

German Representations
of the Far North
(17th-19th Centuries)

German Representations of the Far North (17th-19th Centuries):

Writing the Arctic

Edited by

Jan Borm and Joanna Kodzik

With a Preface by Jean Malaurie

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PREFACE

JEAN MALAURIE

Professor Jan Borm, eminent scholar of circumpolar studies, has edited with Dr Joanna Kodzik, Germanist and historian, specialist of the Moravians, a fundamental collective volume about representations of the Arctic in German for Cambridge Scholars Publishing. The book contains a long introduction and eleven articles, some of them originally written in German.

This publication is a historical landmark. I insist on the expression. It seriously challenges the disastrous development of the Humanities in Europe and notably in France. It raises essential questions, not only about so-called “ordinary people”, but also about the top, among those who destine themselves to study the former.

What are we talking about in particular? The Christianization of Greenland in the 18th century, initially by Hans Egede, and, starting a few years later, by the Moravians, missionaries of diverse origins from central Europe. They were Lutheran pietists dedicated to be with and work for the “poor” classes in the spirit of Jesus Christ and the apostles, participating in the conversion of the people of the Arctic, in Greenland and Labrador especially, as well as some Alaskan nations.

The volumes of the *Terre Humaine* book series which I founded in 1955 with my own account *The Last Kings of Thule* and Claude Lévi-Strauss’ *Tristes Tropiques*, as well as the research of the Arctic Studies Centre I directed at École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) and the French National Research Centre (CNRS), have tried to understand the principal traits of Inuit society, especially during this movement of conversion in Greenland during the 18th century. Still, to seize the long history of Greenland properly, one needs to have all elements in hand.

The Moravians’ work in Greenland started in the 1730s, after Hans Egede had begun to convert heathen Greenlanders to Lutheranism in the Nuuk region from 1721 on. The Moravians joined the effort, initially in competition with Egede’s Lutheran beliefs somewhat simplified for the sake of these Greenlandic heathen.

What does that mean? Simplified or complexified? The question needs to be looked at from a theological point-of-view. Greenlandic shamanism,

which the “pagan” Greenlanders were adhering to so adamantly at the time – despite the endeavours of those fervent Moravian evangelists, has not been sufficiently studied as far as its perception by the Moravians is concerned. Who were these Brethren, Lutheran pietists who spent almost two centuries converting the Greenlanders of the South-West? One can sense the shock experienced by this Inuit society and its animist spirit dating back 4000 years and beyond once they were taught the history of Christianity: it commences with a prophet, Moses, who from the top of Mount Sinai heard the voice of God which taught him the Ten Commandments. Could those Greenlandic heathens possibly have understood what God wanted: to interfere in the histories of those he had created. Besides, these teachings were trying to make the Greenlanders understand that the first humans were soon guilty of original sin. One needs to comprehend that God consists of three beings and to accept - without thinking about it - messages as complex as those to be found in the Bible. Did they resist? Of course, they did. I witnessed this in the second phase of my research though it so happens that these questions were not at the core of my research when I spent time in Greenland initially. I am a geocryologist. I am interested in fallen rock, that-is-to-say erosion and naturally great geological phenomena like statism and the cryopedology of polygonal soils which I tried to analyse by drawing maps of them in Disko Bay. But there are also humans and it was only later that I started to take an interest in the Inuit, notably of the Thule region where the Moravians had never been active. Also, if I dare say so, the revolution that the Christianization of the Greenlanders by the Moravians represents was not on my mind during my first field trip to Disko Bay, further south in Greenland, in April 1948 though I did catch some bits and pieces of memories about them at the time. It was by chance that I met the Vice-Provost of Greenland, Matthias Storch, upon his request. He was of Greenlandic origin and shared his metaphysical misgivings with me. I did not speak southern Greenlandic very well, nor did he have a particularly sound command of English which is why our discussions did not last long. The plan was to meet again next year with his son Johann who wanted to become my student. Unfortunately, when I came back, he had died from tuberculosis which was then waging in Greenland.

The history of the Moravians is not sufficiently known. One usually contents oneself with general statements although they play a central role in Arctic history, especially in Greenland and Labrador. I stressed at the beginning of my preface that this publication is fundamental, first of all because it exists and secondly because we can finally read some essential work about this partly ill-known historical movement in English.

I would now like to make a few observations.

First of all: knowledge is power; these readings of Moravian sources have no doubt benefited from the expertise of the analysts. Who are they? Analysts and schools of thought need to define their philosophical approach and choices. I will return to this essential point.

I will not come back to the relation between one of the principal colonizing and evangelization movements after Hans Egede, that-is-to-say 1721, with the magisterium of the Danish King. What I wish to consider above all are quasi-philosophical questions that have to be raised: how can we account for the fact that we had to wait until 2020 to become more immediately aware of our lack of knowledge about one of the great schools of thought to have shaped the Northern hemisphere?

