

Millais's Metapicture: *The North-West Passage* as Distillate of Arctic Voyaging from the Anglosphere

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Abstract

John Guille Millais reported in his 1899 biography of his famous father, John Everett Millais, that *The North-West Passage* (1874) was “perhaps the most popular of all Millais’ paintings at the time”. The picture’s adoptive subtitle—“It might be done, and England should to do it”, purportedly uttered by the aged sailor in the painting—captured the patriotic zeal for the British Arctic Expedition of 1875–1876, rather than the past glories (and tragedies) of the British quest to traverse the Northwest Passage. “It” in this motto looks ahead to the planting of the British flag at the North Pole and to the treatment of the Arctic in contemporary art. Looking closely at this complex painting and its surrounding discourses in the Victorian period and in related works from our own time, I argue that *The North-West Passage* was and remains a “metapicture” that distilled speculation on Arctic voyaging from the Anglosphere in the 1870s and does so again today.

Moving Away from the Past in 1874



Figure 1

John Everett Millais, *The North-West Passage*, 1874, oil on canvas, 176.5 cm × 222.2 cm. Collection of Tate (N01509). Digital image courtesy of Tate (CC-BY-NC-ND 3.0).

John Everett Millais presented *The North-West Passage* at the Royal Academy of Arts in London in its 106th annual Summer Exhibition, from 4 May to 3 August 1874 (fig. 1). His son, the artist John Guille Millais, reported enthusiastically in his 1899 biography of his famous father that this complex picture was “perhaps the most popular of all Millais’ paintings at the time”.¹ Over three hundred thousand people attended the Academy exhibition in that year. The painting represented England at the 1878 Exposition Universelle in Paris and was given to the nation by Henry Tate in 1897. Celebrated in its time, I will argue that the painting also repays close attention today because it compels our attention to issues surrounding British interests in the Arctic. Extending the rekindled appreciation of Millais’s post-Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood work in recent scholarship, I will claim that *The North-West Passage* was and remains what W.J.T. Mitchell defined as a “metapicture” and an “image-text”.² For Mitchell, “the power of the metapicture is to make visible the impossibility of separating theory from practice, ... to reveal theory as representation. The power of the imagetext is to reveal the inescapable heterogeneity or representation.”³ As I extend the concept, Millais’s painting is a metapicture because it focuses our attention on the representation of Arctic exploration as crucial to the British state and empire in the nineteenth century, including views of masculine heroism and female quietude that supported Arctic exploration and the status of technology and science on these journeys.⁴ More than an individual visual object of its own time, the painting is a concentrated, multivalent meditation on Arctic voyaging from the Anglosphere, one surrounded by texts pertaining to these expeditions. When I compare Millais’s *The North-West Passage* with contemporary artworks that again reconnoitre the Arctic—including our inheritance from nineteenth-century visual and cultural conventions about this region encapsulated in Millais’s painting—I underline the import of this painting for at least two generations of viewers in the nineteenth century and its potency

in the present through the state and private affairs it captures. Looking back from the present, the contemporary artworks discussed below also amplify—without anachronism—our understanding of Millais’s painting by heightening our awareness of the racial and ecological issues pertaining to the Arctic, which were elided in the nineteenth-century and remind us of ongoing exploration and exploitation in the Arctic.

Why was this work so celebrated in its time? In addition to its “intrinsic merit”, John Guille Millais held that the picture was “an expression more eloquent than words of the manly enterprise of the nation and the common desire that to England should fall the honour of laying bare the hidden mystery of the North”. Yet, to secure his reading of the work, the younger Millais immediately ranks text over vision. Disparaging the ability of words, he nonetheless misquotes the motto recorded in the Academy catalogue entry for the painting, repeating a revealing error about this caption made when the painting was first reviewed by changing 'should' to 'ought': “It might be done, and England ought to do it” (fig. 2).⁵ We can imagine hearing this jingoistic tag—sometimes taken to be the work’s subtitle, uttered by the “brave old sea-dog”, who dominates the interior scene—intoned by visitors standing in front of the picture, catalogue in hand.⁶ Similar prompts in poetry and prose were common in these catalogues, and commonly forgotten. Why was this line so often repeated—and often misquoted—in the quarter-century between the exhibition of the painting and the publication of *The Life and Letters of Sir John Everett Millais* in 1899? Through his recapitulation of what evolved into a maxim, John Guille Millais both extended and obscured what I will argue was the import of this painting in its own time and once again in ours: its status as a focused reflection on Arctic voyaging from the Anglosphere.

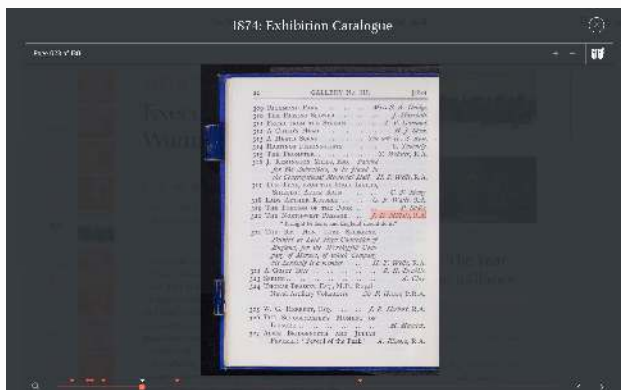


Figure 2

Screenshot of digital facsimile, *Royal Academy of Arts Summer Exhibition Catalogue*, 1874, p. 22, <http://chronicle250.com/1874>. Collection of the Royal Academy of Arts, London. Digital image courtesy of Paul Mellon Centre (CC BY-NC).

The future conditional tense of the sailor’s putative exclamation should make us wonder to what “it”—the first and last word of the motto—refers. Despite its seemingly unambiguous title, the painting presents the British obsession with the Northwest Passage as something of the past.⁷ The quest to discover this quicker and thus cheaper trade route to the Far East, over the top of what is now Canada, was the locus of swashbuckling heroism from Martin Frobisher’s three excursions in the 1570s through to the early nineteenth century. The old sailor was modelled on Edward John Trelawny. For the many Victorian viewers of the painting who recognized him, he was the personification of this recent past. A friend of Millais, Byron, and Shelley’s, and a

