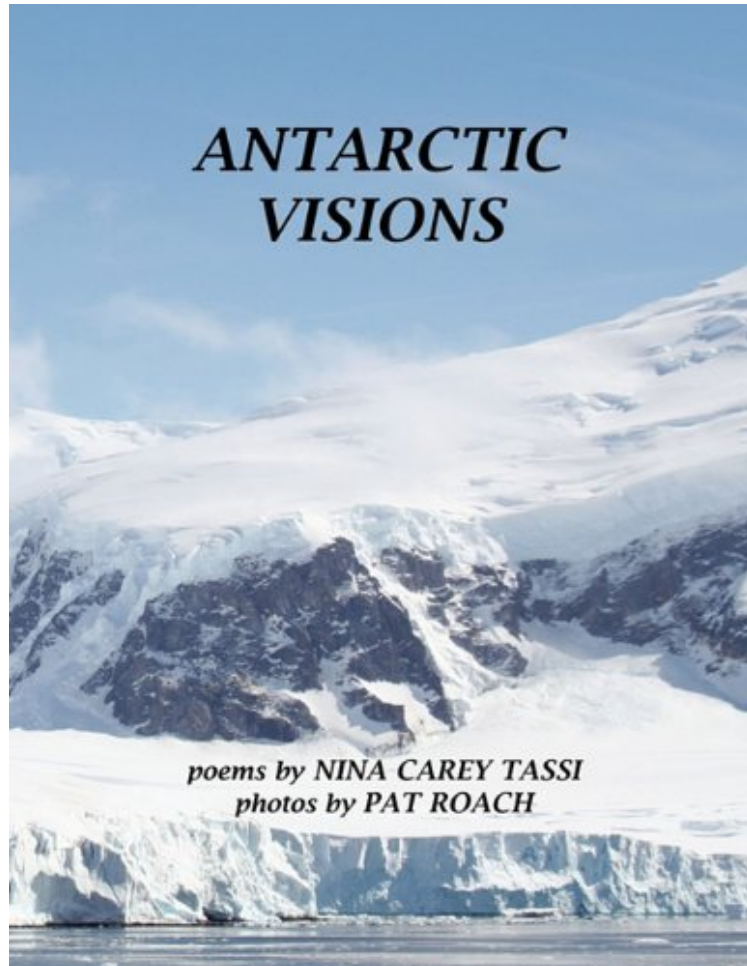


(Free pdf) Antarctic Visions

## Antarctic Visions

*Nina Carey Tassi*

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**Nina Carey Tassi : Antarctic Visions** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Antarctic Visions:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Antarctica Poems and Pictures: Visions and VoyagesBy Dorothy JamesNina Carey Tassi, poet, joins photographer, Pat Roach, in this unique book of visions of Antarctica. The word "visions" in the title is an appropriate one since Nina Tassi makes it clear in her clear and comprehensive introduction that the intention is not to provide a tourist's guide to the region but to capture in verse and picture "transfiguring moments" from their own eight-day expedition through Antarctica in January 2008. Most of us have never set foot in Antarctica--99 percent of us in fact, Tassi tells us--but many of us probably have some images in our minds, largely of vast white expanses of ice and snow in a cold gray sea. It is a surprise, therefore, to read that the "transfiguring" moments to be captured in this book are moments when the travelers felt "truly at home" in this cold, lonely continent. I had my own picture, fixed from my British childhood, of the great adventuring explorers of the Antarctic,

