

Travels, Explorations and Empires, 1770–1835

North and South Poles

Edited by
Peter J. Kitson



TRAVELS, EXPLORATIONS AND EMPIRES

Volume 3

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TRAVELS,
EXPLORATIONS AND
EMPIRES

WRITINGS FROM THE ERA OF
IMPERIAL EXPANSION
1770–1835

Volume 3
NORTH AND SOUTH POLES

Edited by Peter J. Kitson

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INTRODUCTION

Parry seeks out the Polar ridge;
Rhymes seeks S. T. Coleridge.¹

OF ICE AND IMAGINATION

In the period 1770–1835, the two least known portions of the globe were its poles. For this reason, perhaps, the North and South Poles feature in two epiphanic Romantic texts as landscapes or seascapes which typify the otherness of sublime nature: Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' (1798); and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818). The exact sources of both texts are not completely known, though a number of possibilities have been raised by various literary historians and critics; from the accounts of early modern explorers such as Martin Frobisher, Henry Hudson, Thomas James and George Shelvocke to more contemporary accounts and writings by James Cook, Daines Barrington and Constantine John Phipps. Bernard Smith some time ago suggested that the Ancient Mariner's journey bore similarities with James Cook's second voyage of 1772–7 and, more recently, Francis Spufford and Marilyn Butler have located Robert Walton's voyage to the North Pole – the subplot and framing narrative of *Frankenstein* – in the context of the early nineteenth-century interest in the pole and the various theories about what might lie there.² Both Coleridge's and Shelley's polar fables, if such they be, exploit the current vogue for the sublime, famously discussed in 1757 by Edmund Burke.

Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757) argued that the sublime powerfully affects us because it appeals to our feelings of self-preservation. The sublime is only a pleasurable experience when it is viewed from a distance. For Burke, the sublime is characterised by, among other things, 'vastness', 'obscurity', 'privation' and 'terror'. It accounted, in part, for the vicarious thrill that a late eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century reader might experience when perusing the firsthand accounts of explorers like Cook, Phipps, Ross, Parry and Franklin

1 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Poetical Works*, ed. E. H. Coleridge, 2 vols (Oxford, 1912), vol. II, p. 972.

2 Bernard Smith, 'Coleridge's Ancient Mariner and Cook's Second Voyage', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 19 (1956), pp. 117–54; Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus. The 1818 Text*, ed. Marilyn Butler (London, 1993); Francis Spufford, *I May Be Some Time* (London, 1996); see also Miranda Seymour, *Mary Shelley* (2000), pp. 76–8.

reproduced in this volume. The extraordinary incidents and dangers of these narratives entranced and fascinated their readership, while introducing them to new species of animals and plants, and new races of people. Arctic and Antarctic explorers encountered exotic peoples, some previously unknown to Europeans. As well as meeting and working with many North American Indian peoples, explorers such as John Ross, William Edward Parry and John Franklin came into contact with several Inuit tribes, whom they called 'Eskimos' or, in Ross's eccentric denomination, 'Arctic Highlanders'. The colonial encounter occurred at the top and bottom of the world, as well as its East and West. Such polar encounters varied; those peoples new to Europeans were often friendly and helpful, while those who had encountered the traders and ways of the Hudson's Bay Company were often hostile and aggressive.

The ice itself, its structures and formations, described in scientific detail and illustrated by naval artists like George Back and George Francis Lyon, would also delight and thrill. The extreme dangers experienced by the explorers, dwarfed by the magnitude, scale and sheer destructive power of the natural scenery around them, fascinated readers of expedition narratives. On many occasions, life and limb were endangered by huge icebergs which threatened to destroy substantial ships like toys, as is particularly shown in Parry's account of the loss of his ship *Fury*, and the near loss of his second ship, *Hecla*, in the violent Arctic seas of Prince Regent Inlet during his third voyage of 1824–5 (see below, pp. 293–305).

More than this, these accounts described areas which were virtually unknown in the period, gaps and spaces on charts and maps. One of the objectives of Cook's second voyage was to discover whether or not the *terra australis incognita*, the unknown southern continent, existed. Speculations about what would be found at the poles – open waters or unknown continents – abounded and were only gradually proved or disproved. Most eccentric were the theories of the US writer and lecturer John Cleves Symmes, who postulated the existence of a hollow Earth in a series of publications and talks in the 1820s. Edgar Allan Poe was to take Symmes's theories and, in his *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838), gothicise and racialise them. One can thus appreciate the vicarious thrill of terror and danger experienced by the armchair explorer, warm and secure in his or her own home, while entranced by stories of the hardships and dangers of this other, savage world. Such encounters with the otherness of the poles also reinforced and confirmed the values of home. As Francis Spufford puts it, 'Armchair travel to the far North – an increasingly popular pursuit – may have taken people out of themselves, but it must also have done the opposite; or exploration would not have spoken, as it did, to people's identities, where they lived, at home'.¹

1 Spufford, *I May Be Some Time*, p. 47.

Certainly, writers of the period exploited this public fascination with ice and snow, and with the extremes of human endeavour and hardship. As a boy, Coleridge was taught by William Wales at Christ's Hospital. Wales had been the astronomer aboard Cook's second voyage.¹ Coleridge placed his mariner (not yet ancient) against the backdrop of a beautiful, unfamiliar, strange and frightening world. However we chose to interpret the mariner's voyage – as a depiction of sin and guilt, of psychological trauma, or of the existential angst of a nightmare world – the sublime polar seascape, with its unearthly voices and vengeful spirits, superbly and powerfully evokes an unknown and primal realm:

And now there came both mist and snow,
And it grew wondrous cold:
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
As green as emerald.

And through the drifts the snowy clifts
Did send a dismal sheen:
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken –
The ice was all between.

The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around:
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like noises in a swound.²

It is a primal and atavistic landscape that Robert Walton encounters in *Frankenstein*, a novel of gothic excess and extremes. Presenting himself as a natural philosopher and explorer, investigating the secrets of the magnet and searching for a Northwest Passage through the Arctic Ocean – a man who may traverse the 'land of mists and snow' of Coleridge's poem (which he has read) but who will 'kill no albatross' – Walton encounters Victor Frankenstein and his unnatural creation at the geographic limits of humanity's endurance. Walton's mind is filled with the travel narratives which, he reminds his sister Margaret, 'composed the whole of our good Uncle Thomas's library'. He has been brought up on the theories of an open polar sea propounded most tellingly by the naturalist and Fellow of the Royal Society (FRS), Daines Barrington, and accepted by John Barrow at the Admiralty. Walton imagines the Arctic as being not a 'seat of frost and desolation' but the 'region of beauty and delight'.³ Instead, he finds only snow and ice. Threatened with his crew's mutiny and hearing Frankenstein's own cautionary tale of the consequences of pursuing the dictates of the scientific intellect too far, Walton decides to leave the Arctic and return home. As Francis Spufford points out, *Frankenstein* exploits a number of commonplaces

1 Bernard Smith, *Imagining the Pacific: In the Wake of Cook's Voyages* (Melbourne, 1992), pp. 135–45.

2 Coleridge, *Poetical Works*, vol. I, p. 188–9.

3 Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, ed. Johanna Smith (Basingstoke, 1992), pp. 30, 26, 27.

in the imaginative rendering of the poles: 'There is the use of polar cold as a metaphor for human coldness, culminating in a complete, deathly departure from emotion at the North Pole. There is the contrast between ranging male explorers and stable women awaiting their return. Criticism of exploration would often suggest that science is not an adequate motive for risking lives; indeed, that the demand it seems to make for Arctic sacrifices reveals a monstrous dimension to science'.¹

