

Ryall, Anka, Johan Schimanski, and Henning Howlid Wærp, eds. 2010.
Arctic Discourses. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
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This rich and diverse collection of literary essays related to post-Romantic *Arctic Discourses* and counter-discourses was generated by an international collaborative network built up around the multi-faceted “*Arctic Discourses*” project at the University of Tromsø (2006-2009). Edited by the three project leaders—Anka Ryall (English), Johan Schimanski (Comparative Literature) and Henning Howlid Wærp (Scandinavian Literature)—this volume demonstrates the multiplicity of representations and images of the Arctic found in and formed by texts written from around 1840 to the present from a variety of cultures, time periods and genres. In addition, numerous theoretical frameworks are used to examine these images. This diversity, as the editors point out, makes *Arctic Discourses* fairly unique, as most previous studies have focused on individual cultures or nations and have privileged Anglo-American literatures, discourses and perspectives. The multifarious nature of this collection is also evident when reading over the list of contributors who range from well-established scholars such as Sherrill Grace to those newer to academia. While nearly half of the contributors are connected to the University of Tromsø, the others work at universities in Canada, Britain, Germany, Sweden and Denmark.

Arctic Discourses contains fifteen chapters which are thoughtfully ordered into two parts—“Discovering the Arctic” and “Imagining and Reimagining the Arctic”—preceded by the editors’ introduction. This clearly written introduction provides valuable context by discussing the term *Arctic Discourses*—defined here as “accounts of the Arctic and appeals to Arctic images... within which we form our expectations of the Arctic” (Ryall, Schimanski, and Wærp x)—the distinctions and relationships between dominant discourses and counter-discourses, the notion of “answering back from the Arctic” and the ways in which dominant Western discourses may gradually change. The broad range of perspectives in the various chapters are outlined, as well as the thread which connects them, namely “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” (Ryall, Schimanski, and Wærp, xiii). Brief comments about several useful theoretical frameworks, and remarks on each of the fifteen chapters round out the introduction.

The seven chapters in “Discovering the Arctic” focus primarily on Arctic exploration accounts. In the first chapter, Hanna Eglinger draws upon a variety of personal exploration narratives from multiple expeditions in her discussion of paradoxical metaphors and parabolic narratives, and this is followed by an article by Johan Schimanski and Ulrike Spring which focuses on numerous

accounts surrounding one particular expedition, namely the Austro-Hungarian Arctic Expedition of 1872-1874. While some of the chapters offer new perspectives on expedition accounts and explorers who have previously received substantial attention in Western Europe and North America, others cover accounts and texts which have received less scholarly attention in the West. Examples of the former are Henning Howlid Wærp's accessible analysis of Fridtjof Nansen's *First Crossing of Greenland* (1890) and chapters on the Danish/Greenlandic explorer and ethnographer Knud Rasmussen by Kirsten Thisted and Fredrik Chr. Brøgger, while examples of the latter are Tim Youngs's study of the 1937 Soviet North-Pole 1 Expedition and Susi Frank's examination of Soviet Arctic discourse in the 1930s. Frank uses Russian fictional texts with factographical claims and American and German works of fiction and popular documentaries to demonstrate why Soviet discourse in the 1930s should be viewed as a counter-discourse to the European Arctic discourse of the era. It also provides a transition to the second part of the book which primarily—but not exclusively—focuses on representations of the Arctic found in fiction, poetry, and music.

As in the first part of the book, analyses of representations of the Sámi and other indigenous peoples of the North play a prominent role in a number of the chapters found in part II—"Imagining and Reimagining the Arctic." Cathrine Theodorsen's look at images of the Sámi in travelogues and fiction by German author Theodor Mügge (1802-1861) and Wendy Mercer's examination of what she calls "quasi-scientific-travel-adventure" (180) novels in nineteenth century French prose fiction are two examples covering the oldest texts in this section. Maria Lindgren Leavenworth's use of the gothic horror novel *The Terror* (2007)—Dan Simmon's fictionalized account of Franklin's fatal expedition—to look at the challenges of sorting out notions of history and time and Heidi Hansson's examination of Arctic crime discourse using Dana Stabenow's Alaska-based Kate Shugak series employ newer texts. Lisa Williams's chapter on "Telling an Arctic Tale: Arctic Discourses in Canadian Foreign Policy" also focuses on more recent material and underscores the urgent need to be more inclusive of indigenous perspectives and voices in Canadian foreign policy.

The final three chapters of *Arctic Discourses* look at representations of the Arctic in Inuit and Sámi poetry and Canadian music. Laurel Parsons combines these themes in "Anerca: Representations of Inuit Poetry in Twentieth-Century Art Music" and Sherill Grace discusses how older and newer discourses of the North "collide" in *Frobisher* (2007)—the only Canadian opera with the Arctic as a theme. In the final chapter of the book, Harald Gaski explores the work of Sámi poet and multimedia artist Nils-Aslak Valkeapää who directly conveys an Arctic indigenous discourse. This final chapter provides a fitting springboard for further dialogue and discussions regarding power relationships past and present in the Arctic.

One dimension which may appear to be underrepresented in this volume is gender and *Arctic Discourses*, but it should be noted that gender roles and the

notion of northern femininity does figure into Hanson's chapter on crime fiction, and a number of other contributors draw gendered perspectives into their essays. Additional chapters or material related to gender and *Arctic Discourses* might have enhanced this collection, and this area provides, at any rate, fertile ground for research and publication opportunities for others.

In summary, *Arctic Discourses* is an invaluable contribution to the growing field of Arctic literary studies, and it will be of interest to a broad academic audience. While the editors and this review point out the benefits of reading the essays as a type of dialogue, chapters can be read and used as stand-alone texts by individuals and as part of undergraduate and graduate courses. Readers will find ample material and ideas with which to engage, and these essays will encourage further study and the emergence and awareness of additional perspectives and discourses on the Arctic.

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