

# LOST IN TRANSLATION, OR ADRIFT IN INTERDISCIPLINARY SPACE

*A review essay*<sup>1</sup>

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GRAEME WYNN

*The Atlas of U.S. and Canadian Environmental History*

Char Millar, Editor

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These are heady days for environmental historians. Their field, the beginnings of which most commentators date to the 1960s or 1970s, is flourishing. Where early efforts to define the enterprise exemplified it in catholic and almost comprehensive inventories of work done, recent reviewers acknowledge the impossibility of commenting on everything that bears the label “environmental history” and opt for selective – even quirky – engagements with samplings of an increasingly diverse literature. Monographs spill from university presses, some of which have established series for the publication of work in the discipline. Syntheses interpret the close-grained analyses found in research monographs and theses for student and general audiences. An American commercial publisher has commissioned a string of regional studies that will, together, constitute a world-encompassing set of

environmental histories.<sup>2</sup> And recent months have seen the appearance of the *Encyclopedia of World Environmental History* and *The Atlas of U.S. and Canadian Environmental History*.<sup>3</sup> From “awkward beginnings” this new interdisciplinary approach to the study

<sup>2</sup> Compare Richard White’s two review articles, “Environmental History: The Development of a New Historical Field,” *Pacific Historical Review* 54 (1985): 297–335 and “Environmental History: Watching a Field Mature,” *Pacific Historical Review* 70 (2001): 103–12; and consider J.R. McNeill, “Observations on the Nature and Culture of Environmental History,” *History and Theory* 42 (2003): 5–43. Among university presses with environmental history series one might identify Washington (Weyerhaeuser Environmental Books), Ohio (Series in Ecology and History), and British Columbia (Nature/History/Society). For a lively synthesis see T. Steinberg, *Down to Earth: Nature’s Role in American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). The globe-encircling series is with ABC-Clio, under the general editorship of Mark Stoll.

<sup>3</sup> S. Krech III, J.R. McNeill and C. Merchant, eds., *Encyclopedia of World Environmental History*, 3 vols. (New York: Routledge, 2004); Char Miller, ed., *The Atlas of U.S. and Canadian Environmental History* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>1</sup> I thank Anne K. Knowles, Cole Harris, and Robert A.J. McDonald for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this essay. As always, I alone am responsible for opinions expressed and arguments made.

of history has been transformed “into a sophisticated academic field” offering “an important lens through which to view the past.”<sup>4</sup> It is, by most internal reckonings at least, “something new [and significant] under the sun.”<sup>5</sup>

Yet a note of caution is required. It is tough to navigate in interdisciplinary space. Those who travel there may well have “to boldly go” where none of their kind has been before, but they are unwise to assume that the vast reaches spread before them are untracked and uninhabited. Just as Earth-bound mortals are likely to gain most from visits to foreign realms if they know a good deal of the language, it is usually a very good thing for those who venture across disciplinary borders to learn something – even if they remain dependent upon a phrase-book – of the lingo (and the behavioural quirks and worldviews and so on) of those into whose territory they venture. If the world of postmodern scholarship increasingly resembles the European Union as a place where political agendas have made boundary crossing easier and thus more frequent, neither the compass of intellectual endeavour nor the twenty-five member states of the EU should be construed as a homogenous space. If “social theory” offers scholars a Euro-like common currency, its adoption and use are still resisted in important parts of the universe in which its proponents believe it should circulate. Deep differences divide Slovaks from Swedes, psychologists from political scientists. Despite shared borders and historic ties, ecologists, car-

tographers, geographers, and historians are separated just as markedly (by language, tradition, sense of identity, fundamental convictions) as Poles, Germans, French, and Spaniards. This is not, for a moment, to suggest that communication across the lines is impossible. Far from it. But it has to be worked at, and voyagers are unlikely to be well received if they proceed beyond their disciplinary or national boundaries blithely insensitive to local traditions, convictions, and contributions.

