NextGenerationEU - **D.M. 351/2022, CUP I61I22000300007**
Tematica Patrimonio culturale, Area 10 – Media, patrimonio e beni culturali, in collaborazione con il Centro Studi Tradizioni Nautiche di Napoli

UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI NAPOLI "PARTHENOPE"

SCUOLA INTERDIPARTIMENTALE DI ECONOMIA E GIURISPRUDENZA

Dipartimento di Studi Economici e Giuridici

Corso di Dottorato in Studi Linguistici, Terminologici e Interculturali XXXVIII Ciclo

Tesi di dottorato in SC: 10/L1 – LINGUE, LETTERATURE E CULTURE INGLESE E ANGLOAMERICANA

Frozen Landscapes, Imperial Dreams: The Arctic in 19th-Century British Fiction and Non-Fiction Narratives

TUTOR

Chiar.ma Prof.ssa Raffaella Antinucci

CANDIDATA

Candida Basile Baldassarre

MATR. DR14000005

COORDINATRICE

Chiar.ma Prof.ssa Maria Giovanna Petrillo

ANNO ACCADEMICO 2024/2025

Who is the third who walks always beside you?
When I count, there are only you and I together
But when I look ahead up the white road
There is always another one walking beside you
Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded
I do not know whether a man or a woman
– But who is that on the other side of you?

T.S. Eliot, “What the Thunder Said” – Section V, in *The Waste Land*, 1922

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Introduction

The main issue addressed in this thesis regards how British imperial discourse constructed the Arctic landscape through both textual and visual representations during the 19th century, a period when Britain's maritime dominance reached its zenith and Arctic exploration became central to its colonial ambitions. Drawing on postcolonial theory and Corpus Linguistics methodology, the study investigates how the Arctic environment functioned as a site of imperial anxiety, where British attempts to assert discursive control over polar landscapes revealed the *provincial*[1] limitations of supposedly universal Western epistemology. The research originated from a remarkable discovery within the Bourbon Collection at the University of Naples Parthenope, where Edward Lawton Moss's *Shores of the Polar Sea* (1878) provided both the material foundation and theoretical motivation for this study.

The travelogue, documenting the British Arctic Expedition of 1875-76, stands out not merely as a historical document but as a cultural artifact that combines scientific observation with artistic representation, offering a unique opportunity for multimodal analysis of Arctic landscape portrayals within the broader context of imperial aspirations and scientific inquiry.

The central research question investigates how the word 'ice' – as the dominant feature of the Arctic landscape – acquires linguistic *agency* across different genres, and whether this agency attribution reveals underlying imperial anxieties about natural forces that exceed colonial control. Through corpus linguistic analysis of two distinct datasets – the Arctic Fiction Corpus (AFC) and the British Arctic Expedition Corpus (BAEC) – the study explores whether fictional and non-fictional narratives employ fundamentally different strategies for representing environmental resistance to imperial authority.

[1] D. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2000.

"Part I: Foundations" provides the historical and archival context that grounds this research. Chapter 1 focuses on the Bourbon Collection, a valuable archive of maritime-related texts that served as a key resource for the education of cadets within the Bourbon Navy of Naples. Although the collection encompasses a broad range of literary genres, it mainly consists of works pertaining to naval and scientific knowledge, which played a crucial role in shaping the intellectual milieu of the 18th and 19th centuries. The first chapter traces the collection's multilingual character and its evolution from the Bourbon era through Italian unification, revealing how British naval expertise became a model of maritime excellence that Italian naval education sought to emulate.

Chapter 2 provides the historical context by outlining the key developments and motivations behind British Arctic expeditions, which shaped British perceptions of the region. As Britain's maritime power expanded throughout the 19th century, Arctic explorations became central to its colonial ambitions, transforming the polar regions into both a testing ground for imperial authority and a site of cultural imagination where notions of heroism, endurance, and national superiority were projected onto seemingly inhospitable landscapes.

"Part II: Methodology" outlines the theoretical framework and analytical approach employed in examining the selected travelogues and fiction narratives, focusing on both textual and visual elements. Chapter 3 details the corpus linguistic methodology and the main tools of the software *Sketch Engine*, used to identify linguistic patterns, word frequency, concordances and collocations within both corpora. Drawing on concepts from Corpus Stylistics – a field that applies corpus-based methods to the analysis of literary and non-literary texts –, the analysis pays particular attention to semantic prosody – the tendency for words to carry positive or negative connotations within contexts – and examines processes of delexicalisation and relexicalisation, investigating how words loose or gain specific meanings through contextual usage. While these analytical concepts were originally developed for the study of poetic

texts[2], this study extends their application to prose narratives, demonstrating their validity across different textual genres. The methodological framework integrates postcolonial perspectives with Kress and van Leeuwen's "grammar of visual design"[3], enabling a comprehensive multimodal analysis that uncovers how images function in conjunction with text to convey power relations, cultural messages, and implicit ideologies.

"Part III: Analysis" presents the empirical investigation across two analytical chapters. Chapter 4 outlines the methodology behind the creation of the two corpora central to this study, providing an overview of the texts included in each corpus and detailing their origins, context, and relevance to themes of Arctic exploration and British imperialism. The chapter offers insights into broader cultural and literary perceptions of the Arctic during the 19th century, establishing the foundation for subsequent linguistic and thematic investigation. Chapter 5 presents the core findings through detailed linguistic analysis, examining how *ice* functions syntactically and semantically across both fictional and non-fictional Arctic narratives, with particular focus on its agency attribution and potential semantic shifts. The study reveals complex patterns of environmental personification, demonstrating that even scientific expedition accounts linguistically construct ice as ranging from a passive element to an active resistant force through military metaphors that simultaneously preserve and expose the limitations of imperial authority. This contradiction operates through what Homi Bhabha terms colonial *ambivalence*[4] – the simultaneous recognition and denial of difference required to preserve power relations. The study contributes to understanding how imperial discourse adapts when confronted with environmental alterity, revealing how the Arctic functioned as a *contact zone*[5], where British epistemological supremacy

[2] See B. Louw, M. Milojkovic, "Corpus Stylistics as Contextual Prosodic Theory and Subtext", *Linguistic Approaches to Literature*, Vol. 23, Amsterdam, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2016.
[3] G. Kress, T. van Leeuwen, *Reading Images. The Grammar of Visual Design*, 3rd ed., London and New York, Routledge, 2021.
[4] H. K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London and New York, Routledge, 1994.
[5] M. L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes. Travel Writing and Transculturation*, London and New York, Routledge, 1992, p. 4.

encountered its provincial limitations. This integrated approach offers a methodological framework for investigating tensions between imperial ideology and environmental resistance across other colonial contexts. In the Conclusions, postcolonial critical perspectives are adopted to interpret the study findings, thus exploring nature's ability to disrupt social and cultural hierarchies.

Part I: Foundations

Chapter I – The Bourbon Collection

1.1. Shores of the Polar Sea*: A Significant Travelogue in the Bourbon Collection*

The present research began with Edward Lawton Moss's *Shores of the Polar Sea* (1878), which is part of the English bibliographic resources of the Bourbon Collection[6]. While the latter is not exclusively dedicated to Arctic exploration and includes works across sundry genres, it contains important texts that shed light on the nineteenth-century context of maritime expansion. Documenting the British Arctic Expedition of 1875-76 (see § 4.3.1), *Shores of the Polar Sea* stands out as a historical document but also as a cultural artifact embedded within the wider context of imperial aspirations and scientific inquiry. The selection of this specific travelogue is motivated by its unique relevance for a multimodal and postcolonial analysis of Arctic landscape representations. The textual component will be analysed through corpus linguistic tools (specifically *Sketch Engine*) within the BAEC – a collection of travelogues regarding the 1875-76 Arctic Expedition, which Moss's text is a key part of – allowing for the identification of linguistic patterns used to describe polar environments in such firsthand accounts. Concurrently, some of the volume's chromolithographs – created by Moss himself, who participated in the expedition – will be examined using Kress and van Leeuwen's framework of visual grammar.

This dual approach will be further enriched by a comparative dimension, based on the AFC, a collection of fictional narratives by coeval British authors, such as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, to explore how the Arctic was

[6] Online Catalogue of the University of Naples "Parthenope": Bourbon Collection, http://192.167.9.28/F/V5Y4RCDR3PS8P4V77VG3N3ADM1T1DCKII1S3SHMBG7QKUALIRQ-30157?func=find-b-0&local_base=FB.

discursively constructed in both factual and imaginative literature. In this sense, *Shores of the Polar Sea* serves as a pivotal starting point for interrogating the ways in which the Arctic was narrated, visualised, and ideologically framed during the late 19th century.

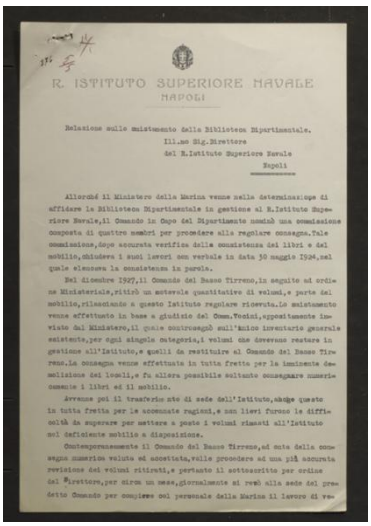
Although this work was most likely integrated into the collection between 1931 and 1979, therefore far after the fall of the Bourbon regime, its inclusion can be interpreted as part of the broader evolution of the archive. In this regard, the travelogue aligns with the collection's long-standing interest in British naval expertise, which was already prominent during the Bourbon era. Even though Arctic exploration was not a focus of the Bourbon Navy, British naval expeditions – particularly those combining scientific, military, and exploratory aims – must have represented an ideal model of maritime excellence and ambition that Italian naval education, both before and after Unification, sought to emulate.

1.2. Charting Maritime Legacies: The Significance of Multilingualism in the Bourbon Collection

A major purpose of this study is to unravel the historical circumstances and intricacies that shaped the distinctive character of the Bourbon Collection. A particular focus has been directed towards understanding the factors that may account for the prominence of French volumes within this bibliographic treasure, while investigating the gradual acquisition of foreign-language volumes, with a particular emphasis on English works.

The intention is to present a comprehensive report that not only retraces the genesis of the collection but also delves into some features influencing its composition. After the Great War, the Maritime Department of the Southern Tyrrhenian (Dipartimento Marittimo del Basso Tirreno), whose Command was situated in Naples, was a district that included naval bases on the Southern costs of the Tyrrhenian Sea. In 1924, its library, and probably part of the heritage that once belonged to the Royal Navy of Naples, was taken over by the Royal Naval

Institute (see Fig. 2), later transformed into the Parthenope University of Naples, where it is currently preserved[7]. Over the years, several pieces of furniture and books were taken from the library. For instance, a withdrawal was made by the Departmental Command in 1927. Although a formal report should have been issued, this is not present in the archival documents and cannot be found.



R. ISTITUTO SUPERIORE NAVALE
NAPOLI

Relazione sullo smistamento della Biblioteca Dipartimentale.

Ill.mo Sig. Direttore
del R. Istituto Superiore Navale
Napoli

Allorchè il Ministero della Marina venne nella determinazione di affidare la Biblioteca Dipartimentale in gestione al R. Istituto Superiore Navale, il Comando in Capo del Dipartimento nominò una commissione composta di quattro membri per procedere alla regolare consegna. Tale commissione, dopo accurata verifica della consistenza dei libri e del mobilio, chiudeva i suoi lavori con verbale in data 30 maggio 1924, nel quale elencava la consistenza in parole.

Nel dicembre 1927, il Comando del Basso Tirreno, in seguito ad ordine Ministeriale, ritirò un notevole quantitativo di volumi, e parte del mobilio, rilasciando a questo Istituto regolare ricevuta. Lo smistamento venne effettuato in base a giudizio del Comm. Vecchi, appositamente inviato dal Ministero, il quale controllò sull'unico inventario generale esistente, per ogni singola categoria, i volumi che dovevano restare in gestione all'Istituto, e quelli da restituire al Comando del Basso Tirreno. La consegna venne effettuata in tutta fretta per la imminente demolizione dei locali, e fu allora possibile soltanto consegnare numericamente i libri ed il mobilio.

Avvenne poi il trasferimento di sede dell'Istituto, anche questo in tutta fretta per le accennate ragioni, e non lievi furono le difficoltà da superare per mettere a posto i volumi rimasti all'Istituto nel deficiente mobilio a disposizione.

Contemporaneamente il Comando del Basso Tirreno, ad onta della consegna numerica voluta ed accettata, volle procedere ad una più accurata revisione dei volumi ritirati, e pertanto il sottoscritto per ordine del Direttore, per circa un mese, giornalmente si recò alla sede del predetto Comando per compiere col personale della Marina il lavoro di re-

Figure 1. Archival document on departmental library holdings – Parthenope University Archive

Furthermore, there is a summary of the variations that occurred between 1930 and 1931 in the inventory of the furniture of the Departmental Library of Naples, dated September 25th, 1931. This is followed by a list of registered books divided into two sections: "duplicated" and "non-duplicated" books; some of which are in French and English. Upon reviewing the list and checking for French and English volumes as well as Italian translations of French and English works, only a few correspondences within the "non-duplicated" section were found within the current catalogue of the Bourbon collection.

This confirms the substantial loss of materials throughout the years, especially after 1931. Below is a list of such texts:

[7] See M. Cassella, "Il fondo Borbonico", in *L'Università 'Parthenope' – Le risorse storico-artistiche*, Napoli, Denaro Libri, 2003, pp. 115-120.

- Brunnow, F.F.E., *Traité d'astronomie sphérique et astronomie pratique*
- Collet, *Traité théorique et pratique de la régulation et de la compensation des compas*
- Evans and Smith, *Admiralty Manual for the Deviations of the Compass*
- Faye, *Cours d'astronomie de l'école Polytechnique*
- Grenet, *Arte marinaresca*
- Guyon, *Les problèmes de navigation et la carte marine*
- Knight, *Modern Seamanship*
- Ledieu, *Les Nouvelles méthodes de navigation*
- Maury, Matthew Fontaine, *Geografia fisica del mare e sua meteorologia* (Italian translation by Luigi Gatta).

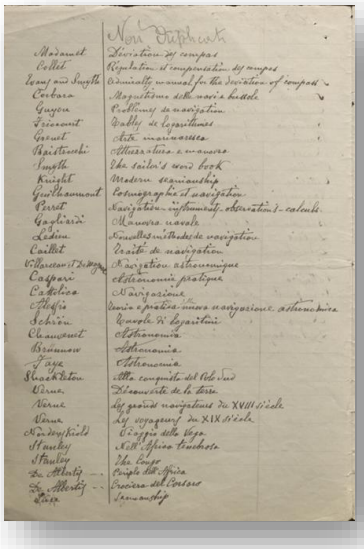
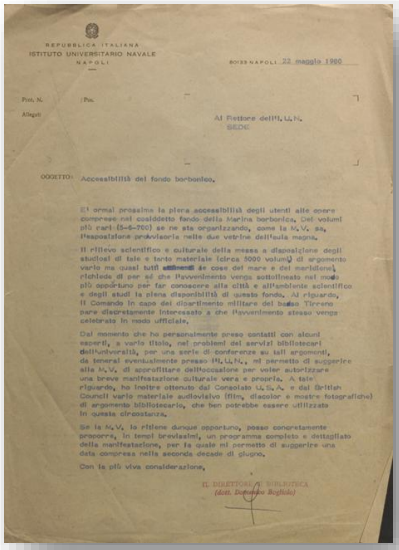


Figure 2. List of non-duplicated books from the 1930-31 inventory summary -Parthenope University Archive

English volumes like *Shores of the Polar Sea* by E. L. Moss and James Cook's travelogues from his three voyages or the very rare Italian translation of *Le Nouveau & Grand Illuminant Flambeau De La Mer De Tout Le Monde*

(C.J. Vooght; G. Keulen, 1695) do not appear in this list. These works likely joined the collection after 1931 and before 1980, when a new cataloguing was conducted in preparation for a cultural exhibition meant to promote public access to the collection, whose rarest volumes were to be temporarily displayed in the lecture hall of the Naval University Institute.



REPUBBLICA ITALIANA
ISTITUTO UNIVERSITARIO NAVALE
NAPOLI

ROMA-NAPOLI 22 maggio 1980

Prot. N. / Pos.
Allegati

Al Rettore dell'I.U.N.
SEDE

OGGETTO: Accessibilità del fondo borbonico.

E' ormai prossima la piena accessibilità degli utenti alle opere comprese nel cosiddetto fondo della Marina borbonica. Dei volumi più rari (5-6-700) se ne sta organizzando, come la M.V. sa, l'esposizione prevalentemente nelle due vetrine dell'aula magna.

Il rilievo scientifico e culturale della messa a disposizione degli studiosi di tale e tanto materiale (circa 5000 volumi) di argomento vario ma quasi tutti attinenti le cose del mare e del meridione, richiede di per sè che l'avvenimento venga sottolineato nel modo più opportuno per far conoscere alla città e all'ambiente scientifico e degli studi la piena disponibilità di questo fondo. Al riguardo, il Comando in capo del dipartimento militare del basso Tirreno pare direttamente interessato a che l'avvenimento stesso venga celebrato in modo ufficiale.

Dal momento che ho personalmente preso contatti con alcuni esperti, a vario titolo, nel problemi dei servizi bibliotecari dell'università, per una serie di conferenze su tali argomenti, da tenersi eventualmente presso l'I.U.N., mi permetto di suggerire alla M.V. di approfittare dell'occasione per voler autorizzare una breve manifestazione culturale vera e propria. A tale riguardo, ho inoltre ottenuto dal Consolato U.S.A. e dal British Council vario materiale audiovisivo (film, diacolor e mostre fotografiche) di argomento bibliotecario, che ben potrebbe essere utilizzato in questa circostanza.

Se la M.V. lo ritiene dunque opportuno, posso concretamente proporre, in tempi brevissimi, un programma completo e dettagliato della manifestazione, per la quale mi permetto di suggerire una data compresa nella seconda decade di giugno.

Con la più viva considerazione,

IL DIRETTORE DELLA BIBLIOTECA
(dott. Domenico Bogliolo)

Figure 3. Archival document promoting access to the Bourbon Collection – Parthenope University Archive

In May 1980 the Library's Director, Domenico Bogliolo, proposed that the occasion might also offer an opportunity to organise a series of conferences on library topics, in collaboration with some experts and using relevant audiovisual material made available by the U.S. Consulate and the British Council. In November 1981, the assistant librarian Guido Vitale announced that he had completed the task of organising the books in the collection, which listed 3,908 volumes, including 4 from the 1500s, 6 from the 1600s, 54 from the 1700s, some from the 1900s, and the rest from the 1800s. It is understood that the most valuable texts had been set aside with a special record.

Vitale suggested that the holdings should be appropriately valued, by promoting their existence outside the Institute[8]. The "Bourbon collection", as it is referred to today, consists of approximately five thousand volumes that must have proved invaluable for the training of highly qualified personnel in the field of Maritime Economics and Naval Technology. As argued by the Librarian Coordinator Maria Cassella[9], who was the Director of the Central Library of the University of Naples Parthenope from 1997 to 2004, sometimes the public records stored in library archives are unable to shed light on the historical events that led to the establishment of a book collection, and yet there is so much that can be done to promote it. The heterogeneity of this heritage is evident in the variety of subjects and languages covered and the broad time span it encompasses. More precisely, the volumes range from the 16th to the 20th century, and the most conspicuous part is represented by a wide array of French books.

1.2.1 French and English Naval Systems as Role Models

It must be considered that back in the 18th century, France boasted the largest European army and held dominant economic sway on the continent.

This dominance led to the spread of French, initially as the language of authority and later as the language of education in all the colonies[10] and all over Europe. The earlier development of the French intellectual and scientific movement, which culminated in the establishment of the *Académie des Sciences* in Paris in 1666 profoundly influenced the spread of modern science throughout Europe. This probably contributed to the prominence of French as a language of influence and communication in the European context of the 18th century. While the Académie itself may not have directly promoted French as a lingua franca, the broader cultural awakening in which it participated certainly

[8] Parthenope University Archive, Istituto Universitario Navale, Prot. N. 18407, *OGGETTO: Relazione lavoro svolto*, Napoli 6/11/81.
[9] Cassella, "Il fondo Borbonico", p. 115.
[10] S. Wright, "French as a Lingua Franca", *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, Vol. 26, October 2006: 35-60, p. 37.

played a crucial role in sparking a renewed interest in literary, artistic and diplomatic practices in various fields. The governance and economic dominance of a nation can significantly impact the effectiveness of its institutions.

During the 17th and 18th centuries, France emerged as one of the leading European powers, exerting considerable cultural and political influence. The intellectual climate during the Enlightenment was exceptionally vibrant, with philosophers, scientists, and writers, such as Voltaire, Rousseau, and Diderot, playing a central role in shaping the socio-cultural milieu of the time and promoting French ideas and values through the dissemination of their works. The court of Louis XIV set the standards for etiquette, manners, and language, elevating French to the status of the language of diplomacy and international affairs. It could also be assumed that the organisational differences between the Royal Society of London, founded six years before its French counterpart, and the Académie des Science, together with France's strategic emphasis on maritime development, contributed to French becoming more influent than English in scientific and naval fields. Although the Royal Society boasted a larger membership, including several eminent scientists and scholars, it focused less on maritime sciences. From 1665 to 1848, only 77 of the 5,336 articles published in its journal, *Philosophical Transactions*, were devoted to geography and topography[11]. As a matter of fact, the Royal Society was granted a royal charter not until 1662, whereas the French Academy was «from the beginning a state-sponsored and state-regulated organization […] with no room for amateurs»[12]. Within the academy, members were considered representatives of different branches of science, so as to recognise specialisms[13].

Cardinal Richelieu, the chief minister of Louis XIII, played a pivotal role in the establishment of the French navy as a significant maritime power, which was meant to promote France's commercial interests globally.

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[11] C.R. Markham, *The Fifty Years' Work of the Royal Geographical Society*, London, William Cloves and Sons Ltd., 1881, p. 7.
[12] M. Crosland, "Relationships between the Royal Society and the Academie des Sciences in the Late Eighteenth Century", *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, Vol. 59, No. 1, Jan. 2005: 25-34, p. 27.
[13] *Ibid*.

He recognised the geopolitical significance of having control over the seas and initiated the process of building a navy for a nation that clearly lacked a maritime strategy. King Louis XIII supported Richelieu's economic and strategic policies, demonstrating a commitment to building a state-sponsored navy. In 1626, he appointed Richelieu as the superintendent of navigation and commerce, giving him authority over the French navy and colonies.

Before the cardinal's efforts, France had no significant naval assets: it relied on vessels hired from foreign countries. It was under the rule of King Louis XIV and the guide of Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619-1683), who served as Secretary of State for the Merchant Navy and Superintendent of Royal Buildings, that the development of French warship technology and construction began. Colbert suggested the creation of the Académie Royale des Sciences, on which he relied for advice on ship building, cartography, and military engineering. As argued by Richard Byington:

> Scientists associated with the Académie royale des sciences employed a technical element in ship architecture that was ignored by previous generations of shipwrights. Early shipwrights did not use mathematical calculations nor planned blueprints when constructing a ship; they relied on the handed-down skills mastered by generations of craftsmen and apprentices working outside the state control of a shipbuilder's guild. This changed under Colbert[14].

The shipbuilding industry in France became more organised and institutionalised. This development allowed for improvements in the design and construction of warships. Jean-Baptiste Colbert committed to ensuring the educational and professional development of potential French shipwrights.

By the mid-17th century, several state-sponsored construction schools had been established. Here the modern shipbuilding was based on scientific principles, and the goal was to provide officers with technical knowledge about a ship's structural integrity, leading to a better understanding of its performance

[14] R. Byington, *The Forgotten Service: The French Navy of the Old Regime, 1650-1789*, Master's Thesis, Florida State University, 2011, p. 20.

capabilities. As a result, by the late 17th century, French naval officers were better equipped than their British counterparts to handle their ships.

As reported by Byington (2011), Historian J.O. Lindsay attributes such superior ship-handling skills to France's decision to offer professional training programmes in shipbuilding to its officers three decades before similar schools were set up in Britain. The Maritime Academies established in the South of Italy in the 18th century, including the *Real Academia de los Guardas Estendartes de las Galeras*, were inspired by the French model: «I programmi di insegnamento di queste scuole riprendevano i metodi e i contenuti adottati nelle scuole francesi di arti e mestieri»[15]. To support what has been said so far, and to prove that France was still considered the true cultural heart of Europe in the 19th century, here are reported the words of the Swiss scholar Jean Charles Léonard Simonde de Sismondi, whose *Storia dei francesi* (translated in Italian by Cavalier Luigi Rossi) is part of the Bourbon collection:

> La situazion centrale della Francia, la sua potenza, la lunga durata della Monarchia, il primato che in due o tre volte acquistò su tutto l'Occidente, congiunsero talmente i suoi destini agli altrui, che per lo più le rivoluzioni dei popoli Europei procedono da quello della Francia, e quindi, dopo la storia nazionale, la Francese è la più necessaria da studiarsi per essi[16].

Therefore, France held an influential position in European affairs, and this perception likely influenced the education of the military forces, tying their studies to broader geopolitical considerations. Understanding French history provides insights into the geopolitical landscape, alliances, and conflicts that could impact on other countries' strategic decisions. The aforethought focus on developing the French navy, as seen in the efforts of Cardinal Richelieu and Jean-Baptiste Colbert, was another significant aspect of this nation's history.

Thus, naval officers were likely expected to study the evolution of French maritime strategies in depth. This knowledge would have been

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[15] M. Sirago, *L'istruzione nautica nel Regno di Napoli (1734-1861)*, Roma, Nadir Media S.r.l., 2022, p. 12.
[16] J.C.L. Simonde de Sismondi, *Storia dei francesi*, Milano, Nicolò Bettoni, 1822-1843 [ed. or. *Histoire des Français*, Paris, Treuttel et Würtz, 1821-1844], pp. 1-2.

invaluable, especially during times of political unrest, enabling them to evaluate the potential implications for their own country.

Notwithstanding France's significant contributions to nautical expertise, in 1737 the Italian mathematician and cartographer Girolamo Alberti acknowledged that England was striving to advance the maritime arts, as well:

> Molte Nazioni hanno cercato di migliorare un'arte così benemerita, studiando di ridurla, in quanto sia possibile, alla sua perfezione. Dagli Inglesi specialmente sono state prodotte, e comunicate molte regole, facilitandole con l'uso della Geometria, Trigonometria, ed Astronomia, delle quali, avuto da me l'incontro di essere illuminato, me ne servo per fondamento dell'assunto, che piglio in questo piccolo Volume di raccogliere quanto è necessario ad un Pilota, e Capitano di Nave, con ciò che conviene ad un Comandante in Mare[17].

Alberti highlights the role of the British in disseminating scientific ideas, thus emphasising the importance of incorporating geometry, trigonometry, and astronomy into nautical studies. In the 19th century, the Royal Society sought to expand this legacy through the consolidation of geographical knowledge in Britain, mirroring France's commitment to maritime progress. The Society's objectives included the creation of a library of books, maps, and charts, as well as the collection of useful information for travellers and explorers, which was essential for advancing geographical understanding and facilitating practical exploration[18]. In addition to promoting research, the society aimed to foster international cooperation and communication with similar institutions around the world, positioning Britain at the forefront of geographical exploration and scientific discovery. Therefore, it becomes clear that linguistic competence is not merely a means of communication, but a gateway to a vast repository of seafaring expertise, through which Italian navy officers could access and apply the improvements made by other countries in the pursuit of navigational excellence. In the development of maritime

[17] G. Alberti, *Introduzione all'arte nautica*, Venezia, Giambattista Albrizzi, 1737, Prefazione.
[18] Markham, *The Fifty Years' Work of the Royal Geographical Society*, p. 19.

education, multilingual dictionaries were considered an indispensable resource for cadets seeking to master the linguistic landscape of the seas.

By the end of the 19th century, Italy's admiration for the United Kingdom became particularly evident with the founding of the *Italian Naval League* (*Lega Navale Italiana*), an organisation that drew inspiration from the the *British Navy League*. The inaugural issue of *La Lega Navale*, the League's monthly illustrated publication, featured a statement by Benedetto Brin – naval engineer, statesman, and central figure in Italy's naval modernisation – who openly acknowledged the British influence:

> Io non posso che applaudire all'idea manifestatami di fondare, a similitudine di quanto si è fatto in Inghilterra, un'associazione che abbia per iscopo di illuminare l'opinione pubblica sulle necessità della nostra marina[19].

It is worth noting the distinction between Britain's goal of maintaining its long-standing naval dominance and Italy's more modest, yet urgent need to safeguard its vulnerable coastlines. Not only did Brin's remarks reflect awareness of Italy's maritime limitations, but they also emphasise the importance of public involvement in supporting naval development:

> Egli è certo che noi, pur camminando sulle orme della Navy League, non possiamo pretendere di adottare nel campo pratico la stessa grandiosità di programma né possiamo sperare di raggiungere la possente organizzazione[20].

This reverence, however, was not merely symbolic, but rather determined by Italy's broader geopolitical strategy, which considered Britain a key partner in the face of growing threats posed by Russia and France. Even after the fall of the Bourbon regime, the tendency to emulate British maritime power remained deeply rooted in Italy's naval and cultural imagination.

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[19] CSTN (Centro Studi Tradizioni Nautiche), "Pro-Lega", *La Lega Navale. Rivista mensile illustrata*, Anno I, n. 1, dicembre 1897, p. 1.
[20] *Ibid*.

1.3 La Real Academia de los Guardas Estendartes de las Galeras and Sir John Francis Edward Acton

Born in Madrid to Philip V of Spain and Elisabetta Farnese, Charles of Bourbon (1716-1788) inherited the titles of the last Duke of Parma and Piacenza, Antonio Farnese, in 1732, while he was in Italy with a Spanish contingent laying claim to the Grand Duchy of Tuscany.

In 1734, he successfully led his troops to victory in the Kingdom of Naples, defeating the Austrian forces. He then went on to conquer the Kingdom of Sicily, leading to the founding of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. On December 4th, 1735, Charles of Bourbon established the Royal Naval Academy of Naples under the name of *La Real Academia de los Guardas Estendartes de las Galeras*. This was a training institute for naval officers of the Kingdom of Naples and the Two Sicilies, which went down in the annals as the oldest naval academy in Italy. The commercial and maritime expansion was to be grounded in the training of qualified personnel and the construction of a solid fleet, which were also necessary to counteract rampant piracy. It seems that the school was to be modelled on the one founded in Cadiz by José Patiño, who had favoured a mixed education based both on the practical model of the English *midshipmen* and the theoretical approach of the French *Gardes marines*[21].

On October 6th, 1758, Charles of Bourbon, who had become king of Spain, entrusted the management of the Italian domains and, therefore, of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, to his third son Ferdinand. In light of the young age of the new sovereign, it was deemed appropriate to establish a Regency Council, with the esteemed Bernardo Tanucci assuming the role of chair.

In 1772, a reform plan was promoted to improve the organisation of the academy:

[21] Sirago, *L'istruzione nautica nel Regno di Napoli (1734-1861)*, p. 25.

> Ne varrebbe del bisogno che i Guardia Marina più capaci ed applicati si dedicassero allo studio delle Lingue, almeno in quanto ve li renda facile la comprensione dè libri, e manoscritti, cosa importantissima nommeno per l'avanzamento né studi di Lor Professione, che per l'occasioni vogliono presentarsi, in cui può esser' utile una tal' intelligenza; quindi sono di parere, che si stabilisca per l'Accademia un Maestro di Lingua Francese, ed altro di Lingua Inglese […] individuando quelli strumenti, libri, o altro, che possa l'accademia abbisognare[22].

The absolute necessity of a multilingual competence finds resonance in its regulations: as clearly stipulated in the guidelines, the most capable and diligent members of the *Guardia di Marina* not only had to be proficient in their native language, but also in French and English. What is more, considerable emphasis was placed on the importance of books and manuscripts for improving understanding, a crucial element for both their academic pursuits and the practical aspects of their profession. While there are no records of specific volumes being purchased, the passage suggests a strategic approach to building a comprehensive library. The desire to appoint French and English teachers might be considered as further evidence of the Academy's objective to provide cadets with a well-rounded education, including the maritime wisdom of such leading seafaring nations. In the pages of *L'istruzione nautica nel Regno di Napoli (1734-1861)*, a decisive moment unfolds as sir John Francis Edward Acton, an English gentleman of French origin, assumes a central role in the Kingdom of Naples back in 1778. He was appointed commander-in-chief of the army and navy, and, in the long run, prime minister of Naples under Ferdinand IV. Under Acton's leadership, the Royal Academy underwent some significant changes, including its relocation to Portici. As a man educated in France, Acton's strategic vision and comprehensive plan aimed at addressing the evolving needs of the Kingdom. The reform encompassed a meticulous reorganisation of the maritime division, by impacting both higher education at

[22] ASN (State Archives of Naples), Foreign Affairs, 4294, "Acton Papers", Reform Plan for the Naval Academy presented to the General Commander of the fleet, July 15, 1772.

the Academy and lower education for *pilotini* in various naval schools[23]. The significance of this amendment suggests a deliberate effort to train highly specialised personnel for both the royal and merchant fleets. The decision to entrust John Acton with this critical mission conveys the idea that it may not have been a random choice: the Bourbon Navy, in its pursuit of excellence, might have looked to the French and English naval systems as role models, thus seeking inspiration from them.

The commander himself, with his French education and English origins, represented a strategic combination of those great values they so intensely pursued. Furthermore, Ferdinand's correspondence with his father, Charles of Bourbon, suggests that the primary purpose was that of addressing the lack of practical navigation experience among young officers and *Guardia Marina*[24]. The decision to have them embarked on English ships demonstrates a strenuous effort to learn from maritime practices beyond national borders. However, although the archives of the Acton family – who played an important role in the Royal Navy of Naples – were consulted, no specific records were found about the acquisitions made for the Academy's library. The lack of documentation reveals how fragmentary historical records can be and some details are lost over time.

[23] Sirago, *L'istruzione nautica nel Regno di Napoli (1734-1861)*, p. 165.
[24] *Ibid*., p. 166.

