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Expedition into Empire

Exploratory Journeys and the Making of the Modern World

Edited by Martin Thomas

Expedition into Empire

Expeditionary journeys have shaped our world, but the expedition as a cultural form is rarely scrutinized. This book is the first major investigation of the conventions and social practices embedded in team-based exploration. In probing the politics of expedition making, this volume is itself a pioneering journey through the cultures of empire. With contributions from established and emerging scholars, *Expedition into Empire* plots the rise and transformation of expeditionary journeys from the eighteenth century until the present. Conceived as a series of spotlights on imperial travel and colonial expansion, it roves widely: from the metropolitan centers to the ends of the earth. This collection is both rigorous and accessible, containing lively case studies from writers long immersed in exploration, travel literature, and the dynamics of cross-cultural encounter.

Martin Thomas is Associate Professor in the Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University. He is the author of *The Artificial Horizon: Imagining the Blue Mountains* (2003) and *The Many Worlds of R. H. Mathews: In Search of an Australian Anthropologist* (2011), winner of the National Biography Award of Australia.

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Exploratory Journeys and the Making of the Modern World
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Exploratory Journeys and the Making of the Modern World

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1 What Is an Expedition?
An Introduction

Martin Thomas

SETTING THE SCENE

As preliminary forays into foreign territory, expeditions were integral to the making of the modern empires. They connected Europeans with indigenous trade routes and laid the groundwork for the foundation of colonies. Once settlements were established in 'new' territories, the young colonies launched their own expeditions that further advanced the process of imperial expansion. So it is no exaggeration to observe that exploratory expeditions have shaped our world. The momentous histories of human migration and dispossession, dating from the early modern era, were seeded by expeditionary voyages and the inland explorations that followed.

Expeditions involve more than travel. Systemized collection and dissemination of data lie at their essence. Being indelibly associated with the growth and diffusion of science, they affect not only *what* we know but *how* we know it. In addressing this subject, the historian Roy MacLeod suggests that the nineteenth century saw a shift in which the metropolitan centres ceased to be the exclusive locales for the advancement of science. For the Victorians, 'the instrument by which the world was to be known was the expedition,' which 'became a major agent of Western influence, creating new disciplines, exploring new ideas, and establishing new forms of cultural appropriation.' Science as both a practice and a metaphor was defined by its relationship with expeditions. That is why, according to MacLeod, science presents itself 'as a symbolic act of perpetual exploration.'[1] Yet despite the profound impact of expeditions on diverse peoples throughout the world, there remains a considerable gulf between the effects of expeditions and what we know about them as cultural entities. This disparity was the motivation for *Expedition into Empire*, which emerged as a multi-author project—as befits a study of team-based travel.[2] And like many an expedition, there were personal inspirations for why, as editor, I initiated the journey. This background illuminates some major themes of the volume.

Several years ago, I began to study a large-scale research venture known as the American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land. A collaboration involving the National Geographical Society, the Smithsonian

Institution, and the Australian Government, during 1948, it travelled widely through the extensive Aboriginal reserve of Arnhem Land in northern Australia. As a twentieth-century journey, sponsored by the publisher of *National Geographic Magazine*, the Arnhem Land Expedition (to use its abbreviated title) resulted in a vast cache of media including many hours of colour film footage, thousands of photographs, and audio documentation of Aboriginal music and ceremony made on electronic wire recorders. Aboriginal men and women displayed aspects of their lives and culture to the camera, as did the expeditionaries themselves. Naturalists and anthropologists enacted their own esoteric rituals as they gathered data or collected and preserved specimens in front of the camera. News of the expedition was communicated around the world.[3]

For some observers—and some of the participating scientists, too—the media archive produced by the expedition was mere populist ephemera. The scientific world had its 'serious' if specialist outcomes: four large volumes of reports, extensive collections of flora and fauna, and superb examples of Aboriginal art and material culture, now held by Australian and American museums.[4] But 60-plus years after the expedition, the enduring value of the photographic and other 'ephemera' has been demonstrated in ways that the expedition and its backers did not anticipate. Aboriginal people have found their own uses for the expedition's documentation of their culture

Figure 1.1 Expedition leader Charles Mountford photographing a family group at Yirrkala during the American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land, 1948. Photograph by Frank M. Setzler. By Permission of the National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution (Photo lot 36, Yirrkala 48).

