

“A tribute of respect to the dead”: Narrative Containment and Focal Substitution in Leopold McClintock’s “The Voyage of the ‘Fox’ ”

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In 1859 Captain Leopold McClintock was lauded as a hero upon his return from a two-year Arctic expedition, an expedition declared by the *Athenaeum* as “one of the most important voyages ever made in the Arctic Seas” (24 December 1859, 845). McClintock and his stalwart team of 24 had pushed Lady Franklin’s converted luxury schooner *Fox* into the Eastern pack ice to nestle in the frigid archipelago of islands during the winter of 1858-59, prosecuting a final search for the remains of Sir John Franklin’s missing crews by man- and dog-hauled sledge. McClintock discovered piles of refuse from Franklin’s crews, a number of skeletons, and a single piece of paper outlining the lost expedition’s intentions to march en masse to the Arctic mainland. Though the information on the rust-stained paper was partially incorrect, partially irrelevant, and inconsistent with much of the other physical evidence McClintock located, he declared upon its discovery that his task was concluded, and that the mystery and manner of Franklin’s disappearance had been solved. Upon his return the popular press largely agreed, with many editorials signaling a triumphant end to the twelve-year-long quest: “Such is the tale now told” (*Athenaeum* 24 September 1859, 399). The tale that McClintock told in his *Voyage of the Fox in the Arctic Seas*, that Franklin’s “heroic men perished in the path of duty,” was a revision of a report received in 1854 that Franklin’s crews had succumbed to cannibal-

ism before perishing on an island just north of the mainland (McClintock, 318). Though the *Times* had issued McClintock's initial report to the Admiralty into print with minimal fanfare (concluding its leader with the firm "Let the dead bury the dead" [23 September 1859, 7]), the majority of public responses to McClintock's expedition and its subsequent narrative were far more positive. The reason for the press's "high opinion of Capt. McClintock's literary performance" was not his narrative skill, but rather the nature of the story he told: that Sir John Franklin had died a hero (*Athenaeum* 24 December 1859, 845).¹

As Jen Hill points out, questions and answers about Franklin, his men, and his missing ships echoed through larger "discussions of the nature and boundaries of national identity" during the period, making the discovery of his fate (and heroism) not just significant to Arctic enthusiasts, but to the nation (114). In conceptual terms, Franklin's lost expedition represented the final unfinished chapter in the national Arctic narrative, and McClintock supplied its dramatic conclusion through his discovery of Franklin's fate. As Janice Cavell writes, Arctic exploration "illustrated the nation's greatness," and it was thus not surprising that for British audiences "the dramatic value of the closing episode [i.e., McClintock's expedition] served to heighten their sense of its overall importance" (36, 37). In Chauncey Loomis's view, nineteenth-century Arctic exploration had "assumed a coherence that could almost be called a 'plot'" (100). As with other narratives in which "the end writes the beginning and shapes the middle," McClintock's expedition implicitly shouldered the weight of 40 years of experience and optimism as it set out to reconstruct the final movements of Franklin's men (Brooks, 22). Historians today continue to characterize McClintock's narrative as the zenith of the expression of Arctic heroism. Echoing nineteenth-century editorialists, Cavell claims that "the story of the lost expedition had been rescued from oblivion" only through McClintock's "courage and devotion" (45). While "courage" is a logical inclusion in the list of personal attributes necessary for success in exploration, Cavell's inclusion of "devotion" is intriguing, since it begs the question, devotion to what? Given

the centrality of heroism to the Victorian British Arctic narrative that Cavell, Dramin, and others have argued for (and that has largely been proven by the myriad documents of the period), that devotion appears specifically to refer to the maintenance of the explorer's image – and specifically that of Franklin – as national exemplar. Thus, though ostensibly supported by empirical discoveries (*Voyage of the Fox* contains the standard charts, maps, and appendices expected in exploration journals of the period), McClintock's narrative remains predominantly shaped by imaginative concepts of Britishness, heroism, and duty, all nationalist tropes that predetermine his conclusions.

McClintock's vastly popular published narrative was accorded, as a *Chambers's Journal* editorialist put it, "great value as a simple and satisfactory narrative" of heroism and sacrifice, but it was actually neither transparent nor straightforward (*CJ*: January-June 1860, 39). McClintock's "simple tale" is in fact the product of a series of complex narrative negotiations that rejuvenate Arctic exploration generally – and Franklin specifically – as a suitable subject for nationalist pride (Murchison, xxxvii): in the pages of *Voyage of the Fox* the invidious cannibalism allegations against Franklin are effectively erased from the historical record, and Franklin himself is reinserted in the proper heroic attitude. In order to accomplish these goals, McClintock employs a dual strategy of narrative containment and focal substitution. McClintock overwrites the cannibalism allegations by minimizing the presence of Inuit testimony in his narrative, and replacing the Inuit conclusion of the Franklin expedition with his own, British version. As a second task that is both complementary to and necessary for the narrative elision, McClintock also erases any physical evidence of cannibalism, discouraging an imaginative reconstruction of such scenes by offering himself and his crews as visual and narrative stand-ins for members of the lost expedition.

