And later in the poem we learn that "The author has a body // like and liking other bodies." Her word play isn't just on the surface, because in this basically lighthearted poem, the reader can discern elements of the poet's desires and self-questioning.

Occasionally a poem may be too clever for its own good (or at least for me to grasp its point). For instance, "Transcribed on Leaves Thrown into the Wind" begins "Sometimes I talk too fast and,"; then it hops down the page to the notation "[five lines missing]" followed by more skipped lines. The intriguing title puts pressure on the fragments that follow to be vivid and epigrammatic, but instead I found them puzzling. The wind behind this poem is strong ("an eight on the Beaufort scale") but its ultimate point blew past me. On the other hand, the poem "The town filled up" combines prose and a scattering of the word "(coyote)" in an amusing and effective take on "invasive species." The "foxes" here aren't the homegrown kind, but rather intruders from Toronto.

We learn some actual facts "about the author" on the back cover. Macdonald was raised "off the grid" in Whitehorse, Yukon, and this off-the-gridness is spelled out in a series of poems toward the end of the book. In one of the book's prose pieces she writes: "On the radio they were saying how technology is everywhere nowadays. We looked from the radio, to the lightbulb, back to the radio, which was about all we'd got." Her schooling is alluded to in the poem "Please Leave On," where the initials P.L.O. on the chalkboard are misunderstood by the kids to mean Palestine Liberation Organization. "Our wisdom was the kind / that's learned in Current Events ….// We got in trouble … / for reading / unassigned texts." In another prose poem sarcasm underlines her annoyance with conventional northern subject matter, as commonly displayed by artists from down south: "wow that's *so real*, those Northern Lights sure do resonate on a hipster wavelength."

Macdonald's perspective on life in a remote northern community includes instructions for plucking a chicken, a skirmish against wasps in an outhouse making use of spray paint, and an anecdote about a woman waiting for a bus "who was clearly not too familiar / with the whole system of public transit." I won't give the punchline away, but it should bring a laugh, at least it did for me.

Northerny is a pleasure to read and to explore. There are some sharp turns in the climb but the view is expansive. The last sentence in the book is "the and" (not, as we might expect, "the end"), and so we're invited to look forward to more work by Dawn Macdonald to come.

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The **Northern** Review
Exploring human experience in the North
The Northern Review 58: 129–131
https://doi.org/10.22584/nr58.2025.007
Published at Yukon University, Canada

Book Review

Nome: The Bering Strait Seen Through Its Most Storied City. By Michael Engelhard. Corax Books, 2025. 306 pp.

Reviewed by Christopher David Adkins*

When colleagues and friends ask me about Alaska, they sometimes ask if I've been to Nome—and I tell them I was supposed to go, but never did. The story has become part of my own personal folklore. You see when my father died, my mother, fresh in her grief, worried about me travelling to so distant a destination, and begged me to reconsider. Not wanting to upset her, but travel grant for fieldwork in hand, I compromised by going to Anchorage instead. It is there that I first saw the northern lights, and felt my late father's loving presence in the skyborne phosphorescence. So no, I never did end up visiting Nome—but it all worked out in the end.

Reading *No Place Like Nome* by Michael Engelhard, however, is an elegant solution to having never been there. Engelhard, a seasoned wilderness guide and outdoor instructor in youth programs, and a former Nomeite besides, has taken his lifetime of experiences and interests in and around the city of Nome, and written about the stories, places, and people that he feels deserve to be talked about more. He does this in a delicious mix of humour, wit, and—always a necessity in Alaska—warmth. The title is a pun, shared by a much older memoir by Artis Palmer (Morrow, 1963) and, of all things, a 1990 Yogi Bear animated special (Hanna-Barbera Home Video), each a punning reference to *The Wizard of Oz*.

The historiography around Nome is not enormous, and Engelhard's work is a welcome, if uneven, addition—his humble inference that he is offering "much material of less than earthshaking significance" (p. 42) notwithstanding. It joins the magisterial Terrence Cole's *Nome: City of the Golden Beaches* (*Alaska Geographic*, 1984), and the more technical *Empire's Edge* by Preston Jones (University of Alaska Press, 2007), as well as broader texts that feature Nome, the town and its people, as a central feature, such as the by-now classic *The Cruelest Miles* by Gay Salisbury and Laney Salisbury (W.W. Norton & Company,

2003). Engelhard's chapter on Bernard Hubbard, the Glacier Priest, will be a welcome addition to a newly emerging canon of Hubbard-related studies led by the contemporary *The Glacier Priest: Father Bernard Hubbard and America's Last Frontier* by Josh McMullen (University of Notre Dame Press, 2025).

