

# Cultural landscapes and ecology, 1995–96: of oecumenics and nature(s)

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## I Introduction

This report is the first of three in a survey of recent work by geographers and their counterparts on cultural landscapes and ecology. Depending on definition and direction these rubrics could, or perhaps should, encompass much of what is being done by cultural geographers as well as those working on questions of human–environment or society–nature relations beyond the bounds of the categories culture and landscape. My core concern here, however, will be to present and comment on studies of cultural landscapes informed by ecological methods and perspectives. Much of this production falls within the purview of cultural ecology or its off-shoots such as political ecology and various cognate fields including historical ecology, environmental history, landscape archaeology and landscape ecology. If this prospectus is less than ecumenical, it should still allow for looking at a wide range of material coming out of various traditions, camps and exploratory ventures that lay claims to these terms' terrain.

Given that the topics 'cultural landscapes and ecology' (in tandem) have not been previously featured in these progress reports, a bit of mapping of what has come before might be useful. It will also require mentioning some publications prior to 1995 to set the stage for the past two years. In the first annual volume of *Progress in Geography* (1969–76), precursor to its current bifurcation along human and physical lines, Harold Brookfield (1969) wrote on 'The environment as perceived'. Cultural ecology *per se* received scant mention, and cultural landscape none at all. During this period Brookfield (1964) was concerned to move beyond the Berkeley school's fielding of cultural landscape studies and on to more systemic and nomothetic pursuits. In the third volume O'Riordan (1971) reported on 'Environmental management', a category that has enjoyed some 17 surveys since 1977 under the same and variant titles in *Progress in Human Geography*. A sampling of titles and authors includes: 'Natural resources and their management'

(Simmons, 1977); 'Resource management and conservation' (Simmons, 1978; Munton, 1983); 'Environmental issues' (O'Riordan, 1980; Cutter, 1994); 'Environmental problems' (Whittow, 1987); 'Resource management' (Munton, 1985; Owens and Owens, 1986; Wescoat, 1991). This series is the place where discussions of ecology and ecological issues have been most evident.

Reports on cultural geography, under this title and its variants, represent the other location where some attention to ecological issues has been offered. In *Progress in Human Geography's* first year Mikesell (1977) surveyed aspects of cultural geography from the previous decade. Unlike Brookfield's earlier résumé, Mikesell had more to say about cultural ecology in geography. He singled out the 'New Guinea syndrome' in which Brookfield and others were carrying out microscaled, synchronic ecological research informed by systems analysis in highland New Guinea and elsewhere. He counterpointed this with traditional cultural geography's concern for the longer view and lesser attention paid to replicability and methodological procedures. Projected follow-up reports did not appear, but Mikesell's implied critique has been validated by cultural ecology's own turns towards a more diachronic and postpositivistic agenda in the past two decades. Noting these twists and turns will serve as something of a leitmotiv in this essay and its sequels.

Reportage on cultural geography was revived by Ley (1981–85) in a series on 'Cultural/humanistic geography'. It was continued by Rowntree (1986–88) under the same title. Cosgrove (1989–92) dropped the appellation 'humanistic' but added themed subtitles. Duncan (1993–95) followed the same convention with an emphasis on 'landscape'. Finally, Matless (1995–96) has reported on 'Social/cultural geography'. From this synopsis of sections viewed over time, we get glimpses of changing research fashions, but to measure the weight given to ecological topics or concerns, we have to look to the contents. Suffice it to say that cultural ecology in either its major or minor keys is largely absent. Cultural landscape study, on the other hand, is a constant if not dominant presence, save for Duncan's renderings and recountings where it receives top billing, albeit in de- and reconstructed forms. Oddly, of *Progress in Human Geography's* 260+ review articles (unlike the progress reports) none are directed squarely at cultural landscape, whether concept, object or process. Lowenthal (1978) addressed the question of 'Finding valued landscapes' and Porteous (1985) introduced the notion of 'Smell-scape'. More recently 'Gendered symbols and urban landscapes' (Bondi, 1992) and 'State terror: ideology, protest and the gendering of landscapes' (Scarpaci and Frazier, 1993) have appeared. Here we see a saltation out of cultural geography's more genteel preserves into its gender-critical positions, but this leap leaves the seeming centre – the impress and record of human agency on biophysical landscapes – largely untouched and unremarked upon.

