The News at the Ends of the Earth
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INUIT KNOWLEDGE
AND
CHARLES FRANCIS HALL

*Teik-ko se-ko? teik-ko se-ko?*—Do you see ice? do you see ice?
—Charles Francis Hall, *Arctic Researches and Life among the Esquimaux: Being the Narrative of an Expedition in Search of Sir John Franklin, in the Years 1860, 1861, and 1862* (1865)

The search for Sir John Franklin’s missing ships that began in 1848 concluded in 2014 and 2016, when the *Erebus* and *Terror* were located on the Canadian Arctic sea floor off King William Island and in Terror Bay, respectively. Identifying the ships has been presented as a triumph of technology, in part: sonar, robot submersibles, subaqueous cameras, and marine archaeology all contributed to the find. It is more properly, however, a confirmation of the accuracy of Inuit reports on the starving, desperate men that have circulated for over 150 years, as some accounts (but far from all) have acknowledged.¹ First Nations sailors were instrumental to the *Terror* find; the ships were eventually found just where the Inuit had repeatedly said they were. From the early searches beginning in the 1840s, various Inuit had told Anglo-American expedition members that they had seen or had heard of abandoned ships, large groups of emaciated men, and mutilated corpses. Arctic whaling captain Thomas Ward of the *Truelove*, conscripted to the search in 1849, turned over to the Admiralty a map
of four iced-in Western ships drawn by an Inuk man; the map attracted little interest or attention. The Inuk translator Adam Beck’s 1851 second-hand account of a ship fire and massacre of white men was given no weight by the Admiralty, one member commenting, “Adam Beck’s Report is not to be trusted.”

Scotsman John Rae, most significantly, returned from the North in 1854 with word of Franklin expedition relics in the possession of the Inuit, who had encountered a large party of struggling white men, or “kabloonas” (Qabluunak), who had lost their ship; the Inuit also reported finding bodies a season later. They noted signs of cannibalism among the corpses, Rae wrote in a letter from the Arctic: “From the mutilated state of many of the bodies and the contents of the kettles, it is evident our wretched Countrymen had been driven to the last dread alternative, as a means of sustaining life.”

Skeptics of Rae’s conclusions feared that Franklin’s men had been torn apart by bears or massacred by the Inuit; one of the strongest of these voices was that of Charles Dickens, who characterized Inuit evidence in *Household Words* as “the chatter of a gross handful of uncivilised people.” Rae, who learned from indigenous Arctic tactics, presented evidence from Inuit oral history as well as from the remnants of the expedition, but his reports

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**FIG 5.1** — Inuk-drawn map of four iced-in ships. A penciled annotation from a British sailor notes the “track from ship to ship.” Communication by the Whale Ships, ADM 7/189. National Archives, London.
were generally greeted with skepticism, if not hostility or hatred. In making judgments derived from indigenous knowledge that Franklin men may have resorted to cannibalism, Rae might have been seen by the British public as speaking as an Inuit and therefore unreliable as a commentator on British naval practice. Some observers invoked Franklin’s harrowing first voyage in 1819 as justification for finding it preposterous that his men would resort to human consumption; although the earlier expedition members had been driven to eating lichen and their shoe leather during a terrible overland crossing to the Coppermine River delta, they allegedly never resorted to cannibalism (even as eleven of the twenty men on the venture died). Franklin became known for this first voyage as “the man who ate his boots.” The English commander’s own avowed principles were not the only reason Rae received pushback on his reports. A pseudonymous group pamphlet addressed what the authors called the “Great Arctic Mystery”:

It may suit Dr. Rae’s purposes to insist upon the tragical termination of cannibalism to the career of the Franklin party, but we well remember the burst of incredulity, mingled with disgust, which was felt by the public when Dr. Rae’s unwarranted conclusion from third-hand Esquimaux evidence was published. For it is important to remember that the intelligence reached Dr. Rae in the thrice-diluted form through his Interpreter, who heard it from the Esquimaux, who heard it from other Natives, who said they had been at the spot where the death of forty of the Franklin party is stated to have occurred. These facts show the traditionary nature of the Esquimaux report, and, considered in connection with the conduct of the Natives, who are notoriously addicted to falsehood and deception, naturally lead us to receive the story with very great caution. . . . All the experience of our Arctic Explorers proves that Esquimaux are not to be trusted.5

The pamphleteers set out several of the terms that structure this chapter on Inuit knowledge and the newsman-turned-explorer Charles Francis Hall. For one, they characterize indigenous oral communication as “traditionary,” which here has a negative valence that would not hold in Hall’s own use of the term. “Traditionary” knowledge, by virtue of its orality, must necessarily be passed along by many voices or hands. In referring to Inuit oral history as “traditionary” knowledge, it should be noted, Hall and his contemporaries anticipate a term that has been in use in recent decades among sociologists and other practitioners of what has also been called ethnoecology: TEK, or traditional ecological knowledge, part of a broader
body of indigenous wisdom known as TK or IK (traditional knowledge or indigenous knowledge). In her work on glaciers and indigenous epistemology Julie Cruikshank defines TK as “tacit knowledge embodied in life experiences and reproduced in everyday behaviour and speech.”6 For an Anglo-American expeditionary culture that fetishized textual records, Inuit modes of communication were suspect.