"Stories hide within stories there, nested like matryoshka dolls," Engelhard tells us (p. 23), and indeed one is astonished to find just how deep Engelhard goes in his grand tour of Nomeite environs and history: ivory harvesting, jade carving, reindeer herding, and lemming breeding, among many others, are all introduced with Engelhard's flashes of insight and a journalist's attention to detail.

But therein lies the largest difficulty with the book itself. As much as Engelhard ruminates and brings to life Nomeite and Alaskan history, it is not a *history book* and does not treat its subject in the way a historian would. There is a trade-off here. Engelhard's dazzling language and brilliant raconteur style means that his use of history itself is like a librettist in an opera: sweeping and beautiful, but once the performance is concluded it is expected to fade back where it came from. Most gravely, the book at no point cites any sources (although some explanatory notes do come with illustrations). The omissions can be frustrating. We hear of an encounter between Wyatt Earp and Charlie Chaplin, a marvel of Americana (p. 63). But how did Engelhard get the information to tell the tale? For that matter, exactly where did the valuable, revealing quote by the Nome Kennel Club (p. 136), which compared the All Alaska Sweepstakes to the Kentucky Derby and Battle of Marathon, come from? Bernard Hubbard, lighting banned movies on fire to inaugurate a bronze statue of Jesus Christ (p. 164), is a striking image, but where exactly did Hubbard talk about it? These are important, indeed profound moments in Nomeite, Alaskan, and Western American history—so one hopes the curious reader at least has Google. Although Engelhard's rapid-fire anecdotes and penchant for finding peculiar coincidences in and around Nome's history will delight most lay readers, the professional historian and cultural scholar will be left scrambling.

But even here Engelhard makes some strident choices that many other readers will immediately take issue with. Right from the beginning he makes clear that he wishes to write about the less famous, less explored aspects of Nome history, which is welcome, but he frames it problematically, inferring that he had nothing else to add to these topics. Still, some subjects are not explored *enough*. "So, here, you'll find … Katmai the goggled pack husky, not Balto the Serum Run's star, 'scrub dog' to snobbish critics" (p. 41). Even if we excuse the fact that the only time Balto ever got called (correctly) a "scrub dog" was by the man who raised and trained him, Leonhard Seppala—the greatest musher of all time and not exactly what one would call a *snobbish critic*—Katmai (Hubbard's beloved dog who was murdered in California, something Engelhard fails to mention) actually does not appear all that much as Engelhard promises. In fact, the storied canine culture of Nome—a city founded by dogsled during its gold rush years and the nexus of both mushing culture and the sled dog as an Alaskan symbol for three decades—is only gestured at. His assertion that the Iditarod "has lost a bit of luster" (p. 41) is sure to raise more than a few eyebrows. The book also lacks a final chapter, a conclusion, to allow the reader some space to explore and reflect on what Engelhard has laid out over the course of the text; rather, the whole thing ends with jarring abruptness on a chapter about cycling.

Where *No Place Like Nome* succeeds, however, is letting outsiders take an insider's tour. There is a logic to Engelhard's choices, bothersome as they may be to someone expecting something a little more scholarly. As inconvenient as it may be to the academic, Engelhard's style is probably best suited to sharing what he passionately believes deserves to be discussed and remembered—culturally, historically, socially—about a place and its people. Engelhard shines a spotlight on Nome's Indigenous Peoples with an easygoing, neighbourly friendliness that is refreshingly authentic. He writes with a matchlessly deep love and fondness for his topic: Nome, Alaska, the myths and symbols of the Great North that he so obviously and earnestly wants to keep alive with the artistry of his storyteller's talent. "It is as vital to link the past with the present," Engelhard insists (p.42). "The two are not sovereign countries; we have one foot in each." Yet I would argue that Engelhard has far more than feet in these "sovereign countries" but, rather, his whole heart. With this in mind, the book's flaws can be readily forgiven.

Ultimately, *No Place Like Nome* is really less a book at all, and still less a collection and examination of Nomeite culture, than it is a confession of faith, a statement of belief in both the dead and the undying, a winking celebration of Alaskana.

After all, having read it—I feel I, too, have finally been to Nome.

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