

contents. The listing is essential, because several of the symbols represent two or even three different parameters. The list does not indicate the customary units or dimensions for those parameters.

The list of references provides an excellent guide to journal papers and conference proceedings dealing with frozen ground. It should be noted that two of the references listed (Williams, 1963, and Williams, 1966a) refer to the same published paper; three entries for K.A. Linell misspell his name as Linnell; and the slash is left out of the "o" in O.H. Løken's name.

The very readable text is well illustrated with numerous high-quality graphs and photos. The reader should, however, be aware that some of the graphs are simplified versions of illustrations from other sources, although the credits do not always indicate this. In some instances the simplification has led to errors, e.g., in the section shown in Fig. 3.12, where the label for "original permafrost surface" was shortened to "original permafrost" and placed in the seasonally freezing layer; the credit states "from Linell 1973."

Few misprints mar the text; only three of those caused this reviewer some concern. On page 102, a factor 2 appears to be missing from equation [4.21]. On page 210, the authors state that "... the unfrozen zone was reduced to 170 m³ . . ." rather than the 167 m² given in the original reference. On page 98, two lines from the second paragraph are repeated in the first paragraph, at the expense of having an obviously incomplete sentence at the end of the first paragraph. Desiccation is consistently misspelled as dessication.

The authors have been less than rigorous in dealing with the subject of permafrost. On page 12 they state: "Permafrost is defined as ground remaining frozen for more than a year" (emphasis added). On p.41 they state: "According to a widely accepted definition any material below 0°C may be called permafrost," but they argue that it is a mistake to apply the term to a material with none of the properties of frozen ground. Nowhere do they refer to the general definition of permafrost: "Ground (soil or rock) that remains at or below 0°C for at least two years," which does not require that the material contains any ice (*Glossary of Permafrost and Related Ground-Ice Terms*, Technical Memorandum No. 142, National Research Council of Canada, Ottawa, 1988). On page 58, however, the authors appear to use this temperature-defined meaning of permafrost when they state "... the top of permafrost is that depth where the maximum annual temperature is 0°C . . ." The authors also object (p.51) to the use of the generally accepted terms "continuous" and "discontinuous" permafrost, for good reasons; but on page 79 they start using these terms themselves.

In dealing with subsea permafrost, the authors invoke (p.51) "... recent submergence due to isostatic adjustment. . . ." Recent submergence is more likely due to the post-glacial rise in sea level; isostatic adjustment in most places resulted in emergence and raised shore lines. Where they state (p.79) that "Permafrost is unique in earth material terms, since it exists close to its melting point," they presumably should have referred to the ice content in permafrost, because none of the other soil minerals are anywhere near their melting point.

Notwithstanding the above comments and the rather stiff price, this book is recommended reading for both graduate students and professionals who are involved in earth science, geotechnical, ecological and hydrological studies in the permafrost region and in other areas that experience seasonal freezing and thawing of the ground.

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PLAYING DEAD: A CONTEMPLATION CONCERNING THE ARCTIC. By RUDY WIEBE. Edmonton: NeWest, 1989. Softbound. Cdn\$12.95.

Rudy Wiebe is a well-known fiction writer in Canada. As poetic shaman and self-styled prophet of both settler and native culture on the prairies and in the North, Wiebe has made his mark on Canadian literature by writing about the West and the North. His many novels and short stories are largely spun out of this space, its histories of aboriginal and white contact, and in his earlier work, out of a German Mennonite cultural context that is his own ethnic and religious background. Such novels as *Peace Shall Destroy Many* (1962) and *The Blue Mountains of China* (1970) involve Mennonite community and protagonists who are in search of spiritual values in a materialistic age. Typically, at the centre of Wiebe's literary consciousness are the land's aboriginal vision questers, the Indians and Inuit, who people his fictional landscapes and whose ancestral past and way of life he celebrates. His two best-known works, *The Temptations of Big Bear* (1973) and *The Scorched Wood People* (1977), are historical fictions of Big Bear and Louis Riel, whom Wiebe mythologizes as visionary heroes.

