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Lisa M. Brady, *War Upon the Land: Military Strategy and the Transformation of Southern Landscapes during the American Civil War* (University of Georgia Press, 2012). ISBN: 978-0820342498

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Introduction by Jacob Darwin Hamblin, Oregon State University

Two and a half decades ago, historian Donald Worster encouraged scholars to be mindful of *agroecological* perspectives, and to adopt the *agroecosystem* as a unit on analysis. The latter term refers to an ecosystem consciously manipulated by human beings for agricultural purposes. When employed, Worster's approach has the advantage of integrating non-human actors and forcing us to understand how they related to one another and to humans.[1] A second benefit is that it also compels us to see how humans, at the time, imagined their roles in relation to the land and other species. It is commonplace in environmental history classrooms to mention the perils of monoculture, for example, using antebellum Southerners as an example of people whose livelihoods relied largely on a few commodities. But how conscious of these connections were the people living in the mid-nineteenth century? How did they imagine their own control over the landscape, and their own vulnerability?

Lisa M. Brady answers these questions by turning to a time of immense destruction, when Americans had to think deeply about how, or whether, they controlled nature. In ***War Upon the Land***, Brady revisits some of the key episodes of the American Civil War, to show how ideas of nature informed Union strategy as soldiers moved throughout the American South.

Like Worster, Brady sees the agroecosystem as a crucial lens. Rather than focus on environmental destruction as a byproduct of war, she highlights how the strategies of Union officers reflected their beliefs about human relationships to nature. They believed that nature could be manipulated and controlled, that wilderness could be tamed, using the tools provided by science and technology. But they also felt that many of their Southern counterparts had based their power on their fragile construction of the plantation landscape. Key campaigns of the war explicitly attacked the South's agroecosystems. For Brady, the burning, pillaging, and infamous exploits such as Sherman's destructive march to the sea should all be seen not merely under the rubric of "war is hell," but as a strategy designed to reduce a civilized landscape into a ruinous wilderness.

Our first roundtable commentator, **Matthew Dennis**, has explored the role of natural landscapes in shaping relations between European and Native Americans from the colonial era to the early nineteenth century. His book *Seneca Possessed* reveals how notions of dominion, spirit, and mastery over nature and people shaped the fate of those who lived in Seneca country. He currently is deeply engaged in a project on the politics of public memory. His study of American public holidays

[1] Donald Worster, "Transformations of the Earth: Toward an Agroecological Perspective in History," *Journal of American History* 76:4 (1990), 1087-147.

compels us to reexamine why we remember particular events, including wars, in only specific ways, ignoring other legacies.[2]

I also invited **Ann Norton Greene** to comment on *War Upon the Land*. Greene's work focuses on animals, technology, and environmental history. In her book *Horses at Work*, she critiques the notion that new technologies associated with the industrial era eliminated work animals. She shows how mechanization actually increased the reliance on animals, and in the nineteenth century horses were more prevalent than ever. Greene sees the Civil War as a war of animal power. Both sides relied on them, and thousands of horses worked and died. "Dead horses became symbols of the tragedy of war," she writes, "a way to talk about death and suffering by transferring it to the suffering of animals."[3]

Our final commentator is **Megan Kate Nelson**, author of *Ruin Nation: Destruction and the American Civil War*. Like Brady, Nelson has spent many years probing the environmental dimensions of the war. She has argued that the proliferation of "dead heaps of ruins" in the Southern landscape had a profound effect on American culture. She traces the prevalence of destroyed buildings and natural landscapes, showing their impacts on shared anxieties among Southerners about human behavior, privacy, and the relationship between technology and nature.[4]

Before turning to the comments, I would like to thank all the roundtable contributors for their efforts. *H-Environment Roundtable Reviews* is an open-access forum and is available to scholars and non-scholars alike, around the world, free of charge. Please circulate.

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[2] Matthew Dennis, *Seneca Possessed: Indians, Witchcraft, and Power in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); Matthew Dennis, *Red, White, and Blue Letter Days: An American Calendar* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).
[3] Ann Norton Greene, *Horses at Work: Harnessing Power in Industrial America* (Cambridge: Harvard Univesity Press, 2008). Quote on p. 162.
[4] Megan Kate Nelson, *Ruin Nation: Destruction and the American Civil War* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012).

Comments by Matthew Dennis, University of Oregon

Matthew Dennis, University of Oregon

Lisa M. Brady's military and environmental history of the Civil War delivers exactly what it promises in its title. It is a close, thorough, and compelling study of the Union campaigns in the South between 1862 and 1865, which targeted the Lower Mississippi Valley, broke the siege at Vicksburg, ravaged the Shenandoah Valley, and devoured much of Georgia and the Carolinas. Brady details the Union strategy and martial practice that waged "war upon the land" and transformed the southern landscape as a means of undermining the economy of the South and its ability and will to fight. At the center of her analysis is a simple but significant point—nature mattered. The physical and natural world (its topography, climate, weather, insects, disease vectors) played an active role in the war—affecting both sides in the conflict, though in ways that sometimes favored the Confederacy and sometimes favored the Union. Moreover, Union tactics included attempts to reengineer nature to enable military assaults on Confederate strongholds, most notably along the Mississippi River, as in efforts to shift the river's course, at Island No. 10 (successfully) and at Vicksburg (unsuccessfully). By the last years of the war, Brady shows, Union strategy fully embraced a renovated tactic of *chevauchée*—a military practice that dates at least to the Hundred Years' War, in which an army conducts massive foraging raids, pillaging or destroying everything in its path. The *chevauchée* could sustain an invading army, demoralize and punish resident noncombatants, and exact a political and psychological cost on the enemy, undermining its control and power.

