

Interesting and Pathetic Relics:
The Franklin Expedition and British Museums

By
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To 129 sailor souls voyaging toward no earthly pole.

Hope on, hope ever.

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ABSTRACT

In 1845, a 129-man crew headed by Sir John Franklin disappeared in the Canadian Arctic while trying to discover and claim the Northwest Passage for Britain. In the aftermath of the Expedition's disappearance and the recovery of its remnants by rescue parties, British communities reeling from the loss of so many men erected memorials and displayed "Franklin relics" in museums and at exhibitions. Today, museums' interpretation of the lost Expedition, including the shipwrecks of its two vessels, is vastly enriched by the participation of the Inuit, whose oral histories about their encounters with Franklin's men have taught us much of what we know today about the explorers' fates. In this thesis, I discuss the Franklin Expedition and its interpretation in British museums, both historically and in the present, as well as the role of Inuit and indigenous epistemology in modern interpretation of the Franklin Expedition. This thesis was written during the COVID-19 pandemic, but I successfully completed it thanks to the abundance of resources online and the generosity of scholars willing to share their time and knowledge with me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Chapter One.....	11
Chapter Two.....	43
Chapter Three.....	71
Bibliography.....	95

INTRODUCTION

1845 was to be the year Sir John Franklin at last left his impactful mark on the annals of British history, the year he finally traversed the fabled Northwest Passage which had been so covetously sought by scores of explorers who had flung themselves against the Arctic ice before him. Under the auspices of Sir John Barrow, the Admiralty's indefatigable Second Secretary who commissioned countless expeditions in the Arctic and Africa, Franklin and 134 crewmen sailed from Greenhithe on May 19, 1845 with great celebration and fanfare. His ships, *Erebus* and *Terror*, were polar veterans and so was Franklin. His specially-equipped vessels were virtually spaceships of their day and his crew were a blend of experienced officers and rising stars of the Royal Navy. When whalers last sighted the ships in Baffin Bay in June of 1845, sailing for the polar ice of northern Canada, Franklin and his crew were plunging into an historical disaster so devastating that pieces of the atomized expedition still lie strewn across the scree of King William Island, Nunavut, today.

The story of the Franklin Expedition is a tale of entrapment, of ships frozen three years in ice and desperate crewmen tracking a tidal wave of death across a lonely Canadian island. It is a tale of memory and the enduring power of Inuit epistemology. It is a tale of the hubris and folly of empire. And because of the final resting place of the lost ships and their crews, it is a tale of two nations, Britain and Canada, and the Franklin story they share—or, perhaps, two peoples, Europeans and Inuit. The relationship between these two groups and their shared custody of the Franklin Expedition is complex and has deep roots in colonialism, and as such, scholars have historically interpreted the

Expedition through a colonial lens. The woeful underuse of Inuit oral histories in the interpretation of the Expedition is a furthering of the disastrous consequences of the Franklin debacle. How, then, do we assess the way the Franklin Expedition is presented to the public today? To begin with, I will establish how the Franklin Expedition has been studied in the past outside of the walls of a museum.

The history of research into the Franklin Expedition is rooted in archaeology. Because of the lack of documents left behind by Franklin's men, material culture has become one of the key pieces to solving the Franklin puzzle. The 1970s and 1980s were a formative period in Franklin archaeology, one that helped begin the creation of a fuller Franklin story. In 1976, Dr. Patricia Sutherland headed a survey of Franklin-related sites for the Arctic Salvage Project.¹ At eleven sites, archaeologists unearthed artifacts including clay pipes common in the 1840s, suggesting a Franklinite presence, but a lack of material evidence and a history of looting at some of the survey sites limited the information archaeologists could glean.²

In the 1980s, more compelling clues about the Expedition's fate emerged during an investigation of the burials of three Franklin crewmen at Beechey Island overseen by Canadian anthropologist Owen Beattie. The complexity of the process Beattie's team underwent to access the naturally-mummified sailors is perhaps a demonstration of the measures put in place to protect Franklin history. Numerous bureaucratic offices, including Inuit government branches, had to sign off on the dig before it began. The team

¹ Patricia Sutherland, "Introduction," in *The Franklin Era in Canadian Arctic History, 1845-1859*, ed. Patricia Sutherland (Canada: University of Ottawa Press, 1985): v

² C.F. Richie, "Nineteenth-Century Clay Tobacco-Pipes from the High Arctic." *Canadian Journal of Archaeology* 2 (1978): 123, 134

had to take considerations for the safety of the remains; the safety of the archaeologists being exposed to preserved corpses from the 19th century, which might expose the researchers to disease; and the consent of living relatives of the mummies before Beattie's research commenced³. A soil testing laboratory in Alberta produced evidence from chemical analysis which suggested that the levels of lead in the bodies of Franklin's crewmen--including the earliest casualties of the Expedition, three men buried at Beechey Island in 1846--were astronomically high compared to the lead levels in the bones of Inuit individuals buried nearby. These high lead levels in the explorers' bodies led to the development of a theory that lead poisoning may have contributed to the demise of Franklin's men.⁴ In 2018, a team of anthropologists disproved the lead poisoning theory, concluding that the lead levels in the bodies of Franklin's men were no higher than those in contemporary burials of sailors in a Royal Navy cemetery in Antigua, and did not demonstrate the drastic uptick in lead consumption in the years before their deaths which would indicate that they had died from lead poisoning. Rather, the prevalence of lead in 19th century Britain and the likelihood of environmental or workplace exposure suggested that the level of lead in Franklinites' bones was high, but not exceptionally so, and lead poisoning did not have a "pivotal" role in the loss of the Expedition crew.⁵

³ Owen Beattie and John Geiger, *Frozen in Time: The Fate of the Franklin Expedition* (Greystone Books, 2014): 146-147

⁴ Beattie and Geiger 13, 140-141

⁵ Swanston T, Varney TL, Kozachuk M, Choudhury S, Bewer B, et al., "Franklin expedition lead exposure: New insights from high resolution confocal x-ray fluorescence imaging of skeletal microstructure," (2018) *PLOS ONE* 13(8): e0202983. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0202983> 5, 17

The incorporation of biomedical and bioarchaeological research into the study of the Franklin Expedition, utilizing technologically advanced processes like synchrotron radiation X-ray fluorescence imaging--which uses fluorescent emission lines to detect traces of chemicals like lead in the material being assessed--bring the valuable research methods of scientific analysis to the table, allowing us to study the material remains of the Franklin Expedition in new ways. This study, conducted by researchers including bioarchaeologist Dr. Treena Swanston and Dr. David Cooper, who utilized synchrotron imaging technology University of Saskatchewan's Cooper Lab to analyze the Franklinites' bones, is illustrative of the boon that can come from exploring different research processes, from archaeology to oral history to the latest imaging technology to chemical analyses.

Out in the field, Dr. Douglas Stenton's research into various Franklin sites as recently as the 2010s has also yielded archaeological information about the Franklin Expedition's movements on King William Island. Stenton utilized Inuit oral histories and the accounts of Franklin searchers as resources and points of comparison with archaeological finds. While documents produced by Franklin's men are incredibly scarce, the observations of searchers like McClintock, Schwatka and Hall are accessible to archaeologists, meaning researchers like Stenton can compare what searchers saw in the 1850s with what remains on King William Island today.⁶ It should be said, however, that

⁶ Douglas R. Stenton and Robert W. Park. "History, Oral History and Archaeology: Reinterpreting the 'Boat Places' of Erebus Bay." *Arctic* 70, no. 2 (2017): 203–18. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26379762>. 215-216

while the records they left might be contextually useful when approaching Franklin sites, the activities of nineteenth-century searchers create unique challenges for archaeologists.

As James Deetz explained with the example of household inventories, historical texts are useful, but their obtuse language can make the interpretation of historical objects (or in this case, sites) more difficult⁷--or, as in the case of some Franklin sites, searchers were clear about where they found certain sites or objects, but the elapsing of time or the activity of salvaging Inuit contradicted the written reports.⁸ Searchers sometimes took artifacts they found as trophies of their quest. Uninterested in the importance of leaving artifacts of a contemporary disaster *in situ*, Franklin searchers disturbed or removed whatever fragmentary human remains or “relics” they found and buried more complete bodies they found in “proper” graves.⁹ For example, a “bone assemblage” Stenton discovered buried under a dismantled stone structure seemed to match descriptions of Franklin crewmen that searcher Frederick Schwatka buried under a cairn in 1879. In his study of the bone assemblage, Stenton worked his way back from 1879 to earlier search expeditions in the 1850s in an attempt to determine whether the buried remains were human bodies previously noted by earlier search parties.

Without documents from Franklin’s men to aid them, archaeologists studying Franklin sites must rely on searchers’ records, Inuit oral histories, and the condition of the

⁷ James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten: An Archaeology of Early American Life* (United Kingdom: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2010): 15

⁸ Douglas R. Stenton, Anne Keenleyside, and Robert W. Park. “The ‘Boat Place’ Burial: New Skeletal Evidence from the 1845 Franklin Expedition.” *Arctic* 68, no. 1 (2015): 33 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24363886>.

⁹ Anthony Brandt, *The Man Who Ate His Boots: The Tragic History of the Search for the Northwest Passage* (United States: Anchor Books, 2011): 373-380

artifacts themselves to learn more about what happened to Franklin's men following the abandonment of their ships--in the case of the bones buried in 1879, cut marks on the bones lent credence to 19th century reports of survival cannibalism among the crew.¹⁰ Although documents are helpful, scientific processes like the synchrotron imaging described above yield information historic documents could not necessarily indicate. Research published by Stenton and colleague Dr. Anne Keenleyside in 2015 suggested that DNA could be used to identify crewmen's remains, as much older bodies had yielded viable DNA for analysis before.¹¹ In May 2021, that hunch was proven correct when it was announced that DNA from a crewman's descendant had been used to identify John Gregory, an engineer on *Erebus*.¹²

The valuable information that we can gather from archaeological studies of the Franklin Expedition feeds directly into the way museums interpret it. As art historian Jules Prown argues, the study of material culture--the objects and landscapes created by humans--can offer information on the patterns and details of daily existence in the past, as well as beliefs within communities and societies.¹³ The objects collected from

¹⁰ Stenton et. al. 41-43

¹¹Russell A. Potter, "EPILOGUE: Last Man Searching." In *Finding Franklin: The Untold Story of a 165-Year Search*, 215–20. McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1d98910.19>. 216

¹² Livia Gershon, "Descendant's DNA Helps Identify Remains of Doomed Franklin Expedition Engineer." *Smithsonian Magazine*, May 7, 2021. Accessed September 23, 2021.

¹³ Jules D. Prown, "Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method." *Winterthur Portfolio* 17, no. 1 (1982): 1–19. Janice Cavell, "Lady Lucy Barry and Evangelical Reading on the First Franklin Expedition." *Arctic* 63, no. 2 (2010): 131-40. Accessed July 4, 2021.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/27821958>.<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1180761>. 1-2, 6

archaeological sites at King William Island--which will be more fully described in Chapter 1--help to create a social history of the Franklin Expedition. Franklin's men left few records, but they did leave objects and altered places which can be used to understand their lives after the abandonment of their ships in 1848. Pieces of shot tied into the finger of a leather glove show one man's solution for keeping up with his ammunition; goggles made from leather and wire mesh show the ingenuity and craftsmanship of crewmen working to protect themselves from snow blindness.¹⁴ These utilitarian objects, while not aesthetically pleasing, are illustrative, and this illustrative power inherent in objects has been cited by anthropologists like James Deetz, who first published his influential book on material culture, *In Small Things Forgotten*, in 1977.¹⁵

Much of the analysis in the following chapters will reference the importance of shared authority and the decolonization of museum spaces. Inuit history, especially where it intersects with European history, has often been interpreted from a European point of view, stripping the objects that are displayed of important cultural context. As argued by Amy Lonetree,

Objects in museums are living entities. They embody layers of meaning, and they are deeply connected to the past, present, and future of Indigenous communities. Every engagement with objects in museum cases or in collection rooms should begin with this core recognition. We are not just looking at interesting pieces. In the presence of objects from the past, we are privileged to stand as witnesses to living entities that remain intimately and inextricably tied to their descendant communities.¹⁶

¹⁴ *Official catalogue & guide: opened Chelsea, May 2nd, 1891* (London: W.P. Griffith and Sons, 1895): 2-4

¹⁵ Deetz 8

¹⁶ Amy Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums* (United States: University of North Carolina Press, 2012): xv

The importance of representing historical events from the perspective of indigenous peoples is an issue that arises when approaching the subject of the Franklin Expedition, but it also impacts the practices of museums more broadly. The decolonization movement is relatively new and is still evolving, but it has manifested in various ways, from museums recognizing the colonial origins of their pasts to inviting indigenous artists to display their works at museums to creating strategic plans to rework the institutions as a whole. The importance of the language utilized in museums is also a point of change in the decolonization movement--as will be examined in Chapter 2, the use of colonizers' language versus Inuit accounts is an example of the beginnings of decolonization within the Franklin story.¹⁷

In the analysis that follows, I will discuss three facets of the interpretation of the Franklin Expedition in British museums. The first chapter will focus on early interpretation of the Expedition in nineteenth century Britain. As a tragedy with a scope the British public took years to fully comprehend, the Franklin Expedition was initially interpreted as a maritime disaster, and early interpretation of it often focused on the memorialization of its dead, particularly the officers. In the second chapter, I will examine the interpretation of the Franklin Expedition in the 21st century, including discussion of recent exhibitions such as *Death in the Ice*, a 2018 traveling exhibition which was the product of a collaboration between the Canadian Museum of History and the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich. Additionally, the second chapter will

¹⁷ Elisa Shoenburger, "What does it mean to decolonize a museum?" *MuseumNext*, May 11, 2011. Accessed October 14, 2021. <https://www.museumnext.com/article/what-does-it-mean-to-decolonize-a-museum/>

feature discussion of the different ways in which the Franklin Expedition can be interpreted going forward, including the reincorporation of 19th century educational tools like panoramas into the suite of interpretive tools museum staff have at their disposal.

Although Britain and its museums will be the main focus--as Franklin was a British explorer and many of the relics of his Expedition were returned to Britain by searchers--since the remains of the Expedition lie in Canada, and the British government gifted Franklin's ships to Canada in the 2010s, Canadian museums and the Inuit figure essentially into the narrative of interpretation.¹⁸ The third chapter will feature a discussion of the Inuit role in the search for Franklin, their continued role in the interpretation of the Franklin Expedition, and their relationship with museums and other public history sites. Understanding how to decolonize the way we interpret the Inuit place in Franklin's saga is an incredibly important goal for Franklin interpretation going forward--the Franklin Expedition has never been a solely British story, and sharing authority with Inuit to create a more comprehensive and diverse Franklin story can only benefit the public.

Why should we study the Franklin Expedition? To that, I answer that the Franklin Expedition is an illuminating look into the reach of colonialism and the lengths to which the British Empire was willing to go to dominate trade in Asia. As remote as it is, I did not conceptualize the Arctic as a site of colonialism until I began to study polar exploration; now it is clear that the Arctic, just like India or Australia, was a place where

¹⁸ Parks Canada, "Parks Canada announces contract to Know History for Franklin Expedition Inuit Oral History Project." Parks Canada, June 13, 2018. <https://www.canada.ca/en/parks-canada/news/2018/06/parks-canada-announces-contract-to-know-history-for-franklin-expedition-inuit-oral-history-project.html>

imperialism and capitalism drove Britons into the homelands of other people for the sake of wealth and imperial power. The hazardous sea route to Asia that Franklin died trying to find was a quest pursued purely because of the greed and ambition of individuals willing to sacrifice countless sailors and officers to exploit Asia.

When we discuss the commemoration of the Franklin Expedition as a maritime tragedy, we can see an early example of the way Victorian Britain lionized its colonizing figures. John Franklin, as a pious, married, career sea captain, was an ideal man to turn into a symbol that valorized the heroic Briton, despite the fact that it took his death, and the death of 128 others, to render him a symbol. In the 19th century, Franklin served as a sort of icon; today, he serves a different purpose. Through studying Franklin's lost expedition, we can explore the erasure of marginalized groups--in this case, the working-class sailors who went un-commemorated by the British public and the Inuit whose contributions to our knowledge about Franklin's fate went unappreciated for over a hundred years.

Franklin's story is in no way solely about Sir John Franklin and his officers; indeed, many of the victims of the Franklin Expedition were working-class sailors, but their lives were not commemorated and valorized the way the upper-class officers' lives were. The historic narrative that focuses on the elite dead of the Expedition no longer suffices--in the discussion that follows, I will explore the ways in which the narrative of the Franklin Expedition has shifted focus from a commemoration of heroic Christian elites to a more fulsome picture that incorporates indigenous and working class narratives--and ways in which there is still room to improve.

CHAPTER ONE: THE FRANKLIN EXPEDITION AND BRITISH MUSEUMS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The earliest interpreters of the Franklin Expedition were not necessarily scholars who studied maritime history or polar exploration, but rather family members, friends and colleagues who wanted to honor the memory of loved ones lost in the Canadian Arctic. This desire to commemorate the fallen led to the creation of myriad artistic works, including plays, panoramas, and even sea shanties like “Lady Franklin’s Lament.” However, bereaved family members like Lady Jane Franklin wanted a more concrete memorialization of their dead than the ephemeral memorial of a song. Left at home by their pioneers, the emotions Victorian Britons so powerfully felt and expressed, described by Joanna Lewis as “a language of patriotism, masculinity and duty,” found a powerful outlet when the men who represented these tenets perished in service of the Crown.¹⁹ The monuments created in honor of the Franklin Expedition offer insights into the early days of Franklin interpretation and its transition from a shocking maritime tragedy grieved by the public to an historic event interpreted in museums.