In what follows I turn to indigenous circuits of knowledge in the Arctic and the embrace—or rejection—of “traditionary” knowledge by Anglo-American polar expedition members. The Arctic dead letters discussed in chapter 4 adapt Western forms of communication as ecomedia in order to enable the transfer of information in the Far North. Inuit modes of TK, as I explore in this chapter, are variously employed, appropriated, or dismissed by white expedition members. Many members of British and American expeditions were slow or reluctant to adapt to indigenous modes of Arctic survival (such as wearing furs instead of woven cloth). British and American scientific and discovery-minded ventures to the northern polar regions were consistently undertaken as if learning about the Arctic and learning from the Arctic were incommensurate modes of knowledge. I focus on an exception: the American explorer and autodidact Charles Francis Hall (1821–1871), who is usually classified as a colorful footnote to (or doomed eccentric within) the history of Anglo-American polar voyaging. A one-time newspaper editor in Cincinnati with no prior nautical experience, Hall first went to the Arctic as part of a personal quest to find traces of the lost Franklin expedition. Hall became best known to his contemporaries initially, however, for developing a long relationship with an Inuit couple, Ipirrviq (whose name Hall rendered as Eieberbing) and Taqulittuq (or Tookoolito; the couple was known to the whaling crews of Cumberland Sound as “Joe” and “Hannah”). Hall lived with the Inuit for over seven years, in two- and five-year continuous periods—a singular act for a white, Western explorer in the mid-nineteenth century. A provocative tension obtains between Hall’s proud amateurism—“If he was enthusiastic in the extreme, there was some method in his enthusiasm,” one account puts it—and the broad-based Arctic expertise he adopted from and championed in the Inuit.7

Hall’s own adventures, sketched briefly here, have had their chroniclers.8 His first two expeditions in search of Franklin relics were not voyages in the usual Arctic sense, since Hall traveled without his own ship or crew; instead he hitched rides with other vessels (including a whaler out of Connecticut captained by Sidney Buddington or Budington) and prepared for his own residencies among the Inuit. After his initial two years living on
Baffin Island in the same igloo as Ipiirviq and Taqulittuq, Hall returned to the United States in 1862 along with the Inuit couple and their children. They had already been exposed to the English language and to white Westerners when a whaling captain took them across the Atlantic for a two-year visit to England beginning in 1853, where they were given an audience with Queen Victoria (whose response was to note in her journal that the Inuit couple were “her subjects, very curious, & quite different to any of the southern or African tribes”). Hall’s treatment of Ipiirviq and Taqulittuq while in America was attentive to their value to his future plans, as the third-person narrative of his second voyage attests: “Hall seems to have been carefully mindful of their welfare. ‘Everything,’ he wrote to Captain Budington, ‘must be done to protect the health of these people; the assistance which I hope to receive from them on my sledge trip is too important for us to relax our exertions to have them comfortable.’” Nevertheless in
between his first two Arctic sojourns Hall embarked on a lecture tour and contracted Ipiirviq and Taqulittuq to P. T. Barnum’s American Museum as part of his fundraising for his second trip north. Such actions were common in an age of ethnographic and scientific racism, even if Hall reconsidered placing the couple on display shortly thereafter. He wrote to Buddington’s wife, “[Barnum] cannot have them again. I do think it would ruin their healths to go through another siege as when they were there. Money would not induce me to run another such risk of their lives.” Hall therefore, according to the second narrative, “followed the advice of friends in refusing his consent for their presence at any other lectures than his own.” His belated scruples against making Ipiirviq and Taqulittuq into spectacles did not extend to Hall’s own public performances of Arctic authenticity, even as he regretted having outsourced the couple for a paying American public.

Although Hall was a relatively agreeable member of the Inuit community in his two northern residencies, he had a more fractious time in the United States and among white sailors. During his second expedition he shot and killed a mutinous member of a whaling crew with whom he had contracted transport. By 1870, however, Hall had established enough polar bona fides that the U.S. Navy entrusted him with command of a state-sponsored North Pole mission, the nation’s first. This disastrous final expedition, on the ship *Polaris* (1871–73), ended early for Hall: during the mission’s first winter on the ice he was poisoned to death by arsenic at the hands of his own men. Most suspicion rests with the ship’s doctor and Hall’s rival in expeditionary science, Emil Bessels. The remaining crew of the *Polaris* venture secured an even more sensational place in polar history when nineteen members were separated from the leaking ship and subsequently endured an extraordinary six months on a diminishing ice floe that traveled eighteen hundred miles before their rescue. Among the floe-floating survivors were Taqulittuq and Ipiirviq, the latter of whom (along with another Inuk man, Suersaq or Hans Hendrik) kept the party alive by his skill at seal hunting. All survived the fractured *Polaris* mission except the murdered Hall.

