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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Joy M. Essigmann entitled "Ein kleiner, schwarzer Punkt am weisslichen Himmel: Antarctica & Ice in German Expressionism." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in German.

Daniel H. Magilow, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Elisa Schoenbach, Maria Stehle

Accepted for the Council:
Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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# *Ein kleiner, schwarzer Punkt am weißlichen Himmel*: Antarctica & Ice in German Expressionism

A Thesis Presented for
the Master of Arts
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Joy M. Essigmann

August 2010

# Abstract

This work explores a fascinating and disturbing literary trope found in select German Expressionist prose in the years 1910-1920. Key Expressionist-era authors, including Georg Heym, Robert Musil, Egmont Colerus and Franz Kafka employed Antarctic and ice metaphors in their poetry and prose to exemplify inner feelings of displacement resulting from modernity. Expressionist discontent, as well as the "Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration" that occurred from 1895 to 1922, led to the creation of polar dystopias in some literature. These dystopias explored abstract interpretations of the South Pole, not as a place of excitement and adventure, but rather as a journey into philosophical inner ice in the era of Modernism. Heym, Musil and Colerus did not invent the disturbing Antarctic allegory, but rather returned to an established literary tradition in a time of polar "pulp" fiction.

This thesis first examines the South Pole as a place of emptying, shown in Georg Heym's 1911 fragment "Das Tagebuch Shakletons" ("Shakleton's Diaries"). In other works, such as Heym's 1911 novella "Die Südpolfahrer" ("Travelers to the South Pole"), the South Pole is portrayed as a blank slate. Two Austrian works show the idea of the South Pole as a refuge: Robert Musil's 1911 *Das Land über den Südpol* ("The Land over the South Pole") and Egmont Colerus' 1915 novel *Antarktis.*

These works exemplify and interpret the modern soul's tepid "temperature," something sharply criticized by Expressionists. These authors and poets longed to see an improved world and expressed discontent by portraying imperialist "heroes" of their time as mere specks lost in the sea of modernity. In the literature of Heym, Musil, Colerus and Kafka, a bleak Antarctic world mirrors the authors' views on their "dying" society and the European "symptom" that resulted in suffocating mediocrity. Self-fulfillment becomes a static or moving point on the horizon that will never be realized by either the explorer or the freezing bourgeois soul.

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# Introduction

"Men wanted for hazardous journey. Small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful. Honour and recognition in case of success." This quote, supposedly placed in a London newspaper by the famous Antarctic explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton, summarizes the picture of South Pole exploration at the dawn of the 20th century. The brutally unforgiving continent of Antarctica, the southernmost point on our globe and the place where "all meridians come together" has long fascinated explorers, authors and the general public alike. It is a land of absolutes, of unending negative space and of forbidding sterility, and a space into which no living creatures would venture unless in denial of their better judgment and even sense of self-preservation. So serious was Antarctic exploration's danger and so dubious its positive return that *The London Times* wrote in 1859: ". . . it is wicked to expose that which we love to risk [i.e. the lives of British explorers] . . . to gratify a curiosity which deserves almost to be called morbid" (Barczewski 22). Yet from the earliest voyages of the mid-1800s to the well-known expeditions of British Robert Falcon Scott and the German Wilhelm Filchner in the early 1900s, foolhardy explorers from around the globe denied their basic human instincts and ventured into the Antarctica wasteland. They went for many reasons. Some hoped to further the cause of science. Others sought personal glory and adventure. Many returned to the frozen continent multiple times after great hardship and even near-death experiences.

Why this fascination with polar exploration? Traveling to either Pole was no small undertaking and many lost their lives. The greatest possible material outcome of these highly dangerous voyages was a country's flag planted on Earth's most desolate territories. Perhaps polar explorers would have done well to heed the warnings of James Cook, the first European explorer to cross the Antarctic Circle in 1773. Cook wrote that a man with greater resolve

than he would have to "conquer" that icy fortress. He recorded: "I shall not envy him the honor of the discovery but . . . the world will not be benefited by it" (qtd. in Barczewski 14). Years of sacrifice and toil to reach the Poles only proved the veracity of Cook's statement. Norwegian explorer Fridtjof Nansen observed in 1911:

> Nowhere else have we won our way more slowly, nowhere else has every new step caused so much trouble, so many privations and sufferings, and certainly nowhere have the resulting discoveries promised fewer material advantages. (Qtd. in Niven 17)

In spite of these dangers and hardships, or perhaps due to them, the Poles' great unknowns lent them a fairy-tale like quality that held men spellbound throughout the centuries. As Richard Buschick put it in the 1930s, "Both end points on the earth's axis . . . have been goals of human yearning since time out of mind" (qtd. in Murphy 178). Although no less exciting or significant in the course of history, Arctic exploration was not as exotic or frightening as Antarctic due to its location and its very nature. Indeed: "If the North Pole was horrifying . . . the *terra incognita australis* was literally dreadful *beyond* words" (Wilson 146). Some polar experts, such as J. Kennedy MacLean, disagreed. MacLean reasoned in 1910:

> . . . the record of adventure in the regions of the South Pole is neither so long nor so rich in incident. Whatever may be the reason, the mystery of the Antarctic has never seized the public imagination nor stirred popular feeling in anything like the same manner as has the glamour of the North. (Qtd. in Barczewski 25)

However, the Arctic is just a land-locked frozen sea within a relatively manageable distance of "civilization" (i.e. North America and Europe), whereas Antarctica is an entire continent. The South Pole lay just far enough from human reach at the turn of the century to make it a tantalizing object of conjecture and romanticization. In short, regardless of some assertions

to the contrary, Arctic "conquest" simply did not capture public interest in the same way as Antarctic exploration.

For the poets and prose writers of German Expressionism, Antarctica took on an especially significant role. These authors responded to the early 20$^{th}$ century's political polarization and social alienation with a slew of South Pole-related allegories. The greater Central European world experienced enormous political and social upheaval during this time period in which:

> the whiff of change and intellectual experiment was particularly pungent. You could smell it, and while some felt in their nostrils the aroma of freedom and discovery, others thought they detected the stench of decadent Europe's rotting corpse. (Blom 284)

This was certainly no time of peace and tranquility, despite the tepid atmosphere of overwhelming mediocrity in Germany that led Expressionist poets to write longingly of revolution. In fact, Enlightenment notions of reason and progress encountered scorn and disapproval as "every artist of note took up arms against the stifling pomposity of Wilhelmine institutions" (Furness 22). Fast-developing modern metropolises left individuals with the feeling that they had been robbed of participation in their own lives. As Georg Simmel noted: ". . . one never feels as lonely and as deserted as in this metropolitan crush of persons" (Simmel 16). Social upheaval left Europe's citizens without identity: "Gripped between the steely jaws of industry and the emerging global market, millions were uprooted and forced to invent new identities in an unfamiliar world" (Blom 394).

Railroads sprang up and became the subject matter of poems in well-known Expressionist collections, such as Kurt Pinthus' seminal *Menschheitsdämmerung* ("The Twilight of Mankind"). In poems by Jakob von Hoddis and Alfred Lichtenstein, for instance, the "iron snake" plays a crucial role in showing society's development: "Der Sturm ist da, die wilden

Meere hupfen / . . . Die Eisenbahnen fallen von den Brücken" ("The storm is here, the wild oceans skip / . . . The railroads fall from the bridges"; Anz 172) and "Fern pfiff die fabelhafte Eisenschlange" ("Far away the marvelous iron snakes whistle"; Vollmer 140). The telephone connected all ends of the globe; streets expanded and soon filled with mass-produced cars and traffic. Interest in exploration, initially re-fueled by Enlightenment fires, now drew men of all nationalities who were eager to rob the map of its final blank spaces.

Particularly in the early 1900s, these rapid and sometimes alarming changes produced an era of "polar extremes" in German literature: light and dark, beginning and end, birth and death, paradise and the apocalypse all collided in poetry and thought. Wolfgang Rothe argued in favor of Expressionist literature as a "critique of a world of absolute negativity" that contrasted with a "vision of utopian, absolute positivity" (16-17). Following this dialectical line of thought, one issue had to exist for another to make sense. Great amounts of negative space must be present for anything positive to exist, and where better to find this surplus of negativity than in Antarctica's uninhabitable shores?

This work explores a few exemplary depictions of Antarctica and snow deserts through Expressionist emptiness metaphors. Specifically, I analyze Georg Heyms' "Das Tagebuch Shakletons"and "Die Südpolfahrer" (1911), *Land über den Südpol* by Robert Musil (1911) and *Antarktis* by Egmont Colerus (1914/15). I also include secondary references to Franz Kafka's short story "Ein Landarzt" (1918), selected writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, and various portrayals of Antarctica or desert spaces by authors beyond central Europe. Although different in style and content, several common threads run through these works, namely: a blatant challenge to modern and often colorful scientific and mathematical theories, a critique

of the Anglo-Saxon "lust" that led to conquest of the esoteric North and South Poles and the desire to find peace and reason in polar deserts.

Through an examination of modernity's scientific theories, religious beliefs, significant historical events and other factors, this work will interpret the above collection of texts and further show that three overlapping Antarctic interpretations emerge through them: the South Pole as a place of emptying, as a blank slate and as a source of refuge. These Expressionist portrayals constituted a counter-narrative to polar "pulp fiction" of the early 1900s, such as Albert Paine's 1901 *The Great White Way* or Charles B. Stilson's 1915 novel *Polaris of the Snows.* American and British polar narratives tended toward fanciful characterizations of the South Pole as backdrops for swashbuckling excitement or great scientific discovery, while the Expressionist Antarctic trope demonstrated, above all, that: "what is farthest away and most hidden is, paradoxically, always what is most important: the journey to the poles is a journey to the center of the soul" (Nelson, qtd. in Wilson 163). Rebellious poets disregarded the more popular polar interpretations and instead examined the journey into the inner ice of the *modern soul*. In the literature of Heym, Musil, Colerus and Kafka, a world without life or breath becomes the lodestar of explorers seeking shelter in a rapidly modernizing and "dying" society.

# Chapter I

## Why Antarctica? Reaction to the "Cold Culture" in the Modernist Era

*Jenseits des Nordens, des Eises, des Todes...An dieser Modernität waren wir krank.*
*[...] Lieber im Eise leben, als unter modernen Tugenden und anderen Südwinden!*

*("Beyond the north, ice, death...This modernity made us sick.*
*[...] Better to live in ice than among modern virtues and other south winds!")*

*–Friedrich Nietzsche, 1895, Der Antichrist*

### *1. The Historical Context of Expressionist Ice Metaphors*

To gain a complete understanding of Expressionist authors' Antarctic fascination, one must examine the so-called "Heroic Age" of polar exploration. The Heroic Age unofficially began in 1895 with the Sixth International Geographical Congress in London, a meeting of scientific minds from literally across the globe. Delegates arrived from every major country and some minor ones to discuss and report on the time period's most burning geographical questions (International Congress xxxvi).

The ever-present mystery of the Poles, and especially the South Pole, brought the "Antarctic Question" sharply into question for the intellectual and scientific minds that gathered in 1895. In the Congress' opening address, Clements R. Markham outlined a few general goals in relation to polar exploration:

> The Polar regions present problems to the explorer of the highest interest, and they will continue to occupy a large share of the attention of geographers until, through the efforts of many expeditions directed to different parts of the vast unknown areas, our knowledge, which at present is very fragmentary and partial in the north, and almost

> non-existent in the south, has been made complete. (International Geographic Congress 15)

As a result of this meeting, London officials declared 1901 to be the “Antarctic Year” (Wouters 21).

Beyond the world of science, polar fever stirred poet, layman and aristocrat alike in the tumultuous early 1900s. Even though scientists protested that *exact* geographical poles existed only in explorers' minds, French, Japanese, British and American explorers sailed boldly forth to plant their country's colors at the top and bottom of the world. The new century's first imperialistic goal was the mapping of the North Pole, which occurred due to one man's unflagging and relentless determination. Perhaps because of the Arctic's geographical closeness to the United States, the North Pole's “discovery” is the only great victory to be credited to America in an era of British, Irish and Norwegian heroes.

Explorer Robert E. Peary pursued what he called the “last great geographical prize,” the ever-elusive North Pole (Kirwan 254). Each time he neared the object of his obsession, weather and other frustrating delays forced him to turn back. Peary set sail for the last time in 1909. He chose Matthew Henson, an African American, as his companion on the trek to the Pole. Peary, Henson and four Inuit supposedly discovered the North Pole on April 6 that same year. A lack of “reliable” witnesses—a racist code word for “whites”—or of worthwhile supporting data leads many to suspect that Peary never reached the Pole.

With Peary's fingers hardly thawed from planting America's flag somewhere in the Arctic, the world's eyes turned southward in June of 1909. The United States, Germany, France and Japan planned frantically to claim the final polar victory (Barczewski 61). A maelstrom of intense societal and governmental interest birthed the polar careers of the “Big Four”: Douglas Mawson, Robert Falcon Scott, Sir Ernest Shackleton and Roald Amundsen.

Sir Douglas Mawson, a native Englishman who lived in Australia, found himself drawn into the "race for the Pole" although his primary interest lay in scientific research. Australia's record of Antarctic exploration was up to this time unimpressive, but the Australian Government paid for over half the cost of Mawson's expedition. With his country's backing and a healthy interest in the secrets of the Antarctic continent, Mawson struck out for the South Pole aboard the ship *Aurora* in 1912. The expedition was called the Australasian Antarctic Expedition and ended in tragedy for two of Mawson's companions, Dr. Zavier Mertz and B.E.S. Ninnis. An unfortunate chain of events left Mawson himself stranded on the icy continent for nearly three years. He apparently never had any desire to discover the Pole itself, and instead successfully charted the coastline between the Mertz Glacier and Gaussberg (Kirwan 301-6).

