

The Northern Gaze: Boreal Dynamics in Endogenous and Exogenous Processes

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Abstract

The recently developed theory of borealism invites us to consider the study of representations of the North in terms of reception, interaction, and observer positions. This article places the theory of borealism in relation to other disciplines and links it to the pedagogical model of concrete experiences, allowing for an understanding of boreal dynamics and the mechanisms of reception and the cultural circulation of borealism. It is necessary to consider the endogenous and exogenous perspectives of the observer, as well as their way of learning about and processing the North, to understand cultural products linked to the North and our interactions with them.

Keywords

borealism, imagined North, reception, imagology, cultural transfer

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L'imaginaire est moins un domaine ou un territoire psychique propre qu'un mode de représentation qui se différencie du rationnel, de l'abstraction, du signe univoque, de l'identité et de la non-contradiction, de la connexion forte, de la démonstration et de la preuve, des classifications stables (Wunenburger 2008: 16)

(*L'imaginaire* is less a domain or psychic territory of its own. Rather, it is a mode of representation that differs from the rational, from abstraction, from the univocal sign, from identity and non-contradiction, from strong connections, from demonstration and proof, from stable classifications).

The theory of borealism was born in a period where the centuries-old fascination for the 'Great North' and its representations had been funnelled into systematic research based on a rigorous scientific approach. Since the early 2000s, researchers interested in the northern geographical area have dedicated themselves to the study, definition, and comprehension of phenomena of thought and images of the North in disparate cultures.¹ The academic tradition of francophone philosophical studies favoured the development of theories based on the study of *l'imaginaire* – a term which presents difficulties when translated into English due to its original philological reference to the totality of representations (including both visual *and* mental images) produced in relation to a certain domain (which *can* be, but are not exclusively, geographic) (Sima *et al.* 2013; Wunenburger 2008).

It is within this academic context of theoretical elaboration that Sylvain Briens developed the definition of *borealism* as a 'grammar of the North' (Briens 2016), which characterises the entirety of the discourses referring to and built upon the Septentrional sections of the world. A complex phenomenon of the perception of the North and the circulation of its representations, borealism was conceived of as a tool for analysis and understanding of cultural products that represent the North, whether through discourse, images, sounds or forms. This allows, through the study of the figuration of the North at different times and spaces, for an understanding of the evolution, origin, and semantic changes of its representations.

The conceptual seed of borealism is situated within this notion of the perception of the North. The North is not shapeless, uniform, unequivocal, and unchanging, but exists in relation to the thoughts

that constitute and structure it. In other words, it is not possible to understand a representation of the North without investigating the context that brought it forth, and the significance that the elements of the representation take on through the lens of the individual who produced it. The idea of the North itself is born, initially, in the imagination. Only later does it become the referent for a concrete geographical space. Initially a mental element, the North becomes grounded when an individual's physical experience of it matches the expectations, and not vice versa.

The consequence of this individual-experience phenomenon can be explained through concrete historical examples. Let us examine the history of polar exploration (the penultimate example of the *physical* quest for the North): the desire of polar adventurers to reach the northernmost point of the globe shows that the mental projection of the imaginary precedes the journey (the destination of which is not necessarily reached). In other words, the pioneers had to elaborate their idea of the North long before they experienced the Arctic territory – when or even if they succeeded in experiencing it. As this example shows, representation depends on experience, but does not need it to exist. Nevertheless, experience has direct and immediate consequences for these representations. The question remains: why did these pioneers decide to confront their Northern dreams with reality? Why did they take the bold step of venturing to the geographic North? Was the draw of the North so potent that it pushed them to explore, or did the *Imagined North* require 'renewal' through interaction with reality? Regardless of the answers to these questions, their example confirms the hypothesis of a mutable and multiform borealism.

