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Herbert Ponting; Picturing the Great White South

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The City College of New York

Herbert Ponting: Picturing the Great White South

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts of
the City College of the City University of New York.

by

Maggie Downing

New York, New York

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Dedicated to my Mother

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Introduction

Herbert Ponting (1870-1935), a self-declared “camera artist” was hired by Robert Falcon Scott (1868-1912) to be the first professional photographer to accompany a polar expedition, the British Antarctic Expedition, 1910-1913. The goal of this expedition was to secure for the British Empire the achievement of sending the first men to the South Pole. While the five-man polar party led by Scott did in fact reach their goal, they found that they were beaten by a team of Norwegians led by Roald Amundsen (1872-1928). The defeated British party never made it back to headquarters, having frozen to death just eleven miles from their next supply depot. Ponting’s Antarctic photographs were used to depict this tragic expedition in early 20th century newspapers and were presented in a series of films, and they continue to be discussed as documentary of the expedition today.¹ However, his large-format images of dramatic ice cliffs and vast landscapes of frozen earth echo the romantic and sublime elements typically found in 19th century landscape art, blurring the lines between science, reportage, and art. Although Ponting was hired to record the activities of the expedition, he neglected its scientific work and instead constructed a picture of Antarctica as a glorious and imposing landscape in which the valiant adventurers both triumphed and suffered [Figure 1]. By employing the

¹ All of the large illustrated books of Ponting’s work focus on the tale of the perilous expedition rather than Ponting’s aesthetic choices, and he is often grouped with the photographer, Frank Hurley, who accompanied Ernest Shackleton to Antarctica a few years later. These include: A. Savours, ed. *Scott’s Last Voyage: Through the Antarctic Camera of Herbert Ponting*. (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, Ltd., 1975); J. Boddington, *Antarctic Photographs 1910-1916: Scott, Mawson and Shackleton Expeditions* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1980); Beau Riffenburgh and Liz Cruwys, eds. *With Scott to the Pole: The Terra Nova Expedition 1910-1913 The Photographs of Herbert Ponting*, (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 2004); _____. Riffenburgh, Beau and Liz Cruwys. *The Photographs of H.G. Ponting*. (London: The Discovery Gallery, 1998); David Hempleman-Adams, et al. *The Heart of the Great Alone: Scott, Shackleton, and Antarctic Photography*. (New York: Bloomsbury, 2009). Ponting’s biographer said little about Ponting’s artistic intentions beyond the fact that he insisted to be called a “camera artist” and received no formal art schooling. H.J.P. Arnold, *Photographer of the World: The Biography of Herbert Ponting*, Cranbury, N.J.: Associated University Presses, 1971.

aesthetic of the sublime, Ponting made the alien landscape visually understandable to a wide audience and heightened the melodrama of man against nature, thus perpetuating the myth of the colonial explorer as a virile and free spirit, asserting himself amid dangers endured for the good of the British Empire.

With the exception of Frank Hurley (1885-1962), Ponting was the only professional photographer to travel to Antarctica during the early part of the century. Because the Antarctic landscape was so vastly different from the rest of the world, and because imagery from this period is so tied to the adventure tales of exploration, Ponting tends to be acknowledged only in the context of Antarctic exploration rather than as an artist operating within visual constructs centuries old and adapting his vision to his contemporary audience.

Ponting would certainly not have been one of the highest paid members of the British Antarctic Expedition had Scott not been absolutely sure that Ponting's work was to bring a great deal of income to the expedition, and had Ponting felt it wouldn't further his career.² In this decision, Scott and Ponting were responding to a popular British enthusiasm for both polar exploration and adventure tales. In his book, *Arctic Spectacles: The Frozen North in Visual Culture, 1818-1875*, Russell Potter chronicled art, panorama

² Only Cecil Meares, the dog handler and Russian interpreter and Griffith-Taylor, a geologist, received the same salary of 250 pounds/month. Most officers were paid between 100–200 pounds, and the crew all received around 40 pounds. Some, including Trygve Gran, a midshipman were paid only 1 pound per month, a nominal fee for the members who joined the expedition at their own expense. B.A.E. Agreement and Account of Crew. SPRI MS 129; SL.

Scott depended on publicity to pay for the cost of the expedition. In fact, the expedition was so strapped for cash, that the newspapers printed fundraising appeals to the public to pay for expenses in November 1911. There were many articles collected in the SPRI archives that were dated but otherwise uncited. These include: "Captain Scott's Expedition: Urgent Appeal by the Antarctic Committee for Further Funds," (November 20, 1911); "Race to the South Pole: Appeal for Support for Scott Expedition," (November 20, 1911); "Captain Scott's Dash to the South Pole: Appeal to the Public for 15,000 Pounds," (November 20, 1911). SPRI MS 1453/38; BPC.

and diorama exhibitions on Arctic subjects throughout the 19th century.³ Potter showed that depictions of Arctic landscapes were being exhibited as entertainment as early as the 1810s. However, popular interest in the Arctic escalated with the 1845 disappearance of Sir John Franklin's naval expedition, which had set out to discover the Northwest Passage through the Arctic Ocean as a possible new trade route with Asia, but never returned. Franklin's disappearance amidst the uncharted and untrodden Arctic landscape proved a popular melodramatic topic for artists and lecturers alike.⁴ Following Franklin's disappearance, dozens of rescue and exploration expeditions set out to the frozen north. Even after hope of finding Franklin or a commercially viable Northwest Passage had waned, these expeditions helped chart the Arctic Ocean and further colonial Britain's geographic knowledge and claim to the world.

Most of these expeditions were funded with published written accounts by the members, who also presented illustrated lectures upon their return.⁵ The illustrations, such as those in Elisha Kent Kane's *Arctic Explorations*, 1856, heightened or exaggerated the vastness and desolation of the landscape [Figure 2].⁶ The Arctic landscape proved ideal for employing sublime aesthetics that evoked awe, terror and fascination as described by Edmund Burke in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of*

³ Russell Potter, *Arctic Spectacles: The Frozen North in Visual Culture, 1818-1875*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), 211-225.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Accounts of Arctic exploration were so popular that they became worldwide bestsellers. Admiral F. Leopold McClintock's *Voyage of the Fox in the Arctic Seas*, 1859, outsold works by Alfred Lord Tennyson and George Eliot. Ibid., 155.

⁶ Franklin's tale was "depicted in popular panoramas, in illustrated journals, and in the wide sales of books published by the leaders of various search and rescue expeditions in the 1850s." Diana Donald, 'The Arctic Fantasies of Edwin Landseer and Briton Riviere: Polar Bears, Wilderness and Notions of the Sublime', in Nigel Llewellyn and Christine Riding (eds.), *The Art of the Sublime*, January 2013, <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/the-sublime/diana-donald-the-arctic-fantasies-of-edwin-landseer-and-briton-riviere-polar-bears-r1136829>, accessed 09 October 2013. Most polar expeditions were followed up by one or more published and illustrated first-hand accounts. The *Terra Nova* expedition alone produced three published accounts by Scott, Cherry-Garrard and Ponting.

the Sublime and the Beautiful.⁷ As Chauncy Loomis wrote in “The Arctic Sublime,” the Arctic

simultaneously reminds him of his own responsive vastness of soul, and of his mortal smallness in the universe. Exultation and terror, liberation and acrophobia, a mixed sense of triumph and defeat – these emotions vitalized responses to mountains in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and they would vitalize responses to the Arctic during the Victorian period.⁸

The mixed emotion of fear and fascination that characterize Burke’s definition of the sublime is evident not only in the illustrations but in the narratives of adventure and hardship endured in the pursuit of uncharted territory. The polar sublime propelled imperialist sentiments of expansion into the unknown, and once the North Pole was claimed in 1909, this enthusiasm was transferred to conquering the Antarctic.

At the same time, British adventure fiction, heroic tales in exotic environments by the likes of Robert Louis Stevenson, Jules Verne, Jack London, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and Rudyard Kipling rose in popularity. Ponting upheld this style of adventure storytelling in his own account of the *Terra Nova* expedition, stating that by showcasing the “perfect comradeship, self-sacrifice, and devotion to purpose, ideals, and duty” of the explorers, he wished to “stimulate ‘a fine and manly spirit in the rising generation.’”⁹ Ponting responded to established trends in travel and adventure narratives and carefully

⁷ A more detailed discussion of this is included in Chapter 1. Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1756). Available at http://www.gutenberg.org/files/15043/15043-h/15043-h.htm#A_PHILOSOPHICAL_INQUIRY (Accessed April 7, 2014); Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, transl. J.H. Bernard (London: Macmillan and Co., 1914). Available at <https://archive.org/stream/cu31924028104085/page/n7/mode/2up> (Accessed April 7, 2014).

⁸ Chauncy C. Loomis, “The Arctic Sublime,” in *Nature and the Victorian Imagination*, eds. U.C. Knoepfelmacher and G.B. Tennyson (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977), 98.

⁹ Herbert Ponting, Preface to *The Great White South*, originally published in 1921, New York: Cooper Square Press, 2001, xiii.

and consciously crafted his photographs and film to both please his audience and promote the expedition, as his extensive lecture and film tours of the 1910s and 1920s show.¹⁰

Ponting was well aware that his audience was more interested in drama than in scientific details, so he focused on landscape images that heightened the vastness and dangers of the landscape, regardless of their scientific importance to the expedition. *Huge Ice Bastions of The Castle Berg. September 17th 1911*, for example, depicts a man facing an immense wall of ice [Figure 1]. The iceberg looms over the solitary figure like a formidable medieval fortress, and extends out of the frame, the actual size of its bastions left to the imagination of the viewer. Rising to the challenge, the figure steps toward the berg, with his ice pick extended, acting out the beginning of the tale of man against nature. Ponting's portraiture was also carefully staged to depict the individuals as rough yet gallant heroes who braved the elements for a noble cause. In order to convey the ruggedness of the men as they returned from sledging expeditions, for example, Ponting prevented them from bathing and shaving, sometimes for up to a whole day [Figure 3].¹¹ His photographs of the men at their jobs picture them singularly focused on their tasks, and posed to visually convey the most information [Figure 4]. Ponting also showed that the crew enjoyed a masculine camaraderie, evidenced in his photograph of Captain Scott's birthday dinner on June 6, 1911 [Figure 5], where the men, cramped in their shelter from the elements, surround their leader with good cheer. These images complement those like *Huge Ice Bastions*, proving the strong and jolly character of the men amid the subzero temperatures, howling winds and massive, icy obstacles. They are

¹⁰ By 1919, Ponting had delivered 1,000 lectures "The World Of The Film," *Times* [London, England] (19 May 1919): 17.

¹¹ Ponting, *The Great White South*, 110; Excerpt from Charles Wright's memoir, referring to Sunday January 28, 1912. Colin Bull and Pat F. Wright, *Silas: The Antarctic Diaries and Memoir of Charles S. Wright* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1993), 244.

also far from what would be called “documentary” today. They tell an incomplete story of the actualities of the expedition in order to elevate the story of 33 men struggling together in the harsh Antarctic elements into a legendary tale of heroic exploration. Ponting’s sublime visual narrative reflects not only the imperialist interest Britain had in Antarctic exploration and the cultural desire for masculine and noble heroes, but also the fluidity of purpose that news images had at the turn of the century, when they could simultaneously serve as art, document, and entertainment.

There is little art historical scholarship that focuses on Herbert Ponting exclusively. Ponting’s archive is held not in an art museum but at the Scott Polar Research Institute (SPRI) in Cambridge, England, and the major publications featuring Ponting’s photographs, such as *With Scott to the Pole: The Terra Nova Expedition 1910-1913 The Photographs of Herbert Ponting*, by Beau Riffenburgh and Liz Cruwys, 2004, focus on the thrilling narrative of the expedition.¹²

Recent publications such as Francis Spufford’s *I May Be Some Time: Ice and the English Imagination*, 1997, and Jen Hill’s *White Horizons: The Arctic in Nineteenth-Century British Imagination*, 2008, consider the popularity of literary and visual artistic depictions of polar space and their broader cultural implications in 19th and 20th century Britain and America.¹³ While these texts provide excellent socio-historical contexts, they do not focus on any particular artist, movement, or body of work.

¹² Beau Riffenburgh and Liz Cruwys, *With Scott to the Pole: The Terra Nova Expedition 1910-1913. The Photographs of Herbert Ponting* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004).

¹³ Francis Spufford, *I May Be Some Time: Ice and the English Imagination* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997).
Jen Hill, *White Horizon: The Arctic in the 19th Century British Imagination* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008).

A more focused examination of Ponting's work is included in David Wilson's *The Lost Photographs of Captain Scott*, 2011, which discussed Ponting's aesthetic to show how he influenced Scott.¹⁴ Elena Glasberg's *Antarctica as Cultural Critique*, 2012, also concisely explained how Ponting's framing strategies illustrate the imperialist goals of the Expedition, and Ponting's work was used as a means to show how future photographers of Antarctica responded to the changing political and ecological structure of Antarctica over time. This thesis extends the arguments brought up in these texts on a single artist, which will not only provide stronger evidence for their views, but will usher Ponting and his work into a broader discussion of art history.

Diana Donald's essay, "The Arctic Fantasies of Edwin Landseer and Briton Riviere: Polar Bears, Wilderness and Notions of the Sublime," 2013, was as a model for this thesis.¹⁵ Donald used extensive formal analysis of specific works and placed them within a cultural context of late 19th century Britain and America. Her socio-historical contextualization demonstrated how the works fit in to a larger popular tradition of melodramatic adventure stories and depictions of polar exploration. She considered exhibition history and contemporary criticism of works by Riviere, Landseer and Frederic Church. This thesis follows a similar methodology in order to demonstrate that it was not just painting that could be imbued with romance, but "straight" photography as well, which reached an even wider audience and played a greater role than painting in bolstering the romance of polar exploration in Edwardian England.

¹⁴ David Wilson, *The Lost Photographs of Captain Scott* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2011). Elena Glasberg, *Antarctica as Cultural Critique* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

¹⁵ Diana Donald, "The Arctic Fantasies of Edwin Landseer and Briton Riviere: Polar Bears, Wilderness and Notions of the Sublime," in Nigel Llewellyn and Christine Riding (eds.), *The Art of the Sublime*, January 2013, <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/the-sublime/diana-donald-the-arctic-fantasies-of-edwin-landseer-and-briton-riviere-polar-bears-r1136829>, Accessed October 9, 2013.

Although Ponting is mentioned in broader arguments about the cultural significance of polar imagery, there is not any scholarship that focuses directly on his work as it relates to the history of art and photography. Formal analysis of Ponting's work and that of his peers establishes him within the broader art historical discourse of landscape art. The socio-historical contextualization in this thesis demonstrates that Ponting's work reflected popular tastes and desires in England and America at the turn of the century. Original photographs, correspondence and other primary source material were consulted at the Scott Polar Research Institute in Cambridge, England, which helped to illuminate Ponting's character, his intentions and practices as a photographer, and his awareness of the audience of his photography and film. Formalist analysis and comparison are used together with a socio-historical contextualization in order to demonstrate the prevalence of the sublime aesthetic in popular culture at the turn of the century, and to show that Ponting used the sublime to construct the myth of the colonial Antarctic explorer.

Chapter One: "Picturing the Expansion of Empire" focuses on Ponting's training as a photographer and his pre-Antarctic landscape photography. This examination of Ponting's early work grounds him within a tradition of romanticized landscapes in photography and painting, which include the photographers of the American West as well as the travel photography in Asia by Samuel Bourne (1834-1912) and John Thomson (1837-1921). By so situating Ponting, one can see the formal constructs that he employed in the Antarctic appear more clearly within the realm of fine art.

Chapter two: "'Ponting' for Ponko: The Constructed Narrative of Antarctic Exploration" centers on Ponting's photographic process in the Antarctic. A focused

discussion of his equipment and process of posing his subjects demonstrates the level of care he took to craft his compositions. Ponting's excessive posing of his photographs of the crew inspired Thomas Griffith Taylor (1880-1963) to coin the term "to pont," meaning "to pose, until nearly frozen, in all sorts of uncomfortable positions."¹⁶ None of Ponting's photographs were candid or strictly documentary in today's sense of the word. That Ponting carefully selected and posed each composition, while neglecting other scientific endeavors of the expedition is evidence of his intentional mythmaking.¹⁷

Chapter three: "Adventure, Penguins, and 'Glorious Death' at *90 Degrees South*" examines Ponting's film and contemporary commentary by himself and reviewers. These primary sources show that Ponting knowingly and sometimes grudgingly adapted his work to appeal to the widest possible audience. He tirelessly worked to promote his film and its moralistic message long after Edwardian imperialist ideals fell out of fashion.

Conclusion: Although there were relatively few publications on Ponting after his death in 1935, global warming and the melting ice caps have brought polar space to the forefront of the collective imagination, and the heroic age of Antarctic exploration has gained a new audience. Often, the myth as it was constructed by Ponting and his colleagues is not questioned, but accepted as a product of a bygone time when daring young men risked life and limb without the comforts of modern technology, to explore a wild space that was not yet in danger of disappearing entirely. Consideration of the nationalist myth of the colonial explorer as perpetuated by Ponting will perhaps inspire questions about how art, photography, and film are still used in conjunction to depict

¹⁶ H.J.P. Arnold, *Photographer of the World: The Biography of Herbert Ponting* (Cranbury, N.J.: Associated University Presses, 1971), 70.

¹⁷ Herbert Ponting, Preface to *The Great White South*, originally published in 1921, New York: Cooper Square Press, 2001, xiii.

faraway places and heroic acts. Publications such as *National Geographic*, film series such as *Planet Earth* and other contemporary images depict icebergs as icons of global warming. All have depended upon the aesthetic of the sublime to inspire awe and action in viewers to try to save the natural wonders of the landscape from human destruction. Formal analysis of images of nature would reveal that art, science and entertainment remain interconnected to this day.

Chapter 1: Picturing the Expansion of Empire

A cosmopolitan, upper class, Victorian gentleman, Herbert Ponting (1870-1935) pursued what had become the popular leisure-class hobby of photography. Although he took it up in London in 1890, he did not seriously pursue the craft until he moved to northern California in 1893 or 1894, writing in 1931, “[A]ll my life, since I was 18, I have been a very keen amateur photographer. [...] but I owe my real success to America.”¹⁸ This distinction is important, for it shows that Ponting came of age as a “camera artist” amid the vibrant photographic community in northern California at the turn of the century.¹⁹ Distinguished Western landscape photographers, such as Carleton Watkins (1829-1916), Eadward Muybridge (1830-1904), and Charles Leander Weed (1824-1903), depended upon the compositional devices prominent in 19th landscape painting in order to appeal to viewers on the East Coast and in Europe. American landscape artists such as Albert Bierstadt (1830-1902) and Thomas Moran (1837-1926) often combined the picturesque aesthetic emphasis on the irregularity of wilderness with the sublime aesthetic that highlighted the awe-inspiring vastness of the landscape.²⁰ By employing similar views in their photographs, Watkins, Muybridge and Weed confirmed the wildness and boundlessness of the country as depicted in paintings. Their photographs could inspire both awe at the country’s size and a restlessness to expand and

¹⁸ Herbert Ponting, Letter to James Hayes, May 27, 1931. SPRI MS 964/7/8.

¹⁹ “Ponting called himself not a photographer but a ‘camera artist.’” Roland Huntford, Introduction to *The Great White South*, by Herbert Ponting (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2001), ix.

²⁰ The term “picturesque” as applied to landscape was prominent in the late 18th and early 19th century, and was defined by Uvedale Price as having the qualities of roughness, variation and irregularity. Picturesque compositions were meant to be stirring, yet not as obscure and fearsome as the sublime as defined by Edmund Burke. Uvedale Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque*, (London, 1794), cited in Stephanie Ross, “Picturesque,” *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*. *Oxford Art Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed May 3, 2014, <http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t234/e0402>.

By the late 19th century, the term “picturesque” was defined much more loosely. The widely published volumes of *Picturesque America*, 1872-1874, however, show that the term was still most often applied to rough yet visually pleasing scenery. William Cullen Bryant, *Picturesque America, or, The Land We Live In* (New York: Appleton, 1872-1874).

cultivate the supposedly untouched expanse of land. This first generation of Western landscape photographers continued to have a lasting influence on Western photographers for decades, and their photographs propelled sentiments of Manifest Destiny and expansionist ideology, a persuasion also evident in Ponting's work in the Antarctic.²¹

In addition, Ponting was influenced by the Orientalizing style of preceding travel photographers to Asia, such as Samuel Bourne (1834-1912), Francis Frith (1822-1898), and John Thomson (1837-1921), who used the picturesque or the sublime to demonstrate the cultivation or savagery of the lands and people they photographed.²² The sublime insistence on the unknown and the embrace of nature and wildness was an important aspect in romantic landscape painting, and Ponting's adherence to these romantic values is further evident in his close working relationship with artist Edward Wilson (1872-1912). Wilson, an admirer of John Ruskin (1819-1900), poet Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809-1892) and painter Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851), sought nature as a means to inspire spiritual introspection and awe in creation.²³ Ponting had begun his photographic career amidst the influence of an American adaptation of romanticism, which also embraced nature, but as a means to champion freedom, individualism, and claim to the expanses of untapped wilderness that distinguished America from European

²¹ Watkins, Muybridge and Weed had all either worked for or owned their own photography galleries where they displayed and sold their work. Terrence Pitts, *Western American Photography: The First 100 Years* (Phoenix, AZ: Phoenix Art Museum, 1987), 5.

²² These photographers were responding to the 19th century European and American aesthetic interest in Asia and the Middle East, which were opened up to trade and travel after Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798. 19th century Orientalist works by painters such as Jean-Leon Gerome and Eugene Delacroix depicted the land and inhabitants as pre-industrial other, and their customs and traditions were appropriated to feed Western fantasies of eroticism, violence, and exotic luxury. Kenneth Bendiner, "Orientalism," *Grove Art Online*. *Oxford Art Online*, Oxford University Press. Accessed April 24, 2014, <http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T063780>.

²³ H.G.R. King, ed. *South Pole Odyssey: Selections from the Antarctic Diaries of Edward Wilson* (Poole, Dorset: Blandford Press, 1982), 14.

civilization.²⁴ Ponting's Antarctic photographs exhibit the influence of both British and American romantic values, depicting the men alternately standing strongly against the forms of ice [Figure 2] and contemplating their place in nature [Figure 32].

Contextualizing Ponting within a larger tradition of picturing foreign lands for a Western audience shows that his work was far from documentary, but rather was carefully crafted to satisfy romantic notions of the grandeur of the British Empire and the nobility of its men.

The first landscape photographers in California began picturing the West in the 1860s and 1870s and they continued to have a lasting impact for generations to come.²⁵ Working for themselves or commissioned by surveying, railroading or other commercial companies, these photographers aimed to depict the vastness and wealth of resources of the West to an audience of which few yet had the opportunity to witness for themselves. They often selected views that showed the West as uninhabited, what Terrence Pitts calls a "pre-civilization West," concentrating on sublime vastness of land not yet inhabited by

²⁴ For further discussion between English and American romanticism, see: Penelope J.E. Davies, et al, "Art in the Age of Romanticism, 1789-1848," in *Janson's History of Art*, 8th Edition (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2004); Barbara Novak, *American Painting of the Nineteenth Century: Realism, Idealism, and the American Experience* (New York: Praeger, 1969); William Vaughan, "Romanticism," *Grove Art Online*, *Oxford Art Online*. Oxford University Press. Accessed April 24, 2014, <http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T073207>

²⁵ For further reading on how photography shaped the vision and myth of the American West, see: Weston Naef and James N. Wood, *Era of Exploration: The Rise of Landscape Photography in the American West* (Buffalo, NY: Albright-Knox Gallery, 1975); Sandra Phillips, et. al., *Crossing the Frontier: Photographs of the Developing West, 1849 to the Present* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1997); Terrence Pitts, *Western American Photography: The First 100 Years* (Phoenix, AZ: Phoenix Art Museum, 1987); Eva Respini, *Into the Sunset: Photography's Image of the American West* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2009); Martha A. Sandweiss, *Print the Legend: Photography and the American West* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002); Santa Barbara Museum of Art, *Watkins to Weston: 101 Years of California Photography, 1849-1950* (Santa Barbara: CA: Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1992). Important publications dedicated to Carleton Watkins include: Douglas Nickel, *Carleton Watkins: The Art of Perception* (San Francisco, CA: San Francisco Museum of Art, 1991); Peter E. Palmquist, *Carleton E. Watkins: Photographer of the American West* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press for the Amon Carter Museum, 1983).

humanity.²⁶ Muybridge's *Tenaya Canyon – Valley of the Yosemite. From Union Point*, 1872 [Figure 6], for example, frames the scene with trees growing at seemingly impossible angles on the side of the cliff in the foreground. The darkness of the trees emphasizes the lightness of the mountain range as it fades away into the background, creating a seemingly infinite territory, as the range expands further than the eye can see.

