

sium; as Moss admits in the preface, it is difficult to put on paper what began as a social event. Some of the stories, no doubt, are experienced very differently in person than on the page. Conversely, navigating the difficult waters of contemporary literary analysis is probably much easier in book form than during a formal symposium presentation. This said, however, *Echoing Silence* does a superb job of sharing the stories, perspectives, and narrative styles of the participants. Even more, it celebrates the complex voices and ideas circulating about the meaning and impact of the Arctic and the willingness and ability of writers, thinkers, and storytellers to continue sharing their insights and search for understanding.

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ARCTIC JOURNAL. By BERN WILL BROWN. Ottawa: Novalis, 1998. 226 p., maps, b&w illus., index. Hardbound. Cdn\$23.95.

ARCTIC JOURNAL II: A TIME FOR CHANGE. By BERN WILL BROWN. Ottawa: Novalis, St. Paul University, 1999. 350 p., map, colour illus., index. Hardbound. Cdn\$32.95.

The two volumes of former Catholic Priest Bern Will Brown's *Arctic Journal* lead the reader through the author's 50 years in the Northwest Territories and northern Alberta. Brown came north as an Oblate Father for the diocese of the Mackenzie in 1948. Volume I chronicles the optimistic life of the young, guitar-playing priest who revelled in the hardships of travel by dog team and the challenges of building new missions. From his first assignment in Fort Norman (Tulita), where he learned to speak Slavey, Bern Will Brown actively embraced life in the North. In his early years, Brown founded churches at Camsell Portage and Uranium City beside Lake Athabasca, and at Deline (Fort Franklin) by Great Bear Lake. The late 1940s and 1950s (chronicled in Volume I) were a time when the Roman Catholic Church was still at the height of its influence in the North. Brown was a member of the last wave of new priests who came north at that time. The young Father Brown chafed at the regimentation of Oblate life in the big missions at Fort Smith and Aklavik. But he prospered in the freedom of the small communities, where he plied his trade by dog team, traveling from bush camp to bush camp to bring the sacraments of the Church to the Dene and Metis trappers of the North. It was during this time that he became an accomplished photographer and applied his skills as a painter to finish the empty panels in the famous mission church at Fort Good Hope, Northwest Territories.

Volume II opens with Brown turning his hand to journalism as the editor of the *Aklavik Journal*. The journal chronicled life in the community of Aklavik during the years around the birth of the "planned" town of E-3 or Inuvik, which replaced Aklavik as the administrative centre for the Mackenzie Delta region. After founding the new church at Inuvik, the freewheeling Father Brown found himself "shackled" by the duties of running the mission at Fort McMurray, Alberta. The responsibilities of church, school, and hospital weighed on him. To escape, he found release in travel by dog and canoe. His diligent work at Fort McMurray was eventually rewarded, however, when the Bishop provided him with the opportunity to build the new church at Nahani Butte along the South Nahanni River and then assigned him in 1962 to found a new mission at Colville Lake, northwest of Great Bear Lake.

Until it reaches Brown's arrival in Colville Lake, the narrative resembles a travelogue of the places and personalities of the North. Building the Mission of Our Lady of the Snows was the largest construction project Brown undertook: in fact, his task was to build a new community. While the narrative follows the construction of the mission in detail, Brown only tangentially discusses his underlying assignment, that of creating an outpost community designed to provide the Hareskin people an opportunity to stay on the land and live a traditional lifestyle. Brown's omission of a more detailed discussion of the Colville "experiment" appears to be calculated. While it would have been interesting to hear Bern Will Brown's views stated more articulately, the omission is understandable given the sensitivity of his role. He alludes to the deeper story in his references to the impact of alcohol on the people and to his increasing loneliness, due, at least in part, to his growing feeling of isolation from the community. At Colville, the young, exuberant Father Brown approached the doubts of middle age. He abandoned his dogs for an airplane and a snowmobile. Brown slowly realized he was not happy single, and he sought release from his vows to marry Margaret Steen. Following their marriage in 1971, Brown continued to run the mission as a devoted lay leader. He was visibly relieved, however, to have laid down the "moral" responsibility for the community he had felt as a priest. During the 1970s, Brown, at that time the best religious artist in the North, found a new secular following for his work, which gave him and Margaret the financial freedom to continue their life in Colville Lake. While the second volume provides an important chronological sequence of his artistic career, it lacks much serious retrospection regarding the development of his craft.

Both volumes of *Arctic Journal* will be of interest to northern travelers who want to meet old friends again. The books will be useful to the student of "current" northern history. And finally, while not as ethnographically insightful as the earlier works of Fathers Petitot or de Cocolca, the *Arctic Journals* will be read by those interested in the role of the Church in the communities of the Mackenzie drainage during the second half of the 20th century.