Figure 1.2 Mammalogist David H. Johnson performing taxidermy during the American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land, 1948. Photograph by Howell Walker. By Permission of the State Library of South Australia (Bessie Mountford Papers PRG 487/1/2/204/2).

and society, which they regard as their intellectual property. To research the place of archival media in contemporary Aboriginal society, I began to visit Arnhem Land to work with local experts in interpreting digitized copies of the audio and photographic documentation.[5] This developed into a larger study of the Arnhem Land Expedition and of expeditions more generally.

Some of the Arnhem Land people with whom I have studied were children when the expedition visited. To spend time with them, watching film from 1948, or hearing recordings of songs performed by their forbears, is an experience both poignant and intellectually challenging, for it complicates any simplistic assumption that the relationships between expeditions and indigenous societies can be nothing but exploitative. I have sat with old men as they tearfully review footage of an initiation ceremony, now defunct although still remembered with great affection. Film of a painter reveals his deft workmanship as he paints a kangaroo on a piece of bark. Archaeologist Denis Byrne suggests in a paper titled 'Archaeology in Reverse' that the backward movement of objects and data from repositories to communities

expresses an essential aspect of our zeitgeist.[6] In the work of ethnomusicologist colleagues with whom I collaborate, I have seen how song recordings documented by expeditions and independent ethnographers provide an enduring source of pleasure and fascination for many indigenous musicians today. Such material can inform contemporary cultures in productive ways.[7]

Acknowledging the contemporary relevance of these expeditionary outputs does not deny that imperial agendas were embedded in the original venture. Especially troubling to Aboriginal audiences is film footage of Frank Setzler, a Smithsonian curator, who can be seen toiling away at an ossuary site—a cave within a sandstone massif, familiar to all locals in the West Arnhem Land region—removing human crania and other bones from crevices. At the end of the expedition, these bones were exported to the United States where they found a new 'home' in the Smithsonian Institution's United States National Museum (now known as the National Museum of Natural History).[8] By the time a film archivist at the National Geographic Society unearthed this footage and showed it to me, the bones taken by Setzler were the subject of a repatriation claim, lodged by the Australian Government on behalf of communities affected by the theft. After years of disagreement and procrastination, the National Museum of Natural History eventually agreed to return them to their owners—another example of archaeology in reverse.[9] More than six decades after their removal, a ceremony held in the West Arnhem Land settlement of Gunbalanya welcomed the stolen ancestors back to their homeland.

This particular example of how the impacts of an expedition have reverberated through time and across cultures is a sign of the multivalency of expeditions. Whenever they intrude on inhabited terrain, expeditionary journeys are intercultural phenomena. As vehicles for cultural display and inquiry, they probe the human interface. Of course, the tenor of their interpersonal encounters varies enormously, covering the full spectrum from empathy to murder. The history of expeditions is accordingly complex and their relevance is not confined to the societies or cultures that launched them. A well-established historiography, much of it indebted to Margaret Connell Szasz's pioneering book on cultural brokerage, has drawn attention to the diverse roles played by indigenous people in mediating between indigenes and visitors during the age of empire.[10] Fortunately, much of the triumphalism traditionally accorded to expeditionary projects has diminished, and more nuanced assessments of their activities, reportage, and relations with indigenous people have developed. These changing perspectives are inflected by the technological transformations we are witnessing in our own era. As my own research in Arnhem Land shows, digitization of archival data allows indigenous communities newfound access to the findings of expeditions past. This development only adds to the urgency of better understanding the phenomenon of the expedition.

Later in the book, I argue that expeditions are 'cultural formations, as distinctive to their epoch as the novel or the photograph' (Thomas, Chapter 4, this volume). Significantly, the dearth of attention usually afforded to them

is not due to lack of public interest in expeditions or exploration. On the contrary, a veritable industry is devoted to the recounting and reprocessing of exploratory journeys. Old journals get reprinted, documentaries made for television, anniversaries celebrated, discoveries re-enacted, novels written, and history books published by the wagonload. Whether they are revered, reviled, lampooned, or surgically dissected with every instrument in the postcolonial toolbox, expeditionary journeys are etched ever more deeply into the cultural imaginary.

