

Ian Giles, Laura Chapot, Christian Cooijmans, Ryan Foster, and Barbara Tesio, eds. 2016. *Beyond Borealism: New Perspectives on the North*. London: Norvik Press. 289 pages. ISBN: 978-1-909408-33-3.

Academics have been intrigued by Scandinavia's rich culture, languages, and history for centuries—or, in other words, its “borealism.” Emerging scholars Ian Giles, Laura Chapot, and Christian Cooijmans thoroughly explore this term and develop new and interesting ideas to establish a fresh understanding of Scandinavia's history in *Beyond Borealism: New Perspectives on the North*. Each chapter is sorted thematically by addressing ideas that relate to art, culture, identity, language, the medieval past, and, naturally, the modern present.

*Beyond Borealism* begins with an introduction by Ian Giles, who briefly defines “borealism” in the context of Nordic studies and provides a concise overview of the chapters to follow. The first section focuses on numerous topics pertaining to the Middle Ages. Stefan Drechsler argues that a fifteenth-century seal depicting a stave church in Reynistaður, Iceland, reveals more information on how Reynistaður was considered a cultural centre at the time. Eleanor Parker analyzes the eleventh-century document *Encomium Emma Regine* and argues that there were clear cultural influences on the written style of the document: more specifically in how the scribe told the story of Danish conquest. Marc Chivers caps off this section by skillfully describing the history of shipbuilding and trade between Shetland and Norway, arguing that Shetland developed their own boat-making traditions in the late eighteenth century. Each of the chapters analyzes topics of the medieval and Early Modern periods further, presenting the reader with new arguments and a broader understanding of early Scandinavia and its “borealism.”

The second section addresses topics related to the Scandinavian languages, which scholars Pavel Iosad and Elyse Jamieson adeptly explore. Iosad focuses on the origins of North Germanic tonal accents, while Jamieson examines the longevity of Nordic origins in Shetland dialects. Each scholar looks at different but equally important aspects of language, and they draw the reader beyond the borders of the north towards the Scottish islands to additionally analyze Nordic expansion in the medieval period.

D. Cox, Kitty Corbet Milward, and Haftor Medbøe lead the next section on Nordic art and society from the seventeenth to twentieth centuries. Cox brings the Battle of Kringen in 1612 to light by focusing on its artistic representation in the nineteenth century. Cox examines the phenomenon of numerous romantic and nationalistic opinions that emerged from Norway's vision of this victory. Milward presents a different and equally interesting angle in her examination of nineteenth-century artistic depictions of women weavers in Norway. Such representations celebrated the work of lower-class women, and it blurred the

line between the public and private spheres. Lastly, Medbøe analyzes the art of music in Scandinavia by looking at the cultural and national impact of jazz in the twentieth century. He explains the rise of underground music culture of the 1920s and its importance in how it achieved nationalistic tones over time.

Charlotte Berry and Ellen Kythor offer interesting examinations of the different types of translated literature to explore how “borealism” was considered in the context of UK-Nordic relations. Berry looks at the problematic British translation process in the 1970s and 1980s with respect to the Swedish children’s author, Maria Gripe. Berry identifies clear issues that related to a silencing of Nordic culture in this process. Kythor takes an equally fascinating approach, though different in scope. She thoroughly examines British translations of Danish literature from 1990 to 2015, marketed in the UK and the US. The results reveal that six individuals often translated nearly half of the examined books in this period, and that non-market-led books were more likely to receive funding for translation than other books of more mainstream genres.

*Beyond Borealism* then delves more deeply into Scandinavian ideas of culture in the chapters by Silke Reeploeg and Pei-Sze Chow. Reeploeg looks at communications between coastal communities in Norway and Scotland in the twentieth century, and Chow examines Danish culture as represented in the 2009 film *Copenhagen Dreams*. Reeploeg argues that an assessment of coastal communities reveals more about cultural encounters, and the interactions between Norway and Scotland crafted the idea of a coastal identity along the Atlantic rim. Chow looks more to Denmark and skillfully takes a different, artistic approach to consider the cinematic representation of Danish culture in a recent film. Chow mentions that there is dramatic significance in the fact that the Oresund region is not represented in the Danish film, which offers an interesting commentary about its impact in relation to core Danish cultural values.

In the final section of the book, Shane McLeod, Karianne Hansen, and Cristina Sandu build further on concepts of Nordic identities ranging from the medieval to modern periods. McLeod investigates a number of Viking burials in Scottish churchyards of the ninth and tenth centuries and considers how these cross-national burials affected medieval Scandinavian regional identities. Hansen then provides a case study of two Norwegian survivors of Nazi occupation in Auschwitz, Herman Sachowitz and Robert Savosnick, to examine how their different ideas of survival created a sense of community and identity in the camps. The final chapter, written by Sandu, examines Finnish and Estonian identities in Sofi Oksanen’s 2003 novel *Stalin’s Cows*. Sandu explores numerous issues presented through the eyes of an Estonian protagonist who migrates to Finland in the novel. Sandu demonstrates that this story expertly portrays interesting ideas relating to identity through the inner conflict of its protagonist. This proves to be another fascinating angle of the north’s “borealism.”

*Beyond Borealism* explores a vast array of topics relating to art, culture, identity, and language from medieval to modern periods with skill and fervour. Each scholar approaches these important concepts from varying literary, artistic, and nationalistic angles to constantly engage the reader and create a fresh, scholarly understanding of the north. This book is a fantastic addition to academic research on an unparalleled amount of interesting Nordic topics.

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