

**TERROR AND EREBUS BY GWENDOLYN MACEWEN:
WHITE TECHNOLOGIES AND THE END OF SCIENCE**

Renée Hulan

Ah Franklin! I would like to find you
Now, your body spreadeagled like a star,
A human constellation in the snow.
The earth insists
There is but one geography, but then
There is another still—
The complex, crushed geography of men.

MacEwen, *Terror and Erebus*¹

So speaks Knud Rasmussen at the beginning of Gwendolyn MacEwen's *Terror and Erebus*, a work that reimagines the Franklin expedition as a journey to the end of science. *Terror and Erebus* is a verse play written for four voices – Knud Rasmussen, John Franklin, Frank Crozier, and Qaqortingneq² – that presents a series of images of a starkly white landscape: ice “gnashing its jaws” as the men “bash against it / Like lunatics at padded walls”; the Strait of Victoria as “stubborn / loins” crushing them. While these startling images evoke the “malevolent,” deadly, female North of the literary imagination that Atwood analyses in *Strange Things*,³ the play's originality lies in its critique of the worldview that produces such stereotyped images of the Arctic environment. As I argue elsewhere, *Terror and Erebus*

¹ Gwendolyn MacEwen, *Terror and Erebus* in *Afterworlds* (MacEwen 1988, 42). All other references to the play are to this version of the text, abbreviated *TE*, unless otherwise indicated.

² First produced as a play aired on CBC Radio on Saturday, January 10, 1965, the original broadcast starred Robert Christie as Rasmussen, Paul Craig as Franklin, as Arch MacDonald as Crozier, and Ed McNamara as Qaqortingneq. Printed in *The Tamarack Review* in 1974, and in MacEwen's collection *Afterworlds* in 1987, *Terror and Erebus* enjoyed renewed critical interest after it was featured in Margaret Atwood's 1995 essay “Concerning Franklin and His Gallant Crew” in *Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature*. It was republished in Sherrill Grace's *Staging the North* in 1999, which discusses the cantata commissioned by the CBC and performed in 1997 (Grace 1999, 120). A new production aired on CBC Radio in 2000 directed by Lynda Hill with Chris Heyerdahl as Rasmussen, Cedric Smith as Franklin, R.H. Thomson as Crozier, and Makka Kleist as Qaqortingneq.

³ In “Re-Inventing Franklin,” Sherrill E. Grace describes the Franklin story a “Foucauldian discursive formation that contributes to and plays a part in the narration of Canada as a ‘nation’ and ‘culture’,” (Grace 1995, 708). Expanding the analysis in *Canada and the Idea of North*, she writes: “Franklin and his men, at least as MacEwen imagines Rasmussen remembering them, came all the way from England to find, not a Victorian angel in the house but their overwhelming Other. The North, or Canada-as-North, in *Terror and Erebus* is a deadly female trap” (Grace 1995 146, see also 198).

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“demythologizes the explorer’s world-view” as its intricate structure of image, metaphor, and rhythm revises the narrative of the Franklin expedition and “cuts to the heart of the ideas that supported the search for the Northwest Passage” (Hulan 2002, 147). In this essay, I want to expand on this point by reconsidering the play’s poetic techniques in their literary context. By challenging the scientific project of nineteenth-century exploration and subordinating British scientific exploration to Inuit ways of knowing, *Terror and Erebus* treats the Inuit Qaqortingneq as the most authoritative voice and uses his voice to undercut the white technology of poetic form.

