

Chapter 2

Images of Antarctica as Transmitted by Literature

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Abstract This chapter intends to retrace the imagination about Antarctica, focusing on the production of two centuries of narration, starting with science-fiction, eco-thrillers and action-adventure novels, than moving on to non-fantastic narratives which take place in the everyday experiences on the White Continent and finally focusing on soul-searching and personal transformation in the later twentieth century. It attempts to reconstruct the images conjured in the literature, which might have influenced and motivated the expectations of modern day travellers. The study is limited to Anglophone readers and travellers. The article concludes by discussing how the imagery of polar heroes of Antarctic Exploration, as presented in fiction, leads to proposals of extreme adventures and experiences, which might allow the traveller to retrace the steps of their idols from the past.

Keywords Antarctic literature • Construction of imaginary space • Tourist expectation • Recreation of epic voyages • Extreme adventure tourism

One might think, that it is almost impossible to imagine a place, which is so very different from what most tourists have experienced before going to Antarctica. But most travellers have a vivid imagination about the White Continent even before leaving home. Visions of Antarctica will most likely be taken from popular films—*March of the Penguins* and *Happy Feet*, as well as documentaries and contemporary novels such as McCaughrean’s “*The White Darkness*” (2011), but also literary classics like Poe’s “*The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*” (1838) or

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Lovecraft's "*At the mountains of madness*" (1931); from Scott's journals, Frank Hurley's photographs, from travel narratives, including Wheeler's "*Terra incognita. Travels in Antarctica*" (1996) and the much older "*The Worst Journey in the World*" (1922), written by Apsley Cherry-Gerrard. Especially if the traveller is of Anglo-Saxon extraction¹, then he would have grown up reading the stories of Antarctic exploration by British and Australian expeditioners during the "Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration". Their stories have survived and still work for people very remote from the dead explorers. "One is sitting down somewhere in the warm... and whatever one's attitude, whatever the skepticism one applies to the boyish, adventurous text in one's hands, into one's mind come potent pictures of a place that is definitively elsewhere, so far away in fact that one would call it unimaginable if one were not at the moment imagining it at full force" (Spufford 1997).

But when it comes to retrace the imagination about the Far South, there is more to it, than just the narrated experiences of polar explorers during the Heroic Age of Polar Exploration. The White Continent has turned into a space of imagination, which is the product of two centuries of literary production, starting with science-fiction, eco-thrillers and action-adventure novels, than moving on to non-fantastic narratives which take place in the everyday experiences on the White Continent and finally focusing on soul-searching and personal transformation in the later twentieth century. What most readers do not realize of course is the fact, that this imaginary space has been construed in a complex interaction of different works from the early nineteenth through to the twenty-first century. This is a complex relationship. The act of reading plunges the audience into a web of textual relations, a network of other texts, which altogether create an imaginary space. There are allusions of and dialogues in between different genres even. And this network has produced a certain polar sensibility, which might not necessarily be found in the production about the opposite pole.

This essay is an attempt to reconstruct the images conjured in the literature, which might have influenced and motivated the expectations of modern day travellers. Most Anglophone travellers have been exposed to some of the literary production about Antarctica. But as there is no way of establishing, what has or has not been read by tourists, the selections of works is simply based on their commercial success. This way we can make sure, that at least they did circulate and could have found their way into the hands of an avid reader planning on going south.² Analyzing the imagery and engaging thus with this construed space, we

¹According to the data compiled by the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) for the Antarctic season 2013–14, 58 % of all tourists visiting the White Continent were of Anglo-Saxon background: North Americans 33 %; Australians 11 %; British 9 % and Canadian 5 %. Information Paper No 44, Report of the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators 2013–14, ATCM XXXVII, Brazil 2014.

²The text selection is based on the commercial success of the works, which can be understood as (a) permanence on bestseller lists; (b) number of editions; (c) quantity of different languages the work has been translated to.

might hopefully get a better understanding towards travels in Antarctica and especially the dreams and expectations of nowadays and future adventure tourists.

Setting the scene in literature tends to integrate prior descriptions of the space and at the same time unfold a complex relation with the imagery present in the representations of this same space. This seems to work surprisingly for literature, which is produced by the so called “armchair travellers” as well as for writers, who have actually been in Antarctica. Both are influenced profoundly by the texts they have come across previously. Even the perception of the writer, in situ is affected by this imagery. Previous texts seem to interact in a creative way in the writer’s mind up to the degree where the writer asks himself, “Who has actually invented this, what I am writing?”.

The reconstruction of the intertextual structure of novels, travel writing, log books and other narratives could help to understand the imagery about the White Continent, which readers are introduced to. Basically, we are dealing with three strings of narration, each of them at the same time presenting its own discursive rules. The first one might be defined as the scientific discourse, such as presented in expedition reports and log books with its specific style, reduced to facts and details. The second one includes the literature of Proto Science Fiction and Science-Fiction, presenting a mix of the fantastic and scientific as well as horror stories and utopian visions of Antarctica as the place for a better future. The third one is searching for a different way of communicating the special qualities of Antarctica, a world “almost pristine” and of sublime beauty. This romantic way of looking at Antarctica is characteristic for the literature created during the Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration, but it did by no means end there.

We got our initial clues from the literature studies carried out by Leane at the University of Tasmania. Her analysis of a broad variety of Antarctic narrative stretching over three centuries of literary production has set the tone, when it comes to understanding Antarctic imagery (2011, 2012). Trying to understand a general attitude towards the White Continent, her studies include all kind of different types of literature. Spufford’s (1997), *“I May be Some Time”* has been another inspiring source. Focussing on sociological aspects as well as representations of Antarctica, Spufford retraces the almost amorous relationship Anglo-saxons maintain with the White Continent. Trying to understand, why the stories of the heroic age of Antarctic exploration are still appealing to broad audiences, Spufford attempts an archaeology of the myths related to the first Antarctic explorers and gives surprising insights in how these very myths have changed over the years, but never lost their grip. The stories of human endurance at the ends of the earth still do move audiences today. When dealing with discursive lines presented in Proto Science Fiction and Science-Fiction, we consulted several sources, the most promising one being a thesis presented by Wainschenker (2013). The author presents interesting points of view about the representation of Antarctica in movies and literature, where the silence and stillness of Antarctica becomes threatening.