When Lady Franklin sponsored the final search for her husband in 1857, her instructions to McClintock were to "confirm, directly or inferentially," that the members of Sir John Franklin's expedition had died not through incompetence but while doing their duty (LF to McClintock,

qtd. in McClintock, 12). McClintock was thus not on a mission to determine whether or not Franklin and his men had died, but rather to confirm the nation's hope: that they had died well. Hill terms McClintock's expedition "unsuccessful" in that it failed to retrieve any living member of Franklin's crews, but there was little hope for that long before McClintock set sail (180). Indeed, when in January 1854 the *Gazette* announced that Franklin and his men would be considered as "having died in Her Majesty's Service" if not heard from by March of that year, the British popular press had little difficulty resigning the one hundred and twenty-nine explorers to their apparent fate. In its 28 October 1854 editorial, for instance, the *Athenaeum* did not allow its readers to hope "That any of our gallant countrymen [still] survive" in the Arctic (1305), and in *Household Words* Charles Dickens solemnly declared "that SIR JOHN FRANKLIN and his party are no more" (1854, 361). Indeed, even as early as 1852 doubt had spread as to the expedition's continued survival, and its men were already in the process of being removed from the forum of scientific and historical relevance. The *North British Review* mused on the fate of the lost men: "whatever be their condition, their adventures ... will ever be a subject of romantic interest" (16 February 1852, 446). But while creative constructions of his fate kept Franklin's memory alive in the short term, it would require more concrete evidence to cement his place in history as a legitimate hero, and this evidence McClintock was charged with discovering.

In 1857 the question of Franklin's ability to do his duty was connected indelibly to the 1854 publication in the *Times* of Inuit allegations of cannibalism among Franklin's men, brought back from the north by Dr John Rae, an explorer for the Hudson's Bay Company.² Rae's report, shocking as the cannibalism detail was, tantalizingly suggested that Franklin and his men had partially navigated and then walked across a frozen passage to the mainland, thereby being the first Europeans to discover a Northwest Passage. Lady Franklin implied this in her instructions to McClintock: "if Dr. Rae's report be true," she wrote, evidence of Franklin's triumph should be clear (LF to McClintock, qtd. in

McClintock, 12). But Lady Franklin's version of "Dr. Rae's report" included only half the story, since if Franklin's men had indeed, as the Inuit said, crossed to the mainland, they had done so only by sustaining themselves through cannibalism. For reasons obvious to everyone, the existence of cannibalism among Franklin's men was not a detail Britons were keen to include in the narrative of one of their national adventures; the allegations also had significant cultural implications. If as an "agent of western civilization" the explorer was central to the "civilizing mission" of imperialism, the Inuit allegations implied that Franklin and his men had crossed a moral as well as a cultural divide (Arens, 18).

The testimony's subject matter was indisputably controversial, but rather than dealing with the information itself, contemporary writers bound it to the ethnicity of its authors as a way of refuting it. The argument thus became a question of ethnicity, not veracity, and its thrust was the assertion that only Britons could tell the truth. For instance, the *Athenaeum*'s initial editorial on the subject briefly alluded to the shuddering "thought that some of the survivors had been driven ... to the last act of maddened human beings," but the majority of its argument focused on its innate distrust of Inuit veracity: "All who know the Esquimaux know that they have no sense of truth. Like all savages, they lie without scruple: – so that any statement made by them, unless reasonable in itself and consistent with known facts, goes for little or nothing" (1305). For the *Athenaeum*'s editorialist, ethnicity determined narrative veracity, and an Inuit story that cast doubt on British honour could be dismissed out of hand simply because it was Inuit. The editorialist's description of Inuits' narrative style ("they lie without scruple") operated in contrast to the ways in which he imagined British narrative style: Britons were in charge of verifying the "known facts"; Britain's narrative was empirical, incontestable, authentic. However, the article's assertion that only "reasonable" stories that are "consistent with known facts" would be accepted was spurious; other than the 1850 discovery of Franklin's first winter quarters on Beechey Island, British explorers had themselves discovered nothing about the missing expedition, only receiving reports from travel-

ling Inuit that remained unverifiable by physical evidence. The “known facts” to which the *Athenaeum* referred were thus exclusively of British imaginative manufacture, grounded in the public images of Sir John Franklin “and his gallant comrades” (1305).³

Proof of the proportional value of ethnicity as it relates to information becomes clear through a perusal of documents: the difference between the British treatment of Inuit information before and after the reception of the cannibalism allegations is stark. As the *Athenaeum* reported “from the highest official authority” on 27 November 1847, for instance, British searching expeditions were specifically instructed to “communicate with the various tribes of Esquimaux, in expectation of gleanings some tidings of the discovery ships,” and it was tacitly acknowledged in searchers’ instructions that travelling Inuits were the most likely of any parties to offer guidance to the searches (1220). Inuit-derived information found a ready audience in readers eager for tidings: on 5 October 1849, for example, the *Times* printed a letter which related an interview between a whaling captain and a group of Inuit hunters who had drawn “a rough sketch of four ships which they stated were frozen up in Prince Regent’s Inlet. ... These natives stated that they had been on board the whole of these ships in March last, and that they were all well and safe.” The letter received minimal gloss by the editors, appearing verbatim and unanalyzed after a brief introduction. As the *Times* cautiously prefaced, “some hopes are entertained that the news ... of Sir John Franklin’s ships having been seen by the natives as late as March last ... is not without foundation.” Given by Inuits, the information was accepted easily because it supported already held beliefs about Franklin’s whereabouts, and because it was validated by a British source: the hope was “somewhat strengthened by a telegraphic message to the Admiralty” received from the first British correspondent of the news. The same information was received again from Captain Parker (the whaling captain who communicated with “the natives” aboard the *Truelove*), from Thomas Ward, owner of the whaler Parker was piloting, the Mayor of Hull (where the *Truelove* docked), and the

Times' "correspondent at Hull" (5e). Though each document repeated exactly the same information from the same Inuit source, the information generated a cumulative truth value as the number of British who supported it increased. The Inuit origin of the information was lost under the weight of British paper.

