Arctic Discourses
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Edited by

Anka Ryall, Johan Schimanski
and Henning Howlid Wærp
# Table of Contents

List of Illustrations .................................................................................................................. viii

Arctic Discourses: An Introduction ............................................................................................. ix

Contributors .................................................................................................................................. xxiii

## Part I: Discovering the Arctic

Chapter One ................................................................................................................................ 2
“Traces against time’s erosion”: The Polar Explorer between Documentation and Projection
Hanna Eglinger

Chapter Two ................................................................................................................................. 19
A Black Rectangle Labelled “Polar Night”: Imagining the Arctic after the Austro-Hungarian Expedition of 1872-1874
Johan Schimanski and Ulrike Spring

Chapter Three ............................................................................................................................... 43
Henning Howlid Wærp

Chapter Four ................................................................................................................................ 59
Voicing the Arctic: Knud Rasmussen and the Ambivalence of Cultural Translation
Kirsten Thisted

Chapter Five ................................................................................................................................ 82
The Culture of Nature: The View of the Arctic Environment in Knud Rasmussen’s Narrative of the Fifth Thule Expedition
Fredrik Chr. Brøgger
Chapter Six .................................................................................................................. 106
City of the Sun on Ice: The Soviet (Counter-) Discourse of the Arctic in the 1930s
Susi K. Frank

Chapter Seven........................................................................................................ 132
The Conquest of the Arctic: The 1937 Soviet Expedition
Tim Youngs

Part II: Imagining and Reimagining the Arctic

Chapter Eight........................................................................................................ 152
“I was as true and loyal as possible”: Images of the North and the Sámi in Theodor Mügge’s Travel Writing
Cathrine Theodorsen

Chapter Nine........................................................................................................ 179
Representations of the Arctic in Nineteenth-Century French Prose Fiction
Wendy Mercer

Chapter Ten ............................................................................................................. 199
The Times of Men, Mysteries and Monsters: The Terror and Franklin’s Last Expedition
Maria Lindgren Leavenworth

Chapter Eleven ....................................................................................................... 218
Arctic Crime Discourse: Dana Stabenow’s Kate Shugak Series
Heidi Hansson

Chapter Twelve ...................................................................................................... 240
Telling an Arctic Tale: Arctic Discourses in Canadian Foreign Policy
Lisa Williams

Chapter Thirteen .................................................................................................... 259
Anerca: Representations of Inuit Poetry in Twentieth-Century Art Music
Laurel Parsons

Chapter Fourteen .................................................................................................. 283
From the “Hand of Franklin” to Frobisher: Opera in the Canadian North
Sherrill Grace
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1-1: The parabolic narrative ................................................................. 15
Fig. 2-1: “A Trip on the Ice of the Polar Sea” ........................................... 21
Fig. 2-2: “Polar Night” ............................................................................... 23
Fig. 2-3: “How Herr von Schwammerl [a stock figure] imagines
the North Pole [as a stereotyped Pole]” .................................................... 30
Fig. 2-4: “How to Capture a Polar Bear in the Polar Regions” .............. 33
Fig. 2-5: “Dr. Képes” [sic] ........................................................................ 35
Fig. 2-6: Detail from “Illustrations for a soon to be published work
on the Arctic Expedition” ........................................................................ 37
Fig. 2-7: “Franz Josef’s Land” ..................................................................... 38
Fig. 2-8: “The ‘Tegetthof’ and its Current Crew” ..................................... 39
Fig. 4-1: Qaavigarsuaq Miteq, Arnarulunnguaq and Knud Rasmussen... 60
Fig. 13-1: Reproduction of layout for I Arise from Rest ...................... 263
Fig. 13-2: Serge Garant’s Anerca, II: “I arise from rest” ....................... 265
Fig. 13-3: Inuktitut and English translation of “Great Sea”, Anerca ..... 267
Fig. 13-4: Poems of Elisabeth Lutyens’s Anerca ..................................... 268
Fig. 13-5: Stage set-up of Lutyens’s Anerca .............................................. 269
Fig. 13-6: Lutyens’s Anerca: Order of hummed entries ........................ 270
Fig. 13-7: Thomas Baker’s Anercainnuit (1973), III: Nocturne .......... 272
Fig. 13-8: Milton Barnes’s Anerca I (1979), II: Song ............................. 273
Fig. 13-9: Population Density Map of Canada ......................................... 279
Fig. 15-1: Nils-Aslak Valkeapää’s Trekways of the Wind (book cover).. 308
Fig. 15-2: Reindeer herd, pencil drawing ............................................... 313
Fig. 15-3: Reindeer herd, typography ..................................................... 313
Fig. 15-4: Reindeer herd, painting .......................................................... 315
Accounts of Arctic or subarctic areas and the people living there represent a voluminous material produced both within these areas and in other parts of the world, and in many languages and many different genres, both fictional and non-fictional. These accounts may have been more or less in keeping with Arctic realities, and some are purely imaginative or speculative, but in any case they constitute an important element of the historical perception of the Arctic and the far north. As a major source of powerful and popular images and assumptions, they are certainly worth study by anybody interested in the Arctic.

