Cold Matters
Cultural Perceptions of Snow, Ice and Cold

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Cold matters. The importance of snow, ice and cold has never been more obvious than now when almost every newspaper contains articles about the effects of global warming and melting glaciers. Yet, for centuries, ‘cold’ as a cultural idea has been surrounded with negative connotations representing a denial of life and progress. Such understandings are not altogether innocent since they continue to govern the way people interpret and present the idea of cold. Nevertheless, the increased understanding of the vital function of the polar ice caps for the earth’s climate has meant renewed interest in the cultural meanings of cold. Thus, the fourth International Polar Year 2007-2009 is the first one to include the human dimension in a substantial way. Research focuses not only on the properties of ice cores and the retraction of glaciers, but also on the conditions for people who live and work in the polar regions and on social, fictional and artistic representations of places and inhabitants. Snow, ice and cold have become integral to the meanings of polar areas and cultural understandings of cold matters therefore incorporate the idea, although rarely, perhaps, the reality of the poles.

From an outsider’s point of view, the Arctic and the Antarctic have often been perceived as masculine-coded areas, where men may go to prove their mettle by defeating the forbidding landscape (David 2000, Grace 2007). As Francis Spufford points out, the snow becomes the enemy and is represented in terms of conflict, conquest and struggle, frequently with moral overtones, which means that the idealists who followed polar expeditions from home were informed by a sense that “such a thing as a moral triumph over the snows was possible” (Spufford 1996: 269). From this outside perspective, the cold landscape...
is sometimes represented as a masculine adversary, sometimes given feminine features as the *femme fatale* who lures men to their death (Atwood 2004), but it rarely appears as soft and inviting. From the inside, the far North and the far South are obviously understood in less stereotypical terms, although the idea that the cold regions of the earth are masculine preserves seem to permeate many indigenous cultures as well as the expedition environments in the Arctic and the Antarctic.

As a consequence, stories about the poles and the far North have usually foregrounded tough and uninviting features. Winter is overrepresented in the narratives and the summer season seems almost not to exist. In most literary representations the Arctic and the Antarctic, like the northern Subarctic areas, are depicted as harsh, frightening and potentially deadly. The same fear-inspiring features are prototypically associated with snow, ice and cold, despite the presence of kinder images like chubby snowmen, the intricate pattern of snowflakes, beautiful landscapes covered with snow and the usefulness of a refrigerator.

A search of the language database British National Corpus (BNC) demonstrates that “cold” appears in various constellations as the negation of life and growth, and is used in a positive sense almost exclusively with reference to refreshments such as “cold beer,” “cold drink” and “delightfully cold ice-cream.” “Cold” commonly collocates with “hunger,” as in the examples “tired, cold, hungry,” “hungry, cold and dirty” and “half dead with cold and hunger.” In these cases “cold” sometimes seems to emphasise physical discomfort in general rather than describe actual low temperatures, and the word slips between a metaphorical and a literal meaning. The very strong association between ‘cold’ and ‘death’ means that the overwhelming majority of experiences represented as cold include some aspect that seems to deny life. Hence, the challenge and attraction of extremely cold places like the polar regions is at least to some extent that they offer the possibility of a vicarious defeat of death.

When human relations are measured with the help of a temperature scale, this connection between ‘cold’ and ‘death’ usually means that a cold personality is figured as negative. When women are concerned, coldness is frequently presented in life-denying terms, and descriptions that focus on cold character traits are especially common
for women with access to power. Designations like “ice maiden,” “ice queen” and “ice virgin” abound, which indicates that the powerful woman is understood as passionless and sterile. In an article in the New Republic Camille Paglia thus suggests that comparing Hillary Clinton to an “ice queen” or a “drag queen” provides an important key to her personality. She possesses

a proud, lonely, isolated consciousness on guard and ever vigilant, a powerful presence who even in high achievement hovers at the edges of communal experience. The woman her classmates called ‘Sister Frigidaire’ has the ‘mind of winter’. (1996: 24)

A woman with a sharp intellect is perceived as emotionally cold, since it upsets the traditional conjunctions man – reason and woman – passion. A slightly different pattern governs the view of women as passive and receptive, the malleable counterparts of the dangerous femme fatales. According to this model, the Snow Queen can also be the innocent, virginal Sleeping Beauty, as an example from the BNC demonstrates:

I looked across at the girl in the coffee bar. She was not the whore who lurks under the demure exterior of even the most respectable wife and mother. She was not an angel capable of mutating into a writhing, biting snake on a soft mattress. To me, at that moment, she was instead the Snow Queen, the Snow White in the glass case, the Princess at the ball.

“Sister Frigidaire” is devoid of feelings because of her sharp intellect whereas “Snow White’s” feelings have not yet been awakened by the Prince’s kiss. In both cases, however, snow, ice and cold become symbols of a passionlessness that connects the powerful, active woman with the powerless, passive Sleeping Beauty by emphasising their life-denying asexuality.

The negative ideas clustering around “cold” are not present to the same extent for “ice” and “snow.” Ice is for instance often viewed in terms of beauty, compared to precious stones like diamonds, as in Lord Dufferin’s account of his voyage to Spitsbergen in 1857 as one of the first Arctic tourists:
[A] white twinkling light suddenly caught my eye about a couple of miles off on the port bow, which a telescope soon resolved into a solitary isle of ice, dancing and dipping in the sunlight. As you may suppose, the news brought everybody upon deck, and when almost immediately afterwards a string of other pieces – glittering like a diamond necklace – hove in sight, the excitement was extreme. (Dufferin 1903: 120)

Ice offers a spectacle, dazzling, brilliant and glittering as in the BNC example “golden ice against a blue and amber sunset.” In addition, ice and diamonds can be understood as belonging to neighbouring semantic fields, sharing concepts like ‘hardness’ and ‘sharpness’.

![Ice - beautiful as diamonds and powerful enough to crush stones. (Photo Jan Bränström)](image)
The marketing strategy of Luleå University of Technology focuses on such interpretations of cold and ice, and the slogan “great ideas grow better below zero” not only alludes to the exotic location of the northernmost university of technology in Scandinavia, but also foregrounds the association between coldness and an intelligence “sharp as ice.” A reversal of the connection between cold and the absence of life and growth is possibly more difficult to achieve, however.

Of the three concepts, ‘snow’ appears to give rise to the most positive connotations, as in one of the numerous popular songs and music hall numbers produced at the time of Robert Edwin Peary’s expedition to the North Pole:

Pretty little snowflake, Little Eskimo  
Queen of all the icy seas  
Pride of all the winter breeze  
Little Eskimo, I love you so  
In your little hut, dear, ’mid the ice and snow  
We will kiss and hug and tease  
Whisp’ring pretty love songs with the breeze  
Sweet little snowflake it is for your sake  
This journey I take. (Timberg 1909)

The woman figured as a little snowflake is the explorer’s inspiration, something soft and cuddly for him to remember and drive him forward on his quest. But such kinder images are not widespread or strong enough to neutralise the idea that snow is a dangerous substance. The idiom “pure as the driven snow” illustrates the ambiguous roles ‘snow’ is made to play, because even though the phrase is used to emphasise somebody’s innocence, it is most often used in contexts where guilt seems to lie close at hand: “He comes across as whiter than the driven snow. A man of such transparent honesty has to have something to hide” (BNC C-files). To be pure, white or innocent as the driven snow seems to suggest a whiteness that deceives. On the one hand, snow is fluffy and soft, a necessary prerequisite for recreational activities like skiing. On the other, it causes dangerous avalanches and traffic disturbances, and every year there are reports of heavy snow storms where people are killed. Examples in the BNC include phrases like “hard snow,” “a danger of wet snow” and “heavy snow made travel-
ling almost impossible” as well as exoticising outbursts as “[t]his is the most beautiful place I have ever been, a land of snow that is so fresh and clean that to ride over it seems criminal.” The unsoiled, unpol-luted image in the last example continues the idea of purity and in-nocence. Other examples emphasise the disappearance of snow and as a consequence, the loss of an important opportunity for recreation, as in the comment about the “uncertainty about snow conditions that hangs over European skiing” (BNC). Such arguments are frequently applied in global warming rhetoric.

In a similar fashion, the image of polar bears which used to rep-resent Arctic danger is changing as a result of climate change. One recent example is the huge interest in Germany and even more generally in Europe in the polar bear cubs born in the Zoos of Berlin and Kiel. The Swedish evening paper Expressen (21 Oct., 2007), for example, gives a careful report of the development of the cuddly polar bear Knut, which was abandoned by its mother and therefore taken care of by zookeepers in Berlin. The article contains a number of extremely sweet pictures of the fluffy little bear which is presented as the perfect pet. Nowhere in the article are the dangerous aspects of polar bears mentioned. Instead it is noted that people are queuing to see the cub. The world-wide interest in Knut and his fate was to a great extent the
result of clever PR, but the fact that the polar bear has become the animal to personify the threats of global warming played a significant role as well. The latent message in the pictures of Knut that appeared on the front pages is that unless human beings do something radical to counteract the changes to the world’s climate, Knut and his cute little siblings will die (Lindén 2008: 4). A similar message is embedded in the film *The White Planet* (Ragobert and Piantanida 2006) where the Arctic is imagined as a birthplace not only for all the animals living there but figuratively for the world itself. To further emphasise the message, carbon neutral tickets to the film were sold (The White Planet Official Film Site: 2006).

Thus the story of Knut, together with numerous other articles, TV-programmes, films, debates and other events help focus the world’s attention on the Arctic and the Antarctic as the areas where the effects of global warming are most clearly observable. In the process, the cultural ideas surrounding snow, ice and cold have begun to change. For this re-evaluation to continue, it is necessary to chart the literal, symbolical and metaphorical meanings of the concepts. Not unexpectedly, closer investigation reveals that these meanings are context-dependent and far from stable. The articles in this collection therefore represent a number of disciplines, although they all employ varieties of cultural studies and discourse analysis to investigate real as well as metaphorical experiences and understandings of cold.

*The volume begins with a discussion concerning the validity and use of the terms ‘Arctic’ and ‘North’ in Arctic discourse in Carina Keskitalo’s exposition of the frequently opposing interpretations of the concepts. In her article “The North – Is There Such a Thing?” particular attention is paid to the inside/outside perspectives of these two terms in different areas defined as Arctic. It is her contention that the history of the Arctic is mythified and that the frontier ideology based on the idea of the civilised explorer braving the wasteland of the North has played an important role in the construction of the region. To some extent, this view is still typical of Arctic discourse in North America, especially in Canada, where the traditional frontier concepts are still used to define the North to southern Canadians. In Nordic countries*
such as Norway, Sweden and Finland the traditional attributes ascribed to the Arctic have only been used on an imaginative level as the term “Arctic” in these countries is primarily used with reference to the area located north of the mainland. The concept of the ‘North’ however, has been used with reference to the inter-state cooperation of these countries (including Denmark and Iceland as well). Keskitalo’s article therefore questions the applicability of an Arctic discourse. It is concluded that the idea of what is understood as ‘the North’/’Arctic’ is far from clear-cut and therefore needs to be defined in each given context.

The idealised view of Arctic expeditions as developed in the age of exploration is further problematised in Elisabeth Wennö’s article “Encased in Ice,” where the reasons for and consequences of misguided heroism attributed to Arctic explorers at the turn of the nineteenth century are discussed. In her text, based on the rendering of Scott’s expedition to the South Pole in Beryl Bainbridge’s novel The Birthday Boys, it is shown that the real dangers of Arctic expeditions are seldom given a realistic description in Arctic narratives. Instead a highly romanticised view of the Arctic explorer is promoted, where attributes related to heroic deeds, manliness, conquest and supremacy play an important role. Scott’s last few lines before he died bear witness to this view, as they emphasise the hardihood and heroic achievements of his companions but say nothing about the real conditions of hunger, agony and extreme cold. Bainbridge’s novel both reveals this perception of manliness, which is described as a call to national duty at a time of change, and challenges it as a fatal notion on many different levels. In doing this, the icy and cold climate of the Antarctic comes to symbolise the ideological rigidity in which Scott and his men were encased – even during the worst of conditions.

Although from a different perspective, the connection between heroism and travels in the snow is also evident in Sir Arthur de Capell Brooke’s travel book and accompanying portfolio of pictures of his journey from Alten to Torneå in the winter of 1820. Capell Brooke’s depiction of his Arctic expedition is analysed by Lennart Pettersson in an article focusing on the interplay between dangerous and exotic descriptions of the Nordic landscape. Dominant features in the pictures are the challenging landscape, the darkness, the Sami culture and the weather. A recurring theme in the travel book is the extreme cold.
Many of these aspects have traditionally been used, as in Brooke’s travelogue, to define the Nordic North as both frightening and dangerous, although it cannot be ignored that the same features are used in the construction of the Nordic North as an exotic place. For example, the promotion of Capell Brooke as a daring explorer and adventurer had not been possible without the hint of possible dangers connected with his journey. Pettersson concludes that when analysing travel literature it is necessary to study pictures as well as text, as different themes may be described differently in the two media. In Brooke’s case the emotional aspects are brought into focus in the pictures, whereas actual facts are provided in the travel book.

That Arctic expeditions were far from devoid of danger and death is more specifically shown in an article about starvation prose by Aimée Laberge who explores the effects of hunger on narrative in the diaries of three famous Arctic explorers: George DeLong, whose ship was crushed against the ice north of the coast of Siberia in 1881, Adolphus Greely, who was trapped on Ellesmere Island in 1884, and Leonidas Hubbard who set off on an expedition to Northern Labrador in 1903. They all expected to gain fame from their intended publications, but the only one who lived to edit his text was Greely. The other texts have been found and published posthumously. By a careful examination of the three texts Laberge concludes that deprivation may shape prose in many different ways. DeLong’s writing confirms the attributes one may think of as typical of starvation stories, that is, a gradual subsiding of the text as the process of starvation sets in. Hubbard’s documentation, on the other hand, defies all preconceived ideas, as hope makes the text expand and even blossom in the last few lines. In Greely’s text despair and horror are left out, probably as a means of maintaining human dignity – at least in the edited diary. A scientific study suggests that it was in fact human flesh that saved Greely and his party. However, despite obvious disparities in the diaries, there is one common factor that permeates the texts and which most likely kept the three men writing: a strong wish to survive, and as long as they wrote they knew they were still alive. According to Laberge, this may be the reason why they never ate their diaries, not even in the worst pangs of hunger.

The typical attributes of Arctic expeditions in the early days of exploration imply that journeys to the coldest areas of the world were
understood and presented as the prerogative of men. Women, however, have both travelled to and participated in expeditions to both polar areas – first in the role of supporters and companions to their husbands and later as explorers in their own right with a mission to carry out research. Two of the articles presented in Cold Matters discuss the existence and conceptualisation of these women in relation to prevailing gender ideologies. “In Women and Civilisation on Ice,” Lisbeth Lewander gives a survey of the accounts of women travelling in polar areas from the late 1930s to the 1990s. The main objective is to emphasise the actual existence of the women who despite formal and informal restrictions managed to visit polar areas. Lewander presents the arguments which until recently have been used to show female unsuitability for Arctic expeditions: physical weakness, inability to resist cold and handle conflicts, a propensity to fight, the risk of sexual harassment and jealousy, to mention a few, and concludes that many discriminatory views of older times are to a large extent present in modern Arctic discourse. Thus, many of the arguments resemble those which have been used to prevent women from entering professions where uniforms are worn, for instance the police force, the rescue services and the army.

Women’s travel in polar areas also constitutes the theme of Heidi Hansson’s article “Feminine Poles,” where the narratives of two early women explorers are analysed: Josephine Diebitsch-Peary’s My Arctic Journal (1893) and Jennie Darlington’s My Antarctic Honeymoon (1956). The women travelled to the far North and far South respectively as the companions of their husbands. According to Hansson, the narratives may be interpreted as responses to the gender anxieties of the end of the nineteenth century and the backlash against feminism after the Second World War, as the two women primarily depict themselves as symbols of civilisation in a masculine world where social codes, like politeness to women, do not apply. Their narratives are thus compatible with the gender ideologies of their respective times, although it is shown that they promote conventional gender roles in different ways. Diebitsch-Peary’s suggestion is to make the North polar region itself more woman-friendly by introducing civilised customs and manners, whereas Darlington’s conclusion is that the South polar region should continue to be a continent for men only. In this respect Darlington’s suggestion must be viewed as the less radical alternative, despite the fact
that it was written about sixty years later than that by Diebitsch-Peary.

Most frequently the literature of Arctic and Antarctic exploration depicts the areas as physical landscapes against which the heroic male explorer may test his limits. There are, however, examples where travels into the cold may be interpreted metaphorically, that is, as inner journeys, or processes of personal development and insight.

In Jenny Diski's autobiographical text *Skating to Antarctica* analysed by Billy Gray, Diski's journey to the coldest area of the world is primarily to be interpreted as a means of dispelling a deep sense of estrangement as a consequence of traumatic childhood experiences. According to Gray, her expedition to Antarctica is not only to be viewed as the result of an attraction to frozen and cold landscapes, but as a way of thawing her own emotions, and re-experience them in a new and purer form. The frozen terrain of the Antarctic with its open and white vistas is presented as a place where such a process is possible. Antarctica is thus not only to be understood as a geographical place, but also as a mental space offering more than physical actuality. It is only in a place traditionally understood as too cold for human existence that Diski is able to freeze unpleasant memories of the past and

The snow-covered landscape represents the allure of the unknown. (Photo Jan Bränström)
reconnect with her emotions. In this respect *Skating to Antarctica* provides an alternative picture to many literary representations of cold regions.

Ursula Le Guin’s science fiction novel *The Left Hand of Darkness*, analysed by Maria Lindgren Leavenworth, constitutes an additional example of a metaphorical journey into the cold. The main character of the novel experiences an inner journey in connection with his mission to incorporate the planet of Gethen (Winter) into an Alliance consisting of eighty-three other planets. Lindgren Leavenworth’s article discusses the effects of cold on several levels. Initially, the cold climate on Winter works as an identifier separating the main character from the Gethenians, as characters are defined by how they react to the cold. Other aspects dividing the observer from the studied are the animal characteristics of the Gethenians and their androgynous sexuality. The latter trait, in particular, proves extremely difficult for the observer to overcome since his society relies heavily on the distinction between male and female. However, despite the fact that the harsh climate on the alien planet gives rise to binaries separating the characters, it is evident, as concluded by Lindgren Leavenworth, that it is the essentialising aspects of cold which finally erase all binary constructions and which eventually enable the main character to understand both himself and the foreign culture of Winter.

Like literal or mental places, human beings are also frequently associated with ice and cold. Metaphorical images and personifications of cold are highlighted in three of the articles included in *Cold Matters*. All of them concentrate on the link between cold and women, and the negative traits ascribed to womanhood as a consequence of establishing such an association.

In her article “Cold and Dangerous Women” Cathrine Norberg focuses on the difference between anger expressed by women and men in nineteenth-century English literature, concluding that the ancient view of perceiving female anger as colder than male anger has historically had negative consequences for women. Based on humoural theory anger displayed by women and men were early defined as two different forms: male anger was defined as hot and brief, whereas the supposedly cold and moist body of a woman was believed to make her anger cold and not as easily spent. As a result, women were more likely to commit calculated crimes than crimes caused by unrestrained emo-
tions. Sensation fiction of the 1860s suggests that the traditional view of understanding female anger as colder and therefore more dangerous than male anger endured in nineteenth-century England. The article also shows that women in Victorian society were, like their predecessors, understood as more emotional and irrational than men, although, contradictorily enough, most forms of female emotionality were understood as unfeminine. Such contradictory conceptions of anger and gender contributed to the ancient perception of female anger as not only colder, but also more problematic than its male counterpart.

Additional examples of the metaphorical link between cold and women are provided by Monica Nordström Jacobsson in her article “Incarnations of Lilith?” where she stresses the fact that good women are frequently contrasted with evil ones in folk tales, and that snow queens, as those depicted in among others the Narnia Chronicles by C. S. Lewis and *The Snow Queen* and “The Ice Maiden” by Hans Christian Andersen, constitute a special kind of wicked females. These women are typically portrayed as powerful and seductive – attributes traditionally understood as extremely provocative and frightening to patriarchal structures when found in women. Nordström Jacobsson’s analysis of literature for young readers suggests that the only way to escape the seduction of a snow queen or ice maiden is to be saved by true love. It is concluded that women desiring power are usually doomed to lonely lives. In this respect snow queens may be interpreted as incarnations of Lilith, that is, Adam’s first wife, who refused to obey her husband and God and as a consequence was forced to leave her home for a lonely life in the desert.

The symbols of snow and ice in Andersen’s *The Snow Queen* are further developed by Ingemar Friberg in his article “The Endurance of Female Love,” where the contrast between the evil, rational and knowledge-seeking snow queen and the unselfish love expressed by the female protagonist of the tale is brought into focus. It is argued that throughout Andersen’s text cold and warmth are symbolically linked to death and life respectively. The danger of the snow queen is particularly highlighted by her obvious resemblance to the biblical serpent, and in this sense female rationality is viewed as not only unwomanly, but also as extremely dangerous and evil. Apart from focusing on the symbolic representation of ice and snow in relation to the snow queen, the article also concentrates on the three-fold narrative of the story, its
allegorical structure and femininity in relation to the Faustian ideal, discussed within the framework of the Romantic tradition.

Symbolical aspects of ice and cold are further analysed and discussed in Anne Heith’s text “Nils Holgersson Never Saw Us,” where the exclusion of the Tornedalian Finnish literature from the Swedish literary canon, as presented in Bengt Pohjanen’s and Kirsti Johansson’s volume *Den tornedalsfinska litteraturen: Från Kexi till Liksom* (Tornedalian Finnish literature: From Kexi to Liksom), is described. The omission is particularly highlighted by reference to the importance given to the Swedish literary classic *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils* (published at the beginning of the twentieth century), which, according to Pohjanen, portrays the northernmost parts of Sweden from the perspective of a stranger and completely fails to represent the Tornedalian culture of the Meänkieli-speaking people in northern Sweden and Finland. In the discussion of the construction of a Meänkieli literary tradition, as suggested by Pohjanen and Johansson, the concepts ‘l’Ugritude’, that is, the representation of a culture without using an ethnic key forged by another culture, the so-called “participation mystique,” peculiar to the Tornedalian mentality, and “third space,” a term used to focus on the diversity of the Tornedalian culture in relation to the culture of the nation states of Sweden and Finland, are explored. These aspects are symbolically represented by snow and the breaking of ice on the Torne river.

Finally, Per Strömberg shows that the exotic concepts of ice and cold may be used to present the Arctic as a cool thing. In his discussion of ice as an aesthetic artefact the marketing strategy of the Icehotel in Jukkasjärvi is analysed. It is explained that it was primarily the promotion of the extremely pure water of the Torne River and the image of the ice originating from the water of the same river that contributed to the successful business concept of the Icehotel, which gradually spread to become a “cool stage” also for other companies – for example the Absolut Company. In many contexts the exotic view of ice, as launched by the Icehotel, has developed into a national symbol where the original concept of authenticity and originality has been extended to include a number of metonymically related concepts, such as ‘Swedishness’, ‘creativity’ and ‘strength’. Strömberg shows that ice has been used symbolically to promote Saab as a Swedish company. In the same fashion, a block of ice was transported to Stockholm when the MTV
Awards event was held there.

Cold obviously matters on a number of different levels. It becomes a political instrument that helps to establish common ground for the cold regions of the globe. Ideologically, it may function as the metaphor for an impassioned and controlled outlook on life, frequently with negative overtones where women are concerned, establishing connections between powerful women and evil. Physically, cold produces environments where people can starve to death, a circumstance which is sometimes used sexual-politically to exclude particularly women from polar ventures. Psychologically, cold may function as the route to self-discovery, since it has the capacity to strip away everything except the most essential aspects of the self. Cold has also become a theme to explore in words and pictures and exploit in marketing strategies. At the beginning of the twenty-first century there are signs that indicate that cold is becoming increasingly “cool.” Assessing the cultural meanings of snow, ice and cold is even more vital at such a juncture since conventional ideological and metaphorical connotations of the concepts are destabilised.

As snow, ice and cold become more and more desirable, it seems logical to expect that the ideas clustering around these phenomena should become more positive as well. In her travelogue On Trying to Keep Still (2006), Jenny Diski describes cold as “always bleak. The twin of dereliction. […] Cold is a kind of internal desert, a terrorism enacted on me by the world” (2006: 246). Experimenting with an opposite set of descriptors would define cold as cheerful, energising, civilised and liberating. There are signs in culture today that such notions could be collecting around concepts of ice, snow and cold. At a time when the survival of cold regions are threatened, it is vital to change the paradigm that figures cold as negative and instead highlight its positive characteristics. Apart from emphasising the necessity of cold matters, such a paradigm change could have radical implications for all the symbolic and metaphorical uses of cold. Instead of routinely associating cold with death, it is essential to show its crucial importance for continued life.
NOTES

1 An exception to the rule that the Arctic is rarely presented in softer terms is Jon Stefánsson’s *The Friendly Arctic* where the author explicitly attempts to give a positive description of the far North.

REFERENCES


ABSTRACT In the last few decades the Arctic has developed as an international region including parts of eight states over the northern circumpolar area. The history of the Arctic, however, is largely mythified, and the frontier ideology of land development has played a prominent role. Whether states acknowledge and exhibit the characteristics that are commonly described as “Arctic,” the definition largely depends upon whether they have historically conceived of their northern areas in Arctic terms. This pattern is typical of North America, especially Canada which for reasons of sovereignty and nationalism has been heavily involved in developing an Arctic discourse. The pattern of development in northern Europe differs sharply, which calls into question the applicability of current Arctic discourse to all eight states. Accordingly, the Arctic frontier discourse may traditionalise and misrepresent the contemporary features and problems of the eight-state region as a whole.

KEYWORDS Arctic, North, discourse analysis, Nordic, Canada, frontier
The understanding of the Arctic or the North has changed over time, as has its delineation. This is highlighted by Alexander Pope in his poem *Essay on Man*, where he rather amusingly ponders over “the location of the North”:

Ask where’s the North? at York, ’tis on the Tweed;  
In Scotland, at the Orcades; and there,  
At Greenland, Zembla, or the Lord knows where,  
No creature owns it in the first degree  
(quoted in Fielding 1998, para. 1)

The lines illustrate that the understanding of the North is relative and dependent on the position of the observer. In the age of exploration reaching into the early twentieth century the Arctic was primarily perceived as a perennially frozen, purely natural environmental area of the High Arctic surrounding the North Pole. In recent cooperation, however, the Arctic has come to cover a much wider area. Perhaps the premier example of this is the development of the Arctic Council – a body established in 1996 for political cooperation among the eight Arctic states. It was “a symbol of the emergence of the Arctic as a distinct region in international society” (Young 2000: chapter 4, recommendation 2, para. 2). The Council was the result of a movement to normalise political security in the area following the Cold War. Accordingly, the cooperation area essentially reflected Cold War security tensions: the northernmost parts of Canada, the USA (Alaska), Russia, and the Nordic countries. According to the largest estimates, the Arctic comprises almost fifteen per cent of the world’s area.

The understanding of a region, or a nation, is “based on invented traditions and the continuous mobilisation and adaptation of history” (Anderson 1996, ch. Neumann 1999, Van Ham 2002: 259). Regional development is not a given, but an undertaking by political actors who draw on concepts already available to them and pursue their own interests. Conceiving of the Arctic as a discourse, or a particular historically developed understanding of what can or cannot be said about the Arctic, the article aims to deconstruct the concept of the ‘North’ or ‘Arctic’. The study is broadly based on social constructivist and postmodernist thought, of which a wide application will be used. The approach is based on the assumption that “language […] is shot through with metaphors disguised as concepts, themes that carry with them a
whole unrecognised baggage of presuppositions” (Norris 2002: 74). To avoid the creation of knowledge that limits an area or groups into certain ways of being and thinking, anything presented as “knowledge” must be questioned. Instead, knowledge is understood as positioned, and can be defined as “that of which one speaks in a discursive practice and which is specified by that fact” (Foucault 1972: 182). Similarly, a discourse is here understood as “constituted by all that was said in all statements that named it, divided it up, described it, explained it, traced its developments, indicated its various correlations, judged it, and possibly gave it speech by articulating its name, discourses that were taken as its own” (Foucault 1972: 32).

The aim in deconstructing any discourse is to show the double meanings in all use of concepts – over time and geography – and to try to show as widely as possible that no “truth” about any concept can be found: “[t]he very meaning and mission of deconstruction is to show that things – texts, institutions, traditions, societies, beliefs and practices [...] do not have definable meanings or determinable missions” (Caputo 2004: 31). Because of this, it is also relevant to develop what may be called a “conceptual history” of terms that are analysed, to describe their origins and applications in context, and particularly to juxtapose different conceptions of similar terms – or resistances to these terms – with one another. This article will highlight diametrically opposed understandings of the “Arctic” or “North” to illustrate the fluidity of the meaning of these terms. Special attention is paid to inside/outside descriptions of the terms in different areas, and to the relations to the terms of indigenousness and frontier that are brought up by viewing the “Arctic” and “North.” The paper concludes that different and conflicting conceptions of northern areas on national and regional levels are obscured by supraregional understandings that stem sooner from the historical associations with the Arctic than the attributes of the areas presently defined as “Arctic.” These are conceptions that may influence and create divisions among local populations, and where any unifying cooperation across “the Arctic” today would do well to recall the multiplicity of different meanings – spatially as well as temporally – that has been given to the terms “Arctic” and “North.”

Methodologically, the study has been based on a conceptual survey of the uses of the concept ‘Arctic’ as well as the concept ‘North’. The study uses what might be called a “snowball sampling methodol-
ogy” of text, where key references have been followed by other references. “Text” has been viewed here as the way discourse and language is manifested in an analysable form. The literature survey has mainly been undertaken at the Scott Polar Research Institute at Cambridge University, housing the world’s largest polar library.

People commonly associate the Arctic with ice floes and polar bears – a view that was developed in the age of exploration. When the North Pole was reached in the 1920s, a number of states were involved in Arctic ventures which were based on the view that the Arctic was a sublime wilderness that constituted the ultimate test for manhood and national sovereignty. This topic has been discussed most recently by authors such as Francis Spufford (1997, cf. David 2000) and has been seen as a British fascination with the Arctic. The Arctic sublime, as a particular Victorian construction based on the gothic, and the view of terror was particularly emphasised. The “sublime,” here, was seen as a transcendence, a way for human beings to surpass their existence: “There was a feeling that if Franklin went out into the Arctic and mastered it, man would somehow be enlarged in mind and soul. Instead, the Arctic had swallowed him, obliterated him” (Loomis, 1977: 107).

In their imaginations, the British people, and other peoples as well, had voyaged with Franklin ‘toward no earthly pole’ [...] [Their imagined Arctic] was an environment within which a cosmic romance could be acted out: man facing the great forces of Nature and surviving if not prevailing over them. The fate of the Franklin expedition soured the romance and at least partly subverted the image of the Arctic sublime. It was one thing to image the expedition disappearing into the Arctic forever: that would have been terrible, but in a way sublime. It was another to know that the men of the expedition had died slowly in an agony of scurvy and starvation. Bleeding gums, running sores, and constricted bowels are not sublime. (Loomis, 1977: 110)

The view of the Arctic, as the sublime or the “testing ground,” was to a large extent made popular by its simplicity – perhaps also packaged this way to best entertain an audience, or the “armchair traveller” who could indulge in some moments of escapism by considering the Arctic and
the brave exploits of the country’s explorers. In this imagined Arctic, the civilised explorer braved a wilderness of polar bears and ice (and the occasional igloo, a testament to indigenous peoples who were easily described as inferior through the colonising, imperial perspective) – a view that perhaps gained its strongest popular representation in Frankenstein’s monster, who epitomises the sublime terror of the Arctic. In such a fantastic representation the Arctic imagination is seen as an answer to the question “What is the Arctic?” – a question that was asked by most countries with exploration interests, including for instance Sweden and the Netherlands, and perhaps most of those who read Arctic travelogues, essays on Franklin or Mary Shelley’s masterpiece.

However, today, when looking for an answer to the questions “What is the North? and What is the Arctic?” one is immediately drawn to Canadian views, which seem to continue the ideology of exploration and have been much criticised for this. While many countries may apply an Arctic imagination as described above, Canada is one of the few countries that clearly do so internally – for areas within its own state, rather than for a “far North.” In Canada, the terms “Arctic” and “North” are regularly used interchangeably and generally refer to the same area, the administratively delineated territories above 60° north latitude – a geographical definition developed in the age of exploration, drawing upon the mirror delineation of the Antarctic at 60° south (Shields 1991). The view of this internal Arctic, however, largely echoes views elsewhere. The Canadian view of the North has been seen as a way of describing the North to southern Canadians as an indigenous “wilderness zone of purity” and simultaneously as an area “offering riches to developers” from the outside (Shields 1991: 181). The Canadian construction has been criticised by many authors, such as Rob Shields and Ken Coates, who emphasise that the space-myth of the “True North Strong and Free”—words that appear in the Canadian national anthem, reminiscent of one of Tennyson’s poems referring to Canada – places “the Arctic” in a specific role of wilderness. Through this myth, “[s]outherners construe the North as a counter-balance to the civilised world of the Southern cities yet as the core of their own, personal Canadian identity” (cf. Coates 1991 Shields 1994: 163; ). Developed in this way, Shields argues that the myth of the Canadian Arctic as the “True North Strong and Free” forms “a mythology which is first of all practiced, and only second consciously contemplated” (Shields 1994: 199).
In accordance with this view, Janice Cavell points out that “[i]t has become almost traditional to begin any discussion of the role played by the North in the Canadian national consciousness with the suggestion that Canadians ‘have always been fascinated by the Arctic’” (Cavell 2002: para. 1). Perhaps similar to the reasons for which the British empire emphasised the Arctic, authors have argued that the notions of “the Arctic” or “the North” have been made integral in Canadian economic, social and psychological development and have been invoked internationally as well as domestically, and as a consequence according Canada a national identity and a place in the world (Nord 1991). Canada’s striving for a self-definition in relation to its southern neighbour (the USA) and a wish to deal with the “blank space on the map” have contributed to this development.  

Such a view can be seen as based on the idea of the Arctic as a ‘frontier’ (Coates 1991) — again, a particularly North American application, where Canada is perhaps the main example with regard to the North (even if the concept may have some application to Russia’s wide Northern spaces). The concept of the frontier has been described as “the central myth-ideological trope of American culture” (Slotkin 1985: xx, quoted in King 2000: 16) and can be seen to have played a significant role in the formation of Arctic categories. Subsequently, it has also been one of the most contested ideas. The epitomal work in describing a frontier perspective is that of Frederic Jackson Turner who used the frontier concept to explain the development of the US and the American national mentality and identity up through 1880. Turner’s work, originally published in 1893, sees the frontier as existing at the meeting of what is perceived as “wilderness,” that is, areas of pure natural environment that are only inhabited by indigenous peoples living in traditional ways, and what is perceived as “civilisation,” that is, the culture of the colonisers (Turner 1976). In Canada, the role of the Arctic as a frontier was naturalised through the state’s development at the time when the frontier concept was most prominent (Canada was established as a federal state in 1867). Historically, and with effects reaching into the present day, the frontier myth resulted in a separation of “wilderness” and “city,” and the creation of specific roles for the populations of such “wildernesses”: as indigenous peoples, they were viewed as different and were conceived of in terms of their relation to the environment. As the wilderness was not a place
for non-indigenous everyday life until it had lost its frontier role, the conception of wilderness also invited boom-and-bust cycles where the “natural abundance” of the wilderness was harvested (King 2000: 29). In this way, “the Arctic” became the wild lands across which progress took place. It was described in terms of an outside and an inside, that is, as a unit, but one without a cultural agency.

In Canada the concept ‘North’ has frequently been understood in this way. For instance, the Canadian geographer Louis-Edmond Hamelin adapted a more limited engineering-focused Soviet “climatic harshness” index to create “a concrete and universally acceptable definition of the Canadian North and a language with which to discuss it” (cf. Hamelin 1979, Graham 1990: 24). His concept of ‘nordicity’ was defined to capture “a state or level of ‘northness’, real or perceived” (Hamelin 1988: 41, quoted in Graham 1990: 24, my emphasis). Graham writes:

Hamelin worked almost exclusively with Canadian data, but felt strongly that any index should be applicable to any circumpolar location. He saw the need for a system or method that would capture the essence of the North. (Graham 1990:24, my emphasis)

The view of the Arctic was thereby detached from its cultural, social, economic and domestic context and treated as an inherent characteristic of latitude.

The applications of these concepts have been criticised. For instance, in a study of representations of Yup’ik (Alaskan) Eskimos in film from early to current productions, Ann Fienup-Riordan found that “[e]ven today debate too often collapses the complex history of adaptation, transformation, and invention that took place in Alaska into the catchphrase of conflict between ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’” (Fienup-Riordan 1995: 28). Hamelin’s approach, similarly, has been extensively criticised as arbitrary and for ignoring the fact that certain social characteristics of areas are a result of the particular historical development of the state and state policy (its territorial status that limits development and self-determination in the area) rather than of latitude, and thus particular to Canada (Dacks 1981). Yet, a view of the Arctic/North consistent with that of Hamelin’s approach is still prevalent in Canadian scientific literature. For example, a recent Statistics Canada publication (published in 2000) argues for a combina-
tion of 16 criteria that “reflect the combined social, biotic, economic and climatic aspects” of northern areas (McNiven & Puderer 2000: 10). Additionally, a subject called “Northern Studies” was launched at some of Canada’s universities in the early 1960s, with a history as a field explaining “the Arctic” as an entity to outsiders, and as a way of defining “the North” or “Arctic”; since then, it has expanded into a field of study in its own right (Graham 1997).

The interest in Arctic studies, especially with a North-American focus, has continued. For the leading multidisciplinary journal in the field, *Arctic*, a survey of the total of 1231 papers published in the first 40 years (up to 1987) showed that subjects located in the Canadian Arctic continuously and increasingly dominated the journal (growing from 23% to 42% of the total number of articles per volume; Harrison & Hodgson 1987). However, the research was mainly carried out by people who did not live in the northern areas permanently. The survey could therefore be viewed as dealing with “southern interests,” (Harrison & Hodgson 1987: 330) for example, non-renewable resources, militarism and sovereignty. The population in the areas, for North America mainly indigenous peoples, was thus marginalised:

Only nine items in the last ten years related directly to indigenous northern cultural, political or social topics [...] It is equally clear that virtually all the research work conducted in the North was done by southerners [...] The number of northern native authors in *Arctic* seems to have been only one, Elmer Ghostkeeper, in 1987 (Harrison & Hodgson 1987: 330, my emphasis).

In existing cooperation such as the Arctic Council, initiated by Canada and set up in 1996 as a “High Level Forum” for cooperation between Canada, USA, Russia and the Nordic countries (Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark-Greenland, and Iceland), many of the above-mentioned assumptions live on. To a large extent, the Arctic cooperation deals with issues concerning the environment and indigenous peoples with some focus on indigenous subsistence – even if the area included in the cooperation is by far larger than historical delineations of the Arctic: it also includes climatically sub-arctic areas of northern Norway, Sweden and Finland. By including a wide selection of countries (largely as a result of the Cold War that implicated eight states in security frameworks across the Arctic Ocean),
however, the understanding of the Arctic is to some extent contested.

* A notably different view of the “North” is taken in areas where it has been used without connection to the “Arctic” and the influence of the age of exploration. The most marked difference can be seen in countries which have used the concept ‘North’ to define themselves in relation to a larger landmass. Here, the North has been ascribed a number of positive attributes and been related to the centres rather than to the peripheries of these countries.

In particular, this can be said to hold true of the attributes ascribed to the “North” in the northern European states of Norway, Sweden, Finland, as well as, to a lesser degree, Iceland — the clear exception here is Denmark, where Greenland has commonly been associated with the Arctic (Hedberg 1994; Norwegian Polar Institute 2001). The description here centers on a general national level of description (there are indeed marked differences in these states, not the least in their foreign policy with regard to the North), where the different meanings used for the concept ‘North’ in these countries are discussed and compared with the understandings of ‘the Arctic’ above. Firstly, in the Nordic countries and most markedly in Norway, Sweden and Finland, the connection to ‘the Arctic’ as a concept is limited, as “Arctic” has been used to refer mainly to areas located north of the mainland in each state. With regard to the concept of ‘northern’ or ‘northerness’, for these countries, a discourse on “the North” of relevance to international level cooperation does not refer to the northern areas of the mainland of these countries, but to Nordic inter-state cooperation. In recent times, ‘northerness’, as the relevant concept on an international level, has been seen as based on the concept of ‘the Nordic states’ or Norden (Jukarainen 1998) which is “probably best defined as the members of the Nordic Council — Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden” (Wæver 1992: 78). The Nordic cooperation developed in 1952 as a result of a need for the states in the region to ally themselves against East-West pressures during the Cold War (Simoulin Lereps 2000). It is thus the administrative delineation of the Nordic Council and the definition of “Nordic” that provide the basis
for international discourse in these areas — as a particularly “modern” discourse, by which the countries portray themselves not in need or as a periphery, but as highly developed. Where the content ascribed to this idea of “northern” is concerned, then, Norden has, rather than focusing on tradition, “regularly been depicted as a particularly modern configuration, one that is exemplary in regard to the rest of Europe” (Joenniemi 2001: 1).

In emphasising modern over traditional development, the concept ‘Norden’ has presumably resulted in different expectations among the Nordic states and North American actors of what is implied by “north” in international cooperation. Recognising these differences, Einar Niemi, for instance, contests the traditional view of the North when he writes: “the whole of Finnmark [the northernmost county of Norway] is highly developed and modernized, not lagging behind the rest of the country in this respect.” (Niemi 1997: 79, my emphasis). Additionally, for instance in Sweden, discourses about local northern areas often do not centre on ‘northernness’ or the concept ‘north’ but on the concept of ‘glesbygd’, literally an “area with a low population.” This definition has been applied, for example, to the Torne Valley which forms the border between northern Sweden and Finland (Muotka 1978). In this context, “glesbygd” is given the characteristics of peripherality and problems associated with a low population number and large distances to centres and markets – but without the attributes commonly ascribed to the “Arctic.”

Similarly, it is contested in literature whether a “frontier mentality” so prominent in North America ever existed in northernmost Europe in any comparable form. One striking example of an attempted incorporation of the concept of the frontier into northern Europe — and its subsequent refusal — can be seen in discussions sparked by the work of the social scientist Ottar Brox. Brox emphasised North Norway’s role as the frontier of the north in, for instance, his book Nord-Norge fra allmenning til koloni [North Norway from common to colony] (Brox 1984). Drawing on Turner’s frontier concept, Brox argued that North Norway in the years 1800-1950 was the frontier of Scandinavia, where outsiders moved to develop industry but where local people chose to remain in subsistence-based occupations such as fishing (Brox 1984). Brox contended that this differentiation between the two groups could be compared to that which occurred between population groups in North
America in terms of the development of the frontier. In a debate where many of Brox’s assertions were refuted, many Norwegian authors showed that the workforce in important industrial centres in northern Norway at the time largely came from local and regional farming and fishing populations rather than from farther away (Vea 2000), and that much of the migration occurred within north Norway – not only did southerners move north, but northern Norwegians moved south rather than remaining in their local areas (Aas 1998).

The discussion of Brox’s work can be seen as an assessment and rejection of the applicability of the concept of ‘frontier’ to northern Norway between 1800 and 1950, as well as a discussion of the roles of subsistence activity and economic diversification in the region during the period. It can thus be seen as a discussion of the relative importance of “traditional” and “modern” occupations at that time, where people in “traditional” occupations also became involved in “modern” ones, and these groups were not absolutely differentiated. Similarly, the frontier issue was sometimes taken up implicitly and rejected:

the spatial history of Finnmark has other factors at play than does, for example, Canada. In addition, the restricted size of the territory in question creates problems for any model of rights distribution and management. With its 48 000 square km, Finnmark is tiny compared to other areas in which land tenure issues are in question today, as in Canada and Australia. In Finnmark there is no longer space for expansion. There is no frontier left. (Niemi 1997: 79, my emphasis)

As a result, it has been noted that the clear and relatively uncontested delineation between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples undertaken in frontier conceptions is less applicable in northern Norway, Sweden and Finland. For instance, Roger Kvist notes:

Making comparisons with North American native policy, it is important to note that no initial contact date can be established for the meeting of Saami and Scandinavians. In fact, the ancestors of both the Saami and the Scandinavians co-existed for thousands of years, and Saami and Scandinavian ethnogenesis took place in a situation of mutual cultural and genetic exchange. (Kvist 1995: 20-21, my emphasis)
A survey of literature about northern Norway, Sweden and Finland reveals that, in general terms, many northern Europeans have both mixed blood and multiple allegiances vis-à-vis the state or ethnic groupings: that is, they may not only see themselves as simply belonging to either a state or claiming an indigenous identity but as combinations of these, sometimes in combinations with local identities. In a critical note in some letters to the editor in a local newspaper in an area in Norway regarding the issue of the delineations, one contributor wrote: “I know that I have at least seven roots from which I stem” (FiN 16.02.1995, quoted in Hovland 1999: 176, my translation). For instance, Kven and Torne Valley Finnish organisations have recently formed a Finnish-related culture outside Finland and argued that these groups should eventually be seen as indigenous, as they existed in the areas before state boundaries were drawn. Among other things, this has led to increased tensions between the Sami and Kven organisations in recent years (Anttonen 1998). Responses here illustrate the problem of drawing clear-cut delineations:

It is not uncommon to hear opinions like ‘the organisation is all right, but personally I am not interested in it.’ Some people are sceptical about or directly reject these political ideas, saying they can’t identify with this ideology: ‘I don’t understand what they are telling us. I am not more oppressed than any other Norwegian because of my ancestry’ [...] In reality there are diverse interpretations of how to be a ‘real’ Kven or a ‘real’ Finn, Norwegian or Saami for that matter. (Anttonen 1998: 52)

Thus, one possible response to these tendencies has been noted by Britt Kramvig: to avoid the categorisations. In some areas in Norway, rather than calling themselves northerners, “nordlending,” people instead speak about themselves by referring to their regionality by using the term “finnmarking.” Regionality is thus used as a category that is not specifically Norwegian, Sami or Kven or explicitly “northern”-related, but can rather be understood as a third alternative based on place (Kramvig 1999: 119).

