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Polar queens, ghosts and mummies: Women in Arctic discourses

Introduction

John Rae's revelation that the Inuit witnessed signs of cannibalism during the Franklin expedition created, according to one contemporary, a 'shock of horror that ... swept across the civilized world' (qtd. in Brannan, 1966, 14). Joseph Conrad later described the demise of the expedition as 'the darkest drama perhaps played behind the curtain of Arctic mystery' (2010, 10). So in what way did people process this disaster?

The publication of Rae's report in *The Times* meant that the Franklin expedition came to be seen by many in Britain as a catastrophic disaster, as something so disturbing that people struggled to gather up the threads of narrative and express it as anything other than a tragedy. Janice Cavell (2008) argues that this recuperation process revealed the 'connected narrative' of the Northwest Passage quest – a set of heroic geographical stories that were read much like people read serial fiction at the time. While it goes too far to say that the loss of the Franklin expedition ruptured British aesthetic engagement with the Arctic (Loomis, 1977, 111), it certainly affected public feelings of optimism about the quest for a Northwest Passage. As a Canadian poet put it decades later: 'No man could ever live to reach that place, / And horror seized me of that haunted world, / That I should die there and be froze for aye, / Amid the ice-core of its awful heart' (Campbell, 1893, 67–8). This pervasive unease regarding geographical discovery in a 'haunted world' surfaced elsewhere in a piece of fiction published in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in 1854. This told a rip-roaring tale of an American who discovered the Northwest Passage

before Robert McClure, only for the narrator to actually reveal himself to be ‘the Khan of Tartary’ and an inhabitant of the mad-house (‘Who Discovered the Northwest Passage?’, 464).

In this chapter I argue that stories like this show how people were able to become affected by the Arctic in different ways after the Franklin expedition. One way that writers dealt with the horror of the Franklin loss was by telling stories of romance and intimacy that bridged the divide between men in the Arctic and women in Britain. In many examples of poetry, ballads, and serial and sensational fiction, it is clear that the loss inspired a strikingly gendered response as the themes of love and ghostly women became associated with the expedition. Male absence and female (spectral) presence became bound together in imaginative re-tellings of the Franklin disaster. Therefore I want to make a case for the significance of emotions in histories of Arctic exploration by focusing on the intersections between exploration, gender and haunting. By looking at some marginal and ephemeral Arctic narratives I show that the emotions mobilised by the Franklin expedition were complex forces that reflected contemporary ideas of a gothic Arctic, but also feelings of anxiety regarding the role of women in Arctic expeditions. I conclude by looking at the importance of mummies in the way that Arctic exploration was thought of as a haunting enterprise.

* * *

The Franklin loss upturned several assumptions that British people had about the Arctic explorations carried out by the Admiralty: that expeditions were well-planned, powerful and scientifically useful, that explorers like Franklin were heroes and that the Admiralty’s geographical aim of a Northwest Passage was achievable and beneficial. As the power of the Admiralty’s voice over the Arctic waned, the voices of people who could not be described as ‘experts’ emerged – many of them were female. As we have seen, clairvoyants and spiritualists visited Franklin in the Arctic through the séance, while metropolitan audiences visited panorama shows to experience the senses of polar terror and sublimity for themselves. There were also developments in traditional literary and media culture that allowed British Arctic exploration to be presented in a multitude of ways to the reading public.

From 1818 onwards it seemed that one particular polar publishing network might come to dominate, comprising John Barrow, the John Murray publishing house, and a range of ‘approved’ Arctic authorities (explorers and scientists) (Craciun, 2011, 440). Through vitriolic policing

of knowledge about Arctic exploration in the conservative journal the *Quarterly Review*, Barrow tried to freeze out critical, literary or otherwise unauthorised voices, while contracts with John Murray promised preferred commanders a prestigious publisher for their narratives. In reality, Barrow was not always successful in his policing efforts (see Cavell, 2013a) and some officers were not beholden to John Murray at all: John Ross and Alexander Fisher published with Longmans for instance. Nevertheless, what did happen in the 1840s, alongside the deaths of John Murray II and John Barrow, was a transformation of the media landscape by spiritualism, the telegraph, penny presses and mass readership, allowing voices very different to Barrow's to increase in volume, make claims and seek credibility on the Arctic.

The subject of the Franklin expedition did not receive as much attention in the Houses of Parliament as might be assumed and, when it was discussed, it was typically after lobbying on the part of Jane Franklin (Stone, 1996). In contrast to the reticence of politicians, Arctic narratives were incessantly constructed and disseminated in the armchairs and lending libraries of the public sphere – independent of naval authorities – and these amateur voices could come into conflict with actual explorers (see Osborn, 1852, 207). Booming newspaper and periodical presses dissected and criticised Admiralty policy on the Arctic, celebrating newcomer-explorers such as Penny, Bellot and Kennedy for their strength and daring, while denigrating established explorers like Belcher and Rae for their incompetence or perceived closeness to the Admiralty (see Cavell, 2008, 206). In serial fiction and ghost stories, meanwhile, the Arctic became a setting for spectral happenings and hauntings. For many writers, the associations between the Franklin expedition and female clairvoyance on the one hand, and the instinctual moral horrors of cannibalism on the other, called for new emotional expressions that would alternately omit, suppress, redirect or transform the raw material afforded by such a traumatic national event.

The 1857 performances of *The Frozen Deep*, a play co-written by Collins and Dickens, stand out as moments of public catharsis, when the traumatic details of the expedition's demise were recreated and then reconfigured to console those who had been affected (Potter, 2007, 139). First performed as an amateur theatrical at Dickens's Tavistock House residence, *The Frozen Deep* was a three-act melodrama that centred on the threat of a murder on an Arctic expedition in search of a Northwest Passage. Richard Wardour (played by Dickens) felt he was jilted by the weak-willed Clara Burnham, and swore revenge on the man she loves. Unknown to Wardour, the man is Frank Aldersley (played by Collins), a

fellow expeditioner with whom he is suffering in the Arctic as the expedition collapses. The women back home are in an anxious state about this because Clara's Scottish nurse Esther, who claims to possess 'second sight', has seen Wardour kill Aldersley in her mind's eye. Despite the prophecy, Wardour, who has figured out who Aldersley is, resists the urge to kill the debilitated expeditioner and in a final scene of sentimental pathos, carries Aldersley in his arms to a cave in Newfoundland where he is reunited with Clara (see Figure 5.1).

Wardour's urge, obviously linked to the Franklin cannibalism controversy, provided Dickens with an opportunity to show the way that British Arctic explorers acted manfully, nobly and did not slide into savagery despite every temptation. Yet, as Lillian Nayder (1991) argues, this redemption came at the expense of an aggressive silencing of the Inuit, who do not feature in the play, and the neutralisation of Nurse Esther, a Highland servant whose visionary claims about Arctic disaster are seen as a subversive threat to the power relations in Clara's household. Dickens played a key role in the development of Esther's character, and she represents the savagery undermining Arctic heroism in *The Frozen Deep*, a dissenting working-class voice who is also a symbol of racial and sexual otherness. As if to demonstrate the closure of an era of spectral threats to a noble narrative of the Franklin expedition, *The Frozen Deep* was followed by a performance of Elizabeth Inchbald's farce *Animal*

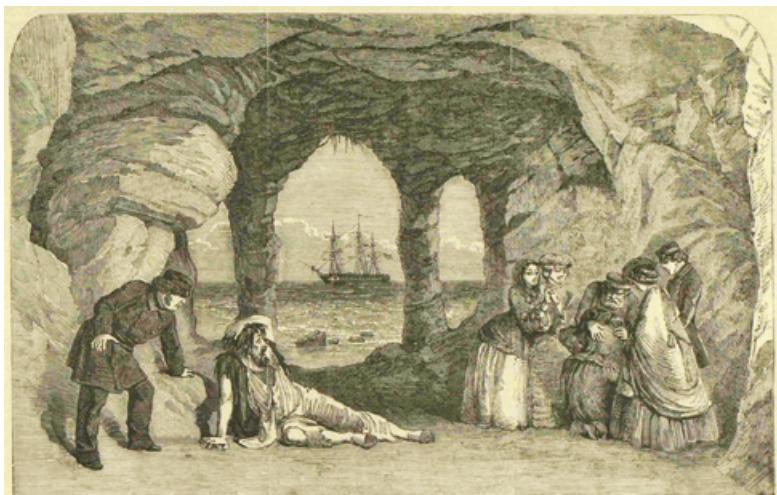


Figure 5.1 'Private Theatricals at Tavistock House – Scene from *The Frozen Deep*'. Source: *Illustrated London News*. 17 January 1857.

