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Antarctica and the Traumatic Sublime.

The British writer, Jenny Diski, having finally arrived in Antarctica, sits in a dinghy at the foot of an iceberg and muses: 'what … was the point of witnessing this sublime empty landscape and then passing on? …how do you become, as I wanted to be, part of this landscape, not making a quick tour through it?' (2008, 223). As she recounts in her 1997 travel memoir *Skating to Antarctica*, Diski has travelled to Antarctica on a cruise ship, the continent having become a more accessible destination for tourists during that decade. Her expression of desire for immersion in the landscape is unusual in a narrative that has been largely concerned with her search for avoidance, detachment and containment. The blankness, whiteness and 'purity' of the 'sublime empty landscape' of Antarctica, as she observes it in this moment of transient spectatorship, are precisely the attributes which have drawn her to the continent.

However, in Diski's narrative of 'skating to Antarctica', a moment occurs on a beach in South Georgia when the boundaries of sublime containment are breached. This moment involves elements of the Burkean sublime—privation, pain, danger and unsettlement of the subject—but it lacks the spectatorial distance which Burke required to allow the subject closure of the moment and pleasure through the aesthetic re-composition of that moment. It is a moment of embodied experience of the Antarctic environment during which elements that could be construed as sublime modulate into an interior landscape of traumatic affect (Diski, 2008, 164-167). The slippage between the sublime and the traumatic that Diski's memoir discloses has often recurred in representations of Antarctica shaping how it has been experienced and imagined. This essay will examine how Antarctica has become constructed as the traumatic sublime in some of these representations and will consider what is at stake in that process. It will focus on how the relationship between the sublime and the traumatic has been foregrounded in two periods through a reading of texts and images produced by explorers and visitors to Antarctica during those periods: the 'Heroic Age' of Antarctic exploration (from 1885 to 1922); and from the 1990s to the present day, a time of increased accessibility to tourists and also to writers, artists and photographers. The articulation of the relationship between the sublime and the traumatic in the Heroic Age texts of, for instance, R.F. Scott, Apsley Cherry-Garrard and Herbert Ponting, informs the negotiation of the traumatic sublime in contemporary literature and art. In the latter, the Antarctic sublime affords a matrix for reflection on current discourses of trauma, including personal trauma, as in Diski's memoir; environmental destruction and restoration, illustrated here by Sebastião Salgado's Antarctic photographs; and global warming, whose effects Judit Hersko represents in her Antarctic artwork.

I   Concepts of the sublime and the traumatic

Connotations of sublimity have long dominated the imagination and representation of Antarctica, affecting the perceptions of the first explorers to see and set foot on the continent (Spufford 2003, 41) as they do those of the writers, artists and visitors of today. In his 1757 work *A Philosophical Enquiry into Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, Edmund Burke lists the properties of the object which may arouse feelings of sublimity—and they are attributes also commonly associated with

Antarctica. They include obscurity, vastness, privation (through 'Vacuity, Darkness, Solitude and Silence') and above all power—the power to engulf and 'annihilate' the subject (2015, 58 and 56). Apprehension of the nature of the object experienced as sublime remains elusive to the rational subject, though, as 'the mind is so filled by its object, that it cannot … reason on that object which employs it' (2015, 47). In Burke's formulation, sublimity slips from denoting properties of the object to describing the feelings of the perceiving subject:

> 'Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant with terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling' (2015, 33 -34).

In Burke's account, knowledge of the sublime object is affective, arising through the interaction of the senses, mind and feeling (2015, 103-104).

Certain affects are common to the experience of both the sublime and trauma: both entail pain, horror and terror at the perception of a power great enough to remove agency from and potentially obliterate the subject. Both the sublime and trauma place the subject at the limits of the human. The etymology of both terms implies a spatial relationship: 'sublime' derives 'from the Latin *sublimis*, a combination of *sub* (up to) and *limen* (lintel, literally, the top piece of a door)' (Shaw 2005, 1) and 'trauma' derives from the Greek for 'wound'. As these derivations suggest, both terms evoke borders which may also be thresholds, but the sublime connotes the elevated and hence privileged position of the viewer, whereas 'wound' implies the continuing pain of the subject and 'leakage' across a breached border (Luckhurst 2008, 3). The two modes are also distinguished by the subject's proximity to the source of power. Feelings of sublimity are occasioned by the observer's distance from the sublime object, as Burke explains: 'at certain distances, and with certain modifications, [danger or pain] … are delightful' (2015, 34). In a traumatic situation, however, the subject's physical distance from the source of power is eradicated.

The connections and differences between the sublime and the traumatic may also be understood as being temporal and structural. Thomas Weiskel, in his still influential psychological model of the Romantic sublime, proposes that the sublime comprises three phases: a first phase, in which 'the mind is in a determinate relation to the object'; a second phase when this relationship breaks down and becomes 'radically indeterminate'; and a third phase in which the relationship between mind and object is renewed 'such that the very indeterminacy which erupted in phase two is taken as symbolizing the mind's relation to a transcendent order' (1976 23-24). Weiskel's model remains valuable, Paul Outka points out, because 'he so acutely identifies how sublime experience is built around a series of *transitions*, from quiescence to eruption to resolution, rather than necessarily inhering in any one of the phases' (2008, 35). Outka adapts Weiskel's structural model of the sublime to suggest that the sublime and trauma represent different 'resolutions of a similar moment when a given subject's identity merges with a nonhuman natural' (2008, 2).