My aim in returning to this sensational history, with a specific focus on Hall’s conception and execution of his first voyage, is to consider how knowledge circulated in the oceanic spaces and indigenous knowledge systems of the polar regions, whether through autodidactic, empirical, professional, or intercultural channels. In what follows I discuss how Hall, in his relationship with Ipiirviq and Taqulittuq, mediates not only between U.S. and Inuit histories of Arctic expertise but between experiential and speculative modes of knowing as well. The Arctic career of Charles Fran-
cis Hall is an example of exchanges of knowledge whose circuits are both routine and extravagant within the Arctic regions and without in the long nineteenth century. While this knowledge took many forms, my interest is the narrative accounts of the circulation of knowledge and historiography between Inuit residents of the Arctic regions and white Westerners such as Hall. As his history demonstrates, a complicated relationship existed between forms of nautical epistemology and indigenous knowledge in the Anglo-American experience of polar exploration. Hall’s unusual path to and within the Arctic, guided along the way by Ipiirviq and Taqullittuq, provides a way to think about the place of indigenous knowledge within oceanic models of intellectual circulation. By this I mean that the logic of “discovery,” by which travelers import the structures and terms of understanding of their own cultural and political origin to the space of their exploration, had consistently less success in the polar regions than in other geographical places of imperial, colonial, or economic interest. Hall sought to take the Arctic on its own terms, which has constituted his eccentricity from the circuits of Anglo-American polar histories. And yet it is the fact that Inuit lifeways are empirically verifiable as ways of knowing and surviving in the Arctic that underwrites his expeditionary innovations. Hall’s speculation was to accede to this fact as an experimental possibility.

North from Cincinnati

Hall was a particularly zealous member of an Arctic-avid public in the late 1850s, a decade of special attention to Franklin’s lost ships and to the polar expeditions launched on their behalf. He was born in New Hampshire but spent his adult life in Cincinnati, where he first ran an engraving business and then edited two newspapers between 1858 and 1860, the Cincinnati Occasional and the Daily Press, for which he wrote much of the noncommercial content. His education did not go beyond the eighth grade, which sets him apart from many of the men associated with the leadership of polar ventures; Hall was an autodidact, however, and an obsessive diarist, making detailed notes of the books he read. By the late 1850s those books were mostly about Arctic exploration, a topic he featured in his newspaper columns as well as in his private journals. Hall’s fixation on accounts of polar expeditions reveals more than his own motivations, of course; his interest reflects both the place of Arctic ventures in the popular Anglo-American imagination, as well as the forms of expression they generated.
The mid- to late 1850s were an active time in polar narrative publication, and in Cincinnati Hall consumed the published voyage narratives that emerged from Anglo-American Arctic travels. In that decade two key pieces of information emerged about Franklin, the first news since his ships’ disappearance. For one, Rae’s expedition produced not just oral histories of Franklin’s distressed men but a large trove of relics from the ships themselves that were purchased from the Inuit. Rae’s account did not solve the broader mystery of what happened to both ships and the majority of the crew members, and his news about possible cannibalism was scandalous, but Hall took note of the fact that Rae had made use of Inuit knowledge and lifeways in his search. The second evidentiary announcement came in 1859, when Francis Leopold McClintock’s Fox expedition found the first written account left by the Franklin expedition: a cached document uncovered on King William Island, as chapter 4 describes.

Hall interpreted these two significant items of news differently than many of his contemporaries. In his view, Rae’s report produced hope that members of the Franklin expedition had had not just commerce with the indigenous Arctic residents but also friendly relations that might have extended to the point of rescue, relief, or cohabitation. And while the confirmation of Franklin’s own death was affecting, Hall focused not on the confirmed losses but on how many men were still known to have survived three years into the doomed expedition—by his conclusions from these fragmentary records, as many as 105 of the original 129. His journals and diaries include numerous extracts from travel narratives whose authors had endured inhospitable regions for extended periods of time, whether polar or otherwise, which Hall apparently found promising antecedents for Franklin’s men. In his diary in January 1860, for example, Hall noted that the American sea captain James Riley had survived captivity and sustained deprivation in the North African desert, although his notes exaggerate some aspects of the feat; Hall records Riley as having been enslaved for ten years (it was less than two) and writes that while Riley had “weighed 240 lbs” before his trials, after his redemption he only “weighed 60” (it was 90, still a shocking drop).16

Hall followed up his notes on Riley and other travelers with the following draft declaration in his diary in early 1860; it shows his enthusiasm and dedication, which is initially limited only by his theoretical death, then reconsidered as a shorter term of three to four years:

Proposal—I, Chas. F. Hall, of Cin.C. do firmly believe that some of the 105 Companions of Sir John Franklin surviving on the 26th day of
April 1848) [sic] are yet living do propose to spend my life the next 3 or 4 years of my life in or in the vicinity of King William Island & that I believe my 1st duty to mankind is to attempt to project an expedition.17

One of his preparations for this “duty” made the local papers: one evening in Cincinnati Hall equipped himself with a candle, books, and a bottle of water and pitched a tent near the city’s observatory in order to “inure himself to fatigue” and accustom himself to winter exposure. “At eleven o’clock his tent was visited by two Irishmen,” the Daily Press reported, “armed with a shot-gun” and demanding drink. “We are pretty sure,” the paper concluded, that “Mr. Hall considers that he would not have been worse served by the Esquimaux.”18 The newspaper’s conflation of the ethnic “Irishmen” with the “Esquimaux” as types both disruptive and comic stages Hall’s mission as itself a folly, as his naïve camping experiment in the relatively mild Cincinnati winter might seem to reveal.

