

Island. While the expedition is underway, and, to a great extent, one of the factors prompting it, a colonizing power struggle takes place in the Norse settlement of Vesterbygd on the southern tip of Greenland. Self-serving machinations by ambitious priests in the Catholic Church and crippling trade restrictions imposed by King Magnus of Norway, who has proclaimed sovereignty over Greenland, seriously threaten the peaceful way of life in the seemingly once-remote frontier of Vesterbygd. The action of the novel shifts back and forth between these two venues. The story of the northern expedition is filled with *Boy's Own Magazine* variety of adventure, as the small party encounters the natural forces of sea ice, polar bears, and walrus, and the cultural dynamic of first contacts between Europeans and Inuit. Back in the settlements, the story is more complex, with Schledermann drawing on his extensive knowledge of the politics and history of Greenland, Iceland, and Markland (modern Labrador) and their role as the European frontiers of their day.

The characterisation throughout is polarised, typical of the romance. The protagonist, Tore Eyvindsson, is a stock heroic figure — young, adventurous, and physically attractive to women. He leads the expedition to the coast of Ellesmere Island and returns to marry the chieftain's daughter. To reveal this resolution of the plot will not spoil the book, because no reader would ever imagine a different conclusion. The psychological detail of individual characters counts for little here. Rather, Schledermann has focused the reader's attention on a sense of the setting — both temporal and spatial — in which the action unfolds.

This sense of an historical setting is certainly where the book shines. Educated people have long doubted the accuracy of that public-school rhyme concerning the European discovery of North America: 'In fourteen hundred and ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue.' We have heard too many vague accounts of earlier European contact with North America: fleeting textbook allusions to Leif Ericsson, rumoured work by Helge Ingstad at L'Anse aux Meadows, the Viking grave discovered in Farley Mowat's *Lost in the Barrens*. But few of us have a solid image of Norse commerce in the New World to match that solidly ingrained mental icon of *Nina, Pinta, and Santa Maria* sailing into the Caribbean Sea under Christopher Columbus' command. Nor do most of us have an understanding of European politics in the thirteenth century to match our general grasp of Europe at the beginning of the Renaissance. *Raven's saga* provides much of that understanding, as well as a better sense of Inuit culture during the same period. One learns about the important rituals associated with the solstice, the social and economic structure of Norse and Inuit societies, and the practicalities of rope-making, boat-building, food preparation, and house construction. One has an opportunity to glimpse the Crusades as something perpetuated by those who profit from military conflict, and not merely as yet another manifestation of blind religious fanaticism. One is provided with a window through which to observe the economic hardship that a frontier society of hunters and

pastoralists must endure when the Pope and the Norwegian king make sweeping decisions from afar.

Schledermann's historical reconstruction also probes into the difficulties encountered when traditional cultures come into contact with new cultures. Some of the members of the northern expedition to Skraeling Island return to Vesterbygd, bringing with them improved skills and techniques learned from the Inuit. But those better methods are not always accepted, simply because they are new and unfamiliar. Other expedition members choose never to return to their Norse roots, preferring the Inuit culture that has embraced them. Although the setting of *Raven's saga* is more than eight centuries in the past, there is much of relevance here to modern Canadian society. This is especially true in matters related to northern cultures and the effect on them of more southerly populations. (Richard C. Davis, Department of English, University of Calgary, 2500 University Drive NW, Calgary, Alberta T2N 1N4, Canada.)

**LEADING AT THE EDGE: LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM THE EXTRAORDINARY SAGA OF SHACKLETON'S ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION.** Dennis N.T. Perkins, with Margaret P. Holtman, Paul R. Kessler, and Catherine McCarthy. 2000. New York: American Management Association. xx + 268 p, hard cover. ISBN 0-8144-0543-6. \$24.95.

This book forms part of the contemporary oeuvre based around Sir Ernest Shackleton. The qualities and behaviour exhibited by Shackleton are crafted into a template for identifying and developing the performance and skills of leadership. Another recent book exploring this theme is *Shackleton's way*, by Morrell and Capparell (2001a), and an article by these authors appears in the March 2001 issue of *Director*, the magazine for the Institute of Directors (Morrell and Capparell 2001b).

