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OPEN RIVERS :
RETHINKING WATER, PLACE & COMMUNITY

GRASPING WATER



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An interdisciplinary online journal rethinking the Mississippi
from multiple perspectives within and beyond the academy.

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The cover image is of Delta of the Yellow River, China (top) and Delta of the Zambezi River, Mozambique (bottom). Landsat imagery courtesy of NASA Goddard Space Flight Center and U.S. Geological Survey.

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Joanne Richardson, Institute for Advanced Study,
University of Minnesota

Contact Us

Open Rivers
Institute for Advanced Study
University of Minnesota
Northrop
84 Church Street SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455

Telephone: (612) 626-5054
Fax: (612) 625-8583
E-mail: openrvrs@umn.edu
Web Site: <http://openrivers.umn.edu>

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CONTENTS

Introductions

Introduction to Issue Eight
By Patrick Nunnally, Editor 5

Guest Editors' Introduction to Issue Eight
By Ruth Mostern and Ann Waltner 7

Features

Watershed Colonialism and Popular Geographies of North American Rivers
By Sigma Colon 12

Industrial Ornament, Modern Symbol: New Orleans' First Waterworks on the Mississippi River
By Rina Faletti, Peer Review 29

Rio Yaqui-The Hiak Vatwe: The Transformation of a Cultural Landscape
By Anabel Galindo and James Hopkins 52

River Conservancy and the Undetermined Future of the Port of Tianjin, 1888-1937
By Kan Li 64

The Vanishing
By Ian Teh 87

Perspectives

Why is water sacred to Native Americans?
By Rosalyn R. LaPier 122

When a river is a person: from Ecuador to New Zealand, nature gets its day in court
By Mihnea Tanasescu 127

Geographies

"C-ing" the River: from Companionship to Control to... Catastrophe or Compromise?
By Stevan Harrell 133

Hydrology and World History: Rivers and Watersheds for Students
By Patrick Manning 139

In Review

Listening to a River: How Sound Emerges in River Histories
By Christopher Caskey 146

Primary Sources

Reflections of “New” Geographies: A Brief Glimpse at Pre-Modern Cartography
By Marguerite Ragnow 155

Teaching And Practice

Grasping Water Summer Institute Reading List
By Ruth Mostern, Ann Waltner and Kan Li 169

Editorial

The People Who Make This Journal Happen
By *Open Rivers* Editorial Staff 174

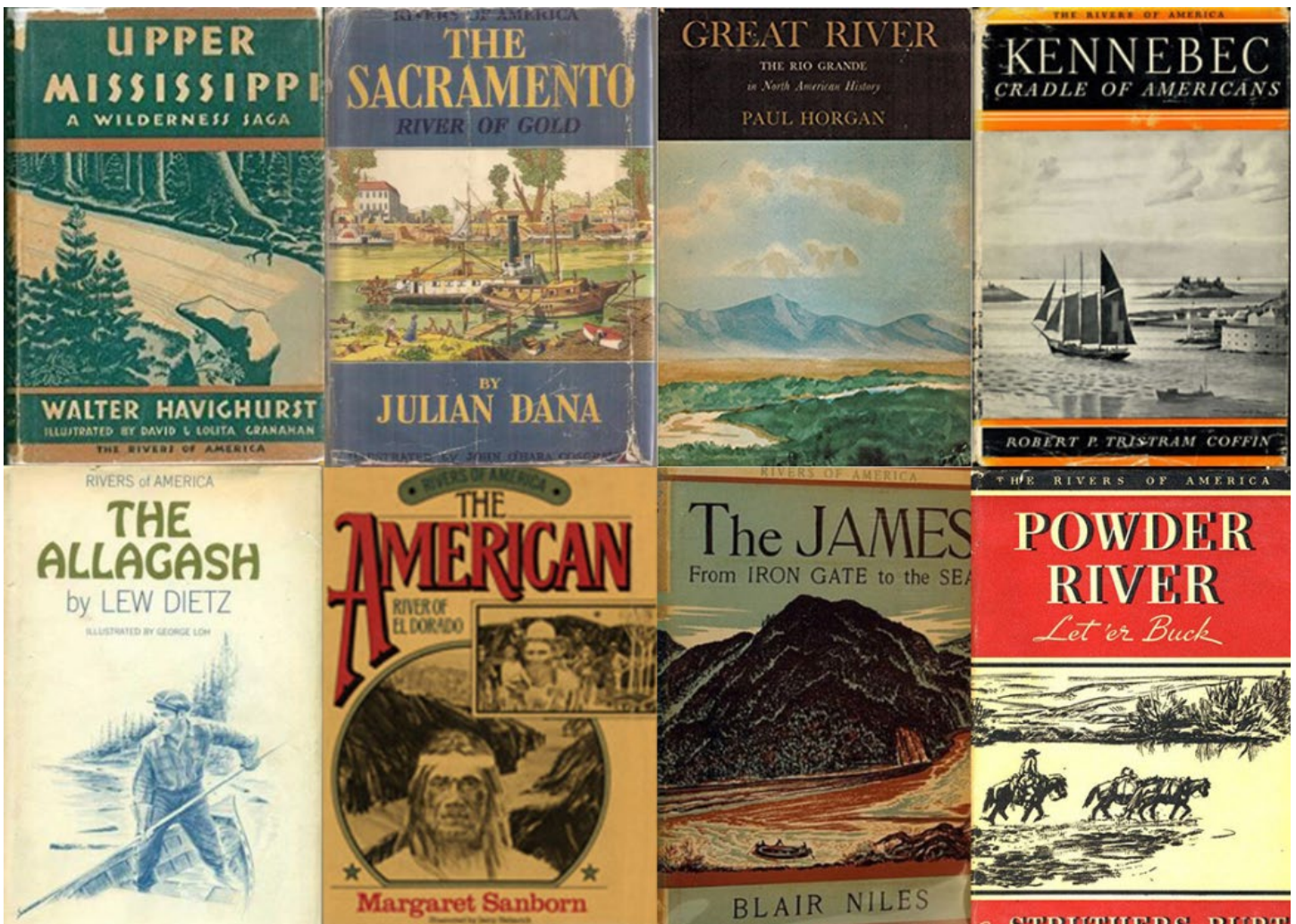
FEATURE

WATERSHED COLONIALISM AND POPULAR GEOGRAPHIES OF NORTH AMERICAN RIVERS

By Sigma Colon

Rivers have long been the subject and vehicle for compelling stories.[1] As physical features that tie natural and human history, rivers in narratives have hidden as much as they've

revealed by naturalizing cultural practices and human values. Placing river stories together, in a genre I describe as popular geographies of rivers, forces their secrets to surface. What this



Select covers from the 'Rivers of America' book series.

remarkable genre in American cultural history reveals ongoing processes of watershed colonialism. Beginning with nineteenth-century narratives of river exploration, then moving to twentieth-century regional histories of river folk, and ending with twenty-first-century river

documentaries, this essay engages the imperial projects, settler colonialist justifications and race-based nationalisms, hydroredemptions and decolonization efforts, integral to a wide-ranging tradition—both temporally and spatially—of river geographies written for popular audiences.

