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(POST)COLONIAL INTERFERENCES:
ETHNICITY, GENDER, AND CLASS IN CONTEMPORARY
DANISH LITERATURE ABOUT GREENLAND

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ITALIAN SUMMARY

Il presente lavoro, intitolato *Interferenze (post)coloniali: etnicità, genere e classe nella letteratura danese contemporanea sulla Groenlandia*, è incentrato sulla produzione ‘groenlandese’ di tre autori danesi che hanno vissuto per anni nell’ex colonia artica, Kim Leine (1961-), Iben Mondrup (1969-) e Lotte Inuk (1965-). Tale peculiarità emerge anche su un piano più prettamente letterario, poiché tutti e tre hanno fatto uso, almeno limitatamente a un’opera ciascuno, di elementi autofinzionali. I romanzi di ambientazione groenlandese degli scrittori studiati si inseriscono nel filone della cosiddetta *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, la letteratura danese sulla Groenlandia, termine con cui si è soliti riferirsi a testi letterari danesi che presentano un’attinenza tematica con l’ex colonia artica. La prima manifestazione di tale genere viene tradizionalmente individuata nel romanzo *Kunnuk og Naja eller Grønlænderne: En Fortælling* (1842; *Kunnuk e Naja o i groenlandesi. Un racconto*) di B.S. Ingemann, e questo tipo di letteratura non sembra avere esaurito il proprio potenziale nemmeno in epoca contemporanea: nel corso degli ultimi due decenni, infatti, sono stati pubblicati numerosi testi di ambientazione o tematica groenlandese. Il recente profluvio di *fiction* sulla Groenlandia e i groenlandesi coinvolge tanto la letteratura impegnata quanto di genere, confermando l’interesse di critica e grande pubblico per la tematica.

Gli autori presi in esame nel seguente lavoro, come accennato, sono stati scelti sulla base delle esperienze biografiche che li accomunano; inoltre, poiché appartengono tutti e tre alla stessa generazione, si è pensato che siano stati esposti ai medesimi discorsi riguardanti il rapporto tra Groenlandia e Danimarca, alla responsabilità danese in riferimento al proprio operato coloniale o a preconcezioni sull’idea di ‘groenlandesità’. Ci si è domandati, dunque, se le esperienze dirette del contesto postcoloniale groenlandese siano confluite in narrazioni alternative rispetto a quelle riconducibili a meccanismi di *othering*, da una parte, e alla retorica di autoassoluzione danese in riferimento al proprio passato coloniale, dall’altra.

L’associazione tra gli autori considerati e discorsi sull’identità non è nuova alla critica, sebbene studi scientifici sulla *dansk grønlandslitteratur* contemporanea siano, in generale, piuttosto sporadici. Fra i contributi più prominenti a riguardo si citano, ad esempio, *Gi’r du en øl, dansker»*. Kim Leine og de danske stereotyper om Grønland (2011; «Mi offri una birra, danese». Kim Leine e gli stereotipi danesi sulla Groenlandia) e *Imperiets genfærd*. Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden og den dansk-grønlandske historieskrivning (2015; *Lo spettro dell’impero: Il Fiordo dell’Eternità e la scrittura della storia dano-groenlandese*) di Kirsten Thisted,

entrambi incentrati sull'opera di Kim Leine, e *Pathological Escapists, Passing and the Perpetual Ice: Old and New Trends in Danish-Greenlandic Migration Literature* (2014) di Ebbe Volquardsen. Quest'ultimo articolo, in base a quanto risulta da un lavoro preliminare di ricerca, è ad oggi l'unico studio in cui Leine, Mondrup e Inuk vengono esaminati congiuntamente.

Dei tre scrittori presi in esame, Iben Mondrup è sicuramente la meno studiata, nonostante recenti contributi – per esempio di Dybdal e Grønlund (2020), Dybdal (2021; 2022), Thisted (2023) e Turri (2023) – colmino, almeno in parte, questa lacuna. Una possibile causa è da individuarsi nel ruolo secondario che la Groenlandia ha ricoperto all'interno della sua opera di *fiction* fino alla pubblicazione del romanzo *Store Malene* (2013). Il 'debutto' groenlandese di Leine e Inuk, invece, si è verificato qualche anno prima, rispettivamente con la pubblicazione di *Kalak* (2007) e *Sultekunstnerinde* (2004; *Artista della fame*). Questo scarto temporale, per quanto minimo, potrebbe avere contribuito a generare maggiore attenzione da parte della critica nei confronti della loro opera. Una prima menzione della produzione 'groenlandese' di Mondrup è attestata nell'articolo di Volquardsen sopramenzionato, nel quale lo studioso si concentra sulla dimensione dell'identità – concepita in termini prettamente etnici – in riferimento a *Kalak*, *Sultekunstnerinde* e *Store Malene*, oltre che ad altri testi riconducibili al contesto dano-groenlandese, come *Isbjørnen* di Henrik Pontoppidan (1887; *L'orso polare*) e *Búsime nâpíneq* (1981; *Incontro sul bus*) di Mâliâraq Vebæk. Il presente lavoro, dunque, potrebbe essere inteso come una sorta di *follow-up* dello studio di Volquardsen per due motivi: 1) in questa sede, infatti, considero un corpus più ampio degli stessi autori da lui presi in considerazione, Leine, Mondrup e Inuk; 2) nonostante il mio contributo sia a sua volta incentrato su discorsi identitari, il mio focus non è specificamente sull'aspetto etnico, ma sull'interazione tra questo e discorsi inerenti a genere/sexualità e classe, partendo dal presupposto che tali categorie di differenza sociale si inseriscano in un dialogo proficuo fra loro, generando tendenze comuni o, talvolta, contrasti inaspettati. L'analisi sistematica e congiunta di questi aspetti è un elemento nuovo all'interno degli studi sulla *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, nonostante non manchi letteratura critica che tocchi questi aspetti, sebbene in maniera non esclusiva.

A tal fine, è stato inevitabile ricorrere agli strumenti offerti dagli studi postcoloniali, rivolgendosi sia a testi imprescindibili, ma non necessariamente incentrati sul contesto scandinavo – come, ad esempio, gli scritti di Said, Bhabha e Spivak – sia a letteratura critica che presenta un più marcato focus sull'*othering* in riferimento al contesto artico. È stato particolarmente utile, in questo senso, ricorrere alla nozione di «orientalismo artico», teorizzata

da Kirsten Thisted, ma anche riflettere sul concetto di «eccezionalismo nordico» – termine con il quale solitamente ci si riferisce alla retorica di autoassoluzione dei Paesi nordici, e in questo specifico caso della Danimarca, riguardo al proprio coinvolgimento in attività coloniali.

Altri studi confluiti nel mio lavoro sono da ricondursi all'ambito dei *gender studies*. Infatti, nel corso del presente lavoro si è pensato di adottare un approccio 'intersezionale', ovvero incentrato sull'interazione fra le categorie di differenza sociale prese in esame – e, in questo specifico caso, la loro rappresentazione letteraria. Il termine «intersezionalità», teorizzato dalla giurista Kimberlé Crenshaw alla fine degli anni Ottanta del Novecento, verrà affiancato ad altre nozioni analogamente incentrate sull'attenzione per la complessità dei meccanismi di oppressione e marginalizzazione. È risultato particolarmente utile, in tal senso, ricorrere al termine «interferenza», formulato da Ingunn Moser (vd. Moser 2006; Lykke 2010). Quest'ultimo, infatti, è caratterizzato da una duttilità maggiore rispetto al predecessore sopramenzionato, e parte dal presupposto che «i diversi processi che costruiscono genere, classe e disabilità non solo si sostengono e si rafforzano meccanicamente a vicenda (come suggerisce la metafora delle intersezioni), ma possono anche scontrarsi, entrare in conflitto e neutralizzarsi a vicenda» (Lykke 2010: 84, traduzione mia). La teorizzazione di Moser implica dunque un certo grado di *fuzziness*, e sembra lasciare più spazio a possibili incoerenze.

Il primo capitolo della tesi è stato concepito come un'introduzione storica al contesto e al genere presi in esame. La prima parte del capitolo è incentrata sulla storia comune di Danimarca e Groenlandia, dagli eventi precedenti la missione di Hans Egede fino ai giorni nostri. In un secondo momento il focus si sposta sulla storia della *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, e le relazioni tra Danimarca e Groenlandia vengono analizzate attraverso un excursus sui discorsi e le narrazioni che permeano questo genere fin dagli esordi. La lunghezza del capitolo suggerisce che è stato pensato per un pubblico che non è necessariamente danese né ha familiarità con l'attività coloniale danese in Groenlandia. Sebbene la sezione relativa alla storia della *dansk grønlandslitteratur* attinga in gran parte al lavoro di Kirsten Thisted – e, in misura più limitata, anche a quello di Emilie Dybdal e Anders Grønlund – la mia ambizione è quella di far luce sugli ultimi sviluppi del genere in modo più sistematico di quanto sia stato fatto finora.

Nel secondo capitolo introduco la nozione di etnicità/identità etnica – e di alcuni termini contigui – partendo da riflessioni mutate da studi antropologici. Una concezione antiessenzialista dell'etnicità si presta particolarmente al mio lavoro, poiché cerco di verificare se le opere di Leine, Mondrup e Inuk generano narrazioni non necessariamente basate sul

binarismo ‘danesità’ vs. ‘groenlandesità’. Per rispondere a questa domanda di ricerca, mi concentro su tre elementi topici generalmente legati all’identità etnica groenlandese e, di conseguenza, alla sua reificazione: 1) l’associazione tra la ‘groenlandesità’ e l’ambiente naturale dell’isola, incontaminato e selvaggio; 2) la conoscenza della lingua groenlandese; 3) il consumo di cibo groenlandese e la partecipazione ad attività di caccia. Indagherò su questi temi attraverso un *close reading* dei romanzi appartenenti al mio corpus – ai quali non farò riferimento sistematicamente, poiché alcuni di essi potrebbero essere più adatti a discutere questioni di genere o di classe piuttosto che di identità etnica.

Il terzo capitolo si apre con un’introduzione al concetto di identità di genere, definita anche attraverso un parallelismo con la dimensione etnica. Anche in questo secondo caso, il focus è su un binarismo (‘mascolinità’ vs. ‘femminilità’) e il suo possibile superamento o decostruzione. L’analisi si sviluppa a partire da alcune considerazioni relative a una visione antiessenzialista del genere (nonché della ‘gerarchizzazione’ intrinseca a questa dimensione), con particolare riferimento al contesto dano-groenlandese. In linea con le premesse del mio lavoro, considero innanzitutto la rappresentazione letteraria di un gruppo doppiamente oppresso, ovvero le donne groenlandesi – che nella *dansk grønlandslitteratur* appaiono spesso come meri oggetti di desiderio e sono tipicamente delineate attraverso uno sguardo maschile (danese), dotato di quella che definisco ‘agency letteraria’. Ci si concentra poi sui tentativi di Leine, Mondrup e Inuk di superare le costrizioni dei ruoli di genere, verificando se questi discorsi riecheggiano quelli relativi all’identità etnica. Anche la sessualità, come ci si può immaginare, ha un ruolo preponderante nel corso della mia analisi; nello specifico, mi concentro sulle manifestazioni di questo aspetto che sono considerate tendenzialmente appannaggio maschile o femminile. Anche l’ultima sezione del capitolo è incentrata sulla sessualità e, in particolare, su comportamenti violenti inerenti a questa dimensione, fra cui l’incesto. Questo fenomeno, infatti, è spesso menzionato in discorsi danesi sul disagio sociale che caratterizza la Groenlandia postcoloniale e costituisce anche un *tópos* all’interno dei testi scelti, nei quali viene spesso rappresentato in termini inaspettati, come a volere disconfermare o ridiscutere criticamente i preconcetti danesi a questo riguardo.

L’ultimo capitolo della tesi ha come oggetto la rappresentazione delle differenze di classe nei romanzi appartenenti al mio corpus, nonché l’interazione tra questa dimensione e quella di etnia e, più limitatamente, di genere. In questo caso, concentrarsi su discorsi imperniati sull’idea di *hybridity* è più complesso, poiché, come suggerito da Amar Acheraïou, la classe difficilmente può essere concepita al di fuori di un’opposizione binaria (vd. 2011: 122-123).

Tale peculiarità implica un approccio diverso rispetto ai capitoli 2 e 3, nei quali le narrazioni alternative nei romanzi di Leine, Mondrup e Inuk sono state analizzate per lo più come variazioni rispetto alla mera opposizione tra ‘danesità’ e ‘groenlandesità’ e ‘mascolinità’ e ‘femminilità’. Anche in questo caso, tuttavia, il focus è sulle strategie impiegate per superare stereotipi (letterari), come ad esempio l’associazione tra la Groenlandia e un certo grado di disagio sociale, soprattutto nelle rappresentazioni relative agli anni post-coloniali. Un’altra questione di particolare interesse riguarda il ruolo della classe all’interno delle opere letterarie considerate; nella sua analisi del *Kalak* di Leine, Thisted sostiene che le dimensioni dell’etnicità e della classe possono entrare in competizione l’una con l’altra, e che la prima spesso ‘prevale’ sulla seconda (cfr. 2011a: 284). A partire da questo spunto, verifico se la dimensione della ‘classe’ viene in qualche modo trascurata a scapito dell’etnicità nei testi del mio corpus – una dinamica che definisco ‘class-blindness’.

Lo studio dell’interazione tra etnicità, genere e classe potrebbe risultare in contraddizione con la decisione di dedicare ciascuno dei tre capitoli di analisi testuale a una delle dimensioni considerate. Questa suddivisione è stata effettuata per ragioni pratiche, in quanto permette di introdurre nozioni teoriche relative ai singoli concetti presi in esame all’inizio di ogni capitolo. L’aporia generata da queste scelte è stata risolta creando una struttura ‘cumulativa’ per i capitoli 2, 3 e 4: mentre il primo capitolo tematico è incentrato esclusivamente sulla dimensione etnica, i capitoli 3 e 4 sono ‘multidimensionali’, poiché è inevitabile prendere in considerazione teorie e osservazioni avanzate nelle sezioni precedenti della tesi. Così, la categoria dell’etnicità dialoga costantemente con quelle di genere e di classe; anche le questioni di genere sono discusse nei capitoli 2 e 4, sebbene siano forse meno pervasive dei discorsi sulla ‘danesità’ e sulla ‘groenlandesità’, vero fulcro della *dansk grønlandslitteratur*.

Una lettura ‘intersezionale’ della produzione ‘groenlandese’ di Leine, Mondrup e Inuk offre nuovi spunti di riflessione sull’opera dei tre autori, nonché sullo *Zeitgeist* in cui si colloca. Un elemento degno di nota è l’inserimento di discorsi inerenti alla classe nello studio di testi appartenenti al genere preso in analisi – a sua volta spesso caratterizzato da un certo grado di ‘class-blindness’, analogamente alla letteratura critica a riguardo. Anche in base ai risultati ottenuti, tuttavia, le categorie di differenza sociale più ‘produttive’ nelle opere considerate rimangono le prime due, quelle di etnicità e di genere – tendenzialmente decostruite e ricombinate da Leine, Mondrup e Inuk, nonostante permanga in taluni casi una certa tendenza all’essentialismo. Questo è vero, ad esempio, per *Tabita* di Mondrup e *Kalak* di Leine – sebbene gli aspetti potenzialmente problematici di quest’ultimo vengano almeno in parte

smussati grazie alle possibilità garantite dalla modalità autofinzionale. I discorsi su genere/sexualità che emergono dai romanzi appartenenti al corpus esaminato sembrano tendenzialmente rinforzare le narrazioni ‘alternative’ proposte riguardo alle categorie ‘danesità’ e ‘groenlandesità’, mentre la questione è più complessa nel caso della classe. Data l’impossibilità di parlare di questa categoria se non in termini oppositivi, l’allontanamento da discorsi stereotipici danesi sulla Groenlandia si verifica attraverso altre modalità – per esempio offrendo un’immagine stratificata di questa società (post)coloniale che non indugi necessariamente sull’associazione tra ‘groenlandesità’ e una condizione di disagio socioeconomico.

INTRODUCTION

The international interest for Greenland has been consistently growing in the last two decades due to diverse reasons. Denmark's former colony is at the center of discourses and debates regarding climate change, geopolitics, and, not least, decolonization – intended in a broader sense, not exclusively with regard to Greenland's *de jura* status. This reflection involves a rethinking of the former colonizer's positioning and responsibilities vis-à-vis the oppressed counterpart. In this regard, as suggested by Kirsten Thisted in her work on Danish fiction about Greenland (2015; 2023), literature also plays a role by attempting alternative narratives and, sometimes, even surrogates for official reconciliation and apologies.

As a matter of fact, Danish-Greenlandic relations have always been at the core of *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, whose surge is conventionally traced back to the mid 1800s. As of today, the genre does not seem to have exhausted its creative potential, quite the contrary. The last two decades have witnessed a notable increase of Danish literary representations of Greenland and, at the same time, the academic interest for this kind of literature has also been growing, albeit with a certain delay, if one considers the wave of postcolonial studies in anglophone or francophone contexts. A probable cause for this deferment is to be found in the rhetoric of «exceptionalism», which has always permeated Denmark's self-understanding as a colonial power vis-à-vis Greenland and whose remnants still haunt public discourses and, to a certain extent, even the academia (see Kjærgaard 2019). However, things started to change in the 2010s, and the year 2020, which marked the peak of the decolonizing movement favored by the «Black Lives Matter» protests, might have acted as a further catalyst.

I. Choice of Primary Sources

The majority of the works included in my corpus dates back to the 2010s, when a rethinking of Danish-Greenlandic relations was sparked perhaps as a consequence of the introduction of Self-government in Greenland, which paved the way to Greenland's (possible) future independence. My hypothesis is that these years witnessed a shift in Danish literary representations of Greenland, as new and anti-essentialist conceptions of 'Danishness' and 'Greenlandicness' emerged in fiction. Therefore, the work of Kim Leine, Iben Mondrup, and Lotte Inuk – thanks to the peculiar positioning of the three authors, as we will see – lends itself to the purposes of

my study. Their literary output shows a pronounced interest in the dimension of ethnicity, as the relationship between ‘Danishness’ and ‘Greenlandicness’ (as well as the redefinition of the two categories) is at the center of their work. This concern might originate from the fact that the three of them have spent a considerable amount of years in Greenland, albeit in different circumstances. Leine, in fact, lived and worked there as a nurse for about fifteen years, while Mondrup’s and Inuk’s ties to Greenland can be traced back to the time of their infancy, both daughters of Danish immigrants who had moved to Greenland during the modernization years. Growing up in post-colonial Greenland, according to Thisted, is an experience until recently rarely thematized within *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, as if the topic was perceived as some sort of taboo: «Danske forfattere har skrevet om Grønland i en endeløs strøm. Men vi har ikke hørt fra dem, der rent faktisk er opvokset i landet. Der har helt klart været en berøringsangst, måske ligefrem en slags tabu overfor at erklære Grønland for del af ens “hovedstol” som forfatter, når man nu “bare” var dansker»¹ (Thisted 2014b).

Apart from their common, first-hand knowledge of life in Greenland, these three writers also belong to the same generation (meaning that they were presumably exposed to the same discourses regarding Greenland) and adopt the same literary genres for their ‘Greenlandic’ production. I will investigate some of their historical novels and realistic fiction, often enriched with autofictional elements. To the former category belongs Kim Leine’s historical trilogy on colonial Greenland – consisting of *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden* (2012; *The Prophets of Eternal Fjord*), *Rød mand/Sort mand* (2018; *The Colony of Good Hope*), and *Efter åndemaneren* (2021; *After the Shaman*) – and Mondrup’s novels concerning the displacement of the siblings Tabita and Vitus (2020-2023). This latter series will be considered only partially, since its culminating volume, *Bjørn*, was published at the end of 2023, in conjunction with the last stages of writing of the present dissertation; therefore, only *Tabita* (2020) and *Vittu* (2022) are included in my corpus. The realistic/autofictional novels taken into account are Leine’s debut, *Kalak* (2007), Mondrup’s *Store Malene* (2013) and *Godhavn* (2014), as well as Inuk’s *Sultekunstnerinde* (2004; *Hunger Artist*).² These specific genres allow me to analyze whether the authors’ personal experiences have been conveyed in new understandings of ‘Danishness’ and ‘Greenlandicness’

¹ «Danish writers have written about Greenland in an endless stream. But we have not heard anything from those who actually grew up in the country. There has clearly been a fear to approach the topic, perhaps even some sort of taboo regarding the possibility to declare Greenland part of one’s own ‘capital’ as a writer, if you are ‘only’ a Dane», my translation.

² Leine’s ‘memoir’ bears the name of a Greenlandic word that can be translated as «true or authentic Greenlandic» (Thisted 2011a: 268, my translation). *Store Malene* and *Godhavn*, on the other hand, are two Danish toponyms, respectively identifying a mountain in the area of Nuuk (Ukkusissat) and the Greenlandic city Qeqertarsuaq.

– or of identity in a broader sense. At the same time, I start from the assumption that the reconstruction of Greenland’s colonial or post-colonial context in historical terms implies a critical reanalysis of Denmark’s positioning, and of the underlying rhetoric that accompanied its imperial endeavors. My main research question is thus to verify whether Leine, Mondrup, and Inuk’s ‘Greenlandic’ production offers narratives on Greenland that do not necessarily draw on an exoticizing attitude toward the Greenlandic ‘Other’ or on the idea of Denmark as a benevolent colonial power – two master discourses that have permeated *dansk grønlandslitteratur* since its outset (see Martinsen 2017).

II. Previous Scholarship

In scholarly research, the association between Leine, Mondrup, and Inuk and identity-related matters is not new, considering that the privileged methodological approach to their works stems from postcolonial studies. Worth mentioning among the most prominent contributions on Leine’s ‘Greenlandic’ fiction are Kirsten Thisted’s «*Gi’r du en øl, dansker*». *Kim Leine og de danske stereotyper om Grønland* (2011a; «*Will You Buy Me a Beer, Dane*». *Kim Leine and Danish Stereotypes on Greenland*) and *Imperiets genfærd. Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden og den dansk-grønlandske historieskrivning* (2015; *The Specter of Danish Empire: The Prophets of Eternal Fjord and the Writing of Danish-Greenlandic History*), as well as Ebbe Volquardsen’s *Pathological Escapists, Passing and the Perpetual Ice: Old and New Trends in Danish-Greenlandic Migration Literature* (2014a). Lotte Inuk’s *Sultekunstnerinde* has also been taken into consideration by Thisted (2005), Schramm and Thisted (2015) and, more briefly, by Volquardsen (2014a). Thisted often mentions Inuk’s autofictional novel as an example of how problematic it can be to make a clear distinction between the categories of ‘Danish’ and ‘Greenlandic’:

Normalt skelner man mellem «grønlandsk litteratur» skrevet af grønlandske forfattere på grønlandsk og (primært) for et grønlandsk publikum og «dansk grønlandslitteratur» skrevet på dansk af danske forfattere og (primært) for et dansk publikum. Spørgsmålet er imidlertid, om denne skarpe opdeling strengt taget giver mening, sammenvævet som relationerne mellem Danmark og Grønland er blevet, sprogligt og kulturelt. På nogle punkter minder Inuks situation om de såkaldt «dansktalende grønlændere» [...]. På den anden side er hendes situation helt anderledes, fordi den skarpe opdeling mellem dansk og

grønlandsk insisterer på afstamning som det grundlæggende parameter for tilhørsforhold.³
(Schramm & Thisted 2015: 190)

Of the three authors considered throughout this work, Iben Mondrup is the most overlooked within the academic panorama – a gap partially filled by Dybdal & Grønlund (2020), Dybdal (2021; 2022), Thisted (2023), and Turri (2023b). A possible cause may be that Greenland only occupied a secondary role in her fiction until the publication of *Store Malene* in 2013 (see Turri 2023b: 120). Even after the release of *Godhavn* (2014), which received unanimous critical acclaim both in Denmark and Greenland, contributions on her work have been sporadic. A first, concise, mention of Mondrup's 'Greenlandic' fiction is to be found in Volquardsen's aforementioned article – which remains, to my best knowledge, the only text that considers Leine, Mondrup, and Inuk in a comparative light. In this contribution, the scholar addresses Leine's *Kalak*, Mondrup's *Store Malene*, and Inuk's *Sultekunstnerinde* along with other texts, such as Henrik Pontoppidan's *Isbjørnen* (1887; *The Polar Bear*) and Måliâraq Vebæk's *Búsime nâpíneq* (1981; *The Story of Katrine*), both shedding a light on the relationship between 'Danishness' and 'Greenlandicness'. Volquardsen's main focus is the dimension of identity, intended in ethnic terms. In this regard, my dissertation can be viewed as a follow up to his work, since: 1) I investigate a larger corpus of novels drafted by the same authors and 2) I do not reduce the concept of 'identity' to 'ethnicity' alone, but make it interact with 'gender' and 'class'-related issues as well.

'Greenlandicness' and 'Danishness', I argue, are not the only two parameters defining identity in the production of the three authors. With different modalities, Leine, Mondrup, and Inuk all bring to the fore gender-related matters. This aspect, for instance, is particularly evident in *Sultekunstnerinde*, since the book recalls the 'Greenlandic' years of Lotta/Charlie and her coming of age. Scholarship focusing on this specific characteristic of the novel can be found in the anthology edited by Marianne Larsen and Moritz Schramm, *Mine drømme har en anden virkelighed. Charlotte Inuk og hendes forfatterskab* (2015; *My Dreams Have Another Reality. Charlotte Inuk and her Literary Production*). Rozemarijn Vervoort's article *(In)visibility and*

³ «It is customary to make a distinction between “literature about Greenland”, drafted by Greenlandic writers in Greenlandic and (primarily) conceived for a Greenlandic audience, and “Danish literature about Greenland”, drafted by Danish writers in Danish and (primarily) conceived for a Danish audience. The question, however, is whether this sharp division makes sense, strictly speaking, considering how interwoven the relations between Denmark and Greenland have become, on a linguistic and cultural level. In a few instances, Inuk's situation is reminiscent of the so-called “Danish-speaking Greenlanders” [...]. On the other hand, her situation is completely different, because the sharp division between Danish and Greenlandic insists on descent as the basic parameter for belonging», my translation.

the Danish Body in Sultekunstnerinde (2004), *a Novel on Postcolonial Greenland* (2019) also touches upon the topic. The gender-dimension, albeit more fragmentarily, has also been taken into consideration in relation to Leine's *Kalak* (Thisted 2011a; Volquardsen 2014a) and *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden* (Pedersen 2019). As regards Iben Mondrup's 'Greenlandic' production, this focus remains surprisingly essentially unexplored, considering how the author plays with and problematizes gender roles, for instance in *Store Malene* and *Godhavn*. Discourses on gender are also a significant feature of *Tabita*, whose narration proceeds through four feminine points of view, be they Danish or Greenlandic. Only in her recent article *Fiktion, erindringsarbejde og forsoning. Om Astrid Saalbach: Der hvor du ikke vil hen og Iben Mondrup: Tabita som del af et dansk selvopgør med dansk kolonialisme i Grønland* (2023; *Fiction, Memory Work, and Reconciliation. About Astrid Saalbach: Der hvor du ikke vil hen (Where you don't want to go) and Iben Mondrup: Tabita as part of a Danish confrontation with Danish colonialism in Greenland*), Kirsten Thisted concisely mentions this aspect.

While the joint (re)discussion of ethnicity and gender is not new neither to *dansk grønlandslitteratur* nor to the critical literature that engages with it, the dimension of class seems to occupy a secondary role. A recent exception, in this sense, is Emilie Dybdal and Anders Grønlund's article *Bygder og barakker: Arbejdspladsen som konfliktzone i dansk grønlandslitteratur* (2020; *Villages and Barracks: The Workplace as a Conflict Zone in Danish Literature about Greenland*), where a perspective on spatial representation merges with more general considerations on class relations. In their analysis of the spaces emerging from the working-class novel *Barakkerne* (1977) by Jørgen Liljensøe, and of more recent works, such as Leine's *Rød mand/Sort mand* (2018) and Mondrup's *Tabita* (2020), the authors write:

Arbejde og kolonialisme går således hånd i hånd: Kolonisering skaber arbejdspladser, arbejdspladser skaber (heterotopiske) steder, og disse udgør ofte zoner for konflikter [...]. Konflikterne findes som sagt ikke kun i Liljensøes *Barakkerne*, der bærer tydeligt præg af 70'ernes arbejderlitteratur. Tværtimod synes arbejde og sted stadig at spille en væsentlig rolle i den allernyeste danske grønlandslitteratur, hvor ulighed og konflikt endnu er centrale emner. I lyset af den grønlandske og globale udvikling er der ingen tegn på, at dette vil ændre sig i den nære fremtid. Derimod ses et stigende (kritisk) fokus på Grønland, senest i forbindelse med Black Lives Matter-bevægelsen, der igen har sat gang i diskussionen om de koloniale skygger [...].⁴ (Dybdal & Grønlund 2020: 46)

⁴ «Work and colonialism, then, go hand in hand: colonization creates jobs, jobs generate (heterotopian) spaces, which often constitute conflict zones [...]. As already mentioned, conflicts are not only to be found in Liljensøe's *Barakkerne*, which clearly bears the stamp of working-class literature of the 70s. On the contrary, work and space still seem to play a significant role in the latest Danish Greenlandic literature, where inequality and conflict are still central topics. In light of Greenlandic and global developments, there are no signs that this will change in the

If class conflicts within *dansk grønlandslitteratur* seem to be virtually inseparable from those springing from the colonial encounter. No mention is made of the relation between class and ethnicity.

The focus of my dissertation is precisely on the compresence and interaction between the dimensions of ethnicity, gender, and class – an ‘intersectional’ approach that has not been systematically applied to the analysis of Leine, Mondrup, and Inuk’s production and constitutes an element of novelty that has been allowed me to investigate the three writers’ representation of asymmetrical power relations and minoritizing/majoritizing mechanisms. A forerunner of my work, at least as to its premises and research questions, can be found in Risak’s book *Knud Sønderby. En kultur-sociologisk analyse* (1973; *Knud Sønderby. A Cultural-Sociological Analysis*), revolving around Sønderby’s *De kolde Flammer* (1940; *The Cold Flames*) and *Grønlandsk Sommer* (1941; *Greenlandic Summer*). Risak investigates the representations of the cultural encounter between ‘Danishness’ and ‘Greenlandicness’ not only in ethnic terms, but also through class- and gender-related matters. In fact, gender and class, similarly to ethnicity, lend themselves to an (essentialist) binary categorization, such as man vs. woman, upper vs. lower class etc. Risak also sees a direct link between the classic colonialist *topos* ‘culture’ vs. ‘nature’ and ‘bourgeoisie’ vs. ‘proletariat’ (Risak 1973: 63). Nevertheless, class hierarchy in colonial (and, to a certain extent, post-colonial) Greenland is more complicated than that: the cultural encounter between ‘Danishness’ and ‘Greenlandicness’ crosses with the more nuanced partition of this peculiar society in «kolonibestyrere», «assistenter», «præster», «lærere», «udstedsbestyrere», «fartøjsførere» and «håndværkere»⁵ (Risak 1973: 64). The average salary gap between Danish and Greenlandic equivalent workers also suggests that «dette er mere end en etnisk modsætning dansker vs. grønlander, der viser så store differencer, at man kan tale om klassemodsatning»⁶ (*Ibidem*). A similarly ‘schematic’ approach is employed by Risak with regard to sexuality:

Modsatning mellem hæmmet sexuel udfoldelse og fri sexuel udfoldelse viser sig også i grønlandsbøgerne at dominere den seksuelle taxonomi. Alle danskerne i kolonien er

near future. On the other hand, there is an increasing (critical) focus on Greenland, most recently in connection with the Black Lives Matter movement, which has once again started the discussion about the colonial shadows [...]], my translation.

⁵ «trade managers», «assistants», «priests», «teachers», «post officers», «ship’s masters», «craftsmen», my translation.

⁶ «this is more than an ethnic opposition between Danes and Greenlanders, the difference is so consistent that it is possible to talk about an opposition between classes», my translation.

beskrevet som sexuel hæmmet på en eller anden måde, hvadenten det finder udtryk som frustrerede pardannelser eller unaturlig sexhunger [...]. Kristian og Veras forhold er i den forbindelse betegnende. Det starter som den store ideale kærlighed i et brud ned et bourgeoisi-miljø og et fastlåst kønsrollemønster. Mødet med Grønland bliver mødet med de samme sociale forhold og de samme mellem menneskelige adfærdsnormer, hvilket driver deres forhold ud i sygelig frustration. Heroverfor står, at det kønslige for grønlænderne er noget naturligt. Adskillige steder antydes en fri og ægte sexualmoral, som hænger meget nøje sammen med de oprindelige samfundsforhold, d.v.s. fællesskabet [...].⁷ (Risak 1973: 68)

Risak's observations are consistent with the assumption that colonial and post-colonial literature – whose primary interest is to come to terms with the relationship to the 'Other' – often addresses, be it slavishly or critically, contrasting identities, whose 'essence' can be grasped through a series of oppositional pairs. This «binary logic through which identities of difference are often constructed» (Bhabha 1994: 3) characterizes for instance Peter Høeg's *Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne* – as extensively demonstrated by Thisted (2002; 2003).

The focus of my work is instead on whether the overcoming of such binarisms – be they ethnic, gender, or class-related – is a distinctive trait of Leine, Mondrup, and Inuk's 'Greenlandic' production. At the same time, I will investigate how these chosen identity-generators interact with one another: the three of them may be represented in accordance with similar patterns – to the point of overlapping – or, conversely, they may engender contrasting discourses. For this purpose, I will adopt an 'intersectional' approach.

III. Theory

Two main theoretical discourses inform my research. On the one hand, I consider critical studies concerning Danish-Greenlandic relations and Denmark's specificities as a colonial power. As unusual as it may sound, Denmark's presence in Greenland is not universally acknowledged as colonial: the controversial historian Thorkild Kjærgaard – even questions the use of the terms «colonizer», «colonized», and «colony» in relation to the Danish-Greenlandic

⁷ «An opposition between inhibited and free sexual expression also dominates the sexual taxonomy in [Sønderby's] books on Greenland. All the Danes in the colony are described as sexually inhibited in one way or another, which results in frustrated couples or an unnatural sexual appetite [...]. Kristian and Vera's relationship is explicative in this regard. It starts as the ideal of great love, in contravention to a bourgeois environment and a fixed gender role pattern. The encounter with Greenland becomes the encounter with the same social conditions and the same interpersonal behavioral norms, which drives their relationship into pathological frustration. This contrasts with the fact that sexuality is something natural for Greenlanders. In several passages, the author hints at a free and genuine sexual morality, which is very closely related to the indigenous social conditions, i.e., the community [...].», my translation.

past (see Kjærgaard 2019; Hálfðanarson & Thisted 2020: 93-94), and insist on Denmark's alleged benevolence and humanity towards Greenland, a conception that falls under the name of «exceptionalism», and is applied both to Denmark («Danish exceptionalism», see Rud 2017a) and to the North in its entirety («Nordic exceptionalism»), see *Scandinavian Exceptionalisms: Culture, Society, Discourse* (2021), edited by Jens Bjerring-Hansen, Torben Jelsbak, and Anna Estera Mrozewicz, and Lars Jensen and Kristín Loftsdóttir's *Exceptionalism* (2022).

Gender studies, and in particular an 'intersectional' approach, also fueled my investigation. Although in the course of my inquiry I also refer to the notion of «intersectionality» – first employed by the jurist Kimberlé Crenshaw in an attempt to «contrast the multidimensionality of Black women's experience with the single-axis analysis that distorts these experiences» (Crenshaw 1989: 139) – I rather tend to employ Ingunn Moser's adjoining term, «interference». 'Interference' points to the fact that «the different processes that construct gender, class and dis/ability not only mechanically sustain and reinforce each other (as the metaphor of intersections suggests), but may also clash, come into conflict and neutralize each other» (Lykke 2010: 84). Moser's expression, suggesting a certain degree of 'fuzziness', thus seems to leave more room for possible inconsistencies. In the course of this section, some considerations will be made on these notions' applicability to literary analysis, as well as on their inherence to postcolonial studies.

Theoretical debates concerning ethnicity, gender, and class will be scrutinized in the course of the thematical chapters, whose *fil rouge* is to be found precisely in the premises of an 'intersectional' approach. Ethnicity, gender, and class, in fact, can be considered three primary elements around which Danish-Greenlandic relations unfold and, although the dissertation's structure may suggest that they can subsist *per se*, it is nearly impossible to study them as three discrete units, since they constantly blur and overlap – in academical investigations as well as in literary fiction, as we shall see.

In scholarship on Nordic colonialism it is often claimed that the interest for postcolonial studies in the Nordic countries and for their involvement in colonial deeds is relatively recent. Although sporadic inquiries first appeared in the 1980s and the 1990s, widespread academic debate did not follow in the wake of these first publications (Höglund and Burnett 2019: 2). Anne J. Kershen, in her preface to *Whiteness and Postcolonialism in the Nordic Region. Exceptionalism, Migrant Others and National Identities* (2012) expresses a similar concern about the general academic disregard that prevailed until recent times:

In nearly all instances, postcolonialism has been perceived through the lens of the traditional Western European colonisers – Britain, France, Italy, Spain and Portugal – and their subjugates in Asia and Africa, as well as those under imperial rule in the Americas from the early 1500s. One region, in the context of both coloniser and colonised, has tended to be marginalised: that region, which comprises the countries of Norway, Sweden, Iceland, Finland and Denmark, together with the autonomous regions of the Faeroe Islands, the Aland Islands and Greenland [...]. (Kershen 2012: XI)

In 2021 and 2022 two seminal volumes on the matter were released: *Scandinavian Exceptionalisms: Culture, Society, Discourse* (Bjerring-Hansen, Jelsbak & Mrozewicz 2021) and *Exceptionalism* (Jensen & Loftsdóttir 2022). The use of the pivotal concept of ‘exceptionalism’ suggests that a change of pace has occurred also within the Scandinavian context as a result of the «Black Lives Matter» movement (Thisted 2021; Rud & Ivarsson 2021).⁸

The gap anteceding the 2010s has become an object of academic attention itself. The Nordic countries, it has been argued, have rarely been encompassed in studies on European colonial endeavors since their politics do not necessarily align – or are not *perceived* to align – with the characteristics of most of their European counterparts. This premise has lead, on the one hand, to considerations on the matter in terms of center and periphery (see Jensen & Loftsdóttir 2012: 2) and, on the other, to «the idea that Nordic self-perception is rooted intrinsically differently from the rest of Europe and that this self-perception generates different kinds of encounters from experiences elsewhere» (*Ibidem*). The term «exceptionalism» refers precisely to this self-perception, and implicitly alludes to the idea of the «Nordic countries as global ‘good citizens’, peace-loving, conflict-resolution orientated (DeLong 2009: 368-9) and ‘rational’ (Browning 2007: 27-8)» (*Ibidem*). As one can easily imagine, the applicability of «exceptionalism» also extends to other fields, for example to political science, where it is «used [...] to describe the socio-economic organization of the Nordic welfare as distinct from other welfare models (such as ‘the continental’ or American models)» (Bjerring-Hansen, Jelsbak &

⁸ Thisted’s monograph *Stemmer fra Grønland. Den danske koloni i 1920’erne* (2021; *Voices from Greenland. The Danish Colony in the 1920s*) starts with a description of the ‘vandalization’ of Hans Egede’s statue in Nuuk on 21 June 2020: «Ikke blot var der den røde maling, men Egedes stav var også forvandlet til en pisk, som ledte tankerne hen på slaveri og en anden tidligere dansk koloni: Dansk Vestindien. Ordet *Decolonize* [...] var skrevet på soklen. Aktionen havde klare referencer til Black Lives Matter-bevægelsen, hvor statuer forbundet med kolonialisme netop da blev revet ned af demonstranter over store dele af verden [...]» («Not only was there the red paint, but Egede’s staff had also been transformed into a whip, which brought to mind slavery and another former Danish colony: the Danish West Indies. The word *Decolonize* [...] was written on the plinth. The action was clearly referring to the Black Lives Matter movement [...] »; Thisted 2021: 9). Rud and Ivarsson’s *Postkoloniale og globale perspektiver på dansk kolonihistorie* (2021; *Postcolonial and Global Perspectives on Danish Colonial History*) begins with similar considerations on the same episode.

Mrozewicz 2020: 10). As a matter of fact, discourses on the Nordic countries' 'uniqueness' enter the most disparate fields (see Bjerring-Hansen, Jelsbak & Mrozewicz 2020: 10-11), stretching from law and criminology to some specific aesthetic manifestations (Scandinavian design, Nordic noir...) and from a general idea of 'lifestyle' to «a specific kind of modernity [...] which manifests itself in phenomena such as sexual liberation, gender equality, environmental awareness etc.» (Bjerring-Hansen, Jelsbak & Mrozewicz 2020: 10).

Throughout the dissertation, «exceptionalism» will be solely discussed in postcolonial terms. Within this specific field of study, the employment of the notion may lead to two mutually exclusive aims: 1) the reiteration of this self-congratulatory narrative, on the one side, and 2) a critical engagement, on the other. Most contributions embrace the latter option and address the inconsistencies characterizing the 'benevolent' Nordic countries with regard to their colonial past, as well as to their present neo-colonial deeds, see *Complying With Colonialism. Gender. Race and Ethnicity in the Nordic Region* (Keskinen *et al.* 2009). Starting from the assumption that the Nordic countries have not been immune to «colonial complicity» (Keskinen *et al.* 2009: 1-2), the authors write:

Nations, groups and individual subjects are drawn by the promise of power to adopt the discourses, imaginaries and material benefits connected to this project. The Nordic countries see themselves as part of the Western world, drawing their value systems from the Enlightenment, and showing themselves to be willing to defend these values sometimes even more forcefully than the former colonial centres. (Keskinen *et al.* 2009: 1)

With reference to center/periphery dynamics, this could be regarded as an attempt by the Nordic countries to overcome their peripheral status and, at the same time, to cherish their geographical and cultural contiguity to the 'West' rather than their unique positioning within Europe; in this regard, then, exceptionalism is nothing but a rhetorical construct. Jensen and Loftsdóttir, not dissimilarly to Keskinen, also stress the chasm between an identification *tout-court* with Western Enlightenment values and the Nordic countries' current image; this 'schism' may be perhaps embodied by the notorious figure of Carl von Linné, whose theories, besides from laying the foundation to modern taxonomy, came to favor a racialized worldview (Jensen & Loftsdóttir 2012: 5). Throughout their history, then, the Nordic countries have not been immune to the reiteration – and sometimes creation – of discourses they have actively opposed in more recent years. Keskinen *et al.* stress the underlying 'hypocrisy' of this practice: «[a]nti-racist and anti-imperialist movements, and academic commentary on issues of race and colonialism, have been part of the Nordic societies since the 1970s, yet these countries have managed to retain an

image of themselves as untouched by colonial legacies» (Keskinen *et al.* 2009: 2). Attention is once again drawn to the problem generated by this «nation narration» – as Jensen and Loftsdóttir define exceptionalism (Jensen & Loftsdóttir 2022: 3), reprising the expression minted by Homi Bhabha.

While these preliminary reflections may be useful to consider colonial and postcolonial relations in the Nordic countries as a whole, one should always bear in mind that the region itself is quite diverse and includes «both independent states (Norway, Sweden, Iceland, Finland and Denmark) and autonomous regions (the Faeroe Islands, Greenland and the Aland Islands)» (Jensen & Loftsdóttir 2012: 3). Some Nordic countries have had territorial hegemony over others and, although their mutual relations have been constantly changing since the Kalmar Union in 1397 (*Ibidem*), «[i]n order to understand the colonial/racial histories within and outside the Nordic region, it is essential to acknowledge the regionally dominant role of Denmark and Sweden» (Keskinen 2019: 166). Denmark, in fact, once encompassed Norway, Iceland, the Faroe Islands and Greenland; Sweden, on the other hand, included Finland until 1809, and ruled over Norway for almost a century (1814-1905). The situation is further complicated by the «existence of people from various ethnicities, languages and areas that have upheld regional identities» (Jensen & Loftsdóttir 2012: 3). Colonial and postcolonial relations concerning the Nordic region, however, have not been exclusively ‘internal’: one need only think about the Danish empire’s «tropical colonies» (Jensen 2018: 2), namely Tranquebar, the Gold Coast in Ghana, and the Danish West Indies.

‘Exceptionalism’, as we have seen, is tendentially paired with the adjective ‘Nordic’, but the more specific variant «Danish exceptionalism» is also to be found, for example in Søren Rud’s *Colonialism in Greenland. Tradition, Governance and Legacy* (2017a). Rud, paraphrasing Lars Jensen, defines the phenomenon as «a Danish lack of interest in acknowledging the colonial past» (2017a: 3), which can find many different expressions, «ranging from apologetic, chastising, and apparently objectively analyzing» (*Ibidem*). Rud stresses the importance of grasping the distinctive character of specific colonial projects not only in relation to different colonial powers, but also to the variety of enterprises pursued by one and the same state:

While I sympathize with the project of deconstructing the hollow narrative of Scandinavian exceptionalism, I find it pertinent to apply an [sic] historical analysis that allows the specifics of the various colonial projects to emerge. As Nicholas Thomas notes: «Colonialism can only be traced through its plural and particularized expressions [...]» Danish practices relating to the slave trade and planter-slave colonialism were every bit as

brutal and inhumane as the practices of other powers in similar colonial projects. And Denmark was every bit as invested as other western nations in the production of hierarchized notions of culture, race, and society. However, deconstructing the narrative of Scandinavian exceptionalism must not entail the conflation of all colonial projects into a hodgepodge of brutality and oppression. (Rud 2017a: 4)

Rud, then, apart from channeling his analysis into the *topos* of Denmark as «en særlig underkategori af nogle bredere europæiske mønstre»⁹ (Jensen 2012: 9), distinguishes between its conduct towards the ‘tropical’ colonies – whose management dynamics present parallelisms with those, for instance, of England and France – and towards Greenland, not equally inhumane. This argument, albeit undoubtedly pertinent, may entail the risk of creating a qualitative hierarchy among colonizing practices, on the one side, and among its consequences, on the other. Further examples of physical – rather than cultural – violence with reference to the Danish-Greenlandic context are now gradually being unveiled, a notable case being the so-called «spiralsag» («spiral case»), addressing the investigation advocated by the Greenlandic government with regard to «svangerskabsforebyggende tiltag i 1960’erne og 1970’erne i Grønland»¹⁰ (Kristensen 2022). According to Veirum (2022), in the decade between 1965 and 1975, thousands of coils were inserted with dubious consent of Greenlandic women and girls. This peculiar kind of violence could be regarded as twofold: on the one side, it has affected the single violated individuals and, on the other, it might have contributed to a demographic change. Tom Høyem, Greenland’s former prime minister (1982-1987), states that the «spiral campaign», which had been promoted and discussed openly, was meant as an awareness initiative against unwanted pregnancies (Veirum 2022). In 1985, Høyem even addressed the campaign in a public discourse:

I sidste halvdel af 1960’erne forøgede sundhedsvæsenet indsatsen med oplysning om svangerskabsforebyggende midler, og resultaterne var så opsigtsvækkende, at de må have international interesse. De viser, hvor hurtigt man kan nedsætte fertiliteten, dersom man har et effektivt sundhedsvæsen og en befolkning, der er motiveret for at undgå graviditeter. I løbet af 3-4 år blev fertiliteten halveret— især på grund af anvendelse af spiralen, og i de følgende 15 år er fertiliteten næsten halveret endnu engang.¹¹ (Veirum 2022)

⁹ «a specific subcategory of some broader European patterns», my translation.

¹⁰ «birth control measures adopted in Greenland in the 1960s and 1970s», my translation.

¹¹ «During the second half of the 1960s, the ministry of health increased its efforts in sharing information about contraceptives. The results were so startling that they should be of international interest. They show how quickly fertility can be reduced if you have an efficient healthcare system and a population that is motivated to avoid pregnancies. Over the course of 3-4 years, fertility was halved – mainly due to the use of spirals. 15 years after that, fertility is almost halved again», my translation.

His statement takes on a new – and disturbing – meaning if considered in the light of the recent findings that stress the constrained character of the «spiral campaign». This example may show that, although Danish intervention in Greenland is generally associated to ‘mere’ cultural oppression, cases of institutionalized physical violence are also to be found.¹² These two different types of violence could be regarded as «symbolic», on the one side, and «systemic», on the other, two notions reprised from Slavoj Žižek’s *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (2008) previously employed with regard to Danish-Greenlandic matters by Christina Petterson in her *Colonialism, Racism and Exceptionalism* (2012). Petterson adopts this terminology in an attempt to demonstrate that «violence becomes much more complex than just a question of force» (Petterson 2012: 30), and aims at dismantling discourses on exceptionalism – which seem to affect Danish-Greenlandic colonial and postcolonial relations more than similar cases.

As mentioned before, the historian Thorkild Kjærgaard, defined by Kirsten Thisted as «the most ardent advocate of the [...] narrative of Denmark as a benign colonizer» (2016: 159), could be identified as the most extreme and polemical voice on the matter. Often quoted as an example of the most drastic drifts of Danish exceptionalism (Thisted 2015; Hálfðanarson & Thisted 2020; Dybdal 2021), Kjærgaard indulges in defiant statements and academical quarrels concerning Danish benevolent involvement in colonial praxis. His provocative taste emerges, for instance, in his review of the book *Grønland. Den arktiske koloni* (2017; *Greenland; The Arctic Colony*), edited by Hans Christian Gulløv, where he even questions Greenland’s status as an (ex-)colony. According to Kjærgaard, modern European colonialism was introduced around 1350, as Spain took possession of the Canary Islands; Greenland, at that time, was already a Norwegian domain, and its occupation cannot be considered of colonial nature (Kjærgaard 2019: 138). The scholar reinforces the message as follows:

Uanset hvad fremtiden måtte bringe, ville Grønland – i modsætning til et hvilket som helst afrikansk, asiatisk, amerikansk, australsk eller oceanisk område – til evig tid være om ikke dansk(-norsk), så i hvert fald et tidligere dansk(-norsk) område. [...] Skulle Grønland have plads i kolonihistorien, måtte det være som koloni under en anden europæisk nation end Danmark(-Norge). Og sådan kunne det i øvrigt let være gået. Både hollænderne og englænderne var interesserede i Grønland i 1600-tallet, og hvis ikke Hans Egede havde fået overtalt en tøvende Frederik IV til at understøtte sit grønlandsprojekt, ville Grønland antagelig være gledet over på hollandske eller engelske hænder [...]. Hans Egede gjorde ikke Grønland til en koloni. Tværtimod forhindrede han, som bemærket af den norske kirkehistoriker Erling Danbolt, at Grønland blev en del af den moderne europæiske kolonialismes historie, hvor menuen for den indfødte befolkning i det Nordamerika, som

¹² Nonetheless, it should be borne in mind that, as it is often the case with Denmark and Greenland, the campaign was conducted ‘with the best intentions’, i.e., to prevent the birth of children who would grow up without an adequate support (see Lyberth 2023: 102).

Grønland er en del af, stod på racisme, folkemord, hensynsløs udbytning, kulturel destruktion og europæiske sygdomme.¹³ (Kjærgaard 2019: 138-139)

Kjærgaard is quite *tranchant*. His claim is that Danish-Greenlandic relations do not fulfill the conditions that would make it possible to identify them as ‘colonial’. Just as Greenland, here, is not viewed as a (former) colony, Denmark cannot be conceived as a ‘real’ colonial power. This label is rather linked to England and to Holland, whose imperial schemes are associated with oppression consisting of both a physical and a cultural component. This reasoning bears some openly problematic aspects: firstly, Greenland is «freed» on the basis of a limited and limiting definition of ‘colony’ given by the scholar himself. According to *Den Danske Ordbog*, a colony is generically to be intended as a «større landområde som en stat har erhvervet sig uden for sit eget oprindelige territorium, ofte i en anden verdensdel, og som står i et politisk og økonomisk afhængighedsforhold til denne stat».¹⁴ While Kjærgaard certainly does not deny Denmark’s political and economic control over Greenland, he supports his thesis by taking into consideration only *one* form of colonialism, namely the imperial afflatus characterizing European states whose first manifestations can be traced back to the 14th and 15th centuries.

A diametrically opposed approach is employed, for instance, by Lars Jensen, who even extends the debate on colonialism – and coloniality – in Denmark to «dansk udviklingshjælpe, og andre former for dansk international interventionisme»¹⁵ (Jensen 2012: 8). The specific situation concerning Greenland, then, lends itself to the logic of exceptionalism more than other contexts – as, for instance, in the case of the so-called *danske tropekolonier*, where Danish endeavors were characterized by a lesser degree of ‘ambiguity’. Following Kjærgaard’s thought one may conclude that, as Greenland can hardly be considered a colony, Denmark does not count as a colonial power either – or, at least, as an ordinary one. Denmark’s uniqueness is revealed through its alleged benevolent (or even ‘selfless’) intentions: Denmark not only

¹³ «Regardless of what the future might hold, Greenland – unlike any African, Asian, American, Australian, or Oceanic area – would forever be, if not Danish(-Norwegian), then at least a former Danish(-Norwegian) territory. [...] If Greenland had a place in colonial history, it would be under a European nation other than Denmark (-Norway). And that could easily have happened. During the 17th century, both the Dutch and the English were interested in Greenland, and if Hans Egede had not persuaded a hesitant Frederik IV to support his Greenland-project, Greenland would probably have slipped into Dutch or English hands [...]. Hans Egede did not make Greenland a colony. On the contrary, as noted by the Norwegian church historian Erling Danbolt, he prevented Greenland from becoming part of the history of modern European colonialism, where the menu for the native population of North America, of which Greenland is a part, included racism, genocide, ruthless exploitation, cultural annihilation, and European diseases», my translation.

¹⁴ «Larger area which has been acquired by a state outside of its own original territory, often in another continent, and which depends politically and economically from that state», my translation.

¹⁵ «Danish development aid and other forms of Danish international interventionism», my translation.

prevented the intervention of less altruistic states, such as England or Holland, it even pursued the interest of the Inuit people and their progressive access to ‘modernity’. This narrative, however, shows some of its own limits by reiterating discourses that are openly related to colonial practices: for instance, it echoes «the idea of colonial empire as a “mother”» (Thisted & Gremaud 2020: 58), as well as the association between ‘Greenlandicness’ and metaphors drawn from the semantic field of childhood (see Martinsen 2017). Before delving into considerations specifically concerning postcolonial readings of Danish literature about Greenland, however, Greenlandic understandings of their colonial past will also be briefly taken into account; in particular, the attention will be drawn on decoloniality, both in its academic and non-academic manifestations.

The «Black Lives Matter» movement, consisting in the manifestations of dissent following the death of the 46-year-old Afro-American George Floyd in 2020, rapidly grew into a worldwide phenomenon. The discontent broadened its target, and the discontents soon overlapped with anticolonial discourses. The notion of «coloniality» is here reprised from Aníbal Quijano’s *Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality* (2007). Originally applied within the context of Latin America, the term refers to the ‘Western’ colonial domination still experienced regardless of the dismantling of «political colonialism» (2007: 169) – a formulation particularly apt to describe Greenland’s *de jura* decolonization during the modernization years. More broadly, the term refers to the so-called «colonization of the imagination of the dominated» (*Ibidem*), a concept on which Quijano further elaborates:

The colonizers also imposed a mystified image of their own patterns of producing knowledge and meaning. At first, they placed these patterns far out of reach of the dominated. Later, they taught them in a partial and selective way, in order to co-opt some of the dominated into their own power institutions. Then European culture was made seductive: it gave access to power. After all, beyond repression, the main instrument of all power is its seduction. Cultural Europeanisation was transformed into an aspiration. It was a way of participating and later to reach the same material benefits and the same power as the Europeans: viz, to conquer nature in short for ‘development’. European culture became a universal cultural model. The imaginary in the non-European cultures could hardly exist today and, above all, reproduce itself outside of these relations. (*Ibidem*)

With reference to the Danish-Greenlandic context, Quijano’s words may concern governance policies adopted by Denmark throughout the 19th century, as well as the so-called dispute on Greenlandic education, a heated debate in the beginning of the 20th century. According to Søren Rud (2017a: 33), in fact, Danish colonial practices in Greenland during the second half of the 19th century can be «viewed as more or less manipulative of the Greenlanders, coaxing them to

produce as much as possible, thus allowing for the maximum colonial exploitation of the area». At the same time, the ‘civilization’ project advocated by missionaries as well as by colonial officials was put into practice on a limited scale, with the aim of pursuing economic interests rather than protecting Inuit indigenous culture (Rud 2017a: 36):

The explanation behind the colonial administration’s ambiguous attitude toward the process of civilization is multidimensional. At the economic level, the Royal Greenland Trading Company was in control of all issues concerning trade in Greenland, as well as the administration of the country. The importance of whaling in Greenland had diminished by the end of the eighteenth century, and the financial success of the colonial project had come to depend on a supply of fur and blubber ‘produced’ by the Greenlandic hunters. The proficient hunters came to be regarded as highly valuable to the colonial project. Accordingly the Royal Greenland Trading Company took measures to limit contact between Greenlandic hunters and Europeans at an early stage, because the European influence was regarded as damaging to the Greenlanders’ hunting abilities. The colonial authorities believed that the more westernized or civilized the Greenlanders became, the less skilled they would be in traditional seal hunting. In other words, the steady support for the monopoly of trade and the ‘protection’ of the Greenlandic culture against a westernizing or civilizing influence was heavily motivated by the need for the blubber and fur produced by the seal hunters. (*Ibidem*)

The later dispute on education originated from these presuppositions since, on the Greenlandic side, ‘development’ was welcomed as something advantageous – especially if one considers that Greenlandic traditional life had already been influenced by the close contact with the colonizers. Mathias Storch (1883-1957), a Greenlandic intellectual and politician, became spokesman of this collective urge, which was not perceived as «an existential question about being ‘traditional’ or ‘modern’, but a struggle to achieve a position from which it was possible to gain the most from modernity» (Thisted & Gremaud 2020: 64).¹⁶ These socio-cultural happenings perfectly match with Quijano’s more general considerations on the limited access to power and knowledge granted to the colonized, on the one side, and on the seductive quality of «cultural Europeanisation», on the other.

Similar reflections have been made by Walter Mignolo, who, in *The Darker Side of Western Modernity. Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (2011) defines Quijano «a kindred soul» (Mignolo 2011: XX). Here, Mignolo presents the notion of «decoloniality», which could

¹⁶ In 1919, Storch was the first Greenlandic to be appointed provost for Greenland. Within the Danish clergy, his nomination was contested upon the grounds that he had no proper theological education (Thisted 2004a: 136). Storch was also the author of the first novel written by a Greenlandic, *Sinnattugaq* (1914; *A Greenlandic’s Dream*), translated into Danish by Knud Rasmussen, who also drafted the preface to the work. A major theme recurring in this futuristic vision, set in Godthåb in the year 2105, is precisely the necessity to introduce changes within Greenlandic society (see Thisted 2004a: 137-141).

be regarded as a further development of Quijano's theories, and starts by defining it in contrast to the adjoining term «postcoloniality» (Mignolo 2011: XXIII). «Although both projects», states Mignolo, «drink from the same fountain they are grounded in a different genealogy of thoughts and different *existentia*» (*Ibidem*). Both expressions, in fact, originate from the common urge to come to terms with the colonial experience – be it *strictu senso* or not. «Post-coloniality», at least in the interpretation adopted by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, is concerned with the influence exerted by «the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day» (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 1989: 2), but does not necessarily encompass speculations about the epistemological presuppositions of colonial systems and enterprises. In the case of decoloniality, on the contrary, the focus is rather on the necessity of detaching from Western epistemology/coloniality, or, in Mignolo's own words, from «the colonial matrix of power» (2011: XXVII). A primary goal of this «Dewesternization» is the dismantling of a *Weltanschauung* based on differentiations between 'us' and 'them' since decoloniality aims at shaping a system of thought that does not legitimate itself by acknowledging 'the other' (Mignolo 2011: 49).

It should be noted that the Nordic context is not mentioned neither in Quijano's or Mignolo's writings; the latter, in particular, states that «[d]iverse knowledge has been generated from that secret code ["Western code"] in six European modern or imperial languages: Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, French, German, and English» (Mignolo 2011: XII). Denmark, then, does not seem to count as a 'center for the production of knowledge'. However, this is more imputable to its geographical and cultural peripherality within the European context rather than to a non-involvement in colonial practices. The premises and consequences of Denmark's colonial venture in Greenland are, in fact, coherent with Mignolo's broader coloniality frame. Mignolo enumerates «some historico-structural nodes, keeping in mind that each node is not a universal instance but that each of them are constantly being articulated through the colonial and imperial difference» (2011: 17).

The claims of Quijano and Mignolo – whose authoritativeness is provided by the strength of their arguments as well as by their external focus to Western epistemological hegemony – have given an essential contribution to the debate on the necessity of engaging in a 'mental decolonization'. This process inevitably involves the academic world and is often associated with the notion of «indigenous knowledge» as an alternative to Western expertise in scientific discourses. Within the Arctic context, the term occurs mainly with regard to issues related to climate change. It should be noted, however, that the expression «indigenous

knowledge» itself may be problematic since «the exact meaning of ‘indigenous’ is contested» (Johnson 2012: V). Defining «knowledge» can be as challenging, considering that «differences between outsiders’ and insiders’ understandings of that knowledge or those knowledges» (*Ibidem*) must always be kept in mind. The distinction between an ‘inside’ and an ‘outside’ implies the risk that indigenous knowledge could be conceived as unchangeable and not to be ‘contaminated’, an understanding that dangerously converges towards othering (and self-othering) practices (see Johnson 2012: VI). In the specific case of Greenland – and of the whole Arctic region – the exoticizing drifts of discourses on the relationship between indigenous knowledge and the natural environment can actually lead to the reproduction of well-established colonial tropes. Let us consider the following extract from Frank Sejersen’s *Klimatilpasning og skaleringspraksisser* (2014; *Climate Adaptation and Scaling Practices*):

Disse klimarelaterede skaleringspraksisser er blevet ikoniseret i inuit, som på en og samme tid skal repræsentere både den store og den lille klimafortælling [...]. Vi kan så at sige gennem det lille, begrænsede og nedskalerede blik på inuit og den arktiske region få øje på det store, inkluderende og opskalerede perspektiv. Inuit bliver i et sådant perspektiv forstået som varende i en position, hvor de kondenserer klimaproblemet sande omfang og er blevet peget på som ground-truthers og førstehandsvidner til klima- og miljøændringerne. I den offentlige diskurs om inuit fremstilles de ofte som de ultimative ofre, da de bogstaveligt talt ser deres verden smelte omkring sig. Ikke kun bliver de forstået som mere og mere fremmedgjorte i deres eget land, men de opfattes som presset til at gå fra deres mere *traditionelle* liv til en *moderne* tilværelse.¹⁷ (Sejersen 2014: 61-62)

The focus, then, is once again on the opposition between modernity and tradition – depicted as two mutually exclusive conditions, respectively embodied by ‘indigenous’ and Western knowledge. In this understanding, introducing the notion of «indigenous knowledge» does not necessarily imply the end of «the era of “the other”», as Mignolo (2011: 49) puts it, rather its opposite. «“Thinking without the other”», on the other hand, could be concretized through hybridation attempts or, alternatively, through the overcoming of the necessity of defining oneself in opposition to the ‘Other’ (*Ibidem*). This goal could be achieved, for instance, by considering Greenland’s place on a global scale – and within a globalized world – rather than

¹⁷ «These climate-related scaling practices are impersonated by Inuit people, who simultaneously represent climate narratives both on a bigger and a smaller scale [...]. Through the small, limited, and scaled-down view of the Inuit and the Arctic region, we can glimpse the large, inclusive, and scaled-up perspective, so to speak. In such a perspective, Inuit are considered to be condensing the true extent of the climate problem and have been pointed to as ground-truthers and first-hand witnesses to climate and environmental change. In public discourse about Inuit, they are often portrayed as the ultimate victims as they literally watch their world melt around them. Not only are they perceived as increasingly alienated in their own country, but they are perceived as being pressured to move from their more traditional lives to a modern existence», my translation.

concentrating on the implications originating from its former colonial dependence from Denmark. A literary example of this latter praxis can be found in Niviaq Korneliussen's production: in *HOMO sapienne* (2014), the Greenlandic author accurately avoids any 'postcolonial' confrontation with 'Danishness', and a global, international dimension is evoked through the extensive use of the English language (see Lubowicka 2018). This latter aspect is also to be found in her award-winning novel *Blomsterdalen*, which, although it thematizes the problematic encounter with 'Danishness', is primarily conceived as an accusation directed at Greenland and the defectiveness of its institutions with regard to the *selvmordskultur* («suicide culture») afflicting the country. In doing so, Korneliussen implicitly refuses the passivity associated with Greenland and its inhabitants by (Danish) post-colonial narratives, and spurs Greenland to make better use of its agency (see Turri 2023a).

Breaking ties with the former occupier, at least on a symbolic level, was also the fundamental goal of the «Black Lives Matter» movement, which, as mentioned earlier, also touched Nuuk. Here, the vandalization of the most evident emblem of the Danish former colonial project, Hans Egede's statue (see *supra*, p. 18), led to a heated debate which culminated in a referendum promoted by Nuuk's municipality, won by those citizens who wished to keep the statue. Thisted comments on the victory as follows:

Et hovedargument var, at det var grønlænderne selv, der for 100 år siden samlede ind til statuen, og at kristendommen er en vigtig del af Grønlands kulturarv. Det er inuits gamle tro imidlertid også, og af den grund anbragte man i 2007 en statue af Havets Mor i vandet nede i bugten for foden af klippen med Egede-statuen. På den måde regerer de to i fællesskab over henholdsvis havet og himlen, og det kompromis er mange, men altså langt fra alle, borgere i Nuuk godt tilfredse med. Alle er imidlertid enige om at hilse diskussionen velkommen, fordi ikke kun fremtiden, men også fortiden er blevet påtrængende, nu hvor relationen mellem Danmark og Grønland udfordres, både indefra i form af ønsket om selvstændighed og udefra i form af verdens stormagter, der pludselig flokkes om Grønland.¹⁸ (2021: 8-9)

Thisted's statement confirms that there is no univocal understanding of the matter, and the placement of a statue of the Mother of the Sea, a figure pertaining to Inuit folklore, can be

¹⁸ «A main argument was that it was the Greenlanders themselves who collected funds for the statue 100 years ago, and that Christianity is an important part of Greenland's cultural heritage, and so is the traditional religion of the Inuit. For that reason, in 2007, a statue of the Mother of the Sea was placed beneath the water of the bay, at the foot of the cliff with Egede's statue. Thus, the two jointly rule over the sea and the sky respectively, and many, but by no means all, citizens of Nuuk are quite happy with that compromise. However, everyone agrees to welcome the discussion, because not only the future, but also the past has become urgent, now that the relationship between Denmark and Greenland is being challenged, both from the inside, in the form of the desire for independence, and from the outside, in the form of the world's great powers suddenly flocking about Greenland», my translation.

viewed as a late attempt to bring the Greenlanders' 'indigenous' legacy onto the same level of Christian heritage. 'Greenlandicness', therefore, is equated to 'Danishness', but this operation implies that Denmark is still conceived as a part of the equation – a presupposition that is not judged favourably by many Greenlandic activists, i.e., those who support the former Arctic colony's political, economic, and cultural independence.¹⁹ The quest for complete Greenlandic autonomy, then – as well as considerations on its prerequisites and its significance – is at the center of contemporary debates on Greenland and Denmark.

The term «intersectionality» appeared for the first time in 1989, in Kimberlé Crenshaw's groundbreaking essay *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics* (1989), and was further developed in her subsequent contribution *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color* (1991) (Carbado *et al.* 2013: 303). In 1989, the scholar addressed the two-fold marginalized position of black women within American society, whose experience was either brought back to that of «(white) women's rights or Black (men's) claims» (Sinevaara-Niskanen 2022: 125). In 1991, «she employed intersectionality to highlight the ways in which social movement organization and advocacy around violence against women elided the vulnerabilities of women of color, particularly those from immigrant and socially disadvantaged communities» (Carbado *et al.* 2013: 304). Sinevaara-Niskanen, reprising the reflections of Collins and Bilge (2016) on the subject, argues that Crenshaw's coinage had a forerunner in Black feminist thought of the 1960s, with its «focus on multiple axes of difference» (2022: 123). While Crenshaw's contributions remained pivotal and marked the entrance of the concept into the academic discourse (Collins & Bilge 2016; Sinevaara-Niskanen 2022), the scholarly reception of her work has often disregarded her forerunners and decontextualized her ideas (Sinevaara-Niskanen 2022: 128). Carbado *et al.* condenses a series of common considerations found among studies that employ the term

¹⁹ It should also be borne in mind that Christianity, on the other hand, is perceived by many Greenlanders as part of the Greenlandic heritage, not necessarily as an European imposition (see, for instance, Wilhjelm 2008 and Langgård 2018). Already in the 19th century, according to Langgård, «[k]ristendommen ses ikke som noget, der er den grønlandske kultur fremmed» («Christianity is not viewed as alien to Greenlandic culture», my translation). and «den gode ideale grønlander [er] en god kristen og en god sælfanger» («the ideal of the good Greenland [is] that of a good Christian and a good seal-hunter», my translation) (2018: 152). In his monography *De nye grønlandere* (2008; *The New Greenlanders*), Henrik Wilhjelm focuses on the growing importance of the Church in Greenland during the first decades of the 20th century: «kirken kunne rekruttere og videreuddanne de grønlandere der havde de bedste forudsætninger [...]. De blev i den følgende tid meget danske: talte flydende dansk, klædte sig europæisk, spiste som de danske osv. Men det betød ikke at de følte sig mindre grønlandske af den grund» («the church could recruit and educate the Greenlanders who had the best prerequisites [...]. In the time that followed, they became very Danish: spoke fluent Danish, dressed like the Europeans, ate like the Danes, etc. But that did not mean that they felt any less Greenlandic», 2008: 546-547).

«intersectionality»: its vast potential applicability, and its susceptibility to different methodological approaches:

Since the publications of [Kimberlé Crenshaw's] *Demarginalizing [the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics]* and *Mapping [the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color]*, scholars and activists have broadened intersectionality to engage a range of issues, social identities, power dynamics, legal and political systems, and discursive structures in the United States and beyond. This engagement has facilitated intersectionality's movement within and across disciplines, pushing against and transcending boundaries, while building interdisciplinary bridges, and prompting a number of theoretical and normative debates. (2013: 304)

Nina Lykke's addition to the dismissal stresses that there is no unanimous «agreement about how to define and approach the issue» even among feminist theorists (Lykke 2010: 50). It should also be pointed out that implications similar to those of intersectionality are to be found in other critical contexts. Murji and Solomos, for instance, draw parallels between the presuppositions of an intersectional approach and post-structuralist theories of the body:

While not always drawing on the term *intersectionality*, theories of the body advanced within post-structuralism and, subsequently, within feminist and queer theory constitute a further location for developing a materialist analysis of race, ethnicity and racism. This work argued that bodies did not contain sexuality or gender but rather that sexuality and gender are socially constructed categories inscribed upon the body. Judith Butler's (1990) discussion of performativity reintroduces and updates social constructionist approaches to sexuality and gender. Building on her theoretical approach, scholars of race and ethnicity drew upon these categories to decentre race as a biological category to unpack its social construction. For example, post-structuralist analyses of the body which investigate how race and ethnicity operate can provide provocative windows into how one might use the body itself as the basis for social analysis. (Murji & Solomos 2015: 16)

To a certain extent, intersectionality thus overlaps with other coeval theoretical intuitions, suggesting that its range of influence can transcend the scope of law and even that of social sciences.

Furthermore, the referral to intersectionality may not necessarily be explicit. As observed by Lykke, there exist «three clusters of feminist analysis of intersections», i.e., «explicit feminist theorizings of intersectionality», «implicit feminist theorizings of intersectionality», «feminist theorizings of intersectionality under other names» (Lykke 2010: 68). The existence of the last category («theories that concentrate on intersections, but while using other concepts and frames than intersectionality», *Ibidem*) is in line with what has been said earlier on the general disagreement as to the notion and its employment in scientific

research. The difference between explicit and implicit theorizings, on the other hand, depends on whether one's approach relies or not on the use of intersectionality as «the main frame of interpretation» (*Ibidem*). The dissertation, as its structure perhaps already suggests, relies on an implicit rather than an explicit understanding of 'intersectionality'.

Given the blurred borders of 'intersectionality', and the diversity of its potential applications – both from a thematic and a methodological point of view – this concept may come across as vague, even inconsistent. Nina Lykke has attempted an operational definition:

intersectionality can, first of all, be considered as a theoretical and methodological tool to analyze how historically specific kinds of power differentials and/or constraining normativities, based on discursively, institutionally and/or structurally constructed sociocultural categorizations such as gender, ethnicity, race, class, sexuality, age/generation, dis/ability, nationality, mother tongue and so on, interact, and in so doing produce different kinds of societal inequalities and unjust social relations [...]. In addition to the definition of intersectionality as a theoretical and methodological entrance point to understand power differentials and normativities, it is, second, to be understood as a tool that can be used to analyze how political resistances vis-à-vis intertwined power differentials and normativities are being built around a resignification of categorizations and normative identity markers, and, more generally, how individual subjects negotiate the power-laden social relations and conditions in which they are embedded. (Lykke 2010: 50-51)

In accordance with Lykke's umbrella definition, intersectionality lends itself to the (stratified) analysis of unequal power relations and majoritizing/minoritizing processes. In this regard, its aims hardly differ from those of postcolonial studies – which, nonetheless, represent only one of the various fields that can be combined with an intersectional approach.

According to Leslie McCall, it is possible to identify «a wide range of methodological approaches to the study of multiple, intersecting, and complex social relations and to clarify and critically engage certain features of the most common approaches» (McCall 2005: 1772-1773). Adopting McCall's view, at least three different 'intersectional' approaches can be identified: 1) «anticategorical», 2) «intracategorical» and 3) «intercategorical» (McCall 2005: 1773). The former aims at the dismantling of borders among analytical categories, the latter two presuppose a different perspective on those same categories. «Intercategorical complexity», as McCall calls it, «requires that scholars provisionally adopt existing analytical categories to document relationships of inequality among social groups and changing configurations of inequality along multiple and conflicting dimensions» (2005: 1773). An «intracategorical» approach, on the other hand, could be defined as a mediation between the other two schools of thought: «Like the first approach, it interrogates the boundary-making and

boundary-defining process itself, though that is not its *raison d'être*. Like the third approach, it acknowledges the stable and even durable relationships that social categories represent at any given point in time, though it also maintains a critical stance toward categories» (1773-1774).

IV. Method

In the course of my dissertation, as foreshadowed, a postcolonial reading merges with a methodological approach drawn from gender studies. The close reading of the novels belonging to my corpus will be supported by 'classic' postcolonial texts, such as Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994) and Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), and by theoretical inputs that address the peculiarities of the Danish-Greenlandic context (es. Thisted's «Arctic orientalism»). An aspect of special interest is constituted by the mechanisms of 'othering' at the basis of Danish-Greenlandic relations, as well as their literary representations, and the consequent understanding of reality in binary terms. The aforementioned studies concern both aspects. Bhabha's reflections, in particular, come to use with regard to Leine, Mondrup, and Inuk's 'Greenlandic' production, as all three of them – perhaps by virtue of their personal life experiences – attempt to redefine 'Danishness' and 'Greenlandicness'. Therefore, the notion of «third space» plays a role in my research, and the same could be argued in relation adjoining terms and practices, such as «mimicry» and «passing». Studies revolving around the specificities of the postcolonial Arctic, on the other hand, allow to isolate recurring tropes and discourses that are reprised – often in a critical fashion – by the authors taken into consideration. This is the case, for instance, of Denmark's rhetoric of self-absolution, the so-called «exceptionalism», or of the exoticizing attitude towards 'Greenlandicness', defined by Thisted as «Arctic orientalism». My aim is to verify whether the novels taken into account align with those narratives or, conversely, whether they offer alternative understandings of Danish-Greenlandic relations though a literary form.

The tool of intersectionality proves useful for my study on two different levels. Firstly, it can be employed to address inequalities and majoritizing/minoritizing mechanisms within the Greenlandic (post)colonial society. Secondly, this same focus allows me to concentrate on the literary resignifications in the 'Greenlandic' works of Leine, Mondrup, and Inuk, characterized by an engaged afflatus. The use of the term «intersectionality», in fact, presupposes an attention to the dimension of social change, which Carbado *et al.* even define as «imperative» (2013:

312). In the present work, the notion of ‘intersectionality’ is used in its broader sense and as a tool for literary analysis, on the basis that 1) the literary representation of ethnicity, gender, and class inevitably addresses a given society and its *Zeitgeist* – either by mirroring it or by offering alternative narratives; 2) the three dimensions, despite the fact that they can be scrutinized individually, all contribute to the generation of discourses or patterns that can be ascribed to unequal power relations.

Although the focus on my research is on the interplay between the dimensions under consideration, I do not concentrate on the singular ‘intersections’ between ‘Danishness’/‘Greenlandicness’, man/woman, and upper/lower class. Rather than analyzing the representation of the individual groups resulting from said intersections, I delve into the possible parallelisms (or contradictions) generated by literary discourses on ethnicity, gender, and class in the Danish-Greenlandic (post)colonial context. Considering the approaches delineated by Leslie McCall (see *supra*, pp. 31-32), the methodology of the present analysis would probably fall under the second definition: an intercategorical approach, also known as «categorical approach» (McCall 2005: 1784), in fact, always presupposes that different categories of difference are *provisionally* taken into consideration and eviscerated. On the basis of similar considerations, I dedicate chapters 2, 3, and 4 to the categories of social difference that I am considering, i.e., ethnicity, gender, and class. A full realization of this methodology, however, would imply that the different categories of analysis employed are «compared systematically» (McCall 2005: 1786). With reference to the Danish-Greenlandic post-colonial context, a similar crossing would result in the consideration of twelve different and recognizable categories:

Ethnicity	Gender	Class
Danes	Men	Lower class
Danes	Men	Middle class
Danes	Men	Upper class
Danes	Women	Lower class
Danes	Women	Middle class
Danes	Women	Upper class
Greenlanders	Men	Lower class
Greenlanders	Men	Middle class
Greenlanders	Men	Upper class

Greenlanders	Women	Lower class
Greenlanders	Women	Middle class
Greenlanders	Women	Upper class

The resulting ‘schematism’, however, can hardly be applied to literary analysis, as my objects of interest are *fictional* representations of Danish-Greenlandic relations and, as such, unquantifiable data. The matter is further complicated by the fact that Leine, Mondrup, and Inuk’s writings could come across as ‘anticategorical’, insofar as they critically address the boundaries between the constitutional elements of each category – and this is especially true for ‘Danishness’ vs. ‘Greenlandicness’ and ‘manhood’ vs. ‘womanhood’, as we shall see. Nonetheless, the table above could come to use with regard to the identification of the most – and the least – recurring ‘intersections’ within my corpus of texts.

Ingunn Moser (2006), on the other hand, proposes a solution that conciliates the inevitable asystemacity of literary representations with the ‘deconstructing afflatus’ of most writings pertaining to my corpus. The scholar, in fact, suggests «the metaphor of “interference” as an alternative to intersectionality in her study of the relations between gender, class and dis/ability» (Lykke 2010: 84). The shift catalyzed by this new metaphor occurs on multiple levels: firstly, as pointed out by Nina Lykke, Moser’s thought stresses the non-linear relation between the various categories of difference considered, on the basis that «the different processes that construct gender, class and dis/ability not only mechanically sustain and reinforce each other (as the metaphor of intersections suggests), but may also clash, come into conflict and neutralize each other» (*Ibidem*). Moreover, Moser’s view draws on the belief that «realities, including social orders and differences, are neither given, stable, nor definite but are achieved» (Moser 2006: 542). Her approach to the intertwinements of «social orders and differences», then, seems to encompass a certain degree of ‘fuzziness’, as the stress is rather on the constant renegotiation of structures of identity and on the unpredictability of their interrelation.

Chapter 1 is conceived as a historical introduction to the context and genre here scrutinized. The first part of the chapter revolves around Denmark and Greenland’s common history, from the events preceding Hans Egede’s mission to present day. The focus subsequently shifts to literary history, and Danish-Greenlandic relations are analyzed through an *excursus* about the discourses and narrations permeating Danish fiction about Greenland since its beginnings. The chapter’s length suggests that it is designed for an audience that is

neither necessarily Danish nor familiar with Denmark and Greenland's shared past. Although the section concerning the history of *dansk grønlandslitteratur* largely draws on Kirsten Thisted's work – and, to a more limited extent, also on that of Dybdal and Grønlund – my ambition is to shed a light on the genre's latest developments more systematically than is has previously been done.

In chapter 2, I introduce the notion of ethnicity/ethnic identity – as well as of some adjacent terms – building on reflections stemming from anthropological studies. The idea of an 'anti-essentialist' understanding of ethnicity is particularly useful for my purposes, since I attempt to verify whether Leine, Mondrup, and Inuk's works generate narratives that do not necessarily rely on the binarism 'Danishness' vs. 'Greenlandicness'. To address this research question, I concentrate on three topical elements generally linked to Greenlandic ethnic identity and, consequently, its reification: 1) the association between 'Greenlandicness' and the island's pristine and untamed natural environment; 2) proficiency in Greenlandic; 3) the consumption of Greenlandic food/engaging in hunting activities. I investigate these issues by undertaking a close reading of the novels belonging to my corpus – to which I will not refer systematically, as some of them may be more apt to discuss gender or class-related matters rather than ethnic identity.

Chapter 3 introduces the notion of gender identity drawing parallels to that of ethnicity. Also in this case, the focus is on a binarism ('manhood' vs. 'womanhood') and its possible overcoming or deconstruction. The analysis unfolds after some considerations concerning an anti-essentialist view of gender and gender hierarchization-processes, with an eye to Danish-Greenlandic relations. In compliance with the premises of my work, I first consider the literary representation of a doubly oppressed group, i.e., Greenlandic women – who, in *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, often come across as mere objects of desire and are typically viewed through a (Danish) male gaze, a characteristic which I refer to with the term 'literary agency'. I then concentrate on Leine, Mondrup, and Inuk's attempts to go beyond the constrictions of gender roles, verifying whether these discourses echo those regarding ethnic identity. Sexuality, as imagined, also plays a role in my analysis; in particular, I deal with those manifestations that are considered either 'masculine' or 'feminine'. Sexuality is also at the core of the last section of the chapter, revolving around violent sexual behaviors and, in particular, incest. The phenomenon is often addressed in Danish discourses regarding social disease in postcolonial Greenland and also constitutes a trope within the corpus of texts that I have chosen, where it is

often portrayed in unexpected terms, as if to disconfirm or to critically rediscuss stereotypes on the matter.

The last chapter of the dissertation is concerned with the representation of class-differences in the novels pertaining to my corpus, as well as with the interaction between this dimension and those of ethnicity and, more limitedly, gender. In this case, focusing on hybridity becomes virtually impossible, since, as suggested by Amar Acheraïou (2011), class can hardly be conceived outside of the binarism between «the global poor or dispossessed (both Western and non-Western, from capitalist and non-capitalist countries) and [...] the global rich (multinational corporations, comprador Third World groups, and so on)» (122-123) – a dichotomy mirroring the now obsolete distinction between working class and bourgeoisie. This peculiarity implies a slightly different approach than in chapters 2 and 3, where alternative narratives in Leine, Mondrup, and Inuk's novels were mostly scrutinized as variations on the flat opposition between 'Danishness' vs. 'Greenlandicness' and 'womanhood' vs. 'manhood'. Also in this case, however, the focus is on the dismissal of (literary) stereotypes, such as the association between Greenland and a certain degree of social disease, especially in representations concerning the post-colonial years. Another aspect of interest is evaluating to what extent 'class' constitutes a relevant category of difference in the literary works being considered; in her analysis of Leine's *Kalak*, Kirsten Thisted has mentioned that the dimensions of ethnicity and class may prevail over one another in fictional representations of Greenland and Danish-Greenlandic relations (see 2011a: 284). Bearing in mind this suggestion, I will verify whether the dimension of 'class' is somewhat overlooked at the expense of ethnicity – a dynamic that I will refer to as 'class-blindness'.