So exploratory expeditions continue to speak to large audiences, as they have done since their inception. Yet the great outpouring of cultural product concerning them is something of a hindrance to understanding the traits of the expedition itself. Popular accounts do not encourage the identification of cultural patterns, preferring instead to proclaim the exceptionalism of each adventure. Somewhat strangely, this limitation often extends to more scholarly treatments of exploration. 'Biography has been its leading genre and hagiography its main mode of representation,' complains Dane Kennedy in *The Last Blank Spaces* (2013), a comparative study of Australia and Africa as sites of imperial discovery.[11] Kennedy, like many of us who contributed to the present volume, is indebted to the seminal work of the geographer Felix Driver, who in *Geography Militant* (2001) writes at length about the codes, conventions, and networks that regulated the business of nineteenth-century exploration.[12] Driver's study was largely researched in the archives of the Royal Geographical Society, which in the nineteenth century was the preeminent organization for sponsoring and in other ways encouraging scientific exploration within the British Empire.

Informed by these sources, Driver necessarily concentrates on the role of metropolitan London in setting and controlling the geographical agenda. He discusses imperial practices that influenced the business of scientific travel: the issue of formal instructions to explorers, the standardization of requirements for keeping journals and recording data, the loan of scientific instruments to expeditions, and 'expert' evaluation of the findings of returned travellers to ensure that the rules of engagement had been observed. That interest in imperial control is evident also in the work of Kennedy, although he, like several contributors to this volume, places greater emphasis on the role played by colonies in launching exploratory expeditions. To understand this history, he argues, we need to 'decenter our understanding of exploration as an imperial enterprise.'[13] Just as importantly, we need to understand how imperialism lingers, even when the age of empire has supposedly ended. The history of the expedition provides insight into that process.

QUESTIONS OF FORM

That the Arnhem Land Expedition is historically recent, sitting somewhere at the limit of living memory, allows access to eyewitness accounts. In 2007,

I recorded an interview with Gerald Blitner (now deceased), who as a young man worked as an interpreter and guide for the expedition. Blitner had an Aboriginal mother and a European father. Like many so-called 'half-castes' in northern Australia, he was taken from his family and brought up in a Christian mission where he learned English. He went on to become the classic cultural broker, mediating between the visiting researchers and older Aboriginal people who spoke little or no English. Blitner provided an extraordinary perspective on the expedition's sojourn on Groote Eylandt, a sizable landmass off the Arnhem Land coast, where the party was stationed for some months. He explained how he came to dislike its leader, the Australian photographer-ethnologist Charles Mountford, whom he regarded as intrusive and tactless. Blitner told me how he did all in his power to assist the scientific work of other expedition members in preference to Mountford.[14] Here was evidence of how the processes of investigation that a scientific expedition had set in train could be affected by the decisions of indigenous people. Undoubtedly, this is true of countless expeditions through the centuries, but it is acknowledged only obliquely—if at all—in the majority of official expeditionary records.

Blitner was not the only witness whom I interviewed. The late Peter Bassett-Smith, the expedition's cine-photographer, recorded his recollections in oral-history sessions, as did the botanist Raymond Specht, now the sole surviving veteran.[15] As I learnt fairly early in my practice as an oral historian, interviews are revealing not only for the wealth of data they throw up, but for their silences and omissions. These became obvious when I compared the oral-history interviews with other streams of evidence concerning the 1948 adventure, of which there are plenty. After all, expeditions are machines for producing discourse. Letters, diaries, and administrative records are part of a great cache of documentary evidence concerning Arnhem Land in 1948. The journal of another participant, the Sydney archaeologist Frederick McCarthy, unequivocally reveals that he, like Blitner, had no fondness for Mountford.[16] Internal dissent began to threaten the expedition's research agenda and its propagandist message of bilateral friendliness between Australia and the United States. That there were problems with the management of the expedition is hardly a secret. Even Mountford's authorized biography—as pure an exercise in hagiography as one could find—is forced to concede that by mid-1948 dissatisfaction with his leadership was so strong that his superiors in Canberra attempted to dismiss him from the top post.[17] On most subjects, Specht and Bassett-Smith were loquacious interviewees. But it was clear that they were far from comfortable when asked about the internal ructions. An earlier oral history with another expedition member, *National Geographic* photographer Howell Walker, reveals extraordinary obfuscation and feigned misunderstanding when questions concerning interpersonal relations were raised.[18] These men's reticence reveals much about the group ethos and codes of propriety observed by the expedition. By the time these interviews were recorded, Mountford and other protagonists were long in

the grave. But the corporate memory of the expedition was still something to be revered and protected by the few survivors.