Such a consideration about the idea of the North (an imaginary North), which precedes the very existence of the North (the real North), leads to another reflection on the nature of borealism, and thus on the discourse constructed about the North: the multiplicity of gazes directed towards the North (in terms of time, space, significance, perception, and interpretation). As each language has its own grammar, so does each cultural community have its own centuries-old representation of the Nordic area (Davidson 2004: 11). In addition, there is a further discriminating factor: within a given cultural community there exists a mode of personal reflection that characterises the individual thinking of each member. The North is therefore the object of a multicultural discourse that varies according to the time of elaboration and the context, as well as the background of the person who has created such a representation. In other words,

a phenomenon such as the North, even when individually conceived and expressed in a representation, is always socially or culturally conditioned. An example of this can be found in the Inuit community's idea of the North which is particularly different from the Occidental idea. As Chartier has pointed out (2019), the representation of the North that exists in Inuit culture is not necessarily linked to a 'vertical' conception like that of European peoples who have always associated the spatiality of this area with a movement of 'going up towards'. Such a way of experiencing spatiality implies a heterogeneous way of relating to the North, of conceiving it, experiencing it, and representing it.

It is this proliferation of diverse representations of the North that borealism considers and aims to understand. It should be noted that some elements of the representation of the North are stable and are reactivated with semantic changes in diverse cultural products, as illustrated in Thomas Mohnike's studies on the mythemes of the North (Mohnike 2020) and in the concept of superimposed layers of knowledge that organise the Imagined North as defined by Daniel Chartier (Chartier 2016). According to Mohnike, mythemes are the 'smallest units of discourse' and 'the laws that determine the possibilities to combine mythemes at a certain moment in time' are 'their "discursive grammar"' (Mohnike 2020: 11). This means that it is possible to break down a representation into smaller elements that are reactivated in cultural productions made in different contexts depending on the purpose of the discourse that contains them. In Chartier's view, the representation of the North in the arts and literature are governed by 'un système des signes cohérent, qui a pu être remis en question par de nouvelles œuvres pendant des siècles' (Chartier 2019: 387) (a coherent system of signs that has been called into question by new works over the centuries). This demonstrates continuity of the representations and perceptions of the North even if, or because of, semantic change over time, and means that the signs of the representation of the North are activated differently depending on the narrative and discursive strategies – and thus, depending on who produced them, where, when, and for what purpose. These characteristics of representations of the North contribute to the presence of certain similar elements that combine and are presented with differing semantic values. Ideas and representations are not inalterable but formed and reformed through experiences, in which the process of elaborating the mental image is rooted.

From these premises arises the need to study the mechanisms of the development and spread of borealism, which is the primary

motivation for this article. To understand the mechanisms of dissemination, however, we must first delve into the mechanisms of circulation and cultural transfer to then understand the phenomenon of reception and production of images inspired by the North. This article aims to introduce a toolset to understand the phenomenon of creation, development, and circulation of the Northern *imaginaire*; the processes presented here as well as their interactions have no other interest than to display the richness, plurality, and complexity of the phenomena of cognition about the North.

Endogenous and exogenous borealism: modelling the mental image

To understand the different dynamics that underpin borealism, it is necessary to introduce the two processes that structure this theory: endogenous and exogenous borealism. Daniel Chartier, speaking on the concept of the 'Imagined North', introduced this structuring difference by pointing out that

Like all represented spaces, the "North" is the product of a dual gaze, from the outside and from the inside; we can distinguish between the "representations" of the North and the works of Nordic cultures (Chartier 2016: 118).

The distinction between a gaze that is internal to the North and one that is substantially external to it becomes central in the division of the mental image between an endogenous and an exogenous process in the production of a representation. As the two adjectives indicate, the term 'exogenous borealism' refers to the discourse produced outside the geographical-linguistic-cultural area of the North, while the term 'endogenous borealism' indicates the set of representations produced within this area (without implying the exclusion of an external relationship or origin of these representations) (Ballotti 2018). Though these are by their very nature opposing gazes, they are at times interdependent. They are not closed categories but constellations in flux, valid for analysing a given boreal phenomenon without simplification or universalisation of the different figurations of the Imagined North.