combatant in the Battle of Trafalgar, we are reminded of his vintage by a picture of Lord Nelson that hangs above him. Recent commentators are more confused by the title than was its audience in the 1870s. The domesticity of the scene led to Bury's view that "the Northwest Passage is *curiously* conspicuous by its absence" in the work.⁸ A nineteenth-century source explains this puzzlement succinctly: "The subject has only a general reference to arctic discovery, for the North-West Passage—the mere possibility of getting sea-wise from the Atlantic to the Pacific via the North—had been long proved when the picture was painted."⁹ For patriotic Britons, this feat was believed to have been accomplished—through toil, technology, unprecedented expense, and loss of life—as early as circa 1847 by the disastrous 1845 voyage of John Franklin, or by Robert McClure in 1850, or John Rae in 1854. As John Guille Millais implied, the more relevant context is that of the British Arctic Expedition of 1875–1876 under the command of George Strong Nares.¹⁰ "It" refers to planting the British flag on the geographic North Pole in the near future—the mission's main goal.¹¹ Viewers at the time understood that *The North-West Passage* was not primarily about the Northwest Passage. Instead, the painting and its reception projected a complex temporality that looked back to heroic voyages personified by the old sailor, ahead to Nares' imminent departure and, as I will argue, further ahead to visual art about the Arctic today. Ian Stone records references to the Nares expedition in *The Times* coincident with Millais's work on *The North-West Passage*; he correctly recontextualized the memorable phrase "and England ought to do it" to 1874.¹² Nares himself found *The North-West Passage* such an inspiration when he saw it at the Academy that he wrote admiringly about the painting to its author.¹³ Of equal importance, however, is the afterlife of what seems to be Millais's memorable phrase.¹⁴ That resonance began when the painting was still on display. In a lecture given to the British Association for the Advancement of Science's annual congress in August 1874 and reported in several British newspapers, the eminent surveyor and geographer Charles W. Wilson (1836–1905) spoke on exploration across the British Empire. He concluded "with a few words on Arctic exploration". He emphasized that Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli seemed inclined to support the British Arctic Expedition.¹⁵ Wilson, it was recounted, also "believed the Pole could be reached, and England ought to do it". We are also told that applause followed this, his final point.¹⁶ Many who repeated this phrase were inattentive to its exact wording. All seem to have remembered the punch line—but imperfectly. In a lecture in December 1876, for example, the Reverend A.M. Hoare "spoke of the advantages derived from ... Arctic expeditions, and concluded with the remark of an old voyager, 'It may be done, and England ought to do it.'"¹⁷ As if thrown by Millais as a ventriloquist—first to the sailor in the painting and then across British society—"England ought to do it" resounded finally in his son's biography at the end of the century. Its abbreviated references were clear in a telling parapraxis from 1874. Covering the same lecture by C.W. Wilson, the reporter for the *Leeds Mercury* assigned to himself, not Wilson, the opinion that, "in the words attached to a picture in the last *expedition* [sic] of the Academy in London, 'It is to be done, and England ought to do it.'"¹⁸ Millais's painting encapsulated and encouraged the British public's appetite for Arctic glory to the extent that its "exhibition" and Nares' "expedition" became one. The complex, evolving, and even contradictory agendas for such voyages, I suggest, can be traced through the (mis)rememberings of Millais's chauvinistic admonition in 1874. "Should" is strengthened to "ought". The oscillation among "might", "can", "may" and "is to be done" in repetitions of the first half of the quotation suggest the increasing urgency of England's missions in the Arctic.

We can appreciate Millais's painting as a metapicture that allows us to ponder the implications of Arctic voyaging, then and now, by reorganizing its many details into those about Britain's past

imperial exploits in Arctic voyaging, current attitudes towards such heroics circa 1874 when the painting was conceived, executed, and exhibited, and in terms of the future glory that it projects with its bombastic subtitle. These temporalities are not independent and do not form a simple chain from the past to the present. For example, in another telling slip, the younger Millais signals to us once more the importance of layered temporal references in *The North-West Passage*. He writes that the Nares expedition to the North Pole was in 1879, when in fact it had departed four years earlier. Instead, the planning and public discussion of the British Arctic Expedition was exactly contemporary with the painting, even its “stimulus”.¹⁹

The complexity of *The North-West Passage* stems from the compression of its myriad details, the concatenation—or psychoanalytic condensation—of what we see, read, and even hear. Trelawny rests his left arm and hand on a large, cloth-covered table, across which is spread an open chart by Robert McClure—the first to document the successful navigation of the Northwest Passage (1850–1854) (fig. 3).²⁰ McClure was closely tied to Nares: the latter served on the Belcher mission in search of Franklin from 1852–1854 and combined forces with the McClure search for Franklin’s two ships. On the table, we also see two bouquets of flowers, one on each side of the chart, partly supporting it. Mauve gloves lying at the right corner of the table suggest that the young woman in the picture has been out of doors to collect the flowers. A basket on the floor at the far right has one flower draped over it, again implying a recent excursion to the garden. On the table also lie the folds of British flags—a Union Jack and a Royal Navy White Ensign, to the right—the types used by Arctic expeditions to mark encampments and claims, including the North Magnetic Pole. The ensign had been arrogated to use by the Royal Navy only in 1864 and was, as I will emphasize below, seen on images from the Nares polar expedition in 1875–1876. The flags spill onto the table in a way that mirrors the cascade of the woman’s skirt across the floor in the right foreground.

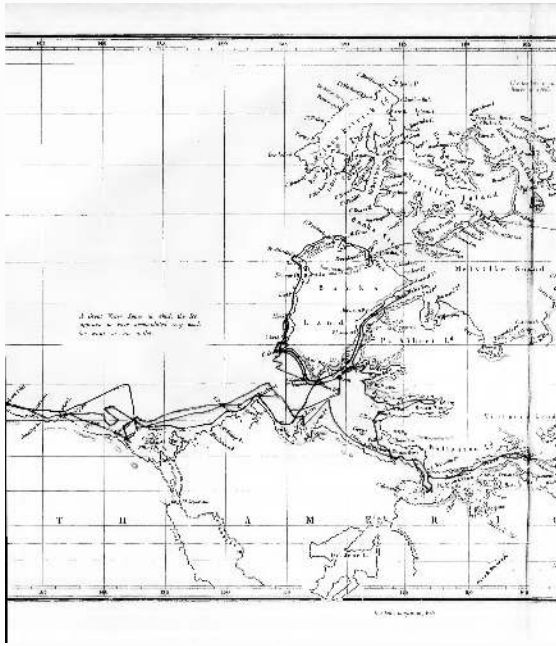


Figure 3

Robert McClure and Sherard Osborn, *Left portion of fold-out chart from 'The Discovery of The North-West Passage by H.M.S. 'Investigator't, Capt. R M'Clure, 1850, 1851, 1852, 1853, 1854, edited by artist, mapmaker, and later rear admiral Sherard Osborn, 1st edn (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longman & Roberts, 1856). Digital image courtesy of Mark Cheetham (all rights reserved).*

This young woman is perennially identified as the sailor's daughter, for whom Millais employed the professional model, Mrs Ellis. Her head is framed by the chart. She looks down at a book on her lap; her left index finger marks a point on the page while she rests her right hand consolingly over her father's closed, some suggest clenched, right fist. Though assumptions have been made, we cannot be sure what type of book this is or whether the woman is reading from it or pointing to an illustration. Two other books lean against the leg of a smaller table at the right of the painting. The topmost is clearly labelled "Logbook". We know from a preparatory sketch that this arrangement is significant because it replaced a figure group showing two children turning a globe. John Guille Millais reports that his father removed this anecdotal scene (which the younger Millais mistakenly remembers being at the right of the picture) for which John Guille and his sister, Alice, had posed for a "fortnight", substituting the desk and books that we now see.²¹ We do not know, but are thus invited to wonder, whether the book so evidently at the centre of the woman's attention is also a logbook, an imagetext in which one could read of past Arctic adventures but as readily look at watercolours, graphs, or maps that were sometimes included in such accounts.²² We might even imagine that she reads from or points to the published record of McClure's famous voyage, which was illustrated and from which the map on the table could easily have been separated.²³ Such accounts were important scientifically, visually, and were also—like flags—a way to stake climes. As noted above with reference to the picture's dictum, this image plays out visual, textual, and aural details simultaneously. Precise details and purposeful ambiguity exist in balance, if not harmony.

