

Crosscurrents North: Alaskans on the Environment. Edited by Marybeth Holleman & Anne Coray. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2008. 314 pp.

The Preface to this volume by Bill McKibben and the Foreword by Jay Hammond set a political perspective for the essays and poems to come. The tone is direct and personal. Both see environmentalism and opposition in terms that are local, practical, and uniquely Alaskan. They implicitly reject outside influences and idealism with a firm belief that Alaskans understand economic benefits as well as environmental respect. The editors go a bit farther in their Introduction seeing the anthology as a protest document.

That being said, the collection brings together works by many Alaska writers from the last twenty or thirty years. Work from noted poets like John Haines and Peggy Shumaker share the pages with acclaimed fiction and non-fiction writers Nick Jans, Nancy Lord, Sherry Simpson, and Richard Nelson. Yet, most interestingly, the chorus of other writers perhaps less well-known provides context and counterpoint that makes the collection a lively read. I count forty-seven different voices. Of course, to get forty-seven writers to sing as one is a challenging task, even if you have a body of work from each to rely on. The editors seem to have done a good job at creating a focus from such a variety of artistic perceptions, though at times the sense of a protest document seems a bit distant. The poets, especially, are often as much concerned with the act of perception as that which is perceived. Yet, the collection is well-grounded in Alaska itself. The writers find inspiration and enlightenment in the flora and fauna of the state, and build on the connections between human and animal life in a way that makes possible political positions on the environment. In this way, perception and identification flesh out more overt intellectual analysis. To achieve this fusion, the editors have woven the poetry in-between the sections of prose. I particularly enjoyed Nancy Lord on temperature change and forests, Nick Jans on wolf hunting, Marjorie Kowalski Cole on the boreal forest, and many other pieces. Also engaging are the poems like John Morgan's "The Moving Out," Joan Kane's "Dingmait," and Peggy Shumaker's "Walker Lake." Moreover, the juxtaposition of the prose and poetry enhances the experience of each other. The more pointed environmental nature of the prose informs and gives context to the poems, and the poems emphasize the emotional and perceptual interaction with the landscape. The editors also supply the reader with a thematic table of contents that organize the works around the following headings: Geographic; Habitat; Encountering the Other: Presences; and Environmental Issues and Themes. This tool should prove useful to readers seeking information and creative responses to particular regions, flora or fauna, or specific issues.

This is a fine collection of writing that well represents Alaska and the writers who live here; and while the poems don't always highlight it, each writer is aware of the complications that come with living and working in what the editors refer to as the nation's last great wilderness and primary resource colony.

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***Polar Imperative: A History of Arctic Sovereignty in North America.* By Shelagh D. Grant. Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2010. xiv +469 pp. Notes, bibliography, index.**

Issues around northern sovereignty have proliferated in recent years as global warming reduces polar ice formation and threatens to open the Northwest Passage to a surge of shipping, exploration, and resource exploitation. Publications about these issues have also proliferated. Shelagh Grant's book offers a unique and comprehensive examination of the history of Arctic sovereignty issues in North America (which, for her purposes, includes Greenland), that is both comparative and interdisciplinary. Her comparative approach gives us insight into American, British, Danish, and Canadian claims in the Arctic, while her interdisciplinary analysis integrates our understanding of climate change with geographic, cultural, and historical events.

Part I of the book, "Setting the Stage," is divided into three chapters. Chapter 1 elaborates on the scope of the book and provides definitions for some of the key concepts and legal terminology involved in asserting sovereignty claims. She also discusses the reasons behind the secrecy of Arctic sovereignty discussions in governmental forums.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of early migration into, and settlement of, the North American Arctic, including the first Aboriginal inhabitants and the early Norse efforts to establish settlements. These peoples had to be hardy, resourceful, and adaptable in order to survive in the extreme polar climate, and some populations, such as the Tuniit and Viking settlers, ultimately did not remain or survive.

Chapter 3 reviews the rise of the merchant monopolies and the monarchs that supported them. According to Grant, "The merchants envisioned a monopoly that would guarantee huge profits and revenue growth. Monarchs dreamed of vast domains supported by military might and mercantile trade" (55). The global nature of interest in the Arctic is also emphasized: "For over 300 years ... the Dutch, Russians, Portuguese, French, and Spanish