There is a systematic barrier between the languages of different cultures and civilisations, a barrier which is so rigid in the Humanities that you are simply not read if your text is not published in English. The Moravian diaries were written in German, in a somewhat different form of the language spoken today, using a handwriting no longer taught at school. Thanks to her experience of central and Eastern Europe, one of the co-editors of this volume can read these manuscripts fluently. Some passages are transcribed and translated here for the first time. Indeed, the young Greenlandic nation hitherto superficially Christianized, discovers at length the message of Jesus Christ taught by the Moravians. God is introduced to humans by reminding them of the fact that they are subject to original sin. Which fatal error would man thus have committed in view of his Creator to be judged in such a severe way? May one believe in this or not, but one should know that Christianity was brought to the Greenlanders in this way. It is of crucial importance to know more about the reactions of these young pagans to such beliefs which they adopted for the sake of good political behaviour. This is how Christianity was presented to them: original sin, last judgment, paradise or hell.

How come one engages in the Humanities and in theory if one does not read the work of scholars in French, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Scandinavian languages, about fundamental issues such as membership of different churches? We no longer read the German language since the First World War. But the situation is getting even worse.

Could one imagine for instance that the only working language of the Arctic Week dedicated to the people, the environment and the economy of the Far North, organized in Paris at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs in December 2019 by Ségolène Royal, then French Ambassador to the Poles, myself having been invited by her to be the week's Honorary President, was English? Does France, represented by her President and her Minister of Foreign Affairs, need to hide herself up to the point of forgetting

her language? I am insisting on this point in particular since my opening speech was read by Professor Jan Borm both in French and English. On this occasion it became manifest again that many scholars, be they Scandinavian, Western-European or other, do not speak French at all and often only superficial and commercial English not allowing them to seize the proper meaning of subtle authors discussing the conversion of a nation.

I stem from a Roman Catholic family of Jansenist orientation whose Christ is not represented as crucified with spread arms but raising the latter to touch his head. This is the cross that my family would pray in front of every evening, my father always ending the prayer with a rather lengthy invocation of Saint Bernard. Jansenism is a religious movement that developed in the 17th and 18th century. It believes in divine initiative rather than human liberty. Jansenists are opposed to Jesuits who on the contrary believe that Jesus Christ has come to save all humans. I was taught that during Mass, the Host contains the substance of God and that it is therefore sacred. What about the Moravians? What exactly does their theology consist of? And if they do share the same belief what do they say about this?

In Western countries of so-called democratic tradition, due to English and American influence, it is understood that you need to move from observation to analysis and then theorisation. Father Pierre Teilhard de Chardin had a strong influence on me. He confessed to me that even though he was a Jesuit, he could not adhere to the fable of Adam. In relation to research about the Moravians, I would like to know how one can theorize as far as the biology, psychology and social development of the nations under study are concerned if one does not have all the elements to be considered at one's disposal, be they Western or Asian, and Chinese in particular in our context. To be honest, is it really possible to theorize at universal level if one knows nothing about Far Eastern thought, Buddhism, Taoism, the different religions of India and the Indian Ocean, Australia and naturally all first nations of the world? They can be counted by the thousands. How dare one to develop structuralist theories of human thought by relying exclusively on observations made by white people from the Occident? This is a serious issue that simply cannot be avoided. The pretence of Western anthropologists and historians is an expression of the colonialist mind as though there were superior nations that have to teach so-called exotic civilisations.

It is hard to imagine that Freudian scholars working in leading French research institutions – and I have chosen this example on purpose – do not hesitate to consider the studies made among a bourgeois minority in Vienna which paid Freud, as “scientific” truth. Besides, the latter never analysed the thoughts of a modest Austrian worker during the same period.

Nonetheless, Freudian psychoanalysis considers itself to be a universal science, valid in the context of any social class and nation! I witnessed such pretence among my colleagues at the famous sixth section – dedicated to social sciences – of the *École Pratique des Hautes Études* (later called EHESS): the authoritarianism of Freudian studies, but also Marxism and consequently atheism. They were fashionable as theories tend to be, and I had a hard time trying to extend the curriculum of our institution to ethology, ecology and naturally religious thought with the support of the great historian Lucien Febvre and Fernand Braudel. I was told to try the section next door, that is number 5. Thus, the *École Pratique* which had been founded to facilitate dialogue not only within each section but also among all of its sections received the corresponding number of departments, all of them small universities strictly separate from each other. I tried in vain to make this or that colleague who was interested in my work leave his domain. My research was only a matter of curiosity to him and he would continue to firmly adhere to his own Marxist approach, Psychoanalysis or structuralist anthropology.

This has also been the case as far as my expedition to Chukotka is concerned. I was able to conduct the latter in the spirit of Perestroika thanks to the Soviet regime of President Gorbachev among an Indigenous society hermetically sealed off until then. My work was published but no discussion with French Marxist entailed. Thus, scholars publish their work, one after the other, without any dialogue being the result.