Before considering the sailor's ambiguous expression and placing the painting's many elements into the simple temporal grid proposed above, other specifics need to be noted. On the smaller table in the left foreground sit more books, a telescope, a plate with a partly peeled piece of citrus fruit, and a glass with a stirring spoon, identified by John Guille Millais as grog. Behind him is a window; through its bottom pane we see a nearby shoreline and an expanse of calm water, across which a small pleasure craft sails. This framed view is a characteristically English—as opposed to Arctic—seascape, reminiscent of Whistler.²⁴ Tracing clockwise, as noted, a print of Horatio Nelson in effect frames the sailor's head as the chart does that of his daughter. Beside it, to the right on the room's back wall—itsself covered with a floral wallpaper—hangs a painting of a ship caught in ice. In a study for *The North-West Passage* dated 1884, which we can compare with Figure 5, below—we see this painting within a painting and a note by Millais stating “where the ship broke up”. All three framed views are partially hidden by furniture, the man's body, the angle from which we see the room, or the flags. Like the sailor's memories, I would claim, each image is partial, yet legible enough to generate a narrative. To the right of these flags and partly shadowed by them, above the basket with one flower, however, is a perplexing pictorial space between the right end of the table and the wall of the room. Whether or not this is the right-hand corner of the room is difficult to fathom because a vertical line is made by the pole of one standard, which also casts a shadow into this area. In this space, loosely attached to the wall and in one case curling away from it, are what appear to be unframed images (fig. 4). No amount of looking at the painting in Tate Britain or at details illuminated on screen makes this passage less obscure visually or thematically. Is this ambiguity purposeful?



Figure 4

John Everett Millais, *The North-West Passage* (detail), 1874, oil on canvas, 176.5 cm × 222.2 cm. Collection of Tate (N01509). Digital image courtesy of Tate (CC-BY-NC-ND 3.0).

There are reasons to adopt ambiguity as an important theme in the work. The sailor's demeanour is more difficult to decipher than is usually proposed. He looks off into the distance rather than

meeting our gaze, as has been suggested. His mouth is closed, as are his hands. If he uttered the phrase “and England ought to do it” while pounding his fist on the table, as imagined in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, he did so before or after the moment we observe.²⁵ While it is easy enough to think that he dwells nostalgically in the midst of so many relics of Arctic exploration, we can only suggest with confidence that he relives scenes that his daughter orchestrates. His gaze in the final oil painting differs from another sketch Millais did of the figure group in 1874, in which his eyes appear closed (fig. 5). These two changes to the painting—the replacement of the children and globe by the smaller table and the sailor’s eyes—suggest a question: in what temporal dimension is the sailor living, the past of Arctic exploration, the present of his daughter’s attentions, or the future accomplishments of the soon to depart British Arctic Expedition of 1875–1876? The painting shows that he—and we—can journey among all three.



Figure 5

John Everett Millais, *Study for 'The North-West Passage'*, 1874, watercolour with touches of graphite and coloured pencil on wove paper, 17.5 × 19.7 cm. Collection of The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens (77.34). Digital image courtesy of The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens (all rights reserved).

These overlapping temporalities are readily legible in *The North-West Passage*. Many details suggest the past, both of Britain’s Arctic voyages and of the sailor himself. McClure’s map of the Northwest Passage was almost twenty-five years old by 1874. While the painting of the ship in the ice is not identified—there were dozens of such expeditions, and many ships were “nipped” in or destroyed by pack ice—McClure’s HMS *Investigator* was famously trapped in the ice for three years and abandoned in 1853 (the wreck was found in 2010). There are numerous images of this calamity.²⁶ Millais has framed a stock image, not a particular view.²⁷ Because McClure searched for the Passage and also for Franklin’s overdue expedition of 1845, this reference is tied to the most obvious “past” in the painting, its title. The logbook is not visibly dated but, like the map, suggests a complete record from an earlier voyage. The image of Nelson, who died heroically in 1805 at the Battle of Trafalgar, proclaims the legacy of British naval heroism and physical sacrifice (an eye and an arm by age forty). Not always recalled but germane here is

Nelson's service as a teenage midshipman on a 1773 polar expedition seeking the Northeast Passage. On Spitsbergen, he battled a polar bear for its pelt, an event retrospectively lionized by Richard Westall's *Nelson and the Bear* (1806) and subsequent prints. All this was received as history by 1874.

The tripartite temporality of the painting registers in more and more details. If we imagine that the sailor is not fully engaged with his daughter in the present—that he is recalling his past or imagining the future of the Nares mission—the painting nonetheless insists on mainly domestic material realities in the moment, including her actions, the fresh flowers, the fruit, the libation, the weather outside, and the passing sailboat. We might also hear several voices in the present: that of the daughter and those of viewers at the Academy as they vocalize the popular motto that became the de facto subtitle of the painting. These elements have been divided into “female” and “male”, the familial versus the expeditionary by Jayasena:

*the division between the male sphere of activity and the female are clearly distinguished by Millais' work. The man in The North-West Passage has surrounded himself with the accoutrements of travel and exploration. A map, a telescope and a ship, visible through the window in the background, all point to the stately, but curiously perturbed, male.*²⁸



Figure 6

Franklin exploration 2019: guided tour of HMS Terror by Parks Canada, 2019, video, 7 minutes 8 seconds. Courtesy of Parks Canada (all rights reserved)



Figure 7

Blue Willow Dinner Plate from HMS Erebus, circa 1826. Digital image courtesy of Parks Canada (all rights reserved).

