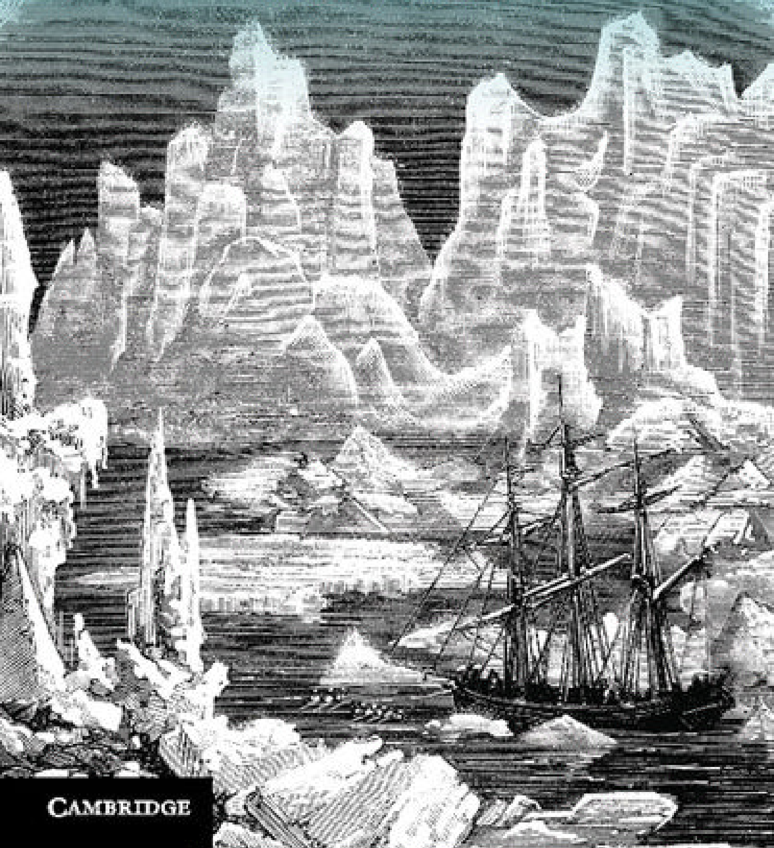
ANTARCTICA IN FICTION

Imaginative Narratives of the Far South

Elizabeth Leane



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ANTARCTICA IN FICTION

This comprehensive analysis of literary responses to Antarctica examines the rich body of texts that the continent has provoked over the last three centuries, focussing particularly on narrative fiction. Novelists as diverse as Edgar Allan Poe, James Fenimore Cooper, Jules Verne, H. P. Lovecraft, Ursula Le Guin, Beryl Bainbridge and Kim Stanley Robinson have all been drawn artistically to the far south. The continent has also inspired genre fiction, including a Mills and Boon novel, a Phantom comic and a Biggles book, as well as countless lost-race romances, espionage thrillers and horror-fantasies. *Antarctica in Fiction* draws on these sources, as well as film, travel narratives and explorers' own creative writing. It maps the far south as a space of the imagination and argues that only by engaging with this space, in addition to the physical continent, can we understand current attitudes towards Antarctica.

Elizabeth Leane is a senior lecturer in English literature at the University of Tasmania. She is author of *Reading Popular Physics: Disciplinary Skirmishes and Textual Strategies* (2007) and editor of *Considering Animals: Contemporary Studies in Human-Animal Relations* (2011) with Carol Freeman and Yvette Watt.

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ELIZABETH LEANE

University of Tasmania

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For Damian

Contents

List of figures — *page* viii
Acknowledgements — ix

Introduction — 1
1. Speculative Visions of the South Polar Regions — 22
2. Bodies, Boundaries and the Antarctic Gothic — 53
3. Creative Explorations of the Heroic Era — 84
4. The Survival Value of Literature at High Latitudes — 111
5. The Transforming Nature of Antarctic Travel — 133
6. Freezing Time in Far Southern Narratives — 153

Coda — 180

Notes — 183
Bibliography — 211
Index — 237

Figures

1. 'Attacked by bears'. Illustration from William Kingston's *At the South Pole*. *page* 13
2. World map from Joseph Hall's *Mundus alter et idem* (Vltraiecti (Utrecht): Apud Joannem à Waesberge, 1643). 28
3. Illustration of the whirlpool scene from *Australis, or, the City of Zero,* from a souvenir programme accompanying the performance. 37
4. Illustration from William Earl Johns's *Biggles Breaks the Silence*. 44
5. Photograph of scene from the Berlin performance of Reinhard Goering's play *Die Südpolexpedition des Kapitäns Scott*, published in the *Graphic*, 8 March 1930, 369. 90
6. George Marston reading in bed during Ernest Shackleton's *Nimrod* expedition. 113
7. Sketch from the diary of Sydney Jones, a member of the Australasian Antarctic Expedition. 115
8. The cast of *Ticket of Leave*. 127

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Introduction

Presenting a study of the far south in fiction is a risky venture: Antarctica is, traditionally, unwritable. Sustaining this idea is the powerful trope of the continent-as-canvas, the 'wide white page'. Artists can make hopeful daubs on the canvas, writers can venture hesitant scribbles on the page, but the canvas or the page itself is essentially beyond representation. This Antarctica is ground, not figure – it is nothingness, and nothingness cannot, by definition, be depicted. Any attempt to do so, to describe the continent as something, or even *like* something, is then interpreted as a sullying of its purity. In the words of one late twentieth-century poet, Antarctica is 'A white blankness … / … that is only itself. / The last unwritten page in our planet's book', and 'Already … our infection / And the stain of humanity begin to soil it'.[1] The poet's choice of metaphor itself gives the lie to the idea of the pure white continent – it is one thing to sustain the notion of continent-as-canvas when considering the interior plateau, another when faced with a noisy, smelly penguin colony – but the image has traction nonetheless. Even for those who recognize the internal diversity of the Antarctic region, who acknowledge that it is more than a white expanse, language still falls short. If it is not the continent's blankness that prevents its depiction, it is its extremity: the vertical sublime replaces the horizontal. The continent exceeds all attempts to contain it, the usual list of superlatives (highest, coldest, driest, windiest) gesturing inanely towards its inexpressible extremes.

Either way, marks on a page become like footprints or ski-trails in the snow: signs only of humanity's interference, of its pathetic attempts to master the continent's vastness. Confronted by Antarctica, writers become, as novelist and essayist Helen Garner observes ironically, 'control freaks, spoiling things for everyone else, colonising, taming, matching their egos against the unshowable, the unsayable'.[2]

If marks on the page, lines on the ice, can only ever be pollution, then the literature of Antarctica says nothing of the continent, and everything

of humanity's futile efforts to find language equal to it. What for scientists might be a palimpsest of considerable complexity, an 'icy archive' in which natural history is preserved like nowhere else on earth, for creative artists offers only a reflection of their own inadequacies. 'The Ice … was an esthetic sink, not an inspiration', observes environmental historian Stephen Pyne, 'Its landscape erased those elements which provided the artistic conventions that made other newly discovered worlds accessible, and its fantastic isolation seemingly defied any but self-referential attempts to assimilate it … No representational art or literature could hope to express it'.[3]

Shoring up this view is not only the powerful spatial image of the plateau, with its seemingly unending white horizons, but also a corresponding temporal blankness: the knowledge of humanity's brief history of interaction with Antarctica and the aeons of untouched isolation stretching before. Other places, other continents – even the icy wastes of the Arctic – have supported indigenous human inhabitants. Not only have these communities had the luxury of millennia of continuous dwelling in which to develop a vocabulary equal to their environment, but their culture and language also have been shaped by that environment. In Marie Darrieussecq's Antarctic novel *White* (2005) one character, observing 'sparkling ridges of snow, with their granular crust', notes that 'Only Laplanders or Innuit would know the precise term in their native tongues for this nuance of snow, and shade of white. But here, no one has ever been born'.[4] People have been born in Antarctica, for strategic nationalist reasons; but the observation is true in essence. No one has been raised entirely in the far south, let alone inherited the deep sense of place that generations of inhabitation bestow. And while words for particular kinds of snow might be transplanted from the far north, there are other words – words for specifically Antarctic features, processes and topographies – that can only come from intimate experience of the place itself.[5]

For this reason alone, the literature of Antarctica will always be distinct from that of the inhabited places of the world. Yet my starting point here is the recognition that the often-evoked image of the unwritable continent, the icescape that resists literary (or artistic) response, is only one of its many fictions.

It is a fiction, admittedly, that critics have themselves reinforced. While Pyne, in *The Ice* (1986), gives nuanced and thought-provoking analyses of a series of Antarctic texts (discussing works by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Edgar Allan Poe, Jules Verne, James Fenimore Cooper, H. P. Lovecraft, John W. Campbell and Thomas Keneally), his overarching thesis is,

ironically, the nullity of Antarctic literature. The continent, he emphasizes, 'has largely been a wasteland for imaginative literature'; it 'has never really known the full attention of high culture'; and created 'no Antarctic school of literature' (or art for that matter). Pyne gives a series of reasons for this absence: the lack of a 'preexisting esthetic for the interior ice terranes'; the minimalizing effect of its icescape, which 'relentlessly simplifies whatever ideas are brought to it'; science's (and science fiction's) dominance of human responses to the continent; twentieth-century creative writers' tendency to fixate on the Scott tragedy;[6] bad timing, in that Antarctic exploration 'typically came at the conclusion of major epochs of discovery and intellectual ferment' and hence 'was a scene to which conventions were applied, not out of which new contentions were generated'; bad luck, in that the only literary and artistic mode equipped to handle its 'abstract, minimal, conceptual' landscape – modernism – had its attention focussed elsewhere; and, more simply, lack of access to the continent. After the efforts of Coleridge, Poe and Cooper, whose nineteenth-century worldview enabled them to construct a 'moral universe' around the Ice, Antarctic literature, according to Pyne, stagnated.[7]

Pyne raises important points, but he also raises suspicion. He protests too much; his narrative of the literary wasteland is overdetermined. Perhaps he simply raises the bar too high: the failure of the continent, which humans had been exploring on foot for less than a century at the time *The Ice* was published, to produce a coherent school of literature, to generate a startlingly new aesthetic style or to be wholeheartedly embraced by the twentieth century's most iconic writers, does not make it an imaginative desert, as my book aims to show. Pyne's analysis of Antarctic literature also itself suffers from bad timing: published in 1986, not long before Antarctic tourism began its rapid expansion, and just before fierce disputes over mineral resources brought the continent to the centre of environmental debates, his book could not take account of the massive expansion in Antarctic literature which has taken place since. But slightly later critics, such as Paul Simpson-Housley, William Lenz and Francis Spufford, have also focussed primarily on nineteenth-century or early twentieth-century Antarctic literary texts, inadvertently reinforcing the sense that after Coleridge, Poe and Cooper there is little to say about the fiction of the far south.

I began this project with a similar sense of entering sparse, barely explored terrain: a flat, white space punctuated here and there by a few nineteenth-century nunataks.[8] I was soon divested of this convenient metaphor. Antarctica may not have had the full attention of high culture,

but, in addition to those writers previously mentioned, the continent has certainly held the interest of well-established novelists, poets and playwrights such as Vladimir Nabokov, Georg Heym, Douglas Stewart, Ursula Le Guin, Dorothy Porter, Les Murray, Beryl Bainbridge, Pablo Neruda, Kim Stanley Robinson, Manfred Karge, Bill Manhire and Ann Michaels.

Admittedly, touted Antarctic appearances in prominent literary texts often prove fleeting or tangential. A few lines from T.S. Eliot's seminal modernist poem *The Waste Land* (1922) allude to Ernest Shackleton's *South* (1919). The patriarch of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927) imagines himself as the Scott-like leader of a doomed polar expedition.[9] An Antarctic journey becomes a useful device for delaying the appearance of a witness for two years in Agatha Christie's *Ordeal by Innocence* (1958). Jack Aubrey's ship collides with an Antarctic iceberg in Patrick O'Brian's *Desolation Island* (1991). A world-renowned botanist in Saul Bellow's *More Die of Heartbreak* (1987) studies Antarctic lichens. A ship venturing into far southern waters has a close encounter with an ice-cliff in William Golding's *Fire Down Below* (1989). Captain Nemo is first to the South Pole in Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Seas* (1869–70). Herman Melville very likely read Charles Wilkes's *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition* (1845) while writing *Moby-Dick* (1851), and Antarctic images appear briefly in his famous chapter, 'The Whiteness of the Whale'.[10] Doris Lessing added an essay on Antarctic exploration to her science-fiction novel set on an ice world, *The Making of the Representative for Planet 8* (1982). A piece of Antarctica is dragged to Spain in Ariel Dorfman's *The Nanny and the Iceberg* (1999). A young girl obsesses over the Scott expedition in Donna Tartt's *The Little Friend* (2002). A valium-addicted housewife hallucinates an Antarctic idyll in Tony Kushner's play *Angels in America* (1993), and the continent itself briefly appears as one of the angelic Continental Principalities, bemoaning the despoliation of the earth.[11] In Thomas Pynchon's *V* (1963) an old explorer who has been to the South Pole and found there only 'annihilation', offers ominous advice: 'You wait. Everyone has an Antarctic'.[12] None of these texts is set, in any sustained or substantial sense, in the Antarctic.

As any deconstructionist knows, however, a periphery can also be a centre. The South Pole is simultaneously the most marginal place on earth and the mid-point of the circles of latitude used to map the planet. Likewise, a seemingly incidental or minor Antarctic reference can bring with it connotations that reshape a text. Eliot's notes to *The Waste Land* (1922) identify only a few lines as Antarctic in origin – and the event in question, a mysterious sense of an extra companion which some believe to be Shackleton's

strategic retrospective invention,[13] occurred not in the most stereotypical Antarctic context – the interior plateau – but on the mountainous subantarctic island of South Georgia. Yet as soon as the epic story of the *Endurance* is evoked, it is impossible for the Antarctic ice not to take its place as one of the wastes that merge together in Eliot's poem: the sterile interior icescape joins the barren desert and the empty sea. Once alerted to Antarctica's presence in the poem, readers begin to notice additional possible connections between *South* (1919) and *The Waste Land*: Shackleton's powerful evocation of 'a sense of wandering over an endless wasteland, absolutely lifeless and forbidding', as well as the famous exchange in which the explorer learns the world is at war;[14] and the mirages that his men continually see in the Antarctic icescape, which seem to feed into Eliot's images of upside-down towers and fractured cities in the air.[15] Even – perhaps especially – when Antarctica seems marginal to a literary text, it is worth exploring the meanings (themselves the accumulated product of previous representations) that the continent brings to the text, and the meanings that are in turn bestowed upon the far southern regions by each new literary context.

A literary text does not necessarily need to feature action set in the far south to make an important contribution to the Antarctic literary corpus. In Karge's Brechtian play *Die Eroberung des Sudpols*, translated into English as *The Conquest of the South Pole* (1988),[16] five unemployed young men in the industrial city of Herne in western Germany re-enact Roald Amundsen's South Polar expedition in an attic. The expedition becomes, one critic writes, the characters' 'substitute for a productive life from which they have been forcibly exiled', and also, given the quixotic nature of a quest to reach an entirely blank space, 'a challenge to the very assumptions of productivity'.[17] Thus, while the play may not be *about* Antarctica, the Antarctic nature of the journey re-enacted by the characters and the assumptions and images that this particular expedition evokes for the audience are pivotal to its meaning. The same applies to Chris Wheat's poem 'Antarctica' (1996), in which an unflinching, intensely personal account of a man's death from AIDS is unexpectedly juxtaposed with images of emperor penguins in a continent 'as silent as starched sheets'.[18] Antarctica is no less important to a text when it is deployed primarily as a metaphor, rather than a setting.

There are fewer debates to be had about the strength of Antarctica's relationship with popular culture, where its embrace has been wholehearted. There is hardly a popular genre that cannot boast an Antarctic title. Action-adventure-eco-thrillers might predominate, but there is also Antarctic category romance, Antarctic chick-lit, Antarctic cyberpunk – even an

Antarctic sitcom.[19] The continent is a must-see destination for the heroes of science-fiction television, children's fiction and comics: Doctor Who, Mulder and Scully, The Phantom,[20] Doc Savage, G. I. Joe, Biggles, Tom Swift, the Hardy Boys, Scooby-Doo, Caspar the Friendly Ghost, the Avengers, the X-Men, Wonder Woman, Batman, Superman and even an alarmingly underdressed Tarzan have had their share of Antarctic adventures.

When strict criteria are applied – for example, that a title can only be considered 'Antarctic' if it is substantially set in the region (itself problematic to define[21]) or engaged with its history or politics – the body of imaginative texts dealing with the far south still remains large: hundreds of novels, hundreds of poems, and significant numbers of short stories, graphic novels, plays and feature films. The corpus is not only larger than expected, but it is also more diverse: a 'nautical drama' based on the Ross expedition of 1839–43, watched from the theatre's pits by sailors from that expedition; a semi-pornographic utopia of a female-dominated Antarctic kingdom, self-published in the 1880s; a 'Spectacular Pantomimic Extravaganza' from the turn of the twentieth century, which includes an Antarctic animal ballet and climaxes in a terrifying South Polar whirlpool scene; a long poem about a magnificent Christmas feast, both concocted on a sledging journey by the photographer Frank Hurley; a German opera based on the Scott tragedy, prematurely closed by the Nazis in 1937.[22]

Alongside and directly connected with the identification of this large, heterogeneous body of work is an increasing critical interest in examining Antarctica from a cultural perspective. Since Pyne published *The Ice* in 1986, several extensive bibliographies of Antarctic literature have appeared; conferences devoted to Antarctic arts and culture have been held;[23] a special cultural issue of the new *Polar Journal* (itself a publication dedicated to polar research within the humanities and social sciences) has been released; an excellent anthology of Antarctic literature, Bill Manhire's *The Wide White Page: Writers Imagine Antarctica* (2004), has been published;[24] and Antarctic-related publications in the standard academic database of literary criticism, the Modern Languages Association database, which sat at three in 1985 (from a starting point of 1925), now number more than fifty. The 'cultural turn' in Antarctic studies has begun.

Integral to this 'cultural turn' is increasing access to the continent for artists, writers and non-scientific researchers. Although, as Pyne points out, 'a visit is hardly essential to make Antarctica a subject of artistic inquiry',[25] direct, immediate experience is a core component of writing creatively about place for many authors. While it was taken for granted that nineteenth-century creative writers and their readers had only indirect

knowledge of the far south, by the turn of the twenty-first century, when cruises have made the continent a possible – if expensive – destination for tens of thousands of tourists annually, no such assumptions are possible. Frustration with science's domination of the continent is a common refrain in later twentieth-century Antarctic literature. Near the start of her travel memoir *Skating to Antarctica* (1997), novelist Jenny Diski recounts a particularly stark 'two cultures' experience:

> ... I called the British Antarctic Survey in Cambridge.
> 'How can I get to Antarctica?' I asked.
> 'Are you a scientist?'
> 'No, I'm a writer.'
> It sounded feeble next to the echo of 'scientist'. The woman at the BAS clearly agreed.
> 'You can't go if you're not a scientist engaged in specific research.' ....
> 'Why not?'
> 'Because the British Antarctic Survey is set up to protect the environment for serious scientific purposes.'
> 'What about serious writing purposes?'[26]

An ice-covered continent can be figured as a laboratory in a way that an expanse of tropical jungle cannot. The qualities – literal and metaphorical – that are stereotypically attached to science are also those stereotypically attributed to the Antarctic: coldness (objectivity, neutrality); purity (altruism); sterility; distance from worldly affairs; a sense of unlimited vistas waiting to be explored. 'The scientists, it seemed, had wrapped up an entire continent for their own and only their own purposes', writes Diski: 'No one could go without their say-so, because their objectives were pure, and being pure they were entrusted with the last pure place on earth. The rest of us are frivolous despoilers ...'[27]

Several years after Diski's failed attempt to go to Antarctica with her national programme (she ended up travelling on a cruise ship instead), the British Antarctic Survey officially acknowledged 'serious writing purposes' with the launch of an Artists and Writers Programme in 2001. The programme (which ran until 2009) had an explicitly interdisciplinary agenda: it aimed to 'bridge the cultural gap between the worlds of science and the arts'.[28] Similar programmes in the United States, Australia and New Zealand had been established in the preceding decades. In 1996, the twentieth meeting of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties (ATCP) had passed a resolution recommending the '[p]romotion of understanding and appreciation of the values of Antarctica, in particular its scientific, aesthetic and wilderness values', through educational activities and 'the contribution of writers, artists and musicians'.[29]

This rhetoric can only go so far: there has as yet been little attempt to spell out what Antarctica's 'aesthetic values' actually comprise.[30] There are also problems raised by a resolution that specifically requires interpreters to *promote appreciation* of the values associated with Antarctica, including scientific values. This could potentially see the arts and humanities providing public relations for the 'continent for science' rather than investigating the myriad possibilities of what the continent could or should be *for*. It allows little room for those who may want to interrogate, criticize or challenge existing Antarctic – or indeed aesthetic – values. It raises the question of how works that give a less than complimentary view of a national programme might affect the selection of later writers or artists. Writing more than two decades ago, Pyne recognized problems of this kind in the U.S. programme, which at that time asked applicants to avoid producing creative works that were 'excessively abstract, or not recognizable as having come from the Antarctic'.[31] These days, the wording is less directive – the resulting works must be 'representative of Antarctica or of activities in Antarctica', but there is still a requirement to 'enhance programmatic goals – advancing knowledge and understanding of the U. S. Antarctic program'.[32]

In addition, there is a certain artificiality in being required to artistically respond to a place within a particular time frame. In *Degrees of Separation* (2006), a novel by Laurence Fearnley (herself a recipient of an Antarctic writer's residency through the New Zealand programme), a sonic artist visiting McMurdo station muses on this difficulty: '[C]ompared with her, scientists had it easy. At least they knew what they were doing; they had a framework – a project – on which to focus, a particular location on which to concentrate, and material they could process using established scientific methods'. Artists, looking for inspiration in the environment, had a much vaguer task. Moreover, she reasons, scientists make regular Antarctic journeys, returning year after year, whereas she has thirteen days to complete her project: 'Bloody scientists, she wanted to say. You don't know how lucky you are!'[33] Yet, all of these constraints aside, access to the continent for non-scientists, through national programmes or through tourist ships, has increased markedly in the last few decades, and Antarctic fiction has expanded correspondingly.

It would be foolish to look for coherence, or even a shared symbolic language, in the large, heterogeneous group of texts that make up Antarctic literature. There are, unsurprisingly, many contradictory and competing versions of the continent that can be evident even within one text. Robert F. Scott's diary of his final polar journey – often recognized as the

continent's most canonical document[34] – is a fitting demonstration of this point: returning to the Antarctic in early 1911, on a calm, brilliantly sunny day, Scott reflected that 'weather in such a place comes nearer to satisfying my ideal of perfection than any condition that I have ever experienced'; just over a year later, returning from the Pole, in overcast, windy, freezing conditions, he made his famous exclamation, 'Great God! this is an awful place . . .'[35] What Antarctica looks like depends on where you stand, what the weather is like, what your prospects are and whether you are first or second to the Pole. Even critics, writing from the distance and comfort of temperature-controlled offices, come to strikingly different interpretations of the Antarctic's symbolic meaning in the same text. For one, the Antarctic icescape in Coleridge's 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner' (1798) functions as a place 'where Earth seems most like Heaven';[36] for others, it is a version of hell.[37] As Victoria Rosner has observed, everyone may have an Antarctic, but 'everyone's Antarctic is not the same'.[38] Similarly, not every text's Antarctica is the same. For example, the continent is a feminized landscape in some genres (particularly the gothic) and a masculinized one in others. There are patterns and traditions in Antarctic fiction, but they are tangled and sometimes contradictory.

A snatch of dialogue from Sara Wheeler's travel memoir *Terra Incognita* (1996) neatly expresses the unrealistic expectation that the far southern continent should produce a single meaning, a grand monolithic artistic vision. Travelling as part of the U.S. Antarctic Artists and Writers Program, she was asked,

> 'What's your impression, then? Of Antarctica?'
> 'Well', I said slowly, 'I have a million impressions.'
> 'Don't you have one overwhelming impression?'
> I thought about that.
> 'I feel as if I'm getting to know a person. It's like having a love affair – I'm finding out more and more and more, it's all different and overwhelming and intoxicating, and I don't know where it's going to end.'[39]

Getting to know the literature of the far south is a similar process.

Given the unmanageably large and diverse body of texts that could come under the rubric of 'Antarctic fiction', it is tempting to reach for overarching theoretical frameworks that could guide a winnowing process in which interesting and significant texts are separated from pedestrian, forgettable ones. With the escalating attention Antarctica is drawing within the arts and humanities, examinations of specific texts, events or issues are increasingly theoretically sophisticated. In particular, analyses built

around questions of gender, postcoloniality, environment, modernity and globalism have begun to appear.[40] Yet there have been few, if any, attempts to theorize Antarctic cultural production in a general sense; this is unsurprising, as the continent is (like any other) a complex, heterogeneous place that needs to be understood from multiple perspectives.

Even if only one of the continent's characteristics is selected – for example, its unrelentingly cold, icy, hostile environment – there are diverse theoretical approaches that can be fruitfully brought to it. Fredric Jameson, for example, in an analysis of Ursula Le Guin's novel *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) – a text set on an ice planet and heavily influenced by Antarctic exploration narratives – begins his search for 'some essential structural *homology*' between the text's themes by focussing on climate.[41] Jameson looks for the 'disguised symbolic meaning' of the planet's freezing weather by turning to the opposite extreme: the (Western) literary symbolism of the tropics. Drawing particularly on the work of J.G. Ballard, Jameson notes that tropical heat evokes a sense of dissolution between body and environment, 'a sense of increasing contamination and stickiness in the contact between your physical organism and the surfaces around it'. This 'loss of physical autonomy … is then understood as a figure for the loss of psychic autonomy'. Le Guin's ice planet (Gethen) can be read in a reverse sense as a 'fantasy realization of some virtually total disengagement of the body from its environment or eco-system', a world in which humans experience 'free-standing isolation as separate individuals, goose-flesh transforming the skin itself into some outer envelope'. This makes Gethen 'an attempt to imagine an experimental landscape in which our being-in-the-world is simplified to the extreme, and in which our sensory links with the multiple and shifting perceptual fields around us are abstracted so radically as to vouchsafe, perhaps, some new glimpse as to the ultimate nature of human reality'.[42]

While there are obvious differences between Le Guin's experiment and Antarctic actuality – not least, that Gethen is a world long-inhabited by beings very much like humans – Jameson's remarks resonate with other observations about the continent: Pyne's sense of 'the Ice' as an environment that 'relentlessly simplifies whatever ideas are brought to it'; the constant association of the continent with purity; the assumption, in both fiction and non-fiction of the far south, that Antarctica strips everything superficial from a person, leaving their core exposed.[43] As I argue in Chapter 2, however, there are also Antarctic texts which directly contradict any sense of the ice as an isolating element – texts in which the icy environment (which in both Le Guin's imagination and Antarctic reality

is not a flat white surface but a duplicitous three-dimensional entity riven by icefalls, sastrugi[44] and crevasses) actually seems to have something in common with the tropics' threatened dissolution of the boundary between body and environment.

Influential cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan has attempted a theorization of icescapes quite different from Jameson's. In his article 'Desert and Ice: Ambivalent Aesthetics' (1993), Tuan divides space into three categories: the 'homeplace', a protected enclosure that 'nurtures biological life [and] commands the strongest attachment and loyalty'; the 'home space', the area immediately surrounding the homeplace, which generates visual and aesthetic appreciation; and the 'alien space' beyond the home space that is 'normally perceived as threatening'. In the polar regions, Tuan argues, home space is squeezed to nothing: 'homeplace is the hut and immediately beyond is alien space, an expanse of whiteness reaching out in all directions to seemingly nowhere'. What this alien space offers is 'unity … by overwhelming the individual', an absorption into the 'overmastering presence of nature'.[45] The polar explorer, Tuan suggests, is both frightened and attracted by this prospect of unity with an immense other. Where Jameson argues that an icy environment acts as a barrier between self and environment, Tuan contends, in a different but related context, that it collapses this barrier to nothing. Tuan's concept of the 'loss of self in alien space' that polar icescapes create[46] is just as useful as Jameson's ideas, speaking to a number of influential gothic and science-fiction Antarctic texts.

Tuan's argument has much in common with theories of the sublime. As a landscape category describing that which instills awe mixed with a pleasant frisson of terror – which humbles the subject by its incomprehensible scale even while giving him/her a sense of exhilaration – this seems the most obvious aesthetic term to apply to Antarctica. Roslynn Haynes notes that when the term was popularized in the later eighteenth century, it was associated 'almost exclusively with mountain scenery', but its sources soon 'expanded to include forms of horizontal expanse as well – the ocean, broad tracts of steppes, and deserts'.[47] Prominent among these was the Arctic, a region in the front of European minds during the early- to mid-nineteenth century because of the many attempts on the Northwest Passage. In a discussion of 'The Arctic Sublime' (1977), Chauncy Loomis observes: 'Even today, the Arctic retains something of its sublimity in the imaginations of many persons, and it remains a popular setting for science-fiction romances and adventure stories'. By the second half of the nineteenth century, however, the Arctic sublime had passed its

heyday, its 'vitality' sapped as the far north became increasingly known. 'The Sublime', Loomis concludes, 'cannot be mapped'.[48]

In some ways, the sublime is even more suited to the Antarctic than the Arctic. Loomis notes: 'Like the sublimity of mountains or space, the sublimity of the Arctic partly depended on its imagined emptiness as well as its vastness and coldness. It was imagined to be not only inhuman but even inorganic, and that was part of its beauty, terror, fascination and challenge'.[49] The far north, home to various animal species as well as indigenous human populations, had to be *imagined* as empty of organic life, whereas Antarctica came ready-made: the interior plateau *is* an empty, inorganic landscape, even if it is a more complex, riven, mutable one than fantasies of a 'wide white page' would suggest. It produces a horizontal sublimity based on absence, in that its impact is generated by its vast emptiness. Of course, nineteenth-century explorers did not know of the plateau, but rather the vertical sublimity of the coastal regions, with their towering cliffs, calving glaciers and spectacular, weird, baroquely shaped bergs – a sublimity more akin to the alps than to a desert. They could only speculate about what might lie behind the icy barrier their ships inevitably met. Outside of utopian novelists and hollow-earth enthusiasts, however, there were few serious suggestions at this time that human populations might be found in the far south; its emptiness was not difficult to imagine.

Unsurprisingly, then, the discourse of the sublime – both the vertical and horizontal versions – is frequently evoked in Antarctic literary texts. But Loomis's discussion points to several problems with adopting this aesthetic as an overarching framework for an examination of literature engaged with the continent. First, as I have suggested, the discourse of the sublime reinforces the sense of the Antarctic as an unrepresentable place. In this book, I am eager to contextualize this as only one of many perceptions of Antarctica, not as a governing idea. Second, although understandings of the sublime continue to evolve, a focus on the concept tends to draw one back to the well-examined nineteenth-century texts of Coleridge and Poe. Third, as a category applied initially to the mountaintops and glaciers of the Northern Hemisphere and influential on representations of the far north, the sublime cannot in isolation identify what is distinctive about the Antarctic icescape; to adopt it as a primary aesthetic reference point is to risk collapsing the marked differences between the various icescapes of the earth.

This third point brings up another important topic: the relationship between the Arctic and the Antarctic, and how this relationship plays

Figure 1. 'Attacked by bears'. Illustration from William Kingston's *At the South Pole.*

out in the literary and cultural texts engaged with these two places. The similarities of the two are obvious: both are polar regions – freezing, far-flung icescapes where diurnal patterns are disturbed. Both were 'blank spaces' still out of reach of Western empires when much of the world had been colonised – terrains across which European explorers doggedly made their way. In her 'Bibliographical Tour of Antarctic Fiction' (1998), Fauno Cordes observes that 'the differences between the two polar regions of earth were not distinct in the public mind' until after the turn of the twentieth century.[50] Confusion between the two regions is not uncommon in literature, with polar bears gracing several nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Antarctic narratives (see Figure 1).[51] Literary critics have also treated them as interchangeable: in *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (1981), Rosemary Jackson has Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) concluding in the Antarctic; at least two critics locate John W. Campbell's 'Who Goes There?' (1938) in the north; and one claims these two texts have 'the same setting'.[52] Even when there are no slippages between the two polar regions, critics – including Spufford in *I May Be Some Time: Ice and English Imagination* (1996) and Sarah Moss in *Scott's Last Biscuit: The Literature of Polar Exploration* (2006) – often choose to examine them together.

There are good reasons to examine the two regions together, but there are equally good reasons for distinguishing them. Etymologically, the Antarctic is defined by its opposition to the north, something made starkly

clear by writers as diverse as meteorologist Roger (Rod) Mallory, in a brief poem published in the in-house magazine of Wilkes Station in 1963,

> The Antarctic
> So unarctic.
> So Antarctic[53]

and Mojisola Adebayo, in her recent play *Moj of the Antarctic* (2008):

> Arctic
> Anti-thesis
> Antarctica.[54]

Philip Benjamin's *Quick, Before It Melts* (1964) takes a characteristically satirical approach to the tendency to conflate the regions. The journalist protagonist, encountering a glaciologist, asks,

> 'How do you like living in the Antarctic?'
> 'In the where?'
> 'In the Antarctic.'
> He looked puzzled. 'You mean the Arctic?'
> 'No, I mean the Antarctic. South.' I pointed down. 'Not north.' I pointed up.
> He pushed back his parka and stared at me. 'You mean this isn't the Arctic?'
> 'Certainly not.'
> 'Well, for Jesus' sake. I thought I was going to the Arctic. You sure this isn't the Arctic? You kidding me?'
> I shook my head slowly and emphatically.
> 'Well, I'll be a son of a bitch. I have a terrible sense of direction anyway. I figure ice, it all looks the same anyway, it must be the Arctic. I was wondering why I didn't see any Eskimo types, or any reindeer. The Antarctic! Jesus! Then the South Pole must be somewhere around here.'
> 'About two hundred miles south,' I said, 'so they tell me.'
> He shook his head. 'The Antarctic! That's a good one on me, all right. Well, what the hell. Ice is ice.' He began drilling again.[55]

Ice is not ice, as a glaciologist should know. The ice of the Arctic, floating on water, is metres thick on average; the ice of the Antarctic, weighing down bedrock, is kilometres deep.

Historian Peter Beck and political geographer Klaus Dodds allow that the Arctic 'does resemble Antarctica in certain respects', but nonetheless insist that 'the differences between the two areas – these derive from geographical, political, legal, scientific, economic and other factors – are perhaps more striking than the similarities'.[56] Admittedly, some of these differences did not exist, or were not evident, until recent decades. The very proximity of the Arctic to the northern continents, however, ensured that its history of European encounter contrasted markedly with that

of Antarctica. Indigenous groups have inhabited Arctic regions for millennia, and exploration of far northern regions by Europeans probably began thousands of years before they ventured into high southern latitudes. The Arctic, therefore, was 'a known populated area', geographically contiguous with Europe, Asia and North America, in the centuries when Antarctica was 'little but a vague notion'.[57] 'What's the North Pole!' exclaims a wealthy American doctor in Bellow's *More Die of Heartbreak*: 'Anybody can go to the North Pole. There are regular helicopter expeditions, and you can fly up for lunch and be back in civilization for cocktails; but the South Pole is a different proposition. It still has mystery and romance'.[58] An exaggeration voiced by an unattractive character, the opinion nevertheless captures something of the asymmetry of the two polar regions, from a Northern Hemisphere perspective. Furthermore, as Rosner observes, the Antarctic's 'unique lack of indigenous inhabitants gives rise to an unprecedented set of issues involving territoriality and the idea of citizenship'; the Antarctic Treaty, which suspends sovereignty claims and 'reserve[s] the continent solely for scientific research', produces another set.[59] As the history of human engagement with the Antarctic region develops, it is becoming increasingly important to understand the specific meanings that humans attach to it – not only as a cold, icy, far-flung land, but as a place where important political, legal and environmental – as well as scientific – experiments are being performed.

For the Antarctic enthusiast, there is another good reason to challenge the tendency to group the poles together in literary and cultural analysis: the south, as the farther-flung, less explored, less inhabited region, is inevitably – if inadvertently – treated as the poor cousin to the north. In *The Idea of North* (2005), Peter Davidson states: 'All the ways of thinking about Antarctica are taken from ideas of the far north, raising the question that there may be places – mountain ranges as well as the South Pole – that are thought of as honorary norths.'[60] Even accepting Davidson's caveat that his 'is not a book about northern places so much as about places that have been perceived to embody an idea or essence of north, or northness', such a view – a highly Eurocentric one in which north is essentially cold and far-flung and south is essentially warm and central – is clearly a problem for anyone interested in the distinctiveness of Antarctic literature and culture. Given the Arctic's long history of human inhabitation, it has produced a far older and more extensive body of imaginative work than the Antarctic, including rich indigenous literatures. If far southern fiction is folded in with its far northern counterpart, it risks becoming a postscript to or cartographically inverted version of it. The specificity of the Antarctic

region can easily be lost, and it becomes simply a displaced Arctic. Early European explorers' ways of thinking and writing about Antarctica were, inevitably, taken from the far north. One member of Shackleton's *Nimrod* expedition, James Murray, observes that '[s]o strong is the obsession of preconceived notions that I believe artists have gone to the Antarctic, looked at the tabular bergs, and then drawn pinnacled bergs as portraits of them'.[61] Yet nearly two centuries after the first human stepped onto the continent, a century after the 'conquest' of the South Pole and fifty years after the signing of the Antarctic Treaty, surely the far south can begin to claim a history, politics and aesthetics of its own.

No single theoretical or aesthetic approach, then, could hope to encompass the complex and diverse texts that make up Antarctic literature. It is, however, possible to identify themes around which far southern narratives cluster, which in turn are manifested in familiar plot arcs, recurring character types and enduring motifs. This book is structured around six of these thematic clusters. Needless to say, I do not try to cover all fiction dealing with the far south;[62] nor are the categorizations I use intended to exhaust the kinds of stories told about the continent.

My focus on specific narrative patterns means that certain texts and genres are better represented than others in this book. In particular, as my title indicates, my emphasis is on narrative fiction, particularly novels and short stories. Feature films, television dramas and plays set in Antarctica are comparatively few in number, for good reasons. Stage and studio television productions must deal with challenges of representing the extensive Antarctic icescape, risking banality unless they resort to stylistic or symbolic interpretations, or ironically confining the action to indoor spaces. The only example of an Antarctic television sitcom, the Australian production *Brass Monkeys* (1983–84), uses Antarctic footage in its opening credits to situate action which takes place entirely inside a station (evoked by a series of purpose-built sets). Karge's play *The Conquest of the South Pole* (1989) solves the problem in nice postmodern fashion: its protagonists' attempts to represent the polar plateau in their attic provide a metadramatic reflection on this limitation. Feature films set in the Antarctic tend to rely on footage from the Arctic, particularly Canada, occasionally spliced in with Antarctic establishing shots; sending actors and a crew south is expensive and seldom attempted outside documentaries. Certain genres, such as horror and science fiction, can rely on computer-generated imagery. Ironically, a big-budget animation such as the children's penguin film *Happy Feet* (2006), in which computer-generated icescapes were based

on images captured in Antarctica, can boast far more physical authenticity than many live-action films. Antarctic feature films and plays require their own specific analytical framework; I have drawn on these texts only inasmuch as they share thematic concerns with narrative fiction.

Likewise, although I discuss some narrative poems and the poetic efforts of early explorers themselves, the large number of shorter lyric poems dealing with the continent deserve separate treatment. My interest in *Antarctica in Fiction* lies in the kinds of stories about Antarctica which imaginative texts tell. Short poems are usually less interested in telling a tale than in teasing out the meanings of a specific event, issue or emotional state. Often, they are concerned with the task of finding a language appropriate to the continent. This group of texts is too important to be forced into the interstices of an analysis focussed on narrative, or to be included only as an afterthought.

Lastly, I have concentrated here on imaginative narratives, leaving aside non-fiction writing unless it bears very closely upon a particular group of fiction texts (as is the case with exploration narratives in Chapter 3 and contemporary travel writing in Chapter 5). Pyne identifies non-fiction exploration narratives as the 'great literature of Antarctica'; fiction, he suggests, could not compete.[63] Certainly, these texts remain seminal in Antarctic writing, and the recent attention they have received from researchers in literary studies and other areas of the humanities recognizes and reinforces this.[64] As I show in Chapter 4, however, the authors of these works would be the first to acknowledge the importance of the literary imagination in Antarctic exploration. The literature of the Antarctic is the stuff the world produces when it dreams about the far southern continent; and, like dreams, it reveals as much about how we think of the continent as do sober, non-fictional accounts. Exploration and travel narratives constantly inform my analysis, but my focus is firmly on the fictional.

Previous analyses of Antarctic or polar literary texts often employ a national framework: examples include Spufford's *I May Be Some Time: Ice and the English Imagination* (1996), Lenz's *The Poetics of the Antarctic: A Study in Nineteenth-Century American Cultural Perspectives* (1995), Elena Glasberg's 'Antarcticas of the Imagination: American Authors Explore the Last Continent 1818–1982' (1995) and Johan Wijkmark's '"One of the Most Intensely Exciting Secrets" – The Antarctic in American Literature, 1820–1849' (2009). This approach makes sense: Antarctica has been, and remains, the site of intense national interest. Yet, since the Antarctic Treaty suspended all sovereignty claims, Antarctica is simultaneously a uniquely international continent that might provide a model for future political

cooperation, particularly in the exploration of outer space. Writers have taken advantage of the continent's bifurcated identity. In Ariel Dorfman's *The Nanny and the Iceberg* (1999), the apolitical protagonist, having escaped from a New York meeting of Chilean ex-patriots protesting military rule, stares for an hour at a television set in a shop window broadcasting Antarctic images: 'those mountains of ice floating on a sea that was black with waves, those caverns of snow and fog . . .' It is only later that he realizes the irony of the moment, that 'on the very night I declared my unilateral independence from my country I was waylaid by images of a silent crystal continent that was part of the territory of that country'.[65] Antarctica, an empty icy wilderness that in one sense offers escape from national politics, is in another sense entirely enmeshed in them. For this reason, Antarctic literature needs to be examined from both national and pan-national perspectives. *Antarctica in Fiction*, while concentrating on texts published in or translated into English,[66] takes the latter approach. Specific national interests, attitudes or actions are discussed where relevant, but the overall focus is on narrative patterns that span national literatures.

Likewise, these patterns span chronological periods, although, as some themes and motifs are more evident in one particular stage of Antarctic encounter than others, there is a rough linearity to the chapters. The first chapter begins by examining early myths and legends surrounding the Antarctic continent. Until recently, creative writers who chose to venture imaginatively into the far south were faced with the task of describing and interpreting a place they had never seen. This was both limiting and liberating: attempts at realism were inevitably second-hand and derivative, reliant as they were on the accounts of explorers, whalers and sealers; but speculation was given free rein. The Antarctic continent in mythology and literature has abounded in creatures and phenomena that appear wonderful, terrible and ridiculous by turns: polar spirits, demon ships, vampires, routes to Mars, routes to Jupiter, routes to the interior of the earth, enormous polar whirlpools, alien monsters buried in ice, the lost city of Atlantis, dinosaurs, giant lobsters, giant insects and giant albino kangaroos. This chapter looks at the various speculations Antarctica has generated, from the theoretical (the postulations of ancient Greek thinkers), to the superstitious (medieval fears of polar whirlpools and magnetic mountains), the optimistic (utopias set in a far southern land) and the materialistic (tales which focus on the potential exploitation of the continent's real or imagined resources). Strikingly, the motifs and ideas that first emerged in pre-modern mythologies frequently appear – modified but still recognizable – in contemporary popular fiction and film.

The second chapter traces the gothic tradition in literature about Antarctica, from early Romantic works to contemporary science fiction and horror stories. In these texts Antarctica is metaphorically and literally the underside of the world: a weird, hellish region that produces monsters and lures unsuspecting sailors and explorers to unspeakable fates. This Antarctica acts as the world's subconscious, harbouring our deepest fears. It is the Antarctica of Coleridge's ancient mariner, sailing a zombie-crewed ship with a decaying albatross hung around his neck; of Poe's Arthur Gordon Pym, left teetering on the brink of a terrifying South Polar cataract; of the Thing, a shape-shifting, body-snatching alien that terrorizes a scientific station in Campbell's story and its film adaptations. This is the Antarctica that swallows explorers in its unfathomably deep crevasses; the Antarctica that still harbours in its layers the dead bodies of Scott and his companions; the unstable Antarctica whose ice sheets break off and metaphorically envelop the world in the disaster film *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004). As its title indicates, the chapter is concerned with bodies – the dead bodies that populate Antarctica's gothic tales, and the disconcertingly changeable, amorphous body of ice that is the continent itself.

In the third chapter, I turn to the 'Heroic Era'[67] – the period that produced the famous stories of Scott, Shackleton, Amundsen and Mawson, and one which has been central to twentieth-century Antarctic literature. I track the fate of narratives of the Heroic Era in the hands of novelists, poets, playwrights and satirists of the last century, focussing on one particular event: Captain Lawrence Oates's suicidal exit from the tent during Scott's ill-fated polar journey, with his famously understated departing line ('I am just going outside . . .'). Through this example, I show the way in which literary re-workings of Heroic-Era stories offer us something that historical accounts cannot. I then move away from Oates and other well-known figures to examine views from the periphery: the imagined perspectives of those who played (or were perceived to play) minor roles in exploration narratives or were prevented from taking part at all.

The fourth chapter, 'Isolation', takes a different approach, focussing on literature *in* rather than *of* Antarctica. Literature might seem irrelevant to the core business of polar explorers, but in the early years of Antarctic exploration, literary activities could be vital to survival. Deprived of the usual sources of stimulation, explorers hungered for reading matter, thankful even for the labels on tins of condensed milk. Leaders were well aware of the necessity of books, taking large libraries on their Antarctic voyages. When reading matter was short, expedition members would compose their own creative pieces, publishing them in expedition 'newspapers'

such as the *South Polar Times.* Occasionally, they took to the stage, writing and performing plays and concerts for their fellows. These literary activities performed multiple functions for the isolated communities of men who inhabited the continent in the early twentieth century. Most obviously, they provided occupation during the long, tedious winters, warding off the spectre of 'polar depression'. They represented an outlet for self-expression during a psychologically trying time – an escape valve for the frustrations of a claustrophobic living environment. Literary activities could have a bonding effect: the production of a newspaper, the performance of a play or the singing of a 'sledging song' promoted team cohesion. Additionally, when in-house 'newspapers' were published on the expedition's return, they could provide publicity and even raise funds to cover outstanding expenses. This chapter examines the literary input and output of Antarctic explorers themselves, analysing why and what they read, how they represented themselves in their poetry and short stories and the uses they made of communal activities such as drama and newspaper production. For men deprived of many other ordinary comforts, literature became a necessity.

One of the strongest impulses in writing about Antarctica is the desire to present the journey south as a transformative one. Antarctica becomes a state of mind, a space of inner as much as outer exploration. Oddly, in these narratives, the Antarctic wilderness shares less with the sublime than with the pastoral experience. It acts as a simplifying, cleansing, renewing landscape where inner demons can be faced head-on and past traumas healed. While there are traces of this pastoral Antarctica in nineteenth-century and Heroic-Era texts, it is really in the last few decades that it has come into its own. Increased access to the continent has encouraged the production of what might be termed 'realist' Antarctic novels, which concentrate on the details of everyday experience of polar stations and, particularly in recent years, gender relations. Sharing much with travel memoirs, they explore the continent's impact on individual subjectivity, emphasizing its power to jolt those who visit it out of their stale relationships or dead-end jobs, cluttered lifestyles and damaged emotional states. These novels are the focus of Chapter 5.

The Antarctic ice is powerfully associated with the ability to preserve. Historic huts, old biscuits, rubbish tips and explorers' dead bodies are kept in pristine condition by the extreme cold. This effect, along with the unfamiliar diurnal rhythms of high latitudes, gives the sense that time progresses differently in the far south. Historical events seem closer, even present. Stories in which characters are 'frozen in time' are common in

Antarctic literature, from nineteenth-century reports of a ship drifting for decades around Antarctic waters, her captain and crew snap-frozen in place, through 'lost race' adventures set in a temperate Antarctic continent, to a time-travel story in which Oates walks out of his tent into the far future. This same sense of preservation both motivates and complicates current attempts to protect Antarctica, to leave the icescape untouched. In the final chapter, I examine the ways in which creative writers have explored Antarctica's anomalous relationship with time and end by asking what hopes and fears Antarctica holds for us in the future.

CHAPTER 1

Speculative Visions of the South Polar Regions

You are aboard the *Pole Star*, anchored in Danger Bay, Antarctica. You are part of an expedition investigating the disappearance of a satellite designed to monitor damage to the atmosphere. You go ashore and discover a secret laboratory run by an unscrupulous corporation intent on destroying the environment to extract financial profit; or you become embroiled with Russian spies; or your attempt to sabotage a submarine captained by a CIA operative backfires and you die in an implosion; or you steal a glider, only to perish in a whiteout; or a shipboard fire forces you to camp on an ice floe, but (alas) you sink and are eaten by killer whales.

These are some of the many narrative possibilities of Choose Your Own Adventure 89, *South Pole Sabotage* (1989). 'You' are interpellated as a boy by the book's illustrations, and the fictional world its (female) author Seddon Johnson evokes is one of male derring-do. The series is designed for teenagers, but its various paths accurately rehearse the standard ingredients of a thriving adult genre of Antarctic fiction: the action-adventure-eco-techno-thriller. The ease with which *South Pole Sabotage* distils the typical characteristics of the Antarctic action-thriller indicates the predictability of this genre.[1] The continent harbours mysterious (often alien or supernatural) secrets, but also hides very material activities. Rival adventurers, companies or nations vie for the control of resources, which range from lost tribes (sometimes with strange and useful powers) to gold, oil, uranium or plutonium. The adventures involve subterfuge, sabotage, terrorism, espionage and the occasional Nazi; renegade scientists, hidden military operations and Antarctic Treaty violations; crevasses, whiteouts and vicious animal attacks; helicopters, submarines and hovercrafts. The books tend to have two-word titles such as *Ice Station*, *Ice Reich*, *White Night*, *Black Ice*, *Big Ice*, *Freeze Frame*, *Tempest Down*, *Antarctic Fury* and *Cold War*.

In some ways these novels say very little about Antarctica. Matthew Reilly, author of *Ice Station* (1998), had no great personal, aesthetic or

intellectual investment in the continent in which he set his bestseller. He researched his novel by reading books from his local Sydney library and located his next adventure in the jungles of Peru. '[R]eally', Bill Manhire suggests, 'the shooting might be happening anywhere'.[2] *Ice Station*, however, is not quite a case of 'Insert Exotic Location Here'. The novel revolves around competing agents from Britain, France and the United States intent on controlling an alien spacecraft frozen deep in the ice. Reilly believes that Antarctica's 'openness' – the suspension of territorial claims – makes it an ideal locale for international intrigue,[3] and its remoteness lends credibility to the extraterrestrial discovery.

The characteristics of many Antarctic action-thrillers of the last few decades can likewise be tied to contemporary political realities: mineral resources, Treaty claims and impending environmental disaster. The genre, however, has its roots in far older myths, legends and motifs that surround the continent. The speculations of Greek philosophers; the superstitions of medieval sailors; the fantastic voyages of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; the far southern utopias of the nineteenth century; the unlikely theories of John Cleves Symmes; the gothic and nautical romances of Edgar Allan Poe and James Fenimore Cooper – for anyone familiar with Antarctic literature, these traditions can be found lurking subtextually in the latest polar airport novel (and the occasional mainstream movie). What joins them all is the urge to fill in the blanks, to speculate – be this speculation purely conceptual (as in early attempts to conjecture the nature of a continent yet unseen) or highly material (as in more recent visions of the continent as a source of mineral riches). To understand contemporary fictional uses of Antarctica, it is necessarily to examine the continent's deep cultural history.

BEGINNINGS

The Antarctic continent is unique in literary history in its absence of an indigenous narrative tradition. Humans began inhabiting the continent more than a hundred years ago (with some born there in the later twentieth century), and specific rituals, discourses and cultural practices have developed at its various scientific bases. These practices, however, are very different from those that characterize the indigenous traditions of other continents, which are produced by countless generations living in and off the land. Modern writers have found the urge to retrofit Antarctica with origin myths irresistible. Monika Schillat's *Antarctic Bestiary* (2002) provides a mock-medieval compendium of real and imagined Antarctic

creatures. In Auden Bailey's *Drifting at the Bottom of the World* (2002), an enigmatic woman who has been working in Antarctica 'more seasons than anyone knew' tells creation stories such as 'Why Penguins Can't Fly' and 'The Origin of Antarctica'.[4] John Calvin Batchelor's *Birth of the People's Republic of Antarctica* (1983) features a mythological account, an old 'sealer's tale' told by a South Georgian, of where 'Antarctica comes from'.[5] Craig Cormick's short story 'The Land of Ice' (2006) imagines how Tupia, a Polynesian man travelling with Cook's *Endeavour*, disturbed to find himself in an icy region for which he has 'no stories', might weave a mythology around his own voyage.[6]

The most obvious place to look for early Antarctic myth is among the indigenous people inhabiting far southern lands. One story handed down by the Selk'nam (or Ona) people of Tierra del Fuego focusses on Kwáičin, a vulture-man hailing from a far southern region so cold that the water freezes permanently. Kwáičin travelled to Selk'nam land but, unable to best the local Shag-man, changed his name to Kárkai. Kárkai could control the weather, calling up on a whim sudden icy winds, storms, mist and snow from his homeland.[7] A narrative belonging to the nearby Yanama people is that of Léxuwa, an ibis-woman who, mistaken for a sign of spring, summoned up a sudden snowstorm, heavy frost and ice which continued for months until ice covered the whole earth. Eventually it melted, leaving ice on mountain slopes and in deep valleys (i.e. glaciers).[8]

More specific in its Antarctic references is the Rarotongan myth of Ui-te-rangiora, a seventh-century navigator who sailed south seeing (among other things) 'rocks that grow out of the sea … the frozen sea of *pia*, with the deceitful animal who dives to great depths – a foggy misty and dark place not seen by the sun', which the nineteenth-century ethnologist S. Percy Smith interpreted as 'quite clear[ly] … the icebergs of the Antarctic … the sea-elephant … the frozen ocean'.[9] Later commentators point to the possibility of the account being influenced by 'post-European information', putting into question historical interpretations of this and later legends.[10] Others note that 'references to ice-bergs and floe-ice need not necessarily imply an Antarctic visit': floating ice has been seen around the latitude of present-day Wellington, and visits to the South Island Fiords, or the Auckland or Antipodes Islands are possibilities.[11]

Unsurprisingly, Maori people living in the southern parts of Aeteoroa (New Zealand) have similar narrative traditions. Ken McAnergney contextualizes his own flight to Antarctica within the accounts passed down by his Stewart Island ancestors. McAnergney recounts diverse myths of the southern lights, tales of a 'god-like ancestor' who travelled

into the southern ocean following the 'great sacred whale', and stories of the creation of 'crags of ice' and a 'smoking mountain'. While the notion of actual southern ocean journeys was hard for the young McAnergney to 'fathom', he thought differently after observing calm days and taking into account his ancestors' expert knowledge of weather patterns and signs: 'An ocean journey to the Subantarctic Islands such as Campbell Island was quite a regular event, and from there special purpose voyages to the edge of Antarctica were made'.[12] In an examination of Maori associations with the Antarctic, Turi McFarlane cites another oral tradition relating to a Polynesian explorer, Tamarereti, whose crew voyaged south to investigate the southern lights. McFarlane notes that the tale is considered by Maori to be more historical than mythological, revealing 'certain understanding of the physicality of the Antarctic region': high ice cliffs and mountain ranges beyond, the disappearance of the sun and spectacular auroral displays.[13]

For English-speaking novelists, the proximity of Maori peoples to the Antarctic was clearly suggestive and often became one ingredient in an incoherent jumble of exoticized images of indigeneity that were drawn upon in populating the southern continent. The 'jet black' people who occupy islands near the South Pole in Poe's *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838) speak a language possibly based on Maori, but also containing elements of Hebrew;[14] the 'Antarctic Esquimaux' briefly mentioned in New Zealander Julius Vogel's *Anno Domini 2000, or, Woman's Destiny* (1889) speak 'a language curiously little different from the Maori dialect' and take winter sojourns on Stewart Island where they facilitate a trade in seal skins and ivory;[15] and J. M. Walsh's pulp science fiction story, 'When the Earth Tilted' (1932), recounts the discovery of a lost race of blonde, blue-eyed and white-skinned people who speak a language similar to Maori – they are descendants of the ancient continent of Mu.

Antarctica itself becomes a Mu of sorts in Robert Argod's non-fiction work, *Out of Antarctica: Reflections on the Origins of Peoples* (2004). The legend of Ui-te-rangiora, along with other myths of an endless night, a disappearing sun and sheltering from the cold, is marshalled by the mariner Argod not as evidence that Polynesians *visited* the Antarctic regions, but rather that they *originated* there. Argod contends that the founding myths not only of Polynesia but also China, Japan, Egypt, Greece, India and Mesopotamia suggest that 'their origin is to be found near one of the poles'.[16] He contends that the Antarctic continent was inhabited in an earlier period and abandoned once conditions changed: 'All knowledge comes perhaps from that land where, once upon a time, the climate

was pleasant. Plantations, orchards, industry, craftsmanship, writing and metallurgy developed, but those who came ashore were as starving as wild beasts. What had been Eden and Paradise had been transformed into Hades, Tartarus, Erebus and Sheol'.[17] Argod draws on multiple mythologies to make his case for an Antarctic originary continent, but his speculations about this alternatively paradisal and hellish land are themselves most usefully read in the same vein, as contemporary rehearsals of competing early visions of the continent. Even in the twenty-first century, the mythologization of Antarctica continues apace.

Although – or perhaps because – European culture prior to the last few centuries had very little knowledge of the extreme south, it developed elaborate theories of the region. Many histories of Antarctica open by observing that the continent was a speculation before it was a reality: the ancient Greeks hypothesized a large southern land mass to balance that of the north.[18] It is always pleasing if the opening of one's narrative coincides with a seminal point or person in cultural history: thus the word *Antarktikos*, meaning 'opposite … the constellation of the Bear', indicating more broadly 'opposite to the north' (*OED*), is usually attributed to Aristotle. There is little evidence, however, for this auspicious beginning; the original source, on the rare occasions it is cited, is the treatise translated as *On the Cosmos*, very likely a forgery of Aristotles' work produced hundreds of years after his death.[19] The term *Antarktikos* occurs forty-seven times in the extant ancient Greek corpus,[20] but not prior to Hipparchus in the second century BC.[21] According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the first known English usage of the adjective 'Antarctic' occurs (pleasingly) in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Treatise on the Astrolabe* (c. 1391); the word can also be found in a version of *Mandeville's Travels* that appeared around the same time (c. 1385). Renaissance maps occasionally use the name *Terra Antarctica* – the Antarctic land – rather than *Terra Australis*.[22] The proper noun 'Antarctica' is less easily pinned down, but appears to have been in use by the turn of the sixteenth century; Bernadette Hince's *Antarctic Dictionary* points to a 1505 letter of Amerigo Vespucci.[23] It was only at the turn of the twentieth century, however, that the noun began to move into regular usage.[24]

Antarctica's early cartographical origins are equally murky and open to debate; the intellectual genealogy of the concept of an antipodean continent varies from one text to another. A recent account gives the following as the 'bare few facts' that can be guaranteed: 'From at least the time of Aristotle in the fourth century BCE, scholars were discussing the idea that the earth is a sphere. From at least the time of Aristotle, scholars were discussing the idea that the earth is divided into five climatic zones.… And

from at least the time of Crates in the second century BCE, scholars were discussing the idea of southern hemispheric lands'.[25] The zonal theory, which can arguably be traced back to Parmenides, designated the far northern and southern zones as frigid.[26] Ptolemy in the second century AD believed the Indian Ocean to be surrounded by land, with Africa and Asia joined to its south, and gave the hypothetical southern landmass that this view entailed the name *Terra Incognita*. Others, such as Macrobius in the fifth century AD, thought the southern continent was separated from the north by ocean. When European exploration of the south began in the fifteenth century, the belief in a temperate, inhabitable southern continent was widespread. This unexplored continent then became the repository for all manner of fears and desires; in Renaissance maps, it acted as a 'screen for mental projection'.[27] Mutated humans, animals real and fantastic, and monstrous and demonic creatures inhabited the southern *Terra Incognita*.

Classical thinkers not only developed the basis for the far southern continent's geographical extent and climate, but also speculated about its physical nature. Eric Wilson explains that early notions of the far south were split between 'positive and negative interpretations', with, for instance, Crates and Strabo considering the region 'a waste' and Eratosthenes, by contrast, believing both poles to be 'paradises'.[28] The influence of this dichotomous view of the southern land is evident, Wilson argues, in the various mythologies that developed throughout later periods, with visions of a terrifying, monstrous south competing and oscillating with dreams of a cornucopian world awaiting exploitation.

While the Greek *Antarktikos*, and its later reincarnation as the *Terra Australis Incognita* of medieval and Renaissance maps, forms part of Antarctica's deep cultural history, it is a mistake to speak of it straightforwardly as an early 'version' of the continent we now know. The hypothetical landmass changed shape and size depending on the cartographer, but in many of these maps takes up a large part of the southern hemisphere, overlapping with the areas where both Australia and Antarctica are found in a modern atlas. 'It was only by complicated exploratory and cartographical stages', writes Carl Murray in analysis of early mapping of the southern continent, 'that these two parts of the old Terra Incognita … were finally separated'.[29] It makes little sense, then, to cite the Great Southern Land as a conceptual prototype for either Australia or Antarctica alone.

It makes no more sense to claim that early fictional representations of this landmass are 'set' in one continent or the other. Bishop Joseph Hall's *Mundus alter et idem* (1605)[30] is '[g]enerally believed to be the earliest

Figure 2. World map from Joseph Hall's *Mundus alter et idem* (Vltraiecti (Utrecht): Apud Joannem à Waesberge, 1643). Image courtesy of the Rare Books Collection, State Library of Victoria. The artist is Pieter van den Keere.

example of preexploration Antarctic fiction',[31] but the categorization needs to be applied with caution. While Hall's satire includes an intriguing description of the land lying directly under the Pole, and its editors identify the setting as Antarctic,[32] the continent he describes covers most of the southern hemisphere, incorporating existing knowledge of New Guinea as well as Tierra del Fuego.[33] A map accompanying some later editions of the satire depicts this sprawling continent, 'thereby satirizing the contemporary view of an immense South Land' (see Figure 2).[34] Numerous early utopias, satires and fantastic voyages set in *Terra Australis Incognita* could, like Hall's, be claimed as vaguely 'Antarctic', without adding much specific to understandings of the continent's representation. In the tradition of auspicious beginnings, one critic argues for an Antarctic setting for Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), noting that 'Houyhnhnmland [is located] 45 degrees latitude south of Australia';[35] but this places it further from the South Pole than Venice is from the North Pole. The origins of Antarctic fiction are as nebulous and ambiguous as the history of human discovery

of the continent. A useful approach is not to search or argue for 'firsts', but to examine the elements of early imaginative texts set in *Terra Australis Incognita* that may have had an impact on authors when, in the nineteenth century, Antarctica became a geographical reality.

THE UTOPIAN CONTINENT

From its etymological and geographical conception in Greek thought, Antarctica has been defined as a place of opposition and inversion. In the early eighteenth century, at the beginning of actual European encounters with far southern latitudes, it is possible to find uses of the adjective 'antarctic' (with a lower-case 'a'), signifying '[d]irectly opposite, contradictory, antipodean'; the adverb 'antarctically', to refer to one who behaves '[i]n an antarctic or contrary way, in direct opposition'; and even the verb, to 'antarctic it', meaning '[t]o go to the opposite extreme' (*OED*). Antarctica, the yet-unseen continent clinging to the bottom of the world, became in this tradition a figure for inversion, contrariness and otherness.