The names Robert Falcon Scott and Sir Ernest Shackleton leap out in the annals of South Pole exploration.[1] Their struggle for Antarctic victory fueled enormous controversy and created a legacy that lasts even today.[2] Irishman Ernest Shackleton planned the now famous *Nimrod* expedition under British colors in 1908. Shackleton's aspirations frustrated explorer Robert Falcon Scott, who also wanted to claim the South Pole for England. Shackleton's *Nimrod* expedition, discussed in more detail later, fell around 156km short of glory. Nonetheless Shackleton basked in "a storm of patriotic fervour and public adoration" upon his June 1909 return to civilization (Barczewski 59). Tales of his exploits echoed around the world. This voyage inspired authors like Georg Heym, the "German Baudelaire," who based

1 Sir Ernest Shackleton's legacy has experienced a great revival since the 1990s. In a 2002 public poll to determine the "100 Greatest Britons," for example, Shackleton came in at number eleven. The sudden surge in interest birthed novels, movies and television programs that center on his life and polar career. Four new biographies have been published since 1999. Shackleton is also now regarded as a hero in his home country of Ireland for the first time in history. Also see Barczewski pp. 283-304.

2 Scott and Shackleton's South Pole exploits live on in different forms, including advertisements, films, plays and books. Although Scott, who suffered the great "heroic death," has been historically considered the more valiant of the two, Shackleton's popularity is also now on the rise (see above footnote and also Barczewski pp. 235-47; 266-69).

the fragment “Das Tagebuch Shakletons” (“Shakleton's Diary” - last name purposely altered by Heym) on these historical events.

In Shackleton's impressive wake, Robert Falcon Scott and Norwegian Roald Amundsen gambled with lives and government funds in a final bid for imperial glory. Both sailed in 1910, Scott from Britain and Amundsen from Christiana (modern-day Oslo). Then an anxious public could only await news. No reporters or television programs alerted the world to what was happening. Possibly also affected by such interminable suspense, Georg Heym and Robert Musil fell into this stretch of white silence between civilization and the Pole. They recorded Antarctic prose fragments in 1911, a year before Amundsen's final victory and Scott's death in the South Pole desert.

Musil and Heym did not set out, then, to critique the actual *winning* of the South Pole. Instead, they saw a world entranced by an ultimately dangerous, foolish and even pointless battle over an obscure point while completely ignoring the coldness of society around them. The bottom of the world lay as forbidding and remote as modernity's big-city environment. Expressionist authors recreated feelings of alienation and frustration through the voices of fictitious Antarctic explorers. An Antarctic destiny was one plunged into an eternal ice not unlike Heym's proclamation of a European “endlosen Winterschlafe” (“endless winter sleep”; II 178), the most deplorable fate imaginable.

*2. The Philosophical Origins of Expressionist Ice Metaphors*

Martin Heidegger wrote in 1933, “Wenn in tiefer Winternacht ein wilder Schneesturm mit seinem Stössen um die Hütte rast . . . dann ist die hohe Zeit der Philosophie” (“When, in a deep winter night a wild snowstorm rages and heaves around the house . . . then is the time most right for philosophy”; qtd. in Gelven 68). Expressionist authors would certainly have

agreed. In the fabrication of Antarctic metaphors, these writers turned to the era's most celebrated prophet and idol: Friedrich Nietzsche.

Nietzsche inspired Expressionist poets in their battle against bourgeois conformity. He challenged men to think of themselves as autonomous individuals, a trend also manifested in the 1899 appearance of Sigmund Freud's *Die Traumdeutung* ("The Interpretation of Dreams"). Although Freudian theories themselves have no visible connection with ice metaphors, Freud did reference North Pole exploration in conjunction with an intriguing case: a man confessed that he dreamt about giving explorer Fridtjof Nansen galvanic treatment in the Arctic (Freud 146). Following the publication of *Die Traumdeutung*, intellectuals began to view themselves as "drifting icebergs" that drew away from the rational analysis of life (Evers 99).

Nietzsche looked beyond the individual to critique the cradle of modernity: bourgeois, Wilhelmine society in pre-World War I Germany. This society not only stagnated under its own patterns and routines, but ultimately choked under a blanket of ice and snow. Nietzsche sought above all to inspire readers to action through his words:

> Wer die Luft meiner Schriften zu athmen weiss, weiss, dass es eine Luft der Höhe ist, eine *starke* Luft. Man muss für sie geschaffen sein, sonst ist die Gefahr keine kleine, sich in ihr zu erkälten. Das Eis ist nahe, die Einsamkeit ist ungeheuer—aber wie ruhig ale Dinge im Lichte liegen! (Whoever breathes the air of my writing must know that it is an air of loftiness, a *strong* air. Otherwise there is no small danger that one may catch cold in it. The ice is near, the solitude tremendous—but how calmly all things lie in the light! (Nietzsche 167-68)

He viewed the world as a place devoid of human sympathy and beliefs, where normal emotions withered in the face of hellish modern ideals (Täubrich et al. 218).

Nietzsche's “innumerable images of winter, of cold, and of ice that symbolize paralysis, immobility, and infertility” appealed to Expressionism's hostile and brooding nature (Donahue 247). Nowhere was his critique of society's coldness more apparent than the highly controversial *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (“Thus Spoke Zarathustra”), published in two parts between 1883 and 1885.

Zarathustra, the infamous “Übermensch,” undertakes a metaphysical journey of transformation and encounters stark winter along the way. He “welcomes winter, honors winter, yet does not *like* winter” (Gelven 65). Chapter 50 of the novel opens with the words: “Der Winter, ein schlimmer Gast, sitzt bei mir zu Hause; blau sind meine Hände von seiner Freundschaft Händedruck” (“Winter, a bad guest, sitteth with me at home; blue are my hands with his friendly hand-shaking”; Nietzsche 253). Further esoteric encounters instruct Zarathustra on “the long bright silence” and what it means to be “in winter” or what “he himself becomes.” This journey into ice “reveals the transcendental character of man” (Gelven 66).

Nietzsche's “Übermensch”, or superman, enthralled and inspired Expressionist authors. Members of Berlin's *Neue Club,* a group of revolutionary young poets that included Kurt Hiller and Georg Heym, lauded Nietzsche's works. They frequently read them aloud during weekly “Neopathetisches Cabaret” meetings. Hiller, the club's leader, named Nietzsche “the most philosophical of all new philosophers” and even went so far as to call him “our powerful and humble beloved master” (Sheppard II 166). Other *Neue Club* members spoke of Zarathustra as though he were a real person, for instance in a short essay by Erich Unger: “Zarathustra wußte es, daß kein Unterschied ist zwischen Philosoph und Dichter” (“Zarathustra knew that there is no difference between a philosopher and poet”; Sheppard II 409).

Volatile and moody Georg Heym further embraced Nietzsche's blatant challenge of Christianity and societal norms. He considered Nietzsche one of his childhood heroes, along with the poet Friedrich Hölderlin and the dramatist Christian Dietrich Grabbe. Heym wrote in February 1906: “Ich las ihn und wurde gefangen” (“I read him [Nietzsche] and was captivated”; Heym III 44). Above all, Heym wished that an arrow would pierce his own soul and transform him into an “Übermensch” (III 44). Nietzsche's work not only influenced Heym's poetry and short stories. The poet’s last two dramas, “Grifone” (1909-11) and “Cenci” (1911), embody Nietzsche's style of tragic pessimism (Sheppard II 504).

Austrian writer Robert Musil also referenced Nietzsche profusely in his diaries. The young Musil held the philosopher in high regard, even if these views degenerated into skepticism later in life. In an 1898 diary entry Musil called it a mark of “destiny” that he read Nietzsche at eighteen, when he had just left military service and reached a turning point in his life. In addition, Musil declared that the philosopher's works had done him “all possible good” (I 19).

Shortly thereafter he experienced his first discontent with Nietzsche's writing when he confessed feeling a need for a “different arrangement” of the philosopher's material (Musil 21). Only a year later, Musil described Nietzsche as a man who “found access to a hundred new possibilities but who has not executed any” and who wasn't of much value in himself. Musil then decided that only the most dedicated followers of Nietzsche could bring about cultural progress. He continued: “Nietzsche is like a park given over to public use-but no one goes in!” (39-40).

Despite his reservations about Nietzsche's inherent worth, Musil continued to read and comment on the philosopher's works throughout his lifetime. He referenced *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (“The Gay Science”), *Der Antichrist* (“The Antichrist”), and *Der Fall Wagner* (“The Case of Wagner”) particularly in his diaries. The poet dedicated the first part of a 1911

notebook to his thoughts on Nietzsche's 1908 *Ecce homo: Wie man wird, was man ist* ("Ecce homo: How One Becomes What One Is"). These reflections later contributed to characterizations in his most celebrated work, *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* ("The Man Without Qualities"). By 1920, though, Musil revealed a final disenchantment with the philosopher:

> . . . [It is a] maliciousness of Fate that it gave Nietzsche and socialism to one and the same age. The ideology of race, cult of the aristocratic, the anti-democratic movement are tolerated on Nietzsche's account. (219)

Expressionism's relationship with its sometimes idol, sometimes nemesis manifested itself continually in correspondence and literature. But whatever the relationship at a specific time and place, icy death tropes appear in Expressionist poems under Nietzschean influence. Georg Heym regularly adopted Nietzsche's image of the endless wanderer on a metaphysical journey in his prose. Even Egmont Colerus, a deeply religious man whose personal beliefs clashed violently with Nietzsche's perspectivism, commissioned a Zarathustran-style portrait of himself as a displaced nomad wandering in the empty desert of war-torn society. Essentially, many Expressionist authors patterned Nietzschean ideals whether wittingly or unwittingly. His striking theme of transformation through winter coincides with the polar journeys analyzed in this work. As "Zarathustra does not value the *object,* winter; he values *what it means to be in winter*" (Gelven 66), so these authors paid closer attention to the underlying motives of polar exploration than the *exoteric* Poles.

### *3. The Literary Origins of Expressionist Ice Metaphors*

In literary history, the use of Antarctic and wasteland allegories reaches at least as far back as Dante's *Inferno,* in which Ulysses passes under Mount Purgatory's shadow in the South

Pole. Samuel Coleridge indirectly criticized destruction of nature and anti-religious sentiments in the celebrated 1797 “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.” The poem describes a ship that blows off course near the South Pole, where “The ice was here, the ice was there / The ice was all around: / It crack’d and growl’d, and roar’d and howl’d” (Coleridge 160). In the 1800s, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* painted a polar landscape “in which human pride could show its folly” and “where science could find redemption” (Pringle 44). Edgar Allen Poe promoted his own social agenda concerning African slavery in *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (1838). Poe's unique polar utopia with hot, milky waters and ashy snow deeply impressed Expressionist authors such as Georg Heym (Braungart 272).

Clearly, then, these German modernist authors did not *invent* societal critique through polar landscapes, but rather *returned* to it in an age when sensationalist polar “pulp” literature filled readers' minds with visions of exciting yet dangerous escapades. Georg Heym, Robert Musil, Egmont Colerus and Franz Kafka's icy wastelands expressed their own frustrations in modernity's tumultuous upheaval. In this sense, Antarctica became not a land of mystery and excitement, but a representation of the coldness of the *modern self* that these men observed in the surrounding world (Nishioka 274).

Expressionist Antarctic metaphors were anticipated by a backlash of criticism from Karl Kraus and Georg Heym in 1909-10 after the discovery of the North Pole. Just as the Arctic victory “paved the way” for the subsequent discovery of the South Pole, these two authors' texts set the tone for the Antarctic literary allegories that were to come. Heym, for one, recorded the following in his diary in 1909: “im Jahre 1907 bezwang der Mensch die Erde unter seinen Fuß, indem er ihn dem Nordpol aufsetzte” (“in 1907 man conquered Earth under his feet when he drew the North Pole on the map”; III 93). When taken out of context, this quote seems to defy Expressionist values of individualism and rebellion against change.

Nevertheless upon reading the entire diary entry, we see that Heym compares his own century with the Renaissance by comparing the two eras' “great achievements,” a phrase that he uses pejoratively. The context, as well as the use of “bezwingen,” (“to defeat”), reveals Heym's thinly veiled skepticism about the Arctic victory's intrinsic worth. After all, no material resources were gained by the conquest and the world was not changed in any tangible way. Thousands of government dollars and years of toil merely brought mankind another label to put on a map.

Karl Kraus, the famous Austrian satirist and playwright, disapproved of polar “conquest” even more strongly. He watched with disgust as explorers, and specifically Peary, hacked the earth to pieces for profit and personal glory. His reaction to the North Pole's great “discovery” was the 1910 polemical essay “Die Entdeckung des Nordpols” (“The Discovery of the North Pole”). Following Peary's conquest, Kraus explained, mankind's inner coldness could no longer be contained. Instead, it expanded until it choked the earth's surface. Kraus wrote scathingly:

> Denn die Dummheit war es, die den Nordpol erreicht hatte, und sieghaft flatterte ihr Banner als Zeichen, dass ihr die Welt gehört. Die Eisfelder des Geistes aber begannen zu wachsen und rückten immer weiter und dehnten sich, bis sie die ganze Erde bedeckten (And the blunder was, whoever reached the North Pole, and heroically planted their banner as a sign, thought that the world belonged to them. The ice fields of the soul began to grow and shifted forward and stretched, until they covered the entire earth). (274)

Far from being a triumph, the North Pole's discovery was “one of those realities which could not be avoided” (Kraus 49-50).

