

proved difficult or impossible for many residents. Adding to the difficulty was the fact that decisions about the megaprojects and the regulation of their impact were made by people outside of the affected communities who were either unfamiliar or unconcerned with the potential costs to residents. One unstated but significant contribution of *Sensing Changes* is to restore the perspective of long-time residents to a history otherwise dominated by distant, technocratic government decision making.

To further flesh out residents' perspectives, Parr and Jon van der Veen, a communications studies doctoral candidate, created a companion website, *Megaprojects New Media* (<http://megaprojects.uwo.ca/>), that features oral histories, maps, aerial photography, music and video related to each case study. 'Our new media experiments', writes Van der Veen in a preface to the book, 'aim to effect a more coherent, sensuous, and memorable reclamation of experience than is possible through textual representations' (xxiv). Indeed, the website allows viewers to flip through aerial photography of changing landscapes, listen to local music, and, most effectively, follow along on a walking tour of former neighbourhoods as residents talk about their memories. However, the material for each case study is limited, and although readers will enjoy recognising quoted material from the book in the site's oral histories, there simply is not enough information on any single case study to move beyond the argument in the book or come to new conclusions. One of the exciting promises of new media is to allow for ongoing contributions from the public or, in this case, from residents and workers living near the megaprojects; but the site does not appear to allow for this type of interaction. *Megaprojects New Media* provides a potentially powerful means of engaging undergraduates with the material but – unlike this innovative book – does not push the boundaries of new media very far.

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Sarah Johnson (ed.)

Landscapes. Themes in Environmental History, 2.

Cambridge: The White Horse Press, 2010

ISBN 978-1-874267-60-7 (PB) £15.00/\$22.50/€18.50. 300 pp.

Landscapes is the second in a new series of affordable environmental history readers (each is priced at £15), designed to appeal to students and researchers. Each volume addresses a different theme in environmental history and is a compilation of papers selected from the journals *Environment and History* and *Environmental Values* (in this case dating from 1994–2009). The first, *Bioinvaders*, investigated the rhetoric and realities of exotic introduced species. Future collections promise to address indigenous knowledge, forests, conservation history and the urban.

BOOK REVIEWS

This book covers a broad geographical and historical range of landscapes and environments, moving from plantations in South Africa to the Australian outback, and from Medieval Ardennes to nuclear-age America, and comes at a time when the compelling cultural significance of landscape to the public, researchers, and those working in the creative industries is becoming evermore apparent. Public concern over landscape (particularly relating to environmental change) is growing, a development that is evident in recent research initiatives like the Arts and Humanities Research Council's strategic programme in Landscape and Environment (2005–2011) and the European Landscape Convention (2000).

Early chapters explore landscape and the imagination, values and aesthetics and are drawn from *Environmental Values*. Ronald Hepburn's discussion of the 'metaphysical imagination' contemplates the many different layers involved in aesthetic appreciation and interpretation of landscape, with landscape revealing or concealing 'a still greater beauty than its own' (p. 2). Hepburn is widely regarded as the 'father of environmental aesthetics', but for the general reader the opening material is amongst the most challenging in the volume. Emily Brady's paper argues that a landscape's aesthetic value should be considered of equal importance to environmental policy debates as scientific or economic considerations. Brady introduces the reader to some key environmental philosophical ideas like Leopold's 'land ethic', discussing the possible links between an aesthetic sensibility toward nature and ethical or moral behaviour. Brady importantly ends by introducing several notes of caution: the difficulties of valuing the not obviously beautiful or the distant and unknown, and the acknowledgment that what we judge as beautiful may be environmentally damaging (i.e. invasive non-native species).

John Benson uses rural landscape to discuss the relationship between aesthetic and utility value, before making distinctions between different non-instrumental kinds of interest in rural landscape. These directly involve the book's readership, including the interest of the geologist, geographer, natural historian or ecologist in understanding nature, and the interest of the historian or archaeologist in the landscape as the product and record of past human activity. The chapter is concluded with a discussion about preservation and change, with the *undesigned* aesthetic character of rural landscape problematising any argument for preserving rural landscapes once they have lost their primary function. Haldane's paper then contemplates whether and how 'philosophical aesthetics might be brought into contemporary thinking about the natural environment' (p. 49). Hinchman and Hinchman conclude the philosophical section of the book by considering what modern-day environmentalism owes the Romantics. Identifying the primary concern of the Romantics as the 'all-sided development of the individual rather than the investigation and preservation of the natural world' (p. 57), they eloquently explain that many Romantic writers were themselves scientists, fascinated by 'wild' landscapes (Coleridge and Wordsworth are described as

‘inveterate hikers and explorers of the remote mountains and forests’ [p. 65]), and being opposed to reductionist forms rather than science itself.

