

strain, and their application to glaciology. As ever, the text is clear and concise, with many fine papers referenced in order to provide the reader with more substantive evidence, and numerous clear and informative diagrams.

Dropped from the book is the second edition's rather weak chapter on glacier measurement techniques. One disappointing aspect is that, as in the previous editions, there is no discussion on the processes of glacial erosion and sedimentation. Another is that, although the mathematical treatments are clearly presented, understanding of the physical concepts presented would be far easier if a 'list of symbols' was included as an appendix.

The structure of the book has obviously been carefully designed so that topics follow each other well. However, the order of the chapters takes some time to get used to. In particular, the discussion of the flow of glaciers and ice sheets curiously appears in chapter 11 (in the second edition, this relatively fundamental subject was dealt with much earlier). Consequently, whilst readers who are familiar with contemporary glaciology will have little problem in understanding the format, undergraduate students may well find the book more difficult to follow than the second edition.

Paterson points out that the third edition will be his last. When one considers that the subject of, and the variety of subjects within, glaciology has expanded so much during the past 14 years, it may be that a fourth edition of *The physics of glaciers*, aiming to combine all aspects of modern glaciology at an equally advanced level as the third edition, may be too ambitious.

This edition of *The physics of glaciers* will rightly remain the most comprehensive glaciological textbook for the remainder of the decade. Moreover, together, the three editions serve as benchmarks for that which has been understood in the subject of glaciology throughout the last 30 years. (Martin Siegert, Centre for Glaciology, Institute of Earth Studies, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, Dyfed SY23 3DB.)

**LABRADOR WINTER: THE ETHNOGRAPHIC JOURNALS OF WILLIAM DUNCAN STRONG, 1927–1928.** Eleanor B. Leacock and Nan A. Rothschild (Editors). 1994. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press. xxvi + 235 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 1-56098-345-0. £34.95; US\$53.95.

'The wind had died down and the country lay beautiful in its empty vastness. There was no sound save the little waves on the beach and the silence was almost oppressive' (page 25). Poetic, sensitive, meticulous and scholarly, *Labrador winter* is a genuine rarity. It cannot be a frequent occurrence when an incomplete manuscript by a long-dead author, based upon his journal recording fieldwork experiences of nearly 70 years before, becomes the mainstay of a current work. Perhaps more surprising is the decision to resurrect such a manuscript in as original and unexpurgated a form as possible. However puzzling, the wisdom of presenting *Labrador winter* to the reader as

historical artefact soon becomes apparent in the light of its profound relevance to the history of ethnographic studies.

Fieldwork as a direct method of obtaining information about a social group through first-hand intensive or participant observation was a comparatively new phenomenon in the field of anthropology in 1927–1928. Its earlier successes, marked in particular by the 1898 Torres Straits expedition, not only represented a movement away from the 'armchair' speculations of earlier practitioners, but also served to define ethnography as a term synonymous with the first-hand descriptive activities and results of social and cultural anthropology. As Strong remarked in his journal, '...culture is no projection of a scholar's dream of what it should be, but a living subtle entity' (page 112). 'My purpose was to see how they lived, to watch them hunt, and to learn and write as much about their life as I could' (page 42).

*Labrador winter* is a lively specimen of early twentieth-century fieldwork, but with an important ethnographic dimension. On the one hand, Strong's account is the expected rigorous, scholarly record of Naskapi Indian hunting, fishing, lodge building, snowshoe making, skin preparing, customs, myths, social structure, genealogy, and language; on the other hand, it is also a touchingly human (and sometimes far from smooth) *rite de passage* of a young man into the discipline of anthropology. Humour, wit, honesty, occasional ambivalence, and his sensitivity to his own role among the Naskapi people are all hallmarks of Strong's journal that lend a frank authenticity to his manuscript, in ethnographic terms, as a carefully balanced version of events.

In retrospect, the poverty of much early ethnographic study was the paucity of information regarding the relationship between the observer and the observed, coupled with an unwillingness on the part of the observer to recognise that he was, in fact, part of the material collected. It is important to realise that Leacock and Rothschild's presentation of these unexpected elements of Strong's journal is not a precipitant decline into sentimentality or crude hagiography, but a way of emphasizing that Strong's ethnographic practice was markedly different to that of many of his contemporaries. Thus, at one point, Strong characteristically describes his attitude towards Naskapi drinking practices. 'The care they took of me was rather ludicrous....My cue I suppose would be to pretend to be drunk....The beer is vile stuff — but one can't be a prig, here least of all. My old drinking ethics are still too strong and I won't "wave my arms" unless there are undoubted ethnological gains to be made thereby' (pages 131–132).

