

to the memory of his father. He anticipates and skilfully answers many of the reader's questions arising from inferences, errors, and omissions found within the diary, yet he does so in a manner which maintains respect for the integrity and context of the original work. Stuart Jenness knew many of the principals associated with the Canadian Arctic Expedition through their visits to his family home. He spent considerable time researching their own diaries, letters, and field notes, now held in various archival repositories throughout Canada, the United States, and Britain. Ironically, his father never kept much in the way of personal papers, a fact his son attributes to his modesty and self-effacing character.

The diary is disappointing in one respect: we gain only limited insights into the reactions of a man who has been thrust into an alien culture and the vast, Arctic expanse. Commentary about his assessment of Stefansson, fellow expedition members, and to a lesser degree, his native companions is very limited. This, however, was also characteristic of diaries written by all other expedition members. As the editor explains, Stefansson was the commander of the CAE and required that all diaries, notes, and journals be turned over to him for transfer to the Canadian government at the end of the expedition. This affected the tenor of the writing, resulting in more technical and less personalized observations. It also contributed to the strong and lasting resentment among expedition members. Despite these drawbacks we do gain an occasional insight into the feelings Jenness experienced during his life at Coronation Gulf and Victoria Island.

Over time we detect gradual changes in the attitude of an Oxford trained Edwardian living among a primitive people. He observes the activities and social behaviour of his Eskimo hosts, noting these with a usually detached, scientific objectivity. Jenness slowly experiences an emotional adaptation to a native way of life. He moves from tolerance to comfort and ultimately to a point where, as his entry from the spring of 1915 explains, "Some of us went along like bees sipping at every little thimbleful of water we could find in the cracked soil on the ridges. I am growing Eskimo in my ways—careless about dirty pots or dirty person—drinking more cold water—tend to have my mouth agape when travelling. It requires an effort to keep white!" (p. 416). Thanks to the journal, readers can share a greater appreciation of life in the Arctic as revealed through the experiences described in this book. We can traverse this bridge between cultures and answer the question put to Jenness by an elderly Inuit woman: "she asked me too if we weep when anyone dies, as is their custom" (p. 423).

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Unravelling the Franklin Mystery: Inuit Testimony. DAVID C. WOODMAN. McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991. xiv, 390 p. ISBN 0-7735-0833-3.

Truth, evidence, observation, validation and testimony—these are the themes which dominate this book. Although he relies for the most part on the scholarship and experiences of others, David Woodman has contributed a unique study among the legion of works devoted to the Franklin misadventure. This book is part of the McGill-Queen's Northern and Native Series edited by Bruce Trigger. It offers a fresh interpretation of the mystery of the fate of the vessels and crew of the *Erebus* and

Terror. Indeed, the author provides a list of twenty-one differences between his own and the “standard” interpretations. Woodman attempts to prove his theory by re-examining the testimony of the only eye witnesses to the disaster, the Inuit inhabitants of the region. First he must prove to the reader the validity of statements recorded up to 140 years ago. In the author’s words the premise of *Inuit Testimony* is that “all Inuit stories concerning white men [Franklin’s crew] should have a discoverable factual basis. I managed to discover a scenario which allowed use of all of the native recollections, solved some troubling discrepancies in the physical evidence, and led to some significant new conclusions as to the fate of the beleaguered sailors” (p. 6). Woodman has achieved these results after a ten-year quest which included consulting a wide range of archival and secondary sources.

The events witnessed by the Inuit inhabitants of the region sparked a search which had great impact on Arctic history. An extraordinary amount of energy and money was spent on rescue missions (some £760,000 between 1848 and 1854, and twelve major search expeditions launched in 1850 alone). Although none of these were successful, the amount of knowledge gained about northern geography eclipsed that gained by all of the previous exploration. While the event was significant one wonders why a man would spend ten years trying to unravel such a distant mystery. Woodman claims that the story of the lost expedition has become a magnet for speculative historians. The mystery, tragedy, and adventure are natural elements which have inspired many writers. In his view, however, all other efforts have been fraught with erroneous conclusions. Woodman reopens the inquiry by attempting to “cross-examine the witnesses of the events themselves” (p. 6) and allows the reader to act as the jury.

In the view of the author the most damning criticism levelled against the other Franklin investigators stems from their handling of the Inuit testimony. Some rejected it as too inexact, others devised elaborate reconstructions based on the testimony but which do not accord with the “hard evidence.” Most walked a middle path of selective use. Woodman’s own approach is that all Inuit statements offered to various searchers have elements of truth and, as the Samuel Butler quotation states, “Life is the art of drawing sufficient conclusions from insufficient evidence.” The book has two main sections, entitled “Evidence” and “Testimony.” The “Verdict” concludes the text. Woodman places great faith in the voracity of the statements attributed to Inuit who lived in the region. In his view any failings were the product of bad translation or interpretation. The errors can be accounted for to produce, as he claims, “truthful roots if we look closely enough” (p. 67). Later in the book Woodman once again argues that the difficulties in finding a plausible interpretation of some of the seemingly contradictory statements concerning whereabouts of ships, number of survivors seen, types of equipment recovered “comes not in finding a plausible origin for the various elements in the native tales ... but in attributing elements of the tales to their proper sources” (p. 221). The natives, in his view, were exceedingly reliable witnesses. The problem is to determine which events they were witnessing (p. 321).

This book is well crafted. The notes and extensive appendices demonstrate the great care and thought taken by the author. There are times, however, particularly for a reader who does not share the same obsession for the topic, when the minute examination of each detail overpowers and frustrates. Despite this criticism the book does utilize sources in a creative and original fashion and offers a modern appreciation for native

culture. One wonders about the author's grasp of such cultural nuances as the Inuit system of knowledge or their epistemology, since this is a recent field of study. He has interwoven an interesting blend of fact, supposition, testimony, and speculation into a potent argument as to the probable outcome of the Franklin expedition. Woodman has alerted all those interested in aspects of northern studies to the dangers of cultural bias and reminds us to re-evaluate any evidence based on truth rather than interpretation. These are valuable observations for students of northern history as well as for the archivist in search of truth. Ultimately, however, *Inuit Testimony* remains a speculative work which can only be proven or disproved, as the author admits, when concrete evidence is discovered which will "instantly render all speculative books, this one included, obsolete" (p. 324).

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