

A Journey of the Utmost Importance, of Heart, Mind, and that Unknown Territory
called the Imagination: Encounters at the Poles

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B.A.F.A., Alfred University, 2002

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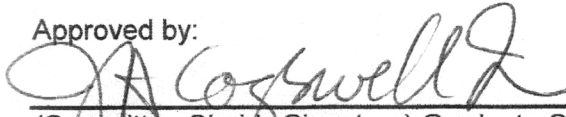
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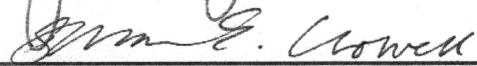
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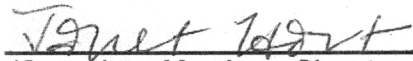
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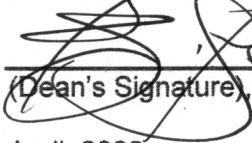
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April, 2008



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ENCOUNTERS AT THE POLES



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Abstract



It Is Never Tomorrow, digital photograph, 2006

A journey of the utmost importance, of heart, mind, and that unknown territory called the imagination: Encounters at the Poles combines the aesthetics of the human imagination and the poetics of polar landscapes in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The Arctic and Antarctic terrains swallowed up ships, men, and their belongings, which upon being found, were buried once again in museums and archives. Utilizing the historic imagination, voices from multiple narrators project the reader to specific times and places in a journey from the North Pole to archives in London and Copenhagen to the South Pole and back again. It is a soliloquy full of hope, despair and yearning.

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Etching from *The Illustrated London News* presenting the latest in survival technology, a large buoy that could hold a few sailors if their ship sunk

Acknowledgements

Many people, places and things assisted me through the past three years of my graduate life. In particular, my thesis committee offered more than I could have imagined. My four professors encouraged my meandering path every step of the way while sharing their own stories of coldness, frozen lakes, artistic practices, and visions. My brief encounter with the Arctic Institute and the Danish Polar Center in Copenhagen could not have been more productive. The archives and people there balanced the Arctic's human scale by showing me all the inhabitants and culture that existed before and after the British and Norwegians.

I could have not made it through the past three years without my partner, my bestfriend, and the wind that luffs my sails, my love, Matthew. He listened to all my polar ramblings.

To my advisors, Jim Cogswell, Susan Crowell, Janet Hart and Margaret Hedstrom

To Bent Nielson, director of the Arctic Institute and Danish Polar Center, Annika Egilsdottir Hansen, curator of prints and paintings and Kirsten Kluver, curator of photography

To the landscape, which teaches us about the persons we strive to become

To those courageous and foolish polar explorers who set out in hope and in ignorance and yet, like all of us, learned much along the way



Category: Living Well from *Exploring the Polar Archive Series*,
digital photograph, 2007

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Category: Fishing, Finding from Exploring the Polar Archive Series, digital photograph, 2007

Prologue

The two polar worlds possess their own separate histories. They have their own tales of survival, nationalistic pride, nationalistic imperialisms, and death. The polar North has been inhabited for thousands of years: a slow sweep of people and culture stretching from the Bering Strait and making their way to Greenland. These people still share dialects from the same language.

The polar South did not gain inhabitants until the late 1800's then gained momentum in the early to mid 20th century. It is an infant in all regards compared to its grandmother, the North.

The first International Polar Year began in 1882. At this moment in time we are again celebrating, 2007-2009. This will not occur again for another fifty years. If we look North, then we must follow our gaze all the way around to South. The explorers constantly did this, gazing, naming, burying, and attaining. But this story isn't about comparisons.

What does one need to know before beginning?
Before packing provisions?
Before leaving home?
Before going out into your unexplored?
I cannot prepare you for any of these.
We are in the same boat.

We will go together.

estpassasjen

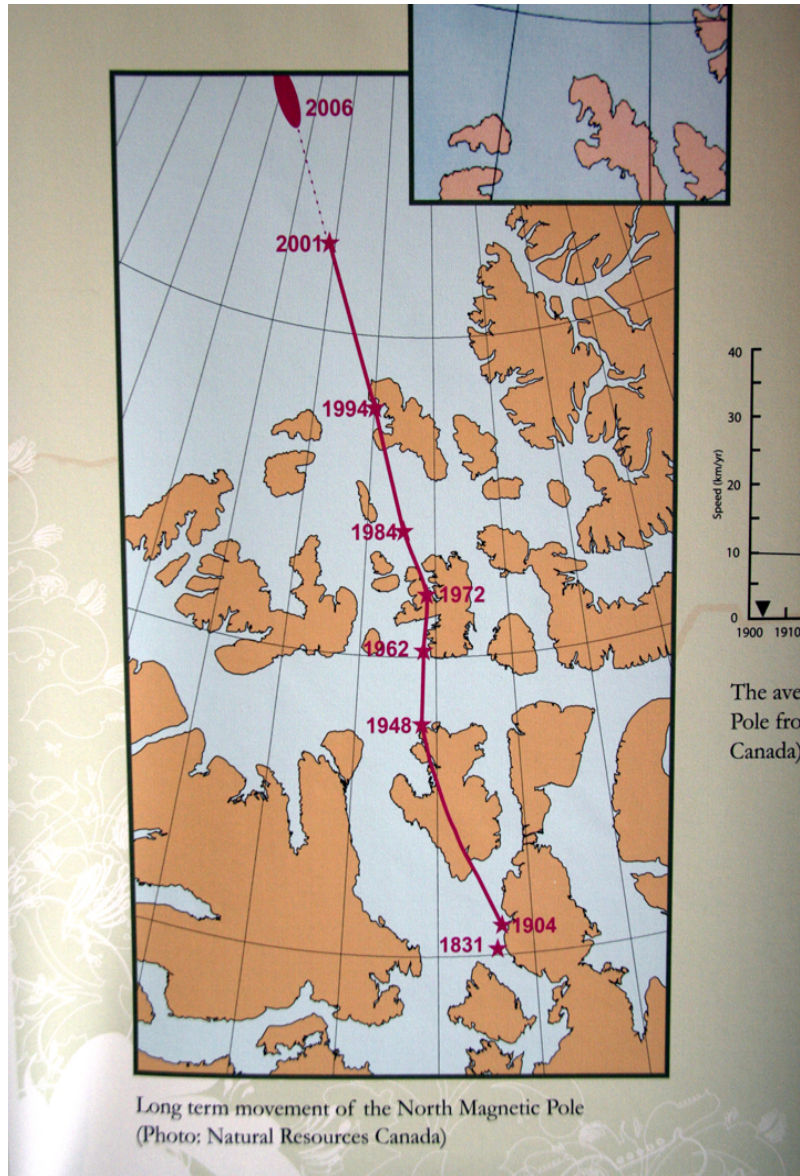
ge.



Map displaying the Arctic according to Norwegian Roald Amundsen's voyage through the Northwest Passage in 1906 at the Norwegian Maritime Museum (Norsk Sjøfartsmuseum) in Oslo Norway.



British map displaying the Arctic with its English-named islands, straits, and bays



A photograph of a map showing the movement of Magnetic North pole taken at the Fram Museum in Oslo, Norway



#1: *Elsewhere Series*, digital photograph, 2006

“Loss, mourning, the longing for memory, the desire to enter into the world around you and having no idea how to do it, the fear of observing too coldly or too distractedly or too raggedly, the rage of cowardice, the insight that is always arriving late... are the stopping places along the way. At the end of the voyage, if you are lucky, you catch a glimpse of a lighthouse, and you are grateful.”

Clifford Geertz, *Works and Lives:
The Anthropologist as Writer*



Photograph of one of Knud Rasmussen's albums at the Danish Polar Center in Copenhagen, Denmark



4th Century B.C.: Pythious discovers Greenland

Detail from *Iceblink* installation, porcelain and felt, 2007

Searching for John Franklin

'A landscape has no fixed meaning, no privileged vantage point. It is oriented on by the itinerary of the passerby'

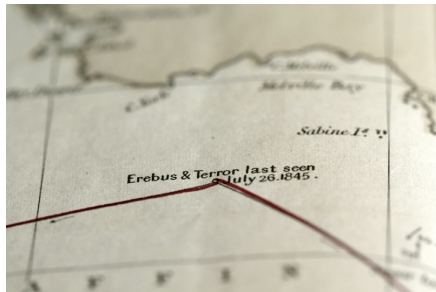
Landscape of Events, Paul Virilio,

On May 19, 1845 Sir John Franklin and his 128 crewmembers set sail from the Thames River chartering two ships, the *Erebus* and *Terror*. Their expedition would finalize the 400-year-old British search for an Arctic Northwest Passage to the Pacific as well as gather scientific data around magnetic North pole. As the *Erebus* was leaving port, a dove landed on its mast. Captain Franklin's only daughter, waving goodbye on shore, commented aloud and later wrote in her diary about the winged omen casting its good luck charm upon the expedition. The dove was also saying goodbye, but a different sort of goodbye. No Franklin crewmember returned to England alive.

The quest was to last 3 years: They hauled enough food, clothing, spare sails and wood, entertainment, and scientific devices to survey uncharted Arctic land and seaways for the World Map. Unlike other British expeditions, no search-and-rescue plan was created because this mission represented British muscle and technological intelligence at its highest. The expedition was assumed fail-proof. A ship would wait for their grand arrival in the Bering Strait.

Captain John Franklin was 59 years old at the time and had gone on two previous Arctic surveying missions: one a disaster in which ten men died, and the second a journey that earned him his knighthood. He had known scurvy, starvation and death.

The expedition weathered its first winter on Beechey Island, a small spit of rock off the coast of Devon Island in Beauford Sound. They built a blacksmith and carpentry shop on



land while the ships were canvassed over for winter quarters. The men waited in the darkness. Sledge parties left from base camp, six to ten men strong pulling survival packed sledges, moving across the frozen waters onto the adjacent island. The sledge journeys usually resulted in frostbite from exposure. Poor clothing and canvas tents offered poor protection against the unexpected blizzards. The sledging party was a brutal scene: the darkness of the sun lost in winter if not the psychotic 24-hour summer sun hobbled mind and mood. The sailors did not know of *qausuittuq*, an Inuit word meaning, "It is never tomorrow". This was a different type of waiting.



Detail of *Iceblink* installation, mixed media, 2007

Despite all of this, the singing of ditties and sailing ballads and the constantly roaring cook stove became common reminders of their former life in England. The sounds of body functions of the men on board competed with the landless howls of the wind in the sails. The snow allowed whispers to travel far but with no echo. In the darkness scurrying rats on the floorboards and beams hurried to devour food provisions, adding some life to the symphony of

sounds. The wintered-over ships slowly lifted off their watery pillows onto sheets of winter ice, [causing](#) nauseating groans and breathless moments amongst the inexperienced men, [still strangers to polar night](#). The [murmur](#) of stories while mending clothing and boots, and the grinding of shovels throwing black coal into the boilers to keep water pipes from freezing, punctuated the Arctic's steady silence.