While rapidly expanding, the field of Arctic literary studies is relatively new when compared to the well-established tradition of the history of Arctic exploration and science. Yet historical investigations are partly dependent on the examination of the literature of the Arctic, as this literature in all its forms has had a decisive influence on the development of European and Western interaction with the Arctic. Arctic explorers are a case in point, not only using literature as a part of their self-fashioning as Arctic heroes, but also dependent on earlier texts as a way of gaining competence in their field. As Urban Wråkberg has pointed out, much time in the Arctic is spent reading books; our image of the explorer should therefore not be that of the lone masculine figure battling through the snow and ice, but the same figure sitting at home, in a cabin or in a ship’s library, reading again and again the classic texts of previous explorers in their attempt to understand the environment in which they find themselves (Wråkberg 2007: 193-94).

Arctic accounts are also worth study by anybody interested in literature because they provide fruitful material for the study of the way in which literary strategies are used in a whole scale of texts, many of which are paraliterary or indeed wholly outside the realm of fiction and poetry. They pose the question of the limits of literary discourse as it has been formed in
the Romantic and Post-Romantic eras, and the intercourse of fiction with other textual forms. Moreover, the Arctic itself provides a vital metaphor for central literary concerns: the interplay of utopian desires and dystopian ordeals, the aesthetic categories of the sublime and the gothic, the act of writing on a supposedly empty space or of imagining and articulating the unknown.

Western understandings of the Arctic are formed by an interplay of expectations and experiences. Our expectations of the Arctic constitute a history of repetition, of the constant return to fixed topoi and intertexts. Typically, the Arctic is imagined as either an icy hell or an inhabitable paradise, the latter, very old conception re-emerging in environmentalist visions of an Arctic full of life—a life not threatened by the cold, the ice and the Winter dark, but by human influence. As Francis Spufford has famously elaborated upon, the Arctic has been conceived of as a sublime absolute, something larger and more powerful than ourselves, full of a gothic horror to be enjoyed at a distance, for example through the medium of literature (Spufford 1996). Taken together, such images become a consolidated, self-perpetuating vision, an “Arcticism” in line with Edward Said’s concept of Orientalism. Within this Arcticism, images of the natural or indigenous other are reproduced and naturalized, taken for granted. Arcticism also becomes a strategy of imagining the self, for example (to take some of the most obvious cases) as an explorer-hero, a scientific worker, or a white, imperial male. It can also be a strong force in the imagining of the collective identities of empires, nations and minorities.

Accounts of the Arctic and appeals to Arctic images represent what may be called Arctic discourses, within which we form our expectations of the Arctic. These expectations are regulated by the textual traditions—consisting of genres, narratives and figures—in which they are embedded. On a global scale, these textualities are formed within a much larger cultural field in which discourses of the Arctic play a formative role alongside many other discourses. However, at certain, singular junctures, the opportunity opens for the possibility of agency, of discursive change, of the opening up of discourses and the formation of critical positions from within new discourses. Direct experiences of the Arctic may occasionally find their role to play in such transformations or gradual changes in the dominant discourse.

Within a post-romantic world structured according to the spiritual and sometimes racial characteristics of differing cultures and nations, an often stereotyped dynamic emerges between conceptions of differing Arctic competences. Such different subject positions offered in the dominant discourse may sometimes compete as representatives of national or cultural
discourses, one vision of the Arctic and life in the Arctic perspectivizing another. This makes a comparative and geographically articulated study of Arctic discourses imperative if we are to understand how different understandings of the Arctic, embedded in a differentiated global landscape, mix with and relate to each other.

**Arctic discourses**

The use of the word discourse is an invitation to discuss questions of power, of the relationship between dominant Western discourses and indigenous counter-discourses, answering back from the Arctic. Some national or cultural discourses of the Arctic, such as the Norwegian, may wish to position themselves as hybrid, both European and Arctic. The explorer-hero may wish to highlight the Arctic part of himself, again taking on a hybrid position. The environmental discourse of ecocriticism may even wish to discover counter-discourses in Arctic nature itself, in its resistances to human interference or in the archives of the ice itself.

A discursive perspective implies an understanding that different discourses may overlap and intersect. The dynamic of discourse and counter-discourse is a case in point. We can also talk of the different national or cultural discourses of the Arctic. Any piece of Arctic discourse will be piggy-backing on other established discourses, exoticist, ecological, scientific, indigenous, imperial, masculine, etc. Arctic discourses are closely related to a whole series of similar discourses: discourses of the North, of the Antarctic, of cold, of winter, or of the Alpine. In this book we are also especially concerned with the interplay of literary and non-literary discourses.

Broadly, when we approach the Arctic from a literary perspective, we may combine an interest in the way literature in general uses images of the Arctic with the way in which specifically Arctic texts use literary strategies. Our focus is on both Arctic discourses and literary discourses, homing in on the places in which these join to create texts and forms in which the literary becomes the Arctic or the other way around. The wider field of factual accounts of the Arctic cannot help becoming infected by literary discourse for the very simple reason that the Arctic has up until the present been largely conceived of as an unknown place. Imagination, and thus the literary (with its toolbox of metaphors and many other rhetorical figures), will be an aspect of any text that we might examine within this field.

