

Anger have I felt so strongly about sharing a book with students—whether in the social sciences, biological sciences or earth sciences—and with individuals who decide to live in any northern community. My reasons, however, are different. Jean Briggs prepared those of us wanting to do anthropology for isolation from our colleagues and working in difficult surroundings, without running water or electricity. Blackman helps us to give up that attitude, and as she says, “Perhaps it’s the romantic ethnographer in me that wants Anaktuvuk Pass to be the isolated, self-contained, unchanging village that it never was. If there’s one constant about culture, it’s change... But sometimes I forget how much my own life has turned upside down over the fourteen years I’ve been coming here” (p. 201). Blackman demonstrates that to go to small northern communities is to engage with community people, to be open to how they accept or reject change, and to accept that they have ideas about how you will conduct your research – that you too will change.

In her eloquence, Blackman also prepares us for the times that every ethnographer faces: forgetting to turn on the tape recorder—even with electricity—and losing that great interview; using old batteries when on the land because we are used to electricity in the communities; the never-ending struggle with whether or not to write field notes if an individual does not want you to; leaving the tape recorder at home and remembering the experience because you are among friends and engaged with what is going on. She remembers the community and the warmth and friendship she experienced while on the land, as she recalls Noah telling her (p. 159), “You never get lonely when you go out camping, Margaret.”

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WRITING GEOGRAPHICAL EXPLORATION: JAMES AND THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE 1631–33. By WAYNE K. DAVIES. Calgary: University of Calgary Press and the Arctic Institute of North America, 2004. 318 p., maps, b&w illus., bib., index. Hardbound. Cdn\$49.95.

In May 1631, Welsh explorer Thomas James and his crew of 22 sailed out of Bristol, crossed the North Atlantic, entered Hudson Strait and Bay, and sailed as far south as the bay that bears his name. They survived the apparently fierce winter of 1631–32 on Charlton Island (now in Nunavut), the latitude of which, 52°03', puts it no farther north than Innisfail, Alberta; Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; and Bella Bella and Williams Lake, British Columbia. Although James bestowed new names on the map of northern North America, his discoveries amounted to nothing significant; Henry Hudson had preceded him by two

decades into James Bay (never to exit from it), and both Hudson’s expedition and that of the Danish-sponsored Jens Munk to Churchill River a decade later had wintered on this inland body of salt water. Luke Foxe voyaged in 1631, as well, but Foxe returned to England and reported the discovery of Foxe Basin and Foxe Channel to his London merchant sponsors before the year was out. Needless to say, neither James nor Foxe, who both sailed under the sponsorship of King Charles I, discovered a northwest passage. James and his men had no contact with Native people. Nothing about these details, then, distinguishes James as an explorer or mariner. And yet, *The Strange and Dangerous Voyage of Captaine Thomas James* (1633) is not only an apt title for James’s book but also a unique title in the annals of Arctic exploration, the publications of which have featured drearily predictable and unimaginative names, for fear of sounding imaginary rather than empirical. *The Strange and Dangerous Voyage* passed out of print two years ago, but it has enjoyed a much-deserved longevity. Although in *Hakluytus Posthumus*, compiler Samuel Purchas (1625) included William Baffin’s account of his first expedition (1615), James’s was the first of what would become a long series of books published for an English monarch by the leader of an Arctic expedition to territory now claimed by Canada.

So, even though James has not attracted much attention from Canadian scholars, the appearance of an entire book devoted to him should not itself seem strange. Wayne Davies has endeavoured to introduce James to his fellow historical geographers and, somewhat ponderously, to boost all readers’ awareness of the seminal role played by Welshmen in the exploration of what is now Canada. His handsomely designed, well-produced book makes for an engaging read.

