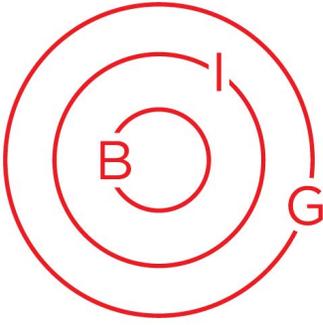




BORDERS IN GLOBALIZATION





Borders in Globalization Research Project 36

**Layered Landscapes: Deconstructing and
reconstructing the Narrative of Victimization for the
Arctic of the Anthropocene**

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Introduction

In September 2014, Prime Minister Harper, seated in front of an imposing map of A Strong Canada, proudly announced the discovery of Her Majesty's Ship (HMS) Erebus, an ill-fated vessel of the 1848 Franklin Expedition. "This is truly a historic moment for Canada," he pronounced as he congratulated the national expedition's success. "Franklin's ships are an important part of Canadian history given that his expeditions, which took place nearly 200 years ago, laid the foundations of Canada's Arctic sovereignty." With those words, the Prime Minister connected Canada's contemporary national identity to that of a centuries old imperialist history of British exploration and presence in the North. In an era of melting sea ice and contentious questions of 'who owns the Arctic,' the importance of establishing such a deep-seated identity was not lost on domestic audiences or the international community.

But Harper's well-crafted diction wasn't the only identity-building tool in action during the Franklin press release. His verbal assertion of Canada as a centuries old, historically legitimate Arctic nation was buttressed by an equally powerful instrument of identity construction: visual narration. By displaying paintings and prints in conjunction with scientific photographs of the wreck, all back-dropped by a Canadian flag, the press conference visually bolstered Harper's claims to a 200-year-old Canadian Arctic identity. Illustrations from 1845 of the Erebus and Terror braving ice-laden landscapes appeared beside images of modern-day Canadian explorers on CBC, NPR, and The Guardian, visually presenting a continual Canadian Arctic presence to a wider audience.

Since antiquity, art has played a critical role in communicating the idea of the nation – its territorially bound personality, its epic myths, and its unifying past. Today, individuals are surrounded by images as never before. 24-hour television newsfeeds, social media, and Internet articles rich in photography and videography ensure that audiences are exposed to an endless stream of not just imagers, but conscious and subconscious visual storytelling. A single image seen on the front page of NYTimes.com and shared on Facebook carries with it a complex foundation of cultural knowledge, past experiences, and frames of meaning that are immediately interpreted and influential to the viewer. Raising the Flag at Ground Zero is an easily recognizable example of the power of visuals in the 21st Century. The photograph, taken by Thomas E. Franklin of three New York City firefighters raising the American Flag in the rubble of the World Trade Center, resonates with patriotism and national strength, not least because it drew on an already established narrative from fifty years prior: the iconic World War II Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima. Raising the Flag (2001). Raising the Flag has been used on postage stamps, national memorials, and shared by private citizens millions of times across the globe, and continues to be used over a decade later. Its success, at least in part, is that it takes a familiar, historically framed aesthetic motif and reframes it for contemporary America's nationalism.

There has been much written on the connections between art, identity, and the nation. However, these analyses often focus on the use and recycling of historical visual compositions in the context of war, violence, triumph, or revolution. There exists a dearth in the scholarship when it comes to evaluating how political actors connect contemporary visual narratives with those of the past in an effort to gain political agency and legitimize sovereignty claims in the 21st Century. This chapter seeks to, in part, fill that gap by exploring the meaning of sovereignty and territory in Northern Canada constructed by images of identity narrations. The research aims to demonstrate that historic visual themes and aesthetics codes of the Arctic have been mobilized to construct values for and ideas of identity in Canada today on two levels: the nation-state and sub-nationally in Arctic civil society.

The chapter will first introduce a brief theoretical framework for understanding Northern identity in contemporary Canada, highlighting scholarship on art and identity formation, imagined communities, and regional discourse. Even as climate change shifts the international community's conceptualization of the Arctic for the 21st Century agenda, the imagery and textual discourse of past centuries of imperialism, exploration, and militarism still shape the imagined North. Therefore, the research will examine legacies of contemporary Arctic discourses of identity and borders from previous eras wherein the Arctic was prominently featured in southern international discourse. This will largely focus on Victorian exploration but other historic motifs will also be addressed briefly.

The body of the chapter will explore two temporally parallel but conflicting constructions of identity in Canada today that have come to fruition through this visual legacy. First, the research will examine the aesthetic codes of the nation-state. It will survey the construction of Canada's national identity as Northern through connecting historic imagery to contemporary ideas and values of the state. It will focus on how these images relate to perceptions of Canada's Arctic territorial borders, sovereignty claims, and historically rooted right to its Northern waters and resources. This will be done by providing two cases linking identity narratives to historical imagery: (i) the visual representations of the discovery and presentation of HMS Erebus previously mentioned; and (ii) the visual exhibition, Canadian Arctic Expedition: 1913-1918, currently on display on the Government of Canada's Northern Strategy webpage.

The chapter will then turn to a second, differing identity narrative in Canada that also uses historically embedded visual themes to construct contemporary values and political agencies: that of Arctic indigenous communities. Using the experiences of the Inuit in Nunavut, as well as the Inupaiq in Alaska, it will argue that these communities have deterritorialized and reterritorialized, displaced and replaced imperial visual narratives to construct a new, temporally layered trans-boundary Arctic identity. It will explore the implications of a new landscape of traditional knowledge being drawn onto abstract grids of imperial power visuals and historic victimization.

