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CHAPTER 21

WOMEN AND GENDER

Useful Categories of Analysis in Environmental History

NANCY C. UNGER

IN 1990, Carolyn Merchant proposed, in a roundtable discussion published in *The Journal of American History*, that gender perspective be added to the conceptual frameworks in environmental history.¹ Her proposal was expanded by Melissa Leach and Cathy Green in the British journal *Environment and History* in 1997.² The ongoing need for broader and more thoughtful and analytic investigations into the powerful relationship between gender and the environment throughout history was confirmed in 2001 by Richard White and Vera Norwood in “Environmental History, Retrospect and Prospect,” a forum in the *Pacific Historical Review*. Both Norwood, in her provocative contribution on environmental history for the twenty-first century, and White, in “Environmental History: Watching a Historical Field Mature,” addressed the need for further work on gender. “Environmental history,” Norwood noted, “is just beginning to integrate gender analyses into mainstream work.”³ That assessment was particularly striking coming, as it did, after Norwood described the kind of ongoing and damaging misperceptions concerning the role of diversity, including gender, within environmental history. White concurred with Norwood, observing that environmental history in the previous fifteen years had been “far more explicitly linked to larger trends in the writing of history,” but he also issued a clear warning about the current trends in including the role of gender: “The danger . . . is not that gendering will be ignored in environmental history but that it will become predictable—an endless rediscovery that humans have often made nature female. Gender has more work to do than that.”⁴ Indeed it does.

In 1992, the index to Carolyn Merchant’s *The Columbia Guide to American Environmental History* included three subheadings under women. “Women and the egalitarian ideal” and “women and the environment” each had only a few entries. Most entries were listed under the third subheading, “activists and theorists,” comprising seventeen names.⁵ Nine years later Elizabeth Blum compiled “Linking American

Women's History and Environmental History," an online preliminary historiography revealing gaps as well as strengths in the field emerging "at the intersection of these two relatively new fields of study." At that time Blum noted that, with the exception of some scholarly interest being diverted to environmental justice movements and ecofeminism, "most environmental history has centered on elite male concerns; generally, women's involvement tends to be ignored or marginalized."⁶

One way to measure scholars' responses to the challenge articulated by Merchant, Norwood, White, and Blum, is to count the citations indexed under various topics in the Forest History Society's *Environmental History Bibliography*, a continuously updated electronic database citing books, articles, theses, and dissertations on a wide variety of topics including global climate change, sustainable development, environmental justice, and the depiction of nature in art, film, and literature.⁷ The bibliography includes citations to 45,000 published works. In 2013, the search term "trees" generated 10,200 entries, "water" generated 6,087, and "men" generated 5,320. The search term "women" generated 1,675 entries, "gender" generated 268, and "sexuality" only 19. Some entries appeared in more than one category, but even when these multiple listings are included in the final tally, the total for the three latter terms constitutes less than 5 percent of this database. A more encouraging sign is the fact that women and gender are finding their way into major reference sources. One of the thirty-two chapters that make up the 2010 *A Companion to American Environmental History* is devoted to "Gender," and "Ecofeminism" is the subject of one of the thirty-six chapters in the *Companion to Environmental Philosophy*.⁸ Although environmental scholars and historians are increasingly investigating topics involving gender, women, and sexuality, such research is still clearly in its infancy. In 2013, in a series of essays entitled "State of the Field: American Environmental History," the *Journal of American History* followed up on its 1990 roundtable. While several contributors note in passing that gender has become meaningful component in environmental history, not one of the eight essays addresses gender with any specificity beyond noting that feminist scholar Donna Haraway's studies illuminate "the particularly gendered and racialized ways science constructed its animal objects."⁹ A survey of the existing literature, however, reveals that gendered approaches have the potential to contribute to a more genuinely comprehensive understanding of environmental history.

As differentiated from sex, which pertains to physiology, and sexuality, which focuses on sexual practices and sexual identity, gender refers to culturally defined and/or acquired characteristics. "Gender" has frequently been misused as a synonym for "women" in historical writing. Joan W. Scott's "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis" stresses that "gender" is "a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes" and "a primary way of signifying relationships of power." According to this definition, in which women and men are defined in terms of one another, "no understanding of either [can] ... be achieved by entirely separate study."¹⁰ Incorporating gender into environmental history is a complex undertaking, as it by definition does not occur in a vacuum. Race, ethnicity, and class—among other factors—help construct gender roles, and the culture that results

can change dramatically over time. Despite these complexities, emerging studies reveal the differences that gender, sex, and sexual identity have made in shaping men's and women's attitudes toward, and relationships with, the environment and each other.

When the new women's history first emerged in the 1970s, many of the early studies emulated the male model of focusing on the "greats" of the past and provided accounts of female leadership in various traditionally male-dominated fields, such as politics, medicine, and literature. Environmental historians followed suit: many of the environmental history studies of the 1970s and 1980s that focused on women examined the contributions of individual female scientists (Alice Hamilton, founder of occupational medicine/industrial toxicology), conservationists (naturalist Caroline Dormon), and nature writers (Mary Austin, *The Land of Little Rain*), with Rachel Carson (*Silent Spring*) by far the most frequently cited and celebrated female environmentalist. However, just as women's history rapidly developed from a rather pale imitation of men's history into a vibrant, rich, and important field in its own right, environmental history broadened its focus to become a vast multidisciplinary field encompassing the entire globe and investigating time periods from the primordial to the present. Women—not just individual female "greats"—increasingly appear, and issues of masculinity and homosexuality are recognized as well. Incorporating this broader context, even the more recent works on individual women are less traditional in their subject matter and make broader contributions to environmental history. For example, Mary Joy Breton's *Women Pioneers for the Environment* (2000) profiles forty-two nineteenth- and twentieth-century women from around the world who broke with their prescribed subservient gender roles to become leading environmental activists.¹¹ Studies of women in environmental history have also broadened from an emphasis on women activists who consciously worked to protect the environment to include a myriad of gender-based environmental relationships.

The uniqueness and importance of women's roles cannot be fully appreciated, though, unless placed in the appropriate gendered context. Elizabeth Blum warns against the "lack of cross-field knowledge [that] has contributed to isolated, often ahistorical studies of women's involvement in the environment," a concern echoed by Leach and Green.¹² Most gendered analyses strive to give both sexes equal consideration—an effort still too infrequently made in the field as a whole. Because men's roles in environmental history have traditionally received greater scholarly attention overall, this chapter focuses primarily on women (but certainly not to the exclusion of men) in seeking to understand both women and gender as useful categories of analysis within environmental history.¹³

PREMODERN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Indigenous peoples serve as the "miners' canaries of the modern world."¹⁴ Because, according to environmentalist Alan Durning, "When the Indians vanish, the rest will

follow,” much attention has been paid to premodern environmental practices, especially those proven to be sustainable.¹⁵ Worldwide, many environmentalists study indigenous peoples who continue to live lifestyles relatively similar to those lived by their ancestors prior to contact with outside cultures and peoples. There is a growing sense of urgency surrounding such studies, as neighboring peoples’ population growth, industrialization, and factory farming threaten those lifestyles by over-fishing, over-hunting, bulldozing, and otherwise depleting or destroying the resources vital to indigenous sustainability.

Although there have been a few attempts to survey the environmental histories of indigenous peoples at the global level, most studies focus on a particular continent, country, or region.¹⁶ The environmental history of Native Americans is in many ways unique, yet some of the most vexing problems that plague its study hinder scholars of other parts of the world as well. Few places on earth remain untouched by modernity, and their environments have changed accordingly. Understanding the role of gender in early Native American environmental history, for example, proves difficult for several reasons, including the fact that in the centuries following the European invasion, virtually no tribe was able to consistently practice pre-contact ways. Moreover, in what is now the United States, there were hundreds of Indian nations whose resource strategies, whether based in fishing, hunting, gathering, or farming, were as diverse and as changeable as the different landscapes they inhabited.¹⁷ It is as dangerous to generalize about Americans in the pre-Columbian period as it is about precolonial Africans, Australians, or any other indigenous peoples.¹⁸ Another barrier to reclaiming the pre-Columbian environmental past based on only fragmentary evidence is that the earliest accounts of Native Americans were written by colonial observers (as was the case with other encounters around the world), who were almost exclusively male and whose own culture, especially their presumptions about gender, strongly colored their perspective on aboriginal ways. English observers, for whom hunting was a recreational activity for aristocrats, were disdainful of the considerable time and energy native men devoted to hunting. English male disapproval intensified when they witnessed activities that they imagined as suitable for men—planting and harvesting—performed primarily by women. Women, according to this view, remained within the local villages caring for the children and doing the “drudgery” appropriate to their subordinate social status, producing the finished goods (especially clothing and food that would not spoil) from the raw materials provided by the men and thereby having little direct impact on the environment.¹⁹

Women’s historians, in tandem with historians of premodern societies, have worked to replace this stereotype with more nuanced understandings of indigenous peoples’ gendered relationships with the environment across many cultures.²⁰ The “grunt” work many missionaries in North America misunderstood as indicative of women’s inferior status was in fact a centuries-old attempt at an equitable division of labor, which made it possible for women to feed and care for children while carrying out various tasks communally. Such gendered divisions of labor were rarely rigid. While California Indian men, for example, were the primary hunters and fishers and the women the primary gatherers and food preparers, men sometimes aided in the gathering (such as knocking acorns off oak limbs) and women hunted, fished, and trapped small game.²¹

In more recent years, premodern ecologists have replaced the old stereotypes with the popular glorification of indigenous peoples living totally off the land, but having virtually no impact upon it. Yet in Indian societies throughout North America, men frequently manipulated the environment by burning, hunting, and fishing. Women too manipulated the environment as they provided, via gathering or farming, much of their communities' total food. In areas where Indians farmed, women were usually the primary distributors of the corn, beans, squash, and pumpkins they planted, weeded, and harvested.²² In Southeastern New England, for example, since about the year 1000, the corn alone produced by women provided about 65 percent of their tribes' caloric input. By planting mixed crops, women shielded the soil from excessive sun and rain and cut down drastically on the amount of weeding that subsequent European farming methods would necessitate, thereby also slowing soil exhaustion.²³

Like other indigenous peoples, Indians did not live in total harmony with nature.²⁴ Their resource strategies continued to be largely sustainable, however, even as the individual elements changed over time. In some areas of North America, as in other areas around the world, local conditions were sufficiently harsh to ensure a low population. Among more prosperous tribes threatened by overpopulation, the key to their ability to carry out what William Cronon calls "living richly by wanting little," was that they controlled their numbers.²⁵ In those tribes, Native American women's greatest environmental impact came not through their gathering, irrigation projects, horticulture, fishing, herding, or their ability to preserve foods. Instead, their greatest single impact came through their nearly universal practice of prolonged lactation. Breast feeding was very common for the first three years after childbirth, but among some tribes it lasted for four years and sometimes even longer. Certainly breast feeding in the first two years had enormous practical benefits, primarily convenience and mobility. It was also valued because it brought decreased fertility. Because Native American women actively sought to control their populations, they routinely nursed their babies past when children could easily thrive on solid foods, and frequently more than twice as long as their European contemporaries.²⁶

Along with prolonged lactation, some Native American women, like their European counterparts, also practiced infanticide and abortion.²⁷ To guarantee population control, breast feeding was sometimes combined, as in the case of the Huron, the Cheyenne, and California's Ohlones, with sexual abstinence, a method also practiced by many indigenous peoples worldwide, including those who lived along the Amazon and within Africa's Congo basin.²⁸ By carefully controlling their populations, and keeping them below the land's "carrying capacity," Indian women made a crucial contribution to their peoples' ability to live relatively sustainable lifestyles. Indian populations were also periodically checked by other factors, including wars, droughts, and floods. In addition some endured "lean" winters, during which the stores of food intentionally limited by the tribe ensured that the weakest were winnowed out.²⁹ But these latter factors alone cannot account for the remarkably stable (although larger than previously believed) numbers of Indians estimated to have populated what is now the United States.³⁰ The contributions made by Indian women were crucial.

