to the Poles, including poetry by John Donne, James Thomson, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, as well as Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* and several children's stories.

The result is a book that is never dull. It skipping between so many different contexts may frustrate readers with an in-depth knowledge of a particular expedition or individual, but it will engage the intelligent non-specialist reader. Moss' style is similarly both a strength and a weakness: her urbane, wryly amusing tone makes for a lively, enjoyable read, but there are times, especially when retrospective judgements are being made of men experiencing horrific conditions, that its knowingness feels misplaced.

Moss' training is in literary rather than polar studies, and the diverse historical and geographical territory she covers in *Scott's last biscuit* means that there are inevitably minor slips that will grate on Arctic and Antarctic specialists (such as the claim that Ernest Shackleton went to the Antarctic 'several times' between the *Discovery* and *Endurance* expeditions [page 21]). However, the main shortcoming of *Scott's last biscuit* is in a sense less to do with the author herself than with the influence of a particular approach that has characterized almost all of the small amount of literary criticism of polar narratives published to date. This is the tendency to take Roland Huntford as the key, if not the sole, authority on Antarctic exploration, and to read polar expeditions more generally through an established, unquestionable binary: English explorers: bad; other explorers (particularly Scandinavian ones): good. Moss is less simplistic than this, but there are times in the section on Scott's last expedition where Huntford's influence is clear, and some of the factual slips mentioned above appear to be a product of her use of this particular lens. Moss claims that Roald Amundsen '(probably) believed Scott's gentlemanly protestations that he was really only there for science and had a merely incidental interest in such vulgarities as the pole' (page 20), when Scott's announcements in British newspapers in 1909 stated quite explicitly that reaching the Pole was his primary aim. Similarly, Moss claims that 'Scott had planned a base camp at the Bay of Whales, but he arrived to find Amundsen already there and decided, to Amundsen's puzzlement, that it would be rude to stay' (page 100). Certainly Scott's Eastern Party met Amundsen and changed their plans (becoming the Northern Party) as a result, but Scott had already established his main camp on Ross Island and was not amongst the party. In both cases, historical precision takes second place to sarcasm aimed at Scott's over-developed sense of social etiquette (something that, along with his general incompetence, is simply taken as read by Moss and most other literary critics). Elsewhere, English explorers are refused the benefit of the doubt offered to others. Moss states that it is 'quite impossible that [Parry's] voyages were really as orderly and cheerful as his published accounts suggests' (page 60), noting that other perspectives are unavailable as they automatically became naval property; however, she accepts quite readily that Nansen's 'was a happy ship from the beginning' (page 73), although again none but the expedition leader's own account is cited. Scott is criticized for using 'an entirely untested technology for a dangerous journey' (page 102), while the account of the Andrée balloon expedition observes that 'Conventional and established technologies had failed to reach the Pole . . . so it was not obvious that newer ones would be any less reliable' (page 117). Moss' otherwise perceptive and nuanced textual analysis is likewise most tenuous when inflected by a desire to denigrate Parry and Scott. These complaints reflect my own impatience with the one-sidedness of recent cultural analysis of English polar explorers; no doubt a reader sympathetic to Huntford's perspective will find these sections of the book as stimulating as the rest of it.

In the end, Moss' insightful cultural and textual analysis, engaging style, and eye for a good story outweigh the problems identified above. The range of topics and experiences covered mean that those who take exception to some sections will likely be fascinated by others. *Scott's last biscuit* is a book that will inevitably provoke some *Polar Record* readers, but it also has a good deal to recommend it. Like the books by Manhire, Spufford, and Davidson, it enriches understandings of the polar regions, and paves the way for further literary and cultural examinations of Arctic and Antarctic narratives.
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WINTER. Cornelius Osgood. 2006. Lincoln, Nebraska, and London: University of Nebraska Press. xviii + 242 p, illustrated, soft cover. ISBN 0-8032-8623-6. £11.99.
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Cornelius Osgood is well known in northern studies as a superb ethnographer who wrote monographs on several Northern Athabascan groups, including the Gwich'in, the Han, the Deg Xit'an or Ingalik, and the Dena'ina. Osgood's purpose in writing these ethnographies was to record, in as much detail as possible, a pure aboriginal culture. To achieve this goal he looked for isolated Athabascan groups hardly touched by EuroAmerican civilization. Osgood did this in 1927 when he traveled to northern British Columbia, but that trip produced no ethnographic data, largely because he could not find such an isolated group. In 1928 Osgood set out again, this time to Great Bear Lake, hoping to find an Athabascan people unaffected by contact. This attempt ended in failure as well. In the preface to his monograph *Ingalik material culture*, Osgood provided insight into why he failed on this trip. First, he could not speak the language; second, he had no understanding of the values underlying the culture; and finally, he never understood what he was seeing and could not sort out those traits that he thought were aboriginal from those that were supposedly modern (Osgood 1970: 6).

