White Rose Research Online
eprints@whiterose.ac.uk
https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk
Universities of Leeds, Sheffield and York

Deposited via The University of Sheffield.

White Rose Research Online URL for this paper:
https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/id/eprint/213609/

Version: Published Version

Article:

Greenwood, C. (2023) Defrosting the Gothic: Arctic poetry in a melting sublime. Gothic Nature (IV). pp. 63-90. ISSN: 2632-4628

Reuse

This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) licence. This licence allows you to distribute, remix, tweak, and build upon the work, even commercially, as long as you credit the authors for the original work. More information and the full terms of the licence here: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/

Takedown

If you consider content in White Rose Research Online to be in breach of UK law, please notify us by emailing eprints@whiterose.ac.uk including the URL of the record and the reason for the withdrawal request.

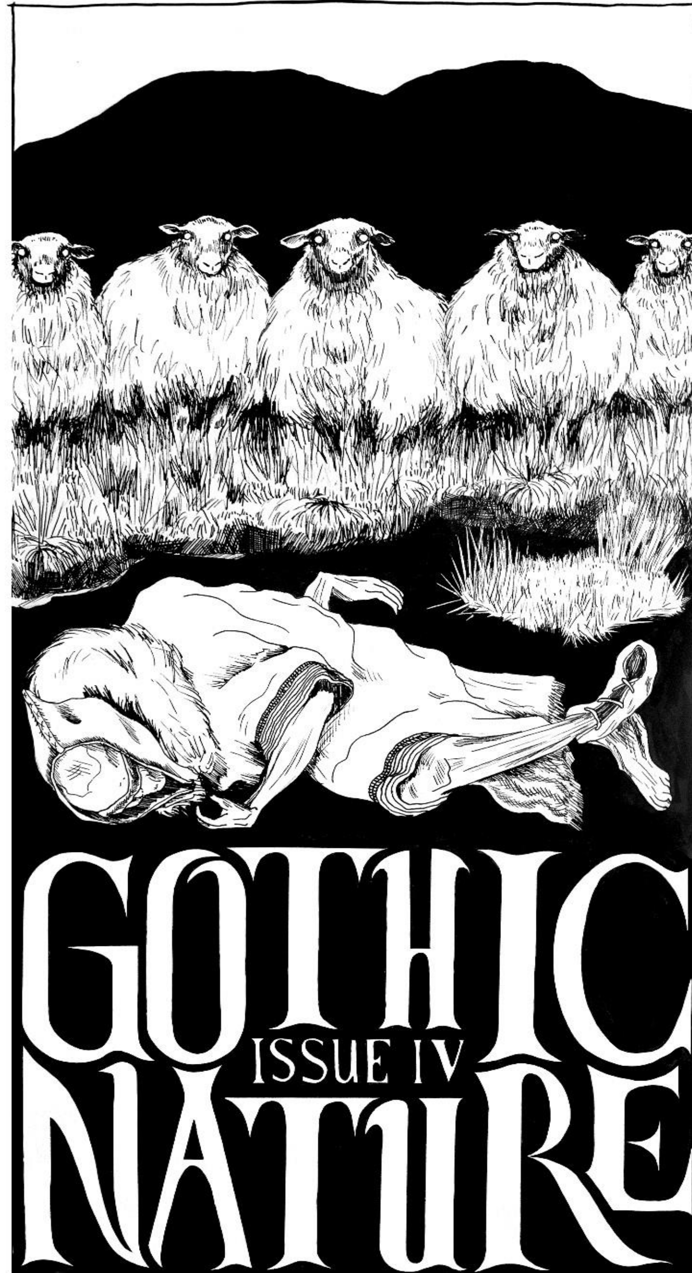
UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

University of Sheffield

UNIVERSITY of York

Gothic Nature

New Directions in Ecohorror and the EcoGothic



Issue Four

Founded by: Elizabeth Parker
Editors in chief: Elizabeth Parker & Harriet Stilley

Cover credit:

Title: Watching and Waiting
Medium: sumi ink on paper
Artist: Lydia Rose

Lydia Rose is an illustrator working with British landscapes and their stories, working primarily in ink through drawing and traditional printing processes.

Gothic Nature: Issue Four

New Directions in Ecohorror and the EcoGothic

Founding Editor
Elizabeth Parker

Editors in Chief
Elizabeth Parker & Harriet Stilley

Book Review Editors
Jimmy Packham & Harriet Stilley

TV and Film Review Editor
Ashley Kniss

Editorial Board:
Stacy Alaimo
Eric G. Anderson
Scott Brewster
Kevin Corstorphine
Rachele Dini
Simon C. Estok
Tom J. Hillard
William Hughes
Derek Johnston
Dawn Keetley
Ian Kinane
John Miller
Jennifer Schell
Matthew Wynn Sivils
Andrew Smith
Samantha Walton

About this Journal

Gothic Nature is a peer-reviewed and open-access academic journal seeking to explore the latest evolutions of thought in the areas of ecohorror and the ecoGothic. It welcomes articles, reviews, interviews, and original creative pieces interrogating the darker sides of our relationship with the more-than-human world. The journal includes research from new and more revered scholars alike, working at the intersections of ecocriticism, Gothic and horror studies, and the wider environmental humanities and sciences.

Online and Open Access

Gothic Nature is available online at https://gothicnaturejournal.com/, where you can easily access all articles, reviews, blogs, and other materials for free. We are proud to be a part of an international movement making research freely available to the public in the pursuit of a greater global exchange of knowledge. You can visit the *GN* website for more information about the journal, including contact details for the Editors and submission guidelines.

Gothic Nature

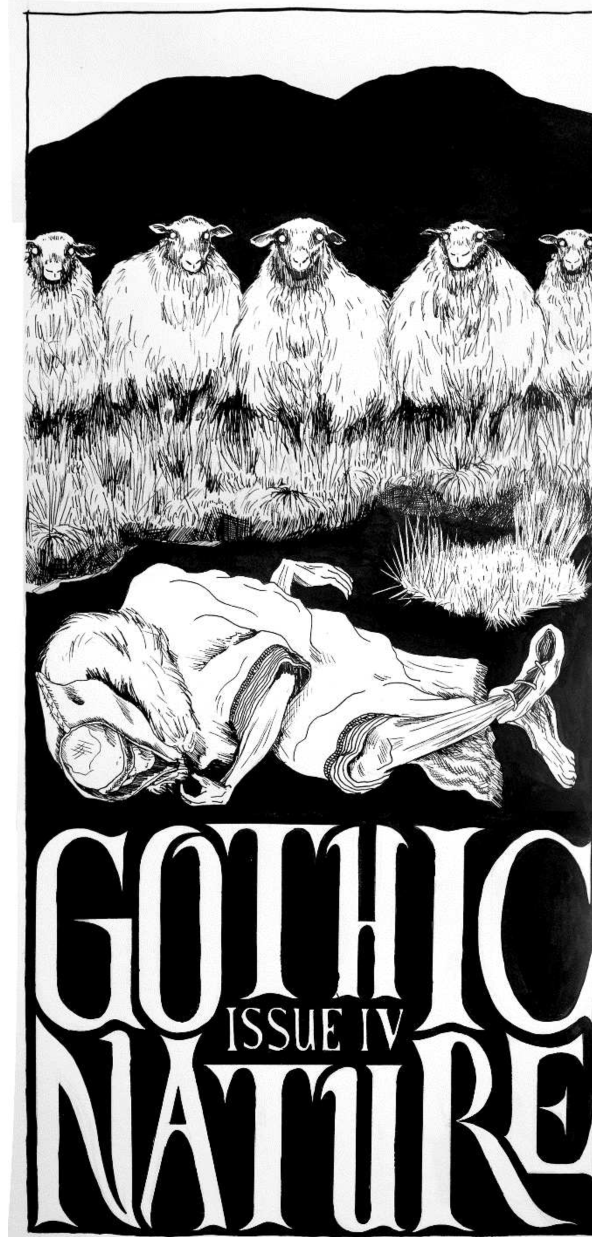
We are proud to be part of the open access movement, but ask that you credit the journal and its authors in full when using this material.

Gothic Nature Issue Four

How to Cite Individual Articles: Surname, Initial. (2023) Title of Essay. *Gothic Nature*. 4, page numbers. Available from: https://gothicnaturejournal.com/.
Published: Spring 2023

Peer Review:
All articles that appear in the *Gothic Nature* journal have been peer reviewed through a double-blind process.
Copyright:
© 2023 The Author(s). This is an open-access journal distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See: http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/.
Open Access:
Gothic Nature is a peer-reviewed open access journal.

