

their various ideals in Alaska's Mt McKinley National Park. The park was established in 1917 (and later enlarged and renamed Denali National Park and Preserve in 1980) to protect the prodigious wildlife populations that roamed along those northern flanks of the Alaska Range. The controversy really kicked in when the US National Park Service and various special-interest groups had differing opinions on the value of various species. Dall sheep, the all-white cousin to the bighorn of the Rocky Mountains, were plentiful and readily viewed in the park, and gentlemen's hunting organisations — like the Boone & Crockett Club and the Camp Fire Club, whose lobbying for the creation of the park resulted in rather proprietorial feelings about its management — felt strongly that the park should be managed to maximise sheep populations. They strongly advocated the killing of wolves to reduce predation, and in this stance they very much represented the 'status quo' that wolves are bad. But the park had been created at a time when scientists were making big strides in the field of ecology and the way that animals were interrelated was just beginning to be understood. Predator-prey relationships were being researched and new light was being shed on the role of predators in healthy ecosystems. The US National Park Service took the unprecedented stance that wolves were animals of value, and the stage was set for a decades-long fight over management ideals. Added to the mix was an attempt to base decisions on scientific findings instead of anecdote and emotion, and the Park Service's internal wrangling over what, exactly, was the role of national parks.

Rawson takes a narrative approach that allows the controversy to unfold like a good story, and he has made it all the more engaging by filling in the details of the personalities involved, and the concurrent events that helped shape the thinking of the various parties. This 'fleshing out' of the characters is what really brings the story to life and is possible because of the admirable breadth and depth of research done by the author. In this way, the book goes beyond simply giving a history of one wildlife management issue; it is a history of the development of ecological study and the rise of the conservation and preservation movements. It also nicely fits the conflict into the pot in which it stewed: a rapidly developing Alaska. As Alaska attracted more people and its resource management issues became more complex, the Alaskan abhorrence of outside intervention in the affairs of the territory/state remained constant. Rawson has a good feel for this local attitude and uses it to explain fully the many peripheral issues that impacted on wolf management.

One word that sums up the work is 'thorough.' The author has gathered material from a vast array of sources, including unpublished letters and memoranda, books, scientific papers, newspapers, and interviews. I particularly enjoyed the detailed endnotes that accompany each chapter and that provide some fascinating minutiae of the period and events.

Changing tracks is more than just a history of a

political conflict; it is the biography of one. Rawson has told the story in lush detail and let the personalities shine through so that the wildlife-management issue at the heart of the story almost becomes a living entity. Seldom have politics and management policy been so interesting. (Peter W. Carey, 21 Radbrook Street, Christchurch 4, New Zealand.)

THE ICE CHILD. Elizabeth McGregor. 2001. London, New York, Toronto, Sydney Auckland: Bantam Press. 368 p, hard cover. £9.99.

This is an ambitious novel. It attempts to weave together several stories: a well-travelled female polar bear, with a sick cub, whose reported bearish thoughts are remarkably articulate; the story (highly conjectural, but nothing wrong with that) of the last months of the Franklin expedition; and, foreground, a complicated love story set partly in Cambridge, where a recognisable Scott Polar Research Institute makes a guest appearance. And it is 'about' growing up and finding oneself, and mothers and sons (and fathers).

A journalist, Jo Harper, is asked to investigate the disappearance in Greenland of a marine archaeologist, Douglas Marshall. Marshall is obsessed with the fate of Franklin, and escapes from an appalling wife (not entirely undeserved) to look for him. Marshall's son John has a comparable obsession with searching for his lost relationship with his father. Harper catches up with Marshall, falls in love with him, and bears his child: but he is run over by a car while quarrelling with his son on the day when he was supposed to marry her. The baby develops a rare disease, aplastic anaemia, for which a bone marrow transplant from a genetic match is the only hope. But the best hope, John, has disappeared, eventually making his way to Canada to work with a man who specialises in photographing polar bears, including the one whose travails we know. In the nick of time, after a chase across continents, John is found, at the end of his strength, having found a relic of the Franklin expedition for which his lost father sought so hard and long, and the transplant is successful. The polar bear's sick cub survives to adulthood too. This bald summary does not do justice to the other patterns and parallel motifs that structure the novel.

The novel is, frankly, a tear-jerker, and the success of a tear-jerker depends entirely on how well it is written. Here, despite the medical and historical research the author has clearly done, there are some considerable flaws. The dialogue is weak, and the author seems to think the vigour of the adolescent idiolect adequately conveyed simply by expletive. Characters are not differentiated in any serious way by their language, and we depend on the prompting of an omniscient narrator to know how to take them. They do not have much depth. But the pace is fast, the echoes do work, if a little heavy-handedly, and many will enjoy the story. It might even make a film.

