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Blum, Hester, *The News at the Ends of the Earth* (London: Duke University Press, 2019), pp. xxv + 298, \$104.95 cloth.

In *Adventures in the Ice* (1869) John Tillotson lists William Edward Parry's weekly newspaper, *The North-Georgia Gazette and Winter Chronicle*--the first Arctic newspaper, composed in manuscript form by members of Parry's British Northwest Passage Expedition--in a roster of activities designed to prevent the men aboard HMS *Hecla* and *Griper* from getting into "mischief" and to prevent time from hanging "heavy on their hands" on their 1819-20 expedition across the Canadian Arctic Archipelago (Tillotson, *Adventures in the Ice*, James Hogg & Son, 1896, 168). In addition to the newspaper, Tillotson records a school and a theatre among the recreational and instructive amusements led by Parry to help his men cope with the isolation of their circumstances. Whilst diversion was undoubtedly one of the reasons why arctic explorers created their own periodicals, what is anomalous about the shipboard newspapers Hester Blum studies in *The News at the Ends of the Earth* is that they are not a phenomenon of any other kind of "seamen's leisure customs"; they only occur on polar expeditions (50). Blum argues that polar periodicals were more than just leisure activities designed to combat the inertia of long winters spent on the ice. Rather, she contends, they were important for creating a sense of "temporal regularity" aboard ship, combating the months of darkness, and building community amongst the members of the crew (73). Parry's experience of creating the first Arctic newspaper would be repeated by HMS *Plover* (1848), HMS *Assistance* (1850-1), HMS *Enterprise* (1853), and others, but Parry himself never repeated the experiment, despite completing two more successful expeditions after the 1819-20 journey. Blum suggests that a staged feud in *The North-Georgia Gazette and Winter Chronicle* between those who regularly contributed to its pages, and those who did not might well have been why Parry encouraged no future polar periodicals amongst his crews. Despite this, a modified version of the *Winter Chronicle* and

Parry's personal diary from the expedition were both published for a public enchanted by the idea of such perilous and otherworldly experiences. Parry's personal log, published as *Journal of a Voyage to Discover a North-west Passage* (1821), was purchased by John Murray for 1,000 guineas which, as I. S. MacLaren reminds us, "was a formidable sum for a first-time author who had never proven himself as a writer," thus demonstrating the popularity of the genre (MacLaren, "From Exploration to Publication," *Arctic* 47, no. 1, 1994, 46).

Some twenty-three years later, in 1845, Captain Sir John Franklin set sail from England with two ships, HMS *Erebus* and HMS *Terror*. Franklin's mission was to navigate the final unmapped sections of the Northwest Passage in the Canadian Arctic. Two years into the voyage Franklin, nine officers, and fifteen other members of the company were dead, and sometime thereafter the remaining members of what had once been a 129-strong crew of men were missing. The wreck of *Erebus* was finally located in 2014 by Parks Canada, an agency of the Canadian government, and *Terror* was found in 2016, by the charitable Arctic Research Foundation. As Blum details, part of the delay in locating the ships stems from historic racism that dismissed local Inuit-gathered information and geographical knowledge. The wrecks of both *Erebus* and *Terror* have since been made a National Historic Site, the first of such sites to be co-managed by Inuit and Parks Canada.

In a chapter entitled "Extreme Printing," Blum notes that the first arctic ships to carry printing presses did so in service of the search for the lost Franklin expedition, but shipboard-printed newspapers increasingly became customary to Arctic and latterly Antarctic expeditions. What is more, in spite of the difficult conditions that dogged the expeditions considered in *The News at the Ends of the Earth*, these periodicals were often full of humour and creative quirks designed to amuse their private or limited audience. They mimicked the journalistic tropes and marketing techniques of the public-facing newspapers the sailors left behind at home. For example, the *Arctic Eagle* boasted "We can confidently assert [...] it is

the only paper in six hundred miles” (77). Another regretted, in the form of a mock-diary entry, “The M.S.S. here ceases in consequence of the Ink having become solid, an evil which might have been remedied, had not the pencils been already used for fuel” (83). The light, humorous tone of most of the content in British Arctic periodicals can be partly attributed to the fact that all written materials produced onboard ships were obliged to be delivered to the naval offices of the Admiralty upon an expedition’s return. Thus, the political, the bawdy, and the personal had a limited presence. However, Blum makes the case that these shipboard newspapers were also crucial to the mental health of a crew, as their construction and consumption “created beguiling regulatory mechanisms for exercising and passing time” (108).

Morale was crucial to surviving, but perhaps writing and editing these periodicals was as well, in that they forced crew members to enact forms of regulated yet creative work. Concluding her study of newspapers produced at polar extremes Blum quotes George De Long, a United States Navy officer and explorer, who reminds the reader that the Arctic and Antarctic expedition is often more likely to generate a “blank” than its projected goal or goals. Aboard the *Jeannette* (1879–1881), De Long wrote in his journal, “I might better keep these pages unwritten, leaving a blank properly to represent the utter blank of this Arctic expedition” (De Long, *The Voyage of the Jeannette*, Houghton, Mifflin, 1883, 2:456). With this bleak, despairing observation in mind Blum reflects on “the inadequacy of standard literary forms of textual media to speak for oceanic and polar extremes” (232). Turning to the present, *The News at the ends of the Earth* leaves us with a challenge: find a new ecomedia for narrating our survival in increasing extremity.

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