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**Novaya Zemlya after Willem Barentsz: The mythology of “Nova Zembla” in English-language literature and journalism**

Dutch navigator William Barentsz went on three Arctic expeditions to Novaya Zemlya between 1594 and 1597. After his voyages, Novaya Zemlya (called “Nova Zembla” by the English and the Dutch) gained a mythical status in English-language literature and journalism, becoming a symbol of the frozen and terrifying North.

The legendary status would persist century after century, beginning soon after the surviving crew members from Barentsz’s last expedition made their return to Amsterdam in 1597. A Dutch edition of the account of their overwintering on “Nova Zembla” would appear almost immediately. Within a year, it would be translated into German, Latin and French.

By 1609, it would be published in English. But even before its publication in English, William Shakespeare included a reference to the Dutch overwintering on Novaya Zemlya in his play “Twelfth Night.”

The men’s suffering was seen as so extraordinary that in the West, “Nova Zembla” became the symbol of the mysterious, forbidden North. Nova Zembla would be used in this way by poet Alexander Pope, satirist Jonathan Swift, and novelists Charlotte Brontë and Jules Verne. With his own long interest in the islands, Vladimir Nabokov would refer to Nova Zembla in his poetry, memoirs and his novel *Pale Fire*, where he created the distant northern kingdom of Zembla. Salman Rushdie would also mention it in a dystopian novel. Now, due to novelist William Boyd, there exists an unusual word in English: *zemblanity*, describing the predictable disaster and misfortune inherent in the idea of Novaya Zemlya.

I will address these mythologies around Novaya Zemlya and how Barentsz’s expeditions shaped them. In addition, I will share my own experiences of going to these places and writing about them as a journalist.