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Although Osgood's trip to Great Bear Lake did not produce an ethnography, he did write a wonderful book about his experiences learning how to survive a northern winter and about life in a small isolated community. Initially I was reluctant to read *Winter* because recollections of 'my time in the Arctic' are often dull and sometimes bigoted. But Osgood's spare writing style, his attention to detail, and his apparent fondness for the people made reading *Winter* delightful. One of my earliest introductions to northern writing was the journal of Anton Money, a prospector who traveled across northern British Columbia and the southern Yukon in 1920s. Both he and Osgood evoke a wonderful sense of adventure, as well as a sense of place and time that has been erased by roads, satellite TV, and airplanes.

Osgood first introduces us to the dogs: Whitey, Curly, Ginger, Scotty, and Peter. At the time, dogs were essential to life in the Arctic, and they play a major role in the story as distinctive personalities who are at times lazy, wise, unpredictable, and vicious. Without the dogs this would have been a very different story. They not only helped to ensure Osgood's survival but also provided him the independence to travel and come face to face with the vast loneliness of the Arctic landscape in winter. Without the dogs the story may have been a tragedy.

Osgood also introduces us to two other non-human entities essential to life in the Arctic: the short-handled Hudson's Bay ax and the fish net. People who live in cities often do not know the value of a good ax or the potential danger it represents when a person is alone in the bush. Likewise, the fishnet is an essential part of northern life that requires a certain amount of ability and stamina. Osgood's description of pulling the net in winter resonates with anyone who has had the experience of pulling a fish net when the air temperature is below freezing.

Two of the principal human characters are Pierre, a French Canadian married to a native woman, and Bill, the store manager, also married to a native woman. Both men had been captured by life in the north and could never return to the south. In some respects they represent stereotypes. Pierre is the easy going Latin supported by his extremely competent wife. Bill is the stalwart Anglo Canadian store manager who has mastered all of the details of Arctic living, and Osgood acknowledges him as the consummate teacher.

The other inhabitants of the book are the Indians, who are known as Sahtu Dene. In Osgood's writing we get a sense of their easy competence in coaxing a living from the land. Without much apparent effort they pull fish from the lake, kill moose, and provide Osgood with winter clothing. One of the interesting contrasts is how Bill and the Indians teach Osgood the skills needed to survive. Bill conveys his knowledge primarily through words, while the Indians simply show Osgood how to do things. Osgood complained that he was unprepared to understand Athabascan culture, but his descriptions of the people and the small details of daily life are authentic. After years of living and working with Athabascan people I immediately recognised and felt the trueness of Osgood's words.

Scattered through the narrative are Osgood's observations of the details of daily life that reveal a people's relationship to the land and the animals they depended upon for life. For example, Osgood records that the Indians told him he should not shoot an especially large trout because it would offend the fish. Poor fishing was blamed on Celine, Pierre's wife, who had broken a taboo by visiting the fishnets to soon after unsuccessfully giving birth to a child (page 91). At one point Osgood learns the difference between moose, which travel with the wind, and caribou, which travel against it. Moose frequently turn their heads to listen because their hearing is more acute than their sense of smell. For this reason it is futile to hunt moose in very cold weather because the frigid air conveys every sound for miles. He is also told that Celine, after killing a moose, immediately cut off its ears and threw them up into a tree so they would not hear her and warn the other animals on the next occasion when she went hunting (page 92). One day, while cutting wood Osgood sees a boy throwing food into a fire. After asking the reason for this he is told a story about how the spirit of the dead can only be fed by throwing food into the fire. All of these details add up to an ethnography, but not the kind that parses culture into its component parts.

The types of ethnographic descriptions that Osgood eventually produced have gone out of style. For example, he wrote separate monographs on Deg Xit'an material, social, and mental culture. While the books provide wonderful, detailed descriptions of specific segments of Deg Xit'an culture, they are dry and provide no sense of the culture as a whole. In *Winter*, however, you do get a sense of a whole culture. One wishes that Osgood had written such books to accompany all of his ethnographies. (Bill Simeone, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Subsistence, Anchorage, Alaska 99508, USA.)

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BOOKS ON ICE: BRITISH AND AMERICAN LITERATURE OF POLAR EXPLORATION. David H. Stam and Deirdre C. Stam. 2005. New York: The Grolier Club. xxii + 157 p, illustrated, soft cover. ISBN 0-910672-63-6.
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Founded in 1884, the Grolier Club, named for the early sixteenth-century French bibliophile Jean Grolier de Servières, and located at 47 East 60th Street, New York, is America's oldest and largest society of bibliophiles and enthusiasts of the graphic arts. The club maintains a library, puts on exhibitions, and publishes books and catalogues. When the club director suggested to the Stams that they mount an exhibition of their Arctic and Antarctic

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