War Upon the Land thus makes a solid contribution, revealing that military history or economic history is often (or often should be) environmental history, which Brady demonstrates concretely for the American Civil War. Civil War historians can speak more fully to the originality of this contribution—that is, how the book, in Brady's words, "is not simply a logistical analysis washed with green but one that offers a new and unique way of conceptualizing the processes and consequences of military actions, especially those based on 'living off the land'" (4).

But if "war upon the land" was the means or the result of Union strategy after 1863, was a war on nature itself the intention of strategists? Was the target *nature* per se, or was it the economy, which was based unavoidably on the natural world? Does such a distinction matter? Brady shows that Grant and his generals sought to destroy the southern economy as a means of rendering the Confederacy unable to supply its armies and continue the conflict. She suggests as well that devastation to its economic infrastructure, and to the southern homeland, took (and was calculated to take) a toll on southerners' resolve to fight. These are important points, and yet what are the implications for considering the historiographical contributions of *War Upon the Land* as environmental history?

Surely such strategic calculations and warfare practices were not unique. Grant revived but did not invent *chevauchée*, though Brady argues "that in the context of the Civil War they [such tactics] took on new meaning" (12). How so? Brady suggests that *chevauchée* was undertaken less as a military necessity than as a means to demonstrate the Union's military mastery and power, not only over people but landscapes. But such designs have long been employed, particularly in warfare against North America's Native inhabitants. As early as the seventeenth century, for example, a French invasion of the Mohawk Country (current-day New York) in the autumn of 1666 plundered and destroyed four or five villages and destroyed food "enough to nourish all Canada for two entire years," one chronicler wrote. An Ursuline nun in Quebec, Marie de l'Incarnation, wondered, "What will become of them? Where will they go? Their villages have been burned; their country has been sacked. The season is too advanced for them to rebuild their villages. The little grain that remains from the firing of their crops will not be enough to nourish them . . . . If they go to the other nations, they will not be received for fear of causing famine." That was the point, in the interest of conquest, to inflict material, psychological, and political damage—without directly killing any foes. L'Incarnation wrote, "God has destroyed them without there being a single of them lost [through battle]. Perhaps he has humbled them only for their salvation."[5]

Or compare the raids of American General John Sullivan during the American Revolution in 1779, which embraced *chevauchée* tactics against the Iroquois not dissimilar to those ordered by Grant in 1864. George Washington specifically instructed Sullivan to "cut off their settlements, destroy their next Year[']s crops, and do them every other mischief which time and circumstances will permit." Washington stressed, "It will be essential to ruin their crops now in the ground and prevent the planting more." Sullivan's forces marched through Iroquoia as furiously as Sherman's troops later traversed Georgia, "burning and destroying the huts and cornfields; killing the cattle, hogs and horses, and cutting down the fruit trees belonging to the Indians." They annihilated everything in their path, leaving "nothing but the bare soil and timber." A survivor, Mary Jemison, remembered "there was not a mouthful of any kind of sustenance left, not even enough to keep a child one day from perishing with hunger."[6]

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[5] Quoted in Matthew Dennis, *Cultivating a Landscape of Peace: Iroquois-European Encounters in Seventeenth-Century America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 217, 27. See Joyce Marshall, trans. And ed., *Word from New France: The Selected Letters of Marie de l'Incarnation* (Toronto, 1967), 321-28, quotations 323-25, 328; Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, 73 vols. (Cleveland, 1896-1901), 50: 143-45; E.B. O'Callaghan, ed., *The Documentary History of the State of New York*, 4 vols. (Albany, N.Y., 1849-1851, 1: 144-49. Similar *chevauchée* tactics in 1687 against the Senecas took over a week "getting the [Indians'] grain cut." French troops were "busy at it from morning to night" and altogether claimed to have destroyed 400,000 minots (1.2 million bushels) of standing and cached corn in four Seneca villages.

[6] Matthew Dennis, *Seneca Possessed: Indians, Witchcraft, and Power in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 37-38. See George Washington, *Writings*, ed., John Rhodehamel (New York: Library of America, 1997), 350-51.

Such military wreckage is the stuff of environmental history, but of what sort? In the context of an agricultural economy (whether subsistence or commercial), destruction of that economy demands environmental ruin. Destroying the means of production and its product entails (as it has for centuries) burning fields, slaying livestock, razing structures, and breaking tools. In the American South it also ultimately required eradication of the southern labor system, through the liberation of its enslaved workers, though Brady does not examine this fundamental change, one that was deeper and more long-lasting than the temporary destruction of a more resilient southern nature. Thus, while the demolition of nature and of "improved" agricultural landscapes occurred simultaneously, the ruination of the former seems largely a byproduct of the latter's destruction, rather than the intentional product of Union strategists. Brady's war upon the land was a form of collateral damage.