The poles became a part of people's consciousness in nineteenth-century Britain. A substantial number of accounts of the various expeditions was published, often by John Murray, and cartoons like George Cruickshank's depiction of the return of John Ross's expedition from Baffin Bay in 1818 abounded. Cruickshank's *Landing the Treasures, or Results of the Polar Expedition!!!* depicts Ross's crew parading up Whitehall, all missing their noses as a result of greeting Eskimos and frostbite, and carrying such trophies as a dead polar bear (representing Ursa Major), Sabine's Gull, and the 'crimson snow'. An elderly Sir Joseph Banks, in the distance, looks on excitedly. Cruickshank satirises not only the uselessness of the expedition but also the public's appetite for its 'discoveries'. As one John Bull-like figure curmudgeonly comments: 'I think we have *Bears, Gulls, Savages, Chump wood, Stones & Puppies* enough without going to the north pole for them'. Ross's later expedition of 1829–33 would also be shown in panoramic displays in London. The accounts of the expeditions were fully reviewed in the *Quarterly Review*, *Edinburgh Review*, *Gentleman's Magazine*, and *Blackwood's Magazine* with the successes and failings of the voyages argued out by often fierce partisans. John Barrow, originator of most of the British naval expeditions of the period, conducted a campaign against John Ross in the pages of the *Quarterly Review* and Ross responded in kind. Rival accounts and supplementary publications by members of the expeditions other than their leaders proliferated. The plight of William Edward Parry, wintering on Melville's Island during his first voyage of exploration (1819–20), gave Byron a topical image to describe the opening of the pearly gates of heaven in his satirical poem of 1822, *The Vision of Judgement*. The hinges of the gates

Flung over a space an universal hue
Of Many-coloured flame, until its tinges
Reached even our speck of earth, and made a new
Aurora borealis spread its fringes
O'er the North Pole; the same seen, when ice-bound,
By Captain Parry's crew, in 'Melville's Sound'.²

The aurora borealis seen by Parry is connected with the death of the confused monarch and the political skirmish occasioned by Robert Southey's earlier *A*

¹ Spufford, *I May Be Some Time*, p. 61.

² George Gordon, Lord Byron, *The Complete Poetical Works*, eds Jerome J. McGann and Barry Weller, 7 vols (Oxford, 1980–91), vol. VI, pp. 320–1.

Vision of Judgement (1821), which used George III's death as a pretext to damn his reformist and radical critics to hell.

John Keats, too, was entranced by accounts of the polar expeditions. In one of his journal letters of December 1818 to his brother and sister-in-law, George and Georgiana, he retells the artist Benjamin Robert Haydon's account of the experiences of Henry Parkyns Hoppner on Ross's first voyage of 1818:

The Ship was sometimes surrounded sometimes entirely with vast mountains and crags of ice and in a few Minutes not an article was to be seen all round the Horizon. Once they met with so vast a Mass that th[e]y gave themselves over for lost; their last recourse was in meeting it with the Bowspit, which they did, and split it asunder and glided through it as it parted for a great distance – one Mile and more Their eyes were so fatigued with the eternal dazzle and whiteness that they lay down on their backs on deck to relieve their sight on the blue Sky. Hoppner describes his dreadful whiteness at the continual day – the sun ever moving in a circle round above their heads – so pressing upon him that he could not rid himself of the sensation even in the dark Hold of the Ship – The Esquimaux are de[s]cribed as the most wretched of Beings – they float from their Summer to their Winter residences and back again like white Bears on ice floats – They seem never to have washed, and so when their features move, the red skin shows beneath the cracking peal of dirt. They had no notion of any inhabitants in the World but themselves. The sailors who had not seen a Star for some time, when they came again southwards on the hailing of the first revision, of one all ran upon deck with feelings of the most joyful nature.¹

Keats's account of Hoppner's experience, filtered through Haydon's own visual consciousness, gives us an impression of the kinds of detail the public appreciated. Keats records the movements of the ice, mysteriously appearing, splitting, transforming and disappearing. He describes the ice's vastness, its sublime manifestation as well as the monotony of the seascape, a dazzling white everywhere. So too are the inhabitants of the North described. Instead of the positive and friendly picture painted in John Ross's narrative (see below, pp. 95–137), we have a picture of a 'wretched', dirty and deprived race. The sufferings and ennui of the crew are recounted with a fascination and interest far removed from the feelings of the actual sufferers. All these aspects and many more were supplied in copious detail in a series of substantial and expensive accounts, usually supplemented by scientific appendices containing meteorological, botanical, zoological and other information. By and large, the books sold well and their authors were usually handsomely rewarded. John Franklin's *Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea* (published by John Murray in 1823) sold especially well, with its tales of heroic endeavour, starvation and cannibalism. Most of the books were not especially well written, though the poles did bring out the best in several rather prosaic British naval men. The poet Robert Montgomery, in his satir-

¹ Hyder Edward Rollins, ed., *The Letters of John Keats, 1814–21*, 2 vols (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1958), vol. II, pp. 6–7.

ical poem *The Age Reviewed* (1828), commented shrewdly on the proliferation of bulky travel accounts, designed as much to profit their authors financially as to profit their readers intellectually:

So fast learn'd vagabonds defame the earth,
So fast their blund'ring quartos spring to birth!
Pleased with the Pole, brave Parry sticks in ice,
While Behring Straits and shaggy bears entice,
Awhile, with grog and whisky, warms the year –
Can John Bull deem a three-pound quarto dear?

THE NORTH POLE AND THE SEARCH FOR THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE 1497–1632

The primary reason for the interest in the Arctic was financial, though it later became a matter of British maritime prestige. From the close of the fifteenth century, Western explorers had attempted to locate a commercial sea route north and west around the American land mass to the rich lands of the East. In 1497, Henry VII sent John Cabot in search of this north-western route to the Orient, five years after Columbus had searched for a westward route. The main reason for this was the Ottoman conquest of the Middle East in the mid-fifteenth century, which disrupted Europe's overland routes to the East. A number of Elizabethan explorers followed in Cabot's wake. Martin Frobisher made voyages in 1576, 1577 and 1578: the first to attempt to reach Cathay through a passage to the North West; the second to prospect for gold; and the third a simple mining expedition. Frobisher managed to get as far as the south of Baffin Island, exploring what is now known as Frobisher Bay and encountering the Innuït of the region. Frobisher was followed by John Davis, who sailed in search of the commercially lucrative Northwest Passage in three Arctic voyages during the years 1585–7. Davis explored the west coast of Greenland, Baffin Bay and the strait between them, which is named after him. Although it was not known at the time, Davis's voyages showed the right path to where the Passage would eventually be discovered.

Henry Hudson next explored the bay in voyages covering the years 1607–11. Hudson had been charged in 1607 to sail by way of the North Pole to find the Passage. He finally stopped at 80° 23' north, some 577 miles south of the pole, a record farthest north that would stand until the time of James Cook's second great voyage in 1772–5. Hudson, like Mary Shelley's Robert Walton, was forced to return home due to threats of mutiny by his crewmen. He next tried for a Northeast Passage across the top of Norway and Russia. His final voyage explored what are now known as Hudson Strait, Foxe Basin and Hudson's Bay in quest of the elusive Northwest Passage. He found no passage through the bay, only a dead end, and was forced to winter on the rocky shores of the bay. When the ice melted, the crew mutinied and Hudson was set adrift along with his son, and the sick and lame, in one of the ship's small

boats, where they perished; a foretaste of the tragedy that was to come in the later history of Arctic exploration.

