insights and information essential to both sides in these discussions.

This book is a compendium of perspectives from five contributors on the context, significance, and successes and failures of the 1915 TCC. Each chapter reveals the challenges faced by both the 1915 participants and the contemporary analysts.

The book's success can be measured in several dimensions. First, Schneider and his collaborators have summarized the 33-page transcript of the proceedings well enough that readers need not risk eyestrain from reading the photocopy of the transcript provided in Appendix 2:77–111. Second, this account tempers Evangeline Atwood's (1979) enthusiastic political biography of James Wickersham in which she credits him with writing the prototype Environmental Impact Statement "anteceding the National Environmental Protection [sic] Act of 1973 [sic] by nearly sixty years" (Atwood, 1979:297–298). Third, this book fills the gap in earlier attempts to trace evolving northern North American issues in land use and conservation. One such attempt is Justice Thomas Berger's (1985) critical review of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971, in which he wonders at the tone deafness of U.S. federal government policies. Another example is Peter Coates' (1993) treatise on progress in defining land use and conservation issues preceding the Trans-Alaskan (oil) Pipeline controversies of 1968 – 77. Had Schneider's analysis of the 1915 TCC meeting been available in 1980, neither Berger nor Coates would likely have missed the opportunity to cite its evidence for steps in evolving public land policies. Finally, one of Schneider's collaborators has recently published a synthesis of Alaska's historical developments between 1896 and 1916 in the context of political progressivism (Alton, 2019). The 1915 TCC figures as prominently in this synthesis as it could have in Berger's and Coates' earlier accounts.

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NORTH POLE: NATURE AND CULTURE. By MICHAEL BRAVO. Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 2019. ISBN 978-1-78914-008-8. 256 p., maps, b&w and colour illus., bib., index. Softbound. US$24.95.

Wide-ranging cultural histories of the polar regions constitute a small but vibrant genre. There are, of course, endless accounts both primary and secondary of polar adventure, and even when these are focused on a single expedition, they often include brief histories of exploration in the far north or far south, along with some reflections on the cultural significance of such exploits. There are also numerous tightly focused academic studies of the Arctic or Antarctic as represented in literature, painting, and other arts. Works aimed at the general educated reader and covering broad swaths of polar history and geography, primarily from the cultural perspective, are rarer, yet sometimes more memorable. Among the best-known examples are Barry Lopez's *Arctic Dreams: Imagination and Desire in a Northern Landscape* (1986), Francis Spufford's *I May Be Some Time: Ice and the English Imagination* (1997), and Sara Wheeler's *Magnetic North: Notes from the Arctic Circle* (2009).

Lopez, Spufford, and Wheeler are all professional writers whose work is published by major commercial firms. Now, Michael Bravo—an academic based at Cambridge University—has entered the field with a book designed to answer the simple question: "Why does the North Pole matter?" (p. 7). In appearance, *North Pole: Nature and Culture* is more like a trade book than an academic publication: the entire volume is printed on glossy paper, and there are many exceptionally beautiful colour illustrations. The contents are in some ways more impressive than the work of Bravo's predecessors in the genre and in some ways less so.

While Spufford and the others have researched Arctic or Antarctic themes well and written about them with imagination and flair, they are not polar specialists. Bravo is, and it shows. His volume starts out with a refreshingly original chapter on the celestial pole in both European and Inuit astronomy. Long before the geographical North Pole was an object of ambition, observers from many cultures noticed that there was one spot in the heavens around which the constellations appeared to rotate. As Bravo explains, the celestial pole is not especially useful as a reference point in the Arctic because it appears high overhead, out of a traveller's line of vision. For European mariners, in contrast, it became ever more significant as the centuries passed. Bravo's second chapter considers the place of the geographic pole in Renaissance mapmaking. Even as cartographers devised new ways of representing the earth in which the pole took pride of place, especially circumpolar and cordiform (heart-shaped) projections, rulers such as the Emperor Charles V used maps and globes to embody their political power.