Interdependent and complementary, the analysis of the endogenous and exogenous processes is not sufficient enough to

explain the plurality of representations of the North, since it does not allow us to consider the relations, transfers, and exchanges between the two. It is therefore necessary to add to this framework the interactions that develop through these two processes: since borealism has the ambition of 'tracer l'histoire des déplacements, des transformations, des circulations qui se réfèrent au Nord' (Briens 2018) (tracing the history of the displacements, transformations and circulations that refer to the North), the notions of interaction and cultural transfer are inherent in the very definition of the term and in the main object of study of the concept. It therefore becomes essential to reflect on these displacements and the impact that they have on the subject receiving them.

The study of these interactions consists of a re-evaluation of previous reception theories and to create a synthesis between post-structuralist, deconstructivist theories and *mondialisation*. The studies developed in the last decades of the twentieth century – from Hans Robert Jauss (1989) and Wolfgang Iser (1985) to Stanley Fish (2007), via Jacques Derrida (1967) and Umberto Eco (1979) – led to a re-evaluation of the role of the public in the creative process and artistic production. Pierre Bourdieu's theories of the 'field' (1991), Michel Espagne's and Michael Werner's transfer (1999) and Pascale Casanova's *mondialisation* (1999), in tandem with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of the rhizome (2013) and Bruno Latour's actor-network theory (2005) have in recent decades shifted focus to the passage of the object from one context to another, therefore placing less emphasis on the subject as an actor in the reception process. However, borealism highlights the need to consider cultural circulation both in relation to the reaction of the audience – including its horizon of expectation (Jauss 1989) – and at the level of the transformation of the work in its transitions from one context to another. In other words, to understand borealism, it is essential to consider the displacement and variation of the cultural product while also considering its perception in the reception context and the reterritorialisation process in the production context. For the study of borealism, though, it is not only necessary to focus on the process of the transfer of Northern cultural *imaginaries* but also on products/objects/subjects. Jauss, Iser, and Eco belong to a tradition that privileges the subject rather than the process; I propose here a reception toolset that similarly accounts for processes as well as subjects. Alongside the aforementioned theories, this study incorporates considerations derived from adaptation theory (Linda Hutcheon's 2012 theory in particular), translation studies (Ladmiral

2014; Venuti 1995), and imagology (Moura 1992; Leerseen 2007) to account for the cultural and material transformation of images relevant to borealism.

These theories constitute an only partially complete method for accomplishing this synthesis between cultural displacements and their relation to the contexts of reception and production. Literary and sociological theories are not sufficient to simultaneously explain, at the same level, reception, imagology, cultural transfer, and adaptation perspectives because they each focus on different aspects (the actor, the object, the subject, the network, the transformation). For these reasons, I propose to turn to the disciplines that study development and learning, as they make it possible to combine all these previously mentioned aspects and to then consider them as necessary phenomena of the same process.

By considering learning as a process of acquiring new knowledge influenced by different aspects (personal strategies, strategies of the surrounding environment, individual experiences, collective experiences, information from external reality), the conceptual similarity with the principles that regulate the imaginary becomes evident. This article, a new contribution to the study of the imaginary and reception (the two subjects on which borealism focuses) draws on prior American studies of education, in particular David Kolb's studies on 'experiential learning' (1984).ⁱⁱ

Kolb's definition of 'experiential learning' points to the moment in which an individual is immersed in action, in experimentation and in discussing a phenomenon. In our case, this corresponds to the moment in which representations of the North are received and processed by an individual, an event which allows us to understand how they react as 'ideal' spectators, to use Eco's terminology. The advantage of this model is that it allows us to consider the active position of the individual in producing a representation of the North, without however limiting the analysis to that single individual (and with this I mean at the same time that we need to understand the reception as part of the process of the representation and that representations are received and then produce new representations). In fact, the learner (as well as the individual pondering the North) is personally involved in and at the same time influenced by their own perceptions and reactions to the experience itself, but they are also influenced by the perceptions and reactions (previous and contemporary) of the cultural community they inhabit. In the Experiential Learning model defined by Kolb, the learning journey is outlined as a life-long process for the individual: like learning, borealism is a social process that has

