Spectral geographies of the Arctic: Shamanism, reveries, wandering

Introduction

In what ways did explorers encounter the Arctic world in all its strangeness and complexity?

In this chapter, firstly I challenge the traditional assumption in histories of the Arctic that only indigenous people engaged with supernatural experiences. Among the Inuit, shamans were traditionally consulted when a qallunaat ship was sighted and it was they who dictated the terms of the encounter following a séance (see Eber, 1989, 3–4). Although it is not surprising to learn that Inuit occasionally thought that British commanders were shamans, given their power and leading spiritual role as religious celebrants onboard the ship, it might surprise some to discover that explorers were active participants in shamanic séances. On these occasions, British explorers adopted nuanced positions on the supernatural, indicative of both scepticism and a degree of enchantment regarding indigenous claims for spirit-travelling. Far from being flim-flam, I show that shamanism and dreaming played a key role in the relations between the British and the Inuit during Northwest Passage expeditions.

Secondly, I thread together some connections between embodied practices and senses of the spectral in the Arctic. I do this by focusing on the ways that movement through the Arctic was thought of as something that was dreamlike and ghostly, which involved spectral senses of co-presence. Reflecting on the reveries of some British explorers can deepen our understandings of Arctic exploration. Reveries were a part of how the world was encountered and a means by which explorers
made sense of their environments – the way that they ‘flirted with space’ (Crouch, 2001, 62). I focus on William Edward Parry’s account of his 1819–20 Northwest Passage expedition because this set the model for overwintering that subsequent expeditions followed.

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During voyages of imperial discovery, British explorers frequently adopted a panoramic ‘monarch-of-all-I-survey’ perspective on the world, encompassing the environment in a sweeping and possessive manner. In the Arctic, part of this strategy of incorporation involved naming places after family, friends, patrons or home locations – indeed, in one case, John Ross felt the need to invent some small islands to name after several members of the royal family (Ross, 1994, 185). This possessive strategy also relied on the importation of British aesthetic categories for its power in Arctic narratives.

The idea of Arctic exploration as something disinterested, in which British explorers – like astronauts – inscribed their visions and achievements on empty space, was a performance that denied the incoherence of everyday life in the Arctic and the historically inhabited landscapes people moved through. Using the language of the sublime or picturesque assumed a disentangled relationship between the British and the Inuit, and between the human and the non-human, both of which promoted the pervasive concept of the Arctic as an untamed wilderness beyond society. This was in contrast to Inuit perspectives, which did not take the environment as something to be contemplated or fought against but rather as something interrelated with social and emotional life.

Landscapes are more than just inert substances, capable of being inscribed upon by a powerful, gazing, and contemplative explorer. They are cumulative processes rather than simply projections, made in and through practices. In this chapter my arguments about exploration are not drawn solely from the thoughts emanating from the minds of explorers – I am interested in different and more complex forms of dis-embodiment. Hunter-gatherers and animists like to think of the world in terms of relationships, whereby animals, spirits, humans, rocks and water all have agency through their connections to each other (see Nuttall, 1992): this animist perspective can help us to understand historical episodes of British-Inuit interaction during which spiritual relationships played a role.

For instance, in response to the arrival of white men in 1821, the Inuit of the Igloolik region [Iglulingmiut] told them a story of how
*qallunaat* once came to visit them, a story that integrated these aliens with the Inuit and the Indians in a shared creation myth. As the story goes, a girl named Uninigumasuittuq was married to a dog with whom she had six children – two Inuit, two half-dog half-Indian babies, and two half-dog half-white babies. Her father brought the half-Indians – who were feared by the Inuit – to the mainland while the half-whites were put into a boot sole with a stem of grass and let go in the ocean:

> Then all of a sudden there was a fog; there were bells ringing in the air, and the father could see a mast from the grasses, and sails of a boat like the sails of the boat in which Paarri came. You could see this boot sole, with the two babies in it, leaving the shore. There were only the two babies in the boot sole – a girl and a boy – but that's how the white people multiplied; they had children from one another. Uninigumasuittuq created the white people (qtd. in Eber, 2008, 21).

For the Iglulingmiut this explained why the man they called 'Paarri' [Parry] and other expeditioners looked for skulls in old graves and camps – they were seeking the skull of their mother.

A later story told by the Neitchille people relates to the Franklin expedition. In the 1860s the Franklin searcher, Charles Francis Hall, heard the story of how two *qallunaat* ships brought bad luck to the Boothian region and so two shamans performed so much magic that the fish and game stayed away from the area. Hall’s informants told him that these shamans were very bad because they wanted the ‘Koblunas’ (white men) that were in the ice to starve to death. Some time later Inuit found a big tent ashore ‘and there saw starved and frozen Koblunas all dead – many with the flesh all cut off the bones’ (qtd. in Loomis, 1991, 191). This story echoes others about the Inuit fear of meeting vengeful *qallunaat* spirits on King William Island (Watson, 2017, 227). Supernatural power was a way of making sense of unusual events, and shamans provided a sense of narrative control over such incidents. In any case, examples like these are striking because they push against the grain of traditional accounts of how British explorers came to be in the Arctic and what they did there. They show that, although explorers consciously maintained the modernist dualisms that placed them above other animals and races, they were actually part of a spiritual field of engagement in which their presence was already a co-presence to the local inhabitants and in which their fate was directed by the actions of shamans.
Shamanic otherworlds

In a valuable study, D. Graham Burnett (2000) discusses the way that nineteenth-century explorers of British Guiana engaged with a landscape populated with spirits:

On the one hand, the explorer was obliged to believe (and demonstrate) that Amerindian claims about geographical spirits were devoid of substance. On the other hand, the explorer’s identity as intrepid and courageous, his heroic character, hinged on the imminent potency of the ‘hostile forces’ he confronted. This ambivalence required subjecting native place-myths and ‘superstition’ to ridicule while at the same time offering some subtle intimation of their power (185).

Spirits are part of exploration and they certainly played a part in British, French and Spanish cultures of colonialism in the Americas (see Lutz, 2007). The examples I gave in the previous chapter showed that the Arctic could be a spiritual place for explorers. I use the word spiritual here as it can be suggestive of ghosts without necessarily involving judgement or recognition of them, and these were examples that had very little to do with the indigenous cosmologies of the region. Of a different order are the spirits, ghosts and elementals recognised by Inuit in the Arctic, encountered by the shaman and engaged with – albeit ambivalently – by British explorers.

