Common Ground

Common Ground:
Integrating the Social and Environmental in History

Edited by

Geneviève Massard-Guilbaud and Stephen Mosley

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CHAPTER ONE

BREAKING DOWN BORDERS: INTEGRATING THE SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IN HISTORY[1]

GENEVIÈVE MASSARD-GUILBAUD AND STEPHEN MOSLEY

This book seeks to forge stronger connections between social and environmental history. It is time, as several commentators have noted recently, to bring the two fields into closer communication.[2] In the new millennium, environmental issues – climate change, loss of biodiversity, deteriorating ecosystem services – have risen to the top of the global political agenda. As societies are confronted with the damaging and often unintended consequences of past choices made in areas such as energy, technology, industry, agriculture, urbanisation, and consumption, we need a history that casts more light on the ways in which unsustainable human-nature relationships came into being. And this means establishing common ground between social and environmental history. We can no longer content ourselves with an environmental history which focuses mainly on nature's agency, nor with a social history that does not incorporate an environmental dimension. This is all the more important today as escalating environmental problems impact disproportionately on the poor, whether in the developing countries of the world or in the wealthiest (albeit differently).[3] The increasing disparity between rich and poor makes

[1] Some material in this chapter appeared previously in the *Journal of Social History*; it is reproduced here with permission.

[2] Steinberg, "Down to Earth"; Mosley, "Common Ground"; Jacoby "Classifying Nature"; Peck, "The Nature of Labour"; Rosen,"Doing Business"; and Armiero "Seeing Like a Protestor." See also: Rosen, "Industrial Ecology".

[3] For example, see: Massard-Guilbaud and Rodger, *Environmental and Social Justice in the City*; and Guha and Martinez-Alier, *Varieties of Environmentalism.*

tackling the global eco-social crisis hugely complex, and solutions to environmental problems will not be sustainable or effective if they are not socially fair. Environmental policies also have to be social policies, or they will fail. If we are to create a usable past that might help policy-makers to make more informed choices in the future, then social and environmental history should not be disassociated from each other.

In the West, we live in a world that has been divided between nature and culture. But as the French anthropologist Philippe Descola has shown, this way of understanding our environment is not shared by many non-Western societies. There are many different ways of thinking about the world and the relationships between its "inhabitants" (not only humans and animals, but also soils, mountains, rivers, and forests) and Descola, without any claim to comprehensiveness, describes some of those he has met in his peregrinations around the world, such as analogism, totemism, animism and naturalism. For each of these modes of relation, there is a different form of continuity/discontinuity between what he calls the "existents".[4] Historians should, then, be wary of employing a division between nature and culture, which is historically dated, and used by only a part of humanity. At the very least, they should be mindful that it is not universally accepted.

However, even if we accept – at least temporarily – to think in the terms of this Western nature-culture dichotomy, another idea that has to be deconstructed is that environmental history should be the history of nature, which it is not, as some historians have long argued without being sufficiently heard. What is at stake in environmental history is a *relationship*, and the way it has evolved over time: the relationship between humans and what we call nature. This being said, how can we study a relationship by taking into account only one side of the story? How can we understand such a relationship if we only study nature, and neglect the human, social side of things?

But there are even older and more structural reasons for the lack of contact between social and environmental historians. To better understand this mutual reluctance to cooperate, we must go back to the very creation of the disciplines and to the time when the social sciences diverged from the natural sciences, and to the birth of ecology. Most practitioners of scientific ecology have a biocentric conception of the environment, which for them consists of a series of interacting natural components, such as species and ecosystems, which should be protected from destruction. This vision of the environment is opposed to the anthropocentric definition of

[4] Descola, *Par-delà nature et culture.*

environment as a subjective and constructed set of relations between humans and their natural or built milieu.[5] According to some scholars, scientific ecology has even built itself on the "exclusion of man".[6] It is then not so surprising that the rejoining of these disciplines is difficult, even if not all their practitioners are conscious of the history of their disciplines.

