

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

visually stunning book recounting her three-week journey. The Rangers, formed in 1947, patrol uninhabited areas of the country's high Arctic each year, establishing a Canadian presence and serving as "the eyes and the ears of Canada's North" (45). On this particular trip, the Rangers made history by patrolling the northwest coast of Ellesmere Island, which previously had only been partially travelled in 1906 by American explorer Robert Peary.

Whelan, who also filmed the trip for a companion documentary titled *This Land*, was the first woman to accompany the Rangers on such a patrol. In a breezy, informal narrative style, she describes the patrol's adventures, interspersing her day-to-day reporting with historical anecdotes about the High Arctic, and musings about the region's future as its warming climate attracts the attention of foreign countries interested in navigating the Northwest Passage and extracting minerals from beneath the melting ice.

Especially vivid are Whelan's matter-of-fact descriptions of the hassles and hazards facing patrol members, each of whom drove a snowmobile that pulled a *komatik*—a one ton, 1.2 metre by 5.5 metre (4 foot by 18 foot) wooden sled used for carrying food, fuel, tools, tents, and other supplies. Whelan was told early on that "the *komatik* is not your friend" (23), a warning that later proved prophetic when she and other patrol members were slammed by the sleds, suffering bruises and sprains, but miraculously avoiding death or broken bones. On another occasion, Whelan and others were flipped off their snowmobiles when they hit crush ice and other rough terrain, then treated their injuries with painkillers dubbed "Arctic candy." She also heard of a Ranger who lost part of his leg to a polar bear, and was unnerved to find polar bear prints outside her tent one morning. She moved slowly in her eighty pounds of gear—including a goose-down jacket, Sorel boots, and a facemask—since sweating in arctic winter temperatures can be fatal. She dined mostly on lukewarm water, noodles, dried caribou, and a flat bread called bannock. She writes, dryly, "In the High Arctic everyday occurrences are an adventure" (65).

*This Vanishing Land* chronicles how the Rangers combine old-school intuition with new technology such as radios and airplane support to survive in the harsh environment, where at one point on Whelan's journey the temperature (with wind chill) dipped to minus 100 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 73 degrees Celsius). The snowmobiles, GPS devices, and aerial maps all helped the team navigate the terrain, but when they reached difficult areas, they still relied on someone to "read the ice and tell us where to go" (110). One ingenious Ranger plugged a leak in his

snowmobile crank case using rubber from the sole of a boot. Whelan notes that the Inuit Rangers in particular “can build an igloo, kill a seal for food or sense their way out of a blizzard” (46).

The book’s title works on two levels, one referencing the literal melting of ice and snow in the region due to warming oceans. As Whelan recounts, the thickness of the sea ice of Jones Sound was only one metre (three feet, three inches) when the patrol crossed over it, while it used to be four times thicker. The patrol also passed by the area where the sixty-six square kilometre (twenty-five square mile) Ayles Ice Shelf broke off in 2005. Whelan describes how the seasons in the Arctic are shifting. “Today everything is changing,” notes Ranger Roger Hitkolok. “From where I am now, we are starting to have long summers and short winters. We used to have a breakup on July first, but today it’s earlier, maybe June first and we don’t have any more ice left in the ocean by the fifteenth. But years ago I used to travel on a dog team in July” (101).

The title’s second level refers to the impending changes in the way of life in the High Arctic as a result of such melting. Whelan makes the point that the warming of the Northwest Passage and its opening as a shipping route threatens the very national sovereignty that the Canadian Patrol is trying to protect. While the Canadian government says the passage is part of Canada’s domestic waters, the United States and other countries insist that the passage, once navigable, will constitute international waters. Whelan also notes that throughout Arctic history, “every visiting nation came here to take something away. In the 1600s, it was the whaling industry, then land for empires and now resources for exploitation” (27–28). Whelan sums up the ongoing environmental-economic turf battle by writing that “while some relish the prospect of the riches to be made off the billions of barrels of oil hidden under the ice, others see the developments up there as an ecological crisis in the making” (15).

*This Vanishing Land* works well as a first-person travelogue of a trip through the High Arctic. Whelan does an especially nice job of inserting historical anecdotes and oral history sidebars into the narrative. She excels at describing the daily hardships of travelling in the Arctic and bluntly details her own struggles and triumphs on the journey. Considering that the locals bet 23-to-1 that she wouldn’t finish the trip, she takes great pride in reaching Alert, the world’s most northerly human habitat. The book is handsomely printed on slick, glossy paper with more than 100 colour photographs documenting Whelan’s journey. Its drawbacks—typographical errors and the occasional jarringly colloquial remark—could have been fixed with closer editing. A more detailed map of the patrol’s

route would also have been helpful. But these are minor details in view of Whelan's overall success in providing the armchair explorer, or anyone interested in the future of the Arctic, with a vivid travelogue that doubles as both a valentine and a lament to a harsh, beautiful place on the cusp of change.

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

***Face to Face: Polar Portraits.* By Huw Lewis-Jones. Photography by Martin Hartley. Cambridge: Scott Polar Research Institute, 2008. 288 pp. b&w and colour illus., further reading, index.**

Though Scott wrote upon reaching the South Pole in 1912, "[A]ll the day dreams must go ... Great God! This is an awful place," the regularity of expeditions both north and south attest to the tenacity of the polar dream (14). His death, like the death of Franklin and his men in the Far North, seems to have in fact spurred adventurers, pioneers, and tourists—in addition to the nations and institutions that have established scientific bases near the poles—to seek out the ends of the earth today. Huw Lewis-Jones, art curator at the Scott Polar Research Institute, has compiled and written *Face to Face: Polar Portraits*, a collection of portraits both old and new "featuring men and women of many nations, exploring, working and living in the polar regions" (47). Specifically, the book offers sizable (and technically perfect) photographs of 100 historical and contemporary polar scientists, travellers, and residents as a means to "recover and to celebrate the range of contributions within this modern landscape—and to reflect upon the memory and the legacies of exploration and survival in the polar world" (47).

The book includes a foreword by the celebrated adventurer Sir Ranulph Fiennes on "The Changing Face of Exploration"; an essay by Lewis-Jones on the history and roles of photography and the portrait in shaping public awareness of the polar regions; a refreshing discussion between Lewis-Jones and Martin Hartley, the photographer of many of the contemporary portrait; and a powerful afterword by anthropologist Hugh Brody. As Lewis-Jones states, the book makes a claim for expanding our understanding of life at the poles, and many of the photographs included offer a new view on human experience and endeavour there. The faces of Scott, Shackleton, Henson, Peary, Franklin, Fiennes, Amundsen, and Messner are familiar; the more fascinating portraits are those of the