

hundreds of miles. Maybe; but she presents no evidence. It is all based on her premise: “Diamonds smell to me. ... Of arrogance. Of greed. Of irrevocable change to the land” (p. 138). On the other hand, she points out that BHP’s own appraisal, which concluded that the mines won’t hurt the environment at all, is also cursory. In other words, readers must more or less choose between competing ideologies.

As for the people of Lutsëlk’é, she says they are divided. Some want the wages from mine jobs, others are against any mining, and “[e]veryone else is on a spectrum between the two extremes” (p. 200). We get little more than that sketch, and Bielawski has the courage to admit why: she is a stranger here, unable even to make good bannock or pick berries at a decent clip, never mind get inside people’s hearts. This is perhaps the book’s main weakness: we end up knowing far more about the author than about the Dene. To be fair, maybe this is the only way it could be. This is her memoir, not a formal study.

In 1996, Lutsëlk’é and other groups reached “impact-benefits agreements” with BHP, which outline certain protections to the land and benefits to the First Nations, but leave the ultimate question of land ownership for yet more hearings, still to come. Did the Dene do better this time? That information is missing, too: the agreements are secret. From Bielawski’s hints, we know that they probably involve royalties, preferential contracts, and some up-front cash. Also, as part of a wider plan, a commission is monitoring the mines’ long-term environmental impacts. Bielawski herself offers no before-and-after picture of land or people; and to be fair, maybe it is too soon. She has obvious passion for the primeval spaces of the north, and respect for its people. Thus armed, she might some day consider going back to Lutsëlk’é—and the tundra beyond—to get the full story.

*Kevin Krajick*  
Journalist and Author  
245 West 104th Street, 14B  
New York, New York, U.S.A.  
10025  
*krk4@columbia.edu*

**NARRATING THE ARCTIC: A CULTURAL HISTORY OF NORDIC SCIENTIFIC PRACTICES.** Edited by MICHAEL BRAVO and SVERKER SÖRLIN. Canton, Massachusetts: Science History Publications/USA, 2002. ix + 373 p., 38 b&w illus., 11 maps, endnotes, index, no separate bibliography. Hardbound. US\$39.95.

A better title for this innovative collection of nine essays might have been “Selected Cultural Perceptions of the Far North Resulting from Danish and Swedish Scientific Investigations.” The actual title—*Narrating the Arctic: A Cultural History of Nordic Scientific Practices*—suggests greater inclusiveness than it delivers. Indeed, the editors’ introduction admits (p. 10) that “the narratives...presented

here are particularly those of two Nordic countries, Denmark and Sweden” and explains that the latter two countries were empires of long standing, of which Norway had formed a part at one time or another from the Middle Ages until 1905. This editorial premise leaves an impression of evasiveness, as does the lack of a clearly defined time frame for the work as a whole.

This volume, in fact, represents Danish and Swedish views so exclusively that neither Norway’s past contributions and perceptions nor its current evaluations figure at all. The editors briefly acknowledge Fridtjof Nansen’s scientific standing (p. 7), but there is no mention anywhere of his scientific contributions or those of such well-known Arctic investigators as Roald Amundsen and Otto Sverdrup. Written several years after Norway had achieved independence, Nansen’s book *In Northern Mists* (1911) became very influential both at home and abroad, along with his other writings, and it is still regularly cited. While much of the historical and cultural information it contains is outdated or wrongheaded, that is also true of works by Vilhjalmur Stefansson and Knud Rasmussen, among other notabilities so ably discussed in the present work. The point is that as a field scientist, explorer, and gifted writer, Nansen helped to create precisely the kind of northern cultural narrative with which the present work is otherwise concerned.

Archaeology is not represented among the field sciences considered important in building Nordic perceptions of the Arctic, but the reader will otherwise find a great deal of substance in these pages. The editors generally succeed in achieving their stated aim of creating bridges among several disparate fields in order to interpret specific cultural narratives created by the confluence of past scientific investigations of far northern environments. Directly and indirectly, the book also considers the relationship between center and periphery as it charts its course through three main analytical categories, named “Meta-Narratives of Northern Nations,” “Claims and Controversies in the Field,” and “Technologies of Indigenuity.”

The book’s two editors came well prepared for this multidisciplinary undertaking. With a broad background in the history and philosophy of science as well as in geography, the English scholar Michael Bravo is familiar with the potential conflict between indigenous knowledge of the Arctic and the information acquired by means of modern science. In his essay “Measuring Danes and Eskimos,” he also reflects thoughtfully on the implications of an anthropological focus on pure racial features. As a historian of science and ideas, Bravo’s Swedish co-editor, Sverker Sörlin, knows the debate arising from the involvement of field and environmental sciences with the growing internationalization of science in the past two centuries. In the present book, he uses this background to particular advantage in his essay “Rituals and Resources of Natural History: The North and the Arctic in Swedish Scientific Nationalism.” Central to this chapter is a careful account of the impact on international science and on Swedish

cultural pragmatism of the groundbreaking Swedish botanist Linnaeus.

