster relief has favored the better-off. When the federal government has cut programs that guard against disasters, the cutbacks often have come mostly at the expense of people with little property to lose. For Steinberg, therefore, "the unnatural history of natural disaster" is part and parcel of the history of social injustice.[15]

Because the environmental history of consumption still is relatively unexplored terrain, Lizabeth Cohen's chapter on "the Consumer Republic" could not have considered the relationship between consumption and the environment in any depth. Yet the subject is rich. Susan Strasser's *Waste and Want* makes that clear. In the history of trash, Strasser argues, the twentieth century was a watershed. Before 1900, most Americans were adept at reusing, repairing, and recycling things. Itinerant peddlers took rags and bones from customers in trade for manufactured goods. Poor children helped to support their families by scavenging city streets for food, fuel, and usable materials. All but the wealthiest women knew how to sew and how to use kitchen scraps. In the twentieth century, however, the habits of thrift eroded. The triumph of consumer culture was tied to the rise of disposable products. Decisions that once seemed wasteful became driving forces in the economy. People bought new cars and appliances to keep up with the latest fashions in design. At home, a new ideal of convenience encouraged families to toss more stuff in the garbage. The affluent society came at a tremendous environmental cost.[16]

My work on the history of the tract house offers a similar lesson. In the years after World War II, the use of new methods of mass production allowed builders to meet an unprecedented demand for housing. The construction of relatively cheap houses in the fast-growing suburbs helped to boom the economy. Yet the growth of suburbia was not entirely a blessing. In addition to causing social problems, the spread of tract housing exacerbated a host of environmental ills. The environmental impacts of suburban development soon became subjects of public debate. By the mid 1960s, the sprawl of the tracts had provoked hundreds of grassroots campaigns to stop "the rape of the land." The suburban boom thus played a key role in the emergence of the environmental movement.[17]

As the story of tract housing suggests, an environmental perspective is important in understanding the politics of consumption. During the Progressive and New Deal years, Cohen argues, reformers often saw consumers as protectors of the public good. Then the ideal of consumers as citizens gave way to a more narrowly self-interested conception in the decades after World War II. Yet the history of environmentalism complicates Cohen's argument. In countless cities and suburbs, women organized as consumers in the late 1960s and early 1970s to improve the environment. The rise of environmentalism contributed at the same time to the resurgence of food cooperatives. For many people, as Warren Belasco argues in *Appetite for Change*, decisions about what to eat became political. The degradation of the environment also was a major issue for Ralph Nader. In a chapter of *Unsafe at Any Speed*, the 1965 book that made Nader famous as a consumer advocate, Nader attacked the automobile industry for polluting the air. By 1970, he was one of the nation's leading proponents of anti-pollution legislation, and he defined the issue in consumer terms: Irresponsible corporations were forcing Americans to consume deadly pollutants. Though Nader failed to transform the nation's political economy, the conjunction of consumerism and environmentalism in the late 1960s and early 1970s had significant consequences.[18]

In the essay on the West, Peggy Pascoe draws on the work of a number of environmental historians, including Patricia Nelson Limerick, Richard White, and Donald Worster. That is not surprising: Environmental historians have played a major role in the rise of "the new Western history." But Pascoe only incorporates one facet of the literature on the diverse ways westerners have related to nature. Because she is concerned with the social history of the West, she makes good use of recent work that has analyzed the class and racial biases in the conservation and environmental movements. In the national parks, she writes, "officials worked to remove Indians from sites they preferred to present to the public as pristine wildernesses." She concludes that—despite the democratic rhetoric of the founders of the conservation movement—the Bureau of Reclamation and the Forest Service ultimately worked most closely with large enterprises. She also argues that environmental arguments have justified policies of social exclusion in cities and suburbs.[19]

But what is distinctive about the West? For Pascoe, that question is beside the point. The questions she wants to answer are ultimately American questions, she writes, and Western history is just a convenient way to get a handle on the big story

however, the idea of a region also is a way to acknowledge a fundamental truth: Place matters. In Patricia Limerick's "top-ten list" of reasons to consider the West a distinct entity, for example, environmental factors predominate. Following Donald Worster's lead, Limerick begins with the aridity and semi-aridity of much western land. In Limerick's view, the West also has had "a particularly dramatic" dependence on "the boom-and-bust economies of extractive industries"—mining, logging, ranching, oil drilling, and commercial farming. The West has most of the land still owned by the federal government, including a host of national forests, parks, monuments, and grasslands. Because much of the Western desert is sparsely settled, the region has become the dumping ground for a disproportionate share of the nation's toxic and radioactive wastes. The spectacular scenery of the West also earns an honorable mention from Limerick: The region's salubrity has attracted millions of migrants.[20]