These thoughts are provoked by *The Atlas of U.S. and Canadian Environmental History*. What excitement this title conveys, with its promise of transnational, interdisciplinary scholarship presented in graphic form. The last two decades or so have been a heyday for historical atlases as interdisciplinary teams have produced a series of truly remarkable volumes dealing, inter alia, with Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Ireland, the United States and the Sto:lo territory of the Lower Mainland.<sup>6</sup> Each has its

<sup>6</sup> *Historical Atlas of Canada*, vol. 1, *From the Beginning to 1800*, ed., C. Harris; vol. 2, *The Land Transformed, 1800–1891*, ed., R.L. Gentilcore; and vol. 3, *Addressing the Twentieth Century, 1891–1961*, ed., D. Kerr and D.W. Holdsworth (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987, 1993, and 1990); M. McKinnon, ed., *New Zealand Historical Atlas* (Auckland: Bateman 1997); J.C.R. Camm and J. McQuilton, *Australians: A Historical Atlas* (Sydney: Fairfax, Syme, and Weldon Associates, 1987); F.H.A. Aalen, K. Whalen, and M. Stout, eds., *Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); S. Duffy, ed., *The Macmillan Atlas of Irish History* (New York: Macmillan, 1997); National Geographic Society, *Historical Atlas of the United States* (Washington, DC: National Geographic Society, 1988); K.T. Carlson, *A Sto:lo Coast Salish Historical Atlas* (Vancouver and Chilliwack: Douglas and McIntyre and Sto:lo Heritage Trust, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> Miller, *The Atlas*, vii.

<sup>5</sup> I borrow the title – but not the intent – of J.R. McNeill’s well crafted and intelligent treatment of the recent environmental history of the world here; *Something New under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000).

strengths, and particular emphases, but for a while and in some quarters at least there was a sense of cumulative enterprise, with later entrants affording the works of their precursors serious attention in order to learn from what had (and had not) been accomplished.<sup>7</sup> Now a historical/environmental atlas: what promise! Although many practitioners proclaim the field's autonomy, environmental history is strongly geographical. Its focus upon "the mutual relations between humankind and the rest of nature" parallels geography's longstanding interest in the human-environment interface.<sup>8</sup> Paying attention to non-human nature – the environment – inevitably grounds analysis in the Earth. Doing so while fixing firm attention on human affairs, and keeping an alert eye upon the mutual relations between these phenomena, has the potential to open important lines of inquiry and interpretation through the spatial visualization and innovative mapping of historical data. Here historians, geographers, and others should find common – and fertile – ground. On espying this title in the Routledge catalogue, I looked forward to a stimulating, boundary-erasing production that expanded understanding of one of the world's most monumental stories: the interaction of humans and the rest

of nature over time to transform the North American continent.

I was, and remain, sadly disappointed. This expensive volume – at \$225 it falls well short of being a bargain at half the price – is an atlas only in the eighteenth-century sense that it is a compendium of knowledge. Perhaps the simplest most inclusive current definition of an atlas is that it "is a communication device that speaks primarily through maps."<sup>9</sup> By my rough estimates, visual (non-textual) material accounts for considerably less than half of the space in this volume – and pictures and charts (not maps) make up a significant proportion of the visual content. Moreover, the maps are essentially snapshots used to illustrate certain points or to locate "things" such as "Coalfields in the United States, c. 1900." Edited by the American Char Miller, a widely published historian and celebrated teacher, with the assistance of Canadian Jennifer Read (identified as the editorial adviser), who took her doctorate in history from the University of Western Ontario, this volume bears many signs of the historian's propensity to regard "geography as the study of where" and to "use maps to show where things were located or where events happened but not much else."<sup>10</sup> The point is made unselfconsciously in the "Preface," where it is noted that the various types of "images" included in the "atlas" serve to "illuminate many of the topics discussed in the articles."