In his photograph, *Yosemite Valley from the Best General View*, 1866 [Figure 7], Watkins frames his view with a forest in the foreground, which forms a sweeping diagonal from the left to the center of the image where it meets a tree, another classical framing device of picturesque landscape painting. But this tree, with its absurdly tall trunk with branches only at the top, floating above the mountains, is unusual and unexpected. It looks more like a flagpole or beacon, with its branches guiding the line of sight over the expanse of canyons, cliffs and waterfalls. This image exemplifies what Albert Boime called the “magisterial gaze,” or “the perspective of the American on the heights searching for new worlds to conquer.”²⁷ Views that employ the magisterial gaze show a seemingly boundless expanse from an elevated viewpoint, and thus appear to be the viewpoint of a floating or omnipresent being, one that wields mastery over the expanse of land below. Boime contrasted the magisterial view with what he called the “reverential view,” more common in European Romantic paintings, especially those by Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840).²⁸ In Friedrich's *Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog*, 1818, for example, the viewer is meant to identify with the figure, sharing his reverential

²⁶ Pitts, 5.

²⁷ Albert Boime, *The Magisterial Gaze: Manifest Destiny and American Landscape Painting, c1830-1865* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 20-21.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

view that sweeps upward toward the heavens in awe, rather than down upon a landscape to be conquered.

Watkins's photograph, *Devil's Canyon, Geysers, Looking Down*, 1868–70 [Figure 8], is taken from an omniscient, magisterial gaze, with the strong, sinking diagonals of the foreground cliffs drawing the gaze of the viewer into the distance and highlighting the boundless expanse of the treacherous landscape. Ghostly vapor from the geysers amid the patchy trees clinging to the rocks imbue the photograph an eerie otherworldliness. This is heightened by the small figure at left, a device common in the early 19th century paintings of the Hudson River School but rare in Watkins's own work, which provides a sense of scale, guiding the viewer into the landscape of the *Devil's Canyon* below. Most of Watkins's landscapes do not include any figures, as he preferred instead to show the landscape as entirely uninhabited, one in which human beings were not yet a measure of scale.²⁹

The next generation of Western photographers, which included George Fiske (1835-1918) and Edward Curtis (1868-1952), along with many other un-credited stereograph photographers, created views primarily to appeal to tourists and new settlers and published lists for travelers of places to find the best views.³⁰ Terrence Pitts accused this new crop of photographers of being derivative, since they pandered to the masses with already established pictorial standards. However, Watkins and Muybridge followed

²⁹ Pitts, 5.

³⁰ Ibid., 7. For further reading on the history of 19th century tourism in America and the American West see: Steven Hoelscher, "The Photographic Construction of Tourist Space in Victorian America," *Geographical Review* 88, no. 4 (October 1998): 548-570; Earl Pomeroy, *In Search of the Golden West: The Tourist in Western America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957); John F. Sears, *Sacred Spaces: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Thomas Weiss, "Tourism in America Before World War II," *The Journal of Economic History* 64, no. 2 (June 2004): 289-327; David Worbel and Patrick Long, eds., *Seeing and Being Seen: Tourism in the American West* (Lawrence, KS: Published for the Center of the American West, University of Colorado at Boulder by the University Press of Kansas, 2001).

the pictorial codes of the landscape painters, such as Thomas Moran and Albert Bierstadt before them. In addition, both Watkins and Muybridge were themselves creating stereographs for commercial consumption as well as geographical studies and fine art prints. In naming his photograph *Best General View*, Watkins, too, adopted the role of tour guide. The next generation followed an inherited tradition of picturing the West in a way that implied an unending wilderness ripe for progress, settlement, and expansion of the American empire across the continent.

Ponting's biographer, H.J.P. Arnold, explained that Ponting's photographic career began around 1900, when a traveling photographer asked him advice on where to go to find the best views.³¹ This photographer was impressed with Ponting's knowledge of the subject, and encouraged him to submit his work to festivals and publishing companies. Unfortunately, with the exception of one image, *Mules at a Californian Round-Up* (1900) [Figure 9], there is little record of Ponting's early work in the West. He kept few notes about his work and much of his published work was not credited to him. However, Ponting alluded to his early success with stereograph companies when he later noted, "I was so staggered by the prices offered [by stereograph companies] that I thought this method was the best way of 'scrapping' negatives I had ever known, and as often as I could I sent others along."³² These sparse anecdotes show that Ponting was an active component of this next generation of Western artist-photographers, adapting the traditions of the sublime and picturesque to appeal to a leisure-class audience of tourists, newspaper readers and stereograph enthusiasts.

³¹ H.J.P. Arnold, *Herbert Ponting: Photographer of the World* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1971), 23.

³² Quoted in *Ibid.*, 24.

As Ponting's popularity grew and he traveled the world, he is more often credited with his photographs, and a more complete picture of his work can be established. In 1901, he was commissioned by *Leslie's Weekly* and The Universal Photo Art Company of Philadelphia to go on a photographic tour of the Far East, and later received commissions from a wide variety of publications including Underwood & Underwood, *Harper's*, *Century*, *World's Week*, *Strand*, *Wide World*, *Metropolitan*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Sunset*, *Pearson's*, *Leslie's Weekly*, *Sphere*, *Illustrated London News*, and *Graphic*.³³ These were weekly or monthly illustrated magazines that featured literature serials and lifestyle articles and were a more entertaining alternative to the current-events-focused daily papers, such as *The Times*. Ponting's early success with publishers shows that he understood his audience and how to please his editors, who would often use his photographs as stock images to illustrate various articles about the same region. His photographs showcased the places he visited in unique compositions, yet were unspecific enough to his particular journey that they could be appropriated for many different uses. The same held true for his Antarctic photographs, as evidenced by the use of Ponting's iconic landscapes to illustrate articles about the continent for decades through the 1930s.³⁴

Before Antarctica, Ponting's travels took him to India, China, and Japan. He again followed in the footsteps of decades of travel landscape artists and photographers. In *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire*, James R.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ The *New York Times* used Ponting's photographs to illustrate articles about the Antarctic expeditions of Richard Evelyn Byrd. For examples see: Richard E. Byrd, "Byrd Contrasts the Two Polar Regions," *New York Times* (June 8, 1930), Section X, page 1; Russell Owen, "Animal Actors in the Antarctic Drama," *New York Times* (February 22, 1931), Section V page 10; Russell Owen, "Storms Over and Icy Continent," *The New York Times Magazine* (August 13, 1939), SM4.

Ryan discusses the photographic work of Asian landscapes by Francis Frith (1822-1898), John Thomson (1837-1921), and Samuel Bourne (1834-1912).³⁵ He wrote that landscape photography of this era was similar to cartography, as both attest to scientific veracity, and both reduce the world to two dimensions and thus make the Empire visible, tactile and concrete.³⁶ This is not to say that landscape images were treated as strictly scientific documents, as the richly embellished 19th century British maps show [Figures 10 and 11]—art and cartography were linked in the minds of the public. Ryan demonstrated that Bourne’s photographs of Indian landscape and architecture, taken from 1863-1870, although novel in medium, were clearly made with the same consideration for the picturesque as the travel artists before him, namely Thomas and William Daniell in the late 18th century.³⁷ The Daniells and Bourne often focused on rural India, where architecture was being overtaken by nature, implying a civilization that is in decline [Figures 12-15].

Bourne wrote of the native population of India with contempt, and depicted the country as a beautiful yet savage land, which would have appealed to the British imperialist spirit.³⁸ More than three decades later, Ponting repeated these sentiments in a 1906 letter to his parents,

Benares, the Mecca of the Hindus – where all who can come to die – beautiful as it is in the changing light of early day; replete as it is in picturesque charm and colour; graceful as are its minarets and magnificent as are its buildings, will always remain in my memory a place of untold horrors.³⁹

³⁵ James R. Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 47.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 51.

³⁹ Herbert Ponting, Letter to his parents, February 18, 1906. SPRI MS 964/9; D.

Ponting thus echoed established sentiments that justified the goals of imperialist Britain to colonize and civilize the backward people of the Indian subcontinent while simultaneously enjoying its beauty and resources.

In contrast, Ponting depicted Japan as a cultivated civilization of “Nature-worshippers.”⁴⁰ *In Lotus-Land Japan*, published in 1910, constitutes the largest complete body of Ponting’s early photographic work. The text, which he wrote as well, provides valuable insight into his personality and aesthetic goals as a photographer. As Japan was never a colony of Great Britain, its culture was not as often depicted as wanting of advancement. However, Japan was a thriving tourist destination at the turn of the century, and Japonisme, the aesthetic interest of Americans and Europeans in all things Japanese, thrived during the 1890s.⁴¹ Ponting’s aim was to showcase the foreign beauty of the people and landscape of Japan to a Western audience, and to inspire them to visit the country themselves. He wrote in his Foreword that he was picturing the pre-modern culture of Japan, and stated “he who seeks information concerning Japan’s vast textile manufactures, statistics of her progress, or of the rapid growth of her military and naval might, will search its pages in vain.”⁴² Every one of the color plates in the book are of women in the midst of nature—beautiful flowers in a landscape. Ponting’s depiction of the Japan as a Lotus-Land is deeply embedded in the sentiments of Orientalism, responding to and perpetuating the 19th century Western fantasy of the exotic and luxurious Asian pre-industrial other.⁴³

⁴⁰ Herbert Ponting, *In Lotus-Land Japan* (London: Macmillan, 1910), 185.

⁴¹ Arnold, 39. Phyllis Floyd, “Japonisme,” *Grove Art Online. Oxford Art Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed April 4, 2014, <http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T044421>.

⁴² Ponting, Foreword to *In Lotus-Land Japan*, v.

⁴³ Bendiner, “Orientalism,”

He intended *Lotus-Land* to be a guidebook to what he felt was “the most delightful of holiday lands,” and as such, was fairly well received in 1910.⁴⁴ The reviewer for *The Burlington Magazine* called it “a very pleasant book” and *The Geographical Journal* called his colored plates “beyond praise” even if his text “does not claim any distinction, and in truth it is at times rather diffuse.”⁴⁵ The *New York Times* praised his pictures as “visions of beauty” in a book “that pleases without presenting anything very new.”⁴⁶ Ponting’s flowery and verbose prose was common in Victorian popular culture, but was a bit played out by 1910, as his reviews so politely indicate.⁴⁷

Like many travel photographers of his day, Ponting photographed with a large-format camera with dry-plate glass negatives, requiring multiple assistants to carry all of the equipment, no easy task amid difficult terrain like that of Mount Fuji.⁴⁸ In Japan, as in Antarctica, Ponting often used his assistants as props, carefully placing them within the composition to add a sense of human scale. This would serve to emphasize the expanse of the landscape as well as to heighten the picturesque nature of his more conventional compositions. *Lake Yamanaka from the Summit of Mount Fuji* [Figure 16], for example, depicts two men in traditional Japanese attire contemplating the expanse of their country, framed elegantly by an arc of puffy, white clouds. The large-format process was not one of a quick snapshot, and so Ponting had to carefully pose his companions at the edge of

⁴⁴ *In Lotus-Land Japan* was reviewed in *London and China Telegraph*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Photography*, *The Standard*, *Yorkshire Post*, *Daily Mirror*, among others. Arnold, 43.

⁴⁵ Review of *In Lotus-Land Japan*, by Herbert Ponting. *The Geographical Journal* 36, no3 (September 1910), 344-345.

⁴⁶ S.C., Review of *In Lotus-Land Japan*, by Herbert Ponting, *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 17, no. 90 (September 1910): 377; William Elliot Griffis, Review of *In Lotus-Land Japan*, by Herbert Ponting. *New York Times* (July 23, 1910): BR3.

⁴⁷ Arnold, 40.

⁴⁸ In Antarctica, Ponting used Paget Prize plates, which likely employed a gelatin emulsion, the common process for glass plates after the 1880s. “Photographic Processes: 1839-1889,” from online exhibition text for *Dawn’s Early Light: The First 50 Years of American Photography* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Library, 2011). Accessed April 29, 2014, http://rmc.library.cornell.edu/DawnsEarlyLight/exhibition/processes/plate_sizes.html

the mountain. Ponting could not as easily pose elements in nature, and had to be infinitely patient in composing his landscapes. In order to obtain the composition in *Mount Fuji and the Kaia Grass* [Figure 17], Ponting explained that he waited for hours for the mountain to be clear of clouds and the wind to be soft enough to not blow the reeds so violently.⁴⁹

Although patient with elements outside of his control, Ponting held few qualms about altering any of the things he could move in order to get a more pleasing composition, whether they were objects, people or even dangerous wild animals. On one such occasion, while photographing a group of alligators [Figure 18], Ponting attempted to lure them into a particular position ideal for his composition.⁵⁰ Upon framing the scene, he

thoughtlessly stepped back a few paces, forgetting there was another ten-footer close behind me. Suddenly there was a fearful snort, the Indians yelled, there was a patter of feet, and without turning to look I took a leap and then ran. I was not a fraction of a second too soon, for the brute's jaws came together with a loud snap that fairly made my blood chill.⁵¹

This dramatic anecdote demonstrates not only Ponting's willingness to stage scenes in nature in order to get the perfect view, which he would often do in Antarctica as well, but also his willingness to put himself at physical risk in order to get it. This is evident in figure 19, which depicts Ponting strapped to a plank aboard the *Terra Nova* in order to get footage of the ship breaking through the pack ice. Ponting, like Frith, Thomson and Bourne, often articulated the difficulties they sustained while obtaining their photographs, and that "to many viewers this enhanced the novelty, scientific worth and artistry of the

⁴⁹ Ponting, *In Lotus-Land Japan*, 158.

⁵⁰ Riffenburgh, Beau and Liz Cruwys, *The Photographs of H.G. Ponting* (London: The Discovery Gallery, 1998), 43.

⁵¹ Herbert G. Ponting, "Photographing Alligators," *Scientific American Supplement* 65 (1908): 353-354.

images.”⁵² The suffering endured added not only a sense of veracity but also of triumph and claim. The fact that places were difficult to reach also added a sense of discovery and an ownership of the place depicted.

In his work in Asia and Antarctica, Ponting relied on the strategic placement of figures in his landscape, providing not only a sense of scale, but also of narrative. In *The Matterhorn Berg (profile). October 8th 1911* [Figure 20], for example, Ponting photographed the figure in the act of climbing to the top of the berg, but not yet at its summit. He drew back to include more of the ice formation, further dwarfing the figure, suffusing the image with drama. In this image, the figure is bent over toward his goal, but there is little doubt that he will reach the top. Other images, such as *Point of the Barne Glacier (Anton and Sledge). December 2nd 1911* [Figure 21], depict the immensity of the landscape as oppressive rather than conquered. A horse groom, Anton Omelchenko looks up at the looming glacier front, yet does not confront it, as does the climber of the Matterhorn berg. In these images, Ponting evoked expansionist ideals, but not with the magisterial gaze of an omnipresent being from above. As in Friedrich’s painting, the viewer is meant to identify with the figures, but the reverential awe at the dangerous immensity of the landscape is tempered by the strong stance of the figures. Though they are small, they are tenacious Brits, determined against physical odds to conquer the expanse of unmoving ice.

Whether it was the sublime images of the American West and Manifest Destiny, the beautiful yet savage land of India, or the calm and cultivated land of Japan, Ponting’s aesthetics always followed several decades of established pictorial practices and imperialist sentiments. His work in Antarctica is different because he was the first

⁵² Ryan, 45.

professional photographer to visit the continent. However, the Antarctic images fit firmly within the Edwardian spirit of Empire-expansion and the nobility of endurance amid hardship. Ponting's skill and adaptability as a craftsman is evident in his Antarctic work. He adopted the then-brand new medium of film from which he created several incarnations of cinema lectures, and overcame the many unexpected difficulties of photographing in such a cold climate. His book, *The Great White South*, 1921, was written not as a guidebook but as a narrative for the adventure-seeking consumer of exploration accounts.⁵³ Ponting expertly adapted his photographic practice and rhetoric to the goals of promoting the expedition.

The exalted narrative in Ponting's photographs indeed endorsed the glory of the British Empire. But the emphasis on the vast oppressiveness was, in many ways, the only way to intelligibly depict polar space to an audience long used to the frozen sublime. Artists seeking the sublime had long been drawn to Alpine and Arctic landscapes for the proper dosage of vastness and desolation. Romantic era literature such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, 1798, and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, 1818, employed polar space as the fearsome setting that heightened the bleak solitude of the fated protagonists [Figure 22]. Later in the 19th century, painters such as Frederic Church (1826-1900) and William Bradford (1823-1892) were drawn again and again to the sublime icy seas of the Arctic [Figures 23 and 24].

Their interest in the Arctic echoed a growing popular interest in the frozen North sparked by the disappearance of Admiral John Franklin's expedition to find the Northwest Passage in 1845. The tale was depicted in panoramas, a popular form of

⁵³ Herbert Ponting, *The Great White South*, (London: Duckworth & Company, 1921). Reprint, (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2001).

entertainment; in illustrated weekly journals; and in the widely distributed books written by the members of various search and rescue expeditions in the 1850s.⁵⁴ Russell Potter reported that *The Voyage of the Fox in the Arctic Seas* (1859), the narrative of the final search expedition for Franklin, was a worldwide bestseller, outselling volumes by both T.S. Eliot and Lord Alfred Tennyson.⁵⁵ Three panoramas of Arctic scenes were shown by Robert Baker, the inventor of medium, at his Leicester Square establishment between 1819 and 1850, more than any other landscape theme.⁵⁶ As accounts of polar exploration became widely published and circulated, they were illustrated with engravings, drawings and photographs that continued to borrow from the sublime imagery of earlier generations of writers and painters, as a means to heighten the drama of the narratives they illustrated, and to captivate a wider audience.

By the time Ponting was photographing in the Antarctic, sixty-five years after the disappearance of the Franklin expedition, the sublime narrative of the polar adventurer was well established. Ponting's carefully crafted images formed a conventional narrative to suit the educated yet mainstream consumer of exploration accounts. Though Ponting was quick to adapt new photographic techniques and technologies such as the cinematograph, he always catered his work to the accustomed tastes of the mass public. Hired by Captain Robert Falcon Scott (1868-1912) as the first professional photographer to the Antarctic, Ponting traveled with the *Terra Nova* from New Zealand, and photographed the first year of the expedition activities. He was already back home in

⁵⁴ Diana Donald, 'The Arctic Fantasies of Edwin Landseer and Briton Riviere: Polar Bears, Wilderness and Notions of the Sublime', in Nigel Llewellyn and Christine Riding (eds.), *The Art of the Sublime*, January 2013, <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/the-sublime/diana-donald-the-arctic-fantasies-of-edwin-landseer-and-briton-riviere-polar-bears-r1136829>, accessed 09 October 2013.

⁵⁵ Russell A. Potter, *Arctic Spectacles: The Frozen North in Visual Culture, 1818-1875* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), 155.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

England by the time Scott and the polar party embarked on their journey to the South Pole. On this journey, Scott was competing with the Norwegian, Roald Amundsen (1872-1928), to be the first to the Pole.⁵⁷ Scott's party was poorly prepared with too little food, too few depots and an inefficient method of transportation—man-hauling sledges—compared to Amundsen's party, which used dogsleds and skis, and had a relatively easy journey to the Pole and back, beating Scott's party to the prize. The British party, low in spirits and short on supplies, all perished on the return journey to Cape Evans. The tragic heroism of Scott's last expedition captivated the world, and overshadowed Amundsen's achievement.⁵⁸

Rather than disillusion the British public to the oft-told tale of triumph amid suffering, the myth of the colonial explorer as martyr thrived even in their defeat. In *An Empire of Ice*, Edward Larson wrote that even before the race for the Pole, while Amundsen was celebrated all over the world for successfully navigating the Northwest Passage, the British held him in relatively low regard. Because Amundsen used a motorized sloop to navigate routes already discovered but not yet navigated in full by British explorers, many felt that Amundsen had cheated.⁵⁹ The British government, which had originally offered a monetary prize for the accomplishment, refused to pay Amundsen.⁶⁰ When the same man beat Scott to the South Pole, efficiently claiming the

⁵⁷ Roland Huntford provided an exhaustively detailed and quite scathing account of Scott's poor leadership and ill-preparedness contrasted with Amundsen's diligent planning that led to his success and Scott's death in the race to the South Pole in *Scott and Amundsen* (New York: Putnam, 1979). Other sources consulted include Apsley Cherry-Garrard, *The Worst Journey in the World* (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2002); Peter King, *Scott's Last Journey* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996); Robert Falcon Scott, *Scott's Last Expedition* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1913).

⁵⁸ Roland Huntford and Edward J. Larson both discuss how Amundsen was quite lukewarmly received by British audiences in particular. Huntford, 548-549. Edward Larson, *Empire of Ice: Scott, Shackleton, and the Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), 10.

⁵⁹ Larson, 10.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

trophy of accomplishment while British countrymen suffered, Amundsen's popularity was even further diminished. For the British, not only was their own countryman dead after having lost the goal of the South Pole, the victory had gone to a man who was singularly focused on getting to the Pole and back, and who had forgone the more noble values of extreme physical labor and scientific achievement in order to do so. Huntford explained, "To the British public, a man who avoided the hard way was 'too clever by half'; he was not a hero but a cheat. Sir Clements Markham, denouncing Amundsen as an 'interloper' and 'that gadfly', was more in tune with conventional opinion."⁶¹ He may have won the race, but he was not the better man in the eyes of the British public. Though he was officially recognized for his achievement, Amundsen's tactics were not dignified enough to warrant much further praise by the British. The cool and at times hostile reaction to Amundsen's success in Britain was unique, and reflected not just a cultural preference for hard labor but a nationalist desire to champion their own man in spite of his defeat. In Norway, Amundsen was of course celebrated as a national hero. Upon his victorious return in 1912 he embarked on a well-attended international lecture tour, and his 1912 book, *The South Pole*, was well reviewed.⁶² News of Scott's death confirmed the British suspicion that Amundsen achieved the Pole with ignoble measures. But in other countries, such as Germany and America, the death of Scott's party attested to the extreme conditions at the South Pole that were overcome by Amundsen's expertise, and

⁶¹ Huntford, 548.

⁶² American Museum of Natural History, exhibition text for *Race to the End of the Earth*, 2009, Accessed April 24, 2014, <http://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/past-exhibitions/race-to-the-end-of-the-earth/amundsen-s-expedition>

Roland Huntford, Epilogue to *Race for the South Pole: The Expedition Diaries of Scott and Amundsen* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), 303-304.

thus added to his distinction.⁶³ Although Amundsen continued a long career of polar exploration, his achievements were no match for Scott's elevated distinction as national tragic hero.

With news of his death, Scott's fame skyrocketed. His diaries were quickly published, and Ponting set about making many episodes and incarnations of his film over the next several decades, eventually creating *90 Degrees South* in 1933, with sound commentary given himself. Ponting's films, lecture series and book, *The Great White South*, 1921, combined tales of camaraderie, hardships, and narrow escapes with a solemn tribute to the sublime sacrifice of Scott, Bowers, Wilson, Oates and Edgar Evans.

In "The Sublime in Crisis, Landscape Painting after Turner," Alison Smith argued that in the late 19th century, artists began to abandon notions of the sublime as laid out by Edmund Burke the century before. She attributes this to the death of William Wordsworth in 1850 and Joseph Mallard William Turner in 1851, as well as to a developing interest in natural science following the groundbreaking studies of Charles Darwin. Through the growing influence of John Ruskin, artists were encouraged toward objectivity, which was fundamentally opposed to the sublime, an emotion that can be evoked, but never achieved.⁶⁴ However, the sublime continued to thrive in theatrical entertainment, melodrama and pop culture long after painters abandoned its pursuit.⁶⁵ Tales of adventure and hardship that were endured in the extreme polar landscapes evoke

⁶³ American Museum of Natural History, exhibition text for *Race to the End of the Earth*, 2009, Accessed April 24, 2014, <http://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/past-exhibitions/race-to-the-end-of-the-earth/amundsen-s-expedition>

⁶⁴ Alison Smith, "The Sublime in Crisis: Landscape Painting after Turner," in Nigel Llewellyn and Christine Riding (eds.), *The Art of the Sublime*, January 2013, Accessed 13 October 2013, <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/the-sublime/alison-smith-the-sublime-in-crisis-landscape-painting-after-turner-r1109220>.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

the dual emotions of fascination and fear that is central to Burke's definition of the sublime.

