

Explorers of a Different Kind
A History of Antarctic Tourism 1966-2016

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the
Australian National University

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

I declare that this thesis is my own work, and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by any other person, nor material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree of a university or other institute of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the text.

Diane Erceg

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ABSTRACT

In 1966, American tour operator, Lindblad Travel, began small-scale tourist cruises to Antarctica. Over the course of the next 50 years, what began as an offbeat and exclusive travel destination transformed into an iconic tourist attraction. Annual tourist visits to Antarctica grew from a few hundred to tens of thousands; modes of transport to the continent diversified to include yachts, cruise ships, icebreakers and aircraft; and the activities available to Antarctic tourists ranged from one-day scenic flights to multi-month mountaineering expeditions and ski tours to the South Pole. Antarctic tourism numbers trebled in the 1990s, when the public's growing desire to visit Antarctica was matched with an influx of Russian ice-strengthened ships into the tourism fleet.

This thesis chronicles that 50-year history of Antarctic tourism growth and diversification. Its narrative centres on the efforts of inventive and enterprising tour operators to secure their footing on a physically and politically formidable continent. Government officials and a mounting environmental movement invariably resisted these efforts. And the safety, environmental integrity and self-sufficiency of the industry were challenged in the wake of a series of environmental emergencies and one major tragedy. Even so, Antarctic tour operators were successful in forging a robust industry through technical ingenuity and political nous. By underscoring their environmental ethos, and their influential role in raising public awareness of Antarctica, tour operators presented themselves as the responsible stewards of an innocuous practice that was consistent with Antarctica's governing principles.

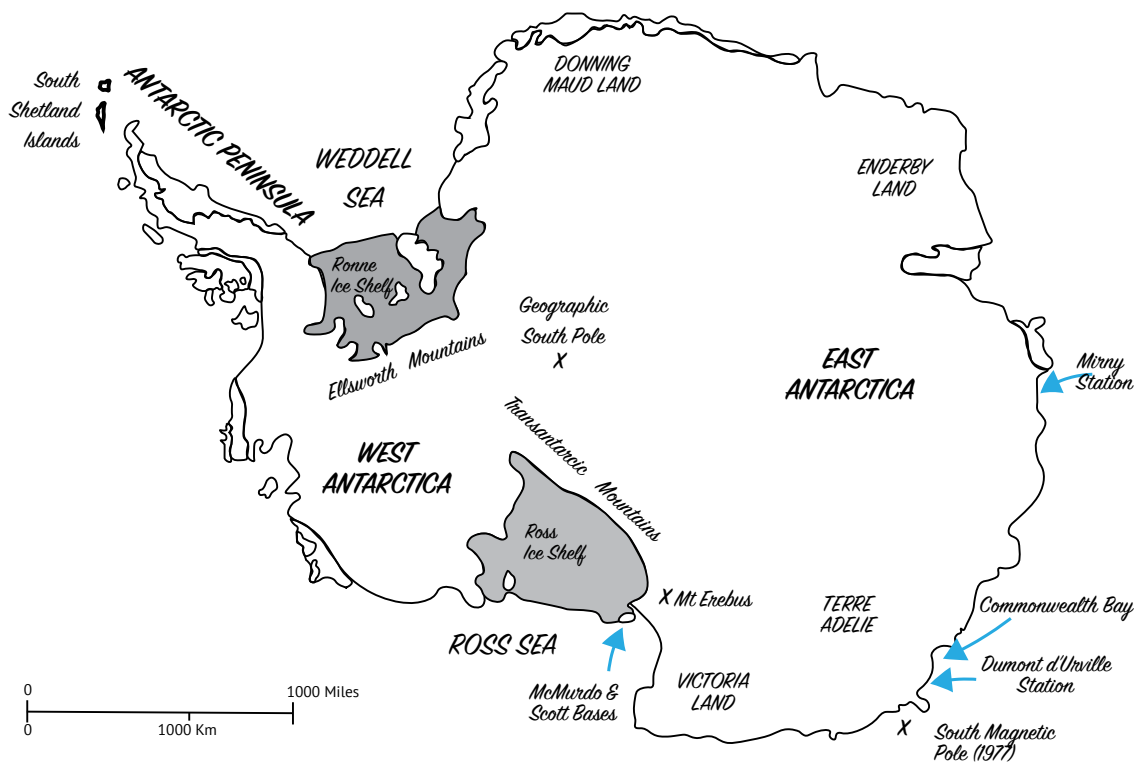
Each chapter in this 50-year tourism history also offers some insight into the Antarctic tourist imaginary, a theme that is explored further through a series of reflections. These reflections reveal that the Antarctic tourism industry draws strongly on the dominant image

of Antarctica as a pristine wilderness, frozen in a perpetual age of heroic exploration. By suppressing its own history, the Antarctic tourism industry strives to maintain a perception of the continent as an enduring blank space available for discovery again and again. According to this image, the heroic age explorers remain the touchstone of Antarctic experience even now, more than a century after the era's conclusion. The explorers' narratives of physical and moral struggle against a relentless environment continue to serve as the benchmark of authentic Antarctic experience. They also inspire the sustained imagining of Antarctica as a masculine sphere for 'Boys' Own' adventure, a legacy most poignantly illuminated in the endeavours of Antarctica's modern explorers.

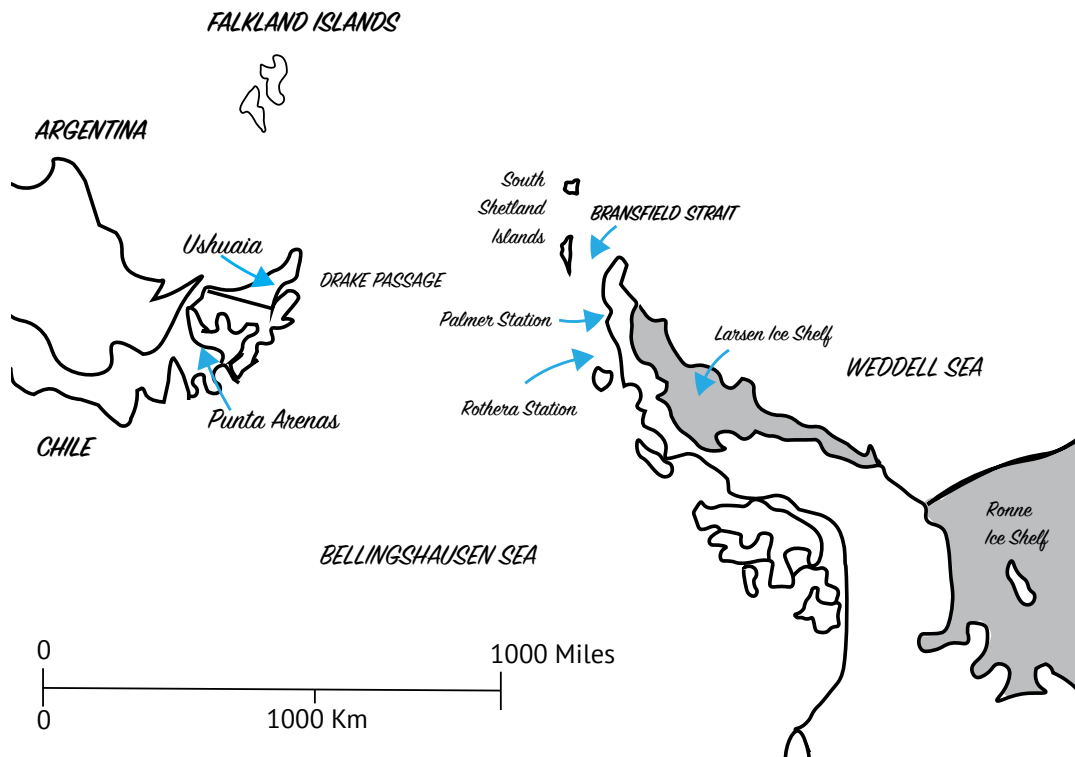
Such an imagining of Antarctica as pristine and untouched—as a continent apart—is challenged by more recent understandings of Antarctic ice. We have come to realise that the world's sea level is principally controlled by the state of the Antarctic ice sheet and that we may be destabilising that ice sheet without ever leaving home. These emerging climate change narratives threaten to undermine dominant images of Antarctica as an untouched wilderness frozen in time. For now, tour operators continue to present climate change narratives in a manner which does not fundamentally challenge this wilderness ideal; an ideal which forms the imaginative foundation on which the Antarctic tourism industry has been built.

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Map 1: Antarctica - names and places



Map 2: Antarctic Peninsula

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACCE	Antarctic Climate Change and the Environment (Report)
ANARE	Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition
ANI	Adventure Network International
ASOC	Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition
ATCM	Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting
BAS	British Antarctic Survey
CCAMLR	Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources
CRAMRA	Convention on the Regulation of Antarctic Mineral Resource Activities
FESCO	Far Eastern Shipping Company
IAATO	International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators
IGY	International Geophysical Year
IMO	International Maritime Organization
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
NAA	National Archives of Australia
NACP	National Archives, College Park
NLA	National Library of Australia
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NSF	National Science Foundation
OAP	Office of Antarctic Program
SCAR	Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research

INTRODUCTION

On mid-summer days, the Ushuaia dock buzzes with activity. Buses, trucks and people gather around its wide concourse. Dozen of ships line its perimeter, fastened tightly with thick lashings of mooring line. Fuel and water lines zigzag the concrete ground. Deliveries come and go. A soundtrack of humming engines and slamming doors fills the brisk air. And huddled in small clusters adjacent to each vessel are tourists. Some may be bound for destinations nearby—Cape Horn, Penguin Island or one of Tierra del Fuego’s glaciated bays. Others might be taking pause during a South American coastal cruise. But most are destined for Antarctica, ‘The Last Continent’, which lies 1,000 kilometres to Ushuaia’s south.

Many people still respond with surprise at the very idea of Antarctic tourism. ‘Tourists can actually *go there*?’ they often ask. Antarctica remains a place that most would not think to consider as their next holiday destination. Compared to other tourism industries, Antarctic tourism is niche and small-scale. But for places like Ushuaia, which serves as a gateway to the continent, Antarctic tourism is a reason for being. The city’s main avenue, Avenida San Martin, is lined from end to end with hotels, restaurants and outdoor clothing stores. Its bookstores are stocked with Antarctic guide books and heroic polar literature in numerous languages. Posters in store windows advertise last-minute Antarctic deals especially for those who thought that a trip to the end of the world was out of reach. ‘Ushvegas’, as it is affectionately called, seems to cater to the Antarctic tourist’s every whim.

Standing on the Ushuaia dock on a January morning—watching tour operators and port agents go about their routine business of bringing one trip of a lifetime to an end and preparing for the next—one could be forgiven for thinking it had always been this way.

It is difficult to imagine that 50 years ago Ushuaia was an isolated military outpost with no commercial airport or hotels. When travel entrepreneur, Lars-Eric Lindblad, set out to organise a sixteen-day tourist cruise from Ushuaia to the Antarctic Peninsula, he was told it would be impossible. People would die. Bringing women there was out of the question. Government-operated scientific stations would resent and resist the intrusion.¹ Today, over 40,000 tourists travel to Antarctica each year. And they choose from a smorgasbord of options in terms of price, trip length, comfort level and mode of travel. How did Antarctic tourism emerge and grow? Why do tourists go there? What do they imagine they will find, and how has that changed? These questions form the basis of this thesis.

This thesis is about the emergence and growth of Antarctic tourism from 1966 to 2016. It traces the early years of three prominent tourist activities—expedition cruising, scenic overflights, and mountaineering and ski tours—and outlines the past two decades of tourism growth and diversification. The first three decades of this period were marked by the endeavours of a handful of travel entrepreneurs and adventurers, who secured a footing on the continent in spite of Antarctica’s formidable political and physical environment. In the 1990s, rapidly increasing visitor numbers raised concerns that Antarctic tourism was damaging the environment. In response, the tourism industry worked collaboratively and proactively to gain government acceptance and maintain an influential self-regulating role. This thesis argues that the Antarctic tourism industry’s success was forged through technical ingenuity and political nous. By underscoring its environmental ethos and leveraging Antarctica’s ambiguous legal status, the industry presented Antarctic tourism as responsible, innocuous and consistent with Antarctica’s governing principles.

Delving beneath the surface of this technical and political history, this thesis also

¹ Lars-Eric Lindblad and John G. Fuller, *Passport to Anywhere: The Story of Lars-Eric Lindblad* (New York: Times Books, 1983).

explores the Antarctic tourist imaginary—the way in which Antarctica is collectively imagined, portrayed and experienced as a tourist destination. It argues that exploration history—Antarctica’s heroic age explorers in particular—loom large in the Antarctic tourist imaginary. Explorers’ narratives of physical struggle against a relentless and overwhelming nature remain the touchstone of Antarctic voyaging and a benchmark of authentic Antarctic experience. The tourism industry draws strongly on related images of Antarctica as pristine wilderness, masculine testing ground and perpetual blank space. In recent decades, climate change discourses have framed Antarctica as a vulnerable and volatile component of an integrated global system. Even so, climate change has not displaced enduring imaginaries of Antarctica as unchanging, timeless and set apart from the modern world.

A Different Take on the Antarctic Tourist

Antarctic tourism has been the subject of academic scholarship for over four decades. The first wave of scholarly interest in the subject came in the early 1980s, as a handful of researchers chronicled emerging trends in the nascent Antarctic tourism industry.² A second wave, in the mid-1990s, considered the impacts of Antarctic tourism on science, the environment, historic sites and the political stability of the Antarctic Treaty System.³

2 Examples include Rosamunde J Reich, “The Development of Antarctic Tourism,” *Polar Record* 20, no. 126 (1980); Robert K. Headland and Peter L. Keage, “Activities on the King George Island Group, South Shetland Islands, Antarctica,” *ibid.* 22, no. 140 (1985); Jeffery Boswall, “Airborne Tourism 1982–84: A Recent Antarctic Development,” *ibid.* 23, no. 143 (1986); Paul Dudley Hart, “The Growth of Antarctic Tourism,” *Oceanus* 31, no. 2 (1988).

3 Examples include Debra J. Enzenbacher, “Antarctic Tourism and Environmental Concerns,” *Marine Pollution Bulletin* 25, no. 9 (1992); C Michael Hall, “Tourism in Antarctica: Activities, Impacts, and Management,” *Journal of Travel Research* 30, no. 4 (1992); Davor Vidas, “Antarctic Tourism: A Challenge to the Legitimacy of the Antarctic Treaty System,” *German YB Int’l L.* 36 (1993); Peter J. Beck, “Managing Antarctic Tourism: A Front-Burner Issue,” *Annals of Tourism Research* 21, no. 2 (1994); Janet Hughes, “Antarctic Historic Sites: The Tourism Implications,” *ibid.*; D Enzenbacher, “The Management of Antarctic Tourism: Environmental Issues, the Adequacy of Current Regulations and Policy Options with the Antarctic Treaty System” (University of Cambridge, 1995); Richard A. Herr, “The Regulation of Antarctic Tourism: A Study in Regime Effectiveness,” in *Governing the Antarctic: The Effectiveness and Legitimacy of the Antarctic Treaty System*, ed. Olav Schram Stokke and Davor Vidas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Davor Vidas, “The Legitimacy of Tourism Regulation” *ibid.*, ed. Olav Schram

Over the past two decades, Antarctic tourism scholars have focused their efforts on evaluating existing tourism measures, identifying policy gaps and recommending new ways forward.⁴

Most of this literature has viewed Antarctic tourism through an environmental management lens. In this sense, Antarctic tourism has largely been framed as a problem requiring solutions, particularly policy responses built on technical and scientific expertise. This approach also reflects broader trends in Antarctic research, which have focused predominantly on science, law, politics and environmental management. Antarctic tourism scholars have tended to be critical of the Antarctic Treaty approach, characterising its response to tourism as ad-hoc, reactionary and too dependent on industry self-regulation. Much of this literature has called on governments to develop a more robust and comprehensive tourism regulation mechanism.

Antarctic tourism has received much less attention from historians, whose research interests have been directed towards Antarctic exploration, science and diplomacy. The few exceptions mention tourism only briefly, noting the emergence of commercial tours in the 1950s and 1960s, and the rise in tourist numbers ever since.⁵ Popular books on Antarctica tend to portray Antarctic tourism as a ‘current issue’ among others, such as

Stokke and Davor Vidas.

4 Examples include Phil Tracey, “Managing Antarctic Tourism” (University of Tasmania, 2001); Kees Bastmeijer and Ricardo Roura, “Regulating Antarctic Tourism and the Precautionary Principle,” *The American Journal of International Law* 98, no. 4 (2004); Daniela Haase, “Tourism in Antarctica: Modi Operandi and Regulatory Effectiveness” (University of Canterbury, 2008); Daniela Liggett et al., “From Frozen Continent to Tourism Hotspot? Five Decades of Antarctic Tourism Development and Management, and a Glimpse into the Future,” *Tourism Management* 32, no. 2 (2011); Jane Verbitsky, “Antarctic Tourism Management and Regulation: The Need for Change,” *Polar Record* 49, no. 03 (2013).

5 Examples of Antarctic histories with brief potted histories of Antarctic tourism include Stephen J Pyne, *The Ice: A Journey to Antarctica* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1986); Stephen Martin, *A History of Antarctica* (Sydney: State Library of New South Wales Press, 1996); Tom Griffiths, *Slicing the Silence: Voyaging to Antarctica* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); David Day, *Antarctica: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

fishing and climate change, rather than recognising its longer history.⁶ Although tourists have been visiting Antarctica for over 50 years—almost half the time that humans have been present on the continent—they have not been seen as ‘history makers’. This reflects particular attitudes to tourism that this study of Antarctica unpacks.

Reflecting more broadly, scholars and observers have tended to depict Antarctic tourism as an activity that is situated on the fringes of Antarctic culture—an addition to it, rather than something that might construct the Antarctic imaginary. This is partly due to the dominant belief that science is, and should be, the only truly sanctioned activity on the Antarctic continent. I also believe that it is because Antarctic tourism has been depicted mainly through statistics and administrative measures—rules, regulations, guidelines and codes of conduct—rather than as a cultural practice, performed in dialogue with others. This thesis takes a different approach to Antarctic tourism by presenting it as a social and cultural practice. It suggests that Antarctic tourists have played a pivotal role in Antarctica’s cultural transformation over the past 50 years, both on and off the ice.

Early Antarctic tourists did not simply come and go from the continent, having met a few penguins and taken photographs as souvenirs. They encountered other Antarctic actors, such as government officials and station personnel, encounters which often amounted to active and unsettling cultural exchanges. Those who objected to tourist visits framed their objections as concerns about the potential disruption to scientific productivity. But the narratives of these early tourist-government encounters reveal that tourists also disrupted Antarctica’s status as a strictly masculine sphere, controlled by government science. Tourists—half of them women and most of them non-scientists—posed a challenge to

6 Examples include David McGonigal and Lynn Woodworth, *Antarctica and the Arctic: The Complete Encyclopedia* (Richmond, Ontario: Firefly Books, 2001); David McGonigal, *Antarctica: Secrets of the Southern Continent* (Richmond, Ontario: Firefly Books, 2008); Gabrielle Walker, *Antarctica: An Intimate Portrait of a Mysterious Continent* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013).

Antarctica's cultural status quo. While the plight of women scientists to overcome the 'last male bastion' has been well documented, the history of Antarctic tourism also offers important insight into how Antarctica's gender imbalance began to shift.⁷

Antarctic tourism also participated in cultural shifts off the ice. For several decades, after the signing of the 1959 Antarctic Treaty, Antarctic governance had remained the sole domain and unchallenged responsibility of a small group of Antarctic Treaty nations. This began to change in the 1980s, as participation in Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings (ATCMs) broadened in response to criticism that Antarctic Treaty nations were an 'exclusive club'.⁸ The inclusion of the Antarctic tourism industry in ATCMs was part of this broader 'opening up' of the ATCM to outsiders. While this dynamic era in Antarctic governance has been documented from the perspective of environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and non-Treaty nations, such as Malaysia, the role of the tourism industry as a new ATCM participant has been overlooked.⁹

7 Works on women in Antarctica include: Kerry Edwards and Robyn Graham, "Gender on Ice: Proceedings of a Conference on Women in Antarctica Held in Hobart, Tasmania, under the Auspices of the Australian Antarctic Foundation," *Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service* (1994); G Kip Bollinger, "Braving the Frozen Frontier: Women Working in Antarctica," *Science Scope* 21, no. 4 (1997); E.D. Rothblum, J.S. Weinstock, and J. Morris, *Women in the Antarctic* (Harrington Park Press, 1998); Robin J Burns, *Just Tell Them I Survived!: Women in Antarctica* (Allen & Unwin, 2001); Felicity Aston, "Women of the White Continent," *Geographical*, September 2005.

8 Non-Consultative Parties have been invited to attend ATCMs since 1983. International organisations have been invited since 1987.

9 Works on the role of NGOs and non-Treaty or new Treaty nations in the Antarctic Treaty System include: Margaret L Clark, "The Antarctic Environmental Protocol: NGOs in the Protection of Antarctica," *Environmental NGOs in World Politics: Linking the Local and the Global* (1994); James N Barnes, "The Antarctic Treaty System: Perspectives of Environmental Nongovernmental Organizations on Addressing Key Issues," *Science Diplomacy: Antarctica, Science, and the Governance of International Spaces* (2011); Harlan Cohen, "Public Participation in Antarctica: The Role of Nongovernmental and Intergovernmental Organizations," *Science Diplomacy: Antarctica, Science and the Governance of International Spaces. Berkman PA, Land MA, Walton D, and Yound OR (eds.). Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press* (2011); Zulhabri Ismail et al., "The Role of Malaysia under the Antarctic Treaty and Madrid Protocol" (paper presented at the Humanities, Science and Engineering (CHUSER), 2012 IEEE Colloquium on, 2012); Hamisah Abd Rahman et al., "Strategic Interest of Malaysia's in Matters Concerning Policy on Antarctica," *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 202 (2015).

The Tourist Imaginary

The history of Antarctic tourism also offers a rich archive with which to explore Antarctica's place in the modern imagination. For Antarctic tourism is as much an imaginative journey as a physical one. By imaginative, I am not referring to something that is pretend or unreal. The images, ideas and emotional responses we draw on when we imagine Antarctica are certainly intangible and impossible to collect or measure. But they are no less real or significant to the tourist's Antarctic encounter than the cold, hard ice itself. Even with feet set firmly on the continent, a bitter katabatic wind biting at their tender flesh, tourists continue to imagine Antarctica with full force. 'It is true that for me Antarctica was always a space of the imagination—before, during and after my own voyage,' writes travel writer Sara Wheeler in her Antarctic memoir, *Terra Incognita* (1996).¹⁰ At the heart of this thesis is the notion that Wheeler's thought-provoking statement is true for us all, whether or not we have been there.

In this thesis, I use the concept 'tourist imaginary', which was coined by anthropologists of tourism in the 1990s and has entered into common use in the tourism literature over the past decade. The 'imaginary' came to tourism studies from other disciplines including psychoanalysis, philosophy and social theory, and especially from the writings of Jacques Lacan, Cornelius Castoriadis and Charles Taylor.¹¹ Each of these thinkers employed distinct definitions of the imaginary. For Lacan, the imaginary was an illusion—the work of distorted and repressed fantasies driven by psychological needs.¹² For Castoriadis, the social imaginary represented the ethos of a group, in the sense of a society's shared core conceptions.¹³ While for Taylor, a modern social imaginary referred to 'the way we imagine

10 Sara Wheeler, *Terra Incognita* (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd, 1996), 1.

11 Naomi Leite, "Locating Imaginaries in the Anthropology of Tourism," in *Tourism Imaginaries: Anthropological Approaches*, ed. Noel B Salazar and Nelson Graburn (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014).

12 Jacques Lacan and Bruce Fink, *Ecrits: The First Complete Edition in English* (W. W. Norton, 2006).

13 Cornelius Castoriadis and Kathleen Blamey, *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997).

our society' rather than what societies imagine.¹⁴ Distinct definitions of 'imaginary' were also adopted by cultural studies scholars, who used the term to refer to a composite image of a place or people drawn from popular representations.¹⁵

While no single definition of 'tourist imaginary' exists, its various definitions rest on an assumption that tourists share ideas, beliefs and interpretive schemas that are culturally constructed and act to shape the tourist's perception of place. It is this broad definition that I bring to bear in my consideration of the Antarctic tourist imaginary. While I am mainly interested in the way that tourists imagine Antarctica, and how Antarctica is represented to them in popular literature and marketing material, I am also interested in how tourists imagine themselves and are imagined by others. Like other tourism scholars, I use a range of expressions when referring to the tourist imaginary, including image, perception, narrative, representation, fantasy, desire, stereotype and ideology. Though each of these expressions has its own distinct meaning, together they form a useful vocabulary, serving to articulate the many ways in which Antarctica functions as an imaginative space.

An exploration of how Antarctica has been imagined by tourists can contribute to our understanding of the continent itself. While the task of studying and understanding Antarctica has largely been referred to scientists, humanities scholars have pointed out the intrinsic worth of investigating the Antarctic from a range of disciplinary and epistemological perspectives.¹⁶ Yet the way in which places are imagined often reveal as much about the people doing the imagining as about the place itself, and Antarctica is no exception. The Antarctic tourist therefore offers us broader insights into workings

14 Charles Taylor, "Modern Social Imaginaries," *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (2002): 92.

15 Leite, "Locating Imaginaries in the Anthropology of Tourism", 261.

16 Peder Roberts, Lizé-Marie van der Watt and Adrian Howkins, "Antarctica: A Continent for the Humanities," in *Antarctica and the Humanities* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016)

of the modern consciousness. How tourists define Antarctica, through imaginaries and representations, subsequently reflects how they define that which is seen to be opposite to Antarctica—the modern, civilised world.

At the Boundaries of Tourism and Exploration

Antarctic tourism does not lend itself to simple categorisation. On one hand, Antarctic tourists observe the defining traits of the tourist performance. They travel from site to site, gathering memorable moments and milestones. The first iceberg, the last continent, a list of species sighted. They collect experiences such as wilderness, adventure and solitude, and make them into souvenirs with the click of a camera. On the other hand, Antarctic tourism is also an expedition performance. Tour operators run ‘voyages’ and ‘expeditions’ rather than tours, which are imbued with exploration rhetoric and informed by the narratives of Antarctica’s heroic age explorers.

The Antarctic tourism industry’s ‘expedition model’ has a tendency to be dismissed as little more than a surface feature—a marketing ploy that capitalises on the public’s continued fascination with exploration history. This thesis takes the view that the ties between Antarctic tourism and exploration are more than just cosmetic or nostalgic. Antarctic tourism, I argue, offers insights into how the boundaries between tourism and exploration are porous: they have a tendency to overlap and blur. This thesis therefore draws on scholarship from a range of disciplines including the fields of tourism studies and exploration history, and shows how, together, they can help us to understand Antarctica’s place in the tourist imaginary.

When tourism studies scholarship emerged in the late 1960s, it portrayed a bleak outlook. The first pieces of social science writing on tourism generally painted a negative picture

of tourism and tourists, seeing the rise of mass tourism as the end of an intrepid and sophisticated 'art of travel.' These authors characterised tourists as superficial, ignorant and sheep-like, travelling from attraction to attraction with little contact with, or understanding of, their surroundings.¹⁷ By the 1980s, writing on tourism became more evidence-based, and inclusive of the economies of tourism development as well as the motives of tourists.

In their efforts to understand tourist motivation, some scholars developed typologies and categorisation systems based on where and for how long people travelled, whether they preferred cultural or natural sites, how active they were and whether they travelled alone or in groups.¹⁸ Those who have written about Antarctic tourist motivation have tended to follow a similar trend, reducing tourist motivation to checklists of interests such as wildlife, adventure, scenery, history and solitude.¹⁹ Yet most tourists have multiple reasons to be drawn to Antarctica. Categorisations and typologies ultimately reveal little about the *meaning* of the tourist experience. They fail to consider what Antarctica represents to the tourist.

Other, more profound perspectives, can be drawn from the tourism literature. An important early work was Dean MacCannell's *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (1976), which explored the tourist experience as a collective social phenomenon.

17 Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (New York: Atheneum Publishers, 1962); Louis Turner and John Ash, *The Golden Hordes: International Tourism and the Pleasure Periphery* (Constable London, 1975); Erik Cohen, "Rethinking the Sociology of Tourism," *Annals of Tourism Research* 6, no. 1 (1979).

18 "A Phenomenology of Tourist Experiences," *Sociology* 13, no. 2 (1979); John L. Crompton, "Why People Go on Pleasure Vacation," *Annals of Tourism Research* 6, no. 4 (1979); Seppo E. Iso-Ahola, "Toward a Social Psychological Theory of Tourism Motivation: A Rejoinder," *ibid.* 9, no. 2 (1982); Philip L. Pearce, *The Social Psychology of Tourist Behaviour* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1982).

19 Nigel Wace, "Antarctica: A New Tourist Destination," *Applied Geography* 10, no. 4 (1990); Colin Michael Hall and Margaret Johnston, *Polar Tourism: Tourism in the Arctic and Antarctic Regions* (Wiley, 1995); Haase; Robert B. Powell, Stephen R. Kellert, and Sam H. Ham, "Antarctic Tourists: Ambassadors or Consumers?," *Polar Record* 44, no. 3 (2008); Thomas G. Bauer, *Tourism in the Antarctic: Opportunities, Constraints, and Future Prospects* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

MacCannell argued that Western tourists were drawn to primitive cultures, paradisiacal places and simpler lifestyles, which they saw as more authentic than their own lives.²⁰ MacCannell, like other early tourism scholars, tended to portray tourists acting without agency or self-reflection, flocking to idealised locales to escape the dissatisfaction of their modern and meaningless lives. His writing has attracted both negative and positive critiques, and inspired other authors to explore ideas about why tourists travel. Many of them, like MacCannell, centred their theories on the notion that tourists were drawn to a distant and different Other.²¹

Another seminal work was Valene Smith's *Hosts and Guests* (1977), which critically examined international tourism as a medium for cultural exchange.²² In a chapter in this volume, anthropologist Dennison Nash argued that tourism was a form of imperialism, as most tourism to developing countries was advised, owned, and run by people and institutions of the former imperial power.²³ Also, tourists, usually from rich, first-world countries, brought with them unconscious imaginaries flavoured by their imperial pasts. As other authors explored the sociocultural impacts of Western tourism for developing countries, the idea that Western tourists cast a 'colonial gaze' over non-Western cultures became a commonplace in tourism literature.²⁴

20 Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (London: MacMillan Press, 1976).

21 Examples include Erik Cohen, "Nomads from Affluence: Notes on the Phenomenon of Drifter-Tourism," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 14, no. 1-2 (1973); Nelson Graburn, "The Sacred Journey," in *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism*, ed. Valene Smith (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977); Ulf Hannerz, "Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture," *Theory, Culture & Society* 7, no. 2 (1990); Mike Featherstone, "Consumer Culture and Postmodernism," (London: Sage, 1991); Chris Rojek, *Ways of Escape: Modern Transformations in Leisure and Travel* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 1993); Michael Harkin, "Modernist Anthropology and Tourism of the Authentic," *Annals of Tourism Research* 22, no. 3 (1995); Dennison Nash, *Anthropology of Tourism* (Oxford: Elsevier Science, 1996).

22 Valene L Smith, ed. *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977).

23 Dennison Nash, "Tourism as a Form of Imperialism," in *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism*, ed. Valene L Smith (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977).

24 Examples include Edward M Bruner, "Of Cannibals, Tourists, and Ethnographers," *Cultural Anthropology* 4, no. 4 (1989); Konai Helu-Thaman, "Beyond Hula, Hotels, and Handicrafts: A Pacific Islander's Perspective of

Few tourism scholars have extended these considerations of Otherness and colonial imaginaries beyond the developing country, and into places without people.²⁵ In this thesis, I argue that these ideas of Otherness and colonial imaginaries are just as valid in Antarctic tourism as in other postcolonial spaces. Yet they take a form which is specific to polar discourses and, in particular, to the history of Antarctic exploration.

Antarctic history has largely been the domain of biographers and writers of ‘armchair exploration’. Placing a strong focus on Antarctica’s heroic age of exploration, these authors have tended to focus on the struggles, triumphs and flaws of a handful of iconic explorers, particularly Robert Falcon Scott, Ernest Shackleton, Roald Amundsen and Douglas Mawson.²⁶ In recent decades, Antarctic exploration history has begun to receive more comprehensive and critical attention. An important aspect of this work has focused on exposing the ties between science and politics, rejecting the popular notion that Antarctica’s status as a *tabula rasa*, or blank space, meant that scientific and geographical discovery in Antarctica was uninfluenced by imperial or national ambition.²⁷

Tourism Development,” *The Contemporary Pacific* (1993); Jaume Martí-Olivella, “The Post-Colonial Tourist and/in the Caribbean,” *Latin American Issues* 13 (1997); John Akama, “The Creation of the Maasai Image and Tourism Development in Kenya,” *Cultural Tourism in Africa: Strategies for the New Millennium* (2002); Edward M. Bruner, *Culture on Tour: Ethnographies of Travel* (University of Chicago Press, 2005); Hazel Tucker and John Akama, “Tourism as Postcolonialism,” in *The Sage Handbook of Tourism Studies*, ed. Tazim Jamal and Mike Robinson (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009); Rafiq Ahmad, “Orientalist Imaginaries of Travels in Kashmir: Western Representations of the Place and People,” *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* 9, no. 3 (2011).

25 An exception is the recent ethnographic work of anthropologists David Picard and Denis Zuev. David Picard and Dennis Zuev, “The Tourist Plot: Antarctica and the Modernity of Nature,” *Annals of Tourism Research* 45 (2014); David Picard, “White Magic: An Anthropological Perspective on Value in Antarctic Tourism,” *Tourist Studies* 15, no. 3 (2015); Dennis Zuev and David Picard, “Reconstructing the Antarctic Tourist Interaction Ritual Chain: Visual Sociological Perspective,” *The Polar Journal* 5, no. 1 (2015).

26 Works on the Antarctica’s Heroic Age of Exploration over the past two decades include Susan Solomon, *The Coldest March: Scott’s Fatal Antarctic Expedition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); Ranulph Fiennes, *Captain Scott* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2003); *Race to the Pole: Tragedy, Heroism, and Scott’s Antarctic Quest* (New York: Hyperion, 2004); Peter Fitzsimons, *Mawson and the Ice Men of the Heroic Age: Scott, Shackleton and Amundsen* (Sydney: William Heinemann, 2011); Edward J Larson, *An Empire of Ice: Scott, Shackleton, and the Heroic Age of Antarctic Science* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011); Chris Turney, *1912: The Year the World Discovered Antarctica* (Melbourne: Text, 2012); Day, *Flaws in the Ice: In Search of Douglas Mawson* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2014).

27 Examples include Klaus Dodds, *Pink Ice: Britain and the South Atlantic Empire* (London: I.B. Tauris,

An important work in this regard was Lisa Bloom's *Gender on Ice* (1993). Bloom argued that the practice of marking territory as 'blank' was a discursive strategy used by European imperial powers to justify the process of filling them in.²⁸ She also highlighted the ideologies of gender at the centre of polar exploration, noting that polar exploration narratives played a prominent part in defining the social construction of white masculinity. Brigid Hains has also explored Antarctica's role as a masculine testing ground. In *The Ice and the Inland* (2002), she argues that the Antarctic frontier and Australian outback offered a means of escaping the feminising influences of domesticity and modern urban life—'a sojourn into the "primitive" heart of civilised man.'²⁹

Writing on the relationship between imperialism, masculinity and mountaineering has also offered valuable insight. As Peter Bayers explains in *Imperial Ascent* (2003), mountains, like the North and South Poles became powerful symbols for displaying imperial and national identity to the world, as well as masculine heroism.³⁰ Much of the scholarship on gender and mountaineering has focused on the construction of masculinity in all-male climbing arenas in the 19th and early 20th centuries.³¹ New perspectives on women mountaineers and mountain guides have explored how femininity is negotiated despite

2002); Christy Collis, "The Proclamation Island Moment: Making Antarctica Australian," *Law Text Culture* 8 (2004); "Mawson and Mirnyy Stations: The Spatiality of the Australian Antarctic Territory, 1954–61," *Australian Geographer* 38, no. 2 (2007); Adrian. Howkins, "Frozen Empires: A History of the Antarctic Sovereignty Dispute between Britain, Argentina, and Chile, 1939-1959" (University of Texas, 2008); Peder Roberts, *The European Antarctic: Science and Strategy in Scandinavia and the British Empire* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

28 Lisa Bloom, *Gender on Ice: American Ideologies of Polar Expeditions* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

29 Brigid Hains, *The Ice and the Inland: Mawson, Flynn, and the Myth of the Frontier* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002), 103.

30 Peter Bayers, *Imperial Ascent: Mountaineering, Masculinity, and Empire* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2003).

31 Examples include Susan Frohlick, "The 'Hypermasculine' Landscape of High-Altitude Mountaineering," *Michigan Feminist Studies* 14 (2000); Robert Macfarlane, *Mountains of the Mind* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2003); Christopher Dummitt, "Risk on Rocks: Modernity, Manhood, and Mountaineering in Postwar British Columbia," *BC Studies*, no. 141 (2004); Peter Hansen, *The Summits of Modern Man: Mountaineering after the Enlightenment* (Cumberland: Harvard University Press, 2013); Michael S Reidy, "Mountaineering, Masculinity, and the Male Body in Mid-Victorian Britain," *Osiris* 30, no. 1 (2015).

threatening lingering masculinist ideologies.³²

An emerging body of literature on modern exploration considers how the legacies of imperial exploration live on, even when the ages of empire and ‘genuine exploration’ have supposedly ended. In her study of Australian ‘footsteps expeditions’ in the 1970s, Christy Collis has argued that such feats of modern exploration, far from being innocuous reenactments, were expressions of an ongoing Australian practice of spatial production and possession.³³ Felix Driver has also argued that modern acts of exploration should be considered carefully for their cultural meaning. The rituals of possession enacted by explorers of previous ‘golden ages’ may have lost their strictly legal status, Driver argues, ‘but they have certainly not lost their cultural power or their geopolitical significance.’³⁴

This thesis makes several contributions to scholarship in tourism studies and exploration history. First, by considering how tourists are drawn to Antarctica’s qualities of otherness, and exploring their colonial origins, this thesis extends tourism scholars’ lines of inquiry beyond a developing country context and into the polar regions. Second, it contributes to emerging literature on the imperial underpinnings of modern exploration by showing how the Antarctic tourist performance also manifests the legacies of imperial exploration. Third, by situating itself at the boundaries of tourism and exploration, this thesis challenges the long-held view that tourism and exploration are distinctly different enterprises, suggesting that their perceived differences are also products of imperial ideology.

32 Joy Logan, *Aconcagua: The Invention of Mountaineering on America’s Highest Peak* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011); Delphine Moraldo, “Gender Relations in French and British Mountaineering. The Lens of Autobiographies of Female Mountaineers, from D’angeville (1794-1871) to Destivelle (1960-),” *Journal of Alpine Research| Revue de Géographie Alpine*, no. 101-1 (2013); Gill Pomfret and Adele Doran, “Gender and Mountaineering Tourism,” in *Mountaineering Tourism*, ed. Ghazali Musa, James Higham, and Anna Thompson-Carr (Routledge, 2015).

33 Christy Collis, “Walking in the Footsteps: ‘Footsteps of the Explorers’ Expeditions and the Contest for Australian Desert Space,” in *New Spaces of Exploration: Geographies of Discovery in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Simon Naylor and James R. Ryan (I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd, 2009).

34 Felix Driver, “Modern Explorers,” *ibid.* (London), 224.

Changing Perceptions of Antarctica

While the legacies of imperial exploration endure in Antarctica, much has been written about what has changed over the course of the last century. Narratives of Antarctica's heroic age of exploration portrayed a continent that was impenetrable, lifeless and isolated; a wilderness set apart from the modern world. Technological and environmental changes have transformed Antarctica, both physically and imaginatively. By the close of the 20th century, Antarctica was seen as an integral part of a global system, one which was vulnerable, volatile and disappearing before our eyes. Antarctic tourism has grown and expanded over the last 50 years amid this tide of change, which has shaped and challenged the way tourists imagine and experience the Antarctic encounter. This thesis therefore contributes to literature on the changing perceptions of the Antarctic environment, particularly those focused on technological change and climate change in Antarctica.

Technology has been recognised by scholars from various disciplines for its role in compressing time in relation to space, producing new visual perceptions of landscape and transforming individual sensory experiences. The world-shrinking capacity of 19th and 20th century technologies has been studied extensively by geographers, historians and sociologists.³⁵ Many of these scholars have focused on the role of successive transport and communications developments in condensing spatial and temporal distances; in annihilating space and time. Wolfgang Schivelbusch's *The Railway Journey* (1986) was a novel and important addition to this literature in that it also explored how rail travel altered old ways of traversing, seeing and knowing the landscape through which the

35 Examples include Thomas Falk and Ronald Abler, "Intercommunications, Distance, and Geographical Theory," *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography* 62, no. 2 (1980); Carolyn Marvin, *When Old Technologies Were New: Thinking About Electric Communication in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Jon May and Nigel Thrift, *Timespace: Geographies of Temporality* (London: Routledge, 2003); Aharon Kellerman, *Time, Space, and Society: Geographical Societal Perspectives* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2012).

traveller moved.³⁶

This line of inquiry was extended to 20th century technologies, particularly to the new visual perspectives afforded by the aeroplane. Aviation historians and geographers wrote about the significance of the aerial view in promoting new ways of seeing and relating to the world. The synoptic scale afforded by this new viewpoint promoted a sense of mastery and dominance over nature, while framing it in terms of global or planetary scales. Some also noted the significant role that aerial photography and mapping played in rendering landscape readable, thus offering objective, quantifiable and assessable knowledge about the world.³⁷

Some scholars have brought these perspectives to bear on the polar regions. Focusing on the time from the interwar period to the Cold War, geographer Klaus Dodds has considered the role of aviation and its associated technologies on changing perceptions of Antarctica.³⁸ Historians Marionne Cronin and Stephen Bocking have pursued similar lines of inquiry in the Arctic.³⁹ Their analyses highlighted the role of these new technologies in ‘unveiling’ the mystery of the polar regions; transforming them from the ‘last blank spaces’ to known and mapped territories.⁴⁰

36 Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century* (University of California Press, 1986).

37 For work on the aerial view see Davide Deriu, “The Photogenic City: Aerial Photography and Urban Visions in Europe, 1914-1945” (PhD Thesis, University of London, 2004); Anders Ekström, “Seeing from Above: A Particular History of the General Observer,” *Nineteenth Century Contexts* 31, no. 3 (2009); William Fox, *Aereality: On the World from Above* (Counterpoint, 2009); Benjamin Fraser, “The Ills of Aerial Photography: Latin America from Above,” *Chasqui* 39, no. 2 (2010); Thomas Robertson, “The Bird’s-Eye View: Towards an Environmental History of Aviation,” *The Journal of Transport History* 35, no. 2 (2014).

38 Klaus J. Dodds, “Antarctica and the Modern Geographical Imagination (1918–1960),” *Polar Record* 33, no. 184 (1997).

39 Stephen Bocking, “A Disciplined Geography: Aviation, Science, and the Cold War in Northern Canada, 1945–1960,” *Technology and Culture* 50, no. 2 (2009); Marionne Cronin, “Technological Heroes: Images of the Arctic in the Age of Polar Aviation,” in *Northscapes: History, Technology, and the Making of Northern Environments*, ed. Dolly Jorgensen and Sverker Sörlin (UBC Press, 2013).

40 Dodds, “Antarctica and the Modern Geographical Imagination (1918–1960); Bocking, “A Disciplined Geography: Aviation, Science, and the Cold War in Northern Canada, 1945–1960”.

Aerial photography and mapping not only rendered the ice readable but also situated the polar regions into modern images of the globe. Dodds has also argued that these visual technologies presented new possibilities for making territorial claims to Antarctica from the air. Significantly, all of these authors commented on the role of technology in undermining the status of the polar regions as testing grounds for courage, heroism and self-sacrifice. By the late 1960s, Dodds noted, polar orbiting satellites had completed the exploration of Antarctica: ‘Henceforth, polar explorers were confined to their “beaten tracks”’.⁴¹

In the latter part of the 20th century, the idea of the environment added to these shifting perceptions of Antarctica. In the 1960s, the prevailing perception of Antarctica as a lifeless continent began to shift as biologists brought attention to the vulnerability of its bird and mammal life.⁴² By the 1980s, the emergence of global change science, and a realisation that anthropogenic climate change was destabilising the Antarctic ice sheet, intensified images of the continent as vulnerable and sensitive to human-induced change.⁴³

While most writing on climate change in the 20th century and onwards has been produced by climate change scientists, historians and social scientists have also contributed to this body of literature. Scholarship on the history of climatology has mainly focused on explaining how scientists came to understand and prove the notion of anthropogenic climate change. These histories tend to trace scientific innovations of the 19th century through to the discovery of the links between carbon dioxide and anthropogenic warming in the 20th century, and finally the recognition of anthropogenic climate change at national

41 Dodds, “Antarctica and the Modern Geographical Imagination (1918–1960)”, 60.

42 Alessandro Antonello, “The Greening of Antarctica. Environment, Science and Diplomacy: 1959 - 1980” (Australian National University, 2014).

43 Libby Robin, Sverker Sörlin, and Paul Warde, *The Future of Nature: Documents of Global Change* (Yale University Press, 2013).

and international levels by the end of the century.⁴⁴

Climate change research has also expanded and probed new areas, with historians and other scholars critically evaluating how climate science is produced and circulated, the social impacts of climate change and the responses or adaptations to those changes, as well as the way in which climate change is perceived by different social and cultural groups.⁴⁵ In the Antarctic context, Adrian Howkins, Lisa Bloom and Elena Glasberg have also explored the role of climate change in shaping Antarctic research, politics and visual culture. Howkins has argued that the threat of climate change has profoundly shaped scientific research while reinforcing the privileged positions of the Antarctic Treaty System's 'insider nations'.⁴⁶ Writing on the roles of the Arctic and Antarctic in the visualisation of climate change, Bloom and Glasberg have argued that polar sea ice, ice caps and glaciers have become a focus of struggle and discord among scientists, governments, and within growing popular misrepresentation.⁴⁷

Tourism scholars have also written about climate change, both in terms of the contribution of tourism to anthropogenic climate change and the impacts of climate change on tourist

44 James Rodger Fleming, *Historical Perspectives on Climate Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Spencer Weart, *The Discovery of Global Warming* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Mark Bowen, *Thin Ice: Unlocking the Secrets of Climate in the World's Highest Mountains* (New York: Henry Holt, 2005); James Rodger Fleming, *The Callendar Effect: The Life and Work of Guy Stewart Callendar (1898-1964)* (Boston: American Meteorological Society, 2007); Mike Hulme, *Why We Disagree About Climate Change: Understanding Controversy, Inaction and Opportunity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Tom Griffiths, "A Humanist on Thin Ice," *Griffith Review* 29 (2010); J Donald Hughes, "Climate Change: A History of Environmental Knowledge," *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 21, no. 3 (2010).

45 Mark Carey, "Science, Models, and Historians: Toward a Critical Climate History," *Environmental History* 19, no. 2 (2014); Mark Carey et al., "Glaciers, Gender, and Science: A Feminist Glaciology Framework for Global Environmental Change Research," *Progress in Human Geography* 40, no. 6 (2016).

46 Adrian Howkins, "Melting Empires? Climate Change and Politics in Antarctica since the International Geophysical Year," *Osiris* 26, no. 1 (2011).

47 Lisa Bloom and Elena Glasberg, "Disappearing Ice and Missing Data: Climate Change in the Visual Culture of the Polar Regions," in *Far Field: Digital Culture, Climate Change, and the Poles*, ed. Jane D. Marsching and Andrea Polli (Bristol: Intellect, 2012).

sites.⁴⁸ Specific to polar discourses, tourism scholars have also coined the terms ‘climate change tourism’ and ‘last-chance tourism’ to describe tourists’ motivation to witness vulnerable landscapes or threatened species ‘before they disappear’.⁴⁹ This emerging body of scholarship has largely focused on finding evidence of last-chance tourism in tourist marketing and tourists’ personal accounts, especially in the Arctic. While much of the literature on climate change and tourism in Antarctica has focused on tourists’ perceptions of climate change, as well as evaluating the tourism industry’s claims of producing ‘climate-change ambassadors’.

This thesis contributes to scholarship on changing perceptions of Antarctica by exploring the various and complicated ways in which technological and environmental change have been perceived and experienced in Antarctica. On one hand, it demonstrates how tourist’s perceptions of the continent changed over the course of the last 50 years, as climate change narratives became a stronger feature of Antarctic tours. By considering tourists’ relationship to technology, as well as the prevailing narratives of Antarctica as a pristine wilderness, this thesis also complicates broad-brush narratives of change. It highlights the multiple layers of history and meaning through which tourists encounter the ice, and the vital role Antarctica continues to play as a symbol of the timeless and unchanging in an uncertain and technologically modern world.

48 Susanne Becken and John E. Hay, *Tourism and Climate Change: Risks and Opportunities* (Clevedon, UK: Channel View Publications, 2007); Andrew Jones and Michael Phillips, eds., *Disappearing Destinations: Climate Change and Future Challenges for Coastal Tourism* (Wallingford: CABI, 2011); Susanne Becken and John Hay, “Climate Change and Tourism: From Policy to Practice,” (Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2012); Maharaj Reddy and Keith Wilkes, *Tourism, Climate Change and Sustainability* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2012); Daniel Scott, Stefan Gössling, and C. Michael Hall, “International Tourism and Climate Change,” *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 3, no. 3 (2012).

49 Eke Eijgelaar, Carla Thaper, and Paul Peeters, “Antarctic Cruise Tourism: The Paradoxes of Ambassadorship, “Last Chance Tourism” and Greenhouse Gas Emissions,” *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 18, no. 3 (2010); Harvey Lemelin et al., “Last-Chance Tourism: The Boom, Doom, and Gloom of Visiting Vanishing Destinations,” *Current Issues in Tourism* 13, no. 5 (2010); H. Lemelin, J. Dawson, and E.J. Stewart, *Last Chance Tourism: Adapting Tourism Opportunities in a Changing World* (Taylor & Francis, 2013).

Scope & Sources

While this thesis aims to be comprehensive, it is not an exhaustive account of everything related to Antarctic tourism from 1966 to 2016. Instead, each historical narrative focuses on a significant development that emerges during the 50-year time span. Together, these chapters are intended to provide an insightful composite of Antarctic tourism. While Antarctic overflights and skiing and mountaineering tours (also known as land-based or adventure tourism) are the focus of two chapters, much of the thesis focuses on ship-based tourism, which accounts for over 90 percent of all Antarctic tourists and has attracted the most attention from policy-makers and the general public. A strong focus has been placed on English sources and, subsequently, on English-speaking tour operators and tourists. Although it should be noted that the Antarctic tourism industry's pioneers have largely come from the United States, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom, and the governments of these countries remain among the most active tourism regulators.

This 50-year history of Antarctic tourism draws on a variety of primary sources including government archives and reports, Antarctic Treaty documents, tourism industry statistics, memoirs, newspaper and magazine articles, tourist brochures and oral histories. I gathered sources in person in Australia and the United States, visiting the archives of governments as well as organisations such as Qantas, the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition (ASOC), Greenpeace Australia, the American Alpine Club and the New York Explorers Club. I spoke to tour operators, tourists, government officials and representatives from environmental organisations in person and over the phone. And because I was a tour guide myself, tourists kindly sent me their travel journals, photographs and video footage. As much as possible, I relied on multiple sources throughout each chapter. But there were limits to what I could access. Government documents on Antarctic tourism were not available from the 1980s onwards. Antarctic tour operators proved themselves to

be generous interviewees but not particularly eager archivists. The Secretariat of the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) offered its assistance on numerous occasions, but was unable to give me access to its archives. And most of the organisers and tourists of Antarctic tours of the 1960s had passed away, though I was fortunate to find some of their travel accounts published as books and magazine articles, or donated to library archives.

I have been immersed in the world of Antarctic tourism, science and governance for the past thirteen years and my role as a practitioner has proved another vital thesis source. From 2005 to 2014, I participated in eight Antarctic tourist seasons as a lecturer and expedition guide. Travelling from Ushuaia to the Antarctic Peninsula on ship-based tours, I lived and interacted with tourists, guides and crew on a daily basis and spent many hours a day observing Antarctic tourists ‘in the field’. Long before I realised I would write a thesis about Antarctic tourism, I began archiving trip reports, itineraries, photographs and personal observations, which have also proved useful sources. In my nine years of voyaging, I developed extensive knowledge about the Antarctic tourism industry including logistics, marketing, staffing, management and governance. And I have met and talked with thousands of Antarctic tourists about their impressions of Antarctica before, during and after they had travelled there. My status as an Antarctic guide also granted me an instant rapport with tour operators, who can be hesitant to talk openly with tourism researchers.

I have also been an observer of Antarctic policy-making at a national and international level. From 2004 to 2005, I worked for the Australian Antarctic Division as a policy officer specialising in the Antarctic Treaty and tourism. Since 2010, I have attended annual ATCMs as a member of the rapporteur team, which is responsible for recording and summarising ATCM proceedings. This experience proved useful to my thesis in a

number of ways. It gave me access to Antarctic tourism experts and IAATO officials, whose knowledge assisted in the scoping of this thesis as well as refining its details. I was privy to ATCM discussions, including those specifically on tourism, which gave me a practical understanding of Antarctic governance and tourism regulation. And it also gave me a sense of the atmosphere, culture and staging of the ATCM which helped me in bringing an ATCM to life in one of my narratives.

While this exposure to the tourism industry and ATCM proved invaluable in my PhD research, it also presented some ethical considerations. Some tour operators shared details of the tourism industry which were classed as commercial-in-confidence and could possibly damage the reputation of individuals or tour companies, past and present. Anything shared ‘in confidence’ was not included in the thesis. Also, ATCMs are strictly closed to the public. As such, I refrained from quoting any ATCM delegations whose perspectives were not available on public record in an ATCM working paper or the Meeting’s Final Report.

Structure: Narrative & Reflection

This thesis is composed of a series of alternating narratives and reflections. Five narrative chapters dedicate themselves to pure historical storytelling. They present a largely chronological account of the people, places and events that I have identified as shaping the past 50 years of Antarctic tourism history. These narratives are imbued with empirical and biographical detail. They take the reader on journeys across the Southern Ocean, over the polar plateau and into the heart of an ATCM. They follow tour operators on their endeavours to secure safe tourist routes, reliable transport technologies and government authorisation. And they introduce the reader to the tourists themselves, highlighting their motivations, expectations and responses to the Antarctic landscape.

Interspersed between these narratives are reflections. Reflections act as a counterpoint to the narratives, in gentle dialogue with them but serving a different purpose. While the narratives explore how Antarctic tourism emerged, the reflections are concerned with what Antarctic tourism means; what it reveals about humanity's relationship with the frozen continent. Taking as its starting point a scene or theme from the preceding narrative, each reflection offers a meditation on the ideas, images and fantasies that form the foundation of the Antarctic tourist imaginary. They consider where these ideas came from and anchor them in their cultural underpinnings. In this sense, the reflections are an existential meditation on tourism, modernity and experience.

I have borrowed the narrative-reflection structure from Australian historian and anthropologist of the Pacific, Greg Denning. Denning pioneered this structure in his ethnographic history of the Marquesas Islands. In *Islands And Beaches: Discourse On A Silent Land, Marquesas 1774-1880* (1980), Denning alternates historical narratives with reflections.⁵⁰ In these reflections, he explores aspects of historiography and social theory that serve to illuminate the story's meaning. Denning considered narrative and reflection to be 'two sides of the same coin of historical writing.'⁵¹ While the narrative concerns itself with the particularities of the historian's subject matter, the reflection expands into world history, literature and theory. 'Reflection is joining the sentences of what I am saying to the conversation someone else is having,' Denning explained. While he considered that reflections worked best when woven into the narrative, he argued that this could be counter-productive if it caused us to 'intrude on our narrative.'⁵²

50 Greg Denning, *Islands and Beaches: Discourse on a Silent Land: Marquesas, 1774-1880* (Honolulu: University Press Of Hawaii, 1980).

51 "Writing: Praxis and Performance," in *Writing Histories Imagination and Narration*, ed. Ann Curthoys and Ann McGrath (Monash University ePress, 2009).

52 Ibid.

A drawback of the narrative-reflection structure is that it leaves the historical narrative to run its course without explicit interpretation or critique. The narrative is constructed of details, particularities and incidents which do not necessarily contribute to a broader, scholarly conversation. But this is counterbalanced by what this structure does allow. The narrative-reflection structure allows me to explore the two main questions at the heart of this thesis—how Antarctic tourism emerged and what it means—without one disrupting or suppressing the other. The historical story-telling is able to flow uninterrupted, suffused in the wonderful peculiarities of the Antarctic world, without continual pauses for existential reflection. Equally, the reflection is free to meander, ponder and explore Antarctica as an idea and imaginary, without being restrained by the narrative’s compelling chronological momentum.

Chapter Outline

The first three chapters of this thesis focus on the emergence of three main Antarctic tourist activities—expedition cruising, overflights, and mountaineering and ski tours.

Chapter 1 focuses on the career of Swedish-American travel entrepreneur, Lars-Eric Lindblad, the ‘father of expedition cruising’. Lindblad became the first tour operator to run consistent tourist cruises to Antarctica, starting with the *Antarctic Expedition 1966*, where this chapter begins. Lindblad’s foray into Antarctic tours reflected a broader trend among affluent American travellers in the 1960s, who were growing tired of the ‘Grand Tour’ of western and central Europe and had developed a taste for exotic and far-flung places including Africa, Mongolia and India. This chapter explores several themes including: Lindblad’s expedition-cruising model, which was based on the expedition style of 19th and early 20th century explorers and which became a standard template for successive tour operators; the rise of tourist-government tensions, particularly at America’s McMurdo

Station, which was a Naval-operated and strictly all-male facility; and also the tourism industry's environmental ethic, which suggested that responsible tourism was pivotal to the conservation of the continent's flora and fauna.

Drawing on the exploratory theme that Lindblad weaves through his Antarctic tours, this chapter is followed by a reflection on the idea of the 'blank space'. It explores the allure of the presumably undiscovered and unmapped regions of the world, which motivated generations of explorers to venture out into the fringes of empire. It considers how this colonial fantasy lives on in the Antarctic tourist imaginary. It explores the role of colonial nostalgia in motivating and shaping Western tourists' travels to postcolonial places, as well as the power of primitive ideals, which they project onto non-Western cultures and those places they perceive to be unpeopled wilderness. The reflection concludes that Antarctica is presented to, and imagined by, the tourist as a timeless and unchanging blank space, ripe with endless possibilities and perpetually available for discovery.