The very limits of the field under study are set in discourse. According to geographers, the Arctic includes the Arctic Ocean and parts of Canada,
Greenland, Russia, the United States (Alaska), Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Finland. One often used boundary is demarcated by the Arctic Circle (at 66° 33’N), which is the approximate limit of the midnight sun and the polar night. Other definitions are based on climate and ecology, such as the 10°C (50°F) July isotherm, which roughly corresponds to the tree line in most of the Arctic. Socially and politically, the Arctic region can include the northern territories of the eight Arctic states, including (in Fenno-Scandinavia) Lapland/Sápmi, although by natural science definitions much of this territory is considered subarctic. However, in various discourses of the Arctic the focus is less on the exact demarcations of the Arctic than on the cultural notions surrounding this area as representing a generalized North. The question is not where the Arctic begins, but where we think and have thought that the Arctic begins. In nineteenth-century travel narratives, for example, the term “Arctic” and also “North Pole” is commonly used very loosely to connote a generalised northern periphery. Incorporated in an imaginary Arctic, even the northern countries of Europe may be represented as at the same time forbiddingly distant and safely accessible. Hence, they represent a border zone between the familiar and the exotic, a location that seems to have allowed travellers (both male and female) to turn their holiday tours into a mode of exploration and their narrative personas from tourists to adventurers.

**Different cultures, genres, periods and theories of the Arctic**

This book investigates Arctic discourses in the post-romantic era, that is, after about the mid-nineteenth century until the present. The different chapters address a wide geographical variety of texts, providing a challenge and a necessary supplement to most previous work in the field, which previously has concentrated on single nations or cultures and their interaction with the Arctic—mostly, as might be expected, Anglo-American discourses and literatures of the Arctic. However, it also addresses the wide variety of genres and sub-genres which flourish under the aegis of Arctic discourse, ranging from exploration accounts, travel-writing, political texts and journalism through diaries and historical documents to novels and novelizations, and including also other media, such as music and opera. In doing so, the book not only aims to give an impression of the wide circulation of Arctic signs through our different and intermixed cultures, but also to ask the question of the function of genre and of different genres in the interplay of reality and figurai
which is so central to approaching the unknowns and ‘imagineds’ of the Arctic.

The different chapters reflect the many diverse and even conflicting representations of the Arctic as a geographical area, as well as the many versions of “Arctic” as a quality attached to a particular area. They all make the Arctic “readable” in various ways. What each chapter has in common is an interest in studying the formation of the images and representations of the Arctic that have persisted over time and have received new functions in the interplay of different discursive contexts. As investigations of Arctic discourses they interrogate the various ways in which discourses are formed and change in encounters with Arctic realities. Many images of the Arctic are myths, fictions or speculations. But although it is important to distinguish between illusion and reality in Arctic discourses, the authors acknowledge that the discourses help make up and are part of the realities of the Arctic. The geographical boundaries of the Arctic themselves are both set discursively and affect the formation of discourses. Most of the discourses documented in different chapters originate within a European/North-American frame of reference, that is, within contexts that belong to other areas than the Arctic. After Romanticism, in a world that is in the process of incorporating an international knowledge culture, these are in increasing interaction with Arctic experiences. Several of the chapters of this book refer to the possibility of various Arctic counter-discourses. Historically however, even discourses formed within the Arctic are often developed on the basis of European/North-American discourses or responses to such discourses.

Hence, Mary Louise Pratt’s concept of contact zones is useful for an understanding of Arctic discourses (Pratt 1992). In terms of Arctic discourses the attempt to establish contact zones, to incorporate new experiences into existing knowledge systems and to negotiate between the known and the unknown are all important. The study of Arctic discourses is also inspired by Edward Said’s use of discourse in his study of Orientalism, particularly in its attempt to connect a discursive project (Orientalism in science, literature and art) with a political project (imperialism). Other theoretical sources of inspiration are Michel Foucault’s attempt at connecting discourse and agency—language and power—through wide-ranging studies of scientific discourses in particular historical periods, and Laclau and Mouffe’s development of a theory of open, changeable and overlapping discourses. Finally, we must make reference to a concept of discourse inspired by the literary studies of Mikhail Bakhtin, who in contrast to Foucault emphasizes the multidimensionality of discourses; their heteroglossia. This said, the
different chapters are informed by a range of theories and methodologies responding to specific aspects of Arctic discourses.

This book addresses a broad academic readership, including students studying northern literatures and issues. One testimony to the emergence of Arctic studies as a field is the recent publication of several collections of Arctic writings, such as Anthony Brandt, *The North Pole: A Narrative History* (2005), Elisabeth Kolbert, *The Ends of the Earth* (2007) and Jon E. Lewis, *The Mammoth Book of Polar Journeys* (2007). Likewise, the publication and popularity of academic studies on northern and Arctic discourses are signs of a growing interest in the field. The range is wide, from cultural studies texts such as Lisa Bloom, *Gender on Ice: American Ideologies of Polar Expeditions* (1993), Francis Spufford, *I May Be Some Time: Ice and the English Imagination* (1996) and Michael Bravo and Sverker Sörlin eds., *Narrating the Arctic: A Cultural History of Nordic Scientific Practices* (2002), to studies focusing on literature and the arts, such as Margaret Atwood, *Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature* (1995), Sherrill Grace’s *Canada and the Idea of North* (2001), Peter Davidson, *The Idea of the North* (2005), Sarah Moss, *The Frozen Ships: The Histories and Tales of Polar Exploration* (2006), and Heidi Hansson and Cathrine Norberg eds., *Cold Matters: Cultural Perceptions of Snow, Ice and Cold* (2009). Apart from the latter, Moss’s popular book and Davidson’s book, in which (as the author admits) the Arctic is an “off-stage presence” (Davidson 2005: 19), all of these studies are limited to one geographical area. This collection aims to amend this by inclusion of a wide range of studies that together represent an international circumpolar approach to Arctic discourses.