In the [spring](#), the *Erebus* and *Terror* were set free by seasonal melting. Their route directed them towards magnetic North, which was predicted to have moved since Captain John Ross's [calculations](#) 1831 at Cape Adelaide, 70° 5' 17" N x 96° 46' 45" W. John Ross's nephew, Captain James Clark Ross, had recently returned from his circumnavigation of Antarctica from 1839 to 1843, [sailing](#) both *Erebus* and *Terror*. He named two volcanoes after the ships. Both were refitted in England and [were ready](#) for Captain Franklin's Arctic voyage in May of 1845. These ships were bomb vessels, built with sturdy hulls able to withstand the recoil from their mortar bombs. The ice pack was their destiny. And their experience in polar navigation was far superior to the men who sailed them.

[Pause for a moment and](#) turn into the wind to contemplate [these](#) foreigners in a foreign land using their foreign instruments to negotiate survival. This is not a normal cold: it is penetrating,



melding leather boots to the feet and woolen mittens to the hands like fire, [causing](#) frostbite to lethargic minded men and scurvy to those [ignorant of](#) the land's animal and plant life. The whiteness, the grayness, and the blinding reflections could leave you [feeling](#) trapped and alone, able to disappear into a watery death. Into nothingness. Experiencing the *fata morgana*, the most impressive of the polar mirages, one sees

mountains in open sea and cityscapes within the flatness. They are deadly believable.

The aesthetic of disappearance possesses a shape, color, texture, sound, smell, or taste however formless. It is both verb and noun. The Franklin Expedition created survival kits against it, carrying food, shelter and items god-like in their promises. The



Their Final Hours from the *Searching for* series, digital photograph, 2006

[Vicar of Wakefield](#) and [Bibles](#), fancy teas and music can only distract for a while. But the thing *consumes*. It is not foreign. It finds comfort in its surroundings, in the Arctic and Antarctic and such places as the Amazon jungles and the Himalayas. It slows the stride of weakening knees and forces [you](#) to mentally [compose your](#) farewell letter. A reflection in the glassy waters and one is summoned to slip silently into the nurturing shroud of cold. The sensation of sleeping, the need to pause and rest, only for a while and, delicately, it lulls one onto one's side, curled in womb. Those foreigners in the Arctic saw not a land that gives and takes, where people had lived for thousands of years, but a hostile, merciless terrain. And [these](#) foreigners refused to learn, abide, or nurture themselves [by its](#) rules. Some, like the Norwegians, shifted their approach [by](#) using traditional fur clothing and smaller crews, [requiring](#) less food and supply burden. The British [felt no compulsion to adapt to outside circumstances](#). They had a History.

Slow communication allowed for the suspension of public disbelief and romantic hope in a triumphant return. It permitted expeditions to disappear into the magician's hat while the public

held its breath, and then magically reappear, months or years later. The Franklin expedition's [failure to use](#) traditional communication methods in the Arctic remains one of today's main mysteries. The crew left no written record along the way and no sailing directions after leaving Beechey Island in the [spring](#) of 1846. No indication of which waterway they later used or where they planned to head during the following summer months. They [failed to use](#) the



Category: Fishing, finding from Exploring the Polar Archive Series, digital photographs 2007

standard tin can messages hidden within rock cairns telling about winter sledge journeys, [newly](#) surveyed land, and flora and fauna discoveries. Or perhaps the paper messages, too, were swallowed up by the Arctic's hunger? What they did leave was a trail of belongings: three graves, frozen sledge tracks, and a tin can cairn on Beechey Island and bones, tools, plates, lifeboats, books, and more on King William Island. A single text exists, found fourteen years later by one of Captain Leopold M'CLintock's sledging parties: the Victory Point Record. The Admiralty printed this standard letterform in five different languages. [The](#) expedition's personal addendum [was](#) intended to enable anyone who found them to send them back to England. The letters [would](#) assist in

keeping track of British ships' orientations, since communication relied on hand-to-hand connection. The Victory Point Record was that standard [letter](#) with two handwritten notes along the edge: The first [was](#) cordial and upbeat, dated 1847; the second bleak and erratic dated 1848. The Captain died June 11, 1847. [The](#) ships were lost in the ice. [One hundred five](#) men headed towards the Great Back River. It was a desperate, final [testimony](#) with no audience. [Added to](#) the clues is Inuit oral history, [tales](#) of [watching](#) men drop down and die, withered men trading for food. Wild-eyed men [forcing](#) the Inuit to leave a ship [they had assumed](#) was abandoned, and later returning to witness the ship sink into the grey water. The Inuit of this region knew of the men, recognized something horribly wrong, and kept their distance in fear.

The regular freezing and thawing in the Arctic is part of its natural life cycle. Animals and people who have lived there for thousands of years know this and move accordingly. They did not bury their dead for it was feared that the bodies would become uncovered the following year, depending on the ice melt. The Arctic blanketed many Franklin details on its vast terrain and under its regular snowfalls for many decades before they reemerged. Many [assumed](#) facts are only speculation based on artifacts lost and found.

We know now that the area of water that swallowed their ships is a culminating point for swiftly moving northern icepacks and rarely seasonally melts unlike other parts of the Arctic. Its

[currents are among](#) the strongest in all of the Arctic, even today. Captain Franklin and the Admiralty did not know this. That fateful year they navigated their ship into this



thawed mess without realizing at what cost. The following years [the](#) Arctic experienced a series of extremely cold winters and the seas did not melt during the summers. At some point, Captain

Franklin died along with [a fourth](#) of his crew, and [they were](#) possibly given watery graves. Abandoning their ships in April of 1848, the remaining 105 men took to the land heading south. They did not know the closest supply post lay [1100 miles](#) away. The few remaining officers presumably relied on their [known](#) latitude and longitude calculations and their outdated maps to decipher Great Back River as the closest landmark. The land they were on did not yet exist on their maps. They knew it as King William's Land, not *Island*. [Within their](#) Cartesian system [of coordinates](#), of grids and [mathematical](#) measurements, they did not exist. A blackened frostbite followed them, and at some point, segregated them. [Exposure](#), scurvy, and dread. [Cannibalism](#).

After the expedition left in 1845, no one in England was nervous. Two-year disappearances were common for expeditions. The Admiralty promoted nine of the officers [in absentia](#). Lieutenant Graham Gore elevated to Commander, Commander James Fitzjames elevated to Captain, and Harry Goodsir [Assistant Surgeon](#) promoted to [Acting Surgeon](#), etc. By 1848, many of John



Franklin's fellow captains and friends became concerned. No word came from any Hudson Bay whaling ships, which were quite active in the polar waters and who regularly sent word about the Admiralty's ships. Franklin's friends pleaded with the Admiralty to outfit a search expedition. Given how expensive the *Terror* and *Erebus* had [been](#) to provision, the Admiralty was slow to believe that the Arctic had stolen its [investment](#). They weren't too keen on immediately spending more. Captain John Ross, one of John Franklin's close friends, funded and formed a search party but the

weather was harsh that year in the polar north. He [got no](#) further than Lancaster Sound.

Finally the Admiralty admitted something was wrong and many people [came forward](#) to help find Franklin in their own special ways. In 1850, while ships left for polar north, people with clairvoyance and great godly faith began their own search and rescue missions. Even after the Franklin hysteria had finally softened in the 1870's, the little 'Weesy Girl of Londonberry' envisioned where John Franklin was trapped. There were those who claimed that John Franklin came to them during a hypnotic trance and God had interpreted his words. The British newspapers



The old compound of the Admiralty in London England

picked up on the hype and sensationalized it. [Their illustrators](#) filled space with etchings of the ships, their Captains and officers before they left, interpretations of scenes 'out on the ice' and 'wintering over'. These were the times of fabulous science fiction novels and youthful industrialization, of newspapers beginning to reach the masses and not just the rich, of a waxing and waning Arctic obsession. John Franklin and his lowly crew became the leading ladies. Tunes such as the *Croppy Boy* bloomed with Franklin text, and famous poets wrote and recited poems about the

expedition's [fate](#). It was a fever. The Franklin Expedition's fate unmasked the Arctic to British eyes: Search parties slowly mapped the Arctic geography and won their own fame while unhinging a psychological Unknown for their society. The Arctic was a hostile place but it was conquerable. A world map was coming together.

Being of great godly faith, Lady Jane Franklin at first believed her husband to be alive. She offered 2000 pounds in 1848 to any whalers who could [provide](#) information about her husband's fate. Then in 1851, Captain Penny discovered the Beechey Island graves. Three of Franklin's crew had died that very first winter, a



Etching from the Illustrated London News showing the lieutenants and captains from the Arctic Searching Squadron that went to find Franklin and his men

bad omen. The trash of the expedition covered the tiny island along with a large cairn constructed of 700 tin cans, some unopened. But no written note indicated where to look next. The expedition had made it through Wellington Channel, but beyond were treacherous waters, [wide](#) lands, and tiny islands to search. When the Admiralty became distracted with the Crimean War from 1853 [to 1856](#), Lady Franklin began funding her own expeditions, hiring captains and crew dedicated to her cause. They wanted to see the polar north. "Going to search for Franklin' soon

became a euphemism for an attempt at the North Pole. Many times it lead to the searcher becoming the searched [for](#). It kept the Admiralty's men busy and working in a time of peace. It kept regular sailors active. Many died and many promotions were given. A flood of ships, British and American, floated around waving their flags, wintering over in the Arctic. When captains and officers returned from expeditions, improvements on equipment, travel, and communication would be made. British exploration slowly evolved. And then the Second Opium War occurred [between 1856 and 1860](#). The question still remained: Had John Franklin made it through the North West Passage? Was he to be counted as the First?