Might this, then, be better considered a history, albeit a misnamed one? There is text enough to suggest that conclusion, and seven revealingly titled "chapters," organized in chronological sequence from 1492 to the

<sup>7</sup> Thus the editorial team of the *New Zealand Historical Atlas* gave careful attention to its Canadian and Australian precursors as well as to the *Historical Atlas of the United States*, before deciding upon its approach and format. For some assessment of the *Historical Atlas of Canada*, see G. Wynn, "Maps and Dreams of Nationhood: A (Re)view of the *Historical Atlas of Canada*," *Canadian Historical Review* 76, 3 (1995): 482–510; and M. Sparke, "A Map that Roared and an Original Atlas: Canada, Cartography and the Narration of Nation," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 88 (1998): 463–95.

<sup>8</sup> McNeill, "Observations," 6.

<sup>9</sup> A. Buckley, "Atlas Mapping in the 21st Century," *Cartography and Geographic Information Science* 30, 2 (2003): 149.

<sup>10</sup> A.K. Knowles, "Revisioning History," *Historical Geography* 27 (1999): 226.

present, determine the basic structure of the volume. Following time's progress is what history is commonly assumed to do. But calling this volume *A History of US and Canadian Environments* would not solve its problems. Within each chapter, time's arrow is deflected by the treatment of material in six thematic categories: Agriculture; Wildlife and Forestry; Land Use and Management; Technology, Industry and Pollution; Human Habitats; and Ideology and Politics. Thus neither time nor theme is able to unfold without interruption. Each of these thematic categories is made up of one or more two-page "articles"; each article focuses on a particular topic. This produces much awkwardness and many anomalies. To take a single example: the Agriculture category in Chapter 2, "Expansion and Conflict (1770s-1850s)," comprises an article on "Farming in Southern Ontario" and another on "Plantation Economy and Labor in the US South." There is nothing on farming – and very little on the important, environment-altering process of settlement expansion – in New England, the middle states, the Midwest, the Shenandoah country, or the rest of British North America. Of course completeness is impossible, and choices have to be made. But there is generally neither acknowledgment nor accounting for omissions. All of this makes for a curiously incomplete, even incoherent, "history."

To be fair, and recognizing its explicit venture into interdisciplinary space, this volume needs to be evaluated from at least two perspectives. First, let us take this atlas on its own terms. It is a collaborative enterprise. Its ninety-four articles are the product of forty-four contributors, including Read; Miller provides a two-page introduction to each of the volume's seven "chapters." The scope and emphases of the articles vary widely from "Pre-Contact:

Indigenous Populations in the United States and Canada" to "Rachel Carson and *Silent Spring*," from "Social Darwinism and 'Survival of the Fittest' in the United States" to "The Trans-Alaska Pipeline Dispute," and from "New England Agrarian Commonwealths" to "Corporate Greenwashing." Approximately two-thirds of all articles deal exclusively with either Canada or the United States. The others "cross" the border, in one direction or another, although only a few do so in ways that suggest bioregional or transnational perspectives. Most articles conform closely to a standard format. They are written in clear, accessible prose. They contain more than 1,000 but fewer than 2,000 words, are organized under three or four subheads, and include a brief set of "Further Readings" (usually four or five items) as well as at least one image and/or a "sidebar." Forty-six articles (almost half the total) do not include a single map. A "Timeline" ranging from 9500 BC to 2002 has almost 250 entries; there are approximately as many of these for the post-1967 period as there are for the years before 1850. By my approximate count, contributors include twenty-nine historians (including one school teacher), five independent writers, four geographers, and others from government, museums, and Departments of English and Political Science. Academics range from doctoral candidates to emeritus professors, and a large handful are well known environmental historians. Readers are given no information about how contributors were selected or about how the organization of the volume was decided upon.

