

The “North” and the “Idea of Iceland”: Contemporary Cross-Cultural Construction of Representations of Iceland¹

Daniel Chartier

Université du Québec à Montréal (Québec, Canada)

Abstract – This article studies a cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary process that leads to the creation of some new artistic representations of Iceland. This process began with an academic conference about the images of the North and the production of children’s drawings about the idea of the North, which resulted in the creation of a book of fiction by a foreign author and its translation into Icelandic. This study highlights the relationship between research and artistic creation and the nature of stereotypes and clichés about the North, the Arctic, and Iceland, as well as the relationship between the national and universal content of the images produced.

Keywords – Iceland, Québec, children’s drawings, literature, writer, images, representations, stereotypes, research and artistic creation

The Idea of “Place”

Iceland, like any other “place,” exists as both representation and reality. As a representation, produced by different discourses, it should be regarded as “the idea of Iceland,” which must be understood, analyzed, and interpreted as a broad and complex combination of internal discourse (from Icelanders about themselves), external discourse (from foreigners about Iceland), and a variety of elements taken from pre-existing discourses (insularity, the North, Scandinavia, and many others) to which Iceland may be linked. The relationship between how it is perceived, what others consider it to be, and what Iceland considers itself to be must be taken into

¹ Translated in English by Elaine Kennedy.

ICELAND AND IMAGES OF THE NORTH

account, even if the fact remains that this confronts us, as always, with discursive representations, some of which are based in reality, while others are imagined. Therefore, we consider all representations, images, and stereotypes that constitute the image of Iceland as “a hub of representations” that defines the “idea of Iceland.”

Inspired by a multidisciplinary approach to the production of representations in a context linking research and artistic creation, this study takes as an example the case of a bidirectional creative process about Iceland between researchers, children, and a writer. The question here is not to consider the production of these representations as crucial to the whole “idea of Iceland,” but rather to study, by a dialectical approach, the influences created by researchers in a context of creation (and vice versa) and to evaluate the stereotypes and *idées reçues* that emerge from it. Representations are generated by and accumulated through competing discourses. This process allows us to measure representations of the image of Iceland. In addition to imagology, this study relies on works written by Hans Robert Jauss² and Wolfgang Iser³ in particular, on the hermeneutics of reception and on the ideological and sociological analysis of discourse (Mark Angenot,⁴ Pierre Bourdieu⁵), on the study of stereotypes and *idées reçues* (Ruth Amossy⁶), as well as applications that were made in the “national” contexts by Micheline Cambron,⁷ Dominique Perron,⁸ and Régine Robin.⁹

In this context, I propose to study the cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary process that began with an academic conference and the production of children’s drawings (“Images of the North” in Reykjavík in February, 2006) and led to the creation of a book of fiction (by Lise Tremblay) and its translation, all of which involve

² Jauss 1988, 1990.

³ Iser 1978.

⁴ Angenot 1989, 1997.

⁵ Bourdieu 1992.

⁶ Amossy 1991; Amossy & Herschberg Pierrot 1997.

⁷ Cambron 1989.

⁸ Perron 2006.

⁹ Robin 2003.

THE “NORTH” AND “THE IDEA OF ICELAND”

different representations of the North and of Iceland. My focus is on the process but also on the drawings and story themselves, which will highlight the nature of stereotypes and clichés about the North, the Arctic, and Iceland, and the relationship between the national and universal content of the images produced.

“Stereotype,” as the essayist Ruth Amossy attempted to define it in terms of neutral textual analysis, is a useful concept in order to understand the representations or the idea of a place. According to Amossy, stereotypes, negative or positive, are necessary to understand and conceive of ideas, perceptions, and images.¹⁰ In the case of the imaginary construction of the circumpolar North, stereotypes, discourses, experiences, and cultural, linguistic, and physical facts all mix together to produce a universal representation and several different circumpolar national representations (i.e., Icelandic, Inuit, Finnish, Canadian, American, etc.)—all of which contain, and use, clichés and stereotypes at different levels.¹¹

Ruth Amossy also reminds us that, from a socio-critical perspective, stereotypes can be

seen as key links between the text and its context, with that which is unspoken but accepted within the strata of a society. These are the places where meaning is seen to crystallize.¹²

They act as a form of interface between the discourse and what is said of a thing or of a place. In the case of children’s drawings, this interface is of significant interest. Furthermore, intercultural and imagological perspectives induce a double interpretation of any image and add the previous meanings: internal and external (which can be seen here in the textual interpretation of the drawings made by the foreign writer). Finally, we can also state that a socio-historical perspective nurtures this conceptual framework with a diachronic

¹⁰ Amossy 1991; Amossy & Herschberg Pierrot 1997.