Europeans quickly changed the landscape of many of the places they came to dominate. European men did so partly based on their patriarchal beliefs that the Bible commanded them to be the leaders and providers for their families and to “subdue the earth,” but also in large part because they needed that landscape to increasingly meet “the demands of faraway markets for cattle, corn, fur, timber, and other goods whose ‘values’ became expressions of the colonists’ socially determined ‘needs.’” As early as 1653, the colonial historian Edward Johnson, considering the New England ecosystems, marveled at the fact “that this Wilderness should turn [into] a mart for Merchants in so short a space [with] Holland, France, Spain, and Portugal coming hither for trade.”³¹ European methods of farming and concepts of progress quickly supplanted the ways of life of those Indians across North America who managed to survive the vast waves of death brought by exposure to European diseases to which they had no immunities. In much of North America and in other colonized places around the globe, many traditional links between gender, sexuality, and environmental sustainability were shattered.

Native peoples’ environmental knowledge and skills nevertheless made them valuable as guides (Sacajawea’s work as guide and interpreter has produced a very large literature, especially for children) and as key contributors to the newcomers’ ways of living on the land.³² When Indians in the Great Lakes region were drawn into the fur trade, native men were often held in greater esteem than were native women, and not only because of the patriarchal traditions of the European invaders.³³ Men’s traditional hunting skills were highly valued in the fur trading economy. (An exception was the Great Plains, where women’s labor was crucial to transforming raw bison hides to marketable commodities.)³⁴ Yet Indian women did not submit passively to the obliteration of their sustainable practices and the other incursions into their peoples’ traditions, but instead practiced cultural self-determination in a number of powerful ways, including through their reproductive choices.

Susan Sleeper-Smith and Sylvia Van Kirk have done extensive work on gender in the fur trade.³⁵ Native women in the western Great Lakes region frequently married or were otherwise paired with French fur traders. Such marriages *à la façon du pays* (in the custom of the country) facilitated fur traders’ commerce by enveloping it in native customs of reciprocal exchange among kin. These kin networks facilitated men’s access to valuable pelts, fueling an industry so lucrative that the population of fur-bearing animals, including seals, otters, and beavers, was rapidly depleted all across North America, empowering women to negotiate positions of prominence. Women strove to maintain their Indian identities largely through the same extensive kin networks.

In western lands under mission control, some Indian girls and women were converted to Christianity and inculcated with European gender norms, but their skills as farmers and herders remained in demand. Severe conditions left native men and women with few options. Both provided forced labor, but they were not completely powerless.³⁶ Indian deaths outstripped births not only due to disease, inadequate food supplies, and overwork (especially when Indians were forced to grow crops in arid climates), but because women consciously limited their reproduction through sexual abstinence, abortion, and infanticide. In California in the second half of the nineteenth century, as Albert Hurtado

has shown, large numbers of native women seemed to disappear from native populations, as they were increasingly drawn into Anglo society as domestic laborers.³⁷

ENSLAVED AFRICANS

For centuries, many of the dramatic changes made to colonized environments were frequently carried out by the people the invaders brought with them as forced labor to mine (in Brazil, for example) or to clear or drain and plant land. As was the case in many slave-owning societies, slave owners in the Americas depended on trade rather than natural increase to maintain their supply of slaves, and most, valuing size and strength, preferred to buy men. Such was particularly the case in Brazil and in the sugar islands of the Caribbean, where the most lucrative plantations were located. Mainland North America, a relative backwater in the New World plantation economy in the eighteenth century, had a lower gender imbalance in the slave trade. Nevertheless, only as the overseas trade was legally phased out did the numbers of enslaved women begin to approach the number of enslaved men, with the sex ratio evening out around the 1740s.³⁸ Forced laborers of both sexes used environmental knowledge gained in both Africa and North America to not only ostensibly do the work their masters required of them, but also to improve the quality of their own lives.³⁹

Enslaved women gathered naturally growing herbs, roots, and berries for both dietary and medicinal purposes, and sometimes joined men and boys in fishing and in trapping and hunting for small game.⁴⁰ Women who were granted garden patches grew food that was used to partially (sometimes nearly wholly) provide for their families' diet, and in some instances to sell or trade. The mixed crops women grew resulted in far less soil exhaustion than did the monocrops of their owners. In her study of female slaves' perceptions of wilderness, Elizabeth Blum explores how the ability to live off the land in local swamps and woods allowed runaway slaves, male and female, to survive before making their way north to freedom or, as happened far more frequently, returning to their owners either through resignation or coercion.⁴¹

The enslaved also used their environmental knowledge to subtly undermine the institution that bound them. Studies by Sharla Fett, Liese Perrin, and Marie Schwartz emphasize the knowledge of abortion and contraception enslaved peoples brought from Africa and the Caribbean.⁴² Methods used previously to control their local populations to their own benefit were adapted in their new situations as forms of resistance to slavery. The demands of forced field labor precluded most enslaved women's ability to breastfeed with sufficient frequency to suppress ovulation. Instead, they used the environmental knowledge gained in their homelands concerning the use of a number of medicinal plants also available in the New World as abortifacients (especially cotton root). Such practices, which were severely punished when detected, not only reduced their masters' supplies of new generations of forced laborers, but also served as a kind of strike, since reproduction was considered a central function of enslaved women, contributing to higher prices for women considered to be promising "breeders."⁴³

Enslaved women used their environmental knowledge concerning production to combat the injustice of slavery in other ways as well. Because most slave owners shared the gendered perception that skilled work was the natural domain of men, enslaved men and boys worked as carpenters, smiths, teamsters, and the like, leaving a disproportionate amount of field work to women and girls. Figures for individual farms and plantations vary widely, but in rough numbers, 13 percent of enslaved males compared to 4 percent of females carried out skilled labor in the 1740s. Fifty years later the percentage of female slaves performing skilled work had increased to 6 percent (and higher on larger estates), but the figure for males was 26 percent.⁴⁴ By 1850, 89 percent of female slaves worked in the fields, still outnumbering the 83 percent of males relegated to field work.⁴⁵ While slave owners may have considered the fieldwork carried out by women to be unskilled labor left to them by default, they nevertheless benefited from the gendered expertise of female field hands. Daniel Littlefield and Judith Carney show that women's agricultural expertise in rice, indigo, corn, and cotton production was a result of the specialized knowledge and hand tool experience garnered in their native lands. In turn, observes Carney, "subordinated peoples used their own knowledge systems of the environments they settled to reshape the terms of their domination."⁴⁶

Agricultural experience and wisdom combined with gender roles to empower enslaved women. All family members were, of course, subject to the will of the master, but within the cabins of the enslaved, women generally enjoyed greater gender equity than did their white counterparts. Limiting their masters' supplies of new slaves was only one of many forms of resistance to white tyranny. Another was the passive refusal of field workers to fertilize increasingly depleted cotton fields or to terrace untilled hillsides. Field workers rarely refused outright to increase their masters' crop yields, but the expensive tools required for the work were ill used, forever breaking or disappearing mysteriously. Costly fertilizers were applied improperly. So widespread were these actions that most slave owners preferred to view them as further proof of their slaves' inherent laziness and stupidity rather than as calculated forms of resistance, and quickly abandoned terracing and fertilizing efforts.⁴⁷ Although some planters did rotate corn with cotton and others had some success with fertilizers, the actions of enslaved field workers, disproportionately female, hastened the necessity for the geographic expansion of slavery.⁴⁸ (A similar, although more flagrant refusal to terrace white-owned hillsides occurred in Kenya in 1948–1949. Known as "The Revolt of the Women," local workers undermined colonists' efforts to stem soil erosion.)⁴⁹

MEN AND WOMEN ON THE AMERICAN FRONTIER

Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (1980) reveals the vast changes in perceptions of both women and nature brought about by the Scientific Revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁵⁰ In the

centuries that followed, gender, race, class, and ethnicity all played a role in Americans' relationships with frontier environments. Where wilderness posed a threat to survival as well as a resource to be exploited, strict gender lines often blurred, as the labor of both men and women was necessary to clear or drain land, plant and harvest, and tend to animals as well as to prepare and preserve food. Only when a certain level of settlement and prosperity was achieved could families afford to have women return to their prescribed domestic sphere within the home. Even on well-established farms, however, kitchen gardens remained the province of women and ensured that women spent considerable time outdoors attuned to the weather and the changing seasons.⁵¹ Susan Scott Parrish has revealed colonial attitudes and perceptions of nature reflected in the writings of eighteenth-century American women interested in natural history, and Joan Jensen offers a particularly insightful study of farm women's contributions to the growth and development of the nation.⁵²

Much of the research published in the 1970s and 1980s on gender on the American frontier focused on pioneers from the east, some recently migrated from Europe, who made the overland journey to settle on the Great Plains or in the Far West in the nineteenth century. The degree of influence held by the evolving prescribed gender spheres (the male worlds of outdoor activities, money, and politics described in E. Anthony Rotundo's *American Manhood* (1994) and Michael Kimmel's *Manhood in America* (2011); the female indoor worlds of domesticity discussed—and contested—by scholars including Barbara Welter, Gerda Lerner, Mary Ryan and Suzanne Lebsock) on the activities and attitudes of the newcomers to the west remains the subject of lively debate.⁵³ According to the prescribed ideals, men, the natural protectors and the material providers for their families, gloried on the frontier where they were made (or broken) by their ability to wrest a fortune, or at least a livelihood, from the land in the form of precious metals, crops, or livestock. The transformation of the land wrought by such endeavors was not seen by men as exploitative, destructive, or shortsighted, but rather as their right and their familial and even religious obligation. In the words of Reverend Thomas Starr King, in an 1862 address before the San Joaquin Valley Agricultural Society, "The true farmer is an artist. He brings out into fact an idea of God." Men in environments that did not naturally lend themselves to carrying out God's idea were not exempt from their obligation. Even the desert like valley floor of central California must be transformed because "[t]he *earth is not yet finished*... It was made for grains, for orchards, for the vine, for the comfort and luxuries of thrifty homes." How must such a transformation take place? "[T]hrough the educated, organized, and moral labor of men."⁵⁴