Magnetism, in which Dickens played a doctor deluded into believing in mesmerism while trying to win the affections of his young ward.

The Frozen Deep was an important and popular resolution to the ‘epistemological crisis’ caused by Rae’s return (Davis-Fisch, 2012, 167). While it seemed to provide a closure of sorts to the thousands who witnessed the defeat of spectral testimony and wept at the death of Wardour during the Manchester performances in August 1857, the play did not silence the voice of ghostly women in cultural representations of the Arctic. Ghost stories and other gothic tales set in the Arctic pre-dated the Franklin expedition, but the emergence of scores of ghostly women into poetic and literary representations of the Arctic after 1845 highlights this motif as a creative means of making sense of the loss.¹

Gender, emotions and the Arctic

From the mid-nineteenth century onwards the theme of love in relation to British Arctic exploration was expressed in popular ballads, poetry and supernatural and sensational fiction. Writers constructed this theme by contrasting masculine endeavour in the face of suffering with feminine fidelity on the home front (see Spufford, 1996, 62). In this relational motif women were psychically connected to their male lovers across the cartographic divide, transgressing even the boundaries of what was natural in the physical world. Such was the power of this polar love to unite souls across space and time that it was inextricably linked to the supernatural, to the world of ghosts, haunting memories and celestial melodies – features which were all performed in an environment of death or impending death. An erotic rhetoric permeated this writing on exploration: although the Arctic was occasionally imagined in masculine terms (Porden, 1818, 23; ‘The Arctic Expeditions’, *The Aberdeen Journal*, 10 April 1850), by the time of the Franklin expedition it was more common for the Arctic to be feminised and imagined to have ‘wooed’ and ‘drawn’ men into her realm only for them to be attacked by ‘white teeth’ which could grip like ‘a vice’ (Gilder, 1908, 108; Dixon, 1864, 49).

Historically prevalent discourses ensured that the Arctic was commonly imagined as a space of masculinist fantasy, a space where white men could test their bodies while at the same time performing their political strength by flag-planting, mapping and other nationalist ‘ceremonies of possession’ (Bloom, 1993). Yet this is only half the story, for in Victorian fiction the Arctic became a space ‘complicated’ by the presence

of women. When possible, it was common for British explorers to have sexual intercourse with Inuit and other indigenous women. The most famous case is that of Green Stockings, a Chipewyan teenager fought over by Robert Hood and George Back during Franklin's first Arctic expedition. Green Stockings was celebrated in a Valentine's Day poem written to Franklin by his first wife, Eleanor Porden, entitled 'The Esquimaux Girl's Lament':

Return! and the ice shall be swept from thy path,
I will breathe out my spells o'er the land and the sea;
Return! and the tempest shall pause in his wrath,
Nor the winds nor the waves dare to be rebels to thee!
Spread thy canvas once more, keep the Pole-star before thee,
'Tis constancy's type, and the beacon of glory;
By the lake, by the mountain, the forest and river,
In the wilds of the north, I am thine, and for ever!

(qtd. in Kay, 1874, appendix ii).

Yet haunting the language of such idealisations of polar romance were the realities of sexual exchange, disease and abandonment. Green Stockings and other women were used by male explorers as informants, geographers and sexual objects. They were occasionally made pregnant (George Lyon, Robert Peary, Matthew Henson and Vilhjalmur Stefansson left children behind) and risked contracting syphilis. By contrast with these embodied encounters with women who were actually present, after Franklin's loss Arctic exploration was imagined to involve spectral relations between men and the absent women back home.

Explorers imagined and wrote about the presence of imaginary women all the time. A poem entitled 'A Thought of Home' written for the shipboard publication *The North Georgia Gazette and Winter Chronicle* during Parry's first Northwest Passage expedition placed the active male facing danger in contrast with the passive, soothing woman back home, whose 'endearments procure us release'. The woman is therefore a figure of solace and her 'love-bearing glance' has a role in the construction of the north for the poet: 'In those virtues we happiness feel; / The source of our transport below, / Not the charms of the sex can reveal; / From the mind, soul-enchantment must flow' (Sabine ed., 1821, 34). Later in the nineteenth century, Fridtjof Nansen imagined his family celebrating a birthday back home: 'Many a thought will be sent northwards but they know not where to look for us; are not aware that we are drifting here

embedded in the ice in the highest northern latitude ever reached, in the deepest polar-night ever penetrated' (1897, II, 59). Explorers knew that loving thoughts about the Arctic and the people in it did not simply evaporate: their poetry and reveries suggest that these thoughts were relational and magnetic, travelling ever northwards. Western women, the great missing category in Arctic exploration, became spectrally present in Arctic discourses.²

How was this presence manifested? As a rule of thumb, when emotions and emotional states were explicitly stated in nineteenth-century narratives of Arctic exploration, references to women, whether figures of support or opposition, were not far behind. From lovers, relatives, women in general, to the Arctic environment feminised, rigidly regulated female categories became crucial in how men orientated themselves in all-male environments considered desolate, dangerous and heartless. For instance, on New Year's Day in 1854 Edward Belcher looked out at the snow surrounding his expedition ships and was struck with the idea of a 'watchful mother spreading her graceful arms around some cherished object, and protecting it from injury; the greater elevation of the snow astern representing the breast, and the gradual tapering to the bow the arms' (1855, II, 87). Echoing this, the relationships between sailors and their wives were frequently idealised as part of the 'two spheres' framework of nineteenth-century marriage, with the privations of the whaling trade and exilic nature of Arctic voyaging placed in contrast to a soft and consoling welcome back home (see Stamp and Stamp, 1976, 12–13). Prolonged periods of separation and distance caused stress and pent-up emotions for explorers, sailors, whalers and their families. For instance, William Scoresby's description of being reunited with his pregnant wife in 1812 demonstrates the intense emotional relationship between the whaler and his lover:

The agony of parting, the gnawing anxiety and distress attendant upon our separation, was thus fully compensated by the feelings, the delights experienced on our reunion. This extreme sensibility, whilst it subjects its possessor to pain and anguish unknown to coarser minds – reaps, when circumstances are favourable, a mighty and full return in an ecstasy and weight of enjoyment which minds of other moulds can neither participate in nor understand (qtd. in Stamp and Stamp, 1976, 47).

Another example of this dynamic was the intimate relationship between Elisha Kent Kane and Margaret Fox. Kane referred to their

relationship as ‘a dream’ and even carried a portrait of his loved one ‘strapped to his back, through the dreary Arctic wastes’ (*The Love-Life of Dr. Kane*, 1866, 117). Furthermore, in a development that might have been taken from the plot of a sensational novel, Charles Francis Hall was poisoned and killed on his *Polaris* North Pole expedition in 1871 by the ship’s doctor, Emil Bessels, who discovered that they were both in love with the same woman, a young artist named Vinnie Ream (Potter, 2016, 114).

While life onboard Arctic ships involved brutal violence, misogyny and casual racism, several accounts also suggest the power of emotions and tenderness in everyday practices. For instance, Joseph P. Faulkner’s wonderful *Eighteen Months on a Greenland Whaler* displays an awareness of the reveries, dreams and occurrences of ‘transcendental import’ that could characterise the situation of the whaler (1878, 42). Crucially, emotions were here not imagined in an hydraulic sense – as ‘venting’ or pressure-releases – but rather as the ‘bundles’ that ‘tie’ the men together through hopes, fears, ‘affections, enjoyments and endurances’ (Faulkner, 1878, 243). Faulkner particularly highlighted ‘Jack’s’ [the sailor] ‘devotion’ to his feminine vessel:

The ‘she’ fairly entwines itself round Jack’s heart, and unless when just leaving her with the view of meeting that other ‘she’, Jack’s own wife ‘Susan’, or his sweetheart ‘Sally’, when he gets into port, it is generally with husky voice and a half-brushed away tear, that he turns his back toward her (Faulkner, 1878, 65–6).