But for readers of *Polar Record* and anybody with the remotest interest in the matter, the show is stolen by the

ghost at the margins, the Franklin story. It's a bit like when the American magazine *Field and Stream* reviewed, in 1959, the recently re-issued *Lady Chatterley's lover*:

...this pictorial account of the day-to-day life of an English gamekeeper is full of considerable interest to outdoor minded readers, as it contains many passages on pheasant-raising, the apprehending of poachers, ways to control vermin, and other chores and duties of the professional gamekeeper. Unfortunately, one is obliged to wade through many pages of extraneous material...and in this reviewer's opinion the book cannot take the place of J.R. Miller's *Practical Gamekeeping*.

Few can be unaware of the dramatic findings of Owen Beattie (Beattie and Geiger 1987; Beattie and others 1990) on Beechey Island and the analysis of other remains by Keenleyside and others (1997), suggesting the last terrible resort of cannibalism — which is exploited in this book. The author has also noticed Keenleyside's interpretation of the dental evidence that on departure from England there was one member of the expedition aged between nine and 12. She has made this boy, to whom she gives the not undistinguished name of Petermann, the focus of the Franklin element in her novel: another young male — joining the polar bear, John, and Jo Harper's child Sam — who survives tribulation because of love.

But Franklin's story has been better told. The atmosphere of life on board the converted bomb-vessels *Erebus* and *Terror* is not convincingly conveyed, and it is a pity that the author does not seem to have used those outstanding first-hand accounts of wintering in the Arctic in this very period, such as of William Edward Parry's three voyages (Parry 1821, 1824, 1826) and in the journals of Rochfort Maguire, brilliantly edited by John Bockstoce (1988). There is an awareness of the peculiarities of Arctic light, but I do not believe in 'palm-sized' snowflakes or apparently malevolent bergs. Furthermore, the author has been too dependent on controversial interpretations of the fate of the expedition. The doctors did not have sufficient knowledge about lead and lead contamination to have suspected the tinned food. The way the autopsy of Hartnell was conducted by the ships' surgeons, where only the lungs were examined, suggests an *a priori* assumption that what killed him was a pulmonary disease — tuberculosis and consequent pneumonia — not a dietary one. The recent theory of Scott Cookman (2000) that botulism was the cause of much of the trouble, aired in this book, does not stand up to rigorous examination of what evidence there is.

Better copyediting would have caught some annoying

small errors. *Mary Rose* was not exactly Henry VIII's 'royal yacht.' Lady Franklin was just that, not Lady Jane Franklin, a style that would make her the daughter of a peer rather than the wife of a knight. The useful word 'careening' — which ships rarely have done to them now — means something quite different from 'careering.' A college of the University of Cambridge is not simply a 'hall of residence,' and the topography of Cambridge and the hints of its institutional structure are both mildly but annoyingly inaccurate. More seriously, in the parts of the book most aiming at some historical verisimilitude, the behaviour of sailing ships at sea is not securely grasped, the social conventions of the Royal Navy of the 1840s were very different from those suggested, and in the imaginary conversations between the officers discussing the death of Franklin, where their ignorance of the true cause of their physical plight is crucial to the tension, Harry Goodsir is made to use the term 'botulism,' a word that the *OED* first records only in 1887 and the name of a disease in the 1840s that still awaited description.

Nevertheless, this book will please many, and it is always a benefit to be sent back to read once more of the real heroisms, and follies, of polar exploration in that extraordinary period. (C.W.R.D. Moseley, Hughes Hall, Mortimer Road, Cambridge CB1 2EW.)

References

- Beattie, O., and J. Geiger. 1987. *Frozen in time: unlocking the secrets of the Franklin expeditions*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Beattie, O., H. Baadsgaard, and P.M. Krahn. 1990. Did solder kill Franklin's men? *Nature* 343 (6256): 319–320.
- Bockstoce, J. (editor). 1988. *The journal of Rochfort Maguire, 1852–1854*. London: Hakluyt Society.
- Cookman, S. 2000. *Ice blink: the tragic fate of Sir John Franklin's lost polar expedition*. Chichester and New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Keenleyside, A., M. Bertulli, and H.C. Fricke. 1997. The final days of the Franklin expedition: new skeletal evidence. *Arctic* 50 (1): 36–46.
- Parry, W.E. 1821. *Journal of a voyage for the discovery of a North-West Passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific; performed in the years 1819–20, in His Majesty's ships Hecla and Griper*. London: John Murray.
- Parry, W.E. 1824. *Journal of a second voyage for the discovery of a North-West Passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific; performed in the years 1819–20, in His Majesty's ships Hecla and Griper*. London: John Murray.
- Parry, W.E. 1826. *Journal of a third voyage for the discovery of a North-West Passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific; performed in the years 1824–25, in His Majesty's ships Hecla and Fury*. London: John Murray.