

The various glacial sedimentary environments are examined in order of increasing distance of the particular geological setting from the sediment source; that is, from those features formed in contact with glacier ice, to proglacial and lake sedimentation, and on to sediments deposited far from glaciers in fjord, sea, and ocean systems. What results is an extremely ordered, comprehensive summary of the current understanding of glacial sedimentology. For a more detailed treatment of the subject, Hambrey continually refers to additional literature and, in so doing, produces an impressive bibliography of more than 300 recent key publications.

Throughout the book, the author tackles the explanation of glacial sedimentation, by first summarizing theoretical aspects of a particular sedimentary process (for example, methods of deposition, and descriptions of landforms and sedimentary facies) and afterwards detailing superb field examples. In this manner, the book is able to provide an understanding of modern glacial geology, which the reader can appreciate and comprehend through dozens of illustrations and photographs (many of which have been taken from Hambrey's own extensive fieldwork, and often from well-known locations within the British Isles).

In summary, *Glacial environments* represents a fine review of contemporary knowledge in glacial geology and, through its descriptive approach, may prove to be an essential and popular undergraduate text. (Martin Siegert, Centre for Glaciology, Institute of Earth Studies, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, Dyfed SY23 3DB.)

Reference

Drewry, D.J. 1986. *Glacial geologic processes*. London: Edward Arnold.

GENDER ON ICE: AMERICAN MYTHOLOGIES OF POLAR EXPEDITIONS. Lisa Bloom. 1993. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press. xii + 163p, illustrated, soft cover. ISBN 0-8166-2093-8. US\$14.95.

Current anthropology lends itself well to the historical dialogue. Consideration of the myriad and often complex underlying cultural issues embedded within a particular cultural milieu and its historical writing — issues of gender, class and race, concepts of nationhood, attitudes toward nature and the wilderness, and the social relations of science and knowledge — is indispensable for establishing both a fluency with the historical texts themselves and a comprehensive understanding of any particular historical episode. Seen in this light, history itself is deconstructed into a series of culturally conditioned and ritualised scenes, and the historical text, as part of the dominant media in a literate society, is best understood as a piece of cultural and national discourse. In short, historical discourse is more than the mere elucidation of events past, but rather both a cultural exposé of a particular people and their time, and of the commentator who writes about it.

In *Gender on ice*, Lisa Bloom has found such a cultural chronicle in the American era of heroic polar exploration. Based upon a feminist analysis of the history of US nationalism and colonialism, this book offers an alternative account of the history of polar exploration through a textual exegesis of gender, race and class, and nationalism. Bloom follows the already-established argument that American involvement in the conquest of the North Pole was, among other things, a chapter of nineteenth and early-twentieth-century western colonialism during which science and the omnipotence of unyielding human will were perceived as absolute and infallible categories. She agrees that the late-Victorian era bore witness to the autumn of imperial conquest that followed centuries of aggressive and enthusiastic exploration, leaving only the polar regions as uncharted and unknown. Thus, as abstract categories in the late- and post-Victorian mind, the series of particular images that developed of the Arctic regions as blank and quite literally empty places were transformed into aesthetically engaging icons, attractive to the American and European middle class, which in turn rendered them engaging to explorers and scientists alike. As both barren and dangerous places, yet paradoxically home to the Inuit, they provided concepts of 'Nature' and 'the other' that simply ceased to exist elsewhere. In other words, there was a glorious and exotic splendour to be found in the 'Arctic sublime' that presented a strikingly illustrative contrast to the cultured, mundane, and confident west. As such, the Arctic, like the austral regions, remained the ultimate Spartan proving ground for the supremacy of human will over a foreboding adversary.

The author's point of departure from other accounts of this era is the inclusion of one important caveat: that those dispatched by the society were white, middle-class, and, most importantly for Bloom, male. She identifies 'masculinism' (the social construction of masculinity to the exclusion of women from the public domain) and models of intrinsic white superiority as the dominant underlying ideologies of American polar exploration. Thus, in conquering the Pole, Robert Peary was both an aesthetically pleasing model for Americans and a metaphor for how they perceived the world and, perhaps more importantly, themselves. Despite the lack of potential commercial gain, it was ultimately the colonial and scientific treasures that could be realised that would transform polar exploration into a unique imperial pageant. As quite literally the last places on Earth 'which still remained invisible and therefore inscrutable, [they] excited a consuming passion on the part of white men of various Western Countries to "conquer" and make "visible" these sites' (page 3). The North Pole, then, was where America would create an imperial self-image, heralding its entry into the twentieth century. It was also the ultimate popular theatre for the exhibition of American masculinism, racism, and overt nationalism.

It is Bloom's thesis that the ideology of the period was flawed, corrupted by supercilious issues of gender, class, and racial and nationalistic dogma. Evidence, she claims,

is to be found in the accounts of Peary's journey to the Pole. So possessed was Peary with the imperial glory to be gained from such a venture that, succumbing to the prevalent views of the time about the infallibility of technology, he abstractly conceptualised himself and his companions as mere 'travelling machines,' yet all the while personifying his sledge dogs in a twistedly theatrical reversal of roles. Worse yet, in another reflection of his times, Peary had little but contempt for (and not a little fear of) his Inuit guides, and also demonstrated eminently racist attitudes to Matthew Henson, his life-long black manservant and career expedition colleague.