This is a very mixed bag indeed. Articles vary widely in quality, and a few are excellent. I especially appreciated Michel F. Girard's "The Canadian Commission of Conservation: Urban Planning" (even though it lacks a

map). Too little has been written of the Canadian Commission of Conservation in English, and this little piece presents a clear, informed, and informative assessment of one aspect of its work. Other authors struggle to wrestle large topics – “Domestication of the Land: From Wilderness to Farmland [1492–1770s],” “Romanticism of Nature: American and Canadian Writers and Artists [1850s–1920s],” and “Forest Management in Canada [1880s–1920s]” – into their allotted space. The results are noticeably uneven. One craves some explanation of the underlying rationale here, a rationale that forces through the same grid such different topics as the “Columbian Exchange,” “The Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909,” and the building of “Transcontinental Railroads.” However tasty the individual sausages produced by this machine, they do not (and cannot) amount to an aesthetically pleasing, intellectually satisfying, meal.

Does the atlas as a whole address the central concerns of environmental history? One approach to answering this question is to focus on its substantive content. Without doubt, many of the themes and topics included here are well known to workers in the field. One reviewer has noted, approvingly, that the atlas covers “a wide variety of topics including industrialization, literary and artistic romanticism of nature, conservation and contemporary globalization”; another that it offers “a holistic coverage of both US and Canadian environmental history.”<sup>11</sup> But is this enough? Consider the list offered by Ted Steinberg in the preface to his ambitious pioneering synthesis of work in American environmental history, *Down to Earth*, as a sample of

the topics touched upon in that book: “colonization, the industrial revolution, slavery, the Civil War, consumerism ... the Little Ice Age, horse manure, pig sties, fast food, lawns, SUVs, and garbage.” That this inventory neither catalogues all of Steinberg’s concerns nor replicates the content of the atlas is a reminder that the scope of environmental history is almost boundless. No single work can possibly encompass the whole. One must therefore approach the question from another direction. Does this atlas of environmental history offer a distinctive point of view, a unique way of looking at the world? Most environmental historians would claim as much for their discipline. Thus Steinberg finds environmental history’s individuality in its focus upon three questions: “how natural forces shape history, how humankind affects nature, and how those ecological changes then turn around to influence human life once again in a reciprocating pattern.” Others describe their concerns in slightly different ways. But it is hard to discern any particular and consistent point of view in the articles in the atlas. Steinberg’s defining concerns are dimly evident here and there, but rarely are they engaged specifically; several articles are simply orthodox historical narratives in which it is hard to identify any particular concern for nature’s role in history. As a consequence the atlas lacks coherence and fails to convey a clear sense of what environmental history is. The whole is less than the sum of the parts, and the atlas thus falls far short of realizing the potential, inherent in such a project, to change the ways in which people think about the past.<sup>12</sup>

Given the presumed readership of this volume – senior high school and university students – and the tenor of

<sup>11</sup> E.E. VonAncken, in *School Library Journal*, quoted on Amazon.com Web site under Miller, *Atlas*; B. Black, “Review,” *Environmental History* 9, 2 (2004): 311–12.

<sup>12</sup> Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, ix, xii.

early reviews in library journals and elsewhere, it is likely to find a place on reference shelves across the continent. This is a troubling prospect. The atlas contains altogether too many inaccuracies and stumbles of the sort attributable to a combination of carelessness, insufficient knowledge, and inadequate editing. The following few examples (all taken from the first fifth of the volume) suggest the range of these shortcomings. On page 8 the pre-Columbian population of North America is given as "between 9.8 and 12.5 million." On page 14 (to which there is a cross-reference immediately preceding the population estimate cited above) the text informs readers that "an estimated fifty million Native Americans occupied the North American continent" on the eve of European contact. These figures are irreconcilable. There is a large, contentious literature on the size of the indigenous population on the eve of contact, but none of the critical sources is included in the "Further Readings" for these articles or in the consolidated Bibliography. To say that "Icelandic explorer Leif Ericson is believed to have reached the coast of Labrador in about 1000 AD" is to exclude Greenland from the story of Viking expansion across the North Atlantic; to drop brother Thorvald from his place in the sagas; to ignore the archeological evidence of L'Anse aux Meadows, which confirms this early European presence in North America; and to anglicize a name now generally rendered Eiriksson, all in a single sentence. Discussion of "The Seigneurial System in New France" is muddled, twice uses the non-word "routures" for *rotures*, and characterizes geographer Cole Harris as a historian. Since the Huron people are generally considered to have adopted cultivation (which diffused from the south) about AD 500, it would seem that "agriculture