Prior to the Enlightenment, notions of antipodean opposition could be very literal, with the antipodes considered the location of the 'archetypal Other': monstrous creatures who walked upside-down, or had the bodies of animals, or two heads.[36] In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, however, the sprawling southern continent (not yet disposed of by Cook's voyages) lent itself more frequently to political or ideological opposition, becoming a favoured site for the overlapping genres of the utopia, utopian satire and fantastic voyage. The unknown southern regions provided an ideal 'no place' in which writers could imagine new modes of being which inverted, contradicted, exaggerated or otherwise satirized their own. Numerous examples of southern-land fiction fall into this tradition,[37] including Hall's aforementioned satire; Gabriel de Foigny's *Australe connue* (The Southern Land, Known, 1676), which features an antipodean population of hermaphrodites inhabiting an extensive continent with a mountainous 'polar end' extending down to the sixtieth parallel;[38] Robert Paltock's *Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins* (1751); and Nicolas-Edmé Rétif de la Bretonne's *La Découverte australe par un homme-volant* ('Austral Discovery by a Flying Man', 1781), which includes a far southern utopia ('Megapatagonia') in which 'all is upside-down and back-to-front'.[39]

Hall's novel – which in modern translation is entitled *Another World and Yet the Same* – features the South Polar land of 'Moronia', a vast, cold, but densely populated region, whose inhabitants are large, stupid and contrary. The area directly beneath the Pole, 'Moronia Aspera', is 'a

mean place: a region mountainous, rocky, and perpetually bound in ice' with a 'dry and extremely cold climate'. The inhabitants of one province live in isolation (communicating only on Thursdays) and prefer to remain indoors – partly because of the 'impenetrable' and 'nearly perpetual' darkness. They spend their time 'imagining and conceiving what was never done and never will be done' (one imagines that he is dead, another that he is a mole): ironically, these early literary inhabitants of the Antarctic occupy their time inventing fictions for themselves.[40] Other parts of the region feature 'frenzied' cannibalistic savages; a towering mountain of skulls; witches, werewolves and ghosts; and a cave with icicles like jaws in which the 'disturbed souls of melancholic people' are rumoured to be tortured.[41] Motifs found in later gothic Antarctic fiction can certainly be located in *Another World*, but then so can images which have no obvious place in the South Polar literary tradition: a golden swamp, a city made of wood, a salty river. The vision that emerges is heterogeneous, which is no surprise, because Hall is much less interested in the South Polar region as a place in its own right than as a canvas on which he can draw a satirical portrait of English society, presenting 'a vision whereby the English Renaissance will ultimately produce a degenerate society that is simply up-sidedown'.[42]

Paltock's *Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins* occupies a similar position within the Antarctic literary tradition. This novel is clearly set in high latitudes: the hero is shipwrecked on an island located, according to the extended title, 'near the South Pole', and later travels even further south to visit a utopian civilization of flying people. There are references to icebergs, white mountains and unusual diurnal patterns.[43] It is unsurprising, then, in geographical if not generic terms, that the back cover of one edition claims it as 'the first genuine science fiction novel set in Antarctica'.[44] Again, however, its setting is fairly incidental. The bulk of the text describes Wilkins's adventure with the flying people he discovers in the southern regions, his encounters with them both satirizing European society and 'presag[ing] … the real cross-cultural relations that were about to unfold in the South Pacific'.[45] The far south primarily acts as a remote blank space onto which the concerns of other regions are displaced. Given that, at this stage, Antarctica had not even been sighted, it could hardly have another function.

Making little impact when it was first published, *Peter Wilkins* began reaching a wide audience in the early 1780s, when hot-air balloon journeys generated interest in its narrative of flight.[46] Another factor may have been a growing fascination with far southern latitudes following

Cook's voyages of the 1770s. It was also these voyages, however, that finally dispelled the myths of an inhabitable land stretching over much of the southern hemisphere. *Terra Australis* was by now divided into the Australian and Antarctic continents, and Cook confirmed that the latter, if it existed, was cold and icy (at least at the perimeter) and confined to far southern latitudes. An ice-covered, inhospitable landscape could be expected to present a problem for writers intent on depicting an ideal world, but nineteenth-century utopianists dealt deftly with this obstacle by treating it, literally, as something to be negotiated in order to reach the temperate, inhabitable region beyond it. The myth of a paradisal southern land was not dispelled by Cook's reports, merely reworked. Most utopias of the period feature a temperate or semi-tropical southern region bounded by ice at its perimeter. This Antarctica is a topographical hybrid of new data and long-standing mythology. The belt of ice conveniently provides the requisite barrier between the utopian location and the wider world: a controlled experiment in social organization needs to be as free as possible from outside influence.

A dogged revision of the *Terra Australis* myth in the face of mounting evidence to the contrary, the idea of a warm polar region hidden by walls of ice nevertheless drew support from some explorers' accounts and (pseudo)scientific reasoning. In 1823, James Weddell led a British sealing voyage into the far southern latitudes, meeting severe cold weather and seas littered with ice. Pushing south, however, he encountered changed conditions. Whales surrounded the ship, petrels covered the ocean and no ice at all could be seen: 'The evening was mild and serene', he observed, 'and had it not been for the reflection that probably we should have obstacles to contend with in our passage northward, through the ice, our situation might have been envied'.[47] The ships reached 74°S in what is now the Weddell Sea, a record southern latitude that held for the next eighteen years. Weddell's experience gave credence to the idea of a temperate South Polar sea – an idea that echoed speculations, widespread in the early- to mid-nineteenth century, about an open Arctic sea.[48] The knowledge of the earth's oblation (its flattening at the poles) suggested to some that both the Antarctic and the Arctic might draw warmth from their closer proximity to the earth's core. An open sea at the South Pole – scattered with inhabited lands and surrounded by a barrier of ice – appears frequently in nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Antarctic speculative fiction.

As other regions of the earth were increasingly explored and occupied, this hybrid Antarctica – part fact and part mythology, ice-bound but

temperate – continued to flourish as a setting used both by utopianists, for whom it became a space for social and political speculation, and also by writers of utopian satires and dystopias, who found it equally effective as an oppositional site from which to critique their own societies. James Fenimore Cooper chose the latter option in *The Monikins* (1835), which depicts a series of Antarctic lands inhabited by hyper-intelligent monkeys. Both natural and social hierarchies are turned upside down in Cooper's Antarctica: the monikins claim to have evolved from humans, and they invert the class differences of the group of humans who sail down to visit them, treating the cabin boy as a prince and the rest of the expedition members as his retinue. These inversions are literalized in the monikins' anatomy: their brains are in their tails rather than their heads. The protagonists find themselves in two different Antarctic lands: Leaphigh (a satirical portrait of England), where snobbery and social stratification prevail; and Leaplow (America), where social equality is enforced by the cropping of the monikins' tails. Although Cooper had access to far more knowledge of high southern latitudes than did Paltock or Hall, he similarly engages very little with the specifics of place.[49] Essentially aimed at highlighting the nonsensical aspects of the British and American social, political and legal systems, *The Monikins* instead deploys the metaphorics of opposition that had become attached to *Terra Australis* over the previous centuries.

Inversions of various sorts characterize later texts. In the South Polar world depicted in 'The Atlantis' (1838–9), a pseudonymous unfinished utopia-of-sorts sometimes attributed to Poe,[50] 'emperours, kings, popes, cardinals, lords, bishops, and all the great men of former times' are 'condemned to labour on the highways or become porters, waiters, lackeys, carmen, and servants', in an attempt to 'distribute justice'.[51] Canadian novelist James De Mille's utopian satire, *A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder* (1888), depicts a perverse Antarctic society in which the native Kosekin (a possible echo of 'monikin') despise wealth, power and rank, and fanatically seek poverty and servitude. In 'The Republic of the Southern Cross' (1905; translated into English in 1918) by Russian writer Valery Brussof (or Bryusov), the South Pole is the location for the capital city of the eponymous Antarctic nation, itself a paradoxical combination of extreme democracy and extreme autocracy. This city is struck by a catastrophic epidemic of 'the disease of "contradiction"', in which 'the victims continuously contradicted their wishes by their actions',[52] saying yes when they mean no, for example, or going left instead of right, or harming those they want to help. The South Pole here provides an ideal locale for a study of 'the inherent contradictions which exist in a hypothetical [political] system'.[53]

One late nineteenth-century utopia doubles as an early example of Antarctic soft-porn:[54] *Revi-Lona: A Romance of Love in a Marvelous Land*, was published privately by Pennsylvania-based lawyer and doctor Frank Cowan in the 1880s.[55] A prefatory 'Advertisement' to the novel summarizes its plot and gives a sense also of the tongue-in-cheek tone that pervades much of the narrative:

> This book has been written in a plain, straight-forward and truthful manner, to tell how a big and brawny man, with many of the vices of his sex and years and a few of the virtues, went from the backwoods of Pennsylvania to the South Pole of the Earth and found, in a volcanic or hot-water wilderness, an isolated oasis of tropic warmth and rare fertility, containing strange survivals from a bygone geological age, and inhabited by a remnant of a former continental people, enlightened, white-skinned and of surpassing beauty, but voiceless – a perfect but petticoated paradise, where big and beautiful women ruled and little and learned men obeyed in a marvelous communistic government.[56]

As the advertisement makes clear, the Antarctic society depicted in *Revi-Lona* is characterized by a partial inversion of gender relations (women are physically larger than men and take all government positions). This is very much in the tradition of the antipodean utopia (Hall's Moronia is likewise subject to female rule), but also reflects growing *fin-de-siècle* anxieties about women's rights. In *Revi-Lona*, the protagonist Anson Oliver directly links gender inversion to geographical inversion: '"you [the occupants of Revi-Lona] embody the surroundings of the southern pole of the planet, I embody the environment of the northern hemisphere"'.[57] The novel's real purpose is anti-feminist: the matriarchal society is established merely to show how easily (if inadvertently) the 'big and brawny' Oliver can conquer it. Any fears generated by the positing of a harmonious society ruled by powerful women are defused by the rulers' readiness to respond to his amorous advances (a good deal of the narrative is taken up with descriptions of his sexual exploits). By the end of his six years in the Antarctic, he has fathered ninety-eight children from forty women and convinced the new mothers to embrace the practice of suckling and nurturing their children, rather than handing them over at birth to a communal 'baby farm'. This is one of many 'revolutionary' changes catalysed by Oliver's presence: he brings 'new blood, new ideas, new seeds, new diseases – new everything'.[58]

The title of one late nineteenth-century novel, *Neuroomia: A New Continent* (1894) by Australian author George McIver, captures the essential function of Antarctica in utopias of the pre-twentieth-century period. In the face of the realities brought home by hundreds of years of European

colonization, the continent offered a new, ideal, resource-filled space to be imaginatively colonized – an experiment in wishful thinking. McIver's protagonist, a sea captain who has 'accumulated a small fortune' through 'successfully whaling' in southern waters, discovers in Neuroomia a lush region with plentiful gold and 'large tracts of virgin soil and forest'.[59] A slightly earlier Australian novella, Christopher Spotswood's *Voyage of Will Rogers to the South Pole* (1888), similarly describes a continent (the aptly named Bencolo) blessed by copious natural resources: animals, birds and fish are abundant, the wood supply is 'wonderful' with 'no limit to the quantity', and there is 'plenty of silver and gold'.[60] These visions were likely spurred by attempts in the late 1880s to send an Australian expedition south, or at the very least to impress 'the practical advantages of [Antarctic exploration] on the public mind'.[61] Neither fictional experiment suggests a particularly coherent vision of high-latitude society; McIver throws into his narrative all manner of established utopian motifs – flying people, the lost continent of Lemuria, an inhabited Mars – without exploring any one idea in depth. Both authors, however, emphasize the importance of the far south as a source of new, abundant resources – the prerequisite, in their accounts, for an ideal society.

The advent of land-based exploration of Antarctica at the turn of the twentieth century signalled the decline of the far southern utopia, although this process was surprisingly gradual. Texts such as Charles Curtz Hahn's 'Wreck of the South Pole' (1899), Charles Beale's *Secret of the Earth* (1899), Albert Bigelow Paine's *Great White Way* (1901), Frank Savile's *Beyond the Great South Wall* (1901), John Mastin's *Immortal Light* (1907), E. Bauer's 'Forgotten World' (1931) and Paralee Sutton's *White City* (1949) continued to rehearse the established utopian conventions of the genre – warm southern continents, tunnels and subterranean spaces, lost civilizations – and added to them more up-to-date mysteries such as telepathy and ether waves. The attempts of Scott, Shackleton and others to explore the interior of the continent – and their failure to find lost races – do not appear to have affected the utopian speculation about the continent in the short term.

Gradually, however, the increasing human experience of the continent meant that a group of (comparatively) more realistic Antarctic narratives grew up alongside this utopian tradition. As the twentieth century wore on, Antarctic utopias themselves changed focus, taking their cue less from decontextualized dreams of perfect societies than from the historical and political realities of the continent. The best example of the far southern utopia in the post-Treaty period is Kim Stanley Robinson's *Antarctica* (1997). Before turning to recent Antarctic speculations, however, it

is worth narrowing in on the part of the continent that has been more mythopoeic than any other: the Pole.

POLAR PORTALS

As both cultural critics and creative writers have observed,[62] the poles are characterized by paradoxes. They are points of cartographical and astronomical significance but are marked by no physical feature: 'nothingness's centre of gravity, one patch among many on the map'.[63] They are both central (points on the axis around which the earth turns and cartographically where lines of longitude intersect) and marginal (remote, relegated to the edges of maps). The South Pole is doubly marginal from a European perspective, being 'opposite' the better-known northern regions and far more remote than the remote Arctic. Thus, in Dante's *Inferno*, Ulysses recounts that for his last voyage into the unknown he chose to head southwest until he saw 'the stars / of the other pole'.[64]

Ulysses is one of the earliest in a series of literary voyagers who journey, escape or are exiled to the edges of the world. But just as strong as the centrifugal forces flinging unsuspected travellers to the margins of the known are centripetal forces luring them in to the centre of nothingness that is the Pole. While Ulysses and his men are rejoicing at the sight of a towering mountain coming out of the sea, they are caught in a whirlwind, their ship spinning around until the waters close over their heads.[65] This is a version of one particularly robust polar myth, that of the polar vortex or whirlpool, which in later fiction becomes something simultaneously desired and feared, the source of both annihilation and ultimate insight.

The notion of some kind of opening at the South Pole is of ancient origin. Victoria Nelson observes that in classical thought the poles were initially astronomical rather than terrestrial features, fixed points in the heavens around which the stars appeared to revolve. According to the ancient Greeks, it was at these astronomical poles, the extreme northern and southern points of the heavens, that respective openings existed for the departure of souls after death and their return at rebirth. The terrestrial poles were correspondingly the places where the celestial axis met the planet's surface – interfaces between earth and the heavens.[66] During the Renaissance, Nelson explains, this cosmology was projected onto the earth, and the mythological holes in the heavens became terrestrial holes.[67]

This idea dovetails with legends of a North Polar whirlpool, found at least as far back as the lost fourteenth-century work *Inventio fortunata*.[68]

Several sixteenth-century maps (e.g. Johannes Ruysch, 1507) depict waters rushing in towards the North Pole to form a kind of vortex. In text accompanying a 1604 map, Urbano Monte claims that water flows into the earth through both poles.[69] Other global topographies were based on inversion rather than symmetry. The cosmographer and mathematician Johann Schöner's globes of 1515, 1520 and 1533 demonstrate his belief in the topographical opposition of the North and South Polar regions: the earlier globes show a ring continent around the South Pole, and a landmass at the North; the 1533 globe by contrast features land ringed around a watery North Pole and a landmass at the South.[70] In his *Mundus subterraneus* (1665), seventeenth-century Jesuit Athanasius Kircher outlines a model of the earth in which the North Polar vortex is balanced by a corresponding one at the South Pole through which waters emerge. Joscelyn Godwin notes that Kircher justified this model partly by an argument likening the earth to the human body: the earth absorbs useful minerals from the waters taken in at the north, and '[t]he undigested remains are then expelled at the nether end'. The North Pole, in this mythology, is the mouth of the world, which absorbs nutrients for its ongoing survival. This puts the South Pole, as Godwin suggests, 'in a most undignified position'.[71] As with the Greek notion of a southern hole as a kind of birth canal for returning souls, the Pole is a place where the borders of inner and outer space are breached.

Writers of proto-Antarctic fiction seized upon the notion of the polar whirlpool. The narrator of an anonymously published French novel *Relation d'un Voyage du Pôle Arctique, au Pôle Antarctique* (1721) relates an old sailor's tale that 'under the north pole there was a terrifying whirlpool ... in the middle of which there was a bottomless pit into which the waters of the sea flowed through to the center of the earth and out to the Antarctic'. His own whaling vessel is caught in this watery vortex and emerges in the Antarctic regions. South Polar discoveries that ensue include large man-eating flying fish and a 'remarkable structure made of white stone' covered in 'bizarre inscriptions' – presumably a sign of some kind of civilization.[72] The eponymous protagonist of Paltock's *Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins* suffers a similar misadventure on a lesser scale: after his ship is thrown upon a large rock, he ventures out in a boat, which is violently 'whirled round and round' in a cataract.[73] This takes him beneath the rock and into a subterranean stream that, several weeks later, delivers him into a pleasant wooded land surrounded by impenetrable rock. The whirlpool motif re-emerges from time to time in later Antarctic literature, perhaps most ambitiously in the dramatic production

Figure 3. Illustration of the whirlpool scene from *Australis, or, the City of Zero*, from a souvenir programme accompanying the performance. Image courtesy of the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.

Australis; or, The City of Zero, performed in 1900–01 to celebrate Australia's federation. Subtitled 'An Entirely Original, Musical and Spectacular, Pantomimic Extravaganza of the Future', the production featured such attractions as a 'Comic Ballet of Polar Animals'.[74] The third act saw the princess of the South Polar city of Zero cast into a terrifying Antarctic whirlpool by the villain. The scene, which looks spectacular in an illustration included in a souvenir publication of the script, must have posed some staging challenges (see Figure 3).

Other luring devices could substitute for or combine with the whirlpool. The idea of a magnetic mountain at the North Pole that attracted ships containing iron stretched back at least to Ptolemy[75] and was still extant in the sixteenth century when the Swedish writer Olaus Magnus advised mariners to use wooden pegs in the construction of ships, as iron would be pulled towards the North Pole.[76] Both Johann Ruysch's 1507 and Gerhard Mercator's 1595 maps of the world show a magnetic mountain on the North Pole, with waters rushing towards it, and the same kind of logic applied to the opposite Pole. Hall's mountainous Moronia Aspera is home to rocks of iron; Peter Wilkins' shipwreck is caused by a rock containing 'a great Quantity of Loadstone … one vast Magnet'.[77] Another mechanism producing the same effect is a strong (and sometimes warm)

current that draws numerous fictional mariners south in nineteenth-century tales.[78] These are only the more popular of the diverse means by which protagonists of fictional narratives are compelled towards the Pole: Coleridge's ancient mariner and the narrator of Poe's 'MS. Found in a Bottle' (1833) are blown south when their ships come in the path of tremendous winds; Will Rogers, the eponymous hero of Spotswood's novel, is dragged southward by a whale. Few people who go to Antarctica in pre-twentieth-century fiction do so deliberately.[79]

If the South Pole is not considered a blank – a piece of flat land, sea or ice – but a physical feature which pulls objects and creatures towards it, then logically it must lead somewhere. In this view, the poles themselves, rather than mere abstract points, are gateways offering new spaces for exploration. For some authors, such as Poe, the arrival at the polar centre signals a moment of ultimate insight but also necessarily an annihilation.[80] In many nineteenth-century texts, however, the some*thing* at the Pole is also a physical gateway to some*where* else. This notion was no doubt partly generated by the same sense of diminishing horizons that produced *Neuroomia*, as well, perhaps, of disappointment that actual exploration of the ice-bound Arctic and Antarctic regions was revealing only more ice. One particularly effective way of solving the problem of diminishing horizons was to suggest that the horizontal – the surface of the earth – was not the only available space. Many years before Edwin Abbott's Flatlanders discovered a new dimension, writers of far southern fiction were exploring new topographies to which the Pole gave imaginative access.

The best-known example of such topographical speculation in Antarctic history is the theory of the hollow earth. This notion can be found in ancient mythologies of various cultures,[81] with the seventeenth century seeing the emergence of pseudo-scientific interpretations such as Kircher's. Most prominently, Edmund Halley put forward a model in which the earth's interior was structured as a series of hollow spheres, possibly with its own internal light source, allowing life.[82] The idea found its most enthusiastic proponent, however, in the unexpected figure of American ex-army captain John Cleves Symmes.

In 1818, Symmes issued the first of a series of pamphlets arguing that the earth was hollow, and its interior inhabitable and accessible via ice-girt holes at the poles. He requested support from his fellow Americans in his quest to explore the interior world to which the poles gave access. While dismissed as ridiculous by many, the idea nevertheless had its devotees; there was, as Spufford observes, 'something of profoundly American appeal in Symmes' idea that limitless new territories awaited discovery

beneath the earth's crust'.[83] Moreover, the theory gave creative writers the benefit of providing '*something* at the poles, some climactic *thing* commensurate with the finality of the poles, rather than an expanse of ice significant only by geographical convention'.[84]

The myth of the hollow earth, re-invigorated by Symmes, informed speculative fiction of the Antarctic for the next century, starting with the pseudonymous utopia *Symzonia* (1820), which some believe to have been written by the theorist himself.[85] The narrator/author Adam Seaborn sets off on a 'voyage of discovery' in the guise of a sealing expedition, taking copies of Symmes's publications with him. After negotiating an ice barrier around the southern polar hole, he enters the interior of the earth, discovering a utopian society of startlingly white-skinned people, which brings into relief the baseness of his own world. Critics have argued over whether *Symzonia* should be considered satirical; Peter Fitting's conclusion that it satirizes American society, but not Symmes's theory itself, is convincing.[86] In *The Monikins* (1835), Cooper more obviously pokes fun at Symmes's idea: the warm climate his intelligent monkeys inhabit is produced by steam issuing from the centre of the earth, a hole at the South Pole acting as 'the great safety valve of the world' by literally allowing it to expel gas – an image only marginally more dignified that Kircher's.[87]

Late nineteenth-century adventure romance writers seized on the idea of an inhabitable subterranean world beneath the polar continent, sending explorers down various holes, chasms and caves to a fantastic underground world within. Beale's *Secret of the Earth* (1899), for example, sees two brothers pilot their airship through the northern hole, past an interior tropical land inhabited by a utopian civilization, to emerge at Antarctica, where they spot a lone polar bear making its way across the ice. Even the Australian explorer Douglas Mawson, not usually known for his flights of fancy, penned a hollow-earth-inspired short story entitled 'Bathybia' (1908) during his time with Shackleton's *Nimrod* expedition: a group of Antarctic expedition members climb down the centre of an enormous volcanic cone, where they encounter a humid environment abounding in plant and animal life.

By the later twentieth century, writers were taking more playful approaches to the hollow earth, with pastiche and alternative history becoming favoured genres. Steve Utley and Howard Waldrop produced 'Black as the Pit, from Pole to Pole' (1977), a hollow-earth sequel to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and homage to Poe and Lovecraft (among others); Richard Lupoff sent Howard Hughes, Amelia Earhart and Charles Lindbergh through the southern hole as co-pilots of a dirigible

in a round-the-(toroidal)-world air race in his alternate history adventure *Circumpolar!* (1984); Rudy Rucker wrote a postmodern reply to *Pym* and its various imitators in *The Hollow Earth: The Narrative of Mason Algiers Reynolds of Virginia* (1990); and Thomas Pynchon took his boy's-own adventurers 'The Chums of Chance' (also travelling in the obligatory dirigible) on a brief hollow-earth adventure via a 'great portal' surrounded by ice in *Against the Day* (2006).[88]

In an ironic twist, just as the trope of a polar hole seemed exhausted and relegated to pastiche, it reappeared in a newly serious and newly threatening form: the ozone hole over Antarctica. This atmospheric phenomenon may seem a long way from Symmes's theories, but the widespread embrace of the image points to the longevity of polar mythology. Researchers have suggested that the adoption of the term 'ozone hole' in preference to other phrases such as 'thinning of the ozone layer' was due to its greater 'element of drama'. Conjuring up the prospect of 'irreparable damage' rather than 'a tissue which is threadbare and can be repaired', the hole metaphor was 'a powerful image that had enormous impact on the world public'.[89] While this explanation is convincing, it is also possible that the deep-seated cultural memory of the polar abyss fed into the image. Fittingly, the present-day Antarctic 'polar vortex' – an atmospheric rather than oceanographic phenomenon 'in which stratospheric air moves in a circular motion, with an area of relatively still air in its centre'[90] – is an important factor in the annual formation of the ozone hole.

The hollow earth, with its associated holes, vortexes and whirlpools, was not the only topographical alternative to the disappointing blankness of the poles. An intriguing inversion of the conceit of the polar hole occurs in the early nineteenth-century utopian satire *Armata* (1817), written by British lawyer and former Lord Chancellor Thomas Erskine. In Erskine's narrative, a ship sailing from New York to China via New South Wales is blown off course, and eventually drawn through a narrow sea channel surrounded by whirlpools to a new planet, 'Deucalia'. The protagonist reasons that earth and Deucalia are joined like 'a double-headed shot' with the channel acting as the 'chain' between them, and all three revolving around the sun in unison.[91] This conceit of a twin planet then enables Erskine to provide a defamiliarized account of British history, politics and society, disguised as a description of the country of Armata, an island of Deucalia. The arrangement of the two planets suggests that the linking channel emanates from earth's South Pole, and an inhabitant of the new world confirms that the poles of the planets 'point in opposite

directions';[92] however, the narrator withholds the geographical details of his journey and makes no mention of the icy southern regions observed by Cook. Like others before him, Erskine is interested in constructing an ingenious blank space, not engaging with the realities of an increasingly known one. Nonetheless, his notion of a channel between earth and an undiscovered planet holds an important place in the Antarctic fiction tradition, literalizing the concept of the Pole as an axis connecting the terrestrial and celestial spheres, and pre-empting numerous later narratives in which the South Polar region becomes a gateway to outer space.

The idea of a South Polar interplanetary channel lay dormant for much of the nineteenth century until it was updated and reworked in Gustavus Pope's *Journey to Mars* (1895). The protagonist, Lieutenant Frederick Hamilton, travels south with a polar expedition in 1891. Unusually, Hamilton is not pulled or dragged through the ice barrier, but rather walks across it. With his companions, he climbs a glacier which gives him a view of the open sea beyond. The next episode, however, sees Hamilton and two others involuntarily taken south by a current when they become trapped in a cavern formed by the coalescence of two icebergs. This device – 'an icy tomb' in which they are 'buried alive' – is one of which Poe (who is mentioned in the novel) might have been proud. Released by members of what they initially assume is a hollow-earth people – Symmes's theory, among others, is enlisted in support of this idea – the explorers (now two in number) travel with their new friends five hundred miles to the South Pole. This is marked, predictably, by a whirlpool of sorts: a 'great eddying circle of waters … thrown in a terrible tumult'.[93] They are informed, to their amazement, that their companions intend to take them via a magnetic current to an advanced civilization on the planet Mars. Earlier notions of polar vortices and sea channels are repackaged in nineteenth-century pseudo-scientific discourse:

> Not only our planet and yours, but every member of the solar system is united in one common bond of brotherhood by the Cosmo-magnetic currents running from one to the other. These currents are generated at the poles of each planet, and flying with immense velocity across great spaces lying between, join them in one fraternal bond of union.[94]

Most of the following action takes place on Mars, so Pope's text, like Erskine's, can hardly be claimed as 'set' in Antarctica, but *Journey to Mars* is nonetheless striking for its deployment of many of the images and ideas of previous far southern fiction.

Pope's Martians were the first of scores of alien creatures to crash-land, become buried, build civilizations and plan the take-over of the earth in a fictional Antarctica. The theme was particularly popular in the American pulp science fiction magazines of the 1920s and 1930s, a period during which the United States became involved in Antarctic exploration after a long hiatus. High-profile expeditions and flights by Richard Byrd and millionaire Lincoln Ellsworth brought the continent into the public spotlight. All sorts of exotic creatures inhabit Antarctica in the science fiction of this period, with arthropods particularly in evidence (intelligent crabs, giant insects and lobster/human hybrids[95]), but the stories that dominate are those involving aliens, such as John W. Campbell's 'Who Goes There?' (1938) and H. P. Lovecraft's *At the Mountains of Madness* (1936). By 1940, the Antarctic alien plot was established enough for the young Arthur C. Clarke to parody it in the fanzine *Satellit*e. In Clarke's short story, entitled 'At the Mountains of Murkiness, or, From Lovecraft to Leacock' (1940), a polar expedition encounters an ancient alien race dwelling in caves in the Antarctic. Surprised at the aliens' detailed knowledge of their language and culture, the expedition members ask how they have maintained contact with the outside world. The aliens' reply is revealing:

> That was simply arranged. We started writing stories about ourselves, and later we subsidized authors, particularly in America, to do the same. The result was that everyone read all about us in various magazines such as *Weird Tales* (of which incidentally I hold 50 percent of the preference shares) and simply didn't believe a word of it. So we were quite safe.[96]

They have remained just as safe ever since.

Within the flourishing genre of far southern science fiction, the polar portal remains a recurring theme, with Pope's 'magnetic current' usually updated to a wormhole (a hypothesized feature of Einsteinian physics in which the curvature of space-time produces a 'shortcut' between otherwise distant points). The heroes of Scott Browning's novel *Searchers* (2001) find such a phenomenon inside an Antarctic mountain, one of 'countless tunnels connect[ing] different parts of the universe' springing from 'quantum foam';[97] in Robert Hood's 'Cross Currents' (2005), a suspected dark energy wormhole whisks a bewildered biologist from the depths of Lake Pell to a moon of Jupiter. It only stands to reason that, in the popular television series *Stargate*, one of the eponymous portals should be discovered buried in Antarctic ice. Like the great southern land, the polar hole has not been discarded as Antarctica has become increasingly known, just reworked.

AVARICE AND EXPLOITATION

Where the myth of the polar whirlpool can lead both inwards to the gothic tales of Poe and outwards to other planets and alien encounters, an interrelated strand of Antarctic mythology and fiction is more interested in material than conceptual speculation. Running alongside and sometimes entwining with the myth of the polar abyss is another set of legends in which the geographic poles are not marked by absence but by presence: the large lodestone of medieval legend; the magnetic mountain sitting above a whirlpool in Renaissance maps; an ice mountain in the 1721 anonymous novel *Relation d'un Voyage du Pôle Arctique, au Pôle Antarctique*; a large man-made fountain in *Neuroomia*; the pointed towers of the Town Hall of the South Polar city in 'The Republic of the Southern Cross'.

A new dimension to this legend appears when the polar presence has not only symbolic but also monetary value. The theory that the Pole was marked by a large deposit of gold was in circulation at least by the time Daniel Defoe published *New Voyage Round the World* (1725): the narrator of this novel skeptically describes the belief that 'if there was any Land directly under the Poles, either *South* or *North*, there wou'd be found Gold of a Fineness more than Double to any that was ever yet found in the World' – hence the movement of the compass needles to these centres of 'the most pure Metals'.[98] Patrick O'Brian's *Desolation Island* (1991), set in the Napoleonic Wars, has a drunken whaler talk wildly of 'the great continent that must lie round the pole, of the gold that was certainly there, and of how he should ballast his ship with the ore'.[99]

The myth only really found traction in South Polar literature, however, around the turn of the twentieth century. By this time, the potential mineral wealth of Antarctica was beginning to draw attention and the mythical mountain of gold reappeared in (slightly) more realistic form. Neuroomia and Bencolo both offer abundant gold: Will Rogers returns from the latter country armed with a supply 'pressed' upon him during his travels, and can live as an independent man thanks to his cargo.[100] Garrett P. Serviss's science-fiction novel *The Moon Metal* (1900) opens with the discovery that 'gold existed near the south pole in practically unlimited quantity', thus precipitating the collapse of 'the entire monetary system of the world'.[101] Ships laden with gold (and golden ships) are a common motif in Antarctic fiction. A good example is in the children's book *Biggles Breaks the Silence* (1949), in which the Special Air Police sergeant must defeat an unscrupulous man of unknown but dubious nationality to

Figure 4. Illustration from William Earl Johns's *Biggles Breaks the Silence*. The artist is Leslie Stead.

retrieve the gold and rescue a madman who has been living in the ship that holds the cache (see Figure 4). ‘Several Governments have an eye on the South Pole’, observes Biggles, who takes a cut of the salvaged gold as reward for his troubles: ‘[T]hat's nothing to wonder at.... They call it the White Continent, because it's in the grip of eternal ice and snow; but nobody knows what metals, coal and oil there may be in that ground for the first nation to tame it’.[102] As Biggles is aware, gold is only one of many possible resources to be found in (or through) Antarctica, which becomes in this brand of fiction a symbol of riches of all kinds awaiting exploitation. Its spoils range from the realistic (seals and whales), to the speculative but feasible (minerals, oil and precious metals), to the paranoid

(uranium, plutonium and caches of nuclear weapons), to the outlandish (buried spacecraft, beautiful [but icy-cold] women and satanic cults with useful supernatural powers).

Alongside these visions of Antarctic exploitation run concerns about the devastation that might be its consequence. James Fenimore Cooper's second, far more realistic Antarctic novel, *The Sea Lions; or, The Lost Sealers*, provides an early example.[103] Published in 1849 but set thirty years earlier during the height of the Antarctic sealing boom, Cooper's novel is a highly structured morality tale focussing on two ships, both named 'The Sea Lion'. The two vessels journey in search of a secret sealing ground located within a group of islands near the Antarctic circle. The ships are captained by two contrasting characters: the protagonist, Roswell Gardiner, and his foil, Jason Daggett. Roswell is sensible, prudent and generous where Daggett is foolhardy, greedy and self-centred. Daggett's rapacious attitude towards the sealing grounds and his determination to fill his ship no matter what risk condemn the two vessels to over-wintering. Both men see no moral problem in exploiting the sealing grounds, but Roswell shows at least some restraint, some acknowledgement of the future, in his attitude towards the seals. Their different methods are compared and contrasted throughout their near-identical journeys, with Daggett and most of his crew eventually dying in the Antarctic, and Roswell returning with a cache of seal skins (as well as treasure from the Caribbean). While the main focus of the novel is Roswell's spiritual transformation (he accepts the divinity of Jesus during an epiphanic experience triggered by the Antarctic environment), it can also be read as a call for sustainable harvesting of Antarctic marine mammals – a response, no doubt, to growing (and completely justified) worries at the time that seal populations in the region were becoming dangerously depleted.

Many early Antarctic narratives include brief gestures of concern about the exploitation of the continent. When the heroes of *La Découverte australe* encounter Cook heading south on his second voyage, they are eager to prevent his discovering the Antarctic utopia of Megapatagonia and are relieved when he sails north.[104] Will Rogers likewise tells no one of his discovery of Bencolo, reasoning that 'it would be a pity' if further European contact disturbed its 'peaceable and innocent' citizens.[105] Even *Revi-Lona* has a proto-environmental message: the 'perfect commonwealth', with its 'pure and happy people' and 'lovely land', having existed in an 'impenetrable encasement of ice for ages in a perfect equilibrium', is finally destroyed by the introduction of 'novelties … in the way of ideas, microbes, seeds and the like'.[106] The central concern in these

texts, however, is not so much the Antarctic environment but its human culture – the corruption of an established, civilized society by an outside intruder.

Fiction focussing on the 'wilderness values' that would become so central to the protection of Antarctica emerged, unsurprisingly, with the environmental movement in the 1960s. A typical example is *Monday at McMurdo* (1967), by Australian journalist David Burke. In a preliminary note, Burke frames the novel as 'fiction based on fact', drawn from his 'first-hand experience at McMurdo'. The narrative revolves around the secret plans of an American congressman, Eric Hassan, to mine a hidden supply of Antarctic gold using nuclear power. For Hassan, the silence and stillness of the continent are threatening: 'I feel like importing a jazz band to make some noise, or driving a diesel tractor through it ...' Opposing him is veteran British explorer, Dr Armsworth, who views the continent not as a set of resources to be exploited but 'something sacred, something beautiful'. Although Hassan attempts to murder Armsworth to prevent his plans being foiled, the explorer nonetheless dies to save his attacker and his party. When a sight-seeing tour goes wrong, Armsworth chooses to walk to his death so that the reduced team can make the flight to base more safely, his emulation of the sacrifice of Scott's companion Lawrence Oates demonstrating his adherence to Heroic-Era codes of behaviour. While Hassan is eventually devoured by killer whales – a reassuringly gruesome end – Armsworth is resigned to the eventual exploitation of economic resources in the continent: 'One day there will be gold mined in Antarctica, I suppose, when the world is hungry enough for it. A lot of other minerals we've found will be dug out too ... They'll harvest plankton for food from the seas. Tourists will come.' Presciently, he identifies the possibility of 'a new age of doom – the retreat of the ice and a rise in the world's sea levels', but believes this natural process 'won't happen for another hundred thousand years'.[107] Burke's novel shifts the legend of Antarctic gold into a new frame, introducing elements – nuclear power, tourism, exploitation and shrinking ice-caps – that would become common in the developing genre of the eco-thriller.

The following decades brought growing awareness of the need for environmental protection of the Antarctic. The 1959 Antarctic Treaty had made some provisions for the conservation of flora and fauna and banned nuclear explosions and the storage of radioactive waste, but many issues remained outstanding. The question of possible mineral exploitation became increasingly pressing in the 1970s and 1980s, spurred by the 1972 oil crisis. At the same time, the preservation of the continent became

an important symbol in environmental movements, with calls for it to become a World Park.[108] The refusal of Australia and France to ratify a convention regulating mineral resource activities led to the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty (or 'Madrid Protocol') in 1991, which banned mining for fifty years. These political and economic pressures, tensions and resolutions were reflected in fiction. For example, in David Smith's *Freeze Frame* (1992), published a year after the Protocol was adopted, a film-maker discovers a covert uranium mine, powered by a nuclear reactor, operating under the guise of scientific investigation near a French station. Other nations interested in mining attempt to discredit Greenpeace and unsettle plans for an Antarctic World Park by orchestrating apparent eco-terrorist attacks around the globe. By the novel's conclusion, the World Park concept is gaining traction internationally, and the rogue mining station, with its nuclear reactor, has been swallowed up during a shift in the Antarctic ice. Numerous other variations on this theme can be found in far southern eco-thrillers of the period.[109]

A different form of exploitation occurs when the continent is not simply plundered for its resources but itself becomes a resource – raw material that can be shaped into a usable product. Here, the nineteenth-century fantasy of discovering a temperate or tropical continent within a ring of ice becomes the twentieth-century fantasy of constructing one. One pulp science fiction story from the early 1930s, 'The Antarctic Transformation' (1931), sees a geologist discover various geysers, fed by a 'mighty passage of [subterranean] superheated waters', in the Antarctic interior. Noting that there was once a 'land of warmth and life' under the ice, he decides to harness the heat to 'restore … the primeval fertility of the continent, creating a blooming paradise, capable of supporting a great civilization, where was now a frozen waste'. A few obstacles notwithstanding, this dream is achieved via an enormous construction project. The frozen south becomes habitable, 'cities, villages, industries covered the land, connected by numerous broad highways on land and by air', 'valuable materials of all kinds' await exploitation and a 'happy new commonwealth in the Continent of Antarctica took its place in the world, to the benefit and enrichment of all'.[110]

While the environmental movement broadly, and the Antarctic Treaty System more specifically, have quelled such visions of transformation, there are still signs of the dream lingering. One recent online Alternative Reality Game – a postmodern equivalent of the 1930s pulp science fiction magazine – was entitled 'Antarctic Regional Terraforming Project: Altering the Landscape for Humanity'.[111] The game asked players to 'Imagine the

day when you can travel with your children to a safely regulated world of lush green forests and untouched lake beds, leaving behind the troubles of an over-populated life in a big city'. In this alternative reality world, more than one hundred habitable environments have already been maintained in Antarctica for several years. This is, of course, speculative fiction, but the U.S. programme's recent construction of a permanent route – often dramatically dubbed a 'highway' in the media – from McMurdo Station to the South Pole makes notions of terraforming the continent seem alarmingly close.

While mineral exploitation depends on riches found (speculatively) under Antarctica's white expanses, and terraforming relies on their radical transformation, other narratives focus on the promise and threat of the ice itself. Fictional icebergs are towed northwards to bring relief to hot climates (Louis Nowra's *Ice*, 2008) or develop ambitions of their own, escaping their bounds and threatening population centres (James Follett's *Ice*, 1978). Environmentalists use them to highlight ecological catastrophes (Russ Madison's *Man Who Watched Trash*, 2001) or (perversely) to manufacture them (Michael Crichton's *State of Fear*, 2004); nations display them to demonstrate sovereignty claims and technological capabilities (Ariel Dorfman's *The Nanny and the Iceberg*, 1999).[112] Ice sheets fracture, collapse, defrost or are deliberately melted for nefarious reasons (Christopher Bonn Jonnes's *Big Ice*, 2003; Judith and Garfield Reeves-Stevens's *Icefire*, 1998). Perhaps the ultimate literary encapsulation of Antarctic avarice occurs in Kevin Brockmeier's *Brief History of the Dead* (2006), which takes place at an unspecified future time – presumably the later twenty-first century. The protagonist, Laura Byrd, is sent to Antarctica by the Coca Cola Corporation to 'explore methods of converting polar ice for use in the manufacture of soft drinks'[113] – the ice is melting anyway, they reason, and concerns about water-safety have put a premium on purity. These plans are made redundant by a virus that wipes out the planet's population, leaving Byrd (fittingly) alone: the ultimate commercialization of the continent is prevented only by the end of the humanity itself.

SCIENCE AND UTOPIAN SPECULATION IN KIM STANLEY ROBINSON'S *ANTARCTICA*

Not all future visions of Antarctica are quite this bleak. The 1959 signing of the Antarctic Treaty, with its dual goals of political and scientific cooperation, gave novelists, particularly those working within the utopian mode, new material to explore. Brian Aldiss's *White Mars, or, The Mind*

Set Free: A 21st-Century Utopia (1999), for example, examines the possibility of applying the legal and political structures surrounding Antarctica to the colonization of Mars. The novel includes a 'Charter for the Settlement of Mars' closely based on the Antarctic Treaty, and concludes with a note from the author demanding that Mars 'be treated as a "planet for science", much as the Antarctic has been preserved'.[114] What remains ambiguous in Aldiss's novel, however, is what kind of science Mars should be reserved for, and whether science itself can ever be the uncorrupted neutral enterprise that the author's note would seem to presume.

The utopian and dystopian possibilities of both Antarctic politics and science are central to Kim Stanley Robinson's *Antarctica*, one of the most prominent far southern genre novels of recent decades. The novel's back cover promises many of the standard ingredients of the South Polar eco-thriller: 'oil companies intent on mass extraction, adventure travellers trailing waste across the tundra, strategic interests covertly vying for influence ...'[115] Robinson, however, combines this usual generic formula with the longer tradition of the Antarctic utopia; and where early utopianists could treat the continent only as a blank space upon which to project ideas and concerns relevant to societies elsewhere, Robinson is able to draw upon the continent's own short but unique political history.

Antarctica followed on the heels of Robinson's epic trilogy *Red Mars*, *Green Mars* and *Blue Mars*, hailed by cultural theorist Fredric Jameson as 'the great political novel of the 1990s'.[116] Robinson's awareness of the parallels between Martian and Antarctic colonization, both in terms of the physical environment and the potential for utopian politics, is evident in the trilogy. His Martian colonists live as a community in the Dry Valleys of Antarctica for more than a year, preparing themselves as best they can for the harsh environment and social insularity of their planned Martian settlement. Mars, for the colonists, appears initially 'like Antarctica but even purer', and threats to the utopian principles of the 'Mars treaty' are compared to the 'chip[ping] away' of the 'fragile and idealistic' Antarctic Treaty on which it is based.[117]

In the Mars trilogy, one character notes that a scientific station can never be a true utopia because 'there is never a case of truly pure research'. Scientists happily 'carve out islands' for themselves, he explains, but 'the people who pay for the scientist islands will eventually want a return on their investment'. In *Antarctica*, this cost is cited as approximately 'ten thousand [American] dollars a day per scientist'. And in the near-future dystopia established at the outset of Robinson's narrative, the world has indeed finally called in a return on this investment; the ideals of the

Antarctic Treaty can no longer be sustained. The narrator describes the Treaty in retrospect as 'a fragile thing, a complex of gossamer and blown glass which had spun in the light of history like a beautiful mobile … until it got caught in the pressures of the new century, and at the first good torque shattered into a thousand pieces'.[118]

As Robinson's reference to the 'pressures of the new century' makes clear, his gradient of political and technological extrapolation in the novel is so slight that the border between future and present is almost imperceptible. The issues which characterize Robinson's dystopian earth are those facing humanity now: global warming, over-population, environmental degradation, international squabbling over resources, and a voting public stalled in a conservative, anti-utopian 'gridlock'.[119] These characteristics are initially reproduced, rather than negated, in Robinson's fictional Antarctica: the ice-caps are shrinking, the Ross Ice Shelf has broken away, mining companies have moved in, and the Antarctic Treaty, up for renewal, has been stymied by American corporations along with developing nations desperate for resources. All the undesirable features of contemporary Western life supposedly negated and opposed in Antarctic stations have re-appeared, or perhaps have merely been revealed: McMurdo or 'Mac Town', with its buildings dubbed the 'mini-mall' and the 'Holiday Inn',[120] represents a microcosmic version of the late-capitalist dystopia with its own labour exploitation and class system. Utopian desire has been channelled into controlled, compartmentalized consumer experiences, such as adventure-tourism treks that continually re-enact famous expeditions within managed and comfortable circumstances. Customers can choose between a wide range of past Antarctic narratives, 'from Mawson's death march to Borchgrevinck's mad winter ship'.[121] Even previous Antarctic utopias have been co-opted into this Disneyfied format. The 'last frontier' of utopian space is, quite literally, melting away.

The implications of the scenario that Robinson establishes are that the Antarctic community can never be a closed system and the utopian values of the Antarctic Treaty cannot be sustained if they are embedded in a world that opposes them. The challenge for Robinson's characters, and Robinson himself, is to imagine a space for the re-building of this utopia, or rather for a new utopia that is not an island in space or time but is continuous with the rest of the world: 'Whatever is true in Antarctica', one character insists, 'is also true everywhere else'.[122]

Towards the end of the novel, a space is indeed opened for the re-building of an Antarctic utopia. A worker-owned co-op is established at McMurdo, and the legal structures are developed to allow for the harmonious co-existence of three groups: the inhabitants of the station, a

community of 'ferals' carving out their own ecotopia in the ice, and environmentally conscious mining corporations. And it is the values of science (itself a 'utopian politics', according to one character[123]) that cement the unlikely alliance between these groups. This utopia-in-progress is far from simplistic or easy: Robinson writes into the tradition of the late twentieth-century 'critical utopia', a genre that shows 'awareness of the limitations of the utopian tradition' and focusses 'on the continuing presence of difference and imperfection within the utopian society itself'.[124] The Antarctic scientific utopia envisaged in Robinson's novel must be constantly reinvented.

Near the middle of Robinson's novel, Wade Norton, advisor to a Washington senator, visits the South Pole. Once he has recovered from the novelty of being there, he becomes a little bored: 'the South Pole was not a place where there was much to do'. Much of the area around the station is off limits to him, the indoor space in which he is forced to spend time is 'a weird cross of military base, airport lounge, lab lounge, and motel', and the only recognition of his location is a barber pole topped by a mirror ball, some way from the actual geographic Pole.[125] Things change, however, when he befriends a few of the locals, who take him on a tour very different from the official one he has received. They introduce him to the 'old old station' (built in the mid-1950s for the International Geophysical Year), and a nearby 'waterslide' they have constructed, an icy tunnel which plunges five stories down into a warm underground lake (the station's water source). Like a 'luge rider', Wade shoots 'down down down down … sliding in a stream of warm water over cold slick ice, and all in pitch-blackness so there was no way of telling where he would go next'.[126] After the shock of plunging into a pool of hot water, he relaxes, sloshing, splashing, laughing and talking with his unseen but familiar companions. Soon, however, he is confronted with another new experience:

> … one of the women called out, 'Whirlpool, whirlpool!' People began to move by Wade around the perimeter of the pool, all in the same direction; and soon enough he was pulled along as well, in the whirlpool growing because of their movement. 'At the North Pole we'd go the other direction, right?' No one replied.
>
> Floating in blue-black darkness. Spinning down a maelstrom, blind.… While submerged he turned and tumbled, upside down, rightside up; it got hard to tell, it did not matter, except when it was time to breathe. He let the water tumble him however it wanted to. He was flotsam.
>
> …. He did not want this rolling tumble-over ever to stop. Apparently no one else did either, for it went on and on and on and on and on and on and on. Eventually it achieved a sort of no-time, a limbic limbo, such that

> afterward Wade could not have said how long it went on; perhaps an hour, perhaps two. What in the world could possibly tempt them back from such amniotic bliss?[127]

The hot pool, with its blissful, boundary-less experience, lies beneath the restricted, bureaucratized zones of the station. Textually, beneath this episode itself lie further literary strata of which Robinson is clearly aware: the mythology of the polar abyss and vortex, Poe's terrifying maelstroms, the whole tradition of polar speculative fiction. Robinson's whirlpool in one sense domesticates polar mythology: the icy tunnel down which Wade plunges is no mysterious abyss but a space purposefully (if illicitly) constructed by the locals; his journey is made comfortable by a stream of hot water; and he goes down by choice, knowing his destination, a pleasantly heated pool filled with friends, which can be exited at will. Wade experiences the frisson of danger in full knowledge of his safety. Earlier in the novel another character, Val Kenning, reflects on her experience of leading paying customers on re-enactments of various famous Antarctic journeys, 'even fictional expeditions like the one in Poe's "Message Found In a Bottle" (including the whirlpool at the end)'.[128] South Polar mythology, like the Pole itself, is now contained, controlled and tamed.

Robinson's achievement, however, is in acknowledging this domestication of Antarctic space while still offering it as a site of hope for the future. His whirlpool may be tame compared to Poe's maelstroms, but where Poe's abysses offer annihilation and death, Robinson's vortex has more the quality of birth. Eventually Wade and his companions must emerge from their womb-like space to eat, rest and re-enter their lives. The concluding chapters of the novel see Wade campaigning energetically for a renegotiation of the Antarctic Treaty which will accommodate the interests of scientists, 'ferals' and environmentalists while acknowledging the continent's potential role in assisting the world's energy needs.[129] Legislated as a zone of international cooperation and peace, and protected by stringent environment sanctions, Antarctica in the twenty-first century may no longer be inaccessible or unmapped, but nevertheless continues to signify speculative, even utopian, spaces that are yet to be fully explored.

CHAPTER 2

Bodies, Boundaries and the Antarctic Gothic

Like the unconscious, it is always there
At the bottom of the world.
– John Russell Rowland, 'Antarctica'

In late 1912, Morton Moyes, one of the members of Douglas Mawson's Australasian Antarctic Expedition, was accidentally left alone in an isolated hut near the edge of an ice shelf for more than two months. A sledging party had left the hut with the intention that one member, Charles Harrisson, would return after the initial leg to keep Moyes company. When the party arrived at their depot, however, they discovered that a sledge they had left there in readiness had blown away. Needing more supplies than their remaining sledge could hold, they had no choice but to bring Harrisson and his sledge along with them. Moyes was left in a position far worse than that recounted decades later by Richard Byrd in his book *Alone* (1938). Where Byrd deliberately isolated himself in a remote Antarctic station, Moyes had no choice in the matter. Byrd had radio contact with his base; Moyes had no such luxury. Worse, Moyes did not know why his companion had not returned and spent many days searching the first part of the sledging route, tortured by the possibility that Harrisson or indeed the whole party might have fallen down a crevasse. Nor could Moyes be entirely sure that the 'restless ice' his hut perched upon – which rumbled, boomed and cracked incessantly – would not split, casting him adrift on an iceberg.

This is a fitting scenario for a horror film, and it is not surprising that, despite his efforts to calm himself by maintaining his routine scientific observations, Moyes's imagination sometimes got the better of him. As he describes in a later account of the experience, the silence that surrounded him quickly came to seem 'oppressive and unnerving', the creaking of the glacier 'ominous' and his own laughter 'uncanny'. He began to think of the glacier as 'something alive' and its creaking as 'ominous'; the space

outside his hut was a 'creeping waste'; his solitude was like 'an unseen presence'; and when he played music, he felt he was revealing himself to 'some prowling enemy'. He explains:

> I could at times think of all Antarctica as … a slow-brained sentient being bent on making a man part of itself: … sprawled gigantically over nearly six million square miles, immovably gripping the southern cap of the earth – deceptively solid and lifeless but actually full of movement and change, with a low amoebic vitality … some it conquered, grafting them indivisibly to its body …

Alone in the hut, he recalls, he speculated on his own end, wondering whether, when his fellow expedition members eventually returned, they would find him 'raving mad or dead in this pit of ice'.[1]

The image of Antarctica that Moyes conjures up in his account of his lonely months sits in direct contrast to the stereotypical view of the continent as a 'wide white page' – an open, flat, featureless, canvas-like space. The Antarctica that surrounds Moyes is insistently three-dimensional and, far from featureless, has disturbing and changeable spatial properties. It is an engulfing, amorphous, threatening body that can literally swallow a hapless explorer. Left on his own, Moyes began to see the Antarctic ice-scape in terms of an intimate relationship with the human subject, recognizing its ability to threaten his sense of self, both physically and mentally. His reaction recalls Yi-Fu Tuan's theory of icy spaces (outlined in the Introduction), in which the stark juxtaposition of the 'homeplace' and 'alien space', without the presence of a mediating 'home space', generates a fear of being incorporated into an enormous otherness. Moyes writes that during his time in the hut his world 'fell into two parts: Out There and In Here'.[2] It is not surprising that, alone in a very limited homeplace, he imagined the alien space which began outside his door in terms of a huge absorbing creature. Without the buffer of the home space, the border between In Here and Out There – hut and environment, body and landscape, self and other – becomes precariously fragile.

This image of the Antarctic as a place of amoebic shapelessness and changeability, where boundaries are breached, selves engulfed and minds unhinged, is not unique to Moyes. A very different text, Rosie Thomas's recent novel *Sun at Midnight* (2004), sees the female protagonist term Antarctica 'that giant white mouth. She sensed it, outside the pathetic barrier of the hut walls, opening up to swallow her. She understood why the old explorers had found it so difficult to extricate themselves'.[3] Both passages need to be contextualized within a mythological and literary tradition – a tradition that sprang from the early speculations about

polar abysses described in Chapter 1, gathered strength with the adoption of Antarctica as a gothic landscape by nineteenth-century writers, permeated the most famous twentieth-century science fiction horror stories set in the far south and continues to influence the continent's role in popular novels and films today. This tradition exploits the symbolic resonances of Antarctica's position on the underside of the world, casting the continent as a repository for both humanity's deepest fears and its hidden, forbidden desires.

POLAR PSYCHOTOPOGRAPHY

Moyes's description of his experience, which combines a horror of absorption by a larger body with a fear of mental dissolution, asks for analysis in psychotopographic terms – that is, terms that recognize the way in which 'inner psychic processes' are projected onto 'an exterior landscape'.[4] In her *Secret Life of Puppets* (2001), Victoria Nelson outlines a psychotopographic theory of the poles. She begins by noting the 'long-standing human tendency to see inner psychological contents – images of wholeness, and ultimately of the self – reflected back from the larger physical contours of our planet'. This is an ancient identification reaching back to Greco-Roman cosmology, but it 'continues to flourish long past its allotted historical moment in science as well as in literature and film of the fantastic'. Within this tradition, the poles have a dual function: 'In microcosmic terms ... they are the orienting loci of the psyche, but by the same token they are also the least known, the farthest from consciousness'. The 'pattern of the southern journey', typified by Coleridge's 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner' (1798), is thus 'an archetypal sea trip from a bustling port (consciousness) to Terra Australis Incognita (unconsciousness), where a transcendental encounter takes place that initiates either the integration of the self or the possibility of psychic (and physical) annihilation'. Nelson discusses both polar regions in similar terms, but suggests that the 'greater remoteness' of the South Pole gives it added resonance within this framework.[5]

The South Pole, however, is not simply more remote than the North Pole from the inhabited world. The Western worldview in which the Arctic rests on the top of the planet and the Antarctic clings, spider-like, to its bottom brings an asymmetry to polar psychotopography. At least since Freud, parallels between mental and physical landscapes have frequently assumed a depth model of the psyche, with the darker, less accessible aspects of ourselves – the id, in Freud's terms – imagined as sitting

somehow 'below the surface'. This means that the metaphorical southern journey is not simply a journey inwards but also downwards, a journey that penetrates the darkest, deepest regions of the unconscious. The asymmetry between north and south is evident in the kinds of narratives that dominate Antarctic myth and literature. Joscelyn Godwin observes:

> The mythology surrounding the North Pole has tended to be positive: it is always the Arctic that is imagined as the location of the endless springtime and the cradle of noble races. The Antarctic, on the other hand, is negative: it evokes tales of gloom and destruction, and is populated by primordial horrors or else by their recent representatives, the Nazis … In short, the North is the positive and the South the negative pole of the earth.[6]

Godwin lists various nineteenth- and twentieth-century examples which reinforce this north/south polarity: Madame Blavatsky terms the South Pole 'the *pit*, cosmically and terrestrially – whence breathe the hot passions blown into hurricanes by the cosmic Elements';[7] occultist Kenneth Grant considers the South Pole to be Satan's abode.[8] Direct correlations in literature are easy to locate. Canadian James De Mille's utopian satire *A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder* (1888) depicts an Antarctic civilization that embraces death and darkness, and practises human sacrifice and cannibalism. Dennis Wheatley's *The Man Who Missed the War* (1945) sees the protagonist encounter a group of Antarctic Satanists using long-range electrical forces to aid the Nazi war effort. The bottom of the world, it would seem, is a fitting locale for evil, both human and supernatural.

Eric Wilson, in his *Spiritual History of Ice* (2003), complicates this view by arguing that the far south has been the site of two dichotomous traditions, a positive one which 'projected onto the southern void fantasies of paradise or visions of the sublime', and a negative one in which geographers cast their 'deepest phobias' upon the south, constructing it as 'the dark other, the alien planet – the antihuman, the monstrous'. Until James Cook's circumnavigation of the continent, the Antarctic remained 'the precinct of freaks', and the South Pole 'the world's unconscious, a reservoir of its repressed terrors'. As detailed in Chapter 1, medieval mapmakers and travel writers tended to construct the far south as a region where established hierarchies do not apply. Boundaries between humans and animals, men and women and head and feet break down, pointing towards 'an even more horrifying chaos: the primal void, the leviathan, Satan'. These medieval visions of monstrosity were tempered, Wilson notes, by more optimistic speculations of Renaissance explorers and cartographers.[9] A sense of the monstrous south, however, remained strong in Antarctic literature throughout the following centuries.

Explorers certainly acknowledged the negative polarity of their Antarctic underworld. John Ross named the two volcanoes he discovered in what was then McMurdo Bay 'Erebus' and 'Terror' after his ships, but the connotations of these names (in Greek mythology Erebus is both a personification of darkness and the deepest part of the underworld[10]) would not have been lost on him. Frederick Cook, who was the surgeon on Peary's first Arctic journey and two other northern voyages before joining the *Belgica* expedition to the Antarctic, was well placed to compare the two polar regions. In his account of his journey, *Through the First Antarctic Night* (1900), he writes of his fellow expedition members becoming 'sad and dejected, lost in dreams of melancholy' as the sun departed for 'the more hopeful arctic lands'. The far north, he notes, offers 'redeeming features', such as indigenous inhabitants, clear weather, and in some places, 'real solid land, not the mere mockery of it, like the shifting pack that is about us here'.[11] The *Belgica* became infamous for the cases of mental instability induced in its over-wintering men. At least three of Scott's men wrote passages in their diaries or expedition accounts comparing their surrounds with scenes from Dante's *Inferno*.[12] One of Mawson's men, writing a book review of Robert Louis Stevenson's most famous novel for the expedition 'newspaper' in 1913, observes: 'With a ninety-mile wind shrieking through the aerial, the hut quivering, the stove-pipe vibrating, and "Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde", by a still, small light … one might expect to pass a night-watch not devoid of incident. Surely satanic Mr Hyde is the presiding genius of this climate!'[13] Presumably it was not only the weather that led this anonymous reviewer to liken the far south to Jekyll's repressed other, but also a sense of being somehow 'underneath'.

To Antarctica's remoteness and its negative polarity can be added another factor central to its unique combination of spatial qualities – the ice itself. As land depressed under the weight of kilometres of ice, Antarctica is a continent of buried secrets. It is no coincidence that many far southern horror stories involve a journey not only to the ice but under it, through fissures, crevasses and tunnels to subterranean caverns. As Nelson observes, 'even as we imagine we have penetrated the farthest reaches of the Underpsyche/Underworld, something yet lies beyond and under, something hostile and deeply threatening to human reason'.[14] In contrast to the North Polar ice cap (relatively thin ice floating on water), the Antarctic icescape has enormous depth. Dramas can be played out not only on the ice but within it. This great expanse of ice, however, is not a dead weight – it is also moving, constantly sliding off the continent and slipping into the sea. Moyes's fears during his time spent alone on an

ice shelf were produced not so much by his isolation or the emptiness of his surrounds as by the activity of the ice itself. It is the icescape's continual motion – its ability to melt, crack and split – that makes him believe himself in the presence of a gigantic, threatening creature. Although other landscapes – desert sands, volcanic mud, swelling rivers – shift and change, no other continent exhibits Antarctica's extreme mutability; there is no better place for tales that explore the instability of the subject.

One useful framework for thinking about this instability and its expression in literature comes from psychoanalytical literary theory, specifically Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection, outlined in her *Powers of Horror* (1982). The abject – material (such as blood, pus, mucous, vomit or a decaying corpse) that mediates the space between the inside and the outside of the body – seems at first glance entirely inapplicable to Antarctica's pristine white expanses. At a deeper level, however, this concept aptly describes the continent's spatial properties. The abject disturbs the perceived division between subject and object, and correspondingly signals the instability of the subject's sense of unity. It is 'the jettisoned object, [which] is radically excluded and draws me toward the place where meaning collapses.... It is death infecting life ... it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us ... [it] does not respect borders'. The abject constantly threatens and seduces the subject with a return to the semiotic or pre-symbolic state, prior to language and culture. The subject is 'drawn toward an elsewhere as tempting as it is condemned ... a vortex of summons and repulsion'.[15] The abject is, as Elizabeth Grosz explains, 'the unspoken of a stable speaking position, an abyss at the very borders of the subject's identity, a hole into which the subject may fall'.[16] The polar mythology described in the Chapter 1 clearly positions the poles as sites of abjection. In Kircher's model, which likens the earth to a human body, the poles are mouth and anus, orifices that mark the border between the body's inside and outside. In maritime superstition, the poles are gaping maws: whirlpools that suck unlucky vessels in their vicinity down into the interior of the earth. Within various hollow-earth theories, these vortexes become liminal spaces between the planet's inner and outer regions. Like the abject, these polar abysses are both horrifying and seductive, threatening the annihilation of the self and promising unimaginable insight. In contrast to the Arctic, with its comparatively thin layer of sea ice, the Antarctic's great volume of continental ice provides literal versions of these mythical abysses: fathomless fissures down which an explorer might fall.

As the abject is closely linked with the female and more specifically the maternal body, any reading of the Antarctic continent within its terms is

also a gendered reading. Francis Spufford observes in his analysis of polar literature that the mythological polar holes, in Edgar Allan Poe's hands, become 'holes with teeth … holes [that] promise a delicious dissolution, sex and death fused …':[17] *vaginas dentata*, devouring wombs. With its deep fissures, which act as polar holes in miniature, and in its ability to swell and shrink and to break off – or, more specifically, 'calve off' – parts of itself, the Antarctic shares the abject qualities of the maternal body. A poem by Ernest Shackleton, published in the *South Polar Times*, figures the Ross Ice Shelf in much this way: 'Mother of mighty icebergs … the great grim giants you wean / Away from your broad white bosom …'[18] The Antarctic can be read as an unruly body that does not know its boundaries, swelling and shrinking like a pregnant woman, splitting, cracking, casting off parts of itself and crumbling away at its edges. It no surprise, then, that the continent is a source of such horror to many of the male protagonists who journey south in Antarctic literature.

FAR SOUTHERN GOTHIC

On the relatively rare occasions when Antarctica attracts literary critical attention, it is usually as a gothic locale: as the region that set in train the ghastly experiences of Coleridge's ancient mariner, produced the culminating horrors of Poe's *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838), and spawned the hideous amorphous aliens of H. P. Lovecraft's *At the Mountains of Madness* (1936) and John W. Campbell's 'Who Goes There?' (1938). William Lenz has gone so far as to identify a category termed the 'Antarctic Gothic', concentrating on Poe as its primary exponent.[19] Even ignoring Poe's considerable contribution to Antarctica's literary heritage, the continent's qualifications as a gothic setting are manifold. As a wilderness – and the most extensive and far-flung of wildernesses – it provides a site remote from civilization, on the edge of established social conventions, functioning in much the same way as the Tasmanian wilderness or the American frontier in other non-European versions of the gothic.[20] As a sublime landscape, it brings the rational mind up against its limits.[21] As a literal underworld, it suggests the monstrous, the infernal, the Satanic. Polar mythology, with its whirlpools and abysses, dovetails readily into the gothic concern with fearful, dark spaces.[22]

Antarctica's actual icescape is no less suggestive: fissures, cracks, strange shapes and calving icebergs are reminiscent of the labyrinthine and hidden passages of the gothic castle. Charles Wilkes, describing the scenery he encountered during the United States Exploring Expedition of 1838–42,

writes of bergs with 'lofty arches leading into deep caverns' recalling 'ruined abbeys, castles, and caves, while here and there a bold projecting bluff, crowned with pinnacles and turrets, resembled some Gothic keep'.[23] These spaces are intensely psychotopographic; thus, Lenz claims that 'The Antarctic, like the Gothic mode itself, is a doorway to the deepest regions of our primitive imagination'.[24] Unlike the Arctic, the Antarctic icescape suggests the archaic, the primordial. Its human history may be short – it lacks the echoes of a barbarous and exotic past of the castle or ruin – but it harbours more primal secrets, preserved within or beneath its layers of ice. It is an ideal location for horrific tales of ancient creatures that emerge from a cold sleep to wreak havoc on those who disturb their slumber.