Women were also present in the ribald rhymes that sailors, including those on the Franklin expedition, would have sung (see Cyriax and Jones, 1954), while rituals of mapping involved a conjuration of female presence, an important practice that underwrote the ideology of exploration as ‘revelation’ and ‘penetration’ (see McClintock, 1995, 24).

In poetry, the fantasy of the polar queen, or Arctic-as-woman, was another way of conjuring non-native women into presence.³ In Amelia C. Jennings’s poem ‘Song of the Polar Night’ (1854), the narrative voice is a female spirit of the Arctic whose domain is conquered and her secrets revealed: ‘He traversed my empire’s farthest bound, / Through that mysterious way / I hid so long in my garb profound / From the babbling tongue of Day’ (117). John Moultrie’s ‘The Witch of the North’ (1828; see Moultrie, 1838) and Thomas D’Arcy McGee’s *Our Ladye of the Snow!* (1858; see D’Arcy McGee, 2000) also imagined the polar agency that attacked vulnerable men as supernatural and feminine. Elsewhere,

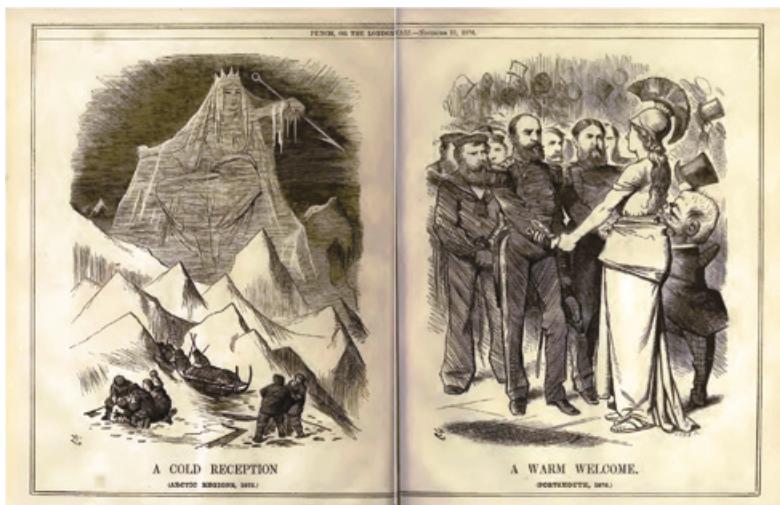


Figure 5.2 ‘A Cold Reception’ and ‘A Warm Welcome’. Source: *Punch, or the London Charivari*, 71 (1876).

in ‘The Snow Queen’ (1844; see Andersen 1911) and ‘The Ice-Maiden’ (1863) Hans Christian Andersen imagined castrative ice queens whose power over men was their deathly embrace and a kiss which froze. Finally, in the saccahrine poem *The Arctic Queen* (1857), dedicated to Kane, Franklin was imagined as someone who had gone in search of the queen of the ‘Frigid Zone’ to plead for the lives of imprisoned lovers. These treatments all had in common an idea of the Lady as a cold and distant being, an objectified abstract, and not as a passionate and loving female.

The popular comic magazine *Punch* provided a striking demonstration of this gendered Arctic in its visual commemoration of the return of the expedition led by George Nares in 1876 (see Figure 5.2). This image drew upon the dualist interpretation of feminine nature/culture, placing the cold Arctic ice queen in contrast to the warm embrace of Britannia back home. A related fantasy appeared in the Christmas edition of *Punch*, released the previous year (see Figure 5.3). In this piece Mr Punch thinks of the ‘gallant’ explorers of the Nares expedition while imagining the sovereignty of a feminine spirit named ‘The Everlasting Silence’ ruling over a ‘realm’ dangerous to men:

Can she be a Woman, by the way, as I have limned her? And if she is, how tired she must be of herself! How fain, methinks, to fling herself into the arms of the gallant mariners who come to break



Figure 5.3 Mr. Punch and the Everlasting Silence. Source: *Punch, or the London Charivari*, 68 (1875–6).

her – and substitute the silvern speech for her pale and frosted gold! ('Preface', *Punch*, 1875–6, iii).

In alternately naming this feminine being 'the Polar Queen' and 'the Ice Maiden', the kneeling Mr Punch exposes a long-standing western cosmology: the difficulties of exploration presume a frigid North capable of freezing the male explorer (indeed, the repulsion of the Nares expedition by the polar ice in 1876 reinforced this representation). Not that this romantic geography was simply a media construction, for just a few years later an officer who served on this very expedition, Albert Hastings Markham, wrote an untitled poem which encapsulates many of the same themes:

At her feet the Frozen Ocean round her head the Auroral Lights
Through cycles, chill & changeless, of six month days & nights.
In her bride veil, fringed with icicles, and of the snowdrift spun,
Sits the White Ladye of the Pole, still waiting to be won.

What suitors to her palace-gates have hoisted daring sail,
Though eye of man has never seen the face behind her veil!
So long sighed for, so hard served for, as this Queen, was never none,
Since the days of brave adventure & true service first begun.

But still the White-Witch Maiden, that sits above the Pole,
In the snow-bound silver silence whose cold quells aught but soul
Draws manly hearts with strange desire to lift her icy veil;
The bravest still have sought, and will seek, whoever fail
(NMM, MRK/48).⁴

Love and laments

After the Franklin loss the themes of love and lament start to inform much of the creative writing about the Arctic. Indeed, the earliest poetic imaginings of the disaster were laments that were sung to traditional tunes and spread widely through broadside publications in ports, towns and onboard ships. In one example – ‘A Ballad of Sir John Franklin’, published in May 1850, by the American poet George Henry Boker – the idea of multivocality stands out, as competing voices – both legitimate and illegitimate – form part of the search expeditions:

O, whither sail you, Sir John Franklin?
Cried a whaler in Baffin’s Bay.
To know if between the land and the pole
I may find a broad sea-way.

I charge you back, Sir John Franklin,
As you would live and thrive;
For between the land and the frozen pole
No man may sail alive.

When the ‘little Esquimaux’ and the ‘little Indian’ both stress the necessity of fur clothing in the Arctic, and sledging rather than sailing, Franklin and his crew laugh off this unauthorised advice (Boker, 1850, 323). As the ‘cruel ice’, ‘as strong as death’, closes behind the expedition, they sink into despair and the authority of Franklin and the Admiralty is questioned: “Twas cruel, Sir John, to send us here, / So far from help or home, / To starve and freeze on this lonely sea: / I ween the lords of the Admiralty / Would rather send than come” (Boker, 1850, 324). The images surrounding the publication of this poem in *Sartain’s Union Magazine* aptly display the affects of disaster as indigenous and bawdy, and female perspectives are re-imagined as being central to Arctic exploration (see Figure 5.4). The crews are absent from representation while a kayak crowns the pathetic image of a British ship crushed by the ice and

surrounded by savage animals. Recast as a folly, the quest for a Northwest Passage becomes a personal and national tragedy, but with the crucial addition of Franklin's love for his wife as a saving grace for masculine nobility: 'Be still, be still, my brave sailors! / Think not such thoughts again. / But a tear froze slowly on his cheek: / He thought of Lady Jane' (Boker, 1850).

In the majority of treatments, however, it is not the voice of Franklin but that of his wife Jane, which drives the tone of lament, making audible a woman imagined as Penelope-like, and 'more steadily hopeful than the



Figure 5.4 'A Ballad of Sir John Franklin', by G.H. Boker.
Source: *Sartain's Union Magazine*, 6 (1850).

