

THE PENNY PAPERS:
IMAGINING MARGARET PENNY

By

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The Penny Papers: Imagining Margaret Penny – Part One

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I first met Margaret Penny in a graduate course at Athabasca University in the summer of 2005. I was taking the course (GLST 653) and she was the subject of one of the books on the curriculum, *This Distant and Unsurveyed Country*, by R. Gillies Ross. Ross is a professor emeritus of geography at the Bishop's University, author and authority on whaling in the eastern Arctic in the 19th century. Margaret Penny (1812-1891) was the wife of a Scottish whaling captain, William Penny (1809-1892), who accompanied him during a year-long expedition to Baffin Island from 1857-1858. As surprising as it may seem to contemporary readers, it wasn't unheard of for wives of whaling captains to undergo the rigours and privations of whaling ships to be with their husbands. Joan Druett, in her studies of New England whaling wives, found evidence of women on hundreds of whaling expeditions. But it was rare for British women. Ross says Margaret Penny was part of a very small, exclusive sisterhood and was almost certainly "the first European woman to winter anywhere in the Arctic islands north of Canada." (1997, xxvi)

Margaret kept a journal of the voyage, a lean, spare description of people and place – both on board and on land. She made entries nearly every day. But during the winter months, from the end of January until May 12, she stopped. At first her husband writes a few entries, but then the pages are left blank as if to be written on, but nothing is there. On May 13th, Margaret picks up where she left off, ignoring the gap as if it weren't there, describing the weather and the state of the ships as usual.

When I first read *This Distant and Unsurveyed Country* I had two questions: why did Margaret go on the journey in the first place, and why did she stop writing? We explored these questions during class discussions, and Ross himself speculates on the reasons. But it wasn't enough for me. I couldn't shake Margaret. She got under my skin. Later, during my studies in MAIS 616, *Writing the Self*, I found myself wanting to pursue the notion of Margaret, as though her journal was a form of proprioceptive writing studied in that course. I was also drawn by the research that shows writing is useful as a therapeutic tool as James Pennebaker and others have demonstrated. Working through the many assignments in the course, I started wondering how fiction might shed light on Margaret – how the possibilities that it creates might help me understand her. My final course of study, *Critical Perspectives in Cultural Studies*, MAIS 625, showed me the value of exploring the many truths of Margaret's story as an important part of cultural studies, and of the enduring nature of the journal as a snapshot of history.

History is changed by historical perspective. For example, John Franklin was seen as an Arctic hero, a brave, stalwart explorer, the discoverer of the Northwest Passage, not because he was all that, but because he had an indefatigable public relations machine (his wife) working to make it believed by history. Ken McGoogan makes a strong case that because Jane Franklin travelled so extensively, she understood the nature of history – what history remembers about people. And that wasn't necessarily the truth (which in our postmodern lives, we understand to be multi-faceted) but what people *saw* as the truth – what appeared to be the truth.

This is another theme that interests me – the dichotomy between reality and illusion or between what *is* and what is *perceived*. Victorian life was a prime example of how “value was placed on outward forms and ritual behavior, not the messy intimate details” (Flanders 176) and how in fact life was structured so that those details were swept under the carpet, or covered up with swags of heavy fabric and formalized social patterns.

Another aspect of the duality of reality and illusion can be seen in the way Arctic explorers see what’s in front of them. Descriptions of the first sight of icebergs, sky and water are very similar. The writers are exhilarated by the views – by the clarity of vision that they experience. Travelling as the surgeon on board the *Advice* with William Penny in 1849, Robert Goodsir wrote: “It is impossible to describe the beauties of these ice islands [icebergs]. Many of them have caverns worn in them, within which the ice appears of the most brilliant blue and green, whilst without, all is of stainless white, the entrances curtained, as it were, with glittering icicles....The transparency of the atmosphere was such as can only be conceived by those who have visited arctic countries.” (Goodsir, 23/61) However, the longer the travellers stay, the more confused their vision becomes. Light refraction plays a big role, revealing what cannot normally be seen around the curve of the earth, or by creating false images of things which are not there at all. In 1818, for example, John Ross turned back from searching for the Northwest Passage because he “saw” a mountain range barring his way in Lancaster Sound. It was a mirage caused by refraction, and Ross was pilloried for the rest of his life for his error. As the clarity of the summer turns into the darkness of winter, another reality sets in. The darkness is not only a real physical experience, but it’s also a

metaphor. It is ironic that it takes the dark of an Arctic winter to shed light on the true nature of the people experiencing it. There are numerous accounts of the torpor and depression that set in during the Arctic winter, and it is not difficult to imagine that a person could descend into madness.

This project then, a research paper and fictionalized journal, is a culmination of themes and ideas explored in the coursework of my MAIS program. The first part of the project – a research paper – will trace my own route as I searched for Margaret Penny and the possibility of who she really was. Sheila Nickerson in *Midnight to the North*, writes that Arctic history has been so dismissive of women. (Nickerson 2002, 7) The books are full of the bluff, bluster and bravery of men with scant notice that women even existed, let alone took part in life. As a contemporary woman with children and jobs and a home to take care of, I was fascinated by what could have motivated Margaret to travel to a harsh climate, face unknown dangers, experience privation, relinquish all privacy, and live with 40 men in a claustrophobic and malodorous wooden ship. What follows is an account of where my readings took me in my search for Margaret Penny – from Arctic exploration, Victorian culture, whaling history, Inuit traditions, personal histories, into the realm of interpretation and speculation. The second part of the project – a fictional journal – will be the product of the combinations, intersections, connections and coincidences that I've teased out of the readings to find the flesh and blood, real woman, Margaret Penny, mother of four, to imagine what might have happened to her, trapped by Arctic ice and fate, on a whaling ship at 66N 66W during the long dark winter of 1858.

There is little evidence of Margaret Penny except for the journal that she kept on the British Whaling and Missionary Expedition (1857-1858) and the very few letters and official records of her life. What we do know about her is the direct result of the Victorian need to document and classify their rapidly-expanding knowledge. In 1837 the Register of Births, Marriages and Deaths was established in a move to document what was seen as these three most pivotal stages in people's lives (Flanders, 80). So we know that Margaret was born on December 12, 1812 in Aberdeen Scotland, the middle child, one of three sisters, in a working class family. She married the up and coming whaling master, William Penny in 1840 when she was 27 and he was 31. Nine months later, she gave birth to her first baby, William. The infant died at six months, but the couple had four more children in rapid succession, every two years from 1842 – 1848. (Ross 1997, xxii – xxiv)

Since we are products of our cultures as well as our genetics, Margaret was first and foremost, a Victorian woman. She was a contemporary of the young queen Victoria, (1819-1901) just seven years her senior. Victoria was only 18 when she ascended the throne in 1837, a staggering fact when viewed from today's perspective: it would be only in fiction that contemporary western society would allow a teenage girl to exercise such political power. She and Margaret were married in the same year, 1840. Their world was experiencing unparalleled growth and change in technology and science and it was a young woman who sat at the helm, as leader of a vast empire. ⁱ

My search to find Margaret pointed first in her husband's direction. Since the notion of "duty" was a highly valued Victorian virtue, and gender roles were clearly defined, at least superficially, (Flanders, 131-132) it was critical to examine the man she married to speculate with more plausibility what Margaret's life might have been like.

Contemporary readers know about Margaret's husband, William Penny (1808/9-1892), because he was a man of business, and his business was of such vital commercial importance, that it got him into the history books for a few brief mentions. Penny was born into the whaling business – the supply side. His father was a whaling captain, and Penny made his first journey with him in 1821 when he was just 12 years old. At that time, commercial whaling in the Arctic took place mostly in the Davis Strait and Baffin Bay, west of Greenland. It didn't push west to the shores of Baffin Island until around 1820, and when it did, young William was among the first wave of British whalers to explore the area.

Whaling provided two of the most sought-after commodities of Victorian life, oil and baleen. It could be said that whale oil greased the wheels of the industrial revolution and shed light on its darkness. Because whales were plentiful in the early days, and demand was high, overfishing became the norm. By the 1840s, because of uncontrolled killing, the number of whales began to decline dramatically (Ross 1985, xiv) but there was no let-up in the demand – whale oil was crucial to lubricate machinery and light homes, factories and offices. And the demand for baleen was even greater. Baleen are flexible strips of keratin attached to the upper jaws of some species of whales that filter food for

the animal, and in bowhead whales found in the Arctic, those jaws could be enormous. A photograph in the Public Archives of Canada, printed in *Arctic Whalers, Icy Seas*, shows one such jawbone that spans almost the width of the ship it's hoisted onto. A man standing in the middle of it is dwarfed by the huge arc of the jaw, and by the curtain-like strips of baleen that are attached to it. (Ross 1985, 39) Goodsir writes the measurements of a whale taken during his 1849 trip with Penny: the whale itself was 65 feet long, and the baleen was more than 16 feet wide. (Goodsir, 97) Baleen had many uses – it was the plastic of its day. It was used for umbrella ribs, Venetian blinds, riding crops, brushes, fishing rods and a multitude of other products (Ross 1985, xiii). But primarily it was used in the fashion industry for crinolines, skirt hoops, and the mainstay of Victorian dress for women of the middle and upper classes – corsets. The corset reshaped the female form by severely restricting the organs, and was a metaphor for the age: Flanders points out that the corset is an obvious symbol for the physical and mental constrictions imposed on women by society at the time. (Flanders, 271) Baleen was worth a fortune because it fed the growing consumerism of middle class Victorians. The whaling master John Atkins Cook of the *Charles W. Morgan*, gives an example of the wholesale value of his catches in the mid-1850s: he estimates that the head of a single whale can yield 2,400 pounds of “bone”. At US \$5 per pound, it was worth \$12,000 alone. (Cook, 40)

To the owners of the whaling ships, a successful expedition was one that returned home with a hold full of baleen and barrels of oil and therefore the men at the helm of those expeditions – the captains, who received a percentage of the take – were highly motivated to bring back a full load, even if it took years to fill. American whalers especially were

known to be away from home for several years at a time. Druett points out that it was the owners, not the skippers, who made vast amounts of money out of whaling, and the captains couldn't afford to spend more than four to six months at home between those long voyages. (Druett 2001, 23) But British whaling was different – most of it focused on the bowhead whale found in the Davis Strait (Ross, 1997, xxvi) so most trips lasted from spring until fall when the ice would close in. Scottish ports were well-positioned for these journeys because of their high latitudes and it was the Scots who revived the Davis Strait fishery to take advantage of a bounty offered by the government. (Tillotson, 80) But by the 1840s whaling captains were forced to travel further to find new grounds to harvest and develop new tactics for maximizing their take. This is where Penny begins to make his way into the official record, and where some of the earliest contact between Inuit and Europeans takes place.

Penny works the Davis Strait from the time he's twelve years old, rising steadily in rank, and by the time he is 26 in 1835, he is commanding his own ship, the *Neptune*. For the next four years, Arctic whalers experience some of the worst, most dangerous ice conditions in history (Holland, 835) and so the young, ambitious Penny gets the idea to start wintering over in the Arctic, just as earlier explorers had done. In 1839, while whaling along the eastern shores of Baffin Island, he meets and befriends a young Inuit, Eenooloopik, who tells him about a bay called Tenudiackbeek (now called Cumberland Sound) where the whales were plentiful. Eeno, as the whalers call him, travels back to Scotland with Penny, and spends the winter learning English and charting the bay. It is during this time, on February 4, 1840, that William and Margaret get married – a young

couple with good prospects. Two months later William says goodbye to his young bride, now pregnant for the first time, and heads back to the Arctic with Eeenoolooapik on the *Bon Accord* to find the waters and the whales that will make him a rich man. (We know about Eeenoolooapik because the young surgeon on board *Bon Accord*, Alexander M'Donald, wrote a book about him in 1841 (reprinted in part in Ross 1985:109-125 and Tillotson 277-279.) As it turns out, Eeenoolooapik has a young sister, known in most histories as Tookoolito, (Nickerson 2002, 12) who is to play a role in Margaret's life. I will return to both these threads later in this paper.)

The commercial imperative to find new whaling grounds coincided with what was supposed to be the final push to find the last link in the fabled Northwest Passage, a direct route across the Arctic Sea to the riches of the Pacific dreamed of for hundreds of years. British exploration to find the Passage began with Martin Frobisher who first reached Baffin Island in the eastern Arctic during voyages from 1576-78. (In one of those lovely synchronicities of history, it is the grandmother of the man Tookoolito marries who tells her ancestors' stories about the first white man (Frobisher) to reach those shores.) (Loomis, 113) But the search for the Passage was put on hold until the second decade of the 19th century, a time of peace and prosperity in Britain. Exploration for the Passage was resumed partly to assert sovereignty and domination of the seas, partly because of competition from American and Russian interests, and partly to provide employment for thousands of unemployed naval men no longer needed after the Napoleonic wars. (Berton, 18-21/McGoogan 2005, 46)

What was supposed to be a relatively simple expedition in 1845 turned into one of the longest and most expensive searches in history to find the missing explorers – the Franklin expedition. By the time the searches ended 14 years later in 1859, 32 maritime expeditions comprising 47 ship voyages had taken part. (Ross, 2002, 13/18) The search for Sir John Franklin and his crew was the *cause celebre* of its day. So much has been written on the disappearance and search for survivors that it is impossible to do it justice in the confines of this paper. But in order to come closer to Margaret Penny, it is important to know something of the biggest news story of her day because it would have had an enormous impact on her life: her husband was there – involved in both whaling and the search for Franklin. Stories of the Franklin searches reveal a labyrinth every bit as convoluted and shape-shifting as the Arctic archipelago itself. They involve greed, ego, large sums of prize money, cannibalism, false leads, mystery, and deceit – and that’s just the *written* record. It wasn’t until March 1854, nine years after Franklin set out, that he and his crew were declared officially dead. Seven months later, Dr. John Rae, a Hudson Bay Company explorer brought back the first evidence of their deadly fate – testimony from Inuit witnesses, and relics belonging to the men, Franklin’s among them.

John Franklin (1786-1847) had been on three previous expeditions to the Arctic. He led the second of these in 1819, with disastrous results. He was considered by contemporaries to be unfit for roughing it in the Arctic, one of whom is quoted in *Frozen in Time* as saying, “he must have three meals p diem. Tea is indispensable...and he cannot walk above eight miles in one day.” (Geiger & Beattie, 38) Franklin proved his critics right. Eleven men died on that expedition; nine starved or froze to death, one was

murdered and another, who was believed to have committed murder and cannibalism, was executed. Franklin himself was forced to eat old boots to keep from starving. (McGoogan 2005, 52) A contemporary reader might think such a debacle would ruin a man's career, but that wasn't the case. Franklin published a book about his experience, became famous as an Arctic hero – “the man who ate his boots” – and was promoted to captain.