Chad Montrie's "Men Alone Cannot Settle a Country": Domesticating Nature in the Kansas-Nebraska Grasslands," traces the evolution of the relationship between gender and women's roles (especially outdoor versus indoor labor) during the transition from homesteading to settlement.⁵⁵ Some authors, including Lillian Schlissel, focus more on the women who accompanied their husbands to the frontier only reluctantly, and who were eager to recreate in the west the spheres of domestic influence they had maintained by virtue of their gender in the east. Others, including John Mack Faragher, highlight the similarities between men and women, and, like Sandra Myres, feature wives who were either eager to partner with their husbands in the business of

homesteading, or, because the Homestead Act of 1862 was not gender specific, sought homesteads in their own right.⁵⁶

Gender values prescribed that men were responsible for providing for their families materially, while women were charged with “civilizing” the frontier. Women insisted upon the establishment of schools and churches rather than saloons, and turned crude dwellings into homes.⁵⁷ Women on the western frontier commonly brought beauty and diversity to their homes and gardens through the exchange of seeds and cuttings with family members back east, transforming a strange environment into one more inviting and familiar, and creating a tangible tie with people and environments seemingly worlds away.⁵⁸ Richard Westmacott and Dianne Glave have studied the aesthetics and cultural significance of traditional gardening practices of rural African American women.⁵⁹ Black and white pioneer women also sought seeds and roots to augment local plants (including berries, barks, roots, and flowers) to be used for medicinal purposes, homeopathy being another art practiced by women within the domestic sphere centered on nurturance.

Sheryll Patterson-Black’s *Western Women in History and Literature* (1978) notes the preponderance of literature focusing on homesteading families, including Willa Cather’s *O Pioneers!* and *My Ántonia* as well as Ole Rolvaag’s *Giants in the Earth*.⁶⁰ Perhaps the most influential has been Laura Ingalls Wilder’s extremely popular *Little House* series, which reveals not only the huge divide between proper men’s work and proper women’s work, but also how frequently that divide was breached in order to secure the family’s survival.⁶¹ Memoirs including Hal Borland’s *High, Wide, and Lonesome: Growing Up on the Colorado Frontier* reveal the hardships settlers faced when families attempted to transform western environments beyond what nature would allow.⁶² Archival repositories all across the country contain letters and diaries of pioneering and rural settlers that continue to enhance understanding of how race, place, time, and ethnicity combined with gender to shape family members’ relationships with each other and their environments.⁶³

Glenda Riley’s sweeping *Women and Nature: Saving the “Wild West”* (1999) looks more specifically at western women’s unique, gender-based contributions to environmental protections.⁶⁴ Other recent studies look at western expansion’s environmental and cultural impact on the peoples already on the contested terrain of “new” lands. Scholars who emphasize the role of race and ethnicity featuring Native American and Mexican American women include Vicki Ruiz, S. J. Kleinberg, Deborah Kanter, Paula Nelson, and Katherine Benton-Cohen.⁶⁵ Theda Perdue and Bruce White have produced particularly useful studies of the gendered roles played by Native Americans in the ongoing fur trade.⁶⁶

MASCULINITY, HUNTING, AND CONSERVATION IN EMPIRE

Indigenous people, plants, and animals throughout much of the world experienced profound change as the result of colonization.⁶⁷ During the Victorian and Edwardian

eras, big game hunting was celebrated as excellent training for future soldiers of the British Empire because it fostered fearlessness, coolness under pressure, and aggression.⁶⁸ All around the world, including in North America, as Greg Gillespie demonstrates in *Hunting for Empire* (2008), these markers of masculinity made big game hunting an integral part of European colonial culture.⁶⁹ Elite colonists and their visitors who hunted lions and tigers in Africa and Asia depended on a large traveling party of local porters and attendants to see to their every comfort. These hunts sometimes occasioned grudging respect for local trackers, but mostly they affirmed the colonists' domination over the local people and non-human environment.⁷⁰ Many of these hunters also self-identified as scientists and students of natural history, donating numerous specimens to regional museums and, especially, the Natural History Museum of London.⁷¹ Others hunted so indiscriminately as to be described as undermining the English ideal of masculinity. In the wake of concerns about the impact on hunters as well as alarm over the rapid reduction of big game, humanitarian concerns began to enter the public discourse on hunting, initiating a preservationist movement.⁷²

THE ROLE OF GENDER IN NEWLY URBANIZED, INDUSTRIALIZED SOCIETIES

By the 1850s nearly a fifth of the American population was living in towns and cities. As the ranks of middle-class urbanites swelled prior to the Civil War, new notions of gender emerged. As Carolyn Merchant notes, "Men's identities as frontiersmen, explorers, fur traders, and soldiers truncated, while their employment as industrial laborers, mechanics, and businessmen expanded." Outdoor clubs for men formed throughout the latter half of the century to provide reassurances of masculinity through the kinds of tests of male strength and endurance that were no longer part of everyday life. Even the men who were not members of the Sierra Club (founded in 1892) or the Appalachian Mountain Club (1886) could have their masculine imaginations stirred and affirmed by the new outdoor journals, such as *American Sportsman* (1871) and *Forest and Stream* (1873).⁷³

Changes in men's identities came to influence the way middle-class Americans defined "true womanhood," or woman's proper sphere. According to the emerging doctrine, commerce and wage work and the moral compromises that accompanied them were presumed to be the realm of men; women were to stay at home, where they could remain immune to the corruptions of urban life and create a healing domestic atmosphere. Women's prescribed sentimental, selfless, and nurturing natures presumably rendered them unfit to compete in the urban world, but ideally suited to the domestic concerns that preoccupied them.⁷⁴ These prescribed gendered spheres ignored the realities of race, class, and ethnicity that left many Americans unable and often unwilling to carry out these "natural" modes of living. In privileging the middle

and upper classes, these constructed identities also in many ways limited the women in those classes to activities inside the home. They nonetheless ultimately encouraged the notion of women as uniquely qualified and obligated to seek environmental reform.

In a 1915 newsletter article entitled “The College Woman and Citizenship,” the Syracuse University Alumni Club reminded its members that “The woman’s place is in the home. But today, would she serve the home, she must go beyond the home. No longer is the home encompassed by four walls. Many of its important activities lie now involved in the bigger family of the city and the state.”⁷⁵ During the Progressive Era (circa 1890–1917), many middle-class female reformers, primarily but not exclusively white, claimed that male domination of business and technology had resulted in a skewed value system.⁷⁶ Profit had replaced morality, they charged, as men focused on financial gain as the sole measurement of success, progress, and right. Men profited, for example, by selling impure food and drugs to an unsuspecting public. In the factories whose profits turned a few individuals into millionaires, working-class men, women, and children toiled long hours for low wages in unsafe conditions, only to go home to urban squalor. Non-renewable resources were exploited with no thought to their conservation.⁷⁷ In the face of so much gross injustice, environmental and otherwise, women, long prescribed to be the civilizers of men, staged protests and organized reform efforts. The nature of their proposed solutions, including resource conservation and wilderness preservation, reveal new insights into the power of gender in early industrialized society.

GENDER IN AMERICAN PROGRESSIVE-ERA WILDERNESS PRESERVATION AND RESOURCE CONSERVATION

According to Lydia Adams-Williams, who promoted herself in 1908 as the first woman lecturer and writer on conservation, “Man has been too busy building railroads, constructing ships, engineering great projects, and exploiting vast commercial enterprises” to consider his environmental impact.⁷⁸ Adams-Williams claimed that it fell to “woman in her power to educate public sentiment to save from rapacious waste and complete exhaustion the resources upon which depend the welfare of the home, the children, and the children’s children.”⁷⁹ Many women agreed that, in the words of environmental historian Carolyn Merchant, “Man the moneymaker had left it to woman the moneysaver to preserve resources.”⁸⁰ Nature, in other words, had been denied nurture.

Some men risked being scorned for holding “unmanly” views by promoting resource preservation. Adam Rome frames “‘Political Hermaphrodites’: Gender and Environmental Reform in Progressive America,” around a contemporary cartoon

rendering wilderness preservation icon John Muir both impotent and feminine.⁸¹ In the drawing, Muir is elaborately clothed in a dress, apron, and flowered bonnet as he fussily (and fruitlessly) attempts to sweep back the waters flooding Hetch Hetchy Valley. Gifford Pinchot, who became first chief of the Forestry Service, escaped such denunciations by making it clear that even as a conservationist with an abiding love for the outdoors, he still saw nature as in the service of men. “Wilderness is waste,” he infamously proclaimed, “Trees are a crop, just like corn.” He dedicated his agency to “the art of producing from the forest whatever it can yield for the service of man.”⁸² Theodore Roosevelt, too, framed his support for conservation in terms of benefitting human rather than non-human nature. In 1907 he addressed both houses of Congress to gain support for his administration’s effort to “get our people to look ahead and to substitute a planned and orderly development of our resources in place of a haphazard striving for immediate profit.”⁸³

It is a testament to Roosevelt’s hyper-masculine persona (detailed in *Rough Rider in the White House: Theodore Roosevelt and the Politics of Desire* [2003], by Sarah Watts), that he could so successfully sow the seeds of conservationism within a male population concerned about the encroachment of federal control into state sovereignty, and deeply suspicious of any argument even tinged with sentimentality.⁸⁴ Writer George L. Knapp was one of many men who remained unconvinced, terming the call for conservation “unadulterated humbug” and the dire prophecies “baseless vaporings.” He preferred to celebrate the fruits of men’s unregulated resource consumption: “The pine woods of Michigan have vanished to make the homes of Kansas; the coal and iron which we have failed—thank Heaven!—to ‘conserve’ have carried meat and wheat to the hungry hives of men and gladdened life with an abundance which no previous age could know.” According to Knapp, men should be praised, not chastened, for turning “forests into villages, mines into ships and skyscrapers, scenery into work.”⁸⁵ Such beliefs were reinforced in the press. The *Houston Post*, for example, declared, “Smoke stacks are a splendid sign of a city’s prosperity,” and the *Chicago Record Herald* reported that the Creator who made coal “knew that smoke would be a good thing for the world.” Pittsburgh city fathers equated smoke with manly virtue and derided the “sentimentality and frivolity” of those who sought to limit industry out of baseless fear of the by-products it released into the air.⁸⁶