Though environmental historians of the South have given most of their attention to the period before 1900, an environmental perspective would enrich Nancy MacLean's discussion of the rise of the Sun Belt. The rapid growth of the South since World War II is inconceivable without air conditioning. The decline of the Cotton Kingdom was partly due to environmental factors. MacLean briefly discusses the exhaustion of southern soils. But she does not consider the complex impact of the boll weevil—the great scourge of the cotton fields. She also misses one part of the South's appeal to outside investors. She points to anti-union policies, tax breaks, and infrastructure improvements, but she does not mention the willingness of southern leaders to tolerate levels of pollution that were increasingly considered intolerable elsewhere. In the postwar decades, the South became a region of pine plantations and paper mills, and the paper industry was especially destructive to the environment. But the pollution did not dissuade the region's boosters. Even in 1970, when roughly 20 million Americans celebrated the first Earth Day, Alabama Governor George Wallace smiled at the stench of a new paper mill twenty miles from the state capitol. "Yeah, that's the smell of prosperity," he told a reporter. "She does smell sweet, don't it?"[21]

The scholarly literature on African Americans and the environment also is relatively undeveloped. But the subject deserves attention. As the novels of Zora Neale Hurston suggest, the descendants of slaves often had an intimate "folk" knowledge of nature, and historians still need to consider the ways that knowledge shaped African-American history in the twentieth century. A recent dissertation by Dianne Glave is a start. In the early part of the century, Glave argues, African-American farmers and gardeners worked to combine folk traditions of land use with the scientific principles taught by agricultural extension agents.[22]

Though environmental historians still have not devoted enough attention to the issue of race, the work on the environmental movement already can enrich the story of the African-American struggle for equality—the principal theme of Charles Payne's chapter on African Americans. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, when most civil-rights leaders argued that African Americans did not yet have the luxury of caring about the environment, Richard Hatcher became one of the nation's first

and environmental problems: For Hatcher, efforts to control rats and cockroaches in African-American neighborhoods went hand-in-hand with campaigns against industrial pollution of the air and water. The Hatcher coalition only lasted a few years, yet the charge of "environmental racism" gave renewed force to the civil-rights movement in the 1980s and 1990s. Grassroots activists in a number of African-American communities protested against proposals to build waste dumps and heavily polluting factories nearby. Activists also argued that segregation in the housing market often meant that African Americans faced a painful choice—to remain in overcrowded ghettos or to move to single-family houses in polluted neighborhoods.[23]

Like the environmental history of African Americans, the relationship of immigrants to the land is only beginning to receive scholarly attention. For most historians of immigration, the countryside hardly exists. The great stage for conflict over ethnic identity, assimilation, and citizenship is the city. The author of the chapter on immigration—Gary Gerstle—is no exception. He began his career with a study of immigrants and the New Deal in the city of Woonsocket, Rhode Island. But the work of a few environmental historians is a corrective to the overwhelmingly urban bias of immigration history. In *The Fisherman's Problem*, Arthur McEvoy demonstrates that the rise of state regulation of fisheries in California was tied to a virulent campaign to drive the Chinese out of the fishing business. Though the effort began in the 1870s and 1880s, when non-Chinese fishers joined with state scientists to blame the Chinese for declines in the catch, the campaign did not end until the 1910s. But the California fisheries continued to decline after the Chinese were driven from business. In McEvoy's judgment, the state laws served only to enhance the competitive position of other fishing groups and to establish precedents for more ambitious efforts to regulate the fisheries. As Louis Warren shows in *The Hunter's Game*, the first decades of the twentieth century also brought violent conflict between immigrants and natives over hunting rights. In Pennsylvania, Italian immigrants often hunted after work to provide meat for their tables. They considered songbirds a delicacy. To the well-to-do members of sporting clubs, however, "alien" hunters were barbaric, wasteful, and greedy despoilers of the beauty of the hunt. The sporting groups successfully supported legislation to make songbird hunting illegal—and Italian hunters then harassed and even attacked the state's game wardens.[24]

