

## REVIEWS

the fact that landmark judicial decisions in the United States receive little attention. Most notably, Chief Justice C.J. Marshall, who developed the influential notion of 'domestic dependent nations', is given brief mention only twice in the closing section of the book, where contributors address the constitutionalization of indigenous rights. Even without this perspective, though, *Indigenous Peoples' Rights in Australia, Canada & New Zealand* is a major achievement. The editor and authors are to be congratulated for bringing such an ambitious project to a very successful conclusion. They have produced an essential reference work.

ARTHUR J. RAY

*University of British Columbia, Canada*

*Nature and the English Diaspora: Environment and History in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.* By Thomas R. Dunlap. Cambridge University Press, New York, 1999. 350 pp. Aus. price: \$34.95. ISBN 0-521-65700-8.

'A THING IS RIGHT when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.'<sup>1</sup> Thomas R. Dunlap contends that in the 1960s the application of ecological insights such as this to relations between people and the land provided Anglo settlers with a revolutionary intellectual and ethical tool that enabled them to become native to the lands that they had colonized. In *Nature and the English Diaspora*, Dunlap historicizes and contextualizes four variations of this imperative. He does this by looking at 'ways in which Anglo settlers of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States have in the past two centuries sought to understand their place in them by the use of their culture's organized nature knowledge — science' (p.1).

The cultural function of nature or ideas about nature in New Zealand has not, for the most part, held the attention of New Zealand historians, although a number of studies of environmental issues, wildlife or national park policy and agencies, as well as biographies of a handful of naturalists and conservationists have been produced. It is interesting, therefore, to assess the manner in which an American environmental historian deploys this historiography — meagre compared to that of his native land — in a comparative history of ideas.

The study begins with an examination of how 'nature knowledge' in the form of natural history was exported to and adapted in these four environments. Natural history, Dunlap argues, was the primary intellectual tool that facilitated nineteenth-century expansion and the European desire to conquer nature. However, based purely on 'observation and common sense' (p.87), its use soon diminished. The depletion of natural resources, droughts, acclimatization disasters, and failed schemes devised by boosters, forcefully demonstrated that, by the end of European expansion, environmental and epistemological limits had been reached. The necessary intellectual changes began in the twentieth century and accelerated during the inter-war period when academically trained park and wildlife managers in the USA moved away from natural history and the study of individual species towards a 'focus on process and relationships in natural systems' (p.165). In Dunlap's opinion, this 'was the single most important change affecting settlers' understanding of the land and their relationship to it' (p.139).

Nature knowledge — increasingly specialized, professionalized, institutionalized, and objective — was removed gradually from the domain of popular culture, so Dunlap also explores parallel popular encounters with nature. At the end of the twentieth century,

popular activities had also replaced expansion as a way to experience nature and these activities provided people with 'a direction for thinking about the land' (p.97). Sport hunting, the creation of national parks, bushwalking, nature writing, landscape painting, and the appropriation of nature for national icons are but a few of the practices discussed by Dunlap. Although they differed in form from organized science, they had the same function: they were 'all part of a single enterprise, to find a place in the new lands' (p.47).

Dunlap notes how some discourses and activities have combined the 'science of nature and the love of it' (p.163). Natural history, for example, appealed to both intellect and sentiment. A cleavage occurred as science entered the domain of 'objective' experts, but expert and popular knowledge were reunited when ecology was co-opted in the 1960s by the burgeoning environmental movement. This was crucial for the movement, as it provided the intellectual authority for popular social and environmental reform. It could also be used to 'hear the spirits in the land' (p.305).

*Nature and the English Diaspora* covers a vast array of material, which in Dunlap's hands, has a miscellaneous feel to it. Because it is a synthesis of secondary material (there is a disappointing lack of original primary research) the 'significance' of historical events and agents in the USA is exaggerated. Canada and New Zealand really do get the 'short shrift' readers are warned about in the introduction. New Zealand material is not treated independently. Its sole function is to reinforce conclusions drawn from American examples. Using the overworked canon of American (but not Canadian) nature writers, for instance, Dunlap concludes that the northern countries used nature as a 'refuge and gateway to transcendence' (p.105), whilst for Australians and New Zealanders, their 'passion was for the bush itself, they valued it as a place of human activity — mateship' (p.195). This conclusion seems incidental to Dunlap's need to answer the frequently posed question: when do we [settlers] become native and how? (p.59). While common sense, or perhaps Dunlap's intuition, may suggest that settlers were anxious to naturalize their presence in colonized lands, there is no direct historical evidence provided by Dunlap to support this claim. Moreover, Dunlap uses the process of 'going native' as his catch-all explanation for, or the ultimate outcome of, changes to the cultural evaluations of nature. As a result, his conclusions are simplistic and predictable.

Production of cultural meanings from nature in colonized societies is more complex than Dunlap suggests. They are embedded in human, rather than natural relations. Other motives or contexts may also have shaped a range of meanings that individuals and groups constructed from nature, such as modernization, urbanization, changes in the economy or in the organization of labour, concerns about social order, the construction of gender relations, and the maintenance of colonial relations. None of these have a place in Dunlap's analysis.

There is also no place for any original natives in his book. Only those who have constructed their indigeneity from a relationship with hitherto alien lands rather than by colonizing native peoples are considered to be 'native'. Because *Nature and the English Diaspora* effaces an indigenous presence so completely and is preoccupied with a process that enables invaders to become native, it could be read as a colonizing narrative.

KIRSTIE ROSS

*Auckland*

1 Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, New York, 1949, p.189.