The book reflects the research on post-Romantic Arctic discourses by both established and young scholars now taking place in different academic contexts in Canada, Germany, Britain and Scandinavia. The topics of the chapters, consequently, span from nineteenth-century French fictional representations of the Arctic to contemporary crime novels set in Alaska, from British, Norwegian, Danish and Russian expedition narratives to modern fiction inspired by and responding to such narratives, and modern art music inspired by exploration narratives and Inuit poetry. The ability to cover such diverse aspects and variants of Arctic discourses springs out of the networks built up around the academic home of the editors, the Arctic Discourses (*Arktiske diskurser*) project, based at the northernmost university in the world, the University of Tromsø, and mostly funded by the Research Council of Norway. This network, in its broadest sense, has included researchers working in, among others, Scandinavian, British, French, Italian, German, American, Soviet, Canadian,
Greenlandic, Sámi and comparative literary studies, along with cultural, political and scientific historians, art historians, musicologists, artists and poets. These researchers have met at workshops, symposia and conferences arranged by the project in Tromsø and in Longyearbyen, and indeed at related conferences elsewhere. Some of them have published articles in two special issues of the periodical *Nordlit*,¹ and some have contributed chapters to this book. A book of further essays in Scandinavian languages is under preparation.

The book is divided into two parts, opening a passage between predominantly non-fictional accounts of Arctic exploration (“Discovering the Arctic”) and literary and other artistic presentation of the Arctic (“Imagining and Reimagining the Arctic”). Some of the chapters deal with the relationship between expedition narratives and other forms of documentation, while others focus on the relationship between discourse and politics. The indigenous peoples of the Arctic, notably the Inuit/Eskimo, the Aleut and the Sámi, represent an important focal point in several chapters. The book concludes with Harald Gaski’s essay about the Sámi poet Nils-Aslak Valkeapää, who gives voice to an indigenous discourse of the Arctic.

**Discovering the Arctic**

The first part of the book opens with a comparison of different exploration accounts, drawing wide-ranging conclusions for the study of the narratives of polar explorers. Hanna Eglinger shows how the rhetorical formation of first-person exploration accounts must be read against the frame of life narratives, the Arctic functioning as a transitional, liminal space in the life journey of the explorer. This juncture in the life narrative is disrupted by a series of paradoxes firmly embedded in partly colonial discourses of expansion and progress: monumental tracings in (thus not so) virginal snow, progress as a return to primordial states, and a melancholic realization of reversal in triumph.

Chapter 2 shows not how the explorer, but how a European public sphere discovers the Arctic upon the return of an Arctic expedition. The case in point in Ulrike Spring and Johan Schimanski’s chapter is the production and recycling of images of the Arctic in Viennese journalism on the return of the Payer-Weyprecht Expedition and news of the (first

publicized) discovery of Franz Josef Land. Spring and Schimanski show that the reception of the Arctic is contingent on the political and medial landscape in Central Europe at the time and must be read against established and emerging generic forms in journalism and other public discourses. They argue that heavily remediated versions of the expedition reveal more about the public’s naturalization of the Arctic world than learned reports and explorer’s accounts. Arctic images in journalistic satires of utopian colonial discourse are however subject to the ambivalent effects of irony.

These discussions of problems associated with the discourse of discovery and its reception is followed by a series of exemplary readings of exploration accounts. The first, in Chapter 3, deals with a small and successful expedition conceived of in a non-military, “Norwegianist” frame. Henning Howlid Wærp focuses on Fridtjof Nansen’s first expedition account, *The First Crossing of Greenland*, and its literary qualities. Nansen’s account, while a bestseller in and outside Norway, has as an expedition account resisted incorporation into the literary canon. Wærp points however to Nansen’s use of very literary strategies, especially of his framing of the narrative through a form of predestination, the creation of suspense through retardation, a careful play on tensions between expedition members (four Norwegians and two Sami), and emotive descriptions of nature. These appeals to readerly interest are reinforced by the ethnographic detail of his depiction of Icelanders, Norwegian sealers and Greenlanders, whereas Nansen avoids describing preparations in Copenhagen, London and Edinburgh. Wærp shows how these literary and scientific aspects create an appeal lacking in accounts of later crossings of Greenland.

Following these readings are two chapters (4 and 5) on the expeditionary and anthropological discourses of the Danish/Greenlandic explorer Knut Rasmussen, giving a unique opportunity to examine contrasting and complementary aspects of a significant, and partly hybrid European-Arctic figure. Kirsten Thisted applies theories of postcolonial hybridity, third space, mimicry, ambivalence and voicing in careful close readings of Rasmussen’s account. Her departure point is that Rasmussen’s account has what might be called a “double address”, enabling the Fifth Thule Expedition, travelling from community to community across the Canadian Arctic, to have a definitive impact on Inuit identity-building and politics. Thisted reads the description and imagining of culture in his texts and his self-fashioning in the role of cultural interpreter; her argument on the impact of these discourses opens up to a discussion of the present-day implications of Rasmussen’s discursive negotiations of cultural identity.
Fredrik Brøgger provides an ecocritical reading of Rasmussen’s descriptions of nature, without losing sight of the central place in Rasmussen’s discourse held by the imaging of the Inuit and its interaction with his ambiguous sense of identity. Rasmussen’s descriptions of nature focus above all on humans’ dependency on nature and on the exigencies of survival in the Arctic, and do so in a way which focuses on the practical, physical and sensuous aspects of nature. Brøgger concludes that Rasmussen is more of a Darwinian or Inuit thinker than an ecological one, but that his appropriation of Inuit humility where nature is concerned has strong common elements with later ecological thinking. He finishes by examining the concluding scenes of the account of the Fifth Thule Expedition, in which Rasmussen and his companions Qaavigarsuaq Miteq and Arnarulunnguaq stand together on the roof of a skyscraper in New York City, reflecting in a complex and ambiguous way on the power relationship between humans and nature.

