

is to be found in the accounts of Peary's journey to the Pole. So possessed was Peary with the imperial glory to be gained from such a venture that, succumbing to the prevalent views of the time about the infallibility of technology, he abstractly conceptualised himself and his companions as mere 'travelling machines,' yet all the while personifying his sledge dogs in a twistedly theatrical reversal of roles. Worse yet, in another reflection of his times, Peary had little but contempt for (and not a little fear of) his Inuit guides, and also demonstrated eminently racist attitudes to Matthew Henson, his life-long black manservant and career expedition colleague.

This is an ambitious piece of work. However, sadly, it is convoluted and discursive, reminiscent more of a casual stream of consciousness than a focused academic thesis. Unfortunately, it also suffers from a near-appalling number of historical, cultural, and literary errors. Subtitled *American ideologies of polar expeditions*, this book curiously devotes a great deal of space to Robert Falcon Scott's tragic last expedition to the Antarctic; in fact, in doing so, it transcends what might be necessary for the purposes of comparison with Peary's successful conquest of the North Pole three years earlier. Further, the author's assessment of Scott is based almost exclusively upon Roland Huntford's controversial *Scott and Amundsen*, and it is Huntford's speculations about 'off-screen' disagreements between Scott and his men during the ill-fated expedition that 'confirmed my fundamental thesis that both Scott and Peary fabricated the events of their expeditions to suit the particular imperial and masculinist ideologies that each characterised' (page 13). To rely on a single, and arguably problematic, source to reach such a momentous conclusion is to leave the reader with a precarious and somewhat myopic interpretation of the facts. To identify Huntford, who was born and raised in Africa and currently resides in England, as 'Scandinavian' (page 133) is simply erroneous.

Additionally, there are a number of fatuous mistakes: Bloom states that, of the American polar explorers, Peary alone became a national hero. In fact, Elisha Kent Kane was a figure of such enormous stature that his funeral journey from Havana to Philadelphia was probably the grandest and most extensive the United States had yet experienced; and Adolphus Greely was an honoured and respected figure for decades after his return from the disastrous Lady Franklin Bay Expedition. The author also states that Dr Frederick Cook, a contemporary of Peary's and companion of Roald Amundsen on the Belgian Antarctic Expedition of 1898–1899, was a polar pioneer whose book *Through the first Antarctic night* — incorrectly titled as *Through the Antarctic night* — 'brought him considerable fame as an explorer [and] anthropologist' (page 27). Amundsen himself is incorrectly identified as the expedition leader by Bloom (page 27); rather it was Adrien de Gerlache. And although the *Belgica* expedition was charged with conducting geological, astronomical, zoological, and oceanographic research, would Bloom have the reader believe that Cook actually engaged in social science research on an uninhabited continent?

Bloom has much to say about the popular national discourse of the National Geographic Society and its emblematic journal *National Geographic* during the 20 years around the turn of the century: this too diverts the reader from the matter in hand. Regrettably, it is this section that contains some of the most distressing inaccuracies in the book; as a result, Bloom's argument flounders. Central to her argument are that *National Geographic* was 'a commercialised discourse of mass culture' (page 65), that it had become an institution with 'a position of enormous power and influence' (page 66), and that it 'played a central role in the production of ideology' (page 66). Yet, in 1888, *National Geographic* maintained a subscription of only 1000 members; in 1912 — three years after Peary's North Pole expedition, 107,000. By contrast, in the same years Joseph Pulitzer's New York newspaper *The World* had a daily circulation of 246,000 and 768,000 respectively; William Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal* had circulations of 48,000 and 1,234,000. These were truly journals of enormous power and influence, and, clearly, Bloom exaggerates the popular influence *National Geographic* had. Equally inaccurate is the author's singular attribution of Peary's status and fame as an American hero to *National Geographic*; perilously, she ignores the fact that *The New York Times* was, arguably, Peary's most significant backer. Likewise, it was *The Times*, far more than *National Geographic*, which attempted to prove the alleged dishonesty of Dr Cook's claim to the Pole. Perhaps the most disturbing inaccuracy in *Gender on ice* is Bloom's continual reference to the Inuit in the plural as 'Inuits,' her failure to identify a single native as *Inuk*, and her reference to 'Inuit language' rather than to *Inuktitut*. In a piece of work that purports to address the inaccuracy and injustice of a century of racist popular discourse, such a failure is nothing short of intellectually embarrassing. Equally annoying is the way the book bounds indiscriminately, variously appearing as a poetic regarding the search for the Franklin expedition in the mid-eighteenth century and a tractate on the Vietnam and Persian Gulf wars.

Although the book has a pivotal conceptual thesis, many of the relevant issues and arguments appear on the page as somewhat disconnected from one another. Ultimately, this is a volume that would seem to be more suited to a general audience in the form of a collection of essays rather than a monograph. Sadly, it is not an easy book to read, and, in the final analysis, like Bloom's conclusions, it ends up on thin ice. (M.J. Whittles, Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, Lensfield Road, Cambridge CB2 1ER.)

