Abstract

This paper aims to examine the representations of two journeys to Patagonia at two different points in time, as documented in the films *Mountain of Storms* (1968) and *180° South: Conquerors of the Useless* (2010). Both document journeys into Patagonia, a region at the southern end of South America known for its diverse landscapes. While they have a shared inspiration, these films have a significantly different focus in their intent and style.

Through analysis of the visual and textual representations of travellers and the Patagonian landscape in the two films, this thesis demonstrates that certain colonial narratives, stereotypes and myths are present in both films, while a call for environmental advocacy is what sets the newer film apart from its predecessor.

Keywords: Patagonia, representation, travel documentary, conservation, landscape, stereotypes

Framing Patagonia:

Representations of Landscape and Travellers in *Mountain of Storms* and *180° South*

1. Introduction

The nature documentary genre has long been used as a medium through which audiences can explore the world's most remote and stunning landscapes. From the first ethnographic travelogues of the 1920s to the high-definition multi-million dollar productions of today, these films do more than just document our world. They shape their viewers' opinions on nature and their relationship with the environment. *Mountain of Storms* (1968) and *180° South: Conquerors of the Useless* (2010) are two such documentaries. Both document journeys into Patagonia, a region at the southern end of South America known for its diverse landscapes. While they have a shared inspiration, these films have a significantly different focus in their intent and style. This illustrates a broader shift in nature documentary filmmaking regarding attitudes toward conservation.

Mountain of Storms captures Yvon Chouinard, Doug Tompkins, Dick Dorworth, and Chris Jones' journey as they travelled overland from California to Patagonia to climb Mount Fitz Roy in 1968. Shot using a modest handheld 16mm camera, the documentary reflects the counterculture of the 1960s, which was a celebration of freedom, exploration, and the search for personal fulfillment through adventure (Suri 47). The film's home-made aesthetic, grainy footage and spontaneous narration draw the viewers into the raw excitement of the journey. Rather than offering a polished narrative, *Mountain of Storms* presents a combination of candid moments: surfing waves in Baja California, climbing preparations, and their triumph on the summit of Fitz Roy.

Mountain of Storms had a modest initial release, and circulated primarily within niche climbing and outdoor communities (Patagonia 2018). Its legacy has grown over the past years, and its status as a cult classic among adventurers and environmentalists led to a global rerelease by Patagonia in 2018. It stands alongside other early adventure films like *The Man Who Skied Down Everest* (1975) as an example of how personal journeys may become cultural touchstones. Two of the film's creators - Chouinard and Tompkins - went on to become leading figures in the environmental movement, founding Patagonia, Inc. and The North Face, respectively.

Fortytwo years later in 2010, *180° South: Conquerors of the Useless,* directed by Chris Malloy and funded by Patagonia, Inc., revisits the spirit of the original journey. The film follows Jeff Johnson's efforts to replicate Chouinard and Tompkins' expedition throughout Patagonia. It creates a visually striking and emotionally impactful story by

combining modern multiple-camera footage with archival footage from *Mountain of Storms*. Johnson's journey is not a direct replication of the 1968 journey, but rather a reinterpretation that emphasises environmental advocacy and the fragility of Patagonia's ecosystems (*180° South*).

Unlike its predecessor, *180° South* was conceived as more than a travelogue. The film's broader distribution and alignment with Patagonia, Inc.'s brand helped the film reach a global audience, and expand its impact beyond the outdoor and climbing communities. The film's narrative highlights Patagonia's environmental challenges, and frames Johnson's journey as a quest not only for adventure but also for understanding and action. *180° South* reflects how nature documentaries have grown to be a popular medium fit for advocacy and storytelling (Milliken and Anderson 2021). The film's alignment with films like *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006) and *The Cove* (2009) underscores its dual function as art and activism, where Patagonia is used as a stage to address global environmental issues. The involvement of Chouinard and Tompkins, who appear in the film as mentors and environmental advocates, reinforces this message, connecting the past and present to underscore the urgency of conservation efforts.

As this thesis will explore, a comparative analysis of these documentaries offers valuable insights into the shifting cultural and ideological landscapes that define the nature documentary genre. This paper will examine the way the Patagonian landscape and travellers are represented in either documentary, as well as how the two compare.

2. Literature review

Travel and film have gone hand-in-hand for as long as film has existed, and throughout the last two centuries, this relationship has persisted. In *The Roots of Travel Cinema: John L. Stoddard, E. Burton Holmes and the NineteenthCentury Illustrated Travel Lecture,* X. Theodore Barber gives an overview of the adaptation of the travel lecture - or travel lantern show - which paved the way for travel cinema (81). Travel was already one of the most popular topics for magic lantern entertainment in America, where the tourist industry was rapidly developing after the Civil War (Barber 68). Academics have long been aware of the varied degree in which lantern shows and travel films have represented their subjects with biases towards imperialist attitudes and beliefs of Western superiority (Barber 82).