an individual function that can also be analysed at the level of community, and thus does not belong exclusively to scholars of Northern subjects. Along Kolb's reasoning, an experience, constructed around multiple cognitive phases, thus implies an exchange and a negotiation, producing sensations and behaviours on which the individual frames the actions of observation and reflection, examining events from multiple points of view and acquiring awareness of the lived experience. The image elaborated about a given phenomenon concerning the North is thus modified through experience.

Let us again consider the case of polar exploration and the legend maintained for centuries (nourished through maps, travelogues, and literary productions) of the Arctic Ocean as an ice-free passage to reach Asia (Rémy 2009: chap.1-2). The experience of arctic explorers, journey after journey, revealed this geographic assumption, previously closely associated with the North Pole, to be invalid. This processing mechanism (individual and collective) can be explained through the stages of the Kolbian process. The understanding of events and the interpretation of those events through reflexive observation leads the individual to conceptualise functioning relationships and elaborate concepts that integrate observations into reference theories (called the abstract conceptualisation phase and corresponding here with the elaboration of the iceless Arctic Ocean legend inspired by the publication of Marco Polo's *Book of the Marvels of the World*). Intentionality and awareness are also fundamental elements (called the active experimentation phase, or in our case when physical expeditions demonstrated the impossibility of easily navigating the area that should correspond to the fabled Arctic Ocean) as the concepts associated with the North are applied and tested in this phase. Experimentation is especially productive for mental images, generating new experiences from acquired knowledge to produce novel ways of thinking and processing images (in other words, the period in which scientific theories, maps, and travelogues were developed to try to combine the legend with facts that seemed to disprove it). The concrete experience of the North (in our case, the discovery of the Northwest and the Northeast Passages and the confirmation that the Arctic is not a sea but an expanse of ice) is built upon the different phases of the interaction of the boreal processes, which follow or overlap one another, affecting the individual's knowledge and perception of the North with a direct effect on the semantics attributed to the representations of the North.

Tropic, inclusive, and exclusive interaction: boreal dynamics

Starting from Kolb's model, the analysis of the endogenous and exogenous processes can be approached through the study of three constitutive interactions: the inclusive interaction, the tropic interaction, and the exclusive interaction (Ballotti 2018). Though Kolb's model integrates all three interactions, each one has its own dynamics that we will discuss here. Recent research and discussion among experts have shown that the most epistemologically fruitful interaction is the tropic interaction, which we will explore in the following (Jamet 2018; Cedergren 2019; Stahl 2020).

We will first briefly explain the other two boreal interactions. In the presence of a cultural production including an *idée reçue* of the North (a particular type of stereotype, according to Ruth Amossy) (1992), the *exclusive interaction* is activated – the most unstable type of interaction that leads to a rapid transformation into one of the other two boreal dynamics (tropic and inclusive). It occurs in the absence of shared zones between the endogenous and exogenous processes, although this does not imply a lack of exchange between the two. In fact, the endogenous and exogenous processes remain impermeable and changeable entities that exist through the exchanges that constantly take place between one and the other. Despite the fact that this configuration occurs when representations of the process are exclusive, we can witness the elaboration of exogenous clichés that are structured in 'couches discursives différenciées' (Chartier 2016: 189) (distinct discursive layers). A fascination with the North does not require direct knowledge of it in order to produce mental images – one thinks, for example, of the Greco-Roman legends about the Hyperboreans and the land they inhabited (Briens 2021), showing how the presence of representative clichés is not necessarily due to the presence of shared mental images. It must also be considered that this configuration of the relations between the endogenous and exogenous process is easily transformed: as the exchanges between the two processes proceed, the representations elaborated by the exogenous process may incorporate some new factors introduced by the exchange and therefore be the product of a new dialogue. The consequence of this phenomenon is the new presence of some endogenous elements (recognised as specific signs of otherness in the exogenous perspective) that are once again projected onto the endogenous process. It should be specified that this does not signify that there are clichés within the exogenous sphere that cannot also be

found in the endogenous space, nor that an exogenous representation cannot trigger evolution within endogenous representations.