Colonizing the Headwaters of the Mississippi River

Not surprisingly, the Mississippi River provides a basis for physical and literary beginnings. In 1834, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft framed his *Narrative of an Expedition Through the Upper Mississippi, to Itasca Lake* (1834) as helping to resolve the last of “three important problems” in “American Geography.” All were related to rivers, the first two involved finding the source of the Missouri and mapping the Columbia, and the third was to establish the “true source of the Mississippi.”[2] At the behest of Thomas Jefferson, Lewis and Clark had resolved the first two in their search for a route to the Pacific Ocean. Lewis and Clark’s exploration narratives familiarized future settlers with geographies that would help inspire what historian Bernard DeVoto called “the desire of the westering nation”—essentially to colonize its way to the Pacific.[3] A series of explorers set out to mark the source of the Mississippi for military and government-sponsored campaigns. By 1889 the Minnesota Historical Society commissioned Jacob V. Brower to do a topographical and hydrological survey that would settle competing claims. In response to Brower’s conclusion that

Schoolcraft had it right all along, the Minnesota State Legislature created a state park in Lake Itasca to fix the source of the Mississippi.[4]

The desire for a conclusive designation of the Mississippi’s source had its roots in colonial territorial claims determined and bounded by the watersheds of rivers. Based on the geographical contiguity of rivers, Law Professor Robert J. Miller observes that the European doctrine of discovery—which has been used to dispossess Native peoples of their ancestral land and resources worldwide—held that European “discovery” of the mouth of a river created a claim over the entire watershed as well as any adjacent coast.[5] As geographer Rich Heyman points out, the French claim over the Louisiana Territory began with French explorer Robert de La Salle’s proclamation in 1682 at the mouth of the Mississippi that effectively took possession of all land drained by the river.[6] After Jefferson purchased the Louisiana Territory from the French in 1803, the U.S. government had proceeded to assess its acquisition, including determining and mapping the source of the Mississippi River.[7]

Popular Geography

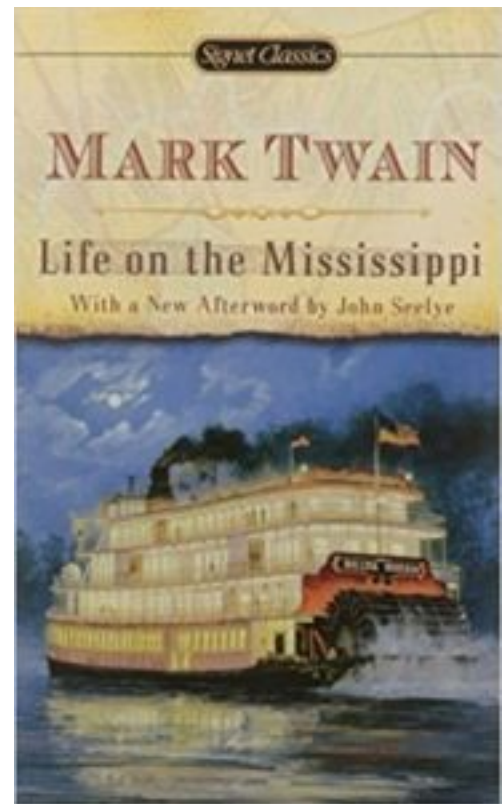
Both the narrative that Schoolcraft discovered the source of the Mississippi and his account of that

expedition mark the beginning of a genre meant to engage broad audiences. Exhibits in Itasca

State Park, which hosts more than half a million visitors each year, memorialize Schoolcraft's discovery of the source in 1832.[8] Schoolcraft's narrative account published in 1834 by Harper & Brothers, and reissued in 1855, was widely read by his contemporaries and continues to be easily accessible through hard copy and digital formats. [9] His voyage to the Upper Mississippi has been described as one of "the most fully documented expeditions in American history" in part because of the journals and reports from other members of the expedition who published shortly after their journey to the source of the Mississippi.[10]

In the U.S., the genre's nineteenth-century roots had a second prominent tradition exemplified by one of the most enduring popular geographies: Mark Twain's *Life on the Mississippi* (1883). Twain provided a cultural history of one of the dominant uses of rivers, which during his time was as transportation corridors. The Mississippi River Commission, a division of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, became an object of ridicule for Twain who concluded of their efforts to control the river, "they could buy ground and build a new Mississippi cheaper." [11] As he described navigating the Mississippi River as a steamboat pilot, and compared it to the work of the Commission, Twain lamented the shift from recognizing the river as infinitely powerful and alive to imagining human dominion over it. Eventually the Army Corps would become the primary governing body with jurisdiction over U.S. rivers.

Popular geographic accounts of rivers from the 1800s through the 1920s exposed the convergence of settler colonialism and the spatial transformation of North American rivers. Organizations such as the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Tidewater Association published geographies intended to educate government agencies and settlers on the use-value of their local rivers, for example, using the St. Lawrence as a source of hydroelectric power and advocating for the development of a shipping channel



through the river.[12] Scenic guidebooks, such as *The Hudson River Route*, included detailed maps, illustrations and advertisements for points of interest and lodging along rivers, in an effort to entice tourists to the "noble river" and impress them with "one of the busiest scenes of commercial activity in the world." [13] Similarly, on the West coast, compiled reflections on *The Grand Canyon of Arizona*, including a piece by explorer John Wesley Powell, persuaded readers that "toil from month to month through its labyrinths" to see firsthand the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River, would culminate in "sublimity... never again to be equaled on the hither side of paradise." [14] Less celebratory accounts lamented significant changes to river flow—in *Tales of a Vanishing River*, Earl Reed suggested that the "Kankakee of old has gone," when "the denuded winding channels," were altered beyond recognition.[15] Since their inception, popular geographies contributed to, and also contested, colonialist, progressive narratives of control and conquest through North American rivers.

