

The Postcolonial North Atlantic  
Iceland, Greenland and the Faroe Islands

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EBBE VOLQUARDSEN

Pathological Escapists, Passing and the Perpetual Ice:  
Old and New Trends in  
Danish-Greenlandic Migration Literature

In an interview with *Al Jazeera English*, British filmmaker Sarah Gavron explains her motivation for shooting the documentary *Village at the End of the World* (2013), a Danish production filmed in Greenland: »Other films of Greenland have mostly focused on nature, or the social issues of the cities. We wanted to tell the story of the people we met in the settlement, revealing their resilience, wit and determination.«<sup>1</sup> Being the director of the film adaptation of Monica Ali's novel *Brick Lane*<sup>2</sup>, Gavron is familiar with the postcolonial subject. With her statement, she disassociates herself from two prevalent modes of representing contemporary Greenland. The first depicts the country as a breathtaking natural landscape in which humans hardly ever appear. When they do, they are portrayed either as traditional hunters or – in most cases – as an exogenous threat to an allegedly unspoiled and unpopulated ecosphere. The second focuses on social problems in the towns, showing Greenland as a dysfunctional society ravaged by alcoholism, violence, child abuse and corruption, unable to meet the challenges that have accompanied gradual emancipation from former colonial power Denmark. The latter perspective (widely held in the Danish media) has, however, lost significance in recent years, especially in the wake of the controversial debate surrounding the 2007 Danish documentary *Flugten fra Grønland* (»The Escape from Greenland«).<sup>3</sup>

In *Village at the End of the World*, the protagonists speak for themselves. Over a period of several years, Gavron and her Danish co-director David Katznelson accompanied the inhabitants of the village of Niaqornat, who narrate the story of their community in a number of interviews. At the beginning of the film, Niaqornat's existence is under threat. Since

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1 GAVRON: 2013.

2 Monica Ali's debut novel *Brick Lane* (2003), named after a street in East London, is set in the milieu of Bangladeshi immigrants and was made into film by Gavron in 2007.

3 Cf. GANT: 2009 for a critical analysis of the film and the debate it provoked within the Greenlandic public.

the government-owned company *Royal Greenland* closed the local fish factory, the population has been in danger of dropping below 50. If this trend continues, all subsidies – such as the helicopter connection with the outside world and supplies to the small grocery store – will be cut, forcing the villagers to move to the next town. However, the strong-willed people of Niaqornat succeed in reviving the factory as a cooperative project, and are thus able to avert the death of their community.

Although the documentary does without an explanatory narrator, in one scene the cutting technique can be interpreted as a commenting intervention by the filmmakers. This is also the only moment in the film where a person not belonging to the village community gets the chance to speak.<sup>4</sup> A cruise ship has landed in Niaqornat and the villagers slip into their costumes in order to give the tourists an authentic picture of the traditional Inuit life they expect to see. The travel company pays: Anyone who shows up in the traditional costume or in sealskin clothing, or who invites tourists home for coffee and cookies, is given a small amount of money. Even in remote Niaqornat, tourism is beginning to develop into an industry. When a Danish cruise tourist expresses his enthusiasm about the lifestyle of the Inuit – which, according to him, has not changed for centuries and hopefully will not be affected by external influences in the future either – Gavron and Katznelson's camera zooms in on a girl wearing a colorful costume and sealskin boots; she is sitting on a stoop operating her laptop. Even before the Dane has finished his statement, it has already been refuted; his remarks are revealed to be the unreflecting reproduction of an essentialist image of Greenland that has its roots in among others polar explorer Fridtjof Nansen's critique of civilization expressed in his writings from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Ever since, such perspectives have had a significant share in European representations of the now former Danish colony.<sup>5</sup>

The scene illustrates two things. Firstly, it is symptomatic of a recent paradigm shift within Danish and European depictions of Greenland. According to this, the established perspectives of the metropolis on the periphery – powerful since colonial times – are especially in film, literature and the arts being challenged by new ways of thinking that subject

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4 Interestingly enough, the scene is missing in the shortened 45 minutes TV version, which was shown on Danish public television, DR 2, in March 2013.

5 Cf. THISTED: 2003, 33–35.

both the historical and the contemporary relationship of dependency between Greenland and Denmark to a critical renegotiation and do not accept without comment a mere perpetuation of the narratives generated in colonial discourse. Whereas the filmmakers' camera maintains a neutral position during the interviews with the Greenlandic villagers, the tourist is ruthlessly exposed as a culturalist and proponent of ethno-aesthetics. With this term, Greenlandic visual artist and postcolonial theorist Pia Arke<sup>6</sup> criticizes the incapacitation of Greenlanders by a »commandment of exoticism«,<sup>7</sup> enacted by a Western cultural elite that, by requesting authentic Greenlandic cultural products, denies the locals the prerogative of interpretation over their own cultural identification. Secondly, the scene prevents the romanticization of an »unspoiled« Inuit culture, a practice that in the film is ironized via the encounter between the tech-savvy villagers and European cruise tourists longing for pre-modern authenticity. A coherent portrait of a local Greenlandic community in 2013 should avoid reproducing the image of a population isolated from the outside world. Even in a place like Narsarsuaq, which is very different from the rest of (mostly urbanized) Greenland, an infrastructure that complies with Western standards and contact with travelers from all over the world are now a part of everyday life.

### Danish labor migrants and performative biographism

»When you've seen the world, there's always Greenland«, is a saw that once circulated among well-traveled seafarers, illustrating the peripheral location of the island. Indeed, Greenland's advancement into an increasingly popular tourist destination must be regarded as a phenomenon of recent times.<sup>8</sup> Climate change (whose effects are being experienced directly in the Arctic), the hope for a future utilization of raw materials and hitherto frozen waterways, and the implementation of self-rule in 2009 have moved Greenland into the international limelight. Images of political leaders concerned about global warming in front of the Ilulissat ice fjord were followed by numerous reports on public television and not least by offers from travel companies affordable for a wider public. The growing relevance of Greenland for political challenges of global signifi-

6 ARKE: 2010.

7 Cf. VOLQUARDSEN: 2011, 139–145.

8 See TOMMASINI: 2012 on tourism in the Arctic.

cance has apparently helped to reduce the perceived distance between the Arctic island and the centers of Europe and America.