Chapter II – Historical Context and Research Questions

2.1 Background of British Arctic Expeditions

The British interest in the Arctic dates back to the Age of Discovery, a period marked by the exploration of new trade routes and territorial expansion. In the late 15th and early 16th centuries, as the possibility of a route to Asia through the Americas diminished, attention turned to the prospect of a northern passage. European powers were seeking new ways to reach Asia, and the Arctic offered a potential shortcut via the Northwest Passage, a navigable route that would connect the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, allowing easier access to eastern markets, by avoiding the two capes Horn and of Good Hope.

The *Muscovy Company*, founded in 1555 by a group of English merchants including Richard Chancellor, was initially established to facilitate trade with Russia but later became instrumental in the search for a shorter path to the East Indies. It was the first major joint-stock company in England, paving the way for future trading ventures like the East India Company.

Among the early explorers who persuaded the company to license their expeditions towards the Arctic was Martin Frobisher, whose late 16th-century voyages failed to locate the passage, yet generated significant interest in the region's potential for trade and discovery. The quest to find a practical, navigable route continued to be a major goal for British explorers in the 17th and 18th centuries. William Baffin, an English navigator and cartographer, became the first European to chart Baffin Bay, situated between Canada and Greenland. In 1775, a prize of 20,000 pounds was offered for the discovery of the Northwest Passage. So, in 1776 Captain James Cook set sail for the Northern Pacific in search of it. Before his voyage, European knowledge of the

region was extremely limited – an original print of a 1764 map simply labelled the area from California to the Arctic Circle as "Parts Unknown"[25].

Nevertheless, Cook's meticulous observations and charts significantly contributed to Britain's understanding of the region. His journey allowed for the accurate mapping of the Northwest Coast of America and the correction of geographical misconceptions, such as the mistaken belief that Alaska was an island, and the confirmation that the Bering Strait constituted the dividing line between Asia and North America. Furthermore, he and his crew met various indigenous communities, including the Chukchi and Kamchadal of Siberia, as well as the Unangax̂ from the Aleutian Islands. The artist John Webber documented these interactions in a series of detailed sketches, offering a rare glimpse into the lives of Arctic peoples. Cook observed their languages and traditions, noting their resilience to extreme weather conditions through sophisticated clothing made from tanned furs and skins, often adorned with decorative elements. Further South, at Nootka Sound, near present-day Vancouver, they encountered the Nuu-chah-nulth people, who paddled around the ships with all their strength while chanting and wielding weapons or rattles as a form of introduction. The crew traded with these people, acquiring items such as hats, visors, and rattles, some of which are now kept in museum collections. Though Cook failed in finding the Northwest Passage, his contributions to Arctic exploration were invaluable. In 2024, the *Captain Cook Memorial Museum* in Whitby, England, hosted a special exhibition titled *Parts Unknown: Cook's Quest for the Northwest Passage*. This exhibition focused on Captain James Cook's 1776-1780 expedition, during which he navigated the Arctic regions aboard the ships *Resolution* and *Discovery*, aiming to locate the elusive Northwest Passage. The display featured original items collected by Cook's crew, as well as artifacts from the later Franklin Expedition, providing a comprehensive view of Arctic exploration during that era.

[25] Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, The New York Public Library Digital Collections, "An accurate map of North America from the latest improvements, and regulated by astronomical observations", accessed February 14, 2025, https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47da-ef81-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99.

It underscored the significance of Cook's Arctic voyage, highlighting its impact on subsequent expeditions and its role in shaping British perceptions of the region. As Britain became a more powerful maritime nation, its interests in the Arctic grew, driven not only by the desire for trade routes but also by scientific curiosity and imperial ambitions. The Arctic's fascination inspired both exploratory ventures and exploitative pursuits, particularly during the era of British colonial dominance. Exploration was not purely a matter of geographical discovery; it was also deeply intertwined with the imagination and mythmaking. As observed by Nicoletta Brazzelli:

> Nella storia delle scoperte geografiche l'intreccio tra geografia e immaginazione è particolarmente evidente […] il potere dell'immaginazione sull'esperienza, nell'espansione e nel consolidamento delle conoscenze geografiche, è esemplificato dalla persistenza dei miti che identificano i territori sconosciuti. Un esempio particolarmente significativo è il mito di El Dorado, che incorpora un vero e proprio «desiderio spaziale»: esso si esplica nell'attribuzione di ricchezze meravigliose a territori remoti e difficili da raggiungere, nel Nuovo Mondo[26].

This idea applies equally to the Arctic, where remote and forbidding landscapes were often imbued with narratives of heroism, endurance, and the promise of imperial dominance. This mythic perception of the Arctic is further exemplified in Edward L. Moss's *Shores of the Polar Sea*, where he evokes the idea of the Arctic as a site of mystery:

> Perhaps some baffled wanderer, whose fate is unknown to fame, had thus marked his furthest north. There is plenty of room for conjecture. Many have sailed for the northern Eldorado since Karlsefne, Celtic Norseman, left his Greenland home and launched his three ships on the first Arctic Expedition, eight hundred and seventy years ago[27].

[26] N. Brazzelli, *L'Antartide nell'immaginario inglese. Spazio geografico e rappresentazione letteraria*, Milano, Ledizioni, 2015, p. 31.
[27] E. L. Moss, *Shores of the Polar Sea*, London, Marcus Ward & Co., 1878, p. 23.

By invoking the notion of «northern Eldorado», Moss connects Arctic exploration to a long-standing tradition of myth and legend. Just as "El Dorado" symbolised an elusive, fantastical goal in the New World, the Arctic was not simply an unknown and empty landscape but a place onto which British explorers projected their ambitions, fantasies, and national ideals.

The influence of English Romanticism, while rooted in the late 18th century, continued to shape cultural and literary depictions of remote regions, including the Arctic, throughout the 19th century. The British perception of the Arctic as a place of danger and resilience can be intended as a clear example of such influence. As Raffaella Antinucci observes, the «dramatic scenery» of these regions, «marked by glaciers, waterfalls, lava plains and floating ice, and hit by terrible sea storms, was reappraised through the aesthetic category of the 'sublime'»[28], a central concept in Romantic thought. This transformed the Arctic from a mere physical frontier into a region that represented both the risks and rewards of Britain's imperial goals. Its harsh conditions posed significant challenges to explorers, but the potential for new trade routes and resources made it a critical area for British expansion. A clear example of this duality is provided by the Franklin Expedition of 1845, regarded as among the most significant events in British Arctic exploration. Led by Sir John Franklin in his attempt to navigate the Northwest Passage, the mission ultimately ended in tragedy when the expedition disappeared, and both the *Erebus* and *Terror* were lost. Moreover, the extreme conditions encountered during these expeditions sometimes compelled the crew to take drastic action; forensic evidence discussed by S. Mays and O. Beattie[29], for instance, supports the hypothesis that cannibalism occurred during Franklin's expedition.

Such incidents underscore not only the environmental challenges of the Arctic but also the profound psychological and ethical stresses imposed on

[28] R. Antinucci, "A Passage to Iceland: Lord Dufferin and the Re-fashioning of the Arctic Sea in Mid-Victorian Travel Literature", in R. Antinucci and M.G. Petrillo (eds.), *Navigating Maritime Languages and Narratives: New Perspectives in English and French*, Oxford, Peter Lang, 2017: 171-190, p. 174.

[29] O. Beattie, S. Mays, "Evidence for End-stage Cannibalism on Sir John Franklin's Last Expedition to the Arctic, 1845", *International Journal of Osteoarcheology*, Vol. 26, No. 5, Wiley Blackwell, 2016: 778-786.

those who ventured into its unforgiving realms. The mysterious disappearance of the vessels became a key part of the cultural narrative surrounding the Arctic, reinforcing its image as a dangerous and unknown space.

The long search for Franklin's lost crew revealed the Arctic's harsh beauty but also its capacity to destroy those who ventured too far into its frozen wilderness. The failure of the Franklin Expedition also added to the perception of the Arctic as a liminal space, where the boundaries between life and death seemed blurred. The uncanniness of the Arctic – in line with gothic ideas of the sublime – captured public imagination. Reports of ghostly sightings and the unknown fate of the crew persisted until 1859, when McClintock found the skeleton remains of a member of the expedition. This first tangible evidence of the crew's tragic end contributed to the idea that the Arctic was a place of mystery and horror, where human ambition was powerless against the overwhelming force of nature. This theme of survival and the collapse of social and moral codes in extreme isolation was not unique to Franklin's crew.

The Greely Expedition (1881-1884) provides another striking example of how Arctic exploration pushed men beyond the limits of endurance. As Kim Salmons observes, «The story of the Greely Expedition demonstrates the total breakdown of morality and loss of codes of conduct among highly respected and "civilized" men»[30]. It represented one of the most gruesome examples of the collapse of order and social norms. Reports of cannibalism among the last survivors were widely publicised, reinforcing the Arctic's association with human degeneration. As Salmons notes, the *New York Times* dramatically framed the event in August 1884 with the headline *Horrors of Cape Sabine*, emphasising the revelation that one of the survivors had, in delirium, confessed the «true facts of the case»[31]: an officer had been deliberately killed and consumed by the others as they struggled to survive. Such narratives not only fuelled public fascination with the Arctic as a site of moral collapse but also reinforced its image as an environment capable of reducing even the most disciplined men to their primal instincts. Situated between the Arctic Circle and

[30] K. Salmons, "Cannibalism and the Greely Arctic Expedition: A New Source for 'Falk'", *The Conradian*, Vol. 36, No. 1, Spring 2011: 58-69, p. 64.
[31] *Ibid*., p. 65.

the rest of the European continent, London occupies a unique geographical position that has historically placed Britain at a crossroads between the cold, remote Arctic region and warmer, more temperate lands. This proximity likely contributed to Britain's fascination with the North, particularly during the 19th century, when exploration of the Arctic became a key element in shaping British dominance on a global scale. The Arctic was not merely seen as a frontier for geographical discovery, but as a space through which British explorers and scientists could define and assert their power, both within Europe and in relation to other colonial territories.

2.2 Literature Review & Objectives

This study draws on the idea that Britain's exploration of the North was not just a physical venture into uncharted lands, but also a process of constructing cultural, ideological, and imperial identities. The Arctic, with its seemingly inhospitable landscape, became a stage on which Britain projected notions of superiority, resilience, and scientific progress. As noted by Peter Fjågesund:

> Because of Britain's central geographical position in the North Atlantic, together with the strong Scandinavian presence in the country from the 800s onwards, the Arctic connection also became a central and self-evident element in Britain's cultural and political orientation, and in its nation-building process[32].

This connection to the North allowed Britain to define its identity in relation to both the Arctic and other northern nations, reinforcing a sense of cultural and geographical kinship with the Far North. This sense of familiarity was not merely geographic but also tied to the British sense of comfort and ease in harsh, cold environments. For instance, an article published in *The Illustrated London News* on December 30th, 1876, titled "Christmas in Florida and in

[32] P. Fjågesund, *The Dream of the North: A Cultural History to 1920*, Amsterdam and New York, Rodopi, 2014, pp. 21-22.

Hudson's Bay Territory", presents a comparison between the celebrations of Christmas in tropical Florida and the frozen lands of Hudson's Bay in Canada.

The article emphasises how the warm, tropical climate of Florida, although appealing to many, was to be considered unsuitable for British people, since it contrasted with the colder, northern climates they were more accustomed to: «The Southern States which fringe the Gulf of Mexico are all so tropical in their climate that they are not comfortable lands for the white man to live in»[33]. Furthermore, the article suggests that for the British, the cold, snowy regions of the Arctic were more appropriate to the celebration of Christmas, which for them was closely tied to traditional winter imagery: «Christmas may be gone through as a duty under the tropics; but it is only in a land of snow and ice – and pine-trees, if they can be got – that a real Christmas can be celebrated»[34]. This comparison highlights how strongly the British linked colder climates to their sense of identity, likely creating a natural affinity for the Arctic region. The tropical heat of places like Florida, «where the negro thrives and enjoys life more fully»[35] on the other hand, felt foreign and uncomfortable, further emphasising the British affinity for the Arctic as an environment in which they felt more culturally at ease.

This is further illustrated by British travel accounts that sought to "domesticate" northern regions, rendering them more accessible and comfortable. For example, Anthony Trollope's 1878 accounts of his trip to Iceland, *Iceland* (1878) and *How the 'Mastiffs' Went to Iceland* (1878), contrast sharply with the heroic depictions of the Arctic often found in contemporary narratives. Trollope's tone is far from being filled with wonder; he describes Iceland's landscapes as picturesque, but not beautiful, and expresses surprise at the absence of the poverty and disorder he had expected.

Through his account, Iceland is portrayed as an accessible and even ordinary destination for British travellers, rather than the awe-inspiring and remote wilderness it is often imagined to be. Trollope and his companions,

[33] Anonymous, "Christmas in Florida and in Hudson's Bay Territory", *The Illustrated London News*, December 30, 1876, p. 626.
[34] *Ibid*.
[35] *Ibid*.

arriving aboard the *Mastiff*, engage in tourist-like behaviour, opting for leisure activities such as celebrating on their ship and purchasing souvenirs rather than participating in local customs. His narrative, while challenging some negative stereotypes about Iceland, ultimately contributes to the process of "domesticating" the North, framing it as a region that, rather than evoking terror or mystery, could be experienced in the same way as any other tourist destination. In this sense, as Raffaella Antinucci observes, «the hallmark of Trollope's article can be detected in the unmasking of the British colonial attitude and of the ethnocentric gaze behind the numerous narratives that had constructed the sign 'Icelandic' until then»[36]. Trollope describes the inhabitants as «well clothed», and «in no degree barbarous»[37], and yet his account ultimately reinforces a colonial framework, showing how even a seemingly neutral travel narrative can perpetuate imperial ideologies. Antinucci further highlights how Trollope's description of Icelanders reveals an underlying assumption of superiority, with the British tendency to view foreign peoples through an ethnocentric lens. As she points out, Trollope's comment on the Icelanders' proficiency in foreign languages reflects this imperial mindset: «the normal Englishman is somewhat like the great Roman» in believing that other cultures should accommodate the English language.

This view aligns with Britain's broader colonial approach, according to which distant regions like Iceland were often seen as spaces to be "civilised" or "domesticated" under its influence. The importance of these constructed representations in shaping British perceptions of the North corresponds with the observations of Antinucci, who discusses how images of distant places like Iceland – often generalised as part of a broader Arctic or northern imaginary – are not merely reflections of geographical reality but are shaped by specific cultural values and ideologies. As she explains, «images of countries and people derive from value judgements and beliefs that are selective, viz., based on notions and prejudices fabricated and transmitted through different media»[38].

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[36] R. Antinucci, "Domesticating the North: Anthony Trollope's Re-writing of Iceland", *Textus. English Studies in Italy*, Vol. XXIX, n. 2, 2016: 63-78, p. 68.
[37] A. Trollope, "Iceland", *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 24, August 1878: 175-190, p. 177.
[38] Antinucci, "A Passage to Iceland: Lord Dufferin and the Re-fashioning of the Arctic Sea in Mid-Victorian Travel Literature", p. 173.

This process of fabrication is particularly evident in the media's portrayal of the Arctic, where sensationalised images of exploration and heroism were crafted not only to influence public imagination, but also to support imperial narratives of British superiority and control.

Furthermore, the success of explorers played a key role in transforming the Arctic into a symbol of adventure and national pride, prompting advertisers to incorporate Arctic imagery into their campaigns. *Cadbury* began promoting cocoa by using depictions of explorers drinking hot chocolate while sitting on a sledge surrounded by ice[39]. This not only evoked feelings of adventure and resilience but also suggested a sense of familiarity. By associating cocoa with expeditions to the Far North, the advertisement reinforced the connection between British culture and the Arctic, implying that even at the ends of the earth, British people could find comfort in familiar products, which were, of course, sourced from other "provinces" of the British Empire.

Thus, the press was instrumental in fostering readers' perceptions of the Polar Region, especially during the 19th century, when advancements in printing technology led to the rapid growth of illustrated publications. Lithography – invented in 1769 and later expanded to chromolithography in 1818 – emerged as the first mass-production technique for reproducing illustrations in print. This method quickly became essential to the development of weekly publications; images were often printed on separate sheets and inserted into newspapers, contributing to a new form of visual storytelling that engaged readers with current events.

Similarly, wood engraving, perfected by Thomas Bewick in the late 18th century, allowed detailed images to be printed alongside texts, thereby facilitating a combination of visual and written narratives. Although photography was introduced in the 1820s, it was not until the advent of half-tone printing in the 1880s that photographs began to supplement engravings and illustrations in the press. Nonetheless, for decades visual representations of this kind remained dominant, shaping public perception and reinforcing

[39] Advertisement for the "Cadbury's Cocoa", *The Graphic*, September 19, 1896.

existing social and political narratives. Frequent repetition of pictorial images across various media contributed to the formation of enduring stereotypes.

Chromolithographs were not limited to high-end periodicals; they also appeared in travelogues, vividly capturing remote landscapes and contributing to public understanding of distant places. For instance, in *Shores of the Polar Sea*, Edward Lawton Moss – a Royal Navy surgeon and artist – combined personal journal entries, various engravings, and sixteen chromolithographs to present a detailed account of his Arctic experience. The original watercolour sketches that Moss created during his journey are preserved at the *Scott Polar Research Institute* (*SPRI*) in Cambridge, a leading institution for polar research and historical documentation. These illustrations and further collections are now available online[40], providing a valuable resource for those interested in the historical and ideological aspects of Arctic exploration. Moss prefaced his work with a modest appeal: «Whatever may be the artistic value of the sketches – and they lay claim to none – they are at least perfectly faithful efforts to represent the face of Nature in a part of the world that very few can ever see for themselves»[41]. By asserting that the sketches are «perfectly faithful efforts», Moss prioritises accuracy and authenticity, qualities that lend his narrative empirical credibility even as they capture the sublime feature of the Arctic.

Newspaper illustrations, in conjunction with other visual and print media – such as pamphlets and illustrated books – created a unified, though often exaggerated, portrayal of people, places, and events. These recurring visual motifs played a crucial role in shaping national and imperial identities, thus influencing public consciousness. Moreover, periodicals such as *Punch, or The London Charivari* (1841), further contributed to this cultural construction: in addition to its humorous and satirical content, the British weekly magazine published poems alongside detailed illustrations[42] likely intended not only to

[40] Scott Polar Research Institute, *Polar Art Collection*, Museum Catalogue, accessed February 14, 2025, https://www.spri.cam.ac.uk/museum/catalogue/bpa/.
[41] Moss, *Shores of the Polar Sea*, Preface.
[42] See "Waiting to Be Won – H.M. Ships Alert and Discovery, CAPTAIN NARES and STEVENSON, sailed for the Arctic Regions, May 29, 1875", *Punch, or The London Charivari*, Vol. 68, June 5, 1875, p. 248; "NORTHWARD, HO! A God-speed to the Arctic Expedition", *Punch, or The London Charivari*, Vol. 68, May 29, 1875, p. 233; "The Arctic Pilgrim's Progress", *Punch, or The London Charivari*, Vol. 70, December 16, 1876, p. 261.

entertain but also to celebrate the courage and determination of Britain and its explorers in expeditions towards the Pole, thereby reinforcing the idea that such heroic deeds were worthy of commemoration in national history. At the same time, illustrated periodicals such as *The Illustrated London News* (1842) and *The Graphic* (1869) were instrumental in disseminating images of current events – from military conflicts to social and political issues – consequently shaping public perceptions of distant and exotic settings, including the Arctic.

While these publications primarily targeted a wealthier audience, their widespread circulation added to the formation of stereotyped narratives, even as more accessible penny weeklies offered a less detailed visual account to the labouring class. While the explorers' accounts allegedly offered a more realistic portrayal of the struggles they had to face, media's representations – driven by the need to engage a broader audience – were more likely to represent the Arctic as a space of heroism. Indeed, the construction of "the North" was not just about mapping unknown territories but about reinforcing a certain worldview in which the West – represented by Britain – was positioned at the centre, with an imperial project casting its shadow over both the natural world and the cultures it encountered. A postcolonial perspective will therefore allow for a deeper understanding of the ways in which imperialism and exploration were intertwined, and how the narratives of Arctic expeditions contributed to the construction of a Western, colonial identity at a time when Britain's global power was at its zenith. Visual representations were not simply artistic renderings of geographical features but were often charged with cultural and ideological meanings. As historian Roy Porter highlights, while written records have traditionally been prioritised for their perceived reliability, «every picture told a story»[43]. The patterns, scale, and portrayal of Arctic landscapes were not neutral; they conveyed messages about power, status, and identity, often reinforcing imperial narratives. Porter points out the need for a *visual history* to better understand how images influence our perceptions, much as *oral history* has challenged the primacy of written records[44].

[43] R. Porter, "Seeing the Past", *Past & Present*, Vol. 118, Issue 1, February 1988: 186-205, p. 186.
[44] *Ibid*.

In the nineteenth century, images of remote regions were primarily presented through paintings, travel narratives, lectures by explorers, and photographs. As argued by Robert G. David, both painters and writers can never fully adopt a neutral stance in their representations, especially in challenging environments like the Arctic. Artists often completed their paintings away from the actual scene, rather than working directly *en plein air*.

Similarly, photographs were shaped by the photographer's cultural background, the tools available, their technical skill, and the intended purpose of the image, including the caption that accompanied it[45]. This highlights the importance of critically analysing these visual and written accounts through a postcolonial lens. In addition to textual accounts, the images created by artists on board these expeditions should offer valuable insights into how these landscapes were interpreted and communicated to the public. Scholars such as Noel Elizabeth Currie explored the relationship between text and image in colonial travel narratives.

In *Constructing Colonial Discourse: Captain Cook at Nootka Sound*[46], Currie examines how the published accounts of Cook's Pacific voyages were mediated and shaped by editorial decisions, particularly concerning class, gender, and aesthetics conventions such as the *sublime* and the *picturesque*. Her work demonstrates how textual and visual representations in Cook's journals were not merely descriptive but actively constructed a colonial discourse, reinforcing British imperial ideologies. While Currie's study sheds light on the way aesthetic frameworks influenced the perception of the Pacific Northwest and its inhabitants, the present research shifts its focus specifically to the Arctic environment. By adopting a multimodal approach, it examines not only the textual representations of the region contained in various texts pertaining to different genres through Corpus Linguistics tools, but also the visual components, employing Kress and van Leeuwen's grammar of visual design to analyse some of Moss's compositional decisions in *Shores of the Polar Sea*.

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[45] R. G. David, *The Arctic in the British imagination 1818-1914*, Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 2000.
[46] N. E. Currie, *Constructing Colonial Discourse: Captain Cook at Nootka Sound*, Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005.

It is worth noting that the visual dimension of Arctic representations has yet to be thoroughly examined using this theory. Previous scholars have privileged either textual analysis or visual description, rarely combining the two in a systematic and theoretically grounded way. While studies such as Robert G. David's *The Arctic in the British Imagination 1818-1914* have examined the cultural construction of the Arctic through a broad range of sources – including paintings, expedition accounts, travel literature, and popular press – they have not applied a multimodal framework to the visual material. At the same time, while corpus-based methodologies have been widely employed to analyse historical and ideological discourses in other domains, they have not yet been used in the study of Arctic representations. Therefore, the significant gap that this research seeks to address concerns the adoption of an integrated approach that brings together Corpus Linguistics tools and Kress and van Leeuwen's grammar of visual design to examine how recurring linguistic patterns in the expedition narratives and fictional texts of the AFC and the BAEC might interact with and reinforce the visual representations produced during the same period. The study intends to show that the imperial construction of the Arctic was the result of a combined textual and visual effort, in which written accounts and visual imagery mutually reinforced one another.

Part II: Methodology

Chapter III – Methodology & Approach

3.1 Corpus Linguistics: Background History

The term "Corpus Linguistics" emerged in the early 1980s[47], but the study of language through corpora has a well-established history, which can be divided into two main phases: the period prior to Chomsky's influence and the period that followed. Corpus methodology involves examining large collections of real-world language data, known as corpora, to study language. Prior to the dominance of Chomsky's ideas, figures like F. Boas (1858-1942)– primarily known for his work in anthropology rather than linguistics − as well as trained linguists from the structuralist tradition, such as E. Sapir (1884-1939) and L. Bloomfield (1887-1949), employed a similar approach.

They collected and analysed language samples by carefully documenting how people spoke or wrote. Without the advanced technology available today, these linguists stored their data in physical forms, such as boxes or folders containing handwritten notes, rather than in digital files. However, the data they gathered often lacked representativeness, as it was typically a small sample that could not account for the full spectrum of linguistic variation in real-world usage. In the early 1980s, only a small number of electronic corpora, created over the previous two decades by a dedicated group of researchers, were available for linguistic analysis.

Notably, the *Brown Corpus* (1960s) and its British counterpart, the *Lancaster-Oslo/Bergen* (*LOB*) *Corpus* (1970s), were pioneering resources in Corpus Linguistics. Both consisting of a million words, they provided balanced, representative samples of language, thus laying the foundation for the large-scale, data-driven linguistic analysis that would follow. However, with the

[47] P. Baker, *Using Corpora in Discourse Analysis*, London and New York, Bloomsbury, 2006, p. 2.

introduction of more advanced computing technology, the use of electronically encoded corpora became more feasible, leading to significant growth in the field of Corpus Linguistics.

These corpora were distributed for free but could only be processed on mainframe computers. By the 1990s, the number of corpus projects worldwide had expanded significantly, as the technology to create and access corpora became more widespread[48]. Corpora were now available for a variety of purposes, ranging from academic research to commercial applications. One of the most notable uses in the late 20th century was in the field of dictionary publishing, where large-scale electronic databases enabled the creation of more accurate and contextually rich dictionaries.

This shift was exemplified by the publication of the first COBUILD dictionary in 1987, which revolutionised English language teaching, by moving away from traditional prescriptive definitions and resorting to authentic examples of language in use, instead. The corpus behind the COBUILD project, developed by Collins and the University of Birmingham, not only helped create this groundbreaking dictionary, but also provided a foundation for grammar guides and other educational materials. This led to the development of the *Lexical Syllabus* (Sinclair & Renouf, 1988), which proposed that language learners should not only focus on the most frequent words in English but also on their contextual usage. Thus, they would have been able to learn the full range of meanings and functions a word may have. The principles of this corpus-driven methodology continue to shape the evolution of language resources, ensuring that learners have access to the most accurate, up-to-date language samples. Therefore, Corpus Linguistics, which once relied on smaller, less representative data, evolved to become a foundational approach in linguistics, supporting both theoretical analysis and practical applications in language learning. Today, its methodology is widely recognised and has paved the way for numerous new areas of research. Fields such as Lexicography, Pragmatics, Translation Studies, Literary Studies, Discourse Analysis, among others, have particularly benefited from corpus-based approaches. For instance,

[48] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

in Literary Studies, corpora facilitate the analysis of recurring linguistic patterns and stylistic choices, offering insights into authorial voice, narrative structure, and thematic elements. In Discourse Analysis, corpora enable the examination of language in context, helping to uncover power dynamics, identity construction, and social interactions.

3.1.1 What is a Corpus?

The term *corpus*, derived from the Latin word for "body", refers to a collection of texts that are carefully selected to provide a balanced and representative sample of a particular language or variety, consisting of authentic, machine-readable materials, including spoken data when available.

Corpus linguistics, as a field, is grounded in the analysis of these corpora, which are large-scale collections of naturally occurring language data, stored digitally and processed using specialised software:

> Simply speaking, corpus linguistics is an approach or a methodology for studying language use. It is an empirical approach that involves studying examples of what people have actually said, rather than hypothesizing about what they might or should say[49].

Therefore, corpora serve as representative collections of language data, allowing researchers to investigate patterns, frequency, and usage in real-world language contexts. They can be classified into various types, as outlined by Teubert and Čermáková (2008). These include:

- Reference corpora, which are typically very large – often exceeding 500 million words – and serve as benchmarks for other corpus types, such as specialised ones. They represent what a discourse community considers to be a typical and complete example

[49] L. Bowker, J. Pearson, *Working with Specialized Language: A Practical Guide to Using Corpora*, London and New York, Routledge, 2002, p. 9.

of a standard language. A good example is the *British National Corpus*, which consists of 100 million words and was compiled in the 1990s.

- Special corpora, which researchers often need to compile when the goal is not to study the language in general but rather a specific linguistic phenomenon. These are typically smaller in size, often containing fewer than a million words, although they can also be larger depending on the scope of the research: «there is no standard recipe for the composition of a special corpus»[50].
- Monitor corpora, which researchers use to monitor language change.
- Parallel corpora, also referred to as translation corpora, consist of original texts in one language alongside their translations in one or more other languages.
- Internet corpus, where the internet is seen as a vast ever-growing source of language data.

Despite the classification outlined above, it is important to note that they are «by no means sacrosanct. They are the corpus linguists' creation, and they can do with them whatever they deem reasonable»[51]. This flexibility allows researchers to tailor corpora to their specific needs for different linguistic investigations. There are further distinctions to be made: written versus spoken, monolingual versus multilingual, synchronic versus diachronic, open versus closed, raw versus annotated corpora, which are enriched with additional information beyond just the raw text. Moreover, Corpus Linguistics can be applied to both general and specialised fields, a distinction that is crucial when dealing with Language for General Purposes (LGP) and Language for Special Purposes (LSP). The former refers to everyday language used in common situations, whereas the latter relates to the specialised vocabulary used in fields, such as meteorology, cinematography, or gastronomy. The nature of LSP

[50] W. Teubert, A. Čermáková, *Corpus Linguistics: A Short Introduction*, London, Continuum, 2008, p. 69.
[51] *Ibid*.

ensures precise communication among experts and even between semi-experts and non-experts. As Bowker and Pearson (2002) emphasise, the vocabulary used in LSP varies depending on the level of expertise of the interlocutors, with experts using more technical terms, while semi-experts and non-experts require more explanations and simpler language.

3.1.2 Corpus Analysis: Sketch Engine and its Tools

In Corpus Linguistics, several software tools are commonly used to aid researchers in analysing large corpora, including *AntConc*, *WordSmith*, and *Sketch Engine*. *AntConc*, developed by Laurence Anthony, is a free toolkit for corpus analysis, whereas *WordSmith Tools*, created by Mike Scott, is a commercial software offering a range of powerful features through a paid license. *Sketch Engine*[52] is a commercial corpus analysis software that offers a more advanced range of tools for linguistic research. For instance, *Word Sketch* provides a quick overview of a word's grammatical and collocational profile and supplies users with access to an extensive collection of pre-existing corpora in multiple languages. Given its advanced capabilities and versatility, *Sketch Engine* is the software chosen to conduct the present study through detailed corpus analysis.

3.1.2.1 Wordlists

The *Wordlist* tool generates frequency lists based on various criteria, such as:

- Parts of speech (e.g., nouns, verbs, adjectives)
- Words that begin, end, or contain specific letters

[52] Sketch Engine [Computer software], Lexical Computing CZ, Sketch Engine https://www.sketchengine.eu/, accessed April 13, 2024.

- Word forms, tags, lemmas, and other linguistic attributes

These options can be combined to generate more specific wordlists.

In Corpus Linguistics, it is important to distinguish between "tokens" and "types". When wordlists are generated based on lemmas – which represent the base or dictionary form of a word (such as 'sail' for 'sailed' or 'sailing') – the resulting list typically reflects types rather than tokens. A token refers to each individual instance of a word form in a text, thus including repeated occurrences. For instance, if the word 'ice' appears fifty times in a corpus, it would count as fifty tokens. Conversely, a type refers to a unique word form, irrespective of its frequency in the text. Therefore, in this case, the word 'ice' would be counted as one type, regardless of how often it appears in the corpus. In conclusion, by focusing on lemmas, researchers can obtain a list of types, providing a clearer representation of the variation of vocabulary across different corpora or genres, without the influence of word repetition.

3.1.2.2 Concordances

The concordance tool allows to examine specific words, lemmas, phrases, tags or complex grammatical or lexical structures in context.

When researchers perform a concordance search, they are presented with concordance lines that display the left context, the *Key Word In Context* (*KWIC*), and the right context. The KWIC, highlighted in red, represents the word or phrase that matches the search criteria, allowing researchers to examine how the key word is used within its surrounding co-text.

These results can be further refined, sorted, filtered, and processed to meet specific analytical needs.

3.1.2.3 Collocations

In natural language, words often appear together in proximity.

When two or more words regularly occur next to each other, they are said to "collocate". For instance, 'strong' often collocates with 'wind', and 'heavy' tends to pair with 'rain'. Such collocational patterns reveal how words are interconnected in meaning and can provide deeper insights into language use and understanding. Concordances and collocates are closely related concepts in Corpus Linguistics but serve different purposes.

The former display a target word in its surrounding context, showing how it is used in various instances within a given corpus. By analysing these concordance lines, researchers can identify collocations, which are words that frequently co-occur with the target word. Thus, while concordances provide a broader view of word usage, collocates specifically refer to the most common co-occurring words within a corpus. In conclusion, concordances help identify collocational patterns.

3.1.2.4 Keywords & Terms

Sketch Engine enables both monolingual and bilingual term extraction to identify key vocabulary and phrases from a corpus. The *Keyword and Term Extraction* tool compares a "focus corpus" (the set of texts being analysed) with a "reference corpus", usually larger and general. This comparison reveals which terms are more frequent or distinctive in the focus corpus.

"Keyness" analysis relies on comparing word frequency across corpora, and without a reference corpus, the tool cannot assess the distinctiveness of words in the focus corpus. When a word occurs more frequently in the focus corpus, it may be considered a "key term". In essence, keyness measures the uniqueness of words in a corpus, highlighting domain-specific terms or recurring themes. This makes it highly useful for extracting relevant terminology, especially in specialised fields or subject areas.

3.1.2.5 Word Sketch

The *Word Sketch* tool in *Sketch Engine* analyses the surrounding context of a word to examine its collocates and syntactic behaviour. It provides a concise, one-page overview of how a word functions grammatically and how it typically collocates with other words.

The results are organised into categories, known as grammatical relations, which highlight the word's role in relation to other words, such as subjects, objects, and modifiers. Therefore, while collocations refer specifically to the frequent co-occurrence of words within a certain proximity – showing how words tend to group together within the corpus – the *Word Sketch* tool offers a more comprehensive view of a word's use within a sentence structure.

