

# The Canadian Nautical Research Society Société canadienne pour la recherche nautique

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## OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

James Pritchard  
Secretary *pro tem*  
e-mail: [jp@queensu.ca](mailto:jp@queensu.ca)

## 2009 Keith Matthews Awards Committee Report

The committee to judge the best book was made up of the following members: Ian Yeates, Roger Sarty, and Serge Durlinger.

More than 30 publishers were invited to submit works for the 2009 Matthews Prize awarded for best book published in 2008. The committee reviewed 16 entrants. Nine publishers were represented in the selection, including two Canadian academic presses which submitted four books combined. All the books were written in English. A list of entrants is attached to this report. The most common genres were west coast exploration and seafarers' reminiscences. Among the other topics were Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River navigation, ships' histories, the fisheries, and the east coast. While the majority of the entrants were popular accounts, some of these were very professionally crafted.

The committee remained flexible in judging publications of differing approaches and intentions. The primary motivation in selecting a winner was to choose the book which made an important contribution to knowledge, exerted a strong impact in its field, encouraged maritime history in Canada or by Canadians, displayed literary merit, was likely to stimulate public interest in maritime history and publishing, had physical appeal, and was of the greatest overall use to nautical researchers.

It was the unanimous decision of the committee that the winner of the 2009 Keith Matthews Prize for best book published in 2008 be awarded to Freeman M. Tovell, *At the Far Reaches of Empire: The Life of Juan Francisco de la Bodega Y Quadra*, published by UBC Press.

### The winner of the Keith Matthews Prize for best book of 2008

Freeman M. Tovell, *At the Far Reaches of Empire: The Life of Juan Francisco de la Bodega Y Quadra* (UBC Press).

This richly detailed, comprehensive, and balanced study of the famed Spanish navigator, Juan Francisco de la Bodega Y Quadra, adds enormously to our understanding of exploration and diplomatic interaction along the northwest coast of North America in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Freeman Tovell's impeccably researched and lively biography of Bodega serves as an interpretive model from which to explore complex Anglo-Spanish imperial rivalries at the time of the Nootka Sound crisis and also sheds fascinating light on native-newcomer relations in the region. *At the Far Reaches of Empire* is definitive, vivid, compelling, and penetrating. It is a work of massive scholarly importance to the history of British Columbia, Canada, and the Pacific Northwest.

## Honourable Mentions:

- Ken McGoogan, *Race to the Polar Sea: The Heroic Adventures and Romantic Obsessions of Elisha Kent Kane* (HarperCollins)

*Race to the Polar Sea* is an engagingly written, impressively researched, and engrossing account of American explorer, adventurer, and scientist Elisha Kent Kane's harrowing experiences in the early 1850s searching for missing British Arctic explorer Sir John Franklin. Ken McGoogan's fortuitous discovery of a long-missing and intensely personal section of Kane's famous journal, the author's effective interweaving of documentary and published evidence, and his infectious enthusiasm for the subject, combine to resurrect Kane as an important figure in the history of Canada's north. Parts biography, adventure tale, and romance, this work makes an important contribution to Arctic and environmental history.

- Taras Grescoe, *Bottomfeeder: How to Eat Ethically in a World of Vanishing Seafood* (HarperCollins)

Given the numerous ecological and environmental calamities befalling the world's oceans, celebrated author and self-proclaimed "piscavore" (fish eater) Taras Grescoe wanted to know whether "there is anything left for an ethically inclined seafood lover to eat?" *Bottomfeeder*, the result of his worldwide quest for an answer, is studiously researched, enormously enlightening, engagingly written with wit and passion, and serves as an authoritative guide to consuming seafood ethically and healthily. Given humanity's evident inability to manage the world's resources, hopefully *Bottomfeeder* will stimulate more responsible management of shockingly depleted ocean wildlife stocks. Despite his insatiable appetite for them, Grescoe has done the world's fish a great service.

A cash prize of \$1,000 was awarded to Freeman M. Tovell for his winning entrant, *At the Far Reaches of Empire: The Life of Juan Francisco de la Bodega Y Quadra*. Certificates suitable for framing were sent to the three authors honoured by the CNRS.