This far southern gothic tradition is a product of historical timing as well as the continent's particular location and physical qualities. Wilkes's often-quoted analogy between an iceberg and a gothic keep is as much the result of reading the icescape through the lens of the gothic as recognizing some intrinsic property of it. When James Cook circumnavigated the continent in the 1770s, he famously dismissed the high southern latitudes as essentially hostile and useless:

> … the greatest part of this southern continent (supposing there is one) must lie within the polar circle, where the sea is so pestered with ice that the land is thereby inaccessible.… It would have been rashness in me to have risqued all that had been done during the voyage, in discovering and exploring a coast, which, when discovered and explored, would have answered no end whatever, or have been of the least use, either to navigation or geography, or indeed to any other science.[25]

Over the following decades, however, while commercial sealing voyages and exploratory expeditions were turning the Antarctic regions into a geographical reality, the aesthetics of nature were in upheaval. The continent's form slowly emerged out of a fog of speculation at the same time that the categories for its appreciation developed. When Coleridge came to write his famous gothic-horror ballad at the turn of the nineteenth century, he depicted an Antarctic that was in some ways more realistic than earlier writers' efforts. Gone are the flying people, magnetic mountains and piles of gold of previous fantastic voyages; in their place is a vastly simplified environment of mist, snow and towering icebergs. At the same time, however, Coleridge figured the Antarctic in terms of the developing Romantic aesthetic: as an eerie, sublime, oppressive setting that precipitates a series of fantastic and horrific events.

Critics debate the sources for the 'Rime', with John Livingston Lowes pointing to Coleridge's reliance on predominantly Arctic narratives, and

others emphasizing the influence of first-hand accounts of Cook's circumnavigation.[26] Lowes insists that 'Ice is ice, be it austral or boreal waters in which it floats and howls'.[27] Certainly the Arctic – along with glaciers and high mountain peaks – shares the Antarctic's overwhelming, sublime, unearthly qualities, and has been put to good use by gothic novelists (most famously in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, 1818). Canadian writers have identified their icy wilderness regions as gothic; Margaret Atwood writes of the north as 'malevolent' and 'sinister', an 'uncanny lure'.[28] Tales of horror from various expeditions in search of the Northwest Passage – especially the lost Franklin expedition, with its evidence of cannibalism – strengthen these associations. Nonetheless, as discussed previously, the far south has its own set of specific gothic resonances. Coleridge's decision to set his tale in the more remote pole was a deliberate one. The mariner does 'a hellish thing'[29] in a geographical and personal underworld before he is brought back – vastly changed – to familiar northern ground.

As one of the first literary attempts to engage with the icy realities of Antarctica (rather than simply a generic *Terra Australis*), and a famous poem in its own right, 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' has been enormously influential on the literature of the far south. Direct and oblique allusions to its images and events recur in Antarctic narratives throughout the following centuries.[30] This places a heavy burden on the relatively brief section of the 'Rime' actually set in Antarctica – only about half of the first of the poem's seven parts. The most explicitly gothic images of the narrative – the demon ship, the zombie sailors, the figures of Death and Life-in-Death – all occur outside the Antarctic region. Yet the physical and metaphorical qualities of the far south permeate the whole tale; the mariner might leave the Antarctic but he is followed by a Polar Spirit, and he continues to exist, as Wilson observes, 'in the South Pole of the mind'.[31] The title turns the poem itself into an icy object: 'rime', an archaic spelling of 'rhyme', is simultaneously a pun on 'rime' as hoarfrost or frozen mist. The Antarctic fog that envelops the mariner also shrouds his tale.[32]

Like Moyes's ice shelf, the Antarctic ice in Coleridge's poem is initially devoid of familiar signs of life: 'Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken'. At the same time it is itself uncannily reminiscent of a living creature – and not a benign one but a monster, werewolf-like in its fierceness and changeability: 'It cracked and growled, and roared and howled, / Like noises in a swound!'[33] Out of this fearful icescape emerges simply a bird native to the region. Coleridge's albatross is by now one of the most over-determined creatures in all of English literature, with critics attributing to it a diverse

variety of allegorical meanings, some of which sideline the Antarctic setting. Sarah Moss notes that while postcolonialists have read the shooting of the bird as symbolic of the violence of colonial expansion and particularly the slave trade, the polar setting works against this: 'If the killing of the albatross represents the abuse of colonized peoples, why would Coleridge choose for a setting the only uninhabited continent?' For Moss, a focus on Romantic ecology which foregrounds the far southern setting makes more sense: '… the albatross is clearly a figure of primal innocence and clearly also closely associated with the Antarctic … Coleridge may begin the tradition of imagining Antarctica as pristine Romantic nature, a landscape embodying originary purity'.[34] Wilson also sees the albatross as a synecdoche for the Antarctic icescape, but he reads the latter as a form of threatening otherness, and the mariner's seemingly arbitrary shooting of the bird as an attempt to master disturbingly unfamiliar surrounds.[35] Whatever particular crime and motive the shooting of the albatross is seen to involve, Coleridge's Antarctic is a region that reveals to the mariner the worst in himself. Once entered, it can never be left behind; the old sailor returns to it every time he relates his tale.

Poe was another teller of gothic tales who made literary voyages into the far south. He set a short story and the last part of his only novel in the Antarctic and published reviews and articles relating to the region. Poe wrote at a time of considerable North American activity in the far southern region. His first Antarctic text, 'MS. Found in a Bottle' (1833), was published not long after the return of the 1829–31 Palmer-Pendleton expedition, an Antarctic sealing and exploratory voyage.[36] In the story, the narrator's narrow adherence to the tenets of science disintegrates in the face of the mysterious forces he encounters in high southern latitudes. As in Coleridge's tale, the protagonist's craft is blown by strong winds down to the Antarctic, and, like the mariner, he encounters a demonic ship. A collision sees him thrown on board an enormous vessel sailed by men who ignore his presence entirely, seeming to exist in another dimension. Their wizened appearance and outdated equipment suggests they have been sailing for an indefinitely long period. The possessed ship is pulled south by a current, passing through 'stupendous ramparts of ice, towering away into the desolate sky, and looking like the walls of the universe'. The narrator is both horrified and thrilled by this experience: 'It is evident that we are hurrying onwards to some exciting knowledge – some never-to-be-imparted secret, whose attainment is destruction. Perhaps this current leads us to the southern pole itself'. The narrative ends with a cataclysmic descent into a polar vortex: 'Oh horror upon horror! – the ice

opens suddenly to the right and to the left, and we are whirling dizzily, in immense concentric circles round and round .... the ship is quivering – oh God! and – going down!' [37] The South Pole here is a place where the subject experiences both infinite insight and total dissolution, the sublime in concert with the abject: the 'abyss at the very border of the subject's identity'.[38]

The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket (1838) covers similar geographical and psychic territory. The stowaway protagonist, Pym, experiences a series of grim events – claustrophobic imprisonment, mutiny, an encounter with a ship full of corpses, cannibalism, shipwreck and a narrow escape from a treacherous Antarctic tribe – before running up against the limits of the world and his sanity. In the last few passages, his boat is pulled towards a terrifying cataract pouring into the earth from the heavens before its pathway is blocked by a giant white human figure. A note appended to Pym's narrative explains that its final few chapters, which might have shed some light on the enigma, are feared lost (the text is presented as the work of Pym himself, with initial help and encouragement from Poe). As with the 'Rime', the majority of *Pym* takes place outside of the Antarctic; however, as the destination to which Pym's gothic adventures inexorably lead him, the South Pole, with its surrounding mysteries, is central to its interpretation.[39]

The links between Poe's Antarctic cataract and early polar myths and theories can be traced easily. Poe was aware of Kircher's model likening the earth to a body, with holes in the polar regions for absorbing and expelling fluid, as he draws on it in another (northern) vortex story, 'Descent into the Maelstrom' (1841).[40] He was also familiar with Symmes's hollow-earth theory, with some critics arguing for *Symonzia* as a likely source for *Pym*.[41] More blatant is Poe's reliance on the work of Jeremiah Reynolds, a one-time promoter of Symmes's idea. By the time Poe came to write *Pym*, Reynolds had travelled to the far south with the Palmer-Pendleton expedition, and was campaigning for an official U.S. Antarctic exploring expedition. In 1836, Reynolds gave an address to a congressional committee arguing his case (although by this time he was ambivalent on the hollow-earth question).[42] Poe reviewed the address favourably in the *Southern Literary Messenger*, and then drew on it extensively in his novel; almost the whole of chapter sixteen is taken verbatim from Reynolds.[43] Symmes's polar holes hypothesis, along with earlier whirlpool legends, clearly lies behind Pym's final Antarctic encounter, but Poe turns it to his own purposes. As Spufford deftly describes: 'Where the Symmesians were prosaic, Poe was Gothic ... The Symmesians wanted new space to

be Columbus in, and for the poles to open on fresh expanses. Never do they seem to have realised the claustrophobic potential of a hollow earth. To Poe on the other hand the space of the poles … was always a mental space, an inward territory'.[44] Pym's narrative, like 'MS. Found in a Bottle' (1833), leads inexorably to mental and geographical implosion.

THE LEGACY OF PYM

While not in the league of Coleridge's albatross, Poe's mysterious cataract and giant white figure have been subject to many different interpretations and explanations, and not only by critics. Poe's construction of Pym's tale as incomplete, and the enigmatic nature of the concluding passages, have inspired a series of literary responses, including at least two direct sequels. In Charles Dake's *A Strange Discovery* (1899), Pym's companion in his South Polar adventures, Dirk Peters, completes the narrative. After the mysterious figure is bathetically revealed to be mist, Pym and Peters venture further south to a warm, volcanic land inhabited by descendants of ancient Romans. Poe's gothic tale is thereby reduced to a lost-race romance very typical of Dake's time. Slightly better known is Jules Verne's sequel *Les Sphinx des Glâces* (1897; published in English two years later as *An Antarctic Mystery*), which is reductive in a different sense: the enormous white figure Pym sights as he rushes towards the cataract is revealed as a giant sphinx-shaped magnet, created (it seems) through induction by an electric current flowing through the polar atmosphere. Both the terrifying magnetic mountain of polar mythology and Pym's mysterious fate become here material phenomena readily describable by science, 'terrible but strictly natural effects'.[45]

Far less confident in the explanatory power of science is H. P. Lovecraft's *At the Mountains of Madness* – the most prominent text inspired by Poe, and not a sequel so much as a new gothic tale intertextually connected with *Pym*.[46] Lovecraft's interest in the Antarctic was longstanding: by the age of twelve, he had written biographical sketches of Antarctic explorers as well as high-latitude stories of his own.[47] Published in serial form in the pulp magazine *Astounding Science-Fiction* in 1936, but written five years earlier, *At the Mountains of Madness* is an intriguing mixture of historical accuracy and extravagant speculation. Lovecraft draws closely on the circumstances of Byrd's first expedition,[48] while retroactively engineering Poe's story into his own Cthulhu Mythos, an elaborate framework of ancient esoteric knowledge constructed in his fiction. The narrative centres around an Antarctic scientific expedition which uncovers preserved alien

life-forms in a cave in the foothills of the eponymous mountains. These creatures (it is later revealed) are the 'Old Ones'– 'star-headed beings' who originally came to earth in its very early history. When scientists attempt to dissect the ancient aliens, the tables are quickly turned; by the time a support party arrives, it is a scientist on the dissecting slab. Although the Old Ones decimate the base and literally butcher its inhabitants, they are relatively benign compared with the creatures that the narrator and his companion find when they journey into caverns beneath an ancient city found higher in the mountain range. These, the real source of fear in the novel, are 'shoggoths', beings that the Old Ones originally created: 'shapeless entities composed of a viscous jelly which looked like an agglutination of bubbles'. They have 'a constantly shifting shape and volume – throwing out temporary developments or forming apparent organs of sight, hearing, and speech in imitation of their masters, either spontaneously or according to suggestion'. As the novel builds to a climax, the narrator and his companion, Danforth, hear the piping noise '*Tekeli-li! Tekeli-li!*' – a cry also uttered by Poe's Antarctic tribe. The narrator admits that his and Danforth's interpretation of the sound was no doubt influenced by their prior reading of Poe, but also notes Danforth's 'queer notions about unsuspected and forbidden sources to which Poe may have had access when writing his *Arthur Gordon Pym* a century ago'.[49] Poe's Antarctic novel thus becomes incorporated into Lovecraft's ficto-mythic system. Expecting the source of the noise to be an Old One, 'a terrible and incredible moving entity' which is nonetheless an 'entity [of which] we had formed a clear idea', the two men are unspeakably shocked to realise that it is instead a shoggoth, 'the uttter, objective embodiment of the fantastic novelist's "thing that should not be" … [a] nightmare, plastic column of fetid black iridescence … a shapeless congeries of protoplasmic bubbles'.[50] Lovecraft thus extends Poe's construction of the Antarctic as the place of ultimate enigma, introducing to the continent beings that, in their amorphousness and mutability, mimic its abject qualities.

Lovecraft's hyperbolic language is hard to top; the later twentieth century unsurprisingly saw the Poe-inspired vein of the Antarctic gothic move into a phase of pastiche and parody.[51] In Chapter 1, I mentioned Steve Utley and Howard Waldrop's 'Black as the Pit, From Pole to Pole' (1977) as a postmodern homage to the hollow-earth tradition. The authors draw playfully on the work of Symmes, Poe, Lovecraft and others while simultaneously offering a sequel to Shelley's *Frankenstein*. In their story, Frankenstein's monster does not kill himself in the Arctic, as he promises at the end of Shelley's novel, but finds his way through a polar opening

into a series of concentric worlds. Working his way down to the South Pole, he must avoid shoggoths and star-headed Old Ones; emerging at the surface, he encounters Pym in his boat heading towards the polar cataract. By this stage, the monster has become covered in white volcanic ash – this, then, is the solution to the giant white figure that Pym encounters at the end of Poe's novel. Most of the places in which the monster finds himself throughout the story are hellish, but the Antarctic is worst of all. He imagines his creator addressing him: 'Welcome to the Pit, Frankenstein said …. Hell, demon. Hell. You are home'.[52] The sight of the white whale Moby-Dick breaching, however, creates an epiphany for the monster, who, realizing his freedom, heads north. Utley and Waldrop intersperse the narrative with accounts of the various works and authors they borrow from, so that the reader cannot overlook their self-conscious intertextuality.

The Antarctic gothic has not, however, entirely dissolved in the face of postmodern playfulness; its tropes still inform science fiction and horror texts. For example, the continent is a lurking presence throughout the science fiction television series *The X-Files*, and comes to the fore in the feature film of the same name, released in 1998. The plot has agents Mulder and Scully investigating what appears to be an alien virus. When Scully is infected and kidnapped, Mulder chases her down to a secret underground installation in Antarctica, where she is being held, along with many others, as a human incubator for aliens. Mulder manages to extricate Scully and bring her to the snowy surface just as it begins to collapse, revealing the installation to be a massive alien spacecraft in the process of lifting off. The concluding moments of the sequence see Mulder and the unconscious Scully on the edge of an enormous circular abyss where the craft has been. The image neatly (and with no apparent irony) merges Poe's polar abyss with the twentieth-century tradition of Antarctic aliens hidden in the depths of the continent.

THE POLAR VORTEX

The psychotopographic possibilities of an abyss at the South Pole were not limited to Poe and the sequels he inspired. An intriguing variation on the whirlpool myth occurs in an obscure story, Malcolm Ferguson's 'The Polar Vortex', published in *Weird Tales* (a pulp magazine focussing on horror and the fantastic) in 1946. More than any other piece of Antarctic fiction, Ferguson's story directly addresses the relationship between the South Pole and the human psyche. As in Poe's Antarctic stories, the narrative moves inevitably towards a final annihilating moment of insight as outer and

inner space, ego and id, spiral together. In this case, however, the vortex is located in the celestial rather than the terrestrial sphere.

'The Polar Vortex' features three nested narratives, with the outermost frame introducing the eccentric 'multi-millionaire turned scientist' Leopold Lemming and the experiment made 'in connection with his observatory at the South Pole'. Records left after Lemming's death point, according to the frame narrator, to a 'ruthlessness' which is 'blindly idolatrous to the acquisition of scientific knowledge'.[53] Lemming's case-book of the experiment forms the next narrative layer, and the innermost narrative comprises the diary and surreptitiously recorded monologues of Lemming's experimental subject, a young student named Daniel Imbrifer.[54]

Lemming has built an 'Antarctic planetarium', a hemisphere with a clear-glass dome giving constant access to the observation of the heavens (a prescient idea, as in 1975 the U.S. base at the South Pole – site of much astronomical work – was rebuilt as a geodesic dome). Although the planetarium is located 'to be technical, at the hypothetical magnetic South Pole', there is a conflation throughout the tale between geographic and magnetic poles, the gyring of the compass reflected in the turning of the stars.[55] The real subject of observation, however, is not the skies, but Imbrifer, who will winter alone in the planetarium. Lemming correctly assumes that, positioned on the earth's axis, with no reprieve from the whirling heavens above, Imbrifer will be stirred 'into a mad wrath that spews up the long-hidden debris' of his 'deepest abysm'. One of the four caretakers whom Imbrifer replaces accurately predicts his fate: 'Ye canna keep yer skull's cap on withouten a roof. 'Tis agin Nature and God'. [56]

Imbrifer's diary records the gradual dissipation of his subjectivity. He desperately searches for relief as he 'whirl[s] in the center of this polar maelstrom' and his 'thoughts spin into the abysms of madness', but ends by identifying himself with the earth's axis itself: 'I make the world go round on course, on time. But what if I should fall asleep and it should stop, and the rest of the universe be spinning except the world? … If I could only really tell why I turn this world around …'[57] Abandoned in the transparent observatory in the Antarctic waste with no orienting point but his own psyche, Imbrifer loses his powers of mental navigation, and descends into solipsism and death.

At one point early in Imbrifer's narrative, he reflects that although '[t]his place is getting me down' this is not because 'it's down under here … that's a lot of imaginary nonsense'. The South Pole, he reasons, is symmetrical with the North, merely 'its antipode, its nadir, its opposite'. His experience, however, belies this apparent neutrality. As he loses his sanity,

he becomes fixated with a feature specific to the southern sky: a 'blind spot' near the 'zenith' of the heavens. It is this hole that arrests him as he peers through his telescope: 'Find the Southern Cross – the cynosure of all navigators below the equator, and this void gapes before you. It is the Coalsack, gaping utterly devoid of stars from this hemisphere's most conspicuous spot'. The Coalsack (a real feature of the southern sky) becomes here a celestial version of the legendary polar abyss. As Imbrifer's own psychological orientation is increasingly shaken, he becomes obsessed with it: 'The first thing I saw was that baleful emptiness, the Coalsack, yawning like an ape's gape in the night'. The image of the ape suggests that for Imbrifer the dark hole in the sky is somehow connected to humanity's primordial origins. It catalyses a return to the pre-symbolic as he loses the ability to distinguish between himself and his environment. As his subjectivity finally implodes, his grammatical structures disintegrate and his language, which at the beginning of his period of isolation was precise and controlled, comes to resemble a semiotic flow of rhyme and alliteration: 'Eieeaaah ..., stop, world. Stop whirling. That ape's hairy black arm grasping the world from that ebon emptiness of the Coalsack turned inside out. Stop spinning me swivelling ... It's me you want – wait – I'll stand at the nub's hub. I'll howl it down. Eiii-ah...'. When Lemming arrives to view the results of his experiment, his predictions are confirmed: Imbrifer lies dead at the foot of his bed with a broken skull, the literal manifestation of the attempt to merge his 'skull cap' with the polar cap. [58]

HEROIC-ERA HORRORS

While many authors of Antarctic horror tales built on the psychotopographic tradition initiated by Coleridge and Poe, others found inspiration in real-life Antarctic narratives: the classic exploration stories of the 'Heroic Era'. On the face of it, these stories seem unsuited to gothic treatment, and better as fodder for quest romances or boy's-own adventures. Yet, as Moyes's reflections indicate, Heroic-Era exploration had its fair share of horrors, from the obvious physical dangers of the sledging trip – death from cold or starvation, an unexpected plunge into a bottomless crevasse – to the psychological trials of life in a claustrophobic base camp. Charles Laseron – an AAE member like Moyes but stationed at another base – experienced during sledging journeys the sensation of a 'relentless, resentful and definite personality, which ever waited implacably for the single false step which would hand the intruder into its power'. The impression, he observes, was 'of fighting, always fighting, a

terrible unseen force'.[59] In Heroic-Era gothic, this sensed force is given literal presence.

The best-known example of a Heroic-Era horror story is 'In Amundsen's Tent' by John Martin Leahy, who had already written one fantastic Antarctic tale, 'The Living Death' (1924–25). Like 'The Polar Vortex', 'In Amundsen's Tent' was published in *Weird Tales*, in 1928. And, like Ferguson, Leahy employs the nested structure typical of gothic narratives. In the outer, frame narrative, a member of a polar party comes across the tent left by Roald Amundsen and his team buried in snow near the South Pole. Inside the tent is the severed – or rather '*chewed*' or '*hacked* off' – head of another (fictional) polar explorer, Robert Drumgold. The inner narrative, in the form of Drumgold's sledging diary, tells how his three-man expedition similarly came across the tent as they approached the Pole. Despite various warning signs – a strange bulge in the side of the tent, the huskies' nervousness, and the eerie light that falls on them – the expedition leader Sutherland decides to look in the tent. The effect on him is immediate:

> 'What is it?' cried Travers. 'In God's name, Sutherland, what did you see?'
> Sutvherland beat the side of his head with his hand, and his look was wild and horrible.
> 'What is it?' I exclaimed. 'What did you see in there?'
> 'I can't tell you – I can't! Oh, oh, I wish that I had never seen it! Don't look! Boys, don't look into that tent – unless you are prepared to welcome madness, or worse.'

Despite Sutherland's desperate protestations, Travers looks into the tent and comes away in an awful state, groaning, staggering and screaming. Neither man can describe what he has seen, although both assert its alien nature. The frame narrator sheds no light on the matter, except to note in parentheses that the three explorers faced 'a doom the mystery and horror of which perhaps surpass in gruesomeness what the most dreadful Gothic imagination ever conceived in its utterest abandonment to delirium and madness'. To make matters worse, Sutherland's party realize that the thing in the tent may not be alone: 'it is there *inside* the tent; but the entrance was laced – from the *outside*!' For these fictional explorers, as for Moyes during his real Antarctic drama, insides, outsides and the thin border between them become sources of terror. [60]

Their fate is sealed when Travers foolishly fires a series of rifle shots at the alien entity, awakening it from its frozen slumber. In the period that follows the sledging party makes a 'mad dash away from that tent of horror', but the men keep catching glimpses of its erstwhile occupant. After their first dash, Travers sees 'something moving off in the gloom'; on the

second day, they again see 'something that moves'; on the third day, they hear it; on the fourth, two dogs disappear; and on the fifth, Travers goes missing. By the sixth day, Sutherland is 'mad – mad – mad' and Drumgold again sights '*it*'. On the seventh, Sutherland is gone, vanished along with dogs and sledge into the fog. The following day, Drumgold reports seeing the alien presence closer and closer, and this entry is his last. The alien is never identified or described – it is referred to only as movement in fog or gloom, an unspeakable, undefinable horror, the very sight of which sends men insane. The frame narrator refers to it simply as 'that *thing* (if thing it was)'.[61]

The fantastic horrors of Leahy's story are anchored in the actual experiences of explorers. The inner narrative borrows its shape from a genre developed over the previous two decades: the Antarctic sledging diary. The names of Drumgold's two companions, Sutherland (i.e. 'southern land') and Travers (i.e. 'traverse', a term commonly used in Antarctic narratives to describe a journey across a stretch of ice), imply they are to be read as emblematic of Antarctic sledgers. Anyone familiar with Antarctic exploration narratives would know that it *was* quite possible for a man along with his sledge and dog team to suddenly disappear. A more specific context is provided by the story's two epigraphs: Amundsen's account of his deposit of a letter for Scott in a tent his party erected near the South Pole, and Scott's diary entry recalling his discovery of the tent and the message. Leahy here alludes to the real horror of Amundsen's tent: the terrible disappointment of Scott's party on realizing they were not first to the Pole. The tent was not the first sign Scott's party found of Amundsen's achievement – this was a flag attached to a sledge that they spotted on 16 January; they discovered the tent two days later. Leahy's readers, however, would have understood the symbolic significance of the tent as a sign of Amundsen's victory (and in Leahy's story the tent acts for Drumgold's party as the first sign that they have been beaten).

Contemporary readers would also have been aware of the impact that the knowledge of Amundsen's victory had on Scott and his men. Scott's diary, published in 1913, recounts his experiences in detail.[62] The day before Amundsen's flag was sighted, he wrote of his anticipation of being first to the Pole, and the 'appalling possibility' of being forestalled by the Norwegians. The next day, having encountered evidence of Amundsen's presence, he recorded that 'The worst has happened.' The following day inspired one of his most famous lines, 'Great God! this is an awful place.' Later commentators emphasize the negative effect that Amundsen's victory had on the spirits of the explorers, who died ten weeks later. According to

Diana Preston, 'The psychological impact of the discovery was tremendous'.[63] The events of the return journey are well known: the delirium and collapse of Edgar Evans, the suicide of Lawrence Oates, and, eventually, the deaths in their tent of the three remaining members, Scott, Edward Wilson and Birdie Bowers. In a sense, it was indeed as if a horrific but indefinable monster were hunting down the party, picking them off one by one. In Leahy's story, the sight of Amundsen's tent is for Sutherland, the leader of the polar party, 'a terrible disappointment', and has an immediate physical impact: he leans on a pile of provision cases, 'as though a sudden weariness had settled upon him'.[64] The horrendous life-form which is found shortly after, driving Sutherland to madness, can be read as a projection of the real horror which confronted Scott: failure, the long walk home and impending death from cold and starvation. Another horror faced the members of Scott's expedition who found the polar party's buried tent the following summer, and saw within the emaciated, frostbitten, yellowed bodies of their erstwhile companions. William Lashly, the oldest of the group, entered the tent with Edward Atkinson, the expedition surgeon, and emerged wordless but tearful. Apsley Cherry-Garrard, who entered next, suffered in later life from depression brought on by the tragedy. One of the men present, Petty Officer Thomas Williamson, remarked in his diary that he was reluctant to go over to the tent, feeling that he 'could not look on this most pitiable scene', and when he did was confronted with a 'most ghastly sight'.[65] Leahy's story, on one level an outlandish combination of gothic and science fiction motifs, functions simultaneously as an unexpected metaphor for the horrors that Antarctic explorers could face.

Lovecraft very likely read 'In Amundsen's Tent' – he published a story in the following issue of *Weird Tales* – and the parallels between *At the Mountains of Madness* and Leahy's tale are strong. Both are science fiction horror stories based around alien creatures awoken in the Antarctic. Like the thing found in Amundsen's tent, the shoggoths kill by decapitation; but as with Leahy's alien, it is the borderless, amorphous nature of the shoggoths that is most horrifying to their potential victims. These are creatures that are defined by their inability to be defined. Both Leahy and Lovecraft are only able to convey the nature of their life forms by deferring to other writers – the 'Gothic imagination' in the first case and the 'fantastic novelist' in the second. Lovecraft cannot describe the thing that in turn Leahy could not describe that in turn Poe could not describe; all can only gesture towards it in hyperbolic language, in a chain of endless deferral. The polar cataract, shoggoths, and the thing

in Amundsen's tent are conspicuous absences at the centre of each text, polar abysses of the imagination.

In all of the texts discussed so far, the psyche whose dark recesses are explored is a male one. No woman appears anywhere in the 'The Polar Vortex' or in the stories of Leahy and Lovecraft, a situation that reflects not only the gender politics of pulp science fiction but also the history of Antarctic exploration. Particularly interesting in this context is 'Bride of the Antarctic', the only example (to my knowledge) of an Antarctic story in an early pulp magazine authored by a woman. Writing under the pseudonym 'Mordred Weir', Amelia Reynolds Long published her tale in June 1939 in *Strange Stories*, a short-lived magazine of the supernatural and the weird. Her story, like Leahy's, begins with three explorers encountering the remains of a previous expedition. This earlier expedition was led by 'Mad Bill Howell', who forced his 'young and beautiful wife' to winter against her will with him and fourteen other men. With the onset of winter, Howell's expedition was plagued by madness and death. The only survivors were Howell and one other man, who babbled about his leader's treatment of his wife one dreadful night when her crying drove him to rage. These babblings were dismissed as the product of delirium: 'Not even such a sadistic monster as Captain Howell would have turned a human creature, stripped naked, out into the merciless cold of the Antarctic blizzard!' The three later explorers build their hut close to the site of the Howell Expedition, but are disturbed, during the dark Antarctic winter, by scratching noises and movement emanating from beneath the hut, in the cellar space formed by the foundations. Eventually, the terrified narrator flings open the cellar door, releasing a misty figure that 'assumed the almost nude form of a woman draped in a long white bridal veil. Or was it a shroud?'[66] At this, one of the men, Murdock, climbs out of their snow-buried hut to his death. In a perfunctory and rather hurried ending, the two remaining men are informed by their relief ship in the spring that Murdock and Captain Howell are one and the same; Howell's wife's frozen corpse is found in a coffin in their cellar.

In this Antarctic story, it is a woman's naked body that represents the abject, and must be expelled from the expedition in order for sanity to be maintained. Her abject body belongs 'Out There', in the equally abject continent, not 'In Here', in the protected, masculine space of the Heroic-Era hut. The corpse of Howell's bride is covered by ice – by what might be termed, using Kristeva's phrase, 'the white expanse … of repression'.[67] But just as the repressed inevitably returns, the abject can never be truly expelled. Like the murdered wife of Poe's story 'The Black Cat' (1834),

the bride's frozen corpse lingers, eventually re-emerging to confront the men, forcing her killer to leave the safety of the hut for the abject space of the continent. The author does not subvert the gendered tropes of the Antarctic gothic, but her story is significant for the way it foregrounds the implicit equation between the female body and the continent.

Another body buried under the Antarctic snows features in a more recent short story, Jane Yolen and Robert J. Harris's 'Requiem Antarctica', published in *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* in 2000. Like Leahy, Yolen and Harris offer a gothic take on the most famous of Antarctic tales, 'Scott of the Antarctic'. Their story relates the (fictional) dying confession of the surgeon Atkinson. Atkinson explains that his leader left him a secret letter, confessing the startling real reason for his Antarctic expedition: Scott was (and remains) a vampire. Examining the men's bodies, Atkinson recalls, he found Wilson and Bowers 'drained of blood' and Scott himself frozen but alive, demanding to be left where he was found. Scott's southern journey, it seems, was a sacrifice in a sense very different from that usually assumed: deliberate isolation in the frozen wastes of Antarctica was the only way he could immobilize himself and save his potential prey. However, as Atkinson observes, the solution is not permanent, as eventually the ice imprisoning the explorer will melt. Scott becomes here a version of Lovecraft's ancient aliens or Leahy's murdered bride – a preserved body that one day in the distant future might emerge to terrorize a new group of victims.

The most complex text combining a Heroic-Era narrative with the Antarctic gothic tradition is a film, *The Forbidden Quest* (1993), directed by Peter Delpeut. *The Forbidden Quest* is structured as an early documentary: the film-maker has located the sole survivor of a mysterious (fictional) expedition to the Antarctic – the *Hollandia* expedition of 1905–06 – who has possession of original footage from the voyage. The documentary combines an interview with this survivor (the ship's carpenter), shot in black and white, with the silent film and stills supposedly taken during the journey. The latter are actually composed of real-life footage from both Arctic and Antarctic expeditions. Scenes from Frank Hurley's *South* (1919), Herbert Ponting's *The Great White Silence* (1924) and many other sources are blithely juxtaposed in the same narrative.

Delpeut exploits the incongruity created by what is actually a melange of different expedition films to engender a sense of gothic weirdness and enigma. One of the first signs that the *Hollandia* expedition is headed towards something disturbing is the appearance of a polar bear ('You mean to say that you saw a polar bear in Antarctica?' enquires the interviewer in

a dead-pan voice), which is hunted down, killed and then eaten raw by a strange, demonic Italian who is on board. The bear, according to the carpenter, was 'God-sent', and its murder brings down divine wrath, ancient-mariner style. That evening, the crew are told of the 'secret' lying at the South Pole – a passage through the earth, whence the bear emerged.[68] This, it is suggested, explains rumours of an earlier disastrous Belgian expedition (an allusion to the *Belgica*): 'the secret was vicious: it had eaten their brains'. A series of horrific events ensues: four 'Eskimos' appear, and the carpenter joins a party that travels inland to visit their 'tribe', who worship the southern lights, crying 'Tekeli-li! Tekeli-li!'; shortly afterwards they too are killed and eaten by the Italian. Reduced in number, the party returns to the ship to find many men dead from eating the bear meat. The vessel soon becomes trapped by ice, and, in desperation, another party is sent south. On the way, the carpenter has the insistent impression that there is one more person in the party than he can count. The temperature gradually increases until they reach 'a hot land, raging fire … Hell's gate' (here red-tinged Heroic-Era footage is used, so that mist and fog look like volcanic smoke). This is a place of transcendence, where the earthly and supernatural realms meet: 'We'd gone beyond … the far side. It was a gruesome place. You can cross over to the other side'. Fine white ash covers the carpenter; seeing a white light, he feels a moment of great happiness, but resists the lure of the 'beyond' and returns with the film canisters.

The standard features of the Antarctic gothic are laid on thick in *The Forbidden Quest*, and Delpeut makes no effort to hide his literary and filmic sources. The cry of 'Tekeli-li' and the white ash makes Poe's influence explicit. The carpenter's strange sense of there being an extra member of his party is an allusion both to an experience reported by Shackleton in *South* (1919)[69] and to T. S. Eliot's poetic reworking of the experience in *The Waste Land* (1922)[70] – the carpenter's words echo Eliot's phrasing. Hurley's famous footage of the crushing of the *Endurance* is borrowed to show the *Hollandia*'s demise, and Scott's expedition members are quite recognizable in the footage taken from *The Great White Silence* (1924). To anyone familiar with the original material, the breaches in continuity are obvious. For the average viewer, however, the switch between different ships, expeditions and hemispheres might well go unnoticed: the presence of Frank Wild and Birdie Bowers on the same journey would set off no alarm bells, and changes in film stock would simply seem part and parcel of hundred-year-old footage brought back from the South Pole. Lacking the obvious satirical intent of a 'mockumentary', the film works simultaneously as a pastiche of, a homage to and a subtle parody of both Antarctic gothic and Heroic-Era narratives.

BODIES AND BOUNDARIES: THE THING AND ITS IMITATORS

Twentieth-century Antarctic fiction, then, abounds in buried horrors, from the undead Scott to Lovecraft's glutinous shoggoths. None is more famous, however, than 'the Thing'. This shape-shifting monster was first introduced by John W. Campbell in his short story 'Who Goes There?' published in *Astounding Science-Fiction* under the pseudonym 'Don A. Stuart' in 1938. With this story, Campbell was self-consciously writing into the tradition of the Antarctic gothic. 'Who Goes There?' contains an explicit reference to Coleridge's poem: the expedition members joke about tying the Thing they have discovered around one of the scientists' neck, 'like the Ancient Mariner's albatross'.[71] Also evident is the influence of *At the Mountains of Madness*. Campbell would no doubt have read Lovecraft's story when it appeared in *Astounding* in 1936, as he assumed editorship of the magazine the following year. Like Lovecraft, Campbell marries the Antarctic gothic with realistic detail, closely basing his fictional Antarctic camp 'Big Magnet' on Richard Byrd's real-life station 'Little America'.

Specifically, Campbell's evocation of the living and working conditions of an Antarctic base is drawn from Byrd's published narrative *Discovery: The Story of the Second Byrd Expedition* (1935). Sometimes Campbell echoes the phrasing of *Discovery* very closely. For example, Byrd's account notes the expedition cook's constant complaints about the multiple uses to which the galley was put: '"The only thing you guys haven't brought in here," moaned the cook, "is an airplane, and I suppose you'll bring that in, just as soon as you can figure a way to get it through the tunnels"'.[72] Campbell's cook similarly complains, 'Hell, the only thing you haven't had on that table is the Boeing. And you'd 'a' had that in if you coulda figured a way to get it through the tunnels'.[73] The names of two of Campbell's characters (Van Wall and Kinner) are reminiscent of those of Byrd's expedition members (Von der Wall and Skinner). The men of both Little America and Big Magnet refer to the area where the huskies are kept as 'Dog Town' and both expeditions, unusually, keep cows. Many of Campbell's original readers would have recognized the parallels between his fictional expedition and Byrd's actual one.

The basic plot of 'Who Goes There?' can be easily summarized. Campbell's men are stationed at the South Magnetic Pole. While exploring a secondary magnetic influence to the southwest, they discover an alien spacecraft which has been frozen for twenty million years. Close to it, also frozen in the ice and apparently dead, is one of its original occupants,

whom they bring back to the base. The Thing's face is 'evil, unspeakable', with '[t]hree mad, hate-filled eyes … bright as fresh-spilled blood' and 'a writhing, loathsome nest of worms, blue, mobile worms that crawled where hair should grow'. After some debate, the entity is defrosted for scientific experimentation, but it escapes and attacks the huskies, leaving grisly devastation in its wake: 'The thing we found was part Charnauk [the dog], queerly only half-dead, part Charnauk half-digested by the jellylike protoplasm of that creature, and part the remains of the thing we originally found, sort of melted down to the basic protoplasm'. Soon, they conclude that the Thing has the ability to imitate anything it digests and still retain its 'original bulk'; thus, in addition to the original creature, an indefinite and undetectable number of dogs and expedition members are in reality Things, a situation that induces suspicion, paranoia, and, in one case, madness among the men. All methods devised to distinguish men from alien imposters fail, until one man realizes that any material ejected from the Thing, or the men it has colonized, will be '*a newly formed individual in its own right*'. Thus, blood taken from a Thing/man will shrink from a hot needle. Following this test, the imposters are quickly disposed of, and the original Thing is located and destroyed.[74]

Campbell's tale can be read in much the same way as Leahy's, with the alien acting as a metaphor for the actual experiences of expedition members. But where 'In Amundsen's Tent' dealt with the horrors of the sledging trip, Campbell focusses on the darker side of life within the spatial restrictions of a crowded underground base. The story opens with a passage emphasizing not the pristine Antarctic icescape but rather the claustrophobic, oppressively pungent atmosphere of the station:

> The place stank. A queer, mingled stench that only the ice-buried cabins of an Antarctic camp know, compounded of reeking human sweat, and the heavy, fish-oil stench of melted seal blubber. An overtone of liniment combatted the musty smell of sweat-and-snow- drenched furs. The acrid odor of burnt cooking fat, and the animal, not-unpleasant smell of dogs, diluted by time, hung in the air.

The Thing is introduced indirectly by the description of 'another taint … a faintest suggestion of an odor alien'.[75] Initially, however, this is merely another smell amongst many, and the defrosting Thing, with its disgusting, dripping body, is in some senses an extension of the squalid conditions in which the men are regularly forced to live.

Similarly, the Thing's ability to take over a man's consciousness highlights the lack of privacy within the camp. A central aspect of the monster's impact on the base is that it instils in the expedition members a deep

distrust of each other – any one of them might be a Thing rather than a man. Once aware of the possible infection, they instigate a rule that all men must be in groups of at least four at all times, and take up 'Rotation sleeping' in which only half of the members can be asleep simultaneously. Huddled together in one room, they find the tension almost unbearable – everyone is 'under constant eyeing'. This is not, however, altogether different from the pressures they are usually under. The claustrophobia of the expedition is clearly evident prior to the escape of the Thing. We first meet the men when they are 'sardined' into the Administration Building. Later, they squabble over perceived intrusions into their professional or personal spaces: 'Privacy? What the hell's that?' remarks one.[76] Like Campbell's protagonists, actual expedition members of the early twentieth century were almost never out of each other's company, whether living on base or squashed together in a tent – sometimes in the same sleeping bag – while on a sledging trip. The crowded conditions and lack of privacy so evident in Campbell's base are also emphasized in Byrd's *Discovery* in much the same language. Byrd's men are described as 'sardines in a goldfish bowl'; for the men of Little America, 'Privacy in the ordinary meaning of the term did not exist'.[77] And like the men of 'Big Magnet', actual explorers did not always trust each other, occasionally acting in a hostile or irrational manner. Official histories of expeditions tend to elide these experiences, but individual narratives and diaries sometimes do not. Frederick Cook's account of the mental instability of members of the *Belgica* expedition forced to over-winter in 1899 was well known to Antarctic enthusiasts as well as later explorers, who were eager to avoid what became known as 'polar depression'. Polar 'rage', although less discussed, could be equally problematic. Frank Wild, veteran of four Heroic-Era Antarctic expeditions, observes that 'tempers must naturally become frayed when [people are] herded together in close quarters under the trying conditions of a Polar winter'. He recounts an incident during Scott's first expedition when 'one man's mind gave way':

> One evening during bad weather he was missed. A search party was organised … The missing man was found a short distance ahead of the [ice-bound] ship with a crowbar in his hand. When asked what he was doing there he said 'Well, I knew a search party would be sent out for me and I hoped _____ (here he named a man with whom he had quarreled) would find me and I was going to brain him with this bar.' [78]

On another expedition over-wintering in 1913, one of seven men living in a two-room hut developed paranoid delusions, believing that his fellows planned to murder him – an uncomfortable situation for all concerned.[79]

Byrd alludes to events of this kind in a chapter of his book entitled 'The Lunatic Fringe'. He opens the chapter by describing the discovery, amongst provisions brought down by his first expedition, of a cache of a dozen straitjackets – the result of 'honest apprehensions' about Antarctic inhabitation at the time. While Byrd insists that his own expedition suffered no such difficulties, he nonetheless quotes a comment by one of his men that 'All of us are a little mad'.[80] Thus the madness, suspicion and distrust experienced by Campbell's protagonists, like their claustrophobia, is different in degree, but perhaps not in kind, from that suffered – or at least anticipated – by actual explorers. The Thing precipitates tensions that are already present in less concentrated form in the Antarctic base.

As this summary indicates, most of 'Who Goes There?' takes place within the confines of the underground station. Campbell would certainly have known from his reading about the specific hazards of the Antarctic icescape; in *Discovery*, Byrd describes the appearance of deep fissures around Little America that rendered the base (like Moyes's hut) 'a potential iceberg'.[81] Unlike many Antarctic narratives, however, 'Who Goes There?' makes relatively little explicit attempt to describe the environment in which it takes place, even though the continent literally surrounds the men of Big Magnet: they are embedded inside it, rather than on its surface. And the horror of the story occurs when the continent refuses to obey the boundaries that the men have established; when the 'alien space' of Antarctica, in the form of the ice-encased Thing, invades the sanctuary of the 'homeplace'; when what should have remained outside is allowed inside.

Campbell's alien personifies (if that is the word) the spatial characteristics of the Antarctic continent more than any other of the extraterrestrial intruders found in far southern fiction. Just as the abject substance, blood, stands in metonymical and metaphorical relationship with the Thing (it is both part of the larger whole from which it is taken and a substitute for the whole), so the Thing stands in metonymical and metaphorical relationship with the continent. The Thing is contiguous with Antarctica (it was buried in the ice for 20 million years) and also serves to symbolize Antarctica (it shares the same spatial characteristics). The alien is shapeless and shifting; the Antarctic, too, has no fixed shape or size, doubling its area from summer to winter, exceeding its own boundaries, constantly expelling material, fracturing, melting and reforming. Like the Thing, it is engulfing, threatening to swallow the unfortunate explorers who fall into its deep crevasses and to absorb them into itself – 'grafting them to its own body', in Moyes's words. Campbell's Antarctic is figured in terms of

boundary-threatening bodily metaphors: its wind is described as 'sucking', its snow as 'licking'. One man recalls an incident when he stepped outside the station and was immediately absorbed by his surrounds, lost in the 'impenetrable murk'.[82] But the Antarctic, despite being shapeless, is nevertheless autonomous: underneath the kilometres of ice is a large landmass, a separate continent. Both the alien Thing and the Antarctic are in this sense what Moyes terms 'amoebic' – autonomous yet shape-shifting, separate yet engulfing. Lastly, like the Thing, the Antarctic is undecidably both dead and alive – superficially frozen and lifeless, but actually moving, melting, growing, shrinking and fragmenting. The alien at the centre of Campbell's story can thus be read as an embodiment of the continent itself. Antarctica is dis-*placed* in Campbell's story in a very literal sense: an undefinable, seemingly limitless place is transferred to the figure of a monster that shares its disturbing spatial qualities but can nonetheless be conquered and killed, defusing (at least temporarily) the anxieties it has aroused. For Campbell, as for Lovecraft, Leahy, Poe and Coleridge before him, the Antarctic represented more than a conveniently large blank space on the map, and more than just a generically hostile setting: it signified instead an instability at the margins of the subject and the margins of the world.

Appropriately for a shape-shifter, Campbell's alien reappeared in different forms throughout the following decades. It initially re-emerged in a 1951 screen adaptation with the title *The Thing from Another World* – a film that has since become a science fiction B-grade classic. Directed by Chrisopher Nyby, with substantial input from producer Howard Hawks, the film transfers the story to the Arctic.[83] This change in location is accompanied by a corresponding change in the nature of the Thing itself, which is no longer a shape-shifter but a strange, intelligent, humanoid vegetable. Both versions of the story seem to have influenced Murray Leinster, a well-known contributor to pulp magazines such as *Weird Tales*, who in 1959 published an Antarctic-based novel entitled *The Monster from Earth's End*. Leinster's tale takes place on a remote subantarctic island, where nineteen members of a supply depot await the arrival of a plane from an Antarctic station, carrying personnel and scientific samples. After the plane crash-lands, the depot is menaced by an indefinable presence. Once again, the horror of the intruding entity stems from its vagueness. The characters can only described it negatively: it is by turns 'not-human' and a 'thing-which-is-not-a-bird'. Even when the threat is revealed to be a group of mobile, carnivorous, cannibalistic trees taken from the fictional 'Hot Lakes' region of Antarctica, the characters still refer to it in abstract terms such as 'the monstrousness',

'boojers' or 'Things'. Although the trees are inevitably bathetic after the sustained suspense created by a vague, invisible threat, as plants that share the features of animals they tap into the tradition of the monstrous south in their disregard for established categories. As in Campbell's tale, these boundary-breaching monsters can be read as a manifestation of the anxieties generated by the station's remoteness and social claustrophobia, particularly the tense relationship between the four female staff and the men. Before the plane's arrival, the personnel are suffering from 'jumpy nerves' and 'irrational tension'; in short, they are in 'an unstable state'. The plane crash is initially assumed to be caused by 'somebody [who] cracked up', a possible result of privation and 'pent-up longings'. The leader and hero is defined largely by his ability to withstand these tensions, and particularly to defer the budding romance between himself and one of the women – something that he admits makes him seem a 'cold-blooded monster'.[84] Both irrational, neurotic behaviour and overly controlled behaviour are thus equated with forms of monstrousness – and the subantarctic station offers only these two polar positions. Leinster's story too was made into a film, *The Navy vs. the Night Monsters* (1966), which is, by all reports, as uninspired as its name suggests. A *Dr Who* television series entitled 'The Seeds of Doom', first shown in 1976, also offers a botanical variant of Campbell's basic premise. The Time Lord appears at an Antarctic base not long after two strange pods have been dug up from the ice. These sprout into mobile plants – known to the Doctor as Krynoids, an alien life-form – which attack and absorb all in their path. When a pod finds its way to England, the safety of all humankind is suddenly at risk.

In 1982, John Carpenter, veteran director of horror films such as *Halloween*, returned to Campbell's tale with his adaptation, *The Thing*. Carpenter's version of the story is much closer to the original than the 1951 film, and many of the arguments made previously in regard to 'Who Goes There?' apply equally to his *Thing*. Back again are the amorphous, body-absorbing monster and the Antarctic location (although filming took place in British Columbia). Back also are the tensions of the isolated all-male station (not, in this case, an underground bunker in the style of Byrd, but a contemporary research base). The first few moments of the film see one man pour a drink into his female-voiced computer after it beats him at chess, and another roller-skating through the station wearing earphones, oblivious to all around him. As one of the best-known Antarctic texts – and certainly better known than Campbell's original tale – Carpenter's film has attracted critical attention from academics and expedition members alike.[85] The website *Big Dead Place*, edited by

veteran of multiple Antarctic seasons Nicholas Johnson, features a section dedicated to reviews of *The Thing* (sitting aptly alongside 'The Symmes Antarctic Intelligencer', a satirical newsletter).[86] Johnson (writing as 'F. Scott Roberts') claims that 'no other movie in history has ever depicted daily Antarctic life and its problems with such accuracy and intuitive brilliance'. He suggests that the 'The Thing represents Bureaucracy, reproducing via individual hosts who are each stunted by their fear of an organized but faceless entity that influences every aspect of their daily lives' – an argument very similar to one that critic John Rieder makes about Campbell's original tale.[87] Elena Glasberg reads all three versions of the story in terms of 'US strategies for incorporating Antarctic territory into national and global imaginaries'.[88] Another cinematic adaptation of "Who Goes There?" was released in late 2011: also called *The Thing*, it ends at the point where Carpenter's film begins, acting as a prequel to the 1982 *Thing*. This adaptation introduces a female lead and discards the part/whole binary around which Campbell frames his narrative in favour of another pair of opposites – organic/inorganic. The concern with boundaries and bodies, however, remains constant. Like Coleridge's albatross and Poe's giant white figure, the Thing will no doubt continue to produce proliferating critical and creative responses for some time to come.

THE BERG THAT ATE MANHATTAN: ANTARCTICA AS GLOBAL THREAT AND GLOBAL REFUGE

A central anxiety of 'Who Goes There?' is that of containment, of stopping a contagion escaping the isolated Antarctic outpost and invading the rest of the world. Towards the end of the story, just before the men finally destroy the Thing, a circling albatross is spotted. In the last lines, the men contemplate and then hurriedly dismiss the disturbing idea that before the alien was destroyed it might have colonized the bird. Lovecraft's tale raises similar anxieties: the narrator presents it as a warning against those who might exploit the far south, potentially releasing its horrors. The same fear is evident in a more recent narrative, the science fiction horror film *AVP: Alien vs. Predator* (2004). In the film, a team investigates an unusual structure beneath the remote subantarctic Bouvet Island, only to discover themselves caught in a ritual battle between the two iconic extraterrestrials. The humans eventually side with the Predators, as the Aliens have imperialistic visions – if successful, they will take over the world. In each case, the key task is to contain an alien threat to humankind, with Antarctica acting as a quarantine area between earth and space.

A variation on this theme occurs in those texts in which part of the continent itself escapes its bounds and endangers the planet. Perhaps, in this context, the most terrifying Antarctic tale is one of the most modern: the prediction that its ice sheets might collapse and melt, literally engulfing the world with water. This scenario was depicted in J. G. Ballard's deeply psychotopographic novel *The Drowned World* (1962) well before it became accepted by governments as a disturbingly realistic possibility.[89] Since Ballard's time, collapsing Antarctic ice has become a standard feature of environmental dystopias. In the disaster film *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004), the breaking off of the Larsen B ice shelf is the first sign of impending doom; before very long, most of the world's cities are buried in ice and snow, as if Moyes's amoebic creature has engorged the earth. In other cases, a single renegade iceberg is enough to spell disaster. James Follett's *Ice* (1978), published with the tag line 'Someday the polar icecap will start breaking up. Some day is now', sees an enormous Antarctic tabular iceberg menace New York, unperturbed by nuclear attack. In *Deep Current* (2004), Benjamin Miller hedges his bets by combining metonymical and metaphorical Antarctic threats. A renegade iceberg threatens to cause an earthquake when it strikes land (this time, slightly more convincingly, it is Hawaii in the firing line), but this is not the only worry: the berg harbours a brood of category-defying Antarctic monsters, which hunt down those who venture on to it.

The reverse scenario is played out in the Japanese film *Fukkatsu No Hi* (1980) – released in English as *Virus* (1990) – in which a military virus is accidentally unleashed on the world. The only survivors (aside from one British submarine) are the staff of Antarctic stations, because of their isolation and the fact that the virus cannot withstand cold temperatures. They converge on a single base with the aim of regenerating the human race, but must violently police the boundaries of their virus-free continent when an infected Italian submarine crew insist on taking refuge with them. Here the threat must be kept outside, not inside, the continent; the horror is one of pollution of the Antarctic body by the world body, rather than vice versa. In Edmund Cooper's science fiction novel *The Last Continent* (1970), an inter-planetary war, along with the weakening of the earth's magnetic field, has resulted in a devastated earth hostile to human life, with one exception: 'Antarctica … has now become a last refuge – now that the remainder of the planet is virtually uninhabitable – for what is left of terrestrial mankind'.[90] Kevin Brockmeier's *The Brief History of the Dead* (2006) takes the notion of Antarctica-as-refuge to its logical extreme, telling the story of the one remaining member of the human race – a

woman working at a remote Antarctic station – left alive after a virus has struck. A similar logic underlies the Antarctic Treaty System itself, which declares Antarctica 'the continent for science and peace', forbids any military presence (except to support scientific activities), suspends the possibility of mining and protects the environment. After the 1991 Madrid Protocol, strict regulations were placed on the bringing of foreign organisms into the Antarctic regions. Human visitors are required to remove all waste they produce. Antarctica's unstable borders are now policed like no other continent's.[91]

Morton Moyes, perilously positioned on his ice shelf, was unaware that, thousands of kilometres to his east, his fellow explorer Belgrave Ninnis had plummeted down a seemingly bottomless crevasse; or that, thousands of kilometres to the south, the British polar party were facing horrors of their own. In his account of his experience, he muses on the fate of Scott and his 'brave comrades' who had become 'their own cenotaph' – particularly Oates and the 'blizzard that swallowed him'. While Moyes refuses to see any 'boy scout heroics' in his own experiences, his is a story that could only have occurred in the 'Heroic Era' of the continent's exploration.[92] The next chapter shifts focus from the Antarctic gothic to the famous exploration narratives of that period. Segueing from Poe's abysses to tales of derring-do might seem like moving from the sublime to the ridiculous – or vice versa, depending on your perspective. Moyes's narrative, however, demonstrates that these two genres are not so far apart – in fact, they are enfolded in each other. Whatever stirring adventures might be played out over the surface of the Antarctic ice, something dark remains buried within it.

CHAPTER 3

Creative Explorations of the Heroic Era

'It's time to vote off the Weakest Explorer!' A sketch by the BBC comedy team *Dead Ringers* (2002) sees Scott and his four companions whipped magically away from their South Polar journey to the studio of the television game show *The Weakest Link*, where they are interrogated by the merciless hostess, Anne Robinson (or, rather, a comedian impersonating her). At the culminating moment, Robinson declares Captain Lawrence Oates the Weakest Link and orders him off the set, his four companions looking on in sad resignation from behind their consoles. As he trudges bravely away, uttering his famous exit line, 'I'm going outside now, and may be gone some time . . .', she clocks him with a well-aimed snowball and proclaims: 'You'll be gone forever, matey! Now shove off!'

Comedy is heavily reliant on irreverence: on showing the narrowness of the line between the sacred and the banal, the sublime and the ridiculous. The same *Dead Ringers* series that subjects Scott's men to Robinson's pitiless judgement also places Jesus and his disciples in *The Weakest Link* studio, along with a group of monks vowed to silence; an earlier radio episode of the comedy has King Arthur and his knights in the same situation. The parallels are clear: the story of Scott's men has taken on a mythic, quasi-religious meaning in its hundred-year evolution. The same is true, to a lesser extent, of other Heroic-Era epics: Amundsen's successful assault on the Pole, mythologized in a very different way to Scott's; the 'Winter Journey' of Cherry-Garrard, Wilson and Bowers – a quixotic quest in search of penguin eggs that has come close to supplanting the polar journey as *the* classic Antarctic narrative;[1] the crushing of Shackleton's ship the *Endurance* and the trials and triumphs that followed; Mawson's solo trek – 'the ultimate Antarctic saga'[2] – following the shocking deaths of his two companions, Belgrave Ninnis and Xavier Mertz. These are the origin stories of a continent bereft of indigenous inhabitants and corresponding creation myths.[3] Like all origin stories, they are re-told and re-interpreted

by each generation, mocked and venerated alike, but never lose their grip on the popular imagination.

The stories of the Heroic Era are repeated in many forms: in popular histories; in television documentaries and dramatized mini-series; in expeditions and tourist cruises that promise to follow 'in the footsteps of' the early explorers; and in imaginative works, from quite serious poems, novels and plays, through to musical comedies and ice-capades. They are re-told with admiration and nostalgia; re-enacted in imitation and homage; re-imagined from new perspectives; re-evaluated in the light of new knowledge (of the weather, nutrition and the psychology of isolation); and re-thought from a plethora of political viewpoints. These origin stories even have a corresponding apocrypha, such as Shackleton's famous and much reproduced advertisement in *The Times* for volunteers for the *Endurance* expedition: 'Men wanted. Low wages, bitter cold, long hours of complete darkness. Safe return doubtful. Honour and recognition in case of success'. No evidence for this addendum to the tale of the *Endurance* has ever been forthcoming, yet it continues to grace countless coffee mugs and T-shirts – a Heroic-Era fiction that has entered into communal memory.[4]

As the most famous Antarctic exploration narratives have now been in the hands of novelists, poets, playwrights, satirists and film makers for about a century, the number and diversity of creative responses is considerable. Shackleton's expeditions have inspired poetry (Douglas Stewart's 'Worsley Enchanted', 1952; Douglas Finkel's *Endurance*, 1978; Melinda Mueller's *What the Ice Gets*, 2000), fantasy (Georg Heym's 'Das Tagebuch Shakeltons'), short stories (Craig Cormick's 'Lady Shackleton's Freezer', 1998, and 'Shackleton's Drift', 2003), plays, musical comedies and television miniseries (Marjorie Duffield's 'Ice Island', 1999; Michael Christian's 'Meet the Real Ernest Shackleton', 2004; Charles Sturridge's *Shackleton*, 2002). Richard Byrd's first expedition provoked a screwball satire, Wolcott Gibbs's *Bird Life at the Pole* (1931). Amundsen's victorious assault on the Pole is re-created by unemployed men in Manfred Karge's play *Conquest of the South Pole* (1988), and is interwoven with Scott's parallel journey in Norwegian Kare Holt's 'documentary novel' *The Race* (1974).[5] Texts focussing on Mawson include a biographical re-creation of his most famous journey (Adrian Caesar's *The White*, 1999), a thinly veiled meditation on his possible cannibalism (Thomas Keneally's novel *The Survivor*, 1969) and various poems (e.g. Roger McDonald's 'Antarctica', 1977). Cherry-Garrard's 'Winter Journey' provides a template for the Antarctic trek of the last human (a woman) remaining alive on earth in Kevin Brockmeier's

Brief History of the Dead (2006). Almost every expedition and expedition leader, it seems, has produced a corresponding corpus of creative texts.

There is, however, one story that dominates both fiction and non-fiction narratives of Antarctic exploration. This is the tale recorded in Scott's last journals – a tale of disappointment, defeat and death; of courage, self-sacrifice and nobility; of incompetence, bad management and poor leadership; or alloys of all of these qualities, depending on which account one consults. The story's power stems partly from the way in which events unfolded. Apposite here is Tolstoy's much-quoted remark at the beginning of *Anna Karenina* that the experiences of happy families are alike, while those of unhappy families are quite distinctive.[6] Amundsen's victorious and seemingly harmonious sledging journey, the counterpart to Scott's, tends to be told as an essentially happy polar narrative. Scratching below the standard view of the Norwegian expedition, one finds much unhappiness – such as the falling out between Amundsen and Hjalmar Johansen, or the aborted early start on the polar journey, or the treatment of the dogs – but these elements have not become cemented into the received public story of Amundsen's victory. It was Scott's that was the unhappy – and hence the dramatic, distinctive and interesting – story. And Scott's story wasn't just unhappy: it was tragic. This word is often applied without much precision, but in Scott's case the fit is surprisingly tight.[7] Had the story been less tragic – had Scott and his fellows survived – they would still have 'had a tale to tell', but not so enduring a tale as the one their deaths secured. As Beau Riffenburgh observes in *The Myth of the Explorer* (1993), 'the most powerful hero is the dead hero, particularly the martyred hero, since it is through his death for the cause that his heroic status can be most easily created, interpreted and manipulated'.[8] Death ensured that the heroic images of the polar party would not be moderated by the mundanities of their remaining lives.

Its tragic form would have ensured some longevity for the story of Scott's last expedition; but added to this were the gifts of the storyteller. What better narrator for a tragedy than the posthumous – and remarkably eloquent – voice of the dead tragic hero himself? There were other Heroic-Era narratives that arguably rivalled Scott's in terms of drama and interest, but their central actors lacked Scott's facility with language. Neither Shackleton nor Mawson was a natural writer; both required assistance to produce the narratives of their most famous Antarctic journeys.[9] Scott's skills as a writer, by contrast, are widely recognized; even his greatest detractor Roland Huntford concedes this point, noting that Scott was 'quite simply … a better writer than Amundsen' (although he suggests

that the main purpose to which Scott put his 'literary talents' was self-justification).[10] In 2006, an edition of Scott's journals was published in Oxford University Press's 'World's Classics' – a series composed (according to its website) of the works of the 'world's finest writers'. Scott's journals are the only example of modern exploration or travel writing included in the extensive series. They form the founding text in what has become an extensive body of literature, both factual and creative. As Francis Spufford notes, 'Like any successful myth, [Scott's story] provides a skeleton ready to be dressed over and over in the different flesh different decades feel to be appropriate'.[11]

Given the proliferation of material, it is impossible here to canvass all the creative responses to the Heroic Era, or even to Scott's last expedition alone. In this chapter, then, I begin by narrowing the focus to one famous incident: Oates's sockless, suicidal march into the Antarctic elements. Even this one event has produced too many literary and artistic responses to cover comprehensively. Every one of the numerous accounts of the polar tragedy in poetic, dramatic or novelistic form inevitably includes some mention of Oates. I have selected texts in which Oates is the main focus, or which are particularly significant in their treatment of his story. Through this case study, I will demonstrate more broadly what poets, novelists and playwrights can add to the many existing historical accounts of Heroic-Era exploration.

There is another class of literary responses to early Antarctic exploration narratives that deserves special attention: these are narratives which do not reprise or re-tell original Heroic-Era stories, but rather use the techniques of fiction to imagine them differently. In these stories, people whose circumstances (such as gender, race or nationality) prevented their inclusion in expeditions are imaginatively given a chance to go south; or, alternatively, perspectives of those whose involvement in Heroic-Era exploits was marginalized and silenced are given a voice. The second half of this chapter analyses this group of stories.

GOING OUTSIDE: CAPTAIN OATES'S LITERARY LEGACY

'I am just going outside and may be some time': the pithiest expression of British understatement since 'Dr Livingstone, I presume', Oates's exit line is also the single most famous utterance of Heroic-Era exploration. The casual irony of the line gives a sense of poise and composure in the face of death, a refusal of melodrama or hysterics. No wonder Oates was held up as an example for British troops during the First World War.[12] These

exact words, however, may not have been Oates's. The line is reported in Scott's diary and nowhere else,[13] and it is Scott, not Oates, who is widely acknowledged to have had a way with words. Huntford claims that the expedition leader invented the phase in order to make a coerced suicide seem like noble sacrifice, thus giving Oates a 'story-book ending'.[14] Behind this speculation is an earlier diary entry in which Scott recorded his insistence that Oates be given opium tablets – either an act of mercy to a man in terrible pain, or a pointed reminder to Oates that his inability to die was holding the party up, depending on your point of view. Oates's most recent biographer, Michael Smith, absolves Scott of coercion and insists that he was too 'conventional' and 'orthodox' to have produced the famous one-liner. It is, Smith suggests, 'pure Oates … typical of the laconic understated language he used regularly'.[15] It is certainly reminiscent of Oates's earlier description of the Antarctic in a letter to his mother: 'The climate is very healthy although inclined to be cold'.[16] But then it also has something in common with Scott's tone in his dying letters. They are full of boyish colloquialisms that play down the drama of the situation: 'I fear we have shipped up; a close shave'; 'I fear we must go and that it leaves the Expedition in a bad muddle'.[17] The original source of the line is impossible to know and largely irrelevant to its afterlife; the words are familiar to those who have little if any knowledge of the man who may or may not have voiced them.