Second observation: the Moravians want their work to be Christian and therefore liberating. They consider paganism to be a fundamental error. Jesus Christ the Saviour has to be taught to the people and his message put into practice. What does it mean to be a practicing Christian? The sharing of goods? I never heard about this among Greenlandic Christians. Generosity may be greater among hunters when they are Christian, but I have experienced the virtues of the Inuit of Thule. They are implacable. One can read about it in my forthcoming autobiography. I know how they treated me over a period of three months, during my “black hole” according to a merciless rite of initiation for young hunters. I did not look like one of those colonizers with a big boat and abundant royalties. Following the spirit of Simone Weil, it is necessary, when studying any given society, to adopt its social, financial and moral conditions to spend time anonymously amongst its members. Christianity has also to be understood as a social act, which means – in principle – great wariness about the accumulation of wealth and an ensuing social policy. Was that the case with the Moravians? Has this issue been discussed? I am mentioning it because in the French Christian tradition a movement developed in reaction to the reaffirming of the

Vatican's authority and papal infallibility in theological terms, Marc Sangnier's *Le Sillon* ("The Furrow" or "Path") which reflected on social Christianity. Did the Moravians resort to policies dictated by the Gospel when dealing with shamanism and "pagan" Inuit tradition in the 18th century? How did they proceed to convert the Inuit who did not have a so-called pagan religion but a doctrine that we now recognize as a philosophy of nature: *natura naturans*. I'd like to know.

As a specialist, I have never accepted that Christianization would be considered anything but a form of spiritual and intellectual colonization. In other terms, following the first missionary of Greenland in the 18th century, Danish-Norwegian Hans Egede who arrived in 1721 in the Nuuk region in search of Christian Vikings who had settled in southern Greenland as early as the 10th century and whom Europeans had lost trace of for a long time, the Moravians accelerated the Christianization of Greenland in certain respects. Some say that the three manifestations of God are not present in the Host during Mass, contrary to what Roman Catholics believe. Neither public nor private confession is practiced. Conflictual moments appeared opposing shamans to the Moravian colonizers of German origin and to those who remained faithful to the spiritual laws of Egede which were less subtle than the teachings of those moralizing Moravians. Some of the Moravian colonizers were exceptional figures in intellectual terms, like the linguist Samuel Kleinschmidt who quasi-codified the practice of Greenlandic. It is also necessary in this respect to remember that the Christian colonizers were at an advantage in comparison to the Inuit since the former spoke the language of the colonizing power which disposed of military and material means.

May I witness in my turn. When I went to Greenland for the first time in 1948, participating in the "French Polar Expeditions Paul-Émile Victor" as a geophysicist, I had no intention of studying anthropological matters and religious colonization in particular. These issues caught my attention later. Here are some examples which are worth mentioning.

After my glaciological research in the company of several geophysicists dedicated to the velocity of glaciers up to 3000m altitude, I was given the responsibility of studying the geomorphology of a Cretaceous-Eocene hill on the south side of Disko Island. I drew Eocene maps of Skansen and soon investigated the main polygonal lines of the unfrozen ground according to the principle of symmetries analysed by Pierre Curie: "A ferromagnetic object becomes paramagnetic and this is how temperatures have had an influence on the paramagnetic qualities of stone." I was naturally collecting very carefully any geographical data, be they botanic or geomorphologic. I was working for some weeks in the company of one of my senior colleagues,

the excellent geologist André Cailleux who was in charge of the group of naturalists on the Greenlandic coast and wanted to familiarize himself with the area before he returned to the main group. In the village, I was staying in a pretty Scandinavian house, on my own. I had my cartography gear with me which could seem impressive to some, drawing maps of valleys and plateaux on a scale of 1:25000, that-is-to-say in a very detailed way. On Sundays, I went to the church where Lutheran hymns translated into Greenlandic were sung. After the service during which God the Saviour, creator of original sin had been glorified, the Greenlanders all wearing their traditional clothes on the Lord's Day, one was expected to be cheerful and to follow the extremely harsh teachings of the Reverend who was usually of Greenlandic origin: charity, sharing of goods, faithful observation of all the rules he taught. The hymns were a testimony to the acceptance of God as the Saviour. One day I asked my Greenlandic companion Peter Geisler: "There is no cross in your house. You are Lutheran, that means you do not believe in immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary, you remain faithful to Luther's message." – "I don't think," he answered. "Don't try to find out what I think. I no longer think. Go and see the Reverend. He received a Danish education and will tell you what I have to think." In his home there were only some very basic books about technical training. He subscribed to the Greenlandic weekly *Atuagagluitit* for which I gave some interviews. I had ample proof that this man had been colonised. We later became friends. He was one of the staunch supporters of independence in 1948-1949.

This modest testimony shows to what extent Christianization was tied to colonization. Greenland was not open to migration. No-one was authorized to land there except in three towns. The leading Greenlandic minds identified by the church ministers were sent from their village to the capital Nuuk where they studied at the theological seminar in order to become churchmen. All of the teachers were of Danish origin. The Protestant teachings were supervised by Copenhagen. The Greenlandic elite was not expected to go beyond the seminar but to follow the lectures of a theologian approved of by Copenhagen. As far as I know, the *seminarium* of Nuuk was not a school of thought in its own right that could be considered independently of what the Protestant church authorities were teaching. It was not a university in the European sense of the term during the first years of my life in Greenland (1948-1951).