The British always brought their home environment with them wherever they went, [libraries, caste systems, and hierarchies](#) in naming [and](#) renaming [lands](#). [In 1845](#) the

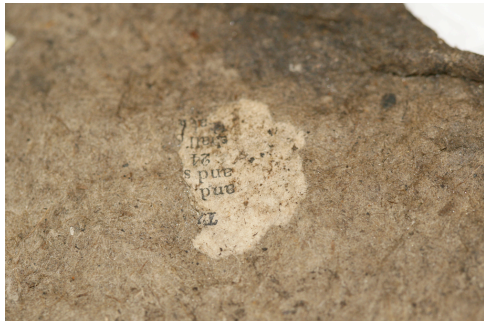
Franklin expedition brought a 1200 volume library, two hand organs, and a monkey named Jacko. Printing presses and theatres soon became a polar tradition to keep the men busy during the long winters. Expeditions began taking pieces of the Arctic back to England. Formal trade with the Inuit influenced where to search and what to avoid. Two Inuit traveled [to England and the United States to be displayed](#) as 'husband and wife' though they were not married. Inuit artifacts and animals found their way into wunderkammers, museums, and private collections. [Diseases](#) were [shared](#), too. Many Franklin expedition artifacts found their way back into British hands.

A single engraved spoon convinced Lady Franklin that her husband was dead. The spoon passed through the mouth of John Franklin and into the hands of the cold, then into the hands of the Inuit, and then the American, Dr. Rae, who traded with them many [metal needles for](#) utensils. [He felt compelled to travel to](#)



England and present the silverware to Lady Jane and the Admiralty. The spoon with John's family insignia, a fingerprint to his aristocracy and social circle, brought a sense of end for Lady Franklin and the public. Perhaps she recognized it as her intimate horizon line, where his mouth once touched finally resting in her palm. She continued her search missions but now with a different purpose. Her husband was gone but what about the rest of the crew? And what about their accomplishments? On January 20, 1854, a formal death announcement was published in the newspapers stating that the John Franklin crew was indeed dead. Captain Sherard Osborn then wrote his book in 1860 testifying that yes, there was enough evidence to claim Sir John Franklin as a hero and as the First through the North West Passage.

[Jules Verne's Journey to the Center of the Earth](#) unravels a quest for the Unknown. [Its story is both](#) fiction [and](#) historical record. The Franklin Expedition story also lies in both realms. The people who constructed public memory are long since gone. The duration between Franklin's departure down the Thames River and subsequent disappearance was crucial in establishing the myth. Only two incomplete bodies were ever brought back to England for burial. [A phantasm of pieces](#) and not wholes. The



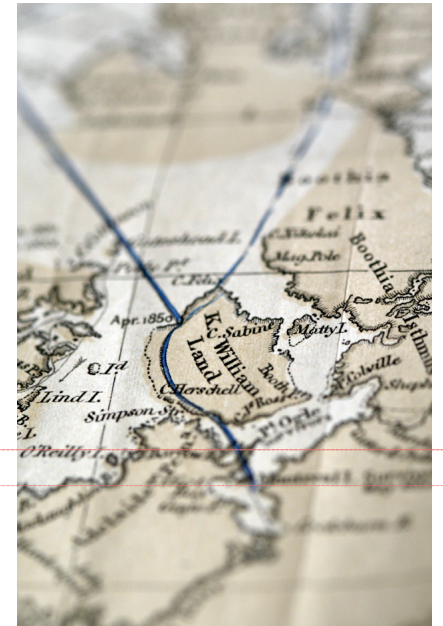
objects returned to England lack their original functions: The objects failed. The trail of random artifacts found over many decades fueled [the debate over mysterious 'N.O.C's'](#) or Not Otherwise Classified objects that [were useless to](#) the forensics of a linear story. [But they lend](#)

[themselves well to](#) a Vernian retelling.

Captain Hatteras, one of Verne's many quirky characters, traveled to the North Pole. His voyages left him restless in his old age. Each day Captain Hattaras would walk the same path, then turn around and return on the same path. His doctor soon realized that this path was in the direction of cardinal North. How many

ghosts unknowingly travel cross Atlantic's ocean to reach those polar shores? How many mingle around magnetic North? How many British ghosts form the Arctic's wind? And bones form its snow? One way to conquer a land is to bury your dead in its ground.

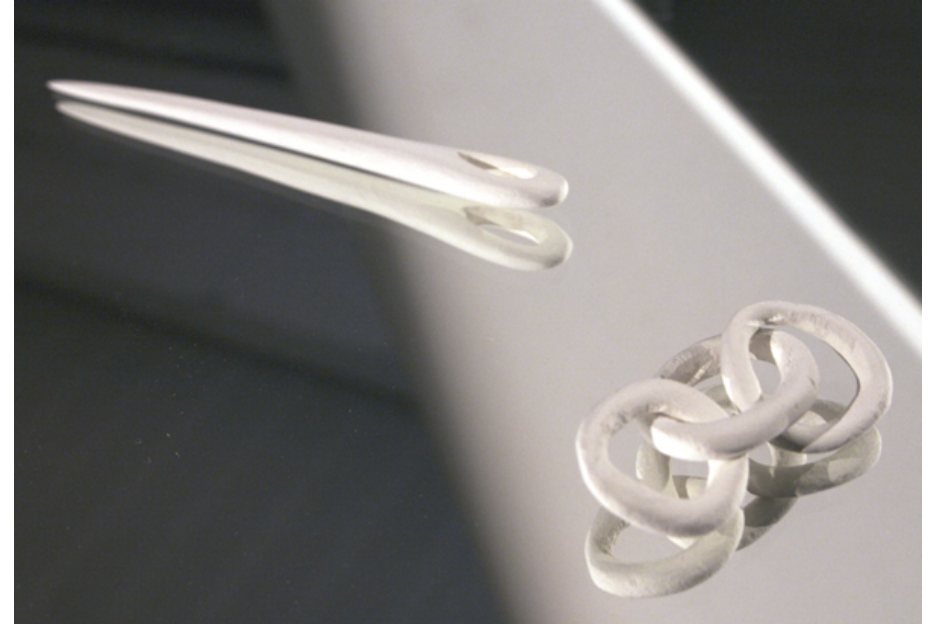
In 1880, the British gave the Canadian [arctic](#) islands sovereignty. [The body of Lieutenant John Irving](#), one of the only Franklin crewmember bodies to be [identified](#), was returned to England by Captain Schwatka's expedition, sponsored by the American Geographical Society. Irving's remains were given a soldier's burial in Edinburg. By this time Lady Franklin was dead, as were many of the original captains who personally knew Sir John Franklin. A new breed of captains was emerging and taking command of the polar North, [captains who took full advantage of cameras and photography, even film.](#) Captains who knew the [exploits of](#) polar history, and had grown up in the shadows of the Franklin frenzy.



Sir John Franklin's memorial in Westminster Abbey [stands in](#) the ranks of Shakespeare, James Cook and Mary Queen of Scots. His bust rests atop a carving of a ship. One section of text reads, 'Oh ye frost and cold, O ye ice and snow'. The memorial also commemorates Captain Leopold M'Clintock, whose expedition had discovered the only written note, the Victory Point Record, and a slew of artifacts and bones indicating the crew's demise. And of course, Lady Jane, who died at age 83 years, with most of her life spent searching for her dead husband. Sir John Franklin's last text panel reads, "Not here: the white North has they bones; And though hero sailor soul, art passing on thine happier voyage now toward no earthly pole".



Category: Fishing, Finding from Exploring the Polar Archive Series, digital photograph, 2007



Needle detail from Iceblink installation, porcelain on mirror, 2007

The un-naming

Wine for all, to flow through these straits and sounds! Lips upon privilege and token, upon Barrow and Ross, Parry and King William. A single hand grasps these waters tightly!

A guttural cries back: *Igdlukik and Netsilik and Aivilik! Who has taken these away?*

The wine stops and changes back to blood. The crescendo's shadow wanes in winter. Blood freezes, wine freezes. The inlet and bay freezes. Momentum from a long sweep of arm over arm brushes clean the snow. Surrenders name erasing name.

We seek to exist, the arms whisper.

The land always names where one sleeps.



#10: *Expedition Series*, ink, pencil and resin on mulberry paper, 2007



It Is Never Tomorrow Series, digital photograph, 2008

Twilight casts its brief life upon the world,
giving rest to day, giving breath to morning.

We search for the missing.
Are we prepared for the answers?

Twilight offers no reply.



Category: A solo, from Exploring the Polar Archive Series, digital photograph, 2007



Category: Fishing, Finding from Exploring the Polar Archive Series, digital photograph, 2008

How the archive consumes the places I have not seen

Fine dust settles on the rounded plane of an igloo. No fog and no alarm mark the threshold. I am six floors elevated with beams holding up the determination of hands and hearts, pilgrimages of storied departures, imagined returns and gliding steeds of wood and knot. I hold tight my binoculars with cautioned eye. Cathedral ceiling lids offer hiding for dry plates, their anchors sunk.

The North is a mouth, swallowing whole lambs. Ignoring Mercator, Cartesian, and I follow my fingers up the lines to see



where I haven't been. Find hoarfrost and mirage, ice castles that pass in silence. Find ice and beacon pushing, pushing through sounds and bays. I follow my fingers' downward decent. Further on lay the

Southern seas, gnashing teeth and the fury piled up in palpable mounds burn my fingers, weathered skin.

Turn into history's wind. Face it open-chested like the bow of a ship. Face it lapping tongued like the seal gulping air. Face it whipped and flogged, beaten but still wobbling. My toes find stability and density. Yet secretly move me farther and farther away. I gather wind and wail, placing them into my ears. Collecting all and withered breeze till only threads from torn garments realize what's gone.

How *does* one face the quiet? Head cocked in patience wait for sound to rupture? Trembling stomach dissolving its contents? I never did ask or break

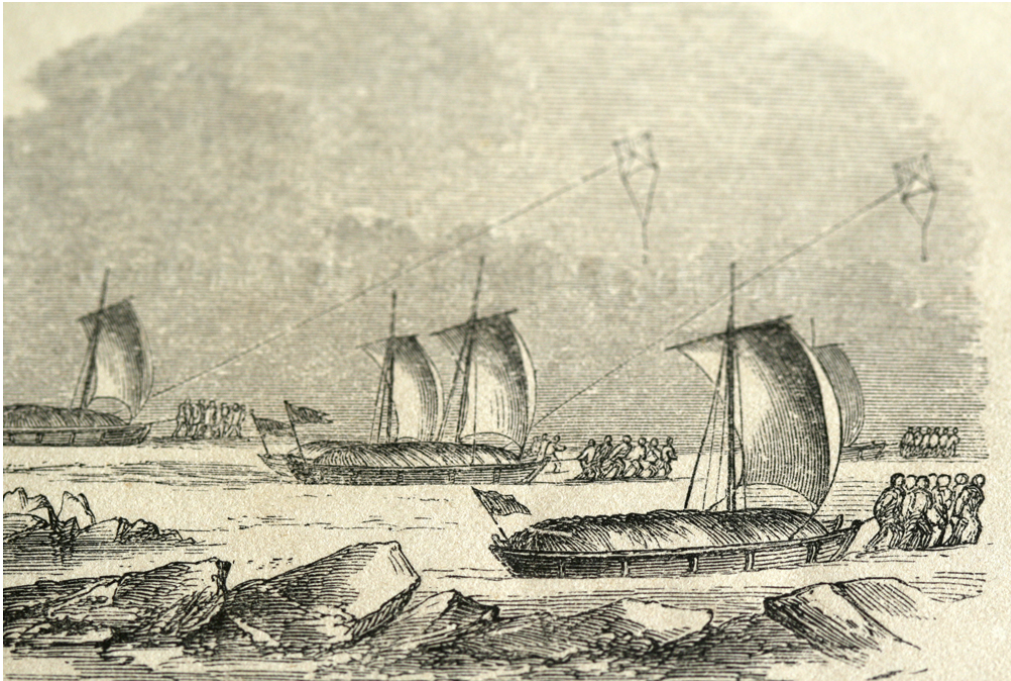


anything apart in fear that I would speak over it. In fear that it would crumble. In fear of its intangible wave extended beyond where my fingers circled. It keeps mum, taunting me with unnamed blackened hands and anonymous boots that peeled follicle away.