Literary responses to the polar tragedy date from the time it was first reported in February 1913. The announcement in the press produced an outburst of memorial poems, some publicly expressed in newspapers and magazines, others sent privately to mourning relatives. Unsurprisingly, these were often fulsome, and tended to frame the tragedy in the language of nationalism, religion and chivalry. Oates's death provided a focal point. The circumstances were well known. In his diary, Scott had marked his account of the event as public discourse ('Should this be found I want these facts recorded'[18]), with the result that this entry and his 'Message to the Public' were the two passages from his journals published in the first press reports of the tragedy. While there was some debate about whether Oates's suicidal act was morally acceptable,[19] the heroism and selflessness of his sacrifice trumped these concerns, and his act represented for many people 'the defining moment of the disaster'.[20] The press highlighted his last words; the *Daily Graphic* considered them 'finer' than anything found in 'the romantic literature of the world'.[21] With the word 'time' offering a convenient range of rhyming options, memorializing poets seized upon Oates's line. Frances Mary Millard, a

self-described working-class poet, used a surprisingly jaunty ballad meter to capture Oates's tragic end:

> I'm going outside, said 'Captain Oates,'
> And I may be some time;
> In vain his comrades bade him stay;
> He went, with thought sublime.
> Out! Gone! Beyond! None knew where he
> Breathed last; or where he trod;
> Men are as feathers tost, before
> The mighty storms of God.[22]

Ironically, some of these authors took up the famously understated line only to re-cast it in overblown, archaic language:

> . . . many a day his suffering did he hide,
> A silent prisoner to his body pent,
> Then, waked once more to find no message sent
> By Heav'n's kind angel, lo!, he rose and cried
> 'Tarry ye here awhile, I go outside.'
> And brave into the blizzard forth he went.[23]

While not the only form of literary response to the deaths of Scott's party, poetry was the safest in the decades immediately after the event. Novelistic treatment would have required the kind of intimate representation of character that both concern for the bereaved relatives and the initial lionization of the polar party precluded. Dramatists, on the other hand, faced the problem of reducing both the vast Antarctic plateau and the larger-than-life polar heroes to physical presences on stage. Moreover, Scott's widow Kathleen opposed the production of plays and films of the expedition until late in life. According to newspaper reports, the well-known playwright R. C. Sherriff abandoned his plans to dramatize the polar tragedy 'out of feeling for the relatives'. Proposals for a film in 1938 were also dropped following Kathleen's opposition.[24] The film *Scott of the Antarctic* did not appear until 1948, the year after her death, and gives a fairly conventional rendering of Oates's exit, with no mention of morphine and Scott simply checking Bowers' impulse to pursue his companion out of the tent.

Outside of Britain, creative writers did not feel so intimidated by the mythic proportions the polar journey had assumed. The first time a dramatization of the expedition was performed was in Berlin in 1930: Reinhard Goering's play *Die Südpolexpedition des Kapitäns Scott* ('The South Pole Expedition of Captain Scott').[25] Goering received an important literary

Figure 5. Photograph of a scene from the Berlin performance of Reinhard Goering's play *Die Südpolexpedition des Kapitäns Scott*, published in the *Graphic*, 8 March 1930, 369. Image courtesy of the British Library.

award (the *Kleist-Preis*) for the play, but British reviews ranged from mixed to outraged. One point of controversy was the representation of Oates's death. An article in the *Graphic* newspaper reproduced photographs from the performance, including a scene in which Oates leaves the tent while Wilson and Bowers attempt to hold him back, but Scott simply 'stands silently in the background staring into nothing' (see Figure 5).[26] Kathleen Scott, one of the play's most vocal critics, complains about this scene in her diary, describing it as 'long, unhistoric, and intensely melodramatic . . . they all howl and shriek like demented Latins – a sorry affair indeed'.[27] It is the failure to capture the stoic, understated qualities associated with the original event, as much as the imputation made against Scott,[28] that upsets Kathleen. Oates's heroism and selflessness in the exit scene are unquestioned: 'Ich will einmal hinausgehen', he predictably states as he exits the tent, 'Und bleibe vielleicht eine Weile draußen'.[29] His act, which struck such a chord with British notions of duty and stoicism, may have had a different, more personal significance for Goering, whose work often dealt with questions of freedom, self-determination and suicide, and who himself committed suicide in 1936.[30]

Another dramatization, Douglas Stewart's radio play *The Fire on the Snow*, would probably have been more to Kathleen's liking. First performed

by the Australian Broadcasting Commission in 1941, Stewart's play stays close to Scott's diary, with blank verse giving the dialogue a sense of order and dignity, and repeated motifs of fire and ice aestheticizing the events, lending them the purity and hard beauty of the environment. Oates exits with his line (slightly amended), and the Announcer – Stewart's version of the Greek chorus – reflects on the mixture of feelings experienced by the three remaining men: 'As they admit, hardening their mouths, they could have stopped him. / It is not an easy knowledge. Hard to restrain / The feeling of guilt and shame though they know they did rightly'.[31] With its quiet, meditative, introspective tone, Stewart's play gives Oates's suicide – and the tragedy more generally – a depth absent from most earlier literary responses, but does not question received versions of events. This had to wait several decades.

When the heroism of the event began to be challenged, it was Scott rather than Oates who was the target. George Bernard Shaw, friend of Cherry-Garrard, suggested in a 1948 letter that Scott gave Oates 'silent hints that he should go out to perish for a day or two before he did so'.[32] By the mid-1960s, the issue was being discussed more openly: in the absence of evidence, Scott's biographer Reginald Pound remains neutral on 'the extent to which [Oates] was influenced by Scott in taking the step that gave him an imperishable name',[33] but he nevertheless raises the question.

Creative writers followed suit. In John Antrobus's play *Captain Oates's Left Sock*, first performed in 1969, a psychiatric patient who has just attempted suicide cites Oates in order to explain and justify his action, only to have his therapy group attack this 'national myth': 'We only have Scott's word for it ... frankly he might have been asked to leave the tent'.[34] Ted Tally's play *Terra Nova*, a complex but largely sympathetic representation of the expedition first performed in 1977, has Scott poised to euthanize the sleeping Oates with a syringe.[35] The value of noble sacrifice was by this time no longer taken for granted.

More common than tentative probes into the circumstances of Oates's demise, however, were the satirical takes on the event that proliferated in the later twentieth century. The values which defined the expedition in the public mind – patriotism, empire and masculine endeavour – were now increasingly seen as a source of national embarrassment rather than a cause for celebration. Scepticism about the polar tragedy was fuelled by the 1979 publication of Huntford's dual biography *Scott and Amundsen*, which mounted a sustained attack on the British leader's character and reputation, but the satire began well before this. In their sketch 'Scott of the Sahara', first screened in 1970, the Monty Python team has Oates

fighting a 'giant electric penguin', which he eventually dispatches using a sling-shot improvised from his underwear.[36] Howard Brenton's *Scott of the Antarctic*, a play performed on an ice rink which premiered in 1971, culminates in the Devil and his offsider giving a running commentary on Oates's last scene. They instruct the audience to 'Wait for the famous phrase …' before singing it themselves to discordant music.[37] Tom Stoppard's *Jumpers* (1972) features a television report of a moon landing by two astronauts named Oates and Captain Scott. With the space capsule damaged and able to take only one man back to earth, Scott knocks down his companion and abandons him on the lunar landscape, remarking as he ascends the ladder to his craft, 'I'm just going up now. I may be gone for some time'.[38] Peter Tinniswood's short story 'Polar Games' (1982) suggests that the real competition between Scott and Amundsen was a cricket match played at Cape Evans. Posterity has been denied an accurate account of the event because of the scorebook being carried off in the hip pocket of Oates when he exited the tent: 'Oates was indeed "a very gallant gentleman"', remarks the narrator, ' – but he was also damnably inconsiderate'.[39] Colin Richmond's 'True Story of Captain Oates' (1986) speculates that Oates's death was actually an elaborate espionage ruse: the explorer was delivered over to Amundsen's Norwegian team, and later entered the German navy as a spy; a cardboard cut-out of the man was carried to the Pole for the photographs. The polar explorers who emerge from these versions of Oates's demise are ridiculous figures, caricatured boy's-own heroes whose imperial mission, outdated values and stale stories can no longer be taken seriously.

Significantly, where Scott is transformed in these texts from a hero to an incompetent fool, who embodies all of the worst failings of his period, Oates shifts from hero to victim. Recent cultural analyses – usually influenced by Huntford – tend to reinforce this process. For example, in *Scott's Last Biscuit* (2006), Sarah Moss argues that Oates was 'reluctan[t] to give up his life according to Scott's mythology of English masculinity', but was textually and perhaps actually interpellated by his leader into the position of self-sacrificial hero.[40] If, however, Scott reflected stereotypes of class, masculinity, nation and empire associated with his period, then Oates epitomized them. He was a wealthy member of the landed gentry who had paid his way onto the expedition; he was Eton-educated (although he struggled academically[41]); he had represented British interests in India and Africa as a soldier, and saw war as 'fun'; he loved sport, particularly boxing, sailing, horse-riding and fox-hunting; and his xenophobia and misogyny were remarked on by his fellows.[42] He had also made his position

on self-sacrifice clear long before he set out with the polar party, stating that any injured team member should commit suicide rather than hold up progress.[43] If Oates's final actions, as reported or constructed by Scott, fitted anybody's mythology, it was his own.

Inevitably the satires provoked their own backlash. New Zealander Stuart Hoar's 'Scott of the Antarctic' (first performed in 1989) parodies the parodies of the polar journey. The play revolves around the staging of a radical re-interpretation of the expedition, in which Scott, Wilson, Bowers and Cherry-Garrard (who has an unhistorical meeting with the polar team) are all played by women, and 'Husky, a sledge dog' by a man. The opening lines have Wilson and Bowers dictating Scott's diary to him, trying for the perfect literary effect; later they chortle over the description of Oates's death, composed by Wilson. 'That's just beautiful', remarks Husky, 'I'm brushing away tears'.[44] It is quickly revealed that the three have in fact eaten Oates as well as Evans, both of whom Scott dispatched with a shovel blow to the head. The remaining drama unfolds in similar style: Bowers and Wilson suggest eating Husky, to whom Scott is unusually attached; Bowers is also disposed of with the shovel; Scott and Wilson declare their love for each other, which requires the female actors playing their parts to wrestle naked on stage. When the actresses begin to protest against the script, the playwright (who doubles as Husky) explains, 'This play is about the class struggle. This play is about the patriarchal make up of society … I'm taking various myths and debunking them, thus revealing the moth-eaten façade of the imperial, patriarchal ruling class. Captain Scott is one example'.[45] The actresses, who have done some research, are not entirely convinced. Hoar's play highlights the fact that by the last decades of the twentieth-century satirical representations of Oates and the polar tragedy were the norm rather than the exception. Heroic-Era satire had reached the point of exhaustion, and any further literary responses needed to develop a new approach.

One answer was a move towards the personal. Beryl Bainbridge's novel *The Birthday Boys* (1991) bypasses historical debates about the competency of the polar party or the value of their actions to explore their characters and experiences in more subtle, complex and intimate ways.[46] Her novel gives each of the five members of the polar party his own turn at narrating different stages of the expedition, but it is Oates who is allotted the pivotal section – the final days of the homeward march. His account flickers between descriptions of the journey, reflections on his companions and nostalgic recollections of his privileged boyhood and youth, and he ends up speaking from beyond the grave. Bainbridge does not shirk points of

controversy: Oates takes morphine to dull his pain, and stumbles from the tent in a drug-induced haze. Debunking Heroic-Era legends, however, is not the author's primary aim. Bainbridge's Oates – along with Scott, Evans, Wilson and Bowers – comes across as a multi-faceted figure rather than a caricatured distillation of Edwardian imperial values. This is largely because of her prismatic technique in which each explorer's personality is conveyed not only by his own narrative, but also by the other four, and in which she draws closely on multiple sources (including the men's diaries; later accounts such as Cherry-Garrard's *Worst Journey in the World*, 1922; and historical assessments such as Huntford's *Scott and Amundsen*). The strength of *The Birthday Boys* lies its juxtaposition of a range of different opinions and evaluations, without any particular interpretation being obviously favoured. More than any other Heroic-Era novel, it emphasizes that what remains of the period – and of the explorers themselves – is a web of texts.

Where Bainbridge's novel deals with Oates in historical context, re-telling original events, other recent texts imagine what would happen if he were brought into the present or the future, giving the explorer an existence beyond the Edwardian period. In T. R. Pearson's *Polar* (2002), set in the Blue Ridge region of Virginia, a decrepit local man called Clayton, whose main source of interest in life has been watching and discussing pornographic films shown on satellite television, suddenly begins channelling the spirit of Oates. He insists that his name is 'Titus', makes cryptic polar references – 'First ice. Skua. Cape pigeon. Petrel .... Fair wind .... The glass is high'[47] – and gives accurate but useless predictions about future events in others' lives. This last ability draws the interest of policeman Ray Tatum, who pieces together Clayton's comments to solve the long-standing mystery of a missing girl. *Polar* marks a new approach to the Oates story. Pearson, whose style is marked by digression and tangential asides, is not interested in re-telling or revising the story, but rather in using it to reflect on seemingly unconnected present-day events. The story's North American setting removes it from the dynamic of national embarrassment that pervades most later twentieth-century British responses. The sheer incongruity of the two figures – Oates, heroic explorer of the white continent, and Clayton, quintessential 'white trash' – is a source of amusement, a quirky combination of sublimity and banality. When Clayton eventually departs from his house – 'Said he'd be a while', reports a man who had come to him for advice on a snoring elixir – the locals turn it into a tourist attraction, pointing out Clayton's map of Antarctica carefully drawn on the chimney stack with a piece of charcoal, and making

maps of their own on dinner napkins.[48] The centrality of the polar journey to the structure of the novel (the chapter headings correspond to its various stages), however, suggests a more serious intent. Tatum's quest for the missing child proceeds in tandem with Clayton/Titus's polar quest, and the reader automatically searches for meaningful parallels. These are not obvious, but one commonality is the inextricability of victory and defeat. Scott's polar party was immortalized, but as an example of failure and tragedy; Oates's suicide ensured his memorialization as a hero, but it came at the cost of his life. Tatum likewise succeeds and fails in his quest: he eventually locates the missing girl, but decides to leave her in her new situation, which is marginally better than that provided by her original dysfunctional family. He makes his own noble exit shortly afterwards, leaving the police force for good. *Polar* is refreshing in its application of Oates's story in an entirely unexpected, non-obvious way, deflecting attention away from increasingly circular debates about the nature and worth of the explorer's action.

Although very different in style, Geraldine McCaughrean's prize-winning children's novel *The White Darkness* (2005) – this time a British text – takes a similar approach in its incongruous yoking together of Oates and a present-day character. The narrator is an ostensibly unlikely Oates enthusiast, fourteen-year-old schoolgirl Symone Wates. Persecuted by her friends for her failure to conform to expected norms, Symone constructs an elaborate imaginary relationship with the long-dead explorer, or rather her idealized version of him. The novel revolves around a dramatic journey to Antarctica that the aptly named Sym takes with her 'uncle', a hollow-earth fanatic. Her imaginary companion lends her strength throughout a series of physical and psychological trials. Both Sym and her creator McCaughrean have read their histories and are aware of the arguable worth of Oates's sacrifice.[49] Although – or even because – his heroism is questionable, he is an inspiring figure: Sym realizes that his worth lies not in his death or bravery, but in the multi-faceted man he was while living. Armed with this knowledge, she chooses life rather than death, both literally and attitudinally. The author, in her acknowledgements, expresses a hope that Oates might somehow know 'how many people, writers included, have carried his story among life's crevasses and frozen reaches'.[50]

Where does this potted history of literary responses leave Oates's much-vaunted, much-mocked story? Can it, in the twenty-first century, be read as anything more than a deep-frozen morsel of Edwardian culture, epitomizing values that both sustained and brought down an empire? Or does it have

meaning outside of this framework, a meaning that can be reshaped for each generation? Perhaps the best way of understanding this and all mythologized narratives of the Heroic Era is through Irish poet Derek Mahon's villanelle 'Antarctica' (1985), which takes Oates's famous line as a refrain:

> .... Need we consider it some sort of crime,
> This numb self-sacrifice of the weakest? No
> He is just going outside and may be some time –
>
> In fact, for ever. Solitary enzyme,
> Though the night yield no glimmer there will glow,
> At the heart of the ridiculous, the sublime.

Mahon has reportedly described his poem as 'feminist' in its account of 'the moment the more-than-faintly ridiculous heroic male ego finally snuffs it',[51] but this seems disingenuous. Bill Manhire is far closer to the mark when he notes that the companion rhyme line 'neatly captures the mixed and shifting responses called over the years by the tragedy of Scott's polar expedition'.[52] I would go further and suggest that Mahon's poem – like several other recent literary texts – enables us to suspend judgement over these responses: to hold contradictory ideas in tension, without being obliged to resolve them. Mahon's poem suggests that, many decades after the event, Oates's sacrifice can be understood as simultaneously laughable and heroic.

Such doublethink is needed in order to move beyond both the idealization of Heroic-Era narratives that characterized many fictional responses in the first half of the twentieth century, and the easy mockery that typified those produced in the second half. This is the benefit that literary responses add to the abundant historical accounts of Heroic-Era exploration. Histories and biographies might present us with alternative interpretations, but only the ambiguity and polysemy of literary language enables us to accept these interpretations simultaneously, without ultimately choosing one or the other. More than any others, literary responses can show the faults and failures, blind-spots and prejudices of early Antarctic narratives while still acknowledging their continuing ability to inspire in unpredictable ways.

FROM THE OUTSIDE LOOKING IN: EXPLORING ALTERNATIVE VIEWS

Some of the most refreshing responses to Heroic-Era narratives take a step back from the famous personalities of the period, such as Oates, to focus

on the periphery – those who played what are usually seen as bit parts in exploration dramas, or who were ineligible for any part because of their personal circumstances. A whole genre of Antarctic literature is premised on imagining exploration of the continent otherwise than through the eyes of the famous men who undertook it: by speculating about what expeditions would have looked like from marginalized perspectives or, more radically, positing an alternative history in which those traditionally excluded from exploration take centre stage.

The people most obviously 'left behind' in Heroic-Era Antarctic exploration were women: the wives, mothers, sisters and lovers deserted by the men who went south, and those women who would themselves have liked to join the adventure. Of actual wives and partners of Heroic-Era explorers, only Kathleen Scott has received much attention from creative writers, provoking (among other things) a poem (Anne Michaels's 'Ice House', 2003[53]), a dance performance ('Kathleen's Antarctic', 2002) and a play (Jenny Coverack and Robert Edward's 'A Father for My Son', 2000). Fictional versions of the woman-left-behind began early, with the patient, godly and forbearing Mary Pratt of Cooper's *The Sea Lions* (1849). Although a focus on this character type incorporated women's experiences into Antarctic narratives, it allowed them only a very limited role: that of the domestic martyr who puts her partner's polar quest before her own needs. Examples of the stereotype can be found in *The Turnstile* (1912) by A. E. W. Mason and Hall Caine's *The Woman Thou Gavest Me* (1913).[54] Antarctica itself is feminized in these narratives, a rival lover for the hero's affection. In both novels, the heroine recognizes the greater importance of the Antarctic exploration quest and sacrifices her needs for the cause: 'Martin must go on his great errand', cries the pregnant lover of a South Polar explorer in Caine's controversial novel, 'finish his great work and win his great reward, without making any sacrifice for me'.[55] It is only through such self-effacement that these heroines can take some secret share in exploratory achievements. The unnamed 'lady' of Kathleen Watson's 'The Small Brown Room' (1913) muses, after her beloved's death on an Antarctic expedition very similar to Mawson's, that 'she had sent him to those unimaginable places of danger and distress, and he had gone, as he had told her gaily – not for glory's sake, not for country's sake, nor for the sake of science … but for her, because he loved her greatly and she had thought that he should go'. Visiting her before his departure, the explorer himself reflects, 'The South Pole (if ever it be won by me) was won in this little brown room'.[56]

While these fictional women automatically accept the nobility of Antarctic explorers, the motivation of those who went south did not

always go unquestioned. The idea that it was the people left behind who faced the real hardship, while those who travelled to high latitudes escaped to a less complicated life, recurs in literary responses to Heroic-Era exploration. The explorer of 'The Small Brown Room' admits that he'd 'rather try to straighten out things at the South Pole than in the city slums'.[57] The author of 'A Hot Weather Outburst', published in the *Bulletin* magazine in 1914 in response to Shackleton's announcement of the *Endurance* expedition, asserts that

> ... this snow-tramping's merely a hobby –
> A sort of cool scramble for fame and the freedom from work that's too jobby;
> A clear get-away from the Monday to Saturday road that *we* travel;
> A break from convention and bills, and the little knots we must unravel.
> Antarctic exploring be blowed! I tell you I'd just like to try it!
> Let's have medals for plain summer work and the heroes like us who stand by it![58]

In Keneally's novel *The Survivor* (1969), a polar expedition leader's wife expresses similar sentiments, observing that her husband fled the messiness of normal life: 'The world and the flesh bemused him, so off he packed to a place where the world was a series of climatic clichés. And as for the flesh, your body doesn't smell. May's shirt is still clean in August, your excreta down in the permafrost offends no one'.[59] The Heroic-Era speaker of McDonald's poem 'Antarctica' (1977) reflects that it is not the thought of the world left behind that occupies him but

> ... the cheerful place I'm in.
>
> We never wash
> nor shave nor go outside to shit,
> and when a fight looms up
> complaint turns inside-out
> with rattled forks and knives
> and ding-donged plates.[60]

In Mark Richard's short story 'The Ice at the Bottom of the World' (1989), the Antarctic represents (among other things) the remote, exotic destinations frequented by sea-faring husbands whose long-suffering wives are left with the chores of household maintenance and child-rearing: 'these women cheated by half-marriages to half-married men, strangers always coming home, drinking, restless to return to sea, to some little empty bleak strange strip of desert sand in the ice at the bottom of the world, while these women shouldered it all ...'[61] Perhaps the most explicit (and most amusing) literary examination of this theme is Craig Cormick's short story

'Lady Shackleton's Freezer' (1998). Cormick constructs a comic parallel between Shackleton's attempt to write his book of the *Endurance* expedition and his wife's efforts to defrost their freezer, in order to retrieve the ice-entrapped roast beef he has insisted on for dinner. She patiently listens to Shackleton reading out his stirring words, but her husband, absorbed in his account, is oblivious to her labours. The struggles of the woman left behind, the story suggests, may not be as glamorous as the explorer's, but they are equally heroic.

Other writers are interested not so much in the trials of the 'women-left-behind' as the 'women-who-wanted-to-go'. There is ample historical evidence that some of them did want to go. Shackleton famously received a letter of application for his *Endurance* expedition from 'three sporty girls', who represented themselves as strong, healthy, gay and bright, were willing to undergo any hardship and apparently enjoyed cross-dressing. Having read numerous polar exploration accounts, they did not understand 'why men should have all the glory, and women none, especially when there are women just as brave and capable as there are men'. The explorer returned his regrets that there were 'no vacancies for the opposite sex on the Expedition'.[62] Mawson, preparing for his Australasian Antarctic Expedition, received a letter similar in its object but rather more ambiguous in tone:

> Dear Sir,
>
> Will you take me as your cabin boy, a servant, on your antarctic expedition. I am a girl in the twenties, strong, healthy and fearless, & could make up as a boy perfectly. You will find the nimbleness of youth combined with the knowledge of woman, a very useful factor.
>
> Yours truly
> Marjory Collier
> Alias Jack Sëall[63]

Mawson's response is not recorded, but, needless to say, the application was rejected. No woman even stood on the Antarctic continent until the mid-1930s,[64] and women were included in national Antarctic programmes only in the later twentieth century.

Imaginatively, however, women explored the Antarctic far earlier, beating both Amundsen and Scott to the Pole. This is the hypothesis of 'Sur', a short story by the acclaimed novelist Ursula Le Guin, first published in the *New Yorker* in 1982.[65] 'Sur' purports to be a report, long hidden in an attic, of an all-woman expedition to the South Pole that took place in 1909–10. Names are suppressed, so as not to embarrass 'unsuspecting husbands, sons, etc' should the story get out. The tale overturns

imperial as well as patriarchal norms – the explorers hail not from European centres but the southern end of the globe, from various South American countries. Like the women who wrote to Shackleton, the narrator reports being initially inspired by her reading of polar exploration accounts, especially Scott's first expedition. She, a cousin and a friend recruit a team of women, although most of those asked are unable to abandon their daily duties: 'An ailing parent; an anxious husband beset by business cares; a child at home with only ignorant or incompetent servants to look after it' (class is one determinant not overturned in Le Guin's story). These are the unlucky women left behind. The nine who are able go invent plausible excuses for their absence – a convent retreat, a trip to Paris – and head off on the *Yelcho* (the name of the real Chilean ship in which Shackleton rescued his stranded Elephant Island men in 1916). After a disappointing visit to Scott's squalid hut – 'housekeeping ... is no game for amateurs' – they base themselves (like Amundsen) in the Bay of Whales, building an underground living area they christen 'South South America' – Le Guin's ironic twist on Byrd's base in the 1930s, 'Little America'. The expedition progresses remarkably smoothly. The women function democratically rather than hierarchically, voting on decisions – they are 'all crew' and no officers; they live at their base with 'real amity'; they experience much better weather than Scott; and they have a relatively straightforward run to the Pole, where they decide to leave no mark: 'some man longing to be the first might come some day, and find it, and know then what a fool he had been, and break his heart'. When they return from the Pole, they discover that one of the women left at the base is pregnant; a few weeks later, the first baby on Antarctica is born: a girl. The story ends with a final note from the narrator, now a grandmother, warning that Amundsen should never be told of their adventure: 'He would be terribly embarrassed and disappointed. There is no need for him or anyone else outside the family to know. We left no footprints, even'.[66] Le Guin's story is clearly no attempt to realistically insert women into the Heroic Era. Instead, it presents a utopian version of exploration that is not premised on conquest, nationalism, fame or priority.[67] Although 'Sur' obviously critiques the values inherent in the actual exploration that took place, its tone is very different from typical late twentieth-century debunking: Scott, Shackleton and Amundsen are consistently praised (if condescended to) in the story, and the value of exploration of remote places itself is unquestioned: '[T]he backside of heroism is often rather sad; women and servants know that. They know also that the heroism may be no less real for that'.[68]

Le Guin had explored questions of gender and the Antarctic once before, in a less explicit way, in her highly acclaimed science fiction novel, *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969). The novel is not set in Antarctica, but on a snow-covered planet named Gethen, or 'Winter'. The most striking characteristic of the planet's inhabitants is their sexuality: they are neither men nor women, but take on the characteristics of either sex during their periods of sexual receptiveness or 'kemmer', and in between times are entirely androgynous. The climax of the story centres on a sledging journey taken by a male envoy to the planet, the earthling Genly Ai, and a Gethenian named Estraven. The journey takes them across the north polar cap of the planet, but to anyone familiar with polar narratives, their route up a glacier onto a sastrugi-strewn plateau of ice miles thick is clearly based on the Antarctic rather than the Arctic icescape. In her essay 'Heroes' (1989), Le Guin describes her fascination with the narratives of Heroic-Era Antarctic explorers: 'They were certainly heroes to me, all of them … they got into my toes and my bones and my books, and I wrote *The Left Hand of Darkness*, in which a Black man from Earth and an androgynous extraterrestrial pull Scott's sledge through Shackleton's blizzards across a planet called Winter'.[69] The description of the journey is divided between Genly's retrospective report and Estraven's sledging diary. During the journey, Estraven comes into 'kemmer' and, in reaction to Ai's maleness, takes on female characteristics. The bond that has grown between the two as they have 'man'-hauled their sledge and shared their tent enables Ai to finally see Estraven not as man or woman, but a combination of both. He realizes that it is through the 'sexual tension between us, admitted now and understood, but not assuaged, that the great and sudden assurance of friendship between us rose'.[70] Le Guin's novel has been criticized for its heterocentrism; while the sex of the Gethenians alternates, the author retrospectively observed that they are 'quite unnecessarily locked … into heterosexuality'.[71] Yet, if *The Left Hand of Darkness* does not evoke a potential homosexual encounter in this episode, neither does it describe a straightforwardly heterosexual one, as Genly always defaults to the male pronoun when referring to Estraven. In addition, the genre of the Heroic-Era sledging journey, which Le Guin's narrative immediately recalls, automatically casts the participants as male: the fact that this particular journey recounts sexual tension as well as friendship between two sledgers, raises the possibility that a similar relationship may have existed between men in real-life sledging journeys.

Le Guin sends not just an androgynous alien onto the ice, but also, in her words, 'a Black man'. Her sledging journey thus re-writes the Heroic

Era on the basis of race as well as gender – and is surprisingly rare in doing so. It is important to remember that not all Heroic-Era explorers were white: Shirase Nobu led a Japanese Expedition to the Antarctic around the same time that Scott and Mawson led theirs. Nor were all previous expeditions to the continent racially homogenous: although the first African-American explorer stood on the continent only in 1939 (George W. Gibbs, with the third Byrd expedition), earlier whaling and sealing crews in the Antarctic region no doubt included African-Americans, Polynesians (a Raiatean man named Omai (or Mai) accompanied Cook's second voyage) and other races. Such visitors to Antarctica make cameo appearances in early realist novels, such as Cooper's *The Sea Lions*, in which an African-American cook nearly perishes on the ice after being sent for help. Drawing on contemporary racial theories,[72] the sea-captain hero and his first mate debate the suitability of dark-skinned people to Antarctic conditions: 'Black blood won't stand cold like white blood …' asserts the mate, 'any more than white blood will stand heat like black blood', a fact which the narrator confirms is 'pretty well established'[73] despite the fact that the cook survives where two previous white messengers died.

Racial dynamics feature far more often in fantastic Antarctic tales of this and later periods. Glasberg notes that a tradition of 'Antarctica as locus for racial fantasy' was inaugurated by American writers, notably the pseudonymous author of *Symzonia* (1820), and Poe in *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838).[74] Symzonia is inhabited by pure white people who make the fair-skinned narrator appear dark in comparison: 'I am considered fair for an American, and my skin was always in my own country thought to be one of the finest and whitest. But when one of the internals placed his arm, always exposed to the weather, by the side of mine, the difference was truly mortifying'.[75] Glasberg explores the ambiguity of this text, which presents a separatist white utopia while simultaneously undermining racist assumptions in its implicit acknowledgement of whiteness as a racial category rather than a universal. In *Pym* the protagonist encounters an Antarctic island (Tsalal) inhabited by a jet-black people, whose initial friendliness reveals an intense savagery and duplicity, symbolized by the blackness that infects their landscape, from the rocks to the wildlife. They utter a terrified scream, '*Tekeli-li*', at the sight of anything white. When Pym is drawn closer to the Pole itself, however, intense blackness is replaced by pure whiteness, as the seascape turns milky, white ash blankets the world, and an immense, enigmatic white figure looms before him. Glasberg (building on Toni Morrison) reads this apocalyptic moment as the culminating point of a logic evident

throughout the Antarctic sections of the novel: 'the refusal of the white imagination to acknowledge its extra-natural construction'.[76] Travelling in his canoe with his mixed-race companion Dirk Peters (son of an 'Indian squaw' and a fur-trader[77]) and a captured Tsalal islander, Pym is blanketed by a universal whiteness which symbolizes his own inability to recognize himself as racially marked.[78]

Symzonia and particularly *Pym*, Glasberg observes, inspired 'a spate of novels figuring race in Antarctica' by late nineteenth-century American authors.[79] Lost-race romances, several of which are described in Chapter 6, are particularly prone to racist assumptions and plot lines – and this tradition is not limited to American literature. In Christopher Spotswood's *Voyage of Will Rogers to the South Pole* (1888), the Crusoe-like protagonist, abandoned in Antarctica, meditates on his loneliness, reflecting that some men found this condition so trying that 'they would take up with a black-fellow sooner than be without a companion'. He is spared this eventuality; in the southern land he explores, not only are the human occupants fair-skinned and fair-haired, even a large kangaroo-like creature he encounters is 'quite white'. [80] It is as if Spotswood, a member of a Tasmanian settler family, is fantasizing a version of Australian exploration in which all racial difference is whited-out. Preoccupations of this kind persisted in Antarctic fiction of the first half of the twentieth century, now 'ominously reflecting Fascist and Nazi racial discourse'.[81] Bill Manhire highlights British author (Dorothea) Beall Cunningham's *Wide White Page* (1936) as a novel 'full of what seem to be fascist sympathies'.[82] Connotations of purity and cleanliness made Antarctica particularly amenable to these sympathies and the association was strengthened by actual and rumoured Nazi activity in Antarctica during World War II.[83]

By contrast, 'the modern Antarctic novel', Glasberg notes, 'is acutely aware of environmental and racial politics'. She points to Le Guin, and also to the 'post-colonial, post-holocaust dystopia' that John Calvin Batchelor imagines in *The Birth of the People's Republic of Antarctica* (1983).[84] Other examples might include Edmund Cooper's *The Last Continent* (1970), Rudy Rucker's *The Hollow Earth* (1990) and, most recently, Mat Johnson's *Pym* (2010). Cooper's novel attempts to defamiliarize racial politics by positing a far future in which a technologically developed black society on Mars encounters a 'savage' white society inhabiting a tropical Antarctica on an earth devastated by a racial war. The Martians, who are interested in earth's – and particularly Antarctica's – mineral resources, are then confronted with an inverted postcolonial version of contemporary environmental Antarctic politics, in which they must decide whether to disturb

the white civilization they have encountered.[85] Rucker's novel is a postmodern reply to Poe's *Pym* that uses the Symmesian concept of the hollow earth to explore notions of interiors and exteriors and reversals and oppositions, particularly in regard to race. The narrator, Mason, an escaped slave named Otha and Edgar Allan Poe himself journey into the interior of the earth. Here, exposure to an inner light turns Mason's and Poe's skin black: 'We've got to get out of here Mason!' exclaims 'Eddie', 'We've got to get white!'[86]

'Eddie' meets his match in Mat Johnson, whose novel *Pym* both parodies and re-appropriates Poe's. His protagonist, Chris Jaynes, the only black professor at an all-white college (whose tenure, at the novel's opening, has just been refused), discovers the literary and physical remains of Dirk Peters (who is now revealed to have been African-American). Concluding that Poe's novel describes real events, Jaynes journeys south, ostensibly as part of an African-American business venture involving the cutting of blocks of Antarctic ice that are destined to be sold as bottled water by a large corporation. Here he stumbles on a race of startlingly white, oversized humanoids, who (working with the still-living Pym) quickly enslave his startled party. Jaynes later escapes, only to find himself in a hyperreal biodome constructed by a wealthy white painter to replicate his chocolate-box art. Meanwhile, communications from the rest of the world have ominously ceased. Johnson evokes and mercilessly satirizes not only *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, but many of the continent's narrative traditions: the all-white civilization, the subterranean society, the discovery of historical anachronisms, the utopia, the secret-hideout of a famous figure and the refuge from global catastrophe. Notions of whiteness in relation to the Antarctic and its literature are explicitly addressed throughout the narrative: 'White people don't own the ice', Jaynes tells his friend Garth at one point, 'I'm pretty sure they didn't even invent it'.[87]

Pym and the other novels described here, however, are not typical; race is far less frequently foregrounded than is gender in late twentieth-century Antarctic texts, fiction or non-fiction. In J. M. Coetzee's novel *Elizabeth Costello* (2003), a Nigerian novelist, Emmanuel Egudu, travelling as a guest lecturer on an Antarctic cruise ship, notes that 'Even here, on this ship sailing towards the continent that ought to be the most exotic of all, and the most savage, the continent with no human standards at all, I can sense I am exotic'. While Egudu's co-lecturer, Elizabeth Costello (a white Australian), is troubled by his seeming embrace of his exoticness – the 'terrible fate' of being '[t]he one black face in this sea of white' – his observation succinctly summarizes the racial politics of many far southern novels – particular the 'lost race' variety.[88] There have been few attempts in Antarctic fiction to imagine the experiences of those who share his

'fate'. Attempts to re-write Antarctic history from a non-white perspective, or to inject racially marginalized characters into this history, are still relatively rare.

A notable exception is Mojisola Adebayo's one-woman play *Moj of the Antarctic* (2008), which uses 'spoken word, physical movement, dance, poetry, song, character playing, multimedia slides projection, and audience interaction to mediate themes of black women, slavery, and gender/racial performativity'.[89] Adebayo was planning a performance based on the narrative of Ellen Craft, an African-American slave who escaped by cross-dressing as a white man, when she encountered an advertisement for the British Antarctic Survey's Artists and Writers Programme. Her application was twice rejected, but an Arts Council England grant enabled her and visual artist Del LaGrace Volcano to travel to Antarctica on a cruise ship, where they shot visual material that was later incorporated into the play. Adebayo's choice to re-locate Craft to the far south was influenced not only by her realization that 'the discourse of white supremacist masculinity in both literature and imagery' dominated Antarctic representation, but also by a visit to Africa during which she saw the way in which the impact of climate change was physically eroding historical slave sites.[90] Her play powerfully combines these various political concerns – slavery and black experience, gender and sexual orientation, and global warming – while also incorporating direct quotations and paraphrases from well-known authors (including Coleridge, Shackleton and Melville) and, inevitably, Captain Oates's exit line.[91]

The play opens and closes with a traditional West African storyteller whose mythological framing links the apparently incongruous continents of Africa and Antarctica, giving Ellen's story a global context:

> Once,
> We were
> Gondwana,
> Africa and Antarctica
> Antarctica and Africa
> One content
> Continent. . . .
>
> A history of
> The future:
> Antarctica melts,
> Africa sinks,
> We all disappear.[92]

The storyteller's reach extends to the astronomical: Adebayo links Greek speculations about Antarctica's origins to theories of the earth's roundness

and its 'tilting . . . eccentric' orbit of the sun, which are then tied to human sexual orientation:

> If Antarctica exists
> And the world is a wobbling wanderer
> Then nothing is straight
> And no one is straight
> Forward.[93]

While the historical Ellen Craft had a husband (who escaped with her in the guise of her slave), Adebayo recognizes untold stories of queer African-American slaves by giving 'Moj' – her version of Ellen and also a version of herself – a female lover, May. After May is killed by the slave master (Moj's father), Moj escapes dressed as a man to the North and then to Britain, where another African cross-dressing woman convinces her to join a Southern Ocean whaler. Moj thus journeys 'Into the heart of whiteness, to hunt the great leviathan',[94] giving Adebayo the opportunity to obliquely explore the way in which race and Antarctica have been historically entwined. While Poe is not one of the many sources Adebayo draws upon, his re-casting of white racial prejudices of the southern United States onto the Antarctic region lurks behind Moj's observations: 'South to me was Georgia', she reflects: 'Now cotton has turned to snow / In the deep deepest south of the earth'.[95] The racist assumptions of the Heroic-Era explorers, who performed black-faced minstrel shows to entertain themselves,[96] come to the fore:

> . . . how can this cold continent
> On a ship of men and me
> With a cat called Nigger for company
> Be freedom for me? [97]

Yet Moj does experience a kind of freedom in Antarctica – 'in this wilderness / I feel so very close to home' – partly because of her realization that the continent is not the 'wide white page' that it is popularly imagined to be:

> . . . under all this white
> Antarctica is a broken rock as Black as my great-
> Grandfather, (*Black rock still image.*) . . .
>
> White is a cover up
> Is a beautiful lie.
> This place is not white but orange and pink and blue!
> (*Antarctica in all its colour*)[98]

After the successful (although, for Moj, distressing) harpooning of a whale, they decide to become the first onto the Antarctic continent, with Moj

imagining herself 'a frosty Caliban'. The storyteller picks up this and other references to *The Tempest* in her closing words, foreseeing a 'Sea / Change' brought on by Antarctica's melting ice, which will give new meaning to Coleridge's famous lines 'Water, water, everywhere . . .'[99] Adebayo successfully politicizes Antarctica in the play, while simultaneously acknowledging its undiminished role as a site of personal odyssey. She has claimed that 'Moj of the Antarctic' is 'a Queering of Black history and vice versa',[100] but it could also be claimed as a queering and 'colouring' of Antarctic history.[101]

While African American and queer politics are central to Adebayo's play, animals also feature, especially as signifiers of a threatened environment. Moj identifies an albatross following her ship with the spirits of her ancestors who jumped into the ocean to their deaths rather than endure slavery – 'Albatross / You like we / Are an endangered species!' – and regrets alerting her company to the appearance of a whale: 'I should have whispered to the whale / Instead of screaming bloody betrayal'.[102] Animals, both native and introduced, played an integral role in Antarctic exploration, but their perspectives have seldom been presented in Antarctic histories.[103] Creative writers, however, have made attempts to provide them with a voice. The libretto of Goering's opera *Das Opfer* (working title 'Die Pinguine') – an adaptation of his play *Die Südpolexpedition des Kapitäns Scott* (1929), discussed previously – features a chorus of penguins.[104] According to one summary, these singing penguins represent 'the "natural" inhabitants of the polar regions' and 'vehemently oppose the intrusion of man into their sphere and hope for his downfall'. By the last scene, they have transformed back into the human chorus, although a few still wear remnants of their penguin costumes.[105] Douglas Stewart's poem 'Worsley Enchanted' uses a similar device. Stewart reverses the lens through which Heroic-Era narratives are usually told, relating the crushing of the *Endurance* through the voice of nine Emperor penguins (Frank Worsley, captain of the ship, had actually observed a group of penguins standing by and making dirge-like cries):

> Oh, there was broken wood,
> There were weeds of iron and rope,
> The log that was bigger than a tree
> Crashed on the frozen sea
> And the tall dark penguins stood
> And stared at the ice without hope,
> Said the nine Emperor penguins.[106]

The 'tall dark penguins' are of course the men of the *Endurance*: just as humans tend to anthropomorphize penguins, so these penguins bring similar

assumptions to Shackleton's men (although their comparison of the mast to a tree is harder to explain). An ambiguity in which penguins blur into men and men into penguins continues through the following six stanzas. This section can be read as a scene of first contact, with the famous ship-crushing scene imagined from a defamiliarizing indigenous perspective.

Caroline Alexander extends the idea of an estranging perspective on Heroic-Era narratives in her short novel *Mrs Chippy's Expedition: The Remarkable Journal of Shackleton's Polar-Bound Cat* (1997). As its title suggests, the novel is a record in feline voice of the experience of the (male) tabby cat taken south by the expedition carpenter or 'chippy', Harry McNeish. The device enables Alexander (also the author of a well-known non-fiction account of the expedition) both to tell the story of the *Endurance* from an unusual angle and to parody the whole genre of the Heroic-Era journal, complete with explanatory footnotes by a far from impartial editor, and the inevitable introduction by an esteemed personage, 'Lord Mouser-Hunt'. The combination of Mrs Chippy's self-righteous tone and evidently very un-stoic qualities make for a highly amusing narrative. The cat spends his time eating, sleeping in warm places and taunting the sledge dogs, but manages to give the impression that he is constantly occupied with strenuous 'duties'. The journal ends when it is clear to the reader – although not the diarist, nor the editor – that Mrs Chippy's days are numbered, as with the crushing of the *Endurance*, Shackleton ordered all non-essentials to be abandoned. The final footnote, in which the editor assures the reader after the abrupt end to the journal that 'As is well known … Shackleton secured the rescue of all his men'[107] adds poignancy to the playful humour of the text.[108]

It is not native or companion animals, however, but animals put to work on Antarctic expeditions that have attracted the most literary attention. This began very early: a poem published in the *Bulletin* in April 1912 with the title 'The Southern Sacrifice' sounds like a spookily prescient meditation on the fate (then unknown) of the polar party, but the sacrifice in this case is made not by Scott and his fellows but by their ponies. The poem begins with an extract from 'Captain Scott's Antarctic diary'[109] describing how ponies and men hauled for fourteen hours without a meal before the former were put to death. Again, the author chooses to turn the tables by telling the story in the ponies' voice:

> Whatever have we done that such a fate
> Should take the tracks we tread? –
> To fill our world with hardship and with hate,
> And our dumb hearts with dread.

These frozen lands, and their fierce frosted air,
  Were never meant for us;
Then why should we, the driven dumb slaves, bear
  The White Man's incubus? [110]

If native animals take the place of indigenous inhabitants in Antarctic exploration narratives, then the fate of introduced animals, this poet suggests, shares elements with the fate of displaced colonized peoples: both are enslaved, transported to inhospitable surrounds and worked cruelly with little regard for their lives. Where the colonized races are considered 'The White Man's Burden' in Kipling's poem of that name, in 'The Southern Sacrifice' the ponies bear the nightmarish literal burden of the white explorers of the Antarctic.

The role of dogs in Heroic-Era expeditions is equally controversial. Many pages have been devoted to analysing Scott's reluctance to use dogs on his second expedition, which is often interpreted as a disastrous decision based on a misplaced belief in the nobility of man-hauling. In the post-Huntford period, Scott's dislike of cruelty to animals, frequently labelled 'sentimentalism', tends to be interpreted as a failing. An extended defence of Scott's attitude towards dogs – and condemnation of Amundsen's – has been provided by Carl Murray.[111] Two very different Antarctic poems deal directly with the issue of dogs in the Heroic Era. Les Barker's comic verse 'Spot of the Antarctic' asserts that Scott was not the second to reach the Pole, but the third. The first was Amundsen's eponymous lead dog: 'How can the man on the back of the sledge / Beat the dog he has tied on the front?' The poem is playful and amusing, but its point strikes home: Spot is 'not a happy dog': '… pulling a sledge all those miles through snow? / A walk round the park would have done'. On the return journey, Roald speaks 'to his pet with regret' before getting out his knife and fork. A longer, more serious poetic mediation on the subject can be found in Bill Manhire's 'Dogs' (2003). The poem is spoken in the first person by Amundsen, who relates the fate of his dogs throughout the polar journey:

At our first beacon we had to shoot Lucy.
Sad to put an end to this beautiful creature,

but there was nothing else to be done.
Adam and Lazarus were never seen again.

Sara fell dead on the way
Without any prior symptom.

Only towards the end of the poem does Amundsen become meditative, reflecting 'I feel quite alone. It is hard almost to speak … / My best friends

bark in my stomach'. He restores his equanimity by thinking on the positives of the journey:

> . . . I see once again how the whip
> haunts the heads of the dogs
>
> *Come over here, Bone!*
>
> and how the great unknown
> spreads out before us – white, always white,
>
> with always a splendid surface.[112]

The final line hints at the other polar party, minus dogs, making their way across the ice: Scott was troubled by difficult surfaces throughout his journey, and even had he elected to use dogs, they may not have been as effective on his route as they were on the Norwegians'. More important here, however, is Amundsen's willingness to dismiss any regrets about his use of dogs in light of the splendidness – superficially at least – of the experience. As Murray shows, both Scott and Amundsen knew that dogs were an effective form of polar travel, but that this was contingent on their being worked relentlessly and then killed. There has been, to my knowledge, no sustained attempt to re-tell the story of a Heroic-Era journey from the perspective of a husky. If such a narrative were written, it would be a harrowing tale, with an abrupt conclusion.

CHAPTER 4

The Survival Value of Literature at High Latitudes

The heroic feats of early Antarctic explorers evoke images of open expanses and unending white wastes. For those who wished to stay alive, however, the reality was very different. 'God damn this country', wrote Charles Laseron, a member of Mawson's Australasian Antarctic Expedition (AAE), during a sledging journey in late 1912:

> Held up this day again by drift. Blowing a hurricane … We are getting wetter and wetter. Our sleeping bags are soaking, everything is wet and uncomfortable … Our tent is getting smaller and smaller as the piling snow bulges the sides in and we are now cramped for room … We can't read aloud owing to the flapping of the tent making our voices inaudible. Seven days out and our record not quite 19 miles, seven days of unceasing drift. Talk about exploring, all we have seen so far is a few hundred yards of uneven snow surface … or else the inside of a small tent.[1]

Laseron's outpouring highlights an irony of polar travel of this period: in the most isolated, deserted region in the world, explorers were constantly subject to crowded, confined conditions. It also points to the importance of reading and writing as ways of dealing with this paradoxical situation. Laseron is frustrated because the noise of the tent prevents the men from reading aloud: two days earlier they had started on Dickens's *Pickwick Papers*, vicariously experiencing the social world from which they were now so disconnected. Thwarted in this activity, Laseron turns to another solace: writing his diary, substituting the spaciousness of the blank page for the claustrophobic tent.

Antarctica turned those who explored it into compulsive readers and writers, as a means of ameliorating the anxieties of both extreme isolation and extreme confinement. They did not limit their reading to practical texts such as survival manuals and polar exploration accounts, but pored over old letters, newspapers, magazines, novels and volumes of poetry. They not only scribbled the diary entries necessary as records of their achievements and bases for later publications; they also wrote creatively,

producing plays, short stories and poems, many of which dealt with – even satirized – their adventures. The earliest imaginative responses to Heroic-Era narratives thus came from those who originally performed them, and the very act of creating these responses helped them mentally and emotionally process their experiences. This chapter, then, looks not only at the representation of Antarctica in a particular kind of literature – the literature that early explorers themselves produced – but also, conversely, at the role that literature and literary activities played in Heroic-Era Antarctica.

THE NOT-SO-STRENUOUS LIFE: BOOKS IN THE HEROIC ERA

Anticipating long periods of inactivity when darkness and bad weather would keep their men indoors, leaders of Antarctic exploration teams equipped themselves with extensive libraries. In their survey of polar expedition libraries, Deidre and David Stam observe that reading was a 'fundamental preoccupation' of high-latitude explorers, who spent 'almost as much time at their books' as they did at more stereotypical physical activities such as hauling sledges.[2] Where earlier polar expeditions could not count on all members being literate – it was common, in fact, for reading lessons to form part of the over-wintering experience in nineteenth-century Arctic exploration – by the turn of the twentieth century, literacy levels were far higher across the social spectrum. Scott's first expedition library comprised about nine hundred books, which were read by both officers and crew. These included a selection of polar titles for consultation (although Scott noticed that 'many important books were omitted' because of their hasty departure);[3] reference books such as dictionaries, atlases and almanacs (useful in debates and arguments); scientific titles; and fiction and poetry. Literary works made up more than a third of the library's titles: authors such as Charlotte Bronte, Charles Dickens, Arthur Conan Doyle and Rider Haggard were featured. There was even an Antarctic novel, Jules Verne's *Antarctic Mystery* (1897), translated into English several years earlier.[4] Often, libraries would be donated by private benefactors or publishing companies: the AAE received more than three hundred titles in this manner. While the extent to which the expedition members availed themselves of this resource depended on their background, inclination and circumstances, it is clear from many diary references that reading material was much appreciated (see Figure 6). One AAE member, Morton Moyes, usefully provides in the back of his diary

Figure 6. George Marston reading in bed during Ernest Shackleton's *Nimrod* expedition. Image courtesy of the Royal Geographical Society.

a list of 'Books Read in 1912 at Shackleton Glacier'; he was consuming an average of two books a week, many of them novels or volumes of poetry.[5]

Although reading is typically considered a private pursuit, in a small community sharing the same limited number of titles, it inevitably becomes a group activity as well. Novels and poems would often be read aloud, discussed, reviewed and debated. Mawson's men in the main base hut listened eagerly to the storeman reciting W. W. Jacobs's humorous tales; debated over the character of the hero of Robert Service's *Trail of Ninety-Eight*; and criticized the idealization of the heroine of *Lorna Doone*. Critics have noted the way in which many of the texts the AAE men read – the imperial quest narratives, the colonial adventure fiction – would have shaped and reinforced their own sense of identity as explorers expanding the empire.[6] While this is undoubtedly the case, their taste was unpredictable and at times, one suspects, ironic. According to Mawson, their unanimous favourite was the romantic novel of manners *Lady Betty Across the Water*; they named an ice cavern that they had dug out on the plateau 'Aladdin's Cave' after a bejewelled underground space (decorated for a lavish Newport party) where the hero expresses his feelings for the girlish narrator.[7] Towards the end of their second winter, they began writing reviews of non-existent titles, such as *Motoring in Queen Mary Land* (an Edwardian

version of extreme travel writing) and *The Voyage of the Oui Oui Monsieur* (a humorous take on an account of a recent French expedition, *The Voyage of the 'Pourquoi-Pas?'*).[8] Whether or not the expedition members related or aspired to the characters and plots of the literature they consumed, these texts became a welcome extension of the confined world they shared.

Reading also had its dangers: Mawson clearly considered it a potentially time-wasting, indulgent activity. Several AAE men come in for criticism in his diary for their perceived laziness, which he associated with reading:

> [John] Close has put in much time at his clothes, but gets tired before the day is out and has a nap at intervals. After 4pm he is prone to read a book and does the same when he is not asleep till after midnight.
>
> Murphy does some sewing but very feeble. After dinner he never does anything but go to bed and read, or (as of late) design collages.[9]

The ironies of Close's situation were multiple, as he was by background a physical trainer who had volunteered for the expedition with the promise of teaching the men 'Physical Culture', which he pitched to Mawson in his application letter as 'a useful and healthful habit during the monotony and comparative inactivity of parties snowbound during the winter months'.[10] Close's favourite book was Theodore Roosevelt's *The Strenuous Life*, which he would be found reading when he should have been working. At one busy moment he was even found asleep with a copy of *The Strenuous Life* resting on his chest.[11]

The titles held in expedition libraries had strenuous lives of their own. Not all languished in the base huts; some travelled the continent packed into sledging equipment alongside pemmican and plasmon biscuits. Although weight was a premium on these expeditions, reading matter was clearly considered a priority. While practical volumes such as the Royal Geographical Society's *Hints to Travellers* were important (see Figure 7), these provided little escape from the immediate situation. In his analysis of reading on Scott's *Terra Nova* expedition, Philip Sidney identifies poetry anthologies as a favoured genre, as they were comparatively slim,[12] but it is also possible to find sledgers reading thick volumes by Thackeray or Dickens (Cherry-Garrard's 'most successful' sledging novel was *Bleak House*, one of Dickens's longest[13]). When the men were stuck in a tent in a blizzard, these books became extremely important to them, 'beguil[ing] many weary hours'.[14] They would consume them individually and also together, reading aloud to each other to while away the time. Their situation pre-empted that of the men living in trenches in the impending world war: these soldiers found books 'an oasis of reasonableness and

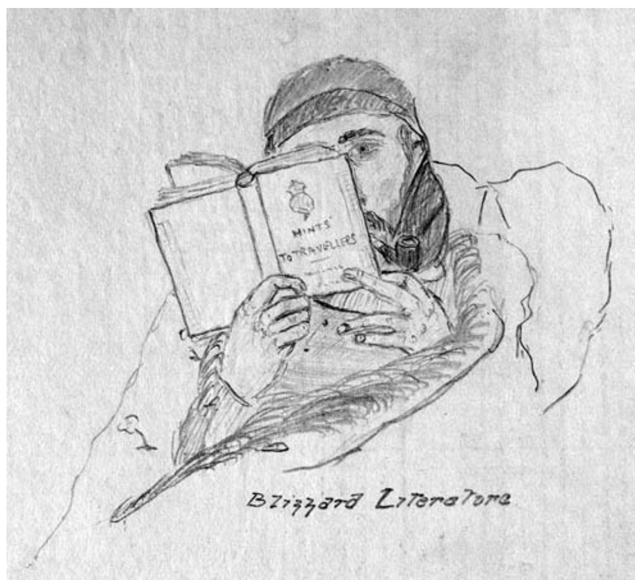

Figure 7. Sketch from the diary of Sydney Jones, a member of the Australasian Antarctic Expedition. By permission of the National Library of Australia (MS 9273/2/1).

normality, a place one could crawl into for a few moments' respite',[15] and polar explorers, also in confined, uncomfortable spaces, and enduring periods of tedium followed by periods of danger, considered them a similar comfort. A corollary of this was that books became very precious, and sledgers proportionately possessive of them: on one AAE sledging trip, when the wind was too noisy for reading aloud, two men fought over a copy of Owen Wister's western *The Virginian*, while the third recorded the event in his diary: '… they have torn the thing in half and each man now reads his own portion quietly'.[16]

A luxury in the base hut when all was proceeding well and an important inclusion in a sledging journey, literature could play a vital role in maintaining spirits and sanity when things went badly wrong. Accidentally marooned without a library of books or even a few selected favourites, but with an abundance of unstructured time,[17] Antarctic explorers became desperate for things to read. Perhaps the most extreme example is that of three Swedish men on Otto Nordenskjöld's expedition at the turn of the century. Living in a makeshift shelter roofed by their upturned sledge for more than six months, they were reduced to reading labels on their tins of

Nestlé's condensed milk and boiled beef. To supplement this meagre offering, they related to each other the plots of novels they knew, such as *The Three Musketeers* and *The Count of Monte Cristo*.[18]

A similar situation occurred during Scott's second expedition when the six men of the Northern Party were forced to winter for about half a year in a small ice cave with very few supplies. According to Raymond Priestley, 'the worst of waiting' was the lack of books, although they made the most of their small number of titles: 'I have read [*David Copperfield*] so thoroughly that I could easily pass a stiff examination on it', he observed early in the ordeal. His knowledge of Dickens's classic would have been second to none by the end of their confinement in the ice cave, as one of the ways in which the men kept themselves sane and occupied in the dark and eventless winter was by reading a chapter a night. Priestley's appreciation of the novel only increased; never, he wrote, had Dickens 'a more dirty or more enthusiastic audience'.[19] The regular reading of *David Copperfield* not only involved all of the men in a shared narrative, it provided an imaginary link with the world back home, its many characters forming a web of connectedness which also enclosed the readers. Moreover, written to be read in serial form, *David Copperfield* gave the men a sense of event and climax in a very static situation. They finished the last of the sixty-two chapters with great regret, but moved quickly on to the next in their small library of books, a life of Robert Louis Stevenson.[20] By midwinter the expedition doctor, Murray Levick, began to worry about what he describes in his diary as a 'falling off of spirits', and increased the number of chapters per day to two, which 'bucked things up a good deal'.[21] Reading was not merely pleasurable, it was medicinal.

The fetishization of books was, not surprisingly, a feature of Shackleton's *Endurance* expedition, the members of which were famously marooned on sea ice, and later under an upturned boat on Elephant Island, after their ship was crushed. The men had been commanded to leave behind many of their belongings after the ship sank, but they managed to keep a surprisingly large number of volumes. Shackleton's narrative *South* (1919) lists the remaining reading material as two books of poetry, an account of Nordenskjöld's expedition, a penny cookery book and one or two volumes of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*,[22] but an examination of various diaries reveals more than fifteen other books, including *The Iliad*, Coleridge's 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner' – apposite reading[23] – and Dickens's *Dombey and Son*.[24] Although the men held concerts, sing-a-longs and recitals of original verse, they do not seem to have organized regular sessions of reading aloud as Scott's Northern Party did; books were apparently consumed individually,

and were sometimes jealously guarded. Thomas Lees writes in his diary of a book he has kept 'absolutely secret' in his sleeping bag for six months, throughout the journey across the sea ice; he observes that the Australian photographer Frank Hurley also has a book he is 'not disposed to lend … out'.[25] Hurley's own enthusiasm for a good story is evident from his diary: 'I have been reading Nordenskjöld all day, & so similar to our own position is his narrative that I became so interested & absorbed that I actually felt it was our party that was being rescued by the "Uruguay"'.[26] Frank Wild, leader of the group in Shackleton's absence, worried about this kind of reaction – he didn't like the men to read Nordenskjöld's book because of the close parallels with their own situation.[27] But he at least recognized the importance of access to reading matter, rationing out the various volumes of the *Encyclopedia*. Lees notes that they became very knowledgeable on topics starting with A, P, M, E and S.[28]

Particularly popular under all circumstances were books about food. Cookery books were avidly read: Mawson's men favoured *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management*; Shackleton's were thrilled to have a penny cookery book; and even poetry would be scoured for gastronomical references: 'Found a ripping description of a meal in Tennyson's "Audley Court" today', wrote AAE sledger Frank Bickerton.[29] Reading became a kind of food substitute: during the attempt on the Pole in Scott's first expedition, Shackleton commented in his diary, '[h]ad only two meals to-day, to save food, so read some Darwin for lunch'.[30] Hurley, during the *Endurance* ordeal, comments in his diary that he is reading a novel that 'alleviates a hungry appetite by providing a literary feast'.[31] Occasionally books would actually be consumed: on Elephant Island the need to read was trumped by an even greater urge when Hurley discovered the India paper of the *Encyclopedia* could be used to make cigarettes. Soon after, the pages 'went up in smoke'.[32]

PUBLISH OR PERISH: THE POLAR NEWSPAPER

Not content with the reading matter they had brought with them, Antarctic explorers produced their own. 'How doth the gay explorer improve the rhyming minute / By editing a newspaper, and printing drivel in it', wrote an anonymous correspondent to the Editor of the *Adelie Blizzard*, a periodical produced by the AAE men during the winter of 1913.[33] Editing a newspaper, the letter writer suggests, was *de rigeur* for polar expeditions of the time. The tradition was by this stage nearly a century old: Captain William Edward Parry, whose 1819–20 expedition to find the Northwest

Passage was the first to deliberately over-winter, marked the disappearance of the sun with the launch of the *New Georgia Gazette*, a weekly newspaper which printed reviews, letters, poetry, accounts of shipboard activities, advertisements and announcements. The idea was embraced by later British Arctic expeditions: for example, ships searching for Sir John Franklin and his companions in the mid-century produced titles such as the *Illustrated Arctic News* and the *Aurora Borealis*.

On the surface, there is little sense in a 'newspaper', often with a 'print-run' of one, written and read by a small group of people who were already all too aware of each other's activities. Polar newspapers cannot be understood in terms of the ordinary purpose of the genre: to disseminate information about current events and opinions.[34] Parry considered that the primary function of a polar newspaper was to combat tedium, restlessness and depression. He feared 'the want of employment' as one of the 'worst evils' which could befall his over-wintering men, and instigated the *Gazette* as one means to combat this evil; for Parry, it was literally a case of publish or perish. For the officers who contributed, the newspaper had 'the happy effect of employing the leisure hours' and 'of diverting the mind from the gloomy prospect which would sometimes obtrude itself on the stoutest heart'.[35]

When polar exploration began to focus on the south, the newspaper tradition came with it. The best-known newspaper to emerge from Scott's expeditions is the *South Polar Times*, but his men also produced two shorter-lived titles. The *Blizzard* featured material of comic or 'fleeting local' interest that might have 'upset the balance of grave and gay' that characterized the *South Polar Times*.[36] The *Adélie Mail & Cape Adare Times* kept the Northern Party occupied. Both newspapers were produced in multiple copies, but neither survived past the first issue. Shackleton's *Nimrod* expedition boasted a shipboard magazine, the *Antarctic Petrel*. The AAE could also claim more than one publication, with the main base producing the *Adelie Blizzard*, and the western base in Queen Mary Land the *Glacier Tongue*[37] – the only newspaper of all those mentioned here that does not seem to have survived in any form. Non-English-speaking nations also embraced the tradition, with the German South Polar Expedition, led by Erich von Drygalski, publishing *Das antarktische Intelligenzblatt* ('The Antarctic Intelligencer') during the winter of 1902.[38]

Like the *New Georgia Gazette*, these publications would feature a wide variety of genres, covering everything from 'news items', scientific articles and potted summaries of previous expeditions; through more creative offerings such as poems, short stories, playscripts, book reviews and

artworks; to playful ephemera such as acrostics, competitions, mocked-up letters-to-the-editor and notices of 'births, deaths and marriages' (relating to the sledge dogs rather than the men). Many of these offerings can be confidently labelled 'drivel' if the sole criteria is literary quality; the 'newspapers' have the feel of boys' boarding school publications. They provide, however, an oblique and revealing insight into mundanities, frustrations and pleasures of hut life and sledging journeys.

There was enough general interest in these productions for eventual publication to become an added motivation. When Parry's expedition returned home, its house paper (now re-titled the *North Georgia Gazette*[39]) found a London publisher, and became a lighthearted public memorial of the expedition. Later Arctic newspapers, such as the *Illustrated Arctic News* and the *Aurora Borealis* were also published (the latter appearing as *Arctic Miscellanies*). Scott was certainly alert to the publication and fund-raising potential of polar newspapers. Shackleton's opening editorial in the *South Polar Times* raises the idea of reprinting on their return to allow anyone who wishes to have a copy. '[T]he Skipper suggests we get the S.P.T. published as soon as we return', wrote Edward Wilson in his diary in mid-1902, 'and get it out before we come south for the third season. He says it will be an excellent advertisement for the expedition and will fetch a lot of money to pay for a third season down here'.[40] When Shackleton led his own expedition several years later, he upped the ante by including a donated printing press in his equipment. Several men were trained in printing techniques before departure and others produced content – essays, creative works and illustrations; the result was the first book printed and bound in Antarctica, *Aurora Australis* (1908).