Nature and travel *documentaries* more specifically are often discussed within the context of environmental ethics. Scholars like Sean Cubitt (*EcoMedia*, 2005) and Pat Brereton (*Environmental Ethics and Film,* 2016) have examined the way these kinds of films affect

their audience. Both Cubitt and Brereton stress that while they can contribute to environmental awareness, at the same time, they risk oversimplifying the complex issues at hand. Brereton argues however, that the large influence and wide reach of film as a medium plays a positive role in calling attention to issues surrounding us, and provoking a response from the public (2). Cubitt adds that reintroducing the past is a necessary aspect to achieve this response, as it points to the absence of a future (139).

Freytag et al. elaborate on the varied responses nature documentaries elicit from scholars in "Explaining the Rich Entertainment Appeal of Nature Documentaries and its Conflicting Motivational Consequences" (2024). Studies have shown that the nature documentary genre possesses a dual entertainment quality: educational and aesthetic entertainment. The impact humans have on the environment has gained a lot more visibility since the 1970s, as well as the importance of conservation techniques (Howlett et al. 642). The nature documentary genre can work to motivate pro-environmental behaviour in viewers (e.g., Hofman & Hughes, 2018; Janpol & Dilts, 2016), as well as motivate touristic travel of viewers in a way that affects the environment negatively (e.g., Arnold, 2019). The motivating factors at play have been discussed extensively, with a strengthened connection to nature (Yan et al., 2024) and gaining more awareness playing a large role (Holbert et al., 2003; Östman, 2014).

With regards to mountain cinema, a subgenre of travelogue film focused on mountaineering, most studies focus on the development of the German *Bergfilme* in the 1920's and '30's. As Cornelia Klecker and Christian Quendler elaborate on in *Cinematic figurations of mountains* (2023), the mountain film remains an inconsistent concept in cinema, and is often only discussed with regard to the classic cinema of the 1920's and '30's (3). Editor of *Bergfilm: Dramen, Trick und Abenteuer* (2001) Stefan König's desire for a broader interpretation of the term - any media engaging with mountains - was received poorly by scholars in the field (Klecker & Quendler 4). Although Klecker and Quendler discuss a wide variety of opinions on the genre, not much about additions of the last decade or their interpretations is discussed.

This seems to apply to the travelogue genre more broadly. The travelogue played a large role in the early development of cinema, and these early stages have of course been discussed extensively by scholars. The relationship between landscape, place and cinema has gained more interest from scholars more recently (Freeman 228). However, most work written on the subject remains focused on films made in the first half of the twentieth century.

In *The Summits of Modern Man* (2013) mountaineering historian Peter Hansen highlights a trope seen in mountaineering accounts, where the modern man is depicted reaching the summit all by himself, "dominant over nature" (2). Even though mountaineering is a team effort, Hansen argues that through modern representations of mountaineering, the image of a lone conqueror is upheld. Long before this, the 1960s saw a large increase in climbing activity in America, which resulted in the deterioration of climbing routes, and a following movement to preserve, as Patagonia Inc. described, "the vertical wilderness and the adventure inherent in the experience" (Labrague 184). In the 1990s, scholars also noted a visible change in experiences, expenses, and "value in the experience" of the sport (Johnston & Edwards 473), calling out the corporate sponsorship of mountaineering that led to the commodification of the sport, and socio-environmental degradation (Johnston & Edwards, 1994).

The Patagonian landscape has long been exploited for economic and commercial interests. Histories of contact, colonisation and displacement have created long-lasting myths surrounding the Patagonian landscape, despite the fact that the area has long been explored and charted (Peñaloza 20). Travel accounts helped to conceal the appropriative power of colonial discourse and enterprises by recalling encountering overwhelming nature (10). As a result of this, "Patagonia's natural charm and promise of profit remained linked with the idea of an empty space, whose sterility and isolation had only just been heroically confronted by intrepid travellers and brave pioneers" (13). In the 21st century, this myth of Patagonia as a desolate, vast and infinite wilderness has remained widespread and unchanged, and the illusion of experiencing the 'authentic' Patagonia continues to bring in tourists longing to rediscover the land (19).

3. Questions

This thesis will make use of a comparative analysis to explore elements of *Mountain of Storms* and *180° South* that remain little researched by scholars. By doing so, this study attempts to answer the following question: how do *Mountain of Storms* and *180° South* portray Patagonia and the travellers' experiences across two distinct points in time?

This question will be dealt with by use of the following sub-questions:

1. How is Patagonia represented?
2. How are the travellers represented?
3. How do the two documentaries compare?

Under the first subquestion the visual depictions of Patagonia will be analysed, as well as the way Patagonia is spoken about throughout the documentaries. For the second question, the way that the travellers are represented in their interactions with nature and each other will be examined. Finally, these findings will be compared to see what differences and similarities the two documentaries share.

4. Theoretical Framework

For analysing the characteristics of the two documentaries, Stuart Hall's theory on representation, as presented in *Representation*: *Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (1997), and his encoding and decoding model, as presented in *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse* (1973) will be used.