The documents analysed in the present essay are novels, historic and modern travel books, and some few log books. All of them share the same criteria, they have been commercially successful, and most of them have been translated into several European languages, which make it even more likely that Antarctic travellers might have been in contact with them some time before starting their actual voyage. This might have occurred in the form of a theatre play, television series or even a movie, all based on the original literature selected.

As already mentioned, our analysis will keep in mind that a literary production of a geographical space, is usually a product of complex relationships and interactions of a broad variety of texts. The Antarctic landscape, perceived as an enigmatic continent, hostile with a dangerous horizon, can be understood as a construction of uncountable comments. Previous texts are reshaped by new readings and now form a web, which is open to new contributions.

Surprisingly, the first novel ever published about Antarctica was written before the continent was actually discovered, in the year 1820. The author Captain Seaborn, was a firm believer in the “Hollow-Earth-Theory” and this first book belongs hence to the Proto-Science-Fiction line of Antarctic literary production. John Cleves Symmes, a believer in the hollow earth theory, proposed in 1820 an idea about the inside our terrestrial globe, which includes concentric spheres and a hollow interior, which allows people to live inside. The inner world, illuminated by a different sun, could be accessed via both poles. His idea would inspire a long line of science-fiction authors, dealing with Antarctica, such as Poe, “Manuscript found in a bottle” (1833) and “*The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*” (1838), Verne, who would finish the story, which Poe had left inconclusive, in 1897 under the title “*The sphinx of the ice fields*”. In 1931, Lovecraft would revive the sombre ideas presented in both books in his novel “*At the mountains of madness*”. Antarctica was still being described as a fantastic place with a challenging mythological geography. In her studies, Leane (2012) identified the main ideas, which would turn into a *leitmotiv* in the literature for almost 200 years. Both poles are considered to be the portals towards the inside of a hollow earth. A great whirlpool drags the ships into the interior of the planet, as presented by Poe in both his works, “*Manuscript found in a bottle*” and “*the Narration of Arthur Gordon Pym*”. An unnamed narrator, estranged from his family and country, sets sail as a passenger aboard a cargo ship from Batavia. Some days into the voyage, the ship is first becalmed, then hit by a sand storm with hurricane force that capsizes the ship and sends everyone except the narrator and an old Swede overboard. Driven southward by this magical wind towards the South Pole, the narrator’s ship eventually collides with a gigantic black galleon, and only the narrator manages to scramble aboard. The narrator finds outdated maps and useless navigational tools throughout the ship. Also, he finds it to be manned by elderly crewmen who are unable to see him; he steals writing materials from the captain’s cabin to keep a journal (the “manuscript” of the title) which he resolves to cast into the sea. This ship too continues to be driven southward, and he notices the crew appears to show signs of hope at the prospect of their destruction as it reaches Antarctica. The ship enters a clearing in the ice where it is caught in a vast whirlpool and begins to sink into the sea.

Oh, horror upon horror! The ice opens suddenly to the right, and to the left, and we are whirling dizzily, in immense concentric circles, round and round the borders of a gigantic amphitheatre, the summit of whose walls is lost in the darkness and the distance. But little time will be left me to ponder upon my destiny – the circles rapidly grow small – we are plunging madly within the grasp of the whirlpool – and amid a roaring, and bellowing, and shrieking of ocean and of tempest, the ship is quivering. Oh God! And – going down.

Only the message in the bottle will make it back to civilization, the author remains missing. Antarctica turns into a continent of dark secrets. Poe and his followers will repeat their warning messages. The White Continent should not be visited. This last frontier should not be conquered, the dangers lurking there should not be disturbed and awakened. Running alongside and sometimes entwining with the myth of the polar abyss is another set of legends, in which the geographic poles are not marked by the absence but by the presence of other phenomena, such as the large lodestone of medieval legend; the magnetic mountain sitting above a whirlpool in Renaissance maps, as first featured by Gerhard Mercator on his map “*Septentrionalium Terrarum*” in 1595. The lodestone with its mighty power attracts all kinds of metal objects, loosens the nails in the ship’s hulls and disintegrates them. Verne used this concept in “*the Sphinx of the ice fields*” (1897). Other geographical notions, such as the idea of a warm polar region hidden by walls of ice drew support from some explorers’ accounts and scientific reasoning. In 1823, James Weddell led a British sealing voyage into the far southern latitudes, meeting severe cold weather and seas littered with ice. Pushing south, however, he encountered changed conditions. Whales surrounded the ship, petrels covered the ocean and no ice at all could be seen. The ships reached 74°S in what is now the Weddell Sea, a record southern latitude that held for the next 18 years. Weddell’s experience gave credence to the idea of a temperate South Polar sea. The knowledge of the earth’s flattening at the poles suggested to some that both the Antarctic and the Arctic might draw warmth from their closer proximity to the earth’s core. An open sea at the South Pole appears frequently in nineteenth century and early twentieth-century Antarctic speculative fiction. As other regions of the planet were increasingly explored, this hybrid Antarctica—part fact and part mythology, ice-bound but temperate—continued to flourish as a setting for novels and short stories. Poe and Verne in “*Manuscript found in a bottle*” (1833), “*The Narration of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*” (1838) and the “*the Sphinx of the Ice Fields*” were both inspired by his observations.