3.2 Corpus Stylistics and Semantic Prosody

Corpus stylistics is a method of literary analysis that employs linguistic techniques, thus allowing researchers to identify patterns, word choices, and recurring themes in literary works:

> stylistics is an approach to the analysis of (literary) texts using linguistic description. Thus, in a book such as this, which is devoted exclusively to the analysis of literary texts, stylistics spans the borders of the two subjects, literature and linguistics[53].

This approach provides a systematic exploration of texts, uncovering insights about language and style that might not be obvious through traditional literary analysis. John Sinclair's work in Corpus Linguistics is pivotal to Corpus

[53] M. Short, *Exploring the Language of Poems, Plays and Prose*, Abingdon and New York, Routledge, 2013, p. 1.

Stylistics, as it introduced innovative methods for analysing language and understanding how words and phrases behave in different contexts.

The term *semantic prosody* was first introduced by Bill Louw in his 1993 paper, "Irony in the Text or Insincerity in the Writer? The Diagnostic Potential of Semantic Prosodies", where he discussed how words acquire meaning through their habitual collocates. Louw specifically explained how words develop a *semantic aura* or prosody in relation to the lexemes they commonly co-occur with. These patterns can imbue them with emotional or evaluative connotations (such as positive or negative feelings), which may not be immediately obvious, but can be uncovered using corpus linguistic methods.

As Hauser and Schwarz explain:

> When a word tends to collocate with positive words in general, the word is said to have positive semantic prosody. Likewise, when a word tends to collocate with negative words in general, the word is said to have negative sematic prosody[54].

For instance, the verb 'cause' is neutral in isolation, yet due to its frequent pairing with negatively charged nouns like 'problems', 'damage' and 'harm', it tends to acquire a negative evaluative meaning in discourse.

Similarly, 'lack' often collocates with 'skills', which, notwithstanding the fact that 'he lacks skills' might be intended as a negative statement, confers the word 'lack' a positive semantic prosody «because what is lacked is usually positive»[55]. Louw's concept of semantic prosody is particularly important for understanding how irony functions in language. Irony often relies on a contrast between expected and actual meanings, which can be detected by examining how certain words deviate from their typical collocational patterns.

When a word is used in a context that contrasts with its usual semantic prosody, it creates an ironic effect. For example, if a word typically carries a negative connotation but is used in a context where its meaning seems overly

[54] D. J. Hauser, N. Schwarz, "Semantic prosody: How neutral words with collocational positivity/negativity color evaluative judgments", *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, Vol. 32., No. 2, 2023: 98-104, p. 98.
[55] *Ibid*.

positive or out of place, the discrepancy between these expectations generates irony. By analysing such deviations, semantic prosody helps identify underlying meanings and intentions, which might not be immediately apparent through direct examination. These meanings emerge from the patterns of words that typically surround certain terms, revealing the speaker's or writer's attitudes, intentions, or emotional stances, which might otherwise go unnoticed. For instance, Louw investigates the phrase 'days are' in Philip Larkin's poem *Days*[56] and finds that the phrase under scrutiny initially suggests a positive meaning, evoking ideas of purpose and happiness.

However, the context and collocational patterns of this phrase in a larger corpus create a contrasting, melancholic effect. In over two-thirds of the instances where 'days are' appears in a corpus of 18 million words, it is followed by words like 'gone', 'over', and 'past', which imbue the phrase with a sense of nostalgia, loss, and death. This dichotomy between the phrase's initial appearance in the poem and its wider semantic environment serves to underscore the pervasive melancholic tone of the work. In conclusion, semantic prosody can be conceived as an additional tool for "unearthing" deeper meanings in language and literary texts.

3.2.1 Collocations, Delexicalisation and Relexicalisation in Corpus Stylistics

Corpus stylistics focuses on identifying patterns of word co-occurrence that reveal meaningful associations between lexical items and their broader linguistic and cultural implications. As previously noted, corpus analysis tools such as *Sketch Engine*'s *Word Sketch* employ the term "collocation" to denote words that co-occur with statistically significant frequency within a given corpus, rather than a language. More specifically, such computational instrument can also help identify patterns of word association across different texts or genres. In addition, *Word Sketch* provides access to the concordance

[56] B. Louw, "Irony in the Text or Insincerity in the Writer? – The Diagnostic Potential of Semantic Prosodies", in M. Baker, G. Francis, and E. Tognini-Bonelli (eds), *Text and Technology: In Honour of John Sinclair*, Amsterdam, Benjamins, 1993: 157-176.

window, thus showing the broader context in which these collocations occur and allowing for a qualitative analysis of the semantic and stylistic implications of such patterns. As Firth (1957) famously stated, «You shall know a word by the company it keeps», emphasising that meaning is not an inherent property of individual words but emerges through their repeated co-occurrence with other lexical items. This concept underpins the processes of *delexicalisation* and *relexicalisation* (Louw and Milojkovic, 2016), two complementary mechanisms – rooted in John Sinclair's work – that influence how words either lose or regain their semantic load depending on their collocational context. In turn, such systematic loss and reacquisition of meaning inevitably influence that emotional colouring Bill referred to as semantic prosody.

Delexicalisation and relexicalisation processes are particularly relevant in Literary Studies, as they help explain how meaning is constructed, altered, or reinforced through language use. As Louw and Milojkovic explain, words subjected to progressive delexicalisation become "washed out" in meaning, serving more as grammatical support structures than as semantically rich units. This phenomenon occurs when a word is used so frequently in fixed expressions or abstract constructions that it loses its original, concrete meaning. As Louw and Milojkovic explain, «the more frequent the incidence of a particular word in the language as a whole, the more progressively washed out meanings it is likely to have»[57]. For instance, common verbs such as 'take' and 'give', when appearing in expressions like 'take a walk' or 'give a speech', no longer retain their full lexical meaning but instead they become neutralised through constant repetition.

Travelogues might be expected to be less prone to delexicalisation because of their scientific and empirical focus. For instance, the word 'ice' is expected to retain its concrete, physical meaning as a tangible environmental element that often poses challenges to explorers' navigation and survival due to its thickness and movement. The fact that 'ice' maintains its original meaning does not exclude, however, the possibility that words belonging to different

[57] B. Louw, M. Milojkovic, "Corpus Stylistics as Contextual Prosodic Theory and Subtext", p. 5.

semantic fields and co-occurring with it may undergo the phenomenon of delexicalisation. It is furthermore possible – and this will constitute one of the interests of the present study – that such terms may be later relexicalised in the text thanks to their proximity with other elements pertaining to the same original semantic field. Relexicalisation denotes the process whereby a delexicalised term recovers aspects of its original literal meaning through co-occurrence with words that "reactivate" its source-semantic field. This process counteracts or mitigates the semantic bleaching characteristic of delexicalisation. In the expression 'the family tree flourishes with new life', for instance, the word 'tree' – already delexicalised within the compound 'family tree' – undergoes relexicalisation as the verb 'flourishes' reactivates its botanical referent, allowing the literal meaning to coexist with the metaphorical sense of genealogical structure. By systematically analysing linguistic patterns within each genre, it might be possible to determine whether delexicalisation and relexicalisation hold across a broader dataset, allowing a better understanding of how lexical meaning evolves in Arctic discourse across different genres.

3.3 Reading Arctic Landscapes: A Postcolonial Framework

Given the imperial context in which the British Arctic exploration took place, a postcolonial perspective is necessary to critically examine how such narratives construct and reinforce power dynamics between explorers and the environment they sought to conquer. The Arctic was not only framed as a physical space to be mapped and dominated but also as an ideological one that reflected imperial ambitions. This dual nature is best understood by focusing on its linguistic and representational dimensions. In *L'Antartide nell'immaginario inglese. Spazio geografico e rappresentazione letteraria* (2015), Nicoletta Brazzelli draws attention to the importance of the *spatial turn* in contemporary discourse. While her focus is on Antarctica, her remarks are equally relevant to the Arctic. She refers to Michel Foucault's lecture *Des espaces autres* (1967), in which the philosopher argues that the 20th century

should be intended as the century of space. Foucault highlights how the spatial dimension, particularly in colonial and imperial narratives, is not neutral but deeply intertwined with power structures. In the context of Arctic exploration, this perspective reveals how representations of the environment are not simply passive reflections of the landscape but active sites where power is negotiated, contested, and exercised. Brazzelli expands on this by suggesting that landscapes – whether real or imagined – are not mere backdrops but spaces shaped by ideological forces, such as colonialism. The process of mapping, for instance, is not simply an act of documenting the land but one that generates meaning, turning the space into a site of conquest and control.

She argues that much like a map that constructs and defines a territory, «il paesaggio come espressione testuale merita di essere preso in considerazione»[58], especially given its preponderant role in Western cultural traditions. In this way, it becomes an arena in which to exercise authority, particularly when viewed through the lens of colonial exploration. Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) provides a foundational critique of how Western discourse has historically depicted the "Other", shaping perceptions of foreign lands and peoples to reinforce imperial ideologies. Though Said's focus was primarily on the East, his remarks regarding the discursive construction of unfamiliar territories are equally applicable to the Arctic, which, despite its geographical distance from the colonial heartlands, was also framed as a space of domination. The Arctic, much like the Orient, becomes a territory to be explored, named, and ultimately controlled in furtherance of imperial goals.

Brazzelli further emphasises that the way people engage with landscapes is shaped by their cultural perspective – specifically, a dominant, external gaze that positions the observer as superior to the land. This stance mirrors the colonial dynamic, where the land is treated as an object of observation and control, rather than a space in which humans coexist or interact.

In Arctic travelogues, this detachment is visible in how explorers represent the environment. For instance, ice is often described in terms of resistance, obstruction, or threat and takes on a self-governing role, challenging

[58] Brazzelli, *L'Antartide nell'immaginario inglese*, p. 45.

colonial authority. This would be consistent with Brazzelli's claim that landscapes are not neutral or passive but rather function as texts[59] that demand engagement and interpretation, thereby disrupting narratives of dominance.

Homi Bhabha's theories on the *unhomely* and the *liminality* of colonial spaces illustrated in *The Location of Culture* (1994) further highlight how landscapes like the Arctic, which do not easily submit to Western control, become sites of anxiety and uncertainty. According to Bhabha, the liminal space challenges the structures of imperial control, turning the environment into a site of disruption rather than a secure space of mastery. Similarly, the Arctic can be conceived not just as a geographical void awaiting discovery but a contested space where the imperial project falters under extreme conditions. This observation complicates the initial hypothesis that travelogue narratives should be more objective and less prone to processes of delexicalisation and relexicalisation.

There may be cases in which ice is granted a form of *agency* through the use of terms usually referring to human qualities and abilities, which are thus delexicalised and later relexicalised in the text through their mutual proximity. The semantic prosody that emerges from these collocational patterns then determines the evaluative character of this agency: a negative prosody – constructed through terms connoting threat, resistance, or obstruction – frames ice as an antagonistic agent, a hostile force hindering imperial expansion, while a neutral or positive prosody would suggest a fundamentally different relationship between explorer and environment. Thus, by applying postcolonial theory to the linguistic analysis of Arctic narratives, this study seeks to uncover the ideological factors shaping British representations of the region and investigate how language and images reflect both the ambitions and anxieties of imperial expansion.

3.3.1 Critical Discourse Analysis and Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis

[59] *Ibid.*, p. 46.

Drawing on Halliday's *Systemic Functional Linguistics* – which argues that language serves three primary functions: the "ideational function" (representing ideas and experiences), the "interpersonal function" (mediating social relationships and expressing attitudes), and the "textual function" (organising discourse coherently) – Kress and van Leeuwen extended its principles to the domain of visual communication.

Their visual grammar framework analyses images through analogous functions: the "representational function" identifies what is depicted; the "interpersonal function" examines how elements such as gaze, perspective, and positioning shape the viewer's engagement with the image; and the "compositional function" considers how the arrangement of visual elements directs meaning. The third of these functions involves three interconnected systems that monitor how visual compositions create coherent meaning[60]: information value, salience, and framing. Information value operates through spatial positioning across multiple dimensions: elements placed on the left function as given information – content assumed familiar to viewers as part of their cultural knowledge – while right-positioned elements represent new information demanding particular attention. Along the vertical axis, upper placement signifies ideal information, representing abstract or aspirational meaning, whereas lower positioning contains real information offering concrete, practical details. Additionally, centre-margin arrangements position central elements as the nucleus around which all other components are organised, with marginal elements functioning as supplementary information.

Salience establishes visual hierarchy through multiple mechanisms: placement in foreground versus background, relative size, tonal value contrasts, colour differences, and sharpness variations work together to attract viewers' attention. Framing determines the extent to which compositional elements appear as unified or separate information units, with dividing lines or actual frames disconnecting elements to signify their distinctiveness, while absence of framing suggests interconnectedness. This approach aligns with *Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis* (*MCDA*), which extended the principles of *Critical*

[60] Kress, van Leeuwen, *Reading Images. The Grammar of Visual Design*, pp. 182-183.

Discourse Analysis (*CDA*) beyond language to encompass other semiotic modes, such as images and photographs. CDA is rooted in *Critical Linguistics*, which originated in the late 1970s from the work of R. Fowler, B. Hodge and G. Kress (*Language and Control*, 1979). They argued that through a close analysis, the set of beliefs and values promoted through a text could be uncovered: «Language is part of the way that people seek to promote particular views of the world and *naturalise* them, that is, make them appear natural and commonsensical»[61]. CDA was born to better determine and describe the link between language, power and ideology, which had already been identified by critical linguists:

> Discourse contributes to the constitution of all those dimensions of social structure which directly or indirectly shape and constrain it: its own norms and conventions, as well as the relations, identities and institutions which lie behind them. Discourse is a practice not just of representing the world, but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning[62].

The theoretical foundations of CDA are principally derived from the work of Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, Teun van Dijk, and M. Halliday. Not only does it focus on language use in general, but also and more specifically on how it reflects and influences social and cultural systems, since «power is transmitted and practised through discourse»[63]. Theorists like Kress and van Leeuwen «believed that some of the principles of linguistic analysis found in the systemic functional theory of Halliday (1978), also used as the basis of CDA, could be applied to visual communication»[64]. Norman Fairclough's contribution to the field has been pivotal in highlighting the potential of multimodal analysis. Although his primary focus was on language, he argued that «it is quite appropriate to extend the notion of discourse to cover other

[61] D. Machin, A. Mayr, *How To Do Critical Discourse Analysis. A Multimodal Introduction*, Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC, Sage, 2012, pp. 2-3.
[62] N. Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1992, p. 64.
[63] Machin, Mayr, *How To Do Critical Discourse Analysis. A Multimodal Introduction*, p. 4.
[64] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

symbolic forms such as visual images»[65]. He further maintained that «discourses in this sense are manifested in particular ways of using language and other symbolic forms such as visual images»[66], thereby laying the groundwork for integrating visual analysis into CDA. This perspective not only challenges the notion that language alone constructs social reality but also demonstrates that images play a crucial role in constructing and maintaining ideological power. In doing so, Fairclough's work led Kress and Van Leeuwen to develop a structured approach for examining visual elements through a framework analogous to that of linguistic analysis.

MCDA seeks to «'denaturalise' representations on other modes of communication, in order to reveal the underlying power ideology buried in the images as well as the texts»[67]. Therefore, both CDA and MCDA explore how semiotic resources – linguistic and visual, respectively – are employed to construct and sustain ideological, political, and social hierarchies. By applying this combined analytical perspective to Arctic imagery in Moss's *Shores of the Polar Sea*, it may be suggested that compositional choices – such as the framing of the landscape, the positioning of figures, and the gaze of the viewer – could contribute to the construction of an imperial discourse. These visual elements, alongside the accompanying text, might play a role in shaping public perceptions of the Arctic, potentially positioning it as a space for exploration and exploitation.

Moss also produced a portfolio titled *Polar Sketches: Sixteen Chromo-Lithographs from Water-Colour Drawings Made in the Polar Regions during the Expedition of 1875-1876*. In this work, he sought to present an artistic yet factual representation of the Arctic landscape, by emphasising that the sketches aimed to depict the territory and phenomena without focusing on the expedition's events or the crew's experiences. As he explained:

> The sketches are not designed to illustrate the progress of the Expedition, or any stirring events in its history, so much as the appearance of the strange and desolate

[65] Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, p. 4.
[66] *Ibid*., p. 3.
[67] Machin, Mayr, *How To Do Critical Discourse Analysis. A Multimodal Introduction*, p. 9.

> country by the shores of which the ships slowly steamed, the wonderful phenomena of the sky, and the effects of light and shape produced by a midnight sun, or a mid-day moon, on the ice-bound rocks which form the scenery of the region[68].

Moss's assertion of neutrality in his illustrations suggests an attempt to present the Arctic landscape without personal or cultural biases. However, as noted by Robert G. David, achieving complete neutrality in representation is challenging, especially in unfamiliar and extreme environments like the Arctic. From a discourse-analytical point of view, images are never passive reflections of reality but contribute to the construction of meaning. Artists often interpret, and intentionally or unintentionally convey their surroundings through the lens of their own cultural and personal perspectives, embedding these influences into their work.

For instance, Moss's depiction of the crew praying in "The Deck: Morning Inspection and Prayers" (Plate VI) introduces a human practice that reflects cultural values, thereby influencing the viewer's perception of the Arctic experience. Such illustrations, even when intended to be neutral, can convey more than just the physical landscape; they also communicate aspects of the explorers' cultural and personal backgrounds. In this sense, Moss's portfolio, rather than being a purely objective record, functions within the broader discursive processes that shape perceptions of the Arctic and its place within imperial narratives.

[68] E.L. Moss, *Polar Sketches: Sixteen Chromo-Lithographs from Water-Colour Drawings Made in the Polar Regions During the Expedition of 1875-1876*, London, Marcus Ward & Co., 1878, p. 1.

Part III: Analysis

Chapter IV – Constructing the Corpora: Arctic Fiction Corpus and British Arctic Expedition Corpus

4.1 The Representation of Ice in Arctic Narratives: A Linguistic Approach

The exploration of the Arctic in the 19th century sparked significant interest in both fiction and non-fiction narratives, with numerous works produced by authors and explorers who sought to depict this challenging and remote region. Its cultural impact − particularly that of the ill-fated Franklin's expedition − extended well beyond prose fiction: in 1857, Wilkie Collins and Charles Dickens first staged *The Frozen Deep* at Tavistock House. Jointly written by the two authors, the play bears witness to the great interest the Arctic aroused in the British literary imagination. Fictional tales, particularly those written during the period, may have sometimes idealised or exaggerated the perils of the Arctic landscape, casting it as a hostile and forbidding environment. At the same time, British explorers embarked on expeditions to the Arctic with the mission of asserting their nation's dominance over these uncharted territories. Such expeditions were documented in various travelogues, giving the public an insight into the real challenges of survival in extreme conditions, while also reinforcing a sense of British heroism and imperial superiority. The present study seeks to compare the depiction of the Arctic in a selection of fictional works from the 19th century with the descriptions found in some of the travel narratives related to the British Arctic Expedition. By examining both literary and historical perspectives, this investigation intends to highlight how each genre contributes to the cultural imagination of the period. Two distinct corpora will be scrutinise through a comparative analysis: the Arctic Fiction Corpus (AFC, 304,313 tokens) consisting of three fictional works – *The Frozen Crew of the Ice Bound Ship* (anonymous, 1868), *The Arctic Crusoe, A Tale Of The Polar Sea: Or Arctic Adventures On The Sea Of Ice* (Percy Bolingbroke St. John, 1854), *The Captain of the Polestar* (Arthur Conan Doyle, 1883) – and the British Arctic Expedition

Corpus (BAEC, 299,550 tokens), which includes two travelogues written by actual British explorers, who both took part to the British Arctic Expedition of 1875-1876 – *The Shores of the Polar Sea* (1878, Edward L. Moss) and *A Narrative of a Voyage to the Polar Sea* (1878, by Captain George S. Nares) in two volumes.

The primary aim of the study is to explore the language used to describe ice – as it constitutes a dominant feature of the Arctic landscape – within both fictional and non-fictional narratives. Specifically, the research will focus on whether the depiction of the Arctic's perilousness and hostility is exaggerated in fictional works as compared to the travelogues, and if this exaggeration served to emphasise the heroism of British explorers. By investigating how these two sets of texts approach the natural element of ice, this study hopes to shed light on how the literary representations of the Arctic may have contributed to the wider cultural imagination of the time. Moreover, this analysis will be conducted from a postcolonial perspective, given that the 19th century marked a period of British imperial dominance par excellence.

As previously stated, the media of the time also played a crucial role in shaping public perceptions of these expeditions, often highlighting the bravery of explorers as they faced harsh conditions, to reinforce the notion of British superiority. In the next chapter, verbs and other parts of speech that most frequently co-occur with 'ice' in both fictional and non-fictional corpora will be scrutinised, also drawing on concepts from Corpus Stylistics, such as delexicalisation, relexicalisation, and semantic prosody, to explore how the word 'ice' may take on different meanings across the two corpora, potentially reinforcing key themes such as heroism, danger, or isolation. More specifically, such semantic shift might reflect either a more literal, neutral usage (e.g., in descriptions of the physical landscape) or a symbolic one (e.g., representing emotional or psychological states). Meanwhile, semantic prosody will be employed to explore how the same word may take on positive or negative associations based on its co-text, thus shaping the broader themes of the narratives.

4.2 Fictional Representations: The Arctic Fiction Corpus

The AFC was created to represent a range of nineteenth-century narratives that explore the Arctic both as a real place and as a cultural or symbolic space. These works were chosen for their role in shaping the popular understanding of the Arctic at that time, shifting between adventure, scientific exploration, and sensationalistic depictions. The corpus includes three works of fiction:

- *The Frozen Crew of the Ice-Bound Ship* (anonymous, 1868)
- *The Arctic Crusoe: A Tale of the Polar Sea* (Percy Bolingbroke St. John, 1854)
- *The Captain of the Polestar* (Arthur Conan Doyle, 1883)

These texts offer diverse perspectives on the Arctic region, ranging from Gothic and supernatural themes to adventure narratives intended for a youthful audience. A comparison of these works with travel accounts will provide a deeper understanding of how the language and representation of the Arctic were influenced by imperialist preconceptions and specific narrative strategies.

4.2.1 Penny Dreadfuls and The Frozen Crew of the Ice-Bound Ship

The "Penny Dreadfuls" or "Penny Bloods" emerged in the mid-19th century as one of the earliest forms of popular fiction aimed at Britain's working class. Sold for a penny, they provided young readers with stories of adventure, crime, and horror, often characterised by sensationalist plots and exaggerated characters. Their success relied on gripping narratives and a strong visual component, with dramatic illustrations designed to capture the attention of a broad readership. As Michael Anglo describes in his study on penny dreadfuls:

> Victorian' suggests moral uplift and sentimentality – but there was nothing uplifting or sentimental about the 'penny dreadfuls', which in the middle decades of the nineteenth century provided escapist reading for working-class youth. Some of the lurid tales issued in penny parts followed in the tradition of the Gothic romances of the eighteenth century; others were inspired by gallows literature – the broadsheets and the spurious criminal biographies and death-cell confessions that were hawked around at public hangings. The 'dreadfuls' were published strictly for profit, and a successful tale would be spun out for hundreds of episodes, with horror piled on horror to hold the interest of the semi-literate readers[69].

The most prominent publishers of this genre included figures like Edward Lloyd, whose *Lloyd's Penny Weekly Miscellany* played a key role in popularising the format, and John Dicks, who produced numerous successful serials. Among the most famous penny dreadful stories were *Varney the Vampyre*; *or the Feast of Blood* (1847), one of the earliest serialised vampire tales attributed to James Malcolm Rymer, and *The String of Pearls*, which introduced the infamous character Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street, and was first published in *The People's Periodical* in 1846.

Despite criticism from contemporary newspapers[70], which regarded penny dreadfuls as morally corrupting for young readers, their cultural impact was significant. They laid the foundation for 20th-century pulp fiction and modern horror and crime genres, influencing literature, film, and television. Their legacy remains visible today in vampire stories, crime fiction, and psychological thrillers, which continue to entertain audiences with the same suspense that made penny dreadfuls a lasting literary phenomenon.

The *Frozen Crew of the Ice-Bound Ship* (1868) belongs to the genre of *penny dreadfuls* and was published in *The Penny Miscellany*, a periodical that, as noted in the *London Evening Standard*, featured the tale as part of its No. 128 issue:

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[69] M. Anglo, *Penny Dreadfuls and Other Victorian Horrors*, London, Jupiter, 1977, inside front cover.
[70] *Ibid*., pp. 92-94.

> Also with No.128, will be given No. 1 of The FROZEN CREW and ICE BOUND SHIP; or, The Terrors of 'The Frozen Crew', price One Penny, post free, for Two Stamps. London Office 13, Paternoster-row, and all booksellers[71].

This advertisement highlights how the story was distributed as part of a larger collection of affordable, sensational fiction aimed at a mass readership.

The story itself employs elements of Victorian Gothic and supernatural horror, emphasising the mystery and the unknown aspects of the Arctic. The depiction of the landscape is heavily stereotypical: the region is portrayed as a desolate and threatening wasteland, populated by spectral wrecks and figures frozen in time. The narrative amplifies the sense of liminality and nightmare, reflecting Victorian cultural anxieties about danger and the unknown. In this way, *The Frozen Crew* aligns with the broader themes of penny fiction, which often blurred the boundaries between adventure, horror, and the supernatural to captivate their readers. The tale opens with a vivid description of the *El Malachor*: the pirate schooner is rendered almost as a sublime object before being described as an instrument of crime. This tension between beauty and evil is characteristic of Gothic fiction and recurs throughout the narrative, which follows Paul Jones, captain of the vessel, whose crew encounters the legendary *Flying Dutchman* (*Vanderdecken*) during their predatory voyages. The supernatural atmosphere is established from the outset through the dialogue of three crew members – Rotaldo, Black Bill and De'il's Rob – whose conversation functions as an embedded oral narrative introducing the legend of the phantom ship. Rotaldo's account of a previous encounter with the schooner is a story within a story, a classic Gothic device that allows supernatural elements to enter the narrative through second-hand testimony, maintaining a degree of ambiguity about their reality.

After a mysterious battle with the Flying Dutchman, Paul Jones is wounded and treated by Hans Hinckman, a supernatural dwarf who claims knowledge of healing arts. The crew becomes increasingly superstitious,

[71] Advertisement for "The Penny Miscellany", *London Evening Standard*, February 21, 1868, p. 8.

believing their captain has made an unholy pact with Vanderdecken. When Paul Jones experiences visions of the Flying Dutchman offering him invaluable treasures in exchange for taking his place as guardian of a cursed wreck, he rejects the bargain. His lieutenant Rotaldo, driven by greed and suspicion, foments mutiny among the crew, claiming Paul Jones has betrayed them to supernatural forces. The mutineers cast their captain adrift in a small boat, but he is rescued by his loyal followers: the faithful Gonzalvi (later revealed to be his wife Emona, disguised as a man) and the devoted seaman Brandy-nosed Nick. Their adventures carry them into the Arctic regions, where they encounter Esquimaux tribes and face the terrible Kracken – a sea dragon controlled by Vanderdecken. The story features multiple supernatural elements: Indian shamanism through characters like the chief Manitto and the witch Skulda, Norse mythology with the three Valkyries (sisters of fate), and the prominent Gothic trope of the curse. The Arctic landscape becomes a character itself – a realm of «eternal winter»[72]. The climax occurs when Paul Jones, through an act of Christian forgiveness toward his supernatural tormentor, breaks Vanderdecken's centuries-old curse. The Flying Dutchman, freed from his doom, provides Paul Jones with the means to escape the frozen wasteland. The tale concludes with the hero's redemption: he quits piracy, settles in America, and fights honourably in the War of Independence, while the cursed *El Malachor* and her mutinous crew are discovered years later as frozen corpses: the "frozen crew of the ice-bound ship". The landscape punishes moral transgression, turning the guilty crew into a grotesque frozen monument – a vivid representation of ice as an instrument of punishment and moral order, which anticipates the analytical category of ice-as-agent developed in Chapter 5 of this study. On the whole, such rehabilitative ending is ideologically telling: despite its sensationalist surface, the penny dreadful ultimately reasserts bourgeois and Christian values, perhaps partly in response to the moral criticism it was commonly subjected to by the Victorian press.

[72] Anonymous, *The Frozen Crew of the Ice-Bound Ship; Or, Terrors of the Arctic Region. A Romance of the Wild and Wonderful*, London, "Penny Miscellany" Office, 1868, p. 28.

4.2.2 The Arctic Crusoe: A Tale of the Polar Sea

Published in 1854, *The Arctic Crusoe* is an adventure novel that transforms the famous Defoe's castaway narrative into an ambitious Arctic expedition tale. In his preface, St. John explicitly acknowledges the Robinsonian debt, stating that the novel owes its "idea" to the notorious self-made man, while claiming originality in its Arctic setting and events.

The story follows the journey of Henry Maynard, a young Englishman who embarks on a whaling voyage with the secret intention of discovering the magnetic pole. After losing contact with his ship during a polar bear hunt, Henry survives alone on a volcanic island before being joined by his devoted servant Timothy Stop and later by Wah-pa-nosh, a Chippewa woman fleeing Esquimaux captivity. Rather than remaining stationary like Crusoe, the trio undertakes a perilous overland journey across the Canadian Arctic, navigating treacherous ice, experiencing hostile encounters with various Indigenous peoples, and the harsh realities of polar survival. The narrative culminates tragically with Wah-pa-nosh's death while defending the group, followed by Henry's eventual return to England and marriage to his fiancée Fanny.

The novel is narrated in the first person by Henry himself, a choice that reinforces the parallelism with Defoe's model and simultaneously serves the ideological purpose of the text: the reader is invited to inhabit the perspective of the British subject, who masters, survives, and interprets the Arctic landscape, which is thus filtered entirely through a colonial gaze, never allowed to speak for itself. The work reflects Victorian scientific ambition and imperial ideology while simultaneously depending on Indigenous knowledge for the protagonists' survival, creating tensions between colonial superiority and this practical reliance that complicate its presentation of British civilisational dominance over the Arctic wilderness. At the same time, the polar landscape in *The Arctic Crusoe* functions as a proving ground for specifically Victorian virtues: physical endurance, practical ingenuity – evident in Henry's ability to build shelters, find food, and adapt to the environment through resourcefulness alone – Christian faith, and the capacity for rational self-governance,

understood as the ability to maintain mental discipline and lucid decision-making in conditions of extreme isolation. Henry's survival is consistently framed as the result of a combination of British resourcefulness and providential favour, while the hostile environment is rendered legible and ultimately surmountable. The scene of Wah-pa-nosh's declaration of love is perhaps the most ideologically revealing moment in the novel, as Henry firmly rejects it by invoking both Christian monogamy and his prior attachment to Fanny. The scene is deeply ambivalent: Henry's rejection is framed as moral rectitude, yet the text acknowledges that it is his own teachings – his «pictures of another kind of life»[73] – that have ignited her imagination.

The novel thus stages a colonial dynamic in which the Indigenous woman is culturally transformed by the coloniser's influence, then denied the possibility of the life she has been taught to desire. Her subsequent death while defending the group resolves this tension conveniently: Wah-pa-nosh is allowed to die peacefully as a Christian convert – repeating Henry's prayer and forgiving her enemies –, which simultaneously seals her conversion and removes her from the narrative. This ambivalence finds its final resolution with Henry describing her as having loved «not wisely, but so well»[74], a quotation from *Othello* that further frames her within a European literary and racial imaginary rather than on her own terms.

4.2.3 The Captain of the Polestar *by Arthur Conan Doyle*

Arthur Conan Doyle, widely known for his Sherlock Holmes tales, also ventured into exploring the supernatural through works such as *The Captain of the Polestar* (1883), first published in *Temple Bar* magazine. In this chilling narrative, a crew gets trapped in the ice, while their captain, tormented by spectral visions, descends into madness. The isolated, frozen environment of the Arctic serves as a powerful metaphor for the captain's mental disintegration,

[73] P.B. St. John, *The Arctic Crusoe: A Tale of the Polar Sea*, Boston, Lee and Shepard, Publishers; New York, Lee, Shepard and Dillingham, 1875, p. 224.
[74] *Ibid.*, p. 233.

while also evoking the Gothic tradition, where the natural world often mirrors inner psychological states.

The author's personal experience in the Arctic likely influenced the vivid and haunting depiction of this frozen wilderness. In 1880, at the age of 21, he sailed as the ship's surgeon aboard the *Hope*, an Arctic whaler, departing from Peterhead. Furthermore, Doyle's tale reflects how nineteenth-century popular literature contributed to shaping the public's imagination of the Arctic, which was not only a place of physical conquest but also a space for confronting the psychological and symbolic fears of the age. *The Captain of the Polestar* constitutes a haunting maritime tale told through the journal entries of John M'Alister Ray, a medical student aboard a whaling vessel trapped in Arctic ice.

The story focuses on Captain Nicholas Craigie, a mysterious and tormented man who becomes increasingly obsessed with apparitions of a woman on the ice fields. As the ship remains locked in the frozen wasteland, Captain Craigie's behaviour grows more erratic, and he claims to see a ghostly feminine figure moving across the ice and calling his name. The crew, already superstitious and fearful, believes the ship is cursed. Despite the narrator's attempts to rationalise these visions as hallucinations born from stress and isolation, the captain's obsession intensifies until he ultimately leaps from the ship onto the ice, pursuing the spectral woman into the Arctic void, never to return. The tale ends with the discovery of Craigie's frozen corpse on the ice, his face bearing a peaceful smile and his arms still outstretched «as though grasping at the strange visitor which had summoned him away into the dim world that lies beyond the grave»[75].

[75] A. C. Doyle, *The Captain of the Polestar and Other Tales*, London, Smith, Elder & Co., 1912, p. 34.

4.2.3.1 The Arctic Ice Maiden: Parallels with Victorian Polar Imagery

In Doyle's narrative, the mysterious figure that appears to Captain Craigie and the crew of the Polestar «in the shape of a woman»[76] seems to mingle with ice crystals and flakes. This depiction inevitably recalls earlier illustrations published in the popular satirical magazine *Punch*[77] and created to commemorate the return of the British Arctic Expedition led by George Nares.