Ithacan wife of old' (Dowe, 1853, 634). Despite her voluminous travel writings, exciting life, and powerful personality, Jane Franklin eventually became an object conflated with the tragedy of her husband – her archive significantly stored in the Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge. Going through her letters and diaries reveals a complicated woman who disguised her independence of thought and mobility through a carefully fabricated 'rhetoric of wifeliness' (Russell, 2005, 47). From the beginning of the era of the Franklin searches, the position, perspective, and voice of Jane Franklin moved centre-stage: she was now a household name and recurring character in periodicals and newspapers (Spufford, 1996, 115–29; Cavell, 2008, 219–22). She even appeared as a Staffordshire earthenware figure, for sale alongside a figure of her husband in full naval uniform. This configuration helped redefine male activity in the Arctic while also legitimising a female perspective on Arctic policy, if only through a male-networked influence. Described by Emily Dickinson as 'the lone British Lady' (qtd. in Morris, 1997, 89), Jane Franklin's imagined virtues ('Patience, Perseverance, and Fortitude') (Abrahall, 1856, dedication page) became the epitome of *Femina Domestica*: she waits and hopes. Jane Franklin quickly became an emotional conduit for the nation with the explorer and writer Sherard Osborn hailing her as an example of how a 'sailor's wife' and an 'Englishwoman' should feel: 'untiring exertions, that zeal which has never wavered, that hope so steadfast ... that patience under misconstruction, that forgiveness for the sneer of jealousy, and that pity for the malicious' (1852, 5–6). Jane Franklin's emotional power began to have real public force following her open letter of supplication to President Taylor in April 1849 and, by September of that year, she was featuring as an emotional presence in the narratives of Emma, the Bolton clairvoyant.

Throughout many of the Arctic narratives that I have surveyed, Jane Franklin's emotional power is traced to the love she has for her husband: this was imagined as a highly sentimentalised relationship, a 'love no Arctic winter bound' (Rawnsley, 1893, 54). In ballad treatments this attachment to her husband either places her in conflict with the Admiralty ('The government in this present year / Did pensions give to their families dear; / But Lady Franklin refused the grant / Crying give me my husband I no money want' ('A Lament on the Fate of Sir J. Franklin and his Crews')), or causes her to initiate journeys for his succour ('With my goodly Ship in motion, / No longer here I'd stay, / But athwart the rolling ocean, / For thee I'd bear away') ('Lady Franklin's Lament', c. 1852). The most popular ballad on the subject, 'Lady Franklin's Lament for her

Husband' (c.1852), narrates the vision of a sailor ('I dream't a dream which I thought was true') in which a female voice is heard:

She wept aloud and seem'd to say,
Alas! My Franklin is long away.
Her mind it seem'd in sad distress,
She cried aloud, I can take no rest,
Ten thousand pounds I would freely give,
To say on earth that my husband lives.

These ballads express an intimate connection between home and abroad, between Britain and the Arctic, mediated through the voice of the loving woman. This connection, symbolised in an illustration of joined hands in the broadside of '*Lady Franklin's Lament*' (c.1851–2), is heightened due to the mystery of the expedition's disappearance and the relentless efforts of Jane Franklin to organise its rescue. '*Lady Franklin's Appeal to the North*', a poem published in the *New York Times* in 1851, imagines her taking on the very conditions of the Arctic environment in her emotional pleas for information from the 'North'. In this scenario the Arctic is a silent impediment to the connection between lovers:

Tell me, oh dreary North! for now
My soul is like thine Arctic zone;
Beneath the darkened skies I bow
Or ride the stormy sea alone!
Tell me of my beloved! for I
Know not a ray my lord without!
Oh, tell me, that I may not die
A sorrower on the sea of doubt! (Bourne, 1851)

The poetics of this connection come about through emotional states and affects, through the sending and receiving of thoughts across environments considered inhospitable for people. While in the Victorian era of 'geography militant' (Driver, 2001) exploration was thought of as a thoroughly masculine enterprise, the North was also imagined as a theatre for the disembodied performance of gender. Although the only domesticities in the Arctic were supposed to be within the homosocial world of the ship, or what Dickens infamously termed the Inuit 'domesticity of blood and blubber' (1854, 392), female presences kept invading the literature of Arctic exploration.

Spectral geographies of love

In the winter of 1859 the *Toronto Daily Colonist* told its readers a story about a young English sailor named Jones who volunteered to join the Franklin expedition because he was dissatisfied with the conduct of his sweetheart, Miss Cook, who was found in a ‘flirtation with another swain from Falmouth’. However, on learning that she had not been unfaithful to him, Jones married the woman just before the departure of the *Erebus* and *Terror*. The narrator reported that in the years following the disappearance Mrs Jones, accompanied by their son, would climb up to Pendennis Castle on Sunday afternoons to gaze out into the English Channel, ‘waiting and watching for the vessels that never came’. When last heard of, Mrs Jones was eking out her widow’s pension, and ‘remained still constant to her first love’ (*An Episode of the Franklin Expedition*, *Paisley Herald and Renfrewshire Advertiser*, 1859). While this is a touching story, it remains just that; no person named Jones was actually present on the Franklin expedition. Yet the image of Mrs Jones gazing into the horizon would have been deeply affecting to readers, showing how the expedition was mourned as an ambivalent loss.

Geographies of love and geographies of ghosts irresistibly blend in examples like this: entangled in the absences and presences of memory and emotion, they speak to the ruptures of space in Britain’s relationship with the Arctic. Turning to Victorian supernatural and sensational fiction, we find that the silences and melodies of the Arctic were articulated through spectres of ghostly women. Ghosthood was something that women and spirits shared in Victorian culture and ghost stories were frequently stages for examining the ambivalence and power/powerlessness of the female (Dickerson, 1996). Western folk traditions host a pantheon of female spirits, elementals, banshees, and ‘white ladies’, but Arctic spirits seem particularly related to a kind of ‘melodic’ haunting linked to the deconstruction of the male explorer.

The first tale I examine explores the spectral nature of male desire. ‘The Shadow of a Shade’ (1869) by the caricaturist and writer Tom Hood (son of the better-known poet Thomas Hood (1799–1845)) tells the story of the elderly Lettie, whose ‘old story of a lost lover’ has given her a habitual grave and melancholy look (Hood, 2003, 150). She was engaged to George Mason, a sailor who had volunteered to join one of the expeditions seeking Franklin. To celebrate this, his portrait was painted by Lettie’s younger brother in full naval costume. Before the departure of the expedition a Scottish colleague onboard the ship was invited to dinner with the family. This man, Vincent Grieve, was an unpleasant

character whose attentions made Lettie uncomfortable. However, Grieve took an instant dislike to the painting of Mason on the wall:

'I have an inherited horror of such pictures. My mother married against her father's will, and when I was born she was so ill she was hardly expected to live. When she was sufficiently recovered to speak without delirious rambling she implored them to remove a picture of my grandfather that hung in the room, and which she vowed made threatening faces at her. It's superstitious, but constitutional – I have a horror of such paintings!' (Hood, 2003, 152)

Mason lets it be known that Grieve was 'pleasant enough company among men at the inn', but was not to be trusted in female company. Despite this, Grieve manages to find opportunities to pester Lettie with his attentions and declares his love for her on the day the expedition is due to sail. Receiving a blunt refusal, Grieve makes a vague threat regarding Mason's safety on the expedition. While Lettie does not mention the incident to Mason 'for fear it should lead to a duel', the painting seems to develop moisture on it and the face of Mason assumes a ghastly pallor (Hood, 2003, 153). The restrictions on sexual choice, it seems, causes paranoia in the male subject, centred on the power of the representation of his rival. Conceived of as an animate object, the painting becomes an icon of judgement, restricting the romantic and sexual feelings travelling between the Arctic and Britain.