In a similar dialogue between two chapters, the final two chapters (6 and 7) of this first part of the book provide a necessary reminder of the historical and cultural contingency of the explorer-hero myth as figured in West-European and American discourses. Susi K. Frank traces the very different contours of Soviet discourses of the Arctic in the Stalinist 1930s, with their narrative transformation of Arctic space into an integral part of national Soviet space. This project of integration provides a radically different, Nietzschean imagining of nature as man’s greatest enemy. The coldness of the Arctic is to be overcome through utopian technology, through a communist rhetoric of social heat, and through the transports of the imagination to warmer climes. Frank examines both non-fictional and literary representations of the Čeljuskin expedition under Otto Jul’evič Šmidt for their transformations of Arctic space, and contrasts Western-European conceptions of the lonesome Arctic explorer-hero—envisioned as a specifically capitalist explorer in the Soviet discourse—with a privileging of the collective aspects and social sides of expeditions, including the women who participated in them.

Tim Youngs likewise compares Soviet and Western discourses of Arctic heroism. He gives readings of accounts of the follow-up to the Čeljuskin expedition, the North Pole-1 or Svernyi polius-1 expedition on an ice-floe drifting across the Arctic, also led by Šmidt. Youngs compares and contrasts its motifs and other generic characteristics with expeditionary travel writing in general and connects its specificities to its embeddedness in a Soviet ideological frame. The sufferings of the explorers fall short when compared to those of the Soviet population at home, their collective identity is emphasized, the expedition is seen as innovative and not
dependent on Western models, and all sense of mystery is rejected. Like Frank, Young sees rejection of the environment in the Soviet material, privileging as it does modernity, science and the machine alongside a deep integration into Soviet society. Young makes the case that these accounts allow us to question generalizations often made about travel writing as an individualistic and conservative genre.

**Imagining and reimagining the Arctic**

The second part of the book deals primarily with literary and aesthetic treatments of the Arctic: how the Arctic is imagined and reimagined in literature and music, and the discursive specificity of narrative, literary and aesthetic strategies in textual and auditive presentations of the Arctic. Like the first part, it presents a wide variety of material in different genres and from different cultures.

The first two chapters of this part, Chapters 8 and 9, both provide perspectives on European (German and French) representations of the Sámi, but deal on a wider level with different kinds of material, one a travel account and a novel by the same author, the other a whole national corpus of Arctic fiction. Cathrine Theodorsen traces the German liberal writer Theodor Mügge’s journeys to Northern Scandinavia, but more importantly, the metaphorical travels of images of the North and of the Sámi between travelogues published in 1844 and 1857. This chapter highlights the travel-writings of an author chiefly remembered for his 1854 novel set in Lapland, *Afraja*, and gives an analysis of 19th Century German discourses of race and notions of the “savage”. Theodorsen shows how these discourses are inflected through textual strategies and emphasizes the paradoxes involved when they are internalized by a liberal writer normally committed to the struggle against social injustice. She also gives contextual explanation for changes in Mügge’s attitude when writing about the Sámi.

Wendy Mercer provides a both authoritative and succinct survey of literary representations of the Arctic in 19th century French prose, especially within what she calls the “travel novel”, a particularly post-romantic genre in this context. Author Jules Verne plays a central, but in no way lonely, role in this corpus. The texts are influenced by Romanticism, but also incorporate increasing amounts of scientific, geographical and economic information. Mercer highlights the introduction of scientific discourse into novelistic prose, the construction of the traveller-as-(masculine)-hero, and especially Eurocentric descriptions of indigenous peoples (as degenerate, animal, gendered, desirable, undesirable,
civilized, uncivilized, sympathetic, patronizable, ignorant, or pagan). She concludes that many of these novels are Romantic in their inscriptions of an ideal paradise as the ultimate goal of Arctic travel, and that the narrative usually ends in failure, emphasizing the spiritual or ideal nature of this paradise.

Chapter 10 addresses a contemporary novelistic rewriting of an Arctic expedition, sensationalist and partly controversial in its highly imaginative inclusions in graphic details of those parts of Arctic exploration which earlier accounts leave out: the white empty spaces of the pages of Arctic discourse. In her analysis of science fiction writer Dan Simmons’s gothic horror novel *The Terror*—the title names both the genre and one of Franklin’s ships on his ill-fated expedition—Maria Lindgren Leavenworth uses a clarifying division into historical, fictional and mythical time in order to approach the various fixtures of the action/horror novel as constructions of “narrative authority”. Leavenworth shows how Simmons uses this authority together with the gaps constituted by our ignorance about the fate of the Franklin expedition in order to question various hierarchical oppositions of class, gender and ultimately identity, with the mythic aspect of the novel mobilizing representations of Inuit culture so as to deliver an ecological message.