Gothic Nature



Gothic Nature IV

How to Cite: Greenwood, C. (2023) Defrosting the Gothic: Arctic Poetry in a Melting Sublime. *Gothic Nature*. 4, pp. 63-90. Available from: https://gothicnaturejournal.com.

Published: May 2023

Peer Review:
All articles that appear in the *Gothic Nature* journal have been peer reviewed through a fully anonymised process.

Copyright:
© 2023 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See: http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/.

Open Access: *Gothic Nature* is a peer-reviewed open-access journal.

Cover credit:

Title: Watching and Waiting
Medium: sumi ink on paper
Artist: Lydia Rose

Founding Editor:

Elizabeth Parker

Editors in chief:

Elizabeth Parker & Harriet Stilley

Web Designer:

Michael Belcher

Defrosting the Gothic: Arctic Poetry in a Melting Sublime

Catherine Greenwood

ABSTRACT

This article traces Gothicised conceptions of the north as a sublime geographical space and argues that as the climate crisis effects material changes on the formerly frozen-solid Arctic, the *unheimlich* literary topography of the north must also change, from a site of obscure terror to one of exposed horror. I integrate into my paper Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's monster theory and Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopias, and I suggest adding a revised category to the lexicon of Arctic Sublime. I focus on analysis of poetry by British and Canadian poets whose work engages with the Arctic, including contemporary poetry I classify as ecoGothic within the context of global heating.

The green leaf looks back, and sees
a man walking out in this shuddering light
to the sound of air under the ice,
out onto the lake, among sun-cups,
snow penitents: a drowned man, waked
in this weathering ground.
(Robin Robertson, 'Signs on a White Field')

(Arctic) Sublime

The Arctic has traditionally been represented as a sublimely terrifying geographical space in Gothic literature, and the vast and impenetrable north is a thrillingly familiar destination—recall Victor Frankenstein hunting, and being haunted by, his monster, the duo travelling northward through the 'desolate and appalling landscape' of the Orkneys to 'the wilds of Tartary and Russia' (Shelley, 2008: p.164; p. 203). Taunted by invitations the creature carves into tree bark and inscribes on stones, Frankenstein traces its snowy footsteps into 'the eternal frosts': 'Follow me,' entices the monster, 'I seek the everlasting ices of the north, where you will feel the misery of cold and frost, to which I am impassive' (Shelley, p. 206; p. 204).

Creature and creator, pursued and pursuer, the pair are sighted sledging across the icepack by Captain Robert Walton, whose ship is 'surrounded by mountains of ice which admit of no escape and threaten to … crush [his] vessel' and whose crew is dropping from hypothermia (Shelley, p. 212). After Victor Frankenstein is brought onboard and himself succumbs, the monster appears at his creator's deathbed and advises an aghast Walton that he will travel on an 'ice raft' to the 'most northern extremity of the globe' to burn himself to ashes on a 'funeral pile'; the thing then disappears forever into the icy wastes (Shelley, pp. 222-3).

The narrative frame of Walton's failed expedition was added to Frankenstein's ur-text in part as Mary Shelley's response to a manifesto in the 1816 *Quarterly Review* promoting John Franklin's planned 1818 four-ship quest to discover the North Pole and Northwest Passage, with Shelley both capitalising upon and critiquing Britain's 'Arctic Fever' (Craciun, 2016: pp. 83-5). These voyages captured the imaginations of the British people, whose 'imagined Arctic was a place of terror' but also beautiful in a 'sublime way' (Loomis, 1977: p. 110). However, as Chauncy Loomis (1977) puts it, when Franklin—along with his prophetically named ships Terror and Erebus and their crews—failed to return from his 1845 expedition, the dream of conquest turned to nightmare when 'it became clear that the Arctic had swallowed him, obliterated him' (p. 107); after a six-year search, subsequent revelations about the grisly facts of the crews' deaths, including well-substantiated evidence of cannibalism, 'soured the romance' and 'subverted the image of the Arctic Sublime' (p.110).

This conceptual spoiling in the public imagination was presaged by Gothic literature's 'significant revision of the eighteenth-century sublime,' whose 'bold, but not prophetic' pictorial descriptions had 'confirm[ed] rather than challenge[d] the convictions of orthodox faith' (Morris, 1985: p. 300; p. 299). Vijay Mishra (1994) observes a similar turn in Walton's own descriptions of the Arctic cold, where awe turns to terror as his ship is engulfed by ice, and identifies this shift as the juncture in which 'Arctic' becomes yet another sublime to be added to a growing list (p. 214); Mishra argues that appending historical descriptors such as 'Romantic' or 'post-Kantian' to the word sublime fails to recognise that by its 'very nature … it cannot be contained' (p. 40). As David Morris (1985) has also acknowledged, the 'uncomfortable fact' is that there is no definitive 'essence of the sublime' (p. 300), nor is there space here to chart its historical development or attempt a fulsome definition. The term, originating from Longinus's Greek *hypsos*—typically translated as '"height," "elevation," and

“loftiness”’ (Doran, 2015: p. 23)—denotes both geographical and physical topoi as well as aesthetic or literary effects, and the emotions these produce in the viewer or reader.

Robert Doran (2015) credits English writer John Dennis with first identifying this ‘nexus between sublimity and terror’ in journal entries documenting Dennis’s 1688 trip through the Alps[17] (p. 124):

> ‘One Stumble, and both Life and Carcass had been at once destroy’d. The sense of all this produc’d different motions in me, viz. a delightful Horror, a terrible Joy, and at the same time, I was infinitely pleas’d, I trembled’ (Dennis cited in Doran, p. 125).

Doran observes that Edmund Burke’s 1757 *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* similarly promotes an aesthetic of tranquility intermingled with terror, and that Burke’s appropriation of the phrase ‘delightful horror’ is ‘obviously redolent’ of Dennis’ original formulation (p.149). In addition to Burke’s providing Gothic novelists with a ‘storehouse of approved and guaranteed terrors,’ Morris credits his *Philosophical Enquiry* with consolidating disparate accounts of the sublime into a system in which terror is the dominating principle (p. 300). In setting forth categories of sublimity such as Terror, Vastness and Obscurity, Burke proposes that

> ‘[t]o make anything very terrible, obscurity seems in general to be necessary. When we know the full extent of any danger, when we can accustom our eyes to it, a great deal of the apprehension vanishes’ (p. 44).

Barbara Freeman (1987) notes that Immanuel Kant’s own influential construct of the sublime, in his 1790 *Critique of Judgement*, is similarly ‘bound up in a system of encasements, injunctions, and imperatives’ that ‘function is to protect the sublime’ from its own ‘monstrous potential’ (p. 22): for instance, sublimity is ‘produced by *colossal* but not *monstrous* representations of nature’ (Kant, par. 26, p. 91, cited in Freeman, p. 22). Freeman convincingly reads Mary Shelley’s novel as staging the impossibility of Kant’s effort to compartmentalise ‘the positive aspect of the sublime from its negative,

[17] Doran usefully distinguishes the ‘sublime proper’ as experienced by Dennis from the conjectural ‘aesthetic sublime’ theorised by Burke and Kant (p. 269).

destructive side'; Freeman's interpretation is bolstered with the telling observation that '[e]ach time a sublime landscape is depicted it is linked to the Monster's appearance' (p. 23; p. 24).

Against Kant's insistence on a morally uplifting sublime, and against Burke's privileging of obscure terror, enter *Frankenstein*. As Mishra sees it, '[i]n writing about the Monster, Mary Shelley also writes herself out of the positive Romantic sublime' (p. 213). To clarify the preceding critical debate regarding the literary effects produced by terror versus the horrid—the former an aesthetic famously championed by Mrs. Radcliffe—perhaps Devendra P. Varma's (1957) blunt explanation puts it best:

> '[t]he difference between Terror and Horror is the difference between awful apprehension and sickening realization: between the smell of death and stumbling against a corpse' (p. 130).