In addressing the history of an expedition, one is grappling with more than a tour by individuals travelling in parallel. An expedition is a distinct socio-cultural formation. This inevitably affects members' perception of the land and its inhabitants, and their relations with one another. Equally, it affects the way they observe and report. To understand an expedition's activities and output we need to think about how it operates as a social unit, branded with its own sense of identity. For all the agony caused by the internal politics, the Arnhem Land Expedition had its core values and understandings. The expedition had its own folklore; its repertoire of funny stories and embarrassments. While in the field, members wrote comic ditties about their exploits, set to familiar tunes of the day, and sang them around the campfire. In later years, when veterans mustered for reunions (usually on prominent anniversaries), the lyrics were distributed in roneoed songbooks and sung again. This is but one example of how an expedition generated its own microculture. Despite the lack of any apparent rulebook, the 1948 expedition had conventions and a code of conduct. Thinking about the origins of these mores raises deeper questions about the historical roots of exploratory and scientific travel.

THE JOURNEY AHEAD

This volume examines the emergence and proliferation of expeditions during the age of the modern empires and it throws light on why expeditions continue even today, their diminished prestige notwithstanding. A work such as this cannot provide a comprehensive history of the expedition. That would be a different book and a longer one, more extensive in its periodization and more systematic in tracing the course of imperial expansion. Here, the aim is less panoptic and more interventionist: we hope to encourage a new and more critical dialogue around the concept of the expedition that will see it recognized as a cultural and, more specifically, as an imperial formation. The chapters can be thought of as a succession of spotlights on expeditionary history. The earliest journeys discussed are voyages dating from the Enlightenment; the most recent—if a centennial pilgrimage to Douglas Mawson's Antarctic base camp is counted as an expedition—dates from 2012. While the scope is international, there is something of an Oceanic bias to the content, a reflection of the Australian origins of the project. Books, like expeditions, emerge from networks. A spotlight approach cannot represent all oceans, continents, or empires, even from the modern period. Similarly, it cannot cover with any thoroughness 'the Greats' of exploration—an approach to expeditionary history that we are writing against. The fame of an expedition or its members was not a criterion when commissioning the volume. The journey ahead will I think persuade the reader that an obscure

tour of discovery can illuminate the phenomenon of the expedition as readily as one of international renown. As the first extended study of the expedition as a cultural form, this is a narrative told by 10 writers, each with an individual perspective on what makes an expedition. There are themes that resonate across all chapters, and just as importantly there are juxtapositions. The contents are not grouped into named sections, but their sequencing brings a narrative trajectory, just as it puts chapters with a particular affinity into conversation.

This introductory chapter, which will soon turn to the task of defining the expedition culturally and etymologically, is the first of four overviews that argue for the reconceptualization of expeditionary modalities. Despite variations in style and approach, these four texts offer a corrective to the lack of attention usually given to the collective properties of expeditionary travel. Debates about authorship and the role of the printing press in enabling the mythos of exploration to blossom are at the heart of Chapter 2 by Adriana Craciun, titled 'What Is an Explorer?' Addressing Michel Foucault's 1969 lecture on authorship as a historical construction, Craciun historicizes the emergence of the explorer by comparing early nineteenth-century Arctic voyages to geodetic expeditions from the 1730s. Explorers, she argues, emerged as 'a distinct species in the nineteenth century, with their own private clubs, costumes, props, and professional organizations.' She reveals the British explorer as a proprietorial figure, originally empowered by naval conventions that required the confiscation of any notes kept by officers and crew. Publication and the kudos it brought was the exclusive right of those captains whom the Admiralty 'authorized to affix their names to a particular kind of object: expensive, illustrated, beautifully produced quarto volumes representing the collective shipboard work.'

Whereas Craciun's contribution reveals the eclipsing of the expeditionary party by the heroic leader, Lorenzo Veracini in Chapter 3 illuminates the expedition by stepping around the question of exploration. He is interested in expeditions that were intended for the purpose of founding settlements, rather than making discoveries and reporting back. Think of covered wagons with families and livestock advancing across prairies, and you have an image of the settler colonial expedition examined in this chapter. Veracini argues that the structures of feeling, modes of perception, and the core narratives that underpin this type of expedition are structurally different from those of other expeditions into empire. He dissects the assumptions underlying the settler expedition, which is predicated on *occupying* the territory on which it intrudes and remaining there indefinitely. He compares this ethos to the standard trajectory of an exploratory journey that, as Beau Riffenburgh argued in *The Myth of the Explorer* (1994), conforms to tropes ingrained in the mythology of many cultures, where the archetypal hero experiences a tripartite life cycle involving 'the departure, the initiation, and the return.'[19]