But it was his fourth and final expedition in 1845 that was to capture the collective imagination, so much so that to this day, 160 years later, books, TV documentaries and websites are still exploring its mysteries. The man who proved to be soft and unfit in 1819 was by 1845 nearly 60 years old, overweight, and suffering from a badly damaged reputation after being recalled as governor of Tasmania (called Van Diemen's Land at the time) for reasons of incompetence. But his wife, Jane, who McGoogan paints a detailed picture of in *Lady Franklin's Revenge*, was well-connected, persistent and a forceful arguer and she convinced friends at the Admiralty that Franklin was the man to lead the expedition of 1845. So in May of that year, he and his crew of 128 men, set sail in the ill-named *Erebus* and *Terror*. (McGoogan 2005, 269-271) Among the crew were two young doctors, Sir Harry Goodsir, and Alexander M'Donald (who just four years earlier had travelled with Penny on the *Bon Accord*, and written the book about Eeenooloopik.) They were last seen by Europeans – whalers in Baffin Bay – heading west toward Lancaster Sound in late July 1845.

The ships were well provisioned for a long journey. Franklin himself wrote in a goodbye letter: “Let me now assure you, my dearest Jane, that I am amply provided with every requisite for my passage...” (Geiger and Beattie, 44) But by 1847 with no word of the expedition, people started worrying. While the British government started making plans for search operations, William Penny actually started searching. Arctic whaling authority, R. Gillies Ross credits Penny with leading the first-ever expedition to try to find evidence of Franklin, even though his primary purpose as captain of the *St. Andrew* was whaling. He pushed as far as he could into Lancaster Sound as time would allow before hitting impassable ice. He did it again two years later, in 1849, with Robert Goodsir (the brother of Harry) on board the whaler *Advice*. This time, the expedition left messages and provisions in case the Franklin crew came upon them. (Ross 2002) By this time, the British government had commissioned three searches – one in the Bering Strait, another in Lancaster Sound, and an overland expedition led by Sir John Richardson and Dr. John Rae. In 1850 after persistent lobbying on the part of Jane Franklin, the British government sent a fleet of search and rescue expeditions. Penny was there again, this time as part of the official search mission – a mere whaler, a working man not part of the fraternity of the British navy.

Penny’s star was rising. Not only was he having great success at the new whaling grounds that Eenoooloopik showed him, but he had clearly gained the admiration of Lady Jane Franklin who was directly responsible for his navy commission. Penny was said to have charmed her “by referring to himself in the third person as ‘the whaling master.’” (McGoogan 2005, 297) In fact, Lady Jane was at the docks in Aberdeen, with her niece

and constant companion, Sophia Cracroft, to see him off on April 13, 1850. (Berton, 170-172) Their part of the expedition comprised two new ships – the *Lady Franklin* and the *Sophia*. Later, Jane Franklin even had the artist, Stephen Pearce, paint Penny’s portrait in 1852. (Ross 1997, xxxii) It gives us a glimpse into the man and the way he was perceived. In it, Penny stands in an Arctic landscape. He wears what appears to be a sealskin parka and pants, and looks handsome and clear-eyed. He gazes not into the eyes of the viewer, but off into the distance. His nose is straight, his chin is square and strong, and his brow is unfurrowed. His left hand is on his hip, holding a fur hat. His right hand rests on a Union Jack, the lining of which shows the words, just barely visible in the reproductions, “GOD AIDING...DUTY.” In the background, a huge sky twinkles with stars, and on the horizon, partially obscured by frost mist, are two sailing ships. It is the picture of a man in command and in control – attractive and confident. (Reproductions in Ross 1997, xxviii/Ross 1985, 108; engraving in Tillotson, frontispiece)

Penny’s part of the search began with high hopes – after all, he was an expert in Arctic waters. But his first navy commission (1850-1851) was to be his last. What happened to alter his trajectory? The record is vague, but points to a dispute between Penny and the senior commander of the overall expedition which comprised six ships, Horatio Austin. As vast an area as it is, the Arctic waters were pretty crowded between 1850 - 1852. There were ten ships searching in roughly the same area – the two that Penny commanded, four others that Austin commanded (as well as Penny’s), two more British ships commanded by Franklin’s old colleague, John Ross, and two American ships. After the first traces of Franklin’s men were found, Penny is quoted as vowing to search the

area “like a blood-hound” (Geiger & Beattie, 61) and he had good luck at first. He found remains of a stone hut, food tins, and scraps of newspaper, and a member of his crew was the first to find evidence of death among the Franklin crew – three graves at the winter quarters of the *Erebus* and *Terror* on Beechey Island. But the trail Penny was following went cold, so he came up with a new plan: get a steamship so his crew could push further north. He had two prizes in mind: finding Franklin and finding the “Open Polar Sea” – a notion that had existed since early days. Finding either would secure his future as a rich and famous man. Ross says Penny had become obsessed with finding this alleged open body of water that some people still believed existed at the top of the world. (Ross 1997, xxxii) But Austin wouldn’t give him a steam-powered ship, and the two men quarrelled. Berton’s source is unclear, but he says the *Sophia*’s captain, Alexander Stewart witnessed the argument, which ended with Penny saying, “I...will have nothing more to do with you.” (Berton, 190) Holland refers to it as “an unseemly quarrel” that led to a “curious outcome” – both expeditions promptly abandoned the search and headed for home. An official inquiry acquitted both men, but Penny was shut out of further search expeditions. (Holland, 835) Instead, he turned back to whaling and a new dream: setting up a colony in Cumberland Sound.

History does not tell us what Margaret thought of any of this. By 1850, she had been married for ten years, borne five children, and suffered the pain of losing the first.

Although her husband had been unemployed for three full years when he returned from his first voyage after they were married, he was now becoming a prominent and respected man, whose knowledge of Arctic waters was of great value. Berton describes him as the

“acknowledged leader of the Davis Strait whalers.” (Berton 170) McGoogan refers to him as an “outstanding whaling captain.”(McGoogan 2001, 223) The young doctor, Robert Goodsir, writes in his journal that he had heard of Penny’s “enterprising character and energetic disposition” and that Penny showed him “unremitting kindness and attention” on board the *Advice*. (Goodsir, vi) By 1845 the Penny family had moved to a larger cottage and had domestic help. (Ross 1997, xxvii) Margaret was now keeping company with one of the most famous women in the world, Lady Jane Franklin. She was overseeing a household of four young children between the ages of two and eight, and she was doing it mostly alone since her husband was usually away from home seven months of the year.

What was that household like? Historian Judith Flanders provides a comprehensive cultural study of the daily life of Victorians in *The Victorian House*, by examining the manuals, magazines, advertisements and fiction of the day, as well as archival records. By the 1850s, she says, domesticity was the norm: a man’s home was his refuge from the commercial world and his wife was responsible for ensuring that it ran smoothly – it was her duty, a Victorian ideal. In fact, the home and the wife were the outward indicators of a man’s success in the world (Flanders, 131) and it was only in the privacy of the home that a man could be his “true self”. (ibid, xxiv) As noted earlier, the Victorian era spanned six decades and was a time of enormous change, fuelled by a rapidly-expanding knowledge base, Christian piety, advances in technology and the growth of work outside the home. (ibid, xxiii) The industrial revolution, variously dated from the late 18th century to the mid 19th, spawned what historian Rosalind Williams calls the consumer revolution.

(Mukerji and Schudson, 202) She writes that the effects of 19th century technological progress altered the “social universe of consumption” – that because so many more consumer goods were available, it made people want them more. “Besides being responsible for an increase in productivity which made possible a rise in real income; besides creating many new products and lowering the prices of traditional ones...technology now made possible the material realization of fantasies.” (ibid 217) Perhaps this availability of new and exotic manufactured goods fed part of the Victorian fascination with the fantasy of the Arctic. At any rate, the Franklin saga – the missing Arctic hero, the loving, dutiful and proper wife – became part of the popular culture. Staffordshire pottery figures of the couple were produced and sold at country fairs, and popular musicians sang versions of a song called “Lady Franklin’s Lament.” (McGoogan 2005, 296)

As in modern times, much of the Victorian imagination, the popular culture, was created by advertising, or public relations, and had less to do with reality than it did with covering up reality and creating illusions. Flanders ties this dichotomy to advances in lighting, due in part to the use of whale oil in lamps. While it was the style of the day to cover floors with carpet (which had to be swept at least twice a day with damp tea leaves to keep down the dust) and cover furniture and mantles with swags of fabric, better illumination meant that the dirt of daily living was now visible or exposed – easily a metaphor for life. This point seems to go to the heart of what we now view as a Victorian artificiality of putting a brave face forward to the world, a pretence that things are conforming to the way society expects them to be. For example, Flanders writes that

women could not speak of the exhaustive amount of work involved in running a home as work at all because to do so would shatter the “myth of domestic life as a haven from work.”(Flanders, 174) Women kept their troubles about running the enterprise of the home – the “seamy side of domesticity” (ibid 175) from their husbands, just as their husbands did not discuss their business enterprises at home.

McGoogan paints Jane Franklin as a master of illusion, perhaps as a way to deal with this falsity of society. He points to Britain’s evolution after the French Revolution into a very conservative, male-dominated society (McGoogan 2005, 154) which Flanders shows segregated men and women by clearly defined gender roles: men set the agenda and women supported them by conforming to their biological destiny as wives and mothers. (Flanders, xxix-xxxi) However, Jane Franklin was a woman who eschewed the role of stepmother to Franklin’s daughter Eleanor, preferring instead to travel extensively during the times her naval commander husband was absent from home carrying out his professional duties. She masked her true nature by pretending to travel for health reasons, when in fact she seems to have been an adventurous traveller who was exhilarated by seeing the world. (McGoogan 2005, 128) It strikes me that in some respects, she may have been a perfect Victorian wife in that she performed what seems to be an impossible juggling act: her attitudes, her writings, her clothing, her homes all conformed to what Victorians said things should be like: while at the same time she didn’t conform at all. She did what she wanted, travelled the world to avoid family responsibility and society at home, and lobbied ceaselessly on behalf of her husband, whether it was to secure him

commissions, or have him go down in history as the Arctic hero who discovered the Northwest Passage.

From my readings, I get the impression that Franklin was a bit of a plodder; his career was punctuated by professional disasters, but he was protected by wealth and privilege. McGoogan writes that the reason Jane Franklin worked so tirelessly to organize, outfit and promote all of the search expeditions, even after she had evidence of his death, is because she felt guilty at having pushed him into an expedition he was clearly unfit for. He suggests that she was also well aware of how history would judge her, and so she undertook to prove that he did, in fact, find the Northwest Passage and therefore was, in fact, a true Arctic hero. McGoogan writes that her “vast reading, unprecedented adventuring and obsessive visiting of historical sites had taught this astute Victorian that *what actually happened at any given moment dwindles to insignificance in comparison with what is perceived to have happened.*” (My italics) (McGoogan 2005, 376) I believe there’s another very practical reason that Jane Franklin funded the searches and led the unceasing crusade to make history believe that her husband was a hero: because she was a Victorian woman, her life was inextricably tied to his, and if he went down, she would too. She would have been ruined.

A similar situation existed for another Victorian woman who also married a famous Arctic explorer, Robert Peary, credited with being the first man to reach the North Pole. Unlike Jane Franklin, Josephine Peary (1863-1955) didn’t get her husband his job – his own desire for fame, money and revenge fuelled that obsession. (Peary, vii) But she was

his staunchest supporter, even when he became embroiled in controversy and caused their family enormous pain. She accompanied Peary on a brutal expedition to northern Greenland from 1891-1892 and wrote an account in her book, *My Arctic Journal*, a memoir. Her Victorian revulsion of dirt comes across clearly when she writes about being forced to spend an entire night in an igloo. “Can I describe it?” she writes on April 18, 1892. After squeezing herself through a small tunnel, she emerges into the interior to find a platform of ice around the perimeter of the space. “The middle of this platform for about five feet was the bed, and it was covered with two or three tooktoo [caribou] skins which almost crawled away, they were so very much alive.” Sitting on this platform “not without a shiver” Jo watches with “dismay” as all the people in the crowded igloo, including the women, strip to the waist when the temperature climbs. “The odor of the place was indescribable...suffice it to say that was a decidedly unpleasant atmosphere in which I spent the night. I soon found that if I kept my feet on the floor they would freeze, and the only way I could keep them off the floor was to draw up my knees and rest the side of one foot on the edge of the platform and place the other upon it. In this way, and leaning on my elbow, I sat from ten at night until ten in the morning, dressed just as I was on the sledge. I made the best of the situation and pretended to Mr. Peary that it was quite a lark.” (Peary 126-128) And why did she suffer so? Because it made her husband “uncomfortable” to have her do otherwise.

During Peary’s subsequent trips without his wife, she campaigned constantly to raise funds for further expeditions which she didn’t want him to undertake. She even continued to support him after the shock of discovering and meeting his Inuit mistress, “a creature

scarcely human,” and baby, named Pearyaksoah (Peary xviii) – this after she had just lost her own baby. She defended her husband’s claim to have been first to the Pole when controversy erupted over a rival claim, even after Peary’s death in 1920. Like Jane Franklin, Jo Peary did whatever it took to protect her husband, to rehabilitate his reputation, to edit out the parts she didn’t want history to remember. Because Victorian wives were bound to their husbands’ fortunes – good or bad – and because their first duty was to support those men, it seems obvious that they would say or do anything to keep their husbands’ reputations untarnished, if for no other reason than protection for themselves (and their children in Peary’s case.) It was a matter of survival. As Bryce says in his introduction to the 2002 edition of *My Arctic Journal*, Josephine Peary’s life was so wedded to her husband’s ambition, what else could she do? (Peary xxvii) Seeing how both Jane Franklin and Jo Peary had to deal with their husbands’ foibles and failures and put a brave face on the situations made me wonder if Margaret Penny had to do the same thing.

How did Margaret take her husband’s change in fortune after the incident with Austin? How many times had she seen his temper already? It seems most likely that the wife knows “the real man” better than anyone, and suffers abuse before any strangers do. In later years, she wrote in a letter to her son: “Govern your temper you know what your father has lost by his.” (Margaret Penny 1867 in Ross 1997, 221.) Perhaps the episode with Austin was an indication of Penny’s growing and embarrassing obsession with the belief of an open polar sea as Ross suggests (*ibid*, 220) coupled with anger and impatience. A letter from his brother in 1845 tells him to “be kinder” to his daughter

Helen. “Margaret has told me several times of the unmanly habit you have of correcting her. I only wish I was within reach when you were at those low tricks.” (ibid, 222) What this suggests is that Penny is abusive to his daughter. Holland describes the man as temperamental and highly emotional, impetuous and ill-tempered, respected but not universally liked by his whaling colleagues. (Holland 836) Even Peter Sutherland, the surgeon on the *Lady Franklin* with Penny on the Franklin search, who praised him in his book, *Journal of a voyage in Baffin’s Bay*, refers in true ambiguous Victorian style to a “predominating feature in [Penny’s] character [that] comes between him and the end he had in view.” (Sutherland, xviii-xix). It’s not difficult to imagine that a man like Penny, used to making his own way, following his instincts, facing danger year in and year out, would not take well to taking orders – especially from men with less experience, men he didn’t respect. It makes sense that he was blunt – he was used to giving orders, fast and direct, and having them obeyed or else people’s lives would be at risk. He couldn’t mince words with Victorian obtuseness – meanings couched in the passive voice, in convoluted sentences full of ambiguous words – when standing in the crow’s nest, navigating treacherous icy waters. Is it possible that Margaret wanted to accompany her husband on his next whaling voyages to protect him (and their family) from himself?