has been practiced for hundreds [rather than "thousands"] of years in the area now known as Southern Ontario." The Hudson's Bay Company (a British concern) is improperly described as "the Canadian giant" between 1820 and 1850. Discussion of "The Extermination of the Buffalo" comes dangerously close to presenting early Plains natives as the "ecological Indians" whom Shepard Krech has shown to be imagined products of the environmental angst of the 1970s. And so on. This is just poor scholarship – bad history. There really is no excuse for it. Volume 1 of the *Historical Atlas of Canada* (available since 1987) provides the information to correct most of these errors.<sup>13</sup>

In the maps and graphs, poor scholarship is compounded by clumsy cartography. Although almost all of the maps, and most of the graphs, in this volume have been "adapted" from other sources, the adaptations are commonly unwise, uncritical, unskillful, and unfortunate. Again a sample of instances, drawing mainly upon Canadian examples, illustrates the problems. For reasons that probably have a lot to do with unintelligent decisions about scale and cartographic conventions (but that might be construed as politically motivated) "Canadian Lands" (p. 186), adapted from a map on the Natural Resources Canada Web site, conveys the impression that Indian reserves encompass almost all of the west coasts of Vancouver Island and the mainland of British Columbia as well as the Fraser River downstream from the Cariboo, when in fact reserves are tiny, scattered pockets of land. "National and Provincial Parks in Canada c. 1911" (p. 94) is adapted from Plate 36 (the attribution given is Plate 35) in Volume 3 of *The Historical Atlas*

<sup>13</sup> S. Krech III, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999).

of Canada. Where the original map uses proportional circles and a key to categorize parks by size, this atlas attaches labels indicating name and area to proportional symbols identifying each park. Instead of conducting the research necessary to establish the size of each park, the appropriate *Historical Atlas of Canada* key category is simply incorporated into each label. This produces senseless specifications such as "Jasper, British Columbia/Alberta (1000–1999 thousands of hectares)". "Urban Population in the United States, 1870 and 1910" (p. 78) actually shows the proportion of the population living in urban areas by state and, thus, maps levels of urbanization rather than the urban population per se.

In the simple graph displaying "Industrial Softwood Production in British Columbia, 1900 to 1950" (p. 61), two lines show production from the coast and the interior over time. The lines are mislabelled, so that the cut from the coast is represented as that from the interior. Moreover, the caption reads "In Canada's British Columbia, demand did not increase until during and after World War II" – despite the steady rise in production charted for the coast (aka interior) from approximately one million cubic metres in 1900 to over fifteen million cubic metres in 1940. "Treaties addressing Land Rights for Canada's First Nations" (p. 48) adapted from Olive Dickason's *Canada's First Nations* is clear enough (apart from the tendentious title) but omits the Douglas Treaties in British Columbia and leaves the impression that the Treaty process ended with Treaty 6 in 1876. Tom McIlwraith gets credit for developing one of the few original graphics in the volume for his article on Crown Land Policies (p. 40). His graph, so far as I can tell, charts changes in the minimum size and cost of farm lots in Ohio and Upper Canada. But

the title and the caption undermine this useful effort. The title generalizes the case in reading "Disposal of U.S. Public Land and Canada Crown Land"; the caption uses the awkward (and inaccurate) phrase "Ontario, a part of British Crown Land" in referring to the period before 1867, and claims that both jurisdictions adopted forty acres as the standard farm plot when the diagram shows correctly that fifty acres was the minimum standard in Canada West. And so it goes. Much is lost in these translations.<sup>14</sup>