Environmental history and the "new" social history – as conceived in Anglo-Saxon countries – emerged at roughly the same time, with both scholarly enterprises drawing inspiration from the radical political activism that gathered momentum worldwide during the 1960s and 1970s. Environmental historians responded to the concerns of the ecology movement, while social historians were energised by new social movements for peace, human rights and cultural freedoms. Both camps, however, shared an interest in the expansion of capitalist relations and processes of production across the globe. But research by social and labour historians sought to uncover how ordinary people experienced the upheavals wrought by industrial capitalism, while environmental historians delved even deeper to reveal the impacts of human economies on the earth. And some four decades later social and environmental history still remain largely parallel endeavours, with little cross-field communication.

Environmental history's orientation towards the ecological sciences can make it seem a difficult field to enter for social historians. Explorations of the various ways in which soils, forests, mountains, rivers, and animals act as "co-creators of histories" incorporate both textual sources and scientific data, blurring disciplinary boundaries between the humanities and the sciences. Writing nature into historical narratives requires environmental historians to become conversant in the languages of the natural sciences, which helps to explain the continued neglect of human-environment relationships by social historians.

It is also fair to say that some environmental historians have viewed any hasty marriage between the two fields with a considerable degree of suspicion. Donald Worster, for example, has warned of the various "risks" involved in such a union, including: a shift in emphasis toward the "cultural turn" that would devalue the agency of nature; the "downward spiral" of environmental history toward fragmentation and loss of identity; and, not least of all, its succumbing to social history's "paralyzing fear of all generalization".[7] Although many environmental historians have shifted ground, integrating the idea that the built environment and, more widely,

[5] Theys, "Pourquoi les préoccupations?"
[6] Larrère, "L'écologie ou le geste de l'exclusion de l'homme".
[7] Worster, "Seeing Beyond Culture", 1144.

human agency, had to be part of the picture, some still resist or recommend a return to strictly naturalist positions.[8]

However, disciplinary differences are not an insurmountable barrier to integration. As Alan Taylor has stressed in a path-breaking study of the two fields, they are "fundamentally compatible and mutually reinforcing". Indeed, building out from Taylor's analysis, there are a number of important shared characteristics that we can identify: an emphasis on long-term processes rather than short-term events; an *Annaliste* inspired ambition to write "total history"; an openness to interdisciplinary methods and techniques; the imaginative and innovative use of source materials; the use of place-specific case studies to examine issues from the bottom up; and a belief in the political relevance of the work.[9] While there is no overarching theory or methodology to call into play, these shared attributes do provide a firm base for adopting, as Ted Steinberg has put it, a more "ecologically minded and socially sensitive approach" to discussions about the past.[10]

Until recently, environmental historians have tended to think about humans in highly abstract terms as just one species among many. While such a stance unquestionably provides us with a more humble view of the human role in historical processes, the downside is that an "oversimplified holism" that portrays cultures and communities as homogeneous in their outlook and actions can "wash out" the extraordinary diversity of people's experiences. As William Cronon has pointed out, "the greatest weakness of environmental history [is] … its failure to probe below the level of the group to explore the implications of social divisions for environmental change."[11] Ordinary people, with their different interests, desires, and experiences, can disappear from view. We still have a good deal to learn about how conflict, difference, and power over access to nature and natural resources – as well as routinised day-to-day practices and consumption behaviours – have shaped human-environment relationships over time and space. On close inspection, environmental issues are often shot through with thorny questions relating to racial inequality, gender relations, class tensions, and ethnic differences. Social historians, for their part, have generally treated the natural world as "a given, as a constant, as an assumed but unexplored backdrop" to events.[12] However, if we are to

[8] See for instance the advocacy by DeLuca, "A Wilderness Environmental Manifesto.",
[9] Taylor, "Unnatural Inequalities", 9.
[10] Steinberg, "Down to Earth", 820.
[11] Taylor, "Unnatural Inequalities", 7; Cronon, "Modes of Prophecy and Production", 1129.
[12] Taylor, "Unnatural Inequalities", 7.

move towards a more sustainable future, then greater attention must be paid to how people's lives connected to their environments in the past.

