

Territories; and George Kennan in Siberia. But there are a lot more who are perhaps less known, such as John Murdoch, Annie Alexander and Andrew Bahr, who worked in Alaska, and Charles Lanauze and Francis French, who conducted expeditions to the Northwest Territories. Bringing all these figures, and more, to light is a significant achievement and a valuable addition to the polar literature.

As would be expected from Hordern House – a publisher that has long thrived on high quality – this book is a first-class production. As in the previous volumes, the editing and cross-referencing are thorough, the printing excellent, and the binding and dust jacket superior, even including the series' trademark three page ribbons.

Unfortunately, the book *does* suffer from one glaring weakness: there are no maps. On the one hand, this is totally understandable, because it most likely that it would be vastly more expensive to produce detailed maps of all of the regions of the Earth's continents than to put together the rest of the book in total. That said, with 950 major articles in the volume, and therefore thousands upon thousands of place-names, it is unfortunate that the reader has to turn to a detailed atlas to follow the routes of the expeditions.

As regards other criticisms of the book, I would really have to search hard to find any, and then they would simply prove to be niggles mentioned to show they could be found. This book is that good – and that valuable as a resource. (Beau Riffenburgh, Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, Lensfield Road, Cambridge CB2 1ER.)

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**ARCTIC SPECTACLES: THE FROZEN NORTH IN VISUAL CULTURE, 1818–1875.** Russell A. Potter. 2007. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press. x + 258 p, illustrated. ISBN 978-0-295-98679-1 (hard cover); ISBN 978-0-295-98680-7 (soft cover). £18.00.

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This is a disconcertingly uneven book, the strengths of which are discussions of visual representations by US Americans of the nineteenth century Arctic that the author has in his possession. More descriptive than analytical or theoretical, *Arctic spectacles* fails for whole chapters at a stretch firmly to contextualise its study within existing scholarship, but then provides good in-depth work on, for example, Kane and the US American presence in the Arctic in search of Franklin. Its discussions of US American representations are generally engaging, but the book spends too much time uncritically stitching these together with what existing sources have already provided.

Russell Potter's general approach concentrates on those expeditions for which panoramas were produced: Ross' second, Grinnell/De Haven/Kane's, Hall's, and Hayes', but at regular intervals he expands from panoramas into other forms of public spectacle — lectures, paintings, and plays. Entire chapters or sections focus on makers of the art, such as Dickens, Church, Landseer, and Bradford. Even with this narrow selection, one would expect the work of a scholar published by a university press to provide up-to-date historical contextualisation, but books such as *Overland to Starvation Cove* (1987), *The myth of the explorer* (1993), *No ordinary journey* (1993), *Victorian science and engineering portrayed in the Illustrated London News* (1993), *Arctic artist* (1994), 'Arctic wilderness and other mythologies' (1998), *Ghosts of Cape Sabine* (2000), *From Barrow to Boothia* (2002), *The last imaginary place* (2004), *Northern exposures* (2004), and *The coldest crucible* (2006) fail to find a place in the discussion, which, despite the subtitle's end-date, does takes its reader up to the present day. Neither the work of Samuel Gurney Cresswell, the superb watercolourist who sailed with M'Clure, nor that of Edward Augustus Inglefield are mentioned.

Regrettably, the author also appears unfamiliar with *Finding Franklin* (2005), the excellent if somewhat musically morbid documentary film by Peter Bate. Not a dramatisation, it spends an entire scene on Landseer's grisly painting, *Man proposes, God disposes* (1864), and, in interviewing Anne Keenleyside, evokes more about the painting than does Potter, although he mentions her and includes a fine colour reproduction of it. *Finding Franklin* also sharpens our understanding of the intimate relationship between Dickens and Jane Franklin, which Potter ignores as a catalyst for the novelist's alacrity in taking up the public case against the evidence of cannibalism by members of the lost expedition of 1845; and it pays particular attention to the intersection of the Franklin mystery with the Victorian fascination with mediums, a topic treated by Potter, who also relies on Gil Ross' essay in *Polar Record*.

