Arctic Discourses. Edited by Anka Ryall, Johan Schimanski and Henning Howlid Wærp. Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2010, 341 pages.

As is stated on the back cover of this book, "Both fictional and non-fictional accounts of the Arctic have long been a major source of powerful images of the region, and have had a crucial part to play in the history of human activities there". Indeed, I am sure that most Siberianists with my background (i.e. Soviet culture) spent countless hours of their youth reading travel and action novels about the 'mastering of the North', about geologists, Communist warriors and other quite 'positive' heroes entering an endless taiga to encounter 'negative' heroes like shamans, white guard officers and other anti-Soviet contingents, as it was expressed in the language of the period. Western people enjoyed stories of Frankenstein and James Bond vanishing between icebergs, riding their dog sledges toward the sinking polar sun. All the more interesting that we have no substantial academic book that gives an extensive overview of the relationship between the written word and the Arctic.

The collection *Arctic Discourses* fills that gap in fifteen chapters written by authors from Sweden, Norway, Austria, Germany, the UK, Canada and Denmark. If the topic of the volume is unusual, then the background of the contributors is even more surprising: while in English-language literature American, Canadian or British scholars dominate, then in this book most contributors come from Scandinavian countries or from Germany. The common line of the volume is to explore how "the images and representations of the Arctic" (p. xiii) were created and changed through several genres of writing. First of all, the collection is written very enjoyably. A wide range of Arctic writing from historical travel accounts to crime novels is covered, but written is in a way that the reader instinctively wishes to read all these books the contributors talk about. And let's be honest: how many Arctic anthropologists have read crime novels about the Arctic? To start with the crime novels, then most prominent of these is of course the story of Frankenstein, which is not analysed here. Instead of this, Heidi Hansson focuses on an Alaskan native and journalist cum crime novel writer Dana Stabenow, whose hero Kate Shugak was placed in a "cultural murder-mystery" situation i.e. the crimes committed and the ways these were solved would have been "unintelligible in another setting" (p. 223). The author analyses both the ways the Arctic is shown and the way these novels were approached by readers. She concludes that the Arctic tends to be a tough masculine place where even female heroes must have masculine qualities to survive and maintain credibility. The line of masculinity also goes through the travel writing discussed in this book. For example, Johan Schimanski and Ulrike Spring analyse how the Austro-Hungarian Arctic expedition (1872–1874) helped to create an image of the Arctic via newspaper coverage and travel accounts. This chapter has an unusual focus, namely how this expedition was covered in the satirical press, in cartoons and jokes from newspapers. Through literary analysis, the authors conclude that the way the expedition was exposed in the press confirmed the values of Austro-Hungarian society.

Two chapters of the book are dedicated to Soviet Arctic writing in the 1930s, the period of the 'heroic' mastering of the North. Susi K. Frank goes into Soviet science fiction and documentary writing about the appropriation of the Arctic. Tim Youngs focuses solely on the (in)famous Cheliuskin expedition of 1937 when a whole research ship sank leaving approximately 100 people to spend two months one ice the before they were rescued. Both chapters argue that the Stalinist Soviet Arctic writing was completely different from its western equivalent. First of all, the appropriation of the Arctic symbolised the

industrial dream of Socialism in which man wins against and surrenders to the nature. Frank writes about the Soviet science fiction that described the Arctic as a "tamed" place where the Ice and snow was, with the help of technology, replaced with sunshine and palms. Frank sets out an interesting discussion on the 'warmth' of Soviet society using the Nietzschean concept of the Übermensch, arguing that the ideology of technology and the collective distinguished Soviet polar expansion from its Western counterpart and created a picture of the Arctic as a region where new Socialist man was able to conquer a harsh climate and create a 'civilised' world. The power of the collective is also the topic of Youngs' chapter, in which he analyses the picture of the Cheliuskin expedition in Soviet writing to show that even failure was turned into glory: as Man's victory over cold.

Apart of these topics, the authors of the volume discuss the indigenous voices of Arctic discourse, the image of the Arctic in Canadian foreign policy writing and opera. As a whole, the book demonstrates that the Arctic was seen in all societies and time periods as a "cold, empty and dangerous place" (p. 225). What is fascinating is how many different facets and approaches this region had in different genres of writing. By reading this book one understands how the popular perception of the Arctic was constructed and how much this picture reflects our societies.

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