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William D. Bryan. *The Price of Permanence: Nature and Business in the New South.* Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2018. 254 pp. $54.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8203-5339-5.

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"The best environmental history takes a traditional historical narrative and turns it slightly so that readers might see the past from a slightly new point of view," states Environmental History of the American South series editor James C. Giesen in the foreword to William D. Bryan's book, ***The Price of Permanence: Nature and Business in the New South*** (p. xii). And that is precisely what William Bryan's book provides: an innovative twist on the traditional narrative of the environmental history of the New South.

From the get-go, Bryan's book diverges from the well-beaten path of presenting postbellum recovery as focused on rebuilding the exploitive plantation macrosystem of the previous era, and instead offers a new version of the New South that utilizes environmental concerns to focus forward instead of backward. Situated at the convergence of both environmental history and southern history, Bryan's work points out that historians should move away from the tired trope of southern disregard for environmental preservationist movements at the end of the nineteenth and turn of the twentieth century and instead focus on the far-reaching ways southerners sought to incorporate methods of conservation to create a better or new system of southern business. It is in this light that Bryan shows that while southerners might not have identified as conservationists in the same way that northerners or westerners did, they certainly practiced processes of it. Southern efforts to preserve natural resources while expanding the growth of industry were couched in economic concepts of maintaining permanence within a system reeling from the impermanence of the previous era. This feared regression motivated broad participation in a southern ethos of environmental conservation that fundamentally set the New South apart from the West or the North, and unequivocally tied industry development to the environment in ways that still echo today.

In chapters 1 through 5, Bryan methodically builds this case for permanence as a southern environmental ethos by exploring how southern conservationism served as the backdrop of many efforts in reimagining industry and growth in the New South. Chapter 1 casts the Civil War as an essential turning point in southern perspectives on resource limitation. As the white southern elite witnessed a failed reconstruction and implemented new methods to build empires reliant on both agricultural and natural resource products, natural resource control became invaluable to regaining prominence on a global stage. Bryan aptly points out that distinct regions of the South (e.g., the Piedmont, Cotton Belt, Yazoo-Mississippi Delta, Appalachian Highlands, Lowcountry, and Virginia Tidewater) all collectively discussed natural re-

source conservation at local levels, often disregarding federal or national intervention in these discussions. As a result, southern conservation efforts were disregarded in broader national discussions of the creation of wildernesses and preservation of public property.

Similarly, as Bryan points out, southern resource conservation efforts also took on atypical meaning as they dovetailed into larger discussions of racial hierarchy within the postwar South. As Bryan shows in chapter 2, conservation efforts in the South were highly exclusionary, often limited to those who had the economic capital and educational background to practice them. Unfortunately, this limited participation in these efforts to already dominant elite white populations and further discouraged African Americans in their efforts to build new lives using the New South business structure utilizing natural resources. As Bryan shows, coupled with systems of segregation and unfair labor, conservation efforts like crop rotation, which relied on access to variegated seeds, soils, and fertilizers, worsened poverty and reinforced racial hierarchies that separated livelihoods in southern states for the majority of residents.

With the development of industries in the South reliant on manufacturing products related to the cornucopia of southern natural resources, racial disparities grew worse as extractive industries placed already at-risk populations in even higher ratios of risk due to waste production. Lumber, petroleum, coal and phosphate mining, paper mills, and chemical production quickly followed with smoke, chemical waste, water pollution, and flooding. Chapters three and four of Bryan's book unpack the issues related to these extractive industries, again tracing the history of southern conservationism in debates over land and water use and abuse. From legal recourse like nuisance suits and public health interventions for the mitigation of disease to financial incentives like tax credits or exemptions, southerners took concerted efforts to control the balance of waste and exhaustion of natural resources during a period of uninterrupted industrial growth. While southern efforts to combat industrial growth concerns often focused on local levels of change, they did motivate businesses to adopt early measures to utilize sustainable development practices that provide keen insight into our debates over the concepts today. While Bryan points out that the southern reputation is regularly perceived as unfavorable regarding exploitative business practices today, early efforts to participate in sustainable business growth provide proof that industry development with environmental impact in mind has existed in the past and give hope for the present.

In the last chapter, Bryan considers the development of a final business in the New South: tourism. While the chapter initially seems like an aside compared to the previous chapters on agriculture and farming techniques, manufacturing and natural resource production, and waste and industrial management that are so often the focus of conservation movement studies, its relevance to the development of the concept of "permanence" in the New South is easily explained. Bryan begins with the birth of the Florida land boom and a discussion of the attempts to capitalize on the natural beauty and mild climate of a region at the same time that city beautiful movements and wilderness appreciation were increasing. Amplified by the growth of health tourism, Bryan notes, the Old South's beaches, mountains, and springs evolved in the New South to become sites of leisure to increasingly accessible to populations excluded initially from them. With the advent of new forms of transportation (first with the growth of the railroad and second with the construction of good roads for automobiles), Americans were able to traverse areas of the South less penetrable previously. In capitalizing on this new interest, New South businesses recognized the possibilities for expanding their “coastal capitalism” to include variations of southern experience, one that fo-

cused on agricultural or natural appreciation, and another focused on historical significance, but all emphasizing the region's environmental distinctiveness. From hunting lodges to plantation houses, in state and national parks, and in rural and urban spaces, the South's conservation movement propagated the development of the tourism industry. A fascinating chapter in all, it is a must-read for anyone interested in the development of the southern tourism industry, particularly in its ability to underscore how all versions of the South found a celebrated home in popular consumption.

Permanence is key to understanding southern distinctiveness in the conservation movement, argues Bryan in the conclusion to his book, and he is not wrong. From business to individual choices, southern residents defined themselves by ideas of permanence and fought extensively to preserve their resources for a future they hoped would surpass their past. By reviewing these efforts, it is possible to see how natural resources became key to economic growth in reshaping ideologies of southern identity. It is also possible to see that while the South’s conservation movement differed, it had profound implications for the future of environmental history. Providing a detailed history of this, Bryan’s work should be commended for expanding our understanding of this period and reshaping the ways we view southern participation in the conservation movement. For me, it brought together stories that I knew existed but in piecemeal form, and which never jibed with the narrative that the South minimally participated in the larger national movement for conservation despite its profound admiration for its natural resources (e.g.., Louisiana's Sportsman's Paradise). The only part of Bryan’s book that may have deserved more attention is the discussion of the racial impact of these practices of business-minded environmental conservation, but that would be another book in itself, hopefully emerging from the scholarship that Bryan has now firmly shifted. In all, I recommend that all scholars interested in environmental history and southern history read *The Price of Permanence*. I look forward to seeing what comes next as a result of its field-defining scholarship.

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