Additionally, in northern Europe, relations to nature or wilderness as well as relations to modernity may be understood as both indigenous and non-indigenous. Many Sami live in national centres, and the vast majority of them are active in non-traditional (in a North American
sense) occupations such as “modern market economy” (Zoegdrager 1999: 196). Similarly, in response to literature that describes the Sami as closer to nature than local populations, Tuulentie writes: “[t]raditional Sami livelihoods’, particularly hunting and fishing, are clearly a part of Finnish national identity” (Tuulentie 1999: 108). Reindeer husbandry is a case in point, since it is often considered a distinct Sami livelihood. In Finland, however, it is the right of everybody who lives in the common reindeer herding areas in northern Finland (Sillanpää 1994). Saarinen notes that “the Anglo-American wilderness concept has emerged more or less by conquering the wilderness — as an opposite to culture” (Saarinen 1998: 30). By way of contrast, he observes: “the traditional Finnish ‘erämaa’ [wilderness] has been defined by living in and with it” (Saarinen 1998: 30). A Sami author writes about the use of mythical concepts of the North for these areas: “The Mythic North? That is a concept that was created by the outsiders [...] you no longer encounter the mythic anywhere except where attempts are made to subjugate people” (Paltto & Kailo 1998: 27). Similarly, Paltto and Kailo note: “The notion of the wildness of the North derives perhaps from urban living circumstances and that so-called community of systematic organization” (29).

*The lines of ethnic and geographic differentiation can consequently not be drawn clearly. The frontier understanding of development, with its delineation of wilderness and civilisation, indigenous and non-indigenous, and traditional and modern, does not encompass more complex realities. With reference to the application and extension of a limited frame of “the Arctic,” this article argues that a description has been created which ultimately generalises the dominant discourse typical of exploration and Canadian understandings to other areas such as the Nordic ones. The frontier has primarily been used to describe a myth of a colonial past, that is of civilisation progressing towards essentialised images of the frontier pushing into the wilderness, rendering the wasteland and its inhabitants part of civilisation. Thus, through the way it depicts environmental, indigenous and traditional entities and by developing a region-building discourse in its search for the authentic, it may create the opposite ideas, that is, the manufac-
tured, as well as extending the discourse to areas where it results in conflict over identities.

To question the categories of the frontier mythology, it has to be acknowledged that “northernness”, like “the Arctic”, is a construct, not a given, and the result of relationships developed in historical periods. During these periods, an image of the “Arctic” or “North” has been created and used for specific purposes, such as to develop national mythologies and identities. This has taken place in Canada – a country where the Northern “frontier” has been described as wilderness – and, contrastingly, in northern European states where the Northern has been seen as a way of identifying and presenting the own states as modern. These considerations show that the concepts of ‘the North’ and ‘the Arctic’ are far from clear-cut and cannot be used without clearly defining what is meant by them in the given context, as well as problematising and avoiding to essentialise these meanings.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT


NOTES

1 As a self-definition, exploration-related views of the Arctic could perhaps be related to Denmark’s relation to its home-rule territory of Greenland, to Russian imaginations of Siberia, or of USA’s relation to its 50th state, Alaska (cf. Keskitalo 2004).

2 The basis of ‘Norden’ as an area has differed over time, however, as Neumann critically observes: “One example of [external factors seen as characteristic of a region] ... was widespread during the eighteenth century, when the cold climate of the North, with its allegedly beneficial effects on cultural life, was used as a defining trait for a Northern region. However, more than other criteria, this one proved to be notoriously slippery and to melt away as one tried to fix the border to the south. Since the time of German romanticism, language has [instead] been
held forth as the central cultural criterion by which to delineate human collectives” (Neumann 1999:117, emphasis original).

REFERENCES


“Encased in Ice”
Antarctic Heroism in Beryl Bainbridge’s
The Birthday Boys

ABSTRACT Antarctic heroism in Beryl Bainbridge’s The Birthday Boys,” examines the way R.F. Scott’s doomed expedition to the South Pole in 1912 is represented in Beryl Bainbridge’s novel The Birthday Boys (1991) in terms of turn-of-the-century heroic ideology, which is both revealed as a cultural call to national duty at a time of change and war threats, and challenged as a misguided and fatal notion on the cultural as well as the personal level. The article also shows how metaphors of ice and its cognates are used to underline the novel’s tragic meaning of male victimisation to patriarchal ideology.

KEYWORDS Beryl Bainbridge, heroic age, heroic failure, metaphors of ice, snow and cold, the Antarctic, polar expedition, ideology, polar fiction.

R.F. Scott’s last message to the public, written shortly before his death on his return trip from the South Pole in March 1912, ends:

Had we lived, I should have a tale to tell of the hardihood, endurance and courage of my companions which would have stirred the heart of every Englishman. These rough notes and our dead bodies must tell the tale, but surely, surely, a great rich country like ours will see that those who are dependent on us are properly provided for. (Scott 1993: 477)

The tale was told in literary form by Beryl Bainbridge in The Birthday Boys (1991), and true to her customary inclination to base her novels on thorough research, her tale is faithful to Scott’s account of male heroic
achievement, unimaginable ordeals and suffering on the fatal Antarctic expedition that was a significant event during the period termed the Heroic Age (1900-1922). The expedition was also a contributing factor to the understanding of the meaning of ‘heroic failure’, a concept which goes well with Bainbridge’s predilection for portraying human aspiration and its frustration without mincing words: “Amundsen had beaten us to the pole” (Bainbridge 1991: 179). The day after this discovery Scott notes in his journal: “Great God! this is an awful place and terrible enough for us to have laboured to it without the reward of priority” (Scott 1993: 424). The failure was twofold: England was deprived of the expected national glory, and Scott and his party of four others died on the return journey from the pole. There was every reason, then, for Scott to emphasise heroism in adversity and to make his desperate appeal to “a great rich country.” According to Paul Theroux, however, Scott and his men, despite their failure to be the first to reach the Pole, became national heroes because of the spirit in which they faced death in cold and hunger. He also points out that the British people “needed just such a symbol, for the First World War began very soon afterwards” (lxxix). Likewise Michael Rosove states without reservation that Scott “became Antarctica’s greatest martyr” and that his “story rivals the greatest of the Shakespearean tragedies” (197).

Obviously, the party did not set out with the intent to become martyrs. Francis Spufford, on reading the standard accounts of the great expeditions, is right in observing: “Their presence is as astonishing as their astonishing surroundings, something to be wondered at. And one asks, of course, everyone asks, why? Why did they do these insane things?” (1). The answer, however, he continues, is not provided by the explorers (2), but must be referred to “the accepted influence of polar material on the collective imagination at the turn of the century” (7). “The polar material” was described by Scott’s sister as “the call of the vast empty spaces; silence; the beauty of untrodden snow; liberty of thought and action; the wonder of the snow and seeming infinitude of its uninhabited regions [...] and the hoped-for conquest of raging elements” (Spufford 1997: 6). This is a highly idealised view of the Antarctic and its promises and Bainbridge’s novel takes a more sobering approach to the material.

Since her novel is based on the accounts of the surviving explorers and written in the voices of the five who died, it does not offer
an obvious answer beyond the immediate mundane and less sublime indications of vested economic interests, the hope of distinction and honour, and the contribution to Science. Perhaps the appeal of the explorers’ stories, and of Bainbridge’s novel, is the lack of a single answer, or rather the lack of a rational answer, something which is humorously suggested in the novel when Dr Wilson asks his comrades to ask him what he is doing there and he replies:

‘I’ve never liked crowds’, and then we all squealed, because we could see the humour of it: three ragged, frosted figures lying on their backs in the darkness of nowhere, emitting cries like stuck pigs as God’s paintbrush splashed among the stars. (146)

The humour is also a signal that Bainbridge has no intention of rendering her account of Scott’s expedition in the tradition of the Antarctic fiction that Elizabeth Leane has termed “Antarctic utopian romance” (165). It is rather an attempt to expose the turn-of-the-century ideology, or ethos, of empire, conquest and supremacy. In historiographic and ironic opposition to the fiction that Johan Höglund argues “participated in the mobilisation of the British war spirit” (13), The Birth-day Boys reveals and challenges the ideology of Antarctic heroism and its contribution to it. In consequence, the novel makes clear that once there, the operative concept of surviving for the men is duty and that of dying honour, both of which are contextualised by the references to the ideologies and spirit of the age, but never romanticised.

It is interesting to note, however, that the romantic idea of Antarctic promise persists in the contemporary imagination. Today, at the cost of 59,000 SEK we can all go in tourist comfort and safety. The Swedish newspaper Dagens Nyheter ran the following advertisement for a trip to the Antarctic on 26 September 2007:

Antarctica – February 2008
A journey to one of the most extreme wildernesses of the earth. Opportunities for real and close encounters with animals and nature. The Antarctic is a continent of peace and research full of history and tales about human longings for discovery. Experience an incredible continent, draped in all shades of white and blue. You will follow in the footsteps of great discoverers such as Roald Amundsen, Otto Nordenskjöld, James Cook and Charles Darwin. (My translation)
But there is no way we can actually follow in Amundsen’s footsteps although we might be seduced by the romantic view of the Antarctic, untainted by commercialism and territoriality, presented in the advertisement. There is no mention of the unspeakable cold, blizzards, the hardship of man-hauling sledges, frozen limbs, fatal crevasses, and killer whales. We are reminded of Barthes’ observation in *Mythologies* that not even a documentary film can make us see the unknown country, nor is there a polar nature film without a tame seal, nor a tropical film without an ape (172). There is not a hint either of the historical national competition underlying the race to the pole at the time (cf. “peace,” “research,” “history,” “discovery” in the ad), as there is in Bainbridge’s novel when Lt. Bowers, for instance, comments on Amundsen’s use of dogs as opposed to Scott’s unfortunate use of motor vehicles and ponies: “[T]here is an unsporting element in the use of either motors or dogs. Far better to stride out, nation against nation, man against man” (142). This is challenged by Dr Wilson and defined as “inappropriate chivalry of a bygone age,” hoping that the “rest of us don’t have cause to regret such romantic notions” (142). Many of those who survived, however, were to lose their lives on the battlefields of World War I in the name of chivalry and the glory of the homeland, which adds further irony to Lt. Bowers’ later remark: “There’s something else God has in store for us, something glorious, I’m sure of it” (157). The irony of the remark gains additional force by being preceded by the group’s sense of being “encased in armour” (149) and by the effects of a hurricane that “rattled as though we were under continuous rifle-fire” (154). The youngest member of Scott’s expedition, Apsley Cherry-Garrard, on whose writings Bainbridge also relies, who survived only to find himself at war in Flanders, draws an analogy between war and the Antarctic in his book *The Worst Journey in the World: Antarctic 1910-1913* (1922): “A war is like the Antarctic in one respect. There is no getting out of it with honour as long as you can put one foot before the other” (liii). In fact, Scott’s writings and photographer Ponting’s photos were delivered to the British troops at the western front as morale boosters (Pyne 1998: 171). In the novel the actual discourse of explorers is likewise used as inspiration, but also deflated and revealed as rhetoric without a claim to the whole truth:
‘Here we see the assiduous Dr Wilson in the process of making an artistic sketch of the distant view of the fairy slopes of the western mountains … here we observe Captain Scott, our gallant leader, overseeing the landing of the motorised transport.’ It didn’t help that he’d captured the Owner, mouth open in dismay, leaping back in shock as the biggest motor plunged through the ice and sank to the bottom of the Sound. (Bainbridge 1991: 130-131)

As the novel makes clear, Scott, although loved, is far from “a gallant leader” and the associations to courage, chivalry as well as the military combined with the war-related “overseeing the landing of the motorised transport” effectively undermine the rhetoric. Also, the discrepancy between the words and what the pictures show, the bathos, seems to be part of Bainbridge’s strategy to avoid “romanticizing the death of Scott, struggling with the Ice” that Pyne suggests the science of the heroic age invited through the “powerful sense of purpose, a peculiar morality” that it assigned to Antarctic enterprises (168).

In terms of heroic and romantic discourses Bainbridge’s novel clearly displays the untenable claims of such rhetoric and discourses. In fact, it displays uncertainty and lack of fixity in an ever-changing world, rather than represents “the still points of the turning world” that Elizabeth Leane sees as one explanation for the literary interest in the Poles. Not even the location of the Pole is fixed: “We marched another two miles to the spot Birdie calculated to be the exact geographical location of the Pole [...] and stuck the Union Jack on top” (181). An early indication of instability and change is signalled at the farewell party through the image of “the remains of the South Pole pudding sliding sideways on a silver platter” (39). There are also examples of inverted states of affairs. The tingling warning signs of frost-bites, for instance, are “similar to those of the thawing-out process” (137), footsteps appear as “elevations rather than depressions” (143), and marching by day is “heavenly” compared to the discomfort of the icy clothes and sleeping-bags, “heavy as lead” during “the night ‘rests’” (144). Again and again the novel stresses the oscillation of temperatures, of day and night, or the lack of difference between the two (137), as well as changes in colours, covering the whole spectrum:

Those who envisage this place as nothing more than a godforsaken place of ice and snow are mistaken. For one thing, there are
outcrops of jet-black rock about which the wind blows so fiercely that the snow can never settle; and for another, the ice, being subject to reflections of sun and sea, is never purely white but tinged with rose and cobalt-blue and every shade of violet, the whole set against skies, day and night, that run through all the colours of the spectrum. (109)

Likewise, the surface of ice and snow is either slippery, appallingly soft, or acts as “brakes” (136). Solid ice breaks up without warning. Fixity is momentary and represented mainly by photos or imprints on the mind:

None of us will forget that nightmare scene – the ice chunks heaving in the black water amidst the bucking whales, Birdie grotesquely riding the dying pony, Titus swinging the pickaxe against a sky the colour of blood. (114)

The fixation of a photo represents a freezing of a moment in history that can only be momentary and devoid of continuity and closure. In the following example, the combination of sudden light and instant freezing is foregrounded by virtue of a later repetition. As three men embark on a search for the Emperor Penguin, Ponting takes a photograph: “Caught in the flashlight we froze, three men about to go bird’s-nesting” (135). On their return, having experienced unimaginable hardships at the mercy of the elements, in darkness, the scene is repeated with a difference, emphasising transience and change in similarity: “Then the door opened. ‘Good God,’ somebody called, and caught in the blinding light we froze, three men encased in ice” (159). The repetition in the return scene also represents a moment, but, unlike the freezing of the photo, this moment is charged with the significance of the events in-between the two and with the difference between the association of boyish pastime that clings to “going bird’s-nesting,” despite the scientific purpose of the project, and its transformation into a state of being literally and mentally “encased in ice.” The repeated scene is the epitome of the progression towards death and the novel’s meaning of admirable but misguided heroism, grounded in Edwardian and imperial ideology of manly ideals such as duty, honour and courage in which they are “encased” and emotionally repressed. The metaphor of “being encased” is repeated and further defined in Capt. Oates’ assessment of himself at the end of the novel and near his death in his fear that he has lost “a sense of what is right”: 
“I’m too rigid, too encased in rules and codes of behaviour” (185). This represents a change from a native state of being to what is essentially seen as a fixed and non-changeable state of cultural construction, but it is because they are caught in the midst of a process of cultural change that they suffer a sense of identity loss.

For, the focus on change extends to the situation of the men. They are presented as products and victims of an age coming to an end, “the last few seconds of an epoch in which a man is still required to stand up and be counted” (145):

It often strikes me [Dr Wilson] that Con [Scott] and myself, Birdie and Oates, even Peter Pan Evans [...] are the victims of a changing world. It’s difficult for a man to know where he fits in any more. All the things we were taught to believe in, love of country, of Empire, of devotion to duty, are being held up to ridicule. (64)

They are the “lost boys” of Peter Pan, involved in “an awfully big adventure” (135) – also the title of a Bainbridge novel (1989) – in “never-never-land” (127), and the gesture towards J.M. Barrie is not accidental; Barrie was the godfather of Scott’s son, Peter, and in a farewell letter Scott writes to him: “We are showing that Englishmen can still die with a bold spirit, fighting it out to the end [...] I think this makes an example for Englishmen of the future (Scott 1993: 471). Taken out of context, the words could easily refer to the rhetoric of warfare, and they connote a “machismo” ideal (Spufford 1997: 260), which, in Bainbridge’s account, is a repression of, or an attempt to overcome “the female” (56) by conquering a continent of otherness (like the “female”). Scott, Evans, Birdie, Dr Wilson, and Oates are all portrayed as basically gentle, emotional and sentimental men, in contrast to their awe-inspiring, domineering or self-reliant wives or mothers; again a sign of changing times and uncertain gender roles. As Höglund points out, the fear of Britain turning into “an effeminate nation” in the late nineteenth century was “fuelled by a patriarchal division of gender roles which must be adhered to in order to avoid or halt the degeneration of the (British) species” (166). It is significant in the novel that Scott, Bowers, Cherry, Evans and Oates are fatherless, but “share this bond with their mothers” (62). In other words, they are sons in a maternal symbiosis (“boys”) trying to be male role models at a distance in a crumbling culture’s absence of father figures, not quite knowing
why: “‘Is it nothing more than a game?’” Cherry asks, and does not receive an answer (72).

As in her novel about the Titanic, which went down a month after Scott’s death, Every Man for Himself (1996), it is clear that Bainbridge attributes death and disaster in both cases to lack of sense, knowledge and rational planning rather than the misfortunes and bad luck that the historical Scott repeatedly refers to in his journal and the fictional Scott returns to in the novel. Captain Oates of the novel comments on Scott’s habit of “making mistakes” and “shifting blame onto others” and draws his conclusion: “What with the late start, the almost immediate failure of the motors, our inexpertise [sic] on skis, ‘unexpected’ weather conditions and Scott’s mistrust of dogs, our journey so far had been a catalogue of disasters and miscalculations” (163). (It should be noted, in all fairness, that Scott was exceptionally unlucky since the winter arrived 6 weeks earlier than usual that particular year.) The actual outcome of their endeavour, however, is in sharp contrast to the initial optimism, hopeful anticipation—“if this is our departure, what on earth would our homecoming be like?”—and the feeling of “being part of something special, something with glory in it” (41). It is, however, precisely the background of ignorant optimism, “inexpertise,” extreme hardships, and constant set-backs that make their struggles and deaths heroic: “‘We’ll stick it out’” (144), and which makes their belief in Providence, purpose and glory, ironically tragic, but not romantic. As PO Evans puts it: “‘Where we are going the cold will snap you in two if your heart isn’t whole’” (35), which, in view of their destiny, is suggestive of their ambivalent identities and ideological victimisation.

Although there is a great deal of honour in their deaths, there is very little glory. Glory is reserved for the Antarctic and its power to put human existence in perspective:

There is nothing on earth so vast, so glorious, as the southern heavens. In the ordinary world a man measures himself against the height of buildings, omnibuses, doorways; here, scale blown to the four quarters, he’d be a fool not to recognise he’s no more significant than a raindrop on an ocean. Standing there, it seemed irrelevant where Amundsen was—we were both cut down to size. (109)
The very size of this uninhabitable space is food for thought and projection. Size matters and so does the idea of Antarctica evoked through words. As Augé points out, “[c]ertain places exist only through the words that evoke them, and in this sense they are non-places, or rather imaginary places: banal utopias, clichés” (Augé 95). In fact, the first American Antarctic novel, *Symzonia: A Voyage of Discovery* (1820), is inspired by John Cleves Symmes and his “holes-in-the-poles” theory, which claims that the earth is hollow and open at the poles. The pseudonym author and protagonist of *Symzonia* discovers a utopian civilisation on entering the pole (Leane 2004: 153-155). There is no discovery of a utopian society in Bainbridge’s novel, but in the passage above, the name the South Pole would have done the trick of creating an image in the readers’ minds; Bainbridge’s choice of the “southern heavens,” as opposed to “the ordinary world,” is even more evocative and myth-producing, not only of empty, vast space, and of discovery and heroic endurance, but of solitude, spirituality, and of the awe-inspiring exotic and unfamiliar. As Francis Spufford points out, “[f]ew places could be more other than the Arctic or the Antarctic” (77). In Bainbridge’s novel this ‘other’ is invariably represented through the familiar, thus highlighting the familiar in the unfamiliar and deflating the glorious and the exotic. While Ponting, the expedition’s photographer is “bubbling with enthusiasm, babbling of the magnificence of the landscape, the glistening bergs” etc., Clissold is relieving himself outside the hut with “closed eyes, face raised to the heavens” (86), when Scott approaches:

‘Mr Ponting seems to think this the most glorious spot on earth. What do you say?’
‘Well, sir,’ he said, I don’t know about glorious, but I do feel at home.’
‘Home?’ said Ponting, taken aback. ‘Are you a native of the Scottish Highlands?’
‘I was born and bred in the city, sir,’ Clissold replied. And noiseways I don’t see much difference, what with the seals honking and them birds screaming, not to mention those blessed dogs.’ (86).

With “closed eyes, face raised to the heavens” and otherwise occupied, there is no wonder that sound rather than vision is foregrounded, but the episode serves as a sobering counter to the romantic fetishism of Antarctic beauty and glory that would run the risk of depriving the
novel of its ambition to juxtapose the attraction of the exotic otherness of the pole with its power to evoke the appeal and familiarity of home, both of which ("otherness" and "home") have female connotations. It also serves to emphasise domestication and non-masculinity in the context of the essentially male enterprise of adventurous exploring.

Unlike the fiction of the Antarctic utopian tradition, which takes otherness as an excuse to "imagine life 'other-wise,'" as Leane suggests, Bainbridge takes her cue from the lived experience and the style of Scott and Cherry-Garrard. In her "realistic" version the emphasis is not on cold and ice as natural phenomena, or on polar space as mythical space, but on human coping strategies and attitudes to them. One such strategy is domestication, which also corresponds well with the double meaning of overcoming the feminine by conquering a continent. Because the Antarctic is nothing like the "Scottish Highlands," everything about it must paradoxically be expressed in terms of "home" and familiar phenomena. Pyne notes that the Antarctic is reductive because it is "the most simple" and therefore "stupefying": "Contrasts, comparisons, analogies, metaphors – all vanish before the pure immensity of the ice monolith" (Pyne 1998: 19). There is no other way to attempt to represent it than through the familiar, as Bainbridge does in the following examples: "To be cold is when the snot freezes in your nostrils and your breath snaps like a fire-cracker on the air and falls to ice in your beard" (9). The wind cuts faces "like knives" (9), ice flowers are "like waxen wreaths in the cemeteries at home" (10), ice waves "bunched like burst pillows" (130), the straps are "frozen to the hardness of wire" (136), and fingers swell to the size of "plums" (10,151) or "bananas" (71). The slopes and walls of the landscape reduce the men to "flies fluttering against a window that would never open" (148) and to "spiders" crawling "sideways" (150). The landscape is a challenge in a double sense, physically as well as linguistically, and the countryside at home serves as the only way of attempting to represent it and grasp it:

Imagine an acre, newly ploughed in the heart of the English countryside the noonday sun filtering through the branches of the oak trees at the boundary, the plump plough-horses standing motionless in the shade, the ploughboy fast asleep with his hat over his
eyes. Then imagine, if you can, a field churned up by the flails of a plough so monstrous in size that the ensuing furrows sink sixty feet, the embankments on either side twisted and fissured into tortured mounds of glittering ice veined with crevasses, the whole landscape dim as the interior of a cave in which every shadow fades to deepest black. If you can imagine this, you may still have only the faintest, foggiest grasp of what we were up against. (Bainbridge 1991: 147)

Still, can we imagine this? The comparison tantalisingly suggests that the first, highly romanticised, warm, still, light and idyllic, image of a countryside at home (vehicle) is as impossible to imagine as the violent, cold, dark and torn image of the tenor and the violence of the words used to create it (“churned up,” “flails,” “twisted and fissured,” “tortured”). The contrast also evokes an image of the unimaginable horrors of the coming war (“only the faintest, foggiest grasp of what we were up against”), which was to mark the end of an epoch.

Civilisation in general, however, is cherished and incongruously confirmed in the novel. The men make tea, celebrate birthdays, play football on the ice, read Victorian novels, write letters, listen to lectures, and are constantly reminded of details of home and loved ones, especially mothers. They remember the past and think of the future: buying a pub, sitting under a tree, courting a girl, having a swimming pool; in other words, the pleasures of unadventurous domestic life. They resort to the culture of civilisation to keep their spirits up, singing “hymns, ballads, bits of Evensong” (155). In a particularly dangerous situation Bowers desperately recites the requirements for the Gold Medal for cadets as they sink into “hell” (154):

‘A cheerful submission to superiors, self-respect and independence of character, kindness and protection to the weak, readiness to forgive offence, desire to conciliate the differences of others, and, above all, fearless devotion to duty and unflinching truthfulness.’ (155)

This recital causes young Cherry to burst out laughing and, at that moment, in true Bainbridge style, to further highlight the inadequacy of the naval code of decency to combat the forces of nature, the roof of their shelter against the blizzard caves in. But in particular, the men confirm and rely on familiar codes of behaviour. In the worst of cir-
cumstances politeness and “civilities” are not only exercised but ex-
aggerated: “Not once through our dreadful journey had a cross word 
come between us, nor had we forgotten the civilities, those please-
and-thank-yous which can mean so much when everything else has 
gone by the board” (151). But the line of civilisation is as thin as the 
war references indicate. Shortly after Scott has become upset by the 
“uncivilised behaviour” of the dogs, biting and tearing at one another 
(100), he proclaims his willingness to “abandon civilised practices” 
and think they should have “fought it out, with guns if need be” with 
Amundsen (104).

In “otherness” civilised conduct is more than superficial social glue 
– it can mean the difference between life and death. Scott is “plunged 
into depression” (82) and sleeps badly upon finding that “some fool 
had forgotten to close a window” at their old quarters of his previous 
journey with the result that it is filled with a block of ice:

Surely it is a mark of civilised human behaviour to leave a place in 
the condition one would wish to find it. One would think they had 
walked out of an hotel in some modern town, not a shelter in the 
most uninhabitable spot on earth, a refuge which could mean the 
difference between life and death to those who follow after. Such 
carelessness transgresses all the boundaries of common courtesy. 
(82)

Bainbridge is close to Scott’s own journal account (Scott 1993: 94-95) 
here, but she has added a feeling of the uncanny in that the place 
seems “altogether strange” and “eerie, as though the past, which until 
now had remained as frozen as that flung-down loaf, had at last begun 
to thaw, releasing shades of days gone by” (82). They all sleep badly and 
“are disturbed by voices murmuring in the darkness” (82). In a Freudian 
sense this return to a familiar place reveals the Heimlich – that which 
should have remained hidden – in the Unheimlich (Freud 1955: 224). 
Without directly being provided with the link, the reader soon under-
stands that Scott is plagued by feelings of responsibility for a man’s 
death on the previous journey. The repressed past, frozen like a block 
of ice, is dissolving to haunt him, and so the ice becomes a metaphor 
of repressed emotions as well as that of being encased in the ice of the 
ideology of duty and honour. In fact, the two metaphorical aspects 
merge into one. They are “lost boys” because they are “gentle’men but
forced to repress it in a cultural context that Höglund argues expected men to behave “like men and conform to their traditional occupations” and “take on their duties as the warriors of the race” (166). The novel suggests that when the answer to the question, duty “to whom”? is clouded by the power of ideological rhetoric, which suggests “a what”, an abstraction, rather than a person, decline is near. The proper object of duty is expressed in connection with the bird-nesting expedition. The purpose of the expedition was to secure the embryos of the Emperor Penguin, which should provide an answer to “the missing link between birds and reptiles” (126). On their return from “the worst journey in the world” (158; Bainbridge quotes Cherry-Garrard verbatim), Bowers concludes: “It may be that the purpose of the worst journey in the world had been to collect eggs which might prove a scientific theory, but we’d unravelled a far greater mystery on the way – the missing link between God and man is brotherly love” (158).

Cold matters in Bainbridge's novel because it draws attention to the mechanisms of ideology. Unlike “excessive heat” which “brings raging thirst, fever and delirium” – in other words “chaos” – the cold “merely numbs the mind and positively lulls one into sleep” (50), that is, encasement in the doctrines of ideology, which in this case entails male repression of feelings in the cultural call to duty and sacrifice. The choice is not obvious. Dr Wilson and Scott both think that “the mind controls the body” and that “physical rather than intellectual strength” (119) might prove to be their saving. This view echoes what Spufford calls “the Edwardian taste for sensational extremes,” namely the notion that military drills would be a solution to the “chaos and irresolution” among boys in the slums (260). Bowers, who thinks there is a choice to be made between the spiritual and material world, takes comfort in the idea that “at least the cold won’t rot us”; the implication being that the mind might be less resistant.

REFERENCES


ABSTRACT This article deals with Sir Arthur de Capell Brooke’s journey from Alten to Tornela in December 1820. The objectives are to show whether snow, ice and cold are presented as frightening or merely as exotic features in text and illustrations and to highlight similarities and differences between the written travel book and the portfolio of pictures that emanated from the journey. To a great extent, ice, snow and cold function as markers of exoticism because of the dangers these elements represent. It is necessary to study both the documentations of the journey to understand the views Capell Brooke transmits to the audience.

KEYWORDS Intertextuality, travel book, representation of the North, Capell Brooke, media specific representations

In the afternoon of 6 December 1820 Sir Arthur de Capell Brooke and his party started their journey from Alten in northern Norway. Their goal was to cross the Finmark mountains and Norwegian, Finnish and Swedish Lapland to get to Tornela where Capell Brooke was to continue back to England. After nearly three weeks in the wilderness they arrived in Tornela the day before Christmas Eve. Even though Capell
Brooke tries to emphasise the hardships of the journey it must be mentioned that during these weeks he and his party stayed six nights in Kautokeino. At first they travelled by pulks towed by reindeer but at Muonioniska they changed to horses and sledges. The route Capell Brooke took from Alten to Torneå was the traditional Sami trails through the northern landscape, mainly following the Alta, Muonio and Torneå rivers. For some parts of the journey the party had to leave the frozen rivers and lakes and instead continue over the mountains of Finmark or through the forests. The route is nearly identical with the one taken by Anders Fredrik Skjödebrand and Giuseppe Acerbi in 1798 and 1799 (Acerbi 1802, Sköldebrand 1805), possibly because Capell Brooke had met Sköldebrand in Stockholm on his way to the North Cape (Huitfeldt 1932: 139). Capell Brooke (1827: 460) also refers to places that had been visited by Leopold von Buch nearly 15 years earlier.

Sir Arthur de Capell Brooke was born in London in 1791 and died on his estate Oakley Hall, Northamptonshire in 1858. In 1829 he inherited his father’s title and estates. He entered the army and obtained the rank of Major in 1846. After having studied in Oxford until 1816 he spent his youth travelling, especially in the Nordic countries. Besides the books dealt with in this text he also published a work on Swedish costumes (1823) and a portfolio of pictures with the title Northern Scenery Illustrative of a Tour through Sweden, Norway and Finmark. Drawn on Stone by J. D. Harding (1823-24). Later in life his interest shifted from the northern to the southern parts of Europe and in 1837 he published Sketches in Spain and Morocco in two volumes. He was one of the original members of the Travellers’ club and in 1821 he founded the Raleigh Club, where he was president until it merged with the Royal Geographical Society (Dictionary of National Biography 1921-22: 1325).

* The purpose of this article is to investigate the perceptions of snow, ice and cold transmitted in Capell Brooke’s travelogue to find out in what contexts these concepts emerge as threatening and when they are presented as merely exotic. A second issue concerns intertextual relations between the written travel book and the volume of pictures which was produced as another way of communicating the journey to an audience (see further Kress & van Leeuwen 1996). In short – what
can be communicated in text and what can be expressed in pictures, and the reverse, what information cannot be conveyed in the different media? The main focus is the pictures that are described, analysed and compared with the written travel book. In travel books about the Nordic North, and certainly about other parts of the world, text and pictures collaborate in creating the image of the subject of the book, especially if they appear in the same volume. In the case of Capell Brooke, however, text and pictures may be studied separately since this is how they were published. There might have been readers who only encountered one of the two media and therefore formed their view of the northern parts of Europe on the basis of either the text or the pictures.

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Some years after the journey to Torneså, Capell Brooke published *A Winter in Lapland and Sweden, with Various Observations Relating to Finmark and its Inhabitants, made during a Residence at Hammerfest, near the North Cape* (1826). This book must be regarded as a sequel to Brooke’s *Travels through Sweden, Norway and Finland, to the North Cape in the Summer of 1820* (1823). The first 400 pages of the 1826 edition deal with Brooke’s stay in Hammerfest whereas the second part of the book, about 200 pages, concerns the journey back home. The main focus is the winter journey from Alten to Torneså. Accompanying this part of the book there is also a volume of 24 pictures. The title of the volume of pictures is *Winter Sketches in Lapland or Illustrations of a Journey from Alten on the Shores of the Polar Sea in 69° 55" North lat. Through Norwegian, Russian and Swedish Lapland to Torneså at the Extremity of the Gulf of Bothnia. Intended to Exhibit a Complete View of the Mode of Travelling with Rein-deer, the Most Striking Incidents that Occurred during the Journey and the General Character of the Winter Scenery of Lapland* (1827). Both the travel book and the volume of pictures were first published in 1826 and republished one year later. The volume of pictures was first published by Rodwell and Cornhill and the later edition was published by John Murray. There are supposed to be hand-colourised copies as well. According to Samuel Bring the tones of the colours are different in the two printed editions (1954: 164). The
format of the plates is 24 x 37 cm and the actual pictures are 19 x 31 cm. The paper is light yellow and the pictures and text are printed in sepia. Below the pictures there are different references that explain the print-making process. From these references it is possible to say that the lithographies were made from drawings by Capell Brooke, but figures and animals were improved by D. Dighton. There were two lithographers involved in the work with the volume: J. D. Harding who made 22 of them and Dighton who made the last two. C. Hullmandel printed the lithographies and below the text it is said that the pictures were published in 1825 by John Murray, with two exceptions: plate IX was published in 1826 and plate XXI has no date. The captions that accompany the pictures describe what happens in the pictures and provide the readers with geographical references. The captions are in both English and French.

The artistic expression of the pictures can be related to the English neo-classical as well as Romantic traditions and can be said to be of higher quality than the general book illustration of the period. It is obvious that the artists involved in this project wanted to give a correct view of the landscape as well as provide an artistic touch.

When the second volume of Brooke’s travels was released it was reviewed in various magazines (London Magazine 1827: 92-108, Monthly Review 1827: 1-13, Göttingische gelehrte Anzeiger 1831: 729-739). The general opinion was that the work contained useful information about a part of Europe that had not previously been the subject of many studies. The London Magazine stated that Capell Brooke must be regarded as an “intelligent traveller,” a type not frequently represented among travellers to the northernmost parts of the continent (1827: 92). In the same review the London Magazine applied a reader perspective to the book:

Captain Brooke’s volume contains much instruction and entertaining matter. He is a little prolix, and not very exact in his language. The Winter in Lapland might, with advantage, be contracted into half the space: half the expense of work would be saved, and double the number of copies sold – that is, twice the information spread. It would ill become us, however, who have spent many pleasant hours over the volume, to complain. We should observe, that Captain Brooke is something of a naturalist, and something of an artist; by which accomplishments he is able to gratify both
the man of science and the man of mere curiosity, by his descriptions, written and engraved, of natural objects and external impressions. (1827: 108)

The reviewers concentrate on the descriptions of Hammerfest and the Sami. According to a comparison in the *Monthly Review* between the writings of Leopold von Buch (1810) and Capell Brooke, the Sami had not taken any further steps towards civilization. Instead their situation was worse than ever (1827: 1). The main reason for the opinion was the widespread drinking problem among the Sami.

The 24 pictures in the portfolio are organised according to geography and time to make it possible for the reader to follow Capell Brooke from the beginning of the journey in Alten on 6 December 1820 to the arrival at Torneå on 23 December. As the journey was divided into two distinctive parts, to and from Kautokeino, where Capell Brooke stayed for nearly a week, the pictures can also be divided into these parts. There are 15 pictures from the first part of the journey and nine from the latter part. This means that the majority of the pictures are from Norwegian Lapland. Some of the pictures have dates and most of them have geographical positions, but in order to know when Capell Brooke visited the different places it is necessary to consult the written travel book. This shows the importance of studying both written documents and pictures when analysing illustrated travel literature. In the written travel book there are references to the pictures. Thus, it is possible to say that Capell Brooke’s and his editor’s intention was that text and pictures should complement each other and create significance together.

The pictures may be grouped according to the themes landscape, weather, natural phenomena, depiction of the Sami, hardships and dangers and Capell Brooke as travelling subject. The landscape is obviously present in all the illustrations as the portfolio of pictures presents a journey through the landscape of northern Norway, Finland and Sweden. Even so, the fairly realistic collection presents different types of landscape. There are, for instance, representations of an alpine landscape as well as pictures of lowland and lower mountains. Lakes and rivers are dominant features. In some of the pictures it is hard to distinguish lakes and rivers from other types of landscapes as they are covered with ice and snow. The reason for the interest in riv-
ers and lakes is, of course, related to the fact that Capell Brooke, as many travellers before and after him, used them for his travel. There is a striking difference between, on one hand the depiction of the lakes and rivers and on the other the forests. The lakes and rivers have positive connotations as the journey runs smoothly on these surfaces, whereas the forests are rather presented as obstacles.

Even though the landscape is present in all the illustrations it is seldom the primary topic. Instead, the landscapes serve as a setting for the travelling party and other aspects Capell Brooke wanted to highlight. In a way this function contradicts to the ideals of the Romantic era when Capell Brooke lived. During the Romantic period the landscape became one of the prime subjects in art as well as an important topic for theoretical discussions (Rose 1986, Koerner 1990, Holmggaard 1996). If one on the other hand compares the illustrations of the landscapes with the written travel book the illustrations give much more information than the text. It is obvious that the descriptions of the landscapes that Capell Brooke was acquainted with during his journey were easier to communicate in pictures than in text.

If the landscapes are characterised according to style they are closer to the idea of the neo-classical portrait-landscape, seen in the work of artists such as Thomas Gainsborough (1727-88). The illustrations should primarily be seen as a way to communicate certain values and facts to the readers and only secondarily as a part of the art sphere. Therefore it is not surprising that the pictures do not correspond to the artistic mode of the era. Another explanation can be related to the fact that the illustrations belonged to the tradition, whereas the art of the Romantic period in a sense challenged this very same tradition.

Just like the landscape, the weather is present in all of the illustrations. In some of them, although not in the majority, the weather is even an important factor. In the illustrations as well as the accompanying text the weather is important when it is a problem, such as fog or heavy snowfall. In addition, the weather is more important in the part of the portfolio that covers the first leg of the journey, before the stay in Kautokeino. In the written travel book Capell Brooke comments on the first segment of the journey, noting that it took four days instead of the usual two due to bad weather (472). In the section of the travel book that concerns this part of the journey the weather is frequently mentioned.
As long as the weather is not a problem it is not commented on, neither in text nor in illustrations, maybe with the exception of the last illustration which shows Torneå on a bright winter day. Another conclusion is that the weather is commented on in the same way and with the same content in both illustrations and text, as far as facts are concerned. On the other hand the illustrations give more of a feeling of the hardships that the travelling company had to endure because of the weather. Thus, text and illustrations communicate on different levels.

Apart from the weather, the Aurora Borealis is present in the illustrations. The Aurora Borealis, and how it was seen, differs from the weather even though they are both natural phenomena. The main difference is that the weather is always there, even in the pictures that do not emphasise it, but the Northern lights are specific, so when they are depicted they become the primary subject. The Northern lights are present in three pictures. That they are the primary subjects of these pictures is emphasised in the captions. Due to their exotic character, the Northern lights cannot really be a part of the setting for some-
thing else. One possible reason for the accompanying texts is that the Northern lights were not something that all the readers of the book were familiar with, and therefore the strange phenomenon had to be explained. The Northern lights are difficult to capture in a picture as their appearance changes in front of the eyes of the person viewing them. That three of 24 illustrations concern the Aurora Borealis indicate that it was an important subject for Capell Brooke. In the written travel book the Aurora is given two pages (517-518). This shows that it was, relatively, a more important topic in the pictures than in the text.

In a travel book the descriptions of the encounters with the local population constitute a source of information about a range of topics. Maybe the most important is how the travelling subject viewed the local inhabitants and their way of life. The Sami are present in most of the illustrations as they played an important role in Capell Brooke’s journey. It was Sami guides who made the journey possible. The travelling party were in their hands as they went through the wilderness of the North.

“Falling in with a Laplander’s herd of rein-deer, while crossing the Jerdis Javre (lake) with a singular appearance of the northern lights.” (Brooke 1827: PL XVII)
Even though the Sami are present in most of the pictures they are not the subjects of the narratives in more than a few of them. In the other ones they could be exchanged for Finns, Swedes or Norwegians without changing the general content of the picture. The Sami are seen as the hard-working guides who helped Capell Brooke and his party through the wilderness (on the presentation of Sami in fine arts see Høydalsnes 2003). This is underlined in the texts accompanying the pictures. The caption to the fourth illustration, for instance, says “[m]orning scene. Laplanders preparing to pursue their journey.” One of the illustrations from 9 December gives some information about the hierarchy of the travelling party and of how Capell Brooke viewed the Sami. The picture shows the campsite by Biggi Jaure and the accompanying text says: “Our Laplanders, who bivouacked on the outside, were this night almost entirely covered over by the snow, which fell heavily until morning.” (Brooke 1827: PL XIV)

“Night quarters in a fishing gamme on the borders of the Biggi Jaure. Our Laplanders, who bivouacked on the outside, where this night almost entirely covered over by the snow, which fell heavily until morning.” (Brooke 1827: PL XIV)

of the illustrations from 9 December gives some information about the hierarchy of the travelling party and of how Capell Brooke viewed the Sami. The picture shows the campsite by Biggi Jaure and the accompanying text says: “Our Laplanders, who bivouacked on the outside, were this night almost entirely covered over by the snow, which fell heavily until morning.” Firstly, the Sami are described as “[o]ur Laplanders,” which signals a clear patron-client relation. Secondly, they
sleep outside and therefore have a status just above the reindeer. This should not be seen as particular to Capell Brooke, however, but rather as a sign of the time when the journey took place.

There is a striking difference between the written travel book and the pictures when the Sami are concerned. One of the dominating themes relating to the Sami in the written text is alcohol. Capell Brooke states that they were heavy drinkers and had to be bribed with alcohol to continue the journey (457). The drinking question is also commented on by the reviewers (Monthly Review 1827: 1). The obvious question is why there are such great differences between the media. One reason might be that it is harder to make a valid representation of the drinking problem in pictures than in text. A drinking Sami would not correspond to the pictorial decorum of the portfolio and would stand out from the rest of the pictures in a striking way. This means that those who only read the written travel book were informed about the Sami drinking problem, but for those who only saw the pictures, the Sami were the noble savages who aided the civilised Capell Brooke through the wilderness of Northern Europe.

Another obvious theme is the hardships and dangers Capell Brooke had to endure. As early as the subtitle of the portfolio: Intended to Exhibit a Complete View of the Mode of Travelling with Rein-deer, the Most Striking Incidents that Occurred during the Journey and the General Character of the Winter Scenery of Lapland, it becomes obvious that one of the aims is to show the dangers of travelling in the Nordic regions and thereby promote Brooke’s own projected image as an explorer and adventurous traveller. In the first part of the portfolio the main danger is the weather and as the weather improves other possible dangers diminish. Apart from the weather, the dangers that are shown in the pictures are connected to crossing unfrozen water, the reindeer as an unruly animal, the slippery surface and the dangerous descents of hills or mountains.

If the pictures are compared with the written text there are dangers that are not shown in the pictures. One of them is the feeling of loneliness and the fear that Capell Brooke and his travelling companions could be left in the wilderness if they were to be separated from their Sami guides (412-13). Another theme in the written text is the cold. On several occasions Capell Brooke states the exact temperature and on other occasions he mentions that members of the travelling party suffer from the chilly climate. On the other hand he also men-
tions that the Sami clothing he uses keeps him warm (417). The night between 16 and 17 December the reindeer were attacked by wolves (506). This is the only time wild animals are reported as a possible danger and there are no representations of wolves, bears or other animals in the pictures.