Conversing with etchings and letters, there until here has too large a face to recognize from the ground. Reaching, my horizon releases me from edge and corner. I bend sideways to peer at North. It pulses with every arch and small world, reeling over my head a dusty



ocean of sepia and mustiness. All are apparitions in this attic's bowels. And my insides ache at the distance I traveled.



Etching from *The Illustrated London News* of British sailors in the Arctic on a sledging mission

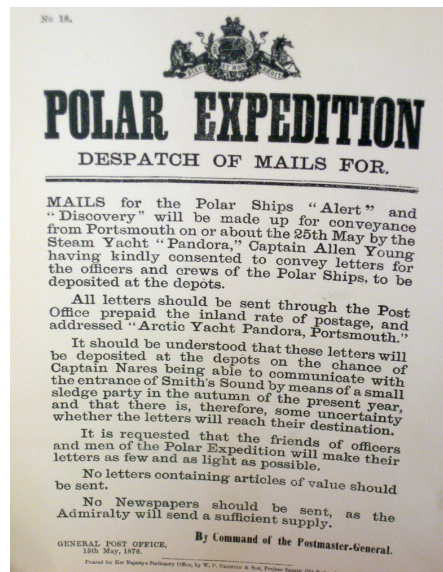
“I may add in support of what I have already stated regarding men carrying with them useless articles on having to abandon their ships in the Arctic Sea... Sir John Ross himself, that in effecting his wonderful escape, after a three year detention in Prince Regent’s Inlet, he distributed his silver plates amongst the men, rather than leave it behind, and thus brought most of it to England with him.”

Dr. Rae’s letter published in *The Times*, 1857

Coldness into eternal spring

In a windowless warehouse in southeastern suburban London rests Captain Nares's sledge. It is situated on the top shelf, farthest on the left, amongst a collection of plastic and cloth ghosts. Its home, the warehouse, secures the overload that cannot fit into the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, England. The un-shrouded sledge lays open and vulnerable. I have wandered this neighborhood for two hours trying to find this warehouse that contains the sledge.

Captain Nares's used this sledge during the HMS *Alert* and *Discovery* Expedition to the Arctic in 1875-76.



The expedition became famous for having more cases of scurvy than all other nineteenth century Arctic explorations. As a result, the captains and officers had to stand before Parliament, the Admiralty and other expert witnesses to explain the events of the tragedy. Why had so many become grotesquely sick or died? What had they done differently from previous expeditions?

The *'Report of the Committee appointed by the Lords Commission of the Admiralty to enquire into the Causes of the Outbreak of Scurvy in Recent Arctic Expeditions'* discussed days traveled out on the ice compared to the number of days spent on the ship, how much the men carried versus how much they were eating (or not eating). According to one chart, British convicts ate more (and better) and drank more than the

sailors had during their arctic expedition. The sledging parties suffered from malnutrition combined with pure physical exhaustion.

I did not expect to see this specific sledge in the warehouse. I felt fortunate because it happened to be designed by one of my favorite polar captains, Captain Leopold M'Clintock, during the 1850's and 1860's. He redesigned it many time over for his own arctic

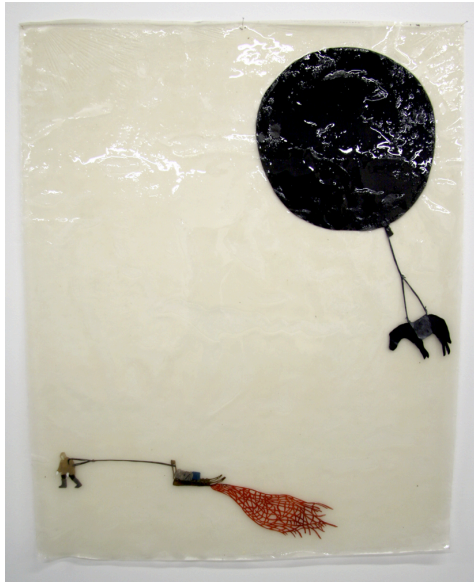


Etching from *The Illustrated London News* showing one of Captain M'Clintock's sledging parties breaking apart the Victory Point Cairn

expeditions including his famed seventy-nine day sledge journey in 1859 while searching for John Franklin and his crew. This was the longest sledge journey at that time. He wrote a book upon his return about adequate gear for polar exploration. The squat-looking sledge did not mimic the lightweight and flexible Inuit sledges. The British used oak beams or elm. The weight of a sledge was around 450 pounds steeped with provisions that might have to last for thirty days out on the ice. Each sailor pulled about twice his weight, every day, even in bad weather or on a twisted ankle or scurvy effected leg. For them this formed a daily routine: packing, tethering, pulling, pushing, un-

tethering, unpacking and repacking each morning and evening during the Arctic's dark winter or brilliant summer. If one was so lucky, they could add the random artifacts found along the way from previous expeditions or Inuit, gems to be brought back to England. They often attached kites and sails to aid travel over rough ice ledges.

As I photographed the sledge on its shelf, I wondered about the piles of bones discovered by one of



M'Clintock's 1859 sledging parties. I wonder which sailors, coming across the bones and tattered clothing, placed them onto the sledge? They were holy relics, christened with polar ice and wind. Those sensational bones, exulted on a M'Clintock sledge, whose pallbearers still needed to defy scurvy and weather on their way back to their ship.

They had to defy their rattling stomachs and dwindling rations. Did the sailors hear the tapping of bones as they lay awake, ship hammocks in mid pendulum swing? Did those unnamed bones protest, traveling away from the North West Passage, returning through Baffin Bay's tunnel from whence they had come with such optimism? Water was all around, but not enough to mold flesh together again. Are they lonely, feeling displaced in a British memorial while brothers and Captain lie in frosty country?

I wanted to spend the day with the sledge. In fact, I wanted it in my house, to always see it. I wanted to use

it, to attach it to my bike and cycle across frozen lakes and snow-covered roads. Or perhaps learn how to drive a team of dogs and become a musher. I *needed* to pull it. How did this sledge fit into my life?

Looking around to make sure the museum handler was not close, I ran my hand over its ropes and leather bindings. I touched its rails and its Arctic wounds and battle scars. I poked the brown canvas bundle resting in its stomach. There was no tag for the package indicating its contents. The sledge was around six feet long. I knew I couldn't lift the thing by myself and I doubted that the friendly museum handler would be an accomplice to my crime. He was busy a few aisles away pushing something around and talking to himself, or perhaps to me. He started to walk back over and so I broke off my love affair and continued photographing. He asked if I was ready to move on to the other objects in their polar collection. I stepped down off the ladder and



gazed at the sledge from the ground. A very skilled maker placed his hands on this sledge once acknowledging his own work. Tying knots for the bed and weaving rope so that sailors could easily place their belongings

without them tumbling off. Taking liberties with the designs given to him by the Admiralty. How much had this sledge meant to him? To Captain Nares? To the crew?

There are many things at odds with themselves lying confined in museum storage: pieces of gold trimmed railing, silk handkerchiefs, clay pipes, shreds of clothing. Like criminals they are trapped without visitors in gang rooms. Their bunks line walls and walls with bedding of plastic sheets. Some, if they are lucky to be small, wear archival tissue shrouds. But more than a prison, it is a tomb. That is where the sledge, my sledge, lay in state, with Westminster Abbey and Royal Naval Hall miles and years away. Perhaps it was written about, a short epitaph in a conference paper. Rarely does the National Maritime Museum allow the items to travel to other museums. Most of the objects have never seen the museum though that is their master. Searching through 'history' reveals many poignant potshards and scat. Within this warehoused menagerie of history, I was too young, too present tense to be the owner of this sledge. I felt ashamed of my delusions of privilege. This was not my history. I was only an obsessed onlooker, imagining my own life lessons into a narrative that was not my story.



“We are forced to transmit what we know, that is our legacy, *but we share the impotence of those who come after*. This is why I believe we must hold on not only to our memory, *but also to the possibility of forgetting*”, said Erri de Luca. Strangulation is what I think about when I walk into nursing homes, museum warehouses and archives. Should we bury and burn our objects just as we bury and burn our bodies? Less waste and less burden. Would these actions create more meaning from our pasts? Or turn

them into nothing, as they often do in these present times? Our museums are full of beautiful and ugly



Bar of left over soap signed and dated by Fridtjof Nansen after his Farthest North mission in 1893 through 1896, on display at the Norwegian Maritime Museum in Oslo

garbage. Yet the difficulty lies in not carrying these objects within us, in not memorizing them, not making them into mantras we can pull out from time to time. In lectures, dinner parties, romantic and personal moments we need those little bits of encouragement that the past can offer. Sometimes they are little wisps of nothing, a piece of leather broken off a boot: it is a piece of trivial junk that possesses power within its own insignificance. Or they are massive, like a pocket watch given to you by your grandfather, kept in his overalls many years ago. As Yi-Fu Tuan asks, how do impressions given to us through the senses acquire stability in objects and places? A deep well: from a dull coin, a faded bracelet, a pungent bonfire,

a folded letter, a piece of long red hair found on your shirt one year later. You must respond and gather your senses.

