

“Howling & Scowling,” “Bear Attacks,” “Antlers as Status Symbols,” and so forth. This is a laudable way to present much of the complex biology of northern mammals as well as topical issues.

However, this book raises a rather fundamental issue: is encyclopaedic material best presented by one author, or by a panel of experts, whose writings are closely edited by an able, visionary editor? After reading this book, I would choose the second option. My expertise resides primarily with hoofed mammals. The sections of this book dealing with these species are, unfortunately, peppered with annoying inaccuracies and dated ideas. This being the case for hoofed mammals, I wonder about the trustworthiness of the other sections. Had the author invited the participation of experts and acted as editor, a role for which he is eminently qualified, the result would have been a better book. I also take issue with the statement (p. 9) that “North Americans are lucky enough to live in a region that still supports wolves, grizzly bears, pronghorn, caribou, orcas—mammals that need large wild spaces.” A sentence such as this misinforms, because the abundance of wildlife we enjoy today has nothing to do with luck: this is wildlife restored through the efforts of three generations of North Americans. Over much of our continent, at the turn of the century, wildlife was depleted to the point of extinction. The return of wildlife was achieved by a remarkable continental co-operative effort that made the United States and Canada adopt identical policies of wildlife conservation. It is in my eyes the greatest environmental success story of the 20th century, and one of the great cultural achievements of North American society. More important still is the fact that wildlife is maintained by deep-rooted populist conservation movements, the product of grass-roots democracy, and a splendid example of a great public good.

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VOYAGE OF THE *BELGICA*: FIFTEEN MONTHS IN THE ANTARCTIC. By ADRIEN DE GERLACHE. Bluntisham, Huntington: Bluntisham Books, 1998. ISBN 1-85297-054-5. xxx + 202 p., maps, b&w illus., appendices. Hardbound. £37.50; US \$67.50.

This book, translated from the original French version by Maurice Rarity, is reprinted on the occasion of the one-hundredth anniversary of the Belgian Antarctic Expedition of 1897–99. It recounts the events preceding and following the first overwintering (and camping) expeditions in the Antarctic regions. The expedition, of a purely scientific nature, was to set out for the southern oceans, following the recommendations of the Sixth International Geographical Congress held in London in July 1895.

The book is introduced with an interesting background of the southern polar region designed to make the reader more familiar with the goals and objectives of the *Belgica* expedition. The story begins in the late 1500s, with Dutch expeditions to the Antarctic region, whose discoveries most probably came about as the result of commercial zeal mediated by chance. The reader is drawn in to the saga of nationalistic conquests, seal slaughters (which parallel today’s shifts in animal populations due to man’s interference through excessive hunting), and well-known explorers whose names live on as geographic markers. The author also wanted to verify in his own mind the fact that a continent did or did not exist in the southern polar region. The stage was set for a Belgian voyage studying many facets of science, including ice drift, geological and zoological collections, ethnological observations of various peoples encountered, a complete year’s meteorological observations made every hour, studies on terrestrial magnetism, and observations of flora and fauna. But first there were the challenges of getting approval from governments to pursue such a voyage, raising the money, assembling the crew and supplies, in a country (Belgium) which did not have a taste for such “far-flung enterprises,” where de Gerlache met much “latent mistrust among most Belgians.” The reader meets interesting personalities, such as Roald Amundsen, the second officer, and Frederick Cook, who “was the one man of unflinching courage, unflinching hope, endless cheerfulness, and unwearied kindness...his ingenuity and enterprise were boundless” (p. xv). We follow the saga of a young sailor, Auguste Karl Wienke, who died in an accident because of “excessive zeal.” The author recounts the sad story of his closest companion, Emile Danco, who was probably destined to death because of his health, and the subsequent effects on the crew’s morale. We follow them sailing on the high seas and stranded deep in polar ice and can feel their every move. The text is supplemented by excellent reprints of the original photographs, taken presumably by Dr. Cook.

There is an excellent description of the lifestyles of the aborigines of Tierra del Fuego, whom de Gerlache dooms to extinction: “So everything is conspiring towards the destruction of this race of people, for whom their history will have been the same as the Indians of North America, the Patagonians, the aborigines of Australia and of so many others, with one important difference: alcoholism will not have been responsible for their disappearance” (p. 53).

Reading this book one hundred years after the fact, one cannot help but observe the differential status between the officers and crew. On various occasions, readers glimpse how crew members were treated, dissent between officers and crew, and insubordination of crew members. Though subtle in the actual account, these problems were more pronounced in the foreword written one hundred years later, which only serves to remind one of the way attitudes have changed over time.