In a sense Capell Brooke is always present as the travelling subject, both in the text and in the pictures as he is the author of the text and has drawn the sketches for the pictures in the portfolio. Both the text and the pictures have a high degree of authenticity, because they include details which could not have been provided by someone who had not personally visited the North. It is hard to say if Capell Brooke himself is depicted in the collection since the thick clothes everybody wears make them look similar. At the same time some of the pictures focus on one person who could perhaps be understood as Capell Brooke. There is no doubt that the ideal of the journey had connections with Romanticism, as the travellers endured the dangers and hardships of the Nordic North. The pictures also show that human beings are in the hands of nature, a nature that in the Romantic era was seen as a reflection of God’s presence.

Apart from the themes discussed above there are also absent ones. By focusing on these a clearer understanding of Capell Brooke’s intention as well as what view the audience received of the northern parts of Europe can be established. In the pictures “culture,” from both a wide and narrow perspective, is missing. There are no genre subjects that describe the Sami way of life and there is nothing that reflects religious matters, although both culture and religion are present in the written text. Capell Brooke describes the food and states that Sami are excellent storytellers (426). In other parts of the book he discusses languages and the names of places in different languages (460). As Capell Brooke comes to Kautokeino he reflects on how the work of the clergymen and the church is affected by the constant movements of the Sami. Such issues are more suited for text than pictures.

In all of the pictures except the last one the sun is absent. Its absence is underlined in the text that accompanies the last picture of the portfolio:

View of the town of Tornet, the river, and the landkirker, or Finnish church, with Finland peasants returning home in their sledges
across the ice after divine service on Christmas day. Here we had the first sight of the sun mid-day, after it had left us for the winter at the North Cape. (Brooke 1827 PL XXIV)

In the caption Capell Brooke shows the sun as connected to the civilised regions of the world. In the two sentences he combines religion, a larger population and the sun with an image of civilisation. When Brooke arrives at Kautokeino he explicitly mentions that it was important to wash. The word he uses is “humanize” (473).

In his written travel book Capell Brooke portrays the town of Hammerfest as vibrant with life, even though it is situated in the very north of Europe (1-406). In the reviews of the book this, and the situation of the Sami are the main aspects commented on (London Magazine 1827: 92-108, Monthly Review 1827: 1-13, Göttingische gelehrte Anzeiger 1831: 729-39). In the portfolio of pictures, the last picture shows the town of Torneå on Christmas Day as the peasants return to their
homes from church. For Capell Brooke Torneå was the gateway to the south and the first sight of civilisation for nearly three weeks. The contrasts between, on the one hand Hammerfest and Torneå and, on the other the more or less unexplored wilderness is striking. This is further emphasised when Capell Brooke points out that he came to a town where civilisation in the form of Christian holidays and peasants was visibly present.

During the journey the darkness impaired visibility and bad weather always constituted a background to the pictures as well as to the text. To give one example, Capell Brooke complains that the snowdrifts on 9 December were so thick that it was hard to see the reindeer in front of him (1826: 455). Altogether the journey is described as most troublesome and dangerous, but when he reaches Torneå he is home safe.

Nature was seen as a reflection of the presence of God in the Romantic era, but in a way Capell Brooke shows that God was not present in the wilderness of Lapland, at least not in a positive way. When he writes about being towed in a sledge behind a reindeer he uses the term “purgatory” (409). With this in mind and the fact that the last picture and its caption emphasise the light and the sun, a possible interpretation of the journey and its documentation in text and pictures is as a journey through darkness towards light. The light could be seen as redemption through civilisation as well as Capell Brooke’s actual experience of light for the first time in weeks.

It is clear that, to get a grasp of the view of the North Capell Brooke transmits, it is necessary to study the portfolio as well as the written travel book, as different themes are emphasised in different ways in the two media. The view of the Sami varies from the hard working guide through the wilderness to people who had to be bribed with alcohol to do what they were hired to do. There are also differences in the way the landscape is represented. In the portfolio it is always present, even though it is seldom the primary subject, but in the written text it does not have the same status. The last example concerns the timetable of the journey. The portfolio of pictures suggests that Capell Brooke was in the wilderness for three weeks, whereas the written travel book makes clear that he stayed for nearly a week in Kautokeino. These examples show that only one of the media would not have given a correct picture. Secondly, the messages are bound by the conventions of the specific media.
The landscape and the weather were communicated as frightening and exotic at the same time. One aspect of the exotic depends on the fact that the journey was connected with dangers. The picture of Capell Brooke as a travelling subject is that of an adventurer in the wilderness, and consequently dangers or at least possible dangers are a part of the discourse. The notion of the sublime landscape includes the frightening momentum as one of its features. In other words, it is nearly impossible to say if the weather conditions and the landscape were actually experienced as exotic or frightening. Instead it becomes obvious that the dangers and possible dangers were a part of the construction of the exotic North.

The image that Capell Brooke transmits must have differed according to whether readers had studied both the portfolio and the written travel book or just one of the publications. The portfolio would have given a more romanticised view of the North, whereas the written text in a sense can be seen as more realistic. This is not to say that there are no realistic aspects of the pictures; on the contrary, they should be related to a Romantic as well as a Realistic tradition. But the written travel book contains so much more information. It could be argued that the portfolio contributes to conveying the emotional aspects of the journey and the text provides the facts.

This leads to the conclusion that the audience, thanks to both media, was invited to view the Nordic North as an exotic part of Europe where travelling was an adventure. As a result the travelling subject, Capell Brooke, also emerges as an adventurer. At the same time, according to the reviews, the publications gave new and useful information about a part of Europe which was not known to the public.

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Starvation Stories and Deprivation Prose
Of the Effects of Hunger on Arctic Explorers’ Texts

ABSTRACT Arctic explorers suffered from starvation on their way back from the farthest North. A starved organism burns its own tissue, reaching a point of no return when somewhere between 30% and 60% of the body mass is lost to the deficit of energy. This article explores the correlations between text and body in three famous starvation diaries: U.S. Navy Lieutenant George DeLong (, , 1881); U.S. Army Lieutenant Adolphus Greely (Ellesmere Island, 1884); and the outdoors journalist Leonidas Hubbard (Labrador, 1903).

Both DeLong and Hubbard reached the point of no return. Greely survived even though a new scientific study suggests the various sources of food supply described in his diary were insufficient to keep his party alive. The study suggests kcal from human flesh is what saved Greely and his men.

What effects does hunger have on the narratives of the hungry? Does the body text shrink at the same rate as the energy deficit in the writer’s body? What goes first – punctuation, pronouns, adjectives – and what goes last, before silence sets in? Are the only choices left to eat and keep writing or be eaten and written off?

KEYWORDS Arctic discovery and exploration, Arctic travel diaries, starvation in the Arctic, George Washington DeLong, 1844-1881, Adolphus Washington Greely, 1844-1935, Leonidas Hubbard, 1872-1903
On 21 May, 1884, U.S. Army Lieutenant Adolphus Greely describes in his diary the food his party is reduced to eating: “We are now mixing saxifrage in our stews; fully nineteen-twentieths of it is the dead plant, with but the faintest tinge of green at the ends” (Greely 1894: 687). Greely’s party of seven, shipwrecked and barely alive, foraged the rocks for this harvest while waiting for rescue at Cape Sabine on Ellesmere Island. Greely had left port with twenty-six men three years earlier, his mission to reach farthest north from the east coast.

“And now for supper nothing remained but the dog,” wrote U.S. Navy Lieutenant George DeLong on 3 October, 1881 (Stark 2000: 160). The dog’s name was Snoozer and he had been the mascot of DeLong and his men ever since their ship was crushed by ice six hundred miles north of the coast of Siberia. Having succeeded to make landfall, DeLong’s party would nonetheless perish on the frozen delta of the Lena River, two years after launching on the same mission as Greely from the west coast.

Leonidas Hubbard, an outdoor adventure writer for Outing magazine, had set out for the last blank spot on the map of Northern Labrador with his cousin, Dillon Wallace, and a native guide, George Elson. His canoe journey ended in tragedy three months later, his last entry dated 18 October, 1904: “I also ate some of the really delicious rawhide, boiled with some bones, and it made me stronger — strong to write this.” (Hubbard, M. 1908: 285) The rawhide came from a pair of mitts. Hubbard had already eaten his boots.

Dead plants, dog meat, a pair of mitts or boots: this is par for the course, and for supper, in starvation stories, a thin but resilient thread running through the history of northern exploration.

Starvation is a slow process. When somewhere between 30% and 60% of the body mass is lost, the starved organism reaches a point of no return and starts to burn its own tissue. The deficit of energy thus becomes irreversible. An increasingly debilitating weakness sets in, eventually leading to physical breakdown and mental stasis. This process is further aggravated by cold conditions, when energy loss accrues due to the body’s effort to heat and humidify the air inhaled. The balance between energy spent and acquired also impacts on the length of the process.

But what effect does hunger have on the narratives of the hungry? Does the body text shrink at the same rate as the energy deficit of the
diarist? Is there enough left for meaning if 30% to 60% of the narrative is lost? What goes first – punctuation, pronouns, adjectives – and what goes last, before silence sets in? What ghosts haunt the white space of the journal’s unused pages, beyond the last entry? Are the only choices left to eat and keep writing – or be eaten and written off?

I became interested in the effects of deprivation on text while sampling field notes from Arctic journeys to help me create a contemporary logbook for my second novel. As I read more and more deprivation prose, I felt the core concerns of my own manuscript were informed by the starvation process. Would a record of the slow starvation debilitating the human heart, when love is taken away, share the same features as famous starvation narratives? Is it possible to quantify human loss against the body mass of someone’s life?

This is the metaphysical territory I explore in my personal work, but I thought I could use my research notes to compare the records kept by Adolphus Greely, George DeLong, and Leonidas Hubbard.

I already had a picture in my mind of how deprivation would shape prose. There would be a gradually dwindling volume of entries as energy is lost and the strength to even sharpen a pencil wanes – until nothing would be left but a few incoherent words, scattered across the page by a trembling hand. My first surprise was to discover there are as many ways to write starvation as there are writers.

In Greely’s text, the focal point of my observations will be on the discrepancy between the written and the unwritten, a discrepancy exposed by comparing a new scientific study published in 2002 in *Arctic: The Journal of the Arctic Institute of North America* and the comments Greely affixed to his own diary upon the publication of *Three Years of Arctic Service* in 1894 (Legezynska & Weslawski 2002: 373-9).

DeLong’s diary is the most faithful to my preconceived ideas; it is also the most affecting, as hope shrinks along with the writing into silence.

As for Hubbard, he defies all expectations with entries that expand in food fantasies during the worst phase of the hunger pangs and contract again during his so-called “blue” periods. Thanks to the restorative power of boiled mittens combined with an indomitable sense of hope, the text blossoms one last time just before the end.

To find out about the correlation between body hunger and body text, the most obvious methodology is to compare a sample of earlier
prose from manuscript records, when the diarist is well fed, to a sample of the last, starved entry. Complementary observations track the evolution between first and last marker in terms of volume per entry, sentence structure and calorie-related subject matters such as diet, ambient temperature and energy expenditure. The methodology had to be adapted to the sources available.

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My inquiry into Greely’s diary is limited to entries from May to June 1884, or the last sixty days spent at Starvation Camp on Cape Sabine before rescue arrived. Over this time span, Greely’s diary is a fastidious and repetitive affair. Each entry bears the usual characteristics of exploration field notes: day and date, temperature record and a brief description of the weather. The lieutenant and his men lead a sedentary life. After reaching four miles further north than the previous record and spending two summers waiting for a relief ship that never came, Greely’s party has retreated and travelled as far south as they can in small whaleboats. After losing their boats to stormy weather, Greely and his men are stranded on the eastern coast of Ellesmere Island where they will spend a third winter in the Arctic. In the spring, what’s left of the party waits for the pack to break up and a rescue ship to reach them. The only energy expenditure involves wrenching food from a truly inhospitable land. All food consumed is noted in Greely’s diary, with the same fussy rigour the lieutenant uses to split rations evenly between his men. Hunting-gathering activities are recorded as well. Once the daily food rations are depleted at the end of April, the only reliable source of nutrition is the “sea flee,” a carrion-feeding crustacean found at the bottom of landfast ice: “May 14th. – Brainard got shrimp and kelp as usual” (Greely 1894: 685). “May 15th. – The sea kelp and shrimps form our only food to-day, until we are driven to eating seal-skins” (686). “May 20th. – The day was too stormy for hunting, but Brainard managed to obtain shrimps as usual. The party are decidedly weaker” (686).

The survivors of Cape Sabine attribute their salvation to this miraculous shrimp harvest. But by the end of May, the absence of live bait compromises this food supply and Greely’s party is reduced to scouring the rocks for saxifrage and the common black lichen called “tripe de Roche.”
At the beginning of May, Greely is also very sick, enough to fear the worst. On 10 May, he puts his paper in order, writes to his wife, Henrietta, and puts a lock of his hair in the letter's fold. In his diary, he then urges his men “to die like men, and not as brutes” (686). This comment can be seen as a forecast of things to come. The dire situation at Cape Sabine will bring the best and the worst out of Greely's
party, and Greely will choose to record what appears to be a partial truth.

But Greely recovers sufficiently to keep writing at a steady clip. Twenty entries for the month of May average ten lines each for a total of 208 lines. The only indication of the debilitating effects of deprivation on prose, since entry volume is steady and sentences well-rounded, is Greely’s closing comment for the May chapter: “In these days, thought was an effort, save when I was irritated by some unpleasant occurrence, or important event, into an unusual energy, and writing a great labour; so that the contents of my journal became at time exceedingly meagre” (693).

There is no physical evidence of exceedingly meagre content in June, where eighteen entries average twenty-one lines each, a double increase over May. However, the longest entry in June relates an important event. “June 6th. – Fine, warm, clear day,” writes Greely, but by the day’s end Private C. B. Henry will have been executed for petty theft on a written order from the leader of the Lady Franklin Bay expedition: “This pertinacity and audacity is the destruction of this party, if not at once ended. [...] This order is imperative, and absolutely necessary for any chance of life” (699).

The lieutenant’s choice of words is strong, and the underlining only emphasises a reaction that might seem exaggerated to the crime itself. Yet, Greely feels vindicated when “fully twelve pounds of seal-skin and a pair of seal-skin boots” (700) are found cached in Henry’s personal effects. Of all Greely’s party, Henry was the man in best physical condition. Food, each parcel of it, means life or death at Cape Sabine, where seven men will die in June alone. This entry describes the dire reality of a place where stealing seal-skin, with its meagre nutritional value, is akin to murder. The following day, another man, Bender, dies and the expedition’s physician, Dr. Pavy, hastens his own death by swallowing extract of ergot. Yet, on 9 June, Greely is concerned with paperwork. First, the lieutenant spends six hours harvesting a quart of tripe de Roche. Then he documents the medical case of Elison, the man without limbs but in remarkable health, before turning his attention to Biederbick’s soon expired terms of service. After three hard years of Arctic service, eight long months spent starving at Cape Sabine, sixty days after the last ration was consumed, and three days after the execution of Private Henry for petty theft, Greely ex-
pedites administrative matters. A few days later, on 13 June, Greely discharges Biederbick, “his term of service having expired. Having no regular blanks, I gave him a written certificate of discharged, to be replaced by a regular one. Was unable to give him his final statements” (707). The next day, Greely “Re-enlisted Biederbick as a hospital steward, subject to approval” (708).

Is it madness or dignity – a desperate attempt to appear more man than brute by filling forms while the dead rot in an ice-crack and the living shed their own body parts, along with their sanity, little by little? Did Greely file reports and processed forms, out of his mind but mindful of terms and conditions, on a makeshift desk of bony knees or rocks? How could he still have the strength to write about such trivial matters? But what else was there left to write about? Unable to relate a reality that might make him and his men appear like brutes, Greely hangs on to what makes him feel safe and sane: protocol and official procedure. Only ten days later, the relief party will describe a very different scene.

The diary shrinks quickly in the few days before the end. The penultimate entry on 20 June is both short and emotional. Greely, having not written once that he or his men were down or hungry, finally breaks down: “20th, 7 A.M., clear, calm, 29°, minimum 26.8°. […] Six years ago to-day I was married and three years ago I left my wife for this Expedition, what contrast! When will this life in death end?” (711).

The last entry is also short, only four lines long, and the diary closes with these words: “Buchanan Strait open this noon a long way up the coast” (711). It is through this open water that Commander Schley, onboard the Thetis, will reach the survivors on 23 June. “It was a sight of horror” (Stark 2000: 183). The navy ensign who first looked into the tent where the survivors were huddled together tells of a man on his hands and knees, crying and trying to roll away the rocks that held the tent’s flap down; of a corpse on one side, his glassy eyes still open, and on the other a man without feet or hands with a silver spoon tied to one of his stumps. As to the leader of the Lady Franklin Bay expedition, he can’t remember his name but he does remember his mission. “Yes – seven of us left – here we are – dying – like men. Did what I came to do – beat the best record” (183).

The bodies of the dead, retrieved from Ellesmere Island against Greely’s wish, “had been cut and flesh removed,” wrote Commander
Schley in his report (Guttridge 2000: 286). Greely said it was used as bait for shrimping. But a scientific study published in 2002 suggests otherwise. After estimating the various sources of food supply described in the diaries and comparing the cumulative energy deficit of the seven survivors during the four last months of their ordeal, with and without the additional kilocalories of human flesh, the study concludes: “Without cannibalism, it seems unlikely that anyone, having attained an individual energy deficit of over 86,000 kcal before rescue in June 1884, could have survived” (Legezynska & Weslawski 2003: 373).

What can we read between the lines of a diary that most certainly witnessed unspeakable acts? Not what Greely hoped for. The diary form, Greely reflects after his last entry, “does not indicate sufficiently the kindly feelings and thoughts for others that were daily and hourly testified in that miserable life.” He hopes these can be “read between the lines” (Greely 1894: 712).

It is in the kilocalorie discrepancy between a diary and a scientific study published in 2002 that the will to survive, bringing out the best and the worst of human nature, can be observed. Greely’s diary provides the steady records of a selective memory, leaving it to the reader to find clues to either goodness, as the author wished for, or baseness, as the American press later denounced, between the lines of his starvation story.

*U.S. Navy Lieutenant George W. DeLong was not as lucky as Adolphus Greely, if Greely’s hardship can be labelled “luck.” But Greely lived to edit his diary; DeLong did not. His so-called “ice journal” was found at the fingertips of his outstretched arm under a layer of snow, its last entry dated Sunday, 30 October, 1881.

Photocopies of the journal’s last pages, from 3 October to 30 October, present a steadily decreasing body text (DeLong 1881: vol. 2). The handwriting is clear and neat, if small and tight. Lines that were straight at first tend to waver and sink near the end. Time is marked twice, by date and the number of days since the Jeanette was abandoned. Temperature is described as well the obstacles encountered on the way South by the party of twelve. The minutes spent travelling
through the maze of the frozen delta are carefully calculated, and the food needed to fuel this effort is recorded. Faith is flagging:

Monday, October 3d, 1881, – 113th day – It was so fearfully cold and wretched that I served out tea to all hands, and on this we managed to struggle until 5 A.M., when we ate our last deer meat and had more tea. Our morning food consists now of four-fourteenths of a pound of pemmican each. May God again incline unto our aid! [...] Brisk winds, barometer 30.23 at 1.50 temperature. [...] 35, 30, 30, 20, 20, 20-total, 155 – 2hrs 35 minutes, say five miles. (Stark 2000: 158)

In this long entry, at almost 100 lines, action is described in full sentences: “Away we went, Nindermann and Alexai leading and had progressed about a mile when, plash, I went through the ice up to my
shoulders before my knapsack brought me up” (159). The Jeanette had left port with a pack of sleigh dogs, which were shot, saved one, when the ship was abandoned. Later on the same day comes the order to kill Snoozer to provide twenty-seven pounds of meat: “I therefore ordered him killed and dressed [...] A stew was made [...] of which everybody except the doctor and myself eagerly partook. [...] To us two it was a nauseating mess, and – but why go on with such a disagreeable subject” (160).

DeLong marks himself, along with the doctor, above his men, in what seems to be an attempt to remain “civilised,” or cling to what is left of the decorum coming with his rank. This behaviour echoes Greely’s own wish to “die like a man, not like a brute.” But starvation has a way to strip away wishful thinking and leave only the raw will to live.

After 3 October, the flesh of the prose thins out at the same sharp rate as the food supplies. The entries average twelve lines. On 7 October, breakfast consists of “our last half pound of dog meat” and “the last grain of tea” (163). On 8 October, breakfast is “one ounce of alcohol in a pint of hot water” (164). A note from the doctor mentions that alcohol “[k]eeps off craving for food [...] and has kept up strength of men” (164). Even with a few additional calories from deer skin scraps and three ptarmigan, this strength is quickly spent. The ice journal’s sentences get shorter, the rhythm choppier on 9 October: “Crossed the creek. Broke through the ice. All wet up to knees” (165). DeLong does not bother with names and pronouns anymore. Individuality does not matter anymore; it is as one that the party keeps moving to reach south and civilisation.

Entries that were eighteen lines drop to twelve lines and then shrink to an average of four lines. Dinner consists of glycerine in hot water, and when this is gone, of Arctic willow infusion. “Hardly strength to get firewood” (165), writes DeLong on 12 October. On 13 October, the last mention of God is found, along with an admission of helplessness: “We are in the hands of God, and unless he relents are lost” (165). The last mention of food, on 15 October, is “willow tea and two old boots” (166). On the same day, DeLong mentions “signs of smoke at twilight southward” (166); they are so close yet so far from salvation.

After 18 October, the few lines jotted down do not run straight but waver and the handwriting is uneven. On 24 October, only three
words: “A hard night” (166). All things described before at length, the wind, the wet, the dead, the delirium of the near dead haunting the cramped quarters of the tent, are now contained in these three words. It is now very cold. There is no more food, and no strength to make a fire. *A hard night:* the verb is dropped. There is no more action. Immobility looms.

The only verb used on the last page of DeLong’s ice journal is dying: “Kaack found dying [...] Lee died about noon” (166). From 25 October, all that is left is the bare bones of the prose: the date and the day, marking time’s inexorable progress toward silence. There is no more hope, only the death toll – and not even a period to close the sentence.

DeLong’s writing is a mirror held to the physical reality of starvation, exhaustion and exposure. With its volume of words gradually subsiding, its sentences broken into fragments and the flesh of the prose stripped down to a date and a day, this diary confirms the attributes I expected deprivation prose would possess. It is also all the more poignant for its complete lack of pretence.

* 

Unlike DeLong and Greely, Leonidas Hubbard was not a man in uniform but an outdoor adventure writer. On 7 July, 1903, he was not heading farthest north, but to a specific, uncharted area of Northern Labrador. Very much like DeLong and Greely, he expected to gain fame, and some wealth, from the publication of a first-hand account of his journey of discovery. But Hubbard “busted out” and died a lonely death in the last blank spot on the map of Labrador on 18 October, 1903.

My two markers from the original manuscript of Hubbard’s diary will be two entries, the first one dated 28 September and the other 18 October. Other observations are based on the abridged version published by Hubbard’s widow, Mina Hubbard, in 1908, and cover material of interest from the month of August. It should be mentioned that Mina Hubbard returned to Labrador and succeeded where her husband had failed: she mapped the course of the George and Nacauspee rivers, thanks to the help of her husband’s native guide, George Elson – and without losing an ounce.
“Entries are brief at first, but they expand as the trip progress,” the authors of *Great Heart: The History of A Labrador Adventure* mention in their notes (Davidson & Rugge 1988: 370). Sherrill Grace, in her introduction to Mina Hubbard’s own travel diary, *A Woman’s Way*, adds that Leonidas Hubbard “time and energy” were spent “recording conversations about food, fantasies about dinners with Mina, and dreams about weakness and hunger” (Grace 2004: i).

The 28 September entry confirms the ample volume dedicated to the subject of food. Over more than forty lines, Leonidas Hubbard describes what he would eat on an “easy trip” with Mina. Fifty-five food items are listed, some repeated twice. The white label canned soup is a favourite. The authors of *Great Heart* suggest that “the pangs of hunger were at their height in the earlier stages of starvation subsiding as the situation became worse,” (Davidson & Rugge 1988: 370) and that this is when Hubbard’s diary became expansive on the subject of imaginary feasts. Pierre Berton, in his *Arctic Grail*, explains the function of this fantasy common to starvation stories: it is “as if the very act of committing the names of the dishes to paper could somehow assuage [his] hunger” (Berton 2000: 468). Another explanation for the length of this entry is suggested by Hubbard himself, who says that he “lay in the tent most of day” (M. Hubbard 1894: 276). The energy expense of travelling, when not used, is transformed into writing. The sedentary life at Cape Sabine might explain the inflated volume of Greely’s diary, whereas DeLong’s, in constant and desperate motion, is much thinner.

But even in the diary’s edited version, expressions of hunger appear early in the journey and becomes a constant. Hubbard’s style is telegraphic and drops pronouns from the start. On 8 August: “All hungry for flour and meat” (252). 11 August: “Hungry all the time. All hungry all day” (252). 12 August: “Ate trout and loaf of bread. Hungry” (253). 15 August: “Hungry as bears. How hungry I am for bread and sweets!” (254). This hunger cannot be explained by lack of supplies. A tally of all that was obtained from a land much more giving than the one where DeLong and Greeley were stranded, is impressive: besides one caribou, a squirrel, and a rabbit, fifty-four pieces of various fowl were pistol-shot and more than one thousand trout caught. The boys, as Hubbard calls his companions, also ate blueberries, moss-berries and currants – but it never seems to be enough. Part of the problem is
that Hubbard brought too much sugar and flour, and not enough fat or protein to fight off the cold or fuel the effort of gruelling portages. Indeed, the men are lost. They paddle along strings of lakes without outlet looking for Lake Michikamau and its fabled caribou grounds. The living-from-the land diet also makes them sick, and weak. 25 August: “Have diarrhoea. All chilled” (259). 26 August: “Sick and very weak. Diarrhoea” (260). 27 August: “Desperate. Late in season and no way to Michikamau” (260).
The lake is finally sighted in the distance on 9 September. “BIG DAY” (266) Hubbard capitalises, but it is too late. On 15 September, Hubbard writes that his decision to turn back pleases their guide: “George is worried and talks of Indians who starve” (270). George Elston is not only worried about starving, but also about Hubbard’s unrealistic plan for their return: “[...] stop and get grub then cross our long portage, then hunt more grub, and finally freeze up preparatory to a sled dash for Northwest River. That will make us late for boat,” Hubbard adds, “but we can snowshoe to the St Lawrence.” His conclusion: “All this, with what we have done so far, will make a bully story” (271). A great story his is, if for different reasons. While Hubbard dreamt of great stories and food, George Elston dreamt of God and God told him to stick with the big river. If Hubbard had only listened to his guide, he would have lived to sell his tale.

The entries shrink again after 15 September, although not as drastically as in DeLong’s diary. As soon as the decision to go back is taken, Hubbard’s mood is upbeat. The boys are going home, a word mentioned in each entry, sometimes combined with the word hungry: “Our minds turn to home even more [...] So hungry to see all our old friends” (274). “So homesick for my sweetheart” (275). “All talking about home, all happy to be going there,” and “[s]o hungry for home – and fish” (277). This compulsive repetition is a way to hang on to hope; the text is dissociating from a harsh reality. Despite the upbeat tone, signs of his own physical debilitation distress Hubbard. 29 September: “Had to drop [the canoe] and became very weak” (277). On 4 October: “[...] ashamed of my ribs which stick out like skeleton’s” (278). Soon mentions of “feel good” and “happy” (278) are replaced by “feel all cold” and “weak” (279).

On the way back, the three men revisit previous campsites and search ashes of old fires for anything they can put their hands on, like caribou leftovers. 11 October: “George gathered bones and two hoofs. [...] Maggots on hoofs. We did not mind. [...] We had three cupfuls each and sat about gnawing bones’ (281). On 12 October, the sentences might be short but there is still volume expanded on the nutritious value sucked out of bones: “For breakfast bones of caribou boiled to make greasy broth. [...] Strong, rancid taste, but we relished it. Roasted part of the hoofs in fire, ate them. Half rubber, half leather, but heap better than nothing. For lunch the same with skin from velvet horns
added. [...] Part from nose very thick and had to be roasted first. Good” (281).

“Very sleepy,” Hubbard adds. The starvation process, once the body starts to feed on itself, and if compounded by daily exertion, is swift. Hubbard confesses lethal weakness in a healthy thirty-line-long entry on 15 October: “I got shaky and busted” (283). A forceful exclamation at the joy of eating three partridge shot by George follows: “OH! How good” (283). Maybe this candid exclamation takes all that is left of the diarist: there are no entries for the two following days.

On 18 October, Hubbard is alone. His boys have left to reach a cache of flour some twenty-miles away. He is wrapped in half a blanket and sits inside a tent pitched by a small river. He has been too weak to write and has busted each day, unable to advance anymore. But now, after sucking on the bones, he does feel stronger — and nostalgic. A can of mustard, thrown away on the way out, has been found again: “I sat and held it in my hand a long time, thinking how it came from [...] our home, and what a happy home it was. Then I took a bite of it and it was very good” (283).

Hungry for home, tasting home in moulded mustard, dreaming of home; Hubbard writes home, profusely for a dying man, the flesh of his prose not thin but voluptuous and expansive. His last entry is seventy lines long. Then he pencils three more letters. Only an ultimate "long, long letter" to Mina is left unfinished.

Hubbard’s physical hunger has abated: “I am not suffering. [...] I think death from starvation is not bad. I think the boys will be able with the Lord’s help to save me” (284). Life pours out in words while Hubbard refuses to give up a sense of hope so strong it transcends his numb, wasted body.

In its essence, Hubbard’s diary is the exact opposite of the slow desiccation of DeLong prose; not a mirror of reality but the fiction spun by a man who left home hungry for adventures and freedom, and died starving only for one thing: to be home again.

* The writer’s mental and physical state does shape the form of deprivation prose, but starvation stories were also designed for a specific
readership. Although this question cannot be addressed here in depth, shifting the attention to this aspect, even briefly, is revealing.

Greely writes as an officer filing a report to his superior: to keep a scientific record in order to support the success of his mission, and to justify his actions as the leader of his party. He also writes for posterity since he knows he has entered history when he beat the previous record north. This is made clear in the edited version of his diaries published in 1894. Despair goes unexpressed until the very end; lawlessness and disorder appear to be repressed successfully on the surface, and the unspeakable remains unspoken. Dignity is maintained, if not at Starvation Camp then in the diary, thus creating an alternative textual reality at once surreal and grotesque.

The diary of U.S. Navy Lieutenant George DeLong should have the same function as his contemporaries’. But in October 1881, once hope, faith, and food have run dry, DeLong does not write for his superiors any more, or his loved ones. As he consigns less and less to a small notebook kept inside his jacket, he still keeps the record of the day, and of the dead, to the end. DeLong only writes for himself, to prove he is alive. This is why his journal possesses a haunting quality, a truth that Greely’s published text never attains.

About forty years later, the North Pole has been reached and what Leonidas Hubbard sets out to do is not as grand as Greely’s and DeLong’s projects. The foremost reason for his trip is to pen an entertaining account of his journey for the readers of Outside magazine. The original manuscript is a candid, sometimes monstrously naïve and always emotional relation of his ill-fated expedition. Hubbard’s account is ripe with dreams and fantasies, passages carefully expunged by his widow, Mina. She does not want readers to see the tourist out of his depth, or the kind man and loving husband. There can only be a hero.

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The three diaries have now come to an end. Adolphus Greely has been saved in extremis but both George DeLong and Leonidas Hubbard are gone.

So what is left, now?

What is left are words, written in truth or in vain: so very near death on a rocky cape strewn with human flesh; moving towards an
always receding column of smoke in a frozen delta; or alone and shoeless in a northern forest.

What is left is a record of Greely's increasing untrustworthiness as he attempts to deny horror and maintain dignity; of the loss of faith silencing DeLong's voice while the progress of hope expands through Hubbard’s voluble last lines.

Three records but one meaning, so painfully clear: I want to live, and as long as I write, I am alive.

Maybe that is why these three men never ate the paper they wrote on, even in the worst throes of hunger.

REFERENCES


Women and Civilisation on Ice

ABSTRACT This article draws on accounts from the 1930s to the 1990s by women who travelled in Antarctica. It aims to show that such accounts actually exist, despite all the formal and informal obstacles that women encountered. Further, the objective is briefly to highlight the particular aspect of women representing themselves in relation to various conceptualisations of gender relations. In what manner do women interpret their own mission in relation to the actual stay in Antarctica? To what extent do they convey the impact on their doings of Antarctica’s place-specific features? The landscape and scenery are totally dominated by one of the most severe climates on earth, including low temperatures and strong winds. No person, whatever their educational or professional background, visits Antarctica without being impressed by the climate and the geography. This particularity seems to provoke visitors into encoding the place with expressions of humanity, including gender relations.

KEYWORDS polar history, women in Antarctica, gender relations, travel accounts

Gender research in polar history with regard to Antarctica is still comparatively rare. The usual reaction when I present my work is: “but there are no women in Antarctica.” This statement is of interest in several ways. It is perfectly correct that there were no women on the southern continent until relatively recently, that is, the late 1930s, and even after that the number remained limited until the present era of
increasing tourism. This alone merits further study – how come that for decades the entire continent was for “men only”? However, the statement also signals a rather serious misconception, equating gender with women. Most gender research is relational, focusing the parallel constructions and representations of femininity and masculinity, more often than not subject to various types of power relation. And, obviously, gender is performed by men as well as women. In my view, polar history has something both particular and general to say about gendered spaces and the meaning of gender for contemporary society.

Although female explorers and travellers have been present in both polar areas, the Arctic in particular (Kelcey 2006), men’s biographies, travel accounts, reports and so on have simply failed to present the few women who have visited Northern Canada, Siberia, Greenland, Iceland and, more recently, the Antarctic. Moreover, on the few occasions when women are mentioned, they are marginalised or even made fun of. As for the Antarctic, some countries explicitly banned female professionals from entering the continent and its research stations, while others did not even consider the issue.

Much still remains to be done. There are some accounts, almost a minor genre, that mention the existence of women in connection with polar areas, patient wives waiting at home for whaling husbands. In contrast to this companionship-literature, the documentation of the “herstory” of the polar areas and the sources on how many women actually visited them, the when and whereabouts of their missions, started relatively recently (Chipman 1986, Druett 1998). The diaries and letters are scattered around the world. Letters from a few hundred women, as well as 80 diaries, have been listed and researched by Joan Druett with regard to “whaling wives,” accompanying their captain spouses, mainly to northern whaling grounds but also to more southern waters (Druett 1992, 1998). Research on the Arctic has shown that in the period 1867-1939 at least 500 European women visited Canada’s Northwest Territories. Women related themselves to schools, missionary stations and medical facilities but also to commercial entities such as the Hudson Bay Company. Although in their movements in the Arctic women more often than not had to relate themselves and their missions to the conditions set by male officials, hunters and whalers, their presence there was less regulated than in the Antarctic. Despite the regulations, we know from a few records that women were present
on ships from the early nineteenth century. There was even a female botanist who visited the Falkland Islands as early as 1766–77 (Chipman 1986).

Professional women’s physical access to high latitudes, north or south, may be described as a history of a gradual approach. Women aboard vessels in the southern hemisphere were tolerated as long as they were the wife of the captain or, later on, of an official in charge of a whaling station and thereafter of a research station. It is ironi- cal that the research station as such was the most prohibited site for women. The strictness of the regulations was also related to the geography – the waters adjacent to the continent and the coastline were more admissible to women than the interior of the continent. Summer expeditions were more acceptable than those in winter, which might entail wintering over. A parallel may be drawn to research on the North American frontier, where the presence of men and women took on mythical dimensions (Bederman 1995). The more distant and the further west, the greater the element of masculinity of the ‘right’ kind.

The history of gender in Antarctica also produced solid patterns of homosocial environments, almost eternal and impeccable, had it not been for the female minority. The latter’s struggle faced obstacles but equally frequently involved resistance to the regulations and practices that prevented women from pursuing their missions and occupations in extreme climates.

A distinction may be made between explorers and travellers. Explorers tended to choose desolate sites, far away from more inhabited places. The journey itself was a significant part of the trip. Exploration in polar areas has also included the discovery of “unknown” land, regardless of whether this was known or unknown to the indigenous population (Bravo & Sörlin 2006). In Antarctica, moreover, explorers were bound to be cut off from the rest of the world for the duration of the winter season, which accentuated the need for careful planning of lodging, fuel and food. The explorer had to live through the winter and this could be a matter of life or death. Travellers, on the other hand, chose particular places to visit and were inclined to decide their itinerary before setting out.

While quite a few women travelled in the Arctic, Louise Arner Boyd (1887–1972) was one of the first female explorers there. She ar-
ranged seven expeditions, including hunting expeditions for polar bears and seals. In 1927 she organised and financed a search party to rescue the missing Roald Amundsen. She also produced maps that were used later by the US Army. On her return to Norway, however, the press made a mockery of her endeavour. Her efforts to find Amundsen were belittled and she was reduced to a person of the fair sex, essentially interested in making an impression on the strong Norwegian airmen who participated in the search (Berg 2006). Her treatment by the press is a clear illustration of the strategy of downgrading a woman doing the wrong thing in the wrong place.

One of the early travellers to the Antarctic mainland was Caroline Mikkelsen. She was on board a whaler managed by a man occupied not just with whaling but also with planting the Norwegian flag on the continent. Caroline’s now-famous footstep on Antarctica was unknown for a long time. By her account, it was not until the mid-1990s that she wished to acknowledge her presence on the mainland (“The Vestfold Hills: The Norwegian Connection” 1995). It had been known by the mid-60s that the whaler had been at Vestfold Hills in 1935 but there had been no mention of Caroline. In 1998, however, the story was questioned and 1937 was put forward instead as the first year in which a woman trod the Antarctic continent. But while this did tell people about Caroline Mikkelsen, in reality she had been accompanied by three other women aboard and the story did not tell which of them was the first to step onto the continent (Norman 1998). Would this omission have been possible if the quartet had been men?

The concept of ‘the human dimension’ has now been launched as a new aspect of polar research in connection with the ongoing international polar year 2007–09. This attracts some attention to the inhabitants of the circumpolar north, which seemingly was not an issue during previous polar years. All well and good. But besides the very late recognition of all the human beings who actually live where elite scientists go for their research, the human dimension has other aspects in relation to polar research, irrespective of polar years. So far, today’s science administrators and scientists shaping the official IPY agenda largely lack a self-reflexive stance, although their activities and fieldwork rest, not surprisingly, on human practices. Back in the late 1940s, the human dimension in relation to scientific practices was acknowledged by two people, Jennie Darlington and Edith Ronne. Inter-
estingly enough, the title of Edith Ronne's travel account contrasted scientific practice with the “human side of the expedition.” One may wonder whether the research somehow symbolised the inhuman? However that may be, Edith Ronne identified the “human side” with the women on this particular venture, the private Finn Ronne expedition to Antarctica 1947-48.

Darlington and Ronne had not planned to over-winter but agreed to do so at a late stage. The story goes that as they were about to say goodbye at a harbour in South America, they were invited to join the expedition to take care of press relations (Ronne 1950). Less was mentioned about Darlington’s mission apart from her being married to a pilot (Burns 2007). A few years after the expedition, Ronne and Darlington each published their account. Both were very keen to underline their unique standing as the two first women to over-winter in Antarctica. They played down their own roles, particularly their work with the press and with keeping diaries, and let their husbands take most of the honour. Men were heroes, women were not. At the same time, women were the bastions of civilisation. They describe how they maintained maternal relations with the expedition’s twenty young volunteers. They did the laundry, generated cosiness and practiced conflict resolution if needed (Darlington 1956). Their account of themselves as the providers of civilisation’s benefits was accompanied by an emphasis on Antarctica as the least suitable place for women. Although they learned how to drive a dog-sledge, how to use fire appliances and melt water, how to survive in a tough climate, it was the representation of themselves as rare birds that predominated. The burning desire to discover unknown natural phenomena and unknown land was reserved for male explorers; such lusts were not for female rationality. Further, readers were told how to maintain good clothing, some degree of attractiveness and good manners. The titles of their texts – *My Antarctic Honeymoon* and *Women in Antarctica: The Human Side of a Scientific Expedition* – mirror how they saw themselves as members of the expedition. Edith Ronne wrote that for her it was neither the challenge nor the natural surroundings that motivated her trip to Antarctica; those matters were reserved for her husband. Her mission was to stand by his side and that was what gave her the strength to endure the ghastly hygienic conditions.

Both authors took pains to underline their intrinsic affinity with
the private sphere. This interest seems to have been equally important for both their publishers, since the reader is fully informed of the text’s private character. There should be no doubt that the travel accounts of Ronne and Darlington were accompanied by parallel accounts signed by men, one being the official account by the leader of the expedition, Finn Ronne.

A similar stance was taken by a British contemporary of Darlington and Ronne, Grace Murphy, who visited South Georgia with her husband. Although she acted as his assistant, her main mission was to provide emotional support and consolation, not to mention encouragement. Murphy likewise contrasts science and human values, values that needed to be upheld by female presence (Murphy 1948). One interpretation is that the male norm was somehow internalised by these three women; they present themselves as non-heroines in order to enhance their husbands. After another five decades, this posture seems to be changing.

In the period leading up to the International Geophysical Year of 1957-58 there are very few accounts of the Antarctic by women, for the simple reason that hardly any women were there. The texts I have referred to witness not only to the fixed gender roles of the past but also to the individual choice of presenting oneself as a rare bird rather than question the preponderance of male scientists and logistic personnel, often from the armed forces. While travellers in the late 1940s were bent on representing high moral standards, the technological era of the cold war in the 1950s was approaching. It brought science to Antarctica on a massive scale compared with previous decades.

The 1957-58 IGY saw an immense escalation of polar research. This had to do with the civil and military need for more accurate weather forecasts, the emerging space research and what might be found beneath the Antarctic ice sheet. Some countries, including Sweden, speculated about vast quantities of precious minerals. A few considered using atomic power to get rid of the ice. The underlying moral values were connected with the idea of unlimited progress by means of technological power (Sullivan 1961).

In 1955 a female oceanographer was active for the first time in Antarctic waters, aboard a Soviet vessel as well as at the Mirny station. She had worked on ice-breakers in the Arctic for 30 years and was active in mapping. There were other women among the scientists as well as
the crew but they came to symbolise the “red peril” and were seen as icons of the Cold War threat from Russia. Their texts are not accessible to me but the German press made a great issue of the female presence on the Soviet IGY expeditions (Luedcke 2007). In 1962–63 USA had four female scientists aboard the Eltanin but as they did not enter the Antarctic there were no major headlines and until recently their work has not attracted much attention.

The arguments at the time floated on a mixture of female physical and mental debilities, even deficiencies. In 1963, Sir Vivian Fuchs, explorer and later head of the British Antarctic Survey, stated that the facilities were not appropriate, women could not carry heavy equipment and would, moreover, affect the psychological atmosphere at the bases. Admiral Dufek of the US Navy had been even more outspoken in 1959, stating that women would wreck men’s illusions of being heroes and frontiersmen (Burns 2007). Journalist Dorothy Braxton reported in 1969 that for many men, a major motive for going to Antarctica was to be in a place without any women, a kind of escapism (Braxton 1969). Unfortunately, these statements are not a thing of the past; in some quarters they are still current forty and fifty years later.

It was in the 1960s that women scientists started to demand participation in Antarctic research. It had become obvious that despite possessing adequate skills and competence, American, Australian and New Zealand women were being prevented from joining their national research programmes. Taxpayers’ money was reserved for male researchers and important programmes were hampered by the sex of the researcher. After the Antarctic Treaty had been ratified in 1961, American women made several attempts to join the programmes and were gradually allowed to attend the summer expeditions, aboard research vessels. After another twenty years, in the late 1970s, they were able to over-winter at the South Pole itself, although women had visited the pole in 1969.

Until 1967 the US Navy actually prohibited women from being aboard marine transports to Antarctica, although the possibility of lifting the ban on women attending summer expeditions had been discussed since 1961. The navy rather reluctantly allowed a few women journalists, a nurse and a few crew members to go south, but female researchers were simply out of the question. Regardless of the quality of research projects, no science was to be done by the “wrong” sex.
The arguments referred to women’s inability to handle conflicts. Women were further accused of a propensity to fight. It was also said that women complained of boredom in such isolated quarters. In 1969, Christine Muller-Schwarze was the first female doctor to enter the continent in modern times, although she stayed safely aboard the summer expedition. A decade later, in 1979, the US Navy finally took the historic step of advertising for qualified female volunteers to overwinter in Antarctica. Great Britain was still reluctant to admit female scientists to a research vessel in 1987 and even in 1991 there was a fierce debate on the possibility of women staying over the winter. When British officials were asked why there were so few women in the British Antarctic service, they replied that there were no applicants. That was hardly surprising since on the ships there was a long-standing total ban on mentioning the research stations. Further, assignments for some of the British stations lasted for 2.5 years, a very long period of military service. Other arguments were directly related to gender: only (young) boys were considered fit enough to over-winter and women would cause jealousy and all sorts of trouble (“She’ll be wearing a scarlet miniskirt” 1991). This echoes the major concern behind the mish-mash of arguments with regard to fear of sexual harassment and the explicit discussions of scientists’ sex lives, themes that were simply taboo in Antarctic circles until the mid-1980s (Chipman 1986). In 1991 reports from Australia concluded that although women had been included in the research teams for quite some time and despite the fact that Australian laws on sexual harassment applied in paramilitary structures such as Antarctic research, the women had experienced sexual overtones and men had difficulties in serving under female executives (“Still an embattled minority” (1991).