It is the intent of this research to not only explore national and indigenous northern discourses in Canada distinctly, but also to better understand the dynamic relationship

between competing and contested narratives in the age of the Anthropocene. Thus, the paper will conclude by considering the interactions between differing narratives of shifting borders and identities and their impacts on the benchmarks of legitimate governance and territorial sovereignty. It will explore how these aesthetic codes have influenced and transformed one another's messages and influence on the national and international communities. As climate change yields to new geopolitical opportunity in the Arctic, it is important to look beyond high-level negotiations and development strategies at evolving visuals of Northern identity to understand an oft overlooked but crucial tool political actors are using to legitimize sovereignty claims and justify economic rights.

A Theoretical Framework

The intersection of identity formation, political perception, and visual representation is taken from the fusion of several post-structuralist postulations on the utility of aesthetics, chief among them born from the disciplines of sociology, psychology, political science, and the history of art itself. Each field provides a layer of understanding on how images govern the seeing and believing of both the individual and society. At its core, the adopted framework rests on John Berger's assertion that visual representation supplies the images that construct the world in which we act, and that those images, subliminally or evidently, create the perceptual and conceptual frames of value making and decisions, at the individual psyche and societal levels.

Political Perception and Pictorial Representation

Making the jump to the notion that imagery is an essential and fundamental element in the shaping of political identity and ideas has no simple causal connection. Aesthetics, in their entirety, are part of the overall social milieu that engenders nationalism and political behavior. As argued by Joseph Nye's theory of soft power, images supply a menu of models from which political entities make their choices. The beliefs and observations off which those decisions are based are not objective, but rather colored by the ideology imbued into every snapshot and video clip that is then multiplied, extended, and reinforced by all visual experiences.

In this way, imagery is the fountainhead from which national beliefs, identity discourse, and consequential political actions ultimately spring. With this inherent power, visuals not only passively condition identity, but they are actively propagated to do so by political actors. As argued by Ross' epistemic merit model, actors seek to ideologically mobilize imagery so as to translate its communicative power into political power; in short, to use visuals as a key means of political persuasion for national ideals.

Imagined Geographies and Concepts of Identity

Edward Said's concept of imagined geographies, where images, texts, and discourse of space are constructed as a means of political persuasion, forms the scholastic bridge between political thought models and theoretical conceptions of space, and in turn

territory. Heavily influenced by Foucault, Said's Orientalism argues that Western aesthetic and textual culture produced a view of the "Orient" based on a particular imagination of its territory a feminized open, virgin space with no concept of organized rule and government. Power to legitimize geopolitical action thus resides in the hands of those who have the ability to objectify and manipulate territory into a biased imagined geography. This is particularly true in cases of distant territory, where imagined geographies make remote territory intelligible through cultural practices, like photography and videography, which make them relatable.

This concept of geographies imagined is further developed by Daniel Gregory's literature on the creation of geographies of truth. Using the example of the opera Aida's creation, Gregory argues that directed visions of territory help to create a more readily accessible idea of distant peoples – a familiar cartography of identities. By using French costume and set design and Italian musical composition, Egyptian identity is placed within a European context and thus more true to European audiences than any authenticity that could be found in Cairo itself. In this sense, imagined geography moves beyond territory to also include its peoples and their identity.

This translation of the aesthetics of imagined geographies to the political and national identity of a peoples can be seen throughout the history of art. Sober paintings of Washington crossing the Delaware River generated politicized notions of leadership, bravery, and national perseverance on the banks of America's fight for freedom. At the same time across the Atlantic, Constable's picturesque visions of the pastoral English countryside evoked an idea of the 'English homeland' and a national identity fused with the country's idyllic landscape.

Such visual narratives linking a state's geography and its peoples make identity and the nation a vivid, palpable, and tangible entity, inviting people to invest a part of their personal identity into the larger being of the nation. These images, imbued with ideas of the nation, are accumulated over the long term to form a tapestry of past and present national narratives, which are then interpreted and sustained by later generations that come to feel and identify with the visual codes of national identity.

Theoretical Models for Melting Maps

Scholastic work on the political, economic, and societal implications of a changing Arctic environment predominately adopts a relatively narrow, mimetic framework of analysis that fails to engage the gap between representation and policy action. Applying an aesthetic approach as outlined above allows for a reorientation of the Arctic geopolitical landscape away from a mimetic model and towards an approach that generates a more diverse, direct encounter with Arctic political geography. It broadens the realm of our understanding of accepted power structures, political decisions, and public opinions of contested, value laden Arctic narratives.

As Dittmer et al contend, "Arctic space is made by foreign ministers, militaries, intergovernmental organizations, scientific bodies, academic researchers, self-styled

explorers, and think tanks.” (Note indigenous groups are not included in his summary). Applied to the aesthetic framework, Arctic space is then made, at least in part, by the visual narrative of those listed. The generation and use of images by any of these actors is inevitably an act of power, which, at its best, can disguise its subjective origins and values. Arctic territorial discourse and identity is an iterative interplay between representational, embodied, and performative practices and the materialization of space. The application of an aesthetic theoretical lens permits a comprehensive investigation into the very phenomenon of political understanding and practice in Arctic discourse and identity.