Hudson's discovery of the bay whetted the appetites of English investors, a group of whom formed the Company of the Merchant Discoverers of the North-West Passage. In 1612, the Company sent Thomas Button to find a way out of Hudson's Bay. Next they sent Robert Bylot, with William Baffin as his pilot and navigator. Baffin's name looms large in the history of polar exploration, as his explorations, much criticised at the time, proceeded further than those of anyone else before Cook. In 1615, Bylot and Baffin coasted the shores of Southampton Island and entered Foxe Basin. In 1616, convinced that Hudson's Bay was not the key to the Passage, the Company sent Bylot and Baffin, in the *Discovery*, to explore Davis Strait to the east of Hudson Strait. They headed north along Davis Strait into the bay to be named Baffin Bay, the starting point for so many later ventures to find the Passage. Baffin mapped the shoreline of this bay in some detail. In particular he noted a substantial sound of water, which he named Lancaster Sound after his patron, Sir James Lancaster. Ice pushed them back, but, though they did not realise it at the time, Bylot and Baffin had passed the entrance to the Northwest Passage they sought. Lancaster Sound was to become an important and controversial area in the search for the Passage. In 1819, William Edward Parry, in the ships *Hecla* and *Griper*, sailed through these waters and entered the great maze of the Canadian Arctic archipelago, in which the secrets of the Passage would eventually be located. Baffin was convinced there was no hope of a navigable passage through these waters and that even if there were it would not be a commercially sound proposition to open it up; the weather conditions were too harsh and unforgiving. Baffin's map was not published and the account of his voyage was scarcely read. His penetration of Baffin Bay was forgotten as, once more, interested parties turned to the waters of Hudson's Bay in the quest for the Passage.

Hudson's Bay was explored by the Norwegian Jens Munk in 1619–20 and, in 1631–2, by the Englishmen Luke Foxe and Thomas James, agents for merchants of Bristol and London respectively. Foxe explored the north-western corner of the bay, coasting Southampton Island and naming its westerly strait Sir Thomas Roe's Welcome (now Roes Welcome Strait) after his patron. Having explored the south-western shores of the bay, Foxe sailed north into what is now known as Foxe Basin, where he surveyed the southern coast of Baffin Island. James fared less well than Foxe. His ship was damaged and almost lost, and he was obliged to spend the winter in James's Bay, the site of Hudson's final camp. When the ice melted, James was able to push north past Southampton Island and Foxe Basin, but his fear of being trapped for another winter there sent him home. Several scholars have claimed that Coleridge's

'Rime of the Ancient Mariner' is indebted to *The Strange and Dangerous Voyage of Captain Thomas James* (1633).¹

THE NORTHEAST PASSAGE 1553–1750

The alternative to the Northwest Passage was the Northeast Passage, linking the White Sea to the Bering Strait along the northern coast of Siberia. This route was of great interest to England and Holland as a means of challenging the monopoly of the route to India enjoyed by Spain and Portugal. In 1553, Sir Hugh Willoughby set sail with three ships on a quest for this passage. Only one of the ships, the *Edward Bonaventure*, actually managed to reach Colmagro (present-day Archangel). Its commander journeyed overland to meet the Russian Tsar, Ivan the Terrible, at Moscow. Following this meeting, a treaty giving English ships freedom to trade in Russia was negotiated; the Muscovy Company was founded in order to exploit this opportunity. While beneficial to English commercial interests, this did not further the discovery of the Passage.

William Barents, the Dutch navigator, led the next major expedition in 1594. Barents was the first European to sail east of Novaya Zemlya. The following year he set forth again with several ships, anticipating trade with China, only to find his way blocked by ice. During his third expedition, in 1596, which sought a passage further to the north, Barents discovered Spitsbergen (Svalbard), which he claimed in the name of Holland. Sailing along the north coast of Novaya Zemlya, he saw open waters to the east but was forced to winter in the area when his ship was damaged by ice. The following June, the crew abandoned ship and attempted to gain the coast of Russia in two improvised boats. Barents died of scurvy and exhaustion, but Russian ships rescued the survivors of his crew. They were the first Europeans to winter at latitude 76° north. The account of Barents's three voyages was translated into English in 1609 and became a great success.

Ironically, Russians were using a sea route from the Kara Sea to the Ob and the Yenisey at the very time that Europeans were searching for the Northeast Passage. They used light boats called *kochis*, which were specially adapted to the conditions of the ice, rather than the heavier ships of Barents and Willoughby. In 1648, the Cossack Semyon Dezhnev, while on a fur trading expedition, achieved a passage through the Bering Strait without realising it. In 1725, Tsar Peter the Great sent an expedition commanded by a Dane, Vitus Bering, north by sea from Kamchatka in search of a route to America. Having established that a passage existed, he returned in 1728, although he had not seen the American coast. Peter's successor, Catherine I, sent Bering on a series of expeditions between 1733 and 1742, known as the Great North-

1 John Livingston Lowes, *The Road to Xanadu: a Study in the Ways of the Imagination* (1927; reprinted London, 1978), pp. 121–3, 129–30.

ern Expedition. In 1741, Bering sighted the coast of Alaska and sailed along it for four days. Inspired by the model of the British East India Company, Russian merchants formed the Russian–American Company, which was to administer the territory of Alaska until its sale to the US in 1867. Unlike the Northwest Passage, the Northeast Passage along the top of the Siberian coast had been firmly established and navigated by the Russians, if not by the European powers.

THE NORTH POLE AND THE SEARCH FOR THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE 1668–1760

Following the voyages of Foxe and James, Hudson's Bay was untroubled by European vessels until 1668, when the *Nonsuch* entered the bay to establish a fur trading post, Rupert House. Thus began one of the great commercial enterprises in the history of North America: the fur trading empire of the mighty Hudson's Bay Company. The *Nonsuch* was chartered by a group of merchants, the Company of Adventurers Trading into Hudson's Bay. Charles II granted them a licence in 1670. The bay was to be used as the channel for collecting and exporting valuable furs and importing other trade goods. The Company's ships were sent from the bay annually, laden with valuable furs. The Company held the right to exploit the resources of some four million square miles of territory, including the shores of Hudson's Bay and the Arctic Ocean. It had the power to enforce laws and build forts, and had its own military forces and fleet. The Hudson's Bay Company's contribution to the exploration and mapping of the region was substantial, although its primary interests were always commercial. In its occasional explorations for the Northwest Passage the Company employed its own land-based traders and *voyageurs* (canoemen).

In 1741, concerned about the inertia of the Hudson's Bay Company in exploring the area and jealous of French incursions into northern waters, the British Admiralty sent Christopher Middleton and William Moor on expeditions into the bay to search for the Northwest Passage. The following year, Middleton sailed north, reaching the edge of the Arctic Circle and naming the bay beyond Southampton Island Repulse Bay. Middleton had to retreat but he noticed a 'Frozen Strait' between the island and Melville Peninsula. He had shown that a northerly way out of the bay, from which a Northwest Passage might be effected, did not exist; but others were to suspect, wrongly, that the 'Frozen Strait' might serve as such.

The British Parliament, some of whose members were convinced that the discovery of the Passage might be imminent, passed an Act in 1744 promising a reward of £20,000 to the first merchant ship to sail between Hudson's Bay and the Pacific Ocean. William Moor sailed on two private expeditions in 1746 and 1747, but with little success. The Hudson's Bay Company was also

engaged in the quest, sending William Christopher into the Chesterfield Inlet in 1761–2. This expedition, too, proved fruitless; the next venture in search of the Passage was to be by land.

THE NORTH POLE AND THE SEARCH FOR THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE 1770–1800

We now come to the point at which the explorers and adventures reproduced in this volume enter the story. Details of their voyages and their careers can be found in the headnotes to each extract. This section will present a brief overview of the chronology of their expeditions.