Spufford explained that the English fascination with tragedy in extreme landscape from the disappearance of John Franklin through the death of Captain Scott is itself a manifestation of the sublime. Spufford wrote:

Common sense might say tragedies are sad, and no-one wants them to happen, but common sense tells only partial truths. The whole existence of something called the sublime, devoted to spectacles of grandeur and terror, testifies that our appetite for tragedies somehow hides an odd species of enjoyment.⁶⁶

Tragedy in the grand and terrifying sublimity of the icy landscape of Antarctica, so far removed from the trials of daily existence, fascinated the general public just as much as it repelled them. In *The Great White South*, Ponting himself used the word "sublime" exactly once, in discussing the self-sacrifice of Lawrence Oates, who, with a severely injured leg, walked out to his death in a blizzard so that he would not further hinder the doomed polar party. He told his comrades, "I am just going outside and may be some time."⁶⁷ Ponting wrote, "There can be no question about the quality of Oates' sacrifice. It was sublime."⁶⁸ Those that faced death at the ends of the earth were exalted as martyrs and national heroes rather than mourned. Even before the fate of the polar party could have been imagined, Ponting pictured the Antarctic as a grandiose setting filled with imposing icebergs that dwarfed human existence, where the polar party suffered and nearly triumphed, sacrificing their lives for Edwardian ideals.

⁶⁶ Spufford, 27.

⁶⁷ Robert Falcon Scott, *Scott's Last Expedition*, ed. Leonard Huxley (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company), 408.

⁶⁸ Ponting, *The Great White South*, 289.

This was the narrative that was perpetuated in Ponting's images, but in *Scott and Amundson*, Roland Huntford retold the story as one of avoidable tragedy, brought about by poor leadership, poor planning, and an unjustifiable affinity of the British explorers for doing things the hard way. Huntford counted among Scott's shortcomings as an explorer the Victorian and Edwardian culture in general, "the moralistic approach that bedeviled English public life," which regarded suffering as equivalent with achievement.⁶⁹ Overcoming hardship was the only way to achieve such a noble goal as reaching the South Pole. Throughout his scathing critique of Scott's incompetence as a leader, Huntford touched only fleetingly on how this culture bred such sanctimonious values. Francis Spufford unpacked this further. He explained that the sublime "remained a heady influence on the way the conventional English saw themselves as they set about doing dangerous things" throughout the Victorian era, and by the Edwardian era at the turn of the century, this sublime self-image was familiar and even worn.⁷⁰ The idea of triumph in spite of misery and misfortune is a sublime notion indeed. That the British would embrace this concept of noble suffering far into the late 19th and early 20th centuries begins to make sense when one considers the sublime in the context of empire-building.

In "The Sublime from Burke to the Present," Frances Ferguson provides a succinct summary of the progression of the idea of the sublime from the 18th century. Throughout the 19th century, the concept of the sublime in nature developed away from Edmund Burke's idea of awe at having "escaped annihilation" due to our comparative

⁶⁹ A quote by Sir Clements Markham (1830-1916) is a prime example. In his praise of Scott's tactics during the *Discovery* expedition, Markham wrote in a letter to Scott Keltie, August 30, 1904: "The sledge journeys *without dogs* are quite unequalled. It is a very much easier matter when... dogs drag their things, while they stroll along." Huntford, 188.

⁷⁰ Spufford, 39.

insignificance in nature; to the sentiment promoted by Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Schiller that “the experience of the sublime involved the affirmation of human identity as the refusal to suffer violence from any of the ‘countless forces’ that are superior to man's own and wield physical mastery over him.”⁷¹ The unknowable vastness of the sublime inspired the ever-forward march into uncharted territories. The triumph of men amid hardship thus justified the right of the expansion of Empire. Perhaps this is what led Scott to embark on the British Antarctic Expedition so ill-prepared, as he believed there was no way to prepare for the alien icescape of Antarctica, and thus he should have to rely on good old-fashioned resourcefulness and off-the-cuff innovation. The embrace of improvisation of course proved disastrous for Scott himself, but the ultimate misfortune that he and his men met did little to dispel the notion of British superiority of noble character.

Although Ponting wrote about his individual photographs in *The Great White South*, he wrote very little about his artistic intent, or how he decided to frame his compositions. However, Ponting felt that his work shared a “kindred nature” with that of Edward Wilson (1872-1912), the zoologist, surgeon, and sketch artist of the Antarctic expedition.⁷² In *The Great White South*, Ponting wrote of working with Wilson, who would sometimes come to him with help on getting the composition to look right.⁷³ One such instance was regarding a study of Mount Erebus, of which Wilson felt did not look tall enough. Ponting realized that he had included too much sky in the composition. “Taking a sheet of paper I placed it across the top of his drawing, cutting off three inches,

⁷¹Baldine Saint Girons, et al., "Sublime," *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*. *Oxford Art Online*. Oxford University Press, Accessed March 1, 2014, <http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t234/e0490>.

⁷² Ponting, *The Great White South*, 128.

⁷³ Ibid.

and immediately the mountain rose. He was quite pleased, and thought it remarkable that he had not thought of such a simple expedient himself.”⁷⁴ Both sketch artist and camera artist wished to make the mountains appear tall and mighty. An image of Mount Erebus dwarfed by the sky would not do.

Wilson corroborated their mutual respect in a letter to Mr. and Mrs. Reginald Smith on October 29, 1911, “I think Ponting’s work is perfectly admirable and the enthusiasm and care he has put into it down here is beyond all praise. I have never seen more beautiful pictures than some he has taken here of ice and Mount Erebus and seals and so on.”⁷⁵ Perhaps because he was an artist rather than a photographer, Wilson was more vocal about how art should be composed. Wilson’s artistic philosophy was an interpretation of the teachings of John Ruskin, who advocated for the close study of Nature, supplemented by romanticism by the likes of Lord Alfred Tennyson, whose *In Memoriam* (1849) he read and re-read in the Antarctic.⁷⁶ In his “Notes on Sketching,” a lecture he gave to the crew during the long Antarctic winter, Wilson laid out nine rules of drawing to achieve balance and emotion through composition. Wilson stated that the purpose of the artist is to make the space understandable to an audience that will never see the place:

In a country such as this, which has been seen by a very small number of people who are likely to see the sketches brought home, it is obviously out of place to swing off too freely on the imagination. Therefore a real artist, that is, an imaginative ‘painter-fellow,’ would be wholly out of place here. What is wanted here is a copyist. If he is what is called artistic so much the better but only because he will then have some idea of what, amongst the innumerable things before him, is representable in a picture – that is, of what will make a picture.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Ponting, *The Great White South*, 128.

⁷⁵ Letter from Edward Wilson to Mrs. Reginald Smith, Oct. 29, 1911. SPRI MS 559/142/9.

⁷⁶ H.G.R. King, 14.

⁷⁷ Edward Wilson, notes on sketching in the Antarctic, 1910-1913. SPRI MS 1225/3; D.

What Wilson was describing, yet not acknowledging, was exactly the capabilities of photography as practiced by Ponting. Ponting's artistry was in framing or staging the view out of the "innumerable things before him" in order to make a "picture," and the technology of the camera itself acted as a "copyist." Sketch artists were indeed required in order to capture the color of the polar landscape where photography could not, but it is notable that Wilson did not discuss photography at all in his lecture.⁷⁸ Curiously, for all his insistence on copying from nature, Wilson referred exclusively to the sublime works of Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851) for examples, suggesting that Wilson had a far more romantic sensibility about drawing from nature than his statement implied.⁷⁹ *Pembroke Castle, Wales*, 1831, for example, was used to illustrate the "law of repetition," as the red and white sails strike a balance with the red and white fishes on shore.⁸⁰ In this painting, the castle is surrounded on one side with a dramatic, stormy sky and choppy sea, but the structure itself seems to dissolve into the almost tactile golden light, of which the fishermen appear wholly unaware. That Wilson referred to such Romantic paintings demonstrates that although he believed his goal in the Antarctic was to record scenes for scientific study, he also believed that the images should be pleasing to look at, and inspire awe in his viewers.

Wilson's romanticism is evident in his own paintings, such as [Figure 25], which shows two, small, silhouetted figures among a landscape at sunset or sunrise. The warm light highlights the mountain behind them, illuminating it in pink and yellow, while grey-

⁷⁸ Ponting did make several autochromes in the Antarctic, but they are studies of color and are not typical of his formally calculated compositions. Two are reproduced in Ann Savours, ed., *Scott's Last Voyage: Through the Antarctic Camera of Herbert Ponting* (New York: Praeger, 1974), 40-41.

⁷⁹ Edward Wilson, notes on sketching in the Antarctic, 1910-1913. "Ruskin was a real teacher and I have his book – and I have gone through it and noted down what I believe to be the soundest principles teachable." Photocopy of handwritten lecture notes, SPRI MS 1225/3; D.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

blue clouds sweep in above them. The companions are isolated from any evidence of human comforts – there is no building, sled or animal in sight. They are utterly alone, isolated from the world in a desolate landscape.

Ponting, like Wilson, also frequently included small silhouettes of figures into his compositions, yet the figures in Wilson's paintings are dwarfed amid an ethereal landscape of mountains dissolving into clouds or the horizon. Ponting's images are far less melancholic, as he photographed his scenes to capture the most detail as possible. With the strong stance of the figures in the majority his silhouette photographs, he aimed to convey the hardiness and ability of the members of the *Terra Nova* despite their isolation. Through simple adjustments of posing, Ponting's images embody the "fine and manly spirit" he hoped to inspire in his viewers.⁸¹ Despite the difference in medium and tone, Ponting and Wilson both aimed to satisfy the various scientific, artistic and armchair explorer communities with images that accurately recorded the effects of light and geology, and with compositions that emphasized the sublime nature of the landscape and the actions of the expedition within it.

Critics such as Martha Sandweiss and Rosalind Krauss have warned against the hazards of attributing artistic intent to photographers in the absence of their own artist statements. In her 1982 essay, "Photography's Discursive Spaces: Landscape/View," Krauss argued that the retroactive appropriation by art historians of the Western landscape photographers such as of Timothy O'Sullivan is "the composition of a false history," and ignores the original and sole intention of the photographs as survey

⁸¹ Ponting, *The Great White South*, viii.

documents.⁸² Krauss, however, based her arguments on the current separation of the realms of art and science, even though in the 19th century, these fields were far more fluid. For examples of Western landscape photography, she discussed only the work of O'Sullivan, and since O'Sullivan apparently never exhibited his prints in galleries, his images were used for geological studies and consumed by the general public as stereograph views. Stereograph views, with their insistence on geography, taxonomy, and anonymity of the author/artist, were "interdetermined and interrelated" with land surveys, and had little if nothing to do with "landscape."⁸³ Therefore, according to Krauss, to discuss these photographs in an art historical context is anachronistic and incoherent. Her example of O'Sullivan was a convenient choice. For how could this argument of the separation of art and science hold true for the photographic work of Carleton Watkins, who was photographed for geographical surveys, stereograph views, album prints and gallery exhibitions? Art and science were always interrelated in the photographic rendering of distant places.

In *Print the Legend: Photography and the American West*, Martha Sandweiss took a more moderate stance. She acknowledged the lack of literary evidence of the artistic intentions of early Western photographers, yet ventured to argue that early painted landscapes of the West still "shaped how photographs of the place would be made, marketed, and understood" to an audience with no first-hand experience of it.⁸⁴ Sandweiss thus suggested that photographers relied on established artistic conventions to appeal to their audiences on the East Coast. Although photographers may not have even

⁸² Rosalind Krauss, "Photography's Discursive Spaces: Landscape/View," *Art Journal* 42, No.4 (Winter 1982), 313.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 315.

⁸⁴ Martha Sandweiss, *Print the Legend: Photography and the American West* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 3-4.

been conscious of the pictorial framing devices, let alone have discussed them in writing, a familiarity with landscape painting and engraving would have nonetheless shaped how the West, and other foreign lands were pictured.

In fact, by the turn of the century when Ponting was photographing, artistic intent was assumed of travel photographers. This is evident in the praise that artists and critics alike doted on Ponting. Arnold cited Sir John Lavery, R.A., who wrote of Ponting's portfolio: "If I were to have painted any of these scenes, I would not have altered either the composition or the lighting of any of them in any way whatsoever."⁸⁵ An undated article from *Colour* stated, "many of Mr Ponting's pictures possess qualities which are only looked for in the work of great painters."⁸⁶ However, Arnold denied any attempt by Ponting to create compositions similar to popular in painting, explaining that he simply worked intuitively:

In using his great technical photographic skill to record a scene, he strove after what he considered 'felt' right and represented its mood. If there were close similarities between certain aspects of this interpretation and that of a painter, then this might be gratifying, but there was no evidence that Ponting would have changed his attitude if things had been completely otherwise.⁸⁷

With this statement, Arnold was perhaps meaning to defend Ponting's originality.

However, Ponting's insistence on calling himself a "camera artist" as opposed to simply a photographer implied that he wished his images to be considered in an aesthetic light, not just documents that "felt right."

Indeed, Scott needed an artist, not a scientist, in order to document and properly market his expedition. The sparsely illustrated *Voyage of the Discovery*, 1907, meant that

⁸⁵ H.J.P. Arnold, *Herbert Ponting Another World: Photographs in the United States, Asia, Europe and Antarctica, 1900-1912* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson Limited, 1975), 31.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

Scott had to rely on its circulation and his lecture series in order to gain interest in the expedition. Pointing the “camera artist” created images that served every realm that photography was capable of. He depicted some of the scientific endeavors of the expedition, he photographed cute penguins for comic relief, he crafted landscapes and portraits intended as fine art prints, and even created advertisements for various goods that were consumed by the crew. The most important and overarching goal, however, was to glorify the endeavors of the men, struggling against nature at the end of the earth for the abstract goal of reaching the South Pole, proving the nobility, self-sacrifice, and superiority of the British people. For this, only an artist would suffice.

Chapter 2: “Ponting” for Ponko: The Constructed Narrative of Antarctic

Exploration

By the time Herbert Ponting was hired by the British Antarctic Expedition of 1910-1913, shortly before the advent of World War I, the expansion of the British Empire was at its height, boasting colonies and claims to land on every single continent in the world, except one—Antarctica. Ponting, having built his career on adapting his vision to align with popular tastes, once again crafted a photographic narrative that captured the interest of the educated, middle class layman. This was a public who visited art galleries and could afford the weekly, illustrated newspapers, illustrated travel books, and stereograph collections, and who also had leisure time to enjoy them. This same audience enthusiastically consumed tales of exploration and adventure in foreign lands, fiction and non-fiction alike.⁸⁸ Although Ponting was only in Antarctica for the first year of the expedition, and although he was not allowed to accompany any of the prolonged journeys from camp, his images remain largely uncontested as illustrative of the entire expedition and have become symbolic for the entire Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Adventure fiction, heroic tales in exotic environments by authors such as Robert Louis Stevenson, Jules Verne, Jack London, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Rudyard Kipling, were very popular in the late 19th and early 20th century. Scott's expeditions at times generated daily attention in local newspapers, particularly regarding the race against Amundsen to the Pole. Database searches for news articles in *The Times of London*, the *Sunday Times*, *Illustrated London News*, *Manchester Guardian* and *The Observer* from the 1900 launch of the *Discovery* through the end of World War I totaled 786 articles about Scott in the Antarctic. Articles particularly about Scott and Amundsen that appeared before 1920 totaled 171.

⁸⁹ Stephen J. Pyne did not coin the term but clearly defines the Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration as beginning in 1895 when the Sixth International Geographical Congress proclaimed the importance of Antarctic exploration, and ending with the conclusion of Shackleton's Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition of 1914-1917. Stephen J. Pyne, “Heart of Whiteness: The Exploration of Antarctica,” *Environmental Review*, v10 n4 (Winter 1986), 235.

All of the large illustrated books of Ponting's work focus on the tale of the perilous expedition rather than his aesthetic choices. These include: A. Savours, ed. *Scott's Last Voyage: Through the Antarctic Camera of Herbert Ponting*. (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, Ltd., 1975); J. Boddington, *Antarctic Photographs 1910-1916: Scott, Mawson and Shackleton Expeditions* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980); Beau Riffenburgh and Liz Cruwys, eds. *With Scott to the Pole: The Terra Nova Expedition 1910-1913 The Photographs of Herbert Ponting*, (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 2004); _____. Riffenburgh, Beau and Liz Cruwys. *The Photographs of H.G. Ponting*. (London: The Discovery Gallery, 1998); David

However, the imposing icebergs that appear again and again in Ponting's images may not have been such important features of the Antarctic landscape to the geological scientists on the expedition, and the portraits of the men that highlight their rugged individualism and camaraderie were in fact meticulously constructed. An examination of Ponting's working method in the Antarctic, corroborated with diaries and published accounts of his character and his work by other members of the expedition will show that his images portray an incomplete depiction of the actual activities of the Expedition and instead reveal a visual narrative carefully constructed for mass consumption to promote the fame of the expedition.

In *The Myth of the Explorer*, Beau Riffenburgh explained that the extensive consumption of exploration accounts by audiences in Great Britain and the United States was indicative of prevalent nationalist and expansionist sentiments. He wrote that the expansion of the empire "represented a means to achieve or maintain moral, racial, spiritual, and physical supremacy, exploration thus became an instrument not only to justify imperial or nationalist political doctrine, but to embody the supposed collective cultural superiority of a nation."⁹⁰ In his study, Riffenburgh discussed both the United States and the United Kingdom, but the need to justify imperialism was likely to have resonated with the British in particular. Although both countries faced uprisings and rebellions in which the legitimacy of these imperialist values were drawn into question (the U.S. government's negotiations with Native American populations, Britain's foreign relations in their Asian and African colonies), it was the British Empire that held the most

Hempleman-Adams, et al. *The Heart of the Great Alone: Scott, Shackleton, and Antarctic Photography*. (New York: Bloomsbury, 2009).

⁹⁰Beau Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer: The Press, Sensationalism, and Geographical Discovery* (Cambridge: Scott Polar Research Institute, 1993), 2.

foreign colonies the world over. Perhaps because Britain held such a variety of foreign colonies the need to reaffirm the superiority of British culture was more acute, and so the drive to explore and claim uncharted territories in the farthest-flung places of the globe was greater in Britain than in America.

Riffenburgh focused on both polar and tropical exploration in his study of the legendary colonial explorer. Jen Hill, on the other hand, explained that it was the exploration of polar space in particular that proved ideal for nationalist mythmaking. Her book, *White Horizon: The Arctic in the Nineteenth-Century British Imagination*, concentrates on the Victorian exploration of the Arctic, but her arguments hold firm in the context of Edwardian exploration of the Antarctic as well. She wrote that for the British, the Arctic represented pure Empire.⁹¹ She quoted an 1853 essay by Henry Morley, which was included in Charles Dickens's *Household Words*. Morley stated,

there are not tales of risk and enterprise in which we English... become interested so completely, as in the tales that come from the North Pole. We would rather hear of travellers among the snowflakes and ice floes than among cypress and myrtle; and we have good reason for our preference. Snow and ice are emblems of the deeds done in their clime... The history of Arctic enterprise is stainless as the Arctic snows, clean to the core as an ice mountain.⁹²

Clean polar space, isolated from society and human enemies, allowed for the enactment of the drama of man against nature in its truest form. In "Heart of Whiteness: The Exploration of Antarctica," Stephen J. Pyne asserted that Antarctica, too, symbolized the purity of Empire, in contrast with the troubles of colonizing tropical cultures. "If Africa displayed the dark side of Western exploration and imperialism, Antarctica showed its

⁹¹ Jen Hill, *White Horizon: The Arctic in the Nineteenth-Century British Imagination* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008), 8.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 8.

bright side.”⁹³ In Antarctica, the feats accomplished and the tragedies endured proved purely the valor and morality of the explorer, rather than the weakness or savagery of his enemy. A review of Ponting’s work in *Country Life* succinctly sums up the sentiment by stating, “It tells of heroism without swords.”⁹⁴ In polar exploration, there is no vanquished enemy, only an icy, dispassionate adversary. The British, at the fore of imperialism worldwide, felt a particular claim to Antarctica. In 1934, nearly 80 years after Morley’s essay, Ponting reiterated the particular claim the British had regarding polar exploration:

No country has a monopoly of this spirit of adventure . . . But it may be said that British explorers have always been to the fore in Polar exploration ever since the days of Captain James Cook . . . Thus British adventurers have been pioneers in exploring the uttermost ends of the earth ever since Polar exploration first began.⁹⁵

Although Ponting appealed to contemporary desires for adventure and heartiness as opposed to the purity of polar space, he confirmed that the British felt a very nationalistic claim to polar exploration since its origins, for very few British would actually ever step close to the continent of Antarctica.⁹⁶ Therefore, photography was of paramount importance in order to provide the British with a sense of the adventure and claim to the landscape. Ponting, the accomplished travel “camera artist,” set out to do just this.

⁹³ Pyne, 232.

⁹⁴ Undated review in *Country Life* from *Some Observations upon the Desirability of the Acquisition of the Moving-Picture Record of the Scott South Pole Expedition Being Taken in Hand by a Public Body*, 13. Booklet collection of reviews of Ponting’s film, put together and published to sway the decision of the British government to purchase film. Included in an album of materials related to the photography, paintings, drawing, etc. of the British Antarctic Expedition, 1910-1913, SPRI MS280/28/7; ER.

⁹⁵ Herbert G. Ponting, “Polar Exploration,” *Times* (London, England), (November 17 1934): 8.

⁹⁶ Ponting marketed his text and images to an adventure-loving public, and wished to make clear the desire of himself and Captain Scott “that the youth of the Nation should be conversant with such adventures as Polar expeditions, as this would help to stimulate ‘a fine and manly spirit in the rising generation.’” Ponting, Preface to *The Great White South*, xiii.

Today, travel photographers are thought to be solitary and mobile explorers, deftly capturing their idiosyncratic vision of the world. But in 1910, this was far from the case. A 1910 article in *The British Journal of Photography* claimed that Ponting had assembled “a photographic outfit the like of which has probably never before been brought together.”⁹⁷ The equipment Ponting took was actually quite typical of travel photographers preparing for year-long expeditions during the 19th century, but the fact that he had to transport it on a naval ship to the most extreme environment on earth makes the list of his outfit all the more impressive. The article reported that among the items he packed were: several compact film cameras with fixed lenses to be used by the sledging parties; a Newman and Sinclair cinematograph, accompanied by wooden film boxes; thousands of feet of cinematographic film; multiple 4x5 glass plate cameras; hundreds of glass plates; color screens for photomicrographic work; a lantern slide outfit and projector; a year’s worth of darkroom chemicals; and materials to build two darkrooms (one on the *Terra Nova* and one at headquarters) complete with sink, benches, shelves, tables and a special machine for developing cinematographic film.⁹⁸ This extensive laundry list of equipment was not even complete. It did not include the variety of lenses, tripods, flashbulbs, developing tanks and trays, exposure meters, or the storage containers that housed the completed plates [Figure 26]. It also does not include Ponting’s favorite camera, one he designed himself, which exposed 5 by 7 inch glass plate negatives and could accommodate a wide range of lenses.⁹⁹ Since Ponting often traveled a mile or more to get a desired photograph, much of this equipment had to be

⁹⁷ “The Photographic Equipment of the British Antarctic Expedition,” *The British Journal of Photography*, 57 (June 3, 1910), 417.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 417-418.

⁹⁹ H.J.P. Arnold, *Photographer of the World: The Biography of Herbert Ponting*. Cranbury, N.J.: Associated University Presses, 1971.

packed onto sledges and hauled to location, a time-consuming and laborious task. Once at location, these large-format cameras had to be set up and positioned on a tripod, and the image had to be focused manually by studying the ground glass back under a dark cloth. No part of this photographic practice allowed for capturing quick snapshots.

