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**A woman in the Polar Museum:
Representations of Christiane Ritter's Svalbard experience**

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Christiane Ritter's classic book *A Woman in the Polar Night* has arguably influenced the images of Svalbard that come to mind in the German-language context. Famed for its vivid descriptions of both the beauty and the risks involved with overwintering in Svalbard, the book deviates from traditional hero narratives connected with hunters and explorers in the North. It foregrounds the influence of the darkness and the unforgiving country on its visitors, whereas other narratives often focus on 'man's' struggle against (and supposed victory over) nature.

This paper will look at museum representations of Ritter's winter in the Arctic, for example at the Polarmuseet in Tromsø and the virtual tour of the hut available at Spitsbergen-svalbard.com. Through a multimodal close reading of these representations, the paper will ask how exhibitions (both on- and offline) can do justice to Ritter's unique perspective, and if they can avoid the trap of attributing essentialist gendered stereotypes to her multifaceted account. Ritter's account – with its focus on aesthetics, the 'otherness' of the Arctic life and landscape (particularly for central European travelers), and the mentality changes caused by experiencing it – can today be re-evaluated in the light of popular culture's current fascination with the High North.

Biographical note:

Martin Siefkes (Dr. phil.) is Research Associate at the University of Technology Chemnitz. His research focuses on multimodality, museum studies, and digital humanities. From 2011 to 2014, he was Humboldt Research Fellow in Venice and in Bremen. He is editor of the *Zeitschrift für Semiotik*. His third book, *The Aesthetics and Multimodality of Style* (with E. Arielli), was published in July 2018.