

cultural pragmatism of the groundbreaking Swedish botanist Linnaeus.

Collectively, the two editors and their co-authors show that Linnaeus and other prominent scientific investigators of the Far North contributed to a Swedish nationalism that considered the vast northern areas a proving ground for manhood, a source of individual and collective wealth through massive exploitation—and indeed, the bright hope of the future. The Danes, too, wove their cultural pride together with scientific investigations in their Greenland colony, which was their own Arctic proving ground. Especially in Denmark, “the logistics of Arctic travel were bound up in rituals of identity-making” (p. 21) in which a powerful heroic mythology linked the advantages of scientific knowledge with the ability to adopt the survival skills of the Inuit (or of the Saami in Sweden), without questioning their right to do as they pleased in regions which northern natives had occupied since time immemorial. The collision between the “traditionalist” approach and the non-Romantic methods of modern field science forms the core of “Lauge Koch and the Mapping of East Greenland,” a balanced and well-informed discussion by Christopher Ries of a pivotal case that is little known to people outside of Scandinavia.

Less convincing is the editors’ argument that evangelicism was a major force behind the exploration and colonization of the Far North. With good reason, modern historians tend to be cautious about literal interpretations of piously stated goals. Some readers are likely to question the editorial conviction that the Danish approach to colonial dominance “was more spiritual, and spearheaded by missionaries, whereas in Sweden, taxation, science, and even forced labor were the instruments” (p. 19). With the exception of Kirsten Thisted’s brilliant chapter, “The Power to Represent Intertextuality and Discourse in *Smilla’s Sense of Snow*,” the authors as a group seem strangely unaware of the ramifications of Denmark’s colonial ambitions in the past. For example, Michael Harbsmeier, in his well-conceived (but somewhat unevenly researched) chapter “Bodies and Voices from Ultima Thule,” fails to see that the common theme in C.C. Lyschander’s *Den Grønlandske Chronica* (1608) and the maps produced between c. 1590 and 1605 by Stefansson, Resen, and Thorlaksson was the greed of America-fever. This greed was engendered by the early 17th-century belief that Greenland was connected to a vast polar continent that included all of Eurasia—of which Arctic North America was considered the easternmost part.

Given the long life of early and erroneous depictions of Subarctic and Arctic regions, a greater focus on old maps generally would have been useful to evaluate progress in the science of surveying—one of the field sciences included in the editorial focus and lucidly discussed by Urban Wrükberg in his essay “The Politics of Naming: Contested Observations and the Shaping of Geographical Knowledge.” Along very different lines, Gisli Palsson’s fine contribution “Arcticity: Gender, Race, and Geogra-

phy in the Writings of Vilhjalmur Stefansson” gives examples of Stefansson’s racism (as well as of his misogyny). The famous Icelandic-Canadian was fascinated by reports of “blond Eskimos” in a remote region of Arctic Canada and wanted to link this supposed racial feature to a medieval Norse seasoning of the Copper Inuit gene pool. He clearly did not know that this myth was codified on the so-called Vallard manuscript chart made in Dieppe before 1547 and based on descriptions of the fictitious and decidedly Subarctic “Norumbega” region. This map shows Native Americans as tall and fair-skinned as the Europeans also depicted there.

All told, *Narrating the Arctic* is laudably direct in its treatment of such touchy subjects as racism and “otherness.” It reflects much original thought in these and many other areas with a scholarship so meticulous that even the end notes to each chapter deserve full attention. This well-written volume is also easy on the eye and left this reviewer feeling thankful to scholars who are able to view their learning through a novel prism. Such eclectic and attractively presented information should appeal to a variety of serious readers with an interest in Arctic history.

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POLAR EXTREMES: THE WORLD OF LINCOLN ELLSWORTH. By BEEKMAN H. POOL. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2002. ISBN 1-889963-44-5 (Softbound). 312 p., maps, b&w illus., index, bib. Hardbound, US\$45.00; Softbound, US\$24.95.

Scholarly authors and their readers—guilds that mutually relish first-rate sleuthing and writing—sometimes march to different cadences. Beekman Pool, for example, was not hurried by the task he set himself: to analyze the background, character, and significance of Lincoln Ellsworth. Pool and Ellsworth became friends during their 1200 km trans-Labrador canoe trip in 1930, while Pool was a Harvard undergraduate, and Ellsworth, then 50, had recently (in 1925 and 1926) become a hero of Arctic exploration. Given that Ellsworth’s life adventure ended in 1951, this book caused me to wonder, did we HAVE to wait half a century for Pool’s balanced analysis?

