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I May Be Some Time: Ice and the English Imagination

Spufford, Francis



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Spufford, Francis. *I May Be Some Time: Ice and the English Imagination.* London: Faber and Faber, 1996. Francis Spufford's analysis of what he describes as "the hazy love affair between the ice and the English," (8) examines the cultural and aesthetic factors that helped propel English explorers to the poles. In contrast to conventional histories of the Parrys, Franklins, Shackletons and Scotts of polar exploration, Spufford broaches a wider range of issues. These include questions of gender, including with reference to explorers' wives. Encounters with Eskimos, and a range of literary influences, including from the works of Elizabeth Gaskell, Charlotte Brontë, and Charles Dickens, are also discussed. The title echoes the last words of Lawrence Oates (1880–1912), one of Scott's doomed explorers, to his party as he left their tent, never to return: "I'm just going outside and I may be some time."

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