One of the earliest monuments to the lost Franklinites is Sir Richard Westmacott’s large memorial at the Old Royal Naval College Chapel, originally erected in the Painted Hall in 1858. This striking memorial features a large tablet which lists the names of the expedition’s officers, flanked by two three-dimensional figures of an officer and an exhausted crewman. In the background, towering walls of ice enclose the masts of

¹⁹ Joanna Lewis, *Empire of Sentiment: The Death of Livingstone and the Myth of Victorian Imperialism* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2018): 1

Franklin's ships, generating a claustrophobic image of glacial entrapment. Despite the striking, icy imagery and elegant poses of the figures, Lady Jane was dissatisfied with this particular memorial because the Admiralty intended it as a sort of capstone for the Franklin search, a pursuit Lady Jane was unwilling to give up at that juncture.²⁰ At the same time, far away from England but still placed at Lady Jane's behest, Franklin searchers erected a simple cenotaph on Beechey Island to commemorate the quest for the lost explorers not far away from the graves of the earliest Expedition fatalities.²¹

As a sort of self-appointed lead interpreter of John Franklin's legacy, Lady Jane Franklin asserted considerable control over how her husband was memorialized. To this steadfast "spokeswidow," the heroism of her husband and his status as a Christian, British sea captain were the most important facets of his life to memorialize. This image of Franklin was literally set in stone. The deadly failure of the expedition mattered little in the face of mourning and memorialization. Lady Jane utilized personal connections with powerful men in the Admiralty and prestigious scientific societies to ensure that her husband and his men were memorialized in Britain and abroad in monuments crafted by respected sculptors of the day, such as Richard Westmacott.²²

Unwilling to be dissatisfied with another memorial, Lady Jane participated in the commissioning of a monument to Franklin in his hometown of Spilsby, Lincolnshire in

²⁰ Huw Lewis Jones, "'Nelsons of Discovery': Notes on the Franklin Monument in Greenwich." https://w3.ric.edu/faculty/rpotter/temp/HLJ_Franklin_Monument.pdf

²¹ *The Nautical Magazine and Naval Chronicle... a Journal of Papers on Subjects Connected with Maritime Affairs* (United Kingdom: Simpkin, Marshall & Company, 1859): 66

²² Barbara Tomlinson, *Commemorating the Seafarer: Monuments, Memorials and Memory* (United Kingdom: Boydell Press, 2015): 195-198

1861. Before he sailed for the Arctic, Franklin had spent several years as the beleaguered Lieutenant Governor of Tasmania; in his former stomping ground of Hobart, the Tasmanian Legislature approved the construction of a statue of Sir John, also erected in 1861.²³ Both the Beechey Island cenotaph and the statue in Tasmania stand not only as memorials to Franklin, but also reminders of his role in British colonialism and the breadth of the British Empire's power in the 19th century.²⁴ Lady Jane also attended the unveiling of an eight-foot tall statue of Sir John on November 15, 1866 in Trafalgar Square. The monument, a likeness of Franklin atop a granite pedestal sculpted by Matthew Noble, was decorated with commemorative plaques engraved with maps of the Arctic, Captain Francis Crozier delivering the funeral service for Sir John surrounded by officers, and the names of the crew.²⁵

Over twenty years after the Franklin Expedition sailed from Greenhithe, the debut of this memorial stirred up strong emotions in certain members of the British public. In a letter submitted to the Editor of the *Morning Herald* a month before the unveiling ceremony, Frederick Robertson, then coxswain of HMS *Terrible*, wrote that allowing veterans of the Franklin searches to participate in the unveiling ceremony would be “a source of gratification to them,” as well as being

of service to the young by encouraging them to emulate those deeds of enterprise and courage on the part of their countrymen which have gone so far and uphold the present high position of Great Britain among the leading nations of the world.

²³ Dr. Michael Robinson, e-mail correspondence with author, July 6, 2021.

²⁴ Lewis Jones 84-86

²⁵ “UNVEILING OF THE FRANKLIN MEMORIAL,” *Morning Herald* (London), October 6, 1866.

Robertson, who had served on HMS *Investigator* under Robert McClure on one of the early searches for Franklin, evidently felt that the ceremony should honor not just Franklin, but the intrepid men who scoured the Arctic for him after his disappearance.²⁶ Robertson was probably satisfied to know that aside from admirals, noblemen and members of parliament, a number of “stout, hearty-looking seamen, wearing the Arctic Medal” for their service in the search for Franklin were also present for the ceremony.

In the hallowed halls of Westminster Abbey, a marble monument to John Franklin was completed in 1875. A bust of Sir John gazes serenely from an intricate marble niche carved with epitaphs by Tennyson and scenes of ships beset in ice. It serves as a commemoration not just of Franklin, but of his widow, Lady Jane, who commissioned the memorial and died the year of its completion.²⁷ It was one of the last Franklin monuments to be erected, and so serves as something of a capstone for Britain’s John Franklin shrine.

Although he has multiple statues, Sir John is not the only one with an imposing monument. With a grandeur that rivals Sir John’s memorials is a monument to Franklin’s adjutant, Captain Francis Crozier of HMS *Terror*, whose hometown of Banbridge, Northern Ireland boasts a massive statue of their lost son. Crozier’s authoritative figure stands loftily atop a plinth, flanked by snarling polar bears.²⁸ Townsfolk erected the

²⁶ Frederick Robertson, “MONUMENT TO SIR JOHN FRANKLIN. TO THE EDITOR.” *Morning Herald* (London), October 6, 1866.

²⁷ Westminster Abbey, “John Franklin,” 2021. Accessed July 6, 2021.

<https://www.westminster-abbey.org/abbey-commemorations/commemorations/sir-john-franklin>

²⁸ Jeremy Williams. *A companion guide to architecture in Ireland, 1837-1921*. Ireland: Irish Academic Press, 1994. 101

monument through public funding; Crozier's grieving sisters also commissioned a wall tablet and placed it in Seapatrik Church.²⁹ No individual monument stands for Commander James Fitzjames of HMS *Erebus*, a burgeoning celebrity of the Royal Navy whose growing fame was cut short by his early death.

Across the British Isles, smaller, subtler memorials in churches and graveyards commemorate the officers and sailors who vanished alongside Franklin, dotting parishes in Scotland, England and Ireland in the hometowns of the lost men. A marble monument in Melrose, Scotland commemorates Lieutenant James Walter Fairholme³⁰; not far away in Edinburgh, a Celtic cross memorializing Lieutenant John Irving is engraved with images of his mathematics medal, which was recovered in the Arctic. Englishman Frederick Hornby is remembered on a wall tablet in St. Mary's Church in Bury, Lancashire.³¹ These local monuments offer a poignant summation of the early years of many communities' relationship with the Franklin Expedition and the way its devastating failure affected not only families, but entire communities.³²

Community members rallied together to fund fitting memorials for the Franklinites. In 1856, residents of Spilsby gathered at a town hall meeting where the Reverend T. H. Rawnsley, a friend of Franklin's since his youth, proposed a resolution to

²⁹ Tomlinson 195-198

³⁰ "Edinburghshire & Borders branch," Fairholm & Fairholme Family Trees Worldwide. Accessed September 30, 2021. <http://www.fairholmfamilytrees.info/Pages%20-%20scottish/Edinborders.html>

³¹ Royal Museums Greenwich, "Memorial: M1716," "Memorial: M552," Maritime Memorials. Accessed July 9, 2021.

³² Garth Walpole, *Relics of the Franklin Expedition: Discovering Artifacts from the Doomed Arctic Voyage of 1845* (United States: McFarland, Incorporated, Publishers, 2017): 158

establish a committee in cooperation with the Mayor of Lincoln and gather funds to erect a monument to “the late illustrious navigator.” According to the *Kentish Mercury*, “the resolution was unanimously agreed to.” Rawnsley’s motivation, as a clergyman who had a friendly relationship with Franklin, was to commemorate an individual he saw not only as heroic, but as pious--a theme in the commemoration of Franklin’s life that was present throughout the 19th century.³³

A similar town hall meeting convened in Banbridge, Northern Ireland, in 1859 “for the purpose of taking measures to erect a suitable monument to the memory of their gallant townsman, Captain F.R.M. Crozier, R.N.” John T. Reilly, ESQ D.L. took the stand at this meeting; like Rawnsley, Reilly had a personal relationship with Crozier, and also commended him as “a truly Christian-minded man.” Crozier’s monument also had uniquely Irish inspiration--Reilly was personally offended to hear a lecturer state that Crozier was from Devonshire. In protest, Reilly “claimed Crozier as our own.” The memorial had a dual purpose of showing Banbridge’s pride in Crozier as a Christian and as an Irishman. The cause was taken up by local noblemen including the Marquis of Downshire, the Marquis of Londonderry and the Earl of Annesley, who helped finance the monument.³⁴

Monuments created for these fallen sailors were meant to commemorate and educate the public very specifically about the importance of the lost men; they were symbols of mourning to draw the public’s attention to the family’s loss and the presumed

³³ “THE LATE SIR JOHN FRANKLIN,” *The Kentish Mercury*, October 11, 1856.

³⁴ “MONUMENT TO THE LATE CAPTAIN FRANCIS R.M. CROZIER, R.N.,” *The Belfast News-Letter*, October 14, 1859.

heroism of the deceased. The Franklin Expedition was a calamity of historical proportions for nineteenth century Britain, and the way in which it was exhibited to the public was as a large-scale maritime disaster; a tragic mass fatality. The Expedition's failure offered lessons, certainly, but contemporarily these lessons coincided with enormous suffering and widespread grief.

A memorial is not a museum exhibit *per se*, but it *is* designed to convey historic information to its viewer, and it *can* offer us a view into what information its creators thought important to communicate to the public, namely the heroism of Franklin's men and the perilous conditions they faced. By analyzing what Victorians deemed important to convey in these monuments, we can see what was important to families, local communities and even governments to preserve for posterity. As argued by Scott R. Stroud and Jonathan A. Henson, memorials serve as a form of cultural remembrance of individuals deemed worthy of remembering, but *who* chooses which individuals are worthy of remembrance and *what* values proliferate through the memorials is complicated. Memorials serve the purpose of reconstructing experiences for future observers. They recreate the meaning behind the memorials whenever they are viewed.³⁵

Ostensibly memorials are windows into historical events, but Stroud and Henson unpack the idea that "history" is a flawed reflection of memory and lived experience. Therefore, representations of historical events, as distillations or alterations of the memories of many people, are fields in which memory and historical representation are at

³⁵Scott R. Stroud and Jonathan A. Henson. "Memory, Reconstruction, and Ethics in Memorialization." *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 33, no. 2 (2019): 282–99. <https://doi.org/10.5325/jspecphil.33.2.0282>. 282-283

odds, yet intertwined. That is to say that the conflicted nature of a memorial lies in the fact that it is proffering information about a historical event that cannot possibly incorporate all the individual memories and experiences of those involved, and what it conveys will erase the narratives it does not incorporate.

As Stroud and Henson argue, there is a space between actual past events and the way the memory of those events is portrayed, and in that space people make ethical choices about how they choose to represent the past based on what they want to valorize in the present.³⁶ John Franklin's prior polar expeditions ended in failure and his final journey was a complete loss, but in the late 19th century, was his previous failure more important than memorializing the loss of a powerful white man in a more powerful white north? In an age of empire, could even a tragic failure like Franklin fit the archetype of the British hero, the champion of empire? Monuments dedicated to Franklin were more than a memorial to a lost husband; while those erected under Lady Jane's guidance may have been, government-funded memorials were a tool which, beneath their surface, reflected the ethical choice made by the British government to memorialize an agent of empire despite his failure in order to demonstrate the high-stakes importance of British conquest in the Arctic. Memorials erected by his community in Spilsby, spearheaded by clergymen, served as a memorial for a role model of piety. Each party had a different motivation for erecting memorials to Franklin, but they were unanimous in their desire to render Franklin a symbol: of marriage, of leadership, of piety, of courage.

³⁶ Stroud and Henson 285-286

Similar ethical choices about power and status are reflected in memorials to Franklin's subordinates. Franklin Expedition memorials commemorate leaders and officers, which on the surface indicates a family's love for their lost son but also emphasizes the affluent, upper-class background from which many of the officers came--families that had enough money to turn their lost sons into permanent monuments on the British landscape, whereas the working-class crewmen's lives and presence in their homeland lacks these material hallmarks. Official decrees to construct monuments by the Tasmanian Legislature or British Parliament did not trickle down to working-class Franklinites. Monuments bearing imagery of ice or discussing the heroism of the lost men may on the surface be commemorating the bravery of a lost explorer, but they also reinforce the idea that exploring the Arctic *was* heroic and necessary and not a needless waste of human life driven by the wheels of imperialism and the greedy desire to dominate trade in Asia.

Therefore, if the public memory of this event was the amalgamation of the individual memories and experiences distilled in these monuments, and the monuments were representative of certain ideals or values that were crystallized in stone, their endurance would help to justify the British presence in the Arctic for subsequent Britons viewing the monument. The idolization of these fallen Arctic explorers would perhaps motivate viewers to then support further British incursions into the Arctic or, in later years, the Antarctic. The stately stone memorials dedicated to the Franklin Expedition tacitly communicated that although it was perilous and high stakes, polar exploration was heroism, not folly.

In most depictions of Franklin, he stands confidently in uniform, striding out towards the viewer from atop his pedestal. The Spilsby monument features Franklin resting his hand casually on the head of an anchor³⁷; the Hobart monument portrays a similarly confident Franklin in a greatcoat, standing in the midst of Franklin Square.³⁸ For a man who perished from an unknown cause several winters into a failed expedition, Sir John is portrayed as confident, competent and noble. Westmacott's monument features the image of a weary, aggrieved explorer, providing contrast to the pointed "in-controlness" of other monuments, but the suffering figure is juxtaposed with the heroic image of an officer surveying a map, reinforcing the image of confidence in the face of Arctic peril.³⁹

These powerful public symbols of mourning were designed to color the way British people understood the expedition and its outcome--and *who* it was important to remember from these journeys. In a way, this is one continuation of the debacle of the Franklin Expedition--by memorializing upper-class officers and not working-class sailors, the working-class narrative of the Expedition was erased, meaning the vast majority of individuals who comprised the 129-man crew went unrepresented in memorialization efforts. Meanwhile, the veritable canonization of Franklin as an Arctic hero rather than an unwitting cog broken in the wheels of larger imperial machinery

³⁷ "Statue to Sir John Franklin, High Street, Spilsby, Lincolnshire," Historic England. Accessed August 19, 2021. <https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/education/educational-images/statue-to-sir-john-franklin-high-street-spilsby-8977>

³⁸ "Sir John Franklin," Monuments Australia, 2021. Accessed August 19, 2021. <https://monumentaaustralia.org.au/themes/people/government---colonial/display/70409-sir-john-franklin>

³⁹ Lewis-Jones 78

covered for the Admiralty's irresponsible pursuit of a northerly sea route that would be impossible to traverse until Roald Amundsen traversed it over several years between 1903 to 1906.⁴⁰

Commemoration may have been a form of public mourning for lost mariners, but it portrayed the Franklin Expedition as a tragedy, rather than the avoidable result of colonial recklessness and the destructive Arctic obsession of Sir John Barrow, the exploration-obsessed Second Secretary of the Admiralty. This is not to say, naturally, that the commemoration of tragic losses forestalled Britons from looking upon the Expedition's dissolution with questioning eyes. As Shane McCorristine asserts, the British press was loudly critical of the perceived incompetence of some polar explorers, and Franklin's demise shook the British public's faith in the capability and even the necessity of Arctic explorers.⁴¹ In 1856, as the Royal Geographical Society and supporters like Caribbean landowner and Arctic explorer Bedford Pim contemplated another quest for Franklin relics, the *London Times* published an article criticizing "so outrageous a proceeding," decrying the use of public funds for "so preposterous a scheme as another expedition in search of Sir John Franklin's relics."⁴²

To these protesting voices, the use of public funding to chase ghosts was an expensive waste. However, as expeditions for Franklin relics extended into the 1870s with searchers like Frederick Schwatka, these detractors--who, it must be said, had no

⁴⁰ Brandt 31

⁴¹ Shane McCorristine, *The Spectral Arctic: A History of Dreams and Ghosts in Polar Exploration* (United Kingdom: UCL Press, 2018): 172

⁴² Bedford Clapperton Trevelyan Pim, *An earnest appeal to the British public on behalf of the missing Arctic expedition* (United Kingdom: Hurst and Blackett, 13, Great Marlborough Street, 1857): 19-20

qualms about private searches for the Expedition's remains and whose complaint was the use of *public* funds for yet another quest to solve the Franklin mystery--did not get their way.⁴³ Relics continued to be sought and returned home, and with their return, the need to interpret the last pieces of John Franklin increased. The search for the expedition may be vexing to parties concerned about the use of the public's money for relic hunting, but Franklin's fate still gripped the British public.

Proceeding with an understanding of the ways in which Victorian Britain's desire to commemorate a maritime tragedy may have been at odds with representing it as an historic event, we can examine how museum exhibits have treated the Franklin story over time. Early exhibitions of Franklin Expedition relics were facilitated by the increasing cultural importance lent to museums by the British public. The Museums Act of 1845 and the Great Exhibition of 1851 drastically increased museum visitorship and importance to Britons, making it easier for the public to explore science and history. The Museums Act of 1845 (sometimes called the Museum Bill) determined that towns with a population of over 10,000 people would be allotted government funding to create art and science museums with low admission rates.⁴⁴ It was enacted after studies revealed that visitors often flocked to museums with free admission; champions of these affordable houses of

⁴³ Pim 20

⁴⁴ Adriana Craciun, "THE FRANKLIN RELICS IN THE ARCTIC ARCHIVE." *Victorian Literature and Culture* 42, no. 1 (2014): 1-31. Accessed July 31, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24575866>. 2

culture believed that they would serve to “civilize” the masses and improve museum visitors’ intellect and morals.⁴⁵

Important London museums like the South Kensington Museum, later the Victoria and Albert, established models of the ideal educational museum that museums in smaller towns could aspire to, and while the Museums Act of 1845 was not immediately seized upon, its long-term effects caused a noticeable increase in the number of museums in Britain, soaring from 50 in 1860 to 200 by 1900.⁴⁶ Additionally, when educational showcases like the Great Exhibition debuted, they drew massive crowds of people who, once they had seen the exhibition, then flocked to other cultural sites like museums.⁴⁷

Museums became a way the British public could access objects and imagery from the rest of their world and in particular the rest of their empire. Museum curators used their own travel experiences and artwork to bring the globe to life for visitors curious about other parts of the world, like Africa, but their work often demonstrated contemporary ideas about the racial superiority of Europeans over indigenous peoples of the lands they conquered.⁴⁸ Although it is a later example, the manner in which Herbert S. Toms curated the ethnography exhibits at Brighton Museum in the early 20th century illustrates the point. Toms arranged similar stone tools from various indigenous peoples

⁴⁵ Hugh Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution: C. 1780-c. 1880* (United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis, 2016): 104-105

⁴⁶ Nicholas B. Dirks, Geoff Eley, and Sherry B. Ortner, eds. *Culture/Power/History: A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994). Accessed August 20, 2021. doi:10.2307/j.ctv1ddd17k. 135

⁴⁷ Dirks et. al. 136

⁴⁸ John McAleer, “The case of Thomas Baines, curator-Explorer *extraordinaire*, and the display of Africa in nineteenth-century Norfolk,” in *Curating Empire: Museums and the British Imperial Experience*, ed. Andrew S. Thompson, John M. MacKenzie, John McAleer, Sarah Longair (United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 2017): 19

in comparison to ancient European stone tools as a way of championing Europeans' "advancements" in comparison to "savage" peoples like Maoris or Tasmanians.⁴⁹

As showcases of all the material goods the reaching hands of colonialism could bring back, museum exhibits often took on an imperialistic or dogmatic slant. They pushed a cause rather than offering facts, as we shall see in early Franklin exhibits. Conquest of another environment or another people--the Arctic, perhaps, and the Inuit--was a way of consuming it, bringing it to heel and understanding it.⁵⁰ Environments like the Arctic, which could not be brought to heel nor fully understood (at least geographically) until after Franklin was long lost, were ephemeral places that provided backdrops for the wild imaginations of the public.

