

ENDURING DREAMS: AN EXPLORATION OF ARCTIC LANDSCAPE. By JOHN MOSS. Toronto: Anansi, 1994. 174 p. Softbound. Cdn\$16.95.

In *Enduring Dreams*, John Moss, professor of English at the University of Ottawa, offers his readers a literary map of the Arctic. Opening with an invitation to “remember fresh snow melting in your mouth when you were a child” (p. ix), the preface hints that the work will provide readers with a taste of the Arctic that is, at once, knowledgeable, deeply personal, sensual, and nostalgic.

Although the text documents numerous forays into the Arctic and captures Moss’s exhilarating experiences as an endurance athlete, this is not simply an adventure story. Its meditative preface and five philosophical chapters explore a wide range of literary treatments of the Arctic and, at the same time, interrogate the terminology used to describe the northern landscape. In the end, the text is less an adventure story than “a Möbius loop of endless contemplation,” to borrow the words of the narrator (p. 26).

With its nonlinear structure, encyclopaedic array of intertextual references, helpful bibliography, and postmodern playfulness, the text will clearly appeal to academics. (It comes as no surprise that it was immediately put on the required reading list for graduate students in English at the University of Toronto.) But its poetic language has the potential to captivate anyone who has ever dreamed of journeying through the arctic landscape.

At times, the author’s wordplay conveys a euphoria that recalls the writing of the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins. Echoes of “Pied Beauty” and “God’s Grandeur” can be heard in the account of the canoe trip Moss and his wife, Virginia, took in 1989:

[W]e entered landscape gradually, bound by muscle fibre, sweat, and will to the river itself, to the great swift current and the scarred and scoured bands of sand, clay, gravel, rock and runnelled muskeg. The Deh Cho was a living place for us, and we, alive within it. Sheer plod, the necessity to endure what we had set ourselves to do, slowly wiped away the predispositions of geography and history, maps and narratives. (p. 5)

Through such indirect and direct allusions to other works, the narrator self-consciously assumes a place among a host of other writers, artists, explorers, and adventurers, ranging from Martin Frobisher to Aritha van Herk, who have likewise portrayed the Arctic’s contours.

The text’s central concern lies in conveying an awareness that the discipline of geography and representations of landscape are culturally mediated and therefore biased. As the narrator states, geography “defines the Arctic relative to Greenwich” (p. 16). In the light of this awareness, Moss cannot assume the stance of an objective observer. Instead, he carefully identifies his points of departure, and lays bare his biases and desires, even going so far as to confess that his book is also “a love story” (p. x).

Each chapter elaborates on his orientation by providing readers with an intimate account of his relations. If geography, as a discipline, is “relative to Greenwich,” then Moss’s particular geography is, as he demonstrates, relative to his wife, daughters, sons-in-law, uncles, grandparents, and close friends.

In addition to highlighting the culturally specific aspects of geography, Moss also takes pains to underscore his position as an outsider to the Arctic. As he notes, for the most part, the North has been represented not by the people “native to the place” for whom “landscape is an extension of being” (p. 29), but by outsiders like himself. The book becomes particularly informative when Moss deploys his knowledge of the Arctic and his skill as a critic to subject representations of the Arctic by outsiders (such as Al Purdy, Rudy Wiebe, and Farley Mowat, to name only a few) to literary and cultural analyses. This type of scrutiny is necessary because, as Moss points out, government policies on the North “are made in consequence of how outsiders imagine it to be” (p. 31).

On the whole, the narrative constructs and operates within a binary opposition between insiders and outsiders—a framework that gives rise to the pervasive tone of nostalgia that envelops the text. One facet of the author’s enduring dream involves a relentless desire on the part of an outsider to merge with the inside, in this case, the arctic landscape. The text intimates that one way to realize this dream is to participate in endurance events. This route to transcendence links Moss to heroic explorers of the past and explains why the text focuses on accounts which feature the author and his family participating in bone-grinding activities, including ultramarathons such as the Midnight Sun, which takes dedicated souls across the Borden Peninsula, 720 km above the Arctic Circle. Feats of endurance, as the author explains, effect the desired merger:

You do these things ... because there ... boundaries bend, borders blur ... It is an honouring of the body as landscape, for the endurance athlete becomes the thing being done, becomes the landscape of its doing. (p. 64–65)

Although partly in awe of quests for manhood, Moss is also a tad skeptical of these rituals. This ambivalence is apparent in a gripping and, by turns, humorous account of his own near death by drowning during the 1987 Ironman (an annual triathlon held in Hawaii). This account of his own male heroism, which verges on parody, signals his awareness of the over-determined cult of manhood that has also shaped most endeavours concerning the Arctic.

Despite the author’s awareness that the stories of Natives and women remain unheard and his willingness to countenance a feminist perspective, he continues, for the most part, to cast women in the role of the muse-figure. On several occasions, he portrays women as encouraging, inspirational spirits who materialize to cheer him across the finish line.