Historical studies exploring the complex interplay between people's day-to-day activities and ecological change, especially the environmental experiences, values and beliefs of ordinary men and women, can help us better understand our relationships with nature over time and make more informed planning and policy choices in the future. This book addresses some big questions of overlapping interest for social and environmental historians, such as: Was traditional resource use really more sustainable? How did different communities control access to nature and its resources? Who gained and who lost when a community changed its relationship with the surrounding environment? Why did public concern about a specific environmental problem emerge at a particular time? And why were the public more tolerant of others? Over the course of the last two decades, environmental historians have increasingly applied the "classic" social history tools of class, gender, race, and ethnic analyses – as well as sociological and anthropological methods of investigation – to broaden and deepen their understanding of human-nature relations. However, the cross-border traffic between the two disciplines has been slow-moving and largely one-way. Thus far, few social historians have made the effort to reciprocate by recognising the environment as "a critical factor affecting human agency."[13] This volume will also cast an environmental gaze on social history's traditional agenda, providing fresh angles of vision on topics such as leisure, protest, crime, work, community and everyday life. As Raymond Williams reminds us, society and nature are inextricably intertwined: "We have mixed our labour with the earth, our forces with its forces too deeply to be able to draw back and separate either out."[14] The chapters in this book represent innovative and conceptually wide-ranging efforts to combine social and environmental history, by both established and younger scholars.

Themes and organisation of the book

This edited collection is organised in six (overlapping) sections, with the first dealing with leisure and the environment. Leisure practices often bring people into close contact with the natural world, and involve complex human-nature relationships, as the contributions on the development of angling as an outdoor activity in Britain by Richard

[13] *American Historical Review*, "Bringing the Natural World into History", 797.
[14] Williams, *Problems in Materialism and Culture*, 83.

Coopey and Tim Shakesheff (chapter 2) and in France by Jean-Francois Malange (chapter 3) demonstrate. Both emphasise that there were many different types of "anglings", varying over time and between one region and another, and involving a broad spectrum of participants – from well-to-do fishermen to working-class – which could cause conflicts over access to rivers and streams. They reveal that a significant number of women were keen and successful anglers, despite the widespread notion that it was a masculine pursuit. Angling saw the reshaping of environments to better facilitate the sport or pastime, and the rebalancing of ecosystems to ensure the availability of the quarry. Importantly, these chapters also show that participation in an activity that was "embedded in nature" encouraged an early environmental awareness with, for example, angling organisations seeking to protect rivers from large-scale pollution by industry.

John Walton (chapter 4) charts the spectacular rise of the seaside or coastal resort since the eighteenth century. The rapid expansion of this kind of tourist settlement, first across Western Europe and then worldwide, has had significant environmental impacts on "coastline after coastline", changed people's perceptions of both the sea and shoreline, as well as their economic activities and ways of life. Walton provides a comprehensive overview of the main social, economic and environmental changes associated with the spread of international seaside tourism, an industry now worth billions of dollars, including: conflicts over access to and enjoyment of beaches; the decline of traditional industrial activities such as fishing as "incompatible" with resort development (with "picturesque" ports often undergoing heritage-based regeneration); and the serious threats posed to land and sea by sewage, garbage and other forms of pollution.

The second section of the book addresses the theme of nature and conservation, and starts with a discussion of changing perceptions of nature – particularly forest use – in the province of Guyenne, in south-west France, during the eighteenth century. Philippe Crémieu-Alcan's case study (chapter 5) draws on the records of forest crimes to examine how the implementation of a uniform national approach to timber production impacted on communities in the region and on the environment. Landowners began to see their forests as natural capital, to be conserved over the long-term for economic gain. Traditional user rights were curtailed, and community access to forests increasingly restricted – resulting in discontent and resistance. As well as local customs, the local ecology changed too, with forest diversity being replaced by even-aged tree plantations.