Chapter 2 opens with preparations for the first Qantas Antarctic overflight, chartered in 1977 by Australian electronics entrepreneur and pilot, Dick Smith. As with Lindblad, Smith's overflights adopted an exploratory theme, framed as a journey in the footsteps of Australian Antarctic explorer, Douglas Mawson. Yet tourist overflights were also marketed, and reported about, as offbeat day trips, a 12-hour joy ride to the once-isolated end of the earth. This chapter is particularly interested in exploring tourists' ambiguous responses to the unique experience and perspective of seeing the Antarctic ice sheet from above. On one hand, it offered an all-encompassing, synoptic view of Antarctica while on the other disconnecting them from the Antarctic environment. This chapter inevitably leads to the tragedy of Air New Zealand flight TE 901, an Antarctic tourist overflight which crashed into Mount Erebus in November 1979, bringing tourist overflights to a sudden and indefinite end.

The second chapter is followed by a reflection on authenticity and the Antarctic experience. Pondering the highly mediated experience of the tourist overflight, this reflection considers what it means to really *be* in Antarctica—experiencing it firsthand. First, it highlights the role that Antarctica’s heroic age explorers played in setting the benchmark of authentic Antarctic experience. Their physical struggles in an unrelenting environment constructed a particular narrative about man’s relationship with the continent, a narrative which Antarctic tour operators and tourists endeavoured to match. As the tourism industry grew and diversified, a perceived gap emerged between contrived tours and authentic expeditions. It became important, though increasingly difficult, for tour operators to convince tourists that they could deliver an authentic expedition. In recent years, Antarctic tourists have written about their own personal ways of finding meaning in their Antarctic travels, which do not necessarily concern themselves with what tour operators purport to represent authentic experience. The reflection concludes by pondering whether a real Antarctic experience can even be achieved thousands of kilometres away from the ice.

Chapter 3 takes the reader deep into the heart of the continent, to the Ellsworth Mountains and the Geographical South Pole. It traces the early years of tour operator, Adventure Network International, which launched in 1985 when a group of mountaineers attempted to climb Antarctica’s highest mountain, Vinson Massif, as part of a ‘Seven Summits’ quest. Detailing the logistical challenges involved in securing adequate aircraft, pilots and refuelling stations, this chapter highlights both how governments resisted assisted private adventurers but also how tourism became a way for some nations to assert their territorial claims to the continent. Following the mountaineers and modern explorers into the mountains and towards the South Pole, this chapter explores the role Antarctica continues to play as a testing ground for physical strength and courage. It reveals the anxieties modern explorers have with being too dependent on technology—preferring to travel ‘the old fashioned way’—and also with being labelled tourists.

The reflection following the third chapter ponders why so many Antarctic tourists reject the label ‘tourist’, preferring instead to be identified as adventurers or explorers. Rather than considering them as arbitrary categories, this reflection considers the terms ‘tourist’, ‘explorer’ and ‘adventurer’ as gendered categories. It delves into the masculinist ideologies of colonial exploration and adventures, revealing how women were ‘protected’ from adventurous activity, which remained an all-male realm of Boys’ Own adventure. When intrepid middle-class British women began to follow in the explorers’ footsteps, they were labelled tourists by virtue of their gender. This reflection argues that the highly gendered world of 19th century exploration has its equivalent in Antarctica today, as the image of the ideal Antarctic scientist continues to be that of a virile man, while the image of an Antarctic tourist endures as an elderly woman.

The past two decades of Antarctic tourism have been marked by extensive growth in tourist numbers and diversity in tourist activities. This growth resulted in increased concerns about the environmental impacts of Antarctic tourism but it also made Antarctica more and more appealing to large, multinational tourist companies. The final two chapters explore these themes in detail.

Chapter 4 is concerned with Antarctic tourism regulation and places its central focus on the two main bodies responsible for regulating Antarctic tourism—the ATCM and IAATO. In the late 1980s, the attention and criticism directed at Antarctic tour operators was increasing. This was due not only to a steady rise of tourist numbers but also due to broader environmental concerns, which played a central and controversial role in Antarctic politics of the 1980s. This chapter explores how tour operators responded to increased scrutiny from environmental groups and governments, including by establishing an industry association (IAATO), which would represent and advocate for the industry at

ATCMs and to the wider public. This chapter reveals that governments, both individually and through the ATCM, were reluctant to take firm control over tourism, partly because of the continent's ambiguous legal status but also because they felt that the tourism industry was responsible and able to take on a self-regulating role.

The fourth chapter is followed by a reflection on changing perceptions of Antarctica, particularly in light of emerging discourses of climate change. When Antarctic tourism emerged in the 1960s, the continent was still largely viewed as an impenetrable and isolated wilderness. This changed over time, with the emergence of new environmental discourses. First, Antarctica's ecosystems came to be viewed as fragile and vulnerable to human-induced change on the ice. Then, data from Antarctic ice cores showed that even the stability of the Antarctic ice sheet was in doubt. Paradoxically, this changing perception has not displaced historic tourist imaginings of Antarctica as a timeless and unchanging wilderness. This reflection explores how Antarctic tourists perceive climate change, and the extent to which it motivates and shapes their Antarctic experience. It suggests that tourists take to the Antarctic ice for physical and tangible evidence of climate change, but also that the sheer immensity and grandeur of the ice at such an up-close level makes it all the more difficult to comprehend.

A significant catalyst for the rapid rise in tourist numbers in the 1990s was the emergence of Russian ice-strengthened vessels into the Antarctic tourism fleet. **Chapter 5** outlines how the introduction of *perestroika* (restructuring) reforms in the Soviet Union led to an exponential growth in Antarctic tourist numbers. New tour companies joined the industry, which targeted a younger, more active clientele, introducing adventurous activities into the tourist cruise repertoire. They emphasised the ice-breaking capabilities of their specialised ships rather than 'comforts and cuisine' for tourists. Antarctica's increasing

popularity, and its perception as no longer being a nascent industry, has attracted new interest from multi-national companies who have bought out many of the industry owner-operated companies. By the opening of the 21st century, Antarctic tours had become shorter and cheaper, attracting a younger and less affluent tourist, as well as tourists from emerging economies, particularly China.

Chapter One

Antarctic Expedition 1966

Chapter One

Antarctic Expedition 1966

‘So at 86 I have seen Antarctica,’ boasted Bessie Sweeney in February 1966. ‘I have traveled all over the world and seen many countries, people and customs. But for many years my dream had been to visit Antarctica, the continent which until now has been open only to the explorer.’⁵³

It was not for lack of powerful connections that Sweeney was denied her dream of visiting Antarctica for so long. Her son was Lieutenant Commander Edward C. Sweeney, a lawyer, serviceman and president of the prestigious Explorers Club, a non-profit scientific and educational organisation whose members boasted famous geographical firsts such as the attainment of the North and South Poles. He had also accompanied American polar explorer, Admiral Richard Byrd, on two exploratory trips into the South Pacific.⁵⁴ And he counted among his closest friends another prominent polar explorer, Captain Finn Ronne. Despite these close family ties to the world of polar exploration, Sweeney—known to her grandchildren as ‘Gram Bessie’—had resigned herself ‘to never being able to see that icy continent’.⁵⁵ She simply did not fit the mould of an Antarctic explorer. She was too old. A woman. Neither a serviceman nor a scientist.

It was presumably through her son that Sweeney learned about New York-based travel agent, Lars-Eric Lindblad, and his plans to organise a sixteen-day Antarctic expedition for tourists. ‘Why would we want to join this expedition?’ Lindblad’s tour brochure asked

53 Bessie Sweeney, “86-Year-Old Traveler Tells of Pleasure of Cruise to Antarctica,” *Gettysburg Times* 4 February 1966.

54 ‘Biography of Edward C. Sweeney, President of the Explorers Club’, Edward Sweeney file, Explorers Club, New York.

55 Sweeney, “86-Year-Old Traveler Tells of Pleasure of Cruise to Antarctica”.

rhetorically and then promptly answered: ‘That wonderful and fantastic curiosity of man, which drives him to climb to the most difficult mountains without hope of reward or gain, the curiosity which drives man to the bottom of the sea and to the edge of the universe—into the dangerous jungles of tropical countries and across the ice plateaus of the polar regions—this curiosity is also in you and in me.’ For a sum of US \$3,000, *anyone* could join Lindblad’s *Antarctic Expedition 1966* and become ‘one of the few—the very few indeed—to have set foot in Antarctica’.⁵⁶

It did not take long for the elderly widow from Rock Island, Illinois, to make up her mind. ‘I was the first to sign up,’ Sweeney boasted several months later from somewhere in Antarctica.⁵⁷



The *Antarctic Expedition 1966* departed Buenos Aires on 13 January. The Argentine naval vessel *M.S. Lapataia* slipped out of La Plata River and sailed south towards the South Atlantic Ocean. During its three-day southward journey along the Argentine coast, the expedition stopped at the resort town of Mar del Plata to relax in its ‘palatial’ hotels and world class beaches, and sample the ‘typical life’ of rural Argentina. At a nearby *estancia* (ranch), the tourists were hosted by the ‘great estancieros of by-gone days’ and entertained by ‘native songs and dances’.⁵⁸ And true to his reputation for having ‘the Establishment’ entertain his tours, Lindblad arranged for Mar del Plata’s mayor to meet the ‘expedition members’ and appoint them honorary citizens.⁵⁹ Continuing south, *Lapataia* reached

56 ‘Antarctic Expedition 1966 Brochure’, Lars-Eric Lindblad file, Explorers Club, New York.

57 Sweeney, “86-Year-Old Traveler Tells of Pleasure of Cruise to Antarctica”.

58 ‘Antarctic Expedition 1966 Brochure’, Lars-Eric Lindblad file, Explorers Club, New York.

59 Geraldine Hotchner, “Lars-Eric Lindblad,” *Venture: The Traveler’s Magazine* July-August 1968, 69.

Tierra del Fuego, rounded its southern tip and retreated into the sheltered waters of the Beagle Channel. It docked in Ushuaia, the tiny, windswept ‘southernmost city in the world’, where Sweeney and her 56 fellow expeditioners anxiously and excitedly waited to commence the next leg of their journey—the crossing of the infamous Drake Passage.

‘The crossing of the Drake’s Passage should prove to be a fascinating experience’, Lindblad joked to his clients. He almost guaranteed bad weather on the crossing but assured the travellers that they would be ‘completely safe’: ‘Dr. Sexton has “tons” of bonine and dramamine tablets for you—so you need not even be seasick’.⁶⁰ *Lapataia* left the refuge of the Beagle Channel on 22 January to begin a tumultuous two-day ocean crossing. It was during the crossing that Sweeney impressed upon Lindblad that she was ‘more robust and healthy than most people half her age’: ‘When storm notices were posted and the dining room closed, there was Mrs. Sweeney ready for action, every time,’ Lindblad declared.⁶¹ When the dining room was open, its staff served morning tea, full breakfast, lunch and ‘table d’hôte dinner’—including ‘the best Argentine beef’—in the ship’s spacious dining room. ‘We were reasonably snug on the *Lapataia*’, Lindblad recalled, while insisting that ‘this was anything but a luxury cruise.’⁶²

Lindblad also cautioned that the expedition ‘was not set up for those who are only interested in a good time’.⁶³ Insistent that the trip should be ‘intellectual’ and ‘adventuresome’, he invited the tourists to participate in the expedition’s scientific programme. Its seven categories included the History of Antarctic Exploration, Marine Biology, Meteorology, Ornithology, Wildlife Conservation, Geology and Glaciology. A ‘fully equipped laboratory’

60 ‘Antarctic Expedition 1966 Brochure’, Lars-Eric Lindblad file, Explorers Club, New York.

61 Lindblad and Fuller, *Passport to Anywhere*, 90

62 Ibid., 93.

63 ‘Antarctic Expedition 1966 Brochure’, Lars-Eric Lindblad file, New York Explorers Club

was installed on the ship where a team of scientists appointed by the Antarctic Institute of Argentina dissected and explained marine creatures. During excursions on the ice and at Antarctic research stations, the expeditioners were also encouraged to participate in research, including inland trips to measure snow and ice density. They were not expected to have any advanced knowledge of Antarctic science but were sent a bibliography of suggested reading prior to the expedition. ‘A very full program has been set up, which, should you be truly interested, will leave you very little leisure time’, Lindblad explained.

The first lectures began during the Drake Passage crossing, and were delivered by the trip’s ‘expedition leader’, Captain Finn Ronne. ‘We doubt it would be possible to find a more able or more knowledgeable leader for our expedition’, Lindblad remarked.⁶⁴ A Norwegian-born American polar explorer in his mid sixties, Ronne had endured four winters and seven summers in Antarctica. He had twice served under Admiral Byrd before leading the 1947 Ronne Antarctic Research Expedition. It was an expedition strained by tension and disharmony, much of it attributed to Ronne’s rigid and authoritarian ways. It would not take long for Ronne to stir the same disharmony on the *Lapataia*.

Ronne ‘had an incredible knack of upsetting people,’ Lindblad soon discovered.⁶⁵ He also harboured an ‘obsessional hatred’ for Admiral Byrd and made clear in his history lectures that only Norwegian explorers had accomplished anything of value in Antarctica. Neither Scott nor Shackleton escaped his wrath. Concerned that Ronne was ‘turning the passengers off and alienating them’, Lindblad finally asked him to step down from his position. From then on, the lecture series rested in the hands of the expedition’s scientists, whose presentations focused on Antarctica’s feature attractions including seals, penguins, whales and albatross.

64 Ibid.

65 Lindblad and Fuller, *Passport to Anywhere*, 92.

Following two days where a few dishes and egos were broken, the expedition reached the South Shetland Islands, a slender island chain hanging 100 kilometres north of the Antarctic Peninsula. Lindblad was nervous about the reception the expedition would receive at its first stop, Argentina's Teniente Camara station on Half Moon Island. 'They had never been interrupted by unofficial visitors,' he explained.⁶⁶ He was delighted when the scientists he encountered on the island's volcanic shores received him, not with aggression or a cold shoulder, but with sheer bewilderment—'as if we were from another planet'. The Argentine scientists then showed the visitors the fruits of their field work, and guided the group to the island's southern cape to meet with a colony of 'comical' Chinstrap penguins.

Next, *Lapataia* stopped at Potter Cove on King George Island, where expeditioners observed a wallow of obese, snorting elephant seals and walked among nesting giant petrels. They also picked up and examined the whale vertebra bones strewn along the shore which served as an artefact of Antarctica's brief whaling history. Some of the expeditioners chose to take them as souvenirs—'those who wanted to pay the excess baggage charge on the return trip', Lindblad joked.⁶⁷ In decades to come, a profusion of rules and regulations would protect nesting birds and preserve whale bones from overzealous curiosity. But for now, Lindblad promoted a policy of 'complete freedom'. 'VISITS AND EXCURSIONS ARE INFORMAL AND UNREGIMENTED', Lindblad Travel's brochure stated, in all capitals.⁶⁸

From the South Shetland Islands, the *Lapataia* ventured further south to the Antarctic Peninsula. Slipping into the sheltered waters that separated mainland Antarctica from its

66 Ibid., 93.

67 Ibid., 94.

68 'Antarctic Expedition 1966 Brochure', Lars-Eric Lindblad file, New York Explorers Club

adjacent islands, the ship cruised through ice-spangled channels and bays. Expeditioners were encouraged to study icebergs, whales and seals in the frigid waters around them. The steep and immense Transantarctic Mountains soared almost vertically above the ship, their peaks and valleys cloaked in ice and snow. ‘I have been able to see some of the most beautiful parts of that frozen continent in all their glory’, Sweeney declared in her report to the Associated Press:

The ice, the glaciers, the fabulous mountain peaks, penguins, antarctic birds—and even the sea elephants and sea leopards. I can say without hesitation that Antarctica is the most beautiful part of the world. I can say the trip through the Le Maire Strait in splendid sunshine is the highlight of all my travels around the world, and my fellow travelers agree with me on this... I have also been fortunate enough to be allowed to see for myself how the scientists of Argentina, Britain and the United States work in the fields of marine biology, meteorology and other sciences... We have had cold days with strong winds. Thanks to the clothing provided, I have always been warm and have not suffered frostbite or worse things—as did the early Antarctic explorers... One of the highlights of the trip for me was holding a penguin in my arms, stroking his chest and observing him relax and even enjoy being petted. I also rode through the snow and ice on a snowcat at the Argentine army base at Hope Bay where we also had the opportunity to travel on dogsleds.⁶⁹

At each Antarctic station they visited, base personnel were invited to dine on the *Lapataia* and were entertained by Lindblad and the expeditioners. ‘Every night we danced to music by an eight man band on board ship while icy winds outside provided a howling contrast’, Washington ‘socialite and world traveler’, Rose Saul Zalles, later boasted to reporters.⁷⁰ Not all of the station visits were a success, however, with heavy sea ice thwarting the

69 Sweeney, “86-Year-Old Traveler Tells of Pleasure of Cruise to Antarctica”.

70 Associated Press, “Danger a Partner on Antarctic Cruise,” *The Milwaukee Sentinel* 7 February 1966.

expedition's plan to visit the American Palmer Station. 'Here the scientists waved to us and we waved back to them in frustration,' Lindblad recalled.⁷¹

The ice also prevented the *Lapataia* from crossing the Antarctic Circle, which had been pegged as a major goal of the expedition. Nevertheless, the encroaching sea ice was framed as a dramatic and exciting event in itself. At several moments along the voyage, the expeditioners were alerted to their dangerously close encounter with the ice, which sent them rushing outside to watch. 'I watched it close in around our ship in the Antarctic Straits forcing us to leave immediately or get imprisoned,' Sweeney insisted.⁷² Zalles also stressed her angst and thrill at the prospect of their ship being trapped in the ice 'until maybe next summer.'⁷³

As the *Lapataia* turned northward, leaving Antarctica behind and nosing its bow into the Drake Passage once again, Sweeney filed her report with the Associated Press. The following day, the story was published in over 3,000 newspapers around the world, inspiring others like her to ponder their chances of visiting Antarctica. In a letter to Edward Sweeney, Eleanor J. Wauchope of Seal Beach, California, asked how she might be able to follow in Bessie Sweeney's footsteps. 'A recent article by your mother about her experiences at Antarctica has whetted my curiosity...Mrs. Sweeney has about 12 years advantage over me which makes me think if she can take it, I should be able to do so', she explained.⁷⁴ Lindblad was flooded with similar inquiries and consequently arranged to charter the *Lapataia* for two voyages to the Antarctic Peninsula the following year. The trips sold out quickly with assistance from the 1966 cohort, eighteen of whom

71 Lindblad and Fuller, *Passport to Anywhere*, 94.

72 Sweeney, "86-Year-Old Traveler Tells of Pleasure of Cruise to Antarctica".

73 Associated Press, "Danger a Partner on Antarctic Cruise".

74 'Letter from Eleanor J. Wauchope to Edward C. Sweeney', 22 April 1966, Edward J. Sweeney file, Explorers Club, New York.

returned to Antarctica the very next year.

Following the *Antarctic Expedition 1966*, Sweeney also turned to organising her next big adventure. ‘I will be going to the North Pole’, she declared boldly. ‘And then I will be back down here—in the Antarctic ice’.⁷⁵



Lars-Eric Lindblad spent little time in his New York office and even less in his rural Connecticut home. Much of the year, the Swedish-born travel entrepreneur led loyal clients on tours to India, Africa, the Pacific Islands, Mongolia and beyond. The rest of the time, he launched ‘exploratory probes’, scouting for ‘wild places that few people had ever seen’.⁷⁶ When he launched his first Antarctic tour in 1966, his company, Lindblad Travel, was in its eighth year of operation. He had already ‘opened up’ many new destinations for tourism, and Easter Island, the Amazon, the Arctic, Indonesia and China were still to come. Tall and well-built with a mop of silver-grey hair, Lindblad was eternally jovial, creative and generous. He looked markedly older than his thirty-nine years and although he had been living in the United States for the past fifteen years, he spoke with a strong Swedish accent. As one observer commented, ‘his whole bearing...suggested something of the Viking.’⁷⁷ It was common for friends and reporters to jokingly attribute Lindblad’s wanderlust to his Viking instincts. Yet he credited his unbridled curiosity and restlessness not to ancestral instinct but to his childhood education in adventure, at the hands of the ‘great explorers’.⁷⁸

75 Sweeney, “86-Year-Old Traveler Tells of Pleasure of Cruise to Antarctica”.

76 Lindblad and Fuller, *Passport to Anywhere*, ix.

77 Dorothy Braxton, *The Abominable Snow-Women* (Wellington: A.H. & A.W. Reed, 1969), 25.

78 Lindblad and Fuller, *Passport to Anywhere*, 26.

A serious reader by the age of seven, Lindblad did not just read books; he ‘devoured them’.⁷⁹ His genre of choice—colonial adventure stories—injected colour, action and exoticism into his calm and prosperous suburban Stockholm upbringing. He credited Kipling for transforming the ‘gray severity’ of his classroom into a vivid montage of maharajas, turbans, palaces and elephants festooned with jewels. Karl May dispatched throngs of cowboys and Indians to invade the hushed cosiness of his family living room. And late at night, while huddled under his bed sheets, Amundsen, Shackleton, and Scott brought the Antarctic to his bedroom. Lindblad did not merely feel that he was reading *about* the Antarctic explorers. Cloaked in a luminous white canopy with book and torch in hand, he felt he was ‘*there* with them’.⁸⁰ Although Swedish explorers Sven Hedin and Nils Nordenskjöld were his ‘special favourites’, Lindblad’s imagination knew no bounds. ‘Wherever any of the giant explorers went, I went, whether it was to Central Asia, the polar icecaps, the Great Rift Valley, or the Himalayas,’ he explained.⁸¹

Lindblad moved to Zurich in 1945 where he studied business administration and met his wife, Sonya. Following graduation, they returned to Stockholm, where a brief stint working for Thomas Cook & Son inspired him to pursue a career in travel. Feeling confined in Europe, Lindblad was convinced he would find wider horizons in the United States. In September 1952, he left for New York, leaving behind Sonya and their one-year-old son, Sven-Olof, until he established himself in the United States. He took a position with fast-growing travel wholesaler, Lissone-Lindeman, and took little time in summing up the state of the travel industry: ‘The tours of the 1950s were concentrating on only a tired handful of countries, or Grand Tours of Europe...In the meantime, the more beautiful and fascinating places of the world—the Middle East, the African wilds,

79 Ibid., 25.

80 Ibid., 26.

81 Ibid.

the islands of the Pacific, India, Japan—were largely being ignored’.⁸² While frustrated at the industry’s lack of ‘inventiveness’, Lindblad assumed that there were others like him, who were ‘burning with the desire’ for these faraway lands.

By 1953, Lindblad noticed ‘a trickle of requests from more adventurous travellers’—people who ‘wanted to reach out to more exciting places and could afford to do so.’⁸³ He was sent to the Orient and Pacific to visit agents, hotels and potential sites of interest and evaluate them in relation to this discriminating and demanding ‘new breed of traveler’.⁸⁴ Returning months later, convinced that travel beyond Europe could indeed be profitable, Lindblad established the company’s first Round-the-World department and began developing tours to India. With the aim of extending travel away from the country’s major cities and attractions, Lindblad focused on the temples, forts and palaces in Rajasthan and South India: ‘We wanted to bring the great historical sites to life so that momentous events of the past could be illuminated through deeper understanding’.⁸⁵ He also made deliberate attempts to channel ‘the India of Kipling’s time’. In the country’s south, his itineraries included the British hill stations where the Northern Frontier steam train still wound its way from Siliguri to Darjeeling, passing the mountain tea plantations of Somerset Maugham’s stories. ‘Here is the sight, sound, and smell of pure nostalgia,’ Lindblad remarked, as he cast a romantic gaze over ‘the last years of British supremacy’.⁸⁶ Nostalgia became a recurring theme in Lindblad’s travel repertoire, especially after he launched Lindblad Travel in 1958. Although explicit in his disapproval of ‘the old unsavoury days of colonization’,⁸⁷ Lindblad also lamented their passing, and carefully

82 Ibid., 28.

83 Ibid.

84 Ibid., 29.

85 Ibid., 31.

86 Ibid., 32.

87 Ibid., 53.

imbued his clients' travel experiences with the essence of colonialism. On his African safaris, he constructed an idealised colonial African camp scene, with the help of the rare and endangered 'true man of the African bush':

The classic safari, of course, is best in the tent camp. Here the smell of the dust and the intimacy of the campfire enrich the scene. The tent camps have been most frequently run by the true man of the African bush. I remember one camp in Amboseli run by a British gentleman named Scott. In the early tradition of the bush, he liked to put on a dinner jacket for the evening meal, and sit before the campfire sipping champagne and serving chilled caviar from Russia and Iran as he spun fantastic yarns of his experiences with lions, leopards, and elephants while their footprints were often still visible. This sort of man—the civilized man who loves the smell of Africa so intensely he wants to be nowhere else—is slowly dying out. In building our own camps, I sought out this type with the help of Tony Irwin and was lucky enough to find several to enhance these stations with character and affection.⁸⁸

Adding further ambience to Lindblad's safaris and expeditions were encounters with the curious and baffled locals whose 'primitive worlds' the tourists entered. Although European explorers had long ago 'discovered' these worlds, the tourism industry had not. And so Lindblad's groups enjoyed the thrill of arriving to a seemingly naive and unrehearsed welcome. When he travelled to Mongolia for his *1964 Explorer's Tour of Central Asia*, Lindblad described meeting Mongolian officials as something akin to making first contact: 'Since we were the first group to arrive under the new, more relaxed open-door policy, none of the Mongolian officials seemed to know how to greet us.'⁸⁹

88 Ibid., 59.

89 Ibid., 78.

Lindblad attested that it was on this Mongolian quest to encounter the ghosts of the Great Khans, that he first dreamed up the idea of running tours to Antarctica. He and his tour group had spent weeks riding camels across the Gobi Desert, journeying into the Mongolian steppes and sleeping in the ‘native yurt’. Following an arduous day of travel, they huddled around a ‘nomadic campfire’ and sipped koumiss, an effervescent and alcoholic drink made of fermented mare’s milk—‘Marco Polo waxed eloquent about it during his journeys with the Kublai Khan’.⁹⁰ As the koumiss kicked in, the group’s conversation turned to the topic of new adventures. Lindblad reached for ‘a sketchy Pan Am route map’. He studied the interlaced routes which covered almost the entire world and noticed that only the bottom of the map remained unmarked by airline routes. Antarctic was missing from the map altogether. ‘Our next exploratory tour will be to a place that isn’t even on the map,’ he boldly announced to the group.⁹¹



Lindblad’s *Antarctic Expedition 1966* had been novel, but it was not the first commercial tour to Antarctica. In 1958, the Argentine Navy operated two tourist cruises to the South Shetland Islands and Antarctic Peninsula from Ushuaia, carrying up to 100 passengers each.⁹² Still, no commercial tour had ever ventured south of the Antarctic Circle or strayed beyond the Antarctic Peninsula. While continuing with annual expeditions to the Antarctica Peninsula, Lindblad also turned his thoughts to developing new Antarctic itineraries.

90 Ibid., 81.

91 Ibid., 82.

92 Reich, “The Development of Antarctic Tourism”.

In collaboration with New Zealand company, Holm Shipping Co., Lindblad organised two tours to Antarctica's Ross Sea region in 1968. The Ross Sea, lying 3,500 kilometres due south of New Zealand, comprised a two-million square kilometre funnel-shaped indent on Antarctica's eastern coastline. Most of it was encased by the 800-kilometre-long Ross Ice Shelf, from which Scott, Shackleton and Amundsen launched their polar marches in the opening decades of the 20th century. Lindblad planned to run two back-to-back tours from New Zealand to the Ross Sea, stopping at various subantarctic islands on the way. In the Ross Sea, the expedition would visit American and New Zealand research bases, as well as Scott and Shackleton's historic huts. 'The magnificent scenery will also be part of the memories we bring back from Antarctica,' Lindblad Travel's brochure promised. 'Mount Erebus, the Ross Ice Shelf, Terra Nova Bay, the pack ice, and Beaufort and Coulman Islands will be never to be forgotten sights'.⁹³

When Richard Bissell and his wife Marian arrived in New Zealand in January 1968, they became instant celebrities. 'All we had to do to cause a sensation was to say, "We're with the Antarctic Tour Group," the novelist and travel writer explained.⁹⁴ Bissell had been sent to Antarctica on assignment for luxury American travel magazine, *Venture*. He hardly expected any of his readers to have heard of the Ross Sea. But Bissell quickly discovered that most New Zealanders knew exactly where it was and were extremely envious to hear that Bissell was going 'down to the ice'.⁹⁵

One of these envious New Zealanders was journalist, Dorothy Braxton. A Christchurch resident and member of the New Zealand Antarctic Society, she had wanted to visit the

93 Lindblad Travel "Antarctic Tourist Brochure 1968" Brochure (NACP: RG401, Travel Brochures and Related Records pertaining to Antarctic Cruises 1967-73)

94 Richard Bissell, "Antarctic Safari," *Venture: The Traveler's World*, July-August 1968, 54.

95 Ibid.

frozen continent from the time she was ‘old enough to realise there was such a place as the Antarctic’.⁹⁶ Braxton’s many attempts to visit Antarctica had included writing an annual letter to the US Naval Support Force, which provided logistical support to the US Antarctic Research Program. Each year she received the same ‘polite but stereotyped reply’: ‘No woman can be permitted to go to McMurdo Station’.⁹⁷ It was a predicament Braxton called the ‘petticoat ban’ and for which she saw no end.

Meeting Lars-Eric Lindblad changed all of that. When Lindblad visited Christchurch to make arrangements for the two Ross Sea tours, Braxton made a point of meeting him. She offered to help make his clients feel welcomed during their visit to Christchurch, and coyly asked whether he needed a journalist on the expedition. While Lindblad regrettably informed her that both trips were fully booked, he later revealed that several berths had become available on the second tour and invited her to join it free of charge.

On 6 February 1968, the Danish icebreaker, *Magga Dan*, departed Bluff and commenced its month-long journey. Whereas the crossing from Ushuaia to the Antarctic Peninsula had taken two days, the journey from Bluff to the Ross Sea was due to take ten days, including brief stops at New Zealand’s Auckland and Campbell islands. After riding out a storm which sent furniture, personal belongings and dishes sliding and smashing around the ship, the *Magga Dan* took shelter in the lee of the Auckland Islands. Here, and at Campbell Islands, the expeditioners had a chance to meet with scientists and take long guided walks to see penguins, seals and nesting albatross. At this point, Lindblad also launched the expedition’s scientific programme, to Bissell’s great amusement: ‘The Leader pretended we were on a scientific expedition. “We must learn,” he said. We must do our work and increase our knowledge’”, Bissell wrote mockingly.⁹⁸

96 Braxton, *The Abominable Snow-Women*, 25.

97 Ibid., 19.

98 Bissell, “Antarctic Safari”, 54.

On 14 February, the *Magga Dan* crossed the Antarctic Circle. ‘There was champagne on the bridge...followed by drinks on the house in the bar, high and low jinx, and great singing and guitar work by the two engineers,’ Bissell observed.⁹⁹ Two days later, the group made its first Antarctic landfall, at the jointly operated New Zealand-United States Hallett Station. Braxton celebrated becoming the first New Zealand woman journalist to set foot on the continent: ‘My feet sank deep into the soft snow, and the ice on top scrunched as my boots cracked the surface. It was one of the best sounds I’ve ever heard in my life,’ she remarked. The Americans on the base welcomed the visitors and ushered them into the base’s ‘restaurant’ for fresh-baked cookies and coffee. The following day, the *Magga Dan* reached the Ross Ice Shelf, which towered above the ship at heights of up to seventy metres. ‘We cruised close along this magnificent ice cliff and the shutterbugs went out of their mind,’ Bissell remarked.¹⁰⁰



The expedition’s next stop was McMurdo Sound, home to New Zealand’s Scott Base and US McMurdo Base. The US Government had been hesitant to allow Lindblad’s visit. For one, McMurdo Base was located in territory claimed by New Zealand and it was unclear whether Lindblad’s contractual arrangements with Holm Shipping Co. would ‘in any way jeopardize the US position with regard to territorial claims’.¹⁰¹ The government was, however, in no position to decide who could or could not visit Antarctica. The Office of Antarctic Programs surmised that, while cooperation with Lindblad was ‘far from mandatory’, ‘the activity is going to take place anyway’. It also noted that many of the tourists were likely to be ‘persons with some influence’ and that their visit ‘could be an

99 Ibid., 59.

100 Ibid., 60.

101 T.O Jones, Memorandum to File 117.6, 11 July 1967 (NACP: RG307, OAP Central Files 1969-76)

asset to us.’¹⁰² The US Government eventually gave permission for the visit to go ahead, on the condition that the tour was safe, entirely self-sufficient and complied with all Antarctic Treaty agreements concerning the conservation of flora and fauna.

‘Now what does this mean to you; as an individual, what should you do if you encounter a real live tourist in McMurdo?’¹⁰³ This was the question Rear Admiral James Lloyd Abbott put to McMurdo Base personnel in his daily briefing on 17 January 1968—the same day the first of Lindblad’s two Ross Sea tours was scheduled to visit the base:

Well in the first place there’s no need to run off in the opposite direction or get behind a building. You might even smile and say “how do you do,” and if a conversation develops, you’d probably continue on with who you are and where you’re from and ask’em who they are and where they’re from. I’m told that about half the group of twenty are ladies, and that several of the ladies have seen more than seventy summers—making them about the age of your grandmothers. The official position of this command is that the tourists are to be received in a friendly and cordial manner, and accorded normal courtesies and hospitality. They should be briefed on all the scientific support and Support Force activities, and such briefings will be officially scheduled for them. We cannot, however, give or sell them any fuel, food, transportation, or any other goods or services.¹⁰⁴

Despite Abbott’s enthusiasm, the first group’s visit to McMurdo Base was not without its problems. As the *Magga Dan* cruised towards the McMurdo dock, it had run aground and

102 Phillip Smith, Memorandum to File 117.6, 11 April 1967 (NACP: RG307, OAP Central Files 1969-76); Rear Admiral Abbott, Antarctic Support Activities McMurdo Station Plan of the Day, 17 January 1968 (NACP: RG307, OAP Central Files 1969-76)

103 Rear Admiral Abbott, Antarctic Support Activities McMurdo Station Plan of the Day, 17 January 1968 (NACP: RG307, OAP Central Files 1969-76)

104 Ibid.

remained stuck despite futile efforts by the ship's captain and crew. The accident infuriated McMurdo Base commander, Captain Hugh Kelley, who had lacked Abbott's positive attitude about tourist visits. Kelley begrudgingly allowed the US icebreaker *Westwind* to assist the *Magga Dan* and set down firm rules for the tourist visit. One of the least popular rules, a ban on the use of McMurdo Base toilets, had enticed one tourist to complain to reporters: 'I am absolutely brassed off with this ban on the toilets,' explained Robert Maison of Los Angeles. 'I am an American taxpayer. As such I am helping to support the United States activities in the antarctic and now they won't even let me use the toilets and I am not a woman but a man.'¹⁰⁵ Despite the set back, the *Magga Dan* was freed from its 'awkward position' and the tourists enjoyed being guided by scientific personnel around the base. In his report on the first visit, Abbott concluded that the tourists 'had in no way interfered with the scientific programs' and dismissed the *Magga Dan*'s grounding as merely 'a blot' on the captain's record and reputation.¹⁰⁶ Abbott obligingly approved Lindblad's second visit, which was scheduled to depart Bluff on 6 February.

As Lindblad prepared to visit McMurdo Base with the second group of expeditioners, he issued them a list of 'golden rules' to be followed during their stay. Playfully mocking Captain Kelley, the list stipulated that the visitors could use the station's chapel and post office, as well as the wardroom bar between 4.30 pm and 6.30 pm. 'It has not been established what will happen to those who are caught in that bar at 6.35 pm. It *may* spell the end of Antarctic tourism.'¹⁰⁷ While there were 'no facilities of the female type' ashore, Lindblad noted that he was working to establish a haven at the chapel—'the chaplain being a man of God and not of the Navy.' The group was not permitted to enter

105 John Drew, "Problems Come to a Head for Tourists in Antarctica," *Pittsburg Press* 25 January 1968.

106 Rear Admiral Abbott, Statement concerning visit of MS *Magga Dan* to McMurdo Station, Antarctica, 27 January 1968 (NACP: RG307, OAP Central Files 1969-76)

107 Braxton, *The Abominable Snow-Women*, 117.

into any buildings at McMurdo Base except as part of an escorted tour, and under no circumstances were ‘the female types allowed to enter the quarters of officers or enlisted men, even if invited’. If offered a lift from a serviceman, the visitors were to ‘turn such offers down with contempt and crawl on...even if on your hands and knees, until you reach the *Magga Dan*.’ Lindblad finished by noting that ‘both the Navy and the National Science Foundation...are actually quite hospitable—the Navy as represented by the captain is a bit gruff and rough on the outside, but has a golden core. And that, after all, is what really counts.’¹⁰⁸

The tourists spent two full days at McMurdo and Scott bases, and had mixed impressions of this sprawling and untidy ‘city in a wilderness’.¹⁰⁹ As the *Magga Dan* docked, Braxton was confronted by the ‘dreadful sight’ of McMurdo’s rubbish dump but quickly showed sympathy for the government’s predicament. ‘It was easy to be critical about the disposal of this trash, but a lot more difficult to be practical about it.’¹¹⁰ While pleased to visit the US Antarctic Research Program headquarters and to be addressed by its scientists, the tourists were not entirely convinced that the quantity or value of the science being undertaken at the base justified its \$29 million-dollar annual budget. Braxton admitted that she found it difficult to understand the reasoning behind some of the projects she heard about, particularly after speaking with an acarologist who studied the life cycle of the Antarctic mite. ‘It costs \$250,000 to “winter” one polar louse expert here, and in winter there are eight scientists here supported by a hundred Navy men,’ Bissell added.¹¹¹ Despite his gloominess, Bissell reassured his readers that McMurdo Sound was indeed ‘a place of beauty’: ‘The only thing unlovely about the place is what you and I, rich

108 Ibid., 118.

109 Lindblad and Fuller, *Passport to Anywhere*, 103.

110 Dorothy Braxton, “Wildlife Sanctuary of the Antarctic,” *The Australian Woman’s Weekly*, 1968, 123.

111 Bissell, “Antarctic Safari”, 61.

Americans cracked on “scientific achievement”, have made of one little piece of it.’¹¹²

The tourists were far more impressed with the relics of Antarctica’s heroic age of exploration. Braxton prized the ‘special sort of nostalgia’ the historic huts inspired: ‘In an age when everything is made as easy as possible for us, it is good to have tangible reminders that it was not always like this.’¹¹³ In Scott’s Hut at Cape Evans, Bissell absorbed the smell of the seal bladder, and the sight of biscuit tins, bunks, stove, pickled bottles, lamps and old boots. ‘*This is Scott’s original hut and I have been in it,*’ he marvelled.¹¹⁴ The tourists also climbed to the summit of Observation Hill and enjoyed a sweeping panoramic view of McMurdo Sound. Surmounted on the hill’s summit was a wooden cross, placed there in memory of Scott’s polar party, who perished on their return journey from the South Pole in 1912. To Braxton, the cross and its inscription from Tennyson’s *Ulysses*—‘To strive, to seek, to find and not to yield’—was ‘somehow symbolic of everything that the Antarctic stands for in the hearts of men...and now women.’¹¹⁵

The voyage had convinced Braxton that she finally understood why the men of Antarctica so firmly wanted to keep tourists out:

It was something that revolved around the emotional impact that the continent has on a person who knows and appreciates its timelessness, its isolation from the rest of the sick world, its extremes of beauty, climate and moods...It was as though [Antarctica] stood ready to defy any attempt to change it or tame it, and even though men might themselves deliberately set out to conquer it, and prise out of it its mysteries, they still were grateful that here was one place on earth that could not really be altered

112 Ibid.

113 Braxton, “Wildlife Sanctuary of the Antarctic”, 138-9.

114 Bissell, “Antarctic Safari”, 61.

115 Braxton, *The Abominable Snow-Women*, 162.

effectively by the intrusion of civilisation.’¹¹⁶

As the *Magga Dan* pitched and rolled back to New Zealand, the expeditioners reflected on the journey. Pennie Rau, a jewellery designer from Hollywood, commented that she had never paid so much for a trip in all her life and seen less—‘but everything I have seen has been worthwhile.’¹¹⁷ Bissell mused earnestly about the tour and what it had meant to share it with his shipmates: ‘It was as though we had all been in the war together, in the same outfit. We were united by a common bond but there was nothing much we could say about it.’¹¹⁸ For Braxton, the expedition had been ‘a great privilege’ made richer by the people with whom she shared it: ‘For everyone...it was totally different from anything they had ever done before and certainly different from what their friends and neighbours customarily did for their summer holidays.’¹¹⁹ For the writers and photographers on board, Braxton felt that the expedition had provided ‘plenty of scope for work’. For herself, and a few others, it had meant ‘a great deal more’—the realisation of a long-cherished ambition.’¹²⁰



By his third season operating in Antarctica, Lindblad had learned several lessons. Although the Ross Sea voyages had been ground-breaking, he feared that they were ‘too long, too rough, and too expensive’.¹²¹ He would continue operating them on occasions but realised that his Antarctic tours would primarily focus on the Antarctic Peninsula. On-going ship

116 Braxton, “Wildlife Sanctuary of the Antarctic,” 104.

117 Ibid., 197.

118 Bissell, “Antarctic Safari”, 63.

119 Braxton, “Wildlife Sanctuary of the Antarctic,” 196.

120 Braxton, *The Abominable Snow-Women*, 162.

121 Lindblad and Fuller, *Passport to Anywhere*, 102.

malfunctions and uncooperative crews also taught him that he could no longer depend on chartered ships. He began to dream up a purpose-built expedition ship that would be safe for navigation through ice; big enough to turn over a profit while small enough to manoeuvre in tight channels and ‘blend with its settings’. ‘I not only needed a ship that could attack the Antarctic, but one that could do the same with the Arctic, the Amazon, the islands of Indonesia, the Indian Ocean and anywhere else we could find unusual harbors whose secrets could be unveiled on an intimate basis for people who preferred learning with their travel.’¹²² In October 1968, Lindblad signed a contract with financial partner Norwegian-American Lines for the \$2.5 million construction of his new ship.

The *Lindblad Explorer* was launched in July 1969, the month Neil Armstrong walked on the moon. Featuring a red hull and white superstructure, it was ice-strengthened and carried up to 92 passengers and 60 crew. It boasted spacious outer decks for bird-watching and photography, a lounge bar and a library stocked with books on anthropology, ornithology, geology, and marine life of the places the ship would visit. The Penguin Room was equipped for lectures and films, with a broad counter and stainless-steel sinks, microscopes and a centrifuge ‘for serious study of marine biology’.¹²³ The ship was also equipped with a fleet of rigid-hulled inflatable Zodiac boats, used to transport groups of up to twelve people for excursions ashore and around ice floes. These versatile boats became key to Lindblad’s vision for a ‘go-anywhere’, ‘land-anywhere’ operation. ‘To me, the Zodiacs changed the entire art of cruise ships, enabling us to see the world from an intimate eye level,’ he explained.¹²⁴ This new style of travel came to be known as ‘expedition cruising’ and Lindblad would be credited as its founding father.

122 Ibid., 105.

123 Ibid., 153.

124 Ibid., 154.

While ship design may have been important to the expedition cruising model, just as crucial was Lindblad's salient travel ethic. His belief that travel should be active and intellectual was reflective of his Swedish pietist roots. 'People do not want to be tourists: they want to *know*; they want to *do*,' Lindblad explained. 'Looking is passive. It's action that counts. In Antarctica, for instance, we match our wits with nature in finding our way through pack ice and in braving storms and rough seas. We experience the difficulty of travel.'¹²⁵ Lindblad's favoured method for 'knowing' and 'doing' was the purposeful use of natural history. His tours featured a host of American and British celebrity naturalists including Sir Peter Scott, Roger Tory Peterson, Robert Cushman Murphy, Keith Shackleton and Dennis Pulston. They all adopted the traditional 'Linnaean style of travel'—patient and diligent observation, systematic recording and collecting, and close physical proximity to that which was being studied.¹²⁶ They also insisted that this style of travel could shape people's values and promote conservation. 'When people of influence go on tours and see things with their own eyes they become a powerful force for the preservation of these places', wrote Roger Tory Peterson, the author of several famous American bird guides.¹²⁷

Lindblad was not without his concerns about tourism 'done blindly' and with greed as its 'main ingredient'.¹²⁸ He lamented the inevitable destruction of natural beauty and traditional cultures at the hands of a 'Western version of civilization' that was so powerful, it had already taken over even the remote parts of the world. Lindblad did not view his own role in opening up remote places for tourism as part of this problem, and saw no justice in denying people a vacation simply because the potential for destruction was

125 Ibid., 284.

126 Michael Bravo and Sverker Sörlin, *Narrating the Arctic: A Cultural History of Nordic Scientific Practices* (Science History Publications, 2002), 19.

127 R.T. Peterson and B. Thompson, *All Things Reconsidered: My Birding Adventures* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2007), 277.

128 Lindblad and Fuller, *Passport to Anywhere*, 290.

there. ‘The big question is how we can go about keeping the world’s balance and beauty in trust,’ he explained.¹²⁹ For Lindblad, the real threat to the environment was the public’s lack of awareness of the need for conservation. This awareness raising was tourism’s crucial role, he insisted. ‘The only thing that can save the world is tourism,’ Lindblad once told a reporter.¹³⁰



By the late 1970s, the *Lindblad Explorer* was operating year-round tours all over the world, including three to four annual Antarctic tours. Lindblad Travel was one of only two tour operators in the Antarctic at this time, the other being Seattle-based Society Expeditions which entered the Antarctic market in 1978. Lindblad Travel also operated a range of inland and overland tours, including tours to China and Tibet starting in 1978. Following its experiences with corrupt war lords and the ‘internal poisoning of the Cultural Revolution and the Red Guards’, Lindblad believed that China was seeking ‘peace and understanding through the tourist.’¹³¹ So popular were his China and Tibet tours, he offered eleven weekly departures on a wide variety of programmes. The Chinese market came to account for up to 60 percent of Lindblad Travel’s business. Despite the growth of his business and popularity of his tours, however, Lindblad Travel proved an unsustainable business in the face of on-going financial setbacks.

On its maiden voyage in 1969, the *Lindblad Explorer* was plagued with generator malfunction, engine failure and a major fire that destroyed the ship’s steering cables and melted the deck above. Lindblad was forced to reimburse and fly home the 92 people

129 Ibid., 285.

130 Shirley Slater and Harry Basch, “Antarctic Tourism Issues Surfacing,” *Los Angeles Times* 4 August 1991.

131 Lindblad and Fuller, *Passport to Anywhere*, 282.

waiting in Buenos Aires to join his next scheduled Antarctic cruise, as well as to cancel the following voyage. ‘The cost was staggering,’ Lindblad declared. ‘The cost to lay the ship up in Buenos Aires for complete repairs was worse.’¹³²

In 1972, the *Explorer* ran aground on the sawtooth rocks that ringed Admiralty Bay in the South Shetland Islands. The expedition’s 160 passengers, staff and crew were transported to Punta Arenas by a Chilean rescue vessel, and then onto Buenos Aires by a chartered Boeing 707 aircraft. The remainder of the Antarctic season was cancelled and all tickets fully refunded. It took another week, and the charter of a German tug, to free the ship and tow it to Buenos Aires for repairs. In 1979, the *Explorer* ran aground again on the Antarctic Peninsula when it slammed into a reef while travelling at full speed, requiring yet another full-scale rescue and repair effort. In 1982, the *Lindblad Explorer* was purchased by Swedish shipping company, Salén Shipping, and managed under the auspices of new company, Salén-Lindblad Cruising. While Lindblad remained a company figurehead and member of the Salén-Lindblad Cruising board, he relinquished all control of the *Lindblad Explorer*.¹³³

Lindblad also struggled to make a profit on his China tours despite their huge popularity. On his Yangtze River cruises, he chartered the *M.S. Ku Lun*, a 36-passenger vessel formally owned by Mao Zedong. The vessel was too small to be profitable. According to his son, Sven-Olof Lindblad, who followed his father into the expedition cruising business, Lindblad was offered and accepted ‘a lousy deal’ by the Chinese. ‘Eventually they discovered that there was a net loss on everyone they took, so they lost hundreds of thousands of dollars on something that should have made millions,’ Sven-Olof explained.¹³⁴

132 Ibid., 156.

133 Tom Ritche, pers. comm., 11 July 2014.

134 David Carroll, “Lessons from Father Fuel a Son’s Success,” *The Australian*, 19 July 2013.

The final blow came in 1986, when Lindblad launched tours to Vietnam without securing the permission required by the US *Trading with the Enemy Act*. Although US citizens were permitted to travel to Vietnam, the Act prohibited tour operators and travel agents from organising or promoting tours there.¹³⁵ Lindblad pleaded guilty to one count of violating the Act but refused to call off the Vietnam tours. 'He thought it was unconstitutional to limit travel, and he cited the fact that after World War II we could go back to Japan and Germany, yet the Vietnam War had been over for years,' Sven-Olof explained.¹³⁶ The government went as far as dispatching government officials to raid Lindblad Travel headquarters in Connecticut. US Treasury then froze Lindblad Travel's bank accounts and seized all of its records. Lindblad Travel declared bankruptcy and closed its doors in 1989.



The end of Lindblad Travel did not spell the end of Lindblad's wanderlust or his desire to create new travel experiences. He continued to travel, and to organise and lead tours around the world with his new company, Creative Travel. Nor did his loyal followers abandon him. He maintained a strong following through his loyalty programme, the Intrepids Club, which was established by his second wife, Carrie-Ann. Intrepid Club members enjoyed discounts on travel and the promise of being chaperoned by Lindblad himself. 'They were the real true blue lovers of Lars and his wild ideas,' recalled Lindblad Travel expedition leader, Mike McDowell.¹³⁷ Some of them proudly called themselves 'Lindbladers'.¹³⁸

135 Douglas McArthur, "Vietnam Dispute Settled," *The Globe and Mail*, 24 May 1989.

136 Carroll, "Lessons from Father Fuel a Son's Success".

137 Mike McDowell, pers. comm., 15 February 2016

138 Hotchner, "Lars-Eric Lindblad".

Lindblad's legacy stretched far beyond this small group of devotees. The expedition cruising model he pioneered was adopted by tour operators around the world, and was a precursor to what would come to be known as eco-tourism. Within the Antarctic tourism industry his influence was pervasive. Lindblad Travel staff were recruited by other Antarctic tour operators, who leveraged the knowledge and ideas that come with the people. Lindblad's tendency to hire high profile naturalists and ornithologists became a hallmark of the Antarctic tourism industry. And the *Lindblad Explorer*, the Little Red Ship, remained an icon of Antarctic tourist expeditions for many years to come.

Perhaps Lindblad's most significant contribution to Antarctic tourism was the expedition performance. It was not simply the kind of ships he sailed or the information he imparted on his clients that created Lindblad's Antarctic experiences. He encouraged his followers not just to follow explorers but to be explorers. 'If I could have been a discoverer, I would have been,' Lindblad once told a reporter. 'The age of discovery on this planet may be over, in the large sense. But for the average person, it has hardly begun.'¹³⁹ Lindblad initiated an extensive amount of Antarctic tourism's logistical, political and intellectual groundwork. And he was instrumental in laying its imaginative foundations too.

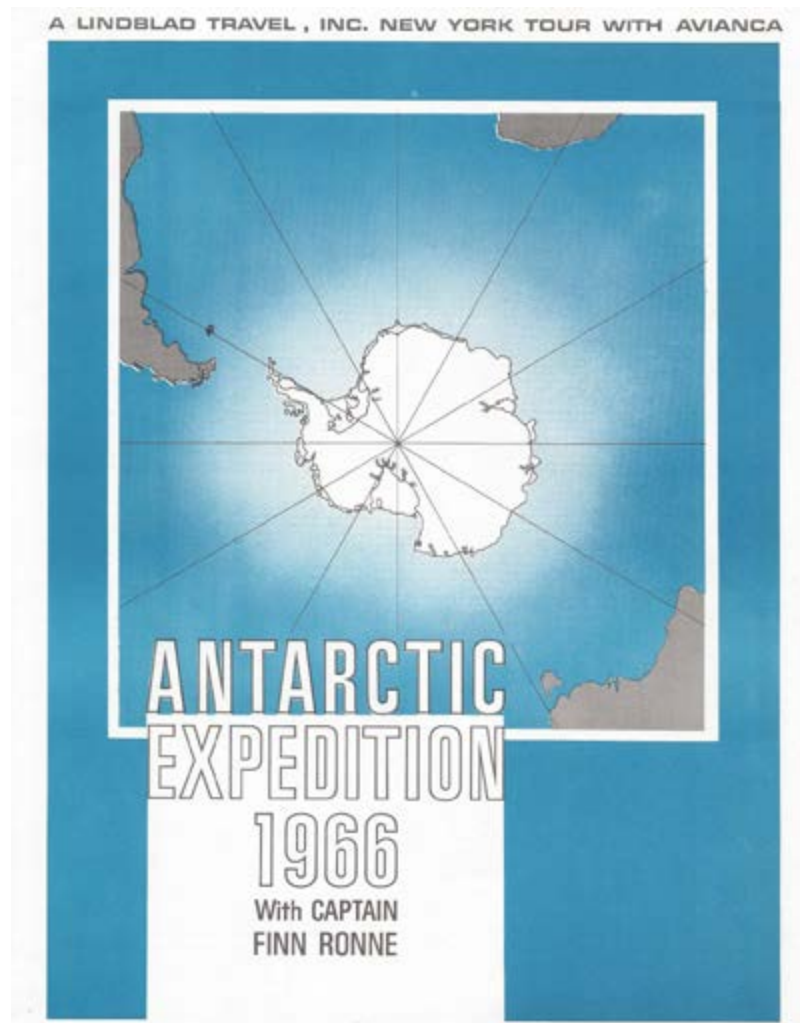
139 Ibid., 72.



Above: Lars-Eric Lindblad and tourists on one of Lindblad Travel's first tours of the Antarctic Peninsula, 1966
(Source: Lindblad Expeditions)



Above: An Antarctic tourist holds a Chinstrap penguin, 1966
(Source: Antarctic Expedition 1966 Brochure, Explorers Club New York)



Above: Antarctic Expedition 1966 Brochure Cover
(Source: Explorers Club New York)

Opposite: Mrs Holton, a tourist on the Ross Sea Expedition 1968 greets a Weddell seal
(Source: Venture Magazine, July-August 1968)





Above: Tourists from Lindblad Travel's 1968 Ross Sea Expedition
 (from left to right): David Payne, Marion Bissell, Richard Bissell, Billie Brown (Source: Barbara Braxton)
Below: Dorothy Braxton at Cape Hallett in the Ross Sea, 1968 (Source: Barbara Braxton)



Reflection

On Blank Spaces

When I read Lars-Eric Lindblad's memoir, *Passport to Anywhere*, I knew he would be the central character of this first narrative. Not just because he was responsible for beginning what many people perceive to be the first Antarctic tour. But also because of his imaginative, theatrical and tenacious nature. No wonder, I thought to myself. No wonder today's Antarctic tourism industry is so invested in the expedition performance—that it insists on leading 'expeditions' rather than tours or cruises. Despite criticism and mockery from the broader Antarctic community, Lindblad carried on conducting 'scientific expeditions'. Unwavering and unabashed, he did not seem to mind whether others believed him or not.

The Mongolian campfire was a particularly striking scene. Here was Lindblad, scanning a map of the world as though he were an explorer pondering which unsurveyed corner of the world to venture next. Pretending that Antarctica was still a *terra incognita*, an unknown continent at the bottom of the earth waiting to be unveiled. Acting as though the voyages of Captain Cook and the race to the South Pole had never happened. 'Antarctica isn't even on the map,' he exclaimed with sheer delight while standing beside that flickering campfire on that chilly desert night.¹⁴⁰ When I first read this scene, I thought of it as nothing more than playful irony—a whimsical story told by a master raconteur.

As I began to delve in to the literature on European discovery and exploration, I realised than Lindblad's campfire performance was more than simple showmanship. It was

140 Lindblad and Fuller, *Passport to Anywhere*, 82.

a contemporary expression of a long-lived fantasy that had fuelled several centuries of imperial exploration and expansion—the fantasy of a blank space. Lindblad was articulating an idea which had captivated generations of explorers and which, he believed, intrepid travellers still desired for today. It is this fantasy of the blank space which we will explore further in this reflection. Drawing also on the history of primitivism, I hope to show that Antarctica represents to the modern tourist a timeless blank space of endless possibility and exploration; a continent which is frozen in time and available for perpetual discovery.

Blank Spaces

It is one of the great paradoxes of exploration, writes historian Dane Kennedy. The idea that it is possible ‘to explore and “discover” places that were already known—known not simply by the indigenous peoples of those places but also by Europeans themselves.’¹⁴¹ A prime example is Prussian explorer, Alexander von Humboldt, who travelled to Latin America at the close of the 18th century. While his 30-volume scientific report was hailed as a first for exploration to that region, Humboldt traversed territory that had been colonised by the Spanish for centuries. He was emblematic of how it became possible for 19th century explorers to ‘discover’ and explore already known territory.

This same paradox found one of its highest expressions in Britain’s changing cartographic practices at the opening of the 19th century. As Kennedy explains, 18th century maps of Africa had come to look like a ‘crazy quilt’ of political, ethnic and geographical features, with delineated regions coloured in separate hues.¹⁴² Though their accuracy is questionable, these maps showed that Britons had already collected a significant

141 Dane Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 6.

142 *Ibid.*, 11.

amount of information on Africa and were aware before they explored it that it was a richly diverse cultural and political landscape.

In contrast, early 19th century British maps of Africa had wiped clean the interior of the continent, emptying it of its patchwork of knowledge and colour. Any information which had previously shaped European understandings of the continent was discounted. Only information collected by European explorers and subject to review by experts back home was accepted as true knowledge. Thus, Africa was reborn as a blank space, an unknown continent ripe for European ‘discovery’.

One of the consequences of this cartographic legacy was its depiction in 19th century adventure stories. In his 1876 poem, *The Hunting of the Snark*, Lewis Carroll imagines a sea voyage on which a captain produces for his crew a map devoid of any ‘vestige of land’. The crew is pleased to find the map completely free of ‘North Poles and Equators, Tropics, Zones, and Meridian Lines’:

Other maps are such shapes, with their islands and capes!

