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Neil M. Maher. Nature's New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement.

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and silvicultural research—and move toward “sustainable” forestry (in other words, harvesting timber from constantly regenerating forests). Roosevelt and Pinchot inspired the U.S. Forest Service to demonstrate these practices in the national forests. Pinchot also established the Yale Forestry School, one of the nation’s first, which trained foresters and provided a model for similar schools that began to spring up around the country. Training in these schools emphasized commodity production, and they turned out newly minted foresters who went forth to staff the U.S. Forest Service, state forestry agencies, and private forest product companies. Working with the denuded lands of the early twentieth century, they rebuilt the forests so that, by the 1950s, there were more trees in many areas than there had been at the time of European discovery.

But the restored forests were not replicas of the ancient forests they replaced. Mixed-age and mixed-species forests were supplanted by even-age, single-species stands, and while selective cutting was sometimes utilized, so were clear-cutting and replanting. There was little concern for wildlife, except game vertebrate species, and not much attention paid to stream sedimentation or water and air quality. Foresters typically defined their ultimate standard of professional ethical responsibility as carrying out “landowner objectives.”

In the 1960s and 1970s, a few foresters, concerned citizens, and scientists began to question the ecological quality of the nation’s public forests. Hays was an active participant in this process, especially in Pennsylvania, and in his current book he chronicles the rise of “ecological” forestry with a particular emphasis on the role of activist organizations in trying to change the management philosophies of the U.S. Forest Service and state forestry agencies. Hays argues forcefully that forest products companies and commodity-oriented foresters represented by the Society of American Foresters unduly influence public forest management. He believes that the perspectives and science of people trained in other fields—biology, botany, ecological science, and hydrology, for example—are either ignored or trivialized by the public agencies. Ecological forest values, such as promoting the biological diversity of forest wildlife, non-commodity trees, a wide variety of forest plants, clean, large-scale watersheds, and aesthetics, are largely neglected. Non-foresters employed by the U.S. Forest Service are sometimes punished for their views. These trends, Hays argues, have intensified under the administration of President George W. Bush.

Hays cites numerous publications, reports, correspondence, and other documents from various organizations, citizen groups, government agencies, and individuals, most of which are either available on the web or in the University of Pittsburgh archives. However, the author writes more from the perspective of an activist than that of a historian. He routinely praises the work and values of those with whom he agrees and denigrates their opponents. He fails to note that some forestry schools and their training are changing, and that commodity foresters did such a good job of growing

timber that fears of a “timber famine” have subsided. Companies that once owned and managed vast forests have recently been divesting their lands at a remarkable rate, with much of the acreage now controlled by investment trusts that have a wide variety of economic and management objectives. Hays does not address the fact that the nation’s demand for wood remains high, and that if the producers cannot harvest timber here, they will turn elsewhere. Reacting to environmental pressures and market conditions, manufacturers have begun to look toward Siberia, China, Bolivia, and other areas to meet their continuing wood supply needs. A restored “old growth” forest with true biological diversity in the United States will probably mean increased pressure on the rain forests and third-world countries. This is an ongoing process that historians will revisit in the coming years. The book under review, although not a balanced treatment, will serve as a valuable source .

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NEIL M. MAHER. *Nature’s New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement*. New York: Oxford University Press. 2008. Pp. x, 316. \$35.00.

If you spend time outdoors, chances are you spend it with the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). From Appalachian Trail switchbacks to contour plowing in Kansas, the CCC reshaped America’s open spaces during the Great Depression and beyond. Neil M. Maher’s book joins a growing number of works reconsidering the origins of modern environmentalism by looking to the New Deal and is among the strongest of this cohort. Blending careful research with an ability to synthesize seemingly disparate topics, from electoral politics to gender roles and landscape architecture, Maher offers a rich and complex history of how Americans became green.

Launched in 1933, the CCC concentrated first on replanting forests and safeguarding farmlands. Franklin D. Roosevelt, the agency’s founder, was a committed conservationist who practiced scientific forestry at his Hyde Park estate. But as a polio sufferer, he also believed in the curative powers of working and playing in nature, another Progressive-era inheritance. These two strands combined in the Corps’ mission: to reclaim both the nation’s resources and the wellbeing of its unemployed young men. For Roosevelt, conservation was more than altruism; he used the Corps to thwart New Deal opposition in rural regions where it ran highest. By the mid-1930s, as more Americans vacationed close to home, the CCC turned to promote tourism. Workers built trails, bridges, roads, and lodges that enticed visitors into the outdoors.