Charles-François Mathis (chapter 6) explores cultural aspects of the topic, discussing the views of some of the key figures in the early British nature conservation movement of the nineteenth century. Beginning with William Wordsworth, he suggests that initially, to attract sympathetic supporters to the conservationist cause, activists focused mainly on the need to protect Romantic landscapes from "rash assault" (most notably from the incursions of railway companies). By the middle of the nineteenth century, however, as the damaging effects of uncontrolled urbanisation and industrialisation on both humans and nature were becoming clear, he argues that the artist and writer John Ruskin was among the first to combine social and environmental campaigning. While his concerns were shared by leading members of organisations like the Commons Preservation Society, his ideas were most influential on the political left, with William Morris, Robert Blatchford, and Edward Carpenter all working to unite socialism with a "back to nature" movement. This early manifestation of red-green politics, however, became marginalised as distracting and divisive after the first Labour MPs were elected to parliament in 1906.

The labour movement's position on nature and the environment, not just in Britain but elsewhere around the world, has been a neglected area of research. Ute Hasenöhrl (chapter 7) examines how important nature conservation was for the labour movement in Germany (with a regional focus on Bavaria) up to the 1970s. In her study of the German branches of the Touristenverein Die Naturfreunde, an international hiking and nature conservation association that was blue-collar in character, Hasenöhrl attempts to bridge the gap between social and environmental history by looking at the role of class in the formation of ecological awareness. She also raises the important issue of whether or not the Naturfreunde association in Germany was an "ecological early-warning system" for the labour movement.

The third section, on environmental conflicts, opens with Lucienne Neraud's account (chapter 8) of how Mexican and Mexican-American agricultural workers in Texas organised to protect themselves as the use of chemicals harmful to their health – insecticides, herbicides and fungicides – became commonplace in farming. For two decades after 1966, their unions campaigned for stricter regulation and better working conditions. The Texas-United Farm Workers and the Texas Farm Workers tried to negotiate contracts that included protective provisions for their members and informed them of the adverse effects of the chemicals sprayed in the fields, entered into coalitions with political and non-political organisations to obtain the adoption of appropriate legislation, questioned the

constitutionality of certain state laws and turned to the courts to force employers to respect newly enacted regulations. However, faced with the violent opposition of employers and their allies, and lacking the kind of support that *campesinos* in other states benefited from, Neraud shows that the farmworkers' unions did not enjoy much success in achieving their aims.

The contribution by Robert Gioielli (chapter 9), by contrast, explores the topic of environmental conflict in an urban context. His chapter examines how in the 1960s an unlikely coalition of activists – white and black, working and middle class – came together to form the Movement Against Destruction (or MAD), to fight against the construction of an expressway system through the American city of Baltimore. Its members were trying to deal with a variety of problems like poor housing, pollution, crime and jobs, and they realised that the construction of the new highway would only make bad urban conditions worse. Gioielli's case study shows how urban environmental activism – especially that of African-Americans and working class whites – was intimately tied together with other, seemingly unconnected social justice concerns. In the 1960s, Baltimoreans formed a citywide movement that transcended class and racial divisions to work together in an attempt to stop the expressway, and they did succeed in having the road re-routed (and lawsuits in the 1970s were to prevent many of the planned road segments being built).

The chapters in section four demonstrate the importance of both folk and scientific knowledge in understanding environmental change. Richard Hölzl (chapter 10) outlines the origins and development of the concept of scientific forestry in Germany (which later provided the model for the exploitation of forest resources in European colonies worldwide) from 1750 to 1850. He looks at the negotiations and conflicts that occurred when foresters in Germany implemented new scientific ideas and practices on the ground. Hölzl argues that the influential model of the "modern forest" that developed during the eighteenth century was substantially modified due to the actions and knowledge of local people. Public discussions, as well as popular resistance, altered the course of scientific forestry in Germany. Using a wide range of sources, including records of forest crimes, he not only contributes to long-standing debates on forest management, but also adds new insights from a European perspective to more recent discussions on the "environmentalism of the poor".[15]

Chapter 11 looks at aspects of social and environmental history in South Africa from the position of veterinary medicine. Since the 1980s,

[15] Martinez-Alier, *The Environmentalism of the Poor*.

the environmental historiography on South Africa has tended to focus on African dispossession from the land and the impacts that this had on black communities and the sustainability of their agricultural systems. But Karen Brown provides a counter-narrative to some of the existing themes in the literature by examining aspects of cooperation between veterinary scientists and farmers, both black and white, in expanding public knowledge about the livestock disease environment. Brown shows that environmental policy in South Africa was not just about coercion, and that its veterinary scientists were not solely focused on the interests of settler farmers. In the early years of veterinary research, she observes, there was particularly close collaboration between black communities and vets as the latter acquired and utilised indigenous knowledge in order to better protect livestock from disease problems, and improve the economic prospects for farmers from all backgrounds.