Next in the story comes another of those intersections of life – one of those hinge events that Stephen Bonnycastle describes in his discussions of literary theory – a pivot point from which the future is determined. (Bonnycastle, 158) After being rebuffed by the Admiralty, Penny devised a new plan which coincided with the ideas of a businessman and ship owner from Hull, John Bowlby. In 1852, Penny tried to get a royal charter to set

up a colony, a permanent residence, complete with missionary, in Cumberland Sound, with exclusive rights for fishing, mining, and whaling. He was turned down, again by government officials, but the plan went ahead with commercial, rather than royal, backing. The Aberdeen Arctic Company was formed, and the two ships Penny commanded during the Franklin search – the *Lady Franklin* and the *Sophia* – were purchased by the new company. It's not clear where the genesis of the idea came from, but Bowlby also wanted to build a permanent fishing colony in Cumberland Sound and tried to do just that in 1853. His attempt failed, but led to an important connection. On his return trip home to Scotland, Bowlby brought with him a young Inuit couple – Nugumiats from Frobisher Bay (Loomis 86) who in later years become famous because of their work with another arctic explorer, Charles Francis Hall. The young man, 18, is known to history as Ebierbing. His wife, just 16 years old, is most often called Tookoolito, and she is the younger sister of the Inuit man Margaret met in 1840, Eenooloopik. But Margaret doesn't refer to her by this name – she calls her “Tackritow.” In her journal entry of August 18, 1857, Margaret writes: “I had a visit from Tackritow, my old acquaintance whom I had seen in England. She has made a great improvement amongst the natives & is herself quite civilized...” (Margaret Penny in Ross 1997, 37)

Part of the difficulty in keeping track of all the players in the Arctic dramas is that the English speakers couldn't get the Inuktitut names right, and because any spelling of Inuktitut words is a transliteration, there is no consistency in how they were written. Obviously the whalers and explorers who met the Inuit wrote words the way they

heard them pronounced, and so we get spellings from different authors –Tukulito (Heighton), Tookoolito (Hall, Nickerson), Tackritow (Penny). Ross says there are many more variations: Tackilictoo, Tickalictoo, Tickalucktoo, and Tarchuctoo, and that the woman herself signed a published portrait with yet another spelling – Tookoolitoo. Americans called her Hannah, the British sometimes called her Anne, and she often introduced herself that way. (Ross 1997, 57) The same is true for her husband. Ebierbing was referred to as Hackbock, Harboch, or Harkbah – or simply Joe. Sometimes he appears as Joe Ebierbing and she is Hannah Tookoolito. Today, in an attempt to spell Inuktitut names so they conform better to the sounds of the language, these two historical figures are written Taqulittuq and Ipirvik, which is how I will refer to them for the remainder of the first part of this paper. However, in the fictional journal which follows, I refer to Taqulittuq as Tackritow, since that is the name Margaret calls her.

The evidence of Taqulittuq and Ipirvik is scant before 1860. We know that Bowlby brought them to Scotland with him in 1853, along with a young boy of seven, called Huckaluckjoe, who Ross tells us, was part of another family (Ross 1997, 54) and that Penny took them back to their home on Baffin Island on his next trip in 1855 (one that Margaret had intended to go on.) Bowlby exhibited them for the general public (much as Hall did ten years later) and even presented them at Windsor Castle to Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in February 1854. Victoria wrote in her journal that she met three “Esquimaux” from a poor tribe. “They are my subjects, very curious, & quite different to any of the southern or African tribes, having very flat round faces, with a Mongolian shape of eyes, a fair skin, & jet black hair.” (Ross 1997, 53-55) Ross speculates that

Taqulittuq may have been so adventurous in leaving home to travel because of the stories she had heard from her older brother, Eenoooloopik. But aside from the brief mentions of her in Margaret's journal, we lose track of Taqulittuq and Ipirvik until the next obsessed polar adventurer comes along – the American, Charles Francis Hall, who history will remember as the captain of the ill-fated *Polaris* expedition to find the North Pole in 1871. Hall, with no Arctic experience whatsoever, was convinced, as were others in the late 1850s, that there were still survivors of the Franklin expedition, and so in 1860 he made his way to Baffin Island to the area of Frobisher Bay where he was astonished to meet a refined Inuit woman who spoke excellent English. (Loomis, 86) It was Taqulittuq of course, a woman he came to rely on as his interpreter, guide, and friend in his drive to find any traces of the Franklin crew. She and her husband taught him how to survive the harsh Arctic climate and then went back with him to the U.S. for years to tour New England and Washington D.C. raising money for the push to the North Pole. That expedition got as far as northern Greenland where Hall was murdered by one of his crew, and Taqulittuq and Ipirvik were among the survivors who drifted on an ice floe in Arctic waters for six months after their ship was destroyed by stormy seas. Taqulittuq could do it all: lead the dogs and pull sledges, fish and hunt, cook and sew, and keep the oil lamp burning in the worst of times. (Nickerson 7) But as Dorothy Eber points out, the Inuit did not keep journals or write memoirs of their adventures because theirs is an oral tradition, and so their stories come to us filtered through the eyes of others. (Eber, xii) Taqulittuq's story shows her to have been a remarkable woman, and the more I read about her, the more I wondered about how she and Margaret might have connected in the winter of 1858.

My search to find Margaret Penny also led me to the *Charles W. Morgan* the only surviving wooden whaling ship in the world, now docked at Mystic, Connecticut. To imagine Margaret Penny on board the *Lady Franklin* would have been impossible without walking the decks of the *Morgan*. It was built in 1841 and travelled from New Bedford to the waters of the Pacific for 80 years under the command of 20 captains. Five of those captains brought their wives with them for the long journeys – some lasting as long as four years. Although not all ship owners approved of wives on board (because it cost them money for food, and because they feared the captains’ attention would be diverted from their jobs) many found that the wives’ presence gave a real boost to both the morale and the morals on board. Because much of the American whale business took place in the south Pacific, there were many opportunities to drop anchor at exotic islands and go wild. As Druett points out, the “pompous husband and righteous citizen” at home often turned into a “randy goat” when he reached port and was greeted by naked women. Stories abound of promiscuous alcoholic captains and the eager young women who traded sex for goods. Kororareka, in the Bay of Islands off the northeast coast of New Zealand, was so infamous that it became known as the “whorehouse of the Pacific” and the ships themselves “floating castles of prostitution.” (Druett, 2001, 6-11) It is no wonder that the presence of a Victorian New England wife on board was seen as a way to curtail such excesses. Americans weren’t the only men to enter into relationships with native women, but there are no reports of the same wild abandon in the Arctic. Still, Eber says that the whalers who worked the eastern Arctic brought with them many things – new equipment, ideas and attitudes, as well as new diseases and new genes. “The relationship between Inuk and whaler was close and intimate; it is a rare Inuk who has no

whaler ancestor.” (Eber xvii) The practice of wintering over, as Penny did from 1853 on, brought about the interdependence of Inuit and whalers, and changed the Inuit way of life forever. (ibid 12) Instead of continuing their nomadic lives, travelling from camp to camp following the migration of animals, life became centred on the ship in harbour, the goods that it brought, and the work that it provided.

Both American and British whalers were floating factories, but the U.S. ships had “tryworks” taking up space on the main deck. After blubber was stripped from the dead whale, it would be cut into pieces and rendered into the precious oil in huge cauldrons, then poured into casks and stored in the hold of the ship, the entire process taking part on the ship. Ross points out that British ships did not have tryworks onboard, but instead cut the blubber into pieces small enough to be stored in the casks, then rendered into oil back in port – after 1853 at the permanent whaling stations in Cumberland Strait first established by Penny. (Ross 1985, 62) This feature would have saved Margaret from the sickening smell of rendering blubber, described by *Morgan* educator and authority, Rick Spencer, as “nauseating – acrid and sickly sweet.” (Spencer, personal communication) The *Morgan* is larger than the *Lady Franklin* – just over 300 tons compared to 200 – and it could carry a crew of 35 whereas on the *Lady Franklin* during the voyage of 1857-1858 there was a crew of 25, plus Margaret, a missionary, and the Pennys’ 12-year old son, Billie. On the *Morgan*, 25 wooden bunks, about one meter by two meters, were squeezed into the small forecabin, and the *Lady Franklin* would have comparable cramped quarters for the crew. And although she may have been spared the stench of blubber rendering on the ship, Spencer says Margaret could not have avoided the stench of the men.

The Penny household on board the *Lady Franklin* would have occupied the captain's quarters below decks in the stern of the ship. On the *Morgan*, the captain's bedroom was about two meters wide and twice as long with a private head two steps up at the very back of the ship. Adjoining the bedroom and privy was a little parlour that stretched less than three meters across the back of the ship. There was a wooden grate on the floor of this narrow room which led to a small storage area below, called the lazarette. The rest of the space was used for the dining room, galley, pantry, and small closets about two meters square with bunks for the mate, cooper, cook and boatsteerers. This area takes up about a third of the *Morgan*, and it's where Margaret would have spent her time on board the *Lady Franklin*.

In between the captain's quarters and the forecastle on the *Morgan*, and probably the *Lady Franklin*, was the blubber room, where much of the processing of the blubber took place. This area was a comparable size to the captain's quarters. The two areas were separated from each other by a wall with no doors. The only way into the other sections was either up or down a hatch, then up or down another hatch into that specific part of the ship.

Exploring below decks, sitting up on the little privy with my head barely missing the ceiling, smelling the lingering odours, having only enough room in the bedroom to turn around, I found it difficult to imagine living there for a year. The lack of privacy, coupled with the tiny rooms and low ceilings, would have created a real feeling of claustrophobia. My shoulders hunched instinctively, and I took small careful steps below decks. I didn't

even realize how hunched and still I had become until I emerged onto the upper deck and saw the sky and felt that I could stand tall and breathe again. Yet the wives of whaling captains lived with those conditions; they performed their “marital duties” with their husbands behind paper-thin walls; they somehow dealt with menstrual cycles and personal hygiene, and some of them even gave birth during the voyages. Any woman I’ve talked to about the so-called “petticoat whalers” shudders at the thought of their difficulties. In the frigid dark days of winter 1858 how did Margaret cope? What happened to cause her to stop writing in her journal in late January?

Ross speculates that it could have something as common as what we now call Seasonal Affective Disorder – a form of depression during winter months believed to be caused by lack of daylight which induces lethargy, fatigue and melancholy. A vivid description comes from the whaling captain, John Atkins Cook, of the *Charles W. Morgan* whose wife fell into depression when they were trapped by Arctic ice in the Bering Strait. “It is hard to see her like this...not manifesting any interest whatsoever, in fact seeming to have lost everything in the way of reasoning power.” Even pictures of their daughter and granddaughter couldn’t rouse her. “They are nobody I ever knew” she told her husband. Cook was horrified that his wife was suddenly opposite to everything she had been before. (Cook 299) He writes that “all the evils of winter life” came upon them in January, and the dark days put them in the “gravest peril.” (ibid 303)

Ross also suggests that Margaret may have been distressed about something that was happening on board ship. (Ross 1997, xxxviii) Since she had no privacy and the journal was read and amended by her husband, Ross says she may thought it “prudent to leave

the pages empty.” What could have happened to upset her so? We have already seen that Penny had what the old Arctic explorer John Ross called a “virulent temper” (Ross 1997, 221) and it wasn’t diminishing. During the 1857-1858 voyage, Penny had run-ins with three men; the captain of the *Sophia*, the captain of another ship belonging to the Aberdeen Arctic Company, and with the harpooner on the *Lady Franklin*, all referred to in Margaret’s journal. Three years later, the doctor of the *Narwhal*, tells a shocking story in *his* journal, which Ross quotes: “Penny is occasionally subject to curious fits of temporary [insanity?] & on one occasion – when wintering in Cumberland Inlet with Mrs. Penny & part of the crew – he threatened to shoot the Doctor if he made the slightest resistance whilst he put [him] in heavy chains. He kept [him] in chains for three weeks, labouring under the idea that he was attempting to poison him while giving him medicine to allay the inflammation of the brain [causing it?]. He used during that time to stalk about, a cutlass on one side & a brace of pistols on the other. It must have been awful during the long winter night to have such a man controlling entirely their destinies.(*Narwhal* 1861 in Ross 1997, 221-222.) (Bracketed words indicate those Ross had difficulty reading in the *Narwhal* journal). The doctor in question was a young man, inexperienced at whaling, the 21-year-old Erskine Grant. There is no way of verifying the story, but Ross points out that during a previous voyage (1853-1854) Penny had a run-in with another doctor, who deserted ship and had to be taken in by an American ship. The stories could be untrue or versions of someone else’s experiences, gilded in the retelling. Either way, it is not so difficult to imagine that the 45-year old mother of four, who knew her husband’s temper only too well, was afraid – for their son Billie, for herself, and for the fate of the crew.

The final clues to what might have happened come in the years *after* Margaret's journey. Penny, the whaling master who opened up commercial whaling in Cumberland Sound, who changed whaling practices by wintering over and establishing permanent processing stations on shore, who used Inuit expertise and employed Inuit labour, didn't return to the area for five years, and when he did, he was shut out. For the next two seasons, in 1859 and 1860, he hunted seals off Greenland, then whales in Davis Strait. After accepting a job to command a steam whaler the next year, the Aberdeen Arctic Company fired him. Finally, in 1863 he returned with Margaret to Cumberland Sound, but because he didn't work for the company he had helped create, he was refused access to the whaling stations that he had established. Perhaps it was a good thing that Margaret was there again: by the time they returned home more than a year later, only one whale had been caught. (Ross 1997, 213-214)

There are three things that strike me about this period, from 1858-1864. First, during this final voyage, Penny became the topic of gossip. He was accused of plundering a wrecked ship – being a pirate – a charge that echoed another made nearly two decades earlier by one of his rivals. Again, as Ross points out, there is no reliable evidence to prove either story (Ross 1997, 219) but it adds another layer to speculation of what might have been.