All the well-known themes appear, one by one. Women as icons or symbols of something else, in this case the threat of communism, featured in press reports from the IGY. Blaming the individual as well as the collective for general inadequacy and incompetence is a common approach to keeping women out of largely segregated organisations. The jealousy theme is also classic. Sexual harassment and explicit discrimination are common practices that unfortunately go beyond the level of oral repression and resort to semi-violence. In polar areas, the snow, ice and cold are seemingly used as pretexts for practices that have been common in all societies throughout history. Moreover, al-
though a change of attitude might be expected in modern industrialised countries such as the United States and Great Britain, with its former Commonwealth partners, research in the Antarctic is an arena where discriminatory views from older times are given an airing in public. Rather than asking “how come,” the reluctance to welcome women to Antarctic services might be used as a kind of indicator of the state of the art in national gender equality policies.

In the *Encyclopaedia of the Antarctic* (Riffenburgh 2007) under the heading “Women in Antarctica” it is said that in 2007 there are female principal investigators from seventeen countries in the Antarctic (Burns 2007: 1092-96). By the mid 1990s a few countries had made a serious effort to have more women in various capacities on their expeditions. Besides the scientists and explorers, there were navy personnel and civilian contractors (Rothblum et al 1998). Obviously the number of female researchers has increased in the fields of atmospheric sciences, geosciences and life sciences, as well as in such activities as monitoring and conservation. So to what extent is this reflected in the accounts of female researchers and travellers and the few explorers? Is there still talk of the rare bird – the exceptional character who does not upset the prevailing gender order except in a symbolic sense?

Back in 1971, Pamela Young, the first female researcher on a summer expedition with the Australians, presents herself as a rare bird in Antarctica. Although she is a researcher in her own right, she went to Antarctica in order to accompany her husband. The material and size of her long johns, made for men, are deemed totally unsuitable; a pair could be produced in a material that suited her sensitive skin but she was not to count on any glamour. Her relatives consider that leaving one’s children for many months is not OK but a summer expedition is more or less acceptable. Not unexpectedly, the talk is about her absence, not her husband’s (Young 1971). Nan Brown (Brown 1971) accompanied her husband to South Georgia and participated in whale hunting. She claims to have been the first British woman in those waters, although this is debatable. Besides describing herself as an Antarctic housewife, Brown clearly states that she is a rare bird in wonderful natural surroundings and her mission is to support her husband. During the 1970s, with the spread of feminism, such coquette storytelling becomes increasingly sporadic as women all over the industrialised world demanded increased access to Academe.
In the late 1970s and during the 1980s, expeditions by a number of female explorers gave rise to the concept of ‘polar heroines’ (Burns 2007). These people are extremely keen to underline their competence for their particular missions and express this in a manner that would be unthinkable for a male researcher. His endowments would be taken for granted and would therefore hardly be mentioned. Another difference seems to be that women are less likely than men to represent their undertaking as some kind of nationally significant mission.

In the accounts from the 1990s, something qualitatively new has occurred. The women present themselves as independent subjects. Their mission is to do research, quite often motivated by some collectively useful purpose such as environmental protection. Or, their tasks are of a highly specialised nature: to build a station or perform logistic operations, for example. Their visits to Antarctica are legitimate. Travellers pose questions and there are also some explorers. Neither female nor male explorers feel ashamed, although a few mishaps entailed costly rescue missions, not very popular among Antarctic operators.

My impression is that the rare-bird syndrome has tended to lose its grip, possibly due to the increasing numbers of women. Still, other features continue to hark back to the traditional gender order, for instance a continuous awareness of one’s own capabilities. This strong presence of self-reflectiveness is seldom to be found in travel accounts by male researchers and explorers. In the texts I have read there seems to be a double standard. On the one hand there are well-formulated descriptions of competence, capabilities and a full endowment of the necessary education and courage, etc. On the other hand there is often a mention of doubts, of shifting degrees of self-esteem or the fear of judgement by others. In an interview Maryann Waters, the first woman to lead a New Zealand research expedition, presents her abilities and risk awareness, capabilities that would have been virtually self-evident for a man in her position (“First Woman to Head Antarctic Programme” 1991). Somehow Waters clearly felt the need to convince her readers of her suitability as an expedition leader.

Robin Burns, a female Australian researcher who chose the dramatic title Just tell them I survived not only refers to the physical aspects of survival in Antarctica but also alludes to a research station’s psychological environment in the early 1990s (Burns 1990). Her story is partly about the piecemeal development of women’s access to the
continent and partly about her personal struggle to do research in a fascinating landscape despite all the opposition and unpleasant sexist practices. Besides her own expressions of low self-esteem, far too many male colleagues had low expectations of female performance. Again, the issue of sexual harassment is raised, as well as the incompatibility of taking care of children and doing science. Burns scrutinises the institutional arrangements that assist or hamper a well-functioning family life. Further she discusses the need for female researchers to present themselves as heroines. Although women do go to Antarctica partly for romantic reasons (adventure, admiration of old polar heroes etc), they are careful not to mix that up with their research mission.

Other travel accounts from modern times include reports from exclusively female expeditions, both explorative and more research-oriented, such as the one to the German Niemeyer station in 1999. Some documentation from these expeditions has underlined gender identity in the performance of psychological and ethnological research. Corresponding studies with a gender-sensitive outlook on all-male parties are comparatively rare. Another under-researched theme is friendship between men and women. The American Eileen Raneey, a member of the ice pirates, the US Navy’s helicopter division, writes about the true friendship between herself and her male colleagues (Johnson 1995). Friendship, solidarity and her readiness to use her competence to solve crises of all sorts are important features of her professional life. Eileen is able and prepared for long-term isolation. She is a doctor, ready to react to fires, explosions and other sorts of accident and one of her tasks is to re-fuel (a sometimes dangerous job). Again we find the need for the author to reassure us of her far-reaching capability and competence. The message is that being a general practitioner is not enough; the capable woman must combine two or even three careers. The women from all sorts of professions interviewed in Rothblum et al (1998) testify not only to their work and their joy over being in Antarctica but also to the lost time with their children.

Another rare theme in the travel accounts from this period is friendship between women on expeditions. One notable exception is the text from Gina Price and Pene Greet, who kept in touch while they visited one pole each for research purposes (1980 and 1990). They both convey the feeling of having unique experiences, though with a strong sense of solidarity based on their gender identity (Greet & Price 1995).
My impression of women in science in the decades 1970–90 is that there was some hesitation about whether or not women were on an equal footing with men doing research. Although the number of female researchers had grown and several formal regulations had made it easier for women to do research in the polar areas, the travel accounts continue to show informal “rules” aboard ships and on stations. Further, the women scientists express sentiments of low self-esteem despite a full-blown educational career. Women also refer to a constant bad conscience for being away from their children.

Among the explorers there are also some modern heroines. Helen Thayer, the first woman to reach the magnetic North Pole on skis, in 1988, describes not only the physical and geographical obstacles but also the psychological impediments she encountered (Thayer 1993). As for the Antarctic, female heroines started to circumnavigate the continent in sailing boats in 1971. In 1974, an all-women expedition aimed to cross the continent with skis and sleighs but a delayed start caused them to break their journey at the South Pole station so that they would not miss their return ship. (Rothblum et al 1998). In 1983 a mixed private party deliberately let their ship become ice-bound for a winter season. Monica Kristensen organised a dog-sleigh expedition in 1986–87 to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Roald Amundsen’s quest for the South Pole. Like the party in 1974, however, Kristensen was forced to abandon her tour in order to reach the ship for her return. A few years later, in 1992–93, a group of women undertook to ski to the South Pole (Burns 2007). The stories have some features in common. One is the strong fascination with the landscape and the expected hardships. Explorers have to bring enough food and equipment, including weapons in the Arctic, to enable them to survive. This confrontation with danger is common to all explorers. What distinguishes the accounts by female explorers is the insights into their gender identity. The reader is accordingly told about their particular endowments and capabilities. They are alpine guides, well prepared, or simply very special in their skills and suitability for their mission. Their visit is entirely legitimate. Nevertheless, in the account of her ski tour to the South Pole in 1994, the Norwegian Liv Arnesen raises the theme that good girls don’t go to the South Pole (Arnesen, 1995). Several of the modern heroines also nourish the memory of the old-timers, such as Scott, Amundsen, Shackleton and Nordenskjöld. Al-
though most women in their accounts distance themselves from historical masculinist ideals of heroism, they tend to relate to the danger, isolation and escapism which the landscape inspires. The opportunity to test one's limits against the hardships of climate seems to attract all adventurous people.

Woman's right to exist mainly as an appendage to men seems to be a time-honoured theme, from the whaling era up to the present. There is a travel account by a (female) researcher that features a female cook/nurse, Tina, who had some difficulty in deciding whether or not to join a mixed winter station (three women and six men). In the end she did and the author chose to end the story by speculating about Tina's chances of remaining single (Garrity 1999). Although it was not until 1995–96 that mixed parties were allowed at the German station Neumayer, such constructions of gender tend to conserve old prejudices. In my view, it would have been more worthwhile for Tina herself to have portrayed her work and her double function as cook and nurse. As it stands, the account not only raises the issue of heteronormativity but also presumes that a cook/nurse is primarily concerned with romantic relationships rather than with her professional ability. Would the author have embarked on similar speculations about a female scientist, like herself? Or about a male scientist?

The saga about Tina further illuminates the fact that traditionally, women in service and support functions have been slightly more acceptable, or at least acceptable earlier, than female scientists. Support, care and domestic tasks were what first provided a place for women in Antarctica, from wives to women cooking, cleaning and performing telegraph duties on whaling and sealing ships. Their supportive functions were also provided at the “base camps” of polar researchers. The Antarctic Wives Association of Australia reports regular activities since 1965 and every now and then arranges for wives and children to travel to Antarctic bases in order to visit husbands and fathers (“Memorial Newsletter” 1991). This is a function of the quasi-military organisation of Antarctic services, where people are expected to serve for 12–18 months. In the commemorative text consulted here, the authors ask who these stoic women are, what they think of the Antarctic grip on their husbands and what they do for such a long time without their husbands. While I doubt that we will be given a proper insight into the lives of all these women, they evidently manage to survive
whether or not their husbands are present. In my view, the discourse
on who should be in the Antarctic continent is further cemented.

To sum up the variety of arguments against women’s presence in
Antarctica, there is a strong resemblance to men trying to keep women
out of the professions that use blue lights, uniforms and weapons. It is
only recently that the police force, the ambulance and rescue services
and the army ceased to be highly segregated in some countries; they
still are in most countries. The arguments have been a lack of facilities,
restrooms and dormitories; frailty and bad temper; the impact on men
and male work; jealousy, romance etc.; women should not be separated
from their children and aging parents. In the case of polar research,
there has been an unfortunate fusion between exclusion mechanisms
in Academe and the military, although the exclusion of women rests
on different ideological foundations (Lewander 2004). Most countries
have managed to solve the practical problems posed by mixed par-

ties without much difficulty. The arguments about deficiencies have
almost ceased, as have those about women’s negative impact on men.
The organisational arrangements for working periods and other mat-

ters could be further improved but today there are aircraft, air strips
etc, on a scale that was not possible just a few decades ago. Still, wom-
en continue to be a minority of those doing research in polar areas,
but this is also a consequence of the uneven distribution of men and
women in disciplines of relevance for modern polar research. In most
countries, such research is still not a natural arena for female research-
ers since traditional gender ideologies have tended to survive and take
on new guises with regard to women in Academia.

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Feminine Poles
Josephine Diebitsch-Peary’s and Jennie Darlington’s Polar Narratives

ABSTRACT From the Eurocentric or Anglo-American point of view, the Arctic and the Antarctic have often been perceived and presented as the last masculine preserves on earth. Outside constructions of the masculine Arctic obviously also disregard the circumstance that people have lived in the region for very long, but there are also non-indigenous women who have spent time or lived in both areas, to begin with usually as companions to their husbands, but in later years as researchers in their own right. Two early narratives about life in the far North and the far South, respectively, are Josephine Diebitsch-Peary’s My Arctic Journal: A Year Among Ice-Fields and Eskimos (1893) and Jennie Darlington’s My Antarctic Honeymoon: A Year at the Bottom of the World (1956). Both women describe life in the polar areas in ways compatible with the gender ideologies of their time. In many respects, however, Diebitsch-Peary’s account presents more radical suggestions for how women might live in the masculine polar environment than Darlington whose conclusion is that the Antarctic should remain a men-only continent.

KEYWORDS Josephine Diebitsch-Peary, Jennie Darlington, gender ideology, Arctic, Antarctic, Robert E. Peary, Ronne Antarctic Research Expedition, feminisation
At the end of the first chapter of the ghost-written account of Jennie Darlington’s year in Antarctica, *My Antarctic Honeymoon: A Year at the Bottom of the World* (1956), the first-person narrator says: “I was in a man’s world, where I was expected to carry my own duffel bag and follow in my husband’s footsteps” (16). In the book, the polar region is constructed as a masculine space where social codes like politeness to women do not apply. This male-coding of the region is of course not restricted to one particular text. In the 1950s, the Arctic and the Antarctic were among the few geographical areas that were still regarded as male preserves. The idea was widespread at least in European and North American culture, and Sherrill Grace points out that in the Canadian context one of the most common stories of North “is the narrative of courageous men battling a dangerous, hostile, female *terra incognita* to prove their masculinity and the superior force of their technology” (2007: 16). This masculinisation of the polar world has its roots in the nineteenth century when, according to Lisa Bloom, “polar exploration narratives played a prominent part in defining the social construction of masculinity and legitimized the exclusion of women from many public domains of discourse” (1993: 6). Like war epics and business success stories, tales of Arctic and Antarctic expeditions function as repeated re-enactments of the classic hero-myth, where
men overcome dangers and compete for supremacy on a site liberated from the trappings and comforts of western civilisation (David 2000: 63-82). The numbing cold and the stark surroundings mean that the quests for glory and self-discovery stand out even more prominently in the texts. The setting is subordinated to the heroic narrative as only another of the hero’s trials.

The structures of the polar narratives are therefore likely to be the heroic quest story, the Bildungsroman or the struggle for supremacy, all of them forms that until very recently have excluded women as main characters. When women narrate Arctic and Antarctic experiences, they consequently need to either adapt their stories and narrative functions to such male-oriented models or create new formats altogether. In line with Jennie Darlington’s comment, the double bind of living under men’s conditions but without the autonomy that should accompany the situation informs many women’s polar stories. On the one hand, women polar travellers challenge the middle class gender order that prescribes a domestic existence and a subordinate role for women by journeying to regions regarded as unsuitable for women. They carry their own duffel bags. On the other hand, they frequently reaffirm conventional femininity by making it clear in their texts that however provocative the act of polar travel may be to the traditionalists at home, they do not really subscribe to any radical ideas concerning women’s place in society. They are happy to follow in the footsteps of men, as it were. Women’s writing about the polar areas seem to establish a feminine pole, or a female tradition of narrating Arctic and Antarctic experiences that governs both Josephine Diebitsch-Peary’s 1893 book *My Arctic Journal: A Year Among Ice-Fields and Eskimos* and continues in Darlington’s *My Antarctic Honeymoon* from 1956.

Peary’s and Darlington’s works need to be read in the context of the gender anxieties at the end of the nineteenth century and the backlash phenomenon of the post-war 1940s and 50s. Although their publication dates are more than sixty years apart, the texts are remarkably similar in how the women at the centre of the first-person narratives are presented. A key element in both narratives is that western women in the Arctic and the Antarctic serve as a reminder of civilisation and sex. Accordingly, Josephine Peary’s journal contains a great deal of information about how she creates an American upper-class home in the wilderness and Darlington frequently returns to the idea
of how her presence makes it more difficult for the male expedition members to “forget women” (95). Their roles are presented as relational and sexual, and they go to the poles to accompany their husbands. The works do not describe the realities of being a woman at the North or the South Pole, however, and it is important to distinguish between the lived and the written experience. As opposed to hero narratives centring on men, these women’s encounters with polar conditions and a predominantly masculine culture are subordinated to an overall story of love and true feminine values.

The gender-coding of the texts is to a large extent a matter of perceived audience, and main justification of the works is that they provide a female perspective on regions that are usually described by men. Especially in the nineteenth century, as Mary Suzanne Schriber points out, women travel writers “capitalized on the ideological construction of gender to advertise their work as different from men’s; thus in a crowded market they distinguished their works for readers” (xxviii). Josephine Peary’s journal can be directly related to a general feminisation of travel literature in the second half of the nineteenth century that coincided with both an increased interest in the woman question and with the heightened emphasis on propriety and family values associated with the Victorian period. This feminisation of the genre frequently manifested itself in a privatising, subjective tone of writing and a particular focus on domestic details and women’s conditions (Foster 1990: 24). It is reasonable to assume that by the mid-1890s, there existed a fairly clear set of expectations of what a woman’s travel book should contain that continues to apply at the time of Jennie Darlington’s 1956 account.

In Josephine Peary’s journal, the author’s wifely role is made explicit even before the beginning of the text proper. The Introductory Note from the publishers begins by describing the expedition of the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences, Robert E. Peary and the other members of the team and the main results of the venture before finally introducing Mrs. Peary as a homemaker on Greenland. Her ethnological observations are mentioned almost as an afterthought (Introductory Note 1894: 1-2). The Note is followed by a Preface by Robert E. Peary emphasising that the book has been written only after considerable persuasion from friends and that Josephine Peary has no wish for publicity and fame (3). Given the fact that she later made
a career of writing about her Arctic experiences in the photo-books *The Snow Baby* (1901) and *The Children of the Arctic* (1903) this declaration needs to be understood as the traditional modesty disclaimer that opens works by women writers from the Early Modern period onwards. The main function of the statement is that it aligns Josephine Peary with conventional models of femininity. The same is true with the remainder of the preface where Robert Peary states that “a desire to be by [his] side” was Josephine Peary’s main reason for coming to Greenland (3). He expresses a certain pride in her physical fitness and pluck, but undercuts these ideas by highlighting the domestic nature of her part of the experience. Close to the area where explorers like Elisha Kent Kane, Adolphus Greely and Isaac Hayes suffered their Arctic trials,

this tenderly nurtured woman lived for a year in safety and comfort: in the summer-time climbed over the lichen-covered rocks, picking flowers and singing familiar home songs, shot deer, ptarmigan and ducks in the valleys and lakes, and even tried her hand at seal, walrus, and narwhal in the bays; and through the long, dark, winter night, with her nimble fingers and ready woman’s insight, was of inestimable assistance in devising and perfecting the costumes which enabled Astrup and myself to make our journey across the great ice-cap in actual comfort. (Peary 1894b: 5)

One result of this persistent focus on feminine values is that Robert Peary’s foreword gives the impression of protesting too much. The final passage of the preface makes clear that he, too, is responding to a feared or experienced criticism: “That neither Mrs. Peary nor myself regret her Arctic experiences, or consider them ill-advised, may be inferred from the fact that she is once more by my side in my effort to throw more light on the great Arctic mystery” (5). It remains clear that from Robert Peary’s point of view, his wife has no role in the Arctic separate from his project. But Josephine Diebitsch-Peary was no mean photographer and the fact that she published her journal shows that, in spite of the modesty declaration, she had things to say and observations of her own to convey. Nevertheless, it is not only her husband’s account that feminises her, but her own text actively contributes to shaping her feminine image as well.

The subtitle of Diebitsch-Peary’s journal is *A Year Among Ice-Fields*
and Eskimos, introducing the idea that the narrative will concern barren, bleak and in western terms uncivilised regions. Yet the first impression conveyed is of Greenland nature as an object of beauty: “Never had I seen so many different wild flowers in bloom at once. […] Never had I stepped on moss so soft and beautiful” (12). Relating an episode of big game hunting when the expedition members shoot a
polar bear, Josephine Diebitsch-Peary is primarily concerned with the bear’s appearance: “A very, very pretty sight he was, with black snout, black eyes, and black toes” (26). On their camp-site in McCormick Bay, flowers “bloom in abundance” (32) and the first item of clothing she really feels in need of is “an old-fashioned sunbonnet” (40). Through these repeated references to a gentle natural world, the initial section of the narrative actually forms a counter-discourse to the idea of cold barrenness set up in the subtitle. This may to some extent be understood as a means of feminising the Arctic and figuring the region as woman-friendly, but it is also a narratological device that goes back to early accounts of the North and is repeated in most travel books about northern locations. By undercutting generally accepted preconceptions, the writers strengthen their own textual authority.

The feminising tendencies can be more clearly seen in Josephine Peary’s descriptions of her role as a representative of refined civilisation and her responsibility for the social life of the expedition. Each member’s birthday is celebrated with a special dinner, and she includes several menus in her text:

Mock-turtle soup.
Stew of little auk with green peas.
Broiled breast of eider-duck.
Boston baked beans, corn, tomatoes.
Apricot pie, plum-duff with brandy sauce.
Sliced peaches.
Coffee. (38)

This particular meal was accompanied by bottles of Liebfraumilch and Sauternes, and with a few exceptions, could have been served in a well-to-do American home. She relates how she lays on a Thanksgiving (82-83) and a Christmas dinner (95) and how she issues invitation cards to the expedition members for an “At home” on New Year’s Eve 1891 to 1892 (99). Before going on a hunting trip with her husband, she pins a card on the door of their hut “out of regard for ‘social custom’”: “Have gone to Toooktoo Valley for two or three days’ hunt. Visitors will please leave their cards” (54). The idea of sending out invitation cards or leaving visiting cards among a small, confined group of Arctic explorers is of course ludicrous and the descriptions do not carry the suggestion that society rules should apply in the camp. Instead, they sig-
nal the style of life Josephine Diebitsch-Peary was used to and would have felt proper at home. In addition, they indicate that she addresses a female, middle-class audience of fairly conventional tastes. Her frequent descriptions of house-cleaning continue to build up this image of proper femininity and emphasise that although the party live under sometimes very difficult conditions far north, she, at least, does not let her standards of cleanliness and neatness slip (81, 91, 106, 168). In her text, Diebitsch-Peary constructs herself as a lady, implying that her primary task on the expedition is to be a reminder of civilisation and home. The chivalry her presence inspires is illustrated, for instance, through an account of a deer hunt when she has to be carried across a stream (49-50). Her feminine sensibilities are brought to the fore in the description of the end of the hunt when she confesses that she cannot force herself to kill the wounded animal (52). Even though she lives in a man's world, she remains a model of genteel femininity.

The contrasts established in the text contribute to this picture of exemplary womanhood, although they are not drawn up along gender lines but follow ethnic divisions. Like most colonial observers at the time, Diebitsch-Peary's places the indigenous Greenlanders in a lower order of humanity (see Pratt 1992, Grewal 1996, Blunt and Rose 1994, and others). Reporting on the results of a walrus hunt she comments, with no sense of incongruity, that the meat would be used “for dog food and as an occasional treat for our Eskimo family” (46). When she lays on a Christmas meal for the Inuit congregation in McCormick Bay, her purpose seems specifically to be to mock her guests' manners: “It was amusing to see the queer-looking creatures, dressed entirely in the skins of animals, seated at the table and trying to act like civilized people” (97). The disparaging remarks draw added attention to her own refinement and form an important part of her presentation of herself as a western, civilised woman in uncivilised surroundings.

The list of topics Shirley Foster has identified as particularly common in women's travelogues includes “appearance, costume and manners of women; details of domestic life such as household management and culinary habits; behaviour towards children; marriage customs and female status” (24). In accordance with these selective criteria, Diebitsch-Peary concentrates more on the Inuit women than the men, provides a description of how to make pemmican (59), comments on the custom of wife-exchange (85), relates how a widowed
woman had had to strangle her youngest child to be eligible for a new marriage (87) and describes the procedure of an Inuit divorce (135-36). But her ethnological authority is seriously compromised when she discloses, quite far into the text, that she has never entered “an Eskimo hut” (125). “Hearing about the filth and vermin was quite enough for me,” she explains, and when she is forced to take shelter in an igloo, she is disgusted (125-27). She presents it as particularly problematic to have to watch the Inuit women undress, with no concern for their visitors. But the episode is nevertheless included in the text where it provides both exoticism and erotic titillation, and Diebitsch-Peary’s expressions of embarrassment rather functions to again emphasise her own elegant delicacy. As Kristi Siegel condenses the strategy, to “get an audience, a woman needed to provide material that was reasonably exciting; to keep an audience, she needed to remain a lady” (2).

Like numerous other early travel writers, Josephine Diebitsch-Peary notes that she at first cannot distinguish the sex of the Inuit...
she meets (42, 70). Like the other descriptions of the Inuit in her text, these, too, emphasise her refined status and suggest that upholding the demarcation lines between male and female is an important aspect of what constitutes civilised life. An illuminating counterpoint to her inability to discriminate between Inuit men and women is an episode she does not include in her book, when the Inuit hunter Equ who has come to McCormick Bay specifically to see the “white woman” turns out to be equally unable to discern the sex of the American visitors. Looking closely at both Robert and Josephine Peary he finally asks: “Which one is the woman?” (“Taissumani” 2005). When culturally and socially determined distinctions are absent, sexual categories are difficult to ascertain, regardless of the home culture of the observer. There are no signs of such an awareness of the cultural aspects of gender identity in Diebitsch-Peary’s journal, however.

My Arctic Journal is concluded with a text by Robert E. Peary, describing his and his companion Astrup’s journey across the Greenland ice cap. There are some notable differences between his text and that of his wife. For obvious reasons, Robert Peary presents himself as primarily a scientist and only secondarily a family man and he continues to stress Josephine Peary’s role as his helpmeet. The severe cold and Arctic dangers that are so conspicuously absent in Diebitsch-Peary’s text are very much present in his narrative, and although he includes what could be regarded as domestic details in his text, the purpose of the information is primarily scientific, as when he gives advice on how to keep scurvy at bay (Peary 1894a: 240) or provides useful pointers as to suitable clothing and provisions for future expeditions (237-40). The text prepared for the party’s return to the US, where Peary began to present his use of native technology as an important factor for his success, stressing its suitability and reliability. Michael F. Robinson suggests that there were other important reasons behind his advocacy of Inuit equipment, however. Towards the turn of the nineteenth century, there was considerable scepticism as to the blessings of modernity and mass culture, and polar exploration could be constituted as the ultimate rejection of the modern world. In Robinson’s view, Peary tapped into this mood by parading in Inuit clothing at his public talks and promoting native – pre-modern and non-western – expedition gear (120). The threat of over-civilisation was accompanied by a threat of emasculation, but both could be counteracted by encoun-
ters with the wilderness and what was understood as a more primitive lifestyle (Robinson 2006: 123). In response to such feelings, Peary presented Arctic exploration “as a test of manhood rather than a test of machines” (Robinson 2006: 126). But Josephine Diebitsch-Peary’s narrative disturbs this back-to-basics polar image to a considerable extent since she continually shows how she does not reject civilisation by going to Greenland but on the contrary, maintains it as far as she is able. There is a jarring discrepancy between the two texts, despite the fact that they were published in the same volume. Robert Peary’s text creates a masculine hero who can show his true mettle only unfettered by urban civilisation whereas Diebitsch-Peary’s journal ventures just a few steps outside the boudoir. It seems an inescapable conclusion that both Robert Peary’s and Josephine Diebitsch-Peary’s projects are closely intertwined with the gender anxieties of the late nineteenth century. Their narratives take the forms they do not because of the writers’ biological sex, but because they write to historically specific understandings of masculinity and femininity in a context where the success of their future expeditions relies on not offending any financial backers.

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Gender anxieties were a prominent feature also of the cultural climate of 1950s America when men struggled to recapture their positions after the Second World War. During the war years, women had done what had previously been considered men’s jobs and a return to the housewife role was certainly not universally welcomed. Women who nevertheless opted for a domestic life had to come to terms with the fact that this was no longer the automatic choice. For both men and women, the 1950s were a period of readjustment and insecurity as it became more and more obvious that it would not be possible to re-establish pre-war conditions. Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) was one of the first attempts to diagnose the problem as a matter of gender trouble, but the issue informs fiction, journalism, TV and film throughout the late 1940s and the 1950s. It is therefore quite logical – although disappointing – that Jennie Darlington’s conclusion in *My Antarctic Honeymoon* (1956) is that Antarctica is no place for women (205).
Darlington’s narrative was ghost-written by Jane McIlvaine and begins in 1946 when Jennie Darlington first meets her husband-to-be Harry. It is a “strange, unsettled time” (17) and Harry is described as clearly out of place at the party where they meet (19). Throughout the text, he is depicted as forceful, uncompromising and uncomfortable in small spaces, and these characteristics are obviously seen as what makes him a successful explorer:

His was a search for simplicity. Because of his directness, his blunt, sometimes hurting honesty, his lack of guile, and his individualistic approach to life, he seemed complex. And, just as he found himself unable to sit comfortably in average-sized chairs, he found it difficult to fit into contemporary civilization. (27)

For Harry, an Antarctic expedition is a way to return to the security of soldiering where everybody knows his place and authority is unquestioned. Antarctica is the peacetime equivalent to war: the “challenge without the killing” (47). It is also a place where his masculine virtues are more important than his lack of formal education. Jennie Darlington, on the other hand, is presented as a cultured, civilised being who understands “tall buildings, gray pavements, and the gaiety of multicoloured hats in display windows” (11). These civilised qualities underscore an image of helpless femininity, and Jennie’s relation to Harry is shown as subordinate The couple’s hierarchical positions are made clear from the start:

Then I remember how he went to the door, opened it and, without waiting for me to precede him, went on out and down the steps. It was the first of a series of doors Harry was to open and through which I, caught in a kind of whirling helplessness, was to follow him. (21)

Since going to the Antarctic is nothing that Jennie Darlington herself can take credit for, and as a result, it cannot be presented as liberating in feminist terms. On the contrary, Darlington emerges as even more conventionally feminine when set against the stark natural environment and the overwhelmingly masculine atmosphere in the Antarctic camp. Her role is primarily to function as a contrast, and the narrative is equally concerned with definitions of masculinity as femininity.
The rationale of the narrative is the incongruous combination of the inhospitable, uncivilised life in the south polar region and the utterly civilised custom of honeymooning and the text is organised as a series of binary contrasts which correspond to traditional notions of masculinity and femininity. It is only Jennie’s honeymoon, however, not Harry’s, and when they are to take possession of their new quarters she reflects: “I had a last, lingering, bridal-like thought. I wondered if it would occur to Harry to carry me over the threshold. It was a silly, feminine thought, as out of place in this man’s world as I felt” (147). The view that Antarctica is “the one spot left in the world where a woman can’t go” (38) is continually juxtaposed with the idea that it can offer “that inner peace men find only in an all-male atmosphere in primitive surroundings” (38). The polar area is used as an argument in the gender debate in order to show that despite all the examples of the war period, there really are parts of the world that only belong to men. As in the case of Robert E. Peary, an expedition to the Pole is presented as a means of reinforcing the importance of physical prowess and counteracting threats of feminisation. In gender terms, the Antarctic is a safe place.

RARE, the Ronne Antarctic Research Expedition 1946-48, set off in January 1947, led by the Norwegian-American Commander Finn Rønne and with rather shaky finances. Since Edith “Jackie” Rønne was to accompany her husband on the first part of the journey, Jennie Darlington was allowed to come too, and only a short time before the women were to go back to the US, they were offered the opportunity to stay on for the duration. For Harry Darlington, “taking a woman down there was unthinkable, as unthinkable as a woman co-pilot in his navy bomber” (92), and he immediately refuses to allow his wife to go. Seven other expedition members sign a paper stating that the presence of women would jeopardise their “physical condition and mental balance” in the Antarctic and declare that they will leave the ship in Valparaiso if the women are allowed to stay on (93). No rational arguments are presented, and the question is treated as almost entirely a matter of gender propriety: “It’s just that there are some things women don’t do. They don’t become Pope or President or go down to the Antarctic!” (94) Harry says. The episode gives rise to Jennie’s only expression of feminist awareness in the text:
The way he had laughed in the elevator, his abrupt “no” angered me. Inside me something hardened. That moment it was as though his words had sparked a determination to prove myself. I did not know how or where, or what would happen. Nor did I consider the possibility of going to the Antarctic beyond this immediate, instinctive reaction. (91)

Although Harry has to give in on this occasion, it is clear that the two women’s loyalties in every other respect belong to their husband. The expedition team gradually splits into two opposing factions, with Rønne as the leader of one group and Harry the other. The conflict is carefully avoided in Rønne’s account of the expedition but given considerable prominence in Darlington’s text. Unlike Rønne, Jennie Darlington was not bound by any expedition decorum, and could therefore publicise the episode freely (Roscoe 1958: 421). As Darlington reports the matter, it becomes another argument against allowing women or at least wives in the Antarctic, and a result of the frictions is that any friendship between Jackie Rønne and Jennie Darlington has to be ruled out since it might be construed as disloyalty to their husbands (202). Their husbands’ needs and wishes have automatic primacy.

To fit in during her time in the Antarctic, Jennie Darlington attempts to conceal any hint of a feminine attitude and become invisible:

My job was to be as inconspicuous within the group as possible. I felt that all feminine instincts should be sublimated. I believed I should ask for no favors nor expect any, not even from my husband. Whereas woman’s natural instincts are to play up to men, I felt it imperative to play down. [...] Any drawing of attention to myself as female, any gesture or indication that I expected certain courtesies, any show of bossiness or pretense would have been resented. (203)

She consequently chooses the opposite strategy to Josephine Diebitsch-Peary. Whereas Diebitsch-Peary’s project is to maintain a civilised, feminine-coded culture in their Greenland camp, Darlington tries to be one of the men. Their accounts represent two fundamentally different attitudes to women’s participation in polar exploration. Diebitsch-Peary’s journal illustrates that it is perfectly possible
for women to go to the Arctic without sacrificing their femininity while Darlington arrives at the conclusion that women's constitutions render them unfit for the Antarctic and place unreasonable demands on the male expedition members:

Taking everything into consideration, I do not think women belong in the Antarctic or on a similar expedition. The polar regions belong to those who know and respect them and can survive. Any weak link damages the whole. Man's best instincts are protective. He should not be put in the position of endangering his own safety for another, lesser physical human. (205)

The circumstance that she becomes pregnant during their stay is used as one of the strongest arguments against women going to the poles. Diebitsch-Peary, in contrast, makes considerable capital out of the fact that their daughter Marie is the only white child born so close to the North Pole through her photo-books about the “Snow Baby” and her Arctic friends.

Although Darlington sees no place for women in the Antarctic, she nevertheless acknowledges the importance of what she regards as feminine touches. In her text, this domestic femininity is represented by the members of the nearby British expedition. After a visit to the British camp, one of the members of the American team paints a scene of domestic bliss, describing how the British scientists gather around their tea-table to darn their socks and mend their gear:

But the most striking thing about those Britishers was a sense of unity as well as that British quality of inward certainty and assurance that made them unashamed of doing feminine chores with detailed domestic precision.

They were restrained but hospitable, and the hut was warm and cozy. There was a boxful of purple pansies with yellow centers, and there were lettuce, mustard and cress for the table. They told us Mrs. Bingham had furnished the gay scarlet-checked curtains for the windows. There were cheerful lamp-shades on which the men had painted topical sketches. Water was boiling for tea and cake, and hot scones sent wonderful odors from the Esse stove in the small kitchen off the main room. (116)

In the absence of women, the men can take on what would otherwise be regarded as feminine duties without their masculinity being
compromised. At first, the British group seem to form a stereotypical contrast to the Americans as posh and effeminate with a hint of degeneration, but gradually they come to represent true civilisation and a welcome relief from the petty quarrels in the American camp. Even so, there is no sense in the text that the Americans could have followed the British example, and the emphasis on frontier-style masculinity remains throughout.

It is a well-documented tradition in exploration writing that the land is depicted as feminine, either silently awaiting the male explorer's penetration or violently resisting it, but in both cases, tamed and controlled in the end (Rose, McDowell). Mapping and naming are the most obvious symbols of this attitude, and in Robert E. Peary's text, for instance, the map-maker's right to name and thus imaginatively control various land features is mentioned on several occasions (Peary 1894a: 227, 229). Jennie Darlington attaches to the tradition of imagining nature as a woman, but somewhat surprisingly, she selects exclusively negative signs of femininity:

Antarctica, to me, is female. Fickle, changeable, unpredictable, her baseness disguised by a white make-up of pristine purity. Suddenly she strips off her gloves, rolls up her sleeves and, with the ferocity of a wolf, springs at your throat. The deceptive white mask becomes a shrieking, demoniacal darkness, a savage reiterations of her sheathed power, lest man let down his guard and forget.

All that day she had been a lady, disguising her true nature in windless silence, burying her treachery beneath layers of snow garments. (262)

The female Antarctic, as Darlington imagines it, is immoral and violent, a demon who treacherously disguises herself as a lady. Corresponding to Margaret Atwood's description of the Canadian North, the far South is thought of "as a frigid but sparkling fin de siècle femme fatale, who entices and hypnotises male protagonists and leads them to their doom" (3, original italics). Darlington compares Antarctica with mythological man-eaters like Lorelei and the sirens (110), and it seems the only reasonable conclusion that the one who will be able to conquer the continent is a heroic de-sexualised man who is not tempted by such feminine guiles as deceptive but dangerous beauty and siren songs. Such a hero cannot be compromised by the presence of women
who threaten his masculinity by suggesting the possibility of a softer life.

Although Jennie Darlington receives attention as one of the first two women to over-winter in the Antarctic, she does not use this circumstance to further women’s equality with men. On the contrary, she expresses stereotypical ideas about women and supports a traditional distribution of gender roles. Rather than expressing any dissatisfaction with the return to a more circumscribed existence for women in post-war America, her story contributes to a 1950s backlash against feminism. Josephine Diebitsch-Peary’s *My Arctic Journal* and Jennie Darlington’s *My Antarctic Honeymoon* can be viewed as direct responses to the gender anxieties of their respective times. In both cases, the works promote conventional gender roles but the effects of the philosophy differ in fundamental ways. For Diebitsch-Peary, the solution is to make the polar region itself woman-friendly by introducing civilised customs and polite social codes. For Darlington, the polar area remains a man’s world and the only possible option for a woman is to avoid going there. Despite its earlier date and more conventional social context, Josephine Diebitsch-Peary’s narrative advocates the more radical alternative.

NOTES


3 Establishing a tradition is obviously a matter of the critic’s choice of works, and there are several other traditions that could be created based on a different selection of works. Adventure and survival stories such as Liv Arnesen and Ann Bancroft with Cheryl Dahle, *No Horizon is So Far: Two Women and Their Extraordinary Journey Across Antarctica* (Oxford: Perseus, c. 2003) or Jerri Nielsen with Maryanne Vollers, *Ice Bound: One Woman’s Incredible Battle For Survival at the South Pole* (London: Ebury, 2001), could be included in a tradition where women’s strength and stamina under harsh conditions are foregrounded. Jenny Diski’s reflective and personal *Skating to Antarctica* (London: Granta, 1997) belongs in a completely different subgenre where the Antarctic experience is used as the counterpart to a journey of self-discovery. All the books are based on the writers’ experiences of the poles, however, and in various ways, they take part in
the cultural debates on gender of their times.


5 This (western) inability to distinguish the sex of indigenous people can be found in accounts of travel from almost every part of the world. Examples include the comment that under the Chinese umbrellas, “it was excessively difficult to tell the men from the women” (14), Albert Richard Smith, *To China and Back: Being a Diary Kept, Out and Home* (London: Egyptian Hall, 1859, published for the author); “The Arab women, it is said, do not appear; and, except in the case of Moorish females, it is rather difficult at first to distinguish the men from the women” (195), David Thomas Anstead, *Scenery, Science and Art: Being Extracts from the Note-Book of a Geologist and Mining Engineer* (London: John van Voorst, 1856); “From the similarity in point of dress, it was often extremely difficult to distinguish the men from the women” (138), William Rae Wilson, *Travels in Russia &c, &c* (London: n. p., 1828)

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“This Dream of Arctic Rest”
Memory, Metaphor and Mental Illness in Jenny Diski’s *Skating to Antarctica*

Night falls fast.
Today is in the past.

Blown from the dark hill hither to my door
Three flakes, then four
Arrive, then many more.

(Millay 1981: 18)

ABSTRACT Jenny Diski’s *Skating to Antarctica*, an autobiographical text published in 1997, engages with Antarctica not only as a literal place, but also as a location of the mind. Her imaginative response to what has traditionally been perceived as an inhuman landscape allows her to view the Polar regions as a mental space, signifying a complex system of images and symbols. Diski’s physical voyage functions primarily as a metaphor for her attempt to locate an interior psychological terrain, the discovery of which will dispel her profound sense of self-estrangement.

This article contends that Diski’s use of the interconnecting metaphors of skating, ice and frozen or numbed emotions provide a rich tapestry of associations which serve to illuminate the process whereby
traumatic experiences can subsequently manifest themselves in depression and mental illness. In this respect, the narrative, which explores the author’s passion for emotional oblivion and obsession with the colour white, represents a desire to experience her life as an accretion of meaning.

KEYWORDS Antarctic, metaphor, cold, depression, skating, whiteness

In an interview conducted in 2004, Jenny Diski attempted to explain the overwhelming sense of estrangement she feels when interacting with other people, and how difficult it is for her to bridge the distance of mutual separation through conventional forms of social contact. “People interfere with my apprehension of reality, they muddy how I can know myself, confuse my understanding of how I am, which is centred around the notion that solitude is a state of perfection” (Brown 2007). This confession partly explains why Diski’s writings revolve around issues such as isolation, emotional disconnection, fear of intimacy and a fragmented or non-existent sense of self. Interestingly, in the same interview, Diski revealingly claims that “I write cold” (Brown 2007) and states that her admiration for the novels of Nabokov is based upon the fact that “There’s something cold there that I seek and respond to” (Brown 2007). It is possible to view Diski’s journey to the coldest region on earth – the Antarctic – and the subsequent recollection of the expedition in *Skating to Antarctica* (1997), as representing not only an investigation into her attraction to a frozen physical terrain, but also an attempt to chip away at the “ice-block” of her emotions. It is my contention that the text, which alternates between graphic childhood scenes, a shipboard cabin and her bedroom at home, utilises the metaphors of ice, cold and skating to illuminate a process whereby traumatic experiences can subsequently manifest themselves in an overwhelming tendency to “freeze” all emotion.

*Skating to Antarctica* – a volume of autobiography published in 1997 – fruitfully engages with the idea of Antarctica as a mental, as well as a physical, space. Diski makes clear that there is an interior component involved in her journey to the Antarctic which takes the form of “a dream of Arctic rest” (Spufford 1996: 80). Her physical voy-
age functions primarily as a metaphor for her attempt to locate an interior psychological terrain, the discovery of which will help dispel her profound sense of self-estrangement. In this respect, the narrative, which explores Diski’s passion for emotional oblivion and her obsession with the colour white, represents a desire to experience her life as an accretion of meaning. The text, which is given a grounded, dramatic contrast through her daughter’s curiosity about her mother’s past, depicts Antarctica as a gateway to an inward, spiritual territory. As Diski herself has written: “We explore ideas as readily as we do the physical geography of the planet and neither kind of exploration is untainted by the other” (2002: 181). Diski’s physical journey to what has been called “a perfect nullity of a landscape” (Spufford 1996: 1) symbolises an assignment of an entirely different sort; that is, an attempt to renegotiate her relationship to a painful family history and the crippling effects of a serious depressive illness. It is necessary to begin, however, by situating Diski’s quest within the historical, cultural and literary framework of Arctic exploration in order to understand what she describes as “the voice of this otherness calling to the soul and making individuals pit themselves against an inhuman landscape” (2002: 184).

David McGonical and Lynn Woodworth have claimed that Antarctica – sometimes known as “the Crystal Desert” – is “the only continent that, from the perspective of human thought, began as a sophisticated concept emerging from a series of deductions” (2002: 114). Although in the seventh century BC, Parmenides divided the world into five climatic zones not unlike those that we know empirically today, it was not until the fifteenth century AD that the world began to gain accurate knowledge of the polar areas; indeed, the Antarctic remained virtually unexplored until early in the twentieth century (McGonical & Woodworth 2002: 149). Explorers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries sailed in frail wooden vessels into the harshest environment on earth and gradually a true picture of the Polar regions emerged. As Francis Spufford has noted in his seminal *I May Be Some Time: Ice and the English Imagination*, attitudes to the barren world of ice and to the literal and figurative meaning of exploration had acquired a particular intensity by the mid-eighteenth century (1996: 80). This conflation of the actual and imaginary meaning of the world of ice was appropriated by influential members of the British establishment who recognised
its usefulness to the imperial designs of the British Empire. One such prominent individual was the Marquis of Lothian who stated that “[t]he main thing [is] that the work of Antarctic research should be done by Englishmen” (2002: 80). Given such a climate of jingoism and expansionism it was perhaps inevitable that the placing of the Union Jack at the South Pole was seen as epitomising civilisation’s struggle to overcome the alien. Equally prevalent was the view that the ability to test physical and mental boundaries of endurance was somehow a quintessential English trait. Indeed, by the time of Scott’s bid for the Pole, both to conquer the elements and to be conquered by them, was viewed as endowing both nobility and moral worth (2002: 87).