¹¹ Chartier 2008b.

¹² “apparaissent comme des relais essentiels du texte avec son en-dehors, avec la rumeur anonyme d’une société et ses représentations. Ils sont des lieux sensibles de condensation et de production du sens.” Amossy & Herschberg Pierrot 1997: 66.

dimension, and therefore the possibility of evolution, in time, of images and representations. Thus, the idea of a place can be partly understood through the analysis of stereotypes. The discourse involved is divided into internal and external points of view. Finally, how this idea evolves over time, and the variations that emerge, must also be considered.

Representations versus Reality

One of the most frequently asked questions in relation to collective representations is how adequately they represent different points of view of what is perceived. Each of them represents a part of the reality, whether a group of individuals, a place, a country, a continent. However, these individuals or places actually exist, and the discourse that represents them in the form of images can sometimes take over from social and political perspectives, go beyond, distort, or deny them. For those who are involved in these images or representations, the question becomes even more significant: for example, can Icelanders accept a representation of themselves, be it internal or external, that is different from the reality in which they feel they live? Conversely, can we deny the existence of a representation under the pretext that it does not reflect “reality,” knowing also that the perception of the latter varies with the viewpoint of the perceiver? Furthermore, can these representations be judged on this basis when it comes to artistic creation of new images?

The issue of adequacy to reality has become more relevant since the different media have become increasingly important in discourses, and the functions of repeated messages and their echoes further increase the gap between the autonomy of discourse and its representations. Again, this fact is of importance in the case of representations made by children. The significance of reality becomes, in some cases, incidental compared to the discursive media hype, which seems to function almost independently. Denunciations of this mismatch are largely short lived: for example, in the Icelandic crisis of 2008, repetitive government statements could not affect the power of images propelled from one media to another, from one country to another. Once initiated, the media discourse explodes, changes images and representations on its way, even when it appears differently from reality. In the case of representations, we must take this effect into account, recalling that it did not apply to the same extent in previous

historical periods, which poses quite acutely the problem of the relationship between representations and reality. It also leads to further questions about the power forces behind the production of those representations.

The Effect of the Study of Representations on Representations Themselves

The analysis of collective representations raises ethical issues: the effect of the selection of an object of study on the creation of new representations and/or stereotypes. Researchers are increasingly aware that their role in the humanities can have an impact on these stereotypes (be it positive or negative), and that research projects that study representations can lead to the creative production of new images and representations, shaped by the perspective of those research projects.¹³

The study of representations, images, and stereotypes is a complex and ambiguous process that is not neutral: indeed, as I have demonstrated elsewhere, this leads to a reactivation of these elements in the cultural and social discourse and, consequently, their dissemination.¹⁴ Speaking about and analyzing stereotypes and representations—in order to understand or to condemn them—paradoxically leads to additional discourse about them, which further highlights these images, for better or for worse. It may happen that the selection of objects of study in cultural and social analysis leads to a reactivation of images, representations, and stereotypes otherwise forgotten or marginalized. In sum, to speak of representations and images can contribute to strengthening and sometimes even developing them.

Our own collective research project—Iceland and Images of the North—provides an ideal framework to measure both the presence of stereotypes in the discourse about the idea of Iceland as well as the influence exerted by the project itself on the image of Iceland,

¹³ Gosselin & LeCoguiec 2006.

¹⁴ Chartier 2008.

including the creation of new representations of Iceland and the awareness of internal and external linkages that define this discourse.

