feeding ecology that might also explain their hitherto-unexplained dark plumage? Tickell does not speculate on this point. Nor does he set out avenues of future research. Given that the age at which individuals of a species start to breed varies so much, and has been declining in some declining populations, it would be fascinating, if difficult, to understand more of the basis for these inter-individual differences. Now that Theresa Burg's unpublished doctoral work in the Department of Zoology at Cambridge has established more extra-pair paternity in wandering albatrosses *Diomedea exulans* than hitherto realised, there may be scope for more behavioural ecology studies. And the flood of information from transmitters that monitor the birds' positions and physiological states can only increase. The challenge is to ensure that the data are used to address focused questions.

How does *Albatrosses* compare with the opposition? Robertson and Gales (1998) edited a book that is substantially devoted to the impact of longlining on albatrosses. It therefore does not begin to compare with Tickell's book as an all-round source of information on albatross biology. John Warham's (1990, 1996) two excellent volumes were largely written before the advent of satellite tracking permitted wonderful advances in the understanding of albatrosses at sea. Thus the clear message is that, if you are seriously interested in albatrosses, it would be a sin not to obtain Tickell's *Albatrosses*. How lucky these birds are to have been served by such a dedicated author. (M. de L. Brooke, Department of Zoology, University of Cambridge, Downing Street, Cambridge CB2 3EJ.)

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RAVEN'S SAGA: AN ARCTIC ODYSSEY. Peter Schledermann. 2000. Calgary: Corvus Press. 347 p, soft cover. 0-9687088-0-3. Cdn$15.00; US$12.00.

Raven's saga is a significant departure from Peter Schledermann's previous work, which had been situated more narrowly within the domain of the social sciences, especially archaeology. Here, Schledermann shifts to the realm of fiction, informed by the considerable knowledge he has accumulated over the years as a research social scientist, in order to reconstruct a long-past world. At a time when universities in Canada pay great lip service to the importance of interdisciplinary studies, Schledermann's new book truly embraces that integrated notion so elusive to the fragmented approaches of the academy. Schledermann draws on his vast professional knowledge of Arctic archaeology and ethnography, as well as his personal interests in sailing and Scandinavian cultural history, to create a piece of fiction that is solidly situated in an historical setting.

This is undoubtedly a piece of historical fiction. And historical fiction should be distinguished from fiction that merely uses the historical past as its setting. In many ways, historical fiction is like science fiction: both are imaginative accounts attempting to understand something that exists *outside* the realm of the imagination. Science fiction, at its best, grows out of some subtle principle of science, exploring it in the realm of the imagination. In H.G. Wells' *The war of the worlds*, for example, the invasion of Earth by the Martians is premised on the scientific understanding that Mars, because of its greater distance from the Sun, would have cooled sooner than Earth, thus allowing the evolutionary process of life to begin long before it was possible on the much hotter Earth. Accordingly, the environment of Mars would have generated more highly evolved forms of life than were present on Earth at the time the book was set. And it is the medical understanding of how organisms build natural immunities to familiar viruses and bacteria that Wells ultimately uses to defeat the Martians upon their invasion of Earth.

Raven's saga operates in much the same way. Both books construct an imagined world, although one soundly premised on the scientific understanding of the tactile world in which we live. But while *The war of the worlds* launches forward into the imagined future, *Raven's saga* reaches backwards into the distant past. Schledermann's created world of the past, like Wells' imagined world of the future, is solidly based on scientific data that can be verified and substantiated. The imagination comes into play in Schledermann's attempt to account for how those factual, historical details could have occurred. Where organic and inorganic evolution provide the scientific thrust to Wells' fiction, the principles of archaeology inform Schledermann's book.

In 1978 and 1982, Schledermann and his colleagues discovered a number of Norse artifacts during archaeological excavations in the high Arctic. Rivets from Viking ships, chain-mail of the variety worn during the Crusades, a Norse carpenter's plane, a knife blade, and several other items were found in the ruins of an Inuit winter house on an island off the central east coast of Ellesmere Island. The house, according to radiocarbon technology, had been occupied sometime between 1250 and 1300 AD. These facts are grounded in the sound empirical observations of sophisticated archaeological research. But they are only the beginning — the point of embarkation, if you will — from which the imaginative journey that is *Raven's saga* begins.

In Schledermann's imaginative reconstruction, an exploratory expedition sets out from the southern tip of Greenland around 1278 and travels up Greenland's west coast beyond modern Thule to Skraeling Island, one of numerous islands midway up the east coast of Ellesmere

Island. While the expedition is underway, and, to a great extent, one of the factors prompting it, a colonizing power struggle takes place in the Norse settlement of Vesterbygd on the southern tip of Greenland. Self-serving machinations by ambitious priests in the Catholic Church and crippling trade restrictions imposed by King Magnus of Norway, who has proclaimed sovereignty over Greenland, seriously threaten the peaceful way of life in the seemingly once-remote frontier of Vesterbygd. The action of the novel shifts back and forth between these two venues. The story of the northern expedition is filled with *Boy's Own Magazine* variety of adventure, as the small party encounters the natural forces of sea ice, polar bears, and walrus, and the cultural dynamic of first contacts between Europeans and Inuit. Back in the settlements, the story is more complex, with Schledermann drawing on his extensive knowledge of the politics and history of Greenland, Iceland, and Markland (modern Labrador) and their role as the European frontiers of their day.