As we have seen, in the years following the Franklin Expedition, museums were multiplying in Britain, and the public's increasing interest in museums and exhibitions created the perfect environment for showcasing the salvaged vestiges of the Expedition freshly gathered up and returned home by search parties.⁵¹ Displays of Franklin Expedition artifacts, in fashionable locations like the Royal Polytechnic Institution, were often subjected to interpretation through the same commemorative lens as memorials. Objects brought back by early search expeditions were conferred titles like "sacred relics"

⁴⁹ Claire Wintle, "Visiting the empire at the provincial museum, 1900-50," in *Curating Empire: Museums and the British Imperial Experience*, ed. Andrew S. Thompson, John M. MacKenzie, John McAleer, Sarah Longair (United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 2017): 41-43

⁵⁰ "Introduction," in *Museums and Empire: Natural History, Human Cultures and Colonial Identities*, ed. Andrew S. Thompson, John M. MacKenzie (United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 2017): 1-17

⁵¹ Craciun 8

and Franklin's religiosity was often a talking point in early displays, dovetailing perfectly into the desire of museum benefactors to influence the morals of the public.⁵²

Much like memorials, museum exhibits full of the last physical remains of the Franklin Expedition were tools through which memory and experience, represented by the objects and the stories they could tell about the last days of the Expedition, were distilled and altered to justify imperialism and evangelism, rather than telling the individual stories and experiences of every man who had suffered and perished on King William Island. Objects that could be definitively linked to an individual--like Sir John's Hanoverian Order medal--served as a sort of stand-in for their presence, a valuable piece of them their family could look to as a tool for remembrance and revere as a sort of "personal relic" of the beloved deceased.⁵³ Sir John's "manly and Christian" character was of particular interest to curators, and not without reason.⁵⁴

John Franklin was perhaps uniquely suited to be material for religious instruction in a museum setting. In his early naval career, he developed an influential friendship with evangelical noblewoman Lady Lucy Barry. Franklin and Barry were initially introduced because of an initiative undertaken by Barry and her husband to provide religious reading material for military officers. A friendship unfolded (much to the chagrin of Franklin's outspoken first wife, poetess Eleanor Porden), and Barry's religious instruction greatly influenced Franklin's focused and intense relationship with his own Christianity. Lucy Barry's influence helped to transform John Franklin into a pious individual who mentally

⁵² Craciun 2

⁵³ Walpole 7

⁵⁴ Walpole 36

framed his struggles in the Arctic as a test of his faith in difficult trials.⁵⁵ He carried religious books she gave to him on his 1819-1822 Coppermine Expedition, wherein he attempted an overland trek through Northern Canada, and, as reported by his traveling companion Dr. John Richardson, “they proved of incalculable benefit to us.”⁵⁶

Franklin’s enduring legacy of piety is evidenced by the presence of a devotional book and a book of religious poetry he owned in the collections of the Polar Museum at Cambridge. The role of Franklin and his men as dual-martyrs for Christ and scientific discovery was often championed by his supporters in order to combat the gruesome and macabre conclusions the public might reach about the expedition’s mysterious and deadly end⁵⁷--an end which Victorian Britons were eager to blame on their easiest scapegoat, the Netsilik Inuit of King William Island.⁵⁸

The “savages versus civilization” lens that other curators implemented when discussing Maori, Tasmanian or African people was utilized in exhibits of Franklin artifacts as well; “menacing” displays of Inuit weaponry were presented alongside Franklin artifacts, with the “danger” or “savagery” of the Inuit and their suspected role in the expedition’s demise implied by the exhibit curators.⁵⁹ The relationship the Inuit had with British Arctic explorers had been established for many years, and while the

⁵⁵ Janice Cavell, "Lady Lucy Barry and Evangelical Reading on the First Franklin Expedition." *Arctic* 63, no. 2 (2010): 131-40. Accessed July 4, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27821958>. 139

⁵⁶ John Richardson, *Arctic Ordeal: The Journal of John Richardson, Surgeon-naturalist with Franklin, 1820-1822*. United Kingdom: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994. 148

⁵⁷ Craciun 4

⁵⁸ Russell A. Potter, *Arctic Spectacles: The Frozen North in Visual Culture, 1818-1875* (United States: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007): 106-107

⁵⁹ Craciun 9

relationship may have been more complex than Canadian historian Pierre Berton's allegation that "the two peoples got along famously," interactions between Inuit people and Arctic explorers were typically peaceable, and, crucially, one of the only reasons Franklin searchers gleaned anything about the explorers' fate at all.⁶⁰

Inuit epistemology is based around their oral history tradition, called Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (or IQ), and one of the roles of IQ was the development of mental maps that allowed Inuit people to navigate their Arctic environment. Communities collaborated to create a physical map, sometimes a three-dimensional wood carving⁶¹, that community members would then memorize and utilize to move through the spaces around them.⁶² This detailed understanding of the landscape was information the Inuit readily shared with British explorers attempting to map the Arctic; Nattilingmiut Inuit from the Boothia Peninsula visited Sir John Ross's ship *Victory* in the 1830s to help him map the geography of the area⁶³, and the Netsilik Inuit's detailed descriptions of locations where they found groups of skeletons or wreckage aided searchers in locating the remains of Franklin's men.⁶⁴ However, despite the importance of Inuit people in the investigations of Franklin's fate, the tension stirred up by public figures like Charles Dickens surrounding the Inuit claims of survival cannibalism among Franklin's men

⁶⁰ Pierre Berton, *The Arctic Grail: the Quest for the North West Passage and the North Pole, 1818-1909* (United Kingdom: Viking, 1988): 56

⁶¹ Karen Ryan, *Death in the Ice: The Mystery of the Franklin Expedition* (Quebec: The Canadian Museum of History, 2018): 30

⁶² Peter Whitridge, "Landscapes, Houses, Bodies, Things: 'Place' and the Archaeology of Inuit Imaginaries." *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 11, no. 2 (2004): 213-250.

⁶³ Ryan 29

⁶⁴ David Woodman, *Unraveling the Franklin Mystery: Inuit Testimony, Second Edition* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015): 232

probably precluded the presentation of Inuit objects in a Franklin Expedition exhibit from being anything but disrespectful.⁶⁵

Inuit people and their artifacts had been displayed for the British public before, beginning in the 1500s with Frobisher. In 1772, trapper George Cartwright, who had an established (if domineering) relationship with the Inuit of Labrador, brought a family of Inuit to London, both as a spectacle for Britons and to showcase the imperial city to the indigenous people. The Labrador party, unfortunately for Cartwright, were more disturbed by the crowded smokiness of London than they were impressed by its grandeur. Their compulsory visit to London resulted in all of the party but one dying of smallpox; the sole survivor, a woman named Qavvik, returned to Labrador infected with the disease, which then decimated the Inuit population of southern Labrador.⁶⁶ When Britons aimed the blame for the Franklin Expedition's demise towards Inuit people, they were directing hostility towards a people for whom British interference had caused immense suffering and displacement. Their hostility, as we know now thanks to Inuit oral histories, was misplaced, but the ungenerous manner in which Inuit and their "curious" artifacts were treated was a 19th century problem that, as we shall see, proliferated in museum interpretation into the 21st century.⁶⁷

As time elapsed and more Franklin relics came back from the Arctic, more sophisticated displays of Franklin relics began to develop. In 1859, the Royal United

⁶⁵ Russell A. Potter, *Finding Franklin: The Untold Story of a 165-Year Search* (United Kingdom: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016): 87

⁶⁶ Coll Thrush, *Indigenous London: Native Travelers at the Heart of Empire* (United Kingdom: Yale University Press, 2016): 114-131

⁶⁷ *Catalogue of the Franklin Relics*. United Kingdom: Kelly & Co., 1859.

Services Institute, a still-extant organization designed to study military and naval strategy and influence British defense and security⁶⁸, published a catalogue of its Franklin collections, most of which were displayed in the Inigo Jones Banqueting Hall at the Royal United Services Museum.⁶⁹ Once again, Lady Jane's hand can be seen in the commemoration and interpretation of her husband's memory--alongside the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, Lady Jane encouraged the Council of the United Service Institution to collect and display the Franklin relics McClintock brought back to England after his search in 1859. The objects, with their "melancholy charm," as described in the catalogue's introduction, were arranged on tables and in eleven cases in a small museum at the Institute's location in Whitehall.

Objects in the cases ranged from navigational equipment to soap fragments to beaded purses and spectacles, as well as "snow veils" and "spectacles like railway spectacles," which the introduction sneeringly states are "gutturally called" goggles. Again the piety of the crew is referred to as a point of interest in discussion of books recovered from the Arctic, which are stated to reflect the "good taste and christian [sic] character of the crew." Although the objects seem to have been organized somewhat randomly in their cases, they provided what must have been an impressive breadth of Franklinalia to exhibit visitors. The catalogue concludes with an image replicating a tablet erected by McClintock in the Arctic at Lady Jane's request, as well as a "Brief History of Franklin's Fate," a short essay postulating about Franklin's movements in the

⁶⁸ "Our History," Royal United Services Institute, 2021. Accessed August 22, 2021. <https://rusi.org/about/our-purpose/our-history>

⁶⁹ Walpole 180-181

Arctic. The catalogue, describing objects in the case and accompanied by additional information about the history of the Franklin Expedition, is not unlike museum catalogs offered to visitors today, although it may have a more opinionated introduction.⁷⁰

The second half of the 19th century saw a diversification of the interpretation of John Franklin's life and legacy, often to his wife's frustration. Jane Franklin's search for her husband had been a famous and highly sympathetic cause celebre, and hers was a household name.⁷¹ However, the publicity of her struggle was a double-edged sword, as sympathy for her cause begat a feverish interest in polar tragedy that meant Franklin's story or thinly-veiled parodies of it proliferated in the mid-19th century.⁷² John Franklin's career had been followed by public art displays like panoramas, an affordable and enthralling alternative to the stuffy environment of the Victorian museum.

Public cultural events like panoramas and bazaars were highly popular to Victorian and Edwardian Britons, and they served as a showy and exciting alternative to the Victorian museum. As described by Claire Wintle, these "unofficial" interpretive events encouraged public participation by civilians who had visited the places being represented in plays or bazaars. At these events, British townsfolk dressed like "turbaned Hindoos of grave demeanour" and "fearful and wonderful Zulu[s]," and while these fantastical showcases in cultural appropriation lacked the academic rigor of museum displays, they were widely popular and more accessible to the public than museum curators' carefully arranged exhibits championing particular anthropological models.⁷³

⁷⁰ *Catalogue of the Franklin Relics*, Introduction

⁷¹ McCorristine 182

⁷² See discussion of *The Frozen Deep* by Wilkie Collins

⁷³ Wintle 45-49

Control over narratives about other cultures was difficult for museum curators to maintain in face of more fun and fanciful options, and polar explorers received much the same fanciful treatment.

John Franklin's polar adventures featured in panoramas as early as 1819, when a panorama 84 feet in diameter debuted in Leicester Square featuring scenes from Franklin's expedition with David Buchan the year before.⁷⁴ Arctic panoramas were highly popular ways for the public to engage with the foibles of Arctic explorers, and in the 1850s Burford's Panorama on Leicester Square featured artwork depicting several rescue ships involved in the search for Franklin.⁷⁵ Some panoramas even moved, sent spinning by an operator at a crank who set the long canvases rotating with accompanying music, narration or sound effects.⁷⁶ These marvels of artistry were seemingly far removed from the "respectable" world of the museum, but could these panoramas have been considered an early form of public history?

Imagery representative of recent historical events was portrayed in a form the public could understand, with accompanying lecturers to explain the imagery to the public.⁷⁷ Is this public history, or public entertainment? After all, as Alison Byerly suggests, the panorama is the nineteenth century precursor to virtual tours, an early form of virtual travel. Byerly connects the panorama to the transportive nature of modern video

⁷⁴ Potter, *Arctic Spectacles* 41

⁷⁵ Potter, *Arctic Spectacles* 81

⁷⁶ Potter, *Arctic Spectacles* 85-86

⁷⁷ Potter, *Arctic Spectacles* 86

games⁷⁸, but the interpretive ability of the panorama is also reminiscent of murals often found in museum displays, whose value lies not in the aesthetic beauty so much as the interpretive ability to help the viewer “travel” to another time or place when viewing the image. Viewing objects in a museum case offers a firsthand look at real objects, but “sad and pathetic” Franklin Expedition artifacts probably lacked some of the dynamism of artistic interpretations of the Arctic. Imagery of ships trapped in ice might have illustrated the experience of Franklin’s men more approachably than static displays of recovered scraps, creating a relatable and immersive world out of stories from firsthand experiences that excited and dazzled viewers at the same time.

While the panorama does not survive, a key to the 1850 panorama *Description of Summer and Winter Views of the Polar Regions*, created by Robert Burford, offers an illustration of the panorama and a key to its important features. Several ships involved in the Franklin search, HMS *Investigator* and HMS *Enterprise*, are portrayed in various stages of summer and winter preparation. Uniquely polar features, like an “Enormous Iceberg” and a “Stupendous Glacier” are denoted on the key, as are important figures like Captain Edward Bird and Captain James Clark Ross, commanders of the ships portrayed in the panorama.⁷⁹ The depiction of these renowned polar explorers, particularly Ross, a

⁷⁸ Alison Byerly, *Are We There Yet?: Virtual Travel and Victorian Realism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013). Accessed July 13, 2021. doi:10.3998/mpub.2333731. 29-33

⁷⁹ *Description of summer and winter views of the polar regions as seen during the expedition of Capt. James Clark Ross ... in 1848-9 : now exhibiting at the Panorama, Leicester Square ; painted by the proprietor Robert Burford ; assisted by H.C. Selous ; from drawings taken by Lieut. Browne of the H.M.S. "Enterprise" and presented to Mr. Burford by the Admiralty* (London: Robert Burford, 1850): 1-3
<https://archive.org/details/descriptionofsum00burf/page/n5/mode/2up>

veteran of both poles, as well as splendid polar scenery and sailors engaged in activities like fox hunting and building snow walls, created an awe-inspiring image of the world into which Franklin had vanished and the men courageous enough to seek him.

The half-fanciful, half-factual nature of panorama displays can be perceived in the *Polar Regions* panorama. While Burford's portrayal embellished the reality of the quotidian experience of the polar explorer--namely by portraying many activities occurring simultaneously that would not happen frequently during winter months, like simultaneous bear and fox hunts--it both led viewers to have an inaccurate idea of the bustle of polar expeditions in winter while also suggesting that arctonauts were indeed working eagerly away to find and rescue Franklin, rather than simply sailing north to claim the Northwest Passage for themselves.⁸⁰ In that capacity it served almost a propagandistic purpose not unlike the messages of polar heroism conveyed in monuments--"behold these Arctic heroes hard at work in the land of ice and snow, striving manfully to find Franklin and hunting polar bears!" The dual purpose of the panoramas, to support the Admiralty's ventures in the Arctic and to amaze visitors with Arctic scenery, was planned into the presentation of Burford's panorama:

"Unlike the moving panoramas and dioramas, Burford's panorama offered the only arctic view that allowed a visitor to quietly contemplate the geographical features and events of one specific voyage in a setting that transported the viewer into another reality. While the programme sought to press the viewer to accept the Admiralty's arctic strategy, a space of contemplation such as this would also allow the viewer to appreciate and reflect on the intense, often physical, response to the dazzling sight."⁸¹

⁸⁰ Laurie Garrison, "Virtual reality and subjective responses: Narrating the search for the Franklin Expedition through Robert Burford's Panorama." *Early Popular Visual Culture* 10 (1): 12-15

⁸¹ Garrison 10

Contemporary American panoramas filled a similar transportive niche through a combination of accessible imagery and interpreters. One surviving example, *Panorama of the Monumental Grandeur of the Mississippi Valley*, debuted in 1850 and featured imagery of different scenes from the history of the Mississippi Valley, including Native American cultures and the travels of Hernando de Soto through the region. This panorama was unequivocally designed to portray historical events in an easily consumable format for the public, designed, as Nenette Luarca-Shoaff argues, to transport viewers to different spaces and times with the help of narrations featuring excerpts from scientific texts and commentary on archaeological and geological points of interest.⁸² Explained thusly, a case could be made that while they were certainly not produced with the academic rigor museum exhibits are today, and while they lacked hallmarks of modern public history, in a way, the story of the Franklin Expedition was being told in an early prototype of public history as early as the mid-19th century. As far removed from the “correct” interpretation as they may have seemed to 19th century museum professionals, panoramas were not far removed from interpretive tools museums utilize today. The panorama was a pedagogical tool that was approachable and exciting for the public, one which was designed to elicit public interest in explorers, as in the case of Burford’s panoramas, or even in the environment itself, whether it was the Arctic or the grandeur of the American landscape many Americans could not visit themselves. Today, museum exhibit designers struggle to create an “experience” for museum visitors while simultaneously maintaining the academic rigor of the museum space--to some

⁸² Nenette Luarca-Shoaf, "Excavating a Nineteenth-Century Mass Medium," *American Art* 27, no. 2 (2013): 15-20. Accessed July 14, 2021. doi:10.1086/673104. 1-4

museum practitioners, creating “interactive” museum experiences represent a “dumbing-down” or “Disneyfication” of the museum experience.⁸³ These practitioners may very well have regarded a narrated panorama with the same frustration--by commodifying historic events and turning them into inaccurate renderings of history and landscapes, as Burford’s bear-and-fox-hunt scenario did, was Burford drawing in paying crowds at the cost of a truthful representation of historic events? In response to these qualms, Robert Bullock argues that:

What has happened is that there has been a change in our feelings about how space is used in communicating content to the public, that is to say how we create an environmental context by giving meaning to the space around an object or in a room. So we may move from a presentation paradigm where objects and artifacts are presented or displayed with a minimum of interpretation to a communication paradigm, which incidentally is educationally based, yet influenced by entertainment. Whether a given example has a commercial, entertaining, or educational intent is not as important as communication taking place.⁸⁴

While panoramas were not necessarily the most academically rigorous representations of history for the public, they did communicate information about the Arctic landscape and the experiences of polar explorers that many members of the public may not have otherwise known. In doing so, these panoramas embodied the “three characteristics of experience” that Bullock argues increase communication and experience with small groups visiting today’s museums: helping to tell the story, humanizing the event and creating emotional engagement.⁸⁵ The *experience* of Burford’s panorama told the public

⁸³ Robert Bullock, “PENNSYLVANIA HISTORY AS PUBLIC HISTORY: THE MORPHING LANDSCAPE OF MUSEUM EXHIBIT EXPERIENCES.” *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 73, no. 3 (2006): 343–59.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/27778743>. 344

⁸⁴ Bullock 345

⁸⁵ Bullock 350

what searchers were doing in the Arctic in the first place, put names and faces to the men searching for Franklin, and moved the public with scenes of the Arctic they would not otherwise get to see, giving them a taste of what Franklin might have experienced. Perhaps Burford's approach to interpreting historical events for the public was ahead of its time--*or* museum practitioners today can learn from the past.

