

Although Osgood's trip to Great Bear Lake did not produce an ethnography, he did write a wonderful book about his experiences learning how to survive a northern winter and about life in a small isolated community. Initially I was reluctant to read *Winter* because recollections of 'my time in the Arctic' are often dull and sometimes bigoted. But Osgood's spare writing style, his attention to detail, and his apparent fondness for the people made reading *Winter* delightful. One of my earliest introductions to northern writing was the journal of Anton Money, a prospector who traveled across northern British Columbia and the southern Yukon in 1920s. Both he and Osgood evoke a wonderful sense of adventure, as well as a sense of place and time that has been erased by roads, satellite TV, and airplanes.

Osgood first introduces us to the dogs: Whitey, Curly, Ginger, Scotty, and Peter. At the time, dogs were essential to life in the Arctic, and they play a major role in the story as distinctive personalities who are at times lazy, wise, unpredictable, and vicious. Without the dogs this would have been a very different story. They not only helped to ensure Osgood's survival but also provided him the independence to travel and come face to face with the vast loneliness of the Arctic landscape in winter. Without the dogs the story may have been a tragedy.

Osgood also introduces us to two other non-human entities essential to life in the Arctic: the short-handled Hudson's Bay ax and the fish net. People who live in cities often do not know the value of a good ax or the potential danger it represents when a person is alone in the bush. Likewise, the fishnet is an essential part of northern life that requires a certain amount of ability and stamina. Osgood's description of pulling the net in winter resonates with anyone who has had the experience of pulling a fish net when the air temperature is below freezing.

Two of the principal human characters are Pierre, a French Canadian married to a native woman, and Bill, the store manager, also married to a native woman. Both men had been captured by life in the north and could never return to the south. In some respects they represent stereotypes. Pierre is the easy going Latin supported by his extremely competent wife. Bill is the stalwart Anglo Canadian store manager who has mastered all of the details of Arctic living, and Osgood acknowledges him as the consummate teacher.

The other inhabitants of the book are the Indians, who are known as Sahtu Dene. In Osgood's writing we get a sense of their easy competence in coaxing a living from the land. Without much apparent effort they pull fish from the lake, kill moose, and provide Osgood with winter clothing. One of the interesting contrasts is how Bill and the Indians teach Osgood the skills needed to survive. Bill conveys his knowledge primarily through words, while the Indians simply show Osgood how to do things. Osgood complained that he was unprepared to understand Athabaskan culture, but his descriptions of the people and the small details of daily life are authentic. After years of living and working with Athabaskan people

I immediately recognised and felt the trueness of Osgood's words.

Scattered through the narrative are Osgood's observations of the details of daily life that reveal a people's relationship to the land and the animals they depended upon for life. For example, Osgood records that the Indians told him he should not shoot an especially large trout because it would offend the fish. Poor fishing was blamed on Celine, Pierre's wife, who had broken a taboo by visiting the fishnets to soon after unsuccessfully giving birth to a child (page 91). At one point Osgood learns the difference between moose, which travel with the wind, and caribou, which travel against it. Moose frequently turn their heads to listen because their hearing is more acute than their sense of smell. For this reason it is futile to hunt moose in very cold weather because the frigid air conveys every sound for miles. He is also told that Celine, after killing a moose, immediately cut off its ears and threw them up into a tree so they would not hear her and warn the other animals on the next occasion when she went hunting (page 92). One day, while cutting wood Osgood sees a boy throwing food into a fire. After asking the reason for this he is told a story about how the spirit of the dead can only be fed by throwing food into the fire. All of these details add up to an ethnography, but not the kind that parses culture into its component parts.

The types of ethnographic descriptions that Osgood eventually produced have gone out of style. For example, he wrote separate monographs on Deg Xit'an material, social, and mental culture. While the books provide wonderful, detailed descriptions of specific segments of Deg Xit'an culture, they are dry and provide no sense of the culture as a whole. In *Winter*, however, you do get a sense of a whole culture. One wishes that Osgood had written such books to accompany all of his ethnographies. (Bill Simeone, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Subsistence, Anchorage, Alaska 99508, USA.)

Reference

Osgood, C. 1970. *Ingalik material culture*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Publications in Anthropology. (First published 1940.)

BOOKS ON ICE: BRITISH AND AMERICAN LITERATURE OF POLAR EXPLORATION.