particularly Captain Scott, tragic hero, and I turned to this book, drawn by curiosity about what a poet would do with the landscape against which these near mythic figures fought their historic battles with nature. I was not disappointed. Looking through the book first simply at the pictures, I was stunned by the beauty of the place. Amazingly it is full of color: a variety of blues and shining blue-whites, deep reds of sunsets and reds and yellows of lichen, cheery blacks, whites and yellow-orange of penguins and a variety too of vastly different types of shapes, natural but often seemingly architectural--icebergs, rocks, mountains, caves. The photographs put before us the glory and majesty of this strange landscape, human beings shown only occasionally as tiny match-stick figures, completely and appropriately overshadowed by the natural world. The landscape however remains strange. The pictures alone do not, cannot, convey the sense that the travelers are "at home" in this amazing place. It is Nina Tassi who in her poems leads us by the hand into an emotional experience of what we are seeing. Some of the loveliest pictures show the reflections in the water of the mountains and the sky. The poem "Reflections" evokes "a new reality/Sun, sky and mountains come/To meet on the surface of the sea/Mirrors yet more than mirrors/Gathered to call to us/Of dreams we pull up from the deep . . ." and in some thirty lines, the poet paints "new dimensions" into the images before our eyes: we see how "reflections cradled on the sea/chase away the darkness . . ." These are not short, trivial word-pictures, telling us what we see in the photographs. They are substantial reflective poems, each one calling for a quiet, thoughtful reading. The human tourists voyaging through Antarctica in 2008 may play little part in the visual images--penguins, yes, and seals, strong pictures and unexpected poems (never just pretty, in fact sometimes red in tooth and claw!)--but before we even come to the great voyages of the past there are images of human labor in times past. One very strong poem, "At Whaler's Bay," where "whale bones lie in scattered heaps/rough burial mounds sucked dry/by time and wind . . ." conjures up a world of work and noise echoing through the silence of the present. All that is left to see and photograph are planks of rotten wood and dilapidated sheds, but the poet's eye sees "men on the broken stoop,/Men with elbows cradled on their knees,/Eyes fixed steadily on the deep." This poem gives us already an inkling of what awaits us in the last eleven poems in the book which move back in history from the tourists' expedition to the great exploratory journeys of the past, back to 1911-1922, to the voyages of Amundsen, Scott and Shackleton. These poems are a collection in themselves, and to me a very impressive single body of work within the book. Five poems tell the story of the Norwegian race to the South Pole led by Roald Amundsen, from the excited happy preparations for this mighty journey ("The Vikings") to the moment when they arrive and triumphantly plant the Norwegian flag ("The Little Tent"). There is an entire shattering poem on the huskies, on whom Amundsen's success partially rested, and an amazingly touching evocation of Amundsen's longing to reach the Pole ("Promise of a Kiss"). These five poems that end in triumph are followed by one that stands sadly, heroically alone, "Scott's Fate," a journey marked by failure, "a Norwegian flag flaps in the wind," and they set off on their doomed return journey, "defeat in every step." This is, to me, one stunning poem that will not disappoint those who grew up with the mystique of Captain Scott's last voyage, and will be a powerful introduction to those who did not. Some famous lines of Scott himself are incorporated into it. It is a daring poet who takes familiar, heart-stirring stories and makes a new poem out of them. Tassi has dared to do this, not inventing out of the whole cloth of imagination but carefully researching the historical record, the letters and diaries, and out of them recreating the terrible sadness as well as the enormous exhilaration of man's battle with the natural elements, sometimes lost, sometimes won. In the final very impressive poetic accounts of Ernest Shackleton's voyages, his attempts to cross the continent from sea to sea, his extreme loyalty to his men, the amazing rescue from Elephant Island, Tassi again succeeds in putting the reader right inside these shattering events. These last narrative poems of brave explorers pitting their human strength against the "loneliest, coldest place on earth" are a tour de force. They are different in content and perhaps in intent from the earlier poems that chronicle the personal reactions of the poet to the sights and sounds of Antarctica, but I do not think that Tassi could or would have written the explorers' narratives without having personally visited and been immensely moved by "this white continent of sheer ice. The poet's eye has seen through the bleakness of "the cold, dark loneliness of Antarctica" to where the sun transfigures the sky ("Light lifts the darkness"). But perhaps to understand the poet's "transfiguring moments," you have to read the poem "Woman on Antarctica" several times, slowly, and really absorb what she means by "a pleasure rarely felt, of sheer emptiness/Then slow expansion to enormity."

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Author's Summary by PoetBy Nina Carey Tassi Seeing Antarctica rise from the sea for the first time was like finding a new Garden of Eden created out of snow and ice. An immense solitude reigned over this remote and uninhabited continent at the southern edge of Earth. I was surprised by a rush of passionate feelings--awed by the grandeur of its harsh beauty, yet also struck by a sense of kinship. It was as if these mountains and glaciers and blue ice caves belonged to me. They were somehow my ancient home. After our ship arrived at the Antarctic peninsula, we spent fascinating days and evenings exploring the icy islands in small zodiacs. I kept hearing people say that it was impossible to describe in words the extraordinary sights that met our eyes. Yet I yearned to capture the depths of this experience. What began as fun and adventure had been transformed into an amazing spiritual voyage. I turned to my poetry as the only way to hold onto the beauty, and I asked my friend, photographer Pat Roach, to collaborate with me on a book. As a result, the poems and photos in our ANTARCTIC VISIONS do not provide a tourist's guide of an Antarctic expedition, but a record of those transfiguring moments when we felt truly at home in this coldest, loneliest continent on the planet. We

offer readers our reflections on Antarctica as an experience of transcendent oneness with the last pristine place on Earth. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Keepsaker gift! By Leopold Lebligue Armchair travelers longing to explore Antarctica via Nina Tassi's evocative-whimsical poems and Pat Roach's pristine photos will not be disappointed. Children and grandchildren will also be entranced with penguins sloping into the sea and seals sleeping on ice floes—far more than a visit to the zoo! The second half of the book dramatizes the journeys of the Antarctic explorers who first braved the frozen elements with courageous determination. This publication commemorates Roald Amundsen's Norwegian team one-hundred years after their South Pole victory December 14, 2011. If you are looking for the perfect Christmas book—this is it!

Book by Tassi, Nina Carey