Yet Hall’s preparations, however amateurish, were not naïve. He filled journals with excerpts from the writings of earlier polar explorers, as well as with inspirational quotations from his reading. (“The greatest discoveries have been made by leaving the beaten path & going into by-paths.”)19 In addition to his research and notes on previous expeditions, he consulted with—and received written endorsements from—the most prominent living Arctic veteran, Israel Isaac Hayes, as well as the benefactor of earlier American Franklin search expeditions, Henry Grinnell, who donated several hundred dollars to his future travels. His wife, whom Hall abandoned along with his children, donated $27 to the expedition. The funding Hall sought more broadly was offered only modestly, however, despite the polite interest his plans; still, he scrupulously acknowledged all contributions, including a single pound of tea offered by one Z. B. Coffin of Cincinnati.20 In his diary in February 1860 Hall laid out five possible prospects for his Arctic mission: first, he would attempt to secure funding for an actual vessel, at an estimated cost of $2,000; the next two options were similarly oriented. His fourth, penultimate option (which he describes as a “last resort”) would be to constitute a joint whaling-exploration venture. Finally, Hall writes—of what would become his actual means of heading north—“see on what terms I can go with [whaling] Capt. Buddington up to Cumberland Inlet.”21 It must be stressed that this was an unusual and possibly unheard of approach to polar exploration in the nineteenth century: no other individual seems to have had the idea of mounting a solo trip relying only on the kindness of strangers, not a fully provisioned expedition, and lived to tell of it. And
not just lived to tell: found himself by his third voyage in command of an official U.S. Navy North Pole mission. Hall knew his tactics were uncom-
mon; as he addressed himself in his diary on 17 July 1860, “What do you now propose to do? This case may be an exception to the rule.”

He continued to refine his plans throughout the spring and early summer of 1860. Hall came to embrace his status as an unencumbered sojourner in the North, with neither a ship nor an expeditionary team, long before his actually becoming one was classified as an eccentric act: “My object is to acquire personal knowledge of the language & life of the Esquimaux, with a view thereafter to visit the Lands of King William, Boothia & Victoria—to endeavor by my personal investigation to determine more satisfactorily the fate of the 105 Companions of Sir John Franklin, now known to have been living on the 25th day of Apr. 1848.”

Significantly his employment of the term “Esquimaux,” the common one in use at the time among whites and sub-Arctic dwellers, would not be one that Hall would retain. While other Arctic travelers might note that the indigenous population in the eastern Canadian Arctic call themselves Inuit, they generally failed to use that term in their writing beyond ethnographic observation. Hall, on the other hand, adopts “their true designation,” the word Inuit, he tells us, “signifying in their language, ‘the people,’ as distinguishing them from all foreigners.” (The singular of Inuit is Inuk.) As Hall clarified on a lecture tour after his first voyage, “The term Esquimaux is not known among these people, it being the name given to them by foreigners, which name signifying eaters of raw fish or meat.”

Dispensing with the ethnographic distance maintained by other polar explorers, Hall explained to his lecture audiences that his accounts of the Inuit would be coextensive with his account of himself: “As, during my five years of sojourn among these people, I adapted myself in all respects to their habits, customs and manner of living, it follows that in describing these, I am describing my own life during that period.”

The extent of this immersion and its public reception is suggested in the two titles under which Hall’s first-person narrative of his initial expedition appeared in England and the United States in 1865. The English edition was entitled Life with the Esquimaux; the American edition that followed shortly thereafter, however, was called Arctic Researches and Life among the Esquimaux. The American title has the effect of reinstalling the ethnographic distance that Hall’s actual experience came to eliminate, treating his cohabitation with the Inuit as an act of scientific curiosity. The title also seems to separate Hall’s living conditions from his research when, as we will see, they were one and the same.
Life among the Inuit

Hall was involved in the publication only of his first narrative, the sole volume that is in his own voice; after his violent death aboard the *Polaris*, the U.S. Navy compiled the accounts of his second and third voyages in the third person from his scores of notebooks.26 So anxious was Hall to return to the Arctic after his first voyage, he writes in the preface to *Arctic Researches*, that “the last page of the manuscript was written on the morning of my embarkation” on the second voyage (iii); it was datelined “on board bark Monticello, bound for the Arctic Regions” (iv). His exuberant writing style in his private journals and in his first-person narrative is very different from that of most polar voyagers, whose approaches tended to be sober and scientific. Indeed the two third-person narratives compiled posthumously by the U.S. Navy are far more restrained in the material they quote from Hall’s notebooks. Published Arctic narratives of the nineteenth century focused not on the personal reactions of expedition members to the region’s unfamiliar conditions but on documenting the missions’ scientific, exploratory, or hydrographic aims. Many include extensive appendices (or supplementary volumes) of records of observations on the temperature, the magnetic “dip,” Arctic fauna, and the solar, lunar, and ocular distortions produced by polar latitudes. The inner lives of the expeditions warrant only a handful of pages in typical polar narratives; this is consistent with the broader nineteenth-century genre of the disinterested travelogue by the scientific-minded observer. Hall, by contrast, based his conclusions not on a preponderance of data but on enthusiasm and a kind of scientific relativity. On spotting an iceberg for the first time, he stages the drama of the encounter: “Then it was we met. Iceberg was silent; I too was silent” (36). He conveyed the relative meaning of Arctic cold for various northern travelers, for example, not by taxonomic charts, but by observations such as the following: “In the Arctic regions one seldom or never hears any remark made with regard to its being cold: this staple topic of conversation is thus entirely lost to the Inuits.”27 And yet Taqulittuq’s time in the United States and England gave her a relative sense of what cold could mean; at one point during Hall’s second expedition, she “expressed a wish that the lady who told her at the Brooklyn fair in New York that Inuuits ought to dress like ladies in the States, could herself take a minute’s walk only at this time over the hill near by, when she would be very glad to change her fine hat and hoop-skirts for any one of an Inuuit’s rough dresses.”28
Hall approached the polar regions and standard nautical practices with a version of the gonzo journalism he had practiced while a newspaper editor in Cincinnati. Upon first observing the maritime visual distortion called “looming,” for example, Hall wrote of it, in a style typical of his narrative: “This refraction? It was Nature turned inside out! Nature turned topsyturvy!! NATURE ON A SPREE!!! Yes, Nature on a spree!” (87). He recognized that this style (the typography and emphases of which he retains in the published narrative when quoting from his own journals, including the moment just quoted) was a departure from the generic conventions of polar expedition accounts, writing in the introduction to his *Arctic Researches*, “This book is to be a work of narrative and adventure, and not one of argument and discussion” (xvii). In the absence of a scientific or navigation team—usually a given on polar expeditions—Hall had to record all his own observations with “a knowledge self-acquired.” He trusts that “readers will be able to see, as they move onward with me through my narrative, how difficult it was—alone, and with no other pair of hands, no other mind, no other thought, sense, or perception but my own—to record, day by day, the occurrences that came under my eye” (xvii).