Significantly, it is when Walton's vessel is imperiled by the negative sublime (in the form of immense, crushing structures of ice) that he encounters the monster, which has boarded his ship uninvited—a 'gigantic,' 'loathsome,' 'appalling,' 'distorted' form whose 'vast hand' exhibits a 'colour and apparent texture like that of a mummy' (Shelley, p. 218). Walton's stumbling upon this animated corpse is a moment of decidedly *un*delightful, *un*obscured horror. Mary Shelley's writing herself out of the 'positive Romantic sublime' serves as a harbinger for the argument to follow—that, as the climate crisis effects material changes on the formerly frozen-solid Arctic, the *unheimlich* literary topography of the north must also change, from a site of obscure terror to one of exposed horror.

North

The Arctic wilderness has always been a good place to hide out in, to get lost in, or to get eaten in—a place to disappear. The fascination with the search for a passage through the Arctic maze of Canada's northern archipelago was shared by Canadians, and the Franklin disaster is an enduring leitmotif in literary imagery of the north (Atwood, 1995: p.11). In her 1991 lecture series *Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature*, Margaret Atwood (1995)

examines a classic CanLit theme, a fascination with 'being lost in the frozen north—and going crazy there' (p. 3). She concludes *Strange Things* with some 'bad news':

> '[…] the North is not endless. It is not vast and strong, and capable of devouring and digesting all the human dirt thrown its way. The holes in the ozone layer are getting bigger very year; […] erosion, pollution, and ruthless exploitation are taking their toll.
>
> The edifice of Northern imagery […] was erected on a reality; if that reality ceases to exist, the imagery, too, will cease to have any resonance or meaning […]' (pp.115-116).

While Atwood's remarks could not have anticipated the extent of environmental change to be wrought by global heating, her concern about the ozone layer now seems prophetic. Regarding what she terms a 'sublime' (proper) and 'timeless poetics of the Arctic space,' Kirsten Hastrup (2013) echoes Atwood's warning, stating: 'It is the ice which holds together the environment, or—indeed—splits it up, and which provides the leitmotif of poetry, story and science;' the timelessness of these poetics will give way when 'environmental histories insert themselves' (p. 58; p. 64).

Frankenstein's frosts are no longer eternal or everlasting. In the plainly stated opinion of poet Jean McNeil (2011), the marine Arctic has 'passed its point of no return' with sea ice levels rapidly diminishing due to global heating (p. 62). In Siberia, overwintering 'zombie fires' with a propensity to 'come back from the dead' spontaneously combust on permafrost peatbogs (BBC Newsround, n.d.); sinkholes appear in the melting ground, with these portals to hell exposing Ice Age cadavers—the remains of long extinct creatures such as woolly mammoths, rhinos, cave lions and canids of the Pleistocene epoch. These exhumations have resulted in a black market in mammoth tusks, accompanied by environmental degradation of riverbank ice-ivory extraction sites.

Gold

The north is becoming a place from which monsters emerge, rather than retreat into, a vast and deep 'boneyard' of what Robert MacFarlane (2019) terms 'Anthropocene unburials':

‘These Anthropocene unburials, as I have come to think of them, are proliferating around the world. Forces, objects and substances thought safely confined to the underworld are declaring themselves above ground with powerful consequences. It is easy to aestheticise such events, curating them into a *Wunderkammer* of weirdness. But they are not curios—they are horror shows. Nor are they portents of what is to come—they are the uncanny signs of a crisis that is already here […]’ (para. 3).

One of these recent unburials is a perfectly preserved one-month old woolly mammoth calf found in the melting permafrost of a Klondike gold mine near Eureka Creek in Canada’s Yukon territory on the hereditary lands of the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in, uncovered in the summer of 2022 when a digger operator shifting muck hit the frozen body. The site and timing of this strike, considered North America’s most significant paleological find, was auspicious—a ‘little after noon on June 21, National Indigenous People's Day’—and extremely lucky: ‘a miracle of sorts preserved into the present, a scientific gold mine and simply a beautiful thing,’ in the words of one paleontologist interviewed by the CBC (Proulx, 2022: para.3; para.7).

Ice-mummy as oracle, the contents of her young tummy (undigested grasses) reveal the last moments of her life 40,000 years ago before she was fatally trapped in a bog, her accidental exhumation heralded by a powerful storm that blew in when geologists arrived to claim the body. As the paleontologist reported:

‘And the amazing thing is, within an hour of them being there to do the work, the sky opened up, it turned black, lightning started striking and rain started pouring in’ (Proulx, 2022: ‘She would have been lost in the storm,’ para. 3).

As though magical forces were at play, this scientist employed familiar Gothic imagery to conjure the drama of the momentous discovery and convey the sublime scale of northern weather.[18] Contemporaneous accounts in other newspapers and journals relate the storm’s force

[18] As Barbara Freeman observes, ‘[i]n Longinus, as well as Kant, the lightening flash is one of the most privileged examples of the sublime’ (p. 24).

with similarly heightened language, describing how the valuable find might easily have been washed away in the deluge to languish in mud for another eternity. The calf was given the tribal name *Nun cho ga*, or Big Baby,[19] and ceremonially blessed by Indigenous elders before being placed in her current tomb, cold storage.

David Jaclin (2018) describes how such fossilised 'gold' is an artifact of the placer mining process, with de-extinction scientists prospecting washed-out Arctic mine sites for 'nuggets of ancient DNA,' their Frankensteinian aim to resurrect a chimera of the extinct mammoth (p. 302-4). Like a modern form of grave-robbing,[20] the activities of these resurrectionists take place in Klondike gold fields, which 'since their discovery in 1897 […] have produced approximately 20 million ounces of gold' (Jaclin, 2018: p. 301). This location, near Dawson City and just 150 miles south of the Arctic Circle, is also the setting for one of 'the most famous poems in Canadian literature, Robert Service's 'The Cremation of Sam McGee' (1907) (Sugars, 2012: p. i).

Service's large corpus of 'Kiplingesque verse' both exploits and builds upon an extant body of 'mystic-North imagery': as Atwood (1995) puts it, Service's poems described 'the uncanny lure of the North and the awful things it could do to you' (p.17). Service's *oeuvre* of sourdough Gothic balladry arises from his own involvement in the Yukon gold rush, and, though Service was a Scottish immigrant, the American Sam McGee serves as an avatar of the poet's own motives and frigid miseries:

'Why he left his home in the South to roam 'round the Pole, God only knows.

---

[19] The calf's size and subsequent containment renders it sublime in the idealised (but ultimately unstable) Kantian formulation: 'Sublime states of mind must be produced by *colossal* but not *monstrous* representations of nature' (par. 26, p. 91, cited in Freeman, p. 22).

[20] Surgical training in eighteenthcentury Britain required medical students to dissect at least three cadavers and procuring a sufficient supply of recently deceased corpses for the anatomy schools resulted in what Tim Marshall (1995) calls the 'dead body business,' an unsavoury but necessary trade reliant upon body-snatching grave-robbers, or 'resurrectionists' (pp. 20-21). As Marshall reads it, the 'fictional doctor' in the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein*, himself 'dabbl[ing] among the unhallowed damps of the grave' in search of illicit materials, stands for all anatomy professors prior to the 1832 Anatomy Act, which legalised medical dissection of 'unclaimed bodies from the workhouse' and thus 'delivered a reliable supply of corpses to the slab' (p. 7; pp. 22-3). Shelley's novel was also informed by an 1803 experiment with 'galvanic electricity' in which live wires were applied to the body of a recently hanged criminal in an attempt at 'reanimating a corpse' (Marshall, p. 6)—hence my comparison to the equally audacious aims of de-extinction science, and resurrection via DNA extracted from unburied animal cadavers.

He was always cold, but the land of gold seemed to hold him like a spell;
Though he'd often say in his homely way that "he'd sooner live in hell"' (ll. 10-12).

Before Sam succumbs to the 'cursèd cold' he extracts a promise from the poem's unnamed narrator to cremate his remains, for he dreads the fate of being consigned to an 'icy grave.' Burdened with a grinning corpse, the narrator trudges behind the dog sled across the 'homeless snows' in search of combustibles. Finally, as if coming across detritus from the final overland trek of Franklin's men, he happens upon some firewood:

'Till I came to the marge of Lake Lebarge, and a derelict there lay;
It was jammed in the ice, but I saw in a trice it was called the "Alice May."
"Here," said I, with a sudden cry, "is my cre-ma-tor-eum"' (ll. 41-2).