That is the problem with my photographs of the M'Clintock sledge. They tell nothing of shifting ice floes where one's life depended upon repeated calculations of longitude and latitude. Now the sledge is stuffed within a frame. My photographs tell of weathered leather and wood, structure and craftsmanship. The humidity monitor in the warehouse doesn't even allow the sledge to die. The scurvy of rotting teeth and muscle, dying men and lost limbs: this sledge broke those men. The wind against the



Untitled #8: Elsewhere Series, digital photograph, 2006

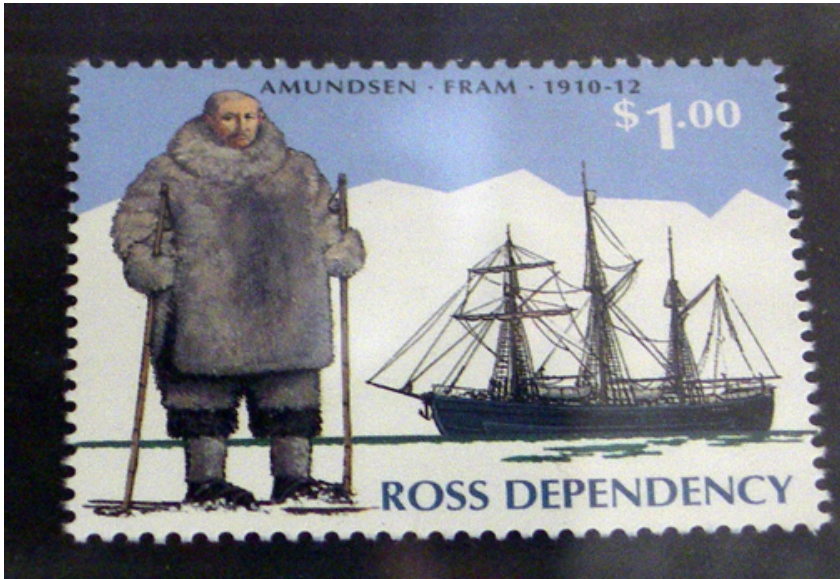
canvas tents in savage summer night sun warned them that death wandered in that awful land. Slowing down to a mile per day trudged. And the weight of the sledge finished them.

Captain Nares returned to England with his dry plate photographs of the Arctic expedition, of sledges and ship, crew and land. The British public oo-ed and aw-ed at

the imagery, at the phenomena of photography in 1876. My photographs, like Nares's images, are meant to fool the eye, too. This sledge contains an evilness that I find difficult to define and to swallow. At one point a world rested on its back, and another and another. It caused knees to give out, backs to ache. Yet here it rests, in passive retirement, getting away with its past crimes. Deemed 'salvageable', as if someone knew that it would suffer in this temperature-controlled room, with no snow and no view of the outside. It waits, in perpetual equator-mildness surrounded by foreigners from all parts of the archived world.



I wandered for two hours in this damn neighborhood to see you, sledge.



Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen stamp, First to the South Pole, First to fly over the North Pole, First to sail through the Northwest Passage, from the Scott Polar Institute Collection, Cambridge England



Outfit rendered in the style of Norwegian Roald Amundsen polar attire and early 20th century Inuit attire



Photograph of a photograph from Knud Rasmussen's albums at the Danish Polar Center, Copenhagen Denmark



Detail from #3: *Expedition Series*, ink and resin on mulberry paper, 2007



#2: *Expedition Series*, ink and resin on mulberry paper, 2007

When you kill an animal, place a chunk of ice or snow in the animal's mouth so that it does not thirst on its way to the afterlife. Ensure that the animal will return become reincarnated over and over for you, the hunter and family, to kill and eat again. The animal sacrifices itself and the hunter humbles yourself in a gesture of thankfulness. After your very first kill, strip every last piece of flesh from the bones of a seal and return them to the sea as an offering. Those bones find each other in the watery darkness of the arctic, reunite to form the seal again and again for you. The family depends on this cycle, for there are only a certain number of animals out there in the wild and one must always be aware that we are in communal agreement.

Tales told by a lecturer and curators at the National Maritime Museum, London, and the Arctic Institute, Copenhagen



Photograph of a photograph from Knud Rasmussen's albums at the Danish Polar Center, Copenhagen



#3: *Expedition Series*, ink and resin on mulberry paper, 2007

The un-naming

Wine for all, to flow through these straits and sounds! Lips upon privilege and token, upon Barrow and Ross, Parry and King William. A single hand grasps these waters tightly!

A guttural cries back: *Igdlukik and Netsilik and Aivilik! Who has taken these away?*

The wine stops and changes back to blood. The crescendo's shadow wanes in winter. Blood freezes, wine freezes. The inlet and bay freezes. Momentum from a long sweep of arm over arm brushes clean the snow. Surrenders name erasing name.

We seek to exist, the arms whisper.

The land always names where one sleeps.



#10: *Expedition Series*, ink, pencil and resin on mulberry paper, 2007

That which is leading

White sail and blue mitten,
Red map and grey fur.
Find my way through.

Qausuittuq steps before me: *it is never tomorrow*



It Is Never Tomorrow Series, digital photograph, 2008



Etching from *The Illustrated London News* showing a ship being moored to an iceberg



#7: *Expedition Series*, ink and resin on mulberry paper, 2007

Their Launch

We harbor much faith in the launch: in blank canvas sea, in open desert road and the constant fight against gravity's hands. We send them off. We wait, wait, wait. Do they return? We harbor much faith in the return, in colorful banners, high kites, bottles smashed and the imagined embrace and kiss. We pull them home, beckoning them further on beyond where the horizon line can meet them. So we meet them, half way. We cross landscapes, tug down the white clouds and part the seas to find their ships, their cries.

These things occur. We catch them in our arms, the trials and error of wind currents with sheer trust. They exist, both past, and now, present. But they are not as we remembered, not what we sent away, not what they had once weighed.

We harbor much faith in their launch.



It Is Never Tomorrow Series, digital photograph, 2008



A Moment at the Pole: Shackleton, felt, roping, and metal, 2007



Soliloquy: Searching for Series, digital photograph, 2006

Detur Gloria soli deo (Give glory god alone)

The boat was small. Perhaps a nice size dinghy, out of context, I thought. Yet resting on the rock-covered tableaux at Dulwich College surrounded by overly loud schoolboys, the scene was a strange colliding of worlds. Then again, perhaps not that strange. It is no coincidence that the *James Caird* now lies in state at this public school in London, given that it is Sir Ernest Shackleton's alma mater. I am here to make tangible the boat that I constructed out of wood and canvas in my mind: his *James Caird*. Dominique, the French-born woman I am staying with in London, is here to watch me investigate and, as an unofficial anthropologist, to observe the wealthy boys in their environment. We are lucky, school is in session today. We appear awkward in the space, the only women, as does the taxidermy emperor penguin in the glass case a few feet away.

The *James Caird* has new sails, a renovated hull and white paint. A bronze plaque in front of the tiny boat offers a



brief account of Shackleton's voyage, complete with photographs and a map of the Weddell Sea death trap. The *Endurance* expedition originally intended to complete an overland trek

across Antarctica's diameter. Instead, on January 19, 1915, the ship became trapped in the summer ice. The crew wintered in the ship and Shackleton kept them busy with physical training and football. The icepack crushed *Endurance* on October 27th of the same year. The 28-member crew camped out on the ice for a month and watched as it was swallowed up. Then began their five-month trudge pulling three



lifeboats across thawing ice. Several times they stopped and set up their 'home away from home' only to have to repack and continue on as the summer turned ice to sea. Finally they retreated to their three small lifeboats. Riding an ice floe's northern current, they marooned in April 1916 on Elephant Island, a tiny island in a cluster of islands. They still needed rescuing.

Shackleton chose five men and set sail in one of the boats for the Norwegian whaling station on South Georgia Island. Twenty-two men, including Shackleton's most trusted companion and the cook, again tried to create home in the Antarctic. Most expeditions stopped at South Georgia before entering Antarctic's final waters. The whalers had warned them in 1915 of the season's bad condition and urged them to amend their plans. But now it was turning into Antarctic winter, 1916. The altered twenty-two foot lifeboat was the *James Caird*. The island rested in the region's most unpredictable waters and weather over 800 miles away.

Seventeen hellish days later the men landed the *James Caird* on the southwestern edge of South Georgia Island using only sextant, prismatic compass, a few charts, and an aneroid barometer to navigate. The whaling station was on the northern side. A sleepless 36-hour trek across soft snow and low

mountains brought them to their destination. Shackleton immediately won respect from the Norwegian whalers who could not fully comprehend the emaciated and wild-eyed group of six humans standing before them. Shackleton, determined to rescue his twenty-two comrades stranded back on Elephant Island, sailed to Chile on one of the whaling ships. He had gained popularity there during his previous Antarctic expeditions. With many setbacks, the penniless Shackleton finally borrowed a ship named *Yelcho* from some gracious Chileans. On August 22, 1916, they spotted the small Elephant Island. Not one man died, a claim still in contention.

The *James Caird* now rests on a tableau of rocks guarded by a rail, protecting it from us. The scene is hopeless. I want to cast the boat out to sea and let it go like Shackleton let go of



British soil. The hallway is too stable and the bronze plaque too small for those hundreds of miles sailed, walked and suffered. Where is the triumph in this presentation? Where, beyond the docile photographs and words, are the tribulations and starvation and perseverance? The passivity angers me.

Circling the hallway I read the other text panels nailed to the brick walls. The schoolboys shout back and forth to each other as if they are old men. I step over them like rocks. Shackleton earned average marks at Dulwich

College. Not spectacular and nothing that indicated his future leadership abilities. He chose the sea at the age of fifteen. The boys around me appear to be about that age but look pleasantly plump in their ties and uniform jackets. Perhaps a few of them sail. It is unfair for me to judge them.

The *James Caird's* original sail hangs against the left wall, glass enclosed, above our heads, dark grey and tattered. Next to it are two sledges, wobbly kneed and thin in a way that shows Norwegian influence and Progress. These naturally glided over the ice and were more forgiving than earlier British models. I photograph them hanging like paintings, like Joseph Beuysian sculptures. In fact, the entire hallway could read like one of his installations about survival, death and rebirth.

I eventually make my way over to the stuffed penguin.

Dominique ventures over, too. Together we look at the strange creature whose seams are coming undone. It has patches of feathers. Shame shudders through me for gawking then shifts to embarrassment for the poor bird. Shackleton fully supported hunting and eating fresh meat while in Antarctica. He believed it would help to dodge scurvy. He also recognized it kept the crew busy and active: hunting, shooting, skinning and butchering the penguins, seals and seabirds. On his first Antarctic voyage as a member of Robert Falcon Scott's crew, he readily shot penguins for the cook. Scott, squeamish about hunting, did not support Shackleton and his buddies' actions.