Stephen Bocking (chapter 12) also situates his study at the intersection of social studies of science and environmental history. In his discussion of salmon aquaculture in British Columbia, Canada, he tackles some of the central preoccupations of science studies, including: the construction of scientific trust and authority; the role of scientific expertise in political and regulatory affairs; the significance of new technologies and industrial practices; and the relations between science and the economy. In addition, Bocking examines both the social and environmental impacts of the salmon farming industry in the province since the early 1970s. Science, he points out, has been invoked by supporters of salmon aquaculture (who claim that it is environmentally sustainable), and by its opponents (who claim that it is hazardous to coastal habitats and species). His case study also enables a better understanding of the history of coastal peoples, coastal ecosystems and oceans – topics which to date have been under-researched.

The penultimate section deals with environmental disasters. Don Garden (chapter 13) argues that El Niño droughts, as part of the wider influence of climate systems, have been among the formative influences in the development of Australian society. Specifically, his chapter focuses on the profound “federation drought” or “long drought” from 1895 to 1903, which contributed significantly to the shaping of the new nation, its social relationships, its psyche and its culture. It is a particularly interesting case study because it occurred at a critical time, when the Australian colonies were forged into a single nation in 1901. The drought resulted in, or coincided with, great human hardship, immense losses of grazing animals, failure of crops, dust storms, bushfires and a rabbit plague. Drawing on primary evidence that includes poetry, songs, artworks and newspaper

reports, Garden documents a sense of common struggle against the challenges of the Australian environment – especially climate and drought – that was a major part of the mythologising that shaped Australian nationalism. However, the reality was an inequality of experience, disadvantage and suffering between urban and rural dwellers and between socio-economic groups.

Africa, Simon Pooley points out (chapter 14), has been characterised by ecologists as the "burn centre of the planet", and it is likely to be the continent on which humans have used fire for longer than anywhere else on Earth. However, he notes that there is a distinct lack of historical perspective in many recent analyses claiming that wildfires in South Africa are becoming more frequent, and more intense. For decades fire was regarded by conservation experts as a human (and particularly native African) disturbance, to be banished from ecosystems protected by western scientific methods. But in South Africa many vegetation types require fire to reproduce, and policies of fire exclusion resulted in disastrous conflagrations when eventually fire penetrated long-protected areas. As a force of nature it has shaped, and continues to shape, the existence of the fauna and flora of the Cape, including humankind. Pooley argues that historians must pay attention to both the environmental and social histories – for instance fire event histories, and the histories of public and policy responses to them – in order to make a constructive contribution to contemporary debates about how to best manage the Cape Floral Region's UNESCO-protected environments.

The theme of the final section of the book is energy, industry and urban infrastructure. José Bernados, Javier Hernando, Gonzalo Madrazo, and José Nieto (chapter 15) examine the effects that growing fuel consumption in Madrid had on the territory of Castile during the three centuries after 1561, both from a social and an environmental viewpoint. They challenge the commonly held idea that Madrid's energy needs were responsible for causing major deforestation in Castile. They use contemporary data series to reconstruct flows of energy into the city (both firewood and charcoal), and the consumption patterns of industries and households (from the aristocracy down to the urban poor), to show that supplies were relatively stable – if inequitably distributed – over a long span of time. Contrary to the "old clichés", Madrid managed its energy resources sustainably throughout the period. Not until the nineteenth century, the authors argue, did accelerating population growth increase rates of deforestation significantly, with some forests having to be converted into farmland.