While the relief of tedium and potential publicity were explicit functions of the polar newspaper, it also met other needs: as a joint production, it could strengthen the group relations that became so pivotal in sledging expeditions, and it allowed the public sharing of experiences. One analysis of domestic life in Scott's second Antarctic expedition suggests Erving Goffman's concept of the 'total institution' as a useful framework through which to examine social relations in the expedition, including the production of the *South Polar Times*.[41] A total institution, according to Goffman, is 'a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life'.[42] Practices such as an in-house newspaper, according to Goffman, function to 'express unity, solidarity and joint commitment to the institution'.[43] The content of polar newspapers provided a forum for expedition members to

celebrate their achievements, and conversely, to acknowledge shared hardships, frustrations and anxieties. The latter was often done in the veiled form of creative or comic contributions: Herbert Ponting's poem 'The Sleeping Bag', which amusingly details the problems of deciding which side of a reindeer-fur bag is more comfortable against the body, is a good example.[44] Similar in function is 'When Your Mitts Begin to Go',[45] a poem from the *Adelie Blizzard*, which employs a jaunty metre and cheerful tone to describe an experience which, at the time, would have been perceived very differently:

> If you're snowed-up by a blizzard in a sludgy, sloppy tent,
> And for days the drift has threshed and swished, and, conversation-spent,
> You hazard another 'chestnut' on your mild forbearing mates,
> And the scornful lips of someone with a wan smile oscillates.
> That's a detail, to the moment when you find your cast iron mitts,
> And, having thawed them gently, find they're going fast to bits.[46]

Poems such as these must have been cathartic for both authors and readers; light verse provided a medium in which the men could express and share negative experiences without the danger of being accused of whining or complaining.

As with polar libraries, there was a potential flipside to the benefits provided by newspapers. Parry's assistant surgeon foresaw problems with the *North Georgia Gazette*, recalling shipboard newspapers that produced 'sarcasms and bitter reflections' rather than 'amusement and instruction'.[47] There is little direct evidence of contention in Heroic-Era Antarctic newspapers,[48] although there is the occasional jibe. At one point in the *Adelie Blizzard*, for example, there is a reference to 'D. I.', meaning 'Dux Ipse' (the leader himself), the nickname the AAE men bestowed upon the somewhat remote Mawson.[49] The acronym was excised when Mawson and the newspaper's editor, Archie McLean, prepared the *Adelie Blizzard* for publication.[50] Teasing the expedition leader in this way is not, in any case, an example of infighting, but rather an instance of the 'nice delicacy of balance' that Goffman identifies in the 'house organ': such a newspaper enables a reversal of power structures, in which those normally in authority come under 'some slight control' of others who write about them. Even though in-house newspapers tend to reproduce the 'official ideology' of the institution, Goffman argues, they also enable criticism 'by means of oblique or veiled writing, or pointed cartoons'.[51] There are moments in Antarctic newspapers when this process is evidently at work.

One manifestation of the in-house newspaper's potential for criticism is the amount of self-mockery to be found in polar publications. Heroic-Era

explorers were their own first, and most trenchant, satirizers. And it was not only the underlings who poked fun at the 'official ideology' of the imperial polar expedition. One of the best examples is Scott's story 'In Futuro', written in 1902 during his first expedition, and published in the *South Polar Times*. This short piece is a mocking portrayal of a pompous, boastful explorer, recently returned from the expedition. It takes place in a room in Buckingham Palace specially set aside for the 'National heroes'. Here, luxuriating on a couch, lies the explorer, 'somewhat pallid from evenings continually devoted to the entertainments of his admiring fellow citizens and a trifle hoarse from constant repetition of "well chosen words" delivered to rapt post prandial audiences'. A young journalist interviews the explorer, who rolls out cliché after cliché, claiming an in-built fascination with the Antarctic from a ridiculously early age and modestly playing down the dangers of the journey while describing various dramas in sensational, overblown language:

> .... shuddering as a living thing, our ship reels on to battle through the shattered fragments of her beaten foe; ... hour after hour, day after day, week after week the contest proceeds; shock follows shock with quivering hull and reeling mast, men are thrown from their feet, shot fathoms ahead of the ship, snatched up again with boathook as we –
>
> 'Was it all like that?' gasps the awestruck reporter.
>
> 'Mostly, until we came to land' replies the hero.[52]

The piece – the only example of Scott's creative writing in the *South Polar Times* – shows a keen sense of self-irony, giving an impression of the expedition leader very different from the stiff, conventional figure of popular stereotype.

A play script published in the *South Polar Times* the following year, by Tasmanian physicist Louis Bernacchi, takes a similar line. Entitled 'When One Goes Forth a Voyaging, He has a Tale to Tell', the play is a short satire aimed at fashionable London socialites who lionize Antarctic explorers while displaying complete ignorance of the continent and its conditions.[53] Like Scott's, Bernacchi's satire indicates the expedition members' awareness that the role of 'returning polar explorer' was as socially constructed as any other. The main protagonists are 'Hero No. I (Poetic)' and 'Hero No. II (Scientific)', whom Scott's men would have recognized as Shackleton and Wilson.[54] They play their social parts unerringly, 'smiling urbanely' as they explain to the confused Misses de Pip that they 'did not exactly reach the North Pole', were 'particularly unfortunate in not meeting the South Polar native' and 'disappointed' too by the dearth of polar bears. Like Scott's returned polar hero, they roll out

expected clichés ('a region of silence and darkness and mystery – really my language fails to paint the awful desolation of the place'), and describe their near-death experiences 'quite simply and brilliantly, without bluster but with unfailing conviction'. Hero No. II even recites poetry – 'a little thing I composed on the "White Silence"' – lines which, the stage directions note, 'would have made a sick elephant turn from his beans'.[55] The object of ridicule here, as in Scott's piece, is not the enterprise of polar exploration, but the language in which it is typically described.

While this play pokes fun at versifying polar explorers – particularly Shackleton, who was known for tormenting his companions with his recitations[56] – poetry played a substantial part in polar newspapers and magazines. In an address to the London Poetry Society in 1911 entitled 'Poetry in Active Life', Shackleton reported (according to the *Times*' paraphrase) that 'while all the men under him did get real help from the study of the great poets, quite a number of them were moved by their surroundings to make poetry of their own'.[57] The original poetry published in expedition newspapers such as the *South Polar Times* and the *Adelie Blizzard* tends to fall into two categories: comic verse about events and characters of the expedition, such as that previously described; and more earnest pieces about the icescape, the fauna or the impact of the expedition on the men's lives. The serious verse was often ponderous – certainly enough, on occasion, to nauseate an ailing elephant, as the following lines from 'To a Snow Petrel' (by Archie McLean, who edited the *Adelie Blizzard*) illustrate:

> The sombre leaden clouds – the snow-sky's cope –
> In misty garlands lower.
> The spectral hummock-ghosts, the grottoed slope,
> That doze in vibrant stillness, envelope
> Thy pearly crystal bower.[58]

The main function of poetry in the Antarctic, however, was not as an excuse for waxing lyrical on one's surrounds while in the comfort of the hut. In terms of the primary goal of Heroic-Era polar expeditions, poetry really came into its own when explorers were 'on the march'.

SLEDGOMETER VERSE

Of all literary forms, poetry was the best match with the rhythmic activity of polar sledging: a volume of poems was useful in the field, according to Apsley Cherry-Garrard, 'because it gave one something to learn by heart and repeat during the blank hours of the daily march'.[59] It could also be motivational, not only in form but in content. In his address to the

London Poetry Society, Shackleton argued for 'a connexion in the minds of men of action between the influence of poetry and the claims of duty and self-sacrifice'. One incident that seems to bear out this claim occurred during an AAE sledging journey, when Mawson, following the deaths of his two companions, was forced to make his way back to base with very limited rations and equipment. Describing his epic journey, Mawson recalls the way his favourite poet Robert Service helped him to endure the trials of the journey. After the death of his second companion,

> There appeared to be little hope of reaching the Hut. It was easy to sleep on in the bag, and the weather was cruel outside. But inaction is hard to brook, and I thought of Service's lines:
> Buck up, do your damndest and fight,
> It's the plugging away that will win you the day.[60]

Mawson must have been indulging in a little poetic license himself when he narrated the incident, as the particular poem he cites – 'The Quitter' – was published in 1912, while he was still in Antarctica; he could not have read it until his return.[61] The basic point nonetheless remains: Service's poetry urged him to go on.

Poetry, however, was not always a spur to action; like reading, it could be dangerously seductive. More than a week later, exhausted after hauling himself out of a crevasse, Mawson was tempted by a very different poem, *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*:

> I lay in the sleeping-bag, thinking things over. It was a time when the mood of the Persian philosopher appealed to me:
>
> Unborn To-morrow and dead Yesterday,
> Why fret about them if To-day be sweet?
>
> I was confronted with this problem: whether it was better to enjoy life for a few days, sleeping and eating my fill until the provisions gave out, or to 'plug on' again in hunger …[62]

Needless to say, Mawson was able to resist the lure of the Persian poem – a text that Shackleton, in his *Discovery* diary, likewise categorizes as 'unmanly'.[63]

There was nothing unmanly about the sledging song. Typically, this polar genre was a rousing piece of original verse, often set to the tune of a popular song, proclaiming the composition of the team, its purpose, its trials and its achievements. Arctic explorers had, once again, inaugurated the genre, recognizing it as a 'first rate way of passing time at the drag belt in a fog'.[64] Even today, the control over language which poetry – especially rhyme – offers has a particular appeal in the polar landscape. Bill

Manhire, who travelled to Antarctica in 1998 as a New Zealand writer-in-residence, recalls that the poems he wrote 'on the ice' were 'mostly little rhyming poems. I wasn't always in a position to write things down, and rhyme helped me remember. But rhyme was also a way of asserting order in an environment that didn't always offer easy evidence that such a thing was possible. Rhyme was my way of standing up straight'.[65] Heroic-Era sledgers differed from Manhire in their poetic ability but not their basic response.

A typical example of the genre is Hurley's 'Southern Sledging Song', composed on a journey to the South Magnetic Pole during the AAE:

> Hauling, toiling, tireless on we tramp
> O'er vast plateau, sastrugi high, o'er deep crevasse and ramp.
> Hauling, toiling thro' drift and blizzard gale,
> It has to be done, so we make of it fun,
> We men of the Southern Trail![66]

Not the subtlest of genres, the sledging song nonetheless fulfilled several important purposes. It had an advantage over published verse, as it did not need to be lugged along in a volume, and it provided diversion not only when it was recited but also when it was composed. Hurley recalls a particularly trying period when his party, trapped in their tent and low on food, regretted the Christmas feast they had allowed themselves to indulge in previously. He 'found some mental diversion and fought remorse by composing doggerel verses' – five hundred lines in all, describing the meal; by the time he had recited the final lines, his companions were more cheerful and 'hopes grew again'.[67]

In the manner of sea shanties, sledging songs would be sung or recited – aloud or in the head – while the men were hauling, their rhythm urging the sledgers forward; the *South Polar Times* features a song composed in 'sledgometer verse'.[68] Such verses, voiced in unison and sometimes composed by multiple hands, established a team bond and identity: 'We're Captain Scott his Eastern Party and we're going strong / We've got a sledging song / And now we won't be long'.[69] Sledging songs were also performative, enabling the men to proclaim their activities as legendary even as they enacted them. In his *Argonauts of the South*, Hurley recounts the role of the 'Southern Sledging Song' in the difficult journey it describes: 'As we drew closer [to the main base], we three, knit together by a great comradeship and affection, our hearts swelling with thankfulness and joy over our deliverance, gave raucous voice to the sledging song that had urged us through many trials and tribulations'.[70] The party established

themselves as 'men of the Southern Trail' through their words as much as their actions.[71] If published in the expedition newspaper (as Hurley's was), the sledging song became a lasting public memorial of the journey.

Sledging songs were spontaneous, written on the march in response to immediate circumstances and sung when needed. Poetry was portable and suited the sledging journey. The relative comfort of the base hut, however, enabled more structured performances. It was here that another literary genre – polar drama – came into its own.

ANTARCTIC THEATRE: SCOTT'S FROZEN FARCE

Like the production of newspapers, theatricals were an established means of maintaining psychological well-being and group cohesion in nineteenth-century British polar expeditions, and had their roots in naval tradition.[72] Parry's expedition not only launched the *Gazette* but also a series of fortnightly theatrical performances. Parry himself took some leading roles, and the midshipmen played the parts of young women, with the handsome James Clark Ross particularly in demand.[73] As the supply of scripts aboard ship was low, the repertoire included an original play written by the officers, entitled 'The North-West Passage, or Voyage Finished'.[74] Parry observed after the opening performances that the theatricals 'afforded to the men such a fund of amusement as fully to justify the expectations we had formed of the utility of theatrical entertainments under our present circumstances'.[75] Although John Ross (James's uncle), whose Arctic expedition wintered three times in the *Victory* in 1829–33, 'did not stoop to such frivolities as plays, masquerades and newspapers',[76] Parry had established a tradition that flourished until the mid-1870s, with the majority of the numerous expeditions that over-wintered in the Arctic during the 1840s and 1850s (including those in search of Franklin and his men) featuring theatrical performances.[77]

The favoured performance area was on deck, although stages could also be erected below deck or even on nearby ice floes. A 60x27 foot snow-hut with a one-foot-high stage was constructed by a British expedition in 1875.[78] Preferred genres included farces, extravaganzas and harlequinades, and performances often involved elaborate sets and costumes.[79] The aim, as always, was to counteract the danger of boredom, inactivity, restlessness and depression by setting the men to work drawing drop scenes, sewing dresses, wigs and polar-bear costumes, constructing properties and the performance space itself, learning parts, attending rehearsals and, on occasion, writing plays. Unlike reading books, writing poetry or editing

newspapers, theatricals were inescapably team-based, and so particularly well suited to promoting group cohesion.

Given this history, it is unsurprising that among the donations to Scott's first expedition was a theatrical kit complete with make-up and costumes.[80] Shackleton, third-in-command, had been made responsible for ensuring the expedition was adequately equipped with theatrical supplies,[81] so plans were being hatched for Antarctic performances before the men left England. Scott himself was a veteran of naval theatricals: as a young officer he had taken part in a shipboard production of *Bombastes Furioso*, writing to his mother enthusiastically about his sumptuous costume: 'I take the part of principle [*sic*] Lady . . . What do you think of that? A gorgeous golden wig & complete dress made on board[,] stays[,] silk stockings[,] buckled shoes[,] sleeves with lace, fan – splendid'.[82] It may have been Scott's personal enjoyment of theatre, which he had loved since he was child,[83] combined with his recognition of the need to maintain the psychological health of the expedition members, that made him prioritize dramatic performance. Not long after the disappearance of the sun, the expedition hut, normally used for storage while the men slept on the ship, was transformed into the 'Royal Terror Theatre' for the performance of concerts and plays.[84] The onset of darkness had by this time become 'very trying to the spirits' and produced 'a lot of unnecessary unpleasantness', with several men becoming 'short-tempered & Quarrelsome'.[85] A concert given in the first week of May made it clear to Scott that, although his men 'had not been chosen for their musical attainments', there was 'some exhibition of dramatic talent'.[86] By June, men were in need of more entertainment; carpenter James Duncan complained, 'We have had nothing in the way of Amusement since 1st May so thing[s] are very slack with our Officers. They were to work wonders during the Winter, but have not started yet & the Winter is nearly half gone & only 1 Concert'.[87] Lieutenant Michael Barne was thus 'entrusted with the task of producing a play'.[88] This play, performed just after mid-winter 1902, is by far the most elaborate example of Heroic-Era theatricals amongst English-speaking expeditions, and is worth examining in detail, as it illustrates the way in which seemingly irrelevant literary texts could take on special significance in an Antarctic context.[89]

Regular rehearsals were conducted in secret, with the audience having no knowledge of the choice of play until the opening night.[90] The theatre doors opened at 7 PM on 25 June, two days after mid-winter celebrations. The audience forced its way to the hut through what Scott describes as 'a rather keen wind and light snowdrift'; one diary records a temperature of –26°F.[91] The theatre looked inviting and was warmed by a stove, but

Figure 8. The cast of *Ticket of Leave*. Image courtesy of the Royal Geographical Society.

audience members showed no desire to remove their overcoats and hats.[92] A two-foot-high stage had been erected on potato cases; it was lit by a row of footlights and featured a drop scene depicting the *Discovery* and the nearby Mount Erebus – 'all proper', as Wilson recorded.[93] When everyone was seated, Scott observed, 'one must own to having seen theatricals under far less realistic conditions'.[94]

The programme for the evening, produced by Wilson and Shackleton, announced *Ticket of Leave* as a 'Screaming Comedy in one act', set in 'Aspen Lodge, Clapham', in 'The Present'. Where Parry's productions had allowed the crew to laugh at the officers, the cast of *Ticket of Leave* was made up of crew, including Frank Wild in a leading role.[95] In his account of the expedition, Bernacchi writes that 'it was chiefly from the mess-deck that the Royal Terror Theatre recruited its performers. We in the wardroom were engaged in weightier matters, preparing debates, for example, on such subjects as "Women's Rights" and other long-dead problems'.[96] The Royal Terror Theatre maintained strict segregation of rank: the officers were given a row of chairs at the front, with the remaining crew seated on benches in rows behind them. Engineer Reginald Skelton took flashlight photographs of the cast, one of which Scott later reproduced in his official account of the expedition (see Figure 8).

The first part of the evening's entertainment, consisting of a number of songs, was followed by an interval in which oranges and nuts were advertised. Then came the main event, which Scott describes in detail:

> [T]he 'screaming comedy' commences and proves to be fully up to its title. There is no need for the actors to speak – their appearance is quite enough to secure the applause of the audience; and when the representatives of the lady parts step on to the stage it is useless for them to attempt speech for several minutes, the audience is so hugely delighted … As the play progresses one supposes there is a plot, but it is a little difficult to unravel. Presently, however, we are obviously working up to a situation; the hero … unexpectedly sees through the window the lady on whom he has fixed his affections, and whom, I gather, he has not seen for a long and weary time … Seated and barely glancing at the window, he says with great deliberation and in the most matter-of-fact tones, 'It is – no, it isn't – yes, it is – it is my long lost Mary Jane' [*sic*]. The sentiment – or rendering of it – is greeted with shouts of applause … And so at last the curtain falls amidst vociferous cheering, and I for one have to acknowledge that I have rarely been so gorgeously entertained.[97]

The audience members were full of praise for the production, particularly for those who played the female parts: Albert Armitage, second-in-command, considered the 'ladies' 'especially good'; Skelton thought Scott (Gilbert Scott, no relation of Robert) 'a very good female slavey!'; Royds concurred that he made 'a really awfully pretty servant girl'.[98] There was a sense in which those in the audience, too, were performing, doing their best to re-create the West End in the unpropitious conditions. Royds records that they walked back to the ship after the show 'singing out "Cab Sir", and "'ansome sir" [*sic*], "Special edition" etc as full of fun as possible'; Duncan suffered frostbite in his nose while walking home because 'all Carriges [*sic*] were engaged'.[99] The only negative words came from biologist Thomas Hodgson, who admitted that the performance was 'very well done' but believed it 'was much too long in its preparation & was stale to the performers'.[100] The actors themselves, however, were very positive about the experience. According to David Allan, who played a butler, the performance 'went off without a hitch' and comprised 'the best night's fun we have had in Antarctica'. Lightly dressed, like the other performers, he stoically described the weather as 'rather mild'.[101]

So successful was the performance that a further night of entertainment was demanded; these plans did not come to fruition until August, when expedition members braved an outside temperature of –40°F to view twelve men with blackened faces perform as the 'Dishcover Minstrel Troupe'.[102] No more plays, however, were attempted. Armitage, in his account of

the expedition, describes the farce as the expedition's 'first and last theatrical attempt'. It was, he admits, 'a pity that we did not have any more theatricals', but 'the longer we stayed in the Antarctic, the less inclined did we feel for that kind of effort'.[103] In an echo of this turn from frivolity, the drop scene ended its days as a 'dashing suit of sails' attached to the sledge Barne used to transport his scientific instruments the following winter.[104]

The play performed on 25 June 1902 now survives only as four weathered pages of handwritten script, one of which is too badly damaged to be legible. Retrieved from a frozen pile of rubbish outside the expedition hut in 1964, the pages are currently held, along with the programme, in the archives of Canterbury Museum in Christchurch, New Zealand.[105] No mention is made of the play's authorship in these pages, the programme, any of the men's diaries, nor any later accounts of the expedition. A close examination of the damaged pages, however, reveals that the play performed was an adapted version of a farce by the illustrator and dramatist Watts Phillips, entitled *A Ticket-of-Leave*, which ran for a two-month London season over the summer of 1862–3 at the Adelphi Theatre.[106] There is no record of why this particular play – which was not one of Phillips's better-known works – was chosen, nor what other options were available to the expedition members. The play is not listed in the *Catalogue of Books of the 'Discovery' 1901*, in which drama is represented by only two sets of the collected works of Shakespeare and Richard Sheridan's *The Rivals*.[107] Originally published as part of the Lacy's Acting Editions series, *A Ticket-of-Leave* may have been one of a collection of these numbers donated as part of the theatrical supplies or it might have come from one of the men's personal libraries.

What features of this play, besides its comic qualities, would have attracted the attention of Scott's men? In *A Ticket-of-Leave*, Lavinia Quiver and her nervous husband, Aspen, live in neurotic dread of attack by London criminals, especially absconded ticket-of-leave men. Their worst fears are confirmed when their home is secretly infiltrated by two ex-convicts. The first is Thomas Nuggetts, Mrs Quiver's cousin: wrongfully imprisoned for seven years, he has returned from Australia, having served his time and become wealthy, 'to breathe once more the delightful atmosphere of England', and disguised himself as 'Mr Smith' in order to find out objectively 'people's feelings' towards him.[108] Bottles, the Quivers' butler, alias 'Shiny Samuel', is a disguised ticket-of-leaver with less benign intentions who once worked in the same gang as Nuggetts. The play develops through a series of misunderstandings, accidents and confusions of identity typical of a farce.

The play performed in Antarctica in 1902 was not, however, identical to Phillips's, but had been adapted, probably by Barne, who, according to Shackleton, 'had a great gift for writing and localising plays'.[109] Phillips's original version features no role of the kind both James Clark Ross and Robert Scott delighted in: no young female character.[110] The expedition members rectified this, introducing Mary Ann, a maidservant mentioned but not seen in Phillips's play, and establishing her as the hero's long lost love.[111] According to Scott's account previously quoted, the inserted recognition scene between Nuggetts and Mary Ann was a highlight of the evening.

This new plot line may well have struck a chord with the men of the *Discovery*, who had not themselves seen women for six months, and would not for many more months. They must surely have recognized the parallel between the ex-convict's encounter with his beloved after a 'long and weary time' and their own reaction to seeing their companion Gilbert Scott done up as 'a really awfully pretty servant girl'. Moreover, they were aware that such a scenario was a cliché of polar exploration. Frederick Cook had written of the response of the men of the *Belgica* on first seeing women after their return from the Antarctic: 'This sight sent a new sensation through us like that of a Faradic battery'.[112] Scott's account suggests that rendition of a similar scene by his crew-member (the bosun, Thomas Feather, had the role of Nuggetts) created hilarity precisely because it was so nonchalant and under-played, subverting audience expectations.

Equally evident, but perhaps less amusing, would have been other parallels between life as an early twentieth-century Antarctic explorer and a nineteenth-century convict. Many convicts lived in prison hulks before being transported to Australia. Like Scott's men, they were confined to the hull of a moored ship for months or years on end, in cold, damp and crowded conditions, with hard and occasionally dangerous labour providing their primary occupation during outside excursions.[113] Yet, while the convict origins of Phillips's characters Nuggetts and Bottles provided a metaphor for the expedition members' own confined situation, the action of *A Ticket-of-Leave* deals rather with escape from imprisonment and return from exile. It must have reminded Scott's men not only of the pleasures but also the difficulties of returning to British society after a long period of isolation. For Phillips's ticket-of-leave men, return to Britain requires social performance: each disguises his identity and hence his clouded past. Although Scott's men expected to be lauded rather than despised, they were aware that a personal (re-)transformation would nevertheless need to take place on their return. In his diary entry describing the night of

the play, Royds notes that 'Skelton had shaved off his beard and moustache' – presumably making himself presentable to theatre-going 'society', in keeping with the extended play-acting that surrounded the performance. The marked effect of Skelton's appearance on Royds indicates the extent to which the latter felt distanced from his pre-Antarctic self: '… for a whole day, every time I looked at him, I simply roared!! One forgets what people looked like, and I dread my possible looks when I take mine off!! Ye Gods!!'[114]

In this sense, then, the performance of *Ticket of Leave*, a narrative of return to civilization after exile and imprisonment, probably played a similar role for the *Discovery* men to the one that 'The North-West Passage, or Voyage Finished' played for Parry's men: it acted as both a form of wish-fulfilment and a veiled exploration of fears and anxieties about the future. By re-creating the West End of London, complete with stage, footlights and imaginary carriages, in their hut on Ross Island, the explorers rehearsed their own return from exile, a performance mirrored metaphorically in the play they selected for their night's entertainment. For the *Discovery* men, Philips's play was their own 'ticket of leave', allowing them to escape for an evening from their chosen isolation.

Heroic-Era Antarctic theatricals did not end with *Ticket of Leave*. The AAE main base, for example, hosted a farce in October 1912 performed by the 'Its Society for the Prevention of the Blues'. This was followed the next day by an original opera entitled *The Washerwoman's Secret*, which the author describes as 'a tragedy in five acts with a complicated and highly dramatic plot'.[115] Some effort went into staging: 'Part of the Hut was curtained off as a combined green-room and dressing-room; the kitchen was the stage; footlights twinkled on the floor; the acetylene limelight beamed down from the rafters, while the audience crowded on a form behind the dining table, making tactless remarks and steadily eating chocolate'.[116] Although songs were memorized and details of action covertly discussed weeks in advance,[117] the opera was far less organized than *Ticket of Leave.* The performance was mostly unrehearsed because of the lack of a separate space, and featured a correspondingly large amount of improvisation (Hurley in particular excelled at this). *The Washerwoman's Secret* was an exceptional event in the AAE's entertainment schedule; brief sketches prepared in the darkroom were more usual. This was true of most Heroic-Era expeditions, which were generally based in huts rather than ships and thus did not have much available rehearsal space. Organized, scripted productions in the tradition of Arctic naval theatricals were rare.

As inhabitation of Antarctica has developed, the function of literary activities has changed accordingly. While newspapers appeared intermittently at some bases in the latter half of the twentieth century,[118] yearbooks, online magazines, blogs and tweets have gradually replaced this tradition. Bases keep large libraries, but they are less important when whole books can be read online through Project Gutenberg and Google Books or downloaded to Kindles, and the latest media reports are likewise available electronically.[119] During the later twentieth century, films took on an important role in station culture, with regular, ritualized screenings of sixteen-millimetre films fulfilling the functions of escape, entertainment and group cohesion. Certain numbers would be played repeatedly, forming – like the novels Mawson's men read – an extension of the world which expedition members inhabited. There is a much repeated story of a group of Australians over-wintering on Macquarie Island who watched a 1941 film adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* so often that 'the entire station took on the elaborate manners and courtly language of Jane Austen's genteel nineteenth century England', and a request to pass the butter would be replied with 'Such affability, such graciousness – you overwhelm me!'[120] With the advent of DVDs, opportunities for the adoption of shared narratives decreased, as films could be watched in isolation on a laptop in a bedroom. Simultaneously, comparatively spacious modern stations allowed a return of the rehearsed play. Australian stations traditionally celebrate mid-winter with a performance sharing many of the elements of *Ticket of Leave*: a pantomime – usually *Cinderella* – adapted to Antarctic circumstances, and featuring ample cross-dressing.

From Laseron cooped up in his ever-shrinking tent unable to read *The Pickwick Papers*, to wintering personnel rehearsing *Cinderella* in a room in a contemporary station, literary consumption and production in the far south has been intricately linked to the way in which humans have inhabited Antarctic space. The ability of both reading and writing to allow an escape inwards, into the mind and emotions of the over-crowded individual, and also an escape outwards, an imaginary link with the world beyond the tent, the hut and the continent, has made literature an intrinsic and enduring part of human experience of the far south.

CHAPTER 5

The Transforming Nature of Antarctic Travel

> *. . . . I knew a man*
> *came South with brown eyes*
> *and went back home with blue ones,*
> *their colour frozen by the Ice.*
>
> – Melinda Mueller, 'Crean. Night Watch',
> in *What the Ice Gets*

In the archetypal far southern journey, according to Victoria Nelson, a 'transcendental encounter takes place that initiates either the integration of the self or the possibility of psychic (and physical) annihilation'.[1] The previous chapters have canvassed many examples of the latter: the traumatic voyage of Coleridge's Ancient Mariner; Poe's polar abysses; Campbell's shape-shifting alien; Lovecraft's terrifying peaks. Yet there is, as Nelson's first alternative suggests, a tradition of Antarctica as a more benign mindscape that enables introspection, self-discovery and renewal. This Antarctica lends itself to literary treatments very different from those available in the speculative and gothic genres that dominated early representation of the continent. Its roots lie less in the hellish experiences of Arthur Gordon Pym and the Mariner than in the spiritual transformation experienced by James Fenimore Cooper's protagonist in *The Sea Lions* (1849), one of very few non-fantastic Antarctic novels of the nineteenth century. Roswell Gardiner's enforced wintering in Antarctica brings on an epiphanic moment of life-changing religious insight, which has both romantic and practical consequences, as it enables him to marry the woman he loves (from whom his previous religious views had estranged him). Cooper was before his time in this respect, for the 'Antarctica of the mind' – the continent as a place of soul-searching and personal transformation – has come into its own as a theme within Antarctic fiction only in the later twentieth century. The reason for this lies in the changed nature of Antarctic travel.

Prior to the 1950s, novelists who chose Antarctica for a setting had two options. They could largely ignore the specifics of place, and let speculation

have free rein – this approach produced the myriad fantastic journeys, utopias, gothic horrors and science-fiction adventure stories discussed in other chapters. Alternatively, they could engage with the comparatively scant history of human encounter with the continent, thus limiting themselves to whaling or sealing activities (in the nineteenth century) – Cooper makes the most of this – and re-workings of Heroic-Era exploration narratives (in the twentieth). While the impact of the continent on individual psychology is often a feature of these narratives, it tends to take a back seat to the drama and danger of physical endeavour. In the mid-twentieth century, however, this situation changed. The International Geophysical Year in 1957–8 saw the establishment of numerous scientific bases on the continent, many of which continued to be occupied throughout the following decades. Antarctica became not only the domain of scientific, administrative, maintenance and naval personnel, but also of journalists, politicians and even the odd artist or writer.[2] The development of the Antarctic Treaty System, which proclaims Antarctica a continent of 'science and peace', gave it a unique political identity. Qualifying and complicating this identity were territorial claims, which were effectively suspended by the Treaty but kept viable by continued inhabitation; debates over resource use; and calls for 'World Park' status. At the same time, the rapid increase of the Antarctic tourist industry, as well as the establishment of various national 'Artists and Writers' programmes, meant that direct experience of the continent became feasible in a way it had never been before.

The range of possibilities for Antarctic fiction correspondingly expanded. While science fiction, eco-thrillers and action-adventure novels continued to dominate in sheer numbers, a smaller group of novelists – particularly those with direct experience of the continent – began establishing a new vein of Antarctic fiction: non-fantastic narratives which take place in the here-and-now and focus on everyday experience rather than the speculative or sensational. By the end of the twentieth century, the age of Antarctic realism – for want of a better term – had arrived. The texts I place in this loose category are generically heterogeneous but unified by their focus on situation, character and personal interaction. They include comedies such as Philip Benjamin's *Quick, Before It Melts* (1964), romances such as Rosie Thomas's *Sun at Midnight* (2004), psychological novels such as Graham Billing's *Forbush and the Penguins* (1965) and Laurence Fearnley's *Degrees of Separation* (2006), and even chick-lit (Liz Maverick's *Adventures of an Ice Princess*, 2002). Some authors combine a contemporary approach with a re-working of Heroic-Era narratives. Thomas Keneally's two Antarctic novels, *The Survivor* (1969) and *Victim of the Aurora* (1977),

both feature late twentieth-century protagonists reflecting on their early twentieth-century experiences in the far south. The contemporary heroine of Elizabeth Arthur's sprawling novel *Antarctic Navigation* (1994) is preoccupied with Scott's final polar journey, and eventually leads an expedition to re-create it. The female protagonist of Robyn Mundy's *The Nature of Ice* (2009) is fascinated by Mawson's Australasian Antarctic Expedition, and the narrative alternately recounts her far southern experiences and the AAE men's, between which surprising and revealing parallels arise. The epigraph of Mundy's novel is taken from a travel essay by Keneally: 'After Antarctica, nothing is the same . . .'[3]

This kind of contemporary, realist Antarctic narrative inevitably has its own limitations. Perhaps most importantly, any realistic Antarctic novel must be a narrative of travel: and not only of travel, which can be one-way, but of departure, experience and return. While utopianists can potentially leave their protagonists in an ideal southern land, hollow-earth enthusiasts usher them through a South Polar hole to a new interior world, and science-fiction authors provide them with time tunnels or shortcuts to extraterrestrial realms, realist novelists know that anyone who goes to Antarctica eventually – and generally fairly quickly – comes back. Any non-fatal Antarctic experience is a temporary one. This predetermined story arc has governed the development of realist Antarctic fiction, which has in turn, like its speculative cousin, generated a specific set of familiar images, motifs and narrative patterns. Aliens, Nazis and lost races are replaced by the typical elements of the story of travel and return: ways of escape, moments of intense insight, spiritual epiphanies, life-transforming encounters, journeys of personal growth and renewal. 'Everyone who goes down there comes back a different person', the protagonist of Nikki Gemmell's novel *Shiver* (1997) is advised: 'It changes your life'.[4] Supporting these narrative arcs are the trivialities of life in the station and the field-base which create an Antarctic reality effect, such as local slang, acronyms and rituals; insider knowledge of characteristic social events and interactions; detail of daily routines, station layout, scientific programmes, training exercises and character types; and minutiae of specifically Antarctic challenges surrounding transportation, food, clothes and toileting.

This narrative vocabulary shares much with a burgeoning non-fiction genre: Antarctic travel writing. This genre includes works by specialist travel writers (Sara Wheeler's *Terra Incognita*, 1996; Peter Matthiessen's *End of the Earth*, 2003), memoirs of cruise ship voyages by established novelists (Jenny Diski's *Skating to Antarctica*, 1997; Helen Garner's 'Adrift

in the Floating World', 1998; Keneally's 'Captain Scott's Biscuit', 2003), tales of 'extreme tourism' (Catherine Hartley's *To the Poles without a Beard*, 2002) and accounts of station life, written by both officially sponsored writers (Gretchen Legler's *On the Ice*, 2005) and base personnel with little previous literary experience (Alexa Thomson's *Antarctica on a Plate*, 2003). Sometimes the line between fiction and travel memoir seems fairly tenuous. Gemmell was working as a journalist in Sydney when she was presented with the opportunity to travel south on an icebreaker in the summer of 1995–6, on one of the Australian Antarctic Division's 'humanities berths' (as they were then known). During the voyage, she fell in love with a scientist who was subsequently killed in an accident in Antarctica. She later wrote *Shiver* (1997), relating the very similar experiences of a similar journalist; it was, she reflects, an 'autobiographical novel' in which she 'cannibalized [her] own life'.[5] This is a familiar outcome for a writer producing her first novel, but one that had not been possible for a novelist – and particularly a female novelist – writing about Antarctica prior to the late twentieth century. Many other contemporary novels of the far south, such as *Antarctic Navigation*,[6] also have strong autobiographical elements, and it is no surprise that all of the authors of the Antarctic realist novels mentioned previously have spent time on the continent.

Presenting an outward journey as a metaphor for an inner journey – a journey of growth, development and self-discovery – is a common enough literary device. In what ways, then, are Antarctic transformation narratives distinctive? What qualities of the continent, apart from the distant location and inhospitable environment that inevitably make any experience of it a sojourn, lend themselves to the notion of changing subjectivity, and what kind of change does Antarctica bring about? Hartley puts forward one theory of the changes wrought by the far southern environment:

> The first obvious psychological effect is that life in the outside world becomes totally insignificant, and with little to distract the mind other than cold and extreme discomfort, the mind becomes one's entire focus. This can lead to mental purification, or uncover deep wells of pain. All return from Antarctica changed – sometimes for the better but often for the worse, unable to take up their lives in normal society.[7]

The latter, however, are perhaps less likely to write books about their experiences; in recent Antarctic transformation narratives, the change is almost always a positive, enriching one, even if the process itself is traumatic. Significantly, while Hartley put herself through physical hardship, this does not seem to be necessary for Antarctica to have its purifying, revealing effect. Just travelling to the continent and experiencing the

environment is often enough to trigger this ultimately cleansing journey into the self in recent memoirs and novels.

THE ANTARCTIC PASTORAL

The pastoral at first glance seems a genre quite distant from Antarctica's icy wastes. Terry Gifford suggests three different meanings of the term. First, it signifies a literary tradition, one that focusses on a bucolic, Arcardian landscape peopled by shepherds and shepherdesses, to which the denizens of cities escape in order to resolve tensions and return refreshed. Second, it implies a literature of the countryside, or rural landscapes, written in a celebratory mode. Third, from a more critical perspective, it suggests an idealizing impulse that ignores problems facing these landscapes. While fertile gardens and bucolic idylls seem a far cry from the Antarctic plateau, one of the texts that Gifford uses to illustrate the flexibility of the category is Wheeler's *Terra Incognita*. Her book, he argues, 'might be called a pastoral work in all three senses', as Wheeler 'views Antarctica as an Arcadia from which to return with a renewed sense of herself', the book is 'a travelogue describing the natural environment', and it is to some degree escapist in its marginalization of 'the urgent political issues concerning exploitation of the continent'.[8]

When it comes to recognizing Antarctica's qualities as a pastoral landscape, it is important to note the changing shape of this genre with increasing industrial development. In *Practical Ecocriticism*, Glen Love proposes that wilderness has come to take the part of the garden in modern versions of the genre:

> Wild nature has replaced the traditional middle state of the garden and the rural landscape as the locus of stability and value, the seat of instruction ... Under the influence of ecological thought, wilderness has radicalized the pastoral experience.
>
> Wilderness today is, of course, still the region of the world's tropical rain forests and evergreen conifer forests; the polar regions, the deserts, and the open oceans.[9]

Landscapes that would, in the nineteenth century, have evoked the sublime are in a late twentieth-century context re-cast as pastoral. Most of the recent Antarctic travel memoirs and their fictional counterparts described previously deploy this notion of the wilderness-as-pastoral to some degree. They are eager to see the continent as a place of retreat and personal renewal, and are only peripherally concerned with the threats to the continent from global warming, mineral exploitation or, indeed, tourism.

In this sense they represent the flip side of the Antarctic eco-thrillers discussed in Chapter 1.

Antarctica's identity as both a pastoral landscape and a wilderness – the world's largest and most remote wilderness – is further complicated by the fact that it is a desert – the most extreme of all deserts. The desert is traditionally a place of cleansing and redemption. 'Precisely by virtue of its material desolation', writes Roslynn Haynes in her analysis of the Australian desert in literature, 'the desert also offers, in Judaeo-Christian tradition, a means of spiritual purification and salvation'.[10] Haynes quotes George Williams's view that 'in the positive sense … the wilderness or desert will be interpreted variously as a place of protection, a place of contemplative retreat, again as one's inner nature or ground of being, and at length as the ground itself of the divine being.… In its negative sense the wilderness will be interpreted as the world of the unredeemed'.[11] The 'unredeemed' Antarctic desert landscape is the hellish underworld examined in Chapter 2; in the positive desert tradition, it blends with the pastoral to produce narratives of retreat, purification and rejuvenation.[12] Sometimes, as in Cooper's *The Sea Lions* as well as more recent travel memoirs, the process occurs on a spiritual level.[13] In contemporary novels, however, it more often relates to career, lifestyle and personal relationships.

The sense of Antarctica as a place to 'get away from it all', rather than merely a hostile frontier environment, was evident even in the Heroic Era. Douglas Mawson, speculating on the commercial resources of Antarctica in his expedition newspaper, the *Adelie Blizzard*, envisages a pastoral Antarctica when he suggests that 'sanatoria, ice sports and sight seeing should some day draw a summer visiting population'.[14] He was not so sanguine about the notion of Antarctica as a sanatorium when it came to his own men: he was furious to discover that one of them had joined the expedition 'to have a quiet time for study' and 'for his health'.[15] Literary texts of the period also sported with the convalescent possibilities of Antarctica's pure, invigorating environment. The explorer of Kathleen Watson's 'The Small Brown Room' (1913) reflects in his Antarctic journal that 'The weakling who soon dies [in the tropics] would, on the contrary, be made whole in the life-giving tonic of these ice-bound shores'.[16] A comic poem in the Australian magazine *The Bulletin* published in 1912 takes its cue from a comment by one of Scott's men that no one gets ill in the far south: 'Antarctica makes each man fresh as a boy!' exclaims the author, adding ironically that 'Death, accident, danger are all on the bill'.[17] Two decades later, around the time of Byrd's Antarctic expeditions, another *Bulletin* poem quotes an Antarctic explorer's claim that 'The South

Pole is one of the healthiest places in the world', and goes on to joke about the restorative nature of the far southern regions:

> What rare sanatorium base
> Is ours for exploiting – eh what?
> What a heritage here for our race,
> What a method of cutting the knot
> That ties us to tiddly and tot.[18]

This benign pastoral tradition of the health-giving properties of the polar environment was, as Brigid Hains notes, related to a 'bleak Darwinian view' in which the harshness of extreme climates were thought to test 'racial vigour' and weed out those were unfit: 'the polar environment acted as a ruthless testing ground for the assertion of innate character and strength, away from the degeneracy of the city'.[19] As the century wore on, however, it was the pastoral as much as the Darwinian Antarctica that emerged in literary responses to the continent. The later twentieth-century texts examined in the next section focus not so much on the way Antarctica winnows the weak, but on its potential to transform the weak into the strong.

'NOT THE SUBZERO TYPE': MALE TRANSFORMATION NARRATIVES

The 1960s and early 1970s (the period following the signing of the Antarctic Treaty and the establishment of permanent Antarctic bases) saw the release of two realistic films about Antarctic travel – realistic, at least, compared with contemporaneous offerings such as *Navy vs The Night Monster* (1966). Both are based on books by journalists who had spent time in Antarctica. One is *Quick, Before It Melts*, which appeared in 1964, and was adapted from a novel of the same name and date by Philip Benjamin, and the other *Cry of the Penguins* (1971),[20] based on New Zealander Graham Billing's novel *Forbush and the Penguins* (1965). Each text centres on a male protagonist singularly ill-fitted for polar heroics, whose time in Antarctica results in a significant personal transformation – one that (like Roswell Gardiner's) better suits him for life and love in the world back home.

Quick, Before It Melts sounds like a prescient anticipation of climate change issues, but is in fact a lightweight comedy. The book focusses on Oliver Cannon, a married magazine journalist who is assigned to an Antarctic base. The main character narrates his slightly madcap experiences

in realistic detail; the author was himself sent to the Antarctic by the *New York Times* in the International Geophysical Year. During his time in Antarctica, Cannon undergoes a transformation in personality. He initially characterizes himself as lacking in confidence and courage: where the great Antarctic explorers had 'guts and vision', Cannon is 'gutless and near-sighted'. By the end of the narrative, however, he has developed daring and drive. '[Y]ou've certainly changed', remarks his boss.[21]

The film compresses and exaggerates the book. On screen, Cannon begins far more emphatically as an ineffectual, weak-willed nobody, whose only distinction is his choice of fiancée. Where Roswell Gardiner is in love with the adopted daughter of his ship's owner, Cannon in the film is engaged to the daughter of his Managing Editor: 'She thinks she can make something of me', he explains, adding with self-deprecating irony, 'it's a tremendous challenge'. Early moments of the film show him being pushed out of a lift, failing to use a drink fountain correctly and greeting a secretary who has no recollection of his name, before he is called into his future father-in-law's office. Previously engaged to cover religious news, Cannon is instructed to travel to an Antarctic base to report on events there – especially anything to do with oil, gold or Russians. His pathetic protests – 'I catch cold very easily' – are drowned out by the Managing Editor, who waxes lyrical about the far southern continent: 'The Antarctic is the last frontier. Where else on this tame and ashphalted earth can man still hurl his challenge into nature's teeth and cry out, "I defy you!" Just think of the heroes who first dared that fearful continent'. This rhetoric captures Cannon's imagination; despite his fiancée's protests, and the fact that all others have refused the job, he decides to take the assignment. The type of man who goes to the white wastes of Antarctica is, he insists, 'the real me … not the me that I am but the one that I wish I was'.

Hilarious misadventures ensue as Cannon teams up with a womanizing, hard-drinking photographer for a brief sojourn in Christchurch, before flying to the ice. The underground Antarctic base they visit, 'Little America', is one-part polar cliché and another sixties zaniness: the expedition members are dour, bearded and zombie-like, the military personnel paranoid; a blow-up doll wearing lingerie decorates the ice-walled corridors; and a resident penguin, 'Milton Fox', delivers the post.[22] Cannon becomes embroiled in a plot to bring some airline stewardesses to the base[23] and in the defection of a Russian scientist. The upshot, not unexpectedly, is that he develops acumen and drive as a journalist, and mettle as a man. As in the book, he returns triumphant to his workplace, but in

the film version he also surprises his fiancée with his new-found manliness and assertiveness.

Quick, Before It Melts is notable as one of relatively few Antarctic comedies, and most of its content – including the Managing Editor's paean to the Heroic Era – is tongue-in-cheek. Its effectiveness as a comedy relies, however, on the serious basis of the concepts with which it sports, such as cold-war paranoia. In particular, its plot arc assumes the audience's ready acceptance of the Antarctic as a masculinizing, resolve-hardening environment – even though the furthest Cannon gets from the station is a short drive in a motorized vehicle. He is never in any serious danger; Antarctica does not physically test him, but it builds his character nonetheless. It is Antarctica's distance – physically and culturally – from the urban existence he is used to that is the primary agent of change, the catalyst for his new-found manliness. As *Sage*'s managing editor declares bluntly in Benjamin's novel, 'the Antarctic has balls!'[24]

Somewhat more subtle is the change enacted upon the eponymous protagonist of Billing's novel *Forbush and the Penguins*. A minor New Zealand classic, which the author offers as 'the first serious novel to come out of Antarctica since man's new involvement with the continent began in the International Geophysical Year',[25] *Forbush* is notable for its almost exclusive focus on a sole human character. Richard Forbush stays in Shackleton's hut at Cape Royds for a summer to monitor the Adélie penguin population. He behaves somewhat eccentrically, writing odd, soul-searching letters to his girlfriend at home, and constructing an elaborate musical instrument. Although Forbush must endure significant trials – such as a blizzard that sees him taking desperate measures to protect himself and the hut – his hardihood is never really in question; rather, it is his philosophical outlook that transforms during the summer. Increasingly, he becomes very protective of the penguins, and eventually wages a one-man war against their natural enemies, the skuas. The predatory relationship between the two species triggers an existential crisis in Forbush: 'He felt trapped within a cycle so unvarying that the difference between life and death was illusionary, a cycle in which dead things were just as manifestly alive because each was totally dependent upon the other'. Eventually he comes to realize the pointlessness of his attempts at resistance, and the necessity of accepting all parts of interacting systems. He acknowledges the futility of the primitive catapult he has built to bombard the skuas. While holding a skua chick in his hands, he recognizes the holistic nature of all life, and lets it free, himself experiencing a new kind of existential freedom.[26]

As in Benjamin's case, when Billing's novel came to be adapted for film, numerous changes were made in the story that amplified the transformation narrative. The protagonist is no longer Richard Forbush, New Zealander and Antarctic veteran, but 'Richard Howard Fitzallen Forbush' (played by John Hurt), a dandified English urbanite. This Forbush is an independently wealthy postgraduate biology student living in London. He has 'academic talent', according to his supervisor, but his womanizing and *bon vivant* outlook are the result of 'far too much money and no parental control'. When his supervisor suggests that he accept an assignment in Antarctica, he demurs, claiming that he is 'simply not the subzero type'. He changes his mind, however, to impress a woman he has met (played by Hayley Mills). Before leaving, Forbush stocks up on supplies at a gourmet shop – 'breasts of quail in wine jelly' – and packs all of his outrageous fashions, including a paisley scarf, a handbag, a beret cap and a fur coat lined with red silk, which he steadfastly wears while in Antarctica.

Forbush's personality and circumstances aside, the film stays reasonably close to the events of the novel, showing the scientist's initial resistance and eventual acceptance of the skua/penguin lifecycle. As in the book, this is a watershed experience in his character development: 'The one unselfish and completely disinterested act of my life was when I tried to change [the natural system]. I failed, of course, as I deserved to, because who was I to take it upon myself to put the balance right?'

Despite its slightly psychedelic early seventies feel, *Cry of the Penguins* (as the film was titled for U.S. release) is far more serious than *Quick, Before It Melts*, and is unusual amongst Antarctic feature films for including actual Antarctic footage, obtained with the assistance of the Argentinian military. Forbush's transformation, however, is among its less subtle features. He not only experiences his philosophical crisis; he also changes from a dilettantish dandy to a serious man able to survive in the Antarctic conditions. Unlike the novel, the film ends with Forbush's return home to his girlfriend, his Antarctic experience having transformed the dandy into a far more earnest character: 'I'm not the same to myself any more, Tara. Will I seem the same to you, and you to me?' As with Cannon, the overall impact of Forbush's Antarctic visit is to better fit him for the 'girl he left behind'. Again, there is little sense that Forbush has been physically endangered by his experience, although the blizzard he endures does test his initiative. Living in Shackleton's hut, perhaps he absorbs Heroic-Era manliness by osmosis. The more obvious agent of change, however, is simply the Antarctic environment to which the urban Forbush is constantly exposed.

In this sense, the Antarctic wilderness in these later twentieth-century texts operates in a very similar way to the American frontier at the turn of that century: 'Riding the range, breathing the fresh country air, exerting the body and resting the mind were curative for men, and in the last two decades of the [nineteenth] century large number of weak and puny eastern city men … all went west to find a cure for insufficient manhood'.[27] While the American frontier could no longer function in this capacity by the 1960s, Antarctica's wilderness values were undiminished: the far south became the new West. The next few decades, however, saw the gradual entry of women into Antarctic bases. This had a two-pronged effect on far southern fiction: first, the continent's symbolic value as a masculinizing force could not withstand its perceived domestication and contamination by the presence of women; second, women began to produce their own realist narratives of female-centred Antarctic experience. These are no less transformation narratives than the male-centred texts discussed thus far, and display some similar elements; but the narrative of masculinization is necessarily reworked.

'BRIDGET JONES GOES TO THE POLE': FEMALE TRANSFORMATION NARRATIVES

What happens when the 'woman left behind' becomes the 'woman-who-goes'? While there are examples of early Antarctic texts written by women, or focussed on women's exclusion from early exploration, they are few and far between. The most prominent is the memoir *My Antarctic Honeymoon* (1957), by Jennie Darlington, who accompanied her husband on the Ronne expedition to Stonington Island.[28] During the following decades, women tended to appear in non-fantastic Antarctic narratives, both fiction and non-fiction alike, only as relatively minor or peripheral characters. Ambiguous exceptions include the category romance novels *Frozen Heart* (1980) by Daphne Clair and *South of the Sun* (1984) by Laurie Paige, which differ from contemporaneous texts in making a woman's Antarctic experience their focus, but not surprisingly conform to the romantic conventions of the genre: the heroine's time in Antarctica centres on the growing sexual tension between herself and the station/expedition leader. From the 1990s, however, a growing number of women-centred narratives began to appear. The phenomenon attracted comment in the media: in late 1998, *Entertainment Weekly* online asked 'Why are so many chicks going polar?';[29] around the same time an article in *Outside Online* magazine declared that 'There's nothing hotter than cold women – or so

some publishers say', as the 'literary genre du jour' is 'Women Who Write About Snow'.[30] An extract in the *Australian Women's Weekly* from Hartley's book was headlined 'Bridget Jones Goes to the Pole' (2003). As far as the media was concerned, the age of Antarctic chick-lit had arrived.

These narratives draw on the elements of the Antarctic pastoral, with the continent acting as a place that cleanses the mind, calms the spirit and corrects bad habits. The experiences of actual and fictional visitors to the continent coalesce on this point. Wheeler gives up alcohol following her sojourn south: 'I do not believe it was a coincidence that this change occurred after my long Antarctic visit'.[31] Hartley is 'a thirty something city girl who left behind a life of failure, too many cigarettes and much too much alcohol, in search of self-respect, in search of myself';[32] she requires treks to both poles to put herself right. Gemmell's fictional heroine Fin wants from her trip 'uncomplicated air … to settle into my skin, reclaim it with rest and removal from my crammed city existence'.[33] The protagonist of Liz Maverick's novel *Adventures of an Ice Princess* effectively summarizes the basic assumption behind passages such as this when she anticipates her experience working at an Antarctic base as a kind of a restorative rural vacation: 'They were always sending people away to the country-side in the old days to fix them up … It would be a giant, no-stress, mental restoration event'.[34] Like trips to the country, Antarctic sojourns have a cleansing effect in these narratives, the purity and emptiness of the continent finding its equivalent in the traveller's mind. Hartley has 'never felt so mentally cleansed' as at the end of her Antarctic journey, an experience that involved 'no stress, no rat race and no relationship nightmares'.[35] Fin likewise feels that her mind is clearer than it has been in years, and that she is 'coming home clean'.[36]

The rejuvenating Antarctic journey becomes, in some female-centred narratives, a more extended and serious encounter with the continent as a place where past traumas can be healed. Again, this conceit spans both fiction and travel writing, underlying Arthur's *Antarctic Navigation* and Darrieussecq's *White* (2003), but also Legler's *On the Ice* and Jenny Diski's *Skating to Antarctica*. In Diski's memoir, one of the best-known of late twentieth-century Antarctic travel accounts, two separate narratives are intertwined – the author's Antarctic cruise and her very difficult early relationship with her dysfunctional mother, Rene. She opens by outlining her long-term 'wish for whiteout', which began in a psychiatric hospital where the white sheets offered 'a place of safety, a white oblivion' and was eventually transferred to a compulsive desire for Antarctic travel, 'my white bedroom extended beyond reason'.[37] Diski's Antarctic, then, is a place of

retreat and safety; it shares this quality with the pastoral, although unlike the pastoral, with its connotations of fertility and growth, Diski's retreat is a largely negative place, a great blankness that prevents her from having to think or feel. She also constructs an implicit analogy between the ice rink she practiced on as a child and the Antarctic ice: the former seemed to promise freedom, but then thwarted it with its wooden barriers; the latter offers both the safety of whiteness and the freedom of limitless spaces, 'an ice rink that ran on and on into infinity'.[38] Needless to say, this is very much a conceptual Antarctica, as Diski readily admits, not the actual crevasse-torn, highly hazardous icescape itself. It is never clear whether Diski, who clings to the safety and privacy of her cabin during her Antarctic cruise, ever sets foot on the actual continent. Her journey among the ice, however, does seem to have its healing effect. Diski arrives home to discover her daughter has completed her attempt to trace Rene's life, and, having dreaded this knowledge since before her journey, Diski actually finds it to be positive in its impact rather than damaging. Her Antarctic journey and her account of it have essentially been a psychological working-through of her childhood issues.[39]

Just as often, however, it is not traumatic childhood memories but simply the trauma of city living from which Antarctica delivers the protagonist in narratives of this kind. A number of recent texts emphasize the highly urban, fashion-focussed nature of a woman about to embark on an Antarctic journey, as if a character from *Sex in the City* suddenly found herself heading south. Yet again, this applies equally to actual and fictional visitors to the continent. Alexa Thomson characterizes herself as 'an educated 30-year-old with a great salary and career but nevertheless disaffected by the hollowness of my fabulous city lifestyle … I wanted an experience that had nothing to do with my career or my life as an unattached woman in the city. I was languishing at the investment bank and wanted to break free of a pattern'. She constantly reinforces this image with references to clothes, shoes and other stereotypically urban feminine accoutrements: 'My idea of a remote location was the distance between a taxi stand and a shoe shop'; 'I resisted the temptation to accessorise the polar fleece jacket with high heels'; '[T]he most energetic exercise I indulge in is traipsing from office to bar to restaurant to theatre with the occasional blister from my stilettos to impede progress'.[40] Gemmell's *Shiver* likewise emphasizes the central character's startling unfittedness for the journey she is about to take, although in a less lighthearted vein than Thomson. When Fin, a Sydney-based journalist, goes for an initial briefing, people stare at her clothes, her 'urban black'; others represent her

(unsurprisingly) as a 'city girl'. At a talent night, a male expedition member mocks her misogynistically, dressing up in black clothes, tight-fitting across predictably outsized breasts, with red lipstick, sunglasses and high pigtails. The other women Fin meets are by contrast, earthy, practical and occasionally masculinized: one of her cabin-mates 'shaves her chin. There's a peppering of black hairs, their blunt beginnings. Maybe she's into steroids'; the other's body is 'loose and large'. The transformation experience depends upon the heroine being not only geographically but also culturally and socially displaced, her allegiance to city ways overcoming any potential bonds with other women. Needless to say, by the end of the novel the heroine has been transformed. Fin finds herself with underarm hair and likes it: 'I'm not wearing makeup or scent. I have just a few changes of clothes ... It's a spare life and it feels good'.[41] In the other texts cited previously, the women are similarly changed, their urban edges rubbed off, their lives simplified; new competencies are acquired, new parts of themselves revealed and embraced.

Female Antarctic experiences of this kind are taken to their extreme – and thus implicitly satirized – in Maverick's *Adventures of an Ice Princess*. Unlike the other texts discussed here, this novel wholeheartedly identifies itself through its outward appearance as Antarctic chick-lit. The cover (by Cheryl Hoffman) features a cartoon drawing of girl in a mini-skirt walking across the ice, dragging a classy suitcase with bikini and high-heels tumbling out. The narrative centres on Clarissa Schneckburg, who works in Silicon Valley for a dot-com company. After a disastrous relationship break-up, Clarissa and her two friends Kate and Delilah, the founder of a teen-cosmetic company, decide on a life change. Inspired by two cans of curried tongue once rejected by Shackleton that Clarissa unwittingly bids for at a charity auction, they opt for Antarctica as their destination. They are attracted, amongst other things, by the high ratio of men to women, the 'opportunity to indulge in slutty behaviour without being judged in the real world' and the 'excuse to buy a pair of those really cool Prada hiking boots'. Their obvious unsuitability is part of the appeal: 'A hundred and eighty degree turn toward a latitude of ninety degrees south. If this wasn't a character building experience, what was?' The friends journey south, Clarissa insists, '[t]o learn about ourselves. In some way, to start over. To avoid defaulting to the boundaries, the expectations of our social circle'. They are not disappointed. When the three arrive in Antarctica, they are horrified by what they encounter – 'I'd pictured it all more sorority-like and less Russian prison novel' – including the three tall, blonde women with 'Amazon-like strength' with whom they share a room.

This is just the beginning of their trials, which include running low on moisturizer and having to instigate 'an emergency skin-care plan'. Although Maverick satirizes the citified Antarctic female sojourner by taking the image to its limit, the narrative nonetheless concludes with a life-affirming transformation, with Clarissa finally able to 'take a leadership role in her own life'.[42]

Why this stereotyping of women who journey to Antarctica as urbanite fashion slaves? Needless to say, many actual women expedition members are scientists and tradespeople who are well used to – and often drawn to – fieldwork and 'outdoorsy' activities. It is, however, professional writers and journalists, whose normal environment is often the city and whose journey to the continent is usually relatively brief, rather than the researchers and maintenance personnel who regularly travel there as part of their jobs, who are more likely to publish accounts of their journey. Even so, there is something else at work here: a narrative of an unprepared urbanite who travels to Antarctica is dramatic and potentially amusing in a way that narratives of more 'ordinary' Antarctic workers are not. This applies to both men and women – hence Forbush's exaggerated transformation when a relatively obscure novel was adapted for a more popular medium, a film with high-profile actors. Forbush's initial dandification, however, made way for his masculinization – a process of becoming more serious and capable, better fitted for his female partner at home. What happens when this scaffolding is placed around a female-centred narrative?

While Gemmell's Fin may stop using perfume and shaving her armpits after she returns north, the adoption of a heterosexual female narrative perspective does not, generally speaking, entail a refusal of gender norms, nor a re-thinking of the way in which the Antarctic wilderness is itself gendered, but more often results in a projection of its masculinizing power onto the heroine's love interest. If men in realist fiction want to be Antarctica, women want to be with it – in the metonymical form of a man. Where men in the texts previously described become better equipped for relationships on their return from Antarctica, their female equivalents tend to bond with men who themselves embody their Antarctic experience.

In this sense it is not as facetious as it might seem to take *Frozen Heart* as the basic plot template for many later stories of Antarctic women. Clair's Mills and Boon novel focusses on Kerin Paige, a journalist with an outdoor/adventure magazine, who goes to the Antarctic for a year as an information officer (and covertly as a psychological observer) at a fictional joint NZ/US station, Hillary, on the opposite side of the Ross Ice Shelf to McMurdo. She leaves behind a fiancé, Roger, the manager of

her magazine, an initial situation that inverts Cannon's in *Quick, Before It Melts*. At Hillary, Kerin encounters the base commander, pale-haired, ice-blue-eyed, hard-chested Dain Ransome, a famous Antarctic adventurer. After a prolonged series of sexually tense encounters in which he asserts his mastery over her – sometimes quite violently – they discover their similarity. The novel ends, as is required by the format, with their engagement (Roger has meanwhile found love with Kerin's flatmate). Clair, who is still an active Mills and Boon author, notes that although 'one would not get away today with what was fairly accepted behaviour' in category romance heroes in previous decades, *Frozen Heart* nonetheless represented 'something of a feminist statement' at the time – presumably in its insertion of a strong-minded woman into a highly male-dominated environment.[43]

Although recent female-centred Antarctic narratives differ in many ways from *Frozen Heart*, not least in their representation of the romantic 'hero', many follow the same basic narrative pattern. They focus on independent women, single or with a lacklustre partner left at home, who venture into the still-masculine Antarctic environment; and it is a man as much as the continent that has a transforming effect on their lives. Most explicit are those stories in which the woman becomes pregnant by a man met in Antarctica – this occurs in Darrieussecq's *White*[44] and Thomas's *Sun at Midnight*. In these cases, the woman is physically as well as emotionally transformed. In others, the agent of change is simply an affair: this characterizes *Antarctic Navigation*, *Shiver* and the non-fiction account *Antarctica on a Plate*.

In a reversal of the typical equation of a continent with a woman's body, in these narratives a man becomes a synecdoche for the continent. Fin, heroine of *Shiver*, falls for a man who, when she first meets him, is wearing a woollen jumper with a hole in it, and whose veins 'stand out like thick cords'; he is sporting walking boots and smells 'of sweat. Not clammy, ugly, office polystyrene-shirt sweat. Sweat from working and walking outdoors'. He has 'big bear hands', a 'strong and still arm' as he farewells his cattle dog at the wharf, and a 'disciplined, rock climber's body'. He represents the opposite of the cluttered urban world from which she is in retreat, and his impact on her is conflated with the impact of Antarctica: the latter makes her 'feel as though layers have been peeled from my skin and eyes and mind'; her lover likewise 'has peeled away the anxiety and loneliness that had settled over my limbs in my city existence'.[45] Thomas, in an article in the *Sunday Times*, writes that Antarctica's

'remote allure is thrilling and maddening, and the effect on me was like being unrequitedly in love'.[46] While her protagonist in *Sun at Midnight* must eventually leave the continent she has come to love, she is able to requite her love for it in her new life with the man she meets there, and the child she conceives with him.

As with any well-established set of narrative conventions, there are texts that satirize, undermine or complicate the elements of the story of the woman-who-goes. Maverick's *Adventures of an Antarctic Princess*, for example, nicely constructs and then deflates the characteristic plot arc. At her job interview, Clarissa meets the aptly named Mitchell Kipling, an outdoor adventure guide, and is fascinated by his ruggedness and untidiness. Kipling, like Dain Ransome, has old-fashioned attitudes towards the presence of women in Antarctica, but Clarissa falls for him nonetheless. Before long, however, she begins to realize that this apparent 'man's man' is actually irredeemably vain and exhibitionist. Therefore, even though her friends Kate and Delilah have found love with a diver and a firefighter, respectively, Clarissa decides she does not need a man as 'an anchor', only herself.[47] When her repentant ex-boyfriend calls and proposes, she rejects him similarly. By the end of the novel, she has developed a new confidence, fearlessness and direction – the final line is 'Anchors away!'

A female-centred narrative that acts as a more serious antidote to the romances described previously is Fearnley's *Degrees of Separation*. One of Fearnley's three intertwined storylines focusses on Marilyn, who goes to Antarctica at the instigation of her male partner to work as a communications operator. Flirtation and friendship with one of her fellow expedition members culminates in a one-night stand, which leaves her humiliated and pregnant; her story ends with her depressed, regretful and nauseous on the plane back to her home, New Zealand. There are no redeeming features to her situation; her Antarctic sojourn has only complicated and worsened her outlook. Where in many Antarctic romances a man becomes a symbol of a transforming experience of the continent, that equation here leads to a contrasting result: 'At that moment she believed she had cheated [her partner at home] in so many ways: not just by sleeping with Tobin but, equally, by not liking the Antarctic, not appreciating it. She had not only failed to recognise the place but had failed to understand what it was she was looking for'.[48] This narrative of failed self-insight acts as a sobering counterpart to texts in the idealizing 'pastoral Antarctica' vein. *Degrees of Separation* offers a reality very rare in realist fiction of the far south: an Antarctica that disappoints.