In Arctic Dreams: Imagination and Desire in a Northern Landscape (1986), Barry Lopez notes how the need to exert oneself against formidable odds and to cast one’s character in the light of ennobling ideals was profoundly shaped by Victorian sentiment. It is for this reason that the literature of Arctic exploration frequently pits the resolute will of the explorer against the menacing fortifications of the landscape. Military metaphors which defined the relation between the body and the environment of the Antarctic were frequent in Polar writings, particularly during the early stages of British exploration. The records of Arctic expeditions presented to the public were arranged to bolster a preconceived vision of the impersonal hostility of the region, and as the journals and biographies of the explorers make clear, themes of quest or defeat, of aspiration and accomplishment constantly reappear. As Lopez points out, in such writings:

The land’s very indifference to human life ironically becomes a point in its favour. In the most extreme form of disassociation, the landscape functions as little more than a stage for the exposition of [...] scientific or economic theories, or for national or personal competitions. (1986: 358)

There was, not infrequently, an additional reason for undertaking such a journey; the belief that one might derive not only prestige, money and social advantage, but also notable awards and public adulation. In this respect, Arctic history could rightly be said to represent “a legacy of desire” (Lopez 1986: 309).

However, there has also existed an alternative kind of Polar history, one which has in Francis Spufford’s words been “largely uncharted”
and which is of particular importance in relation to Diski’s *Skating to Antarctica*. It involves an aesthetic attraction to the cold regions of the Earth, and views the Antarctic as more a location of the mind than a literal place. This perspective represents an imaginative history of Polar exploration as opposed to a strictly chronological one, and embodies a genealogy markedly different from a straightforward chronological chain of events. As Spufford has noted, theories such as Edmund Burke’s concept of ‘the sublime’ mingled both with the Romantic Imagination and the perceptions of the Victorians to produce a fervent interest in the metaphorical significance of sights that were deemed “great though terrible” (1996: 18). Such experiences were believed to relieve “the pressure of actuality” and often involved psychological fantasy of the most compensatory kind. When experience of the Antarctic and the Romantic imagination merged, the infinitude of Antarctica’s landscape allowed fantasy to replace real scrutiny and it became possible to view the region as a mental space, signifying psychological extremes and an internalised picture of the mind. Such perspectives inevitably made the Antarctic available to the idea of contrast and metaphor. A Classic example of this approach is Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818), where the North Pole is hardly depicted as a real place at all, as its extreme cold functions as a metaphor for human estrangement. In Shelley’s text, the Arctic is used as a setting for a philosophical debate concerning what is, or is not, human, personified in the battle between flesh and ice. Another example of this imaginative response to the Arctic landscape occurs in Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847). In a scene from the novel, Jane picks up and begins to read Thomas Bewick’s *History of British Birds*, in an attempt to alleviate the intolerably repressive atmosphere of her Aunt Reed’s household. Her attention is caught, not by Bewick’s detailed descriptions of various seabirds, but by his evocative representation of the Arctic landscape. In the heroine’s reaction to Bewick’s descriptive powers, it is possible to perceive how the cold, icy landscape becomes available as a place that aids the process of psychic integration through the stimulation of a complex system of images and metaphors. Jane is said to be transfixed by:

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[. . .] that reservoir of frost and snow, where firm fields of ice, the accumulation of centuries of winters, glazed in Alpine heights
above heights, surround the Pole and concentrate the rigours of extreme cold. Of these death-white regions I formed an idea of my own: shadowy, like all the half-comprehended notions that float dim through children’s brains, but strongly impressive. The words in these introductory pages connected themselves with the succeeding vignettes, and gave significance to the rock standing up alone in a sea of billow and spray. Each picture told a story, mysterious often to my undeveloped understanding. [. . .] With Bewick on my knee, I was then happy. (2006: 19)

In *Skating to Antarctica* Diski confesses that when she first read two classic works of Arctic literature – Cherry-Garrard’s *The Worst Journey in the World*, and *South*, Ernest Shackleton’s account of the 1914 *Endurance* voyage – she was “immediately lost in wonder” (1997: 120). Nevertheless, although she admits to an abiding interest in Shackleton’s expedition, Diski makes it abundantly clear that her trip to the Antarctic is not related to a fascination for tales of exploration or “derring-do.” Neither is she interested in “a search for roots,” or adding to the sum total of human knowledge. Rather, her journey is intimately linked to an overdue attempt at reconciling herself with seriously traumatic childhood experiences. In an article dealing with the perceived deterioration of traditional family values, originally published in the *Guardian* newspaper in July 2003, Diski admitted that: “It is possible that I’m not the best person to ask about family. Mine was a sorry mess, a ground zero of attempted suicides, mental institutions, dismal disappointments, destitution and love (or something called love) turned nasty” (2002: 191).

First abandoned by her father at the age of six, Diski was forced to live with foster parents after her mother suffered a nervous breakdown and was interned in a mental hospital. Her father returned briefly to the household when she was eleven, then absconded permanently towards the end of her time spent in primary school. Sent to a progressive boarding school on the advice of several well-intentioned social workers, she was expelled at the age of fourteen. After experiencing genuine destitution and penury when temporarily reunited with her mother, Diski was admitted to her first psychiatric hospital a matter of days before celebrating her fifteenth birthday (1997: 97).

The theme of dysfunctional family relationships is central to *Skating to Antarctica* and clarifies the complex reasoning behind what she
calls “her irrational desire to be at the bottom of the world in a land of ice and snow” (120). Diski employs the metaphor of ice, together with her memories of ice-skating, in order to illuminate the ambivalent feelings she has towards her mother. Recalling that the physicality of ice “is quite easily accessible to the memory bank in each of my senses” (15), she contrasts the profoundly insecure environment in which she grew up with the euphoric sense of solidity and wholeness she experienced when engaged in the act of ice-skating. Whereas living with her mother on a daily basis is described as akin to “skating on newly formed ice” (130), the ritual of actual ice-skating confers confidence and an empowering sense of control. Remembering that “[a]ll the clumsiness disappeared. Suddenly I was perfectly equipped” (18), she claims that:

to skate is magical, as you find yourself coasting free and frictionless. The clear distinction between yourself and the ice you are on strengthens the sensation of your own body and its capacity both for control and for letting appropriate things happen. (16)

Diski uses the metaphor of ice-skating to examine the concepts of ‘space’ and ‘boundaries’, ideas that are intimately linked to her attempt to re-enact the aforementioned experience of psychic integration. Although for Diski’s mother, her daughter’s fascination with the ritual of ice-skating gives rise to associations of future fame and limitless wealth, for the skater herself the activity is imbued with an increasing awareness of the contrasting experiences of entrapment and freedom. Intensely aware that the rink itself is surrounded on all sides by a strategically placed, firm wooden barrier, Diski claims that the accompanying sense of enclosure symbolises “as cruel a reminder of reality as any that has been devised” (8). The act of skating itself, however, has associations of freedom and flight. Claiming that “[d]reams of flying are the nearest you get to the feeling of being on the ice” (15), her voyage to the vastness of the Antarctic can be viewed, not only as an attempt to circumvent the actual physical and emotional confines of her life – symbolised by the metaphor of the ice rink – but also as a desire to re-engage with the sense of wholeness that skating once provided. In this respect, it is noticeable that, at one point in the narrative, she refers to Antarctica as “an endless ice rink” (27), suggesting
that she views Antarctica, with its momentous landscape and open vistas, as symbolising a degree of freedom impossible to attain within the limitations of conventional boundaries. It is also significant that the metaphor of flight, with its connotations of freedom, is alluded to when Diski subsequently sails on a Russian-owned passenger ship and enters the Antarctic sound for the first time. While lying in her bunk, she experiences what she terms a “three-part syncopation” (75), involving her body, the sea and the boat itself: “it felt like I was drifting gently, unaided, through the air, the way the seabirds do catching billows of wind, rising on one and then falling on the next, which lifts them up again” (75).

In the text, the metaphor of ice is used in other, equally complex ways, as a means of denoting the reality of various emotional states. Whereas Diski’s recollections of skating evoke memories of both solidarity and metaphorical flight, her descriptions of traumatic childhood experiences and the constellation of conflicting familial loyalties to which she was once afflicted, lead her to employ metaphors of ice which reflect her sense of emotional vulnerability. Such depictions frequently suggest the experience of falling rather than flight; for example, on one particular occasion, when her mother has returned home after a lengthy sojourn in the local mental hospital, Diski mentions that “now the surface of the world itself had turned to delicate ice and we all tiptoed around” (192). Interacting with her mother on a regular basis is, according to Diski, akin to “skating on thin ice” (15). When analysing the emotional fall-out of her parents’ relationship, she frequently uses metaphors of ice which convey images of impermanence and brittleness. It is tempting therefore to view her journey to the Antarctic, with its vast panorama of solid, impermeable ice, as an attempt to reconnect with the feeling of harmony and wholeness that she has previously only felt when skating.

The belief that her voyage to the ice-covered Antarctic involves an attempt to recapture such an exquisite sense of mental harmony experienced when ice-skating is subtly endorsed by Diski herself when she describes the debilitating bouts of clinical depression that have afflicted her since early adolescence. Diski has written revealingly – both in her fictional and non-fictional works – on the paralysing effects of depressive disorders, particularly when experienced in their most severe form. Her vivid descriptions of the illness’s bleak, barren,
yet agitated qualities arguably represent the most affecting and evocative passages in the whole of *Skating to Antarctica*. Although she has shown impatience with the modern predilection for pathologising the extraordinary and is resistant to the “intellectual slackness” of radical attempts to politicise the margins of human experience, she has admitted that, regarding her own experience, depression represents “a lifting of the veil” (1997: 182). She states “what was important – the only thing of importance – during a depression, was that I should see things as they really are” (182). She discovers that what actually lies behind the fatiguing and gathering murk of a chronic mood disorder is “blankness,” and argues that the only “truth” that resides within the residual chaos of what William Styron has referred to as “neurological deficit” (2004: 81) is that of oblivion. Revealingly, for Diski, oblivion represents, not an existential void, but “a place of absolute peace and quiet” (1997: 226), where emotion, consciousness and pain are absent. Her need to enter the psychic state of essential nothingness that oblivion represents is directly attributable to her propensity of “freezing” her emotions during her formative years. If the chaos surrounding her childhood experiences necessitated a form of emotional withdrawal, simply as a means of survival, her desire to embrace a psychological region which has oblivion as its central characteristic can be viewed as a protective device to shield herself from the emotional turmoil of catatonic depression. It represents a place where pain – and emotion, in all its forms – is absent, an area where it is possible to experience the nullification of emotion in a pure and pristine form.

This is why, in Diski’s mental universe, the idea of absolute absence holds as much attraction as it does revulsion. Her hankering for oblivion is therefore inseparable from her conviction that at the source of all existence lies “a blank reality” (1997: 120). The Antarctic, with its elongation of essential emptiness symbolises a physical place where her hunger for blankness and oblivion can be assuaged. She explains that “what it came down to was that I wanted to be there, in a white, empty, unpeopled, silent landscape” (120). Her relationship to the geographical space in which she hopes to indulge her passion for oblivion can therefore be seen as intensely metaphorical. She visualises it as being “filled with a singing silence. It is an endless ice rink. It is Antarctica” (27).

Diski’s engagement with the themes of absence and oblivion is
connected to her obsession with the emotional and intellectual significance of the colour white. Describing her expedition to the Antarctic as “a hopeful journey into whiteness,” she comments how “I wanted white for as far as the eye could see and I wanted it in the one place that was uninhabited” (212). It is through her discussion of the negation of colour and its link with her own depressive illness that Diski contributes her most interesting insights into the mental landscape of what have been termed “the affective disorders” (Styron 2004: 38).

*Skating to Antarctica* posits the belief that the vivid whiteness of the Arctic wilderness represents the realisation of absence in its most perfect form. Noting that “colour was light and made the world liveable in, but from time to time it was necessary to get to the blank reality” (182), she suggests that it is possible to achieve a state of oblivion by immersing oneself in a landscape that personifies the negation of colour. To Diski, the Antarctic represents the best possible destination: a place where the peculiarities and shapes of landscape are concealed behind an endless vista of whiteness. By positioning herself – both physically and metaphorically – inside the whiteness of the Antarctic, she hopes to dispel her own sense of personal estrangement. Equally, in an environment where there are “no shadows [and] space has no depth” a movement into perpetual whiteness induces a welcome confrontation with the ever-present threat of personal extinction. With the obliteration of the vagaries and hues of colour, the glittering whiteness drains, not only the physical surroundings of visual variety, but also Diski’s fear of annihilation. As she admits, “Death, of course [...] is what it is. A toying with the void that finally toys with us. In the face of the waiting I can’t escape, I head straight for its image and rest there for a while” (182).

Diski’s explanation for the significance of whiteness to what she self-deprecatingly refers to as “my mental health recuperation plan,” is replete with literary allusions, the most notable being Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick* (1851). As the whale that Ahab pursues in the novel is said to be “a dreadful white,” Melville includes a chapter on the manifest meaning of whiteness, entitled “The Whiteness of the Whale.” Like Diski, he views whiteness as symbolising absence and negation, yet his interpretation of such emptiness is markedly different; believing that the retreat of the recognisable colour patterns from the Polar seas is suggestive of “a void behind the appearance of
things" (Spufford 1996: 90), Melville rejects the idea that it may be possible to initiate a peaceful, psychic migration into the Arctic landscape. In fact, the visible absence of colour is indicative of "a colourless [...] atheism from which we shrink" (Spufford 1996: 90). In Melville's philosophy, the horror of whiteness lies both in its utter transparency, and the reminder it gives that nature is merely a signifier, marking the realisation that "the palsied universe lies before us like a leper" (Spufford 90).

For Diski, however, broaching the void through an immersion in whiteness induces attraction rather than terror and the originality of her approach becomes clearer when attempting to contextualise Skating to Antarctica within the genre of similar, non-medical writings on chronic depression. Even a cursory reading of the numerous first-hand accounts of the devastating effects of the condition, reveals a uniform tendency to invoke its reality through recourse to images of "darkness" or "blackness." William Styron, in his aptly named memoir Darkness Visible, evokes "depression’s dark tempest" and notes how "the grey drizzle of horror induced by depression takes on the quality of physical pain" (2004: 49). The British writer Alan Garner, who reputedly suffered from a serious depressive illness for many years has written of an occasion when, on looking out at a beautiful summer morning, he felt "the light [...] going out. I could see, but as if through a dark filter" (Jamison 1997: 104). Roman Gary, a notable French author and notorious bon vivant, who committed suicide while still a comparatively young man, described his own depression as "this leaden and poisonous mood the colour of verdigris" (Styron 2004: 18). Andrew Solomon succinctly summarises the ubiquitousness of such images:

Depressives use the phrase ‘over the edge’ all the time to delineate the passage from pain to madness. This very physical description frequently entails falling into the abyss. [...] When asked, people describe the abyss pretty consistently. In the first place, it is dark. You are falling away from the sunlight towards a place where the shadows are black. (Solomon 2001: 27)

Even if Diski’s depiction of depression is remarkably free of such images it is clear that her urge to, as she puts it, “write white and shades of white” (1997: 120) also functions as a rite de passage in which she is forced to confront a plethora of conflicting emotions regarding her
mother. Diski’s mother – a Londoner of Eastern European descent – vanished from her only daughter’s life when the latter was in her late teens and has never attempted to renew contact in any shape or form. Prior to her journey to Antarctica, Diski becomes disconcerted when her own daughter Chloe informs her of an intention to seek information regarding her maternal grandmother’s whereabouts. After unsuccessfully attempting to persuade Chloe of the utter futility of the enterprise, Diski is forced to recognise the real possibility that, upon her return from Antarctica, she may well be confronted with news concerning her mother’s death. Although she claims that “[a]t the idea of her being dead, I could not summon a single thought, nor the hint of a feeling” (46), Diski seeks, both consciously and unconsciously, a negotiation with her past in order to understand the reasons why she feels such an overwhelming indifference to her mother’s fate.

In this respect, although *Skating to Antarctica* is essentially a memoir – albeit one that employs a somewhat unconventional narrative form – there are clear elements of the traditional *Bildungsroman* in the text. The process of maturation that operates as a central tenet of the *Bildungsroman* is most evident in the damaging effects that her parents’ manipulative personalities have had on her ability to feel. When recollecting the early years of her life, Diski reverts to metaphors of ice to explain why she “didn’t seem to know […] how to feel how I felt” (1997: 80). She recalls that her mother’s initial pleasure in watching her daughter skate was quickly replaced by a profound disillusionment:

> My mother dreamed of making me into an ice princess but something went wrong. What she got, to her bitter disappointment, though I think the irony may have been lost on her, was an ice maiden of another kind altogether. (19)

Diski’s withdrawal into a state of emotional nullification and coldness can be viewed as a defensive response to her mother’s frequent hysterical outbursts of rage. Suffering from chronic disappointment at the manner in which her life has embraced professional and personal failure, Diski’s mother’s overwhelming sense of despair manifests itself in dramatic, exhibitionist displays of uncontrollable emotion, during which “she would accuse and curse. Her resentment and disappointment lived on the surface of her skin, trembling on her lips,
glaring in her eyes, ready to flare at any moment” (1997: 102). When faced with such a volatile environment, Diski acquires a predilection for emotional absenteeism and by appearing to be without feelings, she attempts to successfully negotiate and circumvent the chaos that is rapidly enveloping her world. Interestingly, her desire to become an “ice-maiden” is accentuated by her creation of an alternative persona called “Jennifer,” a creative invention whom she feels to be both intimately related to, and yet distant from, her “real self.” Jennifer – who is described as “part separate incarnation and part remembering self” – serves as a means by which Diski can investigate, not only philosophical questions concerning the nature of memory itself, but also how her childhood propensity to project feelings of pain onto a fictive alter ego, served a valuable function: “Jennifer as story suited me. I could look at her, think about her [...] from the distance of a storyteller or historian” (185). It becomes clear, however, that this attempt to distance, divide and compartmentalise experience ultimately leads to a freezing of emotion. Diski herself admits that, throughout the period of her mother’s mental illness, “emotionally I was as absent, I think, as she was” (196). This proclivity to disengage emotionally continues even after Diski is forcibly removed from her home and is sent to live with her foster parents: “I took care to keep my distance, and if I longed for comfort and love, I would under no circumstances ask for it” (193).

Diski’s investigation into her past also reveals a further, disturbing, indication of why she became emotionally frozen; when physically revisiting the domestic setting of her formative years, she discovers, not only evidence of her father’s frequent philandering, but also the fact that she has been sexually molested by her parents. It is not surprising therefore that her initial sense of emotional reconnection to her mother, and the beginning of the abeyance of her ice-queen persona, should centre upon a period prior to such an event; that is, the period of gestation in her mother’s womb. While sailing to South Georgia, the combination of the internal rhythm of the sea, together with the rocking of the boat, reminds her of the unavoidable fact that at one time she was suspended in the amniotic fluids of her mother’s body. Commenting that “I wondered that I had never thought about the fact of my mother – my mother – as my gestation site” (78), she admits: “It came to me as an incredible thought, but the strength and sensual-
ity of my delight on the being on the ocean made it certain. It must have been nice in there” (78). The realisation that “it must have been nice in there” and the subsequent thawing of frozen emotion that accompanies it is combined with a growing sense of perspective, verging on acceptance: “Some things I’ll never get away from, not even in the furthest reaches of the South Atlantic, but with a bit of effort, I can recognise them as a passing wind blowing through me to the bone, an act of nature that isn’t personal” (166). When she writes that “[a] great sense of freedom settled over me like a pure white goose-down quilt” (220) we are aware that she is referring to more than just her appreciation of the seeming infinitude of the Antarctic’s uninhabited regions. Indeed, this new-found equilibrium remains evident even when Diski returns home to London and is informed that her daughter has received a death certificate stating that Rachael Simmons (Diski’s mother) had died in March 1988, at the Royal Sussex Hospital, Brighton.

*Skating to Antarctica* knowingly engages with Antarctica, not simply as a literal place, but also as a location of the mind. Diski’s imaginative response to what has traditionally been perceived as an inhospitable landscape allows her to view the Antarctic as a mental space, signifying a complex system of images and symbols. The interconnecting metaphors of skating, ice and numbed emotion provide a rich tapestry of associations which imbue the Antarctic region with more than just physical actuality. By revealing the link between depression and emotional blockage and critically engaging with the associations traditionally centred on the experience of oblivion, Diski’s text ultimately challenges many preconceived ideas concerning literary representations of the Polar regions. Her literal voyage has functioned primarily as a symbol for her attempt to locate an interior psychological terrain. The depiction of “frozen” or cold emotions is foregrounded in a complex usage of vulnerability and chaos, alternated with perceptions of solidity and permanence. These themes are examined within a fragmentary narrative structure which emphasises the experience of repetition, and dichotomisation – past/present, literal/metaphorical, cold emotions/emotional hysteria, etc. – and which also embodies elements of a traditional detective story. Part memoir, part travelogue, it frequently subverts its serious intentions with an occasional dose of levity, not to say irony. The latter quality is most evident in the fact that it is only in the Antarctic – a region traditionally viewed as
being cold enough to freeze all feeling – that Diski is able to escape emotional rigidity and reconnect with feelings that have been blocked and frozen in time.

Although Diski’s engagement with what could fruitfully be termed the “psychic margins” of human experience and her recognition of the intermittent attractiveness of oblivion could perhaps be viewed as verging on the idiosyncratic, her insight into what she terms “the pressure of actuality” (1997: 115) that constitutes the human condition imbues her text with universal significance. At the conclusion of a narrative in which she admits that “the truth or otherwise of a book about Antarctica and my mother [doesn’t] depend upon arriving at a destination” (1997: 220), it is precisely this sense of recognition that leads to an acknowledgement that Diski’s text engages with metaphors of ice, skating and frozen emotion in a manner that is ultimately both insightful and stimulating.

**NOTES**

1 Jenny Diski was born in 1947 in London, where she has lived most of her life. At the time of writing (2007) she has authored eight novels and three books of travel, two collections and a volume of short stories.

2 As Lopez points out, this view of the Antarctic was reproduced in the European landscape painting of the period, the subject of which was British Arctic exploration: “The theme was remarkably consistent – a nation blessed by God, at war with the elements in a treacherous landscape. The Arctic they painted was a place beyond the pale of civilisation, a beast that preyed on virtue and enterprise” (1986: 226). An interesting comparison can be made here, with the luminest tradition in nineteenth-century American landscape painting which suffused the productions with what art critic John Russell has called “the healing light” of the Polar region (in Lopez 1986: 226).

**REFERENCES**


“Hatred was also left outside”

Journeys into the Cold in Le Guin’s
The left hand of darkness

ABSTRACT In Ursula K. Le Guin’s science fiction novel The Left Hand of Darkness (1969) cold is used on both literal and metaphorical levels as the main character, sent to the planet of Gethen, or Winter, undertakes an inner journey of self discovery. The first part of the article analyses the novel as a fictional travelogue to establish how the boundaries between Self and Other, between observer and studied, are constructed. Animal imagery, adaptation to the cold and the Gethenians’ androgy nous sexuality are aspects in focus. The second part of the article centres more specifically on how the cold functions on several levels in the novel. The harsh climate initially works as a divider between Self and Other, and the central themes of fidelity and betrayal are connected to the cold on both literal and metaphorical levels. However, the essentialising aspects of the cold come to erase these and other binaries and enable the protagonist’s understanding of both himself and the encountered culture.

KEYWORDS boundaries, self, other, cold, winter, travelogue, science fiction

“It is good to have an end to journey towards; but it is the journey that matters, in the end” says First Envoy to the Ekumen, Genly Ai,
the main narrator in Ursula K. Le Guin’s 1969 novel *The Left Hand of Darkness* (2003: 220). Ai spends three years on the planet of Gethen, or Winter as it is also called, and his mission is to incorporate Winter into the eighty-three planet strong Ekumenical Alliance. Due to complicated political machinations he is sent to a labour camp by the Commensals of Orgoreyn, and is helped to escape by Therem Estraven, the former Prime Minister of Karhide, now seen as a traitor. The two embark on a journey across the ice towards Karhide where Ai will be able to contact a spaceship crew in orbit around the planet. Although this objective is reached, Estraven is betrayed and killed. The journey within the journey, Ai’s and Estraven’s trek across the ice, proves to be a learning experience, and it is during their time together Ai learns to understand the Gethenians and form a friendship and bonds of love. In the process, he also comes to understand himself, after the pattern of the heroic journey.

In charting one Earth-born human’s contact with an alien, albeit humanoid, species and an alien world, the novel clearly belongs to the science fiction genre and Le Guin also introduces a few sci-fi elements, such as the ansible (a communication device), mindspeech (telepathic communication) and time-jumping. However, other types of texts are discernible. Fredric Jameson suggests the presence of at least seven genres within the work ranging from political novel to love story (1975: 221). Like Jameson, several critics have focused on the utopian elements produced mainly by the lack of constructed or physical gender roles and the pacifist message, elements which form an important background to the quest for identity of the central characters (Makinen 2001, Lensing 2006). In this article, the division between Self and Other – crucial to how Ai perceives himself and the Gethenians, respectively – is established through a reading of the novel as a fictional travelogue and of Ai as having traits associated with colonial exploration. Ai’s inner journey illustrates the process by which the positions of observer and studied, as well as the possibility of reversing the two are identified. This analysis further enables an understanding of the different functions of the cold in the novel. The harsh climate on Winter functions as both identifier (separating Self from Other), but importantly also as an essentialising factor, erasing cultural binaries and bringing out the characters’ true selves, making possible an understanding between them. The cold thus functions as an extended
metaphor, applicable to the Gethenians and their society, and to the main characters’ inner journeys.

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Travel writing as a genre is characterised by claims of authority and authenticity and the preface to the first chapter of The Left Hand of Darkness establishes that the text is framed as an official document. It is a “[r]anscript of Ansible Document 01-01101-934-2-Gethen … Report from Genly Ai, First Mobile on Gethen/Winter, Hainish Cycle 93, Eku- menical Year 1490-97” (1, original italics). Although the chapters that follow add different perspectives: an omniscient narrator when retelling legends from the planet, Estraven’s journal entries and a report by a female Investigator, Ai himself has assembled the documentation. James W. Bittner observes that Ai “knows that the truths yielded by any one of these narrative types he has collected will be partial because meaning is genre-bound” (1984: 110). That is, the official report from the Investigator carries a certain weight, while journal entries represent another kind of authenticity and the different voices carry their own, individual authority. However, explanatory footnotes inserted into the sections in which Ai is not a narrator (23, 223), and an appendix (302-4) indicate that Ai exercises some control over the text.1 Ai further claims that he will report things in the same way one tells “a story [because] Truth is a matter of the imagination” (1), and while this pronouncement questions the text as travelogue, there are additional features which instead strengthen such a designation. Whereas the bulk of the text is narrated in the past tense, giving the reader a sense of traditional storytelling, several sections, sometimes appearing in the middle of a past-tense narration and chronicling facts about customs, people and places are narrated using the present tense, in the manner of a travelogue. These features combine to give Ai’s story “an aura of factual accuracy” (Bittner 1984: 110) placing it firmly within the genre of the travel report in which truth claims traditionally abound.

The main narrator, the “I” as signalled by one of the connotations to his name, proclaims at the beginning of the novel that he needs alternative voices, because as an outside subject studying a civilisation he cannot fully understand he is unable to report truthfully: “I see and judge as an alien” (5).2 The disparity of his sources which he is
quick to acknowledge (1-2) draws attention to the multifaceted nature of the reality he faces, and the necessity of other perspectives to complete the picture. However, Ai’s view of himself as an alien needs to be seen in relation to the fact that he, by his own admission, successfully blends in with the Gethenians. “I had never had any trouble passing as a native, if I wanted to” he says, “among all the Karhidish dialects my accent went unnoticed, and my sexual anomalies were hidden by the heavy clothing” (56). He has depilated his facial hair, pretends his nose has been broken to explain its unusual shape, and is in most respects similar to the Gethenians. In a later chapter, Estraven says that: “One must know him to know him alien” (154). That is, to the uninitiated or to passing acquaintances, Ai’s ‘alienness’ is not apparent, but as friendships form, the boundaries between known and unknown which Ai himself experiences so acutely become discernible. Once identified, these boundaries also become possible to traverse.

Ai’s motives as well as his descriptions of both people and places can be situated within the colonial tradition and more specifically within the narrative mode of the anti-conquest. When asked the reasons for the Ekumen’s desire to make Winter into an ally he says: “Material profit. Increase of knowledge. The augmentation of the complexity and intensity of the field of intelligent life. The enrichment of harmony and the greater glory of God. Curiosity. Adventure. Delight” (34). Adhering to the “Law of Cultural Embargo” (136) he is restricted from imposing too much of his own knowledge on the encountered culture and can only use himself and a minimum of technological inventions to prove his points. The trope of the “anti-conquest” illuminating “strategies of representation” used by European travellers “to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony” has been analysed by Mary Louise Pratt in connection with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century travel writing (1997: 7). She states that: “Only through a guilty act of conquest (invasion) can the innocent act of the anti-conquest (seeing) be carried out” (66). Ai is by design the only Terran on Winter. As he phrases it: “One alien is a curiosity, two are an invasion” (208). He semantically distances himself from the ‘guilty act’ and reverts the gaze (he is the studied, ‘a curiosity’) while it is clear that he, too, is there to observe, to ‘see’. His insistence on the sentimental objectives of the journey, ‘increase of knowledge’ and ‘the greater glory of God’, further aligns him with the
anti-hero and the mode of the anti-conquest. However, these seemingly innocent objectives must be seen in relation to ‘material profit’ as well as to the judgemental way he views people and customs, asserting, as it were, Terran cultural hegemony.

The colonial dichotomies between Self and Other and between human and animal, prevalent in countless colonial narratives, are clearly established in the first chapter, and are in themselves suggestive of the cultural hegemony Ai wishes to uphold, as well as his particular way of seeing the encountered people. “Can one read a cat’s face, a seal’s, an otter’s?” Ai asks himself. “Some Gethenians I thought, are like such animals, with deep bright eyes that do not change expressions when you speak” (15). The difference between human and animal is established with the Terran culture as the one whose values are the norm and the lack of a response suggests the Gethenians’ inability to comprehend things or react in an ‘appropriate’ way. One individual is described as a primordial “wild animal, a great strange creature who looks straight at you out of his eternal present” (71) and while this characterisation adds an awe-inspiring aspect to the animal imagery designating the Other, it is also indicative of the fact that the Terran temporal system, another cultural construct used as the norm, is non-applicable.3

The Other as occupying an earlier stage of human development is another colonial convention Ai incorporates in his observations and translates to the planet itself. The lack of knowledge and modernity is not only presented as something negative, however. Instead, the eco-friendliness of Winter is stressed. “Winter hasn’t achieved in thirty centuries what Terra once achieved in thirty decades” Ai notes, but “[n]either has Winter ever paid the price that Terra paid” (99). The extent of the damage done to Terra is not clear, but the ecological and human ethics are emphasised also by the fact that the Gethenians do not wage war on each other, thus avoiding other forms of destruction. “They behaved like animals, in that respect; or like women” Ai reports. “They did not behave like men, or ants” (49). The animal aspects of the Gethenians’ peacefulness are here favourably compared to femininity. Significantly, the animal imagery is applied also to the masculine Self, and warfare is associated with the mindless, military behaviour found in parts of the insect world.

The difference between Self and Other is nowhere greater than
where sexuality is concerned, and it makes the Othering process problematic. “Cultural shock” Ai reports, “was nothing compared to the biological shock I suffered as a human male among human beings who were, five-sixths of the time, hermaphroditic neuters” (48). As his time-specific comment makes clear, the Gethenians’ asexuality is not permanent. Once a month they go into kemmer, a state in which they become sexually active and either male or female, but the randomness of this gendering and their mostly unspecific gender belonging disagrees with everything Ai knows. Mona Fayad argues that “[b]ecause the androgynes elude the eye of the observer, they become ‘the dark continent’ that is inaccessible to the colonizing masculine eye that seeks to reshape them” (1997: 64). Ai is a ‘human male,’ they are ‘human beings,’ that is, they are similar enough in their humanity to make him expect similarities, such as cultural gendered patterns which could be used to reinforce a difference between Self and Other or in this case between male and female. The lack of these similarities and the Gethenians’ asexuality in this way initially constitute sites of resistance to the Othering which takes place in Ai’s narrative, and this ‘dark continent’ of their personalities becomes the breeding ground for distrust.

Ai’s early relationship with Estraven is marked by his inability to understand the androgynous aspect and to categorically fix the Prime Minister in an assigned role as the Other. Ai reports:

I was still far from being able to see the people of the planet through their own eyes. I tried to, but my efforts took the form of self-consciously seeing a Gethenian first as a man, then as a woman, forcing him into those categories so irrelevant to his nature and so essential to my own. (12, emphases added)

The interactions between Ai and the Gethenians become problematic, not only because of his inability to set aside his own perspective, but because of language, as the added emphases indicate. Ong Tot Oppong, the first Investigator sent to observe Winter before Ai’s arrival, demonstrates an awareness of this problem and adds: “I must say ‘he,’ for the same reasons as we used the masculine pronoun in referring to a transcendent god: it is less defined, less specific, than the neuter or the feminine” (94-5). In this way, “it” may be less suited to describe
the Gethenians since they are human and actually contain both a male and a female side. Justine Larbalestier makes the succinct observation that Ai’s “use of ‘it’ keeps the Gethenians at arm’s length. His use of ‘he’ keeps this world of Others in the realm of the same” (2002: 103). That is, as a strategy to make the unknown familiar, and as such less frightening, Ai linguistically turns the Gethenians into males, the Terran gender category he is most familiar with.

Categorising people in terms of binaries does not mean an understanding of the opposite sex, however, and this is made clear when Therem Estraven during their time on the ice asks Ai about women. Ai notes that one’s biological sex is “the heaviest single factor in one’s life [...] determin[ing] one’s expectations, activities, outlook, ethics, manners” but comes to the conclusion that he “can’t tell [Estraven] what women are like” (234-5). Larbalestier argues that “[w]omen are the Other which shadows the text” (2002: 99) and as this conversation takes place when Ai’s journey towards self-discovery is well under way, he realises that the Other is not necessarily Estraven, the androgen, but the women he can never understand on his home planet because of the constructed and performative categories that have kept men and women apart.

The male and female aspects of the same person are progressively regarded by Ai as one way out of the binary thinking, and contrary to what the Investigator believes (94), duality is revealed to be an integral part of Gethenian society. The very title of the novel comes from a Handdara poem in which the importance of the double nature of all things is stressed:

Light is the left hand of darkness
And darkness the right hand of light.
Two are one, life and death, lying
Together like lovers in kemmer,
Like hands joined together,
Like the end and the way. (233-4, original italics)

After being read the poem, Ai muses: “You’re isolated, and undivided. Perhaps you are as obsessed with wholeness as we are with dualism.” Estraven answers: “We are dualists too. Duality is an essential, isn’t it? So long as there is myself and the other” (234, original italics). Ai’s com-
prehension of the dualistic nature of the Gethenians increases, which leads to questions concerning his own identity. He comes to realise the possibilities of crossing the boundaries between male and female, between Self and Other, within himself.

The opportunities which become available when gender ceases to be a defining factor have naturally appealed to critics and given rise to utopian readings (Jameson 1975: 226) and analyses critical of the feminism of the novel (Lefanu 1989: 137). In 1976, Le Guin claimed that gender is a minor theme compared to that of “betrayal and fidelity.” She further stated that one of the most prominent “symbols is an extended metaphor of winter, of ice, snow, cold: the winter journey” a metaphor which is intimately connected to both fidelity and betrayal (Le Guin 1992: 8). The harsh climate of Winter is indeed represented in various ways and serves different functions throughout the text, not only to the journey within the journey, producing fidelity to and understanding of both Self and Other, but also to illustrate how characters are defined by their reactions to the cold and how the climate comes to represent or erase important binaries. The binary of male and female is one of the constructions which will crumble in the cold, which illustrates that the gender theme works parallel to the themes of betrayal and fidelity, something Le Guin also notes in a revision of her article (1992: 8).

The animal imagery establishing differences between Gethenians and Terrans also emphasises the dichotomy between hot and cold features. The Gethenians are likened to “Arctic birds” and their manners and customs (such as their habit not to heat their houses) are in line with this “physiological weatherproofing” (28). Ai extends the animal imagery to himself, likening himself to “a tropical bird” and claims to be “cold one way outdoors and cold another way indoors, ceaselessly and more or less thoroughly cold” (28-9). As a Terran he is not adapted to the harsh climate and realises, it seems for the first time, that there are different kinds of cold and different levels of exposure to it.

Ai’s vulnerability to the cold is concretely exemplified as he, along with other prisoners, is taken to a labour camp (or Farm, as they are also called). He reports, looking out of the window of the van: “My breath had made a little ice-bridge between my lips and the mesh. I had to break this bridge with my fingers before I could turn away” (171). In this way, the cold itself captures him and even if Ai is able to
easily free himself, the analogy is extended. Estraven comments that “[t]hey did not kill people on their Farms: they let hunger and winter and despair do their murders for them” (188). The responsibility for the prisoners’ deaths is shifted from people to the cold, and the climate is also on more consistent duty at the Farm as “[i]n winter, they use winter itself to guard it” (195). But the cold also produces a sense of humanity, illustrated through the prisoners protecting each other from the cold, and through their recognition that some are less adapted to it than others. Each night in the van, Ai and two other prisoners are moved towards the centre of the group in a gesture of communal kindness. “We did not struggle for the warm place, we simply were in it each night” Ai says. “It is a terrible thing, this kindness that human beings do not lose. Terrible, because when we are finally naked in the dark and cold, it is all we have” (170). This is one of the first instances in which the cold is described as reducing everything unnecessary, leaving only the essentials within each being. The Gethenians’ sexuality, their ‘neuter’ state, which has previously constituted the main obstacle in Ai’s understanding of them, gives way to their humanity, the common denominator in this exposed situation. The ‘terrible’ aspect of the reduction is indicative of Ai’s growing realisation that the boundaries between Self and Other, crucial to his mental ordering of Winter, become blurred, leading him to question aspects of his own identity.

The cold functions in another, more benevolent, way to Estraven who has made plans to help Ai escape from Farm. “[T]he snow I had waited for was falling” he finally reports (187). To him, the snow becomes a means of camouflage; hidden in drifts and with movements obscured, Estraven can set the plan in motion. In this sense, and progressively through the ensuing chapters, the attitude to the cold changes. As Ai, wrapped in furs in a tent is “as well hidden as winter and wilderness could hide him” (193) the cold finally takes on the shape of a saviour rather than as a controlling and punishing device.

The personification of the cold echoes the first Investigator’s description of the climate as a reason for the peacefulness of the Gethenians.

The weather of Winter is so relentless, so near the limit of tolerability even to them with all their cold-adaptations, that perhaps
they use up their fighting spirit fighting the cold. The marginal peoples, the races that just get by, are rarely the warriors. And in the end, the dominant factor in Gethenian life is not sex or any other human thing: it is their environment, their cold world. Here man has a crueller enemy even than himself. (96).7

Contradictorily, the Investigator claims that it is not a human trait which poses problems for the Gethenians while simultaneously personifying the cold herself, making it into a human entity as she designates it an ‘enemy’. This personification is sustained as she closes her report: “I really don’t see how anyone could put much stock in victory or glory after he had spent a winter on Winter, and seen the face of the Ice” (97). On the journey across the glacier, Estraven describes a similar personification of the Ice, this time by giving it an ability to communicate: “There is nothing the Ice says, but Ice” (231). The capital letter in Ice seems to suggest a human presence and its authority is unquestionable. Similarly, when the travellers are isolated in the tent because of bad weather, the blizzard gains a voice.8 Ai reports that it “yelled at us, a three-day-long, wordless, hateful yell from unbreathing lungs. ‘I’ll drive me to screaming back’ I said to Estraven in mindspeech, and he, with the hesitant formality which marked his rapport: ‘No use. It will not listen’” (268, original italics). Again, the cold takes the form of a human threat, but one which will not respond and cannot be prevailed upon.

The novel’s central binary of reliability and deception, who to rely on and who to distrust, is also made apparent through climate-related metaphors. The winter which is just starting as Ai reaches the city of Mishnory is described as “unrelenting.” The climate, the “cold, sleet, ice, wind, rain, snow, cold, cold inside, cold outside, cold to the bone and the marrow of the bone” is connected to loneliness and isolation as Ai is in a place and in a position in which he can trust no one. In Mishnory, the buildings are “vague, their facades streaked, dewed, smeared. There was something fluid, insubstantial, in the very heaviness of this city...” This lack of definition translates to the inhabitants of the city who are also “a little vague, a little, just a little bit unreal [...] It was ... as if they did not cast shadows” (146-7). Tellingly, Estraven who has come to Orgoreyn to warn Ai, is described as “the only thing alive in all Mishnory” as he is concrete against “the even, vague gray-white of
the snow” (133). Again, the climate works as an essentialising factor. Estraven’s androgynous nature, the initial reason for distrust, becomes less relevant than his concreteness, his ability to leave shadows in these shadowless surroundings.

The binary of reliability and deception returns in significant ways on the journey within the journey, with snow and ice as both literal phenomena and as metaphors. The landscape on the glacier is a painful monochrome at first: “blinding and horizonless to the utmost north, a white, a white the eyes could not look on” (219). The white on white becomes dangerous as the travellers cannot properly judge what areas are safe: “[T]he sky white, the air white, no visible sun, no shadow: and the snow itself, the Ice, disappeared from under our feet” (243). Therem Estraven calls this condition “the Unshadow” (261) and the lack of concreteness parallels the situation in Mishnory since the travellers “need the shadows, in order to walk” (267). The absence of shadows further come to represent the lack of duality and Ai draws the Terran symbol of yin and yang, connecting it to the titular poem: “Light, dark. Fear, courage. Cold, warmth. Female, male. It is yourself, Therem. Both and one. A shadow on snow” (267). Yet again, Estraven comes to represent the needed concreteness, and trust is this time not hindered but rather enabled by his inherent gender duality. The male and female aspects of his being are compared to dark and light, and to the possibility of casting a shadow, of being able to continue the journey. Metaphorically, then, snow and ice enable Ai’s further understanding of that ‘dark continent’ previously constituting Gethenian sexuality.

The process of reaching a full understanding is slow, however, and Ai is still incapable as he is “locked in [his] virility” to completely feel at ease with Estraven’s androgynous nature. He describes Estraven as being “built more like a woman than a man, more fat than muscle” and when pulling the sled together across the frozen wastes compares them to “a stallion in harness with a mule” (218). In this comparison, Ai retains his own male sexuality, while Estraven becomes the sterile mule. Some days into the walk, Estraven goes into the kemmer phase and androgyny (or ‘sterility’ in Ai’s view) gives way to a temporary sexual gendering. The isolation of the wilderness then works to enable a further understanding between the characters. Estraven says:
up here on the Ice each of us is singular, isolate, I as cut off from those like me, from my society and its rules, as he from his. There is no world full of other Gethenians here to explain and support my existence. We are equals a last, equal, alien, alone. (232)

Each society is constructed by its categories and definitions, even the androgy nous society of Winter, but these constructions only carry meaning within the culture which has created them. In this sense, the isolation of the glacier works as the ultimate equalising force when reducing both travellers to nothing more than that, travellers.

The glacial cold and the isolation of the wilderness also work to bring out the characters’ true selves. Comparing how extremes have been used in science fiction, Jameson argues that heat is often used to illustrate the “dissolution of the body into the outside world, a loss of that clean separation from clothes and external objects that gives you your autonomy.” The jungle in these narratives becomes an “immense and alien organism” which threatens to engulf the character travelling through it. In contrast, the cold on Winter is “a symbolic affirmation of the autonomy of the organism, and a fantasy realization of some virtually total disengagement of the body from its environment” (Jameson 1975: 221–2). The essentialising aspect of Winter’s climate which has hitherto worked to establish common ground can in this way also work to reveal the characters’ inner selves and the contradictions inherent in these. Watching Estraven sleep, Ai concludes that: “I saw him now defenseless and half-naked in a colder light, and for the first time saw him as he was” (200). The strong and resourceful Estraven is revealed as having weaknesses just as Ai, ill equipped for the climate, is revealed to be unusually strong (227–8). The collapse of binaries and the resolution of contradictions are in this way produced by the cold itself and become illustrative of the inner journeys of both characters.

These realisations notwithstanding, the cold continues to divide them as Estraven is dependent on it for his comfort, while Ai cannot even fathom it: “The coldness of it [all] was perpetually incredible. Every morning I had to believe it all over again” he says (241). He is repeatedly frostbitten and has to rely on Estraven to massage the blood back into his skin. At one point one of his eyes freezes and Estraven “thaw[s] it open with breath and tongue” (243). The psychological
closeness which they begin to experience is thus paralleled by a physical closeness, produced by Ai's vulnerability, and the distrust between them dissipates. When closing the tent flaps at night, Ai says that “[d]eath and cold were elsewhere, outside. Hatred was also left outside” (245). The shared space of the tent becomes a symbol of their existence outside society and the animosity between them is revealed as only having a place outside their isolation, in a place and time where binaries still hold. Finally, Ai comes to the following conclusion:

I saw then again, and for good, what I had always been afraid to see, and had pretended not to see in him: that he was a woman as well as a man. Any need to explain the sources of that fear vanished with fear; what I was left with was, at last, acceptance of him as he was. Until then I had rejected him, refused him his own reality.[...] But it was from the difference between us, not from the affinities and likenesses, but from the difference, that that love came. (248-9)

Ai has reached the destination of his inner journey and formed an understanding of the Other. Significantly, however, this understanding is predicated not on becoming similar, but retaining while still accepting differences. There is not victory here, in the sense of persuading the Other to change or accept a certain world view. There is no conquest in the traditional sense, which is just what the Investigator predicted: to “win” means very little after having “spent a winter on Winter, and seen the face of the Ice” (97).

