Collecting the Andrée expedition
Circulating Arctic objects in writing

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Abstract: The article investigates the circulation of objects from the Salomon A. Andrée expedition (1897), examining the reproduction and recontextualization of written records in four Swedish works: Med Örnen mot polen (1930), Per Olof Sundman’s documentary novel Ingenjör Andrées luftfärd (1967), and his compilation Ingen fruktan, inget hopp (1968), and Bea Uusma’s Expeditionen (2013). The article approaches these writings through the prism of collecting, exhibiting, and curating, as part of the extended archive of the Andrée expedition, and argues for an understanding of books as important in circulating objects to a reading audience in ways that shape the expedition’s afterlife.

Keywords: Arctic exploration, Salomon A. Andrée, circulation of objects, travel writing, materiality, Per Olof Sundman, Bea Uusma

On 1 September 1937, the Norwegian daily Aftenposten printed news of a discovery from the Swedish expedition’s attempt to reach the North Pole by hydrogen balloon in 1897, led by engineer and physicist Salomon August Andrée. A buoy containing a message from Andrée and his men, Nils Strindberg and Knut Frænkel, had been found by Norwegian trappers at Sivert Island (today’s Kiepert Island) between Northeast Land and Western Spitsbergen. Parts of the written note had been obscured, but portions were still legible. The following day, the newspaper provided more information about the finding and published the brief message signed by the three expedition members, dated the day after their journey began:

Float Buoy, No. 2. Monday, July 12, 1.30 Greenwich Time. We proceed at a height of 20 m. nearly due east and below we have vast ice-floes with few pressure ridges and large openings. The position is about 82° 5’ N. and Long. 28° E. The movement is slow, sometimes nil. All well. Andrée, Strindberg, Fränckel [sic] (Polar Record 1938:1–2)¹

Aftenposten refers to the buoy as an important find, but the note does not add new information about the expedition. Other buoys with similar reports had already been found, and more crucially, the diary of Andrée had been discovered among the remains at White Island in August 1930, and published that same year. Thus, the importance of the buoy and the note seems to lie in their mere existence and in the
fact that they have been located and collected, still intact after 14,625 days in the Polar Sea (Aftenposten 1937). The newspaper publishes the contents of the note, but also describes its form in detail, referring to the thick parchment paper, the steady, pencilled handwriting, and a pair of brown hairs that were found alongside the brief report. Thus, the note is significant as a piece of information and as a relic of the expedition; its status as “a precious document” (Aftenposten 1937, my translation) lies both in its textual content and its materiality.

This article takes its point of departure in the Andrée expedition, and explores how written records from the expedition, such as the note introduced above, circulate in selected writings. Through an approach to books through the prism of collecting, exhibiting, and curating, I examine how such written records are reproduced and recontextualized in four Swedish works: the edited volume Med Örnen mot polen: Andrées polarexpedition år 1897 (1930), Per Olof Sundman’s documentary novel Ingenjör Andrées luftfärd (1967) and his compilation Ingen fruktan, inget hopp: Ett collage kring S.A. Andrée, hans följeslagare och hans polarexpedition (1968), and Bea Uusma’s Expeditionen: min kärlekshistoria (2013). These writings, I argue, constitute part of what we may call the extended archive of the Andrée expedition, circulating material traces of the expedition outside of physical collections and exhibitions. In the present contribution, I explore some of the ways in which objects, written records specifically, are reproduced and recontextualized in the selected writings, and how it prompts reinterpretations of the objects as well as of the expedition.

Andrée’s balloon flight is among the most mysterious events in the history of polar exploration, and it has continued to fascinate scientists and the public alike. After months of preparation, the balloon left Danes Island, Svalbard on 11 July 1897, but stranded on the pack ice just two days after departure. Andrée, Strindberg, and Frænkel had to continue southwards by foot, poorly equipped and in harsh conditions, until they made camp at White Island in the northeast of the Svalbard archipelago in October 1897. The fate of the expedition members was unknown for three decades, until their remains were found accidentally by the Bratvåg expedition, led by geologist Dr Gunnar Horn, on 6 August 1930. The general interest in this spectacular expedition and the fate of its members is represented in Swedish culture, with films, exhibitions, musical compositions, and numerous books. Here, I examine four of these books, published over a period of 83 years and varying in genre and style. The publications have been selected due to their important role in today’s general understanding of the Andrée expedition and because they circulate, verbally and visually, written records from the Andrée expedition to a reading audience.