The massive amount of equipment that had to be transported was only one of many hindrances in photographing the Antarctic. The extreme cold affects equipment in unexpected ways. Breathing on a lens outside would result in an instant film of ice, which had to be thawed off and wiped dry.¹⁰⁰ Cameras had to be left in their cases outside the hut, for the hundred degree temperature difference between outside and inside would cause “such condensation that they became dripping wet” and then had to be disassembled and wiped dry.¹⁰¹ Lubricating oil on the movie camera had to be replaced with graphite, as even the ‘non-freezing’ oil froze.¹⁰² If they were not to be developed immediately, plates had to be brought inside gradually, over the course of two days, “to prevent unsightly markings” caused by condensation moisture on the glass.¹⁰³

The physical hazards of photographing in such extreme temperatures quickly became apparent to Ponting, and he related of some of the injuries he sustained in order to capture his images. Threading film through his movie camera

was an unpleasant job, for it was necessary to use bare fingers whilst doing it. Often when my fingers touched metal they became frostbitten. Such a frostbite feels exactly like a burn. Once, thoughtlessly, I held a camera screw for a moment in my mouth. It froze instantly to my lips and took the skin off them when I removed it. On another occasion, my tongue came into contact with a metal part of one of my cameras, whilst moistening my lips as I was focusing. It froze fast instantaneously; and to

¹⁰⁰ Herbert Ponting, *The Great White South: Traveling with Robert F. Scott's Doomed South Pole Expedition*, originally published 1921 (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2001), 170.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 169-170.

¹⁰² Ibid., 170.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

release myself I had to jerk it away, leaving the skin of the end of my tongue sticking to my camera, and my mouth bled so profusely that I had to gag it with a handkerchief.¹⁰⁴

In addition to the physical dangers of simply operating the camera, there were the environmental hazards of the specific locations. Ponting fell through the ice on more than one occasion, and was even at one point nearly snatched up by a killer whale!¹⁰⁵ He was particularly proud of this last bit of danger he escaped, and he quoted Scott's account of the incident and even posed for a painting by Ernest Linzell so that he could illustrate the event in *The Great White South* [Figure 27]. Just as in his accounts of previous travels, Ponting wrote at length about the hardships he faced to create his photographs, which highlighted his off-the-cuff problem solving as well as his dedication to his craft, the expedition, and the Empire at large.

Ponting went to great lengths to guard against the cold, as he often had to stand waiting for an hour or more for an ideal exposure.¹⁰⁶ In full gear he wore: four pairs of thick woolen socks, one pair of goat-hair ski-socks insulated with sennegrass, and over all of this he wore reindeer fur moccasins. He also wore two pairs of thick, woolen underwear, corduroy breeches and puttees, a thick woolen sweater, a woolen coat and a flannel-lined leather coat, a woolen wrapper and a seal-skin fur helmet. On his hands he wore woolen gloves, woolen mitts and a pair of thick dog-fur mitts [Figure 28].¹⁰⁷ This was not the outfit that could be thrown on at a moment's notice. The bitter cold and heavy equipment meant that everything Ponting did in the Antarctic must have been carefully calculated and planned in advance.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 171.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 63-65.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 168.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 169.

Ponting's practice, as evidenced in his work in Asia, was already one that required additional help in order to efficiently carry equipment to the distant locations with the best views. In Antarctica, even more equipment and precautions had to be taken. Unloading his equipment at the Cape Evans headquarters was a struggle. Ponting had to make "several lone trips, hauling some hundreds of pounds of photographic and darkroom equipment, and my personal belongings, on a sledge."¹⁰⁸ He could therefore not travel more than a few miles from the base at Cape Evans, and because of the weight of his equipment, he was not allowed to accompany any of the shorter expeditions to the interior of the continent or across the Ross Ice Shelf. *The British Journal of Photography* stated that "Mr. Ponting has been given *carte blanche* in the making of all these arrangements, and, therefore, one may look for a record of the expedition's work, photographically speaking, beyond reproach."¹⁰⁹ Yet, considering the actualities of photographing the Antarctic, a *carte blanche* without assigned help meant little to Ponting, who was essentially left to his own devices.

Ponting understood that there were shortcomings in his work, but he rarely took responsibility for them. In an impassioned letter to Scott written in 1912, before news had reached him of the Polar party's fate, Ponting vented about every injustice he felt was done him by the Expedition. He was indignant to find that he did not control the copyright or distribution of his photographs: "I did not go to the South to win my spurs, as many others did, and as perhaps you thought I did. I won them long ago. I went South because I thought this work worthy of the skill which I had been acquiring in many lands,

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p77.

¹⁰⁹ "The Photographic Equipment of the British Antarctic Expedition," *The British Journal of Photography*, 57 (June 3, 1910), 418.

and by many years of travel.”¹¹⁰ In addition to providing insight into Ponting’s character, this letter also hints at Scott’s poor planning in regards to the images. Although Scott had the foresight to be the first Antarctic Captain to hire a professional photographer, he apparently did not realize that Ponting would need assistance and deserved to be informed of how his images would be handled upon their return. Scott was under contract with *The Strand* and the *Daily Mirror* for exclusive rights to the images and written accounts, information that was apparently never translated to Ponting, who preferred to work with what he believed were more reputable papers.¹¹¹ Ponting’s personal correspondence and the accounts of other members of the expedition show that the good-natured camaraderie among the men as presented in *The Great White South* is a fabrication.

In actuality, Ponting’s sense of entitlement alienated him from the crew, and perhaps from friends and family his whole life.¹¹² In his films and book, Ponting presented himself as a member of “that great adventure,” but he was in fact an outcast.¹¹³ When he joined the expedition from Cape Town, South Africa, as Beau Riffenbergh and Liz Cruwys pointed out, Ponting likely appeared to the crew as “fussy, prim, and demanding,” and was almost certainly met by some of the members with doubt.¹¹⁴

Because his images were relied upon as the most important means to promote the fame of

¹¹⁰ Letter from Herbert Ponting to Captain Scott, November 4, 1912. SPRI, MS 964/11; D.

¹¹¹ In his 1912 letter to Wilson, Ponting complained that the Strand Magazine, “that miserable periodical” has sole rights to his pictures and a 20,000-word story from Scott. “I have for years been a contributor to the finest papers of the world, and my main object in joining the expedition was that my work might continue to appear in these papers. I have been incensed beyond measure by this arrangement which gives all my results to such rags as the Daily Mirror and the Strand.” Letter from Herbert Ponting to E.A. Wilson, October 27, 1912. SPRI, MS 964/12.

¹¹² Ponting was estranged from his wife and children since 1901, and his correspondence archives show that he had very few friends to whom he confided.

¹¹³ Ponting, Preface to *The Great White South*, xiii.

¹¹⁴ Beau Riffenburgh and Liz Cruwys, *With Scott to the Pole: The Terra Nova Expedition 1910-1913. The Photographs of Herbert Ponting* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004), 30.

the expedition, and their rights were sold in advance in order to fund it, Ponting was able to negotiate one of the top three highest salaries of the expedition, even among officers.¹¹⁵ As Ponting had a darkroom, he was also the only member of the crew to have his own space with a door, both on the ship and at the Hut. He spent the first half of the trip laid out with seasickness, and later observed that sailing with “the *Terra Nova* was a very different matter to travelling on comfortable ocean liners.”¹¹⁶ With an attitude like this, Ponting earned little sympathy among the hardy group of explorers, some of whom who had joined the expedition at their own expense for the experience and for fame and glory.

Upon landing in Antarctica, Ponting immediately set about photographing, without helping the rest of the crew to unload. Even during the fall and winter, when there was ample downtime, Ponting rarely fraternized. On April 13, 1911, Scott wrote: “Ponting’s nervous temperament allowed no waste of time—for him, fine weather meant no sleep; he decided that lost opportunities should be as rare as circumstances would permit.”¹¹⁷ A “nervous temperament” was hardly one that Ponting acclaimed in his writing, nor captured in his images. In correspondence with Ponting’s biographer, H.J.P. Arnold, Frank Debenham later noted that several of the officers “disliked him for not

¹¹⁵ Only Cecil Meares, the dog handler and Russian interpreter and Griffith-Taylor, a geologist, received the same salary of 250 pounds/month. Most officers were paid between 100–200 pounds, and the crew all received around 40 pounds. Some, including Trygve Gran, a midshipman were paid only 1 pound per month, a nominal fee for the members who joined the expedition at their own expense. B.A.E. Agreement and Account of Crew. SPRI MS 129; SL.

¹¹⁶ Griffith-Taylor, diary entry for Wednesday November 30, 1910: “Ponting is indisposed lying in his photo lab.” Saturday, December 3, 1910: “Ponting secure in his lab all time, filling a bucket. Everyone else roused out.” *The Griffith-Taylor Collection*, 17. Sunday December 4, 1910: “Priestly is a great sufferer from sea-sickness, though he manfully worked at the buckets during the gale.” *The Griffith-Taylor Collection*, 19.

Ponting, *The Great White South*, 12.

¹¹⁷ Robert F. Scott, *Scott’s Last Expedition*, ed. Leonard Huxley (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1913), 234.

joining in tasks like snow digging...”¹¹⁸ Not everyone was appreciative of the value of a photographer who did little else. Geographer Thomas Griffith-Taylor (1880-1963) confirmed Debenham’s hesitant characterization of Ponting. Griffith-Taylor was bemused by Ponting’s physical weakness, though he appreciated his work as a photographer. During the first days of landing, in which the rest of the crew was helping to unload and build the hut, Ponting set straight to work photographing. Griffith-Taylor wrote “Our noble friend Ponting has the softest time tho [sic] he’s doing good work e.g. he is snoozing now (noon) and did nothing but photography yesterday. None of the geologists or biologists have done any scientific yet – all sledging and carpentry and loading.”¹¹⁹ On another occasion he wrote, “Our last run from the hut bore the fatigued Ponting. He was very tired with photographing – no doubt tiring – but it struck me as rather amusing, for we pulled him back with his camera on our empty sledge [...]”¹²⁰ Amidst a group of men who honored physical hardship as an expression of achievement, Ponting treated them like hired help in foreign lands. He was more entitled, less physically capable, and less team-oriented than the other members. To make matters even worse for “our noble friend,” Ponting was a civilian.

As Roland Huntford explained *Scott and Amundsen*, polar exploration was a function of the Royal Navy.¹²¹ Joining polar expeditions fast-tracked promotions that might have taken years to acquire.¹²² There would have been fierce competition among the men regarding who got to lead sledging expeditions, who carried out the most important scientific work, and who got to accompany the polar party. Ponting was

¹¹⁸ Quoted in by Arnold, citing personal correspondence with Debenham, April 20, 1964. Arnold, 57.

¹¹⁹ Griffith-Taylor’s diary entry, January 11, 1911. *The Griffith-Taylor Collection*, 68.

¹²⁰ Griffith-Taylor’s diary entry, January 6, 1911. *The Griffith-Taylor Collection*, 60.

¹²¹ Roland Huntford, *Scott and Amundsen* (New York: Putnam, 1979), 124.

¹²² Ibid.

originally meant to lead the important geological sledging expedition to the Western part of McMurdo Sound, until Griffith-Taylor expressed to Scott that “as a Commonwealth officer it would seem a bit queer if the chief scientist of this trip were under the charge (‘nursed’ as he said) by a photographer even if he has climbed many peaks and travelled everywhere (as Ponting has).”¹²³ Though he did not admit it in *The Great White South*, Ponting was frustrated that he was not able to photograph this journey. He expressed to Edward Wilson in 1912 that he had “only two regrets about the work I did. One is that I was unable to get any aurora pictures and the other that I was done out of the Western trip.”¹²⁴ A different version, however, was told in *The Great White South*, in which Ponting claimed it was the mutual decision of Scott and himself to work in Cape Evans and Cape Royds on Ross Island for the summer, as

the western journey would not have enabled me to take my own time over my work, and photography in these regions is too important and difficult to be done in haste. Moreover, I should not have been able to take my heavy cinematograph apparatus and equipment, and Captain Scott was in complete accord with me as to the desirability of securing typical scenery and animal life records, rather than geological details.¹²⁵

The photography of that expedition, geological details and all, was left to Frank Debenham.¹²⁶ Ponting, however cheerfully he wrote of his experiences in *The Great White South*, was discontented with his lack of mobility, having grown used to employing local natives to carry his things during his travels to foreign lands. He later lamented in a letter to Debenham in 1920, that “if only Scott had better realized the valuable sort of work that I could do” and provided him with assistants so as not to have been confined to

¹²³ Griffith-Taylor’s diary, December 7, 1910. *The Griffith-Taylor Collection*, 22.

¹²⁴ Letter from Herbert Ponting to Edward Adrian Wilson, October 27, 1912. SPRI, MS 964/12.

¹²⁵ Ponting, *The Great White South*, 84.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

certain areas, he could have accomplished much more.¹²⁷ But Ponting was a civilian, and his task, though difficult, was not respected as physically demanding enough by other members of the expedition. He was thus poorly suited to lead his own expedition in the minds of Scott and Griffith-Taylor.

Some members also begrudged Ponting for having to pose for his camera so often, and he was teased for his meticulousness. Ponting recalled in *The Great White South* that

[Griffith-] Taylor had invented a new verb, consisting of the first syllable of my name—‘to pont,’ meaning ‘to pose, until nearly frozen, in all sorts of uncomfortable positions’ for my photographs. [...] I was once again the butt of no end of twitting about ‘the peril of “ponting” for Ponko’ –the latter being my nickname. The more I protested [...] the more persistently these crimes were fastened upon me.¹²⁸

This anecdote of the invention of the verb “to pont” was meant to illustrate the amiable relationship Ponting enjoyed with the other members. And though Ponting himself explained that these jests were “good-natured,” his need to explain to his audience about how people joke around may instead suggest that he was more of an outsider than he wished to let on.¹²⁹ Ponting’s sensitivity and defensiveness was also implied by Charles “Silas” Wright (1887-1975) who wrote in his diary on September 24, 1911: “Ponting away and probably lost for a time though he won[‘]t admit it.”¹³⁰ Wright wrote more about Ponting in his diaries than most of the expedition members, and his bemusement with Ponting affirmed Scott’s own description of his “nervous temperament.”

¹²⁷ Letter from Herbert Ponting to Frank Debenham January 7th, 1920. SPRI, MS 964/12.

¹²⁸ Ponting, *The Great White South*, 182.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Colin Bull and Pat F. Wright, *Silas: The Antarctic Diaries and Memoir of Charles S. Wright* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1993), 171.

Wright was only 24 years old when he joined the expedition, and his diary entries are more candid than the calculated sentimentality and overplayed statements of Ponting, who was 39, and had already enjoyed a long career of contributing to the popular press. Scott, at 43, was also an established writer/explorer, and composed his diary as a resource for narrative, which may have precluded more blunt statements. Wright however, was not shy to discuss his impressions of other people on the expedition, and was particularly annoyed by Ponting, writing,

The photographer Ponting is an abominable nuisance, we have to be posing the whole time for his cinematograph – even when watering (icing) ship or shooting seals. There are two of the men, Levick and Meares, [who] are always being photographed. I have not yet discovered whether they like it or are merely more obliging than the rest of us.¹³¹

Wright clearly did not enjoy having to take time out of his own work in order to pose for Ponting. It is possible that Levick and Meares better understood the value of the photographs and the fact that thousands of people would see them. Nevertheless, though tolerated by some, Ponting was not provided with the proper support to fully document all of the activities of the expedition.

Because this lack of support quickly became apparent to Ponting, he found ways to evoke the complete story of the expedition with insufficient time and experience. As *The Great White South* shows, Ponting was always focused on compositions, and was particularly taken by the sublime majesty of the ice formations, particularly that of Castle Berg, which moved him to wax poetic:

During the long months of darkness, I had often stood beneath its crystal bastions and marveled at the skill with which the hand of Nature had built and chiseled the frozen walls into the semblance of a Norman tower. In the brilliant Polar moonlight, with the soft beams silvering each curve and

¹³¹ Wright's diary entry for Sunday December 11, 1910. Bull and Wright, 54.

ridge and angle of its structure, it had seemed a veritable fairy-tale in ice—a fitting palace for King Jack Frost, whose home I never doubted it to be. Now, as the sun flooded it with light, the berg became of such gleaming beauty that even the most unimpressible members of our community felt the influence of its spell.¹³²

The reference to medieval feudal architecture was common in descriptions of 19th century polar landscapes, and was particularly employed by artists in order to relate to wide audiences on an emotional and unscientific level.¹³³ By likening the ice formation to a castle, Ponting further aligned his photography with romantic landscape art rather than scientific documentation. Jen Hill argued that the depiction of ice formations shaped in familiar forms was a means to reflect the grandeur of Western civilization even in the wild. “By mimicking man-made objects such as aqueducts and cathedrals, the polar landscape reflected a distorted Englishness back at the explorers, a distortion that in turn revealed the protean, constructed nature of civilization itself.”¹³⁴ These formations could illustrate the alien polar landscape to audiences back home, which had no frame of reference for imagining polar space. Icebergs pictured as monumental forms reflected Western civilization and architectural achievement, as well as made the space more relatable and conquerable in the collective imagination.

Huge Ice Bastions of The Castle Berg, taken on September 17, 1911 [Figure 29], depicts the expedition’s cook, Thomas Clissold, in silhouette, staring up at the wall of ice so immense that it dwarfs him. The ice extends out of the frame on the left, so that the full size of the berg is left unclear. Rather than simply acting as a model for scale,

¹³² Ponting, *The Great White South*, 171-172.

¹³³ A Castle Berg is also described by Louis Legrand Noble in his book about traveling to the Arctic with painter Frederic Church, *After Icebergs with a Painter* (New York: Appleton and Company, 1861), 246: “It is a combination of Alp, castle, mosque, Parthenon and cathedral.” Painter William Bradford also likened icebergs to cathedrals along the Rhine River, the Colosseum in Rome and other castle ruins and pagodas. William Bradford, *The Arctic Regions: Illustrated with Photographs taken on an Art Expedition to Greenland* (London, 1873), 45.

¹³⁴ Hill, *White Horizon*, 19.

Clissold steps toward the berg with his pick axe in front of him, as if accepting a challenge. The man is perfectly positioned below the peak of the second triangular iceberg, framing him and echoing his strong stance. This image implies a narrative of isolation and conquest.¹³⁵

Another image of the Castle Berg, also taken in September 1911 [Figure 30], depicts one of the men seated on a dogsled. The three levels of the iceberg grow progressively higher from the left to right of the frame, in the same direction the dogs are heading. The ice at the base of the berg is broken up, as though the Castle Berg is continuing to rise up from the icy surface. Ponting waited for a time in which the light would create such dramatic contrast on the berg, and it is similar to the artificial light that was used for his picture of the Castle Berg at night, taken in the middle of the winter on June 4, 1911 [Figure 31]. This evokes the extreme isolation and months of darkness that was endured by the hardy Brits. In an eerie contrast, the iceberg at night disappears into the sublime void of complete and total darkness rather than the white expanse of ice.

Of all of the photographs taken on the expedition, Ponting was most enamored with his image of the ice grotto framing the *Terra Nova* [Figure 32]. This photograph was taken while the ship was stuck in the pack ice, and Ponting decided to trek a mile to investigate, where he found “the most wonderful place imaginable,” and with the “incredible good luck the entrance to the cavern framed a fine view of the *Terra Nova*.”¹³⁶ This image, more than any other image from the expedition, is most evocative of the sublime, and to this day is among the most widely reproduced of his images. This

¹³⁵ After this image was taken, Clissold did indeed attempt to climb the berg, but fell and suffered injuries severe enough that he was prevented from accompanying a Southern sledging journey Riffenburgh and Cruwys, 164.

¹³⁶ Ponting, *The Great White South*, 67.

vertical image taken from inside a teardrop shaped cave in an iceberg resembles an enormous, frozen wave crashing over the two men who look out from its mouth. Employing a similar composition to the late 18th century paintings of Joseph Wright of Derby, who crafted a series of paintings from cave interiors looking out into golden-lit lakes such as *Grotto in the Gulf of Salernum, with the Figure of Julia, Banished from Rome*, 1780 [Figure 33] and *A Grotto in the Gulf of Salerno, Sunset*, 1780-1781 [Figure 34], Ponting's image of the ice grotto elicits the oppressiveness of the surrounding icescape of Antarctica. But through the rippled surface of the walls of the cave stand two proper British gentlemen. Unlike Julia, despairing in the shadows of the grotto as the last sign of civilization sails away from her, Griffith-Taylor and Wright stand in the sunny patch of ice looking out onto the expanse of landscape that they intend to conquer. The *Terra Nova* sits strong and firm, a symbol of the strength of civilization amid the icy expanse. Icicles frame the mouth of the cave, dripping down to where they meet the mast of the *Terra Nova* in the distance. *Grotto in a Berg* evokes Plato's allegory of the cave, but in which the English are the enlightened philosophers who stand confidently, looking outward on the blinding white expanse of land and at their mighty vessel that carried them there, to study and subdue the uncharted continent.

Ponting was so enthused by this composition that he boasted that he had "secured none more beautiful the entire time I was in the South."¹³⁷ His exhilaration was noted by Scott, who wrote "Ponting has been ravished yesterday by a view of the ship seen from a big cave in an iceberg [...] I went to the iceberg with him and agreed that I had rarely seen anything more beautiful than this cave." But Scott was not as enraptured as Ponting,

¹³⁷ Ibid.

and was sure to note, “it was really a sort of crevasse in a tilted berg parallel to the original surface.”¹³⁸

Indeed, not everyone shared Ponting’s artistic enthusiasm. Wright, for one, was rather annoyed with Ponting that he was more interested in this grotto than he was in the more mundane formations that would be more useful to the geologists. He wrote of the same moment when Ponting discovered the cave:

I had hoped that these ‘icefeet’ and some small caves in the tidal ice shelf would appeal to Ponting and that I would end up with some good photographs for the glaciology reports. But Ponting was interested in larger things and we went straight for a stranded iceberg which had originally been tabular and stratified horizontally with a thick layer of more recently formed ice on top. [...] But the real piece of good fortune for Ponting was that the cave was so directed as to point directly towards the ship. Ponting photographed and photographed, including one scene in which Griff Taylor and I appeared as scale.¹³⁹

Here, Wright explained in scientific terms what the formation itself was and then implied that Ponting was clearly not interested in that aspect. Ponting’s disinterest in the “icefeet” and small caves that excited Wright shows that Ponting was more interested in the imagery that would appeal to his middle-upper class layman audience, rather than that which would be most useful to scientists on the expedition.

Griffith-Taylor’s diary demonstrated that the scientists were interested in details that would likely not have appealed to Ponting. In describing a single photograph that was particularly exciting to him, taken on the 2nd Western geological expedition, Griffith-Taylor wrote:

One photograph was an epitome of the physiography of the region I note that it shows ‘the ice faces, the crevasses, the skuak, young ‘calved’ bergs, low moraines, retreating glacier, high moraines, granite fragments, shear

¹³⁸ Robert F. Scott, *Scott’s Last Expedition*, ed. Leonard Huxley (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1913), 67.

¹³⁹ Excerpt from Wrights memoir. Bull and Wright, 76.

cracks in the bay ice, the ice tongue, the faceted cliffs, cwm valleys, overflow glacierettes, hogback ridges, non-glaciated peaks, the old glacier flood floor, and the junction of the granite and the dolerite' All this in a single ¼ plate negative!¹⁴⁰

Griffith-Taylor rarely responded with aesthetic statements on the landscape as Ponting did at length. The scientists themselves capably photographed the scenes that were of the greatest geological interest (see Figures 35-38 for examples of photographs taken by Charles Wright for geological purposes). Ponting, on the other hand, was an artist with a vision, not a documentarian for hire, and he was focused always on compelling imagery above all else.

Each aspect of every landscape or portrait that Ponting took was carefully considered. Examination of Ponting's negatives, all of which have been scanned and made available online by the Scott Polar Research Institute, reveals his working progress. The sequence of four images depicting Griffith-Taylor and Debenham working in their cubicle in the Hut shows how Ponting rearranged the scenery to make a more pleasing composition [Figures 39-42]. Figure 39 is a closer view than the others, and the objects on the wall are arranged haphazardly. For Figure 40, Ponting had taken a step back, and has arranged the pipe on the wall so that it matches the angle of the other objects, and has stood the canteen next to Debenham upright. In Figure 41, Ponting placed a leather bag on the floor between them, removed the cloth that was over the lamp, added a pipe on the wall (perhaps to indicate that they both enjoyed a smoke), and opened the measuring tool near Debenham's head. The objects here all appear to angle, as if pointing, to Debenham's map. In the final image [Figure 42], Griffith-Taylor and Debenham are seated more upright and towards the camera than in the first image in which they appear

¹⁴⁰ *The Griffith-Taylor Collection*, 127.

to be more bent on their work. Although they are posed to appear mid-task, they would have had to hold each pose for at least several seconds, and endure Ponting's meticulous meddling with the inanimate objects within the composition. They are posed to give the viewer the most information about the work that they each undertake, even if it they are not strictly documentary of their actual work area and habits as scientists. Even Ponting had to "pont" for himself, as evidenced in the six, nearly identical self-portraits of him with his cinematograph filming whales from the *Terra Nova* [Figure 43-48] among other self-portrait series.

