



SNAPSHOTS

On the Value of Photo/Sensitivity

June 1999. My first day of the Melville and the Sea International Conference of the Melville Society; the first minutes of my exploration of the Mystic Seaport Museum—the truly mystical, living Museum of America and the Sea in Connecticut, USA. Wandering in wonder, I err into one of the sheds on the waterfront, where, next to a small display of a collection of authentic harpoons and lances, hangs a reproduction of an image worth more than a thousand words:

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Nantucket Sleigh Ride (ca. 1913). A photograph from the Robert Cushman Murphy Collection. Courtesy, Mystic Seaport Museum, USA, 2022 (CC-BY-NC-ND).

To an untrained eye, the photograph captures a whaleboat tossed by massive waves, manned with a crew of six, and *apparently* struggling to weather an impossible gale. The hood of spray over the bow enwraps the harpioneer, who, ghost-like, holds on for dear life; the oarsmen break their backs to stabilize the puny vessel lest it is swallowed by the raging ocean; the mast and the sail, useless, rest against the bulwarks; the boat-header, almost entirely enveloped in his foul weather gear, does his utmost to fend off the overwhelming swell; the man crouching next to him frantically bails out water, that keeps pouring in over the sides. *Apparently*, again, the image is nothing short of a horrifying document of the epic battle of the human will against the inhuman fury of the ocean.

And yet, someone more inquisitive, or slightly more experienced in matters nautical will indubitably notice that the ocean *around* the whaleboat is calm, almost flat. They will see that the sail is carefully furled around the dismantled mast, and that the oarsmen actually face the boat's bow *pushing* the oars rather than pulling them. Although their boat is indeed in danger of being flooded, the whalemens, evidently, do not struggle with the *weather*. To understand what it is that the sailors fight, to fully grasp the "present" captured by the image, we must first "fancy ourselves" in the past: in the moment directly preceding the scene,

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[...] in an open boat (so slight that three men might walk off with it), some twelve or fifteen miles from your ship, and about a hundred times as far from the nearest land, giving chase to one of the oleaginous monsters. "Pull, pull, you lubberly hay makers!" cries the boat-header, jumping up and down in the stern-sheets in a frenzy of professional excitement, while the gasping admirers of Captain Marryatt and the sea, tug with might and main at the truckling oars—"Pull, pull, I say; break your lazy backs!" Presently the whale is within "darting distance," and you hear the roar of the waters in his wake. How palpitating the hearts of the frightened oarsmen at this interesting juncture! My young friends, just turn round and snatch a look at that whale. There he goes, surging through the brine, which ripples about his vast head, as if it were the bow of a ship. Believe me, it's quite as terrible as going into battle, to a raw recruit. (Melville 1847 :105)

Horrifying as it might be to a “raw recruit,” the moment of the confrontation is inevitable: the world awaits the fuel for their lamps, and the old salts, brave enough to reach for the liquid gold, work for profit. Soon, the whaleboat will sneak up close enough to the whale for the harpioneer to dart his deadly weapon:

“Stand up and give it to him!” shrieks the boat-header at the steering oar, to the harpooner in the bow. The latter drops his oar, and snatches his “iron.” It flies from his hands—and where are we then, my lovelies? It’s all a mist, a crash,—a horrible blending of sounds and sights, as the agonized whale lashes the water around him into suds and vapor—dashes the boat aside, and at last rushes madly through the water, towing after him the half-filled craft, which rocks from side to side, while the disordered crew clutch at the gunwale to avoid being tossed out. Meanwhile, all sorts of horrific edged tools, lances, harpoons, and spades, are slipping about; and the imminent line itself—smoking round the logger-head, and passing along the entire length of the boat—is almost death to handle, though it grazes your person. (Melville 1847: 105)

Unable to free himself of the barbed harpoon lodged deeply in his hump, the “agonized whale” makes a desperate attempt to flee his oppressors, towing the light whaleboat at an enormous speed. The whalemen must carefully observe the gigantic mammal’s actions; facing the bow, they push the oars to warrant the stability of their tiny vessel until the animal either sounds, grows weary with fatigue and pain, or attacks them:

[...] As yet, you have but simply fastened to the whale; he must be fought and killed. But let imagination supply the rest; the monster staving the boat with a single sweep of his ponderous flukes; taking its bows between his jaws (as is frequently the case) and playing with it as a cat with a mouse. Sometimes he bites it in twain, sometimes crunches it into chips, and strews the sea with them. (Melville 1847 :105)