As Hall explains in *Representation*: *Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, culture is about 'shared meanings', where meaning is produced and exchanged through the use of language (1). This production of meaning through language is what he calls representation. As things themselves rarely have a single fixed meaning, it is up to the participants of a certain culture to give them meaning through the way they use and represent them (3). Languages use signs to refer to objects and other things we can encounter physically, but also ideas, fantasies and other abstract things (28). Ferdinand de Saussure analysed the sign into two further elements: the form the sign takes (signifier), and the idea you associate it with (signified) (31). The relationship between the two is fixed by our cultural and linguistic codes, and it is this relationship which makes representation possible.

Hall uses Roland Barthes' theory on denotation and connotation to further describe how signs work to create meaning: the descriptive level or denotation refers to the literal meaning of a sign, while the second level or connotation refers to the symbolic or cultural meaning of the sign (38). However, as Hall points out, "signs can only convey meaning if we possess codes which allow us to translate our concepts into language and vice versa" (29). These are codes that we learn through social conventions, and they differ between different structures of understanding, and social and economic structures (*Encoding and Decoding* 4). One representation may be understandable for many different audiences when they have shared cultural codes. However, a representation can be interpreted in many different ways.

Hall's encoding and decoding model is a model of the communication process present in texts that are in televisual form. The model depicts meaning and messages being organised through codes. There are two moments during this communication where the underlying meaning is determined: during encoding and during decoding (2). At these moments, meaning embedded

in the message is being constructed within a specific discourse (see Fig. 1). For this case study, the encoders would be the creators of the documentaries and Patagonia Inc., and the decoders would be the viewers or audience of either documentary. The encoding process happens during the production of media with a certain message, and is influenced by the cultural context of the producers. The decoding of this representation is done by the audience, who actively interpret the media based on their own cultural context, leading to differing outcomes. There are three ways an audience can interpret the message:

1. A dominant-hegemonic reading: the audience fully aligns themselves with the encoded meaning,
2. A negotiated reading: the audience partially accepts the encoded message, but also partially rejects it to align themselves with it,
3. An oppositional reading: the audience fully opposes the encoded meaning.

In “The West and the Rest: discourse and power”, Hall defines a system of representation he calls ‘the West and the Rest’, explaining how the West shaped its sense of itself through its sense of difference from other worlds (279). When the West imposes European norms onto others this results in stereotyping, which Hall defines as a “one-sided description which results from the collapsing of complex differences into a simple ‘cardboard cut-out’” (308). Nuanced traits are simplified into a simple, singular, often exaggerated characteristic by which the subject is recognised. Through stereotyping, the Rest becomes defined by everything the West is not: the Other (308). In “The Spectacle of the Other”, Hall further explains that these characteristics are represented as fixed by nature, “without change or development to eternity” (258). Stereotyping, and the “Otherness” that is created help maintain power structures through representational practices - the power to represent someone or something in a certain way (259).

This power is also what W.J.T. Mitchell talks about in his book *Landscape and Power*. He introduces landscape as being both a visual art form and a material, lived environment. Mitchell explains how landscape is a medium of cultural expression and representation, an “exchange between the human and the natural, the self and the other” (5). Landscape conceals social relations, and must therefore not simply be seen or read in regard to what it is or means, but what it does, in order to reveal the history and power structures present behind the surface (1).

Landscape is historically associated with European imperialism (9). And like imperialism itself, “landscape is an object of nostalgia in a postcolonial and postmodern era,

reflecting a time when metropolitan cultures could imagine their destiny in an unbounded "prospect" of endless appropriation and conquest" (20). Mitchell refers to the way imperial powers have long viewed landscapes as spaces where they could expand, conquer, and exploit as many resources as they liked. Landscapes were claimed and controlled, which Mitchell argues is still relevant in the way landscapes are represented and enjoyed today. Most importantly, what Hall and Mitchell agree on, is that landscapes are shaped by those who have the power to represent them.

5. Methodology:

This paper will look at the production and circulation of meaning through both narrative and visual language. It will utilise the theories by Hall and Mitchell as outlined above for a qualitative analysis. Firstly, representations of Patagonia will be discussed. This will be divided to discuss each documentary separately. After this, the same approach will be taken to discuss representations of the travellers in each documentary. This research aims to address a gap in scholarship by comparing two documentaries that represent the same journey set in different cultural and historical contexts. While *Mountain of Storms* is often celebrated as a cult classic among climbing enthusiasts, it has not been extensively analysed for its ideological messaging. Similarly, *180° South* has been discussed primarily as an environmental documentary, but its relationship to the earlier film and its framing of adventure and conservation remain underexplored.

6. Representation of Patagonia in *Mountain of Storms*

Mountain of Storms covers the full journey from California to Argentina that Yvon Chouinard, Doug Tompkins, Dick Dorworth, and Chris Jones travelled in 1968. The journey provides the narrative structure of the film, starting in California and travelling down, finishing the journey on the summit of Fitz Roy. Key moments are interspersed throughout. Although the only spoken element of the documentary takes the form of a voiceover, it doesn't offer many in-depth explanations. Often, music replaces the narration, focusing on visuals and atmosphere. A large variety of environments is shown, most often going hand in hand with an outdoor activity such as surfing and climbing. These environments range from snowy mountains to sunny beaches to desert roads.