Layered Landscapes

Since the advent of the Modern Era, ruler and public alike have been fascinated by the mysterious, untamable ice frontier at the map’s edge. Descriptions of pristine hills of tundra and grueling races to claim the pole enthused audiences from English print media to Soviet propaganda films. But the region that became known as the Arctic has been subjugated as more than a mere land of enchanted allure by southern explorers – during the 19th and 20th Centuries it became a key instrument in reinforcing notions of national identity in England, America, the Soviet Union, and eventually Canada. Through exploration and expeditions, the North was operated as a tabula rasa to preform feats of national heroism and project identity ideas of stately power, bravery, and international importance. In a place so geographically remote from the identities it was meant to extoll, images and supportive textual discourse, whether in the form of maps, photography, documentaries, or multimedia platforms, became a medium for legitimizing an imperial nation’s character. Each selective compositional or contextual element determined the realm of visibility and invisibility, enacting a particularly politicized disposition of the country’s identity it was used to propagate.

As noted by Janice Cavell, imagery of the Arctic has an established history of government use for popularizing certain characteristics of national identity. The ‘empty’ snowscapes of the Arctic lent themselves to political manipulation to present the North as an uncivilized, physically challenging land to test one’s personal and national authoritative resolve. As early as the 1570s, Englishmen, led by Sir Martin Frobisher, voyaged north in the quest for wealth, power, and adventure. And, with these first voyages, came etchings of valor and control to financially legitimize their expeditions to domestic (and royal) audiences. During a later journey, Frobisher sailed with a flotilla of fifteen ships, containing all the makings for an Arctic colony, including bricks and mortar. Though the poor soil and extreme temperatures soon convinced the would-be colonists that this was no place to settle, the notions of power and superiority bound to colonialism persisted in the pictorial representations in English print media.

During the Victorian Era of exploration and expansion, the British government nationalized the role of Arctic exploration through visuals in print culture to not only bolster national identity, but also support claims of sovereignty over the North Pole. Etchings of British ships commanding the icescape, formidable explorers forging

through their icy masculine fantasy, and exotic representations of Arctic natives and their artifacts constructed imperial narratives in order to justify control over the region. Robert G. David concludes that the use of illustrations in mass media and dioramas advanced the image of the British explorer as a state hero, buttressing the national myth of British providence to a benevolent global empire. Preparations, departures, and progress, fuelled by popular interest, commercial interests, and strategic motives, were closely followed and communicated to the English public as preformative moments of national prestige. Over time, encounters with the Arctic in British print media became embedded in the rhythms and routines of daily life, providing a regularized space in the public imagination to expand an identity of Pax Britannica.

But such mobilization of Arctic visuals for national identity narratives was not unique to Victorian England. Michael Robinson, in his book *The Coldest Crucible*, traces the role of Arctic explorers in conceptions of American identity from 1850 to 1910. Through masculine imagery of traversing a frozen landscape, Arctic explorers used photography of themselves at the pole to feed commercial and political demands for a national hero. Commercial enterprise, mass media, cults of celebrity, and the public and government vision of cultural superiority all demand a visual myth built manliness and strength, which explorers in turn needed to meet in order to receive funding. These visual narratives were also used to popularize the American identity as white male, as they largely excluded Arctic explorers of color like Matthew Henson. The North provided a space for the US to establish itself as a great imperial power through masculine narratives of heroism, power, and glory conveyed to the general public through universally accessible popular print media photography.

Although the focus of this chapter is connecting the aesthetic codes of 19th Century Arctic exploration to contemporary Canadian identities, it is important to understand the importance Northern visuals have continuously played over the past 200 years as instruments of national identity construction across the globe. In fact, the use of visual representation of dominance over the Arctic to build a national identity domestically not only continued but expanded during the 20th Century. Trevor Pringle demonstrates the power of visual codes of Arctic landscape imagery played in forging an American national identity of international preeminence and perceived imperial heritage in visuals during the First World War and the 1950s. Across the Iron Curtain existed Stalin's manipulation of photography and film of Russian scientists and pilots into socialist heroes of a golden 'Socialist Future.' It was then too when Canada, a country only just embracing its full independence, also embraced the far North as a central aspect of the national psyche. Arctic-themed comics, such as *Nelvana* and *Captain Canuck*, provide illustrative examples of a muscular, boisterous propagation of national identity using Arctic themes. These heroes' costumes, names, and personal values are explicitly tied to Canada's national mythology and the "imagined political community" of Canada as a Northern country.

The importance of Arctic visuals in national identity has been passed down through a long history of domestic propagation and international politicization, and has reemerged in thickly layered visual narratives from century to century. The next two sections will explore two contemporary Canadian identity narratives that have built themselves upon the themes and styles of these reemerging past visual legacies of Victorian Arctic exploration.

Canada National Identity

According to a recent Ekos survey of 9,000 Canadians, the average citizen sees the North as an integral part of their heritage and identity as a nation. The vast majority of Canadians, nonetheless, reside in the southernmost part of the country, and most will never venture to the Arctic. In spite of this, Canadians still identify their country as “the true north strong and free,” a national identity made paramount by the current government. Canada’s history of exploration has long been translated into narratives of nation building and patriotic citizenship. Although Canada only gained its independence in full in 1982, the idea of the North has played a part in its national identity since the turn of the 20th Century. Canada’s Northern identity appears in the national anthem, its postage, and its newly minted fifty-dollar bill, which features a national Arctic icebreaker. There was even a senate movement in 2011 to replace the national symbol of the beaver with the polar bear, which was argued to have better national traits of strength, courage, resourcefulness, and dignity. For the past century, heightened during the Cold War militarization of the Arctic, the North has functioned for Canada as a grand national myth that has the power to a diverse country and peoples.