In Apsley Cherry-Garrard's first edition of *The worst journey in the world* (putatively the best exploration book of the twentieth century), he comments on Antarctic leadership styles: 'For a joint science and geographical piece of organisation, give me Scott; for a Winter Journey, Wilson; for a dash to the Pole and nothing else, Amundsen; and if I am in a devil of a hole and want to get out of it, give me Shackleton every time' (page viii). Since that time the legend of Shackleton has continued to grow, the last few years having seen a glut of exhibitions, TV and other visual media programmes, and newspaper and magazine articles on arguably this most of charismatic of all Antarctic explorers. Much of the current interest may stem from the paucity of present-day 'real heroes.' Although space exploration provides a genuine frontier, the public are, ineluctably, drawn to the raw confrontation of man with the elements epitomised by the expeditions to Antarctica during the first two decades of the last century. Shackleton's Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition of 1914–17 has continually captured imaginations, not for what was achieved in exploration terms, but for the sheer determination and audacity of Shackleton's team to survive against incalculable

lable odds. It is the stuff of sagas and odysseys: his voyage into the Weddell Sea, the trapping of his vessel, *Endurance*, and its final demise as ice crushed every timber, the continued drift on the ice camp, the boat journey to Elephant Island, and then, almost beyond comprehension, Shackleton's 800-mile voyage in *James Caird* with five other crew members, making a miraculous landfall on South Georgia. Notwithstanding that desperate sea journey, the trek across the mountainous spine of the island to Stromness whaling station would have constituted an epic adventure for a modern day-expedition, never mind the final coda of so punishing an experience. Finally, of course, the rescue of the remaining crew from Elephant Island — all without a single loss of life — was the culmination of this astounding venture. Had it not been for the bleakest days of the First World War, the expedition would have been hailed as one of the most extraordinary stories of survival and human fortitude in modern times. As it was, it did receive a positive press. Nevertheless it has taken more than another two generations to pass before a new and critical examination of Shackleton's achievements has revealed the magnitude of his endeavours, and peeled back the layers of Edwardian gloss to reveal traits, skills, and knowledge of a more permanent and fundamental nature. In today's society, confronted with fast-moving developments, frequent crises, and the stress of continual change, including the adaptation to political and market forces, some writers have turned to Shackleton as an exemplar of those qualities of leadership that, when confronted with almost insuperable odds, need to be deployed and exercised.

*Leading at the edge* by Dennis Perkins is a management book, not a volume on polar exploration. Neither is it intended as a biography of Shackleton nor as a critique of his style or of his expeditions. Through a series of studies of the leadership qualities exhibited by Shackleton, the author intends to provide lessons for modern senior managers confronting change.

The book is divided into five parts including an opening section that gives a vignette (barely 11 pages) of the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition. For most part this introduction is well written and gives, certainly for the non-polar specialist, a satisfactory and highly condensed insight into the world of Shackleton's expedition, the characters of some of the senior members of the expedition — Wild, Worsley, Hurley, and especially its leader. Given that Perkins is seeking elements that define Shackleton's leadership, there is a concentration on describing some of the more difficult decisions (logistic, organisational, human, and disciplinary) that the Antarctic explorer confronted, with brief analyses of his responses. The author also gives a contrasting and thought-provoking aside in leadership style on the behaviour of Vilhjalmur Stefansson in the contemporary Canadian Arctic Expedition of 1913, which resulted in the loss of *Karluq* and the deaths of 11 of the expedition members. Perkins proceeds to define 10 key characteristics, which he has drawn from a wider study of leadership 'at the edge.' They are:

1. Never lose sight of the ultimate goals, and focus energy on short-term objectives
2. Set a personal example with visible, memorable symbols and behaviours
3. Instil optimism and self-confidence, but stay grounded in reality
4. Take care of yourself; maintain your stamina and let go of guilt
5. Reinforce the team message constantly: 'we are one – we live or die together'
6. Minimise status differences and insist on courtesy and mutual respect
7. Master conflict – deal with anger in small doses. Engage dissidents and avoid needless power struggles
8. Find something to celebrate and something to laugh at
9. Be willing to take the 'big risk'
10. Never give up – there is always another move.

The chapters in part I take each of these 10 strategies for leading at the edge and expand them in the context of Shackleton's own actions. Perkins also refers them to a number of present-day management situations with examples of a similar kind in industry, predominantly taken from the United States. The first stratagem, for instance, loosely defined as 'vision,' uses the examples of Johnson and Johnson in handling a major crisis with their Tylenol product when a consignment was poisoned, and the successful focus created by the Continental Airlines recovery plan in 1994. In the chapter on optimism (third stratagem), Perkins describes the masterly motivation generated by Lloyd David Ward in the Maytag Corporation, which saw a doubling in profits in three years. A final example would be the tenth stratagem on 'conflict' — the tactics employed by Sun Microsystems in their battle to survive and prosper against competitor giants such as Microsoft and Intel. These juxtapositions — Shackleton and modern business — I found interesting and effective in the context of illuminating leadership qualities.

In part II of the book, Perkins takes a series of case studies and, drawing on the 10 'leading edge' characteristics, provides a detailed analysis of the leadership responses to significant business challenges. The four examples he uses, taken from the US, are the leadership styles of (1) Pat Russo, president of AT&T's Business Communications Systems division, which is now part of Lucent Technologies; (2) a fictitious CEO and company in the health sector, albeit based on a real example; (3) Jack Creighton of the Weyhauser Company; and (4) Aaron Feuerstein at Malden Mills Industries (for outdoor aficionados the company that produces the synthetic fleece fabric called Polartec).