In contrast, in reviewing Rae's cannibalism report in 1854 the press portrayed the information Rae had provided as inextricably tied to its cultural source. As a British citizen Rae was relieved of the responsibility of answering for his troubling report; as Dickens conceded in *Household Words* (1854), "we can release Dr. Rae from this inquiry, proud of him as an Englishman" who did his duty by passing along all the information he had (361).⁴ Rather – and in direct contradiction to the general practice in exploration writing, in which Native information was subsumed within the imperial British text – the Native source of the information became its entire locus of meaning. Rae himself, two other Hudson's Bay Company explorers, as well as members of the Admiralty accepted the Inuit testimony, but the press dwelt almost exclusively on its ethnic provenance as the reason for the story's unreliability. Though the information was translated into English, interpreted by Rae himself and edited into an Admiralty report, the responsibility for the story rested solely on the Inuits who had initially provided it.

McClintock chooses a different tack to rebut the cannibalism report, taking advantage of his position as a scientific and therefore supposedly objective observer. Unlike the editorialists, who relied on their audience's sense of nationalist pride to refute the Inuit testimony, McClintock is allowed at least a gloss of neutrality, and though he draws heavily on what the *Athenaeum* calls the "known facts" – the iconic status of Arctic explorers – he combines these with authentic empirical observations to rewrite the lost Franklin expedition in the national narrative style. Rather than imagining the explorers' collective fate, as editorialists did in the "lights and shadows of fancy," in *Voyage* McClintock claims to discover it first-hand, using his roles as explorer and scientist to lend weight to his imaginative reconstruction.

John Lentz remarks that though McClintock's expedition "found numerous skeletal remains, there is no hint of cannibalism in his book," choosing not to speculate on whether "this was the result of an overly brief field examination or of disinclination to raise a sensitive subject" (182). McClintock does in fact conduct detailed field examinations of each Franklin site he encounters; this "omission" is in fact the main project of McClintock's trip north – he is in the Arctic to overwrite the cannibalism testimony altogether. Indeed, his chief task is to refute what Dickens referred to scoffingly as the "Esquimaux kettle-stories," and in *Voyage* McClintock does this by not acknowledging them at all (HW 245 [1854], 365). Selectively incorporating other Inuit information into his narrative in order to support his claim, McClintock establishes his own voice over the Inuit one as the dominant authority on Franklin and his fate. Throughout his published work the Inuit cannibalism testimony remains officially beneath his notice, and Rae's 1854 report appears in *Voyage* as only one brief paraphrase:

From the Esquimaux of Boothia Felix [Rae] learned that a party of about forty white men were met on the west coast of King William's Island, and from thence travelled on to the mouth of the Great Fish River, where they all perished of starvation, and that this tragic event occurred apparently in the spring of 1850. (2)

Though McClintock cites Rae's report as the reason for his 1857 expedition, articulating his task as answering the questions it opens, he completely omits the crucial detail of alleged cannibalism that makes his journey so historically and culturally important.⁵ This slight but intentional alteration of the original narrative implicates McClintock in the sticky "problem of erasure," as he validates the Inuit narrative in the main while ignoring its most salient point (Warkentin, xix). McClintock's project to overwrite the Inuit information with his own is a difficult one, given that his expedition relies on it to reach its destination, and that his narrative in fact exists as a response to it. His path to the western and southern coasts of King William Island is specifically determined by the

Inuit testimony, and the evidence he eventually discovers corroborates the story of starvation at the very least. But while McClintock collects as much information as he can from Inuit sources, if their testimony does not validate his own observations it remains proof of their untrustworthiness. Though Inuit physical presence supports McClintock's authority by proving he is travelling in the right direction, Inuit verbal presence endangers his narrative by having the potential to reveal information contrary to the heroic tale he is commissioned to construct.

Throughout *Voyage*, McClintock sets his own empirical narrative against Inuit "hearsay," taking pains to show how vague Inuit information is " – indeed all Esquimaux accounts are naturally so – and how entirely [he and his men are] dependent upon [their] own exertions for bringing to light the mystery of their [i.e., the lost sailors'] fate" (249-50). Though McClintock expresses "joy" upon meeting with Inuit people, their value in *Voyage* is left intentionally uncertain; they are simultaneously sought after but not trusted, relied upon and dismissed (208). In an interview with an elderly woman and a young boy, for example, McClintock's sense of caution leads him to bargain with them for four hours "not for the sake of their seal-skins, but in order to keep them in good humor whilst [he extracts] information from them" (135). During this interview McClintock obtains a detailed map of the local geography, which the woman draws in his presence while dictating the names of places she considers important for him to know. Despite the map's detail, McClintock expresses his dissatisfaction with the information the woman provides, because it does not contain what he specifically seeks: "The old woman's denial of all knowledge of the wrecks or cast-away men was very unsatisfactory" (136). Rather than trust to her speech, McClintock examines for himself "some native encampments and caches" for evidence of the woman's lie (137). Though the "total absence of fresh wood or iron [at the site is] strongly in favor of the old woman's veracity," McClintock refuses to give the woman's information a positive truth value, admitting only that it is bereft of falsehood: the accuracy of her chart proves "that her geographical knowledge, and not her powers of invention, have been taxed" (137, 138).

