

Adrian Howkins & Peder Roberts (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Polar Regions*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2023, ISBN 9781108429931, xvii + 829 pp.

The Cambridge History of the Polar Regions is a remarkable achievement. This massive volume pulls together much of the past quarter century's vast upswing in historical research related to the Arctic and Antarctic stimulated by growing environmental and political interest in these regions. More than that, this volume provides a reminder that older traditional forms of polar history must be, and can be, transcended. The thirty-one chapters offer a valuable resource towards that goal. As editors Adrian Howkins and Peder Roberts discuss in their thoughtful introduction, "polar history" itself is a problematic and far from stable concept. They de-construct many of the common terms and ideas associated with polar history, including the challenge of defining the polar regions. They conclude, along with Canadian geographer Louis-Edmond Hamelin (originator of the term *nordicity*), that it is humans that make the polar. Picking up on an observation by Michael Bravo that the expressions polar history and polar regions

emerged from the desire of individual practitioners to stabilize and legitimize traditions, to give them life and meaning [...] Those who practiced and endorsed *polar exploration*, *polar geography*, and *polar science* created *polar history* as the label of their achievements.

The editors walk the reader through a variety of key problems regarding how to define and problematize the polar regions. Bringing a 2020s sensibility to the task of contextualizing and historicizing the past century's trends in writing about activities in the Arctic and Antarctic, they deftly provide eye-opening meta-perspectives with which to conceive problems and methodological tools for further invigoration of histories of the polar regions. Their analyses lead the editors to conclude with an irony:

the best way to do polar history is to *not* do polar history, and instead rely on the individually crafted parts adding up to a whole that, if not coherent, is at least illuminating.

The thirty-one-page introduction should be required reading in any humanities or social science course or research seminar related to the polar regions. The thirty chapters that follow provide strong evidence to the validity of their conclusion.

Historical writing on the polar regions has long been dominated by non-academic writers who emphasized exploration, conquest, and fodder for chauvinism. Even when academic historians brought scholarly skills and instincts to the task, these efforts largely remained siloed within national perspectives. So even as historiographic sophistication and the range of topics increased, the degree to which robust international and circumpolar perspectives and use of multi-disciplinary resources remained comparatively small. Having been part of an interdisciplinary initiative in the mid-1990s to study comparatively the histories of Nordic polar research, I was astounded to learn that many specialists and enthusiasts in each country possessed

meager knowledge of neighboring nations' respective polar past. Much has changed over the past three decades. The thirty-one chapters provide a wide range of topics and perspectives—largely political, environmental, and post-colonial. These entail analyses focused on national perspectives, such as efforts to create a Soviet Arctic, and on broader trans- and internationally oriented studies such as representations of the polar regions in historical fiction; and the connections between mining and colonialism in the circumpolar north. Many of these studies draw upon resources from several humanistic and social science disciplines, and use a wide range of source materials from archival documents to archaeology and oral history. Indigenous experiences and perspectives receive admirable attention. In this respect the volume will surely prove critical for efforts to rethink and re-conceptualize the historical study of the polar regions. It will contribute to elevating the academic status of historical scholarship on the polar regions.

The lack of a unifying theme, or even thematic clustering into sub-groups, might disturb some readers. Given the wealth of topics and methodological perspectives represented by the chapters, the volume provides a unique resource to allow scholars to broaden their horizons. It is not designed to provide a good read from cover to cover; the physical weight alone of the over 830-page hard-cover book should dissuade leisurely reading in a comfy chair, bed, or hammock.

As impressive as this volume may be, it remains slanted towards English-language scholarship. Although science is invoked and discussed in many chapters, the historically significant role of science in polar activities deserves more extensive analyses than is provided. Of course, to be fair, such a volume is dependent on those scholars willing to contribute. One of the editors endeavored repeatedly to recruit this reviewer and other historians of polar research in Scandinavian countries, only to hear that other commitments precluded participation.

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Jorunn Joiner, *Remembering Classical Scandinavia in Britain, 1760–1830*, Lund: Lund University 2024, ISBN 9789189874480, 232 pp.

The fascination with the past is not a new phenomenon, and the past often serves as a canvas onto which our own ideas, values, and ideals are projected, sometimes more clearly than as a realistic representation of past histories and stories. This fascination for the past and projection of ideas is given space in Jorunn Joiner's doctoral thesis *Remembering Classical Scandinavia in Britain, 1760–1830*, which she defended at Lund University in September 2024.

Joiner's study examines how British cultural texts from the period between 1760 and 1830 move beyond a general interest in Scandinavian history and motifs, and start to construe what she terms "classical Scandinavia" as a form of cultural memory. The thesis draws on Aleida and Jan Assmann's works on cultural memory, in particu-