Two years of near-silence follow the departure of the expedition until, one balmy evening, a 'deathly cold' swept into Lettie's dining room and the narrator perceives a grinning spectral skull where Mason's face once was (Hood, 2003, 154). The date of this occurrence is noted and, in a well-known trope of Victorian supernatural tales, the arrival of the news of a significant death on that day is expected. Sure enough, a newspaper reporting on the return of the expedition mentions the death of Mason while out shooting on the ice with Grieve. Soon Grieve comes to visit Lettie, but he is noticeably thinner and stooped, and has acquired a habit of 'glancing sideways every instant, as if unconsciously. It looked as if he heard someone behind him' (Hood, 2003, 158). Again, he evinced a total repugnance of the picture of Mason and demanded that it be covered. However, while giving the particulars of Mason's death to Lettie's brother, the shroud covering the portrait falls down and the sight of the bloody face of Mason causes Grieve to have a fit. On leaving, it is revealed that Grieve is in possession of two shadows, his own and 'something always

at his side' (Hood, 2003, 160). On returning once more to court Lettie, Grieve's head is cut open when Mason's portrait falls on him. He subsequently commits suicide, begging the 'haunting spirit to leave him' (Hood, 2003, 162). The shadow of Mason seems to operate here as a literary device for articulating the experience of self-division; it is a doppelgänger and reflects on the weird status of love in Arctic exploration. Mason and Grieve are different personalities with different libidinal natures but both leave on their search for Franklin in love with the same woman. The trace of Mason left behind in the portrait is part of his soul-force and communicates his death and vengeance in the domestic sphere. In common with other gothic tales of haunted portraits (Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Oval Portrait' and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* for example), the psychological disruption that love causes reveals a narcissism that refuses to accept 'separation from the libidinous object (or subject)' (Chodorow, 1985, 279). Grieve's persistent courting of Lettie might actually disguise an attachment to Mason, the more typical Arctic hero (with a 'fine Italian-looking head' (Hood, 2003, 151)), a fact then diverted into a horror for his representation and self-dissolution. The presence of women and children on nineteenth-century whaling voyages challenged the idea of home at sea, especially in the context of commercial expeditions that overwintered in the Arctic. These tensions about domesticity found their way into fiction where the presence of women made the contrast between brutality and sympathy more obvious.

The short periodical tale 'The Spectre of the Ice' (*Every Week*, 1872) is set within the context of male violence on a whaling voyage, 'the old story of brutality and tyranny' ('The Spectre of the Ice', *Every Week*, 1872, 241). In this piece the young hero, Harry Elting, endures abuse and bullying from the captain of the *Mentor* for talking to his daughter Blanche: 'she whispered regrets and sympathy into the ears of the brave boy' ('The Spectre of the Ice', *Every Week*, 1872, 242). Elting is in love with Blanche but nurses a deep resentment against the captain and plots his revenge. His opportunity comes when he and the captain are stranded alone on the ice after an abortive whale hunt. The act of murder in such a situation is imagined as something intrinsically easy and clean, and recalls examples from *The Frozen Deep* and 'The Shadow of a Shade'. In this case Elting's passion for Blanche causes him to lose his moral balance and contemplate pushing the sleeping captain off the ice to his death, 'when suddenly a soft, sweet voice was heard to breathe, "Harry!"'. Elting hears his name called again by the voice of Blanche and then he sees the 'spirit semblance' of his love

which hovers over him for a moment, extending her arms in benediction and halting the crime ('The Spectre of the Ice', *Every Week*, 1872, 243). It is the perversion of the captain that he enjoys inflicting pain on Elting, both physically and – by separating him from Blanche – emotionally. The captain, who had dreamed of Elting's vengeance while sleeping on the ice, is subsequently reconciled with him and allows his daughter to marry the young man, thus ending the circuit of desire and prohibition. The fact that Blanche had the same dream as her father is left as an unexplained mystery in this family romance, figuring as an implicit challenge to any easy dichotomy between natural and supernatural, dream and reality.

In these Arctic tales, jiltings, romantic misunderstandings and prolonged separation from women form preludes to a conservative reassertion of social and moral order. However, they also speak to the vicissitudes and impossibility of desire. The tale 'The Spectre Ship' (*A London Magazine*, 1876), by Percy Bolingbroke St. John, repeats many of the motifs discussed thus far. In this periodical story the domestic tranquillity of Mary Stone is disrupted when a man she thought was dead returns to Britain from abroad. Robert Rankin, a violent and disreputable sailor had gained a reluctant promise from Stone for her hand in marriage just before he departed on a voyage to India. After three years, and reports of Rankin's death in India, Stone married the Hull whaling captain, Harry Medhurst. Rankin is disgusted at the news, revealing that he had sustained years of hardship for her love: 'You have wrecked my life; when I have wrecked that of your husband I shall be satisfied, and never until then' (518). The constancy of the woman – the cherished illusion of the man at sea – has been denied to Rankin: masculinity is here defined in relation to femininity. Stone's impending sense of dread leads her to persuade her husband to allow her to travel on the next Arctic whaling voyage. However, in a sensational turn of events, Rankin manages to get himself employed on Medhurst's ship, under an assumed name. Fearing the exposure of her past, and the possibilities of mortal violence, Stone keeps her husband in the dark while Rankin plots his revenge as the ship overwinters in the Arctic. The following spring he drugs and kidnaps Stone, escaping on a raft after sabotaging the ship, and heading for Greenland. Yet the raft is seemingly followed by a spectre ship, 'its huge fabric moved or glided as it were over the surface of the sea, it was a thing unreal, the mere phantom of the thing that was, the shadow of the strong fabric of iron and wood' ('The Spectre Ship', *A London Magazine*, 1876, 533). In terror at the vision, Rankin falls to his death into the sea. Stone is later rescued by her sceptical husband with the phantom appearance left

unexplained: ‘but in the solitude of her own heart she never forgot that terrible incident which connected her so strangely with the spectre ship’ (*The Spectre Ship*, *A London Magazine*, 1876, 534).

In ‘The Spectre Ship’ the introduction of women into the Arctic disrupts male activity and moral certainty. Again, the dramatisation of romance and melodrama in the Arctic becomes a stage for unravelling one of the fundamental illusions of western thought – the boundary between reason and magic. The particular geographies of this breakdown – the desolation, icescapes and sublimity of the popular Arctic imagination – set the scene for the transformation of male identities through the supernatural experience. Thus, spectral geographies of love reveal the contingent links between the domestic and the Arctic.

‘The captain of the “Pole-star”’

The Scottish doctor and author Arthur Conan Doyle spent eight months onboard the Peterhead whaler the *Hope* in 1880 as a ship’s surgeon. This was a formative experience for the young medical student and it resulted in material for two journalistic articles and an interesting supernatural tale that focused on the ghostly presence of a woman in the Arctic.

In Doyle’s view, whaling was a practice that demanded vigilance, intelligence and manly prowess – the difficulties of whale-hunting, he writes, ‘dwarfs all other experiences’ (2012, 320). While Doyle was writing in the context of the decline of the industry and a general rise in levels of anxiety and frustration among whalers, he still imagined the Arctic as a realm of romance and enchantment. He wrote of the ‘glamour about those circumpolar regions which must affect everyone who has penetrated to them’ (Doyle, 2012, 323). Fundamentally, it was a region where men acted strangely due to isolation and solitude in the face of physical hardship and environmental ‘purity’:

My heart goes out to that old, grey-headed whaling captain who, having been left for an instant when at death’s door, staggered off in his night gear, and was found by his nurses far from his house and still, as he mumbled, ‘pushing to the norrard’ (Doyle, 2012).

In an article published in the *Strand Magazine* in 1897 Doyle expanded on the homosocial environment of the whaling voyage, painting a picture of simmering violence, comradeship and initiation rites. He also discussed melody and sound at sea, writing of the ‘beautiful and sympathetic tenor

voice' of the steward who sang songs of women and love which 'filled us all with a vague, sweet discontent, which comes back to me now as I think of it' (Doyle, 2012, 327). All of these elements – masculine power, Arctic purity and haunting melody – are present in the fictional tale that Doyle wrote following his whaling voyage, 'The Captain of the "Pole-star"' (1883).

This gothic tale is presented as a series of extracts from the journal of a young ship's surgeon, John McAlister Ray, onboard the *Pole-star*, a whaler of Dundee. Commanded by Captain Craigie, the ship becomes stuck in an ice-field north of Spitsbergen in September, a time when she should be directing her way homeward. Craigie is a wild monomaniac in the style of Captain Ahab who loves the dangers of whaling and possesses something of a death-wish. Yet for Ray, who engages in a 'psychological study' of the captain, he retains a 'depth of tenderness' in his eyes (Doyle, 2012, 336). He is a gallant companion and his countenance is 'manly and resolute', but again Doyle places these characteristics in contrast with his emotional life: Craigie frequently displays a 'look of fear' and has trouble sleeping (Doyle, 2012, 337). He has a peculiar attitude to women (or female representation), as seen in his violent outburst when Ray happens to show him a vignette of his fiancée. The mystery of Craigie's double life seems to be connected with a peculiar outbreak of 'superstition' (Doyle, 2012) among the men onboard the ship, a superstition involving a ghostly woman.