McClintock does not reject Inuit testimony altogether, but his inclusions of it are carefully enclosed by his own text and ideological position. Information that supports the British narrative is given credit as corroborative evidence, and one of McClintock's main "proofs" of the Franklin expedition's heroic integrity is actually derived from a conversation he has with another Inuit woman: McClintock repeats the single phrase she provides, that Franklin's men "fell down and died as they walked along," throughout his book to illustrate the lost expedition's heroism on its march to the Back River (quoted in Murchison, xxxix, McClintock, 237, 249, 277). That McClintock consistently encloses the phrase in quotation marks calls attention to its identification as Inuit speech, and McClintock exploits this phrase to imply Inuits' corroboration with his own, independent discoveries. McClintock thus manufactures Inuit support for the British story, and claims implicitly that his heroic account already exists – it remains only for him to articulate it in appropriate terms.

In May 1859 McClintock and his men discover the first empirical evidence of the Franklin expedition's demise: a lifeboat sledge containing two skeletons only fifty miles "as a sledge would travel" from the northwest coast of King William Island (where Inuit hunters had claimed the ships had been abandoned) (269). Significantly, this is also the first evidence the explorers encounter without the mediation of Inuit interlocutors: the boat exists beyond the range of Inuit travel, and rests undiscovered until McClintock's men stumble upon it. Indeed, in his Preface to McClintock's narrative Sir Roderick Murchison describes the north shore of King William Island as "so frightfully sterile a region ... that it is even deserted by the Esquimaux" (xix). The fact that the boat sledge contains an impressive variety of material goods, from religious books to chocolate to watches and guns, as well as a valuable amount of wood and iron that would have greatly benefited the Inuit, supports this assessment. The two skeletons, however, offer a mute but powerful challenge to McClintock's narrative comfort. As he describes them, the smaller of the two skeletons

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was found in the bow of the boat, but in too much disturbed a state to enable [us] to judge whether the sufferer had died there; large and powerful animals, probably wolves, had destroyed much of this skeleton ... The other skeleton, was in a somewhat more perfect state, and was enveloped with clothes and furs. (265-66)

McClintock's conjecture regarding the "disturbed state" of the smaller skeleton is unsupported by his own experience: given the ravenous behaviour of his own sledge dogs (they have to be restrained from eating each other), it is highly unlikely a pack of Arctic wolves would leave one skeleton intact while devouring portions of the other. Inuits' ignorance of the lifeboat's existence is further proof against the "large and powerful animals" disturbing the body: as McClintock knows, Inuit people travelled only as far as food was available, and their absence from the area implies a corresponding absence of game. The physical evidence McClintock is obliged to record suggests a more sinister interpretation than he seems willing to admit. The smaller skeleton lies naked while the larger, in "a somewhat more perfect state," is covered with clothes, suggesting the owner of the larger outlived that of the smaller, possibly using the smaller one's clothing when he no longer required it. More importantly, the "disturbed state" of the smaller skeleton implies the former's possible continued use as a food source.⁶

McClintock is ultimately saved from having to conjecture on the final days of Franklin's expedition by the discovery of the Point Victory Record, a single piece of paper written by Franklin's men that reveals their intention to abandon ship and march to the Arctic mainland in the summer of 1848, and one of the only other pieces of information McClintock discovers without Inuit aid. The Point Victory Record is by no means straightforward, but through it McClintock receives his template for constructing his story of the lost crews' heroic, unified (and failed) march to the mainland, allowing him simply to dismiss all evidence he discovers or hears that contradicts it. The document actually contains two records: the first a report of geographical discoveries in the

summer of 1846; the second a hastily scrawled note along the margins of the page from the spring of 1848, recording Sir John Franklin's death, the abandonment of the ice-blocked ships, and the intended march of the remaining crews to "Backs Fish River," on the north coast of the mainland. Much of the information (geographical and temporal) in the 1846 report is erroneous, and these are perpetuated by the information in the 1848 report. The second report also contains a surprising amount of extraneous information, much of the space being taken up with descriptions of cairn locations from previous expeditions. In spite of the Record's several problems, however, McClintock makes his narrative conform to it, transforming the hastily scrawled statement, "and start on tomorrow 26th for Backs Fish River" – a last-minute addition to the unofficial second record – into the foundation for all his conclusions. Though McClintock admits the minor importance of the Point Victory Record to the Franklin expedition itself (even he concedes that the mistakes "would hardly have been made had any importance been attached to these documents"), he maintains the record's centrality to his own final conclusions on the expedition's fate, simply because it offers a written, British option (273). As McClintock triumphs, "We now know the fate of the 'Erebus' and 'Terror.' The sole object of our voyage has at length been completed" (222).

But while McClintock's acritical acceptance of the Point Victory Record is expedient, it is also problematic. Though the Record carries an "immense authority" because drafted by Franklin's crews on an official Admiralty form, its numerous errors compromise its value as an accurate account of the Franklin expedition's last days (Parkinson, 45). For McClintock, however, the value of the otherwise "provokingly laconic" document lies not in its factual accuracy, but in its ability to help him interpret the physical evidence he encounters and, more importantly, to overwrite the Inuit testimony (McClintock, 274). In his analysis of the skeletons in the boat, for instance, McClintock shapes the evidence to conform to the written record. The boat in itself does not present a conundrum (it confirms the general location of the crews), but it is found pointing in

the opposite direction than that in which the men were meant to travel in order to discover the Northwest Passage they allegedly crossed (269). Initially McClintock is "astonished to find" the expedition's physical evidence contradicting its written record, but eventually reconciles the physical to the textual by creative extrapolation: "A little reflection led me to satisfy my own mind at least, that the boat was returning to the ships" (269). As he admits when presenting this hypothesis, "in no other way can [he] account" for the discrepancy in directions (269).