But we’ve got our brave Captain to thank:

(So the crew would protest) “that he’s bought us the best—

A perfect and absolute blank!¹⁴³

Perhaps the most famous articulation of this map-erasing heritage appears in the opening scene of Joseph Conrad’s 1899 novella, *Heart of Darkness*. Aboard the cruising yawl *Nellie*, which is anchored in the River Thames, Charles Marlow recalls to his fellow sailors his early passion for maps; how he would look for hours at the world’s ‘blank spaces’, hankering to discover them when he grew up. Now grown up, he laments that

143 Lewis Carroll, *The Hunting of the Snark: An Agony in Eight Fits* (Xist Publishing, 2016).

most of them are blank no more. Not even Africa, after which he hankered the most. By now it had been filled with rivers and lakes and names. ‘It had ceased to be a blank space of delightful mystery—a white patch for a boy to dream gloriously over.’¹⁴⁴

The blank space was an invention of the European imagination; a fantasy which not only made the exploration of Africa all the more appealing to explorers but also laid the moral groundwork for European exploration, colonisation and dispossession. By the end of the century, the idea and allure of the blank space was firmly fixed in the popular imagination. Explorers and would-be explorers could be found just like Marlow, gazing at a map of the world and looking hopefully for an empty space which had not yet been filled. This, just as the last blank spaces seemed to be disappearing.

Primitive and Civilised Worlds

When European explorers ventured to map these so-called blank spaces what they found was far from an empty continent. Africa, Australia and the Americas were vast landscapes of varied environments, an immense array of plants and animals, and long established human communities with rich and complex cultures. Those people the explorers encountered in these faraway lands appeared entirely different to them, in the way they looked, spoke and behaved. As explorers’ reports of these strange foreigners began to make their way home, the task of understanding and categorising these distant cultures became a central preoccupation of European society.

Drawing on the ideas of modernity and progress, evolutionary anthropologists theorised that non-Western cultures represented an ancient condition of humanity—the primitive precursor to modern civilisation. They ordered societies along a temporal scale or, as

144 Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (London: Bibliolos Books, 2010), 11.

anthropologist Johannes Fabian put it, along ‘a stream of time’.¹⁴⁵ Those societies considered to be simple, premodern and less evolved—non-Western societies—were placed upstream of time while those perceived as more complex, modern and highly evolved—Western societies—were placed downstream. Such a way of thinking perpetuated an image of the world as being divided into those people and places living in the present-day modern world and those belonging to a premodern past.

Social evolution theory proffered powerful images of so-called primitive life which shaped the way western societies imagined those people and cultures lying at the peripheries of their world.¹⁴⁶ On one hand, it promoted a view that primitive societies were mentally and morally inferior to the civilised Westerner. Depicted as simple, irrational, violent and savage, the primitive was thought to be in desperate need of control. It was Europe’s moral imperative to colonise these savages; to raise the primitive into a better, civilised life.

Yet the very same theory inspired a different view of the primitive as a pure and noble antidote to an increasingly troubled modern world. A primitivist sensibility emerged which was highly critical of modern civilisation, claiming that it lacked meaning, emotion and truth. Modernity was destroying tradition and culture while promoting self-centredness and economic efficiency, the consequences of which was a society lacking empathy or a greater purpose. The primitive was cast as the answer to modernity’s malaise, figured as a ‘noble savage’ who symbolised the inmate goodness of humanity when free from the corrupting influences of civilisation.

145 Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (Columbia University Press, 2014), 50.

146 Victor Li, *The Neo-Primitivist Turn: Critical Reflections on Alterity, Culture, and Modernity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

The primitive world was seen to be free of the modern world's corrupting influences because it was not only geographically distant but also temporally distant. The primitive was not seen to exist in the present but rather in a stable, unchanging past where time stood still. If the Westerner could only go back in time to a primitive people and place, they would find a lost paradise where they could live a truer life which was in tune with nature. Some of the first Westerners to follow this call were the artists associated with the primitivist art movement, which prized artistic forms considered to be natural, exotic and tribal. In 1891, French painter and sculptor, Paul Gauguin, moved from Paris to Tahiti to pursue a simpler lifestyle in an exotic paradise whose 'naturalness' he hoped would find its way into his art.¹⁴⁷

In the United States, the yearning for simple, primitive living was embodied in the myth of the frontier. As William Cronon revealed, in an influential essay on the cultural underpinnings of wilderness, the frontier myth was based on the idea that East Coast colonists pushed westward across the American continent into the wild, unsettled lands of the frontier, shedding the 'trappings of civilization' and discovering their primitive selves. Built into this myth was the idea that the frontier was vanishing as quickly as it was being discovered, not unlike the vanishing blank spaces on the world map.¹⁴⁸ It was this idea of the passing frontier, Cronon argues, which laid the seeds for wilderness preservation in the United States. Wilderness represented the last remnants of simple, primitive, frontier living; the place we could turn to escape modern civilisation and our 'all-too-muchness.'¹⁴⁹

147 Paul Gauguin and Robert J Goldwater, *Paul Gauguin* (H. N. Abrams, 1972), 102.

148 William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," *Environmental History* 1, no. 1 (1996): 13.

149 Ibid., 7.

Maharajas & Elephants

Lars-Eric Lindblad's travel accounts are imbued with received ideas of a primitive ideal. Inculcated in the colonial discourse of Boys' Own adventure stories, Lindblad sought out the same manifestations of the exotic and primitive Other he had read and dreamed about as a young boy. India was decadent and colourful, filled with maharajas and elephants festooned in jewels. Africa was the savage 'dark continent' of mysterious tribes and untamed animals. Mongolia was an ancient desert landscape of native yurts, camel caravans and the ghosts of the noble Khans.

Although he condemned the 'unsavoury days of colonisation' and made mention of Africa's new-found independence, it was not a decolonising Africa that Lindblad was interested in seeing or showing to tourists. As he put quite simply in his memoirs, 'the American traveller basically wants to go to Africa to see two things: wild animals and a culture totally different from his own.'¹⁵⁰ The tourist did not want to see the modernising metropolis, a developing economy or the turbulence of a newly independent state. They wanted to ride the Northern Frontier steam train through India's mountain tea plantations; to absorb the atmosphere of the African tent camp while entertained by a white 'gentleman of the African bush'. They yearned for the story of the colonial past.

The same desire for a primitive Other has been observed in other tourism spaces. Anthropologist, Edward Bruner, spent extensive time in Bali, observing tourists and the tourism industry, as well as working as a lecturer on a group tour of Indonesia. In *Culture on Tour: Ethnographies of Travel*, Bruner argues that tourism literature depicted Bali as a tropical paradise of haunting and unspoiled beauty, where people lived untouched by civilisation, close to nature, and with a culture that was artistic, static, harmonious and

150 Lindblad and Fuller, *Passport to Anywhere*, 54.

well-integrated. The problem with this romanticised characterisation, he argued, was that it suppressed the true conditions of Balinese life while depicting a culture that never existed. Bruner viewed it as just another example of a ‘Western elite’ travelling to the margins of the Third World in order to explore a ‘fantasyland’ of the Western imaginary.¹⁵¹

Hawaiian activist and scholar Haunani-Kay Trask went as far as to claim that her native culture had been ‘prostituted’ by corporate tourism. Hawaii, she argued, had been depicted as a soft and fragrant sexualised ‘she’, offered up to the American tourist as an image of escape from their daily life. Meanwhile, the multinational tourism industry was the major cause of environmental degradation, low wages, land dispossession, and the highest cost of living in the United States. Despite their exploitation, Trask argues, locals supported tourism, viewing it as a provider of jobs and not cultural prostitution. ‘As colonized people, we are colonized to the extent that we are unaware of our oppression,’ Trask writes. Her final plea to tourists is this: ‘If you are thinking of visiting my homeland, please don’t. We don’t want or need any more tourists, and we certainly don’t like them.’¹⁵²

While many tour operators around the world continue to rely on tropes of untouched island paradises, ancient cultures and primitive living, it has become increasingly difficult for them to deliver on such exaggerated claims as conspicuous signs of development and modernisation continue to appear in once ‘unspoiled’ places. Tour operators are also more likely to be called out by critics like Bruner and Trask for perpetuating stereotypes based on a primitive ideal which says more about the Western imaginary than it does the people being imagined. Aware of their potential complicity in what one critic has called ‘leisure imperialism’ tourists themselves have also become concerned with travelling ‘ethically’

151 Bruner, *Culture on Tour: Ethnographies of Travel*, 193.

152 Haunani-Kay Trask, “Lovely Hula Hands: Corporate Tourism and the Prostitution of Hawaiian Culture,” *Contours (Bangkok)* 5, no. 1 (1991): 13.

or ‘responsibly’ to developing countries.¹⁵³

At first glance, Antarctica would appear to be completely different to other imperial landscapes. Lacking an indigenous population, or a history of cultural dispossession, Antarctica seems to offer tourists an adventure into the faraway and exotic Other without the uncomfortable echoes of imperialism. Pristine and unpeopled, it remains untainted by colonial guilt. But Antarctica is not innocent of imperial ties. Exploration and adventure on the frozen continent has long been associated with undercurrents of colonialism and nationalism, which live on today in rhetoric and rituals of modern tourism and exploration.

The Heroic Age

Towards the close of the 19th century, European exploration of Africa and Australia was drawing to a close, and explorers and imperial institutions turned to new frontiers including the Amazonian jungles, the Peruvian highlands and the Arctic tundra. But none attracted as much attention as Antarctica and the search for the South Pole. In 1895, the International Geographical Congress claimed that ‘the exploration of the Antarctic region is the greatest piece of geographical exploration still to be undertaken.’¹⁵⁴ At a time when Joseph Conrad was penning *Heart of Darkness*, and lamenting the world’s vanishing blank spaces, explorers were readying themselves to venture into its last blank space—the Antarctic interior.

The Belgian Antarctic Expedition (1897-1899) was the first foray into what would become known as the heroic age of Antarctic exploration. Lead by Belgian naval officer, Adrian de Gerlache, the expedition became the first to overwinter in the Antarctic after its ship, *Belgica*, became trapped in sea ice off the coast of the Antarctic Peninsula.

153 Malcolm Crick, “Representations of International Tourism in the Social Sciences: Sun, Sex, Sights, Savings, and Servility,” *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 18, no. 1 (1989): 307-44.

154 Laurence Kirwan, *The White Road: A Survey of Polar Exploration*, (Hollis & Carter, 1959): 225.

This was followed by the Southern Cross Expedition (1898-1900), led by Norwegian-Australian explorer, Carsten Borchgrevink. Well supplied with dehydrated food, the first primus stoves and Antarctica's first sledge dogs, the ten-man expedition was the first to intentionally winter-over on the Antarctic continent, at Cape Adare.

These were soon followed by expeditions from Britain, Scotland, Germany, Sweden, France, Norway, Japan and Australia, most of them privately-funded and each with a mission to extend the frontiers of scientific and geographical knowledge. Over the course of the two decades that marked the heroic age, explorers and scientists generated large quantities of scientific data and specimens across a wide range of scientific disciplines including biology, zoology, geology, magnetism and meteorology. The geographic and magnet poles were both reached. Vast stretches of Antarctica's coastline were explored and mapped, as well as significant areas of its interior. The Transantarctic mountains, Dry Valleys and numerous glacial fields were surveyed, and new species of Antarctic wildlife identified and studied.

The heroic age of exploration is perhaps best remembered for the intensity of its adventures and the tragedies and triumphs of its most iconic figures. The stoic Captain Scott, steadfastly man-hauling his way across a spectacularly awful place. Captain Oates, uttering his haunting last words before he staggered out of a tent and into a blizzard, never to be seen again. Shackleton, Antarctica's celebrated anti hero, keeping morale high and hope alive as his expedition fell apart around him. Mawson, marching home alone and emaciated after losing both his sledging partners. Wilson, Bowers and Cherry-Garrard tenderly cradling three Emperor penguin eggs on their return from the worst journey in the world.

Antarctica was entirely different to any other continent to which European explorers had been before. An unvarying and forbidding icescape without a single flowing river to guide explorers inland. Devoid of terrestrial plants or animals to collect and classify. Lacking any indigenous knowledge, guides or technology to aid them. In Antarctica, there was no one to civilise, dispossess or project primitive ideals onto.

The continent's emptiness—its lack of material value—seemed to raise it above political and economic ambitions. Its exploration appeared to be centred on disinterested science and heroic adventure. Yet its very emptiness was what made it such an appealing site for imperial expansion. Here was a continent that embodied a *true* blank space—vast, unclaimed and free of indigenous interference.¹⁵⁵ The last blank space provided a stage for a final flurry of the European colonial rivalry which had characterised the previous century. Antarctica, and the South Pole in particular, offered an ideal place for a country to establish its imperial power. Antarctica's heroic explorers were not just engaged in science and adventure but in performances of spatial possession.¹⁵⁶

Antarctica was not just a blank space but also a white one. Its whiteness was alien and disturbing but also redemptive. In contrast to the death, ignorance and illiteracy of 'dark Africa', Antarctica's whiteness was symbolic of light, purity and superiority.¹⁵⁷ As Brigid Hains has written, in *The Ice and the Inland*, Antarctica's white frontier offered a place of masculine and racial renewal. For Australians eager to assert a national identity and

155 Bloom, *Gender on Ice*.

156 Collis, "Walking in the Footsteps: 'Footsteps of the Explorers' Expeditions and the Contest for Australian Desert Space."

157 Stephen J. Pyne, "Heart of Whiteness: The Exploration of Antarctica," *Environmental Review: ER* 10, no. 4 (1986); Lize-Marié van der Watt, "The Whiteness of Antarctica: Race and South Africa's Antarctic History," in *Antarctica and the Humanities*, ed. Peder Roberts, Lize-Marié van der Watt, and Adrian Howkins (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

anxious about the degenerative effects of urban living, Antarctica represented a place where white men could reinvigorate their masculine virility and national vitality.¹⁵⁸

Frozen in Time

When the heroic age of exploration came to a close, Antarctic exploration shifted away from private voyages of discovery to large-scale national expeditions. The aeroplane and aerial camera replaced sledges and dogs, and the polar flights of Richard Byrd and Lincoln Ellsworth enabled large swathes of Antarctica's interior to be seen for the first time and in a single glance. During the interwar period, new territorial claims were also pressed onto the Antarctic continent.¹⁵⁹ By 1940, seven nations had declared territorial claims to pie-shaped sectors of the continent—Argentina, Australia, Britain, Chile, France, New Zealand and Norway.

Tension and suspicion dominated Antarctica's political landscape in the 1940s and 1950s, as territorial claimants embarked on a flurry of base-building and continuous occupation of the ice in an attempt to shore up their claims. This escalated the day an Argentine base leader fired bullets over the heads of a British geological party trying to land at Hope Bay, a site on the Antarctic Peninsula that both Argentina and Britain claimed as their own. Renewed interest in the continent by the United States and the Soviet Union also spawned fears that the Cold War would make its way to the frozen south.

158 Hains, *The Ice and the Inland*, 15. Georgine Clarsen has also written that Australian businessman and confectioner, Sir MacPherson Robertson, was an exemplar in this regard. A champion of racial whiteness, he dressed himself and his workforce in white, sponsored an expedition to the White Continent—the 1929-31 British, Australian, New Zealand Research Expeditions (BANZARE)—and had a vast white sheet of Antarctic ice (Mac. Robertson Land) named for him. Georgine Clarsen, “The 1928 MacRobertson Round Australia Expedition: Colonial Adventuring in the Twentieth Century,” in *Expedition into Empire: Exploratory Journeys and the Making of the Modern World*, ed. Martin Thomas (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2015).

159 Dodds, “Antarctica and the Modern Geographical Imagination (1918-1960)”.

The 1957-58 International Geophysical Year (IGY) shifted focus and intention away from territorial claims and towards international scientific cooperation. An international research endeavour focused on Antarctica, outer space and the ocean floor, the IGY involved tens of thousands of scientists and built on the tradition of previous International Polar Years. In Antarctica, IGY participants included the seven claimant states plus Belgium, Japan, South Africa, the United States and the Soviet Union. The following year, these nations codified the spirit of this international scientific cooperation in the fourteen articles of the 1959 Antarctic Treaty. If national honour and territorial conquest had motivated Antarctic exploration in the past, now scientific work and international cooperation became the priorities.¹⁶⁰

The image of the central figure of Antarctic exploration had changed too. The romantic explorer, pulling his sled across the polar plateau had come to look old-fashioned in the wake of modern science. It was not the gentleman amateur, practising natural history and displaying his physical and moral courage, who represented modern exploration but the specialised, technology-laden professional. The heroic explorer's hut was relegated to nostalgic relic, standing derelict on the ice amid violent wind gusts and piling snow drift, while the modern scientific research station became the locus of modern Antarctica. According to historian, Felix Driver, this is the conventional explanation given by 'broad-brush interpretations' of the history of scientific exploration. That is, that the heroic explorer was part of a dying race—necessary to the opening up of new worlds for science, but redundant once these worlds were surveyed and mapped.¹⁶¹

Yet Antarctica's heroic age continues to retain a powerful hold on the popular

160 Tom Griffiths, "A Miracle of Politics and Science," *Inside Story* (4 December 2009).

161 Driver, "Modern Explorers", 246.

imagination, inspiring books, documentaries, re-enactments, anniversary celebrations and, of course, the travels of the Antarctic tourist. As Victoria Rossner shows, in an essay on Antarctic writing, travel and time, the heroic Antarctic explorers continue to reside in the forefront of the public imagination, their stories by and large the primary narratives about Antarctica which inhabit the collective consciousness. 'Antarctica seems to have remained frozen in time, still a "blank space" no matter how industriously modern cartographers survey and sketch its surface,' Rossner writes.¹⁶²

Discovery Again and Again

I gave a brief history of the emergence of primitivism earlier in this reflection because I believe it is vitally important for understanding what Antarctica represents in the collective imagination. Antarctica is not the exotic, tropical paradise that Paul Gauguin went in search of in Tahiti. Nor is it the home of the decadent maharajas and jewel-festooned elephants of the India that Lindblad loved most. Even so, Antarctica fits the bill of the primitive ideal. Like other wild landscapes, it has been figured as a pure and pristine wilderness, far removed from the troubles and corrupting influences of the modern world. It is a place where we can feel closer to nature; where we find the world in its original state. It appears as one of the very last untouched and untrammelled places we have allowed ourselves to keep in an otherwise despoiled world.

We prefer to see Antarctica as untouched and untrammelled, that is, with the exception of its first, heroic layer of human history. The quintessential Antarctic image still remains a vast, unforgiving polar wasteland foregrounded by a gallant and romantic struggle between Man and Nature. If the American wilderness represents the last

¹⁶² Victoria Rosner, "Gender Degree Zero: Memoirs of Frozen Time in Antarctica," *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies* 14, no. 1 (1999): 7.

remnant of simple, primitive, frontier living, the Antarctic wilderness symbolises the last vestiges of the heroic age. If elsewhere in the world blank spaces have all vanished, the possibility of genuine exploration gone, and chivalrous, patriotic romanticism replaced by emotionless, emasculated modernity, Antarctica presents us with a glimmer of hope. It offers a place where such masculinist yearnings and fantasies can be forever safeguarded—frozen in an heroic moment.

Perhaps these sentiments are expressed most vividly by Dorothy Braxton, as she pays her respects to the relics of Antarctica's heroic age during her visit to McMurdo Sound in 1968. According to Dorothy, it is these enduring markers, and not the sprawling, modern facilities at McMurdo Station, which represent 'what Antarctica stands for' in the hearts of men and women. At Scott's Discovery Hut, she feels a 'special sort of nostalgia' as though Antarctica's 'essence of timelessness' is distilled within its splintered walls. And in justifying why these relics must be preserved, Dorothy gets to the heart of the primitive ideal: 'In an age when everything is made as easy as possible for us, it is good to have tangible reminders that it was not always like this.'¹⁶³ For Dorothy, Antarctica is a journey back to an heroic moment as much as it is a voyage down to a frozen continent.

Lars-Eric Lindblad's delight, as he studied the world map beside a Mongolian campfire, was not simply about finding one more blank space to explore. He had, perhaps, found the best blank space of them all. Not only was it unfilled, it appeared unfillable. Here was a continent so far removed and isolated from the modern world that airline companies routinely forget to include it on their maps. Still vast and empty, unlike other continents, Antarctica demanded little stretching of the imagination on

163 Braxton, *The Abominable Snow-Women*, 138.

the tourist's part in order to see it as an unknown and undiscovered continent; a *terra incognita*. Antarctica offered Lindblad, and generations of Antarctic tourists, a timeless blank space for perpetual exploration; an entire continent which made itself available for discovery again and again.

But blank spaces do not remain blank on their own. They were created by erasing history and that is how they must be maintained. In the case of Antarctica, it is not an indigenous history which must be forgotten; no crazy quilt of political and cultural entities to wipe clean as British mapmakers did to African maps in the 19th century. The history the Antarctic tourism industry is curiously interested in forgetting is its own. For its promise to the Antarctic tourist is that no matter how many people have gone to Antarctica before them, they will have the chance to be Antarctica's discoverers. The key to maintaining Antarctica as a blank space for the tourist, then, is to forget all the tourists who have come before.

A Cartographic Legacy

In 2013, I returned to Antarctica for my eighth season as a tour guide. This time, I was also a new PhD student and, as I prepared to leave for the ice, my supervisors gave me these encouraging words of advice: 'Be an ethnographer!' Though not entirely sure I knew what this meant, I made every effort to pay very close attention to everything I did, saw or heard during my Antarctic season. Instead of taking every-day acts for granted, I tried to read them for their deeper meaning. Nothing was simply a task, habit or happening anymore. Everything became a ritual, practice or performance.

One morning, I found myself walking around the corridors of the ship attending to housekeeping. A few hours earlier, we had brought one more Antarctic tourist expedition to a close and, in a matter of hours, we would set sail from Ushuaia again on our next expedition. As I walked around the ship's corridors that morning, I began attending to one of the many routine end-of-voyage tasks I had completed dozens of times before. Fixed to the walls of the ship's corridors were large, laminated maps of Antarctica. During each voyage, we mapped our course on them using removable marker. We traced our journey south across the Drake Passage, the winding path we took between islands and bays on the Antarctic Peninsula and then our final journey north across the ocean and into the sheltered waters of the Beagle Channel.

At the end of each voyage, and before the beginning of the next, one of the staff members was assigned to take each laminated map and wipe it clean. All traces of the last voyage were thus erased. With this act of map erasing, and the close of the last voyage, came the implicit understanding among all of the staff that no mention of the last voyage was to be made during the next; neither where we had been nor what we had encountered there.

In previous seasons, I had not thought much about this simple map-cleaning task or our ethical code of silence. It struck me as a common courtesy to each of our guests; a way of ensuring that we did not taint their 'trip of a lifetime' with unreasonable expectations based on what had happened in the past. But now I no longer saw this as a simple task in housekeeping or expectation management. I was part of a cartographic legacy which stretched back through generations of European exploration and discovery.

As I sprayed a thin film of mist over the next map, leaned in and pushed the cloth across the laminated surface, the ethnographer in me suddenly caught a glimpse of the underlying meaning. This is how we do it these day, I thought to myself. This is how we erase history; how we create a blank space.

Chapter Two

Champagne Jet to the Pole

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Anyone browsing the headlines and classifieds of the *Sydney Sun Herald* on 7 November 1976 might have dismissed the story on Page 13 as a practical joke. It claimed that a Sydney businessman was proposing to take a Qantas Boeing 707 jet for a ‘champagne, one-day return flight to the South Pole.’ Furthermore, he was willing to take with him, to the most hostile, inhospitable and mysterious continent, ‘anyone in the world who has always wanted to go to the Antarctic for the day.’ No heroic gestures, medical examinations or passports were required. Just \$230 would secure them a place on the 11 ½ hour, 8,500-kilometre journey.¹⁶⁴

The *Sun Herald* described the man behind the venture as ‘Mr Dick Smith, who runs a chain of electronic stores in Sydney and suburbs’. At 32, Smith was in fact one of Australia’s youngest self-made millionaires. In nine years, he had transformed \$610 and an interest in car radios into a \$7.35 million-dollar electronics business.¹⁶⁵ Smith’s motivation for organising the flight, he explained, was that he lacked alternatives: ‘It suddenly occurred to me that I’d been around the world about eight times and there was nowhere else to go, except the South Pole.’¹⁶⁶

Earlier that year, Smith had called Qantas to propose the idea of an Antarctic tourist flight and was told it was impossible. Aside from a swathe of regulatory obstacles, Qantas management doubted that Smith would find 140 paying passengers to fill the Boeing 707 aircraft. ‘Who’s going to fly to Antarctica?’ he remembers the Qantas charter department

164 Peter Spooner, “\$230 Champagne Jet Down to the Pole,” *Sydney Sun Herald*, 7 November 1976.

165 Ike Bain, *The Dick Smith Way* (McGraw-Hill Australia, 2002).

166 Spooner, “\$230 Champagne Jet Down to the Pole.”

asking him.¹⁶⁷ Less than three months later, the airline agreed to the idea. If Smith was willing to pay \$30,000 for the charter, the Boeing 707 was his for the day. A Qantas press release titled ‘A Day at the Pole’, confirmed the news story:

Qantas plans to operate a special charter flight to the South Magnetic Pole next February. The aircraft will take fare-paying passengers from Sydney for an 11 1/2 hour flight over the Antarctic on Sunday, February 13, departing at 10am and returning at 9.30pm that night...The fare will be \$230 economy and \$295 first class. The point at which the aircraft will fly is more than 2,500 miles south of Sydney and over the Antarctic landmass. The plane will not land but will make several low altitude passes over the region so that all passengers will have excellent views.¹⁶⁸

Dick Smith Electronics, Smith’s rapidly growing electronics business, fielded enquiries for the flight. A local travel agency offered to arrange all ticketing at no cost, and Smith’s wife, Pip, developed a rotating seating arrangement that would allow all passengers equal viewing of the ice. Smith would make no profit from the tourist venture. What remained from the tourists’ fares after the charter costs had been covered would be donated to charity. Nonetheless, Smith expected the venture to draw significant attention to Dick Smith Electronics and was confident the flights would appeal to the public at large: ‘They could get to work on Monday morning and, when people asked where they’d been on the weekend, they’d say, “To the South Pole”’.¹⁶⁹

By the time the *Sun Herald* story had run, the flight was 75 percent full. ‘I just happened to mention it to a couple of business associates and it’s gone about word-of-mouth’, Smith

167 Dick Smith, pers. comm., 1 December 2014

168 Qantas Heritage Collection, “Qantas Antarctic Route Brief,” in *Antarctic Flights* (1978).

169 Dick Smith, pers. comm., 1 December 2014

told the newspaper.¹⁷⁰ Once the news story was printed, Dick Smith Electronics phone lines were flooded. Smith promptly called Qantas requesting that the 140-seat Boeing 707 aircraft be replaced with a 407-seat Boeing 747. Soon thereafter, he was on the phone to Qantas again, this time asking for the charter of a second Boeing 747. The second Dick Smith charter to Antarctica was scheduled for 16 March 1977.



A product of Sydney's middle class northern suburbs, Smith was an astute, impulsive and impatient businessman who thought of himself as a 'simple bushwalker and transistor salesman'.¹⁷¹ An unmotivated student and untrained businessman, he spent his early years immersed in the Boy Scout movement and was a recipient of the Movement's highest honour, the Baden-Powell Award.¹⁷² Smith neither smoked nor drank, and cared little for luxury goods or an exciting social life.¹⁷³ In 1969, aged twenty-three, he married eighteen-year-old Pip, a loyal and easy-going former Girl Guide who endured his frenetic ways and provided him with the family life he wanted: 'A lot of my friends had girls who were uni types. I wanted someone more like my mother who was happy to look after the children.'¹⁷⁴

In 1975, six years after the launch of Dick Smith Electronics, the business reported \$2.3 million in sales. Smith's face, which was used as the business trademark, featured frequently in Sydney's newspapers and electronics magazines. Dick himself emerged as a public figure specialising in philanthropy, practical jokes and patriotic activism.

170 Spooner, \$230 Champagne Jet Down to the Pole".

171 Bain, *The Dick Smith Way*, xi.

172 Rick Feneley, "Queen's Birthday Honours: Dick Smith, a 'Dumb' Kid Who Was Almost Never Famous," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 June 2015.

173 Keith Finlay, "Dick Smith: What Is He Really Like?," *The Australian Women's Weekly*, 19 July 1978.

174 Ibid., 52.

When American chain, Tandy Electronics, opened a branch just doors away from one of Smith's stores, he appealed to his young, impressionable staff for support. 'Why should a foreign firm be allowed by the Australian Government to take over the Australian market from the Australian people and remain 99 percent foreign owned?' Smith wrote in a staff newsletter.¹⁷⁵ He and his staff turned out to protest in front of the Tandy store with placards declaring 'Go Home Yanks'. Widespread press coverage of the event 'made us the Australian underdogs, attracting a lot of customer support,' recalled Smith's business partner Ike Bain.¹⁷⁶ Smith was a savvy marketer who saw no conflict between promoting his business and his social causes, and believed strongly that 'there should be fun in making money'.¹⁷⁷

Smith was also an avid aviator and adventurer. In 1973, he received his pilot's licence and, in 1975, bought his first plane. As Dick Smith Electronics grew, he spent less time in the office and more in the air. Averse to risk and addicted to adventure, he enjoyed extending his personal boundaries while careful to maintain a self-perception of being the risk-manager, not the risk-taker. Smith eliminated, or greatly reduced, his risk by meticulous planning. But, as Bain reflects in his biography of the eccentric entrepreneur, Smith 'liked pushing himself by living on the edge and enjoyed the possibility that he could fail'.¹⁷⁸ One of Smith's prospective adventures included flying an Australian-built Nomad aircraft to the Geographic South Pole. He hoped to achieve this in time for the 50th anniversary of the first powered flight in Antarctica, which was achieved in 1928 by his hero, Australian aviator and polar explorer Sir Hubert Wilkins. Due to difficulties with sourcing the Nomad, he had turned his attention to organising a Qantas flight to Antarctica.

175 Bain, *The Dick Smith Way*, 23.

176 Ibid., 24.

177 Finlay, "Dick Smith: What Is He Really Like?", 52.

178 Bain, *The Dick Smith Way*, 78.

As plans for the 1977 tourist flight progressed, he adopted a polar exploration theme for the charter flight. The flight was framed as an expedition to follow in the footsteps of Australia's most famed Antarctic explorer, Sir Douglas Mawson, and the 1911-14 Australasian Antarctic Expedition he led. The flight route would fly over Macquarie Island and Commonwealth Bay, where the Australasian Antarctic Expedition had established bases and conducted major scientific investigation in geology, cartography, meteorology, aurora, geomagnetism and biology. It would pass by glaciers and bays named by and for members of the expedition. And Mawson's heroic efforts to locate and reach the South Magnetic Pole would be referenced as the plane flew over this invisible dot in the ocean. While Smith admired Mawson, who was appointed professor of geology and mineralogy at the University of Adelaide in 1921, he preferred a less academic breed of explorer. 'Mawson was a scientist,' he explained. 'Wilkins was the greatest adventurer in the world.'¹⁷⁹



On the morning of Sunday 13 February 1977, Dick Smith's 'Antarctic Antic' sprang to life at Sydney's International Airport. In the departure terminal, a large crowd gathered ahead of the 9 am boarding time. While most of the 300 passengers were Australian, several Germans and Americans had flown to Sydney to join the Antarctic flight. Overhead, a departure board listing international flights to the United States, Singapore and Hong Kong included the entry 'Qantas 144 D.S. Ant. Flt. – Sth Mag. Pole'.¹⁸⁰ Consistent with the expedition theme, mascots in explorer-garb greeted and amused the crowd, while press photographers captured scenes to accompany Monday's headline.

179 Dick Smith, pers. comm., 1 December 2014

180 Harry. Black, "Jumbo Jet to Antarctica," *Aurora: ANARE Club Journal* Midwinter 1977: 95.

One of those Australians was Harry Black, who joined the flight as an expert commentator. Black had served as Office-in-Charge at Macquarie Island in 1957 and at Australia's Wilkes Station in 1960. His job today was to educate and entertain the passengers during the flight, with talks about the continent's geography, biology and environmental threats, and about life on an Antarctic station. 'People of all ages and backgrounds milled around,' observed Black in the departure terminal, 'the one common bond apparently being an intense desire to see the mysterious continent, however briefly, with their own eyes'.¹⁸¹

The aircraft chosen for the flight was the 'City of Canberra' which had, six years earlier, become Qantas's, and Australia's, first Jumbo Jet. Piloted by captains Allan Terrell and Ken Nicholson, the B747 left Sydney at 9.45am and headed south. The aircraft weighed 344 tonnes, almost half of the tonnage accounted for by fuel. Smith had arranged for 100 seats to remain unbooked to maximise viewing. While there had been no check-in luggage and very little carry-on baggage, almost every passenger carried a camera to record the historic flight. Equipment ranged from well-worn household instamatic cameras to \$2,000 Hasselblads with \$1,000 lenses.

After leaving mainland Australia and crossing Tasmania, the aircraft set a course for Macquarie Island. The island once described by Mawson as one of the wonder spots of the world was barely visible, a cloud-shrouded dot in the ocean. But Black, who knew it well, could not have missed it and, upon sighting it, established radio contact with the winter team. They continued their southern journey in an 'unbroken sea of cloud' and, closer to the Antarctic continent, began its descent from 35,000 feet to 3,000 feet. Then, 100 kilometres off shore, the plane emerged into sunshine. Passengers crowded the windows to gain their first view of Antarctic ice. 'Cameras were clicking away by the

181

Ibid.

hundred,’ Black wrote.¹⁸²

Upon reaching the Antarctic continent, they cruised along the coast of George V Land. ‘Below us,’ observed Black, ‘the sea ice, crossed and seamed with tide crack patterns, clutched in its grasp dozens of icebergs. Here and there stretches of open water sparkled blue in brilliant sunshine, an occasional seal lying hauled out on the ice.’¹⁸³ Straight ahead of them, bridging the polar plateau and the ocean was the Ninnis Glacier, scarred with hundreds of long, slender parallel crevasses. A little further on they caught glimpses of Mertz Glacier and, beyond that, the polar plateau ‘climbed unendingly into the distance’.¹⁸⁴

Halving its speed to 300 knots, the aircraft cruised at 6,000 feet towards Commonwealth Bay where the Australasian Antarctic Expedition had established its main base 65 years earlier. Mawson’s Hut at Cape Denison, the Home of the Blizzard, was almost entirely consumed by drift snow, dumped there by the strongest winds in the world. Three people on board who were particularly keen to see the hut were Sir Douglas Mawson’s daughters—Pat and Jessica—and his grandson, Gareth Thomas. As one of the flight’s special guests, Thomas was invited to give a speech about his grandfather’s achievements in Antarctica and to be photographed with Smith during the flight. While the flight was a proud moment for Thomas, he admits that he grew up with only the faintest idea of his grandfather’s fame: ‘I had some vague idea that my grandfather had been the first to climb Everest,’ he recalled.¹⁸⁵

As a child, Thomas was surrounded by Antarctic memorabilia. ‘We’d go fishing wearing

182 Ibid., 97.

183 Ibid., 96.

184 Ibid.

185 Gareth Thomas, pers. comm., 21 November 2014.

balaclavas that had been to Antarctica. We had scarves and socks and that sort of thing.’¹⁸⁶ His memories of his grandfather, who died when Thomas was ten years old, were of a man who was tall but never imposing. He remembered his grandfather teaching him to build a fire in the fireplace of their family home. Mawson’s fame, however, just was not talked about frequently in the family.

Thomas, a 29-year-old visual arts teacher, had strayed from the scientific path pursued by his grandfather and parents, both marine scientists. And although he once applied for a job as an Australian Antarctic expeditioner, he conceded that ‘as someone with an arts background there wasn’t much chance.’¹⁸⁷ Like most other Australians, Thomas was unaware of Lars-Eric Lindblad and his expedition cruises to Antarctica. Nor could he afford a \$3,000 berth on the *Lindblad Explorer*. For most on board, the \$230 day trip was a splurge, but an attainable opportunity to see a place to which they could never go.

Cruising over Commonwealth Bay, Thomas contemplated the physical and emotional suffering his grandfather had endured on the ice directly beneath him six decades earlier. In November 1912, when Mawson, Belgrave Ninnis, Xavier Mertz and a team of dogs left Cape Denison on the Far-Eastern Journey, they traversed dangerously crevassed terrain, exploring and mapping extensive areas of previously uncharted coastline. Two months later, Ninnis and Mertz were dead. Mawson, weak and alone, was 100 miles from Cape Denison. To survive, he dragged a sledge he had refitted with a pocket tool across uneven ice for 30 days. His feet badly abraded, he suffered excruciating pain and cheated death multiple times after falling through the lid of a crevasse. When a reporter asked Thomas how he felt flying over Commonwealth Bay, he told him he felt ‘guilty’.¹⁸⁸

186 Ibid.

187 Ibid.

188 “Day-Trippers See a Polar Base,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 February 1977, 4.

Continuing westward from Commonwealth Bay, the aircraft descended to within 1,500 feet of a collection of neat red buildings nestled in a small archipelago of rocky islands—France’s Dumont d’Urville station. ‘The giant plane circled the base three times. We could clearly see snow vehicles parked nearby...and a launch chugging offshore,’ Black wrote.¹⁸⁹ Tiny black dots rushed out onto the surrounding snow and waved skyward. They were the scientists and support staff stationed at Dumont d’Urville for the summer. The whole plane cheered.

The *City of Canberra* then headed northwest towards the South Magnetic Pole with expert commentator, Charlie Barton, on hand to explain why the aircraft would not be flying due south. From the cockpit, Barton, a PhD student in geophysics at the Australian National University, explained over the public-address system that the Geographic South Pole, which was defined by the earth’s rotation axis, was a fixed location that sat at the 90th southern parallel. The South Magnetic Pole, on the other hand, was a point on the earth’s surface at which the magnetic field was precisely vertical. It was more a phenomenon than a location, moving steadily and not necessarily in the same direction.¹⁹⁰ In 1908, when Mawson, Edgeworth David and Alistair Mackay man-hauled their sledges 2,028 kilometres in a quest to reach the South Magnetic Pole, it was located high on the polar plateau at 72° 25’ South. By now, Barton estimated, it had drifted offshore to within 50 and 100 kilometres of the Antarctic coastline.

Flying aircraft in an area where magnetic compasses became less accurate, and entirely useless at the Pole itself, could have posed navigational problems for the Qantas pilots. But the aircraft’s navigator used gyrocompass headings which he cross-checked using a sextant. In any case, others were paying close attention to the aircraft’s course. During

189 Black, “Jumbo Jet to Antarctica”, 98.

190 Charles Barton, pers. comm., 21 September 2016.

regular visits to the cockpit, Smith plotted the flight's geographical coordinates on his own map. One of the passengers brought his own ship's compass which he clutched lovingly during the whole flight. And another brought a globe on which he faithfully checked the aircraft's position every few minutes and reported it with monotonous regularity to nearby passengers.¹⁹¹

With the Antarctic continent and South Magnetic Pole behind them, and over eight hours of flying time clocked, the passengers settled down for the return flight to Sydney. The excitement and energy that filled the cabin confirmed to Black that the flight had been a great success. Several people also confessed to him that 'the trip had transcended their wildest hopes'.¹⁹² But the strange sensation of a pleasure flight over such unforgiving terrain was not lost on them. One journalist reflected that:

To fly above the home of the blizzard was not to feel the sting of the wind and snow,
nor the isolation and suffering of the explorers.

A steward served champagne. We headed north to the summer.¹⁹³

191 New Zealand Antarctic Society, "First Day Trips to Antarctica," *Antarctic* 8, no. 1 (1977).

192 Black, "Jumbo Jet to Antarctica", 99.

193 "Day-Trippers See a Polar Base.", 4

Less than 50 years earlier, when Sir Hubert Wilkins' two Lockheed Vega monoplanes were lowered from the deck of a whaling ship to the icy Antarctic waters below, powered flight had not yet been achieved in Antarctica. It was November 1928, when Antarctic maps were still dominated by blank space, especially over the continent's interior where he hoped to fly. Little was known about Antarctic weather patterns except that they were fierce and fickle. And although Lockheed was a world leader in aircraft manufacture, the potential for mid-air mechanical failures, especially in polar temperatures, was high. Making matters worse, much of the sea ice around the island had broken up and scattered, foiling Wilkins' plans to use an ice runway. The next best alternative was the volcanic hillside behind his summer base at Deception Island's whaling station. Wilkins' team, with the help of Norwegian whalers, spent days digging a 550-metre long runway that included two 20-degree bends, two hills and three ditches.¹⁹⁴

On 16 November, after days of waiting out fog, Wilkins and co-pilot, Ben Eielson took off for a brief exploratory flight. It was the first ever made in the Antarctic. On 20 December, they took off again, this time with sextant, camera and fuel for 1,200 miles of flight. With no maps to guide them, they discovered new land, the first time this had been achieved using an aeroplane, and travelled as far as 71° South. The aircraft were stocked with a two-month supply of food and survival gear, but realistically, their chances of using it were slim. Either they came back or they crashed. Fortunately for Wilkins and Eilsen, they returned to the Deception Island whaling station nine hours and 25 minutes after take off, and just in time for dinner.

As David Courtwright has written, in his illuminating cultural history of aviation, early 20th century aviation culture was masculine, competitive and inclined to high risk.¹⁹⁵ The year

194 Simon Nasht, *The Last Explorer: Hubert Wilkins, Australia's Unknown Hero* (Hachette Australia, 2011).

195 D.T. Courtwright, *Sky as Frontier: Adventure, Aviation and Empire* (Texas A & M University Press, 2005).

before Wilkins' Antarctic flight, thirty pioneering aviators were killed trying to cross the Atlantic Ocean. Yet by the 1930s, and with the advent of dependable, multi-engine planes and advertising promoting their convenience and safety, significant numbers of women, children and old people began to fly. As the airline industry adopted heavier regulation, training became more formal. By the 1940s, 'air colleges' required stewardesses to take courses in fifteen different subject areas, from meteorology to charm.¹⁹⁶ But even in the 1950s, air travel remained a mode of transport, and status symbol, only for the wealthy.

The introduction in the late 1950s of jet airplanes, like the Boeing 707 and the Douglas DC-8, changed this. Powerful and durable, jets enabled aircraft manufacturers to build bigger, faster, and more productive airliners. Jet technology enabled airlines to reduce operating costs and airfares. Costs and efficiency dropped even more dramatically with the release of the Boeing 747 in 1970. The 400-seat 'Jumbo Jet' carried two and a half times more passengers than the 189-seat Boeing 707. By 1956, sporadic tourist flights on jet aircraft commenced in Antarctica. The first tourist flight to the Antarctic—a Chilean McDonnell Douglas DC-6B of Linea Aerea Nacional—took place in December 1956.¹⁹⁷

In 1957, Pan Am became the first commercial airline to land an aeroplane on the Antarctic ice, a feat achieved with four fuelling stops. Part of the International Geophysical Year, the flight landed at the United States naval air facility at McMurdo Base, carrying 38 government personnel. Antarctica was now only '60 hours away', one reporter mused.¹⁹⁸

196 Ibid., 136.

197 Reich, "The Development of Antarctic Tourism".

198 Franklin Johnson, "Antarctica Is 60 Hours Away", *Central Press Association*, 24 December 1957.

Before consistent Antarctic overflights commenced in 1976, several groups had put forward ideas to fly tourists to US McMurdo Station. With few exceptions, the US Antarctic Policy Group had refused permission. It did, however, agree to a tourist flight across the continent in November 1968, because it was a one-off non-commercial venture, organised by the Richard E. Byrd Polar Center in Boston. As part of the flight, 75 passengers landed at Williams Field, the American airstrip near McMurdo Station, before continuing the flight over the South Pole to Rio Gallegos in Argentina.¹⁹⁹

In November 1969, representatives from Air New Zealand and the Civil Aviation division of New Zealand's Ministry of Transport inspected the Williams Field air facility at McMurdo Station with the idea of conducting tourist flights to Antarctica. The proposal included use of five to eight DC-8 aircraft traveling from Christchurch to McMurdo and carrying 50 to 90 passengers. While satisfied that there were no operational problems in flying to McMurdo Sound and landing on ice runways, the team decided to defer further action until passenger accommodation facilities could be found or built at McMurdo Station. As New Zealand Antarctic Division superintendent, Bob Thomson, put it, 'it is no good having a half-baked effort. If it is done, then it must be done in a big way.'²⁰⁰

Reports also surfaced that Holm and Co. Ltd, the shipping company from which Lars-Eric Lindblad had chartered the *Magga Dan* in 1968, would offer cruises for those tourists flying to McMurdo Station with Air New Zealand. Captain J.F. Holm told reporters that working with Lindblad had proved highly successful but 'extremely expensive.' 'Since then the company has concentrated on the idea of flying passengers to and from the Antarctic as being a much more economical proposition,' Holm noted.²⁰¹

199 Reich, "The Development of Antarctic Tourism".

200 New Zealand Antarctic Society, "Antarctic Tourism?," *Antarctic* 5, no. 9 (1970): 405.

201 "Antarctic Tourism," *Antarctic* 5, no. 8 (1969): 353-4.

Nothing came of Air New Zealand's Antarctic tourist flight plans until Qantas launched its first Antarctic tourist flights. In December 1976, Air New Zealand announced its own flights, which would travel to Antarctica via Auckland and Christchurch. As the planes would not land on the continent, there was no need for passenger facilities on the ice. And instead of using DC-8s, Air New Zealand would use its new long-range aircraft, the DC-10. These were initially proposed as charter flights, like those run by Qantas, but they were later operated as non-scheduled domestic transport flights. The first flight was planned for 15 February 1977, two days after the first Qantas flight, and the second on 22 February. They sold out within eight days of being announced.²⁰²

For \$245, Air New Zealand's passengers received a super economy class fare to McMurdo Sound, where, the airline hastened to add, the explorers of Antarctica's heroic age had begun their journeys towards the South Pole. After an 8 am take-off in Auckland, the DC-10s flew with 232 passengers on the first flight, and 220 passengers on the second flight. En route, while enjoying a champagne breakfast, and prawns and 'Peach Erebus' for lunch, they were entertained and educated by expert commentators including New Zealand mountaineer and explorer, Sir Edmund Hillary (who *was* the first person to climb Everest). Also joining the first flight were Robert Falcon Scott's grand-niece.²⁰³

After travelling the length of New Zealand, the day-trippers flew south towards the Antarctic continent via the Auckland and Balleny Islands. By early afternoon, as they approached the continent's ice shelves and mountains, the aircraft descended from a cruising altitude of over 30,000 feet, making a low sweep through the centre of McMurdo Sound. They passed Ross Island's two volcanoes, Mount Erebus, still active, and Mount Terror, long extinct. Mount Erebus' familiar white spiral of steam appeared against a

202 "Day-Trippers See a Polar Base."

203 "First Day Trips to Antarctica," 35.

brilliantly blue sky. As they approached New Zealand's Scott Base and US McMurdo Station, conversations were initiated and relayed through the public-address system for all passengers to hear. Personnel from Scott Base provided a flashing-mirror welcome, and the winter dog handler brought out the huskies, which appeared to the Air New Zealand passengers as tiny black dots against the ice.

From there, the aircraft passed over Shackleton's hut at Cape Royds and Scott's hut at Cape Evans. Finally, they crossed Victoria Land's glaciers and dry valleys before setting a northward course for Christchurch. In eleven hours, the mostly New Zealand passengers had followed 4,971 miles of heroic footsteps. Furthermore, as stressed in the New Zealand Antarctic Society's report of the first Kiwi flight, they had travelled 300 miles further south than the Australian overflight had two days earlier.



In addition to the Dick Smith and Air New Zealand flights, a fifth Antarctic tourist flight was organised that summer. Operated by Qantas on 20 February 1977, the charterer was high school inspector and former geography teacher, Don Sinclair. Initially hesitant, Qantas eventually agreed to Sinclair's idea for a charter flight from Melbourne to Antarctica. It stipulated that the flight must take place on a Sunday, the only day a Boeing 707 could be made available, and that Sinclair must not make a profit from the flight.²⁰⁴

The flight attracted 140 people, mostly friends and fellow geography teachers, who paid \$295 for a fare. Some had a personal link to Antarctica. Former Australian footballer, Neil Roberts, was officer-in-charge of Australia's Mawson station from 1971-73, and Don

204 Don Sinclair, pers. comm., 14 November 2014

Gibson went to Antarctica in 1950 as an expeditioner. Yet most passengers, like Carina Reed, had no connection with polar exploration: ‘I just always had some ridiculous fascination for Antarctica,’ she said.²⁰⁵ Many of those on board felt the same way. As geography teachers, they were better acquainted with Antarctica than the average tourist. Several had mentioned to Sinclair that they knew much about the continent but would never have the opportunity to see it for themselves. Inspired by reading about Dick Smith’s Antarctic charter flight from Sydney, Sinclair set out to organise his own charter from Melbourne to make geography more real for its teachers.

This was not the first charter flight Sinclair had arranged. The former geography teacher and air force officer had chartered a DC-3 from Ansett Airways for a 30-minute aerial survey with his Year Eleven class. The students’ task was to complete a survey of land use in the Melbourne metropolitan area. ‘The flight cost them eleven shillings and sixpence,’ Sinclair recalls.²⁰⁶ Over the summer, Sinclair led tours for high-end travel agency, Wandana Travel, which in turn agreed to arrange ticketing for the Antarctic flight.

On the morning of 20 February, the Boeing 707 aircraft, filled with 140 excited passengers, was towed to the top of the Tullamarine runway. Owing to the aircraft’s relatively small fuel capacity—it carried just 70 tonnes of fuel compared to 344 tonnes on the Boeing 747—flying time, distance and vertical proximity to ice would be limited. The smallest of fuel-saving measures were considered seriously, like the aircraft’s tow to the runway, which secured the sightseers an additional seven minutes of flying time. Leaving Melbourne at 8 am, captains Ken Davenport and Neil Anderson flew the Boeing 707 to Macquarie Island, and then headed for the rugged Admiralty Range on the north-east of Victoria Land. On Sinclair’s request, six rows of seats had been removed from the front of

205 M. Roberts, “Polar Explorers Get a Clouded View,” *The Age*, 21 February 1977, 4.

206 Don Sinclair, pers. comm., 14 November 2014

the aircraft to create a viewing vestibule and Qantas had replaced the aircraft's windows with new, unscratched plastic especially for the flight.

While Qantas crew and its passengers were in high spirits and ready for a picturesque flight, Antarctica had other plans. Soon after they had sighted their first iceberg, a large tabular berg measuring more than 48 kilometres in length and 11 kilometres in width, heavy clouds 'socked in' the aircraft. 'It's a long way to come to see one iceberg,' commented Captain Davenport.²⁰⁷ As they approached the Antarctic coastline at Cape Washington, the captain found a break in the cloud and descended to 1,500 feet altitude. Under the cloud, visibility was 48 kilometres and the passengers could see the pack ice, icebergs, a rugged coastline and several penguin colonies. Even so, low altitude flying was burning large sums of fuel and could not last long. After circling a few times for the benefit of photographers, the aircraft flew on to 74° 38' South. It passed over the joint United States-New Zealand station at Cape Hallett and Cape Adare before returning to a cruising altitude of 30,000 feet for its return flight to Melbourne. When it touched down in Melbourne at 7.20pm, the Antarctic overflight had covered a distance of 4,805 nautical miles, reached 74° 38' South and consumed 61 of its 70 tonnes of fuel.²⁰⁸

Due to the cloud cover, only six minutes of the eleven-hour flight had afforded clear views of icebergs and the Antarctic continent. 'It was a bit of a disaster,' recalls Sinclair.²⁰⁹ Yet the weather did not seem to matter to the passengers who were 'thrilled' to be on the flight. Each passenger took home an information folder provided by Qantas and a brass medal that read 'Qantas Wandana Antarctic Flight – First Passenger Flight Melbourne to Magnetic South Pole.' The \$620.20 remaining after the charter cost had been covered

207 Roberts, "Polar Explorers Get a Clouded View", 4

208 Qantas Heritage Collection, "Qantas Antarctic Route Brief," in *Antarctic Flights* (1978).

209 Don Sinclair pers. comm., 14 November 2014

was donated to school students in Derrinallum, a farming region 175 kilometres west of Melbourne, whose families had lost their homes in the Western District fires just one week earlier.²¹⁰



Over the course of the next three summers, 37 more Antarctic tourist flights were launched. Air New Zealand operated twelve of these, all of them as unscheduled domestic flights. Similar to its first flights, these focused on the McMurdo Sound area, where highlights included the Ross Ice Shelf, Mount Erebus, New Zealand and American research stations and the historic relics of Scott and Shackleton. The remaining 25 flights were charters operated by Qantas flying out of Australia. These focused on Commonwealth Bay, geographic features and relics connected with Mawson's Antarctic expeditions, France's Dumont d'Urville Station and the South Magnetic Pole. Dick Smith chartered five of these flights, the last of them on 16 November 1978, which fell on the 50th anniversary of Wilkins' first Antarctic flight. Replacing Dick Smith were numerous Australian travel agencies and organisations including Rotary and Scouts clubs, Bush Pilots Australia, Foundation 41 and Legacy. Don Sinclair also encouraged Wandana Travel to organise its own Antarctic charter flights, which it did on four occasions.²¹¹

Overflight tourists were predominantly Australians and New Zealanders, although the flights also attracted a considerable number of Americans and Japanese. A small handful on each flight held a personal connection to Antarctic exploration, like Eric Webb who joined a Dick Smith charter on 1 December 1977. The 88-year-old New Zealander was one of the last survivors of Mawson's Australasian Antarctic Expedition. As chief

210 Roberts, "Polar Explorers Get a Clouded View", 4.

211 Qantas Heritage Collection, "Qantas Antarctic Route Brief," in *Antarctic Flights* (1978).

magnetician of the expedition, he and two others had hauled a sledge 482 kilometres south from Cape Denison in driving blizzards and temperatures below zero to come within 80 kilometres of the South Magnetic Pole. Over six decades later, he looked down over that same stretch of ice while served a three-course meal in the first-class cabin of a jumbo jet. In the case of most others, they were ordinary people on an extraordinary ride. They watched with wonderment, through layers of plexiglass, as an altogether surreal and distant world stretched out before them. Buffered from the sting of an Antarctic gust, the smell of a penguin colony and the sound of cracking ice, sight became the potent sense through which they encountered that world.

The challenge for expert commentator on Antarctic overflights was to bridge the disconnect between the distant scene that held their gaze and a full sensual experience of the ice. ‘You have to make them feel cold and on the ground,’ explained Knowles Kerry, who joined Wandana Travel’s Antarctic flights as an expert commentator. For Kerry, this all began as the aircraft passed over Macquarie Island. He endeavoured to ‘build up’ the experience and keep the passengers focused and engaged by imaginatively depicting what was in store for them. A biologist by profession, Kerry was Acting Assistant Director Science of the Australian Antarctic Division when he was approached by Wandana Travel to commentate on their overflights. He also wrote some travel notes which they published and handed out to passengers. Kerry endeavoured to transport his audience away from their reclining chairs and tray tables, and down that last 1,500 feet to rest their feet on rock and ice.

Interpreters’ efforts to evoke feelings of being ‘cold and on the ground’ proved particularly challenging when the continent was hidden from sight. Weather conditions always remained a gamble in the Antarctic, and the luckless might see little more than endless

cloud for much of the flight. When Captain Geoffrey Piggott consulted weather forecasts before piloting the first Antarctic flight to depart from Perth, on 5 February 1979, he was less than impressed. Strong winds and a solid cloud band were expected in the vicinity of the flight path. Discussing the forecast with the charterer, he made no attempts to silver-line the heavy cloud-cover: ‘If it was my money I would stay home,’ he told the charterer.²¹² But the Perth businessman organising the charter was adamant: ‘Everyone was there and the aircraft was loaded with food and booze’.²¹³ Weather was also a problem for ship-based tours, of course. But these were much longer, and had time to wait out a storm. Plus, inclement weather could add drama and authenticity to a voyage by sea. Surviving a Southern Ocean storm was a rite of passage, an initiation into explorerhood.

For the Antarctic overflight, poor weather proved disastrous. ‘They were the trips from hell,’ Kerry revealed.²¹⁴ They were particularly challenging for the commentator who had to keep the passengers entertained while circling over cloud with only an occasional glimpse through it to Antarctica below. Fortunately for Captain Piggott and his passengers, when the aircraft descended to 10,000 feet, he was greeted with ‘clear blue sky and not a ripple in the water’. After superb views of the Eastern Antarctic coast, the plane turned home for Perth. ‘The flight home was a merry one—the passengers drank the ship dry,’ Piggott wrote.²¹⁵

For a few adventurers, the aircraft’s inner world was even more important or interesting than the world outside. Kerry recalled the time he noticed one passenger remain fixed in his centre-seat for the entire overflight, barely making any effort to glimpse the views of

212 Ibid.

213 Ibid.

214 Knowles Kerry, pers. comm., 27 November 2014

215 Qantas Heritage Collection, “Qantas Antarctic Route Brief,” in *Antarctic Flights* (1978).

the ice. When Kerry approached the man on the return journey, he explained that he had always wanted to fly on a jumbo jet. ‘I looked up the cheapest jumbo flight and this was it,’ he told Kerry.²¹⁶

It was not uncommon for birthdays, anniversaries and marriage proposals to be announced over the public-address system from the cockpit and for celebrations to break out on board. For his final Antarctic charter, Dick Smith went in search of a couple willing to be the first in history to exchange vows above Antarctica. The volunteer couple, a gunsmith and debt collector from Sydney, were married by the Reverend Ted Noffs. ‘We are gathered today in the sight of God...in a cathedral made not by man’s hand, but God’s,’ Noffs announced at 70° South.²¹⁷ On such occasions Antarctica was relegated to the role of backdrop. It became a peculiar aside rather than the main event.

There was some public criticism of the overflights as sources of environmental destruction. This criticism was countered by those in favour of the flights, who emphasised their environmental benefits. ‘It’s the most wonderful way of seeing Antarctica without having an impact,’ Dick Smith insisted.²¹⁸ ‘It is better to have tourists fly over Antarctica than to have them on the ice itself’, Sir Edmund Hillary added.²¹⁹ But not everyone saw it this way.

A cartoon published in Sydney’s *Daily Telegraph* the day following Qantas’ first Antarctic flight expressed a viewpoint less optimistic than Smith and Hillary’s. The scene depicted one penguin addressing the rest of its colony as a giant Qantas jumbo jet looms above.

216 Knowles Kerry, pers. comm., 27 November 2014

217 Ben Sandilands, “Sydney Couple Wed in Antarctic Skies,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 November 1978.