The last two chapters, those by Jean-Baptiste Fressoz and Thomas Le Roux (chapter 16) and Stéphane Frioux (chapter 17), both concentrate on the problem of urban-industrial pollution and sanitation in modern France. Fressoz and Le Roux survey the evolution of French regulation of industrial nuisances during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As they show, early regulation of workshops and factories by Old Regime authorities aimed to prevent environmental pollution and maintain a healthy urban population, but by the end of the period in question the laws had altered dramatically to protect polluting industries and industrialists. According to Fressoz and Le Roux, the role of "experts" in public health – from Bernardino Ramazzini (1700) to Louis-René Villermé (1840) – in creating a "new medical paradigm" that replaced traditional environmental aetiologies of disease with an emphasis on social factors such as pauperism was crucial in bringing about this legislative change. Stéphane Frioux investigates the spread of urban sanitation techniques (water supplies, sewage disposal systems, and garbage collection) in French towns and cities during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He reminds us that before the Second World War the French state allowed a good deal of autonomy to municipal authorities where the development of sanitary infrastructure was concerned, giving local voters an influential voice in often complex decision-making processes. And he too examines the role of external "experts and expertise", such as national commissions and professional engineers, in planning city-wide sanitation projects to protect public health.

Taken together, the chapters in this collection clearly show the value of establishing common ground between social and environmental history. We hope that the book will encourage more social historians to include the theme of human-environment relations among their research priorities. At a time when there are frequent calls for – and much talk about – interdisciplinarity, it is worth noting that environmental historians have been engaged in interdisciplinary research for some time; it is a practical necessity in undertaking their endeavours. Breaking down the former borders to create common ground between disciplines is a challenge that can be as exciting as it must have been to construct them, a century or a century-and-a-half ago. Reconciling the social and natural sciences is a difficult, but rewarding and inspiring task. This book aims to contribute to it.

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LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENT

CHAPTER TWO

ANGLING AND NATURE: ENVIRONMENT, LEISURE, CLASS AND CULTURE IN BRITAIN 1750 – 1975

RICHARD COOPEY AND TIM SHAKESHEFF

Angling, as a leisure or sporting activity, is embedded in nature. Along with other field sports, countryside activities or urban outdoor pursuits, angling necessitates a direct engagement with the "environment". Moreover, since water is involved, it is directly connected with that most sensitive or controversial of environmental resources. This chapter seeks to outline the historical relationship between angling and nature, between anglers and the environment and between anglers and their landscape. The first point to stress is that there is no simple linear history to be traced. To begin with there are many "anglings". As we will show the pastime develops and fragments, and takes on a range of different imperatives, organisations and meanings, encompassing a widely variant set of angling constituencies from aristocrat to working class. Each of these carries their own cultural profile, their own motives and expectations, their own impact on, and ideas about, the environment or nature. Each changes historically. The simple idea of a man sitting contemplatively by an undisturbed water landscape, embraced by the "benison of quietness", while perhaps carrying an element of truth, fails to describe an activity riven by class division, exclusivity and exclusion, competition, capital, technological advance and angst. And women go fishing too.

In many ways angling is in nature. This is an easy observation to make when picturing the fly fisherman among the tumbling mountain streams, or the peaceful bankside figures, lost in reverie beside Constable's *Stratford Mill*. But even the hunched coarse fishermen of the greasy Lowryesque canals of industrial Britain pursued a wild quarry, nature of some kind, inveigled into the most urban of landscapes. Angling is then a connection with the wild, the elemental – the opposite of the urban, indoor life. The opposite of the industrial or urban segmentation of the day into a

Taylorised or Fordised time discipline. As the very paragon of angling writers, Arthur Ransome, noted, "Escaping to the Stone Age by the morning train from Manchester, the fisherman engages in an activity that allows him to shed the centuries as a dog shakes off water and to recapture not his own youth merely but the youth of the world."[1] But Ransome also noted that:

> Fishing cannot be explained simply as a means of escape from our over-elaborate life, for it is enjoyed by men who have lived all their lives on the river bank as well as by those who escape to their fishing from the towns…The truth, I think, is that we resume "Palaeolithic life" not because of any preference for any past age but to seek a relationship with Nature which is valuable in all ages.[2]