Rivers of America-1930s

Popular geographies were serialized in the 1930s with the beginning of the *Rivers of America* volumes published from 1937 to 1974. Through prose, illustrations, and maps, *Rivers of America* produced regional forms of geographic lore that celebrated American nationalism. As dynamic reflections of the place of rivers in American culture, *Rivers of America* provided an antidote to what geographer Jamie Linton has describes as the “placelessness of modern water.”[16] Of the 24 volumes originally commissioned with Farrar & Rinehart, editor Constance Lindsay Skinner assigned nearly half to women and none to an academic historian.[17] The series grew to a total of 65 volumes, each one about a distinct North American river. First editions appeared from 1937 with the *Kennebec River of Maine* to 1974 with the *American River of California*. Altogether the series had more than 350 known printings; millions of copies have been sold with approximately one-third of the titles still in print. [18]

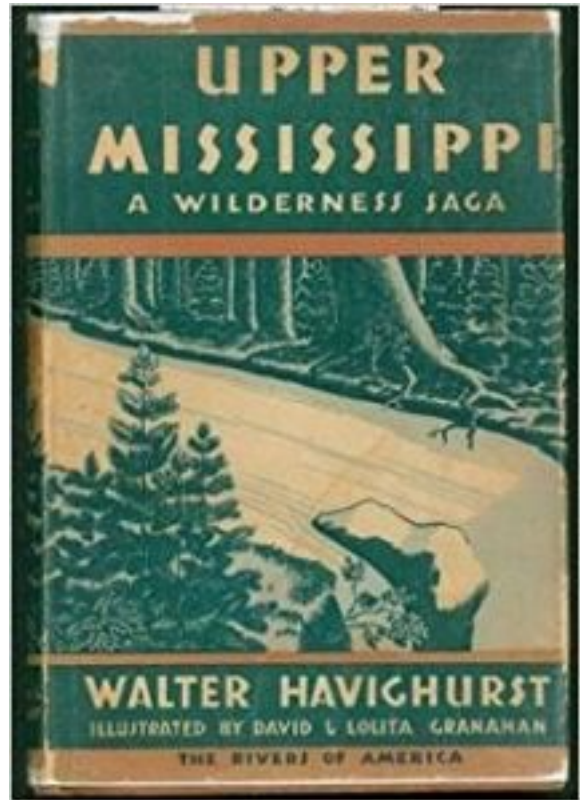
Part of a humanist approach that connected readers to river regions, *Rivers of America* produced a narrative form of settler colonialist ideology and race-based nationalism that was upheld or challenged by individual authors.[19] In his volume, *The Upper Mississippi: A Wilderness Saga* (1937), Walter Havighurst was among the most blatant proponents of Euroamerican solidarity. “It is natural for racial groups to hold together,” he wrote, and asserted that the “Indian menace” brought together Swedes, Norwegians, Scots, Germans, and New Englanders on the Upper Mississippi, and furthermore that the opposition to Native peoples “smashed the racial walls, compelled speech that was English of a sort, and drew the different groups into the closeness of one people.”[20] For Havighurst, race-based nationalism extended to “Yankees, Southerners, Germans, and other breeds hemming the Norse settlements.”[21]

In a 1935 essay appended to early volumes, entitled “Rivers and American Folk,” Skinner invited



Rivers of America book series, selected titles.

readers to consider the *Rivers of America* series as a narrative and political act. “When American folk have troubles which do not end swiftly,” they were inclined “to examine their own sources as a nation and their own story as a people.”[22] For Skinner the source and the story of what it meant to be an American were intimately linked to waterways—the physical locations where “foreigners... began their transition from Europeans to Americans as River Folk.” Skinner envisioned that sustained focus on nature’s agency and the human struggle to navigate, harness, settle, and cultivate river landscapes would reveal the importance of folk culture. She assessed that “the natural rhythm moving the pioneer life of America forward was the rhythm of flowing water.” She also referred to a literary movement when she announced, “It is as the story of American rivers that the folk sagas will be told.”[23]



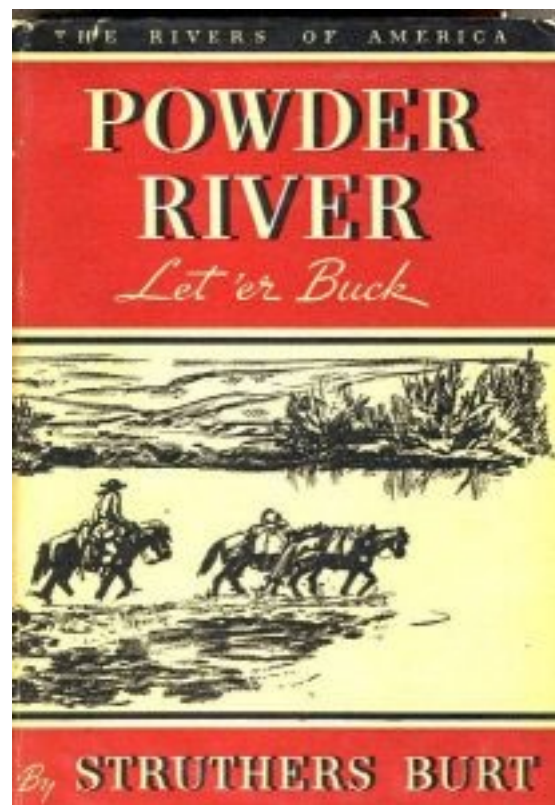
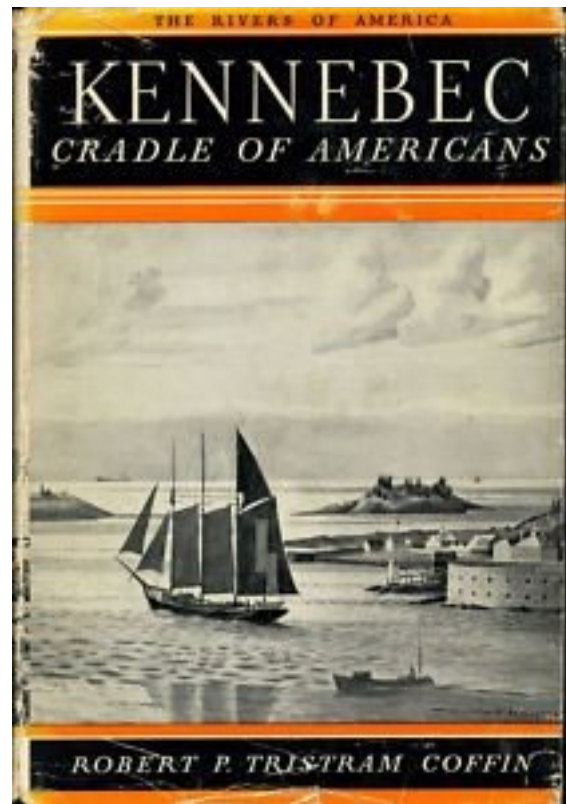
Though they adhered to twentieth-century paradigm shifts in the practice of geography and revealed cultural politics of their contemporary moment, *Rivers of America* volumes focused primarily on narrative history and geography that extended to the end of the nineteenth century. Skinner’s preference for focusing on river history prior to industrialization went hand in hand with her belief that descriptions of American pioneers would illustrate “a new thing on the earth, evolving a new faith and theory of government out of practical and physical struggle with the earth and under the menace of Indians and other wars (Spanish and French).”[24] She imagined that the “social significance” of focusing on a pre-industrial past would emphasize the “democratic ideal of the dignity of the individual.” Narratives that paid special attention to the foundational American strengths “laid all over the land” would convey the auspicious beginnings for “the marvelous inventions that have speeded our labor and increased our riches built upon this foundation. Inventions of free-minded men in a free society.” In practice, however, individual authors grappled with the significance of the past in the context of the major environmental and social costs they experienced in the present, the foundations of which many conveyed as undemocratic, environmentally and socially unsustainable.