From a Research Group to a Book of Fiction

In February 2006, a conference held in Reykjavík on Images of the North dealt at length with the socio-cultural history of Scandinavia, the links between different national images of the North, the place of Iceland in the circumpolar world, tourism, multiculturalism, localities, and the concepts of “nordicity” and “cultural nordicity” proposed by Louis-Edmond Hamelin. The conference organizers defined the “North” as “an imaginary place or geographical locus, [which] constitutes a fascinating multiple mosaic shaped by myth, image, text and experience.”¹⁵ Thus, the inter-discursive—made from different cultural schemata—construction of representations was raised as a methodological foundation for the study of images of the North, and therefore, of Iceland.

Researchers from a dozen countries gathered for the conference, which was part of the Reykjavík Winter Festival. Even the organization of the Images of the North conference was meant to be interdisciplinary, drawing links between a tourism event, academic research, previous cultural works, and the creation of new representations of the North and of Iceland. The programme included artistic activities such as an outdoor video exhibition (“14 artists show works that refer to the North”), a Canadian northern cinemas festival, and an exhibition of children’s drawings. The conference was organized by a research group based in Iceland and led to the creation of an Icelandic Centre for Research (RANNIS)-funded international research project on images of Iceland called Iceland and Images of the North (INOR). The artistic performances, festivals, and academic conference exemplify how the relationships between these intellectual and artistic activities are closely interconnected.

For the purpose of the conference, several Reykjavík art teachers asked their pupils to produce representations of the North that would

¹⁵ Call for papers for the Images of the North international conference, 24–26 February 2006.

THE “NORTH” AND “THE IDEA OF ICELAND”

be exhibited to the researchers during the conference. They asked them to illustrate what the concept of “North” (or, when they could not understand it, “towards North”) could mean for them, without giving too much additional information. This process led to various representations, stereotypes, and perspectives on the “North” that were later shown to the researchers who came for the conference.

Some of these drawings were remarkable and suggested both a particular Icelandic knowledge of the North and some universal stereotypes linked with the Arctic and the poles: icebergs, igloos, penguins, etc. As new representations of Iceland and the North, they constitute both a reinforcement of these images and a way for researchers to grasp and visualize the way Icelandic children interpret their situation as part of the North and the Arctic—or separate from it.

After the conference, the drawings were sent to Montréal to be scanned, and researchers proceeded to study them as part of another interdisciplinary research project on representations of the Arctic.¹⁶ Several general characteristics of the representations of the Arctic and the North were then identified in each of the drawings, as well as those peculiar to Iceland, in order to determine the specific parameters of an “idea of North” from the point of view of Icelandic children.

The drawings were then sent back to Iceland, where an exhibition was held at the National Museum, while an album containing the drawings and an introductory analysis was published jointly in Québec and Iceland as part of a series intended to highlight and interpret the iconographic wealth of the North, winter, and the Arctic.¹⁷ As a way to pursue the cycle of creation of new representations of Iceland in an intercultural context, the drawings were finally submitted to a Québec writer, Lise Tremblay, who was asked to see if she would be inspired by them to write a story for children, or a fable. Tremblay then began to carry out her own research on Icelandic culture, climate, and

¹⁶ Each drawing was analyzed and incorporated into a database of representations of the North at the Université du Québec à Montréal.

¹⁷ Sigfúsdóttir & Chartier 2009.

ICELAND AND IMAGES OF THE NORTH

geography to conceive such a story, which she finished writing early in 2009. As Tremblay said,

This book is the combination of my own little experience of Iceland, my documentary research on this country, my own perception of it, the inspiration that came from the children's drawings, and mostly it is a new creative act to write a book.¹⁸

The story, entitled *L'école de Jobanna (Jobanna's School)*, will be published in French in Québec, and then translated into Icelandic and published in Iceland, thus closing the loop of a long but fascinating intercultural process of study and creation of images of Iceland. The steps of this research and artistic creation process go as follows: a definition of the North—a scholarly conference—children's drawings—an academic exhibition of the drawings—a study of the drawings—an exhibition—an iconographic album—a book of fiction—its translation—its study as a new multicultural representation of the North.