Control over the public narrative of the Expedition was extremely important to Jane Franklin and her allies in order to champion Sir John's scientific scholarship and Christian heroism, but the commodification and commercialization of the Expedition's story through affordable media like printed illustrations or stereographs of relics made controlling the Franklin story more difficult. A public pall of willful uncertainty about the Expedition's fate persisted for several years after the Expedition sailed. Other expeditions had overwintered for several years in the Arctic with no word about their fate, so a certain amount of tentative optimism pervaded the public conversation about Franklin's men.⁸⁶ Therefore, if they were not portrayed as martyrs, Franklin's men were bestowed with dubious status as living individuals at lectures presented by individuals eager to foment hope that some Franklinites may yet survive, living amongst the Inuit.⁸⁷ Accompanying these lectures, remnants of Franklin's men were arranged on tables, organized like the "wares" McClintock had dubbed them, or perhaps scientific specimens from a faraway land.⁸⁸

⁸⁶Fergus Fleming, *Barrow's Boys: A Stirring Story of Daring, Fortitude, and Outright Lunacy*. United States: Grove/Atlantic, Incorporated, 2007. 303-304

⁸⁷ Potter, *Arctic Spectacles* 110

⁸⁸ Craciun 9

These specimens, far removed from the space in which searchers found them and regarded with a morbid reverence by the public, appeared periodically at somber exhibitions as they trickled home from the Arctic; objects returned in 1859 and displayed at the Painted Hall at Greenwich drew enormous crowds when the exhibit opened and stereoscopic slides were taken of the collection as a grave souvenir for visitors.⁸⁹ A great assemblage of Franklin relics made one of their later 19th century appearances on the grounds of the Royal Hospital, Chelsea, at the Royal Naval Exhibition of 1891. In the “Franklin Gallery,” visitors were invited to view “the interesting and pathetic relics” of the Expedition, amassed over the preceding decades. The exhibit designers of the Franklin Gallery threw themselves into designing an immersive experience for visitors. A sculpture and a reconstruction of an Arctic cairn greeted visitors, and Expedition materials were organized in their displays by which rescuer had recovered them. Bottles, rakes, knives and bits of scrap metal in anonymous arrays joined medals and watches bearing officers’ names, diligently itemized in the Exhibition’s catalogue.⁹⁰

Most of the Franklin relics presented at the Exhibition were practical tools, scraps of personal items of clothing belonging to the men, or awards belonging to officers. Although arranged by searcher and stripped of the archaeological context in which they were discovered, this amalgamation of objects offers a poignant microhistory of life aboard two specific polar exploration vessels of the 19th century, demonstrating what belongings 1840s polar explorers brought with them and what was deemed important

⁸⁹ Potter, *Arctic Spectacles* 157

⁹⁰*Official catalogue & guide: opened Chelsea, May 2nd, 1891* (London: W.P. Griffith and Sons, 1895): xv

enough by the different classes onboard to bring along when the ships were abandoned--practical items like stoves, needles and powder cases by the sailors and monogrammed tableware and dip circles by the officers.⁹¹ Many of these objects are now stored at the National Maritime Museum, having made their last public appearance in 1891⁹². Safely ensconced in museum storage, these dozens of objects are far removed from the questioning eyes of Victorian Britons demanding an answer to the Franklin Disaster from the “pathetic” objects before them.

The blend of public monuments to Franklin and the air of macabre mystery surrounding the fragmentary remains of the Expedition brought back to England would have made the task of interpreting the Franklin debacle as anything more concrete than a modern ghost story trying, to say the least. Franklin’s remains were “discovered” several times during search expeditions, and each subsequent false positive likely lent more fuel to the speculative flame.⁹³ Further complicating the situation was the supernatural flavor that the intervention of mediums and other agents of the spirit world had injected into the Franklin conversation. Clairvoyants, typically young women, frequently stepped forward during the Franklin search to report psychic visions of Franklin in the Arctic. Shane McCorristine argues that the very lack of concrete information about Franklin’s fate

⁹¹ *Official catalogue & guide* 2-4

⁹² Potter, *Finding Franklin*, 217

⁹³ “SIR JOHN FRANKLIN’S REMAINS.” *Scientific American* 1, no. 17 (1859): 265–265. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26171133>.

“Sir John Franklin Discovered.” *Scientific American* 5, no. 36 (1850): 282–282. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24933053>.

“Sir John Franklin’s Expedition.” *Scientific American* 4, no. 37 (1849): 294–294. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24930758>.

allowed clairvoyants to step forward and offer their theories about Franklin's whereabouts: "Paradoxically, for some this remoteness made the voice of the clairvoyant legitimate: how could poor illiterate women who knew nothing about Arctic navigation invent such details about the lost expedition?"⁹⁴ Mesmerists could supposedly tap into a "community of sensation" wherein the Franklinites' bodily experiences and senses could be transferred to the mesmerist, who could physically experience what their subject in the Arctic was experiencing. While the intervention of these psychics did not aid the Admiralty in locating Franklin, they offered glimpses of the Arctic and Franklin's fate that tantalized the British public: "It was the quality of these experiences, rather than their credibility or incredibility, which drew people in."⁹⁵

Clairvoyance, cannibalism, and polar mystery combined to produce an irresistible theme for authors and playwrights. Lady Jane's ally Charles Dickens capitalized on the unsettling mystery surrounding her husband's demise when he assisted in Wilkie Collins' writing and dramatization of *The Frozen Deep*, a play which parodied certain aspects of the Expedition's disappearance, including the purported cannibalism and the role of clairvoyants in the search for Franklin.⁹⁶⁹⁷ In Collins' play, two ships, the *Wanderer* and the *Sea Mew*, become stranded in the Arctic for two years while seeking the Northwest Passage. One of the central themes of the story is the romantic competition two of the

⁹⁴ McCorristine 79-80, 87, 97-98

⁹⁵ McCorristine 86, 134

⁹⁶ Jen Hill, *White Horizon: The Arctic in the Nineteenth-Century British Imagination* (United States: State University of New York Press, 2009): 130-132

⁹⁷ Russell Potter, *Arctic Spectacles*, 137-148, 160-161

expedition crewmen have over the same young woman, a clairvoyant named Clara Burnham, whose psychic abilities are met with skepticism by her friends.

The romantic conflict between Clara's fiancé and her former paramour creates a tension in the story that was not perhaps present in its real life inspiration (or, if it was, we may never know about it), but echoes of the Franklin situation are evident in Collins' writing. An unsettlingly cheerful cook named John Want, who pounds bones for soup and pointedly speculates which officers will die sooner, seems to reference the rumors of cannibalism that returned to England with John Rae.⁹⁸ Clara and her friend Mrs. Crayford, the wife of one of the erstwhile lieutenants of the expedition, echo the figures of Lady Jane and her niece and companion Sophia Cracroft, the married woman and the single woman with ties to the expedition (in Sophia Cracroft's case, an abbreviated romance with Francis Crozier). Clara's clairvoyance and ability to see events occurring in the Arctic reference the prevalence of clairvoyants and mesmerists in the Franklin search.⁹⁹ When survivors return from the Arctic safe and alive, trust in God is asserted as a better choice than trusting clairvoyant visions, perhaps indicating tension between the importance of Franklin's religiosity and the dependence on supernatural powers to locate him.¹⁰⁰ The play is an interesting insight into the role of Franklin in popular culture. In a way, it is another form of memorialization; while the play was not explicitly about the Franklin Expedition, it certainly parodied it and left a trace of it in English literature.

⁹⁸ Wilkie Collins, *The Frozen Deep* (United Kingdom: W.F. Gill and Company 2004): 11-58, 61-69

⁹⁹ Collins 120-122

¹⁰⁰ Collins 132, 177

When the expedition *was* questioned or criticized in museum or exhibition spaces in the 19th century, it was sometimes done in the context of man's folly in the face of treacherous polar climes. One notable example is Sir Edwin Landseer's massive painting *Man Proposes, God Disposes*, completed in 1864. Landseer, inspired by accounts from McClintock's search, painted two polar bears in the act of devouring human remains dragged from a destroyed ship's boat. Landseer's depiction of the last vestiges of British humanity being consumed by Arctic wildlife was a nod to the grip the macabre tale had over the British populace, but its graphic nature and the glee with which one of the polar bears seems to consume a human rib made it a controversial statement on the reality faced by the lost explorers and their would-be rescuers. The consumption of the human remains also suggests to some art historians that the eager dispatching of the rib may be a quiet nod to the proliferation of cannibalism rumors amongst the public, which searchers were reluctant to corroborate. Although she had been invited to the show at the Royal Academy where Landseer's work was featured, Lady Jane found the idea of the painting deeply offensive and refused to view it during its debut.¹⁰¹ So potent was the public reaction to this depiction of intrepid explorers reduced to a polar bear's supper that the painting slowly gleaned a reputation for bad luck over the years, such that when the hall where it was hung at Royal Holloway College was used for student examinations, the painting was covered by a Union Jack to safeguard students from distraction or

¹⁰¹ Andrew Moore "Sir Edwin Landseer's "Man Proposes, God Disposes": And the Fate of Franklin." *The British Art Journal* 9, no. 3 (2009): 32-37. Accessed July 4, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41614838>.

misfortune.¹⁰² Draping a comment on the folly of exploration in a hostile climate with such a vivid and universally recognizable symbol of empire is an intriguing irony.

¹⁰² Potter, *Finding Franklin*, 21, 33

CHAPTER TWO: THE FRANKLIN EXPEDITION IN BRITISH MUSEUMS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The way the Franklin Expedition was interpreted in the nineteenth century in British museums was a blend of parable, tragedy-voyeurism and imperial propaganda. But how has Franklin interpretation in the age of Franklin translated into the modern day? What lessons do modern museums in Britain teach about the Franklin Expedition, and are they a departure from 19th century interpretation or merely a homeostatic continuation of the 19th century approach? 19th century museums lacked the myriad interpretive tools modern museums have, and the interpretive approaches of their curators were rooted in a 19th century mindset. How much of that mindset has shifted?

In 2018, two prominent curators of Franklin Expedition artifacts joined forces to discuss their institutions' relationship with polar history and the manner in which it is interpreted in their respective museums. Dr. Claire Warrior of the National Maritime Museum and Dr. Charlotte Connelly of the Polar Museum at the Scott Polar Research Institute co-authored a paper discussing their museums' interpretation of polar history. The united discussion is apt; the NMM and the Polar Museum are arguably the two major sources of polar history interpretation for the British museum-going public. Other museums in the U.K., such as the British Museum, have featured exhibits about the Arctic and its peoples, like the Arctic: Culture and Climate exhibit which debuted in October 2020. However, as museums that are expressly about the Arctic and naval history, these two museums merit examination.

The Polar Museum, founded by veterans of Robert Falcon Scott's 1910-1913 *Terra Nova* expedition, began as a memorial to the adventurers who perished with Scott in the Antarctic. Operated by the Scott Polar Research Institute at Cambridge, a modern successor to the polar research conducted by Franklin and his ilk, the Polar Museum is inextricably associated with a powerhouse of polar research specializing in glaciology, cryopolitics, Inuit culture and other areas of polar study. Because of its association with the ill-fated Scott, the commemorative nature of the museum endures to the present. A bust of Scott features prominently in the museum, as well as a map of the Arctic and Antarctic designed to show different explorers and ships that voyaged to the poles.¹⁰³ The museum is small, but it hosts a broad range of artifacts and artworks associated with the Arctic and Antarctic.¹⁰⁴

In a 2021 interview, Dr. Connelly discussed some of the challenges of operating a polar museum founded by polar explorers and maintained by their families and descendants. For Connelly, part of the difficulty of a memorial-museum was that polar relics could not necessarily be presented critically, as a critical interpretation of polar explorers known and loved by museum founders would cause offense. The main mission of the museum is education and commemoration, but in exploring the museum's Arctic collections, gaps in the narrative become quickly evident. In the diminutive Arctic section of the Polar Museum, white faces decked in the garb of officers and explorers supervise museum visitors; these portraits of polar explorers demonstrate what was historically

¹⁰³ Claire Warrior and Charlotte Connelly, "Survey Stories in the History of British Polar Exploration: Museums, objects and People." *Notes and Records* 73 (2019): 260-262

¹⁰⁴ "Museum Catalogue," Scott Polar Research Institute. Accessed July 18, 2021. <https://www.spri.cam.ac.uk/museum/catalogue/>

important to exhibit in museums like the Polar Museum--the remarkable white men who made their historic mark on the Arctic.¹⁰⁵ The contents of the Arctic section incorporate many artifacts from earlier Arctic expeditions led by Ross and Parry, including rock specimens, a barrel organ, a musk ox horn and possessions showcasing the rank and affluence of the famous explorers, including a sun compass and bullion epaulettes belonging to James Clark Ross, who explored both poles.

What was deemed worthy of preservation by Franklin searchers becomes apparent as one reviews these objects-- monogrammed silverware, medals, navigational equipment and scientific specimens, all showcasing the life and experiences of officers. While some objects in the collections may represent the experience of the average seaman in Franklin's crew or the crew of any other Arctic explorer, most objects on display seem to represent the "great men," the officers and commanders. Certainly the lessons that can be learned about the fate of the Franklin Expedition and what objects the survivors carried with them from the entrapped ships are valuable--for example, the expensive items officers perhaps felt were too costly to abandon--but because of the restrictive shortness of the average object label in a museum exhibit, broader context about life on the lower decks on Franklin's might not be apparent to a museum visitor.

Additional questions arise when one considers the importance of the Inuit in the Franklin story. When items related to the Inuit are displayed in the Polar Museum's cases amongst relics of white explorers, they often lack context. An ulu is labeled as a women's knife, but any use or cultural importance beyond its gendered importance is lacking; Inuit

¹⁰⁵ Charlotte Connelly, Zoom interview by author, June 17, 2021.

fish hooks are displayed with a quote from Parry's journal which, while it is useful for understanding the way Parry perceived and discussed Arctic cultures from his early 19th century European viewpoint, does little to show the experience the other way around: the way Inuit people related to frequent European interlopers. A sculpture lampooning Martin Frobisher's early Arctic expeditions is featured in the collection, but the Inuit relationship with the Franklin Expedition and the way this large-scale disaster affected the Netsilik is treated almost reductively. Commentary on a "crudely repaired" officer's spoon fixed with copper by an Inuk craftsman and a snow knife presumed to be crafted from materials salvaged from *Erebus* or *Terror* creates an almost dismissive tone towards the very real effect the doomed Expedition--and the vast trove of rare and useful materials it brought--had on the residents of King William Island.