Another captain who inspired writers of their time was the adventurer Morrell, who published his experiences in “*Narratives of Four Voyages to the South Sea, ... and Antarctic Ocean*”, (Morrell 1832). On his fourth voyage (1829–31), Morrell was the first to disembark on Bouvet Island, then went to the South Shetland and South Sandwich Islands, where he would neither find fire wood nor encounter any wildlife and barely managed to survive. Penetrating the Weddell Sea, according to his account, he reached the latitude of 70°S and Morrell declared to have passed the South Polar Circle several times. But as the rest of details provided are quite fantastic—he describes cities in the ice, which he could make out in a distance and establishes his position several times quite mistakenly, a 124 miles inland

(200 km). Most readers did not take his accounts seriously. This however did not stop writers such as Poe and Verne to draw heavily from his experiences. Another real-life account, which would influence them, was Reynolds “*Address on the Subject of a Surveying and Exploring Expedition to the Pacific Ocean and the South Seas*” (1836). The first one was based on the 16th chapter of “*The Adventures of Arthur Gordon Pym*” on these publications, whereas the second referenced Morrell and Reynolds throughout his work “*A voyage to Antarctica*”.

Sea exploration was a popular literature genre at the time, but Poe was also influenced by Daniel Defoe’s “*Robinson Crusoe*” (1719) and Taylor Coleridge’s poem “*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*” (1798), who himself had been influenced by Captain James Cook’s voyages of discovery in the years 1768–1779. And as already mentioned, the chasms opening up in the sea at the end of the novel were inspired by the popular Hollow Earth theory of Poe’s day. Pym’s voyage covers similar geographical and psychic territory. The stowaway protagonist experiences a series of grim events—claustrophobic imprisonment, mutiny, an encounter with a ship full of corpses, cannibalism, shipwreck and a narrow escape from a treacherous Antarctic tribe—before running up against the limits of the world and his sanity. In the last few pages, his boat is pulled towards a terrifying cataract pouring into the earth from the heavens. Before it, its pathway is blocked by a giant white human figure. The novel remains inconclusive. A note of a so called “editor” towards the end leaves room for speculation: “The loss of two or three final chapters (for there were but two or three) is the more deeply to be regretted, as it cannot be doubted they contained matter relative to the Pole itself, or at least to regions in its very near proximity; and as, too, the statements of the author in relation to these regions may shortly be verified or contradicted by means of the governmental expedition now preparing for the Southern Ocean.”

Poe and Coleridge turned the White Continent into a gothic locale, with their dark romantic novels. The region had set in train the ghastly experiences of Coleridge’s “*ancient mariner*”, produced the culminating horrors of Poe’s “*Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*” and spawned the hideous amorphous aliens of Lovecraft’s “*At the Mountains of Madness*” (1931). The narrative centres on an Antarctic scientific expedition which uncovers preserved alien life-forms. These creatures are the “Old Ones”—“star-headed beings” who originally came to earth in its very early history. These come back to life, when the scientists start to dissect them and in retaliation those slaughter some of the scientific team. When journeying into nearby caves, the narrator and his companions are attacked by yet another life-form, the “shoggoths”, violent and shapeless beings. The gothic novel exploits US Antarctic explorer Richard Byrd’s language describing a land “beyond the pole” and the many “lost race” fantasies set in the Antarctic to invent a scientific expedition that discovers the hideous true creators of the human race dormant under the ice. Ignorantly penetrating the polar abyss, the scientific team is ejected from the ice itself by a volcanic eruption. Lovecraft’s apocalypse through the extra scientific discovery of what is the hopelessly inferior and belated position of humans and scientific knowing incarnates the problems of hard limits as one of repressed or unknown origins as well. The narrator insists in warning us, that “It is absolutely

necessary, for the peace and safety of mankind, that some of earth's dark, dead corners and unplumbed depths be let alone; lest sleeping abnormalities wake to resurgent life, and blasphemously surviving nightmares squirm and splash out of their black lairs to newer and wider conquests" (Lovecraft 1931).

The idea of disturbing dormant alien life-forms in Antarctica is taken up again a few years later by Campbell in his short story "*Who Goes There*" (1938). In the science-fiction novella, a group of scientific researchers, isolated in Antarctica by the nearly-ended winter, discover an alien spaceship buried in the ice, where it crashed twenty million years before. They try to thaw the inside of the spacecraft with a thermite charge, but end up accidentally destroying it. However, they do recover the alien pilot from the ancient ice, which the researchers believe was searching for heat when it was frozen. Thawing revives the alien, a being which can assume the shape, memories and personality of any living thing it devours.

The novella has been adapted four times as a motion picture: the first in 1951 as "*The Thing from Another World*"; the second in 1972 as "*Horror Express*"; the third in 1982 as "*The Thing*" directed by John Carpenter; and most recently as a prequel to the Carpenter version, also titled "*The Thing*", released in 2011.

Even ignoring Poe's considerable contribution to Antarctica's literary heritage, the continent's qualifications as a gothic setting are manifold. As a wilderness—and the most extensive and far-flung of wildernesses—it provides a site remote from civilization, on the edge of established social conventions, ...As a sublime landscape, it brings the rational mind up against its limits. As a literal underworld, it suggests the monstrous, the infernal, the Satanic. Polar mythological concern with fearful, dark spaces. (Leane 2012)

Antarctica is a more than fitting scenario for horror films. The South Pole is simply put, more remote than the North Pole from the inhabited world. "The Western worldview in which the Arctic rests on the top of the planet and the Antarctic clings, spider-like, to its bottom brings an asymmetry to polar psychotopography" (Leane 2012). This means, that the metaphorical southern journey is not simply a journey inwards but also downwards, a journey that penetrates the darkest, deepest regions of the unconscious. To Antarctica's remoteness and its negative polarity can be added another factor central to its unique combination of spatial qualities—the ice itself. As land depressed under the weight of kilometres of ice, Antarctica is a continent of buried secrets. It is no coincidence that many far southern horror stories involve a journey not only to the ice but under it, through fissures, crevasses and tunnels to subterranean caverns. There is something that lies there, something hostile and deeply threatening to human reason. Wainschenker (2013) relates this necessity to keep Antarctica isolated to the notion of timelessness. "Not only is Antarctica isolated from the rest of the world, but also from time itself. Time seems to freeze here". Forever unchanging, Antarctica seems to be untouched by time, an idea, which still is present in modern day novels, as we will see later.