The notion of a strict gender divide over the need for wilderness preservation and resource conservation is, however, belied by the number of male leaders in the nascent environmental movements in the early 1900s, with Roosevelt, Pinchot, and Muir topping the list. Hunting had been long linked with masculinity and, by the turn of the century, was increasingly the domain of the elite.⁸⁷ Roosevelt and Pinchot were both founding members of the American Bison Society in 1905, an organization composed almost entirely of men who associated the bison with the imagined qualities of frontier masculinity.⁸⁸ Similarly, other sportsmen lobbied for animal conservation laws in order to sustain a supply of game for sport hunting. Scholars including Sarah Watts, Peter Bayers, Tina Loo, and Gail Bederman all emphasize, to varying degrees, the importance of hunting in shoring up a waning sense of masculinity.⁸⁹ Andrea Smalley,

however, points to evidence from sportsmen's periodicals to suggest that men during this period did not perceive the sport as an exclusively masculine past time. Smalley emphasizes women's frequent appearance in magazines and journals that popularized sport hunting's image, revealing how gender played a complex role in turn-of-the-century "blood sports." She argues that elite sportsmen encouraged rather than shunned women's involvement "as a way to promote their political agenda and to legitimize their conception of 'correct' hunting." Women's involvement, as hunters and as hunting reformers, upheld rather than undermined Victorian notions of respectable recreation.⁹⁰

Scholarship on the role of Progressive-Era women who dedicated themselves to wilderness protection and resource conservation is particularly rich, built on the foundation established by Suellen Hoy, Carolyn Merchant, Maureen Flanagan, and Nancy C. Unger.⁹¹ Women, prohibited from voting and shut out from so much of the world of business and power, found an outlet for their energies in environmental activism. This was an arena in which their prescribed gender role was a credential rather than a handicap. Accounts of Progressive-Era scholars (including botanists and nature writers) as well as individual activists have been augmented by studies of groups, especially women's organizations and clubs, although women also played significant roles in some environmental agencies open to both sexes, such as the Audubon Society and the Sierra Club.⁹²

THE CAMPAIGN TO SAVE BIRDS

Women's conservation efforts extended to the protection of both domesticated and wild animals, particularly birds. In 1886, nature writer Sarah Orne Jewett published the short story "A White Heron," an early, impassioned plea for plume-bird conservation.⁹³ By 1910, the activities of the Massachusetts Audubon Society (established in 1896 by Boston socialite Harriet Lawrence Hemenway in response to the slaughter of the heron exposed by Jewett) were augmented by those of the 250 women's clubs that were active nationwide, dedicated specifically to the protection of birds and plants. Resistance to the ongoing extermination of entire bird species, women's club leader Marion Crocker insisted, was vital to the preservation of the human race. Before the widespread use of insecticides following World War II, birds provided virtually the only check on the insect population that threatened crops prior to harvest. Warned Crocker, "If we do not follow the most scientific approved methods, the most modern discoveries of how to conserve and propagate and renew wherever possible those resources which Nature in her providence has given to man for his use but not abuse, the time will come when the world will not be able to support life and then we shall have no need of conservation of health, strength, or vital force, because we must have the things to support life or else everything else is useless."⁹⁴ Crocker's approach was unusual for a female Progressive-Era reformer, because although she appealed specifically to women, she

chose not to play the maternal card. She stressed the necessity of birds in interrelated plant and animal kingdoms, reminding her listeners of the crucial roles birds played in agriculture and pest control. "This is not sentiment," she stated flatly. "It is pure economics."⁹⁵

Speeches on the floor of the US Senate fueled Crocker's and Lydia Adams-Williams's assertions that men could not be trusted to carry out the crucial task of saving the birds and, ultimately, humanity. Missouri's James A. Reed responded to a 1913 bill introduced to protect migratory birds by asking: "Why should there be any sympathy or sentiment about a long-legged, long-beaked, long-necked bird that lives in swamps and eats tadpoles?" He urged, "Let humanity utilize this bird for the only purpose that the Lord made it for . . . so we could get aigrettes for the bonnet[s] of our beautiful ladies."⁹⁶ To the horror of those who saw clearly the crucial role that pest control provided by wild birds played in national and international economies and ecosystems, Reed dismissed the protection of birds as trivial, born out of "an overstrained, not to say maudlin sympathy for birds born and reared thousands of miles from our coast."⁹⁷

The notion that women were especially suited to carry out the campaign to save the birds was reinforced by the photographs and stories of birds by popular novelist and nature author Gene Stratton Porter. Most of Porter's nine nature books featured her signature close-up photographs of birds in their natural habitat. Porter claimed that the female domestic sphere was responsible for the patience, sympathy, and attentiveness necessary to capture those photos. All Porter's books suggested women's special affinity with nature, reinforcing that it was their obligation to be at the vanguard of bird preservation.⁹⁸

Women reformers sought legislation protecting the birds but took more immediate action as well. In describing the practice of using birds' bodies to decorate women's hats, the chair of the conservation committee of the Colorado Federation of Women's Clubs observed, "Each beautiful head, wing, or breast mutely declar[es] the cruel death of the bird—the mercenary spirit of men and the vanity of women."⁹⁹ Some bird protectionists deemed feather wearing to be the antithesis of true womanhood, for it "demoralized and degraded womankind and made a travesty of the better instincts of motherhood." Most admonitions appealed to maternalism. Aigrettes, for example, were "harvested" during the breeding season, when the feathers were at the height of their beauty, leaving the parents dead and the young to die of starvation. "Remember, ladies," urged a California Federation of Women's Clubs newsletter, "that every aigrette in your hat costs the life of a tender mother."¹⁰⁰

The campaigns of various women conservationists ultimately led to a variety of legislative successes, indicated by the plea from a Colorado legislator to the president of the General Federation of Women's Clubs: "Call off your women. I'll vote for your bill."¹⁰¹ In October 1913, a new Tariff Act outlawed the import of wild bird feathers into the United States, and in 1918 the Migratory Bird Treaty Act established protections for birds that migrated between the United States and Canada. Women continued to wear hats, but milliners throughout the United States and Europe bowed to the legal and societal pressures to dramatically reduce the use of feathers as primary decoration, although

they did continue to use naturally shed feathers, particularly ostrich and peacock. Thus, prior to achieving suffrage, women were able to successfully wield legislative influence and, by preserving millions of birds, protect complex and vital environmental relationships from ruin by a powerful American industry. Using similar rhetoric and techniques, women worked to protect forests, lakes, rivers, and a host of other natural resources. Their language was not always conciliatory. Clara Bradley Burdette, the first president of the women's California Club, spoke plainly of the gendered divide that existed across the nation on issues of natural resource conservation: "While the women of New Jersey are saving the Palisades of the Hudson from utter destruction by men to whose greedy souls Mount Sinai is only a stone quarry . . . the word comes to women of California that men whose souls are gang-saws are mediating the turning of our world-famous Sequoias into planks and fencing worth so many dollars."¹⁰²

WOMEN AS MUNICIPAL HOUSEKEEPERS

While the much celebrated "John Muirs, Gifford Pinchots, and Teddy Roosevelts of the conservation movement gave little mind to the quality of urban life," lesser-known and frequently female activists, including Alice Hamilton, Jane Addams, and Ellen Swallow Richards, "struggled with the blight of pollution, health hazards, and the physical degradation" undermining urban homes and work places.¹⁰³ Women of middle-to upper-class backgrounds were leaders in urban organizations promoting reforms including civic cleanliness and sanitation, smoke and noise abatement, and pure food and drugs, making clear the "absolute necessity of combating health hazards and pollution for the safety of all citizens."¹⁰⁴ Journalist Rheta Childe Dorr called community "Home," deemed city dwellers "the Family," and public schools "the Nursery," then added, "And badly do the Home and the Family and the Nursery need their mother."¹⁰⁵ "Women are by nature and training, housekeepers," asserted handbill author Susan Fitzgerald, urging, "Let them have a hand in the city's housekeeping, even if they introduce an occasional house-cleaning."¹⁰⁶

Women's educational programs to promote public health ranged from persuading citizens not to spit on city sidewalks to alerting tenement dwellers to the dangers of lead poisoning. They also addressed concerns specific to women in economically oppressed neighborhoods, revealing the hidden environmental hazards in many women's occupations and promoting pure milk, healthful food preparation, and proper care of infants and children. Labor activist Rose Schneiderman railed against hazardous workplace environments where property was held so dear and human lives, especially the lives of "working girls," so cheap that tragedies like the Triangle Factory fire (which killed 146 women, mostly young and Jewish, in New York City) were commonplace. However, Schneiderman's immigrant and working-class origins, as well as her emphasis on corporate responsibility for urban suffering, set her apart from most of her sister reformers who were bent on eliminating urban environmental ills. While

Schneiderman defended the rights of working women, many middle-class female reformers expressed their concern for these working “girls” as the future mothers of the race, arguing that “the greatest danger was not to the ‘girls’ but to ‘racial vitality’ in the form of ‘nervous exhaustion,’” ultimately resulting in “undervitalized” children.¹⁰⁷

The middle- and upper-class status of white early urban environmental reformers frequently led them to not only ignore or neglect issues of class and race, but to openly exhibit hostility to various ethnic groups and people of color, judging them as inferiors who were as much the cause as the victims of disease and sanitation problems. However, the urban environmental historian Martin Melosi concludes, “The fairest assessment to make about the turn-of-the-century urban environmentalism is that it provides a partial legacy for modern environmental justice activists, rather than no legacy at all.”¹⁰⁸ The role of gender and sexuality in toxic urban environments is evident in this early period, as women were recognized both as uniquely affected by urban environmental dangers (at home and in the workplace) and as uniquely qualified to offer relief from some of those burdens.

CHILDREN’S OUTDOOR ORGANIZATIONS AND THE GENDER DIVIDE

As Nancy C. Unger, Susan Schrepfer, and Ben Jordan have shown, children’s organizations formalized early in the twentieth century codified a gendered approach to the values to be found in non-human nature.¹⁰⁹ The Boy Scouts of America began in 1910, augmenting the ranch camps in the Far West that promised to inculcate urban boys with the traditional masculine frontier values and skills that were quickly disappearing from American cities. When their daughters were excluded from such experiences, some women, themselves barred from membership in many outdoor associations, began creating outdoor activities and organizations for girls.