This is by no means a wholesale critique of the Polar Museum's treatment of the Inuit and their history--the Polar Museum has featured multiple exhibitions in the past of Arctic peoples' arts and culture, with detailed descriptions of the practical uses of different objects and their cultural significance. However, a problem with the exhibits discussed by Dr. Connelly in 2021 holds true upon examination of exhibit labels written about Inuit arts: the Polar Museum, for its representation of the Inuit and their culture, lacks actual Inuit voices discussing their culture and history. The museum exhibits dozens of artifacts from Arctic peoples, yet only four or five of them feature quotes from indigenous people discussing the personal importance of objects or artwork to them and to their culture.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ "The Arctic, Exploration and Encounter," Exhibit Labels Document, The Polar Museum

Other British museums have found ways to incorporate Inuit narratives into their exhibits, solving questions of provenance while simultaneously involving Inuit elders in the interpretation of their own culture. At Brighton Museum, curators knew that artifacts in their collection could be traced to particular groups like the Copper Inuit, but historically operated with little information about how those objects were acquired.¹⁰⁷ In the case of Brighton, information about objects' particular regional provenance was only discovered after extensive research and consultation with experts. Brighton Museum's response to this issue of lost cultural context was to undertake a "digital repatriation" project wherein images of their Copper Inuit collections would be published online so that Copper Inuit elders, communicating through the Kitikmeot Heritage Centre in Cambridge Bay, Canada, recorded their responses to the objects. Their commentary, with their permission, was featured in Brighton's gallery of the Inuit objects, and the elders were compensated for their time. Museum staff not only acquired practical knowledge about the traditional use of objects in the collection, but discovered differences in the use and cultural significance of similar objects among different groups of Inuit, a "disjuncture" that could only have been discovered by utilizing indigenous knowledge.¹⁰⁸

Inuit artifacts, taken from their original context and placed in museums, arrive in "contact zones," described by James Clifford as spaces where colonial encounters between peoples separated widely by distance and culture solidify as an ongoing

¹⁰⁷ Harriet Hughes, "ARCTIC WORLDS: REIMAGINING THE ARCTIC COLLECTIONS AT BRIGHTON MUSEUM & ART GALLERY." *Journal of Museum Ethnography* no. 26 (2013): 14-31. Accessed August 27, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43915835>. 15

¹⁰⁸ Hughes 18-20

relationship based in “conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict.” As Cunera Buijs argues, Arctic peoples have struggled with their historic oppression under colonial rule and then the subsequent misrepresentation of their culture by museum professionals who do not understand them. Then, when museums *do* collaborate with indigenous people to create museum exhibits, their goals and rationale for doing so are often vague and the benefit to the Inuit is inconclusive. Therefore,

Multivocality and community-based cooperation, combined with cocuration, can lead to more inclusive, democratic anthropological museums, which would include shared responsibility for decision making and the transfer of curatorial authority to Indigenous Peoples...It is important and necessary for Indigenous Peoples, as well as for the European public (a growing portion of which is of multicultural origin), that anthropological museums present the harsh truth of colonization, suppression, and extinction directly.

Buijs focuses on anthropological museums in her analysis, but her argument about cocuration and shared responsibility still apply and coincide with the current status of exhibits at the Polar Museum.¹⁰⁹

Underrepresented and underprivileged groups lack voices and authority in the Polar Museum, at least in permanent collections dominated by privileged white narratives. The exhibits succeed in showing the broader effect of the Franklin Expedition by displaying objects related to the myriad search expeditions that went north after Franklin, including collars with messages placed on arctic foxes and remnants of balloons designed to alert Franklin crewmen to the presence of rescuers. However, the ingenuity

¹⁰⁹ Cunera Buijs, "Shared Inuit Culture: European Museums and Arctic Communities." *Études/Inuit/Studies* 42, no. 1 (2018): 37-60. Accessed August 27, 2021. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26775760>. 40, 50-51, 54

and folly of Franklin rescue missions is an incomplete story if the important role of the Inuit eyewitnesses who guided searchers to the truth is neglected in exhibit texts and object labels. If the Polar Museum incorporated a “digital repatriation” initiative like the one undertaken at Brighton, it could be an important first step in transforming the Polar Museum from a contact zone in which there is an unbalanced power dynamic and lack of diverse narratives to one in which the Inuit can communicate their story in an empowering way.

The role of object provenance is also a point of discussion surrounding the National Maritime Museum, although in this case it is about the often-fragmentary nature of polar exploration collections in museums. Dr. Claire Warrior describes in *Survey Stories* the relationship the National Maritime Museum has not only with polar explorers, but also the ways in which other museums have supplied the National Maritime Museum’s polar collections. Many of the polar artifacts now in the possession of the NMM came from the National Museum of the Royal Navy, where scores of Franklin Artifacts were on display from the 1850s to the 1930s. They were then transferred to the new museum and put on display starting in the 1950s.¹¹⁰ Still others were originally acquired from the Hudson Bay Company or absorbed from the now-defunct Royal United Services Institution collection.¹¹¹¹¹² The NMM’s collections are an amalgamation of objects from multiple sources, and while the provenance of these objects is not as

¹¹⁰ Warrior and Connelly 263

¹¹¹ Walpole 180

¹¹² Claire Warrior, email correspondence with author, April 26, 2021.

mysterious and troubling as artifacts like the Benin Bronzes, it demonstrates how many hands Franklin objects have passed through on the path to preservation at the NMM.

Early displays of polar objects focused on famous individuals, rather than the scientific importance of polar exploration that Warrior and Connelly argue is historically lacking in their museums. Even today, the NMM has evidence of this focus on famous individuals--multiple blog posts on the museum's website focus on Jane Franklin, John Franklin and famous searchers like McClintock, as well as later polar legends like Ernest Shackleton¹¹³ (although they *are* supplemented by articles about average crewmen, like *Terror* cook John Diggle).¹¹⁴ ¹¹⁵ However, despite this focus on imperial glory and famous faces of empire, behind the scenes, curators like Warrior and Connelly feel that the scientific facet of polar expeditions is underrepresented in museum exhibits.

Polar expeditions were driven by imperial aims, certainly, but they also collected scientific data about the earth's magnetism, plant and animal specimens and hydrographical measurements. The collection of information of scientific merit was an important facet of polar exploration, but for polar or maritime museums, that aspect of polar expeditions is difficult to access due to the manner in which polar specimens were distributed throughout British museums. Plant and animal specimens would be displayed in natural history museums instead of history museums; artifacts from Arctic peoples

¹¹³ "Sir Ernest Shackleton," Royal Museums Greenwich. Accessed July 18, 2021. <https://www.rmg.co.uk/stories/topics/sir-ernest-shackleton>

¹¹⁴ Claire Warrior, "Jane Franklin: a remarkable woman," Royal Museums Greenwich, 2018. Accessed July 18, 2021. <https://www.rmg.co.uk/stories/topics/jane-franklin-remarkable-woman>

¹¹⁵ "Husband, father, son-lost in the Arctic," Royal Museums Greenwich, September 5, 2017. Accessed July 18, 2021. <https://www.rmg.co.uk/stories/blog/husband-father-son-lost-arctic>

featured in ethnographic exhibits far removed from the rest of the expedition's material culture; documents produced by expedition crewmen were stored in archives as historic documents rather than valuable pieces of material culture in and of themselves.¹¹⁶ This fragmentation of polar expeditions' material remains means that, according to Warrior, neither the NMM or the Polar Museum can tell the entire story of polar exploration in one museum. The problem of fragmented stories is exacerbated when artifacts from Arctic peoples like the Inuit come into the picture and Inuit voices are not incorporated to reflect a wider cultural viewpoint.¹¹⁷¹¹⁸

What, then, can curators of polar history do in the face of these fragmented stories? How is the history of explorers like Franklin told when the stories of polar expeditions are so atomized? At the National Maritime Museum, one solution to the fragmentary nature of the Franklin story was to zoom out. In designing the Polar Worlds exhibit, Dr. Warrior championed a four-gallery exhibit to feature the museum's polar collection, including Franklin Expedition artifacts, because she felt that the poles were extremely relevant to the public in the face of a changing climate. While the Franklin Expedition played a role in the narrative of the exhibit, it was not the keystone of the exhibit; rather, it was placed in a broader historical context within the exhibit, which, because of the funding available, was able to ambitiously tackle the history of both the Arctic and Antarctic. In a departure from 19th century interpretations of the Arctic, Polar Worlds features Inuk Ranger Sammy Kogvik from Gjoa Haven, Nunavut--the discoverer

¹¹⁶ Warrior and Connelly 264-265

¹¹⁷ Warrior and Connelly 264

¹¹⁸ Warrior email correspondence

of HMS *Terror*--discussing the Arctic. Rather than featuring the Inuit as antagonists or presenting their cultural artifacts without context, the voice of an Inuit individual is featured prominently as an authority on the region.

How are modern museum exhibits representing the Franklin Expedition dynamically and imaginatively? How much has the interpretation of the Franklin Expedition changed between the 19th and 21st centuries? How can these museums change or improve the way they interpret the Franklin story? To achieve a “perfect” museum exhibit is not necessarily feasible--history is fluid, subjective, and complex, and a story like Franklin’s will always have challenging gaps. The nature of the museum is not necessarily to tell a *perfect* story with an exhibit, but to tell a compelling, inclusive story that moves the visitors who view it--to create an emotive storytelling *experience*, as Bullock described above. Museums are tourist attractions, certainly, but they are also sites for cultural interpretation, the sharing of heritage and the representation of collective memory--hopefully in a more dynamic way than the museums investigated in Chapter 1. Museums today are more than just a stolid hall of stolen objects stripped of all context--museums are places wherein global communities can work together to tell a multifaceted historical narrative.¹¹⁹

How do museums that interpret Franklin accomplish this? To begin with, the National Maritime Museum has made strides recently in the way it interprets the Franklin Expedition by sharing authority on this originally British story with other stakeholders. The NMM collaborated with the Canadian Museum of History and Parks Canada to

¹¹⁹ Crispin Paine and Timothy Ambrose, *Museum Basics: The International Handbook* (United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis, 2018): 6-7

create the Death in the Ice exhibition, a traveling display of Franklin Expedition artifacts which debuted in 2018. Because it is one of the most recent and important exhibitions of Franklin artifacts, Death in the Ice must be examined critically to gauge how the Franklin Expedition is currently being interpreted in British museums.

As stated in an article announcing the upcoming debut of the exhibition, the goal of Death in the Ice was to demonstrate the story of the Franklin Expedition as a complex narrative uniting British, Canadian and Inuit people.¹²⁰ The conceptualization of the exhibition began in 2014 just before the rediscovery of HMS *Erebus*, spearheaded by curator Karen Ryan of the Canadian Museum of History.¹²¹ The exhibition was divided into eight sections which represented a flowing narrative that included exhibits on Inuit history and culture, the history of Arctic exploration, the life and experiences of Franklin's men, the rediscovery of Franklin's ships and the enduring legacy of the Expedition in the British and Canadian popular imagination.¹²² Videos with narrations by Inuit elders in Inuktitut provided a firsthand look at Inuit oral history and the way in which Inuit people, including Inuk historian Louie Kamookak, used their cultural practices to preserve historical information.¹²³ Ostensibly the exhibition was a balanced blend of Inuit culture and polar exploration--but was it successful?

¹²⁰ Sylvain Raymond, "Introducing the Franklin Exhibition." Canadian Museum of History, May 12, 2017. Accessed July 21, 2021.

<https://www.historymuseum.ca/blog/introducing-the-franklin-exhibition/>

¹²¹ Russell Potter, e-mail correspondence with author, July 26, 2021.

¹²² Andrea Eidinger, "Exhibiting Death in the Ice: A Conversation with Karen Ryan." *Unwritten Histories*, July 10, 2018. Accessed July 26, 2021.

<https://www.unwrittenhistories.com/exhibiting-death-in-the-ice-a-conversation-with-karen-ryan/>

¹²³ Maureen Smith, email correspondence with author, July 17, 2021.

Dr. Russell Potter is an historian of the Franklin Expedition whose expertise aided in the development of *Death in the Ice* from the exhibition's inception. His experience with the development of *Death in the Ice* was fairly involved. Dr. Potter worked with Dr. Karen Ryan and Dr. Kenn Harper to conceptualize what *kind* of exhibition *Death in the Ice* would be based on the recent rediscovery of HMS *Erebus*. The rediscovered wreck, and the integral role Inuit oral histories played in its rediscovery, were key elements that were incorporated in the exhibit through the presentation of Inuit artifacts, including parkas and tools, with voice recordings of Inuit elders giving testimony about the ships creating a transitional space between the Inuit and European artifacts. The rest of the exhibit interpreted items returned in the 19th century. One of its most invaluable objects was the Victory Point Record, one of the only surviving documents from the Expedition, which Dr. Potter stated had not left the UK since it was recovered in the 19th century. Additional exhibits featured objects recovered by Parks Canada's underwater archaeological team, including the ship's bell; and interpretive displays which stood in for objects that were too fragile to display or other delicate traces of the Expedition, like the Beechey Island Mummies, as well as dioramas of the dive sites¹²⁴--as we shall see, interpretive imagery of dive sites is a developing and useful way to interpret maritime archaeology for the public.

Although the core exhibition was mostly consistent from site to site, each museum that hosted *Death in the Ice* contributed its own flair to the exhibits. At some museums, such as the Canadian Museum of History in Ottawa, Dr. Potter met

¹²⁴ Russell Potter email correspondence

descendants of officers who perished with Franklin, whose contribution to the exhibition had been donated objects which had belonged to their ancestors. At several openings of the exhibition, in particular Mystic Seaport Museum, panels of speakers, including Dr. Potter and other eminent Franklin scholars like Douglas Stenton and David Woodman, presented lectures to further educate the public about the Franklin Expedition. A delegation of Inuit visited Mystic Seaport and traveled to Groton, Connecticut, to visit the gravesite of Tookoolito, an Inuk interpreter for Franklin searcher Charles Francis Hall.¹²⁵

Maureen Smith worked as a lead interpreter for *Death in the Ice* at Mystic Seaport Museum, and she attended several iterations of the exhibition. In Smith's opinion, the presentation of *Death in the Ice* at Royal Museums Greenwich was unpolished and featured the smallest exhibit space. Smith stated that *Death in the Ice* at the Canadian Museum of History was strong in that the CMH has other displays on Inuit culture elsewhere in the museum, but the exhibition itself did not feature any surplus information on Franklin and the Inuit in the large exhibit space, instead featuring more information about members of the exhibition other than the commanding officers. Because she was part of the team that presented *Death in the Ice* at Mystic Seaport, Smith had intimate knowledge of the festivities surrounding the exhibition's Connecticut debut. In addition to a Franklin Symposium and Ice Festival which featured winter survival talks and presentations on constellations and Inuit mythology, dignitaries from the local Mohegan and Mashantucket Pequot tribes performed a smudging to bless the opening of the exhibition.¹²⁶ Although several openings hosted important Inuit figures--Canadian

¹²⁵ Russell Potter email correspondence

¹²⁶ Maureen Smith email correspondence

Ranger Sammy Kogvik, whose oral account led to the rediscovery of HMS *Terror*, was present at the Ottawa opening--only the Anchorage opening featured an indigenous lecturer, Inupiat historian Paul Ongtooguk.¹²⁷

What about opinions from scholars who were not involved in the creation and presentation of *Death in the Ice*? Sarah Pickman, whose research examines material culture in extreme environments--including objects used on polar expeditions--attended the debut of *Death in the Ice* at Royal Museums Greenwich and Mystic Seaport Museum. Pickman's assessment was that while *Death in the Ice* was successful in highlighting the Inuit contributions to the story of the Franklin Expedition both historically and in the modern day, it fell short of being "a cutting-edge depiction of Inuit culture and traditions." The exhibition highlighted Inuit lifeways in the Arctic with screens depicting footage of Arctic wildlife, landscapes and Inuit people engaging in traditional activities like dogsledding, as well as emphasizing the Inuit role in the relocation of the Franklin shipwrecks in a room that displayed objects recently recovered from *Erebus* and *Terror*.

However, as Pickman argued, the subject of the exhibition--an expedition of white men with goals based in "the context of 19th century Western science," which did not defer to or widely utilize Inuit knowledge--means that the Franklin story is not one about the Inuit themselves and the core of the exhibition reflected its British nature. While the exhibition did well at contextualizing the Franklin Expedition as one of multiple expeditions that infringed upon Inuit territory, Pickman argued that one of the most compelling parts of *Death in the Ice* was the symposia that accompanied its

¹²⁷ Russell Potter email correspondence

openings, as they featured speakers who could speak more extensively than the constraints of an exhibit would allow about Inuit traditional knowledge.¹²⁸

Based on the reflections offered by Potter, Smith and Pickman, *Death in the Ice* appears to have been an exhibition museum professionals, scholars and even Native American dignitaries dedicated enormous effort to producing. While the symposia could have been more exclusive, their existence allowed for more extensive information about the Inuit and their role in the Franklin story to be disseminated--that being said, the symposia would only be beneficial to the visitors who attended them, and some symposia were not open to the public, allowing only academics to attend.¹²⁹ That being said, with opening ceremonies featuring smudgings and stations in every exhibition featuring oral histories by Inuit elders, as well as the potential for additional exhibits on the Inuit at museums like the CMH, *Death in the Ice* was an exhibition that had great potential to introduce the average museum-goer who knows little about the Franklin Expedition to the story, as well as its historical context in the framework of 19th century exploration. Additionally, *Death in the Ice* introduced visitors to Inuit culture and the ways indigenous knowledge can offer important insights about the past, featuring important Inuit individuals like Louie Kamookak. While it was not a perfect representation of Inuit culture, framing the Inuit in the context of their relationship with British explorers as opposed to outlining the breadth and depth of Inuit history, it illuminated indigenous culture as proficiently as a museum about the story of a particular British expedition likely could. It highlighted the contributions of Inuit people to the relocation of the

¹²⁸ Sarah Pickman, email correspondence with author, October 3, 2021.

¹²⁹ Sarah Pickman email correspondence

Franklin wrecks, as well as showcasing contemporary archaeological work on the wrecks, demonstrating the important and diverse work of archaeologists to the public. Overall, *Death in the Ice* was an imperfect Inuit exhibition, but a fairly well-developed Franklin exhibition.

What will be the progression of Franklin Expedition interpretation at museums in Britain--will Canadian museums take the lead more frequently, as was done in the case of *Death in the Ice*? In May 2021 the Canadian Museum of History unveiled an exhibit about Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, the Inuit oral history tradition, and the Franklin Expedition: *The Ones We Met--Inuit Traditional Knowledge and the Franklin Expedition*, which will show in Canada and Britain throughout 2021. The debut of a new exhibition focusing on Inuit oral history so quickly after it featured in *Death in the Ice* perhaps implies that an increasing importance is being lent to the Inuit side of the Franklin story. Additionally, the introduction of Inuit culture to British audiences will offer them a peek into the rich and important history of native peoples that may ordinarily seem a remote concept to Britons.