Mariano Siskind also focuses on the structural and temporal composition of the sublime in his discussion of the first sighting of Antarctica by Captain Cook. He emphasizes that the sublime is initially 'phenomenological … articulated as an

individual experience, the subjective impression that a particular state of nature may cause in an individual'. It is subsequently aesthetic, through 'the moment of representation of that sublime impression', which includes 'a reconstitution of the distance between subject and object and, therefore, the possibility of the domination of that threatening particular state of nature'. He argues that for Cook, however, 'the radical sublimity of Antarctic nature' at the 'inaugural moment' of its sighting comprised 'solely the phenomenological instance' and resisted its recuperation by reason and concomitant appropriation to modernity and globalization. Antarctica's 'radical sublimity' is a key element, he proposes, of the continuing exceptionalism of the continent which is 'managed' by international agreement, not governed by national sovereignty (2005, 18-19).

In representations of Antarctica, the heightened relationship between the sublime and the traumatic troubles the movement from the phenomenological to the aesthetic that sublimity usually connotes. At moments when the sublime becomes traumatic in representations of Antarctica, specific ways of perceiving, feeling about and knowing the Antarctic environment become apparent. Through the passage of the sublime into the traumatic, connections which frame both our relationship with Antarctica and perceptions of the relationship of Antarctica to modernity, are destabilized, re-aligned and transformed. They are connections between, for instance: the embodied and the detached; the nearby and the distant; the past and the present; the material and the imagined; and the human and the 'nonhuman natural'.

II Antarctica in the Heroic Age

'Great God! this is an awful place': the embodied encounter

The association of Antarctica with the traumatic sublime began to circulate in the Heroic Age of Antarctic exploration. It was engendered in particular by representations of the 'doomed' journey to the South Pole undertaken by Robert Falcon Scott and his four companions during Scott's 1910-13 British Antarctic Expedition. During this period, the 'heroic' masculinity of the explorers was reinforced in the eye of the British public back home by their enactment of their endeavours within a landscape that was imagined as sublime.[i] The sublimity of the landscape is most strikingly evoked in the photographs of the expedition photographer, Herbert Ponting. Photographs like that of the Barne Glacier, with its depiction of a tiny figure and sledge at the foot of a towering white ice cliff, imbued the men on the march to the Pole with the grandeur of the landscape against which they pitted themselves (Spuffford, 2003, 36-37).

Scott's own representation of his experience on this and previous expeditions suggests an embrace of the phenomenology of the sublime. Burke's observation that 'Of feeling little more can be said, than that the idea of bodily pain, in all the modes and degrees of labour, pain, anguish, torment, is productive of the sublime' (2015, 71) finds an echo in Scott's comment in his journals from his earlier National Antarctic Expedition:

> '[a] fine conception … is realised when a party of men go forth to face hardships, dangers, and difficulties with their own unaided efforts, and by days and weeks of hard physical labour succeed in solving some problem of

> the great unknown. Surely in this case the conquest is more nobly and splendidly won' (qtd in Jones 2004, 71).

The 'fine conception' was enacted again in Scott's embrace of privation and excessive hardship, through the man-hauling of sledges, for instance, on his later Antarctic expedition and its polar journey.
Antarctica has come to be widely associated with the darkest affects of Burke's sublime, which exceed or escape the emotional resolution that aesthetic re-composition might afford the subjects, viewer or reader, through the well-known words and images which capture the arrival of Scott and his companions at the Pole. Of this event, Scott comments in his journal: 'We have been descending again, I think, but there looks to be a rise ahead; otherwise there is very little that is different from the awful monotony of past days. Great God! this is an awful place and terrible enough for us to have laboured to it without the reward of priority' (2008, 376). Scott's remarks convey the men's exhaustion at having covered great distances across a landscape which in recent days has been unmarked by differentiating features and where it is unclear even if the way ahead is uphill. The awe and terror of Burke's sublime is flattened into Scott's dismay at the nullity of the landscape. Scott's response is of course informed by the realization that Amundsen and his party have reached the Pole first. The presence of their flag, signifying the Norwegian 'conquest' of the landscape, prevents Scott from being able to convert his own emotions into the aesthetic pleasure of the sublime through the ideological sanction of 'priority'.
The production of the Antarctic landscape as an affective space is intensified by the conjunction of Scott's words, preserved in his journals, with the photographs of the men's arrival at the Pole. One photograph—'At the South Pole, 18 January 1912'—in particular has become an iconic image of this moment: taken by Henry 'Birdie' Bowers with a thread attached to the shutter of the camera, it shows Bowers and Edward 'Bill' Wilson seated in the foreground with Lawrence Oates, Scott and Edgar Evans standing behind them. The posture of the standing men suggests their exhaustion and sense of defeat. Oates' and Scott's darkened faces indicate frostbite and all the men's faces express frozen resignation as they present themselves to the camera to mark their arrival at the Pole. The photograph makes visible the signs of the men's shattering by both their long traverse through the Antarctic environment and Amundsen's precedence at the Pole. Paul Outka distinguishes between the sublime, whereby 'the flux in the subject/material other relation' is resolved, empowering the subject 'at the expense of that material other', and trauma, whose '"essence" is found in its *failure* to resolve, in the repeated and shattering intrusion of that extra-subjective world into the subject's self-construction' (2008, 23). To viewers of the photograph, it represents traumatic shattering: Sara Wheeler, for instance, observes that the men 'look as if their hearts have just broken' (1997, 101) and David Hempleman-Adams notes: 'This soul-destroying moment was when they died' (2011,120). The photograph opens up a traumatic temporality for the viewer because we know that the moment at the Pole would extend itself through the sufferings of the men's return journey until their deaths on the ice.
Traumatic affect fuses with 'the anxieties of geographic possession' that, as Kathryn Yusoff observes, Bower's photograph also connotes (2010, 57). The landscape behind the men is barely discernible as the whiteness of the snow and ice merges with that of the sky, but the Union Jack blows in perpetuity behind Scott. The flag, Yusoff points out, gives 'intelligibility' and meaning to a landscape that would