Kraus' essay is mainly notable because of its influence on the *Neue Club* members, especially Heym. The young men read “Die Entdeckung des Nordpols” aloud at a 1910 *Neopathetisches Cabaret* meeting and it was warmly received (Sheppard II 458). Heym further mentioned Kraus' presence at one of his poetry readings (III 229). The friendly connection between the two must have contributed, at least in part, to Heym's personal reflections on imperialism and polar exploration's parallels with his struggle to find meaning.

After a shift of interest from the North Pole to the South Pole from 1910 to 1911, certain Expressionist authors crafted Antarctic dystopias that thrived in reaction to changes in the surrounding world. With rapid advances in society and exploration, these men often bemoaned the loss of something to wonder *about.* In the words of journalist, poet, and editor Kurt Pinthus: “. . . Was haben wir noch zu erwarten, zu erleben? Vermögen wir uns noch zu wundern?” (“What is there still to expect and to experience? Can we still marvel at anything?”; Vietta and Kemper 12).[3] Max Weber, the German sociologist, speculated about the supposed “Entzauberung der Welt,” or “Disenchantment of the world” in 1913. Weber's “Entzauberung” refers not polar conquest specifically, but rather to “the claustrophobic existence of modern man in an iron cage” experienced by Expressionists (Lehmann 11). Nevertheless, the concept of an inevitable “loss of magic” in an era of machines and industrialization led Expressionists to prophesy about an oncoming global apocalypse that would leave the world lifeless and empty, much like the critique of the modern soul.[4]

In a literary and social movement that often challenged industrialization and positivist narratives of progress, it is no wonder, then, that a continent that was completely “anti-civilization” fascinated Expressionist authors. There seemed to be no chance that expansion's

3 Austrian author Stephan Zweig similarly lamented in 1927: “The twentieth century looks down on a world without secrets. All the countries have been explored” (Zweig 217).

4 For further reference, see: Giese pp. 95-101; Mautz pp. 254-62.

"poison" would corrupt Antarctica, the very concept of which denied all living breath. The South Pole remained a metaphorical purgatory where the harsh climate reduced life to its most basic form: a struggle to survive in a fierce battle against the elements.

Aside from this broader interest in Antarctica, German modernist writers relied on the symbolism of winter, snow and ice to articulate the creeping "cold death" of society. This void, they argued, filled the modern soul with "inner ice." Those trapped in the ice "frösteln, frieren, erfrieren, vereisen und erstarren" ("shiver, freeze, freeze to death, turn to iron and stiffen"; Rothe 74). Georg Trakl relates a bleak vision in "Winternacht" ("Winter's Night"): ". . . O die Finsternis! Schwarzer Frost. Die Erde ist hart, nach Bitterem schmeckt die Luft" (" . . . Oh darkness! Black frost. The earth is hard, and the air tastes bitter"; Trakl 128). By comparison, Zech wrote in "Winterlandschaft" ("Winter Landscape"): "Schee überflutet breiten sich die Felder; / In tiefster Einsamkeit mein Bergwald ruht" ("The snow-covered fields stretch away / My mountain world rests in deepest solitude"; Zech 8). These texts clearly do not romanticize a winter wonderland, but instead depict a world of icy bleakness where souls wander forever without finding rest.

## Chapter II

## Emptying of Self in the South Pole: Amputation of the Soul

*Verflucht ihr dunklen Gifte / Weisser Schlaf!*

*("Curse your dark poisons / White sleep!")*

*–Georg Trakl,1912, Der Schlaf*

### *1. Religious Metaphors and Inner Coldness*

"Man can only do his best, and we have arrayed against the strongest forces of nature," Antarctic explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton recorded in a January 1911 diary entry (Barczewski 58). Shackleton's 1909 *Nimrod* expedition, described in detail in the book *The heart of the Antarctic: being the story of the British Antarctic expedition 1907-1909,* was all the more exciting because it nearly ended in disaster. Shackleton landed in Antarctica in 1908 with companions Frank Wild, Jameson Boyd Adams and Eric Marshall. They met with unfavorable conditions from the start. Their ponies, the only means of hauling supplies, died or were shot for food on the long journey southward. Each man eventually hauled over 200 pounds apiece across the endless ice. They were starving with body temperatures below ninety-four degrees when they turned back at 88°23'S, only 150 miles from the South Pole. The decision to abort the mission after so much hardship was tortuous, but it undoubtedly saved four lives. As Adams later confessed: "If we'd gone on one more hour, we shouldn't have got back" (qtd. in Brunotte 58).

Shackleton's *Nimrod* expedition inspired Expressionist Georg Heym to write a philosophically dense and inscrutable prose fragment with the deceptively straightforward title "Das Tagebuch Shakletons" in 1911. While American and British authors in the 1900s mainly focused on scientific or adventurous Antarctic journeys, Heym's "Tagebuch" portrays an intensely morbid descent into madness and inner void. Any Antarctic hero, imaginary or

literal, must face challenges “im Sinne Nietzsches” (“in the Nietzschean sense”; Täubrich et al. 49), but Heym doesn't allow his characters simply to perish from frostbite or to starve. Their identities are literally ripped from them in the iron-clad ice, just as societal changes “sucked away” identity and familiarity during the age of industrialization. Shakleton and his small band of explorers face a primordial operation that will remove their very identities and transform them into mindless “Golems,” or figures of Jewish mysticism not unlike the “‘metallized bodies,’ innocent of organic frailty” that Helmut Lethen attributes to characters of the avante-garde from 1910-30 (33).

A troubled poet who ironically drowned in icy water at age 24, Heym possessed a vehement and rebellious mentality. Throughout his brief lifetime he experienced periods of extreme productivity, polarized by depression and desperation to find meaning. Heym admired Heinrich Heine and Heinrich von Kleist and despised his deeply religious father, who he called a “swine” in a November 1911 diary entry (III 171). “He was against everybody, and violently so” (Viereck 235).

As expressed in his diaries and other writings, Heym experienced feelings of both jealousy and admiration for “heroes” and explorers such as Shackleton. The poet expressed a classic colonial fantasy in 1910 when he wrote of dreams to travel to India or Africa, “wo Geld liegt und noch unbekannte Länder sind” (“where money and yet unknown lands can be found”; Brunotte 277). He further wrote in the essay “Eine Fratze” (“A Grimace”): “Unsere Krankheit ist, an einen Ort gefesselt zu sein” (“Our sickness is that we are bound to one place”; Heym II 173). Heym himself never traveled outside of Germany and undoubtedly would have loved to undertake an expedition such as Shackleton's, which would have allowed him to experience the valor and great risks that he so craved.

Clearly a difference existed in Heym's mind, however, between adventure and imperialism. He condemned heroism in “Eine Fratze,” in which he intriguingly compares greatness with the concept of a “theater puppet” that must be controlled and manipulated by outside hands (II 173). “Das Tagebuch Shakletons” reiterates Heym's condemnation of polar “heroes” as mere pawns in the greater scheme of imperialistic glory. Shakleton and his men receive the pejorative nicknames of “Drahtpuppen” (“puppets”), “Automaten” (“automatons”) and “Marionetten” (“marionettes”; II 141).

Heym followed the *Nimrod* expedition with great interest and apparently with some disgust, if the “parody” that he wrote in is any indication. His short prose work criticized imperialism, heroics and Wilhelmine Germany through an allegory with roots in Jewish mysticism: the Golem. The word Golem may be over three thousand years old. In medieval times, it came to mean “artificial man” or “creature of clay.” According to legend, a Jewish rabbi molds a Golem from dirt and breathes life into the form with a “magical” Hebrew word. This word varies according to the account, but most always involve God's name in some way. The traditional Golem returns to dirt with the magic's removal (Bronner and Kellner 385).

The Golem went hand in hand with Expressionism's dedication to all things fantastic and supernatural. A veritable slew of Golem-related literature appeared between 1900 and 1920, including poetry and novels from authors Max Brod, Lothar Rudolf and Konrad Müller (Bloch 228-9). Gustav Meyrink's occult novel *Der Golem* (1914) holds a place even today as the time period's most widely favored Golem representation. The so-called “Golem craze” also spread to the cinematic world. Paul Wegener directed two Golem films in 1914 and 1917 before releasing the most widely-known movie, *Der Golem und wie er in die Welt kam,* in 1920. The third Golem installment's “Expressionist treatment” of a classic story appealed

to "a public enthralled with the supernatural, the intensely dramatic, and the ecstatic" (Bronner and Kellner 385).

Berlin Dada artists of the time period such as Raoul Hausmann used the concept of body as machine, or automaton, to express "the individual as a human motor." Results of studies on "the influence of weight, rhythm, heat, cold, anemia, blood chemistry, and other factors" proved, at least to the scientific minds of 1910, that the human body could be controlled. As a result, productivity in factories would increase in certain circumstances. The "internal senses such as thermoception (our sense of temperature), nociception (our sense of pain), equilibrioception (or sense of balance and acceleration), and proprioception (our bodily awareness or perception of the positions of our body parts to one another") intrigued scientists in the early 1900s (Biro 124-5).

Heym combined Jewish mysticism and normative automaton conceptualizations to create his own idea of "golemization," a surgery performed on a fictitious Antarctic explorer named "Shakleton." Instead of being made of clay, Heym's Golem is created from a human "vessel"- namely, Shakleton himself. The human's brain and soul are brutally amputated and then placed inside a different "host" body. While mythical Golems often assisted their "masters" or society in some way, Heym never elaborated on the exact purpose behind his automata. One possible interpretation places the importance not on the surgery itself but the mental and spiritual *conditions* inside men who desire to explore the South Pole.

"Das Tagebuch Shakletons" blends bizarre esoterics and pagan ritualism in an attack on Wilhelmine religious practices. Heym himself wrestled with issues of religion, the presence of a sovereign God and the soul throughout his life. According to "Eine Fratze": "Unsere Krankheit ist der Ungehorsam gegen den Gott, den wir uns selber gesetzt haben" ("Our sickness is the disobedience against the God, who we have personally created"; II 173). His

distrust of religion stemmed from his upbringing by a highly conservative, “swine” of a father (Heym III 171). Hermann Heym was “totally conventional, a man who would have been unthinkable without his innate conservatism”, and a veritable “pillar of Wilhelmine society” (Bridgewater 3). His deeply-ingrained religious beliefs clashed violently with his son's rebellious and revolutionary ideals. The two quarreled frequently about the younger Heym's lifestyle, his poetry and his choice of female companionship (4, 24).

Largely due to these disputes with his father, the rebellious poet rejected the Bible and proposed his own alternative to accepted religious practices in a December 1909 essay titled “Versuch einer Neuen Religion” (“Search for a New Religion”). A basically Nietzschean concept, Heym's religion involved a group of great heroes of noble birth. These “Übermenschen,” or primordial priests, built a temple to worship nature and carry out animal sacrifices. Heym's pagan theology is just one example of his singular religious outlook, a concept further developed in “Das Tagebuch.”

The prose fragment's primary, if rather vague, religious foreshadowing occurs after the fictitious Shakleton, along with three other explorers, pass through a “Tor der Geheimnisse,” or “Gate of Secrets” in a mysterious South Pole kingdom. It is an inscrutable gate in a wall of “Nebel und Dunst” (“fog and vapor”) that the men enter at the expense of their souls (II 137).

Just inside the gate, Shakleton and his men view a group of signs carved into a tree that look like ancient Hebrew. It appears to be “ein unglaubliches Symbol des Lebens, gleichsam wie der Ruf, der die Toten zur Auferstehung herausposaunt” (“an unbelievable symbol of life, similar to the trumpet call that will resurrect the dead”; II 137). Could these words symbolize the kabalistic “incantation,” in the ancient Semitic tradition, which will shortly be used to fill soul-less beings with life? Whatever their purpose, Shakleton and his men remain firmly

entrenched in their own beliefs (or what Heym labeled the "Golem-Dasein"; II 176) and cannot interpret the letters. In like manner, they can't hope to understand the experience that awaits them: an unearthly rite of passage into Heym's "perfect religion."

The "polar people" provide the vehicle for the story's most overt religious theme. A pagan aura pervades as the British explorers encounter a crowd of them "alle in weißen Togen, alle weiß von Gesicht und ihre hohen eckigen Schläfen überdacht von gewaltigen weißen Locken" ("all in white togas, all with white faces and their high angular temples covered with huge white curls"; II 141). Their hair blows like a "fiery crown" in the wind.

Georg Braungart refers to this primordial Antarctic race as Isaac La Peyrère's pre-Adamites.[5] A closer reading of the text in conjunction with Heym's diaries, however, reveals another possibility. The polar race almost exactly parallels a passage in Heym's 1909 essay "Versuch einer neuen Religion." Heym included drawings of a woodland temple and gave specific instructions on how to carry out services, as well as the induction of strangers into this new religion. Heym wrote: "Betritt ein Mensch . . . so entledige er sich seiner Kleider . . . . Man gibt ihm eine weiße Toga und einen Epheukranz in das Haar" ("If a stranger intrudes . . . he loses his clothing . . . . He will be given a white toga and an ivy crown in his hair"; Heym II 166-72). Following this line of thought, Heym's pale polar people are those who "intruded" unwittingly on the South Pole dystopia and reached enlightenment through a similar induction ceremony.