This ruin abandoned in the *unheimlich* snows is haunted by the folly of previous wrecked expeditions and bears traces of Walton's ice-beset ship (and mimics Victor Frankenstein's deathbed request that Walton complete his failed mission to destroy his monstrous creation). Gleefully repurposing what Atwood calls the 'edifice of northern imagery' (p. 116), Service puts a match to the material of maritime Gothic, lighting a Frankensteinian 'funeral pile' to fuel his own narrative's fulcrum as it tilts from horror into parody. A canonic example of Canadian Northern Gothic, 'The Cremation of Sam McGee' also demonstrates what Cynthia Sugars (2012) describes as a 'yearning for settler emplacement and sustainable haunting,' in which the ghosts are 'manufactured' and the landscape itself bears witness to 'dreadful events […]: "The Arctic trails have their secret tales / that would make your blood run cold"' (p. 412).

The cartographic conjunction of Big Baby and Sam McGee in the Klondike gold fields—displacement and emplacement, the real and the written, bog and frost, the thawed and the cooked—is the trailhead to a passage through an Arctic maze: a consideration of how the poetic gold field of a sublime Arctic imaginary might become overmined, muddied, or liquified.

Arctic (Ice)

'What do we mean by "the North"?' asks Atwood, and answers:

> 'Until you get to the North Pole, "North" being a direction, is relative. "The North" is thought of as a place, but it's a place with shifting boundaries. It's also a state of mind' (p. 8).

And what do we mean by 'the Arctic'? According to WorldAtlas.com, the Arctic Circle encompasses everything north of an 'imaginary line' located at 66º, 30'N latitude, and much within this boundary is 'covered with ice.' From a vantage point above that line, Nancy Campbell's (2011) poem 'Ulerussivoq / The Debate' redirects the question: 'Where does the Arctic end? Asked how far south / the region reaches, scholars disagree' (p. 32). These experts variously argue that treeline, temperature, or permafrost marks the ambit, but the speaker questions the utility of such demarcations when the axis of the 'roving' Geographic pole is in constant gravitational flux, and 'drift ice obscures the Arctic's origin' (p. 32).

The imaginary Arctic is also subject to such slippage, but ice is a ubiquitous element in literary constructs of an Arctic Sublime. As a polar landscape, the Arctic is distinguished from the Antarctic by its geological composition; put simply, the South Pole is an immense ice-sheet on top of rock, forming a single huge continent, while the North Pole is ice-cap on top of ocean, surrounded by areas of open sea and varied land masses. In regarding the two polar regions as disparate literary settings, Katherine Bowers (2017) nevertheless identifies a fundamental aesthetic commonality between south and north:

> '[…] the key scholarly distinction made between the two is that Antarctic Gothic focuses on the antihuman as a source of fear, while Arctic Gothic dwells on the human. Yet [in polar Gothic] texts, ice creates a negative space, which gives rise to supernatural beings that reflect the self' (p. 72).

This 'negative sublime' is the uncharted Gothic water ventured into by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in 1798 with his poem 'The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere in Seven Parts.' As his Mariner proclaims, 'We were the first that ever burst / Into that silent Sea' (II. 100. 3-4). Devoid of anything but mast-high structures of floating ice—and that one unfortunate albatross (the

psychic reflection Bowers references)—the towering cryosphere is baldly narrated, as if the volume and scale of it when first encountered overwhelms the Mariner's powers of description: 'the ice was here, the ice was there, / the ice was all around' (I. 60. 1-2).

Fortunately, ice imagery was a portable commodity. Coleridge's 'Rime' was putatively set in a vaguely located southern polar sea, but his 'sources were descriptions of the Arctic rather than the Antarctic' (Lowes, 1927: p. 151, cited in Loomis, 1977: p. 98). Loomis (1977) situates the origins of an Arctic Sublime in imagery inherited from accounts of early explorations such as Martin Frobisher's 1557 Arctic expedition, and notes that Coleridge was influenced by Samuel Purchas's 1625 collection of northern travel stories featuring descriptions of marvelous sea ice formations—likened, for instance, to 'white Swannes' (p. 96). Loomis traces a transference of interest from Alpine to Arctic sublime in travel narratives as taking place in concert with the 'great period of Arctic exploration' that kicked off in the nineteenth-century; until 'Rime,' he argues, eighteenth-century writers relied on 'lifeless,' 'stock' and 'conventional' Arctic tropes that exhibited a 'rather strained sublimity' (pp. 97-8).

About to embark on his journey north, *Frankenstein's* Robert Walton writes his sister not to worry, for though he is 'going to unexplored regions' he 'shall kill no albatross' (Shelley, 2008: p. 21). Walton's overconfident allusion to the 'Ancient Mariner' is Mary Shelley's 'famous' response to Coleridge's 'negative sublime,' a deliberate foil referenced to amplify the 'Romantic hubris' of Walton (Bowers, 2017: p.13)—and, by extension, to obliquely comment on the entire enterprise of British polar exploration. The reference is also a nod from Shelley that she is sailing in Coleridge's wake, the first Gothic visionary of a 'land of frost and snow.' Her own sources of Arctic imagery came from Coleridge's poem, 'a library book about Siberia' and her lover Percy Shelley's own 'paeans to the Alps' (Spufford, 1996: p. 60).

In considering actual Arctic landscapes encountered first-hand, Hastrup (2013) emphasises the primacy of ice in an enduring Arctic poetics that evokes both beauty and terror to depict 'the timeless and sublime character of the ice-clad world' (p. 52):

> 'Emplacement within the Arctic topography is literally towered over by geographical structures of such magnitude that there can be no escaping from

> them, only a sensation of temporary emergence from topography [...]. Poets recognise this' (p. 56).

In a geopolitical sense, Arctic emplacement comprises the northern parts of Canada, Finland, Norway, Russia and Sweden that encroach within the Arctic circle, and the entireties of Alaska, Greenland and Iceland (Kelman, 2017: p. 1). Unlike Antarctica, which is host to only temporary residents, there are permanent settler and indigenous populations in the Arctic, and its human inhabitation predates British and Canadian exploration and extraction expeditions. Apposite sources of literary 'fear' similar (but not identical) to those identified by Bowers in regard to south and north polar Gothic ('antihuman' and 'human') are coeval in early Canadian Northern Gothic—Cynthia Sugars observes that one strand portrays the Arctic wilderness as 'inhabited by savage creatures (animal and human)'; the other expresses it as *terra nullius* 'devoid of ghosts,' hence, as Sugars has argued, the literary impetus for an emplacement of invented spectres (2012: p. 410).[21]

Footsteps (Ice)

Frankenstein's Robert Walton subscribes to the *terra nullius* or *tabula rasa* vision of the north, and assumes that the Arctic's 'icy climes'—a 'region of beauty and delight'—will be unpopulated; before setting sail from Russia, he voices his own desire for polar emplacement:

> 'I shall satiate any ardent curiosity with the sight of a part of the world never before visited, and may tread a land never before imprinted by the foot of man' (Shelley, 2008: p.16).

Such ardent curiosity fuelled the commodification of sublime imagery for a nineteenth-century reading public, who, like Walton, entertained a number of speculations about the polar north—as Loomis (1977) puts it, 'What was there? an open polar sea beyond a rim of ice? a continent supporting an unknown civilization? a huge hole with a maelstrom whirling into it?' (p. 100).

---

[21] As Adriana Craciun (2016) notes, in Britain similar ' [...] contradictions and ideologically corrupt visions of an empty and uninhabited Victorian Arctic are [...] well established' (p. 9).

It was a bay of berg-laden water and looming cliffs christened without irony *Meta Incognito.* A blank white slate where one could scratch 'I was here.' And it was a Gothic heterotopia—a 'simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space' (Foucault, 1967: p. 24)—somewhere up above the imaginary line. A fascination with the uncanny North and the stuff it is composed of informed the early nineteenth-century zeitgeist, as Catherine Lanone (2010) explains:

> '[…] at a time when England was heading for the soot and smoke of the Industrial Revolution, transparent, pristine ice became a source of fascination, an obsession prompted both by science and aesthetics. From crystals to glaciers to the blank maps of the poles, the mystery of metamorphic ice beckoned, a transparent oxymoron, neither liquid nor solid, an enticing alchemy casting its spell, the enigma of purity and creation' (p. 202).

The enigma of ice remains, even as its mysteries are now being decoded as data—polar ice is oracular, as Jean McNeil (2011) puts it, and a preserver of 'the atmospheric past through the chemical residues it traps' (p. 4).