Shortly after leaving Shetland the men at the wheel heard 'plaintive cries and screams' following the ship (Doyle, 2012, 338). The second mate reported hearing sounds 'sometimes like a bairn crying and sometimes like a wench in pain' and then seeing a tall, white, shadowy figure moving along the ice seemingly waiting for someone (Doyle, 2012). Symbolising the attributes of a particular form of western rationality, Ray approaches these accounts as absurd superstitious beliefs but fears an epidemic if such superstitions spread. Ray begins to fear for Craigie's sanity when the captain also sees this ghost on the ice:

He was staring out over the ice with an expression in which horror, surprise, and something approaching to joy were contending for the mastery. In spite of the cold, great drops of perspiration were coursing down his forehead, and he was evidently fearfully excited. His limbs twitched like those of a man upon the verge of an epileptic fit, and the lines about his mouth were drawn and hard.

'Look!', he gasped, seizing me by the wrist, but still keeping his eye upon the distant ice, and moving his head slowly in a horizontal

direction, as if following some object which was moving across the field of vision. ‘Look! There, man, there! Between the hummocks! Now coming out from behind the far one! You see her – you *must* see her! There still! Flying from me, by God, flying from me – and gone!’ (Doyle, 2012, 340).

Mirroring the increasing tension onboard the *Pole-star* are the worsening ice conditions and the ‘horrible’, ‘deathly silence’ of the ice-fields (Doyle, 2012, 341). As the ghost continues to be seen flitting around the ship, the captain mumbles to himself, ‘But a little time, love – but a little time!’ (Doyle, 2012, 345). Ray’s faith in rationality is finally shattered when he hears the sounds of the ghost: ‘a mere sound, and that was all’ (Doyle, 2012), he writes with some understatement. After noting the deep silences and strange hums that pervade the Arctic ice-fields, Ray hears ‘a cry, sharp and shrill, upon the silent air of the night’ culminating in a ‘long wail of agony, which might have been the last cry of a lost soul’ (Doyle, 2012, 346). These are the sounds of grief, but also of longing and enchantment: the ghost’s intentions and the dangers of the ship’s position are interlinked, forcing the men to wait until she releases them.

The denouement to ‘The Captain of the “*Pole-star*”’ comes when Craigie keeps his ‘tryst’ with this ghost and suddenly jumps off the ship onto the ice where he runs towards what seems to be a ‘wreath of mist’ (Doyle, 2012, 348). The next day the ship’s crew find Craigie’s body face down on the ice with a ‘bright smile’ and outstretched arms, as though grasping something (see Figure 5.5). As the men approach the body, a puff of wind catches the snowflakes that covered him and whirl around before blowing out towards the sea: ‘To my eyes’, Ray notes, ‘it seemed but a snow-drift, but many of my companions averred that it started up in the shape of a woman, stooped over the corpse and kissed it’ (Doyle, 2012, 349). Ray had previously found occasion to enter the captain’s cabin where he saw a watercolour of a young lady with ‘languid, dreamy eyes’ and a ‘clean-cut, prominent jaw’ (Doyle, 2012, 343). Judging from this portrait, Ray believes her to have been a woman of extraordinary will-power. On entering the cabin again, he finds that this picture had been cut from the frame, a portrait of a woman, Doyle’s postscript tells us, who had ‘died under circumstances of peculiar horror’ while engaged to Craigie, who was then at sea (Doyle, 2012, 350).

This gothic tale forms one example of a consistent theme in Doyle’s fiction, that of passion and love from beyond the grave. ‘De Profundis’ (Doyle, 2016 (originally 1892; published alongside Doyle’s



Figure 5.5 ‘He was lying face downwards upon a frozen bank’, by Charles Kerr. Source: A.C. Doyle. *The Captain of the Polestar and Other Tales*. London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1912.

‘The Glamour of the Arctic’ in the same issue of the *Strand Magazine*) features the ghost of a dead man who emerges from the ocean to his shocked wife at the very moment that he died in a hospital at Madeira. In a related tale, ‘The Ring of Thoth’ (1890), an Egyptian sneaks into

a mummy exhibit in Paris to bring his ancient love back to life. Love as a means of exploring the relationship between the living and the dead speaks, of course, to the whole area of relics and fetishes. Material objects bearing memories, pieces or representations of the loved one mediate processes of intimacy in Doyle's supernatural fiction and highlight the deep connections between bodies and ghosts, presences and absences.

Craigie's portrait of his fiancée, much like the portrait of Mason in 'The Shadow of a Shade', acts as a substitute for an absent lover – an already spectral object with its own context of loss and desire. The ghostly woman who haunts the men of the *Pole-star* also suggests the spectralisation of sexuality, its sublimation into sounds, images and rumours. It is no coincidence that, in many of these works of Arctic fiction, the link between the male and the female remains tenuous due to the physical and emotional separation between home and Arctic. Lovers have not married yet and the supernatural experience seems to express sexual tension and a desire or fantasy for bonding. Remembering his own whaling experience, Doyle leaves us with no doubts regarding the emotional and carnal desires experienced by whalers onboard ship:

To appreciate a woman one has to be out of sight of one for six months. I can well remember that as we rounded the north of Scotland on our return we dipped our flag to the lighthouse, being only some hundreds of yards from the shore. A figure emerged to answer our salute, and the excited whisper ran through the ship, 'It's a woman!' The captain was on the bridge with his telescope. I had the binoculars in the bows. Every one was staring. She was well over fifty, short skirts and sea boots – but she was a 'wumman'. 'Anything in a mutch!' the sailors used to say, and I was of the same way of thinking (1989, 37).

In many Arctic narratives women were elevated into inaccessible Things – impossible objects – to such an extent that simple desire cannot be fulfilled. Stefan Zweig famously defined the adventurer as one who 'is in flight from women' (1974, 61), but there is perhaps something more complicated going on here.

In the world of female ghosts and spirits, victimisation is often expressed through sound and noise. The wailing and siren calls of the ghost and Craigie's alternating pursuit and waiting motions might be examined from the perspective that desire is fundamentally a paradox. As

Žižek has outlined, ‘the drive’s ultimate aim is simply to reproduce itself as a drive, to return to its circular path, to continue its path to and from the goal. The real source of enjoyment is the repetitive movement of this closed circuit’ (1997, 5). Anxiety, in this scenario, centres not on lack but on the danger of losing lack and thereby desire. In this understanding, the Arctic/woman is not valued because of the obstacles she places in front of the man but because she functions as a kind of emptiness around which the male subject’s desire is structured. The techniques of courtly love identified here are therefore ‘techniques of holding back, of suspension, of *amor interruptus*’ (Lacan qtd. in Žižek, 1999, 156). Remember Craigie’s intonation: ‘But a little time, love – but a little time!’

The attributes of female sexuality in ‘The Captain of the “Pole-star”’ reflect the tension between waiting and pursuing: the flighty and ambient characteristics of the ghost as she embraces Craigie’s corpse (the appearance is described as being like a ‘vortex’ (Doyle, 2012, 349)) plays into historic definitions of female desire as irrational, dangerous, unpredictable and ethereal (see Castle, 1995). These attributes, it should be noted, were also frequently used to describe the Arctic. For instance: ‘Yea, awful art thou in thy beauty; with white fingers beckoning in mists and shadows of the frozen sea; / drawing to thee the hearts of heroes’ (Gilder, 1908, 109). Yet Craigie’s ‘bright smile’, with his hands ‘outstretched as though grasping at the strange visitor which had summoned him away into the dim world that lies beyond the grave’ signifies, I argue, the endless circulation of desire in Arctic fiction, and the fear that this inspires (Doyle, 2012, 350). Of course, Craigie’s death is yet another ordeal and postponement: he has ‘a leaning for metempsychosis and the doctrines of Pythagoras’ (Doyle, 2012, 344). Craigie’s frozen smile – seeking to grasp the ghost – suggests the essential paradox of desire: his Arctic embrace is a version of the courtly love trial.