Inclusive interaction occurs when the endogenous process and the exogenous process are in a relationship with a high degree of exchange of representations – as in the case of Nordic Noir fiction. The strong correlation and dependence of the representations elaborated within the endogenous and exogenous perspectives is such that separating them is impossible (as the endogenous representation – of Nordic Noir in this case – is interpreted by the exogenous perspective). Cultural transfers, circulations and exchanges contribute to the perpetual reworking of Northern representations and their semantic value: the reciprocal transmission of images developed in the endogenous and exogenous spheres leads to a transfer of information and transformation of representations, acted upon by the phenomena of cultural appropriation and re-appropriation.

The notion of *vnenachodimost* (exotopia or extralocality) developed in the field of anthropological philosophy by Mikhail Bakhtin provides an explanation for this phenomenon (1975). Exotopia refers to the external posture (in time and space) of the observer with respect to the cultural process that the individual wishes to understand, a conception that allows for understanding without necessarily implying total identification, which has the tendency of inhibiting understanding. In other words, Bakhtin emphasises the necessary existence of the exogenous principle of cultural processes by stressing how endogenous reflection derives from it. The processes of cultural transfer and re-appropriation that characterise the circulation (and creation) of contemporary Nordic Noir are among the phenomena that can be explained through inclusive interaction (Stougaard-Nielsen 2016, 2017).

We now move on to the third type of interaction of the endogenous and exogenous process: the *tropic interaction*. The adjective ‘tropic’ refers to the Greek word *trope* used in rhetoric to indicate the semantic translation of the primary meaning of a word, and it emphasises the extension of the traditional meaning of an expression (as in the case of metaphors, metonymy, or allegories). In terms of the boreal dynamic, tropic interaction thus indicates an extension of the endogenous process that coincides with the exogenous process (or vice versa), consequently changing the semantic value of the representations produced in a shared space. Tropic interaction, then, implies the existence of contact points between the endogenous and exogenous process, which can be explained through the principle of Foucauldian heterotopia (1984). In defining heterotopia, Michel

Foucault proposes to consider complicated 'other spaces' characterised by a 'double nature' as oxymoronic spaces where the juxtaposition of normally distant elements (in time, space, conceptual elaboration) occurs. Those produced representations are individual to tropic interaction because this common space between the endogenous and exogenous process has the function of juxtaposing 'en un seul lieu réel plusieurs espaces, plusieurs emplacements qui sont en eux-mêmes incompatibles' (Foucault 1984: 17) (in a singular physical location different spaces, different places that are in themselves incompatible) and thus contains elements that go beyond the logic of standard space-time. Heterotopia concerns those out-of-the-ordinary experiences that are found in 'lieux qui sont hors de tous les lieux, bien que pourtant ils soient effectivement localisables' (*Ibid.*) (places outside of all places, even though they are, effectively, locatable). These are spaces of proximity that allow the elaboration of a new meaning of the representations produced in them, since their signifiers are transformed according to changes in the shared context. In concrete terms, these heterotopias are identified with particular cultural experiences such as the colonies of Scandinavian artists in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century. The foreign experiences of these artists were fundamental to the development of a specific aesthetic tendency of paintings from Scandinavian artists and recognised as characteristic of northern latitudes in other European countries integrating some borealistic effects – such as the 'light of the North' (Leguy 2016). These places of encounter and exchange experienced as shared spaces between two identities in which it is no longer possible to define what is northern and what is not exemplify the role of heterotopia and its relationship to deterritorialisation in the study of certain cultural productions.