As the recent search to find the Franklin ships has highlighted, the Franklin expedition is one of the most often represented episodes in Canadian history and literature, from popular histories and songs like Stan Rogers’ recording of “Northwest Passage” to literary fiction such as Margaret Atwood’s “The Age of Lead” and Mordecai Richler’s *Solomon Gursky Was Here*. Each fictional expedition is as doomed by the “combination of hubris, poor preparation and technological inadequacies” as the real expeditions whose general failings Adriana Craciun has shown to be considered “endemic to the Admiralty’s Eurocentric approach to exploration” (Craciun 2012, 3). Similarly, MacEwen’s Franklin expedition serves to illustrate the limits of European scientific knowledge and technology faced with the Arctic landscape as the white explorers attempting to conquer the white Arctic landscape are obliterated in it. The tragic mode serves to highlight this hubris as the flaw that brings down the hero; or, as is the case in works by Margaret Atwood and Gwendolyn MacEwen, as the tragic example of the past that helps us to contemplate similar flaws in contemporary life. In Atwood’s “The Age of Lead” and MacEwen’s *Terror and Erebus*, the Franklin story is a cautionary one warning twentieth-century readers against placing trust in science and technology, or the capitalist ethos motivating them.

While *Terror and Erebus* receives a mention in most studies of the North in Canadian literature⁴, the analysis offered in Margaret Atwood’s *Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature* remains, to my knowledge, the most detailed close reading of the play. Atwood’s explication of the play’s “linked metaphors” traces convincingly the imagery of religion, madness, and sexuality that lead to “the collapse of science in circumstances in which rationality and objectivity cease to have meaning because they have become useless” (Atwood 1995, 9).⁵ Indeed, Atwood remains MacEwen’s most perceptive and appreciative reader. In “MacEwen’s Muse,” Margaret Atwood describes the “temptation to become preoccupied with the original and brilliant verbal surfaces MacEwen creates, at the

⁴ Most of these studies cite *Terror and Erebus* as evidence of Canadian interest in the story, as does Shane McCorristine’s “Searching for Franklin: a contemporary Canadian Ghost Story” (McCorristine 2013), without analyzing it closely.

⁵ This interpretation corresponds to the emphasis on mental illness in Rosemary Sullivan’s biography *Shadow Maker: The Life of Gwendolyn MacEwen* (1995) and also with criticism that explores MacEwen’s interest in myth, ancient civilizations, and world literature.

expense of the depths beneath them” (Atwood 1982, 67), signaling the importance of understanding MacEwen’s engagement with sources.⁶

The notes and drafts in MacEwen’s archive reveal the poet working through a number of themes as she revised *Terror and Erebus*, exploring religious and philosophical themes, using images drawn from Christianity, and binary oppositions. *Terror and Erebus* belongs to the mythmaking poetry that is Modernist in aesthetic, as the rhythmic echoes of “The Hollow Men” in Crozier’s dying speech seem to affirm: “*Thy kingdom come, thy will be done . . . / six hundred and seventy miles to / civilization . . . / For thine is the kingdom, and the power, / And the glory . . . / Our Father / Our Father / Our Father*” (TE 48). The religious imagery articulates the men’s despair as they await death, in Crozier’s words “crucified / before an ugly Easter.” While these references are typical of the Christian images found in MacEwen’s early poems, they also indicate her faithful use of sources, in this case, the dates inscribed on the document left in the cairn at Victory Point which was discovered by Hobson, a member of Leopold M’Clintock’s expedition in search of Franklin.⁷ On the first draft of *Terror and Erebus* housed in the Thomas Fisher Library at the University of Toronto, the complete text of the note appears handwritten in the margins, and it is incorporated as a stanza in the final version of the play. Although MacEwen’s archive does not indicate the source, she could have found the text in M’Clintock’s account which reproduces it in facsimile. Clearly, she was reading about the expedition as she revised the play.

As MacEwen worked on the play, she changed the structure of stanzas built around binary constructions, refining her syntax and sharpening the images of light and darkness. Though the text of the draft is very close to the version that aired on CBC and to the version later published in the *Tamarack Review*, changes made to it reveal elements of the play’s structure that become implicit in the published version. For example, the lines quoted at the beginning of this essay appear in the draft as:

The sea insists
that there is one geography;
but there are two: the mappings of the earth
is one: the other is
the complex, bright geography of men⁸

⁶ As Mary Reid argues in “‘This is the World as We Have Made It’: Gwendolyn MacEwen’s Poetics of History,” her poetry “offers ways of thinking through social ethics and global politics in the contexts of war and cultural conflict and imagines an ethical and political global consciousness grounded in everyday life” (Reid 2006, 37). MacEwen’s reception is a subject for another paper; however, it may be worthwhile to note here that Atwood’s essay answers the gender bias in it. Initial reactions to MacEwen’s work came from contemporary male poets, notably George Bowering and Eli Mandel, whose poetic ambitions varied considerably from hers.

