

the techniques and over-the-top sponsorships involved in North Pole expeditions (started by the lying Cook and the racist Peary), follows Krüger's disappearing trail across Ellesmere, lionizes Hattersley-Smith and the Inuit, and deftly analyzes other forgotten players of Arctic exploration. This is original ground here, and all the more stimulating because Kobalenko is no stranger to adventure.

However, the author mentions but does not properly credit the Reinhold Messner of polar travel, Børge Ousland. Kobalenko also strangely avoids using the kites that are revolutionizing sled travel in Polar regions, but his miles logged behind the sled harness against the wind probably gives him more empathy for the explorers he's following. And while the Selected Reading appendix leaves out several Arctic gems related to his stories, he lists more than a few books that could be arcane classics.

Without equivocation, Kobalenko's book deserves to be read because of its playful, yet compulsive curiosity about a landscape inhabited with rabbit herds and sailor ghosts. Through subtle turn of phrase and seamless transitions, he transports the reader to old explorers' homes, dusty Arctic museums, and back to the radiant island. "I needed the wild landscape under my feet," he writes in the beginning of the book from an icebreaker. While others "stalked about the ship with the all-consumed air of those for whom every second has meaning, I gazed through binoculars at the distant coast of Ellesmere and recalled the many times its extremes had gripped me with similar magnificent obsession."

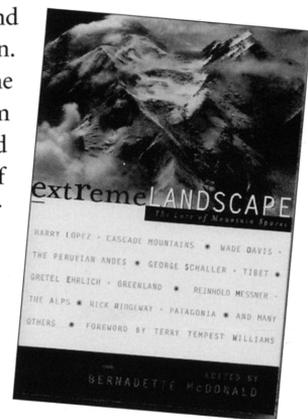
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Extreme Landscape: The Lure of Mountain Spaces. EDITED BY BERNADETTE McDONALD. NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PRESS. 2002. 320 PAGES. PAPERBACK. \$16.00.

Anthologies are like families. You never know how the essays, all bound as one, will go. *Extreme Landscape* is a surprisingly strong collection. The subtitle of the book contains the words "mountain spaces," but the collection is a lot broader than that, encompassing everything from urban architecture to the Internet. Like most families, if you look hard enough you might discern the common threads that tie this family of essays together: spiritual quests, stories, community, and projects for the planet.

Toward the end of the last century the United Nations declared 2002 the International Year of Mountains. The Banff Centre for Mountain Culture held a summit, "Extreme Landscape: Challenge and Celebration." This book is the result of that gathering.

With climbers like Dermot Somers, Reinhold Messner, Ed Douglas, Rick Ridgeway, and Yvon Chouinard included you might expect a "we climbed—we conquered—we came back" kind of thing. Happily, there isn't a trace of that approach. To be precise, this is a book of ideas. And, as the ideas take hold, it becomes something more. Start with the introduction by the lyric Earth Mother of the West, Terry Tempest Williams. Mountains are inspiration and revelation. Tempest Williams insists that "we are in transition from a non-sustainable world to a sustainable one." We must honor the wild or we stand to lose it.



Beginning with Gretel Ehrlich's love story about Greenland, the book contains an overriding sense of spiritualism. The beauty of this bleak northland arrives when "the darkness came, and the ice under us became the source of light, a kind of subterranean moon." The ice is transformed into a moon in a selfless act of hope. Similarly, Ed Douglas finds a way to keep his father's spirit alive in the River Don. George B. Schaller recognizes that sacred lands exist and he makes connections between mountaineers and pilgrims. Aren't they on a similar quest? Schaller warns that "to ignore the sacred, to violate the dignity of local people, is to degrade the ethical values of a culture and diminish it." Wade Davis visits several cultures on his way to discussing Australian Aborigines' Songlines and Dreamtime. Davis explains that "should the ritual stop, the voices fall silent, all would be lost—everything on Earth is held together by Songlines, everything is subordinate to the Dreaming, which is constant but ever changing." Edwin Bernbaum argues for the sublime rather than the "extreme," referring to Buddhism, the Bible, Chinese poet Li Po, Basho, Rousseau, Goethe, Yeats, Shelley, Hemingway, and Cézanne, among others, to explain the process of attaining a sublime wisdom and transformation through the mountains. This is, in essence, what it is to be "sage." Bernard Amy writes of how the climber's quest for the vertical is both sacred and profane. It estranges the individual from the world that calls for the kind of insight that great height provides.

In "Ancient Stories, New Technologies," Chris Rainier states that "what we have lost in the West is the relevance of telling stories to our everyday lives." Rainier interestingly argues that the Internet helps expand our sense of community. A northern Cambodian village sells its arts and crafts online as do Peru's Quechua Indians. Jim Thorsell cites examples of 13 international parks to push the idea of trans-border biosphere reserves. He reminds us of Thoreau's edict about preserving the wild. Similarly, Reinhold Messner calls for an understanding of mountain ecosystems and biodiversity. This brings us back to Davis' point that we need to embrace "metaphor as we attempt to understand traditional relationships to land, history, community, and the spirit realm." There is a point mid-way through reading this collection when it seems as if each essay takes the reader in a different direction.

Then Rick Ridgeway, Barry Lopez, and Yvon Chouinard deliver the book's message with a final vision of how these spiritual quests, the stories and a sense of community connect to enact projects that sustain the planet. At one point Chouinard tells Tompkins and Ridgeway that saving Patagonia "might be the most important thing any of us could do.... (It) makes going on these adventures seem like bullshit." Correspondingly, Barry Lopez argues that the human community needs to be redefined so we can merge nature "with our own nature." Chouinard tells a personal tale that turns public when Patagonia, the company, is incorporated. He talks about the illusion of sustainability, of Patagonia Inc.'s self-imposed tax for using up nonrenewable resources, and of the one-percent-for-the planet alliance. Chouinard leaves the reader with a sense of corporate redemption so vast and honorable that it makes one want to do more than just climb mountains. Read this book, and then act decisively.

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