Today, as the perception of a melting Arctic gives way to economic and geopolitical opportunities, the Canadian government is keen to connect this Northern national identity to a historic occupation and use of the Arctic to fortify its sovereignty claims. Establishing a historic Canadian claim to the Arctic, one that reaches further back than independence, can help to buttress legitimacy in their claims to the Northwest Passage. One way that the Harper government is establishing this continual history of Arctic control is connecting visuals of 19th and early 20th Century polar exploration with images of Canadian icebreakers today to paint an unbroken, sweeping national Arctic narrative over the past 200 years.

Connecting visual narratives from the climax of polar exploration to contemporary notions of national identity do more than legitimate sovereignty claims; like the polar bear, they help to shift the national identity to a more dominate, power-laden narrative. From attempting to replace the beaver with the polar bear to substituting human rights leaders with icebreakers on the fifty-dollar bill, Canada is in the process of changing its identity from a ‘peacekeeping nation’ to one focused on security and strength. The Victorian Era Arctic provided national heroes a frontier to establish an identity of masculinity, strength, and perseverance. More so than the troubled spaces of hot and humid tropical exploration, the Arctic served as an important site for the coalescence of an imperial British masculinity. It provided a landscape to prove one’s abilities, both

physical and mental, and distinguish themselves as a triumphant explorer – symbolic of their homeland - not only to domestic audiences, but also on the world stage. These Victorian values resonate with the shifting identity of Canada, where influence, dominance, and fortitude are the backbone of its latest international persona.

These two aspects of 19th and early 20th Century Arctic imagery, masculine might and an established historical presence, are what make them attractive to the Canadian government today as they look to assert their sovereignty and authority in international arena. Two recent repossessions of earlier Arctic visual narratives by Canadian officials, (i) the HMS Erebus discovery and (ii) the virtual exhibition Canadian Arctic Expedition, illustrate the mobilization of past aesthetic codes to construct a contemporary political identity.

Franklin Expedition

In 2008, Parks Canada announced its intent to sponsor a marine exploration to find the sunken and subsequently lost ships of the 1845 Northwest Passage expedition led by Sir John Franklin. A key reason given by the federal authorities of their sponsorship was the need to assert their claims to arctic sovereignty in an unstable and tense circumpolar geopolitical environment. In 1992, the wrecks of HMS Erebus and HMS Terror were seen as important Canada's national heritage and an integral part of the development of Canada as a sovereign nation. Accordingly, despite their unknown locations and their British origin, they were made national historic sites. Declaring the ships "undiscovered national historic sites" transformed them from material objects lost to a past disaster into a symbol of Canada's destined Arctic sovereignty. Framing the historic tragedy as part of Canada's national myth makes the history and heroic characteristics of the wreck more accessible to Canadians, provides a mandate for the Canadian government to assert their supremacy in polar science and technology through recovery missions, and offers a continual narrative of exploration in Canada's Arctic from Franklin himself to the explorers that discovered his ship earlier this fall.

The discovery and publicity of finding the Erebus provides the current Conservative government an opportunity to propagate a vision of Canada based on heroic examples of a glorious imperial past and to draw historical legitimacy on Canada's claim to the Northwest Passage. Research in Motion (Blackberry) co-CEO Jim Balsillie called the discovery a "tremendous catalyst of nation-building." This nation building is illustrated through the visuals used on the Parks Canada and other government webpages that display 19th Century drawings and paintings of the ship alongside those of the recovery expedition. While the profile plan of the HMS Erebus from 1826 is presented next to images of the wreck today may seem like a parallel of scientific information, the use of Romantic paintings and etchings of the height of polar exploration is what transforms the Franklin expedition from a Victorian sensation into a geostrategic pillar of Canadian Arctic sovereignty. The drawings provide a visual narrative of 19th Century ships commanding the northern landscape, their crew fearlessly sailing onwards in a heroic but ultimately tragic journey that is then built upon

by photographs of modern day icebreakers making the same voyage. The old and new images of vessels traversing the Northwest Passage connects the dots in a continual Canadian command of the Arctic, thus historically securing Canada's sovereign claims to the waters.

Beyond the visuals of the ship, the photographs of the people (all men) involved in the search, including Harper himself, also became a part of this modern-day Victorian exploration narrative. As noted above, 19th Century national explorers were seen as conquerors of a harsh wilderness and celebrated for their strength and determination. The contemporary Canadian Arctic explorers of the Franklin recovery expedition adopted classical exploratory poses for pictures, which would be circulated amongst media outlets and government press releases. These included the men huddled around a table below deck, being briefed over a map; at the prow of a ship looking sternly towards the horizon; and group shots posed in cold weather gear against an icy backdrop. An often used photograph for Franklin news is one of Prime Minister Harper standing at the bow of the HMCS Kingston while sailing through Nunavut this past summer, where he toasted to the search for the lost ships. Standing alone below a Canadian flag waving in the wind, Harper grips the rail and looks pensively out towards the white expanse. The picture, used on CBC, Global News, and CTV, among others, places Harper as a contemporary explorer in an old-fashioned Romantic quest narrative. Used in the context of discovering the wrecks, the photograph, as aptly put by Tina Adcock, conveys a message that "this latter-day explorer has braved the Arctic, found tangible evidence of the Franklin expedition, and thus secured Canada's claim to the Northwest Passage against foreign interlopers." Another frequently used visual was that of Harper being briefed by a Parks Canada official below deck on the HMCS Kingston. Standing over a map, the explorer points to their position in Canada's Arctic archipelago, with Harper and others looking on seriously. By echoing these Victorian compositions and using historic visual quotations of masculine heroism, the Conservative government is able to reinforce the political identity of patriotism, militarism, and northerness it has sought to establish over the past term.