The next four chapters, Chapters 11-14, also consider very different genres and their modes of presenting the Arctic discursively, continuing the focus on the North American and Canadian Arctic of the previous chapters. Chapter 11 considers an example of Arctic crime fiction, Dana Stabenow’s books about the native Alaskan investigator Kate Shugak. Crime fiction is more purely literary than almost all the other genres examined in this book, in the sense that its narrative does not refer directly to the historical specificities of real individuals and their actions in our world. It is however a genre increasingly related to real exotic places and ethnic settings, often becoming an exercise in “place branding” and carrying with it discourses of identity. Hansson uses statistical techniques to isolate uniquely characteristic phrases in the books and thus support arguments within a discourse analysis aimed at describing the Arctic element in the books. Hansson identifies a wilderness discourse which stands in contrast with an intrusive state/technology discourse of the urban detective genre. Kate Shugak is identified with the environment, though because this is a frontier space, the hybridity of a female protagonist in the masculine genre of the crime story is strengthened. This does not mean that the novels critique underlying power structures of race or gender. They do show however awareness of the problems of binary thinking,
including exoticism, romanticization, essentialism, traditionalism, gender scripting, and self-victimization.

Chapter 12 approaches a seemingly non-literary discourse—that of contemporary Canadian foreign policy documents—with the aim of revealing its underlying use of narrative and symbol. Lisa Williams identifies three major, interconnected topoi or nodal points in Canadian official discourses of the Arctic—the Arctic as colonial, the Arctic as marginal, and the Arctic as indigenous. In doing so, she exposes the significant blind spots in those discourses, erasures which allow them to support a policy of primarily military and economic use of the Arctic. In “these policies and debates, the meaning of the Arctic—the discourses and assumptions that structure knowledge about the Arctic—is rarely if ever explored.” In doing so, she points to the relevance of the study of Arctic discourses to pressing global issues, and the way in which countries who claim the Arctic as part of their identity can sometimes repress potentially creative counter-discourses coming from the Arctic and the peoples of the Arctic.

The Canadian politics of the Arctic as discussed by Williams prepares an interesting frame for the next two chapters, which both turn to the musical in a Canadian setting, albeit to musical adaptations of indigenous Arctic literature in the form of Inuit poems and to the textual/musical hybrid of opera. In chapter 13, Laurel Parsons approaches a distinctive corpus comprising of 6 musical pieces composed by modern composers, all named after the same collection of Inuit poetry, Anerca (1959), edited by anthropologist Edmund Carpenter. This chapter argues that they form part of a movement in contemporary Western art music in Canada, forging a Canadian musical identity distinct from European or US traditions by using images of the Arctic North. Parsons problematizes this appeal to the northern wilderness by showing that only one of the Anerca-composers had ever been in the Arctic, and that most of them write in a fashion typical of contemporary Western art music, with limited or no reference to Inuit musical traditions. Their pieces thus “instantiate a dichotomy of discourses”. Parsons concludes with a discussion of the Arctic project of Canadian self-definition in politics and art, attending to problems of acoustic space, isolation and wilderness.

In Chapter 14, Sherrill Grace turns her gaze to operatic treatments of the Canadian North, focusing on similar aesthetic negotiations of the idea of North as those discussed by Parsons. Focusing on one of the first major operas using the Arctic for its material, John Estacio and John Murrell’s Frobisher (2006), Grace argues that the opera is typical for a new kind of Canadian counter-discourse of the North. Giving a comprehensive
description which complements Parsons’s exposition in the previous chapter, Grace describes this artistic tendency as providing alternatives to a discourse of the North suffused with the narratives of male heroic romance. *Frobisher* figures this interplay of discourses by allowing its characters to stand for obsessions and distancings to narratives of the Northwest Passage. She also makes a gender argument about the feminization which goes hand in hand with the production of these counter-discourses. The chapter takes a step back and makes visible a larger discursive change in the Canadian image of the North, acknowledging also the political dimensions of this change.

The book’s concluding chapter, by Harald Gaski, presents the major Sámi poet, musician and artist Nils-Aslak Valkeapää, also known as Áillohaš. Through readings he argues that Áillohaš’s poems provide a sophisticated indigenous counter-discourse to outsider claims of land and resources. Focusing on the famous poem 272 with its graphic layout representing waves of reindeer travelling together as a herd through the landscape, he shows its multimedial and intra-textual connections to Áillohaš’ paintings, discusses the central metaphoricity of the reindeer in Áillohaš’ work, and examines the self-aware modes of representation brought into play by this resistant, untranslatable poem.

**Works Cited**


CONTRIBUTORS

FREDRIK CHR. BRØGGER is Professor of American Literature and Civilization at the University of Tromsø, Norway. Brøgger wrote his doctoral dissertation on the American literature of the 1920s, has co-edited American Culture: An Anthology of Civilization Texts (1996 and 2007), and is the author of Culture, Language, Text (1992) and numerous articles on a variety of topics and texts within American literature and American Studies. In recent years Arctic studies, nature writing, and ecocriticism have served as main fields of interest, spawning articles on works by, for instance, Ernest Hemingway, Williams Faulkner, John Dos Passos, American romantic writers, Knut Hamsun, Robinson Jeffers, Gary Snyder, and Annie Dillard.

HANNA EGLINGER studied Scandinavian and German philology and pedagogy at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich, Germany, and at Uppsala University, Sweden. In 2006 she received her PhD, and from 2006 to 2009 she had a research position in the project “Beginnings in/of Modernity” (Anfänge (in) der Moderne). She works as Assistant Professor at the Institute for Scandinavian Literature at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich. Her research areas include Scandinavian contemporary literature, picture and body theories, and constellations of beginning in Scandinavian literature. Publications include Landnahme: Anfangserzählungen in der skandinavischen Literatur um 1900 (eds. Hanna Eglinger and Annegret Heitmann, 2010); BildDurchSchrift: Zum visuellen Diskurs in der skandinavischen Literatur der Gegenwart (eds. Hanna Eglinger and Annegret Heitmann, 2002); Hanna Eglinger, Der Körper als Palimpsest (2007); articles on Knut Hamsun, Carl Fredrik Reuterswärd, Jens Christian Grøndahl, Solvej Balle, and Gabriella Håkansson.