Other texts sustain some elements of the typical Antarctic transformation narrative while refusing or complicating the heterosexual romance that so often accompanies it. Both novels such as Lucy Jane Bledsoe's *The Big Bang Symphony* (2010) and non-fiction accounts such as Legler's *On the Ice* point to the limitations of the typical Antarctic romance narrative by dealing with lesbian relationships. Legler, early in her narrative, learns that many of the women at McMurdo Station are lesbians: 'In fact, there was a joke: How do you get a date with a woman in Antarctica? Answer: Be one'. Her female lover, if not symbolic of the continent, is clearly intrinsically connected with it: 'My falling in love with her was inextricably bound up with my being in Antarctica – I couldn't separate these experiences, nor make true sense of them in isolation'. Both are involved in the healing process that Legler undergoes: 'The story of my opening to her was also the story of my opening to myself, and to the land'.[49] Bledsoe's novel contains exactly the same joke, and the three women at the centre of her narrative also undergo journeys of healing and transformation, a theme that is made explicit at various points in the novel: 'Just wait … This continent will change your perception of everything', remarks one character; later on, reflecting on a companion's untypical confessional instinct, she explains:

> ' … It's the Ice'
> 'What do you mean?'
> 'Capital I: the Ice. This place transforms everyone. Splits your heart right open.'[50]

The extremity and the beauty of the Antarctic environment, for Bledsoe's characters, produce emotional as well as physical vulnerability, encouraging an unusual openness and honesty in the people who live there. *The Big Bang Symphony* departs in some ways from the typical female-centred Antarctic realist narrative. Only one of Bledsoe's three protagonists finds love in the south with a man who symbolizes the continent ('[H]is mouth on hers was Antarctic primitive. Wanting him was like wanting wildness itself'[51]); another finds friendship with a man met in Antarctica, and the third finds a female partner on her return home. The themes of healing and transformation, however, are still strong. By the novel's end, all three protagonists have to some degree resolved difficult family situations, dealt with past wounds and experienced renewal. Both *The Big Bang Symphony* and *On the Ice* move outside the standard pattern of heterosexual romances of the far south while to some degree sustaining the conventions of the Antarctic pastoral, the metonymic possession of

the continent through a partner and the transformative nature of the far southern journey.

Bledsoe, who travelled to the Antarctic twice on the U.S. Artists and Writers Program and once with a cruise company, notes in her acknowledgments that her aim was 'to portray a real view of the wonderful communities of people living on the Ice'.[52] Depicting Antarctic communities – wonderful or otherwise – has, it seems, been an aim of a number of recent writers of Antarctic novels working outside of genre fiction. It is only relatively recently that this aim has been achievable, particularly for women, and those who fulfil it add a new vein to the Antarctic imaginative oeuvre, counter-balancing a long history of speculative, fantastic and heroic narratives.

There is, however, a sameness to these narratives that points back to the nature of Antarctic experience in the post-Treaty period. In *The Ice*, Stephen Pyne identifies the basic problem facing '[t]raditional fiction' set in Antarctica: lack of material. With no 'real society', and no 'native people', the opportunities for conflict or tension are limited: 'The range of potential experiences was much smaller than elsewhere, the opportunity for surprise much less'.[53] While factors such as development of tourism, increasing focus on the environment and diversity in station society have provided more grist to novelists' mills, Pyne's observation remains relevant. Inevitably, in communities where there are no children, families or retirees, no homes, a limited range of jobs, and no continuous residence, narrative possibilities narrow.[54] There can be no *Bildungsroman* in Antarctica, no intergenerational family saga. Added to these factors is the limited number of routes to Antarctica for an established author. Self-published fiction aside, few Antarctic novels are produced by people who do not already identify as writers. Writers tend to access Antarctica through the various residency schemes with national programmes and cruise voyages, which means that their stays are relatively short – few winter-over. Imaginative accounts of the cycles of Antarctic experience over a year or more, which might explore longer-term physical changes in the environment as well as social and personal changes in the people stationed there, are hard to find.

The narrative sameness of realist novels thus highlights an important fact: the inimicality of the Antarctic environment means that the spectrum of available human experiences in the continent remains limited. Almost all realist narratives retain the plot arc of departure and return, with the time between spent in the station or field-base – liminal spaces in which

first-timers are removed from their normal contexts and confronted with new situations and experiences. The focus on self-discovery and personal transformation seems inevitable. Perhaps realist narratives of Antarctica will continue to follow a similar path unless the continent itself undergoes a radical transformation, the kind of terraforming project dreamt of by pulp science-fiction writers of the 1930s. If so, it may be better to embrace rather than look beyond this literary brand of Antarctic convergence.

CHAPTER 6

Freezing Time in Far Southern Narratives

In 2005, the Australian firm Skin Doctors, makers of 'cosmeceuticals', advertised a new product: a 'cosmetic collagen alternative' called 'Antarctilyne'. As *Who* magazine informed its readers, 'Skin Doctors' latest moisturiser sounds as if it's straight out of a science fiction novel, but this is for real. Characteristics of a bacterial strain from an Antarctic glacier have been adapted for the face cream'.[1] Skin Doctors' website explained the provenance of its product:

> On a landmark expedition to the Antarctic, a brilliant team of scientists from the University of Barcelona made this remarkable discovery at the bottom of a glacier in Admiralty Bay, Antarctica. A discovery so significant, it could actually help to stop the visible signs of aging in their tracks! That discovery was Antarcticine, the active ingredient in Antarctilyne. Antarcticine is produced by an extremophile – a 'survival' molecule which actually thrives in extreme conditions. And it doesn't get more extreme than Antarctica. Yet Antarcticine has survived for millions of years. If Antarcticine is so resilient, so powerful that it can survive in such extreme conditions, just imagine what it could do for your skin!

They advise customers to store their jars of Antarctilyne in the fridge.[2]

The power of this marketing campaign lies in its harnessing of a series of qualities associated with the Antarctic continent, and its projection of them onto the 'bacterial strain' (and hence the skin cream). The unique spatiality of the continent – its seemingly blank white spaces – suggests smooth, unblemished skin, and its clean, sterile, unearthly environment evokes the laboratory or the 'science fiction novel', a suitable source for a high-tech anti-wrinkle solution. But it is not only notions of Antarctic space that give this advertisement its effectiveness; just as important is Antarctic *time*.

It is the apparent timelessness of the vaunted 'molecule' – its ability to survive for 'millions of years' – that renders it an attractive anti-aging product. Like the ice in which it was found, Antarcticine is equated with

preservation: with setting back or 'freezing' the progress of events in time. In this sense, Antarcticine acts as a synecdoche for Antarctica itself, a continent of temporal anomalies. The narrator of Elizabeth Arthur's novel *Antarctic Navigation* (1994) observes, 'the most extraordinary thing about the Ice is not its placeness so much as its timeness'.[3] Nowhere is this clearer than in the imaginative narratives woven around the continent.

Of the tools available to talk about the 'timeness' of a place as it appears in literature, the most prominent is Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the 'chronotope', explained in his *Dialogic Imagination*. Bakhtin coined the term, which literally means 'time space', to talk about 'the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature'. He uses 'chronotope' in an abstract sense to refer to the way that time and space are linked within a genre, but also more concretely to describe a defined space within the world of the text that is associated with a specific temporality. For example, Bakhtin argues that the castle in gothic novels is 'saturated through and through' with 'the time of the historical past', and the provincial town in nineteenth-century realist novels is a space connected with 'cyclical, everyday time'. For Bakhtin, these chronotopes are 'the organizing centres for the fundamental narrative events of the novel ... to them belongs the meaning that shapes narrative'.[4]

The concept of the chronotope neatly encapsulates the inseparability of the sense of time and place in Antarctic narratives. The task of understanding the nature of this chronotope, relatively straightforward in the case of the gothic castle, is messier, however, when it comes to Antarctica, because the continent has multiple and contradictory relationships with time. Sometimes a concern with anomalous temporality can emerge in the narrative structure of Antarctic-based novels. For instance, one critic writing about H. P. Lovecraft's horror story *At the Mountains of Madness* (1936) emphasizes the unusual 'treatment of time' in this text: 'the major portion of the total elapsed time comes from the action of the first 35% of the text, and the remaining 65% of the text deals with the events of a mere sixteen hours – as if, in those brief but portentous hours, time itself has been as frozen as the polar wastes in which the final revelations come'.[5] For the most part, however, those who write creatively about Antarctica are not much interested in formal experiments with narrative time. The majority of Antarctic-based novels and short stories employ a traditional, realist, linear time scheme, eschewing the contortions of modernist and postmodernist novels. Arguably this formal conservatism is itself a response to the temporal confusion of the continent: just as science

fiction writers find it difficult to describe an experimental world through an experimental style, so Antarctica's temporalities can best be explored when other variables – such as the pace and direction of the narrative – remain constant and familiar.

Yet, even when Antarctic chronotopes are explored thematically rather than formally, these explorations often pull in contrary directions. Antarctica is a place that appears to offer direct access to the past, its ice acting as a kind of archive of previous ages; but it also points ominously towards future perils. It enables time to be stretched out, so that a day lasts several months, or compressed, so that a hundred years seems no more than a day. Antarctica acts as a time machine, in science as well as fiction and cosmetics advertisements; little wonder that the Tardis has landed there twice.[6] To understand fully the role that the southernmost continent plays in the modern imagination, it is necessary to explore its strange relationship with time.

DIURNAL DISTURBANCES

Antarctic temporal strangeness reaches its zenith at the South Pole itself: a singularity (in the mathematical sense) within the systematized social temporality of time zones. People stationed at Scott-Amundsen base must arbitrarily select one of these zones, as they technically belong to none. They choose not, as might be imagined, the time zone of their home nation, but that of the largest U.S. Antarctic station, McMurdo, which in turn uses the local time of New Zealand, the operational base for U.S. flights to the continent. Consequently, and rather charmingly, they adopt daylight savings time when New Zealanders do, even though their days and nights are effectively six months long. At the South Pole, observes travel writer Barry Lopez, 'the crush of meridians … the absence of any event even approaching a sunset' makes 'the issue of determining the hour only a vaguely foreboding curiosity'.[7] While all other places within Antarctica technically belong to a time zone, the diurnal disturbances that achieve their limit at the Pole are evident to varying degrees throughout the far southern latitudes.

Time is intimately linked to spatial location in a continent that is, in parts, as featureless as the ocean, and where the proximity of the South Magnetic Pole makes compasses unreliable. Early explorers required accurate chronometers in order to navigate their sledging trips. Scott, in the diary of his ill-fated polar journey, finds it 'very annoying' to discover that his companion Birdie Bowers's watch has lost twenty-six minutes, and

worries about how his party will relocate food depots if their time-keeping is not trustworthy.[8] Even ignoring navigation issues, however, the absence of familiar patterns of night and day would have been confusing in a deep bodily sense for these (as for present-day) expedition members. This is one reason why the regular upkeep of a diary is such a significant activity in the far south: in addition to its obvious functions of keeping a record of events and providing psychological release, it forms an important way of maintaining a sense of control over time. Likewise, irregular entries can indicate high anxiety and impending loss of control. So, in Scott's remarkably well-kept diary, the entry beginning '*Friday, March 16 or Saturday 17* – Lost track of dates . . .' suggests that the end is not far. It is this same entry that describes Lawrence Oates's departure from the expedition tent and from history, with the famous words: 'I'm just going outside and may be some time'.[9] His exit line is justly known for its cool understatement; but, in this context, its vagueness is equally striking. Where the demarcated time of the diary corresponds to a sense of control and survival, the indefiniteness of 'some time' signals the relinquishing of this control and of life itself.

Just as the diary acted as a personal metronome for early Antarctic explorers, the celebration of anniversaries – birthdays, public holidays, significant dates in the expedition's progress – represented a kind of communal time-keeping. As the night grew longer, and the passage of time vaguer, these anniversaries proliferated. 'The mania for celebration became so great', writes Douglas Mawson of the Australasian Antarctic Expedition, 'that reference was frequently made to the almanac. During one featureless interval, the anniversary of the First Lighting of London by Gas was observed with extraordinary *éclat*'.[10] The regular holding of Sunday services performed the same function, as did the production of an expedition 'newspaper', discussed in Chapter 4. This organ traditionally released its first issue at the same time that the sun disappeared for the polar winter, and later numbers followed as regularly as possible throughout the dark season. Men living together in cramped quarters had no literal need, of course, for news of their own activities – the high-latitude newspaper served other functions. Not only the regular appearance of its issues but the very concept of the newspaper provided a reassuring sense of stable temporality. Benedict Anderson has argued in a more general context that the emergence of the newspaper as a form was closely tied to the development of a sense of shared temporality within a community. Newspapers contain accounts of events joined only by 'simple calendrical coincidence'; their readers are likewise linked by their simultaneous consumption of the

material in the newspaper's pages.[11] By producing their own newspapers, Heroic-Era explorers created an imaginary sense of temporal unity with the world beyond their Antarctic outposts.

The importance to these explorers of the passage of time and the marking of calendrical events becomes a structuring principle in Beryl Bainbridge's *The Birthday Boys* (1991). Bainbridge's narrative is divided into five chapters, each related in the voice of one of the men who died during Scott's attempt on the Pole. The chapters cover, discontinuously but in chronological order, five different months during the two years the men spent on the expedition, and each of these months includes the birthday of one of the men. In the third chapter, for example, Scott describes a conversation in which he asked Petty Officer Edgar 'Taff' Evans to accompany a sledging expedition. When Evans complains, 'I had thought I'd be here for my birthday, sir', Scott laughingly replies that 'Birthdays … are hardly our first priority'. Evans's birthday, however, is indeed celebrated with a specially baked cake, and Scott attends, remarking 'I wouldn't miss it for worlds'. The only man who narrates his own birthday is Oates, whose exit into the blizzard (and posterity), if Scott had his dates right, occurred the day before his thirty-second birthday. At the conclusion of Bainbridge's novel, Oates, having uttered his famous line, walks into the blizzard and out of time to be greeted with a vision from his youth, a feeling of overwhelming warmth and the words 'Happy Birthday'.[12] The importance of birthdays in the novel's title and structure highlights the need to punctuate Antarctic time in any way that comes to hand.

Preoccupation with time is even stronger in Marie Darrieussecq's *White* (2003; English translation 2005), a novel in which Scott's men along with other explorers haunt the Antarctic icescape. *White* is set in a fictional European station close to the South Pole, with the action taking place in the near future, about a hundred years after Scott's death. Its concern, however, is very much with the past: with Antarctica's past, and the traumatic pasts of the two main protagonists, radio communications expert Edmée Blanco and heating engineer Peter Tomson. The narrative begins with alternating descriptions of their separate journeys to Antarctica – journeys joined only by their temporal coincidence and their eventual intersection. Peter arrives first by plane, and his time is then measured against Edmée's progress in an icebreaker: 'Pete Tomson spends the rest of the day checking out the generator. Never mind about the word "day", when the sun does not set. What is certain is that, at the same time, up, crack, *chchch*, Edmée Blanco is breaking the ice and advancing towards Pete Tomson'. This constant obsession with time and progress is tied to

the unusual narrative voice – a communal voice composed of a chorus of ghosts. Spirits of individual explorers, and even their animals, drift in and out of focus, but most often these voices speak as an undifferentiated group. As ghosts, they are not constrained by time, and neither is their narrative: 'if we want, we can view the film speeded up, forwards or backwards, in slow motion, the film of the approach, the film of the ice, the film of time solidifying here like ice ... We can let ourselves be rocked in time to the frost: imagine the power to make the rigging turn white'. In the way of ghosts, they are tied to place – 'the South Pole is our identity'– and movement through time is their primary freedom. Their anomalous temporal existences are matched by Antarctica's.[13]

For Pete and Edmée, the season at the station is a kind of time outside of time, a hiatus in their life narratives. As one reviewer remarks, '*White* is not so much a story as an ongoing situation', with the protagonists floating 'in some spirit-filled Sartrian limbo'.[14] The ghosts correspondingly narrate their tale predominantly in the present tense. Near the South Pole, it seems, historical time ceases, and all events take place simultaneously, trapped in a kind of temporal gravity well:

> Peter Tomson's preoccupations are quite different from those of Robert Falcon Scott, one century earlier; but it's not hard to imagine that the same vortex of dead time unravels here every year (we rush in); that blatant hollows are formed in the progression of time (we rush in); and that only winners like Amundsen manage to extricate themselves from them, whipping onwards their dogs and their hours.

Time takes on its own inertia and solidity here: it is a quicksand sucking on its victims, a polar whirlpool spinning them into its depths. To survive Antarctica is to take control of time, to shape it to your will rather than let it shape you. The protagonists attempt this as best they can. Pete becomes increasingly quick at completing his technical tasks, to prepare for 'feeling time slow down'. Edmée is bereft of all sense of location in time and in language: 'It's as if even the simplest words are losing their meaning; as if "this evening" refers to indefinite time, as if "urgent" means "later", as if a verb in the future describes a completed action'. She turns for solace to Scott's diary, only to read the entry describing the inexplicable loss of twenty-six minutes on Bowers's watch.[15]

The sole escape for Pete and Edmée from this temporal quagmire is to find forward direction in acceptance of each other, rather than remaining constrained by the memories of their individual haunted pasts. Towards the end of novel, they drive a scooter out of the station at four in the

morning, travelling fifteen kilometres to the Pole itself. Here they kiss: 'History, of course, does not turn over in its cavern. Time only glances back over its shoulder, like an animal raising its snout for a moment from the carcass it is devouring. But it is enough for space to be able to dig out its slopes again . . .' At this point, they discover in the snow an old-fashioned watch, warm and ticking. While their own modern watches indicate they have been absent from the station for twenty-six minutes, the older watch – it is, of course, Bowers's watch – remains at four o'clock. On their return, they discover that in fact a half-day has passed, and it is now four in the afternoon. During their subsequent lovemaking, they 'do not feel the passing of time', until an alarm sounds and 'Time put[s] itself back together at top speed'. Three weeks later, after an emergency evacuation, they are voyaging home on an icebreaker. The ghost-narrators are aware that Edmée, whose own bodily rhythms have been erratic during her time at the base, is pregnant. As the couple journey away from the ice at the novel's conclusion, temporal anxieties dissipate: 'The blood circulates, the sea is smooth, the Earth spins, and at both poles all is calm and white'. The rhythms of everyday life resume as the ship sails northward, leaving behind the unearthly stasis of the Antarctic continent.[16]

THE LAND THAT TIME FORGOT: ALLOCHRONIC FICTION

The diurnal disturbances, temporal featurelessness and resulting anxieties discussed thus far are not, of course, confined to the far southern regions; they apply equally to the far north. The different forms of 'placeness' represented by the Arctic and the Antarctic, however, translate to different notions of 'timeness'. The Arctic encompasses inhabited regions; an ocean surrounded by land, it is continuous with the landmasses of the northern hemisphere, and includes large parts of Canada, Russia and several European countries. Antarctica, by contrast, is a continent surrounded by a rough and extensive ocean: it is spatially separate. It is not only Antarctica's strange diurnal patterns that signal its temporal anomalousness, but its spatial isolation. This is true in the texts mentioned in the previous section, but even more so in a group of novels which use Antarctica to stage the juxtaposition of two or more periods in history: narratives that might be termed 'allochronic fiction'.

In fiction, and in everyday speech, time is often figured through spatial metaphor. A process of development in time can be described as a journey, even though little actual spatial movement occurs. Conversely, the journey through space is often associated with movement in time.

The more remote the destination from population centres and infrastructure, the more acute the sense of a time shift. This temporal distancing is not neutral, but carries political implications. The anthropological device of creating distance between observer and observed by positioning the latter in a different time – labelling a people 'prehistorical' or 'primitive' or 'primeval' – is well known. Johannes Fabian, in *Time and the Other*, uses the terms 'denial of coevalness' and 'allochronism' to describe this kind of chronological displacement. Allochronism is not geographically limited; as Fabian points out, Western societies denigrate particular aspects of their own cultures by labelling them in this way.[17] This rhetorical device, however, is particularly readily applied to regions or peoples that are spatially remote. An obvious case in point is the Australian Aborigines, consistently labelled as 'stone age' by European colonizers.[18] To relegate a people to a past age is to refuse their capacity to change: whether they are doomed in Social Darwinist terms as destined for extinction or nostalgically romanticized, they are denied a future. Far-flung locations in the south are doubly distanced in time. Tarak Barkawi writes that 'One of the most pervasive ways of seeing the world is in terms of a distinction between an "advanced", modern world – the global "North" – and a "backward", underdeveloped world, the global "South" … The distinction is … temporal, in that the South is considered historically "behind" the North'.[19] Roxanne Doty likewise identifies 'abstract binary oppositions' that 'frame our thinking' about the North-South relationship, including 'developed/underdeveloped', 'core/periphery' and 'modern/traditional'.[20]

Antarctica, of course, is not a people but a continent; yet the effect of allochronism can be political in its case as well. Louise Crossley, in her foreword to Robin Burns's analysis of women's experiences in Antarctica, *Just Tell Them I Survived*, argues that in the late twentieth century, when women were increasingly expanding their presence in non-traditional fields, 'Antarctica seemed caught in a time warp contingent on its "special" status'.[21] The sense of Antarctica as a place apart meant it could also be considered a time apart, and its communities could sustain views of gender roles outdated elsewhere.

This image of an Antarctic community caught in a time warp is one that was fostered by creative writers before the continent began to be explored. One of the most prominent genres within Antarctic fiction in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the romance of the 'lost world'. This genre, Peter Nicholls observes, 'belonged to a cartographically "closed" world': it flourished at a time when blank spaces on

the map were fast disappearing, and Antarctica, along with the Arctic, the Himalayas, the Amazon basin and the Australian outback, was one of the few enclaves still predominantly unexplored by Europeans. As Nicholls notes, the genre was 'largely anachronistic … from its beginning':[22] certainly in the case of Antarctica, writers continued to postulate unknown southern worlds inhabited by all kinds of unlikely creatures long after the continent's icy, hostile nature had been established. In nineteenth-century Antarctic lost-world narratives, a ring of ice hides a temperate or tropical interior (land or island-dotted sea) harbouring beings who seem to belong to an earlier stage in history – descendants of people who long ago colonized the region and have remained isolated ever since. After the Pole had been reached, writers commonly replaced the hidden inhabitable land with less obviously unrealistic scenarios, such as caverns beneath the ice. In both cases, the narrative inevitably centres on the intrusion into the lost polar civilization of contemporary protagonists, so that the far south becomes the site of different but co-existing temporalities.

Although there were a number of remote locations that lent themselves to lost-world narratives, Antarctica at the turn of the twentieth century was particularly suited to allochronic fictions. The discovery of an entirely uninhabited and undeveloped continent in a period of rapid industrialization and mechanization is appealingly incongruous, suggesting an apparent juxtaposition of the modern and the prehistoric. Antarctica, as Elena Glasberg has observed, is in this sense 'a spatialized symbol of time, of the lateness of the hour'.[23] At the beginning of the nineteenth century, when Australia – the other half of the erstwhile *Terra Australis Incognita* – was the site of ongoing British colonization, there had been no recorded sighting of the Antarctic continent. By the end of that century, when the era of European imperialism had already reached its height, the first official landing on Antarctica had only just occurred. By the time Scott and Amundsen were laboriously making their way on foot and ski to the South Pole, the motor car, the aeroplane and the special theory of relativity had been invented. Mawson's expedition of 1911–14 communicated with the outside world through telegraphy. The most remote of lands was explored when communication technologies were altering perceptions of distance, when the 'time-space compression' characteristic of the modern era was already well in train.[24] As Les Murray's poem 'Antarctica' (1990) suggests, the continent is simultaneously the 'Most modern of the Great South Lands' and 'prehuman'. Prior to satellite mapping and the establishment of numerous scientific stations, it provided the perfect 'lost world' in the midst of modernity.

While in some narratives the lost people discovered in Antarctica are culturally or technologically superior to the author's own society (as in the utopias discussed in Chapter 1), more often they have remained 'frozen' in the primitive state of their ancestors while the rest of humanity moved on. In many cases, the 'lost race' represents an earlier evolutionary stage and reflects post-Darwinian anxieties about racial hierarchies. The best-known example is Edgar Rice Burroughs's *The Land that Time Forgot* (1918) and its two sequels. Burroughs's novels are set in 'Caspak', a far southern continent fringed by icebergs and inhabited by humanity's evolutionary ancestors, along with a variety of prehistoric creatures. Writing several years after Amundsen reached the South Pole, Burroughs invented an alternative Antarctica in order to re-live myths of a tropical polar land when they were well past their used-by date. Similar stories followed. John Taine's *The Greatest Adventure* (1929) sees a scientist, his spirited daughter and their companions fend off dinosaurs in caverns beneath the Antarctic ice. In Edison Marshall's *Dian of the Lost Land* (1935), two scientists flying an aeroplane to a hidden region of Antarctic tundra are effectively 'transported to the Glacial Age, to the wild glory of the Age of Mammals, where the splendid Cro-Magnon and the darkened Neanderthal fought their savage wars'. One of the men, realizing that the Cro-Magnons have 'preserved something that will never come again on this earth', determines that he will in turn fight to 'preserve these wonderful people' until society is ready to accept them without exploitation. He stays behind when his companion flies away, revelling in the chance to release the atavistic qualities within himself: 'He was not the lawful child of civilization, but a throwback to the Stone Age … Adam, the youth, the primal man, had entered into his heritage'.[25]

In a few cases, the time to which the lost race harks back is not a vague primeval era, but a specific period in history. One example is Eugene Bisbee's *Treasure of the Ice* (1898), in which ancient Greek culture is discovered flourishing in the Antarctic. Charles Stilson's *Polaris of the Snows* (1915) also features a people described as 'an offshoot of old Greece',[26] and Charles Dake's *A Strange Discovery* (1899) opts for descendants of ancient Rome. Most explicit about its juxtaposition of two historical periods is Edward Bouvé's *Centuries Apart* (1894); the second chapter is entitled 'The Meeting of the Sixteenth and Nineteenth Centuries'. Set during the American Civil War, *Centuries Apart* recounts the adventures of Captain Arthur Percy, from whose journal the narrative is purportedly constructed. Percy sails in a group of ships transporting Union soldiers from the east to the west coast of North America. Forced south by storms off Cape Horn, the ships are drawn through a channel in the ice by the warm current

so ubiquitous in Antarctic fiction of this period. The soldiers find themselves in an open polar sea, where they encounter a 'medieval' ship crewed by people wearing period dress and speaking an archaic English: 'It was the Middle Ages over again, and the Americans gazed as if in a dream'. The Antarcticans are refugees from a much earlier civil war: they are the ancestors of English exiles who, disgruntled by the accession of Henry Tudor in 1485, embarked with a group of French people to form a new colony. Their Antarctic settlement is a literal replica of northern geography: 'South England', an island 'seeming somewhat like unto England' is separated by a channel from 'La Nouvelle France'. Society, dress and customs in both countries have stalled in sixteenth-century mode.[27] This is effectively a time-travel story, and its most obvious forebear is Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court,* published five years earlier. But where, in Twain's tale, a bump on the head is required to send the Yankee into the past, in Bouvé's novel, Antarctica functions as a time machine that makes the past simultaneous with the present.

Heroic-Era explorers themselves used literary devices to portray a temporally distanced Antarctica, although rather than bringing the past into the present, they tended to imagine the present as past. The in-house newspaper of Scott's two expeditions, the *South Polar Times*, published a series of six semi-fictional pieces in which the men satirized their own activities by reporting them in the form of archaic documents discovered by future societies. These have titles such as 'Leaves from an Ancient Papyrus', 'Hieroglyphic Record' and 'Extracts from Some Antarctic Archives'. Frank Debenham explains that 'The idea behind the Archives is that many centuries hence tourists might visit the scene of the expedition on Ross Island and might there dig up bricks with the story engraved or painted on them, just as archaeologists piece together the happenings of two thousand years ago in Egypt or Mesopotamia'.[28] The articles are written in a mock-ancient tongue, designed to evoke the estrangement effect that Edwardian speech might produce in readers hundreds of years in the future. Serious events in the expedition become humorous from this imaginary distance. For example, 'Extracts from Some Antarctic Archives', written by the *Terra Nova* expedition surgeon Edward Atkinson, gives the following description of the sledging trip in search of Emperor penguins' eggs undertaken by Bowers, Cherry-Garrard and 'Uncle Bill' Wilson:

> 14. Theice splitand itwaskrevassed.
> 15. For teendaysout Unclesāādh lesphat. Cherisāādh lesbiskit[.]
> 16. Birdesāādh Imalright isnthis-splendidh.
> 17. Tha-arriveh-dat th'Knoll and built-a-stoneut.
> 18. Thagot-fyve-aigs.[29]

Bower's unfailing cheerfulness and apparent imperviousness to cold are affectionately mocked here, as are the dietary experiment the explorers undertook and the anti-climactic outcome of the epic journey: 'Thagot-fyve-aigs'. Another example of the same genre comes from Mawson's newspaper, the *Adelie Blizzard*. An item submitted to the *Blizzard* by Charles Laseron took the 'ancient manuscript' device a step further by presenting itself as an article in a future newspaper.[30] Entitled 'Extract from the Adelie Times in the Year of Bill Smith 2471', Laseron's story reports the future discovery, beneath 'some forty feet of penguin soil', of a manuscript describing various events and members of the expedition. As in the *South Polar Times* articles, the archaic, mock-Biblical language in which the manuscript is written allows the expression of humour that might otherwise offend. For example, one of Laseron's fellow explorers, Walter Hannam, who somehow managed to put on weight during his time in Antarctica, is described as 'he of the mighty girth'.[31] The comedy derives from the combination of the mundanity of the events described, the solemnity of tone and the perplexity of the future interpreters. The 'ancient manuscript' device, with its imagined temporal shift, thus enabled the expedition members to make fun of each other from a secure distance – an important thing when a group of men are living together in one hut for months or years. On another level, it allowed them to speculate, under the guise of humour, that their achievements would indeed have some meaning for posterity. The expedition represented itself to itself as a kind of time capsule waiting for discovery by a future society.

Fictions of this kind can be classed as auto-allochronic – explorers deny their own coevalness with the rest of humanity, placing their present as the past of the outside world, and conversely representing the outside world as their future. This is not surprising, given the rudimentary way in which they were forced to live. Mawson considered his expedition, wintering in a snow-covered hut in 1913, 'a case of history repeating itself – cave man and the great ice age'.[32] The men agreed: Morton Moyes, in his account of his experiences during Mawson's expedition, compares the Antarctic explorer to 'a Neanderthal simian on some desperate migration to a land of firewood and hunting'.[33] Equally relevant in this context was their spatial isolation. The extreme remoteness and inaccessibility of the Antarctic continent meant that early explorers were removed from all contact with the outside world for months or even years. Their members, on return to the north, were like time travellers emerging into an unknown future. The most famous case of this temporal dislocation comes from Shackleton's

Endurance expedition, which had no outside contact from the time it left South Georgia in December 1914 to Shackleton's return there in May 1916. Having departed Britain the same week that war was declared, Shackleton expected the conflict to be finished by the time he returned. Greeting whalers at South Georgia after spending nearly eighteen months trapped in ice, he famously asked '… when was the war over?' and was informed, 'The war is not over … Millions are being killed. Europe is mad. The world is mad'.[34] Even those intermittently in contact with the north, such as Mawson's men, who had the benefit of a temperamental wireless communications system, felt that returning to society would be tantamount to travelling into the future. One contributor to the *Adelie Blizzard*, writing about the 'Evolution of Women', conveys a 'horrible premonition that the times have changed; that like Rip Van Winkle in his day, we shall after two years of hibernation, find ourselves confronted with a being far more terrible than a suffragette'.[35] Both Scott's and Mawson's men wrote several fictional pieces which speculated about or satirized their likely reception on return to society.[36] Writing fiction set in the future which posited their own present as past allowed these men to prepare psychologically for the changes that lay ahead.

An allochronism of sorts is also characteristic of some retrospective assessments of Heroic-Era exploration, specifically Scott's final polar journey. Writing in a journal of geography, Cindi Katz and Andrew Kirby argue that where Scott's approach to the Pole signified the embrace of 'modernity', his rival Roald Amundsen's represented 'pre-modernity'. 'In almost every way', they claim, 'the solutions employed by the two expeditions replicated this distinction between old and new'. Scott was 'seduced by technology' where Amundsen adopted 'the materials of everyday life' and 'the tools and techniques of aboriginal people'.[37] A converse argument, however, is also possible: Scott is often represented as an old-fashioned amateur, mired in Victorian gentlemanly codes, class hierarchies and naval traditions,[38] and Amundsen as a rational, focussed professional.[39] Francis Spufford notes the temptation to see the two expeditions as 'opposite poles of modernity and antiquity', although he reverses the polarity suggested by Katz and Kirby:

> When the *Terra Nova,* happening on the *Fram* in the Bay of Whales, actually moors next to her, and those aboard Scott's chosen ship wonder at the *Fram*'s petrol tanks, and the individual cabins aboard her for every man from captain to cook, it neatly resolves the sense of times colliding to reflect that while Scott seems to inhabit a 1911 only forty years on from the 1870s, Amundsen's 1911 seems only forty years in advance of the 1950s.[40]

The important point here is not which of these opposing views is right, but that they are joined by their denial of coevalness. These expeditions, which seemed to be all about space, have turned out to be all about time.

ANTARCTIC CRYONICS

While the continent's ice functions metaphorically in Antarctic allochronic fictions, its preserving powers underscoring the apparent preservation of an earlier time period, in a number of other tales the Antarctic ice moves from being a metaphor to a literal device for decelerating or stopping the changes wrought by time. The most extreme, and most comical, fictional example of anomalous temporalities produced by icy conditions is the conceit of 'frozen words', the literary history of which has been outlined by Edward M. Wilson and P. Rickard. The idea stretches back to Plutarch's *Moralia,* which relates a report 'that in a certain city words congealed with the cold the moment they were spoken, and later, as they thawed out, people heard in the summer what they had said in the winter'. This absurd idea is then explained as a metaphor for delayed understanding: philosophical ideas heard by men in their youth are comprehended only when they grow old.[41] The concept of 'frozen words' is employed by a number of later writers (some of whom relocate the generic 'city' to the North Pole), most famously and extensively by François Rabelais in his *History of Gargantua and Pantagruel.* These writers elaborated on the original conceit and suggested further absurdities, such as 'polar wars' which are 'frequently waged six months before they have been declared', and protestations of love which are heard amid a later quarrel.[42] None of the examples listed by Wilson and Rickard are specific to Antarctica (all of their examples pre-date Western encounter with the continent), but the general principle – that ice and the freezing process result in temporal paradoxes – is one that is employed repeatedly in Antarctic fiction. Antarctica offers at least one example of actual cryonics: the midge *Belgica Antarctica*, in its larval stage, is able to freeze over winter and effectively 'come to life' again after it thaws out.[43] The category of Antarctic literature that might be termed 'cryonic fiction' extrapolates this idea to larger bodies – both human and monstrous.

Although the term 'cryonics' appeared only in the mid-1960s, the idea of prolonging a life through freezing has a longer history in literature. In time-travel fiction, preservation in ice is the most popular of a variety of suspended animation devices that can take the place of a time machine (others include the long sleep or hypnotic trance).[44] The earliest example

of cryonics in fiction can be found in an Antarctic-based novel, W. Clark Russell's *The Frozen Pirate*, published in 1887.[45] This tells the story of Paul Rodney, first mate on a brig travelling from Peru to South Africa at the turn of the nineteenth century. When the ship collides with an iceberg in southern waters, Rodney is the only man left alive, with the rest of the crew either washed overboard or crushed and pinned to the deck by the fallen rigging. Taking to a small boat, Rodney eventually finds shelter against another iceberg, wedged into which he encounters a frozen eighteenth-century pirate ship complete with several frozen pirates. Russell, a British writer of popular nautical stories, draws heavily on 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' for his imagery: like Coleridge's poem, *The Frozen Pirate* is a narrative of sin and redemption, involving ominous albatross encounters and crews of dead sailors. The frozen inhabitants of the pirate ship, like Coleridge's zombie mariners, represent a form of life-in-death, and Rodney feels that to board the pirate ship would be to experience a similar fate. As in Darrieussecq's novel, the collapse of temporal distinctions is associated with ghosts: the frozen victuals Rodney finds on the ship have a 'substantial ghostliness', a quality replicated by the ice, 'as solid as a rock and as unsubstantial as a cloud'. Eventually, Rodney thaws out one of the pirates, who believes it is 1753; the Antarctic ice has collapsed the intervening half-century.[46]

The story of the *Frozen Pirate* closely echoes an earlier polar legend of a mysterious frozen ship. An alleged 'real life' narrative related in a military magazine in May 1847 – not long after concerns about the missing Franklin expedition were first voiced – has a late eighteenth-century whaling vessel in high northern latitudes encounter a derelict blown in from the north after a storm. Boarding the ship, the whalers spy a man sitting at a writing desk. On investigating the cabin, the captain makes a starting discovery:

> A tremor seized him as he entered [the apartment]. Its inmate retained his former position and seemed to be insensible to the presence of strangers. He was found to be a corpse, and a green damp mould had covered his cheeks and forehead and veiled his open eye-balls. He held a pen in his hand, and a log-book lay before him . . .[47]

The captain's unfinished entry is dated 1762, indicating that the ship has been lying in its icy prison for seventeen years. Like words frozen in mid-speech, his sentences have waited a long interval to be received. The same story, with occasional minor variations, re-appeared in several publications over the ensuing decade.[48] By 1862, when the recently discovered fate of Franklin

and his men might have rendered the tale distasteful, and the remoter, less trammelled Antarctic had become a more appropriate locale for a legend of frozen time, the story emerged with a far southern setting. The whaling ship had by now acquired a name – the *Hope*[49] – as had the frozen ship – the *Jenny* – and the date of the encounter had moved to 1840, although the interval over which the ship was frozen remained seventeen years.[50]

Unsurprisingly, subsequent attempts to corroborate the encounter between the *Hope* and the *Jenny* have been fruitless.[51] Its basic premise, however, has survived in a series of later Antarctic tales, including *The Frozen Pirate*; Hamilton Drummond's short story 'A Secret of the South Pole' (1902), which gives the tale a supernatural twist; and Margaret Mahy's delightful children's book, *The Riddle of the Frozen Phantom* (2001). The most complex response to the legend is Rosemary Dobson's long poem 'The Ship of Ice' (1947), which cites the story of the *Jenny* in its epigraph.[52] Dobson's poem is in part a meditation on the nature of time:

> . . . be sure at least of ice and pain and silence.
> Of Time? Well, there one can never be certain –
> For you a thing to be measured, perhaps – for me, a searching,
> And for seven alone on a frozen ship? I wonder.[53]

In the poem, the ship's snap-frozen inhabitants occupy an Antarctic purgatory, suspended in the moment of departing from life.

Texts such as these can be read as variations on other maritime myths and legends, such as the Marie Celeste and the Flying Dutchman, but the role of Antarctic ice in the strange preservation stories they relate is significant, connecting them to the larger group of tales discussed in Chapter 2 in which weird and usually ancient creatures are discovered buried in ice on the underside of the world. It is this genre, dominated by pulp science fiction magazine stories, that *Who* magazine's cosmetics writer recognized in the narrative of Antarcticine's discovery. Occasionally the defrosted being is benign: in John Martin Leahy's 'The Living Death' (1924–25), explorers of a hidden Antarctic land discover a lovely woman frozen in ice, who turns out to be a delightful companion when defrosted – a fitting cover girl for Antarctilyne. Far more typical (and more famous) are the terrifying alien creatures of Lovecraft's *At the Mountains of Madness* and John W. Campbell's 'Who Goes There?'. Lovecraft was familiar with Antarctic preservation stories; he had read *The Frozen Pirate* as a boy.[54] In his story, Campbell's, and later imitations such as the Dr Who series 'The Seeds of Doom' (1976), creatures defrosted in Antarctic ice devastate an expedition base and threaten the world at large. In each case, it is the ancient and

alien nature of the frozen organism – its obvious difference from other life forms – that is the primary source of fear. As China Miéville observes in his introduction to Lovecraft's novel, the 'preserving power of the cold' allows 'our supposed atavistic and repressed anxieties to be put on ice, and the Antarctic becomes almost vulgarly overdetermined as a site for psychically anxious fiction'.[55]

Again, a 'real life' counterpart for these nightmare creatures can be located. In 2002, New Zealand scientists found signs of anthrax bacteria in Scott's huts at Cape Evans, possibly carried there by the mules and ponies Scott brought with him and preserved by the ice ever since. The story re-ignited earlier speculations that anthrax might have caused the death of Evans on the polar journey.[56] While later attempts to isolate anthrax spores in the samples failed and the hut was declared safe, the incident raised the spectre of what might happen if a strain of bacteria or virus eradicated from the rest of the world remained hibernating in the Antarctic ice, awaiting release.

Yet perhaps more fearful, because more real, than the notion of a hostile organism hidden in the ice, are the preserved bodies of unlucky expedition members. The frozen body of the explorer forms a central part of the southern continent's most frequently repeated story, that of 'Scott of the Antarctic'. The bodies of the five members of Scott's party are still encased in Antarctic ice, and are likely to remain so for several hundred more years. Evans and Oates were the first casualties, and their remains were never located. Scott, Bowers and Wilson died later in their tent; they were discovered by Cherry-Garrard and others the following southern spring and buried *in situ*. Their bodies have remained encased in the ice ever since, inexorably making their way towards the coast, and presumably will one day leave the continent inside calved icebergs.[57] The idea of these preserved explorers slowly completing their original journey north is an evocative one. Although the bodies of Scott and his companions were in bad shape when found by Cherry-Garrard's party,[58] it is tempting to imagine the dead men lying, protected from decay by the cold, exactly as they might have looked in life. Initial literary responses to the tragedy often figured them as asleep. A printed poem sent to Kathleen Scott from a station in Winton, Queensland, shortly after the announcement of her husband's death, concludes typically:

> God rest thee, brothers, in that silent land,
> Sleep neath the pure white snows that softly fell;
> Rest till the trump shall call thee from that sleep,
> Oh, brave, beloved ones, farewell, farewell.[59]

The image of the men as preserved sleepers is further bolstered by the often-noted links between Scott and the fictional figure of Peter Pan, a boy who does not age. Peter Pan's creator, J. M. Barrie, was a close friend of Scott and godfather to his son Peter, who was named after Barrie's character. Barrie himself made the connection between Scott's body and eternal youth explicit in a 1922 address, 'Courage':

> When I think of Scott I remember the strange Alpine story of the youth who fell down a glacier and was lost, and of how a scientific companion, one of several who accompanied him, all young, computed that the body would again appear at a certain date and place many years afterwards. When that time came round some of the survivors returned to the glacier to see if the prediction would be fulfilled; all old men now; and the body reappeared as young as on the day he left them. So Scott and his comrades emerge out of the white immensities always young.[60]

The obvious point of comparison in the context of Barrie's address is the courage of the young men lost in the war just past, and his use of the present tense in the final line of this passage emphasizes that the explorer, like the fallen youth of the war, is immortalized in memory. While the bodies of those young soldiers decayed like any others, however, Scott's figural preservation is underscored by his literal one. Similarly, the common euphemism of death-as-sleep takes on a certain materiality when applied to bodies preserved by ice.

In this sense, Scott's legend parallels that of other sleeping – and hence time-travelling – heroes. Bud Foote, in an analysis of time-travel stories, observes that the device of 'The Long Sleep' is 'reserved for cultural heroes': 'The mythic landscape of Europe is littered with Arthurs, Barbarossas, and Karageorges, all sleeping up in caves until their peoples shall have need of them'. In the First World War, Foote notes, there was a widely circulated story of 'the appearance of a band of King Arthur's knights at a crucial moment for the English forces on the Western front'.[61] Scott slots readily into this pantheon of slumbering heroes: he too provided a motivating example for British troops;[62] his party's deeds were often celebrated in the language of chivalry;[63] and (along with Oates) he has come to symbolize the last gasp of a certain type of British masculinity: one characterized by courage, self-sacrifice and gallantry.

While the myth of the sleeping hero is a conservative, comforting one, it takes on disquieting resonances when literalized in an explorer's frozen corpse. The uncanniness of Scott's preserved body is the central focus of Jane Yolen and Robert J. Harris's short story 'Requiem Antarctica' (2000), discussed in Chapter 2. In this story, the expedition surgeon Atkinson

reports on his death bed that when he entered the tent of Scott, Wilson and Bowers, he found a letter from Scott providing an unexpected piece of information: he is a vampire, and can only stop his bloodthirsty activities by freezing himself. Atkinson explains to his confessor:

> What haunts me most is this … By his own testimony Scott cannot truly die. He merely sleeps beneath the Antarctic ice, his thirst dormant. But what climatic changes might occur in millennia yet to come? In some distant age, the polar ice melted, might he not rise again to haunt an unrecognizable world, to feed a thirst grown gigantic over a thousand frozen centuries?[64]

The threat of rising sea levels and flooded cities has nothing on this spectre of the voracious undead explorer. This vampiric Scott merges into Campbell's Thing rather than King Arthur: not the victorious triumph of the sleeping hero, but the return of the repressed.

The repressed returns with some vengeance in an Antarctic science fiction thriller published around the same time as 'Requiem Antarctica', Scott Browning's *Searchers* (2001). Browning's narrative centres on the mysterious disappearance of a fictional Antarctic expedition of 1909 led by Robert Talon, who believed that the South Magnetic Pole held the secret of time travel. The frozen body of one of Talon's men is discovered by scientists near McMurdo station in the late twentieth century. This find provokes two antagonistic brothers to continue the search for the Antarctic time tunnel (now understood as a 'worm hole'), only to discover that they themselves were members of the original expedition. The fragmented childhood memories that torment them belong to the nineteenth century, and their true origins lie much further in the past:

> As if unlocked by the words themselves, the crude foundations, long-abandoned, buried under the silencing ice, became whole again in Jared's mind … he stared at the scene, knowing finally the truth of who he was. It's what had drawn him to Antarctica to seek the origins of man, digging for bones in the hard ice, never realizing it was his own origins he sought. This place in the shadow of the foothills, in ancient Antarctica, had been a refuge for his family.

Before their adventures in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the reader learns, the time-travelling brothers belonged to a group of refugees from a dystopian future earth who found shelter in prehistoric Antarctica. The brothers' Antarctic journey provokes colliding visions of past, present and future that eventually leave one dead and the other his reluctant killer. The latter demands that the time tunnel be buried along with his brother's body: 'The world isn't ready for this place'.[65]

Where in these cases an explorer's material body sets a story in train, for another contemporary science fiction writer, Brenda Clough, the absence of a body provides the central conceit. In her short stories 'May Be Some Time' (2001) and 'Tiptoe, on a Fence Post' (2002) – later incorporated into her novel, *Revise the World*, 2010 – Clough explores a scenario in which Oates's parting phrase becomes literal truth rather than stylish understatement. Her narrative takes up the explorer's story where it usually ends, with his famous exit from the tent. Following a brief initial period of suffering, he falls into a warm sleep, waking again 'after some unknowable time'. To his consternation, he learns that he has been brought 133 years into the future. His rescuers have chosen him as a guinea pig to test their time-travel technology. Oates is uniquely qualified for such a test, they explain: his otherwise certain death renders his irreversible removal to a future time morally justifiable. Thanks to Scott's diary, Oates's body can be accurately located in space and time, 'on the 80th parallel on March 16th, 1912'; yet the fact that it was never found, and the sterile environment in which it lies, means that no alteration in events can be caused by its absence.[66] Safely in the future, Oates is able to read over the myriad accounts of the expedition and see his own legend, as well as Scott's, in the making. Oates's trials, however, are not over. Like Mawson's men fearing the 'evolution of women', he is confronted with social changes that he finds disturbing and inexplicable: 'Captain Titus Oates considered that time travel and Antarctic exploration were not dissimilar activities. In both, the traveler leaped out into the unknown, to master it or die'.[67] Facing the future, the narrative implies, requires at least as much courage as facing the Antarctic elements.

While science fiction writers speculate playfully on the fate of Antarctic explorers' frozen bodies, realist novelists tend to limit themselves to preserved artefacts, which act as metonyms for the expedition members themselves. A common focus is the historic huts of the Ross Sea region, frozen like their erstwhile occupants in a kind of cryonic slumber.[68] A visit to Scott's hut at Cape Evans provides one of the climaxes of Arthur's *Antarctic Navigation*. The narrator, Morgan, walks into the hut for the first time uttering a casual greeting to Scott's men, as if (echoing Oates) she has 'just stepped outside for five or ten minutes to attend to some task on the beach'. While the preserving powers of ice might slow down the process of decay and time along with it, to the external observer the effect is the opposite: lack of change makes the years between past and present appear to shrink to nothing. It is 1990, but all of Morgan's 'sense data' suggest that 'the hut had been inhabited *recently*, no more than a few

years ago'. She reflects that in Antarctica 'Nothing degrades, everything remains, and the cold preserves things with such veracity that to go to the Ice is to travel through time in the only way we humans can yet accomplish that'. The years between the hut's erection and her visit collapse, and the hut becomes like one of the 'lost races' described previously, relegated to the past: 'It had missed the twentieth century, remained almost literally in the century's second decade'.[69]

The typicality of this kind of reaction to Heroic-Era huts is deftly and playfully encapsulated in a recent poem by Bill Manhire, 'Visiting Mr Shackleton'. The short poem is entirely composed of comments written in the visitors' book kept in Shackleton's hut at Cape Royds, which Manhire himself visited in early 1998:

> Cool! Wow! Beautiful! Awesome!
> Like going back in time.
> Amazing! Historic! Finally
> I am truly blessed.
>
> Wow! History! Fantastic!
> Wonderfully kept.
> Shackleton's the man!
> Like going back in time.
>
> Wow! Cool! Historic! Yo!
> Awesome! Privileged. Unreal!
> And Thank you, God. And Happy
> Birthday, Dad. And Thailand.

Manhire has pointed out that the last entry came from a confused tourist who accidentally wrote his or her country of origin in the comments column.[70] But there is consensus rather than confusion among the visitors when it comes to identifying the hut's temporal status. The repeated line 'Like going back in time' among the predictable superlatives turns the hut into a time machine. It acts as a direct conduit to a specific period in Antarctic history: the Heroic Era of exploration. It is to this era, more than any other, that Antarctic narratives, as well as tourists, wish to return.

LAND OF THE ETERNAL RETURN

One of the familiar conceits of time-travel fiction is the repeating time loop: in this narrative scenario, a time traveller is forced to experience the same events over and over again. The film *Groundhog Day* is probably the best-known example. The time loop, as Gary Westfahl has suggested,

acts as 'a powerful metaphor for the ways that people can trap themselves in repetitive cycles, making the same bad decisions over and over again, creating the sense that they are constantly moving but getting nowhere'.[71] Some critics argue that Antarctic fictions are caught in such a time loop, compelled to reiterate the famous stories of the Heroic Era. As noted in the introduction, Stephen Pyne goes so far as to claim that mainstream literature has never 'moved beyond' Scott's story in particular – that this story has 'paralyzed serious literary treatment of Antarctica'.[72] Pyne wrote this in the mid-1980s, and the diverse fictions examined throughout this book should be enough to show that his observation, if valid at the time, is no longer accurate. As outlined in Chapter 3, however, the role of the central stories of the Heroic Era – the Winter Journey, the 'race to the Pole', the crushing of the *Endurance* – in shaping later Antarctic narratives is undeniable. These stories are told over and over, not only by historians but also by poets and creative writers.

And retelling is not enough. The epic journeys of the Heroic Era continue to be physically re-enacted. Most prominent are re-enactments by adventurers, such as Roger Mear and Robert Swan, who re-traced Scott's polar journey, Arved Fuchs, who used a replica boat to repeat Shackleton's famous voyage to South Georgia and Tim Jarvis who recreated (as best he could) Mawson's epic solo sledging journey of 1912–13. Ironically but unsurprisingly, these repeated journeys themselves became the originals for books written by the adventurers: *In the Footsteps of Scott* (1987), *In Shackleton's Wake* (2001) and *Mawson: Life and Death in Antarctica* (2008). Scaled-down versions of these journeys of homage are also available to tourists, who can take Antarctic cruises marketed as following the 'footsteps of' Scott, Shackleton and Mawson. The Antarctic adventure tours available in the near-future world of Kim Stanley Robinson's *Antarctica* (1997) satirize this trend. On a break from leading a group repeating Bowers, Wilson and Cherry-Garrard's 'Winter Journey', the tour guides discuss their previous 'gig[s]' with tour companies such as 'Footsteps Unlimited', 'Classic Expeditions of the Past' and 'Condemned to Repeat It'. They even guide tourists in the footsteps of fictional expeditions, such as the all-woman journey to the Pole in Ursula Le Guin's short story 'Sur' (1982; itself a repetition-with-a-difference of the stories of Scott and Amundsen).[73] The beauty of Robinson's satire is that it exaggerates the present state of affairs only slightly. The Heroic Era represents a liminal period during which Antarctica was known but not yet explored, and as the continent is increasingly de-exoticized through tourism and scientific investigation, this moment of first contact exerts a strong imaginative pull.

This continual repetition of Heroic-Era exploration narratives could be understood as a local manifestation of the global postmodern condition diagnosed by Fredric Jameson, in which 'we are condemned to seek History by way of our own … simulacra of that history'.[74] More specific interpretations, however, are also possible. Glasberg has 'pathologized' the multiple re-enactments of polar journeys as a form of 'repetition compulsion'. Noting that this condition is 'understood as being generated by a need to confront or complete a traumatic event', she suggests it is the 'traumatic humanlessness' of Antarctica that is the source of humanity's urge to 'endlessly repeat its "final" arrivals in Antarctica'. This in turn points, for Glasberg, to Antarctica's possible future as 'the ecologically devastated and plundered nature preserve'.[75]

Repetition has in some senses been part of the Antarctic imaginative experience from the beginning: Coleridge's ancient mariner, wandering the earth confessing his crime, is one of literature's most prominent obsessive compulsives. Moreover, the mariner is a kind of time traveller; there are hints that he is not merely old but immortal, doomed to tell his tale indefinitely in an attempt to receive forgiveness. As suggested in Chapter 2, his 'rime' is similarly ambiguous: as a rhyme, it signals repetition and rhythm, but Coleridge's archaic spelling also indicates frost – a frozen tale imprisoning its teller. The mariner's original trauma is the shooting of an albatross in the Antarctic regions, and this much-analysed incident can be interpreted as an act of environmental destruction – as a way of symbolically gaining violent mastery over an environment outside the ordinary reach of human control.[76] In the mariner's case, therefore, ecological devastation and traumatic humanlessness are tied together as the source of an original guilt that can never finally be expunged. If this is the symbolic significance the Antarctic regions held for Coleridge at the turn of the nineteenth century, when the continent was not yet a confirmed reality, it is not surprising that its actual invasion by humans at the turn of the twentieth has produced a similar compulsion to re-tell and repeat its invasion narratives.

The Freudian interpretation of repetition as a response to past trauma, however, is not the only one available; equally relevant in this context is Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of the refrain, outlined in *A Thousand Plateaus*. For Deleuze and Guattari, the refrain is a repeated sound or action that both asserts territorial occupation – like the bird which 'sings to mark its territory' – and also provides a sense of safety and familiarity – like 'a child in the dark, gripped with fear, [who] comforts himself by singing'.[77] Re-enactments of the Heroic-Era journeys can

be understood as refrains, rhythmic repetitions that are both reassuringly familiar and politically strategic in their re-assertion of territorial claims. In this sense, too, repetition can be seen as a response to the humanlessness of the continent: with no indigenous inhabitants, and no permanent occupants, the continent remains, as Glasberg remarks,[78] symbolically unclaimed, and its claiming must be symbolically reiterated. Understood thus, the continual return to the Heroic Era through both fictional and physical methods is less an attempt to assuage past guilt than a warding off of future instability.

THE ICE CORE: TIME FUTURE

Thinking about future time in Antarctica brings a new perspective to the cryonic power of ice. While the preservation of historic huts and significant artefacts is welcomed, the preservation of other materials – rubbish tips, human waste, discarded weather balloons – is considered an environmental hazard.[79] As Darrieussecq's character Pete Tomson observes, picking up a cigarette butt, 'It takes five hundred years for a filter to degrade in a reasonably humid climate, so you can imagine that it will be preserved for all eternity here'.[80] This presumes that the ice itself will be preserved for all eternity. Fictions which figure Antarctica as frozen in time refuse to acknowledge that the continent, like the rest of the world, is subject to change, and that humanity's own actions are in all likelihood rapidly accelerating this change.

In this context, it is important to realize that the Antarctic ice, which in some narratives is a means of collapsing the distance between present and past, can also act as a way to materially represent the plodding years. In John Wyndham's collection of science fiction short stories, *The Seeds of Time* (1956), an analogy is drawn between the freezing of the sea and the passage of time: 'The present was represented by the leading edge of the ice, gradually building up and advancing. Behind it was the solid ice that represented the past: in front, the still fluid water represented the future'.[81] If time could have a physical representation, ice, it seems, would come closest. Tipped sideways, so that the accumulation of ice is vertical rather than horizontal, Wyndham's analogy takes on scientific as well as poetic meaning. As paleoclimatologist Richard Alley explains in his aptly titled book *The Two Mile Time Machine: Ice Cores, Abrupt Climate Change, and Our Future*, glaciers and ice sheets contain chemicals that can be analysed to understand past climatic conditions; they become, in Alley's phrase, 'icy archives'. Like the rings of a tree trunk, but on a far greater scale, a

vertical cross-section of Antarctica's kilometres of ice provides scientists with a systematic record of the events of past aeons. Millions of years are spatially represented in its layers. This massive volume of data is compressed by scientists into the more manageable form of ice cores – narrow cylinders of ice drilled up from the continent and stored in sections for analysis: 'long tubes of raw, blue, deep-frozen time', to borrow a phrase from Darrieussecq's *White*.[82] While the ice core solidifies time past, it also reflects on what is to come, enabling scientists to contextualize current climate change and make more accurate predictions.

Thus cryonics makes Antarctica a space about time future as well as time past. It is a global miner's canary, foretelling possible catastrophes ahead. Scott's expedition members at the start of the twentieth century anticipated this: one creative piece in the *South Polar Times* – a science fiction twist on the much-beloved 'old manuscript' genre – warns of the dangers of ignoring signs of climate change. Entitled 'Fragments of a Manuscript Found by the People of Sirius When They Visited the Earth During the Exploration of the Solar System' and written by the expedition meteorologist George Simpson, it records in retrospect the catastrophic downfall of humankind. The twentieth century, according to the manuscript's now-dead narrator, was characterized by 'luxury and self-indulgence', low birth rates and an increasing emphasis on life-prolonging technologies. With the discovery of an elixir of life, the production of which required the low temperatures of Antarctica, McMurdo Sound (the location of Scott's base) became the 'centre of the world'. Eventually, however, rising temperatures and melting ice sheets meant the elixir became unavailable. The humans of the future consulted the records of Scott's expedition, and learned that 'The greatest authority, the Physiographer [Griffith Taylor] … took for granted that ice age succeeded tropical age, and tropical age succeeded ice age'. They realized, too late, that climate does not remain stable; the narrator's dying thoughts are of 'the folly which neglected the teachings of the Scientists of the British Antarctic Expedition 1910–1912'.[83] Like the other 'old manuscripts' in the *South Polar Times*, the article is comic and affectionately mocking, but if its dire climate predictions had little serious edge at the time, they appear considerably more sobering a hundred years later.

For writers of realist narratives, who prefer not to resort to devices such as manuscripts found by future alien visitors, the time intervals involved in climate-change research make this topic a difficult one to explore. Richard Kerridge, in an analysis of the eco-thriller genre, argues that one of the problems of using realist fiction to represent environmental issues is

realism's focus on individual lives and perceptions, which is incompatible with the large – or minute – timescales on which environmental processes often occur.[84] Climate-change narratives function not on human time but on what John Urry has tellingly termed 'glacial time'. Glacial time offers resistance to the 'instantaneous time' so ubiquitous in postmodernity, and 'seeks to slow down time to "nature's speed"'; it 'imagin[es] what will happen over many generations'.[85] The ice core, which condenses many years of data into manageable sections, is a powerful symbol of glacial time, and hence an appealingly concrete focus for climate-change narratives. The disaster film *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004), the title of which evokes both urgency and indefiniteness, focusses on an ice core researcher, paleoclimatologist Jack Hall. The movie opens with Hall and his colleagues drilling on the Larsen B ice shelf in the Antarctic Peninsula, which dramatically breaks off while they are in the process. This confirms what Hall's ice core data has been indicating – a new ice age – but his warnings come too late to reverse the trend of global warming and prevent catastrophe.

If Antarctica provides the first warning of impending disaster in recent visions of future ecological devastation, it also frequently acts as a last refuge in these scenarios. In Chapter 2, I mentioned texts in which Antarctica becomes the sole safe haven in a virus-infected world, such as the Japanese film *Fukkatsu no hi* (1980, or *Virus*, 1990) and Kevin Brockmeier's *Brief History of the Dead* (2006). Tess Williams's *Map of Power* (1996) describes a similar scenario, a post-apocalyptic earth in which nuclear fallout and global warming have driven survivors down to the far south, which is now warm enough to sustain a marginal, nomadic, tribal society. These visions of the continent as a place of final resort are not limited to novelists and film makers. When, in 2006, Stephen Hawking suggested that humanity needed to colonize space in case the earth were rendered uninhabitable, fellow cosmologist Alan Guth proposed the more straightforward solution of an underground hideout in Antarctica[86] – unaware, presumably, that it would need to be shared with dinosaurs, shoggoths and myriad other manifestations of human anxieties. For climatologists, cosmologists and novelists alike, the weight of the future presses down upon the Antarctic continent like countless tonnes of ice.

The narratives discussed here are united in their representation of Antarctica as a place offering an alternative to everyday, socialized clock-time. This quality is central to its attraction as both a wilderness reserve and a tourist destination. The form of Antarctica's alternative time-sense, however, mutates along with the continent. Some Antarctic temporalities

are closely tied to the preoccupation of a historical period, as in the lost-world narratives of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; others persist across a range of texts over hundreds of years. It is better, then, to speak of a cluster of related and intersecting Antarctic chronotopes than to demand that the continent tie together space and time in a consistent, singular manner. Ultimately, perhaps, the fascination of Antarctica lies in its contradictions: it is a place of compressed time and extended time; haunted by monsters from the past and threatened by its own prophesies of the future; ancient and primeval, but forever young, pristine and wrinkle-free.

Coda

One of the most intriguing uses of Antarctica in recent literature occurs in Michael Chabon's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* (2000). The novel focusses on the experiences of Joe Kavalier, a Jewish refugee from Nazi-occupied Prague, and his New York cousin Sammy Clay, who together devise a comic-book series *The Escapist* – its superhero protagonist an alter ego for Joe, who as a boy learned the techniques of the escape artist. One of the novel's six parts takes place in Antarctica. Joe, unable to cope with his brother's death in a torpedoed ship and the uncertainty of his family's wartime fate, attempts suicide and then enlists in the navy, leaving behind his devastated and (unbeknownst to him) pregnant lover, Rosa. What looks like a run towards action is also an escape, something that is ironically literalized when Joe is stationed in Antarctica, enduring the tedium of a polar season rather than the horror of battle.

In both his novels and essays, Chabon strives to deconstruct the division between genre fiction and the literary novel, between 'escapism' and serious reading. As a devotee of pulp science fiction, he would be aware of Antarctica as a site of ancient aliens, lost races and Nazi bases. Indeed, the Antarctic section of *Kavalier and Clay* recalls (for aficionados of far southern fiction) a very forgettable fantasy entitled *The Man Who Missed the War* (1945), by bestselling novelist Dennis Wheatley, in which a wartime protagonist finds himself in Antarctica, at the furthest periphery of the conflict, only to discover that he is actually in the thick of it.[1] Yet Chabon's narrative is anchored in Antarctic reality, drawing especially on Richard Byrd's expeditions. Joe's Antarctic experience is initially limited to 'wasting time or doing something that pretended not to be wasting time or, in sober, intense bursts, being absorbed in some unavoidable and urgent business of repair, analysis, planning or navy discipline'. He does so in a Little-America-style base along with twenty-one other men, who spend their time playing parlour games at the far edges of the world during a time of intense conflict. They are in Antarctica to maintain an American

presence, to 'monitor the airwaves for U-boat transmissions', and to warn of any actual German encroachments on Antarctic terrain.[2] At the edges of this credible scenario,[3] however, the shadow of the pulp tradition remains: despite their mundane existence, the expedition members sense 'a presence, something struggling to be born out of the winds, the darkness, the looming towers and jagged teeth of the ice. The hair on the back of the neck stood erect and you ran, in spite of yourself, ribs ringing with panic, certain as a child running up the cellar stairs that something very bad was after you'. For Joe, Antarctica holds a further horror as 'the symbol, the embodiment, the blank unmeaning heart of his impotence in this war'.[4]

Joe's situation changes when all but one of his companions are killed, not because of 'some Nazi superweapon', but carbon monoxide poisoning – a hazard of early Antarctic bases, and one of which Byrd himself was nearly a victim, as he recounts in *Alone* (1938). Trawling the airwaves for any indication of the fate of his family, Joe detects a German broadcast of apparently local origin and concludes 'there were Germans on the Ice', on the coast of Queen Maud Land.[5] Chabon draws here on one tenacious modern Antarctic speculation: persistent (but unfounded) rumours of a Nazi wartime base on the continent. Discovering that the source of this broadcast, a German geologist, has also lost his companions and is alone in the station, and full of revenge on behalf of his lost family, Joe makes no report to naval authorities but determines to kill the German himself. This is yet another move towards action that is actually an escape, as Joe sends a threat-cum-warning to the German that effectively renders his undertaking a suicide mission. After a hazardous air journey, during which his remaining companion succumbs to appendicitis, he arrives at the German base.

