Cold Matters
Cultural Perceptions of Snow, Ice and Cold

Editors Heidi Hansson and Cathrine Norberg
Cold Matters
Cultural Perceptions of Snow, Ice and Cold

Northern Studies · Monographs No. 1 · 2009

Published by Umeå University
and the Royal Skyttean Society

Umeå 2009
Cold Matters

is published with support from the Swedish Research Council

© The authors and image copyright holders

Editors Heidi Hansson and Cathrine Norberg
Cover image Emma Nordung
Design and layout Leena Hortéll, Ord & Co i Umeå AB
Printed by Davidssons Tryckeri AB

Umeå 2009
Northern Studies Monographs
ISSN 2000-0405
Contents

Heidi Hansson and Cathrine Norberg, Revisioning the Value of Cold .............................. 7

E. Carina H. Keskitalo, “The North” – Is There Such a Thing? Deconstructing/Contesting Northern and Arctic Discourse ................................................................. 23

Elisabeth Wennö, “Encased in Ice”: Antarctic Heroism in Beryl Bainbridge’s The Birthday Boys .................................................................................................................. 41

Lennart Pettersson, Through Lapland the Winter of 1820: Sir Arthur de Capell Brooke’s Journey from Alten to Tornéå ...................................................................................... 55

Aimée Laberge, Starvation Stories and Deprivation Prose: Of the Effects of Hunger on Arctic Explorers’ Texts ................................................................................................. 71

Lisbeth Lewander, Women and Civilisation on Ice ............................................................... 89

Heidi Hansson, Feminine Poles: Josephine Diebitsch-Peary’s and Jennie Darlington’s Polar Narratives ............................................................................................................. 105

Billy Gray, “This Dream of Arctic Rest”: Memory, Metaphor and Mental Illness in Jenny Diski’s Skating to Antarctica ...................................................................................... 125

Maria Lindgren Leavenworth, “Hatred was also left outside”: Journeys into the Cold in Le Guin’s The Left Hand of Darkness ............................................................................ 141

Cathrine Norberg, Cold and Dangerous Women: Anger and Gender in Sensation Fiction .............................................................................................................................. 157

Monica Nordström Jacobsson, Incarnations of Lilith? The Snow Queen in Literature for Young Readers ............................................................................................................. 175

Ingemar Friberg, The Endurance of Female Love: Romantic Ideology in H. C. Andersen’s The Snow Queen ........................................................................................................ 191

Anne Heith, Nils Holgersson Never Saw Us: A Tornedalian Literary History ......................................................... 209

Per Strömberg, Arctic Cool: ICEHOTEL and the Branding of Nature ........................................... 223

Index ........................................................................................................................................ 237

Contributors ............................................................................................................................... 242
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 over-represented 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’.
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 snow-flake, 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-
ocence. Other examples emphasise the disappearance of snow and as a consequence, the loss of an important opportunity for recreation,

![Image](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

Snow is a necessary prerequisite for recreational activities – but for how long?
(Photo Daniel Rönnbäck)

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
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 ‘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 Tornedalian 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 Tornedalian 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


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

Professor Lars-Erik Edlund
Department of Language Studies
Umeå University
SE-901 87 Umeå University
lars-erik.edlund@nord.umu.se
Web page: www.jns.org.umu.se

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.