John Tillotson, in his book *Adventures in the Ice: a comprehensive summary of Arctic exploration, discovery and adventure, including experiences of Captain Penny the veteran whaler*, published in 1869, devotes an entire chapter to Penny as well as one about the Franklin searches which recounts the part that Penny played. It relies heavily on Penny's stories, told in the first person. A contemporary reader can almost hear the now-

retired whaling master recount the old stories in picayune detail to a new audience. Not surprisingly the stories involve Penny's bravery and cunning. Interestingly, they go from Penny's first time on a whaling ship (when he was upbraided gruffly (by his father?) for harpooning a shark and risking damage to the harpoon), to his 1850 commission to search for Franklin, to his final voyage with Margaret in 1863, but they completely omit the Cumberland Sound years when Penny was at his peak. Tillotson writes that Penny had "earned the honour" to be part of the Franklin search, and that he "acquitted himself bravely." "All that he would have done he was unable to do, in consequence of a misunderstanding between himself and Captain [Horatio] Austin...Had sufficient means been at his command and no small jealousies allowed to interfere with his investigations, no doubt much more would have been done...Captain Penny did all that was in his power to complete the search; but he did not receive the support from the chief officer in command which he had a right to expect." (Tillotson, 226-228) Tillotson also gives us a glimpse into Margaret by describing a harrowing night during that final whaling job in 1863 when Penny was in the crow's nest until early morning, navigating through a treacherous and stormy sea full of icebergs: "Nearly all the officers on board were new men, strange to the captain's voice – they could not easily catch the word: and Mrs. Penny stood all through that long and dreadful night, passing the word of command, when an instant's delay might have been hopeless destruction." (Tillotson, 85-86)

Finally, I find it useful to know that young Billie, who lived with his parents in the Arctic for a year, who hunted and travelled by sledge with Inuit companions, who worked on a whaling ship at the age of 12, did not follow in his father's footsteps. In fact he seems to have gone as far away from him as he could. He moved to India by the time he was 21,

and ended up as manager of a tea company with plantations of his own – quite the opposite of a life spent on the water. (Ross 1997, 211)

Trying to find the real Margaret Penny led me down these many paths, but in the end, I kept coming back to her journal, to hear her voice, to try to read between the lines of her passive Victorian reserve. In the days leading up to the gap in the journal, Margaret writes that she sees the sun on the horizon on January 17th. On January 21st, young Billie returns from a 17-day sledge trip with Dr. Grant, the mate, Mr. Birnie, and 11 natives during which they travelled 200 miles. Margaret writes several times in her journal that she is anxious about the travellers. The weather is very cold and windy, and she is relieved when her son returns safely. By January 24th, she is writing no more than one sentence a day, and by January 28th, Penny is finishing her sentences for her. On the 29th she writes: “I had a walk on shore today with Mr. Penny. He went in to Pillouseak’s edloos” [igloos]. Penny completes the sentence with: “and found him much out of spirits. Some evil disposed person had caused him to beheave [sic] very ill. Certain it was that they had rendered the poor creature very unhappy and deprived him of the advantages which that [sic] Mr. Penny intended.” In the margin, I have written, “What is Penny up to here?” Does he take the pen from Margaret’s hand and complete the sentence the way he wants it to read? The next day, Margaret writes another half sentence and again Penny finishes the thought. On January 31st and February 1st Margaret doesn’t write at all, but Penny does. From February 2nd to May 12th neither writes a word. What follows is the second part of my project – my imagining of what happened, as described by Margaret in a very private journal, written in stolen moments, and lost to history – until now.

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THE PENNY PAPERS: IMAGINING MARGARET PENNY – PART TWO
THE PRIVATE JOURNAL OF MARGARET PENNY
By Judith Charles

Feb 4, 1858

It is our anniversary day. 18 years. I often wonder what happened to the man I married the difference is so great some days. There was no celebration, no notice of the day, it was taken up with the usual coming and going, boiling the oil on shore, hunting trips. I feel rather down. The journal has been taken from me and put away I do not know where and am not told why. I should not write at all but have formed a habit of doing so. I serve tea as usual to the many Esquimaux who come on board each evening. This normal act helps give structure to my days, and makes me appear calmer than I feel. I find a small scribbler belonging to Billie to write these few words and must find a secure place for it.

Feb. 5.

There was great rejoicing among the men and the Esquis on shore when Capt. Penny shot a bear. He has always told stories of being a great bear hunter and that young brother of the Goodsir surgeon wrote of them in his published journal so many years ago. Maybe this will calm his nerves and restore him. There was much revelry and gorging on the meat, but now, a pall has descended. I keep to myself, fearful of the changes I see. Young William goes out with the native men to shoot birds.

Feb 6.

Another disagreeable scene with Mr. Cheyne. The Dr. sides with him and angers P to an alarming degree. I wish he had kept his opinions quiet, it does not help to enflame him when the temper flares. Captain not well now. Takes to his bed. I write in secret. As many men as possible go on shore. The ship is quiet as a tomb.

Feb 7

Sleep all the time. My body can barely be made to move, this torpor is so complete. It is as if it does not hear what the brain is telling it. Or maybe the shock of what the brain is taking in stops it from working. Nothing is normal. Nothing is as it should be. The sun does not rise in the east and set in the west. It comes over the horizon in the south then just drifts away. Nothing is the way I have come to understand except Divine service which is most welcome.

Feb 8

I try to reason with P, to calm him, but he refuses my entreaties. There is illness on board, some influenza, and some scurvy according to the Dr. But P will have none of it. His own lethargy and headaches he fights to ignore, but I see the toll it takes and it makes him angry. He blames the young Dr. and somehow thinks he colludes with that dreadful Capt. Stewart of the Alibi who is not even here.

Feb 10

It is as if a fog has descended and I cannot see my way. Cannot move. Cannot think what to do. The Capt. has been on shore again to talk to Pillouseak, the native man who was so out of sorts before the journal was taken from me. I hear P's footfall on the companionway and must stop writing.

Feb 11

So cold I cannot go on deck again. Fierce NW wind shakes the ship and temperature shows 40 below zero. P allows small fire in the house on shore and one on board.

Feb 12

It is as if someone has died and all are in mourning. The effort it takes to keep from crying is all consuming. What evil has come aboard here? One wonders sometimes if the spirits the natives believe in are real. This is foolishness. What am I becoming here? Give your head a shake, girl.

Feb 14.

Divine service read by Mr. Warmow, a brief respite for us all to hear the word of God.

Feb 15

It has been more than two weeks since the troubles set in and there is no progress. A secure spot has been found for this little diary, hidden in an empty space below and behind the drawer that holds my woman things near the privy. His distaste for such that is foreign to him, nay for such that reminds him of humanity right now will keep him away

from it. It is not usual to write what is in my mind yet the pen has a life of its own and takes over. The need is great.

Feb 16

Another gale keeps all indoors. Mr. Penny grows more restless and disturbed by unseen forces. The longer he is forced to be inactive, the worse his state of mind.

Feb 17

Mr. P runs a tight ship, I know the stories of almost 20 years. But now I hear whisperings and see the men look away when I go on deck. Even two months ago he was reminding the men of the importance of exercise in the darkness of the winter. How many times have I heard told the stories of how he saved the day with busyness. But not now. He is away from the ship more than he is on it, and when he is here, he rails at the men for alleged infractions. I see them huddle together on deck around a hot pot but I hear that some stay below decks for days, barely moving. There is little noise except for the creaking of the ship and sometimes a wailing in the middle of the night followed by a rough rejoinder. From my place at the far end of the ship the sound is ghostly, made more eerie by the buffering of the walls that separate us. How different this is from just two months ago. How can it end well?

Feb 20

A month since the darkness descended on us and it is not better. He has left the ship and taken the lad with him. Young Billie is happy to go on another overland trek, but it does not sit right with me. I know not where the father's thoughts are directed since he no longer confides in anyone but his Esquimaux friends, especially Pillouseak, a man I do not trust. He leaves Mr. Birnie in charge, since his latest scene with Capt. Cheyne, but I remember the way B. spoke to him a few months back, and feel very queer at being alone here. I can write my thoughts here for the first time without fear of being caught but that is the extent of any goodness. In the darkness of this winter twilight, black clouds hover over us all.

Feb 21

Divine service read by Mr. Warmow.

Feb 22

Dare I commit words to paper? The little trip is over and P is not pleased to see that work was not carried out as per his orders. He accuses the Dr. and Mr. Birnie of being soft on the men, catering to their imagined illnesses. When the Dr. suggests a tonic for Penny he becomes angrier than I have ever seen, threatening to shoot the young man with the very gun he used on the bear. Billie stands transfixed by his bunk in the little room he shares with the doctor, and dares not defend his friend. When Mr. Birnie turns to leave, P strikes out and accuses him of insubordination. The steward busies himself in the galley as if he is blind and deaf to the ruckus. This is worse than I have ever seen, and I fear for us all if I cannot get my husband to see reason.

Feb 23

His unseemly row with the Dr. continues and no matter what the young man says or does, P finds fault. He threatens to put the Dr. in chains. It is ludicrous, but the captain is near apoplectic with rage at some imagined wrong.

Feb 24

That Esqui Pillouseak has been on board again and fills Penny's head with nonsense like the stories we heard in October, when Pacak told us of the white men from the big ships who landed at Pond's Bay [Pond Inlet].ⁱⁱ I stay in the bedroom while they sit at the mess table and speak in low voices. What are they thinking, these walls might as well be made of muslin than wood for all the privacy they give. I hear words – spoons, silver, buttons – I hear “doctoc” but maybe they are speaking of young Dr Grant. I hear “must come” and wonder what Mr. Penny is getting himself into.

Feb 25

Penny makes plans for another expedition. He will take young Billie, although the boy is not so eager to go now that he sees his father's ill temper at the doctor. He has seen the

temper before but never so close, never so threatening. He cannot look to me for it would be unseemly for a young man to hide behind his mother when all around him are men. But I see his eyes, and know as a mother that in spite of his outward cheer, all is not well. My protestations will not help, may fan the flames. They travel south to Newbuian [Nuvujen Island] to the settlement the men built last summer when first I visited these shores. It seems so very long ago. Now that the freeze up is solid, P says they will be back before two weeks are up. Preparations are full steam ahead, and there is no turning back.

Feb 27

They are gone, and the madness of the full moon is upon the ship. The mate, Birnie is in charge once more, but the unspeakable has occurred. In an attempt to treat Mr. Penny again, the Dr.'s urgings provoked the captain over much. He forced the Dr. into the lazarette under the parlour floor, and bid him stay and treat his patients there.ⁱⁱⁱ He has clamped a chain to the doctor's ankle, closed the wooden grate, and left instructions that Mr. Birnie make sure he stays put. There is no reasoning with him. He rushes off onto the sledge to find some fortune I know not what. I know not how I can remedy the dreadful state we are all in. I trust in Providence.

Feb 28

Divine service read by Mr. Warmow on deck, the only comfort left. A gale blows from the NE for a change. The men are devout in their prayers. They seem as lost as I am. I hear Dr. Grant. under the floor, moving about, clanking the chains and moaning. It is unspeakable. I pray to God I will know what to do.

March 1

A new month but the weather does not let up. It is only three days, but I am most anxious for our travellers. Penny knows his way I am sure and uses the stars to guide him he has told me often enough.

March 2

This is intolerable. I have no friend, no son, no husband. I am isolated, so alone. Oh dear God nobody knows, nobody knows. I cannot stand for that young man to spend another day under my feet, moaning like a sick animal. What is in P's head? All these years all these years I have done what is right, I have done what I am told, I have believed. I have done it all. All these years and still I do not measure up to a man? I am a grown woman, five babies, one taken too soon too soon. I have seen too much folly to brook the nonsense referred to as the superiority of the stronger sex any longer. Today I heed my own counsel. Indeed. Mr. Birnie can take his direction from me, not the other way around if he is to be in this part of the ship. This is my home. This is my bed. This is my parlour, and I'll not have that man whimpering under my feet any longer.

March 3

He is still there, beneath me like a caged animal. I did not sleep cannot sleep knowing a man weeps beneath my feet. Birnie is afraid of the captain's wrath, he has seen it before and does not want to cut his career short, but I tell him I will deal with any repercussions. I have done it before and can summon the strength to do it again. I have removed the grate covering the lazarette so the good Dr. can see that there is progress. I must now get Birnie to unlock the chains. Perhaps a bottle of wine will help convince him. If that fails, I will appeal directly to the men above decks. The weather has abated somewhat and the weak light grows longer each day. It is still freezing cold, but the worst is surely over.

March 4.

Mr. Birnie enjoyed his wine and is sleeping soundly today, I can hear the heavy snores through the closed door of his tiny cabin. I have employed the skills of the cooper, Mr. Falconer and his young assistant in removing the chain from the manacle around the Dr.'s ankle. After a week in that foul hole, the man is weak and skittish. We found him a brace of brandy and set him down on his cot in the cabin he shares with Billie. He refuses the laudanum, fearing perhaps that once he starts on that road he will travel too far. He sleeps and is quiet. I replaced the grate on the lazarette, and advised the men that I will take full responsibility for any consequences. They are afraid, but compliant.

My old acquaintance Tackritow came to me today and I greeted her as a long lost friend. My natural inclination to reserve fell away, so great was my pleasure at seeing a woman again, one who knows me from home, one not mixed up in this strange business. She looks a proper English lady, although her dress is deerskin and she wears sealskin outer garments, and speaks in a refined voice that she practised in England when she met the Queen. She brings me troubling information. She and her husband Harboch have been at Newbuian [Nuvujen Island] since September^{iv} taking care of the house there. He is able to hunt better there than the poor Esquimaux who stay at Kikertine and subsist on whatever scraps they can find. I asked if she had seen Mr. Penny and Billie on their way in her direction but she says no. That is odd, but what is odder is that she and Harboch see a sledge going NW, not south as they should be. "Toward Kingua? But it is so very far," I say to make sure I have understood correctly. "Yes, Mrs. Penny. And it is bad weather," she says as serious as can be. We talk long into the night, drinking tea alone together once the usual group of Esquimaux who come each evening leave us.

March 5

Although the communication Tackritow has brought is disturbing, I slept better last night than I have in a month. The sun grows stronger and the day is calm and bright. It is as if the weather reflects the shifting mood on our ship. I awoke to the knowledge that the Dr. is out of that foul hole, and that I am not so isolated as I was just two days before. Tackritow (she asks to be called Hannah now but I am unused to it) and Harboch stayed on board with me all night which was my first comfort in weeks. It helps give me back some of my natural enthusiasm for life.