This subdivision is made for practical reasons, as it allows me to introduce the concepts of gender, ethnicity, and class at the beginning of each chapter. The 'intersectional' nature of my work unfolds through the creation of a 'cumulative' structure for chapters 2, 3, and 4: while chapter 2 focuses solely on the ethnic dimension, chapter 3 and 4 are essentially 'multidimensional', as they build on concepts and observations made in the previous sections of the dissertation. Thus, the category of ethnicity constantly dialogues with those of gender and class; gender-related matters are also discussed in chapters 2 and 4, although they are perhaps less pervasive than discourses on 'Danishness' and 'Greenlandicness', at the core of *dansk grønlandslitteratur*.

CHAPTER 1

DANISH-GREENLANDIC RELATIONS: HISTORY AND LITERARY FICTION

1.1 Contemporary Debates on Greenland: Geography, International Interests, and Climate Change

Greenland's situation vis-à-vis its former colonial occupier, Denmark, is rather unique, since the two, regardless of the territorial and governmental rights acquired by Greenland respectively through the Home Rule Act (1979) and the Self-Government Act (2009), still stand together as parts of the *Rigsfællesskab*, the Danish Commonwealth. Their current relations are also complicated by Greenland's economical dependency from Denmark. The latter, in fact, delivers a consistent grant on an annual basis (*bloktilskud*), which approximately corresponds to one third of Greenland's GDP (Mazza 2021a). Furthermore, half of the island's public expenditure is foraged by Danish funds (*Ibidem*). The 'failed' detachment from Denmark proper, however, is far from being the only matter of interest regarding Greenland in international public discourses.

Donald Trump's attempt to buy Greenland in 2019, for instance, sparked a lively debate.²⁰ The territory's strategic position, as well as its economic potential was brought into discussion: Greenland's annexation to the USA, on the one side, could have led to the creation of an outpost to discourage Russia's military aspirations.²¹ On the other, this «'large real estate deal'» (Inman 2019) would have granted the USA self-sufficiency relating to the access of «rare-earth metals, including neodymium, praseodymium, dysprosium and terbium, along with uranium and the byproducts of zinc» (*Ibidem*). Gravitating towards the USA, as a matter of

²⁰ Trump's proposal, which «would secure a land mass a quarter the size of the US and cement his place in US history alongside President Andrew Johnson, who bought Alaska from Russia in 1867, and Thomas Jefferson, who secured Louisiana from the French in 1803» (Inman 2019), was not the first American attempt to acquire Greenland; in 1946, in fact, Denmark and the USA were close to signing an agreement according to which Greenland would be sold for \$100 million (Nielsen 2013: 133). Denmark later retrieved from the negotiations, but its entry to NATO, in 1949, led to controlled US military access to Greenland (see Nielsen 2013: 132-136).

²¹ These discourses have gained renewed importance in 2022 after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Its most immediate consequence with regard to Greenland is the dismissal of any form of inter-Arctic cooperation: «De syv arktiske stater (det vil sige de arktiske stater undtagen Rusland) udsendte den 3. marts 2022 en fælles erklæring, hvori alt samarbejde i Arktisk Råd suspenderes [...]» («The seven Arctic states (i.e., the Arctic states with the exception of Russia) released on 3 March a common statement where they explained that any cooperation within the Arctic council was suspended [...]», Mortensgaard 2022: 40). As Russia has violated «“the core principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity”» the conditions of the so-called «arktisk exceptionalisme» (*Ibidem*) ceased to exist, since the region can no longer be considered isolated and out of the reach of global security matters.

fact, could be profitable for Greenland, since «[o]ne of the options that is being discussed in Greenland is that it pays for the funds it receives from Denmark by making the Thule Air Base available to the US» (Hálfðanarson & Thisted 2020: 150). Greenland's independence, in fact, would question the current relations between Denmark and NATO, where the former «uses Greenland as payment for its membership» (*Ibidem*). As far as rare-earth resources are concerned, on the other hand, China may also play a significant role: in 2011, for instance, Li Keqiang, then vice premier of the PRC, met in Peking with Ove Karl Berthelsen, Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources from Greenland's self-government, and the topic of debate was mineral exploitation (Mazza 2021b).

These circumstances alone may suggest that Greenland, while acquiring international relevance, is progressively dissociating from a sheer Danish dimension. For this reason, an urge to 'relocate' Greenland is now emerging. A salient contribution on the matter, for example, is *Denmark and the New North Atlantic. Narratives and Memories in a Former Empire* (2020), a work in two volumes edited by Kirsten Thisted and Ann-Sofie N. Gremaud. The book aims at giving an alternative perspective on the former Danish North-Atlantic colonies – namely Greenland, Iceland, and the Faroe Islands –, where new ties and alliances are now being formed. In the foreword, Thisted and Gremaud observe that:

The old power relations between center and periphery are being destabilized; new centers are being established *in* the Arctic, and the perspective is shifting. Hence, the vantage point is increasingly positioned in the North, looking south towards Europe rather than the other way around. Consequently, identities are being renegotiated on the bases of demands for self-determination and a new awareness of the region's geopolitical significance. (Thisted & Gremaud 2020a: 11)

Identifying the affinities between Greenland, Iceland, and the Faroe Islands – as well as recognizing the North Atlantic as a territory transcending mere continental borders – may serve the purpose to put Greenland outside of a 'Danish box'. Another factor contributing to the creation of this 'new' region, according to Thisted and Gremaud, is the gradual ice melting in Arctic and Subarctic areas – which, apart from its obvious implications as an ecological catastrophe, can also be seen as an opportunity to get rid of «[t]he old image of the Arctic as a frozen, isolated, barren and desolate space» (*Ibidem*).

The present chapter, nonetheless, will tendentially focus on discourses originating within the context of Danish-Greenlandic relations, since the focal point of the dissertation is contemporary works pertaining to the so-called *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, Danish literary

fiction about Greenland.²² Consequently, it will be useful to briefly delve into Denmark and Greenland's common history, whose starting point is generally identified in Hans Egede's 1721 mission, which aimed at resuming contacts with the former Norse settlements on the island. The event, whose 300-year anniversary took place one year after the «Black Lives Matter» protests, marked the beginning of the colonial age in Greenland.²³ The historical section of the present chapter addresses precisely these three centuries and, therefore, the modernization years and more contemporary developments will also be taken into consideration.

After these first general observations, the focus will shift to *dansk grønlandslitteratur* as a genre. More specifically, Danish literature will be scrutinized in the light of its historical developments and its characterizing features. In this regard, Kirsten Thisted's *Danske Grønlandsfiktioner. Om billedet af Grønland i dansk litteratur* (2003; *Danish Fiction about Greenland. On the Image of Greenland in Danish Literature*) – which draws on postcolonial studies and undoubtedly counts as the most exhaustive contribution on this topic – will serve as a model. The article, published in 2003, inevitably overlooks more contemporary tendencies, which will be here investigated thoroughly as Kim Leine, Lotte Inuk, and Iben Mondrup have contributed, at least in part, to shaping.²⁴

²² As most authoritative studies on the genre agree on (see, for instance, Thisted 2013; Dybdal 2021), *dansk grønlandslitteratur* is generally understood as 1) written by Danish authors and 2) thematically related to Greenland (Thisted 2013: 296). However, it can sometimes be hard to draw a clear line between Danish literature about Greenland and Greenlandic literature. The two options often blur and overlap, as, for instance, in the notable case of Lotte Inuk's *Sultekunstnerinde*, which will be investigated multiple times throughout the dissertation. Thisted, in considering Inuk's novel, wonders whether it should not be regarded as part of the Greenlandic canon, and whether Greenlandic literature as a whole should not be inserted in the Danish canon, «ud fra den logik at en nation først kender sig selv, når den ser sig selv gennem øjnene af sine minoriteter (Bhabha 1994: 6)» («according to the logic that a nation only recognizes itself as such when it sees itself through the eyes of its minorities (Bhabha 1994:6)», Thisted 2013: 298).

²³ The «Black Lives Matter» movement, along with its decolonizing afflatus, also had a notable influence on the reception of this event. As Thisted summarizes, «ethvert initiativ til fejring af 300-året blev aflyst og afløst af mere refleksive arrangementer (konferencer og debatter), tilskyndet af grønlandske debattører og aktivister, som påpeger, at mange grønlændere stadig anser Grønland for koloniseret af Danmark, selv om kolonitiden officielt afsluttedes i 1953» (Thisted 2023: 183; «any initiative to celebrate the 300th anniversary was canceled and replaced by more reflective events (conferences and debates), encouraged by Greenlandic debaters and activists, who point out that many Greenlanders still consider Greenland to be colonized by Denmark, even though the colonial period officially ended in 1953», my translation).

²⁴ Mentions of more recent tendencies regarding *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, albeit less systematic, can be found in Kirsten Thisted's *Hvis du fløjter efter nordlyset: Dansk grønlandslitteratur ved overgangen til selvstyret* (2013; *If You Whistle at the Northern Lights: Danish Literature about Greenland around the Transition to Self-Government*) and in Dybdal's work (see Dybdal & Grønlund 2020; Dybdal 2021; Dybdal 2022).

1.2 Greenland and Denmark's Common History: From 1721 to the 2020s

1.2.1 The Colonial Years: 1721-1953

Before entering into theoretical discourses that involve colonialism in the Nordic region or with specific regard to Denmark and Greenland, it is useful to briefly introduce Greenland's colonial history – which dates back to the establishment of Håbets Koloni («The Colony of Hope»), on 3 July 1721, by means of Danish-Norwegian missionary Hans Egede (1686-1758) (Gulløv & Toft 2017: 43). The event had been anticipated by a growing European interest in the Arctic area, testified by the involvement in the activity of whaling – which, during the 17th century, was widely pursued by Dutch ships. The territory's commercial potential, once it had been clarified that Greenland did not offer access to valuable materials other than blubber, was limited to this occupation, according to Gulløv and Toft (2017: 33,36). However, the Kingdom of Denmark-Norway was also concerned in matters regarding Greenland's sovereignty and the prestige that may derive from its annexation: «Dog forblev det af betydning at kunne fastholde retten til landet, hvilket Christian IV erkendte med kravet på det gamle skatteland Grønland»²⁵ (Gulløv & Toft 2017: 23). In fact, Greenland had been a Norse settlement since the 10th century, and it had first been included into the Norwegian Kingdom (1261) and, later, with the Kalmar Union (1397), into the Danish-Norwegian Kingdom. Denmark's claim on Greenland was, then, grounded on 'continuity', regardless of the fact that all business-related contacts with the Norse settlers had been interrupted in 1408, and that those same territories were occupied by Inuit people (Gulløv & Toft 2017: 23-24).²⁶

Egede's project, certainly aiming at a reconnection to the former Norse overseas settlements, is nonetheless to be judged as a full-fledged colonial enterprise, as Thuesen *et al.* suggest: «Gennem en årrække havde Egede sendt flere henvendelser til kongen, hvori han

²⁵ «However, it remained important to be able to maintain the right to the country, which Christian IV recognized with the claim to Greenland as an old taxed territory», my translation.

²⁶ According to controversial scholar Thorkild Kjærgaard, this timeline alone would make it problematic to use the expression «colony» with regard to the specific Danish-Greenlandic situation: «Der tales f.eks. i Gulløv (red.): *Grønland – Den arktiske koloni*, 43 (og andre steder) om grønlændernes “oprindelige rettigheder”. Hvilke? Da den første inuk satte sin fod på grønlandsk jord oppe ved Smith Sund højt mod nord en gang i 1100-tallet, havde der i århundreder boet nordboer i Grønland. Inuit er et sent tilkommet arktisk erobrerfolk med sibiriske rødder uden skygge af “oprindelige rettigheder” i Grønland» (Kjærgaard 2019: 140; «In Gulløv (ed.) *Greenland – The Arctic Colony*, 43 (and elsewhere) there is mention of “indigenous rights”. What indigenous rights? When the first inuk set foot on Greenlandic soil, north of the Smith Sound region, at some point during the 12th century, Norse settlers had already been living in Greenland for centuries. The Inuit are but a late occupying-folk with Siberian roots and not even the faintest “indigenous rights”», my translation).

beskrev sine ideer om på vegne af kongen at etablere en koloni i Grønland, hvorfra der kunne drives bade handel og mission»²⁷ (2017: 46). The idea of a *mission civilisatrice*, then, stood side by side with the pursuit of material profit and prestige. These aims started being pursued with the foundation of a Danish outpost on Håbets Ø («Hope Island»), to be moved, seven years later, to Godthåb («Good Hope»), today's Nuuk (Thuesen *et al.* 2017: 57, 70). The conversion of the local inhabitants, as well as the difficult life conditions in the colony, were a challenge to Egede's enterprise. Egede had ventured to Greenland together with his family, his wife Gjertrud Rask and their four children, and a bunch of craftsmen (Thuesen *et al.* 2017: 46-60). During Egede's first years in Greenland, in fact, the «religionmøde» («encounter between religions»), substantially unfruitful, and the Bergen Company, financial supporter of the Danish-Norwegian mission, was hardly making profit from the activity. Following the discharge of the Bergen Company, and the later involvement of *Det Kongelige grønlandske Dessein*, the colony was relocated to Godthåb (1728) – where it also underwent a process of militarization, under the administration of land officer Claus Enevold Paars (Pors) and of commander Jørgen Landorph (Thuesen *et al.* 2017: 70).

A few years later, after a massive outbreak of smallpox in Godthåb and the surrounding area (1733-1734) – which, in the words of Thuesen *et al.*, had nearly nullified Egede's «livsværk», «life's work» (2017: 78) –, Christian IV solicited the expansion of the mission and business activities in Greenlandic territory. This wish concretized in the creation of another colony in Disko Bay. The area had been frequented by Dutch whalers, who now feared that their business might be threatened by the Danish presence. In an attempt to reduce tensions, Christian IV, in accordance with the General States, prohibited that Dutch captains engage in any sort of business with the local people (Thuesen *et al.* 2017: 78-79). The expansion of Danish commercial activities in Greenland led to the foundation of two additional colonies on the West Coast, those of Makelijk Oud (1741) and Fredrikshåb (1742); 12 further colonies were established between 1752 and 1774, after the monopoly for handling endeavors was transferred to the *Almindeligt Handelskompagni* («General Trade Company»), which regulated all of Denmark's commercial activities outside the centrale State (Thuesen *et al.* 2017: 80-87).

Those same years witnessed a growing Danish interest for whaling or seal hunting, which was pursued by studying the Greenlandic hunting techniques – or by directly relying on the Greenlanders' handiwork: «Spæk til produktion af tranolie blev betragtet som den

²⁷ «Over the years, Egede had sent several inquiries to the King, in which he described his ideas about establishing a colony in Greenland on His behalf, from which both trade and missions could be conducted», my translation.

allervigtigste handelsvare på grund af den store og stigende efterspørgsel på verdensmarkedet, men det var også [...] stadig den mest umiddelbart tilgængelige ressource» (Thuesen *et al.* 2017: 89-90).²⁸ The perspective of profiting from whaling and seal hunting, as well as «en stærk tro på, at aktiviteterne i Grønland både styrkede rigets status som aktør på verdensmarkedet, og at disse på længere sigt ville vise sig profitable i takt med udviklingen af anlæg, fangstmetoder og tranpriser»²⁹ (Thuesen *et al.* 2017: 91) led to the creation, in 1774, of a trade company owned by the Danish-Norwegian Kingdom, i.e., *den Kongelige Grønlandske Handel* (KGH), the Royal Greenland Trade Department. This outcome set forth the State's engagement in the colonial project in Greenland.

State interference in the colonies' everyday life was made clear in 1782, with the promulgation of the so-called *Instrux*, the Instruction for those involved in trading activities in Greenlandic territory.³⁰ However, as observed by Seiding *et al.*, the regulations imposed by the Instruction had an immediate effect on «hele befolkningens liv og forhold»³¹ (2017: 115) – not least with regard to the establishment of a precise hierarchy in terms of social difference. The Instruction, in fact, among other things, prescribed specific regulations in the matter of mixed marriages, thus indirectly influencing the lives of Greenlanders (see Seiding & Toft 2011: 282); the measure, in the words of Seiding, «founded a colonial society of distinct social categorization that classed, gendered and racialized as a direct response to the social and cultural transgression embodied in the marriages between Inuit women and European men» (Seiding 2011: 56). Furthermore, the Instruction largely limited Greenlandic access to European resources, due to preoccupations regarding the 'Europeanization' of Greenlanders and the consequent abandonment of traditional hunting practices (Seiding & Toft 2011: 283; Seiding *et al.* 2017: 116-117).

As far as the other 'pillar' of the Danish colonial venture in Greenland is concerned, i.e. the mission to spread Christianity among the local population, the 19th century inaugurated a

²⁸ «Blubber for the production of train oil was considered the most important trading ware due to the large and increasing demand on the world market, but it was also [...] still the most immediately available resource», my translation.

²⁹ «A strong faith in the fact that these activities would both boost the Kingdom's status as an actor within the global market and that they, in the long run, would prove profitable in line with the development of facilities, fishing methods, and the prices of train oil», my translation.

³⁰ The complete name of the Instruction would be «Instruks, hvor efter købmændene eller de, som enten bestyrer Handelen eller forestår hvalfangeranlæggene i Grønland, i særdeleshed, såvel som også alle de, der står i Handelens tjeneste i almindelighed, sig for fremtiden har at rette og forholde» (Seiding *et al.* 2017: 115), i.e., «Instruction according to which the merchants or those who either manage trading activities or the whaling facilities in Greenland, in particular, as well as all those who are in the service of the Trade in general, must act and refer in the future», my translation.

³¹ «Life and relations among the population as a whole», my translation.

new phase, in accordance with the diffusion of «nye tanker om udvikling og civiliseringsprojekter»³² (Seiding *et al.* 2017: 133). At the same time, the Moravian mission, whose activities had been performed in parallel to those of the Danish one since 1758 (see Thuesen *et al.*, 2017: 81), started expanding in the south of the island. «Both missions», according to Seiding *et al.*, «had [...] started to include Greenlanders as labor force; the Danish mission, in particular, was growingly making use of Greenlandic catechists and lectors in relation to teaching» (2017: 134, my translation); evidently, then, the Danish mission and the Trade Department had – as well as different aims – also different understandings of Danish-Greenlandic relations. However, with the reforms enacted by the Royal Greenland Trade Department during the 1830s, mission and trading activities started working in closer contact with each other in the name of progress. This change of pace is explained by Seiding *et al.* as follows:

KGH's overskud i 1820'erne gav anledning til overvejelser i Danmark, ikke mindst i Rentekammeret, datidens finansministerium, om, hvorvidt overskuddet blev forvaltet fornuftigt [...]. Diskussionen og kritikken gik så vidt, at man [...] igen overvejede muligheden for frihandel og for at bryde KGH's enevælde i Grønland. [...]. Ligesom i 1788 blev næste skridt nedsættelsen af en kommission, som skulle tage stilling til spørgsmålet om monopol eller frihandel [...]. Et flertal var dog enige om, at frihandel først kunne komme på tale, når en række grundlæggende reformer var gennemført [...]. Den gennemgående tanke i mange af forslagene var, at grønlænderne nu målrettet skulle opmuntres til at leve på en måde, der mere lignede europæisk livsstil – de skulle, med et tidstypisk ord, civiliseres.³³ (2017: 167)

The formalization of education in Greenland, then, made its appearance on the political agenda of the time. With this shift, however, critical opinions also started to spread. ‘Suspicious’ attitudes towards the design to educate (and therefore ‘civilize’) the Greenlandic population – which go by the name of *civilisationskritik*, «civilisation critique» – emerged, for instance, advocated by inspector H.J. Rink (1819-1893). Rink meant that the shifts in the matter of colonial policies were to be considered a contributing factor to «den fattigdom, sult og sygdom,

³² «New ideas on progress and civilizing projects», my translation.

³³ «In the 1820s, the resources of the Royal Greenland Trade Department gave rise to considerations in Denmark – not least in the *Rentekammer*, the ministry of finance at the time – about whether or not they were managed sensibly [...]. The discussion and criticism went so far that [...] the possibility of free trade and the question of the Royal Greenland Trade Department's monopoly in Greenland were once again reconsidered [...]. As in 1788, the next step was the establishment of a commission that would make a decision concerning monopoly or free trade [...]. However, a majority agreed that free trade could only be discussed once a series of fundamental reforms had been implemented [...]. The overarching idea in many of the proposals was that Greenlanders should now be purposefully encouraged to adopt a European lifestyle – they should be, to use a word characteristic to that period, civilized», my translation.

som prægede Grønland i midten af 1800-tallet»³⁴ (Marquardt *et al.* 2017: 184). His views, whose romantic influence is self-evident, drew on the belief that a European lifestyle risked cancelling any trace of Greenlandic traditions and culture; hence his strong engagement in spreading, for instance, Greenlandic tales among a Greenlandic as well as an external audience (Marquardt *et al.* 2017: 185). H.J. Rink, furthermore, is also the person behind the creation of the *forstanderskaber*, the administrative units introduced in Greenlandic territory during the 1860s, which, according to Søren Rud, could be regarded as an «udtryk for et betydningsfuldt skift i rationalet bag den koloniale administrationsstrategi. Et skift som afspejler en forestilling om, at kolonien kunne anvendes som rum for sociale eksperimenter»³⁵ (2011: 130). In fact, after the great economic and social crisis of the 1850s (see Marquardt *et al.* 2017: 204, 214-218), which Rink had traced back to the flaws characterizing the Danish administrative control over Greenland, alternatives started being scrutinized. While there were no substantial changes regarding free trade or the Greenlanders' occupational possibilities, the *forstanderskaber*-system introduced, at least on paper, local self-rule. Each colony had its own *forstanderskab*, which included Danish as well as German and Greenlandic members (Marquardt *et al.* 2017: 219). The most notable feature of this new system, then, is the collaboration between Danish and Greenlandic forces – although the decisions of the latter group might have faced some forms of obstructionism. The *forstanderskaber*, as explained by Marquardt *et al.*, provided for social security among the most vulnerable and, among other things, had their say with regard to some penal clauses; members of the Royal Greenland Trade Department or the missions, however, were not under its competence (2017: 221-227).

Some critical voices on Greenlandic side, however, started pointing out the most evident defaults with this administrative system: Mathias Storch (1883-1957) and C.W. Schultz-Lorentzen (1873-1951), for instance, advocated the urge to 'rebalance' unequal power relations between the Royal Greenland Trade Department and the *forstanderskaber*; the separation between administrative and trading activities was also being taken into consideration (Rud 2017b: 238-241). The widespread discontent resulted in some structural changes regarding both administration and trade. While with the Act concerning the Governing of the Colonies from 1908 (*Styrelsen af Kolonierne i Grønland*), the Royal Greenland Trade Company lost its administrative powers (A.K. Sørensen 2006: 27-28), the *kommuneråd* («municipality

³⁴ «The poverty, hunger, and disease that afflicted Greenland during the mid-1800s», my translation.

³⁵ «Expression of a significant shift in the rationale behind the colonial administration strategy. A shift reflecting the notion that the colony could be used as a space for social experiments», my translation.

councils») and the *landsråd* («provincial councils») took over the *forstanderskaber*. This shift, to be perfected through some other reforms, was accompanied by the establishment of a committee whose task was to evaluate the endeavors of these new institutions; Storch, together with the fellow Greenlanders Karl Chemnitz and David Olsen, was also part of the committee (Rud 2017b: 242-243). Following internal consultations between the members of the committee, a further administrative organ was introduced, the *sysselråd* («district council») (Rud 2017b: 244).

The striving for the creation of an effective administrative system was accompanied by the Danish attempt to define and secure Greenland's borders. The «women's boat expedition» (*konebådsekspedition*) led by Gustav Holm (1849-1940) between 1883 and 1885, which paved the way to the subsequent colonization of Eastern Greenland, is to be considered part of this operation, together with the establishment of a mission and a trading station in Kap York, following the so-called *Litterære Ekspedition* («literary expedition») conducted by Ludvig Mylius-Erichsen (1872-1907) and Knud Rasmussen in 1902 (1879-1933) (Rud 2017b: 249-250). The latter, along with Peter Freuchen, set up the trading station of Thule, in Northern Greenland, in 1910. Although the initiative was private – the station was sold to the Danish state only in 1933 – it allowed, *de facto*, Danish missionary and trading activities in the area (Rud 2017b: 250). According to Rud, a similar course of events also characterizes the endeavors of bigger colonial empires: «Eksempelvis var de britiske og franske imperiers etablering af kolonier, først i Asien og senere i Afrika, typisk en bevægelse, der gik fra anlæggelse af handelsstationer mod gradvis øget administrativ kontrol over et samlet og skarpere afgrænset koloniområde»³⁶ (Rud 2017b: 249). Danish authority over Greenland, furthermore, was reaffirmed through symbolic acts, such as the celebration of the 200th anniversary of Hans Egede's enterprise, or the first official visits of Danish high representatives in Greenland. While the Minister of Internal Affairs, Sigurd Berg, travelled to Greenland in 1908, the aforementioned occasion was marked by the first royal visit in 1921; in 1930 it was the Prime Minister's turn. During his visit, which he later recalled in his *Min Grønlandsfærd* (1930; *My Greenlandic Journey*), Prime Minister Thorvald Stauning restated Danish 'humanity' towards Greenland and the substantial differences between Danes and Greenlanders. According to Hálfðanarson and Thisted, «he looked on the Greenlanders as [...] incapable of reaching the level of Danish

³⁶ «For example, the establishment of colonies by the British and French empires, first in Asia and later in Africa, was typically characterized by a development that went from the establishment of trading posts towards gradually increased administrative control over a unified or more sharply defined colonial area», my translation.

society» due to the ‘fragility’ given by their ‘state of nature’ (2020: 145). The times, then, were not yet mature for opening Greenland to the world.

As pointed out in Stauning’s report, the era was characterized by a meaningful shift within the Greenlandic communities where seal hunting was gradually being replaced by fishing. This change, apart from having evident economic and business-related consequences, also had an impact «i dagligdagen og kulturlivet»³⁷ (Rud 2017b: 261). While seal hunting presupposed a certain degree of nomadism, due to the necessity of following the quarries, fishing allowed stability, and resulted in an evident centralization process. Given the role that seal hunting had been playing with regard to Denmark’s colonial administration, this shift was met with hesitation on Danish side (*Ibidem*). Another activity that somewhat contributed to the reshaping of Greenlandic society was mining, which paved the way for Greenland’s first industrial enterprises; the village of Qullissat, for instance, where carbon was extracted, seemed to present an ‘alternative’ to what was traditionally conceived as Greenlandic identity: «Så længe den eksisterede, udviklede indbyggerne i Qullissat en særlig art grønlandsk kultur, som var løsrevet fra de kulturelle symboler, natur og fangst, der normal dominerede»³⁸ (Rud 2017b: 264). Other forms of social change in Greenland were also catalyzed by the dismissal of missionary activities, in 1905, and by the introduction of new regulations regarding education. As a consequence of the passing of the Governing Act of 1925, compulsory schooling was instituted, along with the introduction of the Danish language as a subject (Rud 2017b: 272). The ‘language of the colonizer’ soon became associated with higher education («efterskoler, højskole og seminarium»³⁹), and post-school education in Denmark could even give access to a Danish salary (*Ibidem*).

The undergoing transformations within Greenlandic society were accompanied by the desire, on Greenlandic side, to acquire more decisional power regarding the administration of the colony. Those ambitions, however, could hardly coexist with the presuppositions of Denmark’s colonial project in Greenland, which aimed at preserving traditional indigenous culture (Rud 2017b: 279). Things took a different turn with the advent of the Second World War and, in particular, after the German occupation of Denmark (9 April 1940), which constituted a governmental conundrum. The Administration of Greenland (*Grønlands Styrelse*) could not exert its power without running the concrete risk of an American invasion, since

³⁷ «On daily and cultural life», my translation.

³⁸ «As long as Qullissat existed, its inhabitants developed a peculiar kind if Greenlandic culture, which was detached from the usually dominant cultural symbols, such as nature and hunting», my translation.

³⁹ «Secondary schools, college, and teacher training», my translation.

Denmark was now deemed an enemy country. Administrative power, then, passed into the hands of the *landsfogeder*, the chairmen of the country councils and, one year after Denmark had been occupied, diplomat Henrik Kauffmann signed a defense agreement with the USA on behalf of Greenland, according to which the American presence on the island would be tolerated for as long as these exceptional conditions endured (Heinrich 2017: 284-288). Therefore, as Jens Heinrich puts it, «[k]rigen markerede således et reelt brud med det danske monopol på Grønland, og Grønland blev hermed en del af verdenssamfundet»⁴⁰ (Heinrich 2017: 288). After May 1945, when Denmark was liberated from Nazi rule, contacts between Greenland and the central state were renewed. The war years had however showed that further autonomy and socio-economic development were a close possibility (Heinrich 2017: 300). Debates regarding the future of the colony persisted throughout the following years; a breakthrough, in this sense, came with the establishment of the UN, whose agenda included the supervision of non-self-governing territories and their development. Two options were taken into consideration in relation to Greenland's future: full independence, on the one hand, and integration into the Danish Kingdom as an equal part, on the other (Heinrich 2017: 307-309).⁴¹ The latter solution, also supported by Greenlandic intellectuals such as Mathias Storch and Augo Lynge, prevailed because Danish assistance was considered a valuable help in the transition from the Greenlanders' «subjective status as a “nature people” to a fully acknowledged “culture nation”» (Hálfðanarson & Thisted 2020: 133). On 5 June 1953, Greenland officially lost its colonial status, and became a Danish *amt*, «county».

1.2.2. 'Decolonizing' Greenland: 1953-1979

The formal integration of Greenland into the Danish Kingdom, in 1953, was anticipated by the promulgation of a series of laws (the so-called G50-policies) promoting the development of Greenlandic society. This «new order» (E.L. Jensen 2017: 322, my translation), a new course in the administration of Greenland, was inaugurated with the 1950 reform, and addressed,

⁴⁰ «The war thus marked a real break with the Danish monopoly in Greenland, and Greenland thus became part of the world community», my translation.

⁴¹ Anne Kirstine Hermann's *Imperiets børn* (2021; *Children of the Empire*) caused a lively debate, as the book suggests that integrating Greenland as an equal part of the Kingdom of Denmark aimed, *de facto*, at preventing the former colony's independence. As long as it maintained its status as a colony, Greenland was entitled to becoming independent in a non-specified future – a possibility that, according to Hermann's sources, was concealed to Greenlanders (see Dahlin 2021).

among other things, the education and the healthcare system. The ambition pursued was to bring up Greenland «to Denmark's level with the same economic system, the same civil rights, and the same standard of living» (A.K. Sørensen 2006: 111) or, to say it with an expression of that era, to 'modernize' Greenland. This «modernization process», (E.L. Jensen 2017: 322, my translation) was first and foremost concerned with the creation and development of infrastructures in Greenlandic territory. Especially in the first ten years that followed the change in the Danish Constitution of 1953, public money was invested in urban projects, as well as «sygehuse, skoler og radiofoni, samt tekniske anlæg som veje og havne, elværker og vandværker»⁴² (E.L. Jensen 2017: 325). The industry of fishing experienced a further advancement, also due to the employment of more refined technologies and production systems (E.L. Jensen 2017: 326); not all the aspirations of the G50-plan, however, were equally fulfilled: whilst the creation of a more structured healthcare and better housing conditions favored a demographic growth, the passage to the privatization of business sectors only progressed slowly (E.L. Jensen 2017: 330-331). Furthermore, the Greenlandic understanding of this transition was not as optimistic as it had been expected from Danish side. As Axel Kjær Sørensen puts it:

Two main troubles seemed to be: 1) the Greenlanders were spectators to the Danish development of the society, 2) incorporation into the realm on an equal footing seemed to be understood by the Greenlanders to mean that they would have the same benefits as Danes in Greenland especially in terms of salaries. Another problem emerged. Articles in the Danish press reported excessive drinking, violence and other crimes. This alarmed the administration which in 1955 responded by setting up a committee to study the impact of reforms on Greenlandic society. (2006: 117-118)

These criticalities alone seem to hint at the fact that the process of Greenland's decolonization, although it had been granted *de jure*, still preserved some characteristics of sheer colonial rule. A similar opinion is expressed by Søren Rud and, perhaps even more firmly, by Lars Jensen and Jens Dahl (Rud 2017a: 127). According to Rud, in fact, «the modernization politics of the postcolonial period of the 1950s and 1960s have ironically come to symbolize the destructive power of colonialism. The period has become emblematic of the colonial aspects of the Danish-Greenlandic past and has often overshadowed the colonial policies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries» (*Ibidem*). It was only in the 1950s, as a matter of fact, that the 'danification' of Greenlandic society gained ground. The entity of this shift was palpable, for instance, in the field of education, despite the problematic aspect of asking «a huge part of the population to

⁴² «Hospitals, schools and radio broadcasting, as well as technical facilities such as roads and ports, power stations and water supply», my translation.

acquire a strange language and a strange culture to the extent that they could function in that culture just as well as people born into it» (A.K. Sørensen 2006: 104).⁴³

Another aspect that contributed to a radical change within Greenlandic society was the centralization process favored by the development plans «in order to maximise the benefit of investment» (A.K. Sørensen 2006: 121). The concentration of people in bigger residential centres nearly resulted in the depopulation of entire peripheral areas (see *Ibidem*); the demand for new housing solutions attracted a great number of Danish (seasonal) workers, mainly due to the high remuneration they were offered (A.K. Sørensen 2006: 119). In those same years, numerous Danish migrants were – more or less stably – employed in Greenland, either as civil servants in the administration, health workers, or teachers.

The aforementioned issues were acknowledged in parliamentary discussions, in 1959, and it was deliberated that the Permanent Greenland Committee should evaluate how development in Greenland was proceeding on a political, economic, and administrative level, and suggest possible changes of route (A.K. Sørensen 2006: 124). A primary matter of concern was, again, equal pay between Danish and Greenlandic employees; the dispute was resolved in 1964, with the introduction of the later contested *fødestedskriterium*, the «birthplace» criterion, which, although it could come across as discriminatory on a racial basis, was regarded by the provincial council as the only viable compromise (see A.K. Sørensen 2006: 130).

In the 1960s, then, along with the ongoing process of growth favored by Danish financial support, a certain degree of dissatisfaction on the Greenlandic side surfaced (E.L. Jensen 2017: 355). The discontent, in particular, addressed the so-called «'bliv-dansk-politik'»⁴⁴ (*Ibidem*), as well as its cultural and linguistic consequences. Greenlandic youth movements started to arise, both in Denmark and in Greenland, and paved the way to the strong political engagement that marked the 1970s – symbolically embodied by the rock band Sumé, whose lyrics, written in Greenlandic, expressed indignation towards Danish politics and Greenland's social condition (see E.L. Jensen 2017: 358). «[D]e nye vinde i grønlandsk politik», according to E.L. Jensen, «manifesterede sig i forlængelse heraf under debatten om

⁴³ The infamous case of the 22 Greenlandic children who, in 1951, were forcefully sent to Denmark for education purposes and, one year later, back to Greenland again, was likely to be driven by these same principles (see E.L. Jensen 2017: 328): imposing the Danish language, as well as a Danish education, was considered, on Danish side, as a means for Greenlanders to emancipate and gain access to better work possibilities. The inherently violent nature of this operation was mostly disregarded.

⁴⁴ «'Become-Danish-policy'», my translation.

medlemskab af Det Europæiske Fællesskab, EF, og ved folkeafstemningen i oktober 1972»⁴⁵ (2017: 360). Axel Kjær Sørensen even affirms that «it was the Danish joining of the Common Market in 1972, which directly triggered the Home Rule model» (2006: 143). In fact, the decision not to join the EEC, which marked a distance from Danish intentions, was held as the first victory of a new generation of Greenlandic politicians who advocated for a more «‘Greenlandic Greenland’» (A.K. Sørensen 2006: 145). The event was followed by a change of pace within parliamentary debate regarding Greenland: Denmark was now more prone to concede a higher degree of self-determination to the former colony, and a home rule committee was established for this purpose. After two years of discussions – covering, among other things, administrative matters, and foreign policy –, another commission was formed with the aim to «fortage de reelle forhandlinger om det fremtidige dansk-grønlandske forhold»⁴⁶ (E.L. Jensen 2017: 366). The commission operated for three years, and its report laid the foundations for parliamentary discussions between May and November 1978; the passage to the Home Rule was confirmed through a referendum held in January 1979 (A.K. Sørensen 2006: 151). A few months later, «[o]n the home rule authorities took over responsibly for future development on the agreed terms. A new era could begin» (*Ibidem*).

1.2.3 Home Rule, Self-Government, and Future Scenarios

From 1 May 1979, Home Rule was officially introduced, and the administration of Greenland passed into the hands of its parliament, the *Landsting*, and to its own government, the *Landsstyre*, whose first president was Jonathan Motzfeldt. The ambition, as stated by Einar Lund Jensen and Jens Heinrich, was that «Grønlands udvikling skulle fortsætte i tilknytning til Danmark, men under friere tøjler»⁴⁷ (2017: 374). After this transition, a first challenge was establishing a self-sufficient economy, mostly based on the fishing industry. Danish help was crucial especially during this first period, and – although «over time, the *bloktilskud* has increasingly been playing a smaller role in the matter of Greenlandic economy» (Jensen & Heinrich 2017: 380, my translation) – it still constitutes an indispensable resource, as observed

⁴⁵ «In this respect, the new winds in Greenlandic politics manifested during the debate on membership of the European Community, EEC, and in the referendum in October 1972», my translation.

⁴⁶ «carry out the real negotiations on the future Danish-Greenlandic relationship», my translation.

⁴⁷ «Greenland’s development should proceed in connection to Denmark, but under freer reins», my translation.

earlier. Regardless of the logistic obstacles, the attention also turned to other sectors, such as the exploitation of raw materials and tourism (Jensen & Heinrich 2017: 380-384).

After the establishment of the Home Rule, Greenland's relations vis-à-vis third-part countries took a new turn: Greenland stepped out of ECC in 1985 and, as a consequence, new agreements regarding fishing were made – firstly with Iceland and Norway, in 1989, and then, in 2006, with the EU (Jensen & Heinrich 2017: 390, 394). Contacts with the USA were also frequent, not only for the duration of the Cold War, during which the airports of Kangerlussuaq and Thule served as a NATO-bases, but also in later years, when it came to their possible dismantling; with the agreement of 1991, Americans withdrew from Kangerlussuaq and, thirteen years later, a new agreement concerning the American use of Thule-base was signed by USA, Denmark, and Greenland. Apart from determining the limits of American military activity in Greenland, the Igaliku-agreement from 2004 laid the ground for a close techno-economical partnership between Greenland and the United States (Jensen & Heinrich 2017: 396-398). Greenland's presence has also become stronger as regards international and transnational organizations, such as the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), the Nordic Council, the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), and the Arctic Council (see Jensen & Heinrich 2017: 391-405); the adherence to these initiatives seems to confirm Greenland's ambition to detach from Denmark and navigate among more global interests.

Twenty years after the introduction of the Home Rule, between 1999 and 2000, the Government of Greenland established a commission (*Grønlandsk Selvstyrekommision*) whose task was the rediscussion of Greenland's positioning within the *Rigsfællesskab*, as well as the evaluation of the possibility of becoming more autonomous (Jensen & Heinrich 2017: 410). The report was followed by the establishment of another commission (*den dansk-grønlandske Selvstyrekommision*), in 2004, which assessed the ambitions pursued on Greenlandic side and elaborated them further in legislative proposals (Jensen & Heinrich 2017: 411). According to the draft handed over by the *Selvstyrekommision*, Greenland's government, now to be called Naalakkersuisut, became an equal part to Denmark's, and Greenland acquired more significant autonomies, for instance in the matter of the exploitation of raw materials – which had always been a crucial point in the negotiations with Denmark. West Greenlandic (*kalaallissut*), moreover, became Greenland's only official language (Jensen & Heinrich 2017: 412). Some areas, however, remain competence of the Danish central state; that is the case of matters regarding «statsborgerskab, Højesteret, udenrigspolitik, sikkerheds- og forsvarspolitik samt

valuta- og pengepolitik»⁴⁸ (Jensen & Heinrich 2017: 412), which will only pass into Greenlandic hands after the country is declared independent (Mazza 2021a).

The introduction of Self-government, in fact, was accompanied by discussions regarding this possibility and the *Selvstyrelov* itself, promulgated in 2009, states that Greenland's future vis-à-vis Denmark lays in the hands of the Greenlandic population, who, in the future, will be able to vote for or against independence in a referendum (Jensen & Heinrich 2017: 415). Leaving the *Rigsfællesskab*, however, would be an economic challenge for Greenland, since the country's finances still strongly rely on the *bloktilskud* granted by Denmark; according to Hálfðanarson and Thisted, «it is still unclear how these will be replaced at a time of possible divorce. One of the options that is being discussed in Greenland is that it pays for the funds it receives from Denmark by making the Thule Air Base available to the US» (2020: 150). Other hypotheses that are being examined are the exploitation of Greenland's rich subsoil, or the production of energy through hydropower (Jensen & Heinrich 2017: 415). Hálfðanarson and Thisted, furthermore, have identified another criticality that may derive from Greenland's independence, namely the fact that the connection with Denmark has given (and gives) Greenland «access to educational and social services that will not be easy to replace» (2020: 150).

The growing desire to detach from the *Rigsfællesskab* has corresponded, on a more symbolic dimension, with the urge, at least on Greenlandic side, to rediscuss Danish-Greenlandic relations in the light of their colonial past. This ambition was concretized through the creation of the Greenlandic reconciliation commission, in 2014. Denmark, at the time represented by prime minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt, refused to take part to the discussions, on the basis that it was not «et dansk behov» (Thisted 2014a: 162). Denmark's stance seems to have undergone a gradual shift within the last few years, perhaps as a consequence of the decolonizing ambitions pursued worldwide by the «Black Lives Matter» movement; Denmark's past and present deeds vis-à-vis Greenland are being scrutinized with increasingly critical tones, and this new awareness has brought to official excuses towards the former Arctic colony, for instance with regard to the case of the 22 Greenlandic children brought to Denmark in the 1950s, made by prime minister Mette Frederiksen in 2020, and reiterated two years later. As a consequence of the aforementioned decolonizing urge, old cases regarding acts of violence

⁴⁸ «citizenship, the Supreme Court, foreign policy, security and defense, along with currency and monetary policy», my translation.

and discrimination towards Greenland and Greenlanders are being reopened: the so-called *spiralsag* («coil case») is quite explicative in this regard.⁴⁹

1.3 Danish Literature on Greenland and Greenlandic People: Defining Dansk Grønlandslitteratur

«*Dansk grønlandslitteratur*», in its simplest understanding, could be defined as literature 1) written by Danes and 2) thematically related to Greenland (Thisted 2013: 296). However, as observed by Thisted, there are several types of *grønlandslitteratur*, which differ in accordance with the ‘positioning’ of the author. In addition, the labelling of a given work may be complicated, because the line between ‘Danish’ and ‘Greenlandic’ can be more blurred than expected (see Thisted 2013: 296-298). In the course of my dissertation, although literature written by Greenlanders may be sporadically mentioned with the purpose to clarify pivotal aspects of Danish-Greenlandic relations, the focus will be solely on Danish literary works.

Bearing in mind Thisted’s wide-ranging definition, one could conclude that the expression *dansk grønlandslitteratur* may include a great variety of literary manifestations, or even diverse genres. The term, however, is most typically employed in relation to fictional works, which are often – but not exclusively – codified in a set of easily identifiable characteristics. Novels pertaining to *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, for instance, may present Danish characters, or characters with mixed background, who travel to Greenland and are faced with its ‘otherness’ in contrast to Denmark. This literary mode, then, is intrinsically linked to the identity question already from its premises since it always encompasses – at least to a certain extent – the cultural encounter between ‘Danishness’ and ‘Greenlandicness’. Paradoxically, the first literary work associated with the term *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, namely *Kunnuk og Naja eller Grønlænderne: En Fortælling* (1842; *Kunnuk and Naja, or The Greenlanders: A Story*) by B.S. Ingemann (1789-1862), is an exception in this specific regard, as the text does focus on the arrival of Danish ships, but the point of view is that of Greenlandic beholders; however, the

⁴⁹ The scandal regarding the *spiralsag* exploded in 2022, as a consequence of the broadcasting of Danmarks Radio’s podcast *Spiralkampen* («The Spiral Campaign»). The podcast, hosted by Anne Pilegaard Petersen and Celine Klint, has given voice to the experiences of some of those Greenlandic women who, between the 1960s and 1990s, became – with their dubious consent – part of the birth control-campaign promoted by Denmark. Upon wish of the Naalakkersuisut, the Danish government has agreed to establish a two-year commission, whose task is the thorough investigation of the matter («Danmark og Grønland indgår aftale om udredning af “Spiralsagen”, 30 September 2022).

dimension of ‘Danishness’ is present and is embodied, among others, by Poul and Niels Egede, Hans Egede’s sons, and Hans Egede Saabye, his nephew. Furthermore, in this case the cultural encounter may also be given by the ‘interaction’ between the author himself and the Greenlandic figures he depicts. It should be noted that B.S. Ingemann was Danish and had never visited Greenland. His short novel is inspired by Hans Egede Saabye’s *Brudstykker af en Dagbog, holden i Grønland 1770-80* (1816; *Fragments of a Diary, Kept in Greenland between 1770 and 1780*) and, therefore, does not draw on direct knowledge of Greenland and its inhabitants (Thisted 2003: 37). Similar considerations on the positioning of the author are essential to Danish literature about Greenland as a whole, strictly tied, as they are, to the question of ‘legitimacy’: who has the right to write about what, considering that Greenland has endured Danish colonial presence for more than two centuries and still is not fully independent? In her *The Power to Represent. Intertextuality and Discourse in Smilla’s Sense of Snow* (2002), Thisted precisely touches this matter, and *Kunnuk og Naja* is once again mentioned as an explicative case. The scholar also focuses on the role of this work as a generator of (second hand) knowledge with regard to Greenland:

The novel may not be of the highest literary value, but it became the main source of information about Greenland for the general public who did not have access to the more scientific representations, and it was translated into German and Dutch. The novel also inspired at least one person later to become an ethnographer, as Louis Bobé describes how Ingemann’s poetry, which he read in his childhood, had roused his longing for Greenland. (2002: 312)

Ingemann’s fictional text about Greenland, as it is also the case with more recent Danish literary representations of Denmark’s former colony, circulated widely through translations and was acclaimed as a source of knowledge regarding life in Greenland and Greenlandic culture. The novel, then, despite – or perhaps due to – its romanticizing modality, has undoubtedly contributed to the shaping a precise imagery of Greenland in Denmark. This constation may lead to reflections on minority/majority relations and how they interact with literary representations.

With regard to descriptions of Greenland, Danish literary voices have been certainly prevailing, but things may be about to change. In 2021, in fact, the Nordic Council Literature Prize was awarded for the first time to a Greenlandic author, Niviaq Korneliussen, for *Blomsterdalen* – a major happening that elicited an unprecedented recognition of a Greenlandic work of fiction, as well as its canonization within literature written in Danish (and, therefore,

conceived for a Danish audience).⁵⁰ These two cases, however, are placed at the opposite extremities of the wider spectrum of *grønlandslitteratur*: on the one hand, in fact, there is a representative for ‘sheer Danishness’, on the other of ‘sheer Greenlandicness’.⁵¹ Kim Leine, Iben Mondrup, and Lotte Inuk’s placement, on the other hand, would be harder to interpret, since all three authors, despite being generally identifiable as Danish, have spent years in Greenland. Leine, Mondrup, and Inuk, then, have all had firsthand experiences of postcolonial Greenland and have all been co-actors in their individual encounters with ‘Greenlandicness’. In the following passage, Thisted even argues that Inuk’s coming-of-age novel *Sultekunstnerinde*, which comprises autofictional elements (Thisted 2013: 297), can be hardly considered exclusively through the lens of «Danish literature»:

Romanen er skrevet på dansk, men der er masser af grønlandsk i den, ikke mindst de grønlandske musiktekster, som blev afgørende for alle i Grønland i de år. Bogen beskriver en virkelighed, som uomgængeligt er en del af det moderne Grønlands historie. Hører den bog derfor egentlig ikke med i den grønlandske litterære kanon?⁵² (Thisted 2013: 297-298)

The authors’ personal experiences with regard to Greenland are here considered not as a basis for the interpretation of their literary works *per se*, but they may concur to enlighten how the dimensions of ‘Greenlandicness’ and ‘Danishness’ may interact in their novels. This is even more true if one acknowledges that a significant number of texts within the production of *grønlandsforfattere* encompass autofictional elements: Leine’s *Kalak* (2007), *Tunu* (2009), and, to a certain extent, the historical novel *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden* (2012), Inuk’s *Sultekunstnerinde* (2004) and Mondrup’s *Godhavn* (2014).⁵³ Besides, this kind of fiction can never be neutral, as it always entails reflections on whom holds «the power to represent» (Thisted 2002), and can possibly lead to the reiteration of exoticizing – or, at least, problematic

⁵⁰ Korneliussen’s *Blomsterdalen* was first drafted in Danish. Although the Greenlandic version came later as a translation of the former, the author refers to both texts as «originals», as she has disclosed during a conversation with me.

⁵¹ The term «‘sheer Greenlandicness’» might be debatable. While I consider *Blomsterdalen* as part of the Danish literature – to be intended as literature drafted in Danish – I regard Korneliussen’s ‘positioning’ as strongly oriented towards Greenland. This judgement is based on how Korneliussen depicts Danish-Greenlandic relations in her novels *HOMO sapienne* (2014) and *Blomsterdalen* (2020) (see Lubowicka 2018 and Turri 2023a).

⁵² «The novel is in Danish, but there is a strong presence of the Greenlandic language, not least in the Greenlandic music lyrics that were fundamental for everyone in Greenland during those years. The book describes a reality that is undeniably a part of modern Greenland’s history. Does not the novel therefore belong to the Greenlandic literary canon?», my translation.

⁵³ For more thorough considerations on the role of Iben Mondrup’s life-experiences within her literary production see *infra*, pp. 84-85.

– images of Greenland.⁵⁴ Furthermore, it should be noted that a given author's 'closeness' to the Greenlandic context may play a critical role in relation to his/her Danish reception: according to Thisted, in fact, Leine has been acclaimed as a cultural mediator between Denmark and Greenland not exclusively on the basis of the merits of his debut novel, *Kalak*, but also because he is well-versed in Greenlandic and has had the chance to make first-hand experiences of postcolonial Greenland – most of which are generally precluded to Danes because of the language barrier (Thisted 2015: 105-106). For this same reason, Leine is often invited as an 'expert' to public debates on matters concerning Greenland (Volquardsen 2014a: 397), as is Iben Mondrup, especially since the release of her historical novel *Tabita*, in 2020. It is interesting to consider, in this sense, how the host of the Danish tv program *Bøger, der gør en forskel* (*Books that make a difference*), Maria Månsen, introduces Mondrup's postcolonial novel *Tabita*:

Mit kendskab til Grønland er nok, som en del andre danskeres, præget af forestillinger af fordomme. Da jeg var barn, var det sådan en fjern eventyrverden, hvor alle børn lykkelige løb rundt med smukke kamikker på fødderne og endnu smukkere perlekraver om halsen og lidt tørret fisk mellem tænderne. Som voksen hører man mest de triste historier. Ingen af synsvinklerne er selvsagt fyldestgørende. Forfatteren Iben Mondrup har med romanen *Tabita* forsøgt at give et mere nuanceret billede. Men kan og skal en dansk forfatter overhovedet give sig i kast med det?⁵⁵ (*Iben Mondrups Tabita* 2020)

Although this impression may be somewhat mitigated by the final question, the host seems to imply that Mondrup's more «nuanced» depiction of Greenland could derive from her direct knowledge of life in Denmark's former Arctic colony – whereas the matter is different in the case of Danes who only have imagined Greenland, most often through the lens of stereotypical conceptions. Månsen's comment helps individuating two widespread tropes about 'Greenlandicness' – tropes that have also been largely exploited within *dansk grønlandslitteratur*. On the one hand, the idea of Greenlanders as a «naturfolk» (see Thisted

⁵⁴ It should be borne in mind, however, that the exotization of Greenland and Greenlanders can also be found in works pertaining to Greenlandic literature. More details on this self-exoticizing tendencies can be found in Thisted's *Eskimoeksotisme – et kritisk essay om repræsentationsanalyse* (2006; *Eskimo-exoticism – A Critical Essay on the Analysis of Representations*).

⁵⁵ «My knowledge of Greenland is probably, as in the case of many other Danes, characterized by fantasies and prejudices. When I was a child, it was a far-away fairytale world where all children happily ran around in their beautiful *kamik* boots and had even more beautiful pearl collars around their necks, as well as some dried fish between their teeth. As an adult, you mostly hear the sad stories. Of course, none of these viewpoints is objective. In her novel *Tabita*, Iben Mondrup has tried to give a more nuanced picture. Can and should a Danish writer engage with this?», my translation.

2012), on the other with a set of social issues, such as alcoholism, domestic violence, a high suicide rate.

These two motifs – which, it could be argued, strongly relate to one another – have exhaustively been analyzed in Thisted's already mentioned article *Danske grønlandsfiktioner. Om billedet af Grønland i dansk litteratur*. This work, probably one of the most comprehensive studies on Danish literature on Greenland, will be here reprised in terms of content, as far as the period 1842-1992 is concerned, and of method, as it will be used as a model to investigate more contemporary tendencies within the genre. Thisted's contribution, in fact, has not been followed by a systematic investigation on *dansk grønlandslitteratur* after the publication of Peter Høeg's *Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne* (1992); the gap has been partially filled by some of Emilie Dybdal's articles, i.e., *Bygder og barakker: Arbejdspladsen som konfliktzone i dansk grønlandslitteratur* (2020), written together with Anders Grønlund, *Litteraturen rykker nordpå. Om Grønland i 10'ernes danske litteratur* (2021; *Literature Moves North. Greenland in Danish Literature from the 2010s*), and *Dansk grønlandslitteratur og jagten på det antropocæne* (2022; *Danish Literature about Greenland and the Search for the Anthropocene*). Dybdal's work, albeit not conceived to be comprehensive, constitutes nonetheless a fundamental starting point to analyze recent drifts within this type of literature – which, far from being stagnating, is kept alive both through genre-fiction and 'high-brow' works. With the latter term, I am referring to novels that have earned critical acclaim and whose 'value' has been publicly recognized, for example through awards such as the Nordic Council Literature Prize (*Nordisk Råds Litteraturpris*), won by Leine's *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden* in 2013, or *Denmark's Radio Novel Prize (DR Romanpris)*, conferred to Mondrup's *Godhavn* in 2015; however, it should be remembered that these works also can have a more or less accentuated commercial potential, and some of them have even become bestsellers, at least in Denmark. Under the label of «genre-fiction», on the other hand, falls the phenomenon of the so-called «Arctic noir», i.e., a variation on the more notorious «Nordic noir», which distinguishes itself on the basis of its even more extreme and 'exotic' setting. Along with this tendency, one would perhaps expect to find sci-fi works among Danish genre-fiction about Greenland – considering the concrete threat that climate change represents for Greenland; however, this modality does not seem to get a grip on Danish authors, as it has been pointed out by Dybdal in her latest article. These and other questions will be discussed more thoroughly throughout the following subsections of the chapter, focusing respectively on *dansk grønlandslitteratur* from 1) the colonial period; 2) the years 1953-1979, and 3) contemporaneity.

1.3.1 The Colonial Age: Early Writings on Greenland

The first Danish – or, more appropriately, Danish-Norwegian – canonical author to direct his attention to Denmark’s Arctic colony was Ludvig Holberg (1684-1754), who, however, did not include Greenland or Greenlanders in any of his fictional writings. As reminded by Hans Christian Gulløv, the «rediscovery of the old Greenland» (1978: 78, my translation) had a place in Holberg’s *Dannemarks og Norges Beskrivelse* (1729; *Description of Denmark and Norway*), as well as in some of the epistles he wrote between 1748 and 1754 (Gulløv 1978: 80-84). Among them, it could be worth remembering epistle n. 350, which revolves around «Grønlændernes Naturbegavelse» («the Greenlanders’ gift for nature») and was written under the influence of Hans Egede’s account *Det gamle Grønlands nye Perlustration eller Naturel-Historie* (1741; *Old Greenland’s New Perlustration, or Natural History*) (Gulløv 1978: 84). Therefore, as it can be expected, Holberg aligns with some typically colonial narratives; in particular, in the aforementioned epistle, Greenlanders are viewed as characterized by a state of nature – a trope persisting not only in the Danish public discourse of the time, but also in literary representations. Holberg expresses himself on Greenland’s inhabitants as follows:

Vist nok er det, at de nu værende Grønlænder ere heel upolerede, grove og vankundige, men man haver fundet hos adskillige *Nationer*, i sær udi Africa og America en større *Immoralitet* og Vankundighed. Min Herre anseer det som yderst *Grad* af Dumhed hos Grønlænderne, at de troe, at, naar Maanen gaaer ned af Himmelen, den er paa Jorden og jager efter Sæl-Hunde til sin Føde [...].⁵⁶ (Holberg 1949: 130)

Holberg somewhat mitigates his judgement by drawing another comparison: this belief is no more ‘advanced’ than the myths of the Romans, the Greek, and the Chinese (*Ibidem*). Although the narrative clearly identifies the Greenlanders’ ‘alienness’ as a form of inferiority in opposition to ‘Danishness’ or ‘Europeanness’, this disparity, following Holberg’s arguments, may originate from the fact that Greenlanders do not seem to have undergone the same ‘development’ as the West. Culture and civilization, then, are here conceived as something cumulative, i.e., in terms of an evolution; a similar point of view implies the placement of

⁵⁶ «It’s certain that the Greenlanders of today are unpolished, coarse, and ignorant, but an even greater immorality and ignorance have been found in other nations, especially in Africa and America. You, my Lord, will take it as a demonstration of the utter stupidity of the Greenlanders, the fact that they believe that the Moon, when it descends from the sky, is on earth and hunts their seal-dogs to eat them [...].», my translation.

‘Greenlandicness’ into an undefined past, on the one side, and a division between culture and nature, on the other.

This same dichotomy is also to be found, as anticipated, in fictional writings concerning Greenland. Adopting the perspective employed by Lone Kølle Martinsen in her essay «*These children of nature*»: *Cultural Exchange in Nineteenth-Century Danish Imaginings of Greenland* (2017), these considerations could be analyzed «as a source of specific historical and sociocultural information about Danish romantic imaginings of ‘the North’ and also, by implication, about contemporaneous imaginings of ‘Danishness’ itself» (Martinsen 2017: 182). Martinsen has availed herself of this approach with specific regard to B.S. Ingemann’s *Kunnuk og Naja eller Grønlænderne: En Fortælling*, which, she states, «constitutes a key moment of imaginative exchange between Denmark and its Arctic colony» (*Ibidem*). The presupposition of her study is that this piece of historical fiction, also thanks to its wide reach, may have contributed to the shaping of a Danish-Greenlandic cultural memory (see Martinsen 2017: 181-182). Martinsen, although she acknowledges the heuristic utility of Thisted’s «Arctic Orientalism», thinks that such an approach would be reductive if not paired with a proper historical contextualization, or without considering a more nuanced version of the «two ‘master narratives’ in Danish engagements with Greenland, which inform both academic history and historical fiction», i.e., Denmark as a ‘typical’ or as an ‘exceptional’ colonial power (Martinsen 2017: 184). In her *Danske grønlandsfiktioner. Om billedet af Grønland i dansk litteratur*, on the other hand, Thisted introduces the novel as follows: «Ligesom “Orienten” til dels er blevet til ud fra beskrivelser og billeder fremstillet af europæere, der aldrig har sat deres ben i de områder, de skildrer [...], er det langt fra alle de danskere, der skriver om Grønland, der har andet end andet- og tredjehånds kendskab til landet og kulturen» (2003: 36);⁵⁷ her analysis of the novel thus explicitly draws from Said’s *Orientalism* and, as such, focuses on unequal power relationships, on the one side, and on the process of ‘othering’, on the other – which also implies reflections on one’s own identity. Bearing in mind both points of departure, it is noteworthy that there still seems to be some disagreement on the implications of the oldest text pertaining to *dansk grønlandslitteratur*.

It is without doubt, however, that *Kunnuk og Naja* laid the foundations of a Danish literary imagery relating to Greenland, shaping some of the tropes that would be later reprised

⁵⁷ «Just as the “Orient” has been partly created from descriptions and images produced by Europeans who have never set foot in the areas they depict [...], not all Danes who write about Greenland have other than second- and third-hand knowledge of the country and culture», my translation.

with an imitative or critical spirit. The novel, for instance, is built upon the association – typical of colonial narratives – between ‘Greenlandicness’ and a child-like state. The analogy, as it could be expected, implies that the colonial power exerts some sort of maternal authority on the occupied territory. This argument, as already pointed out by Thisted, belongs to its time but has nonetheless proven to be rather pervasive also within the Danish-Greenlandic public discourse, even in more recent years (see 2003: 37). Let us consider, for instance, the following extract from *Denmark and the New North Atlantic. Narratives and Memories in a Former Empire* (2020), edited by Kirsten Thisted and Ann-Sofie N. Gremaud, where a contemporary report of a Norwegian journalist travelling to Greenland is taken into consideration:

The story of Greenland is often heavily dramatized, and built upon opposites. In addition to this, the visit took place right before the referendum on the Act on Greenland Self-Government in 2008. Everyone is concerned about whether Greenland can free itself entirely from Denmark and form an independent state. Two of the politicians think it can [...]. However, the bishop, Sofie Petersen, believes it is too early because Greenland does not have enough educated people and is not ready or «mature» (*modent*) enough for independence. The metaphor draws on an old colonial discourse, whereby the Greenlanders were treated like children who needed an understanding mother (the colonial power), under whose protection the child could grow up and learn to stand on its own two feet. The question is, of course, who has the right to decide *when* this maturity occurs. As it appears from Sofie Petersen’s remark, this discourse has been taken over by the Greenlanders themselves. (Thisted & Gremaud 2020: 32)

The rhetoric opposing ‘Greenlandicness’/‘Danishness’ and infancy/adulthood, then, apart from persisting – in a more or less subtle fashion – after the political decolonization of Greenland, in 1953, has not exclusively been adopted by Danes, but by Greenlanders as well, which may be a further demonstration of how rooted it is.⁵⁸

The representation of ‘Greenlandicness’ and ‘Danishness’ as two opposing and irreducible categories, however, may take many different forms, as once again exemplified by the case of *Kunnuk og Naja*. The novel’s plot itself relies on the clash between paganism and Christianity and, accordingly, between nature and culture. Ingemann’s text, in fact, inspired by some events recalled in the diary of Hans Egede Saabye (Thisted 2003: 37), tells a story of love

⁵⁸ An alternative family-related metaphor used to discuss Danish-Greenlandic relations, especially on Greenlandic side, is that of a divorce: «Den danske omsorg kobles her til en smertefuld magtesløshed overfor en grønlandsk selvdestruktion, der især giver sig udslag i en bevægelse ud af den familiære relation – i dette tilfælde anskuet som et ægteskab snarere end som en forældre-barn relation, jf. metaforen “skilsmisse”. Dermed rammesættes bevægelsen mod selvstændighed som en politisk praksis, som er emotionelt sårende for Danmark» (Thisted, Gremaud & Marnersdóttir 2021: 24; «Danish care is here linked to a painful powerlessness in the face of Greenlandic self-destruction, which manifests itself in particular in a movement out of the family relationship – in this case seen as a marriage rather than a parent-child relationship, cf. the metaphor “divorce”. This frames the movement towards independence as a political practice that is emotionally hurtful to Denmark», my translation).

and vengeance, whose tragic premises lay in the fact that a young man, Kunnuk, according to the custom of the Inuit, is forced to avenge the death of his father – who, ironically had been assassinated by a relative of Naja, the woman he loves. The Christian message of forgiveness, then, is here presented as a *deus ex machina* that would allow Kunnuk and Naja to fulfill their impossible love. In the novel, the opposition between Christianity and paganism is also embodied by two key figures, Hans Egede Saabye himself and Elik, an elderly shaman depicted as a representative for heathen traditions. The character of Arnarsak, on the other hand, could be identified as a *trait d'union* between the other two: the woman, another historical figure, actively contributed to the spread of Christianity on Greenlandic soil. Her help, as reminded by Thisted, was crucial for Poul Egede and his project to translate the Bible into Greenlandic, and she later operated as a missionary in Northern Greenland (*Ibidem*). The ending of *Kunnuk og Naja*, however, seems to suggest that, despite the contrast between a pagan and a Christian *Weltanschauung*, a mutual acknowledgment is somewhat possible: «I slutningen forsones den kristne præst og den gamle, nu omvendte vismand. Elik har på sin side erkendt den kristne Gud som garant for en evighed, der består, når naturen og Tornarsuk forgår. Præsten, den fiktive Hans Egede Saabye, har derimod erkendt, at den eskimoiske trosverden ikke bør afvises som løgn og gøglerier»⁵⁹ (*Ibidem*).

As far as the antithesis between nature and culture is concerned, it should be borne in mind that Ingemann's view on the matter was highly influenced by Romanticism. A romantic view on Greenlandic nature, as a matter of fact, is also present in earlier writings pertaining to his production, for instance in a poem from 1823 dedicated to the Apostle of Greenland, Hans Egede, where the image of Denmark's Arctic colony is built upon stereotypical elements including, among others, snow, ice, mountains etc. In the case of *Kunnuk og Naja*, the depiction of Greenland's landscape as *eventyrlig*, utterly alien to most Danes, is paired with the association between Greenlanders and a 'state of nature', a correlation to be found, for example, in the expressions «naturmennesker» («people of nature»), or «naturbørn» («children of nature») – the latter being explicitly used by Ingemann (1842: 17). Such discourses – drawing on the alleged 'primitivity' of the Greenlanders, in opposition to their Danish counterparts – have been extensively studied through the lens of postcolonial studies and, in particular, with a referral to Edward Said's concept of Orientalism, which, although its name may suggest

⁵⁹ «At the end, the Christian priest and the old, now converted, sage are reconciled. Elik, for his part, has recognized the Christian God as the guarantee of an eternity that lasts beyond nature and Tornarsuk. The priest, instead, the fictional Hans Egede Saabye, has recognized that the Eskimo world of faith should not be dismissed as a mass of lies and hoaxes», my translation.

otherwise, also lends itself to the Arctic context, at least in its basic principles: just as imaginings of the Orient have proved essential to the creation of a Western identity characterized by ‘civility’ and ‘rationality’, Greenland has often been depicted – in the Danish public discourse as well as in literary representation – as Denmark’s Other. As Thisted summarizes:

Greenland is inscribed within a broader discourse about the Inuit, who not long ago were called «Eskimos» and considered «primitive». With his famous notion of «Orientalism» the Palestinian-American literary theorist Edward Said (1935-2003) described how the «Orient» has been constructed by external representations in which one text and one image leads to the next and the next and the next in an infinite intertextual chain of production (Said 1978). Something similar can be described for the Arctic (Thisted 1994:214ff.). Ann Fienup-Riordan talks about «Eskimo-Orientalism» (Fienup-Riordan 1995), I have used the term «Arctic Orientalism» (Thisted 1996, 2002), Gísli Pálsson calls it «Arcticity» (Pálsson 2002), Hans Hauge «Nordientalism» (Hauge 2004). In a Danish-Norwegian context, renowned figures like H.J. Rink (1819-1893), Fridtjof Nansen (1861-1930), and Knud Rasmussen (1879-1933) must be credited for showing the Inuit respect and for having changed the discourse from the derogative «primitive peoples» to the positive «naturfolk» (peoples of nature), a term borrowed from the German «Naturvolk» (Thisted 2001, 2003, 2010), a discourse within which culture [sic] was «good», civilization «bad» (Robertson 1995:29). Neo-Romanticism escalated in the civilization critique of the 1970s and 80s, and in a Danish-Greenlandic context the word «Inuit» (people) was given connotations like «menneskelighed»/«medmenneskelighed» (real or genuine humanity), something the «civilized» world had lost, a still living memory and corrective to the modern world (Thisted 1992, 2002). (Thisted 2012: 280-281)

The same traits that have been highlighted with regard to *Kunnuk og Naja* can also be found in Henrik Pontoppidan’s (1857-1943) *Isbjørnen* (1887; *The Polar Bear*), a short novel that revolves around the character of Thorkild Müller. Considered an outcast within Danish society, Müller seems to find his own dimension overseas and, more precisely, in «Greenland’s northernmost and most isolated parish» (Thisted 2003: 38, my translation). The motif introduced by Pontoppidan – who, similarly to B.S. Ingemann, did not have any direct knowledge of Greenland – is but a specific declination of an appreciation of Denmark and Greenland in opposite terms, such as nature/culture, primitivity/civilization etc. Thorkild Müller, then, is more inclined to identify himself, or to adhere, to ‘Greenlandicness’ rather than ‘Danishness’. At the same time, Greenland becomes, in the words of Thisted, a «tilflugtssted for utilpassede eksistenser, sådanne mennesker som i forhold til det etablerede samfund “var kommen til verden som en umulighed”»⁶⁰ (*Ibidem*). The Arctic colony, then, is represented as

⁶⁰ «refuge for ill-suited existences, for people who, in relation to conventional society, “had come into the world as an impossibility”», my translation.

a land of possibility – both in terms of adventure and self-realization. This association is addressed by Thisted with the term «arktisk frirum», «Arctic free zone» (*Ibidem*), whilst Dybdal and Grønlund employ the expression «hvidt lærred», «white canvas» (2020: 39) to refer to the conception of life in Denmark and in Greenland as mutually exclusive alternatives, where the latter is viewed as a space for ‘free expression’ of the individual. The concrete and metaphorical ‘openness’ of the Arctic is thematized by Pontoppidan himself in the following extract, for instance, which lingers on the (negative) expectations of the Danish theology students who may be assigned to the Greenlandic mission:

Man forstaar derfor let de Følelser, med hvilken et saadant ungt Menneske lod sig forskrive til denne livsvarige Forvisning, – den stille Gysen, hvormed han tænkte paa den Dag, da Kaldsbrevet vilde komme og Skibet lægge ud og Byens Spir og Taarne forsvinde under Bølgen med den Kyst, som han maaske aldrig mere skulde gjensee eller i det heldigste som en gammel Graaskæg med sneblændede Øjne og stivnede Lemmer efter en livslang levende Begravelse deroppe i den evige Isørkens frygtelige Ensomhed og tomme Mørke.⁶¹ (Pontoppidan 1887: 21)

Given these premises, it comes as no surprise that *Isbjørnen* can be read as an intertext for Kim Leine’s *Kalak*, from 2007 (Volquardsen 2014a: 398), an autofictional novel that recalls the life of Kim, Leine’s literary alter-ego, tormented by irresoluteness both in Norway, where he was born and spent his childhood years, and in Denmark, his putative country. In Greenland, Kim seems to find his own dimension, and starts his journey to ‘become’ a «kalak», a real, authentic Greenlander. In this regard, then, *Kalak* could be seen as a rewriting of Thorkild Müller’s story, as the priest also seems to be drawn to the natives, to the point that he on one occasion goes seal hunting to imitate local customs (see Thisted 2003: 38-39). It should be noted that hunting itself can be considered a recurring motif within *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, perhaps based on two reasons: on the one hand, as I will clarify in chapter 2, traditional hunting is perceived, both on the Danish and the Greenlandic side, as a strong marker for ‘Greenlandicness’, and is therefore part of discourses on identity. This activity further constitutes a *trait d’union* between man and nature, as it encompasses a deeper understanding of the surrounding it is being performed in and, accordingly, lends itself to reflections relating

⁶¹ «Therefore, it’s easy to imagine the feelings with which such a young man allowed himself to be prescribed for this life-long banishment, – the quiet horror with which he thought of the day when his summoning letter would come and the ship would set sail and the city’s spires and towers would disappear under the wave with the coast that he would perhaps never see again or, at best, as an old graybeard with snow-blinded eyes and stiffened limbs, after having spent a lifetime buried alive, up there, in the terrible loneliness and empty darkness of the eternal ice desert», my translation.

to the opposing pair nature/culture. This opposition, as Thisted once again underlines, also plays an important role in *Isbjørnen*, where «Grønland står snarest som en kulisse for den modsætning mellem kultur og natur, som skulle blive så central i hans [Pontoppidans] forfatterskab» (2003: 39).⁶² The representation of hunting scenes – as the examples drawn from *Kalak*, *Store Malene*, and *Tabita*, in the next chapter, will show – can either hint at an exoticizing attitude towards ‘Greenlandicness’, or at an attempt to depict or get closer to Greenlandic culture and reduce the supposed distance from ‘Danishness’.

It is not unusual, for Danish writers who have thematized Greenland within their production, to use the territory as a scenery for more than just one work, to the point that they may be defined ‘Greenland writers’, *grønlandsforfattere*. In more recent times, one need only think about the case of Kim Leine and Iben Mondrup’s acclaimed novels, which hinge on the Greenlandic theme through the employment of different literary forms, such as the historical novel or realistic narrations with (more or less present) autofictional elements. Greenland is also a recurring topic/setting within the production of authors of the so-called Arctic Noir, Nina von Staffeldt (1964-) and Mads Peder Nordbo (1970-) being two examples. Among the earliest Danish authors who extensively used Greenland within their fictional writings it is worth mentioning Signe Rink (1836-1909) and Aage Ibsen (1847-1915). The former, only briefly mentioned in Thisted’s *excursus* on Danish representations of Greenland, authored four fictional texts, *Grønlændere* (1886; *Greenlanders*), *Grønlændere og Danske i Grønland* (1887; *Greenlanders and Danes in Greenland*), *Koloni-idyller* (1888; *Colony-Idylls*), and *Fra det Grønland som gik. Et par Tidsbilleder fra Trediverne* (1902; *From the Greenland that Disappeared. A Few Snapshots from the Thirties*) – «all of them stories from Greenland of the 19th century» (Langgård 2007: 113). As Thisted points out, Rink’s production has often been dismissed as of scarce literary value (2007: 135), and she has been rediscovered only in more recent years, perhaps due to her peculiar positioning: «Signe Rink skrev på dansk og for et dansk publikum, men hendes forfatterskab udskiller sig derved, at hun talte flydende grønlandsk og besad en stor grad af, hvad vi i dag ville kalde “flerkulturel kompetence”»⁶³ (Thisted 2007: 136). There seems to be a certain level of disagreement on whether Rink’s works should be seen as merely fictional or not. While Langgård refers to the aforementioned texts as

⁶² «Greenland is rather represented as a frame for the opposition between culture and nature, which would play a crucial role in his [Pontoppidan’s] literary production», my translation.

⁶³ «Signe Rink wrote in Danish and for a Danish audience, but her production stands out due to the fact that she spoke Greenlandic fluently and possessed a large degree of what we would today call “multicultural competence”», my translation.

«fiction» and (2007: 113) Thisted stresses the «kunstnerisk bearbejdelse», «artistic re-elaboration», beneath her works (2007: 150), Dahlerup affirms that the fictional component in Rink's writings is negligible (*Ibidem*). Regardless of this *querelle*, Langgård and Thisted's analyses have demonstrated that Signe Rink's prose offers some compelling understandings of Danish-Greenlandic relations, both in terms of content and form. It should be remarked, for instance, that the relationship between 'Danishness' and 'Greenlandicness' is not strictly conceived in 'othering' terms:

Her narrator looks for a start at the content of the fiction with Scandinavian eyes, the eyes of those living in the colonizing nation and not in the colony. She writes from within the colonial and imperial discourse of her time to reach her readers. But the narrative does not stay that monophonic: the implied author (Chatman 1978), the content of the fiction and sometimes the surface narrator lead the receiver to quite kaleidoscopic impressions. (Langgård 2007: 118)

On this note, the use that Rink makes of Greenlandic language is rather explicative, since it aims at giving a realistic image of life in the Greenlandic colonies and, in addition to that, at giving her Scandinavian readers an insight into Greenlandic culture, in an endeavor to act as a 'cultural mediator': «Det grønlandsk, vi præsenteres for i Signe Rinks egne tekster, er et autentisk grønlandsk talesprog, som dog bliver en hel del mindre talesprogsagtigt i den danske oversættelse, fordi hun så gerne vil forklare de indforståede medbetydninger»⁶⁴ (Thisted 2007: 139). According to Thisted, the alternation between Greenlandic and Danish – for instance in *Grønlændere* – may even give the impression that the author aims precisely at generating a «third space» between Danishness and Greenlandicness, to be found «i et krydspunkt mellem to verdener, to sprog og to virkeligheder, hvor den “egentlige” tekst fremstår som et konglomerat af de to»⁶⁵ (*Ibidem*).

Aage Ibsen also had direct knowledge of the Greenlandic context, since he worked as a district doctor («Distriktlæge») in Greenland from 1880 to 1885 (Lind 1915: 69). As the brief note in Th. Lind's *Gyldendals Forfatter-Lexicon* (1915; *Gyldendal's Writer-Lexicon*) specifies,

⁶⁴ «The Greenlandic presented in Signe Rink's texts is authentic Greenlandic everyday language, which however becomes a lot less colloquial in the Danish translation, because she is so keen to explain the implied connotations», my translation.

⁶⁵ «At a crossing point between two worlds, two languages, and two realities, where the 'actual' text comes forth from the merging of the two», my translation. The same could be argued, in more recent times, about the Greenlandic poet and performance artist Jessie Kleemann (1959-), who, for instance in her poem collection *Arkhticós Dolorós* (2021), alternates and mixes Danish, Greenlandic, and English, thus generating a parallel level of expression where the three languages coexist and contribute shaping different reading experiences; in this case, however, the ultimate goal is not cultural translation, since the adjoint use of Danish, Greenlandic, and English does not aim at a multilingual rendition of the same contents.

Aage Ibsen debuted with *Nordlys* (1894; *Northern Lights*), a collection of short stories revolving around Greenland, like most of his writings, and a common thread within his production, according to the author, is the fact that it draws from «en frisk og levende Naturglæde»⁶⁶ (*Ibidem*). Aage Ibsen's work has not been thoroughly investigated in scholarly writings, and his novels and short stories, to my best knowledge, have only been considered as pieces of *dansk grønlandslitteratur*. This is certainly the case of *Fjeldgænger* (1908; *Mountain Wanderer*), whose significance is given by two factors; firstly, with this text Ibsen inserted himself in a public debate arisen in Denmark with regard to the consequences of the Danish presence in Greenland:

Aage Ibsen gør i *Fjeldgænger* grin med sådanne danske damers «Grønlandske Idyller» (s. 21, 65 m.fl.), og forsøger en mere realistisk skildring, hvor problemerne i kolonistytet får lov at komme til orde. Ibsens roman kan ses som et litterært indlæg i den debat om forholdene i Grønland, som rejste sig i Danmark i begyndelsen af 1900-tallet, bl.a. afstedkommet ved systemskiftet i 1901. Embedsmandsvældet i den Kongelige Grønlandske Handel (KGH) kritiseredes for at udbytte og underkue den grønlandske befolkning, med en alt for lav levestandard og helt uacceptable forhold for grønlænderne til følge.⁶⁷ (Thisted 2004a: 142)

Furthermore, on a mere literary level, it should be noted that the novel presents a trope that would later become recurring in Danish fictions of Greenland, i.e., «splittelsestemaet, som bliver udtryk for århundredets altdominerende dansk diskurs om kulturkløften»⁶⁸ (Thisted 2003: 39). The matter is here embodied by the character of Petrus Lyberth, a boy with mixed origins who, at the age of fifteen, reconnects to his dying father, a Danish functionary, and starts going to school (Thisted 2004a: 143). Petrus soon catches the attention of both the priest and the doctor of the colony, who represent opposite views on the need to educate Greenlanders: «Præsten mener, at den begavede dreng bør sendes til Danmark og “udvikles til en Civilisationens [sic] Foregangsmand blandt hans Landsmænd” [...]. Doktoren derimod er af den mening, at

⁶⁶ «[A] fresh and lively joy of nature», my translation.

⁶⁷ «In *Fjeldgænger*, Aage Ibsen makes fun of certain “Greenlandic idylls” written by Danish ladies (p. 21, 65 et al.), and attempts a more realistic representation, where the problems of the colonial government are allowed to be discussed. Ibsen's novel can be seen as a literary contribution to the debate about conditions in Greenland that arose in Denmark at the beginning of the 20th century, brought about, among other things, by the change of system in 1901. The bureaucracy in the Royal Greenland Trade Department (KGH) was criticized for exploiting and subjugating the Greenlandic population, which resulted in a much too low standard of living and completely unacceptable conditions for the Greenlanders», my translation.

⁶⁸ «[T]he trope of splitting, which becomes an expression of the century's pervasive Danish discourse on the cultural divide», my translation.

den såkaldte civilisation kun er af det onde for grønlænderne»⁶⁹ (Thisted 2004a: 144). This *querelle*, however, leads to a tragic outcome: torn between ‘Danishness’ and ‘Greenlandicness’ – and, at the same time, not belonging to any of the two alternatives – Petrus decides to spend the rest of his life as a *qivittoq*, translated into Danish as «fjeldgænger», i.e., a «mountain wanderer». The term indicates an individual who, out of different reasons that may range from «skam, vrede, jalousi eller lignende»⁷⁰ (Thisted 2004a: 136), opts for living on his own, renouncing any contact with society. According to Greenlandic folklore, *qivittoqs*, by virtue of their life choice, would later acquire supernatural powers; their stories, which were transmitted orally, mainly served as «advarselshistorier til folk om ikke at presse hinanden så hårdt, at nogen følte sig skubbet ud»⁷¹ (*Ibidem*). This same trope, it should be noted, is also present in Mathias Storch’s *Sinnattugaq* (1914; *The Dream*), the first Greenlandic novel to be drafted – which was released six years after Ibsen’s *Fjeldgænger*. As already pointed out by Thisted in her article «Hvem går qivittoq?» *Kampen om et litterært symbol eller relationen Danmark-Grønland i postkolonial belysning* (2004a; «Who Becomes a Qivittoq?» *The Struggle for a Literary Symbol or Danish-Greenlandic Relations in Postcolonial Light*), *Sinnattugaq* may actually have been conceived as a sort of counternarrative to *Fjeldgænger*:

Sammenligner man Mathias Storchs fremstilling med Aage Ibsens, springer det således først og fremmest i øjnene, hvordan det hos Storch *ikke* er den oplyste grønlander, der går *qivittoq* på grund af *for meget* uddannelse og oplysning, men derimod den ‘traditionelle’ grønlander på grund af *mangel* på oplysning. Samtidig gør Storch op med de modsætninger, der danner grundstrukturen i Aage Ibsens bog.⁷² (Thisted 2004a: 149)

As hinted in this paragraph, then, the representation of Danish and Greenlandic identity in *Fjeldgænger* follows a well-known pattern, as it mainly draws from contrastive elements associated to ‘Danishness’ or ‘Greenlandicness’. More specifically, Ibsen aimed at depicting the nefarious effects of civilization on Greenlanders and their traditional way of living (see Thisted 2004a: 146-147). However, despite aligning himself to less noteworthy modalities, Ibsen had the merit to insert social critique within *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, as well as to

⁶⁹ «The priest believes that the gifted boy should be sent to Denmark and “be developed into a civilization forerunner among his countrymen [...]. The doctor, on the other hand, thinks that the so-called civilization is only bad for Greenlanders», my translation.

⁷⁰ «Shame, anger, jealousy or something of that sort», my translation.

⁷¹ «Cautionary tales that warned people not to press each other so hard that someone felt left out», my translation.

⁷² «Thus, if one compares Mathias Storch’s depiction with Aage Ibsen’s, the first thing that catches one’s attention is the fact that, in the case of Storch, it is not the enlightened Greenlandic who becomes a *qivittoq* as a result of too much education and civilization, but rather the ‘traditional’ Greenlandic, as he is not civilized. At the same time, Storch distances himself from the contrasts that lay the ground for Aage Ibsen’s book», my translation.

inaugurate the *qivittoq*-motif in Danish literary fiction. This trope, in fact, is to be found – although, often, in the form of a mere citation – within later examples of Danish fiction about Greenland, even in contemporary times. The figure of the *qivittoq*, for instance, is mentioned in Lotte Inuk's *Sultekunstnerinde*, as well as in some of Iben Mondrup's and Kim Leine's novels pertaining to the corpus being used in the present dissertation, as we will see in chapter 2. The motif, in fact, tendentially serves the purpose of giving an insight into Greenlandic cultural identity and, at the same time, of marking that a given work refers to the Greenlandic context and, as such, can possibly count as *dansk grønlandslitteratur*. The *qivittoq*, in fact, may have entered the Danish imagery regarding Greenland, thus becoming an element that is somewhat expected – or, at least, recognized – by the Danish reader. More considerations on the topic will be made in the following chapter.