I arrived in Thule in July 1950. The Moravian teachings had never reached this far north. The first missionaries, of rather general Christian training, had arrived in 1910. My companions mostly said they were Christian as though they might have said Red Indian, but their practices remained traditional. Only one person, whom I called the wise man, had

been converted to Christianity when he was working for Knud Rasmussen in the earlier days of his anthropological field studies (1910-1920). He was dominated by Knud Rasmussen who was his master and who taught him about the forgiving spirit of Jesus Christ the Lord. Did he go any further – I mean Knud Rasmussen – I’m not sure, but his Danish-Greenlandic personality had made a deep impression on the former. He learnt basic Danish. Rasmussen taught him little by little the alphabet and other subjects. He became a Christian. As an Inuit Christian he was always more open in his ways, more generous than his companions from Thule who were particularly implacable to me as part of the rite of initiation they had intended to make me go through. I was on my own and I had no means according to the principle inspired by Simone Weil’s experience among workers in a Renault factory in Paris. I set myself a rule: never interfere in the rare shamanic sessions that I participated in. I have seen them bent over a breathing hole of seals for long silent minutes, apparently paying close attention and being absorbed by the blackish-blue water, their thoughts drifting away, shamanising at times. I also witnessed some drum sessions and manifestations of solitary rituals involving stones and plants. Their life rules were consistently of shamanistic spirit. The Danish-Greenlandic missionary who was of Greenlandic origin became friends with me. He visited me in Paris the year after, expressing his gratefulness to me for never having interfered, as a scientist, Frenchman and Roman Catholic, in their practices. Sometimes, I was wondering about their Christian thoughts. I have to admit that there were no devotional books on their shelves. Besides, they did not read. I never saw a cross in an Inuit house, nor have they asked me about people who are not Protestant or Christian: no question about the birth of Christ, the Holy Virgin; nor have I ever heard them pronounce the name of Jesus Christ in dramatic moments close to death. Our Catholic practice, if they had heard about it at all, was interpreted as the white man’s practice or – let’s say – the practice of white men’s sects. Apart from that, once again, they enjoyed singing together and being together in a different context from their Inuit meetings. Singing was appreciated both musically and as a way of socializing. The thoughts it conveys were not meditated on. Singing and rhythm were the only means for the Reverend to bring some of what Jesus Christ had said across, but never did I come across any reflection about the very notion of original sin or the strange Christian belief that Adam was Eve’s father in a way.

Greenland’s Vice-Provost Mathias Storch took a liking to me, often inviting me for lunch or dinner in his home in Ilulissat. He gradually let me know that he did not appreciate his masters very much, be they ministers, bishops or vice-provosts of Danish origin. “They make comments. They are

authoritarian and they do not speak our language. Help me in asserting a Greenlandic Greenland.” His son Johann also took to me when I was doing my geocryological work. He had decided to accompany me and to act as his father’s secretary to teach me more about Lutheranism, step by step. Unfortunately – I have mentioned it before – he had died of tuberculosis when I came back in 1949. That year, Mathias Storch published a book in Greenlandic about Greenland when I was staying there. He told me that he was not pleased to receive instructions from the Danish authorities, adding: “You are French. How did Danish Christians behave during the war, notably the authorities in Copenhagen of Lutheran tradition? We are not told anything about the topic. The Danes don’t like to talk about themselves.” For the leading Greenlandic minds, the Danish attitude of collaboration with the Nazi regime was inconceivable. They did not raise the subject in the presence of Danish administrators as it would have led to embarrassing discussions for the Danes; this is at least how it seemed to me. In any case, I never saw them asking a Dane any question about this dark side of history, a sad story as far as the Danish masters are concerned – it was simply not done. Storch asked me about these problems. I kept my replies short as I did not want to render my situation – which was fragile – too complicated in relation to the Danish authorities. They would not have liked to see me spreading revolt among the Indigenous population unlikely to accept that their masters had been collaborating with the Nazis.

Christianization, Christian colonisation? Yes, there are some historical eye-witness accounts which the authors of this volume try to elucidate. But they do not tell us more about what the philosophy of life of a Christian should be. Jesus Christ’s message is about the deliverance of man from evil which requires to obey a number of rules: to accept to believe in original sin and in all of what I consider to be “the fable of Adam”, but also the duty of forgiving our debtors, and, to share goods. The great driving force of life, as we know, is the quest of the weak for the power of the strong, and this power is above all economic. To a Christian, the “power of the better” must be shared with the less fortunate. This is in total contradiction with the Inuit way-of-thinking that I became familiar with in Thule in 1950.

And this is where we come to the central question I would like to raise: did the Christianization of the Inuit by the Moravians lead to Christian practice among them? We are told that they had been converted but what does that mean? Do these converted Christians, these Protestants share their goods with the poorest? They certainly don’t. There would not have been any development.