Ponting wished for his portraits to convey very clearly not only the importance of the work the men were doing but also the hardships they endured in order to complete them. When the Southern depot-laying party including Scott and eight other members returned to Cape Evans on 12 April 1911, Ponting was delighted with the coarseness of their unshaved faces. As they ate their first large meal in weeks, Ponting "contemplated the picturesque and unkempt appearance of the party with satisfaction and approval, as suitable for richly enhancing my growing photographic collection."¹⁴¹ As soon as they had finished eating, he took a group photograph of them [Figure 49]. But as he was photographing them individually, to his "intense disgust, however, Petty Officers Evans and Crean had clipped off their bushy, black beards before their turn came round, leaving only a lot of bristles that were sufficient to dismay any self-respecting camera."¹⁴² The next day, clean-shaven and well-groomed, "they were no longer of any photographic

¹⁴¹ Ponting, *The Great White South*, 110.

¹⁴² Ibid.

interest.”¹⁴³ The returning Western Geological party was subjected to the same treatment of having to pose for Ponting before they could change and shave [Figure 50].

Ponting was apparently reluctant to allow this missed photographic opportunity to happen again, as Wilson recounted in his diary a week and a half later upon his own return from a sledging journey on April 22, 1911: “Had a hot bath – shaved off my beard and moustache after Ponting had perpetuated them in a photo.”¹⁴⁴ Few members welcomed Ponting’s insistence on photographing the rugged look of men coming home, especially when they had to wait. When Wright returned with another group from a long and difficult journey on January 28, 1912, everyone was looking forward to taking a hot bath and shaving their beards right away, but were prevented from doing so until photographed by Ponting [Figure 51]. Wright complained that

it was not to be until the following day since Ponting made a claim (sustained by Simpson) on our bodies to take part in a cinema record of our arrival up the icefoot at Cape Evans, filthy as we were, unshaven and with hair uncut and with sledge firmly attached behind us. ‘Art not for Art’s sake, but for publicity’s!’¹⁴⁵

Perhaps the reason the men look so unhappy in the photographs upon their return from the barrier [Figures 52-54] is due just as much to the fact that they faced “ponting” for Ponting as the hardships they faced in the Antarctic elements.

It was Ponting’s efforts as a photographer and filmmaker that ensured the lasting fame of the expedition. During all of the extraordinary adventures undertaken during the Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration, the only other expedition to enjoy a comparable level of fame of the tragic tale of Scott’s polar party is the incredible tale of the Imperial

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Edward Wilson, *Diary of the ‘Terra Nova’ Expedition to the Antarctic 1910-1912*, ed. H.G.R. King. London: Blandford Press, 1972, 125.

¹⁴⁵ Excerpt from Wright’s memoir, referring to Sunday January 28, 1912. Bull and Wright, 244.

Trans-Antarctic Expedition 1914-1917.¹⁴⁶ The *Endurance*, captained by Sir Ernest Shackleton (1874-1922), became trapped and crushed in the pack ice in the Ross Sea before reaching terra firma. All 28 members of the crew escaped during a weeks-long voyage in lifeboats to Elephant Island. From there, a six-man crew, again led by Shackleton, set off in a single lifeboat to South Georgia, and returned to rescue all of the men without a single loss of life. Though the account itself is amazing, it would have likely become a part of obscure history had it not also been for the efforts of its own professional photographer, Frank Hurley (1885-1962). Hurley, like Ponting, was well aware of how important his images were to the fame of the explorers, and protected his case of negatives, even as necessary survival supplies were abandoned.¹⁴⁷ Ponting held Hurley in high regard, but he was also pleased to know that he had little other competition. Ponting wrote in 1912 that he was happy to discover that the films taken on an expedition by Douglas Mawson didn't turn out and that those of the Amundsen expedition "were of no account."¹⁴⁸ Not even Amundsen, the first to actually reach the South Pole, has been as revered and beloved as Scott and Shackleton, due in no small part to the lack of compelling imagery from his expedition.

Like Scott and Shackleton, Ponting and Hurley are often discussed together by publications focusing on Antarctic photography during the Heroic Age.¹⁴⁹ As with

¹⁴⁶ For further reading on this expedition, see: Caroline Alexander, *The Endurance: Shackleton's Legendary Antarctic Expedition* (New York: Knopf, 1998); Roland Huntford, *Shackleton* (New York: Atheneum, 1986); Alfred Lansing, *Endurance: Shackleton's Incredible Journey* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1999); Sir Ernest Shackleton, *South: A Memoir of the Endurance* (London: Robinson, 1998).

¹⁴⁷ Shane Murphy, "The Endurance Expedition," in *South with Endurance: Shackleton's Antarctic Expedition 1914-1917: The Photographs of Frank Hurley*, ed. Murphy, S. et al. London, 2001, 20.

¹⁴⁸ Letter from Herbert Ponting to Captain Scott, November 4, 1912, 5. SPRI MS 964/11; D.

¹⁴⁹ The two photographers are discussed together in: J. Boddington, *Antarctic Photographs 1910-1916: Scott, Mawson and Shackleton Expeditions*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980; David Hempleman-Adams, et al., *The Heart of the Great Alone: Scott, Shackleton, and Antarctic Photography*. New York:

Ponting, scholarship on Frank Hurley tends to focus on his personality and on the physical conditions he braved rather than the photographic compositions themselves.¹⁵⁰ Unlike Ponting, Hurley was a hardy, personable man with a penchant for adventure.¹⁵¹ In “The Perfect Picture: James Francis Hurley,” Gael Newton claimed that his character made him a better photographer than Ponting, whose “refined sensibility” set him apart from other members of the British Antarctic Expedition.¹⁵² Newton suggested that the reason Scott did not allow Ponting to accompany any sledging expeditions was simply because he feared Ponting could not physically cope with the work.¹⁵³ Shackleton therefore must have held a higher esteem for Hurley since he allowed Hurley to take any photographs he wished and even allowed him to enlist the crew for help.¹⁵⁴ Newton concluded, “Perhaps because of this [help from Shackleton] or because of his temperament, Hurley managed to create a visual record of the *Endurance* expedition to the Antarctic that was more personal and intimate than anything Ponting ever created.”¹⁵⁵ Newton did not offer any visual analysis to substantiate this conclusion. Hurley may have shared more intimate relationships with his colleagues, but he was likely able to achieve

Bloomsbury, 2009; J.M. Scott, *The Polar Regions: An Anthology of Arctic and Antarctic Photographs*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1934.

¹⁵⁰ The major monographic books on Hurley’s Antarctic work are: Helen Ennis, *Frank Hurley’s Antarctica*. (Canberra, ACT: National Library of Australia, 2010); and S. Murphy et al, *South with Endurance: Shackleton’s Antarctic Expedition 1914-1917: The Photographs of Frank Hurley* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001). Even Hurley’s own account rarely discusses his photography. Frank Hurley, *Argonauts of the South. Being a Narrative of Voyagings and Polar Seas and Adventures in the Antarctic with Sir Douglas Mawson and Sir Ernest Shackleton* (New York and London, 1925).

¹⁵¹ For a discussion of Hurley’s projected image as an individualistic and restless adventurer, see: Julian Thomas, *Showman: The Photography of Frank Hurley* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 1990).

¹⁵² Gael Newton, “The Perfect Picture: James Francis Hurley,” in S. Murphy et al, *South with Endurance: Shackleton’s Antarctic Expedition 1914-1917: The Photographs of Frank Hurley* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), 236.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Newton, 237.

more spontaneity in his portraiture because he was already familiar with Ponting's more carefully thought out and staged compositions.

In *Frank Hurley's Antarctica*, Helen Ennis claimed that Hurley had not seen Ponting's images before the *Endurance* sailed south, yet since Ponting's images were printed in newspapers and shown in the cinema as *Captain Scott's Dash to the Pole* all over Australia as early as 1912, it is highly likely that Hurley saw and studied them, and their influence on his work is evident.¹⁵⁶ Hurley, like Ponting, depended on silhouettes of the ships and the men to imbue their landscapes with a sense of scale and narrative [Figures 55-57]. Both photographers depicted the expedition scientists at work [Figures 58-59] and at leisure [Figures 60-63]. Granted, both photographers used similar equipment, drew on the same established pictorial conventions, and intended to use their images for the same purpose of promoting the fame and honor of their expeditions. It can therefore be expected that their images would share visual similarities. Yet, some appear nearly identical. Frank Hurley posed Frank Worsley facing a pressure ridge [Figure 64] in an identical pose to Ponting's image of Clissold at the *Castle Berg* [Figure 29]. The men in both of these images step toward an immense wall of ice, enacting the very same conflict of man versus nature. Even one of Hurley's most reproduced images, that of the crew on Elephant Island waving farewell to the *James Caird* [Figure 65] appears to have

¹⁵⁶ In *Frank Hurley's Antarctica*, Helen Ennis claimed that Hurley did not see Ponting's photographs before the Shackleton exhibition was over, yet she does not provide a source for this bit of information. Helen Ennis, *Frank Hurley's Antarctica*. Canberra, ACT: National Library of Australia, 2002, 9. It is true that Hurley did not meet Ponting in person until he returned to England in 1916, but Ponting's images were widely distributed in the Australian press and his films were being shown in Australia as early as 1912. In fact, one article in the *Williamstown Chronicle* states that Ponting was living in Williamstown. "Williamstown Theatre: Captain Scott's Dash for the Pole," *Williamstown Chronicle* (June 8, 1912), 3. As an exploration photographer himself, it is unlikely that Hurley could have or would have wished to avoid Ponting's pictures. See also: "Pictured Antarctica," *Sydney Morning Herald* (April 27, 1912), 15; "Amusements," *The Register* (Adelaide, SA) (July 31, 1912); "The Greatest Feature Film Ever Presented to Williamstown Audiences: Captain Scott's Dash for the Pole," *Williamstown Chronicle* (June 8, 1912), 4; among many other listings searchable via the Trove database of the National Library of Australia, www.trove.nla.au (Accessed, April 5, 2014).

been directly influenced by Ponting's image of seven expedition members waving farewell to the *Terra Nova* on February 9, 1911 [Figure 66].¹⁵⁷ These comparisons show that Hurley must have seen and been influenced by Ponting's images before he went South with Shackleton.

Hurley thus had an advantage over Ponting. Though Ponting had drawn on centuries of pictorial conventions, there was no precedent of a photographer-artist in the Antarctic. Ponting was also more single-mindedly focused on his images than Hurley (which in turn made him less popular among the crew). Ponting's portraits, though staged, provide more information and narrative than Hurley's. For example, Ponting's photograph of Atkinson in his lab [Figure 59], smoking a pipe and inspecting a test tube shows his face in profile, but his body is angled toward the camera. An array of equipment is arranged neatly on the lab table and in sharp focus, where Atkinson points to his record book with his free hand. He stands upright and tall before the wealth of equipment, which suggests just how seriously Scott took the scientific program of the expedition.¹⁵⁸ On the other hand, Hurley's photograph of marine biologist Bob Clark shows him from behind [Figure 58], seated on the edge of a table and bent over his microscope with his hand in his pocket. There are jars and equipment tucked away, but most of the image is out of focus except for Clark's sweater. Hurley's photograph is more casual, and perhaps even a more accurate depiction of how Clark worked in such

¹⁵⁷ Hurley captioned this image "Saved!" and later altered it to include a sky with dramatic sunbeams coming through the clouds, but the image actually depicts the send-off of the *James Caird*. S. Murphy et al., *South with Endurance: Shackleton's Antarctic Expedition 1914-1917: The Photographs of Frank Hurley*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001, 197.

¹⁵⁸ The caption for this image in Riffenburgh and Cruwys, *With Scott to the Pole*, 147, states this as well, proving that Ponting's images have the same effect to this day.

cramped quarters, but it does not display the same degree of sharp information and nor imply the same nobleness of character as Ponting's portrait.

Like his portraits, Ponting's placement of the figures within the landscape is more intentional, but also more subtle and poignant.¹⁵⁹ In general, the silhouettes of the men in the landscape images by Ponting are smaller in comparison to the landscape. Ponting would have set up the scene, and then trekked far back in order to frame the image, leaving his subject with nothing to do but wait until the view was established. This distance results in the perceived removal of the presence of the photographer from the narrative of the scene. Hurley's men are photographed at a closer range. His images provide a sense of the presence of the photographer and the individuality of the men photographed. The narrative in Hurley's images is more specific rather than abstract, as in Ponting's images. Nevertheless, Hurley sought to evoke the melodramatic romanticism common in polar narratives. He quoted Coleridge in his account of the expedition, *Argonauts of the South* evoking Roman mythology in the title itself.¹⁶⁰ And where his images did not evoke the appropriate emotional reaction, Hurley added dramatic cloudscapes to his images through composite printing, a practice uncommon in the work of Ponting who in 1925 was called "an uncompromising champion of the school of 'straight' photography."¹⁶¹

Hurley's composite printing is immediately apparent, particularly in his images from Elephant Island [Figures 67, 68]. Helen Ennis suggested that Hurley's choices for dramatic cloudscapes are not just aesthetic but symbolic. She wrote that the dark,

¹⁵⁹ Newton, 237.

¹⁶⁰ Chapter 3 of *Argonauts of the South* starts with this quote from Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*: "And now there came both mist and snow, And it grew wondrous cold: And ice, mast high, came floating by, As green as emerald." Hurley, 39.

¹⁶¹ A 1925 review in a photography magazine. Quoted in Arnold, 109.

brooding clouds represent the predicament of the stranded party, and that “The sun does not shine until the day of their rescue.”¹⁶² Hurley’s images with dramatic clouds thus reiterate the moralistic tale of the triumph of man amidst the adversity of nature.

Although it was not uncommon in pictorial photography at the time, Hurley’s composite printing may have cost him some credibility as a documentary photographer.¹⁶³

In contrast, Ponting’s images are understood to be unaltered, at least beyond the posing and staging of his subjects before the camera. With the exception of Francis Spufford, who claimed that the figure in [Figure 69] is inked onto the print for dramatic effect, no other scholar has examined Ponting’s own image manipulations.¹⁶⁴ Yet Ponting, too, created composite images to some degree. Lucy Martin, the picture archivist at the Scott Polar Research Institute, has called certain plates of Ponting’s his “working negatives,” which include copies of other people’s pictures, reverse images and some composite images.¹⁶⁵ Most of these are simply negatives with the reversed orientation, such as an image of seals lying on pancake ice [Figures 70, 71]. These were done perhaps for aesthetic reasons, to better suit the film or newspapers. For similar reasons, other images were altered so that figures could be isolated from their backgrounds, such as his portraits of Oates and of Scott [Figures 72, 73], which were taken from a larger group portrait [Figure 74]. Another altered image, which depicts Wilson sketching outside his tent, is actually a panoramic photograph created by combining two negatives [Figure 75]. Though these alterations are relatively minor, at least one photograph displays the same

¹⁶² Ennis, 104.

¹⁶³ Murphy, et al., 51.

¹⁶⁴ Spufford did not discuss which print he was examining, and the negatives as digitized by the SPRI show that the figure does appear in all of the frames. This is not to say, however, that Ponting or his printer did not intentionally darken the figure for certain publications or exhibition prints.

¹⁶⁵ Lucy Martin, SPRI picture librarian, email correspondence with the author, February 19, 2014.

type of composite printing common to Hurley's work. The image, *The Tent Plus Approaching Blizzard* [Figure 76] is a composite print of [Figures 77, 78]. By placing a single tent in the barren expanse of land, and in the direct path of an impending storm, the isolation and danger the men faced is more directly apparent within the single image. Ponting later use the image in the film to indicate the final camp of Scott and the polar party, further separating the image from the truth.

Regardless of the extensive staging of images by both photographers, the major publications of their images, both contemporary and modern, tended to ignore this aspect of their work. In doing so, the photographs could more easily stand as illustrations for the expeditions themselves, rather than as the artistic interpretations they are, crafted to evoke nationalistic sentiments of heroic sacrifice. Even today, as indicated by the title *With Scott to the Pole*, Ponting's photographs are meant to illustrate the entire expedition, though Ponting traveled nowhere near the South Pole and was back in the comforts of his home in London when Scott and his team froze in their tents. Because the documentary status of their photographs remains understudied, the myth of the colonial explorer as captured by Ponting and Hurley remains largely undiminished to this day.

The presentation of exploration as it is reported in the Victorian and Edwardian press bore little resemblance to the actualities of the expeditions, as insight into Ponting's work rightly shows.¹⁶⁶ Ponting carefully composed images that would inform newspaper articles, as well as appeal to cinema audiences and gallery viewers. With the addition of the film, Ponting's images appealed not just to the middle class gallery-goers and armchair travelers, but also to the working class populace who visited the cinema as entertainment and escape. It is important to understand the degree of staging and

¹⁶⁶ Riffenburgh, 3.

manipulation in Ponting's photographs, for it reveals how this iconic imagery reflected the tastes not only of Ponting, nor the needs of the Expedition, but of the broad popular audience back home in Edwardian England. This audience was not interested in facts and data about the Antarctic. It wanted a story.

It is unlikely that Ponting felt he was being at all dishonest in his portrayal of the expedition. To his Edwardian public, it was not only acceptable but expected that one image would serve the purpose of record, entertainment and fine art. To an audience accustomed to drawings and engravings as news images in the weekly papers (the dailies had few images, if any), truth in images was a looser concept. Yet, as James Ryan explained in *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire*, "the authority conferred on photography to capture truthfully scenes of nature gave it a power greater than that of engravings or paintings to confirm and naturalize the landscape aesthetic."¹⁶⁷ The veracity of photography was automatically assumed. Even if subjects were posed or staged, the photograph was still a photograph, and thus provided more factual information than an engraving possibly could.

Ponting's photographs appeared in newspapers and magazines, photographic exhibitions and as stills in his film. The most press, by far, that Ponting received in his own time was in response to his popular film lectures. These were silent films and were accompanied by a live, scripted voiceover. Widely reproduced, his films were able to reach a far greater mainstream audience than any series of exhibitions of prints possibly

¹⁶⁷ James R. Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997, 49.

could.¹⁶⁸ Because he could consistently reach the widest audience with cinema, Ponting dedicated himself to creating new iterations of his film to continue to tell the story of Scott in the decades following the return of the *Terra Nova*.¹⁶⁹ His film focused in large part on Antarctic wildlife and staged scenes of the explorers climbing icebergs and camping in their cramped tents, but ended with a heavy-handed and moralistic account of the death of the polar party.¹⁷⁰ *90 Degrees South* has since fallen into relative obscurity, but an examination of this film and its reception in conjunction with the reception of his photographic prints as they appeared in galleries and newspapers, will further demonstrate that Ponting's work responded to established aesthetic values. It will also reveal the complex and indeterminate relationship between documentary and artistic practices at the turn of the century, which allowed for Ponting to carefully construct aesthetic narratives that reached the widest possible audience to promote the fame and glory of British Antarctic exploration.

¹⁶⁸ By May, 1919, Ponting himself had given 1,000 lectures, often at the London Philharmonic Hall or the Palace Theatre to audiences of hundreds. Elsewhere, the film was shown and different people gave the lecture. "The World Of The Film," *Times* [London, England] (19 May 1919): 17.

¹⁶⁹ Various titles included *With Scott to the Pole*; *The Great White Silence*; *The Epic of the South Pole: The Story of a Great Adventure*; *Scott of the Antarctic*; and the final version with a recorded voiceover, *90 Degrees South*.

¹⁷⁰ *90 Degrees South*, written and directed by Herbert Ponting (1933; London: New Era Films), Film. Available on YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKBttUMKND4> (Accessed April 7, 2014).

Chapter 3: Adventure, Comedy, and “Glorious Death” at *90 Degrees South*

Like his photographs, Ponting crafted his film to promote the actions of the expedition and to uphold the myth of the colonial explorer. For his photographs, Ponting was used to an informed middle-class audience who read newspapers, visited galleries and read travel books, but his film allowed him to reach “Millions of people who would never read expensive books on exploration.”¹⁷¹ These millions were the middle and working classes who could afford the nickel theaters, or nickelodeons, and later the movie palaces which often seated several hundred patrons.¹⁷² They went to the cinema to socialize and be entertained. Though Ponting’s still photographs of landscape feature prominently in the film, this audience was more interested in fast-paced adventure and comedy, and Ponting crafted his film to suit these tastes. The final, feature-length film, *90 Degrees South*, 1933, was a three-part narrative accompanied with a voiceover by Ponting himself.¹⁷³ The film starts with the cheerful send-off of the *Terra Nova* and the antics of the crew on the ship. Scenes of the men play-boxing, dancing, and giving each other bad haircuts attested to the good spirits and camaraderie of everyone on board [Figure 79]. Once on land, they built the hut, played football, and demonstrated the dogsledding and man-hauling techniques [Figures 80, 81]. There is no discussion of the treacherous sledging expeditions endured by the men before the polar party set forth. Next, the film features comic, anthropomorphic scenes of penguins, seals, and gulls,

¹⁷¹ Text from a booklet of reviews compiled by Ponting, entitled *Some Observations Upon the Desirability of the Acquisition of the Moving-Picture Record of the Scott South Pole Expedition Being Taken in Hand by a Public Body*, 8. SPRI MS280/28/7; ER.

¹⁷² For further reading on early cinema audiences see: Thomas Elsaesser and Adam Barker, eds., *Early Cinema: Space Frame Narrative* (London: British Film Institute, 1990); Kathryn H. Fuller, *At the Picture Show: Small-Town Audiences and the Creation of Movie Fan Culture* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996); Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

¹⁷³ There were several versions of Ponting’s film, but contemporary programs show that they shared a similar structure and message to *90 Degrees South*. SPRI MS280/28/7; ER.

which were assigned human thoughts and intentions, likening a courting male to a gentleman bringing gifts for his lady, mated penguins to bickering married couples, and the reaction to a new egg as the pride of a new father. These stories delighted viewers.¹⁷⁴ Following the penguin scenes, the polar party cheerfully demonstrated how they would camp as they embarked for the pole.

Ponting's last footage of the polar party shows the men hauling their sledges, trudging off into the white landscape for the pole, from whence they would never return. After reaching the pole over a month after Roald Amundsen, the British team was in low spirits. They faced particularly harsh weather on the way back, and all of them suffered severe injuries from falling through crevasses. Their food depots were too far apart and contained too little food for the five men. Edgar Evans died first of a concussion, followed by Lawrence Oates, whose leg injury had been holding up the team, until he walked outside into a blizzard to his death. The rest of the party died in their tent a few days later, just eleven miles from their next depot.¹⁷⁵ The film tells this story by showing still photographs of the polar party and scenes in which the camera pans across a sublime painted panorama of the desolate landscape [Figure 82]. The composite photograph of Wilson's tent in the blizzard is used to illustrate the final camping site of Scott, Bowers, and Wilson [Figure 83]. Images of Scott's last diary entries are accompanied by Ponting's sobering voiceover reminding viewers "that they met their end with undaunted

¹⁷⁴ "Comic relief is given by the record of an encounter with penguins..." "Captain Scott in the Antarctic" November 9, 1911, Unnamed author, unnamed newspaper, held in album of press clippings related to the British Antarctic Expedition, SPRI: MS 1453/38, BPC. "his penguins and seals have added vastly to the gaiety of London during difficult times." "The World Of The Film," *Times* [London, England] (19 May 1919): 17.