Peter Freuchen (1886-1957) – who, in Thisted's words, could be regarded as a «one of the great names within literature about Greenland» (2003: 41, my translation) – extensively wrote of Greenland in his fictional and non-fictional production and, similarly to Aage Ibsen, was also familiar with Denmark's former Arctic colony, having participated in numerous expeditions. As pointed out by Thisted (*Ibidem*), his 'internal' knowledge of the context he described also derived from his marriage to Navarana Meqopaluk, who inspired the main figure of *Ivalu* (1930), Freuchen's first 'Greenlandic' novel (Thisted 2003: 42). This text, together with *Hvid Mand* (1943; *White Man*) and *Solfjeld* (1946; *Sun Mountain*), Freuchen's two other fictional books on Greenland, is overshadowed by other pieces of writing, as, for instance, his memoirs; in the words of Thisted: «Det er mest erindringsbøgerne, der fortsat læses, samt måske romanerne om den store Mala. Læserne går således glip af Freuchens fremskridtstro og får kun del i den mere nostalgiske del af hans forfatterskab»⁷³ (2003: 46). A similar disregard is also to be found in academic contexts, as the lack of literature on Freuchen's three 'Greenlandic' novels seems to demonstrate; this gap could perhaps find a justification in the fact that his fictional production is regarded as entertainment literature: according once again to Thisted, his 'Arctic' novels can be labeled as *røverromaner* and present evident similarities with the genre employed by James Fenimore Cooper in his *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826) (2003: 41-42). Central to Freuchen's novels is invariably the clash between different conceptions of the world, embodied, by 'Europeanness' and 'Indigeneity'. The theme finds

⁷³ «It is mostly the memoirs that continue to be read, as well as, perhaps, the novels about the great Mala. Readers thus miss out on Freuchen's faith in progress and only partake in the more nostalgic part of his writing», my translation.

various declinations throughout his production, both spatially and temporally: it should be remembered, in fact, that some of his novels are set in Canada and in Alaska. As far as the temporal dimension is concerned, on the other hand, it could be fruitful to take into consideration the fact that, while *Hvid Mand* is set in 1728, *Ivalu* and *Solfjeld* represent a context that is closer to the author's own direct experience. As already mentioned, the events narrated in *Ivalu* roughly correspond to the life of Navarana Meqopaluk, and the novel is focused on her marriage to a white man – an exemplifying circumstance that allows Freuchen to delve into discourses on the *kulturkløft*. In this regard, it should be noticed that the classic opposition between 'Danishness' and 'Greenlandicness' is illustrated in terms of attraction: «den mandlige hovedperson kun vælger Ivalu med den udtrykkelige begrundelse, at hun er *anderledes* – altså i virkeligheden på trods af at hun er eskimo»⁷⁴ (Thisted 2003: 42-43). *Solfjeld*, on the other hand, is set in 1908 – even though the novel revolves around a curious occurrence that had taken place about 35 years before in another part of Greenland: Thisted wonders whether this practice does not bear some problematicness to it, as it implicitly reiterates the idea, on the one side, that 'Greenlandicness' is stuck in the past – and therefore unchangeable – and that Greenlandic culture, apart from being considered uniform throughout the whole of Greenland, may come across as somewhat 'entertaining' for the Danish reader (Thisted 2003: 45). A similar estrangement originates from the way Greenlandic characters speak, since idiomatic expressions in Greenlandic are directly translated into Danish (*Ibidem*). As we will see in chapter 2, it is not unusual for Danish authors to employ the Greenlandic language in different modalities, which, depending on the case, can either be regarded as «domesticizing» or «foreignizing» – terms that I have borrowed from Lawrence Venuti's studies on translation; Freuchen's strategy, then, can be ascribed to the latter expression, as it is easily recognizable as an attempt to create some distance between the Danish and the Greenlandic characters of the novel.⁷⁵

Among the notable Danish literary fictions preceding 1953, i.e., when Greenland was no longer deemed Denmark's colony, Thisted mentions Kund Sønderby's *De kolde Flammer* (1940), where Greenland is depicted as a mere background for the plot to unfold – plot that, unsurprisingly, hinges on a Danish couple (Thisted 2003: 46). In this regard, Greenland – or, at

⁷⁴ «[T]he male protagonist only chooses Ivalu «on the express grounds that she is different – that is, in reality, despite the fact that she is an Eskimo», my translation. A similar story is presented, in more racialized terms, in the novel *Eskimo* (1930) by Helge Bangsted (1898-1974) (Thisted 2003: 43), known for his activity as a journalist and for being the leader of DNSAP, the Danish national-socialist party.

⁷⁵ On the basis of what has been said earlier, the term «domesticizing», on the other hand, would perhaps be apt to describe Signe Rink's use of Greenlandic language in her fictional writings.

least, the characteristics generally associated to it by Danes – serves the purpose to put the protagonists' life into perspective: «Nede i København tager mennesker sig selv så højtideligt og har frygtelig svært ved at se *andet* end sig selv. Stillet over for den evighed, som naturen i Grønland påmindrer en om, indser man sin rette plads»⁷⁶ (*Ibidem*). This understanding of Denmark's former colony (and its landscape) seems to be parodically reprised by Iben Mondrup in her *Store Malene* (2013), where the Danish couple formed by Mette and Jesper, who are arguably experiencing a period of crisis, seeks to connect to Greenlandic nature, in an attempt to make a unique experience, and to touch by hand life in Greenland – conceived as utterly alien and, parallelly, as an alternative to Denmark. Knud Sønderby's novel, furthermore, also briefly addresses the *qivittoq*-theme, as it features a character embodying the prototypical characteristics of the 'educated Greenlander': the man, Ringsted, who has spent his whole life guided by the aspiration to be like a Dane, decides to become a *qivittoq* when he finds himself getting to grips with the fallaciousness of most Danes (*Ibidem*). The motif, then, according to Thisted, is presented without significant variations that may point at something other than the «den moderne grønlænder som en splittet identitet, der ikke kan finde nogen rolle at være hjemme i»⁷⁷ (Thisted 2003: 47).

Ole Risak's *Knud Sønderby. En kultur-sociologisk analyse* (1973), on the other hand, offers another perspective on the novel, enriched through the parallelism with Sønderby's non-fictional text on Greenland *Grønlandsk Sommer* (1941). The scholar, although he focuses on the displayed opposition between nature and culture, draws a parallelism between the two categories and, among other things, class- and gender-related matters. In *Grønlandsk Sommer*, the usual antithesis between Danes and Greenlanders is not only depicted in ethnic terms, according to Risak, but also as a «klassemodsatning», «class conflict» (1973: 64): «Danskerne, bourgeoisiet, repræsenterer kulturen, og grønlænderproletariatet naturen. Mere korrekt er det dog at sige, at den grønlandske kultur ligger nærmere naturen på kultur/natur-oppositionsaksen end den danske»⁷⁸ (Risak 1973: 65). The juxtaposition with gender in Risak's analysis also draws from the premise that gender roles and patterns are subject to power relations. As it can be easily expected, Sønderby's text presents a somewhat stereotypical view on the topic, since

⁷⁶ «Down there, in Copenhagen, people think too highly of themselves and find it extremely difficult to see something *other* than themselves. Faced with the eternity that nature in Greenland reminds of, one realizes his rightful place», my translation.

⁷⁷ «[T]he modern Greenlander as a torn identity, unable to find a role to inhabit», my translation.

⁷⁸ «The Danes, the bourgeoisie, represent culture, the Greenlandic working-class nature. It would be more correct to say that Greenlandic culture, within the culture/nature opposition axis, is closer to nature than the Danish one», my translation.

the prevailing discourse on sexuality in *De kolde Flammer* consists in the contrast between repressed and free sexuality (Risak 1973: 68), respectively embodied by the Danish and the Greenlandic characters in the novel.⁷⁹

The Danish representations of Greenland and ‘Greenlandicness’ that have been considered so far, which range from 1842 to 1946, show that, throughout a century of Danish colonial dominion, *dansk grønlandslitteratur* developed from Ingemann’s *Kunnuk og Naja* and progressively became a wider phenomenon with recurring themes and motifs. Unsurprisingly, the common thread of these Danish literary fictions about Greenland seems to be the clash between civilizations or, perhaps, different *Weltanschauungen*. At this point, the opposition between ‘Danishness’ and ‘Greenlandicness’ is mainly understood in ethnic-cultural terms, as the ever-occurring discourses on the education of Greenlanders seem to demonstrate: the idea of the ‘spoiled’ Greenland, in fact, relies on the belief that Greenlandic ‘primitive’ culture should be preserved from any contacts with modernity. This is but a literary translation of ideas that circulated within Danish public debates, whose ultimate goal, depending on the interpretation, lies in an attempt «to restore or resurrect Greenlandic aspects of culture that were fast disappearing» or to induce Greenlanders «to produce as much as possible, thus allowing for the maximum colonial exploitation of the area» (Rud 2017a: 33). Denmark’s official version, at least from the 19th century onwards, is condensed by the expression «Til Gavn for Grønland – til Ære for Danmark» («For the benefit of Greenland – for the honor of Denmark»): Denmark, in fact, pledged to act in Greenland’s best interest and to preside the transition from «naturfolk» to «kulturfolk» (Thisted 2021: 22). In Thisted’s words:

Til Gavn for Grønland - Til Ære for Danmark blev mottoet for samtlige af de nyordninger, som blev vedtaget i Danmark omkring Grønlands Styrelse, fra forhandlingerne inden den første egentlige lov om Grønland i 1908 til den nye lov om Grønlands styrelse af 1925 og til grundlovsændringen i 1953 – og den har spillet en ikke uvæsentlig rolle også ved indførelse af hjemmestyre i 1979 og selvstyre i 2009.⁸⁰ (2021: 13)

The Danish rhetoric regarding Greenland, then, has roughly remained unchanged throughout the last century. In the following subsection of the present chapter, however, I will try to

⁷⁹ Risak’s analysis, despite being dated, offers noteworthy starting points for my purposes, as it combines a postcolonial view with an interest for the representation of social categories other than ethnicity.

⁸⁰ «*For Greenland’s benefit – For Denmark’s honor* became the motto for all of the new arrangements that were adopted in Denmark regarding Greenland’s Administration, from the negotiations before the first actual law on Greenland in 1908 to the new Act on Greenland’s Administration of 1925 and to the constitutional amendment in 1953 – and this saying has also played a significant role with regard to the introduction of home rule in 1979 and self-government in 2009», my translation.

determine whether Greenland's formal decolonization has led to new tendencies among Danish literary voices, including, perhaps, the critique of colonialism and a more marked social engagement.

1.3.2 Dansk Grønlandslitteratur in the Second Half of the 20th Century

After the Second World War Greenland's position vis-à-vis Denmark underwent a formal change, in accordance with the desire – expressed by the social-democratic governments of the time – to favor Greenland's development on an economic and structural level: Greenland was no longer deemed a Danish colony and became an overseas *amt*, i.e., a county, and Greenlanders acquired the same rights as other Danish citizens (E.L. Jensen 2017: 321-323). This shift, however, according to Thisted, was not welcomed by a wave of literary 'responses', quite the contrary: while the (documentary) film industry was increasingly interested in Greenland, *dansk grønlandslitteratur* seemed to have reached a point of stagnation (Thisted 2003: 48). In the modernization years, Greenland was being 'rebranded', so to say, and this may have led to a discrepancy between antecedent literary fiction about Greenland and contemporary public discourses: «Pludselig gik det stærkt med den udvikling, Rasmussen, Freuchen og alle de andre havde imødeset med en blanding af længsel og vemod»⁸¹ (*Ibidem*).

An exception, in this regard, can be found in the historical novel *Haabets Ø* (1953; *The Island of Hope*) by J. Bech Nygaard (1911-1988), a literary portrait of Greenland's apostle, Hans Egede, whose life is recalled from 1721 to his death in 1758 (Harding & Wamberg 2014).⁸² Bech Nygaard's 'Greenlandic' production – as in most cases – has not been systematically analyzed but in the writings of Thisted. In the online *Dansk Biografisk Leksikon* (*Danish Biographical Lexicon*), however, Merete Harding and Niels Birger Wamberg spend a few words on his *Natten er nådig* (1963; *The Night Is Gracious*) and *Solen star lavt* (1968; *The Sun Is Low*):

⁸¹ «Suddenly, the development was going at full speed, the same development that Rasmussen, Freuchen and all the others had anticipated with a mixture of longing and anguish», my translation.

⁸² It should be noted that title – as well as content – of Linda Lassen's (1948) later novel *Håbets år: historisk roman om Gertrud Rask og Hans Egede* (2011; *The Years of Hope: Historical Novel about Gertrud Rask and Hans Egede*) echoes the aforementioned text. Lassen's book, furthermore, is one of the sources cited by Kim Leine at the end of his own Hans Egede-novel *Rød mand/Sort mand*, whose title clearly alludes to another Hans Egede-novel, i.e., Peter Freuchen's *Hvid mand* – also mentioned by Leine as an inspiration. This intertextual game may hint at the presence of a sort of subgenre within *dansk grønlandslitteratur* – which does not seem to exhaust its potential, since it allows the authors to undertake new reflections on Denmark's engagement on colonialism, for example, or to delve into non-canonized sides of history.

Også i andre sammenhænge har Jakob [sic] Bech Nygaard antaget sig de uønskede sag: nutidens Grønland har han, på grundlag af erfaringer fra gentagne besøg i Danmarks nordligste provins, beskrevet i to romaner: *Natten er nådig*, 1963, med titlen lånt fra et Johannes V. Jensen-digt, og *Solen står lavt*, 1968. Jakob Bech Nygaards virkningsfuldt komponerede anklage mod dansk Grønlandspolitik forårsagede langvarige offentlige debatter.⁸³ (Harding & Wamberg 2014)

According to this brief comment, a new component seems to have entered Danish literary representations of Greenland, namely social critique and engagement – an attitude belonging to the *Zeitgeist* and still to be found during the 1970s, for instance in Jørgen Liljensøe's (1943-) *Barakkerne* (1977; *The Barracks*) (Dybdal & Grønlund 2020: 37-38), or Sven Holm's works related to Greenland. Thisted also draws attention to Bech Nygaard's peculiar experience of the Greenlandic context: «forfatteren ikke nøjedes med at rejse på en kort tur til Grønland, men som en anden “deltagende antropolog” slog sig ned over en lang periode hos en familie på et udsted og delte deres liv»⁸⁴ (Thisted 2003: 51). The ‘internal’ point of view offered in the two novels, as stated by Thisted (*Ibidem*), is marked by a verisimilitude hardly found in previous Danish fiction about Greenland. After 2003, when Thisted's article on *dansk grønlandslitteratur* was published, things changed – probably due to the fact that many of the contemporary Danish authors writing about Greenland-related matters have spent several years in Denmark's former Arctic colony, perhaps under circumstances that have favored some sort of integration into the local context; the cases of Lotte Inuk and Kim Leine, in this regard, are particularly explicative.

The modernization years brought to Greenland a considerable number of Danish workers, in particular construction workers, teachers, health professionals, and administrators (Terpstra 2015: 54). Danish immigration, as supported by the data provided by Terpstra, became an increasingly relevant phenomenon between the 1960s and the 1980s, which also led to some ethnic and social tensions between locals and privileged newcomers (*Ibidem*). If the ‘Greenlandic’ novels by Jacob Bech Nygaard, according to Thisted, were driven by his faith in

⁸³ «Jakob [sic] Bech Nygaard has taken the side of the neglected also with regard to other contexts: basing on the various experiences he made while visiting Denmark's northernmost province, he has described contemporary Greenland in two novels: *Natten er nådig*, 1963, whose title has been borrowed from a poem by Johannes V. Jensen, and *Solen står lavt*, 1968. Jakob Bech Nygaard effectively formulated accusations against the Danish policies regarding Greenland caused long-lasting public debates», my translation.

⁸⁴ «The writer did not limit himself to embarking on a short trip to Greenland, he settled down with a family, on a farm, and shared their life, like some other “anthropologist on the field”», my translation.

the modernization process and in progress as a whole, the same cannot be said about Jørgen Liljensøe's *Barakkerne* (Thisted 2003: 51):

Udflytningen fra bygd til by betegner ikke længere frelse og fremgang, men katastrofe og undergang. De før så stolte fangere sælger nu deres døtre for at redde sig en dram. En ny glose indføres i dansk litteratur: *snigeren* (danske håndværkeres betegnelse for grønlandske piger, der sniger sig ind i barakkerne for at få del i maden, cigaretterne og ikke mindst den i stride strømme flydende spiritus – samt måske en billet til Danmark). Også de unge danske mænd kan have svært ved at stå distancen i det forråede og promiskuøse miljø.⁸⁵ (*Ibidem*)

In *Barakkerne* the portrayal of Danish presence in Greenland – as well as of post-colonial Greenland *per se* – is hardly flattering. The novel, whose social and political engagement is evident already from its main topic, addresses Danish-Greenlandic relations not only in terms of cultural and ethnic identity – a dimension that, as one could easily expect, is ever-present in the novel and that, in particular, touches the figure of Elisa, a young Greenlandic girl torn between ‘Danishness’ and ‘Greenlandicness’ after her stay in Denmark (for further reading see Dybdal & Grønlund 2020: 40-41). Nonetheless, gender- and class-related matters are also at stake. The latter aspect, in particular, has been highlighted by Dybdal and Grønlund in their *Bygder og barakker. Arbejdspladsen som konfliktzone i dansk grønlandslitteratur* (2020): «I barakkerne viser de grimme sider sig hos danskerne, hvor grænseoverskridende adfærd og social ulighed dominerer. Samtidig udstiller barakkerne interne stridigheder blandt arbejderne med mobning og hård jargon samt ikke mindst en klassisk problematik i arbejderlitteraturen: klasseforskjel»⁸⁶ (Dybdal & Grønlund 2020: 40).

The phenomenon of Danish seasonal migration in Greenland between the 1960s and the 1980s thus contributed to shaping peculiar social conditions – a circumstance that would later inspire a number of social-realistic or historical fiction. In this regard, Mondrup's historical novels *Godhavn* (2014) and *Tabita* (2020) can be considered explicative, as well as Lotte Inuk's *Sultekunstnerinde*. The consequences of this coexistence, however, have found expression also

⁸⁵ «The dislocation from villages to the city is here no longer associated to emancipation and progress, but to disaster and ruin. The once proud hunters are now selling their daughters to get themselves a drink. A new word enters Danish literature: *snigeren* (term minted by Danish craftsmen with reference to Greenlandic girls who sneak into barracks to get a share of the food, cigarettes and, not least, the ever-flowing liquor – and perhaps a ticket to Denmark). The young Danish men can also find it difficult to get through this brutal and promiscuous environment», my translation.

⁸⁶ «In the barracks, where transgressive behavior and social disparity rule, the darker sides of the Danes are exhibited. At the same time, the barracks are presented as the scene of internal disputes among the workers, with bullying and harsh jargon, as well as with a classic matter within working-class fiction: class difference», my translation.

in Greenlandic postcolonial literature, for instance in Mâliâraq Vebæk's already mentioned *Búsime nâpíneq* (1981). The novel, which follows the downward spiral of the life of Katrine – a young Greenlandic who moves to Denmark, hoping to marry a seasonal worker with whom she had had an affair in her homeplace – indirectly thematizes the same context, focusing on its possible overseas developments.

An engagement similar to the one displayed in Liljensøe's *Barakkerne* is to be found, following Thisted's analysis, in the 'Greenlandic' production of Sven Holm (1940-2019), which dates back to the years around 1979 – a crucial date with regard to the political and administrative emancipation of Greenland, since, as it is known, Home Rule was introduced (Thisted 2003: 55). Holm, in particular, devoted himself to literary forms other than the novel, probably the most common genre employed within *dansk grønlandslitteratur* (apart from the memoir, which is not of interest to the present work, with its focus on fictional writing). In 1979, Holm published and staged *Hans Egede eller Guds ord for en halv tønde spæk* (*Hans Egede or the Word of God for Half a Barrel of Blubber*), a historical drama revolving around Hans Egede and the Greenlandic mission between 1721 and 1735. The *pièce*, unsurprisingly, begins with an overture describing the last part of Egede's overseas journey, whilst the four acts address life in the colony and on the growing disillusionment experienced by Hans Egede – who, according to Thisted, must come to terms with the fact that his mission has proved a failure and has not led to any cultural encounter: «Nu forblev den Anden en fremmed»⁸⁷ (*Ibidem*). One year before, his collection of poems *Luftens temperament og 33 andre digte fra Grønland* (1978; *The Temperament of the Air and 33 Other Poems from Greenland*) had been published by Nordiske Landes Forlag, with illustrations made by the Greenlandic artist Aka Høegh (1947-). The poems included in the book also show Sven Holm's engagement and his criticism towards Denmark's colonial enterprise; on this note, the last poem of the collection, *Grønlands historie eller danskernes historie på Grønland* (*Greenland's History or the History of Danes in Greenland*) is rather explicative. Let us consider the following lines:

Hvad skulle vi så deroppe / vi danske mennesker / firetusinde kilometer væk / i Hans Egedes
og Jakob Severins navn / hvad skulle vi med de kors og omkostninger? / Hvad havde vi
tænkt os/ da vi kaldte landets mennesker sammen på bopladserne / og senere spredte dem /
og kaldte dem sammen i Kolonierne / og senere spredte dem / og kaldte dem sammen i
byerne? [...] I mere end to hundrede år lyttede de til os / som alt for tålmodige børn /
igennem en alt for udstrakt barndom. / [...] Så begyndte landets mennesker at tale:/ hen over

⁸⁷ «The Other is still a stranger», my translation.

ordet Grønland lagde de deres eget navn / Kalatdlit-Nunat / det er menskenes land/ [...] og saaledes begyndte de at erobre/ sig selv med ordene.⁸⁸ (Holm 1978)

The poem clearly condemns Egede's mission, which resulted in the establishment of a colony in Greenland, as well as Denmark's modernization and centralization policies. The paternalistic narratives that justify Denmark's behaviour vis-à-vis Greenland are unfolded and criticized, and the fact that Greenlanders are 'reconquering' Greenland, starting from the use of their language for toponyms, is welcomed with utter favor.

In the same year as *Luftens temperament*, Thorkild Hansen (1927-1989) published his *Sidste sommer i Angmassalik* (1978; *Last Summer in Angmagssalik*), illustrated by Sven Havsteen-Mikkelsen (1912-1999), a literary hybrid between fiction and non-fiction that recalls Hansen's own travel to East-Greenland in the summer of 1973 (Thisted 2003: 53). The essay revolves around the «Wild East» of Greenland (Thisted 2011a: 274) – which, as we will see in the following chapter, is a *topos* present in Danish as well as in Greenlandic imageries, and consists in the association between the Eastern part of the island and an utter 'state of nature', not to be found to that extent in the more populated and 'Danified' West. Unsurprisingly, the first part of the book focuses on a small hunters' community, and the author's experience becomes a pretext for reflections on *splittelsestemaet*, i.e., the motif that identifies Greenlanders as torn between nature and culture, tradition, and modernity (Thisted 2003: 53). The same topic is also thematized, in a less idyllic and nostalgic fashion, throughout the second part of the book, which consists in an 'inquiry' about the death of a young Greenland, buried in Blomsterdalen, Eastern Greenland. The young man, who had committed suicide, is here represented «som offer for civilisationsprocessen»⁸⁹ (Thisted 2003: 54). It could be interesting to make a parallelism between Hansen's conclusion and a short extract from contemporary Greenlandic author Niviaq Korneliussen's *Blomsterdalen* (2020): «Data viser, at serotonin-stofskiftet ændrer sig med sæson og lysmængde, og at dette skulle have betydning for impulsiv, aggressiv adfærd, og dermed vold og selvmord. Men lyset er ikke den grundlæggende faktor,

⁸⁸ «What were supposed to do up there / we Danish people/ four thousand kilometers away / in the name of Hans Egede and Jakob Severin / what were we supposed to do with those crosses and charges? / What had we envisaged/ when we summoned the people of the country in the settlements / and later dispersed them/ and summoned them in the Colonies/ and later dispersed them/ and summoned them in the cities? [...] For more than two hundred years, they listened to us/ as overly patient children/ through an overly extended childhood. / [...] Then the people of the land began to speak: / over the word Greenland they put their own name/ Kalatdlit-Nunat / it is the land of the people / [...] and thus they began to conquer / themselves with words», my translation.

⁸⁹ «As a victim of the civilization process», my translation.

fordi lyset altid har været her, mens selvmordene først tog til efter kolonitiden».⁹⁰ Apparently, then, *Blomsterdalen* also identifies a strong – and collective – inner discomfort that has manifested itself «efter kolonitiden», i.e., in the modernization years. However, rather than in a *splittelse* between tradition and progress, the cause of this discomfort may be identified in the fact that Greenland has endured harsher ‘colonial’ policies between the 1950s and the 1960s (see *supra*, p. 48).

Jørn Riel (1931-2023), mostly famous for his *skrøner* («tall tales»), i.e., for the rewriting of myths and anecdotes from North-Eastern Greenland (Finderup *et al.* 2020: 147-148), is remembered in Thisted’s wide-ranging article on *dansk grønlandslitteratur* for his poem collection *Sarfartuut/Strømsteder*⁹¹ (1979; *Arctic Eddycurrents*). With this publication, Riel inserted himself in the political climate that characterized the years around 1979, and the decision to realize a bilingual work could be considered a political act in itself, since it hinted at «et ønske for en ny type dialog»⁹² between Greenlanders and Danes (Thisted 2003: 56). A similar urge emerged with regard to Riel’s three-volume work *Sangen for livet* (1983-1985; *The Song for Life*), promptly succeeded by a Greenlandic translation; this operation, as Thisted argues, is in accordance with the fact that the three volumes – *Heq* (1983), *Arluk* (1984), and *Soré* (1985) – have been conceived for a Danish as well as for a Greenlandic audience (*Ibidem*). The trilogy clearly draws inspiration from Knud Rasmussen’s collection of Greenlandic oral traditions and, at the same time, from the motifs and modalities typical of Freuchen’s ‘Greenlandic’ fiction. In fact, the encounter between ‘Danishness’ and ‘Greenlandicness’, is here represented as a clash between «den europæiske ‘civilisation’ og de oprindelige befolkninger», and in rather nostalgic terms (Thisted 2003: 57). The texts recall the migrations and movements that, through the centuries, have brought to the encounter with the dimension of ‘Danishness’ – which, in the words of Thisted, is nonetheless somewhat ‘cut out’ from Greenland’s history: «På den måde skrives danskerne helt bogstaveligt ud af grønlændernes

⁹⁰ «Data show that serotonin metabolism changes with the seasons and light exposure, and that this should have an impact on impulsive, aggressive behaviour, and thus violence and suicide. But light is not the essential factor, because light has always been here, while the suicides only increased after the colonial period», my translation.

⁹¹ The title of Riel’s poem collection has been reprised in the theater production *Strømsteder/Sarfartuut* (2013, Teater Freeze Productions), which thematizes the marriage – succeeded, of course, by the divorce – between «Father Denmark» and «Mother Greenland». The events are filtered through the eyes of their daughter, a woman torn between Danish and Greenlandic identity (see *Strømsteder/Sarfartuut*, «grob.dk»). Also in this case, the bilingualism may suggest the necessity to engage in a process of *forsoning* both on the Danish and the Greenlandic side.

⁹² «A wish for a new type of dialogue», my translation.

historie – i stærk modsætning til de historiske fakta»⁹³ (*Ibidem*). There seems to be, then, an underlying anticolonial intention based on the choice of what to represent (or not to represent); similar considerations will be made later, in relation to contemporary historical fictions about Greenland, such as Kim Leine's *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden* (2012) (see Thisted 2015).

In her overview, Thisted mentions two last authors, i.e., Vagn Lundbye (1933-) and Peter Høeg (1957-). The Greenland-related production of the former, «en klar repræsentant for den retning inden for dansk litteratur, som [...] er blevet kaldt “økologisk realisme”»⁹⁴ – draws from his interest for Amerindian culture and, in particular, for myths and oral literature (Thisted 2003: 58). The opposition between Greenland and Denmark is present within his *Anholt*-trilogy, consisting of the novels *Tilbage til Anholt* (1978; *Back to Anholt*), *Hvalfisken* (1980; *The Whale*) and *Den store by* (1982; *The Big City*). The journey of the protagonist, inspired by two Amerindian tales, is both concrete and metaphorical, and is conceived as an embodiment of «den indianske filosofi om tilværelsens cirkler»⁹⁵ (*Ibidem*). As far as the representation of Greenland is concerned, Thisted expresses herself as follows:

I romanen står Grønland således som et mytologisk landskab – den absolute «andenverden», som det moderne menneske ikke kan besøge upåvirket [...]. En pointe der udbygges i *Mytologisk rejse i et grønlandsk landskab* (1985), skrevet som en art dagbog fra «Brønlunds Mindeekspedition» sommeren 1984. I det overvældende nordøstgrønlandske landskab bliver alt myte, fordi alt her er større end mennesket. Helt andre spørgsmål bliver væsentlige, end dem man havde udtænkt hjemmefra, og Lundbye siger i starten af dagbogen, at han ville have skrevet sin første bog om Danmarksekspeditionen: *Omkom 79 fjorden* (1984), helt anderledes, eller slet ikke ville have skrevet den, hvis han havde været på stedet først.⁹⁶ (Thisted 2003: 58)

The Greenlandic landscape, therefore, is once again romanticized, and the focus is on the reflections elicited within the European observer rather than on the ‘otherness’ emerging from the cultural encounter with ‘Greenlandicness’.

⁹³ «Thus Danes are literally left out from the history of Greenlanders – in strong contrast with historical facts», my translation.

⁹⁴ «A clear representant for the movement within Danish literature that has been called “ecologic realism”», my translation.

⁹⁵ «The Indian philosophy about the circles of life», my translation.

⁹⁶ «In the novel, Greenland is thus depicted as a mythological landscape – utterly otherworldly, a landscape that cannot but make an impression on the modern man [...]. A motif further developed within *Mytologisk rejse i et grønlandsk landskab* (1985; *Mythological Journey through the Greenlandic Landscape*), which was conceived as a sort of diary at the time of «the expedition in memory of Brønlund», in the summer of 1984. In the overwhelming landscape of North-Eastern Greenland everything becomes a myth, since everything is bigger than man. Here, one is confronted with bigger questions than the ones from the homeplace, and Lundbye, at the beginning of his diary, writes that he would have written his first book on the *Danmarksekspedition* («Danish expedition»), *Omkom 79' fjorden* (1984; *Dead by the 79 Fjord*) in a completely different fashion if he had seen the place first», my translation.

As far as ‘otherness’ is conceived, according to Thisted, Peter Høeg’s bestselling *Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne* (1992; *Miss Smilla’s Sense of Snow*), seems to align to well-known motifs and modalities that characterize most Danish literature about Greenland, i.e., the contraposition between irreconcilable dimensions respectively associated to ‘Danishness’ and ‘Greenlandicness’, as, for instance, «kultur vs. natur, naturvidenskab vs. instinkt, logik vs. intuition, skrift vs. mundtlighed»⁹⁷ (Thisted 2003: 60). The creation of Smilla – a glaciologist of mixed background who has spent most of her life in Denmark – could have led, as Thisted argues, to the establishment of a new common ground to negotiate Danish and Greenlandic identities (*Ibidem*), especially if one considers the potential offered by postmodernist modalities. Thisted’s observations are roughly in agreement with those previously advanced by Prem Poddar and Cheralyn Meador in their *Danish Imperial Fantasies: Peter Høeg’s Miss Smilla’s Feeling for Snow* (2000). The two scholars argue that «[t]hroughout the text identity is treated as if it were pure or true, fixed and self-contained, hence something which can be lost or abandoned, and should on all accounts be ‘held on to’» (2000: 177).

Høeg’s novel, contrary to most works that have been considered until this moment, has been extensively analyzed, perhaps as a consequence of its wide circulation, which granted it a place within world literature, so to say. Therefore, as it can be imagined, dissenting opinions are also to be found. This is the case, for example, of Hans Hauge’s *Det grønlandske spøgelse. Peter Høegs Smilla* (2004; *The Greenlandic Ghost. Peter Høeg’s Smilla*). The scholar, in fact, argues that Smilla could be read as a «dekonstruktion – eller hybrid-roman – der er hinsides modsætningen koloniseret-koloniseret og essens-konstruktion»⁹⁸ (Hauge 2004: 239). In fact, according to Hauge, Høeg *does* create a novel that strongly relies on antithetical pairs but, in doing so, he rather insists on the absence of an identity rather than on the opposition between ‘Danishness’ and ‘Greenlandicness’:

Alle talte om identitet, men Smilla er identitetsløs [...] Hun vælger helt suverænt identitet, der ikke er andet end maske. En indirekte kritik af enhver essentialistisk identitetsopfattelse. Hun er hverken dansk eller grønlandsk, hverken mand eller kvinde og helt usædvanligt inkarnerer hun i sig både det eskimoiske, fornemmelsen for sne, og den vestlige videnskab, glaciologi, den vestlige fornemmelse for sne og dermed oplysningstidens symbol: matematikken.⁹⁹ (Hauge 2004: 243)

⁹⁷ «nature vs. culture, science vs. instinct, logic vs. intuition, writing vs. orality», my translation.

⁹⁸ «A deconstruction – or hybrid novel – that transcends the opposition colonizer-colonized and the construction of essence», my translation.

⁹⁹ «Everyone was discussing identity, but Smilla does not have an identity [...]. Independently, she chooses identity that is nothing but a mask. A veiled critique toward any essentialist conception of identity. She is not a

This explanation does not convince Thisted, who, although she acknowledges the fact that Smilla «[l]ike a classic trickster character [...] crosses boundaries between cultures, identities, and genders» (Thisted 2002: 319), insists on the problematicness of the oppositional pairs shaped by Høeg – which inevitably leads to the classic dichotomy us vs. them to be found in most postcolonial fiction.

Thisted's wide-ranging *excursus* on *danske grønlandsfiktioner* ends with some considerations on Peter Høeg's *Smilla*, whose growing fame even lead to a Hollywood production directed by Bille August.¹⁰⁰ As far as the 1990s are concerned, it is worth remembering Flemming Jensen's (1948-) *Imaqa* from 1999, whose title, the Greenlandic word for «maybe», is meant to hint at the Greenlandic 'life philosophy': «Ordet er et vidnesbyrd om grønlændernes indstilling til livet. Der findes ikke noget forklarende "fordi" på grønlandsk. Kun et "imaqa" – måske»¹⁰¹ (Bendsen 1999). The novel is presented with these words by Claus Bendsen in a review that appeared in the Danish newspaper *Kristeligt Dagblad*. It is simultaneously branded as a *grønlandsroman*, a novel about Greenland, and a certain degree of relevance is given to the fact that the circumstances narrated in the book, albeit admittedly fictional, draw inspiration from Jensen's own experience of Greenland (*Ibidem*). *Imaqa*, in fact, revolves around Martin, a Danish teacher who moves to Greenland during the modernization years, in the 1970s, and experiences a classic «kultursammenstød» («clash between cultures») through the figure of Naja, a young Greenlander. The inspiration for Martin's vicissitudes comes, in particular, from the letters that Flemming Jensen wrote to his parents at the time, which «gav mulighed for at få en troværdighed i fortællingen»¹⁰² (*Ibidem*). The novel, at least according to Claus Bendsen's review, has been conceived as political, as it is meant to criticize the Danish presence in Greenland during the modernization years, and the coincident neocolonial attitude often displayed by Danes:

Dane nor a Greenlander, not a man nor a woman, and exceptionally embodies the Eskimo element, the sense for snow, as well as the Western science, glaciology, the Western sense of snow and, along with it, an Enlightenment symbol: mathematics», my translation.

¹⁰⁰ In a footnote to her work, actually, Thisted mentions the later *Unn fra Stjernestene* (2003; *Unn from Stjernestene*) by Hanne Marie Svendsen (Thisted 2003: 67). However, since the novel is set in 14th century Greenland, it cannot focus on the cultural encounter between 'Danishness' and 'Greenlandicness', and will be therefore omitted throughout my dissertation. Nonetheless, as specified by Hans Hauge, 'Greenlandicness' is here still represented as utterly alien, since it is apperceived though the eyes of the Norse settlers (2004: 238).

¹⁰¹ «The word testifies to the Greenlanders' attitude towards life. There is no explanatory "because" in Greenlandic. Only an "imaqa" – maybe», my translation.

¹⁰² «allowed [him] to shape a credible story», my translation.

Jeg boede på Grønland i starten af 70'erne. Dengang der var «sommermænd». Danskere der dukkede op i et par uger – journalister og embedsmænd – og tog derfra og vidste alt om Grønland. Jeg følte, at debatten om Grønland skulle foregå på grønlændernes præmisser, men jeg havde ikke modet til at være politisk dengang, siger Flemming Jensen. Men i dag er Flemming Jensen mere modig. – Grønlandsk kultur er en træt lille kultur. Men jeg synes, der er nogle unge grønlændere, der virkelig har fat i noget af det rigtige. De vil åbne til omverdenen, men de vil samtidig holde fast i dele af det traditionelle Grønland. De tager virkelig fat, siger Flemming Jensen. Og han mener, at vi danskere kunne lære noget.¹⁰³ (*Ibidem*)

In this article, then, Jensen – by virtue of his direct knowledge of the Greenlandic postcolonial context – is somewhat presented both as an ‘expert’ on the topic and as a mediator of ‘Greenlandicness’ and of a Greenlandic point of view on the relationship between former colonizer and colonized. Similar discourses, as we will see in the following subsection, are also relevant in relation to more contemporary *grønlandsforfattere*, such as Kim Leine and Iben Mondrup.

1.3.3 Contemporary Drifts in Literary Danish Representations of Greenland

Kim Leine’s debut novel, *Kalak*, could be considered a breakthrough within *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, since it somewhat shed a light on Greenland’s potential as to literary representations. The novel, as Thisted argues, probably came out at the right time, a couple of years before the introduction of Self-government and «på et tidspunkt, hvor der i Danmark blev talt meget om sociale problemer i Grønland»¹⁰⁴ (Thisted 2011a: 268). These circumstances are likely to have contributed to *Kalak*’s immediate success, as well as to Leine’s popularity in the public discourse as a sort of ‘knowledge holder’ with regard to Greenland, a «cultural translator of contemporary Greenlandic conditions» (Thisted 2016: 152). The novel, apart from (indirectly) contributing to public discourses regarding Denmark and Greenland, may also be seen as the catalyst for further representations drawing on an author’s personal experience or

¹⁰³ «I lived in Greenland in the early 1970s. At the time there were the «summer-men», Danes who showed up for a couple of weeks – journalists and civil servants – then left the country, and knew everything about Greenland. I had the impression that the debate about Greenland should be conducted on Greenlandic premises, but then I didn’t have the courage to be political, says Flemming Jensen. Today, however, Flemming Jensen is braver. – Greenlandic culture is a small and tired culture. Nonetheless, I think there are some young Greenlanders who are tuned in to the right things. They want to open to the surrounding world, but, at the same time, they want to hold on to some aspects of traditional Greenland. They are growingly raising their voice, says Flemming Jensen. And he thinks that us Danes could learn something from it», my translation.

¹⁰⁴ «at a time, when social problems in Greenland were greatly discussed», my translation.

that, at least, relying on verisimilitude. A pattern, in this sense, has been identified by Ebbe Volquardsen:

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 [...]. In Lotte Inuk's *Sultekunstnerinde* (2004) and Kim Leine's *Kalak* (2007) (which exhibits the genre hybrid «memory novel» – protagonist seem to be identical. These texts thus classify as «autofiction» or even «autonarration», 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. (Volquardsen 2014a: 395-396)

Therefore, in the following paragraph, the novels mentioned by Volquardsen, along with other pieces of contemporary *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, will be considered in relation to their specific genre. The *excursus* on contemporary drifts regarding Danish depictions of Greenland will then proceed by taking into consideration other recurring modalities, such as the historical novel, on the one side, and genre-fiction (noir, sci-fi), on the other.

1.3.3.1 Memoirs, Autofiction, and Realistic Novels

Autobiographically inspired literature is certainly not new to Danish representations of Greenland: the precise imagery of Greenland in Danish readers was shaped by travel literature, including both ethnographic texts and memoirs. According to Thisted, in fact, it is more useful «to look at the whole body of representations of Greenland, in order to obtain an overview of the system or systems of discourse established by these powerful writings that echo through the writings of later generations – even if the discourse is constantly changing and developing as the times are changing and still more and more representations are added» (Thisted 2002: 313). In this quote, the scholar refers to texts that, although they may entail fictionalized elements, are generally regarded as non-fiction – such as Peter Freuchen, Knud Rasmussen, or Kaj Birket-Smith's travel accounts (1893-1977) – that have had an impact on the generation of *fictional* depictions of Greenland. The two 'blocks', in this regard, can come across as one. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that many of the authors that have been mentioned until now also have indulged in non-fictional writings about Greenland: if we consider (travel) memoirs, for instance, it could be worth remembering Peter Freuchen's popular *Min grønlandske Ungdom* (1936; *My Greenlandic Youth*), Knud Sønderby's *Grønlandsk Sommer* (1941; *Greenlandic*

Summer), or Vaagn Lundbye's *Mytologisk rejse i et grønlandsk landskab* (1985; *Mythological Journey in a Greenlandic Landscape*) (see Thisted 2003). However, these texts will be overlooked in the course of my representation, as the focus is solely on fictional Greenland and 'Greenlandicness' – bearing in mind that the discourses emerging from them are broader both in terms of their origin and their consequences.

It has been suggested – for instance by Volquardsen (2014a) and Thisted (2011a) – that *Kalak*'s success may also derive from the popularity of autofiction within contemporary literature – especially if one considers the Nordic panorama, where writings-of-the-self have been flourishing throughout the 2000s: on this subject, Volquardsen mentions Jonas Hassen Khemiri, Jørgen Leth, Knud Romer, Karl Ove Knausgård, and Yahya Hassan as other notable examples (Volquardsen 2014a: 395). To the label «autofiction», Volquardsen rather prefers the term «performative biographism» minted by Jon Helt Haarder, which stresses the dynamic and unpredictable interplay between elements of fiction and autobiography (*Ibidem*). These mechanisms, as again pointed out by the scholar, are also to be found in Lotte Inuk's *Sultekunstnerinde*, which – in spite of the fact that it was published three years before *Kalak*, did not obtain the same commercial success or critical acclaim.¹⁰⁵ At first glance, Inuk's novel may not necessarily come across as an «erindringsroman», contrary to *Kalak*, in which the genre is already displayed, in the form of a paratext, on the front page of the original edition. The cover, furthermore, represents «de omdiskuterede boligblokke på "Sletten" i Nuuk»¹⁰⁶ (Thisted 2011a: 268), thus creating an immediate visual connection to (a possibly harsh) life in postcolonial Greenland. The cover of *Sultekunstnerinde* relies on a triter imagery, as it depicts a stereotypical Arctic landscape (water/ice/mountains); furthermore, Inuk's novel has tendentially been branded as a piece of young-adult fiction, which may have contributed to its more limited reception. In both novels, as Volquardsen argues, «author, narrator and protagonist seem to be identical» (2014a: 396): *Kalak*, in fact, dwells on the life of Kim, with particular focus on his 'Greenlandic' years, and retraces the tormented life of Leine himself, whose ever-present existential dread has brought him to Greenland – represented as some sort of 'land of possibility', where he can forget himself and his past and embrace the identity of a 'real Greenlander'. *Sultekunstnerinde*, on the other hand, recalls the Greenlandic years of Charlotta Mikkelsen (also addressed as Lotta or Charlie), whose name clearly echoes that of

¹⁰⁵ *Sultekunstnerinde*, paradoxically, seems to have generated a bigger interest in academic circles rather than among generalist readers and reviewers.

¹⁰⁶ «The controversial "Sletten" residential blocks, in Nuuk», my translation.

the author. Inuk (born Charlotte Christine Hoff Hansen), similarly to her fictional character, spent some of her childhood years in Greenland, and her experience is also briefly reported in her *Et årti i bevægelse. Om at vokse op i 70'erne* (1987; *A Decade in Motion. On Growing up in the 1970s*), an experimental text also drawing from auto-narration; the chapter *Menneskenes Land* seems to confirm that there is, at least to some extent, an overlapping between autobiography and fiction. According to Thisted, one of the most notable features of *Sultekunstnerinde* is the fact that the novel is impregnated with references to life in Greenland in the 1970s and to its political climate; therefore, as already mentioned, the novel can hardly count as solely pertaining to the Danish canon, and should also perhaps be included in the Greenlandic one (see Thisted 2013: 297-298). The questionability of one's identity, as these premises may suggest, is also one of the main topics of the novel, whose protagonist seems to fluctuate in the undecidedness between/'Danishness'/'Greenlandicness', femininity/masculinity etc.

An entanglement between fiction and autobiography can also be found in the writings of Iben Mondrup, who employs the Greenlandic theme in the whole of her production – more covertly in the case of her debut, *Ved slusen* (2009; *By the Canal Lock*), and of successive *En to tre – Justine* (2012; *One Two Three – Justine*).¹⁰⁷ Volquardsen argues that Mondrup's *Store Malene* «may to some extent be characterized as autobiographically inspired» (2014a : 396); this hypothesis, however, seems to be dismissed by the author herself.¹⁰⁸ Nonetheless, the same cannot be said about *Godhavn* (2014), which, apart from being generally considered her literary breakthrough, is widely based on the author's real life-experiences; the convergence between fiction and memory is addressed by Mondrup in her contribution to the collective volume *Min barndom i Grønland* (2016; *My Childhood in Greenland*), *Danskerbarn* (*Child of Danes*):

I min roman *Godhavn* giver jeg stemme til nogle af alle de danskerbørn, som er vokset op i landet og er taget derfra igen med de ubestemmelige, mere eller mindre problematiske gaver, som følger med i bagagen: følelsen af at høre til og så alligevel ikke, længslen efter at være som de andre, forelskelsen, misundelsen, skammen og en tilbøjelighed til evindelig selvvurdering. Man kan kalde romanen en slags tilbageblik, et forsøg på at fortælle om, og måske også forstå, hvordan et liv kan forme sig, når man lever som medfølgende barn af udstationerede forældre i markant anderledes egne. Mit nuværende projekt er en roman, hvor jeg prøver at skrive uden om Grønland. Men jeg må konstatere, at Grønland altid

¹⁰⁷ I will not be considering the two aforementioned novels, despite the insertion of minor references to Greenland and 'Greenlandicness', as pieces of *dansk grønlandslitteratur*. In an interview with me (26 January 2023), Mondrup stated that she thinks of her first novels – including the later *Store Malene* (2013) – with a sense of estrangement. While writing the latter, however, she found her topic of election while her distinctive stylistic form, in her own words, would only come later, with the publication of *Godhavn* (2014).

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Iben Mondrup, conducted on 26 January 2023 in Copenhagen.

dukker op i mit arbejde. Ikke som steder, begivenheder eller som mennesker, jeg har kendt. Snarere som et filter. Min made at tænke på, min made at handle på, mit syn på, hvad der er vigtigt i livet, er alt sammen farvet af det filter. Det handler om erindrede landskaber.¹⁰⁹ (Mondrup 2016: 124-125)

Following Mondrup, autofictional narrations that are tied to the context of post-colonial Greenland may serve the purpose of giving voice to ‘liminal’ existences that have been floating from the center to the periphery without being able to find a steady collocation. It is hardly surprising, then, that discourses on identity are at the core of this specific subgenre within *dansk grønlandslitteratur*.

The aforementioned novel *Store Malene* by Iben Mondrup, as well as Kim Leine’s *Tunu* (2009) lend themselves to be regarded as more or less realistic prose rather than autonarration, although they may debatably encompass elements inspired from the authors’ direct experiences of Greenland. Nonetheless, *Tunu*, a collective novel set in the «backside» of Eastern Greenland, (as «tunu» could be translated) reads as a slight variation of *Kalak*’s main character. Similarly, the story of the protagonist of *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden*, Morten Falck, could be seen as a historical transposition of Leine’s own journey from Norway to Denmark and from Denmark to Greenland (see Thisted 2015: 106). This recurring element may suggest a conception of the opposition Denmark/Greenland – or perhaps of the triangulation Norway/Denmark/Greenland – in merely subjective terms within Leine’s production (*Ibidem*). The matter, however, is complicated by Leine’s unusual positioning, as he has been able, contrary to most Danes in Greenland – and to most of those who have been writing about Greenland – to master the Greenlandic language and, therefore, to access aspects of the Greenlandic culture generally precluded to Danes by virtue of linguistic differences (see Thisted 2011a; Volquardsen 2014a). This peculiarity has influenced his reception in Denmark, where he has been instantly perceived as ‘authoritative’ and, at the same time, at the crossroads of two cultures. In this sense, then, his ‘Greenlandic’ work also seems to acquire a collective significance.

¹⁰⁹ «In my novel *Godhavn* I give voice to some of the children of Danes who grew up in the country and left it again with undeterminable and more or less problematic gifts in their luggage: the feeling of belonging and, yet, of not doing so, the longing to be like everyone else, love, jealousy, shame, and a tendency to constant self-consciousness. The novel could be regarded as a sort of flashback, an attempt to tell, and maybe also to understand, how one’s existence can develop, when one lives as a child of parents who have expatriated to notably different territories. My present project is a novel in which I’m trying to bypass Greenland. But I have to come to terms with the fact that Greenland always comes up in my work. Not in the form of places, events, or people that I’ve met. Rather as a filter. The way I think, the way I behave, my conception of what’s important in life is colored by this filter. It’s about remembered landscapes», my translation.

One last author worth mentioning with regard to literary transpositions of personal experiences that relate to Greenland is Naja Marie Aidt (1963-). Her poetry collection *Alting blinker* (2009; *Everything Shimmers*) has been taken into account by Rikke Krogh Hansen in her contribution *The Danish Child in Greenland: Literary Memoirs in a Postcolonial Perspective* (2014), where she draws a parallelism between Mondrup's *Godhavn* and Aidt's book. Greenland, where she spent some of her childhood years, is already present in Aidt's *Poesibog* (2008; *Poetry Book*) while in the subsequent collection *Alting blinker* it enters the triangulation Greenland/Denmark/New York – three places where the author has been living at different stages of her life and that have marked her, each in its own peculiar way (K.S. Madsen *et al.* 2022). This strategy alone frees the thematizing of Greenland from the necessity of being inserted in the binary opposition 'Greenland/Denmark' – as in most of Kim Leine's fiction, where Norway also plays a notable role, for instance in *Kalak* and *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden*. The genre of poetry chosen to recall her childhood memories allows Aidt to indulge in a representation of Greenland that does not necessarily offers an objective portrayal of the land as a final result. In the words of Hansen, the writer's aim is «to examine the process of memory itself, the texture of memories which are woven together like the work of Penelope» (2014: 122). Also in this case, then, as in *Godhavn* – and possibly in *Sultekunstnerinde* – Greenland emerges primarily as an emotional landscape (see Mondrup 2016: 124-125) whose outlines, although they blurred, can be reconstructed by drawing from one's own (inevitably subjective) memory.

1.3.3.2 Historical Novels

Contemporary *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, being a subset to the wider label of «Danish literature», tendentially intersects with recurring genre and narrative modalities that have characterized Danish literature between the 2000s and the 2020s. As we have seen, the 'intersection' between autofiction and the Greenlandic theme has proved particularly meaningful. Direct experience of 'Greenlandicness', in fact, is a decisive factor in terms of an author's 'credibility'; autonarration, in this regard, certainly contributes to the impression of being able to witness, albeit as a reader, a glimpse of 'authentic' life in Greenland.

It is perhaps by virtue of their acquired 'authoritativeness' that also Kim Leine and Iben Mondrup also have written extensively about Greenland in their historical fiction. The historical novel, moreover, as reminded by Anne-Marie Mai, has been a popular prize-winning genre

within Danish literature since the 1970s (Mai 2016a: 125) – as was the case with Kim Leine's *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden*:

If one studies the thematic, formal idiom and genre of the prizewinning works, one cannot help but notice that a novel has a far better chance of winning than a collection of short stories or a poetic work [...]. There is a good long tradition for awarding the prize to works that depict historical subjects and processes of modernization. (Mai 2016b: 121)

Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden, as Mai further suggests, has in all probability been awarded by virtue of its «anticolonial, wildly sprawling nature» (Mai 2016b: 123) and its genre. Another aspect of interest seems to be Leine's engagement in political discourses, already evident from the unneutral opening of *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden*: «Dedicated to the Government of Greenland (1979-2009) and its pioneers» (Thisted 2016: 152). An analysis of the techniques employed by Leine to create a 'literary counternarrative' to Denmark's refusal to engage in a reconciliation process with Greenland has been accomplished by Kirsten Thisted in her *Imperiets genførd. Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden og den dansk-grønlandske historieskrivning* (2015). Thisted's article suggests that a literary medium, in this case, has attempted to fill a broader gap both in terms of Danish-Greenlandic relations and of the (self)understandings of the two parts.

The same could be argued with regard to Iben Mondrup's *Tabita*, whose social engagement is evident already in the novel's paratext, i.e., the dedication and the final acknowledgments (see Thisted 2023: 189). The historical setting, in this case, is post-colonial Greenland with *Tabita* focusing on the modernization years. Through the individual stories of Tabita and Vitus, Mondrup wishes to give voice to all those Greenlandic children that had to endure a similar fate. Also in this case, a parallelism can be drawn between the central theme of the novel and the urge to deal with a dark page in Denmark's history, i.e., the displacement of Greenlandic children through adoptions carried out with dubious consent of the children's parents, as in *Tabita*. The 2020s, in fact, perhaps due to the decolonization ambitions spurred by the «Black Lives Matters» movement, witnessed an increasing interest in the infamous 'experiment' of 1951 that brought 22 Greenlandic children to Copenhagen for a year for educational purposes (see Thisted 2023: 190). These young students were then relocated to Greenland, where they were supposed to «danne fortrop i den nye udvikling i Grønland»¹¹⁰ (E.L. Jensen 2017: 328). An official written apology from Denmark was only made by prime

¹¹⁰ «Be the vanguard of the new development in Greenland», my translation.

minister Mette Frederiksen in December 2020, about 70 years after the events at the center of the discussion; it could be argued, then, that *Tabita* inserted itself into this specific debate and, perhaps, that it has contributed – albeit through the use of fiction and the elicitation of an emotional response – to shedding a light on the matter and generating awareness among a Danish audience.

Both Leine's *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden* and Mondrup's *Tabita* are part of a longer series of historical novels. The former, together with *Rød mand/Sort mand* (2018) and *Efter åndemaneren* (2021), is part of a historical trilogy about colonial Greenland. *Tabita*, on the other hand, has been followed by *Vittu* (2021) and *Bjørn* (2023). *Vittu* revolves around the story of Vitus, Tabita's younger brother, sent away by his Danish adoptive family for being the natural son of his adoptive father, illegitimately conceived with the family's Greenlandic householder (*kiffaq*). The young boy, similarly to Tabita, is brought up in Denmark, and struggles to find an identity. The mode, once again, is realistic, and the narration proceeds through different points of view – a technique that brings about empathy for a whole constellation of characters and, therefore, the creation of 'grey' zones. *Bjørn* is the follow-up of the siblings' vicissitudes, as the two are finally able to reunite with their biological mother on Greenlandic soil, in the 1980s.

The matter is different in the case of *Rød mand/Sort mand* and *Efter åndemaneren*, both choral novels also including the fantastic element embodied by the figure of Aappaluttoq, a Greenlandic shaman who travels back and forth in time and space and constitutes a *fil rouge* between the two books. Erik Skyum-Nielsen, in his review of Leine's latest 'Greenlandic' work, addresses the eclecticism of his writing as follows:

Derfor bør man heller ikke undre sig, når Leine i det sidste bind af sin ambitiøse trilogi over grønlændernes frihedskamp kombinerer genren 'kildebaseret historisk roman' med magisk realisme. Når han midt i en løbende beretning i tredje person pludselig bryder af og for en stund udliciterer sin stemme til diverse individualiserede jeg-fortællere. Når han springer fra roligt ydresyn til højspændt bevidsthedsstrøm. Eller når han skifter genrespor, indfletter semifiktive breve og dagbogsnotater samt indsætter autentiske annoncer og dagbladsreportager.¹¹¹ (Erik Skyum-Nielsen 2021)

¹¹¹ «Therefore, one should not be surprised when, in the last volume of his ambitious trilogy about the Greenlanders' struggle for freedom, Leine combines the genre of 'source-based historical novel' with magical realism. When he suddenly breaks off in the middle of a narration in the third person and momentarily subcontracts his voice to various individual first-person narrators. When he jumps from a calm pace to a frantic stream of consciousness. Or when he switches genre, intersperses semi-fictional letters and diary entries, and inserts authentic advertisements and newspaper reports», my translation.

Leine, then, does not hold back from more experimental forms, and pairs the striving for historical accuracy, at least on a general level, with a *pastiche*-like writing. The dialectic between fact and fiction takes on different courses throughout Leine's «missionstrilogi», «mission-trilogy» (Leine 2021b: 735), as disclosed by the author himself. In the case of *Profeterne*, historical events were more explicitly manipulated by Leine in an attempt to tackle the idea of Denmark as a benevolent colonial power (see Thisted 2015) – a strategy that has not gone unnoticed among the most fervent supporters of Danish exceptionalism. *Rød mand/Sort mand*, on the other hand, was even supervised by the historian Hans Christian Gulløv for historical plausibility (Leine 2019b [2018]: 519). There seems to be, then, a growing concern for truthfulness. In the words of Leine himself:

Jeg føler jeg er kommet stadig tættere på den bogstavelige historiske virkelighed, men har selvfølgelig gennem hele trilogien forholdt mig frit til kilderne og historiebøgerne. Jeg håber at mit forsøg på godt og grundigt blande det dokumentariske og det fiktive sammen til en ny sandhed, har givet lige så meget mening for dig, læser, som det har gjort for mig¹¹² (Leine 2021b: 735).

Two other historical novels about Greenland worth mentioning, also due to the different modalities that have been employed, are *Sidste Rejse* (2007; *The Last Journey*), by Carsten Jensen (1952-), and *Der hvor du ikke vil hen* (2021; *Where You Don't Want to Go*), by Astrid Saalbach (1955-). A common element is the fact that neither have been labelled as *grønlandsromaner*. The former, focusing on the life of painter Carl Rasmussen (1841-1893) and, in particular, on his 'Greenlandic' years, is rather considered an artist's novel.¹¹³ Rasmussen's journey, unsurprisingly, is also a psychological one, according to reviewer Anton Geist (2007): «ligesom en af sine litterære forgængere til søs, Marlow fra Joseph Conrads *Mørkets hjerte*, rejser Rasmussen ikke kun af sted i geo-grafisk [sic] forstand, men også indad i mental forstand».¹¹⁴ The Greenlandic theme, therefore, is subordinate to the subjectivity of the protagonist, whose *Bildung* had taken place in the late *guldalder* («golden age») of Danish Romanticism (*Ibidem*). Denmark's former colony is here represented as a sort of Arctic equivalent to Gauguin's Tahiti, in the words of Jensen himself:

¹¹² «I feel I have come increasingly closer to the literal historical reality, although throughout the trilogy, I have certainly made free use of sources and history books. I hope that my attempt to thoroughly blend the documentary and the fictional into a new truth has made as much sense to you, the reader, as it has to me», my translation.

¹¹³ The label «kunstnerroman», perhaps, could also apply to Iben Mondrup's *Store Malene*, whose protagonist, the photographer Justine, travels to Greenland – more or less explicitly – to find artistic inspiration.

¹¹⁴ «Like one of his sea-wandering predecessors, Marlow from Joseph Conrad's *A Heart of Darkness*, Rasmussen doesn't only embark on a journey in geo-graphical [sic], but also inwardly, into the mind», my translation.

«På en måde havde vi jo i Grønland, hvad jeg vil kalde et arktisk Tahiti eller et arktisk Afrika. Den enorme indflydelse, som Den Tredje Verdens kulturer pludselig får på det europæiske maleri og den europæiske kunstopfattelse efter århundredeskiftet med blandt andet Gauguin som pioner, den havde vi jo en lige så åben tilgang til i kraft af vores koloni», siger Carsten Jensen.¹¹⁵ (*Ibidem*)

Not dissimilarly to *Sidste Rejse*, Astrid Saalbach's *Der hvor du ikke vil hen* has hardly been presented as a novel about Greenland – despite the fact that a considerable section of the book takes place there. The family saga *Der hvor du ikke vil hen* retraces the lives of two women belonging to different generations, Anne and Sigrid, thus creating «et billede af udviklingen i kvinders stilling fra begyndelsen af det 20. århundrede til 1989»¹¹⁶ (Syberg 2021). Greenland enters the narration by chance, as Anne decides to leave Denmark after having been involved in a scandalous affair with a painter: the woman, who had studied to become a dentist, starts practicing the profession overseas, in Denmark's former Arctic colony. Due to her peculiar positioning – which may perhaps remind that of Kim, *Kalak*'s protagonist, who works in Greenland as a nurse – the woman has the chance to witness, as well as to be part of, close encounters between 'Danishness' and 'Greenlandicness' (see *Ibidem*). It should be noted that the events depicted in the novel are roughly inspired by real circumstances, which have come to the attention of Saalbach through letters that had been sent by members of her family throughout the 20th century (*Ibidem*). The historical dimension, then, is here paired with some form of «performative biographism», as it had happened in the case of Leine's *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden* or, perhaps even more so, of *Valdermarsdag* (2008; *Valdermar's Day*) (see Haarder 2010; Thisted 2011a). This latter novel, completely unrelated to Greenland, revolves around Leine's own grandfather, whose story is recalled in the third person – with the exception of the last chapter, where Leine makes his entrance as a first-person narrator (Myrwick 2008).

Before delving into genre fiction that encompasses Greenland as a theme, or, more often, as a setting, it could be worth considering a specific subset of historical novels, i.e., those revolving on Hans Egede's enterprise. Egede's life and, in particular, his activity in Greenland between 1721 and 1736, has elicited, throughout the years, a significant number of literary transpositions, from Peter Freuchen's *Hvid mand* (1943) to J. Bech Nygaard's *Haabets Ø*

¹¹⁵ «“In a way, we had in Greenland what I would call an Arctic Tahiti or an Arctic Africa. After the turn of the century, Third World cultures suddenly have enormous influence on European painting and the European perception of art, with, among others, Gauguin as a pioneer. We had an equally open approach to it because of our colony”, says Carsten Jensen», my translation.

¹¹⁶ «A portrayal of the developments regarding the position of women from the beginning of the 20th century to 1989», my translation.

(1953), from Sven Holm's *Hans Egede eller Gud ord for en halv tønde spæk* (1979) to Kim Leine's *Rød mand/Sort mand* (2018). It could be argued that the subject lends itself to considerations on the cultural encounter between 'Danishness' and 'Greenlandicness', as well as to an *ex post* judgment with regard to Denmark's colonial activity – which, as is known, has not always been unanimously condemned due to the conviction that Denmark has only operated for the benefit of Greenlanders and that it has proved a 'human' and 'benevolent' colonial power in comparison to other European nations. The same topic, then, can be declined according to the *Zeitgeist*: Sven Holm's drama, for instance, in line with the political climate that marked the 1970s, addresses the failure of Egede's project (see Thisted 2003: 55). On the other hand, Kim Leine, who is also critical of Denmark's interference, tries to find more nuanced ways to contrast 'Danishness' and 'Greenlandicness' – among other things, by using triangulations instead of binary oppositions – and also focuses on power dynamics in relation to gender. Gender-related matters, in particular, seem to have acquired growing importance with regard to these 'rewritings' of history; the motif of the un-canonization of female voices or points of view, for example, is to be found – although it appears as a secondary theme – in *Rød mand/Sort mand*, as well as in Linda Lassen's *Håbets år: historisk roman om Gertrud Rask og Hans Egede*, or Margrethe Tjalve's *Iseskrog* (2017; *Thin Ice*). The two latter novels, in fact, repropose Hans Egede's Greenlandic venture through the eyes of his wife, Gertrud Rask. While Rask's point of view is only one of the many contemplated in *Rød mand/Sort mand*, the scene in which Hans Egede appropriates a manuscript of hers and signs it with his own name could be considered quite explicative in this regard (see Leine 2019b [2018]: 346-347).

1.3.3.3 Genre Fiction: «Nuuk Noir» and Arctic Dystopias

Among the literary genres that have been taken into consideration by Anne-Marie Mai with regard to tendencies characterizing Nordic literature as a whole (2016), noir fiction stands out as a label that, being known worldwide, has contributed to the exportation of 'Nordicness' beyond domestic borders. Nordic noir, according to the scholar, presents easily recognizable – and therefore 'branded' traits: «Scandinavian crime fiction combines social critique, everyday realism and crime genres, often in a hard-boiled version. Crime fiction genres are often used to describe contemporary social problems: crime, murder and violence are signs of the many social and human challenges that face today's welfare societies» (2016: 126). Given these premises, one could imagine that the social critique so often associated with the genre would

also invest Denmark's responsibility towards its former colonies. However, as Christina Hazzard argues, silence has prevailed, with the notable exception of Peter Høeg's *Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne* (2020: 103). Nonetheless, Hazzard's analysis does not seem to take into consideration the more recent phenomenon of «Arctic noir», addressed by Andersen *et al.* and defined as follows:

En Arctic noir er da for det første en krimi, hvor stedet og naturen ikke er en eksotisk kulisse om en forbrydelse og dens opklaring, men plotgenererende. For det andet forenes i den arktiske krimi [...] hjemmets uhjemlighed (familiens bagside: vold, overgreb, incest, misbrug, had, selvhad) med den koloniale og neokoloniale uhygge (storpolitik, koldkrig, radioaktivt affald, råstoffer, naturødelæggelse, smeltende indlandsis, stormagtsrivalisering, korruption).¹¹⁷ (2019: 46)

On the one side, then, the genre of Arctic noir seems to have the potential to touch exposed nerves in relation to Greenland's colonial past, as well as to its future, threatened by geopolitical entanglements and the aftermath of climate change. On the other side, focusing on «hjemmets uhjemlighed» may come across as problematic, since it can lead to the reiteration of stereotypes regarding post-colonial Greenland and, in particular, its well-known social problems – whose explanation is often related, on Danish side, with the rather abrupt passage from a sort of 'state of nature' to a more complex 'decolonized' society. However, it should be mentioned that the label Arctic noir involves *grønlandslitteratur* written by Danes as well as by Greenlanders. The 'problematicness' of the content, consequently, may also vary according to the positioning of the author.

While the phenomenon of Danish Arctic noir as a whole has not been systematically considered in scholarly research (with the exception, perhaps, of *Grønlandsk Noir – Arctic Noir* (2019) by Andersen *et al.*), Hans Jakob Helms' Greenlandic thrillers have been considered more than once by Kirsten Thisted. In her *Hvis du fløjter efter nordlyset: Dansk grønlandslitteratur ved overgangen til selvstyret* (2013), the scholar stresses the fact that Helm's novels give an essential contribution to the rethinking of Danish-Greenlandic relations – not dissimilarly to more 'high-brow' literature, such as, for instance, Leine and Mondrup's prize-winning novels. A peculiarity of Hans Jakob Helms' *Hvis du fløjter efter nordlyset* (2011; *If You Whistle at the Northern Lights*) is the author's own positioning and his own acquaintance with Greenland:

¹¹⁷ «An Arctic noir is, first of all, a crime story, where place and nature are not an exotic backdrop for a crime and its solution, but plot-generating elements. Secondly, the Arctic crime fiction [...] unites the uncanniness of 'home' (the downsides of family life: violence, abuse, incest, abuse, hatred, self-hatred) with colonial and neocolonial anxieties (global politics, cold war, radioactive waste, raw materials, destruction of nature, melting ice caps, rivalry among superpowers, corruption)», my translation.

Helms, in fact, was born in Ammassalik in 1949, where he spent the first years of his life before following his parents back to Denmark, and has a long experience as an employee for the Government of Greenland. His wife is Greenlandic, and his children identify as Greenlanders (Thisted 2013: 298). In the novel, Helms tackles discourses that are also strongly present in the more successful *Kalak* by Kim Leine, offering new insights on ethnicity and gender in the Greenlandic post-colonial context, as well as on political intrigues involving both Danish and Greenlandic interests (see Thisted 2013). *Hvis du fløjter efter nordlyset* also partially draws from the writer's personal experiences, which results in the reduction, at least to a certain extent, of the gap between fact and fiction (see Thisted 2013: 308) – a modality that, as we have seen, has been widely used within contemporary *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, regardless of the genre employed.

Personal experience regarding Greenland is also shared by Danish thriller-authors Mads Peder Nordbo and Nina von Staffeldt, who, between the years 2016 and 2020, have both drafted a 'Greenlandic' series of novels. Mads Peder Nordbo's ongoing hexalogy on Matthew Cave – which includes, up to this moment, the novels *Pigen uden hud* (2017; *The Girl Without Skin*), *Kold angst* (2018; *Cold Fear*) and *Kvinden med dødsmasken* (2019; *The Woman with the Death Mask*) – unites the *topos* of the hard boiled-detective as a problematic figure himself (see Ferrari 2012: 375) with that of Greenland as a «tilflugtssted og frirum for utilpassede eksistenser»¹¹⁸ (Thisted 2011a: 276). Furthermore, as it can be grasped from the novel that opens the series, 'hot topics' that characterize Danish-Greenlandic public discourses also play a role. At the beginning of *Pigen uden hud*, set in 2014, journalist Matthew Cave watches a TV debate that revolves around Denmark's refusal to be part of Greenland's Reconciliation Commission, featuring Greenland's former prime minister, Aleqa Hammond, and a Danish right-wing politician, Søren Espersen from *Dansk Folkeparti* (Nordbo 2017: 11-12). Another peculiarity worth considering is the fact that the book contrasts the display of murders (easily traced back to Greenland's well-known social problems) with more complex underlying power games. Paradoxically, Greenlandic 'ethnicity', is here knowingly used to derail the investigations.

Nina von Staffeldt has also authored a 'Greenlandic' quadrilogy – released, as in the case of Hans Jakob Helm's *Hvis du fløjter efter nordlyset*, by Greenlandic publisher Milik. The novels *Frosne beviser* (2016; *Frozen Proofs*), *Den sorte engel* (2017; *The Black Angel*), *Skibet fra Isfjorden* (2018; *The Ship from the Ice Fjord*), and *Vinterjagt* (2020; *Winter Hunt*) are all

¹¹⁸ «A refuge for ill-suited existences», my translation.

united by the presence of Sika Haslund, a communication consultant for the tourist organization *Go Greenland*, who finds herself investigating a series of diverse cases. Also in this case, a close tie between seemingly isolated crimes and bigger interests can be found: in *Den sorte engel*, for instance, the smuggling of goods such as polar bear skin and narwhal tusks even leads back to China.¹¹⁹ The strategic position of Greenland in geopolitical terms, as well as the peculiarities of the island's territory, brings with it a multitude of plot-generating discourses and the urge to preserve Greenland's unspoiled nature, menaced both by climate change and the extraction of petroleum or rare earths, is quite emblematic in this sense (Andersen *et al.* 2019: 47).¹²⁰ Concerns related to the exploitation of Greenlandic soil, in fact, are already present in the post-modern progenitor of Arctic noir, Peter Høeg's *Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne*, which has been considered as a «petrofiction», for instance, by Harry Pitt Scott (2020). The same theme is also found in more contemporary works, such as Robert Zola Christensen's *Is i blodet* (2013; *Ice in the Blood*), Steffen Jacobsen's *Et bjerg af løgne* (2015; *A Mountain of Lies*), and Rune Stefansson's *Den sidste olie* (2016; *The Extreme Uncion*) (Dybdal 2022: 39-40).

Similar environmental preoccupations, one could think, would lend themselves to other literary genres, such as sci-fi or, more specifically, cli-fi – a science-fiction subgenre that engages with the threats presented by climate change, which, according to Dybdal, has experienced a certain popularity within the Danish literary panorama during the last years (2022: 38). Nonetheless, as the scholar observes, only a few examples of Danish cli-fi set in Greenland are to be found (*Ibidem*), and the same could be argued with regard to the works that fall under the more general label of *fremtidsroman*, i.e., «a novel that depicts a glimpse of the future – be it utopic or dystopic –, especially focusing on social and technological progress» (*ordnet.dk*, my translation). Dybdal's argument, in her *Dansk grønlandslitteratur og jagten på det antropocæne* (2022), is that contemporary *dansk grønlandslitteratur* hardly touches the subject of climate crisis/Anthropocene, and this assumption, according to her, especially applies to 'canonical' Danish authors who write (or have written) about Greenland: «Faktisk skal man

¹¹⁹ «Bøgerne om Sika», *Nina von Staffeldt* (*ninavonstaffeldt.dk*), <https://www.ninavonstaffeldt.dk/side1> (last accessed 30 January 2024).

¹²⁰ Andersen *et al.* identify another recurring theme within 'Greenlandic' crime fictions, namely biological threats. This is the case, for instance, of the parasites mentioned in *Miss Smilla's Sense for Snow*, but also of Nina von Staffeldt's *Frosne beviser*, where a mysterious illness starts spreading in Sisimiut (see Andersen *et al.* 2019: 47) and of Rasmus Theisen's *Andre hunde* (2021; *Other Dogs*). This latter novel, hardly identifiable as a merely pertaining to crime-fiction (see Kærup 2021) thematizes the outbreak of an epidemic among sled dogs in Western Greenland. The main focus of the book, according to author Rasmus Theisen, is Danish-Greenlandic relations and the Danish «expat-miljø» in Greenland (*Ibidem*).

helt ud i periferien, hinsides de efterhånden kanoniserede værker af Leine og Mondrup samt de voldsomt populære arctic noirs, for at finde en egentlig klimafiktion, nemlig Bjarne Ljungdahls relativt ukendte *Korsveje i Nord*»¹²¹ (Dybdal 2022: 40). The primary focus of Ljungdahl's novel, in fact, is Greenland's development after the island's nature and demographics have been strongly influenced by massive mineral extraction on behalf of Chinese companies. Other cliff traits identified by Dybdal (2022) are the technical language and the representation of nature as something completely detached from the human dimension – and, therefore, possibly threatening.

Among other writings concerned with Greenland's future, however, it is possible to find a few relatively disregarded works within Kim Leine and Iben Mondrup's production. Leine's *fremtidsroman De søvnløse* (2016; *The Sleepless*) takes place in Tasiilaq in the near future, in 2025, and contrasts everyday life in the East-Greenlandic city with turmoil in Europe, agitated by a war that seems to echo the catastrophes of the 20th century. This theme could hardly be defined as a decisive trait of the novel, which rather focuses on the realistic depiction of the vicissitudes of the protagonists, indulging in happenings that somewhat recall Leine's auto-narrative production, i.e., *Kalak* and, to a certain extent, *Tunu* and *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden*. Iben Mondrup's short story *Kraftværk* (2022; *Power Station*), included in the anthology *Klimahistorier* (*Climate Stories*) has also been relatively overlooked in comparison to her other recent writings about Greenland (*Tabita*, *Vittu*). A cause may be found in the fact that the short story collection, being drafted upon suggestion of Dan Jørgensen, former Minister of Climate, Energy, and Utilities, has been received as a commission work or, to use the harsh words of its detractor Molly Balsby, «en instrumentalisering af litteraturen, hvor kunsten fungerer som et fartøj for ministeriets kommunikation»¹²² (Balsby 2022). *Kraftværk* also takes place in the near future, after Greenland, in 2030, has become an independent nation, from a political as well as an economic point of view. Climate change, along with anthropic influence on the Greenlandic landscape and ecosystem, plays a role throughout the story («Nu kigger de på os, fordi vores is smelter», Mondrup 2022a: 14).¹²³ However, the future of Greenland, at least in the thoughts of the narrator, is depicted as far from dystopic:

¹²¹ «You really have to go all the way to the periphery, beyond the gradually canonized works of Leine and Mondrup as well as the wildly popular arctic noirs, to find actual climate fiction, namely Bjarne Ljungdahl's relatively unknown *Korsveje i Nord* (*Crossroads in the North*)», my translation.

¹²² «an instrumentalization of literature, where art functions as a vessel for the ministry's communication», my translation.

¹²³ «Now they're looking at us, because our ice is melting», my translation.

Ingen havde troet, at vi heroppe i Arktis ville være nogle af de første til at være 100 procent selvforsynende med ren energi i en grad, så vi har været tvunget til at finde nye anvendelser for den. Ingen havde set os være med i front, når der skulle udvikle på de nye teknologier. Men selvfølgelig er vi det, sammen med folk fra Island, Canada og Norge. Der er grund til at være stolt.¹²⁴ (Mondrup 2022a: 18)

Rather than in Danish works, optimistic fantasies about the future of Greenland, are to be found in an early Greenlandic novel, Augo Lynges *Ukiut 300-ngornerat* (1931; *The 300th Anniversary*), «hvor han i visionens form forestiller sig et nyt Grønland med en vågen, udviklet og moderne befolkning, boende i et meget europæisk præget samfund»¹²⁵ (Lidegaard 2014). It could be argued, then, that Mondrup's writing is unique within the panorama of *dansk grønlandslitteratur*. Rather than exclusively discussing the numerous causes, it also creates an empowering narrative vis-à-vis the future of Greenland and its inhabitants.

Mondrup's *Kraftværk*, marks, up until today, the latest notable example of Danish fiction that engages the re-writing and re-thinking of Danish-Greenlandic relations. Nonetheless, the panorama of *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, is ever-changing. On the one hand, the Greenlandic setting still elicits a growing number of literary representations especially as genre fiction is concerned, on the other, the wide-ranging decolonization advocated by the «Black Lives Matter» movement is problematic for Danish writers who thematize Greenland within their work. *Dansk grønlandslitteratur* as a phenomenon, then, is perhaps bound to experience a 'crisis', which may eventually lead to rediscussion and 'reinvention'.

1.4 Concluding Remarks

Delving into Denmark and Greenland's common history has served the purpose to give the reader a first impression of the complexities mirrored by *dansk grønlandslitteratur* – a literary mode that has proved productive since its genesis, traditionally traced back to B.S. Ingemann's *Kunnuk og Naja*. The – although not exclusively – literary interest for Greenland has been progressively growing in the last decades, which have witnessed a significant increase in works of fiction devoted to the topic. The genres through which Danish-Greenlandic relations have

¹²⁴ «No one would have thought that we, up here in the Arctic, would be among the first ones to reach 100% self-sufficiency with clean energy, to the point that we have been forced to find new uses for it. No one had seen us being at the forefront when it came to developing the new technologies. But of course we are, together with people from Iceland, Canada, and Norway. It is something to be proud of», my translation.

¹²⁵ «where, in the form of a vision, he imagines a new Greenland with an informed, developed, and modern population, living in a very European-influenced society», my translation.

been investigated, or at least touched upon, are quite diverse, as showed, and include both ‘high-brow’ literary manifestations and genre fiction. The works included in my corpus can tendentially be traced back to the former category, although Lotte Inuk’s *Sultekunstnerinde* is often addressed as a young adult-novel.

CHAPTER 2

REPRESENTATIONS OF ETHNICITY IN SELECTED WORKS BY KIM LEINE, IBEN MONDRUP, AND LOTTE INUK

2.1 Ethnicity: Attempting a Definition

The interest for the ethnic dimension is one of the most evident features of Leine, Mondrup and Inuk's 'Greenlandic' novels, as well as a crucial aspect of their domestic reception. Leine, as mentioned, has been welcomed by the Danish public as a «cultural translator of contemporary Greenlandic conditions» (Thisted 2016: 152), and the same could be argued about Mondrup, albeit with some variations.¹²⁶ The problem of ethnicity comes to light also in *Sultekunstnerinde*, since the main character's ethnic identity is hardly definable, neither as 'Danish' nor 'Greenlandic' in absolute terms (see Thisted 2013: 297-298). These and other considerations will be scrutinized throughout the subsections of the present chapter. However, before delving into a close reading of some chosen texts, the idea of 'ethnicity' will be discussed. The widespread circulation of this term, according to the anthropologist Ronald Cohen, is hardly ever accompanied by an explicit definition:

Writers generally take it for granted that the term refers to a set of named groupings singled out by the researcher as ethnic units. Membership in such groups (defined subjectively and/or objectively) are then shown to have an effect on, or correlation with, one or more dependent variable(s). In this sense, ethnicity is widely used as a significant structural phenomenon. But that is hardly a definition. (Cohen 1978: 385)

In this sentence, Cohen enucleates two of the main obstacles in attempting to illustrate the term: 1) on the one hand, the attention is drawn to the different viewpoints – an external and internal one – that contribute to the identification of a given group as «ethnic»; 2) on the other, the stress on the «structural» nature of ethnicity implies that there barely subsists any substance to it. This last consideration has been elaborated by several anthropologists in recent times, and – perhaps not surprisingly – ethnicity is now often conceived in terms of convention, performance or even 'invention' (see Fabietti 2013: 66-67). Francesco Remotti, for instance, states that 'our'

¹²⁶ In this regard, Volquardsen writes: «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» (Volquardsen 2014a: 397). In more recent years, however, Mondrup has become more active in this regard, especially after the publication of *Tabita*.

identities are «literally “invented”, they are “fictions”», and that «their definability and comprehensibility are mostly illusory» (Remotti 2010: 20, my translation). The juxtaposition of the terms «ethnic identity» and «fiction» seems particularly pertinent with regard to literary analysis and, in particular, to the present chapter, which will focus on fictional representations of Greenland and Greenlandic characters. Richard Jenkins’s approach to ethnicity, perfected in the second edition of *Rethinking Ethnicity* (2008) combines Fabietti and Remotti’s ‘disillusionment’ with a more pragmatic afflatus. According to Jenkins, «ethnic cultural differences are a function of ‘group-ness’; the existence of a group is not a reflection of cultural difference. Furthermore, ethnic groups imply ethnic relations, and ethnic relations involve at least two collective parties, they are not unilateral» (2008: 11). Once again, the stress is on collective (and individual) identity – may it be perceived from the *inside* or given from the *outside* – and the mechanisms that concur to its recognition; «cultural stuff», as Barth addressed the ‘essence’ of ethnic identity, is not considered a useful object of study (Jenkins 2008: 12).

Notwithstanding these more recent drifts, throughout its history, the term ‘ethnicity’, has often been associated with a specific set of traits through which well detectable identities are produced and reproduced; according to this vision, «there are aggregates of people who essentially share a common culture, and interconnected differences that distinguish each such discrete culture from all others» (Barth 1969: 9). This is the case of Raoul Narroll’s understanding of ethnicity, resumed by Fredrik Barth (1928-2016) in the introduction to *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. The Social Organisation of Cultural Difference*:

The term ethnic group is generally understood in anthropological literature (cf. e.g. Narroll 1964) to designate a population which: 1) is largely biologically self-perpetuating; 2) shares fundamental cultural values, realized in overt unity in cultural forms; 3) makes up a field of communication and interaction; 4) has a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order. (Barth 1969: 11-12)

In Barth’s opinion, this approach to ethnicity – though operationally valid for an anthropologist working on the field – fails to notice the fact that ethnic groups live in multi-layered societies and that their identity cannot be reduced to a given number of simplifying subcategories. Another aspect that Barth calls into question is the generally acknowledged *discreteness* of cultures. He proposes a change of perspective by suggesting that ethnic boundaries, albeit undeniably present, can be crossed, and that the existence of «dichotomized ethnic statuses»,

contrary to common belief, is to be ascribed to thriving social relations across the two interacting poles (Barth 1969: 10).