After the discovery of the compass, the north magnetic pole's invisible power added greatly to the Arctic's mystery

and allure. The search for the magnetic pole and the study of magnetism in the regions around it were matters of both scientific interest and practical utility in the age of European expansionism. The third and fourth chapters deal with the rise of science and with expeditions in quest of the geographical and magnetic poles. The fifth turns to "Polar Edens," giving an overview of literary and philosophical speculations about the top of the globe. The sixth chapter, "Sovereigns of the Pole," looks at the colonialist desire to master the Arctic, as expressed in a novel by Jules Verne (*The Purchase of the North Pole*, published in 1891) and through the real-life exploits of Robert Peary.

Wonderful nuggets of information and interpretation are scattered throughout these chapters. For example, Bravo argues convincingly that the anonymously published satire *Munchausen at the Pole* (1819) was aimed not at John Ross, as others have contended, but at Captain Thomas Cochrane. (Cochrane, a flamboyant, outspoken naval hero and political radical, had announced in 1818 that he would claim the £5000 prize for reaching the North Pole as part of a campaign to liberate Chile from the yoke of imperial Spain.) Bravo also casts a new light on Edward Parry's 1827 attempt on the pole by demonstrating that Parry had originally planned to make use of Inuit knowledge gained during his 1821–23 expedition to the Canadian archipelago.

However, a key requirement of this genre is readability. Although the sequence of chapters as laid out above seems logical enough, there is much jumping from topic to topic and period to period within each chapter. Bravo writes that his subject is "more like a cosmographic prism than a straightforward story of discovery through the march of time," and he has suited the structure of his book to this conviction (p. 9). The result is a great deal of unnecessary repetition. The reader is reminded over and over again that at the North Pole, every direction is south and that the pole is not included in any of the earth's time zones. Moreover, in many cases important information is given either too soon or too late. For example, in his comparison between ancient Greek and Inuit astronomy, Bravo places great emphasis on the fact that the Inuit do not make much use of the North Star, Polaris, in their navigation. Only later does he reveal that the ancient Greeks did not use the North Star either, since, because of the precession of the earth's axis, in their time there simply was no star marking the location of the celestial pole.

While polar specialists will likely find Bravo's book enjoyable and intellectually stimulating despite these problems, general readers may not. Both groups may well be unconvinced and even irritated by the treatment of Robert Peary. One of the themes to which Bravo keeps returning is that three famous explorers—Fridtjof Nansen, Adolf Nordenskiöld, and Peary—looked back over the long history of North Polar endeavour, attempting at once to understand it and place themselves within it. Nansen and Nordenskiöld both wrote important historical works, but in the case of Peary, Bravo can cite only a 1906 magazine article and his ghostwritten 1910 narrative. (It's not unlikely that the article was also ghostwritten.)

In the article, Peary compared himself to the ancient Greek hero Herakles. Bravo seizes on this comparison as the key to Peary's innermost thoughts and indeed to the entire history of European interactions with the North Polar region. In the sixth and seventh chapters, Bravo uses the myth of Herakles to consider a multitude of 20th- and 21st-century developments. The question of whether Peary actually reached the pole is relegated to the sidelines. Overall, Bravo treats him quite leniently and is apparently inclined to think that he at least believed he had stood near enough to the pole to qualify as its discoverer. Bravo is also lenient to Vilhjalmur Stefansson, ignoring the fact that Stefansson (1921:25–26) presented himself as superior not only to his British predecessors, but to the Inuit. Bravo mistakenly states that Stefansson's *The Friendly Arctic* is about his life with the people of the Mackenzie Delta. It actually recounts his exploits on the northern sea ice, and Stefansson boasted that while the Inuit believed there were not enough animals there to make survival by hunting possible, he boldly ventured far from land with only a few supplies and returned alive. Bravo, however, lauds Stefansson as a polar visionary who revered Inuit wisdom above all. The conclusion of his otherwise admirable book thus drifts a little too far from the straightforward facts.

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