Consultation of Ross' article is an exception; a thorough review of scholarship in periodicals like this one is also absent, so the reader receives an historical treatment of the topic that seems at times nearly random. It is also only occasionally fresh. Too often, where it is

not deficient and incomplete — for example, in discussing how, time and again, search expeditions looked anywhere but King William Island, Potter fails to consider the impact of Richard King's relations with the Admiralty or Hugh Wallace's *The navy, the company, and Richard King* (1980) — it is general and stale — for example, in *Arctic grail* (1988), Pierre Berton offered a more detailed and livelier discussion of Lady Franklin's role in searches for her husband.

Beginning in 1818 and indicating no knowledge of Arctic exploration prior to the defeat of Napoleon, Potter moves on from a good discussion of Henry Barker's panorama of the Buchan and Franklin expedition before quoting any sources to show what the public thought of this depiction. Shifting to a rehearsal of the well-known ridicule with which Barrow attacked Ross for the other failed voyage of 1818, he offers a perceptive reading of the spoof, *Münchhausen at the Pole* (1819), but he merely re-hashes the particulars of Barrow's attack and tends to exaggeration, speaking without offering proof of 'the crowds who had scorned Ross.' This discussion would have left its reader on surer ground if it were balanced by an indication that, in sharp contrast, both the *Edinburgh Review* and *The Times* generally approved of Ross' effort and certainly stopped short of denigrating it. As they were more venerable and respected sources than the upstart *Gentleman's Review*, in which Barrow had spilled his bile anonymously, both probably had much more to do with forming public opinion of the day. The relevant pages (58–60) of *Polar pioneers* (1994), another source that, like *Barrow's boys* (1998), makes no appearance in *Arctic spectacles*, would have helped the author. This oversight, like the subsequent claim that 'almost no attention' has been paid William Westall's illustrations and that they 'stand apart from any others of their kind' (comparisons to George Back's and Cresswell's work offer easy refutation of this claim), demonstrates what regrettably is the case for much of the volume — that few readers beyond those who do not yet know anything about the subjects of Arctic exploration and visual representations of it would make confident and grateful ones.

Helpfully noting the essence of the panorama — 'its juxtaposition of didactically rendered technical information and inspiring flights of descriptive fancy' — Potter disappointingly contents himself with the rehearsal of a well-known story, or, at least, part of it: he does not make the connection between the juxtaposition of word and image in the newspapers of the 1850s with publisher John Murray's earlier wedding of word and hand-coloured, copper-engraved image in books of exploration, almost all of which he published because of the intimate working friendship that he enjoyed with Barrow up until the death of that career civil servant just after Franklin sailed for the last time. Potter does not seize the opportunity to analyse the coincidence between the death of the man who for a quarter-century had controlled the dissemination in expensive form of Royal Naval intelligence about the Arctic and the rise in the 1850s of more widely

accessible and cheaper forms of dissemination, such as the moving panorama, books illustrated with lithographs, and highly illustrated newspapers such as the weekly *Illustrated London News* (established 1842). Also absent is any discussion of the idea of the Arctic as an apt adversary for a puissant empire and for another trying on manifest destiny for the first time; not to address this is not to explain why the panorama *tended* to succeed with Britons and US Americans as a means of illustrating one particular dimension of the Arctic — its danger.