The voiceover brings attention to lots of different traits of the landscape encountered in the documentary: vastness, isolation, beauty, danger, and unpredictability are some of these. Above all, the extreme conditions and potential danger of the trip are brought to

attention. Patagonia is described as unexplored and “wild” (00:33-00:50), and “the end of the world” (39:24-39:26). The weather is unpredictable and harsh (21:59-22:03), and the mountains ominous (41:23-41:26), dangerous (28:26-28:34), and impossible to climb (20:47-20:52). When an Andean condor is seen circling above the travellers’ heads, the narrator describes they “wonder if you're being filed for future reference”, implying the high stakes of the trip and introducing a sense of vulnerability (27:05-27:15). The environment is depicted as both beautiful and dangerous at once. Descriptions of the environment such as these often go accompanied by shots that showcase the weather through visuals and sound.

However, even when talking about the smooth ocean for example, the camera remains focused on the surfers rather than the landscape (06:20-07:30). Their activities and amusement come first. The same is true when the attention shifts to their activities up in the mountains. Although there are many montages that show the group surfing (06:33-08:55), skiing (14:30-16:20) and climbing (25:02-26:18), the men remain the main focus of the footage. The shots remain closely cropped on surfboards and climbing gear, rather than zooming out to show off the ocean or mountain landscapes in large sweeping shots. The limitations of using handheld cameras presumably play a part in this result, as we see more shots of the mountain landscape when the storm lifts while the group is back at basecamp, and the mountain is once again fully visible (38:20-39:46).

Shortly after the group sets off to Patagonia, cultural differences between them and local people are highlighted. Their van drives into a city, and the narrator speaks: “Once out of North-America, the cities and towns are as bright and loud as jungle birds” (04:13-04:19). This constructs an image of cities and towns in South America being colourful, lively, and somehow a part of the natural world. The use of the words ‘bright’ and ‘loud’ suggest that North America is muted and quiet in contrast to South America. By comparing the cities to jungle birds, an urban and manmade concept is somehow integrated into an untamed and natural one. An exotic picture is painted of the region as peculiar and wild, reinforcing stereotypes about non-Western cultures (Hall 308).

On screen, a market scene is depicted, with fresh fruit being sold on the street, and lots of people moving around. Most of the people on screen wear bright clothes, and wear their hair in long plaits (04:07-04:44). The city that is shown remains unspecified, but several cities spread out over Central America are grouped together to suggest where they are: “Guatemala City where pineapples are a penny each. San Salvador, Managua Nicaragua, San Jose in Costa Rica” (04:20-04:28). Ironically, Central America is a subregion of North America, which means they haven’t quite left North America yet. ‘South America’ is here

reduced to a singular culture, represented by an unnamed town, which presumably is still part of North America. Any regional differences between these cities have been erased, reducing Central America to a vague "Other" under the name 'South America' (Hall 308).

The cultural differences are further amplified when the narration announces that "South America demands patience. Down here, the clocks don't run; they walk." (04:42-04:48). South America is portrayed as slow and disregarding time as an unimportant facet. This ties in to a common but unjustified stereotype that people from Latin America are lazy and laidback (Fuligni 2007). The travellers have to adapt to this change in pace, which highlights the contrast of the efficiency-focused environment in North America.

There aren't many instances where the group is shown to engage directly with the inhabitants of the places they travel through. In an unspecified place in Peru, a group of Peruvians invite them to drive and ski over sand dunes. They try to explain how it works, but Dick Dorworth, "expert skier" starts teaching skiing to them instead (10:25-10:58). The narration elaborates: "Instead of just 'scooting' down the dune, try some of these linked turns. Snow skiers have been doing them for years" (10:59-11:05). Although this moment of contact is framed as a fun moment of connection with the local population goofing around, there is a clear cultural hierarchy depicted here. Dorworth's skiing technique is painted as advanced and refined in comparison to the technique the local Peruvians use, which is in need of improvement. Especially the use of the word 'scooting' frames their skiing as rudimentary. The locals are here represented as primitive compared to the Western travellers who try to impose their knowledge onto them. This depiction showcases one of the binary oppositions used to differentiate between 'culture' as knowledgeable and 'nature' which lacks knowledge (Hall 243). It also exemplifies stereotyping by imposing Western norms onto the Peruvians (215).

Although this trip's main goal is climbing in Patagonia, there are no actual people from Patagonia depicted in this documentary. All the exchanges mentioned above took place either in Central America or Peru, and neither of those are part of the Patagonian region.

On a descriptive level, *Mountain of Storms* portrays the Patagonian landscape, as well as other landscapes encountered during the trip, as diverse, showing many different sides of the area. On a connotative level, some colonial myths can be read about Patagonia as a stage for Western conquest. Especially the idea that Patagonia remains unexplored and wild ties into the imperial gaze Mitchell focuses on in representations of land as unclaimed (20).

7. Representation of Patagonia in *180° South: Conquerors of the Useless*

Jeff Johnson's journey in *180° South: Conquerors of the Useless* starts out in Mexico, from where he heads to Patagonia by boat. The documentary's narrative is guided by Johnson's journey south, but additionally uses archival footage from *Mountain of Storms*, as well as an interview with Yvon Chouinard and Dough Tompkins to expand on the journey.

