

The Reader

(advertisement)

Reading on a theme

Helen Humphreys' *Afterimage* is a beautiful story, inspired by the work of Victorian photographer Julia Margaret Cameron. The story is principally about Isabelle Dashell and the Irish maid who becomes the subject of Isabelle's staged romantic photographs. The side story, though, captured my interest in equal measure. Isabelle's husband is a 'wanna-be' Polar explorer who is obsessed with the fate of the Franklin expedition.

Elizabeth McGregor's *Ice Child* is another novel which draws on the lost Franklin expedition for one of its themes. Parallel stories emerge, in one of which a young man tries to find the lost ships and in the other, a woman fights for her child's life.

Both of these novels are well-written, literary works in which the Franklin tragedy is a theme but not the main story. In contrast, Ken McGoogan's *Fatal Passage* is a biography of John Rae, the Hudson's Bay Company factor and doctor who discovered the fate of the Franklin expedition and the final link in the northwest passage. What a man and what a story!

The history McGoogan recounts in his compelling book is beautifully complemented by the stories of Humphreys and McGregor. This thematic journey left me with vivid pictures of a time and a series of events.

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