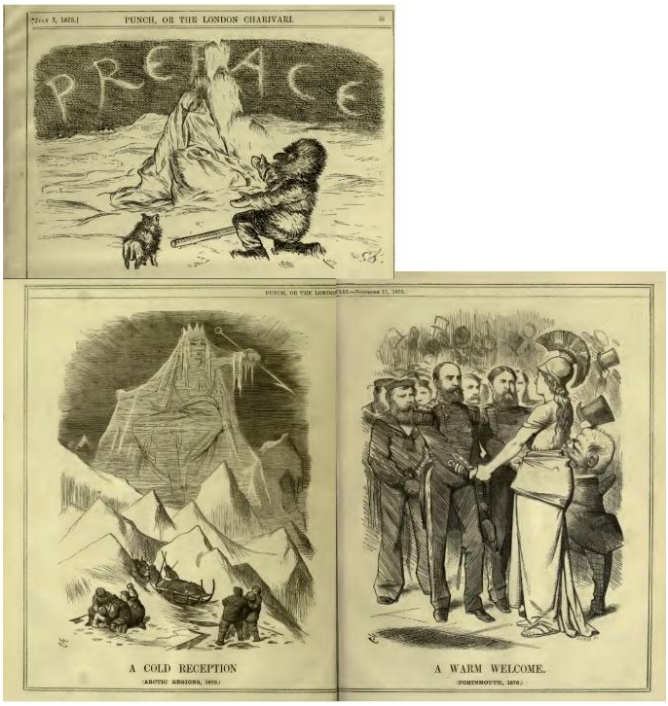


Figure 4. Punch Illustrations

Such illustrations employed a strategic visual contrast that reflected deeper Victorian anxieties about civilisation versus wilderness. Victorian culture consistently used feminine imagery to represent spaces and forces that were seen as fundamentally *other* than the masculine realm of rational action and public life. Both the Arctic and the domestic sphere were positioned outside the masculine world of politics and professional endeavour, though in opposite

[76] *Ibid*.
[77] "Mr. Punch and the Everlasting Silence", *Punch, or the London Charivari*, Vol. 68, 1875, p. iii; "A Cold Reception" and "A Warm Welcome", *Punch, or the London Charivari*, Vol. 71, 1876, pp. 204-205 (see Fig. 4).

ways. On the one hand, the polar regions were feminised because they represented alluring spaces that operated according to different rules and, therefore, had to be resisted. The ice maiden embodies nature as an alien force menacing masculine ambitions. On the other hand, the nurturing warmth of domestic British life was also represented by a woman because the household was culturally coded as pertaining the feminine sphere – the place of emotional comfort, moral guidance, and reproduction. However, this represented a more "positive" femininity, still defined by its service to masculine needs.

Unlike the other fictional narratives examined in this corpus, *The Captain of the Pole-Star* has received some critical attention. In a recent peer-reviewed study, Lin Young reads the tale through the intersecting lenses of Victorian masculinity and spiritualism, arguing that Conan Doyle uses the Arctic as a space where two rival models of masculinity are tested. Dr. Ray embodies scientific rationality – his empirical journalling represents a constant attempt to render the unknown legible and controllable – while Captain Craigie embodies a Romantic, emotionally open spirituality that makes him receptive to the ghost but ultimately incapable of surviving the encounter. As Young argues, «the inability of the story to fully resolve the ghost suggests that Conan Doyle wishes us to earnestly consider both possibilities; further, it suggests that both iterations of masculinity are insufficient to confront the supernatural alone».[78] This reading reinforces the analysis proposed here: Young's argument that the Arctic ghost functions as the ultimate test of Victorian masculinity aligns with the visual tradition examined above, in which the feminised polar landscape simultaneously attracts and destroys those who seek to conquer it. In other words, it is not merely a supernatural presence but a site where competing Victorian definitions of masculinity – and their respective inadequacies – are exposed. The parallel between Doyle's narrative and *Punch*'s visual representations thus suggests that the ice maiden trope operated across both fictional and satirical registers, pointing to a shared cultural imagination in

[78] L. Young, "Proto-Spiritualist Masculinities in Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Captain of the 'Pole-Star'"*, *Humanities*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 2026: 1-12, p. 11.

which the feminised Arctic simultaneously embodied imperial desire and its inevitable defeat.

4.3 Non-Fictional Representations: The British Arctic Expedition Corpus

While fictional narratives played a key role in shaping public imagination, travelogues provided firsthand accounts. Written by real explorers, these works combine scientific reports, personal experience, and national ambition to document both the wonders and challenges of polar expeditions.

Unlike fictional portrayals, which often rely on Gothic or adventure tropes, travelogues may present a more immediate and pragmatic perspective, though they might still contain some evocative language or ideological influences. This section presents two significant accounts of the British Arctic Expedition of 1875-76: Edward L. Moss's *Shores of the Polar Sea*, which blends artistic representation with personal remarks, and Sir George Nares's *Narrative of a Voyage to the Polar Sea*, an official report detailing the expedition's logistical and scientific endeavours. Together, these works may offer a glimpse into how nineteenth-century Arctic exploration was documented, interpreted, and presented to the British public.

4.3.1 Shores of the Polar Sea

Edward L. Moss's *Shores of the Polar Sea* offers a distinctive perspective on the Arctic – one that is both visual and textual – thereby reflecting and shaping British perceptions of the region. On May 29, 1875, the British Arctic Expedition set sail from Portsmouth with the goal of reaching new latitudes and, potentially, the North Pole. The team aimed to navigate through Smith Sound, hoping it would lead them to an ice-free Sea. However, a violent cyclone disrupted their progress, scattering the two ships – *HMS Alert* and *HMS Discovery* –, which only reunited weeks later in Disko Bay.

Around the same time, Captain Allen William Young, aboard his steam yacht *Pandora*, was also engaged in Arctic exploration. A veteran merchant, Captain Young had previously been part of similar expeditions, including one in 1857-1859 with McClintock aboard the *Fox*. His goals in 1875 were to cross the Northwest Passage and search for any relics of the Franklin Expedition on King William Island, provided the land was snow-free. Like the British team, however, Young's journey was halted by ice in Peel Sound, forcing him to turn back. In 1876, when Young planned another attempt at the Northwest Passage, the Admiralty, aware of his intentions, instructed him to support Captain Nares' expedition instead. Young was tasked with delivering and retrieving messages from the *Alert* and *Discovery*, positioned at Cape Isabella and Littleton Island. While he successfully carried out this mission, it also meant abandoning his own exploration of the Northwest Passage. Despite the *Pandora* not being a part of the official British Arctic Expedition, some illustrated newspapers still reported on Young's mission to retrieve messages from the *Alert* and *Discovery*. These reports helped to create a sense of connection between the various expeditions and highlighted explorers' mutual involvement in such perilous voyages. In his account, Moss conveys a desire to claim the Arctic wilderness, emphasising that «no human eye had ever looked upon it before».

This sentiment positions his artistic work as an act of possession over uncharted territory. The expedition's challenges become clear as the crew – motivated by survival and curiosity – hunts Arctic wildlife for sustenance. Despite the harsh conditions, Moss's writing possesses a poetic quality, capturing the personal and surreal moments of their journey. Through his sketches and prose, he powerfully conveys the stark beauty of the Arctic landscape, illustrating the efforts required to document his surroundings in such an inhospitable environment.

4.3.2 Narrative of a Voyage to the Polar Sea

Sir Captain George Nares's *Narrative of a Voyage to the Polar Sea* (1878), in two volumes, provides a more authoritative account of the British

Arctic Expedition of 1875-76. While Edward Moss's *Shores of the Polar Sea* offers a richly illustrated and personal perspective, the Captain's work serves as the official naval report, detailing the strategic challenges, scientific discoveries, and extreme conditions faced by the crew. In the preface to the first volume, Nares himself describes his intent as providing «a plain and faithful account»[79] of the voyage, written for the benefit of future Arctic explorers and in fulfilment of a sense of duty towards those who had followed the expedition with interest. This declaredly functional purpose shapes the tone of the entire work, which prioritises factual precision and institutional accountability over personal or artistic expression. The first volume chronicles the outward journey of HMS *Alert* and HMS *Discovery* from England to the polar region, documenting the progressive advance northward through Greenland waters, the encounters with pack ice, and the establishment of winter quarters. The narrative incorporates some extracts from the official journals of the expedition's officers, including those of Senior Lieutenant Pelham Aldrich and Commander Albert H. Markham. These reports reinforce the documentary nature of the text, lending it the quality of a collective record rather than a single personal account.

The second volume covers the return journey and the traumatic consequences of the expedition, most notably the outbreak of scurvy that severely affected and debilitated a large part of the crew. The second volume also contains extensive scientific appendices edited by the naturalist H.W. Feilden, covering geology, botany, zoology, and meteorological data. These contributions transform the work into a comprehensive record of the expedition's findings. Both authors also devote some attention to the indigenous populations encountered during the expedition, though their approaches differ in tone and emphasis. Moss, despite allowing a degree of personal curiosity and even empathy – noting the rapid demographic decline of the Arctic Highlanders north of Melville Bay and that Greenland may be «fated

[79] G. S. Nares, *Narrative of a Voyage to the Polar Sea*, Vol. 1, London, Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1878, Preface.

to again become a land without inhabitant»[80] – nonetheless describes the Eskimo through the lens of Victorian civilisation hierarchy, referring to their «semi-savage appearance»[81] and approving of the missionaries' efforts to provide them with a civilised education. Nares approaches the subject with even greater detachment: Hans Heindrich, a Greenlander who had previously served on several American Arctic expeditions, is introduced primarily as a useful member of the crew − an experienced hunter and dog-driver − while the Eskimo inhabitants of Greenland are discussed in terms of the civilising effects of Danish governance and missionary work, with Nares noting approvingly that they had come to enjoy «the blessings of religion, law, order, and a considerable degree of civilization»[82]. Such remarks reveal that both authors are informed by the same ideological assumptions of Victorian imperialism, albeit in different ways and to varying degrees. A similar complexity emerges in the two authors' representation of the Arctic landscape itself. Although Nares's work is characterised by a more technical and empirical register, the corpus analysis conducted in Chapter 5 reveals that even within documentary discourse the extreme conditions of Arctic exploration can occasionally generate rhetorical strategies that move beyond purely empirical description.

[80] Moss, *Shores of the Polar Sea*, p. 11.
[81] *Ibid.*
[82] Nares, *Narrative of a Voyage to the Polar Sea*, Vol. 1, p. 33.

Chapter V – Case Study: Linguistic Representation of the Arctic

5.1 The Agency of Ice: Examining Subject-Verb Constructions in the British Arctic Expedition Corpus

To investigate whether ice is represented as a passive environmental element or as an active force within the two corpora, this study examines instances where 'ice' functions as the grammatical subject of a verb. Within the Arctic lexical domain, the term presents numerous hyponyms: 'berg' with its connotations of monumentality and danger, 'pack' suggesting compact mass and resistance, 'floe' implying mobility and fragmentation, along with other specialised terms that enrich the terminological repertoire of polar navigation. While an analysis of such subordinate lexemes could certainly contribute to a more detailed understanding of how ice acquires agency in nautical discourse, this research deliberately focuses on the hypernym 'ice' for specific methodological reasons.

On the one hand, this approach allows for a more precise evaluation of the ways in which 'ice' manifests agency in both corpora, which would be difficult to achieve through a multi-lexemic analysis. On the other hand, it constitutes a "proof of concept" – that is a framework designed to establish theoretical and methodological foundations for future potential research on hyponymic terms. However, hyponyms are not entirely excluded from the analysis: when they appear within the immediate collocational environment of 'ice' and contribute to shaping its semantic prosody through processes of delexicalisation and relexicalisation, they are examined as part of the extended textual context. Understanding how such superordinate-subordinate structures and potential elliptical patterns involving the term 'ice' work is essential to accurately assess how agency is attributed to the polar environment.

Using *Sketch Engine*'s *Word Sketch* tool, subject-verb patterns are identified to determine the extent to which 'ice' is linguistically constructed as having a significant impact on human actions. Agency is here understood not

as a binary concept – either present or absent – but approached through a graduated scale ranging from 1 to 4, acknowledging that the attribution of such personal-like capacity is a representational strategy. From a physical standpoint, all processes involving ice inevitably produce environmental effects that influence navigation, temperature, visibility, and human decision-making.

However, the critical distinction lies not in the objective presence or absence of such effects, but in whether and how these are foregrounded within the narrative discourse. The agency levels therefore reflect the degree to which ice is discursively constructed as an active participant in the unfolding events. Level 1 constructions present ice as linguistically passive regardless of its potential physical influence, while higher levels progressively attribute more dynamic and ultimately anthropomorphic qualities to ice through specific lexical and syntactic choices. For the purposes of this analysis, verbs are categorised into three semantic domains: motion, process and interaction. Such classification captures the primary ways through which ice is linguistically constructed in Arctic exploration narratives.

Motion verbs (e.g. ‘drift’, ‘move’) foreground ice’s autonomous or semi-autonomous movement through space; process verbs (e.g. ‘melt’, ‘break’) describe transformations that may be driven by internal properties or external forces; interaction verbs (e.g. ‘block’, ‘prevent’) frame ice as engaging with human actors and endeavours. It is worth noting that this framework, far from being exhaustive, should be understood as a heuristic tool more than a fixed taxonomy: the same verb may acquire different degrees of agency depending on the syntactic structure, collocational patterns and narrative context.

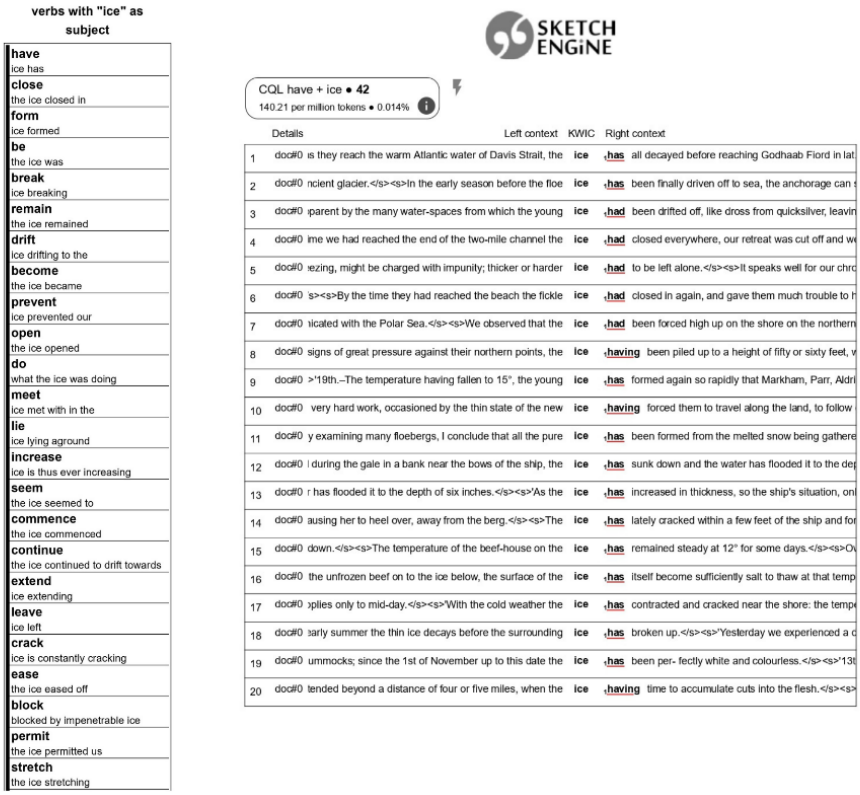
The classification is as follows:

Level	Description	Typical Verb Examples	Agency Type
Level 1	**No Linguistic Agency** Ice appears as subject, but the verb construction presents it as entirely passive, affected by external forces.	*be broken*, *be formed*, *be carried*, *remain*	Minimal agency
Level 2	**Natural Process Agency** Ice appears to initiate processes, but these are clearly understood as natural, involuntary phenomena without intentionality.	*melt*, *drift*, *form*, *decay*, *spread, open, close*	Natural agency
Level 3	**Obstructive Agency** Ice acts in ways that create obstacles or constraints for humans, suggesting active environmental resistance.	*block*, *obstruct*, *prevent*, *surround*, *trap, close*	Resistive agency
Level 4	**Personified Agency** Ice is linguistically constructed as having human-like intentionality, will, or consciousness.	*attack*, *release*, *give up*, *allow*, *open, close*	Anthropomorphic agency

Table 1. Level Framework of Agency Attribution

It is evident that a few verbs, including ‘open’ and ‘close’, are frequently employed in scientific and technical discourse (see, for example, Stefansson’s *Encyclopedia Arctica* or the *SEAICE Portal* glossary) to describe the natural processes of ice formation or dispersion. In such specialised contexts, these verbs typically maintain their literal, technical meaning and could initially be classified at a lower level of agency (e.g., “Level 2: natural processes”). However, the surrounding collocates may attribute a more active or symbolic role, allowing for the interpretation of a higher degree of agency and creating an unexpected personification of ice within non-fictional expedition narratives. In order to take these nuances into account, the classification system is integrated with a qualitative analysis that considers not only the grammatical structure but also the semantic and metaphorical framing in each passage, addressing potential delexicalisation patterns (in which words lose their material referentiality) and, where applicable, relexicalisation processes that can restore their semantic content. Additionally, this methodological framework is informed by the concept of semantic prosody – following the work of Louw and Milojkovic – which not only helps uncover the affective charge associated with ‘ice’ through its collocational patterns but also provides insights into the narrator’s attitude and the explorer’s lived experience of the Arctic environment.

Among the most revealing patterns are those where ‘ice’ functions as the grammatical subject in perfect tense constructions:



verbs with "ice" as subject

have	ice has
close	the ice closed in
form	ice formed
be	the ice was
break	ice breaking
remain	the ice remained
drift	ice drifting to the
become	the ice became
prevent	ice prevented our
open	the ice opened
do	what the ice was doing
meet	ice met with in the
lie	ice lying aground
increase	ice is thus ever increasing
seem	the ice seemed to
commence	the ice commenced
continue	the ice continued to drift towards
extend	ice extending
leave	ice left
crack	ice is constantly cracking
ease	the ice eased off
block	blocked by impenetrable ice
permit	the ice permitted us
stretch	the ice stretching

SKETCH ENGINE

CQL have + ice • 42
140.21 per million tokens • 0.014%

	Details	Left context	KWIC	Right context
1	doc#0	is they reach the warm Atlantic water of Davis Strait, the	ice	has all decayed before reaching Godhaab Fiord in lat
2	doc#0	ncient glacier.</s><s>In the early season before the floe	ice	has been finally driven off to sea, the anchorage can
3	doc#0	parent by the many water-spaces from which the young	ice	had been drifted off, like dross from quicksilver, leavin
4	doc#0	ime we had reached the end of the two-mile channel the	ice	had closed everywhere, our retreat was cut off and w
5	doc#0	ezing, might be charged with impunity; thicker or harder	ice	had to be left alone.</s><s>It speaks well for our chro
6	doc#0	s><s>By the time they had reached the beach the fickle	ice	had closed in again, and gave them much trouble to h
7	doc#0	ication with the Polar Sea.</s><s>We observed that the	ice	had been forced high up on the shore on the northern
8	doc#0	signs of great pressure against their northern points, the	ice	having been piled up to a height of fifty or sixty feet, v
9	doc#0	>'19th.–The temperature having fallen to 15°, the young	ice	has formed again so rapidly that Markham, Parr, Aldri
10	doc#0	very hard work, occasioned by the thin state of the new	ice	having forced them to travel along the land, to follow
11	doc#0	y examining many floebergs, I conclude that all the pure	ice	has been formed from the melted snow being gathere
12	doc#0	during the gale in a bank near the bows of the ship, the	ice	has sunk down and the water has flooded it to the dep
13	doc#0	has flooded it to the depth of six inches.</s><s>'As the	ice	has increased in thickness, so the ship's situation, onl
14	doc#0	ausing her to heel over, away from the berg.</s><s>The	ice	has lately cracked within a few feet of the ship and for
15	doc#0	down.</s><s>The temperature of the beef-house on the	ice	has remained steady at 12° for some days.</s><s>Ov
16	doc#0	the unfrozen beef on to the ice below, the surface of the	ice	has itself become sufficiently salt to thaw at that temp
17	doc#0	pplies only to mid-day.</s><s>'With the cold weather the	ice	has contracted and cracked near the shore: the temp
18	doc#0	arly summer the thin ice decays before the surrounding	ice	has broken up.</s><s>'Yesterday we experienced a c
19	doc#0	ummocks; since the 1st of November up to this date the	ice	has been per- fectly white and colourless.</s><s>'13
20	doc#0	tended beyond a distance of four or five miles, when the	ice	having time to accumulate cuts into the flesh.</s><s>

Figure 5. *Sketch Engine* output: verb collocations with 'ice' as subject (left) and concordance lines of perfect tense constructions with 'ice' as subject (right) in the BAEC

The first clause to be analysed is «[the] ice has [all decayed]», whose examination extends beyond the traditional concordance window, in accordance with Louw and Milojkovic's observation:

> Only repetition within a span of language, the length of which, especially in a poem, may be more than Sinclair's four words to the left and four words to the right, is sufficient to prevent the reader from associating the reference with the delexical forms in his mind and experience[83].

[83] Louw, Milojkovic, "Corpus Stylistics as Contextual Prosodic Theory and Subtext", p. 11.

Although Louw and Milojkovic developed their approach primarily for poetic texts, this study extends their methodology to prose narratives.

The text span must be sufficiently extensive to detect the semantic prosody and any processes of de- and relexicalisation connected to the expression under scrutiny. To meet this requirement, the length of quotations will vary as needed on a case-by-case basis. The verb ‘decay’ in the following instance is an intransitive verb that, according to the classification adopted in this study, falls under “Level 2: Natural Process Agency”:

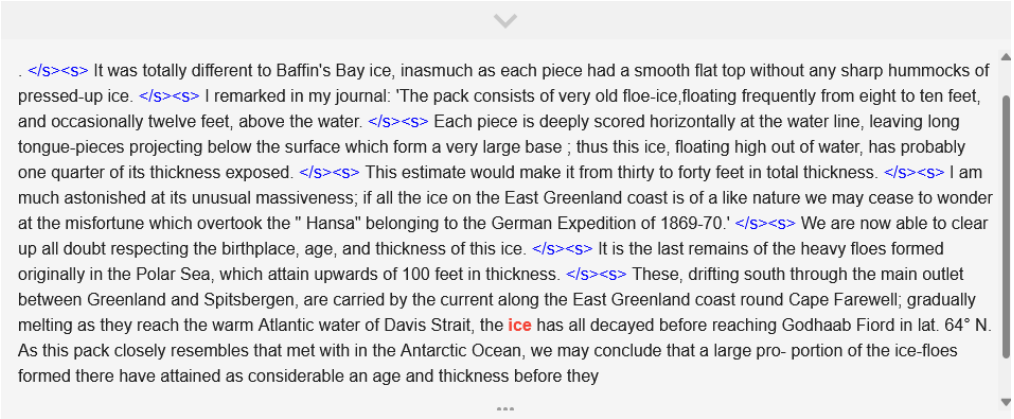


Figure 6. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordances of perfect tense constructions with ‘ice’ as subject in the BAEC: (a_1) «ice has all decayed»*

It describes a phenomenon occurring without intentionality. However, the attribution of agency cannot rely solely on verb type (process); rather, it must be interpreted considering the broader narrative context, which can reshape the semantic roles assigned to the subject.

At first glance, the verb construction suggests minimal agency: ‘ice’ undergoes transformation passively, as it melts and disintegrates. Yet, when framed within the surrounding narrative, this decaying process participates in a broader depiction of the Arctic environment as an autonomous and unpredictable phenomenon. When examining a more extended textual span prior to the target construction, detailed observational data emerge, including descriptions of the floes’ thickness, submerged structures, and their impressive

size: «Each piece is deeply scored horizontally at the water line, leaving long tongue-pieces projecting below the surface... this ice, floating high out of water, has probably one quarter of its thickness exposed». In this instance, 'ice' functions with full referential meaning to denote a tangible, physical substance. The lexeme retains its original value as an object of scientific observation – ice is measurable, quantifiable, and part of the environment.

However, the narrative later shifts:

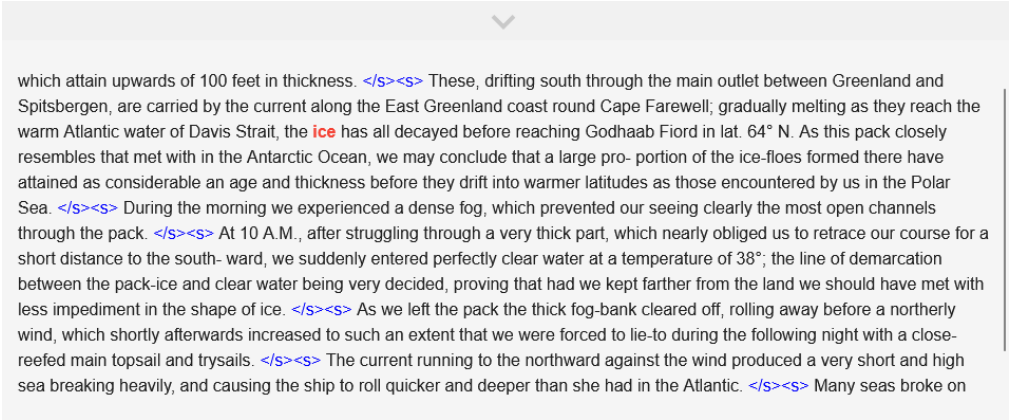

which attain upwards of 100 feet in thickness. </s><s> These, drifting south through the main outlet between Greenland and Spitsbergen, are carried by the current along the East Greenland coast round Cape Farewell; gradually melting as they reach the warm Atlantic water of Davis Strait, the ice has all decayed before reaching Godhaab Fiord in lat. 64° N. As this pack closely resembles that met with in the Antarctic Ocean, we may conclude that a large pro- portion of the ice-floes formed there have attained as considerable an age and thickness before they drift into warmer latitudes as those encountered by us in the Polar Sea. </s><s> During the morning we experienced a dense fog, which prevented our seeing clearly the most open channels through the pack. </s><s> At 10 A.M., after struggling through a very thick part, which nearly obliged us to retrace our course for a short distance to the south- ward, we suddenly entered perfectly clear water at a temperature of 38°; the line of demarcation between the pack-ice and clear water being very decided, proving that had we kept farther from the land we should have met with less impediment in the shape of ice. </s><s> As we left the pack the thick fog-bank cleared off, rolling away before a northerly wind, which shortly afterwards increased to such an extent that we were forced to lie-to during the following night with a close-reefed main topsail and trysails. </s><s> The current running to the northward against the wind produced a very short and high sea breaking heavily, and causing the ship to roll quicker and deeper than she had in the Atlantic. </s><s> Many seas broke on

Figure 7. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordances of perfect tense constructions with 'ice' as subject in the BAEC: (a_2) «ice has all decayed»*

As the ship progresses, clauses such as «after struggling through a very thick part, which nearly obliged us to retrace our course» and «we were forced to lie-to during the following night» suggest that ice, while not explicitly agentive, influences human behaviour and navigation, becoming a force to be negotiated with. It is neither sentient nor intentional, yet it functions as a determining factor in the explorers' experience and decision-making process. This can be intended as an implicit increase in agency, despite the absence of volitional verbs. Moreover, this interpretation is reinforced by the semantic prosody of the passage, which is broadly negative. Words and phrases like 'misfortune', 'dense fog', 'impediment', 'struggling', and 'forced' collectively establish a hostile aura of meaning. Ice is associated with obstruction, and disorientation, even though it is framed in empirical, scientific language.

The presence of such vocabulary suggests that the narrator's attitude toward the environment frames ice not only as an object but as a resistant and

annoying element. In conclusion, while the verb ‘decay’ alone suggests that ice has little agency, the broader narrative context and semantic prosody point to a more complex picture. Therefore, ice demonstrates a resistive agency (Level 3 on the scale), acting as a force that shapes the explorers’ experience and challenges their progress. This shows that verb classification alone is insufficient; agency must be assessed in relation to the wider discursive and prosodic environment. Furthermore, the passage provides interesting evidence of terminological ellipsis with expressions such as ‘heavy floe’, whose head is ‘floe’. It should be noted that unfortunately no glossaries of Arctic terms, either contemporary to the expedition or from later periods, were found in the Bourbon Collection. Therefore, reference has been made to the 1955 *Glossary of Arctic and Subarctic Terms* and to some more recent online glossaries.

In the 1955 glossary, the entry for ‘ice floe’ simply redirects to ‘floe’, defined as «a fragment of sea ice of any size»[84]. The fact that the former is not treated as a separate or distinct entry reveals that ‘ice’ is implicitly understood in the base term ‘floe’, the latter being a hyponym of ‘ice’. In other words, the concept of ice is semantically embedded in ‘floe’, making the explicit addition of ‘ice’ redundant in many contexts. This reasoning extends to ‘heavy floe’, defined as «a floe more than 10 feet thick»[85] in the same glossary.

The elliptical omission of ‘ice’ demonstrates how this modifier had likely become so recurring that it could remain unstated while preserving the complete semantic reference to sea ice fragments. However, a comparison with contemporary sources reveals both continuity and change in such terminological solutions. The *SEAICE Portal* glossary defines ‘ice floe’ as «any comparatively flat piece of sea ice that is at least 20 m wide», introducing specific size criteria, which were not mentioned in the 1955 definition. While this modern glossary does not register ‘floe’ as a separate entry, the detailed classification within the ‘ice floe’ entry reveals the persistence of elliptical usage: the subcategories are listed as ‘giant floes’, ‘very large floes’, etc,

[84] Arctic, Desert, Tropic Information Center, Research Studies Institute, Air University, *Glossary of Arctic and Subarctic Terms*, ADTIC Publication A-105, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, September 1955, p. 30.
[85] *Ibid.*, p. 39.

consistently omitting the word ‘ice’ throughout. This demonstrates that the semantic relationship between ‘ice’ and ‘floe’ has remained stable over time.

Such examples illustrate why it is essential to read specialised lexicographic sources critically: in highly technical registers such as those related to polar exploration, some modifiers become so frequent and expected that they are omitted from definitions and collocations without loss of clarity.

The verb phrase in «the [floe] ice has [been finally driven off]» is in the passive voice, thus depriving ‘ice’ of any intentionality:

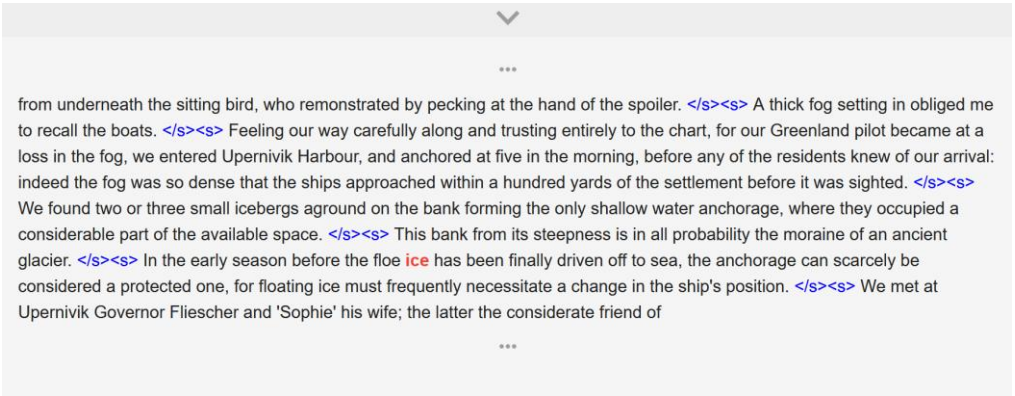


Figure 8. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordances of perfect tense constructions with ‘ice’ as subject in the BAEC: (b) «ice has been finally driven off»*

Sketch Engine identifies ‘ice’ as the grammatical subject in the construction through a *WordSketch* search for all corpus occurrences where the word functions as a noun. However, through the analysis of some lexicographic sources and careful qualitative examination of the data, it becomes clear that ‘floe ice’ is another hyponym of ‘ice’, interchangeable with ‘floe’.

According to the *Encyclopedia Arctica* (1947-51), ‘floe ice’ (written as two separate words) refers to an «extensive area of sea covered with floes of various sizes»[86]. The *Antarctic Dictionary* (2000), however, registers the term with a hyphen (‘floe-ice’) as a synonym of ‘floe’, defining «a piece of free-

[86] V. Stefansson, “Encyclopedia Arctica Volume 1: Geology and Allied Subjects”, 030, Vol I-0041, in *Encyclopedia Arctica* (15 volumes, 1947-1954), Dartmouth College Library Digital Collection, accessed February 14, 2025, https://collections.dartmouth.edu/arctica-beta/html/EA01-07.html.

floating sea ice»[87]. This confusion arose because in the corpus the term is not hyphenated, and therefore *Sketch Engine* identified 'ice' as the sole subject of the verb phrase, failing to recognise the whole term as a distinct hyponymic compound. Nevertheless, this case deserves examination for two methodological reasons. In the first place, it demonstrates how orthographic variations can affect corpus analysis recognition of compound terms, highlighting the importance of qualitative data verification. Secondly, it provides a useful comparison for understanding how agency construction operates across different levels of the lexical hierarchy – from the general hypernym 'ice' to its more specific variants.

In the construction, 'floe ice' is portrayed as a persistent obstacle manifesting resistance to human plans: it must be forcibly removed by some kind of environmental agent, presumably strong winds. According to *Merriam-Webster*, 'drive off' means «to cause or force (someone or something) to leave», with examples such as «They drove off the invaders» or «waved her hands to drive the flies off». The verb is typically reserved for animate or resistant entities that must be actively removed. Thus, this verb choice might seem to denote a metaphorical use, positioning the ice formation as a more active and resilient component. Nevertheless, the passive syntactic structure ensures that 'floe ice' remains primarily understood as a physical substance acted upon rather than as an autonomous agent. So, despite the interesting semantic tension (where the verb apparently implies resistance), the grammatical construction corresponds to a Level 1 agency on the scale – where the entity is affected by external forces. In terms of semantic prosody, 'floe ice' functions with a predominantly negative charge, representing an obstacle to navigation. However, collocates such as 'driven off' and 'finally' introduce a more neutral or positive tone, suggesting relief when this particular ice formation no longer impedes maritime passage. The perfect construction «[the young] ice had [been drifted off]» in the same volume presents a clear example of ice as a fully objectified entity:

[87] B. Hince, *The Antarctic Dictionary. A complete Guide to Antarctic English*, Collingwood, CSIRO Publishing & Museum of Victoria, 2000, p. 134.

