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# INTRODUCTION

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JAMES BEATTIE

The Centre for Science in Society,  
Victoria University of Wellington;  
Research Associate, Centre for Environmental History,  
The Australian National University;  
Senior Research Associate,  
Faculty of Humanities, University of Johannesburg

The second issue of 2019 has a contemporary feel, at least to an editor who's an environmental historian largely of the nineteenth century! The themes the articles explore relate to chemical pollution, biofuel production, climate misinformation, gender, race and hunting, and historiographical interpretation.

In **'A silenced spring? Exploring Africa's "Rachel Carson moment": A socio-environmental history of the pesticides in tobacco production in Southern Rhodesia, 1945–80'**, Elijah Doro and Sandra Swart examine the environmental impacts of increasing agricultural commercialisation and pesticide use on the farmers of Southern Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe). Doro and Swart place the experience of Zimbabwe's tobacco farmers in the context of 'slow violence', the 'environmentalism of the poor' and 'environmental racism', in the process revealing the local divergence of experience of chemical pollution in relation to the global environmentalism sparked by Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. Carson, it should be noted, never applied her analysis to Africa. The article presents an important and original perspective on the intertwined environmental and human impacts of modern, industrial agriculture.

In part 2 of her series exploring European exploitation of African energy resources, Kate B. Showers examines **'Biofuels' unbalanced equations: Misleading statistics, networked knowledge and measured parameters: Part 2. Networks, consensus and power'**. Critiquing the imprecision of large-scale, generalised datasets to guide policy, Showers powerfully challenges claims about biofuels modelling. She shows that 'globalised data sets, databases and models ... reinforce and amplify the biases and world views of the professional networks that created them.' They are, in fact, she notes, greatly divorced from local realities. Instead, Showers argues that biofuels policymaking reliant on local-scale models that recognise diversity can have a real benefit for peoples and communities.

Susan E. Swanberg's article provides a connection between contemporary theoretical paradigms of science misinformation and historical debate on climate change. In **"The Way of the Rain": Towards a conceptual framework for the retrospective examination of historical American and Australian "rain follows**

**the plow/plough” messages’**, she offers a fascinating analysis of ‘rain follows the plough’ (the scientifically incorrect idea that ploughing increases local rainfall), and the insight that historical case study might provide as ‘a basis for the analysis of historical science messaging’. By analysing the development, reception and processing of ‘rain follows the plough’, Swanberg proposes a framework that can be applied ‘to historical instances where the public understanding—and application—of science was hindered by factors modern researchers study in their empirical work’.

Remaining in the nineteenth century, Vijaya Ramadas Mandala provides a revisionist account of hunting by elite British women in India during the 1830s and 1840s. **‘Tiger huntresses in the Company Raj: Environmentalism and exotic imaginings of wildlife, 1830–45’** is an analysis informed by class, race and gender, which demonstrates the greater social opportunities sometimes afforded to elite women by life in Britain’s colonies. Mandala also explores the environmental perception of British female hunters, and describes the context of their experiences amidst a changing environment and growing British power over Indian nature, most notably through the extension of state forests. This is a work that highlights the need for more gendered analyses of environment and empire.

In the final article, a ‘think piece’ on **‘Adam Smith, natural extraction and historical judgement: An unwarranted environmental legacy’**, James Cullis reassesses environmental historians’ interpretation of Adam Smith’s writings on the natural world. Through a close reading and contextualisation of Smith’s works, Cullis argues that Smith’s original views on the exploitation of nature must be understood within his theory of societal progress in stages, rather than necessarily being interpreted as the harbinger of market-driven exploitation of nature. Cullis observes that ‘Smith’s attitude towards mining, as revealed in his writing, reveals a scepticism with regard to the profitability and necessity of such action’.

## Call for papers

I particularly encourage submissions on topics related to history and energy, the atmosphere and water, especially in relation to Africa, South America and Asia. Please also contact me if you are interested in guest editing a special issue.

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James Beattie, Editor,  
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