The shaman (the word comes from the Tungus languages of Siberia) or, in the Canadian Arctic, the ‘angekok’ or *angakkuq* [‘moving, or jerking about’], was a communally recognised medium (male or female) who interacted, through trance states and other ceremonies of possession, with the spirit world on behalf of his or her people (DuBois, 2009, 6). These ceremonies, which featured a ‘shaking tent’ or the harnessing of the shaman with ropes, enacted a soul journey or ‘spirit flight’, through a multi-levelled cosmos (Cranz, 1767, I, 210–11) (see Figure 2.1). People chanted, sang and danced at the shamanic séance and they recognised the presence of spirits by hearing voices or seeing objects fly around inexplicably.

In European thought, shamanism was particularly associated with Arctic and sub-Arctic peoples and, throughout the eighteenth century, shamanic rituals, while no longer seen as demonological, were derided as obscurantist survivals of superstition among non-Christian and ignorant societies.¹ Furthermore, it was maintained that these rituals could be
explained or debunked by the attentive observer, wise to the tricks of
the shaman. By the time encounters between explorers and shamans
took place in the Arctic, the dominant explanation for the strange sounds
heard at the séance was ventriloquism, understood as a natural ability
or art, not evidence of demonic possession. For instance, writing of the
shamans in the 1850s, Elisha Kent Kane could not discover ‘any resort to
jugglery or natural magic’: ‘their deceptions are simply vocal, a change
of voice, and perhaps a limited profession of ventriloquism, made more
imposing by the darkness’ (1856, II, 126).

Yet despite this, accounts by explorers demonstrate the way that they
adopted a range of ambivalent responses to the shamanic otherworlds
in their midst, some of which was related to their own Christian spir-
ituality. For instance, in his 1823 account of Cree and Northern Ojibwa
shamanism, the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) trader George Nelson
suggested that true Christian belief required one to take the shamanic
séance seriously:

There are many in the civilized or Christian world who absolutely
and positively deny [the shamanic power of conjuring] as being
absolutely impossible and at best but absurd and idle stories. Many
of the things related of these Conjurings I acknowledge to be so;
but at the same time I am as positive and as firmly persuaded of

Figure 2.1  ‘Wizard preparing for a “spirit flight”’. Source: Knud
the truth of the assertion ‘that they have dealings with some supernatural spirit’, as I am convinced that I live and breathe in air … To absolutely deny this, we must first deny that there is a Devil, and afterwards deny his pernicious power and if we deny these points, we must descend to a third, more fit for an atheistical wretch and a beast than a Christian, or even rational creature (1988, 82).

Séances were therefore disturbing to those who held to one objective or rational outlook on the matter.

Even if the séance was to their minds debunked, many western observers left with a sense of bafflement, a tense frustration that they were unable to fully explain the phenomena that had taken place. Just like the scores of intellectuals and aristocrats astounded by Daniel Dunnglas Home’s spirituлист performances in the 1850s and 60s, George Francis Lyon, who travelled as Parry’s second-in-command on the Northwest Passage expedition of 1821-3, emerged from a shamanic séance at Igloolik with an interested and hesitating attitude.

Lyon’s shamanic encounter was with an Iglulingmiut man named Toolemak, a ‘cunning and intelligent’ (1824, 358) hunter, storyteller and healer who was very friendly with the British. Lyon had heard of Toolemak’s ‘deceptions’ (Lyon, 1824, 289) and ‘exhibitions as a conjurer’ (Lyon, 1824, 291) and engaged him in a discussion about a vision that Toolemak recently had:

the sum of which was, that an object had appeared to him, advancing rapidly, and making extraordinary motions; this had first alarmed him, but on a nearer approach he discovered the figure of Lyon, bearing in his hand an axe, which he immediately presented to him. This extraordinary account I answered by the relation of a dream which I had also lately been surprised by; which was, that Toolemak had been turned out of my cabin for begging (Lyon, 1824, 296–7).

Lyon’s joke did not affect his friendship with Toolemak and his mannerly concern to share a meal of frozen walrus encouraged the shaman to perform a séance in Lyon’s cabin onboard the Hecla. On this occasion voices were heard, alternately loud and smothered:

in about half a minute, a distant blowing was heard very slowly approaching, and a voice which differed from that we at first had heard, was at times mingled with the blowing, until at length both
sounds became distinct, and the old woman [Toolemak’s wife] informed me that Tornqa [tuurngaq: ‘helping spirit’] was come to answer my questions. I accordingly asked several questions of the sagacious spirit, to each of which inquiries I received an answer by two loud slaps on the deck, which I was given to understand were favourable. A very hollow, yet powerful voice, certainly much different from the tones of Toolemak, now chanted for some time, and a strange jumble of hisses, groans, shouts, and gabblings like a turkey, succeeded in rapid order. The old woman sang with increased energy, and, as I took it for granted that this was all intended to astonish the Kabloona [white man], I cried repeatedly that I was very much afraid. This, as I expected, added fuel to the fire, until the poor immortal, exhausted by its own might, asked leave to retire. The voice gradually sank from our hearing as at first, and a very indistinct hissing succeeded: in its advance, it sounded like the tone produced by the wind on the base chord of an Eolian harp; this was soon changed to a rapid hiss like that of a rocket, and Toolemak with a yell announced his return. I had held my breath at the first distant hissing, and twice exhausted myself, yet our conjuror did not once respire, and even his returning and powerful yell was uttered without a previous stop or inspiration of air (Lyon, 1824, 360).

This séance (or meta-séance, given that Lyon and Toolemak shared the awareness that this was a performance) led to a subsequent session at Toolemak’s hut in which Lyon could not detect any movement from the shaman, despite the séance lasting an hour and a half:

for had he done so, I was so close to the skin behind which he sat, that I must have perceived it. Neither did I hear any rustling of his clothes, or even distinguish his breathing, although his outcries were made with great exertion (Lyon, 1824, 367).

By calling the séance an ‘exhibition’ and the shamans ‘professors’ who don’t disclose each other’s secrets, Lyon translated shamanic experience into the language of secular magic. This translation made its way into Letters on Natural Magic (1832) by the Scottish scientist David Brewster. This text became something of a guide-book for debunking the supernatural and in it Brewster cited Lyon’s first séance with Toolemak as a paradigmatic case of the power of ventriloquism. Yet debunking was not the end of the matter, for both Brewster and Lyon were enchanted by the shaman and found him ‘uncannily desirable as well as alien because
his voicings declared the limit-point of scientific discourses' explanatory power' (Fulford, 2009, 193). Certainly, ordinary people, as well as influential Victorian intellectuals like Brewster, Charles Dickens and the anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor, exhibited a whole range of incommensurable responses to spiritualism that went well beyond either scepticism or belief (see Kaplan, 1975; Lamont, 2006; Stocking, 1971; McCorristine, 2010).

