

Empire of the North:  
Nature and the Hero in Narratives of English Exploration of the Arctic

Terry Price

A Thesis  
in  
The Department  
of  
English

Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts in English at  
Concordia University  
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

February 2008

© Terry Price, 2008



Library and  
Archives Canada

Published Heritage  
Branch

395 Wellington Street  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

Bibliothèque et  
Archives Canada

Direction du  
Patrimoine de l'édition

395, rue Wellington  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

*Your file    Votre référence*  
*ISBN: 978-0-494-40810-0*  
*Our file    Notre référence*  
*ISBN: 978-0-494-40810-0*

**NOTICE:**

The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

**AVIS:**

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protègent cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

---

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.

■ ■ ■  
**Canada**

## **ABSTRACT**

### **Empire of the North: Nature and the Hero in Narratives of English Exploration of the Arctic**

**Terry Price**

England's search for the Northwest Passage marks an important dividing line in the development of the English narrative of exploration, for during the centuries in which England was deeply preoccupied with finding a passage to the riches of Asia the form came into its own as part of a significant literary genre. During this period of exploration, spanning from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, major innovations came about thanks to such men as Richard Hakluyt, John Hawkesworth, George Back, David Thompson and Samuel Hearne, whose literary interventions helped elevate the explorer narrative to the rank it occupies today within Canada's collective imagination, and establishing its role within the nation's literature as a whole. These men's narratives, as well as those of others who explored the New World, stand as important reflections of their respective eras and are imbued with elements central to the literary construction of the New World. Nature, wilderness and landscape are at the heart of this process and of early literary representations of North American exploration literature. These three elements became vital factors both in the establishment of an early tradition linked to Britain in the Old World and to Canadian literature as we know it today. Exploration narratives act as literary vehicles distorted for the means of propaganda; as constructions of British heroes confronting the age-old struggle to survive and inscribing them into history; and as representations both of man's journey into the self and a European attempt to gain access to the worlds of the Other as understood by Frantz Fanon.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the following people who each helped me in their own way to accomplish the things that I have, especially this thesis: My parents, who always believed in me and always inspired me through their patience and love to enjoy the beauty and simplicity of life. I couldn't have done this without their support. Thanks for your guidance and wisdom dad. I will never forget it. My grandfather, who along with his own son, first helped me to explore the forests around my childhood home. Both taught me to love and respect nature, to respect those around me, and to always be true to myself. My brothers, who have anxiously awaited my return. Laura Smyth Groening, who helped fuel my interest in Canadian literature and always transmitted her passion for the written word to her students in a most eloquent and respectful manner. I thank her from the bottom of my heart for everything she did for me. Daniel O'Leary, who gave me the focus I needed to get this project under way and completed, who believed in me and my ideas, and who shares my passion for things not many people care for in this day and age. Bonnie-Jean Campbell, who does so much yet always finds the time to help us poor students. Caroline, for being the most patient of all, always being there for me, and always willing to listen and to help me talk things through.

## CONTENTS

<u>Section</u>	<u>Page</u>
I	
Literary and Historical Contexts	1
The Struggle Begins: Dreams of Wealth, Power, and Colonisation [1620 - 1838]	1
In Search of a Form [1620 - 1679]	5
Evolution of Complex Narrative Form [1795 - 1838]	8
Authorship and Public Appeal: The Case of Sir George Back [1773 - 1838]	10
II	
Outsiders Looking In: Of Journeys, Nature, and the Struggle to Survive	14
Atwood's Anatomy of Survival	15
Testing New Waters and Breaking the Ice: Back's Rendition	17
Hearne's <i>Journey</i> into the Abyss	22
Massacre at Bloody Falls: Difficulties of Representation	25
Of Lambs and Wolves: Trappings of a Colonialist Discourse of Savagery	31
Poetic and Mythic Attractions of David Thompson: The Narrative of Exploration Meets the Twentieth Century	36
Gazing Through Tainted Glass: Representation, Nature and the Unknown	42
III	
Nature and the Hero: Incredible Adventures and Significant Meanderings in the New World	52
Hawkesworth's Path to Redemption	56
Of Such Mettle They Shall Be	58
Heroism and Drama in the High North: The Arctic as Literary Setting	60
Heroes From Britannica: the Great Captain James Cook	65

The Truth Behind the Words: Of Literal and Literary Struggles to Survive	69
Conclusion	78
Works Cited	86

## Literary and Historical Contexts

### **The Struggle Begins: Dreams of Wealth, Power, and Colonisation [1620 - 1838]**

Literary consideration of the fact that the earliest English texts of exploration written about the New World emerged from the first British attempts to explore and overcome the Arctic regions of North America reveals that during the first two centuries of the nation's exploratory quest and desperate search for the elusive Northwest Passage, the beginnings of a literature saturated with man's constant struggle to survive against the elements in a new, and oftentimes hostile world, is born. While in the long run many of these early texts proved of little literary value, they still stand today as evidence of one of the most fascinating periods in the history of British exploration in Canada. Not only do these texts act as logs or journals of explorers' and mariners' journeys in a land practically unknown to Europeans, but they also mark, almost despite themselves, the beginnings of a literary genre that has greatly influenced the tradition of Canadian literature as we know it today. Arising at a time when Romantic ideas were having an increasing influence on peoples' ideas, during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century the exploration genre developed conventions and forms of its own, breaking free from the often monotonous style of many of the first accounts of early British voyagers to the New World, which can be regarded as the base upon which the genre's foundations were built. In his important *Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English* (1966), Carl F. Klinck describes the development and historical basis of Canada's literary tradition, beginning in the sixteenth century as being marked by explorers' contact with Canada and its natural elements in a way that rings true and familiar even today. In

Klinck's history David Galloway writes that "[f]rom its very beginnings, the 'literature' of Canada was stamped by a struggle against the climate and against the land itself" (Klinck 6), a state of things not only for writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but for contemporary writers as well. Canadian literature was and still is today greatly influenced by explorers' or writers' contact with nature, and it is importantly also stamped by the literary and commercial advantages of mythologizing the struggle this contact entails.

The British search for the Northwest Passage began in the sixteenth century, and as Galloway points out so succinctly, the accounts written during this early period of exploration and discovery were greatly concerned with the theme of man's struggle to survive against the natural elements in the New World. One of the most significant examples of such texts is George Best's *A true discourse of the late voyages of discovery, for the finding of a passage to Cathay, by the Northwest, under the conduct of Martin Frobisher General* (voyages of 1576, 1577, and 1578), which first appeared in Richard Hakluyt's *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques, and Discoveries of the English Nation* (1598). Martin Frobisher was the first Englishman to set out in search of the Northwest Passage and the possibility of the Passage's existence attracted him for years. Some say his interest bordered on obsession. Frobisher finally managed to sway wealthy speculators to his cause and set out on his first expedition in search of the Passage on June 8<sup>th</sup>, 1576.<sup>1</sup> Best acted as second-mate and captain while accompanying him on three occasions; and as Galloway points out, Best's account, while it "contains much unexciting detail,—also contains what is, perhaps, the earliest description of a

---

<sup>1</sup>*The Encyclopaedia Britannica: A Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and General Literature Vol. IX* (1875), an entry on Martin Frobisher (791-92).



battle with the Canadian elements”(Klinck 7). Best describes the ships’ constant battle against mountains of ice and the vessels’ vulnerable position in the face of such unforgiving elements. This stands out as a distinctive feature of Best’s narrative, as the same situation arises in many of the accounts to follow in the centuries to come; namely, for example, in Sir George Back’s *Narrative of an Expedition in H.M.S. Terror (1838)*. Back’s account recapitulates the major obstacle faced by all Arctic explorers in search of the Northwest Passage, including Sir John Franklin and the very same *H.M.S. Terror*, last seen July 26<sup>th</sup>, in the year 1845. The Arctic Ocean shows no mercy for the hopes of men, and thousands of miles of ice blocked Britain’s dreams of a direct route to the riches of Cathay for more than three hundred years.

Britain’s sixteenth-century expeditions were frustrated by the Arctic’s short summers and by explorers’ failure to discover the Passage, usually finding themselves blocked by ice from possible points of entry into the straits northwest of Hudson’s Bay. Elizabethan England’s general concern with its own explorers and adventurers was kept at bay as much by the country’s lack of interest in the New World, as by obstacles to the possibilities of new commercial enterprises and their goal of a direct route to Cathay. Galloway addresses this lack of interest when he writes that

[h]istorians, writing of the New World in the sixteenth century, often give the impression that Elizabethans, fired by the voyagers’ reports, dreamed of golden opportunities in America. True, the New World represented aspects of men’s dreams, but men would still have dreamed even if it had not gradually taken physical shape in the sixteenth century. The New World is important to us because we live in it, but the vast majority of Elizabethans took no interest in America as an object of colonization, trade, or missionary endeavour; in the creative imagination of the age, as judged by its literature, America is comparatively unimportant. (Klinck 4)

As Galloway points out, the Elizabethans’ general interest in the New World was discouraged by this literature. This negative attitude can be widely discerned in English

narratives of exploration. Hakluyt's, as well as Samuel Purchas's later collection, *Purchas His Pilgrims* (1625), exemplifies this feature, further illustrating that most interest, on into the seventeenth century, was still focussed on the exploits of renowned French, Dutch, and other European explorers. In fact, long before European nations set up official colonies in what would later become Canada, translations of accounts of expeditions by Jacques Cartier and Samuel de Champlain found their way into both collections. While they figured among accounts of expeditions undertaken by such English explorers as John Cabot and Sir Humphrey Gilbert, a sufficient body of English works about exploration of the New World that could supply solely English material for collections of this kind did not exist at the time. These collections did, nonetheless, play important roles in Britain's project of exploration and eventual colonisation of what would later become British North America (including the establishment of the nation's territorial claims over the land itself as well as the Northwest Passage), and this literature also aided in the dissemination of supposedly "veritable" accounts of the New World, that invariably incorporated fictitious elements into them. Ian MacLaren, in volume one of *History of the Book in Canada: Beginnings to 1840*, outlines their involvement when he writes:

David Ingram's remarkably titled *A True Discourse*, which appeared in 1583 and was reprinted by Hakluyt in his first edition of *Principall Navigations* (1589), though he deemed it too unreliable to warrant reprinting in his second edition (1598-1600). The court of Elizabeth I spurred the concept of a British Empire, often attributed to Welshman John Dee, who coined the name 'Britannia'. A passage (either northwest or northeast) to the Orient was key to this stratagem, and loath to stop at the truth, Dee championed the tale that a Welshman, Prince Madoc, had discovered the New World in the twelfth century. In the face of Spanish claims, this myth helped to legitimate Elizabeth's claim as the rightful sovereign of an Atlantic empire. Both Hakluyt, in *Principal Navigations* (London, 1598-1600) as well as the edition of 1589, and Purchas, in *Purchas His Pilgrimes*, published David Powell's story of this alleged discovery. (HBIC I 35)

As the search for the Northwest Passage was put to an end after the voyages of Luke Foxe and Thomas James in 1631, the form of the English explorer narrative, specifically about Canada, continues its development after the renewal of the search in 1742, when an expedition was led by Captain Christopher Middleton (Klinck 16). During this temporary halt in the search for the Passage, however, other works were published that would also become part of the significant literary history of the period; and while up to this point the main focus has been on English texts of exploration for the purpose of seeking the roots of a British-American and eventually Canadian literary tradition, it would be unfair to say that no literature of any value at all originated from the New World between the mid-seventeenth and mid-eighteenth centuries.

### **In Search of a Form [1620 - 1679]**

The *Halifax Gazette* was the first major publication to be printed in British North America, John Bushell printing the first edition on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1752. Before this significant event, men such as John Mason and Sir Richard Whitbourne published texts in England meant to encourage British settlement of the New World. As Galloway points out, however, Mason's *Briefe Discourse of the New-found-land* (1620) and Whitbourne's *A Discourse and Discovery of Newfoundland* (1623) are interesting as instances of British colonial propaganda, but offer little more than false representations of the North American environment and its realities. They go as far as suggesting that the winters in the new country are no less disagreeable than those of England, and that mosquitoes are nothing more than a minor nuisance to any man who chooses to make the country his home. Any Canadian reader in the present day will probably recognise by experience the

falsehood of such statements, but also will probably understand the necessity of such lies, as clouds of mosquitoes and deadly winters (at least for unaccustomed Europeans) do not make for an attractive sales pitch or slogan in promotion of the New World. When Whitbourne writes of the winters in British North-America, the case is made clear:

I shall not much need to commend the wholesome temperature of that country, seeing the greatest part thereof lieth above foure degrees neerer the South, then any part of *England* doth. And it hath bin well approved by some of our Nation, who have lived there many yeres, that in the winter season it is as pleasant and healthfull, as *England* is. And although the example of one Summer be no certaine rule for other yeeres; yet thus much also can I truely affirme, that in the yeere 1615, of the many thousands of *English, French, Portugals*, and others, that were then upon that Coast, (amongst whom I sailed to and fro more then one hundred and 50. leagues) I neither saw nor heard in all that travell, of any man or boy of either of these Nations, that dyed there during the whole voyage; neither was there so much as any one of the sicke. (1-2)<sup>2</sup>

These types of texts stand in stark contrast to the first newspapers of the time, like the *Halifax Gazette*, created in order to represent local reality as separate from that of the Old World, and not to distort it for the means of colonisation. Other texts to come out of this period that are of more interest than those of Mason and Whitbourne, include the *Jesuit Relations* (1632-79), and Pierre Esprit Radisson's *Voyages* (1668-69). Victor G. Hopwood, also a contributor to Klinck's history, introduces the *Jesuit Relations* as "a series of narratives, set down mainly between 1632 and 1679 by various members of the Jesuit order, telling the progress of their missions. Written by men trained to observe and record, the *Relations* are basic documents of Canadian literature, history, ethnology, and geography"(Klinck 20-21). While they do include instances of danger and adventure, especially in the face of hostile Natives and natural elements, their style is often dry and dense with irrelevant detail. Radisson's *Voyages*, on the other hand, "express a great new

---

<sup>2</sup> Note that the original orthography of works cited has been maintained throughout, as nearly as possible, depending upon the varied publication histories of some of them and modifications made to them over time.

insight into the geography of the continent in the form of a traveller's narrative as admirable for its qualities as fiction as for its real adventures and its ideas"(Klinck 23).

Hopwood describes these works in a manner that outlines why they are of interest:

Radisson's first two voyages deal with his adventures as a youth in the wilds of North America. Although they are not as important historically as the third and fourth voyages, as dramatic adventure stories they are scarcely to be surpassed. The first voyage constitutes a superb example of the story of escape from death by adoption, of which the Pocahontas and John Smith tale is the American prototype. The stories of John Tanner, Alexander Henry, and John Jewitt are later Canadian versions. After adoption, escape, recapture, and re-acceptance by the Mohawks, Radisson went with some young braves on a hunting and war party to the west of the Appalachians. Few if any white men had yet penetrated that wilderness, and, more important, Radisson saw his adventures on this journey practically from the point of view of an Indian. Radisson's final escape from the Mohawks, and his later return in his second voyage to Iroquois territory, this time with the Jesuits, is as wild an adventure as the rest of this career. (Klinck 23)

Although Radisson's voyages include adventure in a context of exploration in the New World, their English translations are rather poorly written and they remain basically the same body of texts originally written as monotonous journals or logs which tend to brim with quotidian detail related to the reality of the life of traders, missionaries and explorers in the wilderness. Such explorers' texts begin to take a new form during the Georgian period, evolving into something of greater interest for a general reading public in the Old World. And as Hopwood points out,

If journals are to become interesting to the ordinary reader, they need suppression of detail, expansion with incident and description, and development of direction and purpose. The account may then be called a 'narrative.' (Klinck 25)

But such changes, eventually marking significant developments in the explorer genre, did not occur until the mid-Georgian period and the publication of one of the most influential explorer narratives of all time.

## Evolution of Complex Narrative Form [1795 - 1838]

The development of exploration accounts into what can be termed fittingly *narratives of exploration*, according to Hopwood's criteria, only truly manifests itself near the end of the eighteenth century in Samuel Hearne's, *A Journey From Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean* (1795). Today, Hearne still stands as one of the most important British explorers to have explored the New World by land, and his successes are not linked solely to his literary achievements, but also to his great geographical discoveries and many territorial claims made in the name of the British Empire. As we are told in a Victorian entry on Hearne in the eleventh volume of *The Encyclopaedia Britannica: A Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and General Literature* (1875 Adam and Charles Black),

[a]t the age of eleven he entered the Royal Navy as midshipman in the vessel of Lord Hood<sup>3</sup>, but at the conclusion of the war he took service with the Hudson's Bay Company as quartermaster. In 1768 he was appointed to examine portions of the coast of Hudson's Bay with a view to the improvement of the cod-fishing, when he executed his task with such ability that it was resolved to employ him in the discovery of the north-west passage, and of certain mines of copper whose existence was asserted by the Indians. (Britannica 551)

His first expedition of 1769 failed and so did his second of February 1770, but he found some success with his third expedition of December 1770. During this third expedition he "not only discovered the existence of copper on the banks of what is now known as Coppermine River" (although in insignificant amounts), "but also traced the course of that river till it joined the Arctic Ocean" (551). Hearne thus became the first Englishman to have reached the Arctic Ocean via this route by land. Today, Hearne is considered as one of the most important explorers of northern North America, and his *Journey* greatly influenced later writers of narratives of exploration, including David Thompson and

---

<sup>3</sup> Captain Samuel Hood, renowned British naval explorer and soldier.

Alexander Mackenzie.<sup>4</sup> Hearne's is an eighteenth century milestone in the genre, but like all other explorers to come before him to the New World, Hearne also based his own writings upon the log or journal. What he achieved is the application to this older form of a style more open to the imagination, rich in detail related to indigenous species of fauna and flora, beautiful descriptions of landscapes, and an awareness of the powerfully dramatic potential of appropriately structured episodes in such narratives.

