

However, it is probably better to appreciate this book for what it does well than to criticize it for what it does poorly. When it comes to producing a vividly written account of explorers struggling over the centuries to make sense of a vast geographical puzzle, Williams has few rivals. He has made excellent use of both published narratives and unpublished diaries and letters, skillfully selecting the most telling details and anecdotes. Someday perhaps someone will write a similar volume that incorporates Aboriginal oral history. Until then, *Arctic Labyrinth* is among the best books available, either for general readers who simply want to enjoy a good story based on solid historical research or for students and academics in search of a comprehensive, accurate account of the various northern expeditions.

**Janice Cavell**, historian, Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada; adjunct research professor, Carleton University

***Baychimo: Arctic Ghost Ship.* By Anthony Dalton. Surrey, BC: Heritage House Publishing Co. Ltd., 2006. 255 pp.**

In the annals of polar literature, one story is especially well-known about a vessel trapped in sea ice—its leader determined to save his men, the crew fighting to survive, its boards eventually crushed to splinters by pack ice pressure. The story in question, of course, concerns the *Endurance*'s ill-fated voyage and 1915 destruction during Sir Ernest Shackleton's Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition. Receiving less literary fanfare is the topic of pack ice itself, and how it often becomes the determining factor in the success or failure of a ship's expedition. Anthony Dalton's book *Baychimo: Arctic Ghost Ship* provides a welcome corrective with its account of *Baychimo*, a Hudson's Bay Company steamship that supplied Arctic trading posts and settlements from April 1921 to October 1931 when the crew abandoned ship after being stuck in an ice floe as winter approached. Rather than sink, though, the empty ship drifted away, and for almost forty years afterwards was spotted periodically in northern waters, thus earning the moniker "ghost ship."

Based in London, *Baychimo* was a 1,322-ton coal-fired ship that transported cargo and passengers from Siberia to Alaska and across northern Canada. Dalton's narrative provides a detailed look at both mundane and epic aspects of *Baychimo's* travels. It describes quotidian elements such as cargo items (ranging from pickled cabbage to chamber pots to sealskins), types of passengers (including missionaries, trappers, HBC employees, and sled dogs), ship chores (such as shifting coal to keep

the boat on an even keel), and the trick of off-loading cargo by boat in natural bays and inlets (given the absence of man-made harbours for the ship to dock at). *Baychimo's* adventures included circumnavigating the globe in 1924 and attempting an east-west crossing of the Northwest Passage—a plan thwarted by broken propeller blades while the ship worked its way through thick ice.

Other than the ship itself, it is ice that plays the most prominent role in *Baychimo: Arctic Ghost Ship*. For nine of its eleven Arctic seasons, the ship was captained by Sydney Cornwell, an abrasive but capable and experienced seaman and navigator who guided the steel-hulled ship with its sturdy bow through fierce gales, dense fog, rough seas, and—especially—treacherous ice. The ship ran aground on mud banks while moving through grounded ice. Impenetrable ice kept *Baychimo* stuck for a month in September in Thetis Bay, off Herschel Island. Cornwell's men sometimes used blasting powder to break the ship free of ice. At the end of most seasons, the ship underwent repairs for ice-induced damage to the propeller, rudder, and stern plates.

And ice proved to be *Baychimo's* undoing. In the fall of 1931, the ship—loaded with furs and other cargo—became stuck in a huge ice pan south of Point Barrow near Wainwright, Alaska. Cornwell and his crew decided to spend winter ashore and monitor the ship until spring. But following a November blizzard, the ship disappeared from sight. Eerily, from then until 1969, it was periodically spotted drifting on ocean currents and winds in the Beaufort Sea and the northern Chukchi Sea, “probably caught in a part of the Beaufort Gyre far from land,” (238) Dalton wrote.

Among the book's many strengths are its painstaking research and detail. Dalton combed the extensive Hudson's Bay Company archives in Winnipeg and many other sources, and often cites excerpts from logbooks, correspondence, and other primary documents. A glossary explains Arctic ice navigation terms and defines obscure kinds of ice such as “growlers,” “frazil,” and “bergy bits.” An extensive bibliography and index, along with numerous captioned photographs, are also useful. Throughout, Dalton conveys his expertise regarding all things nautical, which makes the book ideal for boating fans. And in many places the book has an artful, almost novelistic style of writing, as when the author introduces an image of *Baychimo* during her ghostly period by writing, “Slowly, almost imperceptibly, the floe revolves, responding to the wind and current, turning the ghostly ship in a lazy pirouette, displaying her once proud lines from all angles” (p. 18).

At times, though, extensive detail bogs down the narrative with too much day-to-day minutiae. Also, while the book includes several bare-bones maps to orient the reader, it could have used one solid, comprehensive map. And while James Delgado's Foreward notes that "*Baychimo's* fame rests on her decades of being occasionally sighted as she drifted with the ice long after she was abandoned, apparently at the brink of disaster, in 1931" (12), the chronological narrative devotes only the last thirty-three pages to *Baychimo's* "ghost ship" reputation; the rest of the story is devoted to the ship's annual Arctic voyages.

Perhaps that's as it should be, because overall *Baychimo: Arctic Ghost Ship* is very engaging as a cultural history of the Arctic region during the early twentieth century. Indeed, while Dalton never conclusively determines what befell *Baychimo* after it drifted away in 1931, he establishes the overall context in which the ship operated in the Arctic. He shows how the Inuit hunting and fishing way of life gave way as outside traders entered the region—for instance, by depicting how whalers set up winter quarters on Herschel Island by 1890 but then left by 1907 after the whale population there was depleted. The ship's voyages are shown amidst the backdrop of larger social changes and events, such as Prohibition and the Russian Revolution. Ultimately, while the book might appeal most to fans of polar literature and nautical tales, it touches on enough larger cultural backdrops that the general reader can enjoy it as well.

**Peggy M. Dillon**, Department of Communications, Salem State University

***This Vanishing Land: A Woman's Journey to the Canadian Arctic.* By Dianne Whelan. Halfmoon Bay, BC: Caitlin Press Inc., 2009. 175 pp. Colour photos.**

In March 2007, Canadian photographer and filmmaker Dianne Whelan joined a seven person Canadian Ranger sovereignty patrol on a historic 2,000 km (1,243 mile) snowmobile trip from Resolute to Alert, Nunavut. The group's goal was to plant a titanium Canadian flag on Ward Hunt Island, at the country's northernmost tip, where expedition parties set out for the North Pole just 684 km (425 miles) away.

This symbolic—and successful—flag-raising was "all part of a game of show and tell, the whole point being to make sure the world knows that Canadians are up North protecting their land" (19), Whelan writes in *This Vanishing Land: A Woman's Journey to the Canadian Arctic*, an engaging and