⁷ For analysis of this document, see Parkinson 1997, 43–52.

⁸ Gwendolyn MacEwen Papers, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto, Box 4, File 13.

The replacement of “bright” with “crushed” emphasizes the fate of the physical remains left by the explorers. MacEwen would develop the light imagery through repeated references to whiteness but without the cheerful connotation of “bright.” In the final version, these lines are pared down to create the rhythm of a four-line stanza with alternating rhyme. In the “complex, crushed geography of men,” the whiteness of the explorer’s bones scattered across the white landscape symbolizes the white technology that fails them.

By comparing the explorer’s body to the scientific method used to guide the journey, MacEwen compares the earth’s geography to the “complex, crushed geography of men.” This association is further developed through the imagery of bones and instruments the explorers leave scattered across the land, and Franklin himself is imagined by Rasmussen as “spreadeagled like a star” and “a human constellation in the snow.” As Franklin’s search for the Northwest Passage is transformed into Rasmussen’s unending search for meaning, the passage comes to represent an imaginary divide between “conjecture” and “reality” whose discovery could resolve the human polarities. Before *Terror and Erebus*, MacEwen had already written several poems in which images of bones and loins represent the physical, what she calls “kinetic” energy, of human life. In a draft of a poem entitled “The Absolute Dance,” MacEwen imagines life sustained by “a vertigo, a circular inertia” which is “beyond the bones’ arithmetic” and which she calls “the synthesis.”⁹ As Atwood notes, “there is a strong pull in MacEwen’s poetry towards completion, synthesis,” a drive to make order out of chaos (Atwood 1982, 68, 74). In the first draft of *Terror and Erebus*, MacEwen presents life and death as inextricably bound “human polarities,” then develops a sense of loss of meaning and faith with reference to love: the men believe in “a mating of waters, a kind of love / even here, even in this place.”¹⁰ In the final version, “love” is replaced by “meaning”: “A conjunction of waters / a kind of meaning / Even here, even in this place”. Rasmussen, who acts as guide, interpreting the traces left by the men’s bodies in the white landscape, serves as MacEwen’s access to Inuit testimony, and his informant Qaqortingneq becomes a character in her play. Indeed, Qaqortingneq’s account may have furnished MacEwen with the image of bones scattered across the land. In *Across Arctic America*, Rasmussen recounts that Qaqortingneq told him: “There are many places in our country here where bones of these white men may still be found” (Rasmussen 1999, 240). He took Rasmussen to one such place, where Rasmussen gathered their bones and, in the way of Arctic explorers, built a cairn to mark their passing.

Throughout the play, it is Rasmussen who searches for answers to the Franklin mystery, propelled by a scientific desire to know exactly what happened. The distance between what he knows and what the audience knows creates dramatic irony as he searches for certainty but finds traces leading to more questions. MacEwen thus ironically frames the journey to the end of science as a quest, with Knud Rasmussen displacing Franklin as hero and acting as mediator between

⁹ Gwendolyn MacEwen Papers, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto, Box 4, File 4.

¹⁰ Gwendolyn MacEwen Papers, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto, Box 4, File 13.

western science and indigenous knowledge. As Kirsten Thisted explains, Rasmussen acts as a “cultural interpreter” whose writings, especially from the Fifth Thule expedition, “provide an invaluable source to the ways of the past, a source which has been wholeheartedly welcomed by the present generations of Inuit” (Thisted 2010, 63). Although Rasmussen was “deeply embedded in the colonial system,” having colonized Thule for Denmark, expanded trade and Christianity, and amassed a wealth of Inuit cultural artifacts for European collections, he was also “critical towards the Danish colonial administration” (Thisted 2010, 78). MacEwen seems to understand Rasmussen’s unique position in this history as he tries to imagine what happened to the Franklin expedition. As he does, he speaks ironically, even bitterly, approximating the voices of the explorers: he describes the Strait of Victoria as giant, crushing loins, imagining the landscape from the point of view of the Victorian men, Franklin and Crozier.