In Denmark particularly, where for years the media have been paying considerable attention to political and geopolitical developments in Greenland, this trend also involves cultural production, especially literature. »The writers love to write about Greenland«<sup>9</sup>, reported the Greenlandic broadcasting company *KNR* on the occasion of the Copenhagen Book Fair in the fall of 2013. Anyone following new publications on the Danish book market will have noticed that Greenland as a literary setting has experienced increased significance in recent years. This development is on the one hand due to the general increase in attention for Greenland-related topics, and on the other hand following an international trend that has led to a boom in literature addressing the societies of former European colonies, as Elisabeth Oxfeldt has illustrated on the basis of the latest Nobel laureates in literature.<sup>10</sup>

Starting with Bernhard Severin Ingemann's novella *Kunnuk og Naja* from 1847, the list of Danish literature set in Greenland is long and includes many prominent names, such as Henrik Pontoppidan, Knud Sønderby, Jacob Bech Nygaard, Sven Holm and Peter Høeg.<sup>11</sup> Hence, Denmark looks back on a long tradition of literary engagement in Greenland, and many of the modes of representation that were introduced to literary discourse in colonial times still possess a remarkable tenacity, not least due to their intertextual aftermath. However, the latest examples of Danish Greenland literature mark a caesura. With authors like Lotte Inuk, Kim Leine and Iben Mondrup – all born in the 1960s – a new generation of writers is entering the arena. They have witnessed themselves how the Danish province became a largely self-governing region in 1979. With the country's political change of status, new forms of travel between Denmark and Greenland came along. Today, some 30 years after the implementation of home rule, they find their literary expression in the topos of Danish migration to postcolonial Greenland, an issue that lies at the core of Inuk, Leine and Mondrup's recent literary writings.

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9 »Forfatterne elsker at skrive om Grønland« (KREBS: 2013).

10 Cf. OXFELDT: 2012, 30–31.

11 THISTED: 2003 provides an excellent overview of the history of Danish literature set in Greenland. However, the latest wave of Danish Greenland literature is not discussed due to the age of the article.

Until 1953, Greenland was a closed-off colony that could only be entered by colonial administration employees, expedition travelers and holders of special permits. Then, in the 1960s and 1970s, large numbers of Danish craftsmen temporarily moved to Greenland. They were involved in large-scale infrastructure projects, the core of the »modernization policy« by which the Copenhagen government wanted to shape the standard of living and lifestyle of the Greenlanders to conform with the example of the Danish welfare state. When home rule was established, the Danish workforce was no longer sent out (*udsendt*), but sent for (*tilkaldt*). Given a shortage of trained Greenlandic manpower, Danes, despite the anti-colonial political climate of these years, soon found themselves in all imaginable positions of Greenland's labor market.

The authors Kim Leine, Lotte Inuk and Iben Mondrup belong to these Danish labor migrants of the first or second generation. They have spent their youth or parts of their adult life in Greenland – an experience that they share with the protagonists of their novels. Therefore, a strong autobiographical character is a common feature of their texts, which thus fall into line with an emerging tendency in contemporary Scandinavian literature that Mads Bunch aptly regards as the »perhaps most important new paradigm within prose and poetry in the Nordic countries throughout the 2000s«<sup>12</sup> and which Danish literary scholar Jon Helt Haarder calls »performative biographism«.<sup>13</sup> What Haarder means by this is a form of literary self-exposition: The authors mix elements from autobiography and fiction and thus calculatedly play with the reactions of the readers and the general public that are evoked by the application of such strategies of authentication. In Lotte Inuk's *Sultekunstnerinde* (2004) and Kim Leine's *Kalak* (2007) (which exhibits the genre hybrid »memory novel« –

<sup>12</sup> »det måske vigtigste nye paradigme inden for både prosa og lyrik i hele Norden op gennem 2000'erne« (BUNCH: 2013, 42). All translations from Danish by Ebbe Volquardsen, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>13</sup> »performativ biografisme« (cf. HAARDER: 2010 and HAARDER: 2014). Prominent examples of the practice of performative biographism in contemporary Scandinavian literature beyond the Greenland sujet are e.g. Jonas Hassen Khemiri's novel *Ett öga rött* (»One Eye Red«; 2003), Jørgen Leth's *Det uperfekte menneske* (»The Imperfect Human«; 2005), Knud Romer's *Den som blinker er bange for døden* (»Those who wink are afraid of death«; 2006), Karl Ove Knausgård's six-volume novel project *Min Kamp* (»My Struggle«; 2009–2011), multiple projects by Danish transmedia artist Claus Beck-Nielsen (artistic alias: Das Beckwerk), and most recently Yahya Hassan's poetry collection *Yahya Hassan* (2013).

*erindringsroman* – as a paratext on its cover) author, narrator and protagonist seem to be identical. These texts thus classify as »autofiction« or even »autonarration«<sup>14</sup>, whereas Iben Mondrup's novel *Store Malene* (2013) may to some extent be characterized as autobiographically inspired. The challenging of the line between fact and fiction gives the texts authority, as they are understood as estheticized narrations of reality. The practice is well received by the readers. »It seems as if people do not want to read fiction anymore«<sup>15</sup>, writes literary scholar Hans Hauge. »They ask for real stories about real people.«<sup>16</sup> Hence, the practice of »performative biographism« satisfies a demand for authentic portrayals, especially of milieus that on the one hand are regarded as socio-politically relevant, but on the other hand remain closed to large segments of the readership, be it due to social barriers or geographical distance.

Elisabeth Oxfeldt writes that the Nordic countries lack oppression, rebellion, war, poverty or other forms of turmoil, which are the prerequisites for regarding their contemporary literatures as interesting and relevant enough to include them in a canon of world literature as defined by David Damrosch.<sup>17</sup> Oxfeldt and Hauge's reflections still ring true when applied on the national Danish book market. Ever since institutionalized boredom in the Danish welfare society reached its boiling point as a recurring literary subject in Helle Helle's novel *Rødby-Puttgarden* (2005), a series of minimalistic everyday studies based around the eponymous ferry line, bestselling Danish authors have been moving the settings of their texts at an increasing rate to more exciting locations that often lie outside

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<sup>14</sup> According to BEHRENDT: 2011, writers of »autofictional« texts take the liberty of adding (invented) fictional elements to their (own) stories, whereas the term »autonarration« (a new phenomenon in Scandinavian literature) stands for a mere description of »real« events and life journeys that makes use of the aesthetics of fictional genres. However, »autofiction« and »autonarration« have in common the coincidence of author, protagonist and narrator.

<sup>15</sup> »Det lader til, at folk ikke orker at læse fiktioner længere.« (HAUGE: 2003, 221).