Potter makes some genuine contributions when describing the panoramas, although even then he treads mainly on ground well tilled by the standard sources, Altick's *Shows of London* (1978) and Hyde's *Panoromania!* (1988). He dwells on the sublime representations of the Arctic to the exclusion of any consideration of the numerous efforts by British explorers to render it just the opposite, either scientifically comprehensible or aesthetically picturesque. Since the appearance three decades ago of Chauncey Loomis' article 'Arctic sublime,' on which he heavily depends, scholarship has demonstrated that the picturesque answered a crucial psychological need, especially on multi-year expeditions, and one that interested the British public. Ships winding up sawn-out leads in ice as though they were carriages driving through an English estate, games of cricket on the ice beside a beset ship, beset ships rendered like gelid crystal palaces of scientific surveys also complemented the narratives of expeditions that did not meet with tragedy and even some that did. Nor were picturesque renditions routinely absent from panoramic renditions of voyages, especially after the initial breakthrough into the Arctic archipelago by Parry and Franklin in their expeditions of 1819. Unsurprisingly, Potter's highly selective study has nothing to say about expeditions that succeeded or at least did not experience apocalyptic moments of danger — Franklin's second land expedition, Parry's second voyage, Back's canoe expedition, Dease and Simpson's explorations, Rae's journeys, and most of the expeditions in search of Franklin's last — but neither does it venture an explanation about why panoramas were not created to commemorate some striking near disasters — Parry's third and Back's only voyage, for example.

An enquiry into the fitful success of the panoramas (they enjoyed two fairly brief tenures of notoriety at different points in the century) surely ought to have revealed and explained the Victorian public's need for a live, communal experience of the Arctic, often including effects that appealed to more than one sense (which books could not do), and at particularly symbolic moments in the history of an empire — just as the Crimean War threw its apparently omnipotent and ubiquitous power into doubt. Instead, Potter indulges in tangents. A good example is his discussion of the restitution to Britain of HMS *Resolute* by the United States; it has little to do with his thesis and appears designed to discuss a single illustration of the ceremony of re-presentation from his collection. He reads no irony whatsoever into the event or the illustration,

only good will on the part of two nations for each other. Meanwhile, although he twice stresses the moral and didactic nature of US American panoramas, he does not mention this dimension in their British predecessors or account for the discrepancy.

Generally, the scholarship is under-referenced: no dimensions are given for the reproduced works of art; volume and issue numbers for newspapers are not provided in captions; quotations do not always receive citations; and the bibliography does not include entries for all sources cited in the text and endnotes. All in all, given its promising and all-encompassing title, *Arctic spectacles* is disappointing. (I.S. MacLaren, Department of History and Classics, and Department of English and Film Studies, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB T6G 2H4, Canada.)

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### THE POLAR WORLD: THE UNIQUE VISION OF SIR WALLY HERBERT.

Wally Herbert. 2007. Weybridge: Polar World. 129 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 978-0-9555255-1-3. £35.00. doi:10.1017/S0032247408007869

This is the sumptuous polar coffee table book *par excellence*. In it is presented a comprehensive selection of Sir Wally Herbert's art works in various media. All of them are retrospective in the sense that they were based on memory or on photographs with the composition changed as seemed appropriate to the artist under the circumstances of each. For several of the pictures helpful notes are given indicating the extent to which this has been done, and many of these are extremely interesting in themselves. The text is a relatively short autobiography, written in typically robust Herbert style, and this serves as a framework on which to present the art. It is definitely supplementary to the pictures and one suspects that most people who are attracted to the book will be aware of the author's achievements and will perhaps not need to devote much attention to the writing.

The point should be made at the outset, and is obvious from the slightest glance at this book, that Herbert was a *very* talented artist. He was, moreover, completely self-taught. From the evidence here, he was equally at home in landscape and in portraiture. Not only that, but he was able, to an unusual degree, to paint works that ranged over the whole spectrum from those of almost photographic clarity to those which are rather more impressionistic. Let us consider just a few examples.

On pages 24 and 25 is a watercolour entitled 'Hope Bay at the time of leaving.' He expresses the crystalline quality of a calm day in Antarctica to perfection and from a distance of about a metre this could be a professionally taken photograph. But when one looks more closely, one is led to marvel at the consummate craftsmanship of the painting, especially with regard to its structure and the presentation of the ripples and reflections in the water. Moreover, the painting of the mountains behind the base is equally confident, and particularly impressive is the way in which Herbert achieves the difficult contrast between the darkness of the rocks and the snow and ice fields. The brushwork of the clouds is perhaps very slightly less assured than it is elsewhere in the painting