Cultural ecology's interests are better represented within the same run of *Progress in Human Geography's* review articles. A half-dozen articles provide illustrations, raise issues and present positions that are well within the scope of what cultural ecologists do or feel they should be doing. Three of the articles examine agrarian change and/or crisis in third-world contexts (Grigg, 1979; Richards, 1983; Watts, 1989). Two consider human impacts on landscape types – forests and wetlands (Williams, 1989; 1991). One deals with the emerging issues of 'ecopolitical discourse' and 'environmental security' in relation to political geography (Dalby, 1992). In addition, Ellen (1988), an anthropologist, examined the question of 'Persistence and change in the relationship between anthropology and human geography' in a special 'Interface' section. His article examines

geography and anthropology's shared interests. This is particularly useful in discussing the shades of difference between geographical cultural ecology and ecological anthropology. The importance of landscape conceptually and in practice is one of the key distinctions. For geographers it remains important, while for anthropologists it has never been of much concern. Although as part of the recent 'spatialization' of the social sciences and the trop(h)ic appropriations of geographic/cartographic terminology by practitioners in both the social sciences and humanities (Soja, 1996), anthropologists are finding space for place and landscape and related concepts in their theorizing (Hirsch and O'Hanlon, 1995; Feld and Basso, 1996). At what point, if any, satiety will be reached is uncertain. As Gregory (1994) and others have amply shown, the appetite and capacity for such retoolings and retellings – inside geography as well as without – are seemingly limitless. Lest we get too caught up in the spirit of these *fin de siècle* (cycle?) banquet years, memory of how and where the food comes from should be conserved. Cultural ecology's prime conceit, after all, is that subsistence activities constitute a culture's core. Therefore, I will attempt to survey the workings of, and connections between, scholars and schools, discourses and practices, sites of subversion and loci of control and so on, as grounded in and expressive of actually existing landscapes and ecologies. And as I will be at pleasure to demonstrate, even by today's critical standards, this offers no mean fare.

## II Culture, landscape, ecology: trinity into unity?

In doing fieldwork in coastal Ecuador in the early 1980s I was impressed by local villagers' devotion to a pastime that seemed to be one of the few surviving traits of their pre-Columbian predecessors (Mathewson, 1992). Near Christmas and the end of the dry season, amid the remnants of ancient raised field complexes, groups of men in festive mood drove the spongy swales 'dowsing' with long stakes for *tortugas*, or snapping turtles, embedded in the mud. When a carapace was struck, cries of '*tortuga! tortuga!*' went up, and all slogged to the site for the extraction. *Macho* voluntarism mediated the removal, as grabbing the head rather than tail could mean a lost finger. The day's catch was allocated to individuals, but in the case of larger turtles, traces of communalism emerged. Here preparation and feasting usually involved more than the single household. For many, *tortuga* offered the best of all feasible feasts – a 'three-in-one' meat whose differing parts were said to taste 'like chicken, pork and beef' and 'free' for the taking. The rural coastal folk, known colloquially as *montubios*, are themselves a 'three-in-one' people often of equal Afro-Amerind-European descent. As marginally postcolonial, mostly proletarian, and well aware of their positions in various economies that mimic their own ambient rounds of inundation and desiccation, it is not surprising that some do identify with the *tortuga* – living between savanna and swamp, in conditions of cultural hybridity and embedded in oozes (mostly economic but also political) not much of their own making.

Just as the *montubios* celebrate traces of their past subsistence practices and rituals, it may seem that reviewing traditional cultural landscape and ecological studies invites more retroflexion than reflexivity. By this token, either way it's moving backward or being stuck in the mud. This may be an accurate appraisal, but I also see it as communion with some of geography's time-tested practices and pursuits. The triad of culture, landscape and ecology approaches unity in the best of this work, whether past or present. My main objective, then, will be to identify current work that seeks this fusion,

especially those efforts that build on what has gone before, while at the same time exploring new combinations and constructions.