McNeil shares in Walton's ardent curiosity, acknowledging that polar travelers enact 'a pre-scripted story, of exploration and quest. In part it's an old instinct to venture over the edge of the known world' (p. 5). In recent years, Arctic and Antarctic fellowships and residencies have enabled writers and artists to travel to these polar icescapes and experience emplacement amid the metaphoric icescapes[22]; McNeil's 2011 book *Night Orders: Poems from Antarctica and the Arctic* is a result of such opportunities. *Night Orders* documents her maritime experience of the polar regions, with a 2006 shipboard voyage to Antarctica and an Arctic sailing to the west coast of Greenland in 2009, and is not, as she alerts us, a 'conventional poetry collection,' but a chronological account rendered in sketches, diary entries and poem sequences, with paratexts taken from ship-log and marine lingo (pp. 2-7).

In the Antarctic McNeil discovers a 1950's *Glossary of Ice Terms* in the base camp library, and like Coleridge's sources of imagery for his South Pole sublime, it is a largely

[22] A.B. Jackson notes a correlation between such creative residencies and the renewed 'surge of interest in polar history within the mass-market publishing industry' that commenced in the late 20th century (2015, pp. 6-7).

comprised of loan-words from Arctic languages, nouns such as the Greenlandic *nunatuk* or the Russian *stambuka* or *sastrugi* to describe particular ice structures (p. 4-6). McNeil's collection includes a series of prose poems inspired by this linguistic ice-ography, data collected from both up-close observation and scientific vocabulary affirming her thesis that 'the discovery of a new crop of words can provoke and inform a completely new artistic work' (p. 5).

From a section interspersed with found texts from a volume of British Admiralty sailing directions, this prose poem excerpt identifies a poetic and human impulse to rely on figurative language to capture such phenomena:

> 'There is no way out of the fjord; its mouth is blocked by a tongue of ice. The ice lean and monumental the mind can only understand it through comparison: cathedrals, tors, airliners. Mid-August and the sun only black whalehunter hours in the town warming to its own demise. The sea ice is gone' (p. 74, 'Isfjord').

The town 'warming to its own demise' is both seaport and the floating sun-whittled city of ice, structures both real and verbal melting as the metaphor ice must also warm to its own demise. Ice is 'technically […] immortal'; enjoying a sort of afterlife as it is 'transformed, through melt, into water, into vapour' (p. 4). Francis Spufford (2004) identifies a similar metamorphic property in ice composed of imagery:

> 'People have seen cities in ice for centuries. The curious thing is that the style of the architecture changes faithfully with changing tastes. Towers and spires were perennial, while seventeenth-century sailors in the Arctic started glimpsing Baroque fretwork, and Victorians added in Egyptian obelisks and Stone Age dolmens. Captain Scott's men saw a complete model of St Paul's Cathedral float by in the Antarctic—just like a 'visit London' poster on the Edwardian tube' (p. 281).

Robin Robertson's (2010) poem 'Signs on a White Field' is a virtuoso catalogue of visual and sonic ice-imagery deploying such similes updated for the 21st century. On first reading this free verse lyric seems more post-romantic perambulation than Arctic ecoGothic, as the speaker circumnavigates a frozen lake in an unspecified Arctic icescape, a flaneur of the

frosts, exercising his onomatopoeic muscle as if tracking Stephen Dedalus' stride in *Ulysses* (from which Robertson's poem almost certainly takes its title).[23] Here, he likens huge blocks of ice heaved up by the liquid entity below to 'luggage on a carousel'—suggesting a terminus, perhaps, a point of arrival at his own personal epiphany, or a transition point (2010: p. 4).

The poem opens on an image of solar heat—'the burnt horizon'—and the sun's climacteric is the force triggering contraction in the lake's 'hidden tons of water,' its 'groans and rumbles / like someone shifting heavy tables far below' (p. 4). The ensuing auditory imagery gives the poem its tension and drama, and an unnerving subterranean subtext, that the furniture of our earthly abode is moving beneath us. The speaker 'hears the lake all night as a distant war,' and its 'boom' and 'detonating crack' recalls the 'fearful' sea ice in Coleridge's *Rime,* which was not 'silent' in perpetuity but 'cracke'd and growl'd, and roar'd and howl'd— / like noises of a swound' (I. 60. 3-4). In the morning Robertson's speaker walks onto the ice 'among sun-cups, / snow penitents,' to clear a 'porthole in the crust' and gaze down (p. 5): he is not alone in this wilderness, for a presence observes him from below a pane of ice—*sila,* as Kirsten Hastrup might call it, or the vengeful 'Polar Spirit' Katherine Bowers identifies in Coleridge's 'Rime' (p.73), perhaps; or simply his own psyche reflected, narcissus-like, another sort of penitent.

Robertson uses terminology with ready-made figurative resonance: snow penitents are peaked formations created by melt, clusters of stalagmites that resemble white-hooded Spanish monks.[24] The effect of weather on snow is described by Nancy Campbell, a contemporary poet and non-fiction writer who spent time in Arctic residencies. During her own seven-year sojourn in the north, she learns that Antarctic explorers' footsteps had a lingering effect:

> 'the snow that they stepped on, compressed by the weight of the body, would remain fixed in place as the lighter, unmarked snow around them blew away. These pillars of ice were visible from far away long after the explorer had passed on' (2018: p. 153).

[23] For a sidebar discussion of onomatopoeia and intertextuality in *Ulysses*, see Murray McArthur's article, '"Signs on a White Field": Semiotics and Forgery in the "Proteus" Chapter of Ulysses,' *ELH*, 53(3), pp. 633-652.

[24] National Geographic (2013) offers this evocative description: '*Nieve penitente*, or penitent snow, are collections of spires that resemble robed monks—or penitents. They are flattened columns of snow wider at the base than at the tip and can range in height from 3 to 20 feet (1 to 6 meters).'

Here, Samuel Taylor Coleridge's footsteps stand proud of Robertson's poem, a scaffolding at first concealed under 'White Field's' fresh fall of updated imagery. The penance-driven trajectory of the Mariner's narrative—'the man hath penance done / and penance more will do' (V. 413-4) —charts a path for Robertson's speaker; the Mariner like someone 'seven days drown'd' (VII. 586) receives a spiritual resuscitation, while Robertson's 'drowned man' is 'waked,' or woken to an unstated revelation (p. 5). Following Coleridge's use of auditory and visual imagery to conjure—as 'Rime' did—what Bowers calls 'the alien quality of polar space' (p. 74), Robertson amplifies sound effects and stacks on the ice slabs to create the overwhelming sensory experience of an uncanny landscape, and there are subtle markers of allusion along the way: in 'Rime' the Ocean's 'great bright eye most silently / Up to to the moon is cast' (VI. 422) and in 'White Field' the lake's 'living green' regards the speaker (p. 5); where the Mariner hears the 'sweet jargoning' of 'all little birds' (V. 350-1), Robertson's speaker listens to a 'racket of jackdaws, the serrated call / of a falcon' (p. 4).

And should we doubt we are on a ship, albeit an allegorical one, 'White Field' features 'a deck' and that 'porthole' in the snow crust—along with a jump scare in 'the detonating crack' of 'a dropped plank' (p. 4-5).

Cairns

The changeable nature of Arctic Sea posed immense challenges for explorers trying to chart or follow unfixable cartographies due to the mutable nature of the ice itself; as Catherine Lanone (2010) notes, 'a passage which is open will be closed the next moment, it cannot be charted or explored like land' (p. 208). The Arctic maze as a sublime Gothic space exhibits a characteristic common to all heterotopias, 'a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them permeable' (Foucault, 1967: p. 26). Foucault offers examples related to social, religious, or civic spaces, but the principle may be extended to the geography of the high Arctic, especially regarding the heterotopic element of 'curious exclusions'; consider how the icescape, long inhabited by indigenous people, so persistently resisted the British Admiralty's quest to find a Northwest Passage connecting the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. In 1818 (the year of *Frankenstein's* first publication) the Scottish officer John Ross commanded the first of the Admiralty's explorations to locate this then-mythical route, somewhere in the archipelago

above North America's northern coastline. Sailing into Lancaster Sound, Ross approached what would eventually prove to be the eastern gate to the Passage; however, he was '[…] deceived by refraction, [thinking] he saw a mountain range closing the horizon,' and sailed back to England (Lanone, 2010: p. 203).