Following the line of science-fiction works, we consulted the most successful modern day novels of the genre. Robinson, "*Antarktos Rising*" (2009), Batchelor, "*The Birth of the People's Republic of Antarctica*" (1981) and Robinson,

"*Antarctica*" (1997), conjure up an apocalyptic world, which races to claim a new continent, Antarctica, as the only possibility to survive. In the novel, "*Antarktos Rising*" (2009), they will have to face the fact, that Antarctica is already taken. A phenomenon known as crustal displacement shifts the Earth's crust, repositioning continents and causing countless deaths. In the wake of the global catastrophe, the world struggles to take care of its displaced billions. But Antarctica, freshly thawed and blooming, has emerged as a new hope. Rather than wage a world war no nation can endure, the leading nations devise a competition, a race to the centre of Antarctica, with the three victors dividing the continent. But the dangers awaiting the winning team are far worse than feared; beyond the sour history of a torn family, beyond the nefarious intentions of their human enemies, beyond the ancient creatures reborn through anhydrobiosis—there are the Nephilim, descendants of extra-terrestrials and humans. Morris in "*The Icemen*" (1988) and Botaya in "*Antártida 1947*" (2010), convert the Antarctic into a space, where German Nazis have found their sanctuary in a secret military base. Once again the danger emerges from the White Continent. Batchelor on the other hand positions himself openly in the tradition of the works of Poe, "*The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*" and Melville's "*Moby-Dick*", recreating an epic adventure under the title "*The Birth of the People's Republic of Antarctica*" (1981). As civilization teeters on collapse and national boundaries are closed with governments doing nothing more than announcing "Trespassers Will Be Shot!", a group of disaffected malcontents who had lived on the fringe even in the good times undertake a voyage to escape a glorious socialism that excludes all but a select few from benefits. What begins as a voyage of salvation rapidly becomes a journey rivalling Dante's descent into Hell. The group—idealistic anarchists who are joined by extended family members and an egomaniac opportunist in the guise of "the clear thinker," sail from Sweden's west and south, eventually arriving in Antarctica. They find it has become the dumping ground for the perceived riff-raff of the world. It is nothing less than a vast concentration camp administered by presumably earnest charities and aggressively pragmatic governments operating under the notion that liberal and progressive words can mask what is really underway. It is here that Grim Fiddle—the leader of the group—moves into the forefront of a rebellion that is more a response to certain death than political motivation. Robinson returns to the idea of a utopic society on the White Continent in her novel "*Antarctica*" (1997) and at the same time her text dialogues with Roald Amundsen's and Robert Falcon Scott's writings. Robinson takes us to a harsh, alien landscape covered by a sheet of ice two miles deep. A stark and inhospitable place, its landscape poses a challenge to survival; yet its strange, silent beauty has long fascinated scientists and adventurers. Now Antarctica faces an uncertain future. The international treaty that protects the continent is about to dissolve, clearing the way for Antarctica's resources and eerie beauty to be plundered. As politicians and corporations move to determine its fate from half a world away, radical environmentalists carry out a covert campaign of sabotage to reclaim the land. The winner of this critical battle will determine the future for this last great wilderness.

In the twentieth century, new images would be added to those of an impossible and improbable landscape. It is the images of sufferings and heroism of Antarctica's explorers and scientists, in their majority of Anglo-Saxon extraction. Their time of exploration was called the "Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration" bearing in mind, that a lot of human endurance and suffering was involved. The most important ones in this context being: Robert Falcon Scott's voyage on board the *Discovery*, 1901–04; Ernest Shackleton's on board *Nimrod*, 1907–09; Scott's following voyage on board *Terra Nova*, 1910–13; the Australasian Expedition under the command of Douglas Mawson on board the *Aurora* and Shackleton's Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition on board the *Endurance*, 1914–16. From their books, men with frozen beards are staring right back at us. Not even the yellow stains on the photographs and their frames can take away this sensation: they still seem to be amongst us. The prolific work of writers have made sure that their myth will not be forgotten. Considering the historic context of the production of this kind of literature, the generally sportive and competitive attitude of the early Anglo-Saxon explorers and the extraordinary superb landscape they encountered, it is not surprising that they would have chosen a romantic language to describe the sublime White Continent. Astonishing however its perseverance through time is. The "sublime" is kept alive in clichés about this "pristine and peculiar" landscape for centuries without fissures. The significance of Antarctica for humankind derives from the fact, that there "man is confronted with a world, which has developed in his absence" (Mickleburgh 1988). This is how he learns his place in this unique landscape, which not only shows how insignificant he is but also stays indifferent to him.

In this context, Scott reportedly has become the "iconic British hero". The story of Scott's men has taken on a mythic meaning in its 100 years of evolution. The same is true, to a lesser extent, of other Heroic-Era epics: Amundsen's assault on the pole, mythologized in a very different way to Scott's; the "Winter Journey" of Cherry-Garrard, Wilson and Bowers—a quixotic quest in search of penguin eggs that has come close to supplanting the polar journey as the classic Antarctic narrative; the crushing of Shackleton's ship the *Endurance* and the trials and triumphs that followed; Mawson's solo trek—"the ultimate Antarctic saga"—following the shocking deaths of his two companions, Ninnis and Mertz. These are the origin stories of a continent bereft of indigenous inhabitants and corresponding creation myths. Like all origin stories, they are re-told and re-interpreted by each generation, mocked and venerated alike, but never lose their grip on the popular imagination. The stories of the Heroic Era are repeated in many forms: in popular histories; in television documentaries and dramatized mini-series; in expeditions and tourist cruises that promise to follow "in the footsteps of" the early explorers; and in imaginative works. They are re-told with admiration and nostalgia; re-enacted in imitation and homage; re-imagined from new perspectives; re-evaluated in the light of new knowledge about the circumstances; and re-thought from different political viewpoints. As Spufford notes, "Like any successful myth, [Scott's story] provides a skeleton ready to be dressed over and over in the different flesh different decades feel to be appropriate". Literary responses to the polar tragedy date from the time it was first reported in February 1913 and might testify to the British admiration for