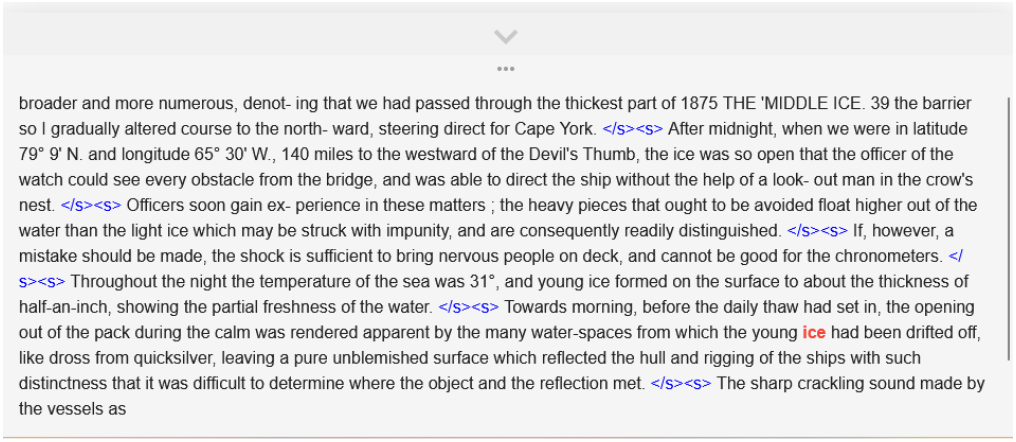


Figure 9. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordances of perfect tense constructions with 'ice' as subject in the BAEC: (c) «ice had been drifted off»*

The broader context describes the ice pack as 'young' or recently formed, thus sufficiently open to allow navigation with relative ease, emphasising human control: «the officer of the watch could see every obstacle… and was able to direct the ship without the help of a look-out man». The construction «may be struck with impunity» notably reinforces this interpretation: the term 'impunity' implies that no adverse consequences can occur from acting upon the light ice. This suggests a semantic prosody that is unexpectedly positive, or at least risk-neutral, in relation to an otherwise dangerous element. Here, ice can be intended as a non-agentive, manageable object, whose resistance can be calculated, tested and even disregarded. It functions as a physical substance devoid of intentionality or active influence and can be therefore classified as passive (Level 1).

The clause «[the] ice had [closed everywhere]» suggests a certain degree of agency, where ice appears to actively influence the narrative through anthropomorphic attribution:

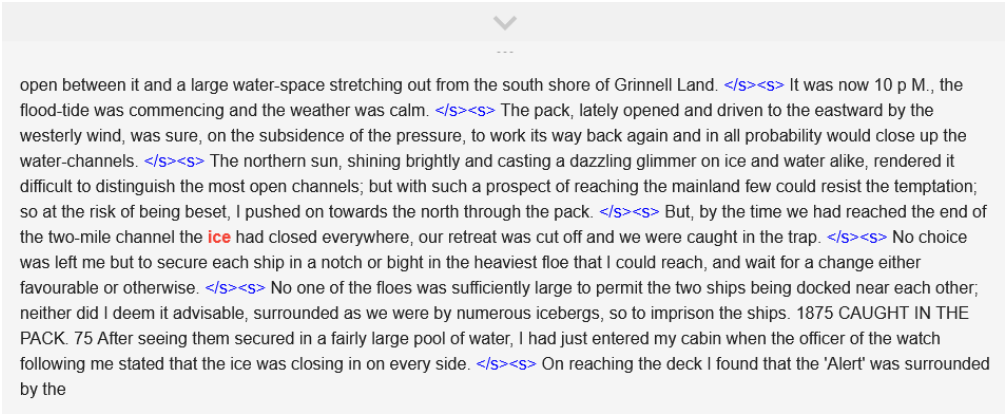


Figure 10. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordances of perfect tense constructions with 'ice' as subject in the BAEC: (d) «ice had closed everywhere»*

This reading is supported by collocates such as 'cut off', 'caught', 'retreat', 'trap' and 'imprison', which collectively create a negative semantic prosody, evoking a sense of threat and entrapment. However, it is important to acknowledge that verbs like 'open' and 'close' are standard terms in scientific discourse to describe natural dynamics of ice dispersion and formation.

As noted in the *Encyclopedia Arctica* (1947-1954), the processes of ice closing and opening are complex natural phenomena not solely caused by tides[88]. However, the closing of ice may evoke the sense of an external opposing force, especially when coupled with descriptions of human vulnerability: «our retreat was cut off», «the officer of the watch following me stated that the ice was closing in on every side». Though the ice is not attributed full intentionality, it is shown as having external impact and situational dominance, consistent with an obstructive role. This positions it at Level 3 on the agency scale, where natural processes affect human plans.

At first glance, the construction «[thicker or harder] ice had [to be left alone]» appears to be passive, but the surrounding context reveals characteristics of Level 3 agency:

[88] V. Stefansson, "Encyclopedia Arctica Volume 1: Geology and Allied Subjects", 053, Vol I-0064, accessed February 14, 2025.

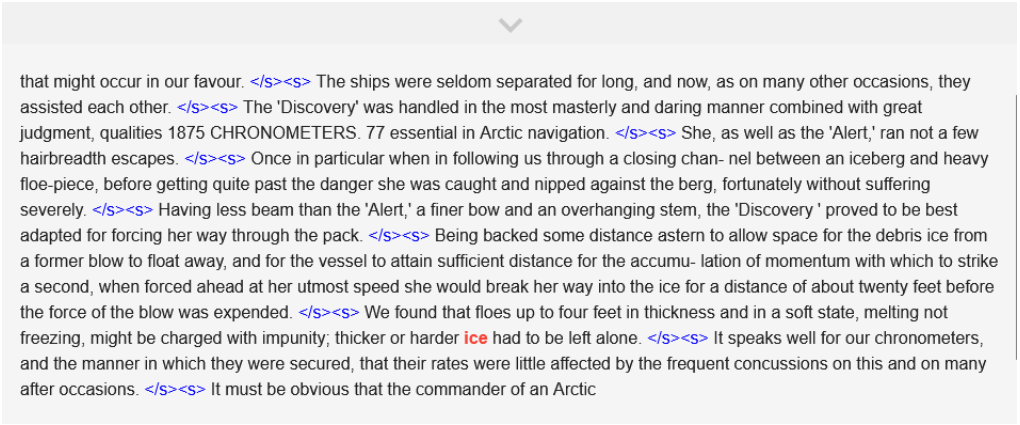


Figure 11. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordances of perfect tense constructions with 'ice' as subject in the BAEC: (e) «ice had to be left alone»*

Expressions like 'closing channel', 'caught and nipped', and 'frequent concussions' emphasise the ice's obstructive and threatening nature and the ships' efforts to navigate such a treacherous environment. This conveys a semantic prosody that is strongly charged with danger and resistance, highlighting the adverse relationship between humankind and nature. From a lexical perspective, «had to be left alone» seems to contribute to the narrative construction of ice as an almost agentive *Other*. While it retains its concrete, material meaning as a physical substance and does not actively initiate actions, it creates significant constraints and obstacles that demand human deference and strategic adaptation.

In the following passage, most references to ice, such as «the ice continued to drift», «movements of the ice», and «the fickle ice had closed in again», focus on the natural element as a tangible force that impacts the course of the journey:

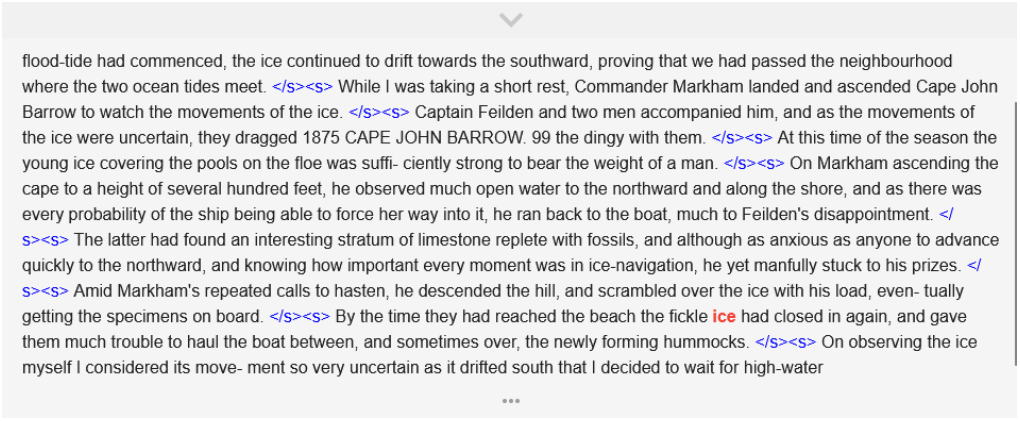


Figure 12. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordances of perfect tense constructions with 'ice' as subject in the BAEC: (f)« ice had closed in again»*

Specifically, in the clause «the ice continued to drift towards the southward», 'drift' indicates a "Level 2: Natural Process Agency", since as noted in the *Encyclopedia Arctica*, the verb refers to the motion of sea ice or vessels resulting from ocean currents[89]. Although the ice does not act with intentionality, its motion affects navigation. «Young ice covering the pools» corresponds to a Level 1 agency – a descriptive reference to existing ice conditions without any implied movement or process. «The ice opened out from the shore» also corresponds to Level 2, describing a natural separation process due to forces like currents or winds. The collocational context tends to describe ice movements and formation while maintaining literal, scientific discourse rather than employing figurative language. For instance, the expression 'young ice', which refers to ice that has recently formed and is still in its early stages of development[90], is used to describe a material characteristic of the environment. Young ice is typically thinner, more fragile and less stable than older ice, which renders it a difficult and unpredictable obstacle for explorers. Therefore, it is not imbued with any human-like qualities or active role in the narrative.

The clause «[the fickle] ice had [closed in again]» illustrates a process with clear consequences on human activity. The verb 'close in' implies a spatial restriction affecting the explorers' mobility, which aligns with "Level 3

[89] *Ibid.*, 025, Vol I-0035, accessed June 06, 2025.
[90] *Ibid.*, 115, Vol I-0126, accessed June 06, 2025.

Restrictive Agency". While being a term commonly used in scientific descriptions of ice behaviour, its use here – followed by the crew's struggle to haul the boat – seems to amplify a sense of external opposition.

This illustrates how seemingly neutral terms can acquire narrative or symbolic load depending on their linguistic context. The adjective 'fickle' introduces an element of unpredictability which is typically associated with sentient behaviour. While it is not sufficient to fully anthropomorphise ice, this evaluative descriptor suggests an incipient personification.

The cumulative effect of collocates like 'trouble' and 'uncertain' indicates a negative connotation. This framing presents ice not merely as a passive obstacle, but as a potentially threatening force. While it may not exhibit full agency, the surrounding lexical choices contribute to a dramatised depiction of the environment, subtly supporting interpretations of the Arctic as a space of resistance. The clause «[the] ice had [been forced high up on the shore]» adopts a clearly passive structure, in which ice is depicted as an object acted upon by other natural forces:

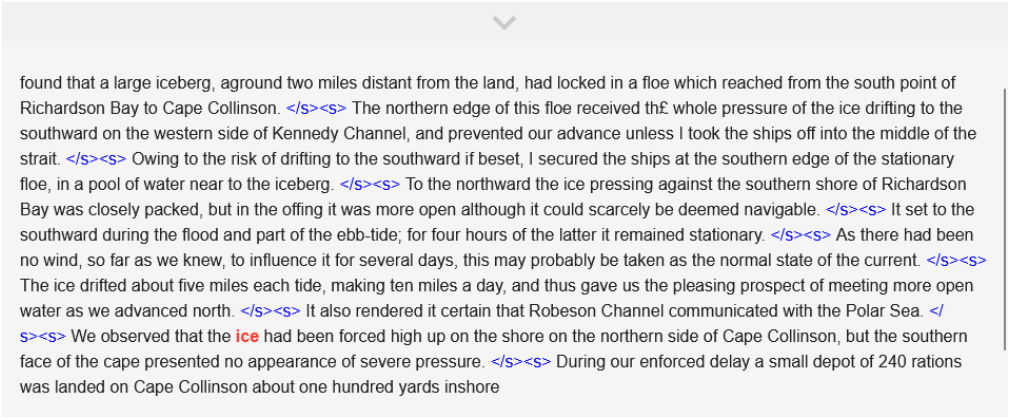

found that a large iceberg, aground two miles distant from the land, had locked in a floe which reached from the south point of Richardson Bay to Cape Collinson. </s><s> The northern edge of this floe received th£ whole pressure of the ice drifting to the southward on the western side of Kennedy Channel, and prevented our advance unless I took the ships off into the middle of the strait. </s><s> Owing to the risk of drifting to the southward if beset, I secured the ships at the southern edge of the stationary floe, in a pool of water near to the iceberg. </s><s> To the northward the ice pressing against the southern shore of Richardson Bay was closely packed, but in the offing it was more open although it could scarcely be deemed navigable. </s><s> It set to the southward during the flood and part of the ebb-tide; for four hours of the latter it remained stationary. </s><s> As there had been no wind, so far as we knew, to influence it for several days, this may probably be taken as the normal state of the current. </s><s> The ice drifted about five miles each tide, making ten miles a day, and thus gave us the pleasing prospect of meeting more open water as we advanced north. </s><s> It also rendered it certain that Robeson Channel communicated with the Polar Sea. </s><s> We observed that the ice had been forced high up on the shore on the northern side of Cape Collinson, but the southern face of the cape presented no appearance of severe pressure. </s><s> During our enforced delay a small depot of 240 rations was landed on Cape Collinson about one hundred yards inshore

Figure 13. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordances of perfect tense constructions with 'ice' as subject in the BAEC: (g) «ice had been forced»*

Even in expressions such as «the ice pressed against the southern shore», ice remains narratively positioned as a passive element exerting mechanical pressure due to natural causes. One construction that might initially appear to suggest a more agentive framing is «the risk of drifting to the southward if beset», where 'beset' may seem to evoke a state of threat or

entrapment. However, it is important to note that it is also a technical term used in polar and maritime navigation to describe a specific condition: according to the *Encyclopedia Arctica*, it refers to «a vessel so closely surrounded by sea ice that control of its movement is lost»[91]. On the agency scale, ice is here consistently positioned at Level 2, exhibiting natural process agency that may impact human activities without displaying the deliberate obstructive behaviour that would characterise Level 3. In conclusion, the lexical field surrounding ice includes terms reflecting resistance and constraint, which nevertheless remain largely denotative. The semantic prosody of the passage can therefore be described as neutral, displaying a technical and descriptive tone.

In «[the] ice having [been piled up]», the references to ice are primarily descriptive:

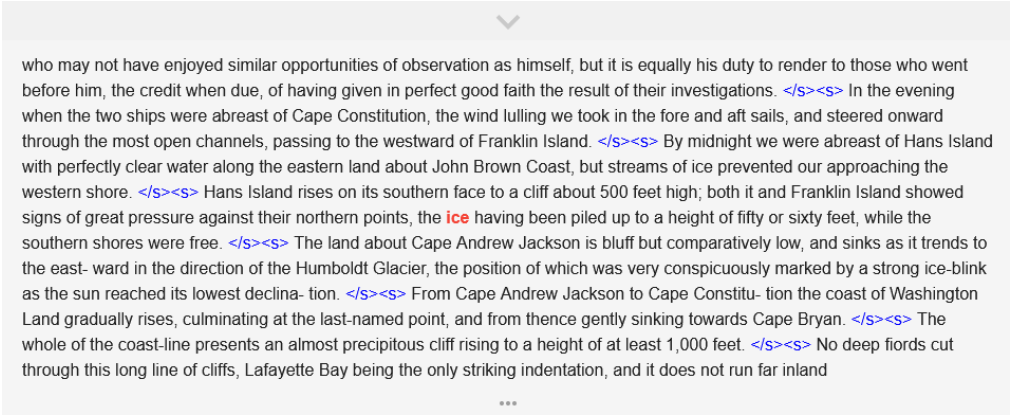

who may not have enjoyed similar opportunities of observation as himself, but it is equally his duty to render to those who went before him, the credit when due, of having given in perfect good faith the result of their investigations. </s><s> In the evening when the two ships were abreast of Cape Constitution, the wind lulling we took in the fore and aft sails, and steered onward through the most open channels, passing to the westward of Franklin Island. </s><s> By midnight we were abreast of Hans Island with perfectly clear water along the eastern land about John Brown Coast, but streams of ice prevented our approaching the western shore. </s><s> Hans Island rises on its southern face to a cliff about 500 feet high; both it and Franklin Island showed signs of great pressure against their northern points, the ice having been piled up to a height of fifty or sixty feet, while the southern shores were free. </s><s> The land about Cape Andrew Jackson is bluff but comparatively low, and sinks as it trends to the east- ward in the direction of the Humboldt Glacier, the position of which was very conspicuously marked by a strong ice-blink as the sun reached its lowest declina- tion. </s><s> From Cape Andrew Jackson to Cape Constitu- tion the coast of Washington Land gradually rises, culminating at the last-named point, and from thence gently sinking towards Cape Bryan. </s><s> The whole of the coast-line presents an almost precipitous cliff rising to a height of at least 1,000 feet. </s><s> No deep fiords cut through this long line of cliffs, Lafayette Bay being the only striking indentation, and it does not run far inland

Figure 14. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordances of perfect tense constructions with 'ice' as subject in the BAEC: (h) «ice having been piled up»*

Verbs like 'prevented' (in «streams of ice prevented our approaching the western shore») may at first seem to carry a degree of agency. However, the broader context clearly frames this as a material impediment: the ice is not endowed with intentionality but simply constitutes a physical barrier to navigation, aligning with "Level 3: Obstructive Agency". Moreover, the participial construction «having been piled up to a height of fifty or sixty feet» demonstrates Level 1 agency: rather than being represented as an agent exerting

[91] *Ibid*., 007, Vol I-0017, accessed June 13, 2025.

force, ice is depicted as an element shaped by external pressures, most likely tidal or wind driven. With regard to semantic prosody, the collocates surrounding ‘ice’, such as ‘streams’, ‘piled up’, ‘pressure’, and ‘prevented’, convey a neutral to slightly negative tone. These terms do not imbue ice with symbolic meaning: they rather highlight the navigational difficulties it presents. The language remains specific and grounded in empirical observation.

In «[the young] ice has [formed again so rapidly]», ‘ice’ is portrayed as undergoing a natural, spontaneous process of re-formation in response to falling temperatures:

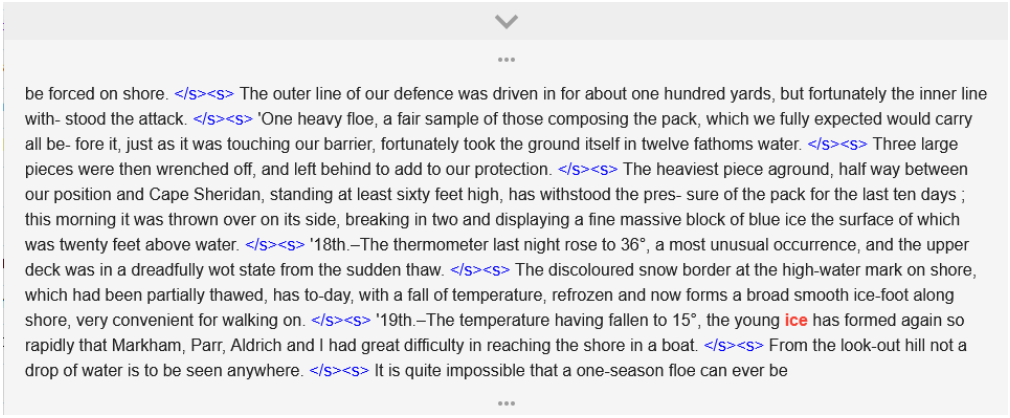

be forced on shore. </s><s> The outer line of our defence was driven in for about one hundred yards, but fortunately the inner line with- stood the attack. </s><s> 'One heavy floe, a fair sample of those composing the pack, which we fully expected would carry all be- fore it, just as it was touching our barrier, fortunately took the ground itself in twelve fathoms water. </s><s> Three large pieces were then wrenched off, and left behind to add to our protection. </s><s> The heaviest piece aground, half way between our position and Cape Sheridan, standing at least sixty feet high, has withstood the pres- sure of the pack for the last ten days ; this morning it was thrown over on its side, breaking in two and displaying a fine massive block of blue ice the surface of which was twenty feet above water. </s><s> '18th.–The thermometer last night rose to 36°, a most unusual occurrence, and the upper deck was in a dreadfully wot state from the sudden thaw. </s><s> The discoloured snow border at the high-water mark on shore, which had been partially thawed, has to-day, with a fall of temperature, refrozen and now forms a broad smooth ice-foot along shore, very convenient for walking on. </s><s> '19th.–The temperature having fallen to 15°, the young ice has formed again so rapidly that Markham, Parr, Aldrich and I had great difficulty in reaching the shore in a boat. </s><s> From the look-out hill not a drop of water is to be seen anywhere. </s><s> It is quite impossible that a one-season floe can ever be

Figure 15. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordances of perfect tense constructions with ‘ice’ as subject in the BAEC: (i) «ice has formed»*

This aligns with Level 2: while no intentionality is implied, the construction presents ice as initiating a natural process, reinforcing its dynamic role. The surrounding context supports this reading through similar syntactic structures. For example, in «the heaviest piece [...] has withstood the pressure of the pack», the verb ‘withstood’ attributes endurance to ice, suggesting a Level 3 agency, where ice actively resists external forces. This phrasing employs terminology often used in human or military contexts[92], thus attributing qualities of conscious resistance.

[92] *Cambridge Dictionary*, “withstand”, «to be strong enough, or not be changed by something, or to oppose a person or thing successfully», accessed June 14, 2025, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/withstand

By contrast, the collocation ‘blue ice’ demonstrates precise technical terminology. According to the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution’s *Sea Ice Glossary*, this refers to «the oldest and hardest form of glacier ice, distinguished by a slightly bluish or greenish color»[93]. In this case, the noun ‘ice’ retains its literal, referential meaning as a physical substance, while the adjective ‘blue’ adds a specific structural quality based on observable characteristics. This shows how specialised terminology operates within scientific registers to increase precision and encode domain-specific knowledge. In «this morning it was thrown over on its side, breaking in two», ice becomes the grammatical subject of a passive construction indicating a loss of stability due to external pressure and corresponding to Level 1 agency. However, the lexical choice of ‘thrown over’ suggests a certain degree of violence, which contributes to a negative semantic prosody, further reinforced by expressions like ‘wrenched off’ and ‘forced on shore’. These collocates create an image cluster dominated by rupture, impact, and involuntary movement, portraying ice as a medium through which the hostile conditions of the Arctic manifest themselves. The expressions ‘attack’, ‘pressure’, ‘dreadfully wet’ and ‘difficulty reaching the shore’ suggest that ice poses challenges to the expedition, yet they remain within the domain of natural phenomena. There are clear instances of specialised Arctic terminology:

1. ‘Ice-foot’ – defined by the *Glossary of Arctic and Subarctic Terms* (1955) as «fast ice formed along and attached to the shore, whose base is at or below the low water mark. Also called ‘ballycadder,’ ‘bellicatter,’ ‘cadder,’ ‘catter,’ ‘collar ice,’ ‘fast ice belt.’». Here, ‘ice’ has become part of a compound technical term that denotes a specific environmental feature: it functions as a modifier that defines a specific type of ‘foot’ (a formation along the shoreline).
2. ‘Ice floe’ – where, as previously discussed, ‘ice’ constitutes an implicit component of the term ‘floe’ within the specialised register.

[93] Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, “Sea Ice Glossary”, accessed June 14, 2025, https://www.whoi.edu/know-your-ocean/ocean-topics/how-the-ocean-works/frozen-ocean/sea-ice/sea-ice-glossary/.

Within the following passage, the expression ‘new ice’ provides an interesting case of specialised Arctic terminology:

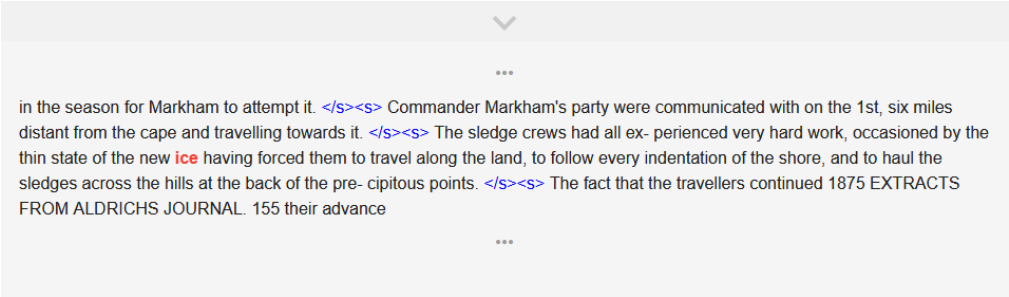


Figure 16. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordances of perfect tense constructions with ‘ice’ as subject in the BAEC: (j) «ice having forced»*

According to the *National Snow and Ice Data Center* (*NSIDC*) glossary, ‘new ice’ refers to «a general category of ice that consists of frazil, grease ice, slush, and shuga». Each of these constituent types is also precisely defined:

- ‘Grease ice’ is described as «a very thin, soupy layer of frazil crystals clumped together, which makes the ocean surface resemble an oil slick».
- ‘Shuga’ is «a form of new ice, composed of spongy, white lumps a few cm across, that tend to form in rough seas; they resemble slushy snowballs».
- ‘Slush’, as per the *Glossary of Arctic and Subarctic Terms* (1955), denotes: «1. Snow or firn saturated with water. 2. Floating ice crystals, which may or may not be slightly frozen together, formed during the initial stages of the freezing of sea ice. Also called ‘ice gruel.’». However, in this context, ‘slush’ would naturally refer to a floating, unconsolidated mass of ice crystals typical of ‘new ice’, rather than to melting snow.

These definitions reveal how specialised usage transforms ‘ice’ from a general element into a scientifically differentiated substance, establishing referential specificity within Arctic scientific discourse.

In the line «the thin state of the new ice having forced them to travel along the land», ice demonstrates “Level 3 Obstructive Agency”, where it creates constraints that significantly alter human movement and decision-making. While no human-like intentionality is attributed to ice, its physical properties actively determine the expedition’s route. The passage overall exhibits a negative semantic prosody, due to the use of lexicon expressing struggle, fatigue, and instability: ‘very hard work’, ‘thin state of ice’, ‘forced’, ‘haul’, ‘precipitous points’.

In the clause «[all the pure] ice has [been formed from the melted snow]» ‘ice’ functions as a subject, but it clearly corresponds to the affected participant:

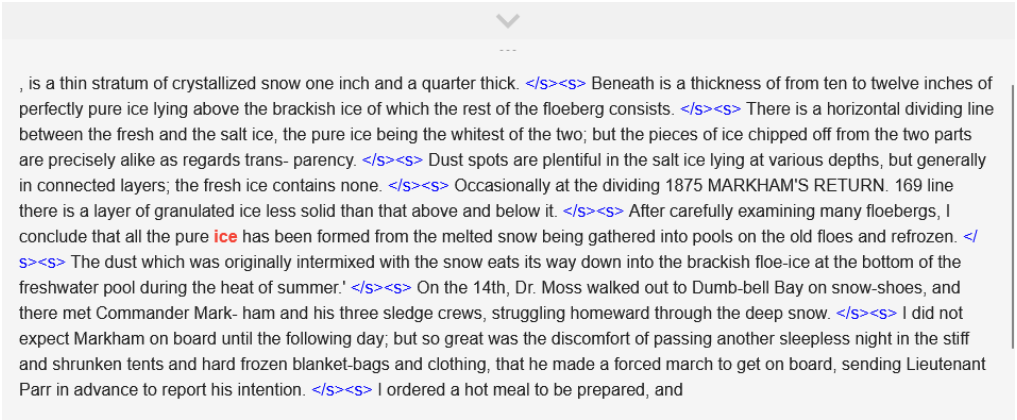

, is a thin stratum of crystallized snow one inch and a quarter thick. </s><s> Beneath is a thickness of from ten to twelve inches of perfectly pure ice lying above the brackish ice of which the rest of the floeberg consists. </s><s> There is a horizontal dividing line between the fresh and the salt ice, the pure ice being the whitest of the two; but the pieces of ice chipped off from the two parts are precisely alike as regards trans- parency. </s><s> Dust spots are plentiful in the salt ice lying at various depths, but generally in connected layers; the fresh ice contains none. </s><s> Occasionally at the dividing 1875 MARKHAM'S RETURN. 169 line there is a layer of granulated ice less solid than that above and below it. </s><s> After carefully examining many floebergs, I conclude that all the pure ice has been formed from the melted snow being gathered into pools on the old floes and refrozen. </s><s> The dust which was originally intermixed with the snow eats its way down into the brackish floe-ice at the bottom of the freshwater pool during the heat of summer.' </s><s> On the 14th, Dr. Moss walked out to Dumb-bell Bay on snow-shoes, and there met Commander Mark- ham and his three sledge crews, struggling homeward through the deep snow. </s><s> I did not expect Markham on board until the following day; but so great was the discomfort of passing another sleepless night in the stiff and shrunken tents and hard frozen blanket-bags and clothing, that he made a forced march to get on board, sending Lieutenant Parr in advance to report his intention. </s><s> I ordered a hot meal to be prepared, and

Figure 17. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordances of perfect tense constructions with ‘ice’ as subject in the BAEC: (k) «ice has been formed»*

In terms of the agency scale, *ice* is here positioned at “Level 1: No Linguistic Agency”, functioning as the goal of a natural material transformation caused by environmental conditions. The passage presents several instances in which ‘ice’ functions as the node of some technical collocations: ‘fresh ice’, ‘pure ice’, ‘brackish floe-ice’, ‘salt ice’, and ‘granulated ice’. These are all part of specialised Arctic terminology, whereby ice functions as a full referential noun

with a precise meaning. For example, ‘pure ice’ is described as ice formed from refrozen snowmelt, lying above brackish ice and free of ‘dust spots’.

This differs from the technical definition of ‘fresh ice’, which – according to the *Glossary of Arctic and Subarctic Terms* – may also refer to young or desalinated sea ice, not necessarily as visually pristine or structurally compact as pure ice. The language remains highly denotative: the various modifiers of ‘ice’ serve primarily to convey objective information about its physical properties, maintaining the specialised vocabulary of scientific Arctic discourse. Furthermore, given the context, the semantic prosody throughout the passage is predominantly neutral. This neutrality aligns with the passage’s purpose of precise description and classification within a specialised scientific register.

In «[the] ice has [sunk down]», ‘ice’ collocates with a verb denoting physical action or transformation. By looking at the broader context, it keeps pairing with similar verbs:

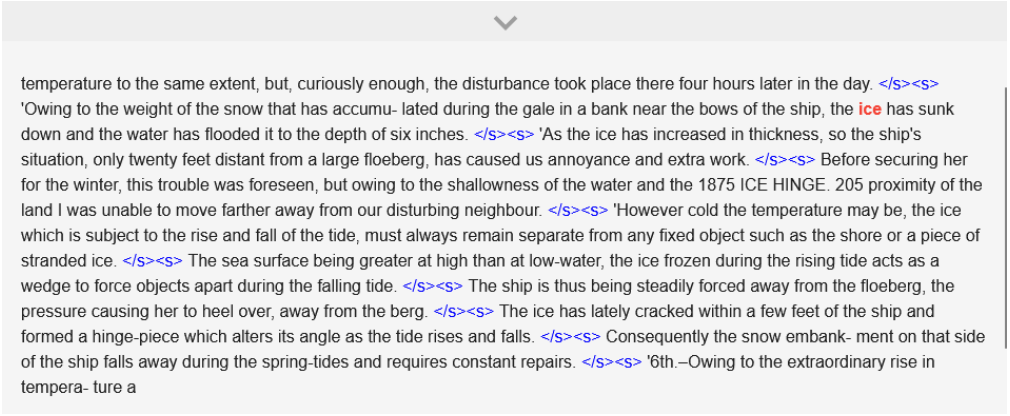

temperature to the same extent, but, curiously enough, the disturbance took place there four hours later in the day. </s><s> 'Owing to the weight of the snow that has accumu- lated during the gale in a bank near the bows of the ship, the ice has sunk down and the water has flooded it to the depth of six inches. </s><s> 'As the ice has increased in thickness, so the ship's situation, only twenty feet distant from a large floeberg, has caused us annoyance and extra work. </s><s> Before securing her for the winter, this trouble was foreseen, but owing to the shallowness of the water and the 1875 ICE HINGE. 205 proximity of the land I was unable to move farther away from our disturbing neighbour. </s><s> 'However cold the temperature may be, the ice which is subject to the rise and fall of the tide, must always remain separate from any fixed object such as the shore or a piece of stranded ice. </s><s> The sea surface being greater at high than at low-water, the ice frozen during the rising tide acts as a wedge to force objects apart during the falling tide. </s><s> The ship is thus being steadily forced away from the floeberg, the pressure causing her to heel over, away from the berg. </s><s> The ice has lately cracked within a few feet of the ship and formed a hinge-piece which alters its angle as the tide rises and falls. </s><s> Consequently the snow embank- ment on that side of the ship falls away during the spring-tides and requires constant repairs. </s><s> '6th.–Owing to the extraordinary rise in tempera- ture a

Figure 18. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordances of perfect tense constructions with ‘ice’ as subject in the BAEC: (l) «ice has sunk down»*

Throughout the passage, ice remains grammatically active but semantically reactive: its actions are either internally driven (thermodynamic or gravitational changes) or caused by external conditions (temperature and tidal movements). The verbs collocating with ‘ice’ are mapped onto the agency scale as follows:

Verb	Agency Level	Explanation
has sunk down	Level 2 – Natural Process Agency	Gravitational response to accumulated snow; natural process with environmental impact (flooding).
has increased (in thickness)	Level 2 – Natural Process Agency	Internal physical transformation due to freezing conditions.
must remain separate	Level 1 – No Linguistic Agency	Describes a static spatial state governed by physical constraints.
has (lately) cracked	Level 2 – Natural Process Agency	Material response to pressure; natural fracturing process.
has formed a hinge-piece	Level 2 – Natural Process Agency	Result of natural cracking process affecting ship's condition.