REPRODUCING AND RECONTEXTUALIZING ARCTIC OBJECTS

Today, the remains from the Andrée expedition form part of various collections, such as the Salomon A. Andrée 1896 Polar Expedition Collection located at the National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution, which consists of prints, photographs, and a scrapbook, gifted by Peter Gustafson in 1993. Most extensive and important, however, is the Andrée collection located at Gränna Museum in Gränna, Andrée’s birthplace. The collection was a deposit from the Swedish Society for Anthropology and Geography in 1944, and has since then been extended, today consisting of
photographs, letters, and other objects from and about the expedition. Both the National Air and Space Museum and Gränna Museum make their collections available to the public, displaying objects on location and/or digitally. The objects from the Andrée expedition belong to the specific contexts of these collections, but are also present in other contexts, such as the books I am concerned with here. Obviously, this is not a physical transfer: the books reproduce and display the objects, verbally and/or visually. Nonetheless, I argue that these reproductions contribute to the objects’ circulation and recontextualization, and that they constitute new collections that may generate new interpretations of the objects and of their initial contexts (cf. Appadurai 1986; Gosden & Marshall 1999).

In her study of how the infamous John Franklin expedition shaped our general understanding of the Arctic and Arctic exploration, Adriana Craciun approaches the objects collected during the searches for Franklin’s ship through “the larger geography of inscription and objects.” This larger geography encompasses the objects and “the visual and verbal texts devoted to these traces” that “together comprise a distinctive body of material inscription about and in the Arctic” (Craciun 2016:37). Craciun refers to an entangled Arctic archive, and indeed the books studied in this article are archives in and by themselves, shaping the afterlife of the Andrée expedition in the public imagination, at the same time as they form part of this larger, entangled archive. I draw here on Craciun’s extended notion of material inscriptions and objects, with a focus on how written records from the Andrée expedition are reproduced and recontextualized in the selected books. I am particularly interested in how the records have a bearing on the narrative strategies in the texts and whether – and how – the materiality of the records is reproduced. Thus, I approach these writings not merely as texts, but as collections and exhibitions that circulate and display the Andrée objects, in which the authors have a curatorial role, choosing what and how to include, and what to leave out.

Several scholars have explored the writings from and about the Andrée expedition. For example, Maria Lindgren Leavenworth (2018) examines the relationship between fact and fiction in one of the earliest literary interpretations of the expedition, Vidar Berge’s novel Den Hemlighetshålla Nordpolsön, published in 1902; and Henning Howlid Waerp (2017) devotes a chapter to Uusma’s work in his book on Arctic literature. Others have focused more on the material traces from the expedition, including Lotten Gustafsson Reinus’s (2024) study of the polar collections in Nordiska Museet and Gränna Museum, and Anders Houltz’s (2010) comparative investigation of the relationship between museum and narrative in the Andrée exhibition at Gränna Museum. So far, however, no studies have combined these approaches, the literary and the material, to examine how objects, and written records specifically, enter the writings about the expedition. Highlighting how these writings reproduce and recontextualize the records and approaching the books as curated collections and exhibitions, the present article aims to bring forth new perspectives on the larger geography of the Andrée expedition’s inscriptions and objects, and on how objects and materiality circulate in writing. In what follows, I briefly argue for my understanding of these books as forms of collecting and exhibiting and of the author-narrator as curator before I analyse each of the four works chronologically, comparing how they reproduce the records and how this ties into the texts’ narrative strategies.
The selected works vary in genre, but all narrate the events of the Andrée expedition. As such, we may categorize them as travel writing. However, they do not entirely fit Tim Youngs’s (2013:3) definition of travel writing as “predominantly factual, first-person prose accounts of travels that have been undertaken by the author-narrator”. Med Örnen mot polen (1930) is indeed mainly factual and includes first-person narratives of travel experience, such as Andrée’s diary. It is not, however, a prose account by an author-narrator made after the journey. Had Andrée survived and returned, perhaps such an account would have existed. Instead, Med Örnen mot polen is published and edited by the Swedish Society for Anthropology and Geography, which, as I will return to, also has a curatorial role when it comes to the inclusion and display of the records from the expedition. Sundman’s novel Ingenjör Andrées luftfärd (1967) is a prose account, but it is not predominantly factual. Although presented as the first-person narrative of Frænkel, the author-narrator in the text is a fictionalized construct. Sundman’s second book, Ingen fruktan, inget hopp (1968), is on the other hand factual in the way that it compiles writings from and on the expedition, like Med Örnen mot polen, presumably without any literary crafting of the events. Yet, the author-narrator here is Sundman himself, who evidently has not himself undertaken the journey he narrates. Uusma’s account is the only text that really fits Young’s definition of travel writing, as a first-person narrative that renders the author-narrator’s factual “second journey” (see Wærp 2017:185–189), following the itinerary of Andrée, Frænkel and Strindberg.