The appearance of qallunaat in Toolemak's visions points to further complexity in the relationship between shamans and non-indigenous observers. Both Parry and Lyon became intimate friends of Toolemak, with the shaman greeting Lyon as a 'son' who 'as well as himself was a great Annutko [angakkuq or shaman]' (Lyon, 1824, 405). This was not an isolated incident. Some years later, during his Victory expedition, John Ross allowed the Neitchille Inuit he encountered to think that he was a shaman. This was apparently in order to:

impress upon the minds of the poor benighted natives the belief, that the proprietorship of all the seals and walruses was vested in him, and that they were so far under his control that not one should be killed, unless his will ordained it (Huish ed., 1835, 560).

Ross, we are told (by a critical eyewitness, it should be noted), went beyond his ‘official capacity, as the commander of the Victory’ and went ‘Angekoking’ (ie being a shaman) in order to convince the Inuit that he had set the marine animals free (allowing them to hunt) and to prevent thefts on his ship (Huish ed., 1835, 563–4). Taking on shamanic power, then, could be an instrumental act by British explorers, eager for food or knowledge. Lyon and Ross, it seems, were participant-observers in Inuit cosmologies and this entanglement has consequences for the way we think about encounters – traditionally taken as climactic moments in Arctic histories.

In a close analysis of the interactions between the British and the Iglulingmiut in the Melville Peninsula region between 1821–3, Michael Bravo has stressed the historic avoidance of qallunaat by the Inuit and the consequent reasoning behind their discovery of and decision to engage with Parry during these years. In 1821 Parry believed that he was making first contact with an undiscovered tribe of Inuit. This was despite receiving testimony from Toolemak about his communication and trading with ‘three kabloona ships’ that were whaling around Igloolik a few years previously (Parry, 1824, 436; Bravo, 1992, 196). Parry’s belief that he was the first is a fantasy of control that other explorers shared, something that is undercut by indigenous oral histories and non-official
textual narratives. These suggest that Parry’s expeditioners were actually too late in that they encountered peoples who knew they were not alone in the world and who had been entangled with western material cultures and ontologies since, at least, the sixteenth century (see Bird, 2005). Bravo’s model of ‘premeditated cross-cultural exchanges’ (1992, 221), rather than sudden encounters between the Inuit and the British, is drawn from this correction and is also helpful when we turn to the visionary dimension of their interactions.

I have mentioned the ‘dream exchange’ between Lyon and Toolemak: other sources attest to the fact that Euro-American explorers were already part of shamanic cosmologies. Disrupting the idea of a classic unidirectional encounter with Arctic peoples, Neitchille Inuit oral history recalls how after sighting Ross’s expedition at Felix Harbour in 1830, a séance was held at which ‘the spirits of the white men themselves arrived behind the curtain and invited all the Eskimos to visit their camp’ (Learmonth, 1948, 11). In another account, the first sight of the masts of the Victory caused a hunter to worry that ‘the white people might think they were spirits – not people’ (qtd. in Eber, 2008, 42). These cosmologies featured later the same year when James Clark Ross was nearly killed by an Inuk whose son had suddenly died, apparently due to qallunaat witchcraft (Ross, 1994, 145). From the other perspective, British officers sometimes consulted shamans to access their geographical knowledge and it is significant that these consultations could alternately be made in the formal atmosphere of the ship with maps and charts, or during a shamanic séance in a hut.

In his journal of 1822–3 William Harvey Hooper, purser on the Hecla, wrote that he wanted Toolemak to perform ‘some of the ceremonies of Angetkokism’ (ie the work of the shaman). The shaman agreed on condition that Hooper and his colleagues slept in his hut that night. Hooper agreed and during the opening chants of this séance Lyon and Parry were mentioned and a ‘general request’ was then made for a qallunaaq to chant, ‘but as we were all diffident of our talents in this way, Mr Hooper proposed to substitute a song’ (RGS, SSC/73 4, 877). Hooper held the hand of an Inuk woman throughout who explained what was happening (RGS, SSC/73 4, 895).

Despite Hooper’s scepticism regarding Toolemak’s ‘conjurations’, he wanted the shaman to find out if the expedition’s ships could achieve a Northwest Passage (RGS, SSC/73 4, 879). Toolemak questioned a tuurngaq (calling upon the British officers ‘to become his auxiliaries’ in this process) who answered that the ships would not be able to reach their destination due to the quantity of ice and would then ‘return to
Kabloona-noona’ [white man’s land] (RGS, SSC/73 4, 881, 885). The expedition was indeed repelled by ice at what Parry called ‘Fury and Hecla Strait’ and then departed the Arctic for home. Incidents such as this remind us that the point of these séances was not primarily to display supernatural powers for foreign observers but to serve the needs of the community and fulfil requests for information. The reasons for going to the shaman in a particular place and time were the key, not the phenomena that he/she could produce.

Despite their own mythologies, and the assumptions underlying traditional approaches to Arctic history, British explorers were actually entangled with indigenous cosmologies. The natural and the supernatural dimensions of life were not easily separated in the Arctic. This was an especially tense terrain for evangelicals like Parry and Hooper who were eager to see signs of God’s presence in earthly events but probably encountered accusations that their beliefs tended toward irrational ‘enthusiasm’ and ‘fanaticism’ (see Bebbington, 1989, 22; ‘Review of New Publications’, 609). Inuit testimony tells us that John Ross – a man not particularly known for his piety (see Huish ed., 1835, 487) – visited the Inuit as a spirit before he arrived in physical form. British testimony tells us that he later took on the attributes of a shaman. Ross had disciplinary reasons for Angekoking, just as the Inuit controlled events by predicting the arrival of the British. The point here is that otherworldly ideas operate in the context of social practices and it makes no sense to restrict either group to just one epistemological outlook or set of beliefs about what is natural or supernatural.4

It was a feint of the explorer to believe that his discovery ship explored the Arctic through inanimate ice-fields, occupying empty space along the way through ceremonies of possession. Whether appearing in dreams, singing during a shamanic séance or collaborating with the Inuit on maps, it is clear that Barrow’s idealised Arctic explorers were not above the world. In fact they always inhabited small portions of already-inhabited physical and social worlds, and a large part of growing into these worlds involved something not even necessarily goal-directed or purposive: wandering about in the winter.