Arctic mummies

In 1934 a strange story about the 1876 *Pandora* Arctic expedition was published in a British newspaper. Its narrator, William J.A. Grant, the photographer on the expedition, recalled some spooky incidents onboard the ship as it prepared to leave Greenland for home. Grant developed his photographs in a darkroom beside the engine-room and one day the stoker, a man nicknamed ‘Deaffy’, ran up to deck claiming he heard a ghost in the darkroom: ‘To which his messmates said: “Rubbish: ghosts

did not make noises, and if they did, how could a deaf man hear them?"’ Yet, as the ship approached Cape Farewell on the southern tip of Greenland, Grant himself heard a ‘woman’s shriek’ from the room and the commander, Allen Young, was informed. With everyone alerted, Grant unlocked the door and found a long box that was brought up on deck and found to contain ‘the body of a woman, cut up, her legs and arms having been sawn off’. It was then discovered that the ship’s surgeon, A.C. Horner, had been paid £100 by the ‘Anthropological Society of London’⁵ to acquire ‘the bones of an Eskimo woman’. The crew, keen to rid the ship of this macabre passenger, performed a funeral service and the body was consigned to the sea. ‘From that moment’, Grant wrote, ‘the wind shifted and blew from dead aft, and in a very short time we had passed Cape Farewell and soon arrived in Bantry Bay, Ireland’ (‘Ghost Story of the Arctic’, *Western Morning News*, 1934). Although he did not mention this story in his private journal, Horner did note that the crew ‘blackballed’ him during the 1875 journey of the *Pandora* for ‘killing skinning & to make matters worse cutting up birds’:

Only yesterday I banged away at a Tern overhead. At the time there was a favourable breeze springing up. The smoke was not out of the muzzle of the gun before the Captn. was on deck and wanting to know what the Dickens anyone meant by shooting the wind away now he had one. I was floored at once. Such a thing never entered my head. Again it was only the other day Benyen [Lieutenant Koolemans Benyen of the Royal Dutch Navy] came and entreated me to throw overboard a birdskin that he did not approve of ... It will be my fate to be chucked over soon I am certain should the calm continue (SPRI, MS 713).

These kinds of mummy stories should affect how we think of Arctic exploration because they raise troubling and gothic questions about how expeditions acted towards native peoples and cultures. Steve Pile (2006) examines the ‘occult entanglements’ that link western cities with non-western and colonial space, showing the circulation of magical beliefs, practices and objects through particular routes. One only has to recall the vast literature on fin-de-siècle occultism and psychical research in Britain to see that there was a fundamental cross-pollination of scientific, pseudo-scientific and occult cosmologies at the time. The exposure of the West to the mysterious, occult and unseen forces of the East, of Africa, or of the Celtic or European peripheries, created a literary mode identified by Patrick Brantlinger (1985) as ‘imperial gothic’. This can be

seen in the ubiquity of vampires, Egyptian mummies and Indian fakirs in late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century fiction. Echoing the work of scholars of the gothic who look at how supernatural forces relate to political forces, I am interested in the way that the noisy ghosts haunting Arctic expedition ships can inform us about acts of colonial violence.

As Grant's ghost story relates, during this period the Arctic was imagined, like Egypt, to be a site of magic linked to acts of disinterment and despoiling. The pulp tale '*A Cry from the Ice*' (1911) by Ernest Elliott Stock echoes Grant's story in recounting the mental collapse of a scientist onboard a ship in the Arctic and is unusual in its appeal to native ontologies. In the story, Dr Muttlebery has been sent North by a learned society 'with instructions to record the Arctic in all its moods' (Stock, 1911, 96). Muttlebery finds himself drawn to the icy landscape, 'holding yet repelling', and begins to feel an 'eerie irresistible temptation' to tramp northwards. In the familiar motif, cries and an 'eerie wail' are heard on the ship by the crew, mostly Scottish as behoves the stereotype of their superstitious disposition. When the ship moves southwards Muttlebery starts to behave irrationally and seems to be mesmerised by the North itself: his outstretched and pleading hands remain, like Craigie's, empty. This results in a kind of collapse and degeneration into savagery. Muttlebery becomes 'a crouching, dishevelled, haggard creature', and he leaps overboard to his death (Stock, 1911, 121). When the men search the ship for the origin of the weird cries they discover a case that Muttlebery had kept hidden: in this case is the half-frozen corpse of 'a young Esquimaux girl' which he had disinterred for phrenological examination in London (1911, 124). 'But the North can guard her ain', the captain concludes, 'that I've heard weel these mony years; and the poor doctor laddie keens it too now' (Stock, 1911, 130).⁶ With some reverence, the crew carry the case on to the deck and deposit the corpse back into the sea.

Just as in the tales of the mummy's curse, there are colonial histories at work in these two stories, alongside a straightforward warning against the antiquarian impulse and the desecration of cultures one does not understand. The preserved body of the Other is a paradigmatic magic object that contains 'a reserve of supernaturalism' (Luckhurst, 2010), and the movement of such an object outside a realm imagined as an otherworld of mystery and secrecy opens up the relic-hunter to feelings of guilt and moral failure. The degeneration of civilised man into superstition is something that happens on the periphery of the Empire and therefore has implications for the social health of the metropolis. '*A Cry from the Ice*' demonstrates that non-western ghosts were harnessed

into a western emotional language about Arctic place and its spectral attributes.

Entertaining and spooky as these mummy stories are, they pale in comparison to real acts of colonial despoiling and grave-robbing which occurred in the 1890s. The American explorer Robert E. Peary looms large in this context as someone who was more than willing to snatch mummies and other body parts in order to fund his expeditions in the far north of Greenland. For instance, Peary's Second Greenland Expedition of 1891–2 was part-funded by the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University whose curator, F.W. Putnam, was eager for a full skeleton of one of the 'Arctic Highlanders' (now known as Inughuit) to display at the anthropological section of the Chicago World's Fair of 1893 (Peary, Putnam and Dexter, 1969, 178). Despite donating the huge sum of \$2000 to the expedition, Putnam was not satisfied by the materials gathered by Peary and his surgeon (and later rival) Frederick A. Cook. In the inventory of photographs, tools and other artefacts from northwest Greenland that Peary sent back to Harvard in October 1891, Putnam was disappointed to read listed only '1 Eskimaux skull from grave at Nettik' (Peary, Putnam and Dexter, 1969, 183). In the end Putnam realised that Peary gave some specimens to other scientific bodies, leaving only a few crania for his display, but the official account of the expedition tells a macabre story of illicit procurement.

According to this narrative, when the expedition ship, the sealer *SS Kite*, reached a village near Cape Parry in July the expeditioners distracted the local Inughuit in order to dig for bodies. Their search was rewarded by the discovery of a mummified corpse wrapped in a bearskin. Afraid of alerting the Inughuit to this 'despoiling', the men covered the body in an old coat and brought it onto the vessel (Keely and Davis, 1892, 126). As the ship was passing the eastern shores of Disko Island some time later the *Kite* ran aground in calm weather, a sign 'some of the more superstitious sailors attributed ... to the presence of the Eskimo skulls which had been obtained further north' (Keely and Davis, 1892, 195). Years later a crew-member of the expedition sent a story to the press that went into greater detail about this incident. He said that despite their best efforts, the expeditioners were unable to purchase skeletons from the Inughuit because of superstitions that, when taken from their homeland, 'the bones of such a transported Esquimaux are chewed up by snakes, and the spirit perishes beyond redemption'. Realising this, the men entertained the Inughuit with 'the mighty

wonders of New York jack-knives' while others, the scientific crew, raided the grave of the mummified male whom they termed the 'chief'. The grave-robbing was supposedly concealed from the crew as they would have refused to sail 'with so ghostly a burden onboard'. Further collections of skulls at Herbert Island and Godhavn turned a bunk on the *Kite* into a 'regular graveyard' but stormy weather caused the crew to rebel. Forming a deputation they told Peary that there would be no luck 'until "something" was thrown overboard':

The men at the wheel declared in turn that while in the act of steering some stronger hand than theirs was constantly turning the ship shorewards. One veteran helmsman ran us into a sandbank. He said 'he couldn't help it, "somebody" seized the wheel and ran the ship aground'. The superstitious sailors were firmly persuaded that ghostly 'Huskies' – as they call the Esquimaux – were piloting the ship landwards to induce us to give up their chief's body for decent burial.