Veracini emphasizes that expeditions have ingrained attributes, although they manifest themselves in very different ways according to their purpose: settling or discovering. He reads the expedition for what it reveals about how a colonial society expands the polity and acquires new living space, and how it justifies the dispossession of indigenous people. Both Craciun and Veracini help set the context for my own examination in Chapter 4 of how exploratory expeditions are structured and how they are empowered as political entities. My case study is the mid-nineteenth-century Australian explorer, Ludwig Leichhardt, who promoted his journeys as independent 'squatting expeditions': embodiments of the same independence of spirit that colonists identified in their own pioneering ventures. Leichhardt successfully appealed to such persons in his fundraising, a necessity resulting from his lack of personal income or official sponsors. His chequered career, which culminated in his disappearance and presumed death after embarking on his second attempt at an east-west crossing of Australia, provides a window on the economy of expeditions and their affinity with other capitalist initiatives that use models of subscription to float projects. Leichhardt's tours of discovery represent socioeconomic microcosms of the colony that supported them.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 are concerned with processes of encounter. Leichhardt reappears in Chapter 5, 'The Theatre of Contact,' as do many of the major figures in Australian inland exploration. Drawing on his long experience as an ethnographic curator and historian, Philip Jones combs the records of a vast array of exploring expeditions for what they reveal about protocols of encounter between explorers and Aboriginal people. This reading of inland expeditions argues that they reveal patterns sufficiently distinct for the encounter narrative to be analysed afresh. Jones is attentive to the roles played by the traffic in objects as well as the gestural exchange set in train by the arrival of an expedition. Apparently fickle and irrational actions can be understood in the light of shared if sometimes misunderstood codes of behaviour. From these insights, Jones is able to chart the morphology of these 'first contact' experiences.

Chapter 6 by Bronwen Douglas is similarly interested in narratives of encounter between indigenous societies and expeditionary travellers, although French rather than British journeys provide the source material. Like Jones, Douglas grapples with generic features of expeditions in her comparative reading of the voyages of La Pérouse (1785–8) and Freycinet (1817–20). These include the issue of 'official instructions,' intended to guide and regulate the expeditionary traveller. Douglas shows the significance of maritime expeditions in producing scientific and practical knowledge about indigenous populations in Oceania, arguing that whereas human encounters were a minor concern in official instructions to voyagers, they loomed large in travellers' experiences. In consequence, their journals and other accounts were profoundly affected by the agency of indigenous people whom they met along the way.

Chapter 7 by Ralph Kingston complements Douglas's account of how Pacific voyagers dealt with the complexity of intercultural encounter, for he deals with a later phase in the train of events resulting from expeditions. 'Armchair Expeditionaries' is set not in 'the field' but in Paris, where in the late 1820s native weapons and other artefacts collected during exploratory voyages were installed as the Musée de la Marine, a specialist collection within the Louvre. Kingston's chapter assesses the ways in which the expeditionary imaginary manifested itself in the metropole. As well as housing artefacts from the Pacific and elsewhere, the Musée de la Marine included models of French naval vessels and a monument to La Pérouse, whose fate was still unknown when the museum opened. The collection was much frequented by naval officers who handled and rearranged objects as they inspected and compared them to each other. Kingston explores connections between expeditionary and intellectual history, examining how the museum functioned as an interactive theatre that spoke to, and at times contradicted, the scientific and racial theories developing in France through the nineteenth century.

Accounts of polar journeys are presented in Chapters 8 and 9. Both the explorations discussed were motivated by the loftiest of scientific ideals, and both establish that science is seldom detachable from national or imperial ambitions. Stephen A. Walsh's aptly named 'On Slippery Ice' tells one of the stranger stories in this volume. He investigates the First Austro-Hungarian North Polar Expedition (1872–4), led by Carl Weyprecht and Julius Payer. For much of its two-year duration, the expedition's ship, the *Tegetthoff*, was trapped in ice. After an almost miraculous escape, they returned to civilization to report the magnificent 'discovery' of Franz Josef Land, an allegedly vast terrain, and reputedly the northernmost landmass in Eurasia. Initially a publicity boon to the struggling Habsburg Monarchy, these happy tidings from the far North proved multivalent and transitory. In ensuing decades, as other voyagers reached the land that Payer and his party had glimpsed through the fog, the great discovery fragmented into the modest archipelago, still called Franz Josef Land, that appears on maps today. Walsh's chapter is a forensic investigation of the propagandist use of the expedition and its 'discovery' by the Habsburgs, the Nazis, and many others along the way. It is also a tale of pathos, in that it charts the pressures experienced by the expedition leader Payer: to deliver a significant discovery when he was out in the field, and his defence of it as the years passed and his great Arctic territory began to melt away.