Perhaps the most hopeful sign that this kind of synthesis has reached critical mass (if not audience, given today's dismal record of new accessions at most university libraries) was the launching of *Ecumene, a Journal of Environment, Culture, Meaning* in 1994. Its significance and intent have already been considered in these pages by one of its founders (Duncan, 1995). His commentary merits reiteration. *Ecumene* (itself a clever play on its three subtitled emphases) offers four principal foci with which to bring about syntheses among British and North American cultural geography's new directions as well as the growing rings of overlapping interests in many allied disciplines in the humanities and social sciences (Cosgrove and Duncan, 1994). The first is culture and landscape. This focus embodies both the older project of charting human agency's landscape modifications and transformations, and the newer 'mappings' of landscapes' representational and ideological dimensions. Cultural ecology is included in this mix. The second emphasis offers histories of geographical knowledges and their impress on, or power relations over, lands and peoples. The third features the voices of critical environmentalism such as ecofeminists, green politicians and deep ecologists. The fourth focus examines dominant and subaltern meanings of landscape, place and space, in their articulations at the local to global scales.

By design *Ecumene* could provide a forum for the established view and the emergent voice to be mutually seen and heard or perhaps even converge. To what extent has this occurred in the first three years of the journal? Karl Butzer's (1994) lead article in the first number, 'The Islamic traditions of agroecology: crosscultural experience, ideas and innovations', sets high standards indeed. With time, however, it may seem less an auspice than a Lucretian peak or moment after which senescence rather than improvement set in. With his customary erudition Butzer argues that the roots of cultural ecology are not to be found in Greco-Roman geography but in Classical agronomy and its florescence in Islamic science. He breaks important new ground; the tools and techniques are appropriately traditional. Wescoat (1994) complemented Butzer's excavations of Islamic nature knowledge with reflections on Mughal monumental tomb-gardens in Lahore. In addition, nature's meanings and constructions in contemporary culture (Larsen, 1994), in arid America (Henderson, 1994), and in recent book-length treatises (Olwig, 1994) were examined. The project of theorizing nature is shaping up as the most contested and productive 1990s site of ferment within the whole domain under discussion here. Critical rereadings of colonial texts, records and exploits may come in a close second. As might be expected these topics are represented in *Ecumene's* subsequent volumes (Livingstone, 1995; Neumann, 1995; Silvern, 1995; Myers, 1996). More conventional topics and approaches are also evident. Doughty (1996) follows the promotion and spread of eucalyptus trees out of Australia, and Green and Lemon (1996) view land degradation processes in Greece through the lenses of landscape perception within agrarian systems.

### III What is to be redone?

If *Ecumene* has yet to present many articles that blend culture, landscape and ecology ('culaneco'?), what of other fora? The *Geographical Review* continues to be a major patron of well written, empirically cast pieces on landscapes from cultural and ecological angles,