Table 2. Agency level analysis of verb constructions with 'ice' as subject in fig. 18 excerpt

According to the agency scale, in this passage ice primarily operates at Levels 1 to 2. The verbs that collocate with it reflect natural processes rather than deliberate action. For instance, «the ice has sunk down and the water has flooded it to the depth of six inches» and «the ice has (lately) cracked» correspond to Level 2, as they describe natural phenomena that produce tangible effects on the surrounding physical space. Similarly, «the ice has increased in thickness» aligns with Level 2, reflecting natural transformation due to freezing conditions. The statement «the ice must remain separate» exemplifies Level 1, representing a scenario in which ice is presented as a passive physical entity defined by its location rather than by any active behaviour. The noun 'ice' maintains high referential specificity throughout the passage, consistently modified by terms that emphasise its physical properties

and structural responsiveness. The semantic prosody of this passage is, on the whole, neutral to technical. In the following passage, it is not ‘ice’ as a whole but rather its surface that functions as the subject of a verb denoting physical change:

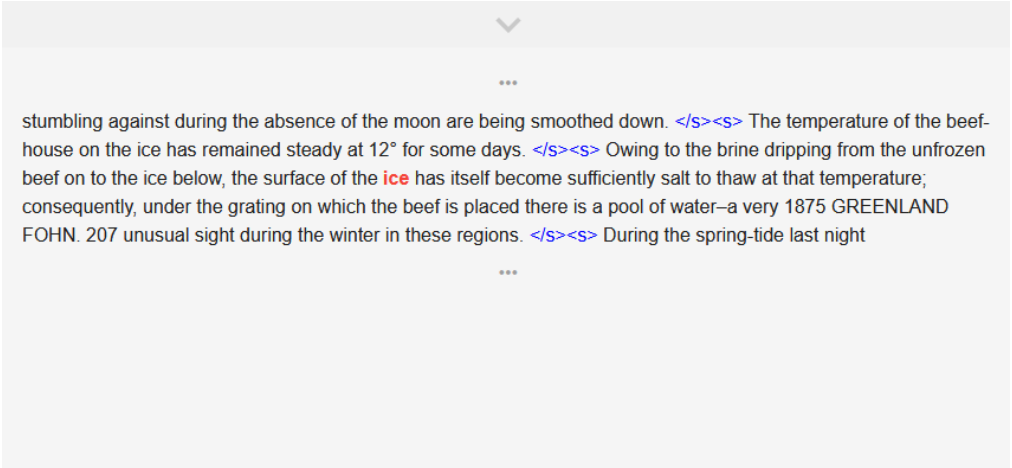


Figure 19. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordances of perfect tense constructions with ‘ice’ as subject in the BAEC: (m) «ice has itself become»*

In the sentence «[the surface of the] ice has [itself become sufficiently salt to thaw at that temperature]», the verb signals a low level of agency (Level 2). The transformation is externally induced by «the brine dripping from the unfrozen beef on to the ice below». However, the partitive subject reinforces the idea of ice as a complex, layered entity, whose various parts (e.g., surface, structure, edge) may behave differently under environmental conditions. The noun phrase retains high material specificity, and the prosody remains neutral.

In «[the] ice has [contracted and cracked]», ‘ice’ is the explicit subject of two intransitive verbs, both denoting physical transformation under environmental pressure:

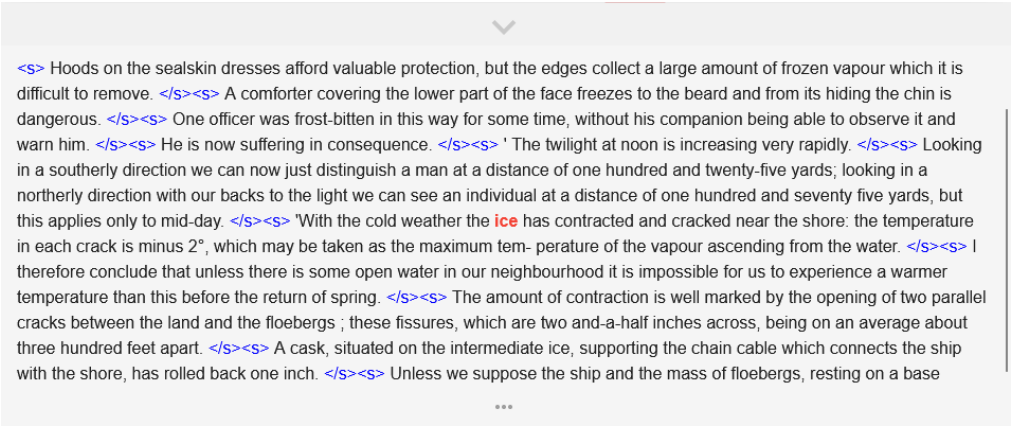


Figure 20. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordances of perfect tense constructions with 'ice' as subject in the BAEC: (n) «ice has contracted and cracked»*

- «has contracted» reflects a Level 2 agency, as it portrays the ice undergoing internal change in direct response to cold weather. This contraction functions as a precondition for rupture.
- «cracked» also indicates Level 2 agency. Although the cracking creates visible effects and disrupts ice stability, it remains a natural response to thermal stress rather than deliberate obstruction.

Together, these verbs position ice as a materially reactive element responding to environmental conditions: it maintains its full referential meaning and the semantic prosody remains neutral.

In «[the] ice has [been perfectly white and colourless]», 'ice' functions as the grammatical subject in a copular construction describing a persistent state: it corresponds to Level 1 on the agency scale, indicating a passive or static condition with no direct impact on the environment:

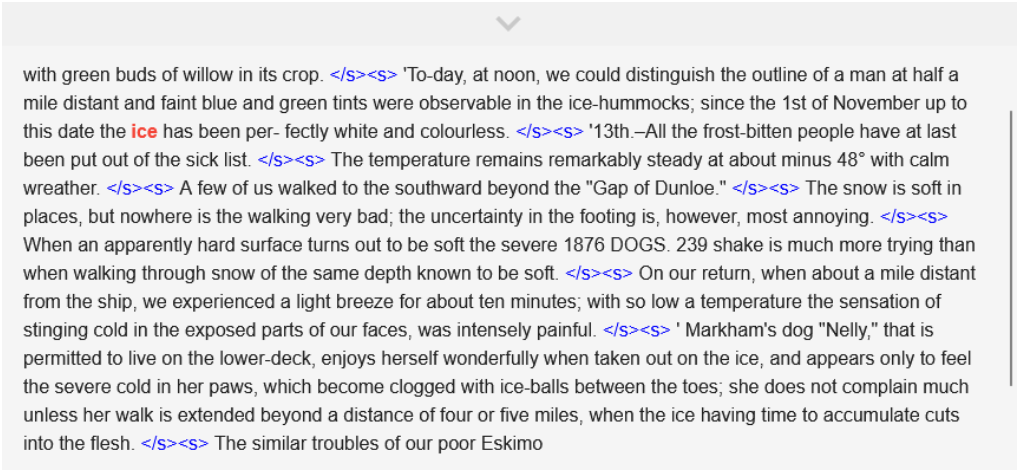


Figure 21. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordances of perfect tense constructions with 'ice' as subject in the BAEC: (o) «ice has been perfectly white and colourless»*

'Ice' maintains referential specificity as a visible and measurable substance within the empirical discourse. The semantic prosody remains neutral, consistent with the observational register of the surrounding text. However, this descriptive tone shifts in the clause «when the ice having time to accumulate cuts into the flesh», where the verb 'cuts' corresponds to "Level 3: Obstructive Agency", suggesting that the natural element creates physical obstacles harmful to living beings. The semantic prosody becomes therefore slightly negative, reflecting discomfort and physical vulnerability, and momentarily disrupts the otherwise neutral and scientific tone of the passage.

Having established the analytical framework through detailed examination of selected perfect constructions with 'have', the analysis now shifts to simple verb constructions within the same three semantic domains. Among the process verbs, a particularly striking example of agency construction can be found in an instance where 'ice' serves as the subject of 'open'. This passage represents a noteworthy example of lexical transformation that appears in the BAEC and, more precisely, in the text *Shores of the Polar Sea*:

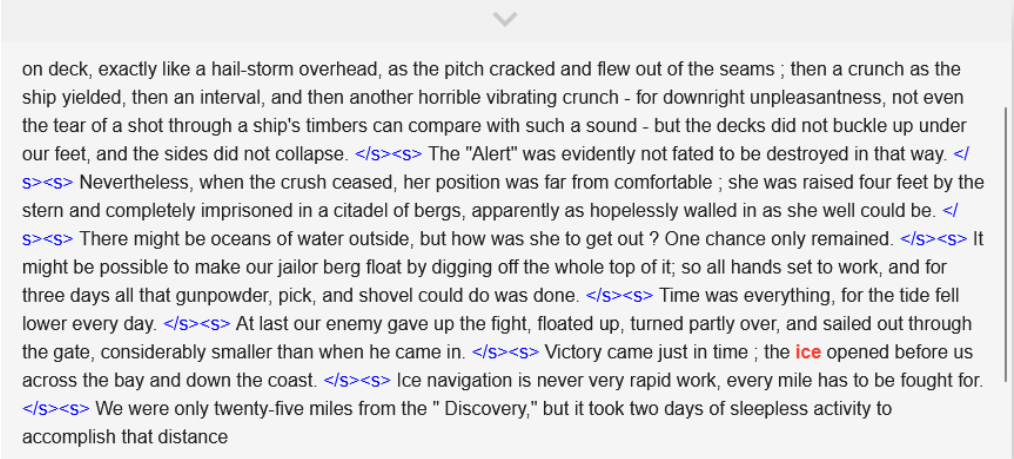


Figure 22. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordances of simple tense constructions with 'ice' as subject in the BAEC: (a) «ice opened»*

Here the compound 'jailor berg' exemplifies how lexical items can be delexicalised when applied metaphorically to a new domain, yet subsequently relexicalised through co-occurrence with terms from their original semantic field. The analysis focuses on 'jailor berg' because the primary concern of this study is the representation of ice as the principal natural element of the Arctic landscape. 'Berg' is the abbreviated form of 'iceberg' and maintains its full referential meaning as an ice formation throughout the passage, while 'jailor' first undergoes delexicalisation and is subsequently relexicalised.

The military terminology – including 'jailor', 'imprisoned', 'citadel', 'enemy', 'fight', and 'victory' – demonstrates a systematic process where each term, when considered individually, undergoes delexicalisation as it is removed from its original military context and applied to natural phenomena. However, these terms are collectively relexicalised through their mutual presence, which reconstructs the complete semantic field of warfare and military strategy. In 'jailor berg', it is specifically the ice formation that is characterised as 'jailor', transforming the physical ice into an active agent of imprisonment and conflict. The collocates encompass a vivid "struggle/resistance image cluster", where ice – here identified through the hyponym 'berg' – is symbolised as the enemy in a battle for survival. According to the agency classification scale, it is therefore positioned at "Level 4: Personified Agency", because it is explicitly endowed with human-like intentionality and consciousness, functioning as a

strategic antagonist capable of imprisonment and tactical warfare. However, ice exhibits a shift in agency level within the same passage: in the clause «the ice opened before us», a natural process is described without implying anthropomorphic qualities ("Level 2: Natural Process Agency"). This demonstrates how contextual framing and collocational patterns can dynamically alter the semantic role attributed to the same natural element – from personified military adversary to natural environmental process and vice versa.

The semantic prosody carries a predominantly negative connotation due to the military image cluster depicting ice as an antagonistic force in an ongoing battle against human endeavours. Among the simple verb constructions examined, particular attention is given to motion verbs (i.e. 'drift', 'move', 'rise', 'ease') and interaction verbs ('prevent', 'permit', 'block', 'surround'), which demonstrate particularly high potential for agency attribution:

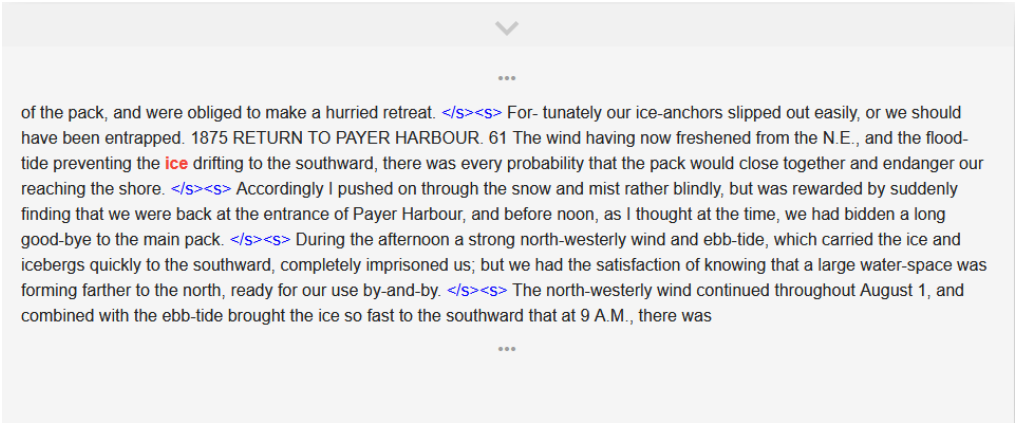

of the pack, and were obliged to make a hurried retreat. </s><s> For- tunately our ice-anchors slipped out easily, or we should have been entrapped. 1875 RETURN TO PAYER HARBOUR. 61 The wind having now freshened from the N.E., and the flood-tide preventing the ice drifting to the southward, there was every probability that the pack would close together and endanger our reaching the shore. </s><s> Accordingly I pushed on through the snow and mist rather blindly, but was rewarded by suddenly finding that we were back at the entrance of Payer Harbour, and before noon, as I thought at the time, we had bidden a long good-bye to the main pack. </s><s> During the afternoon a strong north-westerly wind and ebb-tide, which carried the ice and icebergs quickly to the southward, completely imprisoned us; but we had the satisfaction of knowing that a large water-space was forming farther to the north, ready for our use by-and-by. </s><s> The north-westerly wind continued throughout August 1, and combined with the ebb-tide brought the ice so fast to the southward that at 9 A.M., there was

Figure 23. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordances of simple tense constructions with 'ice' as subject in the BAEC: (b) «ice drifting»*

According to the *SEAICE Portal* glossary, 'drifting ice'[94] indicates «ice on rivers, lakes or seas that moves in response to wind currents or other forces», while Stefansson's *Encyclopedia Arctica* defines 'drift ice' as «all sea ice that is not fast [i.e. ice not anchored to the shore], regardless of the per cent of

[94] Seaice Portal, "Drifting ice", accessed August 22, 2025, https://www.meereisportal.de/en/glossary/Drifting%20ice.

cover»[95]. These technical definitions confirm that the verb ‘drift’ when used with ice as subject denotes the physical phenomenon of ice movement caused by wind and tidal forces. The construction «preventing the ice drifting to the southward» refers to observable natural processes documented in oceanographic literature. As per the agency classification scale, this usage clearly positions ice at “Level 2: Natural Process Agency”. Despite language that potentially evokes anthropomorphic readings («completely imprisoned», «endanger our reaching the shore»), the discourse maintains its empirical focus.

Additional instances of ‘ice’ serving as the subject of ‘drift’ further confirm this pattern. The examination of several occurrences where ice serves as the subject of ‘move’ reveals a similar usage: both verbs refer to physical phenomena. The semantic prosody remains neutral throughout, with collocates such as ‘ebb-tide’ and ‘flood-tide’ (describing the directional currents and sea level variations within the daily tidal cycle), and precise spatial measurements creating a discourse framework of maritime observation.

The verb ‘rise’ likewise maintains Level 2 classification across different contexts. In the construction «[huge masses of solid blue] ice rising [gently]», the verb describes the vertical positioning of ice formations in relation to the surrounding terrain, which is crucial information for navigation planning:

[95] V. Stefansson, *Encyclopedia Arctica Volume 1: Geology and Allied Subjects*, 025, Vol I-0035, accessed August 22, 2025.

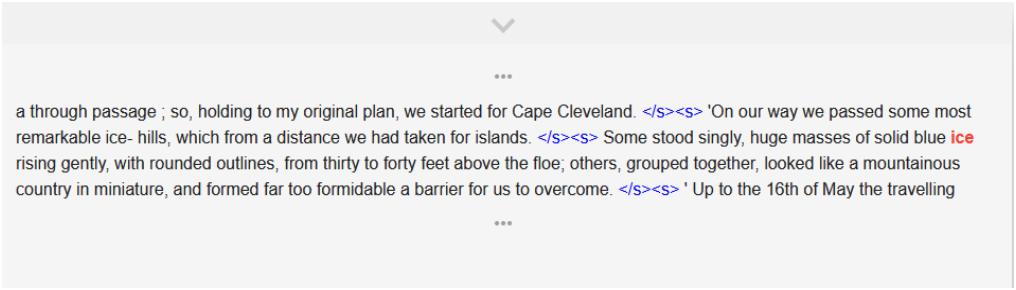


Figure 24. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordances of simple tense constructions with 'ice' as subject in the BAEC: (c) «ice rising gently»*

The collocational environment reinforces this technical framework through precise measurements and spatial descriptors («rounded outlines», «thirty to forty feet») that establish scientific discourse.

A further instance appears in «[the grounded] ice rises [and falls with each tide]», where 'rise' describes a cyclical vertical movement explicitly linked to tidal forces:

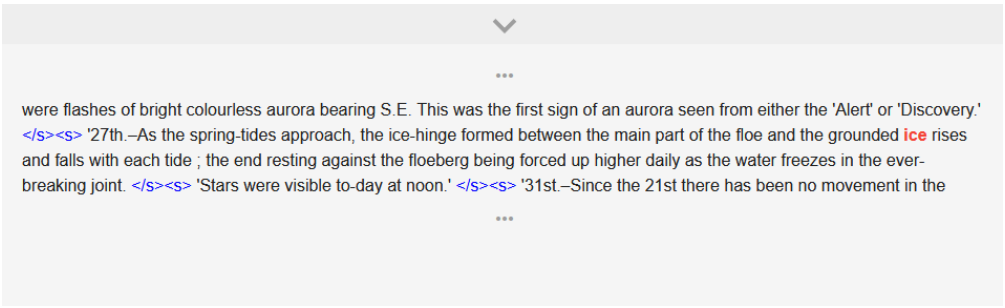


Figure 25. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordance of simple tense constructions with 'ice' as subject in the BAEC: (d) «ice rises»*

This construction emphasises the mechanical nature of ice response to environmental agents, as «with each tide» makes the cause obvious and prevents any metaphorical interpretation.

A third case emerges in «[with] ice rising [from below]», where the verb describes the documented physical process of ice crystal formation and vertical displacement through water columns due to temperature variations:

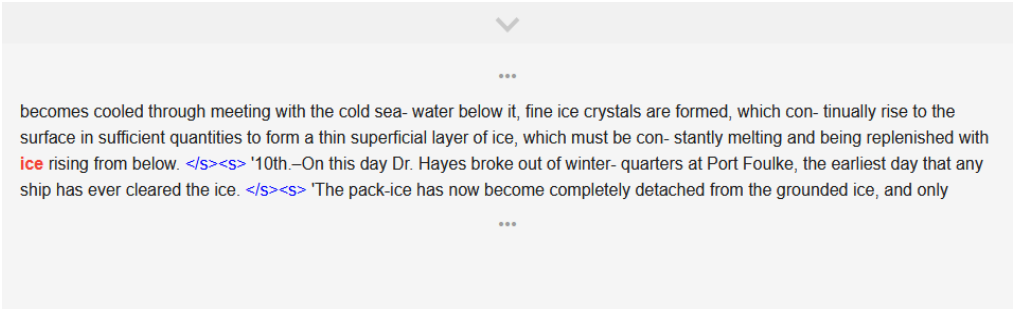


Figure 26. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordances of simple tense constructions with 'ice' as subject in the BAEC: (e) «ice rising from below»*

In conclusion, 'rise' maintains technical precision within oceanographic and geographical terminology, whether describing static positioning, tidal dynamics, or crystallisation processes. Looking at the constructions with 'ease', it becomes clear that this verb describes the gradual reduction of ice pressure or the slight withdrawal of ice from its previous position. In «the ice eased off slightly», the verb refers to the documented phenomenon of ice pressure reduction during tidal changes, which directly affects navigation and safety (Level 2 on the agency scale). Among the various constructions with the interaction verb 'prevent' found in the corpus, two exemplary cases – «Larger floes nipping against Cape Schott and the east coast of the island prevented our progress» and «the passing ice prevented our doing so without endangering the boats» – demonstrate that ice's preventive action results from its spatial positioning rather than intentional agency. All the instances identified describe observable cause-and-effect relationships where ice placement creates insurmountable obstacles for navigation and landing operations (Level 3: Obstructive Agency). The verb 'permit' follows the same pattern, with constructions such as «as far as the ice permitted us», «The ice not permitting us to start», and «the ice permitted us to proceed one and-a-half miles» demonstrating how ice configurations establish practical boundaries for expedition operations. The permissive or restrictive effects result from physical spatial arrangements and environmental conditions rather than deliberate decision-making, maintaining consistent Level 3 classification across all documented instances. In constructions such as «Our passage to the northward still remained blocked by impenetrable ice», «but found the ice blocking a

passage towards Cape Beechey», and «the ice completely blocking up Smith's Sound», the verb 'block' maintains purely descriptive function: it describes how ice positions itself in navigation channels due to natural forces, creating adverse conditions that require tactical responses from mariners (Level 3: Obstructive Agency). The broader linguistic contexts focus on route assessment and alternative navigation strategies, reinforcing the pragmatic framework of maritime operations.

The construction «[the 'Alert' was] surrounded [by the] ice» presents a significantly different semantic environment compared to the verbs analysed so far:

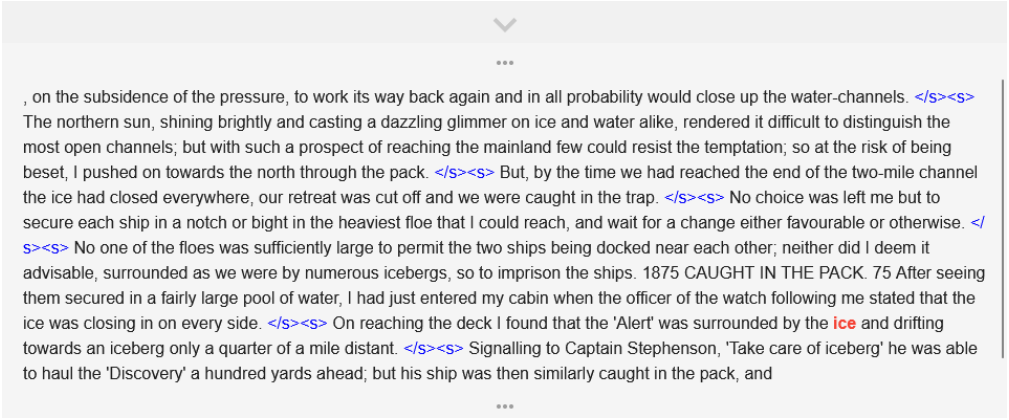

, on the subsidence of the pressure, to work its way back again and in all probability would close up the water-channels. </s><s> The northern sun, shining brightly and casting a dazzling glimmer on ice and water alike, rendered it difficult to distinguish the most open channels; but with such a prospect of reaching the mainland few could resist the temptation; so at the risk of being beset, I pushed on towards the north through the pack. </s><s> But, by the time we had reached the end of the two-mile channel the ice had closed everywhere, our retreat was cut off and we were caught in the trap. </s><s> No choice was left me but to secure each ship in a notch or bight in the heaviest floe that I could reach, and wait for a change either favourable or otherwise. </s><s> No one of the floes was sufficiently large to permit the two ships being docked near each other; neither did I deem it advisable, surrounded as we were by numerous icebergs, so to imprison the ships. 1875 CAUGHT IN THE PACK. 75 After seeing them secured in a fairly large pool of water, I had just entered my cabin when the officer of the watch following me stated that the ice was closing in on every side. </s><s> On reaching the deck I found that the 'Alert' was surrounded by the ice and drifting towards an iceberg only a quarter of a mile distant. </s><s> Signalling to Captain Stephenson, 'Take care of iceberg' he was able to haul the 'Discovery' a hundred yards ahead; but his ship was then similarly caught in the pack, and

Figure 27. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordances of simple tense constructions with 'ice' as subject in the BAEC: (f) «the 'Alert' was surrounded by the ice»*

This passage evokes the same "struggle/resistance image cluster" previously identified in the passage where ice was personified through combat-related language. The collocational environment includes warfare vocabulary: «caught in the trap», 'retreat', «so to imprison the ships», and «closing in on every side». This semantic field constructs ice not merely as a physical obstacle, but as an active antagonist that traps and imprisons. Within this framework, terms such as 'trap', 'retreat', 'imprison', and 'closing in' experience individual decontextualisation as they are displaced from their original military domains and applied to natural ice behaviour. These lexical items are subsequently recontextualised through their co-occurrence, which reconstructs the comprehensive semantic domain. According to the agency classification scale,

this usage approaches “Level 4: Personified Agency”. Here, ‘surrounded’ suggests intentional tactical encirclement, rather than simple spatial arrangement: the ice demonstrates calculated strategic behaviour – eliminating escape routes, advancing from multiple positions, and systematically capturing the vessels through coordinated operations.

The semantic prosody is distinctly negative: such war-related collocates establish a discourse where ice functions as an active opponent rather than a neutral environmental element. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that this highly metaphorical and personified representation emerges from the first volume of *A Voyage to the Polar Sea*, a non-fictional expedition narrative. This demonstrates that even within documentary discourse, the extreme conditions of Arctic exploration can generate rhetorical strategies that move beyond purely empirical description, suggesting that the boundary between scientific observation and literary representation becomes permeable when confronting the psychological pressures of Arctic survival.

In the instance «surrounded by ice [on a lee shore]», the phrase ‘on a lee shore’ is significant maritime terminology indicating a particularly dangerous situation where a vessel risks being driven onto shore by wind and waves:

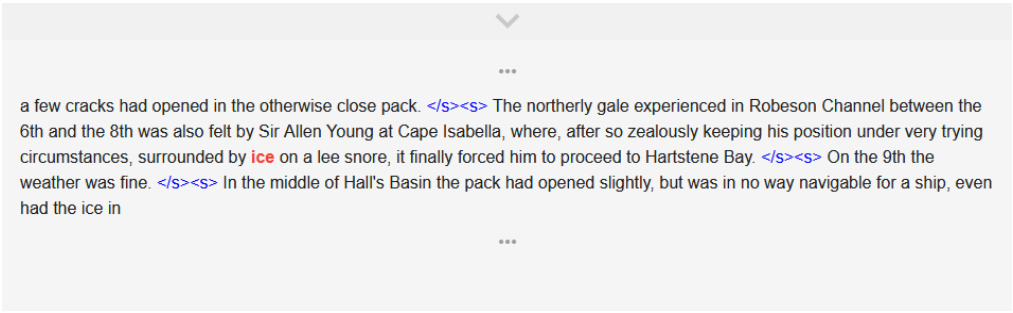


Figure 28. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordances of simple tense constructions with ‘ice’ as subject in the BAEC: (g) «surrounded by ice»*

Combined with being «surrounded by ice», this creates a perilous maritime scenario, however the construction maintains technical discourse. According to the agency classification scale, this usage positions ice at “Level 3”: the northerly gale drives ice formations into positions that create navigational constraints. Such adverse conditions force tactical decisions («it finally forced

him to proceed to Hartstene Bay») without implying intentional agency. This demonstrates the contextual variability of ‘surround’ – ranging from neutral spatial description to war-related metaphors, depending on the broader collocational environment and narrative framing within which it appears.

5.2 The Agency of Ice in the Arctic Fiction Corpus

A comparative analysis of verbal constructions across both corpora using the four-level agency classification system (outlined in the previous section) will determine whether fictional texts systematically differ from expedition accounts in their construction of ice as an environmental force, thereby revealing potential genre-specific representational strategies.

Both perfect tense constructions and simple tense constructions with ice occur with considerably lower frequency in the fiction corpus. Perfect tense constructions are represented by only two instances: «ice had [broken loose]» and «ice has [opened up]», while individual simple tense collocations also yield far fewer concordances per verb compared to the expedition corpus. This reduced frequency of ice-as-subject constructions will become clearer when examining the comparative wordlist analysis. While the Word Sketch analysis of the BAEC identified frequent subject-verb constructions with verbs such as ‘drift’, ‘move’, ‘prevent’, and ‘surround’, the AFC exhibits a distinct verbal profile for the word ‘ice’, with motion verbs like ‘lift’, ‘float’, ‘go’, and ‘come’, process verbs including ‘break’ and ‘crack’, and interaction verbs such as ‘impede’:

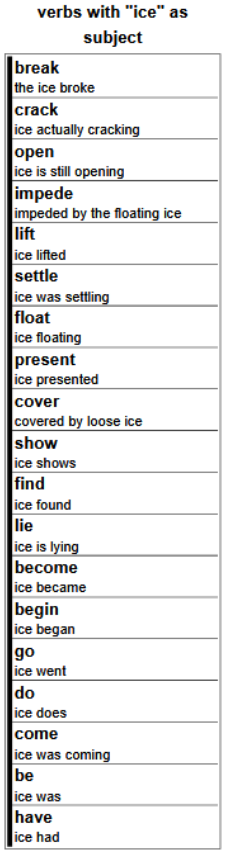


Figure 29. *Sketch Engine output: verb collocations with 'ice' as subject in the AFC*

In «[The] ice had [broken loose] from the rocks» ice functions as the subject of a past perfect construction that describes a completed process with dramatic consequences:

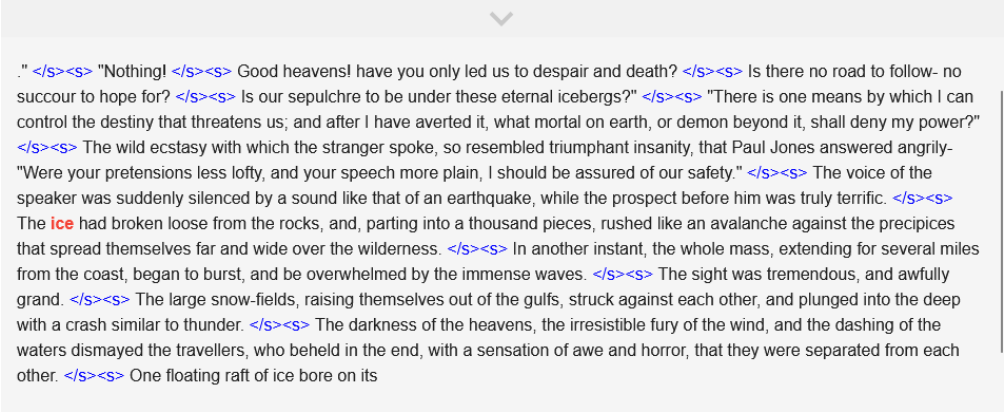


Figure 30. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordances of perfect tense constructions with 'ice' as subject in the AFC: (a) «ice had broken loose»*

According to the agency classification scale, this construction positions ice at "Level 2: Natural Process Agency". The verbs 'break loose' and 'part' describe natural phenomena resulting from environmental forces (thermal changes, pressure, geological shifts) without implying intentionality. While 'rushed' suggests rapid movement, it remains within the domain of natural process description rather than deliberate action typically associated with human agency. The semantic prosody is overwhelmingly negative and apocalyptic, through terms such as 'despair', 'death', 'sepulchre', 'eternal icebergs', and 'threatens', 'truly terrific' and 'tremendous'.

Moreover, associated with expressions such as «no road to follow – no succour to hope for», they create an image cluster of doom and helplessness. The negative charge is further intensified through sublime imagery: «awfully grand», «awe and horror», «crash similar to thunder». These collocates construct the phenomenon within the aesthetic framework of the *sublime* – that blend of fascination and terror characteristic of Romantic and Victorian landscape representations. This is reinforced through apocalyptic imagery: ice «rushing like an avalanche», masses «bursting», and being «overwhelmed by immense waves».

No delexicalisation or relexicalisation processes are evident in this passage. Every word remains within its appropriate semantic domains: 'avalanche' maintains its literal reference to natural disaster, while emotional terms like 'despair' and 'death' operate within their standard contexts of human

fear and mortality. Thus, while the ice maintains a Level 2 agency, the broader context imbues this natural process with dramatic intensity that approaches, without crossing into, personified representation. This demonstrates how semantic prosody can create affective meaning and sublime effects even within literal, non-metaphorical usage.

In «[the] ice has [opened up during the night]», the verb phrase 'has opened up' indicates that clear areas have formed in the ice, allowing visibility of open water:

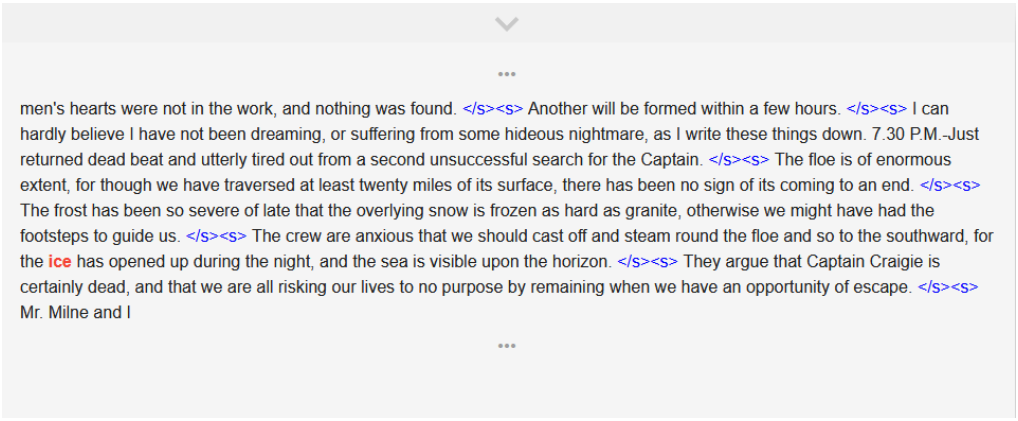


Figure 31. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordances of perfect tense constructions with ice as subject in the AFC: (b) «ice has opened up»*

While the opening creates opportunities for human movement, the ice itself operates with no intentionality. The semantic prosody in this passage is notably different from the previous example: notwithstanding the presence of expressions like «dead beat and utterly tired», «unsuccessful search», and «risking our lives to no purpose», which maintain a pessimistic tone, others such as «opportunity of escape», «visible upon the horizon» introduce elements of potential salvation.