Reveries of the solitary explorer

The surrounding Scenery began to assume a winter like aspect. The Men in consequence worked with all diligence to prepare the House (Franklin, 1995, 67).
Arctic explorers tended to be anxious about the environments they passed through. To judge by their diaries and journals, the stillness of the Arctic was something that felt threatening to them and this led to a sense of relief whenever they saw signs of animation. Explorers gave flesh to these moments of strangeness by representing them as reveries or occasions of mental wandering in their narratives. In the western imagination winter was a season particularly conducive to reveries but scholars have not recognised their importance in accounts of Arctic exploration. Reveries are the buoys that mark out how the Arctic became a haunting place for explorers. Parry’s narrative of his 1819–20 expedition, in particular, shows how overwintering in the Arctic inspired him to mental wanderings.

In this account, *Journal of a Voyage for the Discovery of a North-West Passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific* (1821), Parry described the technical challenges of finding a place to winter after making significant progress sailing through Lancaster Sound during the summer of 1819. With winter setting in in September, his ships the *Hecla* and *Griper* were towed by the men through ice canals and into a place they called Winter Harbour on Melville Island (diplomatically named after the First Lord of the Admiralty). It is at the point when the ships were anchored that stillness started to become a problem for the expeditioners. In his chapter on this winter, Parry described the way that the social life of the expedition was recalibrated, going through the creative methods by which the crew staved off the creeping boredom (education, theatrical performances and craft work) (1821, 123–7). In a disciplinary sense, Parry had to deal with the consequences of ‘the stop’ (Appelbaum, 1995), when life turns inward and when hidden tensions come to the fore. This involved combating the abyss of dead time by structuring time into watches, forcing the sailors to perform calisthenics onboard deck and, most noticeably, dancing to the barrel organ. When the weather outside was too harsh for regular exercise to take place, the men were:

ordered to run round and round the deck, keeping step to a tune on the organ, or, not unfrequently, to a song of their own singing. Among the men were a few who did not at first quite like this systematic mode of taking exercise; but when they found that no plea, except that of illness, was admitted as an excuse, they not only willingly and cheerfully complied, but made it the occasion of much humour and frolic among themselves (Parry, 1821, 124).
This barrel organ, which is held in the Polar Museum at the Scott Polar Research Institute, was taken by Parry on all three of his Northwest Passage expeditions (Holland and Hill, 1972). To modern ears the barrel organ’s repertoire of some 40 hymns, reels and fiddle tunes sounds slightly eerie, but the music of this instrument was an important part of how British time was passed during the Arctic winter. It harnessed the bodily rhythms of the men and created activities for the expedition, combating the stillness that explorers found dangerous.

Following the preparations for the winter and the disappearance of the sun, Parry and his men sought to create homeliness in the ships, which were mobile objects that were suddenly transformed into frozen houses. Parry’s journal shows that this process was not a given but something that actually involved reveries:

Perhaps, too, though none of us then ventured to confess it, our thoughts would sometimes involuntarily wander homewards, and institute a comparison between the rugged face of nature in this desolate region, and the livelier aspect of the happy land which we had left behind us (1821, 125).

Affects float between disparate bodies, Parry hints, making proximate what is far and distant. Winter was a poetic device for Parry, a motif that he shared with contemporary Romantic writers who drew on winter melancholy and mystery as part of their sensitivity to locale. The environment around Winter Harbour clearly offered the conditions for mental wandering and dreaming. We are told that wolves approached the ship ‘howling most piteously on the beach near us’ (Parry, 1821, 116); remarkable varieties of Aurora Borealis appeared, while the stars, moon effects and a meteor drew the eyes skyward; fires were maintained in-between decks and the men largely relaxed and wrote by candlelight. We are dealing with representations here, but also the things that evade representation, what the philosopher Martin Heidegger referred to as ‘those attunements which attune us in such a way that we feel as though there is no attunement there at all’ (1995, 68).

The phenomenology of this light is a good example of something that exists on the fringes of awareness but is ubiquitous in everyday life nonetheless. Light has been taken for granted in histories of polar exploration, discussed either in a negative sense (lack of light during winter) or a positive sense (return of light in spring). It deserves more attention than this, for people’s perceptions and senses of place are
transformed when natural light diminishes and we begin to spend more time in enclosed spaces illuminated artificially. George Brown, a petty officer on McClure’s *Investigator*, gave some sense of what waking up in the ship during the darkness felt like: ‘Rising in the morning to the shrill boason’s “lash up hammocks” one gropes about by the light of one dim lamp, then tumbling on deck, finds even less light there from the dull glare of the open candle’ (GM, M-141). Of course, darkness was always relative and varied widely from location to location. The Winter Harbour region of the Arctic was never totally dark: moonlight, twilight and light reflected from the snow gave some sense of illumination to expeditioners.

Despite the hardships that expeditioners endured, ideas of snugness and somnolency emerged from this period of darkness, within the intimate spaces of the winter house. The stillness of the air became alternately impressive or oppressive; sound vibrations paradoxically drew close to the ear but kept their distance; loud noises in the twilight startled listeners. Winter affected explorers’ moods also, pushing them inward where the self comes to the fore (see Bessels, 2016, 107). Parry’s account of the expedition now became a winter journal – a therapeutic record of thoughts and signs of animation. His thoughts, now ‘housed’ for the winter, began to wander and reverberate according to the rhythms of memory and emotion (see Bachelard, 1994). It is clear that Parry, who frequently felt the lure of melancholy (‘the most delightful sensation I experience’, qtd. in Parry, 1858, 30), made efforts to keep the dangerously hypnotising powers of winter solitude at bay, including prematurely opening the stern windows of the *Hecla* during the period of the most intense cold in February 1820 ‘not less from the impatience which I felt to enjoy the cheering rays of the sun for eight hours of the day, than on account of the saving of candles, the expenditure of which had hitherto been much greater than we could well afford’ (1821, 146–7). The issue of light therefore exposes just one of the phenomenological threads which created winter-time.

