

Pollux River and headed north to Rae Strait, between King William Island and Boothia Peninsula. En route he met the first of the Inuit who were able to tell him about the fate of the survivors of the Franklin expedition; these details were later supplemented by further information provided by other Inuit at Repulse Bay, as Rae and his men waited for the ice to break up. With a view to preventing possible further fruitless searches which might be mounted in wrong areas, Rae returned south to York Factory, then back to England, with his news, the first news as to the fate of the Franklin expedition.

Rae's letters are augmented by an appendix containing 19 letters from Simpson and two from Barclay, which help to complete this remarkable correspondence. All the letters are preserved in the Hudson's Bay Company's Archives, housed at the Manitoba Provincial Archives in Winnipeg, and a citation to the original is supplied with each document. And finally Rich added biographical sketches of 52 individuals whose names crop up in the correspondence, including those of many of Rae's men. Rich also augmented the text of the letters profusely with footnotes, which, in the new edition, McGoogan has converted to endnotes.

We are clearly heavily indebted to Ken McGoogan for having made this invaluable source on the history of the mapping of the Canadian Arctic to a wider readership. And he is certainly correct in stating that the correspondence 'gives us the clearest of all windows into the mind of John Rae' (page viii). This is particularly true with regard to his relationship to Sir George Simpson. The latter is famous (or infamous) for having been extremely hard-nosed and even ruthless whenever any potential diminution of the Company's profits was concerned, yet his attitude towards Rae was one of strong approval bordering on affection. A measure of Simpson's regard for Rae is that he appointed him to the charge of the important and profitable Mackenzie River District with his base at Fort Simpson for the 1849–50 season when he had not previously been in charge of even the smallest post. Their relationship was quite severely strained on one occasion, however, when in May 1853 Rae complained about the wine with which he had been provided (page 318) when, in fact, as Sir George angrily pointed out, he had selected the wine himself, from his own cellar (page 403–404).

Since Cyriax and Wordie had provided a fairly detailed description of John Rae's background, right back to his childhood in the Orkney Islands, it was not necessary for McGoogan to repeat this information. But since those original editors had provided no information on Sir George Simpson, the recipient of most of Rae's letters, it was incumbent on Rae to fill this lacuna. He has not done so. Worse still he describes Sir George as 'governor of the HBC' (page vii). The Governor at the time was Sir John Henry Pelly. Simpson certainly never rose to such heights, although, as the Company's 'Governor in North America' he had still attained an impressively high position.

Surprisingly, McGoogan tells us nothing about the institution responsible for the compilation and publication of this correspondence, namely the Hudson's Bay Record Society. Incorporated on 29 April 1938 and funded by subscription, its mandate was to publish selected records of the Hudson's Bay Company preserved in the Company's Archives (now located at the Manitoba Provincial Archives in Winnipeg). Initially (from 1938 until 1949) the Society's volumes were co-published with the Champlain Society, but thereafter, it functioned independently on its own. The series was discontinued in 1983, by which time an impressive total of 33 volumes had been published. Until 1959 every volume was edited by Professor Edwin Ernest Rich, Master of St. Catherine's College, Cambridge University (1957–73) and Vere Hamilton Chair of Imperial and Naval History (1951–73).

As in his earlier work, *The Arctic journals of John Rae*, McGoogan returns to the theme that in discovering Rae Strait in 1854 Rae had discovered 'the final link in the Northwest Passage'. And yet McGoogan demolishes his own argument when he poses the question '[w]hy did Rae not claim that the strait he discovered represented the missing link in the only Passage navigable by ships of his time?' (page xii) McGoogan's entirely accurate reply to his own question is that 'he could not prove it. And he would not advance claims for which he had no evidence'. Indeed, in 1854 Rae had no way of knowing whether there was any straits or channels linking Rae Strait with the main east-west artery of Parry Channel further north. Specifically some 240 km of what has become a section of the most frequently travelled variant of the Northwest Passage, namely Franklin Strait and Larsen Sound, extending from Bellot Strait south to where James Clark Ross discovered the north magnetic pole in 1831, had still not been discovered and mapped in 1854. It was first surveyed by Captain Francis Leopold McClintock and his sailing master Sir Allen Young, each mapping opposite sides of the channel (each of which is visible from the other) in the spring of 1859. Thus McClintock and Young, between them, by reporting the presence of this channel became the discoverers of 'the final link in the Northwest Passage'. John Rae's achievements are impressive enough without attributing to him a false claim to fame, one which he himself never made. (William Barr, Arctic Institute of North America, University of Calgary, 2500 University Drive NW, Calgary AB T2N 1N4, Canada (wbarr@ucalgary.ca)).

References

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AN EMPIRE OF AIR AND WATER. UNCOLONIZABLE SPACE IN THE BRITISH IMAGINATION 1750–1850. Siobhan Carroll. 2015. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 290 p, hardcover. ISBN 978-0-8122-4678-0. £39.00
doi:[10.1017/S0032247415000443](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0032247415000443)

In the introduction to this thought-provoking monograph, the reader is immediately drawn into the intrigue when confronted with the statement that, in 1749, a French cartographer 'erased

the world'. What today seems logical – to provide a clear depiction of known locations on maps and to eliminate the rumoured unknown – jolted the sensibilities of eighteenth-century geographers accustomed to decorative, even speculative, representations. This less-decorative map offered fascinating blank spaces, representing unknown territory, which appealed to geographers, to explorers, and to regimes with territorial imperatives.