Hearne's *Journey* is also interesting as a benchmark text, as it not only set down an improved form of the explorer narrative which Thompson, Mackenzie, as well as other later writers would follow, but it also opened up the genre to a wider audience by introducing a style that catered to the demand in Georgian and Victorian England for tales of adventure and exotic lands set in the New World. Hearne especially achieved this by mixing elements of narratives of exploration with those of fictional tales of the time. Through the inclusion of the classic struggle to survive against the elements, descriptions of Natives, and various natural species, and instances of exciting and even disturbing events, Hearne manages to engage scientific interest, inform Old World readers of features of the Canadian environment, and even goes so far as to stimulate the readers' sympathy in the relation of vicissitudes experienced by the narrator of his tale. Of such books during this era and the years leading to it, we are told in the editors' introduction to the first volume of *History of the Book in Canada*, that "[t]he New World offered to the Old a country to 'read', and by means of the book, a space was opened

---

<sup>4</sup> As this thesis deals with primary texts written by male writers and the construction of male heroes in English narratives of exploration, it does not discuss women writers of the different periods covered. The decision to do so is solely based on the focus of this thesis, not on the fact that women did not play an important role in the development of Canadian literature. For example, Elizabeth Simcoe and Susanna Moodie are not discussed in detail, as their inclusion would entail a whole other discussion on genre and genre better suited to a lengthier comparative project than that of an M.A. thesis.

where the imaginary, the ambitions of kings, the fervour of religion, and the taste for adventure could find expression” (3). While this is true of Hearne’s text, and while armchair travellers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries did have access to explorers’ accounts even during the early beginnings of the search for the Northwest Passage, often in the form of manuscripts before official publication, the market for such accounts was limited to people of moderate wealth and influence in the Old World. It was not until after the arrival of the *Halifax Gazette*, and the years that followed, that imprints were produced in the New World. And even with material being printed in British colonies, well into the nineteenth century books and narratives of exploration remained luxury items produced and published in England, and mostly affordable only to wealthy readers in both the Old World and the New (HBIC I 23, 46, 136-37). As mentioned above, the narrative of exploration, with Hearne’s *Journey* as a pivotal example, began to represent during the Victorian era what is now Canada in a uniquely “Canadian” fashion and ultimately set down patterns and conventions to be built upon by writers of the twentieth century and the present day.

#### **Authorship and Public Appeal: The Case of Sir George Back [1773 - 1838]**

While Hearne’s narrative stands as a valuable indicator of the genre’s evolution into a form which is recognisable in narratives of exploration even today and adhered to by such contemporary Canadian writers as Farley Mowat and numerous others, by considering the relationship existing between author, publisher, and reading audience of such narratives at the time, a better understanding of the construction of the nineteenth century British explorer’s text and the figure of the explorer himself can be gained. In an



article entitled “From Exploration to Publication: The Evolution of a Nineteenth-Century Arctic Narrative”, MacLaren outlines the relationship existing during the early Victorian era of Arctic exploration “between explorer and author, [and] between, that is, his explorations and the process by which they were brought to public attention and, usually, won the explorer public acclaim”(MacLaren 43). In his outline of the publishing history of the period, in which he pays specific attention to the figures of Cook, Franklin, Mackenzie, and Back, MacLaren discusses the important influence of such figures as publisher John Murray (the third in a line of John Murrays and second to work with John Barrow), editor William Combe, and John Hawkesworth, an eighteenth-century publisher notoriously known for butchering Cook’s and other explorers’ journals before preparing them for official publication.<sup>5</sup>

MacLaren begins with Hawkesworth, despite his obvious flaws as a publisher and the criticism he received for his alteration of the aforementioned journals, by introducing his twofold approach to making up for the lack of truly heroic figures of British exploration in narratives from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century:

He did so in two ways: by adopting the first person for his narration, and by rendering the character preeminently magnanimous, gracious, noble, in short, an adventurer who suffered adversity, whether inflicted by the elements or by the heathens encountered en route, in the name of a nation’s acquisition of knowledge and perhaps of territory. (44)

This he did accomplish in the writing of Cook’s first voyage, and the positive effect of Hawkesworth’s literary construction of Cook’s heroic persona on the general public’s opinion of him and his overall fame, was neither lost on Cook himself nor on Dr. John

---

<sup>5</sup> “Barrow was the most important figure in the Navy’s enterprise [search for the Northwest Passage], although he did not accompany any of the expeditions that he planned. His involvement included not only the duty of assigning command of the expeditions, but also the important role of publicist, for he would promote the expeditions’ successes, authorize their submitted narratives, and review the books in the Quarterly Review before and after they appeared”(MacLaren 45).

Douglas, the publisher of his following two voyages. In his accounts of Cook's voyages Douglas followed the pattern set out by Hawkesworth by introducing the explorer as the first person narrator, including the depiction of the hero of great noble and physical stature, and obtaining the crown's patronage for its official publication. All of these elements, along with Cook's death in 1779, successfully strengthened the captain's image in the public eye as one of the great British explorers (MacLaren 44).

After discussing Cook's importance and various factors influencing the roots of his persona and its literary construction, MacLaren moves on to the figure of George Back. Despite the fact that he was "upwardly mobile by the standards of any age" (MacLaren 48) and therefore does not really stand as an example of the typical Victorian writer/explorer, Back remains one of the most interesting when it comes to explorers' relationships with the publication of their narratives and the construction of such heroic personae as those of Cook and Back themselves. Since Back had accompanied Franklin on his first two expeditions and was well aware of the success of this narrative's publication, as well as the positive reception of his own engravings included in editions of the first voyage, Back fully understood the importance of properly handling the preparation of his own *Narrative of an Expedition in H.M.S. Terror (1838)* (MacLaren 48). Back's awareness ranged from the measured language needed in enhancing the sense of urgency in moments of peril to the construction of a man whom the British public could look upon as a gentleman explorer, adventurer of no common make, and an overall figure of grandeur and heroic stature. Most interesting, however, is the fact that Back himself was already aware in the years leading up to the publication of his own *Narrative* that man's struggle to survive against nature was of the utmost importance in

constructing such a hero. In fact, Back pondered the role of the ice that threatened his ship and crew at many moments and which detained them for eleven months. He came to the conclusion that one of the best ways to sell his narrative was to focus on such instances and thus align their battle against the elements and successful survival story with the theme of man confronting nature and living to tell the heroic tale. Back discusses the importance of including such details when writing his narrative in a letter to Murray in which he mentions that “[t]he subject, though about ice, is so replete with danger and novelty, that when fairly written, which I must do immediately, from my private Journal, as well as those of the Officers, cannot fail of exciting considerable sensation”. And as MacLaren outlines, Back goes on and “clearly tries to satisfy Murray that even a failed voyage merited a publication”, and “[n]ovelty, danger, and newly charted coastlines (if only those of islands) are offered as ample reasons for a book” (50). With such tactics “Back’s concern turns from survival to publicity”, and through the overall success of the narrative’s publication, its positive nineteenth-century reception as a veritable account and continued interest in it today, as well as in the man who wrote it, Back’s stands as a pivotal example of how nature as a literary vehicle helped to mythologize and to thrust literary and historical significance upon explorers and voyages marked by little relative success or scientific and geographical contributions to British Imperialist projects of the era (MacLaren 49-51). By achieving these things Back’s narrative further supports Galloway’s claim that “[f]rom its very beginnings, the ‘literature’ of Canada was stamped by a struggle against the climate and against the land itself”.

## II

### **Outsiders Looking In: Of Journeys, Nature, and the Struggle to Survive**

While early narratives of exploration in North America include subjects ranging from discussions of Native culture to the viable economic and social potential of the country's fertile lands, they often reveal accounts in which the elements of landscape and nature play important roles and are specifically portrayed as obstacles to explorers' progress in their common struggle to survive.<sup>6</sup> Recognition of these individuals' struggle to survive in this often harsh and alien environment also acts as a recognition that in the first stages of colonial expansion and the development of a colonial literary tradition within a North American context, the wilderness of the New World was at once depicted as the explorer's or settler's means to a new way of life, as well as the greatest impediment to its realisation. As was already outlined in the previous chapter with specific reference to narratives of exploration, the dualistic nature of this relationship, often balanced precariously between something bordering on the opposites of love and hate, or life and death, thus acts as the focus of innumerable texts in which men pit themselves against the elements in the name of the British or French empire, personal gain, or contractual obligations. No contemporary Canadian author understands this relationship better than Margaret Atwood, who explores the ties that bind Canada's literary psyche to the potential for life and death that the country's wilderness represents in *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (1972). By connecting Atwood's notions of

---

<sup>6</sup> Nature and landscape as two central terms referred to throughout this text are applied according to an understanding of natural landscape as something which exists outside of the human domain, but which is nonetheless affected by human activity and in turn affects human life. In other words, landscape as a natural setting in which human activity takes place and within which humans see themselves apart from the natural elements that make up the setting. Nature itself refers to the ensemble of natural elements that make up such settings: trees, rivers, mountains, rocks, wind, clouds, rain, sun, beasts, and so on. These are part of the natural world or universe; again something humans identify as existing outside the sphere of human activity; nature as that which sustains life on Earth, and thus human life, but also takes it away.

survival and the recurring theme's role in the chronicles of those men who interacted with and understood the wilderness under such terms, one of the most basic and pervasive elements to infuse narratives of exploration can be better understood: the literary depiction of man trying to survive in a seemingly hostile natural world.

### **Atwood's Anatomy of Survival**

Not only does Atwood's *Survival* stand as an analysis of the theme of survival and its various manifestations, but it can also be read as an open dialogue connecting explorer narratives and other early Canadian texts with those of contemporary writers in a way which outlines their common interest in the literary construction of those things man cannot truly understand. Three of these things are wilderness, landscape and nature, all elements which every man must face on his journey as either explorer or settler in the New World. These elements merge into one in what Northrop Frye labels in his *Conclusion* to Klinck's *Literary History of Canada*, as part of nature itself and its own struggle in "the conquest of nature by an intelligence that does not love it" (Frye 829). Atwood includes this pivotal and oft-cited text in her discussion as an unavoidable benchmark, but also refers to Frye because his thoughts are so well aligned with her own. For instance, his notion of a "garrison mentality", consisting of a general belief held by Canadian colonialist society that man supersedes nature in the hierarchical order of things. Frye outlines how man fears the wilderness around him because he has through experience, myth and legend, developed a dreadful distrust of it and so labels this wilderness as part of the forces opposed to his success or survival in the New World, and Atwood agrees with him. She especially agrees when it comes to the figures of explorers

who in their experiences do not really understand the true nature of the New World, and also that as opposed to a settler “who attempts to clear a place for himself out of the land”, “[a]n explorer is a man who travels through the land for the first time, without settling in it”. While “[h]e may be looking for something specific –India, the Northwest Passage, a goldmine—in which case his exploration resembles a quest; or he may just be mapping out new territory, seeing what is there—he is venturing into the unknown”(Atwood 113). The explorer faces nature in a way that renders anything standing in the way of his set goal as an obstacle to be surmounted, observed or named, and then left behind. In his “quest” he is not initially expected to learn how to live off the land in the long-run, but simply staves nature off as he attempts to stay alive and succeed in his exploratory quest.

Atwood further develops this idea when she suggests that narratives of exploration adopt hints of a different kind of voyage, namely one “into the unknown”. She explains that through such a symbolic journey, “the journey into the unknown regions of the self, the unconscious, and the confrontation with whatever dangers and splendours lurk there,” the retellings of the stories become much more than simple accounts, they actually become stories in which “‘England or ‘Europe’ embodies the everyday ego or the order of the rational mind as opposed to the chaos of the unconscious” (Atwood 113). The men or explorers in these accounts must abandon Old World notions of rationality if they are to survive, and in translating such scenarios into specific recurring types or patterns, Atwood proposes that there exist two typical examples: an “[e]xploration that doesn’t ‘find’ anything” and a “[d]oomed exploration” in which “the explorers find death”(Atwood 115). While Atwood’s ideas cannot and do

not give us access to a complete understanding of what lies behind narratives of exploration, they do give us an excellent point of departure for discussing the main literary motives rooted in such narratives. For example, the accounts of men such as Samuel Hearne, David Thompson, or George Back are not all accounts that end tragically or in failure, but each in its own way deals with different aspects of survival: man sees nature as hostile as he is not equipped with any other way to view, understand, and relate his own struggles and experiences in the North American wilderness; he does not even fully understand himself and so projects his fears, failures, and even death upon nature; and he does so in a pattern that is anchored in an Old World order of things that does not coincide with what the New World actually is, but depicts it instead veiled through the eyes of “an intelligence that [respects this world in many ways but] does not love it”.

### **Testing New Waters and Breaking the Ice: Back’s Rendition**

Sir George Back treats nature and landscape in such a manner in his *Narrative of an Expedition in H.M.S. Terror* (1838), while keeping in mind the enhancement of his own heroic stature in a manner reminiscent of Hawkesworth’s construction of Cook’s persona, in which nature and landscape are responded to as products of his own as well as his crew’s interaction, and coming to terms, with the wilderness of the New World in an initial survival mode. While Back’s account does not fall into Atwood’s category of a “[d]oomed exploration” in which “the explorers find death”, like the expedition of Sir John Franklin and his crew (1845 – 1846)<sup>7</sup>, which involved the same H.M.S. Terror as in Back’s narrative, he and his crew definitely stave off death throughout the expedition and are always a breath away from tipping the balance between staying alive and finding

---

<sup>7</sup> See Atwood’s “The Age of Lead” (1991) for her ironic take on the fate of the Franklin expedition.

failure in death. In his *Historical Atlas of the Arctic* (2003), Derek Hayes summarises the expedition's overall lack of success in a manner which greatly reinforces such categorisation:

In 1836 he was instructed to sail to Repulse Bay and from there carry boats overland to chart the remaining unknown coast, from Point Turnagain to Fury and Hecla Strait. It was a tall order, but Back never even got to Repulse Bay. With HMS *Terror*, he sailed into Foxe Channel, intending to approach Repulse Bay through Frozen Strait, as Parry had done in 1821. The ship was caught in the ice north of Southampton Island and drifted for almost a year, after which, badly damaged, the ship escaped the ice in July 1837. Back had to give up all thoughts of continuing, and he struggled across the Atlantic, finally beaching the ship on the west coast of Ireland. (Hayes 79-80)

The natural forces opposing Back and his crew and ultimately hindering their success were many, as was the case for all other explorers of the Arctic, and through his *Narrative* Back gives life to these elements and his struggle against them. He depicts the wind and seas as obstacles to the ship's progress and in his choice of words a pattern begins to emerge:

The wind still blew perversely from the west, and our rate of sailing scarcely exceeded three knots an hour, much to our annoyance, who felt how the best part of the season was thus as it were, slipping out of our grasp. The heavy swell also continued, and, for some days after this, the ship rolled almost helplessly on the long waves; sometimes even drifting bodily to leeward. (Back 22)

The author understands the environment he finds himself in, especially considering the fact that he had accompanied Franklin on three previous occasions: on his first Arctic expedition (1818), and his two following expeditions in which they explored the northern coast of North America by land. With these and other expeditions under his belt Back is cast in the explorer role as outlined by Atwood, a man passing through the New World with intentions other than settling in. As such, one of the discursive patterns to run throughout his narrative—discernable in the previous passage—arises from his collected experiences or his strengthened resistance to the elements (part of nature and landscape)



in a sometimes tempestuous relationship or struggle to survive. Through such experiences he has come to understand that nature can be the greatest ally to the explorer, both literally and literarily, but also that it most often stands as his greatest physical threat. Seas seizing hold of his ship and conspiring with the winds to slow it down for as long as they can—this goes on for several days we are told (Back 23)—thus become part and parcel of the way Back understands nature, and he writes of actual, past physical interactions with the wilderness.

While the way he “writes” this New World is without a doubt influenced by his prolonged exposure to its physical or natural realities, the way in which Back depicts nature in the form of a hostile Arctic Ocean in order to strengthen his literary project of bolstering both his own reputation and the nineteenth-century appeal of his narrative as a whole, deserves attention as well. In order to build up his character and the drama of entire scenes Back depends greatly upon settings that consist of various elements related to nature and landscape. In fact, in observing almost all narratives of exploration set in British North America and the Arctic, explorers are so enclosed by these elements that the setting itself becomes the greatest antagonistic force they face throughout their journeys. For example, in addition to the scene previously alluded to, we are introduced to many other fantastic instances of danger in which the hazards of sailing among icebergs and ice-flows are outlined in detail. As the narrative develops, it evokes the strain that such instances must have had both physically and mentally on Captain and crew. The men experience nights surrounded by huge masses of ice, which are veiled in darkness and whose existence and positions are only betrayed by the sound of the surf crashing against them (Back 26). At a later moment the ship is threatened by a terrible

winter storm from which they find protection by securing the ship to an iceberg. They continually fight the ice that surrounds them by halting the vessel, waiting, and then seeking out a new flow or break in the ice before advancing until their progress is predictably impeded again (Back 43-46). In building a case for his own valorisation as spearhead of the expedition and for the expedition's overall importance, which according to Atwood's categories was a failed one as no great discoveries were made (they did not traverse the Northwest Passage and the ship was set in ice for eleven months), Back presents these moments of crisis in order to impress readers with the fact that in the end the main protagonists overcome them all. The narrative and the author's valour are thus legitimised through the mere fact of survival, although a feat in itself under such conditions, which also strengthens Sir George Back's reputation as a great leader of men in the same vein as Cook.

Landscape is applied throughout Back's narrative much in the same way as the antagonistic natural elements of ice, water, and wind, in a complementary manner that emphasises the hostile conditions the men face on their journey and these conditions' bleak, if not terrifying, inescapability. This application of landscape as a literary vehicle is effectively put to use following one of the men's early battles against the ocean; for when they finally do get a glimpse of the shore, they are not greeted by an idealised or comforting landscape, but are instead confronted by a coast that reflects their own dreadful situation:

The nearer view now afforded us of the land presented nothing attractive. Peaked and splintered hills, resting on a sort of shelf or ledge, which again broke off perpendicularly into dark cliffs raised upon shelving banks covered with snow; and further off, though still, as it seemed, connected with these, a ridge of heights...all bare and desolate, without one tinge of green to relieve the sombre picture,...such was the forbidding aspect of this unsocial coast. (Back 28-29)

The entire scene and the dreary prospect the narrator and crew have of it do nothing to alleviate their stress. Instead, as the narrative progresses, the setting reflects the state of the captain and crew with increased urgency, as suggested by such chapter headings as “Savage Islands” and “Dreary Aspect of The Savage Islands”. The narrator himself goes on to explain that the surrounding landscapes offer the sailors little reprieve from the monotonous and dangerous routine they are engaged in:

There were many rocks, more or less clad with a dark and russet herbage unenlivened by a single patch of green, and altogether as melancholy and repulsive as fancy could conceive. It was a place, in short, that even the sea-tired mariner would scarcely leave his ship to visit. (37)

This vision is reinforced later on in the narrative when he also relates that

The north shore was partially covered with the snow that had lately fallen; all that could be seen consisted of solid and barren rock, entirely destitute of herbage, or, as far as I could judge, of any thing capable of supporting life. Not an inhabitant, nor even an animal or bird was seen. (56)

Back thus depicts a situation in which the explorer and those he commands must not only battle the elements in order to survive, but must also fight to keep their spirits high without nature’s assistance. They find no trace of greenery and thus no evidence of hope or viable life. Through its seeming indifference nature furnishes bleak metaphors which not only express a journey into the unknown, but also represent the men’s growing desperation. By depicting nature in such a manner Back also reinforces the conventional tendency extant between the sixteenth and mid-to-late nineteenth centuries to characterise the Arctic as a wasteland or obstacle to overcome in order to survive or move on to better things, as is epitomised by Britain’s very symbolic search for the elusive Northwest Passage.