However, for smaller museums, like the Polar Museum, large, expensive traveling exhibitions might not be feasible. On a smaller scale, changes in the way the Franklin Expedition is discussed in museum texts is one simple way to improve the way the Expedition, and polar exploration writ large, is interpreted. Incorporating reflections by polar explorers about their travels is one way to understand their experiences, but it also encourages the unwitting visitor to see polar exploration through the lens of colonizers--an unhelpful exercise if the museum is attempting to instill in its visitors a greater

appreciation for indigenous cultures. Collaboration with indigenous communities in creating museum exhibits allows indigenous communities the right to represent themselves, shifting the curator's role to a facilitator who allows the communities from which objects originate to interpret their own culture and determine how objects should be named and displayed. At the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia, this collaborative process with groups like the Dzawada'enuxw culture allowed curators the opportunity correct inaccurate information about their collections, as well as identify and attribute certain artworks to specific communities and even individuals, not unlike Brighton Museum's "digital repatriation" project.¹³⁰

Curators hoped that improving their interpretive information by working with the originating cultures would "make our visitors understand that the value of these cultural objects lies not only in their qualities as "art," but in their continuing connection to living people today."¹³¹ Therefore, exhibit labels or educational materials that offer context about Inuit artifacts from actual Inuit people would present the artifacts in a more respectful, less colonial way that reminded museum visitors that Inuit culture endures and thrives today. For example, the ulu in the Polar Museum's collection is correctly labeled as a woman's knife. However, the ways in which Inuit women use these traditional knives and the cultural importance they hold for Inuit women is not described. A shift in the way these objects are interpreted and a greater emphasis on interpretation of Inuit

¹³⁰ Jennifer Kramer, "Mobius Museology: Curating and Critiquing the Multiversity Galleries at the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia." in *The International Handbooks of Museum Studies: Museum Transformations, First Edition*. Ed. Annie E. Coombes and Ruth B. Phillips (United States: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2015): 489-492

¹³¹Kramer 495

objects *by* Inuit people will be a meaningful adjustment to the museum's displays. The Inuit Heritage Trust, which took part in the development of the *Death in the Ice* exhibition, may be a point of contact for Polar Museum staff to begin the collaborative endeavor of decolonizing the Arctic wing. The Inuit Heritage Trust offers an Elders Recognition Award to community elders for outstanding efforts to educate other Inuit about their heritage and culture--deferring to the knowledge of elders such as these would likely create an outstanding shift in the museum's interpretation of Inuit artifacts.

The National Maritime Museum also holds myriad Inuit artifacts crafted from items salvaged from the Expedition. Inuit interaction with Franklin material is the subject of research published by anthropologist Dana Thacher, who has discussed the ways in which Inuit people salvaged and repurposed Franklin Expedition materials. If the NMM used such research in exhibit planning, object labels or text panels accompanying exhibits of these artifacts could provide context as to how and why the Inuit collected and "upcycled" Expedition detritus for their own uses.¹³² Rather than the perceived "theft" of deceased explorers' belongings, as Victorian searchers might have seen it, the Inuit's reimagining of European materials, such as repurposing nails from a ship's boat into fish hooks, demonstrate the resourcefulness of Inuit as well as an interesting subversion of the intended purpose of mass-produced materials from an industrialized society.¹³³

If the Polar Museum, the NMM, or other British museums invested in interpreting Franklin Expedition history had the funding with which to do so, they could also

¹³²Dana Thacher, "Salvaging on the Coast of Erebus Bay, King William Island: An Analysis of Inuit Interaction with Material from the Franklin Expedition." *Arctic* 71, no. 4 (2018): 431-43. Accessed July 28, 2021. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26567072>.

¹³³ Thacher 440

reimagine the Victorian polar panorama. Panoramas, as an art form, are representative of Western art and privilege, and are not a wholly unproblematic art form to discuss; my personal interest in them has guided this section of my discussion. Dozens of modern museums around the world feature massive panoramas of historical events, often augmented with modern lighting and set pieces in front of the paintings to add dimension. One historic and immersive example is the “Battle of Gettysburg” cyclorama at Gettysburg National Military Park, completed in the 1880s and still viewable today after a restoration in the early 2000s.¹³⁴ As described on the webpage for Salzburg’s 1829 panorama, these massive paintings were a historic form of “infotainment.”¹³⁵

The fact that panoramas have endured indicates that they can still serve an interpretive purpose in the modern day. Extant panoramas on display today often represent cities or landscapes, like the Salzburg panorama or the Panorama Mesdag at the Hague, which represents Scheveningen Beach in 1880.¹³⁶ Others represent battles, like the Panorama of the Battle of Raławice in Poland¹³⁷, the Panorama 1453 in Istanbul¹³⁸, and *The Capturing of Jinzhou in Liaoshen Battle* in Jinzhou City, China.¹³⁹ Panoramas of

¹³⁴ National Park Service, “Cyclorama Painting,” Accessed July 29, 2021.

<https://www.nps.gov/gett/planyourvisit/cyclorama.htm>

¹³⁵ Salzburg Museum, “Panorama Museum Residenzplatz.” Accessed July 29, 2021.

<https://www.salzburgmuseum.at/en/locations/panoramamuseum/>

¹³⁶ “Panorama Mesdag,” Accessed July 29, 2021.

<https://www.holland.com/global/tourism/destinations/the-hague/panorama-mesdag.htm>

¹³⁷ National Museum in Wrocław, “Panorama of the Battle of Raławice,” Accessed July 29, 2021.

¹³⁸ Panorama 1453 History Museum, “The Panorama 1453 About,” Accessed July 29, 2021. <https://www.panoramikmuze.com/en/about-us>

¹³⁹ International Panorama Council, “The Capturing of Jinzhou in Liaoshen Battle.” Accessed July 29, 2021.

https://panoramacouncil.org/what_we_do/resources/panoramas_and_related_art_forms_databse/the_capturing_of_jinzhou_in_liaoshen_battle/?display_all

key battles and historic landscapes or cityscapes proliferate, some modern, some historical--however, despite the surprisingly vast number of surviving panoramas across the globe, the polar panoramas that once captured Victorian Britons' imaginations have not survived to the modern day, despite their historic popularity. This, perhaps, is where an ambitious museum could step in.

The International Panorama Council, founded in 1992, is a professional organization founded to protect, preserve and promote historical panoramas, with goals that include listing historic panoramas as UNESCO World Heritage Sites.¹⁴⁰ IPC is also invested in the “financing, exhibiting and marketing of panoramas.” Were a museum interested in recreating a polar panorama, the panorama specialists of IPC might serve as valuable allies. As demonstrated by the analysis of Burford's *Description* panorama, artists' sketches of 19th century polar panoramas still exist¹⁴¹, and it could be feasible to recreate a historic polar panorama and present it as a reproduction with new historical context. However, the creation of a new panorama would offer new opportunities to perpetuate a historic art form while reinventing it in dynamic ways.

Panoramas, as massive, evocative scenes of historic events, might provide a tantalizing backdrop for online trendsetters looking for an aesthetically engaging backdrop for Instagram photos. How, then, would museums featuring the new panorama prevent the trivialization of the often-tragic historic information contained within the imagery? The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum grappled with a similar

¹⁴⁰ International Panorama Council, “History.” Accessed July 29, 2021. https://panoramacouncil.org/en/who_we_are/organization_overview/history/

¹⁴¹ Potter, *Arctic Spectacles*, 42

challenge, but Holocaust and media scholar Meghan Lundrigan argues that allowing visitors to photograph and share their experiences on social media platforms like Instagram enables them to engage in a broader online conversation about the different manifestations of Holocaust memory. Additionally, monitoring what is posted about the museum enables Holocaust scholars to study what aspects of the interpretation are most impactful to the public, showing what facets of the museum experience visitors want to capture and preserve.¹⁴²

While the prospect of visitors using the contents of a museum simply for social media attention may raise concerns with museum professionals about the trivialization of the panorama's contents, Lundrigan brings up a valid point--social media represents the museum visitors' genuine opinions of their experience and the parts of the exhibit they want to share with their social circle, people whose opinions they presumably value to some capacity. To Lundrigan, "visitor photography and social media usage at Holocaust memorial sites serve as the front line of visitor engagement with Holocaust memory in the twenty-first century." Visitor engagement with polar panoramas on social media could serve the same front-line purpose, allowing museum practitioners a peek inside visitors' heads so that interpretation can be adjusted accordingly based on what is impactful and what is not.¹⁴³

¹⁴² Meghan Lundrigan, "People, Places, Things: Considering the Role of Visitor Photography at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum." In *Lessons and Legacies XIV: The Holocaust in the Twenty-First Century; Relevance and Challenges in the Digital Age*, edited by Tim Cole and Simone Gigliotti, 263–86. Northwestern University Press, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv16t6nbt.15>. 263-265

¹⁴³ Lundrigan 280

Panoramas of the Arctic may have interpreted the landscape the Inuit called home, but the relationship the Inuit had with their homeland was lost in the grand Victorian paintings by European artists. One way to ameliorate that gap in the artistic narrative would be to exhibit an Arctic panorama created by Inuit artists. The Inuit Art Foundation is a Canadian organization which supports and advocates for Inuit artists and increases public awareness of Inuit artists.¹⁴⁴ A partnership with the Inuit Art Foundation could lead to a panorama which depicts the history of polar exploration, or specifically the Franklin Expedition, through an Inuit artistic lens. Additionally, technology available to museums, including projectors, sound systems and touchscreens, mean that a modern panorama could be as interactive and immersive as the 19th century moving panorama with narration, if not moreso.

Naturally the creation of a panorama would be a massive undertaking which would require a large space to accommodate it, meaning that adapting it for different exhibit spaces may be difficult if it travels. However, the advent of the digital age has created an opportunity to share historic panoramas in other ways. In a demonstration of the utility of digital history, the New Bedford Whaling Museum has digitized “The Grand Panorama of a Whaling Voyage 'Round the World,” using ArcGIS to create a free story map presentation of the massive panorama. The digital exhibit tracks the geographical locations represented in the panorama on a modern map with accompanying interpretive text. An online Franklin “panorama,” in the form of a story map, could use both European and Inuit narratives to plot the route of the Franklin Expedition and show

¹⁴⁴ Inuit Art Foundation, “About Us.” Accessed July 29, 2021.
<https://www.inuitartfoundation.org/about>

interactively on a modern map where important events in the Expedition's story took place. It would take up no space in the museum, but could still employ artists and digital historians to recreate a sort of e-panorama. Different imagery in the recreated panorama would be associated with plot points on the map that site visitors could explore in order to connect imagery with places. Online story maps are informative, interactive and available to anyone with internet access.¹⁴⁵

As the 2020-21 COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated, online accessibility is an essential part of a museum's success during periods of unrest--the British Museum's digital tour of its Arctic: Culture and Climate exhibition, for example, allowed website visitors the opportunity to digitally explore the gallery when it was unsafe to do so in person, a boon not only for museum-goers stuck in lockdown but people in other countries who would not otherwise have been able to visit the museum.¹⁴⁶ Other museums with Franklin stories to tell also took to the internet to share their knowledge with quarantined visitors: in November of 2020, the Surgeons' Hall Museums presented an online lecture about Harry Goodsir, assistant surgeon of HMS *Erebus* and an anatomist and conservator at the Surgeons' Museum in Edinburgh prior to his passing.¹⁴⁷ In non-pandemic circumstances, such lectures, digital tours or story map panoramas

¹⁴⁵ Benjamin Russell and Caleb Purrington, "A Spectacle in Motion: The Grand Panorama of a Whaling Voyage 'Round the World,'" Accessed July 29, 2021. <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=19513a5d13964a48aa9d00973c8a9674#>

¹⁴⁶ The British Museum, "The Citi exhibition: Arctic Culture and Climate," Accessed July 30, 2021. <https://www.britishmuseum.org/exhibitions/arctic-culture-and-climate>

¹⁴⁷ Surgeons' Hall Museums, "Death in the Arctic; Harry Goodsir and the Franklin Expedition." Accessed August 28, 2021. <https://museum.rcsed.ac.uk/news-and-events/events/2020/november/death-in-the-arctic-harry-goodsir-and-the-franklin-expedition>

could make the Franklin story accessible globally, allow differently-abled visitors to see exhibits if physical museum visits are too challenging, and also help make Franklin objects too fragile for display accessible to the public, perhaps for the first time since the Royal Naval Exhibition in the 1890s!

Digital tools could also make the wrecks of Franklin's ships highly accessible to the public. A story map or virtual tour of the Expedition shipwrecks, with interactive location pins that demonstrate where different artifacts were found on the wrecks, could be another way to imaginatively interpret the Franklin Expedition and the exciting mystery of its lost ships. Historic England has a collection of "Virtual Dive Trails" for protected shipwrecks, including some published by the Nautical Archaeology Society, available for free online. These virtual tours featuring 3D models of historic shipwrecks are accompanied by photographs of the actual wrecks and historical information about different points of interest.¹⁴⁸

The computer-generated models of the wrecks are fairly straightforward to manipulate, but for viewers with accessibility issues, Historic England has published research on accessibility and ease of use for the Virtual Dive Trails, indicating the possibility for further development of such virtual shipwreck tours.¹⁴⁹ Additionally, the creation of a virtual shipwreck tour will help provide a substitute to actual diving and exploration; a similar motive spurred the creation of the Thistlegorm Project, a virtual

¹⁴⁸ Historic England, "Virtual Dive Trails." Accessed July 30, 2021.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/get-involved/visit/protected-wrecks/virtual-dive-trails/>

¹⁴⁹ Alison James, "Review of the Virtual Dive Trails Scheme (7374): A big splash or a damp squib?" Historic England, March 2018. Accessed July 30, 2021.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/content/docs/get-involved/dive-trails-review-pdf/>

tour of the wreck of a 1940s cargo ship, SS *Thistlegorm*, which was in part designed to ease the strain of frequent dives on the well-preserved but fragile wreck.¹⁵⁰

As the Franklin wrecks may be in fragile condition, virtual tours would protect the wrecksite from potential damage. A virtual tour could also be created for HMS *Breadalbane*. A supply ship sunk by crushing pack ice during Franklin searches in 1853, *Breadalbane* is one of the northernmost shipwrecks known¹⁵¹, and could provide interesting information to the public about the effect of polar waters on shipwreck preservation and the importance of studying and caring for shipwrecks to protect them from such environmental hazards as shipworms, voracious boring mollusks that survive on submerged wood and endanger shipwrecks.

Interpretation of the Franklin Expedition has already advanced significantly since the 19th century. Memorialization is still a facet of Franklin interpretation, but it has been democratized in the 21st century. At the debut of *Death in the Ice at Greenwich*, small blue banners featuring a fouled anchor and the phrase “Hope on, hope ever,” which became synonymous with the search for Franklin and his men, were displayed on the museum lawn with the names of every individual who died on the Expedition. However, the officers’ memorials were not larger or grander than the crewmen’s, and no local noblemen needed step forward to fund a more ostentatious banner for the commanders. Rather, each memorial was identical save the differing names, demonstrating that each

¹⁵⁰ The Thistlegorm Project, “About.” Accessed July 30, 2021. <https://thethistlegormproject.com/about/>

¹⁵¹ CBC News, “Rare Footage Shows High Arctic Franklin-Era Shipwreck from 1853.” April 25, 2014. Accessed August 28, 2021. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/rare-footage-shows-high-arctic-franklin-era-shipwreck-from-1853-1.2621969>

victim had his own value and was an equally tragic loss of life. The subtlety and almost homogeneity of the memorials is an equalizer that helps to undo the unbalanced memorialization of the upper class versus the working class Franklinites in the 19th century. Additionally, the importance of Franklin and his men as examples of Christian manhood has been reworked through the interpretations of items like Franklin's prayer books as important personal items--rather than using them as an example of faith to follow, they now serve to illustrate Franklin's character and enhance biographical interpretations of his life.

Polar exhibits today, not just about Franklin but about Arctic explorers in the 19th century more broadly, also do a better job of showing polar explorers not just as paragons of heroic masculinity, but as individuals who were part of a particular sphere of scientific and imperial pursuits in the 19th century, and the life experiences those pursuits entailed. Those life experiences include encounters and exchanges with the Inuit, who, rather than being reduced to human specimens or portrayed as savages through displays of weaponry, are now being included in exhibits as valuable contributors to the story of polar exploration and our continuing quest for answers about Franklin. Authority on the Expedition is finally being shared as the Franklin saga is decolonized--increasing utilization of Inuit narratives and presentation of their culture in a more deferential way is a healthy step forward from the colonial attitudes of 19th century British museums. Meaningful changes to the manner in which polar artifacts are displayed--even changes as simple as arranging them by explorer or theme as they are in the Polar Museum, as opposed to randomly in 19th century exhibits--tells a more cohesive, meaningful

narrative that tells a story as opposed to serving merely as the material evidence of a tragedy which struck down heroes of empire.

The benefit of looking back at the relics of the Franklin Expedition also lies in our ability to use the objects as storytelling devices which teach us about the culture from which they came. As elucidated by Jules David Prown in his study of material culture and its interpretive role, material culture, the physical objects left behind from people in the past, allow us to study the beliefs of a society at a given time in history. Their utility often lies in filling in the gaps that are left in historic texts, helping us study patterns and details of daily existence in the past.¹⁵² While the utilitarian objects left behind by the Franklin Expedition--the rakes, ammunition and snow goggles--lack the aesthetic beauty of the monuments commemorating the men who left them behind, they *are* illustrative. And although they are not the typical collections a museum might seek out, owing to their damaged and fragmented state, the very damage and fragmentation of these “pathetic” objects demonstrates the valuable story they have to tell.¹⁵³ With the added illumination of Inuit oral histories, the Franklin Expedition story that museums can now tell, while not “perfect” or “complete,” will likely teach museum visitors more about the Expedition and its historical importance than any exhibit of the 19th century. Interpreting indigenous stories in an exhibit explicitly about the story of white individuals is challenging, but tempering the parade of affluent white faces with information about the environment and cultures they encroached upon lends a viewpoint that has historically been stripped from

¹⁵² Jules David Prown, "Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method." *Winterthur Portfolio* 17, no. 1 (1982): 1-19. Accessed September 13, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1180761>. 1-6

¹⁵³ Deetz 4-5, 8

stories of exploration, simultaneously creating a fuller story and creating a platform for indigenous peoples to interpret their own culture the way they want to represent it.

CHAPTER THREE: INUIT CULTURE AND THE FRANKLIN EXPEDITION

In previous chapters we have touched on the role of the Inuit in the search for Franklin and some of the ways Inuit people are involved in the story of the Franklin Expedition. Further illumination of the ways in which Inuit culture has directly benefited the study of the Franklin Expedition will emphasize the importance of sharing authority with the Inuit in matters of Franklin interpretation. Additionally, understanding the epistemological traditions used by the Inuit to transfer historic information among generations is also important--highlighting the *hows* and *whys* of Inuit epistemology helps us understand how we know what we know about Franklin's fate.