No doubt, studying the image, we can picture “the rest,” especially if we are familiar with the sea, or with maritime literature, such as Dana’s or Melville’s. In his above-quoted review of J. Ross Browne’s *Etchings of a Whaling Cruise* (1846), published in *The Literary World* on March 6th, 1847, the future author of *Moby-Dick* finds it rather difficult to restrict his own literary ambitions, which—incidentally—makes his text so wonderful to read. Sensa-

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tionalist though his review may seem, it is true that the whaling industry entailed more casualties than any other branch of business in America, especially bearing in mind that

[...] by 1833, 70,000 persons and \$70,000,000 were tied up in whaling and such associated crafts as shipbuilding, sail-lofts, smiths to make toggle irons, the thieving outfitters, their agents and the whores of ports like New Bedford; [...] by 1844 (peak years roughly 1840–1860) the figure is up to whaling competes successfully in attracting capital to itself with such opening industries as textiles and shoes, and the export of whale products—one-fourth of the catch—is third to meat products and lumber. (Olson 1947: 18)

Illustrative as they are, these facts plausibly explain why anyone in their right mind would put themselves (or, historically, *himself*) in the situation of the crewmen of the tiny whaling boat portrayed by Robert Cushman Murphy in the course of his naturalist expedition on board the brig *Daisy*.¹ What they *do not* explain is why the whalers would dub the element of the hunt captured by the photographer “the Nantucket sleigh ride”—a phrase which invokes associations with enjoyment rather than fear.

While the “chivalric” contempt for danger could explain such a wording, the evident enthusiasm with which Melville paints the literary analogon of the photograph betrays a poorly camouflaged memory of the adrenaline rush that he himself, certainly not a “new recruit,” may have once felt. Not unlike Melville in the first half of the 19th

1. The *Time* Editors observe that “Robert Cushman Murphy is a naturalist—one of the world’s great authorities on birds. In the course of six decades of tireless devotion to nature, he has achieved an eminence that is substantiated by half a dozen medals, numerous academic honors, nine books and more than 500 articles. His monumental work, *Oceanic birds of South America*, is a classic in its field. He has been associated with the American Museum of Natural History in New York for 44 years and was the first curator of oceanic birds in any museum anywhere. [...]” (Cushman Murphy 1965: ix). Cushman Murphy, who died on March 20, 1973, was “[...] Lamont Curator of birds at the American Museum of Natural History. He went on numerous oceanic expeditions and [...] wrote several major books on [marine birds]. He described a species of petrel which is now known as Murphy’s petrel. Mount Murphy in Antarctica and Murphy Wall in South Georgia are named after him.” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Cushman_Murphy, accessed 12 Nov. 2022.

century, many a contemporary big game hunter, rock climber, expedition sailor, deep water diver, or skydiver, are ready to risk their lives because they find this profound bodily sensation worth more than the sense of safety. Yet, in all probability, the problem is even more complex than this.

Melville's "romantic" review, combined with Olson's "modernist" matter-of-fact insight into the history of whaling, allows us to see Cushman Murphy's image as a snapshot of "being-*in-media-res*," or, in other words, a photographic version of *Dasein*.² The *studium*, i.e. the image's potential to expand our knowledge of the world, is thus energized by the *punctum*,³ the unique property of a given visual to derail our train of thought, to springboard us out of our comfort zone into awe or anxiety. Even a brief, critical, reflection on Cushman Murphy's photograph will make us realize that the emotions of the whalers, which we may have projected upon them as obviously negative, taking for granted that what we face is an image of a boat in a gale, are "out of focus." Or, to use a different photographic metaphor, like the absent "before" and the absent "after" of the scene, and like the absent whale towing the boat, these elusive affects, escaping the rigidity of the (otherwise) "realist" photographic frame, impose themselves on us empathically, through the experience of the *punctum*.

If, however, our experience of the *punctum* allows us to see the *Nantucket Sleigh Ride* as a portrait of *Dasein*, then one could also claim that our experience of the *studium* follows, which, in turn, allows us to interpret the same image as a unique, modernist, document of *Mitsein*. If the "bliss" of literature may become transformed into the "pleasure" of text,⁴ then the painful, possibly shocking, hurtful, or otherwise traumatic *punctum* may become the *point of departure* for the widening of our knowledge of the world in terms of our perceptions of relations within it.

2. The term, now a component of the basic glossary of philosophy, cultural studies, and literary studies, has been introduced by Martin Heidegger in his seminal *Being and Time* (Heidegger 2010).