SUSANNE K. FRANK is Professor of Eastern Slavic Literatures and Cultures at Humboldt University, Berlin. Her most recent publications include Imperiale Aneignung: Diskursive Strategien der Kolonisation Sibiriens durch die russische Kultur (forthcoming, 2010), Zwischen Apokalypse und Alltag: Kriegsnarrative in den Literaturen des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts (ed. 2009), Der Diskurs des Erhabenen bei Gogol’ und die

HARALD GASKI is Associate Professor of Sami literature at the University of Tromsø, Norway. Gaski is the author and editor of several books and articles on Sami literature and culture, and he has been instrumental in establishing Sami literature as an academic field. Gaski’s research topics include indigenous peoples’ literatures with specific emphasis on Sami literature. He has also specialized in oral tradition—especially the transition of the traditional Sami singing, the yoik poetry, into contemporary lyrics. Major publications include translations of Sami prose and poetry into English: In the Shadow of the Midnight Sun: Contemporary Sami Prose and Poetry (1997), and Nils-Aslak Valkeapää’s Trekways of the Wind (1994) and The Sun, My Father (1997). Gaski has also edited Sami Culture in a New Era: The Norwegian Sami Experience (1997) and published a trilingual book on a Sami myth Biejjien baernie—Sami son of the Sun (2003). In 2006 his annotated collection of Sami proverbs was published, entitled Time is a Ship that Never Casts Anchor. He debuted as a writer of fiction books for young adult readers in 2002 (in collaboration with Lars Nordström) with the award-winning book Ciezain cáziin, also published in English as Seven kinds of water (2004). Gaski is also Editor-in-Chief for the academic series Sámi academica, at the Sami publishing house CálliidLágádus.

SHERRILL E. GRACE is Professor of English at The University of British Columbia, Canada, where she has served as Head of Department, Associate Dean of Arts, and UBC Senator. She received her BA from UWO (1964) and her MA (1970) and PhD (1974) from McGill. Since joining UBC, she has been a Senior Fellow of Green College, has held a Senior Scholar in Residence position with the Peter Wall Institute of Advanced Studies, and been the Brenda and David McLean Chair in Canadian Studies (2003-05). In 2003 she was appointed a UBC Distinguished University Scholar, and in 2008 she won the Canada Council Killam Prize in Humanities. Among her other awards are the Jacob Biely Faculty Research prize, the UBC Killam Research prize, the UBC Killam Prize for Graduate Teaching, and a Canada Council Killam Fellowship. Grace was elected to the Royal Society of Canada in 1991 and
served as President of Academy I (2005-07). She has lectured widely across Canada, and in Europe, England, Japan, and the United States, and she is frequently invited to give Keynote Lectures at home and abroad. She has published over 200 articles, chapters, and review articles, as well as 23 books, including the two-volume edition of Malcolm Lowry’s letters, the monographs *Inventing Tom Thomson* (2004) and *Canada and the Idea of North* (2002; 2007), and the co-edited book, *Theatre and AutoBiography* (2006). Her most recent books are the biography *Making Theatre: A Life of Sharon Pollock* (2008) and *On the Art of Being Canadian* (2009). Her current research is on Canadian representations of war.

HEIDI HANSSON is Professor of English Literature at Umeå University, Sweden. In the last few years, her research has primarily concerned the representation of the North in travel writing and fiction from the late eighteenth century onwards. She initiated and manages the interdisciplinary research programme *Foreign North: Outside Perspectives on the Nordic North* at Umeå University. Within this programme, she investigates gendered visions and accounts of the North in particular. She has published academic books and articles in the fields of postmodern literature, Irish literature and Northern Studies, and her most recent book is the edited volume *Cold Matters: Cultural Perceptions of Snow, Ice and Cold*, eds. Heidi Hansson and Cathrine Norberg (2009).

MARIA LINDGREN LEAVENWORTH is Assistant Professor at the Department of Language Studies, Umeå University, Sweden. Her dissertation *The Second Journey: Travelling in Literary Footsteps* (2000) focused on how contemporary travel writers use earlier travelogues as “maps” to follow in their attempts to experience the original and authentic in a time of mass tourism. Recent work includes analyses of Irish traveller Selina Bunbury’s journeys in Scandinavia (“‘The Art of Bookmaking’: Selina Bunbury’s Northern Journeys” in *New Contexts: Re-Framing Nineteenth-Century Irish Women’s Prose*, 2008) and of representations of the cold in a science fiction novel (“‘Hatred was also left outside’: Journeys into the Cold in Le Guin’s *The Left Hand of Darkness*” in *Cold Matters: Cultural Perceptions of Snow, Ice and Cold*, 2009).

WENDY MERCER is Honorary Senior Research Fellow at University College London where she held the post of Senior Lecturer in French until her recent retirement. Her major publications include books on Xavier Marmier and Balzac; editions of texts by Léonie d’Aunet; and articles and
essays on various aspects of nineteenth-century French and comparative literature, especially the reception of German Romanticism in France, women’s writing, travel writing, and French travel narratives presenting the Arctic.