Consciousness and ideas matter in Brady's analysis, and the author makes a number of cultural historical claims: that "ideas of nature—not just its physical presence" were critical in military decision making" (3); that the Civil War can function "as a window through which we can better see . . . how nineteenth-century Americans perceived their natural environment and their place in it" (5); and "that notions of improvement, control, and wilderness evolved during the war even as they maintained semblances of continuity with their antebellum predecessors" (5). The book's foreword, written by series editor Paul S. Sutter, promises even more: "The Civil War," he writes, "engaged with, and forever altered, a suite of nineteenth-century American ideas about nature" (xiv). In the wake of the Civil War, "protecting rather than transforming wilderness seemed increasingly like the civilized thing to do. The Civil War, Lisa Brady insists, was a critical moment in this transition" (xvi). Perhaps, but Brady's text is not particularly insistent on this point, which it barely addresses. And while the above assertions are plausible or even likely, none are developed or demonstrated in *War Upon the Land*.

Cultural history is not the book's strength. Surely the Civil War had its impact on Americans' views of nature and their environmental practice. But Brady's close study of military strategy and tactics is not deployed to examine them. Her cultural historical claims rely largely on an able synthesis of other historians' work, and if her suggestions are reasonable they are for the most part speculative. Her brief conclusion, which carries the burden of this argumentation, reads more like a prospectus than a conclusion or even an epilogue.

And see James E. Seaver, ed., *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison* (1824; new ed., Syracuse, 1990), 53-55.

Consider, for example, a central concept in Brady's analysis: "wilderness." Americans were shocked, as Brady demonstrates, by scenes of destruction that transformed "improved" rural landscape into "wilderness" or "desert." All wars are destructive. How was this war different or shocking in distinctive ways? How exactly did such ruined landscapes embody, challenge, or redefine old dualistic notions of wilderness as, on the one hand, godless, chaotic, uncontrolled space, and, on the other hand, as pure, Edenic, or Promised Land? And did—or how did—these scenes and experiences of destruction have a long-term impact on ideas about wilderness, or about nature more generally? Brady claims that the destruction of the agroecological foundations of the Shenandoah Valley, or of Georgia and the Carolinas, "fundamentally altered" the landscape and forced southerners to development new (unspecified) relationships with their environment. And yet, as she acknowledges, the destruction of crops was only temporary; nature proved resilient. In an agrarian society like that of the antebellum South, the "ravages of war are erased from the land more quickly than in an urban, industrialized economy" (133). What was transitory? What was permanent? Of course, the South could not return to the status quo antebellum, but that had more to do with black emancipation than with simple environmental degradation. To assess long-term effects on environmental ideas and practices, we would need to hear postbellum voices, South and North, and not merely those of the usual suspects—e.g., Frederick Law Olmsted and John Muir.

In short, in the realm of cultural history, the most promising and provocative claims of *War Upon the Land* about nineteenth-century Americans' relationship with their environment are allusive and elusive. Meanwhile, several potential lines of investigation are unexplored. How might Brady reconcile her work with Megan Kate Nelson, *Ruin Nation: Destruction and the American Civil War* (2012), for example? Nelson also examines the impact of physical and environmental destruction and better engages the role of gender, race and slavery. Nelson's case for cultural impact and change is more fully realized and documented as she considers the traces of ruin that lingered in the South (e.g., sentinel-like standing chimneys) and, indeed, nationally in the thousands of "empty sleeves," flapping from the destroyed bodies of amputee veterans—living relicts. Brady's brief reference to historical preservation in battlefield parks such as Gettysburg in her last pages might have been expanded to consider, not the tenuous connection with grand wilderness parks such as Yosemite, or even the way they might have incidentally "helped to protect elements of nature" (139), but rather the critical work of public memory and reconciliation that such restored landscapes performed.

Nature certainly played a role, materially and culturally, not merely in the war but also in the reconstruction and reunion that followed the Civil War. This too is environmental history. Did traces of nature's ruination conserve memories of loss and strengthen sectional political purpose? Or, on the other hand, did nature's resilience or soothing power help to obscure continuing divisions between North and South and reconstruct a nationalism that minimized or ignored the failure to achieve equality and civil rights for African Americans in the South? How did such a

forgetful nationalist redemption emerge on the verdant fields of Gettysburg or in the pages of *Picturesque America*, a new serial publication that promoted postbellum nationalism through the images and text of American nature, including the redeemed nature of a rediscovered and reintegrated South?

Brady eschews such deeper cultural analysis. Instead, she turns to politics and vaguely asserts that the Civil War ultimately promoted an agenda that included conservation and nature protection at the national level. "Though the war did not reconcile the competing visions Americans held with regard to nature," she writes, "it did put in place the mechanisms by which those who sought to preserve or protect the nation's natural heritage could mitigate the ongoing push to make nature conform." She concludes, "This, perhaps, is the Civil War's greatest environmental legacy" (140). Brady sells herself short. Ironically, if this is the case, then *War Upon the Lands* has little to say about the long-term environmental impact of Civil War. A strong state certainly emerged with the Union victory, and such a state offered powerful tools for those political actors able to deploy them. But how and why did conservation or preservation actually emerge as policy from this contested political terrain? These environmental war stories are left for others to reconstruct. Meanwhile, Brady's more focused military analysis of the Civil War should be appreciated as a worthy achievement in environmental history.