Tropic interaction implies spaces that are fundamental to the elaboration of cultural products representative of the Imagined North, but which are not always geographically linked to the area of the North. The notion of geographical place thus loses its value and concreteness. This aligns with Briens's definition of borealism, where evocations of North favour a deterritorialisation, which contributes to a representation that is independent of geography. Precisely because of their heterotopic nature, in the tropic interaction there exists the phenomenon of territorialisation-deterritorialisation-reterritorialisation, indicated by Deleuze and Guattari as phases of exchange of productions between different geographical-cultural areas (1980). These three interactions are mutable, constantly composing and recomposing themselves, transforming and

overlapping in a perpetual exchange, as the different nature of the boreal interactions depends on the relationship between the endogenous and exogenous processes. Yet, they should not be considered as fixed structural models but as useful configurations to understand the transformations of borealism and the representations that characterise it.

The analysis of the endogenous and exogenous process through the inclusive, tropic and exclusive interactions completes the conceptual perspective of borealism, but it still needs to be explained in terms of reception and thus through the three postures that can be assumed by the individual interfacing with the representations: the authoritarian, contractual and community postures.

Reception: the authoritarian, contractual, and community postures

Since the different interactions modify according to the individual's knowledge of the Nordic subject, they align with a system similar to the experiential pedagogy theorised by Kolb, where the interactions and the posture of the individual are the basis of the learning and knowledge processes. The key to understanding the effects of borealism is found in the perspective of the one who learns or observes, here meaning the audience. The interactions of the endogenous and exogenous processes of borealism therefore need to be considered in relation to their effects on the modes of reception.

Since borealism deals with the question of representations of the North, it is not only important to understand *by* whom these ideas about the North are elaborated, but also *for* whom they are elaborated. The origins of borealism are aligned with the tradition of reception studies. Jauss's studies and the Constance school of thought, in particular, have already decreed how the audience's horizon of expectation influences the realisation of the art object; by extension, the influence on the elaboration of mental images becomes a pertinent topic for consideration. Indeed, the purely literary/artistic perspective risks limiting the reach that the Imagined North may have. This broader view of boreal dynamics could, then, bring a new perspective to reception studies.

Assuming that each individual possesses their own personal knowledge of the North (dependent on the cultural community/ies in which they developed as well as personal experience), the position of the observer is fundamental in determining the nature of boreal representations. Taking the audience into consideration, there are

three different postures to indicate the reception process: the authoritarian posture, the contractual posture and the communal posture. They are not strictly dependent on the type of boreal interaction but are related to the method of knowledge production and reflection on the received cultural product.

Authoritarian posture (from L. *auctoritas*) indicates the false hierarchy that places the subject above the subject of study. As has happened to every researcher during the course of their work, the approach to a new object of study gives rise to the presumption (or authority) of being able to easily understand and manage the subject matter. This reveals a kind of knowledge that is neither necessarily superficial nor well-developed, where the direct experience of a phenomenon structures the audience's posture: in terms of learning, direct experience (learning through action) is partial but immediate and momentarily replaces the individual's conviction of not knowing. In terms of boreal dynamics, the authoritarian posture has a generalising tendency (e.g. stereotypes) due to the lack of contact between the endogenous and exogenous processes. The authoritative posture occurs on two different occasions: when the observer is placed either in front of a new or renewed representation of the North, and later when awareness of a reductive discernment of the plurality of elements that constitute Northernness has developed – when some knowledge of the North and its constituting elements has been obtained.

The *community posture*, on the other hand, concerns a shared perception at a group level that recognises and associates the same representations and semantic value with a communal mental image of the North. As suggested by Benedict Andersson (1991), the sense of identity requires an internal cohesion based on the imagination of individuals who perceive themselves as members of the group. This type of posture occurs when the simple fascination with otherness is replaced by a more active posture of the observer (what Kolb defines as 'active experimentation') who does not merely receive and examine representations of the North but produces others, inspired by the representations and meanings that the North has assumed within the cultural community. It is not a matter of reproducing pre-existing representations of the North, but of resemantising some of them and elaborating new ones, which become representative for the cultural community. This entails a transformation of the representations associated with the North, increasing and renewing the spectrum of mental images attributed to this geographic-linguistic-cultural area (transformation by extension). To paraphrase Iser, the dialogical

