

shows the disappointment when the authorities declared that many small settlements were not viable and that the people would not be permitted to return there.

Kohlhoff details the efforts to rebuild their communities by their own means, and how, starting from scratch, the Aleuts succeeded in reconstructing their shattered lives. He also points out the positives: the awareness, especially on the part of members of the younger generation, of the wider world, of the opportunities for political action, of the possibility to fight for their rights. And fight they did. It took them many years, and many a sufferer departed this world without seeing the wrongs righted, but in the end the Aleuts won. The President of the United States, Ronald Reagan, publicly acknowledged the unjustified suffering inflicted upon this people by the United States, and Congress voted to recompense the survivors for their losses. The individual sums were small, but the community as a whole is being recompensed. This past summer, the entire Aleut community celebrated the reconstruction of the church of St Nicholas on Atka, burned at the order of a US Navy officer, and the construction of two chapels commemorating the other two churches destroyed during the war, those on Amchitka and Attu islands.

The book is heavy reading due to the complexities of the process that led to the evacuation, but Kohlhoff ably disentangles them. The book, however, is highly recommended as a first-rate study of an unintended, small-scale genocide-like event that can occur even in a democratic nation. Kohlhoff has my thanks for bringing this festering wound into the open and providing a lesson on the theme 'it can happen here, too.' (Lydia Black, Department of Anthropology, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Fairbanks, AK 99775-7720, USA.)

ALASKA. Marvin Falk (Compiler). 1995. Oxford, Santa Barbara, and Denver: Clio Press (World Bibliographical Series volume 183). xxxi + 219 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 1-85109-141-6. £38.50.

THE FALKLAND ISLANDS, SOUTH GEORGIA AND THE SOUTH SANDWICH ISLANDS. Alan Day (Compiler). 1996. Oxford, Santa Barbara, and Toronto: Clio Press (World Bibliographical Series volume 184). xvii + 231 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 1-85109-236-6. £40.50.

Given that for more than 30 years bibliographic databases have offered the capacity to generate bibliographies on any subject with a few key strokes, do we still need bibliographies that meet the OED's classic definition of bibliography as 'the systematic description and history of books, their authorship, printing, publication, editions...'? Given indeed that it is now within the abilities of the neophyte doctoral candidate to generate a near-comprehensive list of publications on the precise subject that he or she is proposing to study, what is the need for less than comprehensive bibliographies on only broadly related topics? As the co-compiler of a related volume to those under discussion here, these are questions that I have certainly had to ask myself.

The World Bibliographical Series is the standard series of bibliographical monographs to be organized by geographical region, and with these two volumes its coverage of the polar regions may be said to be complete; the other relevant titles are *The Antarctic* (no. 171, 1994), *The Arctic* (no. 99, 1989), *Canada* (no. 62, 1990), *Finland* (no. 31, 1981), *Greenland* (no. 125, 1991), *Iceland* (no. 37, 1983), *Norway* (no. 67, 1986), *Russia/USSR* (no. 7, 1994), *Siberia and the far east* (no. 127, 1991), and *Sweden* (no. 80, 1987). These unquestionably are 'bibliographies' in the OED's sense, although in addition to books, periodicals, articles, reports, and other forms of literature are included, particularly on subjects for which no books exist. Each volume consists of annotated entries to primarily English-language publications grouped under standard headings. The bibliographies are selective, and their quality relies necessarily on the subjective judgement and knowledge of the individual compilers, both as to choice of material and informativeness of annotations. For the two volumes under consideration, more qualified compilers could hardly be found. Marvin Falk is curator of rare books in the Alaska and Polar Regions Section of the University of Alaska Fairbanks. He is also the compiler of the standard historical cartobibliography of Alaska. In addition to compiling the acclaimed volume on England in this series, Alan Day has previously demonstrated his polar expertise in a comprehensive bibliography of the Northwest Passage. Since he is also co-editor of the 'Librarian's Bible,' *Walford's guide to reference books*, Day's bibliographic expertise may be regarded as without peer.

Whilst several volumes have been devoted to regions (for example, the Arctic and Antarctic), and one (Siberia and the far east) to a region within one country, Falk's is only the third to be devoted to a single American state. As with Texas and Hawaii, the other two states to have received such treatment, Alaska's distinctive geography and history has been reflected in a well-established bibliographic tradition — from Wickersham (1927) on — in which it has received separate treatment from 'the lower 48.' Falk is fortunate to be able to build on this tradition. As a thumbnail sketch, Falk's introduction briefly summarizes all that is most distinctive about his state. In it one learns, for example, that Alaska has five distinct climate zones (temperate oceanic, subtemperate, maritime Arctic, interior continental, and high Arctic or polar), the third greatest concentration of glaciation in the world (following the Antarctic and Greenland), and that, so far from teeming with fish and wildlife, it has a total wild biomass less than half that of Texas. This introduction packs a great deal of information into just 19 pages and may be recommended to anyone desiring a brief but highly informative account of the state. With regard to selection of the 793 items, it is as ever possible to identify significant omissions, the most glaring to this reviewer being Plafker and Berg's *The geology of Alaska* (1994). This is the standard source for its subject and would have strengthened a rather weak geological section. In general, the scientific sections appear weaker than those for the humanities, particularly

history, a not unnatural reflection of the compiler's expertise, but also perhaps of the nature of the University of Alaska Fairbanks' collections, where scientific works tend to be found in several departmental collections rather than the main Elmer E. Rasmuson Library where Falk works. Such minor criticisms apart, this is a worthy addition to the series, with the selections well chosen and informatively annotated. With many years' experience of Alaskan literature, Falk clearly knows this literature well and gives the impression of having read a good proportion of it.