Before reaching Patagonia, the crew ends up on Rapa Nui due to a broken mast. A montage is shown of the shoreline, moai and surfers, as well as local fishermen, animals and children (16:29-17:48). Makohe, who was born and raised on the island, highlights the different nature and people compared to big cities. She describes coming to Rapa Nui as going back to the past, and expresses that she doesn't want the island to change (17:58-19:52). The crew's next stop is Pichilemu, Chile. Through Ramon, a friend of Makohe, we learn more about the negative effects of industrial fishing on the local fisheries in the area. Large cellulose mills have led to the contamination of the marine area, and "killed the soul of the town" (33:56-34:25). On screen, images are shown of local people working the land, riding horses, and working with fishing nets. The importance of the ocean is stressed by both Ramon and his father, who taught him a deep respect for the ocean, to work hard, and to live simply, (32:19-32:27). He explains: "The ocean and then the land are of course the most important providers there could be. You should know something about working the land because the land will give back to you" (32:52-33:26).

The crew travels along to Santiago, the only urban setting featured in the documentary, and the only place that is shown after nightfall. Santiago has a larger population than Los Angeles, and Johnson is reminded of his life "back home" (36:12-36:42). The city is packed with buses, cars and skyscrapers. Sped up footage turns people and traffic into a large blur, creating a large contrast with the surfing montages seen earlier. Johnson meets up with Juan Pablo Orego, a friend of Yvon Chouinard's who works to stop urban sprawl in wild Chile and is fighting for the fading way of life of its indigenous people. He explains how the people in the city close themselves off from the dirty air, annoying sounds and ugliness of the city. They don't understand nature, don't love it or take care of it, and don't realise they are dependent on it (37:25-37:43).

When Orego has finished voicing his view, we're immediately transported back to the Chilean countryside. Men with buffaloes pull a cart, a man rides a horse, and a dog is being pet against a sunny backdrop (37:43-37:58). *180° South* commits to a strong contrast between rural and urban spaces, industrialisation and nature, past and present. Polluted Santiago,

disconnected from nature, in direct opposition to rural Pichilemu, whose residents live from the land.

The group travels the last leg to Conservatión Patagonica by boat. The reservation is introduced through shots of quiet waters and mountaintops in the distance. There is no longer any sign of other people, and the crew is shown paddleboarding next to a group of seals (39:30-40:25). Johnson narrates the way Doug and Kris Tompkins, together with Yvon Chouinard, managed to set up Conservatión Patagonica, one of the largest private land conservation projects in the world. With the help of volunteers, they protect the local ecosystems and foster sustainable farming and ranching programmes (40:25-41:00). An interview with Tompkins and Chouinard further expands on this process.

When the group finally gets to climbing Mount Corcovado, it comes with its own troubles. The climbers struggle through dense forest to get to the bottom of the mountain. Mount Corcovado and its surroundings are shown to be remote and unexplored, the "craziest part of Chile" Johnson's seen so far (56:44-56:52). He states: "I've spent a lot of time in places I thought were wild, but I've never seen anything like this" (56:36-56:42). Besides 'wild', the mountain is dangerous. Makohe and Johnson have both never climbed on snow before, which comes with a lot of risks (57:38-58:29). In the end, there's no ice left on the summit of mount Corcovado, making it impossible to climb safely (01:03:03). A couple hundred feet from the summit, they are forced to retreat.

Johnson goes on to work with local park rangers on the conservation, learning about dam projects that threaten Patagonia's rivers and the protests against the power companies they led to. In conclusion of his trip, he points out the global effects of overconsumption and the need to simplify our lives (01:16:20-01:17:15). Finally, Tompkins, Chouinard and Johnson wrap up the trip by climbing an unclimbed peak on the conservation. Johnson gets to stand on a summit after all.

Patagonia is at once both depicted as behind or less developed than North America, but also as an example for the travellers. The interviews and visuals encode both vulnerable and aspirational aspects. The land is described as extreme and remote, acknowledging a certain beauty that comes with the wilderness. At the same time Johnson praises Patagonian natives for their work ethic and ability to live simply with the land, taking it as proof that "we can learn from tradition" (01:15:15-01:15:25). *180° South* stresses the negative effects of industrialisation on the Patagonian people and landscape on multiple instances. By incorporating environmental consciousness into the trip, the narrative shifts from a personal conquest to a larger movement.

Looking back on the trip, Johnson says: “This trip was like going back in time, like seeing North America before it became dominated by industry. But for these people it’s not some nostalgic trip into the past, it’s their present” (01:15:00-01:15:16). Patagonia is here made out to be a pre-industrial, untouched and pure version of North America. Johnson talks with a sense of nostalgia for this timeless land, seeming to feel a kind of loss that came with industrialisation. This manifestation of nostalgia aligns with Mitchell’s theories about reflecting endless appropriation and conquest (20). The documentary reinforces the idea that modern urban life is disconnected from nature, while rural life is more authentic. The local population is idealised for the way they live authentically with nature.