In passages attributed to Crozier and Franklin, the form of the narrative poem evokes the poetry emerging from Arctic exploration in the Victorian era by explorers who, constrained by the form of the scientific report, turned to poetry to express the feelings aroused by contact with the Arctic landscape (see Behrisch 2003). Even as British imperial aspirations focused elsewhere, Arctic exploration remained a popular subject of art and literature, and the exhibition of Franklin “relics” throughout the nineteenth century hallowed his name as national martyr. In *The Arctic in the British Imagination 1818-1914*, Robert G. David shows how even as the Arctic receded from British consciousness, nostalgia for the heroic age of exploration persisted at such events as the 1891 Royal Naval Exhibition where objects from the Franklin expedition were “the star” of the show (David 2000, 6). Paradoxically, exhibitions of Franklin material came to depict the Arctic as “an environment of extremes, against which British naval personnel and technology battled, and heroes were made” despite their failure (David 2000, 164), while Inuit artifacts were presented as the curiosities of simple primitives arranged to promote “the message of white technological supremacy” (David 2000, 176). The bitter irony of this message would not be appreciated until the next century. The disdain with which Charles Dickens responded to the Inuit testimony used by explorers searching for Franklin, including John Rae, Charles Frances Hall, and members of the Schwatka expedition, continued to be replicated in twentieth-century Canada, as in Pierre Berton’s voluminous *Arctic Grail* which claims erroneously that there is “no shred of evidence of any contact with the natives until the dying men were dropping in their tracks” (Berton 1988, 337). Until David Woodman made Inuit testimony central in *Unravelling the Franklin Mystery*, Canadian historians and writers had followed Berton’s example even though as Dorothy Eber concludes “Much has been surmised, but it is Inuit who have told most of what is known of the expedition’s tragic history” (Eber 2008, 73).¹¹

By mimicking the ballad rhythm often used in narrative poetry, McEwen also recalls the late Victorian tradition of popular verse glorifying Arctic exploration.

¹¹ Thank you to the anonymous reader for sending me to Eber’s *Encounters on the Passage: Inuit Meet the Explorers* (2008).

Rasmussen's speech takes the form of a free verse structure that evokes the rhyme and rhythm of the ballad (Hulan 2002, 146):

You carried all maps within you;
 Land masses moved in relation to
 you—
 As though you created the Passage
 By *willing* it to be.
 Ah Franklin!
 To follow you one does not need geography. (*TE* 42)

In this ironic rendering of the ballad form, it is the worldview animating the white, European tradition that, like Franklin and his men, succumbs in the northern environment. When Rasmussen contemplates the expedition's reliance on white technology and its lack of knowledge about the Arctic environment, he uses images of blinding light to represent the white men's cultural and spiritual blindness and chides them for not using "those wooden slits / The Eskimos¹² wore" (*TE* 49–50). In figurative terms, the explorers' blindness makes them unable to see the superior form of technology possessed by the Inuit whose "simple wooden slits" seem "ridiculous" from their point of view. Rasmussen's own journey, as Fredrik Brøgger illustrates, relied on "a fundamentally pragmatic attitude to the natural surroundings" (Brøgger 2010, 91), one which brought his views closer to those of the Inuit, and the Inuit "instruments" contrast the impractical ones carried by the explorers into the Arctic to serve the scientific goals of nineteenth-century Arctic exploration.