The drawings, the story, and then the translation and the subsequent reception of the album and the books of fiction both in Iceland and abroad can be examined in a comparative manner. Moreover, the results of this research and creative process raise many methodological and ethical questions, among them the relationship between researchers and artists, the cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural influences—between Iceland and Québec, which do not share a common cultural background, other than the fact that they can both be considered “cultures from the North”—and, of course, the “creation” of an object of research by the research process itself.

Let us now examine in more detail the drawings made by the children and the story they inspired Lise Tremblay to write, paying special attention to the various discourses that run through both of them in connection with the images of the North and of Iceland.

¹⁸ Interview with Lise Tremblay, Montréal, February 2009.

Icelandic Children Imagine the North¹⁹

All the children’s drawings were made as part of a project organized by the Reykjavík School of Visual Art (Myndlistaskólinn í Reykjavík) in collaboration with the Reykjavík Academy. Nine Icelandic teachers asked groups of pupils (aged 3 to 5, 6 to 9, 10 to 12, and teens) to create a project in which they would express their idea of the “North” in a drawing according to various guidelines. The drawings were to be shown to researchers who would come to a scholarly conference the following winter.

The teachers quickly found that the concept of the “North” was not clear for some children. One teacher, Þorbjörg Þorvaldsdóttir, reported that her pupils did not really understand what the “North” could mean; it was only after some discussion that her group accepted the idea that they, themselves, live “in the North.” “I started by asking what came to mind when I said the word ‘north,’” explains the teacher,

but I didn’t get much of a response. They had no trouble pinpointing it on a map, but didn’t have a clear idea of how far it reached south. They included Greenland and, after some discussion, Iceland and the other Scandinavian countries.²⁰

It is significant to notice that Iceland was not immediately associated with the concept of “North,” which was set at a point that seemed higher, or “further north,” from the standpoint of the children.

In the drawings, one can easily distinguish a mix of specific Icelandic content and universal northern content. The first Icelandic characteristics and clichés pertain to insularity, an island mentality shaped and formed by virtue of being islanders (see Figure 1); the importance of fishing; the presence of monsters in the sea surrounding the island—probably influenced by the old maps with monsters that the teachers already knew and, maybe, shared with their

¹⁹ This part of the article is based on the introduction (which I wrote with Ólöf Gerður Sigfúsdóttir) to the book *Norður. Icelandic Children Imagine the North. Des enfants islandais imaginent le Nord. Íslenski börn ímynda sér Norðrið.*

²⁰ Interviews with the teachers conducted by Sigfúsdóttir, 2009.

ICELAND AND IMAGES OF THE NORTH

pupils; volcanoes, lava, wind, and horses on the land; and the unusual presence of fish drying, even beside igloos (see Figure 2).²¹ Much universal polar content can also be identified in those drawings, like they would be from any child in the world: there are bears, penguins, and seals all together, despite their different geographical location in reality; many landscapes are shown at night, and dog sleds are abundant; northern lights, snow, ice, and igloos are shown in polar colours (blue, white, and black). The drawings often illustrate the isolation of individuals; other figures are also represented, such as wolves, whales, reindeer, and even the high mountain Bigfoot, along with hunting scenes. Finally, some of the drawings go beyond stereotypical representations to reveal a dreamlike, magical polar world (see Figure 3).



Figure 1. Drawing which illustrates Icelandic insularity by Einar Andersen.

²¹ Ísleifsson 1996.

THE “NORTH” AND “THE IDEA OF ICELAND”



Figure 2. Drying fish beside an igloo. Drawing by Sólrún Þórólfsdóttir.



Figure 3. A dreamlike, magical polar world. Drawing by Álfrheiður Edda Sigurðardóttir.

Most of the pupils viewed the “North” as a direction rather than a specific area or a region; all of them saw it as someone else’s land—cold and exotic—and in contrast to the South. Children could hardly see the area surrounding them as the “North,” which was always a direction towards or a place further in the northern direction. Hildur

ICELAND AND IMAGES OF THE NORTH

Bjarnadóttir reports that her students aged 6 to 9 understood the “North” solely in terms of direction: “I started by asking them what the ‘North’ (*norðrið*) meant, but no one understood the word or said anything. Then I asked them what ‘northward’ (*norður*) meant and everyone understood.”