otherwise appear chaotic and disorienting (2010, 61). In another of Bower's photographs, however, the men stand disconsolately around Amundsen's tent, the Norwegian flag flying from it to mark his party's arrival at the Pole. Their affective responses to the different flags, as suggested by the photographs, become part of the production of the meaning of space at the Pole. Through Bowers' photograph, as through Scott's words, the Antarctic environment is brought into being as at once a signifying place and an affective site marked by the movement of the sublime into the traumatic.

The publication in 1922 of Apsley Cherry-Garrard's *The Worst Journey in the World* intensified the production of Antarctica as an affective space. Another account of Scott's 1910-13 expedition, this work differs from Scott's journals in being retrospective: the men's experience in Antarctica is recalled through traumatized memory shaped by both the loss of the polar party and the subsequent occurrence of the First World War. The book gives an extraordinary account of the passage of the sublime into the traumatic and how this transforms the relationship of humans to the nonhuman environment. This passage occurs both through the particularities of the men's bodily experience of the Antarctic environment and the circumstances which shape Cherry-Garrard's reflection on that experience.

In the chapter 'The Winter Journey', Cherry-Garrard describes the five-week journey which he and his companions, Wilson and Bowers, undertook on foot, hauling their sledges behind them, over more than 200 kilometres of ice and snow in the first winter of Scott's expedition. Their purpose was to find Emperor Penguins' eggs: Wilson believed the penguins' embryos, incubating in winter, would show that birds had evolved from reptiles. In Cherry-Garrard's narrative, the dominance of the visual that typically characterizes 'heroic' accounts of conquering the landscape breaks down, as does the possibility of sublime re-composition of the landscape and the self through visual pleasure and control.[ii] The men undertook their winter journey in conditions of extreme cold and almost total darkness and for Cherry-Garrard, the lack of visibility was compounded by his short-sightedness and inability to wear his spectacles in the freezing temperatures. He recounts how in the extreme conditions, the men's way of experiencing and knowing the landscape changes, as does their relationship to it. The landscape in which he is immersed is perceptible to him only through its textures and sounds. The boundaries between the men and the landscape begin to break down as, suffering from frost-bite, they become aware of themselves as decomposing matter. They also begin to merge elementally with their environment through their own excretions. 'The trouble is sweat and breath', Cherry-Garrard notes, as both freeze, forming a layer of ice over their mouths and skin (2003, 243).

In his detailing of his encounter with the Antarctic environment through immersion in it, Cherry-Garrard's account is consonant with the experience of the sublime *before* it reaches its aesthetic and subjective resolution. Paul Outka observes that the sublime involves a moment of 'breakdown, when the human is poised on the brink of collapse into the natural … a moment of unspeakability of blankness, a linguistic collapse that depends in an absolutely material way on the nonhuman natural' (2008, 13). In *The Worst Journey* such moments occur when Cherry-Garrard attempts to remember how he experienced the environment through the pain caused by the extreme cold. He reflects that 'the horrors of that return journey are blurred to my memory and I know they were blurred to my body at the time', and concludes that 'this journey had beggared our language: no words could express its horror' (2003, 301 and 304). In moments of extreme pain, as Elaine Scarry observes, there is 'an overwhelming

discrepancy between the increasingly palpable body and an increasingly substanceless world' (1985, 30). As Cherry-Garrard attempts to recall his experience of the environment through pain, recollection of the landscape is replaced by registration of its effect on his body. He remembers, for instance, 'my feet frost-bitten, my heart beating slowly, my vitality at its lowest ebb, my body solid with cold' (2003, 247). As the environment erodes his corporeal boundaries, his awareness of the parts and interior of his body replaces perception of the landscape. Cherry-Garrard's account of his sensory and painful experience of the landscape on the winter journey can be read as an evocation of the affective space of the Burkean sublime, but the text does not also afford the aesthetic resolution of the sublime. It is the passage from the sublime to the traumatic which prevents this resolution and temporizes Cherry-Garrard's memories of his experiences through the affect of subsequent events. His account of his winter journey and the expedition of which it formed a part becomes a memory of trauma, and an articulation of traumatized memory, through the textual reflection on the loss of Scott and his companions on their return from the Pole and the filtering of that memory through the retrospect of the First World War.