Unlike the strangers in "Versuch einer neuen Religion," Shakleton and his men will have no opportunity to "assimilate" into their new surroundings. The explorers refuse to accept their swiftly changing surroundings and therefore the "old ideas"--metaphorically speaking, those of Wilhelmine Germany--must be completely uprooted. Their "enlightenment" will

5 For further information, see Livingstone pp. 93-4. According to Livingstone, La Peyrère theorized this polar race in the 1600s. The Catholic Church eventually condemned Peyrère's teachings as heresy.

cost the men their lives. While locked in a polar prison, for instance, Shakleton despairs: "Sollte aber Wahrheit sein, was wir erlebt haben, so flehe ich zu Gott, er möge uns wieder herausführen" ("If what we have experienced is true, then I appeal to God, he wants to bring us out of this"; Heym II 142). Shakleton even calls on God for salvation while incarcerated, when Heym makes it perfectly clear that only conforming to a revolutionary "new religion" holds the key to deliverance.

The main religious thread of "Das Tagebuch Shakletons" is undoubtedly the Golem. However, Heym goes on to criticize another aspect of world religion in the fragment's lengthy and dense foreword, written by a supposed Antarctic explorer who knows the "true story" of what happened to the real-life Shackleton party. Beyond Jewish mysticism, the new religious concepts that came to Germany from India and the Orient must be taken into consideration. Only then can the modern reader grasp the full implications of Heym's strange story and the theoretical context in which it was written.

*2. Georg Heym's "Das Tagebuch Shackletons" (1911)*

As Beate Rosenfeld points out:

> Der Einbruch indischen, überhaupt asiatischen Geisteslebens in die europäische Literatur ist wiederum bezeichnend für die Expressionismus (The outbreak of the Indian and Asian intellectual life in European literature is in turn characteristic of Expressionism). (163)

Heym analyzes and condemns Indian philosophical ideas through the voice of H.H.H. Hannawacker, a fictitious Antarctic explorer, who supposedly wrote the foreword to "Das Tagebuch Shakletons." Brash and arrogant, with initials that read aloud in German as "Ha-Ha-Ha," Hannawacker inundates the reader with wild conjectures about science, psychology

and the human soul. At one point, he even reduces the soul to an inexplicable mathematical equation supposedly formulated by "Jogi Tankah Pankah." Heym's inclusion of an "equation for the soul" might stem from a *Neue Club* practice that identified each of its members by a mathematical sign (Sheppard I 28). Hannawacker backs his dubious theories with references to a "famous Indian scholar" and books of his own authorship. Heym openly challenges his readers to think about and challenge "progressive" ideas such as these before adopting them.

Heym didn't live to see Amundsen's 1912 South Pole discovery, but Hannawacker supposedly claimed the honor in 1925. He tells of a skeleton found "am Fuße des großen Gletschers" ("at the foot of a huge glacier") during his polar exploration. The remains belonged to none other than the fictitious Shakleton himself. In the skeleton's bony fingers, Hannawacker found a few loose papers. These pages told a sordid tale of Shakleton's final days at the South Pole (II 130).

"Das Tagebuch Shakletons" begins where the historical expedition ended. Heym describes an unusual polar journey through an icy wilderness that slowly turns warmer and more hospitable. The "descent into white" and heat recalls Edgar Allen Poe's *Arthur Pym.* Parallels like these lead to the belief that Heym relied on Poe's text when creating his own "polar kingdom" (Braungart 272). In contrast to the real-life Shackleton's courageous leadership, Heym's defeated and ineffectual "Shakleton" offers no hope to his men. He and his three companions, Wild, Marshall and Adams, suffer from near starvation and paralyzing despair. "Alles was vor uns über den Pol geschrieben ist von den weiten eisigen Wüsten [ist] Weisheit von Idioten" ("Everything that was written before about the white icy fields is wisdom from idiots"; Heym II 131).

The explorers pursue an abstract goal: a point on the ice, completely insignificant in itself. As they draw near it, their humanity slowly ebbs away in the Antarctic silence. This slow

leech of humanity resembles Arthur Pym's "*numbness* of body and mind—a dreaminess of sensation" as the *Jane Guy* nears the South Pole (Poe 193). Far from feeling triumphant, Shakleton predicts that his group will either freeze or "eines Tages am Pol stehen, dürr wie Stöcke, halb verhungert, lebendige Abstraktionen" ("stand on the Pole one day, thin as boards, half starved, living abstractions"; 134). Even the thought of planting Britain's flag on that desired point brings no comfort.

Shakleton and his men are victims of the "icing over of the earth" that left a "dead world" and "Einsamkeit / Von Pol zu Pol" ("loneliness / From Pole to Pole"; Rothe 375). Like the European public, the explorers don't actually participate in their journey, but merely view their lives' events as passive observers. They can't resist the urge that will ultimately destroy them: "Nach Süden!" ("Southward!"; II 132). Georg Braungart sees in Heym's explorers men whose souls are already lost, even as they face golemization's "emptying" (278). The men serve imperialistic goals as empty vessels, mere specks on a sea of white. It is "kein Wunder also, daß sie als "Golems", d.h. seelenlose Wesen enden" ("no wonder that [the explorers] end up as Golems, i.e. soul-less beings"; Rothe 282).

At one critical point in the narrative, the men nearly reach enlightenment. A heavy mist surrounds them. The snow melts as the temperature increases, similar to Pym's experience as he nears the Pole (Poe 192-3). Like Poe, Heym contrasts stark polar white with tropical warmth, a dichotomy that evokes the flare of Expressionism in modernity's frigid expanse. The explorers note the changes but don't question them. They tread warily on moss. Green life's appearance kindles an answering flicker of life inside the explorers. Yet it won't be enough to save them. Their acceptance of Antarctic reality dooms them to complete obscurity.

A break occurs between “actual” Antarctic travel and entrance into an unearthly dystopia, signaled by a towering “psychic wall.” This concept of a wall enclosing an Antarctic “lost kingdom” appeared often in literature of the time. For this idea, Heym may have drawn on current British literature, such as Albert Paine's *The Great White Way* (1901) or John Mastin's *The Immortal Light* (1907). The barriers in these novels represent just another obstacle for heroes on their journey to fame and glory. For Shakleton, though, the wall draws a towering line between self-understanding and loss of self. With the passage through the “Secret Gate,” the explorers must willingly accept their fate.

Past the gate lies something that recalls a powerful and newly-built European metropolis: the “Paradiese des Südpoles, und das alles in einem seltsamen Weiß” (“the paradise of the South Pole, and all in a curious white”; II 137-39). Powerful cities and sweeping fields surround Shakleton's group in contrast to the South Pole's stark landscape. A feeling of unease pervades in spite of brilliant surroundings. The metaphoric “descent into white” recalls Edward Davidson's vivid description of Arthur Pym's “voyage in an oversize canoe into a blinding white light”. According to Davidson:

> Poe can use only one word, an idea of whiteness, the negation of fact and shape. . . . There was no word or term which could further report the vision of nothing on the other side. Nothing at all; there was no other word for it but “white”. (Qtd. in Kaplan xvi)

Heym purposely infused his “anti-paradise” with foreboding via white to dispel any ideas that he wanted to create yet another South Pole utopia. Braungart claims that Heym openly criticized utopian ideals and the Enlightenment's idea of the autonomous individual (Braungart 266, 281).

An inexplicable chain of events leads Shakleton's group down the pale road to destruction. The diary form conveniently frees Heym from clear explanations, which even further

disorients the reader. Shakleton sees a “polar person” similar to Arthur Pym's final earthly memory. The haunting figure blends into his surroundings with a “schlohweiße Gesichtsfarbe” (“snow-white face”) and “weiße Behaarung” (“white covering of hair”). Shakleton and his men enter a strange civilization's outskirts to see “polar people.” The group kneels before an old man “in weißen Kissen” (“on white cushions”) who must hold great authority. Perhaps a reference to a Nietzschean prophet, the aged figure commands respect. Shakleton notes: “. . . auch wir werden <fast> bis auf die Erde herabgebeugt” (“we were <almost> bowed down almost to the earth”; Heym II 141). The men don't bow of their own volition. A polar force beyond their control presses them toward the ground.

Shortly thereafter, the death march to the Pole ends and the preparation for “golemization” begins. A black door in a long wall draws the explorers into “die Stille des ewigen Eises” (“the stillness of eternal ice”; II 141). The “polar people” chain Shakleton's feet and feed the men something that tastes like lentils, a bland final meal for prisoners on death row. No explanation follows as to why the men lie in chains. Heym's narrator and the jailers alike hold an unbroken silence.

Plunged into a dream-like state, Shakleton sees his surgeons and pallbearers, “eine Truppe der Polarmenschen in langen weißen Talaren” (“a troop of polar people in long white robes”; II 143). The priests' entrance brings a foreboding analogous to Heym's “Das Fieberspital” (“Fever Hospital”): “Zu einem Bette kommt das Sakrament. / Der Priester salbt dem Kranken Stirn und Mund” (“To the bed comes the sacrament. / The priest salves the patient's forehead and mouth”; I 168). The polar priests lift Shakleton onto a kind of rolling table with clinical precision. Curiously, red bands encircle their foreheads, the pale kingdom's only splash of color. Red symbolized warning and danger in Heym's writing (Mautz 370), but Shakleton

lacks the power to aid himself or his companions. He, like Europe, languishes under a thick and suffocating layer of ice.

The actual "golemization" plays out as a dream-like memory. Shakleton's body, now prepped for surgery, recalls the autopsy scene in Heym's "Die Sektion" ("The Autopsy"): "Der Tote lag . . . auf einem weißen Tisch . . . in dem bedrückten weiß . . . des Operationssaales" ("The corpse lay . . . on a white table . . . in the oppressive white of the operating theater"; II 35). The "plunge into blinding white" will be Shakleton's final earthly experience. He calls himself a "leeres Faß" ("empty barrel"). A "magnetic half sleep" comes over him as a "balloon begins to inflate" in his skull. During his last conscious moments the explorer relates: "Danach versank ich schnell in die Starre des Todes und des Vergessens" ("Then I sank quickly into the rigidity of death and oblivion"; II 137-43). The explorers resemble the "Somnambulen Schar . . . mit langem Haar / in weiße Tücher feierlich gehüllt . . . wie Rauch so weiß" ("[A] somnabulist group . . . with long hair / wrapped festively in white clothes . . . as white as smoke") in the 1911 "Die Somnambulen" ("The Somnambuli; Heym I 257).

Paralyzed by their own ignorance, the four men reach the detestable, even petty, state of men like Heym's father (Bridgewater 3-4). Blind to prophesy and unwilling to accept revolution, they must perish in the oncoming tide of change. The primordial polar kingdom mocks the Heroic Age's aspirations and dreams. These men set out to conquer the last mysteries of the globe without regard for the consequences and must pay the price. A frigid world that hungers for excitement will soon be rewarded with heroes worthy of it: empty copies of the men who originally sallied forth. Shakleton and his men have failed in their most significant goal: "to discover at the *axis mundi* the eternal center of oneself and the universe" (Wilson 142). The core of their humanity, now forever lost, drifts above the ice.

Instead of a single, static Pole, the explorers' "menschliche Wesen" ("human nature") appears on the Antarctic horizon as a group of slowly expanding, moving points (II 143).

With the kabalistic surgery complete, the overlying theme of "emptying" draws the reader's mind full circle to Heym's critique of Wilhelmine Germany. The Golem, despite different interpretations by authors throughout the centuries, remained largely a static image. A creature of clay, hollow in itself, always received a soul for a specific purpose. The Golem image in literary and film history was that of a "willenlosen, lediglich vom Willen und Ethos seines Herrn erfüllten Werkzeugs" ("weak-willed tool, made only for the will and ethos of his master"; Rosenberg 171). The creature cannot stand without the aid of religious influence and must rely on its maker for its very existence.

Similar emptiness cursed European society with disillusionment and suffocating societal hierarchy. Shakleton and his band attempted to break with tradition by exploring new territories, but were unable to escape the deep-rooted "Golem-Dasein" already instilled in them by bourgeois conventions. The golemization surgery becomes only a physical manifestation of an inward symptom suffered by all mankind. According to Heym, what can be the punishment for such ignorance except the literal "amputation" of the soul?

## Chapter III
## Endless Wandering in the South Pole: Deserts of Ice & Sand

*Die Welt – Ein Tor /*
*zu Tausend Wüsten stumm und kalt!*

*("The world – A door /*
*To a thousand deserts silent and cold!")*

*Friedrich Nietzsche, 1884, Vereinsamt*

### *1. Desert Metaphors in Modernism*

How does Antarctica qualify as a "white desert," as in South Pole representations like Georg Heym's 1911 short story "Die Südpolfahrer" ("Travelers to the South Pole")? First, it is earth's driest continent. A scant 5 inches of precipitation falls on Antarctica's snow plateau per year (Rubin 55). With the continent's severe elevations and lack of moisture, the average person needs about two quarts of water per hour to remain hydrated. Like the Sahara and other wastelands, the South Pole also defies habitation of any kind. Only lichens, mites and lice can survive the continent's cruel extremes. Topographically, Antarctica further resembles a desert with its crevasses and wind-swept plains. The continent's surface roughens from ice crystals, similar to sand, as the temperatures grow colder. This phenomenon frustrated Robert Falcon Scott during his 1912 return march from the Pole. Shortly before his death, Scott described the traversal of the Antarctic snow plains as "pulling over desert sand" with "not the least glide in the world" (Barczewski 79-80).