David Woodman laments, "It was not the vagueness of the native [reports] which was to blame" for McClintock's rejection of Inuit testimony, but rather his "slavish adherence to the information in [the Point Victory] record" (138). As his narrative suggests, however, it was never McClintock's intention to rely on Inuit testimony for his information; his task was specifically to produce a British conclusion to Franklin's story, and the Point Victory Record allows him to do this. Once the record is discovered, McClintock determines to look no further, a circumstance not unnoticed by contemporary reviewers of his published narrative. As *Chambers's Journal* asked upon the publication of McClintock's book, "what became of [the remainder of Franklin's] party, upwards of a hundred in number? On this point, Captain McClintock offers no conjecture" (38). While his Inuit interlocutors tell him of small parties of men in a number of locations, and McClintock himself finds evidence of a fractured retreat to the mainland, the Point Victory Record's promise of a unified march to the Back River precludes his coming to a different conclusion. Indeed, it is not in McClintock's best interest to look further than the Point Victory Record, given that his other discoveries of physical evidence contradict it. As McClintock concludes, "Brief as these records are, we must needs be contented with them" (274). Though unable to supplement the paltry report with the further discovery of "record, journal, pocketbook, or memorandum of any description," McClintock and his men retract their figurative gangplank and make no more effort to meet with Inuits (262). A private letter to John Rae upon McClintock's return to Eng-

land encapsulates the precise nature of his narrative triumph: “you will see that I have managed my work to be independent of [Inuit] testimony altogether” (qtd. in McGoogan, 248).

Providing a British voice for Franklin’s final chapter is the first half of McClintock’s task; the second is his provision of a British body. McClintock fills the physical gap left in his narrative by a strategy of what Peter Sinnema terms “focal substitution,” offering himself and his men as visual and textual stand-ins for Franklin and his crews (197). The cannibalism allegations were effectively erased from the written text; those terrible scenes now needed to be replaced in people’s imaginations by images of British Arctic explorers intent on their noble tasks. The question frequently asked during the public search for Franklin was, “where is Franklin?” In providing allusive illustrations of his own crews engaged in the search for the missing expedition, McClintock gives the answer: “right where he should be.” Whereas, in Hill’s words, the published narratives of earlier searches for Franklin “peopled the Arctic with England’s dead and transformed the Arctic into a static, panoramic memorial to the British imperial endeavour,” McClintock’s book shows the north alive with industrious Britons, impressing upon the reader the currency, rather than the cost, of imperial exploration (114). McClintock’s text is studded with illustrations of his own men, performing the same functions that Franklin’s men would have performed, participating in the same activities, and covering the same ground. Indeed, no direct illustration of any part of the Franklin expedition exists in McClintock’s book. McClintock’s decision not to include illustrations of any Franklin expedition relics or “potential trauma” (e.g., depictions of skeletons, piles of food or clothing) is politically motivated: according to Sinnema, during the period there was no “aesthetic ordinance” against the visual representation of death in public illustration, and this certainly held true for the periodicals that covered McClintock’s return (197). Illustrations highly evocative of the tragedy were readily available in popular periodicals: still-lives of collected artifacts appeared in the *Illustrated London News*, while *Harper’s Weekly* illustrated its review of McClintock’s book with

a grisly picture of the text's most haunting discovery (the abandoned lifeboat containing two skeletons). But illustrating the remains of Franklin's party is counter to McClintock's project, which is to turn people's imaginations away from the tragedy, and to allow audiences to picture Franklin and his men as Britons doing their duty.

An aura of physical empowerment and activity dominates the illustrations in the *Voyage*, in noticeable contrast to the text, in which the skeletal and detrital remains of Franklin's men are described in detail. "McClintock in his boat sailing through Bellot Strait" (Figure 1) depicts a small rowboat pulling through a channel dominated by sharp cliffs, and is the text's most dramatic illustration, pitting men against nature: on both sides the jagged rocks rise uncompromisingly from the darkening waves, the sea is unsettled, and there is no discernable safe harbor for the tiny boat. Barbara Belyea (1990) provides an analysis of similar illustrations from Franklin's 1822 narrative (from his first overland expedition), in which rocks repeat "their jagged profiles to infinity, while clouds fill the upper half of the frame and oppress the small human figures of the foreground," claiming that a standard picturesque aesthetic is inadequate to represent the "claustrophobic immensity" of the north, and that as a result artists accompanying these expeditions used artistic conventions as an "ironic comment" on the impossibility of representing their experiences (18, 19). But while Belyea's argument may hold true for earlier expeditions, for McClintock no ironic comment intrudes: he uses those artistic conventions to reintegrate Arctic exploration within the realm of the culturally recognizable, implicitly validating his subject by the very conventionality of its depiction. In McClintock's illustration, the four tiny figures seated in the boat pull stalwartly at the oars while the helmsman stands at the stern, face turned toward the cliff as he navigates. The men are coordinated, organized, and calm, contrasting with the scattered flight of the seabirds above the cliff the men approach. The sinking sun illuminates the scene; the expedition's as well as the viewer's vision is clear to the vanishing point, no storm is on the horizon, and no shadow – textual or visual – falls over the party.