Canadian Arctic Expedition

Earlier in Harper's term, the Canadian government launched a virtual exhibit on their website to commemorate the 100 year anniversary of the Canadian Arctic Expedition of 1913-1918. Hosted on the government's Northern Strategy page under the "Sovereignty" subsection, *Commemorating the Canadian Arctic Expedition: 1913-1918* details the events and outcomes of the first nationally funded Canadian exploration of the western Arctic. The exhibition's introduction presents the expedition as key to shaping Canada into a nation and provided a significant turning point in Canada's territorial history by asserting Canadian control over thousands of kilometers in the north. The text explains to viewers that the photographs and 'artifacts' taken in 1913 defined Canada's northern boundaries as a young nation, borders that are still in use to today and lay the foundation for current development in the Arctic. This description is

accompanied by 20th Century cartography and audience-friendly maps demarcating the modern US-Canada border with the trail of the expedition. The exhibition then goes on to detail the voyage itself, led by Vilhjalmur Stefansson, an anthropologist and experienced Arctic explorer, and the collaboration between explorers and government officials, a relationship married by sovereignty concerns and scientific research. Stefansson personally thought that Canada needed to strengthen its Arctic presence through occupation and economic development of the North, which was made possible by his 'living off the ice' techniques. He envisioned the Arctic not as a wasteland of sublime ice but as a region of potential, a vision that aligns with Canada's current conception of its north. Here too black and white photographs of courageous explorers and politicians of the early 20th Century accompany the text, providing a visual narrative a daring expedition, a visionary Arctic explorer, and ultimately a mythic perception of the Arctic.

The virtual exhibit then goes onto to link this 1913 expedition to a continual Canadian Northern strategy of exercising Arctic sovereignty. It moves into the 1930s and the Cold War militarization of the Arctic, onto the 1970s establishment of an exclusive economic zone and pollution prevention zone, the 1986 claim of the Northwest Passage as internal waters, and finally to contemporary UNCLOS submissions to claim an extended continental shelf. Paralleling earlier images of the 1913 ships and explorers are "concept images" of large icebreakers currently being built by the Canadian government, such as the CCGS John G. Diefenbaker. It illustrates a continued and strong presence in the North and a long legacy of scientific, security, and sovereignty minded explorers. The exhibition highlights the Conservative message of the need for a strong Arctic, the resilience of Canada's abilities, the gravity in its sovereignty claims, and the success of Canadian technology and innovation. It helps to embed a Northern, sovereign national identity as an integral part of the nation and its history through painting a captivating and historically valid narrative of Canadian Arctic occupation.

Indigenous: Implications of Imperial Conquest and Arctic Domination

Just as Victorian imagery of a masculine nationalist narrative has resurfaced in contemporary visuals of a Northern Canadian identity, so too have they influenced 21st Century Northern indigenous identity. Unlike southern explorers, who were pictorially exalted as strong, adventurous heroes, indigenous peoples were depicted as an exotic "other." In one of the first Arctic expeditions in 1577, Frobisher captured and brought three Inuit from Baffin Island, a man, a woman, and her child. It is from this and Frobisher's subsequent voyages that the first Western visual representations of the Inuit were made. Similar to illustrations from other expeditions to the tropics and beyond, these sketchings simultaneously conjured imperialist extraterritorialities of being uncivilized, femininely weak, and in need (or in want) of Western culture. Watercolor portraits by John White of the three Inuit brought back to Bristol are prime examples, being both exotic and familiar to British audiences. Keeping their distinct seal skin attire and posed with native weaponry, White paints them in a clearly Westernized

contrapposto stance, one that would be familiar to audiences of the day. By combining native and local attributes, White was able to portray the Arctic region through his subjects as nationally British but subordinately colonial.

Since White's paintings of early expeditions to the North, the Arctic has continued to be visualized as a space for human fantasies and fears, particularly those of control and conquest, and the gendered, political, and cultural consequences that accompany such imagined geographies. This was particularly true of the Victorian era where the mapping of empire and masculine fantasy blanketed the tabula rasa of the North, and in turn the peoples that resided therein. The early to mid-1800s produced a wealth of painting, sketching, and etching of Inuit encountered by English explorers. These depictions followed the style White, depicting an anglicized version of native life in situ. Though stylized, the Inuit are still depicted as foreign, exotic peoples. *A Wild Ride on a Dogsled* (1824) portrays its sitters seated off-balance on a sleigh, long hair blowing violently in the wind while chewing through raw meat. Inuit wishing to trade with the explorers in Beechey's *Narrative of a Voyage* (1831) almost demonize the natives, giving them black holes for eyes and fang-like teeth in stern lipped mouths. Juxtaposed next to the tall, elegant British sailors in uniform in *Greeting the "Arctic Highlanders"* (1819), the Inughuit are pointed as significantly shorter, less regal, and overjoyed in the simple civilized objects brought by the British, such as a mirror.

