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unnerving. They could easily turn out to be too hard-edged for some settings, too wishy-washy for others. Yet the point of such a bibliography is to let these works be advertised and thus used.

I would therefore suggest to the bibliographer and the publisher that if they are thinking of issuing a further volume in this series some years ahead, they should include such short essays and, especially, should develop a working relationship with the main sources of information about Third World films and videos. Otherwise, the putative purpose of this reference book will not be realized. As it stands, it is largely a wasted opportunity.

John D. H. Downing

Unravelling the Franklin Mystery. By David C. Woodman. Montreal, Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991. 390 pages. \$29.95 (CAN) cloth.

The loss of the men and ships of the 1845 Franklin expedition to complete the Northwest Passage spawned not only an intensive manhunt but also a vast library of theory, research, and speculation that continues to grow. In his well-researched book, Woodman peels away several layers from the mystery still shrouding the expedition and, perhaps more importantly, elevates our appreciation of Inuit oral traditions. Inuit eyewitness and secondhand accounts that formed these traditions were recorded by John Rae, Charles Francis Hall, Leopold McClintock, and others as early as the 1850s, but Woodman is the first investigator to place these accounts center stage, according them the serious attention they deserve and acknowledging them as the only real means of ultimately unveiling the truth about what happened to Franklin.

A number of Woodman's conclusions differ markedly from the accepted picture of what occurred toward the fateful end of the expedition. He maintains that Franklin was buried ashore near Cape Felix rather than on the ice, that his two research ships were remanned after their initial abandonment, and that some of Franklin's officers and men survived as late as 1851, rather than perishing in 1848, as is commonly accepted. But Woodman's most tantalizing conclusions stem from the accounts of the contact between numerous Inuit and members of the Franklin expedition. Woodman posits that not only did some Inuit most likely visit Franklin's ships after they were remanned in 1849 but that Inuit

witnessed the sinking of one of the ships and observed the burial of some of Franklin's men.

Woodman proceeds with the supposition that all Inuit accounts concerning the expedition should have a "discoverable factual basis" (p. 6), and he is faithful to this precept, bringing forward considerable corroboration for the evidence in the accounts. The accounts were remarkable in both detail and length of preservation. Not only did Inuit witnesses remember with great clarity numerous points of their encounters with Franklin's men, but they also remembered their meetings with the men sent to rescue Franklin. An account of the meeting by one of the first Inuit who testified about the Franklin expedition to John Rae matched precisely a second account given by the same Inuit to Charles Francis Hall twenty-five years later. The account was identical as to names, physical traits, and the number of men in Rae's party. Other Inuit—both first- and secondhand witnesses—were interviewed as late as thirty-two years after the events, and those accounts were also essentially corroborated. Woodman links the accounts with the physical evidence of graves and artifacts and with the journals of the whites who were on the scene. The Inuit were astonishingly accurate observers of the physical details and mannerisms of the officers and men serving under Franklin. Small wonder, considering that Inuit depended on oral traditions as their means of preserving and transmitting their culture.

In commenting on the failure of other researchers to give proper heed to these accounts, Woodman wryly notes that the longevity and accuracy of Inuit oral traditions were not new to Europeans: It was Inuit accounts of the 1576 Frobisher expedition to the Arctic that cleared up the dispute over the location of Frobisher's landing site on Baffin Island.

In reviewing the reasons behind his predecessors' dismissal of Inuit information about Franklin, Woodman rightly blames Western misunderstanding and distrust of Inuit culture. The Inuit language was too complex, too varied in its dialects for many of the interviewers, and the skill of their interpreters was sometimes less than satisfactory. There was a failure to acknowledge that words have different meanings in different cultures. *Island* to the whites might be *continent* to the Inuit. It was a failure of interpretation and translation brought about by ethnic narrowmindedness. The investigators asked leading questions and, as often as not, failed to appreciate the cultural nuances and worldview of the Inuit. Eager to satisfy the public's sensational appetite for news of one of

England's greatest explorers, the investigators were interested in dates, descriptions of vessels, and numbers of men seen marching, whereas the Inuit were more likely to notice the quality of knives bartered, sources of food or wood, and the condition of weather and pack ice. Interviewers also overlooked the human element by disregarding the fact that some Inuit may have been selective in the information they gave in order to protect caches of meat or the whereabouts of prized hunting areas. There was a natural reticence in the Inuit that was uncommon in the voluble Europeans and Americans, and their sense of geography and use of place names differed substantially from those of their white interrogators.

Even so, Inuit accounts were remarkably exact in the sort of details Franklin's searchers were interested in: descriptions of officers and men and their physical condition, and the kind of supplies and equipment they had. The Inuit witnesses were keen observers with powerful memories; they even recalled the histories of the artifacts they had collected from the expedition—silverware, bits of clothing, watches, and other items culled from the abandoned ships and boats—a fact that gives further credence to their oral accounts.

The most significant reason for the dismissal of Inuit testimony, Woodman maintains, was its failure to synchronize with the highly venerated Victory Point Record—the only written document recovered from the Franklin expedition. This brief statement, deposited in a cairn on King William Island by one of Franklin's officers, reported that the 105 men still surviving in May of 1848 had abandoned the ships and intended to march overland to the Back River. Inuit testimony, on the other hand, suggests that the survivors ultimately split up into groups and that at least one of the groups returned to the ships.

Woodman disputes the conclusions reached in a recent book by anthropologist Owen Beattie, who raises the question of lead poisoning. There is no disagreement over Beattie's assertion that lead contamination was a contributing cause of the deaths of a few of Franklin's men and perhaps was a debilitating factor in the health of all of them, but Woodman maintains that Beattie's findings shed no light on the ultimate fate of the expedition. Vitamin C deficiency and prolonged exposure to the brutal Arctic weather were fatal enough, without the complications of lead poisoning.

As well documented as Woodman's work is, he does not claim

to have proven his case beyond a reasonable doubt; he admits that there is plenty of "coincidence and inexactitude" (p. 321), even in light of the compelling circumstantial evidence of the Inuit stories. Moreover, his research points to the need for further exploration in the area of Kirkwall Island, the site of stone cairns and possibly the final resting place of one of Franklin's two ships. In his focus on Kirkwall Island, Woodman undermines the relatively recent and imaginative books by Nowel Wright, which claim that the ships were borne off by an iceberg.

Intriguing though the Inuit testimony is, it does not tell us in indisputable terms what happened to the expedition. Some of the testimony may refer to other expeditions, and the portions of testimony that cannot be separated from the Franklin expedition can be read in a number of ways. Woodman uses the evidence of the testimony to construct a highly probable picture of what happened, much as an archaeologist mines the strata of a canyon for clues on which to construct a narrative of the canyon's history. The minerals beneath the archaeologist's hammer are genuine enough, but it is up to the archaeologist to examine those minerals in the light of the right questions if he is to draw useful answers.

The questions Woodman asks make for a compelling narrative. His book is richly documented, and the appendices of Inuit place names and witnesses are of considerable help. One complaint: The maps—with which the book is amply supplied—would be easier to use if the land masses were shaded so as to help the reader distinguish them from the dizzying myriad of straits, coves, inlets, and other water bodies. Overall, the book is as carefully organized and produced as it is well written. It belongs in the hands of everyone interested in the Franklin expedition—or in the significance of Inuit oral traditions.

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The Uses of Plants by the Indians of the Missouri River Region.
By Melvin R. Gilmore. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1991. 125 pages. \$9.95 paper.

First published in 1919 by the Bureau of American Ethnology and today considered a classic by many ethnobotanists, *The Uses of Plants by the Indians of the Missouri River Region* by Melvin R.