The characterisation throughout is polarised, typical of the romance. The protagonist, Tore Eyvindsson, is a stock heroic figure — young, adventurous, and physically attractive to women. He leads the expedition to the coast of Ellesmere Island and returns to marry the chieftain's daughter. To reveal this resolution of the plot will not spoil the book, because no reader would ever imagine a different conclusion. The psychological detail of individual characters counts for little here. Rather, Schledermann has focused the reader's attention on a sense of the setting — both temporal and spatial — in which the action unfolds.

This sense of an historical setting is certainly where the book shines. Educated people have long doubted the accuracy of that public-school rhyme concerning the European discovery of North America: 'In fourteen hundred and ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue.' We have heard too many vague accounts of earlier European contact with North America: fleeting textbook allusions to Leif Ericsson, rumoured work by Helge Ingstad at L'Anse aux Meadows, the Viking grave discovered in Farley Mowat's *Lost in the Barrens*. But few of us have a solid image of Norse commerce in the New World to match that solidly ingrained mental icon of *Nina*, *Pinta*, and *Santa Maria* sailing into the Caribbean Sea under Christopher Columbus' command. Nor do most of us have an understanding of European politics in the thirteenth century to match our general grasp of Europe at the beginning of the Renaissance. *Raven's saga* provides much of that understanding, as well as a better sense of Inuit culture during the same period. One learns about the important rituals associated with the solstice, the social and economic structure of Norse and Inuit societies, and the practicalities of rope-making, boat-building, food preparation, and house construction. One has an opportunity to glimpse the Crusades as something perpetuated by those who profit from military conflict, and not merely as yet another manifestation of blind religious fanaticism. One is provided with a window through which to observe the economic hardship that a frontier society of hunters and pastoralists must endure when the Pope and the Norwegian king make sweeping decisions from afar.

Schledermann's historical reconstruction also probes into the difficulties encountered when traditional cultures come into contact with new cultures. Some of the members of the northern expedition to Skraeling Island return to Vesterbygd, bringing with them improved skills and techniques learned from the Inuit. But those better methods are not always accepted, simply because they are new and unfamiliar. Other expedition members choose never to return to their Norse roots, preferring the Inuit culture that has embraced them. Although the setting of *Raven's saga* is more than eight centuries in the past, there is much of relevance here to modern Canadian society. This is especially true in matters related to northern cultures and the effect on them of more southerly populations. (Richard C. Davis, Department of English, University of Calgary, 2500 University Drive NW, Calgary, Alberta T2N 1N4, Canada.)

LEADING AT THE EDGE: LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM THE EXTRAORDINARY SAGA OF SHACKLETON'S ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION.

Dennis N.T. Perkins, with Margaret P. Holtman, Paul R. Kessler, and Catherine McCarthy. 2000. New York: American Management Association. xx + 268 p, hard cover. ISBN 0-8144-0543-6. $24.95.

This book forms part of the contemporary oeuvre based around Sir Ernest Shackleton. The qualities and behaviour exhibited by Shackleton are crafted into a template for identifying and developing the performance and skills of leadership. Another recent book exploring this theme is *Shackleton's way*, by Morrell and Capparell (2001a), and an article by these authors appears in the March 2001 issue of *Director*, the magazine for the Institute of Directors (Morrell and Capparell 2001b).

In Apsley Cherry-Garrard's first edition of *The worst journey in the world* (putatively the best exploration book of the twentieth century), he comments on Antarctic leadership styles: 'For a joint science and geographical piece of organisation, give me Scott; for a Winter Journey, Wilson; for a dash to the Pole and nothing else, Amundsen; and if I am in a devil of a hole and want to get out of it, give me Shackleton every time' (page viii). Since that time the legend of Shackleton has continued to grow, the last few years having seen a glut of exhibitions, TV and other visual media programmes, and newspaper and magazine articles on arguably this most of charismatic of all Antarctic explorers. Much of the current interest may stem from the paucity of present-day 'real heroes.' Although space exploration provides a genuine frontier, the public are, ineluctably, drawn to the raw confrontation of man with the elements epitomised by the expeditions to Antarctica during the first two decades of the last century. Shackleton's Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition of 1914–17 has continually captured imaginations, not for what was achieved in exploration terms, but for the sheer determination and audacity of Shackleton's team to survive against incalcu-