LAUREL PARSONS is Professor of music and humanities at Quest University Canada in Squamish, British Columbia. She has published analytical articles on the music of Elisabeth Lutyens in *Theory & Practice* and the *Canadian University Music Review*, and has contributed a book chapter to *British Modernism and Music, 1895-1960*, edited by Matthew Riley (2010).


JOHAN SCHIMANSKI (Dr. Art.) is Associate Professor of Comparative Literature in the Department of Culture and Literature, University of Tromsø, Norway. He is involved in the ongoing Research Council of Norway projects “Border Aesthetics” and “Arktiske diskurser” at the University of Tromsø, and has published on Welsh literature, national identity and literature, postcolonialism, science fiction and (with Ulrike Spring) Arctic discourses. In 2007 he and Stephen Wolfe published the article collection *Border Poetics De-limited*.

ULRIKE SPRING holds a Dr. phil. in history from the University of Vienna, Austria. She wrote her doctoral dissertation on the nineteenth-century language movements in Norway and Ireland. She holds a position as a researcher at the Department of Culture and Literature at the University of Tromsø, Norway. Earlier she has worked as a curator at Wien Museum, Vienna, and curated/co-curated exhibitions on Wolfgang A. Mozart, Hans Christian Andersen and Vienna’s tavern culture. Her research areas include Arctic studies, tourism and museology. Recent publications include “Polarwissenschaft und Kolonialismus in Österreich-Ungarn: Zur Rezeption der österreichisch-ungarischen Polarexpedition (1872-1874)” (together with Johan Schimanski, in *Wiener Zeitschrift zur*

CATHRINE THEODORSEN is Head of Department of Culture and Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education, University of Tromsø, Norway. She is also affiliated with the Arctic Discourses project. Her main research interest is nineteenth-century German travel writing (Theodor Mügge), and her most central publications include Leopold Andrian, seine Erzählung Der Garten der Erkenntnis und der Dilettantismus in Wien um 1900 (2006), and Elfriede Jelinek—Tradition, Politik und Zitat (editor, 2008).

KIRSTEN THISTED holds a PhD from the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, where she is now Associate Professor in Minority Studies, within the Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies. She has treated and translated traditional Greenlandic narrative and modern Greenlandic literature in numerous books and articles, including Således skriver jeg, Aron (1999), and Grønlandske fortællere: Nulevende fortællekunst i Grønland (2002). Her research areas include the (post)colonial relationship between Denmark and Greenland and the representation of Greenland and other “Others” in Danish literature. She is also the editor of Grønlandsforskning: Historie og perspektiver (2005).

LISA WILLIAMS is a PhD candidate at York University in Toronto, Canada. Her research interests include postcolonial approaches to international relations and foreign policy, critical interventions in Arctic governance and Arctic geopolitics, the politics of knowledge production, and the intersections between popular culture and politics. Her dissertation focuses on the politics of representation and the co-production of Arctic knowledge through Canada’s foreign policy and cinema.

HENNING HOWLID WÆRP (Dr. Art.) is Professor of Scandinavian literature at the University of Tromsø, Norway. He has published a book on the Norwegian novelist Sigbjørn Hølmebakk (Innenfor og utenfor, 1991), a book on Norwegian nature poetry (Dikret natur, 1997) and a book on the prose poem (Prosadiktet i Norge, 2002). He has further published articles and edited books on Knut Hamsun and Cora Sandel, and served as the editor of the literary journal Edda.
TIM YOUNGS is Professor of English and Travel Studies at Nottingham Trent University. He is the author of *Travellers in Africa* (1994) and the editor or co-editor of several collections of essays on travel literature, among them *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (ed. with Peter Hulme, Cambridge University Press, 2002) and *Travel Writing in the Nineteenth Century* (ed., Anthem, 2006). In 1997 he founded the journal *Studies in Travel Writing*, which he continues to edit. He is currently completing *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing*. 
PART I:

DISCOVERING THE ARCTIC
CHAPTER ONE

“TRACES AGAINST TIME’S EROSION”: THE POLAR EXPLORER BETWEEN DOCUMENTATION AND PROJECTION

HANNA EGLINGER

The ambitions of conquest and exploitation of unknown polar regions around 1900 and especially the polar explorers’ competitions for the earth’s poles can be characterized as symbolic acts of land seizure. Their legitimation is provided by paradoxical and inconsistent rhetorical strategies. In the first section of this chapter I would like to trace this frequently paradoxical use of metaphors in the rhetoric of Arctic exploration. On the basis of the most important reports and travelogues of Scandinavian polar explorers (like for example Otto Sverdrup, Fridtjof Nansen, Roald Amundsen, and Godfred Hansen),¹ I am going to investigate, in what kinds of metaphors these rhetoric inconsistencies are reflected, and what significance they have for the way polar explorers construct their aims, their sense of accomplishment and even failure, and their life-projects.

As Michael Robinson has argued, “stories, more than specimens or scientific observations, constituted the real currency of Arctic exploration” (Robinson 2006, 6) and indeed, the polar explorers’ own stories essentially shape their heroic images within the arctic discourse. Their own life thus becomes a narrative, the linearity of which, however, is undermined and disintegrated by the disruptions and conflicts within the inconsistent rhetoric in question. In this regard, the second section of this chapter investigates the close entanglement of spatiality and temporality which results from the alliance of travelogue and biography, and which deduces

¹ Nearly all my examples are from Norway, but as Godfred Hansen is Danish (even though he was the lieutenant-colonel on the Norwegian expedition through the Northwest Passage, led by Roald Amundsen) I speak of Scandinavian instead of Norwegian explorers.