Victim identity: Reconceptualizing Imperialist Thought for 21st Century Crisis

These historic images, impregnated with a variety of gendered identities, fantasies, and projections, had two major influences on perceptions of Inuit identity that can be seen in the reuse of these visual themes today: a universal Arctic identity and a narrative of vulnerability. First, the Victorian imagery of native Northerners did not discern between differing tribes, but instead labeled and depicted them as one peoples. Regardless of their geographic or identity origin, Inughuit of Greenland were shown identical to the Yupik in Alaska. Second, themes of savagery and the need, or desire, for the 'white man's burden' of civilizing became intertwined with themes of vulnerability – the Inuit are in need of British assistance. Similar to the visual narratives of uncivilized of Africa, Asia, and the Americas, the Western concept of Northern peoples as weak and savage, and in turn vulnerable, held very real geopolitical consequences. Historically, the label of vulnerability has been linked to imperial notions of underdevelopment.

Underdeveloped, when aligned with western standards of attainment as the benchmark against which lifestyle conditions are measured, often equates to backwardness, poverty, and in need of charitable control. Building on this legacy, vulnerability is synonymous with helpless, powerless, and weak. Defined as such, vulnerable visual labels have strong links to disempowerment and dependency from general colonial rule and imperial power dynamics.

Unlike the use of Victoria visuals for Canada's national identity, which were used directly to support a continual Northern identity, indigenous identity today has used these past aesthetic codes more indirectly. Inuit civil society has borrowed the themes of these visual narratives and transposed them onto issues of today to create a contemporary identity.

Reusing the theme of a universal Arctic identity, taken from Victorian blanketed representations of indigenous tribes, Canadian Inuit civil society groups have adopted a trans boundary Arctic identity today. Transposing this regional identity given in 19th Century visual narratives onto climate change discourse, an Arctic citizen emerges. The diction and visuals of global climate science, much like Victorian aesthetics, show the peoples of the Arctic as a singular group at immediate risk of climate impacts. National governments, activism organization, regional and international institutions, and indigenous groups have all assisted the identity of a pan-Arctic citizen for the 21st Century to evolve through weaving together generational knowledge and political agenda setting across tribes. This reused pan-regional identity, treating the Arctic as a single unit of an at-risk community, has imbued indigenous political actors with a sense of agency, which will be addressed in depth later in this section. This pan-Arctic identity, rather than a state-bounded identity, is important to note when considering the visual narratives below, which borrow examples from the North American Arctic generally rather than specific to the state borders of Canada.

Again, when Victorian vulnerability themes are grafted onto climate change discourse, an identity of defenselessness frames urgent action on climate change as yet another instance wherein developed nations can impose misguided solutions onto helpless, powerless, weak, and backward 'vulnerable Arctic communities.' Having a victim identity, Arctic indigenous communities are often visualized as being vulnerable to current ecological and climatic shifts. But vulnerability itself is an elusive term, one that provides over a dozen definitions and evades a singularly accepted set of indicators or methods. According to the IPCC, vulnerability is defined as, "the degree to which a community is susceptible to and unable to cope with, adverse effects of climate change, including climate variability and extremes. Vulnerability is a function of the character, magnitude, and rate of climate change and variation to which a community is exposed and its capacity to effectively adapt to change." This combines both the exposure to a physical hazard dependent on geographic location and human sensitivity to that hazard, which is determined by pre-existing social, economic, and political conditions such as inequality, poverty, power dynamics, social networks, and institutions. In the context of Arctic populations, being identified as vulnerable is the result of these communities being at particular risk because changing biophysical conditions create difficulties for hunting and fishing, threaten traditional and cultural lifestyles, and generate adverse health effects.

Indigenous communities and activists understand this contextualized identity as victim, the need for urgent climate action, and the legacy of imperial imagined geographies.

And, with this understanding, they have reclaimed the victimization narrative to empower rather than disempower their political agency. In this way, they use the same Victorian identity of being vulnerable, but frame it as a call to safeguard their human rights, and indeed their very lives. This reclaimed visual discourse presents native identity and territory as a sacred space far removed from the problems of contemporary life, a sacred space and people that are being immediately threatened by climate change. The discourse portrays indigenous Arctic communities as victims on the front line of climate impacts through observations of dramatic changes in their everyday realities. While technical papers, charts, and quantitative figures are also employed, these images turn away from redundant scientific data and instead rely on more emotional medium to convey the reality of climate change and its affects on Arctic territory and humanized territoriality.

The climate victimization narrative calls political leaders and the public to action to help indigenous people safeguard their homelands, and to defend their human rights. These visuals frame disappearing islands in the high Arctic as a human problem -- an immediate threat to the livelihoods, cultures, traditions, safety, and health of native Arctic communities. This is exceptionally exemplified in *The Last Days of Shishmaref: Inupiaq Community Swallowed by the Sea*, a feature length film, a photo book, and a traveling exhibition that captures the disappearance of an Inupaiq Eskimo community in Alaska due to climate change. The town of 600 inhabitants, located just south of the Arctic Circle in the Chukchi Sea, is facing a reduction in sea ice and thawing permafrost along the coast, which allows for higher storm surges and shoreline erosion. The town's homes, water systems, and infrastructure are being threatened and the area is projected to be uninhabitable in ten years. Some climate models place Shishmaref and the island Sarichef (upon which it is located) as the most dramatic frontline of climate change in the world.