Charlotte Farnsworth, preceptor of New York City’s prestigious Horace Mann School, helped to establish the Camp Fire Girls in 1911. Like many other youth group organizers, Farnsworth embraced outdoor activities because she believed they would reinforce, rather than challenge, the separate gender spheres. Farnsworth stated unequivocally that girls “are fundamentally different from boys in their instincts, interests, and ambitions.” Luther Gulick, another key cofounder of the Camp Fire Girls, spent twenty years investigating anatomy, physiology, psychology, ethics, and religions in his effort to understand what it meant to be “manly” and “womanly,” and saw the Camp Fire Girls as a “clearer vision of this question.” He believed that to copy the Boy Scouts “would be utterly and fundamentally evil. . . . We hate manly women and womanly men, but we all love to have a woman who is thoroughly womanly, and then adds to that a splendid ability of service to the state.” Gulick put a new spin on the traditional perception of womanhood, claiming that “women had acquired the undesirable

trait of independence because they had been sequestered in their homes” and therefore needed to be taught collective obedience to best prepare for gainful employment, efficient homemaking, and public service.¹¹⁰ Until 1943, although women served on the board of directors of the Camp Fire Girls, all of the executive directors were men who shared some version of Gulick’s basic belief that the organization’s primary goal was to discourage female independence. They sought instead to imbue girls with the values and skills that would allow them to excel in women’s traditional spheres. Members were routinely reminded in one signature song that “love is the joy of service so deep that self is forgotten.”¹¹¹

A year after the founding of the Camp Fire Girls, Juliette Gordon Low established the Girl Scouts of America. Low was convinced of the value of sports for women, the advantages of outdoor exercise, and the wisdom of preserving the environment. Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts were taught the value of routine, patriotism, and skills necessary to outdoor living, but they were expected to learn very different lessons from their activities and study of nature. According to the original handbook for the Girl Scouts, *How Girls Can Help Their Country*, “The Scout movement, so popular among boys, is unfitted for the needs of girls.” A different system was needed to give “a more womanly training for both mind and body.” A Girl Scout’s first duty was to “Be Womanly,” for “none of us like women who ape men.” Scouting adhered to a strict gender divide: “For the boys it teaches *manliness*, but for the girls it all tends to *womanliness*. . . . If character training and learning citizenship are necessary for boys, how much more important it is that these principles should be instilled into the minds of girls who are destined to be the mothers and guides of the next generation.”¹¹²

To Boy Scouts the outdoors was a stage on which to rehearse manhood, while “one of the most important principles to be instilled” in Girl Scouts was “strict and prompt obedience to laws and orders.” Where Boy Scouts were taught to be aggressive in order to become providers and fighters, Girl Scouts were told to go about their business “quietly and gently,” to “never draw attention to themselves unnecessarily,” to display “moral courage,” and “to never marry a man unless he is in a position to support you and a family.” The first wish of the Girl Scout was “to make others happy.”¹¹³ The task of the Girl Scout was to become a proper mother to the next generation of workers, fighters, and scouts. Even something as seemingly gender-neutral as the campfire, the heart of communal rituals for both sexes, held entirely different meanings for children in scouting organizations. Boys were told that fire stood for the camaraderie of the battlefield, factory, and office.¹¹⁴ Girls learned that fire represented hearth and home; without the fire of domesticity brought by woman’s “magic touch,” a house is “dark, and bare and cold.”¹¹⁵

Girls Scouts were told that they were the natural leaders in conservation: “Women and girls have it infinitely more in their power than men have to prevent waste. . . . The real test of a good cook is how little food she wastes.” Trained to think about future generations, Girl Scouts were urged to apply to natural resources the principles of conservation practiced at home, recognizing that “in this United States of ours we have cut down too many trees and our forests are fast following the buffalo.”¹¹⁶ After an

initial emphasis on dominating the environment by routinely mandating activities like chopping down trees, Boy Scout leaders acknowledged that women were correct that nature needed to be conserved, but they stereotyped women as too sentimental and selfish toward nature to conserve it properly. In 1916, National Boy Scout commissioner Dan Beard celebrated the Boy Scouts' dedication to bird protection, contrasting it to the actions of women, who sought only the "upholstered skins of these poor birds as ornaments for their hats," ignoring the leadership women had provided in the Save the Birds campaign of the previous decade.¹¹⁷

While the Boy Scouts were taught that conservation was the rightful domain of the male sex, girls in outdoor organizations were learning about females' special powers, abilities, and rights. Girls' alleged innate qualities left them uniquely qualified—and obligated—to conserve, protect, and defend parks and forests. Camp Fire Girls earned special honors when they contributed to their community via street cleaning; beautifying yards; conserving streams, birds, trees or forests; or improving parks and playgrounds. Girls in scouting organizations eagerly joined other groups dedicated to nature appreciation, like hiking clubs and urban improvement societies promoting sanitation and health education. The natural nurturers, women and girls who contributed to the uplift of society and the protection of the natural world would themselves be nurtured. This message found ready adherents, and in its first ten years membership in the Camp Fire Girls jumped from 60,000 to 160,000. The Girl Scouts of America experienced a similar explosion, with membership rising from 70,000 at the end of the 1910s to 200,000 one decade later. For generations, both organizations (as well as a multitude of private and civic summer camps) gave girls outdoor experiences and fostered their environmental awareness.¹¹⁸

WOMEN AND NATURE WRITING

Carolyn Merchant argues that male and female conservationists bridged the gender divide between 1880 and 1905 through a "gendered dialectic," a kind of call and response that culminated in "men and women working together to form Audubon societies and to pass legislation to preserve avifauna."¹¹⁹ This bridging of the gendered divide proved temporary, however. Although male environmentalists were gratified by the moral authority women's activism brought to conservation and preservation concerns, Adam Rome has traced the ultimate rejection of the female incursion into the world of masculine authority.¹²⁰ Men feared the homophobic rhetoric that linked the sentimentality and emotionalism associated with women with effeminacy.¹²¹ As such smear tactics ultimately weakened many progressive reforms, including environmentalism, men eased or forced women out of positions of authority. Susan R. Schrepfer's *Nature's Altars: Mountains, Gender, and American Environmentalism* (2005) introduced many of the threads pursued by Rome. Schrepfer shows how, between the 1860s and the 1960s, American men and women, primarily but not exclusively of the

white middle class, viewed mountains through the very gendered lenses prescribed by their particular era, and responded accordingly. She notes that, moving beyond the Progressive Era, women were not only pressured into resigning from the kind of leadership positions detailed in Rome's study, but into quitting various outdoor activities as well. Women's participation in mountaineering did not disappear entirely, but declined significantly in the late 1930s, as did their leadership positions in the Sierra Club and other alpine organizations. Some found acceptance for their outdoor activities by forming leagues and societies promoting wilderness preservation, especially the protection of wildflowers.¹²²

Welcome in fewer and fewer branches of the conservation and preservation movements, women nevertheless continued to contribute, frequently through nature writing. Vera Norwood provides an excellent overview of women's predominantly literary contributions. Edited collections by Marcia Myers Bonta and by Lorraine Anderson and Thomas S. Edwards feature the writings of a wide range of American women, while Rachel Stein argues that even women authors not traditionally associated with "nature writing" reinterpreted nature, incorporating alternative conceptions of nature into their works.¹²³

THE OUTDOORS AS THE SAVIOR OF MASCULINITY

In much of the industrialized world, technology and urbanization were perceived as alienating men from non-human nature. That change in perception, along with the expansion of women's political authority, posed a threat to traditional notions of power being based in the masculine body's mastery over the natural world. Bryant Simon argues that anxieties about cities, decadence, and the dissolution of manhood that pervaded the last two decades of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth were confirmed in the 1930s by the Great Depression. In the United States, New Deal reformers seized on the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) "as a way to 'beef up' male bodies and strengthen the state" because "physically weak men, they believed, weakened the nation." Educated men had been building their minds rather than their bodies. Worse still, urban degeneracy had produced a vast urban poor: unwashed, uneducated, and physically unfit. The solution was to place them outdoors "in close communion with beneficent nature," the "wholesome, pure" source of male "virility and toughness." "The greatest achievement of the CCC," according to one administrator, "has not been the preservation of material things such as forests, timber-lands, etc., but the preservation of American Manhood." And as Simon points out, the type of male the CCC boasted of producing bears a striking resemblance to the ideal masculine images celebrated in Nazi Germany, the Stalinist Soviet Union, and other Western nations in the 1930s. The male body, its muscles honed by strenuous

activity in the outdoors, represented strength and health—a welcome reassurance in a time of tension and uncertainty.¹²⁴

At the insistence of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, residence camps were also created for unemployed women, but female campers were prohibited from reforestation and environmental projects and focused instead on learning and practicing housekeeping skills. As noted by scholar Heather Van Wormer, women could only stay for two to three months in the camps, whereas men were recruited to the CCC for a year. The CCC ultimately employed some three million men, while only 8,500 women experienced life in residence camps. In addition to their room and board, CCC men were paid thirty dollars a month as compensation for their labor, of which twenty-five dollars was automatically sent to their families. Women, seen more as charity cases despite their labor, were “given” an “allowance” of fifty cents a week.¹²⁵ Eleanor Roosevelt regretted that more extensive opportunities were not offered for women, but few in government shared her view that women should participate equally in voluntary service and education programs. Even within the Roosevelt administration, the women’s camps were referred to derisively as “She She She,” a parody of “CCC.”¹²⁶

HOMEMAKING, SUBURBIA, AND THE BOMB

Despite male efforts to minimize female power in formal organizations, even full-time homemakers, both rural and urban, continued to see environmental issues as part of their rightful sphere, and still included environmental activism in their various individual, club, and volunteer activities.¹²⁷ The shortage of male labor created by World War II brought women into jobs for which they had previously been declared unfit. In particular, work widely available for the first time in sawmills, in logging camps, and in forest management brought women new environmental insights, as well as new authority.¹²⁸

The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 and the threat of nuclear warfare in the Cold War that followed forged a new kind of global environmental consciousness. Within the United States the immediate postwar period featured stricter and more rigid gender prescriptions as patriarchy, Christianity, and especially the heterosexual nuclear family were prescribed as not only socially desirable, but politically necessary if the nation was to survive—and to triumph over—the communist menace.¹²⁹ The control of nature extended to activities that included developing bigger and more deadly chemical weapons and controlling pests and weeds through poisons.

Women had been gradually easing into the workplace since the beginning of the twentieth century, and moved into wage work in large numbers during the war, but with the end of the conflict, the return of servicemen, and new prosperity, many middle-class women returned to full-time domesticity in the rapidly developing suburbs. Nevertheless, the number of women taking on paid labor increased in the decades following the war, especially among those of the working class. Despite that fact, woman’s prescribed proper and natural place was, once again, decidedly not in the workplace but within the home, where her role was to see to the health, happiness,

and safety of her husband and children. Yet, as in previous decades, “home” extended into the public sphere. In the local community, women provided much of the unpaid labor in neighborhood schools and houses of worship. Women around the world also participated in far more political activities, including “Ban the Bomb” campaigns and demonstrations, frequently citing their status as mothers and homemakers as their most compelling credential.¹³⁰ Even as the Cold War subsided, women continued to lead protests against nuclear power plants.¹³¹ Middle-class women in their thirties or forties who were raising children and were not employed outside the home were, claims one scholar, “naturals” for this protest work, because their role as the primary caregivers to their children had previously involved them in “broad humanistic/nurturing issues,” their interactions with other activists were minimally contentious, and their lack of conventional power left them with little to lose.¹³²

Some suburban women focused on other environmental hazards. Homemakers, repeatedly urged to conserve during the war years, were now encouraged to consume the many products their husbands’ spent their days working to provide. By 1955 half of all American households owned a television—one of the most powerful tools promoting what was later termed derisively “growthmania,” an obsession predicated on the assumption that “more [more goods, more living space, more people, more profits] is better.” The gendering of consumption of the many newly available and heavily advertised consumer goods aligned suburban women in particular with environmentally harmful practices. New standards of cleanliness and appearance necessitated a range of chemical compounds inside each suburban home, garage, and tool shed.