In the book that launched the series in 1937, *The Kennebec: Cradle of the Americans*, Robert P. Tristram Coffin lamented that “greed has fouled the Kennebec” and he attacked the production of cheap goods and the shortsighted businessmen who prioritized consumer commodities over the future of a great river. [25] He advocated for environmental protections: “Stop the pollution by the mills and the cities, replenish the river from the hatcheries and lakes, and ‘Kennebec salmon’ need no longer be only a name on every hotel menu, and a myth, but can return to the nation’s table.”[26] Coffin critiqued industrialized lumber production: “Shortsightedness and the lumber merchants’ impatience have brought down the chief Maine industry of the latter part of the nineteenth century to such small pickings. The small logs are cut up and peeled, rolled into the streams, and floated to the rivers when the thaws come. And the small streams of both the Kennebec and the Androscoggin are draining

the last life of Maine's once magnificent forests away.”[27] He described the era of trees ushering in an era of massive pollution as increasing amounts of wood by-products, such as sawdust were dumped into the Kennebec. This along with the dyes and chemicals of the paper mills that rose on the riverbanks marked the beginning of massive pollution in the 1870s and 80s. Coffin recognized, however, that those processes created work for thousands of people.[28]

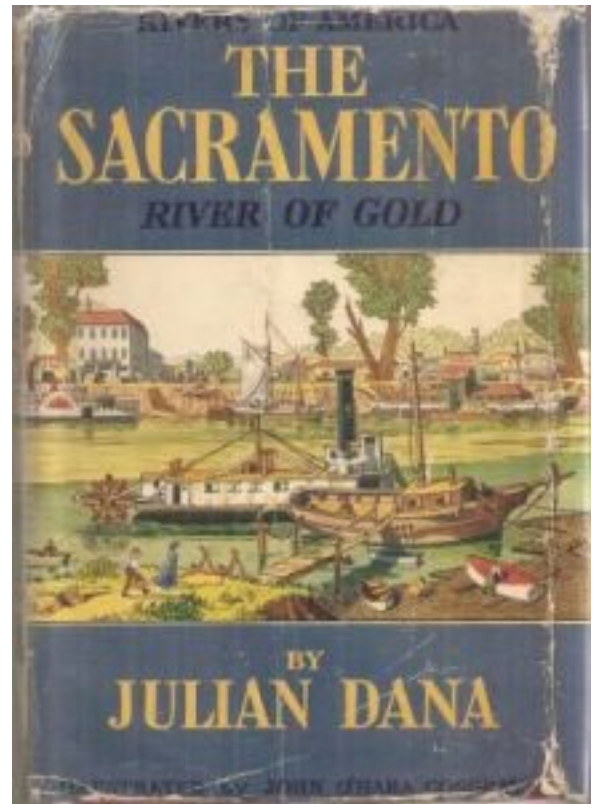
The perennial tension for *Rivers of America* authors was the consumption of rivers and social life by industry. “With the exception of agriculture,” writes historian Patrick Wolfe, no industry “provides a sufficient basis for social life. You cannot eat lumber or gold; fishing for the world market requires canneries. Sooner or later, miners move on, while forests and eventually even fish become exhausted or need to be farmed.”[29] Whereas Skinner imagined the continuity of what she thought of as the American democratic ideal, *Rivers of America* volumes engaged the aftermaths and ongoing incursions of watershed colonialism.

In *The Powder: Let'er Buck*, Maxwell Struthers Burt critiqued the extensive environmental degradation caused by the Northwestern cattle business and examined the systematic circumstances of settlement that exacerbated that depletion. [30] He wrote extensively on the Sioux who he described as following the buffalo who in turn “followed the grass, across the greatest grasslands this country has ever known.”[31] For Burt the confrontation between Euroamerican settlers and Native peoples was “one of the great tragedies of history.”[32] In all the time that the Sioux and the buffalo occupied the Powder River region, Burt argued, they had “kept inviolate the green strip of country.”[33] Unlike the Sioux, he argued that the cattlemen who came after them “lived too largely and too carelessly. News of their easy profits spread too far. The Powder River country was opened up to white settlement in 1878; within five



years the grass was crowded.”[34] For less than a decade cattlemen dominated, and by Burt’s account, destroyed the region.

The emphasis on industry and labor within narratives of environmental change exposed tensions between glorifying and criticizing settler colonialism. In *The Sacramento: River of Gold*, Julian Dana detailed how Euroamerican settlers had destroyed fish stocks with hydraulic mining. In the mid-nineteenth-century, “gold and the machine against the land” led to enormous dumping in the river.[35] Without government regulation, Dana described every group who moved to the valley as polluting the rivers in the Sacramento basin exponentially through mining, ranching, and wheat cultivation.[36] According to Dana, when large-scale wheat production became more lucrative than mining, the few consolidated landowners, “Kings of Wheat,” capitalized on farm mechanization that small owners could not afford, and hired hundreds of migrant laborers for harvest. Small farmers unable to compete “were gobbled up and added to the imperial holdings of the few.”[37] Dana concluded that “the era of the capitalist had arrived and most of the small landholders were against this concentration of land in a few hands.”[38] He described the Kings of Wheat as “the most colossal spenders of resources in our history. For fifty years the land had been sown to the same crop and it was tired.”[39] Once the fertile land was exhausted, the large-scale farming methods and concentrated ownership that characterized wheat cultivation