I photograph Dominique next to the penguin. They are about the same height. I respect the penguin. It traveled thousands of miles and about 100 years to be in London for me to see. A penguin in England was quite an odd fixture in early 20th century. Now it doesn't seem that strange. Penguins and people can go anywhere. There are more people and penguins on some research bases in Antarctica than in some towns in the United

States. Like all suburban sprawls, Antarctica hasn't missed its opportunity.

Turning, I again face the front of the boat, grounded and inert. It speaks of a different life altogether, when landscapes could still haunt the public like ghosts within the imagination.



Most people no longer have whalers to impress with eight hundred mile voyages across the worst waters on the planet; only gas mileage statistics measured on the highway between here and there. Most people no longer have a public waiting for months or years to hear if they have planted their flags or are even still alive. Communication no longer has an aura of mystery or anticipation. Those emotions now come out in other ways.

I photograph a photograph of Shackleton high up in a single-person hot air balloon in Antarctica. Taken quite a distance away, the photograph offers the viewer an expansive view of the Antarctic landscape. I imagine myself standing below gazing up at the floating bird wondering how I got trapped in this god-forsaken place far from London-home. The tale of the Odyssey springs to life. There is another photograph above of Shackleton in his cold weather gear: Norwegian elk-fur boots, woolen face hood, exaggerated fur mittens dangling from strings.

He never really wanted to follow the Norwegians' suggestions but gave in, somewhat, by trying out fur. Shackleton stands on what appears to be a small podium. I can't decide whether it is a real portrait of him or a photograph of a sculpture of him. His eyes seem vacant. Perhaps this was towards the end of his life? His silhouette contrasts with the black background against the red brick wall.

Shackleton recognized home on the southern seas rather than with his wife and social circle in London. Yet he loved the camera and publicity, and modeled for a Burberry ad after his second Antarctic expedition. He charmed the ladies and had an affair with an American actress. There are publicity photographs of him and American explorer Robert Peary,

First to the North Pole, and with Fridtjof Nansen, Father of Norwegian exploration. Free from the British caste system, many sailors repeatedly offered their hands to every expedition he attempted. This small exhibition presents Sir Shackleton the Leader, bold and dedicated, and brushes past Sir Shackleton the Penniless, the man who lived in debt. Even with his knighthood and public fame, he could not keep his wallet full or his family in his heart. When Shackleton died of a massive heart attack on January 5, 1922 during his fourth expedition, his wife knew his body belonged in the Antarctic. She instructed the men to bury him there, in a South Georgia whaler's cemetery, the humble place where he was most respected and remembered. His ghost could walk in peace on that desolate island.



Dominique looks restless. She knows the meaning within this meeting of strangers so has said nothing about leaving. But I realize it is time to part and bid the small ship adieu. Their break has ended and the schoolboys have filed back to class. The

hallway is now quiet. My eyes navigate the space, making sure nothing slipped past. Shackleton shared some things in common with other British captains, sometimes foolish and ignorant of the landscape but highly trained for sea. How I wish I could have been on that small boat with him, not for the heroism but for the story, the treacherousness of the accomplishment. Six fellow passengers shouting commands on how to get ourselves through these bleak times. Not just in the boat but World War 1 and the killing in Europe. Shackleton returned to save every man, valuing life more than his own worth, valuing the ability to retell the story more than dying within the story. This marked him as abnormal, odd amongst his fellow British captains and those of the past.

Dominique and I walk back through the doorway and out into the London sun. The air is still cool, even in June. She tells me her observations of the schoolboys: some with special ties, some with pins and badges on their lapels. She shares her thoughts on their possible meanings. I listen wondering if Shackleton ever wore such a pin, or if they were newly devised badges of honor. Good grades can only carry you so far, I believe. Burned into my visual memory is the *James Caird* and my image of Ernest Shackleton and his five men stuffed into that boat. Some trying to find rest and food below the canvas covering and some, exposed above, tending the sails and navigation. Burned into my ears is Shackleton beckoning his men on with his favorite rallying cry:

Never for me the lowered banner! Never the last endeavor!



It Is Never Tomorrow Series, digital photograph, 2008



Visitor's pass from Dulwich College that the author forgot to return



Two of Shackleton's sledges that were used during one of his Antarctic expeditions, now hanging on the wall at Dulwich College: London England

Missed returns

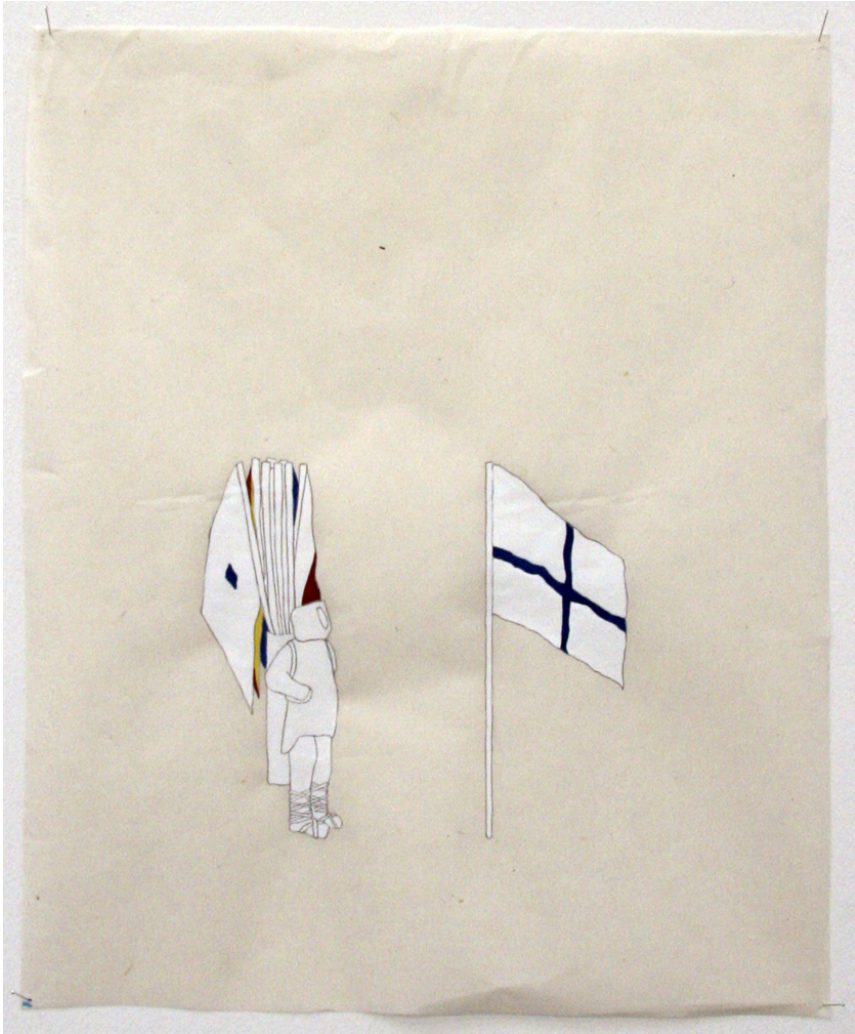
It was Ernest Shackleton who took the first aerial photograph of Antarctica. He was 650 feet in the air, suspended by hydrogen and a cow gut balloon, peering down at his comrades below and the vastness of the land and sea: February 1, 1902. Captain Robert Falcon Scott was not pleased with this arrangement though he was the first to experience the Antarctic from above only minutes before, but without a camera. And so continued Sir Shackleton and Sir Scott's civil unfriendship.

But like all landscapes, the Antarctic does not care about humans traipsing around on it, though the contact impacted its histories and surface forever. Scott, who died on his ill-prepared return voyage from the South Pole: Shackleton, who died of a heart attack off the coast of Antarctica during his fourth expedition. Scott, who left his ghostly basecamp still with crates, banners and bedding: Shackleton, who abandoned his *Endurance* as it was swallowed up in the ice and frigid waters.

Both left bones of cars, dogs and ponies. Both left their bodies buried within Antarctic terrain.



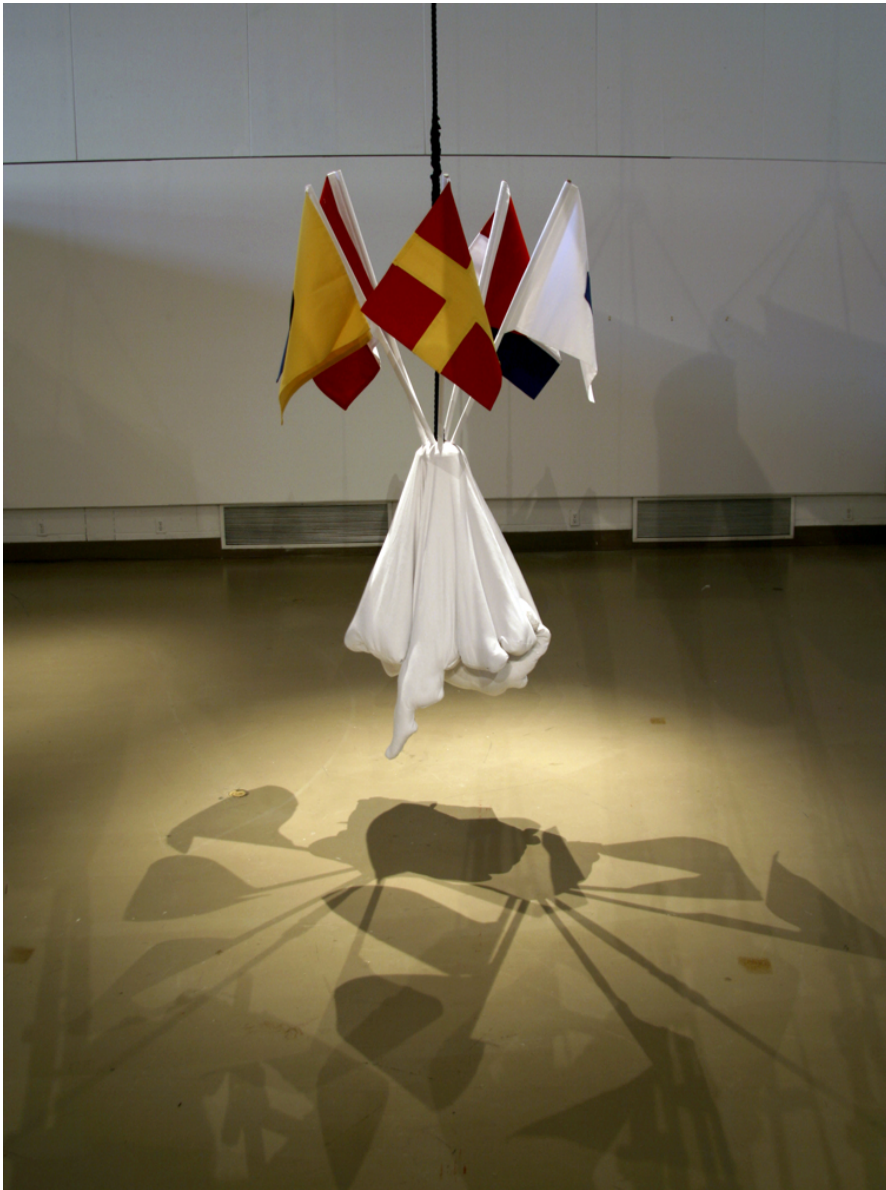
Category: Climate #1 & #2, from *Exploring the Polar Archive Series*, digital photograph, 2007



Staring at Amundsen, ink and pencil on mulberry paper, 2007



It Is Never Tomorrow Series, digital photograph, 2008



Detail of *Their There* sculpture, mixed media, 2007

“The prospects of a speedy passage were soon brought to a stand, and Melville Bay, which they desired to reach, was still inaccessible. They were, however, joined by Captain Austin’s squadron, consisting of twelve ships. ‘The presence,’ says our author, ‘of so many ships, in regular order at the edge of the ice, was really a splendid sight, embellished as it was by the glory of England, the British flag waving in the breeze”.