The texts analysed here all relate to an actual event (the Andrée expedition), actual people (the expedition members) and draw on documentary material (records from the expedition). However, the extent to which they fulfill what Peter Hulme (Hulme & Youngs 2007:3) refers to as travel writing’s truth claim varies: “All travel writing involves an explicit or implicit truth claim: writers claim to […] have been in the places they describe. If they are subsequently discovered not to have been, then their work is discredited”. Whereas Sundman’s novel obviously would be discredited from such an understanding, Uusma’s account would not. However, despite the differing degrees of “truth” in these texts, their varying genres, and the fact that they do not assume the status of records, they form part of the extended Andrée archive and have shaped the understanding of the event.

The variations outlined above suggest perhaps an approach that is more in line with Jan Borm’s (2004:26) understanding of travel writing, not as a genre, but as “a useful heading under which to consider and to compare the multiple crossings from one form of writing into another and, given the case, from one genre into another”. Moreover, these variations point to the different forms of narrating the same event, here the Andrée expedition, tying into Hulme’s recognition of the constructed aspects of travel writing when he states that “all travel writing – because it is writing – is made in the sense of being constructed, but travel writing cannot be made up without losing its designation” (Hulme & Youngs 2007:3, italics original). Hulme refers here to travel writing’s affiliation with, as well as divergence from, fiction, but recognizes that even the seemingly most truthful travel narratives are constructed. As T.D. MacLulich (1979) and John Tallmadge (1979) have argued in their studies of explo-
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ration writing, all texts require some kind of processing to render experience, and even the roughest and most immediate field notes may feature literary techniques, such as crafting narrative personae, selecting and arranging events into plots.

The heading of travel writing allows us to recognize the made aspects of the selected texts, also those that are not fiction. Furthermore, these made aspects correspond to my approach to the writings through the prism of collecting, exhibiting, and curating. Travel writing is a means of recording and narrating travel experiences, which ties into collecting. One meaning of the verb “collect” is “to gather or to bring together”, pointing to how collections are constructed and structured by someone somewhere, in the same way as travel writing (indeed, all writing) is. As new contexts for the objects, we may also consider these narratives a way of exhibiting the documentary material they include. Huw Lewis-Jones discusses exhibitions and the objects they display as imaginative resources in the discourse on the Arctic and heroic exploration. Objects serve as evidence verifying the traveller’s account, but also play a more symbolic role as markers of heroic endeavours, cultural values and national identities that have an impact on “public consciousness” (Lewis-Jones 2017:294). The books discussed here are not exhibitions as such, but they do in various ways exhibit records from the expedition, circulating and displaying them to a readership in ways that have bearings on the understanding and imagination of the expedition. In this context, the author’s choices become particularly pertinent when it comes to the process of rendering the events in writing. The author’s role is that of a curator, selecting which records to exhibit and which not. Literary studies usually approach the drawing on other texts through the notion of intertextuality (e.g., Genette 1987), which refers to a text’s explicit or implicit interconnectedness with other texts. The four writings introduced above and of which I now begin my analysis, are all intertextual in their engagement with records from the Andrée expedition, explicitly and/or implicitly. Here, I see intertextuality in tandem with collecting, exhibiting, and curating to encompass how also the records’ materiality enter the writings.

Med Örnen mot polen (1930)

Med Örnen mot polen: Andrées polarexpedition år 1897 was published in 1930 on the initiative of the Swedish Society for Anthropology and Geography and includes several of the records retrieved at White Island such as Andrée’s diary, Strindberg’s notes, and Frænkel’s meteorological observations, illustrations, and photographs. An English translation was published the year after, with the lengthy title The Andrée Diaries; Being the Diaries and Records of S. A. Andrée, Nils Strindberg and Knut Frænkel Written During Their Balloon Expedition to the North Pole in 1897 and Discovered on White Island in 1930, Together with a Complete Record of the Expedition and Discovery (1931). Many of the records are reproduced visually across the 300 pages, and the book provides photographs of diary pages, sketches, and other remains found at the final camp site. In some cases, the layout of certain records, such as Andrée’s diary, is reproduced typographically with deletions, alterations, and marginalia. In this way, the book renders what Lisa Gitelman (2014:1) refers to as “the know-show function” of the document, and to how its authority and epistemic value lie in its role as artifact. Correspondingly, the value of the records from the Andrée expedition lies in them being ar-
tifacts from the expedition, having, in Clifford Geertz’ (1988:4–5) words, “been there”.