Collectively, the two editors and their co-authors show that Linnaeus and other prominent scientific investigators of the Far North contributed to a Swedish nationalism that considered the vast northern areas a proving ground for manhood, a source of individual and collective wealth through massive exploitation—and indeed, the bright hope of the future. The Danes, too, wove their cultural pride together with scientific investigations in their Greenland colony, which was their own Arctic proving ground. Especially in Denmark, “the logistics of Arctic travel were bound up in rituals of identity-making” (p. 21) in which a powerful heroic mythology linked the advantages of scientific knowledge with the ability to adopt the survival skills of the Inuit (or of the Saami in Sweden), without questioning their right to do as they pleased in regions which northern natives had occupied since time immemorial. The collision between the “traditionalist” approach and the non-Romantic methods of modern field science forms the core of “Lauge Koch and the Mapping of East Greenland,” a balanced and well-informed discussion by Christopher Ries of a pivotal case that is little known to people outside of Scandinavia.

Less convincing is the editors’ argument that evangelicism was a major force behind the exploration and colonization of the Far North. With good reason, modern historians tend to be cautious about literal interpretations of piously stated goals. Some readers are likely to question the editorial conviction that the Danish approach to colonial dominance “was more spiritual, and spearheaded by missionaries, whereas in Sweden, taxation, science, and even forced labor were the instruments” (p. 19). With the exception of Kirsten Thisted’s brilliant chapter, “The Power to Represent Intertextuality and Discourse in *Smilla’s Sense of Snow*,” the authors as a group seem strangely unaware of the ramifications of Denmark’s colonial ambitions in the past. For example, Michael Harbsmeier, in his well-conceived (but somewhat unevenly researched) chapter “Bodies and Voices from Ultima Thule,” fails to see that the common theme in C.C. Lyschander’s *Den Grønlandske Chronica* (1608) and the maps produced between c. 1590 and 1605 by Stefansson, Resen, and Thorlaksson was the greed of America-fever. This greed was engendered by the early 17th-century belief that Greenland was connected to a vast polar continent that included all of Eurasia—of which Arctic North America was considered the easternmost part.

Given the long life of early and erroneous depictions of Subarctic and Arctic regions, a greater focus on old maps generally would have been useful to evaluate progress in the science of surveying—one of the field sciences included in the editorial focus and lucidly discussed by Urban Wrükberg in his essay “The Politics of Naming: Contested Observations and the Shaping of Geographical Knowledge.” Along very different lines, Gisli Palsson’s fine contribution “Arcticity: Gender, Race, and Geogra-

phy in the Writings of Vilhjalmur Stefansson” gives examples of Stefansson’s racism (as well as of his misogyny). The famous Icelandic-Canadian was fascinated by reports of “blond Eskimos” in a remote region of Arctic Canada and wanted to link this supposed racial feature to a medieval Norse seasoning of the Copper Inuit gene pool. He clearly did not know that this myth was codified on the so-called Vallard manuscript chart made in Dieppe before 1547 and based on descriptions of the fictitious and decidedly Subarctic “Norumbega” region. This map shows Native Americans as tall and fair-skinned as the Europeans also depicted there.

All told, *Narrating the Arctic* is laudably direct in its treatment of such touchy subjects as racism and “otherness.” It reflects much original thought in these and many other areas with a scholarship so meticulous that even the end notes to each chapter deserve full attention. This well-written volume is also easy on the eye and left this reviewer feeling thankful to scholars who are able to view their learning through a novel prism. Such eclectic and attractively presented information should appeal to a variety of serious readers with an interest in Arctic history.

Kirsten A. Seaver  
Independent Historian  
3638 Bryant Street  
Palo Alto, California, U.S.A.  
94306

**POLAR EXTREMES: THE WORLD OF LINCOLN ELLSWORTH.** By BEEKMAN H. POOL. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2002. ISBN 1-889963-44-5 (Softbound). 312 p., maps, b&w illus., index, bib. Hardbound, US\$45.00; Softbound, US\$24.95.

Scholarly authors and their readers—guilds that mutually relish first-rate sleuthing and writing—sometimes march to different cadences. Beekman Pool, for example, was not hurried by the task he set himself: to analyze the background, character, and significance of Lincoln Ellsworth. Pool and Ellsworth became friends during their 1200 km trans-Labrador canoe trip in 1930, while Pool was a Harvard undergraduate, and Ellsworth, then 50, had recently (in 1925 and 1926) become a hero of Arctic exploration. Given that Ellsworth’s life adventure ended in 1951, this book caused me to wonder, did we HAVE to wait half a century for Pool’s balanced analysis?

Lincoln Ellsworth was obscure before I read *Polar Extremes*. Dwarfed by European giants of polar exploration, notably Roald Amundsen, Umberto Nobile, Bernt Balchen, Hubert Wilkins, and Hjalmar Riiser-Larsen, he was also indirectly overshadowed by Richard Byrd, the other American prominent in polar affairs of the 1920s and 1930s. Ellsworth’s initial exploits in 1925 coincided with Roald Amundsen’s intent to conclude his own polar career brilliantly. Lincoln and his father put up \$95 000 of the