

Archives of the Arctic. Ice, Entropy and Memory
Sept. 18-20, 2013
Berlin, Germany

Ulrike Vedder

From Prague to Greenland: Ice memories in Libuše Moníková's novel „Treibeis“ (“Drift Ice”)

In 1992, Libuše Moníková (1945 Prague – 1998 Berlin) has published her great novel *Drift Ice*. This novel takes Greenland as its point of departure where a Czech teacher, exiled since 1948, tries to explain the Shakespearean theater – to be understood as a ‘memory theater’ – in front of young Inuits, while he has stocked his own traumatic memories in the arctic ice, as is said in the text. When he has to attend a pedagogical conference in Austria (the novel is set in summer 1971), he meets a Czech girl, exiled after 1968, and both start traveling together through a strange Europe, heading for an imaginative – and inaccessible – Prague. At the same time they are floating through memory fragments and trauma narratives of European history that are assembled by the novel like ‘drifting ice’ that constitutes neither a panoramic landscape nor an encyclopedic recall nor an ‘easy to use’ archive.

Thus – as will be developed in the talk – the title of the novel *Drift Ice* indicates its own mode of narrating as well as a literary way of archiving that is aware not only of the possibilities of remembering but also of those of freezing and getting lost.