The way Patagonia is framed serves the documentary’s environmentalist message, but at the same time Patagonia serves as a stage for Johnson’s self-discovery. Although Johnson learns a lot from native Patagonian people, he, together with Chouinard and Tompkins, remains at the centre of the documentary. While they work together with the native population, the preservation of the land is decided by wealthy Westerners.

8. Representation of Travellers in *Mountain of Storms*

After shortly introducing the destination of their trip, the four climbers of *Mountain of Storms* are introduced in just a couple of words each. Yvon Chouinard, “internationally known climber”, Doug Tompkins, “climber, skier, surfer”, Dick Dorworth, “champion skier, novice climber”, “and a young English climber, Chris Jones” (00:52-01:17). It quickly becomes clear that this documentary wants to stay focused on the journey rather than personal introductions. The climbers are reduced to the only information relevant for the trip: can they climb or not? The group are presented as not professionals necessarily, but young men who all have some type of experience with outdoor activities, and want to go off into the world.

Throughout the documentary it becomes clear that Chouinard and Tompkins take the lead on the climb, with Chouinard being the problem solver of the group, able to figure out difficult climbing problems (42:10-45:12), and Tompkins being “the risk taker, the charger” (42:13-42:17). Dorworth, who is an expert skier, struggles while climbing, trailing behind the others (43:41-44:33). Jones’ climbing abilities remain unspecified.

The group of men is shown to want to engage with nature in a very direct, hands-on matter. When they go skiing on Mount Llaima in Chile, the narration stresses that this will require an eight-hour walk to the top, without lifts or rope tow, adding: “this is skiing as it was in the beginning, when you climbed as high as you could, skied as far as you climbed, and then went home” (13:25-13:31). By emphasising the hard work that has to be done to ski

in this more traditional way, the group distances themselves from the commercialised skiing industry. They don't want to be helped along by ski lifts, they want to earn their experience by putting in physical effort. This conveys an element of authenticity that can be found when skiing without technological aids, but cannot be found in modern skiing.

Throughout their trip, a lot of attention is drawn to the physical and mental challenges the group face. When a large storm hits the mountain, the four men are confined for days on end to a cave they dug out of the snow. They are cold and wet, stuck drinking soup that gets thinner and thinner, and tell each other tales to pass the time. A montage of girls in sunny California is used to show what the men dream of while they are stuck (34:52-35:57). Finally, they have to retreat to their previous camp when the food is finally gone. This part of the journey really stresses the mental strain of the trip, but the group refuses an easy defeat and sticks it out until they no longer can. The camaraderie and perseverance of the travellers are brought to attention here.

Besides weather issues the group also faces technical climbing difficulties (45:08-45:26), money troubles (08:57-09:02) and car troubles (09:11-09:25). Besides these instances, they also seem to seek out dangerous situations themselves. Decisions to stay in the storm or ski down an active volcano (13:59-14:22) highlight their bravery and endurance. The group deals well with the unpredictability the trip brings, and they go with the flow. The difficulty and discomfort they face only heighten the sense of accomplishment when finally reaching the top of the mountain.

During climbing, camping, skiing and surfing, the four men are interacting directly with the nature around them. Once the climb of Fitz Roy has begun, they are fully immersed in the natural landscape around them. The climbers reach the summit of Fitz Roy late in the day, and it will take them multiple hours of daylight to climb back down to their camp. As the narration tells us, "they ought to turn back right now and get as far as they can from this exposed place, but they won't turn back until they've stood on the summit, just for a moment. Just to taste their victory" (49:59-50:10). The group takes their time to document their victory and appreciate the moment they worked for, rather than immediately go back to safety.

In these final scenes we can see the climbers' drive for accomplishment, and their determination to pursue their goal even though it's dangerous. Reaching the summit holds a large symbolic importance for them, and they are willing to suffer and risk for that. The use of the word "victory" implies a win or conquest in the face of nature, rather than an interaction with their environment. In this instance, the climbers acknowledge that nature is a force to be reckoned with, but at the same time, it's a challenge to overcome. This framing

exemplifies the conditions of unequal relations that power operates under, through the claiming of authority and claiming of the physical space as well (Hall 261).

9. Representation of Travellers in *180° South: Conquerors of the Useless*

180° South opens with Yvon Chouinard talking about his old blacksmith's shop where he started forging climbing gear. He describes his friends and himself in the '60s as "dirtbags", climbers and surfers who were opposed to industrialisation, and wanted nothing to do with being businessmen (0:57-1:16). He and his friends were pioneer climbers, brave explorers looking to go back to the "wilds of the world" they grew up in (02:30-02:43).

Where *Mountain of Storms* has a small group of people at the forefront, *180° South* has one protagonist: Jeff Johnson. Although Johnson describes himself as unremarkable - "look in any phone book and you'll find ten of me" (03:57-03:59) - he admires the adventures Chouinard and Tompkins have had, and dreams of seeing Patagonia with his own eyes. Even though he'd recently started planting roots at his "real job" (05:25-05:29), Johnson had been working whatever jobs he had in order to pay for his travels (05:21-05:23). From a young age, he was fascinated by climbers, and felt a desire to be out in nature (04:22-04:45). Later still, he remains committed to travelling and in search of new experiences. Johnson goes out in search of the unknown: "If I don't get on that boat, I'll know exactly what I'm going home to. If I do, my life will be unwritten" (05:45-05:54).