<sup>16</sup> »De vil have virkelige historier om virkelige mennesker.« (Ibid.).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. OXFELDT: 2012, 30. David DAMROSCH: 2003, 4 defines world literature as the body of all literary texts that circulate and are received outside their culture of origin, be it in the original version or in translation. In his later writings, Damrosch coins the term »airport novels« (DAMROSCH: 2014, 6), by which he means the global canon of literature that – mostly in English translation – is sold at international airports all over the world and consumed by a privileged and cosmopolitically oriented readership. The »non-place« of the airport (cf. AUGÉ: 2009) highlights the disentanglement of these texts from the context of the national literatures of their respective countries of origin.

the country's borders. The remarkable posthumous success of author Jakob Ejersbo is not least due to the setting of his trilogy of novels in East Africa, a region that Danes imagine as comparatively rich in turmoil.<sup>18</sup> The readers, who, according to Hauge, do not read literature as fiction any longer,<sup>19</sup> regard Ejersbo as competent to write about that part of the world, as the author spent his childhood and youth in Tanzania. Within the borders of the Danish realm, popular discourse most likely associates Greenland and the migrant-dominated suburbs of the cities with rebellion, poverty and turmoil. At the same time, these environments are highly inaccessible for the average reader. This is why 18-year-old Yahya Hassan succeeded in selling more than 100,000 copies of his first collection of poems within only a few weeks in the fall of 2013.<sup>20</sup> Due to their autobiographical character, the poems satisfied the long-felt demand for an authentic voice from the infamous Muslim parallel societies in the suburbs. The young Dane of Palestinian descent was thus transformed into a highly sought-after media personality within a short space of time. The same applies to Kim Leine and Iben Mondrup. Since the Danish public has been discussing Greenland's turn in the fields of raw material and independence policies (especially around the time of the Greenlandic general elections in the spring of 2013) both of them – Leine, however, more than Mondrup – have repeatedly been welcome guests on talk shows and in the opinions pages of the newspapers. The authors' expertise derives from their own biographies and the exhibition of them in highly regarded literary texts.

Taking up Doris Bachmann-Medick's reflections on the great turns in cultural theory, one may speak of a *biographical turn* given the increasing importance of author's biographies for Scandinavian literature and its reception.<sup>21</sup> The trend leads to a strengthening of literature, as the authors are increasingly heard in public debates against the backdrop of their literary work, and their texts are thus given authority. »Autofictional« and

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<sup>18</sup> Jakob Ejersbo's so called »Africa trilogy« (2009) consists of the novels *Eksil* and *Liberty* and the novella collection *Revolution*. See KÖRBER: 2011 and THISTED: 2011a for analyses of the trilogy from a postcolonial perspective.

<sup>19</sup> HAUGE: 2003, 204.

<sup>20</sup> HASSAN: 2013. However, Hassan's success is mainly due to the fact that his autobiographical poems reaffirm the Danish majority society's common prejudices directed against Muslims.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. BACHMANN-MEDICK: 2006.

autobiographically inspired novels therefore become important for the reevaluation of the relationship between Denmark and Greenland, a process that has gained pace since the implementation of self-rule. Like Sarah Gavron in the documentary film I discussed at the beginning, Kim Leine, Lotte Inuk and Iben Mondrup pick up on traditional narratives, stereotypes and modes of representation of Greenland, which in their texts are alienated, turned around or generally subjected to a critical debate. It is therefore fruitful to read the examples of Danish-Greenlandic migration literature that are presented in the remainder of this chapter against the backdrop of older texts that address different kinds of journeys between the Danish center and the Greenlandic periphery. First, I will analyze the role that Henrik Pontoppidan's 1887 novel *Isbjørnen* («The Polar Bear») plays as an intertext in Kim Leine's *Kalak* (2007).<sup>22</sup> I will then relate Lotte Inuk's novel *Sultekunstnerinde* («Hunger Artist»; 2004), which describes the challenges of a Danish teenager growing up in postcolonial Greenland, to texts by Greenlandic author Málíâraq Vebæk that deal with migration from Greenland to Copenhagen. In the outlook there will be space for some reflections on Iben Mondrup's *Store Malene* (2013)<sup>23</sup> and Kim Leine's *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden* («The Prophets of Eternity Fjord»; 2012).

### Henrik Pontoppidan and Kim Leine

In *Hamskifte* («Molting»; 1936), the middle part of his three-volume memoirs, Nobel literature laureate Henrik Pontoppidan (1857–1943)<sup>24</sup> describes his years of study in Copenhagen, during which, as referred to in the title,

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22 The term intertextuality was introduced to literary theory by Julia KRISTEVA: 1986. Following Michail Bakhtin, she assumes a dialogic relation between all texts, with the result that »any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations« (ibid., 37) and thus is the »the absorption and transformation of another [text]« (ibid.). Gérard GENETTE: 1982, who under the umbrella term of transtextuality has developed a differentiated typology of intertextual relations, conceives only the practice of quoting an intertext, whereas the abstract nexus of all texts described by Kristeva in Genette's terminology falls into the category of architextuality. In relation to Kim Leine's *Kalak*, Henrik Pontoppidan's short novel *Isbjørnen* serves as a hypertext, by which Genette means the transformation of a text in terms of adaption, parody or pastiche.

23 *Store Malene* is a geographical term and therefore untranslatable. It is the name of a mountain outside of Nuuk.

24 Pontoppidan shared the Nobel Prize with his nowadays little-known countryman Karl Gjellerup in 1917.

his conversion from being an engineer in the making to becoming a literary writer takes place. Pontoppidan gives a detailed account of his encounter with geologist Knud Steenstrup during a study trip to Bornholm. The prospect of being taken on one of Steenstrup's geological expeditions to Greenland motivates the young student, who prepares for this adventure by reading the extensive writings of then Danish colonial inspector in Greenland, Hinrich Rink. At the end, however, it is the frustration over another candidate making the grade that provokes the epiphanic key moment that causes Pontoppidan to quit his academic career and become an artist. Ever since its secularization through James Joyce in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), the idea of epiphany – originally a theological concept – has been a recurring feature of the (often autobiographically inspired) *Künstlerroman*. It describes the moment when the formation of the artist begins.

»Dejected like a spurned wooer on the wedding day of his beloved, I followed in thought the ship's way through the sound and further north«<sup>25</sup>, Pontoppidan writes when describing the »molting« of the engineer and the birth of the author. Without Pontoppidan explicitly naming it, one may consider his early short novel *Isbjørnen* a fruit of his coping with the disappointment. First printed as a feuilleton in the newspaper *Morgenbladet*, the novel only received moderate reviews when published as a book in 1887. Ironically, the circumstance that Pontoppidan had never been to Greenland himself came in for criticism by the reviewers.<sup>26</sup> Asking writers of fiction only to write about their own experiences is a strange demand, especially at a time more than 120 years before the emergence of literary self-exposition as a new tendency in Scandinavian literature. Here, the historical dimension of the claim for authenticity aimed at the Danish Greenland novel becomes apparent.

Despite the negative contemporary critiques, *Isbjørnen* has had an impressive impact on literary history and should be seen as canonical today. Of particular importance for its intertextual aftermath are the functions that the novel attributes to Greenland. In *Isbjørnen*, the country appears as a »retreat for maladjusted characters«,<sup>27</sup> as a voluntary or in-

25 »Nedtrykt som en forsmaaet Bejler paa den Elskedes Bryllupsdag fulgte jeg i Tankerne Skibet paa Vej gennem Sundet og videre nordpaa.« (PONTOPPIDAN: 1936, 71).