Even the older pupils were inclined to portray the North as something separate from themselves; it was only after some consideration that they came to see themselves as part of it: “When they started working on their pictures,” says Sigríður Melrós Ólafsdóttir,

most of them wanted to do something exotic like ice bears, igloos, Eskimo jackets, or even penguins and other things they linked with the cold. But, one girl made a picture of her family’s summer house. When we discussed the pictures, I discovered that almost none of them wanted to do a normal “North” that is a part of their everyday life.

While the young children were unable to recognize their familiarity with the “North,” they did know what a cold world is and were more apt to associate “winter” with their own environment: Elsa D. Gísladóttir mentioned that the children aged 3 or 4 could not understand cardinal points, but said that, “when we talked about cold and temperate countries, it became clear to them that Iceland is cold—the ice, snow and icebergs reflecting that cold.” Even for the children aged 6 to 9, the elements that first came to mind to represent the “North” were the cold, snow, and colour phenomena (blue and white, pastels, the polar night, and northern lights). While the concept of “North” was an abstraction, the concept of “cold” and “winter” were ideas they already experienced and could associate with specific graphic representations.

The drawings made by these children are not simple transpositions of stereotypes and clichés about the “North” or “winter.” Actually, they illustrate extraordinary and complex worlds, both including and transcending stereotypes, and they reveal an imaginary experience of the “North.” Although they mostly conceive of the “North” as *another* world, *somewhere else*, *up there*, and *colder* than their everyday environment in Reykjavík, their drawings are permeated by local, Icelandic identity. Some details of their drawings

THE “NORTH” AND “THE IDEA OF ICELAND”

could have been imagined by children anywhere in the world—geography-defying penguins on a cold black sky; the odd warm light shining from houses inhabited by rare isolated characters; people hunting reindeer, wolves, and other wild animals. That is the universal North, an extension of Western discourse on the Arctic, moulded by childhood imaginings where monsters, igloos, and polar bears can mingle, the fruit of a system of representations that does not require any experience of the reality.²² But beyond this first impression, upon closer examination, the drawings also reveal a “North” that is totally specific, experienced, culturally fuelled, and that would never occur in the same way to a child from Montréal, Iqaluit, or Rovaniemi—an Icelandic “North” marked by insularity, the importance of fishing, fish and boats, sea monsters around inhabitable areas, volcanoes, lava, wind, and horses galloping over the moors: all images associated both with “Iceland” and the “North,” even if some of them traditionally refer to other areas as well (volcanoes, fishing, etc.).

Despite the limitations of such a small corpus (about sixty drawings) and the interferences induced by the instructions given by the teachers, it seems from the children’s drawings that the concept of the “North” is most of the time an external one, but when applied to a particular country’s image (here, Iceland), it constructs itself as a combination of universal and specific discourses. Now let us examine how those drawings lead to an external literary representation of Iceland with Lise Tremblay’s story, another step in this cross-cultural process of constructing representations.

Johanna’s School

The writing process of the book entitled *Johanna’s School* is the result of a conscious intervention to link a scholarly event (a conference) and a cultural activity with children (the drawings) to the creation of a multicultural and creative foreign literary representation of Iceland, and ultimately its analysis, in a circular manner. This circularity is actually more in line with the pattern of a spiral, in the sense that it takes elements that reposition the preliminary issues both at the centre and at the margin. This movement will also continue with the translation of the story in Iceland (a return of otherness: a self-image

²² Chartier 2008a.

ICELAND AND IMAGES OF THE NORTH

seen by an “Other,” based on a reflection on the self). In all cases, we can consider this story as the product of a process in which the construction and superposition of images and stereotypes lead to the creation of a new form of representation of the “North” and of “Iceland.”

