foiled by heavy ice; finally they had to abandon their efforts and return to their scheduled mission of attempting the Northern Sea Route. It is unfortunate that Niven makes only vague, imprecise mention of these Russian efforts, the details of which have been readily available in English for 25 years (Starokadomskiy 1976).

Another major criticism concerns cartography. An accurate map of Ostrov Vrangelya is essential to try to follow the complex comings and goings of the various splinter groups of survivors on the island over the summer of 1914. Niven has supplied a map at the end of the book, but makes no reference to it in the text. Unfortunately this map is a tracing of Bjarne Mamen's sketch map of the island from his diary. It bears little resemblance to the true shape of Ostrov Vrangelya, and no scale is provided. Accurate, detailed maps of Ostrov Vrangelya are fairly readily available nowadays. On a related matter, it would have helped if the author had added all the official Russian names of locations mentioned (both in the text and on the map).

Despite these shortcomings, however, Niven has produced an excellent book, well illustrated with original photographs. As an accurate, gritty account of one of the most tragic and preventable disasters in Arctic history, it represents a valuable addition to the literature. Having inherited MacKinlay's task, she has fulfilled that task admirably, and the book represents a fine memorial to him, and to the 11 victims of Stefansson's chaotic Canadian Arctic Expedition. (William Barr, Arctic Institute of North America, University of Calgary, 2500 University Drive NW, Calgary, Alberta, T2N 1N4).

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THIS EVERLASTING SILENCE: THE LOVE LETTERS OF PAQUITA DELPRAT & DOUGLAS MAWSON

Nancy Robinson Flannery (Editor). 2000. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press. xx + 154 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 0-522-84870-2. £19.50.

'The only way to cope with the grind of the trail is with the support of those you love the most.' In this one sentence, the Antarctic explorer Peter Treseder in his foreword to this unique collection of letters sums up the intense feelings of mutual affection that supported Douglas Mawson and his fiancée Paquita Delprat throughout the long, weary months of their separation during the Australasian Antarctic Expedition of 1912–14. The editor of the letters, whose late husband was a protégé of Mawson in the 1930s, has broken new ground by allowing us to share the most intimate feelings of this reputedly austere polar hero, in a theme taboo in its day and only slightly touched upon in our own time.

Nancy Flannery came upon Paquita Delprat's letters to Mawson in 1991 in the Mawson Collection at the University of Adelaide. Six years later she succeeded in unearthing Mawson's letters in a family collection, their presence there unsuspected. The letters, constituting virtually a complete set, are here presented in chronological order, dating from the eve of Mawson's departure from Hobart on 2 December 1911 up to his final return from the Antarctic on 26 February 1914. The background to these events is related in the editor's introductory chapter.

Francisca Adriana Delprat, known to her family as Paquita, was one of the five daughters of G. Delprat, a wealthy and influential Adelaide mining engineer, and his wife Henrietta. Paquita first caught sight of Mawson at a society gathering; she was 17, he then 27. Subsequently they met again at a dinner party, when 'Her flashing black eyes met his mischievous blue ones.' By the close of 1910 Mawson was writing to Mr Delprat seeking permission to marry his daughter. This was duly given, but with a number of reservations relating to Mawson's imminent departure for Antarctica and the probability of an extended separation, a foretaste of which followed as a consequence of Mawson's involvement with expedition affairs. Both Paquita and Mawson had hopes that wireless telegraphy, which was to be experimented with in Antarctica for the first time, would help to bridge the absence of regular correspondence. Inevitably the experiment proved not to be entirely successful, more especially for the exchange of innermost feelings. Thus the letters piled up, awaiting the annual visit of the relief ship *Aurora*. Their correspondence totalled 34 letters, 24 from Mawson to Paquita and 10 from Paquita. These are presented in three groups, along with linking paragraphs and footnotes. Understandably, the contents of many of these letters are naïve in the extreme, but there is no doubt about the depth and sincerity of their mutual affections. It is hardly surprising that as months lengthened into years doubts arose in their minds as to whether this love would survive. The frustration was especially felt by Paquita, who, despite the distractions of a prolonged tour of Europe in 1912, was driven to write: 'My love, my love, how I miss you. I close my eyes and lift up my lips but feel nothing.' Later still in 1913, with the expedition's return almost in sight, she describes writing to Mawson as 'writing to a wall' and cries out that 'this everlasting silence is almost unbearable.'

Mawson, for his part, attributed his survival from the disastrous far eastern sledge journey on which his two companions, Ninnis and Mertz, perished, as entirely due to his faith in Paquita's love for him. During his subsequent prolonged convalescence at Cape Denison, he became increasingly beset by doubts that his 'dedication to science might be at the expense of personal fulfilment.' He fears that his physical appearance may have changed for the worst: 'size me up critically and don't let us get married unless you feel nothing but attraction.' In the event, he had no cause for concern. Only a month after the final return of *Aurora* to Australia, they were married in Melbourne, a union destined to last for 44 happy years.