Comments by Ann Norton Greene, University of Pennsylvania

Lisa Brady's *War Upon the Land: Military Strategy and the Transformation of Southern Landscapes During the American Civil War* analyzes the development of Union military strategy through three famous campaigns—Vicksburg, the Shenandoah Valley, and Sherman's march through Georgia and South Carolina. She uses these Civil War experiences as a window into nineteenth century ideas about nature, in order to understand how the war reinforced or altered them. Focusing on themes of improvement, control and wilderness, Brady explores how these ideas about nature affected Union strategy, suggesting that the Union used nature to defeat the Confederacy. Brady traces how the Union army had to fight Southern nature as well as Confederate armies, re-engineered Southern landscapes to their advantage, and attacked the Southern agroecological system to undercut the Confederate war effort and destroy slave-based plantation agriculture. By reframing this traditional topic of Union strategy into a new story about the natural world as a factor in the Civil War, she makes the natural world an agent within the war rather than merely a stage on which the war took place, and also asks whether environmental destruction of the war influenced postbellum conservation and preservation.

Brady joins a growing number of scholars interested in applying the approaches and methodologies of environmental history to the study of warfare. That warfare is environmentally destructive is obvious, and historians have long noted the wreckage that war leaves in its wake. However, it has been less common to look beyond physical destruction to consider war's environmental effects on natural systems and man-made landscapes, in places where war is actually waged or in places distant from the actual fighting but altered by war's demand for resources. For example Edmund Russell has explored the relationship between warfare and the use and perception of pesticides, and Richard Tucker has argued that the specific destruction of European forests in World Wars I and II were part of systemic ecological changes in which wartime demands for timber altered forests on a global scale. Brady's book also reflects a growing interest among historians in understanding the Civil War in the context of a "long" nineteenth century, rather than as a culmination, a rupture or an aberration.

Civil War historians have long paid considerable attention to the natural world as a factor in strategy and tactics, taking the material world into serious consideration. There is an extensive literature on the development of a policy of "total war" against the material resources of the Confederacy, to reduce supplies needed by its armies, demoralize the civilian population, undercut support for the Confederate cause, and cause Southern civilians to experience, in General Sherman's famous words, " the hard hand of war" through Union tactics of foraging, raiding, emancipation, and material destruction. The battle to take Vicksburg, the Shenandoah Valley campaign, and Sherman's march through Georgia and South Carolina are all well-known and

well-researched. These are all advantages for Brady. She doesn't have to argue for the significance of these campaigns, and she has ample resources for a different way of understanding the Civil War. Yet this poses potential disadvantages for Brady precisely because there are topics well researched by historians who have already taken the natural world and logistics into account, and may be using some of the same language. Brady has to show the reader that her approach is indeed different, not just "a logistical approach washed with green" (p. 4). For example, Brady has to show that describing the Union's strategy of destroying Southern agriculture as the destruction of agroecological systems is more than new language, but brings something new to the table analytically. Her analysis is provocative and intriguing, if not always convincing.

In two chapters on Vicksburg, Brady explores themes of improvement and control by studying the attempts of Union army engineers to alter landscapes from obstacles into assets for victory. These are some of the most fresh and interesting parts of this book. Brady reminds us that many army officers were trained in engineering at West Point, the only engineering school in the nation until mid-century. She tells a compelling story about how Union leadership tried to re-engineer the landscape as an alternative to direct military engagement. First, the Union army dug a canal to circumvent Confederate-controlled Island No. 10, a choke point on the Mississippi River. Then, unable to mount a successful assault on the impregnable Vicksburg, the Union army tried to dig a canal across DeSoto point, within a big oxbow on the river just above Vicksburg, in an attempt to re-route the Mississippi away from Vicksburg entirely and thus eliminate the need to attack the city at all.

What Brady describes as attempts to master and manage the environment reflects the striking optimism that characterized antebellum American society. The hubris of re-routing the river would be striking except that forty years earlier, Americans had built the Erie Canal, digging a ditch four feet deep, forty feet wide and 363 miles long across upstate New York (a project even the usually optimistic Thomas Jefferson had described as madness). The proposal to dig a canal across DeSoto Point may have seemed small by comparison. While nineteenth-century Americans did believe in improving nature and overcoming wilderness, their goal was to create a margin of security and predictability against the fragility of pre-industrial life. Americans also had a different perspective on the relationships between work, distance, energy and time that in combination with their optimism enabled them to take on daunting projects armed with no more than hand-held tools and the muscle power of humans and draft animals. For example, in 1775, the Continental Army moved fifty-nine cannon from Fort Ticonderoga to Boston across 300 miles of largely roadless territory using oxen and ice sledges (it took fifty-six days). Mobilizing nature (ice and oxen), re-engineering nature (canals) and mastering and directing the forces of nature (horses and steam engines) provided Civil War leaders with historical experiences that helps explain the optimism about environmental mastery and management with which Union leadership tackles the Vicksburg campaign. Brady makes it clear she is only looking at the Union side, but since so

many Confederate officers had trained at West Point, I would be interested to know something of how Union strategic solutions were part of a larger engineering discourse shared by their Confederate counterparts as part of nineteenth century ideas about nature.