We are left, then, with a series of vignettes at various scales and of diverse quality and significance. Some useful things can be found, but taken as a whole this volume does not tell a coherent story in words or maps. On balance, the text of this "atlas" will likely prove more useful than its visual content, although both are seriously flawed and should be treated cautiously. In the end this volume is neither an effective atlas nor good history. It also fails to live up to the interdisciplinary mandate or the border-crossing promise of the field to which it is addressed. Its attempt to "bring maps into history" yields little of real value, other than the bitter lesson that this is no easy task. Culling maps from hither and yon and modifying them incompetently in hope that they will contribute to interpretation is a recipe for disaster. If recent critical developments in the humanities and social sciences have taught us anything, it is perhaps that

<sup>14</sup> The several references in this paragraph are to: Natural Resources Canada <[www.lcd.nrcan.gc.ca/English/Canada\\_lands\\_national\\_e.asp](http://www.lcd.nrcan.gc.ca/English/Canada_lands_national_e.asp)>; D.G. Kerr and D.W. Holdsworth, eds., *Historical Atlas of Canada*, vol. 3 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990); and O.P. Dickason, *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2002).

sources and representations are far from stable and transparent entities. Maps, graphs and pictures are not decorations that can be moved from room to room (or study to study) on a whim. Curators and historians of photography have long lamented the practice of those historians who write their books and then turn to historical photograph collections to illustrate their arguments. Photographs, they insist, are evidence, not ornaments. So, too, with maps. Moreover, while cartographers have always acknowledged that maps are not the territory that they represent, because they are necessarily produced at other than a one-to-one scale and are governed by a host of representational conventions, recent scholarship has also insisted that maps are far from innocent mirrors of reality. All maps are "social constructions" produced for particular purposes and reflecting specific contexts.<sup>15</sup> They do not necessarily relocate effectively. "Adapting" them, tinkering with their representational vocabulary (especially ineptly), does not automatically allow them to convey new messages or to communicate with new audiences. To insist and act otherwise is akin to assuming that one can communicate in a foreign land by speaking loudly and gesticulating wildly.

What might have been? How might the shortcomings of this "atlas" help us to think about the challenge of producing a truly interdisciplinary atlas of environmental history? First, careful conceptualization is essential. No book can tell a convincing story without a good deal of attention to beginnings and endings, narrative structures, voice and perspective. The same is true of atlases. Editorial vision is vital. Success in the development of an atlas requires a strong hand on the helm, a

clear sense of where the volume is going (the questions it will address, the contribution it will make, what belongs and what does not), and consideration of the winds, tides, currents and shoals of format, projection, colour-use and scale in plotting a course to carry it there. Second, *The Atlas of U.S. and Canadian Environmental History* reminds us that not everything can (or should) be mapped. Important though Rachel Carson and *Silent Spring* were and are for the American environmental movement, for example, it is hard to see a clear place for this topic in a true *atlas* of environmental history. Maps and atlases, like other representational media, have their strengths, weaknesses and biases. They are, perhaps, better suited to consideration of the material rather than the political and cultural/intellectual elements of environmental history; to the examination, interpretation, analysis, and representation of human-induced changes in biophysical environments and their consequences. Such an emphasis requires either conscientious interdisciplinary collaboration, or a level of competence in and comfort with the literature and methods of several disciplines, sufficient to interrogate their findings and to draw relevant information and conclusions (as well as maps) from them. It might also, in effect, make "landscape" a central focus of our projected atlas, and reveal rich interpretive possibilities in the combination of closely-linked images, maps, and texts into dense accounts of

<sup>15</sup> J.B. Harley, "Deconstructing the Map," *Cartographica* 26, 2 (1989): 1-20.

