



IN NATURE'S NAME

AN ANTHOLOGY OF WOMEN'S WRITING
AND ILLUSTRATION, 1780-1930

EDITED BY BARBARA T. GATES

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IN NATURE'S NAME



Linley Sambourne, cartoon, *Mistress of Creation*, *Punch*, 3 January 1874

This book is dedicated to the incomparable women who haunt its pages and to their understanding of nature.

Life calls to us . . .

Above us, or below us, and around:

Perhaps we name it Nature's voice.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning,
Aurora Leigh I: 673–76

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P R E F A C E



This book grew as a scion from *Kindred Nature* (University of Chicago Press, 1998), a cultural study of Victorian and Edwardian women and nature. In the parent book I tried as much as possible to tell my story through the words of the earlier women, quoting liberally and, when I could, remaining in their grip. Readers of *Kindred Nature* have, however, requested longer selections from the women who were my primary sources, and I have added still other authors who might reveal other facets of nature interpretation in their day. Certainly, I have had a great deal of pleasure in compiling this material—pleasure not just of reacquaintance but of discovery. If feminist scholarship has been diligent in rediscovering Victorian and Edwardian texts by novelists and poets, it has largely ignored writers about nature, science, and species preservation. There are still many to recuperate. To me this seems especially ironic, since most of these writers hoped above all else to aid in the diffusion of knowledge about nature that took place during their lifetimes. They wanted their work to be known because they felt their subjects to be so important.

In Nature's Name began, then, as a supplement, a companion text. Like all offspring, however, it has demanded the right to grow in its own way. Throughout the many months it has taken first place on my desk, the book has kept extending not just its range, but its categories and level of inclusiveness. It still centers in natural history but could easily have been

expanded to include more of the physical sciences and astronomy—the latter being a field in which women were very active. Space simply did not allow. As it stands, *In Nature's Name* includes not just multiple aspects of natural history study but multiple genres as well. Poetry, fiction, artwork, and nonfiction prose are all accommodated here. A thematic anthology like this one permits multiple genres to be gathered together in complementary arrangements that can offer new insights into women's role in redefining nature, nature study, and nature writing.

On the question of genre and generic approaches to the literature of nature, I would like to add a word or two about the nature of nature writing, in part by referencing Patrick Murphy's recent book, *Farther Afield in the Study of Nature-Oriented Literature* (Virginia, 2000). Murphy offers the most comprehensive representation of the modes of nature and environmental writing produced to date. He subdivides writing about nature into four groups: nature writing, nature literature, environmental writing, and environmental literature. The "modes and genres" portion of his schema (page 11) is reproduced below:

Nature Writing

- Natural history essay
- Rambles and meditations
- Wilderness living
- Travel and adventure
- Agrarian and ranch life
- Philosophizing

Nature Literature

Poetry

- Observations
- Pastoral odes
- Agrarian and rural elegies
- Domestic and garden life
- Interaction with animals

Fiction

- Sport stories
- Animal stories and fables
- Regionalism
- Wilderness living
- Travel and adventure

Agrarian and ranch life
 Science fiction and fantasy

Environmental Writing

Environmental degradation
 Community activism
 Wilderness defense
 Recreational responsibility
 Sustainable agriculture and grazing
 Environmental ethics
 Inhabitation

Environmental Literature

Poetry

Observation of crisis
 Agrarian values
 Alternative lifestyles
 Encountering the other

Fiction

Environmental crisis and resolution
 Wilderness defense
 Destruction of agrarian life
 Cultural conservation
 Dystopias, utopias, fabulations

Murphy's lists are useful for the study of British women's nature writing. With the exception of concern for wilderness as such—something most of their European lives had little contact with except when they became colonial lives—the women in this book wrote in all of the categories and subgenres listed by Murphy. In their case, however, one can also discern areas where gender determined genre. Even in their diversity, as a group they are notable both for their interest in domestication of plants and animals and for their focus on education, especially in their desire to educate the young. *In Nature's Name* therefore includes large sections of writing about nature study and science education—areas not specifically outlined by Murphy. Careful consideration of its importance in British nature writing by women moves me to add science popularization to Murphy's categories and to expand popularization's subgenres. These would necessarily include early modes like conversations, dialogues, journeys, and the nature

rambles that included conversations; midcentury modes like parables; and later-century modes like the science–fairy tale comparisons developed by Arabella Buckley. All of these are discussed in the introduction to my section “Popularizing Science.” In this book I have also chosen not to separate nature writing from nature literature nor environmental writing from environmental literature, since essays and expository writing are, to my mind, quite as literary as poems and fiction.