With the phenomenology of reveries comes a geography of reveries. Not only did Parry fail to achieve a Northwest Passage in 1819 but the expedition had to overwinter in a single location. This was the point at which the overwintering explorers were forced to attune themselves to a new rhythm of waiting, something that was extremely difficult for an expedition that prioritised speed and momentum (Parry, 1821, 54). As mobility was restricted by seasonal conditions, navigation by sea was out of the question, while the explorers could not launch their sledging journeys across land and sea ice until the spring. So creating winter
homeliness called for a different form of movement that enacted exploration by mapping out what was not home.

Parry mentioned that he and his officers were in the habit of ‘rambling on shore’ near the ships to combat the tedious monotony they experienced (Parry, 1821, 124). I take this practice to be central in the place-making imperatives of the expedition, for reconnaissance and other forms of boundary exploration served to set limits to what was canny and where British authority was unchallenged. Underlying this, however, are the flickers and intimations of other uncanny voices in the landscape: Inuit did not pass by Winter Harbour during the period of waiting, so it is on the perimeter where one rambles in search of novel encounters, and it is here, within hearing or seeing distance of the ships, where the reverie can unfold itself.

Not that this part of Melville Island was always strange: the summer landscape was considered picturesque, something that was conducive to reassuring reminders of home. Parry highlighted a place called Bushnan Cove as ‘one of the pleasantest and most habitable spots we had yet seen in the Arctic Regions’ (Parry, 1821, 199), a place that was sheltered, open to game and had abundant vegetation. A drawing by Lieutenant Frederick William Beechey illustrating this scene, entitled ‘Green Ravine. Winter Harbour’, portrays the casual rambling postures of two figures walking towards a third in a pastoral-style scene. But a reverie is something more than the pleasant contemplation associated with picturesque aesthetics. The previous winter, Parry’s distant view of the ships had inspired dread at the image of home, a position that drew out a reverie in which senses of place and placelessness come to the fore. Crucially, it is the perimeter that creates the settlement, not the other way around:

When viewed from the summit of the neighbouring hills, on one of those calm and clear days, which not unfrequently occurred during the winter, the scene was such as to induce contemplations which had, perhaps, more of melancholy than of any other feeling. Not an object was to be seen on which the eye could long rest with pleasure, unless when directed to the spot where the ships lay, and where our little colony was planted. The smoke which there issued from the several fires, affording a certain indication of the presence of man, gave a partial cheerfulness to this part of the prospect; and the sound of voices, which, during the cold weather, could be heard at a much greater distance than usual, served now and then to break the silence that reigned round us, a silence far different from that peaceable composure which characterizes the landscape of a
cultivated country; it was the deathlike stillness of the most dreary desolation, and the total absence of animated existence. Such, indeed, was the want of objects to relief to the eye or amusement to the mind, that a stone of more than usual size appearing above the snow, in the direction in which we were going, immediately became a mark, on which our eyes were unconsciously fixed, and towards which we mechanically advanced (Parry, 1821, 124–5).

This representation has been taken as an example of Parry’s ‘unromantic’, ‘calm’, and ‘subdued’ take on the ‘Arctic sublime’ (Loomis, 1977, 101). But at the same time one can sense a panic in this passage that punctures the image of the disinterested observer and acts to entangle the explorer in the landscape.

Parry’s motif of smoke rising from a fire in the distance has deep symbolic meaning in nineteenth-century exploration narratives (‘a hieroglyphic of man’s life’ in Thoreau’s words (1895, 41)), offering, on the face of it, that primeval reassurance of a place of warmth for the explorer in an empty and strange land. But the motif has the double effect of suggesting vulnerability and exposure to the surrounding darkness and cold. Like a microcosm, the home-fire can represent the power and limits of activity in expedition narratives of this period. For instance, an illustration in Franklin’s *Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea*, ‘Manner of Making a Resting Place on a Winter’s Night’ (1820) (see Figure 2.2), suggests that the border between fire and darkness is less redolent of the picturesque than reflective of an anxiety about the divide between the bustling signs of encampment and the ominous, snow-dappled trees surrounding and enclosing the expedition (Belyea, 1990). Some years later, also in the woods of the sub-Arctic, George Back described a similar tense moment between solitude, stillness and homeliness:

There is something appalling in the vastness of a solitude like this. I had parted from my companions, and was apparently the only living being in the wilderness around me. Almost unconsciously I reloaded my gun; and then, stepping cautiously along the narrow ridge of the descent, glided silently into the valley, as if afraid to disturb the genius of the place. It was a positive comfort to hear, now and then, the hollow tread of the men as they passed rapidly through the thicket which screened them from sight; and when the white tent was pitched, and the curling smoke rose through the dense green of the forest, it seemed as if the spell of the desert was broken, and the whole landscape was suddenly animated into life and cheerfulness (1836, 72).
The point here is that British explorers looked at the environment around them in an ambivalent way. The representations of stillness and quietude were sometimes not signs of peace and tranquillity but rather of the uncanny, the unknowable and a reminder of the judgement of God. To go back to Franklin’s first land expedition, another officer, John Richardson, wrote to his wife about the sense of place that had overcome him. ‘If we pass the threshold of our hut’, Richardson wrote:

and enter the forest, a stillness so profound prevails that we are ready to start at the noise created by the pressure of our feet on the snow. The screams of a famished raven, or the crash of a lofty pine, rending through the intenseness of the frost, are the only sounds that invade the solemn silence. When in my walks I have accidentally met one of my companions in this dreary solitude, his figure, emerging from the shade, has conveyed, with irresistible force, to my mind, the idea of a being rising from the grave. I have often admired the pictures our great poets have drawn of absolute solitude, but never felt their full force till now. What must be the situation of a human being, ‘alone on the wide, wide sea!’ How

Figure 2.2 ‘Manner of Making a Resting Place on a Winter’s Night’, engraved by Edward Finden after George Back. Source: John Franklin. *Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea, in the Years 1819, 20, 21 and 22.* London: John Murray, 1823.
dreadful if without faith in God! An atheist could not dwell alone in the forest of America (qtd. in McIllraith, 1868, 74).

Jumping at one’s own shadow; encountering traces of one’s own footsteps; meeting companions by chance, now figured as ghosts – this is the language of spectrality in which an inanimate place suddenly becomes alive with forces that might isolate and threaten the individual. Richardson’s response to the uncanny stillness is to demonstrate how this threat could be managed by the certainty of religious belief. Parry, desperately seeking visual relief, similarly suggests a sense of panic – despite the sign of fire and hint of warmth – but in contrast to Richardson’s resolution, Parry allows it to hover over the scene. There is a realisation of the precariousness of a winter home surrounded by a ‘silence that reigned’ (Parry, 1821, 125), and a recognition of the ‘claustrophobic immensity’ that undercuts any harmonious view (Belyea, 1990, 14). The discourse of the picturesque – the importation of local English ways of seeing – therefore unravels ‘as though it were a fabric torn and repaired with foreign patches – indications of other knowledge, other values, other discourses’ (Belyea, 1990, 22).