Brady explores the theme of wilderness in chapters on the Shenandoah campaign and Sherman's campaign through Georgia and South Carolina. She argues that ideas of wilderness at first restrained the Union, because to destroy improved land and turn it into a wasteland was an act of savagery, not the actions of a civilized people. And yet, as the war continued, and Union frustration with the difficulties of defeating the South grew, and determination to end the political economy of slavery intensified, Union strategy employed the idea of wilderness as a way of punishing and defeating the Confederacy. To this end the Union utilized the centuries-old tactic of the *chevauchée,* or raid against enemy territory to destroy resources and demoralize citizens, justifying its savagery as the only way to achieve victory against a decentralized enemy and on that enemy's territory. By the time of Sherman's march through Georgia and South Carolina, the Union had decided to make landscape destruction central to its strategy.

Wilderness remains one of the most complicated terms in the environmental history lexicon, but its meaning was also complicated for nineteenth century people whose culture was saturated with Biblical language and imagery. In Biblical terms, wilderness was a place of alienation and abandonment, outside of the rules and comforts of human society, but it also could be a place of possibility and redemption, even a necessary retreat from society in order to find clarity and focus. Union officers and soldiers seem to have invoked wilderness using several meanings. They saw the South already if not as wilderness, as only partially improved, they wanted to reduce it to wilderness to punish it, and they described its destruction as the creation of wilderness. Brady does a good job showing that it can be difficult to assess the actual extent of damage, given that both sides were using the language of wilderness to describe the results for different purposes. Here I would like to know more about how this language was deployed. To what extent was invoking "wilderness" simply a rhetorical convention? Or, was it rhetorical shorthand connoting a wide range of meanings to nineteenth century people, which may not be as accessible to us? To what extent did it mean punishing the South by reducing its people to a savage state, or did it mean reducing the South to wilderness in order to wipe the slate clean of the plantation system, slavery and the southern ruling class, in order to then rebuild an improved and redeemed landscape? Did some Union leaders think that destruction would enable the South to start over and establish the right kind of relationships with nature, and create the right kind of landscapes and societies? Or was it merely descriptive, a discourse employed by both sides to describe war's destructions? And what did the language of wilderness mean for soldiers for whom the very experience of warfare may have seemed like wilderness? One continuity in soldier narratives across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is that they reside in a world within war that, like wilderness, is apart from regular society, is often savage and desolate, and in which humans become more animal-like

(think of those Union soldiers burrowing into holes on the levees to escape the rains). In a nation where many Union soldiers came from farms and where even those from cities would have had close connection and proximity to rural areas, did destruction of farms and plantations contribute to their own sense of being in a wilderness that was the war itself?

Brady says repeatedly that Union strategy attacked the agroecological foundations of the Confederacy, destroying the ability of Southerners to manage their environments, and destroying their relationships with nature. I find that where she employs her most theoretical language that the difficulties of distinguishing her approach from older military history approaches to environmental issues are most apparent. When she writes that "power over nature was linked to other kinds of power" and that Union destruction of the environment caused Southerners "to lose power in other areas of their lives," she states a very old idea about the sources of social and political power (there is a reason why one of the symbols of inherited, naturalized, aristocratic power is a man on a horse). But in some ways this also states the obvious: destroying everything people have, including the fruits of their labor, tends to leave them powerless. While the concept of agroecological systems is an effective way of linking political economy with environmental management, it feels too blunt and abstract in relation to the diversity of Southern agriculture. Even the primary form of agroecological system to which she refers, plantation agriculture, was diverse across the South. Slavery was a critical factor in plantation agriculture, but not the only factor, as we see from some of the continuities in postbellum Southern agriculture. Though Brady addresses the nuances of this issue quite well in her excellent introduction, she seems to lose those nuances in later chapters. I think this points to a theoretical difficulty relevant for all environmental historians, which is whether using new terminology or language about nature and environment actually gets us to new knowledge or insight.

One of Brady's most interesting suggestions is that the war had something to do with the emergence of conservation and preservation efforts during the Gilded Age, though she finds these connections not conclusive, and in need of further exploration. She then falls back on a standard argument about the Civil War, that it increased the power of the federal government, and which then could establish parks and wilderness areas. Brady suggests that "This, perhaps, is the Civil War's greatest environmental legacy" (140). I feel this defines environmentalism too narrowly as wilderness preservation. For all its merits, the wilderness movement privileged (and continues to privilege) certain landscapes and certain regions, which then justified environmental destruction in other places. It also created some of those parks and wilderness areas through military conquest and removal of native peoples, against whom the U.S. Army explicitly used the same tactics of environmental destruction employed against the Confederacy during the Civil War. One way to explore the relationship between the Civil War and the development of environmental thinking over the next century might be using Richard White's concept of "knowing nature through work, " work to which Brady does not refer. The Civil War clearly became a site of knowledge production about the environment.

For example, Union engineers learned about nature as they tried to alter it, whether or not they succeeded in their immediate goals, they gained more sophisticated knowledge and technologies. One question would be whether as Union armies altered Southern landscapes or destroyed Southerners' environmental relationships and systems, they were learning more about those relationships and systems in ways that translated into environmental knowledge and policy in postbellum decades.