their polar heroes as well as for their romantic relationship with the cold and the wide Polar Regions. Grace Scott, the explorer's sister, tried to explain her brother's motivation and what had driven him to attempt to conquer the South Pole: "He felt in himself keenly the call of the vast empty spaces; silence; the beauty of untrodden snow; liberty of thought and action; the wonder of the snow and seeming infinitude of its uninhabited regions whose secrets man had not then pierced, and the hoped-for conquest of raging elements" (Spufford 1997). Surprisingly his motivations, do not seem to be very different from those of modern explorers.

The most successful contemporary writers (Diski 1997; Campbell 1992; Wheeler 1996; Keneally 2001; Bainbridge 1993) still do follow the clues their polar heroes left, when they risked everything in this "pure" and "still intact" landscape. A first glimpse at their introductions reveals their venerations of the ferocious icescape of Antarctica as the last frontier on earth. "My name is Morgan Lamont. As I begin at last to tell this story, I am dwelling in a place where few of you who read it will ever have been; it is a harsh place, and a beautiful one" (Arthur 1999). Thus begins the novel "*Antarctic Navigation*", with the narrator introducing herself. Since childhood, Antarctica has been Morgan Lamont's passion. A strong fascination for Robert Falcon Scott turns finally into the necessity to follow his footsteps. Morgan is a woman driven by a wildly heroic obsession... Barring a trip to the continent itself, there may be no better way for her to experience the perilous and endangered majesty of Antarctica. At the same time, she is not driven to conquer, but to understand and preserve it. Other authors establishing a dialogue with their historical heroes, such as Beryl Bainbridge, who gives each expedition member their own distinctive voice to the story of Scott's ill-fated expeditions in "*The Birthday Boys*" (1993), offers a fresh account of the horribly familiar story. Bainbridge evokes an unendurable landscape without and the chilling interior landscapes of damaged souls. Kitto, in the "*Antarctica cookbook*" (1983) manages to merge the tradition of Antarctic Science-Fiction writing with the historical dramas of exploration. His main character succeeds in time travelling and decides to offer a hot beverage to Shackleton's marooned men on Elephant Island in 1916. But the expeditioners decide that this generous offer cannot be real and prefer to think of it as a "mirage", better to be ignored. They prefer to go hungry instead.

Lately the idea that the hostile and dangerous Antarctic Continent should be closed to human visitation for their own good, has also lead to the demand that visitation should be reduced to armchair travelling only: "For the first time since getting to Antarctica, I was afraid. ... Mine was a nameless, shapeless fear. The singing, raging happiness inside me—at the vicious beauty of this place—had drained away, and I liked myself better when I was the one person not afraid. At home, I could have shut the book and put it back on the shelf. Now somehow Antarctica had overspilled the binding, overrun the bounds of safety" (McCaughrean 2011). But there is also the idea that it is the rest of the world, which poses threats to Antarctica and its environment. In representation of others, we'd like to mention the German bestseller by Trojanov (2011), "*Eistau*". A glaciologist, who loves his field of work and especially glaciers, despairs when he understands, that he cannot save the glaciers of the Alps from melting away. He signs up to be a

lecturer on board a cruise ship to Antarctica instead. On board, he tries to persuade the passengers of the importance to save the Ice of the White Continent, but only encounters indifference and lack of interest. This leads him to take desperate measures. The concern about the Antarctic environment often turns into the demand to ban tourism from the White Continent, but this demand of course can have a contrary effect in the future traveller. Just like tourists hurrying their voyage to Venice assuming, that it will be buried under the water of the lagoon soon, the traveller, is lured towards Antarctica the more hostile and forbidding it is presented. Operators do react to this demand by offering extreme adventures on the polar ice. Races over the plateau, skiing expeditions and even traverses on foot to reach the last frontier of our planet, are organized every year with increasing tourist numbers. In the austral summer 2011/2012 alone, 250 tourists were expected to reach South Pole Station on foot or with skis. Their aim was to follow in the footsteps of their heroes: Amundsen and Scott. The continent has become a place of soul-searching and personal transformation in the later twentieth century, which is most likely due to changes in the nature of Antarctic travel from the 1960s. Especially during the last two decades, a new component has been added. More and more travellers are looking for extreme adventures on the Ice, asking to be challenged and brought to their limits, following in the footsteps of polar explorers from previous centuries.³

The sense of Antarctica as a place apart means that it could also be considered a time apart, where the stories freeze, as well as men and animals. They remain forever suspended in the ice. Time stands still in a frozen world. The main character of the *"The White Darkness"*, dialogues with an imaginary Titus Oates, who keeps her safe and guides her through a severe whiteout: "It might be the twenty-first century it might be 1912. Minutes or whole years might be passing, but he is carrying Time, too, inside his useless, frost-bitten fists" (McCaughrean 2011). This timeless quality of Antarctica leads to the illusion that one could actually retrace the steps of Antarctic heroes and repeat their hardships and endurance. Antarctica has been explored and mapped. Yet the minute the modern explorer steps out of the plane or leaves his base camp, regardless of all his hi-tech equipment, he is in exactly the same Antarctica that Scott and Shackleton travelled in. It is remote and it is hostile. Making the slightest mistake can put one's life at risk. It is an unforgiving place. Colder than cold, bleak, a vast wasteland of iciness, its deadliness stretches for thousands of miles.