In addition to these records, the book is made up of chapters written by members of the editorial committee and other scientists who were central in the investigation of the findings from the Bratvåg expedition in 1930. Many of these additions are comments on technical and scientific aspects, such as aeronaut (and reservist on the expedition) Vilhelm Swedenborg’s description of the balloon’s construction and oceanographer and meteorologist Harald Ulrik Sverdrup’s explanation of the pack ice, whereas the main part of the book is written by geologist and glaciologist Hans Wilhelmsson Ahlmann and ethnologist Nils Lithberg. In their preface, the editorial committee elaborates on the purpose of these added chapters:

The object of the chapters just mentioned is to give – on the basis of all available documents from White Island – a connected and as nearly as possible chronologically true picture of the fate of the Expedition, from the beginning of the balloon-journey, on the 11th of July, 1897, down to the catastrophe on the ice-floe near White Island, on the morning of the 2nd of October, 1897. All the memoranda and other notes have been followed as closely as possible, and nothing has been added to the account but such words and phrases as were necessary to combine the, very often, brief, independent and chronologically irregular memoranda from the Diaries into one narrative, or to make these notes more easily understandable. *(The Andrée diaries 1930:x)*

The preface accounts for the editorial committee’s approach to the records that were found on White Island, and to their handling of them in the making of the book. As accounted for, the committee made use of the remaining documents and the expedition members’ own words, as far as possible, but have also edited them, if ever so slightly, into a cohesive narrative. The statement quoted above testifies to the conscientiousness and accuracy of the committee in its editorial choices. Yet, it also raises questions concerning what, according to the committee, is required to make the memoranda and notes “more easily understandable” and what makes a cohesive narrative. Furthermore, it begs the question of how these editorial choices impact the exhibiting and curating of the records.

One example that highlights some of the issues mentioned above can be taken from the beginning of the chapter “The Journey of the ‘Eagle’ (‘Örnen’) 11–14 July, 1897”, written by Ahlmann, which presents a diary entry from expedition member Strindberg:

It is the 21st June, 1897, at nine o’clock in the evening. Nils Strindberg is sitting alone in the balloon-house close by the balloon, which is somewhat more than half filled. He is writing to his fiancée. A hard north-east wind is wailing in the upper parts of the building and among the cliffs above it. He is watching by the hydrogen-gas apparatus, but now his hands are free, for the filling goes on smoothly. His thoughts are with his sweetheart in Stockholm, and he recalls the happy days gone by and dreams of his future, of which he knows nothing. He is hopeful, however, for the balloon is varnished and ought to be much more gas-tight than last year. The expedition has all the advantage of the summer, with its good, favourable winds and long sunlight. Why should not the enterprise succeed? He himself believes in it firmly. *(The Andrée diaries 1931:64)*

If we compare this passage to Strindberg’s original entry in the record found at White Island, it becomes clear that the text has been heavily modified by the editorial committee in *Med Ørnen mot polen*: 
21/6 It is 9 GMT. I am sitting alone in the balloon house below the almost half-filled balloon. NE [northeastern] strong wind, which is blowing in the upper parts of the balloon house and the mountains above. [...] It is strange to be sitting here again this year and think that I am engaged to the best girl in the world, my dearly beloved Anna. Yes, and I have to shed a tear, when I think about the happiness that has been and that may never be given to me again. (Strindberg in Sundman 1968:51)

The downplaying of Strindberg's emotional reflections on his fiancée is striking. In Ingan fruktan, intet hopp (1968), to which I will return in more detail below, Per Olof Sundman comments on this rewritten passage. Juxtaposing Strindberg's original and Ahlmann's rewriting, Sundman points to how the latter changes the meaning of the original text and reduces any trace of Strindberg's pessimism and doubt concerning the realization of the expedition. He remarks on how diary entries such as this one was not rendered in full in Med Örnen mot polen but rewritten in ways that reduced the more intimate aspects, possibly because Strindberg's fiancée Anna Charlier was still alive, and because it better suited the heroic discourse on Swedish polar exploration (Sundman 1968:7).

Another prominent feature, which Sundman does not comment on, is the conversion from a first person to a third person narrative, from the author-narrator's "I" to an omniscient third person narrator who focalizes through Strindberg. This narrative shift may be understood in context with the consideration for Charlier that Sundman notes or as an effort to locate Med Örnen mot polen within a more objective and scientific discourse. Whatever the reason, the rewriting in this example far exceeds the purpose of adding words and sentences to make the entry more "easily understandable," as stated in the preface. The editing of the text and the removal of "a convincing 'I'" (Geertz 1988:79) – or the authorial figure of the "I" (Genette 1987) – downplay the intimacy of the diary entry, create a distance with Strindberg and his experiences, and diminish the diary entry's status and authority as a record from the expedition. The record is no longer really Strindberg's – the object has been altered. Consequently, the committee's editing of his entry entails a potential loss and reduces – perhaps even eradicates – the record's having "been there". Seen through the prism of collecting, exhibiting, and curating, the narrative shift has a huge impact on how the record is presented to the readers as it changes its contents and therefore cuts its material bond to the expedition. Of the four books studied here, Med Örnen mot polen presents the most explicit truth claim, and clearly positions itself within a scientific, factual discourse. Yet, in its circulation and recontextualization of Strindberg's record, the book moves away from this discourse by weakening the record's status as a relic – object – from the Andrée expedition.

