

deserves a wide readership and should be on the shelves in every library in Canada, and the world for that matter.

When I visited the site of Hebron last summer as a historian aboard an expedition cruise, I made sure that the passengers were aware of the injustice suffered by the Inuit of that community when in 1959 they were forcibly evacuated. I now know though, that 40 years earlier, that same community suffered an even worse cataclysm, one that—albeit its ultimate cause was a deadly disease that could not have been fully anticipated—was made so much worse by human prejudice and incompetence. Perhaps it should be considered the worse of the two.

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TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH: THE TRUTH BEHIND THE GLORY OF POLAR EXPLORATION. By JOHN H.V. DIPPEL. Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 2018. ISBN 978-1-63388-411-3. 343 p., b&w illus., notes, index. Hardbound. Cdn\$29.50; US\$28.00. Also available as an ebook.

With the subtitle of his most recent book, *To the Ends of the Earth*, historian John V.H. Dippel promises to reveal “the truth behind the glory of polar exploration.” Having tracked the endless debates about Robert E. Peary and Frederick Cook’s competing claims to have been the first to reach the North Pole (a question that will never be resolved), I am skeptical of any publication that promises to reveal “the truth” about any matter relating to polar exploration expeditions. These were complex endeavors, and there can be no single “truth” about them, nor should we expect one.

Dippel’s main thesis is that nineteenth and early twentieth century polar expeditions were marred by conflicts “between personal ambition and group well-being, between moral rectitude and self-preservation” (p. 18) and that ultimately, the leaders of polar expeditions were driven primarily by a quest for personal glory that led them to make self-serving decisions, often with disastrous results. There is a kernel of truth here, certainly, but hardly the whole truth. This single-minded focus on proving an argument serves no one well, for it has led to superficial discussions of expeditions. In addition, the publication contains numerous errors of fact.

The book is organized thematically rather than chronologically or geographically, and Dippel draws on a variety of the (mostly) better known polar expeditions to make his point. Typically, each chapter begins with a vignette of some aspect of an expedition, which the author uses as a springboard for a wide-ranging discussion, drawing on examples from various times and places to

make his case. This structure means there is no easily summarized narrative arc—individual chapters focus broadly on themes such as the self-aggrandizing nature of the leaders of polar exploration; their propensity to lie about their motives (professing to be interested in science when really they only cared about personal glory and setting records); the challenges of isolation, exacerbated by differences in language, class, and motive; and the struggle between doing what is “civilized” versus what is necessary to survive in the extreme conditions of the polar regions.

As the text covers each theme, readers are repeatedly whisked between the Arctic and Antarctic and from the early nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, a whirlwind that might be manageable for those familiar with the people and places mentioned, but that readers unfamiliar with polar exploration literature are likely to find confusing. To give just one example, as the author describes explorers’ self-perceived need to maintain a brave face despite impending disaster, the text moves directly from describing Shackleton and Worsely waltzing on the deck of the *Endurance*, nipped in the Antarctic ice in 1915, to Lieutenant George Back, writing about the “pusillanimous weakness” of a voyageur who (accurately) predicated disaster for the overland expedition to the Arctic coast in 1832 (p. 41). None of these men, nor the expeditions with which they are associated, are described in any detail until much later in the text. The fact that these events took place nearly 100 years apart in very different circumstances is never addressed.

The book does not include any maps, and the narrative contains numerous errors of fact and geography. More than once, the text mentions that the recently discovered wreck of Franklin’s ship *Terror* was found south of the *Erebus*, for example (p. 63, p. 155), while in Chapter Three, Barrow Strait is described as separating Baffin Island and Greenland (p. 83). Littleton Island is mis-identified as the location of Greely’s camp at Cape Sabine (p. 71) and where Elisha Kent Kane and his men overwintered in 1853–55 (p. 91). Most of these errors do not really impact the argument Dippel is trying to make, but they grate and contribute to a sense of the work’s unreliability. My own expertise is in the Arctic, and it leaves me to wonder how many errors related to Antarctic exploration I failed to notice.

Equally troubling, the book conveys an apparent disdain for science. Dippel devotes a whole chapter to exposing polar explorers as frauds for claiming to have scientific research as an important goal, while really only caring about personal glory through geographic accomplishments. Yet, when expeditions do collect data, he is dismissive of their efforts and displays an ignorance of how science was conducted under extraordinary field conditions: “Icebound parties set up makeshift observatories near their vessels and went to great pains to accurately record measurements—under appalling conditions, and with what strikes us today as obsessional and unnecessary diligence” (p. 89). In fact, scientists and other expedition members often showed huge devotion to collecting accurate, detailed information and understood

the value of recording temperatures, tides, and other data in ledgers, sometimes on an hourly basis, even if they chafed at the difficulties they encountered while doing so.