26 Cf. ROSDAHL: 2007.

27 »tilflugtssted for utilpassede eksistenser« (THISTED: 2003, 38).

voluntary exile for individuals incapable of withstanding Danish society's normativity pressures, and as a place of yearning for escapists striving for catharsis. Ever since their establishment through Pontoppidan, such perspectives on Greenland have had a considerable influence on Western representations of the Arctic island. Even Kim Leine in his debut novel *Kalak* (2007) draws on a notion of Greenland as a place of mental purification and, at the same time, contributes to its deconstruction. Both the titles of Pontoppidan and Leine's novels make recourse to the result of the transformation processes undergone by their respective protagonists, the setting for which is Greenland. Both authors' main characters assimilate in appearance, character and habit with the local population, or rather with the stereotype of Greenlanders that was predominant at the respective times their novels were published. In Pontoppidan's case, the character is Thorkild Müller, a hapless priest who has been sent to Greenland, and in Leine's case it is his alter ego, the nurse Kim. Karina, one of the countless Greenlandic women with whom Leine's protagonist has brief love affairs, declares Kim a *kalak*, a dyed-in-the-wool Greenlandic – with all the positive and negative features associated with the expression.<sup>28</sup> *Kalak* Kim enjoys raw seal liver, a dish that even traditional Greenlanders often refrain from, and hangs out at Nuuk's drinking holes, an environment normally out of bounds to Danes, to which Kim, however, finds access through his local female company. Whereas Leine's protagonist transforms into a stereotypical Greenlandic drunkard and raw meat eater,<sup>29</sup> on his return from Arctic climes, Thorkild Müller is seen as an animalistic barbarian by the people in his Jutland parish. In their view, he has turned into *isbjørnen* – the polar bear.

Learning the Greenlandic language, enjoying traditional Greenlandic food and socializing with members of the Greenlandic underclass: the social practices that promote Kim's metamorphosis into a *kalak* are initially self-chosen. They are the tools he employs to distance himself from his Danish past, which was hallmarked by sexual abuse at the hands of his father. In contrast to this, Thorkild Müller's transformation into the polar bear takes place involuntarily. He is guided by an unbridled desire

<sup>28</sup> LEINE: 2007, 100.

<sup>29</sup> For a long time it was assumed that the term »Eskimo« was derived from the language of the North American Chippewa and meant »raw meat eater«. Although this linguistic assessment is now considered to have been disproved, it is still reproduced in popular literature.

for the authentic life of the alleged savages in his mission district in northern Greenland, a lifestyle that author Pontoppidan exoticizes and romanticizes. Even if Thorkild becomes a contented man, valued and respected by his parish, a change of narrative after the return of the aged priest makes clear that in late 19<sup>th</sup> century Denmark is no place for a preacher who has mutated into a savage. Upon realizing this Thorkild sets off for his Greenlandic exile again – this time of his own accord.

In *Eskimo Essays*, her groundbreaking study on Western representations of the Alaskan Yup'ik, Ann Fienup-Riordan notes:

Though the concept of degeneration remained a powerful explanatory tool for human diversity into the nineteenth century, the Age of Enlightenment produced alternate possibilities. One was articulated by Jean Jacques Rousseau in his *Social Contract* of 1762. Whereas Rousseau's predecessors, among them Thomas Hobbes, depicted »natural man« as brutish and self-centered, [...] Rousseau eloquently defended the image of people as pure in a state of nature and subsequently corrupted by civilization. Although the Hobbesian viewpoint is reflected in Western thought to this day, so also is the image derived from Rousseau of the »noble savage«. Time and context determine which view is in the foreground, but its opposite is never far away.<sup>30</sup>

The ambivalence that, according to Fienup-Riordan, characterizes white Americans' views on the indigenous population of Alaska applies to the Greenlandic situation as well. Henrik Pontoppidan's novel *Isbjørnen*, with its ever-changing narrative perspectives, illustrates the wide panorama of contemporary Danish perceptions of the Arctic colony. In his book, Greenland figures alternately as a deadly ice desert and as a livable idyll, and he initially depicts Thorkild Müller, marked by life far away from Western civilization, as an animalistic barbarian, before having him become the only member of the Danish clergy in the story to represent true philanthropy and charity. Jon Helt Haarder has therefore aptly referred to the novel as a »montage of discourses«. <sup>31</sup> In the first chapter, Thorkild is already an old man. With his unkempt appearance, strong smell and roaring laughter, he rather resembles a wild animal than an employee of the Danish state church, and Thorkild's parsonage does not awake memories of those idyllic whitewashed half-timbered houses, which we are familiar with from the novels of Pontoppidan's contemporary Morten Korch. The house is described as a cave devoid of the slight-

30 FIENUP-RIORDAN: 2003, 14.

31 »diskursmontage« (HAARDER: 2006, 33).

est trace of comfort and order. The priest does not place value on such virtues, as »his home was« – as would befit a bear – »the whole area«. <sup>32</sup> Yet by the end of the chapter, the reader begins to doubt whether Thorkild, who makes the life of his lodger (upstart vicar and philistine Ruggaard) a living hell, really is an unsympathetic misanthropist. When the priest leaves his house late one stormy night to give a dying man his last blessing, we learn that although Thorkild may use unorthodox methods in the execution of his office, he remains conscientious and close to the people. Whereas Ruggaard and the institutions of the Danish state embody the artificiality and stiltedness of culture, Thorkild stands for undistorted human kindness, a virtue that he has acquired during his time in Greenland.

Following a change of narrative perspective, we accompany Thorkild back to his time as a student. For the untalented and gloomy theologian in the making, riddled with self-hate and haunted by suicidal thoughts, Greenland means both a last resort and the epitome of death and lifelessness. Thorkild is financed by a royal grant, upon receipt of which he binds himself to working as a missionary in Greenland for an indefinite period of time. Although he does his best not to pass the final exam, Thorkild is nevertheless sent to a mission district in the far north of Greenland. However, after a period spent struggling with his affinity for the primitive lifestyle of the Greenlanders in his parish, he manages – against all the odds – to lead a fulfilled life. »He had become a new man – a re-created man«, <sup>33</sup> it says in the novel. The topos of restart, often combined with biblical allusions, is a classic component of colonial settler narratives. <sup>34</sup> Similar to the mysterious processes far away in the mountains, through which – according to the myths and legends – Greenlandic shamans gain their supernatural powers, Thorkild's metamorphosis into *isbjørnen* takes place during a summer hunting trip. It is here that instinctual drives overwhelm morality and reason and the alleged cathartic power of life in the wild can take full effect. However, Thorkild's ability to overcome his sad past is firmly linked to the Greenlandic environment; only there is he able to lead a decent life. Back in Denmark, aged Thorkild soon realizes his alienation from his countrymen and returns to Greenland after a short while. Even though this episode mainly serves the

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32 »hans hjem var hele egnen« (PONTOPPIDAN: 1978, II).