Figure 1: McClintock in his boat sailing through Bellot Strait

Erika Behrisch Elce, "McClintock's The Voyage of the 'Fox' "

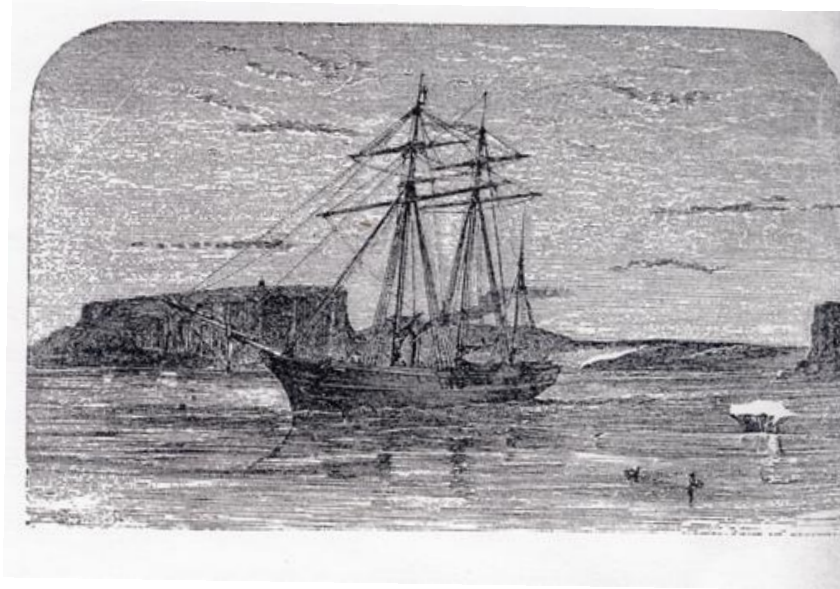


Figure 2: The "Fox" arriving at Beechey Island

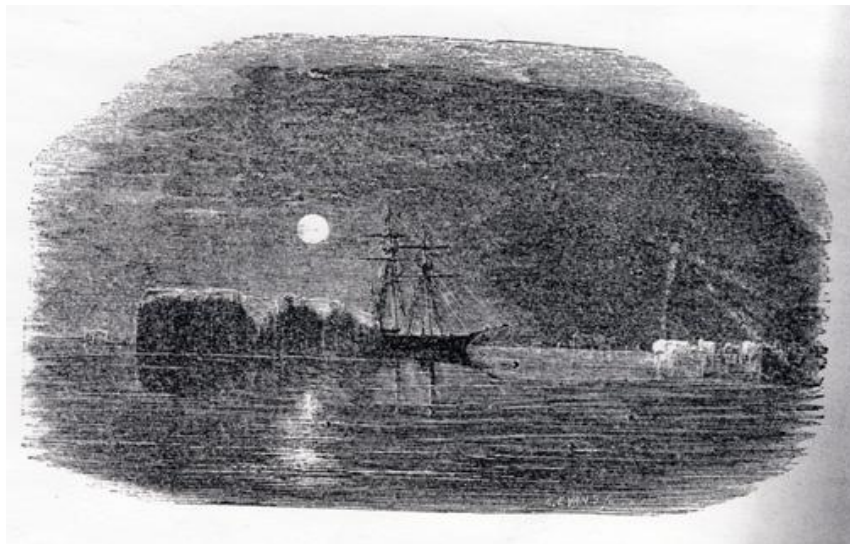


Figure 3: Moonlight in the Arctic regions

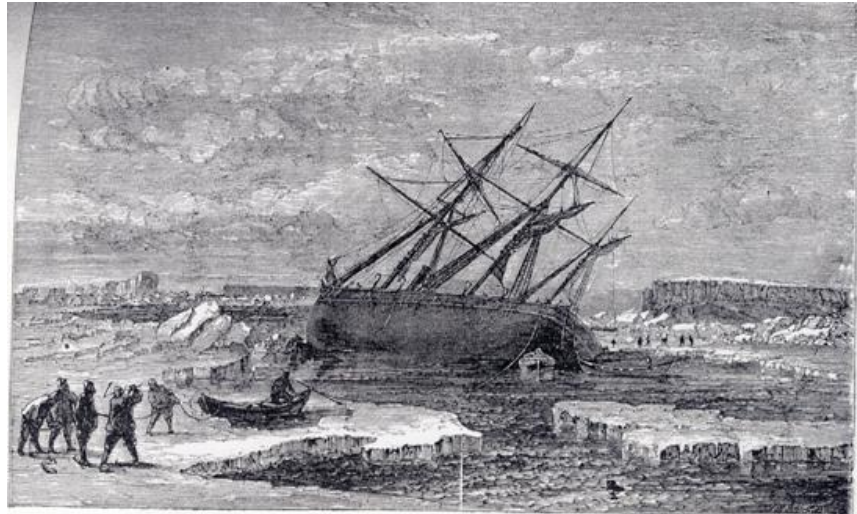


Figure 4: The “Fox” on a rock near Buchan Island

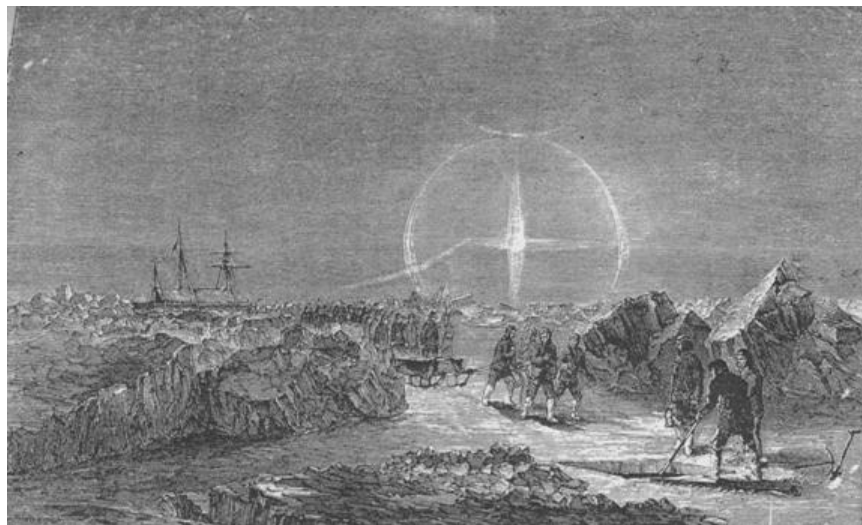


Figure 5: A Funeral on the ice – The effect of Paraselena – Mock Moons

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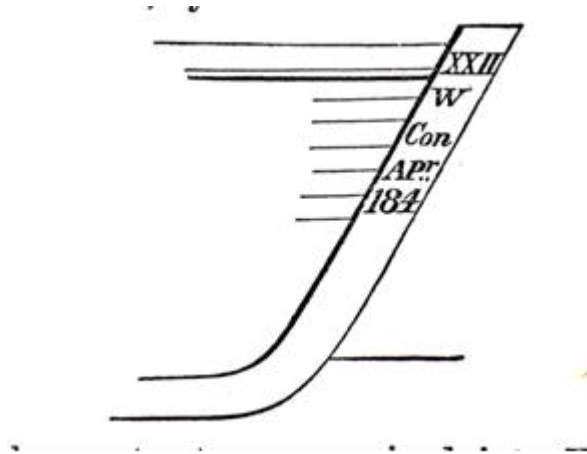


Figure 6: Stem of boat

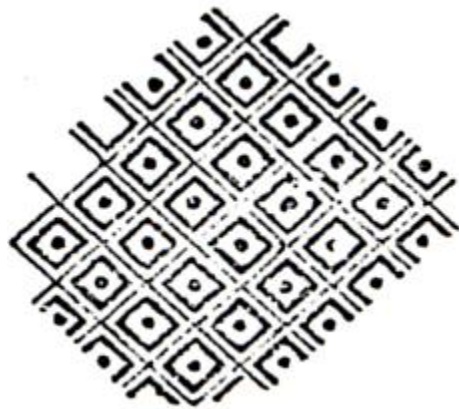


Figure 7: "a pair of worked slippers"



Figure 8: McClintock's travelling party discovering the remains of Cairn at Cape Herschel

This aesthetic optimism continues throughout the book's illustrations, which show, among other views, the *Fox* resting in calm and ice-free waters under clear skies (155, Figure 2); the *Fox*, again in calm waters, anchored to a small iceberg under a full moon and clear sky (217, Figure 3); and the *Fox* in full sail (again through clear waters) foregrounded by a family of curious walruses (295). Even at the scene of the single accident depicted in the book – "The Fox on a rock near Buchan Island" (117, Figure 4) – order prevails, as groups of men on either side of the ship haul on ropes to pull it back into the calm (albeit shallow) waters that surround it. These images of the ship, like the organized image of McClintock's men pulling at the oars, encourage confidence in the expedition: the ship is inviolable; the men inside are fine. This sense of self-containment is central to the successful visual replacement of Franklin by McClintock, as it shows British explorers travelling successfully through the Arctic. The crushed and abandoned *Erebus* and *Terror* disappear behind the perky illustrations of the *Fox*, and the "terrible shadow" of the Franklin expedition's destruction is brightened by the hardihood, competence, and resolute cheer of McClintock's crews (*Athenaeum* 24 September 1859, 398).

The allusive highpoint of the text's illustrations – the funeral scene of Robert Scott, a stoker who died after falling down a hatchway (69) – offers perhaps the most emotionally charged focal substitution for the lost Franklin crews, since it provides a concrete – and conventional – representation of death in the Arctic (Figure 5). A hole has been cut in the foreground ice to inter the body, which is in the process of being hauled