An environmental perspective also gives insight into a central theme of Sara Evans's chapter on women's lives—the long struggle of women to claim space in the public sphere. At the start of the century, when professional opportunities for women were rare, a few pioneers took advantage of traditional expectations about a woman's place in society to make careers as sanitary experts. Club women also campaigned to improve the environment. To ensure that their children and children's children would have the resources needed to build good homes, they worked to conserve forests. In the nation's cities, women were the most vigorous advocates for smokeless skies, clean water, pure food, and spacious parks. The reformers justified their efforts as "municipal housekeeping." As one woman wrote, "We should cer-

clean. The air should be clean. The individual houses and premises, the schools, the places of public assembly, the places of trade, the factories, the places where foods are prepared, sold, served, should be clean. There should be sanitary collection and disposal of all the wastes that inevitably accumulate wherever human beings have a home and find habitation."[25]

The promise that women would wash away the environmental ills of the nation even played a part in the campaign for women's suffrage. A 1913 cartoon perfectly illustrates the argument. The left side of the cartoon is a nightmarish vision of life in a city where women cannot vote. The sky is pitch black, and thick clouds of smoke stream skyward from unsanitary tenements and child-labor factories. The street is dark, too, except for the entrances to the cheap theater, the Sporty Venus Company, and the red light dive. While the children work inside the factories, a throng of men revel outside the saloon; the only women on the street are prostitutes. In contrast, the right side of the cartoon is stunningly bright, with beautiful white clouds in the clear sky. Trees line the walkway along the river that divides the two worlds. Near the gate to the public playgrounds, mothers point out flowers to children. The street is full of families, with children sitting by a fountain, rolling a hoop, and playing with a dog. The sanitary homes and factories produce no smoke. A school, a museum, and a library grace the hill. The bridge over the river is crowded with white slavers and child exploiters—but a woman's hand reaches down from the heavens to block the way with a ballot marked "Womans Vote."[26]

The environmental activism of women continued long after the passage of the nineteenth amendment. In the 1950s and 1960s, middle-class women were a critical force in the emergence of the environmental movement. In some cases, they worked through old organizations, especially the League of Women Voters. More often, women formed ad hoc groups to battle pollution, save open spaces, or protect wildlife. Like the municipal housekeepers early in the century, the activists of the 1950s and 1960s often drew rhetorically on the concerns of housewives and mothers. For some college-educated women, environmental activism resolved a tension between traditional expectations and unfulfilled ambitions: Because they acted to protect the home and the family, they could enter the public sphere—they could be more than "just" housewives—without rejecting the claims of domesticity. For other women, however, environmental activism was the first step toward careers outside the home. The leadership of women in grassroots environmental organizations also was consciousness raising. By demonstrating that women could master technical bodies of knowledge, the activists of the 1950s and 1960s countered the stereotype of female emotionalism. Though they seldom considered themselves feminists, they helped to advance the feminist cause.[27]

In the chapter on religion, Paul Boyer notes several ways that the environmental movement has shaped belief. He mentions "the greening of Protestantism" in the 1980s and 1990s. He also includes Gaia worship in a list of non-traditional forms of religious expression. For Boyer, the larger point in both cases is the incredible adaptability and diversity of religion in modern America. Though a variety of commentators see secularization as the great trend of the twentieth century, Boyer

nation's environmental history offers a rich body of evidence to support Boyer's argument. On the one hand, countless Americans have felt a religious duty to turn the wilderness into a garden. In the twentieth century, the best example would be the missionary zeal of the supporters of "reclamation," the effort to redeem the arid lands of the West by irrigation. The most famous director of the Bureau of Reclamation even described himself as a messiah. On the other hand, the environmental movement has a long tradition of secular yet evangelical leadership. Sierra Club founder John Muir called the proponents of the Hetch Hetchy dam "temple destroyers." To Dave Foreman, the Earth First! movement was "the most sacred crusade ever waged." Even when environmentalists have rejected the faith of their childhood, their actions and convictions often bear the stamp of their religious upbringing. As Mark Stoll argues in *Protestantism, Capitalism, and Nature in America*, religion has always been "something that cannot be contained within walls or even within a creed," but instead is "a force in society that intrudes into all aspects of life."[28]