Samuel Hearne, an employee of the Hudson's Bay Company, was sent in 1769 to find and trace the Coppermine River and ascertain whether or not a passage existed from Hudson's Bay into the Pacific Ocean, cutting through the American continent. He was detailed to walk as far north as he could, taking with him about six 'Northern Indians' (Chipewyan Indians) and a similar number of English labourers. He was also to increase the geographic and scientific knowledge available to the Company as it planned its future trading strategy. He was successful on his third attempt, in 1770–2. On 18 July 1771, his party managed to reach the Arctic Ocean via the mouth of the Coppermine River. Hearne was convinced that he had reached the 'Northern Ocean' and that he was the first European to do so. He was not able, however, to obtain an observation for latitude, owing to fog and drizzle. John Franklin was to make a correct calculation for this spot when he retraced Hearne's steps fifty years later on his first overland expedition. It was now clear that there was no Northwest Passage through the American continent south of the Arctic Circle and that it was within the Arctic Circle that the Passage, if it existed, would be found.

Two years after Hearne's discoveries, the British Admiralty sent out an expedition commanded by Constantine John Phipps, this time in search of the open polar sea that many, including Daines Barrington, believed to exist. Phipps was instructed to find the North Pole and to turn back at 90°. The expedition sailed north of Spitsbergen but was stopped (at 80° 43' north) by an impenetrable wall of ice.

In 1776, Parliament extended the reward of £20,000 for the discovery of a Northwest Passage to apply to any route and any ship, including those of the Royal Navy. At the same time an award of £5,000 was offered to any ship approaching to within a degree of the North Pole. The next Englishman to encounter the northern polar sea was James Cook, on his third and final voyage. Phipps's expedition had failed to find a Northwest Passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific. It was thought that a Passage in the other direction, from the Pacific around the top of the American continent, might prove to be a better prospect. Cook was dispatched on the task with two ships, the

Resolution and the *Discovery*, under his command. He charted the coast of North America and searched every inlet for the elusive passage. Eventually, his ships turned south, round what is now known as the Alaskan peninsula, and reached Icy Cape before making their way north again towards the Bering Strait. Cook, sailing through persistent fogs, crossed the Arctic Circle and, at 70° 41' north, encountering a ten-foot-high ice pack, abandoned the search in August. He was prevented from returning the following year by his untimely death on 14 February 1779.

The next expedition to the Arctic was an overland one, organised by the Hudson's Bay Company. In 1789 Alexander Mackenzie set out with a small party of Indians and French Canadian *voyageurs* to explore the extreme North of the continent. Leaving Fort Chipewyan, the party discovered a river flowing to the northwest (since named Mackenzie River). They descended this river until they reached the Arctic Ocean in latitude 69° north on 14 July that year. Like Hearne, Mackenzie did not rate his discoveries very highly, but they did open the region to later fur traders and explorers.

THE NORTH POLE AND THE SEARCH FOR THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE 1800–1835

In 1817, reports communicated by whalers such as William Scoresby that the ice sheet in Baffin Bay was retreating reached the eyes of influential people. Eighteen thousand square miles of ice had broken free from the polar cap and sections of ice were gradually drifting southwards. The environmental effects of this event were felt on both sides of the Atlantic. As Fergus Fleming comments:

European summers became noticeably cooler. In North America, Bostonians were puzzled to find that their maize crops failed to ripen. Iceland was virtually stranded, its bays, ports and inlets clogged by ice.¹

The Second Secretary of the Admiralty, John Barrow, heard this news. An enthusiast for geographical exploration with many surplus officers on his hands doing little after the end of the Napoleonic Wars, Barrow seized the opportunity to kill two birds with one stone by sending his naval men on exploratory missions. There was a further motive, too: in 1816, Otto von Kotzebue had sailed north through the Bering Strait on a Russian-sponsored expedition in search of the Passage. While charting the Alaskan coast, he had located and named Kotzebue Sound. It was considered a matter of great national prestige and strategic importance to precede the Russians to the discovery.

Barrow first dispatched John Ross and David Buchan to the Arctic; Ross to explore Baffin Bay and Buchan to try for a Northwest Passage at Icy Cape.

1 Fergus Fleming, *Barrow's Boys* (London, 1998), p. 29.

Buchan's instructions were to proceed to the Bering Strait and attempt to reach the North Pole. Failing that he was to pass between Greenland and the east coast of America into Baffin Bay. His ships, the *Dorothea* and the *Trent*, got little further than 80° 34' north, defeated by the sea ice. Ross's expedition was to go beyond Baffin's discoveries. His official instructions were to pass through Davis Strait and seek a current flowing from the north or north-west. If one were found, he was to follow it along the north-eastern coast of America and proceed through the Bering Strait. Ross explored Baffin Bay but claimed to see a range of mountains, which he named Croker's Mountains, stretching across Lancaster Sound, through which the Northwest Passage would eventually be discovered. Barrow and others were furious that Ross had not spent enough time investigating Lancaster Sound, where they suspected the entrance to the true Passage was located. So William Edward Parry was sent in 1819 to ascertain whether Ross's mountains were real or imaginary. The Arctic weather was uncharacteristically mild, and Parry was able to sail through Lancaster Sound and along Parry Channel. In September, Parry's men passed longitude 110° west and reached Melville Island, where they wintered, exploring the island. Attempting to reach the Bering Strait the following year, they were stopped by closely packed and heavy ice near Cape Dundas on the south coast of the island. Thence the expedition returned to England, where Parry received a hero's welcome following his successful mission.

While Parry was sailing through the Arctic, John Franklin led an overland expedition (1819–22) retracing Hearne's footsteps, with the intention of charting the north coast of North America between the Coppermine and Mackenzie Rivers. Descending the Coppermine River by canoe, Franklin's expedition reached the Arctic Ocean on 17 July 1821. They then proceeded east, turning back at the place Franklin named Point Turnagain. The expedition became infamous for the privations and sufferings that followed as the party ran out of food and nearly starved to death before they were rescued. Franklin was celebrated as 'the man who ate his boots'.

At the end of 1820, while Franklin was in North America, Barrow sent Parry back to the Arctic with George Lyon as his second in command. Parry's chief aims were to navigate a passage to the Pacific and to delineate the northern limits of the American continent. Passing through the Hudson Strait, he passed two winters in the Arctic on Winter Island. While there, he discovered a channel to the north of Melville Peninsula, which he named Fury and Hecla Strait, before being forced back by sea ice. Lyon, exploring the area overland, made the first long journey performed by a naval officer with dog-drawn sledges. Barrow next decided that what was needed was an all-out assault on the Arctic from four directions. Four expeditions were to be involved, each commanded by a seasoned explorer: Franklin; Parry; F. W. Beechey; and Lyon were chosen for the task. Beechey was to sail to the Pacific

and attempt a Passage from west to east. George Lyon would head for Repulse Bay and Winter Island in the *Griper*, then strike overland to Parry's Point Turnagain. Parry would follow the route of his first voyage to Lancaster Sound, then head south down Prince Regent Inlet. Franklin was to journey down the Mackenzie River and split his party in two. One half (commanded by Franklin) would travel east with the aim of reaching Cook's Icy Cape, where Beechey's expedition should be; the other (commanded by Richardson) would push west, exploring the coast between the mouths of the Mackenzie and Coppermine Rivers and, if possible, making contact with either Parry or Lyon. Only Beechey and Franklin were relatively successful. Parry lost one of his ships, the *Fury*, in Prince Regent Inlet and Lyon's vessel, the *Griper*, proved unmanageable in the icy seas off Southampton Island.

The failure of the four expeditions to get much further in the search for the Passage led to a cooling of interest. However, in 1826, Barrow turned his attentions to the North Pole itself. He selected Parry to command an expedition there. Hopes of reaching the pole were ludicrously inflated, but on 27 April 1827 the expedition set off, proceeding past the west coast of Spitsbergen. After an arduous journey Parry finally turned back. His expedition had achieved a latitude of 82° 43' 32" north on 22 July 1827, a record which stood until 1875. He was still, however, some 500 miles from the pole itself.