218 Dick Smith, pers. comm., 1 December 2014

219 New Zealand Antarctic Society, “First Day Trips to Antarctica.”, 38

Below the image a caption read: ‘It means this . . . today, sightseers, tomorrow developers and urban sprawl.’²²⁰ The Australian government was regularly approached by individuals and businesses with development proposals for the Antarctic. One such proposal, for a tourist resort and airstrip, suggested that Australians who liked winter sports would spend the summer Christmas holidays in Antarctica. ‘The service could also attract students, and prospectors for minerals and oil’, the proponent claimed.²²¹

In the meantime, tourist flights presented a compelling answer to the many Antarctic station leaders and personnel who complained that Antarctic tourism was disruptive to their work. Any disruption the flights might cause were limited to radio exchanges—both between air traffic controllers and pilots and between station personnel and expert commentators—and the minutes the expeditioners took from their work to scatter outside and greet the aircraft as it soared overhead. While some of the ‘blokes’ grumbled that the flights were not ‘the real thing’, many welcomed the visit as a fleeting reprise from an isolated existence.²²² That is, of course, if the overflights went to plan. It was when accidents happened, warned a New Zealand Antarctic Society article, that station personnel would find themselves in a difficult predicament: ‘And happen they certainly will in this place of lurking dangers.’²²³ This was a chilling premonition.

Although Qantas and Air New Zealand acknowledged that they were operating the tourist flights in remote areas where radio contact was sparse and search-and-rescue conditions difficult, they insisted that overflights were conducted with a level of safety comparable to that accepted for other remote areas. The airlines followed different rules of procedure

220 “Day-Trippers See a Polar Base.”

221 Letter D. Shipman to the Department of Tourism and Recreation, Received 1 August 1975 (NAA: B1387, 84/426 Part 2 International Relations - Advice - Tourism to and in Antarctica - 1972-78).

222 Knowles Kerry, pers. comm., 27 November 2014

223 New Zealand Antarctic Society, “Antarctic Tourism?,” 403

for operating in Antarctica but both required that aircraft always carry ample fuel to return to an alternate destination point in the case of an engine failure or depressurisation.

Aircraft were not permitted to proceed south of 60° South latitude unless communication with McMurdo Station was established. If communication with McMurdo Station was subsequently lost, the aircraft would be required to proceed to a point north of that latitude. Qantas also required that pilots of Antarctic overflights had flown to Antarctica previously. While Qantas aircraft were required to carry survival suits on board, Air New Zealand aircraft were not. Both airlines stipulated a minimum flight altitude—6,000 feet in the case of Air New Zealand and 10,000 feet in the case of Qantas. Yet pilots from both airlines descended below this minimum flight altitude on most flights, as was well documented in newspaper and magazine reports of the overflights.

Few people except those whose job it was to authorise, operate and pilot these flights paid great attention to the specifics of these operating rules. But that all changed in the late hours of 28 November 1979, when Air New Zealand flight TE 901 to Antarctica failed to return to Auckland Airport.



TE 901 was the fourth and final Antarctic flight scheduled for Air New Zealand in the 1979/80 summer season. As with all other Air New Zealand Antarctic flights, this one was scheduled early in the summer when weather was expected to be best. As summer progressed, extensive sea ice break-up could create large expanses of open water which in turn generated fog. Captain Thomas Collins and first officer Gregory Cassin assembled in the cockpit to prepare for the flight. According to the routine briefing they had attended

nineteen days earlier, they entered into the aircraft's navigation system the coordinates for the scheduled flight path to McMurdo Sound. Forecasts promised fine weather for much of the flight, with scattered clouds around McMurdo Sound.

The flight departed Auckland soon after 8 am with 237 passengers and 20 crew members on board. The majority were New Zealanders, although there was a large group of Japanese and Americans as well as people from the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Australia and Switzerland. Joining the flight as expert commentator was veteran Antarctic explorer, Peter Mulgrew.

By 12.30 pm, TE 901 had reached the coast of Antarctica, enjoying fine weather and excellent views of Northern Victoria Land's ice-encased mountains.²²⁴ From here, the aircraft proceeded further south to Cape Hallett and onto McMurdo Sound for the true sightseeing portion of the flight. It was typical of the DC-10s, now in their third year of Antarctic tourist flights, to fly down the Sound before turning left and passing over the flat ice shelf to the south of McMurdo Station and Scott Base. To offer the best possible views of the local features, pilots often did so at altitudes much lower than the 6,000-foot minimum altitude set by Air New Zealand. They would then return, flying past Scott Base again before heading north along McMurdo Sound, and climbing to a cruising altitude for the return journey to New Zealand.

As TE 901 approached McMurdo Sound at 12,000 feet, it entered a low band of cloud that obscured the sightseers' view. The pilots promptly requested permission to descend below it, in order to enjoy the 65 kilometres of visibility that local weather forecasts were promising. Permission to descend was granted by Mac Center, the main radio

224 Ron Chippendale, "Aircraft Accident Report No. 79-139," Office of Air Accidents Investigation (Wellington: Ministry of Transport, 1980), 39.

communications post at McMurdo Sound, and the good news was broadcast through the cabin.²²⁵ ‘We’re carrying out an orbit and circling our present position and will be descending to an altitude below cloud so that we can proceed to McMurdo Sound,’ announced Captain Collins.²²⁶

Anticipation mounted as the plane entered a wide orbit, the passengers anxious to penetrate the cloud band and glimpse the Antarctic continent. Some visited the cockpit and quizzed Mulgrew and the flight crew about their chances of seeing various landmarks. ‘We are descending below cloud now so better photographs soon,’ one of the flight crew answered.²²⁷ Behind the crew, Mulgrew kept a watchful eye out the flight deck window in the hopes of sighting a recognisable feature about which to wax lyrical. ‘I still can’t see very much at the moment,’ said Mulgrew over the public-address system.²²⁸ He promised to keep the passengers informed if he saw anything that gave him a clue as to their location.

Of the five people on the flight deck, only Mulgrew and one of two flight engineers had flown to Antarctica before, and only Mulgrew had stood on Antarctic ice. In 1955, Sir Edmund Hillary had invited the naval-trained wireless operator to join his 1957 Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition. Hillary and Mulgrew travelled on tracked vehicles with two other expedition members from McMurdo Sound to the South Pole. The effort earned Mulgrew a Polar Medal. He later joined Hillary’s 1960/61 Himalayan expedition, suffering severe frostbite that culminated in two amputated feet. Today, the cheerful and cocky 52-year-old was standing in for Hillary, who had been called away to other commitments.

225 Ibid., 10.

226 Ibid., 14., Annex C

227 Ibid., Annex C@14

228 Ibid., 25., Annex C

TE 901 then dipped below the cloud layer and local weather reports proved accurate. Sweeping views of mountains, glacial valleys and a sparkling sea, covered in disintegrating sea ice, became visible. In the cabin, people shuffled towards windows, gazed out on the ethereal landscape and industriously captured the unfolding scene on film. In the cockpit, the pilots confirmed their next steps with Mac Center. They would take one more wide orbit, descend to 2,000 feet and make a straight run across the middle of McMurdo Sound. On this course, they would fly abeam of Mount Erebus, 27 miles to their left, and the mountains of Victoria Land, 30 miles to their right. A few minutes after its last transmission with Mac Centre at 12.45pm, the aircraft should have appeared in the sky above McMurdo Station. Mac Center personnel watched and waited for the aircraft. But it never appeared.²²⁹

Mac Center's subsequent radio calls to TE 901 went unanswered, as did those from local aircraft asked to relay its messages. US Navy aircraft were dispatched and searched intensively for hours. Nothing was seen or heard of the aircraft. That evening, anxiety mounted as friends and relatives of TE 901 passengers gathered at Auckland Airport awaiting the overdue flight. At 8 pm, Air New Zealand released news that the DC-10 was overdue, noting that the aircraft still had fuel and that hope was not lost. An hour later, when it failed to arrive in New Zealand at a time by which all its fuel must have been exhausted, the airline declared TE 901 lost. Finally, at midnight, following over eight hours of searching, the reason for the aircraft's long silence was discovered. A US Navy aircraft found the wreckage of the DC-10 on the side of Mount Erebus. The crash site was located 1,500 feet up the northern slopes of the 12,450-foot volcano. There were no survivors.

229 Report of the Royal Commission to Inquire into the Crash on Mount Erebus, Antarctica, of a DC10 Aircraft Operated by Air New Zealand Limited, 1981, Presented to the House of Representatives by Command of the Governor-General, House of Representatives, Parliament of New Zealand (Wellington, N.Z: Govt. Printer, 1981).

In New Zealand, news of the 257 fatalities stunned not only the friends and family of TE 901 passengers and crew but the nation as a whole. The remoteness of the landscape and the forbidding white emptiness of the Antarctic terrain loomed in the press coverage of the story.²³⁰ In the northern hemisphere, news agencies were mystified as to what a passenger jet was doing in that remote wilderness at the end of the world in the first place.²³¹ The TE 901 search and rescue mission swiftly transformed into a recovery and investigation. Ron Chippendale, New Zealand's chief inspector of air accidents, was tasked with leading an air crash investigation. Because of public concern over the accident, the New Zealand government also held a one-man Royal Commission of Inquiry in 1980, headed by Justice Peter Mahon.

Recovery teams located the aircraft's black box and cockpit voice recorder. Both revealed that the aircraft and crew had performed as expected prior to the accident.²³² It was then assumed that weather had played a major factor in the crash; that the aircraft had suddenly become enveloped in heavy cloud.²³³ But scores of damaged cameras, recovered from the vast expanse of debris in the snow, proved otherwise. Prints were developed of film which had been exposed by cameras only seconds before the crash; prints that should have been developed by the cameras' owners and proudly shared with friends and family. These confirmed that the aircraft had been flying in clear air at the time it struck the mountain. Yet not a word had been uttered by anyone on the flight deck to indicate that the mountain slope was in sight. 'Not even in the last two or three seconds' Justice Mahon observed.²³⁴

230 Luke Strongman and Raymond Young, "'Decent Exposure': A Socio-Cultural Interpretation of Flight TE901," *The Polar Journal* 1, no. 1 (2011): 125.

231 Peter Mahon, *Verdict on Erebus* (Collins, 1984).

232 Chippendale, "Aircraft Accident Report No. 79-139".

233 Parliament of New Zealand, Royal Commission to Inquire into the Crash on Mount Erebus.

234 *Ibid.*, 11.

How could the aircraft have flown on a straight and level flight at 260 knots into the mountain side in clear air with no one on the flight deck seeing the mountain at any juncture? This mystery was explained, Mahon wrote, by ‘the insidious and unidentifiable terrain deception of a classic whiteout situation’.²³⁵ As a result of the large band of cloud that stretched out beneath them, and the position of the sun directly behind, the flight crew had encountered a visual illusion which made the rising white slope of Mount Erebus appear perfectly flat. According to Mahon, the whiteout was a ‘freak of polar weather’ that was ‘known and feared by every polar flier’. According to Chippendale, it was unlikely that the flight crew would have recognised the whiteout conditions.²³⁶

Chippendale and Mahon ultimately drew conflicting conclusions about the principal causes of what became commonly known as the ‘Mount Erebus Disaster’. Chippendale’s report, released on 12 June 1980, blamed the crash on pilot error. According to Chippendale’s assessment, Collins’ fatal flaw was ‘to continue the flight at low level toward an area of poor surface and horizon definition when the crew was not certain of their position’.²³⁷ Following the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the crash, Mahon’s report was released on 27 April 1981. It discredited Chippendale’s findings, arguing that there was ‘no danger in flying at 1,500 feet over any flat terrain in clear water.’ Neither pilot, Mahon added, even expressed the slightest doubt as to where the aircraft was.²³⁸

As part of the inquiry, Mahon had travelled to Antarctica and sat on the flight deck of a C-130 Hercules as it retraced TE 901’s flight path. From the point at which the DC-10 had entered its first descending orbit, the Hercules replicated its course, speed, altitude

235 Ibid., 19.

236 Chippendale, “Aircraft Accident Report No. 79-139”, 48.

237 Ibid., 47.

238 Parliament of New Zealand, Royal Commission to Inquire into the Crash on Mount Erebus, 17-18.

and rate of descent. As the second orbit was completed, the Hercules was straightened out for the run towards the mountain at 1,500 feet of altitude. The crash site could be seen without difficulty in the clear air. Mahon watched as the mountain, drenched in bright sunshine, grew larger and nearer at a speed of 260 knots. Then at a point two miles—or 30 seconds—from the crash site, the aircraft banked sharply to the left and steered off its deadly course. As he considered TE 901's final course, a question came to preoccupy Mahon. Given that TE 901 had followed its programmed flight path, or 'nav track', for almost the entire distance of the flight: 'Why were the two pilots unaware that nav track would guide the DC-10 directly at Mt. Erebus?'²³⁹

The remarkable answer, it was revealed, was that airline officials had altered the aircraft's flight plan the night before TE 901 was due to depart and had failed to tell the crew. When the flight crew had assembled in the cockpit to enter the flight path into the computer on the aircraft, they believed they were inserting the long-standing coordinates always used for flights to Antarctica, and which they had seen at the flight briefing nineteen days earlier. While Collins and Cassin believed that the nav track would guide them down the centre of McMurdo Sound, the revised flight path placed TE 901 on a collision course with the mountain. 'The omission to notify the flight crew of the change in the computer track was, of course, an appalling error. It was the originating and dominating factor behind the disaster', Mahon concluded.²⁴⁰

In a statement that further heightened the drama, emotion and controversy surrounding the disaster, Mahon suggested that Air New Zealand had falsified evidence presented at the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the crash:

The palpably false sections of evidence which I heard could not have been the result

239 Ibid, 12.

240 Ibid., 150.

of mistake, or faulty recollection. They originated, I am compelled to say, in a pre-determined plan of deception. They were very clearly part of an attempt to conceal a series of disastrous administrative blunders and so... I am forced reluctantly to say that I had to listen to an orchestrated litany of lies.²⁴¹

While Mahon's 'litany of lies' statement was later appealed and overturned, it became fixed in the New Zealand vernacular, just as the Erebus Disaster became fixed in its cultural consciousness.



Public debate concerning the Mount Erebus Disaster, which was strongest in New Zealand and Australia, turned to Antarctica itself. Some expressed surprise that tourist flights to Antarctica even existed, questioning why they had ever been approved. 'The Antarctic is a remote and notoriously inhospitable land, and how anyone could contemplate low-flying joy flights in that environment is beyond comprehension,' President of the Air Pilots of Guild Australia, Captain Ian Cameron, claimed.²⁴² Others, like Dick Smith predictably disagreed. 'I would still go on one tomorrow,' he said. 'They are as safe as any normal flight—and far more enjoyable.'²⁴³

TE 901 was the last Air New Zealand Antarctic flight planned by for the 1979/80 summer and, subsequently, it was the last flight the airline ever operated there. Qantas, on the other hand, was due to commence its 1979/80 Antarctic season on 2 December. When asked whether it planned to go ahead with the season, Qantas commented that there was 'no

241 Ibid.

242 I. Cameron, "Joy Flights in Antarctica," *The Canberra Times*, 14 December 1979, 2.

243 Ben Sandilands, "Dick Smith Finds Crash Mysterious," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 November 1979.

operational reason why the flights should not proceed'.²⁴⁴ Nonetheless, Qantas' third and final Antarctic flight that summer, on 16 February 1980, signalled the end of a short era of tourist overflights to Antarctica.

In late 1979, a six-foot cross was erected close to the crash site as a memorial to those who lost their lives. It added another layer of cultural meaning to the mountain which had been, for over a century, an object of scientific study, geographical reference point, subject and foreground for visual artists, and tourist sight. It was now a tomb, forever to be associated with disaster and tragedy. It would take fifteen years for Antarctic overflights to recommence. In 1994, Melbourne-based travel agent, Croydon Travel, began a successful Antarctic overflight programme in collaboration with Qantas. Eventually, the company made an attempt to organise some Antarctic overflights from New Zealand but was unsuccessful in filling even half a plane. Never again would New Zealanders farewell a champagne jet to the South Pole.

244 Frank. Cranston, "Qantas Will Continue Antarctic Flights," *The Canberra Times*, 30 November 1979.



Above: Qantas 747 aircraft in the sky above Casey station, n.d. (Source: Jutta Hosel, Australian Antarctic Division, Commonwealth of Australia)



Above: Qantas 747 aircraft in the sky above Casey station, n.d.

(Source: Jutta Hosel, Australian Antarctic Division, Commonwealth of Australia)

Below: Pack ice on the edge of the Antarctic landscape near Cape Hooker, 1977 (Source: Qantas Heritage Collection)





Above: A view from the cockpit of the Admiralty Range, 1977 (Source: Qantas Heritage Collection)
Below: View of the French Antarctic base, Dumont d'Urville, during the first Qantas Antarctic overflight, 1977
(Source: Qantas Heritage Collection)



Reflection

On Being There

Almost 40 years has passed since the TE 901 tragedy and it continues to dominate narratives about Antarctic overflights. Mention of jumbo jet forays over the ice will inevitably lead conversations back to 1979 and the rugged slopes of Mount Erebus. It seems that neither the tragic loss of life and the mysterious workings of the whiteout nor the dramatic courtroom accusations that followed the crash investigation have lost any of their potency. In this sense, TE 901 presented a significant challenge. The disaster had already been described in forensic detail by numerous government reports, books and documentaries. Authors and experts had spent years piecing together precisely what had happened on 28 November 1979 and who was to blame. Yet they rarely reflected on TE 901 as anything other than a tragedy, a plane crash and an accident investigation. None considered TE 901 as an act of tourism, which was its principal reason for being, right up until its moment of impact with Mount Erebus.

Much of my research focused on what had come before TE 901; on the dozens of flights which had gone to Antarctica and returned with little fuss or reflection. As I gathered newspaper articles, personal accounts, photographs and advertising material, some clear themes began to emerge. The first was the idea that Antarctic overflights had marked a final accomplishment of the Jet Age. Antarctica was no longer the remote, isolated and inhospitable continent it had once been. Even the *Home of the Blizzard* was now in reach; a mere ‘day trip’ and a ‘joyride’ from suburbia. In contrast to such blasé reporting emerged a more sceptical voice, which questioned whether this

kind of tourism, or tourism in general, was appropriate in Antarctica. Curiously, this scepticism came in two, contrasting forms. On the one hand, Antarctica was depicted as a dangerous and hostile environment, unsafe for all but the most specialised polar pilots. On the other hand, the continent was portrayed as fragile and vulnerable, unable to cope with the extensive tourist development which was bound to follow on the heels of Antarctic overflights.

A third theme, and the one I will pursue here, related to the Antarctic overflight as a tourist experience. I read through tourists' travel accounts with a series of questions in mind. How similar or different was this tourist experience to ship-based tourism or adventure tourism? How did it feel to see Antarctica but not be able to reach out and touch it? How was the tourist's relationship with the Antarctic environment mediated by the airplane and the interpretive guides on board? It was interesting to find that some tourists revealed their anxiety and disappointment at being disconnected from the Antarctic environment. They had not suffered enough, they complained. Others allowed themselves to indulge in the comfort of it all. They enjoyed the privileged aerial view, marvelling at their capacity to see more of the continent in a single glance than overland travellers might have seen over the course of several weeks.

In my conversations with people who had travelled as Antarctic overflight passengers or guides, there was one question I could not resist asking again and again: Did they feel that they had really been there? The question was partly inspired by those expressions of anxiety I had found in some overflight travel accounts. I wanted to know if others had felt the same way. But there was also some personal prejudice at work. *I* did not believe that they had really been to Antarctica. I associated being in Antarctica, like those anxious overflight passengers, with setting foot on the ice and

feeling Antarctica in my very core. But TE 901 made me think again. If being on an Antarctic overflight was to not *really* be in Antarctica, how could I explain that terrible tragedy? Were TE 901's passengers not *really there* when the nose of their aircraft ploughed into solid ice and rock? What could be more real than the shocking materiality of smouldering steel and flesh scattered across Erebus' precipitous slopes?

What does it mean to have an authentic Antarctic experience; to really be there?

On Authenticity

By turning to the question of what 'real Antarctic experience' means, I have steered us directly into the realm of authenticity. A complex term which has engrossed philosophers, psychologists and tourism scholars alike, 'authenticity' in ordinary usage suggests the idea of being original or genuine. In this sense, we might profess that a painting is authentic. Or we may claim that we are being true to ourselves and thus living authentic lives. In philosophy, the term is also commonly used in existentialist writings, especially those influenced by German philosopher, Martin Heidegger. In this case, authenticity refers to the human capacity to be fully human; not to be true to one's unique inner nature but to live an ideal life characterised by integrity, intensity and honesty.²⁴⁵

Literary critic, Lionel Trilling, in his history of the concept, writes that authenticity is a fairly recent preoccupation.²⁴⁶ Concerns with authenticity arose alongside 18th century Romanticism and in response to scepticism about the rise of modernity. Among modernity's many symptoms were rationalism and secularisation which, it was feared, were skewing society's moral compass. Up until now, that moral compass had

245 Charles Guignon, "Authenticity," *Philosophy Compass* 3, no. 2 (2008).

246 Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

belonged fully and unwaveringly to the Sacred. But with the rise of individualism—another of modernity’s scourges—it was thought that society needed a new way of finding a sense of the real and true within ourselves. This new outlook reflected a ‘displacement of the moral accent’ whereby being in touch with our true selves came to be something we had to attain in order to be true and full human beings.²⁴⁷

In 1976, American sociologist, Dean MacCannell, became the first scholar to draw a direct connection between tourism and authenticity. In *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, MacCannell argued that tourists went in search of the authentic because their modern lives were alienating and inauthentic. It was not that this feeling of inauthenticity and alienation was unique to tourists. Tourists were models of ‘modern man-in-general’; they merely reflected the fears and desires of modern society at large. Finding themselves surrounded by the fake and superficial in their everyday lives, tourists believed that the real and genuine could only be found in a primitive Other. ‘For moderns, reality and authenticity are thought to be elsewhere: in other historical periods and other cultures, in purer, simpler lifestyles,’ MacCannell writes.²⁴⁸ From encounters with simpler, more authentic people and places, the tourist might find the inspiration to live a more authentic life.

MacCannell’s work was seminal in making tourism studies a serious field of scholarship. It also established authenticity as a central theme of inquiry for decades of tourism scholars to come. While some scholars eagerly awaited the day that authenticity became a concern of the past, its persistence and significance in the tourism literature is not surprising given the essential nature and function of the tourism performance. As an industry that transports people from their home to their

247 Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991).

248 MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, 3.

desired destination, tourism holds a promise to transcend all filters, mediation and representational imagery; to deliver us precisely to the real thing and offer us a pure experience. 'Tourism is modernity's promise of a corporeal encounter with the Thing itself, with the genuine attraction, be it a site, place, artefact, or combinations thereof,' writes tourism scholar Chaim Noy.²⁴⁹

What is this elusive authenticity tourists are searching for? What does the 'real thing' look, sound or feel like? Can we measure it? MacCannell did not say. But implicit in his argument is the notion that the authentic 'thing' for which tourists search is an object, event or experience whose authenticity can be verified. Tourism scholars have since called this 'object authenticity'. Thus, the tourist finds their authenticity when they watch a *traditional* Balinese dance, meet with a *real* Zulu leader or eat an *authentic* Neapolitan pizza.

The problem, then, becomes the tourism industry's clever though deceptive habit of staging the authentic. According to MacCannell's theory of 'staged authenticity', the tourist, on their quest for the authentic, will be met only with 'front stage' performances while the hidden 'back stage' is where the locals are living their authentic lives.²⁵⁰ The tourist is doomed to spend their holiday avoiding 'tourist traps' in their plight to encounter 'real culture'. Still, it is a view which implies that the authentic is out there, waiting to be encountered, if the tourist can only strip away the layers of contrivance and get to the original source.

249 Chaim Noy, "Embodying Ideologies in Tourism: A Commemorative Visitor Book in Israel as a Site of Authenticity," in *Authenticity in Culture, Self, and Society*, ed. Phillip Vannini and J. Patrick Williams (Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009), 219.

250 MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*.

The experiences and responses of Antarctic overflight passengers offers insight into the nature of that ‘original source’ in Antarctica; of the essence of the authentic Antarctic experience. As they gazed down over the polar plateau, reflecting on the hardships faced by Douglas Mawson and his men, they tried, but failed, to relate to them. They longed to stand right where those men had been standing and struggling a century earlier, to feel the full force of the Home of the Blizzard. Their comments reveal the central role that heroic age explorers’ narratives have played as the imaginative foundation of the Antarctic tourist experience. As Francis Spufford has written, these narratives form the ‘touchstone of Antarctic voyaging’—the reference point by which later generations of travellers understand what they themselves are doing there.²⁵¹

When Lars-Eric Lindblad launched the first expedition cruises to Antarctica, he emphasised the authenticity of his brand through the use of the ‘genuine exploration’ trope. ‘The era of exploration—the era of adventure—is almost over’, he told his prospective clients. ‘But there are still areas where men can pit themselves against nature and where knowledge, skill, endurance and courage are still of importance.’²⁵² Antarctica presented a place where genuine exploration was still available, although its days were evidently numbered.

Until the late 1970s, Lindblad held a privileged position. Lindblad Travel was the only company running consistent tours to Antarctica at that time, and Lindblad had little need to differentiate his ‘authenticity’ from that of other tour operators. Curiously, it was the broader Antarctic community, especially government science, which was anxious to set itself apart from Lindblad and his clients—to distinguish bona fide

251 Francis Spufford, *The Antarctic: An Anthology* (Granta Books, 2008), 4.

252 Lindblad Travel ‘Antarctic Tourist Brochure 1968’ Brochure (NACP: RG401, Travel Brochures and Related Records pertaining to Antarctic Cruises 1967-73)

scientific expeditions from expedition replicas dreamed up by a tourism industry.

As the Antarctic tourism industry grew, the promise of authenticity became an increasingly prominent feature of tourism marketing. American tour operator, Lindblad Expeditions promised its prospective clients the opportunity to explore Antarctica ‘in an authentic expedition style, aboard an authentic expedition ship’.²⁵³ And Colorado-based Natural Habitat Adventures was even more explicit about the difference between an authentic and inauthentic Antarctic experience:

In a world where “adventure travel” has become a relative term, we’ve reclaimed it with this total immersion in the planet’s last, most pristine wilderness. While larger, well-appointed ships have made Antarctic travel downright cushy, they have also removed travelers from a primal encounter with nature. Our exclusive small-boat voyage...brings it back! This genuine adventure will reward expeditionary travelers with a rare experience of one of the most remote and magnificent places on Earth.²⁵⁴

According to such statements, authentic Antarctic experience hinged on a direct and ‘in-depth’ experience of pristine wilderness; ‘a primal encounter with nature.’ The way of achieving it was to avoid ‘larger, well-appointed’ ships in favour of smaller, ‘expedition’ ships. In this regard, the ‘genuine expedition’ had become the marker of authenticity, delivering what was perceived to be a raw, ‘unstaged’ encounter with nature, while the comfortable cruise had become its weaker imitation.

Technological Shells

Their aversion to the luxury and comfort of a ‘cushy’ ship also highlights the role that technology is seen to play in disrupting a direct encounter with wilderness.

253 [http: www.lindbladexpeditions.com](http://www.lindbladexpeditions.com)

254 <http://www.nathab.com/antarctica-and-arctic/antarctica-sailing-expedition/>

While the use of technology is inescapable in Antarctica, there is a sense that too much technology can render the experience inauthentic. The aircraft is particularly problematic because it lifts the body above the ice, shielding it in a ‘technological shell’ from the Antarctic environment. Marionne Cronin, in an essay on the polar flights of Richard Byrd, writes about how the aircraft threatened to undercut the heroic image of the American explorer and aviator. ‘Although his new-found aerial viewpoint and ease of travel promised omnipresence and omnipotence, the pilot’s seat in his cockpit far above the icy surface seemed to subvert the heroism of polar travel,’ Cronin writes.²⁵⁵

Eager to join the fraternity of polar heroes, Byrd presented his flight as part of the tradition of heroic polar exploration. In his travel accounts, he stressed the dangers of the polar environment and the way his body continued to experience that environment intensely and intimately even from inside the aircraft. He described how, in the turbulent Antarctic sky, the airplane ‘trembled and rose and fell, as if struck bodily’, and cold winds swept through the cabin, requiring the aviators to wear polar furs.²⁵⁶ By emphasising the close and dangerous nature of his encounter with the Antarctic environment, Cronin argues, Byrd was attempting to preserve a space for masculine heroism within a technologically-advanced modern world.

The explorer’s struggle to remain authentic in a rapidly modernising world is echoed in the Antarctic travels of modern explorers. Adventurer Reinhold Messner, who man-hauled a sled across Antarctica in 1990, claimed that ‘whoever moves in the Antarctic with motor vehicles, helicopters and aircraft, is like a car tourist who squats in his

255 Marionne Cronin, *Technological Heroes*, 58.

256 Richard Byrd, *Little America: Aerial Exploration in the Antarctic, The Flight to the South Pole* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2015), 58.

capsule and feels nothing of his surroundings.’ According to Messner, and sledding partner Arved Fuchs, the key to experiencing Antarctica ‘intensively’ is to ‘stray from technology.’ Yet in making this claim, Messner and Fuchs seem to ignore the fact that they travelled to Antarctica by aircraft, used sophisticated GPS technology to navigate on the ice and were in daily contact with the tour operator who delivered them there; the same tour operator who would be responsible for rescuing them should it be required. Herein lies a central paradox that shadows modern explorers like Messner and Fuchs, who claim to travel simply and self-sufficiently, without the use of technology.

Framing the Experience

What does authenticity mean to the 21st century Antarctic tourist? When Australian author, Helen Garner, travelled to Antarctica at the cusp of the millennium she travelled on the Russian ice ship, *Professor Molchanov*. Not easily buying into the ‘genuine exploration’ trope, Garner was sceptical of the crew’s tendency to call their passage to Antarctica a ‘voyage’. ‘No one calls it a “tour” or a “trip”’, she wrote. But as the *Professor Molchanov* met with a force-seven gale in the Drake Passage, leaving her seasick and bedridden, Garner stopped seeing this label as ‘pretentious’.²⁵⁷

Garner had made the decision to leave her camera at home, equipping herself only with notepad and pen. After hearing people speak ‘fanatically’ about bringing a back-up camera in case their main camera went overboard, she vowed to ‘go to the icy continent in a state of heroic lenslessness.’ But once there, cruising among icebergs that looked like the ‘white ridged sole of a Reebok’, Garner could not escape the incessant presence of cameras and tripods. They seemed to serve as another kind of

257 Helen Garner, *The Feel of Steel* (Pan Macmillan Australia, 2007), 15.

technological barrier, getting between the tourists and their surroundings. ‘I’m lonely because everyone else is hiding behind a camera,’ Garner reflected.²⁵⁸

Artist and tour guide, Ashley Frost, who has been travelling to Antarctica since 1992, also made the ‘rebellious’ choice not to bring a camera to Antarctica.²⁵⁹ Sailing to East Antarctica on the Russian icebreaker, *Kapitan Khlebnikov*, Frost indulged the ‘idea of taking a bit of a risk’ by relying on ‘a really traditional method of capturing moments and places.’ He also encouraged the tourists with whom he travelled to put down their cameras and ‘let the landscape and environment speak.’ According to Frost, the framing device of the camera was distracting and did not allow the tourists to really *see* the place. ‘You have to put the camera down to be able to see,’ he explained.²⁶⁰

For both Garner and Frost, the crux of *being there* was not simply a matter of the kind of ship on which they sailed or how much time they spent exposed to the elements. For ships and planes were not the only technologies which could mediate a direct encounter with the Antarctic wilderness. The camera compromised the tourist’s ability to be fully present in the moment; to engage directly with their surroundings.

Their observations echoed the reflections made by Susan Sontag in her generative collection of essays, *On Photography* (1979). Sontag highlighted the tourist’s ultimate dependence on the camera to make real what they experience; to produce evidence that the trip was made and fun was had. This might explain why Frost felt he was taking such a risk by not taking a camera to Antarctica.

258 Ibid., 20.

259 Ashley Frost, pers. comm., 11 August 2016.

260 Ibid.

Yet the camera also presents us with a dilemma: ‘Photography is a way of certifying experience but it is also a way of rejecting it,’ Sontag writes. ‘By limiting experience to a search for the photogenic, by converting experience into an image, a souvenir.’²⁶¹ In other words, the plight to prove the authenticity of the experience serves to deny an authentic experience. It is only by putting down the camera that we can be truly *in* the experience. When we make all of our being available to absorb the happenings around you. To allow ourselves to listen as the landscape speaks.

Yet even when we put down the camera, there are still other framing devices at work which shape the way in which the tourist encounters their environment. One such device is hinted at by that ultimate travel authority, *Lonely Planet*, in this warning to prospective Antarctic tourists:

Some tour brochures still get carried away with the ‘exploring’ theme and exaggerate claims slightly: ‘Experience the thrill of treading where no-one has gone before as we land our versatile Zodiacs on barren shores...’ Not quite! With the large number of ships now visiting the Antarctic Peninsula each season, it’s much more probable than another shipload of passengers has just landed at your beach less than 12 hours before.²⁶²

The tourism industry’s tendency to frame their trips as ‘expeditions’ acts to influence the way in which tourists perceive the environment they encounter. In its rhetoric, the industry continually re-constructs the Antarctic environment as a barren wilderness—untouched, unpeopled and ripe for discovery and exploration. But it also goes as far as carefully choreographing the arrival of ships to each tourist site to ensure that no two ships should ever meet. I am not suggesting that the wild landscape the tourists are seeing before them

261 Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (Penguin Books, 1979), 9.

262 Jeff Rubin, *Lonely Planet: Antarctica* (Lonely Planet, 2005), 301.

is in some way a figment of their imaginations; that the ice, mountains and wildlife are not *there*. What I am suggesting is that the *wilderness experience*, far from being natural, is a thoughtfully curated event. Through the power of rhetoric and ship scheduling, the tourism industry works to frame Antarctica as a pristine and primeval nature, which is precisely the authentic ‘thing’ we have all come there to experience, every time.

Is this prevalent tourism practice just another case of ‘staged authenticity’? And if so, does it make the experience any less authentic for the tourist? Anthropologist Julia Harrison, who explores the ways in which tourists find meaning from their travels, suggests that it does not. Tourists are not so gullible to believe that they can only find meaning in their lives through an encounter with some pure and primitive Other situated in the corners of the earth, far from the modern, civilised world. ‘It must be recognized,’ Harrison writes, ‘that they can make their touristic adventures meaningful for themselves in ways that may bear no relationship to what the tourism industry suggests will generate “treasured memories.”’²⁶³ Indeed, recent Antarctic travel writers, including Helen Garner and Jonathan Franzen, show how astute tourists take pleasure in the industry’s playful attempts to convince them that they are explorers on an authentic expedition.

In an essay for the *New Yorker*, Jonathan Franzen, wrote subversively about his experience of the Lindblad style of expedition cruising in Antarctica, where he felt like an ‘accidental luxury tourist’.²⁶⁴ He would not have chosen to travel on ‘a cruise line like Lindblad’, he wrote, were it not for his girlfriend—‘to soften the blow of Antarctica’. He poked fun at the expedition leader for his claim that this ‘was not a cruise’ and for repeatedly threatening to ‘*tear up the plan*’ if he spied the right opportunity. Considering himself a ‘serious birder’, Franzen was unimpressed by the Lindblad Expedition’s lack of dedication to

263 Julia Harrison, *Being a Tourist: Finding Meaning in Pleasure Travel* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), 27.

264 Jonathan Franzen, “The End of the End of the World,” *The New Yorker*, 23 May 2016.

bird watching and its obsession with Ernest Shackleton, ‘a figure scarcely less fetishized on board than the Lindblad experience itself.’ He ultimately found the ‘cruise’ a highly contrived experience.²⁶⁵

Franzen came up with his own alternative plan for the tour. Skipping most of the programmed lectures, he spent much of the trip bird-watching from the observation deck. While there, Franzen spotted an Emperor penguin on ice just as the rest of the passengers were rushing to get dressed for a scheduled excursion. Critical of the tour operator’s overemphasis on photography—‘Evidently, the point was to bring home images’—Franzen was another defiant tourist who vowed ‘not to take a single picture on the trip.’²⁶⁶

Towards the end of the voyage, when a slide show of the voyage became ‘an amateur commercial for Lindblad’, Franzen claimed that it performed a ‘back-handed service’ by directing his attention to all the ‘unphotographed’ minutes he had been alive on the trip.²⁶⁷ Franzen is testament to tourism scholarship’s more recent turn toward ‘subjective authenticity’. That is, the idea that authentic experience is in the eye of the beholder and can be found in even the most contrived of settings.

Armchair Explorers

Does this mean that an authentic Antarctic experience can be found thousands of miles away from Antarctica? This opening passage of Francis Spufford’s wonderful imaginative history of polar exploration, *I May Be Some Time: Ice and the English Imagination*, provocatively suggests this:

One is sitting down somewhere in the warm—perhaps it is sunny, perhaps it is a

265 Ibid.

266 Ibid.

267 Ibid.

dark evening of a temperate winter and the radiators are on—and whatever one’s attitude, whatever the scepticism 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 that moment imagining it at full force.²⁶⁸

For centuries armchair explorers have been telling us that it is possible to travel around the world without moving from one’s chair. And even polar travellers like Lars-Eric Lindblad and Dorothy Braxton attested that they felt they had been to Antarctica long before they had set foot on it. ‘I didn’t merely read about Amundsen, Shackleton, and Scott in the Antarctic. I felt I was *there* with them,’ Lindblad wrote about his childhood reading.²⁶⁹ Dorothy Braxton was also a child when she stumbled upon her father’s polar literature collection which she eagerly studied. Wandering over to Bluff Hill, New Zealand’s southernmost port, she would look south and feel she was ‘right on the polar plateau itself, struggling with huskies and sledges.’²⁷⁰

In *Travelling in Place: A History of Armchair Travel* (2013), Bernd Steiger, describes how armchair adventuring became possible for a growing number of 19th century readers due to emerging technologies such as photography and mass printing. Advances in photographic techniques meant that readers no longer needed to tap the power of the imagination to produce images of how far-off places might look. Technology could disrupt an authentic experience but, as we see here, it could also bring experience from afar. ‘We no longer need to board Cook’s or Lapeyrouse’s ship in order to risk journeying at breakneck speed; [photography], which is left to

268 Francis Spufford, *I May Be Some Time: Ice and the English Imagination* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), 1.

269 Lindblad and Fuller, *Passport to Anywhere*, 26.

270 Braxton, *The Abominable Snow-Women*, 17.

certain daredevils, takes us around the world and brings the universe to us in a wallet without our having to leave our chair,’ boasted one 19th century armchair explorer.²⁷¹

This last passage bears some resemblance to present-day advertisements for Antarctic overflights, which celebrate the ease with which you can enjoy a ‘full day of Antarctic experience’ but ‘without even getting your feet wet’. ‘No passports are needed and you are kept warm and safe with a glass in hand while our privately chartered Qantas 747 glides effortlessly over amazing scenery,’ the Antarctica Flights website claims. Are Antarctic overflights a kind of 21st century armchair travel? The advertisements and numerous traveller accounts would suggest that it might be. Then again, the shadow of TE 901 is a constant reminder. A jumbo jet flight over the ice may feel easy and comfortable. It may be a highly mediated and shielded Antarctic experience. Antarctica may be just out of reach for those viewing it from aircraft porthole. But they are certainly not out of Antarctica’s reach.

Antarctic Culture Off the Ice

Where else can we experience Antarctica, beyond the continent and the pages of an heroic epic? While thoughts of the frozen continent may inspire images of ice, penguins and the end of the earth, pockets of Antarctic culture and community can be found dispersed around the world.

Artefacts and impressions of Antarctic voyaging can be found and experienced in museums, visitor centres, art galleries and replica huts. Antarctic research and governance is steered from a myriad of institutes, government agencies and institutes around the globe. Traces of Antarctic history can be found as far and wide as the

271 Bernd Stiegler, *Traveling in Place: A History of Armchair Travel* (University of Chicago Press, 2013), 107.

streets of Buenos Aires and the dockyards of Dundee. And whoever has visited the Scott Polar Research Institute (SPRI) in Cambridge, and been summoned to afternoon tea by the ringing of the bell from Robert Falcon Scott's ship, the *Terra Nova*, might certainly count this as an authentic Antarctic experience.

Perhaps some of the most intense Antarctic experiences outside the continent can be found in those places that provides access to the far south. Antarctica's 'gateway cities'—Cape Town, Christchurch, Hobart, Punta Arenas and Ushuaia—hold close historical and geographical ties to Antarctica. They were used as access points to Antarctica and the Southern Ocean by generations of early explorers, sealers and whalers. And today they serve as infrastructural and logistical support centres for scientific expeditions and Antarctic tours.²⁷²

Gateway cities are not just jumping off points—places from which to commence the last leg of an expedition or a haven to return to at its conclusion. As Elizabeth Leane has argued, these cities form a 'southern rim' surrounding a polar centre, and remind us that Antarctica is not just a natural or scientific place but a social and cultural place too.²⁷³

In an essay on Tasmania's Antarctic culture, Sir Guy Green illustrates how the island state presents a 'remarkably extensive Antarctic culture not actually located in Antarctica.'²⁷⁴ It is a community comprised of government and research institutes

272 Writing on Antarctic gateway cities include: C. Michael Hall, "The Tourist and Economic Significance of Antarctic Travel in Australian and New Zealand Antarctic Gateway Cities," *Tourism and Hospitality Research* 2, no. 2 (2000); Aant Elzinga, "Punta Arenas and Ushuaia: Early Explorers and the Politics of Memory in Constructing Antarctic Gateway Cities," *The Polar Journal* 2013, no. April (2013); Elizabeth Leane, "Tasmania from Below: Antarctic Travellers' Accounts of a Southern "Gateway"," *Studies in Travel Writing* 20, no. 1 (2016).

273 Leane, "Tasmania from Below: Antarctic Travellers' Accounts of a Southern "Gateway", 34.

274 Sir Guy Green, "Tasmania's Antarctic Culture" in *Australia and the Antarctic Treaty System: 50 Years of*

engaged in Antarctic activities including the Australian Antarctic Division, the Institute of Marine and Antarctic Studies, the Tasmanian Polar Network and the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR). These institutions are not simply locations where Antarctic work is done but rather loci of Antarctic community—places that manifest the ideas, ideals and passion that draw people south.

This sense of Antarctic community, Green points out, has its origins in Hobart's history of serving ships carrying explorers and expeditioners on voyages to the deep south.²⁷⁵ A stroll around Hobart's 'polar pathway' is a pilgrimage through Tasmanian Antarctica. From Douglas Mawson's pioneering 1911 Australasian Antarctic Expedition to the drama of Roald Amundsen's announcement from the Hobart GPO that he had conquered the South Pole, polar pathways links significant sites in the city's long Antarctic history.²⁷⁶ Acknowledging the long-standing importance of Midwinter Day for the Antarctic community, Hobart's annual Midwinter Festival calls on Hobartians to celebrate midwinter 'the Antarctic way'.²⁷⁷ Together, these institutions, festivals and pathways emphasise that Antarctica's presence can be potent and pervasive even off the ice.

Antarctica's international political culture is another place where we can experience Antarctica off the ice. And while pockets of this culture are visible in meeting rooms and government department buildings around the world, none embody Antarctica

Influence, ed. Marcus G Haward and Tom Griffiths (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2011), 354.

275 Ibid.

276 Lorne Kriwoken, "Polar Pathways: Exploring Tasmania's Antarctic Heritage," (Taroona, TAS, 2011).

277 Australian Antarctic Division, "Warm Glow from Midwinter Festival," *Australian Antarctic Magazine* Spring, 2002.

in quite the same way as the ATCM. Unlike many other Antarctic institutions, the ATCM is not anchored to one place. A fleeting and itinerate affair, an ATCM is assembled, performed and dismantled within a matter of weeks. Its venue changes annually, as each of the 29 Consultative Parties takes their turn as hosts, meaning that no two ATCM venues are the same, and none have been purpose-built for the job.

Antarctica's highest administrative forum has gathered in hotel ballrooms, convention centres, monasteries, castles and palaces. Each ATCM embodies the unique character and physical constraints of its host country, city and venue. Beginning with a large, cavernous room, this grand stage of Antarctic diplomacy is gradually constructed with tables and chairs, country flags and name plates, interpretation booths and sound systems. In the process of its physical construction, the venue begins to look and feel like an ATCM; to symbolise the diplomacy, internationalism and consensus for which it stands. To watch an ATCM be assembled is to witness a space become an Antarctic place.

In this decision-making forum based on compromise and consensus, political tensions subtly shape the tone and substance of discussion, but open dispute is extremely rare. Many of the individuals sitting around the meeting table are long-serving Antarctic scientists and diplomats, with deep understanding and affection for the frozen continent. The character and willingness of these individuals to cooperate can have as much force at the negotiation table as the substance of their governments' policies. And while the ATCM may be a highly formal gathering, it is not uncommon for friendships to prosper and transcend beyond cultural and political barriers.

As Tom Griffiths and Sir Guy Green have argued, this political culture has grown not just in the meeting room but from the experience of the ice itself—from the romantic idealism of the heroic age, from the irrelevance of national boundaries, from the doing of science and from the need to avoid open conflict and seek consensus within isolated communities. This is the idealist and pragmatic instincts that are forged on the ice and which can be found at the highest levels of Antarctic politics.²⁷⁸

Have You Been There?

At the beginning of this reflection, I alluded to my own prejudiced view on the somatics of *being there*. While I am curious about the different ways one might be able to experience Antarctica, both on and off the ice, my idea of an authentic Antarctic experience involves travelling on a small ice-strengthened ship and setting my feet firmly on the ice. This thesis has been informed by that very kind of experience, which I enjoyed many times over before I turned to penning this piece of research. And I have argued that my research was all the richer for it. How, then, might its outcome have been different if I had never visited Antarctica? Is it necessary to visit Antarctica before writing about it?

In an essay titled *Have you been there?*, Adrian Howkins ponders the advantages and disadvantages of writing Antarctic history without visiting the continent. ‘The act of visiting Antarctica serves to confer legitimacy on the Antarctic historian,’ Howkins notes.²⁷⁹ And there are many good reasons for this. A voyage to Antarctica can contribute to a deeper understanding of the nature of the relationship between

278 Tom Griffiths and Guy Green, “Culture,” in *Australia and the Antarctic Treaty System: 50 Years of Influence*, ed. Marcus G Haward and Tom Griffiths (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2011), 371.

279 Adrian Howkins, ““Have You Been There?” Some Thoughts on (Not) Visiting Antarctica,” *Environmental History* 13, no. 3 (2010): 516.

humans and the Antarctic environment. The time and distance travelled to get there prompts an appreciation of the continent's remoteness. The emotional response of an encounter with the physical environment of Antarctica can inspire similar feelings to those of the historical subject. And while most of Antarctica's historical archives are stored off the ice, some can only be accessed by visiting the field.

But as Howkins highlights, there may also be disadvantages to visiting the continent. Chief among the potential hazards of visiting the places we study is the assumption that our personal experiences of going there might be assumed to be universal. We might overlook, or find it difficult to understand, that different individuals and cultures experience the ice differently. There is also the risk that we will view the past through the lens of modern technology, forgetting that early Antarctic travellers saw the continent through an entirely different worldview. And there is the threat we pose to the environment itself. Our passage across the ice is bound to change the places we study.

At many points along this research journey, I have been reminded of the advantages and disadvantages posed by my own visits to Antarctica. These experiences allowed me to develop an understanding of Antarctica as both a physical and an imaginative place, to embody the tourist performance, and to capture ethnographic details of everyday Antarctic culture. But I also wondered how familiarity with my subject matter might be narrowing my view or flattening my perception. Was I too close to be curious, critical and observant—to see this familiar world in a strange and unfamiliar way?

Being attuned to such questions goes some way in ensuring open-mindedness and attentiveness. But I could never go back to a time when Antarctica was only an imaginary for me; before my physical and imagined experiences of Antarctica became entangled and indivisible. Perhaps Howkins is right to suggest that we should not always rush into going to the places we study. For there is much we can learn from a distance—from *not* being there.²⁸⁰

280 Ibid., 518.

Chapter Three

Modern Explorers

Chapter Three

Modern Explorers

Replete with slender peaks, rigid symmetry and glistening faces, the Ellsworth Mountains are an oasis of vertical in an otherwise ceaseless horizontal plateau of ice. Residing in the depth of Antarctica's interior, they lie 1,200 kilometres from the South Pole and 2,000 kilometres from the Antarctic Peninsula's northern tip. While the Weddell Sea is just 50 kilometres to their east, it is kept at bay and sealed off by the frozen immensity of the Ronne Ice Shelf. The nearest open water lies over 800 kilometres away. So far removed was this dramatic range from the routes of earlier explorers that it remained unknown until 1935, when it was traversed by American aviator, Lincoln Ellsworth, during the first Trans-Antarctic flight.

Amidst the Ellsworth's jagged peaks lies a large, unimpressive bulk of white terrain. Barely scathed by glacial erosion, it lacks the intricate arêtes, towering horns and razor-edge ridges of its neighbours. Yet in 1959, the unnamed peak inspired a flurry of intrigue and interest when it was found to measure 5,140 metres in height—the highest-known point on the continent. Finally, the position of Antarctica's ceiling had been located and its provisional name, 'Vinson'—bestowed in honour of an Antarctic-loving senator—had found a home. Although Vinson Massif fell well short of Mount Everest's height and grandeur, its discovery came six years after Everest's 'conquest' by Edmund Hillary. Antarctica was now the only continent whose highest peak had not been climbed, and the world's elite mountaineers were not the only ones taking note.

'There is an element of national pride and prestige for a nation whose climbers make the

first ascent,’ noted the United States Antarctic Policy Group in 1965.²⁸¹ After several years of refusing support to would-be Antarctic mountaineers, the National Science Foundation (NSF) sought to sponsor an all-American Vinson climbing expedition. When the NSF contacted the American Alpine Club seeking mountaineers who would claim Vinson for the United States, the Club contacted lawyer and mountaineer, Nicholas Clinch. In 1966, Clinch’s ten-member American Antarctic Mountaineering Expedition made the first successful ascent of Vinson Massif. Then, with the coveted prize claimed, the NSF returned to its policy of refusing support for Antarctic mountaineering expeditions, and Vinson Massif fell silent once again.



Fifteen years later, thoughts of Vinson Massif began to stir in the minds of two men sitting in different hemispheres and coming from different worlds. Richard ‘Dick’ Bass, a fifty-two-year-old oil tycoon, rancher and owner of Utah’s Snowbird ski resort was being led to the summit of Mount McKinley, North America’s highest peak. Pat Morrow, a twenty-eight-year-old freelance photographer and climber was lying in a soggy sleeping bag midway up Aconcagua, South America’s highest peak. As Bass descended from McKinley’s summit, and Morrow waited out a storm on Aconcagua, they each marvelled at the fact that no one person had yet stood atop the highest peak of each and every continent. Bass, feeling that his first ‘continental high’ had given him a renewed sense of self-confidence, considered that climbing the other six highest peaks would ‘mentally condition’ him for his ‘pressure-filled life.’²⁸² ‘In climbers’ terms, it hardly compared with such great feats as forging new routes up Annapurna or K2,’ Morrow asserted, ‘but it

281 ‘American Antarctic Mountain Climbing Expeditions’ (NACP: RG 307 Office of Polar Program Central Subject Files 1976-87 Box 9, ‘Antarctic Policy Group 1961-74’)

282 Steve Bell, *Seven Summits: The Quest to Reach the Highest Point on Every Continent* (New York: Bulfinch Press, 2000), 6.

was definitely a worthwhile adventure that would give me an excuse to travel to Africa, Europe, Australasia, and most exotic of all, Antarctica.²⁸³

Morrow and Bass were mismatched ‘Seven Summits’ rivals. Raised in the mountainous interior of British Columbia, Morrow discovered climbing at age seventeen. ‘As soon as I had my hands on the rock, I was hooked,’ he told me.²⁸⁴ While studying for a degree in journalism, he became involved with the Calgary Mountain Club, and later pursued freelance photography as a way to fund his climbing passion. A ‘low-lander from Texas’, Bass had rarely exercised, revelled in modern-day comforts and had never been exposed to extreme cold. His Seven Summits partner was Warner Brothers Studio president Frank Wells, who had even less climbing experience. Both Bass and Wells had been extremely successful in business and assumed that this success would translate to the mountain. ‘Part of it was naivety,’ wrote biographer, Rick Ridgeway. ‘But part also was their strong conviction that with enough hard work and perseverance they could accomplish anything they set their minds to’.²⁸⁵ The duo’s methods, which included inviting elite mountaineers to guide them from base to summit and back, drew criticism from some mountaineers, who Bass called ‘the diehards’. Bass assured his critics that he and Wells had not paid any guiding fees, and had faced the same physical and technical obstacles as everyone else. ‘I was never pulled up any mountains,’ he insisted.²⁸⁶

Beyond Bass and Morrow’s differences in age, career path and climbing ability they would also, ultimately, disagree on which seven mountains qualified as the highest on each continent. On Mount Everest (Asia), Aconcagua (South America), Mount McKinley

283 Patrick Morrow, *Beyond Everest: Quest for the Seven Summits* (Ontario: Camden House, 1986), 10.

284 Patrick Morrow, pers. comm., 5 August 2014

285 Dick Bass, Frank Wells, and Rick Ridgeway, *Seven Summits* (New York: Warner Books, 1986), 1-2.

286 James Clash, “The Adventurer: Dick Bass’ Many Summits,” *Forbes*, 12 November 2003.

(North America), Mount Elbrus (Europe), Mount Kilimanjaro (Africa) and Vinson Massif (Antarctica) they could both agree. Their discord boiled down to whether to include on the list the highest summit of Australia—Mount Kosciuszko at 2,228 metres—or the highest summit in Australasia—Indonesia’s Carstensz Pyramid at 4,884 metres. ‘Being a climber first and a collector second, I felt strongly that Carstensz Pyramid, the highest mountain in Australasia ... was a true mountaineer’s objective,’ Morrow argued.²⁸⁷ Bass, however, had clearly defined his goal as climbing the highest mountain on each of what he had learned in school were the seven continents. They would both agree, however, that for all the various challenges each peak would pose, Vinson Massif was the hardest to reach. ‘Organizing Antarctica was becoming a paramilitary operation more like a wartime invasion than a mountaineering expedition’, Bass remarked.²⁸⁸

‘The crux of the expedition would not lie in the mountain itself,’ Morrow soon realised, ‘but in a horrific swamp of finances, logistics and politics.’²⁸⁹ Both teams had appealed for government support to reach the Ellsworth Mountains—Wells to the National Science Foundation and British Antarctic Survey, and Morrow to the Argentine government—but to no avail. With further prodding, however, their mission to get to Vinson Massif began to seem feasible. The first beacon of hope came in the form of a forty-year-old DC-3 aircraft equipped with skis and three turbo propped engines, and a spirited pilot, Giles Kershaw. After clocking up 5,000 hours of flying time in Antarctica with the British Antarctic Survey, Kershaw delighted in defying the polar establishment by supporting private expeditions. The climbers’ other crucial source of support came from the Chilean government, under the encouragement of retired air force general, Javier Lopetegui Torres. Lopetegui fervently promoted the idea of building an ‘Antarctic city’ at Chile’s Teniente

287 Bell, *Seven Summits: The Quest to Reach the Highest Point on Every Continent*, 8.

288 Ibid., 6.

289 Morrow, *Beyond Everest: Quest for the Seven Summits*, 132.

Marsh research station in the Antarctic Peninsula. ‘In twenty years, this will be a little town, with people from the scientific, university and business communities. There will be little airlines servicing the interior and a hotel for tourists,’ Lopotegui told a reporter²⁹⁰. In line with his ambitions, the general agreed to support the climbers’ expeditions and provided them with fuel caches along their route to Vinson Massif.



In November 1983, Bass, Wells and Kershaw, joined along with a handful of elite mountaineers, left Punta Arenas bound for the Ellsworth Mountains. As Kershaw piloted the DC-3 southward, he urged the other men to reflect on what Lincoln Ellsworth might have been thinking during his 1935 Trans-Antarctic flight. ‘He had no idea what mountains might be in the area...Think about that. I mean really think about it. It was only fifty years ago, and as he flew along he wondered if he would discover a mountain higher than Everest,’ Kershaw told them.²⁹¹ As they approached Vinson, the climbers studied its ridges and plateaus and quickly agreed that the climb would be ‘a piece of cake’. Then, reassessing the mountain from the ground, and noting that Antarctic’s clear air tended to distort distances, Bass thought again. ‘It might be a walk in the park, but it sure as heck looks like a long and cold one to me,’ he thought.²⁹² At base camp that ‘evening’, they ate dehydrated chilli loaded with butter and endured a minus 35-degree chill as the mountain’s shadow grew broader and longer but never gave way to nightfall.

Vinson proved steeper than any of the climbers had anticipated, but the group made good

290 ‘Tourism and Colonisation in Antarctica’ ATCM XIII/NGO/7. Prepared by Greenpeace International; Associated Press, “Chilean Families Begin Colony on Antarctica” *New York Times*, 4 December 1984.

291 Bass, Wells, and Ridgeway, *Seven Summits*, 239.

292 *Ibid.*, 242.

progress over the course of the next two days. Reaching a lookout just hours from the summit, they enjoyed views of the other peaks of the Ellsworth range, ‘running in a line like an island archipelago, frozen in an otherworldly icescape.’²⁹³ The sky was clear, there was no wind and conditions seemed perfect. Then, a budding breeze quickly turned into aggressive gusts that knocked the climbers off balance. They grew cold, visibility dropped and Wells succumbed to first stage frostbite. At one point in the climb he fell and slid 60 metres down a steepening, icy slope. Having dropped his ice axe, Wells resorted to desperately grasping onto rocks sticking out in the ice beside him to stop his fatal fall. Only the group’s leader, Chris Bonington, reached the summit on the first attempt in what he described as the worst climbing conditions he had ever experienced. The rest of the team waited several days before setting out again and successfully reaching the summit. With Vinson Massif complete, Bass had only Mount Everest—it would be his third attempt—left to check off his Seven Summits list. As for Wells, whose wife promised to leave him if he made another Everest attempt, Vinson Massif marked the end of his Seven Summits adventure.