David H. Stam and Deirdre C. Stam. 2005. New York: The Grolier Club. xxii + 157 p, illustrated, soft cover. ISBN 0-910672-63-6. doi:10.1017/S0032247406335991

Founded in 1884, the Grolier Club, named for the early sixteenth-century French bibliophile Jean Grolier de Servières, and located at 47 East 60th Street, New York, is America's oldest and largest society of bibliophiles and enthusiasts of the graphic arts. The club maintains a library, puts on exhibitions, and publishes books and catalogues. When the club director suggested to the Stams that they mount an exhibition of their Arctic and Antarctic

books and artifacts through the early twentieth century, they assented while recognising that their collection lacked many important books; they supplemented the exhibition and catalogue with materials from additional institutions and individuals. The exhibition took place at the Grolier Club from 7 December 2005 to 5 February 2006.

Books on ice, handsomely produced in the tradition of the Grolier Club publications, might more accurately have been subtitled 'English-language literature of polar exploration,' since the listings include publications from Australia and translations of books first published in Sweden, Norway, and elsewhere. The book is organised into 10 sections, the first five concerning narratives of Arctic exploration, the next two concerning narratives of Antarctic exploration, and the last three concerning 'Science and society,' 'Literature of the imagination,' and 'Society moves in,' with a helpful index. The 10 sections contain 125 entries, each with a very brief description followed by lengthier background commentary from the curators, and for each item, just one (unfortunately) suggested book for 'Further reading.' Most of the entries are books. Some are particularly special, such as the volume of Alfred Lord Tennyson's *In memoriam, Maud, and other poems* that was found in Robert F. Scott's last tent (entry 6.14). Among the artifacts, some, too, are especially notable, such as the series of 25 cigarette cards produced by John Player & Sons depicting polar history (entry 7.3), Adolphus W. Greely's sledge journal from the Lady Franklin Bay Expedition (entry 4.9), and the 1910 Edison Amberol cylinder that recorded Ernest Shackleton discussing 'My South Polar expedition' (entry 7.6).

The curators did not define precisely how broad or comprehensive they intended their venture to be. They implied that anything concerning the Arctic and Antarctic up to the early twentieth century was fair game, but their effort could realistically be no more than a sampling, and that indeed is what it is. It is, however, an interesting assortment, with many of the most important expeditions represented, yet I am surprised over the omission of books or papers concerning, for example, the early attempts on the Northeast Passage by Willem Barents and the Northwest Passage by James Cook. The curators also omitted the entire story of Russian exploration of the

Siberian and Alaskan Arctic, which includes expeditions led by Vitus Bering, Joseph Billings, Ivan F. Kruzenshtern, Ferdinand von Wrangell, and others. They might also have included the Franz Joseph Land expedition of Frederick G. Jackson and the Greenland expeditions of Fridtjof Nansen and Einar Mikkelsen. Also omitted were the important Antarctic voyages and expeditions of William Smith, Fabian Gottlieb von Bellingshausen, John Biscoe, John Balleny, Jules S.-C. Dumont d'Urville, Edouard Dallman, Carl A. Larsen, Henryk Bull, Carsten E. Borchgrevink, Erich von Drygalski, Nobu Shirase, and Wilhelm Filchner, all of which fall within the catalogue's stated period of coverage. Among secondary works, I personally regretted not seeing certain classics such as Hugh Robert Mill's *The siege of the South Pole*. But I was delighted to see A.A. Milne's 'An expedition to the North Pole' from *Winnie the Pooh* (entry 9.9 in 'Literature of the imagination'), a hilarious satire that few cataloguers would have thought to include.

I must say that the rationales behind the order of entries within sections, and why certain entries were assigned to one section rather than another, are difficult to fathom. The 'Suggested reading' entries, too, while usually appropriate, are often peculiar. In the case of Apsley Cherry-Garrard's *The worst journey in the world* (entry 6.12), Sara Wheeler's superb biography, *Cherry*, makes perfect sense, but for the Penguin paperback edition of 1948 (entry 6.13), Roger Tory Peterson's *Penguins*, an elementary review, only because of the publisher's name? For Douglas Mawson's *The home of the blizzard* (entry 6.9), why Lennard Bickel's *Mawson's will*, albeit a fine read, rather than Philip Ayres's essential biography, *Mawson: a life*? Science was either the sole or a most important rationale behind many polar expeditions, but despite a section devoted to 'Science and society,' primary scientific publications are essentially absent.

These criticisms and quibbles aside, there is certainly sufficiently engaging commentary on these pages, particularly concerning the artifacts and ephemera, to interest even the experienced polar reader. The newcomer may be stimulated to seek more in the first-hand polar narratives, standard histories, encyclopedias, bibliographies, and on-line resources. (Michael H. Rosove, UCLA Department of Medicine, PO Box 3356, Santa Monica, California 90408-3356, USA.)