The end of the journey within the journey is followed by a re-entry into society, which proves fatal for Estraven and establishes that Ai’s outside view has shifted and that he now looks at his own culture from within Winter’s. This change of perspective is unsettling to him and the animal imagery previously applied to the Gethenians is now transferred to Ai’s own people as he meets with the spaceship crew he has been able to contact. Even their sexuality is seen as abnormal. Ai says that

they all looked strange to me, men and women, well as I knew them. Their voices sounded strange: too deep, too shrill. They were like a troupe of great, strange animals, of two different species; great apes with intelligent eyes, all of them in rut, in kemmer. (296)
In his reactions there is an echo of another fictional traveller’s: Gulliver’s responses to humanity on his return from the land of the Houyhnhms. The once known becomes strange, and established behaviours become barbarous once the inner journey has been completed.

Throughout the fictional travelogue, Ai has struggled to erect and enforce boundaries between Self and Other by privileging his own cultural categories and constructs. The journey within the journey and the extreme cold of Winter both work to erase these boundaries, the journey by becoming an exploration of the travellers’ own selves and the cold by essentialising existence, stripping away the cultural markers of what is known and what is alien. Duality, revealed to be central to both Gethenians and Terrans, in this way becomes a central trope enabling both trust and reliability, and the boundaries between Self and Other finally crumble in the cold.

NOTES

1 Even Le Guin, albeit tongue-in-cheek, establishes the authority of Ai, as she in her 1976 introduction states that he has “used up my ink and my type writer ribbon” (Introduction, n. p.).

2 In a thorough online analysis of the novel, Rebecca Rass draws attention to the multiple meanings of the central character’s name. “His name, Ai, discloses his three roles in the narrative: as I, the narrator who sees everything from his own limited point of view; as Eye, the observer who learns to see into people and events; and as Ai, a cry of pain.” (n. p.) Since Ai is an alien to the Gethenians, and since he uses sophisticated and to them unknown equipment, a fourth possible association to his name could be AI – Artificial Intelligence.

3 On Winter it is “always the Year One” (2).

4 The use of pronouns is a problematic aspect which Le Guin has addressed in her article “Is Gender Necessary? Redux”. In a 1976 version of the article she acknowledges the critique of her novel based on the fact “that the Gethenians seem like men instead of menwomen” putting this down, mainly, to her choice of pronoun, but that she “do[es] not consider this really very important”. However, in a revised version of the article from 1987 she states that she “now consider[s] it very important” and that she in a screenplay of the novel has “invented pronouns” to address the issue (Le Guin 1992: 14-15).

5 The Handdara is a religious Gethenian cult whose members specialise in foretelling.

6 The centrality of the climate and its variations works on basic semantic levels as well. “[T]hey have by my count sixty-two words for the various kinds, states,
ages, and qualities of snow; fallen snow, that is. There is another set of words for the varieties of snowfall; another for ice; a set of twenty or more that define what the temperature range is, how strong a wind blows, and what kind of precipitation is occurring, all together” (168-9).

7 As Fayad has noted, the Investigator’s theory is indicative of “the imperialist enterprise of the Ekumen” since “[s]he relegates the Gethenians to the margins (where is the center?) implying misleadingly that theirs is a mere survival level existence” (66).

8 The first recounted legend is called “The Place Inside the Blizzard” and this legend and others closely parallel events in the main story line. The recounted myths also feature Ice in a humanised form.

REFERENCES


ABSTRACT Based on humoural doctrine, male anger has historically been viewed as a hot emotion associated with rationality and stability. Female anger, on the other hand, has traditionally been ascribed the opposite traits that is, coldness, emotionality and instability. Typically male anger has been defined as a temporary loss of control, whereas anger expressed by women has been perceived as lasting longer, and therefore often viewed as a matter of feminine nature. Thus, female anger has been viewed as a less refined form of anger. Sensation fiction of the 1860s suggests that the ancient view of understanding female anger as closely connected with the female nature and as a consequence more deceptive, colder and more dangerous than male anger persisted in nineteenth-century England. Victorian women, as depicted in the literature of the day, are defined as more emotional than male characters, at the same time as most forms of female emotionality are presented as a break against ideal femininity. The contradictory conception of emotionality, as outlined by ancient philosophers, continued to inform the common view of anger and gender, although the belief in humoural theory and its supposed influence on human characteristics was less pronounced.

KEYWORDS anger, humoural theory, cold, hot, gender, sensation fiction, nineteenth-century English literature
Expressions of anger in many modern languages indicate that people today typically understand the emotion as a hot sensation seething inside the human body. Folk theory also suggests that one of the physiological effects of anger is increased internal pressure which needs to be released. Thus, it is viewed as more typical to display one’s anger than to suppress it (Lakoff 1987: 377-415). This indicates that the prototypical anger scenario, as understood in the Western world, is a description of male anger rather than female anger which has historically been viewed as typically cold (Kennedy 2000, Perfetti 2005). Literary sources, among others, also indicate that suppressed anger is a more common phenomenon among women than men whose anger is traditionally understood as open and explosive.

On the basis of a large number of conventional anger expressions, it has also been suggested that the connection between anger and heat is embodied (Lakoff 1987: 377 ff.), and as a consequence universal – provided that the physiological effects of anger are the same in all human beings. This is of course a very simplified view of anger, as emphasised by Dirk Geeraerts and Stefan Grondelaers, who point out the importance of including diachronic approaches to the study of emotions (1995: 153-79). It seems obvious that nobody actually seethes with anything. Tests measuring the changes in body temperature in connection with different emotions moreover show that the body temperature increases by less than 0.1 C when anger is evoked. Such a rise in temperature is found when other emotions are evoked as well, as Caroline Gevaert notes (2005: 197). Therefore, the common view in primarily European languages of conceptualising anger as ‘the heat of a fluid in a container’ may be a remnant of humoural theory, which “would clearly make it a cultural rather than embodied phenomenon” (Gevaert 2005: 198, Geeraerts & Grondelaers 1995).

One of the four humours which were believed to determine human characteristics was bile. A predominance of yellow bile produced choleric or overtly angry personalities. It was described as a hot and dry humour closely related to fire – the most eminent of the four elements. Both women and men could be defined as choleric, if bile was the most dominant humour in their bodily composition. However, since women were believed to be colder and moister than men and therefore related to water rather than fire, they were thought of as less perfect and prototypically more phlegmatic than men. The percep-
tion of the female body as cold also explained female irrationality and emotionality. Dryness and heat produced the opposite traits, that is rational and emotionally stable characters (Geeraerts & Grondelaers 1995: 156-59, Perfetti 2005: 4-5, 24-25).

The understanding of anger as a hot emotion associated with rationality and as such linked to men rather than women is, of course, not unproblematic. To begin with, it contradicts the historical view of women as colder and more emotional than men, and as a consequence less able to control their passions. Ancient philosophers explained this contradiction by means of suggesting that a man’s hot constitution made his anger brief. Male anger was viewed as a temporary loss of control, whereas female anger was typically understood as lasting for a long time, and therefore more dangerous (Kennedy 2000: 7, Perfetti 2005: 5). A woman’s anger was thus more closely related to her personal character, and in this sense anger could, like other emotions, be seen as typically female (Kennedy 2000: 4). This dichotomous view of male and female anger had terrible consequences for women in court trials, as well as in other situations. Discussing the representation of female anger in medieval and early modern France, Kristi Gourlay concludes that a man could plead innocent to murder because he had acted in chaude colle, that is, in “sudden anger” or “hot bile.” Such an option was not open for women whose cold bodies made their colle, as it was believed, not easily spent (2005: 135-140). Thus, female anger was understood as “more likely to lead to a premeditated murder than to a crime of passion” (Perfetti 2005: 5).

The belief in humoural influence on human characteristics declined during the seventeenth century, although the theory offered reasonable explanations for human character. Emotions, anger included, were still viewed as typically female, despite the fact that anger was mainly understood as a hot emotion determining such characteristics as strength and intelligence, that is, traits historically defined as male (Kennedy 2000: 7). The solution to the contradiction was to view male and female anger as two different forms of anger. Anger could be categorised as either legitimate or wrong; the former kind was, as pointed out by Gwynne Kennedy, “either explicitly or implicitly gendered masculine” (2000: 12). Throughout the early modern period female anger was thus generally understood as more evil and dangerous. If a woman showed a great proneness to anger it was, in line with Stoic philoso-
phy, believed to confirm her inferiority to man – both physiologically and intellectually (Kennedy 2000: 7-9). Helkiah Crooke, an influential physician and anatomist in early modern England, explained that anger experienced by women, children and weak men was “a disease of a weak mind,” whereas anger expressed by men, which was not called anger, but wrath was the expression of “stout heartes” (quoted in Kennedy 2000: 7). Accordingly, a woman’s cold nature was, as concluded by Crooke, the main reason for her uncontrolled anger. The close connection between women and negative instances of anger is also visible in early pictorial images and paintings where anger is depicted as a woman so full of rage that she turns it against herself and commits suicide (Rosenwein 1998: 3-4, Gourlay 2005: 137-38).

The ancient perception of woman “as a creature totally in thrall to biology and her body” (Pykett 1992: 14) continued to determine the view of women in the nineteenth century. In medical, legal and scientific discourses women’s nature was closely related to their reproductive functions and determined their participation in society. It was, for instance, disputed whether girls should be allowed to receive the same education as boys, since theoretical studies were not believed to be compatible with a woman’s menstrual cycle (Pykett 1992: 13-14). In a similar fashion, madness was closely associated with womanhood and female irrationality in Victorian England. It was generally believed that disturbances of the uterus made women more susceptible than men to hysterical outbursts (Perfetti 2005: 5). Still today prototypical female terms such as hysterical and frigid (as shown in the BNC corpus) suggest that women are defined by their bodily functions. The metaphorical extension of cold in the latter example is an additional example of the ancient perception of the female body as cold and imperfect. However, despite a long tradition of linking woman with her reproductive organs, the ideal Victorian woman was nevertheless, like her predecessors, perceived as a passionless and cold creature devoid of sexual feelings, that is, disembodied (Pykett 1992: 15).

It has been suggested that anger was not necessarily regarded as a negative emotion in the nineteenth century as long as it was kept outside the home. For men anger was even encouraged as an element of competition in the workplace. The conventional Victorian woman’s sphere was limited to the home, however, and as a consequence, she was not expected to show anger, but had to learn to suppress it
Natural aggressiveness among men, on the other hand, continued to be perceived as righteous and correct. Literary sources even suggest that fighting and killing could be regarded as positive behaviour among men under certain circumstances, although never among women (Nardin 1989: 137-38). Rebelling, aggressive and murderous women were condemned as cold-blooded, unnatural and extremely dangerous.

The disapproval of allegedly unfeminine women did not seem to have had a negative effect on people's interest in reading and hearing about them, however. Details from court trials communicated to the readers by an expanding newspaper press appear to have satisfied an ever increasing group of people (Pykett 1994: 2) – especially after the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857, which made a woman's but not a man's adultery a legitimate cause for divorce (Edwards 1978: 92). Adultery and crimes of passion were common elements in sensation novels – a new kind of fiction which appeared in the 1860s. Like contemporary sensation drama, from which this new sub-genre gained its name, sensation fiction highlighted strong emotions (Maunder 2005: 5) – in particular those expressed by women. Female anger and sexuality, among other things, were expressed “more directly than had been done previously” (Showalter 1977: 160). Typically, sensational plots feature the transgressive and therefore dangerous woman as a contrast to the conventional female. The dangerous woman in sensational plots is, however, not always the overt rebel, but sometimes also the pretty and innocent girl “whose indoctrination in the female role has taught her secrecy and deceitfulness,” as emphasised by Elaine Showalter (Maunder 2005: 10, Showalter 1977: 165). Against this background, anger as presented in sensation fiction is likely to provide valuable information about the historical understanding of anger and gender. The transgressive woman and her interplay with men and more conventional women is, for instance, featured in three of the most widely read sensation novels of the 1860s: *The Woman in White* (1860) by Wilkie Collins, *East Lynne* by Ellen Wood (1861) and Mary Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1862).

*Collins is often viewed as having inaugurated sensation fiction with his novel *The Woman in White* (Pykett 1994: 14). The text was originally...*
published in Dickens’s magazine *All the Year Round*, and met with immediate popularity (Tilley 1995: 197). The narrative plot centers on Anne Catherick – a ghostlike woman dressed all in white. Late at night, on a road in Hampstead she happens to meet Walter Hartright. She is in a hurry to get to a friend’s house, and Hartright helps her. However, almost immediately after having done so, he learns that she is on the run from a mental institution. Shortly after this incident he is hired as an art teacher to two half-sisters, Laura Fairlie and Marian Halcombe, in the house of Mr. Fairlie, the former woman’s uncle. Hartright falls in love with Laura, who, much to his distress, is engaged to Sir Percival Glyde, a baronet whose only interest in marrying her is to gain control of her possessions. Hartright is almost immediately struck by Laura’s resemblance to the woman in white. Assisted by Marian he is eventually able to prove that Percival is not a true baronet, but the illegitimate child of a man of breeding. He has made himself the heir to the title by means of forgery. Mrs. Catherick, Anne’s mother, has assisted him in committing this crime. She knows his secret, but he in his turn knows that Anne is the result of an illicit union between Mrs. Catherick and Philip Fairlie, that is, Laura’s father – the reason for the resemblance between the two women. Percival suspects that Anne knows his secret too and therefore decides to lock her up in an asylum. She escapes from her imprisonment and communicates with Laura. The only chance to survive, as it seems to Percival and his evil assistant, Count Fosco, is to exchange the two women’s identities. This is made possible mainly due to their resemblance and Anne’s declining health. The woman in white dies as Laura Glyde, who in her turn takes the former woman’s place in the asylum.

Women and men appear to give utterance to their anger equally often in *The Woman in White*. There are around fifty instances1 of male and female anger respectively in the novel – a slight majority expressing female anger. Two characters display their anger more frequently than others: Marian Halcombe and Percival Glyde. A close look at the contexts where anger is displayed suggests that Collins’s view of male and female anger, which most likely reflects the general understanding of the day, differed greatly.

Marian Halcombe matches the attributes ascribed to the unwomanly woman of the day. Unlike her beautiful and conventional half-sister, she is, as noted by Hartright, a masculine woman – both in
terms of physical looks and personal qualities. Throughout the novel she is depicted as a woman who defies and challenges male control. She suffers on behalf of her sister’s predicament and angrily reprimands Laura for letting Percival break her heart “to set his mind at ease” (159). She is, to use her own word, mad when she thinks of the many injustices done by men toward women. Her anger is almost exclusively directed against men. Many contexts reveal that her anger shares many of the characteristics ascribed to typical male anger: it is brief, open and heated; and in this respect even appreciated by other male characters, although never fully accepted. Mr. Gilmore, the family lawyer, welcomes her indignation in reaction to the intended marriage between Laura and Percival (121), and Fosco is totally fascinated by her intelligence and resolution. However, although Marian shares many traditional male characteristics, she is, as she very sadly points out, “nothing but a woman,” and therefore “condemned to patience, propriety and petticoats for life” (174). Open displays of anger are in most situations of no avail to a woman, as she realises. As a consequence, she learns to suppress her anger, although she continually speculates on what she could have done if social constraints had not forced her into silence and compliance. If she “had been a man,” as she says, she would, for instance, not have suppressed her immense anger with Percival Glyde, but “knocked him down on the threshold of his own door” and never considered entering it again (218).

In the same vein, Madam Fosco constantly suppresses her anger in the presence of her oppressive husband. The only visible signs of anger exhibited by these two women in contexts where their anger is described as suppressed are penetrating eyes, viperish looks, cold answers or complete silence. Such expressions have been defined as typical instances of cold anger (Lakoff 1987: 403). Thus, the old view of perceiving female anger as colder and therefore more dangerous than male anger may be related to the fact that women have frequently learned to hold back their anger. Suppressed anger, which is more or less invisible, implies that retribution may come in another form, commonly more severe, than a temporary loss of control, as described by George Lakoff and Zoltán Kövecses (Lakoff 1987: 403). Consequently, cold anger is viewed as more dangerous than more typical instances of anger. Marian, for example, suspects that Madam Fosco’s “present state of suppression may have sealed up something dangerous in her nature,”
something which she believes may be displayed some day (192).

Despite the possible connection between suppression and cold anger, few, if any, of the female characters may be regarded as particularly dangerous in *The Woman in White*. According to modern socialisation theory, however, the suppression of strong emotions may lead to mental disorders (Nunn & Thomas 1999: 146), the consequences of which may be dangerous. In this respect the depiction of Laura and her half-sister deserves a closer examination. Although neither of them expresses anger frequently, one would assume that people treated as badly as these two women should be described as experiencing anger. It is evident that experience and display of anger are two different things (Nunn & Thomas 1999: 145). Laura and Anne are featured as women with a low self-esteem who in accordance with the ideal of femininity had been trained to respond to anger by means of suppressing it or blaming themselves. Laura does not utter a word to display her enormous disappointment when it becomes evident that Hartright cannot continue his work in their home. Instead a “mute expression of constant fear and clinging self-reproach” is noticeable “in all her movements” (55). Emotional suppression is also noticeable in Anne’s first encounter with Hartright. At first, she is excited and speaks “loudly and almost fiercely” about a baronet who, as Hartright later understands, “has done [her] some grievous wrong,” but then suddenly she realises her mistake and controls herself again (18). Both women are described as mentally weak on the verge of madness.

None of the contexts where men display their anger are instances of suppressed anger – at least not if the suppression is represented as the result of social gender structures. It should, however, be noted that most examples of male anger are found in contexts where Percival Glyde expresses his emotions. Because of his social background and villainy, his angry outbursts do not come across as accepted forms of anger. His scheming, but much more sophisticated accomplice Fosco even reminds him that a man can never gain control over his wife by means of adopting the brutal methods of the “lower orders of the people” (290). According to Fosco, Percival can only get the better of his wife by means of quiet resolution. In many respects Fosco’s anger could be defined as cold. His intentions are seldom shown directly, although it is obvious that he is the evil brains behind the scheme. His manipulative skills and tremendous power are noticed by Marian,
who admits that had he married her, she would most probably “have made his cigarettes, as his wife does [...] [and] held [her] tongue when he looked at [her]” (192). Such is his power. The consequences of his anger and his cold calculation are described as more dangerous than any form of female anger displayed in the novel. Despite this, his existence is never threatened as a consequence of Hartright’s investigations (Tilley 1995: 202). It should, however, be noted that Fosco is not, because of his foreign background and repulsive physical character, depicted as a representative member of the male sex. Therefore, his cold anger cannot be viewed as a typical form of male anger – at least not among the socially elevated classes.

Apart from a large number of contexts where Percival’s anger is described, and a smaller number of instances of Fosco’s displays of anger, expressions of anger among men are almost non-existent in the novel. Hartright who is shown to have every reason to experience and express anger practically never gives words to this emotion. In the role of detective and hero it follows that his emotions have to be described as kept in check. He is said to be vexed with himself in two contexts – that is all. Two other men who are portrayed as men who have learned the social value of emotional control are Mr. Gilmore and Dr. Dawson. Like Hartright, they seldom give utterance to their anger. The former is, for example, speechless with indignation when he realises that Mr. Fairlie is not interested in protecting his niece from Percival’s intention of stealing her money. In a similar fashion, Dr. Dawson leaves the house “in a state of extreme indignation” (336) in connection with the maltreatment of Marian’s illness under the supervision of Fosco and his wife. According to the OED vexation is used in the sense of ‘annoyance’ or ‘irritation’, whereas indignation may indicate ‘righteous anger’. Anger expressed by these men is, accordingly, to be interpreted as socially accepted forms of anger. Percival’s anger is never shown as a matter of indignation. On the contrary, it is most frequently associated with his hot temper, and as such uncontrollable and fierce. Many of these attributes tally with the traditional view of the “emotional creature,” that is, a woman, who “constantly act[s] on impulses which [she] cannot explain even to [herself],” as Marian notes (227). Contradictorily enough, the literature of the day suggests that women were neither supposed to have such impulses, nor allowed to act on them.

Many of the topics in The Woman in White are also found in Lady
Audley’s Secret. Like Collins, Braddon makes use of problematic marriage issues, cold calculation, doubles and female madness in her plot. However, although they have many similarities, there are also fundamental differences, as noted by, among others, Elizabeth Tilley (1995: 198). Braddon’s heroine is not a conventional and helpless upper-class woman, but an intelligent and assertive femme fatale.

Lady Audley’s Secret was published in 1862. Like The Woman in White, it met with immediate success, although many critics were concerned about the possible influence it might exert on primarily young women (Maunder 2005: 15-16). Lady Audley’s Secret is the story of a young and poor woman whose husband abandons her and their baby boy to travel to Australia. In order to survive, she leaves their child with her father and takes a job as a governess in the family of a surgeon. She presents herself as Lucy Graham. This job helps her get in contact with a rich man, Sir Michael Audley, who asks her to marry him. Since she has not heard anything from her husband, who after all has been absent for three and a half years, she accepts his proposal. In doing this she commits bigamy. Unexpectedly, her husband, who turns out to be a close friend of Sir Michael Audley’s nephew Robert Audley, returns from Australia – eager to meet his beautiful wife. In a newspaper he finds a note of her death. Robert Audley intuitively senses that something is wrong, and when his friend suddenly disappears after a walk in the vicinities of Audley Court, he begins to inquire into the past of his uncle’s charming, but mysterious wife. Lady Audley’s situation becomes more and more desperate and in a last attempt at defending herself, she tries to kill Robert by setting an inn on fire. Luckily, he survives and is able to make the history of Lady Audley known to his uncle. In order to put an end to the story and save the family from the “esclandre of a Chancery suit” (369) Robert takes her to a physician with the hope of proving her mad. Much to his surprise, the doctor concludes that nothing she has done can be regarded as an act of insanity. All her actions have been committed as consequences of cold-blooded planning and calculations. Thus, she is dangerous and should be locked up. Robert finally succeeds in sending her to a lunatic asylum, where she dies.

About three fifths of the contexts where anger is expressed in Lady Audley’s Secret concern female anger. Not surprisingly, Lady Audley is the character, followed by Alicia, her stepdaughter, who
most frequently occurs in such contexts. Instances of anger, supported by a number of contexts where the consequences of female anger are discussed thus point toward a female prototype of anger in Braddon’s novel. Typical attributes of this female prototype are cunning, evil, calculation, danger, intelligence, deliberation and coolness. Throughout the novel female anger is repeatedly related to the female sex as such. Robert, for example, sees a clear connection between the crimes committed by Lady Audley and “the horrible things that have been done by women, since that day upon which Eve was created” (271). Prototypical female anger in the novel is also associated with slyness, coldness and deliberate suppression. Lady Audley is not easy to quarrel with. Instead of entering into open conflicts, she conceals her wrath by means of soft answers and merry laughter (289). Open warfare, typically found in hot anger scenarios, followed by possible reconciliation, is not included in her plans. Lady Audley is depicted as a woman who plans her actions carefully – a process which is not, as expressed by Gourlay, viewed as an acceptable ingredient in “legitimate, hot-blooded anger and violence” (2005: 146).

Although Alicia is the female character who besides her stepmother displays anger most frequently in the novel, her anger is presented as very different from that of Lady Audley. She would have preferred “a hearty pitched battle” to [the] silent and undemonstrative disunion” which characterises her troubled relation to Lady Audley (289). In this respect her anger, like that of Marian in The Woman in White, comes close to the traditional view of male anger. However, unlike the expressions of male emotions, her emotions are more or less ignored by other characters. She does not constitute a major problem to anybody, and as an effect, her anger is neither shown as dangerous nor important. Robert Audley’s reaction to his cousin’s angry letter written in connection with her father’s marriage to Lady Audley constitutes a good example. He receives her desperate letter “without so much as removing the amber mouthpiece of his German pipe” from his lips (36). Since neither her anger nor the content of the letter has any major effect on him, he throws it in the waste-paper basket.

Among male characters the aggressive behaviour of Luke Marks, a loutish worker and the husband of Phoebe, Lady Audley’s personal maid is noticeable. Like Lady Audley, he is described as a person who is capable of murder. His violent behaviour is even more observable
than that of Lady Audley, which is hardly emphasised at all. In spite of this, his aggressiveness is not described as particularly problematic or dangerous. It does not constitute a threat to more people than to his wife, and later also to Lady Audley, and it is never, as in Lady Audley’s case, related to his sex. He is rather to be seen as a product of low birth than a member of the Victorian category ‘man’. As a matter of fact, his anger may be understood as having more in common with women than men, since women, children, outlaws and other supposedly irrational beings have historically been perceived as a group apart from men (Westphal 2005: 174-75). Not even his death is of interest to the plot, although, ironically enough, he is the only person that Lady Audley actually manages to kill – although unintentionally. Lady Audley’s crimes are, however, never mentioned in connection with his death. Robert Audley, the self-appointed detective of the novel and “the conscience of society” is after all only interested in crimes which constitute a threat to middle- and upper-class men (Tilley 1995: 203). In this respect his own anger, just like that of Luke Marks, is never viewed as remarkable or dangerous. It is mainly directed toward women as a means of restoring male order.

The emotional woman in East Lynne is, like the one portrayed in Lady Audley’s Secret, presented as transgressive, and as such dangerous to patriarchal structures. However, unlike Lady Audley, the female heroine and childlike beauty in East Lynne is not depicted as a real criminal in the sense that she persists in her evil. Lady Isabel’s crime consists of her abandonment of her husband, Archibald Carlyle, and three children for another man, Sir Francis Levison, who later leaves both her and their illegitimate child. Her crime is thus in the first place a moral one (Pykett 1994: 60), and, not least important in this context, a break against an ideology which required women to be emotionally cold. The reader’s sympathies remain with her throughout the novel, mainly due to her bitter regret and extreme longing for her children (Pykett 1994: 60-62), but it is important to remember that there were no extenuating circumstances for an adulteress in Victorian England. Death therefore comes as a redeemer for Lady Isabel, who, after many twists and turns, returns to her former home in the disguise of a governess to see her place taken by another woman – her main rival Barbara Hare.

The discrepancy between women and men expressing anger in East Lynne is conspicuous. Close to two thirds of the many contexts (a
total of about 180) where expressions of anger are found are examples of female anger. Among women, Archibald Carlyle’s unmarried half-sister, Cornelia is shown as by far the angriest of them all. Throughout the novel her frustrations are manifested in numerous fits of anger. In many respects her heated forms of anger may be interpreted as the consequences of female independence. Like Marian in *The Woman in White*, she is depicted as a marginal woman who has failed in her main business of life, that is, to be picked for marriage. She, like her, is accordingly not a typical representative of the female sex – neither emotionally nor socially.

Similar expressions of anger as those displayed by Cornelia are also found in connection with another overtly angry woman, Mrs. Vane, later Lady Mount Severn. She is featured as a “cold, selfish, and [...] bad woman” (67) who constantly finds an opportunity to be mean. However, unlike Cornelia’s, her aggressiveness cannot be viewed as the result of social marginalisation. Instead, she is described as cold-hearted by nature. Only the fact that she is married, and as such forced to obedience, seems to limit her otherwise uncontrollable rage.

Anger expressed by the female heroine of the novel is found in a number of contexts – among women only Cornelia displays her anger more frequently. A close look at anger expressed by women in the novel, however, clearly indicates that Lady Isabel’s anger is different from that displayed by other less sophisticated characters, and in this sense anger is not only a matter of gender, but also of class. It is, for instance, emphasised that Isabel’s upbringing made her feel remorse almost immediately (283). As a consequence, her anger is frequently described as a matter of self-blame. She is, for example, “exceedingly vexed and angry with herself, that [her] meeting [with Francis Levison] should have had power to call forth emotion” (206). After her elopement with him, instances of anger directed to the self, but also toward her false seducer, increase. Her anger is, however, always described as controllable and never heated. She is not depicted as a woman who loses her temper easily, not even when it becomes clear to her that Sir Francis has no interest in giving their illegitimate child a respectable name. She responds to his insolence and rude manners by answering him coldly or lifting “her indignant eyes towards him” (294) – examples which seem to suggest righteous or socially acceptable forms of anger. In the same vein, her only sign of disapproval shown to her husband
when he departs from her – against her will – the night of her elopement is said to be a “stony look” (264).

That Lady Isabel’s anger differs from other less refined characters’ ways of venting their anger is clearly visible in the depiction of Afy Hallijohn – an overtly emotional working-class woman, who, like Lady Isabel, has had an affair with Francis Levison. Thus, both of them are depicted as fallen women as a consequence of their emotional trespasses, but only one of them is able to invite the reader’s sympathy. Miss Hallijohn’s lack of sophistication makes her, as noted by Pykett, a ridiculed person rather than a victim of unhappy circumstances (1994: 65). None of the contexts where she displays her anger can be understood as examples of restrained anger. Not even in court, when she is interrogated in connection with the murder of her father, is she shown to be able to control her passions. She answers the judge rudely and angrily, and without considering the consequences.

The only woman who is described as succeeding in controlling her passions and as a consequence is rewarded is Barbara Hare (Pykett 1994: 61). It is true that she experiences immense anger and jealousy when she hears about Archibald’s marriage to Lady Isabel, and in that moment “forget[s] the ordinary rules of conduct and propriety” (163), but, unlike other female characters in the novel, she is featured as a woman who learns to control her emotions. Once she has communicated her anger to Archibald, it is not mentioned again. Anger expressions related to Barbara are as a matter of fact few after the incidence when she so totally forgets herself. She is not depicted as a particularly interesting or warm woman, but it is quite obvious that her “strong sense and [...] right judgement, and [...] adoring love for her husband” made her a model of female conduct, as pointed out in Saturday Review (1862) (Jay 2005: xx).

Although female anger is brought into focus more frequently than male anger in East Lynne, examples of anger expressed by men are not scarce. Justice Hare, Barbara’s father, frequently shows his anger. His frustration, mainly due to his son’s supposed involvement in the murder of Miss Hallijohn’s father, and great urge to control other people are manifested in numerous explosions of wrath, exasperated tones and angry outbursts. In spite of this he is never described as unnatural, unattractive or dangerous. In the role of a father and husband, his anger, although many times described as too harsh, is, at least to some
extent, justified. His intentions are, after all, never to be unkind to his wife, who, as emphasised in the text, was far “from feeling the servitude of a yoke,” even though “her life had been one long yielding of her will to his” (21).

Even if there may have been circumstances which, according to social standards of the day, allowed men to express their anger more openly than women, it is nevertheless apparent that emotional restraint was a virtue in Victorian England. The character that tallies best with the definition of ideal emotional conduct is Archibald Carlyle. The reader is repeatedly reminded of the fact that Isabel had left an almost god-like man for a rogue. In many respects his even temper and controlled manners make him less human than other characters. Few things, if any at all, appear to affect him emotionally. Not even the fact that his wife leaves him and elopes with a man who later comes back to challenge him for a position in Parliament makes him lose control. The only visible sign of anger shown in connection with the latter incident is a “scarlet flush” (457). Examples of his anger occur in seven contexts only – all of them are mild or controlled forms of anger. He is never furious or enraged. As in Barbara’s case, his self-control clearly makes him a model of human behaviour.

That male and female aggressiveness was understood and valued differently in Victorian England is in particular evident in the depiction of Sir Francis. He is not the angriest man in East Lynne, at least not judging by the number of contexts where his anger is expressed, but he is certainly the most despicable one. He is guilty of a number of terrible crimes, among others adultery and murder. Like the female heroine of the novel, he has also abandoned his child. Despite all this, he is not sentenced to death (Jay 2005: xxii), nor is he declared mad or confined to an asylum. His utterly condemnable actions are never placed in relation to the nature of man either, nor are they viewed as the result of cold-blooded calculation. Much in line with Gourlay’s discussion of the difference between hot and cold anger and the correspondence of these varieties to men and women respectively (2005: 135), the jury acknowledges that he is guilty of murder, but they “wish to recommend him to mercy,” since they believe that it was a crime which “arose out of the bad passions of the moment” (573).

It can thus be concluded that the old idea of perceiving female anger as closely connected with the female nature, and as such more
deceptive than male anger, endured in Victorian England. Women continued to be regarded as more emotional and irrational than men, at the same time as most forms of female emotionality were viewed as a break against ideal femininity. Such contradictory conceptions of anger and gender contributed to the perception of female anger as colder and more problematic than male anger which, in accordance with prevailing gender structures, continued to be viewed as a more acceptable and therefore less dangerous form of anger than its female counterpart.

NOTES

1 Since the definition of many words is not clear-cut, the number of instances must be viewed with some approximation. It is, for example, not always easy to define whether a term is used to express contempt, irritation or anger.

REFERENCES

ABSTRACT In folk tales, good women are contrasted with evil ones. One specific kind of evil women are the snow queens, for example those depicted in Hans Christian Andersen’s tales The Snow Queen and “The Ice Maiden.” Other examples are the White Witch in the Chronicles of Narnia by C. S. Lewis and Mrs Coulter in Philip Pullman’s trilogy His Dark Materials. The realms of the snow queens are cold, frozen and sterile landscapes always covered with snow and ice – a symbol of their cold and dangerous sexuality. The queens are powerful women, beautiful, seductive and rebellious against patriarchal structures. They can be seen as incarnations of Lilith, Adam’s first wife, and as female vampires, constantly looking for new victims. The only way of escaping being seduced by a snow queen is to be rescued by true and eternal love. Women with a desire for power and independence have to live their lives without love and are doomed to a cold and lonely existence. In this way, the snow queen stories support patriarchal gender ideologies.

KEYWORDS Snow Queen, Ice Maiden, H. C. Andersen, C. S. Lewis, Philip Pullman, evil women, Narnia, Lilith
The image of women in literature for young readers is not clear-cut. In the old folk tales for example, good women are frequently contrasted with evil ones, often in the same story: biological mothers are warm-hearted and generous, stepmothers are cold, mean and cruel. There are good fairies as well as evil ones, and witches of both kinds appear.

The snow queens modelled on the central character of Hans Christian Andersen’s *The Snow Queen* (1844) form a specific group of evil women.1 Andersen’s tale is the story of two children, Gerda and Kay, who live near each other and who are very close friends. One day when they are looking in a picture-book, Kay feels a sudden pain in his eye and his heart caused by splinters from a magic mirror. All of a sudden he is totally changed. He turns mean, cold and nasty and he is no longer interested in playing with Gerda. Out in the snow, all on his own, playing with his toboggan, he encounters an exotic woman sitting on a white sledge. Kay ties his toboggan to hers and is swept away, unable to detach himself again. When they stop, Kay is lifted over to the Snow Queen’s sledge. She hides him under her fur and brings him with her to her palace.

At home, Gerda misses her friend and eventually decides to go and look for him. On her way she runs into an old woman who practices witchcraft. She stays with the old lady for quite a while and forgets all about Kay. One day she remembers her mission and starts to look for her friend again. Finally, she arrives at the palace of the Snow Queen where she finds Kay lonely and frozen. The sight of him makes her cry and her tears melt the ice in Kay’s heart which makes him cry too. As a result, the splinter in his eye is dislodged, and together they leave the palace and return home.

Since Andersen writes his tales very much in the tradition of the folk tale whose main focus is the child’s fear of adulthood and the process of becoming mature (Lüthi 1994), many interpretations of *The Snow Queen* concentrate on sexuality and the growing process of the two children. Margaret Rustin, for example, finds “unmistakable references to the excitement of growing up, to sexuality” (2005: 8) in the text, even though she also emphasises its religious frame. Wolfgang Lederer points out that the story of the two children leaving home and eventually returning as adults is a symbol of their search for adulthood (1986: 68–69). René Rasmussen, however, initially mentions dichotomies such as good and evil, innocence and guilt and sexuality and non-
sexuality, but she also comments specifically on the Snow Queen in connection with Kay: once connected to her sledge he is a part of her universe and cannot escape. Her kisses cause a state of amnesia which is comparable to death. Too many kisses would actually kill him and that, according to Rasmussen, indicates that female power and sexual pleasure are fatal (2002: 71, 74).

The presence and the power of the Snow Queen are indicated early in the tale when Andersen describes how winter and cold affect the lives of Kay and Gerda and make it hard for them to meet – an omen of the arrival of the Snow Queen but also an omen of the children’s forthcoming separation. One night when Kay looks out of the window, he sees a snow-flake which slowly grows and transforms into a female character dressed in white. She is an extremely beautiful and attractive woman with sparkling eyes “but in them there was neither rest nor peace” (Andersen 2005: 216). This is Kay’s first meeting with the Snow Queen. He is impressed by her beauty, but scared of her seductive power at the same time. The Snow Queen has now made her first attempt at taking possession of his heart. The splinter from the magic mirror that turns his heart into a lump of ice is her second move. It now becomes clear that her power over his heart is not only painful but might even prove fatal. No one can live with a heart made of ice and so Kay is an easy target for the Snow Queen when she comes to abduct him.

She is magnificent when she arrives in her white sledge. Rasmussen describes her as “the woman of women” (2002: 72). Even though there are other boys than Kay playing in the snow, he is the only one trying to attach his toboggan to the Snow Queen’s sledge. Every time he tries to escape, the Snow Queen turns around, looks at him and nods. This is enough to make him surrender. As earlier, when looking out of the window, Kay sees how the snow-flakes grow larger and larger and after a while the sledge stops and the Snow Queen materialises. Again, he is struck by her looks but this time the Snow Queen also kisses him. The first kiss goes straight to his heart already half-way to being a lump of ice (218) and he feels as if he is going to die. The second kiss makes him forget all about his past. According to Lederer, it kills “his emotions [...] altogether, and nothing is left but ‘cold reason’” (1986: 30). He receives no third kiss or “else I shall kiss you to death,” the Snow Queen says (237). She is determined in her search for satisfac-
tion. Kay is already blinded by her seductive influence which suggests that female sexuality is dangerous, even lethal. Kay is fully controlled by the Snow Queen who has not only taken control of his heart, but also his eyes and his mind. From this moment she seems perfect. She is the most beautiful person he has ever seen and she no longer gives the impression of being made of ice (220). Kay has taken the first step towards adulthood, which means that he is becoming aware of sexuality as well as of death, both represented by a powerful female creature (Rasmussen 2002: 73).

The Snow Queen is in every respect Gerda’s opposite. Gerda is a child and the Snow Queen is a woman. Gerda stands for the innocence of a child, whereas the Snow Queen is a perfect seductress, scheming and powerful. Gerda is warm and loving but the Snow Queen is frigid and never shows any warm affection whatsoever. Her ice palace is a place where cold, sexuality and undefeatable death reign forever (Rasmussen 2002: 73). After having been kissed by the Snow Queen, Kay forgets his prayers as well as his home, his friends and his family. Lederer claims that the Queen is Reason herself (1986: 65) and therefore dangerous. She brings death to faith and to childhood. The feminine norm in the nineteenth century was a woman as wife and mother. Some evolutionists even argued that woman’s development was arrested at an earlier stage than men’s to ensure the maximum efficiency of her reproductive function (Pykett 1992: 13). The Snow Queen, with her inability to reproduce, is therefore an unnatural woman according to nineteenth-century gender ideology. Pykett also emphasises that even though Victorian theorists define women in terms of their sexual function, “normal” femininity is passionless and passive and consequently female sexuality is frightening and threatening (15). Thus, the Snow Queen with her powerful and demanding appearance and her cold sexuality, exercises a fatal attraction on men and is a most intimidating creature.

When Kay first catches sight of the Snow Queen, he notices her outfit. The first time she is dressed in “the finest white gauze which looked as if it had been made from millions of star-shaped flakes” (216). The second time she is “in a fur coat and a cap made of snow” (218). There is really nothing seductive about her clothing, but the first thing she says to Kay is “[c]rawl under my bear coat,” and after having put her fur coat around him, she starts kissing him (218). She liter-
ally invites him in under her clothes, a very obvious act of seduction, almost as obvious as when Little Red Riding Hood is invited into bed with the wolf. Kay’s inability to resist her is understandable, since the tale on one level tells the story of him growing up and becoming a man. Rasmussen, however, calls attention to the fact that sexual desire and sexual pleasure put Kay in a state reminiscent of death – a fact that does not prevent him from giving himself over to it (2002: 72). He is captured in the frozen world of the Snow Queen and he neither can nor wants to leave it. It is in this condition Gerda finally finds him when she arrives at the palace of the Snow Queen. He is “blue, yes, almost black, with the cold. But he did not feel it, because the Snow Queen had kissed away his icy tremblings, and his heart itself had almost turned to ice” (236). The Snow Queen herself is absent, but she still keeps her power over him. He is occupied with an ice puzzle since the Snow Queen has promised him that she will set him free if he can work out the pattern. On the floor, the ice puzzle forms the word that the Snow Queen has told him that he must find to get his freedom back – eternity (236).

It is clear that Andersen’s tale about the Snow Queen, like many other of his tales and many folk tales as well, is a story about leaving childhood and becoming an adult. Therefore, both Kay and Gerda have to leave their homes and go through an adventurous and sometimes frightening journey to gain maturity. To Kay, sexual desire is crucial and he is eager to follow the beautiful and experienced woman who gives him access to her body and her bed. Female sexuality, however, is dangerous and consequently the Snow Queen may be viewed as the incarnation of death and evil. The description of the Snow Queen’s palace is very much like a portrayal of hell albeit cold instead of warm (235). Time has stopped, Kay’s heart has almost stopped and even his intellectual skills have ceased to function. He has become the target of “the improper feminine,” in other words of a woman who is figured as “a subversive threat to the family; threateningly sexual; […] desiring and actively pleasure-seeking; […] independent; enslaver; and victim-izer or predator” (Pykett 1992: 16). What saves him in the end is not cold reason, “it is redemption through the love of woman,” Lederer claims (1986: 182). This means that the Snow Queen and her frozen realm can be defeated only by a true woman, a “naturally dependent, self-sacrificial, nurturing, maternal creature” (Pykett 1992: 55).
It is important, however, to notice that Gerda, as well as Kay, goes through a phase of amnesia when she, on her way to find him, encounters an old woman. The difference between the Snow Queen and the old woman is striking. The latter is kind and warm and ensnares Gerda by gently combing her hair and giving her a lovely bed with a “red silk coverlet quilted with blue violets” (222). Gerda’s bed is unmistakably intended for lust and love, but she is still too young which is why she can only dream “as gloriously as any queen upon her wedding day” (222).

By showing her a lovely flower-garden like the Garden of Eden where Gerda can play, the old woman – Lederer calls her Mother Earth (1986: 40) – makes the girl forget time and Kay for a while and Bruno Bettelheim also mentions that many tales “have the period of passivity for their central topic” (1977: 225). After some time of contemplation Gerda realises that she has been wasting her time at the old woman’s place and resumes her search for Kay. When she finds him, they are no longer children and can return home to build a life together. Because of Gerda’s innocence and warmth Kay is free and able to love her. The cold Snow Queen is no longer the queen of Kay’s heart – Gerda has replaced her and so they are “grown-up, but children – children at heart” (238). The old woman’s spell has not been a threat to Gerda’s heart and feelings and has not made her cold-hearted. Instead, she has given Gerda the time needed to adjust to her role as an adult.

The Snow Queen, however, is trapped in her cold realm where eternity is such a horrible thing that not even the word is to be spelled out when she is around. With no husband and no children of her own, unable to reproduce but with a twisted and perverted desire for little boys, she is not a true woman, but condemned to eternal loneliness in her empty and frigid palace (236).

About sixteen years later, Anderson returns to the idea of a powerful woman connected with snow and ice in another story called “The Ice Maiden” (Andersen 2005: 606-641). This tale however, is seldom included in the volumes of Andersen’s works and it is as a consequence less well-known than The Snow Queen. Still, there are obvious connections between the two stories and, of course, between the two female characters.

“The Ice Maiden” is the story about Rudy, an orphan who lives with his grandfather in the Swiss mountains. As a young boy, he falls in love with the miller’s daughter Babette and they are engaged to be
married. The night before the wedding they go out to a small island. All of a sudden, they see their boat drifting away from the shore. Rudy plunges into the lake to get it back and disappears in the water. His fiancée is rescued the next day, but, as Andersen concludes, “the guidebooks tell nothing about Babette’s quiet life in her father’s house” after that day (641).

The Ice Maiden is the queen of the glaciers “whose joy and in whose power it is to seize and imprison her victims” (613). She attempted to abduct Rudy when he was a baby, but failed. She is now absolutely determined to capture the young man she thinks is rightfully hers, even though he is still alive:

And yet a beautiful boy was snatched from me – one whom I had kissed, but not yet kissed to death! He is again among human beings – he tends his goats on the mountain peaks; he is always climbing higher and still higher, far, far from other humans, but never from me! He is mine! I will fetch him! (609)

That the Snow Queen and the Ice Maiden are identical is “suggested [...] by their frigid nature, and by the kisses of death they bestow” (Lederer 1986: 29). Both women might be looked upon as symbols of Death, reminiscent of the Norse mythological goddess called Hel who rules over Nifelheim which is “a cold and misty place” corresponding to “the hot Mediterranean Hell of the Church Fathers (Lederer 1986: 29). Like the Snow Queen, the Ice Maiden is interested in little boys, although she knows that her kisses can kill and that she is of another kind than Rudy since he is human and she is not.