Moving the focus to literary and cultural postcolonial studies, this precondition seems to reverberate a key concept in Edward Said's acclaimed *Orientalism* (1978), namely the interplay between the affirmation of a collective identity and the appraisal of the Other. In Said's own words, «European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self» (Said 1978: 3). This has been the case of Europe towards the Orient and, on a smaller scale, of Denmark towards Greenland. A concrete example of this practice could be Greenland's 'musealization', whose history has been thoroughly outlined by Mille Gabriel in her article *Fra kolonial samling til national kulturarv. Betydningen af repatriering i konstruktionen af en postkolonial grønlandsk identitet* (2011; *From Colonial Collection to National Cultural Legacy. The Meaning of Repatriation in the Construction of a Post-colonial Greenlandic Identity*). Precisely this process of «counter-identification» (Loftsdóttir & Jensen 2012: 1) constitutes the central matter of *Whiteness and Postcolonialism in the Nordic Region*, edited by Kristín Loftsdóttir and Lars Jensen. The primary interest of the two scholars is to trace a connection between the interaction with otherness and the surge of the so called «Nordic exceptionalism» (see *supra*, pp. 17-24), which, according to their vision, is to be intended in two ways: on the one hand, the term refers to the Nordic Countries' peripherality as to Europe and its vast imperialistic schemes and, on the other, «in relation to research on current forms of internationalization, where [the notion] is usually taken to revolve around [...] the Nordic countries as global 'good citizens' [...]» (Loftsdóttir & Jensen 2012: 2). This self-perception – which, to a certain extent, could also be regarded as a self-absolution – has only started being questioned in recent years.

A first nexus between the mechanisms described in Said's *Orientalism* and the Arctic context has been established by the American anthropologist Anne Fienup-Riordan. In 1995, she first used the expression «Eskimo Orientalism» – partly overlapping with reflections made with regard to the North Atlantic frame of reference by Thisted and a few other scholars, as we will see (see 2.2 *Representations of Ethnicity in Danish Literature about Greenland. Methodological Framework and Research Questions*). One could argue that the *relational* component of ethnicity plays a crucial role also in postcolonial studies, since the attention is not aimed at identity *per se*, but at the elements that make it a social marker of difference. A similar consideration on this precise aspect, in the fields of anthropology and social sciences, is to be found in the so called «situational» approach to ethnicity, which has the merit, according

to Fabietti, of being the «less unilateral perspective» on the matter (Fabietti 2013: 15, my translation). This viewpoint, in opposition to any form of «primordialism», concentrates on the «processes of activation, in given circumstances, of symbols and images that seek to corroborate an identitary sentiment» (*Ibidem*). A situational perspective is also encompassed in Jenkins' so called «basic social anthropological model of ethnicity» (2008: 14), recapitulated in the following points:

- Ethnicity is a matter of cultural differentiation – although [...] identification always involves a dialectical interplay between similarity and difference.
- Ethnicity is centrally a matter of shared meanings – what we conventionally call 'culture' – but is also produced and reproduced during interaction.
- Ethnicity is no more fixed or unchanging than the way of life of which it is an aspect, or the situations in which it is produced and reproduced.
- Ethnicity, as an identification, is collective and individual, externalized in social interaction and the categorization of others, and internalized in personal self-identification. (*Ibidem*)

Primordialist conceptions, on the other hand, are deeply intertwined with «race», a problematic subject often raised in conjunction with ethnic and cultural difference. Precisely the relationship between these semi-adjacent terms is at the center of the following section, where general considerations will be succeeded by a more precise account of the Danish-Greenlandic situation. Further theoretical implications of «ethnicity» will help investigate how the concept relates to that of national identity and what role it plays in Danish literary representations of Greenland.

2.1.1 Race and Racisms

The terms «ethnicity» and «race» – contiguous expressions that often appear jointly – present a substantial difference. While the former stresses the association between cultural specificities and a «common membership of a descent group without distinguishing physical characteristics», the latter insists on the link between this variation and distinctive morphological traits (Murji & Solomos 2014: 8). Gianfranco Biondi and Olga Rickards attempt a more precise definition of the expression «race», which they designate as a «a subspecific

taxonomic category that describes the phylogenetic relationship, or ancestor–descendent relationship, between populations» (Biondi & Rickards 2007: 588). The accent, once again, is on biological variability – a category that, as stated by the two scholars, has hardly any avail in anthropological terms (Biondi & Rickards 2007: 589). Nonetheless, markers of physical difference have always been playing a significant role in the matter of «human self-perception», as the number of contributions on the subject throughout ancient and modern history demonstrate (*Ibidem*). The first modern studies on racial variations appeared during the 18th century within the field of the natural sciences, as a result of the classificatory euphoria that characterized the Enlightenment period. Perhaps not surprisingly, one of the first contributors to the problem was the Swedish naturalist Carl von Linné (1707-1778), who, in Kristín Loftsdóttir and Lars Jensen’s opinion, certainly helped «shaping Europe’s consciousness of the planet through his classification system for all plants on the earth», but also paved the way to subsequent racist drifts (2012: 5-6). Loftsdóttir and Jensen consider this a further demonstration that Nordic Countries are by no means ‘exceptional’, as they actively engaged in shaping a racialized (and racist) worldview (*Ibidem*). Another coeval ‘Nordic’ attempt to classify human groups according to race was made, for example, by Carl August Ehrensvärd (1745-1800), who elaborated a personal version of Montesquieu’s theories on climate and the national character, ‘proving’ that geography could shape morphology and culture (see Carl August Ehrensvärd 1969: 88-93). A similar anthropological interest lies behind the genesis of Hans Egede’s (1686-1758) *Det gamle Grønlands nye Perlustration, eller Naturel-Historie og Beskrivelse over det gamle Grønlands Situation, Luft, Temperament og Beskaffenhed etc.* (1741; *New Perlustration of Old Greenland, or Natural History and Description of Old Greenland’s Situation, Climate, Temperament and Peculiarities etc.*), which encompasses an understanding of Greenlanders, of their morphological features, customs, and traditions. In Egede’s account, Greenlandic identity is dissected in a multitude of subcategories regarding both physicality and culture, and racist overtones can easily be acknowledged in several passages of the text. For example, Egede, after describing the ‘prototypical’ Greenlander, suggests that these people may belong to the so called «phlegmatic» temperament, which would explain their «stupid» and «cold» nature (Egede 1741: 68).

As far as Danish-Greenlandic relations are concerned, another racialized perspective has emerged with regard to «museal representations» of Greenland (Gabriel 2011: 450). The *Konebådekspedition* (1883-1885), «women’s boat expedition», led by Gustav Frederik Holm (1849-1940), for example, resulted, among others, in the deportation of «en samling af 464

etnografiske genstande, 16 kranier og en optegnelse over 136 østgrønlanderes krops- og kranieproportioner»¹²⁷ (*Ibidem*). Evaluation and classification of Greenlandic ‘otherness’, then, was one of the core ambitions of Holm’s expedition, and this goal was pursued with the tools of physical anthropology. Today, the methods of this discipline are generally considered highly problematic, since they helped providing a scientific ground for racist stances (Biondi & Rickards 2007: 588-589). This latter example perfectly matches Jenkins’ remarks on the difference between ethnicity and racism, reprised from Banton: «ethnicity is generally more concerned with the identification of ‘us’, while racism is more oriented to the categorisation of ‘them’ (1983: 106). From this point of view ethnicity depends, of necessity, upon group identification, while ‘race’ or racism is most typically a matter of social categorisation» (Jenkins 2008: 23).

In more recent years racism has partially shifted shape. Departing from its original biological arguments, this process can be traced back to the fact that most legislations, during the 20th century, started outlawing overt manifestations of racism – here intended in a ‘classic’ fashion, i.e., as discrimination in the principle of race. This is likely one of the main reasons why racism has gradually detached itself from its originating object, race, and come to mingle with other difference markers, such as culture and religion, or even class (Loftsdóttir & Jensen 2012: 7).¹²⁸ This change of focus has also been accompanied, as reminded by Loftsdóttir and Jensen, by the ‘institutionalization’ of racism – which, thanks to its newly acquired covert expressions, is able to survive on a systemic level. The two scholars insist on this «new» or «cultural racism» – terms borrowed from Balibar and Abu-Lughod, as its mechanisms have unquestionably taken hold also in the Nordic context (*Ibidem*). An analysis of these practices calls once again into question the illusion of «Nordic exceptionalism», and numerous examples can be found in relation to Denmark and Greenland’s common history. Christina Petterson, for instance, in her *Colonialism, Racism and Exceptionalism* (2012), points out that Denmark – despite its formally «benevolent» intentions – has in fact been perpetrating a two-fold violence, both systemic and symbolic, towards Greenlandic society and Greenlanders (Petterson 2012: 29-30). As far as the former type of violence is concerned, Petterson even talks of a «Danish

¹²⁷ «A collection of 464 ethnographic objects, 16 skulls and a recording of the body and skull proportions of 136 Eastern Greenlanders».

¹²⁸ It should be noted that in today’s Greenland «virtually all Greenlanders have both Inuit and European ancestry. In fact, the nation perceives itself as a mix of Inuit and European heritage [...] Consequently, it is difficult to draw a sharp distinction between the ethnic categories, which are not always discernible from appearance, language, or ‘culture’. Nevertheless the distinction is zealously upheld by Greenlanders, as their status as a people is crucial for their ability, eventually, to [...] form an independent state» (Thisted 2022: 198).

racial state» and justifies the use of this strong expression by mentioning a significant number of cases in which Greenlanders' civil rights were disregarded (Pettersen 2012: 31). One notable example is given by the *Instruction of the 19 April 1782*, which did not consider Greenlanders as civil subjects. Furthermore, the Instruction encouraged Danish colonisers to profit from Greenlanders and their most 'fruitful' skills (as, for instance, hunting), and set some first boundaries regarding «racial 'mixing'» (Pettersen 2012: 32). Systemic violence, however, is also to be found in more recent measures regarding Greenland and Greenlanders: one need only take into consideration the so-called *fødestedskriterium* («birthplace criterium») from 1964, which «blev af den grønlandske befolkning anset som racediskrimination, fordi reglen fik negative lønmæssige konsekvenser for dem, der var født i Grønland»¹²⁹ (Olsen 2011: 411). Symbolic violence, on the other hand, acts more subtly and is based on the production and reiteration of discriminatory discourses, such as the identification, recalled by Pettersen, between Greenlanders and a child-like state, irrationality, savagery and so forth (see Pettersen 2012: 30). Other examples regarding this latter type of violence can be found in Inge Kleivan's *Et sprogligt perspektiv på grønlandsk identitet: Hvad kaldes grønlandere på dansk?* (2011; *A Linguistic Perspective on Greenlandic Identity: How Are Greenlanders Referred to in Danish?*). Two of the Danish slang expressions mentioned by the author, «grønlanderfuld» («very boozed») and «grønlanderstiv» («extremely boozed»), both designate a heavy state of drunkenness, implying an inevitable correlation between 'Greenlandicness' and a soft spot for alcohol (Kleivan 2011: 77).

The interaction with the category of class, on the other hand, «has been one of the most enduring to be found in the sociological literature in the field [of race and ethnic relations]», according to David Mason (1986: 9). Mason, who wrote this in 1986, mainly alluded to the opposition between Marxist and non-Marxist viewpoints. Whereas Marxist scholars – albeit with different nuances – traditionally insist on considering race as «merely one manifestation of more fundamental class struggles», non-Marxists privileged a clear separation of the two social categories (*Ibidem*). In more recent years, neo-Marxism, post-structuralism, and intersectionality theories gave new life to the debate concerning race and class (Murji & Solomos 2014: 12-16). All three approaches underline the significance of race within a wider frame of power inequalities, but the latter school of thought, which partly overlaps with Marxist

¹²⁹ «...was perceived by the Greenlandic population as racial discrimination because the rule had consequences on the salary of those who were born in Greenland», my translation.

social theory, will be privileged throughout this contribution, due to its vast applicability and to its explicit connection with gender studies.

2.1.2 Ethnic and National Identity

The concept of «nation» – not unlike ethnicity – has always proved particularly challenging to scholars, the absence of a unanimous agreement on its definition testifies to (see Anderson 1991: 3-4). In his *Definitions of Nation in European Political Thought* (1991), Uffe Østergård recapitulates two conflicting macro-perspectives on the notion of nation, an objective and a subjective one. While «objective» definitions rely on an indissoluble tie between a nation and a given cultural-historical background, «subjective» ones underline the contractual and situational nature of nations (and hence national identities) (Østergård 1991: 51). According to these premises, an «objective» viewpoint can possibly lead to perilous drifts. Fabietti, for instance, recalls the case of Joseph-Arthur de Gobineau, who conceived nation and race/culture as one, and whose theorizations were used to support openly racist arguments (2013: 30).

On this note, it is fruitful to briefly recall Benedict Anderson's thoughts on the matter, since the scholar is provided assumes that «nationality, or, as one might prefer to put it in view of that word's multiple significations, nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artefacts of a particular kind» (2006: 4). In Anderson's words, then, a nation is «an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign» (2006: 6). The key term «community», which refers to the sense of fraternity and emotional attachment generated by 'nation-ness', implies that the focus of his analysis is the identification and analysis of discourses that concur to invent and preserve nations rather than 'national stuff' *per se* – to use a distorted version of Barth's «cultural stuff» (see 1969: 9).

Tensions and correspondences between national and ethnic identity are at the center of the tenth chapter of Richard Jenkins' *Rethinking Ethnicity, Nations, and Nationalisms*. Here, the author gives an account of some pivotal points in social science discussions on nations and nationalisms, distinguishing two main school of thoughts: 1) one viewing nations and nationalisms as a 'modern' phenomenon, whose surge is to be traced back to the post French Revolution era. This assumption implies that ethnicity is, so to say, 'replaced' by nations, and that the two dimensions cannot coexist; 2) another intertwining ethnic and national

identification and refusing to consider the concept of nation (and nationalism) as merely pertaining to modernity. Jenkins aligns with the latter viewpoint, and defines nationalism as:

[A]n ideology of ethnic identification which:

- is historically and situationally contingent;
- characterizes the politics of complex societies (states but not necessarily nation-states);
- invokes culture and ethnicity as criteria of membership and participation in the polity; and
- claims a collective historical destiny for the polity and/or its ethnically defined members. (2008: 151)

These operational criteria potentially cover a plethora of diversified cases since they insist on the *common* traits that characterize different expressions of nationalisms and do not indulge in sub-categorizations (see Jenkins 2008: 151-152). It is to be noted that Jenkins' and Anderson's perspectives on nations, nationalisms, and national identities do not overlap, and that their premises differ quite consistently. One need only recall, for instance, that the «sovereign» quality of nations considered by Anderson «was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm» (2006: 7). On the other hand, Jenkins, as stated above, does not limit his analysis to post-Enlightenment phenomena and nation-states. Both these points of view will be considered during the analytic sections of this chapter, since they shed a light on the fictive character of nationality and 'nation-ness', and critically engage its relation to ethnicity and culture.

Much can be said about Greenlandic national identity in virtue of its unique territorial status. Mauro Mazza, reprising an expression minted by Maria Ackrén, describes Greenland as a «quasi-État» (Mazza 2021a), hinting at its unsolved relation to Denmark and the neo-colonial practices towards the island. The complexity of the situation is addressed by Adam Kočí and Vladimír Baar, who underline that even «the Western construct of state has fundamentally changed the image of present-day Greenland», starting from the imposition of a toponymy of Viking descent, «Grœnland» (Kočí & Baar 2021: 192). Disputes on Danish and Greenlandic national identities acquired particular relevance after 1953, when Denmark, after acknowledging its anachronistic position as a colonizing power, opted for *de jure* decolonization and incorporated Greenland in the *Rigsfællesskab*, the Danish Commonwealth, which also includes the Faroe Islands. *De facto*, however, Denmark's cultural influence has never been as strong as it was during the 1950s and 1960s, as noted by Axel Kjær Sørensen and Lars Jensen (see Rud 2017a: 127). Søren Rud elaborates on this dyscrasia, stating that «in

popular as well as scientific accounts, the actual colonial period is often placed in the modernization period – after 1953 – elevating it paradoxically to be the dominating symbol of colonial influence in Greenland» (*Ibidem*). The modernization imposed by the Danish central state between the 1950s and 1979 has also been accompanied by the so-called «danisering», «danification», and this expression alone could lead to the conclusion that Greenlandic cultural and national identity were forcefully separated during that period. The example of the *fødestedskriterium* (see *supra*, p. 49, 104) could come in handy also in this regard: this regulation entailed a clear gap between ethnic/cultural legacy and national belonging, and the reason behind this chasm may be traced back to the Danish government's covert intention to elude accusations of racism (Olsen 2011: 410-411).

The post-modernization years, on the other hand, were marked by the so called «grønlandisering» («Greenlandification»), described by Ulrik Pram Gad as a fight for «at holde fast i, at man er en unik nation med en unik kultur»¹³⁰ (Gad 2005: 14). In his *Dansksprogede grønlænderes plads i et Grønland under grønlandisering og modernisering* (2005; *The Position of Danish-Speaking Greenlanders in Greenland During Greenlandification and Modernization*), Gad analyses the 'limits' of Greenlandification, which, according to his research, is problematized by the presence of Danish-speaking Greenlanders. Once again, then, we are faced with the complexity of ethnic/national identities, which, despite being contiguous, do not necessarily coincide, and result from a continuous process of negotiation and re-negotiation.

2.2 Representations of Ethnicity in Danish Literature about Greenland. Methodological Framework and Research Questions

The notions introduced in the first sections of the present chapter – ethnicity, race, nation – originate from anthropology and social sciences, but could be fruitfully applied to literary analysis on the basis that *dansk grønlandslitteratur* is intrinsically connected to matters concerning the cultural meeting between 'Danishness' and 'Greenlandicness' – and,

¹³⁰ «To reaffirm that Greenland is a unique nation with a unique culture», my translation.

consequently, the Danish and the Greenlandic societies as a whole. Furthermore, as suggested by Edward Said, literature is rarely completely external or peripheral to society:

Most humanistic scholars are, I think, perfectly happy with the notion that texts exist in contexts, that there is such a thing as intertextuality, that the pressures of conventions, predecessors, and rhetorical styles limit what Walter Benjamin once called the «overtaxing of the productive person in the name of... the principle of ‘creativity’», in which the poet is believed on his own, and out of his pure mind, to have brought forth his work. Yet there is a reluctance to allow that political, institutional, and ideological constraints act in the same manner on the individual author. (Said 1978: 13)

An attempt to mediate between «political institutional, and ideological constraints» and the author’s individuality has been proposed by Pierre Bourdieu in his writings concerning the so-called literary field. In particular, the French sociologist underlines the need to situate a work within a wider context encompassing «everything which goes to make up the ‘mood of the age’» (Bourdieu 1993: 32). At the same time, according to Bourdieu, authors (and readers) should be considered a product of the society they live in (see Johnson 1993: 4). These two viewpoints – to be intended as general principles – will guide my analysis throughout the present and the following chapters, as I will be dealing with some *literary* representations of ethnicity, gender, and class within the Danish-Greenlandic postcolonial context. As this premise suggests, their depiction is inevitably exposed to a certain degree of subjectivity, resulting from the ‘positioning’ of the authors themselves – or, in some cases, even from intertextual connections.

As far ‘ethnicity’ is concerned, it will be useful to refer to terms and theorizations borrowed from postcolonial studies, given this field’s engagement with the recognition of the ‘Other’ and the mechanisms that lead to identifications and categorizations. More general considerations will be set aside at the expense of the peculiarities characterizing Denmark and the North Atlantic and, more specifically, Denmark and Greenland.

2.2.1 The Facets of Arctic Orientalism: From Exoticization to Victimization

Hans Egede’s mission and the consequent cultural encounter between ‘Danishness’ and ‘Greenlandicness’ also generated a literary interest for the newly integrated colony and its inhabitants. A similar interest is still pretty much alive, as testified to by the lively contemporary

production about Greenland where the tendency for stereotyping and exoticising, which has taken different forms throughout these three centuries of common history, is still present. The mechanisms unveiled by Edward Said in *Orientalism* can be easily transposed to the Arctic context. A first attempt, as mentioned, was made by Anne Fienup-Riordan in 1995 with regard to the portrayal of Alaskan Inuits in American documentary and feature films. In the introduction to her *Freeze Frame*, Fienup-Riordan writes:

Just as representations of the Orient mirror the Occident in specific historical moments (Said 1978), so representations of Eskimos provide another window into the history of the West. Like the representations of the Orient, the representation of the Eskimo is about origins – in this case the origin of society in the ‘pure primitive’: peaceful, happy, childlike, noble, independent, and free. (1995: XI)

It is to be noted that this paragraph – besides its reference to Said – seems to hint at a misconception shared with social evolutionism (see Pálsson 2002: 282-283): Inuits, according to Fienup-Riordan, are often conceived as «primitive» and are associated with a previous ‘evolutionary stage’ undergone by the West. Lars Jensen, in considering this same extract, is not convinced by the vagueness of the «West» addressed by Fienup-Riordan and claims that the American sociologist «does not elaborate on the ways the predominant (or to use a more Marxist term hegemonic) Western representations about the Arctic relate to Said’s conceptualisation of Orientalism» (Jensen 2015: 141). In other words, Fienup-Riordan fails to detach herself from the North American focus and her analysis does not encompass differences generated by «a particular national(ist) agenda in relation to the purposes the discourse on the Arctic served» (*Ibidem*). Despite its limits, Fienup-Riordan’s theorization has had the merit to inspire further reflections on narratives about the Arctic – that is the case, for instance, of Carina Keskitalo’s *Negotiating the Arctic* and of Kirsten Thisted’s writings on «Arctic Orientalism» (Jensen 2015: 141-142).

Because it revolves around the specificities of the ‘Danish’ Arctic, Thisted’s work will be essential to my analysis. The term «Arctic Orientalism» was first minted in the 1990s, but Thisted reprised it in later contributions, such as *The Power to Represent: Intertextuality and Discourse in Miss Smilla’s Sense of Snow* (2002) and *Danske grønlandsfiktioner. Om billedet af Grønland i dansk litteratur* (2003). In the latter text, as seen in chapter 1, Thisted takes into consideration Danish literary narratives from B.S. Ingemann’s *Kunnuk og Naja eller Grønlænderne: En Fortælling* (1842) to Peter Høeg’s *Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne* (1992) in the light of Said’s theories. In particular, she stresses the twofold involvement of the

exotic Other with regard to the production of one's own identity: the Other, apart from being categorized and alienated, also seems to function as a 'mirroring device', through which the Western observer can grasp and confirm his own alleged modernity and civilisation. About recurring discourses in Danish literature about Greenland, Thisted writes:

Meget firkantet sagt har danskerne således oprettet Grønland som deres private vildmark, hvor eventyret udfolder sig, hvor drenge bliver mænd, og hvor en ældgammel, dybt fascinerende kultur engang trivedes og stadig kan opleves af den, der har øjne at se med. I dén version forbliver og fastholdes den Anden som fremmed, og noget virkeligt møde finder ikke sted.¹³¹ (Thisted 2003: 62)

According to Thisted, we cannot talk of a cultural encounter between Denmark and Greenland since Greenlandic (as well as Danish) identity is exclusively imposed from a Danish perspective and, therefore, there is no room for negotiation. This dyscrasia can be seen as a clear example of asymmetrical power relations between former colonizer and colonized, and literary representations are here designated only as one of the many testimonies of these pervasive narratives that concern societies as a whole.

Said's ideas have been applied to the Arctic/North Atlantic context also by other scholars, such as Hans Hauge and Gísli Pálsson, who respectively employ the expressions «Nordientalism» and «Arcticality» (Thisted 2012: 281). The former was coined on the subject of Vilhjalmur Stefansson's writings concerning his three expeditions (1906-1918) into the Alaskan and Canadian Arctic (Pálsson 2002: 275). «Arcticality» was envisioned as a counterpart to «tropicality» – a sub-narrative of Orientalism emerging from the encounter between whites from temperate regions and the utter alienness of the tropics (Pálsson 2002: 276-277). In Stefansson's work, the Arctic triggers a twofold discourse: on the one hand it can be seen as «the home of the howling, exotic wilderness (the source of 'strange' knowledge and ancient wisdom» and, at the same time, as a «semi-domestic, 'friendly' space» (Pálsson 2002: 277). The fluctuation between the poles of alienness and domesticity – since it still implies an 'us'/'them' differentiation – could be regarded as a variation on the mechanisms described by Said; the viewpoint, moreover, is still that of the Westerner. Even though Pálsson's focus is not about Greenland, his investigation of Stefansson's accounts provides nonetheless a useful tool

¹³¹ «To put it straightforwardly, it could be argued that Danes have conceived Greenland as their private wilderness, where adventure unfolds, where boys become men, and where an ancient and deeply fascinating culture was once thriving. This culture can still be experienced by those who want to. According to this interpretation, the Other remains and is perceived as alien, and there is no actual cultural encounter», my translation.

of analysis, as, unlike Said and Thisted, Pálsson insists on the ‘extremeness’ of the Arctic landscape and on the discourses generated by this specific Otherness.

The Danish scholar Hans Hauge, on the other hand, is primarily concerned with representations of Greenland, and distinguishes three kinds of *grønlandslitteratur*: 1) literature written by Greenlanders, in Greenlandic or Danish; 2) Danish-Greenlandic colonial literature (travel writing, ethnographical accounts etc.); 3) Danish literature «med Grønland som tema, indhold eller kulisse»¹³² (Hauge 2004: 237-238). In his article *Det grønlandske spøgelse. Peter Høegs Smilla* (2004), Hauge centers his attention on the latter category and, through the case study of Høeg’s *Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne*, analyses some of the modalities adopted by Danes writing about Greenland and Greenlanders. Similarly to Thisted, Hauge emphasizes the exoticizing practices at the bottom of *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, which result, for instance, in the tendency to depict Greenlanders as a mere distorted reflection of Danes themselves, as their passive counterparts. Nonetheless, he prefers to employ the term «Nordientalism» instead of «Arctic orientalism» – a term borrowed from the Swedish writer Oscar Hemer – to focus on an alleged Nordic nostalgia for a ‘primitive’ life:

[V]i de skandinaviske lande har projiceret vore idealsamfund ud i kolonierne eller i periferien [...]. Vi primitiviserede os, så jo mere moderne vi blev, jo mere længtes vi efter sagatiden. Englænderne ville have de andre til at ligne englændere, vi ville ligne dem, vi koloniserede. Det mest danske er at tage på slæderejse i det arktiske. Og danskerne strømmer til Norge for at stå på ski, som vi har lært af samerne.¹³³ (Hauge 2004: 245)

This aspect – though possibly present, at least in some of the cases I will be taking into consideration – will not be investigated thoroughly during my analysis. Hauge’s contribution, however, will come in useful insofar it has the merit to shed a light on some of the motifs that characterize *dansk grønlandslitteratur*. He recalls a dozen of them, and, while some could be regarded as typically postcolonial tropes, others only pertain to Danish literature about Greenland and arise from the uniqueness of this context. «Allegori på forholdet mellem koloni og koloniseret»,¹³⁴ for instance, is to be found in any kind of colonial and postcolonial literature; the same cannot be said about the motifs of suicide, or of the so-called *qivittoq*.

¹³² «[W]ith Greenland as theme, content or setting», my translation.

¹³³ «[W]e, in the Scandinavian countries, have projected our ideal society onto the colonies or onto the periphery [...]. We primitivized ourselves, so that the more modern we became, the more we longed for the time of the sagas. The British wanted the others to be like British, we wanted to be like the ones we colonized. The most Danish thing [to do] is going on a sleigh ride in the Arctic. And Danes flock to Norway to ski, a sport we learned from the Sámi», my translation.

¹³⁴ «Allegory of the relationship between colonizer and colonized», my translation.

In the paragraph that follows, I will attempt to isolate and elaborate on these and other recurring themes concerning ethnic identity – to be intended in a broad sense. This ‘schematic’ approach will provide the close reading of Kim Leine, Iben Mondrup, and Lotte Inuk’s writings with an analytical framework combining theorizations that originate from both social sciences and postcolonial literary studies.

2.2.2 The Reification of ‘Greenlandicness’: Recurring Literary Motifs and Stereotypes

Starting from Said’s assumption that «society and literary culture can only be understood and studied together» (2003: 27) as the latter is never innocent, I will attempt to consider some *tópoi* specifically pertaining to *dansk grønlandslitteratur* as (literary) examples of reification of culture. This last term is employed in the sense suggested by Arjun Appadurai, who equates culture with a «subset of [...] differences that has been mobilised to articulate the boundary of difference» (2005: 13). What elements, then, could be intended as difference markers in the ‘Greenlandic’ novels by Leine, Mondrup and Inuk?

A first aspect that comes to mind while considering Danish depictions of the cultural encounter with Greenland and its society is the linguistic barrier between (former) colonizer and colonized. This motif has been briefly mentioned by Hans Hauge in his contribution on *Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne* (2004: 239). Even though he does not delve into general considerations, Hauge observes that the Greenlandic language – already from the first pages of the novel –, is depicted as strongly tied to the Greenlandic natural environment and, in particular, to snow:

Kender man ikke andet til grønlandere eller deres sprog, så kender man næsten altid klicheen om, at der på grønlandsk findes mange ord for sne, og at vi kun har et, og vi får i romanen denne kliche serveret på de første linjer, hvor vi læser: «sneen er *qanik*». Vi forventer sne, og vi får det.¹³⁵ (Hauge 2004: 251)

¹³⁵ «Even if you do not know much about Greenlanders or the Greenlandic language, you are almost certainly acquainted with the cliché of Greenlandic having many words for snow, whereas we have just one. This cliché is presented throughout the first pages of the novel, where we read: ‘Snow is *qanik*’. We expect snow and we get it», my translation.

In this case, then, the Greenlandic language emerges as an exotic ‘ornament’ meant to match the expectations of the Danish (or Westerner) reader; this ‘danocentrism’ goes hand in hand with the fact that Høeg, when writing *Smilla*, only had indirect knowledge of Greenland and Greenlandic culture (see Thisted 2013: 297). However, if one considers ‘Greenlandic’ literature written by Danish immigrants, the matter can be notably different. Danes in Greenland are tendentially exposed to Greenlandic in a variety of ways – be it because they work in close contact with Greenlanders or because they have spent part of their childhood there (as Lotte Inuk and Iben Mondrup did). In this regard, therefore, different attitudes towards the Greenlandic language may betray Danish preconceptions or, on the contrary, the desire to establish a common ground for dialogue. Per Bloch, for instance, mentions the use of Danish in Greenland as one of the many factors exemplifying Denmark’s neocolonial practices and attitudes towards its former overseas colony:

Set fra et statsligt perspektiv er dansk ikke et fremmedsprog i Grønland, men på et folkeligt, kulturelt og menneskeligt plan vil jeg mene, at dansk er et fremmed sprog i Grønland. Dansk er dagligdags- og arbejdsprog for mange i Nuuk, og da jeg med en arbejdskollega tilmeldte mig grønlandskundervisning, blev vi af andre danskere mødt med forundring. Hvorfor vil I dog lære grønlandsk?, spurgte de os. Det har man jo ikke brug for (underforstået: Man kan jo bare tale dansk), og I kommer alligevel aldrig til at lære det.¹³⁶ (Bloch 2022)

These tendencies, apart from everyday social practices, can also be found in Danish literary texts on postcolonial Greenland, where writers sometimes employ Greenlandic expressions with the purpose to give an insight into ‘non-stereotypical’ Greenlandic culture. At the same time, romanticizing and exoticizing drifts are often present. It could be useful to refer to these different approaches with expressions borrowed from translation studies, namely those of «foreignization» and «domestication» (see Venuti 2008) – where the latter is not necessarily intended as an ethnocentric practice, but as an attempt to reduce the distance between the supposed ‘Other’ and the Danish reader, to make alien concepts ‘familiar’. «Foreignization», on the other hand, would still be intended as «an ethnodeviant pressure on those values to register the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad» (Venuti 2008: 15).

¹³⁶ «From a legal point of view Danish is not a foreign language in Greenland, but I am convinced that it is alien on an ethnic, cultural, and human level. Danish is the everyday language and one used at work for many in Nuuk, and when I enrolled in a Greenlandic course with a co-worker, we were looked at with bewilderment. Why is it you want to learn Greenlandic?, they asked us. There is no need for that (meaning: you can just speak Danish!), and you will never learn it», my translation.

Another element recurrently associated with Greenlandic culture is Greenlandic food and, not surprisingly, the topic is often investigated in contributions on Greenlandic identity, as, for example, the miscellaneous volumes *Cultural and Social Research in Greenland 95/96* (1996), or *Fra vild til verdensborger* (2011; *From Wildling to World Citizen*), which both feature essays on Greenlandic traditional food and on its role as «identitetsskaber», an «identity generator» (Olsen 2011: 409). As specified by Inge Kleivan, «ever since Greenlanders and Europeans made permanent contact with each other at the beginning of the eighteenth century, different food traditions have been one of the things that characterized the ethnic groups in Greenland» (Kleivan 1996: 146). This statement is in agreement with Milton Freeman's more general consideration according to which «within stratified societies it is observed that social hierarchy is marked by specific foods» (Freeman 1996: 45). When considering food as an *identitetsskaber*, an identity generator, the investigation is not limited to daily menus, but encompasses consumption modalities, i.e., what can be eaten during a specific meal, or what bonds are tied by commensality (Freeman 1996: 46-47). A similar point of view is presented by Natuk Lund Olsen in her *Uden grønlandsk mad er jeg intet!* (2011; *Without Greenlandic Food I Am Nothing!*). Paraphrasing Lotte Holm's words, Lund Olsen claims that «når vi spiser, indlemmer vi samtidig os selv i den gruppe, som lever i et givet system»¹³⁷ (Olsen 2011: 413). Food, therefore, unequivocally contributes to shaping 'us'/'them' narratives. As in the case of Greenlandic language, this specific aspect will be studied from a 'Danish' point of view – or to be more precise, in some Danish contemporary pieces of literature – and it is interesting to search for recurring patterns regarding not only the types of Greenlandic food mentioned, but also the characters' attitude towards it, which may vary from eagerness to utter refusal.

According to the research conducted by the Dutch scholar Tekke Terpstra and published in the volume *Inuit Outside the Arctic. Migration, Identity and Perceptions* (2015), Greenlandic identification with traditional food is, at least in some measure, intertwined with the activity of hunting (Terpstra 2015: 150). While interviewing one of his informants, Terpstra learned about the relation between catching food and country food and the significance it bears for some Greenlanders. A woman, in particular, «felt that catching your own food in Greenland, with its clean nature, offered the best food, and when caught yourself, the food also had a story» (*Ibidem*). From a Danish point of view, this association is not as common – or, at least, it is not often put into practice – and food and hunting can be perceived as two separate and not

¹³⁷ «[W]hen we eat, we insert ourselves in a group living in a given system», my translation.

necessarily communicant entities. Danes might limit themselves to purchasing Greenlandic products from a food market or from «a *kalaalimineerniarfik* (literally, ‘the place where Greenlandic foods are sold’ [...]), a small outdoor kiosk found in many towns in West Greenland» (Marquardt & Caulfield 1996: 108), aware that they have been supplied by local hunters or fishers. Nonetheless, hunting scenes are rather common within *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, and it could be worth investigating whether they can be regarded as attempts to go beyond the dimension of ‘Danishness’ and integrate into Greenlandic society or whether, conversely, these moments rather present themselves as mere ‘Arctic safaris’, i.e., a bait for Danes wishing to experiment the ‘true Greenlandic life’ by engaging in an activity that complies with their expectations of Greenland.

Both Greenlandic traditional food and the activity of hunting could be regarded as connected to the specificities of the Greenlandic landscape, which is perceived, from a Danish and European point of view, as utterly alien because of its climate, conformation, fauna etc. (see Pálsson 2002: 276-277). This (Eurocentric) conception is often paired with qualitative judgements regarding both Greenland’s nature and its inhabitants’ relation to it. One of the most recurring motifs in *dansk grønlandslitteratur* is the association with the harsh and untamable Greenlandic environment and the ‘wildness’ of the Greenlanders themselves, who have adapted to these severe conditions and live in harmony with their surroundings. This romanticization, far from being a merely literary *topos*, has been influencing the Danish public discourse on Greenland since its colonization; given the pervasiveness of this trope, my analysis will depart from considerations on this particular element. An early example of this narrative can be found in Ludvig Holberg’s *Epistola CCCL*, where the influence of Hans Egede’s accounts is palpable; in this short text, in fact, Greenlanders are depicted as mostly ‘primitive’ (see Holberg 1949: 131). In 1842, around one century later, when the first text traditionally identified with the label of *dansk grønlandslitteratur* was published, this idea started taking roots in fictional representations of Denmark’s former colony. Lone Kølle Martinsen reminds that B.S. Ingemann, in sending a copy of *Kunnuk og Naja* to his friend M.B. Nyegaard, wrote:

‘Herewith a little Book about the life of a Natural People without State or Politics, to which I recently fled to escape our own political uproar’ [‘Hermed en lille Bog om et Naturfolks Liv uden Stat og Politik som jeg i den sidste Tid er flygtet til for at blive vort politiske Bulder quit’]. (Martinsen 2017: 191)

This brief note, here reported in Martinsen’s translation, contains at least three significant elements: 1) nature, directly associated with Greenland, is opposed to ‘civilization’, culture and,

therefore, Denmark *tout court*; 2) despite an implicit sense of superiority granted by this ‘enlightened’ position, the state of nature characterizing Greenlanders generates admiration or even longing; 3) through the use of the verb «flygte», Ingemann seems to attribute an escapist nuance to his literary interest for Greenland, and probably hopes that his Danish readers may find solace from Denmark’s «political turmoil» (Martinsen 2017: 191) in the free and simple life of his fictional Greenland.

Danish conceptions of Greenlanders as «naturbørn», as it can be easily assumed, have not only influenced literary representations, but have also played an important role in how Greenlanders are viewed within the Danish public discourse. The first European encounters with Inuits, which took place in the 15th century, contributed to shaping a precise portrait of Greenland’s native inhabitants as «primitive dyrelignende væsener [...] især deres indtagelse af rå kød forfærdede og gav anledning til formodninger om kannibalisme»¹³⁸ (Rud 2013: 491). By the time of Hans Egede’s mission, according to Rud (*Ibidem*), the European appraisal of Inuit people was slightly more nuanced – even though, as we have seen, Egede also conceived of them as primitive creatures living in sin. Around one century later, the ‘state of nature’ associated with Greenlandic Inuits started being romanticized on the wave of Rousseau’s theorizations on *le bon sauvage*, and natives were progressively identified as «en slags idealiseret ur-version af det vestlige menneske»¹³⁹ (Rud 2013: 492). These ideas were often used as a means to justify practices adopted by Denmark from early colonial years to more recent times. In the first half of 20th century these narratives had a strong influence within the dispute on education accessibility for Greenlanders:

Uanset om danskerne delte den civilisationskritiske holdning eller ej, kunne de tilsyneladende blive enige om, at det at uddanne grønlænderne var en sag, hvor der måtte gås frem med den yderste forsigtighed. To af de mest fremsynede administratorer i Grønland, H.J. Rink og Samuel Kleinschmidt, var begge fortalere for at holde grønlænderne så vidt muligt isoleret fra fremmed indflydelse og advarede [...] mod den afhængighed af de europæiske luksusprodukter, som fik grønlænderne til at sælge alt for mange af de produkter, som de selv havde hårdt brug for. Begge mente, at grønlænderne nødvendigvis måtte holdes til sælfangsten, og især Samuel Kleinschmidt mente, at for meget uddannelse i Europa blot ville gøre grønlænderne fremmede for deres egen kultur.¹⁴⁰ (Thisted 2004a: 147-148)

¹³⁸ «primitive animal-like beings [...] in particular, their intake of raw meat was a cause for concern and gave rise to conjectures on cannibalism», my translation.

¹³⁹ «A sort of idealised prototypical version of the Western man», my translation.

¹⁴⁰ «Regardless of whether Danes shared this civilisation-critical stance or not, they apparently agreed that the education of Greenlanders was a matter to be handled with utmost caution. Two of Greenland’s most acute administrators, H.J. Rink and Samuel Kleinschmidt, were both advocates of keeping Greenlanders as isolated as

Educational possibilities in Europe, then, were precluded (or at least heavily discouraged) on the basis that the contact with ‘civilization’ would spoil Greenlanders, drifting them apart from their *oprindelig* («indigenous») culture. These assumptions, as it is now widely accepted, masked a form of underhand control of the activities pursued by Greenlanders, whose hunting skills were of great avail to Denmark and its commercial aims. The stance of most Danish representatives on this matter goes hand in hand with previous measures taken by the Royal Greenland Trade Company, as, for instance, the Instruction from 1782, which favored «procedures to limit the contact between Greenlanders and Europeans and preserve these [hunting] traditions of Greenlandic culture as much as possible» (Rud 2017a: 36-37). Discourses on the Greenlandic ‘state of nature’ took a further step following the so-called modernization and *danisering* («danification»), which took place between the 1950s and the 1970s. The changes triggered by the process engendered new clichés regarding Greenland and Greenlanders, who «in Danish media, film, and literature [...] are often depicted as one of two stereotypes: noble or primitive people; or lost and rudderless in the modern world. In both roles they are trapped in their culture, unable to escape and enter a world in which they are participants» (Rud 2017a: 145).

Therefore, as suggested by Rud, the *topos* of Greenlandic nature in literature did not exhaust its potential during the colonial years, rather the opposite. In more recent (or even contemporary) pieces of *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, in fact, nature still plays a major role in the way Danish characters relate to Greenland – be it through their expectations or direct experience. In the case of Greenlandic figures, on the other hand, it is not uncommon for Danish writers to draw from well-established stereotypes concerning the inhabitants of the former Arctic colony and their supposed relationship to nature: this assumption seems even more true if one takes into consideration consumption *grønlandslitteratur*, i.e., for example, texts pertaining to the wave of so-called «Arctic noir».¹⁴¹ We could think that the premises of this

possible from foreign influence and warned [...] against the dependence on European luxury goods, which caused many Greenlanders to sell many of the products they strongly needed. Both believed that Greenlanders necessarily ought to limit themselves to seal hunting, and in particular Samuel Kleinschmidt thought that too much education in Europe would simply alienate Greenlanders from their own culture», my translation.

¹⁴¹ Regarding this genre, Dybdal writes (2021: 115): «Mens 00’erne blev det store gennembrud for den skandinaviske krimi, kan man i 10’erne spore en bevægelse, hvor flere og flere forfattere flytter mordgæderne endnu mere nordpå. Med udgivelser som Helle Vincentz’ *Nukaakas kabale* (2013), Nina von Staffeldts *Frosne beviser* (2016) og Mads Peder Nordbos *Pigen uden hud* (2017) har flere kritikere omdøbt den velkendte nordic noir til arctic noir: en særlig krimigenre, hvis handling foregår i Arktis, ofte Grønland (Kørner; Lyngø)». [«While the 2000s were the years of the big breakthrough for the Scandinavian thriller, in the 2010s it is possible to find a

genre somewhat rely on the ‘exotic’ potential of the Arctic landscape, at least according to Christina Hazzard’s statement on Nordic noir as a whole. This kind of literature, she writes, «has recently reinforced the image of the Nordic region as bleak, grey and crime-ridden» (Hazzard 2020: 101). At the basis of Nordic noir in its entirety, then, lie stereotypical borealistic conceptions. The same cannot but apply to the so-called Arctic noir, set, among other territories, in Greenland, one of the most ‘extreme’ Nordic lands. Examples of this stereotyping attitudes can be found, for instance, in Mads Peder Nordbo’s *Pigen uden hud* (2017), which features a Greenlandic co-protagonist, a female sidekick to the main character, Matthew. In making her first appearance, the girl, somewhat a Greenlandic version of Lisbeth Salander, strikes Matthew as a ‘savage’, man-like figure; she even carries an *ulo* with her, a traditional inuit knife. A further hint to the girl’s ‘wild’ nature is given by her wide tattoo representing flowers and leaves – «not delicate and pretty, but lush and winding» (Nordbo 2018: 51). Exoticizing details can be found also in Peter Høeg’s *Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne* (cf. Thisted 2002; 2003), which could be regarded as the progenitor to this later trend. Høeg’s *Smilla*, far from being merely conceived for entertainment (see Hauge 2004: 239), had the potential, according to Thisted (2003: 60), to create an innovative dialogue between Denmark and Greenland. Nonetheless, the text only managed to «gentage den etablerede diskurs om Grønland og grønlændere, snarere end at dekonstruere den og levere modhistorier»¹⁴² (*Ibidem*). This consideration by Thisted regards first and foremost Smilla’s relationship to nature, which seems to hint at Høeg’s «civilisationskritisk» aim (see Thisted 2003: 61).

Greenland’s nature and Greenlandic traditions linked to it have always had a prominent place in the Danish imaginary. This seems confirmed by related sub-motifs, such as the *topos* of Eastern Greenland, found extensively, for example, within Kim Leine’s production. Because of its wild landscape and maintenance, of progressively disappearing practices, Eastern Greenland is often conceived in terms of ‘extremization’ of characteristics pertaining to the territory:

Østkysten lå imidlertid gemt bag storisen, som spærrede for sejlads, og danskerne nåede først dertil i slutningen af 1800-tallet. Østgrønland er derfor kendt som det mest oprindelige Grønland, kristnet og civiliseret ikke blot af danske udsendte, men tillige af en stadig strøm

movement of writers who progressively move their murder cases *further* north. Following the release works such as Helle Vincentz’ *Nukaaka’s Cabala* (2013), Nina von Staffeldt’s *Frozen Evidence* (2016) and Mads Peder Nordbo’s *The Girl Without Skin* (2017), many critics have renamed the known label of ‘Scandinavian noir’ ‘Arctic noir’: a specific thriller sub-genre, whose action takes place in the Arctic, often in Greenland (Kørner; Lynge)», my translation.

¹⁴² «Repeat the established discourse on Greenland and Greenlanders rather than deconstruct it and deliver counternarratives», my translation.

af vestgrønlandere, præster og kateketer, skolelærere, politifolk, kontorfolk, administratorer og sundhedsarbejdere. I Østgrønland konfronteredes vestgrønlanderne så at sige med deres egen fortid, lyslevende, og vestgrønlandske forfattere har beskrevet mødet med en blanding af gru og fascination – og derved været medforfattere på diskursen om Østgrønland som Grønlands «Wild East» (Gant 1998, Langgård 1999, Thisted 1999).¹⁴³ (Thisted 2011a: 273-274)

As anticipated by Thisted, Danish voices are not the only contributors to this conception, largely circulated by Western Greenlanders, as well. A contemporary example of this narrative can be found in Niviaq Korneliussen's award-winning novel from 2020, *Blomsterdalen*, where the main character of the book, an anonymous young woman from Nuuk, travels to Tasiilaq to pay visit to her mourning girlfriend and her family. It could be of interest to note that the markers of ethnic/cultural difference and the motifs I have been referring to in this paragraph (language, food/hunting, nature) can be found in the protagonist's interactions with Eastern Greenland's reality and with its inhabitants. On her way to Tasiilaq, the character is faced with the linguistic barrier separating her from the woman sitting next to her – who, after concluding that any attempt of verbal communication with her seat neighbor would be vane, decides to take a selfie with her (Korneliussen 2020: 129-130). Discourses on Eastern Greenlandic food and hunting tendentially relate to one another in the novel, as in the extract that follows – a piece of dialogue between the main figure and her girlfriend Maliina:

«Vil du gerne skære rensdyret?», spørger hun.
«Har du selv fanget det?»
«Ja, i Nordlandet sidste år.»
«Wow. Hvad jager du ellers?», spørger jeg.
«Ryper. Harer.»
[...]
«Har du nogensinde skudt en isbjørn?», spørger jeg.
«Nu lyder du som en dansker,» siger hun og griner.
«Jeg kommer fra Sydgrønland, jeg er lige så uvidende».¹⁴⁴ (Korneliussen 2020: 38)

¹⁴³ «Eastern Greenland was hidden behind ice sheet, which hindered sailing, and the Danes did not reach the area until the end of the 19th century. Therefore, Eastern Greenland is known as the most authentic Greenland, christened and civilized not only by Danish emissaries, but also by a steady stream of West Greenlanders, priests and catechists, schoolteachers, police officers, office workers, administrators, and health workers. In Eastern Greenland, Western Greenlanders were confronted, so to speak, with their own revived past, and Western Greenlandic authors have described this encounter with a mixture of horror and fascination – thereby co-authoring the discourse on Eastern Greenland as Greenland's "Wild East" (Gant 1998, Langgård 1999, Thisted 1999)», my translation.

¹⁴⁴ «Would you mind cutting the reindeer?», she asks. «You caught it yourself?» «Yes, last year in Nordland.» «Wow, what else do you hunt?», I ask. «Ptarmigans, hares» [...]. «Have you ever shot a polar bear?», I ask her. «Now you're sounding like a Dane», she says laughing. «I'm from South Greenland, I am just as ignorant», my translation.

As we can read, the parallelism between Danish and West Greenlandic stereotypes is being made explicit, and the ironic statement «Nu lyder du som en dansker» could be intended as a twofold critique concerning the Danish ‘Other’, on the one side, and a Greenlandic – and therefore ‘internal’ – exoticizing attitude, on the other (cf. Thisted 2011a: 273).

This last example, though not pertaining to *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, shows the heuristic utility of considering the aforementioned elements in a literary context: language, food/hunting, and nature have been used to investigate Greenlandic identity in social science/anthropological inquiries, and that is the case, for example, of Tekke Terpstra’s extensive analysis *Inuit Outside the Arctic. Migration, Identity and Perceptions*. In this contribution, however, these notions will be used to shed a light on relations between ‘Danishness’ and ‘Greenlandicness’ as represented in a selection of works by Kim Leine, Lotte Inuk and Iben Mondrup – both identities, then, are here at stake. The interaction between the two dimensions will be studied through theorizations borrowed from postcolonial studies and, in particular, I will be interrogating on whether there is talk of alternatives to their binary opposition and mutual incompatibility. Do Leine, Mondrup and Inuk engage in creating a «Third space [...] which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricised and read anew» (Bhabha 1994: 37)?¹⁴⁵ If so, do their attempts succeed? And how are they displayed? These questions will be answered throughout the following paragraphs, which concentrate respectively on attitudes and preconceptions regarding 1) the Greenlandic natural landscape; 2) the Greenlandic language(s); 3) Greenlandic traditional food and its relationship to hunting.

2.3 Greenlanders as «naturfolk»: Greenlandic Identity and the Arctic Environment

Tekke Terpstra, whose inquiry helped me identify some recurring motifs regarding Danish perceptions of Greenlandic identity, has conducted a group interview with some *gymnasium* students from Jutland. Among other things, the students were asked to express what they associated to Greenland or ‘Greenlandicness’. Unsurprisingly, they mentioned numerous

¹⁴⁵ In exposing her doubts about Høeg’s *Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne* as an effective postcolonial narration, states that the novel fails precisely in this aspect: despite its potential, the book indulges in the reiteration of binary oppositions mirroring the contrast between ‘Greenlandicness’ and ‘Danishness’ (Thisted 2003: 60).

elements pertaining to Greenland's nature, such as «cold climate», «ice», «seals», and «polar bears» (Terpstra 2015: 127) or made comments about its beauty. The Greenlandic natural environment/landscape plays a pivotal role also in literary representations and, as it is known, Greenlanders themselves have often been considered in terms of their supposed 'state of nature': «[t]he generalized Greenlander», as Bo Wagner Sørensen writes, «appears to engage in a special, and respectful, relationship with nature» (Sørensen 2008: 110). This (Danish) association has been critically alluded to, for example, by the Greenland artist Pia Arke (1958-2007) in her performance *Arctic Hysteria*, consisting of a video during which the artist herself, naked, crawls upon a poster representing a typically – and maybe stereotypical – Greenlandic landscape. Arke starts interacting with the landscape: she strokes it and sniffs it and, eventually, she tears the poster apart (see Thisted 2012: 279). This action sequence could be interpreted as a visual portrayal of the desire to self-determine oneself as a Greenlander. In fact, as Thisted recalls, in Danish depictions Inuit are often referred to as «naturfolk» («nature people») – a term which, despite its positive connotation,¹⁴⁶ still bears problematic traits:

Thus, the term «Naturvolk», and even the term «indigenous», are ambiguous because, on the one hand, these terms recognize the Inuit's close relationship with nature and support their land claims, but on the other hand they lock them securely in this relationship, making them one with the natural surroundings they live in, in the same way as the seals, polar bears, and walruses are considered to be part of the Arctic environment. This becomes deeply problematic when the Arctic is described with an «anthropological present» without a sense of the huge upheavals that have occurred as a result of contact with European culture (Gant 1998a, 1998b, 2005, 2009, Thisted 1992, 2007b). In most of these representations, the Greenlanders are depicted as caught within the so-called «fatal impact» or «pure or poor» syndrome, assumed to be «lost in translation» between tradition and modernity, always assumed to be the victims of modernity rather than producers of it. (Thisted 2012: 281)

The «metaphorical fusion of Greenlanders, sea, ice, and mountains» (Sørensen 2008: 110), as well as the thematization (and 'subjectification') of the Arctic landscape *per se*, is at the core of the present section of this work. More specifically, I will be addressing those texts pertaining to my corpus that, more than others, insist on this aspect and that, at the same time, offer new perspectives on the matter. As one can easily imagine, in fact, landscape (and, consequently, spatial representation) is ever-present in works pertaining to *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, as it is the first 'alien' element Danes come across while travelling to Greenland – a first marker of

¹⁴⁶ The expression «naturfolk» was first introduced within the context of Neo-Romanticism – which glorified the supposed distance from civilisation and the genuineness of a closer contact to nature/tradition – and overtook the pejorative «primitive people» (Thisted 2012: 281).

Greenland's 'otherness' to Danish (or European) eyes.¹⁴⁷ This comes as no surprise since, according to Dybdal and Grønlund, «[i] den danske grønlandslitteratur forekommer utallige skibsrejser – og i nyere tid mere overkommelige flyveture»¹⁴⁸ (2020: 39). *Store Malene*, the first novel I will be dealing with, is an exception in this regard, since, as we shall see, the action starts when the main character, Justine, first enters the house where she is going to spend her summer. Further considerations, then, will be made on the connection between the Arctic environment and Danish perceptions of 'Greenlandicness'.

2.3.1 *Walking on the Wild Side: Arctic Nature and Clichés on 'Greenlandicness' in Store Malene*

Mondrup's first fictional work that extensively deals with «grønlandsk relaterede emner»¹⁴⁹ (Thisted 2013: 296), *Store Malene*, opens with a description of the view from the window of the house where Justine, the main character, is staying for the summer. The accommodation belongs to a nurse, who, on the other hand, is occupying Justine's flat in Amager. Although the scene is set in a closed space, the stress is on the external surroundings:

Fra det grønne hus i Myggedalen er der udsigt over Godthåbsfjorden. Havets rene flade fortsætter til den bliver brudt af land i horisonten. Justine sidder i vinduet. Om formiddagen er fjeldene på den anden side af vandet violette og blå, om aftenen er de sorte mod himlen, hvor lyset aldrig går ud. Vandets overflade skifter konstant, blankt, krapt, spejl, gråt.¹⁵⁰
(Mondrup 2013: 5)

Standing by that same window, Justine had even noticed the shape of a whale's tail, a few days earlier – a sight that somewhat confirms the expectations of a Dane who has travelled to

¹⁴⁷ The same applies to anthropological reports about Greenland, «where the scene(ry) is set initially in order to portray people in a recognizable landscape or picturesque view: the 'objective' landscape of a particular people. The arrival scenes that establish an authorial presence within a text are illustrative examples of the framing convention, emphasizing that the author has truly 'been there' (Geertz 1988; Pratt 1986)» (Sørensen 2008: 108).

¹⁴⁸ «Countless ship journeys are to be found in Danish literature on Greenland – recently substituted by more affordable flights», my translation.

¹⁴⁹ «Topics related to Greenland», my translation.

¹⁵⁰ «The green house in Myggedalen has a view over Godthab's fjord. The clean surface of the sea extends until it's broken by land, on the horizon. Justine is sitting at the window. In the morning the mountains on the other side of the water are violet and blue. In the evening they are black, and they stand out against the sky, where the light never goes out. The surface of the water is constantly changing and glistening. Rough sea, mirror, grey», my translation.

Greenland and assumes to be confronted with the former colony's unspoiled nature, also consisting of 'exotic' fauna (see Turri 2023b: 125). On this last note, it is worth mentioning that *Store Malene*¹⁵¹ – whose title alone explicitly refers to a natural element – even features the sighting of a polar bear, a species that is rarely seen in Nuuk. However, Danes often associate the animal to Greenland, as Terpstra's interview also seems to confirm (Terpstra 2015: 127), and this species also gives the title to Pontoppidan's *Isbjørnen*, one of the first works that can be considered *dansk grønlandslitteratur*. Not only does the outside environment seem to prevail on the inside of the green house, the building itself presents organic characteristics, as if they were overcoming the anthropic, artificial ones: «På same måde har hun været lige ved at gå i gang med soveværelset, men når hun kigger derind, er det som at støde mod en mur af fremmed hud»¹⁵² (Mondrup 2013: 6). Even the city of Nuuk in its entirety, as Justine sees it for the first time, is described in similar terms: as Justine is reaching Myggedalen by taxi, she drives past a neighborhood, «hvor etagehusene lå i farver som larver på klipperne»¹⁵³ (Mondrup 2013: 7). Not even Greenland's capital and most-urbanized area, then, escapes allusions to the natural context – in this regard, in fact, we could argue that *Store Malene*'s Nuuk differs greatly from the city depicted by Greenlandic artists, for instance, in Niviaq Korneliussen's novels *HOMO sapienne* (2014) and *Blomsterdalen* (2020), or in the film *Nuuk York* (2006), where «[w]ith the help of visual collages, trick photography and carefully chosen localities, Nuuk is resurrected in the video as Nuuk York» (Thisted 2014c: 97).¹⁵⁴ Although Nuuk's urbanity does not seem to constitute Mondrup's primary interest, *Store Malene*'s protagonist is also fascinated by some anthropic spaces in Nuuk, such as, for example, the meat market mentioned in the previous section of this work, or the discarded apartments in the Blok P. The house block, which once hosted 1% of the Greenlandic population (Nielsen 2016: 48), is now abandoned, waiting to be demolished; Justine enjoys exploring the rooms that still contain remains of everyday life and takes photographs of them. In a way, it could be argued that this place bears a quality often associated, within *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, to

¹⁵¹ *Store Malene* in one of the mountains surrounding Nuuk.

¹⁵² «Similarly, she was about to enter the bedroom, but, as soon as she looked inside, it felt as if she was crashing against a wall of alien skin», my translation.

¹⁵³ «Where the colored blocks of flats laid on the cliffs, similar to larvas», my translation.

¹⁵⁴ Whilst *Nuuk York*, for instance, glorifies Nuuk's urbanity, as well as its openness to the world, the same characteristics are often perceived negatively by some Greenlanders. Greenland's capital, in fact, is generally considered a «Danish-like town» (Sørensen 2008: 114), to the point that some of the people interviewed by Bo Wagner Sørensen in his study *Perceiving Landscapes in Greenland* (2008) define it «“a piece of Denmark on rocks”, “miniature Denmark”, or a “northern counterpart to a Copenhagen suburb, only smaller”» (Sørensen 2008: 115). Authentic Greenlandic culture, then, is apparently to be experienced in the former colony's 'peripheries', consisting of small villages, or, alternatively, in «certain cultural institutions» (*Ibidem*).

Greenland in its entirety: the apartments come across as a «mulighedernes sted», a «place of possibilities» (Dybdal & Gronlund 2020: 39). The desolation of the Greenlandic landscape and of these late domiciles, therefore, may symbolically allude to the possibility of starting anew – which is the case, for example, of *Isbjørnen* or *Kalak* – or to the one of ‘filling’ such spaces, be it on a physical or on an artistic level. Both the environment and the apartments in the Blok P, then, are to be intended as a blank slate; at the base of this conception, as one can easily imagine, there is a direct association between Greenland and an utter sense of freedom, a freedom hardly experienceable in Denmark. Let us consider the following passage, taken from a scene where Justine is strolling around Nuuk together with the couple of Danish tourists she has met during her stay, Jesper and Mette:

Det er præcis som jeg siger. Man tager alting lidt mere afslappet heroppe, siger Jesper, – har I ikke lagt mærke til at man kan gå alle vegne? Det ville aldrig kunne lade sig gøre i Danmark. Mette går hen til kanten og kigger ned i vandet. Så maser hun sig ind mellem Justine og Jesper igen, – vi er vel nok heldige, siger hun og sukker.¹⁵⁵ (Mondrup 2013: 37-38)

Also in this case, as we can read, spatiality bears a symbolic connotation: the absence of borders pairs with the dismissal of social limitations. During their walks, for example, Justine, Mette and Jesper enjoy crossing otherwise ‘forbidden’ areas. Other explicative examples can be found in some of the scenes representing sexual intercourses. Mette and Jesper, for instance, get intimate at Justine’s place, the house of the nurse, thus invading ‘her’ space with the most private occupation. Later in the novel, on the other hand, Justine witnesses (and photographs) Mette and Joorut having sex; spatial boundaries, then, as well as social ones, are constantly broken in *Store Malene*.

More stereotypical observations on the Greenlandic environment and on Greenlanders often come from Jesper and Mette, described as two petty Danes travelling to Greenland in search for adventure and novelty. The two, ridiculous in their impeccable trekking equipment, boast about their knowledge of the Arctic environment and Greenlandic customs; Jesper, for instance, claims that Greenlandic hunters shoot seals only because of their valuable skin, but he is easily contradicted even by Justine, who replies that «[d]e sælger også kødet inde i byen»¹⁵⁶ (Mondrup 2013: 15). As far as Greenlandic nature is concerned, Mette and Jesper

¹⁵⁵ «It’s exactly as I say. They take things easy up here, Jesper says, – haven’t you noticed that you can walk everywhere? That would never be possible in Denmark. Mette reaches the edge and looks down on the water. Then she pushes her way between Justine and Jesper, – I guess we’re lucky, she says and sighs», my translation.

¹⁵⁶ «They also sell the meat in the city», my translation.

align to Gísli Pálsson's concept of *Arcticality*, i.e., they consider this new environment in opposition to Denmark, thus establishing a dichotomy between 'home-like' and 'alien' (Pálsson 2002: 279). Furthermore, the two characters tend to romanticize the landscape's utter diversity: during a trip to the ice fjord, they break the silence by declaring that «på dette hellige sted er det oplagt at drømme og ønske»¹⁵⁷ (Mondrup 2013: 17). This extreme environment, then, is so distant from European standards that it elicits thoughts on a supernatural dimension, even on «magic» (Mondrup 2013: 16).

Moreover, Mette and Jesper give voice to some of the most enduring Danish preconcepts about Greenlanders. Mette, for instance, reports to Justine that she has heard that alcohol easily runs out in Greenland, as people there drink so much:

En gang imellem, fortæller hun, løber bygden tør for alkohol, – fordi de drikker så meget, dem der bor her, siger hun, – de kan ikke styre det. Så snart der kommer nye forsyninger, står de i kø for at tømme hylderne for øl, og så dingler de rundt på grusvejene. Det er et held, mener Mette, at der var de seks flasker vin tilbage som de købte tidligere på dagen. Justine har ikke set fulde mennesker endnu, men det irriterer hende at hun har været bekymret for at det skulle ske. Hun kender også rygterne, det er ikke nogen nyhed, og hun var parat til ikke at se væk hvis de skulle vise sig at være sande. Det irriterer hende også at der bliver talt sådan om det.¹⁵⁸ (Mondrup 2013: 18-19)

At first glance, these prejudices associating Greenlanders with *druk*, the consumption of big quantities of alcohol, may appear unrelated to the narrative of the former colonized as «peoples of nature». However, the social problems affecting Greenland are often seen by Danes as the result from the abrupt passage from a sort of 'state of nature' to a *daniseret* society; Greenlanders, then, are frequently represented as victims of a «culture shift or cultural encounter», as Terpstra puts it, reprising Peter Sisgård's words (Terpstra 2015: 115). Justine, as we can read, is explicitly annoyed by Mette's shallow comment: nonetheless, she seems to be more troubled by *her own* triviality rather than the nature of Mette's observations. In fact, later in the novel, as she is having a conversation with Jesper and Mette, Justine is even about to observe that «grønlænderne er lidt ligesom børn» (Mondrup 2013: 37), but she stops in time, aware of the fact that it would be inconvenient. This other term is also strongly connotated since

¹⁵⁷ «This sacred place lends itself to dreaming and making wishes», my translation.

¹⁵⁸ «Sometimes, she says, the village runs out of alcohol – because those who live here drink so much, they can't help it. As soon as new supplies are delivered, they stand in a queue and hoard the beer shelves, and then they dangle around the dirty roads. According to Mette, we were lucky to find the six wine bottles that we had purchased earlier that day. Justine hasn't seen drunk people yet, but it annoys her that she has been worried about that possibility. She's heard the rumors, of course, they are nothing new, and she was prepared not to keep her eyes open if they turned out to be true. It just annoys her that they're mentioned like that», my translation.

it echoes the «simplicity and virtue» outlined in many Western (anthropological or fictional) representations of the Inuit (Sørensen 2008: 110) – characteristics that emerge with regard to the harsh landscape they inhabit, to which they adapt with «technological ingenuity and social flexibility» (*Ibidem*). The use of the term «børn», however, is also deeply problematic, as it echoes colonial narratives prone to justify Denmark's colonial deeds in Greenland. During the colonial age, according to Thisted, «grønlænderne tildeles rollerne som børn, med missionærerne som de kærligt opdragende forældre»¹⁵⁹ (Thisted 2003: 37); nonetheless, the idea of Denmark as a benign and generous colonizer – whose actions were dictated by sheer humanity rather than utilitarianism – still survives in the thought of a minority of scholars, among whom, as mentioned, Thorkild Kjærgaard stands out as a particularly extreme voice (see *supra*, p. 16-17, 22-23, 40).

2.3.2 *Beyond a Mere Opposition Between Greenland and Denmark: Arctic Surroundings in Kim Leine's Kalak*

Contrary to *Store Malene* – and to *Sultekunstnerinde*, as we shall see later –, *Kalak* does not include a description of Nuuk seen from a bird's eye view; nonetheless, there is mention of the adventurous journey from Copenhagen to Nuuk, hindered by unfavourable weather. The arrival in Greenland's capital is only accompanied by the following laconic comment: «Det tager tid at lære at elske Nuuk, med dens lange rækker af betonblokke, våde, ramponerede og affaldsstinkende, og det hvileløst skiftende vejr. Men vi lærer det, jeg lærer det i det mindste»¹⁶⁰ (Leine 2019a [2007]: 81-82). Kim's first remarks, then, concern Nuuk's urban characteristics rather than its natural surroundings and, surprisingly, the sense of freedom associated with this 'adventure' is not evoked by the Greenlandic landscape, but by the barely furnished apartment where the man temporarily lives together with his family: «Jeg elsker også tomheden, fraværet af ting, af rod»¹⁶¹ (Leine 2019a [2007]: 82), Kim writes, secretly hoping that his possessions will get lost and that he will be able to start anew, «befriet for ejendele der er imprægneret med

¹⁵⁹ «Greenlanders were described as children, the missionaries as affectionate parents in charge of bringing them up», my translation.

¹⁶⁰ «It takes time to learn to love Nuuk, with its long rows of concrete blocks, wet, damaged, and stinking of garbage, and its constantly changing weather. But we do learn to, at least I do», my translation.

¹⁶¹ «I also love emptiness, the absence of things, of chaos», my translation.

fortid og Danmark»¹⁶² (*Ibidem*). This *topos*, described by Thisted (2003) and Dybdal and Grønlund (2020), was firstly established in Henrik Pontoppidan's *Isbjørnen*; at the time, Greenland was already conceived as space to fill with «beskriverens egne længsler og forestillingsverden»¹⁶³ (Thisted 2003: 38), but Pontoppidan added a further layer to it. Greenland became a place for 'self-realization' – or to disappear in – for those unable to fit into the Danish society (*Ibidem*). Tendentially, the spatial counterpart to these expectations is the Arctic environment *per se* – empty, wild, borderless – and, therefore, we could speculate that Leine is knowingly playing with the motif. This is not an isolated case: closed/anthropic/urban spaces are recurrently thematized in *Kalak*, «den første rigtige Nuuk-roman»¹⁶⁴ (Thisted 2011a: 285), which, contrary to *Store Malene*, tendentially insists on the modernity of the city rather than on the unspoiled nature surrounding it.

Nonetheless, the natural environment also plays a part in Leine's debut novel, and some of the description modalities used by the author constitute a novelty within *dansk grønlandslitteratur*. For instance, Denmark is not the only term of comparison confronted to Greenland:

Dette er en anden slags vinterlandskab end det jeg kender fra Norge. Først og fremmest er der ingen træer. Landet ligger åbent, det skråner opad mod fjeldene og nedad mod fjorden, der er sort som blæk. Åbenheden viser mig hvor lille jeg er. Jeg færdes ikke mellem grantræer, men fjelde. Lille Malene, Store Malene, Hjortetakken. Og med fraværet af træer følger en total stilhed der forener sig med den totale renhed.¹⁶⁵ (Leine 2019 [2007]: 85)

Greenland's winter landscape is contrasted to that of Norway, Kim's (as well as Leine's) birth country, where he lives until he is a teenager. At the age of sixteen, Kim moves to Denmark, to his father's place, and starts living and identifying himself as a Dane. The novel, then, relies more on a triangulation between Norway, Denmark, and Greenland than on a dichotomic opposition between the latter two.¹⁶⁶ The addition of this further component complicates Kim's

¹⁶² «Freed from properties impregnated with the past and with Denmark», my translation.

¹⁶³ «The writer's own longings and imaginary world», my translation.

¹⁶⁴ «The first true novel on Nuuk», my translation.

¹⁶⁵ «The winter landscape here is different from the one I know from Norway. First of all, there are no trees. The land is open and stretches up towards the mountains and down to the fjord, which is black as ink. This openness makes me realise how small I am. I'm not moving from tree to tree; I'm moving through mountains. Lille Malene, Store Malene, Hjortetakken. And the absence of trees is accompanied by utter silence, paired with complete cleanness», my translation.

¹⁶⁶ According to Thisted, triangulations characterize the whole novel, on different levels. In spatial terms, the most frequent combinations are «den norske hjembygd/København/Nuuk» («Kim's Norwegian hometown/Copenhagen/Nuuk», my translation) and «Danmark/Vestgrønland/Østgrønland» («Denmark/Western Greenland/Eastern Greenland», my translation) (Thisted 2011a: 274).

relation to the concept of «home» and «alienness», which are at the core of most Danish representations of Greenland. Dybdal and Grønlund, in reprising Cresswell's definitions of home, stress its relation to a sense of security, affection, and «rootedness» (Dybdal & Grønlund 2020: 41) – qualities that Kim does not seem to be able to find neither in his hometown in Norway, characterized by a strictly religious climate, nor in Denmark, where he is abused by his father. Paradoxically, Kim feels he rather belongs to Greenland, for which he develops an obsession with nearly addictive traits for this country («det der lyder jo som en sygdom»,¹⁶⁷ Leine 2019a [2007]: 322). His existential angst, however – though mitigated by life in Nuuk – still torments him, to the point that he decides to move to another «tilflugtssted», «refuge» (Leine 2019a [2007]: 142,), i.e., Eastern Greenland. In the second part of the novel, natural descriptions abound. This is hardly surprising, since Eastern Greenland – in Danish as well as in Greenlandic representations – is often identified as a place where true 'Greenlandicness' can be found, or where the characteristics associated to Greenland are taken to their exasperation. The nature is wilder, the landscape even more desolate, but at the same time, it is possible to experience 'true' Greenlandic culture here, as the contacts with 'Danishness' have been more sporadic than in Western Greenland (Thisted 2011a: 273-274). Nonetheless, Kim sometimes attempts to present a different narrative on *Østgrønland*, and he does so, for instance, by mentioning Ammassalik's lively night life – with its two discos where the whole city meets, «unge og gamle, danskere og grønlandere, bøsser, lesbiske, heteroseksuelle, biseksuelle, et cirkus af præferencer på kryds og tværs, og her er jeg hjemme»¹⁶⁸ (Leine 2019a [2007]: 292). Therefore, descriptions of the environment and its peculiarities – such as the winter darkness, combined with dramatic sceneries – are interspersed with the thematization, once again, of Greenland as a modern and hardly romanticizable place. Ammassalik's two discos, furthermore, are frequented by all kinds of customers, all differing in age, background, and sexual orientation, and this detail somewhat seems to be aimed at creating a counter-image to Eastern Greenland as the cradle of sheer and unspoiled Greenlandic culture: in this *non-lieux* – a space that, as such, lacks any form of identitary and historical value (Augé 1992: 100) – Greenlanders and Danes meet and mingle, and any distance, be it generational or cultural, ceases to exist. Precisely this feeling, as Kim openly admits, is associated to a sense of home; this absence of any urge to define oneself seems to be at the antipodes of Dybdal and Grønlund's

¹⁶⁷ «It sounds like an illness», my translation.

¹⁶⁸ «young and old, Danes and Greenlanders, gay men, lesbians, heterosexuals, bisexuals, a circus of crisscross preferences. I'm home here», my translation.

definition of home, as *Kalak*'s protagonist finds «tryghed og nærvær»¹⁶⁹ (Dybdal & Grønlund 2020: 41), as paradoxical as it may sound, in rootlessness. Furthermore, as the novel progresses to its dramatic peak, i.e. to Kim's drug overdose, the Greenlandic landscape seems to lose its ability to mirror the character's innermost thoughts or sensations (Turri 2023b: 133):

En uforklarlig angst siver ind i mig som iskold tåge. Hvad laver børnene nu, tænker jeg. Hvis de bliver syge eller kommer ud for noget, er jeg der ikke for dem. Når jeg derimod er i Danmark, tænker jeg kun på hvornår jeg kan komme af sted igen. Skal jeg altid blive ved med at leve med denne splittelse?
Jeg går i fjeldet, vandrer over brune hedestrækninger der fjedrer under sålerne. Men naturen har taget et skridt tilbage, den er hverken truende eller blid, dødbringende eller øm, som den plejede at være. Den er dér, og jeg er hér. Vi er ikke længere på talefod med hinanden.¹⁷⁰ (Leine 2019a [2007]: 329-330)

Man and nature, then, are no longer on the same pace. Nature has detached itself from Kim's subjectivity, and become an independent entity. This shift could be interpreted either as a deterioration of the man's psychological conditions or, alternatively, as the result of a newly acquired awareness of Kim's own problematic status as a *kalak*. The character's 'change of identity' somewhat clashes with the fact that, after all, Kim's conception of 'Greenlandicness' is not immune to romanticizing, or even stereotyping. The aforementioned extract, in this sense, could be regarded as a point of no return, the moment when idealization gives way to reality. The dialectic between romanticization and objectivity, however, characterizes *Kalak* in its entirety: on the one hand, Kim's narration aligns with some of *dansk grønlandslitteratur*'s most deep-rooted motifs and, on the other, it provides estrangement 'pauses', where the character's own actions or thoughts are questioned – perhaps in the light of later reflections, to which autobiographical writing lends itself:

«Med udgivelsen af *Kalak* kan man sige, at Leine har nået det mål [at vende hjem som storyteller], som han imidlertid samtidig må forholde sig ironisk distancerende til, fordi det i mellemtiden er gået op for ham, hvordan hele projektet er indskrevet i koloniale praksisser og diskurser»¹⁷¹, Thisted 2011a: 277).

¹⁶⁹ «Security and attachment», my translation.

¹⁷⁰ «An inexplicable anxiety pervades me like icy fog. What will the children do now, I ask myself. If they get sick or something happens, I'm not there for them. When I'm in Denmark, on the other hand, I only think about when I can leave again. Will I always have to live like this, split? I walk in the mountains and wander over brown stretches of heath springing under my soles. But nature has taken a step back, it is neither menacing nor gentle, neither deadly nor tender, as it used to be. It is there and I am here. We are no longer in speaking terms with each other», my translation.

¹⁷¹ «With the release of *Kalak*, it could be argued that Leine has reached the goal [to return as a storyteller], to which he, however, must relate with an ironic distance, because in the meantime it has dawned on him how the whole project is inscribed in colonial practices and discourses», my translation.

As far as the former are concerned, there are hardly any elements of novelty to be traced: in a passage from the novel, for instance, Kim refers to «grønlandsk køkultur, eller mangel på den samme»¹⁷² (Leine 2019a [2007]: 316) and further elaborates stating that «[d]en inuitiske fanger- og nomadekultur derimod belønner improvisation og spontanitet og fremmer saaledes til en vis grad kaos»¹⁷³ (*Ibidem*). Despite the hyperbolic example opposing Danish and Greenlandic «queue culture» – which may perhaps hint at Leine’s ironic intentions – the difference between the two dimensions is still articulated in terms of rationality and irrationality, a dichotomy that echoes the antithesis between culture and nature, ever-recurring in Danish representations of its former Arctic colony and its inhabitants. In the novel, there is also mention of some of (Eastern) Greenland’s social plagues, witnessed by the narrator himself because of his profession, namely rapes, violence, suicide:

Dette er Grønlands Sundhedsvæsen. Lange perioder af ensformighed og stilstand afløses af dramatiske intermezzoer. En otteårig pige indbringes af politiet, sølet til i blod. Hendes onkel har voldtaget hende. En kollegas søn skyder sig. En femtenårig pige har kastet sig ind foran en bil for at straffe chaufføren der er hendes kæreste. Hun pådrager sig et knust bækken og åbent kraniebrud. Hun ligger lænket til sengen og tager smilende imod blomster fra kæresten, en femogtredivårig dansker.¹⁷⁴ (Leine 2019a [2007]: 291)

Comments that can be traced back to a stereotypical portrayal of Greenland, however, are sometimes subtly mitigated, as anticipated above, by Kim’s reflection of his own positioning as a Dane in Greenland, i.e. as a European white man who decides to embark on an adventure in Denmark’s former colony and ends up becoming part of stereotyped and stereotyping dynamics. The most explicit example, in this sense, could be the following extract: «Jeg ved ikke hvad der er med mig og de grønlandske piger [...]. Men jeg gør det ikke. Jeg er gift, jeg har børn. Jeg har aldrig været Lærke utro. Og tanken om at ende som klicheen ‘hvid mand på besøg i tidligere koloni’ får det til at vende sig i mig»¹⁷⁵ (Leine 2019a [2007]: 87-88). Similar

¹⁷² «Greenlandic queue culture, or rather the absence of a it», my translation.

¹⁷³ «Inuit hunting and nomadic culture, on the other hand, rewards improvisation and spontaneity, thus implying a certain degree of chaos», my translation.

¹⁷⁴ «This is Greenland’s Health System. Long periods of monotony and stagnation alternate with dramatic intermezzos. An eight-year-old girl is brought in by the police, covered in blood. Her uncle raped her. A colleague’s son shoots himself. A fifteen-year-old girl threw herself in front of a car to punish her boyfriend, who was driving. She got a broken pelvis and an open skull fracture. She is now chained to the bed and welcomes with a smile the flowers brought by her boyfriend, a thirty-five-year-old Dane», my translation.

¹⁷⁵ «I don’t know what’s it about with me and Greenlandic girls [...]. But I don’t do it. I’m married, I have kids. I’ve never been unfaithful to Lærke. And I’m tormented by the thought of ending up like the cliché of the ‘white man visiting a former colony’», my translation.

insertions serve the purpose to shed a light of ambiguity on Kim and his apperception of Greenland, which, despite the partially failed attempt to detach from consolidated narratives characterizing *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, still marks a turning point within the genre.

2.3.3 Nostalgia, Bewilderment, and Myth: Greenlandic Nature in Sultekunstnerinde

Lotte Inuk's autofictional novel, as it has been recalled, consists of two storylines. On one level, Charlotta wakes up at the hospital in Nuuk, where she is in care because of an eating disorder. On another, the narrator reminisces her arrival in Greenland, and her life there in the years marking her passage from child to teenager. As in the case of *Store Malene*, Nuuk is described from the helicopter and the focus, rather than on its urban structure, is on the natural landscape surrounding the city:

Menneskenes Land blev det kaldt, i en bog jeg havde og fik læst højt som lille [...]. Jeg føler mig som en ørn, som havde jeg fået dette ældgamle barnagtige ønske indfriet, og var blevet til ørn. Vi flyver tæt ind mellem høje bjerge, stejle snepudrede klippekanter hvorpå maskinens skygge aftegner sig [...]. Dybt inde i den klart smaragdgrønne fjord [...] erstattes klipper af urfarvet fjeld med klipper af blåtglitrende, råkantet indlandsis. Små stykker af den, i alle tænkelige former og faconer, flyder rundt ude i vandet som sælsomme dyr eller skulpturer og kaster lange dystre skygger, med atter andre faconer. Pludselig drejer en af skyggerne omkring og slår med halen; som jeg fra flyveren før forundret så skyerne forvandle sig til vidtstrakt himmel af is, oplever jeg nu isen forvandle sig brat, til springvand og hval [...]. Det gør sig med hensynsfuldt underspillet stolthed til, dette landskab, og venter stille smilende for sig selv på hvad jeg skal synes om det, hvad jeg har at sige til det, om jeg virkelig har noget at gøre i dets nærhed, om jeg er det på mindste måde værdig.¹⁷⁶ (Inuk 2004: 13-14)

The extract encompasses multiple elements of interest: first of all, the environment is admired and interpreted through the eyes of a child, which somewhat justifies the use of naïve imagery

¹⁷⁶ «When I was little, they read me a book in which it was called “Land of the people” [...]. I feel like an eagle, as if my childish fantasy to be transformed into an eagle had come true. We're flying between high mountains, steep snow-dusted cliffs onto which the shadow of the vehicle appears [...]. Deep in the clear emerald-green fjord, [...] cliffs of primeval rock are replaced by cliffs of blue-glittering, rough-edged *indlandsis*. Small pieces of it, in every imaginable shape and form, float around in the water, similar to strange animals or sculptures, and cast long gloomy shadows with different forms. Suddenly, one of the shadows turns around and flaps its tail; before, I was looking in awe at the clouds transforming into a vast sky of ice, now I'm witnessing the abrupt transformation from ice into a water fountain and a whale [...]. This landscape presents itself with considerably understated pride and quietly waits, smiling to itself, to know what I shall think of it, what I have to say to it, whether I really have anything to do in its presence, or whether I am worthy in the least», my translation.

and stress on a ‘magical’ undertone. The motif of the bird’s eye view on the landscape, present in numerous works pertaining to most *dansk grønlandslitteratur* set in contemporary years – probably as a demonstration of truthfulness and verisimilitude, although the landscape is seen through the gaze of an inevitably subjective beholder (see Sørensen 2008: 108) – is here reprised in terms of a child’s fantasy, since Charlotta imagines to be an eagle flying over Nuuk. Another aspect worth considering is offered by the last lines of the passage, in which the scenery is personified and given a conscience. Whilst this latter characteristic may suggest that the natural surroundings bear some sort of agency, the hypothesis seems to be questioned by the fact that «dette landskab [...] venter stille smilende for sig selv på hvad jeg skal synes om det»¹⁷⁷ – some sort of reaction, then, is expected from Charlotta, as if the landscape, devoid of an identity of its own, elicited some subjective response from the (Danish) observer. *Sultekunstnerinde*, thus, also presents a variation to the theme of Greenland as a blank slate or, in the words of Dybdal and Grønlund, as a «hvidt lærred» (2020: 39) and, in this sense, the mediation of a child narrator could be identified as a sort of ‘extenuating’ factor to the problematicness of this praxis. Furthermore, Greenlandic nature – in accordance with the model presented by Pálsson and his conception of *Arcticity* – is depicted as utterly alien, and there is mention of a same detail that also has been taken into consideration by Kim, the protagonist of *Kalak*: the absence of trees. «Og skove var noget der fandtes i gamle dage», recalls Charlotta, «nu findes der ikke længere skove i verden, nu findes der bare ørken af is og fjeld. Og jeg er faret vild i dette fjeld [...]; jeg ved ikke længere hvilken vej jeg kom fra eller hvilken det var meningen jeg skulle gå, jeg går omkring i cirkler. Jeg leder efter havet til der kun er is omkring mig»¹⁷⁸ (Inuk 2004: 62). In this case, the endlessly open scenery is neither associated to a fresh start nor to new possibilities: instead, the bewildering Greenlandic landscape can be here intended as a metaphor for Charlotta’s physical and psychological suffering, which, according to Volquardsen, is «caused by the experience of migration» (2014a: 406). As the scholar further elaborates, the thematization of the negative ‘outcomes’ of Danish migration to Greenland constitutes an element of novelty within *dansk grønlandslitteratur*: «By letting her emotionally troubled Danish protagonist collapse in Greenland, Inuk challenges a long-lasting and powerful

¹⁷⁷ «this landscape [...] is quietly waiting, smiling to itself, for what I will think of it», my translation.

