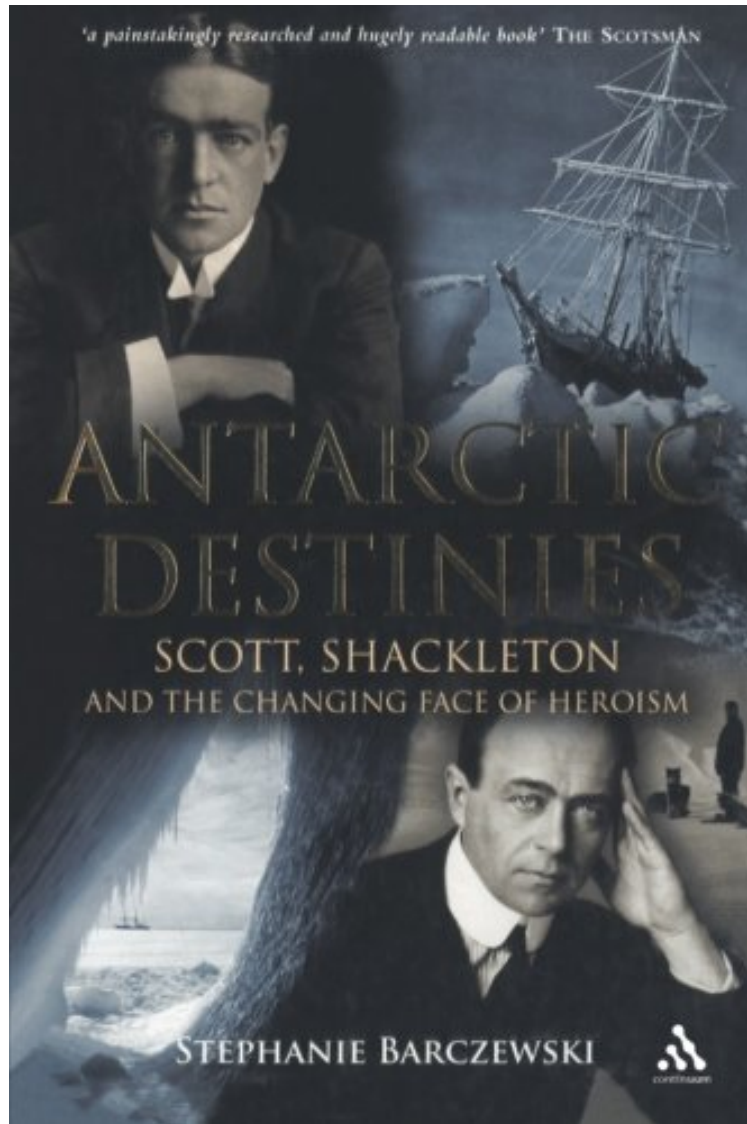


(Ebook free) Antarctic Destinies: Scott, Shackleton, and the Changing Face of Heroism

Antarctic Destinies: Scott, Shackleton, and the Changing Face of Heroism

Stephanie Barczewski

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Stephanie Barczewski : Antarctic Destinies: Scott, Shackleton, and the Changing Face of Heroism before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Antarctic Destinies: Scott, Shackleton, and the Changing Face of Heroism:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A Story of the Changing Legends of Two Antarctic Explorers By Roger D. Launius I have been interested in Antarctic exploration for many years and have read a broad range of books.