ceremoniously by four men at the head of a procession of the ship's crew members. The paraselena (mock moons) refracted in the Arctic sky shed a melancholy light on the event, but the sky is clear and the scene ordered. The landscape, though rugged, does not dominate: the men are as tall as the ice they walk past, and the largest object in the scene remains the *Fox*, nestled in the background with its winter cover sheltering its decks, awaiting the men's return.

Indeed, though McClintock's narrative offers ample opportunity to represent visually the deaths of Franklin's men (he does, after all, find human remains), the text remains demure on the subject, providing nothing at all (in the case of a skeleton found on a headland [248]), or decontextualizing the images to the point of abstraction, as in the case of the skeletons found in the boat (261-71). The description of the boat scene takes ten pages of McClintock's narrative, listing as he does the innumerable objects he uncovers (from needle and thread cases to silk handkerchiefs). As McClintock narrates, "The boat was cleared out and carefully swept that nothing might escape us" (262). Articles in and around the boat – as well as the boat itself – are carefully catalogued, giving readers a minutely detailed verbal picture of the scene. The biography – as well as geography – of the boat is given in detail: as McClintock describes, through the still-visible markings he discerns that it "was built by contract, was received in Woolwich Dockyard in April, 184 ,⁷ and was numbered 61" (264). The ground the boat rests upon is described as "the usual limestone shingle, perfectly flat," and it is "partially out of [its] cradle" due to what McClintock surmises is a prevailing and "violent northwest gale" (264). There is "the stump of a fir-tree 12 feet long" that lies some yards from the boat, and McClintock takes time to note its diameter and rate of decomposition (264-65). This level of detail is in marked contrast to the "vast quantity of tattered clothing" that lies next to the boat, which receives only brief mention (262). The two sketches that accompany the text narrative are resolutely abstract: the disembodied stem of the boat itself, and the fabric pattern from "a pair of worked slippers" (264, 265, Figures 6 and 7). Far from offering the viewer a privileged perspective, as in the text's other illustrations, the decontextualized boat stem and fabric pattern obfuscate the scene because they interrupt the reader's imaginative visualization encouraged by the text.