The Christianisation of Greenland was first and foremost a *colonisation* enacted by poor missionaries and Greenland’s work force loyally engaged

in favour of the Danish administration, that-is-to-say the conqueror who controlled not only schools but also the teachers who were churchmen and catechists who had received a Danish education to teach Danish Christianity, the island being cut off from the rest of the world. One can hardly imagine a more perfect system to re-educate a nation at the mercy of authorities who occupy its territory and who pretend to rely on much more powerful forces. There is something virtual about the so-called Christian presence of these churchmen who are in fact working under the Danish banner.

Our understanding of Greenland's Christianization is thus tied to Danish colonialization which was very pragmatic and often driven by secular minds.

One more major observation: the barrier of languages. Having travelled a lot, I have met many American anthropologists who did not speak French or German. I knew an American who was doing field research for his PhD on parental structures in Igloodik in 1963. He did not speak French. I told him: "There is a famous book in French about parental structures." – "I can't read French," he replied, "too bad, I have to defend my thesis at the University of Chicago. I'll will read it once it has been translated, but my thesis will have been published by then." Besides, when language skills do exist, one notes that studies about such delicate matters as religion and the passing from animism to Christianity are not read carefully enough and often not well-translated. I am sorry to have to raise such obvious points, but I can confirm that these studies written in French, Italian, Norwegian or German are not well-understood – if read at all – and that the translations are easily subject to debate.

I think that the first global reform to introduce in anthropology would consist in proving by one's own bibliography that one has read *all* of the books on the subject *in any language*. But we are a long way away from that. Scholars continue to publish without knowing anything about the works written across the border, notably socialist. To witness, I worked closely for several years with authorities of the Academy of Science of the USSR. They knew nothing about work in English or French. Similarly, French, English and American scholars knew nothing about Soviet research which is frequently of the highest interest. In *Arctica II. Oeuvres de Jean Malaurie*, I have published some 50 articles including more than a dozen by colleagues from the USSR with whom I worked in Leningrad and then during the first Franco-Soviet expedition to Chukotka. Their texts have been translated into French for the volume. This is not only the result of the expedition since a number of my colleagues from the Soviet Union also participated in the international conferences I have organized in Paris and

Rouen notably. It is not true that the creation of an Internationale of anthropological research is impossible. Quite to the contrary. It is in our minds that we take Soviet studies to be inspired by Stalinist doctrine and therefore bad. This is completely wrong and absurd. My Russian colleagues deserve far more respect.

It is thus not adequate to speak of human or social “science”. All we get is bits and pieces of social analysis. I have worked at the EHESS/CNRS for over sixty years. What has struck me all along is the incapacity of intellectuals appointed by the institution to speak to each other. Similarly, international colleagues don’t seem to read one another. Recently, I was shocked by a book written in English by an author who considers himself a specialist of the social history of Eastern Siberia. He mentions neither the Whale Bone Alley nor the discoveries of the Franco-Soviet expedition to Chukotka in cooperation with the Siberian Arctic Institute and the Institute of ethnography of the Academy of Science.

May I thank Professor Jan Borm and Dr. Joanna Kodzik once again to have edited this volume in English to bring the German-language sources they discuss and the authors’ work in German closer to those who cannot read the language. The problem is very serious indeed: how can one establish so-called universal theories if one does not know anything about the intellectual output of three quarters of the world? How dare one ignore the works of Japanese, Indian, African or Malgache colleagues... Countless books deserve to be sent to hell forever. I am alluding to Genesis, rereading the pages about the origin of the world and the tower of Babel: “And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.” One of the punishments that ensued from original sin was diversity of languages. The Yahwist narrative provides a single explanation for the diversity of nations and languages: the punishment for a collective fault – owing to original sin. Unity will only be restored through Christ the Saviour, hence the miracle of languages on Pentecost. How did the Greenlanders react to the oddities of this tale? I’d like to know how this strange story struck them.

There is one more point which is bound to draw the attention of the two co-editors and Professor Borm in particular. Knowledge is power, as mentioned above. Professor Borm is German himself. Everyone knows about the tragedy Germany went through during the Nazi Reich. It is therefore indispensable in my view that he defines his own position. Who is he in this respect? He should remind us of the fact that he left Germany as a youth to continue his secondary education in England, a kind of angry young man. I know my colleague and friend Jan Borm. I’d like to stress the extraordinary skill he managed to acquire in British colleges: to read carefully in between the lines. Reread the Lakists or a poet like Shelley: they

saw what is invisible. This approach makes all the difference in the Humanities and religious studies since it reveals the influence of those invisible forces in the history of a civilisation.

I am convinced that a scholar who wants to be precise - like any great historian for instance - also needs the faculty to deeply experience emotion which I have personally done in the Rhine valley where I was born, with Meister Eckhart and Goethe, who is simply immense. Yes, Goethe is immense.