The hostility of polar environments increases the co-dependence of expeditionary parties, bringing both the strengths and limits of the expedition to the surface. Fatigue, boredom, and internal friction often test the limits of leaders and personnel. In Chapter 9, Tom Griffiths writes about the Australasian Antarctic Expedition of 1911–14, led by Douglas Mawson. This was the most comprehensively scientific expedition of the 'heroic era' of Antarctic exploration. While Walsh's case study looks at the propagandist value of polar journeying to a European empire already in a state of atrophy,

Griffiths's narrative is attuned to the temper of an ascendant nation, amalgamated from the six Australian colonies only 10 years earlier, and determined to establish its presence on the world stage. Mawson's expedition became crucial to Australia's eventual claim to 42 percent of Antarctic territory. Titled 'A Polar Drama,' this chapter investigates the daily experiences of expeditioners through close readings of their diaries, presented in six 'acts.' Expeditions are 'theatre,' writes Griffiths, 'plays of power and possession.' Along the way, he gives account of his own visit to the expedition's base camp for an official centennial celebration, and he takes us through the Antarctic winter of 1913 when Mawson and the remainder of his party were trapped in their hut, sitting out the long months of relentless blizzard, while wireless operator Sidney Jeffryes careered into madness.

By the time the Australasian Antarctic Expedition set out, the blank spaces left uncharted by Western cartographers—the classic drivers for expeditionary discovery—were no longer. Expeditions continued, although their goals had shifted. Roy MacLeod argues that as the rush for territory lost momentum, science increased its already considerable stake in the expedition. Hence the proliferation of university and museum expeditions that began in the 1880s and flourished through the early decades of the twentieth century.[20] Mawson can be seen as the living embodiment of this ethos. He famously declined the invitation of Captain R. F. Scott to join his second attempt to reach the South Pole because he deemed the journey insufficiently scientific. The last two chapters in this volume examine the fate of expeditions as the twentieth century progressed. Although scientific credibility remained important, it was, by the interwar period, no longer an essential ingredient. Other aspects of the expedition, including showmanship and the generation of media product, became more prominent.

In Chapter 10 Georgine Clarsen tells the little-known story of the MacRobertson Round Australia Expedition of 1928, the brainchild of Melbourne confectionary magnate MacPherson Robertson, widely known by the moniker 'MacRobertson.' An Australia-wide truck journey, it was essentially a publicity stunt that generated media as it toured the outback, filming locals and distributing the sponsor's candy. The MacRobertson expedition could be readily dismissed as a protracted advertisement—which it certainly was! Yet this does not diminish its significance as a cultural event, as Clarsen demonstrates in her meticulous interpretation. This journey, she argues, provides vivid evidence of how the colonial expedition enjoyed 'a dynamic afterlife' in an emerging national culture. The two trucks that performed the Round Australia journey were named 'Burke' and 'Wills' in homage to Robert O'Hara Burke and William John Wills, the famed leaders of a disastrous attempt at a north-south crossing of Australia in 1860–1. The MacRobertson journey mobilized vehicular technology in its reprocessing of a failed colonial expedition. In its new, revitalized iteration, the Burke and Wills narrative emerged triumphantly 'as a new form of settler expedition that drew on familiar colonial tropes of land being won through arduous feats of exploration and travel.'