Antarctica, trauma and the First World War

By the time *The Worst Journey* was published in 1922, a cultural and affective symbiosis had occurred between the Antarctic expeditions and the First World War. Scott and Oates in particular had been invoked during the war as models of heroism and self-sacrifice (Jones, 2004, 255) and Ponting's cinematographic film of the expedition was shown to at least 100,000 British troops in France. Ernest Shackleton underscored comparisons between Antarctica and European battlefields in his dedication for *South* (1919), his account of his 1914-1917 Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition, to 'My comrades who fell in the white warfare of the South, and on the red fields of France and Flanders'. Through such comparisons, Mark Rawlinson argues, 'the sublimity of precarious sojourns on a true frontier of the human' can 'be juxtaposed with the historical exhaustion of the sublime in the Great War and in its cultural representations' (2010). However, while Antarctica retained its association with sublimity in this period, the discourse of trauma that had been formed around the psychological effects of the war permeated representations of the experience of the Antarctic landscape.

In *The Worst Journey,* Cherry-Garrard explicitly alludes to the war to convey his party's experience of the dark and crevasse-ridden Antarctic landscape as, having secured some penguins' eggs, they embark on their return journey. He observes:

> 'I have heard tell of an English officer at the Dardanelles who was left, blinded, in No Man's Land between the English and Turkish trenches. Moving only at night, and having no sense to tell him which were his own trenches, he was fired at by Turk and English alike as he groped his ghastly way to and from them. Thus he spent days and nights …' (2003, 277-78).

The implied analogy evokes Cherry-Garrard's own perceptual disorientation in a totally disempowering environment. The retrospective allusion to a scene of trauma in the war also establishes an affective connection between the men's experience in Antarctica and trauma suffered in the war. When Cherry-Garrard wrote *The Worst*

Journey, trauma, now manifested through shell-shock, had entered ‘a new ecology of industrial and bureaucratically organized war’, as Roger Luckhurst puts it, a development which intensified the association of trauma with the effects of modernity (2008, 51). In some respects, Cherry-Garrard’s Antarctica is a timeless elsewhere, located outside the traumatic processes of modernity. His depiction of the men’s lives during the first winter evokes an innocent space of chivalric community (Wheeler 1997, 135), before the loss of the polar party and subsequently the losses of men in the war. However, his account of the winter journey and of the second winter, which the remaining men spent awaiting the return of their missing companions, vividly articulates the effects of trauma, located within Antarctica.

Traumatic memory makes these sections of *The Worst Journey* uncannily proleptic. Cherry-Garrard’s account of the winter journey, which serves as a eulogy to Bowers and Wilson, his companions who were to perish with Scott, also anticipates the rigours of the polar journey and the men’s responses to them. Scott’s comments at the South Pole are presaged, for instance, by Cherry-Garrard’s as he surveys the Great Ice Barrier: ‘over all the grey limitless Barrier seemed to cast a spell of cold immensity, vague, ponderous, a breeding-place of wind and drift and darkness. God! What a place!’ (2003, 267). During the second winter, when the polar party and the Northern party are missing, the landscape is haunted by their ‘ghost work’ (2003, 440). Cherry-Garrard’s imagination of what Scott and his companions endured continues to torment him: ‘for days and nights such as these men spent coming down the Beardmore will give you nightmare after nightmare, and wake you shrieking—years after’ (2003, 544). Such temporal disturbances in Cherry-Garrard’s recollection of his experience indicate the transition of the sublime into trauma. Cathy Caruth posits that trauma is a catastrophic ‘event’ that:

> ‘is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor… trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual’s past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature—the way it is precisely not known in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later on’ (1996, 4).

The traumatized subject, unable to fully understand and ‘know’ the event at the time of its occurrence, is locked in a repetitive temporality in which both meaning and emotion are delayed, returning belatedly, if at all.

Much of Cherry-Garrard’s account of the winter journey is an effort to remember in exact and minute detail his encounter with the landscape, except when pain disallows both perception and recollection. But in his memories of the second winter, the landscape emerges as a mingling of Antarctica’s natural optical effects with the remaining men’s haunted projections of their absent companions: ‘Again and again during those days, someone would see one or other of the missing parties come in. It always proved to be mirage, a seal or pressure or I do not know what…’ (2003, 442). Trauma, Paul Outka comments, ‘retains an absolute materiality’ through ‘the event’s subsequent recurrence in all its raw, literal immediacy’ (2008, 22), and it is the elements of the landscape animated by the shattering disappearance of the polar party that return in Cherry-Garrard’s recollection of the second winter.