The whaling voyage on which Hall arranged transport was captained by Sidney Buddington, an experienced Arctic whaler who had brought back to his Connecticut home an Inuk man he called Kudlago (possibly Kallaarjuk,
writes Kenn Harper). Unlike the representation by white writers of Qalasirssuaq (who was taken aboard the Franklin search ship Assistance in 1850, as chapter 2 details), in Hall’s account Kudlago was not an awestruck naïf or “primitive” when introduced to Western forms of technology or knowledge. “He looked upon the works of civilization with interest, but never with wonder,” Hall reported. “The first time he saw a locomotive no words escaped his lips, nor did he exhibit any signs but what were consistent with the idea of his having seen the same a thousand times before” (40). When later riding a train, Kudlago observed that the passengers given a broadsheet by an urchin held the circular up to their faces to read it; the Inuk man “held his up before his eyes and appeared to read. Though he could not read a word, yet he looked learned” (40). Hall’s early exposure to an Inuk man who had been able to play the part of moving between cultures with facility helped shape the Cincinnatian’s later engagement with the indigenous populations in the Far North—even though Kudlago himself did not survive the encounter. Hall planned to employ him as his guide and interpreter, but Kudlago died of a respiratory ailment during the voyage from New London to Baffin Island. Even the raw liver and heart of an eider duck, provided to him by concerned whale men, failed to revive him. Hall read “appropriate exhortations from the ‘Masonic Manual’” over his sea burial (41), but did not otherwise mystify the Inuk’s experience, which struck him with force. (In his journal, in large letters filling a third of the page, Hall wrote, “Death has been among us! ‘Cudlango’ is dead!!”) Kudlago’s haunting final words, according to Hall, were “Teik-ko se-ko? teik-ko se-ko?—Do you see ice? do you see ice?” (41). Kudlago had hoped to arrive home and be reunited with his family; the absence of ice along the Labrador coast underscored his distance from his Far Northern home.

Hall would come to rely on and learn from other Inuit, several of whom had experience with other U.S. and European expeditions. Here again Hall distinguished himself from most other white explorers, as he looked to forge new social connections rather than recur to a contractual relationship with the handful of experienced go-betweens in Greenland villages. The couple with whom Hall would share much of his Arctic time in intimate quarters, Ipiirviq and Taqulittuq, served him primarily as hunter and translator, respectively. Yet when Hall first meets Taqulittuq, as he records it in his journal, the encounter was shocking not for its ethnographic difference but for its familiarity:

November 2, 1860. About IX this morning, while intently engaged in my little cabin writing, I heard a soft, sweet voice “Good morning, sir!” The
tone in which it was spoken, musical, lively, & varied, told me instantly that a lady of refinement was here, greeting me! Was I dreaming? No—I was wide awake—& writing! Was I mistaken? . . . Who should it be but a Lady Esquimaux? . . . Whence came this civilization refinement? Taqulittuq’s “refinement” and her fluency in English (thanks to her trip to England and her encounters with the Arctic whaling crews) was shocking to Hall in their first meeting, even though he had already been told of the Inuk woman by Buddington. In his inclusion of this diary entry—slightly and insignificantly revised—in his published voyage narrative, however, Hall does not position the encounter in its linear, temporal place, which, like most travel and exploration writing, is the form Arctic Researches takes. Instead he includes this first meeting as an anecdotal aside much later in the book, hundreds of pages after the reader has already been given extensive evidence of Taqulittuq and her Arctic accomplishments. We see here that Hall is not interested in staging her “civilization” or “refinement” as foremost or sensational in his narrative account. Instead his primary emphasis is on what he learns from her in their conversations and shared acts of polar sustenance during Hall’s cohabitation with her and Ipiirviq.