Chapters in the second section of the book feature a series of empirical case studies. Tim Bonyhady’s ‘Artists with Axes’ is a highlight, exploring the actions of artists in physically changing the landscapes that were the subjects of their paintings in order to create more ‘idealised’ views. Damien Shaw then reveals the harshness of the South African landscape experienced by British settlers who arrived at the Cape in 1820. These settlers were wholly ignorant of planting, the history of the region they occupied, and of how to cope with the natural dangers of their surroundings. He details particularly the struggle prospective settlers faced in gaining adequate information about the Cape before departure, South Africa having featured little in the imagination of the British public or the Romantic writers before 1820.

Binder and Burnett’s search for a populist landscape aesthetic in the novels of East Africa’s most prominent writer NgugiWaThiong’o (written between the mid 1960s and mid 1980s) is set in Kenya. Nostalgia is introduced as a key concept, the *wananchi* people having lost their land to a foreign power (Britain), and with it their ability to control and manipulate the landscape. Ngugi’s approach questions the western assumption that it is possible to manage a landscape separately from the society that depends on and shapes that landscape. Heike Schmidt uses Eastern Zimbabwe and a combination of written records and interviews to explore the establishment of tea estates in the Honde Valley during the 1950s. The European sexualisation of the landscape through the ‘penetration’ of dense rainforest and opening up of the land, is contrasted with local African beliefs in forest and water spirits which prevented Africans from felling trees in the plantation zones. Schmidt concludes by demonstrating that claims to spiritual landscape have remained an important issue. When faced with drought conditions in the early 1990s, the plantation management made concessions to local access regulations and the rains arrived! Religious landscape is also the theme of Ellen Arnold’s paper, set in Medieval Ardennes. Medieval monks often represented themselves and others as converting the landscape as part of their religious mission. Monks actively engineered water resources and erased the landscape of pagan cult practices, which Arnold explains through the miracle of Remacle’s fountain.

Kenneth Olwig explores the ‘landscaping’ of Jutland heath, Denmark, and considers its value to both culture and biosphere health. The potentially volatile relationship between nature, nation and landscape becomes apparent, and Olwig also provides a useful history of the word ‘landscape’. Kirsty Douglas changes the focus to geological heritage landscapes in Australia, exploring the recuperative power of ‘deep-time’ landscapes, and highlighting how important scientific discoveries in unexpected locations can generate different pictures of past histories. The characterisation of Lake Mungo as poor grazing, fringe and degraded, was redeemed to an extent by its ‘unparalleled record’ of Quaternary

BOOK REVIEWS

climate change, and brought to the world's attention following the discovery of ancient human remains in 1968, and subsequent designation as a World Heritage Area.

Using the concept of the 'park', John Wills explores the differences and similarities between the landforms and mindscapes of national parks and nuclear parks in the United States. 'The same qualities that marked Diabolo [Canyon] an ideal location for nuclear development also confirmed its potential as a nature reserve' (p. 228). The setting aside of former nuclear testing grounds as protected park areas prevents 'nuclear contamination from reaching human settlements while protecting wild nature from increasing urbanisation and tourism' (p. 234), whereas national parks struggle with an increasing tourism problem, becoming crowded and claustrophobic. Finally, Joseph Goddard explores the urban fringe. Scrutinising changing landscapes and ambience in three edge counties in the eastern US, Goddard explains how these areas were transformed from rural backwaters, improved transport links bringing them closer to metropolitan areas post 1945. Yet despite increasing populations, in the eyes of many these areas have become more rural, greener, more forested and more diverse in plant, insect and animal life. The paper demonstrates the strong influence of farming and agriculture on the perception of place, and documents the emergence of what Goddard refers to as 'hybridised leisure countryside' (p. 265).

The fourteen complementary papers in this reader serve to illustrate the inspiringly varied nature of arts, humanities and social science research on landscape, and its interdisciplinary character, whilst also providing a historical perspective on contemporary landscapes and corresponding environmental issues.

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India's Environmental History

Volume 1: *From Ancient Times to the Colonial Period*

Volume 2: *Colonialism, Modernity and the Nation*

New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2012

ISBN: 81-7824-316-4 for set of 2 volumes. Rs 1850.

This is a major new resource for environmental historians everywhere. Its chapters speak to an audience far wider than its title's focus on India would suggest. They are in fact key contributions to major recent and continuing debates around globalisation, the ambivalence of power, gendered lives and voices, the expansions and retreats of states, contestations over environmental change – not only in economic and biological but in cultural terms – and the varied mobilisations of indigeneity.