

Book Review

Expedition

A journey around the west coast in search of tropical Scotland

by Melanie Carvalho

It is always a good sign when a book begins with the promise of a journey. If, as in the case of Expedition, this undertaking is accompanied by a map, I am eager to join the outing. Melanie Carvalho travels from Wigtown to Polbain and the documentation produced during her seven trips is full of interesting visual and textual material. The book is rich with references alluding to displaced sources, from the unknown author of the Dapuri drawings that inspired her and the “alien” species of plants found in the west coast of Scotland – the aim of her journey– to The Wicker Man and many transient literary mentions.

The integration of Carvalho’s diary entries, photographs and drawings recording her expedition is slightly unsatisfying. Some images are too small to be seen properly. They don’t allow the reader to relish them and use them as prompts to follow her in her journey. This impaired vision, this lack of information, however, may refer us to the essence of this book: what is insinuated but cannot be fully seen or experienced, unless one undertakes her journey. It is a cunning lure to make us venture, map in hand, into Scottish territories where pilgrims, rather than tourists, go.

Laura González
October 2006