What ensues is a tragic farce of changed motives, misunderstood moves and unrecognized alliances. When Joe exits the aircraft and simply walks towards his enemy, the German geologist, himself a 'peaceful and scholarly man' who 'deplored violence, and … liked and admired Americans' but is understandably defensive, shoots him in the shoulder. Joe smiles, greets him cheerfully in German and reaches for his own gun. The geologist, lurching for the weapon, does not realize until too late that Joe's intention was to toss it aside. In the ensuing scuffle the gun goes off and the German dies, but not before feeling regret that he has shot the one other man on the continent, a place in which (he presciently believed) 'the only hope for survival … was friendly cooperation'.[6]

Joe is more devastated by this man's death than any other event of his sorrow-strewn life. He realizes that 'in seeking revenge, he had allied

himself with the Ice, with the interminable white topography, with the sawteeth and crevasses of death'.[7] After killing the geologist, the wounded Joe manages to hike ten miles to a hut abandoned by the 1911–13 Filchner expedition. This section of the novel ends by describing tourist visits to the preserved hut (complete with Joe's enigmatic image of the Escapist carved into a desk), visits that were abruptly ended in 1977 when part of the Filchner ice shelf calved away, taking with it the hut and the (fictional) Nazi base. But the Ice not only signifies death, impotence and loss in the narrative; Joe's time in Antarctica is also transformative. The narrator comments that '... few among the wives and families of the men who returned from a winter on the Ice would have said that what they got back was identical to what they had sent down there'.[8] In the pared-down context that only Antarctica can offer, Joe exhausts his urge for revenge. In the sixth and final part of the novel, he begins to build a life with Rosa and his son.

What is striking about Chabon's Antarctica is that it deploys so many of the narrative patterns established by earlier fiction. In drawing its atmosphere and several incidents from Byrd's accounts, it re-writes exploration fiction. In its evocation of a brooding presence in the continent, and its exploitation of the notion of a secret Nazi base, it touches on both the gothic and speculative modes of Antarctic literature. The narrative arc, in which an attempted escape from the self – an inability to deal with past traumas – becomes a journey into and transformation of that self, links *Kavalier and Clay* with the contemporary realist fiction discussed in Chapter 5. Familiar too, from Chapter 6 and elsewhere, are the future visions – the geologist's dream of national cooperation, the preserved hut, the calving off of the berg.

The result should be an incongruous melange of clichés. In some contemporary Antarctic fiction, this is what the reader finds. Chabon's novel, however, shows that the literary traditions developed over the last several hundred years can still be deployed in fresh and nuanced ways. Antarctic fiction is by no means exhausted; and my book does not mean to exhaust Antarctic fiction. I have investigated only a handful of the narrative veins that run through the literature of the far south; many more remain to be explored. It is only by identifying these imaginative frames that we can contextualize and critique our present understandings of the continent. For while there is bedrock beneath the kilometres of ice that slowly slide across the continent, the layers of narrative it has accumulated do not rest upon anything so enduring: Antarctica's meaning for humans lies in the stories we tell about it.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1 Rowland, 'Antarctica'.
2 Garner, 'Adrift', 18.
3 Pyne, *The Ice*, 151, 166.
4 Darrieussecq, *White*, 21.
5 In her *Antarctic Dictionary*, Bernadette Hince requires nearly 400 pages to record the specialized vocabulary now associated with Antarctica. It includes familiar words used in specific Antarctic contexts (such as 'oasis') and words not found in other dictionaries (such as the infamous 'snotsicle').
6 The five members of the party led by Robert F. Scott in 1911–12 died on their return from the South Pole. The announcement of their deaths in early 1913 produced a public outpouring of grief in Britain. Some of the literary responses to the tragedy are discussed in Chapter 3.
7 Pyne, *The Ice*, 151–6, 168, 201.
8 'Nunatak' (a term transplanted from the Arctic) refers to 'A rocky outcrop or mountain peak sticking up from an ice-sheet' (Hince, *Antarctic Dictionary*, 243).
9 Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 41. See Neel, 'Photography of Antarctica', for an analysis of this and other allusions to Antarctic expedition leaders in Woolf's novel.
10 Melville, *Moby-Dick, or, The Whale*, 206–7, 211. See Lenz for a discussion of Melville's novel in the context of Antarctic fiction (*Poetics of the Antarctic*, 89–92).
11 Kushner, *Angels in America, Part Two*, 126–8.
12 Pynchon, *V*, 250, 241. As David Cowart notes, the Antarctic is a 'recurrent symbol' in Pynchon's fiction, 'redolent of absolute loneliness and emptiness' (*Thomas Pynchon*, 20).
13 John Geiger's book *The Third Man Factor* (37–9) deals with debates about the authenticity of the experience Shackleton recounts, arguing against the claim that the episode is 'a fictional embellishment'.
14 Ramsey, '"The Waste Land" and Shackleton', 44–5.
15 Schwarz, *Broken Images*, 219.
16 Karge's play was adapted as a television film of the same name in 1989, with the action shifted to Edinburgh.

17 Remshardt, 'Conquering the South Pole', 319.
18 Wheat, 'Antarctica', 132.
19 The category romances Daphne Clair's *Frozen Heart* (1980), Laurie Paige's *South of the Sun* (1984) and Kathy Clark's *Groom Unknown* (1994) take place in Antarctica; Liz Maverick's *Adventures of an Ice Princess* (2002) is far southern chick-lit; the continent features in Richard Calder's cyberpunk novel *Cythera* (1998); and the Australian production *Brass Monkeys* (1983) is a sit-com set in an Antarctic station.
20 'Has there ever been a comics hero who has roamed as far afield as The Ghost Who Walks?' asks the publisher of Lee Falk's Phantom adventure *Mission to Antarctica* in a note to the text. The answer is: yes, quite a number.
21 Is 'Antarctic literature' set in or engaged with the continent itself, or the region within the South Polar circle, or (in accordance with the Antarctic Treaty) below sixty degrees south, or even (in accordance with the Convention on the Conservation of Marine Living Resources) below the Antarctic convergence? Problems arise when a text is set on a fictional or non-identified island that is not assigned a particular latitude; the critic is put in the odd position of trying to decide whether a non-existent location is indeed Antarctic. In this book, I have tried to keep the body of literature examined fairly tight without being rigid – most texts deal with the continent or the waters immediately surrounding it. If a subantarctic text seems to have an important relationship with the corpus of Antarctic literature, however, I have included it in my discussion.
22 The 'nautical drama', entitled *The South Polar Expedition*, played to a packed house at the Royal Victorian Theatre in Hobart, Tasmania, on 5 May 1841 (an announcement can be found in the *Hobart Town Advertiser*, 4 May 1841, and an excerpt was published in the same newspaper three days later); an article in the Tasmanian *Colonial Times* of 11 May 1841 mentions the presence of 'sailors in the pit belonging to those ships' (2). The utopia is Frank Cowan's *Revi-Lona*, and the musical is *Australis; or, the City of Zero*, both discussed in Chapter 1. Explorers' own literary efforts, including Hurley's, are dealt with in Chapter 4; more details of the opera, entitled *Das Opfer* (*The Sacrifice*), can be found in Chapter 3.
23 The bibliographies include those established by Fauno Cordes, Laura Kay and myself (details of all three are in the bibliography to this book). The conferences include 'Imagining Antarctica' (University of Canterbury, Christchurch, September 2008) and 'Antarctic Visions' (University of Tasmania, Hobart, June 2010). Essays based on selected presentations from these two conferences are collected in Crane, Leane and Williams (eds), *Imagining Antarctica: Cultural Perspectives on the Southern Continent*.
24 Manhire's title is at least partly ironic, borrowed from a 'very bad' novel by Beall Cunningham (*Wide White Page*, 19).
25 Pyne, *The Ice*, 201.
26 Diski, *Skating to Antarctica*, 6.
27 Ibid., 7.
28 'Arts and Science Work Together in Antarctica – British Antarctic Survey and Arts Council of England Fellowships'. Press release available online at the

British Antarctic Survey website: www.antarctica.ac.uk/press/press_releases/press_release.php?id=20.

29 Resolution 2 (1996) – ATCM XX, Utrecht.

30 Critics who have investigated the term include Rosamunde Codling, 'Wilderness and Aesthetic Values', and Rupert Summerson and Ian D. Bishop, 'Aesthetic Value in Antarctica: Beautiful or Sublime?'

31 Pyne, *The Ice*, 201.

32 'Artists and Writers Program'. Doc. No. NSF 08–552. National Science Foundation, Office of Polar Programs, Division of Antarctic Sciences, 10. Available online via www.nsf.gov/publications/.

33 Fearnley, *Degrees of Separation*, 63–4.

34 See e.g. Manhire, *Wide White Page*, 16.

35 Scott, *Journals*, 71, 376.

36 Moss, *Scott's Last Biscuit*, 215.

37 See e.g. Brown, 'Boyd's Dante', 653–4.

38 Rosner, 'Gender Degree Zero', 7.

39 Wheeler, *Terra Incognita*, 75.

40 In addition to those specifically mentioned in this introduction, see publications by critics such as Bloom, Collis, Dodds, Farley, Glasberg, Griffiths, Hains, Rosner, Suskind, Wylie and Yusoff cited in the bibliography.

41 Here, and elsewhere throughout this book unless otherwise stated, the emphasis is original.

42 Jameson, 'World Reduction', 221–3.

43 D. H. Lawrence evokes this sense of the Antarctic when he writes in a letter to Edward Garnett in early 1913, 'It always frightens me how life gets reduced down and down to fewer elements the further one goes: Captain Scott had cold, hunger, and death' (quoted in Turner, 'Reducing Down', 15). See Turner for a contextualization of the comment.

44 'Sastrugi' refers to 'Ridges of snow (becoming ice) formed and hardened by the wind, and indicating the prevailing wind because they run parallel to this' (Hince, *Antarctic Dictionary*, 297).

45 Tuan, 'Desert and Ice', 140, 154, 155.

46 Ibid., 155.

47 Haynes, *Seeking the Centre*, 30.

48 Loomis, "The Arctic Sublime', 112.

49 Ibid., 110.

50 Cordes, 'Bibliographical Tour', 2030.

51 See, for example, William Kingston's boys' adventure novel, *At the South Pole.*

52 Jackson, *Fantasy*, 100; Seed, 'Breaking the Bounds', 152; Pinsky, *Future Present*, 96; Sloan, 'The Self and Self-less', 180.

53 Quoted in Hince, *Antarctic Dictionary*, vii.

54 Adebayo, *Moj of the Antarctic*, 154.

55 Benjamin, *Quick, Before It Melts*, 78.

56 Beck and Dodds, 'Why Study Antarctica?' 45–6.

57 McGonigal and Woodworth, *Antarctica*, 506, 507.

58 Bellow, *More Die of Heartbreak*, 163–4.

59 Rosner, 'Gender and Polar Studies', 489–90.
60 Davidson, *The Idea of North*, 19.
61 Murray and Marston, *Antarctic Days*, xix.
62 Kay's online bibliography of polar genre fiction suggests that Antarctic novels are now appearing at the rate of fifteen or twenty per year.
63 Pyne, *The Ice*, 168, 154.
64 Scott's journals in particular have received attention from critics such as Bloom, Brazzelli, Wylie and Moss. Narratives by Shackleton and Amundsen have also begun to attract interest – see e.g. Farley, 'By Endurance We Conquer'; Teorey, 'Sir Ernest Shackleton's Miraculous Escape'; and Irving, 'Amundsen's Antarctica'.
65 Dorfman, *Nanny*, 56.
66 Analyses of Antarctic literature which go beyond texts in English include: Marx, *Wege ins Eis* (which extracts both North and South Polar material); Essigmann, 'Ein kleiner schwarzer Punkt'; Munz-Krines, *Expeditionen ins Eis*; and Guijarro Ceballos, *Melancolía del hielo*. Guijarro Ceballos, in addition to discussing well-known Antarctic tales by such authors as Poe, Verne, Lovecraft, Le Guin and Robinson, looks at works in Spanish that are less familiar to English-speaking readerships. Munz-Krines examines fictional re-workings of actual polar exploration narratives (both north and south). Essigmann focusses on the treatment of Antarctica and ice in German prose works by Expressionist-era authors such as Georg Heym, Robert Musil, Egmont Colerus and Franz Kafka. She argues that '[e]xpressionist discontent' led to dystopian responses to the far south which 'explored abstract interpretations of the South Pole, not as a place of excitement and adventure, but rather as a journey into philosophical inner ice in the era of Modernism' (ii). This contrasts with Pyne's conclusion that modernist writers were largely uninterested in the Antarctic (*The Ice*, 156).
67 This term (or Heroic Period or Heroic Age) refers to the time when Antarctica was explored primarily by foot, ski and dog sledge; it corresponds roughly to the years from the mid-1890s to the early 1920s, although dates vary from text to text. It is common to preface the term with 'so-called', or to place it in scare quotes, to signal distance from its valorization of a specific, subjective view (even the earliest use of the term cited in Hince's *Antarctic Dictionary* (167), from 1957, uses quotation marks). While recognizing the evident problems with the term, I have employed it in this book because its periodization is useful and familiar. For readability, I have dropped the quotation marks on most subsequent occasions.

1. SPECULATIVE VISIONS OF THE SOUTH POLAR REGIONS

1 Kay's online bibliography of polar genre fiction provides a very useful list of these texts, tagged with symbols (an alien, a swastika, etc.) indicating their thematic concerns. I have made ample use of it in this chapter.
2 Manhire, 'Introduction', 25.

3 Email communication to author, 11 May 2001.
4 Bailey, *Drifting,* 48, 160, 190.
5 Batchelor, *Birth of the People's Republic*, 151, 210–12.
6 Cormick, 'Land of Ice', 68. Cormick's 'Tupia' is an amalgam of two historical Raiatean men: Tupaia, who travelled on Cook's first voyage, and Omai (Mai), who travelled on his second (Antarctic) and third voyages.
7 Wilbert, *Folk Literature of the Selknam Indians*, 141; Lothrop, *The Indians of Tierra Del Fuego*, 103.
8 Wilbert, *Folk Literature of the Yamana Indians*, 25–6.
9 Smith, 'Hawaiki', 11. *Pia*, Smith explains, is the arrowroot, which 'when scraped is exactly like snow'.
10 Buck, *Vikings of the Pacific*, 116–18.
11 'Nga-Iwi-O-Aotea', 43.
12 McAnergney, 'In My Mind I'm Goin' to Antarctica', 120, 123, 125.
13 McFarlane, 'Maori Associations', 5. References to the Aurora Australis can also be found in the mythologies of indigenous groups in the south-east of Australia (Howitt, *Native Tribes*, 430). Apart from an isolated reference to 'icebergs from the great southern seas' in a contemporary account of a creation myth accompanying a DVD animation ('Creation of Trowenna (Tasmania)'), I have not located any examples of other far southern imagery being incorporated into these mythologies.
14 Poe, *Pym*, 163; Kopley, 'Introduction', xxii.
15 Vogel, *Anno Domini 2000*, 119.
16 Argod, *Out of Antarctica*, 137.
17 Ibid., 311.
18 The extent to which Greek thought about the southern hemisphere was influenced by ideas of symmetry is the subject of some debate; see e.g. Stallard, 'Origins of the Idea of Antipodes', for an attack on this view. Van Duzer gives a defence in his discussion of the southern ring continent ('Cartography', n. 30).
19 Furley, Introduction and Notes, 337–41.
20 I am indebted to Paul Burton, now in the Classics and History programme at the Australian National University, for this information, and for pointing out to me the pseudo-Aristotelian status of *On the Cosmos.*
21 Furley, Introduction and Notes, 349.
22 Mawer, 'Baptism of Ice', 181.
23 Hince, *Antarctic Dictionary*, 7.
24 Mawer, 'Baptism of Ice', 180. Mawer (183) points to polar historian J. Gordon Hayes's 1928 book *Antarctica* (4–5), in which Hayes canvasses and dismisses alternatives to the 'not yet familiar' and seemingly unwieldy name that gives his book its title. 'Australia', while 'obviously correct', has been taken; names derived from those of explorers, such as Scotia, Shackletonia and Mawsonia, are not descriptive; 'Ultima' is unattractive and too closely associated with the north. 'Antarctica', Hayes notes, is 'now generally received by geographers'.
25 Stallard, 'Origins of the Idea of Antipodes', 51.

26 Wilson, *Spiritual History*, 143; Stallard, 'Origins of the Idea of Antipodes', 39.
27 Murray, 'Mapping Terra Incognita', 107.
28 Wilson, *Spiritual History*, 146.
29 Murray, 'Mapping Terra Incognita', 105.
30 Hall's work was originally published under the pseudonym 'Mercurius Britannicus'. The first English translation, entitled *The Discovery of a New World*, appeared in 1609.
31 Higginson, 'First Antarctic Voyage', 386.
32 Brown, 'Introduction', xv, xxi; Wands, 'Introduction', xlvii.
33 Brown, 'Introduction', xx–xxiii.
34 Moors, 'Imaginary Voyages', 9. Moors attributes the map to the engraver Pieter van der Keere.
35 Bentley, Review, 422.
36 Fausett, *Images*, 1.
37 See David Fausett's books *Images of the Antipodes* and *Writing the New World*.
38 Foigny, *The Southern Land, Known*, 39.
39 Fausett, *Images*, 155.
40 Hall, *Another World*, 79–81.
41 Ibid., 82–4.
42 Moors, 'Imaginary Voyages', 9.
43 Paltock, *Peter Wilkins*, 67, 69, 91–2, 102, 130, 254. It was thought at the time that the Antarctic regions were perpetually dim (Fitting, *Subterranean Worlds*, 199).
44 The edition in question is a 1979 facsimile produced by Review publications in Dubbo, Australia. All page references here refer to the Oxford UP edition listed in the bibliography.
45 Fausett, *Images*, 79.
46 Ibid., 73.
47 Weddell, *Voyage Towards the South Pole*, 35–6.
48 Mowat, *Polar Passion*, 39; Gurney, *Race to the White Continent*, 10, 98. The notion that there should be open water at both poles went back to Roger Bacon's thirteenth-century *Opus Maius* (Van Duzer, 'Cartography', 129).
49 Cooper was to return to the Antarctic in a much more realistic manner in his 1849 novel *The Sea Lions*, discussed later in this chapter.
50 'The Atlantis' was published serially in *The American Museum of Science, Literature and the Arts* under the name 'Peter Prospero'. See Moskowitz, Introduction, for a discussion of Poe's possible authorship of this piece.
51 Prospero, 'The Atlantis', 204.
52 Brussof, *Republic*, 8–9.
53 Manning, *Unreality in Russian Literature*, 358.
54 *Revi-Lona* is not the only example of this genre; more recent (and more explicit) contributions to 'polar porn' include Kitt Gerrard's *Midnight Tales of Torment* (1997) and Claire Thompson's *Polar Reaction* (2010) (Kay, 'Long Dark and Stormy Night', 101).
55 There is no clear consensus on the original publication date of Cowan's novel. The most readily accessible edition, a 1978 reprint by Arno Press, states that

the novel was initially published privately, and gives the date as '188-'. The action takes place in the early and mid-1880s.

56 Cowan, *Revi-Lona,* 3.
57 Ibid., 68.
58 Ibid., 106, 166.
59 McIver, *Neuroomia*, 1, 135–6, 120.
60 Spotswood, *Voyage of Will Rogers*, 23, 30.
61 Antarctic Exploration Committee, quoted in Cole, *Proposals*, 21; see also Beck and Dodds, 'Why Study Antarctica?', 43.
62 e.g. Wilson, *Spiritual History of Ice*, 144; Darrieussecq, *White*, 97–8; Glasberg, 'Refusing History', 108; Wylie, 'Earthly Poles', 260.
63 Darrieussecq, *White*, 129.
64 Dante, *Inferno*, Canto 26, 127–8.
65 Ibid., 127–42.
66 Nelson, 'Symmes Hole, or the South Polar Romance', 138–9.
67 Ibid., 145; Nelson, *Secret Life of Puppets*, 140–41.
68 Van Duzer ('Mythic Geography', 9) provides useful information about this text, including possible sources for the idea of a northern whirlpool (9). He notes that while Mercator and others believed the *Inventio fortunata*'s author to be Nicholas of King's Lynn, this is disputed (8).
69 Van Duzer, 'Cartography', 137.
70 Ibid., 125–6.
71 Godwin, *Arktos*, 107, 125.
72 The quotations come from the English translation of short sections of the novel included in Fitting, *Subterranean Worlds*, 26–8.
73 Paltrock, *Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins*, 73.
74 Epinasse and Williamson, *Australis*, 1, 11.
75 Shirley, *Mapping*, 26.
76 Van Duzer, 'Mythic Geography', 8.
77 Paltock, *Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins*, 67.
78 Examples include Poe's 'MS. Found in a Bottle' and *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*; Cowan's *Revi-Lona*; De Mille's *A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder*; Spotswood's *Voyage of Will Rogers to the South Pole*; McIver's *Neuroomia*; and Pope's *Journey to Mars*.
79 There are exceptions, such as the protagonists of *Symzonia* and *The Sea Lions*, discussed later in this chapter.
80 Chapter 2 explores the way in which a voyage to the South Pole becomes a dark journey into psychological inner space in Poe's gothic Antarctic tales.
81 See Standish, *Hollow Earth*, 12.
82 Ibid., 28–35.
83 Spufford, *I May Be Some Time*, 68. As Wijkmark notes, 'all Antarctic fictions in English from the first half of the 19th century are American' ('"One of the Most Intensely Exciting Secrets"', 9). For further discussion of the early- to mid-nineteenth-century American texts mentioned in this chapter, see his and Glasberg's PhD dissertations, as well as Lenz, *Poetics*.
84 Spufford, *I May Be Some Time*, 76

85 Critics who equate the ostensible author 'Captain Adam Seaborn' with Symmes include Nelson, *Secret Life*, 149; Seed, 'Breaking the Bounds', 177; and J. O. Bailey, 'Introduction'. Those who reject Symmes as the author include Spufford, *I May Be Some Time*, 72; and Lang and Lease, 'Authorship of *Symzonia*'. Fitting, *Subterranean Worlds*, 102–6 provides a useful summary of the debate.
86 Fitting, *Subterranean Worlds*, 104–6.
87 Cooper, *The Monikins,* 117.
88 Pynchon, *Against the Day*, 115–17.
89 Grundmann and Cavaillé, 'Simplicity in Science', 376–7, 380.
90 European Environment Agency. Environmental Terminology and Discovery Service: 'Polar Vortex'. Available online at glossary.eea.europa.eu/EEAGlossary/P/polar_vortex.
91 Erskine, *Armata*, 7. Erskine's premise recalls the Pythagorean notion of the Antichthones, 'a separate celestial body, an *alter orbis* completely distinct from our planet' below the northern hemisphere (Nelson, *Secret Life*, 146), and more specifically Margaret Cavendish's seventeenth-century utopia *Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World* (1666), in which the heroine discovers a sister planet attached to earth at the North Pole.
92 Erskine, *Armata*, 96.
93 Pope, *Journey to Mars*, 36, 81.
94 Ibid., 91.
95 In A.C. Stimson's 'The Land of Mighty Insects' (*Wonder Stories*, 1934), a race of enormous insects is found in a tropical region close to the South Pole; Jack Williamson's 'Lake of Light' (*Astounding Stories*, 1931) peoples the Antarctic with intelligent crabs; A. Hyatt Verill in 'Beyond the Pole' (*Amazing Stories*, 1926) opts for lobster/human hybrids.
96 Clarke, 'Mountains of Murkiness', 495.
97 Browning, *Searchers*, 227.
98 Defoe, *New Voyage*, 189. The narrator is right to be skeptical, as pure gold is not magnetic.
99 O'Brian, *Desolation Island*, 219.
100 Spotswood, *Voyage of Will Rogers*, 30, 39.
101 Serviss, *The Moon Metal*, 2, 8.
102 Johns, *Biggles Breaks the Silence*, 31–2.
103 The period between Cooper's two novels saw Britain, France and the United States send exploratory voyages to the Antarctic, under (respectively) James Ross, Jules-Sebastian Dumont d'Urville and Charles Wilkes. Wijkmark ('"An Intensely Exciting Secret', ch. 5) examines the ways in which 'the defining moment in the American discourse on Antarctica – the return of the U.S. Exploring Expedition – is reflected' in *The Sea Lions* (192).
104 Fausett, *Images*, 157.
105 Spotswood, *Voyage of Will Rogers*, 40.
106 Cowan, *Revi-Lona*, 3, 74.
107 Burke, *Monday at McMurdo*, vi, 161, 190–91, 158.
108 Prosser, 'Power, Control and Intrusion', 115–16.

109 See Kay's bibliography of Antarctic genre fiction, which helpfully identifies eco-thrillers and other environmentally focussed texts with a green flag.
110 Nathanson, 'The Antarctic Transformation', 722, 729.
111 The game was accessed at www.antarcticresearch.net/index.html in May 2007, but appears to have ceased operating since that time.
112 Dorfman's incident is based on fact: Chile did tow a hundred-ton Antarctic iceberg to the world Expo in Seville in 1992. See Richard, *Cultural Residues*, 116–17.
113 Brockmeier, *Brief History of the Dead*, 20.
114 Aldiss, *White Mars*, 323.
115 This description comes from the back cover of the 1998 edition of the novel cited in the bibliography.
116 Jameson, *Seeds of Time*, 65.
117 Robinson, *Red Mars*, 402, 445. The colonists' experiences in Antarctica are described in more detail in Robinson's short story 'Michel in Antarctica'.
118 Robinson, *Antarctica* 159, 479.
119 Ibid., 39.
120 Ibid., 8, 99, 520.
121 Ibid., 21.
122 Ibid., 297.
123 Ibid., 300.
124 Moylan, *Demand the Impossible*, 10–11.
125 Robinson, *Antarctica*, 224–7.
126 Ibid., 245, 248, 260.
127 Ibid., 252–3.
128 Ibid., 21.
129 Ibid., 535–9.

2. BODIES, BOUNDARIES AND THE ANTARCTIC GOTHIC

1 Moyes, 'Season in Solitary', 21–3.
2 Ibid., 22.
3 Thomas, *Sun at Midnight*, 300.
4 Nelson, *Secret Life of Puppets*, 145.
5 Ibid., 141–2, 145, 148.
6 Godwin, *Arktos*, 134.
7 Quoted in ibid., 135.
8 Ibid., 136.
9 Wilson, *Spiritual History*, 145–6, 151, 152–7.
10 Grant and Hazel, *Who's Who in Classical Mythology*, 162.
11 Cook, *Through the First Antarctic Night*, 282–3, 295–6.
12 Bowers, Copy of his journal, Jan. 1911; Priestley, Journals, 9 May 1911; Cherry-Garrard, *Worst Journey*, 254.
13 *Adelie Blizzard*, 56.
14 Nelson, *Secret Life of Puppets*, 153.

15 Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 1–2.
16 Grosz, 'The Body of Signification', 87.
17 Spufford, *I May Be Some Time*, 76.
18 Shackleton, 'To the Great Ice Barrier'.
19 Lenz, 'Poe's *Arthur Gordon Pym*'.
20 Edwin Fussell even argues that the Antarctic acts as a metaphor for the American Frontier in Poe's stories, claiming that 'Symbolically, due South ... is a displaced West' (Fussell, *Frontier*, 148). Stephen Mainville, reading Poe within a gothic context, argues *contra* Fussell that 'Poe's unexplored Frontiers are not to be found on any map, in any external geography; they are interior frontiers' (Mainville, 'Language and the Void', 187). My argument is that the Antarctic location in *Pym* is important precisely because its geography, topography and mythology lend themselves to its construction as an 'interior frontier'. The notion of the south as a displaced West does, however, have some relevance to later Antarctic texts (see Chapter 5).
21 See Pyne, *Ice*, 166; Spufford, *I May Be Some Time*, 37.
22 Simpson-Housley, *Cain's Land*, 31–61.
23 Wilkes, *Narrative*, 135.
24 Lenz, 'Poe's *Arthur Gordon Pym*', 37.
25 Cook, *Voyage Towards the South Pole*, vol. 2: 213–14.
26 Smith, *Imagining the Pacific*, 135–71; Bohm, 'Georg Forster's *A Voyage*'; Strongman, 'Captain Cook's Voyages'.
27 Lowes, *The Road to Xanadu*, 136.
28 Atwood, *Strange Things*, 44, 20.
29 Coleridge, 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', 1: 91.
30 Simpson-Housley discusses a number of these examples in *Cain's Land*, 100–7.
31 Wilson, *Spiritual History*, 174.
32 Arden Reed devotes a chapter of *Romantic Weather* to the significance of the pun on 'rime'. He argues that the Antarctic imagery exceeds its geographical boundaries, 'transforming the equatorial into a polar region' (162, 166).
33 Coleridge, 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner', 1: 57, 61–2.
34 Moss, *Scott's Last Biscuit*, 213, 215.
35 Wilson, *Spiritual History*, 168–74.
36 See Higginson, 'First Antarctic Voyage', for an examination of the relationship between the Palmer-Pendleton expedition and Poe's story.
37 Poe, 'MS. Found in a Bottle', 16–17.
38 Grosz, 'The Body of Signification', 87.
39 *Pym* has correspondingly attracted more critical attention as a polar tale than most other examples of Antarctic literature. Examples include Lenz, *Poetics*, 41–4 and 'Poe's *Arthur Gordon Pym*'; Wilson, *Spiritual History*, 192–215; Spufford, *I May Be Some Time*, 74–8; Simpson-Housley, *Cain's Land*, 49–51; Standish, *Hollow Earth*, 87–107; and Dameron, 'Poe's Pym'.
40 Poe, 'A Descent into the Maelstrom', 131.
41 Bailey, Introduction; Standish, *Hollow Earth*, 101.

42 Standish, *Hollow Earth*, 99.
43 Beaver, Commentary, 260.
44 Spufford, *I May Be Some Time*, 74.
45 Verne, *Antarctic Mystery*, 200.
46 See Taylor, 'Nothing Like a Sequel', for a discussion of the sequels to *Pym* and the specific nature of the relationship between Poe's novel and *At the Mountains of Madness*.
47 Joshi, *The Annotated H. P. Lovecraft*, 175; Joshi and Schultz, *An H. P. Lovecraft Encyclopedia*, 132.
48 See Eckhardt, 'Behind the Mountains of Madness', for an analysis of the parallels between Byrd's expedition and Lovecraft's fictional 'Miskatonic Expedition'.
49 Lovecraft, *Mountains of Madness*, 64–5, 93.
50 Ibid., 96
51 Standish (*Hollow Earth*, 106) argues that *Pym* can itself be read as a parody – as a 'send-up of the mania for polar exploration and the bright sunny possibilities trumpeted by Reynolds & Co.'.
52 Utley and Waldrop, 'Black as the Pit', 109.
53 Ferguson, 'The Polar Vortex', 74–5.
54 'Imbrifer' is another name for the constellation Orion (Smith, *Dictionary*, 55), so Daniel is clearly destined to be metaphorically absorbed into the cosmos he observes.
55 The South Geographic and Magnetic Poles are, of course, a significant distant apart in reality, and a station on the Magnetic Pole would soon be redundant as the latter moves considerably in the course of a few generations. When Ferguson was writing, the South Magnetic Pole was located close to the Antarctic coast.
56 Ferguson, 'The Polar Vortex', 75, 77.
57 Ibid., 80–1.
58 Ibid., 77–9, 81.
59 Laseron, *South With Mawson*, 31.
60 Leahy, 'In Amundsen's Tent', 53, 61, 63, 68.
61 Ibid., 49, 68–70.
62 Scott, *Journals*, 375–6.
63 Preston, *A First Rate Tragedy*, 184.
64 Leahy, 'In Amundsen's Tent', 56.
65 Quoted in Limb and Cordingley, *Captain Oates*, 164.
66 Long, 'Bride of the Antarctic', 73, 76.
67 Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 2.
68 Polar bears regularly feature in Antarctic novels published during the Heroic Era, such as Charles Beale's *Secret of the Earth* (1899), Ralph Bonnell's *Lost in the Land of Ice* (1902) and Charles Stilson's *Polaris of the Snows* (1915).
69 Shackleton, *South*, 230.
70 Eliot, *The Waste Land*, 5: 359–65.
71 Campbell, 'Who Goes There?' 73.

72 Byrd, *Discovery*, 187.
73 Campbell, 'Who Goes There?' 69.
74 Ibid., 65, 68, 75–6, 92.
75 Ibid., 61–2
76 Ibid., 62, 69, 87.
77 Byrd, *Discovery*, 217. Although *Discovery* is attributed to Byrd, certain sections were written by one of his expedition members, C. J. V. Murphy. The words cited here are those of Murphy rather than Byrd. Byrd spent the winter of 1934 on his own at a base further inland, and thus could not describe events at Little America during this time. Byrd's more famous book *Alone*, which recounts this solo winter experience, was published in late 1938, after 'Who Goes There?' had appeared.
78 Wild, Papers, 14–15.
79 This incident occurred at the Australasian Antarctic Expedition Main Base (Moyes, whose experiences were described at the beginning of this chapter, belonged to the same expedition but was stationed at a different base). See Chapter 4, note 48.
80 Byrd, *Discovery*, 191, 200.
81 Ibid., 117.
82 Campbell, 'Who Goes There?' 64.
83 Critics thus often read *The Thing from Another World* within a Cold War context, as one of a series of anti-Soviet 1950s science fiction films; this makes sense of the relocation to the Arctic – a liminal space half-way between North America and the USSR. John Trushell also notes that the shift reflected a series of UFO sightings in the Pacific Northwest in 1947 ('*The Thing*', 80).
84 Leinster, *The Monster from Earth's End*, 8–9, 12–13, 29, 35, 40, 164, 174, 176.
85 When discussing Carpenter's *Thing*, several critics (e.g. Butler, 'Abjection'; White, 'Erotics of Becoming'; Johnson, 'Sick Puppies') draw on the concept of the abject (reinforced in the film through the use of excessively gruesome special effects), but do not make a connection with the spatial properties of the Antarctic ice.
86 Available online at www.bigdeadplace.com/the_thing01.html.
87 Rieder, 'Embracing the Alien', 34.
88 Glasberg, 'Who Goes There?', 639.
89 The Antarctic is not, of course, the only melting icescape in Ballard's novel and in real-world scenarios; however, as the Antarctic holds around ninety percent of the world's ice, the contribution of northern glaciers (such as Greenland's) is comparatively meagre. The Arctic polar cap, as it floats on water, would not change water levels if it melted.
90 Cooper, *The Last Continent*, 77.
91 The novels and films featuring Antarctic environmental catastrophes and last-refuge scenarios described here are just the tip of a large iceberg. Kay surveys many more examples in her essay 'It was a Very Long Dark and Stormy Night'.
92 Moyes, 'Season in Solitary', 21–2.

3. CREATIVE EXPLORATIONS OF THE HEROIC ERA

1 The story of the 'Winter Journey' is told by Cherry-Garrard in chapter 7 of his *Worst Journey in the World* (1922).
2 Pyne, 'Extraterrestrial Earth', 147.
3 This idea is borrowed from Craig Cormick, who describes the Heroic-Era explorers as the 'creation heroes' of Antarctica (*In Bed with Douglas Mawson*, 31).
4 The 'Antarctic Circle' website offers a $100 prize to anyone who can locate the original advertisement. More than a decade's worth of responses have drawn a blank; a search of the Times Digital Archives yielded nothing. The present consensus is that the advertisement originated in Julian Lewis Watkins' book *The 100 Greatest Advertisements* in 1949. See www.antarctic-circle.org/advert.htm.
5 The categorization comes from the back cover of the 1976 edition cited in the bibliography. Holt's novel was originally published in Norwegian in 1974 as *Kappløpet.*
6 'All happy families are alike but an unhappy family is unhappy after its own fashion' (Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, 13).
7 See Murray, 'Scott of the Antarctic', 195–208.
8 Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer*, 6.
9 Although Shackleton loved poetry, he was more comfortable with oral rather than written expression; New Zealand journalist Edward Saunders wrote both *The Heart of the Antarctic* and *South* from Shackleton's dictation and documents he provided (Thomson, *Shackleton's Captain*, 188–93; 'Edward Saunders, Journalist'). Mawson, too, had no particular inclination for writing. One of his expedition members, Archie McLean, contributed substantially to *The Home of the Blizzard*, the official account of the Australasian Antarctic Expedition, editing Mawson's drafts, and writing some chapters from Mawson's notes (Ayres, *Mawson*, 100).
10 Huntford, *Scott and Amundsen*, 546.
11 Spufford, *I May Be Some Time*, 4.
12 Limb and Cordingley, *Captain Oates*, 169.
13 Bowers' diary states only that Oates had gone, and Wilson's letter to Oates's mother makes no mention of any final words. Much of Oates's own diary is lost to posterity, burned on the instructions of his bitter, grief-stricken mother, although his parting line would not, of course, have been recorded there.
14 Huntford, *Scott and Amundsen*, 523.
15 Smith, *I am Just Going Outside*, 230.
16 Quoted in ibid., 90.
17 Scott, *Journals*, 417.
18 Scott, *Journals*, 410.
19 Limb and Cordingley, *Captain Oates*, 170.
20 Jones, *The Last Great Quest*, 217–18.

21 Quoted in Jones, *The Last Great Quest*, 218.
22 Millard, 'Our Antarctic Heroes', 26.
23 Quoted in Limb and Cordingley, *Captain Oates*, 171.
24 These and all of the other newspaper sources quoted in regard to 1930s dramatizations of Scott's story are contained in 'Album of Press Cuttings' stored in the Scott Polar Research Institute; no page numbers are provided, and titles and authors are not always given. The report on Sheriff's plans comes from the *Sunday Express* 2 March 1930, and discussion of the proposed film from *The Star* 4 March 1938.
25 Vladimir Nabokov's 'Polyus', originally written in Russian and published in Berlin in 1924, predates Goering's play, but was not performed at the time (Manhire, *Wide White Page*, 312). Nabokov's verse play is a recreation of the historical events, but one that takes place in a kind of parallel universe with its own cast of characters and chronology of events. Johnson (the parallel Oates) makes his heroic exit with a version of his famous line. When Scott (who keeps his own name), who has been asleep, learns of Johnson's action, he pursues him (Nabokov, 'Polyus', 275).
26 *The Graphic*, 8 March 1930.
27 Scott, *Self-Portrait*, 274.
28 This imputation is not apparent in the published script, in which Scott simply encourages the distressed Birdie to understand and respect Oates's decision (50–1).
29 Goering, *Südpolexpedition*, 50.
30 Eben, 'Attitudes', 120.
31 Stewart, *The Fire on the Snow*, 31–2.
32 Quoted in Smith, *I am Just Going Outside*, 229.
33 Pound, *Scott of the Antarctic*, 288.
34 Antrobus, *Captain Oates's Left Sock*, 29.
35 Tally, *Terra Nova*, 70.
36 Monty Python, 'Scott of the Sahara', 179. Manhire reproduces the script of the sketch in full in his anthology, *The Wide White Page*.
37 Brenton, *Scott of the Antarctic*, 102.
38 Stoppard, *Jumpers*, 23.
39 Tinniswood, 'Polar Games', 98.
40 Moss, *Scott's Last Biscuit*, 112.
41 Oates's most recent biographer states that the explorer was of 'sound basic intelligence' but suffered from dyslexia to the extent that his letters can be accurately described as semi-literate (Smith, *I am Just Going Outside*, 26).
42 Preston, *A First Rate Tragedy*, 125; Smith, *I am Just Going Outside*, 26, 52, 144.
43 Ponting, *Great White South*, 288.
44 Hoar, 'Scott of the Antarctic', 6.
45 Ibid., 19.
46 A similar approach can be found in Dorothy Porter's short poem 'Oates' Diary' (1989), which presents the dying explorer's reflections in his own voice and captures the pathos of his last hours without idealizing him.

47 Pearson, *Polar*, 26
48 Ibid., 237, 240.
49 Michael Smith's biography *I am Just Going Outside* (2002), with its contention that the nineteen-year-old Oates conceived a child by an eleven-year-old girl (263–70), gives *The White Darkness* disturbing resonances. Smith's book has influenced later literary representations of Oates: in Robert Ryan's fictionalization of Scott's expedition *Death on the Ice* (2009), Oates has an ex-lover, Edie, with whom he has had a child.
50 McCaughrean, *The White Darkness*, 232–3, 263. Brenda Clough's science fiction short story 'May Be Some Time' (2001) imagines a future in which such a hope is fulfilled. In her story, Oates's parting phrase becomes literal truth rather than stylish understatement when he is selected by American scientists in the year 2045 as the guinea pig for their time travel technology. Stepping out of his tent into the twenty-first century, Oates is able to read (wincing) through the varying perceptions of the expedition and of himself. Clough later extended her story into a novel, *Revise the World* (2008). See Chapter 6 for more detail.
51 Quoted in Haughton, *The Poetry of Derek Mahon*, 202.
52 Manhire, *Wide White Page*, 310.
53 Michaels's interest in the Antarctic extends beyond this poem. The narrator of her novel *Fugitive Pieces* (1996), Jakob, is adopted by a geologist, Athos, whose 'fascination with Antarctica' becomes the pairs' 'azimuth': 'It was to direct the course of our lives' (33).
54 The explorer of Mason's novel is an obvious (and not entirely complimentary) fictional portrait of Scott, whom Mason knew; the novel was published the year before Scott's death became known. See Stafford, 'Before Immortality', for a detailed analysis of Mason's representation of Scott.
55 Caine, *The Woman Thou Gavest Me*, 309.
56 Watson, 'The Small Brown Room', 51.
57 Ibid., 31.
58 'Limp Collar', 'A Hot Weather Outburst'.
59 Keneally, *The Survivor*, 211.
60 McDonald, 'Antarctica', 4.
61 Richard, 'Ice', 89.
62 Pegrine, Davey and Webster, letter of application.
63 Collier, Letter to Douglas Mawson.
64 Caroline Mikkelsen, whose husband Klarius was the captain of a whaling ship, is often cited as the first woman to stand the Antarctic mainland, in 1935. Recent research, however, suggests she may have landed on an island (Norman, Gibson and Burgess, 'Klarius Mikkelsen's 1935 Landing'). This would mean the first continental landing was made in 1937 by Ingrid Christensen (the wife of Klarius's employer, whaling magnate Lars Christensen), closely followed by her daughter and her two female companions. I am grateful to Jesse Blackadder, who has examined Lars's diary as source material for a novel based on Ingrid's experiences, for pointing this out to me (email communication to author, 23 January 2012).

65 Lucy Kavaler's novel *Heroes and Lovers* (1995) explores a similar premise – an all-woman Heroic-Era expedition – but stylistically and politically is very distant from Le Guin's story.
66 Le Guin, 'Sur', 38–42, 46.
67 There is a paradox, however, in the women's lack of interest in priority and Le Guin's task of writing their 'first' into history. See Glasberg for a complex response to the question of whether Le Guin can 'project a feminist fantasy of prior arrival and yet refuse the complicities of masculine teleologies of conquest' (Glasberg, 'Refusing History', 102).
68 Le Guin, 'Sur', 41.
69 Le Guin, 'Heroes', 171.
70 Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness*, 210–11.
71 Le Guin, 'Is Gender Necessary? Redux', 14.
72 Brigid Hains, discussing the Heroic Era, notes that '[t]he effect of cold climate was a keystone of racial theories that condemned the languor of tropical races, and valorised the "Nordic" racial characteristics – supposed to be the outcome of the harshness of the Arctic climate' (*The Ice and the Inland*, 21–2).
73 Cooper, *The Sea Lions*, 333.
74 Glasberg, 'Antarcticas', 159.
75 Seaborn, *Symzonia*, 110.
76 Glasberg, 'Antarcticas', 147.
77 Poe, *Pym*, 49.
78 See Glasberg, 'Antarcticas', 157–9.
79 Ibid., 160.
80 Spotswood, *Voyage of Will Rogers*, 12–14.
81 Glasberg, 'Antarcticas', 161.
82 Manhire, *Wide White Page*, 20.
83 For a detailed debunking of the claim that the Nazis established an Antarctic base, see Summerhayes and Beeching, 'Hitler's Antarctic Base'.
84 Glasberg, 'Antarcticas', 164.
85 Cooper, *The Last Continent*, 77–8.
86 Rucker, *The Hollow Earth*, 163–4.
87 Johnson, *Pym*, 58.
88 Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello*, 47–8.
89 Adebayo and Goddard, 'Mojisola Adebayo', 145.
90 Adebayo, Programme Notes.
91 Adebayo makes Oates's line her protagonist's final words, noting elsewhere that 'Like Oates, Moj becomes an Antarctic anti-hero' ('Supernatural Embodied Text', 99).
92 Adebayo, 'Moj of the Antarctic', 151–2.
93 Ibid., 154–5.
94 Ibid., 178.
95 Ibid., 184.
96 In her introduction to the play, Adebayo mentions minstrel shows performed by both Scott's and Shackleton's men (Programme Notes). A description of

the former can be found in Scott's *Voyage of the 'Discovery'*, on pages that sport running titles such as 'Nigger Minstrels' and 'The Darkies' Catechism'.

97 Adebayo, 'Moj of the Antarctic', 184. A quotation from Shackleton's *South* earlier in the play establishes the historical identity of a dog called Nigger on the *Endurance*. Scott had a cat called Nigger on the *Terra Nova* expedition.

98 Ibid., 184–5.

99 Adebayo, 'Moj of the Antarctic', 188, 190.

100 Adebayo, Programme Notes.

101 Other queer Antarctic narratives certainly exist. Kay notes that 'Antarctic fiction with queer characters has been slow to develop, although there seems to be a few more with women than with men, published by small independent lesbian/feminist presses' ('It was a Very Long Dark and Stormy Night', 100). Few of these novels, however, are engaged with re-writing Antarctic exploration history from a gay or lesbian perspective.

102 Adebayo, 'Moj of the Antarctic', 182, 187.

103 There are exceptions, such as Theodore Mason's *South Pole Ponies: The Forgotten Heroes of Antarctic Exploration*, which focusses on the experiences of ponies in Shackleton's *Nimrod* and Scott's *Terra Nova* expeditions.

104 The opera premiered posthumously in 1937. Ironically, given the controversy that the original play caused in Britain, the opera was branded undesirable ('unerwünscht') by the Nazis due partly to Goering's pro-English text, and was closed after three performances (Davis, *Final Mutiny*, 374–7, 396).

105 Davis, *Final Mutiny*, 376–7.

106 Steward, 'Worsley Enchanted', 45.

107 Alexander, *Mrs Chippy's Expedition*, 148.

108 Another example of a Heroic-Era narrative that focusses on a pet is Meredith Hooper and Bert Kitchen's picture book for children, *Tom Crean's Rabbit* (1999). While related in the third-person, not from a lapine perspective, the tale, like *Mrs Chippy,* moves an animal from the margins to the centre of the expedition.

109 The quotation is actually from an account written by Scott for the *New York Times*, and brought back with the *Terra Nova* in April 1912 ('Captain Scott's Thrilling Story'). It is quite different from his journal. The question of Scott's treatment of his ponies, like many aspects of his expedition, is a subject of debate, with some seeing it as inconsistent with his attitude towards dogs (described later in this chapter) and others pointing to his intention to minimize the ponies' suffering and the relatively good condition of the first few ponies shot; see respectively Barczewski, *Antarctic Destinies*, 2, and Fiennes, *Captain Scott*, 265–6, 276–8. Fiennes notes that on this last march 'each leader gave his animal half of his own biscuit ration for the day' (281).

110 Cassidy, 'The Southern Sacrifice'.

111 Murray, 'The Use and Abuse of Dogs', 168–76.

112 Manhire, 'Dogs', 36, 39.

4. THE SURVIVAL VALUE OF LITERATURE AT HIGH LATITUDES

1 Laseron, Sledging Diary, 14 November 1912.
2 Stam, 'Silent Friends', 113.
3 Scott, *Voyage*, vol. 1, 306.
4 A full list of titles in the library is given in *Catalogue of Books of the 'Discovery' 1901*.
5 Moyes, Diaries.
6 Caesar, *The White*, 190–2; Hains, *The Ice and the Inland*, 9–29.
7 Mawson, *Home*, vol. 1, 147. See also Williamson and Williamson, *Lady Betty across the Water*, 193–6. Mawson suggests the novel's charm lay in the stark contrast its bright American setting made with the Antarctic winter. The AAE men also may have identified with the male romantic lead, whom Betty compares to the hero of *The Virginian* (129). At the same time, the adoption of this novel – a first-person narration by an eighteen-year-old woman with much emphasis on dress, manners, parties and sightseeing – as the unanimous favourite of a group of toughened polar explorers would likely have had an amusing ironic appeal for the men.
8 *Adelie Blizzard*, 175–7.
9 Mawson, *Diaries*, 101.
10 Close, Original letter to Mawson.
11 Laseron relates this incident without identifying the sleeping expedition member (*South with Mawson*, 55), but comparison with information from Belgrave Ninnis's diaries provided in Beau Riffenburgh's *Racing with Death* (85) confirms that it was Close. I'm grateful to Stephanie Pfennigwerth for identifying this connection.
12 Sidney, 'Reading(-)Matters', 67. Sidney's detailed and nuanced analysis is drawn from his PhD research currently underway at Cambridge University.
13 Cherry-Garrard, *Worst Journey*, 203.
14 Madigan, 'Narrative', 37.
15 Fussell, *The Great War*, 162.
16 Bickerton, 'A Log of the Western Journey'.
17 In an examination of stress in Arctic whalers and explorers, Phyllis Johnson and Peter Suedfeld note: 'Modern research has shown that one of the most adverse conditions encountered by human beings is a stretch of unstructured time with nothing particular to do and no definite end in sight' ('Coping with Stress', 44).
18 Nordenskjöld and Andersson, *Antarctica*, 464.
19 Priestley's various diaries, and copies he made of them in the Antarctic, are held in the Scott Polar Research Institute. These two comments come from the 'Copy of part of his general diary of the British Antarctic Expedition' and 'Journals kept during the British Antarctic Expedition' respectively.
20 They also had Boccaccio's *Decameron*, which was not a great success but gave its name to their blubber lamps ('Boccaccios'); William Locke's *Simon the Jester*; two novels by Max Pemberton; and a pocket New Testament (Priestley, *Antarctic Adventure*, 257–8; Journals).

21 Levick, Journals.
22 Shackleton, *South*, 250.
23 John Tallmadge's 'Shackleton in the Antarctic' offers a detailed examination of parallels between Coleridge's fictional narrative and Shackleton's factual one.
24 See James, Journals; Macklin, Diaries; Lees, quoted in Thomson, *Elephant Island*, 247; Hurley, Diaries; and Piggott, 'Shackleton's Men', 16.
25 Quoted in Thomson, *Elephant Island*, 248. Both of these books were on loan from a benefactor in England. Lees claims that he kept his in secret in order to ensure he could return it to its owner, and suggests that Hurley's motivation was similar. It is hard to imagine, however, that this was the sole reason why the expedition members guarded their books so carefully.
26 Hurley, Diaries.
27 Piggott, 'Shackleton's Men', 16. If Wild had had the benefit of modern psychological research, he might have realized that reading Nordenskjöld's account could have provided the benefits of 'downward social comparison', a term from social psychology that refers to 'making oneself feel better by talking about people whose fate was even worse' (Johnson and Suedfeld, 'Coping with Stress', 49).
28 Quoted in Thomson, *Elephant Island*, 224.
29 Bickerton, 'Log of the Western Journey'.
30 Shackleton, Diaries.
31 Hurley, Diaries.
32 Hurley, *Argonauts of the South*, 285.
33 *Adelie Blizzard*, 90. All contributions to the *Adelie Blizzard* were anonymous. In some cases, however, authorship is clear from evidence in diaries, letters or annotations made on the newspaper. A pencilled note on the original typescript of the *Blizzard* indicates that Robert Bage wrote the letter from which the lines quoted here are drawn.
34 Mawson claimed the *Adelie Blizzard* as the first 'real' Antarctic newspaper as the AAE had established the first wireless connection between the continent and the rest of the world (messages were relayed to Australia via Macquarie Island), so real news (such as the death of Scott's polar party) was received. Nonetheless, it was old news by the time it appeared in the *Blizzard*.
35 Parry, *Journal of a Voyage*, 106–7, 115.
36 Shackleton, 'Editor's Notes', 26.
37 Mawson, *Home*, vol. 2, 74.
38 Drygalski, *The Southern Ice-Continent*, 158.
39 By this time Parry had realized that he had used a pre-existing name when he had christened the island he discovered 'New Georgia'; it was re-named 'North Georgia', and the title of the published newspaper changed correspondingly. During the voyage itself, the newspaper was alternatively referred to as the 'New Georgia Gazette' and the 'Winter Chronicle' (McLaren, 'Poetry', 43).
40 Shackleton, 'Editor's Notes', 26; Wilson, *Diary of the 'Discovery' Expedition*, 156.
41 Miller, 'One Night in Antarctica', 23–7.

42 Goffman, *Asylums*, 11. Goffman's arguments deal with communities such as asylums and prisons in which hierarchies are far more pronounced than in many Antarctic expeditions, but they retain some relevance to the latter, especially (as Miller notes in 'One Night in Antarctica', 24) in military-led expeditions such as Scott's.
43 Ibid., 90
44 Contributions to the *South Polar Times* were pseudonymous, but a key provided means that authorship is clear in most cases. For convenience, where actual names are known, contributors are cited here under these rather than their pseudonyms.
45 The title and form of the poem are based on Henry Lawson's 'When Your Pants Begin To Go', and the anonymous author offers his apologies to Lawson.
46 *Adelie Blizzard*, 82. A later hand – probably the editor Archie McLean – has corrected the original spelling of 'mits'.
47 Fisher, *Journal*, 152.
48 One of the AAE men, Sydney Jeffryes, became convinced that his companions were writing about him in the *Adelie Blizzard* (Mawson, *Diaries*, 196); this was, however, a paranoid delusion – one of a number he suffered during the winter. He spent his life following the AAE in a mental institution.
49 Ayres, *Mawson*, 65.
50 This planned publication never eventuated because of the advent of World War I and the perception that the AAE lacked the glamour and excitement of Scott's and Shackleton's expeditions (see Leane, 'The *Adelie Blizzard*'). The unedited *Blizzard* has since been published in facsimile. See Leane and Pharaoh's introduction for a more detailed discussion of this polar newspaper.
51 Goffman, *Asylums*, 91–2.
52 Scott, 'In Futuro', 37.
53 The elaborate and amusing stage directions suggest that 'When One Goes Forth a Voyaging' was intended to be read rather than performed. It has nonetheless received an Antarctic performance, by a group of students from the University of Canterbury's Gateway Antarctica camped on the Ross Ice Shelf in 2001 (Scott Henderson, email to author, 22 May 2002).
54 Several references in Bernacchi's play script, such as the 'poetic' hero's scaling of Crater Hill with 'the orthnithologist', and his measurement of 'the salinity and specific gravity of the sea water', suggest that Shackleton and Wilson are the two unnamed heroes (Bernacchi, 'When One Goes Forth', 21, 23).
55 Bernacchi, 'When One Goes Forth', 20–22. 'The White Silence' is the title of a Jack London short story set in the Arctic.
56 Bernacchi, for example, relates an occasion when Shackleton, relieving his watch at four in the morning, insisted on waylaying him to recite 'endless verse' (Bernacchi, *Saga*, 25).
57 'Sir Ernest Shackleton on Poetry'.
58 *Adelie Blizzard*, 148.
59 Cherry-Garrard, *Worst Journey*, 203.

60 Mawson, *Home*, vol. 1, 260.
61 I'm grateful to Adrian Caesar for pointing this out to me.
62 Mawson, *Home*, vol. 1, 265.
63 Shackleton, Diaries.
64 Aldrich, Sledging journal, 28 May 1876.
65 Manhire, 'Tourism Benefits', 33.
66 *Adelie Blizzard*, 2.
67 Hurley, *Argonauts of the South*, 86–7.
68 'Vox Asini', 'Summer Sledging in Sledgometer Verse'.
69 Scott's Northern Party was originally the Eastern Party; an encounter with Amundsen's expedition led to a change of direction. This sledging song appears in various versions in Priestley's diaries, and is reproduced at the end of his book *Antarctic Adventure*. A sound recording of it was made in the 1920s. The verse given here comes from one of his diaries (Journal kept during the British Antarctic Expedition) and does not appear in the published poem. Punctuation has been added for readability.
70 Hurley, *Argonauts of the South*, 93.
71 Hurley wrote another poem about the journey in which he memorialized the sledging song itself: '… on the morrow we awoke feeling refreshed and strong; / We set off at a swinging bat, singing our sledging song' (*Adelie Blizzard*, 164).
72 For more detail see O'Neill, 'Theatre in the North'.
73 Fleming, *Barrow's Boys*, 79.
74 See Claustre, 'The North-West Passage', for a discussion of this play that includes a reproduction of the script.
75 Parry, *Journal of a Voyage*, 113–14.
76 Fleming, *Barrow's Boys*, 284.
77 O'Neill, 'Arctic Nights', 19.
78 Ibid., 19.
79 Dunbar, 'Royal Arctic Theatre', 112.
80 Yelverton, *Antarctica Unveiled*, 149.
81 Armitage, *Two Years in the Antarctic*, 90.
82 Scott, Letter to Hannah Scott.
83 He encouraged his sister to become a professional actress, despite his mother's misgivings. See Preston, *A First Rate Tragedy*, 20, 25.
84 The theatre was named after the nearby extinct volcano, Mount Terror.
85 Hare, Diary, 31 May 1902.
86 Scott, *Voyage*, vol. 1, 375.
87 Duncan, Journal, 9 June 1902.
88 Scott, *Voyage*, vol., 1, 375.
89 See Pearson, 'No Joke in Petticoats', for another perspective on British polar theatricals, including a detailed discussion of the event examined here. Pearson focusses less on the play performed than on the activities and objects involved in its performance, concluding that '[t]he existence of such prolonged engagement in play activity challenges the easy narrative of courage, endurance, and heroic survival' (57).

90 Scott, *Voyage*, *vol.* 1., 376.
91 Ibid.; Royds, *Diary*, 144.
92 Scott, *Voyage*, vol. 1, 376; Hare, Diary, 25 June 1902.
93 Wilson, *Diary of the 'Discovery Expedition'*, 156.
94 Scott, *Voyage*, vol. 1, 376.
95 O'Neill notes that in Parry's expeditions the lack of literacy among the crew meant that the cast necessarily consisted of officers. By the mid-nineteenth century, seamen were taking part in Arctic theatricals. It was rare, however, for the officers and crew to act in the same production ('Theatre in the North', 358, 363, 367–8).
96 Bernacchi, *Saga*, 47–8.
97 Scott, *Voyage*, vol. 1, 377–8.
98 Armitage, *Two Years in the Antarctic*, 115; Skelton, Journal, 25 June 1902; Royds, *Diary*, 144.
99 Royds, *Diary*, 144; Duncan, Journal, 9 June 1902.
100 Hodgson, Journal, 25 June 1902.
101 Allan, 'Antarctic Diary', 4.
102 Scott, *Voyage*, vol. 1, 379.
103 Armitage, *Two Years in the Antarctic*, 155.
104 Scott, *Voyage*, vol. 2, 143.
105 For further discussion of the damaged script and other details (such as the cast of the play), see Leane, 'Antarctic Theatricals'.
106 Phillips's play is distinct from Tom Taylor's more famous melodrama, *The Ticket-of-Leave Man*, which was first performed in May 1863 at the Olympic Theatre in London (see J. R. Brown, Introduction, vi). A 'ticket of leave' was effectively a form of probation a convict received for good behaviour. A convict granted a ticket of leave was entitled to certain privileges, including the right to choose an employer, receive wages and own property, but was restricted geographically and had to report regularly to the local authorities.
107 *Catalogue of Books of the 'Discovery' 1901*, 18.
108 Phillips, *A Ticket of Leave*, 7.
109 Shackleton, 'Life in the Antarctic', 316.
110 The original London production of *A Ticket-of-Leave* actually featured two women, as the character of Joe the page-boy was played a woman. The *Discovery* men did not, of course, have this option. See Phillips, *A Ticket-of-Leave*, 2.
111 A mad dog, off-stage, also plays a part in the original plot, and as Scott notes that 'a stray dog or two' was 'brought in to enliven the proceedings', it is tempting to believe that a role for one of the expedition's Siberian sledge dogs was inserted into the performance along with Mary Ann (*Voyage*, vol. 1, 376).
112 Cook, *First Antarctic Night*, 403.
113 Campbell, *Intolerable Hulks*, 53.
114 Royds, *Diary*, 144.

115 Laseron, *South with Mawson*, 79. The 'Its Society' was an expansion of a previous three-man comedy team of Laseron, Hurley and John Hunter, called 'The Sydney Its' (110).
116 Mawson, *Home*, vol. 1, 208–11.
117 Laseron, *South with Mawson*, 79.
118 Australian bases, for example, saw the production of titles such as *Hardships: The Macquarie Island Newspaper*, the *Katabatic* and the *Midnight Sun* in the 1950s and 1960s. See Leane, 'The Polar Press'.
119 See Hermichen, 'Bibliotheken', for an analysis of libraries and reading practices in modern-day Antarctica.
120 Bowden, *The Silence Calling*, 229.

5. THE TRANSFORMING NATURE OF ANTARCTIC TRAVEL

1 Nelson, *Secret Life of Puppets*, 148.
2 Australian artist Sydney Nolan, for instance, travelled south with the U.S. military in 1964, and novelist Thomas Keneally did likewise in 1968.
3 The phrase can be found near the end of Keneally's essay 'Captain Scott's Biscuit' (2003).
4 Gemmell, *Shiver*, 16.
5 These comments come from Gemmell's own website, accessible at www.nikkigemmell.com/shiver.php.
6 The autobiographical nature of Arthur's novel is discussed in Smith, 'Elizabeth Arthur'.
7 Hartley, *To the Poles*, 67.
8 Gifford, *Pastoral*, 1–2, 147.
9 Love, *Practical Ecocriticism*, 86.
10 Haynes, *Seeking the Centre*, 28.
11 Quoted in ibid., 30.
12 'Purification' is yet another thematic vein running through Antarctic fiction, taking in texts as diverse as the racial fantasies of the nineteenth and early- to mid-twentieth centuries, future scenarios in which Antarctica acts as a sanctuary in a world devastated by a virus, and the realist renewal narratives discussed here. Manhire briefly discusses the association of Antarctica with purity and cleanliness in his introduction to *The Wide White Page,* 20–22.
13 In *Terra Incognita*, Wheeler writes of her sense of God's presence during her Antarctic stay (Wheeler, *Terra Incognita*, 94, 162). Legler begins both her memoir and her journey with a visit to McMurdo's 'Chapel of the Snows'. Hartley, whose previous religious experience had been 'relatively superficial', finds it 'impossible to ignore the presence of some kind of spirituality' and 'hard not to contemplate religion quite seriously' in Antarctica (*To the Poles*, 138–9.)
14 *Adelie Blizzard*, 216.
15 Mawson's note, pencilled on a small piece of paper, can be found among a series of Operational Instructions and Hut Notices held at the Mawson

Collection at the South Australian Museum. He considered the man's attitude and behaviour 'a criminal matter'.