<sup>16</sup> A.K. Knowles's review article, "Revisiting History," 225-9 is excellent on this point in comparing the two atlases of Ireland listed in Note 5 (above). Note also that her title echoes E. Tufte, *Envisioning History* (Cheshire, CN: Graphic Press, 1990). Tufte's brilliant work is essential reading for anyone interested in the spatial data visualization. See also his *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information*, 2nd ed. (Cheshire, CN: Graphics Press, 2001 [1983]).

the interactions of people and nature in particular places through time.<sup>16</sup>

One likely corollary of this would be a stronger emphasis on environment than chronology as a basic ordering principle of the atlas. This is to say that its first-order structure might turn around the evolution of particular bioregions or the changing ecology of wetlands or the utilization of grasslands, rather than such traditional historical divisions as "The Colonial Period" or "The Interwar Years." Third, those involved in the planning and execution of an atlas should have finely-honed skills in geographic visualization. By this I mean more than the capacity simply to make one's own maps (or at least to understand the reasons why and the ways in which data might be presented graphically) – although these are all important and specialized skills in their own right. The approaches and techniques used in the visualization of spatial information provide "an exploratory tool for interrogating data, developing research hypotheses [and] 'extracting patterns from chaos'." They make maps and spatial patterns integral to thinking about research problems. As the historical geographer Anne Knowles has noted, historians who seek to map the past often find it difficult to overcome the "logocentrism" of their discipline – "the privileging of words and logic over images and perceptual apprehension."<sup>17</sup> Doing so is essential to reading and interpreting maps, to avoiding their naïve use in research and the presentation of its results, and

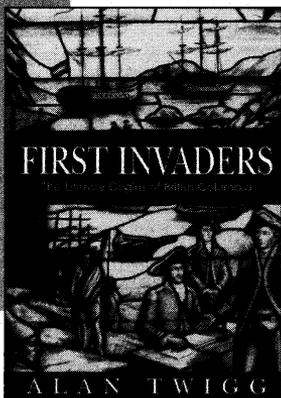
to recognizing that "both abstract ideas and empirical data can ... be presented ... effectively in graphic form." It is a prerequisite to the creation of an effective atlas.

Is it possible, after all of this, to conceive of an atlas of environmental history that lives up to the claims and potential of the field? Indeed it is. There are models from which to learn, opportunities inherent in the technological transformations currently taking place in mapping, and a rich and rapidly expanding body of pertinent research from which to shape an exciting, innovative environmental atlas.<sup>18</sup> But this achievement will not be realized easily. Interdisciplinary space is difficult and demanding territory. Rather than fearing its unfamiliarity and clinging to familiar practices and preconceptions near its edges, those who would benefit from this space need to enter it purposefully. They need to recognize that it is not an unpopulated and trackless waste, and that others enter it from different angles with ideas and skills and tools and languages that help them to imagine and navigate it. There is much to be gained, in short, from thinking of interdisciplinary space as a great bazaar in which expert producers of particular kinds of knowledge can engage in lively exchange with others who see the world differently. Open-mindedness, a readiness to adopt new ways of thinking, a willingness to do things differently and, above all perhaps, the patience to learn new languages and the humility to respect what others have accomplished are important assets in this marketplace. All this will be required of those who would conceive of and represent the world in new ways. But the game is worth the candle.

<sup>17</sup> A.K. Knowles, "A Case for Teaching Geographic Visualization without GIS," *Cartographic Perspectives* 36, 3 (2000): 24–37; see also A.K. Knowles, "Historical GIS: The Spatial Turn in Social Science History: Introduction," in *Social Science History* 24, 3 (2000): 451–70; and A.K. Knowles, ed., *Past Time, Past Place: GIS for History* (Redlands, CA: ESRI Press, 2002).

<sup>18</sup> On the opportunities arising from technological transformation, see Buckley, "Atlas Mapping."

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