In the chapter on intellectual history, Jackson Lears considers the rise of the "iron cage," the imprisoning culture of management. But if imprisonment was one great theme of twentieth-century thought, escape was another, and Americans often envisioned freedom as a state of nature. Early in the century, when countless city dwellers dreamed of returning to the wilderness, the nature writers John Burroughs and John Muir were bestselling authors. Wildlife films also attracted audiences eager to experience a world where instincts and behaviors seemed more authentic than in middle-class homes and offices. For many of the regionalist thinkers of the 1920s and 1930s, the only hope of resisting the corrosive values of modernity lay in reconnecting to the land. The most popular film genre in the middle decades of the century—the Western—was fundamentally about the lessons people learned by living out in open country, surrounded by a transcendent nature. As Lears notes, the Beats and the countercultural writers of the 1960s rebelled against the increasing standardization of society by celebrating "the natural."[29]

The drive to return to nature also was a critical element in the appeal of the automobile—the most powerful symbol of American consumer culture in the twentieth century. In 1907, Henry Ford promised to build a car cheap enough to allow every working man to "enjoy with his family the blessing of hours of pleasure in God's great open spaces." The autocamping expedition soon became a common way for professional people to shrug off the burdens of modern life. "We react against our complex civilization, and long to get back for a time to first principles," John Burroughs wrote after going "a-gypsying" with Ford, Thomas Edison, and Harvey Firestone in 1919. "We cheerfully endure wet, cold, smoke, mosquitoes, black flies, and sleepless nights, just to touch naked reality once more." The Ford Motor Company quoted Ford's mission statement decades later in SUV ads. In the 1980s and 1990s, indeed, almost everything about the marketing of SUVs—the names of the cars, the quotations from Henry David Thoreau and John Muir, the images of sunsets and mountains—spoke to the continued power of the back-to-nature myth. In a few marketing campaigns, the car became nature, pure and simple:

Of course, escape was just one of the many meanings of nature in the twentieth century. Americans also have found in nature ideas about social and political relationships. In the wildlife television shows of the 1950s, Gregg Mitman argues, nature "legitimated the family and the church as central pillars of democracy." As Jennifer Price shows in *Flight Maps*, arguments about feathered hats and plastic flamingos reveal much about the construction of gender and class identities. The history of attitudes about nature is much more than the history of environmental ethics.[31]

I could give more examples, but I hope I already have made my point: We need to do more to persuade our colleagues that environmental history is vitally important. Whether the subject is foreign policy or poverty, politics or religion, culture or social relations, regional identity or economic growth, the insights of environmental history can add to the scholarly literature. In some cases, an environmental perspective adds new complexity to old arguments. In other cases, an environmental perspective fundamentally revises our understanding of the past. The environment should be a basic category of historical analysis.

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Notes

1. Martin V. Melosi, *Coping with Abundance: Energy and Environment in Industrial America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985); James C. Williams, *Energy and the Making of Modern California* (Akron: University of Akron Press, 1996); David E. Nye, *Consuming Power: A Social History of American Energies* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998).
2. William Cronon, "Modes of Prophecy and Production: Placing Nature in History," *Journal of American History* 76 (1990): 1131. Some of my examples come from work that was not available when *Perspectives on Modern America* went to press.
3. Donald J. Pisani, "The Many Faces of Conservation: Natural Resources and the American State, 1900-1940," in Morton Keller and R. Shep Melnick, editors, *Taking Stock: American Government in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 123-155; Karen Merrill, *Public Lands and Political Meaning: Ranchers, the Government, and the Property Between Them* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Samuel P. Hays, *A History of Environmental Politics since 1945* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000); Martin V. Melosi, *The Sanitary City: Urban Infrastructure in America from Colonial Times to the Present* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).
4. Martin V. Melosi, *Effluent America: Cities, Industry, Energy, and the Environment* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001), 211-224; David Stradling, *Smokestacks and Progressives: Environmentalists, Engineers, and Air Quality in America, 1881-1951* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 61-84; Christopher C. Sellers, *Hazards of the Job: From Industrial Disease to Environmental Health Science* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 45-67.