Whilst Falk's volume fills an obvious gap, the Falkland Islands, South Georgia, and the South Sandwich Islands have been covered by two previous volumes in the World Bibliographical Series, *The Antarctic* (1994) and *The Atlantic Ocean* (1985), containing 69 and 142 entries, respectively, for these islands. Clearly, those specifically interested in the Falklands will appreciate the more-focused coverage that a dedicated volume allows, although it is perhaps a pity that the limitation to primarily English-language works meant that the greater space available could not be utilized by including a much greater representation of Argentinian, other South American, and other European non-English perspectives both on the 1982 war itself and on preceding events. That said, Day does include some of the most important non-English language works, and here, as elsewhere, his selections appear sound and his annotations informative.

Returning to the question posed by this review's introduction. Clearly these are two highly competent bibliographies. Falk's book is informed by its compiler's familiarity with both state and literature developed during many years. The selective, annotated format of the World Bibliographical Series allows him to communicate much of this knowledge, whereas a comprehensive Alaskan bibliography would simply overwhelm. Day's book presents an interesting contrast. Whatever Day's expert knowledge of these islands — and one would guess that it was much more considerable at the conclusion of this work than at its origin — his prime qualification as its compiler is his unrivalled expertise in making use of libraries, indexes, and indeed bibliographies. The success of his book thus is itself an instructive illustration of the continuing need for the bibliographer's art. (William Mills, Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, Lensfield Road, Cambridge CB2 1ER.)

References

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A DEATH ON THE BARRENS. George James Grinnell. 1996. Toronto: Northern Books. vi + 333 p, illustrated, soft cover. ISBN 0-96804040-3. \$Can25.00.

A death on the barrens is an interesting puzzle indeed. George James Grinnell's book is surely one of the most uneven, wandering pieces of prose ever published, post-

modern experiments in end-of-the-millennium alienation and fragmentation not excepted. If a book is to be measured by classical aesthetic standards alone — balance, proportion, unity of focus and action, etc — *A death on the barrens* can hardly be said to succeed. On the other hand, if a book's success depends on the emotional bond it establishes between author and reader, Grinnell's book accomplishes precisely what its author set out to do. It is certainly one of the most subjective human responses to an experience of wilderness travel that I have ever read.

At its core, *A death on the barrens* is a story of a canoe trip across the barrenlands of northern Canada in the 1950s. Related in the first person by one of the canoeists, the book offers an innovative variation on the popular narrative of wilderness travel, of which there are many examples. What is unique about Grinnell's approach — at least, initially — is his attention to group dynamics within the six-man party. For the most part, Grinnell's emphasis sheers away from the familiar celebrations of nature's beauties, the excitement of running rapids, or the challenge of difficult portages. Instead, the first three-quarters of the book explores the politics of leadership, an issue made particularly relevant by a perceived shortage of food on a journey that steadily takes the party deeper and deeper into the heart of the uninhabited barrens.

As I read *A death on the barrens*, I was excited by Grinnell's innovative approach. Having read numerous accounts of wilderness travel, I tire rather quickly of those books that do little more than temporarily transport me from my armchair to a vicariously imagined outdoor life. Rather, travel writers who succeed in capturing my interest must offer some unique quality, whether it is the lyric of simplicity of Sigurd Olsen or the humour of R.M. Patterson. What Grinnell's narrative offers — or at least promises — is an exploration of the human response to authority and leadership within a small but highly dependent group. No doubt, I was especially alert to such matters, having recently completed a major project on John Franklin's canoe journey of 1819–1822, a project in which Franklin's style of leadership commanded significant attention.

Thus, I began reading *A death on the barrens* with great interest in the group dynamics that Grinnell reveals. Roughly three-quarters of the way through the book, however, the investigation of leadership becomes lost in a maze of other themes. These other themes — wilderness travel as spiritual metaphor, the journey of personal growth, the eulogy of a great man, the corruption of human institutions, the morality of a Wordsworthian natural universe — are the familiar fare of scores of wilderness travel accounts, and the uniqueness that initially made Grinnell's book attractive disappears.

Having said that, all these odds and ends of theme, this helter-skelter of responses, contribute to the humanity — if not to the classical aesthetics — of the book. One man's life was lost on the 'recreational' journey in the summer of 1955 (perplexingly, the death arose from drowning, not from starvation, as the earlier passages of the book foreshadow), and sadly, decades later, Grinnell lost his sons in