Given Bern Will Brown's long, colourful, and at times controversial career in the North, it is tempting for the reader to seek more from the author than he could possibly have packed into two volumes. Brown has given us two thoughtfully written and well-crafted books that leave me hoping he will continue to write about his years in the North.

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GENERAL GEOCRYOLOGY. By E.D. YERSHOV. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998. ISBN 0-521-47344-9. xxiii + 580 p., b&w illus., bib., index. Hardbound. US\$120.00.

The Earth's polar regions are among the coldest, harshest and most remote physical environments on the planet and, as a result, remain one of its least understood systems. Cold regions research, particularly the study of frozen ground properties and processes, is a relatively recent field of science that since the mid-1940s has emerged as a distinct subdiscipline of Earth Science. Its growth has been closely linked to the unique demands of construction in areas underlain by permafrost and activities associated with both the Arctic oil and gas industry and the Cold War. The geographical and ideological isolation of the former Soviet Union from other northern countries resulted in the development of two distinct and often disparate bodies of frozen ground literature. One is primarily in English and dominated by North American and European examples; the other, in Russian, focuses on Siberian examples. The literature also reflects strong philosophical differences: for example, the North American-European approach has a strong geomorphic bent that is rooted in climatic geomorphology, while the Russian approach is firmly based in physical geology and stratigraphy. Until recently, the West has had little access to the extensive Russian literature. Notable exceptions are the translations of books by Shumskii (1964) and Tsytoich (1975) and papers published in the proceedings of seven international permafrost conferences. However, these translations are extremely specific. *General Geocryology* is an English translation of the Russian textbook *Obshchaya Geokriologiya*, published in 1990, which provides unique insight into the Russian approach to frozen ground science as well as into its historical and geographical context.

Although *geocryology* is widely accepted as referring to the investigation of frozen ground, in the Russian literature it is a general term that embraces not only processes and phenomena associated with seasonal frost and permafrost, but also areas covered by glaciers (Fyodorov and Ivanov, 1974). Professor Yershov describes

geocryology as the branch of geology that includes the study of physical laws governing frozen ground and its structure and properties. It also includes the investigation of cryogeological processes active in permafrost formation. In North America, on the other hand, cold climate and frozen earth studies have traditionally been the domain of permafrost and periglacial science (Washburn, 1973; French, 1996), although in recent years the term *geocryology* has gained widespread acceptance. For example, in 1979 Washburn republished his 1973 text, *Periglacial Processes and Environments*, under the title *Geocryology: A survey of periglacial processes and environments*. Thus, in the English literature *geocryology* includes mainly the geomorphic and geotechnical characteristics of permafrost and periglacial systems.

General Geocryology presents a rather uneven overview of frozen ground topics. It begins with background notes by the editor, including useful translational notes that identify key sources and potentially problematic terms. Next come the author's preface and an introduction that provides general background material on topics ranging from planetary cryology and patterns in permafrost occurrence in past geologic periods to the evolution of permafrost science in Russia and theoretical and methodological approaches in Russian *geocryology*. The neophyte will find these materials both interesting and a good indication of the very different nature of Russian permafrost science.

The main body of the text is divided into five sections comprising 19 chapters. There is significant inconsistency in detail and technical level between the various sections. The first section, entitled "Thermal, physical, physico-chemical and mechanical processes in freezing, frozen and thawing ground and their manifestation in permafrost regions," is the longest (five chapters) and most technical part of the book. In this section, Yershov describes in detail the theoretical and physical aspects of ground freezing and thawing. Included are chapters on moisture dynamics, physical and chemical processes, changes in structure, and physical manifestations of ground freezing. The second section, "Composition, cryogenic structure and properties of frozen rocks," is divided into four chapters that focus mainly on the geological character of frozen ground. This section is somewhat disjointed and descriptive, and it lacks the detail found in other Russian translations (e.g., Shumskii, 1964; Tsytoich, 1975). However, for those unfamiliar with the Russian approach to permafrost science, Section 2 will be very useful. Section 3, "Principles of the formation and development of the frozen strata and layers of seasonal freezing and thawing," deals with surface energy balance conditions and surface processes associated with the active layer, and permafrost formation. This section (four chapters) is reasonably technical and introduces a number of uniquely Russian concepts, for example, V.A. Kudryavtsev's seasonal freezing and thawing classification and Romanovskij's talik classification. Section 4, "Regional features and evolution of permafrost," is short (three chapters), descriptive, and the