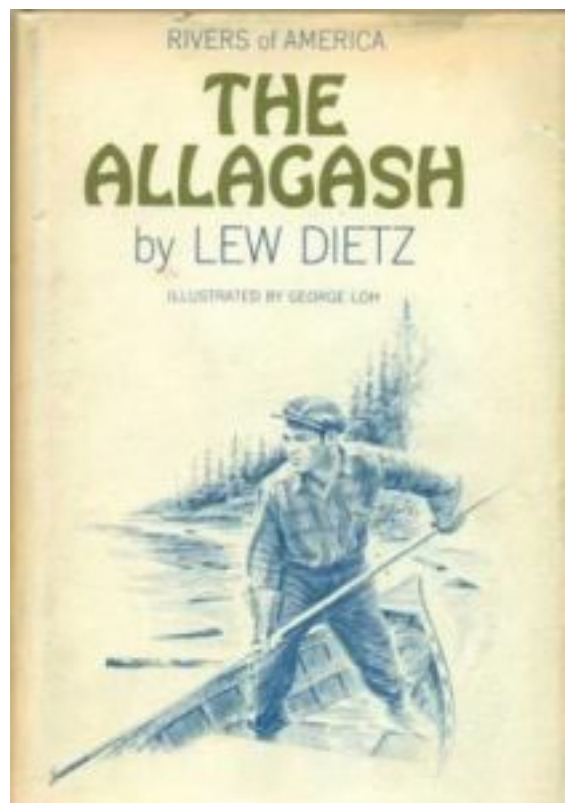
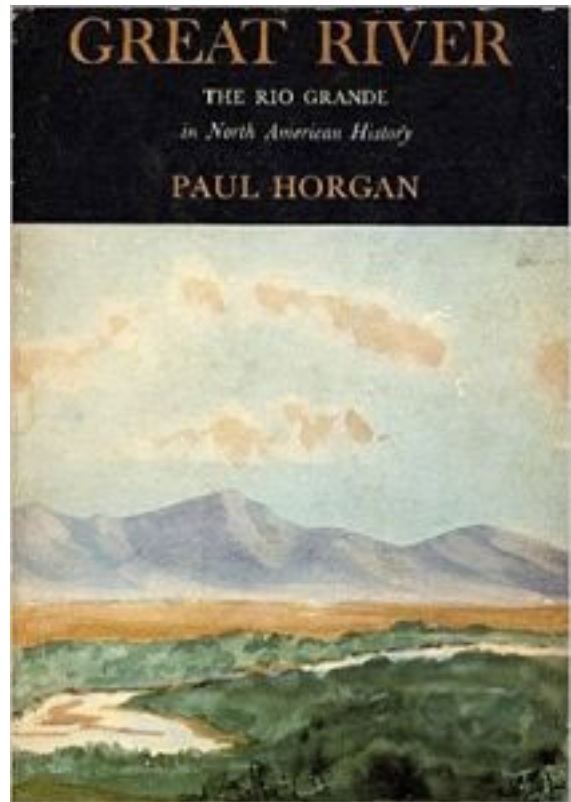
became key features of the intensive cultivation of orchards, vineyards, and vegetable fields.[40] Dana criticized resource extraction and intensive farming that depleted the environment alongside consolidation of land and wealth. Profiling specific men who rose to power and prominence, Dana conveyed that without government regulation, individual actors acted in their sole best interest and, as a result, the environment was depleted and polluted.

Rivers of America-1940s and 1950s

In the 1940s, 32 of the *Rivers of America* volumes were published, and 13 were published in the 1950s. During the war years many books were published as special editions with a notice printed on dust jackets: “WAR EDITION.” In her revised 1945 publication of *The James*, Blair Niles concluded her preface by referencing the

“vision of freedom and of faith which has come to men in the foxholes, to men fighting on perilous seas, and in the air.”[41] The imperative to defend Western culture became an ideological basis for river geographies including Paul Horgan’s volume, which claimed a prophetic Anglo American Manifest Destiny to justify settler colonialism. In

his Pulitzer prize-winning volume, *Great River: The Rio Grande in North American History* (1954), Horgan mythologized Anglo American occupation of the Rio Grande as a facet of the manifest destiny that fueled American Western expansion, Native American removal, and war with Mexico.[42] He characterized General Taylor’s Army on the Rio Grande as carrying a “collective prophecy” that he described as “their own seed,” which they were compelled to “sow”[43]—the sexual connotation suggested the primary physical experience for the settler was in “overcoming a virgin land” and securing the cultural reproduction that would uphold settler colonialism.[44] According to Horgan, Rio Grande Americans had given birth to a new social world, “a society formed around a central passion: the freedom and equality of democratic man. A taste of this—the American theme—had already come near to the river with the Texan settlers in the south, and the trappers and traders in the north; but now once again change, coming with a final sovereignty, was about to make its way along the whole river with an energy and a complexity unknown in the earlier societies of the Indian, the Spaniard and the Mexican.”[45] Horgan found no irony in the notion of spreading freedom and self-government through the conquest of Native peoples and land. He compared Western settlement to domesticating wild nature and characterized the colonizers as preordained objects and subjects of civilization, “plants turning toward the light and space of a new Eden,” but also the gardeners, “Cotton Mather said ‘the whole earth is the Lord’s garden—why should men not tend its empty places?’”[46] For Horgan, Anglo American occupation was natural and everlasting, “Wherever they put themselves on the earth, the American newcomers seemed able to take root against the wilderness.”[47] North American primeval nature regenerated Europeans who had become “useless plants,” wrote Horgan, “wanting vegetative mold and refreshing showers. They withered; and were mowed down by want, hunger, and war. The American is a new man, who acts upon new principles.”[48] Horgan



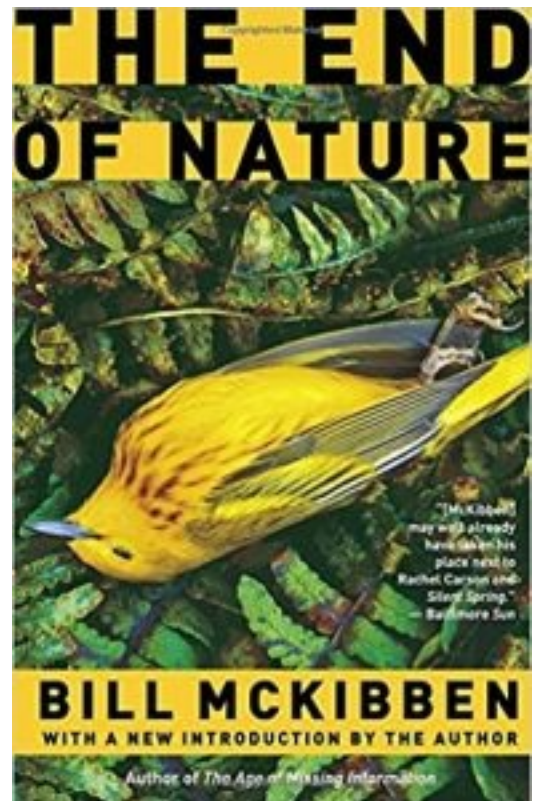
used the past to try to interpret and construct a shared Anglo American historical and geographic culture.

Rivers of America- 1960s and 1970s

In the final volumes of the 1960s and '70s, concerns over pollution and unabated dam construction made for volumes that identified watershed colonialism as national detriment rather than an imperative. Mirroring the shift towards applied geography in the 1960s, *Rivers of America* volumes moved from descriptive accounts of river regions to actively engaging federal environmental regulation, including the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and the Clean Water Act. Senator Edmund Muskie made his first public appeal for support of clean water legislation in the *Rivers of America*. He had suggested to author Lew Dietz that he write a volume on *The Allagash* (1968), for which he wrote in the forward, “now, under a cooperative federal-state program, the Allagash will be protected in perpetuity as an unspoiled link with our past.”[49] Muskie referred to a 1966 act passed by citizens of Maine as a kind of successful precursor to his own act. Whereas national legislation addressed ecological considerations within the context of expanding outdoor recreation opportunities, popular geographies consistently connected environmental degradation and pollution with environmental justice by lamenting the loss of livelihoods connected to river landscapes and by pointing to the interconnections between human and environmental health.