33 »Han var blevet et nyt – et genskabt menneske.« (Ibid., 31).

34 Cf. EGLINGER and HEITMANN: 2010.

Grundtvigian-inspired critique of the »black schools« of the Danish bureaucratic state, it also contributes to the constitution of a powerful discourse in which Greenland figures as a place of purity and primitiveness.

The first 80 pages of Kim Leine's autofictional »memory novel« give a description of the protagonist's escape from the confinement of a Norwegian Jehovah's Witness congregation to Copenhagen, where his youth is overshadowed by his father's sexual abuse. Suddenly and with no forewarning, we meet Kim with his wife and children on a flight to Greenland. »This is new air«<sup>35</sup>, is one of the protagonist's first utterances after their arrival in Nuuk, where he takes a job as a nurse at the country's largest hospital. By this point, the reader already knows that in the year 2007 the cathartic and healing effects on mental suffering hoped for from a move to Greenland must fail to appear. As the conclusion of Leine's novel – just like in Pontoppidan's *Isbjørnen* – is anticipated at the beginning, we know that after his conversion into a *kalak*, Kim will end up as a medication-dependent drug addict collapsing at his place of work – which fortunately for him is the local hospital.

»When I speak Greenlandic, I become another human being«<sup>36</sup>, the first-person-narrator explains, a finding that falls into line with the discourses about new beginnings and reincarnation myths established in *Isbjørnen*. For Pontoppidan's protagonist, Greenland's cathartic effect comes as an unforeseen surprise. For Leine's main character, however, it is from the beginning part of a pathological illusion that feeds on his hope of being able to leave the emotional mess of the Copenhagen years behind once he has left the metropolis. Kim's metamorphosis into a *kalak* initially takes place on a self-chosen and allegedly controlled level. »The food and the language; these are the tools for my integration, the means to distance myself from my countrymen«<sup>37</sup>, he says, revealing some striking parallels to Pontoppidan's Thorkild Müller, for whom the imitation of Greenlanders' seal hunting techniques is a similar means to get over with his unhappy past in Denmark. In Thorkild's case, however, this practice has to take place clandestinely, because of his shame about his »unfortunate passions«.<sup>38</sup>

35 »Det er ny luft.« (LEINE: 2007, 79).

36 »Jeg bliver et andet menneske, når jeg taler grønlandsk.« (Ibid., 88).

37 »Maden og sproget. De er redskaberne i min integration, midlerne til at distancere mig fra mine landsmænd.« (Ibid., 101).

38 »ulykkelige lidenskaber« (PONTOPPIDAN: 1978, 28).

Kim's adaption of Greenlandic conventions can be described as a project of inverted mimicry. In copying Western behavior, postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha perceives a subversive empowerment strategy of (formerly) colonized societies, which serves the generation of agency in a situation characterized by power asymmetries.<sup>39</sup> Through the inversion of this practice, Kim Leine's alter ego hopes to enter a »third space« beyond the colonial dichotomy, where he – the migrant who has moved from the former center of the Danish colonial realm to the postcolonial periphery – is able to renounce his own past. Kim openly ponders his role as a white male in the formerly colonized society. Yet the novel is free from the collective guilt complexes that characterized anti-colonial Danish Greenland literature of the 1970s.<sup>40</sup> Abuse, domestic violence and alcoholism are everyday realities in Kim Leine's postcolonial Greenland. However, the quest for a culprit has become an obsolete endeavor. The controversial Danish documentary *Flugten fra Grønland* (2007) highlighted incestuous sexual abuse of children as a major problem of Greenlandic society.<sup>41</sup> By making the Danish protagonist's difficult struggle with his own incest story the main subject of the novel, Leine emphasizes that the former colony – contrary to common prejudices – by no means preserves a monopoly on such family tragedies.<sup>42</sup>

Although being aware of his own privileged position and despite his good intentions, Kim does not succeed in resisting the charm of the Greenlandic women, who, in accordance with a powerful stereotype, are depicted as relentlessly promiscuous. Eventually the reader stops counting Kim's brief love affairs (at the very latest when his escapist desire for a place of purity leads him to remote eastern Greenland), realizing that the protagonist's polyamorous lifestyle and downright physical craving for rough sexual intercourse are yet further facets of his complex addiction. The maltreated bodies of the haggard and toothless women whom Kim at an increasing rate prefers as sexual partners constitute a medium of abjection, a term that, according to Julia Kristeva, describes a process of transgression and the destruction of system and order,<sup>43</sup> which for Kim, driven

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39 BHABHA: 2009.

40 Cf. THISTED: 2003.

41 Cf. GANT: 2009.

42 THISTED: 2011b, 267.

43 KRISTEVA: 1982, 4.

by his own experience of abuse, appears as an adequate means to discard his own identity – another symptom of his pathological escapism.

Kim ends up traveling back and forth between the new family home on the Danish island of Langeland and sporadic stays in Greenland, during which he works as a substitute nurse. Right to the end, Kim misunderstands that his repeated escapes to Greenland neither help him come to terms with the past nor lead to self-purification; they are instead symptomatic of his mental illness. During his stays in Denmark, Kim is restless and depressed, and the intervals of happiness become shorter after each return to Greenland. Only when a psychologist in Copenhagen draws Kim's attention to the pathological features of his affinity for Greenland does the protagonist accept that he has been cherishing an illusion. At the end of the novel, we meet a man who is far from being cured, but who seems to have understood that the only cure is to distance himself from his father and declare the Greenland chapter of his life completed. Here, the notion of Greenland as a place of catharsis and restart, established in Pontoppidan's novel, undergoes its deconstruction.

#### Mâliâraq Vebæk and Lotte Inuk

At the beginning of the 1990s, anthropologist Bo Wagner Sørensen noted that the tenacious aftermath of colonial power asymmetries brings about different attributions of meaning to the processes of migration from Denmark to Greenland and vice versa. A Greenlander's migration to Denmark would thus be perceived as unnatural and therefore require explanation and legitimization. Whereas migrations of Greenlanders to Denmark were rumored to cause emotional problems, longing and homesickness, Danish migrations to Greenland would be associated with strategic consideration and material benefit. In other words, only Danish migration is controlled by the individual.<sup>44</sup> Aside from the fact that the discourse outlined by Sørensen reproduces the familiar epistemological dichotomy (identified by Edward Said) between an enlightened and rational West and an Other paralyzed by emotionality,<sup>45</sup> it also leaves a major group of Danish migrants in postcolonial Greenland unaccounted for: those who did not come to the country for professional reasons or as a

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44 SØRENSEN: 1993, 31.