The scene of the ships is also a poetic image that echoes Coleridge’s descriptions of ice and fearful sounds in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and William Cowper’s musings on winter from his blank verse poem *The Task* (1784). Moreover Parry’s text was accompanied by an engraving – originally sketched by Beechey – that does express a romantic sensibility, in this case a melancholy reverie. Beechey’s sketch was set during an overcast winter’s day but the illustration included in Parry’s *Journal of a Voyage for the Discovery of a North-West Passage* was an engraving of the sketch by the landscape artist William Westall – well-known for his representations of Australia – who gave the scene a twilight mood (see Figure 2.3). This nocturnal representation of Parry’s daytime view of the ‘colony’ adds strangeness to the scene. Parry’s description of ‘the deathlike stillness of the most dreary desolation’ becomes interrelated with the engraving, emphasising the soul-disturbing darkness of winter. This engraving was widely disseminated through cheaper reprints after the publication of Parry’s account (see Snelling, 1831, n.p.; *Northern Regions*, 1826, facing 24) and it became iconic of the British Arctic winter. Lord Byron was particularly taken by Parry’s descriptions of these winter experiences, using the explorer’s account in his poetry and light-heartedly referring to the cold of ‘Parry’s polarities’ (qtd. in Lloyd-Jones, 1996, 60). Furthermore, if we compare Parry’s reverie with Percy Bysshe Shelley’s contemporary visionary poem ‘Mont Blanc’ (1817), we find the
same idea of the interpenetration between nature and mind which is anything but ‘subdued’:

Thou art the path of that unresting sound –
Dizzy Ravine! and when I gaze on thee
I seem as in a trance sublime and strange
To muse on my own separate phantasy,
My own, my human mind, which passively
Now renders and receives fast influencings,
Holding an unremitting interchange
With the clear universe of things around (Shelley, 1901, 348).

In taking Parry’s view of the ships as a destabilising reverie it is worth explaining what is meant by reverie a little more. In early nineteenth-century psychiatry, reverie was considered analogous to dreaming in its imagery, but also different in that the person having a reverie exercised some amount of control over their imagination. The Glasgow
physician Robert Macnish wrote extensively on reverie during this period, considering it something proceeding from ‘an unusual quiescence of the brain’ causing the mind to wander, as when one gazes intently at a river (1834, 244):

The thoughts seem to glide away, one by one, upon the surface of the stream, till the mind is emptied of them altogether. In this state we see the glassy volume of the water moving past us, and hear its murmur, but lose all power of fixing our attention definitively upon any subject: and either fall asleep, or are aroused by some spontaneous reaction of the mind, or by some appeal to the senses sufficiently strong to startle us from our reverie (Macnish, 1834, 245).

Macnish also highlighted walking alone in the country, ennui and the fading candle light on a winter’s evening as ‘most favourable’ for reveries (Macnish, 1834, 245–6). It is no surprise, therefore, that these ‘waking dreams’, as they were frequently called, were experienced by Arctic explorers who constantly complained of stillness and solitude.

Today, the twentieth-century French philosopher, Gaston Bachelard, is perhaps most associated with the idea of reverie. Bachelard took the reverie to be a creative daydream that, in contrast to the nocturnal dream, occurred during a period of ‘relaxed time’ (1971, 5). In sympathy with the phenomenological perspective, Bachelard thought of the moment of reverie as a time when subject and object folded into each other, thereby transforming Descartes’ famous cogito formulation: ‘I dream the world, therefore, the world exists as I dream it’ (Bachelard, 1971, 158). The reverie, in this understanding, has ontological consequences, for the ‘dreamer’s being invades what it touches, diffuses into the world … The world no longer poses any opposition to him. In reverie there is no more non-I’ (Bachelard, 1971, 167). Reveries, in other words, draw people into a world that entangles but this is not something that occurs in a disembodied manner, for remember that Parry’s reverie began as a ‘ramble on shore’.

**Spectral geographies of walking**

Looking closely at the embodied practice of walking allows us to historicise and place Arctic reveries. The Romantics revitalised walking in British culture by celebrating wandering and strolling through the landscape on foot in contrast to the emerging public transport technologies
of the nineteenth century (see Solnit, 2002; Wallace, 1993). While ped-
estrian travel ironically depended on new transport links to picturesque
locations, such as the Lake District in England and Connemara in Ireland,
walking was re-imagined as an extraordinary rather than mundane
activity, which was treasured and celebrated by people in all its sensory
richness. Crucially, however, wandering was seen as something that was
not necessarily goal-oriented, but was linked to self-discovery. This prac-
tice of wandering on foot was symbolised by the solitary male Rückenfigur
[person seen from behind] in Romantic art and letters, who engaged in
contemplation and reverie while on the move: as Jean-Jacques Rousseau
put it, ‘my mind only works with my legs’ (qtd. in Solnit, 2002, 14). The
characters in some of Caspar David Friedrich’s paintings memorably
illustrate this practice.

Reacting against the dominant ‘head over heels’ position in western
culture, Tim Ingold argues that ‘[l]ocomotion, not cognition, must be
the starting point for the study of perceptual activity’ (2011, 46). We
perceive, in this understanding, not as static beings but rather in our
movement along a ‘path of observation’: the methods, styles, technolo-
gies and effectiveness of moving on one’s feet through the environment
are linked to knowledge and experience of that environment (Gibson,
1979, 195–7). It is no coincidence that the Arctic explorers generally
seen as being among the most successful in terms of their communica-
tion with indigenous inhabitants – Samuel Hearne, George Back and
John Rae – were also celebrated as long-distance walkers. Indeed, a his-
tory of cross-cultural communication in the Arctic could be written just
on the theme of feet.9

