

a similar canoeing accident. The deaths of Grinnell's sons have no connection with the events of the 1950s barrenlands trip, but, as one might well imagine, those deaths three decades later did give Grinnell pause to rethink his own earlier experience.

This much is history, one might say, and should have no bearing on our evaluation of the artistry of the book. But it is the realization of Grinnell's 40-year struggle to tell this story of growth — and the loss that always accompanies growth — that forges the undeniable emotional link between author and reader. Writing the book had, no doubt, a crucial therapeutic effect on Grinnell. And while *A death on the barrens* adheres to few of those classical unities Aristotle lauded in Greek tragedy, the bond of humanity any reader must feel through Grinnell's troubled effort to share his loss creates a great deal of empathy in the reader. I am indeed a more complete person for having read this book, and one wonders if a book can ever achieve a higher end. (Richard C. Davis, Department of English, University of Calgary, 2500 University Drive NW, Calgary, Alberta T2N 1N4, Canada.)

**THE FROZEN ECHO: GREENLAND AND THE EXPLORATION OF NORTH AMERICA, ca AD 1000–1500.** Kirsten A. Seaver. 1996. Stanford: Stanford University Press. xviii + 407 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 0-8047-2514-4. £40.00.

It must be stated straightaway that this work is a major achievement. The author has tackled difficult questions concerning the nature of Norse settlement in Greenland. She has also examined the relationships between those settlements and the exploration and exploitation of North America and of the North Atlantic by other Europeans, most notably the English and Portuguese. A central question is, of course, what was the cause, or what were the causes, that led to the extinction of the Greenland colonies?

The author uses a kaleidoscopic variety of sources, and approaches the questions she has set for herself from the point of view of different disciplines. The sources include historical texts, many in Scandinavian languages, and also the results of archaeological and cartographical studies. The book is divided into two parts. Firstly, there is a detailed study of North Atlantic exploration by the Norse, with an exhaustive analysis of the economic, social, and ecclesiastical conditions of the Greenland colonies. This is followed by an examination of the official and unofficial maritime efforts in the North Atlantic by, for example, the Bristol merchants and of the impact of these on Greenland. The author's central conclusion relating to the fate of the Greenland colonists is that:

...both circumstantial evidence and common sense suggest that the Greenlanders, who had so clearly taken active part in the North Atlantic economic community throughout the fifteenth century, had remained opportunists to the end and joined the early-sixteenth-century European surge toward North America.

As noted, the range and breadth of the author's sources

are breath-taking and the sheer diligence with which she has tackled them is an example to all who undertake historical study. Each of her chapters is a comprehensive analysis of its subject, and they inter-relate well. The totality of the work is a very impressive contribution on a difficult topic.

However, the book is, in some respects, poorly written. The author, in her acknowledgements, comments on the input of her editor, and one feels that the work would have had a more consistent style if the editing had been either more or less rigorous. In places, the author's approach is journalistic, and the uneasy juxtaposition of styles makes for uneven reading. Some of the writing is unfortunate. The first sentence of the acknowledgements — 'It is a truth universally acknowledged that anyone writing a book must be in need of a supportive spouse' — caused this reviewer to wince. One may wonder if the author is aware that Jane Austen was in fact single! Other examples are: 'The cresting wave of European exploration slammed onto the shores of the Americas' (page 254), and the comment that John Cabot 'would try to go Columbus one better' (page 265).

A further deficiency is the illustrations. The maps are adequate as far as they go, but it seems curious that the overall map of the North Atlantic, relevant to the entire argument of the book, is less than half a page in size and is relegated to page 215. The maps of the Greenland settlements are excellent, but the reproductions of contemporary maps and charts are on so reduced a scale as to make them of little use. The photographs of areas in the Greenland settlements, in particular those on pages 10 and 20, give little useful support to the text. Those of archaeological relics are much better and have been carefully selected.

To sum up, a worthy effort, and one that will be required reading for those with specialised interests in the period and area. However, with a more even style and consistent editing, a better book could have been produced, which might have served the needs both of specialists and of the more general reader. Sadly, this is not the book to do this. (Ian R. Stone, Tartu University, Ulukooli 18, Tartu, Estonia.)

**TO THE ARCTIC BY CANOE 1819–1821: THE JOURNAL AND PAINTINGS OF ROBERT HOOD, MIDSHIPMAN WITH FRANKLIN.** C. Stuart Houston (Editor). 1995. Montreal, Kingston, London, Buffalo: McGill–Queen's University Press. xxxvi + 217 p, illustrated, soft cover. ISBN 0-7735-1222-5. £13.95.

**ARCTIC ORDEAL: THE JOURNAL OF JOHN RICHARDSON, SURGEON–NATURALIST WITH FRANKLIN, 1820–1822.** C. Stuart Houston (Editor). 1995. Montreal, Kingston, London, Buffalo: McGill–Queen's University Press. xxxiv + 349 p, illustrated, soft cover. ISBN 0-7735-1223-3. £13.95.

Unquestionably one of the most significant exploring efforts of the nineteenth century was the Arctic Land Expedition of 1819–1822, under the command of Lieutenant John Franklin. Not only was it the first expedition to