"Antarctic Destinies" is focused not so much on the expeditions themselves as on the memory of the men who led them. The two protagonists in this work by Clemson University history professor Stephanie Barczewski are the Englishman Robert Falcon Scott and the Anglo-Irishman Ernest Shackleton, and to a much lesser extent Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen. All three were motivated by the search for fame, and perhaps fortune, not unlike many other explorers of the nineteenth century. They sought the South Pole, first and foremost, but also overland trips across the continent and exploration of other parts of Antarctica. Barczewski begins with a general discussion of the heroic era of polar exploration and what heroism consisted of at the time, as well as the manner in which this era has been reinterpreted over the years since that early twentieth century experience. A succession of expeditions to Antarctica make up the first half of the book. The two central expeditions are Scott's Terra Nova expedition between 1910 and 1912 and Ernest Shackleton's Endurance expedition of 1914-1916. Roald Amundsen enters the story with his 1911 race to the South Pole, arriving there on December 14, 1911, some five weeks before Scott. Even so, Scott's reputation gained enormous status through his death/martyrdom in seeking the Pole. That race to the South Pole is well-known. Many books have explored the frenemy/rivalry status of Scott and Shackleton. Amundsen has always been a part of the story, of course, because he successfully reached the Pole first, documented his success beyond any doubt, and conducted important scientific studies during his expedition. Scott has been revered as one who died in the process, a hero to the cause of exploration and the British Empire. Shackleton was for many years seen as an also-ran who failed to achieve his objective. Barczewski makes her major contribution by assessing the manner in which the reputations of Scott and Shackleton have changed in the century since their race to the South Pole. Initially, Scott received the lion's share of credit for his daring-do, even as he lost his life in the process. Shackleton's reputation suffered for his failures. That remained pretty much the case until the latter half of the twentieth century. Over time the reputations of Scott and Shackleton have migrated in opposite directions. Scott has been interpreted as a huckster and something of a charlatan, and his memory has been colored by that rising perspective. Shackleton has gained stature with his Endurance expedition because of his commitment to ensure that the men on it made it safely home. In the process his failure has been restructured into a success. I am reminded of the manner in which the Apollo 13 mission, suffering a catastrophic failure in 1970 has been reinterpreted as a NASA success story since it found a way to bring the astronauts home alive. That mission's stature is now viewed as only slightly less consequential than the original Apollo 11 Moon landing. Barczewski makes the case that this transformation of the images of Scott and Shackleton have much more to do with significant cultural shifts in the United Kingdom especially the loss of empire and its current place as one of many strong nations but not the preeminent power in the world than any intrinsic meaning that might be assigned to the cause of global exploration. Nor do the lives of Scott and Shackleton have much to do with this change in their images. What we know about them has not changed much in the years since their deaths. The author structures this change in the reputations of these two explorers in relation to a set of major events that affected Western Civilization, as well as the nature of public commemoration in memorials, books, and other forms of scholarship and public presentation. This is a most interesting book for many reasons. Stephanie Barczewski emphasizes the knock-down-drag-out nature of the historiography on the polar quest. She shows the ins-and-outs of the various documentary materials, accounts of participants, and recollections after the fact. In her epilogue she mentions, but does not analyze, recent efforts to rehabilitate Scott's reputation. Her final suggestion is that in the post-9/11 world of the early twenty-first century it may be that emerging political conservatism could have created a climate more favorable to Scott (p. 311). There might be other explanations as well. A continuation of this exploration of memory of Polar Region exploration in the more recent past may well be in order for future historians.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. To the South Pole By Frank J. Konopka I have always been intrigued by polar exploration, both north and south, and have read many books on the subject. This one isn't so much a telling of the exploration stories of Scott and Shackleton as it is a look into their changing hero status. To be fair, there is a straight forward recitation of their respective expeditions, but that is really only a short part of the book. For the most part, the author gives the reader an almost decade by decade account of the rise and fall of the status of the two men. She resists trying to compare their successes and failures, although to be fair she tends to fault Scott a bit more than Shackleton. That seems to be the consensus of most of the writers concerned with these two men, so I have no quarrel with that. I do find somewhat annoying the attempt to use a modern psychological attempt at evaluating the character and actions of these two men. It seems that their status should be judged by the mores of their own time, and not the particular differences in approach of ours. Both were brave men who did things the ordinary people would not attempt, or be interested in attempting, and their respective success or failure should rest on how they were perceived by their contemporaries. After all, they were a product of their time. All in all, though, I did enjoy reading this book.

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Authoritative account By Richard Reaney An authoritative and well researched review. The author has used her literary skills with intelligence and there is evidence of a degree of passion for her subject. I have enjoyed the book immensely. I don't consider this a book for the novice. One needs a reasonable understanding of Antarctic exploration and history to appreciate the finer points encountered. There is a bias towards Scott in her comparisons, but the author makes her position clear from the outset; in fact her reason for writing the account. I am full of admiration for her exhaustive research on the achievements of the two explorers and their life and times. I have

found the account a wonderful addition to my Antarctic Library and it is already being used as a source of reference to other work. There are some factual errors in the text and in one photo along with some typographical errors, which are disappointing in such an authoritative review, but do not detract from the substance of the theme. I have pleasure in recommending this work. I believe all 'Antarcticans' would enjoy this account which offers a catalyst to 'polarise' one's views on the destinies of these two explorers.

This book covers the two most famous expeditions of the heroic age of Antarctic exploration, Robert Falcon Scott's Terra Nova expedition of 1910-12 and Ernest Shackleton's Endurance expedition of 1914-16. For decades after his tragic death on the return journey from the South Pole, to which he had been beaten by five weeks by the Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen, Scott was regarded as a saint-like figure with an unassailable reputation born from his heroic martyrdom in the frozen wastes of the Antarctic. In recent years, however, Scott has attracted some of the most intense criticism any explorer has ever received. Shackleton's reputation, meanwhile, has followed a reverse trajectory. Although his achievements were always appreciated, they were never celebrated with nearly the same degree of adulation that traditionally surrounded Scott. Today, Scott and Shackleton occupy very different places in the polar pantheon of British heroes. Stephanie Barczewski explores the evolution of their reputations, and finds it has little to do with new discoveries regarding their lives and characters, but far more to do with broader cultural changes and changes in conceptions of heroism in Britain and the United States.

"Exciting...As Stephanie Barczewski observes in "Antarctic Destinies," the meaning of the tales along with their moral lessons and cultural appeal has shifted over the course of a century." *The Wall Street Journal* (Michael J. Ybarra) "Antarctic Destinies is a fascinating story of culture and cultural identity. Barczewski raises interesting questions about what it means to be a hero and how heroes are made. [Barczewski's] book is an excellent and thought-provoking addition to the literature on these two compelling men and their incredible expeditions." *The Seattle Times* (David B. Williams) "Barczewski's book is a valuable addition...her unusual analysis of our Antarctic heroes provides us with a mirror in which we can see our own failings reflected in our changing cultural ideals."