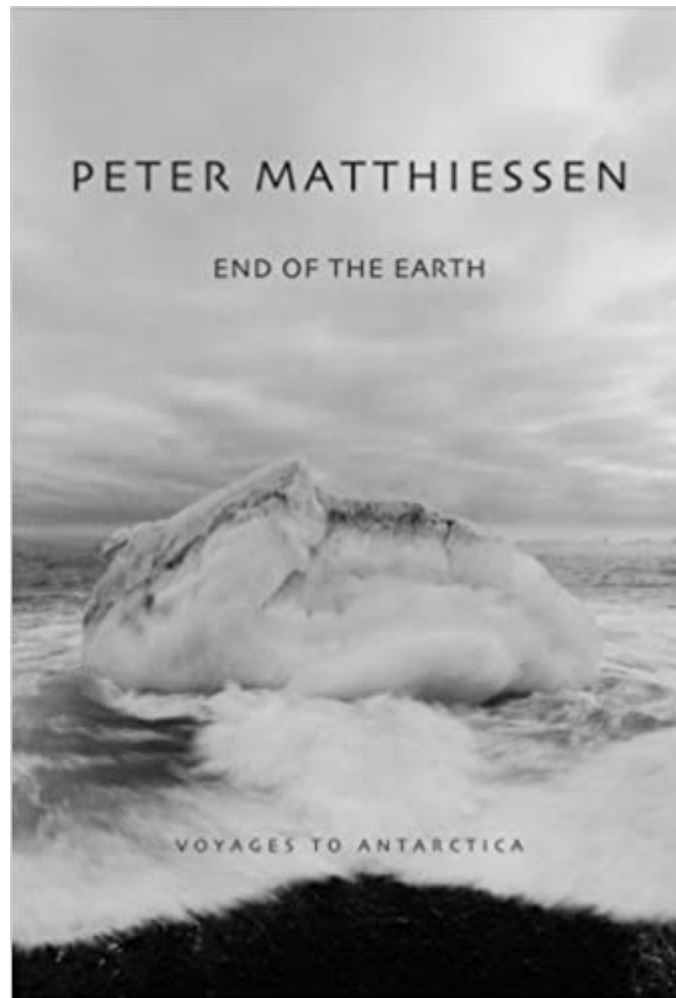




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End Of The Earth: Voyaging To Antarctica



Synopsis

End of the Earth brings to life the waters of the richest whale feeding grounds in the world, the wandering albatross with its 11-foot wingspan arching through the sky, and the habits of every variety of seal, walrus, petrel, and penguin in the area, all with boundless and contagious inquisitiveness. Magnificently written, the book evokes an appreciation and sympathy for a region as harsh as it is beautiful. "Luminous and haunting . . . the contemporary Thoreau." "The Wall Street Journal" " [Matthiessen] doesn't waste words, and in End of the Earth: Voyages to Antarctica, his homage to the austere splendor of that frozen continent, he hasn't deployed a single one whose choice I would care to take issue with. . . . Matthiessen writes crusty, chiseled sentences that demand to be read slowly "the perfect prose equivalent of the landscapes he's describing." "The New York Times Book Review" "Matthiessen and polar landscapes seem perfectly suited. . . . I found myself constantly re-reading sentences or paragraphs to savour all of their rich resonances. . . . Few if any authors on the region have so successfully compressed . . . Antarctic life . . . and I suspect it will become standard reading." "The Guardian"

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Peter Matthiessen (1927–2014) was an American writer and naturalist who famously cofounded The Paris Review as a cover for his work as a CIA agent. He won National Book Awards for The Snow Leopard and Shadow Country: A New Rendering of the Watson Legend, making him the only author to have received the honor in both the nonfiction and fiction categories. Birgit Freybe Bateman is an award-winning photographer from Hünxter, Germany. Her images have appeared

in numerous exhibitions, magazines, and books. Some of her credits include Force Field: 77 Women Poets of British Columbia and End of the Earth: Voyaging to Antarctica. She lives on Salt Spring Island, British Columbia. To learn more, visit birgitbateman.com.

I am undoubtedly biased, because I was on the Akademik Ioffe trip to South Georgia and Antarctica with Victor Emanuel, Peter Matthiessen, Bob and Birgit Bateman, et al. It was a splendid, truly brilliant trip, and I really like this book because it documents the highlights of the trip and adds some ruminations and connections to other world issues with vital and descriptive language that is evocative to me. Some descriptions are truly effulgent and capture the essence of what we saw, from tiny, coruscating bubbles of air being released by ancient ice making effervescent, crystalline sounds we could listen to in the great Antarctic silence to the smell of krill in whale breath as yet another whale surfaced and exhaled next to our fragile Zodiacs. Indeed, this is a journal - I commend it to those with an interest in Antarctic travel and global conservation. For you, I would rate it four stars; for me, six if such were possible.

This is the third Matthiessen book I've read. Heading to Antarctica in November and enjoyed this book, though it certainly isn't his best.

The book is a series of short vignettes focused on distinct incidents or places encountered in his two visits to the Antarctic but they are tied together to create a single understanding of the region: the ten thousand and the one. As always, Matthiessen is a superb stylist. A great read if you want to know what it might be like to actually take such a trip.

took me back to my trip to antarctica

Great!

I've enjoyed everything Mr Matthiessen had written and look forward to his latest & 2nd to last endeavor (I think). What joy in life & now he can be with us always in spirit. A great spirit.

. . . so go look at some pictures of the South Pole. After hearing so much about Mr. Matthiessen in the wake of his recent death I wanted to read something by him, and went searching for the Snow Leopard, apparently his best work. Unfortunately, at a local second hand bookstore I came across

"End of the Earth" and picked it up instead. I was expecting an artful description of Matthiessen's journeys to Antarctica, beautiful depictions of the land and flora and fauna, and some philosophic discussions about the greater meaning of a place like this and the men who, over the centuries, felt compelled to journey there again and again on missions of discovery and plunder. For what? Glory? Riches? To expand man's knowledge? To test their own metal? I did not know, and I was hopeful when I picked up this work to see how Matthiessen would take on the great "nothingness" of Antarctica, and some big picture ruminations about what it all means and how we fit in. Unfortunately, I did not find that here. What I found was one man's travel log, and it was reminiscent of old jokes about the bland suburbs where neighbors pull out slides of their recent vacations. The writing was good, but nothing exceptional or truly distinctive. The descriptions of animals and the land were ok, but go google some pictures of Antarctica and you'll get more than you can out of any page of text here. While Matthiessen touches on the explorers who went before him, he does so in sketchy thumbnails that do not raise any greater questions about what drove them or the meaning of it all, or what drove him to go south. I was expecting philosophy, and I ended up with Herb and Mabel talking about their last vacation over fondue in the burbs.

I was very disappointed. After all, it's Peter Matthiessen, and he writes so well, but this book is dull, big parts read like a list of the wildlife spotted. For a book about Antarctica that's fun to read, I recommend *Terra Incognita* by Sara Wheeler.

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