

phy. It continues with the sins and omissions of the pipeline consortium, Alyeska, prior to March 1989, such as the neglect and dissolution of its spill contingency plans and the shoddy state of its tanker fleet. Then comes the catastrophe itself, the progress of the spill, and the second (arguably greater) disaster — the fatal dalliance and the confusion over who was in charge and how to tackle the situation. Keeble evokes the atmosphere of heated press conferences and the media frenzy. For the environmental disaster junkies, here was the best thing since Bhopal.

Anyone who followed the media coverage will re-encounter all the familiar themes and essential images. Communities divided between grief and glee over the lucrative clean-up wages. Scientists torn between outrage and elation at the tremendous research opportunities. The panicky Alaska tourist industry's notorious, Exxon-funded, nationwide Marilyn Monroe advertisement. The tanker captain's history of alcohol offences, the mosquito fleet, and the ongoing litigation. We are again treated to the absurd spectacle, in a high-tech age, of rocks being scrubbed with absorbent pads. And, of course, there are the stricken otters and statistics for the cost of each rehabilitated otter. Keeble does a thorough job of consolidating a multitude of contemporary reports, reactions, and scenes. Interlaced are some cosmic reflections on 'dimensions' and some grave remarks on the oil dependency of western civilization — sharpened by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait at the time he was finishing his study.

The tone and content of the book (whose only polar aspect, incidentally, is the Arctic origin of the spilled oil) is predictably angry and condemnatory. Unless written by the oil industry or one of its allies, how could it be otherwise? Keeble takes the right side instantly, dedicating the book to the perished creatures of Prince William Sound, rather ponderously giving all their scientific names. The spill, which he proclaims the most devastating in world history, was 'a disaster waiting to happen.' Yet he avoids the temptation to single out Captain Hazelwood as the supreme villain, flaying the bungling and machinations of Big Oil, and ultimately preferring to take the more chilling and intractable 'I have met the enemy and he is us' line.

This account is grounded chiefly in conversation, interviews, observations, and some degree of participation. Keeble points out that the scientists who monitored the spill, in contrast to local fishermen, largely remained 'watchers.' Yet his own participation was restricted to a day or so spent cleaning (ungrateful) cormorants. But then his duty as a writer was to bear witness, so he had to move on. The author is everywhere, flying over the crippled tanker, sailing with the scientists, mingling with the fishermen. Nevertheless, he pays due homage to official reports and other more traditional documentary sources in his bibliography.

Keeble's style will stick in some throats. He gets across the point that events in late-twentieth-century Alaska are a reprise of the time-honoured frontier conquest with a typical metaphor: 'the replay tape is running at high speed.

It's the last such tape the United States gets to play within its own boundaries' (page 11). Some analogies are rather forced. He seeks to locate Hazelwood within the ambiguous adventurer's tradition of James Cook and Lewis and Clark. More than once he refers to the 'Third Reich appearance' of the Trans-Alaskan Pipeline terminal at Valdez. Oil-despoiled beaches are 'ghettoes' (page 137).

Other analogies are misconstrued. The Cordova fishermen represent for him the 'Hamiltonian ideal of the independent producer' (page 13), although what he means is the Jeffersonian ideal; the Hamiltonian ideal was its antithesis. His blow-by-blow reconstruction of the events of the evening and night of the spill tells us more than we ever need to know: the length of the tanker, the exact minute the loading of oil was completed, what the captain ate and drank before returning to the ship. Surprisingly, we don't learn what toppings he had on his pizza. Keeble has a penchant for one-line summations of his characters' attributes and appearances. A marine biologist has 'light red hair and a complexion inclined toward pinkness' (page 114). People are always taking off their caps and running their fingers through their hair. In one chapter he makes a lot out of the frequent tears of scientists who aren't supposed to cry. Some will consider this welcome 'human interest'; others will find such material irritating and distracting.

It is too early to say whether the spill has truly fulfilled the darkest predictions of eco-catastrophe, and Keeble, rightly, does not try to arrive at a final judgment. One aside, however, does beg the question and serves to place the spill in perspective. Clearcutting in southeastern Alaska's Tongass National Forest, he notes, is probably a much greater threat to wildlife.

This is actually not the first book on the Exxon disaster. Art Davidson's *In the wake of the Exxon Valdez* (1990) provides much of the same engaging (and sometimes excruciating) detail and shares Keeble's 'in their own words' approach. But it also supplies a more systematic and incisive analysis of causes, background, and players, displaying Davidson's greater knowledge of Alaska and its politics, and his involvement in the issues. There is room and plenty of time, however, for further journalistic studies of the spill before historians enter the field. These ought to devote greater attention than Keeble or Davidson to the Native Alaskan impact and perspective and look more closely at the role of 'outside' environmentalists. (Peter Coates, Department of Historical Studies, University of Bristol, 13–15 Woodland Road, Bristol BS8 1TB.)

**POLAR PORTRAITS: COLLECTED PAPERS.** A.G.E. Jones. 1992. Whitby: Caedmon of Whitby. 428 p, illustrated. ISBN 0-905355-37-7. £25.50 hard cover, £14.50 soft cover.

