

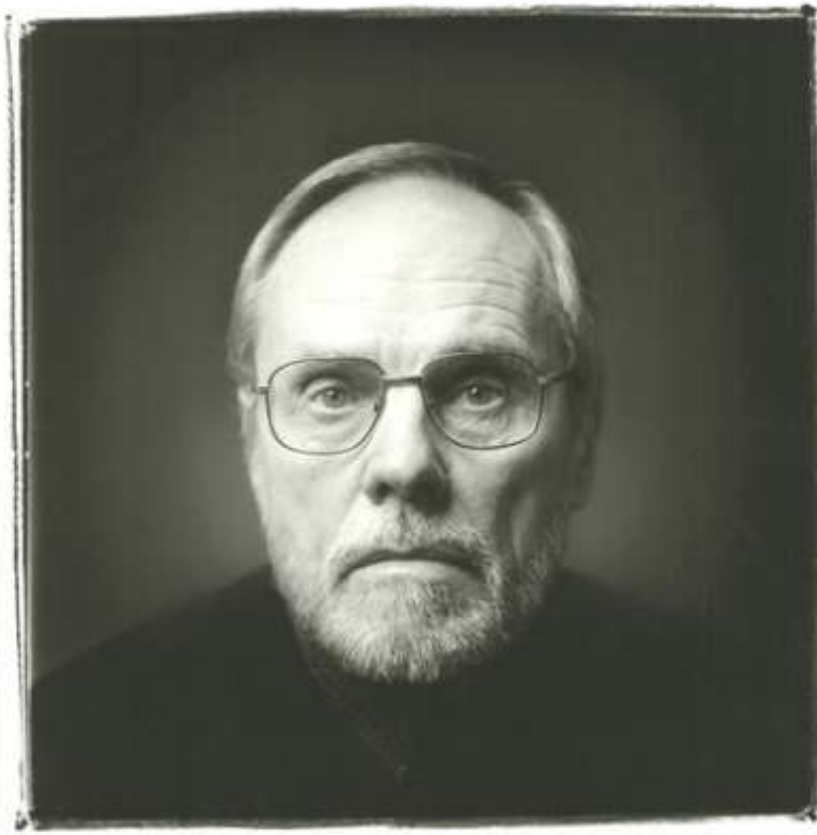
Littérature Commonwealth

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Introducing Rudy Wiebe

Life and work



- born 1934 in farm community in Saskatchewan
- Mennonite background
- 1st novel (1962), *Peace Shall Destroy May*

- interest in the history and culture of Indigenous Canadian communities
 - *The Temptations of Big Bear* (1973= centred on the historical figure of Plains Cree chief (figure of resistance to Western appropriation of Native land)
 - *The Scorched-Wood People* (1977) = interpretation of Louis Riel (political leader executed for rebellion) from the viewpoint of the Métis.
- Indigenous characters in Wiebe's fiction have stories and voices of their own

- Is it problematic?
 - presuming to speak for the others, ventriloquizing (or by what might be called appropriating voice) groups who have been silenced
 - preparing the way for the *writing back*, ie. the moment when Native writers start rising to prominence

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The literary context

- period between 1960 and 1980 = a key moment in Canadian literary history
- “This was a period when Canada’s collective memory was questioned, cultural icons were dismantled and unified visions of history and the mythology contested.” (Teresa Gibert)
- “it’s the very things that *aren’t* mentioned that inspire the most curiosity in us. *Why* aren’t they mentioned? The lure of the Canadian past, for the writers of my generation, has been partly the lure of the unmentionable – the mysterious, the buried, the forgotten, the discarded, the taboo.” (Atwood, “In Search of *Alias Grace*”)
- “revisions of history became a particularly prominent subject from the 1980s onwards when feminism, multiculturalism and Aboriginal awareness made an indelible impression on Canadian literature” (Teresa Gibert)

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Arctic explorations



- the Northwest Passage
- John Franklin (1786-1845)
- three Arctic Expeditions:
 - 1819-1822 (from Coppermine River to the Arctic Sea)
 - 1825-1827 (North American coast – Alaska)



NARRATIVE OF A JOURNEY
TO THE SHORES OF
THE POLAR SEA,
IN THE YEARS
1819, 20, 21, AND 22.

BY
JOHN FRANKLIN, CAPTAIN R.N., F.R.S.
AND COMMANDER OF THE *EXPEDITION*

WITH AN APPENDIX ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS RELATIVE TO
JOURNALS AND NATURAL HISTORY
ILLUSTRATED BY SUMNER PLATES AND MAPS.

ALREADY BY JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL NAVY, THE ROYAL ARMY, &c.

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.
MDCCCXXII.

• The last expedition (1845)



- HMS Terror and HMS Erebus
- 129 men
- best equipped Arctic expedition of the day
- left England May 1845
- last seen July 1845
- no survivors

- the mythical North
- a deadly, inhuman North characterized by mystery, danger, and adventure, in a harsh but magnificent, unspoiled landscape waiting to be discovered, charted, painted (Sherill Grace, *Canada and the Idea of North*)
- dominant popular narrative:
 - journey north undertaken by a white man / boy
 - must prove himself in a series of tests that, if passed, will confirm his superiority over the North (rivers, cold, emptiness), its wild animals, and other human beings
 - if returns south, will be prepared to take up his position as a leader in southern society
 - if dies, his story becomes the stuff of heroic legend and myth (cf. Franklin, Albert Johnson, Tom Thompson, René Richard, Grey Owl)