Jean Malaurie

(translated by Jan Borm)

CONTRIBUTORS

Jean Malaurie was born in Germany in 1922. Emeritus Director of research at École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris and at the French National Research Centre CNRS, he trained as a geomorphologist, studying notably the dynamics of fallen rock in Greenland before he turned “from stone to man”, developing his own anthropogeographical approach. His classic narrative *The Last Kings of Thule* is the most widely distributed book about Greenland in the world and one of the two first titles, with *Tristes Tropiques* by Claude Lévi-Strauss, of the prestigious French book series *Terre Humaine* that Malaurie founded at Plon publishers in 1955. His other publications include *Ultima Thule* (3rd ed., 2016), a model of reflexive ethno-history about the Inghuit of Greenland’s North-West, and his gripping account of his 31 expeditions to the Arctic, the four-part *Hummocks* (1999). In 2019, the monumental second volume of his collected writings *Arctica. Oeuvres de Jean Malaurie* (about his expedition to Chukotka in 1990) came out, the third (about the Canadian Far North in the 1960s) in 2020. A fourth volume (about Greenland), is in preparation. Jean Malaurie is co-founder of the State Polar Academy in Saint-Petersburg (now part of Russian State Hydrometeorological University), UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for the Arctic and recipient, amongst many other distinctions, of the Order of the Dannebrog, the Royal Geographical Society’s Patron’s Medal as well as the gold Nersornaat, the Medal for Meritorious Service awarded by the Greenlandic parliament.

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INTRODUCTION

IMAGINING AND REPRESENTING THE ARCTIC IN GERMAN

JAN BORM & JOANNA KODZIK

“I plead guilty to holding no brief for Germans,” Pavel Petrovich exclaims in Turgenev’s *Fathers and Sons*, specifying: “As for Russian Germans, I do not need to mention them – we all know what sort of creatures they are. But German Germans do not appeal to me either. Once upon a time there were a few Germans here and there – well, Schiller, for instance, Goethe ... my brother is particularly partial to them... but nowadays they only seem to churn out chemists and materialists” (Turgenev, 1975, 97). We are in the year 1859. This may come across as a bit of hoax to some and possibly not at all to others... Be that as it may, Goethe and Schiller are arguably the two names most easily mentioned when it comes to discussions about German literature. What about German-language writing about the Arctic, then? Seen from an international, not German-speaking point-of-view, there are probably few explorers, officials, missionaries or writers that could be considered household names other than, perhaps, Georg Forster (Forster, George 1777) for those familiar with Cook’s second voyage, Adalbert von Chamisso, author of the Peter Schlemihl narrative (Chamisso 1814) or, to Russian speakers at least, a number of so-called German-Baltic noblemen in the service of the Russian Empire like Ferdinand von Wrangel and Friedrich von Lütke.

Fortunately to us, Goethe has dedicated one of his better-known poems to one of the most pervasive myths about the North. Let us recall the opening stanza of his poem “The King of Thule” written in July 1774 (Taylor 1872, 249), also sung by Margaret in “Faust” (I, 8): “Es war ein König in Thule/
Gar treu bis an das Grab,/ Dem sterbend seine Buhle/
Einen goldnen Becher gab” (Goethe s.d., 118) – and, in Edgar Alfred Bowring’s translation: “In Thule lived a monarch,/ Still faithful to the grave,/ To whom his dying mistress/
A golden goblet gave.” (Goethe 1853, 151) Admittedly, the poem was not to become a leitmotif in German writing about the Arctic but it did

inspire Knud Rasmussen in founding the post of Thule in North-West Greenland and Jean Malaurie, the well-known French anthropo-geographer and author of this volume's preface, in writing *The Last Kings of Thule*, the most widely distributed book about Greenland in the world (Malaurie 1955), translated twice into English (Malaurie 1982). As Jean Malaurie, born in 1922 in Mainz, notes: "Thule, Ultima Thule: Who had not celebrated it? Virgil, Pytheas..." (Malaurie 1982, 20) and also Nazi Germany, but for its own devices: "Thule was also the myth of the magi of Germany's racist gospel" (Malaurie 1982, 20), an allusion to the Thule Gesellschaft that Joanna Kavenna has also written about in her travelogue *The Ice Museum: In Search of the Lost Land of Thule* (Kavenna 2006). The history of the myth of Thule has also been studied by Monique Mund-Dopchie in her monograph *Ultima Thulé: Histoire d'un lieu et genèse d'un mythe* (Mund-Dopchie 2009, *Ultima Thule: History of a place and the emerging of a myth*). To return to Goethe, the poet and scholar has also written repeatedly about the Moravians (Vogt 2016) though not their Arctic missions which are discussed by Malaurie in his preface to this volume and analysed by Borm, Kodzik and Wilhelm in their contributions. Still, there are of course numerous references and allusions to the Arctic in German literature and writing as this collective demonstrates. A noteworthy example is the novel *Afraja, King of Lapland* by Theodor Mügge (1802-1861), a prolific German writer whose work no longer receives much public and relatively rare critical attention. Here are a few sentences from the opening paragraph painting the following picture of the European North:

What a world of terror and silence is hidden here! How much the heart of the lonesome traveller must be shivering as he is wandering across these desert fjords and bays, where the sea loses itself among dark, snow-covered rocks in deep rifts and caves. (Mügge 1979, our translation).

"A world of terror and silence" – two tropes that connect Mügge's writing immediately with other nineteenth-century texts about the Arctic, notably English travelogues studied by Francis Spufford in his well-known book *I May Be Some Time: Ice and the English Imagination* (Spufford 2003).

