

Finding Endurance: Shackleton, My Father and a World without End

Darrel Bristow-Bovey

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Ernest Shackleton's Antarctic expedition, the loss and resurgence of his ship, and memories of growing up in South Africa inform Darrel Bristow-Bovey's entrancing literary memoir *Finding Endurance*, about the romantic spirit of adventure and inspiring, myth-making stories.

In 2022, Shackleton's ship, the *Endurance*—which sank in the Weddell Sea, though its crew survived—was rediscovered. Bristow-Bovey was buoyed by this news in the wake of COVID-19. His vigorous account of the 1915 voyage (by some reckonings, a “failure” because its goal of a trans-Antarctic crossing was never fulfilled) mixes with memories of his father, whose tale about meeting Shackleton (an impossibility) spurred his boyhood imaginings. Complemented by beautiful elements of nature writing, biography, and the heroics of polar exploration, this book is a tender tribute to family.

Bristow-Bovey is meticulous in recreating Shackleton's voyage, which has since been hailed as a model of wise leadership through grueling crises. His text dwells on infinite potentials—in charting landscapes, with the sea between ice floes likened to kintsugi; and of life. Narrative suspense divvies up the stages of the *Endurance's* fate: as Shackleton and his crew realize that they're unable to rescue their ship and must winter on the ice, so, too, does Bristow-Bovey experience loss.

The book's coverage of Edwardian figures, including Shackleton competitors Robert Falcon Scott and Roald Amundsen, leads to musings on optimism—highlighted as the quality that set Shackleton apart. It uses to crew diaries to draw ever-widening inferences about interpersonal needs and the methods by which Shackleton's men staved off despair.

With elegiac considerations of subjects including time, hope, and ice, *Finding Endurance* is a grace-filled memoir about a father and a resilient Antarctic legend.

KAREN RIGBY (May / June 2023)

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