The failure of Parry's expedition to the pole led to harsh criticism both for the Admiralty and for the whole enterprise of Arctic exploration, so much so that the next major expedition had to be financed privately by sponsorship and subscription. This marked the return of John Ross to the ice-face of polar exploration. Raising the money himself, chiefly through the help of the gin distiller Felix Booth, Ross took a converted paddle steamer, the *Victory*, into the heart of the Arctic. The *Victory* managed to creep down Prince Regent Inlet into the open water, which Ross named the Gulf of Boothia, from which it would never return. However, in the four years its crew spent there, much overland exploration of the area was accomplished by dog sled. King William Island was traversed (though it was not then known to be an island) and Ross's nephew James Clark Ross, who had sailed several times with Parry, determined the position of the North Magnetic Pole in June 1831. Finally, during July 1833, the *Victory*'s crew were able to proceed by boat to Baffin Bay, where they were rescued.

Ross's return from the Arctic after many had presumed his crew lost was a sensation, but it once more dampened the enthusiasm of the British public for Arctic exploration. However, two further expeditions did leave for the Arctic Circle in the 1830s. George Back, Franklin's old lieutenant, was dispatched on a mission to rescue Ross on 17 February 1833. When Back received news that Ross had been found, he proceeded instead on a mission attempting to chart the coast from Franklin's Point Turnagain to James

Ross's westernmost position. Back reached neither position, but he did notice a strait separating the mainland from King William Island. Back returned to Britain in 1835 to a discussion of whether or not Prince Regent Inlet might be connected by some waterway with the Gulf of Boothia, through Ross's Poctes Bay. He was thus sent again to the Arctic, this time by sea. In command of the *Terror*, Back was to head to Repulse Bay, anchor there, and then cross Melville Peninsula, charting the shoreline north to Fury and Hecla Strait and west to the mouth of the Great Fish River (present-day Back River). But he did not get that far. The *Terror* was frozen in Middleton's Frozen Strait on 20 September. When the ship broke free on July 13, it had been so damaged by the pressure of the ice that Back retreated home, never to return to the Arctic or take to sea again.

An overland expedition by two Hudson's Bay Company traders, Peter Dease and Thomas Simpson, rounded off the expeditions of the 1830s. Dease and Simpson journeyed in Franklin's footsteps down the Mackenzie River and then west to Point Barrow, finally closing the 160-mile gap between the Beechey and Franklin expeditions of 1825. In 1838–9 they successfully charted and mapped much of the Arctic coast from the Coppermine to the Great Fish River. What existed between Boothia Peninsula and the Great Fish River, however, remained unknown. A way through the maze of Arctic islands and peninsulas across the top of a now almost wholly mapped North American coast seemed to be possible. However, public interest in the Northwest Passage had waned and the next polar expedition, that of James Clark Ross, would be to the Antarctic. The success of Ross's southern voyage reawakened the sleeping interest in the Passage and led to one last major attempt to find it, the disastrous Franklin expedition of 1845.

THE SOUTH POLE 1770–1835

Voyages of discovery towards the South Pole were less common in the period than those towards the North Pole. Since the time of Pythagoras and Plato, there had been a longstanding belief that there must be a land on the other side of the world to act as a counterbalance to the land masses of the Northern Hemisphere. The notion of the Antipodes, literally a land with 'feet opposite', was developed. In 1520 Ferdinand Magellan discovered the Strait of Magellan, which now bears his name, while sailing off the coast of South America. He believed he had found the northern shore of the Antarctic continent, and he called the place Tierra del Fuego, the 'land of fire'. In 1616, Le Maire and Schouten doubled Cape Horn and found that Tierra del Fuego was an island. In 1641, Abel Tasman sailed around Australia without noticing it.

Fantasies about the unknown southern continent were as current as those concerning the northern. Many envisaged the continent as a new Garden of

Eden, a fertile region possessed of a tropical climate. A chief spokesman for this kind of thinking was the late eighteenth-century explorer Alexander Dalrymple, who was convinced of its existence and campaigned for its discovery. It was a civilian, the astronomer Edmund Halley, who in 1698 set forth on a voyage in the great southern sea skirting Antarctica. His voyage aboard the *Paramore*, on a mission to measure variations in the earth's magnetic field, sighted icebergs at 52° 24' south. The *Paramore* came close the islands of South Georgia.

The first Antarctic exploration, however, was that of James Cook, whose second voyage (1772–5) was intended to resolve the question of the southern continent once and for all. Cook's voyage skirted the edges of Antarctica and charted the Pacific. This voyage had an enormous impact on the public in Britain. Cook dipped into the Antarctic on three occasions, during December 1772 and January 1773. On 17 January, he crossed the Antarctic Circle for the first time in history, approaching to within some eighty miles of the Antarctic coast at latitude 67° 15' south. He crossed the Antarctic Circle two more times, in December 1773 and January 1774, achieving latitude 71° 10' south. He demonstrated that if a land mass to the south did exist, it was inaccessible and covered in ice.

Cook's reports, however, did bring droves of British and US whalers and sealers south of Cape Horn. Using South Georgia as a base for their hunting operations, they killed many thousands of penguins and seals. Most of the new discoveries in the area were achieved by seal hunters searching for new killing grounds in the South Atlantic. The sealer William Smith discovered the South Shetland Islands in 1819; Edward Bransfield journeyed within sight of Antarctica in 1820 (the first officially reported sighting of the Antarctic mainland); a year later, Nathaniel Brown Palmer, a US sealer, discovered the southern reaches of the Antarctic Peninsula. In 1819, Tsar Alexander I sent out an Antarctic expedition commanded by Thaddeus Thaddevich Bellingshausen, which came within thirty miles of the coast of Antarctica.

The sealer James Weddell was one of the most successful explorers in the region. During the early 1820s he visited the island of South Georgia, east of the tip of South America, as well as the South Shetland Islands; as well as visiting and naming the South Orkney Islands. Later, accompanied by Matthew Brisbane in command of the *Beaufoy*, he surveyed the South Shetlands and the South Orkneys before sailing southwards in search of new land. Aided by unusually open ice conditions, Weddell reached 74° 15' south, in the sea that now bears his own name, on 20 February 1823; exceeding Cook's furthest south by 185 miles. Despite an open sea ahead of him, Weddell turned back only two day's sail from the Antarctic coast.

Enderby & Sons was a whaling and sealing firm which, unlike its competitors and to its own financial peril, placed great emphasis on geographical

discovery. The company won fame particularly because of the achievements of two of its captains, John Biscoe and John Balleny. Biscoe sighted land south of Africa, which he named Enderby Land, and Balleny, in 1838, sighted a group of islands south of Terre Adélie (to be named by Jules Dumont d'Urville). However, it is outside the chronological parameters of this present set of travel narratives that the greatest discoveries in the Antarctic were to be made. From the 1830s onwards, a series of expeditions – including the French expedition of 1837–40 under Jules Dumont d'Urville; the US expedition of 1838–42 under Charles Wilkes; and the British expedition of 1839–43 under James Clark Ross – vastly increased knowledge of the newly discovered continent.

Ross's expedition, sponsored by the British Royal Society and the Admiralty, had as its primary purpose the study of terrestrial magnetism. It was the best equipped of all the nineteenth-century expeditions. Ross discovered and explored Victoria Land, breaking James Weddell's record southern latitude. The expedition came to a halt in January 1840 at 77° 10' south before McMurdo Bay at the foot of a live volcano, which Ross named Mount Erebus after one of his ships. He also discovered the vast expanse of the Ross Ice Shelf. His ships returned to Britain in 1843 and the expedition's success reawakened the public's thirst for further discovery. In 1845 Ross's ships, *Erebus* and *Terror*, were placed under the command of the ageing Arctic explorer Sir John Franklin, for the final British naval expedition to find the Northwest Passage. It would have been luckier for Franklin if Ross's southern voyage had not been such a spectacular success.