In *Terror and Erebus*, MacEwen associates scientific instruments with whiteness through a poetic constellation of image patterns, and the explicit contrast of indigenous knowledge and western science is represented by the dying men becoming "marbled, white" as they succumb to the environment (*TE* 51–52). Through a series of associations, the whiteness of their skin and the bones scattered across the white landscape signifies scientific and technological failure. The association of white landscapes with white-skinned people has rarely been made in an explicit way in Canadian literary criticism even though the number of white, European characters inhabiting literary representations of the North is significant as is the number of literary texts on the history of European exploration. As Linda Peake and Brian Ray argue, the representation of white landscapes contributes to a normative white identity that marginalizes and erases other races: "In the national imaginary the 'real' Canada—Canada as the great white north—lies beyond the nation's largest cities in the countryside and small towns (also overwhelmingly white)" (Peake and Ray 2001, 180). As if to concur, Inuit artist and author, Alootook Ipellie powerfully critiques Canada's colonial administration of his homeland by describing it, significantly, as a "cultural whiteout" (Ipellie 2001, 26).

¹² The term Eskimo was commonly used to describe Inuit at the time when MacEwen was writing. It is the term used by Rasmussen in his accounts, which suggests that MacEwen retains it in the 1987 version in order to remain faithful to his text. Here, Rasmussen refers to the snow goggles the Inuit devised to avoid snow blindness.

In the play, the white men's bones carry knowledge beyond religious and scientific systems of belief, an "instrumental knowledge" that can only be read once they are scattered in the landscape. As the white men move south abandoning prayer and scattering scientific instruments rendered useless by the limits of their own knowledge, Crozier, described as a "scientist, understanding magnetism" voices their defeat:

We scattered our instruments behind us
 and left them where they fell
 Like pieces of our bodies, like limbs
 We no longer had need for:
 we walked on and dropped them,
 compasses, tins, tools, all of them.
 We came to the end of science. (*TE* 52–53)

By comparing the men's bones to their scientific baggage, MacEwen associates the men's bodies with the project that brought them into the Arctic. Here, the body is transformed not into the "human constellation in the snow" that Rasmussen first wishes for but into "traces, the pieces / Of your pain scattered in the white / vaults of snow" (*TE* 53). As the men succumb, Death pulling them south "like filings / on paper," their bodies no longer act but are acted upon by the forces of nature, and their scattered remains write their fate across the landscape. The scientific mission of the expedition, though frustrated, is written by the scattering of instruments and bodies across the landscape indifferent to its message:

We left it behind us
 A graph in the snow, a horrible cipher,
 a desperate code
 The sun cannot read, and the snow
 cannot either. (*TE* 53)

For Crozier, speaking here, the end of science comes with the failure of this writing in the snow to transmit and to signify in the Arctic environment. Although Rasmussen responds, "But men can, men like me who come / To find your traces," he himself cannot find let alone *read* these traces without the help of Qaqortingneq. When the Inuk character Qaqortingneq speaks, he does not use the kind of images the Victorians do, and the rhythm of his speech contrasts the rhythmic patterns used by the white men. The free verse form of Qaqortingneq's speeches follows the syntactical structure of his narration in Rasmussen's transcription which MacEwen shapes into a free verse structure with a loose syllabic rhythm. This rhythmic shift undercuts the "white technology" of the poem's form. Twenty-seven years before David Woodman's collection of oral evidence, *Unravelling the Franklin Mystery*, MacEwen turns to Inuit testimony for the authoritative account. In *Terror and Erebus*, it is Qaqortingneq who tells Rasmussen what happened to the ships:

I remember the day
 When our fathers found a ship.
 They were hunting seals
 And it was spring
 And the snow melted around
 The holes where the seals breathed.

. . .
 Then they went down, down
 Into the hull of the great ship
 And it was dark
 And they did not understand the dark.