3. Both terms, familiar to cultural studies scholars, have been introduced by Roland Barthes in his *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography* (Barthes 1981).

4. The concept, again, is Roland Barthes's (Barthes 1975).

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The reading of the image through the lens of *Mitsein* seems to be the (after)effect of the *punctum*: the thrill of the discovery of “obvious” regularities that question our initial projections. Exploring the picture, we expand our fascination with the *sailors-in-media-res* (people in a liminal situation, in which language is helpless, and in which humans vitally depend on one another) to encompass the very person witnessing and documenting their plight/merriment: Robert Cushman Murphy.

[...] Young Bob Murphy was fresh out of college when, in July of 1912, he sailed from the West Indies aboard the half-brig *Daisy*. He was bound for South Georgia Island on the edge of Antarctica, only a few hundred miles from the end of the world, armed with a commission from the American Museum to study and bring back specimens of the birds and other animals of the South Atlantic. [...] More to the point, he was leaving behind his young bride, Grace, married to him only four and a half-months before. Urging him to make the voyage for the sake of his career, Grace had moved their wedding date forward. The *Daisy* would be out of touch with civilization for at least a year. Murphy resolved that in addition to making the scientific notes his job required, he would keep a log for Grace that told her everything he did and how he felt about it. From the raw material of that loving report—which ran to 400,000 words—*Logbook for Grace* was later distilled. (Cushman Murphy 1965: x)

Needless to say, parallel to the logbook entries came the author’s photographic documentation of his expedition. Yet, bearing in mind that still photography was not invented until the third decade of the 19th century, and that before that the need to “tell the truth” about the reality ordinarily unavailable to the world could not be realized by means other than verbal or painterly, as well as remembering that the roll film was only invented at the end of the 19th century and that the world needed to wait for automated point-and-shoot cameras until the 1980s, one must conclude that Cushman Murphy’s “photostory” is unique for more than just one reason.

On the one hand, the *Nantucket Sleigh Ride* and all other photographs taken (and developed!) during the expedition of the *Daisy* are now available as glass lantern slides: positive transparent photographs made on a photosensitive glass pane covered with a silver gelatin emulsion, exposed to light in contact with the negative image.⁵

5. The Author used two cameras: his own Graflex camera and a reflex camera borrowed from a friend, Jack Nichols (Cushman Murphy 1965: 87).

Such “proto-slides” were to be shown to the audience with the aid of the “magic lantern,” and, by extension, they were meant to be shared with others *along* with the verbal narrative, possibly not only in the professional context, but also in the context of camaraderie, or even intimacy. Importantly, however, participating in a whaling expedition on board the *Daisy*, Cushman Murphy had no other option but to economize on his limited stock of the photosensitive material. Therefore, out of necessity, he did not only have to carefully chose the objects worth representing, but also to decide how to fit these objects in the frame.

On the other hand, aware of the fact that his own thrill of discovery would not have been transmittable to anyone who had not physically shared his experience, he felt the gravity of his decisions to select objects and scenes that would not only be representative of the daily life aboard the whaling vessel, but also capable of *emulating the experience* by means of what today we dub *punctum*, as if aware that discursive narrative alone might not suffice to make the lived truth palpable to others.

Let us consider the point above. The carefully planned and brilliantly executed *Nantucket Sleigh Ride* photograph has its verbal equivalent in Robert Cushman Murphy’s *Logbook for Grace*. The entry, “worth” 1986 words, reads as follows:

October 10. Evening. This has been the most exciting day of my life. Even though the cabin lamp is a poor, dull flicker, I must pour my experiences onto paper while they are still fluid.

The morning broke gray and overcast, with a strong wind whipping the ocean. About eight o’clock a squall blew up, bringing a torrent of rain which was just at its height when a school of sperm whales rose a few ship’s lengths to windward. The boats were at once cleared on the davits and all hands stood by. The rain presently slackened and the weather brightened enough for us to see at least two pods of whales spouting off our quarter,⁶ and others astern. When the order, “Lower away!”⁷ was shouted and echoed, I slid down into the mate’s boat and took stroke oar,⁸ replacing a Dominican who remained with the shiptenders.