The Ice Maiden’s second move comes when Rudy is a young man, engaged to Babette but jealous of a young man who has shown too much interest in her. After an argument with Babette, Rudy is on his way home “following the mountain path, with its cold fresh air, and where the snow is deep and the Ice Maiden reigns” (633). He catches sight of a young girl who reminds him of someone. He asks her for some milk but she offers him wine. After having had some of it, he wants to kiss her. First, however, she asks him to give her his engagement ring. They kiss and he cries with pain – he has, of course, met the Ice Maiden in disguise. He has been unable to resist her attraction and given in to his desire for pleasure and enjoyment, and she has succeeded in her attempt to come between him and Babette (635).
The night before the wedding, Rudy meets the Ice Maiden for the last time. When the boat drifts away from the island where Rudy and Babette are sitting, holding hands, Rudy goes after it. The water is icy and clear and he thinks that he sees a golden ring that he wants to get. In the deep, he finds the Ice Maiden who kisses his feet: “Mine! Mine!” she says. “I kissed you when you were little – kissed you on the mouth! Now I kiss you on your toes and your heels – now you belong to me” (639). At last she has achieved what she has craved for a long time. She has managed this at the last moment: the next day Rudy would have promised Babette eternal love and he would no longer have been a virgin. Instead of marrying Babette, he becomes part of the Ice Maiden’s collection of young men and women who have fallen into the crevasses of the mountains. They all stand in the icy water, looking exactly as they did in life but not alive anymore and like her, they are no longer able to reproduce. The Ice Maiden’s realm is beyond time but not blessed the way Christian eternity is. Like the Snow Queen’s palace, it is a cold hell. When Rudy allows himself to be attracted to the cold sexuality of the Ice Maiden and forget about his duties to Babette, he gives up not only true and eternal love but also sexuality and any possibility of reproduction. The Ice Maiden is as unable to conceive and give birth as all snow queens. By choosing the Ice Maiden, Rudy condemns himself as well as Babette to eternal loneliness and sterility.

The Queen of Narnia, alias the White Witch, also has to be seen as an incarnation of the Andersen Snow Queen. She appears in the second book (the first in the publication order) of the Chronicles of Narnia – The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (1950) – telling the story of four children who are with an elderly professor in a large country-house. The children decide to explore the house and come upon an empty room containing only a wardrobe. Still in the wardrobe in the real world and still unaware of the existence of Narnia and its inhabitants, Lucy can feel “something soft and powdery and extremely cold” on the floor (Lewis 2000: 12). The wardrobe is the sluice gate between the real world and the world of Narnia, the realm of the White Witch. For many years she has kept Narnia in a firm grip: “It’s she who makes it always winter. Always winter and never Christmas; think of that!” one of the fauns complains (22). Evidently, she is a woman of great power and has made Narnia frozen and sterile, a landscape always covered with snow and ice, without joy or happiness. The four chil-
dren have to participate in a battle between the White Witch and her enemy Aslan, a lion and Narnia’s true king. When the White Witch is killed, the children become kings and queens, and spend many years in Narnia, growing to maturity, before they return home and become children again.

Edmund, one of the four siblings, is the one who meets the Queen of Narnia first. She comes in a sledge drawn by two reindeer and she is taller than any woman he has seen before. Her colour is crucial and according to Cathy McSporran, Lewis very thoroughly calls the reader’s attention to this when introducing her: “The White Witch is not just dressed in white; she is defined by whiteness” (2005: 194). Therefore even her face is white – “not merely pale, but white like snow or paper or icing-sugar, except for her red mouth. It was a beautiful face in other respects, but proud and cold and stern” (Lewis 2000: 34). The red mouth in her white face gives her an almost vampiric appearance. Like a female Dracula, she is unable to experience true love. In her ambition to satisfy a tormented sexuality which brings no pleasure but only eternal frustration (Botting 1996: 144-154), she constantly has to find new victims. “The witches know they are beautiful, and use their beauty not to bring pleasure to men, but to put others under their control,” Jean E. Graham claims in her study of women in the Narnia chronicle (2004: 40). The White Witch invites Edmund to come and sit at her feet in the sledge and she tucks him in thoroughly with her fur mantle. The resemblance to the scene when Kay meets the Snow Queen for the first time is striking – with the difference that Andersen’s Snow Queen, unlike the White Witch, has come to the human world and knows for whom she is looking. Since she is not human herself, she cannot exist in the human world. Therefore she and the other snow queens create, like their male precursor Dracula, their own realms, with impressive palaces where they reside as living dead and keep their victims.

In Lewis’ tale, it is Edmund who has left the real world and come to Narnia. At their first meeting, the Snow Queen is not really sure of what he is. “Are you human?” she asks (36) – a question which underlines the fact that she, like the Snow Queen and the Ice Maiden, is not human herself. Edmund, however, is not really at ease under the Queen’s mantle so she has to start her act of seduction. The Queen has noticed that Edmund is a childish and not very nice little boy (McBride 2005:
61) so instead of kissing him with her red mouth, she offers him a hot drink and his favourite candy, Turkish Delight. Her Turkish Delight is of course enchanted and anyone who has once tasted it will eat themselves to death (40). In other words, her candy, if consumed in too large quantities, is as fatal as too many kisses from the Andersen Snow Queen.

Even though neither Lewis nor Andersen directly addresses sexuality, the children in the three stories have to deal with dangerous women who represent the connection between female sexuality and power. The Queen of Narnia, the children are told by Mr. Beaver, is a daughter of Lilith, Adam's first wife (82). According to *The Alphabet of Ben Sira*, Lilith claims that since she and Adam were created in the same way (they were both made from the same piece of clay) they are equal. She therefore refuses to lie below him and finally abandons him. When she refuses to return to him, her punishment is deportation to the desert and life as a demon. Hundreds of her children are to die in childbirth or from hunger every day because of her disobedience. The White Witch “is ‘a daughter of Lilith,’ and will never ‘learn her lesson.’ Nor can she be pardoned, or offered pity” (McSporran 2005: 192). Lilith represents the opposite of the Christian message since she declines a position inferior to Adam's and is a threat to patriarchal authority. Her refusal to lie below him can also be interpreted literally, indicating that her sexuality is about power, which makes it dangerous (Graham 2004: 33-34). She denies Adam access to her body and refuses to attend to her commitments as a mother that is, the Anderson snow queens and the White Witch show no maternal instinct at all. Furthermore, the White Witch lives in her realm, isolated from the other inhabitants of Narnia. She makes her country sterile through perpetual winter, a symbol of her infertility also demonstrated by the circumstance that she has no children of her own (Graham 2004: 39). Her situation is the result of her wish for power and her disobedience towards Aslan who represents male authority. “Lilith demands equality; the White Witch demands, like Milton's Satan, to ‘Reign in Hell,’ even if she must turn Narnia into hell to achieve her aim,” Cathy McSporran concludes (2005: 194). The same is true of the Snow Queen and the Ice Maiden. They have all created their own Hell, resembling the ninth circle of Hell, as described by Dante in *Divina Commedia*, where all the sinners are completely encapsulated in ice. Dante's Satan is impotent – the snow queens are sterile.
Sterility, however, goes further than to bring snow and cold to the snow queen’s realms. All three of them are incapable of reproduction, a punishment for female rebellion against “the principle of ‘natural’ authority, particularly masculine authority” (McSporran 2005: 192). In the nineteenth century, for a woman, getting married meant that she accepted “the moral and reproductive labour of the wife and mother” (Pykett 1992: 12). This role is out of the question for snow queens who, as a consequence, have to steal children – young boys in particular. “I have no children of my own,” the White Witch says to Edmund and she continues: “I want a nice boy whom I could bring up as a Prince and who would be King of Narnia when I am gone” (Lewis 40-41). It is, however, not the longing for motherhood – a kind of respectable femininity – that makes the White Witch wish for a child – it is the need of an heir. Thus, it is obvious that the White Witch is a deviation from the nineteenth-century norm of ideal femininity.

When Edmund finally enters the palace of the White Witch, it is obvious that he has come to a place that resembles the palace of the Snow Queen and the underwater world of the Ice Maiden. It is cold and quiet and the courtyard is filled with statues – people that the White Witch has turned into stone (164). The statues, like the victims of the Ice Maiden, look the way they did in life – they have been captured in the middle of action. In the same way as the realms of the Snow Queen and the Ice Maiden, the realm of the white Witch is beyond time. It is a frozen eternity where Edmund now risks being detained.

At the end of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, the White Witch is overpowered and killed by Aslan since, according to McSporran, her “inhumanity negates her femininity, and justifies any form of violence against her” (2005: 199). As a result, Narnia is released from its state of eternal winter. There is, however, an important difference between the White Witch on the one hand and the Snow Queen and the Ice Maiden on the other. When the White Witch is defeated by goodness – one could even say grace – her realm and her prisoners are saved. “Narnia was” as Watt-Evans points out, “created without evil [...] and the White Witch brought in evil” (2005: 28). When she dies, Narnia goes back to its original state and even Father Christmas returns as a symbol of joy and happiness.

Philip Pullman, author of the trilogy His Dark Materials, also introduces an incarnation of the Snow Queen in his novel The Golden
Compass (1995) – the story of Lyra Belacqua, a girl raised and educated by Oxford scholars. She has had a carefree and unconfined life, but when Lord Asriel – a man who Lyra has known as her uncle but who turns out to be her father – returns to Oxford from exploring the North some strange events where children go missing begin, and Lyra herself is taken away from Oxford to live with the attractive but cunning Mrs Coulter. Lyra and her daemon, Pantalaimon, discover that Mrs Coulter is behind the abductions. They escape and try to rescue the stolen children. Lyra’s journey becomes a life and death struggle and it also raises the question whether Lyra will take on the role Destiny has decreed for her or not. “There is a curious prophecy about this child: she is destined to bring about the end of destiny,” one of the witches announces, identifying Lyra as a redeemer (271). Her first mission in The Golden Compass is when she has to set free the daemons and the children captured by Mrs Coulter. Her role as redeemer is emphasised in the third book of the trilogy when she leaves the human world to break open the world of the dead.

The snow queen Mrs Coulter makes her first appearance in the novel at a market. She is described as a “lady in a long yellow-red fox-fur coat, a beautiful young lady whose dark hair falls, shining delicately, under the shadow of her fur-lined hood” (Pullman 2003: 37). She is observing a little boy and after a while she offers him a drink of chocalatl. Even though she looks quite different from the previous snow queens with her dark hair and her yellow-red fur coat, her seductive skills are indisputable. Like Lilith, Mary Harris Russel points out, she is assertive, sexual and independent (215) – qualities not necessarily regarded as desirable when it comes to women – and she has already captured at least a dozen children – boys as well as girls. She is not only beautiful but also charismatic. “Mrs Coulter [...] was not like any female Scholar Lyra had seen [...] Mrs Coulter had such an air of glamour that Lyra was entranced” (59). In Mrs Coulter Pullman has introduced another daughter of Lilith with “a penchant for stealing children” (McSporran 2005: 197). It is, however, not only her looks and her manners that make an impression on Lyra. When Mrs Coulter starts telling her about the North and Greenland, Lyra is enraptured and she now finds Mrs Coulter the most wonderful person she has ever met (61). Her talents as a seductress are beyond doubt and her connection to ice and snow is established.
Lyra leaves Oxford and moves in with Mrs Coulter in her apartment, but when she learns about the kidnapped children and Mrs Coulter’s connection to them, she escapes. This is the beginning of a long and adventurous expedition that takes Lyra far up north where snow, ice and cold reign. She understands that Mrs Coulter is actually her mother and in charge of an organisation – the Oblation Board – that uses children for scientific experiments. Mrs Coulter realises that Lyra will become a threat to the board and goes after her. In an essay treating Pullman’s trilogy, Burton Hatlen points out that throughout the novel, Lyra is the hero and Mrs Coulter the principal villain (Hatlen 2005: 79). What Hatlen does not mention is that the fight between Mrs Coulter and her daughter is a fight between the devilish and the divine, between Lilith and her daughter. Since Lyra has not been under her mother’s influence while growing up, she is not contaminated by Mrs Coulter’s wickedness. According to Harris Russel, Mrs Coulter is a seeker of knowledge and she mesmerises Lyra when talking about the things she has learned and experienced (215). However, being a snow queen she lacks the knowledge of how to be a mother and a natural woman. Lyra is intelligent and ambitious like her mother, but remains warm-hearted and compassionate and acts out of instinct instead of hunger for power.

Mrs Coulter shows no mercy for the children she has captured. She is also an unnatural mother since she has never taken any interest in Lyra when she was a baby. Her father, Lord Asriel, explains it to Lyra:

You see, your mother’s always been ambitious for power. At first she tried to get it in the normal way, through marriage, but that didn’t work, as I think you’ve heard. So she had to turn to the Church. Naturally she couldn’t take the route a man could have taken – priesthood and so on – it had to be unorthodox; she had to set up her own order, her own channels or influence, and work through that. (328)

In Lord Asriel’s view, Lyra’s mother should have been satisfied with what she would have been able to achieve as his wife, since that is what he considers “the normal way.” As a woman, she cannot become a priest. What is left for her is to reign with the help of evil. Her realm is the research station in the North where “the Aurora was swaying
above them in golden arcs and loops, and all around was the bitter arctic cold” (182-183). Mrs Coulter’s arrival is the entrance of a true snow queen, announced in various ways in the text: it gets colder and colder, the lake is frozen, and the snowfall gets more and more intense. Lyra, who is in a sledge on her way to the Experimental Station of The Oblation Board, finds herself stiff and cold.

At the station, the purpose of catching children is finally revealed to Lyra by Mrs Coulter. By separating a child from its daemon – a horrible idea to Lyra – people will get saved from Dust. “You see,” Mrs Coulter explains to Lyra,

> your daemon’s a wonderful friend and companion when you’re young, but at the age we call puberty, the age you’re coming to very soon, darling, daemons bring all sorts of troublesome thoughts and feelings, and that’s what lets Dust in. (248)

This will, according to Mrs Coulter, make everything peaceful – forever.

Obviously, Mrs Coulter and the Oblation Board want to keep people in an eternal state of immaturity, at least when it comes to sexual matters. Lyra instinctively feels that there is something wrong about this and she is determined to fight Mrs Coulter and the Board and to set all the children and their daemons free. Unfortunately, the battle has to take place in an environment that suits Mrs Coulter far better than Lyra and the children: the realm of a snow queen where the air is frozen and the falling snow makes them blind. Lyra fears that even though they manage to escape, they might die of cold.

The portrait of Mrs Coulter is, as noticed by Lisa Hopkins, complex (2005: 54). Despite her indifference toward Lyra when she was a baby and despite her cold voice and her face “a frozen glare of intense feeling” (259) during the combat, she is prepared to sacrifice herself to save Lyra. But, according to Hopkins, this is Pullman’s way of demonstrating how “love for one’s own child is entirely compatible with the most extreme forms of selfishness and ruthlessness” (2005: 54). This view is not indisputable, however. Lilith, Adam’s first wife, revolted against “proper masculine authority” and that made her monstrous (McSporran 2005: 193). The portrait of Mrs Coulter, refusing to take on the role as a wife and a mother, abducting children and using them for painful,
scientific experiments which she even seems to enjoy, makes her seem monstrous as well. Her husband Lord Asriel does not approve of her ambitions, and Mary Harris Russel describes her as someone following “a completely independent path toward power and ego satisfaction” (2005: 215). On the other hand, one might perhaps say that Mrs Coulter’s heart is not as frozen as the hearts of the Andersen Snow Queen, the Ice Maiden and the White Which, perhaps because she is after all a mother. This becomes more obvious in the second book of the trilogy, The Subtle Knife (1997). It is clear, however, that female ambition and power are not compatible with maternal skills and maternal devotion in Pullman’s texts.

Snow queens in literature for children and adolescents are generally incarnations of Lilith and consequently evil. They are powerful and seductive which makes them more villainous than their male counterparts. What they fear most of all is love and warmth and they fight to keep their victims away from warm and gentle feelings as well as love and passion by putting them in a state between life and death, preventing them from growing up. The only way of escaping this fate is to be rescued by true and everlasting love. Women who have a desire for power and independence will have to live their lives without love. They are doomed to a cold and lonely existence. In this way, the representations of the snow queens in literature for young readers become powerful reinforcements of patriarchal gender ideologies.

NOTES

1 The Snow Queen is included in Nye Eventyr, Første Bind. Anden Samling (1845) but was first published 21 Dec. 1844.

2 The Chronicles of Narnia comprise, in publication order, The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (1950), Prince Caspian: The Return to Narnia (1951), The Voyage of the Dawn Treader (1952), The Silver Chair (1953), The Horse and His Boy (1954), The Magician’s Nephew (1955) and The Last Battle (1956).

3 The trilogy comprises the following novels: Northern Lights (released as The Golden Compass in North America and published in 1995), The Subtle Knife (1997) and The Amber Spyglass (2000).

4 People’s souls manifest themselves as animals, so called dæmons.
REFERENCES

ABSTRACT Like all H. C. Andersen’s stories, the fairy tale The Snow Queen (1844) is a text with many links to the tradition of Romanticism. This article concentrates on (a) Andersen’s use of symbols, especially ice and snow; (b) the three-fold composition in the story, and (c) the allegorical structure. These levels in Andersen’s text are placed in the framework of a larger Romantic ideology or philosophy. When focusing on the Romantic tradition in a larger sense, special attention will be paid to the female protagonist in the story in relation to the male and/or Faustian ideal, whose origins are to be found in Goethe’s drama Faust. Within the allegorical scheme special attention will be paid to the Lilith, also appearing in Faust, and to 1 Cor. 13, a text where the distorted mirror and the divergence between child and adult are key symbols, as in Andersen’s tale. Finally, the tale’s female protagonist Gerda is interpreted as the bearer of Rousseau’s educational ideas and the Christian notion of agape.

KEYWORDS H. C. Andersen, The Snow Queen, Goethe, Faust, Rousseau, Paul, 1 Cor., allegory, agape
H. C. Andersen’s (1805-1875) *Sneævronningen* [The Snow Queen], first published in 1844, is regarded as one of the great fairy tales of the world. It has been the subject of many different kinds of interpretations, not least Freudian, Jungian and biographical (Lederer 1986, Lotz 1988: 203-16, Misheff 1989: 1-7). A common denominator in such readings of *The Snow Queen* and other stories by Andersen is the tendency to either draw parallels between content and assumed structures in the human psyche or to explain the texts not so much as examples of fictions with their own set of rules, but as symptoms of real-life events. The aim of this study is to make no such claims but instead to focus on some aspects of Andersen’s text seen in relation to the tradition of Romanticism. It is true to say, using the words of Niels Kofoed, that “all tendencies of Romanticism are gathered in his writings” [“i hans författarskab samles alle romantikkens tendenser”] (Kofoed 1967: 97, my translation). This discussion, however, will primarily attend to (a) the use of symbols, especially ice and snow; (b) the three-fold composition of the story; and, finally (c) the allegorical structure. These levels or dimensions of Andersen’s text are seen as parts of a larger Romantic ideology or philosophy. When focusing on the Romantic tradition more generally, special attention will be paid to the female protagonist in the story in the context of the male and/or Faustian ideal, whose origin is to be found in Goethe’s drama *Faust*. One may think of (a – c) as patterns, or, alluding to the story itself, as footsteps in the snow that will be followed through the text and finally converge.

*The Snow Queen* is segmented into seven parts, telling the story of a boy and a girl, Kay and Gerda, their separation and reunification through the power of love. However, the boy and girl are not introduced at the beginning of the story. In part one, a kind of overture, the reader is introduced to the Devil, “a goblin of the very wickedest sort” (Andersen 2005: 214), and his new invention: a mirror.

This diabolical mirror has the power to change people’s views of themselves and the surrounding world. It transforms everything good and beautiful into something evil and ugly. “[T]he loveliest landscapes looked just like boiled spinach, and even the very best people became hideous, or stood on their heads and had no stomachs” (214 f). In the
lowest domains, the students who attend the Demon school are astonished by their master’s great invention. They run around in the world holding the mirror and through it everything is transformed into its worst: “there was not a person alive nor a land on earth that had not been distorted” (215). After this they decide to carry the mirror to the heavenly spheres where it will reflect the Lord and his angels. However, when God is inverted in the mirror, to its absolute opposite, the mirror-glass starts to shake and cracks into “hundreds of millions of billions of bits, or perhaps even more” (215). This, according to the story-teller, makes the devilish instrument even more evil than before. Now the bits of mirror-glass are spread in all kinds of sizes all over the world. They get into the houses as windows and into eye-glasses. Through these people see only the ugliness and the evil in the world. The reader is also told that the mirror-glass gets into some people’s hearts and that this makes them into “lumps of ice” (215). With this the first, introductory part of The Snow Queen ends.

A metaphorical transformation has taken place when the second part begins. The primary exponents of the evil in the first tale, the mirror and the glass, have now taken the form of ice possessing the human heart. Reflection and transparency are features associated with the rational aspect of perception. Warmth and cold are features associated with life and death, or being home and safe versus exposed to the elements.

In the second story the reader is acquainted with Kay and Gerda. We learn that their parents are poor and that they are playing together on the roof where the houses of their families meet. The two children are the best of friends. On the roof they are surrounded by flowers, which suggests a sort of Eden-like enclosure. This condition of summer, foliage, playfulness innocence, love, nearness and beauty is contrasted with its seasonal opposite. During the summer Kay and Gerda may easily join each other on the roof. In the winter this is not possible. Their windows on each side of the roof were “often frosted over completely” (216). Still they manage to overcome their isolation by heating a coin on the stove and putting it on the surface of the window. This creates “the finest of peepholes” (216) through the rime and
“[b]ehind them appeared a bright, friendly eye” (216). Keeping in mind the evil pieces of glass that were incorporated into people’s windows, and which isolated them from their fellow-creatures, the warm hole in the icy window may be seen as a symbol of love overcoming alienation. Thus, not surprisingly, winter connotes isolation and alienation. The contrasting symbolical figure is summer and warmth, connoting love and the unifying forces in life. This far into the story love seems to be the prevailing force.

However, one winter evening, the boy looks out through the little round hole. He sees how two snowflakes are falling and how one of them, the largest, grows in front of his eyes. It grows into “a woman, who was dressed in the finest white gauze which looked as if it had been made from millions of star-shaped flakes” (216). The boy is fascinated by what he sees: “She was so beautiful and she was graceful, but she was ice-shining, glittering ice. She was alive, for all that, and her eyes sparkled like two bright stars, but in them there was neither rest nor peace” (216).

The Snow Queen nods towards his window and disappears. Shortly afterwards it becomes warmer outside and winter turns into summer: the seasonal cycle turns. Later in the summer while playing with Greta, Kay feels a sudden pain when a part of the mirror-glass gets into his heart and turns it into something very like a lump of ice. When his heart turns into this cold state the pain stops.

When the mirror-glass gets into Kay’s heart and transforms it into ice, everything he sees is turned upside down. The rose-garden becomes ugly. He runs back into his house through the open window. Later, when he listens to the stories told by his grandmother he is filled with scepticism. He “always broke in with a ‘but -’ ” (217). He also gets an eye for the not so pleasant sides in others, making jokes by imitating them. The laughs are on his side and people see him as very talented.

The seasonal turn is an important motif in the second story. The reader follows the two protagonists from summer to winter and then through another turn of the year ending in winter. Before the second story is finished Kay’s mind has changed according to this turn. His games have become quite different, less emotional and “more sensible” (217). Like a teacher of natural sciences he shows Gerda a snowflake under his magnifying glass:
‘Now look through the glass,’ he told Gerda. Each snowflake seemed much larger, and looked like a magnificent flower or a ten-pointed star. It was marvellous to look at. ‘Look, how artistic!’ said Kay. ‘They are much more interesting to look at than real flowers, for they are absolutely perfect. There isn’t a flaw in them, until they start melting.’ (218)

When playing in the town square one day Kay ties his sledge behind a larger sledge. The pulling sledge starts to move, accelerates to a high speed and drives out through the city gates. The snow starts to fall so thickly that Kay cannot see his hand in front of him. Terror seizes him and he tries to say the Lord’s Prayer, “but all he could remember was the multiplication tables” (218). Then in the midst of his great despair with the snowflakes growing even larger around him, the vehicle suddenly comes to a halt. In the sledge before him is the Snow Queen. As before Kay is struck by her beauty. She talks to him:

‘We have made a good time,’ she said. ‘Is it possible that you tremble from cold? Crawl under my bear coat.’ She took him up in the sleigh beside her, and as she wrapped the fur about him he felt as if he were sinking in the snowdrift.

‘Are you still cold?’ she asked, and kissed him on the forehead. Brer-r-r. That kiss was colder than ice. He felt it right down to his heart, half of which was already an icy lump. He felt as if he were dying, but only for a moment. Then he felt quite comfortable, and no longer noticed the cold. (218)

Kay, enchanted by the beauty of the Snow Queen, becomes deeply attached to her. After he has tasted her kiss he no longer thinks of his grandmother and little Gerda. The Snow Queen seems to have taken on a more human shape. “She no longer seemed to be made of ice, as she had seemed when she sat outside his window and beckoned to him” (220). The second part of the story ends when Kay and the Snow Queen fly away in her carriage heading north.

When Kay is gone, many think that he has fallen into the river and drowned. Gerda is, however, persuaded by the sunshine and the swallows who tell her that her beloved friend is alive. Story three to seven focus on Gerda’s adventures during her journey to Lapland, trying to find Kay.
Andersen’s story was published in 1844 at a time when Scandinavian literature was still influenced by Romanticism (Andersen 2003: 368-70). One characteristic aspect of the Romantic imagination is its affinity to dualist patterns of thought. One typical antithetical figure in the literature of the Romantic period is the disjunction between reason and emotion. This dichotomy in turn, is often linked to a presumed difference between the sexes: male rationality is contrasted with female sensibility. Andersen’s story fits well into the epochal paradigm of Romanticism and illustrates several of its aspects.

A common trait in this Romantic ideology or philosophy of opposites is a triadic historical development. This developmental process is outlined either phylogenetically, through the biographical development of one single individual, or ontogenetically, regarding humankind and its history – or, sometimes, both synchronically (Abrams 1973: 197-252). First, it is assumed, there is an initial stage of unity between the individual, nature and humanity. In this golden age there is a ‘natural’ or ‘organic’ link between people that confirms a larger homogeneity of being. Then this stage of innocence and harmony is altered through a second and middle stage. The main predicament of this phase is separation. The unity of the first world is broken and alienation becomes the key social element. Finally stage one and two terminate in a third stage of renewed unity. This final destination of development may have the shape of a replica, mirroring the initial unity or symbiosis. It may also have the shape of sublation, that is to say imitating the first stage but at the same time transgressing it. In this case the triadic figure has a dialectical content. The first phase is a thesis, the second is its opposite and the third unites and synthesises the previous two in one single vision.

This major triadic figure, here outlined in a quite simplistic manner, has many different facets in the literature of Romanticism. On the individual level it could be experienced as a loss of identity and a predicament of alienation finally replaced by love, affection and some sort of insight. In The Snow Queen it is possible to see the first symbiotic stage in the scheme exemplified in the first part of the second story. This is the part where Kay and Gerda play happily with each other on the roof during the summer, enclosed in the rose garden. The second
stage begins when the Snow Queen makes contact with Kay. After this initial meeting with – or seduction by – the Snow Queen, Kay is separated from the initial unity, or is destined to be so from the very next day when the demon-splinters get into his heart and eyes. The second state reaches all the way through story three to seven. Gerda makes an adventurous journey aiming to rescue Kay from The Snow Queen. In the seventh tale she finds him sitting in the glacial halls of the Snow Queen’s palace. The palace is lit by the northern lights. In the middle of the empty hall of snow is a frozen lake cracked into a thousand pieces all shaped alike (one may think of Blake’s “fearful symmetry”). The symbols of ice and cold are closely linked to the notion of reason and abstract structures. When at home, the Snow Queen sits “in the exact centre” (236) of the lake and calls it the “Mirror of Reason” (236). It is, according to her, the only one and the best in the world (236). Little Kay is spellbound by the Snow Queen and is completely absorbed by the game he is playing with some pieces of ice:

He was shifting some sharp, flat pieces of ice to and fro, trying to fit them into every possible pattern, for he wanted to make something with them. It was like the Chinese puzzle game that we play at home, juggling little flat pieces of wood about into special designs. Kay was cleverly arranging his pieces in the game of ice-cold reason. To him the patterns were highly remarkable and of the utmost importance, for the chip of glass in his eye made him see them that way. He arranged his pieces to spell out many words; but he could never find the way to make the one word he was so eager to form. The word was ‘Eternity.’ The Snow Queen had said to him, ‘If you can puzzle that out you shall be your own master, and I’ll give you the whole world and a new pair of skates.’ But he could not puzzle it out. (236)

As in episode two, the ice is symbolically linked to rationality and the aims of reason. In the second episode Kay compares the snow-flake to the flower and finds the former much more interesting and absolutely perfect. A common denominator between that situation and the one quoted above is, apart from the presence of reason, the drive for perfection. Kay’s mind is, when enchanted by reason, intellectually absorbed into a kind of Platonic sphere where the eternal absolute reigns and ephemeral emotions play no part at all. Still, all his efforts to reach eternity seem to be in vain. Eternity is unreachable through
the intellect. The eternal absolute and the transient human existence converge only in man’s heart and the self-sacrificing love that Gerda represents. It is only when Kay becomes an integrated part of this love that he can find God’s eternal grace:

She recognized him at once, and ran to throw her arms around him. She held him close and cried, ‘Kay, dearest little Kay! I’ve found you at last!’

But he sat still, and stiff, and cold. Gerda shed hot tears, and when they fell upon him they went straight to his heart. They melted the lump of ice and burned away the splinter of glass in it. He looked up at her, and she sang:

\textit{Where roses bloom so sweetly in the vale}  
\textit{There shall you find the Christ Child, without fail.}

Kay burst into tears. He cried so freely that the little piece of glass in his eye was washed right out. ‘Gerda!’ He knew her, and cried out in his happiness, ‘My sweet little Gerda, were have you been so long? And were have I been?’ he looked around him and said, ‘How cold it is here! How enormous and empty!’ (236)

Being a part of Gerda’s love, which is also the eternal love of God, is the leap that takes Andersen’s story from the second stage to the third and last. Now what once was separated is reunited. Hand in hand Gerda and her beloved Kay return to the house with the red roses on the roof. “Both of them had forgotten the icy, empty splendour of the Snow Queen’s palace as completely as if it were some bad dream” (238). At first sight the third stage in \textit{The Snow Queen} seems to be a repetition of the first, adding no further content than the reunion, which in turn confirms a closed annual circle, including summer and winter (the seventh story ends in “summer, warm, glorious summer” (Flahault 1972, Andersen 2005: 238). At the end of the seventh episode, however, we are told that Gerda and Kay when at home together are “grown-up but children still – children at heart” (238). This is a turn giving the story less of a circular content and more of a climbing spiralling dialectical ditto. A developmental transformation has taken place in the seventh story, not only amalgamating the rational and the imaginary, male intellect and female affection, but also the innocence of the child and mature responsibility.
This far the main focus of my interpretation of the text has been the symbolic transformation. The symbols of ice and snow may be understood as signs in a larger semiosis, a triptych-like pattern. One important aspect should be included in this pattern: the allegorical structure that is closely intertwined with the first, second and third stage in the primary scheme. In fact it is not uncommon to see the three-fold narrative mentioned as an integrated part of Romantic allegory. The typical allegorical pattern merges with the Christian idea of the Trinity, that is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Michelsen 1940: 44). The main story is segmented into an initial phase, sometimes called ‘the Age of the Father’, where people live in innocence, united as brothers and sisters with each other, with nature and God. This first phase, the old order, is almost immediately fractured or defragmented by vengeful evil forces, forming the second order, ‘the Age of the Son’. In the third phase, the evil forces are conquered when God and human beings reunite in ‘the Age of the Holy Spirit’, often by the means of sacrifice. The prototype of this sacrifice is Jesus on the cross, represented in the allegory by the Figura, a Christ-like protagonist.

The shift from the first to the second stage in the allegorical structure is exemplified in Andersen’s tale when the diabolical mirror falls down to Earth from God’s higher spheres and cracks into small pieces of glass and ice that enter people’s hearts and minds. Following the prototypical allegorical pattern this disintegration may be seen as synonymous with the Fall of Man, that is to say the transition from a state of innocence to a state of knowledge and reflection. Kay’s increasing desire for reason and his ambition to understand the outer world in terms of science may be seen as important aspects of this knowledge. Another dimension of this knowledge is the human self-awareness that manifests itself in the ironic and sarcastic attitude that Kay expresses towards his social environment. The emblem for this attitude is of course the mirror as self-reflection. Seeing one’s own apparition in the mirror is, transferred to the level of the mind, seeing the self as something alien and “other.” This self-estrangement has a hampering influence on people’s feelings. One may say that they are “frozen” in the metaphorical sense exemplified in Andersen’s story.
However, when interpreting any story not only as a work of fiction but as a work within the tradition of allegory one must not forget its deep relation to the Scriptures. Christian allegory is not only a compositional structure, three-fold or other, but also a way of connecting episodes in the story with biblical key-episodes or symbols. The totality of the allegory is found neither in the compositional setting nor in the episodic-symbolic features, but in the dialectic or playful interaction of these aspects.

One example of such a single symbol is the red shoes that Gerda puts on in the third story (220). In Christian symbolism, two connotations among others associated with the colour red is Christ’s sufferings and the Holy Spirit. When Gerda puts on the shoes this could mean that she will follow in the footsteps of the Master and that she is the figura of the story. Her decision to throw the shoes, her “dearest possession” (220), in the river in order to have Kay back indicates that she is ready to sacrifice to be able to receive love.

This exemplifies a possible rather straightforward one-to-one-relationship between the literary text and the Scriptures. However, usually an elaborate allegory is built upon a more complex interconnection with passages from the Bible and ideas within the traditions of Christianity. One such biblical passage is 1 Cor. 13 where Paul contrasts knowledge and other gifts with a form of free and unconditional love, presenting the latter as the only way to divine grace. This has made the section a pivotal expression in the Bible and Christian tradition of the notion of *agape*, a persisting unselfish love. When making the case for *allegoresis*, in other words an allegorical interpretation of *The Snow Queen*, verses 9-13 are of particular interest. Here knowledge in any form is interpreted by Paul as partial and imperfect in contrast with the “perfect” that will prevail in the name of love. As long as we see things “in parts” everything will be distorted and unrevealed. Only agape will reveal the truth of being. Knowing or not knowing this truth is symbolically linked to a significant difference between the child and the adult. “When I was a child,” Paul writes, “I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” However, with the redemption of humanity we will see it all clearly. But before seeing things again, revealed, we see them distorted “through a glass, darkly.” That is, referring to the original text, through *σποτρον* [espotron], a mirror in metal giving a distorted and unclear reflection. A compari-
son of the use of symbols could be made between Andersen and the Biblical text, with Kay seeing perfection in the form of a single snowflake through the magnifying glass that distorts things beyond divine proportions, or with the “partial” pieces of ice in the game of ice-cold reason, each bearing one single letter impossible to place with another in a meaningful pattern through the means of knowledge. As a corollary the opacity of the mirror in Paul’s writing may inform Andersen’s use of the distorted mirror as a symbol of the Fall of Man. According to Paul, when love finally prevails we will see things “face to face.” In Andersen’s text it is possible to see this Pauline figure of speech in the guise of Kay and Gerda, looking at each other through their little peepholes, one “bright, friendly eye” (216) meeting the other through each “frost-coated glass” (216). The regained love between the adult couple in the final story is in one sense Kay and Gerda seeing each other again, like children and face to face through the once icy but now transparent glass. In another and parallel sense it is the symbol of resurrection. When Gerda kisses Kay and he awakes from his bewitched and frozen sleep, it is the dead being awakened on the Last Day by God’s eternal love (de Mylius 2007: 23-38).

However, before receiving the grace that eschatology withholds, the protagonists have to pass through the needle’s eye of the second stage in the triadic scheme. This stage and the corresponding Fall- or Exile-phase in the allegorical structure are both initiated with shame and self-awareness. Usually this event is associated with the Biblical episode when the serpent persuades Eve to eat the fruit from the forbidden tree. According to Sumerian, Hebrew and folk tradition the serpent has a female disguise in Lilith. This serpent-Lilith with a beautiful female head, connected with the power of seduction, is a common iconographic depiction of the serpent of Eden. One example of its presence is Michelangelo’s painting *The Temptation and Expulsion from Paradise*. The tradition has also made its marks in the Romantic tradition, for instance in Keats’ Lamia-figure in his poem “La Belle Dame sans Merci” from 1819, where the stock character – rightly or wrongly associated with Lilith by interpreters – became the archetypal “seductress.” However, the most important and distinct literary source of the tradition of Lilith in the days of Andersen is Goethe’s *Faust I* (1808). In the “Walpurgisnacht”-episode of the drama the reader meets Mephistopheles in the figure of Lilith in dialogue with Faust.
They dance together and Lilith, a pretty witch, is described as “Adams erste Frau” [Adam’s first wife] (Goethe 1988: 302). Faust was Andersen’s favourite reading at the time of writing *The Snow Queen* (Kofoed 2005: 104ff), and there are in fact some interconnected elements in Andersen’s story that make possible a rather firm linkage to Goethe’s drama. Goethe’s use of Lilith as Adam’s first wife refers to the Hebrew myth, or at least the reading of the Old Testament within folk tradition. This reading is supported by the fact that there are two creation stories in the Book of Genesis. In Gen 1:27 “male and female” are created “in the image of God.” In Gen 2:18 the text instead says that “it is not good for a man to be alone,” after which God creates a woman out of one of Adam’s ribs, in other words out of the clay from which he once formed Adam (Hurwitz 1999: 174). According to the myth this woman is Lilith. When she claims she is made of the same substance as Adam and therefore should not “lie below him” the two start to bicker. Lilith is separated from Adam and replaced by Eve. This is one important source for Lilith being the archetypal witch, disobeying not only Adam but also God. In her witch form, and in many other guises, Lilith is the demonic woman.

When Kay in Andersen’s tale looks out through the window and sees how the beautiful woman is formed out of the snow crystals this corresponds to Lilith being formed out of clay according to God’s will. The woman that Kay sees actually takes shape out of the snow, perhaps as a result of Kay’s fantasy, his male desire. In the original text Andersen uses the words “et Par Sneeflokker” (Andersen 1963-90: 51) [a pair of snow flakes]. This should be compared to how Faust, when reminded of the days in Eden by Lilith/Mephistopheles, has a vision of the Tree of Life and how “Zwei schöne Äpfel glänzten dran” [Two apples glittered there] (Goethe 1988: 302). Dancing with the young woman Faust, with obvious erotic overtones, declares that he wants to climb the tree and hold the two apples. The woman answers that this is what men have always desired. Later in the text, when the main protagonist, now with remorse, says he sees Gretchen in what was originally Lilith, Mephistopheles tells him that the beautiful woman is a chimera, “ein Zauberbild […] ein Idol” (Goethe 1988: 304) In the eyes of Mephistopheles she is the Medusa, who “erstarrt des Menschen Blut,” [freezes human blood] (Goethe: 1988: 304), thus having much the same function as the Snow Queen in Andersen’s story (Lederer 1986: 28 ff).
Within the allegorical pattern, a connection may be found not only between *The Snow Queen* and the biblical tradition in different shapes, but also between Andersen’s and Goethe’s use of this tradition. This is true also about the first story in Andersen’s tale, with the subtitle “Which Has to Do with a Mirror and Its Fragments.” This episode has affinities with Job 1:1-1:12, often referred to as “the council in heaven” and constituting a frame or pre-text to the story of Job’s trials and tribulations. In this part of the Book of Job, God permits Satan to put the virtue of Job to a test. In the “Prolog im Himmel” [Prologue in Heaven] in *Faust I* Goethe alludes to this episode in the Old Testament. As in the Book of Job God is having a discussion with the Devil regarding the inherent nature of the main protagonist. This results in Mephistopheles being permitted by God to lead Faust astray only so that he may learn from his misdeeds (Johansen 1997: 41-53). The easiest way of making the analogy in this case is to say that in Andersen’s story Kay is the protagonist who is being tested. However, stating this would be to seriously contradict the story in *The Snow Queen*, which for most of its length focuses not on Kay’s but on Gerda’s actions. Using Vladimir Propp’s classical term “quest” in *The Morphology of the Folktale* (1968) and identifying the quest as the central function in Andersen’s story would, on the other hand, give the story completely to its female protagonist. If Kay’s true identity is revealed as a result of the bet between the good and evil forces of life, this is made possible through the persistent work of his childhood friend. Thus keeping the allegorical and Faustian background intact it is possible to say that Andersen makes an antithetical claim in relation to the tradition. Neither does Kay receive grace directly through God’s intervention, like the righteous Job in the Old Testament, nor through his own efforts, like Goethe’s Faust, but through the unselfish love, the agape, from another human being.

There is also a thematic relationship between *The Snow Queen* and *Faust*. A common denominator is the shared interest in what may be called “the true nature of human beings” and how to achieve knowledge of this true essence. What is it to be truly human? Is it possible to know this by using one’s intellectual tools? Or is it something that is only given to us through feeling, love and divine grace? These questions, regarding *humanitas*, are penetrated in both texts. Like so many other works of literature written in the Romantic period Goethe’s
Faust, known as the classic Gelehrtentragödie, has as its main theme the relationship between intellect and emotion. The restless “Faustian ambition” has become synonymous with the struggle to embrace these opposites. The redeeming and dialectical mediation between the two, making, in the end, the grasp of life in its entirety possible, people’s, or perhaps more precisely men’s, desire. This is the primus motor of every single line in Goethe’s drama. But also Kay in Andersen’s story is, I would claim, a vehicle for Faustian desire. It is possible to interpret Kay’s desire to know nature’s true essence through the means of science and abstract formulas as a photocopy of his male desire for the Snow Queen.

A lot has been said and written about the lack of erotic sensibility in Andersen’s writing. More than often this is linked to Andersen’s own life, sometimes implying his “sexual failure,” sometimes his “alleged homosexuality,” “bisexuality” – or “non-sexuality.” This reception was a fact already in Andersen’s own lifetime – the philosopher Søren Kierkegaard’s (1813-1855) comparison between the writer and a hermaphroditic plant being representative. There is an androgyous feature in The Snow Queen. In the first phase of the triadic pattern, the state of innocence according to the allegory, the boy and girl may be described as an inseparable unity, before the Snow Queen arrives and tempts Kay out of the initial symbiotic stage. This claim would not be foreign to the Romantic tradition where androgyny is almost a leitmotif. An interpretation pointing in this direction is also in line with the folk traditions and the traditions of mysticism which once inspired the writers of the Romantic period. According to one of these traditions, Adam and Eve constitute “one” androgynous being with a male and female correspondent, Samael and, again, Lilith (Patai 1978: 231).

On the other hand it is possible to claim that erotic symbols are very present in The Snow Queen. One Andersen interpreter, Ib Johansen, focuses on the speech of “Illdillien” [the Fire lily] in the third episode:

The Hindoo woman in her long red robe stands on the funeral pyre. The flames rise around her and her dead husband, but the Hindoo woman is thinking of that living man in the crowd around them. She is thinking of him whose eyes are burning hotter than the flames – of him whose fiery glances have pierced her heart more deeply than these flames that soon will burn her body to ashes. Can the flame of the heart die in the flame of the funeral pyre? (222f.)
In Johansen's reading the sexual content in the flower’s speech makes Andersen's story something more than an edifying bourgeois tale about the return to childhood innocence (Johansen 1997: 46). Another episode with obvious sexual content is when Kay meets the Snow Queen the second time. Here the Snow Queen invites Kay to lie down beside her and wraps the fur around him. She welcomes him: “kryb ind i min Bjørnepels!” [sneak into my bear coat!] (Andersen 1963-90: 54). Now Kay feels as if he is sinking in the snowdrift. Then he feels he is dying, “but only for a moment” (218). Then he feels “quite comfortable” (218). The petit mort Kay experiences in the carriage with the cold woman could be compared to the enduring passion in the story of the Fire lily. The cold snow in which Kay feels he is sinking makes a contrast to the burning fire that consumes the woman at the stake. The superficial/external in Kay’s alienating intercourse stands against the unifying/inner community the Hindoo woman experiences with her lover. Male and female sexuality are not only juxtaposed in Andersen’s story but also stages in a moral development where the female vastly supersedes her male counterpart. Thus it is possible to say that the Fall that takes place within the allegory is a Fall into male sexuality or – into Faustian desire.