Was this a *Fata Morgana* conjured by *sila* to keep Ross out, an act of sorcery by sea and ice? This superior mirage lives on in the name Ross assigned it on his maps, the Croker Mountain Range. Hastrup (2013) writes that Ross was similarly rebuffed when attempting ingress to Davis Strait, but in this instance 'it was simply packed ice that blocked his passage; it argued against his progress, which was then dropped' (p. 53).

John Ross eventually returned to the Arctic, and after he successfully reached the Magnetic Pole in 1831, the ice again conspired against him—this time denying him exit—and his ship was hopelessly frozen stuck. The ensuing desperate search for rescue may have inspired the handwritten poem Ross buried under a cairn on Leopold Island in the winter of 1832 (Behrisch, 2003: p. 73). Cairns in the Scottish Highlands served as 'grave markers, wayfinding marks, or both'—and in the Arctic the British expeditions used them as such, but also as 'nodes in a postal system' (Craciun, 2016: p. 73-5). Ross's poem was never discovered, but fortunately he mailed a copy to Sir John Barrow twenty years later, and 'Far as the eye can reach' is now preserved in the British Library. Ross's reason for secretly burying the poem is 'not surprising,' Erica Behrisch (2003) suggests, '[g]iven the clear discursive break' with the 'straightforward and objective rhetoric' of his 'official' expedition papers (p. 84). The Admiralty expected 'neutrality' in the scientific record and 'the explorer existed only as a data recorder':

> 'In order to record, they had to survive. Perhaps because this personal engagement with the Arctic landscape had no place in Admiralty reports, it became a central theme of the poetry written by nineteenth-century Arctic explorers. Scientific exploration and artistic production combined on expeditions to show two sides of Arctic adventure: the objective and the subjective, the official and the personal' (pp.76-7).

Behrisch's astute reading of Ross's poem demonstrates how it resists the authoritative 'language of science' by using 'intentionally vague' description and acknowledging the poet's 'inability to understand the inner workings of the Arctic world' (p. 82).

Instead, 'Far as the eye can reach' records a negative sublime and the emotions of desolation, sorrow, and exhaustion it inspires in a crew confronted with 'one vast Icy Solitude profound' (l. 2). The immense landscape—'desolate and bare' of vegetation and unrelieved by any 'soothing vapours' (11. 4-6)—and the bleakness it inspires is compressed, like a tightly packed snowball, into a single compact stanza; the 10-line poem is composed of five rhymed couplets, a variation on the *dizain*, a French stanza form sometimes adopted by John Keats.[25] These controlled and decorous couplets function as anti-ode, or anti-pastoral. The first six lines are an impressionistic rendering of the utter solitude and profound silence surrounding the men, in which the voice—no speaking 'I' to set it apart—both observes and experiences this frigid stasis with them. There is a volta or sonnet-like turn in the last four lines, a despairing apostrophic exclamation that reaches to comprehend or explain how 'these Regions' 'had all at once stood still' (ll. 7-10).

Here, the white field is icepack, and the men are beset by 'a field of lifeless sorrow' underpinned by a frozen sea; the 'proud waves' are a symbol of the same fatal romantic hubris that Mary Shelley critiqued, as the ocean's own agency is forcefully stilled by a supernatural power and the wind's 'fatal blow' (ll. 7-10). That the crew must seek rest on this morgue-like, inhospitable surface hints at the horrors of polar subsistence—as glossed by Behrisch:

> 'Their placement on "the snowclad ground" keeps the crew physically separated from the natural world—they lie atop it, separated from the earth by a layer of snow—but the "silent stillness" of their collective sleep makes their .relationship to the landscape much more ambiguous' (p. 81).

The Arctic-as-mortuary implication is rendered more poignant with a biographical critique of the poem: some crew members died on this expedition, and Ross and his men were blocked in the Barrow Strait 'by an unbroken field of ice' and 'waited four weeks for the ice to melt' before

[25] For more on this particular form, see Robert Lee Brewer's (2016) article 'Dizain: Poetic Forms.' Available from https://www.writersdigest.com/write-better-poetry/dizain-poetic-form [Accessed November 7, 2022]

turning around in defeat (Wikipedia, 2022). Although Ross interacted with Inuit people, in 'Far as the eye can reach' the depicted resistance of the landscape to human and other life forms works to reinforce the notion that the Arctic is an empty, uninhabited zone.

Nancy Campell's 2014 poem 'Kinguleruttui / The Survivors' evokes the same impermeable Arctic surface, voiced from the point of view of early Greenlandic settlers. Like Ross, Campbell uses form, but here it is pantoum-as-reportage, a refrain of horrors on repeat as the chorus unsparingly supplies the reader with grisly testimony of what it was to live (and die) in the Arctic:

> 'there was no earth to hold them. Where could we hide the dead
> when our sons were buried alive on the barren rock?
> They were left to die, smothered in stones to keep them still;
> the winter was their warder. Snow blew over the bones […]' (p. 11).

The alliterative verse approximates an apt poetic inheritance for these migrants, 10th century Icelanders, and Campbell's poem is saturated in the gore and ruthlessness of wars between kin often recounted in saga and edda. In five stanzas, 'The Survivors' is the capsule narrative of ill-fated venture, a good luck tale that ends in madness and horror. The settlers scarcely believe their fortune at finding a 'safe' island to settle on, but things soon turn: 'driven by the darkness / men kill their kin' and there's 'no earth to hold' the rotting corpses, requiring burial under 'rocks to hinder beasts'; nor is there 'earth to cultivate' and the firstborn baby is 'buried alive on the highest rock,' a sacrificial infanticide whose cries haunt the community in the sound made by the wind (p. 11). The repetition of auditory and kinetic imagery carried forward as phrases in the pantoum is an effective use of form, each stanza haunted by its predecessor. Winter functions as a 'warder' or jailor to the bones of the dead and to the people 'crying to be free': 'The ice on those cairns was as good as a key in a lock' (p.11).

Again, that inhospitable earth. In Ross, the explorers have 'entered' the Arctic Archipelago but are excluded from its innermost regions, and the ice is a barrier beneath and around them. In Campbell, the settlers 'land' on the frozen rocky ground of Greenland, but it rejects both their attempts to cultivate it and the bodies of their dead. In these two poems, the impermeability of the Arctic land and sea surfaces reifies the illusory nature of heterotopic sites that enforce exclusions, in which 'we think we enter where we are, by the very fact that we

enter, excluded' (Foucault, 1967: p. 26). In the 'real' and reimagined historical past, emplacement was a chilly business.

(Im)Permafrost

Let us circle back to Robin Robertson's poem, its final lines an epigraph piled like a cairn at the head of this essay. If ice in 'The Survivors' is a warder's key, frozen in a rocky lock, in 'Signs on a White Field' heat is the portal to the Arctic icescape—'The sun's hinge on the burnt horizon / has woken the sealed lake' (p. 4). A seal has been broken on an icy subterranean imprisonment, and some *thing* released in sonic form:

> 'a huge release of sound, a boom
> that rolls under the ice for miles,
> some fluked leviathan let loose
> from centuries of sleep' (p. 5).

The poem opens with this waking, and closes (open-endedly) with another, as the 'drowned' speaker is 'waked' in the 'weathering ground' (p. 5). To be waked is to be awoken, revivified—*woke*—but to be waked is also to be 'mourned.' There's no random act of albatross cruelty to flag 'White Field' as ecoGothic in intent, but in its contemporary context, a world of rising sea levels and mega-floods, the meaning of the speaker's drowned state opens a door to such interpretation. Weathering ground is a symbolic field here, and 'weathering' is also a scientific term referring to breakdown in the mineral composition of soil and rock.[26] A passive or static process for the earth, but 'weathering' also implies something agentic, that the drowned man is being weathered by the world.