So, angling is "in" nature then, but we need to go beyond this. Angling, in its many forms, has not been passive in nature. As this chapter will show, while angling is engagement with nature, in many ways the activity has had a role in shaping that nature. The pursuit of angling has led to the appropriation and the creation of a wide range of venues. It has led to the creation and morphology of landscapes and to the engineering of the wildlife profile within those landscapes. In addition, through their individual efforts and power, or through collective enterprise, anglers have fulfilled a range of roles as stewards or custodians of the environment. They have protected rivers from pollution, resisted encroachments and threats ranging from large-scale civil engineering projects to the industrialisation of rivers themselves. They have monitored and offset attacks on water quality, water tables and so on. This is not to say that anglers form some vanguard of environmentalists. To be sure they have sometimes disrupted or rebalanced ecosystems and have acted from purely selfish motives. Some benefits to the environment have been incidental, a secondary consideration. The picture is a complex one, as angling venues, popularity, demographic and meaning changed over time. Nevertheless anglers are an important part of the picture.

The conspicuous consumption of the landscape? The nature of game fishing

One of the fundamental divisions in angling is that between game and coarse fisherman. The former generally in pursuit of salmon and trout, the

[1] Ransome, *Rod and Line*, 70
[2] *Ibid.*, 72

latter fishing for all the other species. We will explore this division in more detail below. Firstly, however, let us consider the essence of game fishing, and its environment. Writing in the 1870s the prolific angling writer the Reverend M. G. Watkins argued that in angling catching fish was a secondary pleasure, similarly writing at the turn of the twentieth century Earl Hodgson suggested that men who fished just to catch fish were little better than fishmongers.[3] They rightly argued, then, that catching fish was just one aspect of angling. For Watkins the murmuring moor-land beck, the sight and cry of the curlew and the smell of wild mint was every bit as important as the number of trout that found their way into his creel. Similarly, angling waist deep in the ice cold waters of the Spey, beneath the snow-capped, heather-clad mountains of Scotland was for A. E. Knox, of equal importance to the salmon he sought to catch.[4] For men such as these angling was not just about taking part in an outdoor activity but, to some degree at least, observing and being part of nature. To become part of the landscape where trout and salmon could be caught; to be as one, to merge with nature, was seen as an intricate part of the game angling experience. This revering of nature and landscape in game fishing developed during the nineteenth century; a century that coincided with the separation of angling into types or categories that were formed largely, although not exclusively, on class, quarry and tactics. Moreover, somewhat paradoxically, the trout and salmon fisherman sought to imitate and control the environment he fished in partly for the betterment of his sport but also so he could maintain its purist nature and therefore exclude the hoi polloi from these ideal river-side havens of peace and tranquillity.

Set against the emergence of a series of movements and cultures, from romanticism and the picturesque onwards, stretching from poetry and art to landscaping and architecture, encompassing figures such as Wordsworth, Repton, Constable and Williams Leader, the nineteenth century transformation of angling into a categorised and stratified pastime was partly a result of an escape to ruralism and the revering of nature and partly to suit those who could afford to do so wished to keep the salmon and trout, those so called "monarchs of the stream", and the wild waters they inhabited for themselves. Anglers yearned for wild nature, but perhaps not the Thoreauvian version. Game fish were an appropriate quarry for a class that felt it was they who could appreciate the habitat of the trout and salmon; fish of clean flowing oxygenated waters of the west, north and Scotland, so unlike the often sluggish and increasingly polluted

[3] Watkins, "With a Trout Rod", 524; and Hodgson, *Trout Fishing*.
[4] Knox, *Autumns on the Spey*.

waters of the industrial Midlands and the flat and featureless east of England. Moreover, the method employed to secure the salmon and trout, that is with an artificial fly, eradicated the somewhat unwholesome task of impaling live baits, and made the pursuit more agreeable. Indeed, fly fishing for trout and salmon was seen as a healthy and invigorating activity. Compared to coarse fishing, with its anglers hunched in shade and immobile on baskets, game fishermen saw themselves as active, bathed in sunlight and artistic. While Earl Hodgson went a little too far in comparing fly fishing to "literature and art", it is evident that fly fishing for game fish was regarded as the "purest form of the art" largely because it put the angler in contact with the swiftly flowing stream and demanded the skills of dexterity and a knowledge of nature.[5] Writing in 1850, and predating Norman Maclean by over a century, Morgan Rattler argued that "other forms of fishing we look upon either as a labour, a business, a toil, for the gridiron or the stew-pan, or a dullards dozy pastime – or anything, gentle piscator, you will, rather than a pure sport".[6]