In this and other ways Hall emphasizes the difference in his methods from those of other polar travelers, tactics he developed on his first trip and continued to modify for his second: “I shall not, like previous explorers, set my foot on shore for a few days or weeks, or, like others, journey among men whose language is to me unintelligible. I shall live for two or three years among the Esquimaux, and gain their confidence; and I have the advantage of understanding the language, and of making all my wishes known to them” (iv). Yet the tone of the published narrative, which makes an argument for how “patiently [he] acquired the language and familiarized [him]self with the habits of the Esquimaux” (iii), has a calmness of reflection that his journal entries made on the spot do not evince. In his initial Arctic residence Hall was early exposed to the raw meat diet of the Inuit, which has vital antiscorbutic qualities but was deemed repulsive by most whites (who, in consequence, suffered greatly from scurvy). Hall wrote in his diary on 10 November 1860:

I therefore eat abundantly of frozen whale! Let those who will think evil of it—one thing is certain, neither my conscience or—Stomach condemned the deed! The fact is, to effect the purpose I have at heart—to carry out such what I have motivation to perform—to visit King Williams Land & lands adjacent—to continue & complete the History of
Sir John Franklin & his manned Expedition, I must learn to live as Esquimaux do! To carry out this Mission, I shall “eat to live,” discarding altogether the common idea—at least for three years—of “living to eat”!

The force of revelation was strong with Hall, and he took up Inuit ways with the zeal of the convert. This interest was reciprocated; on Baffin Island, where they had taken up residence, Ipiirviq and Taqulittuq treated Hall as kin, as he describes after witnessing a healing ceremony: “This people, knowing that I did not make fun of them or taunt them for believing as they do, had confidence in me... It is against their customs to have any but the family present, but hitherto I have always had access to their meetings.”

His embrace of indigenous means of survival was what most characterized him to his contemporaries as eccentric. The editors of his posthumous second expedition narrative, for example, find it odd that Hall would choose an igloo over a ship for his winter residence: “Strange as it might seem to any one but Hall... he still lived in his snow hut, in daily sight and sound of the [whaling] ships, which were now comfortably housed for the winter... He would not depart from his rough Arctic diet.”

This strangeness (or what we can call Hall’s polar method) may simply have been ex-centric, emerging from a sphere beyond the social and political centers of Western culture, for Hall’s interest in Inuit culture and practices formed the basis for his significant education about survival in the polar regions, which distinguished him from other, more celebrated but less successful explorers (the Briton Robert Falcon Scott in the South first and foremost). While British and American polar expeditions would hire Inuit hunters or guides, they routinely resisted adaptation to indigenous means for Arctic survival—slow to learn the use of sled dogs, for example, and relying on the hugely debilitating practice of “man-hauling” sledges. (Other than Hall, exceptions include the Scotsman John Rae, the American Frederick Schwatka, and the Canadian Vilhjamur Stefansson.) The outfitting lists drawn up by white captains detail stores of flannel shirts, knitted frocks, worsted stockings, cloth boots, Welsh wigs (wool caps), and comforters, in one example from Horatio Austin; still, that particular Briton recognized that a “sealskin jumper” would be “much preferable” to a wool jacket, “being longer, less bulky and cumbrous, much lighter and impervious to wind, snow, or wet. I would suggest that dressed sealskin be purchased from the Esquimaux for this purpose, and made up on board.”

Hall’s peculiarity within the history of Anglo-American polar exploration lay in his embrace of native lifeways. Yet his more significant departure from Western tradition can be
found in his no less strong embrace of Inuit scientific, historical, and hydrographic observation.

“ Traditionary” History

Hall privileged Inuit hydrographic knowledge—what we would today call tek, or traditional ecological knowledge—over long-standing Anglo-American charts and beliefs. One of the first revisions he made to Arctic hydrography on the basis of Inuit experience concerned the question of the form taken by the body of water on Baffin Island known to Westerners as Frobisher Strait, after the explorer who had sailed sixty miles up it in 1576. Nearly three hundred years later, Hall recorded the error of this judgment: “Frobisher Strait, so called, does not exist, according to my firm belief! I have had from intelligent Esquimaux travellers” that it is a bay. Hall included in his published narrative several maps and other forms of Inuit ecomedia, including one of Frobisher Bay “drawn by Koopernkung while we were at Cape True, 1862” (583). Experiential observation was the order of Hall’s Arctic residency. “On one occasion, when I was speaking with Tookoolito concerning her people,” Hall recorded, “she said, ‘Innuits all think this earth once covered with water.’ I asked her why she thought so. She answered, ‘Did you never see little stones, like clams and such things as live in the sea, away up on the mountains?’” (572). Inuit experiential knowledge translates to geological and paleontological interpretive conclusions on an oceanic scale.