The photographs and videos from *The Last Days of Shishmaref* attempt to capture this bleak reality of vulnerability to climate change. The intimacy of the field camera's carefully composed portraiture, details of interiors, village tableau, and sea- and landscapes highlight the harsh disappearance of the island, the community, and its identity passed down from generation to generation. The clips of family dinners and houses falling into the sea hauntingly juxtapose the community's past roots in local tradition and their uncertain future. The domestic, intimate visual narrative marks the indigenous community as helpless against the changes in a way that makes them familiar to Southern audiences, an easily accessible geography of truth much like those of Orientalism.

Clips and photographs of the proposed relocation and resettlement of the community further inland into a neighboring city intertwine this reclaimed victimization narrative with past victimization, namely discourses of past exploitation, colonization, and the demand for redistributive justice. Interview videos about forced relocation within the feature film emphasize a familiar discourse, one where native people are excluded from

the meaningful policymaking that is defining their future. Video narratives also underscore the government-sanctioned programs aimed at assisting them as instruments that only further exacerbate pre-existing economic and social issues. The relocation policy, from which community leaders have largely been absent, will force the traditional community to assimilate into a larger, urban location, raising fears of lost culture, discrimination, and low economic opportunity. This uncertain and frightful narrative is captured in quivering voices of elders and close-up portraits of worried youth, and adds a further dimension onto the overall victimization discourse.

Indigenous photographers and videographers use a victimization visual narrative in hopes of moving political leaders to action through the moral obligation of safeguarding their existence and the emotional connection to a fellow human. Visuals of native communities as climate victims frame climate change as a human-interest story and use psychological principles of “innocent victims.” The images and videos that frame this discourse are vocally echoed at climate negotiations, as indigenous leaders make speeches for urgent action to help save their peoples, their culture, and planet earth. They are also buttressed by the narratives of ecological Arctic vulnerability told by familiar imagery of melting ice and stranded polar bears popularized by civil society groups and photojournalists. This non-indigenous, but supportive, discourse is seen in photography campaigns like those of Green Peace or James Balog’s Chasing Ice and Extreme Ice Survey, a long-term photography project that merges art and science to give a visual voice to the Arctic’s changing ecosystem.

The displacement of colonial narratives of victim and their replacement with the indigenous narrative of climate victimization allows for a deterritorialization and reterritorialization of the Arctic as a frontier still in need of protection but strips it of its uncivilized characteristic. But in order to tactically reframe the last frontier to empower themselves in the geopolitical climate plight, indigenous communities have grafted a new visual narrative onto this imperial power-laden grid: that of traditional knowledge.

Triangulation of Power, Knowledge, and Territory

As the Latin aphorism goes, *scientia potestas est* - knowledge is power. And yet, this aphorism simplifies the complex relationship between power and knowledge, their mutually reinforcing, independent coexistence. Foucault’s conceptualization of this relationship moves the aphorism beyond the traditional view that power is wielded by people or groups by way of episodic or sovereign acts. Instead, power is embodied in discourse, diffused rather than concentrated, discursive rather than purely coercive. Knowledge is produced by power and reinforced by visual mechanisms that legitimize an individual’s hold of that knowledge. Moreover, Foucault argued that such power could be demonstrated at a micro level by groups of ordinary citizens rather than large institutions, organizations, and the state. Power then, can be a positive and productive force in society that has the ability to empower local, often marginalized groups.

The knowledge holder narrative frames native Arctic communities as important observers and interpreters of changes in the environment. These visuals go beyond labeling Arctic indigenous persons as vulnerable victims to define the Inuit and other groups as experts of observation knowledge and traditional adaptation and mitigation strategies. In short, they translate knowledge of territory into political power through the mobilization of aesthetic codes that reinforce their scientific and traditional understanding of the Arctic landscape.

Understanding Traditional Knowledge

Traditional knowledge is a “cumulative body of knowledge, practice, and belief, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings including humans with one another and with the environment.” Although this definition is a suitable foundation for the term, it must be expanded beyond its western parameters to include its spiritual nature and the idea that this knowledge is both transient in immediate observations and perpetual in its multigenerational oral habit.

Traditional knowledge is increasingly recognized as an important component to understanding climate related weather patterns, ocean phenomena, and other ecological changes through personal observation. Traditional knowledge is important in constructing historical, earlier environmental baselines, identifying impacts that need to be mitigated, providing observational evidence for modeling, offering technologies for adapting, and identifying culturally appropriate values for protection from direct impacts or from the impacts of adaptation measures themselves. Traditional knowledge is seen as both a sentinel-like warning system for climate change and a critically valuable approach to low-carbon sustainable lifestyles and localized adaptation strategies. It complements scientific data, filling in observation gaps and supplementing scientific findings on shifting atmospheric and oceanic systems, and often helps to focus scientific research on data to support indigenous safety and subsistence needs. Nonetheless, this co-learning and co-production process of scientific and traditional knowledge does not guarantee fairness, equal standings, or address power asymmetries.

Traditional Knowledge, Victimization, and Climate Narratives

Framing indigenous groups as victims in visual representations is, at its core, a call to action against climate change to safeguard vulnerable, and oftentimes marginalized, human and native rights in Arctic communities. While the visual narrative of traditional knowledge also seeks to demonstrate the adverse affects of climate change on traditional lifestyles and livelihood systems through a territoriality of crisis, it more importantly emphasis the contributions that Arctic traditional knowledge can give to scientific research and adaptive strategies. Photographs, videos, and maps that emphasize traditional knowledge frame Inuit and other groups as experts and active political actors that can provide meaningful, value-added observational data to local, national, and

international climate research. This narrative framing is used to politically empower aboriginal actors – rather than a victimized object of climate change, the Inuit and Inupaq are transformed into an integral part of the solution.