¹⁷⁵ See: Roland Huntford, *Scott and Amundsen* (New York: Putnam, 1980); Peter King, ed., *Scott's Last Journey* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999); Robert Falcon Scott, *Scott's Last Expedition* (London: Smith, Elder, 1914).

courage, happy in the knowledge that they died for the honor of their country.”¹⁷⁶ As in his photographs, Ponting’s film features staged reenactments in order to promote the Edwardian values of masculinity and honorable self-sacrifice as well as to inspire patriotic pride in the expedition. This manipulation made the actions of the crew appear stronger and more cheerful while braving the harsh Antarctic elements and as they marched to their deaths. Neglecting the scientific work of the expedition, local wildlife was anthropomorphized and presented as comedic relief to entertain the broader, less scientifically minded public. The adventure and comedy as portrayed in the film was a conscious construction, employed to draw in a popular audience so that they could be served the nationalist myth of the British “fine and manly spirit” that drove Scott and the polar party to the ultimate sacrifice for country and Empire.¹⁷⁷

Ponting’s technique is exemplary of what film critic and theoretician Bill Nichols called the “direct-address style,” in which an off-screen voiceover dominates the visuals on the screen.¹⁷⁸ In this style of filmmaking, the speaker controls how viewers are supposed to react to each scene. In “The Worst Location in the World,” Dennis Lynch speculated that it was Ponting’s experience as a travel photographer and writer that had given him the “instinctive feel for the relation of images with narrative continuity.”¹⁷⁹ Ponting’s voiceover does indeed have a similar effect to text captions to his still photographs. The narrative of *90 Degrees South* is surprisingly fluid for the time that it was filmed, over a decade before the release of Robert Flaherty’s *Nanook of the North*,

¹⁷⁶ *90 Degrees South*, written and directed by Herbert Ponting (1933; London; New Era Films), Film. Available on YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKBttUMKND4> (Accessed April 7, 2014).

¹⁷⁷ Herbert Ponting, Preface to *The Great White South*, xiii.

¹⁷⁸ Bill Nichols, “The Voice of Documentary,” *Film Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (Spring, 1983), 17.

¹⁷⁹ Dennis Lynch, “The Worst Location in the World: Herbert Ponting in the Antarctic, 1910-1912,” *Film History* 3, no.4 (1989), 295.

1922, widely considered to be the first commercially successful documentary.¹⁸⁰

Although *Nanook* is accompanied by subtitles rather than voiceover, the narrative for both films relies on the didactic texts of the filmmaker. It is noteworthy that two of the first travel documentary films ever made were filmed in the Arctic and Antarctic rather than tropical destinations.

Both films rely on provoked, rehearsed or otherwise staged scenes of action.

Nanook follows a hunter of the Itivimuit tribe of Eskimos. Flaherty filmed Nanook doing various traditional tasks such as hunting for walrus and building an igloo, though many of the scenes were suggested or altered by the filmmaker.¹⁸¹ In order to film the interior of the igloo, for example, Flaherty had Nanook and his family build an extra large igloo, and then cut away one side of it so that he could film the interior with the aid of daylight.¹⁸²

As Paula Rabinowitz put it, he “manipulated reality to give a picture of reality.”¹⁸³ The resulting film was one that gave the visual impression of the actions of the Itivimuit tribe, rather than an objective observation of their daily life. Like Flaherty filming the igloo, Ponting had to open up the polar party’s tent in order to film them inside, demonstrating how to get into their sleeping bags.¹⁸⁴ This degree of staging, as left unacknowledged by the filmmaker, would appear inauthentic or even fraudulent today, but the world of the cinema was still in its infancy by 1910, and constructs and expectations for non-fiction film were still being established.

¹⁸⁰ George I. Quimby, “The Mystery of the First Documentary Film,” *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 81, no. 2 (April 1990), 50.

¹⁸¹ Erik Barnouw, *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 36-38.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁸³ Paula Rabinowitz, “Wreckage Upon Wreckage: History, Documentary and the Ruins of Memory,” *History and Theory* 32, no. 2 (May, 1993), 121.

¹⁸⁴ In his voiceover, Ponting stated that he could not film inside the hut because it was too dark, and thus stills had to suffice. It would therefore also have been impossible for there to be enough light to film inside the sealed tent. *90 Degrees South*.

In *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film*, Eric Barnouw explained that Robert Flaherty did not feel he was being deceptive at all. “Flaherty was intent on authenticity of result. That this might call for ingenious means did not disturb him. Film itself, and all its technology, were products of ingenuity.”¹⁸⁵ Ponting was likely aware of this outlook regarding the authenticity of his narrative. He refused to let the limitations of his medium, such as its inability to film in the dark, prevent him from showing audiences back home the realities of the expedition. Therefore, he opened up the tent, and felt no need to inform the audience of this technique. According to Eric Barnouw, most films in the early history of documentary filmmaking were staged to some degree, and “there was not likely to be concern about the precise meaning of a ‘reconstitution.’ The public was accustomed to news pictures having an uncertain and remote link to events. The relationship was scarcely thought about.”¹⁸⁶ The same is true of photography during this period. Equipment was cumbersome and plates were not as light sensitive as modern film, so scenes often had to be posed in advance and held long enough to make a proper exposure. Neither early cinema nor early photography had the capability to record events candidly and unobtrusively. It is therefore unfair to apply the same standards of authenticity today to the work of filmmakers before the advent of the *cinéma vérité* after World War II.¹⁸⁷ Images were posed to provide a better visual understanding of the truth. Filmmaker Jill Godmilow concurred,

Even in the first scrap of motion-picture ever shot—Lumiere’s *Workers Leaving the Factory*, a forty-five-second “documentary” shot of about 100 workers leaving his family plant in 1895—you can see clearly that

¹⁸⁵ Barnouw, 38.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁸⁷ Bill Nichols, “Documentary Reenactment and the Fantasmatic Subject,” *Critical Inquiry* 38, no. 1 (Autumn 2008), 72.

Lumiere had his workers collect just inside the factory gates and wait there until he got his camera rolling.¹⁸⁸

Even though the viewer is not informed of this technique, the knowledge of the fact that it had been staged may not have mattered to the viewer either way. It could therefore be argued that since Ponting was of this early era of the cinema, his staging of scenes meant only that he was trying to provide a full account of the expedition within the limitations of the medium, and not that he was intentionally deceiving his audience. However, both the variety and degree of manipulated footage in *90 Degrees South* complicate the matter. Ponting did not only stage his scenes because of the technical limitations of film, but in order to exaggerate and promote the gallantry of the expedition. He insisted on the objective veracity of his film in the introduction, he selectively acknowledged some staged scenes and not others, and at times even told complete fabrications. The images in Ponting's film are presented as truthful, not as artistic interpretations. Ponting's film is just as deceptive as his photographs, despite the fact that strict documentary practices were not yet established.

Ponting seemed to have an idea of the short attention span of his audience, and so some of the footage was staged so that activities did not take as long on film as they would in real life. This is evidenced in a scene in which Thomas Griffith-Taylor and Charles Wright quickly and easily scale the face of an iceberg. Charles Wright wrote in his diary about this episode as his having been coerced into climbing the exterior of the ice grotto after posing for hours for the still camera [Figure 84]:

Then it came to Ponting that he had not used his cine-camera so he asked us to climb the tilted iceberg up to the top which overhung a pool in which a couple of killer whales were disporting themselves. To our objection that

¹⁸⁸ Jill Godmilow and Ann-Louise Shapiro, "How Real is the Reality in Documentary Film?" *History and Theory* 36, no. 4 (December, 1997), 92.

we would have to rope up and cut our footing with ice axes – a slowish job which would waste a lot of film, his reply was – cut the steps first and then ascend again quickly pretending to do so this second time. We thought this was somewhat dishonest and said so. In reply he said this would come out all right in the cine film so we roped up and off we went. I was in front slashing away with my ice axe and feeling a perfect fool.¹⁸⁹

That “it would come out alright in film” was justification enough for Ponting to essentially stage a reenactment. This section of film is about five seconds long, and the actions of the two men emulate the hurried actions of many early films.¹⁹⁰ There is no evidence of struggle as they quickly scale the side of the berg. The film is even cut so that they are shown climbing for a few seconds and next they are at the summit. Although it was not shot candidly and did not portray the actualities of climbing the ice cliff, it depicted something close to the truth, and was also fast-paced enough to be enjoyed by an audience. Yet it also implied that the men were far more adept at ice climbing than they actually were, and thus served to heroize the physical achievements of the two men and the strength of the expedition as a whole. That Wright was concerned about appearing “dishonest” and was uncomfortable with falsifying the ease of climbing the berg demonstrates that the attitude the public had toward truth in film was not as nonchalant as Barnouw suggested.

Some of the scenes presented in *90 Degrees South* are actually sheer misrepresentations. In his book, *The Great White South*, Ponting wrote of a scene he witnessed with his cinematograph, presumably while he was out filming alone. During this scene, a mother seal and her baby tried frantically to leap onto the ice to escape predatory killer whales. The mother seal alternately dove into the water to distract the

¹⁸⁹ Wright, Pat and Colin Bull, ed. *Silas: The Antarctic Diaries and Memoir of Charles S. Wright*, (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1993), 76.

¹⁹⁰ This is due in part to the fact that frame rates were not regulated, as cameras had to be cranked by hand, and projectors themselves ran at a faster rate than modern projectors.

whales, and tried to push her young up onto the ice, but “the poor little chap, clawing madly with his flippers, rolled off her shoulders into the sea and both mother and baby disappeared—not five yards ahead of the nearest of the Orcas...” [Figure 85]¹⁹¹ In *The Great White South*, the baby and mother disappear entirely, presumably to their deaths. This was apparently too depressing for his cinema viewers, for in *90 Degrees South* Ponting included a scene in the water in which a harpoon was supposedly shot at the whales, frightening them away to save mother and baby.¹⁹² The mother and baby safely on shore are never shown. Perhaps Ponting’s telling of the account in his book or in early versions of the film provoked outcry from his audiences, who were dismayed that nothing was done to help the poor seals. The version with the happy ending for the seal family not only suggested the kind-heartedness of the crew, it relegated this story to the carefree sequences of the comical wildlife. Self-sacrifice, after all, was for the noble Brits, not animals.

Ponting further implied veracity by selectively acknowledging scenes that were staged. In the introduction to *90 Degrees South*, Lieutenant Edward ‘Teddy’ Evans, 2nd in command of the British Antarctic Expedition, averred, “Not a single scene in the film was rehearsed. Everything was filmed just as it occurred.”¹⁹³ This statement implies that Ponting felt the need to convince his audience that *90 Degrees South* was an objective account of the actions of the British Antarctic Expedition. The veracity of the scenes is likewise suggested by Ponting’s admission to staging two of the scenes in the film. The first of these is of a sequence of two newly hatched penguins [Figure 86]. In order to film them close up, “the mother was removed from the nest for a few minutes, in order that a

¹⁹¹ Ponting, *The Great White South*, 216.

¹⁹² *90 Degrees South*.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

picture might be taken of her returning to them.”¹⁹⁴ The audience is made aware of the construct, and is invited to appreciate Ponting’s ingenuity and persistence in order to obtain the footage.

The other instance is when the polar party cheerfully acted out for the camera how they would set up camp while on their journey to the South Pole, as Ponting could not accompany the southern journey. Filmed before their departure, the polar party performed a pre-enactment of how they would set up their tent, cook food, smoke and go to bed in the fur sleeping bags. He does not acknowledge the fact that he opened up the tent in order to film them. Ponting may have explicitly admitted to staging these scenes in order to preclude accusations of falsehood from viewers who knew for a fact that he wasn’t with Scott at the pole. He was likely also proud of his own ingenuity that he had had the foresight to stage these. Regardless, the fact that he openly acknowledged the staging of two of the scenes and not others suggested to the viewer that everything else in the film is authentic. Ponting therefore cannot be grouped with filmmakers who staged scenes just because it was easier and expected by the audience as Barnouw explained. He consciously crafted the voiceover in *90 Degrees South* to imply the veracity and objectivity of scenes that were just as consciously staged. As a result, viewers were less inclined to question the underlying construction of the narrative of the mythic colonial explorer and the ultimate sacrifice for country.

In addition to convincing viewers of the veracity of his film, Ponting had to promise entertainment in order to draw them in. Recent publications of Ponting’s work focus on his landscape and the adventure of the expedition, but his contemporaries were

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

equally, if not more interested in Antarctic animal life.¹⁹⁵ One-third of the running time of *90 Degrees South* is devoted to the animal life of Antarctica and *The Great White South* dedicates over 50 pages to discussing the seals, gulls and penguins. Of particular interest were penguins, which featured prominently on all materials regarding the British Antarctic Expedition. Much of the contemporary publicity for Ponting's films, lectures and exhibitions featured penguins [Figures 87, 88]. In one of the first known instances of movie merchandising, a stuffed penguin was sold at Ponting's lectures [Figure 89].¹⁹⁶ Even the logo for the British Antarctic Expedition itself was a penguin standing on a globe, which appeared on the original edition of *The Great White South* [Figure 90]. Ponting's portraits and landscapes have better stood the test of time, as they continue to be the focus of many publications, but a complete picture of Ponting and his audience cannot be achieved without acknowledging the importance of penguins.

The British Antarctic Expedition was served by two zoologists and two biologists, all of whom were greatly interested in these strange, flightless birds of the southern hemisphere. At the turn of the century, very little was known about penguins at all. They were not held in zoos and they had never before been filmed. Edward Wilson, Henry Bowers and Apsley Cherry-Garrard barely survived a winter expedition across the Ross

¹⁹⁵ *Scott's Last Voyage* features a photograph of the *Terra Nova*. A. Savours, ed. *Scott's Last Voyage: Through the Antarctic Camera of Herbert Ponting*. (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, Ltd., 1975); The new edition of *The Great White South* features the image of the ice grotto on its cover. Herbert Ponting, *The Great White South*, (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2001); *With Scott to the Pole* features men man-hauling their sledge over a crevasse. Beau Riffenburgh and Liz Cruwys, eds. *With Scott to the Pole: The Terra Nova Expedition 1910-1913 The Photographs of Herbert Ponting*, (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 2004); *The Photographs of H.G. Ponting* features an image of melting icebergs with the *Terra Nova* in the distance. Riffenburgh, Beau and Liz Cruwys. *The Photographs of H.G. Ponting*. (London: The Discovery Gallery, 1998).

¹⁹⁶ Christie's auctioned one in April 2000. The tag on the stuffed animal reads "PONKO" THE PENGUIN is designed from my photographic studies of penguins taking during Capt. Scott's South Pole expedition and described by me at the Philharmonic Hall, London, Herbert G. Ponting" Christie's, lot description for sale 6284 – Travel and Exploration, London, April 2000. <http://www.christies.com/lotfinder/lot/herbert-george-ponting-ponko-the-penguin-1753377-details.aspx?intObjectID=1753377> (Accessed May 7, 2014).

Ice Shelf from Cape Evans to Cape Crozier to collect eggs of the Emperor penguins, returning back to the hut with just three eggs.¹⁹⁷ The harrowing journey was discussed at length by Cherry-Garrard in his book, *The Worst Journey in the World*, who wrote,

Why is the embryo of the Emperor penguin so important to Science? And why should three sane and common-sense explorers be sledging away on a winter's night to a Cape which has only been visited before in daylight, and then with very great difficulty? [...] It is because the Emperor is probably the most primitive bird in existence that the working out of his embryology is so important. [...] [it] may prove the missing link between birds and the reptiles from which birds have sprung. [...] And so we started just after midwinter on the weirdest bird's-nesting expedition that has ever been or ever will be.¹⁹⁸

Cherry-Garrard described the events of the winter journey as a “horror” and not one that he would ever wish to repeat, and even suggested that it was a ludicrous journey to undertake in the first place. Yet fifty years after the publication of Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species*, 1856, the discovery of a missing link in evolution would have bestowed the expedition with an abundance of scientific celebrity. The geographical discovery of the South Pole was not the only goal of the expedition. Though it does not feature prominently in *90 Degrees South* or *The Great White South*, geological and biological discoveries were important aspects of the expedition that also served nationalist sentiments. In *Empire of Ice: Scott, Shackleton, and the Heroic Age of Antarctic Science*, Edward Larson explained the imperialist aspect of expeditionary science. Implementing Western scientific methods was a means to grasp knowledge that benefited distant Britain, but it was also a way to tame foreign spaces, allowing them to

¹⁹⁷ Apsley Cherry-Garrard, *The Worst Journey in the World* (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2002), 282.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 252.

become categorized and adopted into the unified empire.¹⁹⁹ Thus, scientific achievement would ensure celebrity in much the same way as discovery.

Yet despite the expedition's intense zoological interest in penguins, Ponting chose to present the Antarctic animal life as comic relief. In *The Great White South* he characterized the actions of "the real inhabitants of the South Land," the penguins, by assigning them social classes: "The proud, stately Emperors—with their courtly, polished manners—are the upper classes, the aristocrats of the eternal snows; but the Adelies are the multitude, the *bourgeoisie*."²⁰⁰ In so doing, Ponting invited viewers to think of the penguins as people and their behavior as comedic. *90 Degrees South* follows suit. In his voiceover, Ponting equated the actions of the penguins to a squabbling married couple. For one sequence in which penguins sitting on the nests called to their mates, Ponting explained, "These wives are calling their husbands home. One answers the call, and he seems to know that he had stayed out too late and was in for trouble. He was right. His wife gave him a good piece of her mind, and then she pulled his nose."²⁰¹ The actual, zoological reasons for the penguins' behavior are never explained. Ponting presented the penguins as comedians for his audience to identify with, rather than study. The penguins may have been further anthropomorphized because there was no other human population in Antarctica. They were thus given human personalities and presented as the naïve locals of the ice desert to entertain audiences and act as a foil to the more noble actions of the explorers. The endearingly clumsy antics of the penguins provide the same comic relief

¹⁹⁹ "Empire is not only about the physical conquest of territories; for the British, it was always about scientifically exploring and systematically exploiting them even as the definition and conception of science itself evolved." Edward Larson, Preface to *Empire of Ice*, xi.

²⁰⁰ Ponting, *The Great White South*, 281.

²⁰¹ *90 Degrees South*.

as a slapstick routine in a pantomime show. Thus, even in the non-human elements of the narrative of Antarctic exploration, the British audience was invited to see themselves.²⁰²

Ponting's audience appreciated his comedic presentation of the penguins. As early as 1911, a reviewer praised Ponting's films for its "vivid and convincing realism whether on board the ship, or with landing parties ashore. Comic relief is given by the record of an encounter with penguins."²⁰³ This early version of the film was released before Ponting returned, and was not edited by Ponting himself. The reviewer considered it a "record," and perhaps a rather dry one at that, in need of penguins for "comic relief." Later, in the year after the conclusion of World War I, a reviewer of Ponting's film wrote, "his penguins and seals have added vastly to the gaiety of London during difficult times."²⁰⁴ The lighthearted scenes of happy animal families who endearingly squabbled with each other at the ends of the earth, were far removed from the troubles of war-torn London, and were undoubtedly an attraction for many viewers. In 1929, at the tail end of the Jazz Age in England, a reviewer pointed out Ponting's role in making the animal life humorous, "by succinct and witty captions Mr. Ponting has succeeded in affording

²⁰² The attribution of human emotions and relationships onto different species may seem an unacceptable practice in wildlife documentaries today, but penguins continue to be anthropomorphized even today. *March of the Penguins*, 2005, narrated by Morgan Freeman, tells of the incredible journey of emperor penguins to their breeding ground in the harsh Antarctic winter, where "love finds a way."²⁰² *March of the Penguins*, Film, Directed by Luc Jacquet (2005; Paris: Bonne Pioche), DVD.

March of the Penguins "took anthropomorphism to new heights" according to Jan-Christopher Horak. Wildlife documentaries tend to stay on the fringes of the documentary market unless viewers are able to identify and empathize with the subject, for which penguins prove ideal. *March of the Penguins* thus "earned over \$80 million in the domestic American market, making it the second highest grossing documentary of all time."²⁰² Jan-Christopher Horak, "Wildlife Documentaries: From Classical Forms to Reality TV," *Film History* 18, no. 4 (2006), 460.

In "The Hope and Promise of Birds," Gregg Mitman discussed this long-standing fascination humans have had with birds, among which "the appeal of penguins is perhaps easiest to explain. Flightless, upright, donned in tuxedo-like garb, they are ideal anthropomorphic subjects." Gregg Mitman, "The Hope and Promise of Birds," *Environmental History* 12, no. 2 (April 2007), 344.

²⁰³ "Captain Scott in the Antarctic," Captain Scott in the Antarctic" November 9, 1911, Unnamed author, unnamed newspaper, held in album of press clippings related to the British Antarctic Expedition, SPRI: MS 1453/38, BPC.

²⁰⁴ "The World Of The Film," *Times* [London, England] (19 May 1919): 17.

through the polar gulls and penguins a heap of amusement.”²⁰⁵ Some reviewers even commended his images of wildlife as the best part of his work. A 1922 review of *The Great White South* acclaimed, “if his book contained only his account of the penguins and their habits it would still be a most satisfying volume,” and that the author’s record of Antarctic life “constitute the most original portion of his volume.”²⁰⁶ These reviews demonstrate that Ponting’s landscapes were not always the most iconic part of his Antarctic work to his audiences, as they are today, and his wildlife images featured far more prominently in order to amuse and attract greater audiences.

Ponting’s letters show that he was keenly aware that viewers and reviewers wanted to see ample footage of penguins in the film. He was in fact dismayed at how much of the penguin footage he felt he had to include to make his film successful. In a 1917 letter to Lady Scott, Ponting wrote of his film, “I have already made it popular among the masses, who will not be educated unless they can be amused, by introducing numerous animal scenes, without which the ‘show’ would be a total failure.”²⁰⁷ Ponting’s definition of “educate” was possibly more akin to “edify,” in that he felt his telling of the moral fortitude of Scott’s expedition was both educational and uplifting. Ponting also expressed a desire and inability to depict more of the scientific achievements of the expedition. In his early film lectures, Ponting included sections on trawling the bottom of the ocean, sorting the catch, taking air temperatures, testing air currents with a weather balloon [Figure 91].²⁰⁸ These were apparently rather unpopular, for in a 1920 letter to

²⁰⁵ Mordaunt Hall, “A Talking Farce: Good Fun and Intelligent Sound Effects in ‘Ghost Talks’ – Other Productions,” *New York Times* (February 24, 1929): 119.

²⁰⁶ Ben Ray Redman, “With Captain Scott in the Antarctic,” *New York Times* (July 9, 1922), 48.

²⁰⁷ Herbert Ponting, letter to Lady Scott, February 10, 1917. SPRI MS 15/3; D

²⁰⁸ “With Captain Scott, R.N., to the South Pole,” Program for a matinee screening at the Palace Theatre W. in London, August 16th, 1912.

Debenham about the film, in which he wrote, “I found it was absolutely necessary to cut out all the Science. The people would simply not stand for it.”²⁰⁹ As Ponting continued to adapt his film, he consciously kept his audience in mind, even to the point of sacrificing his own artistic vision.

The degree of Ponting’s disdain for his popular audience is evident in a 1933 letter to Frank Debenham, written upon the completion of the final version of *90 Degrees South*:

I am CERTAIN that audiences the country over would love a lot of the Nature and the Science, but one has to consider the dreadful mentality of the ignorant persons who control the cinemas.

I have been compelled to regard the odious ‘popular’ side, whereas I am at heart an artist, and I would have dearly loved to have been able to make my work purely educative and scientific.²¹⁰

Ponting felt the need to justify the amount of comedic animal scenes that appeared in his film because he felt that they were not indicative of his artistic prowess. But although they distracted from the high-minded gallantry that he wished to present, he felt they were necessary to draw in crowds so that they could be told of the noble self-sacrifice of the polar party. Ponting’s disdain for what he felt was an unintelligent audience was perhaps somewhat unfounded. The lack of interest in the film by 1933 was likely due more in part to the fact that after two decades of showing the same film, the public was no longer interested, a concept that Ponting simply could not fathom. In a letter to Debenham in 1930, Ponting blamed Gaumont for not marketing the film properly: “They are now in debt, and blame the failure for their miserable, impotent efforts on the film itself, saying that ‘Such films are out of fashion’. Could such a film ever go ‘out of

²⁰⁹ Ponting, letter to Frank Debenham, January 7, 1920. Included in an album of materials related to the photography, paintings and drawings of the Expedition. SPRI MS 280/28/7.

²¹⁰ Ponting, letter to Debenham August 15, 1933. SPRI MS 280/28/7.

fashion'?"²¹¹ Ponting firmly believed that his Antarctic work and the fate of the polar party would forever be a sensation, and everyone else was to blame if his film did poorly.

