

If people who practice traditional sewing in a contemporary context can overlook these flaws, *Women's Work Women's Art* offers a storehouse of information. The close observation this book is based on expresses respect. Hopefully curators and academics using this text will work closely with practitioners of this art form, to whose living cultures it belongs.

Nicole Bauberger, Whitehorse

***The Franz Boas Enigma.* By Ludger Müller-Wille. Montréal: Baraka Books, 2014. 188 pp. 38 figures (photos, maps, sketches).**

This is a short but very intriguing examination of Boas's early writings in German and, through this, glimpses of the way he planned his career in general and his work in the Canadian Arctic in particular. Ludger Müller-Wille, in a great partnership with his wife Linna, has been researching and writing about aspects of Boas's work for many years. The eleven Müller-Wille items in the book's bibliography go from 1983 to 2011, all of them pertaining to Boas or his remarkable servant *cum* companion Wilhelm Weike. This amounts to a very intensive examination of Boas's life and work, drawing in particular on German sources.

The Müller-Willes are from Germany, but have lived and worked in Montreal and the Canadian North for some thirty-five years. In much of their work they have used their reading of German documents, including letters and journals, alongside their own first-hand fieldwork in the region where Boas did his pioneering ethnographical study in the 1880s. This latest Müller-Wille publication at times feels a little as if thrown together to make up a book, but it includes new material and a fresh and, at times, moving picture of Boas's personality. It is fascinating to read in Boas's own words about his careful and determined shaping of career; and also of his profound intellectual commitment, as a very young man, to philosophical and cultural relativism.

It is fascinating to think about Boas taking the works of Kant with him to Baffin Island, and important to realize that from the very beginning of his intellectual life he was steeped in the philosophical and scientific ideas of German thinkers who were advancing the principles of human universality and the universality of humanity. Boas arrived among the Inuit with the basis for cultural relativism firmly in place; his discovery of the distinctive genius of the Inuit then confirmed what he was able to see—that there is

nothing that could be deemed to be inferior about them. Müller-Wille quotes Boas writing in a letter to his fiancée Marie, which he wrote when travelling with Inuit in Cumberland Sound:

And what I want, what I will live and die for, is equal rights for all, equal opportunities to [work] and strive for poor and rich! Don't you think that when one has done even a little toward this, this is more than the whole of science together?

Here is the voice of a young and idealistic German, expressing in personal terms what he has already established from and within his own intellectual tradition. Fifty years later Boas would find he had to restate his insight, his science, in defiance of the growing horror and intellectual idiocy of the German Nazis, pointing out "that pseudo-scientific racism is a monstrous fallacy or a shameless lie."

As is well known, Boas began his intellectual life as a scientist, working at the boundaries of physics and geography, and then shifted towards the borders between geography and ethnography. His need to be the scientist much influenced the ways he reported on his time with Inuit, his first experience of fieldwork in that place he always called Baffin Land. Yet the book follows his move away from both science and ethnography into journalism, and his astonishing productivity as a writer. It seems that between 1885 and 1890 he produced some 150 pieces, about half of them in English, the language he was still seeking to master. Many of these were articles of popular science, and were perhaps his way of establishing a reputation for himself in North America, having decided to forego his careful establishment of all his credentials to teach in universities in Germany. The spectrum of interest and investigation was indeed vast, with a doctorate in physics from Kiel at one end, and stories of adventures on the ice with Inuit at the other.

Boas emerged from an emancipated Jewish and Enlightenment background, with its dedication to the intense life of the mind and, perhaps very much in the German Jewish tradition, commitment to a fiercely demanding work ethic. He had to cope with anti-semitism, and perhaps his decision to move to North America was in part the result of a strong sense that his best chance of a free and open life lay outside Germany. It is a pity that Müller-Wille does not go much beyond the facts unearthed in the German language sources his text offers. The book is fascinating for its unexpected details, but hardly ever goes beyond them to larger questions about either context or Boas himself.

There is, however, intriguing insight into Boas's conviction that the Inuit are doomed to extinction. As Müller-Wille notes, this was very much the mindset of the times, and no doubt was much reinforced by Boas finding himself a witness to the impact on the Inuit of European whalers who had been visiting the Cumberland Sound area each summer for several decades. Whalers brought many kinds of change, including a wide range of dangerous illnesses, from everyday infections to which the Inuit had no established immunity and from which they therefore suffered many deaths, to sexually transmitted diseases. They also brought alcohol and very inequitable trading. Other Inuit groups, notably in the Western Arctic, had been brought to near extinction by this set of impacts brought by the crews of whaling ships; Boas was not alone in thinking that the same was going to happen on Baffin Island.

A question mark that hangs over Boas's ethnographic work in the Arctic is the level he achieved in his study of Inuktitut. At some early points in his notes he seems to claim to have achieved a high enough level of comprehension to be able to record the full range of Inuit belief and oral culture. In reality, this was just not possible; and it appears Boas himself came to appreciate his limitations. In fact, Boas relied very much on James Mutch, the former Scottish whaler who managed the permanent whaling station in the area where Boas was working, and who had acquired excellent Inuktitut over many years. Müller-Wille refers to Kenn Harper's research into this fascinating and crucial relationship, which delivered help to Boas over more than twenty years. But in this book, thanks to the German primary sources, we can see the over-confident claims of youth—and can easily forgive them.

Apart from his mistaken pessimism about the fate of the Inuit, Boas emerges from here as a fascinating and sympathetic figure. The chapters are very much separate essays; at times the editing leaves the reader with a strong sense of their having been created without careful regard for one another. But Müller-Wille is sharing with his English language readers new glimpses of the man who has so often been celebrated as the father of anthropology. There are moments in this book where this paternity is given fresh reason for celebration: Boas was a dedicated man of his times and, when he knew he must speak out against the worst of those times, an honourable man. It is good to be reminded of the underlying integrity of good anthropology.

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