Phosphates routinely found in detergents (as well as disinfectants and deodorants) unbalanced ecosystems by fostering dangerously prolific marine plant growth. Women encouraged to beautify the inside of their homes and keep them in pristine condition routinely used solvent-based paints, primers, and varnishes that emitted volatile organic compounds, contributing to the destruction of the stratospheric ozone layer and playing a significant role in the creation of the greenhouse effect. And the pesticides and herbicides touted as essential to women’s beautifying their homes’ exteriors, especially through the cultivation of colorful flowerbeds, made their way into the groundwater. The result was serious health problems in humans, including disruptions in the endocrine system, cancer, infertility, and mutagenic effects.¹³³ A few critics, including Elizabeth Dodson Gray, began to recognize that rampant consumerism was rapidly depleting natural resources and poisoning the environment, with women uniquely at risk. Gray warned that more chemicals were found in the average modern home than in chemical labs of the past, and that “many homemakers know little about these chemicals and even less about their toxic and polluting effects.”¹³⁴

Silent Spring

In 1962, the ecologist Rachel Carson dramatically challenged conventional notions of progress and celebrations of prosperity with *Silent Spring*, and she used some of the prevailing beliefs about gender to give credence to her message. Carson had spent many

years working in the Fish and Wildlife Service where, despite her abilities as a biologist, she hit the so-called “glass ceiling,” the level beyond which women were rarely promoted. She turned to nature writing, which both made her financially independent (her first book, *The Sea Around Us*, published in 1951, stayed on the *New York Times* bestseller list for eighty-six weeks) and gave her the platform to challenge authority—both the scientific authority that assured the public that chemical pesticides were safe, and, implicitly, the patriarchal authority that relegated women to second-tier positions in professional science. In 1954 Carson proclaimed women’s “greater intuitive understanding” of the value of nature as she denounced a society “blinded by the dollar sign” that was allowing rampant “selfish materialism to destroy these things.” She also announced, “I am not afraid of being thought a sentimentalist,” and stressed the role of natural beauty in human spiritual growth at the same time that she defended the presence of emotion in science and nature writing.¹³⁵

These “female” values were very much in evidence in *Silent Spring*. Chastening “man” for his “arrogant” talk of the “conquest of nature,” Carson warned that men’s power had not been tempered by wisdom. Specifically, she questioned the governmental fathers’ decisions concerning industrial waste and their contributions to the nation’s vast reliance upon pesticides, especially DDT, which was effective to a fault, remaining toxic for weeks and months. Following its initial surface application, DDT seeped into the soil and water and ultimately into the food chain, as it was ingested by birds and animals, including humans, in whose tissues it caused cancer and genetic damage. “Future historians may well be amazed by our distorted sense of proportion,” Carson warned, asking “How could intelligent beings seek to control a few unwanted species by a method that contaminated the entire environment and brought the threat of disease and death even to their own kind?”¹³⁶

Gender and sexuality influenced the critical response to *Silent Spring*.¹³⁷ The many denunciations within the popular press of Carson’s work as overly emotional played to the stereotype of women as unscientific and inherently hysterical (a word derived from the Greek word *hysteria*, “womb”). The popular press focused on Carson’s marital status. She was variously described as “unmarried,” “never married,” and “a shy female bachelor.” Such references served to “desex Carson and brand her as not-quite-woman” in an age in which marriage and motherhood were upheld as woman’s highest calling and defined femininity.¹³⁸

Carson’s defenders, however, openly defied disparaging arguments that hinged on widely held perceptions of gender and sex. *Silent Spring*, which attacked the government’s misplaced and ineffectual paternalism, appeared just one year before Betty Friedan’s assault on patriarchy, *The Feminine Mystique*. Many of the women “awakened” by Friedan’s work took their first steps toward finding a larger place in the world by responding to Carson’s call to question authority. Friedan’s urging that women throw off patriarchy contributed to Carson’s message that they no longer assume “that someone was looking after things—that the spraying must be all right or it wouldn’t be done.”¹³⁹ One woman reader’s praise for Carson denounced the highly touted postwar notion that “Father Knows Best”: “Papa’ does not always know best. In this instance it

seems that ‘papa’ is taking an arbitrary stand, and we, the people are just supposed to take it, and count the dead animals and birds.”¹⁴⁰

When President John F. Kennedy’s Science Advisory Committee validated Carson’s claims about pesticides, her emphasis on the interconnectedness of all life was no longer dismissed as feminine romanticism. The understanding that any disturbance to the web of life has consequences throughout was accepted, by most, as a scientific reality.¹⁴¹ Through her challenge to authority, Carson made the public aware of attempts by the scientific-industrial complex to manipulate and control nature to the ultimate detriment of all.¹⁴² Her critique of the country’s dependence on chemical pesticides has since been widely recognized as one of the most influential books of the twentieth century.¹⁴³

As environmental historian Adam Rome notes, “Carson cultivated a network of women supporters, and women eagerly championed her work.”¹⁴⁴ Her message inspired the untold numbers of local grassroots groups and movements that continued to multiply in cities, suburbs, and on college campuses throughout the 1960s. Women cited *Silent Spring* in educational pamphlets and in their letters to editors and petitions to politicians. Individually and in groups, women stepped up their campaigns to ban the bomb, clean up rivers, save forests, and stop pollution.¹⁴⁵ Women’s organizations particularly active in promoting environmental awareness and protection included the League of Women Voters, the American Association of University Women, the Federation of Women’s Clubs, and the Garden Club of America.

ECOFEMINISMS

The feminist and environmental movements of the 1960s contributed significantly to the ecofeminist and environmental justice movements of subsequent decades. Although the concept of ecofeminism is grounded in the movements launched to no small degree by the writings of Carson and Friedan, its definition depends on which ecofeminist, scholar, or critic is asked.¹⁴⁶ Ecofeminism unites environmentalism and feminism into a global cause, holding that there is a relationship between the oppression of women and the degradation of nature throughout the world. Some argue that, because of that relationship, women are the best qualified to understand, and therefore to right, environmental wrongs.¹⁴⁷ In most parts of the world, women are the ones who are “closest to the earth,” that is, the ones who gather the food and prepare it, who haul the water and search for the fuel with which to heat it. Everywhere, they are the ones who bear children, or in highly toxic areas, suffer miscarriages and stillbirths or raise damaged children. Brazilian ecofeminist Gizelda Castro echoed the sentiments expressed by Lydia Adams-Williams nearly a century earlier: by dedicating themselves to the pursuit of immediate profit, “Men have separated themselves from the ecosystem.” Castro concluded that it therefore falls to women to fight for environmental justice and to save the earth.¹⁴⁸

A variety of mutually exclusive forms of ecofeminism rival for dominance.¹⁴⁹ One branch emphasizes the power of goddess mythology. Scholar Vandana Shiva, for example, presents the precolonial period as India's golden age, when feminine, conservation, and ecological principles predominated, and the forests were "worshipped as Aranyani, the Goddess of the Forest, the primary source of life and fertility."¹⁵⁰ Practitioners of Goddess Spirituality seek to reclaim ancient traditions in which, they assert, a Mother Goddess (rather than a Holy Father) was revered as the great giver of life. Some argue that despite the efforts of the patriarchal Judeo-Christian tradition to eradicate this belief, all women, especially mothers, are the natural guardians of "Mother Earth."

Their horrified feminist rivals counter that these kinds of claims perpetuate old gendered stereotypes and are a violation of the egalitarianism of true feminism.¹⁵¹ Moreover, such claims are insufficiently grounded in science to be compelling to the non-feminists who make up a majority of the population. In the words of Bella Abzug, congresswoman and cofounder in 1990 of the Women's Environment and Development Organization, "it's OK to show your emotion and come in as a mother...to say that this is going to hurt my children, but it's not good enough."¹⁵² Moreover, this school of ecofeminists insists, nature should not be anthropomorphized into a mother to be protected, but must instead be respected as a non-human, non-gendered partner in the web of life. They argue that women and nature are mutually associated and devalued in Western culture. Because of this tradition of oppression, they argue, women are uniquely qualified to understand and empathize with the earth's plight and to more fairly distribute its resources. According to 1980s activist Donna Warnock, "The road to women's liberation lies not only in ousting patriarchy, but also in rejecting its inequitable and environmentally and socially disastrous production system which is based on man's dominion over women and the earth, and the illusion of infinite resources." Warnock represented many ecofeminists who see the anthropocentrism that is so damaging to the earth as just one strand in a web of unjust "isms" including ageism, sexism (including heterosexism), and racism, all of which must be destroyed in order to achieve a truly just world: "[T]he eco-system, the production system, the political/economic apparatus and the moral and psychological health of a people are all interconnected. Exploitation in any of these areas affects the whole package." The only hope for human survival, Warnock concludes, "lies in taking charge: building self-reliance, developing alternative political, economic, service and social structures, in which people can care for themselves...to promote nurturance of the earth and its peoples, rather than exploitation."¹⁵³ Catriona Sandilands-Mortimer, Catherine Kleiner, and Nancy C. Unger have examined the efforts of lesbians to create just such alternative communities.¹⁵⁴

Melissa Leach and Cathy Green, however, offer pointed warnings about the dangers of romanticizing and oversimplifying women's relationships with nature, both in the past and in the present. They question the accuracy of "primordial harmony," and argue, moreover, that "by essentializing the relationship between women and nature, ecofeminist analyses have represented history in generalized ways which entrap women in static roles."¹⁵⁵ Their article "Gender and Environmental History: From Representation of Women and Nature to Gender Analysis of Ecology and Politics,"

focuses primarily on women's land use changes as a result of imperial and colonial policies and politics, but it has larger implications and applications as well. They reveal how a narrow ecofeminist focus on "Women, Environment, and Development" that emphasizes a special relationship between women and environment produces "generalized accounts" that "obscure rather than clarify linkages between changing gender relations, ecologies, and colonial science, ideology and policy, and they deploy history to suggest policies which could well prove to be detrimental to women." Specifically, they note the danger in speaking generically of "third world women," which ignores multitude of distinguishing factors such as age, race, marital status, class, caste, ethnic group, and local ecology. They also warn against regarding men and women as dichotomously separate, and urge recognition of the dynamics of gender, social stratification, and environmental change that were influenced by precolonial trade and commerce. They argue, in essence, for specificity concerning both gender and ecology, and the need to "highlight the variability in experiences of change which emerged as different ecological possibilities, relations of land and labor use, and dynamics of marriage and household formation interplayed with regional political issues." Leach and Green conclude by questioning "the extent to which Northern or elite Southern feminists," including themselves, can or even should set feminist research agendas on behalf of others. In view of their concerns about the politics of voice, they cite as a major challenge for future work the examination of "the production of diverse historical representations about a place, produced at different times and by different authors (local women and men, chiefs and commoners; colonial and modern anthropologists, colonial administrators) exploring how these accounts speak to and past each other, and how (as discourses) they had material effects."¹⁵⁶