Finally, this book illustrates and sometimes suffers from a theoretical difficulty, not Brady's alone but shared by all environmental historians studying warfare, about wartime environmental destruction. This was the topic of an excellent panel chaired by Brady at the American Historical Association meeting in January 2013. The panelists and audience together wrestled, without clear resolution, on how to distinguish environmental destruction in war from other kinds of violence and from other kinds of environmental destruction. Here is a personal example of the difficulty we face in distinguishing between different causes of environmental destruction. The landscape in which I grew up is being rapidly transformed. It was a lake in an exurban area, with a few Gilded Age era estates but many more modest cottages. Lake residents ranged from lower middle class to the very rich. The surrounding area consisted of farms. Now, the cottages are being demolished and replaced with enormous, fancy houses; the fields are full of weeds, awaiting the next developer's bulldozers; the lake community now consists only of the very rich. More than the built environment has changed; a social system of environmental relationships has changed as well. Known landscapes have disappeared as thoroughly as if Sherman's army had come through. We tend to normalize this kind of change with abstractions about suburbanization or development. I think we need to continue to find ways to conceptualize what we mean by war's environmental destruction, when other kinds of environmental destruction also feel like war. In conclusion, I think that Brady's book, while not always convincing, is always interesting, suggests excellent research questions, and is successful in furthering discussions about how to write about war, violence and the environment.

Comments by Megan Kate Nelson

When I received my July 2005 *Environmental History* issue in the mail, I flipped to the Table of Contents and uttered a shriek. I eagerly read Lisa Brady's essay in that issue, "The Wilderness of War," and then sat down at my computer to write her an email. She was the only other person I knew of who was interested in Civil War environmental history; her essay was brilliant and engaging, and I wanted to meet her. In the ensuing years, Brady and I have been on several panels together, have talked about and worked through our projects on parallel tracks, and published our books with the same press one month apart. It has been an inspiring and synergistic friendship, and I know that we are both extremely happy to see this field continue to grow since the publication of her article, with more and more work examining exciting angles of Civil War environmental history appearing every year.

War Upon the Land will certainly become a canonical text in the field. Its arguments—that Union commanders undid the work of agricultural improvement across the South through their foraging raids and acts of wanton destruction; that they overcame natural obstacles (swamps, flooded rivers) through feats of engineering; and that these strategies, both military and environmental, helped win the war for the Union—are persuasive and important. And they help us to see that that environmental historians must engage with military history—and vice versa—in order to understand the history of nineteenth-century American landscapes.

There are some stories missing in *War upon the Land*, as there are in any book. We can't talk about everything, after all. Brady makes note of several of these absences in her introduction (African-American voices, political decisions, diseases), which neatly deflects criticism along these lines. And I always hate it when reviewers demand that you should have written another book entirely. Instead, I would like to note several points that *War upon the Land* makes briefly but does not fully pursue, and which are intriguing and important enough to provoke further discussion.

First, as I was reading through the book, I kept wondering, what constitutes "control over nature" in a wartime context? The first two chapters most directly address methods of control—the digging of canals along the Mississippi River in 1862-1863, in order to bypass Confederate strongholds (Island No. 10) or to take resources away from the enemy (DeSoto Point). Of course, only the first project was successful (which, ironically, led to the follies of the latter); the attempt to divert the Mississippi River away from Vicksburg was a failure, due to the nature of the river itself but also due to lack of time and manpower. Grant could only devote resources to such projects during the winter months; otherwise, he had battles to wage and territory to push through. Brady's argument that these engineering failures pushed Grant to embark upon his long and tedious march southward to cross the Mississippi and then subsist upon the land on the way to Jackson and then Vicksburg is persuasive. But these types of movements and strategies—and the

foraging raids executed by Phil Sheridan and William Tecumseh Sherman in later campaigns in the east—were not about controlling nature exactly, but destroying or taking what resources you could from it and then moving on. Can there be control over nature without sustained occupation? This seems an important question to answer when we are examining environmental histories of warfare.

And it is a question that leads me to another. *War upon the Land* suggests that the Union Army was successful in these campaigns because although they came up against swamps, deep ravines, and flooded rivers, they ultimately made their way through and across them. Framing the interactions between nature and armies in this way—the initial encounter then the struggle and then defeat of nature—suggests that the Union victories over the Confederates and Southern landscapes were inevitable. But these victories were certainly not inevitable so what, ultimately, explains the Union successes in these campaigns? Strength in numbers was certainly helpful, although the Confederates did not need to deploy men into the swamps of South Carolina in order to delay the federals trying to slog through them. Did the Union Army have more engineers in its ranks? Did they have more officers who were adept at conceiving of and executing such projects? These answers to these questions are hinted at rather than answered fully in *War upon the Land*. All of these questions point toward a broader point that deserves more emphasis and attention: the army that adjusts most quickly and effectively to environmental conditions will be the victorious army.

Brady also mentions at one point that the Northern armies turned what should have been Confederate environmental strengths (Vicksburg's terrain, the fertile fields of Georgia) into weaknesses. This, I think, is a fascinating point that could have been a stronger central argument in *War upon the Land*, because it suggests that the same landscape can shape warfare in different ways, depending on whether the armies there are in defensive or offensive postures. It also indicates that terrain and hydrological features can provide benefits for those in defensive positions…until they don't. Vicksburg was a perfect example of this; as a defensive citadel it was unmatched until Union forces laid siege to it. Then it became a deathtrap. The siege was an adaptive strategy, one used to great effect in the particular environmental conditions of this place.