Qapirangaiuq: Inuit Knowledge and Climate Change graphs the power of traditional knowledge onto the historic grid of victimization. *Qapirangaiuq* is a documentary by Dr. Ian Mauro, Canada Research Chair in Human Dimensions of Environmental Change at Mount Allison University, and Zacharais Kunuk, an Inuit director based in Nunavut. It links traditional knowledge with climate science to demonstrate that climate change is increasing the frequency of mirages, which are altering the visual landscape of the Arctic and making celestial bodies appear differently in the sky. The piece interviews and follows Inuit elders, hunters, women, and children to weave a rich narrative of a changing climate through observations in every day activities. The film has been shown at numerous film festivals and academic conferences, is available to the public, and was featured by CBC on the eve of the UN FCCC Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark in 2009.

Qapirangaiuq presents traditional knowledge as intimate but authentic. Its use of native language, rather than translation, and weight given to both literal and spiritual observations and wisdom legitimizes traditional knowledge on its own – outside of the southern scientific community. Like the victimization narrative, here too the visual narrative becomes expressive, illuminating these people's identity as a people of the earth – those who keep Mother Nature safe, a responsibility handed down to them by their ancestors. Traditional Knowledge visual discourse, however, transcends this emotional side by aligning itself with globally and politically vindicated climate scientists. The film “portrays Inuit as experts regarding their land and wildlife and makes it clear that climate change is a human rights issue affecting this ingenious Indigenous culture.” The combination of these two narratives, disempowerment and empowerment, creates a native narrative that, though in contention, is capable of framing Arctic climate change affecting indigenous communities as morally motivating and their role as scientifically legitimate.

This temporally layered grid of images and aesthetic codes has created new values for an Arctic that is evolving from a regional frozen backwater into a global hot spot of economic promise, ecological disaster, and geopolitical conflict. Images of eroding shorelines, falling homes, and empowered elders have constructed a native Arctic identity that is simultaneously empowering and victimizing. But it is also an identity that combines Said's and Gregory's Oriental familiarity for southern audiences with historically belittled native perceptions of Arctic territory and identity. Through these climate narratives, the imagined geography of a melting Arctic becomes inherently multivocal, revealing both the continuities and discontinuities with past geopolitical imaginations.

These new narratives echo past imperial lines of responsibility for southern, developed states to take action on mitigating and adapting to climate change to protect Arctic

communities. But they have also realigned power legitimacy to include the role of indigenous political actors in decisions of governance, climate action, and potential relocation. Victimization and traditional knowledge images have helped to shape the realm of the visible, and, no less importantly, the invisible, which in turn have rendered an imagined geography of the Arctic that is at once intimately familiar and aboriginally empowering. It bridges the abstract space of a changing Arctic with the occupied place, the homeland, of native communities. Their compositional and contextual aspects have helped to redefine sovereign responsibility and power in a region faced with shifting territories, ecological adversity, and human rights hazards – a redefinition of Arctic territory and territoriality themselves.

Conclusion: Moving Beyond Arctic Exceptionality

Over the past half century, the Arctic landscape has undergone a dramatic change, resulting in multiple, interrelated effects within indigenous, socio-ecological, and political systems. While much research has been done on the effects these changes have had on economic opportunity, geopolitical orders, human health risks, natural science disciplines (hydrology, glaciology, biology, ect.), and human-centric studies (anthropology, sociology), there has been less investigation into the visual narrative and identity constructions that have come to fruition from these variations. And yet, in spite of this gap, the Arctic aesthetics of identity and territoriality are critically important to understanding contemporary sovereignty, action on climate change, and changing understanding of territory itself. These images and videos create a shared way of apprehending a changing arctic identity and territorial geography. They can limit or expand climate analysis, reshape our understanding of borders, and have the ability to promote and silence certain peoples.

The importance of Arctic narratives in Canadian national and indigenous identities goes far beyond the circumpolar north. As globalization increases societies' exchanges, and as government, media, and industry increasingly assert a unified discourse, there is a global loss of diversity in ways of believing. Humanity is moving towards a global monoculture in how individuals make sense of things – how we problem solve, think critically, and interpret the world around us. This global monoculture is no different in how society perceives climate change. Humanity, specifically those that do not face the immediate risks of climate change, has developed a handful of static ways to interpret the vast and dynamic ecological changes that are occurring in the global system. These singular, mainstream discourses, limit our ability to understand climate change and perceive all possible solutions. The synthesized discourses include the securitization, environmentalization, and economization of climate change. While these conventional narratives do provide a shared way of apprehending the world amongst different actors, they also obscure the less established discourses that are equally important to interpret and act upon climate knowledge. Visual narratives, like those inspired by the Arctic, are crucially important in providing

different ways of viewing climate change to permit a much needed critical analysis of potential solutions.

The Arctic, though far removed from power holders in Ottawa, is intricately connected to the rest of the global system through climate feedback loops. Changes in the far North have immediate consequences for atmospheric circulation, ocean circulation, sea-level rise, marine and land carbon cycles, and methane hydrate feedbacks. All of these bio-chemical systems have critically important roles in the cultures, the human security, the economic health, and very lives of societies from Shanghai to Somalia. As the Arctic faces the world's more drastic changes in climate and ocean patterns, the native narratives and potential to agitate for climate change mitigation and adaption will not only prove their power for the region and its inhabitants, but the future of our entire world.