6. A ship’s quarter is the rear end of the side of a vessel (all explanations of nautical terms below—Paweł Jędrzejko).

7. A command to lower the whaleboats.

8. The stroke oar is the oar located nearest the stern of a boat.

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Seeing that the spouts were fast pulling to leeward, we stepped the mast, after reefing, for the wind was brisk and the sea choppy. As soon as the whales had sounded, indicating that they were foraging and not alarmed, we zigzagged and jibed⁹ to hold our headway, while we lashed the line tubes to the thwarts, poured sea water over the rope, and put all gear in order. Then the blue waif¹⁰ at the *Daisy's* masthead signaled "whales up" and gave direction. Mr. da Lomba pulled the tiller¹¹ sharply; once more we jibed and made off before the wind, with the other two boats running abreast of us on either side. By this time it was raining a deluge again and we were drenched to the skin.

While we were bearing down towards the school, which was now steaming at the surface in preparation for the next dive, two good-sized bulls popped up unexpectedly just ahead and we were whisked upon them. The nearer of the pair crossed our bow and, while its gray body glided along a little under water, Emiliano drove the iron into the whale's right side, just in front of the hump. As the beast leaped forward, his whole massive head breached above the surface and his flukes grazed the keel as he cleared us and dashed to windward, making the wet line groan when it taunted and began to rub round the loggerhead.¹²

Sail was dropped, mast lowered, and rudder unshipped, while harpioneer and mate changed ends, the latter forsaking the helm for the still more ticklish business of lancing.

Our whale's run was for only a short distance. Coming up with others of the school, he joined them, and we could see him lying calmly at the surface. We four oarsmen now hauled line, the boatsteerer holding the turn around the loggerhead and coiling slack in the stern sheets¹³ as it was paid in. We pulled as hard and as fast as we could and, when we neared the whale, a strange sight was presented through the curtain of rain. Our whale lay wallowing, the harpoon shaft projecting from its blueberry back; beyond him were three or four half-grown calves. On the near side lay a second bull, belly up, his jaw and most of his head out of water, and our harpoon line caught between two of his teeth.

Mr. da Lomba gesticulated frantically for the other boats to come up, and we waited silently but in a shiver of impatience. Before Mr. Vincent's boat could arrive, the bull which had fouled our line, and which had probably been puzzled by the obstacle, allowed it to slip from his jaw. We then hauled up on the whale to which we were fast and when the keel pressed his side, the mate drove in the long keen lance to the socket. Within the same instant the hump hove up, the great flukes reared into the air,

9. To jibe is to cross the line of the wind while sailing downwind.

10. A signal flag.

11. A lever connected to the shaft of the rudder, with which a boat is steered.

12. A wooden post on a whaleboat, around which the harpoon rope is secured.

13. The aft section of the open boat.

our bow went down with a jerk, and we shipped a couple of barrels of water as the whale sounded.¹⁴

“Forty-barrel bull,”¹⁵ said Mr. da Lomba.

Forty-barrel bull! I recalled then what the Old Man had told me long before, that no big sperm whale is likely to make as much excitement for a boat’s crew as a lusty forty-barrel bull, enjoying the most active period of his watery life.

For a quarter of an hour we bobbed about quietly within a small area, the line snubbed round the loggerhead, Emiliano expressing the sentiment of all good boatsteerers by slackening it as little as possible and only at the last moment of safety. Then the expected burst of vapor appeared to windward, the lopsided head began to seesaw with the pointed hump, and we shot ahead on our sleigh ride.

The sun broke through the louring clouds, thawing out our goose flesh while we strained at the line and gradually gained on our unwillingly harnessed beast. But the whale had been goaded to alertness, and the lance puncture had been too far aft to affect his staying powers. Before we attained even pitch-poling distance,¹⁶ he sounded again, jerked us about, carried us back two miles before the wind, and then, without rising to the surface, plunged deeper, tearing the smoking line after him and soon exhausting the two hundred fathoms in the large tub. When the contents of the small tub began to follow, we were in a quandary. But in the nick of time one of the other boats sailed alongside; we bent on borrowed line, and saved our forty barrels!

In the middle of this fight into which I was putting all I had, I confess to a certain sympathy with the enemy. It seemed reasonable at least that after being pricked with the harpoon that still galled him, and pierced through with the horrible lance, the whale should wish to steer clear of us. This, however, was not at all the mate’s idea of good form and fair play. Standing like an armed crusader in the bow of the boat, Long John da Lomba would scratch his hear after the whale had sounded, and mutter, “I cain’t understand’ what make that animile so goodam shy!”

Our status, I thought from time to time, was that of the tin can on a dog’s tail. We annoyed the whale, but were otherwise pretty helpless.