## The Keith Matthews Prize for best article in *The Northern Mariner* published in 2008

The committee to judge the best article in *The Northern Mariner* was made up of the following members: Ian Yeates, Roger Sarty, and Serge Durlinger.

It was the unanimous decision of the committee that the prize be awarded to John C. Appleby for his article "Conflict, co-operation and competition: the rise and fall of the Hull whaling trade during the seventeenth century," which appeared in Vol. XVIII, No. 2, April 2008, 23-59.

"Conflict, co-operation and competition" is a major contribution to seventeenth-century British and European commercial and sea-faring history and vividly illuminates the story of open-sea and bay whaling in northern latitudes from the perspective of the ships' crews, all the while weaving an overarching narrative of the competition and intrigue occasioned by local British and inter-state commercial rivalries. Appleby convincingly portrays British trade practices as rigid and cumbersome, enabling adaptive and innovative Dutch whalers to secure this potentially lucrative market at the expense of the Hull men. It is an exceptionally well-researched, highly detailed, and convincingly argued article.

The author received a prize of \$250 and a certificate suitable for framing.

## The Jacques Cartier MA Prize in Nautical History (accepted in 2008)

The committee was made up of the following members: Ian Yeates and Serge Durflinger with the assistance of Richard Gimblett and Paul Adamthwaite. Roger Sarty supervised one of the entrants and recused himself from the deliberations. Approximately 20 Canadian universities were advised of the Cartier Prize and requested to disseminate information about it through their internal communications network.

Two submissions were received:

- Kenneth Tam, “The Caribou Hut: Newfoundlanders, Servicemen, and the St. John’s Home Front During the Second World War,” (Wilfrid Laurier University); and
- Stephen Hay, “The Creative Misunderstandings of George Cartwright: A Popular Culture in Cartwright’s Labrador, 1770-1786,” (Dalhousie).

While unanimity remained elusive in this case, it was the decision of the committee that neither thesis be awarded the 2008 Jacques Cartier Prize. While both theses displayed impressive scholarly merit, neither was sufficiently maritime in nature to justify granting the award.

I would like to thank Ian Yeates, Roger Sarty, Paul Adamthwaite, Richard Gimblett, and Errollyn Humphreys for their valuable assistance to this committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Serge Durflinger, Chair  
Keith Matthews Award Committee  
August 2009

### CNRS KEITH MATTHEWS AWARD 2009 BOOK ENTRANTS (PUBLISHED IN 2008)

Publishers	Books
Nimbus	1. James D. Frost, <i>Canada’s Atlantic Gateway: An Illustrated History of the Port of Halifax</i>
Touchwood Editions	2. Cathy Converse, <i>Following the Curve of Time: The Legendary M. Wylie Blanchet</i>
UBC Press	3. Don MacGillivray, <i>Captain Alex MacLean: Jack London’s Sea Wolf</i>
	4. Freeman M. Tovell, <i>At the Far Reaches of Empire: The Life of Juan Francisco de la Bodega Y Quadra</i>
Dundurn Press	5. Chad Fraser, <i>Lake Erie Stories</i>
	6. Walter Lewis and Rick Neilson, <i>The River Palace</i>
Viking Canada (Penguin)	7. David Leach, <i>Fatal Tide</i>

McGill-Queen's University Press	8. Joan Marshall, <i>Tides of Change on Grand Manan Island</i>
	9. Donald B. Macmillan, <i>How Peary Reached the Pole</i>
Harbour Publishing	10. Ryan Wahl, <i>Legacy in Wood: The Wahl Family Boatbuilders</i>
	11. Eric Jamieson, <i>Tragedy at Second Narrows</i>
Douglas and McIntyre	12. Julie Angus, <i>Rowboat in a Hurricane</i>
	13. Stephen R. Bown, <i>Madness, Betrayal and the Lash</i>
HarperCollins	14. James P. Delgado, <i>Khubilai Khan's Lost Fleet</i>
	15. Ken McGoogan, <i>Race to the Polar Sea</i>
	16. Taras Grescoe, <i>Bottomfeeder</i>