Beginning in the late eighteenth century, nature and environmental writing grew in popularity in Britain and appealed to a number of women who were prolific over extended periods of time. The individual sections of this book therefore follow the contours of what is now called “the long nineteenth century,” a period that extends from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries. Strict chronological order has, however, taken second place to thematics in this anthology. Consequently, I have also prefaced the book with a chronology that places the works represented alongside the social, political, and scientific events of their day. This stems from a realization that some readers are more comfortable with a chronological approach and that students new to the subjects of this anthology might like to see just where the women included in *In Nature’s Name* fit into a larger historical picture.

Despite the importance of genre and of time, I have nevertheless deliberately chosen to arrange this anthology by theme and subject rather than by type or chronological order. Throughout the period covered here (from just before 1790 to 1930), women took special interest in a number of issues surrounding nature study and natural history: the protection of species, the introduction of plants and animals into the home, the evolution of the animal story, the adventure story about women, the popularization and dissemination of science, and the development of the art of gardening, to name just a few. To bring such issues, movements, and interests into prominence, I have endeavored to find documents and pictures that would group together subjects like these and have developed the book’s divisions accordingly.

In terms of its specific organization, the anthology opens with a section “Speaking Out,” one that points out some of the difficulties women encountered when they tried to speak in nature’s name. They needed to pave their own ways as spokeswomen for nature and at the same time counter a trend, pervasive in their culture, toward essentializing them as more natural and less intellectual than men. Could women, they wondered, be considered authoritative on the subject of nature at the same time that they shed unwanted stereotypes about their own nature? The women included in this

section show just how they went about answering this question and assuming this difficult task. The second section shows how crucial to women was the protection of nonhuman species. “Protecting” is concerned mainly with environmental literature—writing that deals with perceived threats to the natural world. As their writing clearly shows, in the nineteenth century, women were in the forefront of movements intended to save animals and plants from destruction. In sections three and four, the anthology continues by exploring nature writing in its many guises: animal stories, narratives about farming and gardening, and travel and adventure narratives, for example. In the fifth section, I pause to offer selections illustrative of some of the important aesthetic movements of the Victorian and Edwardian time-frame, their bearing on women’s nature writing and vice versa. The book concludes with two sections devoted to the significance of women as science writers: section six explores the wide variety of popular science writing, a field on which women left a strong mark, while section seven probes the vexed question of just who in science study was considered a professional and who an amateur.

Throughout, I have created subsections that I hope will be useful to students using this book—one on women and Darwin, and others on seaweed study, various types of conservation, and on the appreciation of color, to name just a few. Overall my hope is to encourage a dialogue of texts that might have pleased the inhabitants of this book, many of whom felt quite alone in their endeavors and few of whom would have considered themselves working within what we now call “traditions” of women’s writing. What most of these writers did have in common of course was an overarching desire to study, protect, and represent aspects of nonhuman nature, whether wild or domestic.

In terms of the editing of individual texts I have corrected little—only a few glaring typographical errors—and have left spellings and usage entirely intact. In general the footnotes to the selections are those of the women themselves, some of whom, in their desire to be authoritative, were avid footnoters. Occasionally, however, I have created a new note to explain a reference or term that might be unfamiliar to today’s reader. These are inserted and numbered consecutively with original footnotes, but in every case I have labeled new notes as the work of this editor. So as not to confuse my own contemporary readers by causing them to hunt for something they are not going to find, I have also now and then deleted references to figures or tables that I have not been able to reproduce.

The book includes a chronology and a set of brief biographical sketches of the writers and artists included here. These are designed to give the reader