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Phipps: Voyage towards the North Pole

Constantine John Phipps, *A Voyage towards the North Pole* (London: B. White & P. Elmsley, 1774), pp. 60–72.

Constantine John Phipps, second Baron Mulgrave (1744–92), entered the navy in 1760 and was promoted to commander in 1763. He saw action in the West Indies against the French, serving in the reduction of Martinique and St Lucia, and in the siege of Havana. He was also a politician; he was returned as MP for Lincoln in the election of 1768 and later served as MP for Huntingdon. It was Daines Barrington (1727–1800), FRS, the wealthy lawyer, antiquarian and naturalist, who was instrumental in originating Phipps's voyage to the Arctic. Barrington studied the accounts of former voyages to the Arctic region and the records of the master whalers who had fished there, convincing himself in the process that there existed at the North Pole an open sea which was navigable and under a climate less severe than generally thought. Barrington argued that a Northwest Passage to India could be achieved by sailing from Spitsbergen (Svalbard) over the North Pole and south through the Bering Strait into the Pacific. He convinced the First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Sandwich, of the practicability of this idea and in 1773 the government dispatched two ships, the *Racehorse*, under Phipps's command, and the *Carcass*, under the command of Captain Skeffington Lutwidge, to explore the possibility. Phipps was instructed to find the North Pole and to turn back at 90°. The expedition sailed north of Spitsbergen but was stopped by an impenetrable 'wall of ice extending for more than twenty degrees between the latitudes of eighty and eighty-one, without the smallest appearance of any opening'. Stopped at 80° 43', the ships spent some weeks skirting sea ice to the north of Spitsbergen. Finding the sea absolutely blocked with ice, the expedition returned without success. The young Horatio Nelson was a midshipman on board the *Carcass* and his encounter with a polar bear during this voyage became an important incident in Nelson's hagiography.

Phipps's setback did not discourage Barrington and others, who continued to believe in an open polar sea. Barrington read a series of papers on the subject to the Royal Society, which included accounts (many of them hearsay and few well authenticated) of mariners who claimed to have achieved high

latitudes. In 1776, Parliament offered an award of £20,000 for the discovery of a Northwest Passage, not only by merchant ships and by way of Hudson's Bay (as had been offered since 1743), but by any route and by any ship, including those of the Royal Navy. At the same time, an award of £5,000 was offered to any ship approaching within one degree of the North Pole.

Phipps took no further part in Arctic exploration, although he remained in active service in the Royal Navy until 1781. Barrington continued to press his idea that beyond the ice barrier that Phipps had encountered at 80° 43' was an open polar sea. In his review of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* in the *Quarterly Review* of 1818, John Wilson Croker attributed Captain Robert Walton's belief in this theory to the novelist's acquaintance with Barrington's ideas. The hypothesis of an open polar sea would continue to inspire later nineteenth-century voyages.

The following extract is taken from near the end of Phipps's *Voyage*, as he skirted the ice looking for a passage through, almost becoming stuck. Convinced that he would be icebound for the winter, Phipps considered abandoning his ships and escaping in boats before the loosening of the ice allowed the ships to depart. Phipps's predicament was similar to the one faced by Walton, who, after hearing Victor Frankenstein's tale of his animation of a creature, allows himself to be persuaded by his crew to depart from the Arctic.

The main body of ice, which we had traced from West to East, they now perceived to join to these islands, and from them to what is called the North East land. In returning, the ice having closed much since they went, they were frequently forced to haul the boat over it to other openings. The weather exceedingly fine and mild, and unusually clear. The scene was beautiful and picturesque; the two ships becalmed in a large bay, with three apparent openings between the islands which formed it, but every-where surrounded with ice as far as we could see, with some streams of water; not a breath of air; the water perfectly smooth; the ice covered with snow, low, and even, except a few broken pieces near the edges: the pools of water in the middle of the pieces were frozen over with young ice.

31st. At nine in the morning, having a light breeze to the Eastward, we cast off, and endeavoured to force through the ice. At noon the ice was so close, that being unable to proceed, we moored again to a field. In the afternoon we filled our cask with fresh water from the ice, which we found very pure and soft. The Carcass moved, and made fast to the same field with us. The ice measured eight yards ten inches in thickness at one end, and seven

yards eleven inches at the other. At four in the afternoon the variation was $12^{\circ} 24'$ W : at the same time the longitude $19^{\circ} 0' 15''$ E ; by which we found that we had hardly moved to the Eastward since the day before. Calm most part of the day ; the weather very fine ; the ice closed fast, and was all round the ships ; no opening to be seen any where, except an hole of about a mile and a half, where the ships lay fast to the ice with ice-anchors. We completed the water. The ship's company were playing on the ice all day. The pilots being much farther than they had ever been, and the season advancing, seemed alarmed at being beset.

August 1st. The ice pressed in fast ; there was not now the smallest opening ; the two ships were within less than two lengths of each other, separated by ice, and neither having room to turn. The ice, which had been all flat the day before, and almost level with the water's edge, was now in many places forced higher than the main yard, by the pieces squeezing together. Our latitude this day at noon, by the double altitude, was $80^{\circ} 37'$.

2d. Thick foggy wet weather, blowing fresh to the Westward ; the ice immediately about the ships rather looser than the day before, but yet hourly setting in so fast upon us, that there seemed to be no probability of getting the ships out again, without a strong East, or

North East wind. There was not the smallest appearance of open water, except a little towards the West point of the North East land. The seven islands and North East land, with the frozen sea, formed almost a basin, leaving but about four points opening for the ice to drift out, in case of a change of wind.

3d. The weather very fine, clear, and calm; we perceived that the ships had been driven far to the Eastward; the ice was much closer than before, and the passage by which we had come in from the Westward closed up, no open water being in sight, either in that or any other quarter. The pilots having expressed a wish to get if possible farther out, the ships companies were set to work at five in the morning, to cut a passage through the ice, and warp through the small openings to the Westward. We found the ice very deep, having sawed sometimes through pieces twelve feet thick. This labour was continued the whole day, but without any success; our utmost efforts not having moved the ships above three hundred yards to the Westward through the ice, at the same time that they had been driven (together with the ice itself, to which they were fast) far to the NE and Eastward, by the current; which had also forced the loose ice from the Westward, between the islands, where it became packed, and as firm as the main body.

4th. Quite calm till evening, when we were flattered with a light air to the Eastward, which did not last long, and had no favourable effect. The wind was now at N W, with a very thick fog, the ship driving to the Eastward. The pilots seemed to apprehend that the ice extended very far to the Southward and Westward.

5th. The probability of getting the ships out appearing every hour less, and the season being already far advanced, some speedy resolution became necessary as to the steps to be taken for the preservation of the people. As the situation of the ships prevented us from seeing the state of the ice to the Westward, by which our future proceedings must in a great measure be determined, I sent Mr. Walden, one of the midshipmen, with two pilots, to an island about twelve miles off, which I have distinguished in the charts by the name of Walden's Island, to see where the open water lay.

