

CONFERENCE

“Illustrated travel accounts in cold countries (16th to 19th century): from the invention of printing to the invention of photography”

Abbey of Prémontrés, Pont-à-Mousson (Meurthe-et-Moselle, France)

June 14-17, 2017

Organizers :

LIS (EA 7305 – Université de Lorraine - Nancy)

Écritures (EA 3943 – Université de Lorraine - Metz)

LUHCIE (EA 7421 – Université Grenoble Alpes)

Imaginaire Nord (Université du Québec à Montréal)

Why do we get the sense of a diffuse, mysterious and yet obvious affinity when we read the illustrated travel accounts in the Alps, the “Far North” (Arctic, northern part of America, Scandinavia), or even Siberia? In this very specific type of books, that naturally spread representations of “exotic” realia, texts and images picture a world both close and far, familiar and confusing: the world of cold countries.

The notion of “cold country” (regions located close to the poles, high mountain areas, countries where winter is long and rough) arose during a research which was led in the 1960’s by the Quebecer geographer and linguist Louis-Edmond Hamelin. Through his research, Mr. Hamelin also developed the concepts of “nordicity”, “hivernity” and “mountainness” (“montagnité”), which put the stress on the close proximity between the respective representations of three types of landscape: Arctic (and Antarctic) landscapes, high mountain landscapes, and winter landscapes. But many artists and travellers had had an insight on such a proximity long before that time. As of the Renaissance, Brueghel brought it to life through his winter paintings, and so did Windham and Bourrit in the Enlightenment era throughout their trips to the Chamonix valley. In 1861, Xavier Marmier still compares the Mer de Glace with Spitzberg or Novaya Zemlya. As he travels across Norway and Sweden during summer 1827, Jean-Jacques Ampère observes that “the higher one climbs, the more often one discovers the connection between mountain landscapes and northern landscapes”. There are sometimes revealing anagrams: to many of those travellers, altitude and latitude are two faces of the same coin.

To the Western world, and apart from the Antarctic – which, however, was only explored later – “cold countries” mean a very reachable *elsewhere*, maybe the nearest one, in which they can easily mingle: “Northern Enlightenments” that came from Russia and Sweden at the Classical Age; harsh winters from Central and Eastern Europe or from North America; the Far North as a world of conquest and occasionally a source of identity. Yet that frozen *elsewhere* remained unknown for a very long time. Very few travellers dared to venture north of the Arctic Circle before the 18th century – apart from Regnard, who made a journey to Lapland in 1681. We also know how little interest the Alps raised within the travellers’ community, before the “Little Ice Age” (Emmanuel Leroy Ladurie) emerged, allowing the Alps to make their literary debut, from Haller (1729) to Rousseau (1761). For European people however, such countries that “expand to the very edges of living earth” (Mme de Staël), with landscapes that remind us of an eternal winter and inhabitants with unfamiliar customs, kept exerting an unmatched

fascination – from the Ancient Thule to the Antarctic territories glimpsed by Arthur Gordon Pym, not forgetting the “*furor Normannorum*”, the Russian banya or the Alpine Tatzelwurm.

To anyone exploring the relationships between text and image, research led by B. Stafford clearly made the point for illustrated travel accounts. As a matter of fact, the emergence of printing in modern Europe fostered the soon phenomenal development and dissemination of the representations of remote countries, notably in the form of maps, cosmography books and illustrated travel narratives. In those books, which were to remain outstanding tools of knowledge until the 19th century, images and texts have continuous relationships which vary over time, from synergy to strong rivalry, from complicity to detachment. For us today, images are also an invaluable source which allow us to understand how European people would represent and imagine anything/anyone whom they considered different. At the same time, images give us the opportunity to explore the intellectual and cultural systems on which those representations were based. And finally, images make us wonder what really happens during the process of restitution: is it possible -and if so, how?- to give a picture of an atmosphere or of climatic conditions?

For all those reasons, illustrated travel accounts in cold countries provide us with a particularly rich field of investigation, which we intend to explore methodically.

From a chronological point of view, we will restrict the corpus of texts to books printed prior to the age of photography, whose apparition create new issues and specific problems.

The geographical area will however be investigated in all its complexity: where are cold countries located? North, for sure, if we take into account any region located close to the Arctic pole, but we must not lose sight of other countries, even further south from the pole: for instance, Prussia, where “the Northern nature really begins” (Ampère); Nodier’s or Stevenson’s Scotland; Russia and Siberia, which are located sometimes in the north, sometimes in the east, depending on the period and the travellers; Canada, with its endless winters that baffled Jacques Cartier so much... And what about mountains, in particular the Alps, where Bourrit witnessed the reunion of “the horrors of both poles”, between France and Italy? We will not overlook the experience of cold weather in more temperate zones either, such as the new “Région Grand Est” (France), where cold can be considered an undeniable identity trait. And finally, the Antarctic, as the “North of the South”, and its neighbouring lands could, provide interesting insights on the end of the period in question, in spite of their belated discovery

Within this framework, here are a few suggested topics of interest that the abstract proposals could follow:

- Approaches and research methodologies to establish a typology of illustrated travel books: cosmography books, exploration narratives, collection of curiosities, scientific literature or teaching materials, travel guides – each of them dealing with the text-image relationship in a diversified way. We would be equally interested in the specific features of mapmaking, whether the maps belong to a broader context or not.
- Imaginary representation of the cold:

- “Cold country” landscapes: snow (from storms to snow-covered areas), ice (from glaciers to the icebergs), vegetation (from forests to lichens); we will be focusing on the complex relationships sustained by Western people with those landscapes (mountain landscapes in particular) until the middle of the 18th century, with an emphasis on the basis of their representation (myths and legends, religious taboos, aesthetic standards and preconceived ideas, amongst others). Besides natural landscapes, urban landscapes are not to be overlooked.
- “Inhabitants” of the North (man and beast): the encounter with a cultural otherness, mixing reality and fantasy (monsters, barbarians); and whether or not this otherness comes up as the exact opposite of the otherness of the inhabitants of warm countries conquered by Western explorers at the same time.
- Travel writers dealing with the cold:
 - How to travel in cold countries: the traveller’s body struggling with cold climate, clothing, modes of transportation, difficulties along the way...
 - Observations and comments concerning the cold climate throughout scientific explorations: evaluations, measurements, questions, visual translations (graphic elements...)
 - Spiritual dimension of “cold countries”: missionary narratives; religion and mystique, religious proselytizing and/or asceticism; travel itinerary similar to an anabasis (Siberia) or a catabasis (Iceland).
 - How to write/draw/paint the cold: is there a specific form of creativity?

This conference intends to cover a wide range of interests for its participants and delegates. It will allow us to review and update the progress of research on pictorial representations of the North and cold countries in their geographical and historical variety; it will also allow us to bring to light similarities between areas which at first glance seem heterogeneous, and to conduct an initial survey of sources, which could ultimately lead to the constitution of a database of texts and images about the representation of cold countries.

It will also give researchers from different countries and disciplines (literature, history, history of art, geography, etc.) the opportunity to meet over their common field of interest, and to discuss with each other. This dialogue could lead to a fruitful collaboration, both nationally and internationally, between various interdisciplinary research teams with the added benefit of numerous developments and activities: research seminars, publications, creation of databases through technology transfer, and more.

Furthermore, it could be the opportunity to highlight such existing heritage funds which can be found in Lorraine, through surveys, inventories and, above all, a big bibliophilic exhibition.

It will ultimately provide us with the opportunity to pool technological skills, which could promote the networking of resource centres and the development of research tools based on various data supports that would be easily accessible to every researcher and to the general public as well.

Calendar and location

The conference will be held at the Abbey of Prémontrés in Pont-à-Mousson (Meurthe-et-Moselle, Lorraine, France; see http://www.abbaye-premontres.com/site_en/) June 14-17, 2017.

Organizing Committee

- Gilles BERTRAND (Laboratoire Universitaire Histoire Culture(s) Italie Europe and Institut Universitaire de France – Université Grenoble Alpes)
- Daniel CHARTIER (Chaire de recherche sur l’imaginaire du Nord, de l’hiver et de l’Arctique et Laboratoire international d’étude multidisciplinaire comparée des représentations du Nord – Université du Québec à Montréal)
- Matthieu FREYHEIT (Littératures Imaginaire Sociétés – Université de Lorraine)
- Alain GUYOT (Littératures Imaginaire Sociétés – Université de Lorraine)
- Marie MOSSÉ (Littératures Imaginaire Sociétés – Université de Lorraine)
- Anne-Élisabeth SPICA (Écritures – Université de Lorraine)

Scientific Committee

- Philippe ANTOINE (Université Blaise Pascal – Clermont-Ferrand)
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- Alexandre STROEV (Université Paris Sorbonne Nouvelle)
- Trung TRAN (Université Paul Valéry – Montpellier)
- Hélène VEDRINE (Université Paris Sorbonne)

Terms and conditions for contribution and participation

Submission of single papers

- Conference languages: French, English
- Every paper proposal will respect the following characteristics:
 - Presentation title and abstract (\pm 1,000 characters including spaces). Word .doc file is compulsory.
 - A brief biographical and bibliographical record including in particular:
 - Discipline of the author/speaker
 - University and home laboratory
 - Email address
- All paper proposals should be emailed jointly to:
 - alain.guyot@univ-lorraine.fr
 - anne-elisabeth.spica@univ-lorraine.fr
 - matthieu.freyheit@univ-lorraine.fr
 - marie.mosse@univ-lorraine.fr

- **Deadline for submission: *November 1, 2016*.**

- All paper proposals will be submitted for evaluation and selection to the Scientific Committee: the authors will be informed of the decision of the Scientific Committee by early 2017.

- Proposals defining a wide and well problematized approach will be greatly appreciated.

- The duration of each talk may not exceed 30 minutes.

Registration fees

- Standard fee: 45€

- Reduced rate (non-working student): 20€

Travel and accommodation costs

Costs are covered by the participants.

Practical information and contact

Information concerning the conference is to be displayed on a website (under construction) that will be updated regularly. Site location map and all practical indications required to access the Abbey of Prémontrés will be uploaded on this website.