The desert of sand or ice symbolized different things in early 20th century literature. When faced "by the immensity and power of desert and ice, one cannot simply stand to the side" (Kemal and Gaskell 155). For popular adventure authors like Zane Grey, heroes found their

ultimate challenge and even solace in the sandy wilderness. The protagonist of Grey's *In Desert and Wilderness* (1923) reflects, “I love the silence, the loneliness, the serenity—even the tragedy of this valley of shadows” (Grey 212). This hero realizes personal fulfillment through the experience of merely *being* in the desert. In novels authored by Grey, Ada Woodruff Anderson and the Polish Henryk Sienkiewicz, who in 1912 *In Desert and Wilderness*, a desert symbolized the rugged cowboy spirit of American-West style narratives.

A very different corpus of literature from the turn of the century casts a more shadowy, suspicious light on the desert metaphor. T.S. Eliot, an American-turned-British-citizen, gave “an explanation of Modernity through mythology” with his renowned 1922 poem “The Waste Land.” Eliot sought to span the “cleft between science, art and mythology” created by modernity. In “The Waste Land,” Eliot painted his own “*wüsten Land*, d[as] Land der Trockenheit, Dürre, Unfruchtbarkeit” (“*desert* land, a dry, arid and unfruitful land”; Klein 30-4; Italics in original). “The Waste Land” confounds with highly dense and enigmatic imagery. The poem critiques, narrates, speculates and disturbs. Each of its five parts focuses on a range of aspects from societal decay and biblical discourse to Milton and Buddhism. Part Five, “What the Thunder Said,” describes a desert road of terrible dryness. This path certainly makes for difficult travel:

> Here is no water but only rock
> Rock and no water and the sandy road
> The road winding above among the mountains
> Which are mountains of rock without water (331-34).

Jürgen Klein postulates that Eliot wished to show “daß die moderne Welt *ein 'Waste Land' ist*” through this section (“that the modern world *is a waste land*”; Klein 41; Italics added for emphasis). The road among the mountains could just as easily wind through Berlin or New York City. It is not so much the conditions outside as those *inside* civilization that result in

such unfruitfulness. And yet, this "eternal, irremediable sterility" possesses its own brand of "charm" (Douglas, qtd. in Kemal and Gaskell 145).

Further in Part Five, Eliot depicts another intriguing path:

> But when I look ahead, up the white road
> There is always another one walking beside you,
> Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded
> I do not know whether a man or a woman (361-4).

Brooker and Bentley call the above passage a pseudo-biblical experience in which the robed figure, Jesus, accompanies two disciples on the Road to Emmaus (Brooker and Bentley 178-79). Then again, Jürgen Klein takes the emphasis from the spiritual and leads it to a secular vision of polar conquest. He labels the experience a "Halluzination eines Dritten am Nord- oder Südpol" ("Hallucination of a third [man] on the North or South Pole"; Klein 41). Eliot's personal annotations to the poem confirm this:

> [These] lines were stimulated by the account of one of the Antarctic expeditions (I forget which, but I think one of Shackleton's): it was related that the party of explorers, at the extremity of their strength, had the constant delusion that there was *one more member* than could actually be counted. (74)

The "white road" glints under the harsh Antarctic sun; it is the path to the Pole itself. Desert and polar wanderers alike are certainly no strangers to hallucinations. Desert explorers famously experience mirages, especially when under mental duress as a result of dehydration. Polar explorers, on the other hand, face damaging psychical effects from acute hypothermia, long periods of intense isolation and sun deprivation.

Expressionist authors banished anti-heroes not to physical deserts, but inner wastelands of the *mind*. Georg Heym's "Eiswüste" ("snow desert"), for instance, reflects desolation and brokenness, far from a location where one finds triumph of the human spirit. To create desert spaces that concurred with Expressionism's brooding mindset, Heym and others turned to

their ever-present source of inspiration: Friedrich Nietzsche. Deserts factored into Nietzsche's allegorical repertoire even though he never saw one personally (Lindemann 159). In the Nietzschean desert, “starken, unabhängig gearteten Geister” (“strong, independent spirits”) withdraw from society and become desolate (Linemann 159). His desert typified both inner loneliness and outer independence. Nietzsche's best-developed wasteland metaphor can be found in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Zarathustra retreats into the mountains at age thirty to undergo three metamorphoses: first into a camel, then a lion and lastly a child. He wanders through a “Waldwüste,” or forest desert, in search of spiritual enlightenment (Lindemann 164-67).

Expressionist authors adopted certain aspects of the Nietzschean desert, including motifs of loneliness and personal transformation. Some favored the “Großstadtwüste,” or “big city desert.” It reiterated the so-called “loss of self” in modernity's newly formed metropolis (Lindemann 134-39). Georg Heym's 1910 poem “Die Stadt der Qual” (“The City of Agony”) opens with the haunting lines: “Ich bin in Wüsten eine große Stadt / Hinter der Nacht und toten Meeren weit” (“I am in the deserts of a large city / Behind the night and the wide, dead seas”; I 349). Alfred Lichtenstein, one of early Expressionism's best known poets, touched on deserts in the 1913 short story “Punkt.” Lichtenstein vividly describes “desert streets” that burn their way through an extinct head (Green 80).

Yet another of the time period's key authors, Franz Kafka, spun literary worlds of ice and snow to evince inner despair. Kafka's actual place in Expressionism is debated, but his legacy of disturbing and challenging prose easily finds a place alongside the legacy of these brooding poets. His most prolific writing period lasted from 1912 to 1924 and he was close to certain Expressionist writers (Bronner and Kellner 201). Neil Donahue claims that Kafka played “a special role in the development of the narrative technique in Expressionism”

(Donahue 81). However, Paul Raabe argues that his works lack the “dynamic, activist Expressionist tendencies with typical contemporary features in lyric, drama and prose” (qtd. in Bronner and Kellner 201).

Whatever Kafka's place in academic classifications of Expressionism, it remains a fact that he embraced the metaphor of the modern soul as ice. He wrote of the “gefrorene Meer in uns” (“frozen sea inside of us”) to his friend Oskar Pollock in 1904 (Brunotte 283). Kafka's 1918 short story “Ein Landarzt” renders a particularly unforgiving wasteland. Iron-clad winter imprisons a country doctor in the Nietzschean sense. Unable to identify with the villagers he serves and crushed by traditional religious restraints, the unfortunate doctor must wander forever “durch die Eiswüste” (“through the ice desert”) between the village and his own reality. Kafka finally abandons his character to “dem Froste dieses unglückseligsten Zeitalters” (“the frost of this non-blissful time”; 261). The misunderstood and abused doctor leaves the physical earth to join with the symbolic world of “Schnee, Eis, Winter, Kälte” (“Snow, ice, winter, cold”; Hiebel 41).

The journey *across* the desert itself becomes a metaphysical transformation in Kafka and Heym's literature. Wasteland wanderers face a mental void that stands between them and the realization of self-knowledge. Heym's 1911 short story “Die Bleistadt” (“City of Lead”), for example, portrays a group of desert travelers that loses its way in a great desert. The unfortunate party members, blinded by ignorance, slowly succumb to loss of speech and memory before going insane. They are Heym's “Golem” Europeans, stumbling to find their way in the face of destruction. A void as wide as the desert itself has opened in the European soul due to lack of discernment, a stifling sense of contentment and docile acceptance of society's shortcomings. The vacuum caused by such repugnant contentment released European society from the need to think and to challenge the future. All in all, the so-called

"Golems" were not unlike desert or polar wanderers, as seen in a quote by Arctic explorer John Ross:

> amid all its brilliancy, this land, the land of ice and snow, has ever been, and will ever be a dull, dreary, heart-sinking monotonous waste, under the influence of which the mind is paralyzed, ceasing to care or to think, as it ceases to feel what might . . . stimulate us by its novelty; for it is but the view of uniformity and the silence of death. (Qtd. in Fernández-Armesto 312)

For many historical explorers, as well as literary heroes, the laborious journey over ice or snow would be their last. Heym's wretched band of explorers under Shakleton met with doom in a South Pole desert, but the rough terrain interested Heym much less than the group's inner void. Another literary fragment by the same author, "Die Südpolfahrer," isolates a different expedition and exposes three men to the resounding silence of Antarctic ice floes. Heym, fascinated by the descent into death and oblivion, fashioned something akin to an icy apocalypse for his unlucky explorers. The sought-after "point," or Pole, does not move in this case but remains static. Instead, the explorers themselves "dance" across the endless ice, searching for an intangible validation of their hopes.

*2. Georg Heym's "Die Südpolfahrer" (1911)*

"There is nothing to see here [in Antarctica], nothing that differs from the ghastly monotony of recent days" (Scott, qtd. in Zweig 227). These chilling words of British explorer Robert Falcon Scott evoke emotions of loss, of sad acceptance and a man resigned to nature's power. Similar lonely thoughts echo across ice fields in Georg Heym's "Die Südpolfahrer," a "sister work" of "Das Tagebuch Shakletons." Heym wrote "Die

Südpolfahrer" first and then borrowed pieces of this text for the longer "Tagebuch." A careful reading of the two fragments reveals key differences however. For instance, "Die Südpolfahrer" has nothing to do with scientific or religious critiques or the soul's condition. Shakleton's fate was bound together with his spiritual death, while the anti-heroes in "Die Südpolfahrer" face the deterioration of the human psyche after long periods of isolation in a desert wasteland.

Heym powerfully recreates, or imitates, the feelings of historical polar explorers in "Die Südpolfahrer." The surrounding "Eiswüste" glints under the sun, interminable, silent and always very present. Brutal surroundings pale in comparison with the pitiful group's inner turmoil. The men have come to Antarctica to search of a "last white speck," but this place cannot be found on any map. In this sense, they resemble modern-day polar explorer Reinhold Messner, who crossed Antarctica on skis in 1990 with only one companion and no contact with the outside world. His reflections on the journey include words like "loneliness," "nature's purity" and "mythic." Messner also wrote about his desire to locate a mysterious place, not necessarily marked on a map, rather inside *his soul* (Täubrich et al., 49). Zarathustra sought enlightenment in a forest desert; Heym and Lichtenstein found a measure of comfort in their "big city desert"; and the South Pole wanderers long to find reason and enlightenment in a desert of ice. All the same, the heroes of "Die Südpolfahrer" will not realize a heroic Nietzschean transformation.

Merely four pages long, "Die Südpolfahrer" overpowers with its erratic and distressing stream-of-consciousness narrative. Its charged atmosphere transmits sheer desperation. Heym strips three fictitious adventurers of their figurative protective "layers": their human compassion, their adherence to typical bourgeois values and their very sanity. Once stripped, Heym casts his characters adrift, plainly exposing them to nature's most hostile environment.

Antarctic ice fields stretch away both behind and in front of the three unfortunate men. In one direction, the ice separates them from their goal, or the location of the South Pole. Behind them, icy fields stand between them and their respective homelands, where warmth, human compassion and wives await them. But on this surrounding “plain of white . . . 'this' and 'that' are meaningless” (Wilson 147).

An intriguing group of explorers drifts on the “klare Einsamkeit der ebenen Eisfelder” (“stark loneliness of the smooth ice fields”; Heym II 120): two Englishmen and one Japanese. Unlike “Das Tagebuch Shakletons,” the events of “Die Südpolfahrer” have no true historical basis. Nevertheless its characters likely correspond to actual explorers. The expedition leader Evans is possibly E.G.R. Evans, a member of Robert Falcon Scott's 1901 Antarctic expedition. The second Englishman, Godefroy, might reference William Godfrey of the 1853 Kane Expedition to the Arctic (Brunotte 277). Heym's inclusion of a Japanese explorer most likely references Nobu Shirase, who led the ill-fated 1910 Japanese South Pole expedition. The voyage received little funding and even less recognition. Weather conditions and a hostile public prevented Shirase from claiming the South Pole for Japan. The small group did set foot on Antarctic ice in 1912, but never came near the Pole (Wouters 21-2).

In “Die Südpolfahrer,” three eclectic characters conjure a picture not unlike the fictitious Shakleton's “living abstractions.” The story takes place on an Antarctic ice mountain, a vantage point that is in itself noteworthy. In the frame of polar exploration, mountains presented a nearly insuperable obstacle. Already exhausted explorers hauled heavy sledges up a steep, slick surface riddled with ice crevasses and other dangers. Coming to the summit of any Antarctic mountain comprised an undeniably daunting task and great personal victory upon achievement.