Recall that Hall had come north seeking information on Franklin and his crew, whom he believed might have survived if they had, themselves, embraced Inuit subsistence practices. In his second expedition Hall did, in fact, uncover more Franklin relics as well as an Inuit narrative of contact with the expedition; when meeting with natives in Pelly Bay,

Kok- lee- arng- niun, their head man, showed two spoons which had been give to him by Ag-loo-ka (Crozier), one of them having the initials F.R.M.C. stamped upon it. His wife, Koo-narg, had a silver watch-case. This opened up the way for immediate inquiries. Through Too-Koo-li-too who as usual soon proved a good interpreter, it was learned that these Innuits had been at one time on board of the ships of Too-loo-ark, (the great Esh-e-mut-ta, Sir John Franklin), and had their tupiks
Inuit Knowledge

[sealskin summer tents] on the ice alongside of him during the spring and summer. They spoke of one ship not far from Ook-kee-bee-jee-lua (Pelly Bay), and two to the westward of Neit-tee-lik, near Ook-goo-lik. Kok-lee-arng-nŭn was “a big boy when very many men from the ships hunted took-too [tuktu, or caribou]. They had guns, and knives with long handles, and some of their party hunted the took-too on the ice; killing so many that they made a line across the whole bay of Ook-goo-lik.” The Pelly Bay men described the Esh-e-mut-ta as an old man with broad shoulders, thick and heavier set than Hall, with gray hair, full face, and bald head. He was always wearing something over his eyes (spec-tacles, as Too-koo-li-too interpreted it), was quite lame, and appeared sick when they last saw him. He was very kind to the Innuits;—always wanting them to eat something.37

The description is a good likeness of the portly, sexagenarian Franklin. Among the native communities on Baffin Island Hall found a compelling story of several survivors within the repository of indigenous historical memory. What he learned from his companions was that “strangers” had come among them, strangers described as white men. Hall distinguishes what he calls the Inuits’ “traditionary” oral history from “written” history and finds that this information, as well as other Inuit memories of “strangers,” rhymed with written records of expeditions going back hundreds of years. While Hall did not travel far from Frobisher Bay, he did learn something crucial about Martin Frobisher’s expedition to Baffin Island in 1576, which the Inuit talked about as if it had just happened. At one point in Arctic Researches Hall asks a community elderwoman about the reports he is hearing of lost vessels (which he originally thought referred to Franklin). The elder tells him that the community recalled multiple ships: “First two, then two or three, then many—very many vessels.” In his dawning realization that this account does not refer to Franklin’s voyage of two ships but to an earlier and larger expedition, he consults a history of Arctic discovery he had brought with him:

Turning to the account of Frobisher’s voyages, I read what had been given to the world by means of writing and printing, and compared it with what was now communicated to me by means of oral tradition. Written history tells me that Frobisher made three voyages to the arctic regions as follows:
First voyage in 1576, with two vessels.
Second voyage in 1577, three vessels.
Third voyage in 1578, fifteen vessels.

*Traditionary* history informs me that a great many, many years ago the vessels of white men visited the bay (Frobisher’s) three successive years:

First, in two vessels.
Second, in three vessels.
Third, in many vessels. (279)

Hall makes a pointed distinction between the knowledge that circulates in the world by means of “writing and printing” and the knowledge gained by oral or “traditionary” history, or TK. Western explorers too often dismissed oral histories of encounters in the polar regions throughout the nineteenth century, even as they drew from Inuit geographical knowledge. Anglo-Americans also consistently misunderstood and even destroyed the informational cairns called Inuksuit that are used by the Inuit and other northern people to navigate the land- and waterscape (“Inuksuk” [sing.] means “that which acts in the capacity of a human”).

Hall continues his account by recognizing the value of Frobisher’s own embrace of Inuit hospitality and knowledge, which enabled his crew’s survival of at least one Arctic winter ashore:

But this is not all that traditionary history gave me on that day. *Written* history states that Frobisher lost five of his men on his first voyage when conveying a native on shore. *Oral* history told me that five white men were captured by Innuit people at the time of the appearance of the ships a great many years ago; that these men wintered on shore (whether one, two, three, or more winters, could not say); that they lived among the Innuits; that they afterward built an oomien (large boat), and put a mast into her, and had sails; that early in the season, before much water appeared, they endeavored to depart; that, in the effort, some froze their hands; but that finally they succeeded in getting into open water, and away they went, which was the last seen or heard of them. This boat, as near as I could make out at the time, was built on the island that Frobisher and his company landed upon, viz., *Niountelik*. (279–80)

Upon the conclusion of the woman’s testimony, Hall wondered “if such facts concerning an expedition which had been made nearly three hundred years ago can be preserved by the natives, and evidence of those facts ob-
tained, what may not be gleaned of Sir John Franklin’s Expedition of only sixteen years ago?” (280). He feels “great astonishment” at the Inuit “powers of memory, and the remarkable way in which this strange people of the icy North, who have no written language, can correctly preserve history from one generation to another” (281). Such modes of knowing were outlandish to Hall’s Anglo-American contemporaries; in a testimonial used to publicize his lecture tour in between his first two expeditions, for example, a Yale professor emphasized the difference between written and experiential knowledge: “Mr. Hall possesses much knowledge not found in books—the fruits of his own experience.” In a region that had been seen as outside of history (as indigenous or “primitive” peoples often have been) in the particularity of its inhospitableness to colonial settlement or territorial claims, such knowledge creates a world whose circuits oscillate beyond Western evidentiary understanding, much less time and space. This world is oceanic both materially and conceptually, in the sense that its forms of circulation are independent of (or indifferent to) political or doctrinal boundaries.