While Arctic exploration from the Anglosphere was largely a male activity, to separate it from the domestic is too simple. All that we see is within the domesticating frame of painting, yet Millais has been careful to place technologies of external exploration (the chart, telescope, and flags) *and* household life (the flowers and food) on both tables. These objects are not physically or thematically divided but rather are put into mutual play. Moreover, the all-important telescope seems to have been used both domestically and professionally. The eyepiece of this instrument faces into the home; the glass is ready to hand for either figure to spy the passing sailboat, which is a local craft not

rigged as a three-masted, steam-powered, naval ship such as HMS *Alert* and HMS *Discovery* of the British Arctic Expedition of 1875. Expeditionary ships were nonetheless floating examples of Victorian domestic sensibility. Extensive libraries, personal stores of liquor, central heating, and many other accoutrements made them as home-like as possible. As we see in graphic detail in the AMC television series *The Terror* (2018), based on Dan Simmons' novel of 2007, Franklin's officers and crew went to great lengths to maintain this floating bubble of home. Less sensationalistic, more self-conscious about the hubris of Arctic exploration at this time, and more authentically inclusive of Inuit perspectives is the docudrama *Passage* (2008), directed by John Walker. If one prefers a non-fictionalized account, you may travel via a robotic camera tour of *Terror* right into the galley stores and Captain Crozier's cabin as the ship rests on the seabed in 2019. The most popular china of the day in England, Blue Willow, sits undisturbed (fig. 6, see 2:43). Such whiteware had been manufactured in great quantity and variety in Britain since the eighteenth century. Its commonplace, orientalist fantasy patterns should remind us that trade with the East was the initial impetus for the centuries-long British search for both the Northwest and Northeast passages. China is an illustrative commodity in this potent loop of affirmation that was Arctic voyaging from the Anglosphere. Blue Willow was sent to the Arctic (and accidentally remained there) (fig. 7). On the other hand, so-called 'arctic scenery' transferware showing epic landscapes and deeds was manufactured in Staffordshire in the early mid-century and was popular in Britain and colonial Canada. Arctic flora and fauna are surrounded on these plates, serving platters, and tureens by exotica from other parts of the extensive British Empire, conveying an ideology of possession rather than of geographical continuity.

The North-West Passage is an inverted analogue of Arctic territory. Where its details punctuate a homey setting in the south with moments of the far north, the Arctic allows voyagers only partial "southern" domesticity. Continuous with the Arctic tableaux that the sailor's daughter conjures with her book, the chart, the flags, and the grog is a private reflection of the more elaborate Arctic panoramas and plays staged onshore and also aboard ships in the Arctic.²⁹ "Home" was part of a circuit that included "away" and vice versa. Attempts to make ships voyaging to the Arctic self-sufficient Victorian capsules included dramas (where men played women's parts) and newspapers produced on board.³⁰ "Male" and "female", distant and local, were part of an elaborate and multivalent cycle that we see in Millais's metapainting. Arctic voyages functioned fully only when this circle was complete, when voyagers return and recount their exploits, when

images of the Arctic are disseminated, and when scientific data are presented and discussed.³¹ It is this cycle of expansion and return—which we can rightly call imperialist and colonial, and which was infamously not achieved by John Franklin’s expedition because his entire crew perished, and only scant written records have been found—that the Nares voyage seeking the North Pole sought to extend and perpetuate.³² Millais invoked its nationalist priorities in 1874 and cast them into the future.

Carrying standards very like those in Millais’s painting, the Nares expedition tried valiantly to stake Britain’s claim. One testimony is that of Dr L. Edward Moss, a surgeon on the expedition’s ship, *Alert* and a skilled amateur artist who made watercolours “faithful to ... the face of nature in a part of the world that very few can ever see for themselves”. He saw the Arctic first-hand and delivered its verified particulars into the cycle of Arctic voyaging, publishing, and commentary with his 1878 book *Shores of the Polar Sea*.³³ Keen to supply readers with a full sense of the Arctic, he included sixteen chromolithographs in the publication. Plate XV, *Back from the Farthest North*, shows the expedition’s sledging parties returning to the ships after their lengthy, arduous, and unsuccessful attempt to place the British standard at the North Pole (fig. 8). Moss tells us that only four of the seventeen men who set out were able to pull the sledge at journey’s end. Nares eventually abandoned the expedition, the last mounted by Britain to the Arctic in the nineteenth century. In temporal and official contexts, then, the tense of Millais’s painting is “imperfect”, whether we take the sailor to be dwelling in the past or the future, or exhibiting anxiety as we look on. The immediate future imagined by Millais’s *The North-West Passage* and its echoing subtitle—Nares planting the British flag at the North Pole, and from that accomplishment, Britons looking back nostalgically at what would have been the culmination centuries of British Arctic exploration—did not come to pass. Yet, the British Arctic Expedition was largely successful in the public’s opinion because it provided a satisfying, predictable exchange of information and people to and from the Arctic. The crew received mail, for example, a powerful circulatory technology (fig. 9). Nares disseminated his findings in the expected publication, *Narrative of a Voyage to the Polar Sea during 1875–6 in H.M. Ships Alert and Discovery* (1878).³⁴ The expedition was fruitful in scientific terms and was the source of a remarkable range of images of the Arctic, both traditional watercolours and in photographs, a medium new to the region at this time.³⁵ A balanced and still patriotic view was taken in *The Graphic* in a notice headed “Pole Impracticable”:

*Without doubt the expedition has acquired some interesting scientific information, but the most precious gift ... is the knowledge that our sailors ... have in no way deteriorated since the days of Ross and Parry [circa 1818] ... Although ... we have failed to plant the British flag at latitude 90°, we should be heartily thankful that (with a few sad exceptions) these brave fellows have returned home.*³⁶

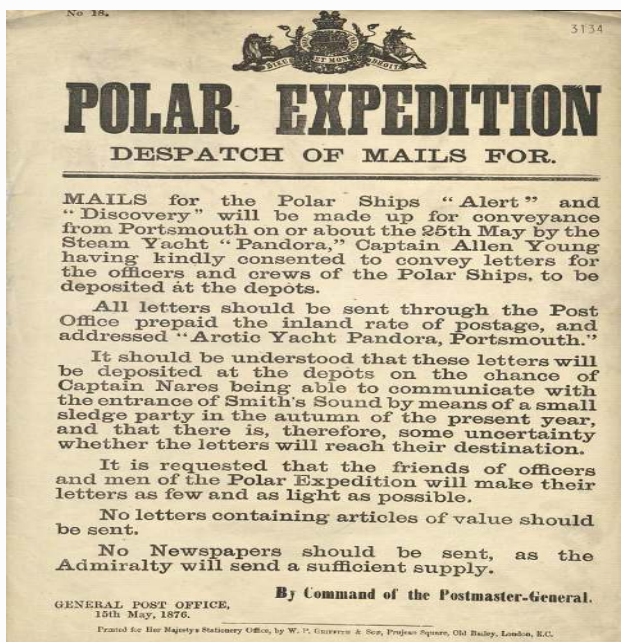


Figure 9

Poster for mail deliveries to the British Arctic Expedition, 1876. Collection of The Postal Museum (POST 107/971). Digital image courtesy of The Postal Museum (all rights reserved).



Figure 10

Photograph of the Robert Peary Sledge Party Posing with Flags at the North Pole, 7 April 1909. Collection of U.S. National Archive, Robert E. Peary Family Collection (Record Group 401). Digital image courtesy of U.S. National Archive (all rights reserved).