This traumatic materiality is captured in one of the most powerful images with which he concludes his narrative:

> 'I hope that by the time Scott comes home—for he is coming home: the Barrier is moving, and not a trace of our funeral cairn was found by Shackleton's men in 1916—the hardships that wasted his life will be only a horror of the past, and his *via dolorosa* a highway as practicable as Piccadilly' (2003, 568).

The image of Scott frozen in the moving ice epitomises how Antarctica has come to be imagined as a locus of the traumatic sublime. The ice appears to belong to a 'deep' geological time which is beyond the human and Scott is preserved in that sublime time and space. At the same time, Scott's being frozen, but nonetheless returning—'he is coming home'—serves as an image of trauma and its effects. The image captures some of the spatial and temporal contradictions that remain unresolved in the representation of Antarctica as both sublime and traumatic. The usually empty and uninhabited and apparently infinite reaches of ice appear to be outside the time and processes of modernity, located in an 'elsewhere', a spatial and natural 'otherness' whose sublimity can be imagined as healing. On the other hand, the men's bodies, like the accounts that describe how they came to be there, suggest trauma suffered both in that environment and through the imperatives of distant 'imperial centres' (Yusoff 2007, 219). Through the connection between the explorers' bodies and the ice, the Antarctic 'elsewhere' is related to our own 'here' in a traumatic temporality where trauma has always already happened, a trauma which, paradoxically, the sublime Antarctic landscape holds the promise of 'healing'.

III The contemporary age: Antarctica and current discourses of trauma and the sublime

The association of Antarctica with the sublime and the traumatic has been rearticulated since the 1990s, when the continent became more accessible to visitors. For decades after the end of the Heroic Age, relatively few people had been able to gain access to Antarctica, but after the Antarctic Treaty of 1959 opened it up to scientists, national Antarctic programmes also began to give some artists and writers the opportunity to take up temporary residency there. For these visitors, as for the public back home, the narratives and images of the Heroic Era explorers have continued to afford a means of imagining Antarctica. Because Antarctica lacks permanent or indigenous inhabitants, the memories of the Heroic Era explorers, preserved in their written accounts and images, persist as 'origin stories', as Elizabeth Leane puts it, which are 're-told and re-interpreted by each generation… but never lose their grip on the popular imagination' (2012, 84-5).

For many of the visitors to Antarctica, as for those imagining it from afar, the fascination of the Antarctic landscape inheres in the relationship between the sublime and the traumatic which the Heroic Era texts articulate. Elena Glasberg proposes that contemporary adventurers in Antarctica are motivated by a 'repetition compulsion' whereby they re-enact the 'feats' of the Heroic Age explorers. She attributes this compulsion to Antarctica's 'traumatic lack' of indigenous people, asking 'how after all do we experience the place if not through an at least imported humanity?'(2012, 43). The emptiness of the uninhabited landscape, as also the perceived blankness of the ice and snow, continue to compel people, physically or in their imagination, towards narratives and images of humans which offer orientation and meaning in that landscape. However, through the different articulations of the sublime with the traumatic which have occurred in representations of Antarctica since the 1990s, the question of how we know the Antarctic landscape persists in

tension with ideas of its unrepresentableness.[iii] The implications of this tension have changed as the focus of these representations has moved from personal and cultural trauma to global environmental change, construed as catastrophe.
Just as the production and circulation of some of the Heroic Age accounts and images of Antarctic exploration were contemporaneous with the discourse about trauma that emerged during and after the First World War, so the opening up of Antarctica to visitors in the 1990s coincided with another moment in which trauma had become a prominent discourse in scholarly and popular culture. The inclusion in 1980 of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (*DSM-III)* had led to wider awareness of that condition in war veterans and an increased understanding of what constituted trauma, and it contributed to the recognition of trauma as an effect of domestic and sexual abuse later in the decade. These developments were concurrent with the increasing visibility given to survivors of the Holocaust and their testimony after a period of cultural amnesia, and the accompanying psychological and epistemological enquiry into the effects of traumatic memory upon survivors (Luckhurst 2008, 59-76).

Witnessing the sublime: Jenny Diski's 'Skating to Antarctica'.

During the 1990s, memoir became a popular form through which to explore the effects of personal trauma (Luckhurst 2008,117) and through her adaptation of the form as a travel memoir, Jenny Diski produced the decade's most striking autobiographical account of the articulation of the sublime with trauma in Antarctica. In *Skating to Antarctica*, the sublime and trauma are for the most part related but polarized opposites. Antarctica, even while Diski travels to it, remains largely a symbol in a metaphoric constellation she has already constructed whereby whiteness, emptiness and blankness represent safe spaces within which she has learned to contain the effects of trauma. In this configuration, trauma has happened elsewhere and previously and the sublimity of the Antarctic landscape offers an escape from it. Diski's reflections on sublimity are, however, informed by her considerations of trauma, as she recalls the parental abuse she experienced as a child and teenager. Her strategies to accommodate her traumatic past, as she recollects them, reflect contemporary beliefs about the therapeutic efficacy of both recovered memory and bearing witness. Drawing on discourses about both sexual abuse and the Holocaust to consider the effects of trauma, Diski also brings the questions her reflection has posed about witnessing, testimony and survival to bear on her contemplation of sublimity in Antarctica.
For the most part, the Antarctic landscape is an object of detached and cerebral anticipation as she approaches it on the cruise ship. The idea of Antarctica is an antidote to both traumatic affect and the process of subjective and cultural reconstruction that 'recovery' from trauma entails. Approaching St. Andrew's Bay in South Georgia, she observes: 'That was the point, for me, of Antarctica: that it was simply there, always had been, with great tracts of the continent unseen, unwitnessed … I ached for the endurance and indifference of this landscape … .' (2008, 162). Her embodied encounter with the landscape as she ventures onto the beach in St. Andrew's Bay, however, has aspects of the Burkean sublime as an approaching storm creates 'a planet turned ominous'. Her 'protection … breeched', Diski experiences the landscape through her sensations as its material elements: gathering darkness, 'resistant air', and the sand and wind that 'threw themselves against you like pointed sticks'. The experience of 'cold as pain' in particular appears to be 'denying my existence' in the 'bleak, dark landscape' (2008, 164-165). While on