These collaborations were long-standing. Neither the elder who conveys information about the centuries-earlier Frobisher voyage nor Ipirviq and Taqulittuq were the first Inuit to assist Western expeditions. William Edward Parry and John Ross had relied on native knowledge during their 1820s British expeditions. And not just the knowledge: in several notable cases Inuit collaborators provided the hydrography and illustrations of their encounters as well. The information they provided, however, was treated mostly as a curiosity by the British Admiralty and Anglo-American geographers and hydrographers. Taqulittuq’s abilities in this regard were compared by the U.S. Navy editors who posthumously compiled the narrative of Hall’s second voyage to those of the Inuk woman who had assisted Parry decades earlier: “Too-koo-li-too showed an unexpected knowledge of the geography of her country, reminding Arctic students of the native woman Iligliuk, and of her chart drawn for Parry.” But even as Iligliuk and Taqulittuq served as translators both of language and of geography, their native knowledge did not translate outside of the North on its own terms; that is, it registered as a curious aside rather than as constitutive to Arctic life. In a similar vein, the carved, wooden, three-dimensional coastal maps used by Greenlandic Inuit when kayaking were valued for their aesthetics rather than their utility when compared to written charts.
Polar Orientations

The example of Hall brings into relief the terms of the ongoing popular fascination with the Arctic and Antarctica, regions that historically have been considered nonnational spaces but that have nevertheless also been the ongoing object of nationally sponsored scientific and exploratory missions. The knowledge produced and circulated by and around such expeditions, in turn, has found purchase in both national and nonnational units of inquiry. What does the example of the “amateur” Charles Francis Hall tell us about the possibilities and limits of “native” knowledge of the poles compared to knowledge generated by national or professionally scientific Western missions? In the afterlife of Hall’s expeditions his gleanings from “tradionary” history were rejected in favor of a narrative of contact that

FIG 5.4 — Part of Greenland Coast (and Islands), Kunit fra Umivik (Inuit, Greenland), 1884. Wood. GREENLAND NATIONAL MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES, NUUK.
for centuries preferred the seeming blankness of the ice to an articulate indigeneity. It was Hall’s very estrangement from Anglo-American, Western modes of scientific exploration that enabled his inhabitation of TK or TEK and other native forms of epistemology and survival. I have traced the circuits of indigenous knowledge retold, rejected, and reimagined in the period after Hall’s Arctic residence as a way to consider the potentialities of the polar ecomedia and TEK for our moment of climate extremity today, in which present-day Inuit experience of climate change is not a quirk or curiosity for later confirmation by Western science, but the reverse. Hall’s history resides not within national traditions of exploration of historiography but within indigenous and oceanic histories of the dispersal and collection of knowledge.

A final example of Hall’s divergence from expected modes of polar travel and exploration underscores the value and broader applicability of both his own epistemological practices and polar and oceanic modes of knowledge production. Even within a tradition of voluminous polar expeditionary narrative production, Hall is exceptional. In his years in the Arctic he filled over 250 extant journals (a handful of which are seen in figure 5.5), and we know from the narratives of former shipmates that many more were lost or destroyed (whether by Hall himself or by the officers on the Polaris voyage on which he was murdered). His excess of writing, in all its forms, can be seen as a way to inscribe something upon a landscape that is hostile to permanent records. Shifting ice, extreme weather, and frozen ground make unreliable the forms of inscription customary to voyages of discovery or imperial ventures. On the other hand, the cold and aridity helped preserve bodies and other organic remnants for decades or centuries longer than a temperate climate would—as it preserved Hall’s own body, intact enough to test for arsenic poisoning a century after he died. Most polar expeditions left written records in cairns, in multiple iterations so as to maximize the possibility of their being found. Since his first two Arctic trips were not tethered to any expeditionary crew or patron, Hall did not himself practice constant cairning but instead made monuments of his own excess of writing.

Hall was attentive to the technological production of texts, of information, of the demands of polar ecomedia. In addition to the many scores of notebooks he kept while winterbound, he engaged in other meticulous acts of literary practice, including making typographical corrections to a copy of Nathaniel Bowditch’s famous Practical Navigator, which he passed along to the volume’s publisher upon his return to the United States. He worked on solutions to the problem of frozen ink in temperatures that reached 70
degrees below zero; the ink was stored in “a deposit of icy ink-blocks outside of the igloo; slices from these were chipped off, crushed and thawed inside.” He developed an ingenious system of writing upon heated metal plates:

I have before me a lamp with two wicks kept constantly burning. The brass sheets are 10 inches each by 3; and while one is heated the other, which has been made hot, is under the leaf on which I write, warming it; this, in turn, keeps my fingers warm and the ink from freezing in the pen, and dries the writing. Changing the plates after writing on each half a dozen lines, I am able to make up my journals, the thermometer at my side showing 42° below the freezing point. It is a plan of my own.43

“It is a plan of my own”: such might be the alternative title to the story of Charles Francis Hall. But as I have been arguing, the plans that Hall made and enacted were always emergent from collectivities of knowledge, initially from the published narratives of previous Arctic voyagers and ultimately from shared Inuit knowledge. This latter indigenous knowledge, too, was as much a part of a technological production of experiential knowing as the histories of Anglo-American exploration. Hall’s life with the Esquimaux functioned as a mechanism for generating narratives, however ephemeral, that are parallel to the epistemological tasks of science. Hall’s fractiousness—his survival and then nonsurvival—are ultimately subordinate to his seemingly indiscriminate but actually exceptionally discerning ability to collate ecomedia and “traditionary” knowledge from circuits on an oceanic scale.