Morrow’s path to Vinson Massif would prove longer and more convoluted. Ambitious attempts to mount Vinson Massif expeditions in 1983 and 1984 failed to get him even close to the mountain. In 1984, he reached as far as Argentina’s Esperanza Station on the Antarctic Peninsula where a brutal storm damaged his plane. Kershaw’s subsequent efforts to seek repairs in Argentina landed him in jail, when the air force personnel he sought help from suspected him of being a British spy. Not surprisingly, when Morrow and climbing partner Martyn Williams finally found themselves ‘winging south’ on 10 November 1985, they prayed for an uneventful trip. Just as Bass and Wells had done, Morrow relied on Chilean logistic support and Kershaw’s flying skills. To fund the US \$400,000 expedition,

293 Ibid., 246.

he and Williams had sold places on the trip to other climbers including a party of seven South Korean mountaineers, who together contributed over half of that. Following hours in the air and one refuelling stop—the Chilean air force also parachuted a fuel airdrop at the foot of Mount Vinson—their Twin Otter broke through a blanket of cloud and, for the first time, the climbers saw the Ellsworth Mountains. ‘Our little plane was suddenly alive with excited chatter,’ Morrow later wrote.²⁹⁴ Upon landing at the foot of the range, they wasted no time in building camp and commencing their climb.

Over the course of the next seven days, Morrow’s team scaled ice walls and glaciers, caching food and building three more camps along the way. On the seventh day, Kershaw left the Twin Otter at base camp and joined them for their final summit push. Straightforward, tedious plodding up the side of a massive snow basin, Morrow marvelled at the ease of the climb, which seemed a surreal mismatch to the financial and logistical hurdling it had taken to get there. Pulling himself up the summit cornice, he hugged his companions and shouted out to the empty continent. They dug out a United Nations flag and posed for photographs. ‘Because the Antarctic continent enjoys no sovereignty, we had magnanimously claimed the continent for the world,’ Morrow declared.²⁹⁵ Yet they could not resist the temptation to also pull out the flags of their respective homelands—Canada, the United States, Britain and Chile—and indulge in some national pride too.

In May 1986, Morrow completed what came to be known in Seven Summits vernacular as the ‘Carstensz’ or ‘Messner’ list. By this time, Bass had completed the ‘Kosciusko’ or ‘Bass’ list and published his expedition account, *Seven Summits*. The story, about two undaunted men achieving an impossible dream, reached a huge audience—through Wells’ Time-Warner book publishing connections—and promoted Bass and Wells’

294 Morrow, *Beyond Everest: Quest for the Seven Summits*, 141-42.

295 Ibid., 146.

mountaineering marathon as a thing 'to do'. Vinson Massif was suddenly illuminated on mountaineers' radars the world over. Reaching it continued to be the 'paramilitary operation' the Seven Summits pioneers had contended with. But Morrow, Williams and Kershaw were about to change all that.



'Up until this point it had all been an adventure,' Williams told me.²⁹⁶ A native of Liverpool, Williams had moved to Canada's Yukon region in his early twenties, determined to pursue work as a mountain guide. In Europe, mountain guide recruitment had not branched out from the 'Swiss-father-teaches-Swiss-son-to-be-a-mountain-guide genre', Williams explained. But in Canada, Williams was offered five climbing jobs in his first week. It was there in the Yukon that he met Morrow, and the two soon become climbing buddies and friends. When they set out on Morrow's Seven Summits quest, the pair scarcely imagined that they would become the gatekeepers to Antarctica's premier adventure playground. But on their return from Vinson Massif, they realised that they had made a US \$50,000 profit. With co-founders Mike Dunn and Bart Lewis, they formed Adventure Network International (ANI), with a mission to provide logistics support for Antarctic adventurers wishing to travel to the continent's interior. The flying component of the company was called 'Antarctic Airways', the world's first commercial Antarctic airline. Within a year, Giles Kershaw was invited on board as an equal owner.

One of ANI's first customers was Reinhold Messner. A luminous and authoritative figure in the mountaineering world, the South Tyrolean's accomplishments ranked as some of the greatest in the history of athletic endeavour. He was the first person to summit all fourteen of the world's 8,000 metre peaks, and achieved the first solo ascent of Mount Everest, as well as

296 Martyn Williams, pers. comm., 12 May 2015.

the first ascent without supplemented oxygen. He was namesake of the Messner list of Seven Summits, having not only proclaimed Carstensz Pyramid worthier than Mount Kosciuszko, but also asserted that Mount Elbrus, and not Mont Blanc, was the true highest point in Europe. When Messner spoke, mountaineers listened. Dick Bass and Frank Wells had considered inviting the climbing legend to Vinson Massif with them but thought better of it. ‘It would have been his seventh summit, and he would have beaten us,’ Bass later revealed.²⁹⁷ Messner was a mountaineering purist who felt uncomfortably complicit in this ‘peak bagging’ trend. ‘For years a few prosperous alpinists played a game which was as silly as tourists ticking off the number of countries they were able to visit...Now I also had to “do” Mount Vinson if I didn’t want to fall behind in this childish game,’ Messner complained.²⁹⁸

Owing to the popularity of the Seven Summits, and to ANI’s network of logistical support, Vinson Massif would never again experience a summer without a group of climbers scaling its icy slopes. Yet the number of climbers would remain modest when compared with some of its Seven Summits cousins. While the number of people attempting to climb Vinson Massif would rise to several hundred each year, Mount Kilimanjaro and Mount Elbrus would receive up to one hundred climbers per day.²⁹⁹ Even with ANI support, Antarctica’s mountain ranges would remain remote, costly to reach and riddled with deadly crevasses. They also harboured the ‘A factor’. ‘The Antarctic factor,’ Australian mountaineer, Greg Mortimer explained, ‘is that cocktail of elements—cold, wind, storms, psychology—whereby Antarctica does not treat fools gladly. It jumps on any mistakes with a vengeance.’³⁰⁰



297 Bass, Wells, and Ridgeway, *Seven Summits*, 41.

298 Reinhold Messner, *Antarctica: Both Heaven and Hell* (Ramsbury: The Crowood Press, 1991), 28.

299 Ghazali Musa, James Higham, and Anna Thompson-Carr, *Mountaineering Tourism*, Contemporary Geographies of Leisure, Tourism and Mobility (London: Routledge, 2015).

300 Greg Mortimer, pers. comm., 16 July 2015.

Until ANI could expand its logistics network beyond Vinson Massif and offer adventurers access to more of Antarctica's heartland, it needed to overcome one major problem. There were no runways able to support conventional-wheeled aircraft in the Antarctic interior, and the largest ski-equipped aircraft ANI could source was the Twin Otter. This was a highly versatile machine, preferred by bush pilots working in the world's most rugged terrain. Yet its low fuel capacity required expensive and burdensome re-fuelling stops. 'The whole story of ANI became centred around the use of fuel—the logistics of fuel and the price of fuel,' Williams explained.³⁰¹ ANI's greatest vulnerability was its dependence on the Chilean Air Force to deliver and store caches of fuel en route to its Vinson base camp. There were grave concerns that the Chileans might one day decide to stop the airdrops altogether or to raise the price significantly. Their price had already jumped from US \$60,000 to US \$110,000 from one summer season to the next.³⁰²

Giles Kershaw suggested that their solution might rest in a curious discovery he and a colleague had made ten years earlier, during his first season as a British Antarctic Survey pilot. That summer, he was assigned to work with a team of glaciologists led by Charles Swithinbank. Swithinbank was a driving force in Britain's efforts to map Antarctica by radio echo-sound, the largest single surveying project launched on the continent that decade. He and his team piled into Kershaw's Twin Otter and spent several weeks surveying the ice, at times flying as little as ten metres above it. As they did, a newly-built echo-sounder sent radio waves pulsing through the transparent ice sheet below them. The waves travelled over a thousand metres beneath the glaring white surface and into a subglacial world of valleys, mountains, lakes and plateaux. Waves that reached the ice base then reflected skyward again, brimming with news from the world below.

301 Martyn Williams, pers. comm., 12 May 2015.

302 Ibid.

Although limited to a tight budget and policies on aircraft use that were ‘rather like that of mother hen’, Swithinbank urged Kershaw to push deeper inland.³⁰³ They circled the Ellsworth Mountains, 1,400 kilometres from their starting point. Vinson Massif and its neighbours, Mounts Shin, Gardner, Tyree and Epperly, towered above them. Then, as they turned towards the southernmost peaks of the mountain range, both men noticed to their right a large area of smooth, snow-free ice. ‘It’s vivid blue colour contrasted with the all-pervading whiteness of the landscape,’ Swithinbank remarked.³⁰⁴ It rested in lee of a ridge called the Patriot Hills and made an impression on them both, although neither man uttered a word about it at the time. Both surmised, independently, that this ‘blue ice’ area might be smooth enough to take a conventional wheeled aircraft, which would avoid the need for skis or refuelling. Ten years later, Swithinbank received a call from Kershaw concerning that very same patch of ice.

Within days of retiring from the British Antarctic Survey, Swithinbank and Canadian geophysicist, Mike Maxwell, were dropped off at the Patriot Hills blue ice area. ‘A bleaker place would be hard to imagine,’ Swithinbank recalled. ‘The wind was cutting through our clothing. A few small bundles [of clothing and equipment] at our feet were all that stood between us and encroaching hypothermia.’³⁰⁵ For the next three days, the men camped and tested the area’s suitability as a runway for large wheeled aircraft. Using a borrowed theodolite and four metre staff they ran a line of levels along the bare ice, which was much bigger than was needed to land even a big aircraft. ‘By the time we were frozen and I was sunburned, we had covered two thousand three hundred metres,’ Swithinbank remarked.³⁰⁶

303 Charles Swithinbank, *Forty Years on Ice: A Lifetime of Exploration and Research in the Polar Regions* (Sussex: The Book Guild, 1998), 110.

304 Ibid., 111.

305 Ibid., 175.

306 Ibid.

Swithinbank theorised that blue ice areas occurred in places where wind and sublimation stripped off the snow which covered the ice before it flowed into a localised area of mountain turbulence. He had approached several government agencies with the idea of researching them as a means to expand the range of Antarctic aviation and, subsequently, Antarctic science. Yet his idea had fallen on deaf ears. Now, working with a private company and tour operator, Swithinbank received significant criticism from colleagues who felt he was making an ill-judged switch from the public to the private sector. Yet he insisted that his work with ANI would ultimately benefit Antarctic science. 'I knew that throughout Antarctic history, most logistic innovations have been the work of private expeditions. Governments generally prefer well-trodden paths even when new methods could be most cost-effective,' Swithinbank explained.³⁰⁷ On completion of their work, Swithinbank concluded that despite strong cross winds, there was a potential 3,000-metre runway at the Patriot Hills, just 120 kilometres from the base of Vinson Massif.

The following summer, ANI successfully landed a wheeled DC-4 aircraft on the Patriot Hills blue ice runway following a ten-hour flight over 3,000 kilometres without refuelling. The ancient four-engine airliner sat proudly on the hard, dimpled ice, its white fuselage emblazoned with a bold, red stripe running from nose to tail. Above it, in sleek, black typeface, the words 'Adventure Network International' adorned one side and 'Antarctic Airways' the other. Near the runway, ANI established and operated a main camp at which Vinson climbers transferred from the DC-4 to a ski-equipped Twin Otter for the final leg to the mountain. Pleased with the performance of the DC-4 and blue ice runway, the ANI team forged ahead with plans to expand its repertoire beyond the Ellsworth Mountains. Their first order of business was the South Pole.

307 Ibid., 170.

ANI commenced the first commercial flights to the South Pole in January 1988. For a meagre US \$46,500, ANI's clients travelled on DC-4 aircraft from Punta Arenas to the Patriot Hills camp and then transferred to two Twin Otters for the return flight to the Geographic South Pole. For those concerned that the trip might be too easy, lacking the drama and discomfort that made the South Pole so iconic, the first South Pole tourist flight did not disappoint.

'It was a thrill of a lifetime,' remarked T.C. Swartz, owner of Society Expeditions, the flight's sub-charterer. After leaving the Patriot Hills, the group was caught in white-out conditions and their two Twin Otters, carrying eight paying guests, was forced to make an emergency landing. 'We actually had to do the survival that we were taught to do,' Swartz recalled.³⁰⁸ 'We got out snow axes, cut big blocks of snow, built a snow wall and put our tents into it.' While thrilled to feel like 'real adventurers' and not tourists, they could not be sure they would live to tell the tale.

Fortunately, the weather cleared the following day and the group was cleared to fly on. They enjoyed two hours at the South Pole, where they took a tour of the US Amundsen-Scott Station and posed for photographs at the ceremonial South Pole before flying back to the Patriot Hills. Yet the highlight for Swartz would remain the dramatic journey to the Pole. 'We could have easily just been a statistic. All of us could have been snowed-over. End of story. End of South Pole tourism,' he said.³⁰⁹

For those who preferred getting there the 'old fashioned way', ANI also organised the first commercial ski tour to the South Pole, in collaboration with Californian travel agency, Mountain Travel. 'No Americans have ever walked or skied to the South Pole,'

308 T.C. Swartz, pers. comm., 26 September 2014.

309 Ibid.

a Mountain Travel catalogue tempted its affluent and intrepid subscribers.³¹⁰ In fact, since Robert Falcon Scott and Roald Amundsen reached it over seventy years earlier, only one group had travelled to the South Pole by foot—Robert Swan’s 1985 Footsteps of Scott Expedition. By retracing Scott’s footsteps to the South Pole, Swan had hoped to ‘defend Scott’s judgement and the noble sacrifice of Captain Oates, and in doing so, to uphold the tradition of Polar exploration.’³¹¹

If successful, ANI would lead the fourth expedition to reach the South Pole by foot. Unlike Swan, who followed in Scott’s footsteps, ANI aimed to forge a new route. Its South Pole trek would begin at Hercules Inlet, a narrow embayment on the margin of the Antarctic continent and Ronne Ice Shelf, located a convenient 50 kilometres from its Patriot Hills camp. Six paying ‘expedition members’—a retired banker, real estate developer, graduate student, retail consultant and two colonels—joined the expedition, leaving Hercules Inlet on 25 November 1988.

Led by Martyn Williams, they were supported by two guides and two snowmobile drivers, who carried the team’s food, clothing and equipment from camp site to camp site. Although ANI staff were responsible for navigation, cooking, setting up camp, and tending to the skiers’ injuries, one of the expedition members grew concerned by Williams’ tendency to refer to the ‘expedition’ as a ‘tour’. ‘I’m not going to spend \$70,000 for a tourist trip...I’d rather give my money to the needy,’ she protested.³¹²

310 Joseph E. Murphy, *South to the Pole by Ski* (Saint Paul: Marlor Press, 1990), 12.

311 Roger Mear and Robert Swan, *A Walk to the Pole: To the Heart of Antarctica in the Footsteps of Scott* (New York: Crown Publishers Inc, 1987), 18.

312 Murphy, *South to the Pole by Ski*, 41.

Skiing for up to nine hours per day, the group travelled in close file, ever alert to crevasses. Some of them fell up to 20 times each day onto the rugged ice terrain and all suffered from sunburn, wind chap and friction-blistered heels and toes.³¹³ On 17 January 1989, the nine skiers and two snowmobile drivers formed a line and travelled their last paces towards the South Pole. Two of the team—Shirley Metz and Victoria Murden—became the first women to reach the South Pole by foot. After posing for team photos at the ceremonial South Pole, Metz stripped down to Christian Dior underwear and continued to pose while station personnel looked on. ‘Why was she doing this,’ wondered Murphy, the oldest member of the team at 58 years of age. ‘I scratched my beard in amazement, recalling the words of a former South Pole commander: “There are three kinds of people who go to the Antarctic: boy scouts, egocentrics and egomaniacs.”’³¹⁴



Soon after his successful Vinson Massif ascent, ANI received another call from Reinhold Messner. Restless after reaching Vinson’s summit in a record 26 hours, Messner had been enticed by a sled he saw lying around base camp as he waited for his flight home. He loaded it with 80 kilograms and pulled it across the dented ice surface, comfortably travelling four kilometres in an hour. At such a rate, he calculated, he could traverse the entire Antarctic continent in 100 days.

Messner immediately began dreaming of completing what Shackleton had started in 1914—the crossing of Antarctica from sea to sea.³¹⁵ ‘The march, which Shackleton has called “the most fascinating land journey on earth”, was conceivable. And it was still

313 Burt Sims, “South Pole of Bust,” *Skiing*, October 1989, 18.

314 Murphy, *South to the Pole by Ski*, 189.

315 Ernest Shackleton, *South: The Endurance Expedition* (New York: Signet Books, 1999), Preface.

available,’ Messner affirmed. With partner Arved Fuchs, Messner planned to man-haul sleds, travelling ‘under our own steam’ with ‘only the rustling of the skis and sledge runners on the snow crust.’ But Messner was careful to distinguish himself from the man-hauling Captain Scott: ‘I did not want to demonstrate the British readiness for sacrifice—I wanted to make relative the use of technology,’ he insisted.³¹⁶

Recently returned from the North Pole, Minnesotan explorer Will Steger was also planning an Antarctic continental crossing. The International Trans-Antarctica Expedition was significantly larger in scale and would travel ‘the old-fashioned way, by dog.’³¹⁷ Its members included six men and 36 dogs journeying for seven months across the length of the continent, from the northern tip of the Antarctic Peninsula to the coast of East Antarctica. They would journey 6,000 kilometres on a budget of eleven million dollars. ‘I don’t want to make a “bagatelle” of our commercialism,’ Messner would later write, ‘but, measured against the expense, for the dogs of “Trans-Antarctica” alone, we travelled modestly.’³¹⁸ Unable to organise their logistical needs solely through the goodwill of government-run Antarctic programmes, Steger also turned to ANI, which he called ‘the only game in town’.³¹⁹

ANI delivered the International Trans-Antarctica Expedition to its starting point on 25 July 1989 and, as they crossed the Antarctic Peninsula, they experienced frequently changing weather conditions and violent storms. Heavy snow falls had hidden several of the food and equipment depots ANI had laid the previous summer and, although the men became increasingly begrudging of ANI, they also became bemused by the game

316 Messner, *Antarctica: Both Heaven and Hell*, 60.

317 Will Steger and Jon Bowermaster, *Crossing Antarctica* (London: Bantom Press, 1992), 19.

318 Messner, *Antarctica: Both Heaven and Hell*, 196.

319 Steger and Bowermaster, *Crossing Antarctica*, 107.

that ‘she’—Antarctica—was playing with them. It was ‘almost as if Antarctica wanted this game to continue a little longer so she “allowed” us to find Lane Hills,’ Steger later wrote.³²⁰

In the tradition of all-male polar expeditions, which excluded women while casting them as curiosities, he would often speak of Antarctica in feminine terms. According to Steger, the continent was ‘distinctly feminine’, filled with beauty, silence and mystery, and ‘heavy with sensuality.’³²¹ And he would also joke that Antarctica was ‘the world’s fiancée’—‘everyone wants to get to know her, everyone wants to protect her, everyone wants her to be a virgin.’³²²

Delayed in Punta Arenas for weeks due to mechanical faults and poor weather, Messner and Fuchs finally arrived at Patriots Hills on 8 November. On arrival, they were told that, due to a fuel shortage, ANI could not deliver them as far as the coastline to begin their trek. Already Messner’s ambitions to cross the continent ‘from sea to sea’ were crushed. Although he agreed to fly to as close to the edge of the continent as the remaining fuel supply would take him, Messner’s confidence in ANI was ‘at zero.’³²³ The bittersweet irony of Steger and Messner’s frustration with ANI was that, by crossing the Antarctic continent, the men were trying to prove their strength, resourcefulness and self-sufficiency. Messner, in particular, by man-hauling, had wanted to demonstrate less dependence on technology and more on his own power.³²⁴

320 Ibid., 96.

321 Ibid., 50.

322 Ibid., 10.

323 Messner, *Antarctica: Both Heaven and Hell*, 91.

324 Ibid., 99.

Although Messner and Steger framed their expeditions as efforts ‘to help preserve and protect one of Earth’s last frontiers’, there were those who questioned the expeditions’ relevance. With no clear geographical or scientific purpose, some environmentalists criticised them for making ‘the last primeval landscapes on this earth attractive to the tourist industry’.³²⁵ Messner dismissed his critics as envious ‘desk-bound folk’, insisting that ‘mankind would be a more peaceful race if, now and then, each person had a chance to stretch himself to the limit of his capabilities.’³²⁶ Steger conceded that his team’s dependence on modern technology and inability to make a new geographical discovery rendered their expedition ‘very much different’ from their predecessors. Yet he emphasised the need for adventure ‘in an era noted for complacency and retreat’.³²⁷

On 11 December 1989, the International Trans-Antarctica Expedition reached the South Pole. ‘It felt very strange to be on a carpet in a warm room,’ Steger wrote.³²⁸ Despite enthusiasm from the majority of Amundsen-Scott Station personnel they met, the team was not officially welcome at the station. During their brief tour, they were offered coffee but nothing more, despite the fact that hot food was being prepared. An NSF representative was sent from McMurdo Station specifically to monitor the team’s arrival. According to Steger, they ‘stood and read a five-minute statement that reiterated the NSF’s policy of nonrecognition of private expeditions.’³²⁹ Steger was told to stay on the opposite side of the runway from the base at all times and not to fraternise with base personnel.

When Messner arrived at the South Pole three weeks later, he expressed disappointment at the amount of development surrounding the South Pole. Messner would have preferred

325 Ibid., 22.

326 Ibid., 27.

327 Steger and Bowermaster, *Crossing Antarctica*, 73.

328 Ibid., 203.

329 Ibid., 204.

to be welcomed by a scene from the heroic age of exploration: ‘a black tent—pointed, tattered...nothing else. Amundsen, yes. The rest was a symbol of human megalomania,’ he wrote.³³⁰ Still, he enjoyed the sleeping quarters, shower and meals the station personnel offered him and Fuchs, all in violation of official station policy.

Beyond the Pole and pushing towards McMurdo Sound, Messner followed Scott’s fabled return journey from the Pole, and considered ‘the scene of this tragedy’ as he retraced Scott’s footsteps: ‘The same ice sea, the same shimmering blue mountains in the background, the same violent coloured sky above. A mighty stage. A reality which moved me emotionally.’³³¹ Although hungry, fatigued and frustrated at Fuchs’s slow pace, Messner grieved the end of a ‘serious journey’ when they reached McMurdo Sound on 12 February 1990. ‘When you drag your whole home behind you for three months, you live another life; a life according to only nature’s criteria.’³³²

Thirteen days later, on 26 February, the Trans-Antarctica team saw open water. ‘The blue of the ocean said one thing to us: completion,’ wrote Steger.³³³ Gaining a visual hold of the continental edge also offered Steger a much-needed reference point, following seven months on a continent he had not yet come to terms with. ‘If we’d sometimes felt as if we were on another planet, now we were sure we were in fact on Earth,’ wrote Steger.³³⁴ A week later, after 220 days of voyaging, Steger’s team reached the coastline, thus completing the first Antarctic crossing by foot.



330 Messner, *Antarctica: Both Heaven and Hell*, 180.

331 Ibid., 262.

332 Ibid., 271.

333 Steger and Bowermaster, *Crossing Antarctica*, 276.

334 Ibid., 277.

Tragedy struck ANI on 5 March 1990, when Giles Kershaw was killed in a flying accident while supporting a National Geographic film crew on the Antarctic Peninsula. The small, open-cabin gyrocopter he was piloting flipped in a katabatic wind and sent Kershaw falling 75 metres down to the ice below. For twenty minutes, he lay conscious and silent, a crippled form of broken bones and punctured organs.

At Britain's Rothera Station he was pronounced dead by a coroner and returned to the Jones Ice Shelf for burial. 'Polar aviation has lost a pilot who became a legend in his lifetime,' Charles Swithinbank wrote in his obituary, alongside a long list of Kershaw's aviation records and accomplishments. 'But records were not his interest; all he ever sought was to make the best use of an aircraft...His prodigious skill in handling aircraft was matched by great personal charm and unfeigned modesty'.³³⁵

Kershaw's wife, Anne, was staying with his mother in England when she received the news of Giles' death. In the middle of the night, a knock at the door was followed by an alarming scream that sent her racing downstairs in her long, pink night dress. Giles' sister and brother-in-law had arrived and shared the bad news, which Anne refused to believe. 'I always thought he was indestructible,' she told me.³³⁶

Within days, she was skiing across the crevassed surface of the Jones Ice Shelf towards her husband's makeshift grave. In years to come, Anne would see this all as a fitting end. 'There's nowhere he'd have rather ended his life than in an aeroplane in Antarctica. That would have been the epitome for Giles.' But at the time, she felt only shock, pain and self-pity. 'I remember thinking, "How could this happen to me?" I wasn't even thinking

335 Charles Swithinbank, "John Edward Giles Kershaw," *Polar Record* 26, no. 158 (1990): 250.

336 Anne Kershaw, pers. comm., 5 April 2015

about what had happened to him. The whole thing was surreal,’ she recalled. ‘I had found my soul mate and then someone had another plan for me.’³³⁷

Hailing from a conservative family in Glasgow, Anne Campbell lived a ‘fairly sheltered life’ and nurtured modest aspirations of one day visiting London. She completed a degree in civil engineering despite constant reminders from peers and teachers that it was not a profession suitable for women. Soon enough, Anne herself would realise that the job was not what she had imagined it would be. She took a summer job as a stewardess with Britannia Airways, whose speciality was whisking away Britain’s ‘bucket and spade brigade’ on holidays to Spain.³³⁸ ‘Everyday I was off to a different destination with different passengers and crew...It gave me that little sense of travel,’ she remarked.

It also introduced her to Kershaw, an ‘attentive, charming and extremely funny’ airline pilot.³³⁹ Kershaw grew up in India where his father ran a tea plantation. ‘He had a wild, free life with nannies and cooks and was then sent off to boarding school in London which he hated,’ Anne explained. Kershaw was dyslexic and had bad eyesight, and was told he would never be able to fly. He pursued his flying ambitions anyway, washing airplanes and working at airports in order to accumulate flying hours.

Anne was twenty-eight-years-old when she married Giles in 1988. First she followed him to London, where she timidly accompanied him to parties thrown by his eclectic circle of explorer friends. ‘I met all these crazy people who had a dream and went with it,’ she remarked.³⁴⁰ ‘They were people who said to themselves, “I don’t know what’s at

337 Ibid.

338 Ibid.

339 Ibid.

340 Ibid.

the other end but I'm going.'” Anne admired their sense of passion and motivation. She then followed Giles to Hong Kong where he worked as a first officer for Cathay Pacific, and travelled with him almost everywhere he went. She even went to Antarctica, where she camped for the first time in her life. ‘I don’t think I’d gone anywhere without heels. Casual wasn’t my thing,’ she told me.³⁴¹

During one trip, Anne opted to camp alone while Giles and his ANI colleagues scouted new ski routes. Looking back, she marvelled at their recklessness. ‘If that aircraft had crashed, I’d have just died. I had no stove, nothing.’ But instead, she revelled in the solitude. She remembers listening to the snowflakes hitting the ground and feeling that she was bearing witness to the best of nature. ‘To be somewhere and nature’s in control. To hear these soft sounds of snowflakes landing. It was the most incredible feeling I think I’d had at that point.’³⁴²

Giles’ death not only devastated Anne emotionally but also financially. She was unemployed and Giles had left no will. It took several years to settle his probate, until which time she could not sell any of his assets. ‘That was by default how I ended up with Adventure Network International,’ she explained.³⁴³ Although she knew little about aircraft or Antarctica, Kershaw was aware that ANI was in hundreds of thousands of dollars of debt, and considered that she might be able to help in some way.

Williams and Morrow appointed her ANI’s Air Operations Manager, a role for which she was grossly under qualified. Later they told her that they were trying to get rid of her. ‘I was someone’s widow and they’d decided to give me a job until I got sick of it,’ Kershaw

341 Ibid.

342 Ibid.

343 Ibid.

revealed.³⁴⁴ She was sent to Opa-Locka Airport in Miami, ‘the drug bust capital of the planet’, to pick up a plane and deliver it to Punta Arenas. The maintenance crew, quickly realising that Kershaw was in over her head, invented a series of delays and excuses.

Fortunately, ANI had also sent along a retired aviation expert who gave Kershaw a crash course in airplanes. ‘He went over every piece of that plane with me,’ she recalled. He also told her to fire four of the five crew. Though the thought terrified Kershaw—‘these guys were drug runners; they were scary men’—she fired three of them the next day and the fourth the day after. The tactic worked and the one man left standing called in reinforcements to get the job done. It was a formative experience for Kershaw. ‘I felt so alone but so empowered at the same time. I wanted to prove to myself that I loved me and I could go on without Giles in some way,’ she told me.³⁴⁵

Within two years ANI’s other owners had sold their shares of the company to Kershaw and business partner Mike McDowell. Kershaw owned 49 percent of ANI and was its Managing Director, responsible for the day-to-day operation of the company. Over the course of the next twelve years, she led the expansion of ANI, lifting it out of debt, acquiring larger aircraft, broadening its geographical reach and offering logistical support to government programmes.

All the while, she fostered her own personal mission to develop an Antarctic safety net and prevent deaths like Giles’ in the future. On a continent where the mere presence of a woman had not so long ago been shunned, and where women leaders remained few and far between, Kershaw was a trailblazer. Yet she insisted that being a woman in Antarctica offered many advantages. ‘Women can fall into any category required because we just

344 Ibid.

345 Ibid.

want to get the job done. We don't need a title or an accolade,' she explained.³⁴⁶

Many of her colleagues and clients commended her courage and astuteness but she also developed a reputation as 'the Wicked Witch of the West'. According to Kershaw, most of her detractors were disorganised expeditioners who could not handle her firm approach. 'Some expeditions were more focused on showcasing their sponsored equipment than in the trip itself,' she explained.³⁴⁷

According to Kershaw, one team posed for promotional photographs in Punta Arenas wearing brand new sponsored boots. They had never worn the boots before and developed blisters before they had even arrived on the continent. Another team spent 'days on end' taking pictures with a sponsored bath tub at the Patriot Hills while delaying their start for the South Pole. The expedition team had a small window of time in which to reach the South Pole. Their return charter flight and permit were set for a fixed date. 'If they don't get to the end on time, they jeopardise everyone's life,' Kershaw explained.³⁴⁸

Kershaw began to see clear trends with expeditions. 'There were the ones who organised an expedition to write a book. If it didn't have all these dramatic, horrible things going on, it wouldn't sell. And there were the organised and modest ones who came in, hit the ground running and got it done.' One of the South Pole expeditions Kershaw admired most was Norwegian explorer, Liv Arnesen: 'She quietly completed this incredible journey and then simply left.'³⁴⁹

346 Ibid.

347 Ibid.

348 Ibid.

349 Ibid.

On the afternoon of 4 November 1994, Norwegian explorer Liv Arnesen was escorted by snowmobile from ANI's Patriot Hills camp to Hercules Inlet and left there, alone. Over the course of the next 50 days, she planned to ski the 1,200 kilometre journey to the South Pole, making her the first woman to do so alone. Wasting no time, and taking advantage of the fine weather, Arnesen immediately set a southward course, carrying a fifteen kilogram backpack and pulling an 85 kilogram sled. Fine weather soon turned to highly changeable weather—fog, snow and whiteout—and Arnesen found herself travelling through a field of deep crevasses. 'I was never really afraid, but intensely focused,' she remarked.³⁵⁰

Dozens of times already she had imagined falling through, and then pulling herself out of a crevasse just as Douglas Mawson had done in 1912. But Arnesen knew well that if she did fall into a crevasse, she might easily be injured or trapped by snow and ice. 'If I couldn't climb out unaided, it wouldn't be long before I froze to death.'³⁵¹ After the crevasses came the wind, a brisk and raucous westerly wind that caused Arnesen splitting headaches until she managed to adjust her skiing technique and headgear. Then she began encountering sastrugi, wave-like ridges in the ice caused by wind erosion. Some of them measured over a metre tall and sent her periodically stumbling and falling or stopped her sled dead in its tracks.

With each challenge she encountered, Arnesen found a way to adapt and move on. 'I'm enjoying myself!' she soon declared, somewhat surprised.³⁵² She had mentally prepared herself to be miserable, assuming that her solo journey would be cold and unpleasant. 'I had absorbed all the sufferings of the old polar explorers into my subconscious, where

350 Liv Arnesen, *Good Girls Don't Ski to the South Pole (English Translation)* (Unpublished Manuscript, 1995), 37.

351 Ibid., 38-39.

352 Ibid., 45.

they were churned over for many a year,' she explained.³⁵³ She had also read Reinhold Messner's Antarctic expedition account, noting that 'his whole book was one long chronicle of suffering.'³⁵⁴

After passing the Thiel Mountains, Arnesen approached the most difficult stretch of the journey. As she climbed another 1,500 metres of altitude the air became colder and thinner, and the snow more clingy and abrasive. While climbing a particularly steep slope, Arnesen chose to remove her skis and walk straight up with the help of ski poles. She suddenly fell through the ice to her hips. Hurling herself back, her sledge slid backwards too and gave a small tug out of the hole. 'I stared down into the blue-tinted depths,' Arnesen reflected.³⁵⁵ Returning to her sledge she put her skis back on, crossed the crevasse safely and tried not to dwell on what had happened.

On Christmas Eve, Arnesen arrived at the US Amundsen-Scott South Pole station and soon found herself in the midst of 'a fantastic Christmas brunch'. 'I was quite overwhelmed by all the people, all the different impressions, and the warm welcome,' she remarked. As her flight to Patriot Hills would not arrive until January 6, Arnesen volunteered in the station's kitchen in return for meals and showers. With no extra living space to offer her, Arnesen would be required to sleep in her tent, which she preferred in any case. 'I didn't feel particularly tempted to sleep indoors in the heat.'³⁵⁶

On her return to Norway, Arnesen harboured no desire to return to Antarctica again. Then she received a letter from American woman, Ann Bancroft, asking if Arnesen

353 Ibid.

354 Ibid., 58.

355 Ibid., 57.

356 Ibid., 62.

would join her on a ski trip across Antarctica. When the women met, they bonded over their adventures, their experiences as former teachers and their shared admiration for Shackleton. ‘It was clear that both of us were fascinated by the way Antarctica had tested Shackleton, and what it brought out of him as a result. Even as children we had both been enchanted with the idea of facing the same test, eager to see what it would bring out in us.’³⁵⁷

Both women had also faced the hardships of finding sponsorship for their expeditions. ‘Have you ever hauled a sledge?’ one prospective sponsor asked Arnesen, who had already proved she could pull a sledge across Greenland. When Bancroft organised the 1993 American Women’s Expedition to the South Pole, she too was an accomplished expeditioner, having sledged to the North Pole with Will Steger and led the first American women’s east to west crossing of Greenland. Yet she struggled to be taken seriously. ‘One CEO actually reached across a conference table, squeezed my biceps, and said he didn’t think I looked strong enough to pull a sled across Antarctica,’ Bancroft revealed.³⁵⁸

For Bancroft, this highlighted the economic barriers women faced in achieving their potential. In the past, when she had encountered ‘stupid conceptions’ about women’s capabilities—‘Women can’t do that; You’re too small; Women don’t belong in Antarctica’—she had thought of them as nothing more than words. She would carry on regardless. ‘But when I looked back, I saw that because the people with those attitudes controlled the money, it affected our ability even to have a chance at making the journey,’ she lamented.³⁵⁹ The women wondered whether they was intruding on something that

357 Liv Arnesen, Ann Bancroft, and Cheryl Dahle, *No Horizon Is So Far: Two Women and Their Extraordinary Journey across Antarctica* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2003), 23.

358 Ibid., 40.

359 Ibid., 42.

belonged to men alone; whether the poles of the Earth were their last refuge.

Bancroft and Arnesen began their trek on 13 November 2001, near Signey Glacier in Dronning Maud Land, a region of East Antarctica lying due south of South Africa. From there they planned to ski to the South Pole and then onto McMurdo Sound on the western coast of Antarctica. Towing 110 kilogram sleds, the women were propelled by sails, moving at up to 40 kilometres per hour when the wind behaved in their favour, and reduced to laborious pulling when it did not. Throughout the expedition, the wind would alternately carry, attack or desert the pair. 'It left no doubt that we were completely subject to its whim,' Bancroft remarked.³⁶⁰

While the women received yet another warm welcome at the South Pole, they found their visit anticlimactic having both already been there. Crossing this threshold and beginning the second half of the trip was their real milestone. They were about to make the first attempted descent of the Shackleton Glacier and already over a month into their journey, they were running out of time. As the wind continued to dictate their fate, the women were twice tent-bound during early February blizzards. Then, on days when they were able to move, they found themselves in heavily crevassed areas that forced them to punch along the glacier with their ski poles to test each section.

By mid-February, the women were 'at the wall for time' and praying for a few excellent sailing days to keep them on track. But their ship, the *Sir Hubert Wilkins*, was departing Antarctica in nine days. They were still 644 kilometres away and without a breath of wind to their backs. On February 14, Arnesen and Bancroft made the difficult decision to call ANI and ask to be picked up and flown to their end point at McMurdo Sound.

360 Ibid., 115.

Technically, they had sledged as far as the Ross Ice Shelf—a large slab of ice floating on the Ross Sea—and had therefore crossed the continent. But they knew that those ‘within expedition circles’ would not recognise the achievement. ‘The trek will never be considered “crossing the continent” without the Ross Ice Shelf,’ Bancroft explained.³⁶¹

With time to spare before their ship’s departure, staff at the US McMurdo Station invited Bancroft and Arnesen to tour Shackleton’s Hut at Cape Royds. Bancroft considered it the perfect ending to their trek: ‘It was like coming full circle.’³⁶² Still, the women could not hide their disappointment. Walking around the hut, Arnesen felt drained and empty. ‘Ann and I had labored for 97 days on the ice. Now it was over. What now?’ She wondered whether the disappointment of not completing a ‘true crossing’ would drive her to come back and try once more. Would she be like Shackleton, she wondered, whose ‘happiness depended so much on those things that he became obsessed.’³⁶³

Women like Arnesen and Bancroft, who venture to Antarctica to ski, climb and sledge across the polar plateau, come to blaze a new trail for women but inevitably follow in the footsteps of men. But perhaps the women of Antarctica beat their own tracks in a different way. Leaving the hut, Arnesen decided not to follow Shackleton’s lead. She had travelled in the wake of Antarctica’s heroic men but she was determined to follow her own heart. ‘I would be able to let go of my dream, having given it all my effort and energy and will,’ Arnesen insisted. ‘It was over. Time to let go. Time for a new dream to take up residence in my heart.’³⁶⁴



361 Ibid., 218.

362 Ibid., 212.

363 Ibid., 214.

364 Ibid.

From unexpected beginnings in 1985, ANI had developed into a professional and influential outfit. In the future, it would continue to grow, developing new itineraries, adopting new communications technologies and employing ever larger and more powerful aircraft. Eventually, the company would leave the Patriot Hills behind in favour of a more suitable field camp and blue ice runway at Union Glacier, also near the Ellsworth Mountains.³⁶⁵ But this style of adventure tourism in the deep Antarctic interior would remain a niche market within the Antarctic tourism industry, accounting for about two percent of annual Antarctic tourism visits.

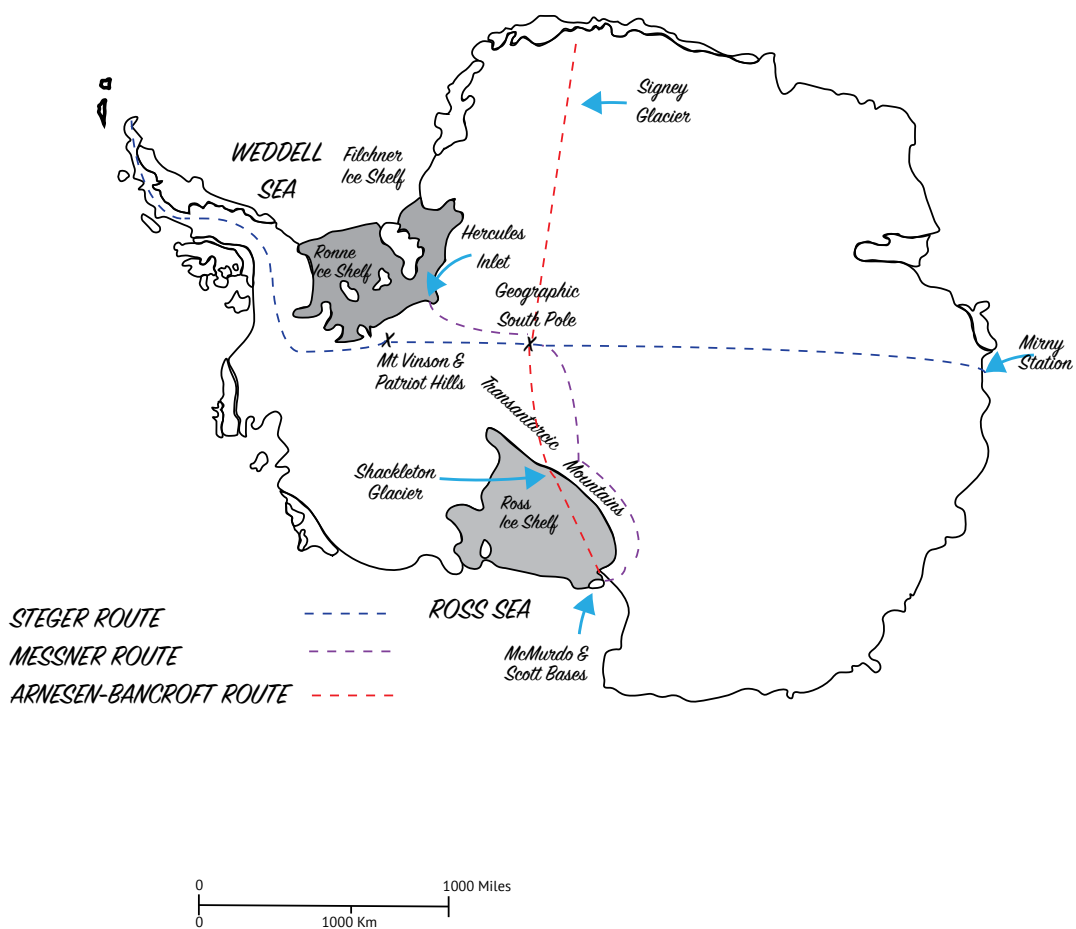
By 2003, ANI would also diversify its operation, catering not only for the logistics needs of tourists but also to government science programmes.³⁶⁶ One of its largest projects would require providing logistical support to the Subglacial Lake Ellsworth Consortium. Led by the British Antarctic Survey, the National Oceanography Centre and several universities, the project would aim to explore Subglacial Lake Ellsworth using a specially-engineered hot-water drill through three kilometres of ice.³⁶⁷

When ANI first arrived in Antarctica, those governments active on the continent were hesitant to allow private operators to access the Antarctic interior. ANI's founders and their associates were seen to be acting in defiance of the 'polar establishment'. Two decades later, this pioneering private operator would be assisting government science programs to access the Antarctic interior. Tour operators were not only delivering tourists to Antarctica. They were also transforming the way in which the continent was explored and who was doing the exploring.

365 ANI moved its Antarctic summer field camp from the Patriot Hills to Union Glacier in 2010.

366 <https://antarctic-logistics.com/about-ale/our-history/>

367 The drilling project, which had been planned for ten years, was called off on 25 December 2012, because the drilling team was unable to link the main borehole to a subsurface water cavity they had formed. Without this link, there was insufficient water to continue drilling towards the lake.



Map 3: Sledging Routes



Above: ANI Twin Otter and Adelie penguin, n.d. (Source: Adventure Network International)
Below: Patriot Hills Field Camp, n.d. (Source: Adventure Network International)





Above: At the summit of Mount Vinson (left to right): Steve Fossett, Alejo Contreras, Martyn Williams; kneeling, Pat Morrow, Pat Caffrey, Giles Kershaw, Mike Dunn and Roger Mitchell, 1985 (Source: Pat Morrow)

Below left: ANI Twin Otter at the South Pole, n.d. (Source: Adventure Network International)

Below right: Anne Kershaw, n.d. (Source: Adventure Network International)





Above: Pat Morrow on the summit of Mount Everest, 1982 (Source: Pat Morrow)
Below: Vinson Massif Base Camp, n.d. (Source: Adventure Network International)





Above: Will Steger's International Trans-Antarctica Expedition Team at the South Pole, 11 December 1990 (Source: Gordon Wiltsie)
Below: Ann Bancroft (left) and Liv Arnesen (right), n.d. (Source: Ann Bancroft)





Above: Reinhold Messner and Arved Fuchs at the Patriot Hills ahead of their 1990 Antarctic crossing
(Source: Reinhold Messner, *Antarctica: Both Heaven and Hell* (Ramsbury: The Crowood Press, 1991))

Reflection

On Tourists, Adventurers and Explorers

What is a tourist? When did Antarctic tourism begin? Who is not an Antarctic tourist? These are some of the questions I grappled with when I set out to write a history of Antarctic tourism. In some ways, these questions were easier to answer in an Antarctic context than anywhere else in the world, where categories of travel like business and tourism, or short-term and long-term, proved far more ambiguous. In Antarctica, there already existed a relatively neat and convenient distinction between government and tourist expeditions—between their main reasons for going, how they got there and who funded them. For the most part, government expeditions were those Antarctic voyagers employed and paid to be in Antarctica, while tourists were not working and were paying their own way to the ice.

As for the matter of when Antarctic tourism began, a list of commercial tours to Antarctica had been well documented by chronologists. And although there had been a handful of commercial tours in the 1950s—organised by Argentine and Chilean tourism boards—Lars-Eric Lindblad's Antarctic tours were the first for which I could readily access personal travel accounts, tourist brochures and government correspondence.

I wondered, however, whether I could be more creative with my definition of Antarctic tourism. If an enduring definition of a tourist was a fare-paying traveller, could I propose Apsley-Cherry Garrard and Captain Lawrence Oates as Antarctica's first tourists? In this case, *The Worst Journey in the World* would become Antarctica's first tourist account and 'I may be some time' the last words uttered before the first tourist death.

Then there was the matter of groups and activities that did not easily fit into the tourism-government dichotomy. What about the artists and writers who travelled on government expeditions? Should I count government expeditioners' off-duty Antarctic sojourns—the Antarctic 'jolly'—as tourism? And what should I do about Ingrid Christensen and Caroline Mikkelsen, who accompanied their husbands on Antarctic whaling expeditions in the 1930s? Were women Antarctica's first tourists?

Equally perplexing were the adventurers and modern explorers who treated Antarctica as an athletic challenge, not a place. As they mountaineered, sledged and skied their way across the continent, were they just embarking on personal challenges? Some made their way to Antarctica by chartering yachts, as Robert Swan did on his 1984 *In the Footsteps of Scott Expedition*. The vast majority have, however, travelled to Antarctica using the logistical support of ANI or another tour operator. And such expeditions fall under the auspices of tourism when authorised and regulated by relevant government agencies. Yet many of them would not, and do not, want to be called tourists. Individually they prefer to be called adventurers or explorers and collectively as 'private expeditions'. Yet their very aversion to the word 'tourist' is what makes them so interesting; what makes it necessary to include them in a study of Antarctic tourism.

The terms tourist, adventurer and explorer are not arbitrary categories. Nor should they be thought of as simply reflecting the kinds of activities different people undertake in Antarctica or whether they travel independently or in groups. 'Adventurer' and 'explorer' represent masculine ideals, which underpinned 19th and early 20th century imperial adventure and exploration, while 'tourists' emerged when intrepid women began following in their tracks.

The Lost Art of Travel

Another way to begin is to ask ‘Where are the travellers?’ In other parts of the world, when we look to distinguish the tourist from its alternative, we usually look to the traveller. According to the conventional tourist-traveller dichotomy, travellers are intrepid, independent and spontaneous while tourists prefer predictability, familiarity and following someone else’s lead. When scholars began to write about the subject of tourists, they did not move far beyond this basic stereotype and often used clichés and derogatory tones when describing the emergence of mass tourism.

American historian, Daniel Boorstin, is the most commonly cited anti-tourist scholar. In 1962, he published *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* in which he dedicated a whole chapter to ‘The Lost Art of Travel.’ ‘The traveller was active; he went strenuously in search of people, of adventure, of experience. The tourist is passive; he expects interesting things to happen to him. He goes “sight-seeing,”’ Boorstin wrote.³⁶⁸ While the tourist-traveller trope continues to circulate in academia and popular culture alike, it was Dean MacCannell who in 1976 called on scholars to lift their game. ‘It is intellectually chic nowadays to deride the tourist,’ he wrote.³⁶⁹

Since then, historians of tourism and travel have uncovered the role that industrialisation, class and gender played in the emergence of these opposing categories of travel. Lynne Withey, whose book *Grand Tours and Cook’s Tours* (1997) explores the history of leisure travel, has written about the ways in which perceptions of British travellers to continental Europe changed in the mid-19th century.³⁷⁰ Prior to this, most leisure travel was restricted to

368 Daniel. Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (Vintage Books, 1962), 85.

369 MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, 9.

370 Lynn Withey, *Grand Tours and Cook’s Tours: A History of Leisure Travel, 1750 to 1915* (W. Morrow, 1997).

wealthy young men of means with aspirations shaped by their nobility or upper class roots. But with rapid industrialisation in Britain, an increasing number of merely upper-middle class British people, including women and family groups, began to travel to the continent.

At this stage European travellers still largely represented the ‘leisure class’—those from élite class backgrounds. Elite Europeans and also Americans, who were in the minority, began to criticise the British travellers for sticking in groups, being crude, ignorant and absorbing little of what they saw and for complaining about anything that struck them as too foreign. All traits, that is, that we would associate with the stereotypical definition of a tourist. ‘In future generations,’ Withey writes, ‘similar charges would be levelled at Americans, Germans, Japanese—whatever group was perceived to be the richest and most numerous among foreign travellers at the time.’³⁷¹

While ‘tourist’ is a commonly used term in Antarctica, ‘traveller’ is, curiously, rarely used. Could it be because we depict travellers as whimsical wanderers who prefer to get lost in order to find themselves? In Antarctica, a place booby-trapped with crevasses and far from help, wandering aimlessly is never a good idea. In any case, the essence of this tourist-traveller dichotomy still arises, as we noted in the previous reflection, in tourists’ concerns with authenticity. If there were a similar split to be found among Antarctica’s leisure travellers it would be between the yachts and small ‘expedition’ ships, who think of themselves as more intrepid, and those who travel on larger vessels and cruise ships, who need to be pampered with comfort and luxury.

Within the realm of Antarctic leisure travel, the most commonly used categories are tourist, adventurer and explorer. And the history of how these terms emerged and took

371 Ibid., 94.

their meaning has less to do with the history of mass tourism than it does with the history of exploration.

A Boys' Own Adventure

The explorer was also a product of the 19th century. This is when the term 'explorer' slipped into common English usage to distinguish world discoverers from other kinds of travellers. It may seem odd that the term is so recent, given that we use it in reference to men like Christopher Columbus, Marco Polo, Vasco de Gama and Francis Drake who lived and died before the 19th century. But this is a product of what historian Dane Kennedy calls 'posthumous apotheosis'—retrospective showering of iconic importance by the countries who claimed these men's achievements as their own.³⁷²

The perceived difference between explorers and other travellers largely related to where they went, their expertise and specialised skills and responsibilities they shouldered. Explorers went where other travellers did not dare—to remote, unknown corners of the world where perhaps no other Europeans had been before. They encountered exotic and primitive peoples, navigated uncharted waters and trekked through wild and savage jungles. They also possessed specialised skills and knowledge. Explorers were expected to be well-versed in hydrography, astronomy, botany and natural history; to carry and use technical equipment such as sextants, chronometers and compasses; and to conduct surveys, identify and collect new found species and record ethnographic observations of the native cultures they encountered. They were also, at times, authorised to make new territorial claims on behalf of their sovereigns including the performance of proclamation ceremonies. Dane Kennedy has called the explorer a 'protoprofessional' who travelled in

372 Dane Kennedy, "Introduction: Reinterpreting Exploration," in *Reinterpreting Exploration: The West in the World*, ed. Dane Kennedy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1.

the service of science, society and the state.³⁷³

‘Explorer’ and ‘adventurer’ are related terms and were often used to refer to one and the same person. The adventurer, however, did not possess an official imperial duty in the same way that the explorer did. To explore implied having a specific geographical or scientific goal, which might be coupled with some other imperial task. Adventure, on the other hand, implied risk-taking and thrill-seeking as an end in itself. For many explorers, adventure was one of the alluring perks of the job. As Brigid Hains has argued in *The Ice and The Inland*, the realities of Antarctic exploration were experienced and expressed by heroic age explorers as dangerous, boring and cold. Yet there was ‘something in the idea of “wonderful adventures” that made light of these difficulties.’³⁷⁴

Like many young British men, the explorer’s education in adventure came from reading imperial adventure stories, a cultural phenomenon which swept the British Empire from the mid-19th century through the Edwardian period.³⁷⁵ Comprising fictional stories, as well as realist narratives of exploration and adventure, Angela Woollcott has argued that these stories constituted arguably the most powerful vehicle for inculcating notions of ideal manliness and imperial mission across the Empire. ‘Generations of British and white settler boys learnt from such stories that the empire proffered an amazing array of exciting places where they could test their mettle and prove their worthiness to family, God and country,’ Woollcott writes.³⁷⁶

These heroic explorers and adventurers gained celebrity-hero status just as British society

373 Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces*, 2.

374 Hains, *The Ice and the Inland*, 10.

375 Angela Woollcott, *Gender and Empire* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

376 Ibid., 60.

was growing anxious about the spread of unmanliness closer to home. According to this view, the comforts and luxuries of modern living were making men soft. Those qualities that Victorians regarded as emblematic of all that was best of themselves as people—manly courage, moral virtue, individual enterprise, patriotic spirit and scientific curiosity—were under threat. By performing heroic acts on the empire’s frontiers, adventurers and explorers represented manly exemplars against which English males could measure their masculinity. If manliness was in decline in the metropolis, they assured the country, it was alive and well in the jungles, mountains and ice caps of the empire’s fringes.³⁷⁷

According to British minds, these remote and wild spaces became masculine playgrounds; prime sites of Boys’ Own adventures.³⁷⁸ Mountains and ice caps were commonly personified as female bodies and branded with carnal and militaristic language. Antarctica is the pure and untouched ‘fiancée’ who men simultaneously desire to unveil and keep a mystery, while mountains were described as ‘virgin peaks’ to be conquered.³⁷⁹ Women themselves were absent from these spaces of adventure and exploration, appearing in the men’s diaries as distant sweethearts and wishful fantasies.

Lady Amateur Tourists

The situation was very different for women. If a Victorian man’s imperial duty was to discover, explore and conquer, a woman’s was to reproduce the race, bear children, maintain her man and keep a household.³⁸⁰ According to Victorian ideas about ‘separate spheres’, the home became the sphere of the woman and the family; the world outside became the sphere of the man. And with this separation came a peculiarly exaggerated

377 Bayers, *Imperial Ascent: Mountaineering, Masculinity and Empire*, 4.

378 Griffiths, *Slicing the Silence: Voyaging to Antarctica*.

379 Pomfret and Doran, “Gender and Mountaineering Tourism”.

380 Catherine Hall, “Of Gender and Empire: Reflections on the Nineteenth Century,” in *Gender and Empire*, ed. Philippa Levine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

distinction between masculine and feminine personal attributes. Women were not only viewed as inferior to men but also as their complementary opposite. If men were physically strong, rational and dignified, women were naturally more delicate and fragile, although morally superior. Part of their job at home was to counterbalance the moral taint of the outside world in which their husbands laboured all day.³⁸¹

Such strict moral codes served to 'protect' women from adventurous travel. Those who showed any interest in exploration or adventure were reminded of their 'natural' ineptitude for such activity. 'It was one of those misogynistic circles,' writes Francis Spufford. 'Middle-class women were excluded, or "protected", from adventurous physical experience then had their social limitations cited to them as evidence of their limited understandings.'³⁸²

Some middle class Victorian women did, however, leave these strict codes behind and go in search of adventure on foreign and exotic shores. By the time Isabella Bird had married in 1881, she had travelled alone through Australia, Hawaii, the Rocky Mountains and Far East. When she was left a widow five years later, she became a missionary and travelled to the Middle East, China and Morocco. During her stay in the Middle East, Bird joined British soldiers on a journey from Bagdad to Tehran. Armed with a revolver and medicine chest, she followed the unit's commanding officer during his survey work in the region.

Marianne North, Ida Pfeiffer, Mary Kingsley, Edith Durham and Gertrude Bell were among other Victorian women who ventured as far as Africa, India, South America, the Middle East and various other colonial spaces. Many of these women travelled into dangerous

381 John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (Yale University Press, 2007).

382 Spufford, *I May Be Some Time: Ice and the English Imagination*, 144.

and rugged terrain and proved their abilities in botany, surveying, ethnographic field work and hunting. They tended to fashion themselves on the adventurers and explorers of their childhood reading. But rather than beating new tracks as their male counterparts did, the women's paths tended to spiral and wind, through forests, up creeks and down canyons, with little goal other than the wandering itself.³⁸³

At a time when the New Woman feminist ideal was gaining ground, several of these women forged successful careers as travel writers. Mary Kingsley wrote two books about her travel experiences: *Travels in West Africa* (1897), which became an instant bestseller, and *West African Studies* (1899). Others like Edith Maturin published stories in periodicals like *The Wide World Magazine*, an illustrated monthly featuring adventure and travel stories, mainly from colonial spaces. Such women enjoyed more power and authority in these spaces than they did back in Britain. Rosemary Marangoly George has argued that these women benefited from their status as 'fortunate outsiders'.³⁸⁴ Being white and English meant that they did not belong and this was a status that men and women shared equally.

What title were these intrepid women to be given? In various ways, they matched many of the personal attributes, specialised skills and geographical coverage of male explorers. Although they did not forge many geographical 'firsts' nor did all of the men who bore the title of explorer or adventurer. Yet intrepid 19th century women were rarely recognised by imperial institutions like the Royal Geographical Society. The British press, in a similar vein, refused to give these women 'male accolades' and were careful to contrast their achievements with those of men in an attempt to establish a separate, non-threatening tradition of female travel.

383 Dea Birkett, *Spinsters Abroad: Victorian Lady Explorers* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

384 Rosemary Marangoly George, "Homes in the Empire, Empires in the Home," *Cultural Critique*, no. 26 (1993): 119.

In *Spinsters Abroad* (1989), Dea Birkett has written that women were considered unable to be explorers on account of 'brutal biology'.³⁸⁵ The terms 'lady' and 'explorer' were perceived by the imperial elites to be mutually exclusive. Obituaries were eager to refer to women like Isabella Bird as 'women travellers' or 'lady amateur tourists'.³⁸⁶ This final point is crucial to our understanding of the gendered nature of the tourist. It is not simply that women *happened* to be the first tourists. By virtue of her gender, a woman could be nothing *but* a tourist.