45 SAID: 2003.

result of careful consideration, but who were born or raised in Greenland, thus belonging to the second generation of migrants. In her autobiographical novel *Sultekunstnerinde* («Hunger Artist»; 2004), Danish author Lotte Inuk breaks new ground in describing the difficult situation of an adolescent Dane in postcolonial Greenland.<sup>46</sup> Kim Leine and Lotte Inuk's protagonists have in common that they share names with their creators; both novels classify as »autofiction« or even as »autonarration«.<sup>47</sup> Charlotta, who prefers the gender-neutral nickname Charlie, comes to Greenland together with her mother, who takes a job as a press photographer in Nuuk. The year is 1976. Charlotta experiences Greenland in the politically turbulent years before the implementation of home rule. Lotte Inuk, whose real name is Charlotte Christine Hoff Hansen, has perpetuated her biographical connection to Greenland in her artist's name; *inuk* is the Greenlandic word for human.<sup>48</sup>

On the content level, *Kalak* and *Sultekunstnerinde* share the course of their respective Danish protagonists' diseases, which in both cases form the center of the plot. As the title implies, Charlotta is suffering from anorexia. In contrast to Kim, whose repeated flight to Greenland is a symptom of his mental illness, Charlotta's suffering is caused by the experience of migration. Like Franz Kafka's hunger artist, who, after initially being admired by the audience, soon sees his skill rejected in the face of new, seemingly more modern attractions, Charlie quickly comes to feel that a girl from the country that had served as a role model worthy of imitation since colonial times is out of place in a postcolonial Greenland characterized by burgeoning nationalism and growing ethnic self-confidence. Kafka's short story *Ein Hungerkünstler* («A Hunger Artist»; 1922), whose title Inuk adopts for her novel, serves as an intertext.<sup>49</sup> Contrary to Leine's *Kalak*, the cathartic effect – which Eurocentric discourses

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46 A central chapter of Inuk's novel is under the title »The Revolution« available in English translation by Thomas E. Kennedy (INUK: 2008).

47 Cf. BEHRENDT: 2011, 294–298.

48 The plural of *inuk* is *inuit*, the common self-designation of the indigenous Arctic peoples in Greenland and Canada. The term *kalaaleq* (pl. *kalaallit*) means »Greenlander« and is in its semantics today less often tied to the actual ethnic origin of the individual person.

49 See ELF: 2009, 79–96 for an analysis of the references to Kafka in Inuk's *Sultekunstnerinde* and in South African author J.M. Coetzee's novel *Life & Times of Michael K* (1983), where anorexia plays a central role as well.

often ascribe to processes of migration into the (post)colonial periphery – does not even exist in the imagination of the protagonist in Inuk's novel. Here, Greenland is the arena for the mental and physical collapse of the girl, who, as literary scholar Moritz Schramm notes, »as a reaction against the social pressure for assimilation, [...] attempts to escape from those normative regimes by reducing the body that is the place in which the inscription of norms and values is situated«. <sup>50</sup> By letting her emotionally troubled Danish protagonist collapse in Greenland, Inuk challenges a long-lasting and powerful discourse, which, as Sørensen has shown, usually associates psychological problems and failure with the migration of Greenlanders to Denmark.

The sad story of a young Greenlandic woman going to rack and ruin in Copenhagen lies at the core of the novel *Historien om Katrine* (»Catherine's Story«; 1982) by Greenlandic author Máliâraq Vebæk (1917–2012). <sup>51</sup> Against the background of the narratives and practices negotiated in *Sultekunstnerinde*, it is worthwhile to take a look at Vebæk's older text, which focuses on the reverse situation of migration.

The arrival of immigrants from the (former) colonies in the auspicious metropolis of the empire and their subsequent experience of racist mechanisms of exclusion are recurring topoi of the postcolonial novel. These are for example prominently addressed in *The Final Passage* (1985), the debut of St. Kittsian author Caryl Phillips, whose plot is astonishingly reminiscent of Vebæk's. Some years before Phillips told the sad and indignant story of the arrival of a young woman from the Caribbean in late 1950s London, the Greenlandic author living in Copenhagen wrote *Historien om Katrine* as an attempt to provide some understanding for those Greenlanders at the bottom of society, who from the 1970s onward became more visible on Copenhagen's streets and squares. At least this intention may be discerned from one of Vebæk's non-fictional texts, »Husk, når du ser de unge grønlandere« (»Remember when you see the young Greenlanders«), which was published in the Danish broadsheet newspaper *Politiken* at about the same time as the book came out. <sup>52</sup> The article features some striking parallels with the story told in the book. The

<sup>50</sup> SCHRAMM: 2010, 144–145.

<sup>51</sup> Vebæk's novel was published in Greenlandic in 1981 under the title *Búsime nâpinex* (»Meeting on a Bus«). One year later, the author herself translated the novel into Danish.

<sup>52</sup> VEBÆK: 1982b.

novel's protagonist is Greenlander Katrine, who, in the heyday of »modernization politics«, falls in love with a Danish construction worker and without being asked follows him to Copenhagen. Soon she learns that Erik by no means is the wealthy man he had purported to be during his stay in Greenland. He is living in his mother's cramped apartment in the then still poor neighborhood of Nørrebro. Although Katrine and Erik get married and Katrine gives birth to a daughter, it is impossible for the young Greenlander to integrate into Danish society. Being both a woman and a Greenlander, Katrine has to face intersectional discrimination in the rough working-class environment. As a reaction to this, she frequently socializes with fellow countrymen who share her fate and she becomes a serious alcoholic. Katrine gets divorced from Erik, is refused custody of their daughter Emilie and finally commits suicide, jumping into the harbor basin at Nyhavn.

What makes Vebæk's novel worth reading even 30 years after its publication is less the stereotyped and thus predictable fate of the protagonist, but rather her encounter with the assimilated Greenlander Louise, which the Greenlandic title of the novel, *Búsime nâpinex* («Meeting on a Bus»), declares to be the core of the story.<sup>53</sup> Louise is also married to a Dane and leads an inconspicuous middle-class life in a detached house in Brønshøj. One day she meets Katrine, who seems sad and distant, on a city bus. Pleased to meet someone she can talk to in her mother tongue, she gives Katrine her address, but then forgets about the encounter after Katrine fails to get in touch. In her darkest hour – after she has lost her husband, daughter and home, Katrine also loses all the money she has on her – she finds Louise's address and decides to visit her in the hope of obtaining some kind of help. Over coffee in Louise's living room, Katrine tells her hostess – and the readers – her sad story.