### **Hearne's *Journey into the Abyss***

Despite their different styles, often easily discerned from one text to another either due to individual authors' writing skills or different variations on similar subjects related to exploration, most of the narratives making up the early corpus of literature dealing with British exploration in North America have one thing in common: they are all caught up in the task of depicting this part of the New World through a language anchored in an Old World order of things. What this means within the contexts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, is that wilderness, nature, and landscape are often written of and responded to according to an outsider's point of view which is itself anchored in established literary and social conventions of the time. In *Land Sliding: Imagining Space, Presence, and Power in Canadian Writing* (1997), a work which explores this aspect of Canadian literature among others, William H. New addresses the ways in which literary representations of nature and landscape, from the time of early exploration to our own era, essentially developed according to various artists' interpretations of them. Interpretation is a key word in his discussion, as he states that writers and artists give life to works of literary or artistic representation which stand as expressions of their coming to terms with the world that surrounds them. New also describes the problems engendered by the application of Old World language and conventions to depictions of a New World and points out that most Europeans first came into contact with the country's landscapes and natural features when they read narratives of exploration. Explorers filtered and gave voice to what they perceived in the New World and were, as well as their works, part of a civilised sphere which translated and shaped what is "natural" in the New World into something that a European audience could understand on its own terms

(New 55-56). New also points out that “two criteria governed what European eyes considered acceptable in the new world: usefulness and beauty”, of which the latter figures prominently in relationship to the Canadian wilderness and its natural landscapes in such romanticised accounts as those of Alexander Mackenzie, or in the mid-nineteenth century in such sublime and picturesque writings as those of Susanna Moodie (57-58, 60-61). He notes that

by the eighteenth century, the Canadian landscape had become a verbal territory as well as a physical one, and the way in which language constructed this landscape affected what people thought they saw or thought was there to be seen...it had turned into a written European literary trope, one that was shaping the way people could respond to the land. (62)

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Canada becomes more than a physical territory to be explored by British officers and gentlemen travellers; it begins to take shape as part of the European community’s collective imagination. And not only is the version of the country confronting them a product of “a written European trope”, but it also reflects the explorer/author’s own understanding of the country itself and how the literary conventions of the time govern this understanding. Samuel Hearne’s narrative, *A Journey From Prince of Wales’s Fort in Hudson’s Bay to the Northern Ocean*, remains a pivotal example of such a text, as marked in its categorisation by many critics as one of the first important works to have influenced the form of the explorer narrative as we know it today as by its overall success in the project of interpreting and representing the Canadian wilderness.

Hearne’s *Journey* is an interesting example for various reasons related to the task of depicting the New World through the written word, and as an explorer who fits into Atwood’s category of man passing through an alien environment without settling down, his writing greatly reflects the Old World’s perception of the Canadian wilderness at the

close of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. New touches upon one of the issues complicating any modern reading of Hearne's *Journey* when he addresses the matter of explorers assigning "Old World" names to places and things in the New World, and points out that

European explorers...moved through the world with a sense of their potential authority over it. They saw themselves as separate from the world they navigated and claimed, but able to impose their will upon it, and, moreover, sanctioned to do so. "Here" was separate from "there"; "cultivation" was separate from "wilderness"; mapping the world was a way to declare the territoriality of rule.  
(29)

Taking a twofold approach to such a statement reveals that Hearne fits into the mould of the typical explorer as outlined by Atwood in his roles as soldier, surveyor, map-maker, explorer for the British nation, and as employee of the Hudson's Bay Company, as well as acting as a rare example of the British explorer who learns how to survive in the Canadian wilderness through a process of adaptation and equilibration. Additionally, just as his views on nature and the Natives of the country are as varied and polemical as those aspects which set the "[h]ere" away from the "there", so can the ways in which he uses the written word to depict his experiences related to these subjects at times come across as two-sided and contradictory. Such contradictions arise from a division within the man himself, and throughout his *Journey* it becomes obvious that Hearne is both extremely fascinated by and interested in learning about the nature of the New World but is equally repulsed by some aspects of it. Hearne's interest in and knowledge of the land itself, as well as the customs of its Native inhabitants, allow him to survive his many struggles against the elements. At other times his aversions greatly represent his stance and role as Other or outsider looking in from an Old World point of view. Hopwood supports this claim when he suggests that while Hearne's text possesses many qualities as a work of

literature, it also gives us a greater understanding of the author as well. He explains that it “begins a series of major narratives,...all conforming more or less to a pattern”, which “are written in the first person, are factual, and derive their interest from the novelty of their material, their story of endurance, adventure, and discovery, and the incidental insight given into the character of the author”. Hopwood then adds other virtues to these which “include clarity, definiteness of statement, sure choice of appropriate detail, combined quick and unflinching transitions and a firm but not obtrusive prose rhythm”(Klinck 25). Here Hopwood touches upon significant literary facets of Hearne’s *Journey*, but its greatest attraction still lies elsewhere, somewhere beyond the limits of conventional language.

### **Massacre at Bloody Falls: Difficulties of Representation**

Despite their many interesting observations related to Hearne’s text, Hopwood and New do not specifically discuss the dualities found within his *Journey*, those which represent the conflict between Old World sensibilities and the reality of the New World, and what these dualities have the power to represent in relation to the way in which the explorer himself, as well as a nineteenth-century reading audience, perceived the New World. At first, the Canadian wilderness begins to take shape for readers as a literary trope in accounts prior to and during the era of the early search for the Northwest Passage and other exploratory endeavours; but for Hearne, the distance between what he sees and writes about in the regions of British North America and what he had read in narratives of exploration before this initial contact, marks an important shift in paradigms. The difference is tremendous, as what confronts the armchair traveller and the actual explorer

or survivor are not comparable in scope. In Hearne's narrative we can easily discern the discrepancy which exists between the real North America and the fanciful version presented of it in books of the era to readers not formally acquainted with the realities of the New World. Through vivid descriptions and explications of instances of life and death and of struggle and survival in the wilderness of the continent, Hearne not only entertains and informs readers, but goes as far as to present the type of symbolic journey that Atwood proposes: "the journey into the unknown regions of the self, the unconscious, and the confrontation with whatever dangers and splendours lurk there" (113).

One section in Hearne's *Journey* stands out as a particularly poignant depiction of an experience which the explorer/author cannot fully rationalise according to an Old World perspective, which many contemporary writers have presented recently as an example of the prominent discourse of savagery in early Canadian narratives of exploration. This scene describes what became known as the "Massacre at Bloody Falls", as Hearne named the site following the events that transpired there, in which he relates the massacre of a band of Inuit by the group of Chipewyans who were part of his expedition party.<sup>8</sup> Although in the past critics have offered different approaches to this section of Hearne's narrative and its significance within different contexts related to Canadian literature, including Russell Brown and Donna Bennett's first volume of *An Anthology of Canadian Literature in English* (1982) and other anthologies and critical works, most of them tend to focus on his application of a colonial discourse of savagery. One of the scene's most gripping incidents reads as follows:

---

<sup>8</sup> The Chipewyans are also known as the Dene Nation, the name they attribute to themselves which signifies "people".



The shrieks and groans of the poor expiring wretches were truly dreadful; and my horror was much increased at seeing a young girl, seemingly about eighteen years of age, killed so near me, that when the first spear was stuck into her side she fell down at my feet, and twisted round my legs, so that it was with difficulty that I could disengage myself from her dying grasps. As two Indian men pursued this unfortunate victim, I solicited very hard for her life; but the murderers made no reply till they had stuck both their spears through her body, and transfixed her to the ground. They then looked me sternly in the face, and began to ridicule me, by asking if I wanted an Esquimaux wife; and paid not the smallest regard to the shrieks and agony of the poor wretch, who was twining round their spears like an eel!

Hearne goes on to describe the manner in which the men continue to brutally torture the girl, and relates the fact that he asks the men to complete their task without further unwarranted torture and instead that they finish her off and thus put her out of her misery. Once this has occurred the narrator reflects upon his initial and future reactions to the girl's murder when he writes:

My situation and the terror of my mind at beholding this butchery, cannot easily be conceived, much less described; though I summed up all the fortitude I was master of on the occasion, it was with difficulty that I could refrain from tears; and I am confident that my features must have feelingly expressed how sincerely I was affected at the barbarous scene I then witnessed; even at this hour I cannot reflect on the transactions of that horrid day without shedding tears. (153-55)

An interesting way to approach this section from Hearne's *Journey* is to analyse it based upon Atwood's notion of the explorer's voyage as a journey into the unknown. It is important to do so remembering Atwood's proposition that narratives of exploration become voyages of self-introspection and individual explorers' coming to terms with discoveries they make concerning themselves, and that within the accounts of these voyages Europe and Britain personify "the everyday ego or the order of the rational mind as opposed to the chaos of the unconscious" (113). Reflecting these ideas Hearne's becomes not only a journey into the regions of the self and a standoff with his own personal demons, but can also be interpreted as a representation of the Old World's

vision of the Natives and wilderness of the New World and how an understanding and representation of these elements is symbolically and rhetorically broken down.

Both Terry Goldie and Laura Smyth Groening deal with the image of the indigene in Canadian literature, and approach the passage quoted above as well as other works based on the same themes, at least in part, from perspectives concerned with further exposing the standard, negative literary conventions which they tend to represent and perpetuate. Let us begin with Goldie's "Signs of the Themes: The Value of a Politically Grounded Semiotics" (1987), in which he begins his discussion by outlining what Edward Said terms, in his seminal post-colonialist work *Orientalism* (1978), as conventions usually associated with a negative, colonial discourse and the construction of the image of the indigene either as part of a dead and dying race or one closely associated with an irrational and savage nature. Goldie argues that

[t]hese are the aspects of the image given most value in the economics of literary discourse. The primary ones for the indigene are sex, violence, orality or the state of "non-writing," mysticism, and the prehistoric, the sense of the indigene as past in the present or as being out of time. All these facets are shaped by the needs of the white text, often in some exploration of the relationship between white culture and the indigene as manifestation of nature. The treacherous redskin and the Indian maiden, embodiments of violence and sex, are also embodiments of the emotional signs of fear and temptation, of the white repulsion from and attraction to the land. To overcome alienation, to "belong," the white must become as though indigenous, must become "indigenized," through rejecting or incorporating the previous indigene. (85)

Goldie then cites Frantz Fanon's assertion in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), that "the indigene is Other while the white signmaker, the self, must find some means of dealing with Other, by denying or embracing" (85). This helps in understanding Hearne as an outsider looking in and also suggests that nature, landscape and wilderness are undeniably and directly aligned with the Native or indigene in early narratives of

exploration, as at some moments explorers such as Hearne are both repulsed by Natives and nature and at others they are obviously attracted to them. Hearne's loss of power when confronted by the murder of the defenceless Inuit girl thus becomes an extension of his relationship to the land itself, as well as a representation of his own eventual powerlessness in the face of the elements this land represents. This loss of power is also evidence of his lack of influence over the men involved in the girl's murder. Despite all this, Hearne's often positive depictions of the great chief Matonabbee are clear evidence of the fact that he did genuinely respect Natives and certain aspects of their culture, as does his justification in his notes of the chief's forced participation in the massacre:

It is impossible for any man to have been more punctual in the performance of a promise than he was; his scrupulous adherence to truth and honesty would have done honour to the most enlightened and devout Christian, while his benevolence and universal humanity to all the human race, according to his abilities and manner of life, could not be exceeded by the most illustrious personage now on record[.] (329-30)

The explorer's sincere admiration is here easily discerned, but in the sentence that concludes the passage Hearne writes that Matonabbee "was the only Indian that I ever saw, except one, who was not guilty of backbiting and slandering his neighbours"(330). Even if one wishes to argue that Hearne does not willingly participate in a negative discourse of savagery and that he respects his Native companions, one would argue with difficulty that he does not resort to some of the era's negative stereotypes commonly applied to depictions of Natives. One can also argue that in his representations of nature throughout his narrative, as writer Hearne finds himself caught in the same vicious circle. He draws upon a language and conventions not yet fully attuned to the nature and Native inhabitants of the New World, in a sometimes negative manner and despite his best

intentions as author and explorer. In other sections of his *Journey*, Hearne depicts himself battling against the elements and facing starvation numerous times:

Beside the inconvenience of being exposed to the open air, night and day, in all weathers, we experienced real distress from the want of victuals. When provisions were procured, it often happened that we could not make a fire, so that we were obliged to eat the meat quite raw; which at first, in the article of fish particularly, was as little relished by my Southern companions as myself. (30)

In such instances he exposes both his vulnerability as a human being and his power as a representative of the British Crown and Empire, as on one hand he is defenceless against nature and its elements, while on the other he is victorious in his battles in the end and conquers the wilderness and claims the land for his country through the symbolic acts of assigning names to it and claiming territorial rights over the land and its people. In this instance we can also recognise Hearne's capability to adapt to the demands of the struggle to survive, as he goes against his society's civilised norms by eating raw meat and fish. To reinforce this adjustment and to leave the impression that he does so with some difficulty, but not reluctantly as this is a necessary step towards his own preservation, Hearne also mentions that even his companions feel the same way about eating raw fish. And as the men continue their journey, Hearne tells of further difficulties encountered along the way:

Notwithstanding these accumulated and complicated hardships, we continued in perfect health and good spirits; and my guide, though a perfect niggard of his provisions, especially at times of scarcity, gave us the strongest assurance of soon arriving at a plentiful country, which would not only afford us a certain supply of provisions, but where we should meet with other Indians, who probably would be willing to carry part of our luggage. This news naturally gave us great consolation; for at that time the weight of our constant loads was so great, that when Providence threw any thing our way, we could not carry above two days provisions with us, which indeed was the chief reason of our being so frequently in want. (30)

In the end, despite his supposed position of power over the land and its Native people, they and not Providence, as he suggests, provide him with the means to survive.

In line with the content of the passage just cited, Hearne hence approaches his own involvement in the massacre in a way which outlines his lack of power in actually being able to assist “the poor wretch” of a girl despite his status as an imperial representative. Hearne then seems to supplant this “neuter-ality” (88), as Goldie labels the explorer’s symbolic castration, by applying to his retelling of the event a language ripe with the standard commodities of an imperialist discourse of savagery. Hearne cannot rationalise the events he witnesses in anything other than visceral terms, as the massacre is an undeniably disturbing and “barbarous scene”. And while his incapability of reacting in a physical manner becomes an extension of an awareness of what he must do and or not do in order to assure his own survival in light of the circumstances surrounding the event, he does control the literary account of the scene. He is therefore accountable if not for actively perpetuating a negative discourse of savagery, for writing a scene which adds to the many negative depictions of Natives at the time despite his best possible intentions and his obvious sympathy towards the Inuit victims.

### **Of Lambs and Wolves: Trappings of a Colonialist Discourse of Savagery**

In *Listening to Old Woman Speak: Natives and alternatives in Canadian Literature* (2004), Laura Groening delves into the issue of the appropriation-of-voice and the roles of Native figures in Canadian literature written by non-Native and Native writers alike. While she draws upon texts dating up to the twenty-first century in order to do so, Groening refers to early texts of exploration as part of the foundation of Canadian literary

tradition today. She discusses the language and conventions having influenced early writers who in their own right informed the texts of numerous writers ranging from those of the nineteenth century's John Richardson and Susanna Moodie, to our own era's Mordecai Richler and Margaret Laurence. Early on in her examination Groening introduces what Fanon identifies as the "Manichean allegory" in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963)<sup>9</sup>, in relation to the literary conventions to influence such writers of fiction and earlier narratives of exploration. In her preface she aligns Goldie's *Fear and Temptation* (1989) and Leslie Monkman's *A Native Heritage* (1981) with the "symbolic pattern" that Fanon outlines and explains in terms of the binaries of his allegory. Groening asserts that "[b]oth critics provide indisputable proof of the overwhelming existence of images of savagery, sexuality, and death—images that consistently depict Native people as 'other' than mainstream, Euro-Canadian culture," and goes on to state:

The images that Monkman and Goldie identify in their texts are not simply evidence of repetitive representations; rather, they are the constituent elements of a symbolic pattern that Fanon has labelled the "Manichean allegory." Fanon uses the term "Manichean allegory" to define an ideological position that divides the world into good and evil, with the colonizer perceived as good and the Native as evil...Representing the conflict between God and the Devil are a series of tropes that create a uniformly dualistic universe of not only good and evil but also light and dark, culture and nature, reason and the irrational, future and past, civilization and savagery. Once a writer adopts this binary view of reality; s/he is implicated in a world view that denies Aboriginal characters the possibility of a healthy, modern existence. (xix-xv)

Here Groening pinpoints many of the very things at work within Hearne's massacre scene and draws upon Fanon's notion of a "dualistic universe" which inhabits many examples of literature dealing with the New World, and specifically occupies much space within narratives of its exploration. The scene itself stands as an excellent example, as it

---

<sup>9</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963). The original French version was published in 1961 under the title of *Les Damnés de la Terre*. In it he cries out to members of colonised third-world countries, to rise against the white, colonial powers and masters which oppress and control them.

contains almost all of them. Just as Monkman and Goldie point out, such images in texts are not simply repeated by writers, including Hearne, but act as markers of their actual contribution to and participation in the construction and maintenance of the Manichean allegory itself. Let us consider the following passage from Hearne:

It ought to have been mentioned in its proper place, that in making our retreat up the river, after killing the Esquimaux on the West side, we saw an old woman sitting by the side of the water, killing salmon, which lay at the foot of the fall as thick as a shoal of herrings. Whether from the noise of the fall, or a natural defect in the old woman's hearing, it is hard to determine, but certain it is, she had no knowledge of the tragical scene which had been so lately transacted at the tents, though she was not more than two hundred yards from the place. When we first perceived her, she seemed perfectly at ease, and was entirely surrounded with the produce of her labour. From her manner of behaviour, and the appearance of her eyes, which were as red as blood, it is more than probable that her sight was not very good; for she scarcely discerned that the Indians were enemies, till they were within twice the length of their spears of her. It was in vain that she attempted to fly, for the wretches of my crew transfixed her to the ground in a few seconds, and butchered her in the most savage manner. There was scarcely a man among them who had not a thrust at her with his spear; and many in doing this, aimed at torture, rather than immediate death, as they not only poked out her eyes, but stabbed her in many parts very remote from those which are vital. (Hearne 158)

While this instance is reminiscent of when the young girl is also “transfixed” to the ground by her aggressors, the victim described in it adds another dimension to the level of “evil” at which the “butchers” operate. In the case of the young girl, “seemingly about eighteen years of age,” Hearne witnesses the slaying of innocence by a force that does not value it, a fact for which he cannot find any rational explanation other than that of “barbarity”. There is no logical way of defining the aggressors’ actions within the binary pattern of the allegory, for as representatives of the side associated with nature they attack and murder “elements”, in a literary context of course, aligned with this same nature and thus themselves. In doing so, they reinforce the allegory’s system while at the same time stripping it of all logic. In the case of the elderly woman’s slaying, the cruelty is clearly evident, but irreverence towards the lives and wisdom of elders themselves, in

this case a most pitiful and defenceless example, also becomes clear. The men are depicted as butchers who kill children and elders alike without the slightest remorse, and in turn come to represent the evil, dark side of the Manichean allegory and defy the narrator's rationalisation of the event. This leaves the reader with the overall impression that the men are indeed "savage" monsters, something which cannot easily be denied. Goldie also offers some insight into Hearne's writing in general and the massacre scene itself, which in many ways reinforces the confusing effect of the narrator's retelling of the event and the reader's impression of it all:

The language of the passage can be directly linked to the first-person narration. Hearne's accounts avoid direct quotation, either of himself or of the Indians. The effect is a limited presentation of consciousness. Hearne avoids the layers of confusion suggested by the transliteration of Indian language, but he also avoids the resonance and the appearance of subjectivity which is a result of direct quotation in which...the character exists because we perceive him perceiving. The Indians remain as objects in the piece, as, of course, does the girl. Hearne himself becomes subject as perceiver and object as actor. This effect becomes redoubled when the narrator is shown at the end of the piece to be well distant in time from the action. The emotive narrator of the conclusion is reacting to story rather than experience. (89)

Through the distancing effect of the narrator's writing or retelling of the event in the future, the avoidance of direct quotations, and the degrees of separation created by his dual role as actor and narrator, in addition to the reader's passive role as second "perceiver", Hearne's own confusion and struggle to come to terms with the chaos of the New World is well represented. The explorer's states of mind during the event and the moment he recalls it in order to record it for posterity, are further symbolised by the narrator's awkward transition from the actual massacre to the explanation of the fishing techniques used by the old woman and his Indian companions.

It may appear strange, that a person supposed to be almost blind should be employed in the business of fishing, and particularly with any degree of



success; but when the multitude of fish is taken into...account, the wonder will cease. (159)

This shift does not leave much space for the narrator to either ponder the horrors he was forced to face and to confront his own symbolic role in the scene and the colonial enterprise as a whole. This is mostly left up to the reader and the act of interpretation.

Groening and Goldie both agree upon the fact that Natives are often aligned with nature within the constraints of the Manichean allegory and a generalised, negative discourse of savagery, especially in narratives of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This means for any interpreter of texts such as Hearne's, texts which play active roles in the literary construction of the Natives and wilderness of the New World, that these are associated to the same side of the binary system the allegory represents, the side indicative of nature, irrationality, and savagery. If the Native characters in Hearne's massacre scene, both victims and aggressors, represent this side of the spectrum, then the explorer inevitably stands for the opposite elements of man, rationality, civilisation, progress, and the British Empire. Hearne thus symbolises the predominant white culture of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century England; and as Goldie indicates, "[t]he passage might also be seen in a larger context", as "[i]t might be considered as part of the general popularity of the 'massacre' image. Hearne conforms to the most common form in his indigene butchers but deviates in his use of the indigene victim" (90). If this is the case, his lack of power in the face of death and cruelty despite sympathy and a willingness to intervene, thus acts as another indication of his Otherness in this New World and further emphasises the fact that readers who do not know the true lifestyles, traditions, and cultural beliefs of the Natives cannot, as the narrator himself proves through his narrative and the conventions which constrain it in a negative manner,

properly understand their actions, however morally “wrong” or “offensive” they may seem from an Old World point of view.

### **Poetic and Mythic Attractions of David Thompson: The Narrative of Exploration Meets the Twentieth Century**

Although most early narratives of English exploration in British North America consist of texts set in the continent’s Arctic regions, one of the most interesting narratives to come out of the Victorian era is that of David Thompson, a man who surveyed and mapped most of the Canadian Northwest and distinguished himself through his various achievements as one of the greatest cartographers and geographers in the history of British exploration in North America. Thompson’s main reasons for travelling and exploring the country were not linked to the search for the Northwest Passage, as in the case of Back, Hearne, and a myriad of other explorers, but were at first based upon his employment for the Hudson’s Bay Company and then for the North West Company, for whom he began working in 1797 after a falling out with his employers at the HBC. Although the wide-ranging experiences accumulated throughout his years of exploration only came together in Joseph Burr Tyrell’s 1916 edition of *David Thompson's Narrative of his Explorations in Western America, 1784-1812* (Champlain Society), which differs in setting from most early narratives of exploration linked to the Arctic or the search for the Northwest Passage, after Hearne’s *Journey*, many recognise Thompson’s as one of the most significant to have marked the literary history of British exploration in what would eventually become Canada. Peter C. Newman outlines some of Thompson’s

outstanding achievements in *Company of Adventurers: How the Hudson's Bay Empire Determined the Destiny of a Continent* (1985)<sup>10</sup>, and relates that

Thompson stood out among his colleagues. He was not Scottish but of Welsh descent, and was not only prodigiously literate but left behind thirty-nine volumes of journals that rank (or should) as major contributions to the early history of Canada. He cared little for the fur trade but walked and canoed fifty-five thousand miles, pacing off the country he was determined to chart. During his stewardship as chief topographer of the North West Company, Thompson not only mapped the Columbia River system to the Pacific but also pinpointed the sources of the Mississippi, explored the upper region of the Missouri and the southeastern interior of British Columbia. He also did the original surveys of the Muskoka country between the Ottawa River and Lake Huron and laid out Quebec's Eastern Townships. He later surveyed much of the border between Canada and the United States. (327-28)

As Newman outlines, Thompson does stand out as one of the defining figures of Canadian history, and the *Narrative of his Explorations* acts as a significant reminder of his many achievements. His *Narrative* is, however, not only interesting as a historical document, but truly deserves attention as a great piece of literature as well, for Thompson stands out from Hearne and his other predecessors not only as map maker and surveyor of the northern part of North America, but also as an author endowed with a very poetic style of writing which helped ingrain the wilderness and landscapes of the continent into the collective imaginations of both Britain and North America. Therefore, although much can be said about the life and history of the explorer himself, this section will deal specifically with Thompson's text and aspects unique to it within its genre, which lent to the form of the "Canadian" explorer narrative the final touches it needed before establishing itself as a model for authors writing about Canada in the twentieth century.

---

<sup>10</sup> Although not considered a very scholarly source, Newman's work is of interest when it comes to the hermeneutics of the hero in exploration literature. His own work is greatly concerned with heroic figures such as those discussed in this thesis and is therefore a great example of their continued literary construction.

Since its publication in 1916, Thompson's *Narrative*, much like Hearne's *Journey*, has sparked the imaginations of many writers and helped establish the form followed by such contemporary Canadian authors as Pierre Berton and Farley Mowat in such works as *Drifting Home* (Berton 1973) and *People of the Deer* (Mowat 1951). In the same vein as Thompson and Hearne, Berton and Mowat intermingle historical discourse with stories of self-discovery, adventure, and exploration, while continuing the tradition of the classic struggle to survive against the wilderness, as well as the explorer's relationship of love and hate with the sometimes menacing but often majestic elements of landscape and nature. In Klinck's *Literary History of Canada* Hopwood relates how the attractive qualities of Thompson's writing are well pointed out by Doctor J.J. Bigsby, one of Thompson's colleagues and friends, who "in *The Shoe and Canoe* (1850) describes him as a conversationalist, and indeed it is almost possible to hear the voice of the storyteller himself as we read the *Narrative*. Says Bigsby:"

No living person possesses a tittle of his information respecting the Hudson's Bay countries—[n]ever mind his Bunyan-like face and cropped hair; he has a very powerful mind, and a singular faculty of picture-making. He can create a wilderness and people it with warring savages, or climb the Rocky Mountains with you in a snow-storm, so clearly and palpably, that only shut your eyes and you hear the crack of the rifle, or feel the snow-flakes melt on your cheeks as he talks. (31)

Here Bigsby points out what is most remarkable about Thompson's writing, his ability to transport readers to the settings he inhabits throughout his expeditions. What is especially striking, when this occurs and we feel as if we are almost sharing moments with Thompson himself, is the fact that the writing appears seamless and engages us to the point of almost forgetting that we are reading a "veritable" account of exploration. The fictional quality of his *Narrative* raises it above those of his contemporaries, while

also adding to the construction of his persona as a man of myth and legend. Bigsby does the same through his comparison of Thompson to the famous figure of North American myth, Paul Bunyan, a lumberjack of gigantic proportions and incredible strength first written about by James MacGillivray in the *Detroit News* of July 24, 1910, which sets Thompson up as a stoic figure within the context of British exploration, while also setting him apart as a distinguished man of letters. Thompson's *Narrative* therefore achieves that which Hearne's *Journey* does with regards to the changes needed, according to Hopwood as mentioned earlier, in order for the mere "account [to] be called a 'narrative'". These changes do not simply include "suppression of detail, expansion with incident and description, and development of direction and purpose", but also include rendering the explorer narrative interesting to everyday readers craving stories of adventure in new and different worlds, by writing in a manner that draws upon such fictional classics as Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), while further strengthening the status of the explorer narrative as a legitimate literary form.

While Thompson's *Narrative* offers great adventure and precarious events, he especially distinguishes himself as a writer when he describes indigenous faunal and floral species as well as natural occurrences, which he presents as unique elements of North America's northern climates. In such instances Thompson proves that the narrative of exploration can include details of scientific or geographical concern as long as the information is presented in an interesting fashion. For example, Hearne's *Journey* which despite the distinction of its style contains lengthy, monotonous passages, sometimes comes across as such because he presents certain information in a very

straightforward manner and in such unadorned English that it may not meet the expectations of readers looking for diversion. While this is definitely a quality of Hearn's *Journey* when we consider that it is a work that intends to record the natural details of the New World for readers unfamiliar with it, Thompson, on the other hand, piques our interest through more elaborate language and manages to make descriptions of everyday occurrences somewhat more interesting, as when he describes the Northern Lights:

The Aurora Borealis is seen only to the northward, sometimes with a tremulous motion, but seldom bright; halos of the sun also appear. The month of January comes, and continues with intense cold; from the density of the air, the halos, or mock suns, at times appear as bright as the real Sun; but when in this state, betokens bad weather. The halos of the Moon are also very pleasing.

By alluding to the Northern Lights he evokes an occurrence which fascinated scientists of his time, and thus reminds us of how the Arctic remained a place still filled with mystery, even at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Thompson adds further to this by referring to the "mock suns" and "the halos" which create an illusion of brightness equal to that of the Sun. He goes on to relate the following:

A curious formation now takes place called Rime, of extreme thinness, adhering to the trees, willows and everything it can fasten on, its beautiful, clear, spangles forming flowers of every shape, of a most brilliant appearance, and the sun shining on them makes them too dazzling to the sight. The lower the ground, the larger is the leaf, and the flower; this brilliant Rime can only be formed in calm clear weather and a gale of wind sweeps away all this magic scenery, to be reformed on calm days; it appears to be formed of frozen dew. The actual quantity of snow on the ground is not more than 2 ½ feet in depth in the woods, clear of drift, very light and dry; almost every fall of snow is attended with a gale of NE. wind. The falling snow with the moveable snow on the ground, causes a drift and darkness in which the traveller is bewildered, and sometimes perishes. The months of February and March have many pleasant clear days, the gaudy, spangled Rime is most brilliant, and requires a strong eye to look upon it. (51-52)

In this passage the explorer depicts the North American winter which is a subject of interest, especially in relationship to the theme of survival as outlined earlier, in almost all accounts of British exploration of the continent from the sixteenth century through to the nineteenth. The difference in this passage is found in the depth of his observations, their transcription into the written word, and their metaphorical value within the narrative construction of his text. First we are presented the “curious formation” of “Rime”, alluded to in a manner that recalls the explorer’s general fascination with the natural phenomena he observes in the New World. The “Rime” is described as something of “extreme thinness”, and thus of an extreme fragility, which clings to everything it can anchor itself to, and is compared to flowers. Through such imagery the subject of Thompson’s observations comes to fittingly symbolise the nature of the New World, a world where life hangs in the balance at all times, especially in the face of harsh winters, often the focus of survival stories in narratives of exploration, as found in the previous examples of Back and Hearne, as well as in Thompson’s itself. This is further reinforced when he writes that “this brilliant Rime can only be formed in calm clear weather and a gale of wind sweeps away all this magic scenery, to be reformed on calm days”, a passage which reminds us of the fragile nature of human life in the face of nature and its elements, while recalling the cycle of life, death, and rebirth, which both nature and man are subject to. And the notion of survival and of the impending possibility of death is even further reinforced by Thompson near the end of the passage when he tells the reader that “[t]he falling snow with the moveable snow on the ground, causes a drift and darkness in which the traveller is bewildered, and sometimes perishes”, reminding us that, just like the “Rime”, man is constantly subject to the different temperaments of

nature in this northern environment. What is most interesting about Thompson in this case, however, is the fact that while he relates such subjects linked to death and the classic struggle to survive, he focusses on the beauty and magical nature of the winter season and its creations. The poet overtakes the scientific observer within him and allows the beauty of nature to shine through, as the consequences of death and suffering take their places as inevitable parts of human life and human exploration of the world.

### **Gazing Through Tainted Glass: Representation, Nature and the Unknown**

While the scenes looked at so far in relation to Back, Hearne and Thompson help delineate their narratives as individual works, there is one important element shared by all of them that further helps support the notion that depictions of nature, wilderness and landscape act as reflections of the explorers' attitudes towards the land as well as reflections of their own understanding, or lack thereof, of their relationships to it.

Atwood points out how this manifests itself within the Canadian literary tradition:

Poems which contain descriptions of landscapes and natural objects are often dismissed as being mere Nature poetry. But Nature poetry is seldom just about Nature; it is usually about the poet's *attitude* towards the external universe. That is, landscapes in poems are often interior landscapes; they are maps of a state of mind. Sometimes the poem conceals this fact and purports to be objective description, sometimes the poem acknowledges and explores the interior landscape it presents. The same tendencies can be present in the descriptive passages of novels or stories with natural settings. What we are looking at—is the types of landscapes that prevail in Canadian literature and the kinds of attitude they mirror. (49)

Evidently, as part of the literary traditions of their respective eras, narratives of exploration easily stand alongside works belonging to the schools of poetry and fiction, and explorers are in turn also caught up in the application to their works of landscape and nature as literary vehicles. For instance, as mentioned earlier, in Back's *Narrative* ice acts as a symbol of the major obstacles encountered throughout his expedition while the



“dreary” landscapes that surround him express his crew’s isolation and distress; in Hearne’s *Journey* the figure of the Native in the massacre scene stands as an expression of his incomprehension when faced with certain aspects of nature in the New World; and as will be pointed out in this section with regards to our three explorers, including Thompson, so do landscape and nature become extensions of their struggles to come to terms with Natural phenomena witnessed in this New World. As Atwood suggests that such written “landscapes” become “maps of a state of mind”, so do they map out journeys into the unknown or confrontations with things the explorers have yet to understand. As writers and explorers Back, Hearne and Thompson are all fully aware of this type of literary application of landscape and nature, and these physical elements, along with the figure of the Native as an extension of them, all operate as expressions of man’s attitudes towards them and the New World in general. Let us begin with the example of Back as outsider looking in.

If these conventional uses of landscape and nature are at times intentionally applied to their writing, at other times the explorers, despite themselves, tend to portray situations which point to a certain level of incoherence best attributed to the contradictory nature of the relationship existing between the outsider perceiving the Other from an Old World perspective, as explained by Goldie. Back’s *Narrative* presents two such examples, in which elements of nature are first depicted with great admiration and respect, and then laid waste upon as things inferior to man and part of Frye’s “conquest of nature by an intelligence that does not love it”. The first scene is described by Back in the following manner:

On the 18<sup>th</sup> the gale abated, and the wind getting more to the south, enabled us to lay on our course. On several occasions before this, in the intervals of good weather, I had observed porpoises in great numbers gamboling about the vessel;

and at this time in particular, we were visited by a large shoal, whose sportive tricks and ludicrous attitudes relieved the monotony of the scene, and afforded us much amusement. When they left us, a flock of gulls succeeded, and approached with so much boldness as to catch the bits of tallow thrown to them from the deck. It is needless to say that they came and departed unmolested. (23)

The second passage, cited now in order to emphasise the confusing effect of the inclusion of both positive and negative depictions, takes place when

[t]he officers amused themselves with shooting, and bagged two or three brace of dovebies<sup>11</sup>, which after being skinned and steeped for a time in water, were made into sea pies, and pronounced very excellent eating. They also endeavoured to kill some seals, which continually popped their heads out of the water with apparent curiosity, gazing stupidly at those who were about to destroy them. But though it is certain they were hit, and often on the head, yet in no instance could they be secured before they sunk. (47-48)

These two passages allow great insight into the inner workings of Back's text and offer examples of how nature and landscape function within nineteenth-century narratives of exploration. To begin with, in the first passage Back includes the element of wind, which on the preceding page of his narrative is depicted as a major obstacle to their progress<sup>12</sup>, not as an antagonist but as an ally in their struggle to survive. This acts as another reminder of the duality existing in nature itself as a literary construct and explorers' relationships to it in the literal sense, which is the dual role it plays as provider of life but also that which takes it away, as is also well demonstrated by Thompson in the section dealing with "Rime". Here, not only do the natural elements allow moments of relief from the monotony and dangers of the sea, but so do its creatures "whose sportive tricks and ludicrous attitudes relieved the monotony of the scene," act as entertainment and a source of "amusement" for the men. Arguably, these positive depictions are temporary

---

<sup>11</sup> A small black-and-white sea bird, the Dovekie is chubby and has a short-neck and very short bill. It is found in the Arctic and along northern Atlantic coasts (Audubon 26).