¹⁷⁸ «And woods were something pertaining to the old days; now there are no longer woods in the world, now there’s only a desert of ice and mountains. And I’ve lost myself on this mountain [...]; I don’t know what way I came here or the one I’m supposed to take, I’m walking around in circles. I look for the sea until I’m only surrounded by ice», my translation.

discourse, which [...] usually associates psychological problems and failure with the migration of Greenlanders to Denmark» (Volquardsen 2014a: 407).

Further considerations on the interaction between Charlotta and the Arctic environment could be made with regard to the insertion, within the novel, of two Greenlandic mythical figures, namely the *qivittoq* and *Havets Moder*. The *qivittoq*, as it has been mentioned earlier, is identified as someone who, unable to fit into society, opts for leading a ‘hermit’ life in the mountains; in Greenlandic folklore, furthermore, *qivittoqs* are also attributed supernatural qualities. Charlotta, struck by the spookiness of the stories she has heard – there is talk, for instance, of «et forhekset fjeld», a «bewitched mountain» where even expert climbers disappear (Inuk 2004: 49) – seems to overlook the former aspect; nonetheless, the *splittelse*, the sense of dyscrasia endured by these «mountain wanderers» may also be linked to Charlotta’s own sense of non-belonging. The myth of the «Mother of the Sea», reprised as a sort of hallucinatory vision or a dream experienced by Charlotta in her hospital bed, is even more evidently related to Greenlandic nature, as it may serve as a cautionary tale that explains the potentially nefarious consequences of human interference in the natural environment; according to Kleivan, however, the myth does not revolve around an ecologist message: «det er ikke en bogstavelig forurenelse af havet, det drejer sig om [...]. Der var en række taburegler, som mennesker skulle forholde i forbindelse med fangst, fødsel, menstruation og død, og hvis fangsten svigtede, var forklaringen, at en eller anden, vidende eller uvidende om det, havde overtrådt en taburegel»¹⁷⁹ (Kleivan 1997: 104). Let us consider the following passage:

I hendes tykke og søgræslignende hår sidder alverdens fangstdyr fast, som i et net af klistret edderkoppespind: Sæl og hval og marsvin og torsk og laks, alk og edderfugl og kanin og ræv og hermelin, endog bjørne og rener og ulve og moskus og mammut. Og det er grunden til at resten af mit hav og min verden er så tom og øde og der ingenting er at bringe hjem til middagsmad eller ly eller klæder [...].

– Vi har ingenting at spise, siger jeg til den fornemme oldgamle dame. – Hvordan får vi køkkener og kyster og køleskabe fyldt op med næring igen!

– Du skal rede og rede mit lange hår, svarer hun, som det siden tidernes morgen [...]. – Det er snavset af menneskers ugerninger, og alt der findes at spise sidder fast i det og kan ikke komme løs.¹⁸⁰ (Inuk 2004: 128)

¹⁷⁹ «It’s not literally about sea pollution [...]. It was a set of taboo-rules to be observed with regard to hunting, labour, menstruation, or death, and if the hunter failed, the explanation was that someone, more or less knowingly, had contravened one of the rules», my translation.

¹⁸⁰ «All the quarry in the world is tangled in her thick, seaweed-looking hair, similar to the net of a sticky spiderweb: seal and whale and porpoise and cod and salmon, razorbill and eider and rabbit and fox and stoat, even bears and reindeers and wolves and mammoth. And this is the reason why the rest of my sea and my world is so empty and desolate and there is nothing to take home for dinner or to make shelters or clothes with it [...]. – We have nothing to eat, I said to the distinguished elderly lady. – How can we fill our kitchens and coasts and fridges

Charlotta, in a coma-like state, has visions regarding Heaven and Hell and the biblical figures who inhabit the two afterlife-realms. The Mother of the Sea makes her appearance after the devil («Djævlen stikker mig i hjertet og ler og slukker alt det hvide lys og jeg er væk»¹⁸¹, Inuk 2004: 127), and the juxtaposition between the two characters may suggest that Charlotta, despite her Danish background, recognises herself in two different cultural traditions at the same time. Whilst the devil presupposes a Manichean *Weltanschauung*, the Mother of the Sea is rather represented in terms of neutrality, since, at least in the aforementioned extract, she limits herself to making sure that the balance between the availability of natural resources and their exploitation is respected. This interpretation of the myth – which, in more recent times, has also been referred to, for instance, in the Danish drama series *Borgen. Riget, Magten og Ære* (2022) – inevitably overlooks its ‘regulatory’ use remarked by Kleivan (1997: 104).¹⁸² The focus, then, is more on the ‘deferential’ attitude towards the environment promoted by Greenlandic culture – which somewhat echoes the Danish habit to represent Greenlanders as engaged in a «special, and respectful, relationship with nature» (Sørensen 2008: 110). Despite the presence of minor elements that can be traced back to this narrative, however, *Sultekunstnerinde* stands out as the first fictional text encompassing life in Nuuk (Thisted 2011a: 285), as well as a mostly successful attempt to overcome the classic binary opposition ‘Greenlandicness’ vs. ‘Danishness’, on the one side, and nature/irrationality vs. culture/rationality, on the other; in Charlotta’s own words, «bastarderne er de smukkeste, hér som alle andre steder»¹⁸³ (Inuk 2004: 133).

with food again? – You must comb and comb my long hair, she replies, as it has been said since the dawn of time [...]. – It is dirty from the misdeeds of people, and everything that is available to eat is stuck in it and cannot come free», my translation.

¹⁸¹ «The devil stabs me in the heart, he laughs and turns off the white light, and I’m gone», my translation.

¹⁸² Nonetheless, taboo-breaking behaviors and the need for ‘atonement’, or at least purification, are arguably present in *Sultekunstnerinde*. One need only think about Charlotta’s relationship with menstruation, or her experiences with adult men preying on teenage girls.

¹⁸³ «Bastards are always the most beautiful ones, here and everywhere.»

2.4. *Greenlandic as a Barrier and a Bridge: 'Foreignizing' and 'Domesticizing' Attitudes Towards the Language(s) of the Former Colonized*

2.4.1 *From Telemark to Eastern Greenland: Kim's Linguistic Passings*

As anticipated at the beginning of this chapter, with the release of *Kalak*, in 2007, Leine was instantly hailed by the Danish public as a sort of «kulturformidler», «translator», of Dano-Greenlandic post-colonial relations (see Thisted 2015: 105).¹⁸⁴ Thisted elaborates on this consideration by mentioning some of Leine's biographical details that in all likelihood contributed to its shaping:

Sin autoritet henter Leine i personlig erfaring, baseret på sammenlagt femten års virke som sygeplejerske forskellige steder i Grønland, fra hovedstaden Nuuk i Vestgrønland til små bygdesamfund i det afsondrede Østgrønland. Som en ud af meget få danskere behersker Leine det grønlandske sprog. Debutromanen fortæller en historie om et incestforhold mellem far og søn, med sønnens efterfølgende alkohol-, pille og sexmisbrug på Grønland, som til forveksling ligner den historie, forfatteren i andre sammenhænge har berettet som selvoplevet. Romanen er derfor blevet betegnet som autofiktion eller performativ biografisme (Haarder 2014). Fra starten blev Leine set som en – længe savnet – postkolonial stemme i den danske litterære offentlighed. I begyndelsen virkede han noget uforberedt på at skulle spille en sådan rolle, men han har gradvis taget den på sig og drejet sine tekster mere og mere i retning af postkoloniale problematikker [...].¹⁸⁵ (Thisted 2015: 105-106)

According to the scholar, then, it could be argued that Leine's debut novel 'happened' to fulfill some of the 'needs of the frustrated' Danish audience at the time. Not only did the author engage in a portrayal of post-colonial Greenland, but he also drew from his own biographical experience and chose a literary mode that allowed him to merge facts with fiction without losing

¹⁸⁴ It is to be noted that, despite Leine's production being entirely in Danish, the author is originally from Telemark, Norway. In the course of my contribution, I will be considering Leine as an author full-fledgedly pertaining to Danish literature, as most scholars who have been critically engaged his work (see Thisted 2011a; Volquardsen 2014a; Dybdal 2021).

¹⁸⁵ «His status is based on his first-hand experiences working as a nurse for fifteen years in various locations in Greenland, from the capital, Nuuk, in western Greenland to small, remote settlements in eastern Greenland. While he writes in Danish, Leine is among few Danes to have mastered Greenlandic. His debut novel portrays an incestuous relationship between father and son and the son's subsequent experiences with alcohol, drug and sexual abuse in Greenland. This resembles a story the author has recounted as his own in other contexts, and the novel is therefore widely considered autofiction or performative biographism (Thisted 2011a; Haarder 2014). From the outset, the Danish literary audience welcomed Leine as a long-awaited postcolonial voice. Initially, he seemed somewhat unprepared to play this role, but he has gradually come to embrace it and has increasingly turned the focus of his writing to postcolonial issues» (Thisted 2016: 152).

a realistic touch. In order to explain the close relation between Leine's – but also Mondrup's – success and their respective biographies, Volquardsen draws a comparison with Yahya Hassan (1995-2020), the late *enfant terrible* of Danish poetry. Based on his life, Hassan's poems «satisfied the long-felt demand for an authentic voice from the infamous Muslim parallel societies in the suburbs» (Volquardsen 2014a: 397). Similarly, Leine and Mondrup's «expertise» in post-colonial Greenland relies on their direct experience of it (*Ibidem*) and the same could apply to Inuk, who spent a considerable part of her childhood in Greenland. Contrary to Leine and Mondrup, however, this author has not 'specialized' in *grønlandslitteratur*, and Greenland plays a relatively marginal role within her production. Therefore, while Leine and Mondrup have often publicly expressed themselves with regard to Greenland-related matters (see *supra*, p. 98), Inuk's engagement is rather modest – or, at least, it is given less visibility.

It should be noted that Thisted (2016: 152) mentions Leine's fluency in Greenlandic as one of the incisive factors that contributed to the unanimous acclaim he instantly received. The linguistic barrier between Danes and Greenlanders and its overcoming is, in fact, at the core of *Kalak* itself, as already suggested by the title of the novel. Thisted renders this term, as «rigtig eller ægte Grønlænder»¹⁸⁶ (2011a: 268), whereas Karina, one of the protagonist's many Greenlandic lovers, translates it as «skide Grønlænder», stressing its ironic connotation (Leine 2019a [2007]: 100). It may come as a surprise for the reader that the appellative *Kalak* does not refer to an 'actual' Greenlander, but to Kim, i.e., the main character of the novel, based on the author himself. As it could be assumed from the subtitle «erindringsroman» («memoir») – identified by Jon Helt Haarder (2010: 33) as an «autofictional marker» – writer and character also share life vicissitudes, to the point that it is hard to separate actual events from fictional elaborations.¹⁸⁷ Both literary figure and author were born in Telemark, Norway, and later moved to Denmark during their teenage years. One could think that Leine's origins are somewhat 'denied' as the author chooses to employ Danish, which he perfectly masters, in pursuing his literary ambitions. What is, then, the role of Greenlandic in this picture, which already bears atypical traits?

¹⁸⁶ «True or authentic Greenlander», my translation.

¹⁸⁷ Both Thisted (2011) and Volquardsen (2014a) have addressed *Kalak*'s genre in association with the idea of «performative biographism» – a wide-ranging concept theorised by Jon Helt Haarder which potentially includes the most diverse manifestations of (auto)biographical literature. In his article *Hullet i nullerne. Ind og ud af kunsten med performativ biografisme* (2010; *The Hole in the 00s: In and Out of Art with Performative Biographism*), Haarder explicitly mentions *Kalak* as an example of autofictional writing.

Before delving into Kim's relationship with the Greenlandic language(s), it could be interesting to consider the following passage, describing his *gymnasium* years and, in particular, his 'gift' for languages:

Jeg opdager at jeg har sprogøre. Engelsk lærer jeg at tale næsten flydende af en ven [...]. Tysk og fransk tilegner jeg mig på samme måde som man kan lære en melodi første gang man hører den. Lektier er stort set overflødige. Alligevel får jeg gode karakterer. For at få en god udtale spiller jeg utallige gange Stravinskys *Soldatens Historie*, løfter pickuppen, efterligner stemmen, spiller passagen igen, gentager, gentager, gentager [...]. Når min fransklærer har en af sine dage med glasagtigt blik og en bitter krølle ved mundvigen, lader hun mig læse højt af en lang tekst og læner sig tilbage med halvt lukkede øjne. Hun vil ikke tro mig når jeg siger at jeg aldrig har boet i Frankrig, kun opholdt mig i Paris i seks timer. Tysklæreren, fru Barfoed, er en tresårig kvinde med knold i nakken, rouge på kinderne og en svulmende kavaler gang fuld af rynker. Jeg bøjer beredvilligt hendes uregelmæssige verber og kan hendes kasus i søvne og får hende hurtigt til at elske mig. På Det Tyske Kulturinstitut på Nørrevold låner jeg nogle kassettebånd med Thomas Manns stemme og efterligner hans dvælende og blide version af det tyske sprog. Det er 'sehr autentisch', siger fru Barfoed.¹⁸⁸ (Leine 2019a [2007]: 66)

This extract shows how easily young Kim manages to gain proficiency in English, French and German. While in the former case he is facilitated by frequent interactions with his native English friend, the matter is slightly different with regard to French and German. These two other languages are acquired through imitation rather than intercommunication. Nonetheless, the final effect – which is probably what Kim was aiming at – is the same in both instances: utter authenticity. The aforementioned passage is not directly connected with the postcolonial implications *Kalak* has been praised for; in spite of that, it could be argued that these few lines somewhat seem to anticipate Kim's eagerness in learning Greenlandic, as well as a mimicking attitude. In this regard, the search for «authenticity» could hint at postcolonial notion of «passing», defined by Volquardsen as «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» (2014a: 409).

¹⁸⁸ «I realize that I have a talent for languages. From a friend I learn to speak English almost fluently [...]. I approach German and French in the same way one can learn a melody after hearing it for the first time. Lessons are virtually superfluous. Still, I get fine grades. To get a good pronunciation, I play Stravinsky's *Soldier's Tale* countless times, I lift the stylus, imitate the voice, play the passage again, repeat, repeat, repeat [...]. When my French teacher is having one of her days with a glass-looking stare and a bitter wrinkle around her mouth, she lets me read out loud a long text and leans back with half-closed eyes. She doesn't want to believe me when I say that I've never lived in France, that I've been to Paris only for six hours. The German teacher, mrs. Barfoed, is a sixty-year-old woman with a bun on her nape, blush on her cheeks, and a bulging décolleté full of wrinkles. I voluntarily offer to conjugate her irregular verbs and I know all the ins and outs of her cases, and I get her to love me soon. From the German Culture Institute in Nørrevold I borrow some tapes with Thomas Mann's voice and mimic his lingering and gentle version of the German language. It is 'sehr autentisch', according to mrs. Barfoed», my translation.

After moving to Greenland to work there as a nurse (as well as to make life experiences that could be turned into literature), Kim buys a Greenlandic phrasebook, and decides to learn a new word every day. Throughout chapter four, Kim enumerates six of the words he has been learning, «tuttu» («reindeer»), «nanoq» («polar bear»), «qaqqaq» («mountain»), «inuk» («human being»), «angut» («man»), and «imaq» («sea»)¹⁸⁹ The phrasebook represents a first way to access (Western) Greenlandic, and the words mentioned by Kim do not seem to be chosen casually: most of them are pertaining to Greenland's landscape and fauna, with the exception of «inuk» and «angut» – a sort of 'anthropic' counterpart to the former category. Two observations can be made about this 'essential' vocabulary: firstly, it can be noted that womanhood is completely absent from the picture and, secondly, that the focus on Greenland's nature could hint at a stereotypical and exoticizing attitude towards Denmark's former colony. Leine seems to be aware of this risk, and in the passage that follows he explicitly addresses the Danish preconception of Greenlandic as a «language of the nature» (Leine 2019a [2007]: 89-90):

Hvis jeg havde forestillet mig at grønlandsk var en slags natursprog, så bliver jeg skuffet. Jeg forsøger at regne ud, hvor mange bøjningsformer et udsagnsord har og når til 640. Yderligere indviklet bliver det af at udsagnsord ofte opfører sig som navneord, navneord som tillægsord og tillægsord som udsagnsord. En sætning med kryds, bolle og firkant består tit kun af et enkelt ord, der til gengæld er sat sammen af kæder på fem til ti stavelser, noget der gør det nærmest umuligt at læse en tekst [...]. Grønlænderne behersker virtuost de forskellige bøjningsformer, men kan ikke give mig en forklaring på sammenhængen i de lange remser, kun gentage dem med variationer af tempo og volumen¹⁹⁰.

The impression that the reader gets is that the idea of a «natursprog» seems somewhat incompatible with the grammar of Greenlandic, according to Kim, mainly due to its 'objective' complexity, which finds its expression in uncountable inflectional forms and exceptions to rules. The grammar of Greenlandic, as we can assume from the last sentence of the extract, bears nonetheless a 'mysterious' quality to it; the mystery cannot even be disclosed by Greenlanders themselves, who apparently are not able to give Kim any theoretical explanation of the linguistic forms they employ. Even though these considerations are made to remark

¹⁸⁹ Leine 2019a [2007]: 81, 83, 85, 87, 88.

¹⁹⁰ «If I had imagined that Greenlandic was some sort of language of the nature, I should be disappointed. I try to figure out how many inflectional forms a verb can have, and I count 640 of them. This is further complicated by the fact that verbs often behave as nouns, nouns behave as adjectives, and adjectives as verbs. A sentence with subject, verb, and object often consists of a single word, a word that, however, is formed by chains from five to ten syllables, which makes it nearly impossible to read a text [...]. Greenlanders master inflectional forms with virtuosity, but they cannot give me an explanation of how these long word strings are combined, they just keep repeating them with variations of rhythm and volume», my translation.

Kim's 'disappointment' in encountering a not-so-exotic language, they actually insert themselves in long-lasting colonial narratives: the supposed complexity of Greenlandic, besides from being a common motif in *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, is often used as an argument by a great number of Danish immigrants living in Greenland who are extremely reluctant to approach the language. The phenomenon, as it has been anticipated, has been addressed by Per Bloch (2022), who states that «Grønlandsk bliver af mange omtalt som verdens sværeste sprog. Et argument, som ikke afholder grønlændere fra at lære dansk, der også bliver betragtet som svært».¹⁹¹ According to Bloch, then, Danes generally fail at acknowledging their privileged position – which concretizes, among other things, also on a linguistic level: danification, in fact, led to the inauguration of educational programs in Danish, and to the consequent increase of Danish speakers in Greenland; even today, the «language of the former coloniser» (Terpstra 2015: 59) plays a major role in 'higher' frameworks and in urban contexts, regardless of Greenlandic being Greenland's official language since 2009 (see Terpstra 2015: 58-60). Kim, however, despite dwelling on the stereotypical (and problematic) assumptions on the 'complexity' of Greenlandic, distinguishes himself for actually learning the language, thus distancing himself from the cliché of the 'neo-colonizing' Dane. Even more unusual is the fact that Kim (and his extra-literary counterpart) does not limit to mastering the Western variety of the language: after moving from Nuuk to Tasiilaq, he also learns Eastern Greenlandic, as we shall see in detail afterwards.

It has been anticipated that Kim does not look up for the entry «woman» in his Greenlandic phrasebook, or, at least, he does not bother to tell the reader. We are introduced to the Greenlandic word for «woman» in a completely different context, i.e., during Kim's night adventures in the pubs of Nuuk. One evening, while he is drinking alone at the bar on the top of Hotel Hans Egede, Kim is approached by a Greenlandic woman flirting with him: «Hun hedder Arnaq, siger hun. Det betyder kvinde»¹⁹² (Leine 2019a [2007]: 93). Kim's secret nocturnal life in Nuuk is essential to his assimilation: after Arnaq, the man meets Karina, the first of his Greenlandic lovers, who introduces him to environments which would otherwise be inaccessible for him, since he is not a Greenlander (Thisted 2011a: 271; Volquardsen 2014a: 400): «I disse nattemørke lejligheder erhverver jeg en større viden om grønlandsk mentalitet,

¹⁹¹ «Greenlandic is considered by many the world's most complicated language. An argument that does not stop Greenlanders from learning Danish, which is also considered hard», my translation.

¹⁹² «She's called Arnaq, she says. It means "woman"».

sprog og skikke end alverdens bøger kunne have lært mig»¹⁹³ (Leine 2019a [2007]: 132-133). On the one side, then, we have the theoretical knowledge provided by grammar lessons and the phrasebook and, on the other, Kim's direct experience of Greenlandic culture and language. These complementary elements are at the basis of the character's Greenlandic education. It is worth asking whether this image contributes to the reiteration of binary narratives between 'Danishness' and 'Greenlandicness' or whether Leine rather aims at deconstructing 'us/them' discourses – which is precisely what Peter Høeg, according to Thisted, failed at (Thisted 2003: 60). The matter is unclear, as in most cases in *Kalak*, because the narrator often insists on the boundaries between Denmark and Greenland, but, at the same time, he actively pursues the creation of a «third space», where those categories are merged, played with and re-constructed. Let us consider, for instance, the following passage:

Jeg har for længst overhalet de andre danskere i sprogbeherskelse, for selv de der har været i landet i ti og tyve år, kan ikke mere end et par brokker, som de til gengæld bruger hele tiden. Efter et halvt år er jeg nået til et punkt hvor jeg kan tage telefonen, forstå hvad der bliver sagt og give et forståeligt svar. Der sker stadigvæk misforståelser, men de fører som regel til latter og ikke til vrede. I brystlommen bærer jeg en lommebog, hvor jeg hver dag nedtegner nye ord og vendinger som jeg memorerer til næste dag. Jeg beder det grønlandske personale om udelukkende at tiltale mig på grønlandsk, men det må jeg opgive indtil videre. Der er stadig for mange udtryk jeg ikke forstår.¹⁹⁴ (Leine 2019a [2007]: 101)

As we can read, then, Kim fully identifies with a Dane (despite his atypical background) and considers the proficiency in Greenlandic as a crucial difference marker between Danes and Greenlanders – an 'obstacle' he wishes and strives to overcome. On the one side, then, there is the unfolding of an explicit «enunciatory act of splitting» (Bhabha 1994: 128) and, on the other, an attempt to surpass the colonial dialectic of oppositions, in this case between 'Danishness' and 'Greenlandicness'. The dismantling of this logic only occurs through Kim's life experience, leaving aside any form of theoretical reflection – and this is probably the reason why Thisted defines Leine as a «somewhat unprepared» (Thisted 2016: 152, see *supra*, p. 135) mediator between post-colonial Denmark and Greenland, referring to the time of his literary debut. It is

¹⁹³ «In these night-dark apartments I acquire a deeper knowledge of Greenlandic mentality, language, and habits, I learn more than any book could ever teach me».

¹⁹⁴ «It's been long since I have overtaken the other Danes in language proficiency, because even those who have been in the country for ten or twenty years can't say more than a couple of expressions – which, however, they use all the time. After half a year I have reached a point where I can pick up the phone, understand what they're saying and give a comprehensible answer. Misunderstandings still occur, but they generally lead to laughter rather than anger. In my breast pocket I carry a notebook where every day I write down new words and phrases to memorise for the following day. I ask the Greenlandic staff to address me exclusively in Greenlandic, but I must leave it to a later time. There are still too many expressions I don't understand», my translation.

pretty evident that language (alongside with food, as we shall see later) is one of the cultural elements through which Kim mimics ‘Greenlandicness’. The character’s attitude toward the Greenlandic Other has been first identified as «inverted mimicry» by Ebbe Volquardsen, who elaborates on the concept as follows:

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. 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. (Volquardsen 2014a: 403)

It should be noted, I believe, that this reversed mimicking attitude, even though it has the unequivocal merit to stress the ‘performative’ nature of ethnic/cultural identity, does not entail its original «subversive» quality. Kim’s attitude, on the contrary, could be even considered problematic in relation to the character’s (and the writer’s) background.

As mentioned earlier, Kim does not only progressively improve his Greenlandic – outshining other Danes who had ventured on learning it (including his former teacher in Nuuk) –, but he also approaches Eastern Greenlandic, the variety spoken in the ‘wildest’ area of the island, where Danish is relatively unknown:

Mit grønlandske har taget et hop fremad. De færreste her taler dansk, men de er tålmodige på deres egen lattermilde måde, taler langsomt og tydeligt, forklarer med en meget levende gestikulation hvad de mener. Dialekten har den samme fjerne lighed med det rigsgrønlandsk jeg lærte i Nuuk, som nordnorsk har med københavnsk. Havet, fjeldene og de store afstande har skabt en særpræget version af sproget, eller måske snarere bevaret det i en mere oprindelig form. Men det omgiver mig fra morgen til aften, både på arbejdet og privat, og jeg lærer det, fordi jeg gerne vil, og fordi jeg er nødt til det.¹⁹⁵ (Leine 2019a [2007]: 142-143)

This paragraph is a clear example of Kim’s twofold attitude towards Greenlandic (and possibly ‘Greenlandicness’ in its entirety), as the narrator alternates and merges domesticizing and

¹⁹⁵ «My Greenlandic has taken a leap forward. Few people here speak Danish, but they are patient in their own humorous way, they speak slowly and concisely, and explain what they mean by gesticulating animatedly. Their dialect bears the same remote resemblance to the main variety of Greenlandic that I had learned in Nuuk of that shared by Nordic Norwegian and the Danish spoken in Copenhagen. The sea, the mountains, and the big distances have created a peculiar version of the language, or maybe they have rather preserved it. But it surrounds me from the morning to the evening, both at work and in private contexts, and I learn it because I want to, and because I’m forced to», my translation.

foreignizing observations: the difference between Western and Eastern Greenlandic is recounted through the parallelism between two other languages Kim has been exposed to, Nordic Norwegian and the Danish variety spoken in Copenhagen, which also happen to be well known to his ideal audience; on the other hand, the state of relative isolation characterizing Eastern Greenland – and, extensively, the «rock island» Kim has moved to (Leine 2019a [2007]: 142) – is being romanticized, and, in particular, discourses on the linguistic boundary only focus on stereotypical elements of the Greenlandic landscape, the sea and the mountains. Furthermore, in considering the language, Kim seems to align himself with the trope of Eastern Greenland being the most ‘authentic’ Greenland, whose uncontaminated state facilitates the encounter with utter ‘Otherness’. As it has already been anticipated, Western Greenlanders also tend to insert themselves in these exoticizing narratives, contributing to the preservation of the image of the «Wild East» (Thisted 2011a: 273-274). In this case, then, it can be surprisingly hard to separate Danish clichés about Greenland from mimicry of ‘Western Greenlandicness’. Once again, however, Kim’s ‘chameleon’ personality prevails, and the man takes on the challenge to learn Eastern Greenlandic – out of necessity, as we can read in the extract –, but also because he is eager to. So, as the scenario of the novel changes for the third time, we are witnessing a third cultural ‘adaption’ undergone by Kim. Here, the matter is further complicated by Western-Eastern Greenlandic relations: does the nurse’s mimicry of Eastern-‘Greenlandicness’ imply the rejection of his sense of belonging to the community of Nuuk? Does this further passing suggest that he should be addressed as more ‘authentic’ a Greenlander than most Western Greenlanders? These paradoxical entailments seem to suggest, as already hinted by Jon Helt Haarder (2010: 38), that Leine relates his «æstetisk identitetsarbejde» to a ‘performative’ mode. In Haarder’s own words:

Kim gennemskuer kun delvist at han dermed ender som en parodi. Ikke en parodi på enhver tanke om oprindelighed, ikke en etnisk version af Judith Butlers drag, men en parodi på tanken om identitet som noget man kan vælge, fx at man som dansker på kant med det danske kan undslippe sig selv i Grønland og sætte egne vellykkethedsbetingelser for sin utopiske avatar hinsides samfund og postkoloniale magtstrukturer. Det grønlandske, «etniciteten», er ikke en naturgivet essens, men så sandelig heller ikke et sprog enhver bare kan lære sig fordi man lige synes det er interessant.¹⁹⁶ (*Ibidem*)

¹⁹⁶ «Kim realises only partially that he ends up being a parody. Not a parody of any form of native culture, not an ethnic version of Judith Butler’s drag, but a parody of identity as something you can choose, for example by fleeing to Greenland, as a Dane critical of Danishness, and by setting one’s own condition to live as a utopian avatar, regardless of society and postcolonial structures. Greenlandicness, ‘ethnicity’, is not some essence shaped by nature, but it is certainly not a language you just can learn because you think it is interesting», my translation.

Despite appreciating Leine's operation on an aesthetic level, Haarder criticizes its extra-textual consequences, i.e., the decontextualization of cultural traits – which, in a sense, are reified outside of the categories 'Greenlandicness' and 'Danishness', as they existed *per se*, and not within a framework of late colonial relations. Kim's 'performative' conception of ethnic identity, I think, actually mirrors what Judith Butler, with regard to the 'performativity' of gender roles, identifies as «ambivalent drag» (2014: 124). According to Butler, «there is no necessary relation between drag and subversion, and [...] drag may well be in the service of both the denaturalisation and the reidealization of hyperbolic heterosexual gender norms» (Butler 2014: 125). Nonetheless, drag has the merit to expose gender binarism as a *discourse* that, as such, can be produced and reproduced. Not dissimilarly, Kim's 'passings' – which also unfold on a linguistic level, as underscored by Haarder in the quoted passage – show that 'Greenlandicness', as well as 'Danishness', can be conceived as non-essential categories. Whether this representation bears a subversive quality, however, is debatable. Even Kim – or, or more likely Leine as author, who maintains an ironic distance from the character described in *Kalak* – seems aware of his problematic position: «Ikke alle er lige henrykte for mine assimileringforsøg. Det gælder både grønlændere og danskere [...]. Måske er der nogen der føler sig stødt, eller pinligt berørt, synes at jeg spiller komedie og er en nar»¹⁹⁷ (Leine 2019a [2007]: 101).

2.4.2 *The Language of Childhood: The Use of Greenlandic in Lotte Inuk's Sultekunstnerinde*

Lotte Inuk's young adult autofictional novel *Sultekunstnerinde* recounts the 'Greenlandic' coming-of-age of Charlotta, a Danish teenager who lives in Nuuk with her mother between 1976 and 1979. Volquardsen observes that also in this case – similarly to *Kalak* – «author, narrator and protagonist seem to be identical» (2014a: 396), as suggested by the name of the main character, which is almost indistinguishable from Inuk's real name, Charlotte Christine

¹⁹⁷ «Not everyone is equally fond of my assimilation attempts, both Greenlanders and Danes [...]. Maybe there's someone who feels offended or embarrassingly involved and thinks that I'm playing a part or that I'm a fool», my translation.

Hoff Hansen.¹⁹⁸ The young protagonist finds herself in Greenland by chance, merely following her mother, who has applied for a job overseas in the mid-1970s and does not know much of Greenland at the time. Her only knowledge comes from an illustrated book she used to own in Denmark: «Et år havde jeg en stor billedbog med der hed ‘Menneskenes Land’¹⁹⁹ og hørte til blandt mine kæreste ejendele [...]. Især titlen gjorde indtryk på mig, og fik mig til at drømme: Menneskenes Land. Et land af lutter mennesker, selvom der var flest dyr og vidtstrakte ubeboede landskaber i bogen»²⁰⁰ (Inuk 2004: 205). Greenland, then, was only a place Charlotta had fantasized about with utter naiveté, and her encounter with ‘Greenlandicness’ seems to be mediated by a similar child-like perspective.

With regard to the linguistic barrier, this ‘innocence’ seems to unfold, at least partly, in the games Charlotta plays with her Greenlandic peers: «Med børn er det så let, plejer min mor at smigre, er det ikke en fantastisk ting, de behøver slet ikke sproget for at kunne kommunikere med hinanden! Selv er jeg ikke helt så sikker»²⁰¹ (Inuk 2004: 36). Despite her initial perplexity, Charlotta later engages precisely with the form of ‘non-verbal’ interaction described by her mother, and even finds solace in it, as we can assume from this extract:

Her i min nye verden synes det anderledes nemt og ligetil; man går alene ude i fjeldet, springer fra knold til knold omkring en myggesummende smeltevandssø og tænker sine egne tanker [...]. Så kommer der en eller anden tilfældig mindreårig unge man aldrig før har set hen og synes man er sød og smiler stort og tandløst til én og spørger, nogle gange på sit eget sprog, i fuld tillid til at man alligevel vil forstå det væsentligste: *Skal vi lege?* Også selvom det kun skulle blive for denne ene eftermiddag eller endog for en time. Det kilder i maven hver gang, livet bliver så let og løftefuldt af dét: – Skal vi lege. Jeg har lyst til at lege med dig. Har du også lyst, så kom!²⁰² (Inuk 2004: 42)

¹⁹⁸ Volquardsen comments on the author’s choice to employ a pseudonym as follows: «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, has perpetuated her biographical connection to Greenland in her artist’s name; inuk is the Greenlandic word for human» (2014a: 406).

¹⁹⁹ It should be noted that the term, according to Thisted, does not translate the Greenlandic toponym *Kalaallit Nunaat*, contrary to what many believe: «Outside Greenland, it is generally believed that the Greenlandic name for Greenland means “Land of the People”; however, [...] Kalaallit is the West Greenlandic term for modern-day Greenlanders who trace their ancestry to two sources: to the Inuit to the West and the Scandinavians to the East. When Greenlanders speak of “our ancestors” in the plural, they refer to the Inuit [...]. When they speak of the ancestor who gave the family its surname, they refer to a European, usually a Dane, who came to Greenland, married a local woman, and started a family» (Thisted 2022: 198).

²⁰⁰ «One year I carried with me a big illustrated book with the title ‘The Land of the People’. I was struck especially by the title, which made me dream: The land of the people. A land with mere people, even though the book mainly presented animals and uninhabited landscapes», my translation.

²⁰¹ «It’s so easy for children, my mum used to blandish, isn’t it great that they don’t even need a language to communicate with one another! I myself am not so sure about it», my translation.

²⁰² «In my new world everything felt otherwise easy and simple: you walk alone in the mountains, jump from swell to swell around the glacial lake humming with mosquitos and think your own thoughts [...]. Then some casual underage boy you’ve never seen before comes along and he thinks you are nice and smiles a broad and toothless

As Charlotta grows older and childhood games are substituted by her first romantic adventures, this ‘other’ form of communication remains substantially unaltered, as suggested by Moritz Schramm and Kirsten Thisted, who argue that «[a]fgørende er imidlertid, at de første erfaringer med kærlighed – og senere seksualitet – handler om interaktioner mellem personer, der ikke deler sprog. Den kropslige, non-verbale interaktion bliver i denne kontekst til en form for *kommunikation*, der træder i stedet for sprog»²⁰³ (Schramm & Thisted 2015: 178). This is further elaborated with considerations on the peculiar setting of *Sultekunstnerinde* and on Lotte Inuk’s poetics. On the one side, according to Schramm and Thisted, non-verbal interaction is favored by the specificities of Greenland’s postcolonial context, certainly not characterized by perfect bilingualism, since Greenlandic and Danish are unequally distributed among Greenlanders and Danes (Schramm & Thisted 2015: 179). On the other, in her whole production Inuk insists on «[m]otivet om den non-verbale, privilegerede adgang til den andens inderste følelsesliv»²⁰⁴ (*Ibidem*).

Parallel to the motif of ‘overcoming’ linguistic barriers through games or bodily experiences, runs Charlotta’s slow progress regarding her Greenlandic proficiency and her sense of discomfort and unsuitability in interacting with native speakers:

Jeg kommer i tanker om at jeg sandsynligvis ikke er i stand til at udtale denne kærestes navn rigtigt, i deres ører, og at afsløre dette ville være endnu mere pinligt end det føles lige nu, ikke at være i stand til at sige noget overhovedet. Til sidst slapper jeg af og begynder at synes det næsten også kunne være en lettelse»²⁰⁵ (Inuk 2004: 114).

Despite her initial frustration, Charlotta later realizes that this ‘hindering’ is not likely to affect the communication with Hansi, a Greenlandic boy with whom she shares her first kiss. In his article *Pathological Escapists, Passing and the Perpetual Ice: Old and New Trends in Danish-Greenlandic Migration Literature*, already mentioned with regard to *Kalak*, Ebbe Volquardsen also considers *Sultekunstnerinde* in the light of reverse mimicry and passing. The linguistic

smile and asks, sometimes in his own language, confident that you’ll catch the essential message: *Do you want to play?* Even though it’s only for that afternoon or maybe even an hour. Every time I get a feeling in my gut, it makes life so simple and full of promises: – Do you want to play. I want to play with you. Come if you want to play with me!», my translation.

²⁰³ «At the same time, it is crucial that her first love– and later sex – experiences involve interactions between people that do not share the language. The physical, non-verbal interaction becomes in this context a form of *communication* that substitutes language», my translation.

²⁰⁴ «The motif of non-verbal, privileged access to the other’s innermost emotional life», my translation.

²⁰⁵ «I realize that probably, to their ears, I’m not able to pronounce the name of this boyfriend correctly, and revealing it would be even more embarrassing than, not being able to say anything at all. Eventually I relax and start thinking it could almost be a relief», my translation.

dimension *per se* is not taken into consideration, as Volquardsen draws attention to Charlotta's perception of the morphological differences between Danes and Greenlanders. Nonetheless, his observations are still worth examining:

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 [...]. 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. (Volquardsen 2014a: 411)

After considering this perspective, we could argue that camouflage, in the case of *Sultekunstnerinde*, is attempted through the body rather than through language 'imitation' – which, as we have seen, is what happens in *Kalak*. This conclusion seems to match the dichotomy between non-verbal and verbal communication already mentioned, which resolves in favor of the 'bodily' dimension. Since Charlotte's 'reverse mimicry', through which «Inuk challenges the common Danish discourses on immigration and integration» (Volquardsen 2014a: 412), does not contemplate language, we could interrogate the effectiveness of this practice. In the words of Ulrik Pram Gad, when it comes to Greenland, «it is difficult to speak about language without committing a political act» (2009: 139); in fact, while majority/minority relations are formally inverted in Greenland, the structure of power remains the same, inevitably affecting the use of Greenlandic and Danish. Let us consider, for instance, how pupils are sorted at the «*Atuarfik* Samuel Kleinschmidt» (Inuk 2004: 66), the school Charlotta is attending: Danish speakers are separated from Greenlandic speakers, but Greenlandic parents who want their children to have better facilities (and possibilities) may opt for the Danish class instead. Sometimes, Greenlandic classes are provided with Danish teachers and textbooks, so that lessons are mostly incomprehensible to the students (Inuk 2004: 68). On the contrary, as it is expected of Danish students, no knowledge of Greenlandic is required:

De danske børn i skolen og de fleste tilflyttere her taler ikke den mindste smule grønlandsk, selv når de er rejst ud for at bo og arbejde i de fjerneste små byer, langt væk fra den dobbeltsprogede hovedstad. Vi børn har ikke engang timer i sproget i skolen. Jeg ville ellers gerne lære at forstå hvad folk rundt omkring mig sådan går og siger til hinanden og taler med hinanden om, og kunne deltage i en samtale uden at andre derfor skulle gøre sig en særlig anstrengelse og opfatte min tilstedeværelse som påtrængende og besværlig. Men når man spørger, får man at vide at grønlandsk er et alt for vanskeligt sprog for en europæer at lære. Det har en fremmedartet grammatik og en udtale vores tunger skulle trænes hårdt for

at kunne mestre! Der ville gå alt for mange vigtige kræfter til spilde hvis hver eneste, også kortvarige tilflytter, skulle sætte tid af til at lære dette usandsynligt svære tungemål.

Hvis man prøver at argumentere, at det vel må være præcis ligeså svært at lære sproget den anden vej rundt, får man ikke rigtigt noget svar. Det er vigtigt for folks fremtid, repeteres det; alle vigtige uddannelser foregår i Danmark og fremtiden er åbenbart uomtvisteligt dansk.

Den slags ting er det bedre ikke at tænke for meget over, eller at komme op at skændes med folk om. Det er jo heller ikke op til mig, jeg kender ikke noget videre til forholdene her og skal ikke være her så længe.²⁰⁶ (*Ibidem*)

In this long extract we are once again presented with the motif of Greenlandic as an extremely difficult language, too difficult for Europeans to learn. In this case, even physiological reasons are mentioned («we would have to train our tongues to master its pronunciation»), leading us to think that the narrator is giving a hyperbolic (and therefore ironic) description of Danish prejudices against Greenlandic. Furthermore, it should be noted that these stances – contrary to the case of *Kalak* – are not internalized, since Charlotta is only reporting the answers she is given by adults, presumably Danes. The girl, at the moment, is still free from preconceptions, and her child-like thoughts, though logically impeccable, do not grasp the reasons behind the difference of status between Danish and Greenlandic. At the same time, it could be argued that her naiveté is also used as a pretext not to get involved in political matters: why should a young girl partake in discussions that lead to discordance, also considering that she will not be staying in Greenland for long?

Although Charlotta, to her dismay, does not manage to learn Greenlandic and overcome her fear of coming across as clumsy and incomprehensible, a few Greenlandic expressions are scattered throughout *Sultekunstnerinde*. The first one is mentioned during the opening scene of the novel, describing Charlotta's awakening in the hospital where she is being treated for severe anorexia: «Hvor er alle andre henne? Alle disse andre end mig. Alle disse Nogen. Skærsilden burde være det mest befolkede sted [...]. Måske. *Immaqa*. Jeg tror jeg levede i et land engang,

²⁰⁶ «The Danish children at school and most newcomers don't speak a single word of Greenlandic, not even if they have moved to live and work in the most remote villages, far from the bilingual capital. We don't even have language lessons at school. I would like to learn to understand what people around me say and what they talk to each other about, and to be able to engage in a conversation without forcing them to make a special effort or come across as intrusive and troublesome. But when you ask, you are told that Greenlandic is too hard a language for Europeans. Its grammar is alien and we would have to train our tongues to master its pronunciation. Too many vital energies would be wasted if everyone, including short-term movers, would set aside time to learn this improbably difficult language. If you try to argue that it must be just as difficult to learn the language the other way around, you don't get any answer. It's important for the future of the people, they keep repeating; all the important education possibilities are in Denmark, and the future is obviously, indisputably Danish. It's better not to think too much about these things, or quarrel about it. It's not up to me either, I don't know much about the life conditions here, and I won't be staying here that long», my translation.

hvor dette ord sagdes at gælde som lov. Ordet mellem ja og nej →»²⁰⁷ (Inuk 2004: 6). In the light of what has been said about Charlotta's proficiency in Greenlandic, this insertion could result surprising, even ill-suited. However, it is perhaps not a case that such a crucial concept is reported in Greenlandic rather than Danish: the oscillation between binary poles is at the core of the novel, on various levels, and does not only regard 'Greenlandicness'/'Danishness', but also, for instance, femininity/masculinity and mind/body – the image of Purgatory itself perfectly epitomises the undecidedness between these dimensions, which sometimes may evolve in the search for a «Third Space of enunciations» (Bhabha 1994: 37). Furthermore, it should be noted that this sentence could be interpreted in view of *Sultekunstnerinde's* autofictional content: Charlotta, unaware of where she is – and even of the fact that she still *exists* –, starts speculating on which of the realms of the afterlife may be hosting her. However, we could assume that a similar bewilderment characterizes Inuk's passage between Greenland/Denmark, on the one side, and childhood/adulthood, on the other.

The Greenlandic adverb «*immaqa*» is the first word to be featured in the short «grønlandsk ordliste» («Greenlandic glossary») appearing at the end of the novel, which contains 22 expressions mostly pertaining to everyday use, as for example «*iterniarit*» («wake up!»), «*qanoq ippisi*» («how are you doing?») etc. (Inuk 2004: 352). A few other terms belong to the semantic field of Greenlandic fauna/food («*ammassæt*», «*appat suaasalit*», «*nattoralik*»),²⁰⁸ while the word «*qivittoq*» (in Danish «*fjeldgænger*», literally «the mountain wanderer») stands out as one related to Greenlandic folklore (*Ibidem*). In the words of Thisted, a «*qivittoq*» can be described as someone who, for various reasons, feels no longer adequate to live in community, and decides to lead a lonely life in the mountains (2004a: 136); «[i] folketroen», continues Thisted, «*mente man, at fjeldgængereren i løbet af nogen tid ville blive opsøgt af de vældige overnaturlige kræfter, der råder i fjeldet*»²⁰⁹ (*Ibidem*). Charlotta addresses this mythical figure with considerations on how seriously *qivittoq* tales are taken by Greenlanders, who, paradoxically, do not seem as preoccupied when faced with more concrete risks:

At blive forvandlet til en *qivittoq* er ikke noget at spøge med, det er tydeligt at forstå på den alvor og respekt selv de mest seriøse voksne her lægger for dagen når de fortæller om

²⁰⁷ «Where is everyone else? Everyone except myself. All these Someones. The Purgatory is supposed to be the most crowded place [...]. Maybe. *Immaqa*. I think I once lived in a land where that word counted as law. The word between yes and no – », my translation.

²⁰⁸ «Little fish», «razorbill stew», «eagle», my translation.

²⁰⁹ «According to folklore, after some time mountain walkers became possessed by the mighty supernatural forces that control the mountains», my translation.

fænomenet. Ingen har lyst til at blive forvandlet til sådan et væsen, og at møde det når man er alene ude i fjeldet kan være endog mere farligt end at spise for meget hvalkød på en gang eller sejle ud i en båd, ind i fjorden, uden at have forhørt sig eller fornemmet grundigt i forvejen, om der skulle være tågebanke eller snestorm på vej.²¹⁰ (Inuk 2004: 49)

The «qivittoq», however, is not the only character pertaining to Greenlandic folklore featured in *Sultekunstnerinde*: there is also mention of «Havets Moder» («the Mother of the Sea»), described by Inge Kleivan as «en gammel myte, som forklarer sammenhængen mellem menneskenes opførsel og de livsnødvendige ressourcer [...]»²¹¹ (1997: 104). This being, whose supernatural appearance is described in detail by Inuk (2004: 128), visits Charlotta in her dreams, while she is lying unconscious in her hospital bed. According to Thisted, the peculiar use of these references contributes to an original interpretation of the cultural encounter between ‘Greenlandicness’ and ‘Danishness’, «hvor grønlandsk fortælletradition og dertil hørende shamanistiske verdensbillede krydses med kristendom og den europæiske eventyrverden»²¹² (Thisted 2005: 29). One last comment that could be made about the Greenlandic glossary regards the last element on the list, which is neither a word nor a phrase, but the Danish translation of an extract from a song by the Greenlandic rock band Sumé. As observed by Thisted, during the 1970s the band became a symbol for Greenland’s politicized climate – which culminated in the introduction of the Home Rule, in 1979 – and gathered support mainly among young people (Thisted 2004b: 142). Volquardsen, commenting on the release of the documentary film *Sumé – Lyden af en revolution* (2014), even insists on the band’s active role in favoring the civil awakening that would later lead to Self-government, in 2009 (Volquardsen 2014b). Charlotta and her friends, some of whom are Greenlandic teenagers rooting for the island’s independency, all listen to Sumé’s music, the *nonplus ultra* of Nuuk’s juvenile culture in the 70s. The girl’s fascination for the band, as we can read in the following extract, is linked to some of the Leitmotifs already mentioned:

Jeg køber også kassettebånd med lokal og for mig aldeles ukendt musik for mine mange nye penge; først og fremmest de samlede udgivelser fra et nyt populært rockband der hedder Sumé og består af fire smukke unge mænd der synger vrede og hurtige sange, hård

²¹⁰ «Being transformed into a qivittoq is not something to joke about; it is easily understandable from the seriousness and respect shown even by the most serious adults when they talk about the phenomenon. No one wants to be transformed into such a creature and meeting them when you are alone in the mountains can be even more dangerous than eating too much whale meat at once, or sailing out in a boat into the fjord without inquiring into or foreseeing the risk of fog bank or blizzard on the way», my translation.

²¹¹ «an ancient myth that explains the connection between human behaviour and primary resources», my translation.

²¹² «where Greenlandic oral tradition and its annexed shamanistic *Weltanschauung* intersect with Christianity and the world of the European fairytales», my translation.

genkendelig rock hvor man jo umiddelbart bare ikke fatter en lyd af teksterne. På deres pladecovers står de ude i fjeldet med seje sorte solbriller på, i hvide kortærmede T-shirts og med kønne muskuløse arme afventende overkors foran brystet. Sumé betyder «Hvor» og alle kender og kan synge med på deres sange, de bliver spillet overalt hvor man kommer. Bag på pladen eller i et lille hefte inde i kassetten står teksten til sangene oversat til dansk ved siden af originalen, men man kan godt bare holde af sangene og de iørefaldende melodier og synge med selvom man ikke ved hvad de handler om, det er virkelig cool og gode sange [...].²¹³ (Inuk 2004: 75)

Also in this case, Charlotta is not immune to the fascination exerted by typically Greenlandic morphological traits, which, as already observed by Volquardsen (2014a: 410-411), she aspires to acquire. In accordance, her (reverse) passing attempt trespasses the dimension of mere ethnicity, encompassing an inadvertently racialized perspective. Her attitude towards ‘Greenlandicness’ and its supposed physical manifestation oscillates between «desire for» and «desire to-be», Freudian concepts reprised by Alan Sinfield (2004: 5) with regard to gender identity – which can be applied to the notion of ethnic/racial identity. Another motif emerging from this paragraph is the ‘uselessness’ of speech: an alternative channel, in this instance, is constituted not by body language, but by music («you can just love the songs and the catchy melodies and sing along even if you do not know what they are about»). Both themes are to be found also in Inuk’s autobiographical text *Et årti i bevægelse. Om at vokse op i 1970’erne* (1987; *A Decade in Motion. On Growing up in the 1970s*). Here, the author recalls her first kiss with a «søn af Menneskenes Land»,²¹⁴ whose beauty was marked by his exotic and «god-like» appearance (Inuk 1987: 42). As a concluding remark to Inuk/Charlotta’s relationship to the Greenlandic language, it is worth reading this extract from the author’s memoir, where Inuk explicitly addresses her fascination for non-verbal forms of communication:

Det dér med sproget – en underlig ting. En vældig barriere i ens liv, når man ikke kan bruge det... men samtidig nok osse en nyttig lektion i bare at *være*. Nu om dage kan jeg tit synes, at man/jeg/vi i denne del af Verden snakker alting ihjel. Måske er det derfor, jeg altid i mig

²¹³ «With my new money I also buy cassette tapes with local and for me completely unknown music; first and foremost all the releases from a new popular rock band called Sumé, four beautiful young men who sing angry and fast songs, recognizable hard rock with incomprehensible lyrics at first hand. On their record sleeves they are pictured in the mountains wearing cool black shades and white short-sleeved t-shirts, with fabulous well-trained arms crossed over the chest. Sumé means ‘Where’ and everyone knows and can sing along to their songs, they are played everywhere you go. On the back of the record or in a small booklet inside the cassette, the lyrics to the songs are translated into Danish next to the original, but you must love the songs and the catchy melodies and sing along even if you don’t know what they are about. These are really cool and great songs», my translation.

²¹⁴ «Son of the Land of the People», my translation.

har en længsel efter at komme langt bort fra Danmark, til hvor der tales sprog jeg ikke kan tale, og hvor jeg derfor bare må opleve...²¹⁵ (*Ibidem*)

Applying the same principle to *Sultekunstnerinde*, we could conclude that Inuk, despite conceiving Greenlandic as a barrier to her integration within Nuuk's community, hardly considers it as a marker of ethnic difference. Charlotta's attention is drawn to bodily, non-verbal forms of interaction (games, kisses/sex, music), and this could be one of the reasons why she seems to suffer more because of her typically Danish features because of her lack of proficiency in Greenlandic. At the same time, these alternative forms of communication could be intended as an attempt to overcome the clear separation between 'Danishness' and 'Greenlandicness' and create a «third space» characterized by undecidedness.

2.4.3 «Børn, der har skullet glemme sig selv»:²¹⁶ *Forms of Linguistic Violence in Mondrup's Tabita*

Contrary to *Kalak* and *Sultekunstnerinde*, *Tabita* (2020) is not an example of autofictional prose. Nonetheless, the events narrated in the novel are inspired by real circumstances (see Thisted 2023: 189), as the final acknowledges seem to suggest: Mondrup expresses her gratitude to six women, «som på hver deres måde har fortalt mig om deres opvækst i Grønland og Danmark. Disse smukke, stærke kvinder»²¹⁷ (2020: 356). The life experiences of these women helped Mondrup recreate the context of the years following Greenland's 'decolonization', officially started in 1953, when the former colony was proclaimed a province of the Danish commonwealth. That period, known as modernization, was characterized, as mentioned, by individual and collective forms of violence towards Greenland and its inhabitants, to the point that some scholars – for instance Søren Rud, Axel Kjær Sørensen, or Lars Jensen (see Rud 2017a: 127) argue that Denmark perpetrated its most explicitly controlling deeds during those years of passage. Shortly before 1953, for example, 22 Greenlandic children

²¹⁵ «The thing with the language – a strange thing. A huge barrier in your life when you don't know how to use it... but, at the same time, also a useful lesson in just *being*. Nowadays I often think that, in this corner of the world, one/I/we always talk things to death. Maybe it is because of this that I always feel the desire to travel far from Denmark to places where they speak languages I don't speak, and where I therefore can just experience...», my translation.

²¹⁶ Mondrup 2020: 5. «Children who had to forget themselves», my translation.

²¹⁷ «Who, each in her own peculiar way, told me about their childhood in Greenland and Denmark. These beautiful, strong women», my translation.

became the object of an experiment carried out by Danish ‘central state’ and, more specifically, they were extirpated from their social context to be brought in Denmark for educational purposes. In Denmark, these children – 9 girls and 13 boys – were supposed to «lære dansk og danne grundstammen i det nye grønlandske skolesystem»²¹⁸ (Bryld 2010: 9); nonetheless, they were never taken back to their homes in Greenland (Ilio/Ritzau 2009). In more recent years, this case caused great indignation all over the world due to the refusal of the former Danish prime minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen to apologize to those who were forcefully involved in the experiment and their families. Rasmussen justified his stance on the basis of Denmark’s supposed good intentions towards Greenland; furthermore, in his own words, «you cannot change history» (*Ibidem*).

In *Tabita*, Mondrup aims precisely at addressing the climate of those years, in an attempt to involve her Danish readers in a critical reflection about Denmark’s colonial deeds. In this regard, Mondrup’s intentions could be compared to the political afflatus characterizing Leine’s *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden* (see Thisted 2015; Thisted 2023). As in the case of this latter text, *Tabita* opens with a dedication clearly stating the novel’s militant and anticolonial purpose: «Til alle de børn, der har skullet glemme sig selv»²¹⁹ (Mondrup 2020: 5). In *Tabita*, then, Mondrup wishes to unfold the role of Denmark regarding the high number of adoptions of Greenlandic children between the Fifties and the late Seventies, when Home Rule was introduced. In commenting on the present policies that regulate ‘international’ adoptions, Helle Nørrelund Sørensen (2021) observes: «Egentlig er det ikke direkte ulovligt, at et grønlandsk barn bliver adopteret til Danmark eller et andet land. Men det bliver vurderet ud fra et princip om, hvad der er ‘bedst for barnet’. Og her spiller barnets grønlandske identitet meget ind».²²⁰ The aim, then, is to prevent cultural ‘estrangement’ and forced assimilation within a new social context.

Tabita thematizes precisely this – more or less institutionalized – form of violence, and narrates, through the point of view of four different female characters, the story of Tabita, a Greenlandic five-year-old girl, and of her younger brother Vitus, with particular emphasis on the circumstances that precede and follow their adoption to a Danish couple. Eva and Berthel, Tabita and Vitus’ adoptive parents, deceitfully convince their *kiffaq* («housemaid») Abelone to

²¹⁸ «Learn Danish and become the core of the new Greenlandic school system», my translation.

²¹⁹ «To all the children who had to forget themselves», my translation.

²²⁰ «Actually, it is not straightly illegal to adopt Greenlandic children and take them to Denmark or to another country. A decision is taken considering what is ‘best for the child’, and in this regard the child’s Greenlandic identity plays a major role», my translation.

let go of her children, so that they can live a better life in Denmark. Eva's relationship to motherhood is rather tormented, probably due to her infertility, and the woman insists on raising Tabita and Vitus as her own children – her own *Danish* children. As one could easily imagine, language plays a pivotal role in this sense: once in Denmark, Tabita and Vitus attend Danish schools, and Danish is the language they are expected to speak at home. Danish, then, is not only imposed in institutional contexts, but also in the most intimate ones. Furthermore, it should be noted that Eva's interest for Tabita was awakened by the girl's responsiveness with regard to the Danish language:

Siden Abelone tog Tabita med første gang, er det gået hurtigt fremad med pigens dansk. Hun har lært hele sætninger, har ingen hævninger, men vrøvler løs med de ord, hun har opfanget. Tit forstår Abelone ikke det halve. Men det gør fru. Det er godterne, som gør Tabita så ivrig. Fruen har sat skålen med sukkerknalder ind på chatollet og giver hende lov til at tage en, når hun har været rigtig sød.²²¹ (Mondrup 2020: 54)

This extract presents at least two elements of interest, i.e., the family dynamics created by Tabita's progress and the modalities through which the girl's improvements are encouraged. On the one side, the Danish language acts like a bridge between the young girl and her adoptive mother – who, however, does not bother to learn Greenlandic, confirming that her sympathy is not catalyzed by Tabita *per se*, but rather by her potential as a putative (and later adoptive) daughter. On the other, the fact that Tabita is becoming fluent in an acquired language somewhat creates a barrier between her and her biological mother, Abelone. The woman, although she is hardly able to understand the conversations between her daughter and Eva, does not seem particularly concerned: being proficient in Danish, in fact, could only guarantee Tabita better possibilities than the ones she herself has had. Moreover, it should be observed that Eva, while 'training' her housemaid's daughter, reinforces the association between the use of Danish and being a good girl. Later in the book, this seemingly innocent gesture will nonetheless evolve in more explicit forms of coercion. Let us consider the following scene, set after a quarrel between the Danish couple and their adoptive children, who have tried to paint a doll's hair black, possibly to make it look more 'Greenlandic':

²²¹ «Since Abelone took Tabita along for the first time, her Danish has rapidly progressed. She has learned whole sentences, does not hesitate, and rambles on with the words she has picked up. Abelone often doesn't understand the half of it. But the lady does. It's the goodies that make Tabita so eager. The lady has put the bowl of sugar lumps on the writing desk and allows her to take one when she has been good», my translation.

De rallende lyde fra langt nede i halsen myldrer ud af pigen. Selvom Eva står der, bliver det ved og ved. Eva løber ud og kalder på Berthel, og Berthel tror hende ikke, men går med ind og får Tabita til at gentage, hvad hun lige har sagt.

«Det lyder som grønlandsk,» siger han. «Men det er det ikke.»

«Hvordan kan du vide det?»

«Stol nu på mig, det ved jeg noget om.»

Han blander sig i børnenes snak, og først gør de store øjne, så pludrer Tabita igen.

«Hold op,» afbryder Eva dem. «Jeg bryder mig ikke om det!» [...].

«Det er jo ikke meningen, vi skal snakke sammen på den måde,» siger Berthel senere, da han og Eva er blevet alene. «I øvrigt er det slet ikke noget sprog. Jeg tror, hun husker lydene, fra da hun var helt lille, altså før vi fik hende. Og Vitus, han husker ingenting.»

«Jeg synes, I havde en hel del at sige til hinanden.»

«Det må du selvfølgelig godt synes. Men det var ikke tilfældet.»

«Hvorfor føler jeg det så? Synes du, det er i orden, hvis det kun er dig, der har noget med dem? Nu er der pludselig det med sproget. Hun vil åbenbart holde mig udenfor. Det er svært at tolke det på andre måder.»

«Hun er bare et barn, Eva.» [...].

Hun kan se på ham, at han er ærgerlig over hende. Men hun er ligeglad. Det føltes ubehageligt at høre det sprog, ensomt.

«Jeg er sikker på, det dør ud af sig selv,» siger han. «Vi kan under alle omstændigheder ikke forbyde dem at pludre med hinanden.» [...].

Hun vil give dem en uge. Så vil hun have, de taler almindeligt. Hun vil ikke have mere Grønland i sit hus.²²² (Mondrup 2020: 200-201)

Once again, the opposition between Greenlandic and Danish is represented as a means to (un)tie family relations: in this scene, Eva perceives the use of Greenlandic – or Greenlandic-sounding gibberish – as an act of rebellion from Tabita and Vitus, with whom she feels she can no longer communicate. The children's 'secret' language reminds Eva of the possibility that Tabita and Vitus may not perfectly integrate into the Danish culture – a doubt that frequently crosses her mind. On the one side, this insecurity is linked to her middle-class desire to form a respectable family – no different from that of her sister Ingrid – and, on the other, to the fear that her adoptive children should have never been taken from their 'habitat': «Er det så umuligt for et grønlandsk barn at have det godt i Danmark? Ligesom man ikke kan omplante et hvilket som

²²² «The rasping sounds from far down the throat swarm out from the girl. She goes on and on, even though Eva is standing there. Eva goes out and calls for Berthel, Berthel doesn't believe her, but enters the room and asks Tabita to repeat what she has just said." "It sounds like Greenlandic, but it isn't", he says. "How would you know that?" "Trust me, I know something about it." He joins the children's conversation and, at first, they make their eyes wide, then Tabita starts babbling again. "Stop", Eva interrupts them, "I don't like this!" [...] "We're not supposed to talk like that", Berthel says later, when he and Eva are alone. "By the way, that's not a language at all. I think she remembers the sounds from when she was very little, before we got her. And Vitus, he remembers nothing." "I get the impression that you've had a lot to say to each other." "You may certainly have that impression. However, it is not the case." "Then why do I feel like this? Do you think it's ok that only you are able to share something with them? Now suddenly there's this thing with the language. She obviously wants to keep me out. It's difficult to interpret it in other ways." "She's just a child, Eva." [...] She [Eva] can tell that he is sorry for her. But she doesn't care. It felt uncomfortable to hear that language, lonely. "I'm sure it will die out on its own", he says. "In any case, we cannot forbid them to chat with each other." [...] She's going to give them a week. After that, they'll have to talk normally. She won't have any more Greenland in her house", my translation.

helst træ til et hvilket som helst himmelstrøg, kan man måske heller ikke flytte et barn af Tabitas race til et land, hvor det ikke hører til?»²²³ (Mondrup 2020: 197). Since there is an explicit mention of the term «race», we could assume that, according to Eva, there may be some innate reasons behind Tabita's incapability to fit in the Danish context. The girl, later in the text, is compared to one of the two *slædehundehvalpe* («sled dog puppies») that have been brought to Denmark by Louise, the Danish nurse working in Upernavik who convinced Eva to adopt Abalone's children. In Denmark, the puppies, still bearing a 'savage' quality to them, grow up to be «lunefulde og bidske» («unstable and biting»), and the same could happen with Tabita (*Ibidem*). These considerations could be interpreted as a variation of the motif of the supposed 'state of nature' characterizing Greenlanders, to be found in a high number of Danish literary works regarding Greenland (Thisted 2003: 33; Martinsen 2017: 191), as we will see. Besides, it could be fruitful to inquire to what extent «race» is actually involved in the dynamics between Eva and Berthel, on the one side, and Tabita and Vitus, on the other. Alongside with the use of Danish, another essential prerequisite to pass for a Dane is having some distinctive physical traits. Not unsurprisingly, Tabita and Vitus' Greenlandic features 'preoccupy' Eva – who, long before her overseas journey, imagines how her relatives and friends would react to the children's 'exotic' appearance:

Hun forestiller sig, hvordan hun går ud af flyet på landingspladsen i Danmark, ned ad trappen med datteren foran sig og sønnen på armen [...]. Hendes lyse hud og hår, deres mørke hud og hår. Hvad ville hun selv tænke, hvis hun så en anden kvinde stå ud af et fly sådan? Hvad vil hendes søster tænke? Eva kan næsten mærke Ingrid's forbløffelse over, at hun har fået børn, og så endda indfødte børn, som dem, de har set i bøger og blade fra den store verden.²²⁴ (Mondrup 2020: 143)

The contrast between Eva's hair and complexion and those of her adoptive children is evident, but she seems to be consoled by the thought that other Danes may perceive her action as caritative, or that she may even be deemed a 'woman of the world' – who has seen places that others have only read of. Therefore, we could argue that Tabita and Vitus' enforced passing is more focused on language than appearance. However, 'traditional' racism (see Biondi &

²²³ «Is it so impossible, then, for a Greenlandic child to be happy in Denmark? Just as one cannot transplant any tree to any climate, maybe one cannot move a child of Tabita's race to a land where it does not belong?», my translation.

²²⁴ «She imagines the moment when she gets off the plane at the landing site in Denmark, she will be walking down the stairs with her daughter in front of her and her son in her arms [...]. Her fair skin and blonde hair, their dark skin and hair. What would she think if she saw another woman get off a plane like that? What will her sister think? Eva can almost feel Ingrid's astonishment seeing that she has had children and indigenous children, like the ones they have seen in books and magazines from the wider world», my translation.

Rickards 2007) is present in the book and serves the purpose to find an explanation to Tabita's inability to adapt to the Danish society: «Evas to børn er som nat og dag, ikke bare hvad angår udseende. Deres sind er vidt forskellige. Hun begynder at tro, det er Vitus' blandede blod, det gør det lettere for ham at indordne sig. Tabita derimod opfører sig som en, der har taget skade»²²⁵ (Mondrup 2020: 196). Tabita's 'Greenlandic blood' and her untamable character are juxtaposed arbitrarily, in a well-known fashion that Catherine Rottenberg (2003: 437), reprising Louis Miron and Jonathan Inda's *Race as a Kind of Speech Act*, traces back to the tendency of inserting oneself into the reiteration of dominant discourses. «[R]ace performativity», continues Rottenberg, «compels subjects to perform according to these 'fictitious' unities, thus shaping their identity and their preferences» (*Ibidem*). Nonetheless, in this specific case, performativity is rather imposed than acted by Tabita herself, and this lack of agency could be explained in the light of mother-daughter relations – which, of course, are subjected to further power dynamics.

Going back to the representation and of the Greenlandic language, it should be noted that Mondrup's novel bears a similarity to *Sultekunstnerinde*, i.e., the inclusion of a short Greenlandic-Danish glossary as a paratext. The list consists of 22 entries that can be clearly divided into two categories, with a few exceptions: on the one side, nouns and expressions pertaining to the sematic field of family/affections («ataata», «anaana», «ataatannguaara», «aataa», «aanaa», «asasara», «apa», «apannga»²²⁶) and, on the other, words that are either 'culturally connoted' or refer to the Greenlandic nature/fauna («amisut», «tornaarsuk», «qivittoq», «suaasat», «amaat», «ulo», «puisi», «piniartorsuaq», «miteq»²²⁷). We could presume that these words and expressions are quoted to give a brief insight into Tabita's family relations and to her everyday life prior to the adoption. Already from this short list, then, it is evident that Tabita's Greenlandic identity is constructed upon the three elements thematized in the present chapter, i.e., Greenlandic language itself, Greenlandic traditional food/hunting, and a close relationship with the local nature. While this operation has the merit to display the cultural violence perpetrated against Tabita and, to a lesser extent, to her brother, it may also come across as oversimplifying; in this regard, the novel, despite its anticolonial intentions, does not seem to create a counter-narrative to some of the most common and problematic motifs of *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, and, on the contrary, somewhat contributes to their reiteration.

²²⁵ «Eva's two children are like night and day, not only because of their appearance. Their minds differ greatly. She starts to think it's Vitus' mixed blood that makes it easier for him to conform. Tabita, on the contrary, behaves like someone who has been hurt», my translation.

²²⁶ «dad», «mum», «my little father», «grandma», «grandad», «my love», «kiss», «kiss me», my translation.

²²⁷ «Herd of seals», «great spirit», «mountain wanderer», «seal soup», «women's anorak with wide hood», «women's knife», «great hunter», «eider», my translation.

2.5 'Freshly Hunted': Danish Preconceptions on Traditional Greenlandic Food and Hunting

Another element often recurring in Danish representations of Greenlandic culture is Greenlandic food – which, for instance, is mentioned by Kim, the main character of *Kalak*, as one of the pillars of his Greenlandic 'education' (Leine 2019a [2007]: 101). As in the case of Greenlandic language, this contribution addresses «ethnic categorization» rather than «self- and group-identification» (see Jenkins 2008: 3), since it focuses on Danish fictionalizations of Greenlandic identity. Nonetheless, as we have seen, Greenlandic food also plays a pivotal role with regard to Greenlandic self-identification, as showed, for instance, in the works of Inge Kleivan (1996), Natuk Lund Olsen (2011), and Tekke Terpstra (2015). From *Inuit Outside the Arctic*, I am reprising the tie between traditional Greenlandic food and hunting hinted at by Terpstra: both, in fact, are linked to «the importance of being on the land, 'living off the land'» (Terpstra 2015: 27). It is no surprise, however, that «when hunting becomes less important and more people start working in the service sector such identifications take on a different role to before» (*Ibidem*). In Danish representations, this shift does now always seem to take place, and hunting still constitutes an inflated *topos*: let us consider, for example, the insistence on the topic in Mads Peder Nordbo's Arctic thriller *Pigen uden hud* (2017), where the victims are slaughtered with *ulos*, traditional Greenlandic hunting tools. More often, the motif appears in the form of an 'Arctic safari' – an occasion for outlanders to experience 'real Greenlandicness', and appreciate the island's pristine landscape, which generally ends with the consumption of freshly hunted food.

2.5.1 Food as an Integration Tool: Eating One's Way out of 'Danishness'

As we have seen, language constitutes a primary element through which Kim, *Kalak*'s protagonist, attempts to pass for a Greenlandic. Another essential means of 'education' is constituted by Greenlandic food, and the narrator himself makes this connection explicit: «Maden og sproget. De er redskaberne i min integration, midlerne til at distancere mig fra mine

landsmænd, som stadig, efter 270 års tilstedeværelse i landet, klumper sig sammen om deres gule ærter og stegte flæsk og ser med mistro på alt hvad der kommer fra en grønlandsk hånd»²²⁸ (Leine 2019a [2007]: 101). Volquardsen elaborates on this quote stating that language and food (as well as «socializing with members of the Greenlandic underclass») help Kim coping with his Danish past and, particularly, with the sexual abuses he endured from his father (Volquardsen 2014a: 400). However, I would like to concentrate on the modalities of this distancing operation rather than indulging in its implications. Firstly, food is thematized as an ethnic boundary clearly distinguishing ‘Danishness’ from ‘Greenlandicness’ with regard both to taste and alimentary habits. Moreover, it should be noted that in *Kalak* this ‘barrier’ is created and maintained by Danes rather than Greenlanders: as in the case of language, we could argue, attitudes towards the respective traditional foods reveal – albeit to a lesser extent – underlying power disparities. Danes, in fact, are not only reluctant to try Greenlandic food, but they are also the ones setting an ‘acceptability’ standard. It is precisely this standard that Kim enjoys playing with, as emerges in the following extract:

På afdelingen serveres der grønlandsk mad hver dag. Jeg spiser det hele. Torsk, hellefisk, rød fisk, havkat, ørred, rensdyr, moskus, hvalbøf. Sælsuppen ligner levret blod. Når man spiser suppe af alk og edderfugl, spyttar man fjer og blyhagl. Mine danske kolleger rynker på næsen og synes det er modbydeligt, men jeg lægger på tallerkenen, jeg gør et nummer ud af det og spiser sammen med mine grønlandske kolleger i smug bag en lukket dør, fordi det officielt ikke er tilladt at tage fra madvognen.²²⁹ (Leine 2019a [2007]: 100-101)

In this regard, it could be useful to make a comparison to the notion of *Arcticity*, theorized by Gísli Pálsson. The term refers to the supposed extremeness of the Arctic landscape, which strongly differs from the European standard in climate, vegetation, morphology etc.; a similar ‘extravagance’ is to be found in Greenlandic food, which in most Danish fiction about Greenland distinguishes itself for being raw or hardly appealing to European eyes. This is the case, for example, of the aforementioned soups: the one made with seal resembles «clotted blood», while the other one even contains bullets, as proof of the fact that the meat has been freshly hunted. Kim openly mocks the disgust flaunted by his fellow Danes and uses food to

²²⁸ «The food and the language. These are my integration tools, a way to distance myself from my countrymen, who still, after 270 years of presence in the country, huddle around their yellow peas and fried pork and look with distrust at everything that comes from a Greenlandic hand», my translation.

²²⁹ «At the department, Greenlandic food is served every day. I eat all of it. Cod, halibut, redfish, catfish, trout, reindeer, musk, whale steak. The seal soup looks like clotted blood. When you eat soup of alk and eider, you spit feathers and lead bullets. My Danish colleagues frown and find it disgusting, whereas I fill my plate while putting up a show, and I eat it together with my Greenlandic colleagues behind a closed door – secretly, because it is officially not allowed to take from the food cart», my translation.

mark that he does not belong with them – although, as mentioned, Leine as an author seems to keep an ironic distance from his literary persona. Food as an identity marker is also present in the scene where the narrator is first identified as a *kalak* by one of his numerous Greenlandic lovers: «Den rå lever varmer som en snaps i maven. Kalak, siger Karina. Skide grønlænder»²³⁰ (Leine 2019a [2007]: 100). A few lines earlier the reader is told that most food eaten by Karina's family is hunted by her uncle, and that in their house one is likely to come across the body of a seal in the process of being butchered: one day, Karina's mother offers Kim the possibility to help her with the task, and to taste raw meat. It is shortly after that Kim earns the title of *kalak*; according to these premises, we could argue that food is not the only identity marker at stake, and that the way it is procured and consumed also plays a pivotal role. This assumption seems to be confirmed by Natuk Lund Olsen, who writes:

Mad er basal for alle, men mad drejer sig ikke kun om næring, det handler også om opdragelse, normer og skikke. Madopdragelsen er faktisk menneskets allerførste møde med kulturel socialisering. Mad er altså andet og mere end ernæring, fødevarer, smag og holdbarhed. Fortæring af mad og drikke har den dobbelthed, at det samtidig med at være forsyning af energi til vore kroppe også er en symbolsk næring, som fortæller om os, for os selv og for andre [...]. Mad er altså, ud over at være fysisk og symbolsk næring, også en ekspressiv identitetsskabende faktor i vort sociale liv, hvor vi benytter mad: «... til at knytte identitet og hukommelse sammen både i forhold til vores egen livshistorie og for at samordne vores livshistorie og samfundets historie».²³¹ (Olsen 2011: 413-414)

Specific eating habits and customs, then, characterize every society, and contribute to the creation of identities – both internally and externally. Not unlike language, a taste for certain food can be acquired, as well as the modalities through which it is consumed. Kim crosses both these 'boundaries' and, also in the case of Greenlandic food, there is a stress on the performative quality of ethnicity and, consequently, on its inessentiality and precariousness. These assumptions also apply to the case of Enok, a Greenlandic friend of Kim's: we are told that he had to attend a Danish school for a limited period of his life and that «han havde store problemer, kunne ikke spise deres mad, holde på kniv og gaffel uden at få mindst én af dem i øjnene, lære sproget. Han var syg af hjemve» (Leine 2019a [2007]: 151-152). Food and

²³⁰ «The raw liver warms like a snap in the stomach. Kalak, says Karina. Shitty Greenlander», my translation.

²³¹ «Food is essential to everyone, but it does not only concern nourishment, it also involves education, norms, and customs. Food education is one's very first encounter with cultural socialization. Therefore, food means more than nutrition, aliments, taste, and durability. Consuming food and drinks is a dual activity: it supplies energy to our bodies and, at the same time, is also a symbolic nourishment that tells about us, for ourselves and for others [...]. Thus, food – in addition to being physical and symbolic nourishment – is also an expressive identity-creating factor in our social life, where we use it: '... to link identity and memory together both in relation to our own life history and to pair our life history with the history of society'», my translation.

language are ‘metonymically’ paired once again and, although the reader might get the impression that Enok does not succeed in conforming to Danish culture, his Greenlandic foster mother seemed to think «at han var blevet alt for dansk, at han havde glemt hvordan man sidder ved bordet, at han var blevet rapkæftet og doven»²³² (Leine 2019a [2007]: 152). The crossing of ethnic boundaries is here combined with a recurring motif in *dansk grønlandslitteratur* and, in particular, the depiction of Greenlandic characters with ‘mixed’ background, i.e., «splittelses-temaet» (Thisted 2003: 39). The *topos* was first introduced by Aage Ibsen in the novel *Fjældgænger* (*Mountain Wanderer*; 1908), whose protagonist, brought up as a Greenlander, starts living as a Dane at the age of fifteen. The cultural fracture he experiences leads him to personal dissatisfaction and causes disagreements among the ones who consider him either a Dane or a Greenlander (Thisted 2003: 39-40). The matter is different in the case of Enok, as he is just a Greenlander who has spent a relatively short time in Denmark and has learned some of the local habits; this could perhaps be a further hint of Leine’s conception of ethnicity as something utterly permeable, almost ‘interchangeable’.

The character of Enok is also partly involved in Kim’s ‘Greenlandic education’, since he accompanies him during his first hunting experiences, and convinces him to buy a boat for this same purpose. For instance, Enok is present during Kim’s first killing, depicted in the following paragraph:

Sammen med Enok skyder jeg min første sæl. Den bryder overfladen nogle meter til højre for båden og bliver stående stille i vandet og stirrer på os. Jeg sidder på hug, støtter albuen på knæet, hviler riffelskæftet i hånden og skyder den midt i panden. Det er et perfekt skud. Jeg mærker det i samme øjeblik jeg krummer pegefingern om aftrækkeren, og kolben hugger mig i skulderen, en følelse af balance og harmoni, et halvt sekund af fuldkommenhed. Jeg ser sælens øjne briste. Langsomt kæntrer den og bliver liggende med den gullighvide bug opad. Knurhårene bølger på vandet der er rødt.²³³ (Leine 2019a [2007]: 152)

It should be noted that seal hunting, at least during the 19th century, was viewed as a primary marker of Greenlandic culture (Rud 2013: 490), often in association with the use of kayaks. This activity is also performed by Thorkild Müller, the protagonist of Henrik Pontoppidan’s

²³² «That he had become far too Danish, that he had forgotten how to sit at the table, and that he had become irreverent and lazy», my translation.

²³³ «Together with Enok, I shoot my first seal. It breaks the surface a few meters to the right of the boat and stands still in the water, staring at us. I squat, lean my elbow on my knee, rest the rifle butt in my hand and shoot the seal in the middle of its forehead. It’s a perfect shot. I feel it the moment I curl my index finger around the trigger and the stock hits me in the shoulder, a sense of balance and harmony, half a second of perfection. I see the seal’s eyes burst. The animal overturns slowly and ends up lying with its yellowish-white belly upwards. The whiskers bulge on the red water», my translation.

Isbjørnen – which, according to Volquardsen, constitutes an intertext to *Kalak* (Volquardsen 2014a: 398). The scene, then, could be regarded as a further allusion to Pontoppidan's text, whose main character finds in «the imitation of Greenlanders' seal hunting techniques» a way to escape his Danish past (Volquardsen 2014a: 403). In this regard, Müller's journey from 'Danishness' to 'Greenlandicness' resembles the one made by Kim (*Ibidem*). As recalled by Thisted in her «*Gi'r du en øl, dansker*». *Kim Leine og de danske stereotyper om Grønland*, Karen Blixen's *Den afrikanske Farm* is another recurring reference in *Kalak*, whose problemativeness is dimmed by Leine thanks to the distance granted by autofictional writing. Nonetheless, Blixen's autobiographical work is often present in the novel in the form of citations, be they explicit or not. On this basis, it could be worth asking whether the reported passage bears some similarities with one of *Den afrikanske Farm*'s most notorious scenes, i.e., the moment when the Baroness, incited by her lover, Denys Finch-Hatton, shoots a lion:

Jeg var aldrig meget for at skyde med hans riffel, den var for tung, og især for lang for mig, og gav mig hver gang et voldsomt stød. Men denne gang var skuddet en kærlighedserklæring, og skulle våbnet så ikke være af største kaliber? Løven stod fuldkommen stille [...]. Idet jeg skød, så det ud for mig, som om den sprang lige op i luften og kom ned med samlede ben. Jeg stod i græsset med riflen i hånden og åndede dybt, gennemglødet af den følelse af magtfulde, som et skud giver en, fordi man her virker så kraftigt på lang afstand.²³⁴ (Blixen 2012: 212-213)

In both cases, the act of killing is evidently romanticised, although the sensations elicited in the respective characters seem to differ slightly: Blixen's literary alter-ego mentions a feeling of «plenipotency» and compares the image she is presented with to the ending of a Greek tragedy, whereas Kim, after shooting the seal, experiences «a sense of balance and harmony, half a second of perfection». Both, however, insert themselves into the dynamics of the 'savage' and untamed natural environment they are inhabiting as uprooted Europeans: Blixen kills the lion while the animal is slaughtering a giraffe and thus becomes a predator herself, whereas the balance mentioned by Kim could imply that the seal will be later butchered and consumed – so that there will not be any waste of natural resources, along the lines with an 'environmental' interpretation of the myth of the Mother of the Sea (Kleivan 1997: 104). Kim, then, seems to aim at a twofold 'integration' – into Greenlandic society, on the one side, and into its nature,

²³⁴ «I was never keen to shoot with his rifle, which was too long and heavy for me, and gave me a bad shock; still here the shot was a declaration of love, should the rifle not then be of the biggest caliber? As I shot it seemed to me that the lion jumped straight up in the air, and came down with his legs gathered under him. I stood, panting, in the grass, aglow with the plenipotency that a shot gives you, because you take effect at a distance» (Dinesen 1938: 230).

on the other. Prior to that, a few observations will be made about the representation of Greenlandic food (and its connection to hunting) in the novels by Mondrup included in the corpus, namely *Store Malene* and *Tabita*.

2.5.2 *Attraction and Repulsion: The Representation of Greenlandic Food in Iben Mondrup's Store Malene and Tabita*

Not dissimilarly to the case of *Kalak*, some discourses emerging in *Tabita* with regard to the Greenlandic language also apply to Greenlandic traditional food, as we will see later in detail. In *Store Malene*, on the other hand, Greenlandic language is completely absent, even on a thematic level. This vacancy could be explained in the light of Mondrup's ambition to focus on problematic Danish attitudes towards the former Arctic colony and its inhabitants— ambition pursued, for instance, through «Justine's displacement and the topos of invasion», which give rise to the interpretation of the text 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» (Volquardsen 2014a: 413). Justine, the main character of the novel – who, according to Volquardsen, could bear some autobiographical traits (2014a: 396) – travels to Greenland during the summer, in search for her 'true self' and, at the same time, for artistic inspiration. Although at a first glance her motivations partly overlap with those of Kim, the photographer does not wish to escape her Danish past, and her stay in Nuuk is just a diversion from her life in Copenhagen. Consequently, Justine is not particularly interested in Greenlandic culture and, on the contrary, often exhibits disrespectful behaviors, such as the non-consensual appropriation of 'Greenlandic' spaces or her problematic fixation with a local man. Given these premises, it could be worth investigating whether the disregard showed by Justine, as well as by other Danish characters, also concerns 'Greenlandicness' and, more specifically, one of the stereotypical identity markers that have been taken into consideration, i.e., Greenlandic food.