Curiously, many of these women did not want male accolades. Rather than being portrayed as strong, independent and pioneering New Women, they tended to emphasise their feminine characteristics. While they may have followed the routes of heroic male explorers and adventurers, in Britain these women still felt they had to conform to conventional ideas of how a British woman ought to look, behave and speak. 'With this acute dilemma in mind, they set out to bolster their feminine reputations against all those who dared question it,' Birkett writes.³⁸⁷

We Are All Tourists Now

By the close of the 19th century the 'age of genuine exploration' seemed to be coming to a close. According to most histories of exploration, the reason for its end was that there were no blank spaces left on the map to explore. Yet such a broad-stroke explanation ignores the significant challenge that 19th century 'women travellers' posed to the status of the explorer. By travelling into remote and wild places on the empire's frontier, these women called into question the very idea that exploration and adventure were exclusively masculine spheres, requiring a man's special strength, skill and courage. Also, the

385 Birkett, *Spinsters Abroad: Victorian Lady Explorers*, 217.

386 Ibid, 222.

387 Ibid., 197.

‘gentlemanly amateur’ tradition of exploration, which had focused strongly on practices of natural history began to give way to a modern, specialised science. The explorer’s special ability to combine rigorous, systematic in-the-field observation with physical strength and struggle began to look increasingly old-fashioned.³⁸⁸

At the opening of the 20th century, when Antarctica’s heroic age of exploration commenced, men like Scott, Amundsen, Shackleton and Mawson represented what Stephen Pyne has called ‘splendid anachronisms, the last and purest of a breed for which Antarctica offered a final refuge.’³⁸⁹ While elsewhere in the world the heroic and romantic explorer had become a thing of the past, Antarctica provided one last exclusively masculine testing ground. Here a man could prove himself amid the most raw and merciless kind of nature, while far removed from the complications that seemed to come with the presence of women and indigenous peoples. ‘Antarctica was the twentieth-century’s prime site for Boys’ Own adventures, and they were very much their own,’ Tom Griffiths writes. ‘The ice was a masculine place, to be defended, where women might be imagined and missed but never seen or held.’³⁹⁰

By the mid-20th century, nostalgic writers were counting the casualties of the great decline of adventurous travel. The explorer was dead, the traveller dying and the tourist thriving and multiplying at a baffling rate. ‘We are all tourists now, and there is no escape,’ Paul Fussell finally declared in 1980.³⁹¹ But if the explorer was dead, how can we explain all of these self-proclaimed explorers and adventurers of the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

388 Elizabeth Baigent, “‘Deeds Not Words’? Life Writing and Early Twentieth-Century British Polar Exploration” in *New Spaces of Exploration*, ed. Simon Naylor and James R. Ryan (London: I.B.Tauris, 2009).

389 Pyne, *The Ice*, 89.

390 Griffiths, *Slicing the Silence: Voyaging to Antarctica*, 203.

391 Paul Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Traveling between the Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 49.

They man-haul sleds across the polar plateau; slog up no-longer virgin mountain peaks via new, undiscovered routes; and retrace the footsteps of their explorer heroes across deserts and the polar wilderness. And, as they remind us again and again, they are unquestionably *not tourists*.

Are they in denial? Is this an attempt to return to a more heroic, chivalrous and simple past? Their tendency to qualify themselves as ‘modern’ explorers suggests that this is not the case. Modern explorers seem to recognise that some older tradition of exploration has passed and given way to something new and modern. Curiously, the term ‘adventurer’ does not seem as dated or anachronistic as ‘explorer’. It might be argued that ‘true adventure’ is harder to come by in an increasingly commoditised world. Yet we do not find anyone lamenting about the death of the adventurer or qualifying the term with the adjective ‘modern’. The adventurer has remained a timeless concept, because it was not tied to a specific purpose as the explorer’s was. The explorer was performing the duties of Empire; the adventurer was challenging himself alone and for no greater purpose. One did not have to be tasked with claiming new territories or geographical firsts in order to be called an adventurer. Though it played a crucial role in defining and reaffirming masculine ideals, adventure continued to be viewed as a thrilling by-product of exploration rather than its central purpose.

Unfortunate Outsiders

What about the women of Antarctica? What role did they play in this Boys’ Own world? Before they began to visit the continent, women played their own role in the colonisation of Antarctica through their appearance as names on Antarctic maps. When he journeyed from Hobart to Antarctica in 1840, French explorer Dumont d’Urville claimed a sliver of the continent for France and named it for his wife, Adelie, who has a penguin named

for her as well. Explorers named glaciers and mountains, bays and inlets, for their female sovereigns, benefactors and family members. Later, women would even be encouraged to conceive and give birth in Antarctica, all in a bid to bolster territorial claims.

In the 1930s, women began travelling to the continent. First came Ingrid Christensen and Caroline Mikkelsen who accompanied their husbands to Antarctica on Norwegian whaling voyages. Then, in 1947, American women Edith ‘Jackie’ Ronne and Jennie Darlington became the first women to overwinter in Antarctica. Jackie was the wife of the expedition’s leader, Finn Ronne, and twenty-three-year-old Jennie was the new bride of chief pilot, Harry Darlington. Initially only Jackie was invited along. But when the all-male expedition protested against the presence of a women on the expedition, and then finally conceded that two women were better than one, Jennie found herself on her Antarctic honeymoon. Jennie returned to the United States at the end of the year adamant that she would do it all over again. But taking everything into consideration, she did not believe that women belonged in Antarctica.

The men of Antarctica agreed wholeheartedly and resisted any further attempts for women to live or work on the continent. First they objected to their presence on the ice, then to women overwinterers and finally to their right to work in remote field camps. ‘The last male bastion was continually rebuilt and defended,’ Tom Griffiths writes.³⁹² Finally, in 1974, the Americans sent two women to overwinter at McMurdo Station. Felicity Aston has argued that they ‘played safe’, choosing a mature marine biologist, Mary McWhinnie, and a nun, Sister Mary Cahoon. Jennie Darlington had returned from her Antarctic honeymoon conspicuously pregnant and no-one in the US Antarctic programme was interested in a repeat performance. Soon, the Australians, French and Germans included women in their

392 Griffiths, *Slicing the Silence: Voyaging to Antarctica*, 214.

overwintering programmes. But for British women, the wait was much longer.

Sir Vivian Fuchs, director of the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) from 1959-1973, believed that the inclusion of women into all-male Antarctic stations would disrupt the harmony and scientific productivity of Antarctic stations. Women were welcome to come to Antarctica but they should form all-female stations, he argued. Presumably they should find their own funding too. As more British women graduated with relevant qualifications and took an interest in Antarctic science, BAS began to receive more job applications from women. It was customary for the rejection letters sent out to female applicants to explain that there were no hairdressers or shops in Antarctica. Glaciologist Liz Morris recalls receiving ‘wonderful letters’ from BAS explaining that British Antarctic stations did not have ‘suitable facilities’. This, Morris took to mean that they did not have women’s toilets. ‘I used to joke that I’d go outside and dig a hole in the snow,’ she told me.³⁹³

By 1987, Morris was BAS’s chief glaciologist and that year became the first woman to work with BAS at an Antarctic field camp. She constantly confronted what she described as ‘bizarre restrictions’, presumably put in place to ensure she never spent a night alone with a man. Morris was conscious of the pressure she felt to not do ‘anything stupid’ while at the same time frustrated at the thought that other women might be judged based on her mistakes. ‘I really did feel that I had to suppress my gender in a way and just be one of the chaps,’ she revealed.³⁹⁴

In a similar vein, Jennie Darlington had felt that she needed to suppress her femininity in order to achieve equality and acceptance within the masculine sphere of the Ronne Antarctic Research Expedition:

393 Liz Morris, pers. comm., 20 August 2014.

394 Aston, “Women of the White Continent”, 29.

My job was to be as inconspicuous within the group as possible. I determined not to act like a woman in a man's world or allow female foibles or desires to take precedence over the sense of fairness and equality an individual should not lose under any circumstances. When the men forgot I was there, it was their highest accolade—acceptance within the group.³⁹⁵

It is revealing that, unlike Victorian women travellers, who bolstered and defended their 'feminine reputations', women living and working in Antarctica felt the need to suppress theirs altogether. Might this have been any different if, as in other colonial spaces, the women could leverage their power against the perceived inferiority of the 'dark-skinned native'? In Antarctica, women could not be the 'fortunate outsider'. It was a world to which men belonged and women did not.

Yet we see another story unfold with the women who travelled to Antarctica as conscious tourists. In his travel brochures, Lars-Eric Lindblad explicitly encouraged women to pack cocktail dresses for special occasions such as when Antarctic station personnel were invited aboard to dine on the *Lindblad Explorer*. Travellers' accounts mention the way in which women tourists indulged in their feminine sides upon returning to the ship from an excursion. Pennie Rau, a jewellery designer from Hollywood who travelled to the Ross Sea in 1968, reportedly brought a spectacular ensemble of dresses and jewellery to Antarctica and paraded them around the *Explorer*. And as Dorothy Braxton packed for the same trip, she made a point of including in her luggage 'the prettiest, fluffiest' pink negligee and a bottle of Chanel No. 5. 'If there were going to be women in the Antarctic,' she wrote, 'they're going to be feminine.'³⁹⁶ Perhaps the degree to which a women felt comfortable expressing her femininity hinged on whether she was visiting a man's world or trying to *live* in one.

395 Jennie Darlington, *My Antarctic Honeymoon* (Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1956), 56.

396 Braxton, *The Abominable Snow-Women*, 37.

Liz Morris found herself recruited into a special ‘women in Antarctica’ committee to discuss the perceived issues surrounding overwintering women. As Felicity Aston explained, other national Antarctic programmes had encountered problems with mixed-gender overwintering programmes and supported the argument that women should not overwinter in Antarctica. But for Morris, the argument was simple: ‘There were good scientists who wanted to work in Antarctica, and they ought to be able to.’³⁹⁷ In 1994, Dr Lesley Thomson became BAS’s first female overwinterer, by which point women were regular participants in summer field seasons.

Returning to Antarctica later that decade, Morris was pleased to find that a woman could now go to Antarctica and ‘just be [herself]’. Still, she continued to sense a perception in the community that Antarctica was a place for ‘chaps’; ‘that it’s not entirely equal and that if you don’t take care, then you reinforce that perception,’ she explained.³⁹⁸ Efforts continue to abolish the persistent stereotype of the quintessential Antarctic scientist as being represented by an heroic, rugged man. In 2016, a team of volunteers created and updated more than one hundred biographies of high achieving women in Antarctic science to be published online. The organisers expressed the view that it was important that senior women scientists be visible to younger female scientists so that they understood that careers in science were possible.³⁹⁹

In the same year, the largest all-woman expedition sailed to Antarctica in an effort to increase the representation of women in top science jobs across the globe. Over 70 women from various scientific backgrounds joined the Homeward Bound voyage to the Antarctic

397 Aston, “Women of the White Continent”, 30.

398 Ibid.

399 Jessica Hinchcliffe, “Wikibomb Event Gives Greater Recognition to Australia’s Antarctic Female Scientists,” *ABC News*, 30 August 2016.

Peninsula. Although its Australian organisers had hoped to sail from Tasmania where the programme originated, this prospect became impossible without government funding. Instead, the privately-funded expedition sailed from Ushuaia on a tourist ship and took a ‘traditional tourist route’. But its organisers hastened to distance the expedition from that most undesirable of terms: ‘This certainly is not a tourist voyage,’ they told reporters.⁴⁰⁰

Beyond Geriatrics & Widows

Why does no-one who ventures to Antarctica want to be labelled a tourist? I believe it has much to do with another kind of enduring stereotype. Just as the image of the ideal Antarctic scientist takes the form of a virile male, the Antarctic tourist prompts images of an elderly woman. I wrote at the beginning of this reflection about why I chose to begin a history of Antarctic tourism with Lars-Eric Lindblad. But, in fact, I began it with Bessie Sweeney. It was Bessie, an eighty-six-year-old grandmother, whose account of the *Antarctic Expedition 1966* went global. She, and not Lars-Eric Lindblad, was the face of what many believed to be the first Antarctic tour. Lindblad, a tall, broad man in his late thirties, whose supposed ‘Viking origins’ never escaped mention, could have passed as an explorer. Indeed, many people referred to him as one. Bessie, on the other hand, could not pass as anything else. She became the quintessential Antarctic tourist.

Decades later, we find traces of this stereotype in Antarctic writers’ descriptions and caricatures of the Antarctic tourist. In 1988, American scientist, David Campbell, spent a summer at a Brazilian Antarctic research station on King George Island. In *Crystal Desert: Summers in Antarctica*, Campbell describes the day a ‘boatload’ of tourists came to visit the station. Noting that most were ‘geriatrics’ and ‘widows’, Campbell asked himself, ‘What curiosity pent up over a lifetime has led these retired school teachers and

400 BBC News, “Largest All-Women Expedition Heads to Antarctica,” 1 December 2016.

housewives to this most remote place on Earth near the end of their days?’⁴⁰¹ One woman told Campbell that she wanted to glimpse Antarctica as a last act before she died. He watches as the woman ‘shuffles’ through the station, ‘exchanging trifles’ with staff and takes photographs. When she wanders outside to take yet more photographs, the elderly tourist inadvertently tramples on a moss bed. ‘She may not know it, but she left her indelible mark; the continent will long remember her brief passage,’ Campbell writes.⁴⁰²

Campbell neatly and eloquently carves out the stereotypical tourist-scientist dichotomy; the masculine, knowledgeable and sensitive scientist standing opposite the ignorant, superficial and decrepit tourist. According to such a viewpoint, the tourist could not possibly have anything to contribute from her Antarctic experience because her only task left in life is to return home and die. Her ‘indelible mark’ is left on the continent for no good reason other than her own self-fulfilment; her wish to find solace before she dies. It is interesting that Campbell should make this observation on King George Island, a small, mostly ice-free island on which over a dozen nations have each built research stations in their bid to secure a permanent presence in Antarctica. Yet Campbell makes no mention of these much larger indelible marks.

Half of all Antarctic tourists are men. Although the average Antarctic tourist remains remarkably white, mature and affluent, the past two decades have seen a shift to more culturally and socially diverse tourists. The Antarctic tourism industry purports to ‘create Antarctic ambassadors’—to send tourists back home feeling inspired and informed to act in a way that ensures the continent’s future safeguarding. What exactly does this mean? How might we recognise an Antarctic ambassador if we saw one? These are pertinent questions begging further exploration. But tourists certainly play a role in sharing what

401 David. Campbell, *The Crystal Desert: Summers in Antarctica* (Houghton Mifflin, 2002), 56.

402 Ibid.

they have learned and experienced with their friends and family. And as for the geriatrics and the widows, many will place particular emphasis on sharing what they discovered on the ice with our next generation of citizens and scientists, their grandchildren.

Antarctic tourist expeditions have also played a vital role in supporting the work of researchers, artists and writers, both by providing them passage to Antarctica and by financially backing their work. As national Antarctic programme budgets are largely directed towards science and logistics, Antarctic tourism has become an important vehicle for the research of scholars from other fields including sociology, anthropology and the humanities. Antarctic tourists have included prominent writers, artists and photographers including Jenny Diski, Helen Garner, Jonathan Franzen, Ann Noble and Emma Varga. And in March 2017, the Antarctic Biennale Project travelled to Antarctica on a tourist ship carrying a cohort of international artists, scientists and philosophers. The aim of this ‘socio-cultural phenomenon’ was to design a platform for ‘intercultural and transdisciplinary dialogue about the future of “shared spaces”’.⁴⁰³

For most tourists, Antarctica will invariably continue to be a destination for a wonderful ‘trip of a lifetime’. One which they are most likely to take near the end of their days. But tourism might also offer us an alternative space for probing questions about how and why we value Antarctica; for exploring ideas and problems from the humanist’s perspective; for the thinkers and doers who do not quite fit into the national Antarctic programme mould. Antarctic tourism might offer us the 21st century’s prime site of adventure for emerging explorers of a different kind.

403 <http://www.antarcticbiennale.com/>

Chapter Four

Black Sea of Suits

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Black Sea of Suits

By early February, Nadene Kennedy was tired. For the past two months, she had been interrogated, criticised and belittled, simply for doing her job. People had complained about her to her face and in writing to their local congressmen—the one who wrote that she had ‘the brains of a grasshopper’ not taking the trouble to spell her name correctly. The summer of 1987/88 would prove to be one of the toughest that Kennedy—a loyal NSF administrator in her tenth year of service—would ever spend in Antarctica. It was the summer she was ‘deployed’ to US Palmer Station to deal with the tourists. According to Kennedy, she had been chosen for the unpopular task of overseeing tourist visits to the station because her colleagues saw her as ‘a sweet little thing’. Barely five-foot-tall and bursting with personality, they thought that she would ‘wow those little old ladies’. ‘They’ll think of you as their granddaughter,’ she recalls them telling her. ‘Well they forgot about the CEO husbands,’ she retorted bluntly, her facial expressions echoing the exhaustion she felt almost three decades ago.⁴⁰⁴

Kennedy joined NSF in 1975, having hand-delivered her resume to the government agency soon after graduating from college. Three years later, she moved into the Division of Polar Programs following a curious job interview at which she was not asked a single question. Years later, her supervisor, Joe Bennett, explained to Kennedy that when he had told her about the Polar Program’s science and logistics work, her eyes ‘grew as big as saucers’. Bennett immediately knew he had Kennedy ‘hook, line and sinker.’⁴⁰⁵ During her first visit to Antarctica in 1979, Kennedy was based at McMurdo Station when Air

404 Nadene Kennedy, pers. comm., 5 February 2015.

405 Ibid.

New Zealand flight TE 901 crashed on Mount Erebus. Although not directly involved in the recovery effort, Kennedy, like everyone working at McMurdo and Scott bases that season, was deeply affected by the tragedy. She spent hours talking to pilots whose days were spent taking bodies and debris off the mountain side and who ‘just needed to talk to someone.’⁴⁰⁶

Kennedy’s infamous summer at Palmer coincided with a new NSF policy restricting tourist visits to twelve vessels per season. It was introduced in response to complaints from station personnel that increased tourist traffic was disrupting their work, but was also a mark of a steadily growing tourism industry. For six years, from 1978 to 1984, only two tourist ships travelled each summer to the Antarctic Peninsula. The *Lindblad Explorer* and the *World Discoverer* each carried between 96 and 139 passengers and completed three to four voyages per season. In 1985, they were joined by the Argentine supply vessel *Bahia Paraíso*, carrying around 80 tourists on its station resupply voyages, and in 1987 by the 140-passenger *Illiria*. The number of voyages completed by each vessel also increased—up to nine per season in the case of the *World Discoverer*. In the 1987/88 season, over 3,000 tourists visited Antarctica, more than 90 percent of them travelling to the Antarctic Peninsula, and by ship. Although a growing number came from Britain, Australia, Germany and Japan, the majority of Antarctic tourists continued to comprise US citizens, many of whom were eager to visit Palmer Station. In addition to visits from tourist ships, Palmer also received regular ‘social calls’ from ships and yachts of various national Antarctic programmes.⁴⁰⁷

Palmer Station was not a sprawling metropolis like the much larger and more populous

406 Ibid.

407 Debra J. Enzenbacher, “Tourists in Antarctica: Numbers and Trends,” *Polar Record* 28, no. 164 (1992).; US Antarctic Activities, Section X: Tourism and Non-governmental Activities, 1980/81-1987/88 (NSF).

McMurdo Station. It was the smallest of the three American Antarctic outposts, nestled on the southern coast of Anvers Island, off the west coast of the Antarctic Peninsula. Compact, basic and populated at its peak by fewer than 50 scientists and support staff, maintaining a harmonious and productive environment there was no easy feat. As scientist and tour guide Frank Todd well understood, the frustration expressed by Palmer staff was not simply anti-tourist sentiment:

In the old days, when there were just one or two ships a year, any visit to a station was greatly looked forward to by station personnel...But over the years, the type of project has changed. There's a lot of laboratory work now, with greater emphasis, at least at Palmer, on controlled-temperature work inside buildings. Sometimes, by simply opening a door, you may wreck an experiment. Some of these experiments may be sensitive to vibrations, which is a problem if somebody accidentally bumps a sensitive instrument...Timing is very important in the Antarctic. It sometimes takes years to get our programs going and the austral summer is very short. A visit once or twice a month is okay, but when you're talking every other day, you've got a problem.⁴⁰⁸

Kennedy did her best to enforce strict rules regarding where visitors could and could not go at the station. They were forbidden from entering laboratories and were instead shown sample tanks filled with krill and invited to Palmer's small gift shop. Ships that missed out on an opportunity to visit Palmer were advised to instead visit Torgesen Island, an Adelie penguin colony about one kilometre from the station. As a courtesy, Kennedy visited these ships, armed with souvenir t-shirts and a short speech about life on the station. With Palmer Station in plain sight of Torgesen Island, it was not long before the passengers asked Kennedy why they were not permitted to visit the station. 'The only reason you don't want us at Palmer is that you're doing secret Star Wars research,' some of them

408 Yvette Cardoza and Bill Hirsch, "Antarctica Tourism 1989," *Sea Frontiers*, September-October 1989, 290.

retorted, referencing President Reagan's controversial missile defence programme. Shy and unaccustomed to public speaking, she did her best to explain the rationale for NSF's policy amidst a barrage of questions and complaints. 'I was beaten up, but I had no authority. All I could do was report back to the office,' Kennedy conceded.⁴⁰⁹

While the 'plain nastiness' of the tourists' verbal and written complaints was upsetting, Kennedy and fellow NSF staff also presumed they had been 'riled' by the expedition staff on board. Until the restrictions on visits to Palmer had been enforced, tour operators had enjoyed free range on the Antarctic Peninsula including Palmer Station. When tourist complaints lead to congressional inquiries into NSF's conduct, its staff decided to address the matter directly. 'Finally, my boss said, "We need a meeting with the tour operators,"' Kennedy recalled.

In July 1988, Kennedy's boss, Jack Talmadge, chaired a hearing and workshop at NSF Headquarters in Washington DC to bring scientists and tour operators together.⁴¹⁰ 'We had people from tour companies, scientists, lawyers . . . people who had been guides on board ships, and people who had been guides in other, similar areas such as the Galapagos,' Talmadge remarked.⁴¹¹ In the highly formal gathering, Talmadge and other government officials outlined the reasons for the visitor restrictions at Palmer Station and fielded questions and complaints from tour operators. Among the handful of tour operators in the room was Werner Zehnder. Nineteen years after his first voyage to Antarctica, as second chef on the *Lindblad Explorer*, he was representing Society Expeditions as its Vice

409 Nadene Kennedy, pers. comm., 5 February 2015.

410 Jack Talmadge acted as the NSF Head of Polar Coordination and Information Section.

411 Cardoza and Hirsch, "Antarctica Tourism 1989", 290.

President for Planning and Operations. Alongside Travel Dynamics, Society Expeditions was the most dominant company in the industry.

While acknowledging Talmadge's predicament, Zehnder expressed his frustration that the Americans could not be as welcoming as the personnel they regularly visited at other stations. At Poland's Arctowski Base, the tourists enjoyed 'a great reception' and station personnel showed genuine appreciation for the tour operators' efforts to bring them fresh produce and deliver their mail. 'Then we'd get to Palmer Station and it was like, "Do you really need to stop here?"' Zehnder explained. He also believed NSF was wasting an opportunity to 'show off' Palmer Station to its countrymen. 'You're doing this all wrong at Palmer Station,' Zehnder was not shy to tell Talmadge. 'It's fine to have restrictions but if you have them and you allow a half-day visit then go all out. Put on a nice show.'⁴¹²

By the end of the meeting, government officials and tour operators had reached a quiet truce. Tour operators established voluntary restrictions, agreeing not to schedule visits to Palmer Station on Sundays or on days when the station was being resupplied. Although they did not regain access to scientific laboratories or raise the annual quota of Palmer Station visits, tour operators were once again allowed to visit the rest of the station, including personnel living quarters. They also prepared brownies for the visitors. 'And for Americans brownies mean a lot,' Zehnder joked with a heavy Swiss-German lilt.⁴¹³

So successful was this initial meeting between government officials and tour operators that NSF made it an annual affair. Each July, Talmadge and Kennedy met with tour operators and other interested stakeholders including scientists, officials from other US government agencies and representatives from environmental organisations. At what came to be

412 Werner Zehnder, pers. comm., 10 September 2015.

413 Ibid.

known as ‘NSF Tour Operator Meetings,’ Talmadge took the opportunity to explain newly adopted Antarctic Treaty recommendations and US Government regulations relating to Antarctic tourism, while Kennedy gathered statistics on Antarctic tours.

According to Kennedy, these meetings gradually evolved from an ‘us against them’ scenario—with government officials sitting on one side of the table and tour operators on the other—to an open forum in which grievances were aired, perspectives heard and solutions found. NSF supplied tour operators with brochures, copies of the Antarctic Conservation Act and videos explaining the Act, as well as arranging for experts to explain the purpose and implications of the legislation to the group. While Kennedy insisted that NSF collaborated with the tour operators in good faith, the full-scale effort stirred suspicion among some observers. ‘A lot of energy and money (it seems) is going into this effort,’ reported Susan Sabella to her Greenpeace colleagues. Pondering NSF’s motives for ‘going all out,’ she wondered whether it was ‘to win points with Congress; to avoid having their authority over tourism taken away; [or] to draw attention away from waste disposal and their own problems?’⁴¹⁴



Just as Palmer Station’s laboratories were settling back into undisturbed, temperature-controlled productivity, Antarctica’s largest environmental disaster struck right on its doorstep. On 28 January 1989, the *Bahia Paraíso* ran aground just two kilometres from the station, leaking 600,000 litres of diesel fuel into the frigid waters of Arthur Harbour.⁴¹⁵ As well as carrying 235 crew, the Argentine government supply vessel—deployed to

414 ‘NSF tourism notes’, Susan Sabella, 15 July 1990, Records of the Antarctic Campaign, Greenpeace Australia 1981-1994 (NLA: MS 9432; Box 6; NSF Mgt 1990-91).

415 Mahlon C Kennicutt II et al., “Grounding of the *Bahia Paraíso* at Arthur Harbor, Antarctica. 1. Distribution and Fate of Oil Spill Related Hydrocarbons,” *Environmental Science and Technology* 25, no. 3 (1991).

distribute food, fuel and equipment to Argentine stations on the Antarctic Peninsula—had 81 tourists on board, who had just that morning enjoyed a scheduled visit to Palmer Station. Following the visit, the crew lifted anchor and sailed the ship at considerable speed out of the harbour before stopping abruptly.

Nadia Le Bon was finishing a late lunch in the *Bahia*'s mess when she felt a violent jolt penetrate through the ship, causing it to tremor 'like an earthquake.'⁴¹⁶ Alarm bells blared through cabins and corridors, and 'everybody got their life jackets and went up to the deck, still unsure what was going on'. Most of the tourists could neither understand the intermittent Spanish announcements churning through the ship's speakers nor guess what might have gone wrong on such a bright, sunny and windless afternoon. Finally, an English-speaking voice blasted through the public-address system, announcing that the ship had hit a reef and was rapidly taking on water.

Of the 81 tourists on board, around 40 had booked with Californian tour operator Mountain Travel, co-founded by Le Bon's husband, Leo. For the past two years, Leo had been collaborating with an Argentine tour company, offering tourist berths on the *Bahia Paraiso* and sending large groups of Americans on each departure. This was Le Bon's first Antarctic voyage and she was responsible for escorting the group of Americans. Following a confused and chaotic hour-long evacuation, the tourists—several of them elderly—were lowered into lifeboats. 'One older gentleman was in bed sick with the flu. We had to get him out and get him organised to go,' Le Bon told me. Meanwhile, Palmer Station personnel arrived at the scene in inflatable boats and towed the evacuees to shore. 'You're back again!' some of the personnel gasped, as the bedraggled tourists stumbled into the station, all of their possessions left behind on the ship.⁴¹⁷

416 Nadia Le Bon, pers. comm., 11 September 2015.

417 Ibid.

Palmer personnel then turned their focus to returning the abandoned tourists safely back to South America and containing the fuel that was gushing from a ten-metre-long tear in the ship's hull. Tourist vessels *Society Explorer* (formally the *Lindblad Explorer*) and *Illiria* altered course and evacuated 202 people, including all of the tourists. Le Bon and her travel companions slept on the floor of the *Society Explorer*'s theatre and halls that night before being left at King George Island. From there they took a series of Chilean and Argentine air force and charter flights back to Buenos Aires. According to Le Bon, the whole ordeal 'was a tremendous adventure'. 'We had no letters of complaint. Nobody sued.'⁴¹⁸

Within days of the grounding, an oil slick measuring 100 square kilometres covered the water adjacent Palmer Station. Then, on 31 January, due to a combination of wind, currents and tides, the ship slipped free of the reef, drifted several hundred metres and sank. While Argentine, Chilean and US personnel worked to contain the oil spill, Palmer's scientists monitored the response of Arthur Harbour's ecological communities. Among the spill's victims were several dead, diesel-coated Adelie penguins and blue-eyed shags, and thousands of oil-choked intertidal limpets. A high proportion of those which survived were also stained with diesel fuel. Small signs of hope emerged from the greasy shores two months later, when researchers discovered that most of the limpet communities had recovered and little oil residue remained on birds' feathers. A medley of factors—the oil's volatility, the relatively small volume spilled, severe weather conditions and prevailing offshore wind—all softened the *Bahia*'s oily blow.⁴¹⁹ Still, the ship would continue to slowly leak oil into the surrounding waters for years afterwards.

418 Ibid.

419 Mahlon Kennicutt II, "Oil Spillage in Antarctica: Initial Report of the National Science Foundation-Sponsored Quick Response Team on the Grounding of the Bahia Paraiso," *Environmental Science & Technology* 24, no. 5 (1990); Kennicutt II et al., "Grounding of the Bahia Paraiso at Arthur Harbor, Antarctica. 1. Distribution and Fate of Oil Spill Related Hydrocarbons".



Within weeks of the *Bahia Paraiso* grounding, two more government resupply vessels allegedly caused oil spills in Antarctica.⁴²⁰ Then, on 24 March, the super tanker, *Exxon Valdez*, ran aground in Alaska. Images of once-charismatic megafauna—oil-drenched and unmoving—shocked the world as eleven million US gallons of black crude gushed into the pristine waters of Prince William Sound. This cacophony of blunders was a stark reminder of the potential threat of oil drilling and transportation to fragile environments. It also came at a moment when Antarctic Treaty nations found themselves straddling the line between possible exploitation and complete preservation of Antarctica.

Just months earlier, Antarctic Treaty nations had concluded eight-year negotiations on an Antarctic minerals regime. By the time the controversial regime was adopted in 1988, environmental groups had mobilised a major international campaign against it. Loosely organised under the banner of the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition (ASOC), the World Park Antarctica campaign called for the recognition of Antarctica as the ‘last wilderness continent’ and a permanent ban on mining. It included an annual Greenpeace expedition to Antarctica and establishment of a permanent Antarctic base—so that the Antarctic Treaty nations would ‘take us, and our ideas of the future of Antarctica, more seriously.’⁴²¹ The *Exxon Valdez* and *Bahia Paraiso* spills provided further ammunition for Antarctic World Park campaigners, who leveraged their fallouts to further damage the mineral regime’s reputation and ultimately secure its demise.⁴²²

420 Gerry Nagtzaam, *The Making of International Environmental Treaties: Neoliberal and Constructivist Analyses of Normative Evolution* (Edward Elgar, 2009), 123.

421 ‘Why a Greenpeace Expedition to Antarctica?’ (NAA - B1387, 84/426 Part 4: International Relations - Advice - Tourism to and in Antarctica - 1982-83).

422 Emma Shortis, “‘Who Can Resist This Guy?’; Jacques Cousteau, Celebrity Diplomacy, and the Environmental Protection of the Antarctic,” *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 61, no. 3 (2015).

Among those individuals who had spoken in favour of an Antarctic World Park were tour operators, guides and adventurers. Keith Shackleton and Sir Peter Scott, both members of Antarctic exploration families and regular fixtures on Lindblad Travel cruises, wrote open letters encouraging Antarctica's protection. In an essay titled 'No mining in Antarctica,' penned shortly before his death in 1989, Sir Peter Scott wrote that he believed 'the risks are much too great ever to justify any minerals activities in the Antarctic.'⁴²³ When she joined ANI's 1988 ski tour to the South Pole, Shirley Metz declared that she was doing it 'to create a World Park.'⁴²⁴ Reinhold Messner also suggested that he would leverage the publicity from his 1990 Antarctic crossing to promote the World Park idea. 'But how were we to win people over to the protection of Antarctica? By showing its singular beauty! Only that which we love do we also conserve,'⁴²⁵ Messner wrote, echoing environmentalist Baba Dioum's 1968 speech to the general assembly of the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

Yet concerns for Antarctica's fragility and the conservation of its wilderness values soon cast a shadow on tourism. Environmental groups pointed out that those like Messner—who went to see first-hand the beauty they wanted protected—were part of the problem. If left uncontrolled, Antarctic tourists would love the 'last great wilderness' to death. In Australia, the parliamentary inquiry into Antarctic tourism in 1988 prompted dozens of submissions from individuals and groups concerned about the current and future consequences of increasing tourist activity. While acknowledging that Antarctica provided 'one of the few exceptional wilderness experiences remaining in the world,' the Australian Littoral Society insisted in its submission that 'management of tourism must

423 Sir Peter Scott, "No Mining in Antarctica," in *Antarctica: Voices from the Silent Continent* ed. Richard Adams (London: Montagne Jeunesse, 1989), 29.

424 Quoted in Murphy, *South to the Pole by Ski*, 24.

425 Messner, *Antarctica: Both Heaven and Hell*, 64.

be addressed in both the short and long term.’⁴²⁶ In a US congressional hearing in May 1989, Environmental Defense Fund lawyer Bruce Manheim testified that among NSF’s many faults was its failure ‘to exercise its regulatory authority over US tour groups that routinely visit sensitive penguin rookeries and seabird nesting areas during the breeding season.’⁴²⁷

Concerned that ‘somebody like Bruce Manheim’ would lobby NSF and the US State Department to ban Antarctic tourism altogether, three US tour operators—Society Expeditions, Mountain Travel and Travel Dynamics—issued joint environmental guidelines for their cruising expeditions in November 1989.⁴²⁸ ‘We thought we should come up with our own guidelines before somebody else put those guidelines together,’ Zehnder explained. A combination of the best practices from each company, they included a set of guidelines each for visitors and tour operators. According to Zehnder, the former were intended ‘not just for tourists but for all visitors going to Antarctica because anyone going to Antarctica is a visitor.’⁴²⁹ The guidelines required visitors to maintain a distance of at least 15 to 20 feet (five metres) from penguins, nesting birds and seals—more from aggressive fur seals—and to avoid blocking marine animals’ paths to open water. Tour operators were expected to be aware of their obligations under the US Antarctic Conservation Act of 1978 including staying out of protected areas and hiring qualified and experienced expedition teams. ‘With your cooperation we will protect and preserve Antarctica, leaving the continent unimpaired for future

426 ‘Ice Cold Tourism’ Reproduction of Australian Littoral Society submission to the House of Representatives Inquiry into Tourism in Antarctica, Records of the Antarctic Campaign, Greenpeace Australia 1981-1994 (NLA: MS 9432; Box 6; Submission for Tourism Inquiry).

427 Oversight of the National Science Foundation. Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Science, Research and Technology of the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology. U.S. House of Representatives, 101st Congress. 1st Session. 14 March 1989, No. 21, 517.

428 Werner Zehnder, pers. comm., 10 September 2015.

429 Ibid.

generations,’ the joint statement read.⁴³⁰

The following year, NSF’s Director of Polar Programs, Peter Wilkniss, reported to a Senate hearing that the tour operators’ guidelines had been ‘fully observed.’ ‘No further regulation appears necessary at this time, but NSF will continue to monitor the practices of tourists and tour operators, as well as continue to consult with the tour operators,’ Wilkniss stated.⁴³¹ Greenpeace’s Susan Sabella suggested otherwise, declaring that the tourism industry was ‘largely unregulated’ and that the Antarctic Treaty nations must ‘issue guidelines for tourists and tour operators as quickly as possible.’⁴³² Sabella also presented a Greenpeace Antarctic Expedition report which documented the ‘nature and status of human activities’ in Antarctica, including station personnels’ thoughts on tourist activity. ‘It was reported by the Officer in Charge that after tourists visit Maxwell Bay, station personnel had to “clean up after them.”’⁴³³ Also testifying at the hearing were Senator Al Gore and Bruce Manheim. No tour operators were invited to speak.

‘People are at these hearings talking about tour operators and you don’t have anyone up there representing your voice—telling your side of it,’ Kennedy recalls telling the tour operators at the following NSF Tour Operator Meeting.⁴³⁴ ‘These people are saying things that probably aren’t true and we can’t be up there advocating for you. You have to do it for yourself.’ Talmadge and Kennedy encouraged the tour operators to take their collaboration

430 ‘Antarctic Ship Operators Release Joint Environmental Guidelines’, Antarctic News, 6 November 1989 (ASOC Archives).

431 ‘Statement by Peter Wilkniss’, S. 2575; S.J. Res. 206, and S. Res. 186: Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 101st Congress, 2nd session, 27 July 1990, 28.

432 ‘Statement of Susan J. Sabella’, S. 2575; S.J. Res. 206, and S. Res. 186: Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 101st Congress, 2nd session, 27 July 1990, 44.

433 ‘Expedition Report (1989-90) Greenpeace Antarctic Expedition’, S. 2575; S.J. Res. 206, and S. Res. 186: Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 101st Congress, 2nd session, 27 July 1990, 74.

434 Nadene Kennedy, pers. comm., 5 February 2015.

a step further and organise themselves into an advocacy group, ensuring that they too had ‘a voice on The Hill.’⁴³⁵ The tour operators did not immediately respond—wary of the consequences of working too closely with their competitors—but soon came to realise that if they did not organise themselves someone else would. ‘It was during the second year of Jack and I pushing this idea that a light bulb kind of went off for the tour operators. They started whispering to each other. Jack and I looked at each other and realised we’d got through,’ Kennedy recalled.⁴³⁶



Following their July 1991 meeting with Talmadge and Kennedy, a handful of tourism representatives returned to the Hotel Lombardy—a small, boutique establishment located a few blocks from NSF headquarters on Washington DC’s prominent Pennsylvania Avenue. Gathered for dinner that evening in the hotel restaurant, the group continued to discuss the idea the two NSF officials had put forward—that each of the seven tour operators represented at the table set aside their competition and get organised. By the time the night was through, everybody sitting at the dinner table had enrolled their companies as founding members of IAATO—the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators. ‘The IAATO name seemed the only logical one,’ explained Peter Cox, who represented Society Expeditions at the table. ‘The only issue of discussion was on whether to use “Antarctic” or “Antarctica”,’ he noted—the latter prevailing because ‘Antarctic Tour Operators’ would have incorrectly implied that the companies were based in Antarctica. ‘In any case, none of us were grammar specialists while many of us were foreign-born to boot.’⁴³⁷

435 Ibid.

436 Ibid.

437 Peter Cox, pers. comm., 25 September 2015.

The organisation's seven founding members—Adventure Network International, Society Expeditions, Travel Dynamics Inc., Zegrahm Expeditions, Mountain Travel Sobek, Salén Lindblad Cruising and Paquet/Ocean Cruise Lines—registered IAATO in Olympia, Washington. An interim Secretariat was established at Society Expeditions' offices in Seattle, and company employee, Melissa Folks, appointed as IAATO's interim Secretary. In its brief by-laws, IAATO listed its ten objectives which included representing its members to the Antarctic Treaty Parties and the public at large; advocating, promoting and practicing safe and environmentally responsible tourism; fostering cooperation between tour operators; enhancing public awareness and concern for the conservation of the Antarctic environment; supporting science in Antarctica; and creating ambassadors.⁴³⁸

At the first IAATO meeting—held in Washington DC in conjunction with the 1992 NSF Tour Operators Meeting—the organisation welcomed six new members. German company TransOcean Tours became its first non-North American member, stretching the 'I' in 'IAATO' beyond the US-Canada border. These new additions were warmly welcomed, as the nascent organisation was eager for new members, both to ensure that all tour operators were conducting tours in an 'equivalent and environmentally responsible manner' but also to gain recognition as the legitimate representative of the Antarctic tourism industry. Although its membership almost doubled in one year, IAATO's first meeting remained small and informal. 'There were ten or fifteen of us. We had a meeting agenda but no papers,' recalled Denise Landau, who represented new member Clipper Cruise Lines. 'It was just a group of people, sitting around a table saying, "Right, what can we do to make sure that we're running safe and responsible tourism in Antarctica?"'⁴³⁹

438 'Tourism in Antarctica: Guidelines for a Low-Impact Presence', submitted by IAATO, ATCM XVII - IP 65, 16 November 1992.

439 Denise Landau, pers. comm., 7 August 2015.

While everyone in the room was passionate about Antarctica and committed to practising ‘safe and environmentally responsible tourism’ they did not all necessarily agree on what this meant or how they would achieve it. There was disagreement at times about which tourist activities, and what scale of activity, were appropriate for that environment. Zehnder, one of the most outspoken and dynamic in the group, had openly discouraged mountain climbing, camping and cross-country skiing in Antarctica—ANI’s specialty—because they posed ‘unnecessary risk and pressure on the rescue parties, such as the National Science Foundation and other government organizations.’⁴⁴⁰ His biggest concern—one which he shared with several others—was the presence of large cruise ships, which he felt were inappropriately designed for Antarctic cruising. ‘If something were to happen it would backlash on the whole industry,’ he explained.⁴⁴¹

When Lars-Eric Lindblad, now representing Florida-based cruise ship company Ocean Cruise Lines, announced that the 480-passenger *Ocean Princess* would sail to Antarctica in 1991, the other tour operators were outraged. ‘We couldn’t quite understand how someone like Lars-Eric Lindblad who was the father of expedition cruising—small ships, environmental tourism and so on —gave his name away to be on a bigger ship,’ exclaimed Zehnder.⁴⁴² Landau was also puzzled by Lindblad’s seemingly reversed environmental philosophy:

I remember Lindblad sitting next to me and saying “It doesn’t matter the size of the ship. You can land as many people as you want. It won’t affect the wildlife”. I asked him, “How do you know that? How can you definitively say that *that* many people ashore at a time isn’t going to have a negative impact?”

440 ‘Outline of Werner Zehnder’s Talk for the Tinker Foundation’s Forum on Antarctica, 10 November 1988’. Records of the Antarctic Campaign, Greenpeace Australia, 1981-1994 (NLA: MS 9432 Box 7, Other NGOs - Tourism).

441 Werner Zehnder, pers. comm., 10 September 2015.

442 Ibid.

I remember sitting there thinking, “How can I possibly disagree with the guy who started this whole industry?”⁴⁴³

Ocean Cruise Lines⁴⁴⁴ was accepted as a founding member of IAATO because, according to Zehnder, ‘ultimately they would have gone anyway so it was better to have them in and control them a little bit at least.’⁴⁴⁵ As a safeguard, they created by-laws to prohibit IAATO members from carrying more than 400 passengers to Antarctica, and limiting the number of passengers ashore to 100 at any one time and place. While the ‘big ships’ issue would resurface on many occasions, the members succeeded in staying focused on their shared goals and on harmonising their many passionate and diverse voices into one. This was necessary if they were to present a united front to the ATCM, a forum in which they desperately wanted to be recognised and respected.



‘To discuss the fate of a continent so wild and unexplored, in a city so rich in history and civilization, certainly is bringing two extremes together,’ reflected Pieter Verbeek, head of the Netherlands delegation to the ATCM XVII.⁴⁴⁶ Two hundred delegates were assembled in Venice’s San Giorgio Maggiore monastery for the ten-day meeting, held in November 1992. Adorning the monastery’s rooms and corridors were relic riches of a long-ago fallen Republic—amongst them tapestries, meticulously crafted and draped hundreds of years before Antarctica’s existence was ever confirmed. Those who paused for thought may have marvelled at the stark contrast between their host city—its storied canals, pastel hues and celebrated romance—and the frozen continent they had come there to discuss.

443 Denise Landau, pers. comm., 7 August 2015.

444 In 1990, French company Pacquet acquired Ocean Cruise Lines and created Pacquet/Ocean Cruise Lines.

445 Werner Zehnder, pers. comm., 10 September 2015.

446 ‘Opening Address by Pieter Verbeek, Head of Delegation of the Netherlands’, Final Report of the Seventeenth Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting, Venice, 11-20 November 1992, p145.

Although early morning water taxi commutes, weighed down by briefcases of meeting documents, may have proved trying in mid-November, those responsible for its fate sat worlds away from the coldest, windiest continent.

Antarctica's highest administrative forum materialised as a temporary construction of tables and chairs, arranged in U-shape formation and adorned with microphones, name plates and alphabetically-arranged national flags. Crowding them was a black sea of suits worn by diplomats, lawyers and scientists, overwhelmingly men. These individuals enjoyed privileged access to a world that some observers had unflatteringly referred to as an exclusive club. Taking offence to the criticism, Antarctic Treaty nations were hardly enticed to open their doors to outsiders.⁴⁴⁷ The US delegation was one of a few exceptions. It had invited non-governmental representatives to join its ATCM delegations since the late 1970s, and had actively supported these groups' and individuals' appeals to represent themselves at ATCMs. 'Although we didn't always agree with the points of view of any particular group, we felt it was important that their knowledge and interests be represented at the Treaty Meetings, as observers and not just as part of other delegations,' explained Tucker Scully, who headed US delegations for over twenty ATCMs.⁴⁴⁸

Darrel Schoeling, having been appointed IAATO's Executive Secretary earlier that year, had been invited to join the US delegation to ATCM XVII. Astute and scientifically literate, Schoeling had worked as an expedition leader for Travel Dynamics until 1991 and now ran the low-budget IAATO Secretariat from the office of his New York-based bookstore. Schoeling—along with IAATO Spokesperson John Splettstoesser—were also invited to attend an informal two-day workshop on tourism, held immediately prior to the

447 Richard Herr, A, "The Regulation of Antarctic Tourism: A Study in Regime Effectiveness," in *Governing the Antarctic: The Effectiveness and Legitimacy of the Antarctic Treaty System*, ed. Olav Schram Stokke and Davor Vidas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 214.

448 R. Tucker Scully, pers. comm., 8 September 2015.

ATCM. ‘I had a semi-prepared statement, but also responded to questions from Treaty Party delegates, all straightforward and polite. The Parties mainly showed they knew little about tourism in Antarctica,’ remarked Splettstoesser, a geologist who had participated in eight Antarctic research voyages before joining tourist ships as a guest lecturer in 1983.⁴⁴⁹ Unbeknown to Splettstoesser, only Schoeling had permission to stay on and participate in the ATCM itself. He only realised when, on the opening day of ATCM XVII, an Italian delegate stripped him of his name tag. ‘Tucker Scully came to the rescue,’ Splettstoesser recalled. While Scully considered two tourism representatives on the US delegation to be unnecessary—and possibly an endorsement of tourism—he secured approval for Splettstoesser to attend only those meeting sessions at which tourism issues arose. He was to leave the room when other subjects were discussed.

As might have been predicted from the Antarctic Treaty nations’ opening speeches, Splettstoesser would not need to leave the room very often. ‘Tourism represents a major challenge to the Antarctic Treaty System,’ stated Norway’s head of delegation, Ambassador Jan Arvesen in his opening speech.⁴⁵⁰ ‘Tourism in Antarctica must be regulated and controlled. One of the major tasks of this ATCM would be to analyze and consider whether [current] provisions...provide for adequate regulation of tourism, or whether an additional set of rules are required,’ he added, echoing the concerns of many of the 40 delegations in attendance. Tourism, as it turned out, would become the major and most controversial item addressed at the Venice Meeting.⁴⁵¹

449 John Splettstoesser, pers. comm., 29 September 2015.

450 ‘Opening Address by Ambassador Jan Arvesen, Head of Delegation of the Norway’, Final Report of the Seventeenth Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting, Venice, 11-20 November 1992, 155.

451 Vidas, “The Legitimacy of Tourism Regulation”, 308.

Although Antarctic tourism had been discussed at ATCMs for over 25 years, it had, until now, been afforded only marginal attention. Some countries, including Argentina, Australia and Chile, had initially been hesitant to discuss tourism at all. This is because territorial claims to the continent, while held in abeyance by the 1959 Antarctic Treaty, lingered as a sensitive and problematic undercurrent to Antarctica's unique system of shared governance. According to Australian delegates attending early ATCMs, tourism 'raised serious problems, particularly on account of the jurisdictional aspects which might arise.'⁴⁵² Nonetheless, tourism became a regular fixture on ATCM agendas and the Consultative Parties—those Antarctic Treaty nations with voting rights—adopted five tourism-related recommendations between 1966 and 1979.⁴⁵³ These were primarily concerned with protecting the Consultative Parties' Antarctic science programmes and maintaining the authority of the Antarctic Treaty.⁴⁵⁴ Only in 1989, in recognition of a steady rise in tourism numbers, did the Consultative Parties agree that it was time for a comprehensive review of the issue.

Their focus on tourism also intensified with the adoption of the 1991 *Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty* (Madrid Protocol)—swiftly negotiated after the Antarctic minerals regime was abandoned in 1990. A comprehensive regulatory framework for the protection of the Antarctic environment, the Madrid Protocol was supplemented by five annexes relating to environmental impact assessment, conservation of Antarctic fauna and flora, waste management, prevention of marine pollution and area protection and management. In their gathering together of issues to ensure 'comprehensive'

452 'Australian Delegation Report in the Fifth Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting', 30 November 1968 (NAA: B1387, 1996/856 Part 2 Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting - 1968).

453 Antarctic Treaty database, www.ats.aq.

454 Richard A. Herr, "The Regulation of Antarctic Tourism: A Study in Regime Effectiveness," in *Governing the Antarctic: The Effectiveness and Legitimacy of the Antarctic Treaty System*, ed. Olav Schram Stokke and Davor Vidas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 213.

environmental protection, some Consultative Parties considered it necessary to draft a sixth annex—on the regulation of Antarctic tourism.

This proposal came to a head at the Venice Meeting, where the so-called ‘Group of Five’—Chile, France, Germany, Italy and Spain—argued that Antarctic tourism warranted its own—presumably stricter—set of industry-specific regulations.⁴⁵⁵ The proposal met with strong opposition, the United States and New Zealand insisting that a specific annex on tourism was not necessary because the Madrid Protocol was, by its very nature, comprehensive and applicable to all human activities in Antarctica. In addition to these two strongly opposing views, a spectrum of other views were expressed by a handful of nations.⁴⁵⁶ Environmental groups—represented by ASOC—were strongly in favour of strict tourism regulation but opposed the idea of a tourism annex because it applied to all non-governmental activities, including their own. ‘All activities in Antarctica should be governed by the same set of rules,’ declared Greenpeace in response to the Group of Five’s proposal.⁴⁵⁷

Amid the to-ing and fro-ing, Schoeling, sitting with the US delegation, followed Tucker Scully’s instructions. ‘I talked to different delegates about how Antarctic tourism was currently operating and canvassed “like-minded” countries,’ Schoeling recalled.⁴⁵⁸ Splettstoesser, who sat at the back of the room, not officially part of the meeting, offered the benefit of his knowledge and experience in Antarctic tourism. ‘I never hesitated to chat with delegates about tourism. I answered questions and also explained why and how IAATO was formed. I think that was acceptable to all delegations because they

455 Davor Vidas, “The Legitimacy of Tourism Regulation “ *ibid.* (Cambridge), 311.

456 *Ibid.*

457 ‘Greenpeace comments on the Draft Code of Practice with Regard to Non-Governmental Activities’, 15 April 1991 (NLA: MS 9432 Box 7-F07 Tourism 1991 (Esp NZ)).

458 Darrel Schoeling, pers. comm., 22 January 2015.

liked the idea that someone from the industry was on hand for questioning,⁴⁵⁹ Spettstoesser explained. Davor Vidas, a member of the Norwegian delegation and international lawyer, was also watching on with interest as the tourism debate unfolded. He was ultimately unimpressed with the outcome: ‘Despite the abundance of proposals submitted, as well as the extensive discussions of the issue, the final outcome...was indeed poor: nothing more than one page containing seven neutrally phrased paragraphs in the Final Report of the Meeting.’⁴⁶⁰ Nonetheless, the outcome was welcomed by those opposing the tourism annex, and a relief for IAATO.

ATCM XVIII, held in Kyoto in 1994, became the first Treaty Meeting to which an IAATO delegation was officially invited. By this time, the idea of a tourism annex had been abandoned. Instead the Consultative Parties focussed their energy on developing guidance documents for Antarctic visitors and tour organisers, but refrained from giving them any legal status. In their guidelines for tour organisers, they clearly and simply interpreted the operators’ existing obligations under national laws implementing the Antarctic Treaty System.⁴⁶¹ They developed visitor guidelines that outlined how visitors should behave in Antarctica in order to protect wildlife, respect protected areas and scientific research, stay safe and keep Antarctica pristine—not unlike the visitor guidelines developed by tour operators in 1989.

Hereafter, IAATO was represented at annual ATCMs, providing the Meeting delegates with regular updates on IAATO activities, tourism statistics and progress in implementing Antarctic Treaty recommendations. At this stage, IAATO’s presence seemed ‘acceptable

459 John Speltstoesser, pers. comm., 29 September 2015.

460 Vidas, “The Legitimacy of Tourism Regulation “ 313.

461 ATCM Recommendation XVIII-1.

to all delegations,’ explained Splettstoesser.⁴⁶² Three years later, the IAATO delegation would begin to expand—Denise Landau, Anne Kershaw, Victoria Underwood and Barbel Krämer among its additions. Just as tourism had disrupted the gender imbalance on the continent, now it was disrupting the ATCM’s black sea of male suits. ‘I’d try and wear brighter colours because I felt I was at a funeral,’ Landau joked.⁴⁶³



Over the next five years, IAATO members formed a swathe of committees, through which to organise their finances, membership and environmental policies. IAATO members commissioned environmental assessments of their operations even before it was a legal requirement to do so. IAATO made compliance with the Antarctic Treaty’s newly-formed guidelines to visitors and tour organisers part of its by-laws. Ship-based tour operators regularly shared their vessels’ contact details and ANI’s Punta Arenas office was designated a 24-hour emergency station. Members offered assistance to national Antarctic programmes, transporting scientists to Antarctica and assisting in emergency evacuations.⁴⁶⁴ All of IAATO’s members seemed to be adhering to its by-laws and guidelines. All, that was, except one.

Florida-based Orient Lines was founded by British shipping magnate Gerry Herrod in 1993 and became an IAATO member in the same year. Herrod, who had previously owned Ocean Cruise Lines and operated the 460-passenger *Ocean Princess*, launched the 800-passenger *Marco Polo* for Antarctic cruises in the 1993/94 season. Just as he had

462 John Splettstoesser, pers. comm., 29 September 2015.

463 Denise Landau, pers. comm., 7 August 2015.

464 Reports of the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) Pursuant to Article III (2) of the Antarctic Treaty 1994-97: ATCM XVIII - IP96; ATCM XX - IP 97; ATCM XXI - IP 108.

done in the past, Lars-Eric Lindblad represented Herrod at IAATO meetings, and gave his assurance to the members that the *Marco Polo* would—according to IAATO’s by-laws—carry a maximum of 400 passengers to Antarctica.

Following its first season of operation, reports surfaced that Lindblad’s assurance had been betrayed. In a 1994 Antarctica Project newsletter, tour operators and guides Shirley Metz and Peter Harrison reported on the ‘most disturbing observations’ made aboard the *Marco Polo*, a ship they claimed to be chartered by ‘new IAATO member’ Lars-Eric Lindblad:

The expedition leader, a friend of ours, told us that 506 passengers were onboard.

In addition, IAATO Guidelines specify that only 100 passengers are to be ashore at a time. The expedition leader confided to us that when no other tour vessels were around, over 100 passengers were taken ashore at a time. Clearly, Lindblad broke his word. Antarctica had no place for operators who display wanton disregard towards its fragile ecosystem...the only course of action available would be for IAATO to rescind Lindblad’s membership.⁴⁶⁵

The *Marco Polo*’s expedition leader, Nigel Sitwell, defended Lindblad. He explained that Lindblad was neither the ship’s charterer nor an IAATO member but rather an advisor to Orient Lines and assistant to Sitwell. ‘In neither capacity was he responsible for the number of passengers on board,’ Sitwell wrote.

From the earliest planning stage, Lindblad advised Orient Lines to limit the number of passengers in Antarctica to about 400. It was Orient Lines’ decision, not his, to carry more than this number...When it became clear that there were likely to be more than 400 passengers on board for some or all of these cruises, Lars-Eric and I discussed what we

465 ‘Notes from the Ice’ The Antarctica Project newsletter, Volume 3 Issue 2, Spring 1994, Washington DC, p2.

should do. Some may say that we should have left the ship in protest. But we decided that since Orient Lines would continue with their programme whatever happened, it was better that we should stay to ensure that the cruises were operated in a responsible manner.⁴⁶⁶

Within two weeks of writing this letter in his friend's defence, Sitwell was writing Lindblad's obituary. Lindblad died of a heart attack on 5 July 1994, aged 64, while on vacation in Stockholm. In his obituary, Sitwell described Lindblad as 'an impulsive, emotional man'. 'When Lindblad died he was not a very wealthy man but he was intensely proud of his achievements and happy that he had been able to go everywhere and do almost everything that he wanted. In the process he made it possible for millions of armchair travellers to make their dreams come true.'⁴⁶⁷ Soon afterwards, Lindblad's third wife, Ruriko—an Antarctic guide and Japanese interpreter—scattered his ashes in Antarctica during a tourist voyage.⁴⁶⁸ Few could argue that Lindblad's ashes belonged anywhere else. And perhaps it was fitting that this final tribute was also a breach of environmental regulations.