<sup>12</sup> See passage on page 18 in the section entitled "Back's Rendition of Survival".

lapses, as are the actual moments of respite on such expeditions, as the major setting still remains monotonous and the creatures are looked upon as a form of entertainment but not necessarily respected by the men, a fact which becomes obvious in the second passage. Furthermore, while hunting for sport was a popular activity during the nineteenth century, in the second passage the narrator sets himself apart from the men who “destroy” the seals. This exclusion targets him as the source of respect for the creatures in the first passage, as if it were he who had ensured that they “came and departed unmolested”, and he who controlled the situation as he controls the dictation of his narrative; and this functions much in the same manner as Hearne’s account of the massacre scene in which he is not part of the action but stands as a spectator who later relates the tale through the act of writing. While this is meant to demarcate Back as an honourable figure, precise words in the passage once more betray his own role in man’s lack of respect for wild creatures at large, when he writes that the seals were “gazing stupidly at those who were about to destroy them”. This comment simply perpetuates the negative discourse of savagery of the author’s era and, along with the actual wasteful destruction of the seals, acts as a powerful reflection of man’s general lack of respect towards nature; as a symbol of man’s place in the human order of things; and as an example of nature being supplanted yet again by, as in Frye, “an intelligence that does not love it”.

Before continuing and turning to a sample from Thompson’s *Narrative*, one must first consider the relationship existing between literature and the dissemination in Victorian England of knowledge pertaining to North America, for two specific types of literary works in Britain transmitted “veritable” knowledge of the northern regions of the continent to the general reading public during this period: the narrative of exploration and

the encyclopaedia. The Chambers brothers' *Chambers's Encyclopaedia: A Dictionary of Universal Knowledge for the People* (1880) and Adam and Charles Black's ninth edition of *The Encyclopaedia Britannica: A Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and General Literature* (1875), are perfect examples of how the same language and literary conventions found within narratives of exploration also helped mould the British nation's first contacts with North America in encyclopaedic entries touching upon subjects of all kinds. Many entries in these works engage in a negative discourse of savagery, a discourse which greatly influences peoples' perceptions of the wilderness, landscapes, and Native inhabitants of the continent, as discussed earlier in relationship to Hearne, and many of these same entries are replete with a negative literary construction of these elements as found within narratives of exploration. Such representations help to explain general Old World attitudes towards these natural elements and the Other in general, but also outline the basic literary conventions and popular conceptualisations of New World subjects having influenced the works of our three explorers. These types of representations also stand as typical examples to be deconstructed within a post-colonial setting and discourse in order to reveal the colonisers' own attitudes and inadequacies. The fourth volume of *Chambers's Encyclopaedia*, for example, presents an entry on "Esquimaux, or Eskimo" which says much about the era in which it was written and the general approach to some people or things not of British origin at the time of its publication:

The habits of the E. are filthy and revolting in the extreme. A great part of their food is consumed without any attempt at cooking it, and they drink the blood of newly killed animals as the greatest delicacy that could be offered them. In the short summer, those who can afford it live in tents; but in the winter they all equally live in snow-huts, the stench of which, from the offal with which they are stored, and the filthy oil that gives them light, makes them insupportable to the European. The dress of both sexes is nearly the same, consisting of the skins of animals, reindeer, birds, and even fish—whatever conduces most to warmth, without much regard to appearance; but in their winter abodes they usually wear

nothing except trousers. Their religion consists principally in superstitious observances, but they believe, we are told, in two greater spirits, and many lesser ones. (129)

In “Conclusion to a *Literary History of Canada*”, Frye writes of Elizabeth Waterson’s appraisal of travel writings that deal with Canada, in a way that greatly reflects that which is at work in the above passage, when he points to the fact that “[t]he travellers reviewed by Mrs. Waterson visit Canada much as they would visit a zoo: even when their eyes momentarily focus on the Natives they are still thinking primarily of how their own sensibility is going to react to what it sees” (rpt. in Klinck 827). Elsewhere Frye discusses the literary forms and conventions available to Canadian writers and makes a statement applicable to British writers of the nineteenth century as well, that what the “writer finds in his experience and environment may be new, but it will be new only as content: the form of his expression of it can take shape only from what he has read, not from what he has experienced” (835). Frye helps us to understand how passages in texts such as the above can influence readers and members of the culture within which they are produced; and as a further extension of this culture, its main body of literature acts as the fodder feeding and influencing writers’ depictions of the country and its indigenous elements, species, and experiences directly related to them. Such a description of the Inuit people is written, distributed, and read in concordance with this relationship existing between the author and the culture of which he or she is a product. The judgement imposed upon the Inuit, that their eating habits are “filthy and revolting in the extreme”, as well as the generalisation that the “snow-huts” they live in during the winter, “the stench of which, from the offal with which they are stored, and the filthy oil that gives them light, makes them insupportable to the European”, therefore act as reflections of British codes of etiquette and hygiene of the era, and do not truly reflect the Inuit

peoples' actual state of being. Even in the description of their dress, which the writer understands as being based upon the practical realities of the climate and materials that are readily available to them, the author resorts to degrading the "Eskimo" by stating that they do not have "much regard to appearance". As the language and discourse established in the passage should have it, this negative imagery is taken even further when the author claims that their habit of wearing nothing except trousers when in their igloos is a sign of bad taste which goes against the social norms associated to clothing in nineteenth century England. As if the language used to describe the Inuit is not evocative enough up to this point in the same passage to warrant reading it from a post-colonial perspective, and thus revealing the somewhat puritanical social norms of the time, the recurring subject of Native spiritual beliefs as "superstitious" and therefore false, is also introduced.

In contrast to the above passage from *Chambers's Encyclopaedia*, Thompson's *Narrative* is far from being racist and is instead rather respectful towards Native culture in general. Therefore, it is here important to mention that the passage on the "Eskimo" was not solely included above in order to point out evidence of how Natives of the New World are sometimes responded to in a negative fashion. This passage was most importantly included in our discussion as an illustration of how difficulties of representation make their way into writings that deal with the New World and the elements that constitute it. As explorer and writer Thompson must also articulate his malaise, as outsider looking in, with regards to expressing and filtering his own experiences in the wilderness of North America. He does so in a way which reflects his own point of view and his own understanding of things, and not one which aligns his

*Narrative* with such negative depictions as that of the “Eskimo” in *Chambers’s Encyclopaedia*. Although the explorer presents many scenes in which he conveys the beauty of nature and landscape as settings, and does so in a manner that demonstrates his own knowledge and scientific understanding of that which he observes, one particular instance dealing with the phenomena of mirages illustrates Thompson’s role as a newcomer to a land which has yet to reveal all of its secrets. The scene unfolds as Thompson relates:

In the latter end of February at the Reed Lake, at its west end, a Mirage took place in one of its boldest forms. About three miles from me was the extreme shore of the Bay; the Lake was near three miles in width, in which was a steep Isle of rock and another of tall Pines; on the other side a bold Point of steep rock. The Mirage began slowly to elevate all objects, then gently to lower them, until the Isles and the Point appeared like black spots on the ice, and no higher than its surface. The above bold Bay Shore was a dark black curved line on the ice. In the time of three minutes they all arose to their former height and became elevated to twice their height. Beyond the Bay the rising grounds, distant eight miles, with all their woods appeared, and remained somewhat steady for a few minutes; the Isles and Point again disappeared. The Bay Shore with the distant Forests came rolling forward with an undulating motion, as if in a dance; the distant Forests became so near to me I could see their branches, then with the same motion retired to half distance. The Bay shore could not be distinguished; it was blended with the distant land, thus advancing and retiring with different elevations for about fifteen minutes when the distant Forests vanished, the Isles took their place, and the Lake shores their form. The whole wild scenery was a powerful illusion, too fleeting and changeful for any pencil (38).

Here Thompson tells of a phenomenon known as a Superior Mirage or Fata Morgana, described in *Chambers’s Encyclopaedia* as

a phenomenon extremely common in certain localities, and as simple in its origin as astonishing in its effects. Under it are classed the appearance of distant objects as double, or as if suspended in the air, erect or inverted, &c. One cause of mirage is a diminution of the density of the air near the surface of the earth, produced by the transmission of heat from the earth, or in some other way; the denser stratum being thus placed *above*, instead of, as is usually the case, *below* the rarer. Now, rays of light from a distant object, situated in the denser medium (i.e., a little above the earth’s level), coming in a direction nearly parallel to the earth’s surface, meet the rarer medium at a very obtuse angle, and...instead of

passing into it, are reflected back to the dense medium; the common surface of the two media acting as a mirror. (485)<sup>13</sup>

Such mirages baffled many British mariners who explored the Arctic from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century and are attributable to many cartographic errors made by explorers at sea; and while it has a completely scientific explanation even Thompson was aware of according to findings of his own era, it stands as a remarkable example of how the wilderness of North America challenged the minds of those who studied and explored it while also standing in, as a literary representative of nature, as a type of trickster figure trying to bewilder its opponents in their struggle to overcome the land and to survive. This scene fits right in, along with others in which Thompson refers typically to nature and wilderness as things of magic and beauty fascinating explorers such as himself, with the project of lending voice through narratives of exploration to a land not yet having been exhaustively explored and studied by British explorers. In fact, he points out in a manner quite typical of the explorer/writer, such as Hearne in the “Preface” to his *Journey* and Richardson in the “Introductory” chapter to *Wacousta; or, The Prophecy: A Tale of the Canadas* (1832), in which Richardson refers to British North America as “a ground hitherto untouched by the wand of the modern novelist” (Richardson 2), that “[t]he whole wild scenery was a powerful illusion, too fleeting and changeful for any pencil”(Thompson 38). In so doing Thompson sets himself up as a humble writer who cannot possibly explain everything he observes throughout his expedition while simultaneously allowing for the fact that there still remain certain elements of the

---

<sup>13</sup> The earlier inclusion of the entry on Inuit people from *Chambers's Encyclopaedia* was meant to stand as an example of how “veritable” texts can and do manipulate information, and not as an example of a text to be totally distrusted. *Chambers's* is here cited because despite the obviously problematic entry on the Inuit, its entry on the Fata Morgana is one of the most relevant found in English Encyclopaedias produced near the end of the nineteenth century.



“unknown” he must face on his journey. The example of Thompson and his task as explorer and writer giving voice to the wilderness of North America, its realities, as well as its mysteries, is one among many, and as those of Back, Hearne, and countless others also demonstrate; the struggles of these men not only surviving their expeditions, but also recording their experiences through the written word, still mark the tradition of Canadian literature as we know it today. Just as the texts that came before them influenced and informed the construction of their own works, negative and positive aspects alike, so did their narratives of exploration lay down the ground work and conventions for generations to come. Many years and countless advances in British exploration of North America separate the early seventeenth century of Whitbourne’s *A Discourse and Discovery of Newfoundland* and Thompson’s *Narrative of his Explorations in Western America*, and all things change with time. The English narrative of exploration has proven to be no exception.

### III

#### **Nature and the Hero: Incredible Adventures and Significant Meanderings in the New World**

As early as the sixteenth century and the eager beginnings of Britain's search for the Northwest Passage, the figure of the explorer played a pivotal role in the nation's literary project of supporting its territorial claims over North America; and while the form of the explorer narrative underwent significant changes from the time of George Best's account of Martin Frobisher's voyages to that of Thompson's narrative, throughout the three centuries that separate them the role of the explorer itself essentially remained the same. Despite the fact that the explorer's basic role as heroic figure and central character within these narratives stayed intact throughout the years, it did evolve in sync with the form itself according to the necessities inherent to publication as well as their anticipated reception by the general audiences of their respective eras. As outlined in chapter one, for instance, up to the first major changes occurring within the form of the explorer narrative, marked by Hearne's 1795, *A Journey From Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean*, and its pivotal movement away from the traditional voyager's account based upon the journal or log, the explorer remained a centralised character, but one who occupied a space within a genre that had yet to develop its full literary potential. Thus before Hearne, explorers tended to emerge from markedly dull accounts as characters of importance, but of no more impressive quality than that of the texts which represented them. As such it now remains difficult to argue that travelers from Britain's early era of exploration cannot be considered central figures or characters within the literature of the time, as they were for the most part members of expeditions officially sanctioned by the Kings and Queens of England, and their potential as British

national icons was not fully tapped into until the eighteenth century and the significant, albeit controversial, involvement of John Hawkesworth.

Ian MacLaren points out in “From Exploration to Publication: The Evolution of a Nineteenth-Century Arctic Narrative”, that the reputations of key figures belonging to the important era of eighteenth century British exploration were intrinsically linked to the literary accounts of their expeditions, representations which meant that writers and publishers became more and more concerned with the formal literary construction of the explorer’s persona itself. At this point Hawkesworth enters the story with the publication of *An Account of the Voyages Undertaken by the Order of His Present Majesty for Making Discoveries in the Southern Hemisphere, and Successively Performed by Commodore Byron, Captain Wallis, Captain Carteret, and Captain Cook (1773)*, from which he gained as much notoriety for generalised criticism of liberties taken as author and editor as he gained repute, within the annals of literary history and the evolution of the narrative of exploration, for developing certain of the genre’s literary mechanisms.

MacLaren outlines the whole ordeal surrounding its publication:

In 1773 John Hawkesworth paid a steep price for what the British public, including such custodians as the Reverend John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, and Elizabeth Montagu,<sup>14</sup> censoriously judged his improper preparation for publication of the journals of British captains in the Pacific, including James Cook’s...Hawkesworth’s ignominy, perhaps even his early death, were the cost of the alleged improprieties and liberties he had taken with the explorers’ own words.

MacLaren then relates that

Cook stood to gain from Hawkesworth’s *faux pas*, the publishing event of the decade, for the explorer not only learned what could and could not go before the public, but also almost immediately began to benefit from what Hawkesworth

---

<sup>14</sup> Elizabeth Montagu was an 18th century writer and patron who played an important role in the creation of the Bluestocking Society. She rubbed elbows with such pivotal 18th century writers as Samuel Johnson, Edmund Burke and Horace Walpole.

had done that had *not* prompted public outrage. This was the creation of the heroic adventurer. (43)

Here, MacLaren points to a feature quite important in relationship to the discussion of heroes and the narrative of exploration, that being the notion of fame through reputation, whether good or bad, and how explorers such as Cook caught on to this fact themselves not long after the stormy reception of Hawkesworth's *Account*. After Frobisher's expedition of 1576 and Best's rendition of it, essentially identifiable as the impetus of all later accounts linked to Britain's search for the Northwest Passage, Hawkesworth's stands as one of the defining examples in the development of the form, as his efforts not only influenced the writing and publication of Cook's subsequent narratives, but also influenced such figures as Back and essentially changed the way in which the explorer as character is constructed. Hawkesworth addresses these developments in the introductory chapter to his *Account*, where he points out that

It is drawn up from the journals that were kept by the Commanders of the several ships, which were put into my hands by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty for that purpose: and, with respect to the voyage of the Endeavour, from other papers equally authentic; an assistance which I have acknowledged in an introduction to the account of her voyage.

When I first undertook the work, it was debated, whether it should be written in the first or third person: it was readily acknowledged on all hands, that a narrative in the first person would, by bringing the Adventurer and the Reader nearer together, without the intervention of a stranger, more strongly excite an interest, and consequently afford more entertainment[.] (iv-v)

Hawkesworth draws the public's attention to the fact that he is not the original author of the explorers' accounts, and also attempts to lend to the work a semblance of validity by mentioning its being drawn from "authentic" journals written by the commanders Byron, Wallis, Carteret, and Cook, themselves. This in and of itself may have sat well with an eighteenth century reading audience, but as in the case of most changes within longstanding traditions such as that of English literature, a period of adjustment was

necessary for the change to become solidly anchored in the form of the explorer narrative. This change did come about thanks to Hawkesworth's intervention, but as MacLaren points out, the reasons he was criticised are attributable to certain aspects of the "*faux pas*" he committed, such as subjective interventions and allowing himself to include "hint[s] of moral relativism" within his narratorial interjections, these things Dr. John Douglas diligently stayed away from during the preparation and publication of Cook's second and third expeditions (MacLaren 44). Douglas did his best to avoid committing the same literary transgressions as the regretted Hawkesworth, but as MacLaren points out, there was

also much to be retained from the literary invention of his deceased predecessor. Not only the first-person voice for the narrator but also that characterization of the dutiful, magnanimous patriot and the securing of the monarch as patron of the publication constituted the chief qualities of the pattern that Douglas retained and polished in his editions of Cook's second and third voyages. (44)

Hawkesworth's case thus stands as an important example of how the genre was in dire need of significant developments at the beginning of the eighteenth century; and the positive changes of an otherwise complete literary blunder, which Douglas adopted to his own writing, mark the beginning of significant developments within the form that continued on through Hearne well into twentieth century Canada. For these reasons, before moving on, Hawkesworth's *An Account of the Voyages Undertaken by the Order of His Present Majesty for Making Discoveries in the Southern Hemisphere, and Successively Performed by Commodore Byron, Captain Wallis, Captain Carteret, and Captain Cook*, deserves at least brief attention in our discussion of the explorer as hero in the narrative of exploration.

## **Hawkesworth's Path to Redemption**

Securing the patronage of the monarch is one of the essential characteristics of Hawkesworth's construction of the figure of the explorer as hero, and he chooses to begin his text by evoking the relationship between the King and the explorers of his narrative. By opening his narrative in this manner Hawkesworth achieves two things: he importantly aligns the explorers themselves with the monarchy and thus establishes their status as ambassadors; and he elevates his own status through his dedication of the text to the King. This sets him up as an ambassador in his own right while allowing for the fact that he secured the monarch's patronage for its official publication. His dedication "To The King" speaks volumes for the potential power of this politically grounded literary strategy, for not only does the author flatter his royal patron; but he attributes the achievements of the British nation directly to the King himself as well as his whole approach to the nation's exploratory endeavours.

After the great improvements that have been made in Navigation since the discovery of America, it may well be thought strange that a very considerable part of the globe on which we live should still have remained unknown; that it should still have been the subject of speculation, whether a great portion of the Southern Hemisphere is land or water; and even where land had been discovered, that neither its extent nor figure should have been ascertained. But the cause has probably been, that sovereign Princes have seldom any other motive for attempting the discovery of new countries than to conquer them, that the advantages of conquering countries which must first be discovered are remote and uncertain, and ambition has always found objects nearer home.