Greenlandic food – and, more specifically, whale meat – plays a crucial role in chapter 4, since Justine has it for dinner together with her fellow countrymen Jesper and Mette. The two unexpectedly visit Justine, who is visibly annoyed by their presence, and Mette, despite being uninvited, even offers to cook local food for all of them. Let us consider the following extract taken from the scene:

– Det er vel lige meget hvad han er, siger Mette, – han er en flot fyr. Har du også selv taget nogenbilleder? Mette venter ikke på svar, – nej, hvor sjovt, siger hun, – er det ikke kød, det dér? Har du også været nede på markedspladsen? Jesper, prøv at se, det er da hvalkød, det dér, er det ikke? Jesper trækker på skuldrene. – Vi har lige været dernede, siger Mette, – vi har købt hvalkød med, det står lige dér, i posen. Mette henter den hvide pose og åbner den, så Justine kan se ned i den. [...] – Vil du ikke være med til at spise det? spørger Mette, – jeg skal nok finde ud af hvordan det skal laves. Jeg tror jeg vil stege det med bløde løg og syltede rødbeder [...].²³⁵ (Mondrup 2013: 50)

A first aspect that should be noted is how the topic is introduced by Mette, who is initially commenting on the risqué portraits of a young Greenlander displayed at Justine's place. Justine has found these photographs – carefully hidden in an envelope inside a cabinet – while rummaging in the house where she is spending the summer. There could be some metonymical connection between erotic images and raw meat, and this assumption seems to be reinforced by some objectifying observations made by Mette («“En pornomodel? [...] Han må da være model”», *Ibidem*)²³⁶, as well as by Justine's own behaviour towards Joorut – whom she will later meet in person, during her nocturnal pub crawls in Nuuk. Similarly to what happens in *Kalak*, food is here associated with another significative element regarding the encounter between 'Greenlandicness' and 'Danishness' within *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, namely men/women relations. Such implications will be investigated more thoroughly in chapter 3; for the time being, it will be only anticipated that, within this literary mode, the categories Greenlandic/Danish and man/woman often intermingle, reiterating similar patterns or, on the contrary, creating unusual connections. In the case of *Store Malene*, the classic power disparity between men and women is reversed, and Justine is depicted as nearly predatory; given this premise, the fact that the conversation flawlessly switches from erotic images to food acquires a deeper meaning. Another detail worth focusing on is the cooking modality chosen by Mette, who even dreams of exporting this exotic aliment to Europe (Mondrup 2013: 52-53): the woman roasts the whale meat and serves it with savory vegetables. This preparation does not seem to match the way *hvalkød* is traditionally consumed, at least according to Natuk Lund Olsen: Greenlandic food usually undergoes only a modest «kulturtransformation» – i.e. the

²³⁵ «“Never mind what he is”, says Mette, “he is a beautiful bloke. Did you take these nude pictures?”. Mette doesn't wait for an answer. “Oh, that's funny!”, she says, “isn't it meat? Have you also been to the marketplace? Jesper, try and see, that's surely whale meat, isn't it?”. Jesper shrugs his shoulders. “We've just been there”, she says, “we've bought whale meat, it's over there, in the bag”. Mette takes the white bag and opens it, so that Justine can take a look at its content. [...] “Do you want to eat this with us?”, Mette asks, “I'll just have to find a recipe. I think I'll roast it with soft onions and pickled beets [...]”».

²³⁶ «A porn model? [...] He must be a model», my translation.

passage from ‘nature’ to ‘culture’, from raw material to meal – perhaps as a consequence of its innate strong flavour (Olsen 2011: 414, 416).²³⁷ Precisely because of this peculiarity, traditional Greenlandic food, i.e., meat and fish, is usually tasted raw, dried, or boiled in water, and the use of strong spices is tendentially ruled out (see *Ibidem*). It could be argued, then, that Mette follows an ‘europeanizing’ preparation method. European contaminations within Greenlandic cuisine are certainly not new, and, among Greenlanders, they are usually regarded as an innovative way to keep alive the traditions regarding *råvarer*. However, the matter might be more problematic in this specific case, since a Greenlandic identity marker is being ‘appropriated’, so to say, by a Dane. The term ‘appropriation’ also seems to be fitting with regard to Mette’s suggestion:

– Vi skulle da prøve at importere noget af det til Danmark, siger Mette, «– vi har nogle venner som har en restaurant, det ville da være noget særligt at kunne servere hvalbøf. – Det må man ikke, siger Jesper [...], – I øvrigt tror jeg heller ikke folk ville have lyst at spise hval de tror nok det smager af fisk [...]. – Det smager overhovedet ikke af fisk, siger Mette og tager en bøf mere». ²³⁸ (Mondrup 2013: 52-53)

The woman, rather than the dish itself, seems to be enjoying its exotic *côté*, which she also relates to a certain commercial potential. One last aspect I would like to draw the attention to is that the whale meat purchased by Mette comes from the «markedsplads» – presumably a traditional *kalaaliaraq* market, described by Natuk Lund Olsen as the best alternative to get fresh Greenlandic *råvarer* for those who do not hunt (Olsen 2011: 417). The diffusion of these spaces – increasingly becoming more organized and, at the same time, losing some of their long-established characteristics – implies that «kontakten mellem fanger og køber er ophørt»²³⁹ (Olsen 2011: 419). Moreover, as *kalaaliaraq* markets are progressively being deprived of their social meaning (*Ibidem*), tourists – such as Justine, or Mette and Jesper – are likely to be some of its primary clients.

²³⁷ «Sammenlignet med mad udefra forekommer grønlandske råvarer at have en mere kraftfuld smag, hvilket kan have noget at gøre med, at kødet er fra vilde og fritgående dyr, samt at fisk, rejer og skaldyr vokser noget langsommere i de kolde grønlandske have end i varmere farvande» (Olsen 2011: 416). [«Compared to foreign food, Greenlandic raw goods seem to have a stronger taste, which may have something to do with the fact that meat comes from wild and free-ranging animals, and that fish, shrimp and shellfish grow somewhat more slowly in the cold Greenlandic seas than in warmer waters», my translation.].

²³⁸ «– We should try to import some of this to Denmark, Mette says, – we have friends who own a restaurant, it would be something unusual to be able to serve whale beef. – You can’t do that, Jesper says [...]. – Besides, I don’t think people would want to try whale, when they think that it tastes like fish [...]. – It doesn’t taste anything like fish, Mette says, and takes another beef», my translation.

²³⁹ «Contacts between hunter and buyer have ceased», my translation.

As a matter of fact, the meat market in Nuuk is one of the attractions Justine is more intrigued by – also on a professional level, since she asks the sellers if she is allowed to take pictures of the wares, or of dead animals being butchered:

– Det er tikaarullik, siger kvinden, – hvalkød.

Klemmelampen sidder på den ene side af glasmontren. Lysstrålerne falder [...] på kødet, som er skåret i store terninger, fire-fem eller seks kilo ad gangen, med grove fibre der løber gennem klumperne som et landskab. Hun glemmer kameraet et øjeblik. Hun har lyst til at trække musklerne fra hinanden, hun har lyst til at splitte sådan et stykke kød ad til det kun består af tråde.

Mens hun retter på lampen, pirker hun til klumpen med blikket. Lyset falder blødere på dyngen. Hun snuser til kødet, trækker havet ned i lungerne. Da hun vil udløse igen, opdager hun at manden med øreklapperne står ved siden af hende. Hun må ikke røre ved noget, siger han og peger på kødet, der må ikke komme bakterier på maden. Han tager fat i hendes hånd og holder hendes pegefinger frem; den er rød [...].

På vejen hjem går hun gennem et krat af følelser. Mest af alt har hun lyst til at smide kameraet fra sig, kaste det i jorden og se det falde fra hinanden, glaslinsen der popper af, hun vil træde på den, køre den rundt i gruset under hælen. Hun har lyst til at gå tilbage til kødmarkedet og røre ved kødet igen. Hun vil købe et stykke, et stort stykke, som hun kan trykke på og mase. Men hun vil også gerne se billederne hun har taget.²⁴⁰ (Mondrup 2013: 31-32)

Justine, in particular, is mesmerized by the meat's materiality, by its texture and consistence, and this allure is verbalized through nearly erotic expressions. The connection between food and sensuality, then, occurs more than once in *Store Malene*, as does the motif of appropriation/invasion – which, although it is not immediately recognizable, is also present in this extract. Justine's craft, photography, often intermingles with her invasive tendencies, which range from voyeurism to sheer intrusion, and this connection seems to be, at least according to Susan Sontag, intrinsic to this form of art: «To photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge – and, therefore, like power» (Sontag 2005: 2); this assumption acquires a new depth in *Store Malene*, given its postcolonial topic. The attention, however, should not only be drawn

²⁴⁰ «– It's *tikaarullik*, the woman says, – whale meat. The clamp lamp is attached to one side of the glass case. The rays of light fall [...] onto the meat, which is cut into large cubes, four, five or six kilos at a time, with coarse fibers running through the lumps, similar to a landscape. She forgets about the camera for a moment. She wants to pull the muscles apart, to tear a piece of flesh apart until it consists of nothing but threads. As she adjusts the lamp, she pokes at the lump with her gaze. The light falls more softly onto the pile. She sniffs the meat, draws the sea down into her lungs. She's about to take a picture, when she realises that the man with the ear flaps is standing next to her. She must not touch anything, he says and points at the meat, bacteria must not get on the food. He takes hold of her hand and holds out her index finger; it's red [...]. On the way home, she goes through a thicket of emotions. Most of all, she wants to throw the camera away, throw it on the ground and watch it fall apart, to watch the glass lens pop off, she wants to step on it, drive it around in the gravel under her heel. She wants to go back to the meat market and touch the meat again. She wants to buy a piece, a big piece that she can press and massage. But she also wants to see the pictures she has taken», my translation.

to the simple act of photographing, but to the subjects chosen by Justine, on the basis that «[a]lthough there is a sense in which the camera does indeed capture reality not just interpret it, photographs are as much an interpretation of the world as paintings and drawings are» (Sontag 2005: 4). In Nuuk, the photographer is attracted mainly to three types of subjects: food, and more specifically meat, naked bodies, and abandoned spaces.²⁴¹ As already pointed out by Volquardsen, spatiality – and, in particular, the ever-present motif of invasion/appropriation – plays a crucial role in the novel, even more so if one considers its postcolonial implications (Volquardsen 2014a: 407). If one views the novel as «an allegory on Danish colonisation and Danish dominance» (*Ibidem*), Justine and Mette may represent two different (and complementary) sides to it; whilst the former is ruthless, the latter is naïve, and her shallow observations or behaviour, despite coming from a privileged position, are generally benevolent. As we have seen, Mette tends to treasure the experiences corresponding to her exoticizing expectations; this applies also to Greenlandic food, whereas Justine rather enjoys pushing boundaries – be they cultural, private, or even hygienic, as in the case of the market scene – and breaking taboos. In both cases, at least with regard to Greenlandic food, both characters are seemingly attracted to ‘alterity’, although for different reasons.

In *Tabita*, on the contrary, Greenlandic food is more frequently approached with suspicion, if not with disgust; in this regard the novel seems to replicate the same metonymical association between language and food presented in *Kalak*. Here, in fact, food and language both contribute to Kim’s supposed ‘greenlandization’; also in Mondrup’s novel, as already mentioned, the concept of passing plays a crucial role, as Danish identity is imposed to Tabita and her younger brother Vítus by their adoptive parents. The mother, in particular, wishes for her adoptive children to cut ties with their Greenlandic background, and reacts aggressively whenever Tabita and Vítus speak Greenlandic to one another (or even pretend to do so). Similar dynamics are to be found when it comes to Danish and Greenlandic food: Tabita is initially attracted to the Danish cooking style («“Naa, det smager så godt”, hvisker Tabita og læner sig ind mod sin storebror. “Hvad spiser vi?” “Dansk sovs og kød. Spis nu”», Mondrup 2020: 87),²⁴² but, later in the novel, the child starts refusing to eat, as she misses her mother’s cuisine («Tabita

²⁴¹ Justine – not dissimilarly to what happens with Joorut and the meat displayed at the *kalaaliaraq* – is also drawn to the Blok P, once the biggest residential complex in Nuuk (see Bærenholdt 2016: 407). The building, soon to be demolished, has been cleared, and the apartments bear traces of those who lived there; those remnants, alongside with the thrill of entering a ghost edifice, stimulate Justine and her creativity. In this case, then, appropriation takes places on a spatial as well as on an artistic level.

²⁴² «“Oh, this tastes so good!”, Tabita whispers, leaning towards her big brother. “What are we eating?” “Danish sauce and meat. Now eat”», my translation.

vifter gafler væk; det er ikke hendes mors mad», Mondrup 2020: 277).²⁴³ In this latter case, food is presumably represented as a metaphor for home *tourt court* – meaning both Greenland and the familiar context Tabita and Vitus have been uprooted from. Traditional Greenlandic food, as we have seen, is often represented as one with the act of hunting and preparing it, whereas this does not apply to its Danish counterpart. Let us examine the following scene, which describes the moment when Tabita, together with her grandmother Rosine and her mother Abelone, butchers a seal for the first time:

«Det var godt, jeg havde den med,» siger Rosine og vifter med uloen.
 «Tabita er klog.»
 De trækker sælen ind på land og et godt stykke op på en flad sten, og Rosine kalder på Tabita. Fruen kommer hen og kigger med.
 «Hvad gør vi ved den?»
 «Det er ikke hver dag, man fanger en sæl. Det er i hvert fald vores første sammen,» siger hr. Berthel og tager Eva om hofte.
 «Tabita skal ordne sin første sæl,» siger Rosine.
 Pigen er ved at briste af stolthed. Rosine hvæsser kniven på en sten og giver den til hende. De følger alle sammen hendes bevægelser, da hun lader knivsbladet glide ned over dyrets mave, da hun stående overskrævs over den udspilede bug åbner den og med rytmiske bevægelser snitter gennem skindet ind til det lyserøde indre.
 «Min lille kvinde,» siger Abelone og kæler Tabita i nakken. «Du bliver en god kone.»²⁴⁴
 (Mondrup 2020: 69)

According to what Abelone says, learning this craft is an essential part of Tabita's education («“Du bliver en god kone”»). It is impossible not to think of this activity as contraposed to Tabita's progresses concerning the Danish language, an activity favored by her adoptive mother, Eva. The incompatibility between the two occupations – a mental and a practical one – seems to echo the antithesis between culture and nature, a recurring motif in *dansk grønlandslitteratur*. The poles roughly correspond to the categories of 'Danishness' and 'Greenlandicness'. Quite surprisingly, the reiteration of this association does not only concern Danish literature about Greenland from the colonial age (or the years of the modernization), but also more recent texts: an example that has already been mentioned is *Frøken Smillas*

²⁴³ «Tabita throws the forks away; that's not her mother's food», my translation.

²⁴⁴ «“Luckily, I brought this with me!”, Rosine says, waving her ulo. “Tabita is smart.” They drag the seal onto land, up onto a flat rock, and Rosine calls for Tabita. The lady comes over and takes a look. “What do we do with it?” “It's not every day you catch a seal. At least, this is *our* first seal,” Mr. Berthel says, putting his arm around Eva's hips. “Tabita is going to take care of her first seal”. Rosine says. The girl is bursting with pride. Rosine sharpens the knife on a rock and gives it to her. They all follow her movements, as she lets the blade of the knife slide down the animal's belly. Bending over the animal's distended abdomen, she opens it with rhythmic movements and cuts through the skin, down to its pink interiors. “My little woman”, Abelone says, stroking Tabita's neck. “You will be a good wife”», my translation.

fornemmelse for sne, which, according to Thisted, maintains «dansk vs. grønlandsk som to hinanden udelukkende modsætninger, konstrueret over de samme arbitrære modsætninger [...]: kultur vs. natur, naturvidenskab vs. instikt, logik vs. intuition, skrift vs. mundtlighed»²⁴⁵ (Thisted 2003: 60, see *supra*, p. 79). Partially similar dynamics manifest in *Tabita*, whose anticolonial engagement does not seem to be paired with a dismantling of this oppositional rhetoric. With regard to food, this incompatibility is embodied by the character of Eva, who, on the one hand, keeps reifying Greenlandic cultural traits and, on the other, fully rejects any ‘contamination’ with them – be it because the woman perceives them as alien or because she wants Tabita and Vitus to forget their Greenlandic past. When her husband Berthel, for instance, suggests they could eat seal meat, she firmly replies: «Vi er ikke indfødte»²⁴⁶ (Mondrup 2020: 71). The same distance from Greenlandic alimentary habits is restated during a dinner at a couple of friends’ place, during which Eva and Berthel are insistently asked about the food «deroppe», «up there» (Mondrup 2020: 172): «Hval kunne jeg spise», says Eva, «Men ikke sælkød. Det var virkelig en prøvelse. Helt sort og blævret. Fy for pokker»²⁴⁷ (*Ibidem*). The woman, as she later specifies, feels relieved to finally be able to express how disgusted she was, and to be understood by some fellow Danes. Among them, European food and cooking is conceived as the standard for normality and, therefore, acceptable – not dissimilarly to what happens with landscape in the case of «Arcticality».

2.6 Concluding Remarks

Delving into some preliminary considerations on the notion of ‘ethnicity’ – as well as on some adjacent concepts, such as those of racial and national identity – and connecting them to the Danish-Greenlandic (post)colonial context has allowed to identify three recurring tropes that are often used as identity markers as to the representation of ‘Greenlandicness’ within *dansk grønlandslitteratur*: 1) the association between Greenlandic culture and the island’s pristine and wild nature; 2) fluency in the Greenlandic language; 3) consuming Greenlandic traditional

²⁴⁵ «Danish vs. Greenlandic as two mutually exclusive opposites, built over the same arbitrary oppositions [...]: culture vs. nature, science vs. instinct, logic vs. intuition, written word vs. orality», my translation.

²⁴⁶ «We aren’t natives», my translation.

²⁴⁷ «I could eat whale meat. But not seal meat. That was really an ordeal. It was all black and pudgy. Ugh, damn it», my translation.

food, which is also tendentially linked to the activity of hunting. These motifs, which I have referred to as examples of ‘reification’ of Greenlandic culture, can also be detected – be it in an imitative or critical fashion – in Leine, Mondup, and Inuk’s fictional production about Greenland.

The connection between Greenlandic identity and the island’s natural landscape has been one of the most productive tropes of *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, as reminded extensively in chapter 1. This association has often led, among other things, to considerations on the Greenlanders’ supposed ‘state of nature’. I have delved into this aspect by focusing on the role of the natural element in *Store Malene*, *Kalak*, and *Sultekunstnerinde*. My specific interest was the interaction between the Danish beholder’s subjectivity and Greenlandic nature, and I have therefore taken into account Justine and Charlotta’s first encounter with Nuuk, seen from a bird’s eye perspective. This same topic moment is not present in *Kalak*, where, nonetheless, Greenlandic nature also seems to mirror Kim’s moods – to the point that, when the man experiences his biggest crisis, they are no longer able to communicate. In all of the novels considered, the Greenlandic landscape stands out for its utter alienness – given, for instance, by the absence of trees – and for coming across as potentially ‘infinite’. This latter characteristic, in particular, can be traced back to the *topos* of Greenland as a blank slate, and it is more evidently so in *Store Malene* – where the Danish characters make an association between spatial and metaphorical freedom. In *Sultekunstnerinde*, conversely, the subjective element emerges as less problematic, due to the protagonist’s guilelessness. Some considerations on Charlotta’s peculiar understanding of Greenlandic nature have also been made by analyzing how Lotte Inuk encompasses the myths of the *qivittoq* and the Mother of the Sea in her narration. Concentrating on this latter aspect has allowed me to detect an attempt to detach from dichotomizing narratives that identify ‘Danishness’ and ‘Greenlandicness’ as two mutually exclusive dimensions, since Greenlandic mythology is encompassed in not necessarily exoticizing modalities.

With regard to the second trope, I have considered three works in particular, i.e., *Kalak*, *Sultekunstnerinde*, and *Tabita*. In Leine’s and Inuk’s novels the question has been analyzed mainly in the light of the concept of ‘passing’: the results of my investigation with regard to *Kalak* substantially align with those obtained by Ebbe Volquardsen, who addresses Kim’s assimilation to ‘Greenlandicness’ in terms of a «reverse passing». My analysis, however, has the merit to broaden discourses on the relationship between linguistic passing(s) and performative identity by encompassing passages that do not necessarily focus on Greenland and Greenlandic, but on Kim’s aptitude for foreign languages and his urge to ‘escape’ from the

context where he belongs. In relation to *Tabita*, on the other hand, I use the expression «forced passing», which I have minted keeping in mind the coercive nature of her integration within Danish society, also on a linguistic level. The matter is different in the case of *Sultekunstnerinde*, since the novel's protagonist, Charlotta, aims at merging with 'Greenlandicness', but cannot do so because of her visibly Danish features and her inability to speak Greenlandic. The overcoming of the binarism 'Danishness' vs. 'Greenlandicness' is here suggested on the basis of Charlotta's belief according to which language (and languages) are always fallible and unnecessary to establish a deep connection.

The presence of Greenlandic traditional food (and its connection to hunting) has been investigated, once again, in *Kalak* and *Tabita*. The analysis, this time, has been enriched by taking also Mondrup's *Store Malene* into consideration, where Greenlandic traditional food, i.e., meat, seems to obsess the photographer Justine. While in *Kalak* and *Tabita* this aspect clearly emerges as an identity marker for 'Greenlandicness', leading once again to considerations on the notion of 'passing', freshly hunted meat is mostly conceived as an exotic curiosity by Danish tourists Jesper and Metter, as well as by Justine – who, although she wishes to keep a certain distance from the couple's provincial and naïf behaviors, also approaches 'Greenlandicness' with long-lasting preconceptions. This trope, furthermore, opens an unexpected connection in *Store Malene*, since meat is also somewhat linked to the erotic sphere and, perhaps, to the objectification (and fetishization) of 'Greenlandicness' in this specific regard.

After these first observations on the representation of Greenlandic (and Danish) identity, I will include in my analysis two other categories of social difference, namely those of gender and class. In the following chapter, as the title *Gendering 'Danishness' and 'Greenlandicness'* suggests, I will introduce the notion of gender identity – which, similarly to the case of ethnicity, can be viewed in an anti-essentialist perspective. The observations that I have made until this moment, however, will also be included, since, as foreshadowed, I am more concerned with the relationship between the oppositional categories 'Danishness' vs. 'Greenlandicness' and 'manhood' vs. 'womanhood' rather than them *per se*.

CHAPTER 3

GENDERING ‘DANISHNESS’ AND ‘GREENLANDICNESS’

3.1 Gender-related Matters through a Postcolonial Lens

Postcolonial theory and gender studies, both concerned with unequal power relations, have been fruitfully intertwining throughout the years, regardless of the fact that some of the founding contributions to the former branch could come across as ‘gender-blind’ (see Babka 2017: 109; Lewis & Mills 2003: 1-2). Contaminations between race/ethnicity- and gender-related matters are also to be found outside of postcolonial theory *strictu sensu*: Ann Laura Stoler, for instance, stresses the (post)colonial implications of Michel Foucault’s notorious *Histoire de la sexualité* (1976), which, according to most commentators, treats race only marginally (Stoler 1995: VIII). However, as argued by Stoler, racialized bodies have played a crucial role with regard to the production of European discourses on sexuality, both in the colonies and in the ‘central state’: «bourgeois identities in both metropole and colony emerge tacitly and emphatically coded by race. Discourses on sexuality do more than define the distinctions of the bourgeois self; in identifying marginal members of body politic, they have mapped the moral parameters of European nations» (Stoler 1995: 7). Sherry B. Ortner stresses that Stoler’s thought has had the merit to recognize that «Western categories of the Other, especially racial categories, emerge not only from an economy and a politics of culture, but from an erotics of culture, in which the parties in the borderlands (in this case imperial colonies) meet as gendered beings with gendered fantasies, anxieties, and desires» (Ortner 1996: 182). It should be noted that the dimension of class is also inevitably present in the thought of Foucault and Stoler, who insist on the function of discourses on sexuality with reference to the affirmation of «bourgeois identities».

A partially adjacent perspective, which connects narratives of gender and sexuality with a broader dimension – namely «the imperialist project cathected as civil-society-through-social-mission» (Spivak 1985: 244) – can be found in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s *Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism* (1985). As far as gender-related matters are concerned, Spivak’s studies, which have been taken into consideration both by Babka (2017) and Lewis and Mills (2003), are often addressed as an exception within the ‘pantheon’ of postcolonial theory:

It is far more common to see allegiances proffered to the line of male greats (for example, Frantz Fanon, Edward Said and Homi Bhabha) than to acknowledge the contributions of women scholars and activists (such as Angela Davis, Adrienne Rich, Audre Lorde or bell hooks, although it must be noted that Gayatri Spivak tends to be very visible as the exceptionally cited female voice). (Lewis & Mills 2003: 1)

In particular, Spivak has addressed the relationship between the individualistic thrust displayed by white female characters in colonial literary fictions, such as Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, and the subaltern role of their 'ethnic' counterparts (see Lewis & Mills 2003: 10). Spivak's intuition offers a further layer to considerations on the right to represent, since, as reminded by Lewis and Mill, «[t]he focus on white women's colonial texts has also led to a particular view of indigenous women being adopted, sometimes leading to a generalisation that all the women described in white women's texts (generally either aristocrats or servants) represented the women in that nation» (*Ibidem*). A similar perspective lends itself to the application to *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, as the positioning of most Danish authors thematizing Greenland is tendentially external; 'Greenlandicness', then, is represented 'on behalf of' Greenlanders and, for this same reason, Danish writings that aim at giving voice to even more marginalized groups – such as Greenlandic women, as happens in *Tabita* – may perhaps come across as intrinsically problematic.

A parallelism between the notion of ethnicity and gender, furthermore, can be drawn by acknowledging that both concepts can be defined in an anti-essentialist fashion. As argued by Gwynne and Poon, «[a] common thread running through social scholarship on sexuality in the humanities and social science disciplines over the last five decades has been the attempt to dismantle essentialist notions of sexuality» (Gwynne & Poon 2012: XI). A notable voice on this subject is that of Judith Butler (1956-), whose groundbreaking *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies that Matter* (1993) proposed a view of «gender identity as discursively constructed and iterative in nature» (Gwynne & Poon 2012: XXII). Partly analogous points have been made by feminist anthropologist Sherry B. Ortner (1941-), who, in considering «the making and unmaking of gender, as well as what gender makes» (Ortner 1996: 19) opposes the idea of gender as a cultural construct to that of biological sex.

Ortner, among other things, has also authored the notorious article *Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?* (1972), where she attempts an explanation in anthropological terms of the 'hierarchy' between genders that seems to constitute a universal characteristic among cultures. This unequal positioning, according to the scholar, can hardly be explained through

biological determinism – or based on the assumption that woman and man may also present «a different psychic structure» (Ortner 1972: 12). A possible solution, Ortner argues, may reside in the fact that women – due to some of their morphological and socially-acquired qualities – are often regarded as being closer to «nature», if one considers this category as opposing to «culture».²⁴⁸ In her own words: «my thesis is that woman is being identified with, or, if you will, seems to be a symbol of, something that every culture devalues, something that every culture defines as being at a lower order of existence than itself. Now it seems that there is only one thing that would fit that category, and that is “nature” in the most generalized sense» (Ortner 1972: 10). Her argument seems particularly pertinent to my analysis, as the dichotomy between «nature» and «culture» is a recurring motif within *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, where the former element is to be associated with ‘Greenlandicness’ and the latter with ‘Danishness’, as we have seen in chapter 2. It is interesting to note that the same oppositional pair generates two different ‘hierarchies’, i.e., those concerning ‘Danishness’ and ‘Greenlandicness’, on the one side, and man and woman, on the other.

If one bears in mind this partition and intersects the two sets of categories, Greenlandic women clearly come across as the most disadvantaged group. This conclusion comes as no surprise, and has been explicitly addressed both by Danish and Greenlandic authors, such as Jørgen Liljensøe, Christian Regin Tobiesen, and Måliâraq Vebæk – whose works were fueled by the climate of socio-political engagement that characterized the 1970s. Vebæk, according to Inge Kleivan, was keenly aware of the twofold marginalization that Greenlandic women might endure in Denmark (1997: 109), and thematized the issue in her *Búsime nâpíneq* (1981). Liljensøe’s novel *Barakkerne*, on the other hand, along with Christian Regin Tobiesen’s *Snigeren* (1986), revolves around the power dynamics emerging from the – tendentially seasonal – presence of Danish handicraftsmen in Greenland, during the modernization years. Both texts, in fact, focus on those Greenlandic young women («snigere») who engaged in more or less established relationships with Danish men, in the hope to get access to specific goods or, perhaps, even to be able to settle in Denmark (Thisted 2003: 51). Also in this case, class is part of the equation: although both the Danish workers and Greenlandic *snigere* belong to lower classes, Greenlandic women clearly come across as proportionally disadvantaged and, for this

²⁴⁸ Judith Butler explains the presuppositions of the dichotomy nature/culture as follows: «The binary relation between culture and nature promotes a relationship of hierarchy in which culture freely “imposes” meaning on nature, and, hence, renders it into an “Other” to be appropriated to its own limitless uses, safeguarding the ideality of the signifier and the structure of signification on the model of domination» (Butler 2002: 48).

reason, they seek contact with Danish *udsendte*, in an attempt to ‘advance’ from a socio-economic point of view.

Ortner’s considerations, as anticipated, presuppose a reflection on the ‘non-substantial’ nature of the categories «female» and «male» – which are nonetheless linked to a precise symbolism in cultural terms. The attention, then, as in the case of ethnicity (see chapter 2), is on the concept’s ‘surface’ rather than on its essence. Judith Butler, in stressing how challenging it can be to define the term «woman», also defines gender as culturally (and socially) ‘situated’:

If one «is» a woman, that is surely not all one is; the term fails to be exhaustive, not because a pregendered «person» transcends the specific paraphernalia of its gender, but because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. As a result, it becomes impossible to separate out «gender» from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained. (Butler 2002: 6)

The category of gender alone, then, does not seem to subsist *per se*; the same label finds different expressions in different times and cultures – which reinforces the idea that the notions of «women» and «men» should not be regarded as universal. It should be noted that, while Ortner, in her article from 1972, does not make an explicit distinction between «gender» and «sex», Butler’s analysis in *Gender Trouble*, on the other hand, encompasses that demarcation:

If gender is the cultural meanings that the sexed body assumes, then a gender cannot be said to follow from a sex in any one way. Taken to its logical limit, the sex/gender distinction suggests a radical discontinuity between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders. Assuming for the moment the stability of binary sex, it does not follow that the construction of «men» will accrue exclusively to the bodies of males or that «women» will interpret only female bodies. Further, even if the sexes appear to be unproblematically binary in their morphology and constitution (which will become a question), there is no reason to assume that genders ought also to remain as two. (Butler 2002: 10)

Even though the categories of gender, sex, and desire all concur to the production of discourses on sexuality within a common patriarchal and heteronormative matrix, the oppositional pairs man/woman, male/female, and heterosexual/homosexual work on different levels. The attributes «masculinity» or «femininity», in fact, do not necessarily correspond to «manhood», on the one side, and «womanhood», on the other; their arbitrariness can perhaps be grasped by considering, for instance, different lesbian identities, such as butch, femme, which apparently seem to hint at «[t]he “presence” of so-called heterosexual conventions within homosexual contexts» (Butler 2002: 41). This ‘interference’, Butler argues, should not be traced

back to the pervasiveness of «heterosexist» constructs; on the contrary, a similar ‘displacement’ could elicit reflections on their non-substantial nature, on the basis that «gay is to straight *not* as a copy is to original, but, rather, as copy is to copy» (*Ibidem*). Butler’s reflections regarding the distinction between gender and sex have been inspired by Simone de Beauvoir’s thought, and, in particular, by the observation that «“one is not born a woman, but rather becomes one”» (Butler 2002: 141). Following Beauvoir’s theory, then, gender seems to acquire an ‘in-fieri’ quality, and, in particular, her thinking «suggests that sexed bodies can be the occasion for a number of different genders, and further, that gender itself need not to be restricted to the usual two» (Butler 2002: 142-143).

Two conclusions stand out: 1) gender, to be intended as «an incessant and repeated action of some sort» (Butler 2002: 143), comes across as performative rather than ‘substantial’, ‘essential’; 2) since there is no direct connection between gender and sex, the former can transcend the binary construct limiting the latter (*Ibidem*). In this regard, it could be worth considering Butler’s early understanding of drag, partially revised in her later *Bodies that Matter*: «I would suggest as well», she argues in *Gender Trouble*, «that drag fully subverts the distinction between inner and outer psychic space and effectively mocks both the expressive model of gender and the notion of a true gender identity» (1999: 174). A few years later, Butler suggested that, although drag undoubtedly has the merit to unfold the underlying mechanisms that characterize heterosexual gender norms, the practice does not necessarily entail subversive intents (1993: 125).

Similar considerations have been briefly taken into account in chapter 2, albeit with regard to ethnicity rather than gender. The focus, in particular, was Kim Leine’s staging of ‘Greenlandicness’ in *Kalak*, whose performative quality was nearly taken to its exasperation (see Haarder 2010: 38). Butler’s conception of (gender) identity, in fact, lends itself to a broader application, and some of its drifts may even engage in profitable dialogue with postcolonial theory: the overcoming of binarisms, in the wider sense, is also at the center of Homi Bhabha’s thought, for instance. A connection between Bhabha’s theorizations and gender-related matters has already been stressed by Oxfeldt *et al.* in *National (Gender) Trouble: Race, Bodies and Sexualities*, one of the chapters included in the second volume of the anthology *Denmark and the New North Atlantic* (2020): «From a theoretical point of view, it is above all Homi Bhabha who has put the idea of the hybrid on the agenda – as a corrective to the nation-state idea of the pure, “immaculate” people» (Oxfeldt *et. al* 2020: 14). Bhabha’s idea of ‘impurity’ is taken by Oxfeldt *et al.* as a departing point to analyse national narratives and their intersections with

gender-implicated considerations: for instance, Niviaq Korneliussen's *HOMO sapienne* (2014) is scrutinized in the light of «how the previously hegemonic narratives of gender and reproduction have been challenged based on inspirations from the women's liberation movement and new narratives based on homosexual experiences – which were previously excluded from the national narrative» (Oxfeldt *et al.* 2020: 16). These 'queer' narratives, according to the authors, contribute to the rediscussion, or perhaps even to the subversion, of «the previously hegemonic narratives of gender and (national) purity» (*Ibidem*). My focus, however, is rather on the «interference» between ethnic and gender-identities – term that I am borrowing from Ingunn Moser (see Moser 2006; Lykke 2010), and national discourses only play a marginal role within my analysis.

3.1.1 Gender Relations in (Post)colonial Greenland

If we regard Greenland as a «contact zone»²⁴⁹ – as it has been previously done by Kirsten Thisted in some of her works, such as, for instance, in her recent *Stemmer fra Grønland* – majoritizing and minoritizing mechanisms emerge in relation to different social categories, and not exclusively with regard to 'Greenlandicness' and 'Danishness'.²⁵⁰ Within *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, as we have seen, the theme has been addressed by Jørgen Liljensøe and Christian Regin Tobiesen and, perhaps less extensively, by Sven Holm. His collection *Luftens temperament*, in fact, includes a poem that could be considered quite significant in this regard, *De tre køn* (*The Three Genders*). Thisted has mentioned the poem on multiple occasions (2011a;

²⁴⁹ «Begrebet *kontaktzone* er introduceret af litteraten Mary Louise Pratt, der henter det fra sprogvidenskaben, hvor man bruger det om situationer, hvor to eller flere sprog kommer i forbindelse og påvirker hinanden. Pratt bruger det om "sociale rum, hvor forskellige kulturer mødes, kolliderer og kæmper med hinanden, ofte i stærkt asymmetriske magtforhold præget af dominans og underordning"» («The concept of contact zone has been introduced by literary scholar Mary Louise Pratt, who has borrowed it from linguistics, where it is used to describe situations where two or more languages get in touch and influence one another. Pratt uses it in relation to "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination"», Thisted 2021: 57).

²⁵⁰ A notion partially adjacent to that of «contact zone» may be found in Sherry B. Ortner's conception of «borderland»: «The image of the "borderland" is a powerful presence in contemporary theory. Borderland thinking initially took shape within the theorizing of ethnic and minority studies, and emphasized the construction of complex, hybridized identities for those who must live within, yet are excluded from, the dominant cultural order» [...]. In a borderland's perspective the terrain of cultural encounters, of border crossings, is never neutral and never level. It is never neutral because borderlands are spaces that some people call "home" and define those entering it as Other, alien. "Home" may or may not be an advantage: the Others who are entering may come as poor and terrified refugees or as powerful conquerors, but in any event the space from the outset has different relationships to the different parties involved. Similarly, the space of border crossings is never "level," that is, it is almost always a space of unequal power» (Ortner 1996: 181-182).

2013), using it as a starting point for the analysis of Danish literary representations of Greenlandic society and its ‘layering’. This short text offers a vivid image of gender relations in postcolonial Greenland and, contrary to what the reader may expect, the opposition between genders does not follow a binary logic: the counterparts to «kvinderne» («women») are «de danske mænd» («the Danish men»), on the one side, and «de grønlandske mænd» («the Greenlandic men»), on the other (Holm 1978). The tripartition made by Holm, along with the roles that he ascribes to each category, hints at the attribution of agency to the Danish side or, to be more precise, to that of Danish men, who «organisierer, bygger, administrer» («organize, build, administrate», Holm 1978). Greenlandic men do not take part in those activities, and appear anachronistically stuck in the past, regardless of the undergoing ‘modernization’ Greenland is going through. Both groups, however, are concerned with the oppression of women, in accordance with the «old rivalry» between Greenlandic and Danish men identified by Bo Wagner Sørensen (1994: 52). It could be interesting to note that, whereas ‘Greenlandicness’ and ‘Danishness’ intersect with ‘manhood’, ‘womanhood’ does not explicitly bear any ethnic connotation in *De tre køn*. While this peculiarity may suggest that the author has some sympathy for feminist battles, the category of Greenlandic women seems somewhat ‘erased’ from Holm’s depiction of Greenland. Nonetheless, *De tre køn* remains an essential contribution to the (literary) discussion of interferences between ethnicity and gender in the Greenlandic context. A similar operation has also been made by Kim Leine in his *Kalak*, according to Thisted:

På samme måde som Leine udforskede Holm således trekantsdramaet mellem den danske mand, den grønlandske mand og retten til den grønlandske kvinde. [...] Mens danskerens dominans hos Holm står fuldstændig uantastet, forsøges den som beskrevet detroniseret hos Leine. Alligevel er konstellationen den samme: Hvis man skulle tro Leine, var der stadig kun disse tre køn. Grønlandske mænd, som mestrer det moderne samfund, er overhovedet ikke trådt i karakter i Leines fremstilling. Man må i den forbindelse også bemærke sig, at hverken Holm eller Leine har kunnet få øje på den danske kvinde gift med den grønlandske mand.

Til gengæld er enhver grønlandsk kvinde tilsyneladende tilgængelig for Kim – i modsætning til de danske kvinder, hvor kvinder af den mere «elegante» type under normale omstændigheder er helt uden for hans rækkevidde og kun lader sig betragte med «distanceret beundring» (*Kalak*, s. 337).²⁵¹ (Thisted 2011a: 284)

²⁵¹ «Similarly to Leine, Holm explored the triangular drama between the Danish man, the Greenlandic man, and the right to the Greenlandic woman. [...] While in the case of Holm Danish dominance is completely unassailable, in the case of Leine, as it has been described, there is an attempt to dethrone it. Yet the constellation remains unchanged: if we have to believe Leine, there are still only these three genders. Greenlandic men mastering modern society does not emerge from Leine’s portrayal. On this note, it must also be observed that neither Holm nor Leine have been able to witness the case of a Danish woman married to a Greenlandic man. On the other hand, any

It should be noted that Thisted seems to equate, at least in agreement with the first sentence of the paragraph, the category of «women» to that of «Greenlandic women»; this may certainly be a possibility, given the vagueness of Holm's formulation. On the other hand, as Thisted continues, neither Holm nor Leine have drawn attention to a specific 'configuration' regarding Danes and Greenlanders, on the one side, and men and women, on the other: couples formed by Danish women and Greenlandic men. The gap, as we shall see later in the present chapter, has been partially filled by Lotte Inuk and Iben Mondrup – and, as far as the latter is concerned, this is especially true in the case of *Godhavn* and, perhaps in a less definite fashion, in *Store Malene*.

The representation of sexuality – to be intended in its wider sense – plays a pivotal role with regard to the discourses that have been addressed: 1) unequal power relations that result, among other things, in the twofold oppression experienced by Greenlandic women; 2) the urge to overcome the binarism between man and woman, inaugurating gender hybridity or indefiniteness. The disadvantaged position endured by Greenlandic women, in fact, has resulted in more or less institutionalized discourses on their sexuality, which rely on the association between 'Greenlandicness'/womanhood/nature – in opposition to 'Danishness'/manhood/culture. On this subject, it could be interesting to take into consideration the phenomenon of «Arctic hysteria» described by Søren Rud (2017a: 77-79). This condition, tendentially associated with female Greenlanders, was identified by psychiatrist Inge Lynge as rooted in «the transition from a traditional Inuit lifestyle to a modernized lifestyle as marked by precariousness and vulnerability» (Rud 2017a: 77). The classic narrative viewing Greenlanders as *naturmennesker*, on the one side, and as victims of modernity, on the other, is here coupled with the gender-specific motif of «hysteria»: the focus, then, inevitably seems to be on the 'untamed' – and, at the same time, fragile – sexuality of Greenlandic women. These discourses seem to echo Gwynne and Poon's considerations on the «hegemonic power of social arrangements and how minority/deviant sexualities are constructed in relation to normative sexualities» (2012: XXIX). The idea of a 'wild' sexual drive that seems to characterize Greenlandic women may also come across as a fetishization of this same group – operated through a (Danish) male gaze. It should be observed that, while the notion of «Arctic hysteria»

Greenlandic woman is apparently at Kim's disposal – contrary to Danish women, where those of the more "elegant" type are generally out of his reach and can only be admired from a distance (*Kalak*, p. 337) », my translation.

belongs to the colonial past, those same associations have persisted throughout the modernization period (for instance, though the creation of the terms «snigere» and «havnepiger»),²⁵² and can still be found nowadays in the form of stereotypes. With regard to the aforementioned epithets, a clarification should be made:

As the post-war influx of foreign male workers, primarily Danes, increased in the 1950s and 1960s, the issue of sexual behaviour of Greenlandic women became a special topic, giving rise to a new local terminology describing women visiting foreign ships, the so-called harbor girls (*havnepiger*, *umiarsualiviup arnai*), and women visiting the barracks for contracted workers and craftsmen from Denmark, the so-called barrack girls (*barakpiger*, the Greenlandic words *arnapalaat* and *kannaaliat* mean 'bad women' and 'women crazy for men's genitals'). (Oxfeldt *et al.* 2020: 56)

As pointed out by Oxfeldt *et al.*, «the issue of sexual behaviour of Greenlandic women» concerns the Danish *udsendte* as well as Greenlandic men, as the terms «*arnapalaat*» and «*kannaaliat*» may suggest. The two formulations, in fact, seem to imply that the questionability of these women's conduct derives from their involvement with Danish men rather than promiscuous sexual behavior *per se*.

In more recent times, stereotypes concerning Greenlandic women and their sexuality may be found perhaps in a less systemic fashion, at least in Greenlandic literature, but still rely on an idea of supposed 'untamedness'. Let us consider, for instance, an explicative passage from *Blomsterdalen* – an extract from a dialogue between the nameless protagonist and a Danish woman she meets at a night-club:

«Du er virkelig dårlig til at danse», griner hun.
«Det betyder ikke, jeg er dårlig til sex», siger jeg uden at tøve.
«I er sgu da nogle vilde nogle, I grønlændere», griner hun og vender sig om.
«Jeg er ikke grønlænder», siger jeg, men hun hører mig ikke.²⁵³ (Korneliussen 2020: 101)

²⁵² In Lotte Inuk's *Sultekunstnerinde*, a local girl, Gudrun, is rumored to belong to the category of «Havnepiger», defined as follows: «Havnepige er et af de værste skældsord man kan bruge i denne by. Det betegner unge piger der går rundt og fryser nede på havnen om natten og tigger cigaretter af hinanden og venter på at fremmede skibe skal lægge til, så de kan tjene penge ved at gå med mandskabet om bord. Eller, fortælles det, de værste af dem går ikke engang med ombord kun for pengene» (Inuk 2004: 171; «'Harbor girl' is one of the worst insults you can use in this city. It refers to young girls who walk around by the harbor at night in the freezing cold, begging each other for cigarettes and waiting for foreign ships to dock so they can earn money by joining the crew on board. They say that the worst of them don't even come aboard just for the money», my translation). In Inuk's novel, stories about these 'lost girls' seem to come across as cautionary tales for (Danish) female teenagers.

²⁵³ «You're really bad at dancing», she laughs. «This doesn't mean I'm bad at sex», I answer without any hesitation. «You Greenlanders are a wild sort», she laughs, turning around. «I'm not a Greenlander», I say, but she doesn't hear me, my translation.

Despite the fact that both women are looking for a sexual partner at the club, the protagonist's clumsy and 'unmannered' approach is immediately traced back to her ethnic background by her interlocutor. The Danish woman, in fact, seems to suggest that the protagonist is not conforming to the norms of an implicit (and somewhat 'civilized') courtship standard. On this subject – the supposed standard from which Greenlanders and, in particular, Greenlandic women seem to detach – it should also be observed that, on Greenlandic soil, Danes may exhibit a more uninhibited sexual behavior. This is self-evident, once again, in the case of Danish craftsmen entertaining 'seasonal' relationships with Greenlandic women, during the modernization years; this outcome may be perhaps traced back to the fact that, «[n]ot least in Denmark, the topic of the sexually accessible Greenlandic girls became urban legend. The subject was mixed with rumors about pre-colonial practices such as 'switching of wives' or the 'turning off the lamps game'. In Denmark, however, official indignation was first and foremost directed at the promiscuous Danish men» (Oxfeldt *et al.* 2020: 57). The same motif, however, has also been addressed in later fictional writings through individual examples, for instance in Leine's *Kalak* and *Tunu*, and Mondrup's *Store Malene* and *Tabita*.

Given these premises, it is hardly surprising that the 'sexual encounter' between Danes and Greenlanders is often thematized in terms of violence – which may somehow echo Danish-Greenlandic relations in a metonymical fashion. While the latter would count as «systemic violence» (see Petterson 2012: 30), the former type of violence mainly concerns individual bodies and non-consensual practices. These considerations seem to be in accordance with Bo Wagner Sørensen's general assumption on the phenomenon of gendered violence: «Voldsbegrebet er altså af alt andet end neutral karakter. Det er i allerhøjeste grad omtvisteligt og handler om, hvem der har mulighed for at definere den givne hændelse [...]. Voldsfænomenet er altså en process, der er centreret omkring magt til at definere. Volden er en højst politisk sag»²⁵⁴ (Sørensen 1994: 72-73). Sørensen's anthropological study *Magt eller afmagt? Køn, følelser og vold i Grønland* (1994; *Power or Powerlessness? Gender, Feelings, and Violence in Greenland*), in particular, deals with violence directed at Greenlandic women. The scholar's focus, as a matter of fact, is the 'internal' violence endured by Greenlandic women, i.e., domestic violence and abuse; the subject is often brought up in Danish discourses on post-colonial Greenland, and contribute to the imagery of the former Arctic colony as a

²⁵⁴ «The concept of violence is far from being of neutral character. It is highly debatable and about who has the opportunity to define the given event [...]. The phenomenon of violence is thus a process centered around the power to define. Violence is a highly political matter», my translation.

‘problematic’ country, associated with «alkohol, kønssygdomme, incest, vold, kæbebrud, voldtægt [...] etc.»²⁵⁵ (Sørensen 1994: 54). Some of the dominant narratives regarding violence against Greenlandic women could be summed up as follows, according to Sørensen:

I det hele taget giver volden anledning til en modstilling af før og nu, hvor nutidens typisk ses som problemfyldt, og ‘det gamle Grønland’ ofte fremstilles i romantisk skær [...]. Der har været fokuseret en del på såkaldt sociale problemer i Grønland i såvel faglitteraturen som den mere populære litteratur. Vold mod kvinder ses gerne som ét blandt mange sociale problemer, der er opstået eller i det mindste tiltaget, siden moderniseringen af Grønland blev påbegyndt fra 1950. Denne klassificering af volden som symptom på en hastig udvikling har visse konsekvenser for, hvordan man tackler fænomenet.²⁵⁶ (Bo Wagner Sørensen 1994: 24)

The scholar thus starts from the assumption that violence against women can be tendentially traced back to the more complex picture of post-colonial Greenland, whose society is afflicted by a number of issues that have started to spread since the modernization years – such as, for instance, the significant suicide rate. The same could be argued with regard to another specific type of (domestic) violence that is often associated with Greenland: incest (see Thisted 2011a: 269). On this note, Thisted defiantly comments that «[d]ebatten om sociale problemer får gerne en helt anden drejning, når det drejer sig om Grønland, end når tilsvarende finder sted i Danmark»²⁵⁷ (*Ibidem*). Contemporary *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, consequently, can be as well involved in these discourses, and may either contribute to their establishment or ‘deconstruct’ them in an attempt to reduce the stigma against Greenlanders. Thisted, for instance, notes that Leine’s *Kalak* introduces an element of novelty by indirectly juxtaposing the abuse endured by Kim as a teenager, in the father’s apartment in Copenhagen, and the Greenlandic post-colonial context (*Ibidem*); Mondrup’s *Tabita* and *Vittu*, as we shall see, also address the matter in alternative terms, as incestuous violence on children is perpetrated in a non-Greenlandic ambience and, more specifically, within Danish adoptive families.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ «alcohol, venereal diseases, incest, violence, broken jaws, rape [...] etc.», my translation.

²⁵⁶ «On the whole, violence engenders a contrast between then and now, where the present is typically seen as problematic, and the ‘old Greenland’ is often portrayed in a romantic light [...]. There has been a lot of attention on the so-called social problems in Greenland in both specialistic and more popular literature. Violence against women is often seen as one among the many social problems that have arisen, or at least increased, since the modernization of Greenland began in 1950. This classification of violence as a symptom of rapid development has certain consequences for how to tackle the phenomenon», my translation.

²⁵⁷ «when it comes to Greenland, the debate on social problems in Greenland takes a completely different turn than when something similar takes place in Denmark», my translation.

²⁵⁸ The matter is perhaps more complicated when it comes to *Vittu*, as the novel’s protagonist is lured into a sexual relationship by his adoptive mother. The woman, married to Stig – who describes himself as «pæredansk» («Danish to the core», Mondrup 2022: 50) – is French, although she speaks Danish fluently and lives as a Dane.

Finally, as reminded by Gwynne and Poon, the dimension of gender is also present in (post)colonial literature in the form of metaphors, generally referring to national narratives: «Nation-states have traditionally employed a gendered discourse for self-definition (e.g., Motherland, Father of the Nation, etc.) and for inscribing relations between their male and female citizens» (Gwynne & Poon 2012: XXVI). Danish-Greenlandic relations are no exception in this regard, as ‘infantilizing’ Greenlanders may serve the purpose to highlight Denmark’s ‘maternal’ and benevolent attitude vis-à-vis its former Arctic colony. On this subject, Thisted and Gremaud mention a public comment made by bishop Sofie Petersen on the possibility that Greenland breaks its ties with Denmark; the bishop believes that Greenlanders are «not ready or “mature” (*modent*) enough» to take this step (Thisted & Gremaud 2020: 32, see *supra*, p. 60). The term «draws on an old colonial discourse, whereby Greenlanders were treated like children who needed an understanding mother (the colonial power), under whose protection the child could grow up and learn to stand on its own two feet» (*Ibidem*). The same metaphor, for instance, has been critically reprised by Mâliâraq Vebæk in her *Historien om Katrine*, where Denmark’s self-understanding as ‘benevolent’ is opposed to the isolation and discrimination faced by the novel’s eponymous protagonist, who travels overseas in the hope to settle and start a family with a Danish man. Gendered imageries of Denmark and Greenland will also be touched upon throughout the present chapter, albeit marginally, as the focus is rather on ‘Danishness’ and ‘Greenlandicness’ than on Denmark and Greenland as nations.

Taking into account ethnicity and gender seems to give rise to a multiplicity of reflections. As the present dissertation is characterized by an ‘intersectional’ look on ethnicity, gender, and class within a selection of contemporary works counting as *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, it will be inevitable to draw on the considerations that have been made throughout chapter 2. A point of connection between the two dimensions – which will be substantially overlooked in the final chapter, revolving around class – is an anti-essentialist conception of identity, on the basis that both ethnicity and gender can be regarded as culturally constructed and, perhaps, even performative, ‘fictional’. Similarly to what happens in the case of ethnicity, gender identity may also undergo an operation of reification: we have seen some examples of Greenlandic «cultural stuff» (Barth 1969), and it could be worth attempting a similar operation in the case of gender. We could start from the assumption that the latter is

Her fascination for Vitus’ ‘eskimo’ background, then, transcends the limits of the dichotomy juxtaposing ‘Danishness’ and ‘Greenlandicness’ as one another’s cultural Other. As disclosed by Mondrup herself in an unpublished interview (26/01/2023), providing a non-Danish counterpart to Vitus has been intentionally done, at least in part, with the purpose to exit this ‘unavoidable’ opposition.

reified through gender roles – which are deeply intertwined with the hierarchical order described by Ortner, for instance – and through gender expression. Also in this case, the attribution of agency plays a pivotal role, since it is tendentially associated with men; Sven Holm's poem, once again, is a good example on this subject, as (presumably both Danish and Greenlandic) women are represented as mere bystanders throughout the unfolding conflict between 'past' and 'future', respectively embodied by Greenlandic and Danish men. Furthermore, it should be noted that a significant part of the works pertaining to *dansk grønlandslitteratur* is also inclined to present a story through the eyes of a Danish male beholder; it could be perhaps possible, then, to speak about 'literary agency'. The aforementioned trend has apparently been reversed, at least in part, in more recent years. Peter Høeg's Smilla, for instance, can be regarded as an atypical protagonist in this sense, and Mondrup and Inuk, with their novels, have contributed to creating a gallery of Danish women displaced in Greenland; in *Tabita*, moreover, three of the four narrators are Greenlandic female characters. Kim Leine's historical novels partially insert themselves in these discourses, since they also thematize women's 'involvement' in Denmark's colonial enterprise. The matter seems to be different if one only considers the rest of his production, namely *Kalak*, *Tunu*, and *De søvnløse* – which, being a reposition of Leine's own Greenlandic experiences, tend to reproduce the writer's point of view or, at least, gender relations similar to those depicted in *Kalak* and analyzed, for instance, by Thisted (2011a) and, more briefly, by Volquardsen (2014a). A point that has been touched by Thisted, as we have seen, is the 'constellation' – which also presupposes a hierarchization – proposed by Leine. It will be interesting to contrast it with the one emerging from Inuk's *Sultekunstnerinde* and Mondrup's *Godhavn*. To my best knowledge, these two novels have not been analyzed in the light of female agency, and my contribution attempts to fill this gap.

The motif of 'queerness', i.e., of the overcoming of gender-binarisms, also seems to characterize some of the novels that belong to my corpus – more or less directly. As the cultural encounter may engender a «Third Space of enunciation» (Bhabha 1994: 37), the limits of gender roles and sexuality are sometimes sounded out and transcended by the figures of Leine, Mondrup, and Inuk's novels. A pioneer, in this regard, is again *Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne*, which, as pointed out by Thisted, offers a feminine character with clearly distinguishable 'masculine' traits: Høeg, according to the scholar, «tildeler sin dansk-grønlandske heltinde en række maskuline karakteristika i forsøget på at fremskrive en karakter,

der bryder med de klassiske koloniale subjekt-objekt-forhold»²⁵⁹ (2011a: 278). A similar operation has been advanced by Leine in his *Kalak*, where Greenlandic women interact with Kim following the same pattern that characterizes interactions between Danish men and Greenlandic women (*Ibidem*). Masculine – and perhaps ‘predatory’ – women are to be found in all of Mondrup’s novels that are being taken into consideration. In *Sultekunstnerinde*, on the other hand, gender-related considerations emerge with reference to Charlotta/Charlie’s ongoing process of self-understanding, as the protagonist lives in Greenland during her passage from infancy to adulthood; her dilemmas are deeply intertwined with identity – on different levels – and with her bodily self-apperception.

Another aspect that will be taken into consideration is the representation of the sexual element within Leine, Mondrup and Inuk’s novels. This subject is also connected to the two themes that have been mentioned, i.e., asymmetrical power distribution and hierarchization, on the one side, and gender expression and gender identity, on the other. On this note, the theme of incest/abuse appears to be of particular significance, as it can be found in the majority of the texts that are being considered. It will be interesting to verify whether the *topos* may bear some metaphorical implications regarding Danish-Greenlandic relations or, conversely, whether it just inserts itself into a broader ‘trend’ characterizing Nordic contemporary literature.

3.2. *Interferences between Ethnicity and Gender: Power Relations and Hierarchies*

The colonization and the later modernization of Greenland have prevalently been a manly enterprise, as already specified, and, for this reason, the relation to Greenlandic women has always played a peculiar role within Danish discourses on the former Arctic colony. The colonial narrative of seizing a virgin territory described by Gwynne and Poon (2012: XXV) already entails such an idea, and it comes as no surprise that a similar ‘conquering’ attitude has been reduplicated with regard to Greenlandic women. This seems to be confirmed by Inge Seiding, who, in her *Colonial Categories of Rule – Mixed Marriages and Families in Greenland around 1800* (2011) states that «[i]ntimate relations between Greenlandic Inuit women and European men most likely predate the colonization initiated by the Lutheran mission in 1721 as encounters between European whalers and Inuit on the Greenlandic coasts» (Seiding 2011:

²⁵⁹ «assigns his Danish-Greenlandic heroine a series of masculine characteristics in an attempt to create a character who is not in line with classic colonial subject-object relations», my translation.

56). According to this reconstruction, the engagement in relationships to Greenlandic women has always accompanied European-Greenlandic interactions. As Thisted further elaborates, «[h]istorien om de europæiske mænd og de eskimoiske kvinder [...] har under det koloniale danske styre bestandig været reguleret, lovgivet og administreret. Koloniale, racemæssige og etniske relationer er som bekendt ikke mindst karakteriserede ved, hvilke mænd som har retten til hvilken kvinder»²⁶⁰ (2011a: 271). A first record of an «intimate relationship between a Greenlandic woman and a European trade worker resulting in a childbirth» can be found, as noted again by Seiding, in Hans Egede's writings (2011: 56). The phenomenon soon became frequent, and its vastity can perhaps be acknowledged by considering the intermarriage-prohibition introduced by the Royal Greenlandic Trade Department in 1776. New regulations on the matter were promulgated in the *Instrux* from 1782, according to which marriages between Danish men and Greenlandic women were allowed, depending on the hierarchical position of the man involved. It should be noted that, whereas mixed marriages were still forbidden for superior staff members of the Department, only to common staff members access to «women of mixed descent, not unmixed or European women» was given (Seiding 2011: 57). This shift can perhaps be explained by taking into account the exiguous presence of European women on Greenlandic soil; for this same reason, marriages between Greenlandic men and Danish women were not contemplated. In the words of Thisted, «konstellationen dansk kvinde i forhold til grønlandsk mand var først så utænkelig, at den slet ikke kom på tale, derefter ansås den for dybt problematisk og grænseoverskridende. Langt op i det 20. århundrede var det uhyre vanskeligt for en grønlandsk gift dansk kvinde at finde roller, hvori hun kunne indgå i det etnisk stratificerede Grønland»²⁶¹ (Thisted 2011a: 271).

In more recent years, i.e., after Greenland's formal decolonization, in 1953, relationships between Danish men and Greenlandic women were favored within those contexts where Danish *udsendte* were in close contact with the local population. In line with the modernization urge promoted by Denmark, Danish workforce progressively became more present on the island, and this led, among other things, to the later migration of Greenlandic women in Denmark: «more Greenlandic women than men live in Denmark, which can be

²⁶⁰ «The history of European men and Eskimo women [...] has constantly been regulated, legislated on, and administered under the colonial Danish rule. Colonial, racial, and ethnic relations are, as it is known, not least characterized by making dispositions that bring about which men have the right to which women», my translation.

²⁶¹ «The constellation Danish woman-Greenlandic man was at first so unthinkable that it was not even taken into consideration, as it was conceived as deeply problematic and taboo-breaking. Still in the 20th century, it was extremely difficult for a Danish woman married to a Greenlander to find a fitting role in ethnically stratified Greenland», my translation.

partially explained by the higher number of Greenlandic women married to Danes who worked in Greenland during the modernization of the country. Once these men returned to Denmark, many women followed» (Terpstra 2015: 99). As recalled in chapter 1, the coexistence of Danish craftsmen and local women on Greenlandic soil often resulted in utilitarian affairs: women indulged in sexual activity in the hope to obtain better life conditions, and men exploited the Greenlanders' disadvantaged position in exchange for a relationship without commitment. This phenomenon went along with the consolidation of a specific imaginary regarding Greenlandic women (see *supra*, p. 74, 173, 179), whose sexual availability easily lent itself to stereotypical associations with the idea of Greenlanders as *naturmennesker*.

3.2.1 The Othering of Greenlandic Women: Fetishization and Oppression

The subject of «the Danish gaze» has been touched by Kristine Køhler Mortensen and Marie Maegaard in their *Meeting the Greenlandic People – Mediated Intersections of Colonial Power, Race and Sexuality* (2019: 1). The two scholars, although their research is primarily oriented towards Danish images of Greenland conveyed through mass media, agree that «[o]ne recurring articulation in the representation of Greenlanders in Danish public discourse is built through linkages between different categorizations like 'Greenlander', 'woman', 'uncivilized' or 'promiscuous'» (Mortensen & Maegaard 2019: 2). Similar juxtapositions had been made already in Hans Egede's *Det gamle Grønlands nye Perustration* from 1741 – which, as Mortensen and Maegaard believe, has inevitably had an impact on Danish imagery regarding Greenlanders and their sexuality:

In one of his first reports on Greenlandic culture and tradition Hans Egede writes, in lofty moral contempt, about a certain ritual involving sexual activities: «One after the other walks with another one's wife behind a curtain or a partition wall made of skin which is hung in one end of the house. On the couch they are lying caressing each other [...] in this shameful whore game only the married take part.» (1741: 63). This so-called wife-swap (*konebytning*) is a recurring phenomenon in Danish descriptions of Greenlandic culture. However, nowhere in Egede's accounts of Greenlandic sexuality is it possible to find primary sources of evidence for his descriptions, and this is the same pattern throughout history regarding accounts on Greenlandic sexuality. The detailed descriptions of wife-swap and this type of celebrations are never traced back to people who have firsthand experience. This is also the case when reviewing present-day open online encyclopedia platforms. (Mortensen & Maegaard 2019: 4)

Unsurprisingly, the idea of promiscuity also emerges in some of the literary representations pertaining to my corpus – such as, for instance, Mondrup's *Store Malene* and Leine's *Kalak* and *Tunu*. It can be conjectured that, in these novels, the trope of Greenland as a «mulighedernes sted»²⁶² (Dybdal & Grønlund 2020: 39) for Danish visitors may as well bear a sexual connotation to it. The stories of Kim and Jesper, on the one side, and of Justine, on the other, seem to confirm that the 'Danish beholder' could have some expectations with regard to sex-life in Greenland – and to the possibility of being involved in it. Let us consider this representative passage from *Store Malene*:

Jesper siger at det sikkert passer, – det er almindelig kendt at folk er mere, hvad skal man sige, mere sexfikserede, de kopulerer mere heroppe, siger han. – Tror du virkelig det? bliver Mette ved, – det skal nu nok være rigtigt, det virker som om alting er lidt mere lige ud ad landevejen her.²⁶³ (Mondrup 2013: 37)

The 'authenticity' and 'simplicity' of life in Greenland – a recurring *topos* in *Store Malene*, especially in the words pronounced by the petty Danish tourists Mette and Jesper – is here linked to the alleged promiscuity that seems to characterize sexual relations among Greenlanders, depicted as «mere sexfikserede» and, perhaps, closer to the idea of a 'pre-modern' sexuality, far from the European bourgeois standards mentioned by Stoler (1995). A similar discourse is reiterated in another scene, where Justine joins a group of locals in a pub; among them there is Henrik, «den danske fyr» (Mondrup 2013: 67), whereas Jakob and Otto are presumably Greenlanders. Although Justine is introduced to this group, she is not able to take part in the conversation at first, since the three are too busy with their man-talk to bother to involve her. This is how Justine manages to catch their attention:

Det er først da hun siger at hun har hørt at man boller mere i Grønland, at der sker noget. Henrik ser overrasket på hende. – Det er helt rigtigt, siger Otto og tilter bagover af grin. – Hvad skulle vi ellers få tiden til at gå med? siger Henrik og griner også, – hele vinteren er det jo mørkt, og noget skal vi jo lave.²⁶⁴ (Mondrup 2013: 68)

²⁶² Promiscuity in the Greenlandic post-colonial context has been taken into consideration, for instance, by Juaaka Lyberth in his *Kommentar: Spiralsagen*. According to the picture he delineates, the growing incidence of sexually transmitted diseases during the 1960s and 1970s, «især gonorré og syfilis, [...] voldte store problemer» («especially gonorrhea and syphilis, [...] caused major problems»; 2023: 106, my translation).

²⁶³ «Jesper says that it's true, – it's common knowledge that people up here, how do you say it, have a fixation for sex, they copulate more, so he says – Do you really believe it? Mette continues, – I guess it's true, it seems like everything is easier here», my translation.

²⁶⁴ «Only when she says she's heard that in Greenland people have more sex something happens. Henrik looks at her, surprised. – That's totally right, Otto says, and tilts his head back in laughter. – What else are we supposed to spend our time with? Henrik says, also bursting in laughter, – we have darkness all winter long, we have to find something to do», my translation.

This same trope, then, is apparently supported by people who live in that context – Danes, but also Greenlanders; Otto’s joking remark, in this sense, could perhaps be identified as an example of self-othering. At the same time, it is somewhat implied that this demeanor could be linked to the specificities of the Greenlandic context – which, as we have already seen through other examples, almost seems to invite Danish visitors to embrace their ‘wild side’. Such observations, however, are not addressed at Greenlandic women specifically. More typical examples of the fetishization of this category are to be found in Leine’s aforementioned novels, or in Mondrup’s *Tabita*.

3.2.1.1 *Loving the Alien: Kim’s Danish Male Gaze in Kalak*

As far as *Kalak* is concerned, the topic has been analyzed in Kirsten Thisted’s already mentioned «*Gi’r du en øl, dansker*». *Kim Leine og de danske stereotyper om Grønland* (2011a), revolving, among other things, around gender-representation and its implications in Leine’s debut novel. Kim’s relationship to Greenlandic women, in fact, plays a consistent part within the novel, especially in chapter 4, where the man engages in numerous extra-marital liaisons and encounters with local inhabitants. A first hint regarding this ‘affinity’ is given already in the opening chapter of the novel, set in Nuuk, in November 2004:

Tit har jeg dem mistænkt for at vide det hele, at det netop er den viden der tiltrækker dem, pirrer dem. Hvad er der med disse kvinder? tænker jeg. De skyr havet, men søger ilden. Alligevel kan jeg ikke lade være med at elske dem. For deres skrøbelighed. For deres styrke. Fordi jeg ikke forstår dem. Og fordi jeg ikke kan se dem i øjnene uden at smile.²⁶⁵
(Leine 2019a [2007]: 12-13)

Throughout these lines, the narrator seems to betray an exoticizing attitude towards the Greenlandic women he is confronted with: no mention is made of individual characteristics or drives, as they are all grouped under the collective label «disse kvinder». An element that stands out, furthermore, is Kim’s inability to decipher them, to the point that these women are attributed exceptional – and perhaps an ‘instinctive’ sort of – wisdom. Ultimately, we have a

²⁶⁵ «I often suspect that they know everything, that it is precisely that knowledge that attracts them, that turns them on. What’s the matter with these women? I wonder. They shun the sea, but seek the fire. Still, I can’t help loving them. For their fragility. For their strength. Because I don’t understand them. And because I can’t look them in the eye without smiling», my translation.

more or less direct clue as to the ‘male gaze’ exerted by Kim – of which the narrator (or perhaps the author) seems aware. Later in the novel, in fact, Kim problematizes his own positioning in post-colonial Greenland as that of a «‘hvid mand på besøg i tidligere koloni’» (Leine 2019a [2007]: 88, see *supra*, p. 130); the accent, therefore, is both on the racial/ethnic («hvid») and the gender-related component («mand»). It should also be noted that Kim’s fascination for Greenlandic women somewhat precedes his actual overseas ‘adventure’, as it is arguably inaugurated in Copenhagen:

Der er noget nøgent ved hendes ansigt, som hos et menneske der vågner fra en nats søvn. Håret er sort og glat, halvlængde, hun er et hoved mindre end mig. Hun støtter sig til mig, har grebet fat i min arm, ser på mig med øjne der stadig svømmer. Jeg bøjer mig forover og kysser hende, uden at vide hvor denne pludselige dristighed kommer fra. Hun besvarer mit kys, hendes tunge borer sig ind mellem mine tænder. Den er ru og smager af cola [...]. Det er min fyr, siger hun og gætter mine tanker. Han er ude. Kommer han snart hjem? Det tror jeg ikke. Hvad siger han, hvis han finder en fremmed mand hos sin kæreste? spørger jeg. Det gør ikke noget, siger hun. Han stoler på mig. Jeg forstår ikke logikken i svaret, men kommenterer det ikke. [...] Da jeg synker ned i hende, og vores skamben støder sammen, siger hun: Jeg hedder Eva. Du er min første, siger jeg.²⁶⁶ (Leine 2019a [2007]: 75-76)

Kim is instantly attracted by the Greenlandic woman he meets in a bar near Pusher Street – which alone may suggest her social extraction: according to Madsen and Sullivan (2004), in fact, Christiania – along with the area of Vesterbro Torv, where hash is also publicly sold – is known to be frequented by «socially excluded Greenlanders». When Kim first lays eyes on Eva she is drunk and sleepy, in line with this imagery. It could perhaps be argued that the protagonist experiences a sense of ‘kinship’ both towards the woman and the underground world she apparently gravitates in. This twofold longing is somewhat replicated during Kim’s stay in Greenland, where he «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» (Volquardsen 2014a: 400). The accent, then, is both on Kim’s penchant for Greenlandic female company and the fact that he seems to thrive among «members of the Greenlandic underclass»

²⁶⁶ «There is something naked about her face, she looks like a person waking from a night’s sleep. Her hair is black and straight, medium length, she is a head shorter than me. She leans against me, grabs my arm, looks at me with eyes that are still fumbling. I lean forward and kiss her, not knowing where this sudden boldness comes from. She returns my kiss, her tongue digs in through my teeth. It is rough and tastes like cola [...]. That’s my boyfriend, she says, guessing my thoughts. He’s outside./Is he coming home soon?/I don’t think so./What will he say if he finds a stranger at his girlfriend’s house? I ask./It doesn’t matter, she says. He trusts me./I don’t understand the logic behind the answer, but don’t make any comments. [...] /When I sink into her and our pubic bones collide, she says: My name is Eva./You are my first one, I say», my translation.

(*Ibidem*). The ethnic/racial element, nonetheless, is also likely to be present in the aforementioned passage. On the one hand, the reader is presented with a character bearing typically Greenlandic traits, such as black hair and almond eyes («Der er en pige, såvidt jeg kan se asiat»; Leine 2019a [2007]: 74);²⁶⁷ on the other, it is somewhat presupposed that Eva lives her sexuality – as well as her relationship to her partner – rather freely. This latter aspect, according to the observations made by Mortensen and Maegaard, is far from being neutral, as it draws on well-established intersections between (female) ‘Greenlandicness’ and preconceptions of a wild, untamed sexuality: «[...] Greenlandic sexuality, is described in Danish discourse as connected to nature and biology, at the same time as it is described as corrupted and disturbed by modernity» (2019: 4). While the former idea dates back to the colonial times, in more recent years problematic sexual behaviors among Greenlanders have been linked to the abrupt passage to a more complex society, favored by the Danish policies of modernization (*Ibidem*). The two scholars comment on this shift within Danish imageries regarding Greenland as follows:

This duality [...] constructs Greenlandic sexuality as either pure and belonging to some earlier evolutionary stage, or as problematically disturbed by civilization. In both cases Greenlandic sexuality is delimited from Danish culture and civilization through a process of othering, constructing the Greenlanders as not just different, but backwards and culturally and morally inferior to Danes. (*Ibidem*)

The opposition between ‘Danishness’ and ‘Greenlandicness’, furthermore, may be once again given by Kim’s inability to grasp the woman’s logic. It should also be noted that Leine’s literary alter-ego defines Eva «min første» even though he already has had other intimate experiences before. There seems to be a demarcation, then, between his first ‘Danish’ and his first ‘Greenlandic’ encounter; it is perhaps not casual, in this sense, that the Greenlandic woman bears the biblical name «Eva» – which replicates this same idea, almost in a pleonastic fashion.

The meeting with Eva thus somewhat anticipates Kim’s nearly pathological obsession with Greenland, and a similar situation is presented during the last scene set in Nuuk, before the novel’s ‘Danish’ epilogue, taking place in a pub, where the man runs into a former female colleague from Eastern Greenland. The peculiar placement of these scenes, respectively located at the two ‘poles’ of *Kalak*, may hint alone at a connection between them; analyzing them in succession, moreover, might serve the purpose to stress the ‘circularity’ of this motif. It should

²⁶⁷ «It’s a girl, Asian as far as I can see», my translation.

be borne in mind that this same ‘circular’ modality characterizes the novel as a whole, as two of its core-subjects – Kim’s deeply problematic relation to his father and the man’s tendency to addiction – emerge as ever-recurring. Kim’s last night in the Greenlandic capital is described as follows:

Siddende ved baren får jeg øje på en jeg kender. En østgrønlandsk pige jeg har arbejdet sammen med. Jeg går over til hende, rører let ved hendes skulder som hilsen. Vi drikker et par øl sammen. Jeg har kunnet lide dig lige siden den første dag, siger hun. Kunne du ikke mærke det? Jeg kysser hende. Hendes kindben er brede, næsen lille, ansigtet fladt. Hun har denne glød i øjnene, det ubarmhjertige drag om munden, som jeg kender fra østkysten. Hun bærer en halskæde med et mini-Grønland af sølv som vedhæng. Jeg fortæller hende at jeg elsker hende.²⁶⁸ (Leine 2019a [2007]: 339)

This ‘last’ Greenlandic woman remains anonymous – either because she used to be one of Kim’s colleagues or due to the fact that this figure may be interpreted as somewhat ‘archetypal’: her facial features recalled by the man, in fact, contribute to the shaping of a ‘type’ more than of an individual («that relentless draw around her mouth that I know from the East Coast»). The detail of the pendant portraying a «mini-Greenland», furthermore, could suggest that Kim makes a metonymical association between Denmark’s former Arctic colony and its women. His declaration of love, in this sense, is certainly not to be intended as directed at this particular woman but, rather, at all Greenlandic women and, perhaps, at all of Greenland, here present in the guise of a necklace. Based on this extract, history seems to repeat itself. The reader, however, knows that Kim is leaving Greenland for good – along with everything that comes with it – and that he, parallelly, has found the strength to put an end to the relationship with his father, which has been haunting him throughout all these years.

Thisted’s analysis on gender relations within *Kalak*, on the other hand, is more concerned with the oppositional representation of men and women in terms of agency. In this regard, in fact, Leine’s debut novel offers some elements of novelty, not unlikely Peter Høeg’s *Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne* (see *supra*, pp. 183-184). According to Thisted, in fact, although the release of the novel was accompanied by critical discourses on the representation of Greenlandic women, Leine aims arguably at the deconstruction of this narratives rather than at their reproduction:

²⁶⁸ «Sitting at the bar, I spot someone I know. An East Greenlandic girl I have worked with. I go over to her and touch her shoulder lightly to greet her. We have a few beers together. I’ve liked you since the first day, she says. Didn’t you notice? I kiss her. Her cheekbones are wide, her nose is small, her face flat. She has this glow in her eyes, that relentless draw around her mouth that I recognize from the East Coast. She’s wearing a necklace with a silver pendant representing a mini-Greenland. I tell her I love her», my translation.

Også Kim må som beskrevet sande, at fordelingen mellem subjekt og objekt ikke er så ligetil i denne tilsyneladende klassiske koloniale relation dansk mand/grønlandsk kvinde. Kvinderne er i høj grad i stand til at påføre Kim oplevelser han ikke kan væge sig mod, ikke mindst de østgrønlandske kvinder, der i realiteten bruger Kim fuldstændig på samme måde, som danske mænd plejer at bruge grønlandske kvinder [...]. Læser man romanen som et stykke postkolonial bekendelseslitteratur, sådan som der argumenteres for her, kan man for det første henholde sig til, at den skrivende Kim ikke deler bevidsthed med den agerende, oplevende Kim. For det andet, at det ikke er iboende essenser, men derimod historisk betingede sociale konstruktioner skabt af stærkt asymmetriske magtforhold, forfatteren forsøger at skrive frem.²⁶⁹ (Thisted 2011a: 278-279)

Thisted thus draws the attention to the alleged performative use of gender roles made by Leine – which somewhat reduplicates the representation of ‘Greenlandicness’ and ‘Danishness’ as untied to «cultural stuff» (Jenkins 2008: 12). In the case of ethnicity, an anti-essentialist conception of the two categories is paired with the *de facto* repositioning of the reification of some identity-markers (see chapter 2); similarly, in this other case, «opretholdes [...] den grundlæggende stærkt patriarkalske kønsmetaforik»²⁷⁰ (Thisted 2011a: 278). Later in her article, Thisted wonders whether maintaining the association between ethnicity and sexuality *per se* does not risk resulting in the reproduction of stereotypes on Greenlandic women rather than deconstructing them (2011a: 279). In fact, even though Kim undergoes a process of ‘ethnic hybridization’ – as he is, in his own words, split between Greenland and Denmark (Leine 2019a [2007]: 329) – and comes across as ‘feminized’, at least to a certain extent, the association between ‘Greenlandicness’ and specific sexual behaviors entails some risks.

If we consider both dimensions in the light of Ingunn Moser’s observations on the possible types of interactions between different social categories, we could conclude that, in the case of *Kalak*, the oppositional pairs ‘Greenlandicness’/‘Danishness’, on the one side, and ‘femininity’/‘masculinity’, on the other, seem to be reenacted in a similar fashion. Both sets of categories, in fact, although they are respectively linked to precise symbols and associations, emerge as performative: ‘Greenlandicness’, for instance, is appropriated by Kim, who becomes

²⁶⁹ «Kim also has to admit, as described, that the role-distribution between subject and object is not so straightforward with regard to this relation, which apparently mirrors the classic colonial opposition between Danish man/Greenlandic woman. Women are highly capable of exposing Kim to experiences from which he cannot protect himself, and this is especially true for East Greenlandic women, who in reality use Kim in exactly the same way as Danish men tend to use Greenlandic women [...]. If you read the novel as a piece of postcolonial confessional literature, as it is argued here, you can first of all assume that Kim as a writer does not share consciousness with the other Kim, who acts and makes experiences in the novel. Secondly, you can assume that the author is here trying to present historically conditioned social constructions created by strongly asymmetric power relations rather than inherent essences», my translation.

²⁷⁰ «the fundamental strongly patriarchal gender metaphors are [...] maintained», my translation.

a *kalak*, and ‘masculine’ characteristics – such as a predatory sexuality – are to be found in Greenlandic women. This specific correlation, however, bears some problematicness to it, as an ‘uninhibited’ sexual demeanor may also be traced back to the idea of Greenlanders as *naturmennesker* – and not only to the antithesis between ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’. The same cannot be said with regard to *Store Malene* and *Godhavn*. In the former novel, as we have seen, the focus is rather on the Justine and Mette’s display of aggressive attitudes, both representatives of ‘Danishness’. Interestingly enough, in *Godhavn* these recurring motifs and discourses characterize and distinguish each one of the members of the Danish family at the center of the novel; among them, there seems to be a correlation between the ability to adapt to the Greenlandic context and a harshness that is somewhat conceived as man-like.

3.2.1.2 Giving Voice to Greenlandic Women: The Case of Tabita

As been mentioned, Greenlandic women often appear in Danish representations as objects of desire, an expression denoting their passivity and the fetishization that comes along with an othering attitude. As we have seen, pairings between Greenlandic women and Danish men have always been a part of Denmark and Greenland’s common history – to the point that it has been deemed necessary to regulate them in specific historical moments (see chapter 1). Romantic and sexual relations in the Danish-Greenlandic (post)colonial context, in this sense, cannot be considered either neutral or an individual matter. The collective nature of this subject – with special attention to the oppression experienced by Greenlandic women – has already been addressed by politically engaged pieces of *dansk grønlandslitteratur* from the 1970s, for instance in the work of Sven Holm and Jørgen Liljensøe. It could be argued that this same thread is also present in more contemporary Danish fictions about Greenland, and this is especially true if one considers the genre of the historical novel, not unfrequently used by Danish writers to come to terms, in a literary fashion, with Denmark’s past vis-à-vis Greenland (see Thisted 2015; 2023). Kim Leine’s trilogy on colonial Greenland and Iben Mondrup’s *Tabita* are quite explicative in this sense. In her *Imperiets genfærd. Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden og den dansk-grønlandske historieskrivning*, Thisted (2015: 118) concludes that «[r]omanens skildringer, hvor grønlændere og danskere mødes i øjenhøjde og i et fælles univers, afspejler denne proces og inviterer læserne til en ny måde at tænke relationen. Som sådan kan romanen læses som et bidrag til den forsoning mellem Danmark og Grønland, det officielle Danmark

foreløbig har takket nej til at deltage i». ²⁷¹ It could be argued that Mondrup's *Tabita* is also conceived as a literary response to Denmark's power abuses towards Greenland during the colonial and modernization period – and to its own official positioning with regard to those power abuses; in fact, when the novel came out, in the beginning of 2020, Denmark had not given any official statement of apology with reference to the scandal involving the 22 Greenlandic children forcefully sent to Denmark for education purposes (see Thisted 2023: 190). The attention to these discourses is already evident from the novel's opening dedication (see *supra*, p. 152).

Tabita's final acknowledgements, on the other hand (see *supra*, p. 151), explicitly refer to the dimension of gender and, arguably, to the twofold oppression endured by Greenlandic women (Mondrup 2020: 356). The author, then, expressly aims at 'unsilencing' Greenlandic female voices and advocating their claims. It is impossible, in this regard, not to think of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's observations on the limited expression possibilities of the «subaltern». This label, in fact, can be fruitfully used also with regard to gender, as «both as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the contest of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow» (Spivak 2010: 41). The focal role of the gender dimension, furthermore, is also betrayed by the structure of the novel, which revolves entirely around different women's voices: the four points of view, in fact, follow the vicissitudes of as many female characters. Three of them are representatives of three different generations within the same Greenlandic family (Rosine, Abelone, and Tabita), whereas the fourth point of view is associated with Eva, the Danish woman who, along with her husband Berthel, becomes Tabita's adoptive parent with dubious consent from her biological mother, Abelone. The gender-related aspect, then, is at the core of *Tabita*, together with the contraposition between a Danish and a Greenlandic perspective on the same matter, i.e., the shady adoption of Tabita and her little brother Vitus, favored regardless of Abelone's presence and reluctance.