Nares returned from the Arctic in 1876, having over-wintered there but ultimately aborted the expedition because of widespread scurvy among the crews of his two ships. A sledging excursion achieved a “furthest north” record (83°20’), for which there had long been a reward, but they did not reach the pole. Nares’ early return encouraged journalists to comment on both *The North-West Passage* and the British Arctic Expedition. Exhibition and expedition were again elided. The *Royal Cornwall Gazette* of 4 November 1876 boldly laid out the comparison: “By art, by literature, by oratory ... England has for years been stirred on to do this thing, ‘It can be done, and England ought to do it.’” Recent history summarized, the writer cannot resist continuing, “The new variation of Mr. Millais’ picture is ‘It can’t be done; England has failed’”, which is followed by a rant about what science still did not know about the North Pole. In a memorable final flourish, we are told that the ultimate barrier is climate: “The temperature of the Arctic regions forbids our curiosity.”³⁷ The negative tone is not unexpected. Arctic expeditions in search of both the Northwest Passage and the North Pole had been controversial since Martin Frobisher’s elaborate, brutal, and failed attempts to find gold and establish a colony on Nunavut (Baffin Island) in 1576, 1577, and 1578.³⁸ While northerly voyages from Britain proliferated soon after the 1815 victory over Napoleon, which were led for four decades by the indefatigable John Barrow, 2nd Secretary of the Admiralty (1764–1848), there was perennial opposition to the human and financial costs, not least because the passage was no longer seen as an economic boon. John Franklin’s third voyage to the Arctic (1845) was supposed to be the last and best.³⁹ Instead, his disappearance greatly multiplied naval and private recovery missions from Britain from 1848 on (including McClure’s, as we have seen) and, increasingly, the United States.

Scientific research was a prime motivation for these ventures in the nineteenth century, even when finding Franklin was the official remit. The British Arctic Expedition was fully consistent with these long-held aims, which are in turn an important component of nationalist pride.⁴⁰ Amidst accusations of failure, Nares was knighted by Queen Victoria in 1876.

Towards the Present

The North-West Passage crystallized the cultures of nineteenth-century Arctic voyaging from Britain in objects and narratives. My reconstruction of central cultural contexts of Arctic excursions in Millais's picture plots this density of image and text temporally. Also crucial to my understanding of a metapicture is its resonance in the present. Today, the Arctic is the site of the most rapid climate change on the planet, underling the urgency and precarity of an epoch widely called the Anthropocene, when human activity has become an environmental force at least equal to nature.⁴¹ While the effects of climate change are planetary, both its causes and potential ameliorations tend to be state-oriented, as were the official Arctic expeditions of Millais's time and before. The imperative to plant a national flag at the North Pole is a case in point. If one thinks—or hopes—that such aggressive claiming rituals are in humanity's past, recall Robert Peary and Matthew Henson's declaration in 1909 that they were first to the North Pole, an achievement that is still disputed, or Buzz Aldrin and Neil Armstrong from Apollo 11, bouncing on the lunar surface as they planted the Stars & Stripes in July, 1969 (recently photographed from space, still standing), or Russia's geopolitically provocative, robot-assisted flag planting on the seabed to arrogate the geographic North Pole in 2007.⁴² From Millais's time to ours, sovereignty—whether Indigenous or colonial—has climate change implications for all beings and territories. We can explore the gaps and connections between Millais's painting and understandings of the Arctic today through three potent examples that demonstrate the cycles of Arctic voyage and return articulated in Millais's painting. The first is a photograph taken at the North Pole in 1909 as the culmination of the expedition by Robert Peary, Matthew Henson, and their Inuit guides, Ootah, Egingwah, Seegloo, and Ooqueah. British artist Isaac Julien's film *True North* (2004) reflects on Henson's relationships with Peary and the Arctic as a black man who—along with the Inuit—for decades disappeared into the “whiteness” of the narrative of accessing the North Pole. Finally, Inuk Jobie Weetaluktuk's film *InukShop* (2009), decries the commercialization and uprooting of Inuit art that is one outcome of the legacies explored by both Millais and Julien.

A victorious image taken by Admiral Robert E. Peary is labelled “Photograph of the Robert Peary Sledge Party Posing with Flags at the North Pole, 04/07/1909”. Its long caption is germane to the discussion of flags in the Millais painting: “Ooqueh, holding the Navy League flag; Ootah, holding the D.K.E. fraternity flag; Matthew Henson, holding the polar flag; Egingwah, holding the D.A.R. peace flag; and Seeglo, holding the Red Cross flag” (fig. 10). Flags are the focus of several of Peary's photographs from his final excursion in search of the North Pole. He shows them being carried towards the site across flat terrain, multiple as here, or with a single banner decisively lodged atop the pyramidal ice form that powerfully structures these hierarchical images. This image was taken the morning *after* the supposed discovery on 6 April 1909 described below. Peary has presented the five men who made the final push to what they thought was the Pole on a theatrical Olympic dais. While geographers now believe that navigational errors placed them some 50–100 kilometres short of their destination—just one of a legion of intrigues surrounding Peary and Henson's seventh Arctic expedition in twenty-three years, including the competition with fellow American explorer Frederick Cook—it is again the image

culture of attaining victory (if not literally staking land, since they were on sea ice), that makes this photograph part of the legacy of Millais's *The North-West Passage* and the British Arctic Expedition of 1875.⁴³ That Peary posed his loyal and Inuktitut-speaking assistant, Matthew Henson, at the top of his victory triangle in this photograph is both accurate and ironic, given that Henson later maintained that he went ahead and was the first to reach the Pole, which alienated the irascible Peary. We also have Henson's account from 1912 of the importance of the flags:

*When we halted on April 6, 1909, and started to build the igloos, ... I noticed Commander Peary at work unloading his sledge and unpacking several bundles of equipment. He pulled out from under his kooletah (thick, fur outer-garment) a small folded package and unfolded it. I recognized his old silk flag ... He fastened the flag to a staff and planted it firmly on the top of his igloo ... The stars and stripes were "nailed to the Pole".*⁴⁴

Henson waxes further,

*A thrill of patriotism ran through me and I raised my voice to cheer the starry emblem of my native land ... This was a thin silk flag that Commander Peary had carried on all of his Arctic journeys, and he had always flown it at his last camps. It was as glorious and as inspiring a banner as any battle-scarred, blood-stained standard of the world.*⁴⁵



Figure 10

Photograph of the Robert Peary Sledge Party Posing with Flags at the North Pole, 7 April 1909. Collection of U.S. National Archive, Robert E. Peary Family Collection (Record Group 401). Digital image courtesy of U.S. National Archive (all rights reserved).

