

technical language. Nevertheless, these issues naturally arise from the text's strengths: its coverage of all human history and its productive blending of science with human history in an impressively concise volume.

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Apollo in the Age of Aquarius. By Neil M. Maher. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017. 360 pp. Illustrations, map, graph, notes, index. Cloth \$29.95, paper \$18.95.

In *Apollo in the Age of Aquarius*, Neil Maher places the American space race firmly back on planet Earth. To this day, the popular memory of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) evokes an image of apolitical scientists, engineers, and astronauts pushing the boundaries of human exploration. It is a story siloed off from the rest of the tumultuous 1960s. Maher shatters this myth, showing how NASA's history was inextricably bound to the roiling domestic politics of the decade. In five chapters covering civil rights, Vietnam, environmentalism, women's rights, and neo-conservatism, Maher's NASA acts like a prism, refracting a spectrum of conflicting views of Cold War American society back to the country. *Apollo in the Age of Aquarius* reveals an America grappling with a fundamental question: was the space agency an example of the best of American society, science, and historical exceptionalism or was it a truer reflection of America as it 'really was'—myopic, militaristic, and unequal?

Since its inception, NASA's self-image has tended toward the former. A product of the Cold War, it owed its very existence to the Soviet Union's early success in space exploration. In response, the upper echelon of Cold War American society—which was an entirely male, white, militaristic rule of experts—mobilized for the space agency, powerfully shaping its meaning for public consumption. Unsurprisingly, NASA's self-image was awash in the historical myths of American exceptionalism and progress. From John F. Kennedy's 'New Frontier' speech and descriptions of astronauts as 'space cowboys' to the development of Cape Canaveral's wetlands, NASA's boosters placed the space agency squarely within the twinned white, male historical trajectories of manifest destiny and conquest of nature. At the same time, the inevitability of NASA's past projected right into

the American present and world's future. As *Newsweek* told its readers in 1969, "Each spaceship ... is a model and reminder of what earth should be like" (p. 20).

Such claims produced cognitive dissonance for an ascendant political Left, which looked at the earth as it really was and wondered why NASA's triumphs seemed dwarfed by urgent need. Through a diverse set of sources like political cartoons, personal papers, and postcards, Maher shows how protest movements assailed the space race. They viewed it as a vast misallocation of resources, connecting the pock-marked Lunar surface to the bombed-out countryside of Southeast Asia and blaming the agency for distracting American's from the real issues of poverty, pollution, racism, and war. Paradoxically, critics also saw NASA as a potential panacea, simultaneously making demands upon the space agency to aid in their struggle—a fight the Left largely won. By the 1970s, as NASA faced plummeting public support, it promoted "spin-off" technologies and space-age programs designed to combat poverty, gender inequality, and halt environmental pollution. Ironically, its outreach never won over former critics entirely, leaving white, middle-class, neo-suburbanites as the agency's last supporters.

For readers of this journal, *Apollo in the Age of Aquarius* is a *cri de coeur*, exhorting environmental historians not only to appeal to non-specialists but also to take on the big topics of the historical profession. And Maher is showing the way. Even for a book that the author admits is more political history than anything else, the space race and the 1960s becomes unintelligible without attention to nature. It bubbles up between the spaces in each chapter, spilling over from one protest movement to the other. For example, consider the space capsule. The engineered environment was one of NASA's greatest triumphs, making the nature of space safe for humans. It became both a powerful metaphor and an instructive case of how the environment in the Mercury capsule presented similar challenges as the one on earth or, as ecologist Eugene Odom called it in 1962, "spaceship earth." The metaphor found resonance with civil rights leaders, second-wave feminists, and environmentalists who now saw 'environments' everywhere—in bodies, cities, and the Third World—and, for a brief time, believed that every challenge—from pollution to inequality—could be boiled down to the level of human spaceflight and solved.

The great accomplishment of *Apollo in the Age of Aquarius* is that at no point does it tell the reader, "this is environmental history." Yet the questions, approaches, and framing of the discipline are implicit throughout, merging seamlessly with those once given over solely to political history or histories of technology. Indeed, by the end of the book, the reader becomes convinced that the next great Hamilton biography or history of the First World War cannot be

written without the environment—as if the approach was always second nature.

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American Tropics: The Caribbean Roots of Biodiversity Science. By Megan Raby. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017. xvi + 319 pp. Illustrations, maps, table, glossary, notes, bibliography, index. Paper \$29.95, e-book \$19.99.

“Biodiversity, and its accelerating loss, was not an idea cooked up in Washington. It was rooted in biologists’ tropical stations” (p. 207). Thus argues Megan Raby in her fascinating book *American Tropics: The Caribbean Roots of Biodiversity Science*. Raby bookends her project with the emergence of a public interest in the newly coined term “biodiversity” in the 1980s, spearheaded by the Smithsonian Institution and the National Academy of Sciences. Yet she traces how the sudden cultural and political cachet of this concept was owed to the scientific exchanges and political maneuverings of nearly a century of biological work at a growing number of US-affiliated field stations in the circum-Caribbean after 1898. As her periodization would suggest, Raby emphasizes biologists from the United States and their negotiation of tropical science fieldwork in their country’s expanding imperial sphere. Where the United States exercised a form of imperial dominion (Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Panama Canal Zone), attractive access via its British ally (Jamaica, Guiana), or particular influence within sovereign states (Costa Rica), its biologists and their home institutions followed and constructed a network of American tropical science.

This is a broadly accessible book that should work well in the classroom. Although the entire book is bound to provoke discussion, its structure lends especially well to assigning individual chapters as illustrative case studies on a particular subject, time period, or location. There is a great deal here that will be of interest also to scholars, particularly those working at the intersection of environmental history and histories of science. Raby offers a close interdisciplinary reading of scientific texts and attention to technical detail. In addition to a robust cast of idiosyncratic characters and their respective home institutions, Raby guides the reader through the conceptual development of island biogeography, for example, and the abstract mathematical population genetics applied to the study of *Drosophila* fruit flies.