The Greenlandic woman – being poor, a single mother, and having born children from different fathers – is not regarded as capable of mothering Tabita and Vitus; this consideration is advanced by Eva and Berthel, who thus convince themselves of acting in the best interest of

²⁷¹ «The novel's portrayals of Greenlanders and Danes meeting at eye level and in a shared universe reflect this process and invite readers to reconsider and reframe their understanding of the relationship. As such, the novel may be read as a significant contribution to the Danish-Greenlandic reconciliation process in which the official Denmark has so far declined to engage» (Thisted 2016: 169).

the two siblings, who will be raised in Denmark and will have better life opportunities overseas. The violence perpetrated against Abelone acquires a more ‘official’ and collective character in the words of Louise, a Danish nurse who facilitates the adoption process and minimizes Eva and Berthel’s hesitation given by a guilty conscience. Let us consider the following passage:

«Hvis det overhovedet kan hjælpe dig, så tænk på, hvad alternativet ville være. Hvis ikke I tog dem, hvem skulle så? Jeg kan ikke fortælle dig, hvor mange børn jeg har set gå til. Vi bygger børnehjem og gør ved, men det er endeløst. Der er så mange børn, Eva, som ikke har noget sted at bo.»
«Det har jeg også tænkt på.»
«Børnene har brug for, at du tager den med ro og er glad for din beslutning,» siger Louise.
«Det er kun naturligt at komme i tvivl [...].»
«Jeg er ikke i tvivl. Det føler jeg da i hvert fald ikke.»
«Nej. Eva, du er klar til det her, du bliver en god mor.»
Louise læner sig frem.
«Se lige på mig. Du gør en god gerning!»
«Tak, Louise [...]. Det er jo også en egoistisk ting. Det er vi vel også nødt til at være ærlige om, eller hvad? Men jeg fortryder ikke noget.»
«Selvfølgelig er det egoistisk. Vi tænker alle sammen på os selv. Men tænk alligevel også på, at det er både Rosines og Abelones ønske. Rosine om nogen ved, hvad der venter sådan nogle børn.»
«Det er sandt.»
«Abelone er bedst tjent sådan her.»²⁷² (Mondrup 2020: 113-114)

It could be argued that this extract, along with its more ‘concrete’ meaning, also lends itself to a metaphorical interpretation: as it is known, Danish-Greenlandic relations have often been conceived in maternal terms – where the benevolent and caring mother is to be identified with Denmark, and Greenland is somewhat relegated to a child-like state. The situation presented in the aforementioned dialogue reproduces those same discourses, albeit on a smaller and individual scale: Danish interference is justified on the basis that action is being taken in the Greenlanders’ best interest. Therefore, it is implied that Greenlanders cannot ‘take care of themselves’ – or, at least, not yet. This same naiveté also seems to concern their sexuality, or perhaps their inability to control it, which results – according to the words of the nurse – in the

²⁷² «“If it somehow can help, think about what the alternative would be. If you don’t take them, who else would have done it? I can’t tell you how many ruined kids I’ve seen. We build institutions for children, and we take care of them, but it’s an endless story. There are so many children, Eva, who don’t have a place to stay.” “I’ve been thinking about that.” “The kids need you to take it easy and be satisfied with your decision”, Louise says. “It’s normal to have doubts [...]” “I’m not having doubts. I don’t think I am.” “No, Eva, you’re ready for this, you’re going to be a good mother.” Louise leans forward. “Look at me. You’re doing a good thing!” “Thanks, Louise [...]”. It’s also an egoistic thing to do. We should be honest about it, shouldn’t we? But I regret nothing.” “Of course it’s egoistic. Everybody thinks about themselves. But you should also think about the fact that it’s also what both Rosine and Abelone wish for. Rosine knows what expects these children better than anyone.” “That’s true.” “This is in Abelone’s best interest”, my translation.

birth and neglect of numerous children («We build institutions for children, and we take care of them, but it's an endless story»). Abelone, as anticipated, is not regarded as a suitable mother for Tabita and Vitus, due to the fact that she belongs to a lower class, being a *kiffaq* («housemaid»), and has had both of them outside of marriage. The woman, then, is being judged according to Danish bourgeois standards, which entail an idea of respectability based on the social status and adherence to a sexuality constrained by marriage and monogamy. In the dialogue between Louise and Eva, then, the intersection between 'Greenlandicness' and 'womanhood' engenders discourses that overlap with the observations made by Mortensen and Maegaard (2019: 3-4): the sexuality of Abelone undergoes, as the words of the two characters seem to hint, a process of othering, and her specific situation is traced back to a wider phenomenon – so wide that Danish authorities 'must' take control of the situation by building facilities for children or favoring adoptions: «Sygeplejersken har været med til at sende flere børn af sted med danske familier [...]. Børnehjemsbørn, som ingen forældre havde, børn fra familier med alt for mange børn, børn, hvis forældre havde slået sig selv ihjel. Det er gode og lykkelige historier, Louise har været involveret i. Eva stoler på hende i denne sag»²⁷³ (Mondrup 2020: 116). It should be noted that none of the three cases that are being considered by Eva applies to that of Abelone. Furthermore, the stress is always on the hardships allegedly characterizing life in Greenland; conversely, no mention is made of the role of Danish men with regard to the surge of difficult parenting situations. As the narration unfolds, however, the reader is acquainted with Vitus' real origins: the child, in fact, is Berthel's biological son, whom he conceived together with Abelone. Their affair is explicitly addressed during a fight between Eva and Berthel, before the two decide to send Vitus to another family, thus separating him from his older sister:

«Løgner. Jeg væmmes ved dig. Jeg var bare i vejen for dig i al den tid. Tror du ikke, jeg mærkede det? Du ville ønske, jeg forsvandt, så hun kunne flytte ind til dig, og du kunne leve dit spændende liv med hende.»

«Hun var jo for helvede bare en dum grønlanderpige. Du kan ikke sammenligne dig med hende, så lavt kan du da ikke tænke om dig selv.»

[...]

«Men hun var god nok til, at du lokkede hende op i min seng. Eller det var måske hende, der lokkede dig? Er du egentlig rigtig klog?»

«Jeg er en mand, Eva. Vi har snakket om det tusind gange. Jeg var ensom.»

[...]

²⁷³ «The nurse has been associated with the displacement of many children, sent away together with Danish families [...]. Children from institutions, who didn't have any parents, from families with too many children, children whose parents had killed themselves. Louise has been involved with nice and happy stories. Eva trusts her in this regard», my translation.

«Hvordan kunne du holde hende ud? Hun var ulækker.»
 «Eva!»
 «Hun gik jo aldrig i bad. Men det værner man sig måske til? At nogen stinker af spæk og pis.»
 «Ti nu stille.»
 «Nej, fortæl mig det. Hvordan kunne du holde det ud?»
 «Det kunne jeg heller ikke.»²⁷⁴ (Mondrup 2020: 214)

In this extract, the contraposition between Eva and Abelone is depicted in ethnic – and perhaps also class-related – terms. Eva and Berthel's comments, in fact, betray a discriminating attitude towards Abelone on the grounds of her 'Greenlandicness', on the one hand, and on the fact that she comes across as socially marginalized, on the other. This interpretation seems to be supported by the adjective «dum», as well as by the observations on her hygiene habits. Furthermore, according to Berthel's statement, Greenlandic women seem to be eligible for the Danish (male) gaze only in a condition of 'necessity', i.e., in the absence of Danish women. His justification, however, is likely to entail a tendentious quality, as their relationship is more complicated than that, and can perhaps be summed up by considering an extract from *Je suis Martiniquaise* quoted by Frantz Fanon in his *Black Skin, White Masks*: «But a woman of color is never altogether respectable in a white man's eyes. Even when he loves her» (2008: 29). In fact, while the tie with Eva is associated with marital obligations and middle-class respectability, the relationship between Abelone and Berthel is depicted as an infructuous affair imposed by circumstances 'of nature': the man engages in these sexual encounters driven by 'physiological needs' and, in his own words, nearly against his will («Det kunne jeg heller ikke»).

It is ironic, in this regard, that the affair with Abelone leads to the birth of Vitus, while the marriage with Eva remains sterile. This theme seems to constitute a recurring element within Mondrup's production, since it is already suggested in *Store Malene*. Despite Mette's insistent attempts to get pregnant, in fact, she and Jesper do not seem to be able to have children – which causes their relationship to collapse. Sterility among Danish couples in Greenland, it could be argued, may bear a symbolic quality: the trope could be traced back to the (illusory) idea of

²⁷⁴ «“Liar. You disgust me. I've just been standing in your way all this time. Don't you think I noticed it? You wished I'd disappeared, so that she could live with you, and you could live your exciting life with her.” “For Christ's sake, she was just a stupid Greenlandic girl. You can't compare yourself to her, you can't think that little of yourself.” [...] “But she was good enough for you to lure her up into my bed. Or maybe it was her who lured you? Are you really smart?” “I'm a man, Eva. We've talked about it thousands of times. I was lonely.” [...] “How could you put up with her? She was gross.” “Eva!” “She never washed herself. But maybe you get used to it? To someone stinking of grease and piss.” “Be quiet now.” “No, tell me about it. How could you put up with it?” “I couldn't, honestly”», my translation.

Greenland as a «hvidt lærred» (Dybdal & Grønlund 2020: 39), i.e., as a place of infinite possibilities and new beginnings. At the same time, the fact that Abelone manages to give birth to Berthel's child – whereas Eva does not – could be regarded as a clue for the urge to step beyond the discrete and irreducible categories of 'Danishness' and 'Greenlandicness', as a concrete generation of a third dimension, according to the assumption that «bastarderne er de smukkeste, hér som alle andre steder»²⁷⁵ (Inuk 2004: 133, see *supra*, p. 134). This perspective, however, implies an optimistic view of the relationship between Abelone and Berthel, which, as we have seen, bears an undeniably oppressive character. Alternatively, this same element could be interpreted bearing in mind Kirsten Thisted's analysis of *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden* by Kim Leine and, in particular, her observations on the *kateket* Bertel, born from the union between the Danish missionary Oxbøl and his own illegitimate mixed-race daughter:

Ved at gøre Bertel til resultatet af en illigitim [sic] forbindelse understreger Leine spændingerne mellem den danske dominans og den grønlandske underlegenhed, der hos romanens blandinger indlejres som en del af personligheden (2015: 115). Billedet af den korpulerende [sic] Oxbøl som en inkarnation af «den onde selv» (Leine 2012, 441), «en øgle med en svungen ryg og en hale der bugter sig fra side til side» (Leine 2012, 441), bliver et fysisk udtryk for det dæmoniske, uudholdelige ved at bære undertrykkeren i sig, men samtidig også identificere sig med ham og genkende sig selv i ham – uden på nogen måde gensidigt at blive genkendt og anerkendt.²⁷⁶ (Thisted 2015: 115)

The relationship between Abelone and Berthel, as anticipated, repropose a similar «tension» caused by power disparities among Greenlanders and Danes, since the woman evidently comes across as the oppressed part. Moreover, similarly to what happens in the case of Oxbøl, the reader cannot identify with the 'evil' Danish man – who, at the end of the novel, even attempts to engage in sexual intercourse with Tabita, his own adoptive child. With reference to this concluding scene, it is worth noting that the fetishization of 'Greenlandicness' also plays a role:

«Sig det igen,» hvisker han.

«Hvad?»

«Det, du sagde.»

«Apannga.»

Han vender hende om mod sig og trækker hendes ansigt hen til sit og kysser hende hårdt, presser sin behårede mund mod hendes og stikker tungen ind.

²⁷⁵ «Bastards are always the most beautiful ones, here and everywhere», my translation.

²⁷⁶ «By casting Bertel as the result of an illegitimate relationship, Leine underscores the tension between Danish dominance and Greenlandic inferiority, making it an intrinsic feature personality in the novel's characters of mixed ancestry. The image of the copulating Oxbøl as an incarnation of "the Devil himself" (Leine 2015, 471), "a reptile with arched back and a tail swishing from side to side" (Leine 2015, 470), becomes a carnal expression of the demonic and unbearable burden of carrying the oppressor inside oneself, identifying with him and recognizing oneself in him – albeit without encountering any reciprocal recognition or acceptance» (Thisted 2016: 164).

«Min elskede, elskede skat,» stønner han, og hun lader ham trykke sig op ad hendes ben og ind til hendes krop, hun lader hans hænder famle sig vej under hendes nattøj, til han når hendes trusser.²⁷⁷ (Mondrup 2020: 354)

Berthel, in fact, seems to be aroused by the Greenlandic expression «Apannga» («Kiss me»), insistently repeated by Tabita. This same word, earlier in the novel, had been used by Tabita's little brother, Vitus, who, contrary to his sister, could not completely abandon the linguistic memories linked to his Greenlandic upbringing (Mondrup 2020: 246). A possibility, therefore, is that the word has lost its semantic value for Tabita, and that it is stuck in her head as pure 'form', an acoustic remembrance from the past. Berthel, on the other hand, with «sit gebrokne grønlandsk», «his broken Greenlandic» (Mondrup 2020: 67), might be able to understand the term's meaning, and to take it as an invitation; the mere occurring of a Greenlandic word seems to awaken those same desires that had characterized his stay in Greenland and that had been repressed since then. The relationship to Greenland – and, more specifically, to Greenlandic women – is here represented as morbid, nearly pathological, not dissimilarly to Kim's obsession for the island, in *Kalak* (Leine 2019a: 322). Berthel's oppressive and abusive behavior, however, does not only regard Abelone and Tabita. His wife, Eva, can also be identified as a victim of the man's actions and lies. While the Danish woman wants to pursue her ambitions and, at the same time, act in the best interest of the two children – even though this may well be a tale of self-absolution – her husband is depicted as a less nuanced character, who takes advantage of his twofold privileged position, being at the intersection between the categories 'Danishness' and 'manhood'.

3.3 Beyond 'Manhood' and 'Womanhood': Alternative Gender Constellations in (Post)colonial Greenland

Colonial enterprises, according to Gwynne and Poon, have often been accompanied by gendered discourses. As mentioned earlier, Denmark has often regarded itself as a maternal and benevolent figure towards non-mature Greenland, thus relegated to a child-like state (see *supra*, p. 60, 182). This metaphor hints at Denmark's supposed 'exceptionalism', and detaches from

²⁷⁷ «“Say it again”, he whispers. “What?” “The thing you said.” “Apannga.” He turns her around and pulls her face to his and kisses her hard, pressing his hairy mouth against hers and thrusting his tongue in. “My love, my beloved darling”, he moans, and she lets him press up her legs and into her body, she lets his hands find their way under her nightgown until he reaches her panties», my translation.

more recurring colonial narratives, such as the one that follows: «The discovery of new lands and the colonization of geographical spaces by western European powers have traditionally been expressed in terms of sexual conquest and an occupation of virgin land, terms that conflate the colonizer's imperial authority with masculinity and virility» (Gwynne & Poon 2012: XXV). Nonetheless, it could perhaps be fruitful to consider the gender-related implications of the modernization years, which, as known, have paradoxically become a symbol for Denmark's colonial engagement vis-à-vis Greenland (Rud 2017a: 127). Those same years, in fact, were characterized by a migration wave of Danish workers, whose displacement aimed at the adaptation of Greenland's infrastructures to the standard of the Central state; the intuition that this post-colonial endeavor was not untied to gender-related discourses has been proposed, once again, by Sven Holm in his verses: «Det andet [køn] er de danske mænd / de bor i det nye samfund / uden at være bofaste / men de er til stede / de organiserer, bygger, administrer / sådan som det nye samfunds fremmede mænd skal gøre»²⁷⁸ (Holm 1978). The text seems to suggest that some of the main activities performed on Greenlandic soil by Danish migrants (craftsmanship, administration) were male dominated. The construction of a new society – and, perhaps, progress *tout-court* – is thus represented as a solely 'manly' endeavor; the presuppositions of this *mission civilisatrice* may thus not differ greatly from those described by Gwynne and Poon, as Greenland is still somewhat regarded as a virgin, 'uncivilized' land. The parallelism could be further enriched by taking into consideration Ortner's reflections on the gendered notions of nature and culture: «The formulation I would like to defend and elaborate on, then, is that women are seen "merely" as being closer to nature than men. That is, culture (still equated more or less unambiguously with men) recognizes that woman is an active participant in its special processes, but sees her as being, at the same time, more rooted in, or having more direct connection with, nature» (Ortner 1972: 12).

Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, the 'social agency' held by Danish men is often paired with 'literary agency', as the prevailing point of view presented in Danish fictions of post-colonial Greenland is that of Danish men. Kim Leine's *Kalak*, although it set in a period between the introduction of the Greenlandic Home Rule and Self-Government (1979-2009), continues this tradition, not unlike Flemming Jensen's *Immaqa*. The first exceptions, in this sense, have been Lotte Inuk's *Sultekunstnerinde* and Iben Mondrup's *Store Malene*. The former

²⁷⁸ «The other [sex] are the Danish men / they live in the new society / without having a permanent residence / but they are present / they organize, build, administrate / as the foreign men of this new society are supposed to», my translation.

centres on Charlotta's years in Nuuk, from 1976 to 1979, while the latter focuses on Justine's solo trip to Nuuk. No specific temporal information is given in the case of *Store Malene*, but it could be argued that the book is set in contemporary years, before 2012, when the infamous Blok P was demolished. This theory, among other things, also seems to be confirmed through a parallelism with *En to tre – Justine*, of which *Store Malene* is a «selvstændig fortsættelse», as stated on the novel's back cover.²⁷⁹

3.3.1 Atypical Danish Gazes: The Displacement of Female Danish Characters

Sultekunstnerinde's protagonist, Charlotta, moves to Greenland to follow her mother, who has found a job opportunity as a photographer, in Nuuk. Their mother-child 'adventure' is described in romanticized terms, and the woman's presence in Greenland does not seem to be linked to the modernization project, since her migration is apparently driven only by individual motivations (desire for adventure, hopes for a better financial/working position etc.). However, the trope of the displacement of «utilpassede eksistenser», «ill-suited existences» (Thisted 2003: 38, see *supra*, p. 62, 93), is also present in this case, despite the different premises. Charlotta's mother, in fact, does not apparently embody a typical parental figure, being seemingly unable to keep an 'ordinary' job and to fit a middle-class way of living. Let us consider the following explicative extract from *Sultekunstnerinde*:

Før hun fik idéen at søge det job arbejdede hun i et cirkus, med at sælge billetter og den slags; der var ikke nogen i Danmark der kunne bruge den uddannelse hun havde taget til noget, lige på det tidspunkt. Hun kunne godt lide cirkusjobbet, tror jeg, og jeg kunne få gratis billetter til forestillingen hver aften hvis jeg ville og billige rabatbilletter til mine venner.

– Synes du jeg skal lade mig ansætte for sæsonen, spurgte hun mig efter at have været der et par uger, halvt i spøg, men det er aldrig til at vide med hende. – Så skulle vi bo i en cirkusvogn og rejse rundt fra sted til sted og jeg ville blive nødt til selv at undervise dig fordi du måtte undvære nogle måneder af skolen!

Jeg syntes det lød vidunderligt. Jeg havde drømt om at rejse med et cirkus så længe jeg kan huske tilbage, og jeg havde lige så lidt lyst til at blive i fødebyen på det tidspunkt som min mor. [...]

Måske havde hun bare ønsket at teste min lyst, mit mod til at begive mig ud i det blå og væk ved at spørge; måske var det også sit eget mod hun testede. I hvert fald kom det ikke

²⁷⁹ «stand-alone sequel», my translation.

mere på tale at lade sig ansætte for sæsonen i cirkus, og i stedet stod vi pludselig og skulle rejse til Grønland.²⁸⁰ (Inuk 2004: 16-17)

The idea of touring with the circus is thus substituted with a seasonal job in Greenland. A trait common to both options that Charlotta's mother is presented with is the ostensible irreconcilability with a dull and stable life in Denmark, or, at least, in the characters' «hometown». Mother and daughter both long to break free from the ties of a such an existence, and Greenland seems to be the perfect recipient of their – perhaps naïve – dreams and hopes. However, it should also be remembered that the migration to Greenland, a 'nation in progress', would allow Charlotte's mother to access an «ordentligt arbejde», «ordinary job» (Inuk 2004: 16) that also satisfies her restlessness («Min mor er ikke særlig god til ingenting at foretage sig med sine dage, det gør hende trist og anspændt til mode», *Ibidem*).²⁸¹

Justine's overseas travel, on the other hand, is hardly definable in terms of a migration, as the woman has only agreed to a home exchange with a Danish nurse based in Nuuk. Nonetheless, this novel also focuses on the point of view of a female character, offering a variation on the trope of the «hvid mand på besøg i tidligere koloni», the «white man visiting a former colony» (Leine 2019a [2007]: 88, see *supra*, p. 130, 189). Justine's experience, although it bears some similarities with that of Kim, the protagonist of *Kalak*, is perhaps harder to decipher, due to the fact that the background of the character is unclear. According to Volquardsen, in fact, «her origins are never revealed to the reader. Yet the name suggests a connection to Greenland» (Volquardsen 2014a: 413). As a matter of fact, throughout *Store Malene*, Justine disseminates a couple of hints with regard to her Greenlandic roots, but the topic is never delved into and the reader, given the unreliability of her point of view, may also doubt her words. However, it is interesting to note that, despite this, Justine could substantially be regarded as a representative for 'Danishness', as she seems to display an othering attitude

²⁸⁰ «Before she got the idea to apply for that job, she was working in a circus, selling tickets and other things of the sort; at the time, no one in Denmark could do anything with the studies she had pursued. She liked working at the circus, I think, and I could get free tickets to the show every evening, if I wanted to, and discounts for my friends. – Do you think I should work here for the whole season, she asked me after a couple of weeks, half joking, but you never know with her. – So we would live in a circus wagon and travel from place to place, and I would have to be your teacher, because you would miss some months at school! I thought it sounded wonderful. I had dreamt of travelling with a circus as long as I can remember, and I had as little had desire to stay in my hometown as my mother. [...] Perhaps she had wanted to test my disposition, my courage to venture out into the blue and away; perhaps it was also her own courage she was testing. In any case, the possibility of getting hired for the season was no longer mentioned and, instead, we suddenly found ourselves travelling to Greenland», my translation.

²⁸¹ «My mother is not particularly good at having nothing to do all day, which makes her sad and nervous», my translation.

towards ‘Greenlandicness’ and to share – albeit covertly – some of the stereotypes explicated by Mette and Jesper.²⁸² This perspective on the matter seems to be confirmed by the author herself, who, in a private correspondence (27 October 2022), writes as follows:

Justine inkarnerer klart en danskhed som for hende er ambivalent, hvorfor hun på sin vis projicerer den over på Mette og Jesper (og andre danskere). Samtidig er hun dybt, og måske uerkendt, fascineret af det etniske, det grønlandske, som både er hende (som en længsel), og som hun synes at finde i den fremmede (grønlandske mand), ham som hun udforsker og intimiderer med kameraet [...]. Det fremmede, feticherede vilde og ophøjede, mørket, er vel hvad hun drages imod og frastødes af.²⁸³

Justine’s non-clarified status, which is stressed in *En to tre – Justine*, where the woman admits that she is not interested in defining herself,²⁸⁴ inevitably plays a role in the power relations emerging among the constellation of characters. If we, once again, draw a parallelism with Sven Holm’s *De tre køn*, it could be argued that, within a hypothetical hierarchization, the dimension of gender may seem to prevail upon that of ethnicity – at least for women. It should be noted, however, that Justine’s gender identity may *also* come across as ‘ambiguous’. A similar operation, as mentioned earlier, had been attempted by Peter Høeg with his Smilla, a Dano-Greenlandic glaciologist who bears distinguishable ‘masculine’ features. It is perhaps worth remembering the explicative scene in which the woman penetrates a sexual partner with her clitoris. The same passage is recalled by Hauge, who elaborates on the subject as follows: «Hendes seksualitet er svær at forestille sig. Hun vil trænge ind i manden – “mekanikeren” – med sin klitoris, og ved Esajas begravelse drømmer hun nekrofile og pædofile drømme: “om

²⁸² If we take into consideration the three elements mentioned in chapter 2 with regard to the reification of Greenlandic identity, Justine clearly comes across as a Dane – and is perceived as such by Mette and Jesper and the Greenlanders she encounters during her trip. The matter is perhaps different in the case of *En to tre – Justine*, where the woman often includes Greenlandic elements in her artistic performances. These elements, however, are never explicitly traced back to Justine’s origins – which may hint at a fetishization of ‘Greenlandicness’ and, at the same time, of ‘ethnic’ motifs in art. Conversely, the employment of Greenlandic tropes within an artistic performance could also suggest an underlying anti-essentialist conception of ethnic identity.

²⁸³ «Justine clearly embodies a ‘Danishness’ that she perceives as ambivalent, and this is the reason why she projects it on Mette and Jesper (and other Danes). At the same time, she is deeply, and perhaps unwillingly, fascinated by the ethnic, the Greenlandic element – which is both her (as a nostalgia), and which she seems to find in the alien (Greenlandic man), the one she explores and intimidates with her camera [...]. The alien, fetishized wild and exalted, the dark, is probably what she is drawn towards and repelled by», my translation.

²⁸⁴ Let us consider the following passage from *En to tre – Justine*, the protagonist and narrator’s internal monologue: «Farvel? Hvad er der tilbage hvis ikke dét der har været så længe at det er altid? Hvad er der andet? Ja, hvem er den anden? Dét jeg er nu, er uden form [...]. Jeg er ligeglad med hvad jeg er. Bare dét viser mig hvordan jeg er, giver mig alle vinklerne, alle øjeblikkene vil jeg have uden men. Lige nu har jeg brug for et kamera.» («Goodbye? What is left but what has been so long that it is always? What else is there? Who is the other? What I am now is formless [...]. I don’t care about what I am. Only *that* shows me how I am, gives me all the angles, I want every moment without buts. I need a camera right now », my translation, Mondrup 2012: 92).

jeg bare én gang kunne mærke hans rejsning mod mit lår, en gestus af anet, endeløs erotik”»²⁸⁵ (2004: 251). On the other hand, Justine, whom we meet in two of Mondrup’s novels, has a fluid sexuality, as a comparison between *En to tre – Justine* and *Store Malene* suggests. While in the former book the woman is engaged in a (rather open) relationship with Vita, a fellow artist, in the latter she develops an obsession for Joorut, a taxi driver from Southern Greenland. The man, whose morphology can be clearly traced back to his Greenlandic origins, is described in objectifying terms, firstly by Justine and, in a second moment, by Mette. Their common interest for Joorut seems to hint, once again, at the fetishization of his appearance, directly linked to the man’s ‘exotic’ background. There seems to be a reversal, thus, of the typical dynamics among Danish men and Greenlandic women, where the latter are conceived as easy sexual preys by Danish *udsendte*. Women, in this case, present a predatory attitude towards a man, who manages to express his frustration, but remains nonetheless substantially passive. Justine’s approach to Joorut is described throughout the whole novel as a hunt, which is ironic, if one considers the ‘inexperience’ displayed by the woman during the Arctic safari she takes part in, while Mette is strongly distressed by the killing of a seal.²⁸⁶ Let us consider this passage, in which Justine manages to engage in sexual intercourse with Joorut:

Hun gik i gang med at slikke hans ansigt. Han var ikke modvillig, nok nærmere overrasket, men han kyssede tilbage, stak tungen ind i hendes mund og sugede hendes tunge til sig, sugede hende så hårdt at det næsten gjorde ondt. Hun sugede også ham, men det var først senere, efter at han havde fået tøjet af og havde blottet sig. – Pas på, han bider, sagde han og grinede fordi pikken stod ud af bukserne. Hun tog sit tøj af, så han også kunne se hende. Et bytte, sådan havde hun følt sig, et hvidt bytte med gåsehud og væskende sår. Og en jæger, sådan havde hun også følt sig, en jæger som nedlagde sit bytte ved at byde sig til. [...] Polarræven, som nu ligger og sover ved siden af hende, var på det tidspunkt en anden slags dyr, noget større, en bjørn måske, et voldsomt dyr, der rystende og gryntende faldt sammen oven på hende.²⁸⁷ (Mondrup 2013: 71-73)

²⁸⁵ «Her sexuality is hard to imagine. She wants to penetrate the man – the “mechanic” – with her clitoris, and at Esaja’s funeral she has necrophiliac and pedophilic dreams: “if I could only once feel his erection against my thigh, a gesture of anticipation, endless eroticism”», my translation.

²⁸⁶ Justine, although she wishes to come across as less ‘ridiculous’ than Mette and Jesper, unwillingly displays her inexperience by mistaking a seagull for a seal, and the seal’s liver for a heart; as Joorut starts slaughtering the animal, Mette loses control and bursts out crying (Mondrup 2013: 113). The woman, in an attempt to demonstrate that she is not like Mette (or, perhaps, like other Danes in general), even tastes freshly hunted meat: «Hun har lyst til at sige til ham at hun er anderledes end Mette; hun er ikke chokeret over sælen, og slet ikke over at se den blive flænset» («She wants to tell him that she’s different from Mette; she’s not upset about the seal, and certainly not by seeing it torn apart», my translation; Mondrup 2013: 115).

²⁸⁷ «She started licking his face. He wasn’t reluctant, rather surprised, but he kissed back, thrusting his tongue into her mouth, and sucking her tongue, sucking her so hard it almost hurt. She sucked him too, but it wasn’t until later, after he had stripped and exposed himself. – Be careful, he bites, he said and laughed because his dick was sticking out of his pants. She took off her clothes so he could see her too. A prey, she had felt, a white prey with goosebumps and oozing wounds. And a hunter, that’s how she had felt too, a hunter who killed his prey by offering herself. [...]

The scene is clearly described in animal-like terms: Justine «licks» Joorut's face, and Joorut warns Justine that his penis «bites». As the scene unfolds, 'bestial' metaphors occur more often and in a less discrete fashion, to the point that the Greenlandic man is decidedly compared to the wild animals of Greenlandic. As he sleeps, he reminds Justine of an «Arctic fox», whereas, during the climax of their sexual encounter, he comes across as «something bigger, perhaps a bear». It should be noted that the reversal of stereotypical male-female roles – represented as a nearly 'dialectical' process – is also made explicit in the aforementioned paragraph, where Justine specifies that, in a first moment, she had been feeling like a prey, a «white prey with goosebumps and oozing wounds»; later, however, she rather recognizes herself in the role of a hunter, who lures her prey with a bait, with her own body.²⁸⁸

Agency, then, has always been on Justine's side, and her interest for Joorut seems to bear objectifying and fetishizing traits from the very moment she first set eyes on him, i.e., though the erotic pictures that she finds in her landlady's closet. In fact, it could be argued, their relationship starts in that occasion, long before Justine casually runs into him in Nuuk; the man unknowingly becomes the object of her fantasies, and his unveiled pictures are repeatedly used by the woman to masturbate: «Det var ikke let at komme frem til orgasmen den tredje gang hun onanerede. Hun havde set på fotografierne af den halvnøgne mand. Virkningen var utrolig; det var næsten som at have ham i teltet»²⁸⁹ (Mondrup 2013: 25). Furthermore, the fact that Mondrup introduces the character of Joorut through some photographic portraits may not be casual; these images, in fact, could come across as a 'reversed' version of the photographs depicting Greenlandic women that were taken – by Danish men – during the scientific and anthropological expeditions led by Denmark (see Thisted 2011a: 282).²⁹⁰ Mette's attitude

The arctic fox, now sleeping next to her, was then a different kind of animal, something bigger, a bear perhaps, a fierce animal that collapsed on top of her, shaking and grunting», my translation.

²⁸⁸ This ambiguity has also been commented by reviewer Kamilla Löfström: «Iben Mondrup viser billedet af mennesker som rovdyr og byttedyr, sågar tøjdyr. Som seksuelt væsen er Justine både på rov og et bytte. Ordene 'grønlandsk fangerkultur' bruges vist ikke direkte, men de står der næsten » (Löfström 2013; «Iben Mondrup gives us an image of human beings as predators and preys, even as stuffed animals. As a sexual being, Justine is both predator and prey. The words 'Greenlandic hunting culture' are not used directly, but they are almost there»).

²⁸⁹ «It wasn't easy to achieve orgasm the third time she was masturbating. She had seen the pictures of the half-naked man. The effect was incredible; it was like having him in the tent», my translation.

²⁹⁰ «Der var blandt ekspeditions mændene tradition for at fotografere eskimoiske kvinder i positurer, som leder tankerne hen på klassisk europæisk kunst og på kulturelle forskydninger af disse i fremstillinger af kvinder fra diverse sydhavsøer, som fx hos Paul Gauguin», Thisted writes, with regard to Pia Arke's 'response' to this specific form of art (Thisted 2011: 282; «Among the men who embarked in expeditions, there was a tradition of photographing Eskimo women in poses that remind of classical European art, as well as of cultural displacements in depictions of women from various islands of the South Sea, such as in the case of Paul Gauguin», my

towards the man – and, in a first moment, towards the pictures depicting him – does not seem to differ greatly from that of Justine: the subject has already been touched in chapter 2, with reference to the metonymical juxtaposition between discourses on Joorut's nudity and Greenlandic food (see *supra*, p. 163). The man seems to strike both Mette and Justine not only by virtue of his uncommon physical prowess – but also of his alleged Greenlandic appearance: the first detail that Justine notices, for instance, is Joorut's black hair. Mette, on the other hand, does not immediately seem to be fascinated by his exotic looks, but later, during their 'safari', compares him to a «grønlandsk fanger», a «Greenlandic (traditional) hunter», (Mondrup 2013: 110).²⁹¹

It should be noted that the constellation of *Store Malene*'s characters – along with the conclusions that can be drawn by considering the relations between Justine, Mette, Jesper and Joorut – seems to suggest a substantial absence of Greenlandic female figures in the novel. Justine, as already recalled, ventilates that she has some sort of Greenlandic background, but emerges nonetheless as a representative for 'Danishness', since she embodies and vocalizes some of the still existing Danish prejudices against Greenland and its inhabitants. Following this interpretation, then, the characters presented in the novel only include Danish women, Danish men, and Greenlandic men. The aforementioned interplay between the roles of predator and prey does not allow us to draw an unambiguous hierarchization of these categories in terms of unequal power and distribution of agency. Nonetheless, Justine and Mette undoubtedly display aggressive sexual behaviors towards their manly counterparts. The following scene, which is not characterized by any ethnic-cultural connotation, is rather exemplificative in this sense:

Hun snød mig. – Snød dig? spørger Justine og retter sig op. – Ja, siger han, hun vidste godt at jeg ville vente, vi havde snakket om det tusind gange, og alligevel gjorde hun det. – Gjorde hvad? spørger Justine. Jesper sukker, – du vil alligevel ikke kunne forstå det, siger han, – der er ingen der forstår den slags, alle tror det er umuligt. – Prøv at forklare mig det, siger Justine. – Hun tvang mig, siger han. – Tvang dig til hvad? spørger hun. – Hun satte sig oven på mig, siger han. Selv om vi havde aftalt at vente. Hun ville ikke vente. – Åh, barnet, siger Justine [...]. Ja, gu var hun gravid, siger Jesper og hæver stemmen, – det er jo dét jeg siger. Hun snød mig. Hun gjorde det mod mig selv om jeg havde sagt at jeg ikke

translation). The same theme is reprised in a short scene from Kim Leine's *Efter Andemaneren*, where the Danish botanist who is taking part to the second *Konebådsekspedition* makes a portrait of a Greenlandic rower (Leine 2021b: 109).

²⁹¹ Mette, when she first sees the pictures of Joorut, states that he is a good-looking man regardless of his ethnic background. Her comment refers to Jesper's somewhat racist speculations on Joorut's origins: «– Er han ikke grønlander? [...] Han kan selvfølgelig også være japaner eller mongol. Kineser er han nok ikke, de ser anderledes ud» («– Isn't he Greenlandic? [...] He could also be Japanese or Mongolian. Certainly not Chinese, they look different»), Mondrup 2013: 50).

ville. Hun kunne ikke lade være. Man siger at man ikke kan voldtage en mand, men det kan man altså godt, næsten råber han.²⁹² (Mondrup 2013: 136)

In the aforementioned paragraph, Jesper makes serious accusations against his wife, Mette: the woman, according to his words, has tricked him into having sex for the sole purpose of becoming pregnant. Not only the man did not consent to this unilateral choice, he also did not consent to engaging in an intercourse with her. The reader, then, is presented with a somewhat atypical case of rape, where the role of the oppressor is taken by a womanly figure, whereas the man is the victim. The same could be argued, albeit with some differences, with regard to Joorut, who feels harassed by both Justine and Mette, and wishes they will soon get back to Denmark (Mondrup 2013: 135). Bearing in mind Sven Holm's observations about gender and agency in post-colonial Greenland, we could conclude that Mondrup attempts a literary 'reversal' of those same conditions, presenting womanly (Danish) agency, on the one side, and the substantial passivity of those (Danish and Greenlandic) men interacting with Justine and Mette, on the other.

According to these first considerations on *Store Malene*, the notion of «interference» introduced by Ingunn Moser could perhaps be used to describe how the dimensions of ethnicity and gender interact within the novel, since this theorization accounts for the idea that the various processes behind the construction of different social categories do not necessarily engender 'parallel' and consistent discourses that «mechanically sustain and reinforce each other» (Lykke 2010: 84). The resulting narratives, according to Lykke, «may also clash, come into conflict and neutralize each other» (*Ibidem*). In fact, while Mondrup's book does not seem to linger on the twofold oppression originating from the intersection of ethnicity- and gender-based inequalities in a traditional sense – since the experience of Greenlandic women, it could be argued, is substantially absent –, the two dimensions still undoubtedly relate to one another in *Store Malene*, and they do so with unexpected outcomes.

Unequal power relations among the characters are clearly to be traced back to the oppositional pairs 'Danishness'/'Greenlandicness', on the one side, and womanhood/manhood,

²⁹² «She tricked me. – Tricked you? asks Justine, straightening up. – Yes, he says, she knew well that I wanted to wait, we had talked about it a thousand times, and yet she did it. – Did what? Justine asks. Jesper sighs, – you wouldn't understand, he says, – nobody understands, they all think it's impossible. – Try to explain it to me, Justine says. – She forced me, he says. – Forced you to what? she asks. – She sat upon me, he says. Even though we had agreed to wait. She didn't want to wait. – Oh, the baby, Justine says [...]. Yes, she was pregnant, Jesper says, raising his voice, – that's what I'm saying. She tricked me. She did it against my will, even though I had told her that I didn't want to. She couldn't let it go. They say you can't rape a man, but you can, he nearly screams», my translation.

on the other. As far as interactions between Danes and Greenlanders are concerned, Mondrup does not apparently introduce any element of novelty: the two dimensions come across as ‘irreconcilable’ – despite the fact that this is mainly due to the exoticising and fetishizing attitude on Danish side; conversely, Justine’s alleged Greenlandic background does not play any role in the creation of a «third space», as she herself displays that same ‘invasive’ attitude that characterizes Mette and Jesper. As already been observed, however, *Store Malene* presents an inversion of the classic oppression pattern among men and women, since the former are depicted as ‘subdued’ by the latter – and, in some cases, they even endure abuses. In this sense, it is not casual that Mette – who presents both these ‘dominant’ characteristics, being a Dane and woman – is described as «kødbjerg», a «mountain of meat» (Mondrup 2013: 158), an expression that accounts for her intrusive presence, both on a concrete and a metaphorical level. This similitude and its implications have already been taken into consideration by Ebbe Volquardsen (2014a) and Dag Heede (2015). Volquardsen (2014a: 413) – who insists on Justine’s Greenlandic origins regardless of the fact that the woman seems to embrace ‘Danishness’ – connects the expression with the fact that «Justine perceives Mette’s dominance in particular on a physical level» (*Ibidem*). Heede (2015: 142), on the other hand, relates Justine to Lotte Inuk’s *Sultekunstnerinde*: «*Store Malene*, Iben Mondrups roman fra 2012 [sic], er interessant at samlæse med *Sultekunstnerinde*, og især naturbeskrivelser synes at kunne gå i dialog. Men hvor Inuks protagonist er asketisk, er Mondrups kvinder glubske og nydende, og en af heltene i hendes roman er betegnende nok en tiltrækkende, fed, dansk kvinde».²⁹³ Whereas Volquardsen’s comment is mainly focused on Mette’s origins and physical appearance, Heede introduces the dimension of gender, suggesting its significance to the reading of Mondrup’s novel in dialogue with *Sultekunstnerinde*.

Not unlikely *Store Malene*, in fact, Lotte Inuk’s novel also offers a different perspective on post-colonial Greenland, whose context is experienced through the eyes of a Danish child. The dimension of gender, as said, plays a crucial role within *Sultekunstnerinde*. Charlotta/Charlie, during her Greenlandic years, undergoes the passage from childhood to adulthood and finds herself questioning her identity on a variety of levels, including gender and sexuality. Throughout this paragraph, however, the focus will not be on the girl’s quest for a true and stable self, but on the composition of the society she interacts with – bearing in mind

²⁹³ «It is interesting to read *Store Malene*, Iben Mondrup’s novel from 2012 [sic], together with *Sultekunstnerinde*, and the descriptions of nature seem particularly apt to be compared. But where Inuk’s protagonist is ascetic, Mondrup’s women are ferocious and aroused, and one of the heroines in her novel is, quite explicatively, an attractive, fat, Danish woman», my translation.

that her point of view is that of a Danish migrant displaced in Nuuk, in the years shortly preceding the introduction of the Home Rule (1979). Being a teenager, most of her interactions occur within the school environment, and the places where she goes in her free time, with her peers. In the following paragraph, the girl gives an account of the relations existing among the young members of the community she is a part of:

Her eksisterer grønlandske piger, og danske piger, og grønlandske drenge. Nogle grønlandske drenge kan kun lide grønlandske piger, andre kan også godt lide danske. For at vinde deres hjerter og deres eftertragtede blikke skal man prøve at opføre sig så grønlandsk, så sejt og cool og streetwise som muligt; man skal spise lokal mad og lege ufortrødent hvor som helst i fjeldet og helt nede ved isen og ikke være bange for noget; ikke engang for de grønlandske piger der afskyer én og rotter sig sammen neden for éns gadedør for at håne en og fange en og give en tæsk hvis man bliver alt for populær hos bare en eneste af drengene i deres klasse, hvor ligegyldig han end måtte være for en eller for dem selv.²⁹⁴ (Inuk 2004: 130)

A first element that strikes the attention of the reader is the virtual absence of *danske drenge*, «Danish boys». The idea of a (reverse) passing is here linked to the possibility of engaging in a relationship with one of the coveted Greenlandic boys. The internal hierarchization within this teenage environment in Nuuk suggests that ‘Greenlandicness’, along with the characteristics attributed to the expression, is associated with a higher status. In this ‘underworld’, there may be different internalized rules than those emerging from the parallel relations among adults – into which, however, Inuk is not particularly interested in delving. The only glimpses she gives regard Charlotta’s mother and the school and hospital environments. Focus is on the interaction between ‘Greenlandicness’ – again presented in terms of performativity – and the dimension of gender. In particular, the author enumerates some of the attributes that one should possess in order to be considered not only a Greenlandic, but, more specifically, a Greenlandic girl; along with the mention of one of the most-recurring Greenlandic identity markers, i.e., traditional food, a girl must be able to play fearlessly in the nature to be considered ‘Greenlandic’ enough. This latter element, on the one side, could be traced back to the *topos* of the ‘wild’ disposition that seems to characterize Greenlandic women in many Danish depictions. On the other, this passage may hint at a ‘masculinization’ process

²⁹⁴ «Here there are Greenlandic girls, and Danish girls, and Greenlandic boys. Some of the Greenlandic boys only like Greenlandic girls, others also like Danish girls. To win their hearts and their coveted glances, you have to try to behave like Greenlanders, as cool and streetwise as possible. You must eat local food and play anywhere in the mountains and down by the ice, not be afraid of anything; not even of the Greenlandic girls who loathe you and huddle under your door to mock you and catch you and beat you if you become too popular with just one of the boys in their class, regardless of how indifferent he may be to you or them», my translation.

that Danish girls must undergo if they want to be accepted and cherished by Greenlandic boys. These unwritten rules – whose interference indirectly touches the bodily dimension, as it is evident from the story of Charlotta/Charlie – give a clue of the girl's positioning within the society of Nuuk in the 1970s, as well as her wish to assimilate (or, at least, be recognized as equal). Among her peers, Charlotta clearly senses that she might be perceived as extraneous and therefore somewhat disadvantaged. This very feeling – the desire, as a Danish migrant, to be an active and acknowledged part of the Greenlandic society and the constant perception of being an outsider – is also addressed in Iben Mondrup's *Godhavn* (2014). As reminded by Thisted, the split experienced by those Danes who grew up in Greenland has been a 'taboo' until recently (Thisted 2014b), and the first fictions that have tackled these nuanced and 'problematic' feelings, often associated with «berøringsangst» («fear of confrontation», *Ibidem*), are precisely *Sultekunstnerinde* and *Godhavn*. Both novels, furthermore, locate the quest for identity beyond mere discourses on ethnicity, as gender and sexuality are other crucial dimensions at stake.

Godhavn – which, as specified, also contains autobiographically inspired circumstances – is an account of the 'Greenlandic' upbringing of Bjørk, Knut, and Hilde, three Danish siblings who live in Godhavn, today known as Qeqertarsuaq, presumably in the 1980s (Dybdal 2021: 120). The siblings, perhaps even more markedly than in the case of *Sultekunstnerinde*'s Charlotta, are confronted with their liminal positioning, and each of them has a specific attitude towards the matter. As already noted by Dybdal, Knut finds himself ill at ease as a Dane dislocated in Greenland and, unlike his peer Johannes, he does not seem to be capable of embracing his identity as multifaceted and ambiguous, as a «hybrid» (Dybdal 2021: 121). Knut's inability to 'fit in' also concretizes on a bodily level, as it happens in *Sultekunstnerinde*; in fact, as Dybdal observes, the boy spends hours in his bathroom, confronting his own image in the mirror – which he perceives as foreign:

Navnlig ét rum i dette stedvis uhyggelige hjem er knyttet til Knuts identitet: badeværelset. Dette er ikke blot et koldt og klinkebelagt lokale, men et særligt sted, hvor mennesket konfronteres med sig selv: Det er her, vi står afklædte og alene, kun med vores spejlbillede i sigte. En sådan sårbarhed ses ofte hos Knut, der flere gange studerer sig selv i badeværelsesspejlet. Når han gør det, erfarer han endnu en fremmedgørelse, nu over for sin egen krop. Den lille Knut er snart teenager, men han har ikke den maskuline figur, han ønsker [...]. Knut bliver konfronteret med sin klejne krop og indser, at han hverken er som

gymnastiklæreren Hardy, sin far eller skolekammeraten Johannes. Selv storesøsteren Hilde er mere ‘mand’ end Knut [...].²⁹⁵ (Dybdal 2021: 122)

Although not her primary focus, Dybdal also makes a brief mention of the gender dimension: Knut’s prepuberal body does not seem to bear clearly distinguishable masculine traits, and this confusion seems to reduplicate the one generated by the feeling that he does not belong to the society of Godhavn. There is also a chasm, Dybdal argues, between the boy’s physical appearance, since he could ‘pass’ for a Greenlander, and his ability to *act* as a Greenlander (Dybdal 2021: 121-122). The boy does not seem to possess any talent for hunting – an activity that, conversely, is successfully pursued by Hilde, who displays more ‘masculine’ traits than Knut himself. It could be worth investigating whether the novel hints at a connection between the two aspects, as in the case of *Sultekunstnerinde*, where, as we have seen, the reverse passing of Danish girls is correlated with the acquirement of both ‘Greenlandic’ and ‘masculine’ qualities.

It could be argued that in *Godhavn* Mondrup turns back to some of the metonymic connections already seen in *Store Malene*, such as the implicit juxtaposition between the semantic field of hunting/meat and that of gender/sexuality. Hunting, a breadwinning activity, may be stereotypically conceived as a ‘manly’ activity, Knut and Hilde’s respective dispositions could therefore suggest a reversal of roles in terms of their relation to manhood and womanhood. Furthermore, this pursuit inevitably generates an opposition between the parts involved, i.e., hunter and prey, whose different agency possibilities are self-evident. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that hunting metaphors lend themselves to associations with courtship or, more often, sexual intercourse. From a patriarchal perspective, a predatory attitude to both aspects would once again be a masculine prerogative. On this note, let us consider the following passage from *Godhavn* and, more precisely, from the section of the novel that focuses on Hilde’s point of view:

Fra nu af kredser hun om Johannes; hele tiden tænker hun på ham, når hun spiser, når hun skal sove, mens hun sover, hun drømmer om ham om natten [...]; det er vigtigt at hun er

²⁹⁵ «In this somewhat uncanny house, one particular room in particular that is linked to Knut’s identity: the bathroom. This is not just a cold and tiled room, but a special place where people are confronted with themselves: This is where we stand naked and alone, in the company of our reflection. A similar vulnerability is often displayed by Knut, who studies himself several times in the bathroom mirror. When he does that, he experiences yet another kind of alienation, this time emerging from his own body. Little Knut will soon be a teenager, but he does not have the masculine shape he wants [...]. Knut is confronted with his tiny body and realizes that he is neither like the P.E. teacher Hardy, his father, or his schoolmate Johannes. Even his older sister Hilde is more of a ‘man’ than Knut [...].», my translation.

den første i klassen når det ringer ind, hun kredser, hun kredser om ham, ikke for tæt på, ikke for ivrig, ikke for hurtigt. Hun kan mærke jægeren i sig. Bag skydesejlet kravler hun møjsommeligt frem på maven til hun har ham helt inden for skudvidde. Det må gerne tage tid. Det sker meget sjældent at hun rammer ved siden af; hun er en dygtig jæger med en stor tålmodighed.²⁹⁶ (Mondrup 2014: 212-213)

As in the case of *Store Malene*, Hilde's interest for Johannes is depicted as an obsession, a pervasive thought that haunts the girl even when she is sleeping. Her approach to Johannes, moreover, is explicitly described as a hunt, and Hilde overtakes the role of the *jæger* who lurks and waits for the right moment to catch the prey. While in the case of Justine and Joorut, at least in the beginning, there was a certain degree of confusion with regard to the roles of subject/object, Hilde is here undoubtedly presented as the bearer of agency. Furthermore, as she succeeds in her ambition to 'capture' Johannes, other details seem to hint at an 'objectification' of her newly acquired boyfriend, such as the recurring expressions «Hun har ham»²⁹⁷ (Mondrup 2014: 248), or «Han er hendes»²⁹⁸ (Mondrup 2014: 256).

As explicated throughout the previous chapter, hunting is perceived, both on Danish and Greenlandic side, as a strong identity marker in relation to 'Greenlandicness', and so is the taste for freshly hunted meat, classified as 'authentic Greenlandic food'. Bearing in mind this connection and its metaphorical implications, Knut's relation to animals – and to the consumption of meat – acquires a new significance. The boy, in fact, displays a certain degree of sensibility even towards insects, let alone bigger creatures, such as mammals:

Hvad skete der egentlig med selve insekttavlen? Den lod han blive i sommerhuset så sommerfuglene kunne blive ædt af de andre insekter, eller af musene måske, så de kunne indgå i det naturlige kredsløb, som han, som den eneste i familien, har meldt sig ud af. Han spiser ikke mere kød. Fra nu af spiser han kun sne. Fra nu af spiser han i hvert fald kun en lille smule kød.²⁹⁹ (Mondrup 2014: 121-122)

²⁹⁶ «From now on she will circle around Johannes; she thinks about him all the time, when she eats, when she goes to sleep, while she sleeps, she dreams of him at night [...]; it's crucial that she's the first to enter the class when the bell rings, she circles, she circles around him, not too close, not too eager, not too fast. She can sense the hunter within herself. Behind the shooting spot, she strenuously crawls forward on her stomach until she has him completely within range. It may take some time. She misses the shot very rarely; she is a skilled hunter with great patience», my translation.

²⁹⁷ «She's got him», my translation.

²⁹⁸ «He's hers», my translation.

²⁹⁹ «What was it that really happened to the flypaper? He left it in the summer house, so that the butterflies would get eaten by the other insects, or perhaps by the mice, so that they could be part of the circle of nature, which he, the only member of his family to do so, has backed out of it. He doesn't eat meat anymore. From this moment on, he'll just eat snow. From this moment on, he'll eat just a little bit of meat», my translation.

Knut does not want to be part of the «circle of nature» by using flypaper and, as it can be easily imagined, he neither wants to have anything to do with hunting. Later in the novel, when the boy expresses his sense of foreignness towards his Greenlandic peers and the environment he is being brought up in, he even comes to think that his diversity may have something to do with his distaste for meat: «Inde i kroppen, under huden, er hans kød den anelse mere følsomt. Kan det have noget at gøre med at han ikke ligesom de andre propper sig med kød? Ris, korn, mel, mælk. En blød, hvid dej»³⁰⁰ (Mondrup 2014: 130). Knut's inability to pass for a Greenlander, then, somewhat relies on his contempt for hunting and eating meat. These characteristics may parallelly hint at the boy's metaphorical 'emasculatation'. His father, in fact – arguably the prime model of masculinity in Knut's life – is described in diametrically opposite terms: as a man with «the instinct of a killer» (Mondrup 2014: 119, 121). When he is performing his duties as an office employee, he is just wearing a mask and hiding his own real nature: «På en måde er hans far stik modsat. Han har hundeskindsbukser, syet af skindet fra en af deres egne hunde, og dræberinstinkt. Han har også bukser af stof og et kontorarbejde. Men han er den samme mand, i forklædning»³⁰¹ (*Ibidem*).

It is interesting to note that the father's disguise is his 'respectability', whereas his true self bears animal-like, and perhaps even 'uncivilized' traits – at least in the eyes of his son. The opposition between reason/civilization and a state of nature is recurring throughout the novel, and could be linked to the reverse passing of most Danish characters and, conversely, to Knut's inability to adapt to Greenlandic society – or to recognize his well-fitting family as his own. Bjørk, Knut's younger sister, who actively recognizes her home as Godhavn, is often described as a savage, even as an animal: «Bjørk har altid sorte negle, på en måde passer det godt til hende; havde hun været alt for ren, ville hun næsten være for pæn med krøllerne. Neglene og snottet i næsen; hun er et dyr. En hvalp»³⁰² (Mondrup 2014: 120). In another passage, Knut reminds her that she is a person, not a dog, and that she is supposed to behave as such (Mondrup 2014: 159). Furthermore, his older sister is also compared to an animal, and her masculine and nervous body bears a «dyreagtige spændstighed som man kan fornemme selv under mange lag

³⁰⁰ «Within his body, beneath the skin, his flesh is that bit more sensitive. Could it have something to do with the fact that he doesn't stuff himself with meat like the others? Rice, cereal, flour, milk. A soft, white dough», my translation.

³⁰¹ «In a way, his father is the exact opposite. He wears trousers made of dogskin, the skin of one of their own dogs, and has the instinct of a killer. He also owns trousers made of fabrics, and has an office job. But he is the same man, in disguise», my translation.

³⁰² «Bjørk always has black nails, in a way it suits her; had she been too clean, she would almost be too neat with the curls. The nails and snot in the nose; she is an animal. A puppy», my translation.

vintertøj»³⁰³ (Mondrup 2014: 110). The same ‘bestiality’, as we have seen, characterizes Knut’s father, and contributes to the boy’s impression of being a stranger within his own family, within his own home. Even Johannes – who, as it has been demonstrated by Dybdal, finds himself at ease while moving across the categories of ‘Danishness’ and ‘Greenlandicness’ (2021: 121) – cannot escape a similitude with an animal:

Nogle dyr skifter dragt efter årstiden, og Johannes som nu har gået i Anden Danske i et stykke tid, er på en måde sådan et dyr. Er han sammen med sine grønlandske venner, skiller han sig ud ved at være lige den smule lysere. Og sammen med Anden Danske virker han den anelse mørkere. Johannes er en slags matematik.
Det er som om Johannes bruger sin camouflage omvendt. Han har flere forskellige flokke som han hører til i, og kommer han forbi et fremmed territorium, bevæger han sig derind uden at være bange.³⁰⁴ (Mondrup 2014: 130-131)

The Greenlandic boy, then, has the ability to pass both for a Greenlander and a Dane, according to the circumstance – a quality that Knut lacks. His masking-capability is described both as an instinct and as the result of an accurate calculation («Johannes er en slags matematik»). This seems to confirm the idea that the dimensions of ‘Greenlandicness’ and ‘Danishness’, although their undeniable performative quality, may be linked to a rather well-known oppositional pair, i.e., nature/culture. Nonetheless, this contrast is arguably presented in atypical terms, if we also consider the element of gender/sexuality: starting from the assumption that ‘Greenlandicness’ stands for nature and instinct, and ‘Danishness’ for culture and reason, it could be expected that womanhood/femininity positions itself alongside with the former elements – at least if we take into account Ortner’s thesis on the matter (1972). Ortner stresses the frequent association between women and «something that every culture defines as being at a lower order of existence than itself» (1972: 10), i.e., nature. The chasm between femininity and masculinity is ever-present in *Godhavn*, especially in the section of the novel that recounts Knut’s point of view, and constantly overlaps with discourses on ethnicity, on the one side, and nature/culture, on the other.

As anticipated, Knut’s contempt for hunting, for instance, can be understood in ethnic-related terms, as well as in relation to his apparent lack of virility. The boy does not seem to

³⁰³ «Animal-like springiness that you can sense even under many layers of winter clothing», my translation.

³⁰⁴ «Some animals change their clothes according to the season, and Johannes, who has now attended *Anden Danske* for a while, is in a way such an animal. If he is together with his Greenlandic friends, he stands out by being just that little bit lighter. And among the students from *Anden Danske*, he seems a little darker. Johannes is a kind of math. It is as if Johannes uses his camouflage in reverse. He has several different packs to which he belongs, and if he passes a foreign territory, he moves into it without fear», my translation.

possess his father and his older sister's «dræberinstinkt» (Mondrup 2014: 119), and may consequently come across as somewhat 'emasculated'. The disposition showed by Knut's family, it could be argued, thrives in the harsh Greenlandic context, where a close contact with the omnipresent and unforgiving nature is inevitable whereas the boy, on the contrary, seems to succumb. The Greenlandic environment, then, apparently favors hypermasculinity, in line with a standing trope in *dansk grønlandslitteratur* (see, for instance Thisted 2011a; Dybdal & Grønlund 2020). This may act as a counterpart to the idea, conceived during the colonial period, of a 'feminine' Denmark, often depicted as a soothing mother who acts for the benefit of its Arctic colony (see Thisted & Gremaud 2020: 58). The former aspect could be traced back to the dynamics stressed in the previous subsection of the dissertation, focusing on the Danish representation of Greenlandic women, typically conceived as an object of desire by Danish colonizers and, in more recent times, by Danish migrants. Then again, the 'masculinization' process catalyzed in Hilde by the encounter with the Greenlandic context, as well as in Charlotta, the protagonist of *Sultekunstnerinde*, may hint at the creation of a «third space» of expression with regard to gender – which seemingly reduplicates ethnic-related discourses. The ambition to step beyond the limiting binarisms 'Danishness'/'Greenlandicness' and man/woman will be at the core of the following paragraph, *Queering 'Danishness' and 'Greenlandicness'*, where I will be considering *Godhavn* and *Sultekunstnerinde*, on the one hand, and *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden* and *Efter åndemaneren*, on the other.

3.3.2 *Queering 'Danishness' and 'Greenlandicness'*

Kim Leine's award-winning *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden*, which inaugurated his trilogy on colonial Greenland, is deeply intertwined with issues regarding both ethnic and gender identity, and turns back to discourses already presented in *Kalak*. The novel encompasses some 'deviations' from the idea that the oppositional pairs man/woman and masculinity/femininity constitute the only experience of gender and sexuality. The matter is addressed through the introduction of an explicative character, a young hermaphrodite prostitute. The protagonist of the novel, Morten Falck – who, according to Volquardsen (see 2014a: 414), could be identified, at least to a certain extent, as a literary alter-ego of Leine himself – entertains a sexual relationship with this figure during his years at the Faculty of Theology, in Copenhagen. Let us

consider the following passage from the novel, during which the young ‘boy’ unveils his true ambiguous nature:

Drengen trækker op i skjorten, nu griner han over hele hovedet.
Morten rejser sig op med et sæt, han rykker tilbage. Hans øjne flakker op og ned ad drengen.
Men kære pigebarn! siger han [...].
Han kigger sig omkring, men kan ikke få øje på drengen. Han har besluttet at kalde ham ‘drengen’. Men det er muligvis pigen han begærer. Eller et tredje køn, hvis det giver mening at kalde det det. Måske er det bare den biologiske utilstedelighed han søger. Han har på fornemmelsen at det der sker i aften, og de valg han tager, vil blive afgørende for resten af hans liv.³⁰⁵ (Leine 2021a [2012]: 47)

Morten’s sexual attraction for the hermaphrodite, even though the man initially attempts to define it in terms of gender binarism, is explained as an unconscious longing for a ‘third gender’ – which, as such, can hardly be traced back either to masculinity or femininity. The fascination for the hermaphrodite may hint, as suggested by Morten’s own thoughts, at the wish to defy the laws of biology, and, perhaps, even the constrictions generated by cultural discourses. It is reasonable to think that Leine might be as interested in the latter aspect, as it prompts parallelisms with the dimension of ethnic identity and its non-essentialist quality. Reflections on the significance of this peculiar character with regard to identity issues have already been proposed by Christian Bank Pedersen in his *L’histoire hermaphrodite: sur les Groenlands de Kim Leine* (2019; *Hermaphrodite History: On Kim Leine’s Greenlands*). The scholar considers the hermaphrodite as the living union of contradictory traits coexisting in one individual, and gives a symbolical interpretation of this figure, which touches Denmark and Greenland’s common history and the roles that have traditionally been associated to both sides: «La relation victime-bourreau constitue-t-elle une forme inquiétante d’hermaphrodite: un l’un-dans-l’autre aussi intime que contradictoire? [...]. En outre, le motif de l’hermaphrodite – et donc de la relation victime-bourreau – est chez Leine également lié à la réflexion sur le temps, le temps individuel et historique»³⁰⁶ (2019: 61). Pedersen, however, opts for viewing the hermaphrodite as the fusion of man and woman, whereas I wish to insist on the character being neither of them,

³⁰⁵ «The boy pulls up his shirt, now he’s laughing all over his head. Morten jumps up, he steps back. His eyes dart up and down the boy’s figure. But dear baby girl! he says [...]. He looks around, but cannot spot the boy. He has decided to call him ‘the boy’. But it is possibly the girl he desires. Or a third gender, if it makes sense to call it like that. Maybe it’s just the biological absence he’s looking for. He has the feeling that what happens tonight, and the choices he makes, will be decisive for the rest of his life», my translation.

³⁰⁶ «Could the relationship between victim and perpetrator be some disturbing kind of hermaphrodite: a one-in-one-other as intimate as it is contradictory? [...]. In addition, the motif of the hermaphrodite – and therefore of the victim-perpetrator relationship – is in Leine’s work also linked to the reflection on time, be it individual or historical time», my translation.

somewhat beyond the constrictions of a binary conception of gender. This perspective is supported by the use of the expression «et tredje køn», «a third sex», as well as by the fact that the denomination chosen for this character is somewhat arbitrary: Morten *chooses* to consider the hermaphrodite a ‘boy’, thus implying that there is no ‘masculine’ essence that may confirm this decision or not. Furthermore, Pedersen does not seem to be interested in the parallelisms among ethnic and gender identity, which I argue is a common thread within Leine’s production, starting from *Kalak*.

A non-essentialist conception of identity can be found already in Kim’s ‘transformation’ into a *kalak*, an authentic Greenlander. Up to a certain point, this process may entail an ironic quality (see Thisted 2011a). The same theme is suggested in his trilogy on colonial Greenland, for instance in *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden* (see Turri 2023a) and in *Efter åndemaneren*. In this latter novel some (Danish) preconceptions about Greenlanders are reversed, among other things, through the encounter between *vestgrønlændere* and *østgrønlændere*. In the eyes of Hanseraaq, a Greenlandic *kateket* from Sydprøven, Eastern Greenlanders come across as pagan savages. The first approach between the preacher and Naffalik, a man from Eastern Greenland, is told from the point of view of Hanseraaq, who cannot help making the following reflections: «Der er noget på en gang hjerteligt og brutalt ved ham. Det er altså en hedning, tænker han. Gad vide hvor mange mennesker han har dræbt? Eller spist?»³⁰⁷ (Leine 2021b: 119). Western Greenland, then, allegedly distinguishes itself from the Eastern part of the Island by virtue of its civilisation – a viewpoint that implicitly echoes discourses contraposing Greenland to Denmark. It is interesting to note, however, that Hanseraaq also associated Denmark with paganism:

Danmark er ved at glide tilbage i hedenskab. Det er vel derfor I er så interesserede i de hedninger og absolut vil over at besøge dem. Der er jo ved at blive forberedt en ekspedition der skal derop til næste år. Min egen bror skal være med. Men det er selvfølgelig en dansker der har fået idéen, og har fået kongen og regeringen med på den. De vil møde deres trosfæller. Men her på vestsiden af landet har vi ordnede forhold. Velkommen til civilisationen, Adam hr. Bjerg!³⁰⁸ (Leine 2021b: 36).

³⁰⁷ «There is something warm and, at the same time, brutal about him. A heathen, after all, he thinks. He wonders how many people he has killed. Or eaten», my translation.

³⁰⁸ «Denmark is slipping back into paganism. That is probably why you are so interested in those pagans and absolutely want to visit them. They’re organizing an expedition to go up there next year. My own brother will be there. But of course it’s a Dane who got the idea, and got the king and the government on board. They’ll meet their fellow heathens there. But here, on the West side of the country, everything’s respectable. Welcome to civilization, Adam Mr. Bjerg!», my translation.

Later in the novel, in the chapters reporting the advancement of Gustav Holm's *konebådsekspedition*, the contraposition between Christianity and paganism also seems to acquire a gendered character. Hanseraaq is not the only Greenlander embarking on the expedition to Eastern Greenland. Along with him, there are also women forming the rowing crew, whom Hanseraaq apparently cannot stand because of their singing and obscene conversations: «Når kvinderne ikke ror, er de en plage»³⁰⁹ (Leine 2021b: 229), as the man writes in his diary. The rowers spend their nights chatting and sharing their impressions about the «pagans» (230), to whom they are inexplicably drawn, and seem to undergo a 'paganization' process themselves: «Jeg har hørt lyde i natten. Skamløse lyde. Hedningelyde. De giver los for deres liderlighed med mennesker liggende rundt om sig. Ligesom de vilde ovre i hedningehuset»³¹⁰ (*Ibidem*). The motif of the untamed sexuality of Greenlandic women is here reprised in an original fashion: this behavior does not belong to the rowers *per se*, it is rather acquired through the contact with Eastern Greenlanders – whose presence somewhat 'corrupts' the women, dragging them towards a long-forgotten 'state of nature'.

This same trope is also present as a subtext to the relationship between Cecilie and Jens, but in different terms. As the two share their first sexual experiences, the reader might notice a clear distinction between the role of the subject and that of the object during their moments of intimacy:

Jeg tror ikke han kan lide det, siger Cecilie. Det kan jeg mærke. Han gør det bare fordi jeg gerne vil.
 Han skal nok lære det med tiden. Der er nogle mænd der er sådan. Så må vi bare være ekstra gode ved dem, ikke?
 Måske er det derfor jeg ikke bliver gravid. Fordi han gør det modvilligt.³¹¹ (Leine 2021b: 96)

Cecilie, according to her comments, always takes the initiative, while Jens is substantially passive. A similar configuration could perhaps remind of the observations that have been made with regard to *Kalak* and its 'precursor' *Frøken Smillas Fornemmelse for Sne*: 'masculine' and 'feminine' attitudes, it could be argued, are here respectively attributed to a woman and a man, if one considers the classic patriarchal distribution of subject/object roles. Cecilie's hypothesis

³⁰⁹ «When the women aren't rowing, they're a torment», my translation.

³¹⁰ «I've heard noises at night. Shameless noises. Heathen noises. They unleash their lasciviousness with people lying around them. Just like the savages in the heathen's house», my translation.

³¹¹ «I don't think he likes it, says Cecilie. I can feel it. He does it just because I want to. He'll probably learn it with time. Some men are like that. So we just have to be patient with them, right? Maybe that's why I'm not getting pregnant. Because he does it reluctantly», my translation.

is confirmed by Jens himself – who, while the two are engaging in sexual activity, cannot help thinking about the girl’s ‘animal-like’ nature: «De lyde hun udstøder idet hun får ham op i sig, er skræmmende, dyriske. Hun lyder som en kælvende ko. Meget ucharmerende, tænker han. Man skulle ikke tro de kunne komme fra en pige på hendes alder»³¹² (Leine 2021b: 64). These considerations made by Jens suggest that the boy, besides taking part to these intimate encounters unwillingly, is not even attracted to Cecilie – whom he compares to an unappealing ruminant. Their lives take separate ways as Jens decides to sail to Copenhagen and Cecilie joins the expedition led by Gustav Holm.

The young man is confronted with the decadent atmosphere characterizing Copenhagen at the *fin-de-siècle*. In Denmark, the boy seems to undergo a process of ‘de-greenlandization’ and, at the same time, of queering. The ‘de-greenlandization’ is prompted, for instance, by the acquired taste for Danish food, as well as for alcohol, which, at the time, could not be consumed by Greenlanders in the colonies (see Leine 2021b: 149, 154). In Copenhagen, Jens decides to enroll in the Faculty of Theology, thus becoming the first Greenlander to do so, as well as a sort of ‘curiosity’ among Danes: «Du tager hurtigt ved lære, siger Schmidt. Snart er der ikke meget grønlænder tilbage i dig. Vi drikker ham væk! Du ser jo også dansk ud, hvis jeg må sige det uden at fornærme dig»³¹³ (Leine 2021b: 154). His education, according to Schmidt, Jens’ chaperon throughout the city, will make a Dane out of him, wiping away the last remnants of his Greenlandic upbringing. The semantic field of food/drinking is also present in these lines, through the suggestion that, if Jens starts drinking like a Dane, he will cease behaving like a Greenlander. There is irony in this assumption, as the (Danish) reader may associate ‘Greenlandicness’ to stereotypes regarding bad drinking habits. Jens’s features, on the other hand, is less ‘exotic’ than the Danish beholder expects: as the young man reveals, he should be considered a «blanding», a «half-blood», since his father was Danish (*Ibidem*). While other characters in *Efter åndemaneren* do not accept this label and rather consider themselves as ‘mere’ Greenlanders (with Hanseraaq as the most significant example), Jens does not regard the term as particularly problematic, which may indicate the acceptance for his partially Danish background. Nonetheless, in a moment of discomfort, Jens feels like a Greenlander again, «som

³¹² «The noises she makes as she pulls him inside her are terrifying, animalistic. She sounds like a calving cow. Very unattractive, he thinks. You wouldn’t think these noises could come from a girl of her age», my translation.

³¹³ «You learn quickly, says Schmidt. Soon there won’t be much of a Greenlander left in you. We’ll drink him away! You also look Danish, if I may say so without offending you», my translation.

en indfødt der er blevet bragt til Danmark og udstillet i skinddragt til beskuelse og morskab for københavnernes»³¹⁴ (Leine 2021b: 206).

Jens's ethnic identity, then, is far from being fix and unchangeable, and, even though 'Greenlandicness' and 'Danishness' do not cease existing as two discrete and contrasting dimensions in his *Weltanschauung*, the young man seems to occupy a «third space» between them rather than defining himself univocally. These dynamics tie in with the discourse on the hermaphrodite from *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden*, who is both a man and a woman and, at the same time, neither; the identification with the former or the latter category is somewhat arbitrary, as it relies either on an individual choice, as in the case of Morten Falck, or on the identity that is being *performed* – rather than 'owned'. Jens's sexuality also suggests at a certain 'indefiniteness', and a new awareness in this regard is apparently triggered by his life experiences in Copenhagen. The young man, in fact, is faced with the Danish capital at a peculiar time, at the turn of the 19th and the 20th century. Those years, characterized by the contradictions that conflated into the decadentism era, are explicitly described by Leine in terms of gender ambiguity, as the following paragraph stresses:

Der er mænd der er stærkt sminkede med både rouge og mascara, der er mænd med spraglede tørklæder og halsklude, blomst i knaphullet, kunstig naturligvis, en nellike eller en kamelia af lyserødt silkestof, der er endda mænd der går i kvindesko, og der er mænd der måske er kvinder der måske er mænd. Den kønnede kønsløshed er meget populær, det svævende og udefinerlige. Og alle ser meget syge og lidende ud, som statister i et gotisk drama.³¹⁵ (Leine 2021b: 211)

The fashion of the time, condensed in the expression «den kønnede kønsløshed» is explicatively embodied by one of the many historical figures met by Jens, i.e., the decadentist writer *par excellence* Herman Bang. According to a joke made by the chaperon, who introduces the student to Bang, the Danish writer dreams to play feminine roles in the course of his career as an actor (Leine 2012b: 201). Bang elaborates on the same subject, making some considerations about the Danish reception of his own acting style, which he laconically defines as «udansk» (Leine 2021b: 202). Therefore, 'undanishness' – or, perhaps, the feeling not identifying

³¹⁴ «As a native who has been brought to Denmark and exhibited in a fur suit for the viewing and amusement of the Copenhageners», my translation.

³¹⁵ «There are men wearing heavy make-up, both blush and mascara, there are men with garish scarves and neckerchiefs, flowers in their buttonholes, artificial of course, a carnation or a camellia made of pink silk fabric. There are even men wearing women's shoes, and there are men who may be women who may be men. The gendered genderlessness is very popular, with its floating and indefinable quality. And everyone looks very sick and suffering, like extras in a gothic drama», my translation.

completely with ‘Danishness’ – seems to characterize both characters, who, among other things, also share a passionate kiss (Leine 2021b: 408). Jens’s encounters in Copenhagen, in fact, open his eyes about his own homosexuality: he starts to think that he may be attracted to men after Martin Kok, one of his acquaintances from the Danish capital, lures him into a kiss. Kok, before convincing the boy to ‘experiment’ with his sexuality, tries to understand whether he is willing to do so or not, and teases him with similar observations: «Du er vel glad for kvinder, kan jeg tænke mig. Sådan en kernesund, ufordærvet eskimo som dig»³¹⁶ (Leine 2021b: 219). Kok, then, identifies a causal relationship between Jens’s alleged unspoiled nature – thus reprising the well-known narrative that associates Greenlanders to an anachronistic ‘state of nature’ – and a heteronormative model of sexuality: Jens must be fond of women *since* he is a Greenlander, i.e., as he has been brought up far from civilization, at least in Kok’s eyes. Homosexuality, according to this perspective, is not viewed in relation to instinct, but rather as a byproduct of civilisation – or, perhaps, to be more precise, of a bourgeois order of things.

The surge of the «Victorian bourgeoisie», as stated by Michel Foucault, corresponded to the confinement of sexuality to the home and, as such, to the «conjugal family» (1990: 3). Earlier, the attitude towards ‘non-conforming sexualities’ and ‘obscenities’ seemed to be less prudish, at least at a first analysis: «At the beginning of the seventeenth century a certain frankness was still common, it would seem. Sexual practices had little need of secrecy; words were said without undue reticence, and things were done without too much concealment; one had a tolerant familiarity with the illicit» (*Ibidem*). Nonetheless, the ‘repression’ and ‘demonization’ of sexuality that came with the 19th century – especially with regard to its most marginal expressions – actually contributed to «the proliferation of specific pleasures and the multiplication of disparate sexualities» (Foucault 1978: 49). The reason behind this paradoxical outcome is to be found, following Foucault’s thoughts, in the pervasiveness of scientific discourses on the subject, which contributed to its manifestation and verbalization (1990: 45-49). These considerations are in line with Leine’s description of the climate characterizing *fin-de-siècle* Copenhagen and, in particular, of its contradictions: on the one hand, in fact, all homosexual practices were deemed illegal by official Denmark, but, on the other, «den kønnede kønsløshed» (2021b: 211) he mentions was an essential manifestation of the *Zeitgeist*. The aesthetics and the lifestyle condensed in this expression were strikingly appropriated by the

³¹⁶ «You must be fond of women, I reckon. An Eskimo like you, fit as a fiddle and unspoiled», my translation.

artistic scene of the city – where homosexual practices could count as a form of counterculture in opposition to the façade of ‘respectability’ pampered by mainstream social norms.

Going back to Kok’s (arguably ironic) words («Du er vel glad for kvinder, kan jeg tænke mig. Sådan en kernesund, ufordærvet eskimo som dig»), the reader may conclude that in Greenland, contrary to what seems to be happening in ‘queer’ Denmark, sexuality follows the supposed course of nature – favoring only relations between men and women – and, as such, does not need to be regulated. Following this literal interpretation of the Dane’s comments, it is possible to identify a gendered «civilisationskritisk» (Thisted 2003: 61) subtext to it: through a detachment from an alleged state of nature, Denmark has started being corrupted by culture and its implications. Authentic life, on the other hand, can supposedly be found overseas among ‘Eskimos’. Although Kok may well be sarcastic, since he himself engages in subterranean liaisons with numerous men and boys, it is reasonable to think that he facetiously appropriates discourses belonging to the time. On a further level, it can be presumed that Leine’s intentions are also ironic, as Kok’s statement seems to match Hanseraaq’s *Weltanschauung* – according to which Western Greenland should be regarded as a ‘beacon of civilization’ in opposition to ‘heathen’ Eastern Greenland and Denmark. Furthermore, as clarified earlier in the dissertation and as Leine is undoubtedly aware of, sexuality was also regulated on Greenlandic soil – although, apparently, in different terms than in Denmark. In Greenland, in fact, the stress was rather on the ethnic dimension than on sexual practices that ‘deviated’ from the norm. Both regulatory systems, however, drew on the centrality of the «conjugal family» (Foucault 1978: 3), and contributed to shaping the standard of the bourgeois colonial subject.

An interplay between the dimension of gender/sexuality and that of ethnicity is also present, on a more individual level, in the figure of Jens himself, who has been previously presented as an ethnic «hybrid», navigating – more or less successfully – between two worlds. It could perhaps be fruitful to scrutinize Michel Foucault’s considerations on the status homosexuality acquired since the ‘bourgeois turn’ of European society:

We must not forget that the psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality was constituted from the moment it was characterized – Westphal’s famous article of 1870 on «contrary sexual sensations» can stand as its date of birth – less by a type of sexual relations than by a certain quality of sexual sensibility, a certain way of inverting the masculine and the feminine in oneself. Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphrodism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species. (Foucault 1978: 43)

The idea of homosexuality that started spreading around the end of the 19th century, then, is not focused on the sinful implications of homoerotic sex. At the core of the ‘bourgeois’ understanding of the matter there is the conception of homosexuals as ‘gender-hybrids’, characterized by «interior androgyny» and «a hermaphroditism of the soul». Therefore, in Foucault’s view, a homosexual individual is regarded as belonging to neither of the two genders and, at the same time, to both of them. This liminal and contradictory positioning seems to characterize the most diverse aspects of Jens’ life, who, besides from being a *blanding*, also experiences the feeling of being torn between life in Greenland and in Denmark and, simultaneously, the utter absence of a sense of belonging:

Jeg troede det ville hjælpe at rejse bort, at være et helt andet og fremmed sted som her hvor alting er anderledes, og hvor jeg kan glemme alt det dårlige som jeg ikke engang ved hvad er. Men det er ikke blevet bedre. Tværtimod. Det hele er så hæsligt her, byen, alt skidt og usædeligheden, menneskene er frastødende, de kan ikke tale rent, de taler med to tunger, ironiske, man kan ikke regne med noget, og Martin Kok, han er så, jeg ved ikke. Jeg kan ikke holde det ud. Jeg kan ikke være her. Og jeg kan ikke rejse hjem [...]. Jeg hører ikke til nogen steder. Jeg tror jeg kommer til at dø uden at finde ud af det. Jeg tror jeg kommer til at dø hernede. Jeg tror aldrig jeg kommer hjem igen. Og jeg ved ikke engang om jeg har lyst til at rejse hjem.³¹⁷ (Leine 2021b: 404)

To give an interpretation of this passage, it could be useful to consider Kirsten Thisted’s observations on «splittelsestemaet» («the split-theme», 2003: 39), introduced within *dansk grønlandslitteratur* by Aage Ibsen and later reprised, among others, by Knud Sønderby and Thorkild Hansen. Ibsen’s *Fjeldgænger* (1908) presents the character of Petrus Lybert, a young man with mixed background who «[u]den at kunne finde sig hjemme hverken hos danskerne eller hos grønlænderne ender [...] med selv at blive en slags fjeldgænger»³¹⁸ (Thisted 2003: 40). In more recent times, this same motif has been reprised by Leine himself, for instance in *Kalak*, where the author’s literary alter-ego, Kim, becomes a sort of ethnic *blanding*, and finds himself sharing similar sensations: «Skal jeg altid blive ved med at leve med denne splittelse?»³¹⁹ (Leine 2019a [2007]: 329). It could be argued, then, that Jens’s sexuality

³¹⁷ «I thought it would help to go away, to be in a completely different and foreign place, like here, where everything is different and where I can forget about all the bad things I don’t even know. But it hasn’t gotten any better. On the contrary. It’s all hideous here, the city, all the filth and the immorality, the people are disgusting, they can’t speak clearly, they speak with two tongues, they’re ironic, you can’t believe anything, and Martin Kok, he’s so... I don’t know. I can’t stand it. I can’t be here. And I can’t go home [...] I don’t belong anywhere. I think I’m going to die without finding out where I belong. I think I’m going to die down here. I don’t think I’ll ever come home again. And I don’t even know if I want to go home», my translation.

³¹⁸ «Without feeling at home neither among Danes nor Greenlanders, he ends up becoming a sort of *fjeldgænger* himself», my translation.

³¹⁹ «Will I always have to live like this, split?», my translation.

somewhat reduplicates the sense of non-belonging the young man endures in relation to ‘Greenlandicness’ and ‘Danishness’. As Jens detaches from his Greenlandic past and successfully embraces a Danish lifestyle – for instance, it should be noted that the man stops dreaming in Greenlandic (Leine 2021b: 428) – his understanding of his own sexual orientation becomes clearer and clearer, to the point that, during a conversation with Herman Bang, he confesses: «Jeg elsker mænd, og jeg elsker kvinder, men jeg elsker mest at elske mænd. Jeg har lyst til at råbe det fra byens tage»³²⁰ (407). The presence of this twofold discourse is reinforced by Bang himself, in the course of another dialogue between him and Jens. The writer asks Jens about his origins, and the young man discloses his mixed background, prompting the following commentary:

Men blandinger er der vist mange af, ikke?
 Jo, siger Jens. Jeg er selv en blanding.
 Det er vi jo alle som en, siger Bang.³²¹ (Leine 2021b: 399)

The expression *blanding*, which Jens mentions in its standard and ‘concrete’ use, is employed by Bang metaphorically, as he extends it to a ‘we’, covertly implying that the term might be used to describe all forms of non-conformity – including the sexual and gender-related ones.

It is worth noting that these connections are made by Leine mainly with reference to Jens’s stay in Denmark and to his consequent ‘danification’ and ‘queering’. The reverse situation, it could be argued, is observable in the case of *Godhavn* and *Sultekunstnerinde*, respectively in relation to the characters of Hilde and Charlotta/Charlie – both daughters of Danish *udsendte* in Greenland. The latter novel has already been analyzed in the light of gender-related matters by Dag Heede in his «*Det var næppe ordet». At undslippe kategorier i drift og skift* (2015; «*It Was Hardly that Word». To Escape Drifting and Shifting Categories*). Starting from general considerations on the novel’s genesis and on the many literary pseudonyms adopted by Charlotte Christina Hoff Hansen, i.e., Lotte Inuk, the scholar states that *Sultekunstnerinde* may be read as «et portæt af forfatteren som ung (ikke)kvinde eller måske også som en fortælling om, hvordan Charlotte blev Charlotte Inuk. Inuk betyder “menneske” på grønlandsk»³²² (2015: 129). The ‘queerness’ characterizing Charlotta, as well as

³²⁰ «I love men and I love women, but I love loving men the most. I feel like screaming it from the rooftops of the city», my translation.

³²¹ «“But there are probably a lot of half-breeds, right?” “Yes”, Jens says, “I myself am a half-breed.” “We’re all like them, after all”», my translation.

³²² «A portrait of the author as a young (non-)woman, or maybe even as a story telling how Charlotte became Charlotte Inuk. Inuk means “person” in Greenlandic», my translation.