often combining them. For the period 1995–96 there were several articles per number that deserve mention here. For the record, I should add that the *Geographical Review's* actual publication dates have been in arrears a year or more lately. According to its new editor Paul Starrs (1996), this gap will close, but the amplitude of given cultural and ecological landscape studies should remain generous and perhaps even widen. Novel or distinctive agroecologies placed in cultural and/or landscape perspective remain standard items. Examples range from close inspections of urban sites such as New Orleans' Vietnamese market gardens (Airriess and Clawson, 1994) and New York's Lower East Side community gardens (Schmelzkopf, 1995) to analyses of Finnish greenhouse horticulture as a remedy for regional decline (Palomäki and Noble, 1995) and northeast Brazilian fruticulture as a cause of further underdevelopment (Caviedes and Muller, 1994). Broader-scaled surveys considered questions such as the ancient meso-americans' invention or diffusion of irrigation technology (Doolittle, 1995) and the global distribution of lithic-mulch agriculture (Lightfoote, 1994). Two articles focused on traditional farming practices coping with capricious and massive exogenous forces. The plight of Wisconsin's family dairy farms in the face of seemingly accelerating agroclimatic hazards forecasts more erosion but also possible survival strategies (Cross, 1994), whereas Madagascar's small rice farmers are confronting the grinding spatiotemporal 'rationality' of green revolution solutions with time-honoured taboo observances involving work rhythm and customs (Jarosz, 1994). Three articles reported on cases of ecological landscape degradation and/or rejuvenation. The once extensive and largely forgotten mesic hardwood forests of the Carolina coastal plain are much reduced and not likely to be regenerated (Phillips, 1994). The island of Cebu in the Philippines has long been considered an extreme example of environmental degradation. New measures of observation and management suggest the nadir has been reached and restoration is probable (Kummer *et al.*, 1994). In maritime temperate lands such as Chile, where large tracts of native tree species have been devastated, plantation-produced exotics such as the Monterey pine may paradoxically create economic spaces for the return of antecedent ecosystems (Clapp, 1995). Finally, Irish immigrants to the Kentucky Bluegrass and Nashville Basins present a textbook case of material culture knowledge and cultural preadaption to specific environments. Raitz (1995) shows how these anomalous artisans filled a niche between slave labour and established freeholders with their stone-masonry skills, and not inconspicuously lined the landscape with their dry-laid stone fences.

At various times in the past the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* has been arguably less congenial than the *Geographical Review* in making space for the culture/landscape/ecology triad. Under Carville Earle's editorship (1994–96) explicit attempts were made to strengthen this focus (Earle, 1994). This included recognizing 'nature–society relations' as one of its five associate editorial divisions. Representation of these interests on the editorial board was noticeably increased. But comparing this period with the previous three years (1991–93) shows similar representations (*c.* 17%) for articles with obvious nature–society affiliations. This sample is skewed in the earlier run because of the September 1992 special issue guest-edited by Karl Butzer (1992) on 'The Americas before and after 1492' featuring nine articles on topics such as ecological and landscape change, historical demography, subsistence regimes and European colonization. Without this thematic issue and deriving an average from the other two volumes the total would be closer to 12%. Perhaps what these numbers tell us is that journals such as *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* and its national counterparts *Transactions, Institute of British Geographers, Canadian Geographer, Annals de Géographie* and

many others, are broad fora with nature–society research always visible but not pre-eminent.

Does this mean that we need yet another specialist journal, this one to service the ‘nat-soc’ or the ‘culaneco’ communities? Probably not, yet energetic foraging efforts are needed to keep up with even a portion of the journal material appearing on these subject areas. In subsequent reports, I hope to profile other journals. Logically these might include *Journal of Cultural Geography*, *Journal of Historical Geography*, *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, *Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers Yearbook*. Many non-geography journals such as *Human Ecology*, the recently reconstituted *Environmental History* and the new *Environment and History* offer prime locales for ecocultural landscape studies. From the left, *Antipode* and *Nature, Society, Capitalism* provide regular venues for nature–society critique. Beyond this, both generalist and specialist journals based in anthropology, archaeology, botany, cultural and environmental studies, history and regional or area studies often publish work that pertains. I would be grateful to hear from readers about new journals, special issues or particular articles in the past year or two that deserve mention.

#### IV Indigenous pasts, indigent futures?

The cultural landscape and ecology nexus has always provided good groundings for geographers concerned with indigenous and other traditional subsistence systems and survival strategies. Refinement and revision of previous studies are a frequent exercise among the Americanists, especially those working on prehistoric and contact period topics. Turner (1993) put the past two decades of theoretical debate on the nature of ancient Maya subsistence systems in perspective with a defence and updating of the ‘new orthodoxy’ that he and others were instrumental in establishing in the 1970s and early 1980s. Their positions are now being challenged by those arguing for the centrality of environmental constraints and perturbations in explaining ancient Maya agrarian development. Sluyter’s (1994) review of the literature on intensive wetland agriculture in mesoamerica yielded new perspectives on the distribution, areal extent and morphometry of these distinctive systems that allow additional ways to approach old questions about the emergence of sedentism, urbanism and statism. Butzer (1996) is well into a long-term project aimed at reconstructing the landscape archaeology and history of portions of central and northern Mexico on both sides of the Columbian divide. Part of his strategy involves comparative analysis of the ecological impacts of Mediterranean agrosystems in both their old and new-world contexts. The work of Butzer and his associates offers new perspectives on the ecological consequences of European colonization in Mexico and elsewhere (Butzer and Butzer, 1993).