Hierarchy cuts in several directions in Peary's triumphant photograph. Henson was as aware of race at the Pole as he was of the competition to claim it. He was temporarily given pride of place here, but he also "knew his place" and internalized it vis-à-vis Peary and white people generally:

The Commander gave the word, "We will plant the stars and stripes at the North Pole!" and it was done; on the peak of a huge paleocrystic floeberg the glorious banner was unfurled to the breeze, and as it snapped and crackled with the wind, I felt a savage joy and exultation. Another world's accomplishment was done and finished, and as in the past, from

*the beginning of history, wherever the world's work was done by a white man, he had been accompanied by a colored man. From the building of the pyramids and the journey to the Cross, to the discovery of the new world and the discovery of the North Pole, the Negro had been the faithful and constant companion of the Caucasian, and felt all that it was possible for me to feel, that it was I, a lowly member of my race, who had been chosen by fate to represent it, at this, almost the last of the world's great work.*⁴⁶

While racism is unacknowledged in Millais's painting, it was blatant in the narratives of the Arctic that the painting enfold. Prejudice against the Inuit was paraded loudly and publicly by Wilkie Collins and Charles Dickens at the apex of the search for Franklin in the mid-nineteenth century. Collins' much-acclaimed play *The Frozen Deep* (1856)—co-written, directed, and starred in by Dickens—was performed for Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in July 1857. The play sought to discredit Hudson's Bay Company Scottish explorer John Rae's circulation of Inuit testimony about cannibalism during what was revealed as the death march south by surviving members of the Franklin expedition. To make a long and complex story short, Dickens—a self-proclaimed expert on cannibalism—refused to believe Rae's witnesses, labelling them untruthful savages.⁴⁷

The remarkable story of Matthew Henson and his Inuit collaborators on the Peary quest—Ootah, Egigingwah, Seegloo, and Ooqueah—motivates Isaac Julien's *True North* (2004), a three-channel film and series of still images that revise received notions of race at the North Pole (fig. 11). As Millais did in his masterly metapainting, Julien threads the implications of the past, present, and the future through imagined Arctic landscapes. Filming in Iceland and northern Sweden, Julien has Black British actor Vanessa Myrie stand in for Henson as s/he wanders through a sublime, frozen landscape (fig. 12). The narration quotes Peary, Henson, and a book about Henson; Inuit chanting is heard. For Julien, substitutions of person and place create a break with the stereotypical narrative of the conquering, white Arctic explorer (though some of Peary's quite violent statements are heard), a fissure for our critical understanding of both race and the environment in this region. As Julien states,

*you have an African-American [Henson] who is forging this journey into the sublime, into blankness, into whiteness, and almost into a certain disappearing-ness because Henson disappears from history. [And you have the] incongruousness that one may associate with this particular ecological landscape and the way that this subject is ... a subject that wouldn't be considered an authentic part of that landscape. In a way, it is about trying to reposition grand narratives to obfuscate or obscure those histories that have taken place. And, of course, the reason that people want to go to these far away spaces and conditions has a certain colonial aspect to it.*⁴⁸

Inspired by Lisa Bloom's ground-breaking book *Gender on Ice* and Paul Gilroy's influential writing on the "Black Atlantic", Julien reimagines the import of gender and race in Arctic and colonialist journeying generally.⁴⁹ Bloom, in turn, describes this film as "a cinematic rewriting of the North Pole exploration narratives of the early 20th century", including both Henson's and Peary's.⁵⁰



Figure 11

Isaac Julien, *True North* (film still), 2004, DVD installation with 3 screens and 5 channel sound (edition of 6), 14 minutes 40 seconds. Collection of the Akron Art Museum, purchased by exchange with funds from the Mrs Frederick W. Gehring & Knight Purchase Fund for Photo Media (2005.1). Digital image courtesy of Isaac Julien / The Akron Art Museum (all rights reserved).



Figure 12

Isaac Julien, *True North Series, Ice Project Work No. 1*, 2006, duratrans photograph mounted in lightbox (edition of 6), 120 × 120 cm. Digital image courtesy of Isaac Julien / Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery (all rights reserved).

Henson represents himself in the long passage above as being both subject to racial hierarchies and, sadly, as one who reinforces them. His “savage joy” at reaching the Pole (before Peary) inverts Dickens’ and Collins’ use of “savage” as an insult in *The Frozen Deep* and related texts. Yet, he is as condescendingly grateful to his adult Inuk “boys” as Peary ultimately is to him as a black man that he calls his “manservant”. Silences and elisions remain in *True North*. For example, no one mentions that Peary hired many Inuit, including unnamed women and children, to support this trek to the pole. Their traditional livelihood and culture already much disturbed by Anglo and Danish incursions in Greenland and the Canadian Arctic, it is worth recalling that the North Pole was of no practical interest to people living on this land. Exploration for glory was a foreign practice. Julien’s complex, three-screen presentation in *True North* explores and conveys to viewers the complexity of Henson’s relations with Indigenous northerners. We never see Peary. Instead, Henson/Myrie is shown at a distance, walking across an expanse of snow and ice, and also in a close-up, “Henson” in the middle, framed by two Inuit companions. The effect of both landscape and portrait is at once highly specific and somewhat dreamlike. We see the people and place clearly, but what are they doing there?

That is not a question one would ask of *InukShop*, Jobie Weetaluktuk’s film from 2009 (fig. 13). This short but purposeful work draws a stark contrast between traditional life on the land and the reproduction of these activities in carvings destined for the global art market. In the film—and, arguably, in art generally—Inuit life is thus deracinated, made inauthentically portable as it accommodates to markets in the South. “For Indigenous peoples, language and culture are rooted

in the land,” write the co-authors of a recent exhibition on circumpolar art, *Among All These Tundras*.

Knowledge is place-based, embodied, and interrelational. This worldview, and the artistic practices based in it, has become politicized by settler colonialism, which is characterized by a historical and ongoing dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their lands.

*Decolonial thought and aesthetics, therefore, must also centre on the land.*⁵¹

In *InukShop*, we see traditional activities of living from the land that survives but is increasingly threatened. As in the other artworks considered here, the past, present, and future are intertwined. The film opens with close-ups of the feet of a large, seemingly new inukshuk, an example of the anthropomorphic rock “sculptures” that Inuit had placed across the Arctic for centuries to aid in wayfaring, hunting caribou, and to mark food caches. Weetaluktuk soon contrasts this recent example with long-standing correlates in Arctic landscapes and with scenes that alternate between Inuit ceremonies and hunting (thus displaying *Qaujimaqatuqangit*: “Inuit traditional knowledge”) and the sculptures that reproduce these activities. Some are exquisite handworks in themselves; others show commercially produced inuksuit (pl. of inukshuk) trapped inside tourist snow globes. For the hunting and ceremonial scenes, he uses archival film, making the inuksuit on the land seem ancient (as many are). “Shop” in the film’s title cuts two ways: it makes reference to an artist’s workshop and to the activity of shopping. Near the end of the two-minute film, we view clichéd, miniaturized inuksuit for sale as tourist ware, with “Canada” announced on small plaques. These mass-produced trinkets are displayed as part of a confusing array of “native” knick-knacks; they sell for \$5.99. The reduction and proliferation of these degraded objects is coincident with the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, Canada, which adopted the inukshuk as its logo, a symbol now of Canada, not the Arctic, broadcast to the world.⁵² By criticizing commercialization, Weetaluktuk telescopes the effects of European modernity on the Inuit. Western technologies, religion, community settlements, a cash economy, and worst of all, residential school “education” were incrementally forced on these peoples from the sixteenth century through the twentieth century.⁵³ As Weetaluktuk reminds us in this film, the legacy continues. His closing shot returns us to his opening locale, now identifiably the city of Montreal, where the artist lives. The large, beautifully made inukshuk that we saw at the outset—by Jusipi Nalukturuk (1992) and owned by the McCord Museum—is rendered small by a glass skyscraper. People hurry past, not noticing the monument. Even this large inukshuk has become a consumable and almost invisible. Where we heard birds in the opening images of this work—as if to proclaim its heritage on the land—here we are overwhelmed by a wash of traffic noise. The inukshuk now marks only the displacements of Inuit culture under colonialism.