Playing Dead: A Contemplation Concerning the Arctic is a short collection of three essays originally presented in "somewhat different form and under the title *The Arctic: The Landscape of the Spirit*" as a series of lectures at the University of Toronto. These essays, entitled "Exercising Reflection," "On Being Motionless" and "In Your Own Head," are literary explorations of the Arctic in which Wiebe, with the voice of the informal and discursive essayist, maps the territory. Quoting from the journals and the likes of John Hood, Samuel Hearne and John Franklin, historical records and official reports on arctic expeditions, recorded songs and stories of the Inuit, and supplying his own personal experience of the arctic landscape and the people he met there, the author freely associates and reflects on the physical and spiritual nature of the Arctic and its stories of native/white interface which are frozen in time and space.

In effect, even as the essayist, Wiebe continues to function as the fictionalizer, the storyteller. In an earlier essay, "On the Trail of Big Bear," he explained:

... I believe in "story" as a fact beyond and outside the entity of its maker. Michelangelo's beautiful (perhaps apocryphal but no matter) statement that he studied the rock for the shape that was inside it and then used his chisels not to create that shape out of the rock but rather to release the shape from all the encumbering rock around it — that has seemed to me profoundly true of the storymaker's art also.

In this collection of essays, Wiebe is on the trail of the Arctic, attempting to "release its shape" as he questions and speculates upon the possibilities of historical events and the lives and fates of arctic characters. He speculates, for example, about the relationship between John Hood and Green Stockings, the beautiful native woman Hood painted, and the fate of their daughter. He wonders about the arctic explorer Steffansson's relationship to the native woman Pannigabluk and the untold story of the explorer's son, the blond "Viking" Alex Steffansson, who died in Aklivik in 1969. Of the lost ships *Erebus* and *Terror*, vanished on the coast of King William Island, he suggests:

Perhaps the implacable ice holds them still. Perhaps in one or another of those endless, gigantic ice pressure ridges shifting, sinking, reshaping themselves forever in the ice streams that flow between the islands of the Canadian archipelago, *Erebus* and *Terror* are still carried, hidden and secret. Their tall masts are long since destroyed and their decks gouged, splintered, walled in by impenetrable floes, the ice a shroud scraping over these great oaken sailing ships of empire, their skeleton crews

rigid in a final posture of convulsive movement. They could be anywhere in the Arctic Ocean for the ice flows hundreds of kilometres a year; long separated now, perhaps at intervals the ice opens and one or the other is revealed for a moment or a year, a mast stump or a bowsprit reaching like a hand, briefly, up into the light somewhere off the coast of Ellesmere or Axel Heiberg islands.

In these essays, Wiebe is concerned as well with not only presenting the "story" from the perspective of the white European but from the native point of view. The first page of the text is a map that is an inverted version of the official map of the Arctic, presenting the "Inuit View to the South." The oral and mythological realities of the Inuit themselves are included, not only through non-native records, as the Copper Inuit myth "The Origin of Ice," which introduces the essays, but through passages where Inuit storytellers tell their own stories and sing their own songs. Wiebe includes, for example, passages from Tony Thrasher's well-known book *Thrasher . . . Skid Row Eskimo* and a "moving oral elegy" told by Felix Nuyviak of Tuktoyaktuk and recorded in 1976 about "gathering at Kittigazuit, or Christmas in old days."

What is most interesting about this book is not only the author's attempt to release the shape of the Arctic but his definition of the "all encumbering" material it issues from. For Wiebe, the arctic land and its geography is the true mystery, one he tries to unravel or "map" through the Inuit comprehension of the "necessary arctic distinctions between linear and areal space," a lack of understanding that Wiebe suggests doomed European explorers who came to the Arctic. Although the author's speculations about these visual and space perceptions are fascinating, he does not entirely make the linear/areal distinction clear to this reader. In his attempt to capture the spirit of this landscape, however, what Wiebe does convey clearly is the "restless line between land and sea" and the overwhelming difference of a landscape that is essentially water: a world that is one of relentless motion, or frozen as ice, renders one motionless. In the Arctic there is no sure ground — only "green icy land bordered everywhere by water." Wiebe poetically captures this terrain and indeed validates it, not as a passage to another place as it existed in the imagination of the European explorer, but as a landscape or nordicity, and desirable as such, as "true North not Passage to anywhere." In this sense, the essays are inspiring and an invitation for the reader who has not yet done so to visit the Arctic.