Following the *Marco Polo* incident, Sitwell offered his resignation from IAATO's three-person Executive Committee, but 'the other two members felt this to be unnecessary.'⁴⁶⁹ At its following meeting, however, IAATO adopted two new categories of membership: provisional and probationary. Provisional membership was reserved for new operators while probationary membership was reserved for past or current members who the full membership decided—by a two-thirds majority vote—had 'not fully met with IAATO objectives and expectations'. Members in these categories were subject to a review of their operations and were required to carry IAATO-approved observers before being eligible to

466 Letter from Nigel Sitwell to Beth Marks (The Antarctica Project), 21 June 1994 (ASOC Archives).

467 Nigel Sitwell, "Obituary: Lars-Eric Lindblad," *The Independent* 16 July 1994.

468 Erica Wikander, pers. comm., 5 August, 2014.

469 Letter from Nigel Sitwell to Beth Marks (The Antarctica Project), 21 June 1994, (ASOC Archives).

apply for full membership. With the new categories created, Orient Lines was promptly voted IAATO's first probationary member. Two years later, after continuing to carry more than 400 passengers to Antarctica, it was stripped of its membership altogether.⁴⁷⁰



At the other end of the size spectrum, IAATO's membership did not include any yacht operators, even though many returned each season to Antarctica with paying passengers. Finally, in 1997, American yachtsman, Skip Novak, took the plunge and became the first to apply. Novak admitted that standing before a room of IAATO members, trying to convince them that his company and lifeblood, Pelagic Expeditions, was a responsible operator, was 'fairly intimidating.' Many IAATO members were hesitant to include yacht operators in the association. 'Most people were ignorant of how yachts operated. They didn't know who we were or what we did,' Novak explained. Aware that yachts were perceived as an 'uncontrolled' part of the Antarctic tourism industry, Novak was eager to address the negative perception of yachts held by government officials and IAATO members.⁴⁷¹

Active in Antarctica since 1987, Novak initially achieved his main goal—'to go south'—by offering his 54-foot, six-berth yacht, *Pelagic*, as a mobile base camp for mountaineering and filming expeditions. This expanded in 1990 to a commercial operation that catered to 'a combination of people who just wanted to see Antarctica's beauty and wildlife,' as well as those seeking logistics support for mountaineering, cold-

470 Reports of IAATO Pursuant to Article III (2) of the Antarctic Treaty; ATCM XX - IP 97; ATCM XXI - IP 108.

471 Skip Novak, pers. comm., 21 September 2015.

water diving and filming. Yacht travel in Antarctica was less structured than ship-based travel and needed to be. ‘We’re more weather-dependent than the cruise ships. You have to wait for weather windows to go from here to there. But that’s all part of what the people who go with us want. They don’t want certainty. They want a bit of uncertainty,’ Novak remarked. For around the same price of an expensive ship berth, Pelagic Expeditions’ clients were expected to be part of the crew—to wash and cook, as well as contribute to steering and sail handling on deck. ‘It’s not a classic yacht charter where they’re served by the crew. We get people who are hands on, who want a challenge.’⁴⁷²

Novak’s decision to join IAATO came as a consequence of seeing ‘the writing on the wall’. Observing the ever-increasing numbers of tourists travelling south and higher levels of ‘due diligence’ performed by governments, he knew that his days of sailing in a regulatory vacuum were numbered. ‘So I took it upon myself to get engaged and to get a proper permit from the British Foreign Commonwealth Office.’⁴⁷³ Novak then turned to convincing other yacht operators to join IAATO. A free-spirited breed who preferred fleeing from structure and paperwork, yacht owners were not always easy to convince. ‘Being part of IAATO requires a lot of work—pre-season, post-season, during the season, going to the IAATO meeting, and then there’s the permitting side which didn’t exist in the old days,’ Novak explained. As he succeeded in gradually bringing more yacht operators to the organisation, this also caused friction—a product of IAATO’s per-head fee structure. While yacht operators contributed per-head fees for up to a dozen passengers on each trip, some ship operators paid for hundreds—yet each operator received one vote. ‘The yachts contribute little, the big ships contribute a lot, and they want more say about how things should go,’ Novak explained.⁴⁷⁴

472 Ibid.

473 Ibid.

474 Ibid.

IAATO meetings never failed to be emotionally charged, with most tensions centred on the questions of whether to accept a company as a new IAATO member and where to place limits on tourist numbers. ‘How many trips, how many landings, the capacity of the ships. It was always changing because every year some new company would join,’ explained Zehnder.⁴⁷⁵ According to Novak, arguments were to be expected ‘when you try to limit people’s activities.’ ‘Whenever we asked how we were going to achieve certain restrictions, there’d be ten different answers. To get an agreed outcome took time.’ At the end of a day of passionate debate, however, the members ‘all went out and had drinks,’ Zehnder recalled. ‘While we were all competing for the same clientele, most of us became good friends. Those things are important I think. The after-hour meetings. Because we were all in it for the same reason.’



In July 1998, NSF hosted the tenth annual Tour Operator Meeting. Kennedy had continued co-facilitating these meetings after Talmadge’s retirement in 1995. As non-US tour operators joined IAATO’s ranks they too started coming along each July to Washington, to learn about how new Antarctic Treaty regulations would affect their businesses. ‘When we started talking about environmental impact assessments, the German companies started to attend our meetings also. We were pulling in all these different companies who weren’t getting any information from their own governments.’ Kennedy continued to gather and compile tourism statistics but this became an increasingly time-consuming task, as more and more detail was added to the unwieldy spreadsheet. ‘My boss wanted to get me out of doing all the number crunching,’ she explained.⁴⁷⁶ At this point, IAATO took full responsibility for the task and NSF Tour Operator Meetings came to an end—

475 Werner Zehnder, pers. comm., 10 September 2015.

476 Nadene Kennedy, pers. comm., 5 February 2015.

a moment Kennedy likened to a fledging. ‘My babies want to fly!’ she recalled saying to IAATO members when they expressed the desire to go their own way and host annual IAATO meetings. Some of the ‘old timers’ would continue to call Kennedy the ‘mother of IAATO’.⁴⁷⁷

In 1999, IAATO’s leadership changed hands when Darrel Schoeling resigned and was replaced by Denise Landau. The transition came at a critical moment in IAATO’s history, just as annual visitor numbers to Antarctica had reached five figures. It also signalled a change in direction for the organisation, one that reflected Schoeling and Landau’s differing philosophies on IAATO’s *raison d’être*. ‘I always saw IAATO’s role as being an advocacy group,’ Schoeling told me. ‘It was there to communicate the tourism-related outcomes from ATCMs to tour operators and tourists, and to advocate for the tour industry. Not to over-regulate or make tourism-specific rules of its own.’⁴⁷⁸ Landau believed otherwise and, upon taking over as Executive Secretary, wasted no time in setting IAATO on a firm and rugged road towards industry self-regulation.

Landau found her way to Antarctica via Alaska’s Glacier Bay National Park, where she had worked for the National Park Service during college summers. To Landau, it was a natural and inevitable route. ‘Once you start working in Alaska, it doesn’t take long for you to start looking down south.’⁴⁷⁹ While fondly recalling the unique and impressive collegiality she had observed at her first IAATO meeting in 1992, Landau acknowledged that much had changed in a decade. ‘At that time, there was so little science and monitoring. There weren’t that many tourists coming down. And it was a big place.’ During her nine-year tenure, IAATO would grow from 30 members with a fleet of nine ships to over 100 members with 60 ships.

477 Ibid.

478 Darrel Schoeling, pers. comm., 22 January 2015.

479 Denise Landau, pers. comm., 7 August 2015.

The industry was not only growing but also transforming. What began as a fleet of predominantly small ships and one inland operation diversified to include medium-size ships, yachts, large cruise ships and overflights. Landau felt that the various measures adopted by Antarctic Treaty Parties to manage tourism, such as visitor and tour operator guidelines, were not enough for this level of growth and diversity. ‘It took big picture thinking to look at what tools to put in place to manage it,’ Landau explained. The following years saw a flurry of IAATO-hosted strategic workshops resulting in the production of yet more guidelines, standard operational procedures and protocols. ‘That was the fun part for me. Because I like big picture thinking, to see what needs to happen on all levels to do the best job that you can,’ remarked Landau, whose title changed from Executive Secretary to Executive Director in 2000. In order to achieve all of this, Landau convinced the IAATO members to commit more resources, change their practices and adopt a spectrum of ‘diversification strategies’.⁴⁸⁰

In 2001, following years of debate, IAATO finally welcomed cruise ship operators to join its membership, provided that those ships carrying more than 500 passengers made no landings. ‘Including the large vessels was a positive step forwards for IAATO despite earlier concerns,’ it reported to the ATCM the following year.⁴⁸¹ Recognising the benefits of IAATO membership and of proudly brandishing its logo, three cruise ship operators joined the organisation the following year. In doing so they committed to paying an IAATO membership fee based on the number of passengers they carried ‘south of 60’ while foregoing the opportunity to land any of them ashore. Despite this attempt by IAATO to adapt to the changing nature of the tourism industry, a handful of operators—primarily yachts and cruise ships—remained out of its reach. Its Achilles heel, the *Marco Polo*,

480 Ibid.

481 Report of IAATO Pursuant to Article III (2) of the Antarctic Treaty 2001-2002; ATCM XXV - IP 74 Rev 1, 3.

continued to roam the Antarctic Peninsula carrying over 500 passengers and allowing them to land ashore. ‘We haven’t signed up because the membership fees penalise larger ships like ours,’ Orient Lines representative David Yellow told a reporter.⁴⁸² ‘But we are a great deal more strict than some smaller ships. If people breach the guidelines, we don’t allow them ashore again.’

Those who celebrated IAATO as a success story argued that industry self-regulation made good practical sense, allowing Antarctic Treaty nations to focus on being ‘stewards of science’ in Antarctica. ‘Why take on something that can be delegated to a responsible and reliable organisation that can manage tourism but also be overseen by Treaty Parties?’ John Splettstoesser asked rhetorically.⁴⁸³ Yet Orient Lines’ defiance exposed an inherent vulnerability. What if Antarctic tour operators saw no incentive in joining IAATO? Or if the threat of losing IAATO membership for bending its by-laws was no longer a strong deterrent? Yet several Antarctic Treaty nations, as well as environmental groups, continued to call for stronger government intervention. According to them, it should be the job of government alone to implement and enforce tourism regulation.

In response to these criticisms of industry self-regulation, Landau argued that governments lacked the ‘knowledge and wherewithal’ to regulate tourism on their own. Government officials turned over too frequently and it was too complicated an industry from a regulatory perspective. ‘You can’t put an army across the border at 60 degrees south and put a stop light in and say “You can go. You can’t,”’ Landau explained. While self-regulation alone may not have presented any silver bullets, Landau felt that neither did a ‘top-down approach’. ‘If you have a partnership between tour operators and government

482 Mark Rowe, “Tourism ‘Threatens Antarctic’,” *The Telegraph*, 11 February 2006.

483 John Splettstoesser, pers. comm., 29 September 2015.

where everybody's got their oars in the water at the same time and they're rowing towards the goal, that's a far more effective approach.'⁴⁸⁴



Each year thereafter, around April or May, fresh tourism statistics emerged. With few exceptions each new bar planted on the 'tourism trends' graph stood slightly taller than the one to its left, leaving tourism managers and scholars to muse over what it all meant. On the water, tourist vessels were increasingly likely to encounter others, a concern for tour operators whose Antarctic product line included solitude, remoteness and exclusivity. 'What we were selling was an experience for the clients to go to these remote areas. They didn't want to see two ships next to them,' Werner Zehnder remarked. To deal with the issue, IAATO developed a ship scheduler, which required tour operators to book visitor sites well in advance. As the tourist fleet grew and technology advanced, so too did the size and complexity of the ship scheduler. Delivering a seemingly effortless 'wilderness experience' now hinged on a behind-the-scenes network of databases, programmers and timetables.

Those who sailed south in the old days, when only two tourist ships—the *Lindblad Explorer* and *World Discoverer*—ruled Antarctic waters, looked back 30 years and marvelled at how much had changed. Safety and environmental standards had significantly improved. Women were more likely to be zodiac drivers, expedition leaders and company directors. Antarctic tourists enjoyed a broader range of options in price, ship size, tour length and comfort level, and they in

484 Denise Landau, pers. comm., 7 August 2015.

turn represented a broader range of languages and cultures. For many, however, the most significant change was the loss of freedom and seclusion that came with the increase in ship traffic. Recalling his days as expedition leader on the *World Discoverer*, Zehnder marvelled at how his ship and the *Lindblad Explorer* would make a point of finding each other and throwing a party together whenever the opportunity arose. Passengers could move freely from one ship to the other, sharing exaggerated tales of adventure with strangers while bathing in midnight sun. ‘Then, more and more ships came and we made a point of avoiding each other,’ Zehnder conceded. ‘Because it wasn’t a special experience anymore.’⁴⁸⁵

Next page: The *World Discoverer* and *Lindblad Explorer* together on the Antarctic Peninsula , n.d.
(Source: Werner Zehnder),

485 Werner Zehnder, pers. comm., 10 September 2015.





Reflection

On Shifting Ice

When I first began working as an Antarctic guide in 2005, and escorting tourists on excursions in inflatable zodiacs, I was overwhelmed by the barrage of questions the tourists fired at me over the course of a two-hour zodiac cruise. They wanted to know the names of everything they saw, the reasons those penguins were doing what they were doing, the height of the mountain off in the distance, why some of the icebergs were blue. The questions went on and on. One of the questions tourists most often asked, usually in the later stages of a trip, related to what *we* were doing and how it might be changing Antarctica. Were we causing harm to the environment by being there, they wanted to know. What was our impact on Antarctica?

A year later, Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* was released and began being screened on the ship as part of the evening entertainment programme. Around the same time, the shipboard lecture programme included a talk on climate change. And soon thereafter, new questions began being posed during my zodiac cruises. People wanted to know whether climate change was real. They asked me whether I had noticed the ice changing during my years of travelling to Antarctica. A glacial calving took on new meaning too. No longer was it simply a dramatic spectacle to behold. After the heart-thumping rush of watching a giant slab of ice sheer off the face of a glacier and collapse into the water beneath it—once the swell and adrenaline had begun to dissipate—chances were that someone would ask the inevitable question: Is *that* climate change?

When Lindblad Travel organised its first Antarctic cruises in the 1960s, climate change was far from being a concern for the Antarctic tourist. Climate change science was old by then, but it did not carry the same sense of urgency it would in decades to come. Nor was there an awareness of how vulnerable Antarctica might be to rising global temperatures. In the 1960s, Antarctica was only beginning to be thought of as being susceptible to change by humans. Until then, it had been seen as an empty and impenetrable wilderness; a continent full of physical force but devoid of life and resistant to any attempts to change it. As our understanding of climate developed—with help from the ice itself—climate change emerged as a new and pervasive threat to Antarctica and the globe. How did this change in understanding come about? And how has it shaped the Antarctic tourist experience? These are the questions I will explore in this reflection.

The Greening of Antarctica

The transformation of the Antarctic environment, from a lifeless stage for heroic exploration to a sensitive and meaningful part of human relationships, is often thought to have begun in the 1980s. This is when Antarctic Treaty Parties rejected the Convention on the Regulation of Antarctic Mineral Resource Activities (CRAMRA) in 1988, and began negotiating the Madrid Protocol, which was signed in 1991. But as Alessandro Antonello has argued, in *The Greening of Antarctica*, this transformation had been developing from the beginning of the 1960s and drew on a long history of conservation and environmental thought.⁴⁸⁶

An important catalyst for change was the International Geophysical Year (IGY). Not because it placed a particularly strong emphasis on understanding or protecting Antarctic flora and fauna but because it largely ignored them. The IGY was a global programme

⁴⁸⁶ Alessandro Antonello, “The Greening of Antarctica: Environment, Science and Diplomacy 1959-1980” (PhD Thesis, Australian National University, 2014).

of scientific research held between 1 July 1957 and 31 December 1958. Its aim was to observe and understand the geophysical phenomena of earth and outer space, with a special focus on the polar regions. Knowledge of Antarctica was still highly fragmentary in the mid-1950s, and the IGY was, in part, a reflection of the desire to discover new geographical, geological, and meteorological features of the continent. To many, the IGY represented the ‘final assault on the Antarctic’—a large-scale exercise designed to conquer the frozen continent once and for all.⁴⁸⁷

The IGY included studies of meteorology, geophysics, the structure of the ionosphere, cosmic rays, solar activity, glaciology, oceanography, seismology, and the earth’s gravitational field. Globally, 67 nations participated in the IGY and 12 nations had Antarctic programmes. There were 40 scientific stations operated on the Antarctic continent and a further 20 on subantarctic islands. With its strong focus on the geophysical, the IGY largely overlooked Antarctica’s ecological systems. As a result, this large-scale scientific spectacle served to embed the idea that Antarctica was devoid of life and insensitive to the human presence.

Following the IGY, Antonello explains, a group of Antarctic biologists ‘emerged from the shadow’ of the geophysical sciences to call for strong conservation measures to protect Antarctic wildlife. Led by biologist, Robert Carrick, this group of men raised concerns that IGY personnel had shown little interest or sensitivity to Antarctica’s natural life or its conservation. ‘In the eyes of many biologists,’ Antonello notes, ‘the IGY’s “assault on the unknown” had become an inadvertent assault on the animal life of the Antarctic.’⁴⁸⁸

487 Dodds, “Antarctic and the Modern Geographical Imagination 1918-1960”, 47; Adrian Howkins, “Science, Environment, and Sovereignty: The International Geophysical Year in the Antarctic Peninsula Region,” in *Globalizing Polar Science: Reconsidering the International Polar and Geophysical Years*, ed. Roger D. Launius, James Rodger Fleming, and David H. DeVorkin (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2010).

488 Antonello, “The Greening of Antarctica: Environment, Science and Diplomacy 1959-1980”, 76.

Making a case for conservation, Carrick had argued that Antarctica's bird and mammal life possessed great value both as a subject of research and for its aesthetic appeal. But this wildlife was also extremely vulnerable to acts of human destruction, and it needed to be protected. All of the leading scientists in the push for strong conservation measures in Antarctica were ornithologists, a fact which highlights the association between the culture of ornithology and the origins of modern wildlife protection.⁴⁸⁹ 'These ornithologists drew on a venerable vocabulary and sensibility of conservation deeply embedded in the specific practice of ornithology and natural history,' Antonello writes.

It was these calls for conservation that initiated the first major step forward in the development of an Antarctic environmental regime—the negotiation of the 1964 Agreed Measures for the Conservation of Antarctic Fauna and Flora. The Agreed Measures designated the whole of Antarctica as a 'Special Conservation Area', emphasising the vulnerability and uniqueness of its flora and fauna. It protected animals, both as individuals and species, and established the category 'Special Protected Areas' to preserve unique ecological systems. The Agreed Measures also articulated developing notions of the human place in the Antarctic environment. There was a move away from visions of Antarctica as lifeless inert ice, and a nature that humans were outside of, towards one of a sensitive and valued environment with which humans shared a close relationship.

Perhaps it is unsurprising that Antarctic tourism emerged at the same time as this 'greening' of Antarctica. Or that many of Lindblad Travel's expedition staff were ornithologists and naturalists much like the scientists who pushed for Antarctic conservation. Robert Cushman Murphy, a prominent ornithologist, conservationist and founding curator of oceanic birds at the American Museum of Natural History, belonged to both groups. He

489 Libby Robin, *Flight of the Emu: One Hundred Years of Australian Ornithology 1901-2001* (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 2001).

was one of the scientists supporting calls for Antarctic Treaty conservation measures and he also joined Lindblad Travel tours to Antarctica as a naturalist and lecturer.⁴⁹⁰ These associations highlight the long-standing and sometimes antagonistic relationship between tourism and conservation.

Tourism, and especially eco-tourism, is itself a product of conservation and environmental thought. That tourists travel to see ‘natural’ landscapes and wildlife is an indicator of the intrinsic value that these places and species are seen to possess. On the other hand, tourism has been seen as a significant threat to that environment and one of the justifications for stricter nature conservation. This central paradox of Antarctic tourism would become even more perplexing as concerns about climate change and its consequences for Antarctica began to emerge.

Discovering Global Climate Change

Climate science was a low IGY priority but its significance would become much clearer in decades to come. In hindsight, one of the most important projects conducted in Antarctica as part of the IGY was Charles David Keeling’s study of atmospheric carbon dioxide. Keeling was a young researcher from the Scripps Institute of Oceanography in San Diego, working under the supervision of esteemed scientist, Roger Revelle. During the IGY, Keeling established two study sites in locations he deemed to have clean and pure air—one atop the volcanic peak Mauna Loa in Hawaii, surrounded by thousands of miles of open ocean, and the other at the South Pole. Over the two-year cycle of measurements, Keeling captured a precise and consistent baseline number for the level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. And those carbon dioxide readings, at both sites,

490 Lindblad and Fuller, *Passport to Anywhere*; Antonello, “The Greening of Antarctica: Environment, Science and Diplomacy 1959-1980”.

demonstrated a perceptible upward trend.⁴⁹¹

Keeling's work built on over a century of climate change science. A fundamental milestone in this climate science history was Joseph Fourier's theory of the greenhouse effect, which he proposed in 1827.⁴⁹² Concerned with understanding why the earth does not continue heating up as it receives sunlight, the French mathematician and physicist set out to understand what was regulating atmospheric temperature. Comparing the Earth with its covering of air to a box covered with a pane of glass, Fourier suggested that the atmosphere was somehow intercepting a part of the infrared radiation emitted from the earth's surface, preventing it from escaping into space.

Further seminal work was completed by Irish chemist, John Tyndall. In 1859, Tyndall discovered that water vapour and carbon dioxide helped to trap heat from escaping the atmosphere. A few decades later, in 1896, Swedish chemist, Svante Arrhenius, produced an energy budget model showing the effects of varying levels of carbon dioxide (carbonic acid) and water vapour on the surface temperature of the Earth.⁴⁹³ Calculating that the average surface temperature was about 15°C, Arrhenius suggested that a doubling of atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration would lead to a 5°C temperature rise.

Arrhenius's paper was largely overlooked until 1938, when British steam engineer, Guy Stewart Callendar, published a paper identifying the links between the burning of fossil fuels and global warming.⁴⁹⁴ Callendar estimated that human fuel consumption had released

491 Charles D. Keeling, "The Concentration and Isotopic Abundances of Carbon Dioxide in the Atmosphere," *Tellus* 12, no. 2 (1960); Weart.

492 Libby Robin, Sverker Sörlin, and Paul Warde, *The Future of Nature: Documents of Global Change* (Yale University Press, 2013)..

493 Ibid.

494 Guy Stewart Callendar, "The Artificial Production of Carbon Dioxide and Its Influence on Temperature," *Quarterly Journal of the Royal Meteorological Society* 64, no. 275 (1938).

about 150,000 million tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere over the course of half a century and that approximately three quarters of this remained in the atmosphere. Using temperature observations from 200 meteorological stations, Calendar estimated that global temperatures had increased at an average rate of 0.005°C per year over that time.

This succession of foundational climate science was not conducted with any great sense of urgency. It was largely theoretical, curiosity-driven and a labour of love for the scientists involved. Their work was mostly focused on the ancient past—the causes of ice ages—rather than the immediate future. And those who considered the potential for global warming in the future did not appear to be concerned by the thought; they were even encouraged by it.⁴⁹⁵

Keeling's IGY experiments contributed to a shift in thinking on climate change. By showing an increase in atmospheric greenhouse gases, his work added urgency to what had until now been a largely theoretical problem. If carbon dioxide did indeed contribute to global warming, then these measurements from Antarctica suggested that the world might be heating up. Keeling's findings quickly grabbed the attention of a group of concerned scientists. In a few years, the Keeling Curve—the steeply rising and pulsing carbon dioxide curve representing Keeling's findings—was widely cited by scientific review panels and science journalists. It became the central icon of the greenhouse effect.

When Keeling's mentor, Roger Revelle moved to Harvard University and lectured on climate change, he employed the Keeling Curve to illustrate the greenhouse effect to his students. Among them was a young chemist by the name of Al Gore, who pondered what

495 Griffiths, "A Humanist on Thin Ice."

the rising curve meant for the future of the planet, and would later broadcast it to the world.⁴⁹⁶

Antarctica's Frozen Archives

Climate change concerns were boosted by evidence from ice cores drilled in Antarctica and Greenland from the 1960s onwards. The idea of using ice cores to study past climate was conceived by Danish scientist, Willi Dansgaard, in the early 1950s. In 1952, Dansgaard discovered that the ratio of oxygen isotopes O^{16}/O^{18} in precipitation correlates with the temperature at the location where the precipitation is formed.⁴⁹⁷ The more of the heavier and rarer O^{18} isotope in each ice layer, he proposed, the warmer the air temperature at the time that ice was formed. Dansgaard had estimated that his discovery would enable the study of climatic changes over several hundred years of the past.⁴⁹⁸ But his foundational work would lead to several ice core drilling projects that determined climatic changes not over hundreds of years but rather hundreds of thousands of years.

Techniques for deep ice coring were initially pioneered at American Camp Century, a military base secretly built and maintained beneath the northwestern Greenland Icesheet during the Cold War. In 1961, analysis of a Camp Century ice core showed that the oxygen isotope ratios did indeed shift, with high levels of O^{18} isotope present during interglacial (warmer) periods and low levels during glacial (colder) periods.

The first significant Antarctic ice core was retrieved in 1968, near Byrd Station in West Antarctica. Antarctic ice cores proved older and more compressed than Greenland ice

496 Justin Gillis, "A Scientist, His Work and a Climate Reckoning," *New York Times*, 21 December 2010.

497 Spencer Weart, *The Discovery of Global Warming* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

498 Willi Dansgaard, "The O^{18} -Abundance in Fresh Water," *Geochimica et Cosmochimica Acta* 6, no. 5-6 (1954).

cores—to date, the oldest continuous ice core records extend 123,000 years in Greenland and 800,000 years in Antarctica. But the two proved to be complementary, with Greenland ice cores offering a shorter but more discriminating climate record.⁴⁹⁹ Together, they showed there to be strong continuity in past climate records across Antarctica and Greenland, which provided further proof that temperature variation operated at a global, as well as a regional, level.

It would take until the 1980s for scientists to determine how to measure levels of greenhouse gases in the ancient air bubbles trapped inside seasonal ice layers. The solution, it was finally discovered, was to clean the ice core thoroughly, crush it in a vacuum and quickly measure its contents. When a team of French and Russian scientists extracted a 400,000-year-old ice core from near Vostok Station in Antarctica in the 1990s, this method was used to analyse variations in greenhouse gases over that time period. As historian Spencer Weart asserts, the results were ‘definite, unexpected, and momentous.’⁵⁰⁰

The Vostok ice core covered four glacial periods and clearly showed that atmospheric carbon dioxide rose during warmer interglacial periods in earth’s history and dropped during colder interglacial periods. It provided compelling and disturbing evidence that greenhouse gases played a central role in climate change. It also revealed that present-day levels of these greenhouse gases were unprecedented during the past 420,000 years.⁵⁰¹

On Shifting Ice

Antarctica was not just a laboratory for researching past climates and proving that

499 Griffiths, “A Humanist on Thin Ice.”

500 Weart, *The Discovery of Global Warming*, 126.

501 J. R. Petit et al., “Climate and Atmospheric History of the Past 420,000 Years from the Vostok Ice Core, Antarctica,” *Nature* 399, no. 6735 (1999).

anthropogenic climate change was a reality. As it would turn out, Antarctica was one of the regions of the world most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. During the IGY, it was discovered that the West Antarctic Ice Sheet was not firmly fastened to the continental bedrock. It was a marine ice sheet, meaning that much of the ice sheet rests on a bed below sea level. In 1968, geologist, John Mercer suggested that, with increased warming, the West Antarctic Ice Sheet could release and slide into the ocean, leading to a sea level rise of up to five metres.⁵⁰² Over the following decades, scientists would work to determine just how stable or unstable the West Antarctic Ice Sheet really was and what its disintegration might mean for the rest of the world.⁵⁰³

In 2009, the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) carried out a major assessment of how the climate of the Antarctic and Southern Ocean had changed in the past, and how it might change in the future under a range of greenhouse gas emission scenarios.⁵⁰⁴ The *Antarctic Climate Change and the Environment* (ACCE) report revealed that the impacts of climate change had been both rapid and complex, especially over the previous 50 years. Significantly, the assessment found that the ozone hole had shielded much of the continent from the effects of climate change. The ozone hole had intensified the polar vortex—a ring of westerly winds around the continent—which acted to isolate much of Antarctica from the rest of the planet. This isolating effect served to stabilise surface temperatures and snowfall across the continent.

502 John H. Mercer, “Antarctic Ice and Sangamon Sea Level Rise,” *IAHS Publ.* 179 (1968); “West Antarctic Ice Sheet and CO₂ Greenhouse Effect: A Threat of Disaster,” *Nature* 271, no. 5643 (1978).

503 Examples of research papers on West Antarctic Ice Sheet stability include R. B. Alley and I. M. Whillans, “Changes in the West Antarctic Ice Sheet,” *Science* 254, no. 5034 (1991); Michael Oppenheimer, “Global Warming and the Stability of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet,” *Nature* 393, no. 6683 (1998); Ian Joughin and Richard B. Alley, “Stability of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet in a Warming World,” *Nature Geoscience* 4, no. 8 (2011).

504 J. Turner et al., *Antarctic Climate Change and the Environment: A Contribution to the International Polar Year, 2007–2008* (Cambridge: Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research, 2009).

The exception was the Antarctic Peninsula which, protruding northward of the shielded area, had warmed rapidly. Faraday/Vernadsky Station on the Antarctic Peninsula was shown to have undergone a decadal increase of +0.53°C over the period 1951–2006, and 87 percent of the Peninsula’s marine glaciers have shown overall retreat since 1953.⁵⁰⁵ The ACCE report revealed that the distribution and success of the Antarctic Peninsula’s plant and animal life had been affected by this warming. Plant communities have expanded rapidly and newly available land has been colonised by plants and animals. Plant and animal communities have also become more susceptible to invasion from non-native species, which—fostered by the warmer, wetter climate—could have detrimental effects on local ecosystems.⁵⁰⁶

As for the future, the report predicted that the greatest change would be experienced in those regions that were already changing, namely the Antarctic Peninsula and West Antarctica. It raised concerns that warmer waters would continue to well up onto the continental shelf around the West Antarctic Ice Sheet, which ‘could be entering a phase of collapse’. If this collapse were to occur, the report predicted that it could contribute 1.5 metres to global sea level.⁵⁰⁷

Since the ACCE Report was published, serious concerns have also been raised about the stability of the Totten Glacier, a major outlet glacier located in East Antarctica. A paper published in 2015 revealed that scientists had discovered two deep troughs in the seabed beneath the glacier. This suggested that the Totten, one of the largest glaciers in Antarctica, could be vulnerable to similar changes as those observed in West Antarctica. If the Totten Glacier were to open up, it would release a significant catchment of ice

505 Ibid., xvi.

506 Ibid., 294.

507 Ibid., xxiii.

which could lead to a sea level rise of 3.5 metres.⁵⁰⁸

In the 1960s, concerns over environmental change in Antarctica had focused on the detrimental impacts humans were seen to be having on Antarctica's ecological communities. At the turn of the 21st century, it was becoming clear that humans could induce change in Antarctica without even leaving home. It was no longer just Antarctica's ecosystems that were at risk. The ice was proving to be less stable than scientists had once thought. And the greatest fear with regards to the volatility and vulnerability of ice was not how it would affect Antarctica but rather what the melting ice meant for the rest of the world. One scientist calculated that if all of the Antarctic ice were to melt, the world would experience a 59-metre sea level rise.⁵⁰⁹

A New Meaning for the Ice

How did this growing awareness of climate change, and its disturbing implications for Antarctica, change perceptions of the continent? Scientists were among the first to grasp the gravity of climate change and to begin contemplating Antarctica in a new light. As historian Adrian Howkins argues, a 'tipping point' in scientific perceptions of the Antarctic continent was reached around 1990—the same year the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published its first assessment report. It was around this time that scientists began to view Antarctica as a victim of anthropogenic climate change.⁵¹⁰ This, Howkins notes, was consistent with a general increase in concerns about global climate change within the scientific community at that time.

508 J. S. Greenbaum et al., "Ocean Access to a Cavity beneath Totten Glacier in East Antarctica," *Nature Geoscience* 8, no. 4 (2015); A. R. A. Aitken et al., "Repeated Large-Scale Retreat and Advance of Totten Glacier Indicated by Inland Bed Erosion," *Nature* 533, no. 7603 (2016).

509 Howkins, "Melting Empires? Climate Change and Politics in Antarctica since the International Geophysical Year."

510 Ibid., 191.

In the opening decade of the 21st century, the polar regions began to feature prominently in media representations of climate change. The polar bear became a symbol of the fragile and melting Arctic environment and strong focus was placed on the volatility of Antarctic ice sheets and their potential impact on rising sea levels. In 2002, the abrupt collapse of the Larsen B ice shelf proved an important and startling milestone. Situated on the east coast of the Antarctic Peninsula, the entire 200-metre thick ice shelf collapsed over the course of one month, turning an estimated 500 billion tonne ice mass into a sea of small icebergs. Because Larsen B was a floating ice shelf, its disintegration did not affect sea levels. Still, the event made headlines around the world with reporters claiming it to be ‘one of the most dramatic examples yet of the effects of climate change’ and just a taste of things to come.⁵¹¹

Al Gore’s *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006) was also instrumental in bringing climate change to a world audience.⁵¹² As well as explaining the role of Antarctic ice core research to our understanding of climate change, the film raised concerns about the possible collapse of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet and its impact on global sea levels. These popular representations of climate change presented Antarctica as vulnerable and volatile, which signalled a significant shift from traditional images of Antarctica as an heroic and impenetrable testing ground. They also served as a call to action. If the polar regions were a laboratory and litmus test for climate change, they could also be showcases—places where concerned politicians and citizens could bear witness to the impacts of climate change and be moved to take positive action.

511 John Vidal, “Antarctica Sends 500 Billion Tonne Warning of the Effects of Global Warming,” *The Guardian* 20 March 2002; Andrew Revkin, “Large Ice Shelf in Antarctica Disintegrates at Great Speed,” *New York Times* 20 March 2002.

512 Albert Gore and Davis Guggenheim, *An Inconvenient Truth: A Global Warning* (Paramount Classics, 2006).

Among the most fervent advocates of climate action were artists. Over the past decade, a wave of artists travelled to the Arctic and Antarctic, representing what Lisa Bloom and Elena Glasberg have called a ‘revival’ of the environmental activism and art movements of the 1960s and 1970s.⁵¹³ Subhankar Banerjee, Annie Pootoogook, Lillian Ball, Jane Marsching, Roni Horn and Andrea Bowers are among those artists who have travelled, predominantly to the Arctic, to create alternative representations of climate change to those produced and circulated by government science.

American artist, Diane Burko, is another example. While she focused on painting ‘beautiful landscapes’ earlier in her career, a trip to Alaska’s Glacier National Park in 2011 inspired Burko to shift focus. According to William Fox, the trip ‘allowed her to witness how 150 glaciers had been reduced to 25’.⁵¹⁴ Rather than limiting herself to reflecting the beauty of the world, she became motivated to ‘talk’ through the language of paint about the urgency of climate change. Over the span of a decade, Burko accompanied scientists on numerous visits to Arctic field camps and glaciers where climate change was readily apparent.

In Burko’s *Elegies* series, each painting is based on aerial photographs of glaciers and sea ice. The fissures and crack patterns that formed in the varied thickness of paint surface were created intentionally to evoke images of melting, cracking ice edging land masses, fjords and splintering glaciers floating on a polar sea. And she named each print after a glacier or area in the world whose existence is being threatened dramatically. She also called on her viewers to consider the notion of glaciers in the past tense, and to contemplate the prospect of losing something essential to our humanity. ‘Her paintings still respond

513 Bloom and Glasberg, “Disappearing Ice and Missing Data: Climate Change in the Visual Culture of the Polar Regions”, 120.

514 William Fox, “Diane Burko: A Broader Perspective,” in *Diane Burko: Glacial Shifts, Changing Perspectives, Bearing Witness to Climate Change*, ed. Diane Burko (Exton, PA: Brilliant Graphics, 2017), 12.

to the abstract beauty of the scenery, but they focus on the data of climate change and propose a different view of the sublime,' Fox notes.⁵¹⁵

Burko's creative journey illuminates the way in which ice had taken on new meaning in this century. Ice no longer belonged solely to the realms of the scientific and aesthetic. Questions about the ice were not limited to how it had formed and whether it was changing, or how beautiful and sublime it was. Now the experience of standing before a retreating glacier stirred ethical questions too. How was our fate bound up with that of the ice and what was our responsibility to act?

Antarctic Ambassadors and Global Stewards

Climate change emerged as a central theme on Antarctic tours around the first decade of the 21st century, the same time the issue was rising to prominence in the global media. Some tour operators began responding to calls for climate change action, by informing their clients about the effects of climate change on Antarctica and by taking measures to estimate and reduce their carbon footprint. Then, in 2009, the same year that SCAR published the ACCE report, the Antarctic tourism industry took collective action by forming an IAATO working group on climate change.

One of the working group's main aims was to support tour operators in becoming more 'climate-change friendly'.⁵¹⁶ IAATO committed to assessing tour operators' carbon footprints, reviewing their carbon offsetting practices and researching ways that tour operators could mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. Many tour operators were already taking part in carbon offsetting schemes or encouraging their clients to

515 Ibid., 13.

516 IAATO, "Climate Change in Antarctica - Understanding the Facts," International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (2013).

do so independently. And some committed to improving technologies and practices, both in Antarctica and at their corporate headquarters, to improve their efficiency and minimise carbon dioxide emissions.⁵¹⁷ While IAATO is yet to release any carbon emissions data for the tourism industry, a 2011 study estimated that emissions from Antarctic tourism were a ‘minute fraction’ (approximately 0.02%) of the global tourism-related emissions of carbon dioxide.⁵¹⁸

The Antarctic tourism industry considered that its primary responsibility was, however, to act as an advocate and educator. By raising tourists’ awareness of the effects of climate change on the Antarctic environment, the tourism industry sought to transform each Antarctic tourist into an ‘Ambassador for Antarctica and a steward of the global ecosystem’.⁵¹⁹ Just as Burko had been roused to act on climate change following her travels to the Arctic, tour operators suggested that Antarctic tourists would be inspired by their first-hand Antarctic experience to ‘take part and follow developments’ on climate change.⁵²⁰

The idea of ambassadorship was certainly not new to Antarctic tourism. It had been part of Lars-Eric Lindblad’s conservation-minded expedition model. But now it had been repackaged for an age of global change. Antarctic tourists would not just be advocates for the Antarctic environment but for all those people and places around the world hit hardest by climate change.

517 ATCM XXXIV - IP 103 ‘IAATO Climate Change Working Group: Report of Progress

518 The study concluded that the average tourist trip to Antarctica results in 5.44 t of CO₂ emissions per passenger, or 0.49 t per passenger and day. Ramon Farreny et al., “Carbon Dioxide Emissions of Antarctic Tourism,” *Antarctic Science* 23, no. 6 (2011): 564.

519 IAATO, “Climate Change in Antarctica - Understanding the Facts”.

520 Ibid.

Despite efforts to inform Antarctic tourists about climate change, and encourage positive action, there has been little evidence to show that Antarctic tourism is creating climate change ambassadors. An IAATO survey conducted in 2009 suggested that tour operators were more concerned about climate change than their clients were. And several tourism scholars have commented that Antarctic tourists are either unconcerned about climate change or do not act on these concerns.⁵²¹

Some have even suggested that tourists are attracted to the idea of a disappearing Antarctic, not to advocate for its salvation but to witness its demise. So-called ‘last-chance tourism’ is thought to provide tourists the opportunity to witness the death of ecosystems, extinction of species and disappearance of landscapes. And the polar regions have become prime ‘last-chance’ destinations. Observers have found more examples of last-chance tourism in the Arctic, where prospective tourists have been urged to see polar bears ‘before they disappear’.⁵²²

Antarctic tour operators have also been singled out for encouraging potential clients to see Antarctica before it changes or disappears.⁵²³ Tourism scholars have also been critical of the tourists themselves, arguing they have little interest in learning about climate change to begin with. As one Antarctic tourism study concluded, ‘tourists returning from the Antarctic do not seem to play the role of ambassadors because many visitors merely want a last chance to glimpse a vanishing world.’⁵²⁴

521 Eijgelaar, Thaper, and Peeters; Powell, Kellert, and Ham; Mar Vila et al., “Contrasting Views on Antarctic Tourism: ‘Last Chance Tourism’ or ‘Ambassadorship’ in the Last of the Wild,” *Journal of Cleaner Production* 111 (2016).

522 Lemelin et al; Mark Groulx et al., “Motivations to Engage in Last Chance Tourism in the Churchill Wildlife Management Area and Wapusk National Park: The Role of Place Identity and Nature Relatedness,” *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 24, no. 11 (2016).

523 Lemelin, Dawson, and Stewart, *Last Chance Tourism: Adapting Tourism Opportunities in a Changing World*.

524 Vila et al., “Contrasting Views on Antarctic Tourism: ‘Last Chance Tourism’ or ‘Ambassadorship’ in the

The Changing and Unchanging Antarctic

Where are all the Antarctic ambassadors and global stewards? Why have Antarctic tourists not responded more actively, or anxiously, to climate change concerns? Some insight can be drawn from broader discussions on public perceptions of climate change, which have sought to understand how people come to understand, ‘believe in’ or express concern about climate change, and why they do, or do not, feel a need to take action.

Barriers to action identified by anthropologists, sociologists and psychologists include ignorance of climate science and uncertainty about the urgency of climate change. The general public’s understanding, awareness and perceptions of the risks associated with climate change have been found to differ greatly to those of the scientific community. Some have noted that people may feel helpless or unmotivated to take individual action in the absence of collective action, which is ultimately difficult to achieve. Fundamental values and worldview have also been identified as influencing the phenomena and risks to which individuals and societies choose to respond.⁵²⁵

In her study of a rural community in western Norway, American sociologist Kari Marie Norgaard found that even the most highly educated and politically savvy community members failed to act on climate change in their everyday lives. While her study coincided with an unusually warm winter, which made ice-fishing impossible and affected the region’s ski industry, community members continued to practice what Norgaard calls ‘socially organised denial’.⁵²⁶ In Bygdaby, the fictional name of the actual place she

Last of the Wild”, 9.

525 Elke U. Weber, “What Shapes Perceptions of Climate Change?,” *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 1, no. 3 (2010); Beatrice Crona et al., “Perceptions of Climate Change: Linking Local and Global Perceptions through a Cultural Knowledge Approach,” *Climatic Change* 119, no. 2 (2013); Maria Sakellari, “Cinematic Climate Change, a Promising Perspective on Climate Change Communication,” *Public Understanding of Science* 24, no. 7 (2015).

526 Kari Marie Norgaard, *Living in Denial: Climate Change, Emotions, and Everyday Life* (Cambridge: MIT

studied, Norgaard found ‘a landscape where the possibility of climate change is both deeply disturbing and almost completely submerged, simultaneously unimaginable and common knowledge.’⁵²⁷

While these broader cultural and psychological factors are important, insight can also be drawn from the Antarctic tourist performance itself. For even though Antarctica has changed over the past 50 years, and public perceptions of the frozen continent have as well, the Antarctic tourist performance has remained the same. Despite its efforts to raise awareness of climate change among its clients, the Antarctic tourism industry still portrays Antarctica as a remote and unchanging wilderness. Images in the global media may depict Antarctica as vulnerable and volatile—rapidly warming and disintegrating—but marketing material and tourism rhetoric are still dominated by long-standing themes of heroic exploration and sublime nature.

It is not just rhetoric and imagery that serves to favour a more traditional view of Antarctica, but also the physical journey. A voyage across the Southern Ocean remains an important rite of passage, and emphasises the notion that Antarctica is removed from the rest of the civilised world. This idea is further reinforced by the celebrated crossing of the Antarctic convergence, a biophysical barrier which serves to separate cold, dense Antarctic waters from warmer waters of the north. Upon reaching the continent, the tourist is faced with the overwhelming sight of the Antarctic ice sheet. Its immensity may prompt some to ponder what might happen if all of that ice were to melt and disintegrate. But its size, stillness and silence can also prompt doubts that the ice is threatened at all.

A first-hand experience of Antarctica may offer tourists a visceral understanding of the effects of climate change. It may alert the tourist to the continent’s volatility and stir them to become

Press, 2011), 9.

527 Ibid., xix.

concerned and take action. But an Antarctic tour also has the power to reassure tourists that not much has changed at all. Antarctica remains remote, pristine and weighed down with kilometres of ancient ice. It appears much as it did when heroic explorers traversed its rugged, icy surface. And while a warm, sunny day may prompt questions about melting ice, a bitter and frozen one might just as easily put those questions at bay.

Landscapes of Heroism and Adventure

In 2006, the year after I began working as a guide in Antarctica, I was fortunate to travel to Greenland and the Canadian Arctic. I was working as a guide there also, sailing on the same ship and working with the same crew as I had in Antarctica. Although I was now at the top of the world, many of the goals of our expedition cruises were the same as they had been at the bottom of the world. We were seeking adventure, wildlife and the wilderness experience. But in the Arctic, we traded penguins for polar bears, and indulged in the delightful springiness of sprawling tundra. And here we gave the name ‘wilderness’ to a peopled landscape imbued with thousands of years of history and culture.

That summer, we journeyed through a segment of the ‘fabled’ Northwest Passage, the sea route that captured the imagination of centuries of explorers and led many to their deaths. From as early as the late 15th century, European explorers endeavoured to find a navigable route from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans through the Arctic Archipelago. But the stubborn pack ice had persistently sabotaged their efforts. In the spring of 1845, British explorer John Franklin set sail for the Northwest Passage with 128 men, none of whom returned. Throughout the 1800s, the British and American governments launched around 40 expeditions to find the lost explorers. Now, over a century later, I found myself following ‘in the footsteps of Franklin’, and in the company of 100 tourists.

We failed to find any sea ice along our planned route. On our journey along the ‘treacherous’ Northwest Passage, we found only open sea channels, their smooth, ice-free surfaces glistening in midsummer sunshine. For a double dose of irony, we then went in search of ice. Taking a significant detour from our planned course, we burned tonnes of excess fossil fuel in the hope of encountering the pack ice and immersing ourselves in it. Geographically, we were already at our destination, sailing the same channels as the explorers who had come before us, possibly even those Franklin himself had taken. But that was not the point. We were not just looking for a geographical location but rather a landscape fit for a heroic explorer. We were searching for the Northwest Passage of our imaginings.

There are many differences between the Antarctic and Arctic, but they both represent salient landscapes of heroism and adventure—places where strength, courage and self-sufficiency are tested, proven and revitalised. Their heroic and adventurous status hinges on the notion that they are natural and unchanging—the wild and untameable opponent to the civilised man. And the stories of modern tourism and exploration suggest that we need them to stay that way.

The tendency to imagine northern environments as wild, unchanging nature is illustrated poignantly in the edited volume, *Northscapes: History, Technology and the Making of Northern Environments* (2003).⁵²⁸ In her exploration of tourism to the Yukon, Lisa Cooke reveals how the tourist imaginary is built on celebrations of colonial encounter and the image of the North as an unpeopled wilderness. Unnur Birna Karlsdóttir writes that Iceland continues to be imaged as a wilderness and ‘a world apart’ despite rapid technological change in the 20th and 21st centuries.⁵²⁹ Finn Arne Jorgensen also highlights a problematic

528 Dolly Jørgensen and Sverker Sörlin, *Northscapes: History, Technology, and the Making of Northern Environments* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013).

529 Lisa Cooke, “North Takes Places in Dawson City, Yukon, Canada,” in *Northscapes: History, Technology, and the Making of Northern Environments*, ed. Dolly Jørgensen and Sverker Sörlin (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013);

tension between two opposing stories of the North. On one hand, stories of climate change have imparted a growing sense of urgency and vulnerability. On the other hand, the North is supposed to remain a timeless and unchanging place.⁵³⁰ This is a tension that perturbs Northscapes and Southscapes alike.

Landscapes of heroism and adventure are not limited to the stomping grounds of heroic polar explorers. We find them in mountain ranges and ski fields around the world. They are places of tourism and leisure, but they hold strong cultural significance too. As Kari Marie Norgaard learned in Bygdaby, it is perhaps impossible to overemphasise the symbolic significance of skiing to Norwegians, who are proverbially said to be born ‘with skis on their feet’. ‘Skiing in this community is the source of a great deal of local pride and identity,’ Norgaard writes.⁵³¹ Indeed, skiing and national identity have become closely intertwined, especially in Nordic countries.⁵³²

Scholars of tourism and environmental change have duly recognised the unique vulnerability of icescapes and snowfields to the impacts of climate change. Their research has closely considered how these environments have changed and are likely to continue changing as average global temperatures continue to rise.⁵³³ They have explored

Unnur Birna Karlsdóttir, “Iceland and the North: An Idea of Belonging and Being Apart,” *ibid.*, 248.

530 Finn Arne Jørgensen, “The Networked North: Thinking About the Past, Present, and Future of Environmental Histories of the North,” *ibid.*, 276.

531 Norgaard, *Living in Denial: Climate Change, Emotions, and Everyday Life*, 37.

532 Works on skiing and national identity include: Sverker Sörlin, “Nature, Skiing and Swedish Nationalism,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 12, no. 2 (1995); Roman Horak and Georg Spitaler, “Sport Space and National Identity: Soccer and Skiing as Formative Forces: On the Austrian Example,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 46, no. 11 (2003); Vlado Kotnik, “Sport and Nation in Anthropological Perspective: Slovenia as Land of Skiing Nationhood,” *Antropologija* 7 (2009); Matti Goksøyr, “Taking Ski Tracks to the North. The Invention and Reinvention of Norwegian Polar Skiing: Sportisation, Manliness and National Identities,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 30, no. 6 (2013).

533 Examples include: Martin Beniston, “Mountain Climates and Climatic Change: An Overview of Processes Focusing on the European Alps,” *Pure and Applied Geophysics* 162, no. 8 (2005); Lawrence C. Hamilton, Cliff Brown, and Barry D. Keim, “Ski Areas, Weather and Climate: Time Series Models for New England Case Studies,” *International Journal of Climatology* 27, no. 15 (2007); Georg Grabherr, Michael Gottfried, and Harald Pauli,

the economic and social impacts of climate change to tourism industries, especially in ski fields.⁵³⁴ Yet little has been said about how climate change might transform the ways in which we imagine and relate to these places.

What happens as landscapes of heroism and adventure change and even disappear? Will they continue serving as testing grounds and sources of national identity and pride? Will we look elsewhere to fulfil our cultural and imaginative needs? Or will these change too?

A hundred years ago, we knew little about the ice. The first humans did not set foot on the Antarctic ice sheet until the early 20th century, and until the 1950s, scientists assumed that the ice sheet was only a few hundred metres thick.⁵³⁵ In the 21st century, we know much more. We recognise the fundamental processes of ice, and realise that this knowledge is key to understanding climate change. And while there is much more scientific data and knowledge to be extracted from the ice, there is also much that these landscapes of echoing whiteness can teach us about our own humanity. As Stephen Pyne has written, ‘the ice is a great, distorted mirror.’⁵³⁶ We can study its properties—learn about its patterns of accumulation, ablation and retreat—but the outcome is ultimately a better understanding of ourselves.

“Climate Change Impacts in Alpine Environments: Climate Change Impacts in Alpine Environments,” *Geography Compass* 4, no. 8 (2010); Thomas Kohler et al., “Mountains and Climate Change: A Global Concern,” *Mountain Research and Development* 30, no. 1 (2010).

534 Examples include: Daniel Scott et al., “Climate Change and the Sustainability of Ski-Based Tourism in Eastern North America: A Reassessment,” *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 14, no. 4 (2006); Catherine Pickering, “Changes in Demand for Tourism with Climate Change: A Case Study of Visitation Patterns to Six Ski Resorts in Australia,” *ibid.* 19, no. 6 (2011); J. Dawson and D. Scott, “Managing for Climate Change in the Alpine Ski Sector,” *Tourism Management* 35 (2013); Marc Pons et al., “The Vulnerability of Pyrenean Ski Resorts to Climate-Induced Changes in the Snowpack,” *Climatic Change* 131, no. 4 (2015).

535 Griffiths, *Slicing the Silence: Voyaging to Antarctica*; Alessandro Antonello, “Engaging and Narrating the Antarctic Ice Sheet: The History of an Earthly Body,” *Environmental History* 22, no. 1 (2017).

536 Pyne, *The Ice*, 381.

Chapter Five

Perestroika at the Poles

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At ten minutes to five on the afternoon of 18 August 1991, a man, tending to business in the office of his holiday home, was approached by his bodyguard and told that a group of people had arrived and demanded to see him. Intent on finding out who had sent them, the man reached for his phone only to find that the line was dead. He tried a second, third and fourth phone line but found that they were dead too. The man immediately told his wife, daughter and son-in-law what had happened. ‘You know,’ the man told his family, ‘that I will not give into any kind of blackmail, nor to any threats or pressure and I will not retreat from the positions I have taken up.’⁵³⁷

The man was Soviet Secretary General, Mikhail Gorbachev, and the people demanding to see him in his Crimean *dacha* (holiday home) were all senior Communist Party and KGB officials. They had come from Moscow to discuss ‘the situation the country is in’, referring to the revolutionary reforms Gorbachev had introduced since taking power six years earlier. His *glasnost* policy had encouraged increasing openness in the mass media while *perestroika* (re-structuring) had eased central control of the country’s political and economic activities. Such reforms were deeply destabilising to the Communist Party’s central apparatus, which had ruled the country with an iron grip since the revolution of 1917. A group of plotters decided it was time for the all-powerful Communist Party to regain its firm hold over the country. The delegation that arrived at Gorbachev’s door on that midsummer Sunday afternoon gave him this ultimatum: either he declares a state of emergency, or transfers his powers to the country’s Vice President. Just as he had promised his family, Gorbachev refused to cooperate.⁵³⁸

537 Mikhail Gorbachev, *The August Coup : The Truth and the Lessons* (London: HarperCollins, 1991), 19.

538 Ibid.

Early the following morning, a group of eight high-ranking Soviet officials appeared on television and radio broadcasts across the country. Calling themselves the Committee for the State Emergency, they announced that Gorbachev was no longer able to rule due to ill health. They were taking over the government in a bid to rescue their ‘great Motherland’ from the ‘mortal danger’ that loomed over her. Tanks soon rolled into Moscow and Leningrad where martial law was established. Gorbachev remained isolated, held under house arrest and unable to communicate with the outside world. Resistance to the coup did not emerge immediately, but when it did, newly elected Russian President, Boris Yeltsin, became its galvanising force. On Monday morning, Yeltsin issued an *Appeal to the Citizens of Russia*, denouncing the takeover as illegal and calling for popular resistance including a general strike.⁵³⁹

On the very same day that Gorbachev received his unwelcome visit, another significant event was unfolding on the other side of the Soviet Empire. A short distance from the Bering Strait, in the remote port of Providenya, the nuclear-powered icebreaker *Sovetsky Soyuz* (Soviet Union) was commencing the first ever commercial tourist voyage through the Northeast Passage, a shipping route that traversed the Soviet Union’s northern coastline. Carrying around 100 tourists from nineteen countries, its purpose, wrote American tourist Charles Werner, ‘was to do in reverse the historic voyages of Swedish Baron Adolf Eric Nordenskjöld ... in 1878-9 and Norwegian Roald Amundsen ... in 1918-20.’ The journey would take them from Providenya northward through the Bering Strait and then westward towards Murmansk. Each passenger had paid up to US \$32,000 to join ‘this unique opportunity for north polar exploration,’ a joint venture between the state-owned Murmansk Shipping Company and tour operator Quark Expeditions.⁵⁴⁰

539 Coit D. Blacker, *Hostage to Revolution: Gorbachev and Soviet Security Policy, 1985-1991* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1993).

540 Charles A. Werner, “West through the Northeast Passage,” *The Explorers Journal* 70, no. 3 (1992): 81.

The tourists were promised up-close encounters with polar bears, walruses and bird colonies. They would become among the first Westerners to visit fishing villages and reindeer herders living along the Siberian coast. And they would make scientific observations of the ecology, geology, and fauna of the Eurasian Arctic along the way. But barely 48 hours into the three-week cruise, the *Sovetsky Soyuz* received Yeltsin's call to join the general strike. 'We appeal to citizens of Russia,' Yeltsin had pleaded, 'to give a fitting rebuff to the putschists and demand a return of the country to normal constitutional development.' In support of this appeal, Captain Anatoly Gorshkovsky agreed that the *Sovetsky Soyuz* would indeed join the general strike, but not until the ship had completed its journey through the Northeast Passage. The fate of the Soviet Union may have been at stake but so was around one million dollars in tourist fees, which would be lost if they had joined the strike immediately.⁵⁴¹

News about the coup continued to reach the *Sovetsky Soyuz* sporadically and in puzzling fragments. The extent of military force and violence was unclear but many of the ship's crew feared the worst. 'It was a tense time for the crew as they didn't know if serious civil war was going to break out,' recalled Quark Expeditions staff member, Colin Monteath.⁵⁴² The coup formed a strong undercurrent to the tourist voyage, and fodder for dining room chatter, as some passengers followed international news coverage on personal radios. Yeltsin's *Appeal to the Citizens of Russia* was translated and posted on a noticeboard for all the tourists to read. In the meantime, they continued visiting remote villages on the Chukotka Peninsula, which seemed worlds away from Moscow, where tens of thousands were rallying around Russia's White House, defending it against an imminent military attack.⁵⁴³ By Wednesday morning, a high-level delegation from the Russian government

541 Colin Monteath, pers comm., 6 November 2015.

542 Ibid.

543 Bob Liljestrand, "Icebreaker: Impressions of the Russian Arctic - a Film," (Honolulu, Hawaii, 1992).

had been sent to rescue Gorbachev, and most of the coup plotters were arrested. In less than 72 hours, the plotters' attempt to seize power had collapsed.⁵⁴⁴

When news of the coup's failure reached the *Sovetsky Soyuz*, Captain Gorshkovsky gave a gala dinner celebration replete with singing and dancing from the crew. 'Russian champagne, vodka and wine were produced and many speeches were made in which there was much emphasis on international friendship and the desire for peace,' the ship's log read that day.⁵⁴⁵ Expedition leader, Mike McDowell, toasted to 'all the Soviets on board', noting that, 'for us, of course, the events of the last week have been historic and of political interest but for our Soviet colleagues it's been a very emotional week.' After toasting to prosperity, one of the passengers presented Captain Gorshkovsky with a gift—a white t-shirt with the words 'I survived the North-East Passage! 1991' printed across the front. Below it, a handwritten afterthought was added in permanent marker. It read: '+ COUP'.⁵⁴⁶ As part of the celebrations, which continued well into the night, seven officers, all members of the Communist Party, were encouraged to tear up their communist party cards. But they soon reconsidered. 'When they found they could sell these cards to our fellow passengers for one hundred dollars each the officers made a first and fateful step towards capitalism!' Werner jested.⁵⁴⁷

When the *Sovetsky Soyuz* arrived in Murmansk on 7 September, having completed a 5,421 mile journey, it was flying a Russian flag. Within months, the Soviet Union had ceased to exist but its namesake sailed on, fuelled by 75,000 horsepower nuclear reactors and millions of US dollars.

544 Blacker, *Hostage to Revolution: Gorbachev and Soviet Security Policy*; Gorbachev, *The August Coup : The Truth and the Lessons*.