Why then publish a separate volume of studies on travel writing about the Arctic in German in the early modern period and up until the late nineteenth-century? To offer a simple reply echoing Spufford to begin with: because one can just as well study *Ice and the German Imagination*. Indeed, the effort seems timely since no monograph or collective volume dedicated to the subject has been published to date, be it in German or English, even though the corpus of relevant and important works is more than sizeable. To

give but one example at this stage, the missionary writings of the Moravians from Greenland and Labrador, later also from Alaska, have of course been partly available in English for some time, but only at a reduced scale, a number of excerpts from diaries and letters having been published in the Moravians' own review *Periodical Accounts Relating to the Missions of the Church of the United Brethren* (first volume 1790). Having observed that, the material has not been studied in depth frequently, notable exceptions in German being Heinz Israel's book *Kulturwandel grönländischer Eskimo im 18. Jahrhundert* (Israel 1969; *Cultural Change of the Greenlandic Eskimo in the 18th century*), not principally concerned with writing and questions of representation, though; Thea Olsthoorn's *Die Erkundungsreisen der Herrnhuter Missionare nach Labrador (1752-1770). Kommunikation mit Menschen einer nicht-schriftlichen Kultur* (Olsthoorn 2010; *Voyages of Exploration by Moravian Missionaries to Labrador (1752-1770). Communication with People of an Oral Culture*), monograph focused on the problem of communication as the subtitle suggests; the two literary studies *Grönland – Wo Nacht und Kälte wohnt. Eine imagologische Analyse des Grönland-Diskurses im 18. Jahrhundert* by Maike Schmidt (Schmidt 2011; *Greenland – Where the night and cold reside. An Imagological Analysis of Discourses About Greenland in the 18th Century*) and *Offene Räume und gefährliche Reisen im Eis. Reisebeschreibungen über die Polarregionen und ein kolonialer Diskurs im 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhundert* by Mike Frömel (Frömel 2013; *Open Space and Dangerous Voyages on Ice. Travel Accounts About Polar Regions and Colonial Discourse in the 18th and early 19th Century*); and the collective volume edited by Erich Kasten *Reisen and den Rand des Russischen Reiches. Die wissenschaftliche Erschließung der nordpazifischen Küstengebiete im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (Kasten 2013, *Journeys to the Edge of the Russian Empire. Scientific exploration of the North Pacific Coastal Regions in the 18th and 19th century*), as well as Johan Schimanski's and Ulrike Spring's monumental study of the Austro-Hungarian North Pole Expedition in the years 1872-1874, *Passagiere des Eises. Polarhelden und arktische Diskurse 1874* (Schimanski and Spring 2015, *Passagers on Ice. Polar Heroes and Arctic Discourses 1874*), both reviewed by Borm in French and English respectively (Borm 2015a and 2015b). As to work in English on German sources, we do come across articles here and there, for instance Catherine Theodorsen's contribution on Theodor Mütge in the collective volume *Arctic Discourses* (Theodorsen 2010), but no comprehensive study in English has been dedicated to German-language travel writing about the Arctic in the period under study here so far, despite the numerous sources available – access to German-language material and the use of different languages in academic writing

being a matter of major concern in academic research, as Jean Malaurie so poignantly remarks in his preface.

The present volume thus purports to offer a first general approach to what has been written in German about the Arctic in the days of geographical exploration, colonization and the spreading of Christian missions across the circumpolar North prior to such initiatives as the First International Polar Year partly due to German explorer Carl Weyprecht (1838-1881). Difficulties of access in terms of linguistic skills set apart, one of the reasons that such writings may have escaped international attention is the fact that we do not have any national or overall narrative of these texts and writings though the Austro-Hungarian North Pole Expedition is of course a notorious exception in the Austro-Hungarian context as Schimanski and Spring have shown (Schimanski and Spring 2015). But there is no anthology of German-language writing that could be considered on a par with Hakluyt's enterprise or compilations in French and other languages. Johann Reinhold Forster's *History of the Voyages and Discoveries Made in the North*, published in German in 1784 and two years later in English translation, is dedicated to discoveries in Antiquity and the Middle Ages in general, then focusing on discoveries "in modern times" made by the English, Dutch, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Danes and Russians, not mentioning, for instance, David Cranz's seminal *History of Greenland* published in German in 1765 (Cranz 1765) and in English translation in 1767 (Cranz 1767), the Moravian's work admittedly not dealing with geographical discovery and exploration but the natural history of Greenland and the history of the Moravian mission there (Forster, Johann Reinhold 1784 and 1786). Forster's history is largely dedicated to the seafaring empires of the Renaissance and beyond, as it were, the Holy Roman Empire not entering into consideration here since it did not have any imperial or colonial ambition in the Far North unless one considers the whaling enterprises of the city of Hamburg in this respect, though countless German speakers have of course taken to the sea and to distant places, some of them producing narratives in a colonial context, such as Schefferus about Lapland, a book commissioned by the Swedish Lord High Chancellor Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie (1622-1686; see Klein's contribution in this volume). Accounts of German-Baltic noblemen in Russian service were published by the Academy of Science in Saint Petersburg in German and Russian, illustrating the importance of German as a language of scholarly communication at the time. Many translations of scholarly texts and travel accounts from one language into another were of course circulating in the Republic of Letters, but no anthology of German-language writing dates from this period.