And to make it light, they bored a hole
 In the side of the ship
 But instead of the light
 The water came in the hole
 And flooded, and sank the ship
 And my fathers ran away
 And they did not understand. (*TE* 55)

In *Strange Things*, Atwood focuses on these lines, which she sees as part of a particular Canadian tradition of poems about nautical disasters, arguing that sinking the ships satisfies MacEwen's poetic vision rather than the historical record:

(This last detail is fairly implausible – Inuit people are not so dumb about boats, and would know that if you make a hole in one it is likely to have adverse effects upon the boat. Also, the ships were copper-hulled; boring holes in them would not have been work for an idle afternoon. But MacEwen obviously felt a poetic need for this passage: the ships of death with their cargoes of corpses – placed there by MacEwen herself, not by the historical record—settling down under the icy water. My own theory is that these ships sink in MacEwen's poem because the *Titanic* sank in Pratt's, and she just had to get those ships down to the bottom of the sea somehow, because it was so obviously – poetically – the right place for them. But I have no way of proving it.) (Atwood 1995, 26–27)

Given MacEwen's careful reading, it is more likely that the ships sink in MacEwen's poem because they sink in Qaqortingneq's account as recorded by Rasmussen, a crucial part of the historical record that Atwood does not mention. While there are reasons to distrust Rasmussen's recording of the account given his decision to omit significant portions, such as the names of the ancestors listed by Qaqortingneq, it is not the accuracy of what Rasmussen reports so much as the use MacEwen makes of it that is significant. Indeed, Rasmussen was somewhat skeptical as he noted his informant's eagerness to tell of "the ignorance that prevailed among their own people as to white men generally, and their goods and gear in particular as viewed in light of the narrators' own superior knowledge" (Rasmussen 1999, 238). In the play,

Qaqortingneq's repeated claim that his ancestors did not understand can be explained by this rhetorical intent when Qaqortingneq recounts that his ancestors had never seen white men and had "no knowledge" of the white men's things as he recounts the sinking of the ship:

At first they were afraid to go down into the lower part of the ship, but after a while they grew bolder, and ventured also into the houses underneath. Here they found many dead men, lying in the sleeping places there; all dead. And at last they went down also into a great dark space in the middle of the ship. It was quite dark down there and they could not see. But they soon found tools and set to work and cut a window in the side. But here those foolish ones, knowing nothing of the white men's things, cut a hole in the side of the ship below the water line, so that the water came pouring in, and the ship sank. It sank to the bottom with all the costly things; nearly all that they had found was lost again at once. (*TE* 240)¹³

The similarity of this passage to the lines given Qaqortingneq shows MacEwen respecting Rasmussen's text as source material.¹⁴ Similarly, Crozier's telling of their encounter with the Inuit is consistent with Qaqortingneq's account of "your white men who once came to our land but who our fathers could not help to live" (241). Though Qaqortingneq's account has final authority in the play, it is, as Atwood remarks, Rasmussen who has the last word, a lingering question that betrays his earlier confidence that men like him can read the traces left on the land and wonders at the foundations of empirical knowledge:

. . . is it that the way was *invented*,
Franklin?
That you cracked the passage open
With the forces of your sheer certainty?
Or is it that you cannot know,
Can never know,
Where the passage lies
Between conjecture and reality. . . ? (*TE* 56–57)

With these words, the fictional Rasmussen announces the philosophical skepticism that would characterize the postmodern period that followed, the play's themes resonating as well in MacEwen's 1987 collection *Afterworlds* as when first aired in 1965.

By re-examining the Franklin expedition through multiple voices in which the Inuit account is authoritative, Gwendolyn MacEwen's *Terror and Erebus*

¹³ See also Rasmussen 1976, 130 and Woodman 1991, 218–19.

¹⁴ Although there is no reference to specific sources in MacEwen's archive, the close correspondence of this passage to the speech made in the play suggests that it served as the main source. Other Inuit accounts of the hole in the side of the ship were in circulation, however, as McClintock, Hall, and Gilder all heard versions of this Inuit testimony (Eber, 93-95).