Therefore, walking, like the winter landscape, is not ontologic-
ally given. It was constructed and performed by people moving through
the Arctic. Inuit could absolutely distinguish British tracks from their
own due to different footwear and gaits (Woodman, 1991, 258). In
contrast to heavy British boots, with their deep heel imprint and long
narrow footprint, Inuit footfalls were soft and their gait was pigeon-
toed (Woodman, 1995, 15). An Inuk woman told a Franklin searcher
that white men could also be spotted by the way they swung their hands
while walking (Woodman, 1995, 13). Several explorers, typically taller
than Inuit, were named Aglooka by them [agluqaq: ‘he who takes long
strides’] and one Victory expeditioner was named Niugitsoq [‘the good
walker’] (Rasmussen, 1931, 28). One of the exceptional things the
Iglulingmiut noticed about Parry was that he ‘took very long strides
in walking’ (RGS, SSC 73/3 367) and, indeed, in a portrait of ‘Paarri’,
probably drawn by the teenager Toolooak sometime between 1821–3,
the commander appeared to the boy as tall and thin, with noticeably
elongated limbs (see Figure 2.4). Furthermore, when the Inuit of Cape Bathurst were trying to convince McClure that they had seen Rae they mimicked the walk and manner of Rae so exactly that one expeditioner said immediately ‘That’s the Doctor – Sir J.R. [sic]’ (SPRI, MS 1503/47/1). Despite its universality, different tribes have different ways of walking. Walking changes according to social, environmental and historical contexts and focusing on the ‘heels’ over the ‘head’ can help us to think of exploring as akin to dreamy wandering, as much as it involved purposeful travelling.

Not that wandering was something everyone could do. On Arctic expeditions commanders differentiated between the mechanical movements of the men and the more refined, contemplative ‘rambles’ and ‘wanderings’ of the officer class. For instance, on John Ross’s 1818 expedition, William Harvey Hooper described how he ‘rambled, or rather scrambled’ up the hills of Disco Bay, Greenland, in search of ‘natural productions’ (RGS, SSC/73 1 53). In August 1858 Francis Leopold

Figure 2.4: ‘Portrait of Parry, probably drawn by Toolooak’. Source: Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, with permission: SPRI 76/6/2+a (reverse).
McClintock recorded a ‘delightfully refreshing ramble’ which he took by himself on the shore near Bellot Strait in order to make immediate plans for the sailing of the Fox: McClintock described this as cogitating ‘undisturbed in a leisurely and philosophic manner’ (1859, 185). On a darker note, the Moravian missionary Johann Miertsching reported that during the long winter of 1851 Robert McClure was ‘oppressed with anxieties’ and sought comfort ‘by wandering alone on the hill’ (1967, 170). McClure was regarded as a particularly irascible man but, while officers were allowed to have moods, they did not separate the explorer from the world around him. The mood is something that the solitary wanderer shares with the world for, as Heidegger points out, the landscape perceived as melancholy or desolate is not in-itself so: it ‘merely attunes us in such a way, causes this attunement in us’ (1995, 85). With their authority and authoritative voice, explorer-authors had the opportunity to express this radical interlacing of the self and the world.

*I* * * * *

I turn now to the walking practices of George Lyon, who interestingly used three different terms to describe this distinctive mobility of the officers: ‘ramble’, ‘stroll’ and ‘American walk’ (1824, 52–3). However, like Hooper, when Lyon described a walk it was usually in connection with an antiquarian adventure, rather than anything cartographic or utilitarian. Moreover, this was a practice that was not exclusive to Arctic exploration for Lyon. Before setting out in command of the Griper on his own expedition in 1824, Lyon made the standard stopover for water and supplies at Stromness on Orkney, where he ‘walked into the country’ in the company of his officers to investigate the ‘Druidical remains’ of the island.

The first of these remarkable monuments consisted of three flat slabs of sandstone, standing upright, and from ten to fifteen feet in height. One entire slab lay flat on the ground, and I afterwards heard that it had been intentionally thrown down by some ardently inquisitive antiquary, to ascertain how deeply it had been embedded in the earth; but he was afterwards unable to place it as it was before, to the great chagrin of some of the old Orkney women, who hold these ruins in great reverence (1825, 7).

The disenchanting antiquarianism of this passage reads like the prelude to an M.R. James ghost story, but it is an incident that expresses the very
real sense of connection between walking and the sense of place. In his account of Parry’s second Northwest Passage expedition (1821–3), Lyon wrote that readers might feel it strange that he regretted leaving his Arctic winter camp for, though dreary and flat, he had occupied his eight months with walking around and naming landmarks accordingly, such as the ‘Promenade’ or the ‘Causeway’ (1824, 208).

Lyon’s walking was not just a reflection of his position as an officer with spare time, but was something that revealed him to be entangled in an inhabited landscape, for again and again he described rambles when he happened across traces of Inuit encampments, landmarks and sacred sites, uncovering a sense of co-presence in this foreign environment, ideologically figured as uninhabited.

So what did Lyon do with this intimation of other voices? In his 1824 expedition, Lyon described finding an Inuit encampment full of relics and signs of historical inhabitation. After disinterring the corpse of an adult, Lyon excavated the grave of a child (see Figure 2.5):

Near the large grave was a third pile of stones, covering the body of a child, which was coiled up in the same manner. A snow buntin

Figure 2.5 ‘An Eskimaux Grave’, engraved by Edward Finden after George Lyon. Source: George Lyon. A Brief Narrative of an Unsuccessful Attempt to reach Repulse Bay: Through Sir Thomas Rowe’s ‘Welcome’ in His Majesty’s Ship Griper, in the Year 1824. London: John Murray, 1825.
had found its way through the loose stones which composed this little tomb, and its now forsaken, neatly built nest, was found placed on the neck of the child. As the snow bunting has all the domestic virtues of our English red-breast, it has always been considered by us as the robin of these dreary wilds, and its lively chirp and fearless confidence have rendered it respected by the most hungry sportsmen. I could not on this occasion view its little nest, placed on the breast of infancy, without wishing that I possessed the power of poetically expressing the feelings it excited. Both graves lay north-east and south-west. Before going on board I placed boarding-pikes, men’s and women’s knives, and other articles, which might be useful to the poor Esquimaux, on the huts and various piles of stones (1825, 68–9).

Lyon here dwelt in a place that was crowded with the memories and possessions of the dead and the living. Finding Inuit settlement and grave sites offered explorers more than something colourful and interesting to note and remember; these artefacts were signs of an inhabited landscape intersecting with the places they created through discovery service: this could be deeply affecting for explorers. Coming across these signs during a walk, when chance encounters and discoveries are welcomed, means they become symbols of haunting absences for the walker, traces that are barely there. The walker here becomes spectral, curiously poised between ‘one step and the next’ (Wylie, 2005, 237).