This is an ambitious piece of work. However, sadly, it is convoluted and discursive, reminiscent more of a casual stream of consciousness than a focused academic thesis. Unfortunately, it also suffers from a near-appalling number of historical, cultural, and literary errors. Subtitled *American ideologies of polar expeditions*, this book curiously devotes a great deal of space to Robert Falcon Scott's tragic last expedition to the Antarctic; in fact, in doing so, it transcends what might be necessary for the purposes of comparison with Peary's successful conquest of the North Pole three years earlier. Further, the author's assessment of Scott is based almost exclusively upon Roland Huntford's controversial *Scott and Amundsen*, and it is Huntford's speculations about 'off-screen' disagreements between Scott and his men during the ill-fated expedition that 'confirmed my fundamental thesis that both Scott and Peary fabricated the events of their expeditions to suit the particular imperial and masculinist ideologies that each characterised' (page 13). To rely on a single, and arguably problematic, source to reach such a momentous conclusion is to leave the reader with a precarious and somewhat myopic interpretation of the facts. To identify Huntford, who was born and raised in Africa and currently resides in England, as 'Scandinavian' (page 133) is simply erroneous.

Additionally, there are a number of fatuous mistakes: Bloom states that, of the American polar explorers, Peary alone became a national hero. In fact, Elisha Kent Kane was a figure of such enormous stature that his funeral journey from Havana to Philadelphia was probably the grandest and most extensive the United States had yet experienced; and Adolphus Greely was an honoured and respected figure for decades after his return from the disastrous Lady Franklin Bay Expedition. The author also states that Dr Frederick Cook, a contemporary of Peary's and companion of Roald Amundsen on the Belgian Antarctic Expedition of 1898–1899, was a polar pioneer whose book *Through the first Antarctic night* — incorrectly titled as *Through the Antarctic night* — 'brought him considerable fame as an explorer [and] anthropologist' (page 27). Amundsen himself is incorrectly identified as the expedition leader by Bloom (page 27); rather it was Adrien de Gerlache. And although the *Belgica* expedition was charged with conducting geological, astronomical, zoological, and oceanographic research, would Bloom have the reader believe that Cook actually engaged in social science research on an uninhabited continent?

Bloom has much to say about the popular national discourse of the National Geographic Society and its emblematic journal *National Geographic* during the 20 years around the turn of the century: this too diverts the reader from the matter in hand. Regrettably, it is this section that contains some of the most distressing inaccuracies in the book; as a result, Bloom's argument flounders. Central to her argument are that *National Geographic* was 'a commercialised discourse of mass culture' (page 65), that it had become an institution with 'a position of enormous power and influence' (page 66), and that it 'played a central role in the production of ideology' (page 66). Yet, in 1888, *National Geographic* maintained a subscription of only 1000 members; in 1912 — three years after Peary's North Pole expedition, 107,000. By contrast, in the same years Joseph Pulitzer's New York newspaper *The World* had a daily circulation of 246,000 and 768,000 respectively; William Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal* had circulations of 48,000 and 1,234,000. These were truly journals of enormous power and influence, and, clearly, Bloom exaggerates the popular influence *National Geographic* had. Equally inaccurate is the author's singular attribution of Peary's status and fame as an American hero to *National Geographic*; perilously, she ignores the fact that *The New York Times* was, arguably, Peary's most significant backer. Likewise, it was *The Times*, far more than *National Geographic*, which attempted to prove the alleged dishonesty of Dr Cook's claim to the Pole. Perhaps the most disturbing inaccuracy in *Gender on ice* is Bloom's continual reference to the Inuit in the plural as 'Inuits,' her failure to identify a single native as *Inuk*, and her reference to 'Inuit language' rather than to *Inuktitut*. In a piece of work that purports to address the inaccuracy and injustice of a century of racist popular discourse, such a failure is nothing short of intellectually embarrassing. Equally annoying is the way the book bounds indiscriminately, variously appearing as a poetic regarding the search for the Franklin expedition in the mid-eighteenth century and a tractate on the Vietnam and Persian Gulf wars.

Although the book has a pivotal conceptual thesis, many of the relevant issues and arguments appear on the page as somewhat disconnected from one another. Ultimately, this is a volume that would seem to be more suited to a general audience in the form of a collection of essays rather than a monograph. Sadly, it is not an easy book to read, and, in the final analysis, like Bloom's conclusions, it ends up on thin ice. (M.J. Whittles, Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, Lensfield Road, Cambridge CB2 1ER.)

HISTORICAL ECOLOGY: CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE AND CHANGING LANDSCAPES. Carole L. Crumley (Editor). 1994. Santa Fe, New Mexico: School of American Research Press. xiv + 284 p, soft cover. ISBN 0-933452-85-3. US\$22.50.

Concern about environmental degradation as one of the most pressing issues of modern times is evident in a growing academic and policy-oriented literature on global change. Much of this literature comes from the various