The following construction illustrates the importance of qualitative analysis beyond automated corpus tools:

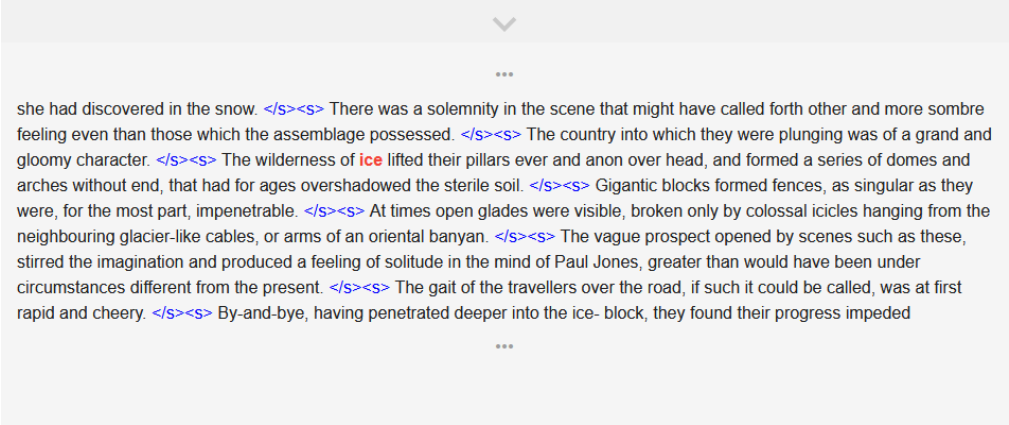


Figure 32. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordances of simple tense constructions with 'ice' as subject in the AFC: (a) «ice lifted»*

While *Sketch Engine* categorises this as "verbs with ice as subject", a closer examination reveals that the actual grammatical subject is 'the wilderness', followed by 'of ice' functioning as a postmodifier. Nevertheless, wilderness represents an inherent characteristic of the ice itself – its untamed nature – and the verb 'lifted' positions this construction at Level 4 on the agency scale by attributing deliberate architectural action to ice. The co-textual environment creates a sublime metaphor through terms like 'pillars', 'domes', 'arches', and 'formed fences', reinforcing the image of a master builder creating imposing structures. This architectural terminology demonstrates a systematic process whereby each term undergoes delexicalisation when applied to the Arctic discourse, as it is removed from its original construction context and applied to natural ice phenomena.

However, these terms are collectively relexicalised through their mutual presence, thus reconstructing the complete semantic field of architectural mastery. The semantic prosody differs markedly from expedition narratives, carrying an awe-inspiring yet melancholic charge through collocates such as 'solemnity', 'sombre feeling', 'grand and gloomy character', 'colossal', 'gigantic', 'stirred the imagination', and 'feeling of solitude'. Such terminology might be understood as functional to the discourse of the sublime, as concepts of monumentality, grandeur, and overwhelming scale are fundamental to this aesthetic framework.

In «[huge pieces of] ice floating [here and there on its surface]», ‘huge pieces of ice’ functions as the subject of ‘floating’:

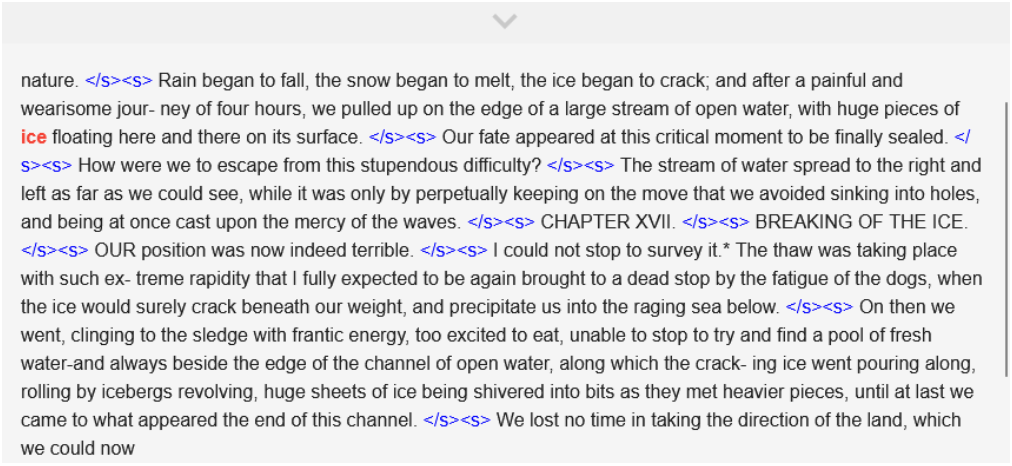

nature. </s><s> Rain began to fall, the snow began to melt, the ice began to crack; and after a painful and wearisome jour- ney of four hours, we pulled up on the edge of a large stream of open water, with huge pieces of ice floating here and there on its surface. </s><s> Our fate appeared at this critical moment to be finally sealed. </s><s> How were we to escape from this stupendous difficulty? </s><s> The stream of water spread to the right and left as far as we could see, while it was only by perpetually keeping on the move that we avoided sinking into holes, and being at once cast upon the mercy of the waves. </s><s> CHAPTER XVII. </s><s> BREAKING OF THE ICE. </s><s> OUR position was now indeed terrible. </s><s> I could not stop to survey it.* The thaw was taking place with such ex- treme rapidity that I fully expected to be again brought to a dead stop by the fatigue of the dogs, when the ice would surely crack beneath our weight, and precipitate us into the raging sea below. </s><s> On then we went, clinging to the sledge with frantic energy, too excited to eat, unable to stop to try and find a pool of fresh water-and always beside the edge of the channel of open water, along which the crack- ing ice went pouring along, rolling by icebergs revolving, huge sheets of ice being shivered into bits as they met heavier pieces, until at last we came to what appeared the end of this channel. </s><s> We lost no time in taking the direction of the land, which we could now

Figure 33. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordances of simple tense constructions with ‘ice’ as subject in the AFC: (b) «ice floating»*

In the broader context a few natural processes are listed: «the snow began to melt», «the ice began to crack», «the thaw was taking place». In particular, the verb ‘float’ describes ice pieces moving on water without attributing any human-like qualities. The semantic prosody is distinctly negative: words such as ‘painful’, ‘wearisome’, ‘critical’, ‘terrible’, ‘stupendous difficulty’, ‘raging sea’, and ‘frantic energy’ construct ice as a threat. This positioning corresponds to Level 2 on the agency scale – ice exhibits a natural process agency, functioning according to physical laws with no intentional impact. The threatening and overwhelming aspect of natural forces creates a survival/crisis image cluster that encompasses danger and human struggle against the vastness of nature. In «the cracking ice went pouring along», ‘go’ functions as an auxiliary in a progressive construction: it primarily serves as a marker for the ongoing action rather than a standalone motion verb.

The main semantic content comes from «pouring along», which describes the continuous movement of ice fragments through the water channel due to external forces (current, pressure, etc.). This usage positions ice at Level 2 on the agency scale, as it describes natural process agency – the ice is moving without creating deliberate obstruction or resistance to human activity. The co-

textual environment is the same as the one encountered in the previous example; the semantic prosody remains negative through surrounding expressions like ‘raging sea’, ‘frantic energy’, and the survival/crisis image cluster established in the broader context.

Co-textual analysis of «[another stream of] ice [was] coming [down]» indicates Level 3 agency: surrounding clauses like «he had evidently met with a powerful current» and «a current came round that mountain» establish that ice movement results from oceanic currents that actively impact and constrain human movement:

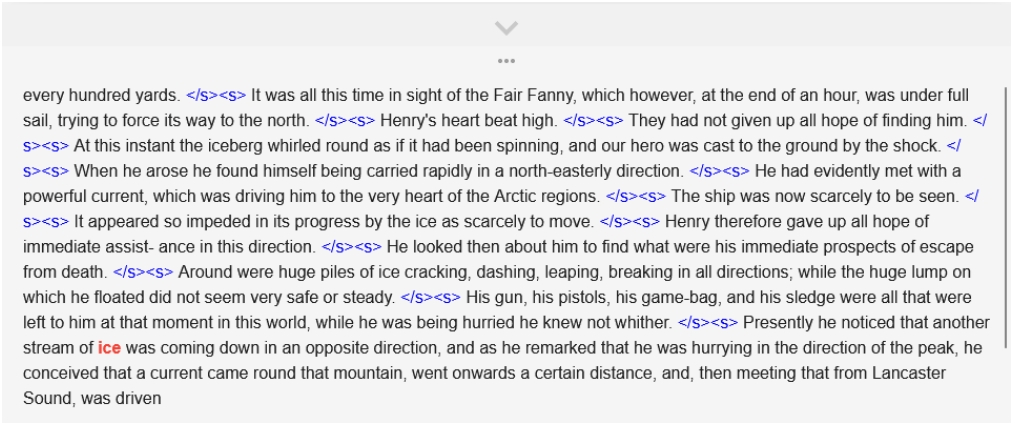


Figure 34. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordances of simple tense constructions with ‘ice’ as subject in the AFC: (c1) «ice was coming down»*

Such obstructive agency framework is reinforced through descriptions like «driving him to the very heart of the Arctic regions», where the current forces Henry toward a dangerous destination against his will.

The semantic prosody of this passage carries a distinctly negative charge through collocates of isolation, uncertainty, and threat, such as «great danger», «desolate hill», «his peril would be great», and «hopelessly lost»:

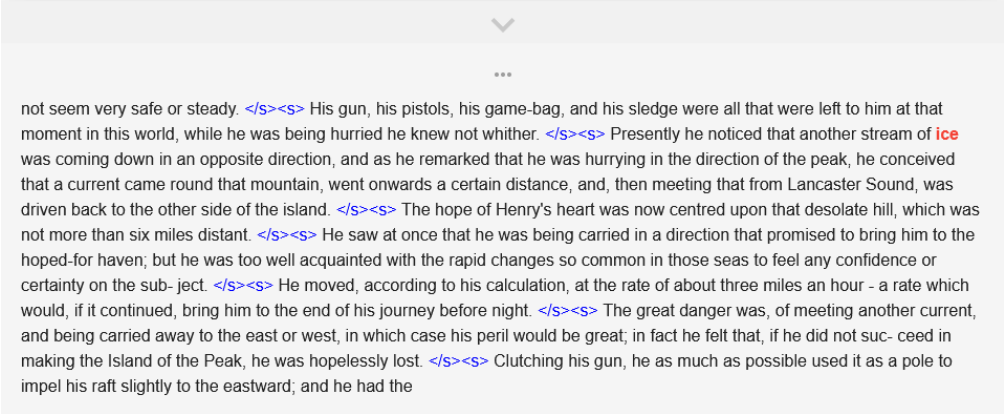


Figure 35. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordances of simple tense constructions with 'ice' as subject in the AFC: (c_2) «ice was coming down»*

However, the verb 'coming' describes the observable physical approach of ice formations positioning the ice as creating external impact and obstruction for Henry's survival. While other verbs in the passage such as 'dash', 'leap', and 'whirl' might initially appear to personify ice, these also describe natural movements: dictionaries document tsunamis that 'dash' or snow that 'whirls'[96] – maintaining Level 3 agency classification as obstructive processes rather than metaphorical personification:

[96] *Cambridge Dictionary*, "whirl", accessed August 29, 2025, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/whirl.

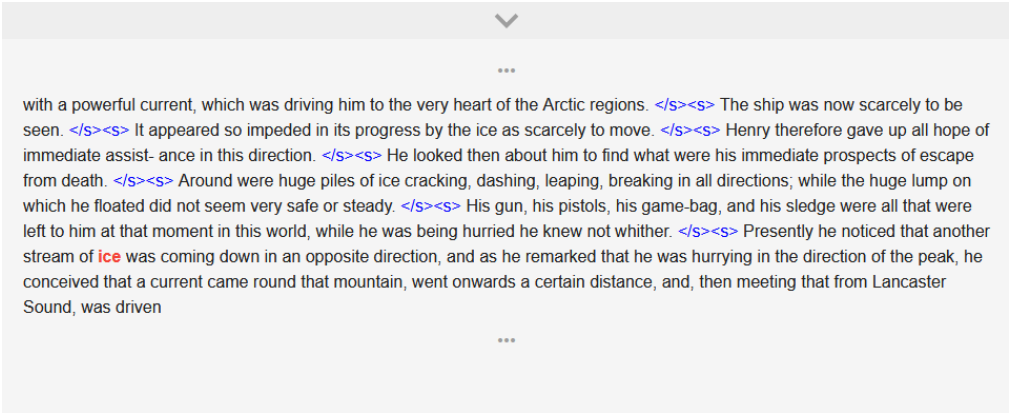


Figure 36. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordances of simple tense constructions with 'ice' as subject in the AFC: (c_3) «ice was coming down»*

In «[The] ice [was] breaking [up in every direction]», the verb 'break' operates within the same framework of seasonal transformation («It was the first day of summer») but the co-textual environment includes sound descriptions that approach personification: «something between a bark and a whine» and «a roar like that of thunder»:

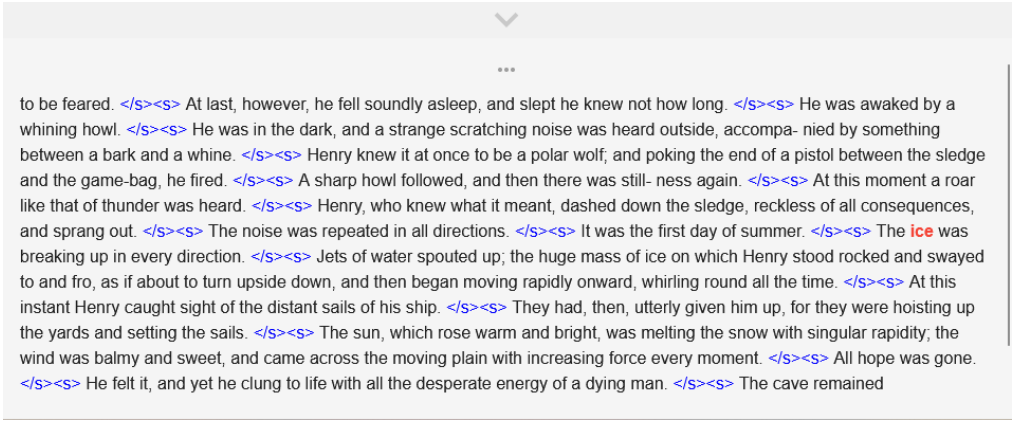


Figure 37. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordances of simple tense constructions with 'ice' as subject in the AFC: (d) «ice was breaking up»*

The tentative phrasing («something between») suggests the ice approaches personification through animal-like vocalisations, though the uncertainty in the description keeps it from fully reaching Level 4 agency.

The verb 'crack' in «[the] ice [actually] cracking [beneath our weight as we advance]» and in «[the] ice cracking [once more under our weight]»

represents Level 3 agency, as the ice creates immediate physical constraints and danger for humans through its structural response to their presence:

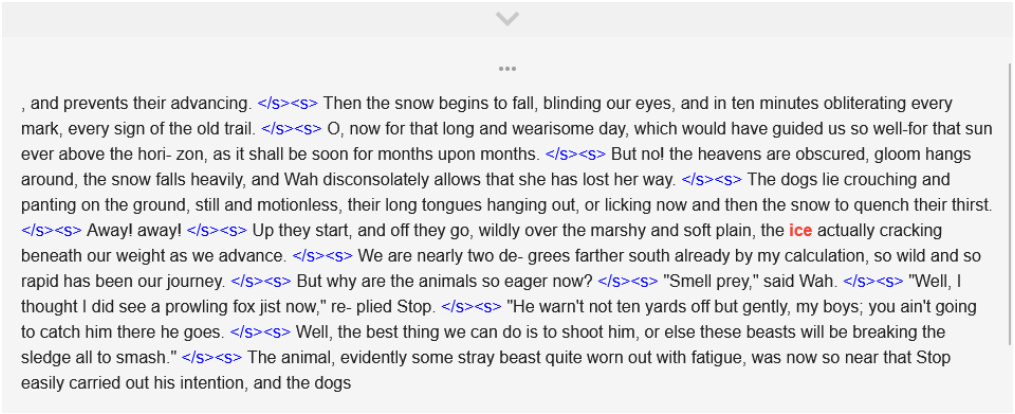


Figure 38. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordances of simple tense constructions with 'ice' as subject in the AFC: (e) «ice actually cracking»*

The description of «reports, the nature of which cannot be described, so strange were they» continues the pattern of attributing unsettling sounds to ice phenomena. The semantic prosody is distinctly negative through expressions of physical deterioration («low, bleak, and dismal», «so soft and weak was the ice»), imminent danger («quite alarming», «the sledge now sank into the water»), and desperate urgency («urged the dogs...to their utmost speed», «the last desperate struggle»). Even where ice does not appear as the grammatical subject, its precarious and menacing characteristics motivate the actions described:

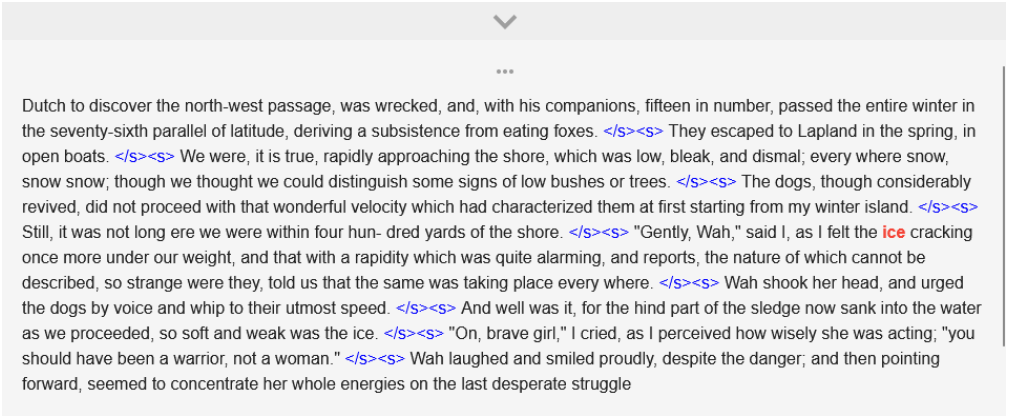


Figure 39. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordances of simple tense constructions with 'ice' as subject in the AFC: (f) «ice cracking»*

In the passive construction «[was continually] impeded [by the floating] ice», the verb 'impede' clearly represents Level 3 agency: the floating ice creates navigational obstacles and constrains human movement through its physical presence in the water rather than merely drifting passively:

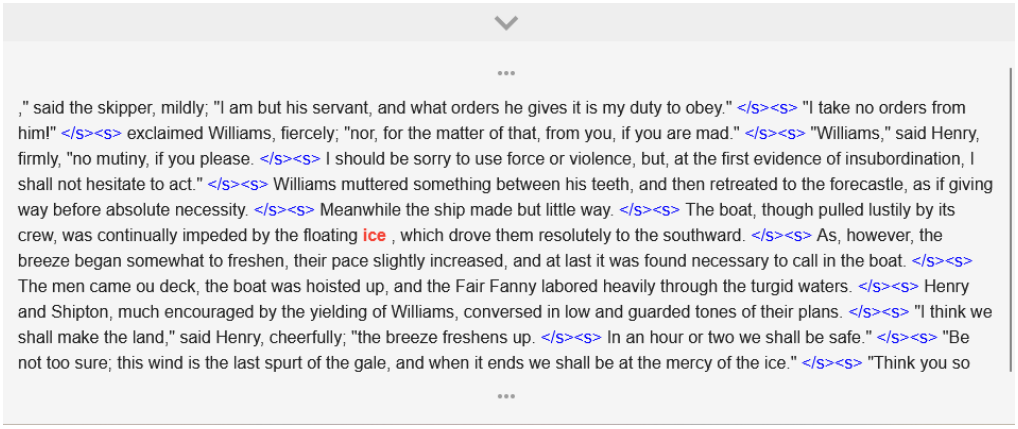


Figure 40. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordances of simple tense constructions with 'ice' as subject in the AFC: (g) «impeded by the floating ice»*

Similarly, in «[the sea was] covered [by loose] ice», the verb 'cover' exhibits the same agency pattern:

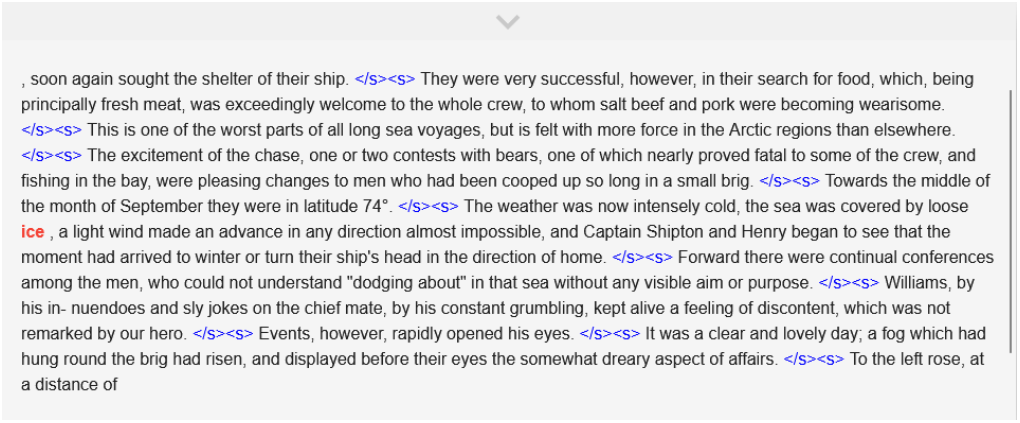


Figure 41. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordances of simple tense constructions with 'ice' as subject in the AFC: (h) «was covered by loose ice»*

The passage describes environmental conditions that hinder navigation by blocking routes rather than simply existing as passive background.

Drawing on the theoretical framework established in *Table 1*, the following table maps the verbal constructions actually attested across both corpora onto the four agency levels, enabling a direct cross-corpus comparison of the linguistic patterns through which ice acquires agency.

Agency Level	**Non-fiction Corpus**	**Fiction Corpus**
Level 1 (No Linguistic Agency)	remain, lie	-
Level 2 (Natural Process Agency)	decay, drift, move, rise, ease, form, melt, contract, crack (thermal), open (natural separation), close (natural)	float, break, open, go (auxiliary)
Level 3 (Obstructive Agency)	prevent, block, permit, surround (spatial), crack (beneath weight), close (constraining)	crack (beneath weight), come, impede, cover

Agency Level	Non-fiction Corpus	Fiction Corpus
Level 4 (Personified Agency)	surround (warfare context), open (military metaphor)	lift (architectural metaphor)

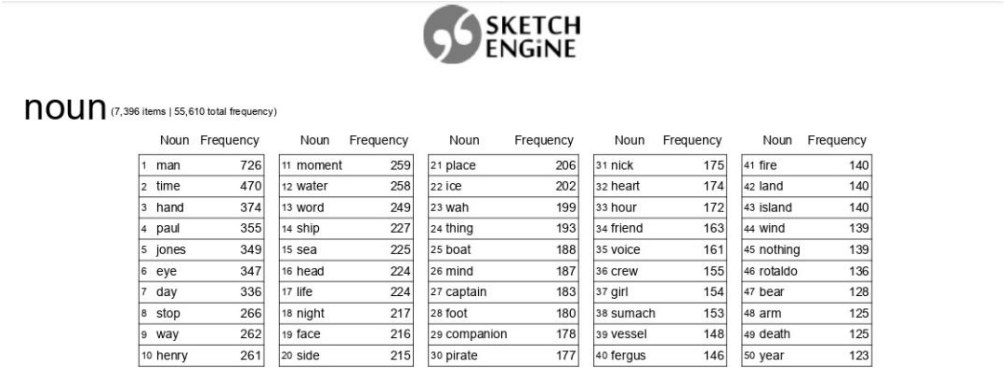
Table 3. Agency classification of ice as subject constructions across corpora

The revised classification demonstrates how individual verbs can operate at different agency levels depending on their collocational environment and narrative framing. For instance, 'surround' exhibits spatial positioning (Level 3) in basic navigational contexts but escalates to personified agency (Level 4) when embedded within warfare metaphorical discourse. Similarly, 'crack' maintains natural process characteristics (Level 2) when describing natural fracturing due to temperature changes but shifts to obstructive agency (Level 3) when threatening human safety through structural failure. The table structure reveals patterns that warrant further investigation: non-fiction texts show greater lexical variety in their verbal constructions with ice as subject, suggesting a more multifaceted representation of its dynamics, while fiction demonstrates fewer constructions of this type but draws upon a different metaphorical register in the single instance of personification that was identified. Where expedition accounts resort to military terminology, fiction narratives employ metaphors that reflect the aesthetic priorities of Romantic sublime representation.

5.2.1 Linguistic Intensification in Arctic Fiction

The initial subject-verb analysis revealed a striking disparity in the frequency of ice-as-subject constructions between the two corpora. While the BAEC yielded numerous combinations of verbs with ice functioning as grammatical subject, the AFC demonstrated significantly fewer instances across all verb categories examined. This quantitative disparity prompted a frequency analysis using *Sketch Engine*'s *Wordlist* tool to investigate the

prominence of the noun ‘ice’ within each corpus. The results indicated a remarkable difference in lexical distribution: in the AFC, ‘ice’ ranks 22nd with a frequency of only 202 occurrences, while in the non-fiction corpus, it occupies the first position with 1,348 occurrences. This substantial frequency gap explains the reduced availability of ice-as-subject constructions in fictional narratives and suggests fundamentally different representational priorities between the two genres. Further examination of the fiction corpus’s wordlist revealed an unexpected predominance of corporeal vocabulary among the top 50 lexical items. Terms related to body parts, physical sensations, and embodied experience appear with notably higher frequency than anticipated, suggesting that fictional Arctic narratives prioritise sensory experience over environmental description:



noun (7,396 items | 55,610 total frequency)

	Noun	Frequency		Noun	Frequency		Noun	Frequency		Noun	Frequency		Noun	Frequency
1	man	726	11	moment	259	21	place	206	31	nick	175	41	fire	140
2	time	470	12	water	258	22	ice	202	32	heart	174	42	land	140
3	hand	374	13	word	249	23	wah	199	33	hour	172	43	island	140
4	paul	355	14	ship	227	24	thing	193	34	friend	163	44	wind	139
5	jones	349	15	sea	225	25	boat	188	35	voice	161	45	nothing	139
6	eye	347	16	head	224	26	mind	187	36	crew	155	46	rotaldo	136
7	day	336	17	life	224	27	captain	183	37	girl	154	47	bear	128
8	stop	266	18	night	217	28	foot	180	38	sumach	153	48	arm	125
9	way	262	19	face	216	29	companion	178	39	vessel	148	49	death	125
10	henry	261	20	side	215	30	pirate	177	40	fergus	146	50	year	123

Figure 42. *Sketch Engine output: Top 50 most frequent nouns in the AFC*

Such emphasis aligns with expected disciplinary differences: while scientific discourse tends to be object-oriented, focusing on the phenomena under investigation, literary discourse naturally gravitates around subjective experience and human perception of events and environments.

However, closer investigation of such vocabulary proved less productive than expected. A *Word Sketch* analysis of ‘hand’ (the most frequent body-related noun) shows conventional collocations like ‘left/right hand’ and verbs such as ‘clasp’, ‘wave’, ‘put’, and ‘shake’. These patterns reflect standard narrative usage and do not reveal how the body specifically mediates human interaction with the harsh environment.

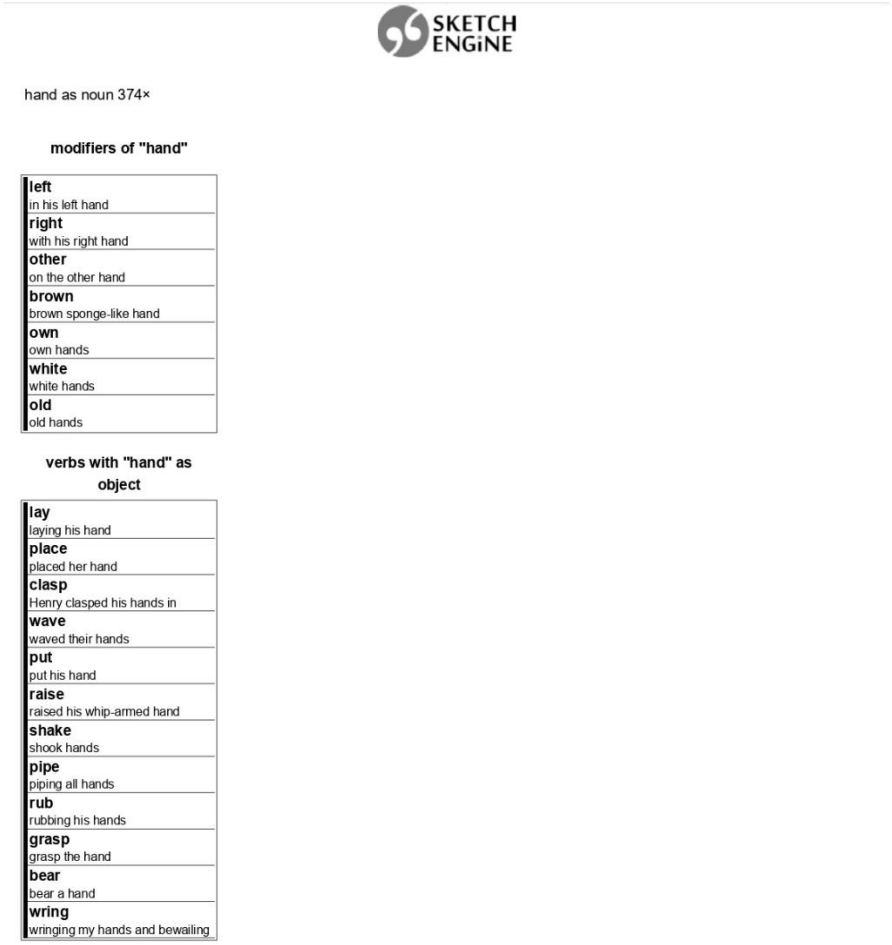


Figure 43. *Sketch Engine output: Collocational patterns of 'hand' in the AFC*

The analysis failed to detect the expected evidence of corporeal vocabulary encoding the distinctive challenges of Arctic survival – such as hands struggling against freezing conditions, fingers compromised by cold temperatures, or tactile perception of ice and snow – suggesting that body-related terminology may not provide the most productive analytical lens for investigating Arctic-specific representational strategies in the fiction corpus.

Thus, the analysis shifted to examining concordance lines of 'extreme'. Among the adjectives available in the corpus wordlist, it is positioned at rank 95 with 35 occurrences. However, notwithstanding its reduced frequency when compared to more frequent adjectives such as 'good' (367 occurrences), 'great' (355 occurrences), and 'old' (295 occurrences) or more obvious Arctic-related ones such as 'cold' (68 occurrences) and 'frozen' (48 occurrences), it presents

several advantages for the analysis. First, generic adjectives like ‘good’ and ‘great’ produce collocational patterns common to all fiction narratives (e.g. «good humour», «great consideration»). Secondly, although adjectives like ‘cold’ and ‘frozen’ might seem relevant due to their specificity, they tend to yield predictable descriptive patterns (e.g. «cold water», «frozen land»), which primarily document environmental conditions rather than revealing how these are subjectively experienced and narratively heightened.

‘Extreme’, by contrast, functions as an intensifier that amplifies whatever it modifies, potentially revealing how Arctic fiction transforms both environmental conditions and human responses into subjective experiences. A systematic qualitative analysis of all 35 concordance lines containing this adjective showed that most instances describe generic narrative events. To ensure analytical precision, only those instances with direct connections to environmental conditions, survival challenges, or Arctic-specific activities were examined. This filtering process led to the identification of 9 occurrences that fall into three distinct semantic domains.

The first domain involves psychological responses to Arctic-specific dangers and opportunities:

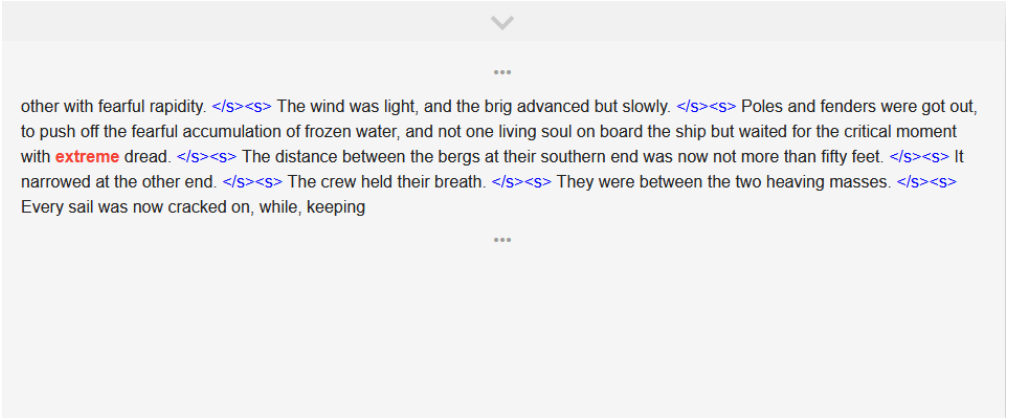


Figure 44. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordance of the collocation ‘extreme dread’ in the AFC*

‘Extreme dread’ appears as crew members navigate between icebergs, describing their emotional reaction to a life-threatening situation.