5. For the quotations, see Henry R. Luce, editor, *The National Purpose* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), 27 and 88. I discuss the relationship between liberalism and environmentalism in my work-in-progress, "'Give Earth a Chance': The Environmental Movement and the Sixties."
6. Adam Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 221-253; C. Brant Short, *Ronald Reagan and the Public Lands: America's Conservation Debate, 1979-1984* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1989); R. McGreggor Cawley, *Federal Land, Western Anger: The Sagebrush Rebellion and Environmental Politics* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993).
7. For a good example of the way government policy shaped the market for a vital resource, see John G. Clark, *Energy and the Federal Government: Fossil Fuel Policies, 1900-1946* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987).
8. Gifford Pinchot, *The Fight for Conservation* (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1910); Kendrick A. Clements, *Hoover, Conservation, and Consumption: Engineering the Good Life* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000); Robert C. Paehlke, *Environmentalism and the Future of Progressive Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 45-50; Robert Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement* (Washington: Island Press, 1993), 35-41.
9. Richard P. Tucker, *Insatiable Appetite: The United States and the Ecological Degradation of the Tropical World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).
10. John H. Perkins, *Geopolitics and the Green Revolution: Wheat, Genes, and the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).
11. Donald Worster is the foremost environmental historian to address the history of modern agriculture. See, especially, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West* (New York: Pantheon, 1985); and "Transformations of the Earth: Toward an Agroecological Perspective in History," *Journal of American History* 76 (1990): 1087-1106. In addition, see Thomas R. Dunlap, *DDT: Scientists, Citizens and Public Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); John H. Perkins, *Insects, Experts, and the Insecticide Crisis: The Quest for New Pest Management Strategies* (New York: Plenum Press, 1982); Donald J. Pisani, *From the Family Farm to Agribusiness: The Irrigation Crusade in California and the West, 1850-1931* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); John Opie, *Ogallala: Water for a Dry Land* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993); Tim Lehman, *Public Values, Private Lands: Farmland Preservation Policy, 1933-1985* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Frieda Knobloch, *The Culture of Wilderness: Agriculture as Colonization in the American West* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Steven Stoll, *The Fruits of Natural Advantage: Making the Industrial Countryside in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Mark Fiege, *Irrigated Eden: The Making of an Agricultural Landscape in the American West* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999); Edmund Russell, *War and Nature: Fighting Humans and Insects with Chemicals from World War I to Silent Spring* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Randal S. Beeman and James A. Pritchard, *A Green and Permanent Land: Ecology and Agriculture in the Twentieth Century* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001). The statistics are in John L. Shover, *First Majority—Last Minority: The Transforming of*

12. Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring*, 270-306; Andrew Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945-1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 77-110; Rosemary Feurer, "River Dreams: St. Louis Labor and the Fight for a Missouri Valley Authority," in Andrew Hurley, editor, *Common Fields: An Environmental History of St. Louis* (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1997), 221-241; Scott Dewey, "Working for the Environment: Organized Labor and the Origins of Environmentalism in the United States, 1948-1970," *Environmental History* 3 (1998): 45-63; Alan Derickson, *Black Lung: Anatomy of a Public Health Disaster* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); Robert Gordon, "'Shell No!': OCAW and the Labor-Environmental Alliance," *Environmental History* 3 (1998): 460-487; Chad Montrie, "Expedient Environmentalism: Opposition to Coal Surface Mining in Appalachia and the United Mine Workers of America, 1945-1977," *Environmental History* 5 (2000): 75-98.
13. Ronald L. Lewis, *Transforming the Appalachian Countryside: Railroads, Deforestation, and Social Change in West Virginia, 1880-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 1-14, 263-292; Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 212-314; David Rich Lewis, *Neither Wolf Nor Dog: American Indians, Environment, and Agrarian Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); David Rich Lewis, "Native Americans and the Environment: A Survey of Twentieth-Century Issues," *American Indian Quarterly* 19 (1995): 423-450.
14. Hurley explores the social history of the urban environment in his two contributions to *Common Fields* as well as in *Environmental Inequalities*. In addition, see Joel A. Tarr, *The Search for the Ultimate Sink: Urban Pollution in Historical Perspective* (Akron: University of Akron Press, 1996), 77-102.
15. Ted Steinberg, *Acts of God: The Unnatural History of Natural Disaster in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).
16. Susan Strasser, *Waste and Want: A Social History of Trash* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1999).
17. Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside*.
18. Warren J. Belasco, *Appetite for Change: How the Counterculture Took on the Food Industry* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989); Ralph Nader, *Unsafe at Any Speed: The Designed-In Dangers of the American Automobile* (New York: Grossman, 1965), 147-169; John C. Esposito, *Vanishing Air: Ralph Nader's Study Group Report on Air Pollution* (New York: Grossman, 1970); David Zwick and Marcy Benstock, *Water Wasteland: Ralph Nader's Study Group Report on Water Pollution* (New York: Grossman, 1971); Samuel P. Hays, *Beauty, Health, and Permanence: Environmental Politics in the United States, 1955-1985* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 13-39.
19. The environmental histories Pascoe cites in the chapter bibliography include Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1987); Richard White, *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": A History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991); Donald Worster, *Under Western Skies: Nature and History in the American West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); William G. Robbins, *Colony and Empire: The Capitalist Transformation of the American West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994); Mark David Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Paul W. Hirt, *A Conspiracy of Optimism: Management of the National Forests since World War Two*