Throughout the book, sensational statements are highlighted at the expense of accuracy in recounting the events of expeditions. Chapter Eight opens with a citation of Schley's account of the rescue of the men on the Lady Franklin Bay expedition, in which Greely claims that he "did what I came to do—beat the best record" (p. 183). The text goes on to claim that a farthest north record had been Greely's primary goal all along, rather than the International Polar Year science that had been the public goal of the expedition (and which the scientists diligently conducted before disaster overtook them). A careful reader might check the footnote that follows the Greely/Schley quote to discover that Dippel is aware of other, reputable, sources that dispute the accuracy of this rendering of Greely's words, but such subtleties do not seem to warrant a place in the main text, particularly when they cast doubt on Dippel's thesis.

My issues with the book can perhaps best be illustrated with a final example. Chapter Nine discusses the loneliness and isolation that afflicted many explorers, particularly in the dark polar winter. The chief example is, not surprisingly, Richard Byrd's solo overwintering in Antarctica in 1934. Augustine Courtauld's five months alone on the Greenland icecap in the winter of 1930–31 is briefly mentioned, but although Byrd's time in Antarctic mirrored Courtauld's in many ways, Dippel apparently does not find in him a suitable comparison with Byrd. Instead, Dippel casts his net wider, writing (p. 207):

The closest to Byrd's [experience] in terms of length was when the explorer Knud Rasmussen, son of a Danish missionary and an Inuit-Danish mother, had crossed northern Canada in sixteen months by dog sled – a journey of some twenty thousand miles, making it the longest ever of its kind – in the early 1920s. But Rasmussen had been accompanied by two Inuit hunters.

The fact that the author finds a parallel between Rasmussen's multi-year Fifth Thule Expedition and Byrd's 1934 overwintering debacle is troubling. Dippel references Stephen Bown's (2015) biography of Rasmussen rather than any primary source. Even worse, he relegates the "two Inuit hunters" to an aside as if they were not true companions of any consequence, assumes Anarulunguaq was a man (she was an Inuk who, along with her cousin Miteq, accompanied Rasmussen) and never mentions the other members participating in the first years of the expedition, or the many families with whom Rasmussen, Miteq, and Anarulunguaq stayed as they crossed the continent. And inexplicably, Rasmussen is never mentioned again, perhaps because he does not fit into Dippel's notion of a glory-seeking explorer.

Is there truth to be found in this book? Certainly many, perhaps most, polar explorers put their own goals and

desires before those of the (mostly) men who worked with and for them. But errors of fact and the superficial rendering of the complexities of the social dynamics on polar exploration expeditions undercut the author's argument.

REFERENCE

Bown, S.R. 2015. *White Eskimo: Knud Rasmussen's fearless journey into the heart of the Arctic*. Boston, Massachusetts: Da Capo Press.

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INUIT LAWS: TIRIGUSUUSIIT, PIQUJAIT, AND MALIGAIT. [Interviews with] MARIANO AUPILAARJUK, MARIE TULIMAAQ, AKISU JOAMIE, ÉMILE IMARUITTUQ, and LUCASSIE NUTARAALUK. Edited by JARICH OOSTEN, FRÉDÉRIC LAUGRAND, and WILLEM RASING. Iqaluit, Nunavut: Nunavut Arctic College Media, 2017. ISBN 978-1-897568-50-7. 384 p., map, b&w illus. Softbound. Cdn\$27.95.

This interesting and important book explores traditional Inuit law through a series of interviews carried out with Elders from different northern communities. The project was developed in the context of two courses taught in 1997 and 1998 at Nunavut Arctic College on interviewing Elders on traditional law. These courses were offered under the supervision of the three editors of the book and involved the participation of Inuit Elders. Students were provided training on interview techniques and engaged in multiple interview sessions with the Elders. A core objective was to learn more about "the ways in which Inuit used to maintain and preserve social order in their communities" (p. 9).

This second edition of *Inuit Laws* is published almost 20 years after the first, although the timing of each edition coincides with an important milestone. The courses and interviews that form the basis for the book took place on the eve of the creation of Nunavut under the Nunavut Land Claim Agreement. This was a milestone in Inuit self-determination, and the anticipation and promise around this event is reflected at moments in the interviews. The publication of the second edition of the book tracks another major development for Indigenous communities in Canada: the publication of the final report (TRCC, 2015a) and the 94 calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2015 (TRCC, 2015b). Many of the calls to action address the need for greater respect for and understanding of Indigenous cultural traditions and legal systems.