Heym's explorers, in fact, have reached the very tip of an ice mountain. They stand in a typical position of conquest and domination, yet depression and homesickness figuratively press them down toward the earth. Impenetrable silence contrasts sharply with the raucous modern society that the men left behind. Evans reflects desolately: “Hier hat noch niemand gestanden, diese Stille hat noch niemand zerrissen” (“No one has ever stood here, and no one has ever broken this stillness”; II 120). What should be a triumph of human spirit becomes in fact a realization of polar conquest's true insignificance. Far from being noble “conquerors,” the “unendliche meilenweite weiße Ebenen” (“unending white ice floes, stretching for miles”; II 120) reduce Evans and his companions to mere black specks in a sea of white. Evans issues a challenge to polar conquest's long and illustrious history:

> Bis hierher war der Mensch gekommen, [gejagt] von seinem Idol, und unter entsetzlichen Leiden, unter Entbehrungen, Frost-Wunden, wie ein Blinder, der einem irrsinnigen Führer nachtappt (Up until now men came, [hunted] by his idol, and under dolorous sorrows, under deprivation, wounds from frost, like a blind man who follows an insane guide). (II 121)

The parallel to Heym's critiques of modern society is obvious. What were the members of Wilhelmine Germany but sightless fools, following after a leader who had long since outlived his usefulness? And like modernity, which brought knowledge and progress with a price, the promises of fame and glory at the end of the long polar road cost the explorers dearly.

Evans gazes at “footprints,” or sledge tracks, that stretch far away behind the group, similar to the railroad tracks that scarred the landscape of some Expressionist poetry (Anz 117-18). The tracks lose themselves “in den zerrissenen Abhängen der vereisten Berge” (“in the broken crags of the ice-covered mountains”). Similar to the frozen Antarctic earth, the

explorer's minds must be “cut open” to achieve “progress.” Their psyches degenerate into mere pieces of paper besmirched by “Strichen, Kreuzen und Zahlen” (“lines, crosses and figures”; II 121) like those on Godefroy's guiding map. Now fragments of men, their minds reel in a vicious cycle of revolutionary thoughts, depression and nostalgia.

As in “Das Tagebuch Shakletons,” Heym's anti-heroes face their deaths locked in eternal ice, but not through kidnapping or golemization. This rag-tag group's greatest danger lies instead inside of each other. Illogically, Adams reaches the following solution to his homesickness: “. . . warum erstach [ich] [diese Gesellen] nicht, diese zwei Lumpen . . . diese Tiere” (“. . . why didn't [I] kill [these comrades], these two rascals . . . these animals”; II 121). His companions' death would bring freedom, Adams reasons. The Japanese explorer also privately resolves to kill “the white swine” and return to the sea by himself. Broken minds pose a “solution” that would, ironically, destroy them all. Heym's troubled and prophetic mind may well have made such connections in anticipation of World War I, a topic that he anticipated in his poetry (Heym I 58, 60, 346).

Heym followed the hoopla concerning the Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration along with the rest of the general public. But where popular accounts celebrated explorers' transcendent abilities, Heym deliberately exposed their abject humanity. Godefroy, Adams and the Japanese are inconsolable, desperate and on the brink of insanity in their deserted loneliness. The road to the Pole stretches, in the words of Heym's “Die Bleistadt”*:* “wie ein weißer Faden . . . aus dem Bauch einer großen weißen Spinne” (“like a white thread . . . out of the stomach of a huge white spider”; II 117). Hardship and loneliness slowly rob the three explorers of their human compassion. They yearn to return to a former state of being and homesickness plagues their every step. Evans longs for his garden and his wife. The

Japanese explorer gazes "über Eisfelder, über das Meer hinein nach Tokio" ("across ice fields, across the ocean toward Tokyo"; II 123).

Corresponding to the futile gasp for breath in Eliot's "water dropping song," desperation claws at the explorers' hearts. Irrational decisions eventually cause their failure. Godefroy announces that it will take four more interminable weeks to reach the Pole. Each man knows that the food supply will run out long before then. "Wollen wir umkehren?" ("Will we turn around?"), Godefroy inquires anxiously. It is the moment of truth. In the polar tradition of Scott and Shackleton, nevertheless, egotism wins over rationality. Evans announces finally: "Ich gehe weiter. Zum Teufel, ich gehe weiter" ("I'm going on. By the devil, I'm going on; II 123).

Evans, Godefroy and the Japanese know that they are most likely marching to their deaths, but they shoulder the burdensome trip across the psyche nonetheless. Kemal and Gaskell note that: "Explorers of desert and ice may be said to be half in love with piercing beauty and half in love with death" (155). Heym's explorers, at least, fulfill this solemn observation. And even should they live, their greatest desire will be denied them. Unlike popular American and British stories of the time period, which usually end with a flurry of victorious celebration,[6] Heym places the goal just beyond reach. A tiny black point dances in the air "ferne von ihnen, am weißlichen Himmel" ("far from them, in the white sky"; Heym II 123). This is the Pole, and the men will never find it.

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6 See for instance Savile pp. 303-22. The book's final chapter relates disturbing and highly fanciful events encountered by a South Pole expedition, including encounters with an erupting volcano, an esoteric Beast and an enormous beached whale. After hair-raising adventures, the book closes with the following sentences: "A thousand miles behind us were the terrors of the land of fire . . . Our prow was pointing to the islands of eternal summer; and in our hearts love's endless summer reigned" (Savile 322). For another example of such an idyllic ending, see Stratemeyer and Bonehill. A group of explorers sail to the South Pole in search of a lost treasure ship. After discovering the physical South Pole by accident (which Stratemeyer and Bonehill clearly confused with the magnetic pole), the men discover the lost treasure and return to New York City. They all experience fame and fortune as a result of their Antarctic travels and their expedition even inspires other men to further explore the mysterious southern continent.

## Chapter IV

## Refuge in the South Pole: Gazing over the Ice Wall

*Gegen Süden, gegen Süden, dorthin, wo die Menschen NAHE SIND,*
*wenn sie einander anblicken und an GOTT GLAUBEN!*

*("To the south, to the south, thither, where the people are close,*
*if they gaze on one another and believe on God!")*

*Egmont Colerus, 1914/5, Antarktis*

For certain authors, the earth's Poles became a metaphorical refuge for those whom modernity had displaced and alienated. As modern society's rush brought on "the anxious feeling of speeding along without control" (Blom 394), these mysterious points on the earth meanwhile lay far removed from all society, undisturbed behind great icy fortresses. The longing for an "undefiled, immaculate and stable present" placed an even greater emphasis on the Poles as a metaphor for "the transitory, the elusive and the ephemeral" (Leitsch 1750).

Heym and Kafka utilized frigid wastelands to critique loss of identity and self-understanding. In Austria, authors Robert Musil and Egmont Colerus criticized the misappropriation of scientific and mathematical knowledge framed by South Pole narratives. Their prose does not focus on explorers, whether historical or fictitious, but rather the necessary technology, ambitious thinking and technical know-how that contributed to a successful Antarctic journey. The attention to scientific theory, especially, comes as no surprise in an era that saw Einstein's theory of relativity, the first measure of an electron's charge, and the first major effort "toward the marriage of physics and astronomy."[7]

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7 For more detailed information on the scientific advances of the early 20th century, see Hamblin pp. xiii-xxi.

While Musil focused on inconsistencies in astronomical and geographical advances, Colerus indirectly examined the manufacture and use of destructive weapons that slaughtered much of mankind in World War I, as well as the imperialistic notions that led to their use. Both authors warned indirectly against using science for dubious purposes and look to Antarctica as a location not yet despoiled by human folly. Musil and Colerus projected a desire for an improved world onto the South Pole, where possibilities abounded and, at least presumably, no accepted rules applied. These authors affirmed the wish to *escape* the world's disorder as they gazed southward where: “Years come and go unnoticed . . . In this silent nature no events ever happen” (Nansen qtd. in Kemal and Gaskell 151).

*1. Robert Musil's* Das Land über den Südpol (1911)

Robert Musil commented in an 1899 journal entry:

> Ich wohne in der Polargegend, denn wenn ich an mein Fenster trete, so sehe ich nichts als weiße ruhige Flächen, die der Nacht als Piedestal dienen. Es ist um mich eine organische Isolation, ich ruhe wie unter einer 100 m tiefen Decke von Eis (“I live in the polar region, and if I come to my window, I see nothing but white, quiet expanses that the night uses as its pedestal. All around me is an organic isolation, I rest as though I am under a roof of ice 100 meters thick”). (Qtd. in Täubrich et al. 27)

Like the introspective Expressionists, Musil wrote of his own life in terms of glacial silence brought on by social mundanity. He did not belong to Berlin's revolutionary literary circles, but nonetheless shared similar passions with the *Neue Club* and other Expressionist authors. Musil devoured the works of Nietzsche, Kraus, Georg Simmel and Alfred Döblin and railed against modernity's shortcomings. As David Luft explains:

> Musil was convinced that modern European man had lost track of the capacity to think and act regarding his ego and had settled instead for the bonds of objectivity. Evading the terror of the ethical, European man had escaped into the shelter of the moral law and socially given rules. Bourgeois culture and morality . . . and the need for security had virtually cut modern man off from access to religion, ethics, and mysticism. (162)

Musil, like Heym, condemned the modern soul as corrupt and worthless. Musil's diagnosis: modernity's sickness could only be cured by "einem resoluten Einschnitt in diese Instinkt Widersprüchlichkeit" ("a resolute incision into this instinctual contradiction"; Musil I 30).

Musil led a highly unusual life. He described himself as "arrogant, dismissive, reticent, refined, happy" (Musil 91). By turns an engineer, philosopher, mathematician, librarian and soldier, Musil received support from his parents for most of his life. He wrote creatively for many years before turning to the profession in earnest. The publication of *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß* ("The Confusions of Young Törless") in 1906 marked the beginning of a prolific career that ended with Musil's magnum opus, the extraordinary but incomplete three-volume novel *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (1930-32). Musil wrote as much for himself as he did for the public. He recorded myriad personal thoughts and observations in diaries over forty years. These notebooks contain lecture notes, story sketches, medical reports and fleeting observations on almost all areas of life. Often haphazard and at times nonsensical, the journals nevertheless reflect a lifelong intellectual and philosophical journey.

One notebook entry from 1911 proposed a satirical novel called *Das Land über den Südpol* ("The Land over the South Pole"). This all-important year coincided with the lauded Heroic Age expeditions of Shackleton, Scott and Amundsen. In the literary world, it was also the time that Heym penned the fragments "Die Südpolfahrer" and "Das Tagebuch Shakletons." There is no evidence that the authors ever met, nor were these works published

during their lifetimes. The well-publicized events of the Heroic Age of Antarctic exploration served as a mutual point of reference.

Musil never completed *Das Land über den Südpol,* but he fleshed out the proposal in notebook entries for the next nineteen years. Outside of Musil's diaries, a few hand-written notes and a single completed chapter, the story's content remains a mystery. Musil submitted a veritable kaleidoscope of ideas for its development, ranging from ancient Greek mythology and sorcery to German emigration and barometric pressure. He called it a book of "moral experimentation" in one diary entry and an "autobiographical and contemporary" work in another (Musil 242, 343). Further: "eine Art Satire auf unsere seelischen Verhältnisse durch Darstellung unbegrentzer anderer Möglichkeiten" ("a kind of satire about our souls' relationships through the presentation of unlimited other possibilities"; II 243). Musil believed in a "profound connection between the civilized character of morality and scientific understanding" and undoubtedly saw polar conquest, one of the great "scientific triumphs" of his time, as an excellent opportunity to unite the two concepts.

An October 1911 diary entry detailed a potential story outline. The novel would seemingly have consisted of two parts. The proposed first part includes another Expressionist polar dystopia. Musil's Antarctic kingdom incorporates a "Kongreß der Tiere" ("animal congress"). This idea fascinated Musil so much that he copied an entire page on salamanders and frog species from *Brehms Tierleben* ("Brehm's Animal Life"; 1860) and one can assume that he intended to include these animals in the narrative. A mysterious polar race would also inhabit Musil's South Pole kingdom. His speculated Antarctic inhabitants boast great intellectual ability but no noteworthy technological advances. These polar people shun the world's energy sources and rely instead on what the author calls "soul power." He called the

polar kingdom an “Inferno Farm” where souls would be harvested as a fuel alternative (Musil II 971).

A more literal world would provide the setting for the book's proposed second half. It hinges on the historical 1910 Halley's Comet sighting, an event Musil mentioned in an October 1911 diary entry. The story's main character is, like Ulrich in *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften,* a young mathematician. This protagonist aspires to make a South Pole expedition in search of scientific truth. He finds himself “zermürbt von der Anwendungslosigkeit der Mathematik” (“worn down from the uselessness of mathematics”; Musil II 964). Full of ambition, the young man's story would have made the only evident connection between the subject matter and the South Pole.

*Das Land über den Südpol* demonstrates Musil's fascination with, and sometimes abhorrence of, modern scientific developments. His thoughts on science fluctuated between approval and scorn at different points in his life. Musil generally accepted new advances in psychology and astronomy as long as they were, in his opinion, sound and contributed to the betterment of mankind. He recorded in a journal entry somewhere between 1905 and 1919:

> Alle echte Wissenschaft und echte Kunst arbeitet für die größte Geistesfülle . . . je mehr unklare Gedanken, leichtfertige Meinungen . . . desto schwächeres Leben (All real science and art works for the greatest spirituality . . . the more unclear thoughts, easily reached opinions . . . the harder life is). (I 158-9)

Overall, Musil viewed science as no “threat to tradition; it was itself a tradition, on its way to creating a new civilization” (Luft 112). Science provided the key to a better world when discoveries were treated responsibly.

In Musil's single completed chapter, the brilliant young mathematician “X” strives to challenge and expand existing scientific theories through South Pole research. X and Musil's

narrator meet by chance in Rome in 1910, shortly after the historical Halley's Comet appearance. Musil visited Italy himself during this time as a soldier. The use of historical and personal events lends the chapter an almost autobiographical feel, similar to Musil's voice in *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften.* The narrator serves as the author's alter-ego, playing out Musil's own convictions under the guise of fiction.