makes the argument about social exclusion and suburban environmentalism in *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 153-219. Many other environmental historians have written about the twentieth-century West—William Cronon, Hal Rothman, Dan Flores, Nancy Langston, Mark Harvey, Susan Schrepfer, Char Miller, and William deBuys, for example. Much of the work about agriculture and the environment also is Western history.
20. Edward L. Ayers, Patricia Nelson Limerick, Stephen Nissenbaum, and Peter S. Onuf, *All Over the Map: Rethinking American Regions* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 88-93. In addition, see Susan Rhoades Neel, "A Place of Extremes: Nature, History, and the American West," *Western Historical Quarterly* 25 (1994): 489-505.
21. Raymond Arsenault, "The End of the Long Hot Summer: The Air Conditioner and Southern Culture," *Journal of Southern History* 50 (1984): 597-628; Albert E. Cowdrey, *This Land, This South: An Environmental History* [Revised edition] (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 151-195; Craig E. Colten, editor, *Transforming New Orleans and its Environs* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), 160-177. The quotation is from Cowdrey, 178.
22. Dianne D. Glave, "Fields and Gardens: An Environmental History of African American Farmers in the Progressive South" (Ph. D. dissertation, State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1998).
23. Hurley tells Hatcher's story in *Environmental Inequalities*, 111-153. In addition, see Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring*, 235-269; Martin V. Melosi, "Equity, Eco-racism, and Environmental History," *Environmental History Review* 19 (Fall 1995): 1-16; Giovanna Di Chiro, "Nature as Community: The Convergence of Environment and Social Justice," in William Cronon, editor, *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995), 298-320; Eileen Maura McGurty, "From NIMBY to Civil Rights: The Origins of the Environmental Justice Movement," *Environmental History* 2 (1997): 301-323; Andrew Hurley, "Fiasco at Wagner Electric: Environmental Justice and Urban Geography in St. Louis," *Environmental History* 2 (1997): 460-481; Ellen Stroud, "Troubled Waters in Ecotopia: Environmental Racism in Portland, Oregon," *Radical History Review* 74 (1999): 65-95; Dolores Greenberg, "Reconstructing Race and Protest: Environmental Justice in New York City," *Environmental History* 5 (2000): 223-250.
24. Arthur F. McEvoy, *The Fisherman's Problem: Ecology and Law in the California Fisheries, 1850-1980* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 93-119; Louis S. Warren, *The Hunter's Game: Poachers and Conservationists in Twentieth-Century America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 21-47.
25. Suellen M. Hoy, "'Municipal Housekeeping': The Role of Women in Improving Urban Sanitation Practices, 1880-1917," in Martin V. Melosi, editor, *Pollution and Reform in American Cities, 1870-1930* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980), 173-198; Maureen A. Flanagan, "Gender and Urban Political Reform: The City Club and the Woman's City Club of Chicago in the Progressive Era," *American Historical Review* 95 (1990): 1032-1050; Carolyn Merchant, *Earthcare: Women and the Environment* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 109-136; Maureen A. Flanagan, "The City Profitable, the City Livable: Environmental Policy, Gender, and Power in Chicago in the 1910s," *Journal of Urban History* 22 (1996): 163-190; Stradling, *Smokestacks and Progressives*, 37-60; Angela Gugliotta, "Class, Gender, and Coal Smoke: Gender Ideology and Environmental Justice in Pittsburgh, 1868-1914," *Environmental History* 5 (2000): 165-193; Harold L. Platt, "Jane Addams and the Ward Boss Revisited: Class, Politics, and Public Health in

