



Writing Arctic Disaster

Adriana Craciun

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How did the Victorian fixation on the disastrous John Franklin expedition transform our understanding of the Northwest Passage and the Arctic? Today we still tend to see the Arctic and the Northwest Passage through nineteenth-century perspectives, which focused on the discoveries of individual explorers, their illustrated books, visual culture, imperial ambitions, and high-profile disasters. However, the farther back one looks, the more striking the differences appear in how Arctic exploration was envisioned. Writing Arctic Disaster uncovers a wide range of exploration cultures: from the manuscripts of secretive corporations like the Hudson's Bay Company, to the nationalist Admiralty and its innovative illustrated books, to the searches for and exhibits of disaster relics in the Victorian era. This innovative study reveals the dangerous afterlife of this Victorian conflation of exploration and disaster, in the geopolitical significance accruing around the 2014 discovery of Franklin's ship Erebus in the Northwest Passage.

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