In Chapter 11, Agnieszka Sobocinska leads the expeditionary journey into the post-Second World War era. 'The Expedition's Afterlives' concerns a Land Rover journey from England to Singapore, known as the Oxford and Cambridge Far Eastern Expedition of 1955–6. The title of the expedition was extravagant, given that it had no official connection with either of the universities namedropped. Similarly, its claim to be the 'first overland' journey (a phrase immortalized in the title of Tim Slessor's widely read book on the expedition) was dubious, given that Francis Birtles had driven much the same route and more in his London to Melbourne journey of 1928. Sobocinska's purpose is to track a genealogy of influence by examining how the imperial model of expeditionary travel provided inspiration for this latter-day adventure. Like Clarsen, she is interested in national reimaginings of imperial gestures, although the postcolonial context makes the Far Eastern Expedition radically different from the MacRobertson journey. With a portfolio of sponsors that included the Mobil Corporation, provider of fuel throughout the journey, the expedition's pair of Land Rovers rattled their way through the Middle East to East Asia, 'discovering' a British Empire that was in the process of being dismantled. Colonial clubs were still dispensing the gin slings, but the Oxford and Cambridge men had arrived at a 'last drinks' moment. The accomplishments of this expedition were slight indeed, but its 'afterlife' was powerful. Sobocinska shows how in the wake of the journey substantial parts of the route became the 'Hippie Trail' between Europe and Asia. Lonely Planet guidebooks and a new form of backpacking tourism drew inspiration from the 'first overland' journey, which provided 'a vehicle (both literal and symbolic) into postcolonial Asia at a key historical juncture: a moment when international tourism was booming and metropolitan attitudes towards the decolonizing world were in the process of renegotiation.'

From this perspective, it might seem that the journey ahead leads *out* of empire (at least in the formal sense of that term). But the title is appropriate if we acknowledge that imperialism in various guises continues to prosper, even if it disavows that name. Having charted the trajectory of the book from the eighteenth to the twentieth century, my purpose now is to pick up at the point where Clarsen and Sobocinska finish. As their contributions, like my own delving into the Arnhem Land Expedition in the present chapter, establish, the more recent history reveals traits of the expedition that help illuminate the period when Europe's empires were at their height.

TRAITS OF THE EXPEDITION

Historians of exploration mostly agree that the end of the nineteenth century brought the terminus of the great epoch of geographical discovery. As Simon Naylor and James R. Ryan gloss this position, the 'completion' of the cartographic project coincided with 'the professionalization and

institutionalization of science at that time,' which was instrumental in consolidating the scientific turn of expeditionary endeavours.[21]

This did not in itself dispel the romance of exploration, just as it did not quell the widespread nostalgia for imperial glory, symbolized by expeditionary heroics. Like the proverbial ocean liner losing momentum, it was not until the empires of Europe were manifestly unraveling that the end-of-discovery was widely and deeply felt. An emblematic moment was the ascent of Everest in 1953—an event that marked the death knell and the apotheosis of the exploratory expedition. In the triumphalism that greeted this long-anticipated victory, which happily coincided with the coronation of Elizabeth II, the New Zealander Edmund Hillary and his Sherpa companion Tenzing Norgay shared equal credit for the first ascent. With this occurrence, the mythos of the explorer collided with the geo-political reality of decolonization—with explosive effect.[22] For if the input of the local guide, the indigenous knowledge-holder, was now to be put on equal footing with the heroics of the white discoverer, what was the status of all those 'explorations' that had shaped world history in previous centuries; those triumphs of 'discovery' in which the input of innumerable persons such as Tenzing had been obscured, diminished, or ignored?

Several books have already been published on the tantalizing subject of how residual echoes of exploration persisted through the twentieth century, despite the absence of those seductive blank spaces on maps.[23] Bathyspheres plumbed the depths of oceans, while rockets ventured into the upper atmosphere and beyond. Expeditionary ventures, directed at the remaining pockets of humanity who lived beyond the zone of 'contact,' continued. Curiously, the imperial associations of expeditionary adventure, and the draining of its scientific import, made the term 'expedition' less attractive to publicists of space travel. In their quest for the heavens, astronauts are said to go on *missions* not expeditions. At one level, this choice of terminology can be seen as endowing a religious significance to the skyward trajectory. Yet the term 'mission' is also replete with military connotations, which makes it such an apposite descriptor for this form of travel.

Like the Everest ascent, the Arnhem Land Expedition postdated the 'über-project' of geographical exploration and discovery. Yet as I think I have shown, it reveals aspects of the structure and social makeup of expeditions that are survivals from the imperial age—the epoch when geography was still 'militant' (to use Conrad's phrase).[24] In this vein, I will go a little further in probing some recent expeditionary history, in which key characteristics of expeditions are revealed, often with remarkable clarity. Four key traits strike me as especially pertinent.

Trait 1: Man versus Nature

In expeditions of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, we find that the spectacle of 'man versus nature' is heightened, sometimes to the point of