**HISTORICAL ECOLOGY: CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE AND CHANGING LANDSCAPES.** Carole L. Crumley (Editor). 1994. Santa Fe, New Mexico: School of American Research Press. xiv + 284 p, soft cover. ISBN 0-933452-85-3. US\$22.50.

Concern about environmental degradation as one of the most pressing issues of modern times is evident in a growing academic and policy-oriented literature on global change. Much of this literature comes from the various

disciplines of the natural sciences, which continue to monitor the causes and extent of environmental change. Research on environmental issues has tended to be predominantly science-based, partly because it is assumed that global environmental change requires scientific interpretation. However, the present ecological crisis, in its regional and global senses, is a complex of social and environmental conditions arising from human activity. Yet, comparatively little research demonstrates the diverse and intricate ways in which humans engage with and influence the natural world, and how environmental change modifies human activity. While social science is well equipped with the theoretical and methodological tools to understand the human dimensions of global environmental change, there has been little progress in the social sciences beyond outlining 'strategies for research.'

The 10 essays in this volume address this imbalance from the perspectives of anthropology, archaeology, and human ecology, and in doing so make a significant contribution to the literature on the human dimensions of global environmental change. The contributors take an anthropological approach to understanding the dialectical nature of human–environment relationships in historical context. They argue that historical ecology, or 'the study of past ecosystems by charting the change in landscapes over time' (page 6) can help to explain how changes in demography, subsistence, land use, and environmental perception have caused people to modify (whether intentionally or not) the global environment. Such an approach contrasts with other, more traditional, anthropological assumptions that, in pre-modern cultures, problems arising from human–environment interactions had only local consequences.

Instead of viewing the environment as something that people live in, exploit, and are influenced or constrained by, one of the aims of the book is to address the problem of denying 'the environment a meaningful role in history' (page 2). In this sense, the contributors argue that the study of human–environment relations is to be placed at the centre of any discourse on global environmental change if it is to be made sense of and the implications understood.

Several contributors (Crumley, Winterhalder, Ingerson, Gunn, and Patterson) explore the theoretical challenges global environmental change poses to the study of human–environment relations, while others illustrate historical ecological processes in a number of case studies (Schmidt on equatorial Africa, McGovern on Norse Greenland, Hassan on ancient Egypt, and Marquardt on southwest Florida). These case studies demonstrate, for example, how people in the past lived beyond their means, existing on scarce resources, or how they were forced to adapt to new environmental conditions brought about by changing technology and agricultural methods. As a number of contributors (such as McGovern and Patterson) argue, by examining how humans related to their environments in the past, we are in a better position to understand the temporal and spatial processes of environmental change and to act on this understanding.

As anthropologists are now demonstrating in increasingly sophisticated ways, conceptualisations of, and interactions with, the environment inform social relations and human action. By understanding how such conceptualisations, and, indeed, human actions, have changed through time, *Historical ecology* demonstrates that the (not always wide) gap between the natural and social sciences can be bridged, and that a new holistic environmental science is possible by assuming an interdisciplinary perspective on environmental change. For this reason alone, *Historical ecology* should appeal to those in the social and natural sciences who are concerned with developing new theoretical insight into regional and global environmental change. (Mark Nuttall, Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, Lensfield Road, Cambridge CB2 1ER.)

**SS EAGLE: THE SECRET MISSION 1944–45.** Harold Squires. 1992. St John's: Jespersion Press. xii + 113 p, illustrated, soft cover. ISBN 0-921692-37-4. \$Can11.95.

*SS Eagle: the secret mission 1944–45* is a first-hand account of a wartime voyage made by that ship, the last of the Newfoundland wooden-walled sealing steamers, to 're-establish British claims in Antarctica' (page 64). This aim was to be achieved through the founding of a scientific base at Hope Bay. In the author's words: 'Antarctica was now considered of strategic importance....The British Government felt very strongly that Argentina should not at this time control the southern side of Drake Passage' (page 48). Indeed, control of Hope Bay was to be further reinforced by the establishment of British jurisdiction over Deception Island, thus preventing any further repetition of that island's use as a refuelling and supply depot by enemy shipping.

Squires' narrative charts the progress of *SS Eagle* and her crew from Newfoundland to Antarctica and back again. Throughout its pages, scenes of day-to-day life blend with more spectacular events: appalling storms, close shaves with icebergs, fatal accidents, and the near-destruction of the ship herself when her bowsprit and bow were torn off by an iceberg. It is an unusual story of a risky mission in an elderly vessel manned by an unusually determined crew.

This is self-evidently not an academic book, and it would be invidious to treat it as such. It lacks such scholarly necessities as an index, bibliography, and extensive footnotes, but equally it does not lapse into that species of academic dryness that can make some scholarly works deadly to anyone but specialists in a similar field. Instead, this is a personal history, the wartime recollections of Radio Officer Harold Squires, an ordinary man involved in an extraordinary series of events.

The narrative is recounted in Squires' own words and expressed in his own inimitable style. 'Scalding hot tea' and 'raisin duff' are *de rigueur* at the mess table, the ship's rigging howls pitifully 'like a human soul lost in eternal torments' (page 27), and the menace of German U-boats