Concerning academic work, the situation is similar, the German-language studies mentioned above excepted. This may be due to a number of reasons impossible to elucidate here though the way curricula and areas of study have been organized in Academia may well be one of them. Travel writing studies are a fairly recent field of specialization, at least as far as literary approaches are concerned, and so are cultural studies, cultural history being an exception. Regarding Arctic travel writing, or, to be more precise, travel accounts about the Arctic, literary and cultural approaches to the subject have only developed in recent years, such material having been mostly studied in the past by geographers within the context of the history of geographical discoveries and exploration, to witness Richard Hakluyt (1553-1616) who lectured on geography, or, in the German context, August Petermann's famous *Geographische Mitteilungen* published from 1855 on, while serving also as sources of knowledge in other fields of scholarly and scientific interest. Once again, there are notorious exceptions, especially when a given account was written by an author known also for his fiction and/or poetry, such as Chamisso. A fascinating example of a case study is Jean Malaurie's ethno-history of writings about North-West Greenland *Ultima Thulé* systematically discussing the point-of-view of explorers in relation to his own observations based on his experience in the field (Malaurie 1990, 3rd ed. 2016; Engl. tr. 2003a: *Ultima Thule: Explorers and Natives in the Polar North*, translated into German and published in 2003 under the rather misleading title *Mythos Nordpol: 200 Jahre Expeditionsgeschichte* (Malaurie 2003b – *The Myth of the North Pole: 200 Years in the History of Its Exploration*). Another recent publication to consider is Michael Bravo's *North Pole* (Bravo 2019) essentially dedicated to Anglophone sources. The closest we might get to such approaches about the North in German, apart from the studies mentioned above, is Michael Harbsmeier's anthology *Stimmen aus dem äußersten Norden. Wie die Grönländer Europa für sich entdeckten*, containing translations into German of passages voicing Inuit views of Europe (Harbsmeier 2001). We are thus dealing with an area of specialization that is relatively recent and still constituting itself. Having made this observation, it is understood that the German-language material cannot be studied without looking at relevant sources in other languages. The second part of this introduction accounts for the reception and impact of writings about the Arctic in German-speaking countries and among German-speaking scholars, placing this volume's contributions and the sources they discuss in a wider European and North American context.

In their 2010 collective volume *Arctic Discourses*, Anka Ryall and her co-editors Johan Schimanski and Henning Howlid Wærp decided to assemble studies on “the many diverse and even conflicting representations

of the Arctic as a geographical area, as well as the many versions of ‘Arctic’ as a quality attached to a particular area.” (Ryall et al. 2010, xiii). Investigating “Arctic discourses in the post-romantic era, that is, after about the mid-nineteenth century until the present” (Ryall et al. 2010, xii), the contributions discuss “questions of power, of the relationship between the dominant Western discourses and Indigenous counter-discourses, answering back from the Arctic” – hence the title of the book, as the editors explain (Ryall et al. 2010, xi). Why focus on the notion of *writing* in this collective volume, then? The contributions all share an interest in the *representations* of the Arctic constructed by the authors they discuss. Looking at the question from anthropological, ethno-historical and literary angles, point-of-view and knowledge are the primal focal points, leading to further questions about who is observing, how and to what purpose, of course. As Jean Malaurie has pointed out in relation to early representations of the Inuit, “the authors of these first views of the Eskimo have not always been aware of the dangers of their distribution” (Malaurie 2019, 53-54), thereby raising the issue of responsibility. All of these narratives presuppose observers with their own previous itineraries impacting the way they look at Arctic societies and their environment (no German-language female travellers to be considered in the time framework of this book, alas!), that-is-to-say, it appears essential to appreciate under what conditions a narrative was produced and by whom. In his essay on German-language natural historians and travellers exploring Siberia in the 18th and 19th century, the anthropologist and ethno-historian Peter Schweitzer tries to determine to what extent we can conceive of “national” traditions of research as far as Siberian Studies are concerned, wondering notably “how ‘German’ the travellers were” who had German-Baltic roots (Schweitzer 2013, 11; our translation), to what extent we could envisage their work as constituting a “national” tradition and if “internationalism” or “transnationalism” might not be more appropriate terms for their contextualization. This last premise certainly appears partly relevant for the corpus studied here, as far as the transmission of knowledge is concerned. Han F. Vermeulen has also reflected on the birth of ethnography and ethnology – as he sees it – in the German Enlightenment and the role of Gerhard Friedrich Müller in particular (Vermeulen 2015). As to the writing of these narratives, they tend to reflect both the most persistent topoi and tastes of the day, as the chapters in the present volume show. In doing so, these accounts are naturally participating in the constitution of discourses about the Arctic. It might thus be useful here to briefly recall some of the best-known common places in representations of the Arctic in view of the German-language material.