River Restoration

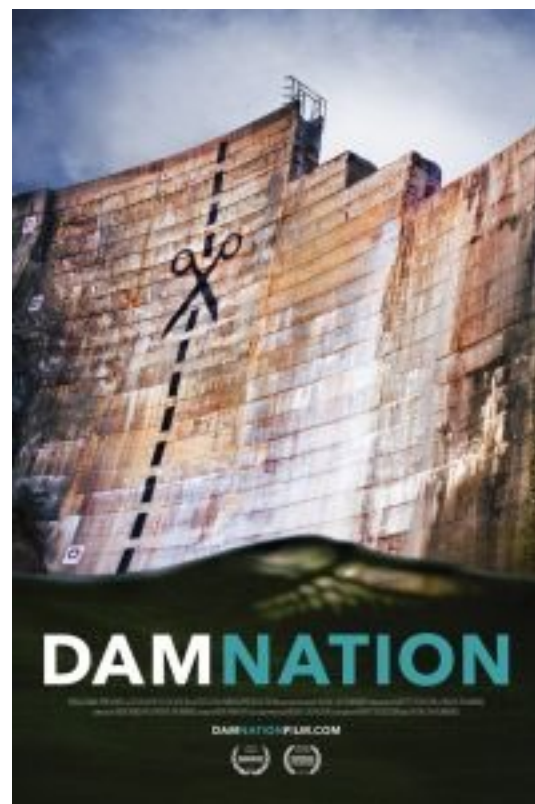
A key distinction between narrative geographies and histories of rivers is the insistence that it is necessary and possible to restore our rivers. Historians Christof Mauch and Thomas Zeller point out that in the decade after Bill McKibben’s *The End of Nature* appeared in the late 1980s, a prevailing set of interpretations emerged based on the ecological determinants of rivers wherein scholars emphasized the decline, despoliation, and death of American rivers. Writers and scholars documented the life course of rivers as ending in decline, extermination, rape, silence, and death. Gregory McNamee mapped this trajectory onto the Gila River in his book, *Gila: The Life and Death of an American River*. Similarly, Blaine Harden wrote of the Columbia as *A River Lost*. Rivers became unrecognizable natural entities to scholars such as Philip Fradkin who describes the Colorado River as *A River No More* and Blake Gumprecht who characterizes the Los Angeles River as a non-river.



ISSUE EIGHT : FALL 2017

[50] Popular geographies of rivers constructed alternate narratives of rivers as fluid bodies capable of renewal and brought those qualities to bear in public debates and in widespread river restoration efforts.

National legislation adopted to clean and conserve rivers inspired a vast array of river restoration geographies across the country. Artists and scholars created popular geographies that helped make the history, geography, and ecology of urban rivers visible to a broad public. Lewis MacAdams, a man described as “the first person in 50 years to promote the idea that the L.A. River could be something more than a drainage ditch,” characterized his first artistic piece concerning the L.A. River as “the first act of a 40 year artwork to bring the L.A. River back to life through a combination of art, politics, and magic.”[51] MacAdams created a popular geography for the Los Angeles River—a river not included in the original *Rivers of America* series—in a book of poetry, *The River: Books One & Two*. He participated in a successful protest to stop the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers from building a sewer system that would have discharged the town’s liquid wastes into the ocean.[52] As cofounder of Friends of the Los Angeles River (FoLAR), established in 1985, MacAdams’ position as a representative of the river contrasts with that of Gumprecht, who describes his interest in the river as “more in its past than in its future.”[53] Scholar Jenny Price spearheaded popular geographies including co-founding the Los Angeles Urban Rangers collective in 2005—an online platform replete with guided hikes and interpretive tools designed to help the public explore everyday habitats and help citizens identify public easements on the Malibu coastline that are seemingly blocked by private property.[54] The L.A. River found its most ardent supporters among urban dwellers, artists, and activists who in 2010 successfully lobbied that the river be entitled to protection under the Clean Water Act.



Hydroredemption on Film

The willingness to engage the histories and aftermaths of troubled hydraulic pasts together with the ability to imagine better futures became an excellent basis for film. By the early decades of the twenty-first century, river documentaries became the dominant form for popular geographies of rivers. Cinematic representations addressed the consequences of watershed colonialist strategies that had disconnected rivers from their floodplains, polluted and devastated their waters, and allocated water resources based on long-standing settler colonial inequalities. Films offered viewers reparative narratives by advancing possibilities for hydroredemption and raising public awareness.

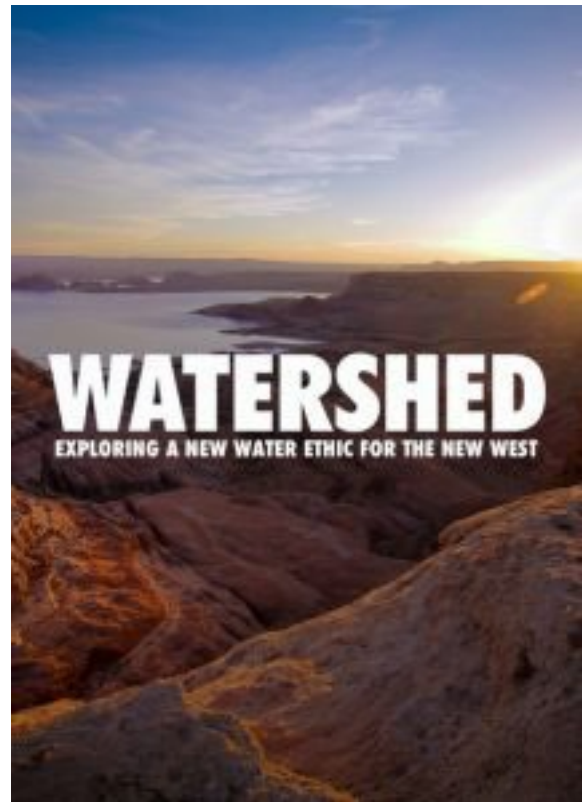
River restoration efforts in the form of dam removal convey a desire to redeem hydrosocial processes that once destroyed natural environments. Reconnecting historic habitats for species—especially salmon, which are central to the culture and heritage of local tribes—become evidence of hydroredemption in a plethora of films related to dam removal efforts on the Klamath River, including *Battle for the Klamath* (2005), *Upstream Battle* (2008), *River of Renewal* (2009), and *A River Between Us* (2014).[55] The most prominent dam removal film, *DamNation* (2014), emphasizes the successful removal of the Condit Dam on the White Salmon River in Washington and the largest dam removal in U.S. history on the Elwha River in Washington. The title of the film evokes religious connotations of divine punishment rendered in an afterlife for actions committed on earth—we see a reversal of the negative consequences of dams once they are removed. In more secular terms historian Donald Worster describes the dam removal movement in the U.S. as one of the “boldest challenges to the water empire.”[56] The dramatic unveiling of rivers in the film *DamNation* occurs in tandem with an examination of the epistemology of water control and centralized governance within

federal agencies that first dammed, diverted, and destroyed US Rivers.[57] *Return of the River* (2014) focuses exclusively on the Elwha River, which was the first river restoration of its kind and provides a success story that conservationists continue to use as a model for the promise of hydroredemption and the ability of river systems to dramatically recover.[58]