In a pair of auto-critiques, Denevan (1992; 1996) has revised his view of prehistoric Amazonian settlement and agricultural patterns. He now proposes a ‘bluff model’ with population concentrated along rivers, but not continuously or in the floodplain proper, as most Amazonianists have blithely suggested. Denevan reasons that the shifting and sporadic bluffs were the main settlement sites. In the earlier article he argued that shifting cultivation in the vast interfluvial zones (*terra firme*) was severely limited or nonexistent until the advent of the metal axe. These reconceptions have implications for both estimating ancient demographics and planning for future populations. He still finds plausible a figure of up to 5 million persons for the Amazon Basin in 1492, based in part

on Newson's (1996) ethnohistorical study of the Ecuadorian Amazon, but cautions that future reconstructions will have to pay closer attention to the region's ecological heterogeneity. Newson (1995) also published the first major study on the historical demography of colonial Ecuador. Appropriately, much of the study is based on archival sources but she also includes landscape and ecological change in her reconstructions in the tradition of Sauer, Aschmann, Denevan and other Berkeley school geographer-demographers. Denevan's revisions are part of a larger roiling debate on the Amazonia's prehistoric populations and their cultural precocity (Roosevelt, 1994; 1996). New finds are shifting the hearths closer to the Amazon's mouth than its origins, and far deeper in time than once thought.

Lessons from the more recent past applicable to Amazonia's present and future environments are available in a number of geographers' writings. Coomes (Barham and Coomes, 1996) helps put the rubber boom in its environmental contexts against the larger canvas of its economic consequences. Nigel J.H. Smith (1995) surveys human-induced landscape changes in Amazonia with implications for development, and he coauthored a book on the region's endangered biota and landscapes (Goulding *et al.*, 1995). In yet another book Smith (1996) draws on personal (re)collections over the past 25 years in reciting tales of eco-lore contemporary Amazonians like to tell in the face of the massive changes confronting them and their environments. These stories are also being studied by scholars influenced by geographers' work (Slater, 1994).

If Amazonia and its geo-superlatives occupy a vaunted place in the geographic imagination, the Andes represent at once a complementary and contrasting location. We are reminded by Caviedes and Knapp (1995: 86) in their excellent new textbook that the Andes extend over 8000 kilometers (60 degrees of latitude) and constitute 'the longest and ecologically most variegated mountain chain in the world'. Andean environments and peoples have exercised strong attractions on geographers for the past two centuries. From Herder to Humboldt to Hettner to Troll, German geographers in particular have recognized a supreme challenge in attempting to record its geoecological complexities. Since early in this century Americanist geographers of other nationalities (including Andean) have contributed to this project. Often working in a shadow caste beside and beneath the spectacular finds and fabula of Andeanist archaeologists and anthropologists, geographers have registered their own less assuming successes (Knapp, 1991). For example, in the 1980s, Denevan (1987) directed a large multidisciplinary project on terrace abandonment in Peru's awe-inspiring Colca Valley. Their findings continue to appear, as with Treacy's (1994) posthumously published book on the valley's irrigated terrace systems. Work on regional scales and problems remains an important medium. Gade (1994), an indefatigable observer of Andean landscapes and culture, considers the effects of regional isolation at high altitudes. Drawing on nearly three decades of study of a highland community, Watters (1994) analyses the current predicament of Peruvian peasantry. Perhaps the most ambitious, innovative and ecologically grounded work on Peruvian peasants, their landscapes and livelihood histories to date is being produced by Karl Zimmerer. In a series of articles over the past decade he has examined rates of genetic erosion among indigenous crop species and recast the problem in terms of landscape modifications, farming practices, regional agrarian structure and peasant attitudes (1991; 1992; 1993; 1994b). This work has been expanded and extended in his book (1996a) *Changing fortunes: biodiversity and peasant livelihood in the Peruvian Andes*. Not since Troll's coining of the terms 'landscape ecology' and 'geoecology' and putting them into practice has there been an attempt to found a new geographical subfield based