Chiefly, however, Davies has another concern: he aims to alert historical geography to the limitations of its traditional orientation to narratives of exploration, an orientation that he sees as an unthinking equation of explorers’ personal experiences with their apparently realist narratives of them. In announcing this alert, he discusses how modern theories about narrative, advanced in the past four decades, could be brought to bear on the way in which historical geographers esteem and make use of books of exploration. Davies stresses that these theories are informed by cognitive psychology (ways of seeing, recognizing, selecting, representing, and remembering). In addition, adapting James Clifford’s paradigm of influences on anthropological writing, he provides a useful distinction between constructing and writing a narrative of exploration, and proceeds to anatomize the complexities of a process that is anything but straightforward, mainly because publishers insisted on “readying” most explorers’ accounts for the press. Davies’ catholic breadth of interest is welcome and supports his timely thesis: that the exploration narrative generally, and James’s book particularly, “needs to be read from several different perspectives if its value is to be fully appreciated” (p. xiv). Although this call

does not issue in a study that exhausts these perspectives—indeed, *Writing Geographical Exploration* adopts a fairly standard positivist approach when it hits its stride—it is warranted. But Davies surprises his reader by neglecting the work of the past 15 years in the field of book history (bibliography) that has focused on the process by which explorers and travellers evolved, or were turned by their publishers, into authors. Given his title, this oversight is regrettable. Still, to the meagre portrait that history has painted of James, Davies does add new details, including James's Welsh roots.

Not all portions of *The Strange and Dangerous Voyage* repay as close reading as Thomas James's accomplished poems, two of which grace his account, but it is clear that he was a better than ordinary writer, just as he was a more than normally educated sea captain, having studied law in London at some point in his youth. Davies does not discuss what one must allow was likely James's own talent, which saw him into print a scant five months after he docked at Bristol in October 1632. He does clarify, however, that Robert Boyle, who would help found the Royal Society, the world's oldest scientific society, 25 years after James's death in 1635, esteemed James as both a talented writer and an observant natural philosopher. In his *New Experiments and Observations Touching Cold*, Boyle (1665) cited James's book more often than any other source. And no wonder: it is rare for a narrative of exploration to hold in fruitful tension a Christian faith—James is the first explorer of Arctic North America who comes to mind as a regularly prayerful, worshipping Christian—and a reputable empirical curiosity. Moreover, the three appendices of James's book, one by him, the second by mathematician Henry Gellibrand, and the last by William Watts, sometime chaplain to Charles I, preserve this balance. The appendices set an enquiry into longitude (the dependable measurement of which still lay more than a century away) against a philosophical disquisition that pits Christian faith against Aristotelian reasoning, arguing that the latter is the handmaid of the former, not the reverse. In the years before the Puritan uprising and civil war in England, *Strange and Dangerous Voyage* was very much a book of its times; that it needs to be studied from several different disciplinary perspectives is wholly understandable if consideration is to be accorded all its contents.

Davies makes less of the stranger and more dangerous aspects of James's voyage than one might like, for example, the horror of the ship's crew at discovering the body of Richard Edwards, the gunner's mate, frozen to the hull of the ship months after he had died and been given a burial at sea "at a good distance from the Ship." This rarity, together with James's account of his successful if bizarre strategy of sinking his ship for the winter in order to prevent its being smashed by ice, provide instances where the study of narrative effect clarifies how the Arctic had its reputation as Satan's haunt and a graveyard for lunatics up until recently.

Although he maintains as much, Davies fails to show that James's book was popular. What he means by "popu-

lar" is never made clear; obviously, in an epoch when many fewer people could read or afford to buy a book, popularity would not equate with what is meant today by the term *bestseller*. That James's book had no second edition right away or even, as far as has been shown, a second printing, suggests that it did not sell widely. It might have been esteemed by those who knew it, but such regard does not signify popularity. Likely, Davies has confused fame and popularity, synonyms today perhaps, but not always. If so, he is not the first to do so.

Davies' argument that James refused to hire men with previous Arctic experience because he was concerned about a repetition of the mutiny on Hudson's expedition is only the same point that Kenyon made in his modern edition of the book, published in 1975. Generally, Davies pays scant attention to the contribution to studies of the expedition made by Kenyon's edition, the only Canadian one apart from an unedited, un-introduced facsimile reprint of the corrupt second edition of 1740, issued in 1973 as part of the Coles Canadiana Reprint series.

If there are flaws of omission, there are few of commission in what is on balance a welcome addition to studies of Thomas James.

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