Lincoln Ellsworth was obscure before I read *Polar Extremes*. Dwarfed by European giants of polar exploration, notably Roald Amundsen, Umberto Nobile, Bernt Balchen, Hubert Wilkins, and Hjalmar Riiser-Larsen, he was also indirectly overshadowed by Richard Byrd, the other American prominent in polar affairs of the 1920s and 1930s. Ellsworth’s initial exploits in 1925 coincided with Roald Amundsen’s intent to conclude his own polar career brilliantly. Lincoln and his father put up \$95 000 of the

total expedition cost of \$130 000 (p. 48) to finance Amundsen's two-airplane attempt on the North Pole. Amundsen treated the newcomer Ellsworth as an equal partner, not as a rich idler who had bought passage on an exploit designed exclusively for experienced polar hands. Good choice: the ice-landing that abbreviated their flight would have cost the lives of all six participants but for the quick and physically heroic intervention of Ellsworth, who pulled two crewmembers from the water into which thin ice had dumped them (p. 61).

The 1925 Amundsen-Ellsworth flight was forced down at 87°44'N, only 135 nautical miles (250 km) short of the Pole. For raw courage, prowess, and pluck over weeks of harrowing setbacks to get airborne again in their remaining Dornier flying boat, Ellsworth's later ventures never surpassed this inaugural polar trip. He was smitten with his own success in rescuing the North Pole-seekers of 1925, for which he was honoured by the Norwegian government. Pool's analysis shows that Lincoln Ellsworth was set up to be disappointed by the subsequent success of the Amundsen-Ellsworth-Nobile transit of the Arctic Ocean via the North Pole in the semi-rigid airship, *Norge*, in 1926. The U.S. government's failure to award him a medal as the nation's honoured contributor to the European-dominated feat left Ellsworth feeling betrayed at the peak of his ambition.

The blistering feud between Amundsen and Nobile following the trio's 1926 triumph enveloped Ellsworth. He tried to mediate between the factions, which included the Aero Club of Norway, Mussolini's government, and the protagonists themselves. Pool could have strayed from good scholarship toward defending the reputation of his friend during this and subsequent polar disputes, but the biographer never substitutes opinion for well-documented observation. Throughout this book, however, Pool is alert to how his subject behaved in difficult situations, analyzing rather than defending Ellsworth's personality.

Ellsworth's word portrait calls to my mind features of two historical personalities: Charles Darwin and Charles Lindbergh. Like Darwin, Ellsworth was under the spell of a difficult father, who became a widower when Lincoln was only eight years old. Thereafter, Lincoln was at pains to please his father, James. Like Lindbergh, once bitten by the bug of exploring, Lincoln Ellsworth upset his whole life as he restlessly set out to "patrol the world" instead of settling down to home and family (Berg, 1998:531). Unlike Darwin, Lincoln Ellsworth had minor written contributions to make, and unlike Lindbergh, he had little interest in commercial applications of the geographic knowledge stirred up by his restless adventuring.

One passage in this book took my breath away. A screen or fiction writer might arrange a fantasy meeting between Lincoln Ellsworth and Umberto Nobile years after Arctic success turned to rancor, and after Nobile's *Italia* disaster of 1928. Pool shows that the encounter actually did take place, by chance, in 1930. I daren't spoil this delicate moment for other readers, but Pool uses it to establish Lincoln's essential human decency (p. 159).

Despite portraying Ellsworth as chronically lonely and at times unhappy, Pool wisely avoids making his analysis into the psychological probe of a compulsive personality. That is, he leaves us room to admire things the "late bloomer" accomplished through physical training and determination, and to ponder the naiveté with which Ellsworth dabbled in the volatile claims by nation-states exploring Antarctica in the 1930s. Apart from being a close spectator to the Nobile disaster of 1928, and financially supporting the probes by Wilkins' submarine, *Nautilus*, in 1930, Ellsworth rounded out his polar contributions in Antarctica. After several false starts with his custom-built airplane, *Polar Star*, and supply ship, *Wyatt Earp*, Ellsworth and his pilot, Hollick-Kenyon, flew a breathtakingly courageous traverse of the continent, covering 3500 km between Dundee Island on the Weddell Sea and Little America on the Ross Sea. That feat, punctuated by numerous landings and digging out the *Polar Star* from snowdrifts, was unmatched for 20 years. By 1956, of course, the support of the International Geophysical Year (IGY) was behind the next generation of explorers and scientists.

The book's few faults are mostly self-correcting through the superb documentation provided. Pool's crediting strange "tides at Point Barrow" (p. 34) with searches for undiscovered land in the central Arctic Ocean drove me to the library to check his sources. Footnotes 66 and 67 on that page cite an article by Harris in 1904 and Stefánsson's preface to a 1960 book. These clarified the statement about tides. Decades after fruitless searches for Peary's Crocker Land and Stefánsson's Harris Land, Stef still advised Sir Hubert Wilkins to keep a sharp eye out for undiscovered islands north of Barrow while Wilkins searched for the lost Soviet aviator, Levanevsky, in 1937.

Pool's Epilogue is a gem of synthesis in lean prose. *Polar Extremes* is a must read and an ideal gift for bibliophiles inclined to high latitudes. Beekman Pool rewards readers' patience with crisp scholarship.

REFERENCE

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