Significantly, the only representative image that appears to include direct evidence of Franklin's expedition is actually a visual red herring: the darkened and diminutive lump on the horizon toward which McClintock's men bend their efforts in "McClintock's Travelling Party discovering the Remains of Cairn at Cape Herschel" (Figure 8) is the only illustration that

appears to offer concrete visual evidence that Franklin's fate remains the object of their search – McClintock and his men search all the cairns they find for written records – but the cairn in the illustration was built by Thomas Simpson in 1839, not by Franklin and his men.⁸

McClintock's narrative was deemed a success for "clearing up the mystery" of the Franklin expedition, as Roderick Murchison wrote to Benjamin Disraeli in 1860, but its greater triumph was effectively shutting down all further discussion on the subject. After reconstructing the Franklin saga as an exclusively British narrative, and ridding that narrative of the unsavory implication of cannibalism, there was little more to do than "close [the] very mournful tale," a task universally agreed upon by McClintock's numerous and complimentary reviewers (*Leisure Hour*, 22 December 1859, 815). In his efforts to "save the record" of Franklin's "faithful service," McClintock had convincingly overwritten the invidious rumour of cannibalism in an official capacity, and had provided an appropriate visual model on which the public could imagine the Franklin expedition's adventures (McClintock, 4). As visual as well as textual substitutes for Franklin and his crews, in *Voyage* McClintock and his men became themselves the members of the lost expedition, allowing Britons to see the missing sailors in their triumph, rather than in their defeat. McClintock's men came safely home with the aura of Franklin's men still about them, travelling as they did over the same ground. McClintock's audience had little hesitation in acknowledging the import of McClintock's expedition: as the *Leisure Hour* proclaimed on 22 December 1859, "As a tribute of respect to the dead, it has been crowned with complete success" (816). Press writers focused upon and augmented the image of Franklin and his crews that McClintock and his men modeled, setting confidently "at rest for ever all speculation on the subject" (*Fraser's Magazine*, February 1860, 221). *Voyage of the Fox* was not simply a tale of McClintock's own adventure, but was understood even on its original publication as an extended eulogy to the missing explorers, providing an appropriate – British – conclusion to a beloved national narrative.

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Notes

¹ The Victory Point Record indicates that Franklin died before the alleged cannibalism occurred: Franklin died in 1847 while the evidence of cannibalism found by Inuit hunters dated from 1850. The significance of this distinction was not lost on Franklin's advocates in England, though Franklin's widow, Lady Franklin, continued to worry about her late husband's reputation, his name being "too exclusively used as the representative of a corporate misfortune" (Lady Franklin to Admiralty, 24 February 1854, 113). See Behrisch Elce, *As affecting the fate of my absent husband*.

² Rae's report was printed in the *Times*, 23 October 1854, 7a. The report uses Rae's expression to describe cannibalism ("the last dread alternative") but inserts " – cannibalism – " into the text so audiences would be perfectly clear on what was meant.

³ A poem in *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, January 1854 (16), was one of the few texts to comment – if only implicitly – on the lack of information searchers had regarding Franklin's location. Though the poem admits to Britain's ignorance of Franklin's fate, it retains its cultural insularity, preferring to wait until the final apocalypse to discover Franklin's story than to rely on Inuit testimony: "The secret of their fate/ Shall, when the sea gives up its dead, be shewn,/ And God for judgment by his great White Throne/ The world shall congregate" (37-40).

⁴ Rae was in fact Scottish; Dickens's main point was that he was not Inuit.

⁵ McClintock was not the only writer to produce incomplete "verbatim" copies of Rae's report. Two anonymous hand-written copies of Rae's report exist in the Scott Polar Research Institute, both of which use ellipses to exclude that section. Only one copy acknowledges the amendment, claiming to be "a copy ... of the letter [Rae] wrote – omitting only a few minor descriptions" (MS 248/459/1, 2).

⁶ Owen Beattie and John Geiger's book *Frozen in Time* (1987) discusses the evidence of cannibalism, as well as of lead poisoning, among the remains of Franklin's men. A forensic scientist, Beattie did tests on bones he discovered and noted a number of regular striations, which he concluded to be human-made cut marks. David Woodman (1991) has also compiled testimony

by nineteenth-century Inuit people on the subject of the Franklin expedition's cannibalism. See *Frozen in Time* and *Unravelling the Franklin Mystery*.

⁷ McClintock intentionally leaves a gap in his transcription of the boat's information to indicate a partial date, explaining that the final digit is missing because "the stem had been reduced in order to lighten the boat" (264).

⁸ Though the cairn itself was not built by Franklin's men, physical evidence of them at that location would have been incontrovertible proof of the Franklin Expedition's discovery of a Passage.

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