**Ingenjör Andrées luftfärd (1967)** and **Ingen fruktan, inget hopp (1968)**

Per Olof Sundman's two books on the Andrée expedition differ from each other – the former is fiction, the latter a compilation of various documentary materials. In Sundman's documentary novel Ingenjör Andrées luftfärd, published in 1967, the events of the expedition are narrated in the first person by expedition member Knut Frænkel. He was the only expedition member who left no personal writings that have been located, and the novel thus presents itself as a lost record, supplementing the remains of the expedition. Sundman's novel
was thoroughly researched, but there is nothing in the work that calls attention to this research, except for the fact that it narrates a real event. We find no footnotes, no listing of sources or any other elements that draw attention to the documentary components.

Only once does the author make direct use of the textual material from the Andrée expedition, namely in a scene towards the end of the novel that marks a decisive turning point in Frænkel’s relationship with Andrée, representative of the novel’s unfavourable portrait of the expedition leader. In the scene, the three men have set up camp at White Island. While Andrée is roaming around, Frænkel finds Andrée’s diary and reads it aloud to Strindberg. Other than Frænkel’s comments and outbursts, the diary entry is taken verbatim from Andrée’s writings found on White Island (see Kaasa 2019). Yet, the novel does not in any way signal that this is a record retrieved from White Island. It is instead represented as an integrated part of the novel’s plot and of the fictional dialogue between Strindberg and Frænkel. This insertion of the diary entry may be seen as an authorizing strategy that underlines the novel’s documentary value, credibility, and authenticity, but without drawing on the fact that it is a record from the expedition. Moreover, it points to how fiction may reproduce, exhibit and curate objects with a rather different set of conventions than what would be the case in museum exhibitions. The circulation and recontextualization of Andrée’s diary entry is barely discernible here, and as we saw in the reproduction of Strindberg’s entry in Med Örnen mot polen, it weakens the record’s status as a relic and object of the expedition.

Another aspect of the choice of Frænkel as the first person narrator relates to the very impossibility of him narrating: in Sundman’s novel, Frænkel is the last to die and the final paragraphs describe how he crawls down into his sleeping bag and takes a combination of opium and morphine. The fictional character Frænkel commits suicide, and the novel ends with the sentence: “I lay on my side near to Andrée. His beard was grey. He was an old man. I was still young” (Sundman 1970:383). The narrative level here is of interest. For one, the choice of Frænkel as narrator is paradoxical: he never returns from the expedition, either in real life or in the novel. The novel’s final sentence is in the past tense but also suggests a continuation and something unresolved (“I was still young”; my emphasis). This begs the question of where Frænkel speaks from. To my mind, this narrative choice highlights a crucial aspect of travel and exploration writing: only those who return can tell their story. The stories of those who do not return are lost, and so are the stories of the objects that never make it into collections and exhibitions. Sundman plays with this by choosing Frænkel as his narrator. Not only did he fail to return alive, but, in contrast to Andrée and Strindberg, he left no written records of his personal experiences. This absence provides an opening for Sundman’s novel, and we may read the ending as a thematization of the missing records, of the incomplete collection and of our efforts to fill in and make meaning of the blanks.

Sundman published his other book on the Andrée expedition, entitled Ingen fruktan, inget hopp: Ett collage kring S.A. Andrée, hans följeslagare och hans polarexpedition (No Fear, No Hope: A Collage of S.A. Andrée, his Companions and his Polar Expedition), the very next year. It is a compilation of all the sources and materials that he collected and consulted during his work on the novel. The book spans approximately 340 pages and includes records such as written excerpts and photographs retrieved at White Island, as well as excerpts of
speeches and newspaper articles published at the return of the bodies of the three expedition members in 1930. Like the Swedish Society for Anthropology and Geography’s publication almost forty years previously, Sundman’s publication includes visual and typographic renderings of the records, exemplifying a much more explicit circulation of the records than in his novel from the year before, with a greater emphasis on the document’s materiality and epistemic value as artifact (see Gitelman 2014).

In his preface to the collage, Sundman comments about how he was first asked to edit a new version of the Swedish Society for Anthropology and Geography’s publication in 1930. However, he found it to be too dated and heroizing, and chose to write a new and entirely different book, resulting in his novel of 1967. The collage approaches the records from the expedition in a very different way than Ingenjör Andrées luftfärd – and Med Örnens mot Polen. Sundman here brings together a wide range of written sources relevant to the expedition, including records found at White Island and texts that were published both prior to and after the expedition, such as letters, biographies, and memorial volumes. The aim, he writes, is to render possible the various circumstances that made the foolish and overconfident endeavour of a balloon flight to the North Pole.