It is the distinguishing characteristic of Your Majesty to act from more liberal motives; and having the best fleet, and the bravest as well as most able navigators in Europe, Your Majesty has, not with a view to the acquisition of treasure, or the extent of dominion, but the improvement of commerce and the increase and diffusion of knowledge, undertaken what has so long been neglected; and under Your Majesty's auspices, in little more than seven years, discoveries have been made far greater than those of all the navigators in the world collectively, from the expedition of Columbus to the present time. (Hawkesworth 1-3)

Through this dedication many things are set in motion in order to stress the King's own status as a monarch of impressive character and strong economic, intellectual, and moral convictions; and the King's qualities in turn stand as powerful reflections of the characters and lofty personae of the explorers who act in his name. While it is common knowledge that at the time Hawkesworth wrote his *Narrative*, much of North America still remained to be charted and mapped with clarity and precision, an undertaking attacked with great success by explorers like Thompson and Hearne near the close of the century, attributing the lack of advancement to the sovereigns of other countries seems like a blatant generalisation on the part of the author. However, while this seems to be the case at first glance, when Hawkesworth's intentions are taken into account, it becomes evident that this exaggerated claim acts as part of the mechanisms employed in the construction of explorers as national heroes. The same is inferred in the statement that "Your Majesty has, not with a view to the acquisition of treasure, or the extent of dominion, but the improvement of commerce and the increase and diffusion of knowledge, undertaken what has so long been neglected", for the explorers themselves, as representatives of the crown and sources of this "knowledge", are essentially at the base of it all. They act in his name and therefore explore, discover, and lay claim to the territories of North America as well as significant knowledge pertaining to the northern part of the continent; and the language applied to the description of the explorers themselves in the last section when Hawkesworth comments on the King's "having the best fleet, and the bravest as well as most able navigators in Europe", reinforces their being set up as heroes in a transparent but very effective manner. No doubt remains that such rhetoric aided in securing the public's approbation of such expeditions, and as can

be ascertained through the eventual and lasting reputation of the great James Cook, Hawkesworth's project not only helped to elevate the King's reputation but also aided in the inscription of Cook, and as such the figure of the explorer in general, into the annals of history. Thanks to Hawkesworth's significant contributions to the genre and Douglas's subsequent final touches, Cook, especially after his "noble" death in 1779, not only became a hero within Britain's collective imagination and that of an international reading audience, but also found his place as a pivotal model later adhered to by many explorers who followed in his footsteps.

### **Of Such Mettle They Shall Be**

Before discussing the roles of landscape and nature in the construction of heroes in narratives of exploration, we must first return to some of the conventional elements that are part of the base Hawkesworth and Douglas built upon in the eighteenth century. According to David Galloway, as mentioned in the first chapter, "[f]rom its very beginnings, the 'literature' of Canada was stamped by a struggle against the climate and against the land itself" (Klinck 6), and explorers first came into being as heroes through depictions of this struggle. The struggle to survive in its most early representations, as found in Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations* and Purchas's *Purchas His Pilgrims*, was at first founded upon myths and legends traditionally associated to the travel narrative in the sixteenth century. While nature and landscape often play important roles as antagonistic elements and settings in the accounts included in these texts, the hero is remembered mostly for his daring deeds and the adventures he experiences in strange and mysterious worlds. This type of construction of the explorer as heroic figure lies at the heart of



Charles J. Finger's 1928 *Heroes From Hakluyt*, in which he treats some of the main voyages included in Hakluyt's eight volume edition of 1598, and pays homage to the literary tradition of the explorer genre. Finger establishes the literary setting for Hakluyt's work early on in his book when he explains its points of interest and delineates many of the conventions usually associated to the genre during the sixteenth century:

There are all those close printed pages, all those long sentences and heavy paragraphs, all that queer spelling and strange punctuation, all that solidity to be expected from prose writers of the late 1500's, for Hakluyt died in 1616. It's not to be denied that the books look dull. They are a sort of mountain, vast and forbidding. But master the mountain; what a difference then! You have a world at your feet as in a map outspread. It is a world of adventure, of voyagers and adventurers and knights and seamen. It is a magic world of true and false, fact and fable, all mixed up. There are waterspouts which had to be split apart to save ships; mountains of magnetic iron which drew the nails from ships, giants who dwelt in mountains and devoured men, warrior kings whose swords were sharp, sailors who did daring deeds, crusaders who rode. There are tales of voyagers who set off with eyes bright and shining, of Tartars who lived wild lives, of pirates and slave traders and men who were held in captivity. There are tales of travels in ice-bound lands, in the tropics, in deserts. There are sea-fights, and shipwrecks. There are tales of strange beasts that frightened tough old mariners, such as the creature that came when Sir Humphrey Gilbert set a homeward course. (Finger 4)

Finger evokes the myriad of stories influencing sixteenth century tales of exploration in new worlds and many of the general types included call to mind traditional elements found in such early works as Homer's *The Odyssey* (circa 800-600 B.C.), the *Travels* of Marco Polo (1298), the medieval *Mandeville's Travels* (circa 1357-1371), the alliterative Arthurian romance of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (unknown circa 1375-1400), and such classics of later centuries as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726). As Finger forwards through the clever mention that the world of these narratives was "a magic world of true or false, fact and fable, all mixed up", there is a fine line between the real world and the world written about and presented in early narratives of exploration. This fact never really seemed to bother readers in

general, especially those reading narratives as a means of escape and entertainment. Narratives of exploration, as they naturally draw upon elements of adventure, attempt to engage readers through the inclusion of moments of crisis, either being resolved or ending in tragic failure, and for these reasons draw upon stories and texts which come before them in order to give life to worlds discovered or explored by their central characters. These characters in turn become part of the mythology of European expansion, and as Finger points out, “[m]en who had been in far-off lands were expected to tell wonderful things,” and “so they did as they were expected, and others passed the tales along, adding fringes and trimmings to them” (7). Men such as Douglas’s Cook and Best’s Frobisher, thus become the literary descendants of Homer’s Odysseus, and the traditional elements of adventure and fantastic tales in far off lands are therefore naturally expected of the accounts in which they figure. What varies from text to text, and what inevitably helped shape the tradition of explorer narratives dealing with North America, are the lands in which the stories take place, for from one setting to another landscapes change and vary, as do the beasts and challenges met by the explorers. North America was the perfect setting for explorers to test their physical and intellectual capacities, and within the constructed accounts of their voyages, their experiences related directly to the wilderness of the continent in the classic struggle to survive would become the greatest expression of their potential power and worth as representatives of the British Empire.

### **Heroism and Drama in the High North: The Arctic as Literary Setting**

No other setting marked examples of early British literature dealing with the exploration of North America more than did the Arctic, and in the first accounts dealing with

expeditions in search of the Northwest Passage the Arctic first found expression as a central character and setting in the mythology of British exploration. The Arctic fascinated readers throughout the centuries of the search for the passage, as it was depicted by many men having journeyed there, especially in the sixteenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as a place like no other; a land of ice and desolation, and a place where the explorer had to learn about himself and the environment that surrounded him in order to survive and accomplish his exploratory goals. The Arctic also fuelled dreams of riches and inspired the imaginations of men who visited its regions with its harsh beauty and natural charms; and all in all, came to represent many of the features crucial to the construction of the explorer as literary and national hero. George Malcolm Thomson evokes the alluring qualities of the Arctic in *The Search for the North-West Passage* (1975), when he explains that

[t]he Arctic had a magic of its own for the early voyager. It had mystery. It had a magnetism that could not be denied. It was forbidding and alluring at the same time. It appealed to courage, endurance, fortitude and to greed, too, of course. The frozen wilderness had—it must have, as a necessary complement to all its horrors—gold! Gold and the sea road to the golden East! There was, in short, emotion and the impure poetry of adventure in the early image of the North. (Thomson 14)

Within this type of literary construction of the North the image of the explorer as survivor and hero found its footing in early narratives dealing with Arctic exploration and the search for the Northwest Passage. The men set out with the support and approval of the Queens and Kings of England in order to claim territory in their names, as the main reasons for British exploration in the North were after all directly linked to dreams of a passage to Cathay, and explorers eventually became iconic figures of this search. These men first lent voice to their struggle against these magical, yet ever threatening elements,

as antagonist and setting in the depictions of their own struggles with the wilderness and nature of the Arctic and northern North America in general.

In *Canada and the Idea of North* (2001), Sherrill E. Grace builds upon this notion of representing the North and discusses how it has been portrayed by Canadians, who greatly identify with the “idea of North” as an extension of and representation of their own sense of belonging to Canada, through various art forms ranging from music, pop culture, literature, and various other forms related to the country’s social, cultural and political histories. Her study draws upon many unique examples especially relevant in relationship to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, but what she offers as being at the foundation of the construction of the North which remains something extremely abstract yet familiar and accessible, are the early explorers of the region and their narratives, which in turn have greatly influenced and affected the works of such twentieth century writers as Atwood, Frye, Leacock, Mowat, and Berton. Grace suggests that “Atwood’s North is much more than malevolent; it is parodic, tricky, alluring, hungry, inescapably part of who we are as Canadians, and fun”; while “[w]hat Leacock, Mowat and Berton construct is a naturalized version of exploration as Canadian history in which the men whose narratives they recycle are viewed for the most part as noble, intrepid Canadian heroes, even when they fail” (35-36). Here Grace retraces key features which have been essential to the construction of the North as an antagonistic, yet noble and beautiful character, as early as the sixteenth century of Hakluyt’s *Principal Navigations*; and that these same features, most often represented through landscape, nature, and wilderness, are also traditionally associated with the construction of heroes as well. She continues to

discuss the subject of constructing heroes within the Canadian literary tradition, which naturally includes early narratives of exploration:

Within this lively tradition there is a strong element of the romantic and personal southern response to a variously located northern landscape of cold, snow, ice, mystic beauty, and alluring danger, a response that persists in constructing North as a grail, a test (notably for men), and as a place to find not the Other but the self. (43)

That which modern Canadian or “southern” authors respond to is similar to that which early explorers reacted to from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, a harsh country filled with landscapes and a wilderness which came to symbolically represent the journey of the explorer into the farthest reaches of his own self. As outlined earlier on in relationship to Hearne, this type of literary depiction of the physical elements of the North acts as a crucial part of Atwood and Frye’s understanding of the notion of survival, and thus of versions of survival presented in narratives such as those of Back, Hearne, and Thompson. This also emerges as a crucial factor in establishing explorers as heroic figures. Landscape, nature, and wilderness represent the greatest obstacles to explorers’ survival and progression in the North and through their overcoming and or supplanting of these elements their prowess as literary characters and national heroes is put to the test, strengthened, and proven true. As Grace also suggests,

[t]he discourse of this subtext is heavily masculinist even today; it assumes an objectifiable feminine Other in the physical terrain that can be (indeed, must be) penetrated, revealed, put to use, tamed, and controlled. It also assumes and reiterates the male author’s first-hand physical and intellectual knowing, experience and expertise, a knowledge that circles back to confirm his masculinity. (48)

In this short passage Grace recapitulates the essence of many scenes presented in narratives such as those of Hearne, Back, and Thompson, in which the male explorer battles the elements and from which individual renditions of the different levels of

survival, as proposed by Atwood, come into being. While each explorer and narrative retains individual qualities and a unique identity, it goes without saying that the explorer genre in general, as well as in specific relationship to the project of constructing heroes, abounds with a strong sense of a masculine tradition and from its very beginnings was part of a genealogical discourse developed in order to pay homage to the founders of new territories and nations. Gerald Friesan supports this notion in *Citizens and Nation: An Essay on History, Communication, and Canada* (2000), by explaining that “[t]he genealogical school of heritage interpretation insists on all honour being paid to the founding fathers and mothers. Known to historians as ‘filiopietism’ (literally, praise or worship owed to the founders by dutiful sons and daughters)” (67). As exploration remained a mostly masculine activity, especially in the early days of exploration in North America, the lines traced throughout the development of the genre are intrinsically linked to the notion of ‘filiopietism’ in a manner that reflects the male dominated vision of the North and the masculinist discourse with which male explorer/writers gave voice to their struggles against and coming to terms with landscape and nature through the written word. While this tradition seems exclusionary in its application of the “feminine Other” as a symbolic extension of these elements, the conventions applied to the genre and ensconced within it over time, essentially act as further representations of the construction of heroes facing obstacles manifested by elements indeed Other in relationship to the male explorer himself. These elements, although they are often not rationally dealt with or explained, as the two animalised female victims in Hearne’s massacre scene, are appropriated for rhetorical reasons by the male authors participating in the literary project itself.

## **Heroes From Britannica: the Great Captain James Cook**

While an overtly masculinist tradition manifests itself in narratives of exploration, during the Victorian era obvious traces of it are also found in the common body of knowledge in the form of the encyclopaedia; and as in the case of the previously cited entry on the “Eskimo” in *Chambers’s Encyclopaedia*, in which language is applied in an overtly manipulative fashion, so does language associated with the tradition of constructing masculine heroes find its way into entries dealing with explorers as historical figures. Although encyclopaedias are understood as being far removed from fiction, they remain written productions nonetheless and are thus also constructed literary works. The language applied to explorers within such encyclopaedias is greatly based upon conventional words and labels inspired by Hawkesworth’s assumption that the explorer could be effectively written as hero, “by rendering the character preeminently magnanimous, gracious, noble, in short, an adventurer who suffered adversity, whether inflicted by the elements or by the heathens encountered en route, in the name of a nation’s acquisition of knowledge and perhaps of territory” (MacLaren 44). These same subjects are often introduced, outlined, and applied as an extension of the project of constructing heroes in nineteenth century entries on British explorers of great renown, with many of these entries being quite reminiscent of writings such as Hawkesworth’s dedication and introduction to his *Narrative* or Finger’s introduction to *Heroes From Hakluyt*.

An excellent specimen of this masculinist discourse at work is a record of Captain James Cook (1728-1779), published in the ninth edition of *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1875), in which Cook is presented as a great historical figure, but with much care being

taken in forming a proper image of the man as an explorer of great mettle and great historical value as representative of the British Empire. In this entry Cook is introduced as a “celebrated navigator” in the habitual manner: his humble origins are first evoked; his early career and eventual promotion to the rank of captain in the Royal Navy follow; and then the many expeditions and accomplishments to which his grandiose reputation can be attributed are briefly discussed. While the entry itself reads as a typical nineteenth century encyclopaedic entry, written in plain prose and revealing many simple facts, the conventional language usually associated to accounts of heroic British explorers enlivens and embellishes it:

The attention of Government having been turned to the discovery of a north-west passage in the Arctic regions, Cook volunteered to conduct the expedition, and his offer was gladly accepted. Two ships, the “Resolution” and the “Discovery,” were speedily equipped and placed under his care. Cook’s instructions were to sail first into the Pacific through the chain of the newly discovered islands which he had recently visited, and on reaching New Albion to proceed northward as far as latitude 65° and then to endeavour to find a passage to the Atlantic.—Setting sail from the Nore, June 25, 1776, he cruised for a considerable time in the South Pacific, discovering several small islands; and in the spring of 1777, judging it too far advanced in the season for attempting the navigation of the northern seas, he bore away to the Friendly Islands. Here he continued for several months, and only set sail for the north in January 1778. On his passage from the Friendly Islands, he discovered a group which he named the Sandwich Islands, after the earl of Sandwich, who had taken great interest in the expedition. After circumnavigating these, and laying down their position on a chart, Cook reached the coast of America in March 1778; and following the coast-line northward, penetrated into the bay afterwards known as Cook’s inlet. Disappointed of a passage in this direction, he sailed for Behring’s Straits, where again he found the passage intercepted by an impenetrable wall of ice. Returning to winter at the Sandwich Islands, he discovered Mowee (Maui) and Owhyhee or Hawaii, where he met his tragical death. During the night of the 13<sup>th</sup> February 1779, one of the “Discovery’s” boats was stolen by the natives; and Cook, in order to recover it, proceeded to put in force his usual expedient of seizing the person of the king until reparation should be made. Having landed on the following day, a scuffle ensued with the natives, which compelled the party of marines who attended him to retreat to their boats. Cook was last to retire; and as he was nearing the shore he received a blow from behind which felled him to the ground. He rose immediately, and vigorously resisted the crowds that pressed upon him; but as the boats’ crews were able to render him no assistance, he was soon overpowered (14<sup>th</sup> February 1779). (Britannica 331)



This passage recalls so many of the conventions associated to eighteenth and nineteenth century narratives of exploration that it almost seems taken directly from an account of Cook's voyages; and the fact that the passage, as well as the entire entry on the captain, is steeped in the same language found in such narratives greatly attests to their influence at the time on the general public's conception and knowledge of explorers and their voyages. There is no doubt that narratives of exploration were the general means of creating the heroic personae of such men as Cook, Back, Franklin, Thompson and Hearne, and through such literary constructions of them as significant figures, encyclopaedias supported their claims to fame and helped strengthen their literary and historical reputations. In the passage quoted above, for instance, we are reintroduced to Britain's quest for the Northwest Passage, which in and of itself can be viewed as a type of grail, as Grace also suggests in relationship to the North in general, helping insert Cook into the male tradition of stoic explorers risking life and limb in search of a passage leading to the riches of Cathay. We are also reminded of the explorer's role as participant in such quests, as outlined in Atwood's *Survival*, and the tradition of naming new lands and territories as a means not only of personal interest and a physical reminder of one's own exploratory achievements, but also as a way of paying homage to wealthy patrons such as Lord Sandwich and laying claim to territory in the name of the British Empire. Also of note is the depiction of the great captain as a man of incredible sense and instinct, qualities easily attributable to his crews' being spared from the fate shared by such expeditions as those of Henry Hudson<sup>15</sup> and the famed Sir John Franklin, who

---

<sup>15</sup> Hudson's is a different story than that of Franklin's. His fate, as well as that of many expedition members is historically attributed to the explorer's lack of judgement and leadership, which ultimately led to mutiny and ended as one of the most sordid tales of British exploration in North America.

were forced to winter in the North and paid the ultimate price for their lack of knowledge on how to survive harsh northern winters.