545 Dennis Collaton, pers comm., 21 January 2016

546 Liljestrand, "Icebreaker: Impressions of the Russian Arctic - a Film".

547 Werner, "West through the Northeast Passage", 85.



Murmansk Shipping Company's decision to engage in business dealings with a foreign tour operator reflected the recent and rapid downturn of the Soviet economy. It also signalled the demise of the nation's icebreaker fleet which had not long ago been the biggest and most powerful in the world. Sweden's Adolf Eric Nordenskjöld and Norway's Roald Amundsen may have been the first to traverse the Northeast Passage but none had completed the entire journey in a single season until the small Soviet icebreaker, *Sibiriakov*, limped into the Bering Strait in October 1932. Just four years after Stalin had unleashed his plans to reshape the Arctic into the 'great wellspring of the Soviet economy' here came proof that the Northeast Passage—known to Russians as the Northern Sea Route—could be transformed into a regular, operational sea lane. The nation began developing a fleet of icebreakers and ice-strengthened vessels to service the Route, which became critical in keeping the European and Asiatic parts of the country linked, allowing for the supply and service of northern Soviet settlements and the export of their natural resources.⁵⁴⁸

In 1959, the USSR launched the world's first nuclear icebreaker, *Lenin*, which began escorting convoys along the Northern Sea Route the following year. Nuclear icebreakers boasted greater power and ice-breaking ability than their diesel-powered counterparts and could operate for extended periods—years in some cases—without refuelling. Soviet and Finnish shipbuilders went on to complete nineteen more large polar icebreakers and about one hundred smaller, specialised icebreakers for use in the Soviet Arctic. Counting these, and an estimated two hundred and fifty ice—strengthened cargo ships, the Soviet Union operated the largest polar fleet in history during the 1980s. Navigating year round

548 John McCannon, *Red Arctic: Polar Exploration and the Myth of the North in the Soviet Union, 1932-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Claes Lykke Ragner, "The Northern Sea Route," in *Barents – Ett Gränsland I Norden*, ed. Torsten Hallberg (Stockholm: Arena Norden, 2008).

in the narrow channels of the Northern Sea Route, this fleet transported an all time high of almost seven million tonnes of cargo in 1987.⁵⁴⁹

By the late 1980s, a rapid downturn in the Soviet economy had convinced Gorbachev that *perestroika* reforms were necessary.⁵⁵⁰ With the aim of accelerating the sluggish economy, Gorbachev transformed state-owned enterprises into joint-stock companies—autonomous and accountable enterprises, which would presumably function more efficiently. Previously state-owned firms were privatised, leaving those that succeeded in cutting costs or expanding their markets to survive and prosper and those that did not to fail. Under Gorbachev’s sink or swim policy, Murmansk Shipping Company found itself flailing desperately and seeking new ways to turn a profit from its ships. This, just as the Polar regions were enjoying growing popularity among the world’s affluent and intrepid travellers.



Until 1990, Mike McDowell was oblivious to the growing crisis in the Soviet icebreaker fleet, or that it had anything to do with him. The Iron Curtain seemed worlds away to the Australian physics graduate, who was tirelessly travelling the world while building his small tour company, Quark Expeditions. Launched in 1985, Quark Expeditions offered ship-based tours to the world’s premier diving destinations—Indonesia, the Coral Sea, Solomon Islands and New Guinea to name a few. The company name reflected McDowell’s longstanding interest in physics and his vision for the company. ‘A quark is

549 Lawson W. Brigham, “Soviet-Russian Polar Icebreakers: Changing Fortunes,” *United States Naval Institute. Proceedings* 125, no. 1 (1999).

550 Alexander S. Bim, Derek C. Jones, and Thomas E. Weisskopf, “Hybrid Forms of Enterprise Organization in the Former USSR and the Russian Federation,” *Comparative Economic Studies* 35, no. 1 (1993); Blacker, *Hostage to Revolution: Gorbachev and Soviet Security Policy*; Gorbachev, *The August Coup : The Truth and the Lessons*.

the smallest particle of mass and I wanted to be small and unique,' McDowell told me.⁵⁵¹

While most of Quark's business focused on warmer latitudes, McDowell added North Pole tourist flights to his repertoire in the late 1980s, chartering Twin Otter aircraft from Canadian outfit, Kenn Borek Air. It was through McDowell's business dealings in the Arctic that German shipowner, Gunter Shultz, tracked him down.

'I've got a Russian nuclear icebreaker going to the North Pole. Would you like to go?' McDowell recalls Shultz asking him during their first phone conversation. That August, McDowell joined Shultz along with dozens of German entrepreneurs and reporters on a fourteen-day voyage to the North Pole. Described by one reporter as 'an experiment with the Soviet Union's policies of *glasnost*'⁵⁵², the voyage was designed to test the logistical and commercial viability of operating regular tourist voyages on Russian nuclear icebreakers. 'It was a great trip,' McDowell boasted. 'We cracked jokes, drank vodka and swam at the North Pole.'

The experiment was declared a great success and it seemed likely that Shultz would organise more of them. But somewhere between this voyage and the next, Shultz's relationship with the Soviets soured and he found himself sidelined from any future deals.⁵⁵³ McDowell saw an opportunity and took it. Soon after the 1990 North Pole tour, he struck a deal with Murmansk Shipping Company to charter the *Sovetsky Soyuz* for two tours of the North-East Passage the following summer. The trips sold out with minimal fuss and, although the first voyage coincided with the failed August 1991 coup, the political

551 Mike McDowell, pers. comm., 15 February 2016

552 Alister Doyle, "Cold War Ending for Soviet Icebreakers Tourism: Soviets Offer Sightseeing Trips to North Pole and Hope to Guide Western Cargo Ships through the Frozen Arctic," *Los Angeles Times*, 24 June 1990.

553 Mike McDowell, pers. comm., 15 February 2016

intrigue only seemed to delight the tourists more. As one reporter suggested, this was the perfect kind of trip for those ‘wanting to witness an offbeat ending of the Cold War’.⁵⁵⁴

McDowell quickly turned his thoughts to Antarctica, a place he had come to know well over the previous two decades. In 1970, he travelled to subantarctic Macquarie Island, where he spent thirteen months working as a geophysicist for the Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition (ANARE). While there, he and his fifteen colleagues were visited by the *Lindblad Explorer*. The men were asked to show the tourists around the island and were invited to dine on the ship, an encounter that made a lasting impression on McDowell. ‘That certainly introduced me to Lars-Eric and what he did; to the ship and what a cool idea it was.’⁵⁵⁵ After returning to Australia and working for a short time as a government geophysicist, McDowell again succumbed to wanderlust and travelled to South America, where he was reunited with the *Lindblad Explorer*. He took a job on board as a zodiac driver but his mentor, expedition leader Lyall Watson, saw his potential. Soon the young Australian became an expedition leader. His serendipitous reunion with the *Lindblad Explorer* turned into an eight-year journey around the world aboard the ‘Little Red Ship’.

Now at the helm of his own tour company, McDowell was eager to return south to Antarctica. The problem was finding a suitable ice-strengthened ship that could get him in there. Due to political and logistical complexities, his chances of sailing a nuclear icebreaker to Antarctica were slim. There were, however, a handful of other Russian shipping companies and scientific institutes with their own fleets of ice ships. They included

554 Doyle, “Cold War Ending for Soviet Icebreakers Tourism: Soviets Offer Sightseeing Trips to North Pole and Hope to Guide Western Cargo Ships through the Frozen Arctic”.

555 Mike McDowell, pers. comm., 10 December 2014

the Arctic and Antarctic Research Institute in Saint Petersburg, the Shirshov Institute of Oceanology in Moscow, the Far Eastern Shipping Company in Vladivostok, and various branches of the Russian Hydrometeorological Center (Hydromet). In comparison to the existing Antarctic tourist fleet, Russian ice ships lacked luxury and comfort but were far cheaper and superior in terms of their manoeuvrability in ice. They promised to shake up what had become, over the last 20 years of commercial Antarctic voyaging, a relatively established and exclusive market.



It was during his *Lindblad Explorer* days that McDowell met Lars Wikander. A veteran of the international shipping world, Swedish-born Wikander was living and working in Miami when his employer, Salén Shipping Co, acquired the *Lindblad Explorer*. The sale had come at a time when Lindblad Travel was floundering financially and Salén Shipping Co was looking to diversify its portfolio with a foray into tourism. ‘I was commanded to go to New York in 1982 and take over the office of the *Lindblad Explorer* as director of this new subsidiary company called Salén-Lindblad Cruising,’ Wikander explained.⁵⁵⁶ Wikander was technically McDowell’s boss but the pair struck a friendship that would continue after McDowell left the *Lindblad Explorer* two years later. When McDowell launched Quark Expeditions in 1985, Wikander, agreed to lend his support. The pair made a deal whereby McDowell could run all of Quark Expedition’s bookings and administrative work through Salén-Lindblad Cruising headquarters in return for a small commission. It was an arrangement that suited McDowell’s nomadic lifestyle and aversion to paperwork. ‘I didn’t have to open up an office, learn how to make bookings or do any of the other things I had no interest in doing,’ McDowell explained.⁵⁵⁷

556 Lars Wikander, pers. comm., 25 August 2015

557 Mike McDowell, pers. comm., 15 February 2016

Adding to McDowell's fortune was a significant financial boost he received in 1990. That year, Salen-Linblad Cruising offered Quark Expeditions the opportunity to sub-charter its newly built ship, *Frontier Spirit*, for one trip to Antarctica. McDowell filled the first trip—164 berths—in three weeks with the help of Dennis Collaton and Erica Frost at Australian travel agent, Adventure Associates. McDowell then advertised a second trip which sold out only weeks later. But as the *Frontier Spirit* departed on its maiden voyage, it was damaged in a cyclone off Fiji, just weeks before the first of Quark Expedition's Antarctic trips was due to commence. McDowell had taken out 'no show insurance' for the two trips he had sub-chartered. When the first trip was cancelled, he was able to shift most of the passengers to later departures. And his insurance payout came just as the Russian ships were becoming available.

Meanwhile, Salén Shipping was in financial trouble because 'it had invested too much in oil tankers,' Wikander remarked. 'So they decided to sell off Salén-Lindblad Cruising and the company closed its doors.'⁵⁵⁸ It was at this juncture that McDowell and Wikander formalised their working relationship. Wikander took 50 percent ownership of Quark Expeditions and the business partners registered the company in Darien, Connecticut, where Wikander lived with his family. The business partners also convinced Erica Frost to move from Australia to the United States to work for Quark Expeditions. Next, McDowell and Wikander turned their thoughts together to Vladivostok and Russia's Far Eastern Shipping Company.

558 Lars Wikander, pers. comm., 25 August 2015

Murmansk Shipping Company, which owned and operated the *Sovetsy Soyuz*, was responsible for moving cargo through the western half of the Northern Sea Route. Its counterpart, Vladivostok-based Far Eastern Shipping Company (FESCO) took charge of the east—the Bering Sea, Okhotsk Sea and Chukotka region. In 1992, McDowell travelled to Vladivostok to meet with FESCO officials and discuss the prospects of chartering a diesel icebreaker for both the Arctic and Antarctic tourist seasons. After discussing several options, they agreed on the *Kapitan Khlebnikov*, a 22,000 horsepower diesel-electric icebreaker which needed little modification for tourism. Although far from preened and polished, the ship boasted a specialised hull designed for breaking ice up to three metres thick, plus two helicopters for ice reconnaissance and shuttling passengers to remote locations on land and ice. Like all icebreakers, the *Kapitan Khlebnikov* featured a flat bottom, a crucial design feature which allowed the ship to rise up onto the ice and break it. The downside was that in open seas, the flat bottom caused the ship extreme pitching and rolling. As its many admirers would attest, the *Khlebnikov* could do just about anything in the ice. But first it had to get there.

The *Kapitan Khlebnikov*'s first Antarctic voyage departed from Cape Town, South Africa on 23 November 1992. It carried 65 passengers and was destined for 'The Far Side', the stretch of Antarctica which lies approximately due south of South Africa and Australia.⁵⁵⁹ Soon after leaving Port Elizabeth, giant waves began to pound against the side of the ship's hull, causing it to roll so violently from side to side that the captain had little choice but to change course. 'At one point instead of heading towards Antarctica we were going towards Madagascar just so we would stop this violent roll,' McDowell recalled.

It was a voyage the ship's captain, Petr Golikov, would never forget. A native of Vladivostok, Golikov boasted sixteen years of experience captaining icebreakers in the

559 US Antarctic Activities, Section X: Tourism and Non-governmental Activities, 1980/81-1987/88 (NSF).

Russian Arctic but had never experienced the kind of swell he encountered on that voyage in the Southern Ocean. On several occasions, the ship's angle of incline was so steep that its engines stalled, leaving the *Khlebnikov* swaying uncontrollably while the crew tried desperately to restart the engines. Golikov described it understatedly as 'a very unpleasant situation'.⁵⁶⁰ Finally the crew realised that the ship's operating system was triggering a protective device each time it pitched beyond a certain threshold, a problem which increased levels of lubricant oil seemed to resolve. It was one of the many practical lessons the *Kapitan Khlebnikov's* crew would learn on their maiden Antarctic voyage.

Following the rocky crossing, the *Khlebnikov's* passengers enjoyed fine weather for much of the month-long voyage. After visits to various subantarctic islands, including Crozet, Kerguelen and Heard Islands, they headed due south for the ice. The *Khlebnikov* successfully ploughed through thick sea ice as it approached the continent's dramatic ice shelves. On the continent, the tourists visited China's Zhongshan station and Australia's Mawson and Davis bases, and enjoyed helicopter rides to Emperor penguin rookeries nestled well 'inland' on stable sheets of fast ice. They explored the seldom-visited Scullin and Murray Monoliths, impressive rock features that rose up hundreds of metres from between the sea and the continental ice sheet. The base of Scullin Monolith provided the breeding ground for 160,000 breeding pairs of Antarctic petrels, one third of the world's population. The lower slopes of the two monoliths hosted 70,000 breeding pairs of Adelie penguins.⁵⁶¹

This expedition was immediately followed by a second, which Australian passenger, Suzanne Commerford, described as 'mind-blowing'. 'It was unreal. I couldn't take it all

560 Petr Golikov, pers. comm., 4 March 2016

561 Management Plan for Antarctic Specially Protected Area No. 164, Scullin and Murray Monoliths, Mac Robertson Land, Measure 13 (2010)

in,’ she recalled.⁵⁶² Commerford and her husband, Gerry, had taken their first Antarctic tour on the *Frontier Spirit* in 1991. Straight afterwards, they signed up for a cruise on the *Kapitan Khlebnikov*’s inaugural Antarctic summer season, in the hopes of getting Antarctica ‘out of [their] system’. Instead, the voyage cemented Commerford’s lifelong love affair with Antarctica and the *Kapitan Khlebnikov*. She was impressed by the ship’s capacity to go where others could not and warmed by the camaraderie of all the passengers, staff and crew on board. ‘It was new and exciting and very adventurous,’ she explained. All of those on board were well-travelled but wanted more adventure and wildlife. ‘We didn’t want to be driven on coaches from town to temple to tour. We wanted places that no one but explorers had been before.’ Commerford would stand on the Antarctic ice and revel in the thought that she was the person in the world who had ever stood at that particular spot.

Besides wildlife and adventure, the Commerfords and their mostly Australian fellow passengers also enjoyed the rare opportunity to interact with Russians. There was an excitement and a deep curiosity about the encounter. As most of the crew spoke no English, communication with passengers was challenging, especially for the wait staff who were required to interact with them often. To help them, Quark Expedition’s staff drew diagrams of common items that the passengers might need to request. ‘They drew things like a fork, spoon, can of beer, bread. We’d point to it and then the girls would know what to get us,’ Commerford explained. One of the expedition team members also organised for passengers to take Russian language lessons with the ship’s first officer, Andrey Gostnikov. They began with *dobray utra* (good morning), *dobray vecher* (good evening) and *spasiba* (thank you). ‘It got to the stage where we started teaching him Aussie slang,’ Commerford recalled. Years later, Gostnikov would still refer to his

562 Suzanne Commerford, pers. comm., 16 April 2016

favourite Australian expression learned on that trip, the ‘sheila in the ute’.⁵⁶³

The passengers also held concerts during long stretches of time at sea. On their six-day return journey, two of the passengers, sisters Margaret and Cathryn Mittelheuser, proposed that they perform a concert to fill the sea days. The passengers spent days writing a script, rehearsing and making costumes and props. ‘We dressed the men up and they’d do the Swan Lake scene.’ It was so successful that they repeated the performance just for the Russian crew. But the highest expression of the *Khlebnikov*’s congenial milieu was its infamous ‘hangar parties’. Zodiacs and helicopters were moved out of the ship’s hangar and tied to the deck. The space would be decorated and everyone—passengers, staff and crew—invited to party together. ‘They were wild, wild nights,’ Commerford recalled. There was music, dancing, an abundance of alcohol and a wonderful sense of togetherness. ‘We were all one. There was no such thing as a passenger and a deckhand or a cleaning lady. We were just all there having a party, having the best time.’⁵⁶⁴



On the other side of Antarctica, Quark Expeditions operated two additional ice-strengthened ships that summer. The *Akademik Sergey Vavilov*, carrying up to 100 passengers, was chartered from Moscow’s Shirshov Institute of Oceanology while the 50-passenger *Professor Molchanov* was chartered from Saint Petersburg’s Arctic and Antarctic Research Institute. Together, the two ships completed thirteen voyages to the Antarctic Peninsula between November 1992 and February 1993.⁵⁶⁵ Similar to on the *Kapitan Khlebnikov*, the staff and passengers on board found the experience of sailing

563 Translation: The woman in the pick-up truck. Wendy Commerford, pers. comm., 16 April 2016

564 Suzanne Commerford, pers. comm., 16 April 2016.

565 US Antarctic Activities, Section X: Tourism and Non-governmental Activities, 1980/81-1987/88 (NSF).

with a Russian crew just as exciting and bewildering as the Antarctic environment itself.

Greg Mortimer, who worked as the *Professor Molchanov*'s expedition leader that summer, recalled in vivid detail a stirring ceremony he witnessed on his first voyage. It was New Year's Eve and the ship was at anchor off Half Moon Island, a small islet within the South Shetland Island group. It was a magnificent Antarctic evening with the sun scuttling along the horizon beneath a rising moon. Mortimer sensed that the captain had deliberately placed the ship there that evening for what was about to unfold. The captain asked the staff and passengers to gather on the ship's stern deck to see the New Year in. He and his officers then appeared outside in full uniform, which the passengers had not seen before. Next, a line of engineers marched in single file with a ladder, which they laid against the ship's funnel. One of them climbed up the ladder with a hammer and chisel and gently knocked the Soviet hammer and sickle insignia off the ship's funnel. 'It was an unbelievable event,' Mortimer recalled. 'They gently lowered the hammer and sickle down and that was the end of an era.'⁵⁶⁶

Although Mortimer had trained as a geochemist and worked with the New Zealand Antarctic Division as a geologist-mountaineer, he was best known as an elite Australian mountaineer. In 1984, he became the first Australian, along with Tim Macartney-Snape, to climb Mount Everest without oxygen. He later collected other Australian firsts, on Annapurna and K2. With Mike McDowell, Mortimer became the first Australian to summit Antarctica's highest peak, Vinson Massif. When Mortimer first met McDowell, he thought he was as 'mad as a cut snake'. McDowell offered him a job as an expedition leader in Antarctica, he saw it as an opportunity and challenge, just as he was looking for direction and a new endeavour. He thrived in this new work environment and enjoyed the

566 Greg Mortimer, pers. comm., 19 October 2015.

thrill of having an ice ship ‘to play with’. At the close of the season, he was ‘absolutely humming,’ Mortimer recalled.⁵⁶⁷

In 1993, Mortimer launched his own tour company with wife Margaret, Aurora Expeditions, which struck a deal with Quark Expeditions to sub-charter the *Professor Molchanov*. This allowed Mortimer to grow his business gradually. In turn, it allowed Quark Expeditions to offset some of its financial risk as its fleet of Russian ice ships grew larger. Aurora Expeditions began with no assets or clients, and Greg and Margaret found their first customers by ‘bending the arms’ of friends and contacts. Following this, they began advertising and presenting slideshows at information evenings. It took relentless work and effort but after two years the company had gathered momentum.⁵⁶⁸

In the summer of 1993/94, New Zealand tour company, Heritage Expeditions also entered Antarctic waters. Company owner, Rodney Russ had previously worked for the New Zealand Wildlife Service, specialising in the management of rare and endangered birds. Although satisfied that his group were high achievers in the fields of research and management, Russ felt that they failed in the area of advocacy. ‘Too often, we underestimated the power of people to invoke conservation,’ Russ explained.⁵⁶⁹ In 1986, Russ founded Heritage Expeditions ‘with a view to doing advocacy commercially.’ He lead groups of ten to twelve people on ship-based tours around the New Zealand coastline and islands. Seven years later, Russ decided to branch out into Antarctic and subantarctic tours, and took out a sub-charter of the 50-passenger *Akademik Shokalskiy* from Quark Expeditions.

567 Ibid.

568 Ibid.

569 Rodney Russ, pers. comm., 26 April 2016.

When Russ flew to Korea to see the ship, he was shocked by what he saw. While he was satisfied with the ship's basic engineering, Russ realised that aesthetically, the *Akademik Shokalskiy* was 'in poor shape'. He was glad to be sailing south with loyal clients who trusted his judgement. 'Because that ship was a pretty hard sell,' he conceded. According to Russ, the *Shokalskiy's* crew was under-resourced and unprepared for tourism. Their style was not consistent with Western hospitality standards and the *Shokalskiy* had clearly been stripped of furnishings and other facilities. 'In those last few years of the Soviet Union, things just walked off that ship,' Russ remarked. 'They had nothing.'⁵⁷⁰

To many of the Russian crew, the idea of Antarctic tourism made little sense. Why affluent Westerners were paying thousands of dollars to travel to the bitter cold ends of the earth baffled them. And while these tourists were indulging in this bizarre and expensive vacation to the wilderness, the newly-independent Russia they had left behind was slowly emerging from political and economic turmoil. Many of the women working as waitresses and cabin stewards in these ice-strengthened ships were qualified doctors, accountants and economists. They were overqualified for the positions they held on board but their pay was far better on tourist ships than it would have been at home in Russia.

Some crew became so desperate that they tried to stay in Australia or New Zealand. One crew member met a Russian man in New Zealand and married him the following day. Another jumped ship, disappearing without informing anybody on board. 'We reported her to New Zealand customs and she turned up about nine years later trying to leave the country,' Russ revealed.⁵⁷¹ Given the shortage of many goods in Russia, crew members were also keen to purchase anything in the ports they visited that might have some value in Russia. 'I think they bought every single sewing machine in Wellington,'

570 Ibid.

571 Ibid.

Russ remarked.⁵⁷² On the *Molchanov*, they bought second hand cars in South America and loaded them ‘up to the Plimsoll line’ at the end of the Antarctic season to take back to Russia and sell. Some crew also bought weapons on the black market, presumably purloined from the Argentine military. It took several years for this kind of behaviour to ‘settle down’. ‘It was real cowboy stuff,’⁵⁷³ Mortimer remarked.

Both Mortimer and Russ were eager to develop a different style of expedition cruising from that of more established Antarctic tour operators. In previous years, Russ had worked as a lecturer on tours to New Zealand subantarctic islands and Antarctica for Seattle-based tour operator, Society Expeditions. It was an experience that convinced him he could ‘do it better.’ Russ felt that Society Expeditions was running cruises rather than expeditions. The difference between the two, he explained, was that cruises placed greater emphasis on the comfort of the ship, on board entertainment and formal dinners—services which were ‘superfluous to an expedition’. Expeditions, on the other hand, were focused on what was happening outside. They were focused on the wilderness encounter, adventure and exploiting unexpected opportunities even if these disrupted meal times. ‘The people who travelled with me to Antarctica didn’t mind if dinner was delayed in favour of a wilderness experience,’ Russ remarked.⁵⁷⁴ They preferred to spend as much time as possible exposed to a raw Antarctic encounter.

Mortimer also felt the expedition cruising industry was defined by an American approach—‘the Lindblad approach’. Rather than appealing to a demanding and sedentary clientele, Mortimer wanted to travel with a ‘robust’ clientele that was attracted to a ‘rough old Russian ship’. ‘I wanted to offer a raw, in-your-face Antarctic experience,’ he explained.

572 Ibid.

573 Greg Mortimer, pers. comm., 19 October 2015.

574 Rodney Russ, pers. comm., 26 April 2016.

Aurora Expeditions attracted an active and largely Australian tourist group whose average age was much younger than that of a Lindblad Travel or Society Expeditions trip. Mortimer also introduced what he called ‘adventure options’ into his expedition programme, which other tour operators soon copied. These included skiing, climbing, kayaking, diving and camping. He also launched the ‘Shackleton Walk’—a three-day hike across South Georgia retracing the last stretch of the Shackleton’s *Endurance* epic, from King Haakon Bay to Stromness Whaling Station. Prior to this, only Ernest Shackleton, Frank Wild and Tom Crean, and one other party of men, had completed the hike.



By 1995, Quark Expeditions was chartering up to eight Russian ice-strengthened ships per season. The *Kapitan Khlebnikov* remained the company’s ‘flagship’ and the only icebreaker vessel to be operated for Antarctic tourism. In 1993, the *Khlebnikov* became the first tourist vessel to visit the Dry Valleys in Antarctica’s Ross Sea sector. In 1997, it became the first tourist vessel to circumnavigate the Antarctic continent. Despite their best efforts to get Antarctica out of their system, Suzanne and Gerry Commerford became enamoured with the continent and the *Kapitan Khlebnikov* and continued to travel on the ice-breaker again and again. Suzanne even began comparing the price of everyday goods and services against the cost of a day on the ship. Whether it was a car, a new handbag or a home renovation, nothing seemed to match up to the ‘KK’. ‘If a new car costs 50,000 dollars, and that can get me 28 days on the *Khlebnikov*, I’d rather drive a battered old car,’ she explained.⁵⁷⁵

By the mid-1990s, a growing number of companies were entering the Antarctic tourist

575 Suzanne Commerford, pers. comm., 16 April 2016.

market by sub-chartering from McDowell and Wikander. Others, like Canadian company, Marine Expeditions, by-passed Quark Expeditions and dealt directly with the Russians. During their second season of operation in Antarctica, Marine Expedition's founders, Sam Blyth and Dugald Wells, secured a direct charter of sister ships *Akademik Sergey Vavilov* and *Akademik Ioffe* from Moscow's Shirshov Institute of Oceanology. The Canadians adopted a low-cost business model, offering fares up to 40 percent cheaper than established Antarctic tour operators. They quickly became a major competitor to Quark Expeditions.

One of Marine Expeditions' strategies was to cut the length of the shortest Antarctic Peninsula cruise from thirteen days to nine days. They achieved this both by cutting down the length of time spent in Antarctica and crossing the Drake Passage faster, by using more fuel. While many tourist ships spent up to two days docked in Ushuaia between voyages, Marine Expeditions introduced an eight-hour turnover time between voyages. 'Other companies' passengers were paying 30 to 40 percent more for a trip just in docking fees', Operations Manager, Pat Shaw explained.⁵⁷⁶ Cost savings were made whenever they could be found. The Canadians also did away with the standard practice of gifting Antarctic tourists with bright red parkas for their voyage. Instead, Marine Expedition's clients were encouraged to bring their own outdoor gear or to rent this equipment on board. The company also introduced 'last minute deals', whereby people could buy drastically reduced tickets on undersold trips from agents in Ushuaia.

Other tour operators followed suit and the average price of an Antarctic tour began to drop markedly. It was now possible to sail to Antarctica for under 5,000 American dollars. According to Shaw, Marine Expedition's low-cost model opened up a whole new market

576 Pat Shaw, pers. comm., 27 October 2015.

of tourists who previously could not afford Antarctic travel. ‘Instead of just doctors and lawyers, now firemen and school teachers—people in a lower income bracket—were able to visit Antarctica,’ he explained.⁵⁷⁷ Not everybody was as enthusiastic about this apparent democratisation of Antarctic travel, especially those tour operators belonging to the expensive and exclusive Antarctic tourism ‘establishment’. ‘They were not happy with our arrival on the scene,’ Shaw explained. ‘But I think it’s incredibly important that Antarctic tourism was opened up to a broader audience.’⁵⁷⁸ Despite being a strong competitor in the Antarctic market, Marine Expeditions succumbed to financial difficulties when its parent company went bankrupt in 2000, and despite repeated salvage attempts, Marine Expeditions closed its doors a year later. Its presence in Antarctica had been brief but significant.

In 1998, Mike McDowell had sold his share of Quark Expeditions to Lars Wikander and moved onto other business ventures. A part owner of Adventure Network International since 1990, McDowell decided to place more focus on the adventure tourism company. Having sold Quark Expeditions, McDowell co-founded two adventure tourism companies—Deep Ocean Expeditions and Space Adventures. Deep Ocean Expeditions specialised in taking tourists and film crews to the wrecks of the *Titanic* and *Bismarck* on Russian Mir submersibles for around \$60,000 per person.

Space tourism was a second strike of *perestroika* luck for McDowell, who founded Space Adventures with American entrepreneur, Peter Diamandis. Just as Russian shipping companies had engaged with foreign tour operators in the wake of *perestroika* reforms, so did Russian space organisations like Energia, makers of the Soyuz and Mir spacecraft. Space Adventures brokered deals to get tourists on the third seat of a Soyuz

577 Ibid.

578 Ibid.

space capsule—the same space capsule taking Russian cosmonauts and NASA to the International Space Station. In April 2001, Space Adventures sent the first space tourist, American businessman Dennis Tito, on a ten-day ‘tour’ in a Soyuz spacecraft.⁵⁷⁹



By the turn of the 21st century, Antarctica was growing ever more popular as a tourist destination and the mainstream tourism industry had turned its gaze southward. Tourist numbers had increased from 4,800 in 1991/92 to 12,248 in the 2000/01 season, effectively doubling the number of Antarctic visitors in less than a decade. With over three decades of knowledge accumulated by the tourism industry, the barriers for entry for new companies were lower than ever before. Mortimer described the arrival of the mainstream tourism industry into Antarctica as a ‘paradigm shift’.⁵⁸⁰ Small and specialised ice-strengthened vessels began to retire from the Antarctic tourist fleet, being replaced by larger, conventional ships. The age and income of the average Antarctic tourist began to decrease. And multinational companies—‘the big dollar guys’—increasingly replaced small owner-operated tour companies.⁵⁸¹

In 2007, Lars Wikander and wife Erica (née Frost) received an offer from multinational travel agency, TUI Travel, to buy their shares of Quark Expeditions. The couple was still enjoying the Antarctic expedition cruising business and had not been thinking of selling. But when the offer came in, they agreed that it was a good time to move on. Their timing was fortunate, as they sold just before the ‘bottom fell out of the economy.’⁵⁸² The

579 Jim Slade and Willow Lawson, “First ‘Space Tourist’ Lifts Off, *ABC News*, 28 April 2001.

580 Greg Mortimer, pers. comm., 19 October 2015.

581 Ibid.

582 Lars Wikander, pers. comm., 25 August 2015..

couple continued travelling to Antarctica but now they travelled on larger cruise ships, which were prohibited from taking passengers ashore. Far from missing the ‘expedition’ action, the Wikanders enjoyed the experience of travelling in comfort around Antarctica, ‘with a drink in their hand.’ ‘I’ve done my time climbing in and out of zodiacs,’ Erica Wikander jested.⁵⁸³

The global financial crisis began to put a dent on the Antarctic tourism numbers around 2009.⁵⁸⁴ After tourist numbers peaked in the 2007/08 season, at 46,069, this figure dropped significantly over the following three summer seasons, reaching a low of 26,509 in 2011/12. But it was not just the global economy that would prove problematic to the Antarctic tourism industry during these years. On 23 November 2007, the Antarctic tourist industry experienced its most serious accident to date. The M/V *Explorer*, operated by Canadian company GAP Adventures, sank in 1,300 metres of water in the Bransfield Strait, 25 miles from the coast of the South Shetland Islands.

At just before midnight on 22 November, the *Explorer* was sailing through the Strait when it hit what one passenger described as a ‘wall of ice’.⁵⁸⁵ When the ice brought the ship to a standstill, the captain repeatedly manoeuvred the vessel astern and ahead until it broke through the ice. Soon afterwards, when an officer was sent to investigate the cause of an alarm that had been activated in a passenger cabin, he found himself standing in knee-deep water. The ice had damaged a three-metre section of the ship, piercing a

583 Erica Wikander, pers. comm., 25 August 2015

584 Daniela Liggett and Emma Stewart, “The Changing Face of Political Engagement in Antarctic Tourism,” in *Handbook on the Politics of Antarctica*, ed. Klaus Dodds, Alan D Hemmings, and Peder Roberts (Cheltenham: Edgar Edward, 2017).

585 Bureau of Maritime Affairs, “Report of Investigation in the Matter of Sinking of Passenger Vessel Explorer (O.N. 8495) 23 November 2007 in the Bransfield Strait near the South Shetland Islands,” (Monrovia, Liberia, 2009), iv.

‘fist-sized hole’ in its hull.⁵⁸⁶ The flooding quickly spread across the ship and became impossible to contain.

At around 2 am, when the *Explorer* lost electrical power, its 54 crew members and 100 passengers were called to abandon ship. Climbing into open lifeboats and inflatable zodiacs, they floated in the Bransfield Strait for several hours, waiting to be rescued. A choppy sea surface sent salty spray into the boats and several passengers became seasick, but the passengers and crew were fortunate to be stranded in a relatively mild sea. Soon after 6 am, two tourist ships, the *Nordnorge* and *Endeavour*, arrived at the scene to rescue all of the passengers and crew. There were no major injuries and only one minor injury reported.⁵⁸⁷

As they looked on from their rescue vessels, the *Explorer*’s evacuees watched on as the vessel listed more and more steeply by the hour. By this time, news reports and images of the event were being broadcast around the world showing the bright red ship leaning helplessly and dangerously to its side, surrounded by a field of broken ice. To many in the Antarctic tourism industry, the news of the *Explorer*’s fate was both shocking and unsurprising. It was only a matter of time before something like this happened, many would later comment. But it was significant that it should be *this* ship that was sinking. The former *Lindblad Explorer*—Lars-Eric Lindblad’s Little Red Ship—was not just any tourist ship. It was an Antarctic pioneer and an icon of expedition cruising. Finally, at 3.30 pm, the last patch of red hull disappeared beneath the water’s surface.⁵⁸⁸ The *Explorer* sank to the bottom of the Bransfield Strait, never to be retrieved.

586 Ibid, iii.

587 Ibid.

588 Ibid.

The investigation of the *Explorer*'s sinking was prepared by the Government of Liberia, the country in which the ship was registered. Investigators blamed the accident on the ship's captain, who, it was argued, had misjudged the type of ice field into which he had steered the ship. The captain was reported to have thought he was entering first-year sea ice but it was later discovered that the *Explorer* had hit much harder glacial ice.⁵⁸⁹ Some have subsequently drawn links between the sinking of the *Explorer* and climate change, warning that Antarctic waters may become even more dangerous for navigators as more glacial ice breaks away from the continent. On the nature of the ice that sank the *Explorer*, Antarctic policy scholar Julia Jabour argued that there is 'no doubt this was a product of additional disintegration of the Antarctic ice cap.'⁵⁹⁰

When Antarctic Treaty Parties discussed the Liberian incident report in 2009, they expressed their concern over what appeared to be serious gaps in the Antarctic tourism industry's safety protocols. Only 'calm weather' and 'quick action from the crew' had prevented the accident from becoming a 'greater tragedy,' the Treaty Parties noted.⁵⁹¹ An unknown volume of oil leaked from the *Explorer* into the surrounding sea, and the environmental impact of the sinking was also raised as a concern. Ship safety issues became a dominant topic of discussion at ATCMs and IAATO meetings over the course of the following decade, with both bodies adopting measures encouraging improved vessel safety and enhanced search and rescue capabilities in Antarctic waters.⁵⁹²

589 Ibid.

590 Julia Jabour, "Would You Like Ice with That? Antarctic Tourism and Climate Change," in *Disappearing Destinations: Climate Change and Future Challenges for Coastal Tourism*, ed. Andrew Jones and Michael Phillips (Wallingford: CABI, 2011), 187.

591 ATCM XXXII Final Report Paragraph 220

592 ATCM Resolution 9 (2009); ATCM Resolution 6 (2010); IAATO, "IAATO Takes Further Action on Antarctic Passenger Vessel Marine Safety" news release, 9 October 2009.

One of the most significant aftermaths of the *Explorer* sinking was the introduction by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) of a ban on heavy fuel oil in the Antarctic Treaty area. Viscous, dirty, inexpensive and widely available, heavy fuel oil was largely used on large commercial vessels such as cargo and large cruise ships. The new regulations, introduced in August 2011, compelled all tourist ships sailing in Antarctic waters to use marine gas oil, which is less polluting but considerably more expensive than heavy fuel oil. In response, cruise operators Crystal, Princess, Regent Seven Seas and Oceania all pulled out of the region ahead of the 2011/12 season, and Antarctic tourist numbers plummeted by 25 percent that season.

Another concern raised in the wake of the *Explorer*'s sinking was the changing nature of the Antarctic tourism fleet. The industry's era of Russian ice-strengthened ships was drawing to a close, and specialised polar vessels were increasingly being replaced by conventional tourist ships. Some observers, such as ASOC executive director, James Barnes, questioned whether the vessels replacing them were safe enough to be operating in Antarctic waters. 'If a ship like [the *Explorer*] can go down, it really should be a wake-up call about allowing vessels that are not ice-strengthened and do not have double hulls to go down there at all,' Barnes argued.⁵⁹³

The tourism industry's recovery from the global financial crisis and heavy fuel oil ban were boosted by an emerging and lucrative new market—Chinese tourists. Over the past decade Chinese nationals have experienced a substantial increase in disposable income. The number of Chinese travelling overseas increased from 35 million in 2005 to 122 million in 2016.

⁵⁹³ Federcio Quilodran and Richard Jacobsen, "Cruise Ship Sinking Sparks Concern over Antarctic Tourism", USA Today, 27 November 2007.

While most of them travelling to Asia, western Europe and the United States, Antarctica also peaked the interest of a growing number of Chinese tourists.

Chinese sales and shipping executive, Kenneth Keng, was one of the first to recognise the potential of bringing Chinese tourists to Antarctica. Born and raised in Taipei, Keng studied transport planning and traffic engineering before becoming a senior researcher for Taiwan's Department of Transport. In 1986, when Keng and wife Karen were both employed by YangMing Marine Transport Corp in Taipei, Karen was offered a job in YangMing's New York office. The couple moved to the United States where Keng enrolled in a second masters degree, in shipping management, at the State University of New York. A year later, he began working for Salén-Lindblad Cruising. Keng worked for the Swedish shipping company for six years, until it finally folded. Two years later, he joined Mike McDowell and Lars Wikander at Quark Expeditions.⁵⁹⁴

While still working for Salén-Lindblad Cruising, Keng had begun organising expedition cruises for the Asian market. These were so successful that Keng organised more Japanese charters to Antarctica during his time with Quark Expeditions. He decided to delve deeper into the budding Asian tourist market, and at the helm of his own company. Subsequently, in 1996, Keng launched Amazing Cruises & Travel. Based near his New Jersey home, Amazing Cruises focused on taking Western tourists on trekking, cycling and camel-ride tours along China's Great Wall and Yangtze River.

In 2005, Amazing Cruises organised the first Chinese charter tour to Antarctica, in collaboration with Quark Expeditions. Keng offered free berths on that first charter to journalists and photographers, with a view to generating publicity and future business. It did not take long

⁵⁹⁴ Kenneth Keng, per comm., 21 January 2015

for Antarctic cruises to take over as Amazing Cruises' main business product. The company also operated tours in the Arctic and invited special guests to join its tours from time to time, including major travel agencies in the Chinese market. In 2008, Amazing Cruises delivered the Chinese Olympic flag to the North Pole. Onboard for this commemorative expedition were Chinese polar experts as well as special interest group organisers. Amazing Cruises became the leading agent in the Chinese market for Antarctic tourism. By 2011, the company was sending over one thousand Chinese tourists to the Antarctic and Arctic each year aboard Quark Expeditions vessels.

Following Amazing Cruises' tracks, other Chinese travel agencies set their sights on the Antarctic market. In 2007, Guangzhou-based travel agency, 3Polar, organised a Chinese charter to Antarctica for 23 clients. They travelled aboard the *Lyubov Orlova*, a small Russian ice-strengthened ship operated by Quark Expeditions.⁵⁹⁵ In 2009, Beijing-based travel agency, Tripolars, organised its first Antarctic tour, taking twelve Chinese clients to the Antarctic Peninsula. While Amazing Cruises would remain the leading Chinese travel agency in the polar cruising market, these smaller companies also enjoyed growing success. By 2012, Tripolars was taking over 200 clients to Antarctica. 'Eighty per cent of our tickets sold out within three hours,' remarked Tripolars company sales representative, Tang Guodong.⁵⁹⁶ And by 2016, 3Polar had organised 23 Antarctic tours.

Tripolars and 3Polar were both named after an emerging trend among affluent and elite Chinese travellers—the desire to visit the world's 'Three Poles'. These included the North Pole, South Pole and Mount Everest, which the British began referring to as the third Pole soon after the North and South Poles had been 'conquered'. According

595 Yuan Ru, pers. comm., 29 April 2015

596 Patrick Boehler, "Antarctica: The New Hot Destination," *South China Morning Post*, 23 December 2013.

to 3Polar co-founder, Yuan Ru, completing the Three Poles challenge does not require literally standing at mountain peaks or geographic poles. ‘It usually means travelling to Antarctica, the Arctic and Everest Base Camp in Tibet,’ Ru told me.⁵⁹⁷ A variation on the challenge, begun by a few competitive enthusiasts, requires that all three Poles be conquering within the span of one year.

With a rise in average Chinese incomes and increased affordability and options in the Antarctic tourism industry, the Chinese tourist market to Antarctica grew exponentially. As one Chinese travel consultant explained, wealthy Chinese tourists were ready to spend more on extravagant trips, skipping popular tourist destinations in favour of ‘ultimate destinations’: ‘Chinese tourists are now seeking extremes,’ he noted.⁵⁹⁸

Until 2010/11, IAATO tourist statistics made no mention of how many Chinese tourists visited Antarctica annually. While IAATO ranked the eight largest sources of Antarctic tourists, the remaining nationalities, including Chinese, were lumped together under the category ‘Other’. But over the course of the next five years, China climbed rapidly through the ranks. In 2015/16, 4,095 Chinese tourists travelled to Antarctica out of a total of 38,478 tourists, making China the third largest source of Antarctic tourists after the United States and Australia.⁵⁹⁹ The following year, China rose another notch in the rankings, with Chinese tourists outnumbering Australians.⁶⁰⁰ Observers have predicted

597 Yuan Ru, pers. comm., 29 April 2015

598 Boehler, “Antarctica: The New Hot Destination”.

599 In 2015/16, the major sources of Antarctic tourists were: United States (13,660), Australia (4,237), China (4,095), United Kingdom (3,233), Germany (2,856), Canada (1,833), France (1,142), Switzerland (1,097) and Japan (736). IAATO ‘2015-2016 Tourists by Nationality (Total)’ <https://iaato.org/tourism-statistics>

600 In May 2017, IAATO released preliminary tourism statistics for the 2016/17 Antarctic season. The total number of tourists travelling to Antarctica with IAATO members was 44,367, an increase of 15 percent compared with the previous season. Chinese tourist numbers rose by 25 percent compared with the previous season. IAATO, “Latest Antarctic Tourism Figures Released by Iaato,” news release, 1 May 2017.

that this rapid growth of Chinese tourists to Antarctica is likely to continue.⁶⁰¹



In 2009, Quark Expeditions announced that the *Kapitan Khlebnikov*, would be retiring. In March 2012, Quark's flagship would be returning to full-time escort duties in the Russian Arctic. To see out the Russian icebreaker, Quark launched the *End of an Era* programme, a series of 'unique itineraries and special guests that celebrate the polar-class icebreaker's unparalleled history.'⁶⁰² These *End of an Era* expeditions would include the *Khlebnikov*'s final west-to-east transit of the Northwest Passage, as well as tours of Tanquary Fjord in Canada's High Arctic, northern Greenland and an Emperor Penguin rookery in the Weddell Sea.⁶⁰³ Its final voyage was an expedition to Antarctica's Far East, a tribute to the *Khlebnikov*'s first Antarctic voyage in 1992, and a 'salute' to the 100th anniversary of Douglas Mawson's Australasian Antarctic Expedition⁶⁰⁴.

Among those to promptly sign up for the *Khlebnikov*'s *End of an Era* seasons were Suzanne and Gerry Commerford. When the *Khlebnikov* retired, the couple continued travelling to the polar regions on other Russian ships. 'I don't think I'd even consider going on anything else,' Suzanne Commerford remarked about Russian ice-strengthened vessels.⁶⁰⁵ At last count the Commerfords had been to Antarctica 23 times. They were contented at home, on their farm in rural New South Wales, surrounded by bushland and community. But it took little persuasion

601 Nicole A. Bender, Kim Crosbie, and Heather J. Lynch, "Patterns of Tourism in the Antarctic Peninsula Region: A 20-Year Analysis," *Antarctic Science* 28, no. 3 (2016).

602 Quark Expeditions, "End of an Era Begins: Expedition Icebreaker Kapitan Khlebnikov to Retire," news release, 15 October 2009.

603 Not all of Quark Expeditions' *End of an Era* expeditions went ahead. The ship's 2011 Arctic season was cancelled when FESCO failed a ship safety check prior to the season's commencement.

604 The *Kapitan Khlebnikov* returned to the Quark Expeditions fleet in 2015, operating tourist expeditions in the Arctic only.

605 Suzanne Commerford, pers. comm., 16 April 2016.

to send the couple packing for another voyage south. Antarctica was an unshakable fixation that the Commerfords had simply come to live with. As Suzanne Commerford puts it, ‘there’s ice in our veins we always say.’⁶⁰⁶



Above: Tourist group on the 1990 North Pole Expedition on the *Rossiya* (Source: Leo Le Bon)
Below: *Rossiya* in the ice during the 1990 North Pole Expedition (Source: Leo Le Bon)





Above: *Kapitan Khlebnikov* in Antarctica, n.d. (Source: Quark Expeditions)

Inset: Mike McDowell, 2011 (Source: ABC)

Below left: Greg Mortimer, n.d. (Source: ABC)

Below right: Rodney Russ and *Akademik Shokalskiy* in background, n.d. (Source: Rodney Russ)





Above: M/V Explorer sinking, 23 November 2007 (Source: New York Times)

Below: An Amazing Cruises and Travel Chinese charter to Antarctica, 2012 (Source: Diane Erceg)



EPILOGUE

I was not an ideal candidate for an Antarctic tour guide. I had never worked in tourism; did not climb, ski or drive boats; was not an avid naturalist or polar history buff. Nor could I wax lyrical about the time I sled across Greenland, sailed around the world or overwintered at an Antarctic research station. I was twenty-four years old and had spent most of my life near to my family home in suburban Perth. My interest in the frozen continent began with an undergraduate essay about policy—on the Antarctic Treaty, to be precise.

This kernel of Antarctic fascination drew me to Hobart, where I completed a postgraduate course in Antarctic Studies. Later, I found work with the Australian Antarctic Division there. While initially employed as a scientific research assistant, I soon joined the policy team working on the Antarctic Treaty and tourism regulation. By now, I was knowledgeable and extremely keen, but Peregrine Adventures did not snap me up after my first phone call. A few years later, one of the company directors told me that they had hesitated to hire me because they thought I might be too dry and academic.

In the world of Antarctic tourism, I soon realised, being knowledgeable is not enough. The best guides do not simply present facts, display diagrams or define terms. They tell stories. Guides tell stories to bring an abiotic landscape to life, to help people comprehend and connect with this strange and overwhelming nature. They tell stories about how Antarctica had been discovered, explored and exploited; about how penguins spend their days and their lives; about how glaciers form, move and retreat; about how Antarctica was created in the wake of Gondwana's breakup. Curiously, one of the stories guides never seemed to tell during our Antarctic voyages was our own story—the story of Antarctic tourism.

There were always plenty of anecdotes being shared at the bar, of course. Tall tales from seasoned guides about near misses with thundering glacial calvings or close encounters with curious leopard seals. As for the history of the tourism industry, or the tourist experience, these were apparently without stories. The tourists wanted to know about the explorers who had come before them, but not the tourists who had. Each successive group of tourists, it seemed, was forbidden from leaving any trace of their presence on the continent—neither on the ice nor on the page.

Stepping away from the world of Antarctic tourism and into a scholarly realm provided me a space to reflect more deeply and critically about what the story of Antarctic tourism might entail. I wanted to tell stories just as I had learned to do over the past eight years of Antarctic voyaging. But I wanted to get beyond tall tales about adventure and bravery. I wanted, rather, to portray a vivid and profound portrait of Antarctic tourism in all its various forms—as an industry, a performance and an experience.



As this thesis has illustrated, Antarctic tourism is made up of layers of different stories. It begins with a pioneering story—about a group of proactive entrepreneurs who created or seized unlikely opportunities to bring a new kind of explorer to the ice. It illuminates both the physical and political challenges they had to overcome, as well as the surprising and unexpected events that advanced their efforts. The emergence and growth of Antarctic tourism was both deliberate and fortuitous. It was forged with purpose, ambition and foresight on the part of its founders. In hindsight, it is portrayed as a natural and inevitable development. But the rise and rise of Antarctic tourism from an eclectic jaunt to a mainstream industry took the public, governments and even the tour operators themselves by surprise.

Antarctic tourism is a story about exploration, but of a different sort. It illuminates the central role of exploration as the imaginative foundation of Antarctic tourism, as well as its ongoing appeal and currency even today. The traditional explorers who ventured to Antarctica, especially those associated with the heroic age, saw it as one of the world's last 'blank spaces'. It was unknown and empty, and its raw nature provided the ultimate testing and proving ground for heroic masculinity.⁶⁰⁷ This vivid imagery has continued as Antarctica is still valued by tourists as a blank space, testing ground and pristine wilderness. The tourism industry markets Antarctica this way. For a generation of heroic explorers, Antarctica represented an antidote to the modern world—a refuge for rugged and romantic individualism—and it continues to do the same today.

This is also a story about changes in Antarctic culture; over the course of the past 50 years there are some important differences. From a strictly masculine sphere, colonised and controlled by government science, Antarctic culture has evolved and diversified significantly. Antarctic tourists have played a central role in this transformation. The emergence of Antarctic tourism calls into question the very notion of who belongs in Antarctica and challenges the idea that the continent's principal value to humanity is as a laboratory for science. By the end of the twentieth century, annual visits by tourists outnumbered those of scientists to Antarctica and tourism was no longer a peripheral and tolerated activity but a significant presence not only on the ice but also at the Antarctic Treaty negotiating table.

Finally, Antarctic tourism is a story about the Antarctic continent itself—about its physical presence and its sensitive and vulnerable life forms; about how Antarctica has changed over time and how our growing awareness of that change has shaped the way we imagine

607 Bloom, *Gender on Ice*; Rosner, "Gender Degree Zero: Memoirs of Frozen Time in Antarctica"; Hains, *The Ice and the Inland*.

and experience it. Fifty years ago, Antarctica's grandeur and sublime beauty delighted and dismayed, challenging tourists to come to terms with a raw and overwhelming nature. But as concerns for the impacts of climate change have grown, Antarctica overwhelms us in new ways.⁶⁰⁸ This is a new story that we are only just beginning to uncover and understand.

What stories might we tell about Antarctic tourism in the future? Ever since Antarctic tourism became a subject of academic scholarship, scholars and observers have pondered what might happen next. Will Antarctic tourist numbers grow and, if so, by how much? What new Antarctic experiences might the tourism industry have in store? Will they be drastically different to those on offer today or more of the same? How might Antarctica change in the future and what might it mean for the tourism industry?

Recent trends suggest that the Antarctic tourism industry will continue to grow and diversify.⁶⁰⁹ Tourist ships will grow bigger as the length of Antarctic tours grow shorter. Continued warming on the Antarctic Peninsula may prolong the summer tourist season, allowing even more trips and tourists to be shuttled south before the winter sea ice begins to form once again. And variations in the distribution and numbers of Antarctic birds and mammals are expected to see some tourist sites abandoned while new sites are found and incorporated into tour itineraries.

What about the tourist imaginary? How might the way that tourists imagine and experience Antarctica change in the future? As this thesis has illustrated, until now, the tourist

608 Griffiths, "A Humanist on Thin Ice."; Howkins, "Melting Empires? Climate Change and Politics in Antarctica since the International Geophysical Year."

609 Liggett et al, "From Frozen Continent to Tourism Hotspot? Five Decades of Antarctic Tourism Development and Management, and a Glimpse into the Future"; Bender, Crosbie, and Lynch, "Patterns of Tourism in the Antarctic Peninsula Region: A 20-Year Analysis"..

imaginary has drawn strongly on imagery of Antarctica as a pristine wilderness, where tourists are promised an encounter with pure, unmediated nature. It was an imaginary built on the experiences and impressions of early Antarctic explorers and maintained by tour operators through careful behind-the-scenes curating. Today, the task of delivering the sacred wilderness experience is under increasing pressure, as tourism to the Antarctic Peninsula grows. Will there reach a point at which the Antarctic tourism industry can no longer deliver this, its most fundamental product?

Antarctic wilderness is also undermined by climate change. Not only does climate change pose a physical threat to the Antarctic environment, it also calls into question the very idea that Antarctica can be perceived as pristine wilderness, untouched and set apart from the rest of the world. To understand climate change—its sources, processes and impacts—requires us to think of the earth as an integrated system and to see Antarctica as a component of that system. Some scholars have suggested that we must move beyond idealised notions of pristine wilderness, which rest on problematic dichotomies that separate humans from nature.⁶¹⁰ Rather than seeking to protect wilderness from its opposite, the modern world, Richard White calls on us to perceive of hybrid landscapes which are somewhere in between the wild and the civilised.⁶¹¹

But as the past 50 years of Antarctic tourism illuminates, the image of Antarctica as a pristine wilderness has persisted and thrived, despite decades of environmental and technological change, and calls for climate action. Rather than moving beyond wilderness, tourists have tended to either reconcile the wilderness ideal with discourses of global

610 William Cronon's seminal essay 'The Trouble with Wilderness' was highly influential in promoting extensive debate and discussion on the problems of idealised notions of wilderness. William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," *Environmental History* 1, no. 1 (1996).

611 Richard White, "From Wilderness to Hybrid Landscapes: The Cultural Turn in Environmental History," *Historian* 66, no. 3 (2004).

change or to ignore the latter altogether. At the opening of the 21st century, Antarctica may seem closer than ever to the rest of the world. Humanity's fate may be intimately bound to the frightening fate of Antarctic ice. But the story of Antarctic tourism suggests that the image of a pristine, untouched Antarctic will persist.



On the shores of Half Moon Island sits the wreck of a wooden boat that looks much like all the rest. A bundle of splintered timber fastened together by neat rows of rusted rivets, each battered plank yields to a steady curve and partly overlaps the one beneath it. The wreck rests just above high tide line, on a black pebble beach frequented by loitering Chinstrap penguins and fur seals. In winter, its weathered frame lies buried under metres of snow while in summer it is exposed to savage Antarctic winds and the curious gaze of tourists.

Small, crescent-shaped and nestled within the South Shetlands Islands, Half Moon Island is one of the most frequently visited places in Antarctica. Each year, thousands of tourists trudge along its ridges and beaches, observing its wildlife, enjoying its seclusion and awkwardly tripping along its rocky, uneven terrain.

I have many wonderful memories from this little corner of the world's end—hiking to one of its highest points and soaking up its volcanic and glacial landscape; drinking *mate* and speaking Spanglish with the personnel at Argentina's Camara Station; circumnavigating the island in zodiacs just to see what it looked like from the other side; and listening as heavy waves pound onto its beaches, sending ice-cold water percolating melodically through the spaces between the thick, black pebbles beneath my feet.

Over the last few years, I also took a special interest in that wooden wreck, and in watching the tourists notice it, wonder towards it and pause for thought beside it. Many instinctively take out their cameras to photograph it. And quite a few of these photographs find their way onto blogs, travel stories and photo albums, each accompanied by a short, descriptive caption. ‘Old whaling boat,’ reads one caption. ‘Historic Antarctic wreck from the whaling era,’ notes another. It is a common trend to alter the image with a sepia hue or to transform it from a colour image into black and white, to emphasise its historical authenticity.

But the Half Moon Island wreck does not belong to Antarctica’s whaling era. It belongs to the age of tourism. This wooden boat became a wreck on 14 February 1967. One minute the boat was attempting to rest its bow on the beach and the next it was teetering, spinning, careening out of control on the crest of a giant wave. It then crashed into the sloped, pebble shore, sending its stunned passengers scrambling to their feet. Huddled together, freezing and drenched, were thirteen women and nine men. Most were American and all were members of Lars-Eric Lindblad’s *Antarctic Expedition 1967*.⁶¹²

Fortunately, the group was able to take refuge in a nearby emergency hut, which had been supplied with food and blankets by the Argentine navy. There, they saw out the night together, trembling and shivering, as winds whistled through narrow cracks in the hut’s floor and walls. The following morning, they were back in their warm, dry ship, tired, relieved and brimming with stories to share with their grandchildren. Fifty years later, this historical artefact marks the memory of that dramatic turn of events, although most people would not know it.

612 Lindblad and Fuller, *Passport to Anywhere*.

Perhaps it is not surprising that tourists should jump to conclusions when they encounter the Half Moon Island wreck. It *does* look a lot like other wrecks scattered along the shores of the Antarctic Peninsula, all of which did originate during Antarctica's shore-based whaling era. Many people are even surprised to learn that Antarctic tourism existed in the 1960s. Most of those I spoke with assumed that it began only in the past couple of decades.

The Half Moon Island wreck, and the assumptions that come with it, also reveal the suppressed nature of the history of Antarctic tourism. It is a history that is hidden in plain sight. Antarctic tourists are supposed to reflect on the experiences of the sealers, whalers, explorers and scientists who came before them. They are encouraged to ponder what brought these voyagers to the end of the world, what they thought and felt as they experienced this strange and forceful place, and how that experience might have changed over time. But they are not prompted to ask those same questions of the generations of tourists who preceded them. The Antarctic tourist experience is not supposed to have a history of its own.

For all their efforts to tread lightly and leave no trace, tourists are not passive observers of Antarctic history. They are part of that history. They shape the ice and its culture. They reflect and distill the meaning that Antarctica holds for the 21st century world. And even against the stark white contrast of the frozen continent, they blur the boundaries between past and present, physical and imaginative, tourist and explorer. Heroic explorers formed Antarctica's first layer of human history, but tourists add another vivid, compelling and complex layer of experience to this confounding place. They are explorers of a different kind. And their stories and experiences offer us renewed insight into what Antarctica means to us now and might mean to us in the future. Tourists should tread lightly but not so lightly that we miss the meaning of their brief visit.

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