The key to such successful adaptive strategies is the commander's ability to really see the landscape, and to see it through a military lens. How can this land become *militarily* productive? And who can make it so? The issue of labor is everywhere in *War upon the Land* but never becomes a central focus. I wanted to know more about slave impressment, labor procurement made possible by the First and Second Confiscation Acts, and by Union control of particular regions that prompted slave flight, creating territories of emancipation. And I wanted to know more about pioneer corps, special detachments of men who cut down trees and built roads and bridges—the men who made adaptive strategies possible on both sides of the conflict. Pioneer corps were biracial in some contexts, and further examination of them can tell us about the important role racial beliefs and dynamics played in

shaping environments of warfare, and how these activities perhaps changed the ways that blacks and whites fighting for the Union perceived one another.

Beyond the Union victory, enabled by the labor of Northern soldiers and workers, and secured by adaptive strategies, what was the impact of this war upon the land? In her conclusion, Brady enters the debate about whether or not the Civil War was a turning point in American environmental beliefs, and an important stop on the road to the conservation and preservation movements. Lisa argues that it was, for two reasons: because the federal government became so powerful during this era that it began to tame and control tracts of public land with greater effectiveness after 1865; and because both Northerners and Southerners witnessed the immense amount of destruction that made the Union victory possible and began to lament the demise of the wilderness. The former point I find persuasive. The latter argument, though, gives me pause. Some soldiers did express sadness at the felling of ancient trees to feed their fires or build their winter quarters, and felt guilty about burning agricultural fields, houses, and barns. And the scale of their destructive acts was certainly a novelty. But most soldiers (both Union and Confederate) thought nothing more of it and often embraced it wholeheartedly; they needed to survive and they wanted to win the war, and if they destroyed nature in the process then that was just how it was.

If we see an uptick in environmental "feeling" during and after the Civil War (I'm not convinced this was true, beyond a very small set of white elites who were already thinking about such things before the war began), it had to have been for a different reason. It was not the destruction that moved soldiers to think about natural environments, but their exposure to new natural environments, across the nation. The war, as Yael Sternhell has recently argued in *Routes of War*, was a revolution in motion. It put hundreds of thousands of men on the road, most of whom had never been all that far from home in their lives. They saw mountain ranges (climbing to the tops of these peaks to take in the view), caves and waterfalls, and yes, even swamps, for the first time. Their families at home saw illustrations of these landscapes in newspapers, and read detailed descriptions of these places in newspaper articles, letters from the front, and diaries soldiers sent home for safekeeping. This kind of exposure made them more aware of the nation geographically and created an imagined community of Americans who conceived of the United States as a diverse array of places. It is this new form of knowledge that may have led them to think about those places and saving them for various uses.

War upon the Land leads us to think about these connections, between war and the land, destruction and adaptation. They are definitely worth thinking about, and talking about, and researching further because they spark conversations between not just those in this still quite small subfield of Civil War environmental history but also those who are interested in the ways that we can theorize and document environmental histories of violence both in the United States and across the world.

Response by Lisa M. Brady, Boise State University

Writing a book is a humbling experience. Responding to one's readers is even more so. I am honored that Jacob Hamblin thought my book worthy of an H-Environment roundtable review and that Matthew Dennis, Ann N. Greene, and Megan Kate Nelson took such care in reading it and engaging with its ideas. I was reminded by their comments that the book leaves out a great deal more than it includes: slavery, for its centrality to the drama of the Civil War, barely makes an entrance; Southern voices, whether Union or Confederate, rich or poor, white or black, are extras, whereas Northern ones take the starring roles; and the action seems to end after the first violent act, with the curtains closing before the denouement of Reconstruction, as Americans attempted to pick up the pieces of the broken nation. Despite these omissions, and other issues that I will address below, I was deeply pleased that Dennis, Greene, and Nelson all saw the book as a spark for further conversations that need to be had about the Civil War's place in environmental history. After all, that was what I had hoped to accomplish in writing it.

One of the benefits of peer review, both during and after the publication process is that authors learn from each other. Often, I think, some of us would like to have had the insights of our post-publication reviewers in the pre-publication stage (but then, our books would likely never get published if we waited to hear from all who could assist us in making the work better!). That is a long way of saying that I greatly appreciate all the questions and critiques Dennis, Greene, and Nelson raised in their reviews. What I will do here, however, is only address those for which I think I can defend my original position.

First, I will answer Matthew Dennis's question about the novelty of the *chevauchée*. He pointed to similar actions against Native Americans in the Colonial and Revolutionary periods and suggested that Union attacks against the productive capacity of the Confederacy was "a form of collateral damage" rather than anything significant or long lasting. He is right on both points – but the innovation during the Civil War was that such tactics were used against an enemy that was deemed to be both "civilized" and a social equal, rather than against one that was considered to be savage and already outside the bounds of the rules of war. That is where the Union's actions diverged from common military practice, and what made those operations so open to criticism from all sectors of society. Grant, Sherman, and Sheridan did not garner approbation from Southerners alone; their fellow officers, subordinates, Union supporters, and civilians from North, South, and abroad questioned the efficacy and the legality of attacking the productive landscape, leaving Southern civilians few resources on which to survive in the short term. But it was in the short term that mattered – Grant, Sherman, and Sheridan did not want a prolonged war; in fact they were attempting to bring it rapidly to a close, so the longevity of the results was of little matter to them. That said, I would still suggest that the psychological and direct material impacts of such "uncivilized" operations did have

longer term effects, that of inspiring the creation of memorial parks, which would have the inadvertent result of protecting thousands of acres from industrial, agricultural, and residential development across the former Confederacy.