imaginatively conveys a northern vision that continues to speak to the present, and significantly, as the preceding discussion shows, there is nothing particularly "Canadian" about it. The search for the sunken ships, which had extended the imperial age of heroic exploration into the shrunken world of the new millennium, ended in 2014 with the discovery of the *HMS Erebus* by Parks Canada archaeologists. As the current Government of Canada (GOC) attempted to recast the Franklin expedition as a founding myth of Canadian nationhood, little was said about how that myth had been deconstructed in literary works like *Terror and Erebus*. The revision of Franklin's story by the GOC as an expression of national self-importance ignores the counter-arguments found in Canadian literary culture. In the media coverage, the discovery was depicted as a technological triumph, and much attention was given to the equipment used to scour the ocean floor. This "scientific" imagery was allowed to distract from the GOC's rejection of scientific inquiry, its cuts to funding for scientific research, including in the Arctic, and the active muzzling of government scientists underlying the promotion of Arctic militarization and resource extraction based on economic viability rather than environmental or economic sustainability. In a timely editorial, Adriana Craciun cautioned readers not to "lose sight of how this disaster is being used to drive instrumental visions of the Arctic's future with little respect for its complex histories," including those of the Aboriginal peoples of the Arctic (Craciun 2014). As several commentators noted, the Inuit had known where the ships sunk all along, but media coverage largely ignored these facts, preferring to construct the story as a scientific discovery.

The appropriation of a British naval expedition within Canadian national history, replacing those complex histories with a single master narrative of nation, also serves to recast Canadian institutions as essentially British. In 2012, millions in public funds were spent to celebrate the anniversary of the War of 1812, anachronistically promoted as a foundation narrative of Canadian national identity. In addition to justifying increased militarism in foreign and domestic policy by insisting that Canada is a nation born in battle, celebrating a conflict in which British North-American colonists defended British imperial interests against American territorial ambitions rewrites Canadian history as a triumph of colonial fealty, not independence, and revives the imperial connection. From prominently displaying portraits of the British monarch to sharing embassies with the British abroad, the GOC has sought to revive Canada's identity as a dutiful descendent of the British empire. The consequence of these interventions, including the deliberate exclusion of the role played by Inuit testimony in the recent discovery, is the preservation of unequal power relations based on maintaining the dominance of whiteness in the national imaginary. MacEwen's environmental vision, like the voices created to express it, critiques the white man's scientific and metaphysical beliefs as it respects and values Inuit knowledge. Without indigenous knowledge, the fate of Franklin and "his Gallant Crew," and by implication, the society following in their footsteps, is the inevitable arrival at the end of science.

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About the Author

Renée Hulan (renee.hulan@smu.ca) is the author of *Canadian Historical Writing: Reading the Remains* (Palgrave, 2014) and *Northern Experience and the Myths of Canadian Culture* (McGill-Queens, 2002). From 2005-2008, she served with Donald Wright as editor of the *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'études canadiennes*. She is also the editor of *Native North America: Critical and Cultural Perspectives* (ECW, 1999), and, with Renate Eigenbrod, *Aboriginal Oral Traditions: Theory, Practice, Ethics* (Fernwood, 2008). She teaches Canadian literature at Saint Mary's University in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Summary

This paper examines Canadian poet Gwendolyn MacEwen's verse play *Terror and Erebus* by considering the play's representation of technology in light of its own poetic technologies. *Terror and Erebus* is a play for voices that features four characters: Franklin, Crozier, Rasmussen, and Qaqortingneq. As the character Rasmussen searches for the traces of the lost expedition, imagining the voices of the explorers in their final hours, his investigation reveals how the "white technologies" used to explore the Arctic succumb to the environment without the indigenous knowledge possessed by the Inuit who inhabit the Arctic. The paper shows how MacEwen's literary vision contrasts recent coverage of efforts to locate the Franklin ships which have ignored or down-played Inuit testimony. Working from Rasmussen's transcriptions of Qaqortingneq's voice, MacEwen represents Inuit knowledge and technology as both an alternative to the model of scientific discovery underwriting the Franklin expedition and as source of the authoritative account of what happened to Franklin and his crew.

Keywords

Gwendolyn MacEwen, *Terror and Erebus*, Franklin expedition, Canadian poetry, Rasmussen.