They tell me of the madness that afflicts people at these latitudes when the sun comes back. It is well known, Tackritow says, and sometimes makes people rip off their clothes and dash into the freezing cold. "It is a demon that takes hold of them when they are weakened by darkness and doubt."^v She speaks of mysteries to me that in my own cottage and the clear light of day, would sound like utter nonsense because I am a practical and God-fearing woman. But in this land where the moon does not set and the sun does not rise, where day is dark and the night is lit by moonlight and aurora reflected

off snow, I can almost believe her. She does not like to speak of the gods and the shamans, preferring instead to dwell in the house of the Lord and trust in Jesus, but I see it is a part of her that is difficult to shake.

March 6

I saw myself in an instant of clarity through the fog of my dreams this morning and it caused me to sit up in bed with a jolt. In my dream, I stood in front of myself, a spectator in my own life. I was coming out of our safe little house in Aberdeen that I have cursed on so many occasions because of its dirt and its smells and its never-ending demands, but that I long for so dearly now that I cannot have it. I saw clearly the stone walls which need new mortar, the threshold in need of repair. Behind me I could see in detail the door, the grain of the wood, the black paint fading and peeling in the spots I know so well. I wore my dark bonnet and shawl, carrying the basket I take to the shops. I was closing the door behind me. Then instead of looking toward myself, I began to view the scene through my own eyes. As I turned from the door to the path ahead, I got such a shock! Rather than the cobblestone path to the street, what lay in front was a vast expanse of snow sparkling under the bright moonlight. I woke immediately, my heart pounding. Around me were the now-familiar sounds of the ship creaking in the cold, the wind blowing the woolen coverings protecting the deck, the snores of the men who occupy the aft quarters and the deep Arctic silence that envelops us all. The message was clear, like it came from my soul. I must leave the past behind. I must go forward.

March 7

Divine service led by Mr. Warmow. The Dr. in attendance and all the men expressing well-wishes to see him back. He moves slowly, as in a dream, and we have prevailed upon Mr. Birnie to unlock the manacle. The Dr.'s ankle is inflamed and bruised, but he professes that all is well in a quiet and dignified manner. Poor soul. Such a dreadful thing.

Tackritow and Harboch are at Kikertine, an hour or two away, getting supplies for our journey. We undertake to bring back the little band of travellers that is lost on the ice, for

even if Penny thinks he knows his way, I know he is lost. He either lied about where he was headed, or he has taken a wrong turn. Either way, he must be brought back. He carries precious cargo, young William, who might look like a young man to the world, but who is my only son and a baby to me. Penny is needed here with his crew to get us home safely. He cannot be allowed to desert us and drift away into this landscape as did Franklin, for whatever cause. It is as if I am Lady Jane herself, searching for my lost husband. I shall take command and give orders like a woman born to it. We will find and bring back the lost travellers, for lost they are, as sure as those 129 souls who M'Clintock searches for to this day.^{vi} Why do I think it is the Franklin spoils that so bedevil Mr. Penny? I'll warrant he feels he can beat M'Clintock to the answer. Never mind, Penny. Your search is over.

March 8

Odd how that once a thing is decided upon, it becomes possible to do. A week ago, we were in despair of ever finding ourselves and getting our lives back in order. A month ago, I could barely lift my head from the pillow, my grief at Penny's fevered rantings was so overwhelming. But today, an impossible journey seems like the only rational way to find our way back to normalcy.

I give instructions to Warmow to see to the Dr. although I know he will minister to all souls in need. Birnie will keep the men in line and the men will make sure that no ill comes to the Dr. since he is their only hope of keeping healthy. Capt. Cheyne will continue to oversee the station at Kikertine and his own ship's company. I have locked the wine and gin down in the lazarette, restoring it to its proper function as a storeroom in the captain's quarters. The doctor is given the key for safekeeping. The men all nod and agree with my orders as if it is the regular way to do business. I find an authority in my voice that comes from years of telling the children what to do. No one has questioned my right to do so, which surprises me, but I do not let it show. Perhaps I have learned from watching and listening to those whose haughty manner I have seen often enough. It is quite simple to imitate if one pretends to be a grand lady who assumes everyone will bow to her orders.

Hannah and Harboch return with a sledge full of supplies and more winter garments for me – an amautik^{vii} and sealskin boots which will be warmer than my deerskin-lined greatcoat and trowsers^{viii}, and will be waterproof if the snow begins to thaw. We take provisions for a three week journey, although we may be gone more, depending on where our search takes us. Harboch is considered a fine hunter and navigator, and I have no choice but to trust Providence that I am in good hands and doing the right thing. God help me Billie, I will get you back and see you safe home and you need never return to this strange land.

March 9-12

I am most confused. I break from everything I know, everything, to live this white dream I am in. Yet this is no dream, it is more real than the real of the veils of civilization at home where people say one thing and mean another. I feel this reality with a sharp stab of frigid air in my chest, I hear it in the squeaking of Tackritow's boots on the snow and the howling of the wind. Where do these thoughts come from? What does it mean that I write them down?

I have entered another world and have no knowledge of it. It is as when I was born into this world, a helpless infant, crying at the bright light and the cold air after being in the warm dark womb for nine months. I relied on my mother to nurse me and make me comfortable and could not explain my needs, nay, did not know my needs, was aware only of discomfort and pain and pleasure.

So it is tonight wrapped in furs while Tackritow tends the oil lamp to keep us warm in this makeshift snow house left behind by earlier travellers – perhaps the ones we are looking for. Harboch has left us here, turned southwest toward Nuvujen to search in the direction Penny was supposed to go, and we continue north, into the wind, two women six dogs and one gun. I do not know the time of day anymore, and know the date only because I cross off the squares in a small calendar I made. I have relinquished all pretence of knowledge or control over the situation. I am mesmerized, in one of those

trances I have dismissed in the past as pure balderdash, all that tosh of seeing Franklin in a cold place.^{ix} My fingers ache to the bone, I can hold the pencil no longer.

I write to remember. I write to forget.

March 14

More days and nights of travel. The wind is in our faces, always in our faces as we head NW. The silence is as white as the land and the sky. I am enveloped in it, like it is heaven, like I have lost my ability to see colour. I hear only the rhythmic breathing of Tacritow as she drives the dogs forward. Hear the panting of the dogs in day and their howling at night. Few words are ever spoken, there is no need and there is no energy to spare. Sometimes she sings a tuneless song over and over, A ya ya. Aya ya. I do not catch the other words. When I ask her, she says they are the songs her father sang travelling over the land and will keep us safe.^x

It is Sunday and for the first time in my life, I lead Divine Service. I say the words I have heard since childhood, and add new ones. Thank you God for showing me the way, thank you for my loved ones, thank you for the help you give me. Please show me the way home. We sleep in a small shelter Tackritow has dug from the snow, not a full snow house. It is a week like this. I fall into trances or deep sleeps brought about by the repetitious sounds and the white fog we drive through.

March 16

Yesterday we reached the camp near Kingua where the man who lost his toes came from.^{xi} A few edloos, maybe twenty people here. We are curiosities, two women alone, especially me, a white woman. I am something new, I know. They have never seen anything like me. We were invited to share a fresh caught seal in the largest edloo in the camp. We supplied the tea and sugar and are made most welcome. Tackritow spoke in low tones to the men gathered, and one woman tended the little oil lamp, constantly moving the wick around to make sure the light does not go out. Other women sat around, chewing on skins to make them pliable. I feel most queer to be stared at and talked about,

but I know I look peculiar to them. It makes me shudder now to think how Tackritow and Harboch were gawked at when they came to England, how they were put in exhibitions as oddities. In this cold world, I am the strange creature who does not know the rules, who cannot speak the language, who cannot survive without intervention. God forgive me my arrogance.

Many people crowded into the edloo to see the lady kabloona^{xii} and to share in the seal meat. It became quite hot after awhile and everyone, including the women, stripped to the waist.^{xiii} I did not know where to look I was so shocked, but Tackritow did not join them. We remained in our deerskin trowsers and woollen shirts, an odd dress for these people, I know. Even though the outside temperature was frigid, we were sweltering, and in the darkness lit only by oil lamp, with the horrid smells of seal and filthy bodies, I felt most light-headed. A man came in and everyone made way for him. He was very full of himself, I felt. He grunted and growled and then laughed like he was possessed. Around his neck, he wore a necklace of long teeth which I know now are from the walrus and around his waist was a belt with many objects dangling from it. He came up very close to my face and stared into my eyes and the smell of him and the fright he gave me nearly made me faint. Tackritow spoke to him in a singsong voice, rising and falling like an incantation. Then he allowed himself to be tied up with his hands behind his back and his head lashed to his knees, his legs stretched straight in front of him. Tackritow told me to close my eyes and not open them until she said so. I did not need telling for I did not want to watch such a fearful sight. The man started chanting and humming and the people echoed his words. His voice grew louder and seemed to come from different parts of the edloo. There was a whooshing sound, then everything went silent. Someone took up a little song that had no rhyme or reason to me and others joined in. Nobody spoke. I heard breathing, shuffling, sniffing, even snoring but there was no talk. How long this lasted I cannot say for I must have fallen asleep. Certainly I have no recollection of feeling the time pass. But with a jolt, the man was active and talking, as though he had just swooped into the room from an unseen hole in the edloo. I was most astonished. I opened my eyes instinctively and saw that others had too. He stood in front of us and spoke in so forceful a manner that he commanded total attention of everyone in the room. Some of the women

cried and talked to him in a most distraught manner, I did not know what was happening. When he finished speaking to them, Tackritow looked at me and asked if I might have a token to give to the man. Not having any idea of what I had just witnessed, but caught in the grip of its power, I took off the little silver cross that my mother had given me on my wedding day, and gave it to the man. I do not know what possessed me to give away such a treasure, for it was quite precious to me, but I did not give it a second thought. The man seemed most pleased with the cross and added it to his belt. There were murmurings of approval and people started talking to each other, none of which I could follow of course, but the tone seemed genial, and the man withdrew back out of the small tunnel that forms the entryway to the edloo. Gradually the others also withdrew and Tackritow showed me my place on the sleeping platform, between one of the young girls, and Tackritow herself. I remember nothing more until I woke this morning and began to write this.

We will have tea and set off. The day is clear and bright and the wind has dropped.

March 17

I am in a room with stone walls, in a big bed. There is a window with a deep sill that I see when I open my eyes. The day looks grand. I am not sure where I am, but it is a nice place with high ceilings and I am warm and feel no fear. Perhaps I am a guest at a country estate, in a fine manor house. I get up out of bed and wonder where Billie might be. I cannot remember where he is, where he spent the night. I go out of the door and step into an atrium with soaring ceilings. It is unadorned, not a glittering hall like those French palaces, nor even like Windsor castle. I see grey stone walls, very high ceilings, deep windows and a stone floor. I begin to walk through the hall, opening doors gingerly to see if Billie is there. Through an arched window in the hall I look out to a pastoral scene of great beauty. Under a clear azure sky, sheep graze on the greenest hills I have ever seen – so many shades of green I cannot count. Trees and bushes and grasses sway in a gentle breeze. Bronze clouds sweep across the sky. Warm air floats through the window, smelling of earth and sweet life.

I hear someone call my name. “Margaret. Mrs. Penny,” a woman says as if she has been on her way to find me. I look toward a passageway across from the window. A woman of authority, perhaps a housekeeper, strides toward me accompanied by two young maids. She carries in her hands a wooden chest, solid looking, dark wood carved in a decorative pattern, brass fittings for the lock and hinges.

“Where’s Billie,” I ask. “Where’s my son?”

“He’s out there,” she nods toward the window. “He’s fine. Here. This is for you.” I am confused. I cannot think what would be for me in that fine chest.

“But Billie. I can’t remember where he is. I can’t find him. I’m worried about my son.”

“There is no need for concern. He is just outside that window. Here. This is what you’re here for. What you’ve been looking for,” and she slowly begins to open the lid of the chest.

I peer inside and recoil. It is the head of John Franklin, its eyes yellow and rheumy, his teeth rotten, smiling in a death grin like a skeleton.

The lid comes down swiftly on the box and I wake up with a shock.

March 18

We have finally stopped again, and Tackitrow made us a cozy little snow house in quick order. She lights her oil lamp and warms some stew in a pot. I write in this scribbler words that can never be read by anyone, but it is as if I write for an unseen audience. Perhaps I am that audience, a spectator to my own thoughts. This need to record what is happening is still quite new to me as the blue and white world that I find myself in. If I am not myself, then I wonder who I am and who it was in this place before. It makes me giddy to write such foolishness. And anxious, for fear that I will like it too much and not be able to return to normal, which is the whole purpose of this journey.

While I have a chance, I will set down what I can since the night of the wizard. The head religious man here is the shaman or angakok, Tackritow calls him both names. If I understand properly, he is feared and respected, but mostly feared. He interprets the rules of nature. I would say he is like a priest who interprets the word of God, but there is a

difference. Tackritow is most reluctant to discuss her knowledge in this matter, preferring to say, “I am a Christian, if you please, Margaret. I love Jesus.” But little by little over the past 36 hours, I have learned a bit about what happened.

The shaman told Tackritow that he has seen Penny and Billie, about two days from here in the direction we are headed. The constellation she calls something like Nanurjuk guides us as it appears late in the afternoon in the NE and travels far across the sky to set in the NW before dawn. We know the hour of the day because of the position of Ursa Major as it circles Polaris. They have different names of course for these things. It sounds like Tukturyuk and Nootooituk, but I cannot hear or say them properly let alone spell them.^{xiv} Tackritow tells me that when the shaman was tied up, he went into a trance. He left his body and became a bird to fly over the land to see what lies ahead. Shamans have this power, she says, to transform into animals and take on their spirits. He then travelled under the sea to plead with Sedna to release the seals. He says we will find more than the two kabloonas when we reach our destination, but that we will be safe.

“How can he travel like this, Tackritow? What does he do?”

“I am Hannah now, Margaret. I prefer this name. I follow Jesus.”

“How does the shaman mesmerize us all?”

“The angakok has many powers we do not understand. But this man is ruled by good, not evil, so I believe God is with him.”

“Do you not have many gods? Many spirits. I have heard stories of Sedna whose father cut off her fingers.”

“Do not speak of things you do not understand Margaret, please. There are gods and there are spirits. Sedna lives at the bottom of the ocean and the shaman must visit her from time to time to comb her hair since she cannot do it herself anymore. If she is pleased with the angakok, she will free the seals she holds captive so they will come up to the surface of the water and we can hunt them to survive. When he returns to his body there is always a price to pay, and it is always the women who pay it. We must confess if we have eaten raw meat during our monthly time for that is forbidden and it can bring starvation to the community. We must confess if we lose a baby before it is born. We must live separate and alone in our own tiny iglu before and after we give birth, until the

bleeding stops. We cannot eat raw meat at this time. There are many tabus that cannot be broken and we live in fear of breaking them. We are always afraid, the women, of displeasing the shaman, of breaking the rules, of being left on our own to face the elements and of bringing starvation to our people.^{xv} Please do not make me speak of it, it scares me so just to tell you. I love Jesus. He does not frighten me.”

