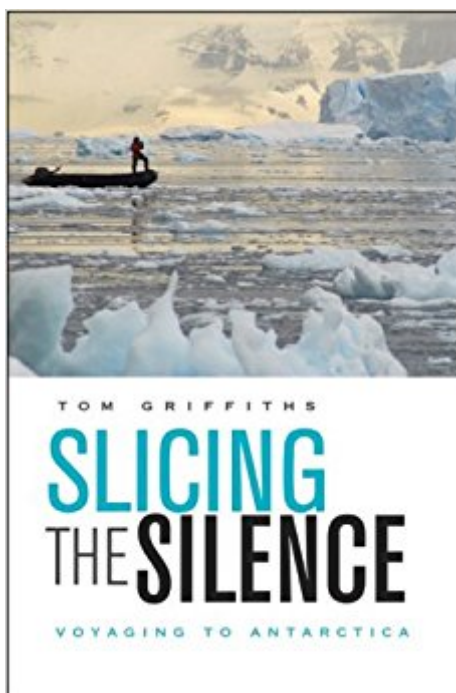


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# Slicing The Silence: Voyaging To Antarctica



## Synopsis

Listen to a short interview with Tom Griffiths Host: Chris Gondek | Producer: Heron & Crane From Scott and Shackleton to sled dogs and penguins, stories of Antarctica seize our imagination. In December 2002, environmental historian Tom Griffiths set sail with the Australian Antarctic Division to deliver the new team of winterers. In this beautifully written book, Griffiths reflects on the history of human experiences in Antarctica, taking the reader on a journey of discovery, exploration, and adventure in an unforgettable land. He weaves together meditations on shipboard life during his three-week voyage with fascinating forays into the history and nature of Antarctica. He brings alive the great age of sail in the initiation of travelers to the great winds of the "roaring forties." No continent is more ruled by wind, and Griffiths explains why Antarctica is a barometer of global climatic health. He charts the race to the South Pole, from its inception as part of the drive to map Earth's magnetism, to the reasons for Robert Scott's tragic death. He also offers vivid descriptions of life in Antarctica, such as the experience of a polar night, the importance of food for morale, and coping with solitude. A charming narrative and an informative history, *Slicing the Silence* is an intimate portrait of the last true wilderness.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. As the climate changes and polar ice caps shrink dramatically, author and environmental historian Griffiths (*Forests of Ash*) provides essential background for understanding how we reached the current state of meltdown. Griffiths weaves journal entries from his own voyage to Australia's Antarctic stations in 2002-03 with extended chapters on the history of human

exploration in Antarctica. His description and analysis of the polar experience is clear and comprehensive: he knows the rough seas, the storms, the desolation, the strange lack of green, the physical disruption of body rhythms and the psychological distress, and makes vivid use of that knowledge in his accounts of past explorers (Roald Amundsen, Robert Falcon Scott, Douglas Mawson, Richard Byrd and many others). As an Australian, Griffiths looks European colonial misdeeds head-on, but he also analyzes forthrightly the Australian government's claims on and behavior toward Antarctica. A jumpy style can be difficult to follow at first, but soon the Griffiths' many angles of pursuit-the effects of solitude, the experience of overwintering, the struggle for survival, the biology and behavior of penguins, etc.-come together in an engrossing and highly satisfying pastiche. A fine and informative ecological adventure, Griffiths' history is worth reading and re-reading. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Australian environmental historian Griffiths presents a comprehensive and enjoyable survey of Antarctic history, recounting the exploration, research, and management of the southernmost continent. Armchair travelers will relish Griffiths' witty writing style and his excellent command of everything from geology to politics to the searing impact of loneliness. What is really interesting here, though, is the fresh view he gives to so many of the stories readers might already know. His takes on Scott, Shackleton, Amundsen, and the cold war rivalry between the U.S. and the Soviet Union are smart, insightful, and packed with first-person narratives. Antarctic aficionados will appreciate the lesser-known voices that Griffiths highlights, such as Douglas Mawson, Fred Middleton, and Robert Cushman Murphy. From reports of the Nazis dropping swastikas on the ice to bitter recollections from the first party to overwinter, Griffiths attends to sources rarely heard. His is the writing of a consummate scholar, a man both curious about and committed to knowing all that makes Antarctica "the last place on Earth, the first place in Heaven." Very well done. Mondor, Colleen

Since *The Son and The Daughter* came I have become an armchair adventurer rather than an outdoor adventurer. The tale of Shackleton's adventure to Antarctica has always fascinated me; Trapped in ice for months and sailing to rescue in a small boat to an island hundreds of miles of away. I am always stunned that his entire crew survived in a situation where none should have. I came across a blurb about Tom Griffiths' *Slicing the Silence: Voyaging to Antarctica* in National Geographic's Adventure magazine. The author traveled to Antarctica and kept a diary. This book

mixes entries from his diary with the history exploration of Antarctica and settlement on the icy continent. The book is about the enduring power of the "heroic era" stories of exploring Antarctica, as Edwardian figures sledged across the inhabited expanse of snow and ice. [Antarctica] is a place where nature is lethal, humans are always just visitors and the land is covered by ice kilometers deep. This is a landscape in which the laws of chemistry and physics - and indeed the power of metaphysics - predominate, and terrestrial biology looks very marginal indeed. The ocean is where life is: the largest land animal is a mite. The ice is massive, deadly and - in spite of its own variety - reductionist. It simplifies and universalises Griffiths does a great job of summarizing the history of exploration, living on Antarctica and the implication of Antarctic research on human behavior. He puts in contrast the easy death of humans on the continent with the abundant life in the ocean just offshore. He moves onto the current technology and climate research at the Antarctic bases. In this place where humans can barely exist, we are learning more about our world. In the end, people go South to Antarctica "for purity, solitude, otherworldliness; they go there for the silence."

This has been great!! I'm just sorry I didn't find out about buying books on sooner. The book came on time and is in excellent condition.

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