The account of the expedition from its preparation stages to its return is a most interesting anecdotal retelling

of the harsh realities that the author faced in making this expedition successful. It is written for the layman and would also be enjoyed by young readers. What makes reading a challenge is the lack of accurate maps. The maps throughout the book, copies of the originals, are in French and very difficult to follow. A series of up-to-date maps, on which readers could locate the many place names used by the author, would make the story even more compelling.

Apart from the map problem, this book is an excellent read for the general reader, as well as for those interested in polar history.

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ACROSS ARCTIC AMERICA: NARRATIVE OF THE FIFTH THULE EXPEDITION. By KNUD RASMUSSEN, with an introduction by TERRENCE COLE. Classic Reprint Series No. 6. Fairbanks, Alaska: University of Alaska Press, 1999. (Originally published in 1927.) ISBN 0-912006-94-3. 415 p., maps, plates, index. Hardbound, US\$34.95; Softbound, US\$24.95.

Between 1921 and 1924, Knud Rasmussen led a small band of colleagues in a journey of investigation across arctic North America, from Hudson Bay to the Bering Strait. The full scientific report of the Fifth Thule Expedition, as it was called, fills ten volumes. This single volume, *Across Arctic America*, is Rasmussen's own reworking and condensation of the larger series and gives the essence of the Arctic and its people.

In his introduction, Terrence Cole says, "On his journeys Rasmussen explored both the visible world of ice and snow and the invisible world of mind and spirit, recording an incomparable wealth of data about Eskimo intellectual and spiritual life" (p. xi). Rasmussen's basic principle in his work was to "earn the trust of local people by showing understanding and patience: living with the people and not apart from them, sharing their work and their food, even when it was not the most palatable" (p. xvii). The expedition name "Thule" was derived from "the legendary name of Thule, after the mystical land that the ancients believed was the end of the earth" (p. xx).

The story of Rasmussen's journey from region to region and from tribe to tribe becomes rather philosophical as he compares and contrasts what he finds with his own experiences and those of his colleagues. Throughout the book, he tells of finding the local *angakoq*, an older person bequeathed with a sort of mystical and religious quality that made him the center of all meaning and practice in each community. It is the business of the *angakoq* to protect, to heal, to intercede, to oversee observance of traditional customs and taboos, and to administer justice. Rasmussen describes each *angakoq* charmingly in con-

crete terms, including his living quarters, charms, amulets, and bracelets, as well as his power and influence (his place in totemism) in his community.

What is death? What is life? What are the taboos that govern life? What are the roles of men and women in each community? What are the laws of survival? What are the fears that haunt the people? How do the forces of nature and weather influence life? With these fundamental questions, Rasmussen engages his *angakoqs* and records their wisdom for us. Through their stories, songs, games, laughter, and legends, Rasmussen explores the customs and ways of these people as he weaves from western Greenland to the eastern ports of Siberia. These accounts, often similar in story and meaning, make delightful reading.

Of particular interest was the chapter entitled "From Starvation to Savagery." Each group of people had different survival methods, based on the lay of the land, the climate, the types of animals, the size of the group, and its ability to wander. In this chapter, the Netsilingmiut people are described at the extremes, in times of plenty and times of starvation. Rasmussen says, "life is thus an almost uninterrupted struggle for bare existence, and periods of dearth and actual starvation are not infrequent" (p. 223). He then explores cannibalism in the light of the above questions posed to the *angakoqs*, and asks further: Who is sacrificed? Where does suicide enter the picture? Why not infanticide? What is the importance of amulets? His summation:

My own experiences in these particular regions have convinced me that the white man, though bringing certain perils in his train does nevertheless introduce a gentler code, and in many ways lightens the struggle for existence.... On the other hand, one must not judge these children of nature too harshly. They are, in fact, still in but an early stage of evolution as human beings. And we should bear in mind that life in these inhospitable regions, exposed to the cruellest conditions and ever on the verge of extermination is not conducive to excessive gentleness. (p. 236)

The short chapter entitled "Belated Honors" is an interesting supplement to the history of the John Franklin expedition. Although 75 years had passed since Franklin's death, Rasmussen heard several stories of encounters with the expedition that seemed still fresh in memory. Sitting on King William Island, where many of Franklin's men died, he listened to the stories, saw material remains of the British expedition, and paid tribute:

Here on this lonely spit of land, weary men had toiled along the last stage of their mortal journey. Their tracks are not effaced, as long as others live to follow and carry them farther; their work lives as long as any region of the globe remains for men to find and conquer. (p. 241)

The similarity in the stories from east to west is what strikes Rasmussen most. The characters may change, the