The context of the creation of this story can be defined as follows: the Québec writer Lise Tremblay, whose work shows great sensitivity to issues of identity shift, cultural and territorial eccentricity, and remoteness and small communities, was first asked to undertake a speaking tour in Iceland, a country she did not previously know. Following this visit, her collection of short stories *La Héronnière*²³ was translated into Icelandic and published in Reykjavík.²⁴ Thereafter, she was invited to create, from the series of children’s drawings about the “North,” an original “Icelandic story” that could accompany them. She then launched herself into personal research on Iceland, its culture, its history, and its peculiarities, and wrote a story that is a combination of her own concerns, inspiration from the drawings, the image of Iceland, and finally the desire to contribute to a scholarly research project on the image of Iceland in relation to the idea of the North. Since Tremblay’s work often deals with the concept of “nordicity” (she “nordifies” in her literary works the area where she was born, the Lac-Saint-Jean), the artistic result would certainly integrate many elements found in the children’s drawings (an Icelandic view of the “North”) with an outsider’s view of Iceland (her own perspective).

Based on a *fait divers* that occurred in 2008—the arrival of hungry polar bears around Skagafjörður—the story by Lise Tremblay unfolds like an ecological fable and also echoes the issues of the desertion of small villages, a topic that is found in the writer’s other books. Johanna, a former teacher, befriends one of her former students, now an adult. The latter supports Johanna in her last days as she seeks to stay in touch with the rest of the world using a computer and to visit the past through the drawings of children she has found in the school where she formerly taught. She is concerned about the changes that have occurred around her: the disappearance of small communities,

²³ Tremblay 2003.

²⁴ Tremblay 2007.

THE “NORTH” AND “THE IDEA OF ICELAND”

climate changes, etc. Before dying, she entrusts her friend with a box containing her testament: a plane ticket to America, for the narrator to visit an island where a man has reversed deforestation, and her fortune, which she has donated to an environmental organization for the protection of polar bears.

We must consider Tremblay’s narrative as a literary creation that is also a foreign view of Iceland, based on academic study, inspired by drawings of Icelandic children who represent the North and, of course, that uses—sometimes, creatively—some of the stereotypes about this country. We can extract from its first paragraph an impressive account of characteristics that can define Iceland: first, insularity, the presence of ice, women’s prominent role in society, an obsession with the sea and concern about the disappearance of fisheries, the loss of small villages, the presence of Scandinavian elements, and the importance of reading, drinking, and telling stories. Secondly come a few stereotypes, already present in the children’s drawings: polar bears, the haunting absence of trees, the lunar landscape, the desire to go abroad, the invading presence of tourists, the concentration of the population in Reykjavík, the radical change of day and night, the silence, the great wind, and the importance of technology in everyday life.

The portrait of Iceland the text conveys is not false at all, and is actually in line with many internal and foreign representations of this country. Being a cultural work, it has the advantage of concentrating many elements of these images in a single text. Again, Iceland is both shaped by a universal discourse and specific content: the North is Arctic, imaginary and stereotyped, but it is also the “place” of social, demographic, and environmental issues. Most of all, it is a “real place” where people live, struggle, and imagine the world.

The Idea of Iceland

The study of the cross-cultural process from a conference to a new literary book about Iceland and the “North” has allowed us to consider three assumptions, two of which relate to researching contemporary culture, and the third, to the discourse on the Imaginary North, Iceland, and the Arctic.

ICELAND AND IMAGES OF THE NORTH

Firstly, there is a strong link and two-sided influence between research and creative production in research on contemporary culture. Our research, that is, the selection of our objects of study, the perspectives from which we carry out research, our contacts with the creators, and the published results of our research, all influence the creative process of future works and the reception of previous works. It can also define the object of study itself.²⁵

Secondly, since we often work on artistic creations from an aesthetic perspective, we are looking for the emergence of new forms and styles—what interests us are original works, but we are also trying to find works that combine different elements into a single reshaped form—in both cases, we need to imagine (or sometimes create) what could have been the “conventional form” (which would concentrate on the stereotypes) from which the novelty of the new productions can be evaluated and understood. Since we talk about “new,” “unconventional,” “original” artworks, we need to set a “conventional” standard, which is often very hard to define, except when based on the concepts of clichés and stereotypes. In spite of this, the contents of such clichés and stereotypes are not easy to grasp, since they evidently change over time and lead to more complex issues than originally envisioned. The best we can suggest in many cases is establishing lists of elements which rely on one aspect or another of a more general idea—here, the “North,” the “Arctic,” and “Iceland.”