For a Greenlandic storyteller in the heyday of the oral narrative tradition, it was the greatest honor if the audience gradually fell asleep during the recitation. Mâliâraq Vebæk utilizes this reminiscence of pre-modern traditions to develop the novel's plot. Louise falls asleep while Katrine is telling her story, and when she wakes up, her visitor has gone. Only when she reads about Katrine's suicide in the newspaper does it become clear to Louise that the visit had not been a dream. Suffering from a guilty conscience over not having helped when she was needed, Louise is racked by

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53 See also the readings by KLEIVAN: 1997 and THISTED: 2010.

self-doubt and recalls another countryman's attempts to get in touch with her. Out of fear of her Danish neighbors' possible reactions, Louise had then refused to invite the man – who was clearly an alcoholic – home, only to hear about his death a short while afterwards.

Louise's strategy to resist the mechanisms of exclusion applied by the Danish majority society to Greenlanders can be described with the concept of »passing«, a social practice by which one's ethnic identity is concealed towards others and the acting person is thus freed from the expectations associated with it. In the petty bourgeois neighborhood of Brønshøj, Louise, who tries to avoid any social contact or practice that might mark her as Greenlandic, passes as an ethnic Dane. The potentially fatal consequences of »passing« were addressed by another female author with connections to the Danish colonial empire in her novel of the same name – *Passing* from 1929. African-American writer Nella Larsen (1891–1964) was the child of a Danish mother who had immigrated to the United States and an Afro-Caribbean father, a descendant of African slaves from the Danish West Indies, which Denmark sold to the USA in 1917. Larsen became a prominent representative of the »Harlem Renaissance«. <sup>54</sup> Whereas in *Passing* colored Clare Kendry's efforts to align herself with the hegemonical superior white class in terms of appearance and lifestyle leads to her death in Larsen's New York of the 1920s, the integrated Greenlandic encounter with stereotypical Katrine in Vebæk's Copenhagen of the 1980s merely causes a grueling reflection about the price of assimilation and the renunciation of all ties with one's culture of origin. In her second novel *Tretten år efter* (»Thirteen Years After«; 1997), which can be read as a sequel to *Historien om Katrine*, Máliâraq Vebæk extends the topic. <sup>55</sup> Here, it is the conflict of identity suffered by Katrine's daughter Emilie that makes up the core of the plot. Due to the early death of the mother, the teenager has no connection with Greenland at all and struggles with her foreign appearance. After an encounter with her successful

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54 Nella Larsen's novel *Passing* tells the story of African-American Clare Kendry, who due to her light skin initially succeeds in passing as white and socializing in white social environments. When her cover is blown, Clare falls out of a window, and it remains unclear if her fall is accidental or suicidal. See LÖBBERMANN: 2000, 131–144 on Larsen's role in the »Harlem Renaissance« and for a reading of the novel from a gender-related perspective.

55 Vebæk's second novel was published in Greenlandic in 1992 under the title *Ukiut 13-t qaangiommata* and was translated into Danish by the author in 1997.

Greenlandic uncle, who embodies the opposite of what Emilie had been told about her mother, the girl radically changes her attitude towards her Greenlandic roots and clandestinely plans to emigrate to her mother's country of origin. However, when Emilie realizes that her plan is doomed to failure, she finally develops a healthy self-confidence and appreciates both sides of her origin.

Whereas in Lotte Inuk's *Sultekunstnerinde* the detailed account of Charlie's mental illness (caused by her experience of migration) features some parallels to Katrine's mental and physical collapse in Copenhagen, the ending of the novel is rather reminiscent of Emilie's development, who – just like Charlie – belongs to the second generation of immigrants. After a long stay at Nuuk's hospital, to which she is admitted as Greenland's first anorexia patient, Charlie finally meets a doctor she is able to trust. After having struggled with her own whiteness and simultaneously feeling a homoerotic affection for her school friend Malou, it seems in the end as if Charlie is able to appreciate the fact that she neither lives up to the ethnic-Greenlandic identity norm nor to the common heteronormative gender roles. Even before Charlie had realized that

the bastards are the most beautiful, here and everywhere else: that black hair, those light eyes, or the other way round. Those long, powerful limbs. That warm complexion. All the best salvaged from both fallen worlds, a new beginning, a Phoenix rising from the ashes, a whole new breed of human being.<sup>56</sup>

Ethnicity plays a crucial role in Lotte Inuk's portrait of postcolonial Greenland. In the heyday of burgeoning nationalism before the implementation of home rule, the Danish children in the country »suddenly stand on the wrong side of a struggle for freedom«,<sup>57</sup> their un-Greenlandic appearance marking them as belonging to the opposite side. In order to describe the processes of exclusion in postcolonial Greenland, anthropologist Terje Olsen has developed the term »ethnic capital«<sup>58</sup> and thus expanded Pierre Bourdieu's model of different types of capital. Bourdieu only differentiates between economic, social and cultural capital, which, according to him, are social mechanisms of distinction be-

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<sup>56</sup> INUK: 2008, 17.

<sup>57</sup> »[...] det har været hårdt for danske børn pludselig at befinde sig på den forkerte side af en frihedskamp.« (THISTED: 2005, 24).

<sup>58</sup> OLSEN: 1997.

tween hierarchically organized strata of society.<sup>59</sup> Hardly any personal descriptions, which in Inuk's novel are given from the perspective of the first-person-narrator, go without a detailed account of the Greenlanders' dark hair and brownish skin. Blonde and fair-skinned Charlie, who is equally drawn to Greenlandic boys and girls, is convinced that she possesses far too little »ethnic capital«: »We are unwanted, especially someone like me. With my scrubby almost white hair and my caricatural rosy skin, I have the looks that incarnate the pure age-old enemy. I am fully aware of that, wherever I walk.«<sup>60</sup>

Although Charlie knows about her divergence from the Greenlandic norm and the sheer impossibility of ever fulfilling it, she and her Danish friend Malou try as hard as they can to assimilate with their environment and to obliterate their obvious differences from the Greenlandic adolescents. By trying to resemble the majority, Malou and Charlie turn Homi Bhabha's concept of mimicry upside down, a strategy that also is applied by Kim Leine's protagonist. The foreign body needs to camouflage itself in order to obtain the ability to wield transformative influence on the dominant culture and language. In the novel it says:

Anyway, in winter my hair gets darker and Malou and I eagerly compare color, count the black strands among the lighter ones and feel that it is going in the right direction, and we go without washing our hair for as long as possible because it seems darker then, and we practice the slang the girls in our class use as well as the unusual way they pronounce certain Danish words.<sup>61</sup>

The inversion of what Homi Bhabha calls mimicry can in the case of the Danish girls in postcolonial Greenland also be described as an attempt at »passing«. By adopting the Greenlandic slang and having darker hair and tanned skin, Malou and Charlie hope to pass as Greenlanders within their social environment, or at least as the daughters of mixed parents. Their endeavor fails, of course, and just as with Kim Leine's *kalak*, Nella Larsen's Clare Kendry and Louise and Emilie from *Máliâraq Vebæk's* novels, their attempt to disguise or discard their own (ethnic) identity leads to problems – in Charlie's case to a serious anorexic disorder. By

59 BOURDIEU: 2010.

60 »Vi er ikke ønskede og især en som jeg; med mit stride næsten hvide hår og min karikaturisk lyserøde hud er jeg i besiddelse af udseendet der inkarnerer selveste den pure, urgamle Fjende (sic!); jeg er mig det bevidst hvor jeg går og står.« (INUK: 2004, 165).