Carroll examines the potential for conquest and colonization, which this new approach to cartography highlighted,

extending the concept beyond terrestrial claims to other geographic realities. She applies the term 'atopias' to polar, maritime, atmospheric and subterranean zones, once thought to be physically impossible to conquer and consequently uninhabitable. Alternating between imagined and factual accounts, she discusses the transition of these selected atopias from unknown and wild states to charted and partially-tamed regions.

During the period covered in this book, many Romantic-era authors rejected the constraints of the Enlightenment, or the Age of Reason, as well as the prevailing political trends. Atopias offered them both subject matter that could not be decisively challenged, and the freedom of unrestrained virtual exploration coupled with opportunities for imaginative literary expression. Each atopia – the polar regions, the sea, the air, and the underworlds – is the subject of a dedicated chapter in which the author explains the associated terminology, and draws on the works of Romantic poets, writers and philosophers to illustrate, or to support, her arguments. Content within these clearly-defined chapters is less structured and at times a more logical development of an argument would be welcome.

While acknowledging the exploratory endeavours of other nations, she focuses on the literary, political, exploratory and economic effects of atopias on the British imagination. In the first chapter, the polar 'province of the imagination' promoted by literary speculations is also presented as real and challenging atopic space, which has a 'significant role ... in the construction of British imperial identity' and against which citizens could actually test 'their technology and national character'.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, members of polar expeditions – including those led by McClure, Nares, Nansen, Peary, and Cook in the Arctic, and Scott, Shackleton and Amundsen in the Antarctic – documented their experiences of the polar regions. Ships' logs, expedition reports and personal journals informed their written publications, which were illustrated with photographs and maps; lantern slides and cinematographic evidence augmented their public lectures. Prior to these factual revelations, the literary world had been free to express whatever extremes the imagination could summon to describe the otherness of the unattainable polar regions.

Carroll calls attention to the monsters and other mythical beings, which abound in polar fiction and poetry of the time, offering Robert Paltock's *The Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins* and Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* as examples. She also cites the journals of Captain James Cook and other factual accounts, juxtaposing these with the fictional, as she explores elusive atopic concepts.

The next chapter, *The language of the sea*, names the ocean as a 'key component in Britain's national mythology' and as part of its identity. The author takes extracts from literary works such as Marryat's novel *Mr Midshipman Easy*, and Falconer's poem *The Shipwreck*, to highlight the development of Britain's maritime ambitions to 'rule the waves' and to profit by conquering fear of the atopic ocean, with trade links and colonial outposts rewarding imperial endeavour. Simultaneously, a culture specific to maritime space – quite apart from the law of the land – developed, and Britain's naval success was dependent on the management of its navy. Carroll extends her references to resources beyond the timeframe stipulated in the

title, with the inclusion of the work of Joseph Conrad (1857–1924), his impression of *The Voyage of the 'Fox' in the Arctic Seas* (McClintock 1858), Marlow's 'review' of maritime legacy in *Heart of Darkness* (Conrad 1902), and other examples.

Remaining chapters, *The regions of the air* and *Underworlds*, each explore the theme of the relevant atopia to be conquered. Imagination and fact, superstition and reality, contributed to the beliefs of protagonists in the literature referenced. Similarly, Carroll draws on fact and fiction in her attempts to sustain arguments when discussing the impact of perceived atopias on the British imagination.

A few statements invite challenge. For example, mountain peaks as atopias 'were omitted from this project for reasons of period focus' and because of 'large settlements on mountains'. Yet in a classic Romantic-era poem, *Mont Blanc* (1816), Shelley described the peak as 'remote, serene and inaccessible'. Though the summit had been reached in 1786, it still evoked sublimity, suggesting that it represented an atopia to the poet. Countless other uninhabited mountains had not been conquered but, because they were represented on maps, they did not meet the author's criteria to be classified as atopic. I found that reasoning inconsistent when Antarctica, which had been represented, though inaccurately, on maps for centuries, and which had been sighted by several expeditions prior to 1850, was classified as an atopia.

A concluding chapter presents the city of London from the eighteenth century to the present day as a developing atopia, becoming more dangerous and more difficult to navigate. Lines from Wordsworth's *The Prelude* (1799) are quoted to provide an example of an escape from London crowds. Metaphorical references to oceans, caverns and inhospitable spaces in the city reinforce the concept of atopia, with the implication that 'London cannot ever be fully known'.

Today's technology renders the concept of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century atopias less valid when the geographical south pole now has a research station where people live for extended periods and where crops can be grown in a controlled micro-environment; when space exploration is established practice; when oceans are monitored, and caves can be heritage-listed. This common knowledge could hinder the reader's ability to become completely immersed in the attitude of the defined period, but should not lessen appreciation of the scholarship.

At first I found the front cover unappealing. Complementary images represent two of the book's foci: air and sea, with a hint of subterranean regions. The first, of a balloon, is not easily identified at first glance. Both images – the cavernous shape of the manned balloon as it descends, and the dark cavern into which a boatload of people enters – suggest danger; and this suggestion is possibly enhanced by the dun-coloured design. The inside jacket gives more detail of these nineteenth-century images, but the cover did give an initial impression of lacklustre text within.

This proved to be an indefensible criticism; the content is interesting, widely-researched, annotated, and has a comprehensive index. Siobhan Carroll's work will undoubtedly encourage discussion and further study in the field. (Anna Lucas, Maritime Museum of Tasmania, 16 Argyle St, Hobart TAS 7000, Australia (lucasmil2002@gmail.com)).