THE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT

The environmental justice movement frequently incorporates aspects of feminism in its efforts to enforce the right to a safe and healthy physical, social, political, and economic environment for all people. Issues of race, class, sexuality, and gender are regularly addressed in environmental justice studies as factors that frequently subject people to injustice, but have also served to unify and mobilize those same people in their struggles against that injustice. Beginning in the 1950s, for example, in a series of actions later denounced as "Plundering the Powerless," mining companies aggressively gutted lands held by Chicanos and especially by Native Americans for nuclear fuel.¹⁵⁷ Native American women established the national organization Women of All Red Nations (WARN) in 1978 to strengthen themselves and their families in the face of ongoing attacks on Indian culture, health, and lands, drawing attention to the fantastically high increase in miscarriages, birth defects, and deaths due to cancer on Indian reservations in areas of ongoing intense energy development including Nebraska, the Southwest, and western South Dakota.¹⁵⁸ WARN's emphasis on the drastic increase in

childhood cancers of the reproductive organs (at least fifteen times the national average) made the demands for action by mothers particularly compelling; however, the involvement of many WARN members was motivated by a variety of factors in addition to maternal concerns, including property rights and values based in gendered traditions. Among the Navajo, for example, land often belonged to the women, since it could be passed down from father to daughter, uncle to niece.¹⁵⁹ In addition, many men had died as a result of their work (miners' risk of lung cancer increased by a factor of at least eighty-five), leaving their widows to band together to seek compensation.¹⁶⁰ WARN also worked to inform Native American women of their rights to resist an aggressive government-funded mass sterilization program WARN termed genocidal.¹⁶¹ At a WARN sovereignty workshop Indian women were told they "must lead." Activists urged them, "Control your own reproduction: not only just the control of the reproduction of yourselves... but control of the reproduction of your own food supplies, your own food systems" to rebuild traditional native cultures and ways of living with the earth.¹⁶²

People of color perpetually bring unique perspectives (evolving as well out of class, education, religion, and a host of other factors in addition to race) to ongoing issues concerning their environments. Toxic waste facilities, chemical emissions, and health risks from air pollution disparately affect economically poor communities disproportionately populated by people of color.¹⁶³ In the modern environmental justice movement in the United States, African American women in particular, frequently the heads of single-parent households, bring a legacy of assertiveness, leadership, and maternal concerns.¹⁶⁴ They play a prominent role in a number of community organizations, waging campaigns against environmental dangers in the workplace and the home, especially in areas known as "brown fields" because of their toxicity.¹⁶⁵ Latinas, too, emphasize their dual role as mothers and workers in combating environmental hazards.¹⁶⁶ In California, for example, they continue to build on a long legacy of struggle led by the United Farm Workers against various pesticides, particularly those affecting reproduction.

Much of the best scholarship on environmental justice is being carried out by sociologists, political scientists, and legal experts, but scholars are increasingly providing crucial historical and gendered viewpoints. Rachel Stein's edited collection *New Perspectives on Environmental Justice: Gender, Sexuality, and Activism* (2004) offers a wide-ranging and particularly valuable introduction to the history of efforts to achieve environmental justice in communities suffering from factors including poverty, racism, ethnocentrism, sexism, and homophobia.¹⁶⁷ Nancy C. Unger; Robert D. Bullard and Damu Smith; Andrea Simpson; and Giovanna Di Chiro have revealed the widely ranging role gender has played in environmental justice history.¹⁶⁸

NEW TRENDS AND THE FUTURE

Virginia Scharff's 2003 edited collection, *Seeing Nature Through Gender*, was widely praised for placing sexuality and gender into environmental history.

Although scholarship at the intersection of gender studies and environmental history is still in its infancy, many exciting studies are emerging, including *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Biopolitics, and Desire* (2010), edited by Catriona Sandilands-Mortimer and Bruce Erickson, and Nancy C. Unger's *Beyond Nature's Housekeepers: American Women in Environmental History* (2012). One of the most important new trends is recognition of the importance of gender and environment across all times, cultures, and geographic boundaries. The huge outpouring of environmental histories by and about women from around the world is finally being appreciated and widely disseminated beyond their countries of origin. Women and gender are increasingly being recognized as useful categories of analysis within environmental history. From a plethora of studies about the Chipko environmental resistance movement by women in India in the 1970s, scholarship has grown to include the roles of gender and sexuality in the environmental histories of Africa, Asia, Canada, Europe, South America, Australia.¹⁶⁹ One of the most prolific and influential scholars is Bina Agarwal, whose investigations into the gendered ways in which women in poor rural households suffer uniquely from environmental degradation resulting from decreased resource access and control are centered primarily in India, but are frequently relevant to other parts of the developing world.¹⁷⁰ Of particular interest are her studies of women's activism in environmental protection and regeneration, including the gender dimensions of decision-making and property rights.¹⁷¹

Perhaps even more exciting than the single-area studies are those that compare environmental issues in two or more countries or regions, imbuing the material with crucial context. Carol MacCormack and Marilyn Strathern's *Nature, Culture, and Gender* (1980) culturally contextualizes perceptions of the relationship between nature and gender by examining eighteenth- and nineteenth-century concepts and practices in Bolivia, Papua New Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Europe.¹⁷² Other excellent examples of this kind of vitally important work include Carolyn E. Sachs's *Gendered Fields: Rural Women, Agriculture, and Environment* (1996), which compares the role of women in rural agriculture in Africa, Asia, and the United States, and Glenda Riley's *Taking Land, Breaking Land: Women Colonizing in the American West and Kenya, 1840–1940* (2003).¹⁷³ Gender dimensions of the new transnational model of development are explored in William Robinson's "(Mal)Development in Central America: Globalization and Social Change" (1998) and Andres Serbin's "Transnational Relations and Regionalism in the Caribbean" (1994).¹⁷⁴ The effect of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) on local gendered relationships with the environment are examined by Millie Thayer in *Making Transnational Feminism: Rural Women, NGO Activists, and Northern Donors in Brazil* (2009); Lisa Marie Aubrey's *The Politics of Development Co-operation: NGOs, Gender and Partnership in Kenya* (1997), and "Sovereign Limits and Regional Opportunities for Global Civil Society in Latin America" (2001) by Elisabeth Friedman, Kathryn Hochstetler, and Ann Marie Clark.¹⁷⁵

WHY A GENDERED HISTORY OF THE ENVIRONMENT MATTERS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Both the physiological differences between the sexes and the vast array of culturally created differences (i.e., gender) have profoundly shaped the environmental past. The results in the present day are nevertheless often startling in view of the fact that men and women generally inhabit the same environments and usually share equally in their benefits and detriments. Susan Schrepfer argues that William Cronon's influential essay "The Trouble with Wilderness; Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature" (1997) is incomplete as a reparative, because Cronon targets only the masculine version or myth of wilderness. She maintains that "scholars working at the intersection of gender and environmental history need to continue to disentangle the strands of masculinity and femininity that have been wrought into the . . . all visions of nature over the course of American history."¹⁷⁶

Differentiating and disentangling gender is not just an intellectual exercise. In the twenty-first century, men and women work together under the leadership of women as well as environmentalists like Bill McKibben and Al Gore, men who are raising awareness and providing vital direction. Yet a growing body of social science research indicates that "women rank values linked to environmental concern as more important than men do and see environmentalism as important to protecting themselves and their families." American women make up the bulk of a great many environmental organization memberships and are "less likely than men to support environmental spending cuts and are less sympathetic to business when it comes to environmental regulations." They are also more concerned about environmental risks to health, especially local ones. And this gendered difference is not limited to the United States. Throughout industrialized countries, women are "more likely to buy ecologically friendly and organic foods, more likely to recycle and more interested in efficient energy use."¹⁷⁷ In developing nations as well, women are often at the vanguard of environmental leadership, both locally and nationally.¹⁷⁸ Gender continues to influence how the environment is understood, used, abused, exploited, and healed.¹⁷⁹ If men and women are to be partners in protecting the environment, they need to recognize the factors, especially the socially constructed ideas and attitudes, which have influenced and sometimes divided them. In the decades to come, studies at the intersection of gender and environment will enrich both disciplines as they immeasurably expand understandings of the past, inform the present, and shape the future.

NOTES

Portions of this essay are drawn from works by Nancy C. Unger, including *Beyond Nature's Housekeepers: American Women in Environmental History* (Oxford University Press, 2012); "Gendered Approaches to Environmental Justice: An Historical Sampling," in *Echoes from the Poisoned Well: Global Memories of Environmental Injustice*, ed. Sylvia Hood Washington, Paul Rosier, and Heather Goodall (Rowman & Littlefield, 2006): 17–34; and "Women, Sexuality, and Environmental Justice in American History," in *New Perspectives in Environmental Justice: Gender, Sexuality, and Activism*, ed. Rachel Stein (Rutgers University Press, 2004), 45–60. Beth Bailey and Andrew Isenberg offered valuable suggestions to this essay, as did many of the contributors to this volume. Mary Whisner and Don Whitebread provided editing expertise.

1. Carolyn Merchant, "Gender and Environmental History," *The Journal of American History* 76 (1990): 1117–1121.
2. Melissa Leach and Cathy Green, "Gender and Environmental History: From Representation of Women and Nature to Gender Analysis of Ecology and Politics," *Environment and History* 3 (1997): 343–370. Subsequent quotes from this article have been altered to conform to American spellings.
3. Vera Norwood, "Disturbed Landscape/Disturbing Process: Environmental History for the Twenty-First Century," *Pacific Historical Review* (February 2001): 84.
4. Richard White, "Environmental History: Watching a Historical Field Mature," *Pacific Historical Review* (February 2001): 104; 109.
5. Carolyn Merchant, *The Columbia Guide to American Environmental History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 448.
6. Elizabeth Blum, *Linking American Women's History and Environmental History: A Preliminary Historiography*, <http://www.h-net.org/~environ/historiography/uswomen.htm>.
7. Forest History Society, *Environmental History Bibliography*, <http://www.foresthistory.org/Research/biblio.html>.
8. See Susan R. Schrepfer and Douglas Cazaux Sackman, "Gender," in *A Companion to American Environmental History*, ed. Douglas Cazaux Sackman (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), and Victoria Davion, "Ecofeminism," in *A Companion to Environmental Philosophy*, ed. Dale Jamieson (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2003), 233–248.
9. Linda Nash, "Furthering the Environmental Turn," *Journal of American History* 100 (June 2013): 132.
10. Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *American Historical Review* 91 (December 1986): 1053–1075.
11. Mary Joy Breton, *Women Pioneers for the Environment* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998).
12. Blum, "Linking American Women's History," and Leach and Green, "Gender and Environmental History."
13. See John Herron and Andrew Kirk, eds., *Human/Nature: Biology, Culture, and Environmental History* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999), especially Virginia Scharff, "Man and Nature! Sex Secrets of Environmental History," 31–48; Vera Norwood, "Constructing Gender in Nature," 49–62.