Those interested in the literature of polar exploration or British maritime affairs have undoubtedly long been familiar with the work of A.G.E. Jones, who, in more than four decades, has published an impressive number of articles on the history of these subjects. Now Caedmon of

Whitby, which itself has gained respect as a maritime and polar publisher, has joined with Jones to produce *Polar portraits*, a selection of 50 of his previously published articles.

The book is certainly a glowing illustration of the hard work of Jones, who has managed to produce this material — and, indeed, a great deal more — without the research advantages enjoyed by many university-based authorities. The articles cover both polar regions and a period of more than 300 years, but each nevertheless exhibits an intensive investigation of the subject. Several, such as 'Tracing a master mariner,' are virtual guides on how to use original sources. They vary in length from two to 32 pages and were previously published in a wide range of journals, both well-known and easily available, such as *Polar Record* and *The Geographical Journal*, and less so, such as *Great Circle* and *The Falkland Islands Journal*.

Some of the articles are outstanding examples of creative research and original thinking, such as 'Scott's transport, 1911–1912,' which appeared in *Polarboken* in 1977. This detailed assessment of the use of dogs, ponies, motor sledges, and skis on Robert Falcon Scott's last expedition gives a less-than-charitable interpretation of Scott's role in some of the logistical problems faced by his party, and has been supported by other subsequent research.

Yet it seems to be this desire to reassess traditional heroes of the establishment, or to dispute what Jones terms the 'authorized version' of history, that has led him at times to treat his characters in a manner that I consider to be unfair, including making debatable statements about them without providing any supporting evidence for his viewpoint. For example, when he refers to Frank Debenham's opinion of Albert Armitage, he says, 'but since the comment came from a man who lacked leadership himself, even in academic circles, the remark is of doubtful value' (page 15). This analysis of a man who reached the position of Professor of the Department of Geography at the University of Cambridge not only is at odds with the usual assessment by those at the University who best knew Debenham's academic contributions, it also tends to make the reader question Jones' judgment.

Whether one agrees with Jones' interpretations or not, it is still easy to be disappointed with this collection of his work. The arrangement of articles alphabetically, instead of by geographical location or historical period, gives the reader a feeling of lack of consistency, a point magnified by the different referencing and footnoting systems and by the book's brief index. Moreover, the articles have essentially been reproduced as they were originally published in a wide array of journals. The result is an ever-changing typographical hodgepodge, and a complete lack of any articles from journals that are a different size than this book, such as *The Musk-Ox*, where a number of Jones' more significant articles appeared. The financial reasons for having reproduced the book in this manner are apparent, but the author and the reader both would have been better served if the articles had been totally reset in a consistent fashion. This would also have allowed Jones to

make revisions or corrections based on recent information, and an editor to help with those aspects of the writing — such as a frequent lack of smooth transitions between trains of thought — that make comprehension more difficult than it need be.

In an article about Henry Peter Peglar, Jones indicated that his subject's papers, found on King William Island, were 'an intriguing jig-saw of trivialities' (page 205). This is ultimately perhaps the best description of Jones' own collection. Certainly some of the articles are in the mainstream of polar interest, but in many instances Jones has dealt in great detail with 'minor' figures — 'the small, unexamined fringes of the subject' to use his own words — while, to my mind, failing to show their importance to the study of the polar regions or of exploration as a whole. In the past, Jones has produced valuable works, such as *Antarctica observed*; unfortunately, *Polar portraits* does not form as significant a contribution as its predecessors.

*Polar portraits* is available direct from the publisher: Caedmon of Whitby, 28 Uppang Lane, Whitby, North Yorkshire YO21 3JJ, United Kingdom. (Beau Riffenburgh, Scott Polar Research Institute, Lensfield Road, Cambridge CB2 1ER.)

**THE SOVIET ENVIRONMENT: PROBLEMS, POLICIES, AND POLITICS.** John Massey Stewart (editor). 1992. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 245 p, hard cover. ISBN 0-521-41418-0. £40.00.

This useful volume contains 14 papers given at the Fourth World Congress of Soviet and East European Studies at Harrogate in July 1990. About half of the contributions are by citizens of the former USSR — a great advance on the previous Congress in 1985, when no Soviet citizens of this specialisation attended. Many environmental issues are discussed, from case studies of particular areas to the political and global impact of Soviet actions. Leading specialists from both east and west have been enlisted, and their papers carefully edited.

These discussions relate chiefly to the country as a whole. One essay, however, places the Arctic at the centre of attention. It is entitled 'Environmental issues in the Soviet Arctic and the fate of northern natives' by A.Yu. Roginko of the Academy's Institute of World Economy and International Relations. Roginko emphasises the point, made also by others in the volume, that pollution leads to alienation of native groups. He recounts a number of situations, not widely known before, in which members of the northern peoples have found themselves — not quite horror stories, but heading that way. He ascribes these situations to various causes: confusion as to ownership of land, lack of money, ignorance of aspects of the northern environment, and lack of any overall development strategy; and he would like to see the natives decide for themselves what future they want. Many of these problems will be familiar to those concerned with the present situation in the west. Small wonder, then, that the lot of the Inuit and the other northern minorities of the west is now