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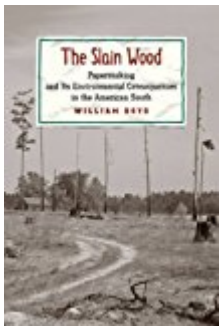
William Boyd. *The Slain Wood: Papermaking and Its Environmental Consequences in the American South.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015. 376 pp. $55.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-4214-1878-0.



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In *The Slain Wood*, William Boyd challenges a triumphalist narrative of twentieth-century American New South industrialization by tracking the problems caused by the spread of industrial paper production in the region. Boyd understands paper making as a complex industrial-agricultural system that had sweeping environmental consequences throughout the South, rationalizing and economizing relationships between humans, land, and ecology. To explain the development of this system, Boyd links race-based discrimination and entrenched economic inequality to the industry's legacy of environmental contamination, demonstrating that paper making's environmental consequences were borne most heavily by poor and nonwhite populations. Although his story is about a single region, Boyd places his narrative within the larger history of American twentieth-century industrial expansion and the evolution of federal environmental legislation. In doing so, Boyd reveals that the southern paper industry's efforts at rationalization and history of environmental negligence was heavily influenced by the region's ecological, economic, and social particularities.

Although large corporations such as Union Bag and International Paper feature in his story, Boyd does not focus on any specific company, community, or legislator. Instead, he describes the development of a region-wide, interconnected, economic-environmental web. Boyd places the origins of this system within a Depression-era dialogue about forest overharvest and natural depletion. He identifies a desire among industrialists and government officials to simultaneously preserve the natural world and profit from its exploitation and uses this framework to explain institutional complicity with paper industry expansion. To demonstrate the consequences of such a partnership Boyd organizes the majority of his book thematically, identifying several key problems that the industry overcame in its efforts to turn a profit. Boyd begins by discussing paper companies' efforts to secure a steady supply of local wood for pulping, describing the industry's attempts to reframe trees as a renewable crop in-

stead of a finite resource in the minds of local landowners. Boyd goes on to discuss the ways in which northern papermakers adapted to southern hierarchies of race and class, creating a subservient and expendable, contract-based labor force. Next, Boyd describes the environmental contamination stemming from paper industry waste, focusing on widespread water and air pollution caused by both paper mills and monocrop tree farming. Boyd tracks the failure of state and local governments to enforce the few environmental zoning or public health laws implemented before the 1970s, arguing that the desire for economic prosperity--and belief in rationalized environmental management--outweighed other concerns. He goes on to describe the ultimate imposition of environmental controls by the federal government in the 1970s, arguing that their focus on waste mitigation as opposed to environmental depletion represented a triumph for those who believed in the industrialization of nature. In his last chapter, Boyd describes industry upheaval and restructuring in the 1970s and 1980s as overproduction and then globalization spelled disaster for southern paper production.

Boyd deploys a satisfying array of government reports, legal documents, and industry statistics in his analysis of the dual economic and environmental costs of southern papermaking. Using anonymous insider accounts of daily company decision making and discussions of the contract-based Southern timber supply system Boyd effectively demonstrates the ways in which the competing interests of landholders, timber farmers, workers, regional boosters, regulators, and paper companies combined in an effort to more efficiently manage nature. To this end, Boyd argues that the twentieth-century southern paper industry is best understood as a system of individual relationships which all had to be managed and influenced to build an ecologically all-encompassing, region-wide paper empire. Compellingly, he argues that those most harmed by the industry were those who worked most fully within it. He describes the ways in which loggers, small landholders, mill workers, and their families were trapped within a system that perpetuated both systemic poverty and increasingly toxic pollution. However, in his analysis Boyd is careful--at times maybe too careful--not to assign individual blame to the company managers, legislators, and government officials who worked to create a rationalized, systematized, and fundamentally exploitative system.

The Slain Wood comes at a moment of renewed interest in the connections between the history of capitalism and environmental history. In the tradition of William Cronon and Richard White, recent scholars such as Andrew Needham and Chris Jones have begun to reevaluate the relationships between urban economic systems, rural spaces, and local ecologies. William Boyd bring such analysis to the American South in a significant contribution to both southern and environmental history. Although the voices of individual workers or residents are at times lost within a larger discussion of policy and economic systems, this book is a welcome cross-disciplinary bridge between economic, legal, and environmental history that successfully explains the fundamental historical importance of this understudied industry.

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