the cruise, Diski has been reading Cherry-Garrard's *The Worst Journey* and Scott's journals and it is through her later recollection of Cherry-Garrard's account that she identifies her own experience on the beach as having been traumatic. Comparing her own sensations with Cherry-Garrard's description of the pain he experienced in 'a temperature of 70 below', Diski observes:

> 'So it wasn't really cold … but… *I* was all of those things … I begin to feel that the world has deserted me, that things have fallen apart. I found the cold interesting, the way it moved in on me, but the bleakness immediately chimed with something mournful inside me' (2008,166).

The 'bleak' and unsheltering landscape which she experiences through her senses becomes traumatic as it arouses childhood fears of homelessness. Diski observes: 'some things I'll never get away from, not even in the farthest reaches of the South Atlantic…I can recognize them as a passing wind blowing through me, chilling me to the bone, an act of nature that isn't personal*,* or not any more' (2008, 167). Through her recollection of Cherry-Garrard's evocation of the pain he experienced in the Antarctic landscape, Diski is able to recognize her own sense of annihilation in and by the landscape as an effect of the traumatic shattering of her past. In the resolution of this moment through her reflection on it, the materiality of the environment is erased by the 'nature' that her own psychic history now constitutes.

Diski's Antarctic expedition concludes with a retreat from both the materiality of the Antarctic landscape and her exposure to the effects of trauma that remembering the accounts of Cherry-Garrard, Scott and Shackleton has triggered. She resolves that she will simply 'add' what she has observed 'to the Antarctic of my mind' (2008, 225) where it will continue to offer conceptual and metaphoric containment of the effects of trauma.

Sublimity and the 'still pure' landscape: Sebastião Salgado's 'Genesis'

Like Diski, other recent visitors to Antarctica reflect on how to be 'part of' a landscape whose locations, as the philosopher Alphonso Lingis observes, are usually knowable only as the 'abstractions' produced by remote mapping and 'scientific representation' (1994, 93). Lingis, describing his own approach to Antarctica aboard a cruise ship, contemplates how one might experience the landscape without the distancing that the aesthetics of the sublime affords. He describes how, freed from the 'mental furnishing' of the sublime, he experiences a process of de-personalized, sensory emergence into and immersion in a material and non-human-centred environment where he is part of an elemental whole (1994, 96).

An arguably non-homocentric vision of the co-existence of humans, animals and the material environment also informs the Antarctic photographs of Sebastião Salgado, but this vision is framed by a re-alignment of the relationship between the sublime and trauma. The photographs are part of the Brazilian photographer's 2013 photo-essay *Genesis.* Prior to the eight years he spent creating these photographs, Salgado had travelled the world producing images of the devastating effects of modernity on his human subjects through poverty, famine, migration, displacement, war and genocide. He recounts how, after documenting scenes of the genocide in Rwanda, his own 'mind and body started to give way' (2014, 101). He describes how, 'despairing about how economic, social and political upheavals had altered the planet' (2014, 109), he turned to two concurrent projects about environmental

restitution: ‘Instituto Terra’, the restoration of the Atlantic Forest and its ecosystems on his parents’ deforested estate in Brazil (Salgado 2014, 14); and the undertaking for *Genesis* to photograph ‘marginal’ people, animals and spaces around the globe. He has explained that rather than pursuing his initial idea of a photographic project that showed the effects of environmental destruction and global warming (2013, 6), he sought instead in *Genesis* to present ‘still pure’ landscapes (Singer 2010, 44). According to this narrative, trauma has happened elsewhere as an effect of modernity and Antarctica is one of the spaces that promise amelioration for the individual, humanity and the environment.

As its title suggests, *Genesis* is concerned with origins, but as far as Antarctica is concerned, Salgado differs from other visitors to the continent in that he does not return to the ‘originary’ traumatic experiences evoked in the written accounts of the Heroic Age explorers. He does, however, compare himself to the Heroic Age photographers who ‘shot incredible pictures from … the South Pole…We knew [such] places existed, but at that moment we rediscovered them. I want people to *rediscover* the planet’ (Singer, 2010, 44). As the Heroic Age photographers recorded the process of discovery, so Salgado proposes to show a world available for rediscovery.