Time flies with a fighting whale on one’s hands. The sun climbed to the zenith and its pleasant beams alternated with cold showers while we sped over the rugged, white-capped Atlantic, wearing the skin off our palms in this yet undecided tug-of-war. The whale battled nobly for his life. He tried sounding, spinning, and running all ways with respect to the wind. At one time he was towing three whaleboats, besides two

14. When a whale “sounds,” he dives.

15. An adult male whale estimated to deliver forty barrels of whale oil.

16. Pitch-poling is an element of whale-hunting technique, involving an arched pitch of a long light lance attached to a rope at the animal.

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drogue tubes,¹⁷ one of which is alleged to offer as much resistance as four boats. Watching one of these tubs dragged through the water at high speed made me marvel that the single tiny harpoon was not ripped from its anchorage in the blubber.

During a midday tempest, the roughest period of our chase, the whale pulled us cross-seas through the troughs and crests so that combers slopped over the gunwales. It was then that we kicked off our oil-skin pants (I was the only man wearing shoes), so as to be unencumbered for swimming. Over and over again the bow was pulled completely under water, because a boatsteerer hates to slacken line. Three times we half swamped and had to let the whale steal line while all hands bailed; indeed, the piggins and our sou'westers¹⁸ were employed thus more or less continuously

I have a dreamlike mental background for the day's play—the choppy, spummy water and the varying sky, the heliotrope Portuguese men-o'-war that seemed to bob past us, the bright flying fish scared up, the inquisitive Mother Carey's chickens¹⁹ that fluttered astern; and, focus of it all, straight ahead, the rocking, shiny back of our forty-barrel bull, with an impertinent little harpoon sticking there.

The brig appeared to shunt about magically, being now abeam, now close aboard off the bow, now nearly hull down astern. Fortunately, we were moving mostly in wide circles, for otherwise we should have been towed out of sight and would have to cut the line. Time and again we slacked away and tried to give another boat an opportunity to sail upon the brute and plant a second iron, but he was all wariness. When the boats came ever so softly within three or four lengths, he would kick up his big flukes and be gone. Mr. da Lomba eventually shot a bomb lance²⁰ into the whale's back, but the rubber-feathered end of it broke off and went whizzing over the sea, while the cylinder failed to explode. Three more bombs from a shoulder gun were likewise vainly spent, and the mate concluded that the charges were watersoaked.

The turning point of the struggle came when the frantic whale once more fell in with a gam of his fellows. The calming influence of neighbors was soon apparent, for he allowed us to draw right toward him. We pulled ourselves through an acre of sperm whales, big bulls that we might have touched with oars, cows at arms' length, and tiny calves, ten or twelve feet long, with huge remoras clinging to their flanks. Such company lay unconcernedly awash all about us, but we paid it scant

17. A drogue tube is a device designed to slow down the movement of a vessel, or, in this case, of a whale attempting to escape the hunters.

18. A piffin is a small vessel used to bail water out of the boat. A sou'wester is an oilskin hat used by seamen; in this context, the hats are used to bail water out of the boat.

19. A stormy petrel (*Thalasidroma pelagica*).

20. A whale-hunting device containing an explosive charge, shot from a shoulder gun.

attention because it is quite sufficient to be fast to one sperm whale at a time.

“Shush, easy, easy boys,” whispered Mr. da Lomba; “trim the boat; don’t shift your quids.”

We hauled softly along the length of another whale and, when our line was as short as a dog leash, the mate braced his thigh in the clumsy cleat, raised his long powerful arms, and buried the five-foot shank of the lance in blubber and flesh. The tortured whale quivered and sank. We peered tensely over the side for his dark hulk, knowing that the sound-ing would be brief and that he might rise beneath us. The mate pounded and pried the twisted lance shaft into a semblance of straightness.

“Stern all!” Up came the whale under our keel. While we just avoided capsizing, the lance struck home twice or thrice again through the froth before the whale got under way on another lap of his race. Then every-thing was repeated. Once more we were drenched. Again we bailed and hauled and slackened and hauled and bailed.

Finally, the second officer’s boat, which had been back to the brig, transferred to us a case of dry bombs. Late in the afternoon, when we once more entered a group of whales, the crucial opportunity was seized. A bomb was shot into the brute’s lungs, where it exploded with a muf-fled crack. In his leap, he half filled our boat with water for the last time, but he had no longer had the breath to sound. His spout, formerly so thin and white, reflecting tiny rainbows in the rays of the low sun, now became first pink and then crimson and gouted.

“His chimney’s afire!” said Mr. da Lomba, with a heartless chuckle.

Mr. Almeida’s boat closed in with ours. Lances were thrust between the whale’s ribs, held there, and churned, until the creature went into his ghastly flurry, all the while belching squids from his gullet until we floated in a slimy pool of their remains.