To that point, Dennis noted that my analysis of the cultural historical implications of the war on American notions of nature is speculative and limited, and he's quite right about that. Explaining such developments fully was never my intention, but they are an interesting analogue to what happened during the war. I hope others will, like Megan Kate Nelson has already expertly begun to do, take up that task. Dennis wanted to hear more post-bellum voices to see what had changed, both materially and culturally, with regard to the southern and the national landscapes and ideas about wilderness and the longer-term issue of emancipation. These need to be addressed, but were not the purpose of the book. To explore the postwar effects would have, I believe, blurred my intended focus on the wartime effects.

Ann N. Greene's major critique revolves around language, in particular, the term "agroecological." She wondered whether it was just a new term applied to an old subject, or did it bring something novel to our understanding of the conflict. I would argue that it is both. Although neologisms can be problematic, especially when anachronistically applied, I think the notion of "agroecosystems" accurately encapsulates what evolved when humans began to select certain plants and animals in preference to others through the process of developing agriculture. Agricultural systems did not become exclusively human products; nature – in the form of insects, pathogens, and so-called weeds interceded into these systems, thus creating ecological as well as agricultural systems. So, when the Union Army attacked the plantation system of the Confederacy, they were indeed attacking the region's agroecological base.

Greene also suggested that White's "knowing nature through work" might have been a better lens through which to understand changing notions about the environment, correctly arguing that those who engaged in the Civil War campaigns, and in the post-war creation of the first national parks, did so as soldiers. These experiences certainly shaped they ways they interacted with and viewed the natural world; but did that translate more broadly to how Americans in general (if we can generalize) felt about and perceived wilderness, preservation, conservation, parks, and so on? The soldiers, especially those who participated in both the war and park creation, were few in number, so their experiences and ideas would have been quite limited.

Greene also questioned the larger conceptual framework of the book, noting that this is a problem of the developing literature on war and environment, and not a singularity of my scholarship. Distinguishing wartime destruction from other types of destruction can be difficult, especially since we are prone to making war analogies when any kind of devastating event occurs – areas of towns destroyed by tornadoes look like war zones, for example. This is a problem, and not one that will be easily solved, especially if such comparisons continue in the everyday lexicon.

Megan Kate Nelson's question about control – must one engage in sustained occupation to effectively control an area – is intriguing. During the war, and especially during the campaigns I examined, I would say no. This is because sustained occupation was obviated by the lack of protection provided by the Confederacy. That is precisely why the operations under Grant and Sherman worked (Sheridan's campaign in the Shenandoah Valley is the exception that proves the rule – the Confederacy tried very hard to protect the region, but forces there also had to protect Richmond, so had competing directives). Theirs were military operations conducted in territories with little to no enemy presence, especially in Georgia and the Carolinas. That was exactly Sherman's point. He could march through with impunity – the Union could disrupt civilian activity because the Confederacy had abdicated power in those areas.

Nelson's second question – about numbers vs. adaptability – is also good. The Union was superior in the first, certainly, but also demonstrated a high degree of the latter, once Grant took command. He allowed his subordinate officers, especially those who had shown particular talent and loyalty, much latitude. Sherman broke all communication ties with his superior officers as he marched across Georgia. What he did not do was leave behind contingents of soldiers to occupy conquered territory; those men were more useful to him as he moved forward, helping him to overcome whatever potential obstacles he might face. The joke was that he carried an extra railroad tunnel with him – he had both the tools and innovation to deal with human and natural circumstances as they arose.

Nelson was not as convinced about my argument regarding wartime destruction as an impetus for postwar wilderness preservation (seems to be an issue for all three, as it is for many readers of the book) – and points to sources she encountered in her research for her own excellent book. All I can say about that is that we consulted different sources – this is both the beauty and the problem of Civil War studies – there are so many extant letters, diaries, memoirs, and other sources that one simply can not read them all, so every study will be limited based on the sources consulted and, thus, biased in some way. I'm not so sure my argument about nature's destruction is so far from the alternative that she proposes – that exposure to new landscapes prompted soldiers to want to protect them.

I hope I have adequately addressed the questions and concerns presented by these three fine scholars. If not, I hope to do so over a beer or coffee sometime at a future conference (my treat). It may be that on some points we never see eye-to-eye, but I, for one, am enriched by the chance to read and respond to their insights into my work.

About the Contributors

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Ann Norton Greene is Adjunct Assistant Professor and Associate Director for Undergraduate Studies in the Department of History and Sociology of Science at the University of Pennsylvania. She is the author of *Horses at Work: Harnessing Power in Industrial America* (Harvard, 2008).

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Megan Kate Nelson is a writer, historian, and cultural critic based in Massachusetts. She is the author of *Ruin Nation: Destruction and the American Civil War* (Georgia, 2012) and *Trembling Earth: a Cultural History of the Okefenokee Swamp* (Georgia, 2005).

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