Figure 13

Jobie Weetaluktuk, *Vistas – InukShop*, 2009, film, 2 minutes. Courtesy of Jobie Weetaluktuk / National Film Board of Canada (all rights reserved).

I have claimed that Millais's *The North-West Passage* is a metapicture and imagetext that demands our attention today because it continues to encapsulate colonial paradigms of the Arctic, the assumptions and conditions of exploration, masculinist heroism, Western mapping, disregard of the environment, and flag planting that—broadly speaking—led to the spiral of commercialization and attendant exploitation that we witness in *InukShop*. Julien surprises us by staging a little-known and revisionary depiction of race relations in the Arctic. Weetaluktuk mixes markers of Inuit tradition and Western modernity to describe a still-colonialist present. Both *InukShop* and Julien's *True North* implore us ponder the nineteenth-century roots of troubles that live on today in this region. Whether or not these films can interrupt the control of the ideologies apparent in *The North-West Passage* remains an open and urgent question.

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Footnotes

1. John Guille Millais, *The Life and Letters of Sir John Everett Millais, President of the Royal Academy / by his Son, John Guille Millais, with 319 Illustrations Including Nine Photogravures* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1899), Vol. 2, 48.
2. See Debra N. Mancoff (ed.), *John Everett Millais: Beyond the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001). Laurent Bury traces responses to the painting from its exhibition through to current readings in “A Certain ‘Want of Arch-Inscape’? The Critical Reception of Millais’s *North-West Passage* (1874)”, in Frédéric Regard (ed.), *Arctic Exploration in the Nineteenth Century: Discovering the Northwest Passage* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 171–183. My concern here is exclusively with Millais’s painting in light of then-contemporary and recent reflection on British voyaging to the Arctic, rather than on its place in the artist’s oeuvre or Victorian culture more broadly.
3. W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 418.
4. See Roy MacLeod, “Nature and Empire: Science and the Colonial Enterprise”, *Osiris* 15 (2000): 1–13.
5. John Guille Millais, *The Life and Letters of Sir John Everett Millais*, Vol. 2, 48. Subsequent references to this book appear in the main text. I have argued elsewhere that this combination of images and texts is typical of a characteristically British practice of art theory. See Mark A. Cheetham, *Artwriting, Nation, and Cosmopolitanism in Britain: The “Englishness” of English Art Theory since the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2012).
6. Jason Rosenfeld and Alison Smith extend this nineteenth-century interpretation of the phrase as subtitle in *Millais* (London: Tate, 2007). One example of the assumption that the sailor speaks these words reads: “our great painter ... showed us the fair girl reading out with glowing countenance the story of our British heroes in the icy seas and the stout old sea dog clenching his fist and crying, ‘It is to be done, and England ought to do it.’”. *Pall Mall Gazette*, 19 November 1874, 3. I will return to the sailor’s actions and putative utterance.
7. Britain was dominant but was not alone, in this and related quests. Russia was an important competitor, especially in the search for a Northeast Passage. Hester Blum provides a chronology of international Arctic expeditions from 1818–1922 in *The News at the Ends of the Earth: The Print Culture of Polar Exploration* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019). For contemporary international perspectives on polar exploration, see Gry Hedin and Ann-Sofie N. Gremaud (eds), *Artistic Visions of the Anthropocene North: Climate Change and Nature in Art* (New York: Routledge, 2018).
8. Bury, “A Certain ‘Want of Arch-Inscape’?”, 172. My emphasis.
9. Mrs Lang [sic], in Walter Armstrong and W. Cosmo Monkhouse, *Presidents of the Royal Academy: Sir E.J. Poynter, Sir J.E. Millais, Lord Leighton* (London: Art Journal Office, 1898), 18.
10. This point was made by Ian R. Stone, “‘The North-West Passage’ by Sir John Millais”, *Polar Record* 23, no. 142 (1986): 81–84. This venture was jointly undertaken by the Royal Navy

and the Royal Geographical Society.

11. The North Magnetic Pole, so important for navigation, had been pinpointed and claimed for Britain in 1833 by James Clark Ross. On the notable literary fascination with the poles, see Siobhan Carroll, *An Empire of Air and Water: Uncolonizable Space in the British Imagination, 1750–1850* (Philadelphia, PA: Penn Press, 2015).
12. Stone, “‘The North-West Passage’ by Sir John Millais”. This venture was jointly undertaken by the Royal Navy and the Royal Geographical Society.
13. John Guille Millais, *The Life and Letters of Sir John Everett Millais*, Vol. 2, 51.
14. I have been unable to find this phrase used in the context of Arctic voyaging before 1874. While Millais could have been citing someone—perhaps a parliamentary deposition supporting the British Arctic Expedition of 1875–1876—the words *became* his, as I show below.
15. Disraeli’s support of the mission in autumn 1874 was lampooned in *Punch*, 5 December 1874. An illustration depicts the prime minister in the place of Millais’s sailor, one hand on a chart of the Arctic and a glass of spirits labelled “popularity” in place of the seaman’s grog. At his knee is a young woman in the guise of Britannia.
16. *Watchman and Wesleyan Advertiser*, 26 August 1874.
17. *The Hampshire Advertiser County Newspaper*, 20 December 1876.
18. *Leeds Mercury*, 21 August 1874. My emphasis.
19. Stone, “‘The North-West Passage’ by Sir John Millais”, 81.
20. This identification is proposed by the anonymous author at Millais.org, “a personal website covering the career of famous British painter John Everett Millais”; see <http://www.millais.org/north-west-passage>, accessed 16 May 2020. McClure published a large, fold-out map of the Arctic Archipelago in *The Discovery of the North-West Passage by H.M.S. “Investigator”, Capt. R. M’Clure, 1850, 1851, 1852, 1853, 1854*, edited by artist, mapmaker, and later rear admiral Sherard Osborn, 1st edn (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longman & Roberts, 1856); it went through numerous later editions up to 1969. Given that John Franklin’s voyage of 1845 did not return to Britain, and that claims that he traversed the Northwest passage cannot be proven, despite Lady Franklin’s Herculean efforts and the 1866 monument in Waterloo Place, London, which claims this achievement, the McClure account was especially welcome and celebrated. The open chart closely resembles the leftmost portion of that published by McClure and Osborn in 1856. Appropriately enough, Millais has placed the head of the young woman overtop Victoria Land, with Banks Land to the left as we face the painting. Millais is highly specific when he wants to be; more obscure passages might also be taken as purposefully so.
21. John Guille Millais, *The Life and Letters of Sir John Everett Millais*, Vol. 2, 52.
22. An example is the logbook of Captain George Back (1796–1878) from 1833–1835, now in the McCord Museum, Montreal, which displays both written accounts and skilled watercolours of, for example, meteorological phenomena in the Arctic; see George Black, *Journal d’observation des aurores boréales de Sir George Black*, Musée McCord, M2634, <http://collections.musee-mccord.qc.ca/fr/collection/artefacts/M2634>, accessed 19 May 2020. On the writing and illustration integral to northern voyages at this time, see Adriana Craciun, *Writing Arctic Disaster: Authorship and Exploration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).
23. Nalin Jayasena contends that others have not considered “the possibility that the young woman gazing into a book might perhaps be reading about what the man is contemplating”;