He died and turned fin out after giving us nine thrilling hours. We chopped a hole through one of his flukes, attached a line, and rested, weary but content, munching hard bread, drinking fresh water, and awaiting the arrival of the distant brig which, happily, was then to windward. After all the bluster of the day, the sun set in a calm sky. Mars, burning red, followed closely on the same track, and was hanging like a lamp on the waters when the *Daisy* bore down and gathered us in. (Cushman Murphy 1965: 124–130)

The narrative, although nominally a realistic journal entry, docu-menting the hunt from the moment of spotting the school of whales until the conclusion of the chase, evidently betrays the writer’s literary flair. The first descriptive paragraphs, concrete and matter-of-fact, soon yield to more complex, dramatized forms of the approximation of the experience of the chase. The whale becomes “a beast” whose

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head is “massive” and whose “flukes graze the keel”; the enormous power of the animal towing the whaleboat is such that the rope around the loggerhead is “smoking”; the crew of the boat “kick off” their oil-skin pants, so as to be “unencumbered for swimming,” should the “frantic,” “tortured” whale cause the boat to capsize (“because a boatsteerer hates to slacken line”). Petrels, following in the wake of the chase, are “inquisitive,” the brig “appears to shunt about magically,” and the whole drama comes to its end under red light of Mars. Cushman Murphy skilfully builds the tension by interspersing his first-person report with Mr. da Lomba’s commands (which enhances the sense of immediacy) and his dramatic, often jocular, interjections (offering the minimum of comic relief). Resorting to techniques characteristic of creative fiction, he appeals to the affective capacity of his readers, aware that even the most meticulous “facto-graphic” description of the hunt will be in vain if the audiences, especially the readers finding the nautical vocabulary foreign, fail to fill the spots of indeterminacy with emotions. And even though the narrative covers the preparation for the chase, the chase itself, and the well-deserved rest after hard work, it struggles hard to achieve what the very limited frame of the *Nantucket Sleigh Ride* allowed Robert Cushman Murphy to attain without a single word.²¹

His “freedom from excess” has proven to be most productive: out of necessity, the photographer adopted the position of responsibility. To shoot his picture, he could not afford to experiment much. Unlike contemporary photographers (equipped with high resolution digital cameras, able to afford water or weatherproof casings,

21. “*Logbook for Grace* is one of those rare books that are published to the applause and admiration of the critics and then unaccountably sink out of sight. Published in 1947, it received lavish praise from reviewers everywhere. ‘A book to set on the shelf beside *Moby Dick* and *Two Years before the Mast*,’ said one review; another called it a book to ‘live forever in the solid and lasting literature of a civilization.’ Yet by 1950 the book was out of print and apparently forgotten by the public and publisher alike. It deserves a far better fate. *Logbook* is the fascinating chronicle, in diary form, of a voyage of one of the last Yankee whaleships in the twilight days of sail. More than that, it is an adventure story, a travelogue, a naturalist’s notebook and a charming love story all rolled into one—written, in must be added, by a man whose profession is not writing, although he has written scientific works.” the Editors’ of *Time* “Preface.” (Cushman Murphy 1965: xi).

and having a whole gamut of high-tech lenses and memory cards taking almost no space, yet warranting the owner and almost limitless storage capacity, at their disposal), the photographer of the *Dasein* had to embrace *Mitsein* by way of careful, dedicated observation. *Nantucket Sleigh Ride*, like his other images preserved in the Mystic Seaport Museum Collections, are the fruit of *caring for*, but also *worrying about*, those, with whom he shared the deck, as well as of his care for his beloved wife, “the well-spring of [his] experiences and of all the best that have followed,”²² who herself could not participate in her husband’s expedition.

Through his glass lantern images, Robert Cushman Murphy gives his audiences the “realist” truth, employing “modernist means” to “romantically” emulate the emotions, without which no picture could be worth a mention, much less a thousand words.

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22. The full inscription to the book reads: “To Grace, The Well-Spring of These Experiences and of All the Best That Have Followed.” The dedication is complemented with the fourth stanza of Robert Burns’s poem “A Red, Red Rose.” In the 1965 edition of the *Journal*, the author adds the following note: “December, 1965. Without Grace’s clairvoyance in 1911—a trait ever since reaffirmed—the meaning of my opportunity would have gone unrealized: no voyage, no salty yarn; only different, less stimulating path towards a career. R.C.M.” (Cushman Murphy 1965: title page).

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