“The shaman seemed pleased with the silver cross I gave him.”

“It is because you wished him well. You gave it freely in good spirit. Every gift conveys strength. It is the thought which goes with it that gives strength.”^{xvi}

And so the conversations go. T. is more reserved than the most proper lady back home. I seem a loquacious flibbertigibbet in comparison, and it unsettles me to feel so.

March 20

I know that it is the equinox today and it gives me such hope to know that the sun keeps coming our way. We are within sight of something on the horizon. The air is so clear after the swirling snows that I can see not only what is ahead, but what is ahead of that. This is not possible. In the sky, I see the shapes of what lies ahead. Is this vision the same kind that caused poor John Ross to see mountains where they did not exist as he travelled through Lancaster Sound so many years ago?^{xvii} Did the world make jokes at his expense and cause him to lose his reputation for seeing what is so clearly in view? I see it now, I can see ahead.

March 21

I lead Divine Service once more. I repeat the familiar words but with more meaning. I see that more phenomena apply to the ancient words that we all repeat over and over.

Tackritow’s people believe that after death people go either go up and become the people of day or they go under the sea, where there is a narrow belt of land with sea on either side. These are the people of the narrow land. They go to one or the other of these places depending on how they die – if they have been murdered or suffer terribly, they become people of the day. Either way, both places are good, the people are happy and there is always enough to eat. She has names for them – they sounds like Oovlormiut and

Kimmeoo-arniut but again, I do not hear them right.^{xviii} It is a revelation to me that primitive people have beliefs that echo those of civilized Christians, for how different is such an understanding of the after world from ours? “Meaning comes from privation and suffering,” she says. “This is what my people know and what I believe. Only in great solitude and suffering can we grow.”^{xix}

March 22

I am walking alone in the cemetery, aware of the fallen leaves and the distant smell of roses in the humid air, head down, arms pumping, pushing ahead. I see names on the stones and they register on the periphery of my brain: Franklin, Crozier, Goodsir, M'Donald. I seem to be in a kind of lather, forging ahead, seeing only my feet and the ground that I walk on. Then the grass turns to snow, and instead of my sturdy shoes, I am walking on sealskin boots and snowshoes. I come to a fork in the path and look up to get my bearings: that is when I see the doe and two young deer. At first, I think they are statues because they are so still and they stare at me intently, as if through marble eyes. For the longest time I hold their gaze and none of us moves. We are still and there is not a sound, not a whisper of a breeze. “I will not hurt you,” I say. “I do not want to harm anything. Please do not bar my way.” The doe looks to her young ones, the only movement that proves to me these are living creatures, and slowly but surely, they vanish into the frost mist.

I wake up knowing I have encountered one of the lords of life. I do not even understand what that means, but I know it is true all the same.

March 23

It is late and I can barely find energy to write. I must tuck everything away now, my relief, my grief, my needs, and be still. Suffice for the moment to record that I have found what I was searching for, my son and my husband, and now to sleep to dream again.

March 24

The moon had not set in several days, it circled us in the sky. We found Billie first, saw his shape on the northern horizon, walking around and around. The sky was pale blue, lit

by the moon low on the horizon. We could hear the dogs howling for miles before we saw anything. When we finally saw his shape, and he could make out ours, we began rushing to each other, as if we knew who it was. In the strange twilight, in the enveloping silence, we yelled: "Billie!" "Mum!" My heart leaped, and I jumped off the sledge to get to him before the exhausted dogs could get us there. We must have looked at each other as strangers for a moment, both of us wearing sealskin head to toe, the beginnings of a beard on his young face, mine reddened by the wind and dusted with snow that forever blows from the NW. In the middle of nowhere, no signs, no distinguishing landscape that I could tell, nothing but snow and sky, we found each other. We hugged and held on for dear life, I laughed and sniffed at his neck, my baby, my son, my sweet boy! Never had I experienced such relief in my years. He must have been surprised at my lack of reserve, for he held me back for a moment to search deeply into my eyes, before he gave way to the comfort of his mother's embrace. It was pure joy. I wiped tears on my face, knowing now how quickly they can freeze and cause pain. It is painful to record what comes next and more time may be needed to understand what is in my heart before I can set down the words in my head. There is much work to be done here before we can return.

Hannah hunts with Billie and shows him how to wait without movement at a seal hole. We will need an abundance of fresh meat if we are to survive our journey back to the ship in good health. It is the fresh meat that keeps the scurvy at bay and helps keep the mind clear. I begin to fear that the cans of food from home cloud the mind and weaken us all because I never feel right when I have eaten from them.

There is still the problem of Penny himself, but I will give that another day to settle before committing words to a page.

March 25

We need to be on our way today, but the weather has turned stormy and we are forced to put off our departure. Between the wind howling and the dogs howling and the baby crying, it is enough to try the patience of a saint. And I am not feeling so very saintly at the moment.

Hannah has taken P to make ready the sledges. They ice the runners with small amounts of water, then polish them with soft fur so they will glide swiftly across the snow. They will check all the leads to make sure the dogs are attached securely and cannot break free. Billie is hunting for birds close by. I have gathered our supplies together and organized them so we can pack and make good our escape from this place. With everyone thus occupied, I have a few moments to write. Perhaps it will help me sort my thoughts in preparation for what lies ahead.

When Billie first brought us to this edloo I had no idea what awaited me. Since making the decision to come after my family, I had given little thought to what lay ahead, so critical was our attention to immediate detail. Every aspect of the weather, the direction of the wind, the shape of the snowdrifts, the changing constellations all of this was calculated and recalculated for as long as we were moving.^{xx} With my hat on and the big amautik hood over that, sometimes the only sound I heard was my own breathing and the creaking of the dry hard snow. I believe I fell into trances lulled by the monotony of sights and the repetition of sounds.

So great was my awakening and joy at seeing Billie, at finding him in such a huge open place, I did not gird myself for what I might see next. On his own small sledge, he led us to a sparse encampment another half hour northwest. A few of the women came to see who we were and once more, I became the centre of attention, since I am the first kabloona woman they have ever seen. As always, Tackritow smoothed the way and made everything right with her unique combination of abilities – her knowledge of local ways, her command of English, and her refined and charming way with everyone she meets. It is a wonder that such a young woman can be so very accomplished. Billie tugged at my sleeve and brought us to one of the edloos. He said only “Everything will be okay mum, now that you’re here. I’ll help you.” And with that he vanished into the narrow tunnel that led to the main room of the edloo. I followed.

When I emerged, I was in a room about five feet around. Very cramped and dark. A young woman sat on an ice platform at one end of the room, tending the oil lamp which

had only a few weak flames while she nursed an infant. It took my eyes awhile to get accustomed to the gloom after spending so many days in the brilliant white outdoors. I heard the scraping sound of a bone blade being sharpened on stone, the sound of an edloo I have heard before. A man dressed in native furs, face darkened by soot and hair wild and matted, was sharpening the blade. He looked up at me and I down at him and it was as if he had taken that blade and flung it at me, so great was the wound I received when I realized that it was my husband I was looking at. And his child.^{xxi} For as my senses returned to me I saw that the baby had auburn hair and when the mother held it proudly for me to examine, I saw that the eyes were blue. Oh the pain at writing those words, although God knows that it pales in comparison to the wretchedness I actually felt. Never will I be able to capture the shock, the hurt, the rage and the fear that coursed through me at that moment. Perhaps it is best to be unable to express it in writing, for truly, I do not want to dwell on such feelings and live them again.

Much was the captain's surprise at seeing his wife of 18 years standing before him in an edloo, dressed as a native woman when he believed her to be more than one hundred miles away on a frozen ship, alone with 40 men, one of whom cried piteously all day and all night from under her parlour floor. I may never understand where I summoned the knowledge of what to do. Perhaps it was part of the magic of the shaman. Maybe it came from Billie's simple words of belief that I would do what is right. Or maybe God stepped in and helped me speak, as he helped Moses' brother Aaron challenge the Pharaoh of Egypt. "Penny. It is time to return to the ship. Your men need you very much and the whaling season is almost upon us. Get your things together. We must go. Now."

I must have spoken these words with great authority, for even I heard the glacial tone in my voice. I was fortunate that my fear was not apparent.

Tackritow stood quietly behind me, then came forward. "Harboch go to Nuvujen. Make sure men okay and doing jobs. You go now. Harboch need you. Men need you. Lazy without you. Spring coming early for whales." I found this little speech most surprising as Hannah pretended to speak Esqi English when I know her use of the language quite

superior. Then she went over to the young woman and baby and started speaking to her in that quiet way of her people.

I am most weary after three days here, trying to understand all that has gone on. The others return now from their labours. Everything is made ready for our departure. Cannot write more. Tomorrow, I hope we are out of this dreadful hovel.

March 27

Another day of storm, but we are ever closer to our goal. Hannah tends the lamp while the others sleep and I make tea. She tells me that the girl comes from the last settlement we were at, she is part of the shaman's big family. I ask what will become of her and the baby and she says only, "She will be protected. Her family is strong. The shaman has many iglus and many wives and people bring him gifts to pay for his help." I think of the way wealth and privilege protect the behaviour of our own Lady Jane who travels the world with men other than her husband and who takes a young woman as constant companion.

Penny himself is docile, like a dog who has been beaten, all his rage of the last month somehow dissipated. He makes plans to return and is ready to go, but I do not know all of what has gone on here, we do not talk much. This fact is strange in itself for a man so full of bluff and bluster, but he is not himself, and I wonder if I can truly get him back from where his mind now resides. His hair and beard are most unkempt, and his eyes have a wild haunted look about them, lined and tired and sad. He grows old quickly in this place.

Our sleeping arrangement on the ice platform I will bury in the deep recesses of my mind, and hope never to relive. As is the way in edloos, we must all huddle together on the skins covering the ice, and they fairly crawl with vermin. We cover ourselves with furs and keep surprisingly warm. I refuse to adhere to the native way of sleeping naked. I will not remove my woollens. We lie together, Hannah, then me, then Penny, Billie, the baby, and the mother. I owe my life to Hannah and her competence and grace. I will trust in her discretion.

March 28

I remind Penny of his duty to read Divine Service and he recalls the phrases that are etched in his memory. Is it my imagination or do the words take hold of him. Can mere words possess power to take him back to that civilized place he seems to have forgotten here? He looks at me during the service and nods. "Thank you Margaret," he says afterwards, one of the few things he has said all week.

We leave immediately after "Amen" having packed and repacked for two days. I have not spoken to the creature who nurses the baby. I cannot, God forgive me, not even on the Lord's day, cannot speak to her or look at that blue-eyed infant.

March 30

It has been a journey of signs and portents although to look at things this way is fanciful, I know well. Turning back toward Kikertine has been a blessing in itself. We now travel into the sun with the wind that Hannah calls "uangnak"^{xxii} at our backs. The world is much brighter and less threatening, and the way is easier than it was when we set out, although we must continue to take great care. The moon is full and in the brilliance of the sun, it multiplies so we see its full halo on either side of it. It is a wondrous sight seen only at these latitudes. It shows my ignorance to say that I would never have believed that such a thing could exist, but now that I see it for myself, I am in awe once more of the greatness of nature. If I live to tell people at home of such miracles, they will think me mad. The sun now conforms to what I know as normal, it rises in the east and sets in the west, and gives me back some of my old optimism for the first time in months. I will take these to be signs that all will be well.

When we stop for tea, Billie asks Hannah how it is that the sun and moon can be seen together in the sky. "They are brother and sister," she says. "In the very old days they lived here on earth, but the brother did wrong and the sister exposed him by smudging soot on his face. He got angry and chased her round and round the igloo. They ran so fast round and round that his torch went out, but hers stayed lit. Soon they went up into the sky, where she became the sun and he became the moon but where they are always

together.” She looks at me, and I silently thank her, because during our long journey, she has told me the real version of the story, in which the brother’s crime is incest, and the sister cuts off her breast and offers it to him for the whole community to see. But Hannah knows that Billie has seen enough unpleasantness and so keeps the story short.^{xxiii}

April 1

We again reach the settlement at Kingua where we first met the shaman two weeks ago. We make no less of an impression this time, since our little caravan now comprises six people, not two. The ladies are most gracious toward me, smiling and seeming pleased to see the lady kabloona again. I grow accustomed to being an oddity, but do not relish the position. They remind me very much of the friends I have made at Kikertine when I serve tea or go out on the land to pick berries with them, and suddenly I feel a longing to see them again and go back to that innocent time. Again, were it not for Hannah’s impressive knowledge of languages and human nature we would be lost. With few words, she found the young woman’s people and they surrounded her and the baby protectively and walked them to a small edloo off a little ways from the others. So quietly and simply did this occur that we almost questioned that it happened at all. Then the men came and greeted Penny heartily and they all began sharing their news. The roughness and volume of their voices cut through the stillness of the women’s small movements and low-pitched discussion. Reports of an old kabloona in the region, one who came from the white man’s boats from long ago, everyone now agreed were false. The men had gone in different directions to see if the stories were true, of the man who had survived and ended up at Pond’s Bay [Pond Inlet] up north. “M’Donald. Doctoq. Smart man. Know land.” “Yes!” Penny jumped in, animated for the first time I had seen in over a week, since we found him in that squalor. “M’Donald knows the land and the sea up there. He went whaling with me nearly twenty years ago, and knows the ways of your people. He was with me when we brought old Eenoo back home – even wrote a book about Eenoo. If anyone of those navy pansies could survive in the rough, it would be M’Donald!” But all agreed that the trail was as cold as the land. There was no man. No message waiting in a cairn. There were no relics to be found in this part of the country.

I looked at Penny. “Do you mean to say that you undertook this journey to find the trinkets of a man you know full well is dead? You are aware that you put the lives of your family and of the men entrusted to your care in jeopardy? Answer me William. Answer me now, for your wife of 18 years deserves to know the truth.”

“I did not know him to be dead, and that is the truth, woman. I could not rest until I knew for certain that all hope was lost. I could not, in all conscience let my old friend go without one more try.”

“Then you can rest now, because he is dead as are the rest of those poor souls who travelled with that man, as unsuitable as could be for such a journey.^{xxiv} It is no wonder his wife still searches for his remains since she is to blame for the folly of that trip. I am weary of hearing about it all, and feigning interest. Leave them be. Forget the chase. It is over.”

We sleep tonight in an edloo as a family – Hannah, Billie, me and Penny.

April 4

We are well rested and re-supplied to continue our journey. Penny led Divine Service and a joyful one it is for it is Easter. Billie tells the story of how our Lord Jesus rose from the dead on this day to ascend into Heaven. The natives nod – it is familiar to them. They say that because he was tortured and suffered physical agony and was murdered, he went to the after world where they are happy and jubilant for eternity.^{xxv} There would have been a time where such description I would have called blasphemous. No more. “He is risen” seems well understood by all.