61 INUK: 2008, 16.

letting her Danish protagonist experience those identity and integration problems, which – as Bo Wagner Sørensen has shown – are usually associated with Greenlandic migration to Denmark, Lotte Inuk challenges the common Danish discourses on immigration and integration, and, just like Kim Leine, contributes to a long overdue rethinking and reevaluation of some long-held approaches to the Danish-Greenlandic relations that have been powerful since colonial times.

### Conclusion

Since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Greenland has been a frequent setting and the country's colonial relationship with Denmark a recurring topos of Danish literature. What is more, since the publication of Henrik Pontoppidan's *Isbjørnen*, Danish fictional characters have consistently traveled to Arctic climes. However, a relatively new phenomenon is the accumulation of literary texts that draw on the authors' own experiences of migration and thus are written from the perspective of the contact zone. Based on the authors' biographies, Kim Leine's *Kalak* and Lotte Inuk's *Sultekunstnerinde* address the experience of suddenly finding oneself in the minority position, which due to an internalized Eurocentric worldview is still an uncommon and disconcerting situation for Europeans. As we know from numerous postcolonial texts by British Commonwealth writers and from Måliâraq Vebæk's novels, such an experience can bring about the desire to adapt to the dominant culture. Drawing on Jon Helt Haarder's reflections on »performative biographism« and Hans Hauge's remarks on a declining interest in fiction, in the first part of this chapter I analyzed the present success of »autofictional« and autobiographically inspired Greenland novels and the increasing audience that the authors of the texts are now receiving in political debates. As Greenland (in the wake of climate change and the ongoing debates about raw materials and the political status of the country) is currently attracting a lot of attention among the Danish public, an increasing demand for authentic voices that know the country first-hand is simultaneously emerging. Some of the authors discussed in this chapter satisfy this demand. Their texts thus have the opportunity to act on the increasingly heated discussions about Denmark's colonial legacy in Greenland and its aftermath. By pathologizing the notion of Greenland as a place of restart and catharsis, Kim Leine deciphers a powerful discourse as part of colonial iconography. Lotte Inuk holds up

a mirror to the striking Danish debates on migration and the integration of immigrants, when in her novel she turns the usual processes of minorization and majorization upside down.

It would be worthwhile to consult other contemporary Danish novels set in Greenland, analyze how they address migration from the center to the periphery, and see in which way they contribute to the ongoing debates on Danish colonialism and postcoloniality. Iben Mondrup's novel *Store Malene* (2013) is also about Danes who travel to Greenland. However, it is not a piece of »autofictional« writing. The main character is the photographer Justine, whose origins are never revealed to the reader. Yet the name suggests a connection to Greenland. Longing for solitude, Justine travels from Copenhagen to Nuuk, where she rents the house of a nurse who is out of town for a couple of weeks. In Nuuk she meets the taxi driver Joorut, for whom she develops an erotic obsession after finding nude photographs of him in her landlady's bedroom. A Danish couple, Jesper and Mette, have also traveled to Nuuk, and they repeatedly cross Justine's path. The three of them develop an ambivalent friendship. They spend a lot of time together, and finally the couple moves into Justine's house. Justine perceives Mette's dominance in particular on a physical level – at one point, the corpulent Dane is described as a »mountain of meat«. <sup>62</sup> »Not even here can one be in peace; all places can be invaded«, <sup>63</sup> the protagonist complains at another point. Due to the unsettling omnipresence of her new acquaintances, Justine spends less and less time in her house and instead entrenches herself in the abandoned Block P. Formerly housing 500 inhabitants and 200 meters of length, the building, which was demolished in 2012, once epitomized the dubious Danish »modernization policies« of the 1960s. Justine's displacement and the topos of invasion, embodied by the naïve tourist Mette, suggest an interpretation of *Store Malene* as an allegory on Danish colonization and Danish dominance within the debates on the future of the country, the latter often being criticized by Greenlanders. <sup>64</sup>

With his historical novel *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden* (»The Prophets of Eternity Fjord«; 2012) meant to make up the first part of a trilogy,

62 »kødbjerg« (MONDRUP: 2013, 56).

63 »Heller ikke her er der fred; alle steder kan invaderes« (ibid., 92).

64 Cf. e.g. former Greenlandic member of the Danish parliament Lars-Emil Johansen's statements in the documentary *Flugten fra Grønland* (2007). See also GANT: 2009.

Kim Leine could live up to his earlier success and even substantially expand on it. The novel won virtually all the major literary awards in Denmark and has already been translated into German, Spanish and Dutch. The plot is partly based on a true story that took place in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>65</sup> Yet the novel may also be interpreted as a transferal of Kim Leine's own story of migration into the past. The parallels between the protagonist in *Kalak*, Leine's alter ego, and missionary Morten Falck, the main character in *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden*, are striking.

With an article in the Danish weekly newspaper *Weekendavisen*, Thorkild Kjærgaard, Danish professor of history at the University of Greenland, provoked a lively debate on the legitimacy of literary adaptations of authentic history and the nature of Denmark's colonial legacy in Greenland.<sup>66</sup> In his vehement attack on Leine, he accuses the author of an inaccurate depiction of history. With his position that Denmark's rule over Greenland cannot be classified as colonialism, Kjærgaard certainly stands more or less alone, even among historians. Indeed, his reproach to Leine's allegedly overly negative depiction of the Danish presence in Greenland could also be discussed at length. However, what seems to be more interesting is the question as to why a seasoned scholar like Kjærgaard feels obliged to check the work of a literary author for its truth content and then publish a scrupulously compiled list of all those passages in the text where Leine's fiction allegedly deviates from the facts. »It reeks of envy«<sup>67</sup>, writes literary critic Johan Rosdahl in his reply to Kjærgaard's remarks. The professor's jealousy of the writer not only reveals the short-tempered climate that currently characterizes the debates about Greenland, what is more, it illustrates the strong impact on the shaping of public opinion in Denmark that the authors of the new Greenland novel have gained. The achievement of this position is not least due to their calculated challenging of the line between fact and fiction.

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65 Cf. LIDEGAARD: 1986.

66 KJÆRGAARD: 2014.

67 »Det lugter af misundelse« (ROSDAHL: 2014, 15).

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