Canadian poet Larissa Andrusyshyn's 2010 poetry collection *Mammoth* features another species of leviathan, released from the unsealed ground of Siberia's melting permafrost. The unearthing of the titular 'Mammoth' predates the recent discovery of the Yukon's Big Baby, and the unnamed ice-mummy in Andrusyshyn's book is based on an ice-

[26] Zolkos, Tank, & Kokelj (2018) argue that the 'thaw-driven ground collapse (thermokarst)' of Arctic permafrost is hastening carbon-related weathering processes and consequently producing 'significant, previously undocumented CO_2' (n.p.).

age cadaver pulled from an ancient Siberian peat bog. Along with the release of 'carbon dioxide' and 'anthrax' and other disturbing unburials, this mammoth relic represents just a small portion of what Heather Altfeld (2019) terms 'the sheer volume of animalia surfacing as the permafrost melts' (p. 229). In Part I of Andrusyshyn's poem 'Extinctions,' the mammoth is found 'frozen solid in Siberian permafrost' by a 'nine-year old nomadic reindeer herder / named Jarkov':

> 'After twenty thousand years
> of stasis, from one ice-age
> to another, they heave it out like a chunk of sidewalk.
> The mammoth is airlifted
> by helicopter, the block with tusks
> dangles below like a locket' (p. 10).

The workman-like concrete imagery of the carcass being extracted from the Arctic permafrost like a 'chunk of sidewalk' is reminiscent of the poetic impulse to see human-built structures in ice identified by Francis Spufford. Here, the image-field is mud, once frozen ground dismantled by man and melt both. That chunk of concrete is also Atwood's edifice of icy northern imagery being taken apart, like a movie set on a sound stage. The simile comparing the transported mammoth body to a locket is an apt, evocative visual—one can imagine the chains suspending a lump of jewellery mid-air—yet is subtly suggestive of *memento mori*, and how lockets function as repositories for photos of dead relatives (a sepia-toned image of the ancestral Arctic, perhaps, or a hint of the personal loss threaded through the poem sequence).

Elsewhere, a detached tone and clinical diction sparing of figurative adornment is suited to the speculative conceit running through the collection, that the mammoth is both genome-yielding specimen and reanimating scientist. As Kerry Clare (2010) observes, this 'is poetry unleashing the magic implicit in algebra, taxonomy, molecular biology, zoology' (n.p.). An unacknowledged figure shadows what Andrew DuBois (2012) terms 'autopsy logic' (p. 617), as if Frankenstein has been taken out of the deep-freeze and thawed and is now working with constituent biological elements of 'adenine, guanine, cytosine, thymine' rather than an assemblage of stitched-together grave meats. The mammoth's task is to clone the endling Ivan Andrusyshyn, the poet's late father, and 'the only known specimen' of his kind, whose ghostly

image haunts the poems ('The Mammoth Sequences the Ivan Andrusyshyn Gene,' p. 59).[27] 'We are very close' [to achieving this resurrection], states the Mammoth, the subtext of relationship overlaid on its promised feat—the contiguity of poet and mammoth, scientist and creature, death and resurrection (p. 59).

This conflation evokes Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's (1996) thesis, that 'the monster is the harbinger of category crisis' and a 'rebuke to boundary and enclosure' (pp. 6-7):

> 'the *monstrum* is etymologically "that which reveals," "that which warns," a glyph that seeks a hierophant. Like a letter on the page, the monster signifies something other than itself: it is always a displacement, always inhabits the gap between the time of upheaval that created it and the moment into which it is received, to be born again' (p. 4).

Robertson's figurative 'leviathan' and Andrushyshyn's sci-fi 'mammoth' signify by rupturing the icy façade of the Arctic sublime; they are what Robert MacFarlane (2019) would call 'unruly, obscene surfacings' that confound the boundaries demarcating an underland (para. 7).

Andrusyshyn's technique is genre-blurring and *Mammoth* might be labelled sci-fi or slipstream were it prose fiction. Permafrost does something similar, embodying a sort of geological category crisis: 'that peculiar combination of water pretending to be land within the land itself' (Wiebe, 2003: p.106, cited in Lanone, 2010: p. 208). True Siberian permafrost is 'perenially cryotic ground' that has been 'frozen for at least two years'—a 'mortal substratum of ice' (Altfeld, 2019: pp. 218-9). Now these mortal and weathering 'mud-glaciers'—to borrow Andrusyshyn's term—are spawning ice-age corpses as often as melting bergs calve ice, both with accelerating frequency. The Siberian permafrost, suggests Altfeld, is 'one of the last frontiers': 'a silo of sorts, a granary of diamonds and ore and oil and bone' (218-9). The Yukon's mudscape similarly 'encases sought-after ore and fossils,' Jaclin (2018) writes:

[27] In 'Leaving Ukraine, 1929' we learn that Ivan's mother immigrated to Canada to escape famine in Ukraine (p. 60).

> ‘More than just a commodity-extraction medium, mud encapsulates dreams: dreams of gold, dreams of knowledge contained within tons of decaying organic material, and dreams for bones full of potency that avantgarde microbiology labs can use to resurrect animal lives and pierce a little further into the secrets of life.’ (p. 305).

An icy Arctic sublime is no longer a language suited to these final frontiers of exploration and extraction. To reprise Hastrup’s observation, it is the ice that holds together a timeless leitmotif of Arctic poetry. ‘What do we stand to lose, in a world without ice?’ asks McNeil (2011): ‘For one, there is a lexicon at stake’ (p. 5). A sublime lexicon is a fluid one, subject to revision, and to follow the Romantic engagement with a sublimity capturing elevated ‘transactions between nature and the human soul,’ Francis Spufford (1996) lists (with a raised eyebrow) an ensuing ‘wealth of different sublimes’:

> ‘[a natural], a negative, a positive, a mathematical, an ethical, a psychological, a religious, a rhetorical, an aesthetic, and a dynamic sublime’ […] all of which agreed […] in putting forward for consideration something distinctly pleasurable, but definitely un-beautiful’ (pp. 18-19).

Spufford spots an ‘unbeautiful’ element in Edmund Burke’s nascent thinking around his theory of the Sublime. In 1746 Dublin, the river Liffey ‘was in spate, loaded with the mud of the counties upstream,’ and this brown flood provoked in young Burke the germinal idea; as he wrote to his friend Shackleton, ‘It gives me pleasure to see nature in these great though terrible scenes’ (Spufford, 1996: pp. 16-17).

Steve Mentz (2013), in proposing a ‘Brown’ ecology that ventures into muddier places than the green or blue humanities might, suggests that with its blending of ‘liquid and solid,’ ‘[t]hinking brown pushes us into hybrid spaces that span living and nonliving matter, aesthetic values and biological drives’ (pp. 193-4). His attendant reading of John Bunyan’s ‘Slough of Despond,’ a literary ur-swamp, cites a character’s explication of the allegorical mudscape: ‘This Miry slow, is such a place as cannot be mended’ (p. 200). Nor can the Siberian permafrost’s ‘magical substratum’—which ‘in places is up to seven hundred to eight hundred

meters thick; […] undisturbed, for millions of years'—nor can this ground be mended: '[o]nce melted,' warns Altfeld (2019), 'this ice cannot be recreated. Ever' (p. 233).

In the terrible scenes to come, the Arctic sublime's silent snows, vast solitudes, and argots of ice will give way to a glossary of mud and flood, a semiotics of sludge. A brown and muddy Gothic sub/slime.

BIOGRAPHY

Scottish-Canadian poet **Catherine Greenwood** is a PhD candidate in Creative Writing Poetry/Gothic Studies at the University of Sheffield, where she is working on a thesis titled *Gothicising a Poetics of Displacement: Immigrants/Effects*. In Canada, Catherine's poetry has received recognitions such as a National Magazine Gold Award and a *Kiriyama Prize* Notable Book Citation, and her work has also been published in the UK and USA. An ecoGothic poem called the 'The Grolar Bear's Ballad' was a finalist for the CBC Literary Prize and appears in the anthology *Poetics for the More-than-Human World*. Her practice-based PhD research includes poetry inspired by permafrost unburials and one of these pieces, 'Lenskaya Horse,'was selected for inclusion in the *Gingko Prize Ecopoetry Anthology*. Other poems from a manuscript-in-progress titled *Siberian Spring* appear in *Route 57*, *Reliquiae,* and *Canadian Literature's* special issue on *Poetics and Extraction.*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Atwood, M. (1995) *Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian literature*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Altfeld, H. (2019) The Magical Substratum. *Conjunctions*, *Earth Elegies.* Fall/November 2019, No. 73, pp. 217-238. Available from: https://www.jstor.org/stable/26842551 [Accessed 28 th March 2023].

Andrusyshyn, L. (2010) *Mammoth*. Montreal, DC Books.

BBC Newsround. (n.d.) What are ‘Zombie Fires’ and Why is the Arctic Circle on Fire? *www.bbc.co.uk*. [online] Available from: https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/57173570 [Accessed 7th November 2022].