Though Ponting attributed the relative success of the film over the years to the inclusion of animal scenes, the film would likely never have been shown at all after World War I had it not been for the death of the polar party. Scott's death transformed the film from an interesting travelogue of adventurers in an exotic frozen landscape into a tale of the ultimate sacrifice. In fact, the early version of the film fared rather poorly, particularly when news had been received of Amundsen's victory but before the fate of Scott's party had been discovered. In his 1912 letter to Scott, Ponting wrote,

I am quite convinced that the receipts from the films have suffered to the extent of the many hundreds of pounds from the failure to make a good showing of the Expedition in the Press, because, you see, Amundsen has taken a great deal of the glamour out of things, so much, indeed, that a number of theatres will not touch the films at all, which is a pity to say the least.²¹²

Before news of Scott's death, the film ended with the scene of the polar party setting off for the South Pole.²¹³ The story did not yet have an ending. Scott's death transformed the expedition's story from one in which the British lost the race to the South Pole into a tale of heroic self-sacrifice made for the advancement of the British Empire. The story became a source of nationalist pride and moral superiority even in the loss of the goal to Amundsen.

The film was adapted from two parts to three, and the narrative was complete: The adventurous, good-natured, likeable men embarked to the unknown, where they encountered the unique and comical animal life, the likes of which had never before been

²¹¹ Ponting, Letter to Frank Debenham, January 8, 1930. SPRI MS 280/28/7.

²¹² Ponting, Letter to Robert F. Scott, November 4, 1912. SPRI MS 964/11; D.

²¹³ Program for *With Captain Scott, R.N. to the South Pole*, presented at The Palace Theatre West in London, August 16, 1912. SPRI MS 280/28/7.

filmed, before they gave the ultimate sacrifice for knowledge, achievement, and the advancement of the British Empire. Each section was crafted to promote the triumph of the expedition, but it took the tragic and uplifting conclusion to make Ponting's film a success.

Closely following the news of Scott's death was the declaration of war and Britain's entry into World War I. At this time, the tale of Scott's heroic death as told by Ponting became a symbol of the valiant British spirit that served their men in the Great War. Ponting's film was even shown to troops in France in 1914 as a means to uplift the spirits of the men as they fought for their country amidst unimaginable conditions. The Reverend F. I. Anderson, Senior Chaplain to the Forces in France, wrote his praise of the film to Ponting:

The thrilling story of Oates' self-sacrifice, to try and give his friends a chance of 'getting through' is one that appeals so at the present time. [. . .] We all feel we have inherited from Oates and his comrades a legacy and heritage of inestimable value in seeing through our present work. We all thank you with very grateful hearts.²¹⁴

During this trying time at the start of World War I, Ponting's film was shown to King George V in May, 1914.²¹⁵ The King expressed to Ponting his desire "That every British boy could see this film and know its story, as it will help to foster the spirit of adventure."²¹⁶ This quote was marketing gold for Ponting, and he repeated it again and again in his correspondence with friends, in newspaper articles, and in the printed programs for his screenings as a means to promote his screenings.

²¹⁴ Ponting included this excerpt in a letter to Arthur Robert Hinks of the Royal Geographical Society. Herbert Ponting, Letter to Arthur Robert Hinks, December 7, 1917. SPRI MS 964/10/6.

²¹⁵ Herbert Ponting, "The Great White South," *Times* [London, England] (February 22, 1922): xii.

²¹⁶ Ponting, Letter to Debenham August 15, 1933. SPRI, MS 280/28/7.

By September of 1919, Ponting had delivered his lecture 1,000 times, and the reviewer called it:

One of the greatest achievements of the cinematograph to date has been to make the expedition imperishable. The story of Scott's death will of course, be told as long as the English language is spoken, but it is wonderful to think also that 100 or 500 years hence future generations will be able to see this pictorial record and gaze upon Scott and his comrades trudging over the ice to glorious death.²¹⁷

By December of 1919, Ponting was exhausted and complained to Cherry-Garrard, "A lecture twice per day containing more dialogue than the whole of Hamlet is no easy task. It is the very hardest ordeal I have ever attempted to do in my life."²¹⁸ This statement, made to his comrade who had not only wintered in Antarctica with Ponting but survived the Worst Journey in the World, is indicative of Ponting's inclination toward hyperbole. It nevertheless attests to the success of Ponting's film as a symbol of national pride as Britain healed and attempted to reestablish its national identity in the years following the Great War.

During the 1920s, Ponting worked diligently to include new scenes so that his films continued to be shown.²¹⁹ Ponting, uncomfortable with the abandonment of Edwardian values during Jazz Age, hoped that his film might continue to moralize the population. He wrote in 1922,

In these days when so many seem to think life is only for the pleasure that can be got out of it, it is well to have this visual record to show that Captain Scott and his comrades did not hesitate to give up comfort, luxury, the joys of home, and all that many think most worth living for, in order to go to the uppermost ends of the earth to face discomfort, danger, and even

²¹⁷ "The World Of The Film," *Times* [London, England] (19 May 1919): 17.

²¹⁸ Ponting, Letter to Apsley Cherry-Garrard, December 20th, 1919. SPRI, MS 559/102/1-4.

²¹⁹ "Mr. Ponting has spent many months in searching through the thousands of feet of film for fresh incidents." "Films Of The Scott Expedition," *Times* [London, England] (19 Jan. 1922): 8.

death itself, so that England might maintain her glorious tradition of being ever to the fore in the search for knowledge.²²⁰

One critic agreed that the film was “finely photographed, and, in spite of the years that have passed . . . the scenes give a stirring conception of the hardships of those gallant men of bygone days.”²²¹ The polar party had by 1929 become martyred and canonized into national myth, a symbol of Britain’s heroic past rather than of current values.

In 1928, in an effort to have his film purchased by the British government to preserve it for national posterity rather than selling rights to American companies, Ponting set out compiling favorable reviews and critical testimony to make his case. These were printed in an unpublished brown booklet titled *Some Observations Upon the Desirability of the Acquisition of the Moving-Picture Record of the Scott South Pole Expedition Being Taken in Hand by a Public Body*.²²² Though *90 Degrees South* was not released until 1933, the version that was promoted by this material, referred to simply as “the film,” was likely very similar, as the first article stated that it was a completed feature-length, two hour film.²²³ The reviews Ponting included are not dated, but some were actually reprinted from articles published in the 1910s and early 1920s. The tale of Scott’s sacrifice continued to be toted as a source of nationalist pride. In the introductory article to the booklet, Hannen Swaffer argued that the polar party

died in such a way that their last hours will remain forever an imperishable glory of our race. . . . And here, all the time, is the greatest glorification of British idealism that has ever been recorded. I wonder why the British nation does not think it worth while to acquire this film as a national possession. For it is the greatest epic of our race, the photographed story

²²⁰ Ponting, “The Great White South,” *Times* [London, England] (February 21, 1922): xii.

²²¹ Mordaunt Hall, “South Pole Film of Scott Thrills,” *New York Times* (February 21, 1929): p35.

²²² The booklet itself and the reviews that appear in it are undated, but he enclosed it in a letter to Frank Debenham on May 10th, 1928. SPRI MS 280/28/7.

²²³ Hannen Swaffer, “Heirloom that England May Lose,” *Some Observations Upon the Desirability of the Acquisition of the Moving-Picture Record of the Scott South Pole Expedition Being Taken in Hand by a Public Body*. SPRI MS 280/28/7.

of an expedition which will never be forgotten, as long as man lives on earth.²²⁴

Ponting's film continued to reflect how the British, at least of Ponting's generation, saw themselves and their place in the world for decades, even as that world was abandoning the Victorian and Edwardian values of valor and self-sacrifice. Up until his death in 1935, Ponting worked tirelessly, and with limited success, to adapt his Antarctic work in order to promote imperialist sentiments to an audience with rapidly changing values. As years since Scott's death passed, viewers were drawn to the theater for adventure and for penguins, and received a healthy dose of moralizing nationalism. His film, like his photographs, were staged and edited to appeal to the widest possible audience. Although Ponting was of an era in which strict documentary practices were not yet in place, he still deliberately misled his viewers as to the veracity of his pictures. As a result, the heroic myth of the colonial explorer was presented as fact rather than opinion. In both photography and film, Ponting deliberately crafted his work based on established aesthetic conventions in order to convince a popular audience of the fame and tragic glory of the explorers, single-handedly creating the legendary visual narrative of the British Antarctic Expedition, 1910-1913.

²²⁴ Ibid.

Conclusion

Herbert Ponting did not become the first professional photographer to the Antarctic as one of the highest paid members of the British Antarctic Expedition, 1910-1913, simply to record the activities of the expedition. There were several capable photographer-scientists among the crew, including Charles Wright and Frank Debenham. Ponting was hired because he was first and foremost an artist, and a successful one at that, who had built his career drawing on established landscape painting aesthetics in order to picture exotic places that appealed to a Western audience. As Stephen J. Pyne wrote, the pastoral did exist in the Antarctic, where there were no trees, buildings or countryside.²²⁵ Thus, the aesthetic of the sublime was better suited to picture the “isolated, deglaciated oases and in the coastal fjords and glaciated peaks of the continental perimeter, populated by throngs of peasant penguins and the noble savage seal and killer whale.”²²⁶ Ponting’s images evoke the sublime vastness and desolation of the uncharted territory not only to make the images of the alien landscape visually understandable to his audience, but also to set the stage in which the band of adventurers triumphed and suffered to further the expansion and ideals of the British Empire. Ponting’s Antarctic photographs were thus a visual interpretation of the imperialist sentiments that motivated the expedition, constructed to promote the fame and glory of the expedition rather than a complete and factual account of its activities.

Indeed, Ponting was incapable of documenting the expedition even if that had been his goal. He was in Antarctica for only one year, without assistants, and unable to

²²⁵ Stephen J. Pyne, *The Ice: A Journey to Antarctica*, (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa, 1986), 153.

²²⁶ Ibid.

accompany any of the longer sledging expeditions from Cape Evans.²²⁷ As a middle-aged man used to the comforts of ocean liner travel, Ponting suffered from seasickness, and was not as physically capable as most of the other men who travelled south with the *Terra Nova*. His cumbersome equipment precluded any candidness in his portraiture, and he was far more interested in picturing the majesty of the landscape than the formations of greater interest to the geologists. Yet Ponting's photographs continue to be used as illustrations to accounts of the expedition, and his artistic intentions and constructs are rarely discussed in depth.²²⁸ As such, his images continue to promote nostalgia for the tragic heroism of bygone days, and the myth of the explorer lives on.

Though less focused on landscape, his film, too, helped promote the celebrity of the survivors and the martyrdom of the polar party. In the years following the death of Scott, his film was likely even more instrumental in achieving this goal than his photographs were, as it was seen by a wider audience and continued to be reviewed in the press for decades. Although Ponting's film remains relatively unknown today, as its heavy-handed "direct-address style" of narrative is irrelevant to modern viewers except

²²⁷ When a reviewer of *The Great White South* for the Journal of the Royal Geographical Society pointed this out that he did not "venture more than a few miles from Cape Evans," Ponting got very defensive. He wrote to Hinks on February 14, 1922: "I regret the Journal has taken such an unfavorable view of my recent book. [...] no arrangements whatever had been made for its [photographic equipment] transport; consequently my radius of action was circumscribed, due to no lack of desire to 'venture' on my part." Royal Geographical Society Archives CB9 Ponting, H.G.

²²⁸ A. Savours, ed. *Scott's Last Voyage: Through the Antarctic Camera of Herbert Ponting*. (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, Ltd., 1975); J. Boddington, *Antarctic Photographs 1910-1916: Scott, Mawson and Shackleton Expeditions* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980); Beau Riffenburgh and Liz Cruwys, eds. *With Scott to the Pole: The Terra Nova Expedition 1910-1913 The Photographs of Herbert Ponting*, (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 2004); _____. Riffenburgh, Beau and Liz Cruwys. *The Photographs of H.G. Ponting*. (London: The Discovery Gallery, 1998); David Hempleman-Adams, et al. *The Heart of the Great Alone: Scott, Shackleton, and Antarctic Photography*. (New York: Bloomsbury, 2009). Exceptions include Elena Glasberg, "Photography on Ice," in *Antarctica as Cultural Critique* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 89-108; Steven J. Pyne, *The Ice: A Journey to Antarctica* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1986); and Francis Spufford, *I May Be Some Time: Ice and the English Imagination* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997); but these are broader visual studies analyses, that do not focus on Ponting's work exclusively.

for its historic interest, a study of the film and its reception shows the degree to which the constructed narrative strayed from the actualities of the expedition. It also demonstrates Ponting's level of awareness and later disdain for his popular audience's desires. Ponting worked diligently to try to keep his film relevant, even as changing values and national interests shifted away from Edwardian values of empire expansion and noble self-sacrifice.

Ponting accompanied few expeditions after his return from Antarctica, and he dedicated himself for over two decades to promoting the ideals of the expedition until his death in 1935. More research into the psychological effects of living and wintering in the Antarctic in such close quarters would likely reveal that Ponting had suffered mentally even after his safe return from The Great White South. He was also likely traumatized with survivor's guilt at the news of the deaths of his friends at the South Pole, which drove him to tirelessly seek to validate and promote the imperialist ideals that motivated the tragic expedition. Ponting emphatically wrote:

There will doubtless be the usual cry: 'What's the good of it all?' Those who ask that question never will understand why it is that some are willing to give up everything and risk hardship, danger, and even death for an ideal.

But every explorer knows what their motive is. It is innate love of adventure combined with the desire for achievement and the wish to add something to the sum of knowledge. These are the qualities that have actuated all our own great Empire-builders of the past, and they are the qualities for which this country has always been pre-eminent, for British explorers have ever been pioneers in the Polar regions.²²⁹

This rhetoric glorifying the "Empire-builders" was outdated in the years of the Jazz Age and the beginning of the Great Depression in the U.S. and Britain. As early as 1921, Edward Evans wrote, his Preface to *South With Scott*, "The object of this book is to keep

²²⁹ Quoted in H.J.P. Arnold, *Photographer of the World: The Biography of Herbert Ponting* (Cranbury, N.J.: Associated University Presses, 1971), 110-111.

alive the interest of English-speaking people in the story of Scott and his little band of sailor-adventurers, scientific explorers, and companions. It is written more particularly for Britain's younger generations."²³⁰ Evans's book enjoyed a longer-lasting audience, and it was reprinted in 1937 and 1958. Frank Debenham's later account also abandoned the language of martyrdom and presented his experiences as cheerful adventures.

Debenham's *In the Antarctic* stated, "I have dealt chiefly with the lighter side of those fateful yet happy three years and have addressed myself mainly to a new generation."²³¹

The story of Scott and the fate of the polar party was simplified and stripped of imperialist histrionics to appeal to a younger generation of adventure tale consumers.

After Ponting's death, his work fell into relative obscurity until the 1990s and the 21st century.²³² Renewed interest in Ponting coincided with a rejuvenated scientific interest in the Antarctic and the melting icecaps brought on by global warming. However, this interest in Ponting's photographs has not been accompanied by in-depth consideration of the artistic, economic, and social conditions under which he constructed them. The aim of this study has been not only to provide a formalist analysis to ground Ponting's photographs within a broader discourse of sublime landscape art, but an attempt at demonstrating how fine art aesthetics are employed to visually construct myths to this day, although often with quite different results. Whereas Ponting employed the sublime to showcase the virile superiority of Edwardian men as they conquered the land, contemporary images of nature in such publications as *National Geographic* and *Planet*

²³⁰ Edward Evans, Preface to *South with Scott* (London: Collins, 1921).

²³¹ Frank Debenham, Foreword to *In the Antarctic* (London: John Murray, 1952).

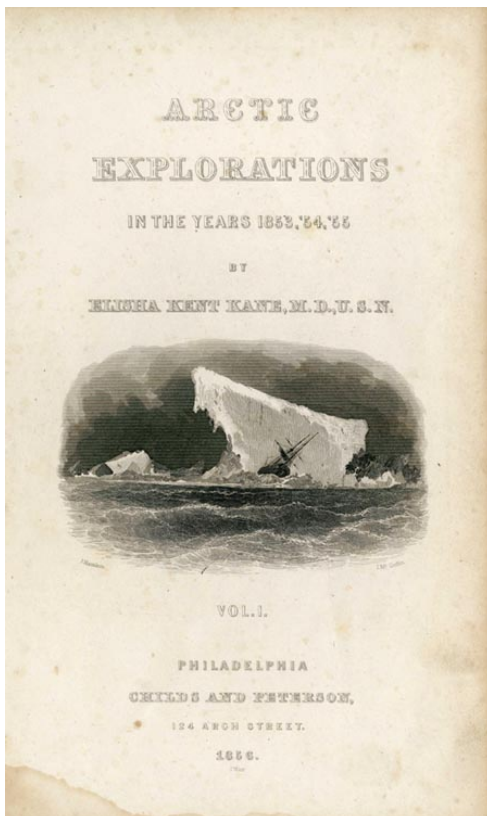
²³² There were few, if any, publications dedicated to Ponting's work from his death in 1935 until his biography appeared in 1971. Until the 1990s, few other books appeared that were dedicated to Ponting's photography. These included Savours, A. ed. *Scott's Last Voyage: Through the Antarctic Camera of Herbert Ponting*. London, 1975 and Boddington, J. *Antarctic Photographs 1910-1916: Scott, Mawson and Shackleton Expeditions*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980.

Earth depict majestic sweeping expanses of land in order to provoke conservationist rather than expansionist sentiments. Formal and socio-historical analyses of images of nature throughout history will reveal that art, science and entertainment have long been interconnected, and continue to reflect changing cultural values and philosophies regarding the natural landscape today.

Illustrations



1. Herbert Ponting, *Huge Ice Bastions of The Castle Berg*, September 17th 1911. Photograph. SPRI P2005/5/498.



2. Engraved frontispiece from Elisha Kent Kane, *Arctic Explorations in the Years 1853, '54, '55* (Philadelphia : Childs and Peterson, 1856).



3. Herbert Ponting, *Cecil H. Meares on his Return from the Barrier*, January 5th 1911.
Photograph. SPRI P2005/5/776



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4. Herbert Ponting, *Dr. Atkinson in the Laboratory*, September 15th 1911. Photograph. SPRI P2005/5/492.



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5. Herbert Ponting, *Captain Scott's Birthday Dinner*, June 6th 1911. Photograph, P2005/5/437.



6. Eadward Muybridge, *Tenaya Canyon – Valley of the Yosemite, From Union Point*. 1872. Albumen print. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. From: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, <http://www.metmuseum.org> (accessed March 11, 2014).



7. Carleton Watkins, *Yosemite Valley from the Best General View*. 1866. Albumen print. From: The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. <http://www.getty.edu/art/gettyguide/artObjectDetails?artobj=62093> (accessed March 11, 2014).



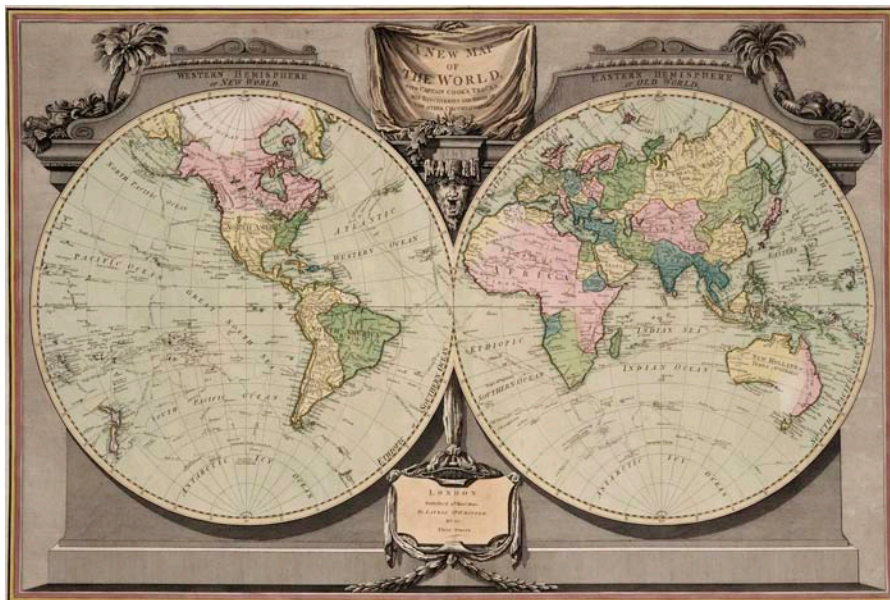
8. Carleton Watkins, *Devil's Canyon, Geysers, Looking Down*. 1868–70. Albumen print. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. From: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, <http://www.metmuseum.org> (accessed March 11, 2014).



9. Herbert Ponting, *Mules at a California Round-up*. 1900. Photograph. From H.J.P. Arnold, *Herbert Ponting: Photographer of the World*. Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, Inc., 1969. Plate 13.



10. John Charles Ready Colomb, *Imperial Federation, Map Showing the Extent of the British Empire in 1886*. 1886. From The Boston Public Library. <http://maps.bpl.org/id/m8682> (Accessed April 15, 2014).



11. William Palmer. *A New Map of the World, with Captain Cook's Tracks, his Discoveries and Those of Other Circumnavigators*, 1813-1814. Map. From The National Library of Australia. Accessed April 28, 2014. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.map-rm28>



12. Thomas Daniell, *Ruins of the Naurattan, Sasaram, Bihar*. 1811. Oil on canvas, 38 9/16 x 53 5/8 inches (97.9 x 136.2 cm). Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection. Available from ArtStor, www.artstor.org (Accessed March 11, 2014).



13. Thomas Daneill, *The Rope Bridge at Serinagur*. c1800. Oil on canvas, 32 1/4 x 40 3/4 inches (81.9 x 103.5 cm). Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection. Available from ArtStor, www.artstor.org (Accessed March 11, 2014).



14. Samuel Bourne, *Village on a Rocky Outcrop in Spiti, India*, c1870. Photograph. From BBC News website, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/pop_ups/07/in_pictures_samuel_bourne_himalayan_landscapes/html/1.stm (accessed March 11, 2014).



15. Samuel Bourne, *The Buspa Valley from the Village of Chitkul*. 1865. Photograph. British Library, <http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery>. (Accessed March 11, 2014)



16. Herbert Ponting, *Lake Yamanaka from the Summit of Mount Fuji*. c1910. Photograph. Available from: The National Archives UK Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/nationalarchives/5621792404/> (Accessed April 14, 2014).



17. Herbert Ponting, *Mount Fuji and the Kaia Grass*. c1910. Available from: The National Archives UK Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/nationalarchives/5621792404/> (Accessed April 14, 2014).



18. Herbert Ponting, *Photographing Alligators*. 1908. Photograph. The National Archives, UK. Available from: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/nationalarchives/5621214513/> (Accessed March 11, 2014).



19. Ponting *Cinematographing the Prow of the Terra Nova Going Through the Pack Ice*. 1910. Photograph. SPRI P2005/5/916.



20. Herbert Ponting, *The Matterhorn Berg (profile)*. October 8th, 1911. Photograph. The Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge, UK.
<http://www.spri.cam.ac.uk/library/pictures/catalogue/article/p2005.5.530/> (Accessed March 11, 2014).



21. Herbert Ponting, *Point of the Barne Glacier (Anton and Sledge)*. December 2nd 1911. SPRI P2005/5/646.



22. Gustave Dore, Engraved illustration for Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. 1865. University of California, San Diego. Available at ArtStor, www.artstor.org (Accessed March 11, 2014).



23. Frederic Church, *The Icebergs*, 1861. Oil on canvas, 64 3/8 x 112 1/2 in. (163.51 x 285.75 cm.). Dallas Museum of Art. Available from ArtStor, www.artstor.org (Accessed March 11, 2014).



24. William Bradford. *An Arctic Summer: Boring Through the Pack in Melville Bay*. 1871. Oil on canvas, 51 3/4 x 78 in. (131.4 x 198.1 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, www.metmuseum.org (Accessed March 11, 2014).

