published since 2003, three are the author's own. Recent literary and historical work by scholars of polar exploration such as Jen Hill and Michael F. Robinson is absent, as is the older, but now standard contribution of Lisa Bloom. Cavell's narrative frequently touches upon the relationship of Arctic exploration to other nineteenth-century cultural narratives, such as romanticism, nationalism and populism, and science. However, her bibliography includes few recent scholarly analyses of such phenomena, and her footnotes rarely refer to those she has consulted. Moreover, some of her assessments contribute little to her overall argument. With unclear intent, she revives a dead debate in the Canadian historiography of Arctic exploration (4-7), and has somewhat dismissive and unnecessary brushes with the work of major scholars such as Michel Foucault, Edward Said, and Bernard Smith. This mixed, sometimes clouded, deployment of relevant and irrelevant literature mutes the force of the book's arguments.

The main contribution of *Tracing the Connected Narrative* lies in its attentiveness to lesser-discussed repositories of nineteenth-century representations of the Canadian Arctic. It also coincides fruitfully with a renewed attentiveness to Canada's imperial history, spearheaded by Phillip Buckner and others. Scholars interested in one or more of its themes will find it informative and enjoyable, and may use it with due critical care.

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Dorothy Harley Eber. *Encounters on the Passage: Inuit Meet the Explorers*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008. xxiv, 240 pp.; \$45.00 ISBN 9780802092755

Dorothy Eber aims to understand the Franklin tragedy on and near King William Island from the point of view of Inuit oral history. With *Encounters*, she, like David Woodman, has made an enduring contribution to exploration history from the Inuit perspective. Most scholars study it mainly from a White perspective, which amounts to an impoverished history, also known as a mystery, because, being predicated on written sources, it relies on an archive that contains but a single document written by any of the 129 Britons on the voyage once HMS *Erebus* and *Terror* disappeared into the Arctic archipelago

in late July 1845. Oral histories are all the more welcome in the case of this historical event.

In fact, *Encounters* casts its net widely to provide coverage of many Arctic voyages and Inuit stories (as well as some remarks by non-Inuit northerners) about them. All accounts are excerpted from interviews conducted in several Arctic communities between 1983 and 2006. In her introduction, Eber notes that a disproportionate number understandably pertain to the expeditions that had the most interaction with Inuit: William Edward Parry's second voyage 1821–23 (to Igloolik), John Ross's second voyage 1829–33 (to the area of Thom Bay, halfway down the east coast of Boothia Peninsula), and Roald Amundsen's successful voyage in a fishing smack through the northwest passage 1903–6 (including his two winters on King William Island at what became the village of Gjoa Haven). In terms of preservation of life, these were not surprisingly also the most successful expeditions. But the Franklin tragedy, the one that interests Whites most and Inuit increasingly, forms the book's core and receives most attention. The expedition of 1845 had no contact with Inuit before it started unravelling.

In sum, the stories about this voyage cover familiar ground: Inuit thought that the deaths cursed the land; even before the deaths (74), they found that the sailors "didn't seem to be right" (75); the appearance of the sailors terrified the Inuit, and so did the fact that they were carrying "bones from legs and arms that appeared to be sawn off" (78); ships broke up both west of King William Island and east of it (88–107), and so forth. Some stories, such as those first reported by J.B. Tyrrell in 1908, are fully re-rehearsed (104–6), but a number are new to print or are variants of ones already published. An example of the latter is the story heard by five searchers between 1858 and 1923 about Inuit boarding an abandoned ship in the Royal Geographical Islands west of King William Island, encountering in a cabin the body of a very large man, failing to off-load all the desirable supplies (e.g. iron) before the ship sank, and being responsible for the sinking because an ignorant Inuk, trying to shed some light on the dark lower interior of the ship, drilled a hole in the hull below water line. The new variant included by Eber suggests that a shaman drilled the hole and knew exactly what he was doing (133). The innocent version of this story, repeated last by Knud Rasmussen in *Across Arctic America* (1925), was used by poet Gwendolyn MacEwen in her verse play "Terror and Erebus" (1974). In 1991 and 1995, Margaret Atwood criticized her friend posthumously when she judged MacEwen's

account “fairly implausible – Inuit people are not so dumb about boats.”¹ So, oral accounts can evolve both as they are rehearsed and, once published, as they are interpreted, in this case in Atwood’s mindset of political correctness.