Some of Salgado’s photographs of icescapes and animals recall those of Herbert Ponting, and through this resonance, Salgado’s images offer a representation of a landscape which is not pristine, but which already signifies. For example, both men produced photographs of icebergs whose resemblance to a medieval castle captivated them: Ponting’s ‘The Castle Berg with dog sledge’ (17 September, 1911) and Salgado’s ‘Iceberg between Paulet Island and the South Shetland Islands on the Weddell Sea’ (January and February 2005). Ponting’s photograph depicts a castle-shaped iceberg towering over the human figure with dogs and a sledge at its base, whereas Salgado’s photograph, which contains no human, shows the rough-hewn surfaces of an iceberg rising out of the sea. The composition of the image suggests a castle-shaped edifice formed out of the ice at the top right of the picture, and a key-hole shaped hole in the ice just off-centre. This opening in the ice recalls Ponting’s predilection for similar cavities in the ice, but whereas the framing fissure in Ponting’s ‘Grotto in an iceberg’ (5 January 1911) draws the viewer’s eye to a ship, site of human activity, on the sea beyond, in Salgado’s photograph, the sea, ice and sky through the ‘key-hole’ suggests instead a mysterious and ‘unclaimed’ elemental world. The play of light and shadow over the ice and sea in Salgado’s black and white photograph evokes the stillness of aesthetic sublimity achieved rather than the affective turbulence of the experiential sublime. Salgado’s iceberg, with its uneven, eroded surfaces and narrow bridge of ice over the ‘key-hole’ resembles a ruin and has a fragility that Ponting’s sublime ice structures lack. In this respect, Salgado’s photograph may be taken as nostalgic for the sublimity of Antarctica, as it was experienced and represented at the moment of its discovery by the Heroic Age photographers. According to Parvati Nair, Salgado’s *Genesis* photographs display a ‘utopian nostalgia’ which both comprises ‘a powerful vision’ of our loss of ‘oneness with the environment’ (116) and enables us to envision a way the world still might be: ‘In the magical flip of photography, somewhere between black and white, we glimpse the translucent shimmer of time as that which would have been translates itself temporally into what could possibly be’ (2011, 116 and 289). The echoes of Ponting’s photographs of a sublime Antarctic landscape enable Salgado to suggest a gap between Antarctica as it might have been from the early moments of discovery and Antarctica as it is now, imperilled by global warming and other environmental

threats. In this gap Salgado's aesthetics allow us to imagine a world in which the effects of modernity, including the divisions between humans, animals and the material environment, are recuperated. This vision is enabled by Salgado's separation of the sublime from the traumatic, whereby the human subjects and cultural effects of trauma are located elsewhere.

Global warming as trauma: Judit Hersko's re-envisioning of the Antarctic sublime

In our own Anthropocene moment, Antarctica has once again been cast as the site of catastrophe, this time as the 'canary in the pit' of global warming. The Antarctic landscape has become a focus of another discourse of sublimity, with global warming as the unrepresentable object of the sublime—or, as Timothy Morton puts it, a 'hyperobject', something which is 'massively distributed in time and space relative to humans' (2013, 1). The American multi-media artist, Judit Hersko, has explored this reconfiguration of the Antarctic sublime in her work to evoke the catastrophic effects of global warming, while connecting that process to previous representations of the Antarctic landscape as sublime. In her narrative essay 'Pages from the Book of the Unknown Explorer' (2012) and its companion project, the online exhibition of photographs, 'Anna's Cabinet of Curiosities' (2010-present), Hersko elaborates the narrative of Anna Schwartz, a fictive Jewish Hungarian photographer who passes as a man to participate in Richard E. Byrd's 1939-1941 United States Antarctica Expedition and survives the Holocaust in Europe. In Antarctica, Anna studies pteropods—microscopic planctonic molluscs. The narrative is recounted by Anna's daughter, an artist who, like Hersko herself, has collaborated in Antarctica with scientists researching the effect on pteropods of ocean acidification, a consequence of global warming.

In these two works, Hersko revisits images relating to Scott's British Antarctic Expedition. The most immediate effect of her re-working of these images is to illustrate women's exclusion from the masculine history of exploration. In a photo-collage of Bowers' photograph of Scott and his companions by Amundsen's tent at the South Pole (18 January, 1912), Hersko adds a young woman in the foreground, in place of Edgar Evans who stands there in the original photograph and who died on the expedition. In another photo-collage, 'Anna's 90°South', Hersko superimposes 'Anna Schwartz' on two juxtaposed reproductions of a still of the *Terra Nova* trapped in the ice from Ponting's cinematographic film, '90 Degrees South'. Around another photograph, taken by Hersko, entitled 'Scott's Terra Nova Hut—Ponting's darkroom in the background (with door open)', Hersko weaves a narrative of Anna Schwartz looking at pteropods through a microscope in Ponting's darkroom during Byrd's expedition. Whilst trauma is not the explicit subject of these photographs, the superimposition or presence of the figure of a woman in scenes from which the historic male subjects are absent or frozen in the past has an uncanny effect. This uncanniness arises partly from the traumatic temporality which is articulated in these images, through the viewer's retrospective knowledge of the loss of life on Scott's expedition, and the loss inherent in the belatedness of women's arrival in Antarctica. The circulation of traumatic affect through the images associated with Scott's expedition becomes most apparent in Hersko's photograph in *Anna's Cabinet* of an installation she has created, inspired by the objects from Scott's expedition that remain today in the *Terra Nova* hut. The icy-white objects in Hersko's sculpture include the candy jar of her narrator's aunt, who, Hersko informs us, died in the Holocaust.