In an effort to avoid constructing yet another totalizing narrative of the Arctic which, despite its beauty, overwhelms the subject, the text shies away from offering any form of

cohesive alternative to heroic, masculine narratives. But the narrator does not relinquish traditional, romantic dreams of enduring. In a self-reflective gesture, he confesses that people who travel to the Arctic go there “to taunt mortality . . . to drive the self like a stake through the heart of time; to be history” (p. 106). He intimates that, by engaging in endurance sports and writing, he too can achieve this goal. In a deliciously playful and nostalgic conclusion, he envisions his own death (alluding, perhaps, to what Roland Barthes describes as the Death of the Author), and urges readers to look for him in the fictive arctic landscape of his imagination—a landscape which, as he so convincingly argues, exists both “out there” and on the page.

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POLAR TOURISM: TOURISM IN THE ARCTIC AND ANTARCTIC REGIONS. Edited by COLIN MICHAEL HALL and MARGARET E. JOHNSON. Rexdale, Ontario: John Wiley & Sons, 1995. 329 p., maps, b&w illus., bib., indexes. Hardbound. Cdn\$90.50.

One would not think that tourism in polar areas had reached the point where a book on the subject might be merited, but in the last few years it has received more attention, especially in Antarctica: A book entitled *Antarctic Tourism* was published in 1994, and several international symposia on polar tourism and Arctic tourism have been held. Tourism in the Arctic has a history of many decades, but in Antarctica it began only in the late 1950s with a cruise vessel to the Antarctic Peninsula. The pace of tourism accelerated in the 1970s and afterward, perhaps because of marketing techniques and the construction of ice-strengthened ships for passenger travel in polar regions.

A relatively recent development in Arctic tourism was the first tour vessel in 1984 through the Northwest Passage of Canada, an itinerary that has since become popular each summer. The availability of Russian icebreakers has made possible annual trips to the Geographic North Pole, Northeast Passage, Northwest Passage, and also various parts of Antarctica. Onboard helicopters for Antarctic itineraries have made adventure tourism attractive because they allow access to emperor penguin colonies within range of the icebreakers.

The editors of this book define polar tourism as “all travel for pleasure or adventure within polar regions, exclusive of travel for primarily governmental, commercial, subsistence, military or scientific purposes” (p. 8). They point out two major differences that affect the management of tourism in the two polar regions—national sovereignty, and indigenous peoples. In the Arctic, all land areas are within national

boundaries and well defined, although some disagreement exists over the definition of international waters. In addition, the Arctic has been populated by indigenous people for thousands of years, and today there are large cities north of the Arctic Circle (e.g., Murmansk). Antarctica has no indigenous population, and as far as anyone can determine, never has had any. A widespread distribution of research stations in Antarctica includes a cumulative total of perhaps a few thousand people at the height of activities, the austral summer. Numbers of tourists there have peaked at about 8000 annually, all from about November through February. The total number of tourists who have visited Antarctica since records have been kept is about 70 000, an insignificant number when compared to those in other environmentally sensitive areas (e.g., Galapagos). In addition, nearly all tourism in Antarctica is conducted from ships, with no shore-based stations, a significant difference from research stations with a permanent presence on land. The exception to ship-based tourism in Antarctica is that of a private company that flies its clients to a base in the interior (from Punta Arenas, Chile, to Patriot Hills, at 80° South), where they have options of climbing the highest peaks on the continent, or traveling further to the Geographic South Pole.

It is possible that interest in polar tourism has been sparked by the “green” or eco-tourism movement that is present in other parts of the world. There is more attention paid now to wildlife areas, in particular those that appear to be vulnerable to visits by humans, especially in large numbers. Management of visitors to the polar areas, with these concerns in mind, appears to be the overriding theme of this book.

The book consists of 17 chapters, with introductory and concluding chapters by the editors. The other chapters are about equally divided on the Arctic (8 chapters) and Antarctica (7 chapters). The authors of the individual chapters all have experience in various kinds of field studies of tourism, or in tourism management in their respective countries. Fringe areas (subarctic, sub-Antarctic) are included by some authors. In Antarctica, these are islands outside the Antarctic Treaty area (north of 60° South latitude), and thus are not under the management regime of the Treaty countries. However, the respective countries owning these islands (Norway, France, New Zealand, Australia, United Kingdom, and South Africa), have individual tourism policies ranging from no visits permitted (Bouvetøya), to moderate controls on numbers of visits by ships and passengers allowed ashore. Many sub-Antarctic islands have already experienced substantial exploitation of wildlife, and have been invaded by a variety of animals (e.g., rats and feral cats) that have affected the native bird populations in particular. As a result, management policies are likely to become stricter as the number of visitors increases.

The strength of this book is the section on Antarctica and the sub-Antarctic. Tourism history there began with the onset of the International Geophysical Year (1957–58) and coincides more or less with the succeeding growth of research stations. The Antarctic Treaty (1959, ratified in 1961) governs all activities there, as the self-appointed Treaty signatories