

only good will on the part of two nations for each other. Meanwhile, although he twice stresses the moral and didactic nature of US American panoramas, he does not mention this dimension in their British predecessors or account for the discrepancy.

Generally, the scholarship is under-referenced: no dimensions are given for the reproduced works of art; volume and issue numbers for newspapers are not provided in captions; quotations do not always receive citations; and the bibliography does not include entries for all sources cited in the text and endnotes. All in all, given its promising and all-encompassing title, *Arctic spectacles* is disappointing. (I.S. MacLaren, Department of History and Classics, and Department of English and Film Studies, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB T6G 2H4, Canada.)

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THE POLAR WORLD: THE UNIQUE VISION OF SIR WALLY HERBERT. Wally Herbert. 2007. Weybridge: Polar World. 129 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 978-0-9555255-1-3. £35.00. doi:10.1017/S0032247408007869

This is the sumptuous polar coffee table book *par excellence*. In it is presented a comprehensive selection of Sir Wally Herbert's art works in various media. All of them are retrospective in the sense that they were based on memory or on photographs with the composition changed as seemed appropriate to the artist under the circumstances of each. For several of the pictures helpful notes are given indicating the extent to which this has been done, and many of these are extremely interesting in themselves. The text is a relatively short autobiography, written in typically robust Herbert style, and this serves as a framework on which to present the art. It is definitely supplementary to the pictures and one suspects that most people who are attracted to the book will be aware of the author's achievements and will perhaps not need to devote much attention to the writing.

The point should be made at the outset, and is obvious from the slightest glance at this book, that Herbert was a *very* talented artist. He was, moreover, completely self-taught. From the evidence here, he was equally at home in landscape and in portraiture. Not only that, but he was able, to an unusual degree, to paint works that ranged over the whole spectrum from those of almost photographic clarity to those which are rather more impressionistic. Let us consider just a few examples.

On pages 24 and 25 is a watercolour entitled 'Hope Bay at the time of leaving.' He expresses the crystalline quality of a calm day in Antarctica to perfection and from a distance of about a metre this could be a professionally taken photograph. But when one looks more closely, one is led to marvel at the consummate craftsmanship of the painting, especially with regard to its structure and the presentation of the ripples and reflections in the water. Moreover, the painting of the mountains behind the base is equally confident, and particularly impressive is the way in which Herbert achieves the difficult contrast between the darkness of the rocks and the snow and ice fields. The brushwork of the clouds is perhaps very slightly less assured than it is elsewhere in the painting

but the artist has had sufficient courage to avoid the obvious expedient of simply having a blue sky without clouds. A comparison between this work and some of John Constable's famous portrayals of clouds reveals how close Herbert has approached to the standards set by that great artist. This picture is a masterpiece and one that any connoisseur would be glad to have in his or her collection.

Rather more sombre is a watercolour, on pages 38 and 39, of the Reclus Hut in which a party of seven, including Herbert, resided for a month while waiting to be picked up by *John Biscoe*. Here it is a gloomy day on the coast, and the contrast between the sea and the sky hardly exists from the colour point of view. But the clarity of the paint in the former and the haziness of the paint in the latter, achieved by washing, afford a profound contrast. The centre point of the picture, albeit almost on the right edge of the work, is the hut itself with three members of the party standing outside it. In this case it is the construction of the painting that is primarily of interest. It was an act of real artistic imagination to make the hut, stark in its simplicity, the focal point of the work but to place it in a marginal position. The figures are small and only one is in direct contrast to the snow but the artist has managed to convey an air of patient stoicism about them. They are simply standing around waiting for something to happen. This is a fine example of the total insignificance of man in the enormity of the Antarctic. There is a second painting, on pages 40 and 41, again a watercolour, depicting the 'rescue' of the party from Cape Reclus. This shows boats approaching the shore and Herbert's party waiting to greet them. This affords an interesting contrast to the first, which is essentially static, in that there is significant movement. However, the work is even more monochrome than the previous one, and this serves to accentuate the tension inherent in the scene.

When Herbert dealt with subjects that permitted a more impressionistic approach, he displayed equal confidence. An example is on pages 26 and 27 and is entitled 'Sunrise in Smith Sound.' This is a depiction of Avatak, his Inuit companion standing on a pressure ridge 'performing his own private greeting to the returning sun.' The colour contrasts in this picture are imaginative. He has introduced varying shades of purple and brown to convey a profound sense of distance and remoteness. But it was surely not mere coincidence, but an exercise in humility, that the figure of Avatak, gazing into the distance, has his pipe in his mouth!

The artist was, if anything, more competent in the ostensibly easier medium of pen and ink, and some evocative sketches are included in the book. The most obviously attractive of these is 'Rescued' indicating the happiness of one of Herbert's party on being relieved at the Reclus Peninsula, but there are several others of equal quality throughout the book.

When we come to oils we find similar mastery of technique. An example appears on page 41, 'Portal Point, last visit.' Herbert's palette is of necessity restricted —

green is hardly necessary in the polar regions for example — but he manages to extract the maximum amount of contrast possible from it. Here is yet again a study of the insignificance of man. However, this reviewer trusts that he will not be regarded as churlish if he states his opinion that Herbert was perhaps more at home in watercolour, or pen and ink, or pencil and scalpel, than he was with oils. Certainly less confidence in composition is displayed in this medium, as is demonstrated in the last picture in the book, dated from 2002, and entitled 'Hunter and the narwhal' on pages 124 and 125. Here we have an Inuit in a kayak approaching a pod of narwhals in a flat calm sea surrounded by bergs. The predominating, almost the only, colour is blue and of a vividness that exceeds anything this reviewer has ever seen in the north. But from an impressionistic point of view the picture is stunning even though the execution is perhaps not as fine as in some of the artist's earlier works.

One cannot conclude a review of this book without commenting on Herbert's portraits of humans and of animals. He was a superlative painter of polar bears and several examples are presented. Of humans he was equally good, and the best examples are self-portraits, one of which appears on the cover. Of ships, too, his portrayals are excellent and maritime enthusiasts will find much to please them in this book. Vessels as diverse as *Fram* and *James Caird* are presented with verve and confidence.

The presentation of the book is excellent. It is in landscape format and is printed in a lavish, almost luxurious, style that is rare nowadays. This is reflected in the price, which is not, however, excessive for a book of this quality. All who appreciate art, who love the Arctic and Antarctic, and who would wish for a memento of the great man will want to possess it. (Ian R. Stone, Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, Lensfield Road, Cambridge CB 2 1ER.)

ROTER SCHNEE: ODER DIE SUCHE NACH DEM FÄRBENDEN PRINZIP. Petra Werner. 2007. Berlin: Akademie Verlag. viii + 189 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 978-3-05-004432-3. €49.80. doi:10.1017/S0032247408007870

The literature on the history of the exploration of the polar regions is very rich, including, for instance, treatments of the history of the Northwest Passage, the Northeast Passage, and the Antarctic by numerous authors, available in different languages. However, few books in this genre have been devoted to the investigative history of one particular natural phenomenon associated with the polar regions, such as aurora borealis or 'red snow.' Petra Werner, a researcher at the Alexander von Humboldt Research Centre of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences (and also the author of several books of fiction) proves that such topics also deserve to be treated in monographs.

What made Werner, who had previously wittily analysed the working methods of Alexander von Humboldt