An ever growing number of touristic expeditions try to recreate epic voyages of the past, such as Douglas Mawson's expeditions on the White Continent or Ernest Shackleton's open boat voyage from Elephant Island to South Georgia. The latter even includes the traverse of the densely glaciated interior of the island.

In 2013, new ingredients were added to the commemorative expeditions. All of a sudden it was not enough to use the replica of Shackleton's open boat the *"James Caird"* to re-enact the crossing from Elephant Island to South Georgia. In addition,

³Information Paper No 78 Adventure Tourism: Activities undertaken by IAATO Members, ATCM XXXVII, Brazil 2014.

the expeditioners had to use historic clothing and the same inadequate food their heroes consumed a 100 years ago. Jarvis for instance, led an expedition where pemmican was the only food source for the participants, together with a couple of cups of hot chocolate per day (Jarvis 2014). It seems that there might be more extreme voyages being offered by tour operators in the near future, which might replace more traditional expedition cruises focusing on educational and contemplative aspects. Passengers seeking to test their own limits, physical and psychological, in extreme adventures, demand excursions, which do include kayaks, diving, mountain and ice-climbing, as well as overnight stays in tents. To them it seems the only way to measure up to their heroes.

Others—based on the idea implanted by the literature that Antarctica is a place where time itself seems to be frozen—suspect, that there are lost civilizations hidden under the ice. Groups of spiritualists come to Antarctica in search of esoteric entities, which might give them answers to pressing questions about the past and future of our planet or look for the long lost Atlantis. This search for real and unreal sensorial experiences also seems to be triggered by the presence of meteorological phenomena, which are not easy to be understood, such as the reflection of the sun in very cold air. “Quite suddenly the fog changed substance over our heads. In a matter of moments, the fleshy grey mist resolved itself into frozen dew, a precipitation of crystals, a burden of ice particles that fell twinkling out of the air like rice at a wedding, sunlight splitting them in to all the colours of the rainbow. We were bombarded with rainbows falling from an infinite heights, dazzling us with iridescent spears and darts and cataracts of cascading colour... The fog was gone—a magician’s cloth deftly whipped off a table of marvels. In the sky, the sun was a hub of dull aluminium spokes with strands of light, and at the end of each spoke—another sun. Cloned suns” (McCaughrean 2011). And just like other travellers, the narrator of this novel is having trouble to accept, that she is not in the presence of the supernatural, when contemplating mirages over the horizon, produced by layers of air with different temperatures. “It’s a mirage,” said Titus. “Mountains a hundred miles away.” But I did not want it to be mountains a hundred miles away. I wanted there to be people, sentries, Martians in a flying palace of a ship; a secret US establishment we had stumbled upon by chance. I wanted it to be Aeolus, brass-walled home of the King-of-Winds, shipwrecked here in the days of myth. I wanted so much for it to be real. In a place where ‘real’ puts five suns in the sky and slices rainbows into sushi, why shouldn’t there be a palace adrift on the Ice?” (McCaughrean 2011).

Dreams of a more primitive nature come to mind. In Antarctica, it seems, the world is still young, almost untouched by human intervention. A certain appetite for the frozen beauty of a world apart is awakened. The hostile landscape with its forbidding horizon poses a challenge at the same time. And the authors insist on sending warning messages. This continent should not be visited. But there it is, this ultimate frontier, which seems to be dangerous and hence is very attractive at the same time. The voyage today, as it was for the early explorers in their days, always was twofold: facing adversities on the outside and engaging in a voyage towards the

deepest layers of our own unconsciousness, towards the dark spots, where dreams, fears and old traumas lurk.

The introduction to Diski's novel "*Skating to Antarctica*" (1997) might serve as an example. Her book is based on her personal life experiences and a voyage, which she took on board an expedition cruise ship to the Antarctic Peninsula. The main reason for going south seems to be an inner search, the idea to find herself in the process. Diski projects her interior onto the white spaces of Antarctica, building a mental landscape seemingly free of painful memories, a place possibly able to transform and heal her. "I am not entirely content with the degree of whiteness in my life. My bedroom is white: white walls, icy mirrors, white sheets and pillow-cases, white slatted blinds. It's the best I could do. Some lack of courage—I wouldn't want to be thought extreme—has prevented me from having a white bedstead and side-tables. Opposite my bed, in the very small room, a wall of mirrored cupboards reflects the whiteness back at itself, making it twice the size it thought it was." Diski admits, that it would have been much easier to travel north to the Arctic starting from her home in England. Just like a sexual compulsion, somewhat annoying and inconvenient, but not to be ignored, the wish to go to Antarctica was suddenly there. "Still, the thought was there. Antarctica... I have not always longed to go to Antarctica, or even ever wanted to especially, but the thought was as powerful as if it had been a lifelong dream. Perhaps it's possible to have lifelong dreams in retrospect". She needed a place, which only could exist in her mind, a place where there would be no thought, no pain, nor stimulating colours; a place, which reminded her on previous stays in psychiatric facilities; a place where she could find the same kind of solace, but without the annoying presence of the nurses: "I wanted white and ice for as far as the eye could see, and I wanted it in the one place in the world that was uninhabited (never mind the penguins, seals and base camp personnel for the time being). I wanted a place where Sister Winniki couldn't exist. I wanted my white bedroom extended beyond reason. That was Antarctica, and only Antarctica."

Keneally (2001) understands his obsession with the open white spaces as a metaphysical experience: "This is the icy Eden many modern readers consider their favourite mental landscape on earth...the South Pole, a place where all is north, where the world can be circled in four steps, a point as absolute as some mystic's conception of the Deity." Soul-searching and Adventure Tourism sometimes go together. There is a prolific production of extreme sport events, privately organized expeditions and related to both of these the publication of their accounts. Their adventures capture the will and fear of Antarctic exploration. And however diverse there expeditions might be, they all do establish a dialogue with the heroes of their childhood.