Eber acknowledges as well that “old stories are sometimes blended or ‘collapsed,’ as anthropologists say, a process apparently much on the increase in the last fifteen years,” perhaps because, written down and no longer “learned almost by rote,” they “are now getting through to the next generations only in a fragmented state” (xix). Nevertheless, she regards them as sufficiently reliable to merit rehearsal. She, the storytellers, and their interpreters have succeeded in stitching together a composite narrative beginning with the first appearance of English-speaking *qallunaat* in the North American North – Martin Frobisher and his men on Baffin Island in 1576.

But although historians and ethnohistorians may welcome this volume, it will give bibliographers pause. Eber does not explain her methodology as a recorder of oral history pertaining to Arctic explorers or offer an opinion on the validity of one or another story’s content or point of view, or the reliability of its source. Routinely if not exclusively, she links excerpts together without comment. Perhaps when it comes to oral records traditional bibliography asks the wrong questions – which is the base text and which the variants? – yet, it behooves scholars to undertake the very difficult work of deciding on the merits of a text’s identity and contents. Yes, one must avoid polarizing natives’ and newcomers’ versions, preserved by rote or on paper. Yes, one must avoid the “three scholarly pitfalls” that Laura Murray has identified regarding the study of imperial/colonial sources.² And, yes, one must stop thinking that we identify unproblematically with our European forebears (because our cultures share written communication); as Anne Salmond persuasively argued

1 Gwendolyn MacEwen, “Terror and Erebus: A Verse Play for Radio,” *The Tamarack Review* 63 (Oct 1974): 5–22; Margaret Atwood, “Concerning Franklin and his Gallant Crew,” *Books in Canada* 20, no. 4 (May 1991): 24; rpt. in *Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 26.

2 “First, the assumption that ‘we’ can achieve objective understanding whereas ‘they’ are benighted by prejudice and superstition; second, in contrast, the idea that ‘their’ superstitions make it impossible for ‘us’ to understand anything; and third, the impression that ‘they’ are all rather the same – where ‘we’ represents present-day scholars and ‘they’ colonial sources.” Laura J. Murray, “Colonial Ethnography and Supernatural Bears,” *American Literary History* 12 (2000): 218.

in her work on Dutch explorer Abel Tasman, the links between the seventeenth-century Dutch cultural baggage with which Tasman sailed and the twentieth-century cultures of New Zealand or even Holland are as distended and ultimately precarious as Napoleon's supply lines to Russia, if not as different from pre-contact Maori cultural practices.³ But then what? Surely readers can expect a scholar to offer a nuanced reading of documents, not be satisfied to compile, organize, and present them.

Another matter that Eber leaves unpursued is the relation between an explorer's own writings and the subsequent narrative published under his name back in Britain. In providing historical context for each expedition, she is content to quote from written sources that were published. Just as oral stories evolve, so did explorers' accounts as they grew from handwritten entries in logbooks or diaries to published commodities that usually reflected the interests of more people than their author, including their purchasers.

Eber does not disclose much about the extensive interviews that she conducted, and one infers that no scholar is yet permitted access to the sources. Interviewees are identified in notes, but Eber does not identify the whereabouts of tapes and hard-copy or electronic transcriptions and translations. Her illustrations are excellent, but, because the notes about them are very spotty, the original of many would prove tough to track down.

Now that the Canadian government has funded Parks Canada to search for the drowned wrecks of ships off King William Island, this book is bound to be caught up in renewed public interest in the fate of Franklin. While it deserves to be, readers interested in print culture and bibliography will have to be satisfied with the contents of the stories. They will not encounter or have the opportunity of evaluating details of the story of how they made their way into print; that, regrettably, remains a mystery.

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3 Anne Salmond, *Two Worlds: First Meetings between Maori and Europeans, 1642-1772* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991).