

## Culture



**David H. FLAHERTY and Frank E. MANNING (eds), *The Beaver Bites Back: American Popular Culture in Canada*, Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993; 356 pages, \$19.95 (paper)**

Ian Chunn

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hunting trips, as well as encounters with beings like "half-whale woman" and with malevolent shamans. A second narrative gives equally personal accounts of encounters with Others: with shipwrecked whalers; with Hudson's Bay Company traders (at Cape Wolstenholme in 1909, Lake Harbour 1911, Cape Dorset 1913); with crew members on ships like the *Active* and *Nascopie*; with film makers, including Flaherty; with missionaries who brought the troubling "first (1901), second (1908), and third (1941) religions times"; and with government administrators whose activities began to change settlement patterns.

Eber's introduction is extremely helpful and her footnotes are discrete. They serve mostly to provide necessary context and references for readers interested in relating Pitseolak's story to a larger Arctic literature. The family photos provide excellent documentation, but also bring to life the many named children and adults whom we see growing and changing over the years Pitseolak carefully photographed them. A genealogy (p.156-7) connects all of them with earlier forbears. Eber provides an index which guides us through both text and photos and is especially helpful because it specifies the relationship of each named person to Peter Pitseolak. The two-page map is invaluable, though it is unfortunate that in this edition, the binding has obliterated some of the placenames where the pages meet.

This will be an excellent addition to any course dealing with either Arctic ethnography or life history. It gives students an opportunity to see how difficult it is to make complex text appear seamless. It also draws attention to Pitseolak's much larger collection of 2000 photographs, now housed in the McCord Museum. Peter Pitseolak's goal was cultural documentation. His family, his translator, Ann Hanson, and his colleague, Dorothy Harley Eber, are all to be congratulated for ensuring that his legacy will not be forgotten.

David H. FLAHERTY and Frank E. MANNING (eds), *The Beaver Bites Back: American Popular Culture in Canada*, Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993; 356 pages, \$19.95 (paper).

By Ian Chunn

Simon Fraser University

Lester Pearson once remarked, "If you're supposed to be anti someone you resemble so much, it makes for a kind of paranoia." That paranoia may have flagged a little since the 1960s, although vestiges remain in the odd ironic remark in this fine volume of essays, such as Seth Feldman's opening comment to the effect that any discussion of American popular culture in Canada is in danger of inspiring serious one-upmanship as scholars debate whose field has been most co-opted by the Yankee nemesis. Part of popular culture's value lies in the fact that we can enjoy it while we study it, as Thelma McCormack points out, and that has contributed to an explosion of work over the last fifteen years, including intriguing case studies, disciplines in flux, the emergence of intellectual programs such as critical cultural studies, and the examination of the national and international flows of "public culture."

The papers that Flaherty and Manning have assembled grew out of a conference and lecture series at the University of Western Ontario in 1987-88, sponsored by the Centre for American Studies and the Centre for Social and Humanistic Studies. Flaherty was also involved in an earlier collection, in which the editors sought material on the general theme of the ways in which Canadians view the United States; here they have asked the contributors to address some aspect of U.S. popular culture, its impact on Canada, and the Canadian response, if any. The result is a useful collection that is organized around several themes (Communications and Cultural Penetration, American Sports and Canadian Society, Stage, Screen, and Soundtrack, and Merchandising Culture, as well as some concluding Reflections) that cohere well and allow the contributions to illuminate one another. As is typical with interdisciplinary work, a variety of methodologies is used, but all are appropriate for approaching the task at hand.

Editor Frank Manning's introductory essay on the theme of "reversible resistance" neatly picks up a large number of threads that run through the book, as he outlines the duality of acceptance and rejection with which Canadians meet the pervasive influence of American cultural products. We reconstitute and recontextualize those products, mixing in such Canadian features as state capitalism, social democracy, middle class morality, regional identities, official multiculturalism, the True North, our parliamentary system, institutionalized compromises, and international neutrality. Manning correctly points out that our popular culture shares a predicament with the whole of Canadian society, and that is its precarious relationship with the most powerful image system of the twentieth century.

Countering that image system by setting up barriers so that we may hear our own voices is not restricting information, but adding to it, asserts former chairman of TVOntario Bernard Ostry. Expanding on this, Bruce Feldthusen notes that our system operates under a pair of external realities, the proximity of U.S. stations, and the commercial approach to broadcasting here at home, that work in ways opposed to our cultural and public service broadcasting goals. He suggests that cultural nationalists, intellectual and artistic communities who have organized and lobbied effectively in the past, should work towards the creation of a non-commercial public broadcaster which would provide public goods in the form of cultural and public service programs not available on the private networks. G. Stuart Adam cautions against this approach, suggesting instead that cultural nationalists should focus on education systems and curricula, since those are more important in transmitting our social and political heritage.

If it is some kind of "homogenization" that is feared from the influence of mass culture, John J. MacAloon urges us to dismiss that worry and seek rather to recover and analyse the patterned differences that exist between contemporary popular cultures. He builds a convincing case for using Olympic sports as a paradigm for understanding the construction of the Other, and shows how Canadian and American interpretations of each other's sport cultures may also inform their interpretations of the significance of Free Trade for each other. On this political note, Thelma McCormack is to be congratulated for taking the discipline to task for being so casual with regard to participation in important hearings such as the Fraser Committee on Pornogra-

phy and Prostitution, and the Meese Commission in the U.S.: the deafening silence reflects badly on the professional community. She also accurately points to the lack of an informed representation of feminist research and feminist thinking about popular culture in this volume.

In terms of production values, the book is handsomely laid out in friendly, readable 10/12 Baskerville. The endnotes are clear (and contain the majority of the book's very few typos) and their running heads usefully refer back to the text's pages. A random check of the index shows it to be accurate. On the whole, this stimulating and provocative volume is worthy of the memory of Frank Manning, "the brains behind the operation."

Catherine A. LUTZ and Jane L. COLLINS, *Reading National Geographic*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993; 309 pages, \$19.95 US (paper).

By Rebecca B. Bateman

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Many of us who became social scientists got our start by reading *National Geographic*, so it is especially appropriate that two of our number, anthropologist Catherine Lutz and sociologist Jane Collins, have undertaken a deconstruction of this cultural icon. The photographs of the *Geographic*, the authors contend, are much more than simply straightforward portrayals of the world, but rather constitute a very potent and culturally valued form of media shaping North American understandings of and responses to the outside world (pp.xii-xiii). Based on a collection of hundreds of ethnographic photographs that appeared in the *Geographic* between 1950 and 1986, Lutz and Collins examine not only the end products themselves, but also the inner workings of the *National Geographic* in terms of the editorial decisions that determine what finally gets published, and the methods employed by *Geographic* photographers to obtain those famous pictures.

Founded in 1888, the National Geographic Society traces its origins to an era when peoples and materials from the colonized areas of Africa, Asia, and Latin America were displayed (along with North American aboriginal peoples) to curious crowds in museums, expositions, and world fairs (pp.20; 25-26). Similarly, the photographs of *National Geo-*