The most famous memoir of the 1910–1913 British Antarctic Expedition led by Robert Falcon Scott was written and published in 1922 by one of its members, Apsley Cherry-Garrard. The book earned wide praise for its frank treatment of the difficulties of the expedition, the causes of its disastrous outcome, and the meaning of human suffering under extreme conditions. Cherry-Garrard's masterpiece, "*The Worst Journey in the World*", refers in the first place to a winter journey he took

together with two other members of the expedition from Cape Evans to Cape Crozier. Their goal was to recover eggs of the Emperor penguin for scientific study. It was thought at the time that the flightless penguin might shed light on an evolutionary link between reptiles and birds through its embryo. As the birds nest during the Antarctic winter, it was necessary to mount a special expedition in July 1911. Complete darkness and temperatures of -40°C and below made this “the worst Journey in the World”. But they succeeded and Cherry-Garrard later accompanied the initial team across the Ross Ice Shelf and up the Beardmore Glacier. At the edge of the polar plateau, Scott sent him and other men, who were not chosen to go on to the Pole to return to the base camp at Cape Evans. Cherry-Garrard had been given the task of using the dog teams to meet Scott’s party and assist them home, but he did not penetrate beyond One Ton Depot, only 11 miles distant from Scott’s final location where he and his companions froze to death. “*The Worst Journey in the World*” asks, but does not answer, the question of whether this suffering was futile, or whether it would inspire future human beings facing very different challenges. Modern day debates unfold around these questions and Cherry-Garrard is still a much frequented source for polar travellers. In 1994, his book was published as the first numerical entry in the Picador Travel Classics. The July/August 2001 issue of National Geographic Adventure listed the “The 100 Best Adventure Books of All Time”, with “The Worst Journey in the World” named first. A drama documentary, under the same title, was broadcast on BBC Four in April 2007, which was followed by a two-part radio drama in the Classic Serial strand, first broadcast in September 2008. With typical British understatement Cherry-Garrard would exclaim that “Polar exploration is at once the cleanest and most isolated way of having a bad time” (Cherry-Garrard 1922).

Even today there are still places in which no human has set foot, mountains have yet to be conquered, ways of crossing Antarctica, which have yet to be devised. There are still new records to be achieved and although this continent is not for the faint of heart, as literature has well established, the challenges are out there. For mountaineers a must in their reading list, Messner’s, “Antarctica: both Heaven and Hell” (1992), deals both with the physical challenges and the more spiritual questions involved in polar expeditions. He recounts the first crossing on foot, together with Arved Fuchs, of Antarctica in 92 days ending in mid-February, 1990. His treatment of the white void in front of him as a meditative medium becomes the centre of his reflections about how to endure in this harsh environment.

Felicity Aston, physicist and meteorologist, took 2 months off from all human contact as she became the first woman—and only the third person in history—to ski across the entire continent of Antarctica alone. Aston’s journey across the ice at the bottom of the world asked of her the extremes in terms of mental and physical bravery, as she faced the risks of unseen cracks buried in the snow so large they might engulf her and hypothermia due to brutalizing weather. She had to deal, too, with her emotional vulnerability in face of the constant bombardment of hallucinations brought on by the vast sea of whiteness, the lack of stimulation to her senses as she faced what is tantamount to a form of solitary confinement. Her account of a spectacular and appalling journey, “Alone in Antarctica: The First Woman to Ski

Solo across the Southern Ice” (2014) was applauded by the media and praised for its power to inspire others to follow their own dreams. She took great risks, just like the polar explorers of the past had done. “Generally the risks were taken, for, on the whole, it is better to be a little over-bold than a little over-cautious, while always there was a something inside urging you to do it just because there was a certain risk, and you hardly liked not to do it. It is so easy to be afraid of being afraid!” (Cherry-Garrard 1922).

Another modern day adventurer and writer, much acclaimed by the press and other media was Alastair Vere Nicoll with his book “Riding the Ice Wind: By Kite and Sledge across Antarctica” (2010). Leaving the security of friends, work and a wife, Vere Nicoll joined a team of young men to harness the katabatic winds and haul and kite-surf across Antarctica. His story is not only about the first West-to-East traverse of the continent of Antarctica, but of the crossing of two phases in his life—from youth into manhood, fantasy into reality. It is also the story of a race against time, as he fought to get home for the birth of his first child. As Alastair battled through the freezing wastes, exploring the earth’s wildest continent and his deepest self, he was haunted by ghosts of past explorers and by the question of what it is to be a “modern man”. John Hare, author of “Mysteries of the Gobi”, would later say that “It’s extremely heartening, to discover, that a younger generation of adventurers has got what it takes—and more. They prove themselves worthy successors to their heroes, Amundsen, Shackleton and Scott” (2009).

For others, the waters surrounding Antarctica are more appealing than the ice ashore. In January 2001 three men from New Zealand set out to paddle down the length of the Antarctic Peninsula. It was to be the southernmost sea kayak journey ever attempted, a 528-mile expedition through the freezing waste of ice, rock, and ocean that makes this one of the most inhospitable coasts on earth. Their book, “The Frozen Coast: Sea Kayaking the Antarctic Peninsula” (Charles 2004), offers a gripping account of this ultimately successful journey and at the same time invites future adventurers to follow in their footprints, by offering a broad section about the equipment needed. And once again it testifies to the physical challenge and the hardships the kayakers had to overcome by careful preparation, ingenuity and determination. And while the three intrepid kayakers tried to stay above the water, others decided, that it was time to explore the underwater world of Antarctica.

Until recently the seventh continent has been the exclusive realm of scientific and military divers. Today, however, the icy waters of Antarctica have become the extreme destination for recreational divers wishing to explore beyond the conventional. They hope to observe the strange marine life that abounds below the surface, feel the thrill of meeting Leopard seals one to one and dive under the ice. Kelley Eareckson’s “The Antarctic Dive Guide” (2015) is still the first book offering information about both the history of diving in Antarctica and its wildlife. Essential information is also provided on how to choose and prepare for travel to this remote region, and diving techniques for subzero waters. Antarctica’s underwater world is little-explored, which makes it even more attractive for visitors. More and more tourists wish to dive in Antarctica. And by doing so, they live up to

their own expectations reaching physical and psychological limits outlined in adventure tourism excursions (IAATO 2014a).