Chicago, 1890-1930," *Environmental History* 5 (2000): 194-222. For the quotation, see Hoy, 183.

26. Monika Franzen and Nancy Ethiel, *Make Way! 200 Years of American Women in Cartoons* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 1988), 38.
27. Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities*, 46-76; Merchant, *Earthcare*, 139-166; Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring*, 207-234; Lewis L. Gould, *Lady Bird Johnson and the Environment* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1988); Vera Norwood, *Made from this Earth: American Women and Nature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); 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). I also discuss the postwar environmental activism of women in "'Give Earth a Chance.'"
28. Roderick Frazier Nash, *The Rights of Nature: A History of Environmental Ethics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989); Donald Worster, *The Wealth of Nature: Environmental History and the Ecological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 184-202; Patricia Nelson Limerick, *Desert Passages: Encounters with the American Deserts* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1985), 77-85; Mark Stoll, *Protestantism, Capitalism, and Nature in America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997).
29. Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 141-160; Peter J. Schmitt, *Back to Nature: The Arcadian Myth in Urban America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969); Gregg Mitman, *Reel Nature: America's Romance with Wildlife on Film* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999); Robert L. Dorman, *Revolt of the Provinces: The Regionalist Movement in America, 1920-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Jane Tompkins, *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 68-87.
30. Warren James Belasco, *Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel, 1910-1945* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1979); Marguerite S. Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 130-260. For Ford's mission statement, see Warren I. Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 136. The second quotation is from Belasco, 31.
31. Mitman, *Reel Nature*, 109-156; Jennifer Price, *Flight Maps: Adventures with Nature in Modern America* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

Book Reviews

An Environmental History of Great Britain: From 10,000 Years Ago to the Present. By I. G. Simmons. Edinburgh, Scotland: Edinburgh University Press, 2001. xii + 419 pp. Appendix, notes, biographies, glossary, selected bibliography, index. Cloth $82.00, paper $30.00.

Critics sometimes claim that historical scholarship has become monopolized by studies that are obsessively narrow in focus and that academics have abandoned the task of synthesis to others. Several recent works of environmental history, however, serve to refute this charge. Coming a year after the publication of J. R. McNeill's sweeping global environmental history of the twentieth century, *Something New under the Sun* (W.W. Norton, 2000), I. G. Simmons's equally ambitious book, *An Environmental History of Great Britain*, explores people's interactions with (and ideas about) the environment in one part of the world since the end of the last ice age.

Simmons, an emeritus professor of geography at the University of Durham, has written a book that is wide-ranging not merely chronologically, but also conceptually. Although there exists a long and valuable tradition of scholarship by historians and geographers that examines Britain's past from an environmental perspective, such works have generally employed a restricted focus (agricultural history, urban history, and so on). Simmons distances himself from such approaches, including the one that W. G. Hoskins made famous in *The Making of the English Landscape* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1955), by considering the environment in a much broader sense and seeking to explain how its constituent elements fit together.

Drawing from an impressive range of sources—including even poetry and music—Simmons argues that the histories of people and the environment in Britain are inextricably connected, and that virtually every square centimeter of the island's surface has been altered as a result. While such a thesis is far from revolutionary, the details make for a fascinating account, and he does an excellent job navigating the complexities and paradoxes of this history. He notes, for example, that moorlands, which constitute some of the most cherished "natural" landscapes in Britain, were in many places covered with trees until humans began removing them about 4,000 years ago.

Each chapter provides a comprehensive overview of a particular period, with topics organized into sections such as climate, landforms, energy, urban settlement, and international linkages. Useful features include an extensive set of maps, statistical tables, and illustrations, text boxes that make connections between historical