Finally, it seems that the discourse on the Imaginary North, Iceland, and the Arctic oscillates between universal and particular discourses. The idea of North is made of universal elements, colours, and schemata, complemented and augmented by individual and national perspectives. Its circumpolar—or pan-Arctic—nature constitutes a remarkable example of a multicultural and intercultural construction. This makes it difficult to study the Imaginary North and the Arctic from a single national point of view, since it is a cross-cultural, shared imagination. On the other hand, the universality of

²⁵ In some cases, this relationship has been modelled into an institutional framework: for example, some academic institutions—like the Reykjavík Academy—do not separate research from creation, which is reflected in the co-existence of researchers, writers, and artists in research laboratories, academic conferences, and published proceedings.

“the idea of North” can only be understood if we also consider the different national, generic, historic, genre-related, and geographic particularities it encompasses. This leads us to question the relationship between geography and discourse, the real and the imaginary—a relationship in which discourse is constructed like a changing whole that can be grasped only in its constant movement in the narration, images, and forms that underlie it. The way we carry out this research today and the role of the media adds to this cross-cultural perspective as we borrow and share ideas and concepts and try to apply and modify them for our own research. Contacts and collaboration between researchers from different disciplines, cultural backgrounds, and fields of study accentuate the need for a cross-cultural, shared methodological common ground. What is true for the research process can also be applied to creative processes and to the influence of research on creation, and vice-versa. Evidently, when we are researching the images of Iceland, we study a patchwork of different discourses that all apply to Iceland, but which come from different sources and perspectives: among them, the “idea of North,” the “idea of a cold place,” a “remote place,” and dozens of other discursive paradigms that shape and define “the idea of Iceland.”

References

- Amossy, R. (1991). *Les idées reçues. Sémiologie du stéréotype*, Paris: Nathan, “Le texte à l’œuvre.”
- Amossy, R., & Herschberg Pierrot, A. (1997). *Stéréotypes et clichés. Langue, discours, société*, Paris: Nathan, “Lettres et sciences sociales.”
- Marc, A. (1989). *1889 : un état du discours social*, Longueuil: Le Préambule.
- Marc, A. (1997). *La propagande socialiste : six essais d’analyse du discours*, Montréal: Éditions Balzac.
- Bourdieu, P. (1992). *Les règles de l’art*, Paris: Seuil.
- Cambron, M. (1989). *Une société, un récit*, Montréal: L’Hexagone.
- Chartier, D. (2008a). “The Gender of Ice and Snow,” *Journal of Northern Studies*, 2, pp. 29–49.
- Chartier, D. (2008b). *Le(s) Nord(s) imaginaire(s)*, Québec: Presses de l’Université du Québec and Montréal: Imaginaire | Nord.

ICELAND AND IMAGES OF THE NORTH

- Gosselin, P., & LeCoguiéc, É. (2006). *La recherche création: pour une compréhension de la recherche en pratique artistique*, Québec: Presses de l'Université du Québec.
- Iser, W. (1978). *The Act of Reading. A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Ísleifsson, S. R. (1996), *Ísland. Framandi land* [Iceland. A Strange Country], Reykjavík: Mál og Menning.
- Jauss, H. R. (1988). *Pour une herméneutique littéraire*, Paris: Gallimard.
- Jauss, H. R. (1990). *Pour une esthétique de la réception*, Paris: Gallimard.
- Perron, D. (2006). *Le nouveau roman de l'énergie nationale*, Calgary: University of Calgary Press.
- Robin, R. (2001). *Berlin chantiers*, Paris: Stock.
- Robin, R. (2003). *La mémoire saturée*, Paris: Stock.
- Sigfúsdóttir, O. G., & Chartier, D. (2009). *Norður. Icelandic Children Imagine the North. Des enfants islandais imaginent le Nord. Íslensk börn ímynda sér Norðrið*, Québec: Presses de l'Université du Québec and Reykjavík: ReykjavíkurAkademían.
- Tremblay, L. (2003). *La héronnière*, Montréal: Leméac.
- Tremblay, L. (2007). *Hegravarpið* [The Heron's Breeding Place], Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan and Stofnun Vigdísar Finnbogadóttur í erlendum tungumálum.