Scientist X challenges astronomy's fundamental laws as the narrator lends a skeptical ear. The two debate the existence of another Earth-like planet only a million kilometers away and whether the earth is round or flat. Another topic of discussion is the earth's "Massenmittelpunkt" ("direct middle point"), and specifically if science has located it correctly. According to X's calculations, the earth's Poles aren't flat. These speculations play into the time period's mainstream theories concerning the world's "spiritual center," a topic that engrossed the public beginning in the 1870s. Ernest Renan first wrote of "Aghartha," a subterranean world sometimes found in Asia and sometimes lurking deep beneath the earth's crust (Godwin 81). Agartha, or the "spiritual middle point" of the world, is sometimes reached in popular myths by sailing into the center of the earth via the slightly flattened Poles (Bernard 17, 40). Mirrored by Heym's skepticism of esoteric religious notions from India that resulted in "golemization," Musil undoubtedly remained skeptical of theories rooted in mythology and ancient religion, despite his own fascination with the idea of a mysterious earthly "point" that will be discussed shortly.

The fervent young mathematician "X" continues on from esoteric ramblings to a discussion of planetary magnetism, another popular topic at the turn of the century (Hamblin 126-27). From the interaction of Halley's Comet with the earth's atmosphere, "X" reasons that there must exist "ein Gebirge von riesigen, bisher unbekannten Dimensionen" ("a mountain range of enormous, previously unknown dimensions"). And where could these

undiscovered mountains be located? “Es gibt nur einen einzigen Ort der Erde, der es bisher unserer Kenntnis entzogen haben konnte, mit einem Wort: der Südpol!” (“There's only one place on earth that has eluded our knowledge, with one word: the South Pole!”; 573). These claims may denote a theory developed by Sir George Biddell Airy (1801-1892) and John Henry Pratt (1809-1871), both British mathematicians. Their hypothesis put forth that variations in mass over the earth's surface, such as mountains, must be neutralized by opposite variations. Therefore, density differences in the earth's crust must be compensated to ensure uniform mass distribution. American geologist Clarence E. Dutton dubbed the Pratt and Airy theory “isostacy” in 1889 (Hamblin 88).

Astronomer X appears on the verge of a mental breakdown. He describes a haphazard plan to visit Berlin and then Paris to prepare for an Antarctic expedition. Only a trip to the South Pole can prove his theories to skeptics such as Musil's narrator. Sharing the convictions of Shackleton, Scott and Shirase, X declares his intentions with flashing, cold eyes that glitter like stars (Musil 571). Musil's narrator listens with reserved and noncommittal incredulity. He ultimately rejects X's eagerness to explore and discover, and even sends a spurious telegram to a German newspaper about the expedition. The telegram relays an alarming message:

> In Rom ist der bekannte junge Gelehrte X. gelegentlich umfangreicher Forschungen über den jüngsten Kometen infolge Überarbeitung von einer schweren Psychose befallen worden. Die Ärzte erklären seinen Zustand für bedenklich, wenn auch nicht aussichtslos (The well-known young scholar X who has extensively studied the youngest comets has fallen ill from a terrible psychological illness. The doctors have declared the outlook to be doubtful, if not hopeless). (574)

What can be the reason behind such deliberate callousness? The narrator stands for modernity, insentient and impersonal, with no room for autonomous individuality. He cannot tolerate Enlightenment ideas of challenge and change. Instead he condemns what he believes to be the ravings of a near madman, doing his very best to remind the young X of his "proper" place in bourgeois society. In fact, just before the two part ways in Rome, the narrator gently reminds the younger man of young "Fräulein Bertha," who X has recently asked to marry him. The narrator confesses: "[Ich] hoffte, ihn durch die Erinnerung daran in den Wiederbesitz seiner bürgerlichen Fähigkeiten zu bringen" ("[I] hoped to remind him of his civil duties [by asking the question]"; 573). Attitudes like these frustrated Expressionist writers who rebelled so violently against society's conventions, and yet were always pulled back from revolution by the inner complacency of the European population.

A few years pass before the two astronomers meet again in Berlin. No further mention is made of the South Pole. The reader can assume that X never reached Antarctica because of the false telegram. X's glance startles the narrator with its veiled and almost evil intensity. He is considerably thinner than before. X has been sufficiently beaten by a world that can't understand him, as the narrator's lie denied him refuge and perhaps deliverance in the South Pole. After a hostile discussion, in which X calls the narrator unbelievably mean, the young mathematician leaves a packet of mathematical and astronomical calculations and disappears forever. He declares: "Ich nehme Abschied vom Leben" ("I'm taking leave of my life; II 970). Young X has become yet another victim of industrialization and social displacement. He discovered that: "Despite the new horizons opened by [modernity], the new world was a merciless place, dividing humankind into those who coped and those who did not" (Blom 275). A precious few defied the new world's imposed rules and succeeded; Astronomer X faced a distinctly different outcome.

*Das Land über den Südpol* existed in Musil's mind as a rudimentary and at times bizarre collage of ideas. The outline's abstract nature might, at first glance, deny its place in Expressionist Antarctic and ice metaphors. Nevertheless a closer reading of Musil's diaries reveals at least one parallel between his work and Heym's: the recurring theme of the "imaginary point." The point symbolizes a quest for self-understanding and alternately the South Pole. Heym's explorers labor in vain to find a "kleiner, schwarzer Punkt" ("small, blank point") that symbolizes humanity and mystery (II 123; 143), while Musil's "Punkt" proves even more abstract.

Musil calls his polar dystopia the "Land über dem unbetretenen Punkt" ("Land over the undisturbed point"). He reflects: "Es wird irgendwo einen Punkt geben, den noch keines Menschen Fuß betreten hat" ("There will be a place somewhere, where no man's foot has stepped"). Musil's polar kingdom *itself* forms an abstract point on the globe. This earthly place, or the absence of such a place, furthers the emptiness theme that binds Musil and Heym's works together. And similar to other Expressionist literature is the strange prediction of failure to find this spot on the map: ". . . denn - - ihre Methode – sie werden niemals den Punkt finden" (". . . then - - their method - - they will never find the point"; Musil 964, 971).

Also relevant to Modernism's social issues are Musil's two choices of location for his abstract "point." The first is "irgendeinen imaginären Punkt in Innerasien" ("any imaginary point in inner Asia"). The fusing of the Orient with Antarctica was not a new concept. According to Buddhist legends, the previously mentioned esoteric city of Agartha "was a branch of a subterranean, suboceanic network of tunnels radiating from . . . the Continent of Antarctica, where one of the seven icebound cities is now open again for operation" (Dickhoff 25). In 1908, foundations were laid for an extraordinary polar fraternity called the "Polaires," which furthered the connection between Buddhism, esoterics and the Poles.

Mario Fille, a Franco-Italian, supposedly met a hermit near Rome who bequeathed him an Oracle. The Oracle revealed a channel of communication with sages called "Little Lights of the Orient" who lived in Agartha (Godwin 88). The Oracle's revelations drew a group of loyal followers that eventually founded the "Polaires," a society that transcended countries and religions, in 1927. One believer, Jean Marquès-Rivière, recorded:

> Now, the center of transhuman power . . . is called in Central Asia *Aghartta.* . . This Center has its mission, or rather as its reason for existence, the direction of the spiritual activities of the earth. (Qtd. in Godwin 89)

Musil's second choice for his "Pole's" location was the direct middle of a huge metropolis. This image evokes famous poems by Expressionists Georg Heym, Alfred Lichtenstein and Jakob von Hoddis.[8] The big city, and especially Berlin, corresponded with feelings of loneliness, corruption and alienation in the tradition of Georg Simmel. Therefore, Musil's abstract "center point" can be nothing other than that sought after and elusive realization of self-fulfillment sought by his German peers.

Wherever Musil's abstract point would have been, his story presents a unique view of polar exploration in the turn of the century mind. Nowhere in his diary entries does Musil mention Shackleton, Scott or Amundsen. His South Pole depiction reveals no nationalistic or utopian radicalism. In fact, the surviving pieces of *Das Land über den Südpol* align with the opinions of some Germans during the Heroic Age of Antarctic exploration even more closely than Heym's writing. These Germans considered it their obligation "to replace the mystery of the Poles with the certainties of science" (Murphy 3). The unlucky 1901-03 *Gauss* and 1911-13 *Filchner* Expeditions, for instance, failed to win the Poles or imperialistic glory. Politicians and others of high standing found the lack of new Antarctic scientific data even

8 See: Heym *Lyrik* pp. 56-8, 93-4; Lichtenstein p. 6, 110; Pinthus p. 7, 10, 187, 266.

more disappointing than the imperial failure. Hans Gazert, a medical doctor on board the *Gauss* expedition, wrote mournfully: “Our time wants the sensational, wants tales of dangers . . . But we did not set out to seek those . . . [rather] to track down the secrets of the Antarctic” (qtd. in Murphy 86).

Musil's South Pole, unlike the physical location, does not deny its explorers the opportunity to make strides in the world of science. The Pole at the center of Musil's imagination, with its “Congress of Animals” and extravagant soul farm, offers a utopian society of undiscovered possibilities. Nonetheless mankind's narrow-mindedness ultimately prevents great discovery and the brilliant X's dream of Antarctic research. The reservations of X's friend and betrayer reflect the wider “symptom” of European mediocrity. Musil expounded on similar thoughts shortly after World War I in the 1922 essay *Der Hilflose Europa* (“The Helpless Europe”). The essay traces post-Enlightenment ideals' ultimate effect on Musil's world. Shortsightedness that began with a “symptom” eventually destroyed social norms and catapulted Europe into war's destruction. European “Golem-Dasein” originated with “a debilitating lack of intellectual and spiritual organization . . . while the forces championing realpolitik at least had the advantage of a certain middle-class legitimacy” (Musil 129). This overall lack of organization ultimately denies the young X intellectual refuge in the metaphorical Antarctic sanctuary.

*2. Egmont Colerus'* Antarktis (1914/15)

While Robert Musil speculated about mathematical oddities and earthly magnetism, another Austrian author and mathematician explored the roles of imperialism and harmful technology in polar narratives. Egmont Colerus von Geldern, an Austrian writer and civil servant, aspired to the role of prophet in an age of European unrest, chaos and destruction.

While some in the European milieu supinely accepted the events that led to World War I, Colerus' intense religious allegories embodied humanity's *divine right* to find sanctuary wherever possible in times of trouble. Primarily a mathematician, Colerus also wrote ponderous novels with religious overtones such as the 1914 *Antarktis* and the 1920 *Sodom.* Colerus' beliefs were the "spiritual center" of his own life, and they manifest themselves in his writing. As he says: "Was Glauben heißt, hatte ich immer gewußt. Was Nähe heißt, weiß ich heute" ("What belief is, I have always known. What closeness is, I know today"; Colerus 63). Similar abstract thoughts permeate the novel *Antarktis.* Colerus believed in the novel to such an extent that he commissioned a portrait of himself as one of its main characters, a poet on a quest to find meaning during a great war. The portrait shows a sober Colerus, robed and holding a walking staff in one hand. Like the poet in the novel, or even Nietzsche's "Übermensch," Colerus searches for rationality and belonging through otherworldly wanderings.

Colerus' novel, a narrative in four parts, relates continuously to Europe as an "Old World" in opposition to Antarctica's utopian wilderness. All four sections find a common thread in the longing for a saner, quieter world which can be found at the South Pole. Parts One and Four stand out particularly in the context of polar metaphors as a religious and political refuge from modernity. Curiously, the novel doesn't decry imperialism or the dominance of nature that Karl Kraus detested. Colerus' novel has no greater social agenda than to promote religious tolerance and peace in an era of incredible destruction.

Part One of *Antarktis,* "Die Visionen" ("The Visions"), includes two themes that beg the reader's attention: brute imperialism and German polar mysticism. Rooted in Scandinavian mythology, the "Ultima Thule" fantasy often blended with nationalism in the minds of German authors and radicals. Even the Nazi regime built the idea of an ideologically pure,

Aryan utopia around pre-existing polar narratives when it became clear that no such place could exist in Europe (Murphy 6). The South Pole in *Antarktis* symbolizes religious and social freedom for Vikings who fled "Thule," an unnamed country in the North. The lower deck of their ship, "The Dragon," holds a kidnapped princess and a few virgins. The men chant Latin incantations as they near their ice-locked destination.

Colerus' choice of Vikings for his novel is ironic, especially in the light of a quotation by his daughter, Bianca Colerus. She calls the book "eine wunderbare Metapher auf die Gegenwelt der Liebe und Gewaltlosigkeit" ("a wonderful metaphor of the parallel world of love and non-violence"; Colerus 64) in a book of memoirs that she assembled about her father and his work. Vikings, historically known for their savage conquest, intriguingly laid the foundation for a metaphorical *escape* from Colerus' war-worn world. According to Bianca Colerus, the Vikings represent both power and avarice (64). This then brings to light the compelling question of why the elder Colerus chose Vikings at all. These "anti-heroes," far from promoting the author's agenda of peace and good will, instead extend the novel's "white is might" aspect. The Vikings view Antarctic colonization as their divine right, signaled by a "sign of the anointed" in the sky. With this peculiar portrayal of manifest destiny, Colerus collaborates, perhaps unwittingly, with the Anglo-Saxon imperialist project to "whiten every sea" (Nelson 97).