The final section of the allegory represents people's way back to their fellow human beings, nature and God through redemption in Christ. It has been asserted that the Fall is induced by the male telos or inclination, whose prototype is to be found in Goethe's drama. One important trait in this desire is its estrangement from nature. Kay's Faustian desire to reify nature and life through the means of knowledge not only transforms this nature and life to discrete and abstract entities; it also corrupts his own nature and alienates him from his female part. Since tasting the Fruit of Knowledge he has forgotten what it is to feel pain or joy. This condition, the death-in-life, is explicitly expressed in Andersen’s story by the symbols of snow and ice. Kay’s knowledge a priori is paralleled in the story by Gerda’s search for love. Her way of finding knowledge and thus finding Kay involves all human modalities. The episode with the Fire lily involves Gerda listening directly to the flower, that is communicating with nature without any intermediary. In her innocence she does not understand the subtext of the speech, unlike the adult reader, but her main strategy to attain knowledge, her anti-Faustian form of Bildung, remains to in-
terpret the various life forms that her adventurous and dangerous task forces her to encounter. Her main source of knowledge is the stories she takes part in and not abstract models. Interpreting these stories and taking part in the adventure involves a dialogue between her inner and outer nature. The ice puzzle in the Snow Queen’s palace is finally solved when she and then Kay express their inner feelings. This way of “knowing” a posteriori presumes childishness, a certain form of naivety and an art of receiving, features Andersen has given to his female protagonist. One might claim that Gerda’s only characteristic is her invincible love and that beyond this she is a tabula rasa, open to the inscriptions of experience. It is obvious that this strategy, whose characteristic is knowledge through life itself, is directly derived from the educational philosophy of Rousseau, whom Andersen evidently admired (Andersen 2003: 466). However, when letting a young girl enter the educational program of Émile, contrary to his master’s advice (Rousseau thought that this form of education was reserved for boys only), Andersen takes a more modern stance vis-à-vis the difference between the sexes. This stance is also the point where the tracks in the snow finally converge, not so much in the finding of Kay, the rather anonymous male protagonist, and not so much in the Goethean Ewig-Weibliche, the prototype of the Romantic all-embracing feminine – but in the endlessly active female protagonist of The Snow Queen, Andersen’s vehicle of a redeeming love beyond all bounds.

NOTES

1 Such an idea may also be understood as a notion within the tradition of biblical interpretation or theology. For example on an allegorical level the metaphorical change from the mirroring glass in the otherworldly realm of demons and angels to the pieces of glass and ice scattered around the human realm, may be interpreted as a transformation from transcendence (the notion of God and salvation as something outside human existence) to immanence (God and salvation as a process within existence).

2 In some myths Lilith is referred to as a child-stealing female demon (which would fit Andersen’s tale). The only occurrence of Lilith in the Hebrew Bible is in Isaiah 34:14. Here Lilith takes the guise of an owl finding a place of rest in a deserted palace in the desert. This could be compared with the episode when the Snow Queen leaves Kay’s sight; “da var det, som der udenfor fløi en stor Fugl forbi Vinduet” [then it was as if a great bird flew outside the window] (Andersen
1963-90: 52). The second time Kay meets her he is taken to an empty palace where the Snow Queen resides.

REFERENCES


ABSTRACT The article explores a contemporary reaction to homogenising nation-building in the context of the writing of literary history in Sweden. Bengt Pohjanen’s and Kirsti Johansson’s Den tornedalsfinska litteraturen: Från Kexi till Liksom (2007) is analysed as an example of the emergence of multiple histories and the acknowledgment of the notion of multiple origins in current developments in European societies. The role of the concepts ‘l’Ugritude’, ‘participation mystique’ and ‘the third space’ in the construction of a Meänkieli literary tradition is explored as well as the re-interpretation of the impact of Laestadianism in Meänmaa aesthetics. The symbolic function of metaphors connoting heat and cold and the appropriation of the Finnish Kalevala tradition is furthermore commented upon.

KEYWORDS Tornedalian Finnish literary history, Meänkieli, Meänmaa, l’Ugritude, Kalevala, participation mystique, third space, Keksi, Pohjanen, multiple histories

In 2007 the first volume of a survey of Tornedalian Finnish literature entitled Den tornedalsfinska litteraturen: Från Kexi till Liksom [Tornedalian Finnish literature: From Kexi to Liksom] was published by the publishing house Barents Publisher, run by one of the authors, Bengt Pohjanen. The other author is Kirsti Johansson. Pohjanen and Johans-
son divided the writing between themselves, clearly stating which one of them wrote the various chapters. The authors presented in the volume are: Antti Keksi, Timo K. Mukka, Oiva Arvola, Bengt Pohjanen himself, Rosa Liksom and Bengt Kostenius. The material is divided into three main parts with the titles: “Antti Keksi,” “Etnisk nyckel – fördom och okunnighet” [Ethnic key – prejudice and ignorance] and “L’Ugritude – vår andes stämma i världen” [L’Ugritude – the voice of our spirit in the world]. The foregrounding of ethnicity reflects the principle followed by the authors when presenting the material. This is definitely a literary history in which ethnicity counts. The special focus on Fenno-Ugric ethnicity is given prominence by the neologism “l’Ugritude.” The term is inspired by ‘Négritude’, a concept which has been criticised for essentialising blackness and race. However, this negative interpretation of “Négritude” has been challenged in recent analyses which instead highlight strategic uses of ideas of race and blackness (Lundahl 2005).

A short preface by Kirsti Johansson is followed by a brief introduction entitled “Litteraturen i Meänmaa” [The Literature of Meänmaa] by Bengt Pohjanen. Pohjanen is overtly polemical towards prevailing delimitations of Swedish literature for not including the Tornedalian Finnish literature. This exclusion is represented synecdochically by the role attached to the Swedish classic Selma Lagerlöf’s *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils* (*Nils Holgerssons underbara resa genom Sverige*) published in two parts in 1906 and 1907 respectively. This work was commissioned by the Swedish Elementary Schoolteachers’ Association’s textbook committee whose members wanted textbooks of “greater pedagogical and literary value” than those that were in use at the time (*National Atlas of Sweden* 2007: 1). The purpose of the book was to teach Swedish school children geography while at the same time presenting the country in a positive manner. The pupils were to be given “the most beautiful things that the Swedish countryside and Swedish culture had to offer” (*National Atlas of Sweden* 2007: 1).

At the time when Selma Lagerlöf wrote *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils* Sweden was undergoing a national identity crisis. The union with Norway was dissolved in 1905 and “Sweden as a nation was left standing alone and confused, and many writers and artists thought that it was their duty to re-establish Sweden’s honour and culture.” (*National Atlas of Sweden* 2007: 1). According to the presentation on the
website of the *National Atlas of Sweden*, “Selma Lagerlöf’s *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils* was considered the most successful contribution to this end” (*National Atlas of Sweden* 2007: 1).

The material of *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils* is presented in the form of a narrative about a young boy, Nils. In the fiction Nils is turned into the size of a pixie which makes it possible for him to fly on the back of a migrant goose in a flock of geese flying from the south to the north. The device of the migrant birds flying over one province after another conveniently provides the author with a rationale for presenting the historical provinces of Sweden. Today *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils* is no longer used to teach geography to Swedish school children, but the book still enjoys the status of having been a great success abroad and it remains the most frequently translated book by Lagerlöf (*National Atlas of Sweden* 2007: 3).

From Pohjanen’s perspective presented in the introduction Nils Holgersson’s view of the northernmost parts of Sweden is that of a stranger who fails to represent the specific local culture of Meänmaa, an area on both sides of the Torne, Muonio and Könkämä rivers. The target of the critique is the construction of a Swedish national canon which did not include the literary works and histories of the ethnic and linguistic minority of Meänmaa. The first volume of Tornedalian Finnish literature implies the construction of a presumptive canon of the most significant authors with roots in Meänmaa. All of them speak Meänkieli as their mother tongue (Pohjanen and Johansson 2007: 12).

Pohjanen makes clear that he and his co-author will not follow the principle of writing literary history on the basis of demarcations of national boundaries or citizenship, but by considering ethnic, linguistic and geographical aspects which may be used to delimit Meänmaa literature. This in itself entails some interesting problems. The least problematic issue is perhaps Pohjanen’s presentation of Meänmaa as a transnational area which covers parts of Finland and Sweden. The marking off of this space is performed verbally in the text and visually on the cover of the book. The back-cover illustration is a map of the border area between Sweden and Finland where Meänmaa is shaded with a green colour. There is no fixed marking of a border between this area and the surrounding – the core is green but there are grey parts on the fringes which stand out visually from the rest especially to the west where the grey shade covers the municipalities of Kiruna and
Gällivare. The name “Meänmaa” is written in large orange coloured letters above the map. In the centre there is a flag with a yellow, white and blue horizontal band.

The naming of the area, the map and the flag all fill a symbolic function in the construction of Meänmaa as a specific space which in some substantial ways is different from other parts of Sweden and Finland. It is of interest in this context that Bengt Pohjanen himself is one of the agents who has launched the idea of Meänmaa and who is advocating the use of the concept. It literally means ‘our land’. “Our” here refers to the Meänkieli-speaking people on both sides of the Swedish and Finnish border. Pohjanen also played an active role in the introduction of the flag. The event took place on 15 July in 2007 when it was hailed for the first time on both sides of the national border. Pohjanen who was present proclaimed that 15 July henceforward would be the national holiday of the Torne Valley (Danhall 2007).

Both the terms “Meänmaa” and “Meänkieli” are of fairly recent origin. The first occurrence of the term “Meänkieli,” which means ‘our language’, in print has been traced to an article by Matti Kenttä published in the regional newspaper Haparandabladet in the early nineteen-eighties (Norrländsk uppslagsbok, vol. 3: 147). This implies that the application of the terms to literary texts produced centuries ago presents a challenge to established mainstream historiography. One such text is Antti Keksi’s famous poem about the breaking of ice in the Torne River in 1677.

Keksi’s literary production is presented as the starting-point of a Tornedalian Finnish literary tradition. The ice and river motifs which are central in Keksi’s most well-known poem are foregrounded by the photograph on the front cover which is a colour picture of Bengt Pohjanen looking out on the river in a winter landscape. The ground, the trees and the river are covered with snow. Three over-sized icicles hang from the top of the image embedding Pohjanen in a landscape of ice and snow. Later in the volume in the chapter about Bengt Pohjanen’s authorship a connection between Keksi and Pohjanen as pioneers is implied.

Kirsti Johansson presents Pohjanen as one of the great names among Fenno-Ugric linguistic innovators, in parity with Agricola and Lönnrot (85). Agricola who translated the New Testament to Finnish in 1548 is considered the father of Finnish literature and the creator of a
Finnish written language. Lönnrot is known as the collector, arranger and publisher of the volume of the Finnish national epic the *Kalevala* which has become the standard edition in Finland (SKS 2007). It may be deduced from Johansson’s presentation that the photograph on the cover aspires to show nothing less than the father of Meänkieli literature and the creator of Meänkieli as a written language. Pohjanen is presented in the third part entitled “L’Ugritude – vår andes stämma i världen” [L’Ugritude – the voice of our spirit in the world]. Keksi’s importance is somewhat diminished as a result of the emphasis on Pohjanen’s role. In contrast to Pohjanen, Keksi is no creator of a written language. Even his role as an agent on the arena where national epics are created is contested when Johansson suggests that a trilogy by Pohjanen, *Älvdalstrilogin* [The River Valley Trilogy] deserves the epithet of “Meänmaas epos” [The Epic of Meänmaa] (86). Thus Keksi’s role is reduced to that of a predecessor, while Pohjanen emerges as the father of a literary tradition.

However, there are obstacles to overcome if the idea of a Meänmaa with a language of its own will have bearing on the construction of transnational borders in the real world. For example, there are differences between the development of Meänkieli on the Swedish and Finnish sides of the national border and it is a fact that Meänkieli does not have the same status in Finland as in Sweden. In 2000 it became an official minority language in Sweden, whereas it does not have an equal status in Finland where it is regarded as a regional variant of Finnish. These are factors which make the project of constructing a transnational Meänmaa with a common language and literary history both challenging and potentially controversial. The ambiguous status of Meänkieli is reflected by the contradictions in Pohjanen’s and Johansson’s survey with regard to the status of Meänkieli as a standardised written language. In the preface, Kirsti Johansson mentions that the book is about authors on both sides of the border who have written in Meänkieli. Considering that Keksi, who is the author who gets the most space and who is highlighted as a pioneer, lived long before ideas of Meänkieli as a separate language existed, the statement implies a redefinition of the relationship between languages which have been used through history in the Torne Valley. It seems odd when Johansson characterises Meänkieli as a new written language (7), while the presentation of Bengt Kostenius’ writings has a subtitle which reads
“Att skriva på ett språk utan skriftspråk” [Writing in a language without a written language]. The question of how to categorise Meänkieli is left unresolved. This is not necessarily a flaw since it may be interpreted as a typical trait of the production of culture-as-negotiating. And the process of negotiation is still going on.

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The river, ice and snow foregrounded in the cover-illustration are part of a both concrete and mythic landscape common to Pohjanen and Keksi. They function as symbolic elements to distinguish a Tornedalian tradition where the breaking of ice is a concrete recurring event. This event is important as subject matter both in Keksi’s seventeenth-century poem printed in the first section of the volume, and in later sections. The metaphoric potential of this event is utilised by Pohjanen when he describes his own writing in three languages as a “melting of ice” and a “flowing of words” [“När jag skrev mitt trespråkiga verk hände ofta att isen smälte och orden strömmade”] (Pohjanen and Johansson 2007: 122). Thus a metonymic relationship is established between the picture of Pohjanen on the cover, the presentation of Keksi’s literary works and the presentation of Pohjanen’s own work.

Ice, snow and cold also function as markers of the nature of Meänmaa. These markers are contrasted with the Tornedalian people’s propensity for rapture and religious fervour. In the final section entitled “Teater på meänkieli” [Theatre in Meänkieli] Pohjanen makes use of references to cold and heat when describing himself walking in a snow-drift (137) and seeing the world as a feverishly hot pulse [“Jag som ser världen som en feberhet puls”] (138). This way of experiencing is particularly attached to the people of the Torne River Valley. The opposite is described with terms like “intellektets kylskåp” (139) [the refrigerator of the intellect]. The presentation of the feverishly ecstatic people living in the snow, cold and ice of Meänmaa as radically different from other Swedes affected by modernity and cold rationalism is a recurring element in Pohjanen’s writings.

In Den tornedalsfinska litteraturen the propensity for mystery and ecstasy is emphasised as characteristic of the mentality of the Torne-
dalian people. In the presentation of Timo K. Mukka’s writings Pohjanen elaborates on the phenomenon of “participation mystique” when presenting his own aesthetic response to Mukka’s texts. The term is also part of the title of the article on Mukka: “Participation mystique – möte med Timo K. Mukka” (69) [Participation mystique – encounter with Timo K. Mukka]. ‘Participation mystique’ is a concept derived from anthropology and the study of primitive psychology. It denotes a mystical connection between subject and object (New York Association for Analytical Psychology 2007). According to Pohjanen, Mukka, together with Hilja Nyström, is the first author who does not use an ethnic key when writing about the Torne Valley and its people. In Pohjanen’s view, Mukka’s representations of the Torne Valley are not hampered by the prejudiced perspective of Selma Lagerlöf, Nils Holgersson and their like-minded. The perspective is termed ‘Ugritude’ (74). This concept is presented as the opposite to the ethnic key by which Pohjanen refers to the perspective of strangers who fail to understand and appreciate the specific culture of Meänmaa. One author who, according to Pohjanen, uses an ethnic key is Stina Aronsson: “Stina Aronsson prisas av svenskspråkiga, eftersom hon öppnar Meänmaa med den etniska nyckel som är smidd av svenskar. I hennes berättelser cementeras fördomarna (73) [Stina Aronsson is praised by Swedish language users as she opens Meänmaa with the ethnic key forged by Swedes. In her stories prejudices are preserved.]. However, Pohjanen’s own account of Torneidian mentality and aesthetics is by no means void of an ethnic key. On the contrary, he insists on the importance of ethnicity for example when launching the concept ‘Ugritude’. The difference is that Pohjanen appropriates ideas about ethnicity from post-colonial critique by reversing the norms which have historically been part of a homogenizing majority culture.

According to Pohjanen “Selma painted a picture of Sweden as it really was NOT. Nils Holgersson never saw us” [“Selma gav en bild av Sverige som det verkligen INTE såg ut. Nils Holgersson såg aldrig oss”] (Pohjanen and Johansson 2007: 11). At the time when The Wonderful Adventures of Nils was produced neither Meänmaa nor Meänkieli existed as terms or concepts. Pohjanen’s reference to Selma Lagerlöf’s book may be interpreted as a performative enunciation of the kind that Homi K. Bhabha discusses in The Location of Culture (Bhabha 1994). There are striking similarities between Bhabha’s vocabulary
when discussing “Border Lives: The Art of the Present” (the sub-title of the introduction) and Pohjanen’s anecdotic renderings of his own experiences of being a “border man” [“gränsmänniska”]. These are combined with reflections on the nature of aesthetic expressions and experiences arising from the existential mode of “border persons” living in a border zone.

The aim of Bhabha’s analysis is to foreground the prerequisites and conditions for the articulation of cultural differences. And articulating cultural differences is precisely what Pohjanen does when he insists on his and others “Tornedalianness” as different from Swedishness. In this context Pohjanen’s statement “Nils Holgersson never saw us” has a symbolic function as Lagerlöf and her fictive character Nils Holgersson are used to exemplify Swedish majority culture and the marginalisation of ethnic and linguistic minorities. It is significant that Nils travels from the south to the north, in the same direction as that of the migration of settlers and workers which was a constitutive element of the colonisation of Norrland. One aim of Pohjanen’s text is to provide a critical examination of the construction of a national culture and identity and of the history of the colonisation of Norrland. This is performed by a presentation of an alternative history through a deconstruction and negotiation of the boundaries of imagined communities which have shaped historiography based on homogenising nationalism.

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In the construction of a Tornedalian tradition which differs from Swedish majority culture, Pohjanen appropriates and adapts concepts from post-colonial studies. ‘Border existence’ is only one of these. The aim of performative enunciations deriving from experiences of a border existence is to foreground cultural difference. In the context of post-colonial critique this is a strategy used for the articulation of challenges directed against oppressive cultural patterns and for asserting cultural alternatives. There is a political dimension in Bhabha’s plea for the role of the enunciation of cultural differences. He refers to Fanon and his view of “culture-as-political-struggle.” The enunciation of cultural difference is said to
problematize the binary division of past and present, tradition and modernity, at the level of cultural representation and its authoritative address [...]. It undermines our sense of the homogenizing effects of cultural symbols and icons, by questioning our sense of the authority of cultural synthesis in general. (Bhabha 1994: 35)

One concept introduced by Pohjanen which blatantly draws attention to difference is that of ‘l’Ugritude’. The term is coined in analogy with the word and concept ‘Négritude’. Négritude was originally a literary and ideological movement of French-speaking black intellectuals. The movement developed in the nineteen-thirties as a rejection of French colonial racism among black students from the colonies who were studying in Paris. Among the most prominent were the Senegalese Léopold Sédar Senghor, Martinican Aimé Césaire and Guianan Léon Damas. They believed in the strategic use of a common black identity and a shared black heritage in the fight against French political and cultural domination. The movement advocated cultural difference in making a point of being against assimilation with the dominant culture and by reclaiming the word “nègre” as a positive term.

If the term and concept of ‘l’Ugritude’ is to be successful in the enunciation of cultural differences in a process of culture-as-negotiation, the connection with the Négritude movement ought to be conveyed. Culture-as-negotiation entails the struggle for a positive recognition of the specific cultures based on ethnic difference and a different tradition compared to that of modern, western, metropolitan cultures.

What Pohjanen does when using the neologism “l’Ugritude” is that he draws attention to similarities between the interests of minorities in a post-colonial space. It is significant that the term is coined by a combination of the words “Négritude” and “Ugric,” by replacing one ethnic marker with another. By this manoeuvre analogies to the ‘Négritude’ movement are incorporated into Pohjanen’s own enunciations in the project of constructing a Tornedalian imagined community with a common identity and a shared cultural heritage. The function of the concept of ‘l’Ugritude’ may be described as a strategic use of ethnic essentialism in analogy with the ‘Négritude’ movements and its predecessor the Harlem Renaissance.
Pohjanen repeatedly foregrounds the kinship between Tornedalian Finnish literature and the Fenno-Ugric tradition. This is conveyed by references to the Finnish national epic the *Kalevala*. The compilation of this work was part of a patriotic movement in the nineteenth century. Elias Lönnrot collected and arranged ancient oral poetry which was published first in 1835 and later in an enlarged edition in 1849. With the *Kalevala* the Finns had the material for constructing a common heroic past which had a tremendous impact on the shaping of a national identity and ideas of a common origin. It is the characters and myths of this Finnish seminal work Pohjanen relies on when in the present advocating the idea of a common Meänmaa identity. This is of course a constructivist endeavour in opposition to Swedish nation-building and the shaping of a modern Swedish identity in the period of modernity and industrialisation.

In *Den tornedalsfinska litteraturen* Pohjanen makes a connection between being a multilingual author in a border zone and the magical singing of Väinämöinen (121). Väinämöinen is the hero of the *Kalevala*. One of his characteristics is that he has the capacity to spell-bind people by his playing and singing. He is also the inventor of the *kantele* which today is the national musical instrument of Finland. The *Kalevala* has a very strong symbolic function in Finnish culture and it is this symbolic function Pohjanen utilises in the mobilisation of Meänkieli culture. Pohjanen describes the work of the multilingual border zone author with imagery which connects coldness with the nature of Meänmaa and the Finnish Kalevala tradition. The work of the author is described as “digging in frosty earth with nails frozen blue, convinced that the words are there like Väinämöinen’s *loihtuja*, words of witchcraft and magic spells, read into bogs and frozen earth in the ice-age of language” [“att gräva i frostig jord med blåfrusna naglar, övertygad om att orden finns som Väinämöinen’s *loihtuja*, sejdord och galder, inlästa i myrar och frusen jord i språkets istider [...]” (Pohjanen and Johansson 2007: 121).]” In this passage, ice, cold and frost are part both of the image of Meänmaa and of the Kalevala tradition which Pohjanen appropriates and modifies to suit his purpose of constructing a Meänmaa culture which is related to the Finnish tradition and which can share its mythic past.
It is nevertheless important to stress that the literature and tradition of Meänmaa are not conflated with those of Finland. Meänmaa is described as a border zone and this area does not completely overlap with neither a Swedish nor a Finnish imagined community. Pohjanen uses the term “third space” to emphasise the non-congruence of Meänmaa in relation to the nation states of Sweden and Finland. This is a term with resonances from Bhabha who discusses a “Third Space” as a prerequisite for the production of meaning. The Third Space represents “both the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot ‘in itself’ be conscious” (Bhabha 1994: 36). Pohjanen uses the term “third space” in a somewhat different way. He highlights the role of living in a border zone for producing a third space and a specific mentality, or capacity, for transgressing limits. This capacity is shown for example in the religious ecstasy of prayer meetings. Pohjanen specifically elaborates on the particular ecstasy called *liikutuksia* experienced at Laestadian meetings in a section with the subtitle “[G]rätens är inte ett streck utan ett tredje rum” [The border is not a line but a third space] (132). Here the meaning of the border is connected with metaphysics and an ability to transgress limits imposed by rationalism and intellectualism. Pohjanen makes this explicit by describing Laestadius’ work *Dårhurstjonet* [The madman] as a cannon which shoots Immanuel Kant into a thousand pieces (132). Laestadius himself compared religion to a mother tongue. He believed in the existence of a supernatural world and experienced it “in the Saami way” (*The Saami: A Cultural Encyclopaedia*: 172). Shamanism, which is part of Sami religion and one of the propensities of the Kalevala hero Väinämöinen, is of course a practice aiming at the transgression of borders. It is obvious that the element of transgression both in religious ecstasy and in art appeals to Pohjanen and is a vital part of the mentality and aesthetic sensitivity he presents as characteristic of Meänmaa and Tornedalian Finnish literature.

*Participation mystique* and the *liikutuksia* (that is, ecstatic movements of Laestadian prayer meetings), form part of the specific Tornedalian mentality described by Pohjanen. In the Tornedalian aesthetics articulated, the particular transgression of borders inherent in these concepts is connected to a popular tradition of spectacle and theatre. Pohjanen explicitly makes use of Bakhtin’s concept of ‘the carnival’
when discussing Tornedalian prayer meetings as a kind of interactive performances with roots in medieval carnival culture in a section with the subtitle “[B]önemöten som interaktiv performance” [Prayer meetings as interactive performance] (134). This exemplifies the prevailing strategy employed in Den tornedalsfinska litteraturen of presenting Tornedalian culture from a different perspective than that of “prejudiced” writers not familiar with local culture. In the final chapter entitled “Teater på meänkieli” [Theatre in Meänkieli] Pohjanen suggests a new way of interpreting Laestadianism and its connection to aesthetics and art in Tornedalian culture by employing concepts and ideas from contemporary literary theory. In this account the prayer meeting exemplifies an art form arising in a third space where metaphysical borders are crossed and mystical connections between subjects and objects may take place. In Pohjanen’s account the social setting where this may occur is the collective space of Laestadian prayer meetings where individuals may cease to be themselves while temporarily experiencing a heightened awareness of unity and community. The prayer meeting emerges as a synchretic art form that combines elements from a popular medieval tradition with Laestadian religious fervour and contemporary ideas of interactivity. This is still another example of the interpretation of culture as negotiation and the writing of literary history as a constructivist attempt.

Today cultural diversity has been politically acknowledged on national and supranational levels. This is reflected for example in the idea of “unity in diversity” promoted by the Council of Europe. As a consequence the paradigm of “one nation, one people, one language and a common culture and history” has become increasingly problematic. In this contemporary negotiation between homogenising tendencies in culture versus the promotion of multiple histories and origins Den tornedalsfinska litteraturen. Från Kexi till Liksom represents a strategy aiming at a diversification of Swedish literary history.

REFERENCES


NOTES

1 In *Den tornedalsfinska litteraturen* the name "Keksi" is alternatively spelt "Kexi" and "Keksi". I use the spelling "Keksi" when not quoting passages where the other spelling is used.
At Absolut Icebar Stockholm you can buy gimmick drinks “in the rocks”.
(Photo The Absolut Company, Jonas Ingerstedt.)
ABSTRACT The Icehotel Company in Jukkasjärvi has succeeded in refining snow, ice, and coldness by turning Nature and the natural landscape into a commercial concept. During the 1990s, the icehotel has gradually become a cool stage for other companies who use the environment as a marketing tool for events, product placements, and advertisements. The frozen water from the Torne River was converted into an arty technology for packaging newness. The Arctic became a cool thing. It was an aesthetic as well as an emotional appropriation of the ice-material in a new and trendy context. The author of this article uses the notion of “Arctic Cool” to describe this creative and reflexive attitude towards the ice-material. Furthermore, the Icehotel Company largely capitalises on the notional of authenticity. The believed intrinsic genuineness of the glacial water is the common denominator for the business. The imaginary world of ice corresponds to a geographically stratified symbolism where the regional symbols can also be transmitted to a national level. One could speak about a “culturalisation” of the natural landscape where the elements of nature do not essentially stand for themselves, but are ascribed values within the scope of their materiality.

KEYWORDS Absolut Icebar, branding, experience economy, Icehotel, Jukkasjärvi, Lapland, Sweden, visual culture studies
In the autumn of 2005, visitors could read slogans like "GENUINE TORNE RIVER ICE" and "CLEANER THAN WATER" written in frozen letters inside the wall at acer ICEBAR in one of Stockholm’s hip hotels, the Nordic Sea Hotel. One of the real gimmicks of the 1990s in Sweden was to sell drinks surrounded by an artistic ice scenography. The novelty was to offer drinks, not on the rocks, but “in the rocks,” that is, to serve the drinks in big ice cubes instead of adding ice cubes to the drink.

The concept still works today. It has become a veritable ice industry to sell Absolut vodka in designed icebars inside room-sized freezers. The drinking glasses as well as the ice décor are delivered to the icebars around the world in freezer trucks from the north of Sweden and the icehotel in Jukkasjärvi from where the concept derives. Since 2002, the original icebar in Jukkasjärvi has been cloned into several hotel icebars around the world to which Icehotel delivers the ice-scenography: Stockholm (2002), Milan (2004), London (2005), Tokyo (2006), Copenhagen (2007) and Shanghai (2007). The icehotel is the mothership, whereas the icebars are the satellites that are supposed to promote the base camp in Jukkasjärvi. Hence, the icebar satellites serve as the training camp for the tourist gaze which hopefully gives the visitors a keen visual appetite for the Arctic. For the Absolut Company, the icebars work as sophisticated concept stores and a pull for their products attracting new groups of consumers. For this purpose, the idea of the pure Torne River water, the authenticity of the ice and its visual qualities are essential to the marketing of ICEHOTEL and ABSOLUT ICEBAR. This article aims to analyse how ice became an aesthetic artefact as well as a vehicle for notions of regionality during the 1990s.

The Icehotel Company has succeeded in refining snow, ice, and coldness by turning Nature and the natural landscape into a commercial concept. The first real Icehotel was built in 1992-93 but the medial breakthrough was in 1994 when Icehotel made their first important attempt to win publicity after a few years of small-scale business. The entrepreneurs of the Icehotel Company produced a photo of a bar made of ice with some people standing next to it. Crucial to the pic-
ture are the Sami and the reindeer that work as conventional markers for northern Scandinavia. The entrepreneurs had earlier tried to involve the Absolut Company in their business without success. By placing several bottles of Absolut Vodka in the foreground of the picture, they hoped to be discovered by the Swedish company, which had been established as a premium alcohol brand since the 1980s.

The press release was spread globally to more than a thousand media through the network of the Swedish Travel & Tourism Council. It was a successful move. Within two weeks more than 200 articles were published with the icebar picture, only in Germany. The icebar was listed as one of the ten hottest bars in the world in the American magazine Newsweek. Many TV-stations initiated contacts with ICEHOTEL (Karlsson 2002: 26). The publicity turned into what I call a visual flow, a hyper-frequent distribution of visual information through several media channels. Today Icehotel is still the prime target for foreign journalists in Sweden. What were then the conditions for success?

First of all, the idea of a hotel bar made of ice and snow was some-
thing totally unexpected. The story of the icebar in Swedish Lapland fitted well with media looking for the unexpected and a spectacular, entertaining scoop. Also, the channels of the Swedish Tourism Council facilitated the medial breakthrough. To a large extent, this was due to a new Internet-medium and its possibilities to spread files by attaching digital images.

This successful press release had four primary consequences. First, no more advertising campaigns were needed. Media came to Jukkasjärvi, not the reverse. Second, more intensely than before, the fictive Arctic scenography of the icehotel became popular as an arena for

The Absolut Company and ICEHOTEL market their products in the icebars with the devise “CLEANER THAN WATER”. (Photo The Absolut Company Magnus Skoglöf)
marketing campaigns and business-to-business meetings. Third, the Absolut Company established a contact with ICEHOTEL which finally ended up in a partnership with mutual business interests. And fourth, a basic architectural scheme of the icehotel materialised as a result of this visual flow. A visit at a tourist site is partly an act of recognition. The icehotel is no exception. As a result, some of the elements of the icehotel, such as the icebar and the hall with its crystal chandeliers became permanent features, adapted to the visitor’s expectations.

* The icehotel is rebuilt every winter from water and ice from the Torne River, immediately adjacent to the building site. The icehotel normally has about sixty hotel rooms, a hall of ice, an icebar and an ice chapel. The main construction material is called *snice* (snow+ice), an artificial snow material made out of the water of the Torne River with the help of snow canons.

The water of the Torne River is not only the basic construction material, but also the foundation of a whole mythology which is important for Icehotel as a conceptual tourist attraction. The water is considered extremely pure and crystal-clear because of the even freezing process. The originator and director of the Icehotel Company, Yngve Bergqvist, says: “We can stand at the shore of the Torne River, pointing with the finger, and tell [the tourists]: This is what we use as building material. This is authenticity!” (trans. Strömberg 2007: 177).

In the Icehotel magazine, the river is described as a motion that stills in a freezing process. In early December, it is harvest time, like when the peasants harvest their wheat fields. The water is a loan that is finally “respectfully returned” to its source each spring (“Harvest Time in Jukkasjärvi” 2004: 8). The Torne River is considered a mother, the conquered forces of nature, and the origin of the whole business. The story also contains comparisons to the ice age and references to the Biblical Genesis:

In the beginning of time there was the ice age. Then, the melt water of the inland ice gouged a new furrow and the Torne River was born. This was 10,000 years ago. Now it is ice age again, in Jukkasjärvi. (“Harvest Time in Jukkasjärvi” 2004:7)
To consider the identity of the north through geology and the ice age is not a recent occurrence in Sweden. The geological explorations of Lapland made by Swedish glaciologists in the nineteenth century were important for the idea of Sweden as a nation born of the motions of the inland ice. The glaciologists considered the inland ice the most important factor for the creation of the Swedish natural landscape. Consequently, the cultural landscape was regarded as a result of its geological conditions. Sweden became the land of the "inland ice." The northern part of Sweden could then be identified in terms of natural science and finally be integrated in the construction of the modern nation (Sörlin 1988: 131, 154).

The Icehotel Company largely capitalises on this notional world, echoing the first glaciologists. The believed intrinsic genuineness of the glacial water is the common denominator for the business. As a consequence, every activity and attraction connected to the Icehotel Company ought to be essentially pervaded with such authenticity, like a radiating moral. Ecology is intertwined with rhetoric and the inorganic material is treated as organic.

The second component of the mythology is the geographical place and the place-myth of Jukkasjärvi: a historical meeting point, an Arctic environment north of the polar circle, and the last wilderness of Europe. The third component is the weather and the seasonal changes that bring about coldness and darkness, warmth and the midnight sun. The company’s nature mysticism also includes the shifting lights of the winter darkness, like the Northern Lights and the luminescent daytime during the winter. The business also alludes to the culture of the Sami people. The Sami connection is regarded as an integrated and natural part of the local context in Jukkasjärvi, according to Yngve Bergqvist (Strömberg 2007: 178). Many of the inhabitants have different ethnical backgrounds. Despite that, the Sami Culture has its own separate presentation on the homepage of the Icehotel Company together with the other headlines Jukkasjärvi, The Torne River, The Northern Lights, and Virgin Wilderness. To sum up, the mythology is based on the polar climate, the seasons, the weather, the northern lights, the last wilderness of Europe, the Sami culture, the geology and the water of Torne River. These features constitute a narrative which ICEHOTEL wants people to associate with the company.

At the same time, the mythology of the Torne River water is inten-
tionally transposed into fiction. The narrative of genuineness is visualised within the ice scenography, on the homepage, in the Icehotel magazine, and in the lectures by the originator of the business itself, Yngve Bergqvist. One could speak about a visualised narrative, that is, a process where visualisations and business activities are intertwined with a mix of myth and fiction.

* At the beginning, we weren’t that active, but we were around [...] Due to the cooperation we have subsequently got the opportunity to be a part of a creative brand, and that is something we want to be. Peter Wijk, marketing manager of the Absolut Company. (trans. Jansson 2004: 44, original italics)

The mythology applied by the Icehotel Company can be symbiotically transmitted to other companies. In the “experiencescape” of ICEHOTEL, the icehotel building, the ice and its visual qualities, can be used as a metaphor for what other companies can offer. Since the partnership between ICEHOTEL and the Absolut Company was formalised in 1994, the two companies have extended their cooperation, both in advertising campaigns and the Absolut Icebar-project.

The Absolut Versace-campaign is the most prominent example. In December 1996 one could observe half-naked super models freezing in human-sized bottles of ice during a photo session at the Icehotel in Jukkasjärvi. The ads were produced by the American photographer Herb Ritts. A range of international super models were photographed in existing and specially constructed scenography: columns of ice, a 12-ton-large A, a human-sized bottle of ice, etc. The Absolut-collection was later launched at the Cotton Club during the fashion week in New York, April 1997, while the ads were published in Vogue at the same time. Afterwards, Swedish media speculated about the budget of this huge campaign. A figure of 230 million Swedish crowns (almost 30 million dollars at the time) was mentioned (Karlsson 2002: 27, Jansson 2004: 44).

Versace was in fact one in a row of other fashion designers and artists who were commissioned by the Absolut Company to make collections for advertising campaigns. The objective of the Absolut Versace-campaign was to create an arty fusion between artistry and the alcohol brand as in earlier campaigns, such as Absolut Warhol. The
ambition was to let the artist demonstrate the immaterial potential of the brand for trend setters within the consumer society. The co-branding with ICEHOTEL was a sequel to this ambition to integrate artistry into Absolut's corporate image in order to become producers of culture themselves.

The marriage between ICEHOTEL and the Absolut Company is astonishingly well-fitting. Comparisons with the core values of the two Swedish companies strengthen that impression: *purity*, *simplicity*, *perfection* for the Absolut Company, and *purity*, *sensuality*, *genuineness*, *uniqueness* for ICEHOTEL. Both are Swedish premium brands for a rather exclusive market where progressive creativity is the leading ambition. It is not only the transparency but also the rhetoric of purity that pull the brands together. According to the Absolut Company, the distillation process of the vodka is absolutely pure. Purity is also perceived in the shape of the bottle in the same way that Icehotel strives for plain design of their work of art. Another similarity is the Absolut Company's notion of one source: “One factory. One well. One big wheat field. One source,” relating to the origin of their alcohol production, the well and the factory in Åhus (Olsson 2002: 122, 132).

The explicit narratives of the two companies are thus so intimately related that they are even visually compatible to each other: transparency, purity and creativity. Thus, one could speak of a *narrative convergence* that encourages mutual cooperation, a win-win situation of corporate symbiosis. The value statements of the two companies can be transmitted and incorporated into the respective businesses. The narrative works as a bridge between the brands.

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Not only the Absolut Company but a range of companies with Swedish or Scandinavian profiles such as Ericsson, Saab, and Volvo have used the ice as an exclusive and spectacular tool for marketing communication. In this case, the imaginary world of ice corresponds to a geographically stratified symbolism where the regional symbols can also be transmitted to a national level, like Chinese boxes: Jukkasjärvi is Lapland, which is Sweden, which is Scandinavia. For example, during the Swedish presidency of the EU in 2001, Icehotel produced blocks of ice for the conference rooms which were decorated with the
logo of the Swedish presidency. At the MTV Music Awards event in Stockholm, a melting block of ice was placed in the middle of the city. The ice became a national symbol.

There are more examples. The architect Anders Wilhelmson was commissioned to create the showcase for Saab at Auto Motor Show in Geneva 1998. The showcase reflects the visual attraction of the ice, but also its capacity to create associative links between products and nationality. Wilhelmson turned the trade fair presentation into a spectacle show by framing the showcase with a 36-square-metre melting block of ice from Jukkasjärvi (Palmer 1998: 16). The ice was the medium through which Saab projected Swedishness as well as creativity.

In a similar way, Saab markets the company’s new convertible car
through the marketing campaign “Saab Ice Experience” in cooperation with the Icehotel Company. For the occasion, a Saab car was encapsulated by ice scenography, like a mammoth that had been frozen into the inland ice. In the press release, a connection between the ice and national geography was established. Saab makes comparisons to the recycling feature of the icehotel – nature mysticism, ecology and rhetoric are once again intertwined:

Visible at night from a kilometer away, the icy reflections of the convertible’s illuminated bright blue paintwork give arriving guests an automotive interpretation of the Northern Lights. The installation, added to this year’s version of the ICEHOTEL, is made from 60 ice blocks, weighing 30 tons, all harvested from the nearby Torn River, one of Europe’s purest. [...] ‘Snow and ice are core elements of Scandinavian nature, so it was a very natural step for us to adopt this theme for our Convertible, the original car for all seasons.’ says Marie Larsson, Saab’s Event Project Manager.
Sweden also has a strong tradition for environmental care. For example, the ice used to build this hotel is a renewable resource that is recycled each year when it melts and returns to the river. In a similar way, our Saab BioPower engines are able to run on bioethanol, a renewable fuel with a greatly reduced CO2 impact (“Saab 9-3 Convertible Gets ‘Iced’” 2007).

All these examples demonstrate the impact of the ice material within the so-called “Experience Economy.” The icehotel in Jukkasjärvi has gradually become a cool stage design for other companies, who use the environment as a marketing tool for events, product placements, and advertisement. It was not only the Arctic genuineness that was attractive. It was also the discovery of a new material for the most unexpected occasions: from the MTV Music Awards to the marketing of Volvo trucks in Brazil.

During these events, the logotypes of the companies were carved in ice and used as a background to the show. The ephemeral feature of the ice makes the marketing a sublime event that is intensely visual, when the logotype slowly melts. It is an entertaining process, like the transitory and self destructive art experiments by Jean Tinguely and Billy Klüver in the 1960s. The new construction principles in snow attracted many architecture magazines during the 1990s. Yngve Bergqvist states that it was the first time ice-art came into the important design and architecture magazines: “It was new, plain architecture and design. It was the right moment for it.” Ice became a fascinating aesthetic artefact. At the same time, it was considered fresh and new (Strömberg 2007: 189).

When ICEHOTEL became a hot spot and the figurehead of the experience economy in Sweden in the 1990s, it also attracted the new culture mediators and consumer heroes. ICEHOTEL became a target for cool hunting and subsequently appeared as a background to rock videos, TV-commercials and even films. The discovery of ice as an aesthetic artefact coincides largely with the search for new spectacular technologies for packaging newness. The concept gave birth to a range of puns in slogans and headlines: ice was both hot and cool, and snow rhymed with show. The Arctic became a cool thing. It was an aesthetic as well as an emotional appropriation of the ice-material in a new and trendy context. This creative and reflexive attitude towards the ice-material is what I describe as “Arctic Cool.” For example, Saab wants
to appear as a creative Scandinavian company by means of being associated with the Arctic coolness of ICEHOTEL.

Hence, ICEHOTEL became a part of a so-called “Catwalk Economy” during the economic boom of the 1990s. Central to the “Catwalk Economy” was the event-making: happenings, release parties, and strategies of secrecy and exclusivity. Trendy brands and expressive companies were in search of a suitable technology for staging the potential energy of being at the front line, that is, to find the right choreography and scenography for impression-making (Löfgren 2005: 62).

The discovery of ice as a marketing tool was somehow typical for this movement. The commodification of glacial water signifies a commercial process where nearly everything can be turned into a commodity. The frozen water from the Torn River was converted into a fresh and arty technology for packaging newness. And the Absolut Company, Saab and other companies, went with the flow.

In conclusion, the experiencescape of Icehotel is heavily impregnated with branding processes. Considering this commercial pressure in general and in more critical terms: How much of our lived spaces are we willing to leave to such branding processes? Icehotel and the glacial scenography are visually used as a metaphor for other companies and what they have to offer. At the same time, this shows the scope of the Experience Economy, that is, how different forms of market aesthetics are reproduced and spread to other economic fields. The ice-scenography can both sell Volvo-trucks in Brazil and house tourists in Jukkasjärvi. By letting other companies into the experiencescape of ICEHOTEL, those companies can also become a part of it. The icehotel and the icebars contain branding processes composed by a range of imaginary components such as genuineness, regionality, artistic creativity and sensuality. These values can be transmitted in a symbiotic manner: Absolut is not just a Swedish company and liquor; Absolut is an experience, a genuine experience.

It is about mutual recognition and shared aura-production. The co-branding and joint ventures resemble what Pierre Bourdieu calls the "cycle of consecration." He uses this notion as a pseudo-religious metaphor for describing relationships within the production system of holy commodities (exclusive brands). There is a value exchange within the ABSOLUT ICEBAR-project and the ads of the Absolut Versace-campaign that resembles the academic citation technique: A
consecrates B, that sanctifies C, that blesses D, that deifies A, etc. The more complicated this cycle is, and the more invisible it is, the greater is the force of belief (Bourdieu 1997: 222).

Finally, the fundament for the mythology of ICEHOTEL is the notion that Nature is natural. Myths often have tautological features. By bringing home this tautology, Nature appears as a human notion and a signifying construction. In Barthes’ sense, a myth is not a lie, but rather, that which is considered natural and politically normal. The myth is a depoliticised speech and an inflection of an imagined reality. Or, to put it differently, the myth is the “believer’s” faith in reality. The genuineness of the Torne River water is regarded as essential, as Yngve Bergqvist states: “In truth, Icehotel is so natural, so unique and so genuinely exotic that you will never experience it elsewhere” (Bergqvist 2006: 3). Therefore, one could speak about a “culturalisation” of the natural landscape where the elements of nature do not essentially stand for themselves, but are ascribed values within the scope of their materiality.
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Northern Studies

The Journal of Northern Studies is published by Umeå University and the Royal Skyttean Society. There are two monograph series connected to the journal, Northern Studies Monographs (publication languages English, German and French) and Nordliga studier ['Northern Studies'] (publication languages Swedish, Norwegian and Danish). The editor-in-chief of the Journal of Northern Studies is

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Cold matters on a number of different levels. It has become a political instrument that helps to establish common ground for the cold regions of the globe. As a metaphor, it suggests an impassioned and controlled outlook on life. Physically, cold produces environments where people can freeze and starve to death. Psychologically, it may serve as the route to self-discovery, since it has the capacity to strip away everything except the most essential aspects of the self. Historically, cold has usually been surrounded by negative associations but more recently, it has become a theme to explore in words and pictures and exploit in marketing strategies. At the beginning of the twenty-first century there are signs that indicate that cold is becoming increasingly “cool.” At such a juncture, it is vital to assess the cultural meaning of snow, ice and cold since conventional ideological and metaphorical connotations of the concepts are destabilised.

*Cold Matters* launches the monograph series linked to *The Journal of Northern Studies*. This interdisciplinary journal concentrates on life in the northern parts of the globe, and is published by Umeå University and Sweden’s northernmost Royal Academy, the Royal Skyttean Society.