relationship between the representation and the observer decisively conditions the work in its artistic character and historicity. The observer, therefore, is an active and decisive component in the reception process of the representation of the North, whose historical significance and aesthetic rank is determined by each generation. It is therefore not a question of considering only the representation of the North but also of considering the meaning attributed to it by a cultural community, since it is not the representation that establishes the interpretation but the value that the audience associates with it.

As the expression 'concrete experience' suggests, it is not enough to read, observe, witness, know indirectly or even actively reproduce at a community level in order to assimilate elements of the Imagined North, as the individual must actively strive to integrate experience with knowledge. Concrete experience is, at a deeper level than knowledge, determined by the feeling of belonging or continuity to the cultural community whose artistic phenomena have been assimilated, yet it also affects individual experiences. These elements characterise the *contractual posture*, which refers to a participatory attitude often found in tropic interaction.

Integrating the perspective of the context under analysis and understanding it through concrete experience means moving to a higher stage of knowledge; it is identified through observation and abstraction of phenomena. The in-depth reflection and conceptualisation of what is representative of the North indicates a desire to give new meaning to the representations and thus is indicative of a process of intentional transformation of the semantic referents and a new understanding of the idea of the North.

This is a case of relocation of the North in which cultural products deeply associated with the North are elaborated (e.g. the proliferation of cultural products related to the Danish phenomenon of *hygge*, which, as a result of international interest, have begun to be developed and studied in Denmark by an institution like The Happiness Research Institute). Paradoxically, this posture can entail such a knowledge of the context of artistic production that the existence of endogenous and exogenous spheres of existence is questioned. At such a level of knowledge and sensitivity to what was initially foreign, is it still possible to think in terms of exchange and transference, or is the very content of this knowledge inseparable from exchange? Not only is this possible, but it is the task of the researcher to try to understand the components of thought and the representations associated with it, because, to borrow Wunenburger's words, in this article's epigraph, the study of the imaginary and its modes of operation facilitates the

understanding of cultural phenomena by avoiding the limitations of a systematic, closed, and existentialist way of thinking.

Conclusion

As francophone research in recent years has shown, the distinction between endogenous and exogenous borealism has proved particularly effective in naming the phenomena of reception, transfer, and cultural circulation. The exogenous-endogenous model constitutes the first attempt to explain borealism by identifying its epistemological foundations.

The contribution of endogenous and exogenous borealism does not, however, end in the simple labelling of two distinct entities useful only for cataloguing. On the contrary, it is a concrete methodological contribution to the study of representations of the North. This does not mean that it is a universal structuralist model that claims to explain the totality of phenomena associated with cultural productions from the North. It is a promising, fruitful area of study for researchers who aim to better understand and reveal the underlying mechanics of reception, conception, and elaboration of cultural products of, in, and around the North. For these reasons, the analysis of endogenous and exogenous processes, inclusive, tropic, and exclusive interactions as well as authoritarian, contractual, and community posture completes but does not exhaust the conceptual perspective of borealism and the tools for analysing it.

Examined from these perspectives, borealism is no longer just a tool that conveys various aspects of imagological theories of cultural representations and transfer, but a true Northern gaze taking the form of an approach that allows one to go beyond the analysis of Northern experience alone and to elaborate a discourse on the function of the skills and knowledge of those who wish to express themselves on the topic of the North.

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ii The proximity between the two fields of research is greater than we might think: similar to the interactions between endogenous borealism and exogenous borealism, learning is a process in which knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Of course, one might say that of most areas in the Arts and Humanities, as every activity creates knowledge through the transformation of experience; the point is that Kolb's process becomes a model to study the way in which it is structured: the advantage of choosing such an established model is precisely to shift the focus to the process while still taking into consideration all other aspects.