Lyon’s concept of place here seems to be spectral in that it recognises the voices of absent others. Unlike the cartographic vision in which a ‘particular kind of boundary between subject and space’ is created (Kirby, 1996, 47), Lyon’s encounter creates the space for multiple voices to emerge. Lyon connects the present Arctic scene with absent English ‘domestic virtues’ but beyond this his voice fails, he tells us, to express poetic feeling. Not that this closes off the power of the moment for, years later, John Barrow recalled that he read this passage to ‘an accomplished lady’ who ‘felt a desire to try what she could do with so interesting a subject’. ‘Georgiana’ went on to write a short poem entitled ‘To the Snow-bunting’ that cited Lyon’s analogy with the English robin and suggested that the snow bunting ‘cheer’st the wandering seaman’s thoughts / With home, his aim and end’ (Barrow, 1846, ff 220–1). This moment of grave-digging, therefore, contains so much more than the scientific curiosity of the explorer. Rather, we are dealing with an Arctic made up of multiple voices, an interweaving of presences that jostle among each other. At this scene Lyon leaves some tools for the ‘poor Esquimaux’ to
use, imagining, perhaps, that they might someday wander, like him, by this cache by chance: this is a new horizon that places exotic British materials into circulation with the Inuit, further entangling the work of foreign exploration with the lives, feelings, and voices of indigenous inhabitants. ‘To haunt a landscape’, John Wylie writes, ‘is to supplement and disturb it’ (2005, 246).

Happening upon signs of Inuit inhabitation in the Arctic was one thing but the British could also be haunted by their own absence and walking played a significant role in this context. The kind of rambles I have been discussing are what Wallace identifies as ‘excursive walks’, associated most prominently with the poetry of William Wordsworth, which counter ‘the threat of wandering with the promise of return’ (1993, 120). For the indigenous inhabitants of the Arctic, the world is so full of spatial references and landmarks that getting lost is something of a temporary disorientation: once a mark on the land, ice or horizon is located the locale becomes familiar again (see Aporta, 2003). What for British explorers might seem like a monotonous and empty landscape outside history was filled with memories, contexts, stories, information and trails for Inuit travellers. By contrast, the British were unfamiliar with the environment and this meant that getting lost was something to be feared.

On Parry’s first expedition, in September 1819, a party of seven men from the Griper disappeared after following the tracks of some reindeer and musk-oxen. Search parties were sent out but it began to snow:

which rendered the atmosphere so extremely thick ... that this party also lost their way in spite of every precaution, but fortunately got sight of our rockets after dark, by which they were directed to the ships, and returned at ten o’clock, almost exhausted with cold and fatigue, without any intelligence of the absentees (Parry, 1821, 82).

Parry’s apprehensions grew to a ‘painful degree’ and he had search parties plant pikes with flags and messages in bottles attached in the surrounding area that had the double purpose of guiding themselves and the absent party back to the ships (1821, 82). It was three long nights before the men found their way back to the ships and the tale of disorientation and confusion they told impacted on the expedition’s sense of place. Living out in the open had nearly killed them and in ‘humble gratitude to God for this signal act of mercy’, Parry named the place ‘Cape Providence’ (Parry, 1821, 84). Some weeks later, after anchoring in Winter Harbour, Parry had finger-posts erected ‘on all the hills within two or three miles
of the harbour’ to direct his men to the ships and prevent them becoming lost amid the ‘dreary sameness’ of the locale (Parry, 1821, 109).

Further rambles drove home just how strange and dangerous Arctic place was for the British. Wandering around was not something that performed possession in a disembodied manner – rather it was something that signalled their vulnerability. After ‘a longer walk than usual’ in April 1820, Parry’s group of ramblers passed a stone three miles north of the ships ‘on which was plainly engraved the letter P’ (Parry, 1821, 160). This puzzled them as the weather had been so cold that winter as to discount any one man sitting down and taking the time to carve this, ‘however desirous he might be of immortalizing himself in this way’ (RGS, SSC 73/2 83). This was quite an uncanny moment for the group, akin to when one of the officers reported seeing fresh footprints at a place called Possession Bay the previous July (on examination it became apparent that they were actually made by the shoes of the same men one year previously, when John Ross’s expedition had passed by (Parry, 1821, 26)). The mysterious ‘P’ stone, however, suggested that they ‘were not the first visitors of the country’ (Letters Written, 1821, 84). Bringing the stone back to the ships, they found out that a seaman named Peter Fisher had scratched the initial on it with his bayonet when he was lost the preceding September, some 25 miles from where the ships were now located. ‘This circumstance’, Hooper noted in his journal, ‘throws a good deal of light on the direction which these wanderers took, and shows how little idea they themselves had of their true situation’ (RGS, SSC 73/2 83).

The party of seven seamen lost for up to 91 hours was a microcosm for the larger expedition, a pioneer group of men who vanished just at the precincts of homely space. Despite the best efforts of Parry to gather some geographical information from the leader of the lost party it was clear that ‘little dependence’ was placed on men in those circumstances as they were in ‘utter ignorance’ about where they were (Parry, 1821, 162). The ‘P’ stone, much like the ‘found objects’ celebrated by the surrealists in the 1920s, gained meaning by being something mundane that was made extraordinary. Peter Fisher engaged in serious physical activity in order to mark his presence in a place marked by the ‘total absence of animated existence’ (Parry, 1821, 125). After carving his first initial he gave up this struggle and wandered off again. The stone he left behind was ‘out of place’ and was later encountered by chance by passing ramblers who felt that this thing represented a rupture of the unknown in a place that had been extensively walked and mapped during the winter. Like the stone from Parry’s reverie that stood out of the blankness, this was a mark
towards which they ‘unconsciously’ and ‘mechanically advanced’ (Parry, 1821, 125).

For an expedition that particularly sought to guard against any moments of ‘uneasiness’ among its members (Sabine ed., 1821, vii), such moments were rendered mysterious and, along with occasions of winter dreaminess and reverie, drew out the spectral forces that were present in everyday life. This puts into question assumptions that British explorers somehow disconnected from the world during the winter, bedding-in in homely ships, and continuing the battling work of exploration once the opportunity presented itself again. Actually, explorers who felt a reigning solitude and stillness during winter were already entangled in the world and could not be sealed off from the voices and presences that haunted outside, whether Inuit or people back home. Exploration was always taking place in the Arctic, not on the Arctic.