Johnson continually seems to align himself with Chouinard and Tompkins throughout his journey. The two praise Jeff, and states he reminds him of his younger self (07:33-07:35). He elaborates: "Jeff is the real thing, he's just - a total dirtbag. He can live out of his car climbing in the valley, he's become a really good climber, rides any kind of waves" (07:19-07:29). They guide him, and teach him about the conservation projects they lead. The two are experts on the area, and help plan the climbing route for Mount Corcovado (48:40-49:21). Besides taking on a mentor role, they also become companions when completing the final climb of the trip together. The use of the term 'dirtbag' to describe him validates Johnson in the climbing community, and fully cements his relationship as an equal.

Chouinard paints the picture of climbing Mount Everest: rich climbers who pay a lot of money to participate, and have sherpas lay the groundwork for their climb. Not to be mistaken with Chouinard's own climbing style. About the climbers, he says: "the whole purpose of climbing something like Everest is to affect some kind of spiritual and physical gain. But if you compromise the process, you're an asshole when you start out, and you're an asshole when you get back" (09:24-10:03). He is implying the same will not happen during

his own climbs, or on this journey to Patagonia, as they will not ‘compromise the process’ by skipping out on the necessary hard work. Chouinard effectively distances himself from this kind of mountainclimber, further implying that the spiritual or physical gain he mentions *are* reserved for his own kind of mountainclimber.

Later, when struggling through the dense forest at the foot of Mount Corcovado, Chouinard states: “You could take a helicopter right to the snowline and climb it. But that’s cheating. I guess this is what makes the climb, all this crap” (56:00-56:11). Similarly to the statement about Mount Everest, Chouinard here distances himself from other climbers who would put in less work to get to the same goal. This belief suggests a necessary aspect of struggle or perseverance to be able to claim the summit. To not cheat and have an authentic climbing experience. By the way he positions himself as an advanced and dedicated climber, the same can be applied to Johnson, now that he shares the ‘dirtbag’ title. Chouinard functions here as a kind of gatekeeper, defining who deserves to experience the landscape properly.

Other travellers in the documentary include Timmy O’Neill and Keith Malloy, both friends of Johnson. O’Neill has “climbed all over the world, and put up record breaking descents in Yosemite valley” (11:05-11:11). Malloy hadn’t climbed much at all, but “was on Pro Surf Tour, has been chased by grizzlies and shot at by rebels”, making him fit for the job anyways (11:18-11:28). Makohe, who joined the journey from Rapa Nui, has no climbing experience, but was the first woman to surf on the island. The travellers are each depicted as brave, outdoorsy people, with an element of pioneering or expertise in either surfing or climbing.

After the crew ends up heading for Rapa Nui due to the boat’s broken mast, Chouinard’s voice sounds: “The word adventure has just gotten overused. For me, adventure is when things go wrong. That’s when the adventure really starts” (16:17-16:25). By using this quote, their problem with the boat is framed not as a setback, but as a sign their journey has now really begun. The unpredictability of the journey is embraced by the crew, making them out to be resilient and resourceful by the way they adapt accordingly.

Throughout his journey, Johnson undergoes changes, and seems to discover a lot of new things. He uses his trip as a chance to reflect on his own life and habits. Early on in his journey, he states “as each day passes, I feel more detached from my scheduled life back home, and more in rhythm with what surrounds me” (14:46-14:52). Johnson critiques the modern, industrialised environment where he lives. These feelings increase more and more during his trip. One of the things he learns from his journey is the responsibility and

dependence that comes with living in close connection to nature. Realising the threats on open country, he no longer takes his travels for granted (01:17:43-01:18:01). This transformation is highlighted once more at the end of Johnson's journey, with the transformation within yourself, or the "quest" as Chouinard puts it, said to be the most important aspect (01:08:26-01:08:37).

10. Comparing the Two Documentaries

When placing *Mountain of Storms* and *180° South* next to each other, both similarities and differences can be seen. In regards to the representation of Patagonia, both films emphasise that the landscape is remote, wild, dangerous and challenging to climb. Patagonia, and specifically the mountains, are portrayed as untouched or unexplored, leading the American travellers to discover and document their encounters. The myth of Patagonia, as Peñaloza writes, as a desolate wilderness (19), is definitely present at both points in time. In both documentaries, Patagonia provides the opportunity for the travellers to challenge themselves, with a focus on the travellers' personal journey rather than the environment.

One difference is that in *180° South* environmental concern is introduced, which partially shifts the focus from climbing and surfing to the surrounding nature. Another distinction is visible in the interaction with locals. In *Mountain of Storms*, interactions are limited, and emphasise differences through use of stereotypes. *180° South* attempts a more respectful representation: Johnson actively engages with the people he meets, and local people get the chance to talk to the viewer themselves. However, Johnson's Western perspective is still at the core of the film. Finally, the largest difference is a total lack of environmental concerns mentioned in *Mountain of Storms*, while *180° South* uses Patagonian issues of industrialisation and overconsumption to critique them at large.