Although the passage resonates with many themes pivotal to the construction of heroes, those of particular interest in the present discussion are the struggle to survive, nature as an obstacle to explorers' progress, and the classic confrontation with Otherness and its manifestation in the form of clashes with antagonistic Natives. As an essential feature in the construction of the explorer as hero, the classic struggle to survive plays an important role even in this encyclopaedic entry, for Cook is depicted as a great leader who looks over his flock with great care. Although they encounter major obstacles, such as an "impenetrable wall of ice" in the Bering Straits, and are at sea for months on end, nothing in this entry tells of grave sufferings, mutinies, or failures on the part of the captain. Cook is established as a man whose "merits—were of the highest order", and whose "commanding personal presence, his sagacity, decision, and perseverance enabled him to overcome all difficulties; while his humanity and sympathetic kindness rendered him a favourite with his crews" (Britannica 331). And in a literary move that Grace might also identify as part of a discourse aimed at a feminised landscape and nature, which Cook appropriately "penetrates", the great man manages to supplant that which is "impenetrable" through his many accomplishments as male hero. By the time of the hero's death we are almost as enthralled in the construction of his character as we are in those of Thompson and Hearne when reading their narratives, and the captain's death forcibly reeks of greatness and a sense of success even in death and some lingering remnants of failure, for as in the case of many men to come before him he is also greatly successful despite his failure to locate a Northwest Passage. Cook dies fighting, as he

“vigorously resisted” until the very end; and the reader will notice that it takes “crowds” of Natives to take him down before he is finally “overpowered”. Doubtless through this rather Hawkesworthian piece of writing, the impact of the literary construction of the explorer as heroic figure and national icon in narratives of exploration is further evinced. By the end of the nineteenth century by tapping into its own potential as a significant literary form, the genre itself had accomplished exactly what men such as Hawkesworth, Douglas, and Back had hoped.

### **The Truth Behind the Words: Of Literal and Literary Struggles to Survive**

Alongside the many developments to occur within the explorer genre between the sixteenth and the end of the nineteenth century, such as the shift to a first person narrator, the development of the explorer as a central character and iconic figure in relationship to imperial expansion, and the establishment of a more poetic fictional style less focussed on relating monotonous details and more concerned with entertaining readers while also informing them, since the form’s early beginnings, nature has been cast in the role of the explorer’s greatest adversary in the classic struggle to survive. This role is an extremely significant one, as attested to by the fact that innumerable writers and critics have studied and written back to its early manifestations since even before the mid-twentieth century, and continue to do so today. This is for the most part due to the way landscape and nature were applied by writers of these earlier centuries as characters in their narratives. While this is true and crucial to an understanding of the genre’s development as a whole, we must also remember that while most authors applied these elements figuratively or according to the necessities of literary creation, the explorer narrative draws upon

veritable experiences and depicts, to a relatively great extent, the real experiences of men caught up in very literal struggles to survive. For example, in the case of Back's *Narrative of an Expedition in H.M.S. Terror*, as demonstrated in chapter one, the elements of landscape and nature become figuring characters in the construction of his persona. The truth of the matter still remains, however, that during his expedition he and his men endured numerous hardships and barely made it back to European shores, as their ship was left in terrible condition after having itself been put to the test by the elements as well. Under different circumstances the narrative of a "successful" voyage written by its leader, may have been written instead by someone else as a tale of tragedy and loss. The fate of John Franklin's last expedition also stands as a stark reminder of the "reality" behind narratives of exploration, it arguably being the most eerie reminder of this reality in the history of exploration in North America, as the disappearance of his entire crew has haunted the imaginations of British and Canadian writers and explorers for over a hundred-and-fifty years. Derek Hayes gives a brief summary of the expedition's final struggles to survive which ironically harkens back to the element of ice, so key to Back's narrative construction, in a manner that displays how Back and his crew could easily have suffered the same fate if luck had not been on their side. Hayes relates that after setting out in May 1845 and being spotted by whalers in the northern part of Baffin Bay, Franklin simply vanished never to be seen again:

Franklin did sail north into Wellington Channel that year, presumably because the ice conditions would not let him go south, and he reached 77°N. He returned to Beechey Island, to the southwest of Devon Island, to winter. The following year he sailed south through Peel Sound and Franklin Strait into what is now Larsen Sound, the right direction—were it not for the ice. The multi-year ice here surges from the main pack southeast down M'Clintock Channel. On 12 September 1846 Franklin became irreversibly trapped in the ice. They were...just off the northern tip of King William Island.

The ice refused to release the ships the following summer, and the ships remained beset. Men were dying, and on 11 June 1847 Franklin also died. The following April Crozier<sup>16</sup>, leading 105 survivors, abandoned the ships and headed south, landing at Victory Point on King William Island, where records were left. Crozier then led his men south, intending to make for Back's Great Fish River (the Back River). The last survivors died at Starvation Cove, on the Adelaide Peninsula, immediately south of King William Island. (85)

Franklin's fate was not fully revealed until the early twentieth century and many tales and hypotheses began to circulate after his disappearance, which still live on today as part of the Franklin myth, such as stories of cannibalism, the possibility of lead poisoning due to the faulty soldering of tins used as a major part of the expedition's food supply, and the obvious possibility of their having been trapped in ice and succumbing to the harsh Arctic climate. These are all myths proven true with time. Scrutiny of the Franklin mystery clearly shows that despite the preparation put into the expedition in order to ensure its success in finally traversing and mapping a Northwest Passage, the ice got them. They were so well-equipped, in fact the best equipped expedition to ever leave England in search of the passage, that it was the opinion of the general public that they could meet with nothing other than success in their quest. Despite what John Geiger and Owen Beattie relate in their enthralling study of the physical, forensic, and historical evidence of the Franklin expedition, *Frozen in Time: Unlocking the Secrets of the Franklin Expedition* (1998), that the *Terror* and *Erebus* were equipped with steam engines in case of emergency, had ample food supplies to spend years in the Arctic, and the presence of men who were quite knowledgeable about exploration in the North, nothing could have been done to save them (Beattie 12-13). Franklin, like Back and many others who came before and after them, knew of the real dangers he would face on his journey to the North

---

<sup>16</sup> Francis Rawdon Moira Crozier. A famed British Naval officer with numerous Arctic expeditions under his belt.

and lost his battle to survive against nature. As we are reminded in Beattie's *Frozen in Time*, even today the almost perfectly preserved bodies of sailors John Torrington, John Hartnell, and William Braine, are to be found on Beechey Island where they were buried in the winter of 1846. And these men's bodies, still protected by the climate that essentially led to their deaths, stand as poignant remnants of the tale of the most famous of failed expeditions in the entire history of British exploration in North America.

While nature is ever-present in literature of exploration as both a thing of beauty and as that which explorers most dread but respect, one of the greatest examples of man's struggle against nature emerging from the centuries of active British exploration of the continent remains that of *David Thompson's Narrative of his Explorations in Western America, 1784-1812*. Although Thompson's *Narrative* has often been neglected in discussions of major works adding to the development of the explorer genre and the Canadian literary tradition, of late it has been given more attention as an important milestone in the development of this literary tradition as a whole and the explorer's impact as a historical figure in the development of the Canadian nation. We note renewed interest in Thompson with the organization of such significant events as the symposium entitled, *David Thompson: New Perspectives, New Knowledge*, which was hosted by the Glenbow Museum of Calgary Alberta, in October, 2007; and valuations of his text by writers such as Hopwood, who in his 1971 edition of Thompson's *Narrative*, suggests that

although incomplete and in places still almost in note form, David Thompson's *Travels* is one of the finest works in Canadian literature. The struggle for half a continent unfolds in the self-renewing freshness of an archetypal adventure story—a charity-school boy leaves his homeland and in a vast wilderness

achieves a vision of his life's task: to scientifically explore and survey that unknown waste. (Hopwood's Thompson 15)

As a central text, Thompson's therefore emerges as a narrative infused with a classic language of heroism, which at the same time manages to transmit the explorer's great respect for the wilderness of North America. This, as well as his elegant writing style and sense of what distinguishes an incredible story from an incredibly memorable one, combine to make his instances of danger and heroism some of the most indelible literary examples of man's struggle to survive in the wilds of North America. In a manner recalling J.J. Bigsby's portrayal of Thompson as a man endowed with "a very powerful mind, and a singular faculty of picture-making" who "can create a wilderness and people it with warring savages, or climb the Rocky Mountains with you in a snow-storm, so clearly and palpably, that only shut your eyes and you hear the crack of the rifle, or feel the snow-flakes melt on your cheeks as he talks" (Klinck 31); Thompson's *Narrative* rings with the passion of one genuinely fascinated by the nature of the land he explores. His ardor as a writer, especially in relationship to the wilderness and his many confrontations with it, permeates his tales of adventure and effectively sets him up as a hero and narrator whom the reader comes to trust and admire as both a historical and literary character. His *Narrative* is greatly accentuated by impressive instances of heroism and adventure, as he battles terrible snowstorms, is involved in serious conflicts with Natives hostile to European encroachment into their territories, and even fights against the established customs of his employers when he stands by his convictions that the Natives of the country should not be corrupted by the spirituous liquors usually offered to them in exchange for their services in the fur trade or as a simple enticement. One instance in particular stands out as a powerful example of how the greatest threat to

the explorer in his quest, despite many possible hardships, will always remain that of nature. In this most memorable scene, described in the chapter dealing with his “Trip to Lake Athabasca”, Thompson describes his descent of the Black River; a journey they began on June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1796. He begins by describing the river in detail and establishing it as a hazardous and powerful setting:

In it's course of One hundred and fifty three miles from the above place of observation in the Black Lake, it meets with, and forms, many small Lakes; and collects their waters to form a Stream of about one, to two, hundred yards in width...its course is sinuous, from the many hills it meets, and runs round in it's passage; it's current is strong, with many rapids, some of them one mile in length: it has four falls. Three of these are about half way down the River; the fourth fall is the end of a series of rapids, cutting through a high hill; at length the banks become perpendicular, and the river falls eight feet, the carrying place is six hundred yards in length. For a mile further the current is very swift; it is then for one hundred and eighteen yards, compressed in a narrow channel of rock of only twelve yards in width. At the end of this channel a bold perpendicular sided point of limestone rock projects at right angles to the course of the river, against which the rapid current rushes and appears driven back with such force that the whole river seems as if turned up from it's bottom. It boils, foams and every drop is white; part of the water is driven down a precipice of twenty feet descent; the greater part rushes through the point of rock and disappears for two hundred yards; then issues out in boiling whirlpools. (143-144)<sup>17</sup>

There is no denying that Thompson is well aware of the dangers involved in navigating such a river, but as an explorer in tune with his natural surroundings his awareness of this danger drives him to understand his formidable opponent, which is made quite obvious through his detailed description of the river itself. This is a key element in the theme of survival, one that Hearne was also seemingly aware of, and which prompted Thompson to become well versed in the techniques of reading and navigating rivers in order to steer around and avoid risky passages. The way he describes the river with its strong currents and turbulent nature evokes the sublimity of nature. This description also adds greatly to

---

<sup>17</sup> Note that the original spelling has not been altered in passages taken from Thompson's *Narrative*. This is not a revision of his text but an exploration of it, and for this reason it is cited in its original form. This is the case for all other quotations as well, including those in previous chapters.



the action of the almost catastrophic scene to follow and reminds the reader of the type of environment Thompson is forced to face as both a real explorer and a literary figure. This thus reinforces his construction as a character of heroic stature in the classic struggle to survive, for despite his seeming losses and struggles, Thompson emerges as a victorious hero in the end.

As this section of Thompson's *Narrative* continues to unfold, he adds more urgency to the dangers he is about to encounter during his descent. He first outlines the fact that the two men travelling with him know nothing of the state of the river outside of the winter season, and that no white man had ever descended its length before him. This allows for the fact that besides his own observations he has next to nothing upon which to base his navigation of the river. He outlines some of these dangers and relates:

This journey was attended with much danger, toil and suffering, for my guide knew nothing of the river, it's rapids and falls, haveing merely crossed it in places in hunting. We were always naked below the belt, on account of the rapids, from the rocks, shoals, and other obstructions we had to hand them, that is, we were in the water, with our hands grasping the canoe, and leading it down the rapids. The bed of the river is of rough or round loose stones, and gravel, our bare feet became so sore that we descended several rough rapids at great risque of our lives. (147-148)

Here Thompson evokes merely some of the hardships he must endure during the descent of the river, and as Bigsby suggests, the reader is easily drawn to empathise with the explorer and his plight. Minimally equipped and running risky sections of the river in order to allow their sore feet moments of respite, the three men push on and persevere, the leader, as usual, maintaining his calm and stoic presence of action and mind, qualities all necessary if the hero is to make it through the mishaps encountered throughout his exploratory quest.

The setting having been compellingly established and having been clearly understood, Thompson faces one of the most difficult challenges of his many adventures in the wilderness; and at this moment the reader can almost feel the tension in the air as the explorer continues to relate his tale. The three men keep on descending the river until they get to a section where they must guide the canoe from the shore using lines, a procedure known as tracking, and while the other two are on shore controlling the lines, Thompson takes on the daunting task of guiding the canoe safely to a take out point above a fall situated a little further down river. The incident ensues as follows:

On our return...we came to one of the falls, with a strong rapid both above and below it, we had a carrying place of 200 yards, we then attempted the strong current above the fall, they were to track the canoe up by a line, walking on shore, while I steered it, when they had proceeded about eighty yards, they came to a Birch Tree,...and there stood and disputed between themselves on which side of the tree the tracking line should pass. I called to them to go on, they could not hear me for the noise of the fall, I then waved my hand for them to proceed, meanwhile the current was drifting me out, and having only one hand to guide the canoe, the Indians standing still, the canoe took a sheer across the current, to prevent the canoe upsetting, I waved my hand to them to let go the line and leave me to my fate, which they obeyed. I sprang to the bow of the canoe took out my clasp knife, cut the line from the canoe and put the knife in my pocket, by this time I was on the head of the fall, all I could do was to place the canoe to go down bow foremost, in an instant the canoe was precipitated down the fall (twelve feet), and buried under the waves, I was struck out of the canoe, and when I arose among the waves, the canoe came on me and buried [me] beneath it, to raise myself I struck my feet against the rough bottom and came up close to the canoe which I grasped, and being now on shoal water, I was able to conduct the canoe to the shore....nothing remained in the canoe but an axe, a small tent of grey cotton, and my gun: also a pewter basin. When the canoe was hauled on shore I had to lay down on the rocks, wounded, bruised, and exhausted by my exertions...We had no time to lose, my all was my shirt and a thin linen vest, my companions were in the same condition, we divided the small tent into three pieces to wrap round ourselves, as a defence against the flies in the day, and something to keep us from the cold at night, for the nights are always cold. On rising from my rocky bed, I perceived much blood at my left foot, on looking at it, I found the flesh of my foot, from the heel to near the toes torn away...A bit of my share of the tent bound the wound, and thus barefooted I had to walk over the carrying places with their rude stones and banks...Late in the evening we made a fire and warmed ourselves. It was now our destitute condition stared us in the face, a long journey through a barren country, without provisions, or the means of obtaining any, almost naked, and suffering from the weather, all before us was very dark, but I had hope that the Supreme Being

through our great Redeemer to whom I made my short prayers morning and evening would find some way to preserve us[.] (148-150)

This scene stands as a solid example of Thompson as both the adventurer and writer at his best. Not only does he write in a manner that stresses his calm faculties, but he also evokes many of the traditional qualities of the heroic explorer. One need only imagine experiencing the same situation, under the same conditions, and the stark fear felt by the explorer easily comes to mind. This reminds us of the fact that the explorer, despite his roles as author and character within his text, relates events he has really experienced; the type of tale that not all men live to talk about, and the type of tale that creates heroes. As a true hero Thompson is calm and acts with impressive rapidity in extreme situations, as when he cuts the line, rights the canoe, and then plunges over the waterfall in the best position possible; and while doing all of this he has the forethought to secure his knife which is essential to his survival if he loses all else in the spill. Here the Hawkesworthian characteristics of the magnanimous hero come to mind, and through his commitment and incredible resolve under terrifying circumstances, Thompson presents himself as a man worthy of fame. After all of this occurs the three men endure many more hardships before being rescued by a band of Chipewyans, and despite serious illness, extreme malnourishment, and long exposure to the elements without any real protection at all, they are nursed back to health and sent on their way, successfully reaching Fairford House on July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1796. While Thompson attributes part of his success to the aid of the Chipewyans by mentioning their intervention in his narrative, the text remains his to construct as he deems appropriate for the creation of his own heroic persona. And as is usually the case with such classic examples of explorers' tales, in the end, the honour is all his for the taking.

## Conclusion

The beginnings of England's search for the Northwest Passage marks an important dividing line in the development of the English narrative of exploration, for during the centuries in which England was deeply preoccupied with finding a passage to the riches of Asia the form came into its own as part of a significant literary genre. As outlined in the previous chapters, during this same period of exploration spanning from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, major innovations came about thanks to such men as Richard Hakluyt, John Hawkesworth, George Back, David Thompson and Samuel Hearne, whose literary interventions helped elevate the explorer narrative to the rank it occupies today within Canada's collective imagination and establishing its role within the nation's literature as a whole. While these men's narratives, as well as those of others having explored the New World, act as reflections of their respective eras, as in the case of Sir Richard Whitbourne's *A Discourse and Discovery of Newfoundland*, a work caught up in the project of encouraging settlement in the early seventeenth century, or Back's significant and successful contribution to the construction of heroic, male figures of British exploration, their narratives are imbued with elements linked to the literary construction of the New World and the way three specific elements, in time, came to be represented. Nature, wilderness and landscape are at the heart of such early literary representations of North America. Whether they act as literary vehicles distorted for the means of propaganda, are applied to the construction of heroes through the age-old struggle to survive and the project of inscribing them into history, or stand as representations of man's journey into the self and of European attempts to gain access to the worlds of Others, as outlined by Frantz Fanon, these three elements became indelible

actors within the establishment of an early tradition linked to Britain in the Old World and Canadian literature today. As there is no better way to shed light upon the ways in which certain literary forms come to influence others than to present concrete examples of how such influences manifest themselves, we shall wrap up our discussion with a brief look at instances of themes and stories running throughout the general body of works presented in the three previous chapters, in one of the most interesting novels produced by a Canadian author near the close of the twentieth century; Mordecai Richler's extravagant example of historiographic metafiction at its best, *Solomon Gursky Was Here* (1989).