A second form of hydroredemption, expressed in the documentary *Lost Rivers* (2012), involves uncovering and restoring urban rivers. Linton marks the transition to “modern water” during the end of the nineteenth-century as a time when hydraulic megaprojects attempted to accommodate growing water demands, address sewage problems related to rising populations, and create hydraulic infrastructure that removed water from central locations in order to control its provision. [59] *Lost Rivers* pivots on this symbolic moment when rivers went from being seen above ground, to being hidden and used from below. Rivers once polluted, diverted, and buried in the industrial city are unearthed and represented as sites of communal hydroredemption for white-collar workers in Seoul, Korea who find respite from their busy lives on the Cheonggyecheon River, school children who take part in the ecology of the Saw Mill River in New York, and transnational urbanites in London, Montreal, and Brescia, Italy who connect with local water sources. By linking underground waters to a common Edenic historical past before the ill effects of industrialization drove them underground, *Lost Rivers* is able to emphasize communities working together to recapture the connections fostered when people congregated around water—despite scenes of recognition that access to rivers is often unequal and segregated.

Testimonials on Film

River documentaries raise awareness by depicting rivers as visible markers of the legacy of watershed colonialism and imperialism locally and globally. Films developed to confront water struggles in the western U.S. include *Wind River* (2000), which portrays ongoing struggles between the Arapahoe and Shoshone Tribes against farmers and ranchers using the Wind River in Wyoming. [60] *Watershed: Exploring a New Water Ethic for the New West* (2012), produced by the Redford Center and Kontent films, focuses on the Colorado River as one of the most dammed and diverted rivers in the world that “struggles to support thirty million people.”[61] In contrast to the high-quality cinematography of Kontent films, *Remains of a River* (2013) produced by Northwest River Supplies (NRS), offers candid videography and a more intimate portrayal of the troubled status of the Colorado River.[62]



Taking a global approach, the film *Watermark* (2013) begins with a silent and immense landslide of silt pouring out of the Xiaolangdi Dam on the Yellow River in the Henan Province of China. [63] The sound grows louder as the vertical lines explode with tremendous force into the river, creating enormous waves of silt and water, with plumes of air-born dust and water. Suddenly the camera stops on a still image of parched Colorado River Delta in Mexico, the cracked earth a visual testament of the upstream mega-dams that fueled U.S. development of the arid West.[64] The great dams of the American Southwest were put in place to divert water to U.S. agriculture and industry, leaving a visually captivating “saline dead zone” that appears in photographer Edward Burtynsky’s images as an intricate tree-like structure with branching, salty streams. The camera follows the Lower Colorado where we see water that once flowed into the sea disappear long before reaching Mexico’s Gulf of California. Burtynsky visually connects American and Chinese water control in a cinematic portrayal of Worster’s contention that



China has gone on to emulate twentieth-century U.S. hydrological technologies.[65]

Conclusion

From the headwaters of the Mississippi River where Schoolcraft designated the source as part of an imperialist project to conquer and assimilate new territory, to Burtynsky's images of the Colorado River without a mouth, popular geographies testify to the movements and paralyzing consequences of watershed colonialism. Across this reach of time and geography, the deluge of exploration narratives; *Rivers of America* volumes; visual, poetic, and digital maps of degraded rivers; and documentary films indicate the appeal and power of telling river stories. Increasingly, popular geographies have

become a forum for marginalized communities to engage histories of watershed colonialism and to raise awareness of decolonization efforts. Beyond what is included here, readers might imagine the breadth of geographies devoted to understanding and spatializing rivers within human history. The abundance and variety of river geographies indicate the potential of Rob Nixon's conviction that "stories matter... in a world drowning in data, stories can play a vital role...in the making of environmental publics and in the shaping of environmental policy." [66]

Footnotes

[1] Many thanks to the organizers and participants of the *Grasping Water: Rivers and Human Systems in China, Africa, and North America* Summer Institute at the University of Minnesota for broadening my conception of river geographies, and to Michael Denning who was instrumental in helping me develop the dissertation on which this piece is based.

[2] Henry R. Schoolcraft, *Narrative of an Expedition Through the Upper Mississippi to Itasca Lake, The Actual Source of This River; Embracing an Exploratory Trip Through the St. Croix and Burntwood (or Broule) Rivers in 1832* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1834), 7–8.

[3] Bernard DeVoto, ed., *The Journals of Lewis and Clark*, maps by Erwin Raisz (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1953), lii.

[4] Henry Sibley, President of the Minnesota Historical Society correspondence to J.V. Brower, included in Jacob V. Brower, *The Mississippi and its Source: An Historical and Illustrated Geographical Record. A Narrative and Critical History of the Discovery of the River and its Headwaters, Accompanied by the Results of Detailed Hydrographic and Topographic Surveys* (Minneapolis, MN: Harrison & Smith State Printers, 1898. Reprinted in Minnesota Historical Collections. Vol III), 1.

[5] Robert J. Miller, *Native America, Discovered and Conquered: Thomas Jefferson, Lewis and Clark, and Manifest Destiny* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008). Robert J. Miller, "The Doctrine of Discovery: The International Law of Colonialism." Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law, Arizona State University, Chief Justice, Grand Ronde Tribe Court of Appeals. Preemption clause: 25 U.S.C. Section 177 (2006).

- [6] Rich Heyman, “Locating the Mississippi: Landscape, Nature, and National Territoriality at the Mississippi Headwaters.” *American Quarterly* 62:2 (June 2010), 311.
- [7] Jacob Vradenberg Brower, *The Mississippi and its Source: An Historical and Illustrated Geographical Record. A Narrative and Critical History of the Discovery of the River and its Headwaters, Accompanied by the Results of Detailed Hydrographic and Topographic Surveys* (Minneapolis, MN: Harrison & Smith State Printers, 1893. Reprinted in Minnesota Historical Collections. Vol III), vii.
- [8] Heyman, “Locating the Mississippi,” 310–312.
- [9] Mason, ed., *Schoolcraft’s Expedition*, preface, xi; Over twenty editions were published between 1834 and 1998 (WorldCat identities); In 1953 Michigan State University Press began working to make Schoolcraft’s major works available to the public including a 1958 edited volume (Mason, ed., *Schoolcraft’s Expedition*, forward, viii).
- [10] Lucile M. Kane, “Review of *Schoolcraft’s Expedition to Lake Itasca: The Discovery of the Source of the Mississippi*,” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 46:1 (June 1959): 136–37.
- [11] Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi* (Boston: J.R. Osgood, 1883), 267.
- [12] Alexander T. Vogelsang, *St. Lawrence Power: Key to the Fuel Crisis on the Eastern Seaboard* (Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Tidewater Association, 1919).
- [13] Charles Newhall Taintor, *The Hudson River Route* (New York: Taintor Brothers, 1900).
- [14] *The Grand Canyon of Arizona: Being a Book of Words From Many Pens, About the Grande Canyon of the Colorado River in Arizona* (Chicago: Passenger Department of the Santa Fe, 1909), 32.
- [15] Earl H. Reed, *Tales of a Vanishing River* (New York: John Lane Company; London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1920), 26, 28.
- [16] Jamie Linton, *What is Water? The History of a Modern Abstraction* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010), 18.
- [17] Constance Lindsay Skinner, “Rivers and American Folk,” (1935), 3; Nicolaas Mink, “A Narrative for Nature’s Nation: Constance Lindsay Skinner and the Making of *Rivers of America*.” *Environmental History* 11:4 (Oct 2006), 761.
- [18] Carol Fitzgerald, *The Rivers of America: A Descriptive Bibliography, Volumes I and II*, edited by Jean Fitzgerald (New Castle, Delaware: Oak Knoll Press, 2001), xxi.
- [19] In his work expanding the terrain of cultural and ideological history, Michael Denning observes, “Rather than seeing ideology as a system of ideas, a worldview, a collection of fragmentary opinion—which can be characterized as true or false—one can see ideology as essentially narrative in character, a set of stories one tells oneself to situate oneself in the world, to name the characters and map the terrain of the social world” (*Mechanic Accents: Dime Novels and Working-Class Culture in America*. London: Verso, 1998, 78).