16 Watson, 'The Small Brown Room', 48.
17 'Rose de Boheme' (pseudonym of Agnes Rose-Soley), 'Joys of Antarctica'.
18 Iford (pseudonym of Charles Hayward), 'Vitamin C'.
19 Hains, *Ice and the Inland*, 20.
20 Released as *Mr Forbush and the Penguins* in the U.K.
21 Benjamin, *Quick, Before it Melts*, 12, 245.
22 Fox – who appears to be a Little Blue penguin rather than a member of an Antarctic species – actually starred in his own short documentary, *Milton Fox Esq.* (1964), as a promotion for *Quick, Before It Melts*.
23 This seemingly frivolous plot twist is in fact based on an actual event. Robyn Burns reports that the most publicized early women travellers to the Antarctic were two PanAm stewardesses who served on the first commercial flight from Christchurch to McMurdo in 1957 (Burns, *Just Tell Them*, 16; see also Chipman, *Women on the Ice*, 84).
24 Benjamin, *Quick, Before it Melts*, 6.
25 Billing, *Forbush and the Penguins*, 7.
26 Ibid., 168, 188.
27 Kimmell, *History of Men*, 53.
28 See Moss, *Scott's Last Biscuit*, 186–92 for an insightful literary analysis of Darlington's book.
29 Jacobs and Flamm, 'Between the Lines'.
30 Arnold, 'Polar Chic'.
31 Wheeler, *Terra Incognita*, 284.
32 Hartley, 'Bridget Jones', 6.
33 Gemmell, *Shiver*, 57.
34 Maverick, *Adventures of an Ice Princess*, 92.
35 Hartley, 'Bridget Jones', 164.
36 Gemmell, *Shiver*, 245.
37 Diski, *Skating to Antarctica*, 2, 5.
38 Ibid., 14.
39 This image of Antarctica as a kind of negative pastoral is not confined to realist narratives. The continent takes on a similar role in Tony Kushner's 'gay fantasia' *Angels in America*, a two-part play first performed in 1991–2. One scene sees the valium-addicted housewife Harper hallucinating that she has been transported to Antarctica. Her companion, the likewise hallucinated travel agent 'Mr Lies', informs her that she has reached 'Cold shelter for the shattered. No sorrows here, tears freeze'. Delighted, Harper fantasizes about turning the frozen icescape into a pastoral landscape: 'I'll plant [trees] and grow them. I'll live off caribou fat, I'll melt it over the bonfires and drink it from long, curved goat-horn cups. It'll be great. I want to make a new world here'. She fantasizes teaming up with an 'Eskimo' who will look after her and her imagined baby. Mr Lies reminds her that the place she has dreamed up is, like Diski's, a place of sterility rather than fertility, but an idealized

place of safety and escape nonetheless: 'This is a retreat, a vacuum, its virtue is that it lacks everything; deep-freeze for feelings. You can be numb and safe here, that's what you came for. Respect the delicate ecology of your delusions' (Kushner, *Angels in America*, *Part 1*, 101–2). In the tradition of the pastoral, Harper envisages an idealized Antarctic retreat, immune to historical, national, political and environmental debates and controversy.

40 Thomson, *Antarctica on a Plate*, 7, 11–12, 29.
41 Gemmell, *Shiver*, 48, 59, 89, 111, 237.
42 Maverick, *Adventures of an Ice Princess*, 57, 64, 73, 75, 82, 125, 204.
43 Email to author, 3 March 2007.
44 Set in the near future, *White* is not realist in style nor premise, but in its focus on character and relationship it can be grouped with the other novels discussed here.
45 Gemmell, *Shiver*, 4, 37–8, 56, 136, 164, 179.
46 Thomas, 'Cold, Vast and Empty', 8–9.
47 Maverick, *Adventures of an Ice Princess*, 204, 215.
48 Fearnley, *Degrees of Separation*, 217–18.
49 Legler, *On the Ice*, 42, 88.
50 Bledsoe, *The Big Bang Symphony*, 52, 127, 165.
51 Ibid., 303.
52 Ibid., 333.
53 Pyne, *The Ice*, 152.
54 There are, admittedly, settlements such as Chile's Villa Las Estrellas that do include children, families and schools, but these are exceptions rather than the rule.

6. FREEZING TIME IN FAR SOUTHERN NARRATIVES

1 'Glacial Beauty'.
2 'Antarctilyne – Cosmetic Collagen Alternative'. Skin Doctors Cosmeceuticals. www.skindoctors.com.au/. The website was accessed in March 2006. This product description is no longer featured; the same blurb can, however, still be found at many other skincare sales sites.
3 Arthur, *Antarctic Navigation*, 6.
4 Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 84, 245–8, 250.
5 Burleson, *H. P. Lovecraft*, 166.
6 The Time Lord visits Antarctica in two different *Dr Who* television series, 'The Seeds of Doom' (1976) and 'The Tenth Planet' (1966). Both have also appeared as books, and a written sequel to the latter, *Iceberg*, by David Banks, was published in 1993.
7 Lopez, 'Our Frail Planet', 43.
8 Scott, *Journals*, 370.
9 Ibid., 410.
10 Mawson, *Home*, vol. 1, 146.
11 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 30, 37, 39–40.

12 Bainbridge, *The Birthday Boys*, 88, 122, 189. Bainbridge's choice of title and organizing principle may have been triggered by Charles Frend's film *Scott of the Antarctic*, in which auspicious birthdays are also highlighted.
13 Darrieussecq, *White*, 31, 34–5.
14 Joughin, 'Deep Freeze'.
15 Darrieussecq, *White*, 96–7, 120.
16 Ibid., 130–32, 138, 141, 145.
17 Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 30–31.
18 McGregor, *Imagined Destinies*, 33–48.
19 Barkawi, *Globalization and War*, 101–2.
20 Doty, *Imperial Encounters*, 2.
21 Crossley, Foreword, vii.
22 Nicholls, 'Lost Worlds', 735.
23 Glasberg, 'Refusing History', 100.
24 Dodds, 'Antarctica', 47; Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 240.
25 Marshall, *Dian of the Lost Land*, 80, 111, 148.
26 Stilson, *Polaris of the Snows*, 92.
27 Bouvé, *Centuries Apart*, 16, 45.
28 Debenham, *In the Antarctic*, 18.
29 Atkinson, 'Extracts from Some Antarctic Archives', 101–2.
30 Again, Twain had set a precedent: his short story 'From the London Times of 1904' (1898) uses a similar device, and was possibly Laseron's inspiration.
31 Laseron, 'Extract from the Adelie Times', 6.
32 Mawson, *Diaries*, 195.
33 Moyes, 'Season in Solitary', 22.
34 Shackleton, *South*, 227.
35 *Adelie Blizzard*, 18.
36 Examples include Scott's own piece 'In Futuro' and Louis Bernacchi's short play 'When One Goes Forth a Voyaging' in the *South Polar Times*, discussed in Chapter 4; and, in the *Adelie Blizzard*, 'A Phantasm of the Snow' and 'His First Fling', both anonymously authored (3–7, 84–9).
37 Katz and Kirby, 'In the Nature of Things', 259–61.
38 E.g. Huntford, *Scott and Amundsen*; Spufford, *I May Be Some Time*; Pegg, 'Nature and Nation', 217, 227–8.
39 E.g. Moss, *Scott's Last Biscuit*, 20–21; Smith, *I am Just Going Outside*, 107.
40 Spufford, *I May Be Some Time*, 267.
41 Plutarch, quoted in Wilson and Rickard, 'Frozen Words', 95.
42 'Jean Paul', quoted in ibid., 107.
43 There are other arthropods that are able to supercool, and thus avoid freezing at low temperature, but *Belgica Antarctica* is the only species that is able to tolerate actual freezing (Block, 'Terrestrial Microbiology', 203).
44 Stableford, 'Suspended Animation', 1189.
45 Stableford, 'Cryonics', 283.
46 Russell, *The Frozen Pirate*, 45, 80, 97, 155.
47 Thomas, 'The Frozen Ship', 106.

48 The tale is repeated, for example, in Rev. Henry T. Cheever's *The Whale and His Captors* (1849) and in 'The Story of the Whale', in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (1856).
49 There were a number of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century whaling ships of this name; in 1880, the young Arthur Conan Doyle travelled to the Arctic aboard a whaler called the *Hope*.
50 'Drift of the *Jenny*'.
51 'Drift of the *Jenny*', 411; Headland, *Chronological List*, 129.
52 A poem entitled 'The Frozen Ship' was published alongside the 1847 narrative; Dobson makes no mention of this northern version of the legend. She learned about the story from an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (email to author, 10 May 2007).
53 Dobson, 'The Ship of Ice', 49.
54 Miéville, Introduction, xviii.
55 Ibid., xvii.
56 Chapman, 'Anthrax Find'; Falckh, 'The Death of Petty Officer Evans'.
57 Robert Headland estimates that Scott's tent will reach the edge of the continent around the year 2470 ('Captain Scott's Last Camp').
58 Limb and Cordingley, *Captain Oates*, 164.
59 Hines, 'In Memoriam'.
60 Barrie, *Courage*, 32.
61 Foote, *Connecticut Yankee*, 25.
62 Jones, *The Last Great Quest*, 254–61.
63 Ibid., 239–40; Girouard, *The Return to Camelot*, 2–4.
64 Yolen and Harris, 'Requiem Antarctica', 61.
65 Browning, *Searchers*, 246, 255.
66 Clough, 'May Be Some Time', 12, 15, 31.
67 Clough, 'Tiptoe', 198.
68 The function of the huts as a kind of time machine was highlighted recently in the retrieval of three cases of whisky and two of brandy from Shackleton's Cape Royds hut. The makers of the whisky used a sample to recover the lost recipe for the hundred-year-old blend. See 'Whisky Buried by Ernest Shackleton Expedition Recreated', BBC News Highlands and Islands online, available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-12959215.
69 Arthur, *Antarctic Navigation*, 501–3.
70 Manhire, 'Tourism Benefits', 35.
71 Westfahl, 'Introduction', 5.
72 Pyne, *The Ice*, 171.
73 Robinson, *Antarctica*, 20–21.
74 Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 25.
75 Glasberg, 'Refusing History', 114–15.
76 Wilson, *Spiritual History of Ice*, 168–74.
77 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 311–12.
78 Glasberg, 'Refusing History', 114.

79 This point is somewhat contentious: in her article 'Icy Heritage', archaeologist Sherrie-Lee Evans discusses the opposing forces at play in conservation in Antarctica, in which notions of the 'pristine' Antarctic environment have led to the labelling of items that could have cultural heritage value as contamination or 'rubbish'.
80 Darrieussecq, *White*, 24.
81 Wyndham, *The Seeds of Time*, 128.
82 Darrieussecq, *White*, 89.
83 Simpson, 'Fragments of a Manuscript', 76–8.
84 Kerridge, 'Ecothrillers', 243.
85 Urry, *Sociology Beyond Societies*, 157–8.
86 The report I accessed was Martin O'Malley's 'Back to the Caves', posted on 20 June 2006 on *CBS News: Analysis and Viewpoint,* at www.cbc.ca/news/viewpoint/vp_omalley/20060620.html. This article is no longer online, but many other websites still describe the exchange.

CODA

1 This novel's plotline reads like a satire of the speculative fiction described in Chapter 1. Through a series of misadventures, the wartime protagonist, Philip Vaudell, drifts down to Antarctica on a raft, where he discovers a land dominated by descendants of the people of Atlantis, who regularly sacrifice the neighbouring Leprechauns to Satan. These Atlantian Satanists are involved through long-range electrical forces with the war, controlling the weather in order to help the Nazis. Philip and his sidekick Gloria Smith (a stowaway on the raft who becomes Philip's lover) stop them from sabotaging the D-Day landings, losing their own lives in the process.
2 Chabon, *Kavalier and Clay*, 426, 439.
3 Elena Glasberg notes that this scenario is 'modeled on actual US-German tension in Greenland' ('Who Goes There?' 645).
4 Chabon, *Kavalier and Clay*, 436.
5 Ibid., 434, 443.
6 Ibid., 463–4.
7 Ibid., 465.
8 Ibid., 437.

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Index

AAE *see* Australasian Antarctic Expedition (AAE)
Abbott, Edwin, 38
action-adventure-eco-thrillers, 5, 22–23, 46, 47, 49, 134, 138, 177
Adebayo, Mojisola, 14, 105–7
Adelie Blizzard (newspaper), 117, 118, 120, 122, 138, 164, 165
Adélie Mail & Cape Adare Times (newspaper), 118
Adelphi Theatre (London), 129
'Adrift in the Floating World' (article), 135–36
Adventures of an Ice Princess, 134, 144, 146–47, 149
Aeteoroa *see* New Zealand
Against the Day, 40
Age of Mammals, 162
Aladdin's Cave (ice cavern), 113
albatross, 107
  'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', in, 19, 61, 62, 64, 75, 81, 167, 175
Aldiss, Brian, 48, 49
Alexander, Caroline, 108
aliens, 11, 18, 22, 23, 43, 56, 66, 69–70, 73, 101, 135, 169, 177, 180
  At the Mountains of Madness, 42, 59, 64–65, 71, 75, 154, 168
  'Who Goes There?' (short story), 13, 42, 59, 75–81, 168, 171
Allen, David, 128
Alley, Richard, 176
allochronic fiction, 159–66
Alone, 53, 181
Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay, The, 180–82
American Civil War, 162
Amundsen, Roald, 5, 19, 69, 70–71, 72, 84, 85, 86, 92, 99, 100, 158, 161, 162, 165, 174
  dogs, use of, 109–10
ancient Greeks, 16, 18, 23, 26, 27, 29, 35, 36, 55, 57, 105, 162
Ancient Mariner *see* 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner, The' (poem)
ancient Romans, 55, 64, 166
Anderson, Benedict, 156
Angels in America (play), 4
animals, 107–10
  cats, 106, 108
  cows, 75
  dogs, 70, 75, 76, 86, 93, 108, 109–10, 119, 148, 158
  ponies and mules, 108–9, 169
  see also birds; seals/sealing; whales/whaling
Anna Karenina, 86
Anno Domini, 2000 or, Woman's Destiny, 25
Another World and Yet the Same, 27–28, 29–30
Antarctic,
  Arctic, contrasted with, 12–16, 159, 160
  early maps, 26–28, 29, 31, 32, 43
  term, etymology of, 26–27, 29
  see also South Pole
Antarctic Bestiary, 23–24
Antarctic Dictionary, 26
Antarctic Fury, 22
Antarctic Mystery, An, 64, 112
Antarctic Navigation, 135, 136, 144, 148, 154, 172
Antarctic Petrel (magazine), 118
'Antarctic Regional Terraforming Project' (online game), 47–48
'Antarctic Transformation, The' (short story), 47
Antarctic Treaty (1959), 16, 17, 22, 34, 46, 48, 49, 50, 52, 134, 139, 151
Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties (ATCP), 7
Antarctic Treaty System, 47, 83, 134
'Antarctica' (1977 poem), 85, 98
'Antarctica' (1985 poem), 96
'Antarctica' (1990 poem), 161
'Antarctica' (1994 poem), 53
'Antarctica' (1996 poem), 5
Antarctica (novel), 34, 174
  science and utopia in, 48–52
Antarctica on a Plate, 136, 148

'Antarcticas of the Imagination: American Authors Explore the Last Continent 1818–1982' (unpublished thesis), 17
Antarctilyne, 153–54, 168
Antarktikos (Greek term), 26, 27
Antarktische Intelligenzblatt, Das (newspaper), 118
anthropomorphism, 107–8
Antrobus, John, 91
Arctic, 2, 35, 55, 58, 60, 61, 65
  Antarctic, contrasted with, 12–16, 159
  early maps, 36, 37, 43
  see also North Pole
Arctic Miscellanies, 119
'Arctic Sublime, The' (essay), 11
Argod, Robert, 25–26
Argonauts of the South, 124–25
Aristotle, 26
Armata, 40
Armitage, Albert, 128, 129
Arthur, Elizabeth, 135, 144, 154, 172
Arthur, King, 170, 171
artists and writers programmes, 7–8, 9, 105, 134, 136, 151
Arts Council England, 105
Astounding Science-Fiction (magazine), 64, 75
At the Mountains of Madness, 42, 59, 64–65, 71, 75, 154, 168
'At the Mountains of Murkiness, or, From Lovecraft to Leacock' (short story), 42
ATCP *see* Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties (ATCP)
Atkinson, Edward, 71, 163
  'Requiem Antarctica', character in, 73, 170–71
'Atlantis, The' (serialized story), 32
Atwood, Margaret, 61
Aubrey, Jack *(Desolation Island)*, 4
'Audley Court' (poem), 117
Aurora Australis, 119
Aurora Borealis (newspaper), 118, 119
Austen, Jane, 132
Australasian Antarctic Expedition (AAE), 53, 68, 99, 111, 112, 117, 118, 120, 123, 124, 131, 135, 156, 172
  Adelie Blizzard, 117, 118, 120, 122, 138, 164, 165
  literary activities *see* literary activities in Antarctica
  The Washerwoman's Secret (opera), 131
  see also Bickerton, Frank; Close, John; Hannam, Walter; Hurley, Frank; Laseron, Charles; Mawson, Douglas; McLean, Archie; Moyes, Morton
Australe connue, 29
Australia, 7, 27, 28, 31, 47, 129, 130, 161
Australian Antarctic Division, 136
Australian Broadcasting Commission, 91
Australian Women's Weekly (magazine), 144
Australis; or The City of Zero (play), 36–37
avarice and exploitation, 43–48
  mineral resources *see* mineral exploitation
Avengers (character), 6
AVP: Alien vs. Predator (film), 81

Bailey, Auden, 24
Bainbridge, Beryl, 4, 93–94, 157
Bakhtin, Mikhail, 154
Ballard, J.G., 10, 82
Barbarossa (Frederick), 170
Barkawi, Tarak, 160
Barker, Les, 109
Barne, Michael, 126, 129, 130
Barrie, J.M., 170
Batchelor, John Calvin, 24, 103
'Bathybia' (short story), 39
Batman (character), 6
Bauer, E., 34
Bay of Whales, 100, 165
Beale, Charles, 34, 39
Beck, Peter, 14
Belgica Antarctica (midge), 166
Belgica expedition, 57, 74, 77, 130 *see also* Cook, Frederick
Bellow, Saul, 4, 15
Bencolo *(Voyage of Will Rogers)*, 34, 43, 45
Benjamin, Philip, 14, 134, 139, 141, 142
Bernacchi, Louis, 121, 127
Beyond the Great South Wall, 34
'Bibliographical Tour of Antarctic Fiction' (article), 13
Bickerton, Frank, 117
Big Bang Symphony, The, 150
Big Dead Place (website), 80–81
Big Ice, 22, 48
Big Magnet ('Who Goes There?'), 75, 77, 78
Biggles (character), 6, 44
Biggles Breaks the Silence, 43
Billing, Graham, 134, 139, 141, 142
Bird Life at the Pole, 85
birds, 34
  albatross *see* albatross
  penguins, 1, 5, 16, 24, 84, 92, 107–8, 139, 140, 141–42, 163, 164
  see also animals
Birth of the People's Republic of Antarctica, The, 24, 103
Birthday Boys, The, 93–94, 157
Bisbee, Eugene, 162
'Black as the Pit, from Pole to Pole' (short story), 39, 65–66

'Black Cat, The' (short story), 72
Black Ice, 22
Blavatsky, Madame (H.P.), 56
Bleak House, 114
Bledsoe, Lucy Jane, 150, 151
Blizzard (newspaper), 118, 164
blogs, 132
Blue Mars, 49
Bombastes Furioso (play), 126
books and libraries (expedition activities), 112–17, 120, 125, 132
Borchgrevinck (Carsten Egeberg), 50
Bouvé, Edward, 162, 163
Bouvet Island, 81
Bowers, Birdie, 71, 73, 74, 84, 89, 90, 93, 94, 155, 158, 159, 163, 164, 169, 171, 174
Brass Monkeys (tv production), 16
Brenton, Howard, 92
'Bride of the Antarctic' (short story), 72–73
'Bridget Jones Goes to the Pole' (article), 144
Brief History of the Dead, The, 48, 82–83, 85, 178
British Antarctic Expedition 1910–1912
see Terra Nova expedition (Scott)
British Antarctic Survey, 7, 105
Brockmeier, Kevin, 48, 82, 85, 178
Bronte, Charlotte, 112
Browning, Scott, 42, 171
Brussof (Bryusov), Valery, 32
Bulletin, The (magazine), 98, 108, 138
Burke, David, 46
Burns, Robin, 160
Burroughs, Edgar Rice, 162
Byrd, Richard, 42, 53, 138, 180, 181, 182
first expedition, 64, 75, 81, 85, 100
second expedition, 75, 77, 78, 80, 81
third expedition, 102

Caesar, Adrian, 85
Caine, Hall, 97
Caliban *(The Tempest)*, 107
Campbell, John W., 2, 13, 19, 42, 59, 75–81, 133, 168, 171
Campbell Island, 25
Canterbury Museum (Christchurch, NZ), 129
Cape Evans, 92, 169, 172
Cape Horn, 162
Cape Royds, 141, 173
Captain Oates's Left Sock (play), 91
'Captain Scott's Biscuit' (article), 136
Carpenter, John, 80
Caspak *(Land that Time Forgot)*, 162
Caspar the Friendly Ghost (character), 6
Catalogue of Books of the 'Discovery' 1901, 129
cats, 106, 108
Centuries Apart, 162–63
Chabon, Michael, 180, 181, 182
Charter for the Settlement of Mars *(White Mars)*, 48
Chaucer, Geoffrey, 26
Cherry-Garrard, Apsley, 71, 84, 85, 91, 93, 94, 114, 122, 163, 169, 174
chick-lit, 5, 39, 134, 143, 144, 146, 147–48, 150
children's fiction, 6, 43, 95, 168
Christian, Michael, 85
Christie, Agatha, 4
chronotopes, 154, 155, 179
Cinderella (pantomime), 132
Circumpolar!, 40
Clair, Daphne, 143, 147, 148
Clarke, Arthur C., 42
climate change, 105, 139, 176–77, 178
see also global warming
Close, John, 114
Clough, Brenda, 172
Coalsack ('The Polar Vortex'), 67
Coca Cola Corporation, 48
Coetzee, J.M., 104
Cold War, 22
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, 2, 3, 9, 12, 19, 38, 55, 59, 60–62, 68, 75, 79, 81, 105, 116, 133, 167, 175
Collier, Marjory, 99
colonial expansion, 62, 113 *see also* postcoloniality
Columbus (Christopher), 64
comedy, 37, 84, 91–92, 98–99, 109, 118, 120, 122, 127, 128, 129, 138, 139, 141, 164, 166, 177 *see also* satire
comics, 6, 180
Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, A, 163
Conquest of the South Pole, The (play), 5, 16, 85
Cook, Frederick, 57, 77, 130
Cook, James (Captain), 24, 29, 31, 41, 45, 56, 60, 61, 102
Cooper, Edmund, 82, 103
Cooper, James Fenimore, 2, 3, 23, 32, 39, 45, 97, 102, 133, 134, 138
Cordes, Fauno, 13
Cormick, Craig, 24, 85, 98–99
cosmology, 35, 55, 178
Count of Monte Cristo, The, 116
Coverack, Jenny, 97
Cowan, Frank, 33
cows, 75
Craft, Ellen, 105–7
Crates, 27
'Crean. Night Watch' (poem), 133
Crichton, Michael, 48
Cro-Magnon man, 162

'Cross Currents' (short story), 42
cross-dressing, 99, 106, 132
Crossley, Louise, 160
Crusoe (Robinson) (character), 103
Cry of the Penguins (film), 139, 142
cryonics, 166–73, 176, 177 *see also* time travel
Cthulhu Mythos, 64
Cunningham, (Dorothea) Beall, 103
cyberpunk, 5

Daily Graphic (newspaper), 88
Dake, Charles, 64, 162
Danger Bay, 22
Dante, 35, 57
Darlington, Jennie, 143
Darrieussecq, Marie, 2, 144, 148, 157, 167, 176, 177
Darwin (Charles), 117, 139, 162
  social Darwinism, 160
Das Antarktische Intelligenzblatt (newspaper), 118
Das Opfer (opera), 107–8
'Das Tagebuch Shakeltons' (short story), 85
David Copperfield, 116
Davidson, Peter, 15
Day After Tomorrow, The (film), 19, 82, 178
De Mille, James, 32, 56
Dead Ringers (tv series), 84
Debenham, Frank, 163
Deep Current, 82
Defoe, Daniel, 43
Degrees of Separation, 8, 134, 149
Deleuze, Gilles, 175
Delpeut, Peter, 73, 74
'Descent into the Maelstrom' (short story), 63
'Desert and Ice: Ambivalent Aesthetics', 11
Desolation Island, 4, 43
'Deucalia' (*Armata*), 40
Dialogic Imagination, 154
Dian of the Lost Land, 162
diaries and journals, 57, 67, 69, 70, 77, 90, 94, 101, 108, 111, 112, 114, 115, 116, 117, 119, 123, 126, 129, 130, 156
  Scott, Robert F., 8, 70–71, 86–87, 88, 91, 93, 155–56, 158, 172
Dickens, Charles, 111, 112, 114, 116
Die Eroberung des Sudpol, 5
Die Südpolexpedition des Kapitäns Scott (play), 89–90, 107
Discovery (ship), 127, 129
Discovery: The Story of the Second Byrd Expedition, 75, 77, 78
  'The Lunatic Fringe' (chapter), 78
Discovery expedition (Scott), 77, 112, 117, 121, 123
  Dishcover Minstrel Troupe, 128–29
  Ticket of Leave (play), 126–31, 132
  see also Allen, David; Armitage, Albert; Barne, Michael; Bernacchi, Louis; Duncan, James; Feather, Thomas; Hodgson, Thomas; Royds, Charles; Scott, Gilbert; Skelton, Reginald; Wild, Frank; Wilson, Edward
Dishcover Minstrel Troupe, 128–29
Diski, Jenny, 7, 135, 144–45
diurnal disturbances, 155–59
Dobson, Rosemary, 168
Doc Savage (character), 6
Doctor Who (character), 6
documentaries, 16, 85
Dodds, Klaus, 14
Dog Town ('Who Goes There?'), 75
dogs, 70, 75, 76, 86, 93, 108, 109–10, 119, 148, 158
'Dogs' (poem), 109–10
Dombey and Son, 116
Dorfman, Ariel, 4, 18, 48
Doty, Roxanne, 160
Doyle, Arthur Conan, 112
Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde (characters), 57
Dr Who (tv series), 6, 80, 155, 168
drama *see* plays
Drifting at the Bottom of the World, 24
Drowned World, The, 82
Drummond, Hamilton, 168
Drygalski, Erich von, 118
Duffield, Marjorie, 85
Duncan, James, 126
DVDs, 132
dystopian societies, 32, 49–50, 82, 103, 171

Earhart, Amelia, 39
early myths and legends, 18, 23–29
eco-thriller *see* action-adventure-eco-thrillers
Edward, Robert, 97
Elephant Island, 116, 117
Eliot, T.S., 4, 5, 74
Elizabeth Costello, 104–5
Ellsworth, Lincoln, 42
Encyclopedia Britannica, 116, 117
End of the Earth, 135
Endeavour (ship), 24
Endurance (poem), 85
Endurance (ship), 4, 5, 16, 34, 84, 85, 98, 99, 107, 108, 174
Endurance expedition (Shackleton), 4, 5, 16, 34, 74, 84, 85, 98, 99, 107, 108, 116–17, 165 *see also* Hurley, Frank; Lees, Thomas; Wild, Frank

Enlightenment, 29
Entertainment Weekly (magazine), 143
environmental politics, 3, 10, 23, 46–48, 50, 51, 82, 103, 176–78
  climate change, 105, 139, 176–78
  global warming, 50, 105, 137, 178
  ice-caps, shrinking of, 46, 50, 82, 107
  see also mineral exploitation
Eratosthenes, 27
Erebus (Mount), 57, 127
Eroberung des Sudpol, Die, 5
Erskine, Thomas (Lord Chancellor), 40–41
Evans, Edgar, 71, 94, 157, 169
expeditions, 3, 4, 10, 19, 34, 42, 56, 70, 72, 85–87, 97, 107, 109, 112, 114, 115, 172
  Australasian Antarctic Expedition *see* Australasian Antarctic Expedition (AAE)
  Belgica expedition, 57, 74, 77, 130
  Discovery expedition *see Discovery* expedition (Scott)
  Endurance expedition *see Endurance* expedition (Shackleton)
  Filchner expedition, 182
  Franklin expedition, 61, 118, 125, 167–68
  German South Polar Expedition, 118
  literary activities *see* literary activities in Antarctica
  Nimrod expedition *see Nimrod* expedition (Shackleton)
  Nordenskjöld expedition, 115, 116
  Palmer-Pendleton expedition, 62
  Parry expedition, 117–18, 119, 120, 125, 127, 131
  Ronne expedition, 143
  Ross expedition (James Clark), 6
  Terra Nova expedition *see Terra Nova* expedition (Scott)
  United States Exploring Expedition, 59
  see also explorers; Heroic-Era exploration
exploitation *see* avarice and exploitation
explorers, 3, 4, 10, 19, 34, 42, 56, 70, 72, 85–87, 97, 107, 109, 112, 114, 172
  Amundsen, Roald *see* Amundsen, Roald
  Byrd, Richard *see* Byrd, Richard
  Drygalski, Erich von, 118
  Franklin, Sir John, 61, 118, 125, 167–68
  Mawson, Douglas, 19, 39, 50, 53, 57, 84, 86, 97
  Nobu, Shirase, 102
  Nordenskjöld, Otto, 115, 116
  Parry, William Edward, 117–18, 119, 120, 125, 127, 131
  Ross, James Clark, 6, 125, 130
  Scott, Robert F. *see* Scott, Robert F.
  Shackleton, Ernest *see* Shackleton, Ernest
  see also expeditions

Fabian, Johannes, 160
fantasy *see* science fiction and fantasy
Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion, 13
Fascists, 103
'Father for My Son, A' (unpublished play), 97
Fearnley, Laurence, 8, 134, 149
Feather, Thomas, 130
female transformation narratives, 143–52
Ferguson, Malcolm, 66, 69
Filchner expedition, 182
films, 6, 16–17, 19, 23, 73–74, 79, 80–81, 82, 89, 132, 139–41, 142, 173, 178 *see also* individual titles
Finkel, Douglas, 85
Fire Down Below, 4
Fire on the Snow, The (radio play), 90–91
First World War, 87, 114, 170
Fitting, Peter, 39
Flatlanders *(Flatland)*, 38
Flying Dutchman myth, 168
Foigny, Gabriel de, 29
Follett, James, 48, 82
Foote, Bud, 170
Forbidden Quest, The (film), 73–74
Forbush and the Penguins, 134, 139, 141–42, 147
'Forgotten World, The' (short story), 34
Fram (ship), 165
Frankenstein, 13, 39, 61, 65, 66
Franklin expedition, 61, 118, 125, 167–68
Freeze Frame, 22, 47
Freud (Sigmund), 55, 175
Frozen Heart, 143, 147–48
Frozen Pirate, The, 167, 168
Fuchs, Arved, 174
Fukkatsu No Hi (film), 82, 178
future time, 176–79

Garner, Helen, 1, 135
Gemmell, Nikki, 135, 136, 144, 145, 147
gender politics *see* women, depiction of
genre fiction *see* types of fiction
German South Polar Expedition, 118
Gethen *(Left Hand of Darkness)*, 101
G.I. Joe (character), 6
Gibbs, George W., 102
Gibbs, Wolcott, 85
Gifford, Terry, 137
Glacial Age, 162
Glacier Tongue (newspaper), 118
Glasberg, Elena, 17, 81, 102–3, 161, 175, 176
global refuge, 81–83
global threat, 81–83, 104

global warming, 50, 105, 137, 178 *see also* climate change
Godwin, Joscelyn, 36, 56
Goering, Reinhard, 89–90, 107
Goffman, Erving, 119, 120
gold, 22, 34, 43–44, 46, 140
Golding, William, 4
Google Books, 132
gothic tradition, 9, 11, 19, 23, 30, 55, 59–66, 71, 133, 134, 154, 182
At the Mountains of Madness, 42, 59, 64–65, 71, 75, 154, 168
The Forbidden Quest (film), 73–74
Frankenstein, 13, 39, 61, 65, 66
'MS. Found in a Bottle' (short story), 62, 64
The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket, 59, 63–66
'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' *see* 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner, The' (poem)
'Who Goes There?' (short story), 13, 42, 59, 75–81, 168, 171
see also horror fiction; science fiction and fantasy
Grant, Kenneth, 56
Graphic (newspaper), 90
Great Southern Land, 27, 28
Great White Silence, The (documentary), 73, 74
Great White Way, 34
Greatest Adventure, The, 162
Green Mars, 49
Greenpeace, 47
Grosz, Elizabeth, 58
Groundhog Day (film), 173
Guattari, Felix, 175
Gulliver's Travels, 28
Guth, Alan, 178

Haggard, Rider, 112
Hahn, Charles Curtz, 34
Hains, Brigid, 139
Hall, Joseph (Bishop), 27–28, 29, 33, 37
Halley, Edmund, 38
Halloween (film), 80
Hannam, Walter, 164
Happy Feet (film), 16–17
Hardy Boys (characters), 6
Harris, Robert J., 73, 170
Harrisson, Charles, 53
Hartley, Catherine, 136, 144
Hawking, Stephen, 178
Hawks, Howard, 79
Haynes, Roslynn, 11, 138
Henry VII (King), 163
'Heroes' (essay), 101
Heroic-Era exploration, 17, 19, 68, 77, 83, 84–110, 111, 134, 138, 141, 142, 157, 163, 165
alternative views, 96–110
base huts, 20, 72, 78, 100, 113, 114, 115, 119, 122, 123, 125, 126, 129, 131, 132, 141, 142, 164, 169, 172, 173, 176, 182
gothic/horror stories, 68–74
literary activities *see* literary activities in Antarctica
literary legacy, 73, 75, 83, 84, 85, 87–96, 100, 101, 105, 107, 108, 109–10, 170, 172, 174–76
Heym, Georg, 4, 85
Hince, Bernadette, 26
Hints to Travellers, 114
Hipparchus, 26
History of Gargantua and Pantagruel, 166
Hoar, Stuart, 93
Hodgson, Thomas, 128
Hoffman, Cheryl, 146
Hollandia expedition *(The Forbidden Quest)*, 73–74
Hollow Earth, The: The Narrative of Mason Algiers Reynolds of Virginia, 40, 103
hollow-earth theory, 12, 38–40, 41, 58, 63, 64, 65, 95, 103, 104, 135, 145
Holt, Kare, 85
homosexuality, 101 *see also* lesbianism; queer politics
Hood, Robert, 42
horror fiction, 16, 19, 75, 76, 78, 79, 80, 81, 154
gothic, and *see* gothic tradition
heroic era horror, 68–74
see also science fiction and fantasy
'Hot Weather Outburst, A' (poem), 98
Houyhnhnmland *(Gulliver's Travels)*, 28
Hughes, Howard, 39
Huntford, Roland, 86–87, 88, 91, 92, 94, 109
Hurley, Frank, 6, 73, 74, 117, 124–25, 131
Hurt, John, 142

I May Be Some Time: Ice and English Imagination, 13, 17
Ice (Follett), 48, 82
Ice (Nowra), 48
Ice, The, 2–3, 6, 151
'Ice at the Bottom of the World, The' (short story), 98
ice-caps, shrinking of, 46, 50, 82, 107
'Ice House' (poem), 97
'Ice Island' (short story), 85
Ice Reich, 22
Ice Station, 22–23
icebergs, 4, 18, 24, 30, 41, 48, 53, 59, 60, 78, 82, 162, 167, 169
Icefire, 48

Idea of North, The, 15
Iliad, The, 116
Illustrated Arctic News, 118, 119
Immortal Light, The, 34
'In Amundsen's Tent' (short story), 69–71, 72, 76
'In Futuro' (short story), 121
In Shackleton's Wake, 174
In the Footsteps of Scott, 174
Inferno, 35, 57
International Geophysical Year (1957–8), 134, 140, 141
interplanetary channel (South Polar), 40–41
Inventio fortunata, 36
Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine, 73

Jacobs, W.W., 113
Jameson, Fredric, 10, 11, 49, 175
Jarvis, Tim, 174
Johansen, Hjalmar, 86
Johns, William Earl, 44
Johnson, Mat, 103, 104
Johnson, Nicholas, 81
Johnson, Seddon, 22
Jonnes, Christopher Bonn, 48
journals *see* diaries and journals
Journey to Mars, 41–42
Jumpers (play), 92
Jupiter, 18, 42
Just Tell Them I Survived, 160

Karageorge (Kara George), 170
Karge, Manfred, 4, 5, 16, 85
'Kathleen's Antarctic' (dance performance), 97
Katz, Cindi, 165
Keneally, Thomas, 2, 85, 98, 134, 135, 136
Kerridge, Richard, 177
Kindles, 132
Kipling (Rudyard), 109
Kirby, Andrew, 165
Kircher, Athanasius, 36, 38, 58, 63
Kristeva, Julia, 58, 72
Kushner, Tony, 4
Kwáičin/Kárkai (vulture-man), 24

La Découverte australe par un homme-volant, 29, 45
La Nouvelle France *(Centuries Apart)*, 162
Lacy's Acting Editions series, 129
Lady Betty Across the Water, 113
'Lady Shackleton's Freezer' (short story), 85, 98–99
'Land of Ice, The' (short story), 24
Land that Time Forgot, The, 162
Laplanders, 2

Larsen B ice shelf, 82, 178
Laseron, Charles, 68–69, 111, 132, 164
Lashly, William, 71
Last Continent, The, 82, 103–4
Le Guin, Ursula, 4, 10, 99–102, 103, 174
Leahy, John Martin, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 76, 79, 168
Lees, Thomas, 117
Left Hand of Darkness, The, 10, 101–2
legends, 25, 43, 46, 167, 168, 170, 172 *see also* mythology
Legler, Gretchen, 136, 144, 150
Leinster, Murray, 79, 80
Lemuria *(Neuroomia)*, 34
Lenz, William, 3, 17, 59, 60
Les Sphinx des Glâces, 64
lesbianism, 150 *see also* homosexuality; queer politics
Lessing, Doris, 4
Levick, Murray, 116
Léxuwa (ibis-woman), 24
Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins, The, 29, 30, 36
Lindbergh, Charles, 39
literary activities in Antarctica, 17, 19–20, 111–32
  books and libraries, 112–17, 120, 125, 132
  newspapers *see* polar newspapers
  plays, 20, 112, 125–32
  poetry and sledging songs, 20, 112, 113, 120, 122–25
Little America (base), 75, 77, 78, 100, 140, 180
Little Friend, The, 4
'Living Death, The' (short story), 69, 168
London Poetry Society, 122, 123
Long, Amelia Reynolds, 72
Loomis, Chauncy, 11, 12
Lopez, Barry, 155
Lorna Doone, 113
Love, Glen, 137
Lovecraft, H.P., 2, 39, 42, 59, 64–65, 71, 72, 73, 75, 79, 81, 133, 154, 168, 169
Lowes, John Livingston, 60, 61
Lupoff, Richard, 39

Macquarie Island, 132
Macrobius, 27
Madison, Russ, 48
Madrid Protocol (1991), 47, 83
Magnus, Olaus, 37
Mahon, Derek, 96
Mahy, Margaret, 168
Making of the Representative for Planet 8, The, 4
male transformation narratives, 139–43, 147, 182
Mallory, Roger (Rod), 14

Man Who Missed the War, The, 56, 180
Man Who Watched Trash, The, 48
Mandeville's Travels, 26
Manhire, Bill, 4, 6, 23, 103, 109, 124, 173
Maori people, 24, 25
Map of Power, 178
maps, 4, 35
Antarctic, 26–28, 29, 31, 32, 43, 56, 79, 94–95, 161
Arctic, 36, 37, 43, 161
Marie Celeste myth, 168
Mars, 18, 34, 41, 48–49, 103
Marshall, Edison, 162
Marston, George, 113
Mason, A.W.E., 97
Mastin, John, 34
Matthiessen, Peter, 135
Maverick, Liz, 134, 144, 146, 147, 149
Mawson, Douglas, 19, 39, 50, 53, 57, 84, 85, 86, 97, 99, 102, 111, 113, 114, 123, 132, 135, 156, 161, 172, 174
Adelie Blizzard (newspaper), 117, 118, 120, 122, 138, 164, 165
see also Australasian Antarctic Expedition (AAE)
Mawson: Life and Death in Antarctica, 174
'May Be Some Time' (short story), 172
McAnergney, Ken, 24–25
McCaughrean, Geraldine, 95
McDonald, Roger, 85, 98
McIver, George, 33, 34
McLean, Archie, 120, 122
McMurdo Bay, 57
McMurdo Sound, 177
McMurdo station, 8, 46, 48, 50, 147, 150, 155, 171
McNeish, Harry *(Mrs Chippy's Expedition)*, 108
Mear, Roger, 174
medieval *see* Middle Ages
'Meet the Real Ernest Shackleton' (unpublished play), 85
Megapatagonia *(La Découverte australe)*, 45
Melville, Herman, 4, 105
Mercator, Gerhard, 37
Mertz, Xavier, 84
metaphors and metonyms, 1, 3, 5, 7, 19, 32, 40, 56, 61, 71, 76, 78, 79, 82, 130, 131, 136, 147, 150, 159, 166, 172, 174
Michaels, Ann, 4, 97
Middle Ages, 18, 23, 27, 43, 56, 163
Miéville, China, 169
Millard, Frances Mary, 88–89
Miller, Benjamin, 82
Mills, Hayley, 142
Mills and Boon (publisher), 147, 148
mineral exploitation, 3, 23, 43–48, 137
gold, 22, 34, 43–44, 46, 140
oil, 22, 44, 46, 49, 140
plutonium, 22, 45
uranium, 22, 45, 47
Moby-Dick, 4, 66
Modern Languages Association database, 6
modernism, 3, 4, 10, 23, 154, 161, 165 *see also* postmodernism
Moj of the Antarctic (play), 14, 105–7
Monday at McMurdo, 46
Monikins, The, 32, 39
Monster from Earth's End, The, 79–80
Monte, Urbano, 36
Monty Python comedy team, 91–92
Moon Metal, The, 43
Moralia, 166
morality, 3, 45, 88, 172
More Die of Heartbreak, 4, 15
Moronia *(Another World)*, 29–30, 33, 37
Morrison, Toni, 102
Moss, Sarah, 13, 62, 92
Motoring in Queen Mary Land, 113–14
Moyes, Morton, 53–54, 55, 57–58, 61, 68, 69, 78, 79, 82, 83, 112, 164
Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management, 117
Mrs Chippy's Expedition: The Remarkable Journal of Shackleton's Polar-Bound Cat, 108
'MS. Found in a Bottle' (short story), 38, 52, 62, 64
Mu (mythological continent), 25
Mueller, Melinda, 85, 133
Mulder *(The X-Files)*, 6, 66
Mundus alter et idem, *see Another World and Yet the Same*
Mundus subterraneus, 36
Mundy, Robyn, 135
Murray, Carl, 27, 109, 110
Murray, James, 16
Murray, Les, 4, 161
My Antarctic Honeymoon, 143
Myth of the Explorer, The, 86
mythology, 18, 23–52, 54, 56, 57, 58, 59, 63, 64, 65, 66, 162, 167, 168, 170, 172
Heroic Era, 84, 87, 89, 91, 92, 93, 96, 105
see also legends
myths *see* mythology

Nabokov, Vladimir, 4
Nanny and the Iceberg, The, 4, 18, 48
Napoleonic Wars, 43
Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket, The, 25, 40, 59, 63–66, 102–3
legacy, 64–66, 103, 104

Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition, 4
Nature of Ice, The, 135
Navy vs. the Night Monsters, The (film), 80, 139
Nazis, 6, 22, 56, 103, 135, 180, 181, 182
Neanderthal man, 162, 164
Nelson, Victoria, 35, 55, 57, 133
Nemo, Captain *(Twenty Thousand Leagues)*, 4
Neruda, Pablo, 4
Neuroomia *(Neuroomia)*, 43
Neuroomia: A New Continent, 33–34, 38, 43
New Georgia Gazette, 118, 125 *see also North Georgia Gazette*
New Voyage Round the World, 43
New York Times (newspaper), 140
New Yorker (magazine), 99
newspapers *see* polar newspapers
Nicholls, Peter, 160–61
Nimrod (ship), 16, 39
Nimrod expedition (Shackleton), 16, 39, 113, 118
Ninnis, Belgrave, 83, 84
Nobu, Shirase, 102
Nordenskjöld expedition, 115, 116, 117
North Georgia Gazette, 119, 120
North Pole, 15, 28, 35–42, 55, 67, 166
  positive polarity, 56–57
  whirlpool *see* whirlpool myth
'North-West Passage, or Voyage Finished, The' (unpublished play), 125, 131
Northwest Passage, 61, 117–18, 125
Nowra, Louis, 48
nuclear power/weapons, 45, 46, 47, 82, 178
Nyby, Chrisopher, 79

Oates, Lawrence, 19, 21, 46, 71, 83, 84, 87–96, 156, 157, 169
  literary legacy, 83, 84, 87–96, 105, 170, 172
O'Brian, Patrick, 4, 43
oil, 22, 44, 46, 49, 140
Old Ones *(At the Mountains)*, 65, 66
Omai (Mai), 102
On the Cosmos, 26
On the Ice, 136, 144, 150
'One of the Most Intensely Exciting Secrets – The Antarctic in American Literature, 1820–1849' (unpublished thesis), 17
Opfer, Das (opera), 107–8
Ordeal by Innocence, 4
Out of Antarctica: Reflections on the Origins of People, 25
Outside Online (magazine), 143
Oxford English Dictionary, 26
Oxford University Press, 87
ozone hole, 40

Paige, Laurie, 143
Paine, Albert Bigelow, 34
Palmer-Pendleton expedition, 62, 63
Paltock, Robert, 29, 30, 36
Pan, Peter (character), 170
Parmenides, 27
Parry expedition, 117–18, 119, 120, 125, 127, 131
  'The North-West Passage, or Voyage Finished' (unpublished play), 125, 131
pastoral tradition, 20, 137–39, 144, 145, 149, 150
Pearson, T.R., 94
Peary (Robert Edwin), 57
penguins, 1, 5, 16, 24, 84, 92, 107–8, 139, 140, 141–42, 163, 164
Percy, Arthur, 162–63
Phantom, The (character), 6
Phillips, Watts, 129, 130, 131
Pickwick Papers, The, 111, 132
planets, 40–41, 43, 56, 101
  Jupiter, 18, 42
  Mars, 18, 34, 41, 48–49, 103
plays, 4, 5, 6, 14, 16, 17, 20, 36–37, 85, 89–92, 97, 112, 121–22
  expedition literary activities, 20, 112, 125–32
  see also individual titles
Plutarch, 166
plutonium, 22, 45
Poe, Edgar Allan, 2, 3, 12, 19, 23, 25, 32, 38, 39, 41, 43, 52, 59, 62–64, 65, 66, 68, 72, 74, 79, 81, 83, 102, 104, 106, 133
Poetics of the Antarctic, The: A Study in Nineteenth-Century American Cultural Perspectives, 17
poetry, 14, 17, 20, 59, 88, 89, 96, 107, 108–10, 133, 138–39, 168, 169, 173
  expedition literary activities, 20, 112, 113, 120, 122–25
  see also individual titles
'Poetry in Active Life' (address), 122, 123
Polar, 94–95
'Polar Games' (short story), 92
Polar Journal (journal), 6
polar newspapers, 19–20, 117–22, 125, 126, 132, 156–57
  Adelie Blizzard, 117, 118, 120, 122, 138, 164, 165
  Adélie Mail & Cape Adare Times, 118
  Antarctic Petrel, 118
  Aurora Borealis, 118, 119
  Blizzard, 118, 164
  Das Antarktische Intelligenzblatt, 118
  Glacier Tongue, 118
  Illustrated Arctic News, 118, 119
  New Georgia Gazette, 118, 125
  North Georgia Gazette, 119, 120

South Polar Times, 20, 59, 118, 119, 121, 122, 124, 163–64, 165, 177
polar portals, 35–42
hollow-earth theory, 12, 38–40, 41, 58, 63, 64, 65, 95, 103, 104, 135, 145
interplanetary channel, as, 40–41
whirlpool myth, 6, 18, 35–38, 40, 41, 43, 51–52, 58, 59, 63, 66, 158
see also North Pole; South Pole
polar psychotopography, 55–59, 66, 68, 82
polar vortex, 66–68, 135 *see also* whirlpool myth
'Polar Vortex, The' (short story), 66–68, 69, 72
Polaris of the Snow, 162
ponies and mules, 108–9, 169
Ponting, Herbert, 73, 120
Pope, Gustavus, 41–42
Porter, Dorothy, 4
postcoloniality, 10, 62, 103
postmodernism, 16, 40, 47, 65, 66, 104, 154, 175, 178 *see also* modernism
Pound, Reginald, 91
Powers of Horror, 58
Practical Ecocriticism, 137
Preston, Diana, 71
Pride and Prejudice (film), 132
Priestley, Raymond, 116
Project Gutenberg (website), 132
Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty (1991) *see* Madrid Protocol (1991)
Ptolemy, 27
pulp fiction (science fiction), 25, 42, 47, 64, 66, 72, 79, 152, 168, 180, 181
see also Astounding Science-Fiction (magazine); *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*; *Satellite* (fanzine); *Strange Stories* (magazine); *Weird Tales* (magazine)
Pym, 103, 104
Pynchon, Thomas, 4, 40
Pyne, Stephen, 2–3, 6, 8, 10, 17, 151, 174

Queen Mary Land, 113, 118
queer politics, 107 *see also* homosexuality; lesbianism
Quick, Before It Melts (film), 139–41, 142
Quick, Before It Melts (novel), 14, 134, 142
'Quitter, The' (poem), 123

Rabelais, François, 166
Race, The, 85
race politics, 102–7
Rarotonga (Cook Islands), 24
realism, 18, 20, 34, 43, 45, 60, 75, 102, 134–52, 154, 172, 177–78, 182 *see also* travel writing
Red Mars, 49
Reeves-Stevens, Garfield, 48
Reeves-Stevens, Judith, 48
Reilly, Matthew, 22–23
Relation d'un Voyage du Pôle Arctique, au Pôle Antarctique, 36, 43
religion, 84, 88, 133, 138, 140, 156
Renaissance, 26, 27, 30, 35, 43, 56
'repetition compulsion', 173–79
'Republic of the Southern Cross, The' (short story), 32, 43
'Requiem Antarctica' (short story), 73, 170–71
Retif de la Bretonne, Nicolas-Edme, 29
Revi-Lona: A Romance of Love in a Marvelous Land, 33, 45
Revise the World, 172
Reynolds, Jeremiah, 63
Richard, Mark, 98
Richmond, Colin, 92
Rickard, P., 166
Riddle of the Frozen Phantom, The, 168
Rieder, John, 81
Riffenburgh, Beau, 86
'Rime of the Ancient Mariner, The' (poem), 9, 55, 59, 60–62, 63, 75, 107, 116, 133, 167, 175
Rivals, The (play), 129
Roberts, F. Scott *see* Johnson, Nicholas
Robinson, Anne, 84
Robinson, Kim Stanley, 4, 34, 48–52, 174
Romanticism, 60, 62
Ronne expedition, 143
Roosevelt, Theodore, 114
Rosner, Victoria, 9
Ross, James Clark, 125, 130 *see also* Ross expedition (James Clark)
Ross, John, 57, 125
Ross expedition (James Clark), 6
Ross Ice Shelf, 50, 59, 147
Ross Island, 131, 163
Ross Sea, 172
Rowland, John Russell, 53
Royal Geographical Society, 114
Royal Terror Theatre, 126, 127
Royds, Charles, 128, 131
Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, The, 123
Rucker, Rudy, 40, 103, 104
Russell, W. Clark, 167
Ruysch, Johannes, 36, 37

Satan/Satanists, 45, 56, 57, 59
Satellite (fanzine), 42

satire, 14, 19, 28, 29, 30, 32, 39, 40, 56, 74, 81, 85, 91, 93, 104, 112, 121, 146, 147, 149, 163, 165, 174 *see also* comedy
Savile, Frank, 34
Schillat, Monika, 23
Schöner, Johann, 36
science, 3, 7, 8, 49, 55, 60, 62, 64, 83, 97, 134
  utopia, and *see Antarctica* (novel)
  see also environmental politics
science fiction and fantasy, 3, 4, 6, 11, 16, 19, 55, 66, 71, 134, 135, 171, 177
  film and television, 6, 19, 66, 79, 81, 82, 178
  horror, and *see* horror fiction
  pulp fiction *see* pulp fiction (science fiction)
  time travel, 21, 163, 164, 166, 170, 171, 172, 173, 175
  see also Aldiss, Brian; Ballard, J.G.; Campbell, John W.; Clarke, Arthur C.; Clough, Brenda; Le Guin, Ursula; Leahy, John Martin; Lovecraft, H.P.; Serviss, Garrett P.; Wyndham, John
Scooby-Doo (character), 6
Scott, Gilbert, 128, 130
Scott, Kathleen, 89, 90, 97, 169
Scott, Robert F., 34, 74, 102, 119, 123, 131, 138, 158, 163, 165, 169–70, 171
  Discovery expedition *see Discovery* expedition (Scott)
  dogs, use of, 109–10
  journals, 8, 70–71, 86–87, 88, 91, 93, 155–56, 158, 172
  literary legacy, 73, 75, 83, 84, 85, 87–96, 100, 101, 107, 108, 109–10, 174
  Terra Nova expedition *see Terra Nova* expedition (Scott)
  see also South Polar Times (newspaper)
Scott-Amundsen base, 155
Scott and Amundsen, 91, 94
Scott of the Antarctic (1971 play), 92
'Scott of the Antarctic' (1989 unpublished play), 93
Scott of the Antarctic (film), 89
'Scott of the Sahara' (Monty Python sketch), 91–92
Scott's Last Biscuit: The Literature of Polar Exploration, 13, 92
Scully *(The X-Files)*, 6, 66
Sea Lions, The; or, The Lost Sealer, 45, 97, 102, 133, 138
Seaborn, Adam, 39
seals/sealing, 31, 39, 44, 45, 60, 62, 97, 102, 133, 134 *see also* whales/whaling
Searchers, 42, 171
Second World War, 103
Secret Life of Puppets, 55
Secret of the Earth, 34, 39
'Secret of the South Pole, A' (short story), 168
'Seeds of Doom, The' *(Dr Who)*, 80, 168
Seeds of Time, The, 176
self-discovery *see* transformation narratives
Selk'nam (or Ona) people, 24
Service, Robert, 113, 123
Serviss, Garrett P., 43
Sex in the City (tv series), 145
sexual orientation, 101, 105, 106, 107, 150
Shackleton (tv miniseries), 85
Shackleton, Ernest, 4, 5, 16, 19, 34, 39, 59, 74, 84, 85, 86, 94, 98, 99, 100, 101, 105, 108, 113, 117, 119, 121, 122, 123, 126, 130, 141, 142, 146, 174
  Endurance expedition *see Endurance* expedition (Shackleton)
  Nimrod expedition, 16, 39, 113, 118
Shackleton Glacier, 113
'Shackleton's Drift' (short story), 85
Shakespeare (William), 129
Shaw, George Bernard, 91
Shelley, Mary, 13, 39, 61, 65
Sheridan, Richard, 129
Sherriff, R.C., 89
'Ship of Ice, The', 168
Shiver, 135, 136, 144, 145–46, 147, 148
Sidney, Philip, 114
Simpson, George, 177
Simpson-Housley, Paul, 3
Skating to Antarctica, 7, 135, 144–45
Skelton, Reginald, 127, 128, 130
Skin Doctors (firm), 153
slavery, 62, 104, 105–6, 107, 109
sledging songs, 20, 122–25
'Sleeping Bag, The' (poem), 120
'Small Brown Room, The' (short story), 97, 98, 138
Smith, David, 47
Smith, Michael, 88
Smith, S. Percy, 24
South (documentary), 73, 74
South England *(Centuries Apart)*, 162
South Georgia, 5, 24, 165, 174
South Magnetic Pole, 75, 124, 155, 171
South of the Sun, 143
South Polar Times (newspaper), 20, 59, 118, 119, 121, 122, 124, 163–64, 165, 177
South Pole, 4, 9, 15, 16, 25, 28, 30, 31, 32, 35–42, 48, 51, 55, 66, 67, 69, 70, 74, 84, 97, 98, 99, 100, 139, 155, 157, 158, 159, 161, 162
  negative polarity, 56–57
  whirlpool myth *see* whirlpool myth

South Pole Expedition of Captain Scott, The (play), 89–90
South Pole Sabotage (Choose Your Own Adventure, No 89), 22
'South South America' ('Sur'), 100
Southern Cross (constellation), 68
Southern Literary Messenger (newspaper), 63
'Southern Sacrifice, The' (poem), 108–9
'Southern Sledging Song', 124–25
South: The 'Endurance' Expedition, 4, 5, 74, 116
speculative visions, 22–52
  early myths and legends, 23–29
  polar portals *see* polar portals
  science and utopia *see Antarctica* (novel)
  utopias *see* utopian visions
Spiritual History of Ice, 56
'Spot of the Antarctic' (poem), 109
Spotswood, Christopher, 34, 38, 103
Spufford, Francis, 3, 13, 38, 59, 63, 87, 165
Stam, David, 112
Stam, Deirdre, 112
Stargate (tv series), 42
State of Fear, 48
Stevenson, Robert Louis, 57, 116
Stewart, Douglas, 4, 85, 90–91, 107
Stewart Island, 24
Stilson, Charles, 162
Stone Age, 160, 162
Stonington Island, 143
Stoppard, Tom, 92
Strabo, 27
Strange Discovery, A, 64, 162
Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder, A, 32, 56
Strange Stories (magazine), 72
Strenuous Life, The, 114
Sturridge, Charles, 85
sublime, 1, 11–12, 20, 56, 59, 60, 61, 63, 137
  see also pastoral tradition
Südpolexpedition des Kapitäns Scott, Die (play), 89–90, 107
Sun at Midnight, 54, 134, 148, 149
Sunday Times (newspaper), 148
Superman (character), 6
'Sur' (short story), 99–100, 174
Survivor, The, 85, 98, 134
Sutton, Paralee, 34
Swan, Robert, 174
Swift, Jonathan, 28
Swift, Tom (character), 6
Symmes, John Cleves, 23, 38–39, 40, 41, 63–64, 65, 104
'Symmes Antarctic Intelligencer, The' (newsletter), 81
Symzonia, 39, 63, 102, 103
'Tagebuch Shakeltons, Das' (short story), 85
Taine, John, 162
Tally, Ted, 91
Tamarereti (legendary explorer), 25
Tardis (*Dr Who*), 155
Tartt, Donna, 4
Tarzan (character), 6
television programs, 5–6
Tempest, The (play), 107
Tempest Down, 22
Tennyson (Alfred), 117
Terra Antarctica (early maps), 26
Terra Australis (early maps), 26, 31, 32, 61
Terra Australis Incognita (early maps), 27, 29, 55, 161
Terra Incognita (early maps), 27
Terra Incognita: Travels in Antarctica, 9, 135, 136
Terra Nova (play), 91
Terra Nova (ship), 165
Terra Nova expedition (Scott), 3, 4, 6, 8–9, 19, 46, 57, 70–71, 83, 86–87, 88, 99, 114, 119, 123, 135, 155–56, 157, 161, 162, 163, 165, 168, 177
  literary legacy, 73, 75, 83, 84, 85, 87–96, 100, 101, 107, 108, 109–10, 174
  Northern Party, 116, 118
  see also Atkinson, Edward; Bowers, Birdie; Evans, Edgar; Levick, Murray; Oates, Lawrence; Priestley, Raymond; Simpson, George; Wilson, Edward
terraforming, 47–48, 152
Terror (Mount), 57
Thackeray (William Makepeace), 114
theatricals *see* plays
Thing, the ('Who Goes There?'), 19, 75–81, 133, 171
Thing, The (1982 film), 80–81
Thing, The (2011 film), 81
Thing from Another World, The (film), 79
Thomas, Rosie, 54, 134, 148–49
Thomson, Alexa, 136, 145
Thousand Plateaus, A, 175
Three Musketeers, The, 116
Through the First Antarctic Night, 57
Ticket of Leave (1902 play), 126–31, 132
Ticket of Leave, A (1862 play), 129–30, 131
Tierra del Fuego, 24, 28
time, concepts of, 20–21, 153–79
  allochronic fiction, 159–66
  chronotopes, 154, 155, 179
  cryonics *see* cryonics
  diurnal disturbances, 155–59
  future time, 176–79
  'repetition compulsion', 173–79

time travel, 21, 163, 164, 166, 170, 171, 172, 173, 175
Time and the Other, 160
time travel, 21, 163, 164, 166, 170, 171, 172, 173, 175
Times (newspaper), 85, 122
Tinniswood, Peter, 92
'Tiptoe, on a Fence Post' (short story), 172
'To a Snow Petrel' (poem), 122
To the Lighthouse, 4
To the Poles without a Beard, 136, 144
Tolstoy (Leo), 86
tourism, 3, 7, 8, 46, 50, 85, 94, 134, 136, 137, 151, 163, 173, 174, 178, 182
Trail of Ninety-Eight, The, 113
transformation narratives, 17, 20, 45, 47, 48, 92, 133–52, 182
  female, 143–52
  male, 139–43, 147, 182
travel writing, 9, 17, 20, 87, 114, 135–37, 138, 144–45
Treasure of the Ice, 162
Treatise on the Astrolabe, 26
'True Story of Captain Oates, The' (short story), 92
Tsalal *(Arthur Gordon Pym)*, 102
Tuan, Yi-Fu, 11, 54
Tupia, 24
Turnstile, The, 97
Twain, Mark, 163
tweets, 132
Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Seas, 4
Two Mile Time Machine, The: Ice Cores, Abrupt Climate Change, and Our Future, 176
types of fiction,
  action-adventure-eco-thrillers, 5, 22–23, 49, 134, 138, 177
  chick-lit, 5, 39, 134, 143, 144, 146, 147–48, 150
  children's fiction, 6, 43, 95, 168
  cyberpunk, 5
  fantasy *see* science fiction and fantasy
  gothic *see* gothic tradition
  horror *see* horror fiction
  romance *see* chick-lit
  science fiction *see* science fiction and fantasy
  see also comics

Ui-te-rangiora (legendary navigator), 24, 25
Ulysses *(Inferno)*, 35
United States Exploring Expedition, 59–60, 63
uranium, 22, 45, 47
Urry, John, 178
Utley, Steve, 39, 65, 66
utopian visions, 6, 12, 18, 23, 28, 29–35, 39, 40, 45, 56, 100, 102, 104, 134, 135, 162
  science, and *see Antarctica* (novel)

V, 4
Verne, Jules, 2, 64, 112
Vespucci, Amerigo, 26
Victim of the Aurora, 134
Victory (ship), 125
Virginian, The, 115
Virus (film), 82, 178
Vogel, Julius, 25
Volcano, Del LaGrace, 105
Voyage of the Oui Oui Monsieur, The, 114
Voyage of the 'Pourquoi-Pas?', The, 114
Voyage of Will Rogers to the South Pole, The, 34, 103

Waldrop, Howard, 39, 65, 66
Walsh, J.M., 25
Washerwoman's Secret, The (opera), 131
Waste Land, The, 4–5, 74
Watson, Kathleen, 97, 138
Weakest Link, The (tv game show), 84
Weddell, James, 31
Weddell Sea, 31
Weir, Mordred, 72
Weird Tales (magazine), 42, 66, 69, 71, 79
Westfahl, Gary, 173–74
whales/whaling, 22, 31, 34, 36, 44, 46, 102, 106, 134, 165, 167, 168 *see also* seals/sealing
What the Ice Gets, 85, 133
Wheat, Chris, 5
Wheatley, Dennis, 56, 180
Wheeler, Sara, 9, 135, 137, 144
'When One Goes Forth a Voyaging, He has a Tale to Tell' (unpublished play), 121–22
'When the Earth Tilted' (short story), 25
'When Your Mitts Begin to Go' (poem), 120
whirlpool myth, 6, 18, 35–38, 40, 41, 43, 51–52, 58, 59, 63, 66, 158 *see also* polar vortex
White, 144, 148, 157–59, 167, 176, 177
White, The, 85
White City, 34
White Darkness, The, 95
'White Man's Burden, The', 109
White Mars, or, The Mind Set Free: A 21st-Century Utopia, 48–49
White Night, 22
Who (magazine), 153, 168
'Who Goes There?' (short story), 13, 42, 59, 75–81, 168, 171

Wide White Page, 103
Wide White Page, The: Writers Imagine Antarctica, 6
Wijkmark, Johan, 17
Wild, Frank, 74, 77, 117, 127
Wilkes, Charles, 4, 59–60
Wilkes Station, 14
Wilkins, Peter, 37
Williams, George, 138
Williams, Tess, 178
Williamson, Thomas, 71
Wilson, Edward, 71, 73, 84, 90, 93, 94, 119, 121, 127, 163, 169, 171, 174
Wilson, Edward M, 166
Wilson, Eric, 27, 56, 61, 62
Winter *(Left Hand of Darkness)*, 101
'Winter Journey' *(Worst Journey in the World)*, 84, 85, 174
Wister, Owen, 115
Woman Thou Gavest Me, The, 97
women, depiction of, 10, 20, 33, 58–59, 72–73, 85, 97–101, 104–7
  chick-lit, 5, 39, 134, 143, 144, 146, 147–48, 150
  transformation narratives, 143–52
Wonder Woman (character), 6
Woolf, Virginia, 4
World Park status, 47, 134
World War I *see* First World War
World War II *see* Second World War
Worsley, Frank ('Worsley Enchanted'), 107
'Worsley Enchanted' (poem), 85, 107–8
Worst Journey in the World, The, 94
  'Winter Journey', 84, 85, 174
'Wreck of the South Pole, The' (short story), 34
Wyndham, John, 176

X-Files, The (tv series), 66
X-Men (characters), 6

Yanama people, 24
Yelcho (ship), 100
Yi-Fu Tuan, 11, 54
Yolen, Jane, 73, 170