Similarities in the representation of travellers include a strong desire to take a break from their 'normal' life to explore. Both films feature young and capable men who look for challenges and embrace the unknown. Both films use the concept of the "dirtbag" traveler who rejects a traditional career, and endures discomfort for the gain of authentic adventure. While both groups have a different approach to the journey, they are both depicted as transformative for the travellers.

Where the two differ is firstly in the form of the group. *Mountain of Storms* focuses little on the individual besides each climber's outdoor skills, while *180° South* centers Johnson as the lone protagonist and creates a hierarchy through the student-mentor dynamic. Another thing that stands out in *180° South* is Johnson's shift to conservationist. His focus is

no longer only on seeking adventure or reaching the summit, but also about what he learns during his travels. This shift is not present in *Mountain of Storms*. Instead, the climbers focus on overcoming nature's obstacles, and celebrate their victory over the summit.

All together, the changes between these two representations reflect a shift in nature documentaries that heads towards a larger inclusion of environmental advocacy (Milliken and Anderson 2021). *180° South* uses Chouinard and Tompkins to connect the two documentaries, which further highlights the differences in subject matter and focus.

11. Conclusion

This paper aimed to identify the representation of both Patagonia and travellers within *Mountain of Storms* and *180° South.* The analysis was concerned with the way their representations compare at two different points in time. As outlined above, the findings reveal many similarities as well as contrasts. Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that colonial narratives of appropriation and conquest remain relevant themes during the making of both documentaries. Furthermore, binary oppositions remain significant in the framing of local people against travellers. A large contrast between the travellers and Patagonian people is at play in both documentaries, showcasing that the ancient divide between 'culture' and 'nature' remains alive in the twentyfirst century. Although the use of stereotypes about local people decreases over time, myths about the Patagonian landscape remain very present. A newly introduced element in the newer film is a call for environmental advocacy.

One of the limitations of this paper is that the Patagonian perspective itself is absent from my analysis, as I only bring another Western perspective to the table. Another is that this thesis does not explore in depth how the Patagonian landscape and people are affected by conservation movements. Future research could analyse travel narratives from local Chilean and Argentine travellers to gain their perspectives, and see how Patagonian communities frame their own landscape. It could also shed light on the effects of conservation movements that remain invisible. Further study of these documentaries could also focus more specifically on the relatively unexplored influence of cinematographic techniques such as framing and editing, especially within documentaries.

Appendix

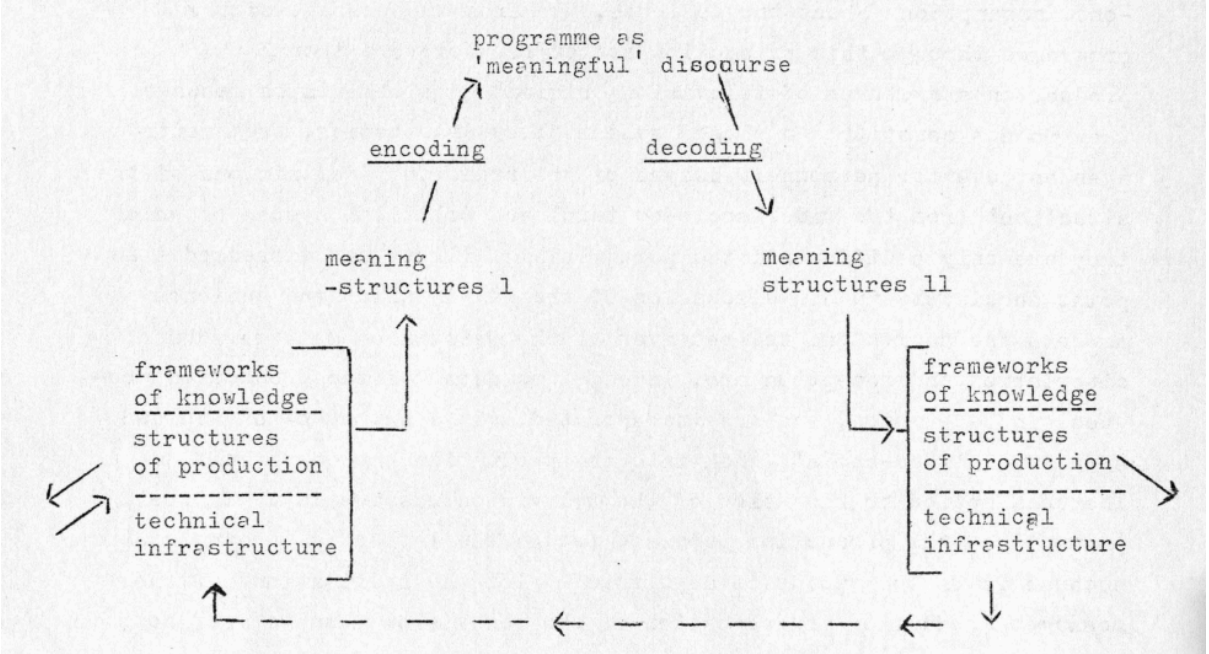

Fig. 1: Encoding/decoding model, *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse,* 1973.

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