Behrisch, E. (2003) ‘Far as the Eye Can Reach’: Scientific Exploration and Explorers’ Poetry in the Arctic, 1832-1852. *Victorian Poetry*. 41 (1), West Virginia University Press, pp. 73-92.

Bowers, K. (2017) Haunted Ice, Fearful Sounds, and the Arctic Sublime: Exploring Nineteenth-Century Polar Gothic Space. *Gothic Studies*, 19 (2), pp. 71-84. Available from: http://dx.doi.org/10.7227/GS.0030.[Accessed 27th April 2023]

Brewer, R. L. (2016) *Dizain: Poetic Forms.* [online] Writer’s Digest. Available from: https://www.writersdigest.com/write-better-poetry/dizain-poetic-form [Accessed 7th November 2022].

Burke, E. (1757) *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. London: Available from: https://www.proquest.com/books/philosophical-enquiry-into-origin-our ideas/docview/2138584947/se-2 [Accessed 27th April 2023].

Campbell, N. (2018) *The Library of Ice: Readings from a Cold Climate*. London, Scribner.

__________ (2015) *Disko Bay*. London, Enitharmon Press.

Clare, K. (2010) Mammoth review. Picklemethis.com [online]. Available from: https://picklemethis.com/2010/10/01/two-best-books-ive-read-this-year-mammoth-and-light-lifting/[Accessed 23rd March 2023].Cohen, J. J. (1996) Monster Culture (Seven Theses). In: Cohen, J., (ed.) *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, University of Minnesota Press, pp. 3-25.

Coleridge, S. T. ([1798] 2011) The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere in Seven Parts. In: Franklin, C., (ed.) *The Longman Anthology of Gothic Verse*. Milton, Routledge.

Craciun, A. (2016) *Writing Arctic Disaster: Authorship and Exploration*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Doran, R. (2015) *The Theory of the Sublime from Longinus to Kant*, Cambridge University Press.

DuBois, A. (2012) Poetry. *University of Toronto Quarterly*. 81 (3), pp. 544-622. Available from: https://doi.org/10.3138/UTQ.81.3.544[Accessed 27th April 2023].

Foucault, M, and trans. Miskowiec, J. (1967/1986) Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias. *Diacritics.* 16 (1), pp. 22-27. Available from: https://doi.org/10.2307/464648 [Accessed 27th April 2023].

Freeman, B. (1987) '"Frankenstein" with Kant: A Theory of Monstrosity, or the Monstrosity of Theory.' *SubStance*. 16 (1), pp. 21-31. Available from:https://doi.org/10.2307/3685382 [Accessed 27th April 2023].

Hastrup, K. (2013) The Ice as Argument: Topographical Mementos in the High Arctic. *Cambridge Anthropology.* 31 (1), pp. 51-67. Available from: http://www.jstor.org/stable/43610859 [Accessed 27th April 2023].

Jaclin, D. (2018) Becoming Mammoth: The Domestic Animal, Its Synthetic Dreams, and the Pursuit of Multispecies F(r)ictions. In B. Boehrer, M. Hand, & B. Massumi (eds.) *Animals, Animality, and Literature* (Cambridge Critical Concepts), pp. 301-318). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jackson, A.B. (2015) *The Polar Sublime in Contemporary Poetry of Arctic and Antarctic Exploration*. PhD thesis. Sheffield Hallam University.

Kelman, I. (2017) *Arcticness: Power and Voice from the North*. London, UCL Press.

Lanone, C. (2010) The Mystery of ‘those icy climes’ (Shelley 269): Literature, Science and Early Nineteenth-century Polar Exploration. *Cahiers victoriens & édouardiens*, (71), pp. 201-210. Available from: https://doi.org/10.4000/cve.2855 [Accessed 27th April 2023].

Loomis, C. C. (1977) The Arctic Sublime. In U. C. Knoepflmacher, and Tennyson, G. B. (eds.) *Nature and the Victorian imagination.* London, University of California Press.

McArthur, M. (1986) ‘Signs on a White Field’: Semiotics and Forgery in the ‘Proteus’ Chapter of Ulysses.,’ *ELH*. 53 (3), pp. 633-652. Available from: https://doi.org/10.2307/2873043[Accessed 27th April 2023].

MacFarlane, R. (2019) What Lies Beneath: Robert MacFarlane Travels Underland. *The Guardian* [online], 20/04/2019. Available from: https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/apr/20/what-lies-beneath-robert-macfarlane [Accessed 9th October 2020].

McNeil, J. (2011) *Night Orders: Poems from Antarctica and The Arctic*. Sheffield, Smith/Doorstop Books.

Marshall, T. (1995) *Murdering to Dissect: Grave-Robbing, Frankenstein and the Anatomy Literature*. Manchester, New York, Manchester University Press, Distributed in USA and Canada by St. Martin's Press.

Mentz, S. (2013) Brown. In Cohen, J. J. and Buell, L. *Prismatic Ecology: Ecotheory Beyond Green.* Minneapolis, Minnesota, University of Minnesota Press.

Mishra, V. (1994) *The Gothic Sublime.* New York, State University of New York Press.

Morris, D. B. (1985). Gothic Sublimity. *New Literary History*. 16 (2), pp. 299-319. Available from: https://doi.org/10.2307/468749 [Accessed March 28 th 2023].

National Geographic. (25/06/2013) Pictures: The Story Behind Sun Dogs, Penitent Ice, and

More. Available from: https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/130125-mysterious-ice-frost-flowers-physics-science [Accessed 6th November 2022].

Proulx, M., CBC News. (24/06/2022) 'She's Perfect and She's Beautiful': Frozen Baby Woolly Mammoth Discovered in Yukon Gold Fields. Available from: https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/frozen-whole-baby-woolly-mammoth-yukon-gold-fields-1.6501128 [Accessed 1st August 2022].

Robertson, R. (2010) *The Wrecking Light*. London, Picador.

Ross, J. (1832/1852) Far as the Eye Can Reach (Barrow Bequest, British Library Add 35306). In: Behrisch, E. (2003) 'Far as the Eye Can Reach': Scientific Exploration and Explorers' Poetry in the Arctic, 1832-1852. *Victorian Poetry*. 41 (1), West Virginia University Press, 2003, p. 91.

Service, R. W. (1907) The Cremation of Sam McGee. Available from: https://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/content/cremation-sam-mcgee [Accessed 1st August 2022].

Shelley, M. W. and Joseph, M. K. (2008) *Frankenstein: or, The modern Prometheus*. Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press.

Sugars, C. (2014) Introduction: Settled Unsettlement; or, Familiarizing the Uncanny. In: Sugars, C., ed. *Canadian Gothic: Literature, History, and the Spectre of Self-Invention*. Cardiff, University of Wales Press, pp. 1-19.

__________ (2012) Canadian Gothic. In Punter, D. (ed.) *A New Companion to the Gothic*, John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, Somerset, pp. 409-427.

Spufford, F. (2004) Ice. In: S. Harrison, S. Pile and N. Thrift, (eds.) *Patterned Ground: Entanglements of Nature and Culture*. London, Reaktion. pp. 279-281.

__________ (1996) *I May Be Some Time: Ice and the English Imagination*. London, Faber.

Varma, D. (1957) The Gothic Flame: Being a History of the Gothic Novel in England; Its Origins, Efforescence, and Residuary Influences. London, A. Barker.

Wikipedia. (2022) *John Ross (Royal Navy officer)*. [online] Available from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Ross_(Royal_Navy_officer) [Accessed 7th November 2022].

WorldAtlas. (2022) *Arctic.* Available from: https://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/polar/arctic.htm [Accessed 1st August 2022].

Zolkos, S., Tank, S. E., & Kokelj, S. V. (2018) Mineral Weathering and the Permafrost Carbon-Climate Feedback. *Geophysical Research Letters*, 45, 9623-9632. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1029/2018GL078748 [Accessed 7th November 2022].

Gothic Nature

New Directions in Ecohorror and the EcoGothic

Founded by: Elizabeth Parker

Editors in Chief: Elizabeth Parker & Harriet Stilley

Visit us: www.gothicnaturejournal.com

Contact us: gothicnaturejournal@gmail.com

Follow us on Twitter: @gothicnaturejo

Follow us on Instagram: @gothicnaturejournal

2023