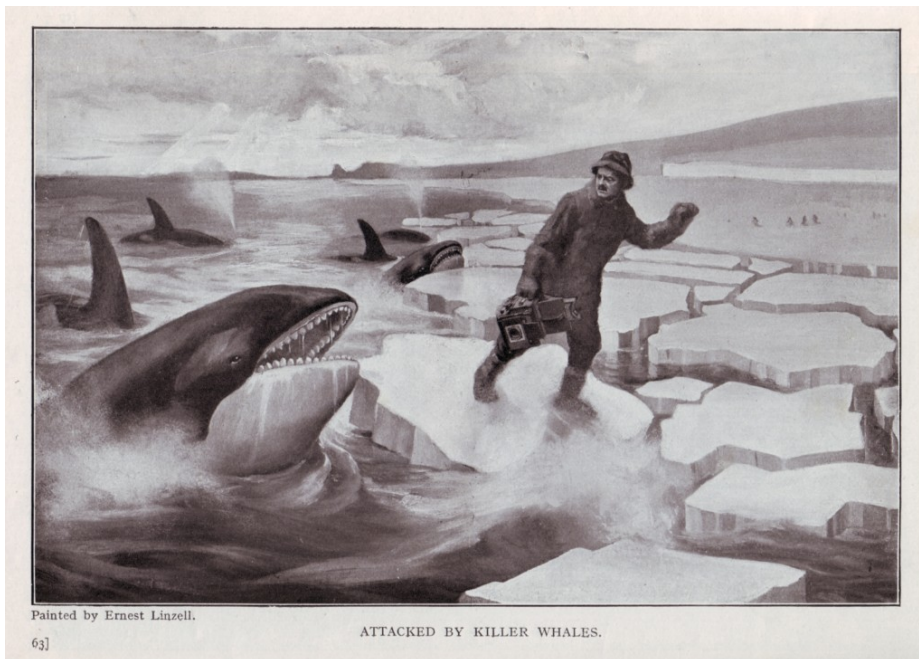


25. Edward Wilson, *Waiting at Hut Point*, March-April 1911. Available from <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/4211654/Tragic-Antarctic-explorer-Dr-Wilsons-lost-art-unearthed-after-100-years.html> (Accessed April 15, 2014).



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26. Ponting at work in darkroom, March 24th 1911. Photograph. SPRI P2005/5/346.



27. Ernest Linzell. *Attacked by Whales*. From Herbert Ponting, *The Great White South*, p63.



28. Ponting in full gear with his kinematograph, c1911. SPRI P2005/5/820



29. Herbert Ponting, *Huge Ice Bastions of the Castle Berg*, September 17th 1911. Photograph. SPRI P2005/5/498



30. Herbert Ponting, *The Castle Berg, with Dog Sledge*, September 17th 1911.
Photograph. SPRI P2005/5/1546



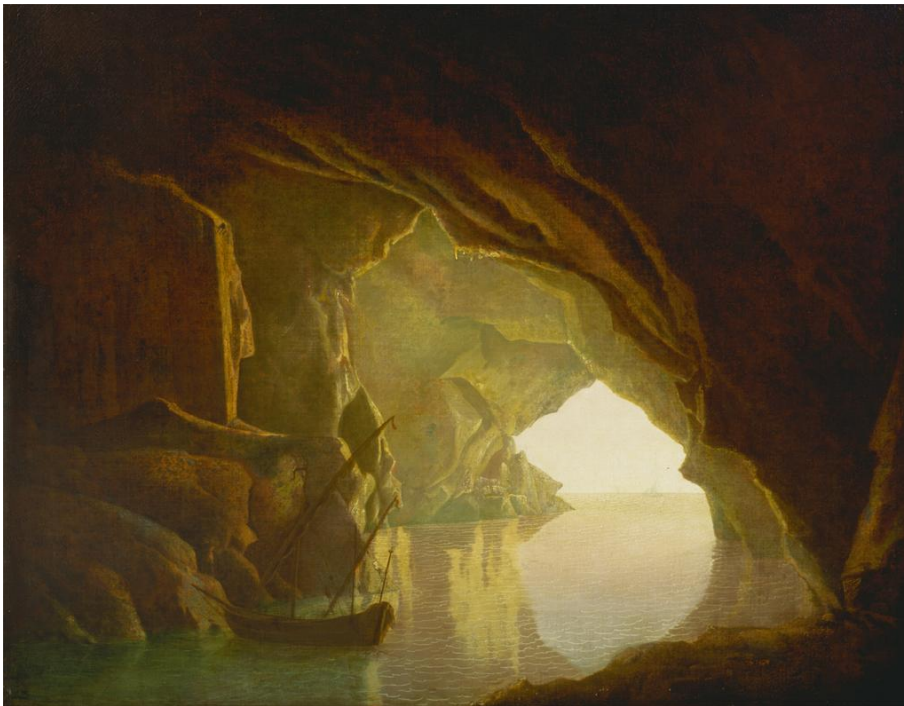
31. Herbert Ponting, *Flashlight Photograph of The Castle Berg*, June 4th 1911.
Photograph. SPRI P2005/5/433



32. Herbert Ponting, *Grotto in a Berg. Terra Nova in the Distance. Taylor and Wright (Interior)*, Jan. 5th 1911. Photograph. SPRI P2005/5/127.



33. Joseph Wright of Derby, *Grotto in the Gulf of Salernum, with the Figure of Julia, Banished from Rome*. Oil on canvas, 1780. Private Collection. Available from ArtStor, www.artstor.org (Accessed March 25, 2014).



34. Joseph Wright of Derby, *A Grotto in the Gulf of Salerno, Sunset*. Oil on canvas, 1780-1781. Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection. Available from ArtStor, www.artstor.org (Accessed March 25, 2014).



35. Charles S. Wright, *Crystals in stable*. Photograph, 1910-1913. SPRI P99/50/19



36. Charles S. Wright, *Silt Band near Highcliff*. Photograph, 1910-1913. SPRI P99/50/90.



37. Charles S. Wright, *Barne Glacier Face Showing Water Channels from Silt Bands*. Photograph, 1910-1913. SPRI P99/50/104.



38. Charles S. Wright, *Crossed Silt Bands*. Photograph, 1910-1913. SPRI P99/50/155.



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39. Herbert Ponting, *Griffith Taylor and Debenham in their Cubicle*. Photograph, 1910-1912. SPRI P2005/5/403.



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40. Herbert Ponting, *Griffith Taylor and Debenham in their Cubicle*. Photograph, 1910-1912. SPRI P2005/5/404



41. Herbert Ponting, *Griffith Taylor and Debenham in their Cubicle*. Photograph, 1910-1912. SPRI P2005/5/405



42. Herbert Ponting, *Griffith Taylor and Debenham in their Cubicle*. Photograph, 1910-1912. SPRI P2005/5/406



43 and 44. Herbert Ponting, *Cinematographic Whales*, Photograph. c1910. SPRI P2005/5/1208 and P2005/5/1209



45 and 46. Herbert Ponting, *Cinematographic Whales*, Photograph. c1910. SPRI P2005/5/1210 and P2005/5/1211.



47 and 48. Herbert Ponting, *Cinematographic Whales*, Photograph. c1910. SPRI P2005/5/1212 and P2005/5/1213.



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49. Herbert Ponting, *Captain Scott and Group Taken on Return of the Southern Party*, April 1911. Photograph. SPRI P2005/5/368.



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50. Herbert Ponting, *The Return of the Western Geological Party*. F. Debenham, T. Griffith-Taylor, T. Gran and PO Forde, March 1911. Photograph. SPRI P2005/5/872.



51. Herbert Ponting, *Charles Wright on his Return*, 1911. Photograph. SPRI P2005/5/816.



52. Herbert Ponting, *Bernard Day on Return from Barrier*, December 21 1911. Photograph. SPRI P2005/5/724



53. Herbert Ponting, *Cecil H. Meares on his Return from the Barrier*, January 5th 1911.
Photograph. SPRI P2005/5/776.



54. Herbert Ponting, *Apsley Cherry-Garrard on his Return from the Barrier*, July 1911.
Photograph. SPRI P2005/5/813.



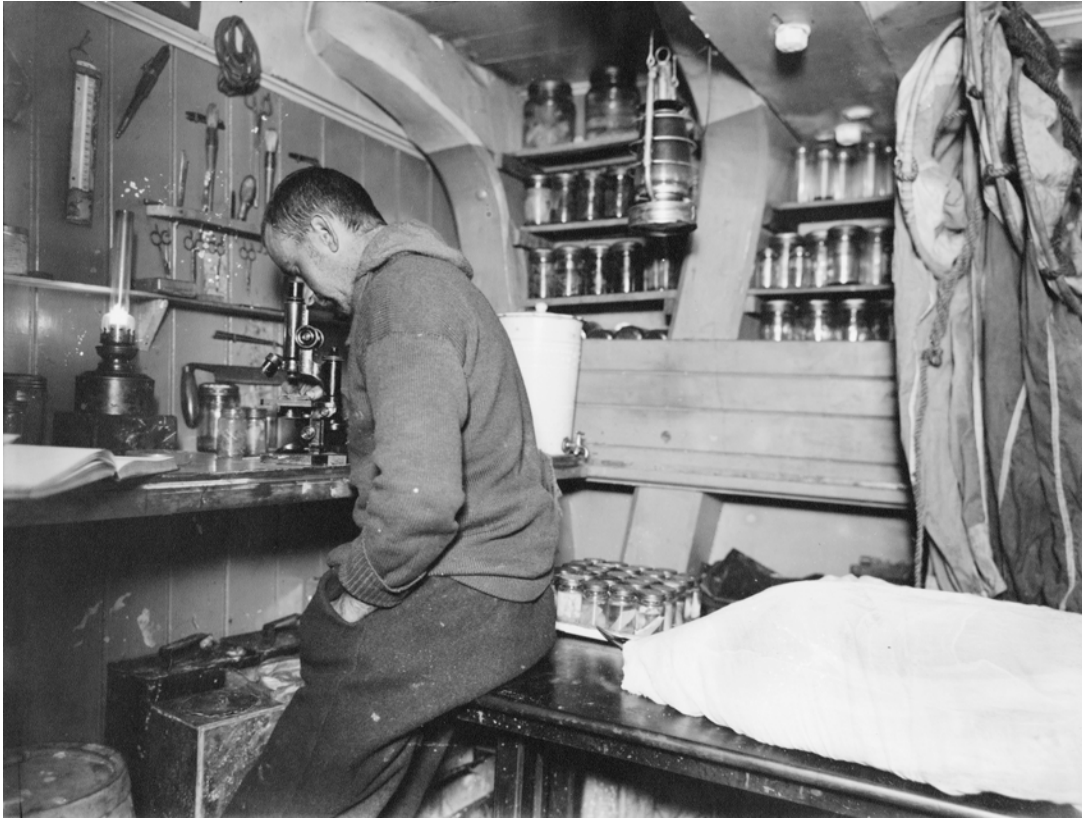
55. Frank Hurley, *Skiing on the Ice*, 1914-1916. Photograph. Courtesy of the Royal Geographical Society, S0000171.



56. Frank Hurley, *Crew Member Standing on the ice with 'Endurance' in the Background*, 1914-1916. Photograph. Courtesy of the Royal Geographical Society, S0015762.



57. Frank Hurley, *'Endurance' Frozen in the Ice*, 1914-1916. Photograph. Courtesy of the Royal Geographical Society, S0011701.



58. Frank Hurley, *Robert Clark in the Biological Laboratory*, 1914-1916. Photograph. Courtesy of the Royal Geographical Society, S0011641.



59. Herbert Ponting, *Dr. Atkinson in the Laboratory*, September 15th 1911. Photograph. SPRI P2005/5/492.



60. Frank Hurley, *Round the Night Watchman's Fire*, 1914-1916. Courtesy of the Royal Geographical Society, S0000147.



61. Herbert Ponting, *Meares and Capt Oates at the Blubber stove, Cooking Food for the Dogs*, 1910-1912. Photograph. SPRI P2005/5/415.



62. Frank Hurley, *Midwinter Dinner*, 22 June 1915. Photograph. SPRI P66/19/80.



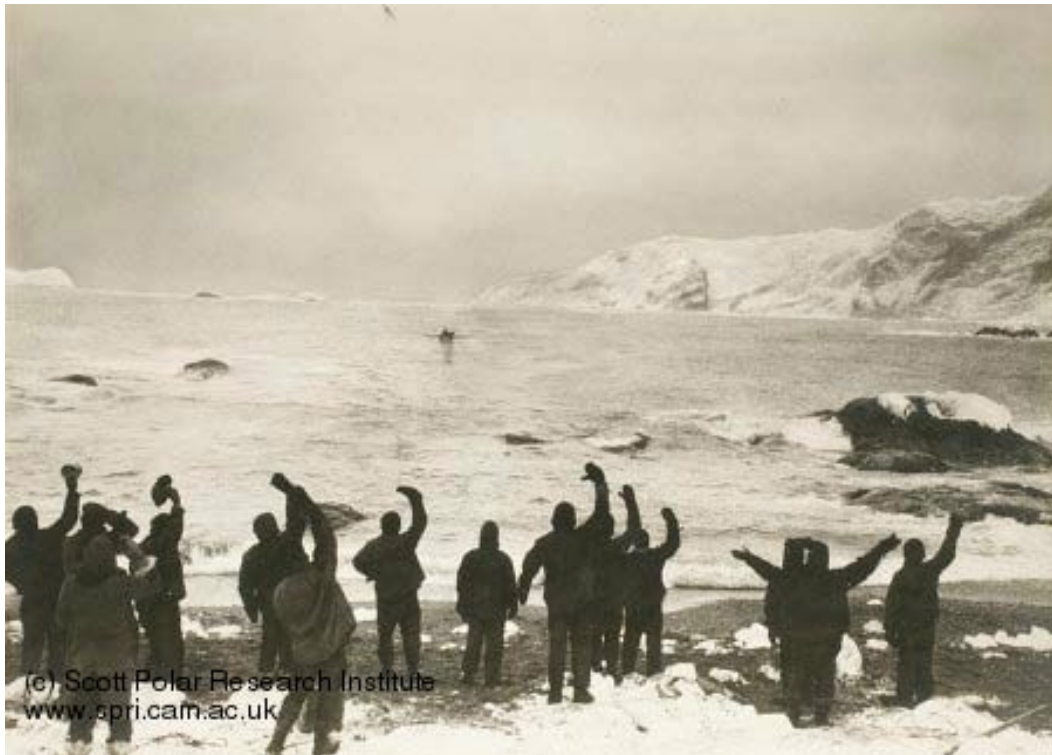
63. Herbert Ponting, *Capt Scott's Birthday Dinner*, June 6th 1911. Photograph. SPRI P2005/5/437



64. Frank Hurley, *A Typical Pressure Ridge with Rafted Floe*, 1914-1916. Photograph. SPRI P66/18/40.



29. Herbert Ponting, *Huge Ice Bastions of the Castle Berg*, September 17th 1911. Photograph. SPRI P2005/5/498



65. Frank Hurley, *Saved!*, 1916. Photograph. SPRI P66/18/79.



66. Herbert Ponting, *Left Behind in Victoria Land*, Feb. 9th 1911. Photograph. SPRI P2005/5/240



67. Frank Hurley, *Saved!* Composite photograph. From “Pics of Antarctic Explorer Faked,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, August 23, 2004. Available at <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2004/08/22/1093113057723.html> (Accessed March 25, 2014).



68. Frank Hurley, *Shackleton's Departure for South Georgia, April 24, 1916*. Composite photograph From “Warrior armed with a camera,” *The Sydney Sun-Herald*, January 16, 2005. Available at <http://www.smh.com.au/news/Arts/Warrior-armed-with-a-camera/2005/01/16/1105810756956.html> (Accessed March 25, 2014).



69. Herbert Ponting, *Point of the Barne Glacier (Anton and Sledge)*, December 2nd 1911. Photograph. SPRI P2005/5/646.



70. Herbert Ponting, *Seals basking on New Pancake Floe off Cape Evans*, March 7th 1911. Photograph. SPRI P2005/5/1115.



71. Herbert Ponting, *Seals Basking on New Pancake Floe off Cape Evans*, March 7th 1911. Photograph, variation made by Ponting of his original negative. SPRI P2005/5/1308.



72. Herbert Ponting, *Captain Scott*, January 26th 1911. Photograph, variation made by Ponting of his original negative. SPRI P2005/5/1243



73. Herbert Ponting, *Captain Oates*, January 26th 1911. Photograph, variation made by Ponting of his original negative. SPRI P2005/5/1242



74. Herbert Ponting, *Captain Scott and the Southern Party. Mount Erebus in Background*, January 26th 1911. Photograph. SPRI P2005/5/214



75. Herbert Ponting, *Wilson's Tent*, 13 December 1911. Photograph. SPRI P2005/5/1708.



76. Herbert Ponting, *The Tent Plus Approaching Blizzard*, 1911. Composite photograph. SPRI P2005/5/1709.



77. Herbert Ponting, *Approaching Blizzard*, December 18th 1911 about 3pm. Photograph. SPRI P2005/5/708.



78. Herbert Ponting, *Tent on the Barrier*, 1911. Photograph. SPRI P2005/5/1700.



79. Herbert Ponting, Captain Lawrence Oates giving Cecil Meares a haircut. Still from *90 Degrees South*, 11:32. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKBttUMKND4> (Accessed, April 1, 2014).



80. Herbert Ponting, “But the bulk of the work, now as afterwards, was done with human muscle.” Still from *90 Degrees South*, 20:11. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKBttUMKND4> (Accessed, April 1, 2014).



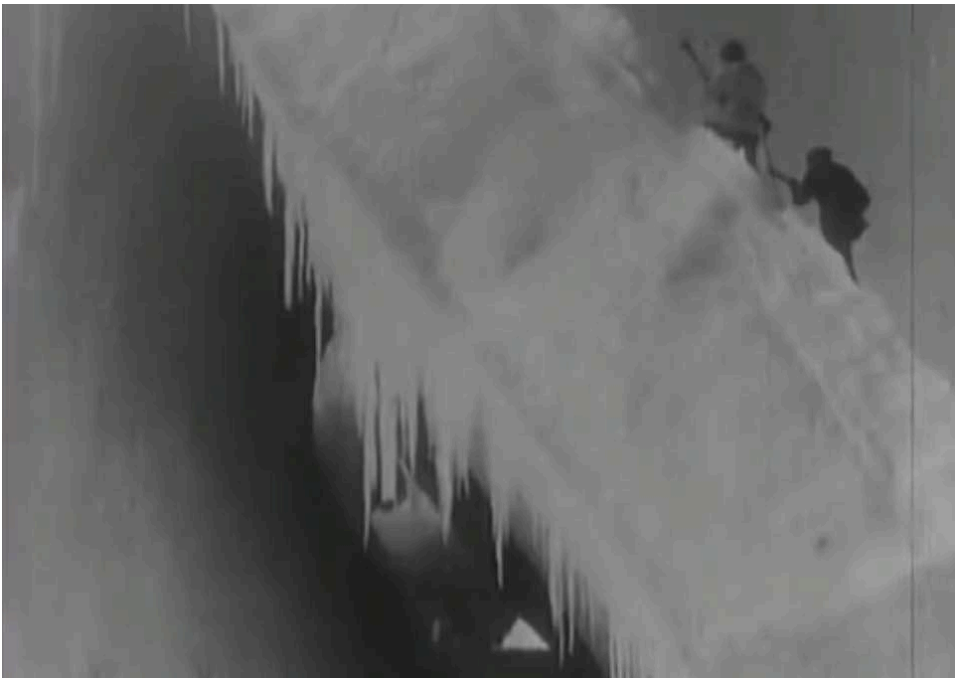
81. Herbert Ponting, "Thousands of miles nearer the South Pole than any other football game ever contested," Still from *90 Degrees South*, 33:29. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKBttUMKND4> (Accessed, April 1, 2014).



82. Herbert Ponting, "The surface was alternately very rough and very slippery, making sledge-hauling most arduous work," Still from *90 Degrees South*, 1:01:21. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKBttUMKND4> (Accessed, April 1, 2014).



83. "On March 19, they pitched their 60th camp from the South Pole, with food sufficient for only one meal," Still from *90 Degrees South*, 1:06:18. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKBttUMKND4> (Accessed, April 1, 2014).



84. Herbert Ponting, Wright and Griffith-Taylor climbing the ice grotto. Still from *90 Degrees South*, 47:31. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKBttUMKND4> (Accessed, April 1, 2014).



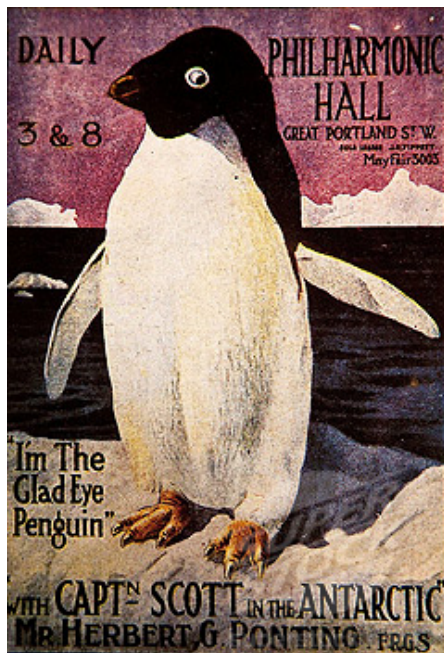
85. Herbert Ponting, "This pack has caught sight of a seal," Still from *90 Degrees South*, 28:37. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKBttUMKND4> (Accessed, April 1, 2014).



86. Herbert Ponting, Still from *90 Degrees South*, 41:42, Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKBttUMKND4> (Accessed, April 1, 2014).



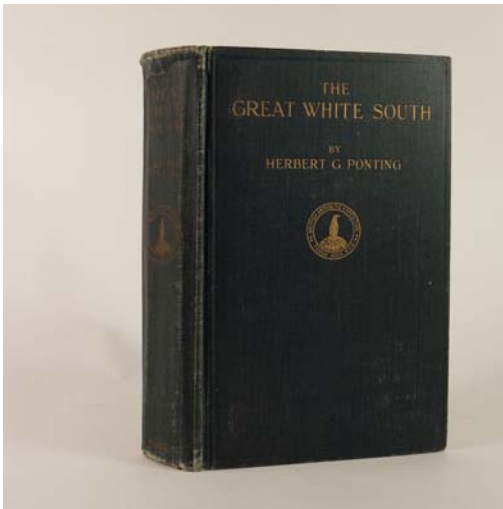
87. Page from a program for *With Scott to the Antarctic*, c1917.



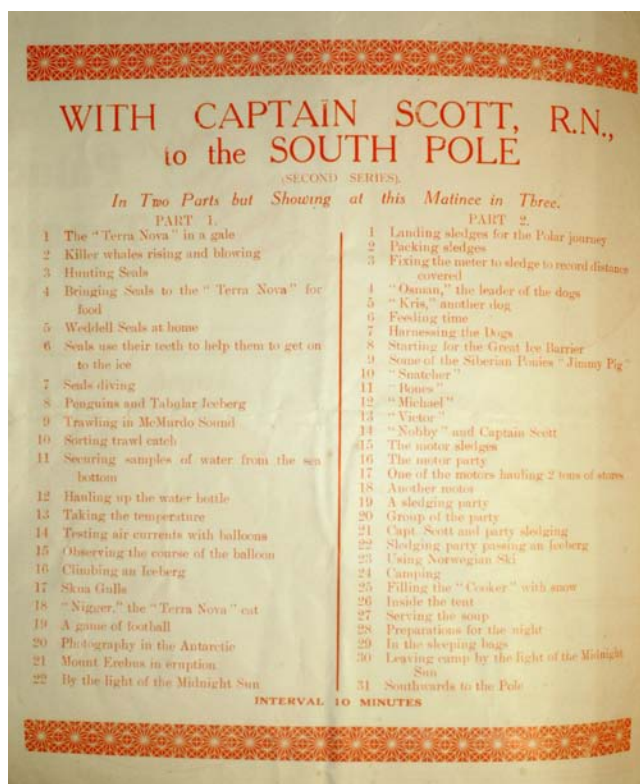
88. Herbert Ponting, Postcard advertising his film lecture, "With Captain Scott in the Antarctic" at Philharmonic Hall in London, c1912. Available at SuperStock, <http://www.superstock.com/stock-photos-images/1566-511164> (Accessed April 1, 2014).



89. Herbert Ponting, "Ponko" the Penguin. Label on the underside reads "'PONKO" THE PENGUIN is designed from my photographic studies of penguins taking during Capt. Scott's South Pole expedition and described by me at the Philharmonic Hall, London, Herbert G. Ponting'" Height: 16 inches. Christies Sale 6284, Lot 210. Available at <http://www.christies.com/lotfinder/lot/herbert-george-ponting-ponko-the-penguin-1753377-details.aspx?intObjectID=1753377> (Accessed April 1, 2014).



90. Cover for Herbert Ponting, *The Great White South* (London: Duckworth, 1921).



91. Herbert Ponting, Program for *With Captain Scott, R.N., to the South Pole*, at the Palace Theatre West in London, August 16, 1912.

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