Similarly, ‘extreme terror’ describes sledge dogs fleeing Arctic dangers until reaching safety:

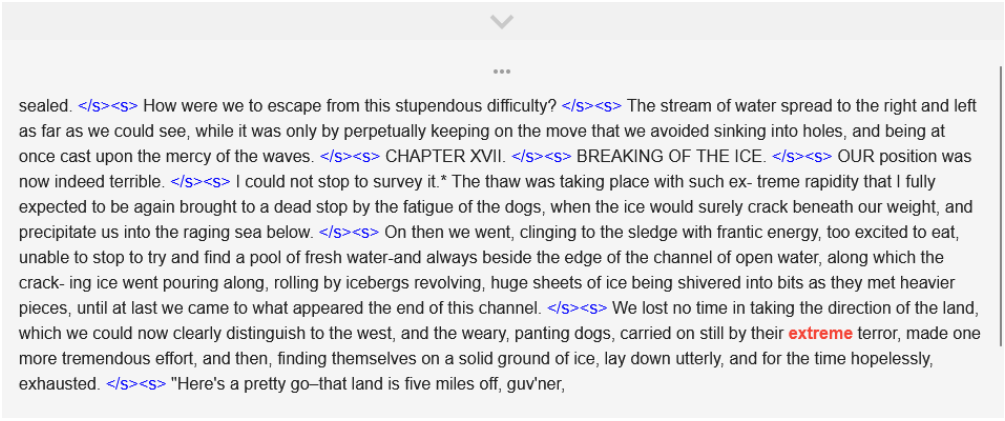


Figure 45. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordance of the collocation ‘extreme terror’ in the AFC*

The adjective intensifies the animals’ fear, suggesting that terror itself becomes a survival mechanism – the dogs continue despite exhaustion («weary, panting») because their extreme fear overrides physical limits.

By contrast, ‘extreme satisfaction’ captures a character’s response to favourable tidal conditions crucial for Arctic navigation:

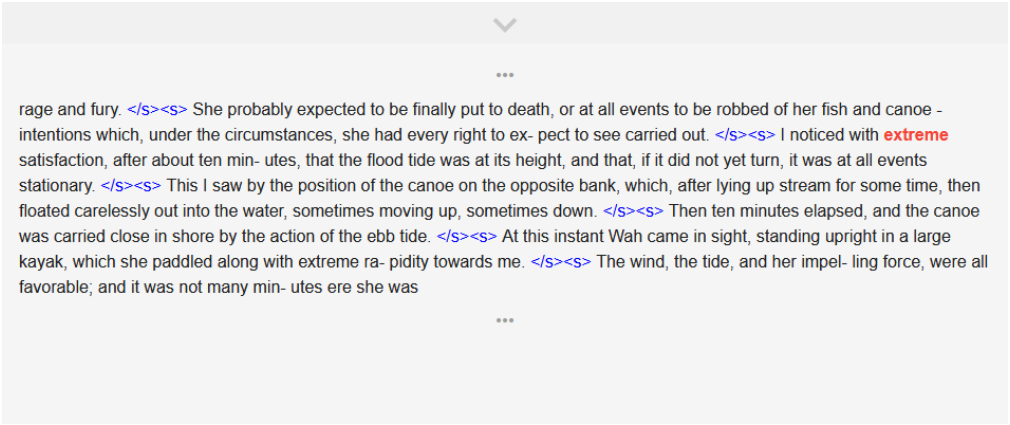


Figure 46. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordance of the collocation ‘extreme satisfaction’ in the AFC*

Unlike the previous examples where ‘extreme’ intensifies fear or terror in moments of danger, here it amplifies positive emotion: the adjective transforms

a simple observation («the flood tide was at its height») into a moment of profound emotional release, suggesting how Arctic survival depends not only on enduring threats but also on seizing rare favourable conditions.

'Extreme delight' expresses joy at constructing survival equipment essential for Arctic escape:

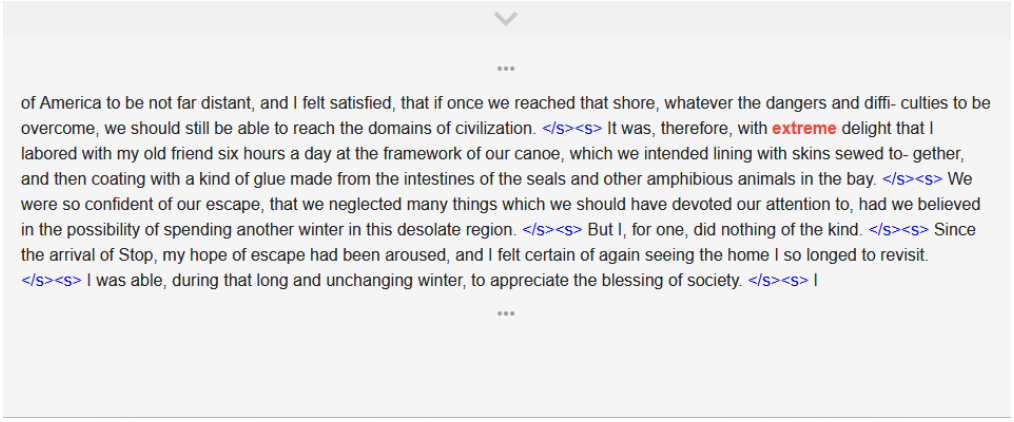


Figure 47. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordance of the collocation 'extreme delight' in the AFC*

Here, the adjective transforms practical work – building and waterproofing a canoe – into a source of profound emotional satisfaction. This usage reveals how Arctic conditions reshape human values: what would ordinarily be tedious labour becomes intensely pleasurable because it represents autonomy, hope, and the prospect of escape. The intensity of the emotion reflects how isolation transforms routine activities into a source of intense psychological reward.

The second domain encompasses physical deprivation and survival-related states: 'extreme misery' and 'extreme privation' appear in contexts describing fatal hardships endured during Arctic expeditions. The former appears in a dramatic dialogue where characters recount the deaths of expedition members:

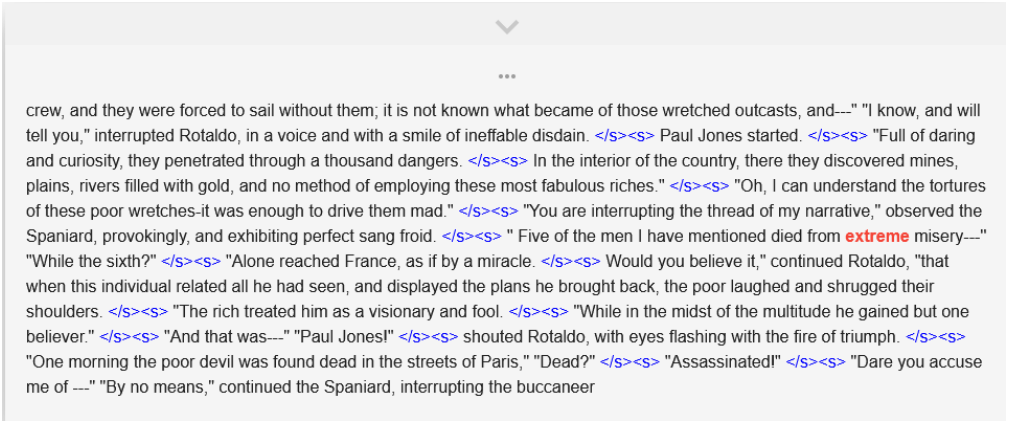


Figure 48. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordance of the collocation 'extreme misery' in the AFC*

The phrase is embedded in a story-within-a-story – Rotaldo's narrative of Paul Jones – creating a layered structure where tales of extreme suffering circulate among explorers. The adjective modifies a sustained condition rather than a momentary emotion, describing the prolonged hardship that proved fatal.

'Extreme privation' occurs as a selective criterion for volunteers undertaking a perilous journey to Baffin's Bay:

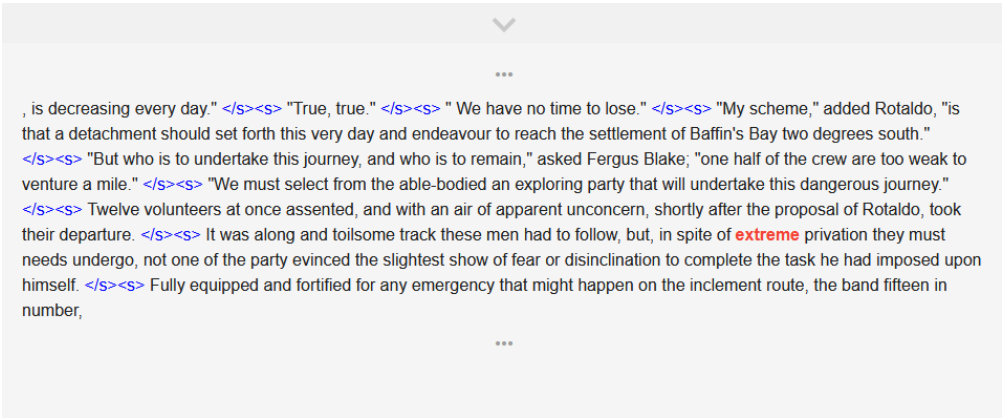


Figure 49. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordance of the collocation 'extreme privation' in the AFC*

The adjective intensifies 'privation' to emphasise the severity of conditions sail men will face – deprivation so extreme that only the 'able-bodied' can attempt it. The phrase shows that Arctic exploration demands willing acceptance of potentially fatal consequences.

‘Extreme caution’ repeatedly emphasises the hypervigilance required for Arctic survival:

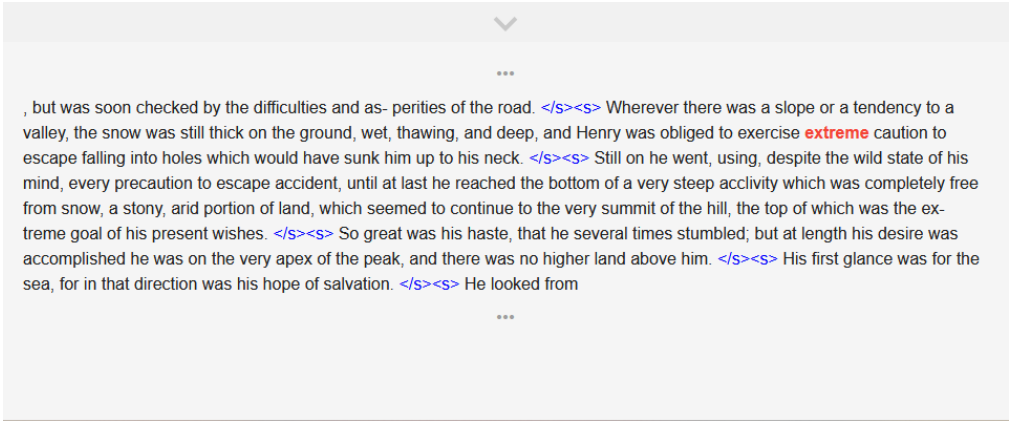


Figure 50. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordance of the collocation ‘extreme caution’ in the AFC*

This collocation shows that Arctic survival requires not just enduring extreme deprivation but also exercising extreme care in every action.

The third domain addresses environmental and spatial features encountered in Arctic settings. ‘Extreme edge’ marks a liminal spatial position where environmental danger intensifies:

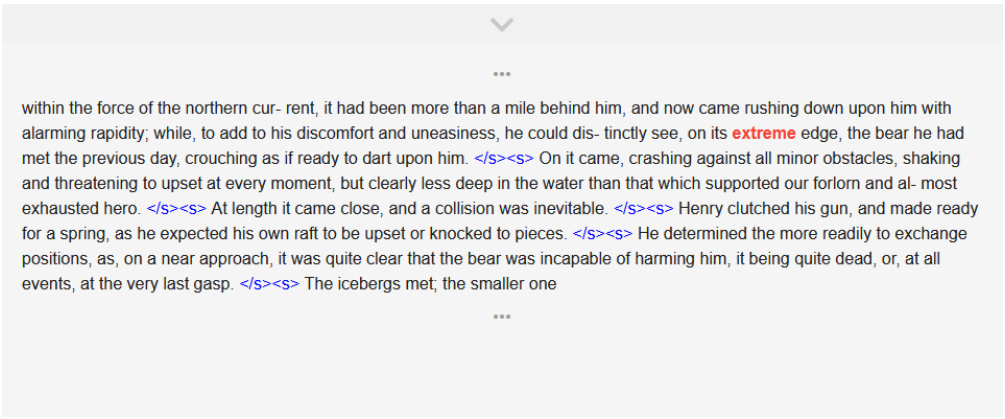


Figure 51. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordance of the collocation ‘extreme edge’ in the AFC*

In this passage, the phrase describes the precarious position of an ice floe where the character encounters a bear – a location that combines spatial extremity (the edge of floating ice) with immediate threat. The adjective transforms a simple boundary into a zone of maximum vulnerability, where the character is literally and figuratively at the limit of safe space, with the bear approaching and the possibility of being knocked into deadly water.

'Extreme end' refers to geographical extremities explored during Arctic reconnaissance:

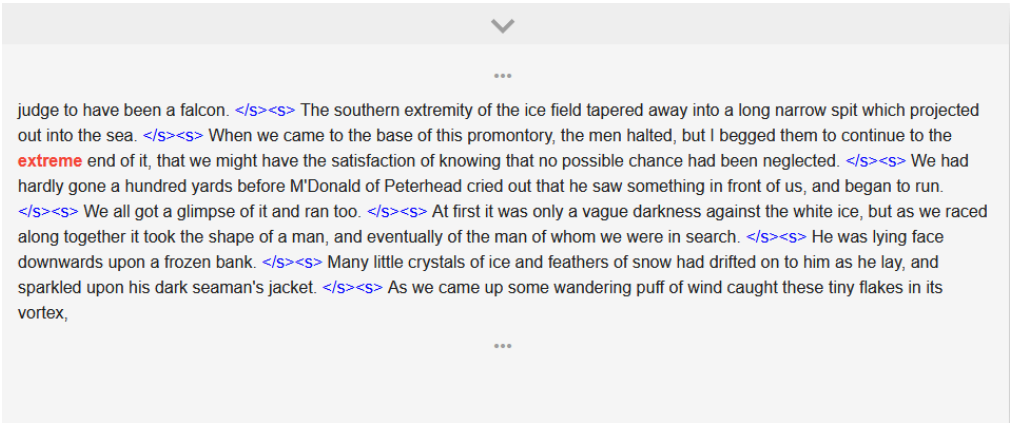


Figure 52. *Sketch Engine output: extended concordance of the collocation 'extreme end' in the AFC*

The phrase captures explorers' compulsion to explore, ensuring «no possible chance had been neglected», revealing how Arctic exploration demands thoroughness even at the cost of additional risk and effort.

The adjective seems to mark not just physical distance but the psychological drive to achieve complete knowledge of the surrounding environment, where leaving any extremity unexplored represents an unacceptable informational gap. This analysis of Arctic-specific uses of 'extreme' reveals a pattern of experiential intensification rather than objective record: while the limited sample (9 instances) prevents broad generalisations, the distribution shows that the adjective consistently amplifies subjective perception of the Arctic environment – whether psychological responses to danger (4 instances), physical awareness of survival challenges (3 instances), or hazardous positioning (2 instances). Even when modifying spatial

boundaries like ‘edge’ or ‘end’, these descriptions emphasise human vulnerability rather than providing precise measurements or coordinates. However, the predominance of non-Arctic uses of ‘extreme’ in the corpus (26 out of 35 occurrences) suggests that this adjective primarily serves conventional narrative functions, with Arctic-specific amplification representing a limited subset of its overall usage patterns.

5.3 Visual Representations of Arctic Ice: A Multimodal Analysis of Edward L. Moss’s Chromolithographs

The analysis of the BAEC has revealed complex patterns of agency attribution and ideological construction in textual representations of Arctic ice, demonstrating how even scientific expedition accounts can linguistically construct ice as ranging from a passive element to an active resistant force. Edward L. Moss’s *Shores of the Polar Sea* presents a unique opportunity to extend this investigation to the visual domain, as it combines his personal narrative with sixteen chromolithographs, which claim to provide an accurate depiction of a region that few will ever witness firsthand.

The full-colour prints are based on watercolour illustrations that Moss created during the 1875-76 British Arctic Expedition. The chromolithographic process enabled the mass production of these original artworks, making Moss’s documentation of Arctic landscapes accessible to Victorian society, who would have never encountered such remote environments otherwise. Moss produced a supplementary booklet titled *Polar Sketches: Sixteen Chromo-Lithographs from Water-Colour Drawings Made in the Polar Regions during the Expedition of 1875-1876*, also preserved at the Scott Polar Research Institute (SPRI). However, a comparison between the two publications reveals significant editorial differences: while *Shores of the Polar Sea* contains sixteen chromolithographs, the standalone booklet provides detailed descriptions for only thirteen of them, as the remaining three artworks appear exclusively in *Shores of the Polar Sea* with minimal textual accompaniment. Through direct consultation of the original watercolour illustrations at the SPRI, it has been

possible to trace the transformation from source materials to published chromolithographs and to understand how reproduction techniques and editorial decisions may have influenced the final prints distributed to Victorian readers. The potential gap between Moss's declared documentary intentions and the visual messages ultimately conveyed through his published works becomes particularly evident in this selective editorial treatment. The corpus linguistic analysis has already demonstrated how even scientific expedition accounts can construct ice in different ways, ranging from a passive environmental element to an active resistant force. Similarly, visual representations that claim objective documentation may simultaneously encode imperial ideologies through compositional choices, colour schemes, and spatial arrangements. The tension between declared empirical accuracy and implicit ideological positioning suggests that a visual examination is necessary to uncover the full range of meanings embedded within these seemingly neutral representations of the Arctic landscape. To support a systematic compositional analysis, the well-known rule of thirds will be applied to subdivide each image into nine equal sectors, providing a framework for assessing the placement and salience of key elements. This paragraph applies Kress and van Leeuwen's grammar of visual design to selected chromolithographs from *Shores of the Polar Sea*. Drawing on Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics, Kress and van Leeuwen's framework analyses images through three metafunctions already mentioned in §3.3.1. The analysis focuses on the representation of ice and Arctic landscape, examining how compositional choices – especially information value along the horizontal axis (Given/New), and the vertical one (Ideal/Real), salience patterns, and framing strategies – construct meaning that may complement, contradict, or extend the textual representations identified in the BAEC. The three works excluded from detailed description in the *Polar Sketches* booklet provide particularly revealing examples of how visual composition encodes imperial ideology through seemingly neutral landscape representation. *The Most Northern Grave* is described in *Shores of the Polar Sea* as depicting «A little mound of ice on the side of a floe-hill, and a rough

cross made of a sledge batten and a paddle, mark our shipmate's grave – the most northern of any race or time».

Figure 53. *Edward Lawton Moss,* The Most Northern Grave*, chromolithograph from* Shores of the Polar Sea *(1878) – rule of thirds grid overlay*

The rule of thirds analysis reveals that the improvised cross is positioned within the central-right section of the composition, approaching the intersection of the right vertical third and the central horizontal third intersection of the right vertical third and the central horizontal third. According to Kress and van Leeuwen's information value theory, elements placed on the right represent new information – what readers must pay attention to – while elements on the left represent given information that readers already know as part of their culture. The cross's right-side placement presents British territorial marking as new information demanding attention. In terms of vertical information value, the pale Arctic sky is positioned in the Ideal realm (representing aspirational meaning), while the grave and ice occupy the Real domain (presenting more specific, tangible information). This establishes a clear Ideal/Real division, yet the relationship between these domains is more complex than mere contrast.

The pale, enigmatic sky in the Ideal realm carries divine connotations – a transcendent presence that merges with imperial ideology, positioning British exploration as a civilising mission blessed from above. The cross, positioned

near the boundary between earthly loss and celestial expanse, operates as a mediating symbol that re-signifies death, by transforming it into both a religious martyrdom and a patriotic sacrifice.

Yet the sky's muteness introduces a troubling ambiguity: its silence neither confirms nor denies such perspective, rendering the resignification process uncertain and potentially hollow. The explorer's death hovers uneasily between redemptive sacrifice and meaningless loss within an indifferent vastness. The salience patterns establish the cross as the primary focal point through multiple factors: its vertical orientation against horizontal ice, tonal contrast between dark wood and pale Arctic palette, and its strategic positioning as a visual bridge between the material and an unresponsive divine realm.

The framing reinforces the idea of a territorial claim: the vast ice landscape extends beyond the visible borders, suggesting the vastness of the marked territory. The phrasing «most northern of any race or time» claims British supremacy over all previous Arctic explorers, both historically and geographically. *Back From the Farthest North* explicitly displays a sense of imperial pride through its description:

> the northern detachment, with the relief sledges sent to its assistance, returned to the ship from its ten weeks' march over the polar floes [...] flying the Union Jack they had carried a month's hard march beyond every predecessor[97].

[97] Moss, *Shores of the Polar Sea*, pp. 68 et seq.

Figure 54. *Edward Lawton Moss,* Back From the Farthest North*, chromolithograph from* Shores of the Polar Sea *(1878) – rule of thirds grid overlay*

The compositional analysis shows the Union Jack positioned near the intersection of the central vertical third and upper horizontal third, ensuring maximum salience through both strategic placement and chromatic contrast against the muted Arctic palette. The four exhausted explorers are distributed along the lower horizontal third, their bent postures emphasising physical suffering, while the sledge occupies the middle ground, creating a figurative bridge between human endurance and the patriotic symbol.

The bent bodies create a vector that leads the viewer's gaze upward, towards the flags. This establishes a dynamic interconnection between human effort and national identity, integrating them into a unified narrative field. Such compositional interplay converts the horizontal Given/New axis into a story of redemption: the explorers' visible suffering (Given) legitimises territorial appropriation (New), while the flags' position in the Ideal realm elevates physical hardship into a symbol of imperial triumph.

The Last of the Paleocrystic Floe presents a problematic tension between declared purpose and visual representation: it is worth noting that another version of this illustration exists, preserved at the SPRI, in which the ships are completely absent and only the Arctic landscape is depicted.

Figure 55. Alternative Version The Last of the Paleocrystic Floe *depicting the Arctic landscape without the expedition ships (SPRI, Cambridge)*

This version was not included in *Shores of the Polar Sea*, and its purpose remains uncertain, as does the matter of which of the two was created first.

However, their existence raises intriguing questions about Moss's artistic choices and the editorial decisions pertaining to the publishing process.

On the one hand, as previously noted with reference to Robert G. David (see above, § 2.2), artists of the period often completed their paintings away from the actual scene, which could account for any compositional differences. On the other hand, it is possible that the published chromolithograph showing the ships struggling amid the pack ice was deliberately modified to depict a moment of acute difficulty, thereby enhancing the heroic narrative of the expedition, despite Moss's assertion in the *Polar Sketches* booklet that these were «not intended to illustrate the progress of the expedition or any stirring events» (see above, § 3.3.1). This contrast highlights the need for a multimodal approach that considers both compositional and narrative choices in the analysis of these Arctic representations. The account accompanying this chromolithograph in *Shores of the Polar Sea* frames the depicted landscape by

referencing locations named after earlier explorers: the text mentions Kane's *Open Polar Sea*, named after American explorer Elisha Kent Kane, who led Arctic voyages in the 1850s searching for the lost Franklin expedition and reached his farthest point in this region. The image also shows Franklin and Crozier Islands in the distance, named after Sir John Franklin and Francis Crozier, the British naval officers whose 1845 expedition had famously disappeared in the Arctic. By depicting British ships navigating these waters near landmarks bearing the names of earlier explorers, the chromolithograph creates a visual narrative of legacy: where Kane reached his northernmost limit and Franklin's expedition met disaster, British exploration now continues and advances, positioning the 1875-76 voyage as the culmination of previous Arctic endeavours.

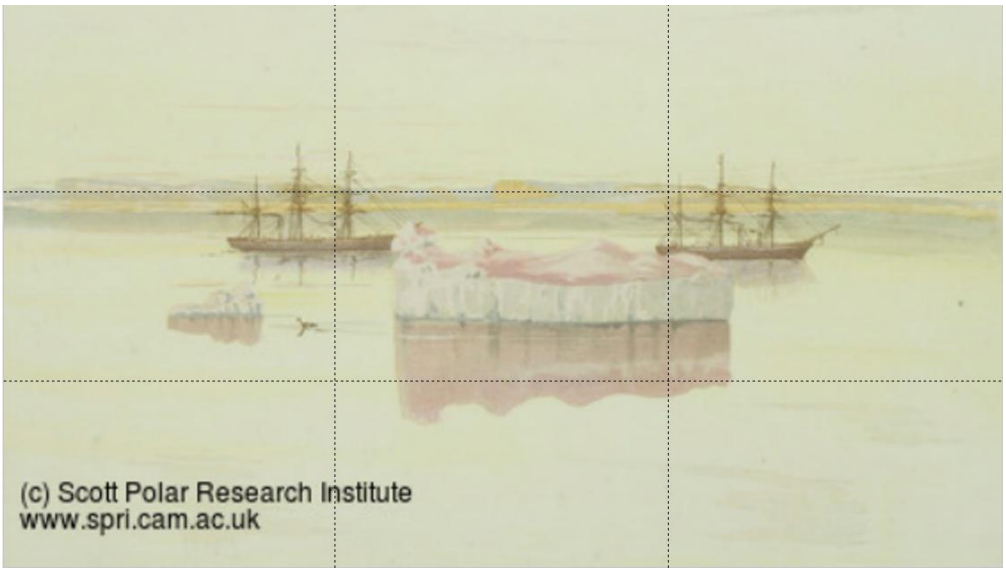


Figure 56. *Edward Lawton Moss,* The Last of the Paleocrystic Floe*, chromolithograph from* Shores of the Polar Sea (1878) – *rule of thirds grid overlay*

The compositional structure positions the two British vessels along the middle horizontal third, where their dark silhouettes create stark tonal contrast against the pale ice, ensuring maximum salience despite their relatively small scale. The distant geographical features bearing British explorers' names occupy the upper third horizon line, while the scattered ice fragments described

as lying «here and there in the water, strangely reflected» fill the lower third, functioning as archaeological remnants of ongoing British appropriation.

The existence of the alternative version without ships suggests that the published chromolithograph deliberately emphasises human presence and struggle, transforming what might have been pure landscape documentation into an imperial narrative in which British vessels become the focal point of territorial possession. Their presence interacts with the surrounding ice through the interplay of light and reflected surfaces, creating a visual connection that integrates human activity and the natural environment into a cohesive compositional framing.

Conclusions

Edward Said's well-known and most influential work *Orientalism* provides the essential theoretical framework for understanding how British imperial culture constructed the Arctic as a space of both desire and anxiety. Just as the East was constructed as a coherent object of Western knowledge and control, British Arctic discourse systematically transformed the polar regions into a testing ground for imperial authority and technological superiority.

However, the Arctic presents a crucial difference from Said's Oriental model: while Indigenous populations inhabit the region, British imperial discourse primarily projects otherness onto the environment itself, treating the landscape as the principal site of alterity requiring conquest and control. This displacement becomes particularly significant when considered alongside the gendered dimension of Arctic representations identified in Victorian cultural production. As demonstrated in the analysis of Doyle's *The Captain of the Polestar* and contemporary *Punch* illustrations, the Arctic landscape was often feminised in the cultural imagination of the time. It was constructed as an alluring yet dangerous force, thus reflecting broader Victorian anxieties about feminine autonomy and its perceived threat to masculine authority, particularly in the context of contemporary debates about women's social and political roles. The disparate frequency of ice-as-subject constructions between the BAEC (1,348 occurrences) and the AFC (202 occurrences) exposes fundamentally different strategies for managing imperial anxiety when confronted with environmental alterity that exceeds colonial control. Non-fictional expedition accounts must maintain scientific authority while documenting navigational challenges. The results obtained from the analysis of the BAEC support this reading through the military metaphors that consistently cast explorers in masculine roles of strategic planning and heroic struggle, whereas ice is represented as the unpredictable adversary, whose autonomy disrupts imperial control.

This dynamic can be better understood through Homi Bhabha's notion of colonial *ambivalence*, which describes how imperial discourse

simultaneously recognises and denies difference to preserve authority. The representation of ice in expedition accounts reveals a tension: on the one hand, writers must acknowledge its agency, since it literally blocks progress and exerts real power over the explorers; on the other hand, they need to deny this agency in order to protect imperial dominance. They do so, by turning the ice into a 'jailor berg' that can be described in military terms, which allows them – at least narratively – to frame it as something that can be confronted and controlled. Mary Louise Pratt's concept of *anti-conquest* describes the strategies through which European imperial powers «secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony»[98] – disguising domination as benevolent science or exploration.

The 1875-76 British Arctic Expedition exemplified this mechanism: the sailing orders explicitly frame the mission as being «for the advancement of science and natural knowledge», with naturalists appointed to collect specimens that become «the property of Her Majesty's Government»[99]. This scientific language hides the real purpose: taking control of the Arctic territory. Among the expedition's objectives there was the creation of detailed maps for future explorers, and the identification of safe harbours, which are all practical steps for establishing British control over the region.

However, one of the primary challenges comes from environmental resistance rather than human opposition: when ice literally blocks British progress, neutral language is replaced by military terminology. Ice becomes a 'jailor berg', an 'enemy' that must be fought, and this linguistic strategy also serves anti-conquest purposes, by preserving British authority through victimhood: explorers are brave defenders against an aggressive and inhospitable environment, maintaining an aura of innocence, while establishing the narrative and practical foundations for territorial control.

Nevertheless, this military linguistic strategy reveals an inherent ambivalence that ultimately undermines the very imperial authority it seeks to preserve. The necessity of transforming ice into an adversary to account for

[98] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes. Travel Writing and Transculturation*, p. 7.
[99] Nares, *Narrative of a Voyage to the Polar Sea*, Vol. 1, p. XVII.

navigational failures demonstrates what Dipesh Chakrabarty calls the *provincializing* of European thought[100]. He argues that European epistemological categories, presented as universal, prove culturally specific when they encounter experiences they cannot adequately contain or explain. In the Arctic context, Western scientific categories – measurement, classification, rational control of nature – prove inadequate when faced with environmental resistance. Explorers are forced to resort to anthropomorphic metaphors to make sense of their experience. This reveals that Western frameworks claiming universal validity unveil their cultural specificity when tested against experiences that exceed their explanatory power.

The Arctic thus becomes a space where European epistemological supremacy encounters its inherent boundaries. This transformation of the polar regions into what Mary Louise Pratt terms *contact zone* – a space where disparate cultures meet and clash, often within highly asymmetrical power relations – reveals the unique character of Arctic imperial discourse. Unlike traditional colonial contact zones defined by encounters between European and Indigenous peoples, the Arctic one is primarily configured as an encounter between British imperial culture and an environment that actively resists colonial categorisation. Such distinctive arrangement operates through what Antinucci, in *Jean Rhys and the Duplicity of Landscape* (2009), identifies as the structural mechanism underlying colonial spatial representation[101]. She demonstrates that colonial discourse systematically produces «duplicity of landscape» – environments that must be discursively constructed as simultaneously knowable and unknowable, familiar and exotic, depending on shifting imperial narrative requirements. The concept of «intentional landscape» she highlights – drawing on Martin Lefebvre's definition of landscape as «a form of being of external space in our mind»[102] – reveals how colonial spaces refuse to remain passive settings and instead actively shape the

[100] See Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference.*
[101] R. Antinucci, "Jean Rhys and the Duplicity of Landscape", in A. Mariani, F. Marroni, M. Verzella (eds.), *Scritture femminili: da Mary Wollstonecraft a Virginia Woolf. Atti del convegno in memoria di Gabriella Micks (Pescara, 24-25 ottobre 2007)*, Roma, Aracne, 2009: 273-283.
[102] M. Lefebvre, "Between Setting and Landscape in the Cinema", in *Landscape and Film*, ed. by Martin Lefebvre, New York-London, Routledge 2006: 19-60, p. 51.

conditions of their own representation. This duplicitous logic requires colonial discourse to maintain contradictory positions: the colonised environment must appear scientifically intelligible and controllable to justify imperial intervention yet simultaneously alluring and threatening enough to warrant continued imperial presence and authority.

The Arctic landscape functions according to the same rationale, though with a crucial difference: whereas in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) such duplicity emerges through competing cultural perspectives between colonisers and colonised, in the present case it manifests through British expedition accounts alone, without requiring indigenous counter-narratives. Therefore, ice is presented both as a measurable scientific phenomenon and an autonomous military adversary, exposing the fundamental instability of colonial discourse when environmental agency disrupts imperial categorical frameworks. Building on Brazzelli's observation that mapping actively generates meaning and transforms space into sites of conquest and control, Moss's chromolithographs function as visual cartography that serves multiple imperial purposes. These images exemplify Mary Louise Pratt's concept of *imperial eyes* and the *monarch-of-all-I-survey*[103] trope – a rhetorical strategy that transforms the act of observing a landscape from an elevated position into a gesture of territorial appropriation, disguising imperial claims as aesthetic appreciation. The compositional act of positioning British symbols (such as the Union Jack, commemorative cross, and vessels) within salient areas visually operationalises this trope. The strategic placement of such elements does not merely record British presence but actively constructs it, turning visual representation into a form of symbolic occupation.

The choice to foreground British vessels in *The Last of the Paleocrystic Floe*, rather than presenting a deserted Arctic scenery, provides further evidence of the representational tensions embedded within imperial discourse. The existence of an alternative version suggests that Moss may have recognised these competing demands for representing the Arctic as both empty wilderness and occupied British territory. However, the editorial preference apparently

[103] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes. Travel Writing and Transculturation*, p. 201.

serves the imperial narrative of British heroism confronting a hostile environment. Such representational strategy mirrors the textual oscillation between empirical observation and military metaphor found in the expedition accounts, revealing how imperial discourse must maintain contradictory spatial representations to preserve its authority while acknowledging the challenges that threaten to undermine it.

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La borsa di dottorato è stata finanziata con risorse dell'Unione Europea – *NextGenerationEU*, a valere sui fondi di cui al DM n.351/2022 (CUP I61I22000300007), del Piano Nazionale di Ripresa e Resilienza 2022-2025 Patrimonio culturale, Area 10 – Media, patrimonio e beni culturali