primarily on Andean fieldwork. Zimmerer subsumes his concerns and methods under the (overly?) ample coverlet 'environmental geography'. Within this construct, however, he is quite specific about the central roles regional political ecology, agroecology and biodiversity research play in his own work. The approach he is elaborating will be applicable elsewhere, especially in the world's remaining centres of ethnobiological knowledge and peasant livelihood practices.

## V Of isles and empires

The imagery of islands and insularity not only invites synecdochic representation but also often appears to require it. Synecdoche is the trope that seeks synthesis or integration, relating the particular to the general and *vice versa* (J.M. Smith, 1996). In geographic writing synecdoche is well suited for the basic (cl)aims of ecology – contextualizing the individual in the terms of the whole – and for integrative approaches to cultural geography that see landscapes as conjunctive sites of matter, social mediations and meaning. Tuan (1995) writes of our current human condition of disconnectedness ('island selves') and passionate fixations on communal identities made all the more poignant by our growing awareness of global interdependence and ecological crisis. He views culture in general as the 'human answer to the world's disjunctions, unconnectedness, and indifference' (pp. 233–34), but in its evasive particulars, 'a form of escapism unique to human beings' (p. 238). As always his humanist musings spark rare insight but are hardly meant to incite the kind of poststructuralist-culturalist critique that has become common coinage in human geography's increasingly interconnected realms.

As I write, the 'cultural turn' is still in full arc, with many first-rate examples to recommend it appearing in the expected and some less imagined places. Perhaps not so curiously cultural ecology is largely awaiting its turn while in multiple instances focus on cultural landscape serves as a pivot (Mathewson, 1996; Rowntree, 1996). The recent *Progress in Human Geography* progress reports on cultural geography mentioned earlier, and those covering related fields, especially historical geography (McQuillan, 1995; Ogborn, 1996) and the history of geography (Driver, 1995; 1996), offer partial overviews. One of the pre-eminent concerns to emerge has been the fascination with colonialism, imperialism (more in the literary than Leninist mode, thus the highest stage of canonicalism?) and the experience of Empire in general (Godlewska and Smith, 1994; Smith, 1994; Bell *et al.*, 1995; Gregory, 1995; Driver, 1996). Land-base empires of the World Island, such as the Hapsburg, Ottoman, Russian and many other earlier formations, functioned in part as complex multicultural entities. Beyond comprising and compressing vast cultural diversities, western Europe's overseas empires, their subjects and geo-subjectivities, were spread over global expanses. Within these spaces, islands offer well defined nodes of difference and locales for identity formation. Within these contexts, excellent work by geographers and close associates is appearing on islands as the workshops of colonial savants and science – stages pre-, post- and plain.

In colonialism's wake Waddell and Nunn (1993) have coedited a fine Festschrift honouring the 25th anniversary of the founding of the University of the South Pacific and its geography programme. Cultural/ecological geography is paramount in that region's premier university and department. *The margin fades* features 15 essays on Fiji, ecological change and the past few decades of geographers' work in this part of the world. From its near margins nature writer William Lines (1994) has put a postcolonial eye on the life of