6th. Mr. Walden and the pilots, who were sent the day before to examine the state of the ice from the island, returned this morning with an account, that the ice, though close all about us, was open to the Westward, round the point by which we came in. They also told me, that when upon the island they had the wind very fresh to the Eastward, though where the ships lay it had been almost calm all day. This circumstance considerably lessened

the hopes we had hitherto entertained of the immediate effect of an Easterly wind in clearing the bay. We had but one alternative; either patiently to wait the event of the weather upon the ships, in hopes of getting them out, or to betake ourselves to the boats. The ships had driven into shoal water, having but fourteen fathom. Should they, or the ice to which they were fast, take the ground, they must be inevitably lost, and probably overset. The hopes of getting the ships out was not hastily to be relinquished, nor obstinately adhered to, till all other means of retreat were cut off. Having no harbour to lodge them in, it would be impossible to winter them here, with any probability of their being again serviceable; our provisions would be very short for such an undertaking, were it otherwise feasible; and supposing, what appeared impossible, that we could get to the nearest rocks, and make some conveniences for wintering, being now in an unfrequented part, where ships never even attempt to come, we should have the same difficulties to encounter the next year, without the same resources; the remains of the ship's company, in all probability, not in health; no provisions; and the sea not so open, this year having certainly been uncommonly clear. Indeed it could not have been expected that more than a very small part should survive the hardships of such a winter with every advantage; much less in our present situation. On the other hand, the undertaking to move so large a body for

so considerable a distance by boats, was not without very serious difficulties. Should we remain much longer here, the bad weather must be expected to set in. The stay of the Dutchmen to the Northward is very doubtful: if the Northern harbours keep clear, they stay till the beginning of September; but when the loose ice sets in, they quit them immediately. I thought it proper to send for the officers of both ships, and informed them of my intention of preparing the boats for going away. I immediately hoisted out the boats, and took every precaution in my power to make them secure and comfortable: the fitting would necessarily take up some days. The water shoaling, and the ships driving fast towards the rocks to the NE, I ordered canvass bread-bags to be made, in case it should be necessary very suddenly to betake ourselves to the boats: I also sent a man with a lead and line to the Northward, and another from the Carcass to the Eastward, to sound wherever they found cracks in the ice, that we might have notice before either the ships, or the ice to which they were fast, took the ground; as in that case, they must instantly have been crushed or overset. The weather bad; most part of the day foggy, and rather cold.

7th. In the morning I set out with the Launch over the ice; she hauled much easier than I could have expected; we got her about two miles. I then returned with the people for their dinner. Finding the ice rather

more open near the ships, I was encouraged to attempt moving them. The wind being Easterly, though but little of it, we set the sails, and got the ships about a mile to the Westward. They moved indeed, but very slowly, and were not now by a great deal so far to the Westward as where they were beset. However, I kept all the sail upon them, to force through whenever the ice slackened the least. The people behaved very well in hauling the boat; they seemed reconciled to the idea of quitting the ships, and to have the fullest confidence in their officers. The boats could not with the greatest diligence be got to the water side before the fourteenth; if the situation of the ships did not alter by that time, I should not be justified in staying longer by them. In the mean time I resolved to carry on both attempts together, moving the boats constantly, but without omitting any opportunity of getting the ships through.

8th. At half past four, sent two pilots with three men to see the state of the ice to the Westward, that I might judge of the probability of getting the ships out. At nine they returned, and reported the ice to be very heavy and close, consisting chiefly of large fields. Between nine and ten this morning, I set out with the people, and got the Launch above three miles. The weather being foggy, and the people having worked hard, I thought it best to return on board between six and seven. The ships had in the mean time moved something through the ice, and

the ice itself had drifted still more to the Westward. At night there was little wind, and a thick fog, so that I could not judge precisely of the advantage we had gained; but I still feared that, however flattering, it was not such as to justify my giving up the idea of moving the boats, the season advancing so fast, the preservation of the ships being so uncertain, and the situation of the people so critical.

9th. A thick fog in the morning: we moved the ship a little through some very small openings. In the afternoon, upon its clearing up, we were agreeably surprised to find the ships had driven much more than we could have expected to the Westward. We worked hard all day, and got them something more to the Westward through the ice; but nothing in comparison to what the ice itself had drifted. We got past the Launches; I sent a number of men for them, and got them on board. Between three and four in the morning the wind was Westerly, and it snowed fast. The people having been much fatigued, we were obliged to desist from working for a few hours. The progress which the ships had made through the ice was, however, a very favourable event: the drift of the ice was an advantage that might be as suddenly lost, as it had been unexpectedly gained, by a change in the current: we had experienced the inefficacy of an Easterly wind when far in the bay, and under the high land; but having now got through so much of the

ice, we began again to conceive hopes that a brisk gale from that quarter would soon effectually clear us.

10th. The wind springing up to the NNE in the morning, we set all the sail we could upon the ship, and forced her through a great deal of very heavy ice: she struck often very hard, and with one stroke broke the shank of the best bower anchor. About noon we had got her through all the ice, and out to sea. I stood to the NW to make the ice, and found the main body just where we left it. At three in the morning, with a good breeze Easterly, we were standing to the Westward, between the land and the ice, both in sight; the weather hazy.

11th. Came to an anchor in the harbour of Smeerenberg, to refresh the people after their fatigues. We found here four of the Dutch ships, which we had left in the Norways when we failed from Vogel Sang, and upon which I had depended for carrying the people home in case we had been obliged to quit the ships. In this Sound there is good anchorage in thirteen fathom, sandy bottom, not far from the shore: it is well sheltered from all winds. The island close to which we lay is called Amsterdam Island, the Westernmost point of which is Hacluyt's Head Land: here the Dutch used formerly to boil their whale-oil, and the remains of some conveniencies erected by them for that purpose are still visible. Once they attempted to make an establishment, and left some people

to winter here, who all perished. The Dutch ships still resort to this place for the latter season of the whale fishery.

12th. Got the instruments on shore, and the tent pitched; but could not make any observations this day or the next, from the badness of the weather.

13th. Rain, and blowing hard: two of the Dutch ships failed for Holland.

14th. The weather being fine and little wind, we began our observations.

18th. Completed the observations: Calm all day. During our stay, I again set up the pendulum, but was not so fortunate as before, never having been able to get an observation of a revolution of the sun, or even equal altitudes for the time. We had an opportunity of determining the refraction at midnight, which answered within a few seconds to the calculation in Dr. Bradley's table, allowing for the barometer and thermometer. Being within sight of Cloven Cliff, I took a survey of this part of Fair Haven, to connect it with the plan of the other part. Dr. Irving climbed up a mountain, to take its height with the barometer, which I determined at the same time geometrically with great care. By repeated observations here we found the latitude to be $79^{\circ} 44'$, which by the survey

corresponded exactly with the latitude of Cloven Cliff, determined before; the longitude $9^{\circ} 50' 45''$ E; dip $82^{\circ} 8' \frac{1}{4}$; variation $18^{\circ} 57'$ W; which agrees also with the observation made on shore in July. The tide flowed here half past one, the same as in Vogel Sang harbour.

Opposite to the place where the instruments stood, was one of the most remarkable Icebergs in this country. Icebergs are large bodies of ice filling the vallies between the high mountains; the face towards the sea is nearly perpendicular, and of a very lively light green colour. That represented in the engraving, from a sketch taken by Mr. D'Auvergne upon the spot, was about three hundred feet high, with a cascade of water issuing out of it. The black mountains, white snow, and beautiful colour of the ice, make a very romantick and uncommon picture. Large pieces frequently break off from the Icebergs, and fall with great noise into the water: we observed one piece which had floated out into the bay, and grounded in twenty-four fathom; it was fifty feet high above the surface of the water, and of the same beautiful colour as the Iceberg.

A particular description of all the plants and animals will have a place in the Appendix. I shall here mention such general observations as my short stay enabled me to make. The stone we found was chiefly a kind of marble, which dissolved easily in the marine acid. We perceived no marks of minerals of any kind, nor the least appearance of present, or remains of former Volcanoes. Neither did we meet with insects, or any species of

reptiles; not even the common earthworm. We saw no springs or rivers, the water, which we found in great plenty, being all produced by the melting of the snow from the mountains. During the whole time we were in these latitudes, there was no thunder or lightning. I must also add, that I never found what is mentioned by Marten (who is generally accurate in his observations, and faithful in his accounts) of the sun at midnight resembling in appearance the moon; I saw no difference in clear weather between the sun at midnight and any other time, but what arose from a different degree of altitude; the brightness of the light appearing there, as well as elsewhere, to depend upon the obliquity of his rays. The sky was in general loaded with hard white clouds; so that I do not remember to have ever seen the sun and the horizon both free from them even in the clearest weather. We could always perceive when we were approaching the ice, long before we saw it, by a bright appearance near the horizon, which the pilots called the *blink of the ice*. Hudson remarked, that the sea where he met with ice was blue; but the green sea was free from it. I was particularly attentive to observe this difference, but could never discern it.