The final part is relatively brief and concentrates on how to develop individuals and their personal attributes to realise their full potential as leaders. Such issues as 'growing your own competence,' 'the learning support environment,' 'how to combat fear,' and 'coping with career plateaux' are some of the topics that are addressed.

The volume is then completed with an appendix of 'Resources' — tools to self-assist the reader (for example, critical leadership skills survey, personal development plan).

The book is an interesting blend of modern leadership training and analysis of the exceptional experiences of a great polar explorer. Has it worked? There are today countless management texts on leadership and related aspects of personal development. Most, if not all, are based around the dissection of case studies and examination of the experiences of high-performing and inspirational individuals, typically within the commercial sector. In this respect the key to this volume is the set of 10 strategies for 'leading at the edge'; they create the framework to understand the motivation and performance of successful people. Although Perkins does not provide a detailed and researched analysis for their derivation — they appear as being distilled from his own experiences as a teacher and consultant over a number of years — most students of leadership would recognise these criteria in one form or another. However, the need to take these strategies on trust is a weakness, although not necessarily critical. The manner in which Perkins uses them is certainly original and vivid. The relationship of Shackleton's actions to Perkins' 10 strategies can at times appear artificial, but the novelty of the approach carries the reader with him. The text is easy reading and the many business examples provide a wealth of valuable material even if the level of penetration in some of the case studies is not high.

For those approaching this volume from the Antarctic perspective and with an interest in Shackleton the explorer, it will provide a new and interesting dimension to the way in which leadership, honed and exercised in Antarctica, has wider relevance to commercial and business activities today. For those using the book as a management text, they will enjoy and undoubtedly be awed by the achievements and characters from the 'Heroic Age' of Antarctic exploration. Perhaps it will result in the creation of a few, often much needed, Shackletons in industry. (David J. Drewry, Vice-Chancellor, University of Hull, Cottingham Road, Hull HU6 7RX.)

### References

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**UNCOVERING THE NORTH.** Valerie Alia. 1999. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press. xxiv + 224 p, illustrated, soft cover. ISBN 0-7748-0707-5. Can\$29.95.

*Uncovering the north* aims to examine 'the representation of the North in northern and southern Canadian media.' In fact it seems to be both less and more than that — sometimes ranging far afield of the author's presumed

expertise and at other junctures failing to look deeply enough at the subjects it raises. The result is a rambling, often fractured discussion of journalists and the people they cover in the north, sprinkled with useful insights but failing in the whole to present a persuasive case.

In general, this is a familiar discussion, repeated in many places around the world where people making news rub up against people whose job is to report it. Valerie Alia's central themes are that northern people are not covered enough, that existing coverage is often inaccurate, and that news about the north is collected and disseminated by the wrong people. The underlying assumption is that content generated by Inuit people would necessarily be more accurate and fair than news currently coming out of the north.

Her introduction proposes to compare the Canadian experience with other northern countries, but Alia's experience is primarily Canadian, and her credibility suffers when she wanders geographically. For example, she declares herself 'one of the many who mourned the death of the American television program *Northern Exposure* and treasured its many wonderful moments. The show managed to communicate an essential northerness and promote intercultural awareness despite its often casual approach to accuracy.' Casual approach to accuracy? Although the show was purportedly about a southeast Alaska village, it was filmed in Washington state, and it featured a female Indian character supposedly from the local area but strangely dressed as a Plains Indian who stopped just short of holding up one palm and saying 'How.' Alaskans of all ethnicities cringed at the program's repeated inaccuracies, stereotypes, and clichés.

Alia's book does focus on numerous important issues — for instance, examining the effects of the media provided to indigenous people in the north. She rightly notes that, 'Many elders speak little English and, consequently, are ill informed when Aboriginal language programming is cut ..(it) also undercuts their traditional importance as political leaders and contributes to the decline in Aboriginal language use.'

And few would argue with her assertion that 'There is a need for better journalism in all directions — by southerners covering the north; by northerners covering the north; by aboriginal journalists covering their own communities, each others' communities, and those of non-Native people; by non-Native journalists covering Aboriginal people and events.' Yet her analysis loses appeal when she adds that she is 'extremely frustrated with inadequacies of conventional training and practice, which remain grounded in ethnocentric principles of "expert" authority and "balance".' It seems condescending at the least to suggest that balance and expertise are somehow foreign to indigenous cultures.

The work suffers from vague sourcing that readers have no opportunity to test. The reference section opens with this: 'Most of those interviewed or consulted were guaranteed anonymity. This list includes only the people who chose to speak on the record, or whose anonymity