On one level, this book is good bedside reading for the intelligent layperson who is willing to be captured by the spirit of the Arctic and who has some knowledge of the history of exploration there, a knowledge that Wiebe to some extent assumes, and who is also prepared to entertain a style that shifts between ideas and sources in an impressionistic — even fractured — way. On quite another level, it is a must for the senior student of Canadian literature who is intrigued by the contemporary blurring of literary genres in a postmodern culture and who is interested in the issues of historiographic metafiction, which are sure to be found, even peripherally, embedded in this text. *Playing Dead*, however, will probably not satisfy a determinedly facts-minded reader. This collection of essays is very much a speculative, poetic and loosely woven literary contemplation of one man's academic knowledge, historical interests and personal experiences of the North.

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GREENLAND SEEN THROUGH 50 YEARS OF STAMPS: 1938-1988. By ROLF GILBERG and MADLS LIDEGAARD. Copenhagen: The Greenland Post Office (Wilders Plads P.O. Box 100, DK-1004 Copenhagen K, Denmark), 1989. Originally published in Danish, 1988. 122 p., 6 maps, illustrated throughout, index, no bib. Softbound. Cdn\$27.50 plus \$2.50 mailing.

The 50th anniversary of Greenland's postal service has been celebrated by the release of an exceptionally fine commemorative catalogue that will be of interest to philatelists, historians and anthropologists. Written by ethnologist Rolf Gilberg and teacher-writer Mads Lidegaard, the book is generously illustrated by Jens Rosing, former director of the Greenland Museum, who was also responsible for many of the original stamp designs. His chapter explaining how the designs were arrived at and carried out is an interesting bonus. Most of the stamps have been reproduced in black and white alongside their individualized and complementary cancellations.

The subject matter covered in the stamps is elaborated in the catalogue and covers Greenland's natural history, prehistory and history, traditional culture, art and legends, and several special topics. As in many commemorative publications of this kind, the illustrations have been given pride of place over the text, which is nevertheless both well researched and lively reading. The line drawings, most on ethnological themes, are particularly charming and extremely detailed. Considering its small, softcover catalogue format, the book is crammed with information, presented attractively in a straightforward manner.

There are one or two problems with accuracy in the text in sections written by Lidegaard, who does not appear to have the depth of expertise equal to that of her co-author. For example, she begins her description of the narwhal (p. 40) with the statement that it is found only in Greenland waters. In fact, this mammal is distributed throughout the Atlantic sector of the Arctic Ocean, including Lancaster Sound and the Barents Sea. It might be mentioned here that a useful notation throughout the book is the use of authors' initials following each item, which is helpful in assessing the research.

Rolf Gilberg's descriptions of traditional material history and his renderings of Greenland versions of four Inuit myths are succinct and readable. Finally, though, it is the stamps themselves, along with their accompanying explanatory illustrations, that make the book a unique addition to the existing literature.

The small (18.5 x 26 cm) format of the book makes it easy to handle but constrains the reproduction of some of the detailed line drawings and photographs. The excellent quality of the reproduction and the printing compensates in large part for this, however, and may account for the rather steep price. Sometimes the translation is a little rough: "The kayak was tailor-made to the whaler who was to use it as whaling tackle" (p. 88). The lack of a bibliography is an inconvenience.

This enjoyable reference will be of special interest to anthropologists, who will find the catalogue of illustrations invaluable, but also to anyone concerned with Greenland's history, natural history — or stamps. The initial 1988 Danish edition was translated and published in English in 1989 with only 2000 copies. It will undoubtedly demand further printing.

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