For its enthusiasts fly fishing was an ideal means of escape; often taking the angler to the boundaries of wilderness and away from the pressures of modern life. Sir Edward Grey, for example, wrote in 1899 that time snatched away from his role as Foreign Secretary to his favourite chalk stream to fish for trout was a welcome "escape", and he was always "grateful for the grass on which you walk, even for the soft country dust about your feet".[7] Similarly, Sydney Buxton, the liberal politician, in the same year, wrote that "a day's fly fishing, snatched from the worry and scurry of life, (was) the most fascinating of pleasures, the truest of recreations, and the greatest of rests".[8] These brief retreats to ruralism could be obtained through angling; however, while Martin Wiener argued that ruralism played a part in the eventual retardation of the British economy the role of angling was probably minimal, even if there were some rich fly fishing industrialists that spent the whole trout fishing season on the banks of a river.[9] Grey and Buxton were trout anglers and for men such as these fly fishing was important because as Arthur Ransome suggested it exchanged the elaborate and indirect for a simple and direct relationship with nature. That fly fishermen felt that they were communing with and being part of nature was (and perhaps still is) of paramount

[5] Hodgson, *Trout Fishing*, 2.
[6] Rattler, "Touching Fly-Fishing", 138; for the vastly more well known evocation see Maclean, *A River Runs Through It.*
[7] Grey, *Fly Fishing*, 50-51.
[8] Buxton, "Fly Fishing", 116.
[9] See: Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit.*

importance. Indeed, much game fishing literature of the period reflects this and as much space was devoted to describing the angler's environment complete with observations entomological, botanical and ornithological as it did with instructional material. While Grey and Buxton cast their lines on the chalk streams of Hampshire and the becks of Devonshire for trout, Scotland was another popular destination for the trout and salmon angler and as Grenier has pointed out, the wilds of Scotland "spoke to nineteenth century middle class anxieties" in other ways than simply offering "spiritual and physical refreshment".[10] The wilds of Scotland provided the opportunity for the salmon angler especially to reinforce the ideals of masculinity.[11] Indeed, a good deal of salmon angling literature relates Homeric battles with large fish that were landed or lost while standing chest deep in an icily cold river. Knox's *Autumns on the Spey* for example, is full of references to the harshness of the Scottish climate and titanic battles with fish.[12]

Fly fishing for trout and salmon, then, had become a gentile pursuit by the middle of the nineteenth century. However, the enthusiast had to claim the pristine water in wild and relatively untamed scenery that was deemed necessary as part of the game fishing experience as his own. This was achieved in several ways. Firstly, as angling grew in popularity, the cost of game fishing increased to such a degree that by the 1870s the working class enthusiast was effectively priced out. For example, membership of a trout fishing club on a decent stretch of water by the 1860s could be anything up to £25 per annum; nearly half a years salary for many working men. If trout fishing was prohibitive then salmon angling had become the pastime of the rich. Watkins admitted that "it is not everyone … who can afford the luxury of a salmon river, with the necessary gillies, boatmen & co, which the sport entails".[13] Indeed, the *Pall Mall Gazette* noted in 1869 that "it is a common thing on a good (salmon) river to pay from £300 to £500 a year for the privilege of fishing a mile or two".[14] The salmon, then, as Bertram argued, had "become the rich man's fish … and liberty to ply one's rod on a salmon river is a privilege paid for at a high figure per annum. Such facts at once elevate *Solmo salar* to the highest regions of luxury".[15] Writing to the *Glasgow Herald* in 1886 a displaced James Brown complained that:

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[10] Grenier, *Tourism and Identity in Scotland*, 108.
[11] *Ibid.*, 110.
[12] Knox, *Autumns on the Spey*.
[13] Watkins, "Salmon Fishing", 281.
[14] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 14 May 1869.
[15] Bertram, *The Harvest of the Sea*, 53.