Befitting this proper sanctuary, a great barrier encircles Antarctica. It hides the continent's secrets from prying eyes. The actual "barrier" surrounding the icy continent is the Ross Ice Shelf, discovered in 1841 by James Clark Ross. It stands at a towering 100 feet high. The formidable barrier inspired Ross to write: "We might with equal chance of success try to sail through the Cliffs of Dover, as penetrate such a mass" (qtd. in Barczewski 18). The Ice Shelf finds its way, literally and metaphorically, into many early 20$^{th}$ century works of Antarctic

literature.[9] In conjunction with Heym's dystopia in “Das Tagebuch Shakletons,” Braungart declares the wall a metaphysical barrier that must be broken to break the Pole's power (272). Colerus' Vikings scale the wall to gain their own power over the primordial paradise and claim it as their sanctuary.

Part Four of the novel, “Das Erwachen” (“The Awakening”), opens with the Vikings' mantra: “Südwärts, immer weiter südwärts!” (“Southwards, always further southwards!”; 199). It is told, presumably, in the context of Colerus' modern world through the voice of Colerus' anonymous poet. He is a man of great talent, a keen intellect and a natural curiosity about the South Pole. His society stands on the verge of war and Antarctica serves as a metaphorical “hiding place” from the world's growing unrest. The poet writes three fables about the great white continent, but is left with many questions. For instance:

> Warum mengten sich die Antarktiker nicht in die Dinge der alten Welt? Weshalb versuchten sie nicht einmal, die Guten zu bewahren und das Unrecht zu bekämpfen? (“Why aren't the Antarctic people involved in the things of the old world? Why don't they ever try to keep the good and fight against wrongdoing?”). (259)

After long debates with colleagues about the point of war and manifest destiny, in which he seeks the answers to these questions, the poet sinks into semi-conscious state to see an Antarctic man bowing over him. This “polar man” gives a detailed explanation of his people's philosophy in defense of their alienation from the surrounding countries. The polar kingdom, he explains, doesn't interfere with world events unless they *directly* involve Antarctica (277-8). Colerus obviously followed and accepted the oft times bizarre utopian notions that formed such a unique corner of 20th century philosophical theory. His hermetically sealed Antarctic kingdom may have patterned Hollow Earth ideologies like

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[9] For further reference, see: Paine p. 7, 101, 138; Mastin p. 37 and Braungart p. 273.

those of Edward Bulwer-Lytton. Lytton believed in the presence of a utopia *inside* the globe, classless, technologically advanced and preserved from the beginning of time, similar to the Agartha theories (Bernard 95-7).

The Antarctic man spirits the poet away to the cellar (but bring your pistols, he admonishes). This seemingly short trip is in fact a metaphysical journey to the South Pole itself. In the cellar (or alternately South Pole) the poet finds an astonishing stockpile of explosives that reach for a thousand kilometers. He is privileged to view the "Macht der Antarktis" ("might of Antarctica"; 285).

The notion of a primordial polar people collecting weapons predates Colerus:

> We [the citizens of Agartha] are stockpiling atom bombs and spiriting them to countries sympathetic to a cause with the same zealous fanaticism as the Russian scientists at this very moment ready themselves for an all-out atomic assault. (Dickhoff 27)

Further, American writer Theodore Fitch described the anti-war attitudes of a fictitious Atlantean kingdom inside the Earth's crust: "They [Atlanteans] say we [Americans] should get rid of nuclear bombs and armaments. They say all their efforts are for peace" (Bernard 193). Colerus' polar man displays similar attitudes, but proves more cautious. The poet discovers that the Antarctic people have the power to stop the Great War, but don't want to influence the ever-turning "wheel of the world" (288).

Colerus' poet climbs aboard an Antarctic "Totenschiff" ("ship of the dead") after this curious experience. His enlightenment leaves him displaced and alone in the physical world, unable to return to his previous life. Death, and thereby union with the South Pole kingdom, forms a destiny bound up with a "holy symbol" burned onto the poet's chest (345). His fate is more fortunate than Musil's young X, who also perished because he stubbornly rejected conformity but did not realize enlightenment. Colerus' poet, on the other hand, like the

Vikings before him, figuratively “scales the wall” to find peace and tranquility on the other side. The reader does not experience the actual “winning” of the Antarctic utopia at the close of the novel, but instead is left with a striking image of the poet standing at the bow of the death ship. His wife and young son are by his side. The metaphorical paradise that awaits exists in the author’s mind as an esoteric point akin to Heym's static Pole that dances above the ice, always just beyond reach.

## Conclusion

An Expressionist literary tradition in the German-speaking world mirrored the “Furcht vor sozialen Kältetod” (“Fear of social cold death”; Rothe 376) that certain authors expressed and critiqued through their writing. Robert Musil, Egmont Colerus, Georg Heym and Franz Kafka turned to Antarctic and ice tropes to express the inner emptying of society, the desert landscape of modernity's big city atmosphere and the need to find refuge in a time of upheaval and strife. These prose descriptions constituted a counter-narrative to polar “pulp fiction” of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, some of which depicted rugged heroes in a “man versus nature” battle against the elements.

With the beginning of the 21st century, the world has seen a surge of renewal in polar fascination. Alongside the previously mentioned “Shackleton revival,” a flurry of news articles centering on Antarctic science and exploration have appeared recently in mediums such as National Geographic and BBC News.[10] Exciting discoveries made on the Antarctic ice turn up constantly, from a 100-year-old bottle of whiskey to the shards of a 1912 plane wreck, thought to be lost forever.[11] Renewed polar interest manifests itself continuously in popular culture in movies, books and music. Antarctic film representations have enthralled the public, a few of which center on the indigenous Emperor penguins, since the year 2000. Some of the most popular include the following 2007 films: *March of the Penguins* (Jacquet et al.) and the cartoon graphic film *Happy Feet* (Miller et al.). Additionally, a plethora of best-selling novels revolving around Arctic and Antarctic escapades attests to the 21st

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10 See: “Antarctic 'Time Capsule' Hut Revealed.” 11 Jan 2010. *National Geographic*; “Warming risks Antarctic sea life.” 16. Feb 2008. *BBC News*.

11 For further information, see: “Antarctic's first plane found in ice.” 4 Jan 2010. *The Independent;* “Shackleton's whiskey recovered from South Pole ice.” 5 Feb 2010. *BBC News.*

century's conflation in polar interest.[12] In 2004, Bill Manhire published the first comprehensive Antarctic anthology, *The Wide White Page,* which draws on excerpts from the entire corpus of South Pole literature from Dante to H.P. Lovecraft to modern writer Kim Stanley Robinson (Manhire).

In the German-speaking world, certain novels of the 21st century concentrate on the legacy of Arctic and Antarctic "heroes," the allure of polar travel and the spiritual consequences of "journeys into inner ice." Some of these current novels even pattern the Expressionist legacy put forth in this work, namely Antarctic metaphors that expose creeping inner coldness or the need to take refuge far away from the agitated modern world. One such book, written in 2009, is titled strangely: *MoLemurian, oder, Die Grotte in der Antarktis* ("MoLemurian, or, the Grotto of Antarctica"). Written by Maria Angela Simotti, the book parallels Colerus' portrayal of finding an Antarctic sanctuary in times of strife. A great disaster forces a group of refugees to flee their home country in search of safety. Their airplane crashes over Antarctica, and what could have been a disaster unfolds into an early 20th-century style tale of exploration and discovery. A "lost world" peopled by the mysterious ancient MoLemurian race comes to light (Simotti).

More significant by far in view of Expressionist ice tropes and the return to Antarctica as a social metaphor is German author Tina Uebel's 2005 *Horror Vacui: Roman* ("Horror Vacui: A Novel"). Heym, Musil and Colerus would undoubtedly have given Uebel's intriguing stream-of-consciousness and broken narrative a warm reception. The author analyzes tropes of emptiness, desolation, loss of self, transformation and failure, all told from the shifting vantage point of four "extreme tourists" looking for meaning at the South Pole. Travel in Antarctica's great void reflects the inner vacuum left by capitalism and social mediocrity.

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12 Robinson, Jeremy (2007); Mercy, David (2006); Preston, Douglas J. (2000); Clancy, Tom (2001).

The small party consists of two men and one woman, as well as a tour guide. Danger awaits in the form of brutal temperatures, illness and psychological damage. More distressing than these factors is the alarming inner "abyss" that each character must face to find self-fulfillment, in the style of Heym's Shakleton party.

The novel opens with the words: "Hier ist gar nichts. Dies ist ein grauenvoller Ort" ("Here is nothing. This is a gruesome place"; 9). The quote is a double *entendre*; while essentially describing Antarctica, the words attest on a deeper level to the narrator's inner state. Uebel taunts her characters with the possibility of self-realization in the ice. She then systematically strips them of their inner resources through sickness and isolation, as the men in Georg Heym's "Die Südpolfahrer." Analogous to historical polar explorers such as those in the 1913 *Karluk* expedition to the Arctic (Niven), Uebel's four characters begin their journey as a close-knit team, but emptiness inside as well as out breaks the group into solitary, drifting "icebergs."

*Horror Vacui* further patterns Expressionist Antarctic metaphors in that the characters seek personal transformation in the ice. Something magical and elusive awaits them should they reach their goal. Almost one hundred years after Amundsen "conquered" the South Pole, this small group of tourists still longs to find that esoteric point: "Und in der Mitte der magische Punkt. 90 Grad Süd. Der große Traum. Der Pol" ("And in the middle the magical point. 90 degrees South. The great dream. The pole"; 29). Antarctica shelters its enigmas and remains the *terra incognita* even today.

Uebel's main characters, similar to the fictitious Shakleton, sacrifice their inner substance during their journey into ice. Her use of staccato phrases evokes the painful progress, step by step, that will finally lead to the Pole. One central character is Ralph, an overweight Dutchman. Ralph observes and records the obvious parallel between his surroundings and

his inner state: “Leere und kalt absorbieren mich, bis ich gar nichts mehr denke und fühle. Alles ist Eis. Alles ist gut und alles ist Eis” (“The emptiness and cold absorb me, until I can hardly think or feel. Everything is ice. Everything is good and everything is ice”; 47). Susan, an American, reflects: “Mein Kopf ist ganz leer und nur voller Schönheit und Eis” (“My head is completely empty and only full of beauty and ice”; S. 60). And the third member of the party is Michael, a successful New York businessman who only finds self-worth through extreme sports. He obsesses constantly with “den Weg, den Weg zum Pol” (“the way, the way to the Pole”) and constantly “denkt an den Pol . . . Der Pol” (“thinks about the Pole . . . The Pole”; 66).

Yet another Expressionist trope surfaces toward the end of the book. As the small party traverses rough Antarctic territory, they reach the peculiar South Pole “Dry Valleys.” The three main valleys, Victoria, Wright and Taylor, boast no ice due to the air's incredible dryness in that region. These desolate valleys, first discovered by Robert Falcon Scott in 1902, stretch for an astounding 3000 sq km, or 1158.306 mi² (Rubin 312-13). They form a curious “oasis” in the endless Antarctic desert. In the case of Uebel's explorers, the South Pole's endless snow plains recall the bleakness of Eliot's poetry and Heym's prose. According to Michael: “Antarktika ist eine Wüste, letzendlich. Man stellt sich Wüsten anders vor . . . Ich habe noch keine Wüste gesehen, fällt mir auf” (“Antarctica is a desert, after all. One imagines deserts a bit differently . . . I have never seen a desert that I liked”; Uebel 151).

Heym, Musil and Colerus believed that the Pole as a tangible object held little value, rather the *inner* state of their fictitious explorers decided their ultimate destinies. These Expressionist authors, although of various backgrounds and with very different literary agendas, sought to demonstrate modernity's freezing vacuum as well as the tepid European soul through ice metaphors. Each left his fictional characters wandering somewhere between

the physical world and enlightenment at the South Pole. Heym's explorers yearned for a tiny, black point on the horizon. Musil's astronomer X found inspiration and then met with despair as he contemplated the South Pole's maddening scientific promise. Colerus' poet voyaged southward on a death ship to seize an uncertain manifest destiny. And Uebel brings the tradition full-circle almost one hundred years after Expressionists journeyed into inner ice. She parts with her tiny group of "extreme tourists" as they wander, lonely and dazed, on the edge of frigid oblivion:

> Der Pol ist eine Idee, die südlich von hier liegt. Da, wo der Süden aufhört und alles andere. Von hier, wo gar nichts ist. Ausser Eis. Eis. Das schon. Sonst nichts (The Pole is just an idea, that lies south of here. There, where the South ends and everything else. From there, where nothing at all is. Except ice. Ice. That already. Otherwise, nothing; 271).

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# Vita

Joy Marie Essigmann began her language studies in high school and received a Foreign Language Combination B.A. in French and German at the University of Central Florida. After two years of work as a secondary education instructor, Joy visited Leipzig, Germany on a teaching scholarship. She then decided to further her studies of the German language and expand her intellectual horizon through graduate studies. Joy applied to the German Studies program at the University of Tennessee and was thrilled to be accepted. Even more exciting was participation in a year-long graduate exchange program that allowed her to attend the University of Mannheim in Germany. After a wonderful year in Europe, Joy returned to Tennessee to finish her M.A. She finds the intellectual community of her graduate studies program to be both challenging and rewarding and looks forward to completing her Ph.D. in Modern Foreign Languages in the next four years.