Nevertheless, Strong seemed to delight in interacting with the Naskapi and 'wave[d] [his] arms' as much as he could. During his seven months' stay with them, he experienced a kaleidoscope of Naskapi life: he hacked through the ice to fish, camped in freezing conditions, checked traps, and even helped bury their dead. His intimate record is made all the more significant because his experience was of a culture now long since altered out of

all recognition by external interference, perhaps quite literally gone forever. Even 'as late as 1928 [Strong claimed] the native basis of life had not yet been superseded,' although he also realised that 'this state of affairs, sad to say, is passing rapidly' (page 1).

With the passing of time, Strong's journal has gained significance as an important ethnographic and cultural document, and it has been greatly augmented by the editorial work of Leacock and Rothschild. *Labrador winter* is well served by Strong's original photographs, maps, appendices, a bibliographic essay by Stephen Loring, a cumulative bibliography, and an index. For the most part Leacock and Rothschild have executed their task with considerable skill. Nevertheless, there are still the usual odd errors of proof-reading (pages 5, 8, 74, 97, for example) and some passages that seem unnecessarily repetitious of earlier material. For example, page 103 repeats material found on page 98, and the same is true of pages 109 and 107 (here the quoted word 'door' is a moveable feast), and pages 121 and 107.

It remains strange to think that a man possessed of such gritty determination, who braved sub-zero temperatures, great personal discomfort, and the deprivation of his own kind for so long, never published the contents of his journal. 'I could go back now [he writes], it probably...might be safer, but the work is only half done and this is the only way to finish it. As long as I've started on this God-forsaken job I might as well see it through' (page 134). Perhaps Strong felt that the personal element of his work was inimical to ethnographic studies of his time. If so, it is a curiously perverse quirk of fate that his empathy for the Naskapi way of life is precisely what makes his work so valuable to us now that it has almost gone. As Jack London, a fellow wanderer in sub-Arctic territories, once commented, this is 'part of the mystery of things that passes understanding,' but then humankind in general has an alarming tendency to value indigenous inhabitants and their environments only when it has almost destroyed them, and sometimes not even then. (Ian N. Higginson, Centre for History & Cultural Studies of Science, Rutherford College, The University of Kent at Canterbury, Canterbury, Kent CT2 7NX.)

**MISS SMILLA'S FEELING FOR SNOW.** 1994. Peter Høeg. London: HarperCollins. 410 p, soft cover. ISBN 0-00-654783-4. £5.99.

Greenland has finally appeared on the world literary map with Peter Høeg's novel *Miss Smilla's feeling for snow*. *Time Magazine* hailed it as the 'Book of the Year,' and, indeed, it has become an international best-seller, winning accolades from critics and readers alike. If anything, its success has been too great; in fact, one lone reviewer

across the Atlantic criticised it for being too perfect! How can it be, then, that this novel that focuses upon a Greenlandic spinster, approaching middle-age, living a lonely life in Copenhagen in a form of exile from Greenland both spiritually and geographically, has won such keen attention?

The answer must surely lie on the various levels on which the novel can be read; it is, in the first instance, the story of grim Smilla, whose very name, associated in Danish with the word for smiling, provides an initial element of humorous irony, a characteristic of the book cleverly woven into its entire fabric. She struggles with enormous fortitude to battle her way through a life in which she is truly at home nowhere, unable, really, to come to terms with her roots. The novel is politically correct, but naturally so, and not in a way that is forced or repelling. Smilla presents herself to the reader in the first person in self-consciously unloveable terms, and yet one cannot help being attracted to her: her truthfulness, her determination, and her commitment to things that matter to her.

In the second instance, the novel is a mystery, in a manner reminiscent of Umberto Eco's *The name of the rose*. Smilla, her unrequited maternal instincts awakened, against herself, by a Greenlandic boy more or less abandoned by his mother, devotes her energies to unravelling the mystery of how he came to be murdered one winter's night in Copenhagen. It is the snow that contains the answer to this riddle, and Smilla's fight against an establishment cover-up leads her back to Greenland and an heroic expedition into the unknown.

I asked the author, who had spent some time living in Greenland, if the experiences and perceptions he wrote about had come from an intimate understanding of Greenlandic people. No, he replied, his intimate knowledge is more of Africa, since he is married to an African. Perhaps it is therein that the secret of this book lies, for the author has tapped a vein of universal moral issues and yearnings, relevant to readers whatever their culture or background. (Neil Kent, Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, Lensfield Road, Cambridge CB2 1ER.)

#### Publications Received

**BARRETT WILLOUGHBY: ALASKA'S FORGOTTEN LADY.** 1994. Nancy Warren Ferrell. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press. x + 188 p, illustrated, soft cover. ISBN 0-912006-76-5. US\$14.95.

**FROST BYTES.** 1995. Pene Greet and Gina Price. Neutral Bay, New South Wales: Transworld Publishers. x + 269 p, illustrated, soft cover. ISBN 0-86824-554-2. Aus\$22.95.