Hersko uses the narrative about Anna Schwartz, including Anna's and her daughter's research into the pteropods that are now threatened with extinction, to suggest 'comparisons between two holocausts to move us away from the purely visualizable as the basis of knowledge' (Bloom, 2011). Through this narrative, and the inclusion of photographs of pteropods, Hersko contests the aesthetics of the sublime that is associated both with Antarctica and its 'heroic' exploration, and climate change itself. Hersko's work opens up a different vision of sublimity, whose affects were presciently remarked by Burke:

> 'the last extreme of littleness is in some measure sublime …; when we attend to the infinite divisibility of matter, when we pursue animal life into these excessively small, and yet organized beings, that escape the nicest inquisition of the sense… the imagination is lost as well as the sense [and] we become amazed and confounded at the wonders of minuteness' (2015, 59).

Through her representation of the pterepods, Hersko makes normally invisible effects of global warming through the destruction of unseen species 'present and visible to the imagination' (Yusoff, 2010,'Biopolitical Economies', 7). But in her final treatment of the image of Anna Schwartz, Hersko exposed transparencies of the photograph, 'coated in UV sensitive dyes', to atmospheric UV radiation in Antarctica and California. The fading image that results from this process of dissolution suggests the embeddedness of humans in the environment through their materiality, and the threat posed to both humans and the environment by global warming. The evanescence of this artwork, with its 'transformation of matter' (Hersko, 2010, 'Translating'), returns to the sublime as a phenomenology and 'aesthetics of disappearance' (Bloom, 2011) which is unrecuperable to the permanence and transcendence of sublime re-composition.
All these works—Diski's memoir, Salgado's Antarctic photographs and Hersko's art—reimagine that articulation of traumatic experience and memory with the sublime that Antarctica has inspired since the Heroic Age. During the Heroic Age, accounts such as Apsley Cherry-Garrard's filtered their embodied experience of Antarctica through traumatic memory, partly because recent cultural memory of the Great War inflected personal recollection of the landscape and losses of Antarctica. The evocation of Antarctica as the traumatic sublime in this period also implied a broader critique of modernity: Antarctica was positioned as a 'pure' elsewhere outside the devastation of modernity, but also as a place where the harshness of the physical environment evoked the traumas of modern war.

In more recent decades, these images of Antarctica as the traumatic sublime, first put into circulation by the Heroic Age explorers, continue to provide a lens through which writers and photographers have made sense of the continent. Salgado's work, for example, invokes the sublimity of Antarctica as offering two potential sources of redemption: a personal recovery after his traumatic witnessing of the destruction of human life, and a more general vision of the restitution of the environment after its devastation through the processes of modernity occurring elsewhere. In Hersko's work, the insistence of the traumatic within the Antarctic sublime shapes the way the continent is experienced and imagined, and how we understand its relationship to ourselves and the rest of the world.

All these contemporary engagements with Antarctica show that trauma and the sublime remain powerful ways of representing our current concern with how humans

relate to the non-human environment. Our affective and aesthetic responses to the continent have a directly instrumental bearing on the management and protection of its environment: under the 1991 Madrid protocol, areas deemed to be of 'aesthetic or wilderness significance' are to be assigned special environmental protection (Summerson, 2011). More indirectly, perceptions of Antarctica as the locus of the traumatic or catastrophic sublime influence our understanding of climate change and how to respond to it. As all the texts here show, notions of the traumatic sublime afford an open matrix through which new and creative interpretations of Antarctica and its relation to the rest of the world remain possible.

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[i] According to Lisa Bloom, Scott 'adopted literary conventions of the sublime' in his writing to represent his ventures in the Antarctic landscape to the British public. In this way, Bloom argues, Scott both invested himself with heroic masculinity and contrasted the sublime Antarctic landscape with that of England, constructed through this comparison as 'all that is good, ordered, and agreeable' (1993, 128-129).

[ii] See Kathryn Yusoff's reading of *The Worst Journey* in 'Antarctic exposure: archives of the feeling body' (2007): 226-229.

[iii] Post-structuralist interpretations of theories of the sublime and trauma have focussed on the unrepresentable at the heart of both discourses: in the sublime, through the temporary 'annihilation' of the subject by its object of perception, creating an absence which cannot be subsequently represented; and in trauma, through the shattering occlusion of the entirety of the event at the moment of its occurrence. Paul Outka rejects what he regards as the 'narcissistic discourse of unrepresentability' however, as he argues that the 'theoretical modes' of the sublime and trauma both describe how the supposed 'failure of representation' produces differently resolved encounters with the materiality of the event or environment that this discourse denies (2008, 22, 14 and 16).