Just as Corps laborers reclaimed the land for profit and play, the landscapes they made remade them in turn. Maher is at his finest when he gives voice to the “Cs” themselves, explaining how the CCC transformed sickly and poor young men into physically strong and

skilled workers. It was a vehicle for Americanization and upward mobility for many working class and immigrant young men, who later remembered their time outdoors fondly. But the Corps was not truly democratic. Women were excluded. African Americans and Native Americans were segregated. Organized labor opposed the CCC at first, fearing it would undercut union power. Corps workers also faced hostility from residents living next door to the camps, but antagonism evaporated when locals harnessed them to promote regional economies.

Maher skillfully compares two projects to illustrate this dynamism: restoring farmland in Coon Valley, Wisconsin, and constructing recreation facilities in the Great Smoky Mountains of Tennessee. These locales are especially apt: Aldo Leopold worked with Coon Valley planners, and Robert Marshall advised construction in the Great Smokies. At first, both were ardent supporters, but they soon became strident critics. Leopold attacked infrastructure and reclamation work as ecologically harmful, while Marshall condemned extending automobile access to public lands nationwide. Both men helped found the Wilderness Society, an organization opposed to making nature too modern and recreation too convenient.

Despite such enmity, the spirit of the Corps endured after its termination in 1942. Former members joined federal and state conservation agencies, or created their own grass-roots political organizations. Numerous local and state governments launched work programs modeled on the Corps, employing inmates, young men and women, or the underemployed. According to Ma-her, the CCC extended conservation past its narrow Progressive-era base to lay the foundation for modern environmentalism, but this claim, despite his persuasive writing and strong evidence, is not as firmly established. To be sure, the Corps' demographic size and physical ubiquity exposed many enrollees to conservation. Yet absent specific evidence quantifying how many CCC members joined environmental groups, or what visible roles they played politically, Ma-her offers more correlation than causation. The New Deal matters but not necessarily as a direct precursor to environmentalism. Rather, its legacy may lie in reminding contemporary environmentalists that Americans once found innovative and popular ways to manage resources and strengthen community and economy simultaneously.

Such criticisms aside, this is an ambitious and imaginative book that opens new terrain for historians to explore. By rethinking the trajectory of conservation, Ma-her compels us to reconsider the history of modern environmentalism as well. In so doing, he challenges us to embrace an environmental ethic that once had room for both wilderness and hard labor together.

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JOSEPH B. ENTIN. *Sensational Modernism: Experimental Fiction and Photography in Thirties America*. (Cultural Studies of the United States.) Chapel Hill: University

of North Carolina Press. 2007. Pp. xi, 325. Cloth \$59.95, paper \$22.50.

Influenced by Warren Susman's pivotal 1970 essay "The Thirties," American cultural historians of the 1930s have overemphasized that decade's fundamental conservatism and tended to underestimate radical challenges to it, according to Joseph B. Entin's book. Entin proposes a countertradition of self-consciously modernist literary texts and photographs centered on issues of class, ethnicity, race, and, to a lesser extent, gender that contests this historiographical paradigm. While Entin exaggerates both the paradigm's predominance and the degree to which cultural historians have neglected 1930s dissent, his study does identify a heretofore unacknowledged radical "cultural form" (p. 19) that employed the sensationalism favored by contemporary popular media—in tabloid newspapers, pulp stories, and mass entertainments—to foreground the injustices perpetrated on abused and disfigured working-class bodies. Such modernist sensationalism was distinguished from the popular variety by its formal sophistication, which utilized avant-garde expressive techniques to induce "cognitive disorientation" in its bourgeois audience and thus discomfit that social formation's self-satisfied "sense of moral authority and cultural control" (p. 3) vouchsafed to it by naturalistic or sentimental representations of working-class subjects.

Literary practitioners of sensational modernism receive considerably more attention in Entin's book than photographers, and it includes detailed, acute discussions of five central texts in which disfigured working-class bodies are central tropes: William Carlos Williams's short stories in *Life along the Passaic River* (1938); Tillie Olsen's *Yonnondio: From the Thirties* (1974); William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* (1930); Pietro di Donato's *Christ in Concrete* (1939); and Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940). These extended analyses are supplemented by about a dozen briefer studies of 1930s texts, mostly of additional works by Entin's central authors or other instances of sensational modernism such as Henry Roth's *Call It Sleep* (1934) and Nathanael West's *Miss Lonelyhearts* (1933), but also for contrast two examples of a politically retrograde modernism that withdraws agency from working-class subjects, John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* (1939) and James Agee's contribution to *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941). While I do not entirely agree with Entin's judgment of Agee, it must be said that in his discussions of *Famous Men* and other literary texts Entin is rarely if ever tendentious; to put it more positively, one of the most attractive features of his critical method is its suppleness, his acknowledgment that each of these works is composed of contradictory or at least paradoxical elements, formal and ideational, and that "they do not ultimately resolve the thorny problems of engagement and representation that they raise" (p. 33). In this sense, he says, they were honorable failures, and taken together they do constitute the important countertra-