Peter Sutherland, surgeon for the *Lady Franklin* and *Sophia*, who were searching for the Sir John Franklin Expedition, 1850 through 1851



Beechey Island Memorial from *Iceblink* installation, mixed media, 2007



Had We Lived: Robert Falcon Scott from the *Explorer's Last Words Series*, acrylic on wall, 2007



#6: *Expedition Series*, ink and resin on mulberry paper, 2007

Rooting the flags

Flags grow in all types of climates: colonialism, patriotism, and other -isms. They rapidly sprout, bury their roots, and try to thrive. In 1909, American explorer Robert Peary, his partner Matthew Hensen and their four Inuit guides returned with photographic proof, showing five individuals holding flags at the North Pole. They were the First. Many contested that they feigned their calculations. It is still contested today. In August 2007, a team of Russian divers and a submarine arm planted their flag underneath the ice at the North Pole. For different reasons the North Pole and the Magnetic North Pole are always shifting. No one can capture them.

The South Pole, located on solid ground, does not have this problem. Upon being the First to reach the South Pole in 1911, the Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen planted his country's flag on the exact spot. This marked both the achievement of his impassioned personal goal and the favor of his countrymen, king and queen. Two months later, when British Captain Robert Falcon Scott and his party were two miles away from the South Pole, they spotted something in the distance and dreadfully realized that it was Amundsen's flag. They planted their British flag three-fourths miles north, away from the Norwegian flag. It was a symbol of their own failure.



Collection of Inuit goggles from the Ethnology Department
of the National Museum in Copenhagen, Denmark



Peering through domes, ink and pencil on black and white
photograph, 2006

Our Sorrow's Knot

My hand extends in the chance of salvation: grasping rope, wooden wall, tethered blanket and hammock. It is all we can do to not tumble about. I lay inside the giant whale with visions of ash and water: unrest within the cyclone's frigid dance. It is the baying of the sea like icy mares in heat longing for loves left on far shores.

The thundering leans against the mast: luffing sails, shuddering hooks, their hands over hands. We think it is the end. The horizon captures longitude tangling this watery bed into a filmy line. The sky only swallows more as it challenges cloth to rip itself into violent death, ensuring all to go down into the depths.

Fierce night and wicked day play games: training hands, eating hearts, and despairing minds. It forces us to be wrong. Light bleeds out from the coming darkness. Our tasks bear scars from treading foot on bending wood and beliefs grow stagnant in winter's impending stench. Suppressed coughs heave shoulders in tune, allowing bets to be placed on severed wits and lungs.

Then song cracks against midnight's storm, driving it out: racous voices, breathful mourning, trustful words, We strike back all that it gave. I had almost forgotten about warm rain tumbling down fog filled streets, whistling with love linked in arm and heart, before all that was green and good. Divert our sorrow's knot to fire stove and keel.

Polar trumpets curse our bobbing bottle: cautious cleaning, wakeful minds, easing legs. The morning calm is silence in our bellies. Recycling countenance till spit reaches land. I am a frozen well upon a coffin's lid, imploring North to send me home. Lay deep my palms upon bow and stern till stars find sleep and sun returns.



Photograph of a photograph from Knud Rasmussen's albums at the Danish Polar Center, Copenhagen



Photograph of a lock of Norwegian explorer Fridtjof Nansen's hair at the Fram Museum in Oslo Norway: cut upon his return from the Farthest North mission



Etching from *The Illustrated London News* of a man assisting another man out of polar waters

The man who never threw anything away 1983-95

Installation by Ilya Kabakov: he quotes, “ to separate himself from these things ... is to sever the ties to these memories, to forget the past and with that- all one’s life”.



It Is Never Tomorrow Series, digital photograph, 2008

Fluctuation and a March

I remember realizing that the earth's core was not solid as I pulled my heavy sledge up the hill. I remember the mid-morning wind ruffling my white fur parka, the warmth at the tips of my mittens and at the tips of my boots. The heaviness of lifting up my foot through two feet of fresh snow in order to place it a little in front of me, only to have to lift up the other. How far to bend forward when pulling? When to pause? How do I not fall from the strain? The longer I trudged, the more I believed the end of the day would never come. There was much work left to be done before the sun set:

My body aches with tension, pushing in from the four cardinal directions. In my legs, my thighs and calves, my back and neck: all must keep moving. If my pace lulls, my sledge begins to fall asleep, sinking deeper into the drifts. I throw my body forward in hope that it will become un-wedged, enlivened. The terrain cares little for my internal recognition. Encountering me gives it no satisfaction. Yet I feel it impressed upon me as an infinite shroud. I can never find an edge to grasp for casting it away. Like the volcano at the North Pole seen by the whaler, imagination clutches and becomes unshakable.

My path up the hill is as wandering as the magnetic North pole's dance: 1100 km walked since 1904. Whiteness swallows my gaze beneath my feet. If I look beyond myself, all is white meeting blue-grey, the never-ending horizon line. Steady, in color, form and in distance. The line that strikes earth from sky, that can make us waver in defiance when we turn our eyes to only sky. Or remind us of gravity when we suddenly fail, crashing onto earth once again. I cling to that line, a tight rope that my eye can easily walk, almost glide across. It is crisp, solid, only teetering when I doubt.



It Is Never Tomorrow Series, digital photograph, 2008

What is this burden connected at my waist? I am bound by white fur and cotton roping that uncoils ten feet behind me. I turn and face them. Wooden sledge and white sail, white poles and colored flags. The sail luffs in response. The Flags of where? The Flags of what? Who are they for? The First or Farthest to where? *Seek to exist*, their signal sprawls over the white dunes, breaking up horizon and land. The frozen ground resists their words, their consonants and vowels, their riddle. The ground spits them back at me, while wind tumbles me down, white over red, blue, yellow, and black. The flags are everywhere. The wind encourages them to unfurl. Coldness slows my arms, tightens my legs and knees. My thoughts begin to sabotage my situation. I beg myself into the chase. Grasping each, fingers wrap around their diameters. I collect them back into my bundle. I feel the earth's nutation and tumble down again: 1724. It takes all of us to pull me to my feet. I plant a flag into the ground. X: blue and white. E-X-I-S-T: blue and red, blue and white, yellow and black, white and blue, red and blue and white. I exist. We exist! On white plains under grey skies, rocked into the life that landscapes dictate. Our tools, our vehicles, our words and bodies are owned by the land. We are conquered by our horizon line, yet cannot see without that distance, however high or low or staggered. We hope to exist somewhere within the twilight and droning day. Richard Chancellor in 1555, Martin Frobisher in 1576, and Daines Barrington and his Open Polar Sea in 1773: 80° 37" N x 14° 59'30" E. Hadley's octant and Bird's sextant: Nansen and Nares, Banks and Cook, Franklin and Ross, M'Clintock and McClure, Parry and Peary, Scott and Shackleton Their gaze is unknown to me! My gaze is forward. I will myself forward. I claim each foot placed into the accumulating snow as my own. As my own distance traveled over this vast expanse. I have not bagged the South Pole like Scott, and have not gone to search for Franklin. Mine is a non-ending, a march without words, without language. I am merely shadow, here for only a few years: It is soliloquy unfolding.

All is fluctuation, twilight, and a march.





It Is Never Tomorrow Series, digital photograph, 2008

A search for the missing:
We ask the questions but do we
really want the answers?

Epilogue

My story of the poles began two years ago in a library. Captain Robert Peary and his 1905 *Roosevelt* expedition to the North met me in the stacks and presented a world full of abandoned whaling villages, Inuit women with bundled children in their hoods, dogs, fur, and polar bear blood. My fascination grew from there. Slowly a physical investigation of the terms *archive*, *history*, and *imagination* manifested. Particularly, *my* imagination, an *unfamiliar* past, and *foreign* archives. The combination of the three spurred drawings, photographs, sculptures, and installations displaying nautical flags on walls, igloos on islands, two-headed horses, giant size walruses and net-like maps carrying only their longitude and latitude lines. This was a voyage filled with many people, places and things and most important, the historic imagination.

During June 2007, I traveled to the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich England to find Captain Sir John Franklin, his crew and their artifacts. The museum had a massive collection of polar artifacts, some on display in the museum but mostly in storage. I got to experience my first sledge, as I wrote about in the *Coldness turning into eternal spring* essay. I read through volume after volume of *The Illustrated London News*, from 1840 through 1860 plus specific dates such as when Captain Nares messed up in 1875 through 1877. The illustrations were fascinating, lovely, and comical: the artifacts were seductive, broken, and in need of life.

Continuing my journey, I traveled to Oslo Norway to see Roald Amundsen's *Gjøa*, the Fram Museum, and their maritime museum. The collections of Norwegian polar artifacts enraptured everyone around me, from Italian tour groups to the Japanese tour groups. The museum was packed, the crowds lively and the boats captivating. I left feeling vitalized and overwhelmed at the insurmountable presence of what I did not know.

My last stop was the Arctic Institute and the Danish Polar Center in Copenhagen Denmark. Being there for only four days was not enough. Their sixth floor archive was dark and stuffed full. Photographic albums from Knud Rasmussen's



Self Portrait, digital photograph, 2008

Thule expeditions, paintings by Harold Moltke, and glass negatives from 1840 through the 1950's were just some of the gems in this collection. I wanted more time, more days to investigate the Danish encounter with the polar north and particularly its peoples and cultures.