ISSUE EIGHT : FALL 2017

- [20] Walter Havighurst, *The Upper Mississippi: A Wilderness Saga*, illustrated by David and Lolita Granahan (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1937), 53, 54.
- [21] Havighurst, *Upper Mississippi*, 103.
- [22] Skinner, "Rivers," 1.
- [23] Skinner, "Rivers," 2.
- [24] Constance Lindsay Skinner Papers, "Notes on Town Hall dinner speech," Box 17, Manuscripts and Archives Division of the New York Public Library.
- [25] Robert P. Tristram Coffin, *The Kennebec: Cradle of the Americans*, illustrated by Maitland de Gogorza (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1937), 271.
- [26] Coffin, *Kennebec*, 273.
- [27] Coffin, *Kennebec*, 165.
- [28] Coffin, *Kennebec*, 156.
- [29] Wolfe, *Traces of History*, 179.
- [30] Maxwell Struthers Burt, *The Powder: Let'er Buck*, illustrated by Ross Santee (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1938).
- [31] Burt, *Powder*, 3.
- [32] Burt, *Powder*, 198.
- [33] Burt, *Powder*, 5–6.
- [34] Burt, *Powder*, 6.
- [35] Julian Dana, *The Sacramento: River of Gold*, illustrated by J.O'Hara Cosgrave (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1939), 105.
- [36] Dana, *Sacramento*, 155.
- [37] Dana, *Sacramento*, 179, 191.
- [38] Dana, *Sacramento*, 162.
- [39] Dana, *Sacramento*, 179.
- [40] Dana, *Sacramento*, 191.
- [41] Fitzgerald, *Descriptive Bibliography*, xxi.

- [42] Paul Horgan, *Great River: The Rio Grande in North American History* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1984 [1954]).
- [43] Horgan, *Great River*, 619.
- [44] Horgan, *Great River*, 626.
- [45] Horgan, *Great River*, 619.
- [46] Horgan, *Great River*, 620.
- [47] Horgan, *Great River*, 402.
- [48] Horgan, *Great River*, 621.
- [49] Fitzgerald, *Descriptive Bibliography*, 10; Dietz, *Allagash*, xiii.
- [50] Christof Mauch and Thomas Zeller, *Rivers in History: Perspectives on Waterways in Europe and North America* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008), 6. Gregory McNamee, *Gila: The Life and Death of an American River* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994); Blaine Harden, *A River Lost: The Death of the Columbia* (NY: Norton, 1996); Philip L. Fradkin, *A River No More: The Colorado River and the West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Blake Gumprecht, *The Los Angeles River: Its Life, Death, and Possible Rebirth* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); Bill McKibben, *The End of Nature* (Random House, 1989). Not all river histories emphasized the de-spoliation of rivers, in *The Organic Machine*, Richard White posited that the Columbia was not gone, defiled, or dead, but retained a life and energy of its own that extends beyond human control. (Richard White, *The Organic Machine* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995).
- [51] Gumprecht, *The Los Angeles River*, 250, 253.
- [52] Gumprecht, *The Los Angeles River*, 250.
- [53] Lewis MacAdams, *The River: Books One and Two* (San Francisco: Blue Press, 1998), *Book One*, poem 16; Gumprecht, *The Los Angeles River*, 5; Friends of the LA River: <https://folar.org/>.
- [54] Los Angeles Urban Rangers: <http://www.laurbanrangers.org/>.
- [55] *Battle for the Klamath*, Dir. Steven Johnson, Veriscope Productions, 2005; *Upstream Battle*, Dir. Ben Kempas, Preview Production, 2008; *River of Renewal*, Dir. Carlos Bolado, Lobitos Creek Ranch, 2008; *A River Between Us*, Dir. J. Martin, It Matters, 2014.
- [56] Donald Worster, "Flow of Empire: Comparing Water Control in China and the U.S.," *Rachel Carson Center Perspectives* (Munich, Germany: Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society, 2011), 20.
- [57] *DamNation*, Dir. Travis Rummel and Ben Knight, Patagonia, 2014.
- [58] *Return of the River*, Dir. Jessica Plumb and John Gussman, 2014.

[59] *Lost Rivers*, Dir. Caroline Bacle, CatBird Films, 2012; Linton, What is Water, 13-19.

[60] *Wind River*, Dir. Drury Gunn Carr, High Plains Films, 2000.

[61] *Watershed: Exploring a New Water Ethic for the New West*, Dir. Robert Redford and Mark Decena, Redford Center and Kontent Films, 2012.

[62] *Remains of a River*, Dir. Will Stauffer-Norris, NRS Films, 2013.

[63] *Watermark*, Directed by Edward Burtynsky and Jennifer Baichwal, Sixth Wave Productions, 2013.

[64] *Watermark* includes personal testimonies of trauma as well. In his investigation on the formation of the environmental documentary genre Charles Musser describes a key feature of environmental documentaries is the trauma of ecological events and devastation people experience, “their lives have been upended, and they feel compelled to speak—to bear witness to their trauma often as a way to begin to take action and also begin the process of recovery.” *Watermark* incorporates testimonies of trauma throughout. (Charles Musser, “Trauma, Truth and the Environmental Documentary,” in Anil Narine, ed., *Eco-Trauma Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 47).

[65] Worster, “Flow of Empire.”

[66] Rob Nixon, “The Great Acceleration and the Great Divergence: Vulnerability in the Anthropocene,” Presidential Forum, *Profession* (March 19, 2014).

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About the Author

Sigma Colon earned her Ph.D. in American Studies at Yale University in 2017 and is currently an NEH Fellow in the Humanities at Lawrence University. Her research and teaching explores the intersections of environmental issues with systems of social injustice.