Primary source documents that offered insight into the events of the Franklin Expedition were unfortunately lost or destroyed in the years following the Expedition's end. At least some of the books the explorers carried, like the ships' logbooks--which would have been invaluable for tracing the Expedition's path from 1845 to 1848--were thrown away or torn apart for fun by Inuit children, as their parents were unable to read the books' contents.¹⁵⁴ Other books and loose papers were discovered by Inuit people where they had been abandoned by the explorers, but searchers were unable to recover them.¹⁵⁵ This loss is unfortunate, but traditional indigenous knowledge can help scholars fill in some of the gaps in the Franklinites' story after they left their ships for King William Island.

¹⁵⁴ Beattie and Geiger 75, Woodman 155

¹⁵⁵ Woodman 191-192

The Inuit have an advanced epistemological system called Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit. Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit, or IQ, is an oral history tradition based on a deep understanding of the Arctic environment and the spaces and seasons in which historical events transpired, as well as a strong foundation in traditional Inuit culture.¹⁵⁶ IQ represents cultural values, social structures, skills and expectations of behavior, and is “as much a way of life as it is sets of information,” per the Nunavut Social Development Council.¹⁵⁷ This way of life is one that emphasizes the importance of deference towards Inuit elders, whose participation in the transferal of traditional knowledge helps them educate younger generations about historical events and important skills for which there is no written evidence.¹⁵⁸ The dissemination of knowledge about traditional survival skills and tools, Arctic wildlife, Inuit laws and conflict management is used as an opportunity to impart traditional Inuit values to youth.

IQ is not just about sharing traditional knowledge, but sharing *accurate* traditional knowledge. An important trait of Qaujimagatuqangit is its utilization of eyewitness testimony—elders today are hesitant to teach their young charges about anything they have not personally experienced.¹⁵⁹ As described by Inuk scholar Krista Ulujuk

¹⁵⁶ Andrew M. Stewart, Darren Keith, and Joan Scottie. “Caribou Crossings and Cultural Meanings: Placing Traditional Knowledge and Archaeology in Context in the Inuit Landscape.” *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 11 (2004): 183-211.

¹⁵⁷ Lisa Stevenson, “Starting Out,” in *Critical Inuit Studies: An Anthology of Contemporary Arctic Ethnography* (Ukraine: University of Nebraska Press, 2006): 22

¹⁵⁸ Carol Zane Jolles, “Listening to Elders, Working With Youth,” in *Critical Inuit Studies: An Anthology of Contemporary Arctic Ethnography* (Ukraine: University of Nebraska Press, 2006) 44-55

¹⁵⁹ Barbara Saunders, *The Challenges of Native American Studies: Essays in Celebration of the Twenty-fifth American Indian Workshop* (Belgium: Cornell University Press, 2004): 140-141

Zawadski, “we strongly believe you can truly understand something and talk about something only if you have experienced it, which renders your knowledge true.”¹⁶⁰

Therefore, while the knowledge elders share will vary based on their life experiences, it is guaranteed to be a truthful interpretation of their personal history. The value of elders’ knowledge has been highlighted in exhibits like *Death in the Ice*, which featured Inuit elders’ testimonies about Franklin’s lost ships, and initiatives like Bristol Museum’s “digital repatriation” project, where elders were compensated for their analysis of Inuit artifacts in Bristol Museum’s collections.

While involving elders in exhibit planning and interpretation is an important step in demonstrating the value of Inuit epistemology to “southerners” who are unfamiliar with Arctic culture, the utilization of elders’ testimony for the benefit of outsiders also illuminates a question that is something of a through-line within studies of the Arctic and its communities. The benefit the Inuit provide researchers is obvious, but how do the Inuit benefit from their work with researchers? What does their work with museums or anthropologists do for them, and how can museums ensure that this working relationship is beneficial for both parties?

To begin with, working collaboratively with Inuit communities to conduct research is imperative. In the right circumstances, a collaborative approach can help foster relationships between Inuit youth and their elders. Anthropologist Carol Zane Jolles worked with high school students in an Alaska Native community to conduct research on their culture. This approach gave youth an opportunity to absorb knowledge

¹⁶⁰ Krista Ulujuk Zawadski, “Qaujimanira: Inuit Art as Autoethnography.” *Ab-Original* 2, no. 2 (2018): 151–56. <https://doi.org/10.5325/aboriginal.2.2.0151>. 151

from their elders.¹⁶¹ Communing with elders can allow youth to receive different knowledge from their community than what they might learn in school. From elders, youth can acquire *isumaqsajuq*, Inuit knowledge from nomadic life about their traditional lifeways passed orally along gendered corridors amongst communities. This is distinct from *ilisaijuq*, Inuit knowledge from their settlement days, acquired after Inuit were forced into permanent settlements by the Canadian government in the 20th century.¹⁶²

These categorizations of knowledge show an interesting differentiation that Inuit make between knowledge they acquired through a traditional lifestyle versus a lifestyle that was imposed upon them. If researchers are interested in acquiring *isumaqsajuq*, being aware of the distinction and the importance lent to knowledge from past nomadic days will likely prove helpful. Acquiring information for anthropological research is certainly important, but if that research can foster a situation that gives elders a definitive opportunity to commune with their descendants, it benefits both parties, improving and balancing the historically one-sided relationship between foreign researchers and the indigenous subjects of their research. Ludger and Linna Weber Muller-Wille, while studying Inuit toponymy, brought research conducted by anthropologist Franz Boas in the 1880s on Inuit place names to the communities Boas had studied, sharing information that had never been accessible to the Inuit before. The Muller-Willes discussed Boas' work with elders, allowing them to reincorporate forgotten place names into their oral

¹⁶¹ Jolles 45-55

¹⁶² *Traditions, Traps, and Trends: Transfer of Knowledge in Arctic Regions*, ed. Jarich Oosten and Barbara Hellen Miller (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2018).12-30

records, while the Muller-Willes create a comprehensive toponymic map of the Eastern Arctic region of Tinijjuarvik.¹⁶³

In these cases, the researchers had concrete benefits to offer the elders for their time and valuable knowledge: sharing that knowledge with community youth and reabsorbing historical information into their oral record which had been lost over time--and which Boas himself had not shared with the subjects of his research. Boas was operating in a nineteenth century mindset. In this way, his retention of the data from his study is somewhat comparable to explorers like Parry, whose reflections on Inuit artifacts included in the Polar Museum's object labels reveal some of his ignorance towards indigenous peoples and the value of sharing authority and a voice with them about their own cultural artifacts.

While Boas' intentions were probably not *malicious* in neglecting to share with the Inuit the toponymic information he acquired from them, it offers an important lesson about cross-cultural collaboration--the hazard of cultural biases. Because non-Inuit researchers approach Inuit culture from a different background, they must be aware of the inherent biases they bring to their interpretation. The predominant view of the Arctic, as explained by Karen Routledge, has been created by people who are not from there. This has concretized a popular view of the Arctic as a barren and inhospitable place, rather than the culturally rich landscape it actually is. Since the nineteenth century, its value to Europeans has been either as a potential conduit for resources--the Northwest Passage to

¹⁶³ Ludger Muller-Wille and Linna Weber Muller-Wille, "Inuit Geographical Knowledge One Hundred Years Apart," in *Critical Inuit Studies: An Anthology of Contemporary Arctic Ethnography* (Ukraine: University of Nebraska Press, 2006) 217-229

Asia--or as a site for resource extraction, rather than an extremely important, spiritual home for its indigenous inhabitants.¹⁶⁴

The manner in which researchers collect information about Inuit culture and epistemology is as important as what the Inuit themselves actually tell the researchers. Providing research results to the communities being researched is an important step, but researchers like Jolles or the Muller-Willes frequently expanded their efforts and actually involved Inuit people in the process of data collection, whether it was consulting with elders in meetings to improve a toponymic map, as the Muller-Willes did, or enlisting community youth to confer with elders about traditional knowledge, as practiced by Jolles in her research. When we compare the way researchers work side by side with Inuit people today to understand the Franklin Expedition, as opposed to the 19th century approach, an enormous evolution in methodology becomes apparent. The collaborative approach, so beneficial to both researchers and Inuit communities, was scarcely undertaken by Franklin searchers who met with Inuit in the 19th century.

John Rae was not the only Franklin searcher to rely on Inuit accounts of the Franklinites, but he certainly suffered for it more than other searchers. Because he placed his confidence in these so-called “savages” and their testimonies about Franklin’s men resorting to survival cannibalism, he was widely dismissed and even outright shamed by London society and died scorned and unthanked for his Franklin rescue efforts.¹⁶⁵ McClintock had discovered damaged human remains, but he neither confirmed nor

¹⁶⁴ Karen Routledge, *Do You See Ice? Inuit and Americans at Home and Away* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018). xxii-2

¹⁶⁵ Potter, *Finding Franklin*, 83-97

denied Rae's allegations due to his lack of Inuit testimony.¹⁶⁶ The importance and validity of indigenous narratives in relation to the Expedition was either widely disregarded or cherry picked by searchers, who were just as likely to lash out at the Inuit for "lying" as for telling the truth.

Ill-fated American Franklin searcher Charles Francis Hall relied on Inuit guides during his rescue expeditions, but often regarded Inuit with suspicion--he typically showered Inuit informants with effusive praise initially, only to lose his trust in them and treat them with contempt if they gave him information that proved to be untrue. In-nook-poo-zhe-jook was an Inuk man whose oral accounts had been relied on and trusted by John Rae. However, he was treated with disdain by Hall because he "[spoke] truth and falsehood all intermingled," leading Hall to distrust his word and accuse the Netsilik of being "consummate liars." David Woodman, whose research on Inuit accounts of the Franklin Expedition provides extensive clues to the Franklinites' fates, argues that In-nook-poo-zhe-jook did not intend to deceive Hall. Rather, different cultural attitudes about death and the importance of events that transpired in the past meant that detailed accounts of the experiences and movements of Franklin's crew would not have been of great import to the Inuit Hall encountered, and therefore they could not always give Hall the information he wanted to hear.¹⁶⁷

The information the Netsilik felt was important to recall, such as what they traded with Franklin's men, was not as important to searchers as factors like the date

¹⁶⁶ Potter 160

¹⁶⁷ David C. Woodman, *Unravelling the Franklin Mystery: Inuit Testimony* (Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992): 48-53

upon which their remembered events occurred, something the Inuit could not offer them. Additionally, Hall's quest for information was probably complicated by his limited understanding of the nuances of Inuktitut, for which he required interpreters. Despite his frustrations, Hall acquired extensive Inuit testimony, interviewing Inuit elders for hours to acquire information about Franklin's men. While he was quick to jump to the conclusion that the Inuit were somehow conspiring against him or lying, the personal stories he acquired have proved hugely useful to scholars like Woodman.¹⁶⁸ This sharing of personal stories about life experiences, which Franklin searchers found so obtuse and frustrating, is a key exhibit of the nature of IQ. Personal stories of life experiences like trade or hunting are the types of vignettes which Inuit elders seeking to combat "cultural memory loss" are eager to share. Personal experiences and knowledge about past lifeways, rather than the particular historical events Europeans might emphasize as hallmarks of their history and culture, are the elements of Inuit history elders try to instill in their descendants: "Remembering is seen as a safeguard to existence of an Inuit people, but it is the memory of a way of life rather than a set of historical events that shores up Inuit identity."¹⁶⁹

The prioritization of remembering how life *used* to be lived and must continue to be lived in order to maintain traditional Inuit culture is an interesting iteration of the ethical choices of memorialization discussed in Chapter 1. Rather than cherry-picking facets of historic lifeways and experiences of Inuit in the past to justify or valorize Inuit

¹⁶⁸ Woodman 48-53

¹⁶⁹ Lisa Stevenson, "The Ethical Injunction to Remember" in *Critical Inuit Studies: An Anthology of Contemporary Arctic Ethnography* (Ukraine: University of Nebraska Press, 2006): 170

culture in the present, the lifeways of the past are intended to maintain a *continuity* and stability in Inuit culture--rather than justifying changes or current attitudes, traditional lifeways are retained as a way to keep Inuit identity consistent and recognizable throughout the centuries. But, like the ethical choices made in memorialization of history through monuments, in which the experiences of a whole group of people are pared down and distilled to teach a historical lesson, "life stories are told not so much for what makes them unique or even unusual but precisely for their power to represent a way of life that is perceived to be disappearing." The experiences of individual people as they recount them to others are representative of a universal Inuit past. Statues representing the officers of the Franklin Expedition were intended to tell the story of the unique experiences of a 129-man crew; Inuit elders speaking about their personal experiences as youths refer to how "we" used to live even when speaking only about their own lives.¹⁷⁰ The memorialization of explorers valorized characteristics which those who viewed the monument should emulate, like duty or piety; oral histories from elders, or demonstrations of traditional skills, also instilled cultural values younger generations of Inuit could emulate.

While erecting a statue and demonstrating the use of an ulu may seem dissimilar, they both represent something that was of great importance to both Inuit and Britons--the endurance of their values. However, while both acts are representative of a desire to maintain cultural memory, the motivators were different. For the British, erecting statues of heroes was a way of valorizing what Berny Sébe calls the "heroic imperialist," a man

¹⁷⁰ Stevenson 170-175

who embodied Britain's "civilizing mission" abroad. As Sébe argues, these heroes were products of a rapidly industrializing world, a literate consumer society that valorized its heroes in quickly expanding forms of mass media before their legacies were reinforced in stone¹⁷¹--a pattern one can see in the lengthy news coverage of the Franklin Expedition's disappearance and the later use of the press to publicize efforts to memorialize the Expedition's commanders. The enduring value preserved in these statues is the role men like Franklin had in carrying Britain's influence around the world and enforcing it on other peoples. Meanwhile, the endurance of memory was important to the Inuit because it was a way to hold on to facets of their traditional culture in opposition to the "civilizing mission" which was being memorialized in Britain. While both peoples took steps to maintain memory of important parts of their history, the Inuit did so for the preservation of their imperiled lifeways, rather than a celebration of putting others' lifeways in peril.

When museum professionals interpret Inuit and British peoples side by side, this should be a theme to keep in mind: while the method is different, both Inuit and British people have historically used representations of the past to share and reinforce the importance of their cultural heritage. While IQ may not have offered the types of answers Franklin searchers wanted, the oral histories they shared are appreciated as priceless today now that Western historians have a better understanding of the way Inuit memories are shared and what the Netsilik thought important to retain. Again, the issue of cultural

¹⁷¹Berny Sébe, "From the Penny Press to the Plinth: British and French 'Heroic Imperialists' as Sites of Memory." in *Sites of Imperial Memory: Commemorating Colonial Rule in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Dominik Geppert and Frank Lorenz Müller, 95–114. Manchester University Press, 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv18b5mfd.12>.

biases in the transfer of information is a problem we must confront. As argued by Jules Prown, we cannot inhabit other times and cultures, and therefore we depend on how well we can identify an artwork or artifact with our own paradigm in order to find it a transporative view into history.¹⁷² The way we interpret material culture, Prown argues, depends on how well we can relate it to our own world. If Franklin searchers or museum practitioners have had a difficult time inhabiting the world and mindset of 19th century Netsilik Inuit, would allowing Inuit individuals the opportunity to interpret their history and culture their way, so they can be properly understood, not be the best option?

Offering Inuit museum professionals and scholars the opportunity to interpret IQ in museum spaces can give them a historically rare chance to interpret their own culture as they see fit. Dr. Heather Igloliorte, an Inuk art historian, argues that most interpretation of Inuit arts and culture has historically been by Qallunaat, non-Inuit people, owing in part to the scarcity of Inuit scholars who can step in to interpret Inuit culture instead of Qallunaat. Igloliorte used the basis of IQ and its combination of traditional knowledge, world views and cosmology to curate an exhibit of Inuit sculpture that reflected the living and changing nature of IQ as a dynamic system of knowledge that is applicable throughout time: “This philosophy, applied to the arts, underscores that for Inuit, the way to respect our ancestors is to maintain our living traditional knowledge and to be resourceful and creative, as they had to be.”¹⁷³

¹⁷² Prown 16

¹⁷³ Heather Igloliorte, “Curating Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit: Inuit Knowledge in the Qallunaat Art Museum.” *Art Journal* 76, no. 2 (2017): 100–113. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45142476>. 101-103

The title of Igloliorte's exhibit was *Ilippunga*, "I have learned" or "I am learning" in Inuktitut. By organizing the exhibit displays by different tenets of IQ, like respect for animals and the land or the important intergenerational knowledge mothers transfer to their families, Igloliorte reframed an exhibit of Inuit art to convey Inuit values, rather than artistic merits projected onto them by Qallunaat art collectors. The interpretation of IQ as an enduring and important practice is also significant because, as Igloliorte suggests, the transferral of IQ was disrupted by the introduction of colonialism and Christianity to the Arctic, threatening the traditional practice's endurance:

Within a period of a few short decades between 1900 and 1950, the Inuit way of life was rapidly altered by contact with Qallunaat culture in the North, in areas now known as Nunavut and Nunavik, and earlier in the east and west of the Arctic. Massive changes came to the Arctic. Inuit were almost completely converted to Christianity in the first decades of the century by eager missionaries.¹⁷⁴

The side effects of European colonialism, including the depletion of natural resources in the Arctic and the forced attendance of Inuit children in church-run schools, meant that Inuit people had to preserve their culture in other ways, including sculptures like the ones in Igloliorte's exhibit.