In their preface to Med Örnen mot polen from 1930, the editorial committee refer to their curatorial function through their editorial choices. In Sundman’s Ingen fruktan, inget hopp, the author as curator is far more prominent. The text is, as the subtitle indicates, a collage, which may refer to “a collection or combination of things,” often entailing a multimodal combination of text and image. The collage technique in Ingen fruktan, inget hopp mirrors this, compiling fragments of verbal and visual materials from and about the expedition, accompanied by the author-narrator’s scattered comments and reflections. The seemingly unassuming first-person narrator appears in brief passages and effortlessly positions himself between the excerpts and records. This may be understood as an authorizing strategy, making transparent the author-narrator’s, or curator’s, practice of reading, interpreting, and compiling the documentary material, and as such, constructing a “convincing I”. Here, the authority and ethical imperative referred to by Hulme lie not in the firsthand experience of the journey narrated, but in the firsthand experience of the records and sources. Whereas these fragmentary remains have been crafted into coherent narratives in Med Örnen mot Polen and Sundman’s novel, the collage mirrors the fragmentary form, underlining how writing – and collecting and exhibiting – is a process of piecing together and curating those fragments available to us, and of making meaning of that which is not available to us.

As mentioned, a collage is most often multimodal, and Ingen fruktan, inget hopp includes photographs, maps, and sketches, most of which have been assembled at the end of the book. The chapters entitled “Ballongfärd” (The balloon flight) and “Isen” (The ice) are multimodal in the way that they include excerpts from Andrée’s diary, Strindberg’s writings and Frænkel’s meteorological annotations, mimicking their visual expressions and alternating with the author-narrator’s commentaries. With a few exceptions in which these writings are reproduced visually through photographs, the excerpts imitate the original documents in terms of print layout. Thus, inventory lists are rendered as lists, and bullet points of the almanack are rendered as bullet points. Most striking and of relevance to this study is how Sundman’s collage reproduces
the lacunae of the records. In some of Andrée's diary entries that were collected at White Island, words and phrases are missing or eroded after so many years. Sundman's book reproduces these lacunae visually, allowing for blank spaces between the words and between the fragments. Accordingly, certain pages in the book consist of scattered word fragments on a white surface.

The blankness of these pages hints at the white landscape in which the three expedition members travelled and perished, and in which the records were first produced and retrieved. Also, Sundman notes how especially Andrée's last diary entries can be read as poetry, referring to their fragmentary and abbreviated form, which results in line breaks that suggest poetic form and allow for a certain rhythm. The mention of poetry is interesting because it draws our attention to the made character of Sundman's collage, to his interpretative and curating role and to his text as a construct. The rendering of fragmented form makes manifest what is no longer there, materializing that which no longer exists.

Seen in the context of books as collections and exhibitions, the white spaces comply with a modernist, neo avant-garde aesthetic as well as with the white cube aesthetic of galleries and exhibitions. In his well-known essay “Context as Content” (1976), Brian O’Doherty reflects upon how the white and clean spaces in which art is increasingly presented from the early 20th century onwards, surpass the art works they display so that context becomes content. An important aspect of this exhibition practice is the presumed neutrality of such spaces. However, as O’Doherty (1976:79) points out: “The white wall’s apparent neutrality is an illusion. It stands for a community with common ideas and assumptions.” In other words, the space may be white, but it is far from clean and neutral.

Evidently, Sundman's collage is not a three-dimensional space, but the blank spaces on the pages may be seen as equivalent to “the white wall”. For one, the lacunae do draw attention to the context, namely the collage, as much as to the content, that is the fragmented records from the expedition, turning context into content. However, I would argue that in Sundman's book, the whiteness does not necessarily imply neutrality in the way O'Doherty claims. Rather, it calls attention to the crafting and curating by an actor, here the author. Thus, the blankness of the pages in Ingen fruktan, inget hopp does not pretend to be neutral, but remind the readers of the illusionary, of the incompleteness of the records and of the curatorial choices that impact how they are made available and exhibited to us. The collage, then, can be understood to question rather than to confirm the common ideas and assumptions that O'Doherty refers to, by materializing that which has been lost to us.