The world that Richler creates within *Solomon Gursky Was Here* depends greatly upon the legacy of the explorers outlined in previous chapters. For this reason, especially in relationship to our present discussion, Richler's novel merits attention as an example of a contemporary author putting the historical figure of the explorer and the narrative of exploration to use in an extremely effective and original manner. In *Solomon Gursky Was Here*, Richler draws upon the early history of British exploration in the Arctic, with the specific example of the final, infamous Franklin expedition, as a way to inscribe the figure of the Jew into the early days of Canada's history. This is done by cleverly having Ephraim Gursky, the figure around which the whole story of the novel is centred, along with his grandson Solomon, and his accomplice Izzy Garber, who must pass himself off as Sir Isaac Grant as established by Ephraim, gain passage aboard the Erebus of Franklin's expedition. Through this simple inclusion of Ephraim and Izzy in his rewriting of the Franklin expedition Richler sets off a chain of events tying the novel's central male characters together through affinities that, at their base, draw upon man's

classic struggle to survive against nature while also depending upon the creation of heroes in the literal and literary sense, as found within early British narratives of exploration. In this post-colonial approach to Jewish participation in the founding of the Canadian nation, Richler thus mixes fact with fiction. In so doing he blends together the history of Britain's early search for the Northwest Passage, the history of the Bronfman family and its members' incredible rise to wealth and power from humble beginnings as bootleggers to the status of iconic national and international liquor barons, upon which the whole Gursky family history is based, and Moses Berger's obsessive odyssey in search of the ever-elusive figure of Solomon Gursky.

*Solomon Gursky Was Here* is greatly interesting for its fusion of historical fact and fiction and as a post-modern novel functions as part of what Linda Hutcheon calls historiographic metafiction in *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (1988). Such works "both install and then blur the line between fiction and history" and are filled with "intense self-consciousness about the way in which" this mixture is applied to the writing process (Hutcheon 113). Richler's novel does not seem reflexive in terms of its own creative process, but through his blurring of fact and fiction, especially in the somewhat sordid stories of Ephraim Gursky's involvement in the final Franklin expedition of 1845 and his great-grandson Isaac's later tale of survival in which Isaac resorts to eating flesh from the body of his dead father Henry in order to survive, which also greatly mirrors the final days of the Franklin expedition, Richler successfully engages in a discourse which links four of his main male protagonists to Britain's long search for the Northwest Passage. With Moses Berger's obsessive search for Solomon Gursky, which essentially leads him to the pivotal figure of Solomon's grandfather

Ephraim and to Ephraim's great-grandson Isaac, Richler establishes a central thread that weaves its way through the novel from beginning to end. In so doing Richler pays homage to the age old theme of survival in the vast Canadian North. The novel's complex structure further allows Richler to poke fun at such historical figures as Samuel Bronfman, upon whom the character of Bernard Gursky is based; to critique the values and vices of a modern Canadian nation; to create a space for a Jewish voice within the mainstream history of Canada; and to explore the mystique and obsession associable to the early periods of exploration in North America. In his novel Richler also outlines the prestige of legendary quality associated to its male heroes and their historical, physical, and literary legacies as a whole. This is all done in the same vein as the narratives of exploration presented earlier, in a manner which calls upon nature and landscape as character, setting, and an important literary vehicle in the construction of the characters of Ephraim, Solomon, Isaac and Moses, as all of the four characters interact and identify with the Canadian wilderness in their own ways according to their own experiences, and most importantly, their own struggles to survive.

The novel opens with the introduction of Ephraim Gursky, the man who acts as the genesis in the unfolding story, and who is at the outset presented as a figure who epitomises the notion of survival in relationship to the North. This first impression of Ephraim sets him up as a man unlike others; capable of surviving even the toughest winter conditions with nothing but the bare essentials at his disposal, having learned how to survive according to Inuit traditions (Richler 3-5). A group of men watch from the warmth and comfort of "Crosby's Hotel" as Ephraim sets up camp and the following ensues:

Ephraim was throwing slabs of bear meat to his leaping dogs, settling them down, and starting to clear snow from a circle of ice with a board, flattening it to his satisfaction. Then he took to stacking goods from his sled on to the ice he had cleared. Animal skins. Pots and pans. A Primus stove. A soapstone bowl or *koodlik*. A harpoon. Books.

“See that?”, one of them says, “[c]razy bastard’s brought reading books with him”, reminding us of one of the “refined” drawbacks of early gentlemen travellers and their penchant for books even on exploratory expeditions during which they sometimes acted as more of a burden than a necessity. As Ephraim continues:

They watched him pull a rod and what appeared to be a broadsword free of the sled ropes. Then he slipped into his snowshoes and scrambled up the sloping shore, jumping up and down there, plunging his rod into the snow like one of their wives testing a cake in the oven with a straw from a broom. Finally finding the texture of snow he wanted Ephraim began to carve out large blocks with his sword and carry them back to his flattened circle. He built an igloo with a low entry tunnel facing south. He banked the walls with snow, tended to the seams, and cut more blocks for a windbreak...The men turned up early the next morning, fully expecting to find Ephraim dead. Frozen stiff. Instead they discovered him squatting over a hole in the ice, taking a perch, setting the eye in the hook, taking another, starting over again. He threw some of the perch to his dogs, some he stacked on the ice, and now and then he nimbly skinned one, filleted it, and gulped it down raw. He also harpooned two landlocked salmon and a sturgeon. (4-5)

Here Ephraim stands in as an example of what men such as Franklin should have taken into account when travelling to the North; the fact that one must adopt Native habits if one wishes to survive in a country which is home to a hostile and unforgiving environment. This is a lesson that explorers to the North learned in time, as in the case of men such as Hearne and Thompson, who learned what they could from their Native companions in order to survive; a lesson which would have spared many lives during the first centuries of Britain’s search for the Northwest Passage. Richler even refers to books as one of the oddities of most expeditions, being ill-equipped but also overly equipped at times with what may best be judged as mere trivialities in the struggle to survive, when he includes the men’s reaction to those of Ephraim as something only a mad man would



carry around with him in the North. Here Richler emphasises Ephraim's incredible adaptive qualities, presenting him as a man capable of coming to this wild land, learning how to survive according to local customs and knowledge, and doing so in such an effective manner that he is able to preserve his own customs rooted in the culture of the Old World he has left behind. Ephraim knows how to build a proper igloo, knows how to provide his own food supply, and can therefore allow himself to be burdened by objects which otherwise proved to be part of excess materials in such expeditions as Franklin's final expedition which was well equipped with emergency steam engines, an ample supply of canned food and a significant number of books, but whose members lacked true knowledge of how to survive an extreme Arctic winter and for this lack of knowledge paid the ultimate price.

The object of Moses Berger's obsession in the novel, Ephraim's prized grandson Solomon Gursky, also stands as a powerful example of the manly tradition of survival in the classic struggle existing between man and nature; and his knowledge of the northern wilderness and how to live off the land is transmitted to him directly from his grandfather. Solomon's nephew, Isaac, also learns many lessons on how to survive from his own father, Henry, while living in the North. This transfer of knowledge is an important part of Richler's own project of paying homage to the long list of writers whose works are concerned with the omnipresent theme of survival, such as those outlined earlier; but Richler's focus reaches beyond his formal narrative structure. He evokes the names of pivotal explorers at different moments throughout the novel and presents these explorers as the base to which the male survivors in the book are constantly linked to whether consciously or unconsciously in their own physical struggles

against nature, wilderness, and a new and extremely different urbanised Canadian environment. This includes Moses as a barely surviving writer and powerful symbol of the difficulties of the writer's life in Canada. During Moses's first visit to Sir Hyman's library at his "flat in Cumberland Terrace", he "scanned the shelves encountering, for the first time, names that would come to be embedded in his soul: Sir John Ross, Hearne, Mackenzie, Franklin, Back, Richardson, Belcher, M'Clure, M'Clintock, Hall, Bellot"(191). Here Moses experiences what will eventually become a defining moment in his search for Solomon Gursky, as Richler cleverly aligns the obsessive writer's exploratory quest with the history of Britain's own exhaustive search for the Northwest Passage. For Moses, Solomon becomes the Northwest Passage, elusive and unattainable. By the end of the novel Moses is still haunted by Solomon and much like many of the regretted mariners from the era of the search for the Passage, such as Hudson and Franklin, faces the choice of either accepting his defeat and moving on, if he survives the ordeal, or succumbing to the spectres of a past now distant and forever out of reach:

Moses sat staring at the salmon fly he had set out on the table. His Silver Doctor. After all his years on the rivers it finally struck him that he wasn't the angler but the salmon. A teasing, gleeful Solomon casting the flies over his head, getting him to roll, rise, and dance on his tail at will. Sea-bright Moses was when he first took the hook, but no more than a black salmon now, ice-bound in a dark river, the open sea closed to him. (550)

Richler's novel is full of rich and interesting references to Canada's exploratory history and the conventional themes found within narratives associated to it, so much so that this conclusion cannot possibly give the recurring themes dealt with in the novel the attention they truly deserve. *Solomon Gursky Was Here* reminds us of the central role such narratives of exploration had, along with the explorers themselves, in founding, creating, and defining the Canadian nation both physically through the act of exploration

and rhetorically through the act of writing, and this sets it apart as an important contemporary tribute to a bygone age. In the Canada of Moses Berger and Solomon Gursky, many horizons have changed, innumerable landscapes have been altered, and many forests have succumbed to the ever-spreading effects of human civilisation and the very human tenets of Frye's garrison mentality, but some things remain the same. Although even the northern regions of the country have fallen into the same trap, as Richler advances through the introduction of early concerns about global warming echoed by Henry and the eventual and now very real effects it will eventually have on the Arctic as well as the once almost permanently frozen Northwest Passage, nature still symbolises hope in an oftentimes extremely pessimistic world. *Solomon Gursky Was Here* reiterates the importance of early narratives of exploration, not only helping define the Canadian nation as we know it today and its literary tradition, but also transforming nature, landscape and wilderness, into iconic symbols of who we are as a people. And as is also attested to by the works of other writers, such as Margaret Atwood, Margaret Laurence, Douglas Glover, and Farley Mowat, our country's wilderness continues to define who we are even today. We must always remember the country presented to us in the narratives of the men who explored the country all those years ago; as well we must also remember what these narratives represented for them and what they represent for us today; and we must make amends with nature and members of the First Nations in a new reality which may call upon them once more as man's only hope of survival.

## Works Cited

- Atwood, Margaret. *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*. Toronto: Anansi, 1972.
- Atwood, Margaret. *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1970.
- Atwood, Margaret. "The Age of Lead". *Wilderness Tips*. Toronto: Seal, 1998. 136-52.
- Back, Sir George. *Narrative of An Expedition In H.M.S. Terror, London 1838*. University of Toronto Press 1999: D1. CD-Academia Book Co. CD-ROM. 1999.
- Beattie, Owen and Geiger, John. *Frozen in Time: Unlocking the Secrets of the Franklin Expedition*. Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1988.
- Bennett, Donna and Brown, Russell, eds. *An Anthology of Canadian Literature in English: Volume I*. Toronto: Oxford, 1982.
- Berton, Pierre. *Drifting Home*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973.
- Black, Adam and Charles. *The Encyclopaedia Britannica: A Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and General Literature*. Ninth edition. Edinburgh: Little, Brown & Co., 1875.
- Campbell, Marjorie Wilkins. *The Nor'Westers: The Fight for the Fur Trade*. Toronto: Macmillan, 1974.
- Chambers, Richard and William. *Chambers's Encyclopaedia: A Dictionary of Universal Knowledge for the People*. London: Chambers Brothers, 1880.
- Cooper, James Fenimore. *The Last of the Mohicans: or, A Narrative of 1757*. New York: Putnam's, 1912.
- Defoe, Daniel. *Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*. Banbury: J.G. Rusher, 1840.
- Edwards, Mary Jane. *The Evolution of Canadian Literature in English: Beginnings to 1867*. Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada, Ltd, 1973.
- Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press, 1967.
- Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched Of The Earth*. Trans. Constance Farrington. New York: Grove Press, 1963.

- Finger, Charles J. *Heroes From Hakluyt*. New York: The Henry Holt Company, 1928.
- Fleming, Patricia L. and Lamonde, Yvan, eds. *History of the Book in Canada: Beginnings to 1840*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004.
- Friesan, Gerald. *Citizens and Nation: An Essay on History, Communication, and Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000.
- Frye, Northrop. *Divisions on a Ground*. Ed. James Polk, Toronto: Anansi, 1982.
- Frye, Northrop. Conclusion to the "Literary History of Canada". *Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English*. Ed. Carl F. Klinck. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966. 819-849.
- Frye, Northrop. *Mythologizing Canada: Essays on the Canadian Literary Imagination*. Ed. Branko Gorjup, Ottawa: Legas, 1997.
- Galloway, David. "The Voyagers". *Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English*. Carl F. Klinck. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966. 1-18.
- Goldie, Terry. *Fear and temptation: the image of the indigene in Canadian, Australian and New Zealand literature*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989.
- Goldie, Terry. "Signs of the Themes: The Value of a Politically Grounded Semiotics". *Future Indicative: Literary Theory and Canadian Literature*. Ed. John Moss and Lorraine McMullen. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1987.
- Glover, Douglas. *Elle: a novel*. New Brunswick: Goose Lane Editions, 2003.
- Grace, Sherrill E. *Canada and the Idea of North*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001.
- Grant, George M. *Ocean to Ocean: Sandford Fleming's Expedition Through Canada in 1872*. Toronto: Prospero, 2000.
- Gray, Hugh. *Letters From Canada: Written During a Residence There in the Years 1806, 1807, and 1808*. Toronto: Coles, 1971.
- Groening, Laura Smyth. *Listening to Old Woman Speak: Natives and alterNatives in Canadian Literature*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill Queen's University Press, 2004.
- Hakluyt, Richard. *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques, and Discoveries of the English Nation*. Edinburgh: E & G. Goldsmith, 1885.

- Halsey, David with Landau, Diana. *Magnetic North*. Vancouver/Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1990.
- Hawkesworth, John. *An account of the voyages undertaken by the order of His present Majesty for making discoveries in the Southern hemisphere, and successively performed by Commodore Byron, Captain Wallis, Captain Carteret, and Captain Cook, in the Dolphin, the Swallow, and the Endeavour : drawn up from the journals which were kept by several commanders, and from the papers of Joseph Banks, esq.* London: Printed for W. Strahan & T. Cadell, 1773.
- Hayes, Derek. *Historical Atlas of the Arctic*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2003.
- Hearne, Samuel. *A Journey From Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean*. London: 1795.
- Hearne, Samuel. *Coppermine Journey: An account of a great adventure – selected from the journals of Samuel Hearne by Farley Mowat*. Toronto: T. H. Best Printing Co., Ltd., 1958.
- Homer. *The Odyssey*. Tr. W. H. D. Rouse. New York.: Mentor, 1937.
- Hopwood, Victor G. “Explorers by Land (to 1860)” & “Explorers by Sea: The West Coast”. *Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English*. Carl F. Klinck. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966. 19-51.
- Hurley, Michael. *The Borders of Nightmare: The Fiction of John Richardson*. Canada: University of Toronto Press, 1992.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 1988.
- Klinck, Carl F. *Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966.
- Mackenzie, Alexander. *Alexander Mackenzie's Voyage to the Pacific Ocean in 1793*. New York: Citadel Press, 1967.
- Mackenzie, Alexander. *Voyages from Montreal on the River St. Laurence, through the continent of North America, to the frozen and Pacific oceans, in the years 1789 and 1793: with a preliminary account of the rise, progress and present state of the fur trade of that country*. London: R. Noble, 1801.
- MacLaren, Ian S. “From Exploration to Publication: The Evolution of a Nineteenth-Century Arctic Narrative”. *Arctic: Journal of the Arctic Institute of North America*. Alberta: The Arctic Institute of Canada, 1994. 43-53.

- Mandeville, Sir John. *Mandeville's Travels. The Defective Version of Mandeville's Travels*. Ed. M.C. Seymour. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Mason, John. *Briefe Discourse of the New-found-land*. Edinburgh: Andro Hart, 1620.
- Monkman, Leslie. *A Native Heritage: Images of the Indian in English-Canadian Literature*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981.
- Moodie, Susanna. *Roughing It in the Bush, or, Life in Canada*. London: R. Bentley, 1852.
- Mowat, Farley. *People of the Deer*. New York: Pyramid Publications, 1968.
- Mowat, Farley. *The Polar Passion: The Quest for the North Pole*. Toronto: Little, Brown and Co., 1967.
- New, William H. *Land Sliding: Imagining Space, Presence, and Power in Canadian Writing*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997.
- Newman, Peter C. *Company of Adventurers: How the Hudson's Bay Empire Determined the Destiny of a Continent*. Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2005.
- Northey, Margot. *The Haunted Wilderness: The Gothic and Grotesque in Canadian Fiction*. Toronto & Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1976.
- Polk, James. *Wilderness Writers*. Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Co. Limited, 1972.
- Polo, Marco. *The travels of Marco Polo, a Venetian, in the thirteenth century: being a description, by that early traveller, of remarkable places and things, in the eastern parts of the world*. Tr. William Marsden. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1818.
- Purchas, Samuel. *Hakluytus posthumus: or, Purchas his Pilgrimes : contayning a history of the world in sea voyages and lande travells by Englishmen and others*. Glasgow: J. Maclehose, 1905-07.
- Richardson, John. *Wacousta, or, The prophecy: a tale of the Canadas*. London: T. Cadell, 1832.
- Richler, Mordecai. *Belling The Cat: Essays, Reports & Opinions*. Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998.
- Richler, Mordecai. *Hunting Tigers Under Glass: Essays and Reports*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1968.

- Richler, Mordecai. *Solomon Gursky Was Here*. Toronto: Penguin, 1998.
- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.
- Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Original Middle English text as edited by A. C. Cawley, and a modern verse translation. New York: Printed for the members of the Limited Editions Club, 1971.
- Swift, Jonathan. *Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World of Lemuel Gulliver*. New York: Peter Pauper Press, 1940.
- Terres, John K. *The Audubon Society Encyclopedia of North American Birds*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980.
- Thompson, David. *David Thompson's Narrative of his Explorations in Western America, 1784-1812*. Ed. Joseph Burr Tyrrell. Toronto: Champlain Society, 1916.
- Thompson, David. *Travels in Western North America, 1784-1812*. Ed. Victor G. Hopwood. Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1971.
- Thomson, George Malcolm. *The Search for the North-West Passage*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1975.
- Thwaites, Reuben G. *The Jesuit relations and allied document: travels and explorations of the Jesuit missionaries in New France, 1610-1791: the original French, Latin, and Italian texts, with English translations and notes*. Cleveland: Burrows, 1896.
- Whitbourne, Sir Richard. *A Discourse and Discovery of Newfoundland*. London: Felix Kingston, 1623.