- see Nalin Jayasena, *Contested Masculinities: Crises in Colonial Male Identity from Joseph Conrad to Satyajit Ray* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 20. Because he unaccountably claims that the Northwest passage had not been discovered by the time of Millais's painting, and is thus not shown by the artist, he does not speculate on the identity of the book in the woman's lap; Jayasena, *Contested Masculinities*, 21.
24. Catherine Roach, *Pictures-Within-Pictures in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 126.
 25. *Pall Mall Gazette*, 19 November 1874, 3.
 26. See "The Perilous Situation of H.M.S. Investigator, While Wintering in the Pack in 1850–51....", Royal Museums Greenwich, <https://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/156627.html>, accessed 19 May 2020.
 27. The image is both typical of its period and pedestrian. I cannot agree with Christine Riding's hypothesis that by including it, Millais "perhaps alludes to Church's or Landseer's emotive representations", *The Icebergs* and the even more epic *Man Proposes, God Disposes*, which were, she notes, exhibited in London in 1863 and 1864 respectively. Millais moves away from the discourse of the sublime found in these works to a more pensive and ambiguous register. See Christine Riding, *John Everett Millais* (London: Tate, 2006), 58.
 28. Jayasena, *Contested Masculinities*, 19.
 29. On panoramas and related theatrical devices, see Russell A. Potter, *Arctic Spectacles: The Frozen North and Visual Culture, 1818–1875* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007). On-board theatricals are examined by Heather Davis-Fisch in *Loss and Cultural Remains in Performance: The Ghosts of the Franklin Expedition* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).
 30. See Blum, *The News at the Ends of the Earth*.
 31. A rich discussion of the double scientific and aesthetic impact of this painstakingly collected information is found in Benjamin Morgan, "After the Arctic Sublime", *New Literary History* 47, no. 1 (Winter 2016): 1–26.
 32. Of all these cycles, the most nefarious and tragic was that involving human and animal "specimens", which had for centuries been brought back to Britain. For the early history, see Christopher P. Heuer, *Into the White: The Renaissance Arctic and the End of the Image* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press Zone Books, 2019).
 33. Edward L. Moss, *Shores of the Polar Sea: A Narrative of the Arctic Expedition of 1875–6* (London: Marcus Ward & Co., 1878), Preface. These sixteen prints were also published as a suite titled *Polar Sketches* in 1878).
 34. George S. Nares, *Narrative of a Voyage to the Polar Sea during 1875–6 in H.M. Ships Alert and Discovery* (London: S. Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1878).
 35. See Richard G. Condon, "The History and Development of Arctic Photography", *Arctic Anthropology* 26, no. 1 (1989): 46–87.
 36. "Pole Impracticable", *The Graphic*, 4 November 1876.
 37. *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 4 November 1876.
 38. See Heuer, *Into the White*.
 39. Among the hundreds of books and media accounts of Franklin's fateful voyage, a reliable and recent source is Russell A. Potter, *Finding Franklin: The Untold Story of a 165-Year Search* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016). On Barrow, see Craciun, *Writing Arctic Disaster*.

40. See Trevor H. Levere, *Science and the Canadian Arctic* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
41. The definition and implications of this term, coined in 2000, fills books and is itself part of the controversy around climate change. For an account of the term and its competitors in Art History, see Mark A. Cheetham, *Landscape into Eco Art: Articulations of Nature since the '60s* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2018).
42. Unlike Antarctica and the South Pole, the North Pole is not on land but rather on the seabed. The “high seas [are] a global commons beyond the authority of any state” according to current international law; see Philip E. Steinberg, Jeremy Tasch, Hannes Gerhardt, Adam Keul, and Elizabeth A. Nyman (eds), *Contesting the Arctic: Politics and Imaginaries in the Circumpolar North* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 2.
43. An authoritative account of this journey is Bruce Henderson, “Who Discovered the North Pole?” *Smithsonian Magazine*, April 2009, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/who-discovered-the-north-pole-116633746>, accessed 27 May 2020.
44. Matthew Henson, *A Negro Explorer at the North Pole* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co, 1912), 132–133.
45. Henson, *A Negro Explorer at the North Pole*, 132–133. On Henson and Peary, see Lisa Bloom, *Gender on Ice: American Ideologies of Polar Expeditions* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).
46. Henson, *A Negro Explorer at the North Pole*, 136.
47. See Jen Hill, *White Horizon: The Arctic in the Nineteenth-Century British Imagination* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008); and Carroll, *An Empire of Air and Water*. The story is perhaps best reassessed in John Walker’s film *Passage*, cited above, where a reconciliatory meeting is staged between Inuit MP Emeritus Tagak Curley and Dickens’ great-grandson, Gerald Dickens. <http://johnwalkerproductions.com/portfolio/passage>. Forensic evidence has since proved Rae’s Inuit correspondents correct in their report.
48. Lara Taubman, “True North: Interview with Isaac Julien”, *S&F Online*, 1 July 2005, <http://sfonline.barnard.edu/ice/gallery/julien.htm>, accessed 25 May 2020.
49. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).
50. Lisa Bloom, “True North: Isaac Julien’s Aesthetic Wager”, in Viet Görner and Evaline Bernasconi (eds), *Isaac Julien: True North. Fantôme Afrique*, exhibition catalogue (Hannover: Kestnergesellschaft, 2006), 42.
51. Heather L. Igloliorte, Amy Prouty, Charissa von Harringa, *Among All These Tundras* (Montreal: Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery, 2018), 23. An important comparator is the film *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen*, Directors Zacharias Kunuk and Norman Cohn, Isuma TV, 2006.
52. The film was produced as part of the Digital Nation Project for the 2010 Winter Olympics.
53. For a full account of these and other related topics, see Gerald McMaster and Ingo Hessel, co-curators, *Inuit Modern*, exhibition catalogue (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 2010).

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