As Krista Ulujuk Zawadski describes in her analysis of Inuit arts, "The impact of a colonial incursion on Inuit communities resulted in an enforced "contact zone" in which Inuit livelihoods were made to exist side-by-side [with] Western power systems." Inuit arts and cultural practices were forcibly shaped by colonizers in this environment.¹⁷⁵ Zawadski argues that Inuit artists used their crafts as a form of autoethnography, introspective artworks that describe Inuit people and their relationship with their own

¹⁷⁴ Igloliorte 108-109

¹⁷⁵ Zawadski 152

culture, creating meaningful depictions of Inuit's relationship with Inuitness in conversation with the ways in which colonizers perceive them.¹⁷⁶ Zawadski reflects on the ways in which incorporating Inuit voices into exhibit design can strengthen the interpretation and correct inaccuracies: "My parents visited a museum where the interior of an iglu was on display...They immediately noticed that the sleeping platform was set up backward and notified the curator, who had never been in an iglu nor had ever been in the Arctic and had set it up based on his own assumptions." As illustrated by Zawadski and Igloliorte, the path forward in exhibitions of Inuit culture is a "multivocal" approach that makes up for the lack of Inuit voices in past exhibits of Arctic arts and artifacts.¹⁷⁷

How, one might ask, can we apply Zawadski and Igloliorte's multivocal approach? As illustrated in Zawadski's example, a lack of Inuit involvement in exhibits involving their culture can lead to mistakes in interpretation. Although the lack of Inuit scholars to fill in interpretive roles is a problem Igloliorte emphasized, scholars do not necessarily need to be the final word on Inuit interpretation; the exceptional elders discussed above could likely fulfill a similar role with as much competence despite the lack of higher education. Museums like the Polar Museum or the National Maritime Museum could simply apply the same elder-focused oral history components present in the Death in the Ice exhibit to their permanent polar collections. The vantage point of explorers like Parry do not necessarily need to be excised from exhibits--they do provide a valuable view into the colonial mindset--but they should be juxtaposed by Inuit testimony that provides the view of indigenous peoples interacting with the Europeans

¹⁷⁶ Zawadski 152-153

¹⁷⁷ Zawadski 155

who were “discovering” their homeland. The voice of the colonizer has historically been lent more credence than the voice of the indigenous individual--perhaps this historical devaluing of Inuit narratives is part of the reason Inuk ranger Sammy Kogvik kept his discovery of the mast of HMS *Terror* to himself for six years before he informed his superiors of his find in 2016--he did not feel he would be believed, in part because he lost the camera that showed photographic proof of the wreck and worried that his story “might seem like lies to people.”¹⁷⁸ This echoes the accusatory manner in which Charles Francis Hall dubbed Inuit “consummate liars.” Kogvik reflected on oral histories about the wrecks: “Oh yeah, I heard a lot of stories about *Terror*, the ships, but I guess Parks Canada don't listen to people...They just ignore Inuit stories about the *Terror* ship.” Kogvik’s boss, Operations Director of the Arctic Research Foundation, validated Kogvik’s fears, stating in an interview that “people from the South” seldom listen to Inuit about the Franklin shipwrecks.¹⁷⁹

Sammy Kogvik’s story is highly important, but not unique, especially when it comes to the Franklin Expedition. Not long before Kogvik’s guidance led Canadians to the wreck of *Terror*, the importance of lending credence to indigenous narratives was demonstrated when Inuk historian Louie Kamookak used Inuit oral accounts and his complex traditional knowledge of the landscape of King William Island to help locate the wreck site of HMS *Erebus* in 2014.¹⁸⁰ Over decades of hard work, Kamookak combined

¹⁷⁸ Katherine Barton, “No camera, no proof: Why Sammy Kogvik didn’t tell anyone about HMS *Terror* find.” *CBC News*, September 15, 2016. Accessed October 4, 2021. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/sammy-kogvik-hms-terror-franklin-1.3763653>

¹⁷⁹ Barton, “No camera, no proof.”

¹⁸⁰ Nick Walker, “Remembering Inuit Oral Historian Louie Kamookak,” *Canadian Geographic*, March 23, 2018. Accessed April 28, 2021.

information from Qaujimagatuqangit stories and the logs of Franklin searchers to create a working—and accurate—theory of where the Franklin shipwrecks lay.¹⁸¹ His guidance helped underwater archaeological teams to locate Erebus using side-scan and multi-beam sonar in an area of the sea called Ugjulik, which Inuit in the nineteenth century had also suggested to searchers as a resting place for one of Franklin’s ships.¹⁸² Kamookak relied on historic information, but he also emphasized the fact that modern Inuit accounts of the shipwrecks existed, but were not often taken seriously by Canadian authorities: “There’s a lot of modern information of a ship being seen there, under the water, from hunters and also from airplanes. Researchers like David Woodman and John Geiger acknowledged the importance of Inuit testimony, but “[d]espite this long history of Inuit oral tradition, little notice of Inuit communities had been taken in the official announcements made in 2014,” when it was reported that *Erebus* had been located.¹⁸³

Both Kamookak and Kogvik had a wealth of information available about the location and history of Franklin’s ships, but were disregarded because the source was indigenous knowledge. However, public history institutions in Canada are taking steps to prioritize Inuit knowledge and stewardship of Franklin sites. The importance of Inuit

<https://www.canadiangeographic.ca/article/remembering-inuit-oral-historian-louie-kamookak>

¹⁸¹ Leyland Cecco, “Inuit oral historian who pointed way to Franklin shipwrecks dies aged 58.” *The Guardian*, March 29, 2018. Accessed September 23, 2021. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/29/inuit-oral-historian-who-pointed-way-to-franklin-shipwrecks-dies-aged-58>

¹⁸² Michael Smith, *Icebound In The Arctic: The Mystery of Captain Francis Crozier and the Franklin Expedition*. (Ireland: O'Brien Press, 2021): Chapter 24. Retrieved from Google Books.

¹⁸³ Renée Hulan, *Climate Change and Writing the Canadian Arctic* (Germany: Springer International Publishing, 2017): 12-13

testimony is front and center in Parks Canada's presentation of the Franklin Expedition on their website, demonstrating a desire to publicly credit the Inuit for their ongoing role in the protection and preservation of Franklin history and sites. In 2019, the United Kingdom yielded ownership of the Franklin wrecks to Canada, leading to the establishment of the Wrecks of HMS Erebus and HMS Terror National Historic Site in Gjoa Haven, Nunavut. Particular importance is lent to Kamookak's contributions to Franklin research.¹⁸⁴ Offline, Parks Canada has made an effort to place the importance of Inuit culture at the forefront of the park's interpretive strategy. A yearly Umiyaqtutt ("Shipwreck") Festival celebrates Inuit culture and crafts as well as the history of the shipwrecks and features such events as a fashion show of traditional Inuit garb, often modeled by tribal Elders.¹⁸⁵ Interpreting European history while celebrating Inuit history is a model for Franklin interpretation in other theaters. The Inuit of King William Island are also joint guardians of *Erebus* and *Terror* alongside Parks Canada, as the wreck sites lie in waters controlled by Nunavut.¹⁸⁶ Ongoing underwater archaeology teams from Parks Canada are working to retrieve artifacts from the sunken vessels, with further research planned for the future, while the Inuit serve an important and closely involved

¹⁸⁴ "Inuit Traditional Knowledge," Wrecks of HMS Erebus and HMS Terror National Historic Site. Accessed October 4, 2021. <https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/lhn-nhs/nu/epaveswrecks/culture/inuit/qaujimajatuqangit>

¹⁸⁵ Derek Neary, "Gjoa Haven celebrates second summer festival." *Nunavut News*, September 11, 2018. Accessed October 4, 2021. <https://nunavutnews.com/nunavut-news/gjoa-haven-celebrates-second-summer-festival/>

¹⁸⁶ "Britain officially gifts two long-lost ships from Franklin Expedition to Canada, Inuit." *The Globe and Mail*, April 26, 2018. Accessed October 4, 2021. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-britain-officially-gifts-two-long-lost-ships-from-franklin-expedition/>

role as protectors of the wreck sites.¹⁸⁷ The Inuit serve as stewards of the wrecks with an Inuit Guardian program¹⁸⁸, an idea they suggested themselves through the Franklin Interim Advisory Committee, an organization widely comprised of Inuit people including members of the Kitikmeot Inuit Association and the Inuit Heritage Trust.¹⁸⁹ which utilizes indigenous involvement in important park sites and also involves other peoples including the Haida, Huu-ay-aht, Ditidaht, Pacheedaht and other First Nations tribes who care for historic sites and share historic knowledge, songs and stories with visitors.¹⁹⁰

The Guardian and Watchmen programs are an excellent example of the multivocality discussed above--Parks Canada, as an institution, has yielded authority and a voice to indigenous peoples so that they may protect sites that are important to their history while sharing their cultural heritage with park visitors. A museum exhibit in Britain about the lives and experiences of the Inuit Guardians of Franklin's ships might be an interesting introduction to the contemporary lives and careers of indigenous people to Britons, who do not have an indigenous population like Canada does. An exhibit about the life and work of Inuit Guardians, which could combine Franklin relics, modern Guardians' gear and Inuit artifacts, could paint a picture for the public of the work

¹⁸⁷ Megan Gannon, "Divers Recover More Than 350 Artifacts From the HMS 'Erebus' Shipwreck," *Smithsonian Magazine*, February 24, 2020. Accessed October 4, 2021. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/divers-recover-more-than-350-artifacts-from-hms-erebus-shipwreck-180974251/>

¹⁸⁸ "Inuit Guardians Program," Wrecks of HMS Erebus and HMS Terror National Historic Site, Parks Canada, <https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/lhn-nhs/nu/epaveswrecks/culture/inuit/gardiens-guardians>. Accessed October 4, 2021.

¹⁸⁹ "Inuit Guardians," *Above & Beyond*, August 31, 2018. Accessed October 5, 2021. <http://arcticjournal.ca/featured/inuit-guardians/>

¹⁹⁰ "Guardian and Watchmen programs," Parks Canada. Accessed October 4th, 2021. <https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/culture/autochtones-indigenous/gardiens-guardians>

indigenous peoples can do to contribute to and protect other peoples' history. Oral histories by the Guardians would put their voices and experiences at the forefront in an engaging way that would not only educate the public, but also showcase and honor the hard work Guardians do protecting and interpreting the Franklin story. The Indigenous Cultural Heritage Advisory Council advises Parks Canada on its cultural programs and advocates for Métis and Inuit people, and could be a useful liaison for a museum planning a Guardians exhibit.¹⁹¹

Parks Canada's utilization of Indigenous peoples as guardians of park sites is a progressive step towards sharing authority over the land and its history with Indigenous groups, but it is an imitation of programs implemented in Australia with Aboriginal people. There, initiatives like the Working on Country program, started in 2007, channel funding into land and sea management efforts undertaken by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Additionally, Indigenous Rangers assist in land management programs in Indigenous Protected Areas; the job opportunities offered from various ranger programs account for the availability of over 2,000 jobs per year for Indigenous peoples of Australia.¹⁹² Much like the Inuit role in caring for Franklin sites is in part because the wrecks rest in Nunavut, Indigenous Rangers in Australia help oversee the 20

¹⁹¹ Mi'gmaq Government, "Join the Indigenous Cultural Heritage Advisory Council." *Listuguj*, July 29, 2019. Accessed October 4, 2021. <https://listuguj.ca/join-the-indigenous-cultural-heritage-advisory-council/>

¹⁹² Lisa J. Watt, "Tribes, agencies, & co-management: Indigenous Guardians Programs." *Ecotrust*, January 21, 2021. Accessed October 5, 2021. <https://ecotrust.org/indigenous-guardians-programs/>

percent of Australian land held in indigenous ownership, implementing indigenous techniques to care for the landscapes under their jurisdiction.¹⁹³

Anthropologists and archaeologists working in Australia often find that an Indigenous Ranger is their first point of contact during their research, and the installation of Indigenous Rangers also helps protect culturally significant sites from damage by tourists, a problem Kowanyama rangers faced when confronted with reckless hunters and fishermen, destructive four-wheelers and vandals destroying signs prohibiting shooting on Aboriginal land, alongside confrontations between Aboriginal Rangers and white tourists unwilling to submit to Aboriginal authority. Despite the difficulty of their position, Veronica Strang argues that Aboriginal Rangers provide an important cultural role for Aboriginal men, filling a niche of land management and protection that was subjugated in Aboriginal people by colonial repression in the 19th and 20th centuries--much like Inuit self-expression and traditional practices were subjugated by colonization.

Granting authority to Aboriginal Rangers as representatives of their communities' cultural backgrounds and viewpoints on the land and its history, as well as assisting the transfer of traditional knowledge from elders--although this role is complicated by the wide difference in languages spoken by different Aboriginal groups, which makes a homogeneous representation of "Aboriginal" difficult for Rangers to attain.¹⁹⁴ Strang

¹⁹³ Country Needs People, "What are Indigenous Rangers?" Accessed October 5, 2021. https://www.countryneedspeople.org.au/what_are_indigenous_rangers

¹⁹⁴ Veronica Strang, "The Strong Arm of the Law: Aboriginal Rangers, Anthropology and Archaeology." *Australian Archaeology*, no. 47 (1998): 20–29. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40287391>. 20-24, 26

argues that anthropologists and archaeologists can serve as advocates for Aboriginal land ownership and authority, although she cautions that the intertwined relationship of Aboriginal people and anthropologists may not always prove mutually advantageous, and that further observation of the relatively-new Ranger program will be necessary to understand the long-term effects of the breadth of responsibilities Aboriginal Rangers must juggle.

Recently, representatives of the Indigenous Leadership Initiative have referred to the myriad jobs the Aboriginal Ranger programs in Australia provide, suggesting that as Australia had invested \$650 million dollars in 2020 to Indigenous rangers, so should the Canadian government invest money in Indigenous guardians. Guardians in Canada often fulfill important roles caring for remote areas and communities; additionally, advocates for further investment in guardian programs argue that they fulfill an important cultural role, restoring governance of the land to the hands of its original inhabitants and enabling them to practice traditional land-based skills for a living.¹⁹⁵ An increase in guardian jobs would be hugely beneficial to communities like Gjoa Haven, the town closest to the Franklin wrecks. Established in 2017, the Inuit Guardian program offers Inuit a summer job and responsibilities including monitoring and conserving the wreck sites and managing tourists, including warding off boaters who stray too close to the delicate

¹⁹⁵ Jimmy Thomson, “Australia just committed \$650 million to Indigenous rangers programs. Should Canada do the same?” *The Narwhal*, June 26, 2020. Accessed October 5, 2021.

wrecks. Additionally, the program has proved a beneficial way for Inuit to commune and share IQ while they hunt and camp on the land during the summer.¹⁹⁶

Public history, at its core, should be community-oriented. It is the interpretation and dissemination of historical information in a way that benefits the public. The cultural landscape of the Franklin Expedition, and its stewardship by the Inuit of King William Island, are a way in which public history and its practice can benefit a remote Arctic community by providing jobs for locals as well as creating a community-led educational experience for visitors. The process of decolonization is still evolving, but as indigenous voices call for more investment in programs that put native people at the helm of protecting and interpreting historical sites and important landscapes, the future of Franklin interpretation will hopefully continue to rest in responsible and knowledgeable Inuit hands.

Parks Canada, following the model established in Australia, has made strides in giving positions of authority to Inuit people, allowing them to work on the land and practice their traditional lifeways while also protecting and interpreting the story of the Franklin Expedition. As Inuit representatives challenge the Canadian government to invest more in indigenous rangers, the question of what more can be done arises. The answer seems fairly clear for Canada: invest more in Inuit Guardians in order to benefit some of Canada's more remote communities and safeguard a history that is shared by

¹⁹⁶ "Inuit Guardians," *Above & Beyond*

both Canada and Britain. However, this analysis is about British museums, not Canadian parks. What is the way forward for British museums?

The answer for British museums when it comes to the question of Inuit involvement, to my mind, is to invest in the Inuit as much as the Canadian government has thus far (and should continue to do). As discussed above, Inuit scholars are scarce as it is due to a lack of academic opportunities for Inuit students. If British museums like the NMM or the Polar Museum are invested in expanding their interpretation of Inuit and their culture, they could collaborate with British universities (for the Polar Museum, working with the SPRI and Cambridge would naturally be the simplest choice) to create scholarship programs or fellowships for Inuit students, providing educational opportunities or job pathways for Inuit scholars interested in acquiring advanced degrees and working in museums. Because their relationship with the land is so close, if Inuit students were unwilling to leave Canada to study in Britain long-term (perhaps an understandable hesitation given the British history of bringing Inuit back to Britain as specimens), the scholarship or fellowship could qualify at Canadian universities with a summer internship at a British museum where the Inuit students could assist in the curation of rotating exhibits and the updating or correcting of existing displays of Inuit artifacts. This program would be mutually beneficial to British museums and the Inuit students who studied at them, increasing the educational horizons of Inuit interested in higher education while also providing the museums with a tangible and ongoing connection to Inuit communities.

The SPRI has relationships with dozens of Arctic institutions, including schools like Aurora College, Nunavut Arctic College, Yukon College, University of Northern British Columbia, University of Manitoba and other educational and cultural institutions.¹⁹⁷ Any of these schools or institutions could provide assistance in the endeavor, and creating such a program might help create permanent positions for Inuit at British museums or the SPRI--while it has a sizable staff, none of the SPRI's researchers and educators appear to be Inuit.¹⁹⁸ With investment from British museums, a place for Inuit scholars in the British sphere of public history could be forged. A good-faith effort by British museums to incorporate Inuit people into their actual institutions, not just in their exhibits but in their staff, would not only be beneficial to the interpretation of the Franklin story but Britain's much longer history with Arctic peoples. It is our duty as public historians to lend ourselves to the Inuit--to lend our skills, time and resources to them and make ourselves useful to them. It is the least we can offer after the great contributions the Inuit have offered to our knowledge of Franklin's fate.

John Franklin and his men perished long ago, but the story of their failed quest can still educate the public in many ways. From Franklin's story alone, museum staff can teach the public about imperialism, exploration, maritime history, Inuit culture, the material culture of both peoples, and even women's history when Jane Franklin, Sophia Cracroft and the female mediums who reported on the Expedition's movements are

¹⁹⁷ "Organizations," Scott Polar Research Institute. Accessed October 25, 2021. <https://www.spri.cam.ac.uk/resources/directory/organisations/canada.html>

¹⁹⁸ "People," Scott Polar Research Institute. Accessed October 25, 2021. <https://www.spri.cam.ac.uk/people/>

included--the topics might be finite, but the interpretations by imaginative museum staff are limited only by their imaginations (and perhaps their resources). I believe that the best way the British can commemorate the loss of the intrepid men who followed Franklin into the ice is to tell their story, and the stories of the Inuit who never forgot them, so that the world remembers and learns from their lives, their experiences, and the worlds from which they came and into which they vanished.

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