**Expeditionen: min kärlekshistoria** (2013)

The final and most recent of the selected works for this article is Bea Uusma's Expeditionen: min kärlekshistoria (2013). Uusma is a medical doctor, and her book is an important contribution to the attempt to solve the mystery of the three expedition members’ deaths, providing theories based on her examination of the remains, including bodily remains, from the expedition. In addition, the book narrates her own journeys to White Island, following in the footsteps of Andrée, Frænkel, and Strindberg. Similar to the way Wærp writes in his study of Expeditionen, the book is hybrid in its genre, being part travelogue, part detective story and forensic report, blending fact and fiction. Cen-
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tral to the understanding of the text is Uusma’s journey as a “second journey” (Leavenworth 2018, Wærp 2017), which also centres Uusma as the protagonist. This is highlighted by several photographs of her on location on White Island, in the archives, and collections, emphasizing her role as investigator – and curator. In this way, Uusma plays a similar role to that of Sundman in his collage. However, the inclusion of material traces from her own journeys and of her encounters with the objects from the expedition certainly amplifies this role. Also, Uusma includes photographs of several striking and emotive artifacts in her account, such as torn clothing and bodily remains of the expedition members. Indeed, these objects evoke the presence of the absent men in a very different way than the written records I am concerned with here.

*Expeditionen* was met with critical acclaim, was awarded the prestigious August Prize in the category for non-fiction and was translated into English in 2014 with the title *The Expedition: a love story: solving the mystery of a Polar tragedy*. It spans 315 pages, thoroughly illustrated with maps and photographs, both from Uusma’s journeys and from the expedition, with several lists and tables giving overviews of Uusma’s findings, and its multimodal form is certainly reminiscent of the collage form that Sundman made use of. It shares also with Sundman’s book the link to *Med Örnen mot polen*: Uusma traces the beginning of her fascination for the Andrée expedition to her reading *Med Örnen mot polen* and thus makes explicit the intertextuality of her own text. Moreover, she refers to her frequent visits to the Andrée Museum in Gränna, to her encounters with the objects exhibited and the records in the museum archive.

In her book, Uusma is especially fascinated by the love story between Strindberg and his fiancée Anna Charlier, perhaps because this aspect was toned down in *Med Örnen mot polen*. This interest, which is also made evident in Sundman’s collage through his inclusion of the personal entries from Strindberg’s diary, makes Charlier a more prominent figure in Uusma’s narration and in her selection of which records to reproduce. Reinius (2024:87–91), referring to *Med Örnen mot polen* and *Expeditionen*, centres her discussion of gendered polar history partly on a small pouch from the collections at Gränna Museum. The pouch has Andrée’s monogram and violets embroidered on it, and is thought to be made by Gurli Linder, Andrée’s secret love interest. In Reinius’s discussion, it illustrates how those distant from the events of the expedition, here Linder, but also Charlier, seek to be present through such objects as this pouch. Such a female, absented presence is made manifest also in the written records included in Uusma’s book. For example, many of the quoted records are from Strindberg’s diary in which he addresses Charlier. These quotes are printed on separate pages, with a different size and font, scattered in between Uusma’s narration. As in Sundman’s collage, lacunae and strikeovers are rendered. The quotations, however, are not directly commented on, nor are they referenced until the list of sources at the very end of the book.

Charlier is also made manifest in another interesting example. At the very end of the book’s thirteenth chapter, Uusma verbally and visually reproduces a photograph of the first page of Strindberg’s diary. On this first page, a farewell card from Charlier has been inserted, featuring a small drawing that seems to have been pasted on. The drawing shows three men in a balloon hovering just above the ground and a woman waving them goodbye. A caption is placed underneath: “I cannot follow you.” (Uusma 2013:286) After first having descri-
bed the drawing and its caption, the book devotes two pages to the photograph of the card as it is inserted in the diary.

The drawing and caption are not mentioned in Med Örnen mot polen, which is not surprising as it does not fit within the objective and scientific discourse of the book. Certainly, the card’s status as a relic from the expedition may be questioned. It was found among Strindberg’s remains at White Island and thus embodies “the know-show function” that Gitelman (2014:1) refers to. Yet, it does not originate from the expedition as such, but was inserted into Strindberg’s diary before he left for the North Pole. Sundman, on the other hand, describes the drawing’s motif and quotes the caption in his collage, linking it, albeit indirectly, to Charlier: “One hardly has to doubt who pasted the picture into the diary” (Sundman 1968:46). To me, Expeditionen’s written and visual reproduction of the drawing and caption, found in Strindberg’s diary, on White Island, is an fascinating example of how the circulation of objects in writing shapes the afterlife and broadens the understanding of the expedition. With this double spread exhibiting the drawing and the caption, Uusma draws attention to the love story between Strindberg and Charlier, alluded to in her title, as well as to Charlier herself and her role, albeit from a distance, in the expedition. Charlier never sets foot on White Island; she is not part of the attempt to reach the North Pole by balloon. Nevertheless, with this card glued into the diary, she does leave material traces that become part of the collection of expedition objects.