The editor is to be congratulated on bringing these letters to light; their appearance so soon after the publication of Philip Ayres' life of Mawson (reviewed in *Polar Record* 198) is most opportune. (H.G.R. King, Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, Lensfield Road, Cambridge CB2 1ER.)

THE ARCTIC IN THE BRITISH IMAGINATION 1818–1914. Robert G. David. 2000. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press. xx + 278 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 0-7190-5943-7. £46.00.

Robert David's new book explores the various ways in which the Arctic was represented to the British public during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. David looks not only at the many books produced by Arctic explorers, but also at the exhibits and panoramas so popular in the time before cinema, at the newspapers and magazines of the day, and at the print items targeted for young audiences. Yet in spite of its seemingly broad scope, *The Arctic in the British imagination* is not so important for new factual information that it brings to the table, but rather for the way it refocuses how we think about what the Arctic looks like. With this new perspective in mind, one is encouraged to revisit and rethink materials that have long been the traditional subject of Arctic study. For example, David explains the technical matters that necessarily altered the colour of illustrations so that they could be reproduced in published versions of explorers' narratives. Once the reader sees how far from visually accurate such representations were, s/he more easily grasps the similarly subjective nature of the written texts themselves. They are, in fact, products of cultural manufacture, not the factual records for which they are frequently mistaken. One begins to think of the familiar narratives of such men as John Franklin and John Ross as constructions closely allied to historical fact, but nevertheless distinct from it. David's concern, of course, is with the particular nature of those constructions and the forces that shaped them.

His assessment of how the British public came to perceive the Arctic immediately brings into play the ambiguity of cause and effect. To use George Orwell's analogy of how an effect becomes a cause, and a cause becomes an effect: a man fails because he drinks and then he drinks because he is a failure, and on and on. The reader of David's book soon realises that, as the early images caused the public to acquire certain expectations about the Arctic, those expectations — and the commercial interest in fulfilling them — in turn became causes that shaped subsequent images presented to the British public.

David effectively selects and arranges his material to reveal the influence of the popular imagination on the Arctic image and of the commercial and technological innovations that gave it shape. In his enthusiasm for his thesis, the author makes some insupportable explanations for isolated causes and their effects, but most certainly he builds a provocative and thoughtful case for his approach to Arctic studies. Without doubt, the most important feature of this book is the different line of enquiry it encourages. It invites the reader to see Arctic history as a product of popular interest, and not simply as a phenomenon directed by mercantile and Admiralty decisions. No doubt, the actual events of history were shaped by a multiplicity of factors, and if David sometimes gets carried away in estimating the impact of popular forces, his approach at least heightens awareness of these less tangible factors.

The introduction is the most difficult part of the work. Rather than inviting the reader into the interesting world that the book explores, it spends most of its time justifying what the book is about to do. This approach seems obligatory in modern critical writing, especially in the world of theses and dissertations, but the style is more designed to satisfy academic examiners than to interest readers. In the introduction, David states the purpose of the book is 'to examine the variety and nature of Arctic representations, and where appropriate to consider their meaning in the context of theories created in other contexts' (page 20). That convoluted and opaque explanation, along with chapter sub-headings such as 'Representational theory and the Arctic' and 'Appropriating the Arctic,' speak volumes about the nature of the introduction. Personally, I prefer the Nike approach: 'Just do it.'

After relatively hard slogging through the uninviting introduction, the reader becomes more absorbed. The second chapter examines the numerous popular images of the Arctic as they were created and disseminated in travellers' and explorers' narratives and in the engravings that generally accompanied them. The third chapter looks at the popular creation of the Arctic as a testing ground on which heroes could be made, even at the expense of the natural and social sciences that were the true objects of the geographical societies' frequent expeditions into those regions. The fourth chapter investigates the role of the press in shaping and solidifying the lay image of the Arctic, an image that was shaped as much by what the commercial presses thought their readership wanted to see as by the more broad and encompassing scientific endeavours that often took Britons into the Arctic. Chapter five addresses the ways in which the Arctic was exhibited throughout the century in museums, panoramas, art galleries, and the like. The sixth chapter explores the representations of the Arctic as it appeared in publications tailored to young audiences — novels, penny magazines, comics, and school textbooks. And the final chapter draws conclusions from what precedes it, although not in a very satisfying manner.

David's approach to his subject is quite thought-provoking. And while his unbending compulsion to argue his main thesis sometimes unnecessarily biases his own judgment, he clearly has a commanding grasp of many of the primary and secondary sources available in Britain. Even though he is aware of much of the excellent Arctic scholarship produced in Canada during the past several decades, his attention to it is generally superficial, paying little more than lip-service to considerable scholarship that could be effectively employed to advance his own argument.