April 5

We are back on the trail southeast into the sun. The days and nights are distinct and equal, so we regain our natural rhythms. The days are clear and most pleasant, often above the freezing point, and the travelling is swift. Hannah says this is the best time of year to travel overland, the snow conditions are perfect.^{xxvi} The nights are clear and very cold and the aurora sweep across the sky in tones of red and violet, green and white. Without the dogs and the wind howling, it is so silent that we can hear them swish past us, like silk curtains in the finest drawing room.

We travel on two sledges, Penny and Billie in the lead, and the women behind to watch over everything. Ten more days perhaps until we rejoin civilization. How queer it seems now to imagine us back on the ship in our own quarters. I hope all is well, but since there is nothing I can do to alter what may await us, I will fall back on my old ways of cheerfulness and hope. This journey has given me confidence that we can face what lies ahead.

April 7

The fine weather could not last of course. Another storm has come upon us and winds gust from the NW as usual.^{xxvii} How I will welcome a SE gale when I return home! Never again will I complain about the damp winds from the low countries. Hannah and Penny set about to making a quick snow house, she has all the skills of a man, but maintains at all times the modesty so prized in women. It is good to see my husband active at physical labour once more. It does him good, I believe. Young William helped me unpack only the bare necessities to feed us and keep the edloo warm. He and his father now tend to the dogs, as I write these few words and Hannah prepares our sleeping platform. We have a cozy little den and we are safe from the storm.

April 8

The storm passed, but the rage that fuelled Penny in the past asserted itself once more. As we continued our journey this morning, Hannah and Billie took turns driving one of the sledges and sleeping while Penny and I took the other. Perhaps it is the dogs, nearly wild as wolves, that bring out the aggression in him. It is no matter. His invective has lost much of its sting. He lashed the dogs to make them go faster, heaven forefend that we should fall behind a lass and lad.

“You might want to conserve some energy, William, for the days ahead.”

“I’ll not be needing your advice, woman. I think you forget yourself.”

“You would be a fortunate man, indeed, were I to be able to forget what I have witnessed here, husband.”

“Enough of your chatter. I could’ve secured our future if I’d found M’Donald or another of Franklin’s men. Even a relic – a spoon, or a button or some papers. I’d’ve been a rich man. A hero.”

“Franklin, again! I’ll not hear that name uttered any more. It has caused more grief and anguish than any other I have ever heard in my lifetime. At any rate, it is not the great man who ate his boots of whom I speak, William. I speak of the evil that you have done here, and you understand full well.”

“Evil is it? A man takes comfort where he can, especially in this hard land. If his wife will not be with him, he has the right to maintain his health and his manhood however he can. If such unions produce offspring, so much the better, for they will be a race with the hardiness of the mothers and the intelligence of their fathers!”^{xxviii}

“You brazen fool, William. Keep your voice down and your opinions to yourself for once. Were it not for Hannah, that young mother would be alone and her baby left to die on an ice floe. You would be well to put all this behind you and think about your son.”

“That baby is the future of these people!”

“Then God help these people. You have seen how they suffer already at the hands of those who use them. They have learned much evil. You of all people know this to be true for why else would you have worked for years to get a missionary here to help them? Think, William, I beg you to use your rational powers. You are most fortunate that the child is part of a powerful family, and not a threat to anyone. She will be useful for sewing clothing and preparing the meat and skins from the kills. And if she is blessed, she will have healing skills as well, for the blood of the shaman may run strong in her.”

“You talk like a madwoman, Mrs. Penny.”

“You are fortunate that I am not one. And you would do well not to speak to me with such disrespect in the future. For now, calm yourself and cool the heat of your anger. I can take over the reins so you can rest a spell.” I am surprised when he relinquishes control of the sledge and allows me to carry on while he sleeps.

April 9

I was running somewhere, I needed to catch up, and ran full-out like I haven't done since I was a lass. I didn't have my shoes on and needed to go home to get them so I ran like the wind. I ran so fast, it was so exhilarating, but I could not stop. As I ran, my feet may have lifted off a bit, I was light as air, but I possessed enough gravity to keep close to the ground. I was running (flying?) over a herd of caribou, many more than I knew existed. Were they miniatures like toy soldiers, or was I seeing from far overhead? I do not know, it is unclear. But they went on and on in a long line, and I was travelling so quickly I could not stop. Finally, I managed to suppress my speed and turn back to the place where I would find my shoes. Rather than fly back over the route I had just been, I followed a big map on the wall that scrolled more quickly through where I had been and where I was going. I got to my house, the cottage and walked up the cobblestone walk. I turned the knob on the door and found myself, not in the little hallway facing the stairs leading up to the bedrooms or back to the kitchen or into the morning room, but in a room I did not recognize with carpets on the floor and open doorways leading to more rooms I did not know. I was with an old friend, who I did not recognize either.

I woke up with a start and felt the bodies on either side of me, Billie and William. I took deep breaths and tried to recall where I had just been, the big caribou herd, my little house in Aberdeen so far away, and the strange rooms I did not know. I listened to the stillness of the Arctic night – the only sounds were Penny's snores and the breathing of Billie and Hannah. I was sweltering in my woollen underclothes, and so crept out from under the furs blanketing us, and backed my way out of the edloo. For a few moments I breathed the frigid air of an April night in the high arctic, the heat of my body protecting me. In the heavens I saw the most astonishing show of aurora. Instead of sweeping across the sky, the lights positively shot up into the heavens, beams of brilliant white light pointing to a single place, a vanishing point in the sky.^{xxix} Was this another vision I was seeing or was the universe capable of such miracles? I heard the sound of movement behind me and a fur was thrown around my shoulders. "Come back inside, lass. It won't do to have you getting sick." "William, have you ever seen such a sight?" "Never in all my years, girl. It is a wonder of God."

April 10

I begin to recognize landmarks – snowdrifts, the mountains to the west. We must be driving over the frozen water. Explosive sounds of ice cracking punctuate the silence and give us a terrible fright. We press on beyond all endurance, knowing that at any moment, a piece of ice could split off from the rest and we could be cast adrift on an ice floe, or plunge into the frigid depths to join Sedna in her strange world at the bottom of the sea. We stop only briefly to make a cup of tea and I am able to record these few words. We dare not stop longer at this point, it is too perilous.

April 11

How is it possible to describe my vision this morning, after driving all night? The sun rose early due east, filling the sky with brilliance to welcome us home. I first saw rough shapes near the horizon, but not trusting my eyes and fearing snow blindness, I did not speak. Closer and closer we came, yet the vision persisted. It seemed not to be an illusion, not mere refraction which has tricked so many arctic travellers so many times in the past. I believed I actually saw the masts of two ships, God be praised. Both sledges pushed ahead, harder, faster than ever, and after many hours saw with clarity that the vision was no illusion, but a real sight – our ships. We were home.

I write this now, quickly, in the dark of the night, in my little privy, with a candle as only illumination. Exhaustion has set in. I could sleep forever. But I must record the almost painful joy to be on deck once more and hear Mr. Warmow read Divine Service. He had already conducted service for the men in the morning, but all agreed a second celebration was in order. Warmow read in a most heartfelt manner, and we enjoyed exceeding warmth and goodwill of all the men on board, who were roused from their beds to welcome home the weary travellers. But it is very late now and all are back to their dreams, so the ship is quiet save for the normal sounds of creaking wood, wind in the rigging, and water beneath us. Never have I felt such relief. Never have the words of the service meant so much to me. It will take time to reflect on all that I have observed just this one day, let alone the past month. For now, it is enough to tuck this record into its old

safe place and sleep in a bed of straw, covered in linen and wool. Oh merciful heaven, this will be like the finest palace.

April 12

I write again late at night safe in the only private spot I have. I am not complaining, it is heavenly to sit again on this little throne. How odd to think that not so long ago, I found it a cramped, foul wooden closet, freezing and dark. Now it is my study and library. It might well be a bathing chamber in a Roman palazzo for the luxury it affords me here.

The day was a whirlwind of activity. The ship fairly buzzed, such was the vibration and pitch of the busyness on board. Explanations to the men, thanks to Mr. Birnie and Capt. Cheyne for keeping the men safe and the ships and settlements in working order. Dr. Grant and Mr. Warmow were praised for their gallant work to maintain the health and morale of the men. The story goes that while Capt. Penny and young William were on their way to Newbuian, they met with some natives who retold the story of the white man at Pond's Bay who had survived the Franklin disaster. The man was said to have left there to come south, and so a final search was hastily organized and all available men headed NW to see if they could find even a trace of him. Penny was personally involved because there were reports that the man might have been his colleague from the old days, Alexander M'Donald, "the young doctor who wrote the book about Eeno - Tackritow's brother." Penny spun the story as an old sea captain tells his tales on the wharf. "But all was for naught, there was no Franklin survivor and there are no relics in these parts. We must lay those thoughts and those men to rest. Thanks to Mrs. Penny and Tackritow for meeting us halfway with fresh supplies for we were weary and hungry when they found us." It was a pretty speech indeed. And how quickly we adapt to our circumstances. Now that the days are growing longer and brighter we get out the veil once more, to shade us from the glare.

April 13

Already it is more difficult to find time to write. I am running out of pages and do not want to ask for another scribbler for fear of arousing suspicion. In some ways, I need it less now, but it has comforted me to take time to listen to my thoughts.

April 14

My first days on board were a joyous rediscovery. I felt home again, and delighted in the mundane little things that are familiar and good. The small skylights cut into the floor of the upper deck captured the spring sun and shone like jewels in the ceiling of my tiny bedroom. The well-worn floorboards gave off the smell of warm wood. The upper deck fairly shone as the men kept everything in topnotch shape. All men were employed making ready the gear in each of the whale boats. They sing the old sailor songs of their fathers as they work and the rhythm and repetition brings to mind Hannah's aya ya songs. I walk about above decks and take deep breaths and smile. I keep Billie in sight and marvel at how the simple details bring such joy.

April 15

Hannah has left me today to fetch Harboch from Newbuian. It is the first time we have been apart in more than a month and I feel very odd to be alone in this man's world again. She has gone with several of the crew and Dr. Grant and Mr. Warmow. These fellows are in need of the activity of such a journey, as much as the people at the whaling station there must surely be in need the ministrations of the doctor and the missionary. Once more I trust her discretion. She wondered if I might accompany her on this little trip, but I felt my purpose was better served here.

April 17

The first days without Hannah feel very queer, but I get into a new routine quickly. I have asked the steward to get a big cauldron of water boiling for me and I scrub the sheets that have covered our bed for months. I wash underclothes and dresses and hang them all out above decks, like an Aberdeen housewife in her backyard. I have scrubbed myself as well, for my horror at seeing my changed appearance when first we returned from our

journey has caused me to wash several times a day. When I first glimpsed myself in a mirror, I had to look twice, so great was the shock – I almost did not recognize myself. My face was filthy, smeared about with grease and soot, sitting in all the nooks and crannies. My hair was wild and matted – it has taken days to get a comb through it all. My hands and nails looked like those of a dockworker, and I smelled like one too – or worse – like the stench of an old edloo.

Everything so quickly returns to normal that I wonder if the past month was another fevered dream, or a vision in the sky. Fanciful thoughts for a woman who has seen much.

April 18

Since Mr. Warmow is off to Newbuian, Divine Service is read by Capt. Penny. This is his first since we returned and the men were most sincere in their devotions. I confess I had to hold myself back from adding some of the elements that Hannah and I put in our services. That would not do here. There is not point in upsetting the cart no sooner than it is upright to satisfy personal need. I say my own prayers in silence.

The men tend to their Sunday chores and then go over to Kikertine, the ice still holds. The weather is fine and bright and no one speaks anymore of obsessions or evil. There is good hunting. The men shoot birds and catch fish at the floe edge. There is small game enough to keep us in fresh meat so we have no need of the canned goods. It is as if the world has turned and our earlier troubles and misfortune have come back as beneficence. The Lord works in mysterious ways indeed.

April 20

There is a whale! Early this morning, we heard the shout from the crow's nest and from the silence of a sleeping ship suddenly erupted the noises of industry at full speed. The pounding of footsteps in the hatches. The barking out of orders. The men grab their clothes and get dressed on their way down the gangway. Each one has a place, each one has a job and they are out of bed and running hard for their boats within five minutes.

This is what they have come for, this will pay their way for a little while. After a dismal autumn of fishing, we are off to a very early start.

April 21

What a day was yesterday. Activity from beginning to end. Five boats gave chase to the great fish and Billie and I watched with the telescope. Penny's boat led the race and after an hour, reached the whale. The carpenter was in the crow's nest and as soon as he saw Penny shoot the fish, he gave chase to help bring the beast back in. From there, the men worked steadily, hauling the huge creature back through the water then alongside the ship where the flinching^{xxx} began immediately. It was another enormous catch, like the one caught in the fall. The bone measured 11 feet.^{xxxii} The work has continued without cease today, and all hands are employed cutting and bone and blubber and storing it below decks. The men are elated although exhausted and sleep in shifts. I enjoy some solitude in the cabin as the Capt. labours with his crew. I feel spoiled, like a lady of privilege, sleeping alone on clean sheets.

April 22

Hannah and Harboch returned today with the Dr. and Mr. Warmow. It was a joyous homecoming for me to see them again for the weather has turned and there are some stormy days. Billie and Dr. Grant were likewise happy to see each other, they have become close sharing their little quarters. The doctor is near to the age that Billie's brother would have been, had he not been taken from us when he was an infant. I have not thought about that baby in quite some time and do not know where the image of him just came from. I had not realized how I missed him. Had forgotten the pain of his death.

Hannah and Harboch head NW again. The weather holds and the two of them are to rejoin their people in the spring hunt. In late summer they will travel back south to process the skins before winter sets in again.^{xxxiii} They tell of huge numbers of deer following their annual migration and I am suddenly struck with the memory of my dreams. Where did I fly on that frigid night when I woke to the spectacle of aurora shooting into the air?

April 25

Divine Service read by Mr. Warmow this morning. The day is cold, well below freezing and a NW gale keeps many men from crossing to shore. I make tea and serve the natives who come on board for the service.

I write now in my little privy with a single candle lighting the page. How far I have travelled this past year. Tonight I ache with loss. Such sadness came over me today that I could not sweep under the rug or cover up with swags of fabric. My leave taking from Hannah provoked a sorrow, the depths of which took me by surprise. She came to me as a guardian angel, who helped me find the courage and strength to save my family from what could have been disaster. It is not overstatement to make such a claim when I think about all I have done here. I was so scared, so alone and were it not for that dear girl, God knows what straits we would be in now.