amateur Australian botanist Georgiana Molloy (1805–43). This blending of biography, environmental history and cultural critique is but one (fairly tame) example of the genre-bending work on colonial natural science and history that is booming. From nearer geography's margins, environmental historian Richard Grove's (1995) *Green imperialism: colonial expansion, tropical island edens and the origins of environmentalism, 1600–1800* offers a superb account of how English, Dutch and French reactions to the environmental degradation of their oceanic island outposts such as St Helena, Mauritius and their Caribbean colonies helped spawn not only conservationist attitudes and actions but also the Enlightenment's orientalist and Utopian currents. Jumping ahead a century or so, Galloway (1996) and Richardson (1996) depict Caribbean colonies as settings for less elevated thought and practice. Richardson (1996) shows how environmental determinism became orthodoxy among British planters and bureaucrats through their dealings with local labourers. Galloway (1996) recounts how crisis in the sugar industry was overcome through cane-breeding experiments on Barbados and Kew Gardens' promotion of economic botany as a new endeavour. Bridging precolonial times to the present, archaeologist Patrick Kirch (1994) impressively summarizes and synthesizes current knowledge of irrigation and agricultural intensification in Polynesia. Kirch joins the long list of Wittfogel-challengers in questioning the hydraulic hypothesis and pointing out the need to consider dry cultivation techniques in relation to their wet counterparts.

Not all the island readings have been lower-latitude soundings and sightings. First, a new collection of E. Estyn Evans' (1996) writings is available with a Foreword by Henry Glassie and a biographical sketch by Gwyneth Evans. As always Evans captures the essence of insular culture-in-its-environs, well demonstrated in his piece on Ratlin Island as 'an Irish St Kilda?' Secondly, with *Landscapes of desire* a pair of medievalists (Overing and Osborn, 1994) have given us a marvellous meditation on their travels to Iceland and elsewhere to ground-sooth the sagas and map Beowulf's texts using Tuan-on-place as magnetic north. By extending the scope of island to metaphor, and looking at urban as well as nonurban landscapes, a large literature could be tapped. Two examples include urban and regional 'islands' of cultural-ethnic landscape formation – viewed partially from the 'other' human ecology tradition (Arreola and Curtis, 1993; 1996) – and animals in cities (Philo, 1995) and zoos (Anderson, 1995). The topic of animals in urban places, in particular, opens various windows on the question of 'nature' within society (Wolch and Emel, 1995).

## VI Nature: a natural destination?

Just as critical revisitation of empire and colonialism, especially as directed towards travel accounts and explorers' journals, is providing some of this decade's most accessible and engaging work, theorizing and dissecting nature-as-concept offer some of the most challenging and insightful efforts (N. Smith, 1995). Neither case finds geographers' work topping the citation charts – that distinction goes to Said (1993), doyen of postcolonial studies, or to the docents of nature's demuseifications such as Merchant (1989), Harraway (1991) and Evernden (1992). Nor have anthropologists produced widely cited books on the subject, but they have been at work editing volumes (Descola and Pálsson, 1996; Ellen and Fukui, 1996). Perhaps the most anticipated collection has been Cronon's (1995) *Uncommon ground: toward reinventing nature*. The volume grew out

of a semester-long 1994 multidisciplinary seminar on 'reinventing nature'. I expect to report on its contents and impact in my next piece. Geographers have commented extensively on nature-as-construction and related notions in these pages and other places (Duncan, 1994; Williams, 1994; Matless, 1995; N. Smith, 1995; Demeritt, 1994; 1996; Ogborn, 1996). Tangent to these debates Zimmerer (1994a; 1996b) has re-examined ecology's place within geography. More directly Olwig (1984; 1994; 1996a) has mapped the meanings geographers have invested in nature and landscape. This has included excavating their groundings. He has recently (1996b) uncovered landscape's etymological origins, suggesting new bases for its 'substantive nature'. Rather than in the representation space of Renaissance aesthetics, or simply in the older Germanic associations with bounded space, i.e., territory, Olwig argues that it emerged in the (relatively rare) free spaces of northern European feudalism such as Frisia. Landscape's original meanings should be sought in the conceptual and practical nexuses of community, customary law, cultural identity, expressions of freedom, in addition to territory, within these historical contexts. A reconstituted meaning of landscape informed by these findings would have important implications for geographers' use of the concept. I hope to explore some of these possibilities in my next survey. I will also turn to the work of environmental historians, landscape archaeologists, cultural and historical ecologists, whose efforts are both replicating and redefining familiar approaches to landscape studies, especially those centred on culture and ecology.

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