In his discussion of Uusma’s book, Wærp (2017:187) argues that it not only narrates her personal journey but examines historical material in a way that extends our knowledge. Adding to this, I claim that the very circulation and reproduction of this historical material and Uusma’s curatorial choices in Expeditionen contributes to this extension. Uusma’s emphasis on this object shifts away from the masculine, scientific discourse that characterizes so much of the writing on the Andrée expedition and on (Arctic) exploration more generally. Evidently, numerous elements in Uusma’s book form part of such a shift. Nonetheless, the collecting, exhibiting, and curating of this drawing is a central component, including and displaying an object that has been omitted in previous narratives. Thus, Uusma’s circulation of this material trace contributes to extending the Andrée archive and consequently to shaping our understanding of the object and, in turn, of the expedition.

Circulation and reinterpretation

This article does not cover all the ways in which the four selected writings circulate material traces from the Andrée expedition. However, it sheds light on aspects of the verbal and visual reproduction of written records and how this recontextualizes and reinterprets the objects. The varied forms of reproducing records in the Med Örnen mot polen, Ingenjör Andrées luftfärd, Ingen fruktan, inget hopp and Expeditionen must be seen within the historical and cultural contexts for these writings: the publication of 1930 commemorates and pays homage to the expedition members whose fates had been unknown for so long; Sundman is more distanced in time, and writes with the aim of revising the predominantly heroizing view of the expedition; whereas Uusma, who largely follows Sundman in his negative view on Andrée, writes about the expedition in tandem with her own travel experience, brought about from her personal quest to solve the mystery of the three men’s deaths.
In his discussion of *Expeditionen*, Wærp points to how Uusma’s second journey does not change the first journey, that of Andrée, Frænkel, and Strindberg. However, her book does change the meaning of and our interpretation of this first journey (Wærp 2017:190). So do the three other writings I have discussed here. Their circulation and recontextualization of the written records and their role in the exhibiting of these objects to a readership contribute to shaping the expedition’s public afterlife. The writings, I have argued, are part of the extended archive of the Andrée expedition, and their ways of reproducing and recontextualizing written records have a bearing on our interpretation of both the objects and the expedition.

The point of departure for the texts is the same: the Andrée expedition. Yet, the varied use of and approach to the records from this expedition frames the narrated events very differently, and results in distinct interpretations of the records and of the expedition. The understanding of these narratives as ways of collecting, curating, and exhibiting records offers insight into the less evident yet important and often wide-reaching contexts for material traces, and into the extended geography of inscription and objects that Craciun refers to. Moreover, the texts’ diverse narrative strategies and their varying emphasis on materiality show the multiple ways of collecting, exhibiting, and narrating objects records, be it in books or in exhibition spaces. Finally, it reminds us not only of the deliberate choices that decide the reading and writing, and thus the afterlives, of past events and experiences. It reminds us, too, of the haphazard ways such material traces – a written note in a buoy that endured 14,625 days in the Polar Sea – may or may not be collected, exhibited, and curated.

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**Notes**

4. This reading audience is international. Except for Sundman’s *Ingen fruktan, inget hopp*, the selected works have been translated into English. Shortly after its publication in Swedish, *Med Örnen mot polen* had been translated into fifteen languages (Uusma 2013:17).


10. Sundman (1968:42–43) finds that in Med Örnen mot polen, only those entries that concerned the expedition were translated and published, whereas those of a more personal character were ignored. In his collage, Sundman renders several of these more personal entries from both before and during the expedition, translated by Olof Lindborg in 1968 (see Sundman 1968:42). Furthermore, almost all of Strindberg's diary was written in stenography. Sundman's book visually reproduces the stenographical version of the entry quoted here, rendering also its materiality.

11. “21/6 Klockan är 9 GMT. Jag sitter ensam i ballonghuset under den något över hälften fyldla ballongen. NE [nordostlig] hård vind, som susar i övre delarna av ballonghuset och på bergen ovanför. […] Det är underligt att sitta nu här i år igen och tänka sig att jag i år är förlovad med den bästa flickan på jorden, min innerligt älskade Anna. Ja, jag må väl fälla en tår, när jag tänker på den lycka som farit och som kanske aldrig skall åter givas mig”, my translation.

12. For a discussion of a “masculine, objective rhetoric” and “feminine, subjective, private forms of writing” in travel writing, see Saunders (2014).

13. Uusma (2013:271–272) presents the hypothesis, in fictionalized form, that Strindberg was the first to die at White Island. Fraenkel died either shortly before or at the same time as Andrée. See also Wærp (2017:182).


17. “Man behöver knappast tveka om vem som klisterat i bilden i almanackan.” (Sundman 1968:46), my translation.

Literature


The Andrée diaries; being the diaries and records of S. A. Andrée, Nils Strindberg and Knut Fraenkel written during their balloon expedition to the North Pole in 1897 and discovered on White Island in 1930, together with a complete record of the expedition and discovery 1930, transl. Edward Adams-Ray. London: J. Lane.


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