I grew ever sadder as they made ready to go, and withdrew to make tea. When I heard her light steps on the companionway, I could not hold back tears. We embraced as sisters and cried quietly.

“This is how it is for my people Margaret. When any of us leave, even for a short trip, we do not know that we will see each other again, there is always the weather, the threat of animals, or of enemies, or of the eternal fear that haunts us, starvation. We cannot dwell on what we do not know, but trust that we are guided and will meet again.”

“Your philosophy applies to us all, Hannah. We none of us know when is the last time for anything. I did not know on the day my baby died that it would be the last time I would hold him in my arms, or smell his little head. I do not know what last times lie ahead. I know only that our time together was a gift and I thank you.”

“We have shared much, sister, and you need never worry of my discretion. We must take leave now but our paths may cross again, for we seem to travel in the same circles.”

“Dear Hannah, they are large circles. I will miss you, sister.”

April 26

Another whale was sighted early today and pitched the ship into full motion once more. The men take off, I see them with the telescope, rowing with such energy against the elements to kill the great beast and turn him into profit for us. I do not understand why my pen wrote such a sentence, but the time is late and I leave it thus.

I am glad to have the men occupied so thoroughly for it gives me a chance to be quiet and alone, and grieve in peace. There is a heaviness in my heart that I cannot yet make sense of. I understand the toll my journey with Hannah may have had, the shocks I experienced, the fears for my family, the loss of my friend, the memories I had put away, but something else nags at me. I know not what, but I am tired and take to my bed. I feel like I have cried overmuch and it has wrung me dry.

April 28

Men occupied fully with processing the whale. Again, another large fish. Bone about ten feet. This is now the third beast I see chopped up and boiled for fuel, and the early excitement has given way to nausea at the sight. On shore, the men render the blubber in huge cauldrons and the stench makes one vomit. It is a little late in the game to feel such sensitivity at my husband's work, and hypocritical too, for it provides a comfortable life for us. Perhaps it is the effects of the full moon that make me write such nonsense.

April 30

The men were all out in the boats this morning and spotted another whale. The weather continues cold, but there are more days now that go above freezing. The sun has gone from being the absent sister to the one who almost never leaves your side. She shines for most of the day and night now, nearly 18 hours a day, giving the men many long hours for doing their work.

It seems most peculiar that after a summer and autumn of terrible fortune, the spring is heaping bounty on us. Three whales in just over a week – why they are practically

throwing themselves into the harpoons to be taken. The men are exhausted with the work involved, and have little time to catch up before the next kill. It keeps them fully occupied. I think of Hannah and wonder where she and Harboch are right now. I will not be receiving a letter from her by post, that much is certain. I pray they are well. The night the angakok flew over the land to find young William and his father, she said he also visited Sedna beneath the sea to persuade her to release the creatures she kept captive. In one week we have already caught three times what we did in our first three months here. Who is to say that the shaman did not enter the spirits of animals or see beyond the horizon?

May 1

Men fully occupied with their labours. I have gone across to the shore with Billie, the doctor and Mr. Warmow, and enjoyed a sunny day climbing the hills. The four of us make a happy group, and we give thanks for the day. It is above freezing, and the warmth of the sun on our faces makes us drowsy and content.

May 2

Divine Service read by Mr. Warmow. It is like a vacation for the men today, the heavy work of flinching and making off with the blubber just about completed. They sit above decks some of them, playing the accordion, singing songs of home and a few even do a bit of a jig. The mood is light and I enjoy it well, knowing how the hinge can swing the other way at a moment's notice.

May 3

After a quiet day yesterday, there was some friction in the evening. Sensing that the time was good, that Penny was on an even keel, I broached the subject of taking up the journal again. "It might be well to note the excellent start to the season, to keep a record, a small narrative. It might help put the expedition in a good light. Speak of the good works of Br. Warmow and such."

“I’ll not have ye writing of things y’know nothing about,” was his first retort but perhaps he saw some flint in my eye that made him add, “But I’ll warrant it might serve some purpose. I’ll think on’t.”

As I turned from the parlour to go out into the main cabin he said, “Do not think I forget that business that lay beneath my feet not so long ago,” referring to the dreadful episode with the doctor I hoped to erase from our lives. “I’m glad it is ended, but as your husband, I disapprove if you had a hand in it.”

We could not afford another scene. “William, why do you not join me tonight and take some comfort? Our fortunes are changing, the whales fairly leap into the casks by themselves, and we can enjoy a little bit of life.”

“On the Lord’s Day, lass? You make a good proposal.”

May 4

Another whale is spotted and so the week begins. Our fourth whale in just over two weeks. Surely this is unusual. The sightings come with such frequency that it has become routine for the crew. The men work as a machine, each one doing his job. I have never seen such a division of labour that works so efficiently. I play no role in this world and so am left to amuse myself. I wander about in parts of the ship I have not had the opportunity to explore before. I look in Mr. Birnie’s room, in the tiny cabin shared by Billie and the Dr. and poke my head into the others shared by the cooper and steward and Mr. Warmow. I touch nothing, but I look for anything that might hide the journal. I go below into the hold to see the growing number of casks full of oil already rendered on shore. It is down here in the depths of the ship at I look toward the stern, past the great mast, past the heavy beams, past the hatch into the gloom. I see the lazarette from this side view for the first time, from the outside in, rather than from the top down as I know it only too well. It is another shift in my point of view and gives me a fresh idea.

May 5

All are employed at flinching and chopping up the fish when the cooper in the crow’s nest calls, “Whale!” A small crew must remain to continue processing yesterday’s catch, while the rest rush to the boats to give chase. About twenty Esqi men join in to help in the

kill. Billie, Mr. Warmow and Dr. Grant go with some natives. All are eager for the thrill. With everyone thus occupied, I can escape without notice. How well I remember how to take the grate off the lazarette in the little parlour, it is no mystery to me now. I lit a candle and placed it on the floor, then lowered myself gingerly onto the rung of the rope ladder that hung down into the black hole. I wore no petticoats, but would have had an easier time in my deerskin trowsers than I did in the long woollen dress I wore. I got partway down the ladder then reached for the candle most carefully so as not to set anything ablaze. In the total darkness this far underwater and this deep in the hold of a ship, I could see rough shelves on the walls, bottles of wine and gin, medical supplies, cans of food. As my eyes grew accustomed to the blackness, I could see the small room was maybe six feet square. There were dark stains on the floor that I did not want to know about. And there, tucked between bottles of gin, was the small book I looked for, the journal taken from me three months ago. I left it undisturbed and climbed back out of the foul little tomb to feel the warmth of the sun and breathe the clean air above decks as quickly as I could.

May 6

With the catches of the past two days needing processing, there is no time for other matters. I wonder if the wives of England realize when they light the lamps in their drawing rooms how hard the men work to make it possible. They complain that the price is too high or that the smoke is too dirty, but they have no idea just how high a price is paid for this commodity, or how filthy it is. There is no time to speak to Penny about the journal again, he is too caught up with work and this will go on for days now.

May 9

Divine Service read by Mr. Warmow. The men once more respond well with devotion to the service. I believe they derive much comfort in their rough lives from the word of God. They are kept too busy to complain, their idleness of the winter replaced by never ending work. They are exhausted and when their labours are complete on Sunday the ship becomes as quiet as a church.

I do sums with Billie to get him back into his lessons. His chair sits over the grate of the lazarette. When Penny comes in from the main cabin, he is greeted by a domestic scene that could be a painting. Mother and son, bent over the desk, working at school exercises.

“Have you had time to get that journal, William? These are heady days for fishing and while I have the time, it would be good to record the industry that goes on out in the boats and on board.”

I see him glance at the floor, then back at his wife and son. He says nothing, but goes into the captain’s bedroom where I hear him snoring a few moments later.

May 10

The men are off in the boats, searching for more whales. Some have gone ashore to help with the rendering, there is so much to work with. When I woke this morning, the sun shone through the porthole and through the little six-sided skylight, making the room sparkle. I splashed cold water from the basin on my face and headed up the two steps to the privy. The door from privy to parlour was open, and as I sat down to pull the door closed, I saw on the desk, the journal.

May 11

Everything is back in place as it was before the darkness descended on this good ship. The men are all engaged in meaningful labour, and the Capt. knows his trip is already a commercial success, even if we do not catch any more whales. But the way things are going, it will be a busy and productive summer. My son is healthy and seems on the surface to bear no scars from his experience here. There is no mention of what went on with the Dr. – it is as if the veil has dropped and the incident is now hidden from view. Let it be so. The natives are no longer starving and the illness has abated. How it all happened I have set down here, but should I read these words to myself in the future, I may think myself to have been mad for how could it have happened?

May 12

I have come to the end of the scribbler, there is no more room and tomorrow I pick up the old life. It is bittersweet – another leave taking of sorts – for I return to life as the middle

age wife of a Scottish whaling captain, living the domestic role. It is well and good, it is what I strove for, yet the striving has made me heed my own authority and feel a confidence hitherto unknown to me. The two sides do not sit well with each other at the moment but perhaps in time, they will coexist peacefully. The weather is fine. The wind is changing. It is blowing from the south.

* * * * *

Epilogue

Margaret's life on board did not stop here. In May during a crisis where all hands were required to save boats from breaking up, Penny put her in command of the ship, and she recorded giving orders to the mate of the *Sophia*. The crews caught another 20 whales before going home.^{xxxiii} They arrived in Aberdeen a year before M'Clintock returned with intelligence and relics that closed the case on the Franklin expedition for the time being. The first news Margaret probably heard is that her mother had died soon after she left Aberdeen the previous summer. For the next two seasons, Capt. Penny took part in sealing and whaling only in Davis Strait, not wintering over. In 1863 Margaret accompanied him to Cumberland Sound again, but it was not a good trip; the whales were scarce, and their ship was denied access to the whaling stations Penny had established because he'd been fired from the company he had helped found.^{xxxiv} The captain retired the following year.

The woman Margaret knew as Tackritow/Hannah next shows up in the written record as Tookoolito. In 1860 she and her husband, known as Harboch to the English, met the American explorer Charles Francis Hall on Baffin Island. He called them Tookoolito and Ebierbing. Hall was there to pursue his belief that Franklin survivors still existed. They travelled extensively with him for years in the eastern Arctic, acting as interpreter, guide and hunter, and then went with him to the U.S. and finally northern Greenland where Hall wanted to lay claim to the North Pole. He was murdered by member of his own crew, and many of his remaining crew, including Tookoolito and Ebierbing survived adrift on an ice floe for the next six months in Davis Strait. That story has been told by Sheila Nickerson in *Midnight to the North*, and Steven Heighton in *Afterlands*, and in Chauncey Loomis' biography of Hall, *Weird and Tragic Shores*. All of them conform to Hall's use of the names Tookoolito and Ebierbing. Today, the names are spelled Taqullitug and Ipirvik. Taqullitug spent the rest of her days in Groton, Connecticut, just outside of Mystic.

NOTES

ⁱ <http://www.royal.gov.uk/output/Page118.asp>

ⁱⁱ Possible survivors of the Franklin expedition. Margaret writes of it on Oct 17, 1857. (Ross 1997, pp. 80, 88-90)

ⁱⁱⁱ Lazarette has two meanings: a hospital for those affected with contagious diseases, esp. leprosy and a small storeroom within the hull of a ship, especially one at the extreme stern. In the case of the *Charles W. Morgan*, the lazarette is under the floor of the captain's parlour. There are oral stories of the lazarette being used to hold prisoners. (Spencer, pers. comm.)

^{iv} Margaret writes of it in her journal on Aug. 21, 1857 (Ross 1997, p. 39)

^v Piblokto, pibloktok, pibloktoq or "arctic hysteria." Said to strike people either in fall or spring. Manifested by running naked into the snow, speaking in tongues, making animal noises, being in an agitated state. MacDonald pp. 103-106.

^{vi} M'Clintock is the final searcher for evidence of the Franklin expedition. His mission leaves from Scotland on July 1, 1857, one day after the Pennys leave for Cumberland Sound. The irony would not be lost either on Margaret or William.

^{vii} Woman's sealskin and/or caribou parka.

^{viii} Margaret's spelling, Nov. 6, 1857 (Ross 1997 p. 98)

^{ix} Ross 2003

^x Rasmussen p. 24

^{xi} An old man is rescued from around Kingnaite after he suffers frostbite to his toes. Margaret tells of it Dec 6th and 22nd (Ross 1997 pp. 115 and 118)

^{xii} White person

^{xiii} Rasmussen p 27, Peary p. 128

^{xiv} MacDonald, pp. 57, 59, 79

^{xv} Wachowich et al, pp. 113-117

^{xvi} Rasmussen pp. 84-85

^{xvii} See preface, p. 3

^{xviii} Rasmussen p. 28

^{xix} *ibid* p. 81

^{xx} MacDonald pp.173-180

^{xxi} In *Saqiyuq*, Apphia Agalakti Awa refers to the qallunaat (kabloona) who was known to have a great many children up north. This man, called Sakkuartirungniq was her husband's grandfather – his mother's father, and she says her husband felt some shame at having qallunaat blood. His other grandfather – his father's father was the great shaman Awa or Ava as Rasmussen spelled the name. Rasmussen writes of both men in his narrative, *Across Arctic America* published in 1927. Sakkuartirungniq's was an American, whose English name was George Washington Cleveland. Rasmussen visited the region in 1925, and Apphia was born in 1931, so it is clear they are talking about the same person. It is an interesting example of how lives intersect, and how history can paint one side of a story. Was Cleveland the genial host who Rasmussen writes about, or a randy qallunaat whaler who had children "all over the place." Penny's time was more than 50 years before him, but it is an example of how widespread babies of mixed blood would have been. Wachowich pp. 117-119/Rasmussen pp 9-10

^{xxii} MacDonald p. 174

^{xxiii} *ibid* pp.211-220

^{xxiv} i.e. Sir John Franklin

^{xxv} MacDonald p. 29

^{xxvi} *ibid* p. 196

^{xxvii}

http://www.climate.weatheroffice.ec.gc.ca/climate_normals/results_e.html?Province=ALL&StationName=iqaluit&SearchType=BeginsWith&LocateBy=Province&Proximity=25&ProximityFrom=City&StationNumber=&IDType=MSC&CityName=&ParkName=&LatitudeDegrees=&LatitudeMinutes=&LongitudeDegreeS=&LongitudeMinutes=&NormalsClass=A&SelNormals=&StnId=1758&&autofwd=1

^{xxviii} Peary p. xviii

^{xxix} Hall p. 127

^{xxx} Margaret uses this word for “flensing,” the process of peeling blubber off the whale Sept. 29, 1857
(Ross 1997 p. 78)

^{xxxi} The jaw containing the baleen measured 11 feet across.

^{xxxii} Loomis pp. 79-80

^{xxxiii} Ross 1997 p. 183

^{xxxiv} *ibid* p. 213

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