All of these images, facts and readings culminated into my thesis show, *It Is Never Tomorrow*, presented as thirteen photographs and two sculptures. I became captivated with the idea of 'the trudge', a long belabored walk that continues on and on that was shown to me through the British sledging parties. The thesis show imagery flourished with colorful flags, shades of white snow, black sails, fur outfits, and the movement of the body, the figure, through vacant landscapes, through space.

The feeling of meeting the Unknown, from what one does not know, from what one has never experienced, from what one recognizes as unbelievable yet quite real. Our moving horizon line separating our earth from our sky constantly places us in this position of not-knowing. It is the idea of never catching up with the past. Never quite grasping how much came before us and how much will come after us, and how much has been left behind for us to see within this constant process. I recognize that my infatuation with the polar worlds will evolve, will become something else once I have journeyed there on my own, seeing it through my own senses instead of through the Archive's senses. My writing is not meant to represent what it was or is, but to reflect my own journey through what it may have emotionally felt like in the 19th century and early 20th century. To ponder the possibilities of myself placed as a fly-on-the-wall. But more than that, to seep into the space where my imagination and the fictions within history converge, and mesh together until they are inseparable.

This story could not have been spun without the financial assistance from the University of Michigan's Rackham Graduate School: both the Rackham International Research Award and the Rackham Graduate Student Research Award.



Photograph of the author standing next to Robert Falcon Scott at his desk in Antarctica on view at the Scott Polar Institute, Cambridge England: June 2007

Glossary of Terms

Captain Nares: British captain whose expedition had the most cases of scurvy in all of 19th century Arctic exploration.

Elephant Island: Tiny island where Ernest Shackleton's crew of twenty-two men created 'home' and were stranded in 1916 before Shackleton rescued them.

Ernest Shackleton: British captain who attained the Farthest South in 1909 during the *Nimrod* expedition. He is known for his famed *Endurance* mission in which he and five other men made a 800 mile open water boat journey in order to save the rest of their crew. Shackleton completed three expeditions to Antarctica, the fourth expedition ending in his death in 1922 of a heart attack before the real voyage began.

Fridtjof Nansen: Norwegian scientist, diplomat and explorer who attained the Farthest North in 1895, crossed the Greenlandic ice field in 1888, and won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1922.

icefloe: A flat mass of ice floating in the sea; depending on their strength, they often crushed or trapped ships.

James Clark Ross: British captain who circumnavigated Antarctica and assisted in searching for John Franklin and his crew: nephew to Captain John Ross.

John Franklin: British captain who disappeared in the Arctic along with his crew and two ships in 1847. His mission was to traverse the Northwest Passage and gather much needed data around Magnetic North pole. His expedition's disaster set off a flurry of ships into the Arctic and resulted in the surveying of much unknown Arctic territory.

John Ross: British captain who first measured Magnetic North pole in 1831. He created many sailing inventions such as the deep-sea clam, which took samples from the ocean's floor. He was a dear friend of John Franklin.

Lady Jane Franklin: Wife of Captain John Franklin who spent most of her fortune funding ships to bring news about her husband's fate in the Arctic.

Leopold M'Clintock: Captain who became famous for discovering the fate of John Franklin and his crew on King William Island by finding the Victory Point Cairn and many other artifacts. Known for his knowledge in polar survival, especially during sledging trips and his famed seventy-nine day sledging trip in 1859.

Magnetic North Pole: Point on the earth where the magnetic field shoots directly downward. It is different than the *North Pole*, and is constantly in flux.

North Pole: Point where the earth's rotational axis meets the surface of the earth. Considered the Top of the World.

Roald Amundsen: Norwegian explorer who attained the South Pole for Norway in 1912, first voyaged through the Northwest Passage in the *Gjøa*, and, though contested, first flew over the North Pole.

Robert Falcon Scott: British captain who voyaged twice to Antarctica. His second trip was to attain the South Pole for Britain but was beaten by Norwegian Roald Amundsen in 1912. Scott and his team died on their return trip to the ship.

sledge: A large wooden vehicle with rails used in polar regions, and meant to carry objects or people over snow or ice. Normally pulled by dogs.

South Georgia Island: Island in the Antarctic known for its Norwegian whaling station and where Ernest Shackleton and his five men landed in their lifeboat, They were the first to cross the interior of the island.

South Pole: The southernmost point on the earth where the earth's axis rotates. It is considered the opposite of the North Pole.

Weddell Sea: A bay in Antarctica which is mostly frozen and whose waters are known to be some of the roughest. The sea where Ernest Shackleton's *Endurance* ship became trapped in 1915 and which Shackleton and his five men crossed in their 800 mile boat journey.



Royal Navy Chapel in Greenwich, London on the campus of the old Royal Naval Academy, across from the National Maritime Museum

Glossary of Photographs

Photographs are listed by page number and Left/Right:

Title: Cover page to bound edition of *The Illustrated London News*, vol. 14, January to June 1849, housed at the James Caird Library within the National Maritime Museum, England.

Abstract: *It Is Never Tomorrow Series*, digital photograph, 2008

Acknowledgements: Photograph of etching in *The Illustrated London News* of a new invention, a large buoy that would assist in rescuing shipwrecked sailors.

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Prologue: *Category: Fishing, Finding*, from *Exploring the Polar Archive Series*, digital photograph, 2007

Map 1: Map showing Norwegian Roald Amundsen's path through the Northwest Passage: Norwegian Maritime Museum (Norsk Sjøfartsmuseum), Oslo

Map 2: Map showing the Arctic according to the British in the mid 1800's

Page 9: L/ Photograph of a map showing the movement of Magnetic North pole 1904-2006: the Fram Museum, Oslo Norway **R/ #1: Expedition Series**, digital photograph, 2006

Page 10: Photograph from one of Knud Rasmussen's Thule expedition albums: the Danish Polar Center, Copenhagen Denmark

Page 11: Detail from *Iceblink* installation, porcelain and felt, 2007

Page 12: L/ Photograph of a map showing the last point where whalers saw Sir John Franklin and his crew in 1845. **R/** Detail of *Iceblink* installation, mixed media, 2007

Page 13: L/ *The leaving: Searching for* series, digital photograph, 2006 **R/** *Their Final Hours: Searching for* series, digital photograph, 2006.

Page 14: Category: Fishing, Finding from *Exploring the Polar Archive Series*, digital photograph, 2007 **R/** Photograph of an etching imagining Sir John Franklin's funeral from Captain Sherard Osborn's book, *The Career, Last Voyage, and Fate of Captain Sir John Franklin*, published in 1860: James Caird Library at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich England

Page 15: L/Title page of P. L. Simmon's book titled *Polar Regions*, which discusses British exploration, the flora and fauna, and climate in the Arctic: James Caird Library at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich England **R/** Photograph of the old Admiralty's compound and their provisions departments in London, England

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Page 17: L/ *Category: A solo #2* from *Exploring the Polar Archive Series*, digital photograph 2007 R/ A map of King William 'Land', the island where Captain Franklin and his men's artifacts were found, with blue lines offering possible routes they may have taken

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Page 22: L1/ *It Is Never Tomorrow Series*, digital photograph, 2008 L2/ Crumbling inflatable globe from 1830 at the National Maritime Museum: London England R/ *Category: A solo #4* from *Exploring the Polar Archive Series*, digital photograph, 2007

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Page 25: L/ #7: *Expedition Series*, ink and resin on mulberry paper R1/ Rail of Captain Nares's sledge R2/ Rope and knotting from Captain Nares's sledge

Page 26: L/ *Mark & Tagged Banner*, digital print, 2007 R/ Bar of soap left over from Fridtjof Nansen's Farthest North mission in 1893-1896. The soap has been signed and dated by Nansen and is on display at the Norwegian Maritime Museum: Oslo Norway

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Page 28: L/ Stamp of Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen: Scott Polar Institute, Cambridge England R/ Outfit rendered in the style of Roald Amundsen's polar attire and typical early 20th century Inuit attire

Page 29: L/ Photograph of a photograph from one of Knud Rasmussen's Thule expedition albums: Danish Polar Center, Copenhagen Denmark R/ Detail of #3: *Expedition Series*, ink and resin on mulberry paper, 2007

Page 30: #2: *Expedition Series*, ink and resin on mulberry paper, 2007

- Page 31:** L/ Photograph of a photograph from one of Knud Rasmussen's Thule expedition albums: Danish Polar Center, Copenhagen Denmark R/ #3: *Expedition Series*, ink and resin on mulberry paper, 2007
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- Page 34:** L/ Etching from *The Illustrated London News* showing a sailor mooring his ship to an iceberg: James Caird Library, Greenwich England R/ #7: *Expedition Series*, ink and resin on mulberry paper, 2007
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- Page 36:** L/ *A moment at the pole: Shackleton felt, rope, and metal*, 2007 R/ *Soliloquy: Searching for series*, digital photograph, 2006
- Page 37:** L/ Photograph of the *James Caird* at Dulwich College, Sir Ernest Shackleton's alma mater: London England R/ *It Is Never Tomorrow Series*, digital photograph, 2008
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- Page 42:** *Category: climate specimen #1 & #2* from *Exploring the Polar Archive Series*, digital photograph, 2007
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Page 48: Photograph of a photograph from one of Knud Rasmussen's Thule expedition albums showing the Arctic waters swallowing a ship: Danish Polar Center, Copenhagen Denmark

Page 49: L/ Photograph of a lock of Norwegian explorer Fridtjof Nansen's hair, cut upon his return from his Farthest North expedition 1896: Fram Museum, Oslo Norway **R.** Etching from *The Illustrated London News* of a man assisting another man out of polar waters: James Caird Library, Greenwich England

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Epilogue: Page 1/ *Self Portrait*, digital photograph 2008
Page 2/ Photograph of the author standing next to a photograph of Robert Falcon Scott sitting in his Antarctic bedroom: Scott Polar Institute, Cambridge London

Glossary of Terms: Royal Navy Chapel in Greenwich, London on the campus of the old Royal Naval Academy, across from the National Maritime Museum

Glossary of Photographs: *Untitled: Trudge Series*, ink on mulberry paper, 2008



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National Maritime Museum: London England

Royal Geographical Society: London, England

Royal Naval Academy: London, England

Scott Polar Research Institute: Cambridge, England

Westminster Abbey: London, England

Norway

Fram Museum: Oslo, Norway

Norsk Sjøfartsmuseum: Oslo, Norway

National Gallery: Oslo, Norway

Denmark

Arctic Institute: Copenhagen, Denmark

Danish Polar Center: Copenhagen, Denmark

National Museum: Copenhagen, Denmark