Extreme athletes take this challenge to a whole new level. Their life stories inspire readers equally with their drive and their fierce determination. The British swimmer Lewis Pugh broke two world records, for the most southerly swim ever undertaken in the ocean, and the longest-duration polar swim ever completed. On 14 December 2005, Pugh swam a kilometre in the seas off the Antarctic Peninsula at a latitude of 65° south, some of the world's coldest waters, where the sea's saltiness allows temperatures to dip to just below 0 °C without freezing. The feat, which took 18 min and 10 s, required him not only to maintain a safe body temperature throughout the ordeal, but also to stave off the crippling effects of the body's natural reaction to icy water. Two days later, he swam a mile off the nearby Deception Island, spending 30 min and 30 s in the water—longer than any other polar swimmer. How can a person wearing only Speedo trunks survive the icy sea? Less than a second after hitting the water, the lungs constrict, causing an untrained person to hyperventilate, taking up to 60 gasping breaths per minute. Heart rate and blood pressure also skyrocket as the heart panics in response to the shock. Pugh says he felt “screaming pain” all over his body as soon as he dived in. The paralysing effect of this response means that, in icy water, the body becomes its own worst enemy and the mind has to make up for it with sheer determination. Mental imagery can have a profound effect on physical responses, and Pugh seems to have trained for this occasion such a long time, that he is capable of generating more body heat, when needed. The cold-water swimmer Lynne Cox got her first taste of extreme swimming in a pool, when she was only 9 years old: “My world was reduced to the blur of my arms stroking as a cold, driving rain began. The raindrops that hit my lips tasted sweet and cold, and I enjoyed the sensations of every new moment. The pool was no longer a flat, boring rectangle of blue; it was now a place of constant change, a place that I had to continually adjust to as I swam or I'd get big gulps of water instead of air. That day, I realized that nature was strong, beautiful, dramatic, and wonderful, and being out in the water during that storm made me feel somehow a part of it, somehow connected to it ... I realized that by putting myself in a situation different from everyone else's, I had experienced something different, beautiful, and amazing” (Cox 2004). After this first glimpse of stardom it is not surprising, that she went on training for more adrenaline. The American long-distance open-water swimmer and writer became the first person to swim the Straits of Magellan, the first to swim around the Cape of Good Hope. And another of her accomplishments was swimming more than a mile (1.6 km) in the waters of Antarctica. Cox was in the water for 25 min, swimming 1.22 miles (1.96 km). Her book about the experience, “Swimming to Antarctica”, was published in 2004. The health benefits of these swims are doubtful, the risks less so. And yet every year, some people swim in polar waters. It seems to be almost like a spiritual experience to some and Cox's book gives insight to the mental exercise it involves. One thing that encourages people to endure the pain is the accompanying cocktail of endorphins that arises in the brain, resulting in a lasting sense of euphoria and calm. “It sets you up for the day,” But a more mental

problem seems to be the fear of losing one's life. A problem historic polar heroes knew all too well. "And if the worst, or best, happens, and Death comes for you in the snow, he comes disguised as Sleep, and you greet him rather as a welcome friend than a gruesome foe" (Cherry-Garrard 1922). Cox tries a different approach by offering advice on how to deal with the fear and ultimately guarantee the survival of the swimmer this way. "I'm writing about the Fear because it's a common problem. My theory is that you can't get rid of it, but you can have a few tricks to deal with what feels like a life-threatening situation, particularly if there isn't another more-frightened swimmer to accompany. So far in my repertoire I have the following, but I'd welcome new ideas: breaststroke a while, concentrating on getting your breath under control, bringing your heart rate back to normal. Go on to your back and float a little, if you can. Look at what's above and around you."

Antarctica with its extreme geography certainly offers possibilities to look around. But there is more reasons to choose the Seventh Continent for the special experiences, travellers are looking for. Antarctica is a space that we tend to configure according to our own deepest preoccupations whether we have been there or not. And then there are of course images that break through our unconsciousness, quite uninvited, as if they have been there for a long time, lurking. The skipper and writer Alvarez Forn (1991), who sailed on board the sailing vessel "Pequod" to Antarctica might stand as an example for others: "It was in April 1987, when a subconscious idea broke to the surface, which must have formed quite a while ago, when we came back from our voyage to Cape Horn. It was suddenly there, I had to go to Antarctica, without much further ado or measuring the consequences, I just knew that I had to sail south. I wasn't competing with anybody, but it seemed to be an additional bonus, that the first sailing yachts, which had wanted to go in the years 82 and 83, had not succeeded."

Many others feel the same urge to excel and compete in expeditions. The Irish Pat Falvey is one of them. Having completed the Seven Summits Challenge twice, his adventures have taken him to some of the highest, coldest, loneliest and most remote places on earth. He reveals the danger and joys at the limits of physical and mental challenges on an Antarctic Expedition in his book "*A Journey to Adventure. Stories I never thought I'd tell*" (2007). The traverse of South Georgia and a visit to Elephant Island were part of his voyage to Antarctica. "The highlight of our expedition was the moment we reached Cape Valentine, where Shackleton first landed to rescue his crew. We paid homage to our heroes by landing on the very spit of shore where the crew awaited their boss so many years ago. For me it was a dream come true to stand in a place that had been etched in my memory from photos I'd seen and books I had read. I was so proud of our team for coming to Antarctica to pay homage to Irishmen who had achieved an incredible feat of survival. As I left Elephant Island, my journey was just beginning. Next, I would set out to achieve Shackleton's dream of reaching the South Pole and beyond. But that will be another story."

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Tourism in Antarctica

A Multidisciplinary View of New Activities Carried Out on
the White Continent

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