The Driftwood in these seas has given rise to various opinions and conjectures, both as to its nature and the place of its growth. All that which we saw (except the pipe-staves taken notice of by Doctor Irving on the Low Island) was fir, and not worm-eaten. The place of its growth I had no opportunity of ascertaining.

The nature of the ice was a principal object of attention in this climate. We found always a great swell near the edge of it; but whenever we got within the loose ice, the water was constantly smooth. The loose fields and flaws, as well as the interior part of the fixed ice, were flat, and low: with the wind blowing on the ice, the loose parts were always, to use the phrase of the Greenlandmen, *packed*; the ice at the edges appearing rough, and piled up; this roughness and height I imagine to proceed from the smaller pieces being thrown up by the force of the sea on the solid part. During the time that we were fast amongst the Seven Islands, we had frequent opportunities of observing the irresistible force of the large bodies of floating ice. We have often seen a piece of several acres square lifted up between two much larger pieces, and as it were becoming one with them; and afterwards this piece so formed acting in the same manner upon a second and third; which would probably have continued to be the effect, till the whole bay had been so filled with ice that the different pieces could have had no motion, had not the stream taken an unexpected turn, and set the ice out of the bay.

19th. Weighed in the morning with the wind at N N E. Before we got out of the bay it fell calm. I observed for these three or four days, about eleven in the evening, an appearance of dusk.



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Cook: Voyage towards the South Pole

James Cook, *A Voyage towards the South Pole and Round the World. Performed in His Majesty's Ships the Resolution and Adventure. In the Years 1772, 1773, 1774, and 1775*, 2 vols (London: W. Strahan & T. Cadell, 1777), vol. II, pp. 222–43.

James Cook (1728–79) was one of the greatest explorers of all time and one of the select band of adventurers who encountered the extremes of both the Arctic and Antarctic regions. During his second and third voyages Cook went further north and south than any man before him.

Cook was born in Marston, Yorkshire, the son of an agricultural labourer. Apprenticed to a Whitby shipowner, he joined the Royal Navy in 1755, becoming master in 1757. Cook led three enormously important expeditions which virtually completed the mapping of all but the extremities of the globe. In the first, from 1768 to 1771, as lieutenant of the *Endeavour*, Cook, accompanied by the naturalist Joseph Banks, explored the South Seas, visiting Otaheite (Tahiti) and surveying the coasts of New Zealand and Australia. The second, from 1772 to 1775, as commander in the *Resolution*, accompanied by the *Adventure*, set out to discover whether or not the *Terra australis incognita*, the great southern continent, existed. During this voyage Cook sailed further south than had hitherto been achieved, skirting the edges of Antarctica before charting the Pacific. The third, from 1776 until his death at the hands of the Hawaiian islanders in Kealahakua Bay, was to investigate the possibility of a Northeast Passage between the Pacific and the Atlantic round the top of the American continent. Cook wrote in great detail about his voyages for the eyes of the Admiralty, but then, after being disturbed and embarrassed by the authorised account of his first voyage written up from his journal by Dr John Hawkesworth, Cook prepared his own accounts for the public. His first and only publication was *A Voyage towards the South Pole and Round the World*, from which work the extract reproduced below is taken.

Cook's second voyage had an enormous impact on the British public. Several accounts of the voyage were published in addition to that of its leader. The Prussian naturalists who accompanied Cook, the father and son, Johann Reinhold and George Forster, both published their own accounts, the latter not authorised to do so. Cook's astronomer on board the *Resolution*, William Wales, kept his own journal, not published in the period. Wales also

accompanied Cook on his final voyage. He was appointed mathematics master at Christ's Hospital, where he tutored the young Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Charles Lamb. Many have speculated that Cook's second voyage, as mediated through Wales, was an important source for Coleridge's great poem of geographic and spiritual exploration, 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' (1798).

Cook dipped into the Antarctic three times on this voyage, during December 1772 and January 1773. On 17 January, Cook became the first man to cross the Antarctic Circle, approaching to within eighty miles of the Antarctic coast at latitude $67^{\circ} 15'$. He crossed the Antarctic circle twice more, in December 1773 and January 1774, achieving latitude $71^{\circ} 10'$. It was to be fifty years before another ship, commanded by the whaler James Weddell, was to sail further south to 75° .

The extract printed here describes the termination of Cook's search for Cape Circumcision (present-day Bouvet Island), first sighted by the French explorer Jean Bouvet de Lozier on the feast day of the Circumcision, 1 January 1739. The extract provides a fine description of the conditions of sailing in the high southern latitudes and includes Cook's thoughts on the existence of the alleged southern continent. It also contains Cook's speculations that there exists a 'tract of land near the pole which is the source of most of the ice that is spread over this vast Southern Ocean'.

C H A P. VI.

Proceedings after leaving the Isle of Georgia, and an Account of the Discovery of Sandwich Land; with some Reasons for there being Land about the South Pole.

ON the 25th we steered E. S. E., with a fresh gale at N. N. E., attended with foggy weather, till towards the evening, when the sky becoming clear, we found the variation to be $9^{\circ} 26'$ East, being at this time in the latitude of $56^{\circ} 16'$ S., longitude $32^{\circ} 9'$ W.

Having continued to steer E. S. E., with a fine gale at N. N. W., till day-light next morning, on seeing no land to the East, I gave orders to steer South, being at this time in the latitude of $56^{\circ} 33'$ S., longitude $31^{\circ} 10'$ W. The weather continued clear, and gave us an opportunity to observe several distances of the sun and moon for the correcting our longitude, which at noon was $31^{\circ} 4'$ W., the latitude observed $57^{\circ} 38'$ S. We continued to steer to the South till the 27th, at noon, at which time we were in the latitude of $59^{\circ} 46'$ S., and had so thick a fog that we could not see a ship's length. It being no longer safe to sail before the wind, as we were to expect soon to fall in with ice, I therefore hauled to the East, having a gentle breeze at N. N. E. Soon after the fog clearing away, we resumed our course to the South till four o'clock, when it returned again as thick as ever, and made it necessary for us to haul upon a wind.

I now reckoned we were in latitude 60° S., and farther I did not intend to go, unless I observed some certain signs of soon meeting with land. For it would not have been prudent in me to have spent my time in penetrating to the South, when it was at least as probable that a large tract of land might be found near Cape Circumcision. Besides I was tired of these high southern latitudes, where nothing was to be found but ice and thick fogs. We had now a long hollow swell from the West, a strong indication that there was no land in that direction; so that I think I may venture to assert that the extensive coast, laid down in Mr. Dalrymple's chart of the ocean between Africa and America, and the Gulph of Saint Sebastian, do not exist.

At seven o'clock in the evening, the fog receding from us a little, gave us a sight of an ice island, several penguins and some snow peterels; we sounded, but found no ground at one hundred and forty fathoms. The fog soon returning, we spent the night in making boards over that space which we had, in some degree, made ourselves acquainted with in the day.

At eight in the morning of the 28th, we stood to the East, with a gentle gale at North; the weather began to clear up; and we found the sea strewed with large and small ice; several penguins, snow peterels, and other birds were seen, and some whales. Soon after we had sun-shine, but the air was cold; the mercury in the thermometer stood generally at thirty-five, but at noon it was at 37° ; the latitude by observation was $60^{\circ} 4'$ S., longitude $29^{\circ} 23'$ West.

We continued to stand to the East till half past two o'clock P. M., when we fell in, all at once, with a vast number of large