14. Jose Barreiro, "Indigenous Peoples are the 'Miners' Canary' of the Human Family," in *Learning to Listen to the Land*, ed. William Willers (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1991), 199–201.
15. Alan Durning, "Worldwatch Paper #112: Guardians of the Land: Indigenous Peoples and the Health of the Earth," (Worldwatch Institute, 1992).
16. For a global overview, see J. Donald Hughes, *An Environmental History of the World: Humankind's Changing Role in the Community of Life* (New York: Routledge, 2002). In Washington, Rosier, Goodall, eds., *Echoes from the Poisoned Well*, thirteen chapters are devoted to the environmental practices of indigenous peoples from various parts of the world.
17. See Charles C. Mann, *1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus* (New York: Vintage, 2006).
18. Leach and Green, "Gender and Environmental History," 352.
19. See, for example, Thomas Forsyth, "Manners and Customs of the Sauk and Fox Nations of Indians," 1827, Thomas Forsyth Papers, Lyman Draper Manuscripts, Volume 9T, 20, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.
20. See Hermien Soselesa, "The Significance of Gender in the Fishing Economy of the Goram Islands, Maluku," in *Old World Places, New World Problems: Exploring Issues of Resource Management in Eastern Indonesia*, ed. Sandra Pannell and Franz von Benda-Beckmann (Center for Resource and Environmental Studies, ANU, 1988), 321–35.
21. See James J. Rawls and Walton Bean, *California: an Interpretive History*, 7th ed., (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1998), 11–13; Richard Dasmann, *California's Changing Environment* (San Francisco: Boyd and Fraser, 1981), 1–8; George Phillips, *The Enduring Struggle: Indians in California History* (San Francisco: Boyd and Fraser, 1981), 4–12.
22. See Morrill Marsten to The Reverend Jedediah Morse, November 1820, Thomas Forsyth Papers, Volume 1T, 65, Lyman Draper Manuscripts, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.
23. Carolyn Merchant, *Earthcare: Women and the Environment* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 92–95.
24. See Mann, *1491*; Shepard Krech, *The Ecological Indian: History and Myth* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000); Leach and Green, "Gender and Environmental History," 351.
25. William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983).
26. Forsyth, "Manners and Customs of the Sauk and Fox Nations of Indians."
27. Russell Thornton, *American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History Since 1492* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 31. See also Demetri Shimkin, "Eastern Shoshone" in *Handbook of North American Indians (Great Basin)*, ed. Warren L. D'Azevedo (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution 1986), 330; Francis Riddell, "Maidu and Konkow," in *Handbook of North American Indians (California)*, ed. Robert F. Heizer (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 381; T. N. Campbell, ed., "Coahuilecans and Their Neighbors," in *Handbook of North American Indians (Southwest)*, ed. Alonso Ortiz (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1983), 352; Walter O'Meara, *Daughters of the Country* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968), 84; John Demos, *The Tried and the True: Native American Women Confronting Colonization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 77.
28. Thornton, *American Indian Holocaust and Survival*, 31, Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost* (Boston: Mariner Books, 1999), 73. See also Liese M. Perrin, "Resisting

- Reproduction: Reconsidering Slave Contraception in the Old South,” *Journal of American Studies* 35, no. 2 (2001): 258–259; 263; 266.
29. In a manuscript on tribal traditions, a US government agent noted, “All Indians are very fond of their children and a sick Indian is loth [*sic*] to leave this world if his children are young, but if [the children are] grown up and married they know they are a burden to their children and don’t care how soon they die.” Forsyth, “Manners and Customs,” 15.
 30. See Unger, “Women, Sexuality and Environmental Justice,” 48.
 31. Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 167.
 32. For works for adults on Sacajawea, see Thomas P. Slaughter, *Exploring Lewis and Clark: Reflection on Men and Wilderness* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003); Sally McBeth, “Memory, History, and Contested Pasts: Re-imagining Sacagawea/Sacajawea,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 27, no. 1 (2003): 1–32. For a case study outside North America, see Barbara Walker, “Engendering Ghana’s Seascape: Fanti Fishtraders and Marine Property in Colonial History,” *Society & Natural Resources* 15 (May–June 2002): 389–407.
 33. See Virginia Bouvier, *Women and the Conquest of California, 1542–1840: Codes of Silence* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2001).
 34. See Andrew Isenberg, *The Destruction of the Bison: An Environmental History, 1750–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
 35. Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001); Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670–1870* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983).
 36. See Miroslava Chavez-Garcia, *Negotiating Conquest: Gender and Power in California, 1770s–1880s* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004); Rose Marie Beebe and Robert Senkewicz, eds., *Lands of Promise and Despair* (Santa Clara, CA: Santa Clara University, 2001).
 37. Albert Hurtado, “Sexuality in California’s Franciscan Missions: Cultural Perceptions and Sad Realities,” *California History* 72 (Fall 1992): 370–385; Hurtado, *Indian Survival on the California Frontier* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988) 169–192.
 38. Deborah Gray White, *Ar’N’t I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1985), 67.
 39. See Mart Stewart, “Slavery and the Origins of African American Environmentalism,” in “*To Love the Wind and the Rain*”: *African Americans and Environmental History*, ed. Dianne Glave and Mark Stoll (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006), 9–20; Whitney Battle, “A Yard to Sweep: Race, Gender, and the Enslaved Landscape” (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2004).
 40. Scott Giltner, “Slave Hunting and Fishing in the Antebellum South,” Glave and Stoll, eds., “*To Love the Wind and the Rain*,” 21–36.
 41. Elizabeth Blum, “Power, Danger, and Control: Slave Women’s Perception of Wilderness in the Nineteenth Century,” *Women’s Studies* 31, no. 2 (2002): 247–266.
 42. See Sharla Fett, *Working Cures: Healing, Health and Power on Southern Slave Plantations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 65; 176–177; Perrin, “Resisting Reproduction,” 255–274; Marie Schwartz, *Birthing a Slave: Motherhood and Medicine in the Antebellum South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).
 43. Perrin, “Resisting Reproduction,” 258–59; 263; 266.

44. Phillip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth Century Chesapeake and the Low Country* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).
45. S. Mintz, "Slavery Fact Sheet," *Digital History*, 2007, http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/historyonline/slav_fact.cfm.
46. Daniel Littlefield, *Rice and Slaves: Ethnicity and the Slave Trade in Colonial South Carolina* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991); Judith Carney, *Black Rice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 162. Carney's conclusion "that knowledge of rice cultivation enabled slaves arriving in South Carolina to enjoy greater autonomy from their owners than was possible for other crops" is questioned by David Eltis, Philip Morgan, and David Richardson in "Agency and Diaspora in Atlantic History: Reassessing the African Contribution to Rice Cultivation in the Americas," *American Historical Review* 112, no. 5 (December 2007): 1328–1358. The controversy was revisited in "AHR Exchange: The Question of 'Black Rice,'" *American Historical Review* 115, no. 1 (February 2010): 123–171.
47. See Eugene Genovese, "Cotton, Slavery, and Soil Exhaustion in the Old South," *Cotton History Review* 2, no. 1 (1961): 3–17.
48. See Frederick Law Olmsted, *The Cotton Kingdom: A Traveler's Observations on Cotton and Slavery in the American Slave States* (New York: Knopf, 1953), 410–411.
49. See Fiona Mackenzie, "Political Economy of the Environment, Gender and Resistance Under Colonialism: Murang'a District, Kenya, 1910–1950," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 25, no. 2 (1991): 226–256.
50. Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980). For an application of Merchant's theory to the history of South Africa, see Nancy Jacobs, "The Colonial Ecological Revolution in South Africa: The Case of Kurman," in *South Africa's Environmental History: Cases and Comparisons*, ed. Stephen Dovers, Ruth Edgecombe, Bill Guest (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003), 19–33.
51. See Clarissa Dillon, "'A Large an [sic] Useful, and a Grateful Field': Eighteenth Century Kitchen Gardens in Southeastern Pennsylvania, the Uses of Plants, and Their Place in Women's Work" (PhD diss., Bryn Mawr College, 1986).
52. See Susan Scott Parrish, "Women's Nature: Curiosity, Pastoral, and the New Science in British America," *Early American Literature* 37, no. 2 (2002): 195–238; Joan Jensen, *Loosening the Bonds: Mid-Atlantic Farm Women, 1750–1850* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988); and especially Jensen's document collection *With These Hands: Women Working on the Land* (New York: The Feminist Press, 1981). See also Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785–1812* (New York: Vintage, 1991).
53. E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations From Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). Although few historians dispute what was being prescribed, there is controversy over to what degree it was internalized and by whom. R. W. Connell, for example, emphasizes in *Masculinities*, 2d ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005) that there is never a single concept of masculinity. While some historians defend Barbara Welter's conclusions about the era's "Cult of True Womanhood," others object to the negative connotations of the word "cult," and criticize Welter's definition as both simplistic and overly rigid. More recent additions to the controversy include Mary Kelley, "Beyond the Boundaries," *Journal of the Early Republic* 21, no. 1 (2001): 73–78; Carol Lasser, "Beyond Separate Spheres: The

- Power of Public Opinion," *Journal of the Early Republic* 21, no. 1 (2001): 115–123; Mary Cronin, "Redefining Woman's Sphere," *Journalism History* 25, no. 1 (1999): 13–25; Brian Gabriel, "A Woman's Place," *American Journalism* 25, no. 1 (2008): 7–29; Mary Louise Roberts, "True Womanhood Revisited," *Journal of Women's History* 14, no. 1 (2002): 150–155; Nancy A. Hewitt, "Taking the True Woman Hostage," *Journal of Women's History* 14, no. 1 (2002): 156–162.
54. Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 97.
 55. Chad Montrie, "Men Alone Cannot Settle a Country': Domesticating Nature in the Kansas-Nebraska Grasslands," *Great Plains Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (2005): 245–258. See also Cynthia Prescott, "'Why She Didn't Marry Him': Love, Power, and Marital Choice on the Far Western Frontier," *Western Historical Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (2007): 25–45.
 56. John Mack Faragher, *Men and Women on the Overland Trail*, 2d ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001); Sandra Myres, *Westering Women and the Frontier Experience, 1800–1915* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992); Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Frontier Women: "Civilizing" the West? 1840–1880*, 2d ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998). A variety of books focus on pioneering women in general, including Linda Peavy and Ursula Smith's *Pioneer Women: the Lives of Women on the Frontier* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998); Ruth Moynihan et al.'s edited collection *So Much to be Done: Women Settlers on the Mining and Ranching Frontiers* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2nd ed., 1998), and Susan Roberson's edited collection *Women, America, and Movement: Narratives of Relocation* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1998). Others take a more regional approach, such as Terri Baker and Connie Henshaw's edited collection *Women Who Pioneered Oklahoma: Stories From the WPA Narratives* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007); JoAnn Levy's *They Saw the Elephant: Women in the California Gold Rush* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992); and the section "Women on the Wisconsin Frontier, 1836–1848," in Genevieve McBride's edited collection *Women's Wisconsin* (Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2005). These various accounts are filled with women gathering fuel along westward trails; building sod houses; clearing land; planting, harvesting, and preserving crops; herding animals; milking cows, and tending chickens.
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