The next morning one of the sailors spotted a ghostly kayaker at sea who 'kept waving and beckoning with mysterious gestures' and hailed the ship 'with a mournful wail'. An officer on watch also reported seeing a procession of six Inuit walk the poop deck and vanish through the bulwark, following which six skulls were found to be missing from the storage bunk ('Arctic Body-snatching', *The Hampshire Telegraph*, 1898).

So what do these three mummy stories tell us? Firstly, it is clear from Grant's story and the account of the haunting of the *Kite* that sailors had certain beliefs about what constituted the proper behaviour of a sailor. The desire for a decent burial was an important part of these beliefs, something which body-snatching disrupted. This moral dimension found expression through the sailor's superstitions and the superstitions that were ascribed to them. On the *Pandora* in 1875, Horner was a figure of suspicion for the crew both for his relentless desire for animal and human remains and his status as a greenhorn who drove away the wind. Secondly, all three tales demonstrate considerable tension between the crew of Arctic expedition ships and the scientists onboard. Clearly one group had to manage navigation and had the ultimate responsibility for the safe passage of all, while the other group gathered data and specimens. Given that the scientific cargo already represented a point of fracture between the two types of expeditioner, the fact that skeletal remains were involved provided an

opening for dissent and interpersonal conflict. The recognition of the spectral co-presence of Inughuit onboard the ship is another theme here and it is remarkable, in this regard, to note how closely Stock's fictional story echoes real events in Greenland. Whether a 'woman's shriek', 'eerie wail' or 'mournful wail', the repressed spectral woman shadows the expedition ship, demanding justice through the lament. The work of Arctic exploration is suddenly recognised as haunting when the mummy wakes up, when the moral dimension of scientific practice hits home, when this *something* becomes *somebody*. Mummies disturb because they are the actors of colonial haunting par excellence; rarely mentioned at all in narratives of Arctic exploration, they come from the dark depths beneath the icy surface. Frequently female, they attack western knowledge with all the force and power of repressed hatred and a desire for justice. These were feelings that were not simply limited to the pages of pulp fiction or memories of a maritime expedition but were forces that followed Peary around and continue to haunt Arctic exploration and science to this day.

Although the mummy of the 'chief' mentioned above was given to the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia ('Additions to the Museum', 1891, 510), Peary continued to supply human remains for Putnam and his colleague, the anthropologist Franz Boas, who both went on to work at the American Museum of Natural History in New York. Indeed disinterments, as well as other acts of biological and cultural appropriation, were normative practices for nineteenth-century explorers, anthropologists and antiquarians (see Garson and Read, 1892, 5; Roque, 2010).⁷ Peary long coveted the large meteorites near Cape York known to the Inuit as 'the tent', 'the woman' and 'the dog'. These meteorites had provided the locals with iron for centuries and, although they were less dependent on this metal source by the 1890s, Peary's removal of them was considered something that threatened bad luck for the community. Before he left on his 1897 trip to take the largest meteorite – 'the tent' – Boas requested that Peary send him a live Inuk for ethnological study. Peary returned from Greenland with six people and the remains of others in 'five big barrels' (Herbert, 2012, 107). This human cargo caused a sensation when it arrived in New York and 30,000 people reportedly visited the ship, with admission by ticket only.

The Inughuit, who included one of Peary's hunters Qisuk and his seven-year-old son Minik (also known as Kishu and Menee), were kept in the basement of the museum until the authorities knew what to do

with them. In the autumn heat of New York they quickly contracted tuberculosis and four had died by 1898, including Qisuk. Minik, now a sickly orphan, was determined to bury his father according to traditional ritual but the museum authorities staged a phoney funeral in the grounds in order to keep a hold of the corpse of one of ‘Peary’s Eskimos’. Minik’s foster father William Wallace later confessed to the trick:

While Minik stood sobbing by, the museum men lingered around watching the proceedings. The thing worked well. The boy never suspected, and when the grave was complete he made his mark on the north side of it. You see that is the Eskimo way. They think that the mark prevents the spirit of the dead coming back to haunt them, and the mark is always made between the home of the living and the resting place of the dead (qtd. in Harper, 1986, 93).

While Minik mourned over a mound of stones containing a log of wood, students at Bellevue hospital dissected his father’s corpse. At this point he may have remembered how he and his father were photographed naked on arriving at Bellevue. These photographs later appeared in a short scientific study – *An Eskimo Brain* – along with an analysis and more photographs of Qisuk’s dissected brain (Hrdlička, 1901). After dissection Qisuk’s disarticulated skeleton was then sent to the museum where it was put on display. Some years later Minik learned of his deception from the newspapers and confronted the museum authorities, but his call for his father’s burial was ignored (see Figure 5.6). His appeals to be brought back to Greenland were also ignored by Peary who, after selling the meteorites to the museum for the fabulous sum of \$40,000, became firmly focused on his quest to reach the North Pole. As recounted by Kenn Harper in the biography *Give Me My Father’s Body* (1986), Minik kept up the pressure on Peary with a public campaign until he was eventually given passage to Greenland in 1909.

The story of Qisuk and Minik reminds us that mummies and skeletons matter; just because people, alive or dead, are tagged as specimens they do not lose their capacity to resist objectification. Haunting therefore names resistance. It was not until 1993 that the American Museum of Natural History sent back four of the Inughuit bodies, including Qisuk, to Qaanaaq in Greenland for burial. The American actor Kevin Spacey was so enthralled by the story that he acquired the movie rights for Harper’s narrative and wrote a foreword

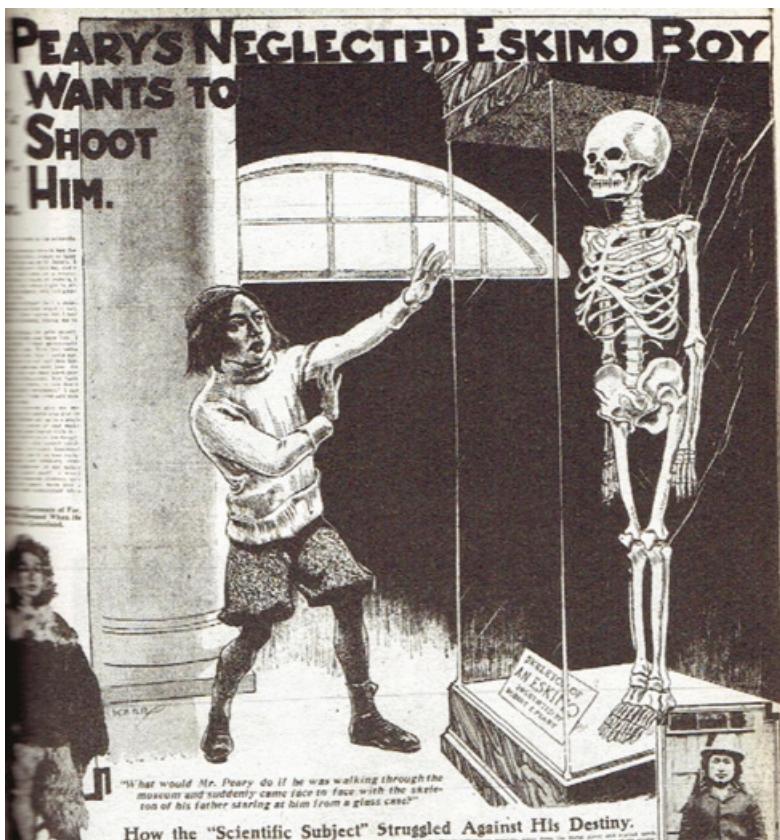


Figure 5.6 ‘Why Arctic Explorer Peary’s Neglected Eskimo wants to shoot him’. Source: *San Francisco Examiner*, Magazine supplement, 9 May 1909.

to a 2000 edition of *Give Me My Father’s Body*. It is clear that the past does not simply vanish with the passage of time and indigenous people in the Arctic continue to think of Euro-American exploration and science in terms of violence, racism and injustice.