Sultekunstnerinde in its entirety, is the focal point of Dag Heede's analysis. Heede is particularly interested in the fact that neither Charlie nor the narrator – whom he identifies as a figure that should be distinguished from Charlie – come across as «entydigt barn, ung eller voksen, mand eller kvinde, homo- eller heteroseksuel, så denne tekst er virkelig på en særligt, uforvekslelig Inuk 'sk måde ekstremt queer»³²³ (133). As far as the novel *per se* is concerned, moreover, Heede stresses that also its genre may be considered 'queer', since it places itself «et noget uafgørligt sted mellem ungdomsbog, erindringsroman, traumefortælling, anoreksilitteratur, Grønlandsberetning eller portræt af forfatteren som ung pige»³²⁴ (134). Despite its thematic and structural 'queerness', the novel evidently insists on the opposition of contrasting categories, such as «barn/voksen; kvinde/mand; homoseksuel/heteroseksuel; krop/sjæl/ dyr/menneske» (*Ibidem*) – not unlikely, perhaps, Peter Høeg's notorious *Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne*. Høeg's bestseller, in fact, according to Thisted, parallels the (contrasting) categories 'Danishness'/'Greenlandicness' with other «arbitrære modsætninger» («arbitrary oppositions»), such as «kultur vs. natur, naturvidenskab vs. instikt, logik vs. intuition, skrift vs. mundtlighed»³²⁵ (Thisted 2003: 60, see *supra*, p. 79, 168). While Høeg insists on what Heede defines as «den vestlige kulturs grundlæggende og betydningsgenererende logikker og hierarkiserende dualismer»³²⁶ (2015: 134), Inuk rather thematizes the impossibility to find one's own dimension among them. During Charlotta's Greenlandic years, in fact, the girl seems to occupy a liminal dimension that oscillates between 'Danishness' and 'Greenlandicness' as she tries to undergo a sort of 'reverse passing' – on an ethnic and on an arguably racial dimension, i.e., «from white to nonwhite» (Beydoun & Wilson 2017: 284). Throughout chapter 2, Charlotta's ethnic positioning has been taken into consideration in the light of Alan Sinfield's theorizations regarding gender identity and sexuality: hypothesizing that her relationship to 'Greenlandicness' fluctuates between the two poles «desire for» and «desire to be» (Sinfield 2004, see *supra*, p. 150), implying an adherence to 'Danishness' and, at the same time, the aspiration to overcome it. These same concepts could

³²³ «univocally a child, a young person or an adult, male or female, gay or straight, so this text is truly, in a special and unmistakably Inukian way, extremely queer», my translation.

³²⁴ «in a somewhat undecidable place between young adult literature, memoir, trauma narrative, anorexia literature, Greenland-report or portrait of the author as a young girl», my translation. Heede further elaborates on these considerations stating that *Sultekunstnerinde* also presents some forms of linguistic hybridity. The subject has been delved into in the second chapter of the dissertation.

³²⁵ «culture vs. nature, science vs. instinct, logic vs. intuition, written language vs. orality», my translation.

³²⁶ «the fundamental and meaning-generating logics and hierarchizing dualisms characterizing the Western culture», my translation.

perhaps be fruitfully employed to verify whether discourses on Charlotta's' gender identity/sexuality reproduce this same dialectic, thus confirming her (twofold) 'queerness'.

In this regard, Heede's analysis constitutes once again a valuable help, as the scholar mentions Charlotta's attempts to resist her transformation into a woman, prompted by puberty, and, simultaneously, into a «voksant aktivt (heteroseksuelt) begærsvæsen»³²⁷ (Heede 2015: 135); Charlotta's eating disorder, in this sense, could also be interpreted as a way to defy these physiological changes and take control over her body (136): «På den anden side er jeg stærk nok til at trods selvste naturens love; holde op med at kræve og behøve og næres og i stedet langsomt forvandle mig til en kønsløs, en åndsløs, en ønskeløs; en blåtonet overlegen hindugudinde»³²⁸ (Inuk 2004: 285). As far as Charlotta/Charlie's sexuality is concerned, on the other hand, Heede focuses on the jealousy experienced by the girl in relation to Malou's flirtation. According to the scholar, the object of these feelings is not clearly stated, as the girl might be jealous of her friend, as well as of Malou's (male) conquests: «Det angives karakteristisk nok ikke direkte, at Charlie begærer Malou, men at hun er jaloux på hendes mandlige flirt»³²⁹ (138). While this peculiarity may be interpreted as an attempt to 'mask' Charlotta's underlying and unexpressed yearnings, it could also be seen – once again – as a mere ambiguity. The girl is somewhat attracted to her female friend («desire for») and, at the same time, she wishes to be like her («desire-to be»). This latter aspect, for instance, can be grasped from the passage that follows:

Malous far blev skilt fra Malous mor i Danmark på grund af en grønlandsk kvinde ikke så frygteligt meget ældre end os selv, og flyttede hér til byen for hende og med Malou, mens Malous lillebror blev hos deres egentlige mor i Jylland. Så Malou er faktisk næsten halvt [sic] grønlænder og kan i hvert fald gå for at være det, hvis hun anstrenger sig med sin accent og ingen ellers kender for meget til hende; der er mange halvt grønlandske børn og endda også helt grønlandske børn, der ikke kan et ord rigtig grønlandsk alligevel, og også mange hvis hår har samme lysbrune farve som Malous og hvis øjne ikke ser meget anderledes ud. Det misunder jeg hende; med mit eget gullige hår og umiskendeligt gråblå øjne er det sværere at tricke overbevisende, også selvom min mor heldigvis ser mere og mere til denne her flotte og helt rigtige, en del yngre grønlandske kæreste.³³⁰ (Inuk 2004: 130-131)

³²⁷ «An adult subject experiencing (heterosexual) desire», my translation.

³²⁸ «On the other hand, I'm strong enough to defy the very laws of nature, to stop demanding and needing and eating, to slowly transform myself into somewhat genderless, soulless, desireless, sexless, a spiritless, a desireless; a blue-toned superior Hindu goddess», my translation.

³²⁹ «Characteristically enough, it is not stated directly that Charlie desires Malou, but that she is jealous of her flirtations with male characters», my translation.

³³⁰ «Malou's father had divorced from Malou's mother, in Denmark, because of a Greenlandic woman who wasn't that much older than us, and moved here to the city for her sake. He brought Malou with him, while Malou's younger brother stayed with their real mother in Jutland. So Malou is actually almost half Greenlandic and can at

The motif of jealousy is here introduced through the intertwinement with the ‘ethnic’ component: it is interesting to note that this feeling is not only triggered by Malou’s flirtations with Greenlandic boys, but also because Charlotta perceives her friend as nearly ‘Greenlandic’ – or, at least, that she could successfully pass for one, due to the acquirement of a Greenlandic stepmother and to her physical appearance. At the same time, it could be argued that Charlotte’s «desire-to be», besides Malou, is also projected towards to the opposite gender: this ‘envy’ is palpable as she asks to be called ‘Charlie’, and tries to resist the inevitable biological alterations her body is subjected to. Anorexia, in this sense, partially helps her achieving this goal, since she stops menstruating and loses some of her most evident ‘feminine’ traits. The girl, however, must come to terms with the fact that her wish to defy biology –the same desire that had been expressed by Morten Falck in *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden* (Leine 2021a [2007]: 47) – cannot be fulfilled that easily: «Charlie var bare snyd. Charlie var noget vi fandt på og jeg har aldrig været en Charlie for hende. Jeg er, jeg er en, jeg ved ikke hvem eller hvad jeg er, der er ingen længere til at se mig og fortælle mig det, ingen»³³¹ (Inuk 2004: 227). Charlotta’s considerations, on the other hand, could be viewed as a further demonstration of the fact that her identity does not find a fix and stable collocation within the poles man/woman, heterosexual/homosexual, and ‘Danishness’/‘Greenlandicness’. Her positioning, fluctuating and ever-changing, can be found somewhere within the spectrum that emerges between the poles of each of these oppositional pairs – and, as such, is definable as intrinsically queer.

3.4 Incest, Abuse, and Violent Sexual Behaviors in Fictions on Postcolonial Greenland: Social and Metaphorical Implications

As anticipated, the Danish imaginary regarding the former Arctic colony encompasses the idea of domestic violence and abuse as one of many social problems afflicting post-colonial Greenland. This association, as mentioned, can be explained in the light of the well-known

least pass for being one if she makes an effort with her accent and no one knows too much about her; there are many half Greenlandic children and even fully Greenlandic children who don’t know a word of correct Greenlandic anyway, and also many whose hair has the same light brown color as Malou’s and whose eyes don’t look very different. I envy her that; with my yellowish hair and unmistakable gray-blue eyes, it’s more difficult to trick convincingly, even if fortunately my mother is looking more and more at this handsome and completely real, somewhat younger Greenlandic boyfriend», my translation.

³³¹ «Charlie was just a trick. It was something we invented, and I’ve never been Charlie to her. I am, I am one, and I don’t know who or what I am, there’s no longer someone who can see me or tell me, no one», my translation.

narratives identifying Greenlanders as *naturmennesker* – which, concurrently with Greenland's formal *ligestilling* vis-à-vis Denmark, in 1953, have taken new forms. Similar discourses are effectively condensed in a 2010 editorial from the *Kristeligt Dagblad* mentioned by Mortensen and Maegaard, «Grønland på rette vej» (Mortensen & Maegaard 2019: 3). The two scholars comment on the discourses emerging from the article as follows:

Several issues are drawn into this argument: The Greenlandic traditional culture and the hunter society that was lost, abuse of alcohol, child neglect and child abuse, promiscuous behavior and sexually transmitted diseases. All of this is woven together in an argument about problems in Greenlandic society. Traditional culture, sexual behavior and modernity are logically interconnected in this type of argument. It shifts the focus from Danish colonialism («the Danes were to blame») to the more abstract concept of 'modernity' (as in the «modern welfare state»). The Greenlandic culture is constructed as 'pre-modern', and unviable within the societal and economic changes that modernity brings with it. Quite importantly, the rejection of Danish responsibility and guilt is executed by turning the matter into a question of sexuality; the Greenlandic people is presented as particularly promiscuous with problematic sexual practices. (*Ibidem*)

On the one hand, the article addresses the difficulties faced by Greenlanders in the passage from a 'pre-modern' to a 'modern' society, prompted by the policies favored by the Danish government between the 1950s and the 1970s. On the other, it is still possible to identify as a subtext an underlying association between Greenlanders and a supposed 'state of nature' – with specific regard to their 'untamed' sexuality, expressing itself in promiscuity and in violent forms. These arguments draw on the same presupposition. i.e., on the Danish idea that Greenlandic sexuality is «connected to nature and biology» and, at the same time, «problematically disturbed by civilization» (Mortensen & Maegaard 2019: 4).

A specific form of violent sexual behavior that often occurs in Danish discourses concerning contemporary Greenland is child abuse, which Hans Klausen, in his article *Grønland er så meget mere end misbrug* (2015; *Greenland Is So Much More Than Abuse*), defines as a non-nuanced and limiting narrative: «I en dansk sammenhæng er den dominerende fortælling om børn i Grønland, at de har det dårligt, at mange mistrives og ofte udsættes for seksuelle overgreb, og at det grønlandske samfund ikke er i stand til at tage vare på sine egne børn»³³² (Klausen 2015). The journalist attempts to deconstruct this idea, which, according to him, tends to be extremized and manipulated by the Danish media – usually relying on

³³² «In a Danish context, the dominant narrative about children in Greenland is that they have a bad life, that many are malnourished and often exposed to sexual abuse, and that Greenlandic society is unable to take care of its own children», my translation.

«belastende citater og dramatiske overskrifter»³³³ – as well as by Danish politicians, such as, for instance, Søren Espersen from Dansk Folkeparti (*Ibidem*). Bo Wagner Sørensen, in his *Magt eller afmagt? Køn, følelser og vold i Grønland*, gives voice – through the words of the Greenlanders he interviews – to a non-Danish point of view on the same matter: «Mange grønlændere har under feltarbejdet givet udtryk for, at de er trætte for at blive defineret udefra [...]. De er trætte af at stå som rekordholdere, hvad enten det gælder alkohol, kønssygdomme, incest, vold [...] etc. De mener, at medierne giver et ensidigt billede af Grønland og grønlænderne» (Sørensen 1994: 54). In the light of the ‘victim-role’ attributed to Greenlanders within Danish – and sometimes even Greenlandic – post-colonial discourses –, these children can be identified as «ofrenes ofre», «the victims’ victims» (Gant 2009: 211).

As it happens in the case of media, Danish literature is not immune to this theme, which, sometimes, may be employed critically. This is the case, for instance, of Mads Peder Nordbo’s Arctic noir *Pigen uden hud*, where past and present crimes intertwine, leading the reader to believe that ‘savage’ murders and abuses have been committed by equally ‘savage’ Greenlanders. Preconceptions on Greenlanders, violence, and sexuality in post-colonial Greenland are used by the actual (Danish) perpetrators to cover their criminal actions, committed against local children. According to Kirsten Thisted, another notable example of Danish ‘counter-narrative’ with regard to the motif of *sex-misbrug* has been offered by Kim Leine in his bestselling debut, *Kalak*: «Incest er et tema, som der ofte har været fokuseret på i forbindelse med Grønland, men i dette tilfælde har det skildrede incestforhold intet med Grønland at gøre. Den er begået imod ham selv af hans far, i København»³³⁴ (Thisted 2011a: 269). The motifs of child abuse and incest, moreover, seem to constitute a recurring theme within Leine, Mondrup, and Inuk’s ‘Greenlandic’ production – albeit with different modalities.

In the case of *Sultekunstnerinde*, the matter is thematized in a two scenes, one centered on the disturbing encounter between Charlotta and a «børnelokker», a «pedophile», who visits her while she is home alone (Inuk 2004: 61). The preacher, with the excuse to share the word of God with the young girl, starts touching her, triggering in Charlotta «to helt modstridende følelser»³³⁵: disgust and, at the same time, «umådelig nydelse»³³⁶ (Inuk 2004: 117). Ambiguity, as we have seen, is a characteristic feature of *Sultekunstnerinde*, both on a thematic and

³³³ «Incriminating quotes and dramatic headlines», my translation.

³³⁴ «Incest is often thematized with regard to Greenland, but in this case, there is a representation of an incestuous relationship that has nothing to do with Greenland. This violence has been committed against Kim himself by his father», my translation.

³³⁵ «Two completely opposing feelings», my translation.

³³⁶ «Immense pleasure», my translation.

structural level, and this repulsive moment may perhaps count as a *mise en abyme*, in this sense, as it prompts a rational and an irrational response in Charlotta. However, this passage does not seem to lead to considerations on violence in the Greenlandic post-colonial context, as does the other scene of the novel that encompasses the idea of carnal violence. As suggested once again by Dag Heede, this latter scene is perhaps more meaningful in relation to Charlotta's attempts to resist the changes in her body and her sexual awakening, two pivotal underlying themes of *Sultekunstnerinde*: «Og yderst konkret er Charlies udmagrede krop et skjold mod diverse seksuelle tilnærmelser, også direkte voldtægtsforsøg. Hendes erkendelse af, at hun har “frelst” sin krop fra seksuelle overgreb, fylder hende med en følelse af styrke, magt og lykke»³³⁷ (2015: 136). In line with these considerations, it could be argued that *Sultekunstnerinde*, although the tropes of child abuse/violent sexuality are present and intersect with some of the founding elements and discourses of the novel, does not offer a 'counter-narrative' to the Danish – almost voyeuristic – insistence on social (and sexual) 'chaos' that marks Greenland. The focus, in fact, is markedly on Charlotta's individuality rather than on a more collective dimension.

The matter is different in the case of Kim Leine's trilogy on colonial Greenland, especially in *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden* and *Efter åndemaneren*, and in Iben Mondrup's Tabita-trilogy. Both sets of works propose a literary coming-to-terms with Denmark's colonial past – or with the colonial practices favored in the (formally) post-colonial period. Leine and Mondrup engage in different strategies that aim at dismantling Denmark's narratives of benevolence and self-absolution. In these works, it is not infrequent to come across descriptions of the obscenities committed by Danish characters. In this regard, the case of Oxbøl, from *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden*, is rather explicative – since his perversity casts a shadow throughout different generations, and still has some form of impact at the time of the vicissitudes depicted in *Efter åndemaneren*, i.e., around 1885. Let us consider the following passage from the last novel of Kim Leine's trilogy:

Først nu hvor jeg har læst bedstefars dagbog, forstår jeg det, og for hver gang jeg læser den, forstår jeg lidt mere, men helt forstår jeg den vel nok aldrig. Min oldefar, Lauritz Oxbøl, far til min bedstefar, Bertel, og hans halvsøster, Lydia, hende de uvist hvorfor kaldte «enken». Hun slog sin far, præsten Oxbøl, ihjel. Grunden, så vidt jeg kan forstå, var at han havde forgrebet sig på hende, som på flere andre af sine døtre, og disses døtre igen, og havde lavet indavl med dem til det hele endte i et morads af blodskam der oppe i Holsteinsborg. Dyret måtte dø, og dyret døde. Denne Oxbøl er roden til det hele, selve det

³³⁷ «And very concretely, Charlie's emaciated body is a shield against various sexual advances, including direct rape attempts. Her realization that she has “saved” her body from sexual abuse fills her with a sense of strength, power, and happiness», my translation.

ondes rod, farfar til min salig far Jens der døde da jeg var ung. [...] Men hvem var pastor Oxbøl? En horebuk tydeligvis. Ligesom mig. Præst. Dansker. Han avlede børn med mange kvinder. Og med disse børn avlede han også børn. Derfor måtte han dø. Jeg gad virkelig godt vide hvem der var hans far. Der er intet i bogen der giver nogen ledetråd, så jeg går ud fra at bedstefar ikke vidste det. Man skal være ferm til brøkgregning for at udregne andele af dansk og grønlandsk i sit blod når man er efterkommer af en som ham. Denne fordømte horepræst har sprøjtet sin sæd ind i slægten og endda besmittet afkommet fra sin egen horeseng med sit blod og dermed lavet rod i regnestykket med sin blodskam [...]. Jeg har ikke denne drift mod mit eget kød og blod. Det er måske det der skiller os ad, og det der redder mig selv på dommens dag.³³⁸ (Leine 2021b: 606-607)

The point of view is that of Julius Krabbe, known among the local people as «the Dane» – even though, ironically, he has never set foot in Denmark: «Julius Krabbe har med andre ord aldrig været uden for Grønlands vestkyst i sit seksoghalvtredsårige liv»³³⁹ (Leine 2021b: 56). The man, now in his late 50s, descends from Lauritz Oxbøl, with whom the reader may be acquainted – it should be reminded, in fact, that the novels forming Leine’s trilogy can be read as independent works. Thisted’s analysis of *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden* concentrates, among other aspects, also on this ‘evil’ figure. Nonetheless, the scholar stresses that «even [...] the novel’s virtual “heart of darkness”» (2016: 162) can to some extent be regarded as a nuanced character – which Thisted sees as a demonstration of the fact that Leine attempts to create ‘grey’ personas rather than opting for a one-sided depiction, as far as both Danes and Greenlanders are concerned.

The attention to this aspect could be traced back to the idea of hybridity at the core of his three-book project on colonial Greenland: according to Thisted, Leine – contrary to Sven Holm, for example – emphasizes that «there is no way back from colonization – in part because the Danes scatter their seed indiscriminately» (*Ibidem*). Therefore, the idea that contemporary Greenlandic culture is intrinsically ‘hybrid’, expressed for instance by Kirsten Thisted in her

³³⁸ «Only now that I’ve read grandfather’s diary I understand, and every time I read it, I understand a little more, but I guess I’ll never understand completely. My great-grandfather, Lauritz Oxbøl, father to my grandfather, Bertel, and his half-sister, Lydia, whom they called «the widow» for unknown reasons. She killed her father, the priest Oxbøl. The reason, as far as I can understand, was that he had preyed on her, as he had done on several other of his daughters, and their daughters again, and had done inbreeding with them until it all ended in a morass of shameful blood-chaos up there in Holsteinsborg. The beast had to die, and the beast died. This Oxbøl is the root of it all, the very root of evil, grandfather to my blessed father Jens who died when I was young. [...] But who was Pastor Oxbøl? Clearly a whoremonger. Like me. Priest. Dane. He fathered children with many women. And with these children he also begat children. Therefore he had to die. I’d really like to know who his father was. There are no clues in the book, so I assume grandpa didn’t know. You have to be good with fractions to calculate the proportion of Danish and Greenlandic in your blood when you are a descendant of someone like him. This damned whore-priest has spread his seed across the family and has even defiled the offspring from his own whore-bed with his blood, messing up these calculation with the shameful blood chaos he caused [...]. I don’t have this urge against my own flesh and blood. Maybe this is what distinguishes us, and what will save me on judgment day», my translation.

³³⁹ «In other words, Julius Krabbe has never been outside of the Greenlandic West Coast, in his 58 year-long life», my translation.

Blame, Shame, and Atonement: Greenlandic Responses to Racialized Discourses about Greenlanders and Danes (2022),³⁴⁰ is inevitably associated with Danish colonial endeavors and to the most ‘concrete’ results of the Danish-Greenlandic encounter, i.e., reproduction among Greenlanders and Danes – which, as we have seen, tendentially resulted from relationships between Greenlandic women and Danish men. This known constellation is often explicitly addressed in the works that are being taken into consideration, for instance in the following extract from *Efter åndemaneren*: «I mænd er heldige at I kan være sammen med de indfødte. Det er umuligt for os kvinder. Tænk hvis jeg flyttede sammen med en af kiffakkerne i Handelen og fik børn med ham?»³⁴¹ (Leine 2021b: 466). However, it should be noted that Oxbøl’s offspring has been conceived *outside* of conventional relationships, and even social norms: the man, sleeping with young Greenlandic women and with the daughters they bore, inaugurates a series of despicable acts – creating, in a way, his own ‘tribe’ of direct descendants. Oxbøl’s actions are inherently violent as they are directed, it could be argued, both at the ‘laws of nature’ and at the local women, as well as at his own daughters. Different types of violence, then, are at stake, and it could perhaps be fruitful to wonder whether this hyperbolical figure may bear a metaphorical connotation, coming to symbolize the whole of Danish colonial deeds perpetrated at the expense of Greenlanders. At the same time, the theme of incest, so often referred to in Danish narrations on post-modernization Greenland, is here addressed in relation to a Danish perpetrator, thus allowing a reversal of the known association between ‘Greenlandic sexuality’, on the one side, and ‘closeness to nature’/‘bestiality’, on the other.

The latter characteristic, as a matter of fact, is thematized explicitly both in *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden* and *Efter åndemaneren*, even in the aforementioned paragraph: the missionary’s actions qualify him as «dyret», a term that matches the descriptions featured in the first novel of the trilogy. Thisted, for instance, recalls that the character is often depicted as a reptile (Thisted 2015: 115) and this similitude is repeated on the occasion of his death, caused by Bertel and Lydia («De er flere om at holde ham fast, han slår ud efter dem, hurtigt som en slange, men de ler og får ham tvunget på plads»,³⁴² Leine 2021a [2012]: 439). In other passages, Oxbøl is compared to a fox, due to the form and the look of his eyes – the same eyes that have

³⁴⁰ As stated by Thisted, in fact, Greenland «perceives itself as a mix of Inuit and European heritage» (2022: 198), which is rather paradoxical, if we think that *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, even in more contemporary times, tends to represent ‘Danishness’ and ‘Greenlandicness’ as one another’s Other.

³⁴¹ «You men are lucky that you can have relationships with the natives. It’s impossible for us women. Can you imagine if I moved in with one of the *kiffaks* of the Department and had children with him?», my translation.

³⁴² «There are more of them that are holding him down, and he strikes out after them, quick as a snake, but they laugh and force him into place», my translation.

been inherited by his illegitimate sons Bertel and that, among other characteristics, have deturpated «et sæt smukke og rene eskimoiske arveanlæg»³⁴³ (Leine 2021a [2012]: 128). Therefore, a *dyrisk* quality is associated to ‘Danishness’ rather than to ‘Greenlandicness’, and this peculiarity could be regarded as a literary counter-discourse to the idea of Greenlanders as *naturmennesker*. A similar interpretation can perhaps be better understood in the light of the following extract from Solvej Skovmose Vinther’s *Kropskultur i Grønland – set med danske øjne* (2007; *Body Culture in Greenland – Seen through Danish Eyes*):

I begyndelsen af 1900-tallet var det almindeligt at benytte «dyriske» referencer til at beskrive de indfødte i fremmede egne. Kaj Birket-Smith var overinspektør ved Nationalmuseet, og i hans berømte bog fra 1927 *Eskimoerne* skriver han bl.a.: «Eskimokraniets mest iøjenfaldende ejendommelighed er måske dets tag- eller kamagtige form, og det kan ikke nægtes, at dette i forbindelse med de højt liggende, øvre tindingelinjer kan give indtrykket af noget «dyrisk», noget der meget fjærnt minder om gorillaen og dens vældige muskelfæster». Her ses en reference til det mystiske og dyriske, der [...] fastholdt grønlanderne i en underlegen position. Denne tekst fortæller i høj grad om den kontekst, hvori den er skrevet.³⁴⁴ (Vinther 2007: 115)

As we have seen in chapter 2, during the colonial period the othering of Greenlanders has often been supported by anthropological studies and expeditions – which aimed at collecting and cataloguing knowledge both on the morphology characterizing the ‘Eskimos’ (physical anthropology) and on their peculiar way of living. A more accurate insight on these matters can be found in Mille Gabriel’s *Fra kolonial samling til national kulturarv. Betydningen af repatriering i konstruktionen af en postkolonial grønlandsk identitet*, where the scholar discusses the significance of the *Konebådsekspedition* led by Gustav Holm in the mid-1880s. Holm’s expedition resulted in the Danish displacement, among other things, of 16 skulls belonging to East-Greenlanders – which, after some examinations, were classified as «“Varieteter af den Mongolske Race”», «“Varieties of the Mongolian Race”» (Gabriel 2011: 457). It is perhaps not unsurprising that Gustav Holm’s *Konebådsekspedition* is thoroughly reported in *Efter åndemaneren*, where the Danish explorer appears as one of the many historical figures populating the novel. The detail of the skulls is also mentioned throughout the chapters

³⁴³ «A set of beautiful and pure Eskimo genes», my translation.

³⁴⁴ «In the early 1900s, it was common to use “animal” references to describe the natives of foreign regions. Kaj Birket-Smith was chief inspector at the National Museum, and in his famous book from 1927, *The Eskimos*, he writes, among other things: “Perhaps the most striking peculiarity of the Eskimo skull is its roof or ridge-like form, and it cannot be denied that this, along with the high-lying, upper temple lines can give the impression of something ‘animalistic’, something very distantly reminiscent of the gorilla and its huge muscle attachments”. Here is a reference to a mysterious and animalistic element, which [...] kept the Greenlanders in position of inferiority. This text tells a great deal about the context in which it was written», my translation.

following the expedition, as well as in the section of the novel where the character of Rufus makes his first appearance as a narrator. The year is 1953, Greenland has just been integrated into the *Rigsfællesskab* as a formally equal part, and the man, on the occasion of his first visit to the former Arctic colony, makes these considerations:

Det skete at man så en afrikaner eller vestinder på gaden, men altid i en meget underordnet funktion. Grønlændere så man kun på koloniudstillinger og deres dragter på byens etnografiske museum og deres afpillede kranier på det antropologiske. Så kunne danskerne se hvem de herskede over. Man fandt også menneskeudstillinger, hele karavaner af eksotiske folkeslag, i Zoologisk Have som i virkeligheden var lavet i underholdningsøjemed, og kun havde et svagt skær af videnskabelighed, ligesom de kinesiske tableauer i Tivoli.³⁴⁵ (Leine 2021b: 379)

Leine, therefore, demonstrates to be well-acquainted with the aforementioned practices and the discourses they contributed to engender, which he openly condemns through the words of Rufus. In the light of these arguments, the association between Oxbøl, a questionable sexuality, and ‘bestial’ qualities is perhaps less casual than one could think at a first glance. The origins of his ‘tribe’ reveal him as the real ‘savage’, if one considers the same stereotypical associations made in Danish discourses on Greenlandic sexuality.

A similar operation has been made by Mondrup in the first two novels belonging to the trilogy that revolves around the displacement of the Greenlandic siblings Tabita and Vitus. It could be argued that the main topic of both *Tabita* and *Vittu* is, broadly speaking, violence against children. The most evident form of violence they are exposed to is cultural: Tabita, as concluded in chapter 2, must undergo a sort of ‘forced passing’ to comply the wishes and expectations of her adoptive parents, especially Eva. Vitus and the girl, furthermore, have been taken away from Abelone with her dubious consent, a detail that further complicates the matter. As far as *Tabita* is concerned, this motif takes a disturbing turn, since Berthel attempts to sleep with the girl, who, besides from being his own adoptive daughter, is also a child. This twist in the narration might serve the purpose to further stress the hypocrisy of the couple’s intentions – offering Tabita and Vitus a better life in Denmark, in a protected family environment – in contrast with the actual outcome. Once again, a problem associated with (postcolonial)

³⁴⁵ «It could happen to see an African or West Indian on the street, always in a very subordinate role. Greenlanders were only seen at colonial exhibitions, their costumes displayed at the city’s ethnographic museum and their peeled skulls at the anthropological one. So that the Danes could see who they ruled over. You could also find exhibitions of humans, entire caravans filled with exotic peoples, in the Zoological Garden – which were actually made for entertainment purposes, and had only a faint tinge of science, like the Chinese tableaux in Tivoli», my translation.

Greenland is transposed to another context: in this case, the perpetrator is Danish, and the abuses take place in ‘respectable’ Denmark.

Although an analogous situation is presented in *Vittu*, gender-roles are reversed in this second case, since Vitus, now in his puberty years, engages in a sexual relationship with his adoptive mother. It is interesting to note that, despite the fact that the action still takes place in Denmark, the woman is a French photographer. The choice could have been taken both in an attempt not to encapsulate Danes and Greenlanders in the respective roles of perpetrators and victims, as well as to limit the risks connected to the Danish ‘appropriation’ of a story regarding Greenlanders. Nonetheless, the character of Alice, loosely inspired by the photographers Sally Mann and Irina Ionesco (Mondrup 2022b: 329), gravitates in a Danish ambience, speaks Danish, and has a «pæredansk» husband (Mondrup 2022b: 50). Furthermore, her experience as a migrant in Denmark is not used to parallel Vitus’ sense of estrangement; on the contrary, Alice comes across as the representant of a European and exoticizing point of view, as it can be grasped, for instance, from the following citation:

En for én fotograferer hun hans kropsdele, og mens hun fotograferer, tænker hun på da Vincis Homo Vitruvianus [sic], på menneske-kroppens proportioner i forhold til cirklen og firkanten. Ved ansigtet kommer hun til at tænke på hans ophav. Der er så godt som ingenting ved ham som virker indfødt. Jo ældre han bliver, desto sværere er det at forstå at han skulle være Esquimau. Hun har skrevet til børne-hjemmet og bedt om alle hans oplysninger. De var ikke videre hjælpsomme, men kunne bekræfte hvad hun på forhånd vidste, at moren var indfødt, og faren angiveligt dansk.

Kun folden ved øjet og den lidt brede mund fortæller om hans herkomst. Og så den stærke krop som ikke nødvendigvis har noget med et ophav at gøre. Men hun er ikke skuffet. For hende er det tilstrækkeligt at se ham vokse og blive et sundt menneske, og sådan er det ved at gå, hun er stolt og fascineret af hans styrke.³⁴⁶ (Mondrup 2022b: 71)

Alice’s fascination for the boy apparently transcends his ‘exotic’ origins, since she is not «disappointed» by the fact that Vitus’ Greenlandic background cannot be told based on his looks, especially as he grows older. Her actions, however, suggest an excessive interest for the matter, which may lead the reader to believe that the woman is being insincere to herself. This

³⁴⁶ «One by one, she takes pictures of his body parts, and as she photographs, she thinks of da Vinci’s Homo Vitruvianus [sic], of the proportions of the human body in relation to the circle and the square. When she reaches his face, she comes to think of his background. There is almost nothing about him that seems native. The older he gets, the harder it is to tell that he should be an Esquimau. She has written to the orphanage and asked for all his information. They couldn’t give any further clue, only confirm what she already knew, that the mother was native, and the father allegedly Danish. You could tell of his ancestry only by the crease in his eye and his mouth, slightly wide. And then by his strong body, which doesn’t necessarily have anything to do with origins. But she is not disappointed. For her, it’s enough to see him grow and become a healthy person, and that’s how it’s going, she is proud and fascinated by his strength», my translation.

interpretation is supported by the numerous observations Alice makes on her «petit Esquimau» (Mondrup 2022b: 39) throughout the novel – as if, through this continuous othering, she did not want him to be an ‘integral part’ of the family. The distance between Alice and the boy is remarked during the photoshoots in which Vitus models for his adoptive mother, where it is possible to detect the photographer’s estrangement towards the subject of the pictures. The existence of these ‘barriers’ between the two – who, nonetheless, come across as quite close to each other – is perhaps one of the causes contributing to the ‘incestuous’ outcoming of their relationship. Also in this regard, we can appreciate the gap between the Alice’s actions and her own self-perception:

Chouchou er femten år gammel og stor nok til at vide hvad han laver. [...] Han ville aldrig være gået med til noget han ikke selv syntes var i orden, så godt kender hun ham. De er to voksne mennesker, og de er ikke engang i biologisk familie. Der findes historier om kærlighed mellem stedbørn og deres stedforældre som er gode og lykkelige. Og alle de gange han har været og banke på hendes dør om natten hvor hun har måttet bede ham om at gå. Han kan være kommet ind til hende og have lagt sig i sengen mens hun var blæst væk af alkohol og søvn. Han kunne have elsket med hende mens hun var bevidstløs, det er slet ikke usandsynligt. Altså er de lige gode om at være gået over grænsen.³⁴⁷ (Mondrup 2022b: 189)

What strikes the reader are Alice’s discourses of self-absolution, which somewhat echo Eva and Berthel’s attempts to justify their choices and actions: the decision to adopt Tabita and Vitus despite Abelone’s unwillingness, on the one hand, and the man’s ‘necessity’ to sleep with the Greenlandic woman, on the other. Therefore, Alice also inserts herself into a logic that is both inherently violent and drawing on an idea of ‘exceptionalism’, although on a more individual and metaphorical level. Despite being essentially stranger to the (post)colonial relationship between Denmark and Greenland, Alice, then, does not seem to detach herself from ‘Danishness’ – or, at least, with the symbolical implications associated with this category. An element of novelty, still, is represented by the role reversal in terms of gender – since carnal abuse is more often associated with the idea of a male perpetrator and a female victim. Also in this case, then, Mondrup depicts a woman who bears ‘predatory’ qualities and acts at the expense of a substantially passive and helpless male counterpart.

³⁴⁷ «Chouchou is fifteen years old and old enough to know what he’s doing. [...] He would never have agreed to something he didn’t think was right, she knows him too well. They are two adults, and they aren’t even biologically related. There are nice and happy love stories between stepchildren and their stepparents. And all the times he had been knocking on her door at night, and she has had to ask him to leave. He may have reached her and laid on her bed while she was knocked out by alcohol and sleep. He could have made love to her while she was unconscious, it’s not that unlikely. In other words, they could have both crossed the border», my translation.

3.5 Concluding Remarks

The works that have been taken into account – Leine’s *Kalak*, *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden*, and *Efter åndemaneren*, Mondrup’s *Store Malene*, *Godhavn*, *Tabita*, and *Vittu*, and Inuk’s *Sultekunstnerinde* – show that ethnicity and gender interact in literary (post)colonial Greenland on multiple levels.

Both dimensions, as we have seen, entail an internal subdivision and hierarchization. With regard to this latter aspect, some considerations have been made by recurring to the concept of ‘literary agency’: in *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, the point of view of the beholder is generally that of a Danish man – and this presupposition alone may lead to objectifying and fetishizing tendencies towards Greenlandic women. While some of the novels under consideration limit themselves to problematizing this *status quo*, as in the case of *Kalak* and *Tabita*, others challenge this narrative by offering ‘alternative’ voices. This is what happens, for instance, in *Sultekunstnerinde* and *Store Malene*, both presenting female ‘migrant’ figures.

Another peculiarity characterizing *Store Malene* is the fact that the novel – along with *Godhavn*, although with different modalities – offers a reversal of gender roles in terms of how they are conceived within a patriarchal system. In Mondrup’s books, however, it is often (Danish) female characters who come across as predatory, or even inherently violent. This twist also lends itself to considerations on the ‘queering’ of ethnicity categories (‘Danishness’ vs. ‘Greenlandicness’), as well as of gender-related ones (‘manhood’ vs. ‘womanhood’). This theme, as observed in the analysis, goes hand in hand with Bhabha’s theorizations on hybridity. The figure of the hermaphrodite featured in *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden*, in this sense, could be regarded as highly significative. Lotte Inuk’s *Sultekunstnerinde* is also deeply concerned with parallelisms between the ethnic and the gender-related dimension, since the figure of Charlotta seems to embody ‘undecidedness’ both between ‘Danishness’ and ‘Greenlandicness’ and identifying as a girl or a boy.

One last aspect I have delved into is the representation of violent sexuality – more specifically in the form of incest – in the Greenlandic (post)colonial context. As known, this social plague is often brought up in the Danish public discourse to fuel well-known narratives on the former Arctic colony. It has been interesting to note that this specific form of violence is perpetrated, in the texts belonging to my corpus, by Danish characters, such as Oxbøl, who

ushers in a line of descendants through his abominable deeds. Carnal violence is also carried out by Tabita's and Vitus' adoptive parents, in an unsuspected Danish bourgeois setting. The element is also present in *Sultekunstnerinde*, although, as demonstrated, it only seems to concern Charlotta's *Bildung* rather than collective discourses.

These considerations on gender and ethnicity will also be borne in mind throughout the last thematic chapter of the dissertation, revolving around class. Similarly to the present section of my work, chapter 4 will also be characterized by a less systematic approach to the object of study than chapter 2. Another element of difficulty is, as we will see, the impossibility of speaking of class in anti-essentialist terms.

CHAPTER 4

CLASS-CONSCIENCE IN DANISH LITERARY REPRESENTATIONS OF GREENLAND

4.1 *The Notion of 'Class': Postcolonial Implications and Intersections*

The last element that will be taken into consideration with regard to Leine's, Mondrup's, and Inuk's 'Greenlandic' fiction is 'class'. The notion is here understood as a third category of social difference, alongside with ethnicity and gender. Contrary to the latter two, however, 'class' is not necessarily acquired from birth, but still has a great impact on various aspects of one's life (see Wright 2015: 3). Erik Olin Wright, whose Marxist approach to 'class' has progressively opened to other perspectives through the years, identifies «three clusters of class-relevant causal processes» (*Ibidem*), which will be here considered as a trail for the present chapter. The scholar describes them in the following terms:

The first [cluster] identifies class with the attributes and material conditions of the lives of individuals. The second focuses on the ways in which social positions give some people control over economic resources of various sorts while excluding others from access to those resources. And the third identifies class, above all, with the ways in which economic positions give some people control over the lives and activities of others. (*Ibidem*)

A first element of interest is the interaction between individual attributes (such as sex, race, religion etc.) and material life conditions. According to Wright, «[c]lass should neither be identified simply with the individual attributes nor with the material conditions of life of people, but with the interconnections between these two» (4). In this sense, broadly speaking, it could be argued that Wright has an 'intersectional' look on the matter. Furthermore, Wright is also concerned with power-dynamics generated by class inequality and, in particular, with the so-called «*opportunity-hoarding*» and «*domination and exploitation*» phenomena (*Ibidem*). Examples of such practices limited to the Danish-Greenlandic (post)colonial context have been presented in the previous chapters and since they were often introduced in accordance with ethnic criteria. One of the most eloquent cases in this regard was represented by the *fødestedskriterium* instituted in 1964 (see *supra*, p. 49, 104), which gave access to different material conditions of life on a *de facto* racial basis. As to the idea of domination and exploitation and its applicability to my area of interest, it is worth recalling the system described in detail by Søren Rud in his book *Colonialism in Greenland. Tradition, Governance and*

Legacy. Here, the scholar focuses on the control imposed on Greenlanders in order to profit from traditional hunting practices (2017a: 61). Also in this case, discourses on ethnicity/culture and class are inextricably tied.

In the light of the structure chosen for the present dissertation, some preliminary considerations should be made with regard to the concept of ‘class’ and its applicability to a wider analysis. While in the case of ethnicity and gender my primary concern was the idea of ‘deconstruction’ inherent in Bhabha’s notion of «hybridity» and in an anti-essentialist approach drawn from anthropology and gender studies, considering class in more nuanced and non-binary terms comes across as a challenge. This aporia has already been stressed by Amar Acheraïou in his book *Questioning Hybridity, Postcolonialism and Globalization* (2011). As the scholar polemically points out, «[a]s a general pattern, studies examining hybridity in the light of class and race politics are scant in postcolonial studies. Besides, the few works dealing with the issues of class and race are often ignored or marginalized by the high-priests of hybridity discourse in the name of anti-essentialism and emancipation from racial thinking» (2011: 121). Acheraïou thus identifies a gap in postcolonial studies, which, according to his thought, tend to focus on race/ethnicity rather than encompassing the intertwinement between this dimension and class difference. This disregard, as he further elaborates, is hardly accidental and could even «constitute a deliberate strategy of occlusion predicated on theoretical, social, ideological, and political interests» (122). When considering class, it is unthinkable to break free from a binary logic: if the mere opposition between bourgeois and working class is obsolete in relation to contemporaneity, a strong dichotomy is still to be found between «the global poor or dispossessed (both Western and non-Western, from capitalist and non-capitalist countries) and [...] the global rich (multinational corporations, comprador Third World groups, and so on)» (122-123). On an even larger scale, «global wealthy states/global poor countries» can also be identified (123). In line with these observations, Acheraïou concludes that binarism, although it is tendentially conceived as an outdated model of thinking by postcolonial scholars, is «fully alive» and «still constitutes an energizing epistemic tool and organizing principle underpinning our globalized world» (*Ibidem*). A mediation between the notion of hybridity and the evident dichotomy offered by class inequality has been attempted by Shalini Puri. Her arguments draw on the idea of class equality conceived as «‘ [...] part of the unconscious of liberal discourses of hybridity’» (*Ibidem*).

Given these premises, approaching ‘class’ in the same way as ‘ethnicity’ and ‘gender’ would be impossible. Consequently, the main concern of the present chapter is the *interaction*

between the dimensions already taken into consideration rather than ‘class’ in (post)colonial Greenland *per se*. To do so it will be useful to draw from social rather than postcolonial studies, on the basis that – as reminded in chapter 2 – the interaction between ‘ethnicity’ and ‘class’ «has been one of the most enduring to be found in the sociological literature in the field [of race and ethnic relations]» (Mason 1986: 9). In recent years, this interest has been pursued by neo-Marxism, post-structuralism, and intersectionality theories (Murji & Solomos 2014: 12-15) – the latter being an extremely versatile tool whose principles can also be applied to literary investigations. In her introduction to *Att göra klass. Nedslag i svensk samtidsprosa* (2022; *Making Class. A Look at Swedish Contemporary Fiction*), Åsa Arping mentions some of the common elements characterizing both post-structuralism and intersectionality, and specifies that she adopts the latter as a non-systematic approach for her inquiry into the representation of class in Swedish literature. The method chosen by Arping allows her to define ‘class’ through the constant reference to a wider frame of social inequalities: «Genus, ålder, etnicitet och rasifiering ingår som fasetter i det prisma som jag vänder och vrider på, och även om jag dröjer särskilt vid klass, skiftar tonvikten i de olika kapitlen»³⁴⁸ (2022: 14).

These dimensions also interact on multiple levels, as foreshadowed in chapter 2: class inequality, for instance, is one of the factors worth taking into consideration when analyzing the phenomenon of ‘new’ racism, i.e., the discriminating attitude that originates from markers of social difference others than ‘race’(see Loftsdóttir & Jensen 2012: 7). In other cases, belonging to a specific ethnicity – or bearing the morphological traits stereotypically associated with it – may have an influence on one’s educational and working possibilities. In such circumstances, then, class inequality arguably originates from the ethnic/racial element. Interferences between the categories of ‘class’ and ‘gender’ can also be found, and this is especially true with reference to colonial contexts. As reminded by Gwynne and Poon, in fact, colonial enterprises were led by men, and the underlying rhetoric was also strongly gendered (2012: XXV). Consequently, the representatives for the upper classes in the colonies were tendentially European white men, whereas (native) women were often confined to a lower status. Other considerations on the ‘intersections’ between gender and class have been made, for instance, by Foucault and Stoler. The latter, as reminded in chapter 3 (see *supra*, p. 171), commented on the significance of racialized bodies with regard to the production of European

³⁴⁸ «Gender, age, ethnicity, and racialization come across as facets of the prism that I twist and turn, and even though my specific focus is ‘class’, the emphasis shifts throughout the different chapters», my translation.

discourses on sexuality – which identified a ‘bourgeois’ standard of respectability in opposition to a supposed ‘state of nature’ characterizing colonized people.

4.1.1 Class Discourses in Danish Literary Fiction about Greenland

If we narrow our focus to the academic interest in the representation of class in *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, the gap identified by Acheraïou is particularly evident. With the exception of Ole Risak’s *Knud Sønnerby. En kultur-sociologisk analyse* – written, perhaps not surprisingly, in the 1970s, when a new awareness concerning Danish-Greenlandic relations started spreading – class has been essentially overlooked as a category of literary analysis until very recently. Risak applies the notions of ‘bourgeoise’ and ‘proletariat’ to the Greenlandic postcolonial context depicted in Knud Sønnerby’s *De kolde Flammer* and *Grønlandsk Sommer*, and compares this dichotomy to other antithetical categories, such as ‘culture’ vs. ‘nature’, ‘Danes’ vs. ‘Greenlanders’, and ‘man’ vs. ‘woman’. The society described by Sønnerby, according to Risak, betrays a clear distinction between the (Danish) upper class and the (Greenlandic) lower class. Sønnerby’s Greenlandic characters, in particular, always appear in the role of servants: «[...] alle danske hjem har en kivfak, en tjenestepige, og [...] alle grønlandske mænd (med undtagelse af Ringsted) optræder som hjælpere/tjenere for danskerne. Det er ikke forkert at sige, at beskrivelsen i DKF af den måde grønlænderne fungerer på ligner slaveri»³⁴⁹ (1973: 65). In the novels considered by Risak, then, the ethnic and the class-related element come across as tightly related to one another with a limited number of exceptions. Little attention, on the other hand, is given to upper-class Greenlanders – who, as reminded by Hans-Erik Rasmussen in his article *Some Aspects of the Reproduction of the West Greenlandic Upper Social Stratum 1750-1950* (1986), were an essential part of colonial society.

Some observations regarding the overlaps and boundaries between ‘ethnicity’ and ‘class’ in relation to more contemporary works pertaining to *dansk grønlandslitteratur* have been made by Kirsten Thisted in her «*Gi’r du en øl, dansker*». *Kim Leine og de danske stereotyper om Grønland*. Here, the scholar identifies a sort of ‘competition’ between ethnicity and class: «Hvor 1970’ernes marxistisk inspirerede analyse [...] overså eller i hvert fald forsøgte at nedtone de etniske aspekter, synes et værk som *Kalak* således at overse de sociale

³⁴⁹ «[...] every Danish household has a *kivfaq*, and [...] Greenlandic men (with the exception of Ringsted) come across as helpers/servants of the Danes. It is not wrong to say that the descriptions of the Greenlanders’ activities in DKF remind of slavery», my translation.

aspekter, hvorved det etniske helt uantastet fastholdes som demarkationslinje mellem mennesker i Grønland»³⁵⁰ (2011a: 284). The focus on ethnicity is thus associated with a disregard for class-related matters, and it is worth wondering whether Leine's production has remained consistent in this regard and, secondly, whether this same afflatus is shared with Lotte Inuk's and Iben Mondrup's 'Greenlandic' works. These questions are partially answered in Emilie Dybdal and Anders Grønlund's article *Bygder og barakker. Arbejdspladsen som konfliktzone i dansk grønlandslitteratur*. The focus chosen by the scholars, who analyze the representation of workplaces in contemporary Danish fiction about Greenland, allows them to make some considerations on class inequality and its role in the Danish-Greenlandic (post)colonial context. One of the objects of their inquiry is Kim Leine's *Rød mand/Sort mand*, which, according to Dybdal and Grønlund, has some elements in common with Liljensøe's *Barakkerne* as to class-related matters:

Værkernes fortalte tid er [...] vidt forskellig, men præmissen er den samme: Arbejdere sendes nordpå for at etablere 'et nyt Grønland'. Desuden er de udstationerede i begge værker – ganske typisk for den danske grønlandslitteratur – en broget skare: Mens vi i *Barakkerne* læser om underkuede ledere og arbejdsløse håndværkere, møder vi i *Rød mand/Sort mand* alt fra tugthusfanger til den megalomane guvernør Pors. [...] Hos Liljensøe er de fem barakker i Nordhavn og Slottet i Ikatek en slags samfund i samfundet; et mikrokosmos med egne regler, rutiner og begrænset adgang. Det samme gør sig gældende hos Leine, hvor kolonien Godthåb kan ses som én stor arbejdsplads, der står i kontrast til det omkringværende samfund. Mens de indfødte fortrænges til periferien, opfører kolonisatorerne både missionsstue, mandskabshus, bageri og smedje, og de indleder en hverdag centreret om arbejde [...]. På samme vis som i *Barakkerne* skaber denne arbejdsplads [...] et særligt rum, hvor normer, vanlige regler og deslige er suspenderet, og konflikterne blomstrer på tværs af etnicitet og embede.³⁵¹ (Dybdal & Grønlund 2020: 44)

³⁵⁰ «Where the Marxist-inspired analysis of the 1970s [...] overlooked, or at least tried to downplay, the ethnic aspect, a novel like *Kalak* thus seems to overlook the social aspects, whereby the ethnic is maintained as an unspoiled line of demarcation between people in Greenland», my translation. In the 1970s and 1980s, 'class' also played a considerable role as to scholarly literature, for example in the works of Jørgen Viemose and Jens Dahl. The latter, in particular, is interested in Greenland's abrupt passage to an industrialized and capitalistic society, which occurred after the Second World War (see Dahl 1986). This aspect, however, will be overlooked as it is not thematized in the novels that I am taking into consideration.

³⁵¹ The historical time is [...] very different, but the premise is the same: Workers are sent north to establish 'a new Greenland'. Furthermore, both works' expatriates – as is quite typically the case of *dansk grønlandslitteratur* – are a motley crowd: while in *Barakkerne* we read about subjugated leaders and unemployed craftsmen, in *Rød mand/Sort mand* we meet everything from penitentiary inmates to the megalomaniac governor Pors. [...] In Liljensøe's novel, the five barracks in Nordhavn and the Castle in Ikatek are a sort of society within society, a microcosm with its own rules, routines, and limited access. The same applies to Leine's book, where the colony of Godthåb can be seen as one massive workplace that stands in contrast to the surrounding society. While the natives are displaced to the periphery, the colonizers build a mission and a staff house, a bakery, and a forge, and their daily routine is centered on work [...]. Similarly to *Barakkerne*, this workplace [...] creates a special space where norms, usual rules, and the like are suspended, and conflicts flourish across ethnicity and administration», my translation.

Leine's 'class-blindness' stressed by Thisted as to *Kalak* and *Tunu* (2011a) is thus substituted by a growing interest in the representation of social hierarchies in the Greenlandic colonies. Class inequality and the interaction between members of different social strata, in fact, are at the core of the three novels forming Leine's series about the Danish-Greenlandic encounter in different phases of the colonial age. This shift might find an explanation in the attention for the historical verisimilitude – which becomes even more evident after the first volume, *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden* (2012). This award-winning novel, as said, had attracted some harsh criticism because of its 'tendentious' depiction of the colonial context. It is perhaps not casual that, in the afterword to *Rød mand/Sort mand*, Leine addresses the question of historical truth: «Denne bog er en fiktion. Den lægger sig tættere op ad de faktiske historiske begivenheder end *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden* gjorde. Men man bør ikke læse den som en pålidelig historisk skildring. Det er den ikke»³⁵² (Leine 2019b [2018]: 517). The accurate representation of dynamics stemming from class hierarchization, then, could arguably be related to the literary mode chosen by Leine with regard to his trilogy – where the room for subjectivity is more limited than it was in *Kalak*.

Dybdal and Grønlund also briefly consider Mondrup's *Tabita* in the light of class hierarchies, and stress the chasm between the Danish couple formed by Eva and Berthel, on the one hand, and their *kiffaq* Abelone, on the other. The scholars argue that the relationship between these three characters is highly asymmetrical, and that Abelone's evidently subdued position is to be identified as the main cause for Tabita and Vitus' problematic adoption (2020: 45). Class inequality, consequently, emerges as the prime mover of the events narrated in the novel. According to Bodil Skovgaard Nielsen, the same applies to *Vittu*, which also revolves around «den uhellige alliance mellem kolonialisme og klasseforagt»³⁵³ (2023: 9). Nonetheless, it could be worth wondering whether Mondrup – not dissimilarly to Knud Sønderby – makes an equation between 'Greenlandicness' and a lower social status in opposition to 'Danishness' and an upper status. This juxtaposition entails the risk of overlooking some 'grey areas', such as the one constituted by well-to-do Greenlanders. On this note, it could be interesting to consider the following observation made by Hans-Erik Rasmussen with regard to the overlaps of ethnicity and class in colonial Greenland: «Inattention to these processes [of integration and

³⁵² «This book is fiction. It runs closer to actual historical events than its predecessor *The Prophets of Eternal Fjord*. But it should not be read as a reliable historical account. For it is most certainly not» (Leine 2022: 555).

³⁵³ «the unholy alliance between colonialism and class contempt», my translation.

differentiation] could lead, for instance, to the misinterpretation of European dress as an ethnicity idiom, as an indication of “Danishness”, whereas in fact it is a social status idiom, indicating membership with a social group» (1986: 147). The boundaries between ethnicity and class markers, then, are more blurred than a superficial analysis would suggest.

Another question at the core of my inquiry, besides ‘class-blindness’ and the interferences between the categories of ‘class’ and ‘ethnicity’, is how class is ‘made’ in the Greenlandic (post)colonial context. For instance, as reminded in chapter 2, language-related matters are hardly neutral when referring to Greenland (see Gad 2009: 139). While Greenlandic is usually conceived – both on Greenlandic and Danish side – as one of the pivotal ethnic markers for ‘Greenlandicness’, fluency in Danish is rather associated with a greater number of educational and working possibilities (see Terpstra 2015; Gad 2009). Observations about this phenomenon can be made by considering *Godhavn* and *Sultekunstnerinde*, which both give an insight on the Greenlandic school system and on the immediate consequences of the bilingual education offered. Dybdal has briefly considered this aspect in her *Litteraturen rykker nordpå. Om Grønland i 10’ernes danske litteratur*:

Som Rikke Krogh Hansen påpeger i sin læsning af romanen (s. 115), er det først, da børnene starter i skole, at nationalitet bliver en væsentlig faktor. Her inddeles de i grønlandske og danske klasser [...]. Skolen er altså ikke bare et samlingssted eller et centrum for læring [...] en institutionel magtstruktur, der konstruerer sociale skillelinjer. Disse skel mellem dansk og grønlandsk samt gråzonerne imellem fortsætter med at spøge i Godhavn, ikke nødvendigvis som et bærende tema, men som noget lurende, underliggende i fortællingen.³⁵⁴ (2021: 121)

The opposition between Danish and Greenlandic language is also present, albeit in slightly different terms, in Leine’s historical trilogy. Here, the proficiency in Danish as well as in Greenlandic is linked to the possibility of being part of a Greenlandic elite – which tendentially corresponds to the *blanding*-population. The split between two ethnic identities, then, is arguably congruous with having access to some of the privileges of the elite and, at the same time, being exposed to the downsides characterizing the lower social strata.

³⁵⁴ «As pointed out by Rikke Krogh Hansen in her reading of the novel (p. 115), it is only when the children start school that nationality becomes a significant factor. Here they are divided into Greenlandic and Danish classes [...]. The school is thus not just a meeting place or a center for learning, but also [...] an institutional power structure that constructs social dividing lines. These differences between Danish and Greenlandic and the grey areas in between continue to haunt *Godhavn*, not necessarily as a main theme, but as something lurking, underlying the narrative», my translation.

One last element that will be taken into consideration with regard to class-related discourses is the – more or less – direct association between postcolonial Greenland and Greenlanders and a socially disadvantaged position. This stereotypical combination started gaining ground after the modernization and danification years, which, as we have seen, were accompanied by a number of social plagues afflicting Greenland, such as alcoholism, domestic violence, the high suicide rate etc. The growing presence of socially vulnerable Greenlanders on Danish soil (see Terpstra 2015) also contributed to the shaping of this imagery, whose *de facto* marginalization is described, for instance, in Vebæk's *Historien om Katrine*. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that Danish representations of class relations in Greenland tend to focus on this aspect – which, it could be argued, is somewhat expected by the target reader. An example in this respect could be, once again, Mads Peder Nordbo's *Pigen uden hud*. The domestic abuses and various crimes depicted in the novel, in fact, are linked to a specific social context, i.e., that of economically disadvantaged Greenlanders living in crumbling blocks of flats:

«Mange af de familier, der blev flyttet herind til byen [...] kom direkte fra små bygder, og de kunne slet ikke fungere i sådan en lukket lejlighed håbløst langt fra deres fødebygd. [...] De her mennesker var vant til hver eneste dag at kunne være ét med naturen i deres bygd. Det var dér, de levede, fangede deres føde og trak vejret frit. Herinde kunne de ikke ånde. De forstod slet ikke konceptet med at bo i sådan en kasse hævet over jorden. De fleste havde åbne vinduer døgnet rundt, og nogle tændte endda bål i stuerne. De var flygtninge i deres eget land.» [...] «[...] Hvad skete der med blokken?» «Der er mange af de gamle blokke i Nuuk, og de står der stadig, selvom de også er smadrede og utætte. De har alle hver deres nummer, men ikke kæmpen, der lå her. Den hed Blok P. Som havde man lige fra begyndelsen anet, at den ville ende sine dage som et tyngende symbol på Nuuks mentale ar. Den blev revet ned i 2012, så det er ikke længe siden, men nok alligevel små 50 år for sent, vil jeg tro.»³⁵⁵ (Nordbo 2017: 51).

In particular, there seems to be an overlap between a socio-economical condition of detriment and the supposed distress stemming from the forced detachment from the more 'traditional' life

³⁵⁵ «“Many of the families who were moved to Nuuk, [...] came from small villages, and they never settled in the claustrophobic apartment blocks miles from where they were born. [...]. The Inuit were used to being at one with nature in their villages. It was where they lived, where they caught their food, where they could breathe freely. They couldn't breathe here, and the idea of living in a box high above the ground was foreign to them. Most people kept their windows open day and night, and some even lit fires in their living rooms. They were refugees in their own country.” “[...] So what happened to the apartment block?” “Many of the old apartment blocks in Nuuk are still standing, although they're falling apart. They're all numbered, except for the giant that used to be here. It was called Block P, and it became a troubling symbol of Nuuk's problems. It was demolished in 2012, so not all that long ago – but still fifty years too late, in my opinion”» (Nordbo 2018: 49).

led in the villages before the modernization. Also in this case, then, the ethnic element can hardly be discerned from class-related discourses.

Given these premises, the representation of ‘class’ in the works belonging to my corpus will be analyzed in a less systematic fashion than ‘ethnicity’ and ‘gender’. A *fil rouge* characterizing my investigation will be the relational nature of ‘class’, to be intended in a two-fold manner. A first interaction that will be considered is that between Danes and Greenlanders – inevitable when dealing with *dansk grønlandslitteratur* – along with the interference with the categories of ‘ethnicity’ and ‘gender’. My analysis starts with observations regarding the ‘making’ of class in *Sultekunstnerinde* and *Godhavn*: in particular, I will focus on the description of the society inhabited by the children of the Danish *udsendte*, as well as their supposed ‘class-blindness’ stemming from the absence of a class-conscience. Later in my investigation, I will consider another form of ‘class-blindness’, i.e., the direct association between ‘Greenlandicness’ and a lower status or, at least, a certain degree of social vulnerability – which, as anticipated, mirrors the expectations of the generalist Danish reader, who links the Greenlandic context with various social diseases. A less monolithic representation characterizes Leine’s trilogy on colonial Greenland, where the rigid hierarchy of Sukkertoppen, Godthåb, or Sydprøven is challenged either by single individuals or groups, such as the community of the Eternal Fjord.

4.2 *Everyday Life in Postcolonial Greenland: ‘Class-blindness’ in Lotte Inuk’s Sultekunstnerinde and Iben Mondrup’s Godhavn*

The idea of Greenland as a «tilflugssted for utilpassede eksistenser», theorized by Thisted (2003: 38, see *supra*, p. 62, 93, 201), can be arguably applied to class-related discourses. The literary characters come across as outsiders. The protagonist of *Kalak*, for instance, does not fully identify as a Dane and is driven by an existential angst that pushes him further and further away from home. Justine, *Store Malene*’s main character, is also subject to a certain degree of personal irresolution. The search for better *material* opportunities, however, does not seem to find space in their decision to visit (or live in) Greenland. The matter is different in the case of Charlotta’s mother, one of the main figures of *Sultekunstnerinde*.

This character, as seen in chapter 3, stands out as a female migrant – which is somewhat atypical for *dansk grønlandslitteratur*. Furthermore, the woman does not seem to be thriving

economically in Denmark, where she settles for occasional and precarious jobs. Migrating to Greenland, for her, could arguably correspond to the achievement of a higher status, thanks to the peculiarities of the society she inserts herself in. In Greenland, Charlotta's mother makes a living as an employee and a photographer, and her daughter has access to the best educational possibilities thanks to her Danish background. Nonetheless, as we have seen, this aspect does not seem to have a strong impact on Charlotta's self-understanding, since she perceives her 'Danishness' as an obstacle preventing her from being part of an 'elite' among her peers – where this expression is not to be understood in terms of material well-being. Charlotta's peculiar *Weltanschauung*, it could be argued, somewhat undermines the trope consisting in the *tout-court* opposition between 'Danishness'/upper class vs. 'Greenlandicness'/lower class.

Furthermore, the society described in *Sultekunstnerinde* is not that monolithic. The mixed families encountered by the girl are characterized by different degrees of wealth, as testified to by the houses where they live. Charlotta's Greenlandic friend Nico, for instance, lives with his mother and his newly acquired well-off stepfather, allegedly a Dane, in the so-called «Millionærhus», «Millionaire House»:

Nico vil være trommeslager når han bliver stor og har sit eget kæmpe trommesæt stående placeret inde midt i Millionærhusets dagligstue, der er større end begge rum i min og min mors lejlighed [...] tilsammen. Forstærker og højttaleranlæg og mikrofon er også hans; det siges at han kan få hvad han peger på, fordi hans mor og nye millionærfar har dårlig samvittighed over for ham efter skilsmissehistorien. [...] Den kolossale [sic] stue er næsten lutter vindue ud mod bugten og fjeldet i tre forskellige retninger, og man skal passe på hvor man går og at man ingenting vælter, for det meste af hvad der står på borde og reoler og selv midt på gulvet derinde er mange tusinde kroner værd.

Malou og jeg ligger på maven sammen på isbjørneskindet foran trommesættet og drikker Tigerblood og ser på mens drengene øver sig [...]. Nico er stolt af sit hus, han understreger hele tiden at vi skal gøre hvad vi vil der og bare føle os hjemme, han er alligevel kommunist ligesom Martin, siger han, og hans mor er en rigtig bitch, sådan at have giftet sig med en rig idiot kun for pengenes skyld.³⁵⁶ (Inuk 2004: 152)

³⁵⁶ «Nico wants to be a drummer when he grows up and has his own huge drum set standing in the middle of the living room of the Millionaire House, which is bigger than the two rooms in the flat where I and my mother live [...] combined. He also owns the amplifier and loudspeaker system and the microphone; rumor has it that he can get anything he wants because his mother and new millionaire father feel guilty because of the divorce. [...] The colossal living room is almost all windows facing the bay and the mountain in three different directions, and you have to be careful where you walk so as not to knock anything over, because most of the objects on the tables and shelves and even in the middle of the floor are worth many thousands of crowns. Malou and I lie together on our stomachs on the polar bear skin in front of the drum set and drink Tigerblood and watch the boys practice [...]. Nico is proud of his house, he constantly emphasizes that we should do what we want there and just feel at home, he is a communist just like Martin, he says, and his mother is a real bitch, for having married a rich idiot only for the money», my translation.

The economic situation of Nico's family contrasts, for instance, with that of Maliaaraq and Martin. The latter, abandoned by his Icelandic or Faroese father, lives with his single mother and siblings in a tiny house in Myggedalen: «Det er et lille og beskedent hus og ligner faktisk næsten noget nogen selv har bygget af ting de samlede sammen om natten; og det ligger nede i Myggedalen hvor ingen udsendte ellers bor eller fædres»³⁵⁷ (Inuk 2004: 75). The quarter itself where the building is located can be viewed as a status-marker: Myggedalen is an area where only 'real' Greenlanders can be found.³⁵⁸ Furthermore, the architecture of the house, as well as its atmosphere and odor, seem to indicate a disadvantaged position in the matter of material wealth: the inside is impregnated with a smell of «støv, bøger, kaffe, joints, vaskepulver, kattetis, stegefedt og god grønlandsk mad»³⁵⁹ (Inuk 2004: 74) – which the girl perceives as pleasant. This list encompasses contrasting elements, hinting at the neglect that characterizes Martin's place and at its simultaneous romanticization. Keith Gandal, in his *Class Representation in Modern Fiction and Film* (2007) discusses similar processes with reference to 'class' in American literature and cinema, suggesting that poverty is often 'nobilized', i.e., associated with virtuosity and the opportunity to be «in touch with a deeper, truer life» (9). It could be argued, then, that the underclass is also subject to othering dynamics – as happens in the case of ethnicity. The (Eurocentric) 'standard' is to be identified with a middle-class viewpoint, from which these «exploitative [...] fantasies» (6) often originate. An analogous subtext can be detected in *Sultekunstnerinde*, albeit with some specificities stemming from the distinctive qualities of the narrator, a Danish teenager who wishes to fully integrate with her Greenlandic peers. Martin's lifestyle is somewhat idolized by Charlotta, who, after a period spent with her mother in a temporary accommodation, moves to a new flat, «en god stor toværelses med havudsigt i en af byens nyeste boligblokke, Blok 16, oppe på Radiofjeldets top»³⁶⁰ (Inuk 2004: 79). The girl experiences a certain annoyance at the prospect of moving to the Radiofjeldet-area, covered in concrete blocks that she finds «ugly, sad, and a bit threatening», no matter if they are new and equipped with all sorts of comforts – or, perhaps, precisely because of those characteristics (*Ibidem*). Martin, however, reassures her and says

³⁵⁷ «It is a small and modest house and actually almost looks like something someone has built by themselves from things they collected at nighttime; and it is down in Myggedalen, where no *udsendte* live or dare to go», my translation.

³⁵⁸ Martin is defined as an ethnic Greenlandic on the basis of his lifestyle, regardless of the fact that his absent father comes from Northern Europe and that his somatic traits betray a mixed background.

³⁵⁹ «dust, books, coffee, joints, washing powder, cat pee, frying fat, and good Greenlandic food», my translation.

³⁶⁰ «A nice big two-room apartment with a view on the sea in one of the city's newest blocks, Block 16, on the top of the Radiofjeldet», my translation.

that «Radiofjeldet er fuldstændig cool, han har selv flere gode venner der bor i Blok 16 [...], og fyren hans mor ser for tiden står på venteliste til en lejlighed i Blok 17»³⁶¹ (Inuk 2004: 80). Moving to a brand-new residential area that she associates with the presence of other Danish *udsendte* would imply, for Charlotta, a further detachment from her Greenlandic friends and the ‘underground’ environments where they usually hang out. In this regard, it could be argued that Charlotta’s aspiration for a ‘social descent’ is driven by her «desire to be» (or to come across) as a ‘real’ Greenlander; accordingly, there is an association, at least in this case, between ethnicity and class-related behaviors and lifestyles.

Charlotta’s disappointment caused by the absence of Greenlandic classes for Danish children could also be explained in the light of these considerations. As seen, the girl expresses her discontent in acknowledging that the possibility of learning Greenlandic is not contemplated for Danish *udsendte*. The explanations she receives either rely on an ‘cultural’ basis or on practical considerations. Greenlandic is supposedly too complicated for Europeans because of its pronunciation and «fremmedartet grammatik», «alien grammar» (Inuk 2004: 68). Furthermore, fluency in Greenlandic is not viewed as a useful skill since most *udsendte* only stay in Greenland for a limited period of time. Charlotta herself – despite being a teenager and, as such, relatively naïve – is aware of the problem with this system: while describing her peers, she also names the students who are neither fluent in Danish nor in Greenlandic, but enroll in the Danish class at their parents’ initiative. Rumor has it, in fact, that the best teachers and schoolbooks are destined to Danish classes (*Ibidem*). Those who defend the evident disparity marking education in Greenland insist that «[d]et er vigtigt for folks fremtid [...]; alle vigtige uddannelser foregår i Danmark og fremtiden er åbenbart uomtvisteligt dansk»³⁶² (*Ibidem*). There is an explicit mention of the implied hierarchization that this arrangement entails. Danish, then, is not only the ‘language of the colonizer’ *strictu senso* (even though its compartmented diffusion is arguably linked to neocolonial practices), it is also a means through which better life conditions can be obtained. This is in line with Tekke Terpstra’s sociological inquiry on Greenlandic identity, *Inuit Outside the Arctic*. Here, the scholar reminds that «many Greenlanders realize that knowledge of Danish is needed in order to pursue an education» (2015: 60). A possible consequence of this *de facto* ‘diglossia’ is the disregard for the Greenlandic language – which, despite being an identity marker for ‘Greenlandicness’, risks

³⁶¹ «Radiofjeldet is totally cool, he even has some friends who live in Block 16 [...], and the guy his mother is dating now is waiting to be assigned to an apartment in Block 17», my translation.

³⁶² «[I]t’s important for the future of the people [...]; all important education possibilities are in Denmark, and the future is undoubtedly and undeniably Danish», my translation.

losing ground at the detriment of Danish. This phenomenon is also briefly addressed in *Sultekunstnerinde*, where ‘real Greenlanders’ dream of independence and of a wholly Greenlandic nation:

Nico og Miki bliver hånet som forrædere, fordi deres forældre ikke har lært dem at tale familiernes sprog. Når revolutionen kommer, eller blot når Hjemmestyret endelig på fredsommelig vis bliver indført, så skal alle børn lære grønlandsk i skolen og dansk skal ikke længere være obligatorisk, som sædvanligt var jeg for tidligt på færde: Vores årgang vil blive den sidste, der ikke fik mulighed for at lære landets oprindelige sprog fra barnsben. Mig forekommer skolen den sande forræder, jeg håber i mit hjerte at man finder på at gøre et andet og større sprog end mit mikroskopiske modersmål til nødvendig lære efter den reformation: En helt ny nation, der på må og få behersker to sprog, kun et fåtal af verdens befolkning taler eller forstår? Jeg bekymres ved tanken om den store smukke ø der vil flyde langt ud i polarhavet som den ensomme, overdimensionerede isflage den er, og helt forsvinde i mørke og glemsel.³⁶³ (Inuk 2004: 165)

In this passage, the hierarchization between Danish and Greenlandic is somewhat liquidated by Charlotta, who considers them both peripheral languages («to sprog, kun et fåtal af verdens befolkning taler eller forstår»). Fluency in either one of them will not prevent Greenland from sinking into oblivion, i.e., from retaining a marginal position in a globalized world.

A description of the Greenlandic school system in the years around the introduction of Home Rule can also be found in Mondrup’s *Godhavn*, through the eyes of the three narrators. The subject has been briefly touched by Sikke Krogh Hansen in her article *The Danish Child in Greenland: Literary Memoirs in a Postcolonial Perspective* (2016), where she focuses on Bjørk and Knut’s experiences. Schooling, she argues, plays a crucial role in the characters’ self-understanding as ‘Danes’ or, rather, as ‘Greenlanders’:

The friendship between Bjørk and Karline is not described as a Danish-Greenlandic relationship until they begin school, where they are divided into Danish and Greenlandic classes. This division of classes suddenly creates a distance between the two friends and shows how these institutional structures create social differences among the Greenlandic and Danish children at the school. (115)

³⁶³ «Nico and Miki are mocked as traitors because their parents haven’t taught them how to speak the language of their families. When the revolution comes, or when the Home Rule is finally peacefully introduced, all children must learn Greenlandic at school and Danish will no longer be compulsory. As usual I was too early: our cohort will be the last that didn’t get opportunity to learn the Country’s original language from childhood. The school seems to me to be the real traitor, I hope in my heart that they find a way to make a different and bigger language than my microscopic mother tongue compulsory after that reformation. A completely new nation, which may or may not master two languages only a small minority in the world speak or understand? I worry at the thought of the big, beautiful island that will float far out into the Polar Ocean like the lonely, oversized ice flake that it is, and completely disappear into darkness and oblivion», my translation.

Dybdal reprises Hansen's observations, stressing that school, besides playing a social function of gathering, also contributes to the creation of differences within a community, mirroring its underlying power structures (Hansen 2016: 121). The resulting demarcation, I would argue, is not only between Danes and Greenlanders, but also between upper and lower class: the students enrolled in the Danish classes already benefit from better material conditions or, if not, may undergo an otherwise unlikely social ascent. The idea that knowledge of the Danish language and pursuing a Danish education is essential to be part of an 'elite' is also at the core of the notorious and disputed case of the social experiment involving 22 Greenlandic children that took place in the early 1950s. Although this operation entails a degree of violence that does not belong to the partition in Danish and Greenlandic classes, the elemental matrix is arguably the same.

It is worth examining whether this aspect plays a role in Mondrup's *Godhavn* or if, on the contrary, ethnicity and class compete at the expense of the latter – as is often the case in *Sultekunstnerinde*. The two novels share the same genre, as they both are autobiographically inspired, and even focus on similar experiences: as recalled earlier, *Sultekunstnerinde*'s Charlotta describes the houses of her local peers, and this same element can be found in *Godhavn*. Houses are here being considered as an effective marker of material well-being and, for this reason, it is interesting to take into consideration how Bjørk, one of the three siblings at the center of the narration, sees the house of her Greenlandic friend Karline:

Alt i Karlines hjem er anderledes. Bjørk bor i et hus med spidst tag, en stue og et køkken i underetagen, et børneværelse og deres forældres soveværelse i overetagen. Karline bor i et rækkehus, også i to etager, men det er på en måde mere moderne.

Der er så mange ting hjemme hos Karline, og derfor er der hyggeligt. Tingene står i vindueskarmene og på reolerne. De hænger på væggene, alle vegne. Karlines mor syr perler, duge, dukker, kugler, kegler, løbere, skjulere, alt der har en nogenlunde jævn form, kan hun beklæde. [...]

Hos Karline har de en rigtig sofa i stedet for briksen som de har hjemme hos Bjørk. Sofaen er så stor at den fylder det meste af stuen. Selv når Karline og Bjørk ligger i hver sin ende og strækker sig så meget de kan, fylder de den ikke ud. Den er af læder. Puderne har Karlines bedstemor syet af sælskind sat sammen i forskellige former og nuancer af grå og sort.

Der lugter særligt hos Karlines familie. Selv om hendes far ikke længere er fanger, og han derfor mest sidder på sin havestol uden for rækkehusets sydvendte væg og holder øje med bådene der sejler ud og ind af havnen, så lugter der af fangst i huset.³⁶⁴ (Mondrup 2014: 20-21)

³⁶⁴ «Everything is different in Karline's home. Bjørk lives in a house with a pointed roof, a living room and a kitchen downstairs, the children's room, and their parents' bedroom upstairs. Karline lives in a terraced house, also on two floors, but it is somewhat more modern. There are so many objects at Karline's, which is why it is

Considerations on the material well-being of the two families do not find much space in Bjørk's impressions of her friend's home – besides the fact that Karoline's terraced house is «somewhat more modern». The most evident discrepancy between the two houses is the different degree of 'homeliness' they elicit: Karoline's place is full of objects – which, in most cases, have been crafted by her own family members and thus bear a strong identitarian quality. This remark can be interpreted in a twofold manner: on the one hand, Bjørk is likely to be attracted to displays of 'Greenlandicness', since she also feels a connection to that dimension – whereas Knut, as seen in chapter 3, finds it extremely difficult to identify as a 'hybrid'. On the other, the aforementioned extract could also be linked to the condition of precariousness characterizing the life of Danish *udsendte* in Greenland. To them, living overseas is but a temporary solution – which further complicates the desire to fit in, often presented by the *udsendte*'s children. Social groups in post-colonial Greenland are ever-changing due to this phenomenon, at the core of both *Sultekunstnerinde* and *Godhavn*. Thisted, in a review of the latter, describes it in these terms:

De tilrejsende danskere er i byen og er der ikke rigtig alligevel, for uanset hvor godt de integrerer sig, orienterer de sig stadig hele tiden mod Danmark. Hver sommer rejser de væk, og når der opstår problemer, rejser de deres vej for godt. Når deres børn bliver store og for alvor skal finde ud af, hvem de er, sendes de til Danmark. De danske børn lever med tab i et omfang, som deres forældre næppe kan forstå. Tabet af de grønlandske venner, når skolesystemet skiller dem ad, tabet af bedstevennen, som flytter til Danmark, tabet af Grønland, når de sendes til Danmark, fornemmelsen af aldrig rigtig at høre til. De danske børn opvokser i Grønland, fjeldet og havet er præget på deres krop og sjæl – men er Grønland deres land?³⁶⁵ (Thisted 2014b)

cozy. Objects on the windowsills and on the shelves. Hanging on the walls, everywhere. Karline's mother sews beads, tablecloths, dolls, balls, cones, runners, hides, anything that has a fairly even shape, she can dress. [...] At Karline's, they have a real sofa instead of the cot that they have at Bjørk's. The sofa is so large that it takes up most of the living room. Even when Karline and Bjørk lie at opposite ends and stretch as much as they can, they don't fill it up. It's made of leather. The cushions have been sewn by Karline's grandmother from sealskin and put together in different shapes and shades of gray and black. There is a characteristic smell in Karline's family. Even though her father is no longer a hunter, and therefore mostly sits in his garden chair outside the south-facing wall of the terraced house and keeps an eye on the boats sailing in and out of the harbor, the house smells of wild game», my translation.

³⁶⁵ «The visiting Danes are in the city and aren't really there anyway: no matter how well they integrate, they still orient themselves all the time towards Denmark. Every summer they travel away, and when trouble arises, they leave Greenland for good. When their children grow up and really need to find out who they are, they are sent to Denmark. The Danish children live with loss to an extent that their parents can hardly understand. The loss of the Greenlandic friends when the school system separates them, the loss of the best friend who moves to Denmark, the loss of Greenland when they are sent to Denmark, the feeling of never really belonging. The Danish children grow up in Greenland, the mountains and the sea are imprinted on their body and soul – but is Greenland their country?», my translation.

Given the impermanence of their condition, the Danes' houses do not necessarily mirror the possible material well-being of their inhabitants. What accommodations for Danes in Greenland typically lack, as in the case of Charlotta's house in *Sultekunstnerinde*, is the feeling of 'homeliness', which is a class-crossing category and can therefore be detected in the most diverse residences. However, in both *Sultekunstnerinde* and *Godhavn*, this characteristic is associated with an ethnic component: Martin's and Karline's houses come across as cozy and 'animated' because they are not temporary accommodations, and they are furnished and decorated with clearly recognizable Greenlandic elements. Similarly, it could be argued, Bjørk is somewhat jealous of her friend and Greenlandic peers in «their fine clothes» (Mondrup 2014: 22). The clothes' value, however, does not stem from their price or quality: «Karline og alle de andre børn har deres fine tøj på; dem der har nogen i familien som kan sy selv, har festdragter og kamikker»³⁶⁶ (*Ibidem*). The value is rather given, once again, by their function as ethnic markers: those who wear them are identified as 'real Greenlanders', a category to which the children of Danish *udsendte* only partially belong. In the hierarchization conceived by these children, 'Greenlandicness' is the most desirable condition – regardless of the fact that wearing home-sewn clothes may be linked to a certain degree of poverty. The 'class-blindness' emerging from these passages could find an explanation in the fact that the beholders are not adults and therefore lack class conscience. Nonetheless, the romanticizing tendency sometimes occurring in *Sultekunstnerinde* with regard to indigence – for instance in the passages: «Og engang vil jeg leve som en fattig forfatter i Paris» (Inuk 2004: 203)³⁶⁷ and «Men hvem vil alligevel ikke også gerne være lidt dekadent en gang imellem!»³⁶⁸ (Inuk 2004: 183) – does not seem to take up much space in *Godhavn*.

In *Store Malene*, as seen, the trope of hunting/traditional Greenlandic food offers cause for reflection on all the levels that are being analyzed in the present dissertation, i.e., ethnicity, gender, and class.³⁶⁹ In Mondrup's partly autofictional novel, *Godhavn*, hunting is addressed

³⁶⁶ «Karline and all the other children are wearing their nice clothes; those who have someone in the family who can sew have festive costumes and *kamiks*», my translation.

³⁶⁷ «And one day I want to live as a poor writer in Paris», my translation.

³⁶⁸ «But who doesn't want to be a little decadent once in a while!», my translation.

³⁶⁹ As illustrated in chapter 2, Danish approaches to hunting can be multi-faceted: this activity can either be carried out by Danes who bear in mind the cultural significance it has to Greenlanders – for instance to prove that they are willing to integrate in Greenlandic society – or in the guise of an 'Arctic safari'. The latter case can be viewed as a display of wealth, a luxurious once-in-a-lifetime experience that can only be made on Greenlandic soil. Eating freshly hunted food, then, acquires a different meaning in accordance with these respective presuppositions: Greenlandic traditional food can either be viewed as an integration tool, for instance in the case of *Kalak's* Kim, or as part of a bigger 'exotic' (and often repulsive) experience. In the case of *Store Malene*, there is a strong predominance of the latter component. Jesper, Mette, and Justine embark on a sailing trip with Joorut to touch

mostly as an identity marker: those who perform it successfully (Hilde and her father, for instance) have also managed to assimilate into ‘Greenlandicness’. The same cannot be said with regard to Knut, who despises the idea of killing animals and, parallelly, finds it difficult to navigate between the dimensions of ‘Danishness’ and ‘Greenlandicness’. In the case of *Godhavn*, then, hunting does not seem to bear any class-related connotation, only an ethnic one. Furthermore, as seen in chapter 3, this subject lends itself to analogies with the sphere of sexuality, given the unequal power relationships that it presupposes and the stereotypical roles attributes to masculinity and femininity. While the trope also expands towards ‘class’ in *Store Malene*, *Godhavn* rather seems to overlook the matter. A possible reason can be identified in the fact that the point of view, as happens in *Sultekunstnerinde*, is that of characters who tendentially do not have a class conscience: children. Different material conditions characterizing Danes and Greenlanders cohabiting in the former colonies may be occasionally grasped, but the gap is only intuitively aimed at rather than problematized. In this regard, a good example would this dialogue between Bjørk, the youngest of *Godhavn*’s protagonists, and her father. They are discussing the fact that Bjørk’s classmate Jakob and his family have left Greenland for good, probably because they could not fit in:

Bjørks far ved at Jakobs far har sagt op på fiskefabrikken før tid, han er blevet uvenner med dem som bestemmer over fabrikken. – Og nu har han smidt alt hvad han havde i hænderne. – Men er han ikke direktøren? spørger Bjørk, – for så er det da ham som bestemmer? Sådan er det åbenbart ikke; fabrikken er ejet af nogle helt andre, og nu er der ingen chef til at holde øje med at tingene foregår på den rigtige måde, det er noget skidt; fabrikken kan ikke bare lukke. Bjørks far tænker selv på at søge arbejde dernede. – Altså ikke som rejepiller, griner han, – som direktør. Han er træt af at være hos kommunen, der er altid problemer, selv om man er ansat til at lave en bestemt ting, skal man hele tiden lave tusind andre fordi folk ikke kommer på arbejde, eller fordi der bare ikke er andre til at gøre det. – Jeg er tusindkunstner, siger han og sukker, – men jeg må jo kunne lide det.³⁷⁰ (Mondrup 2014: 49-50)

with hand ‘Greenlandicness’ as spectators and, presumably, to get back to Denmark with new experiences to share. However, as already reminded, Mette is disgusted by the actions performed by Joorut, who shoots and slaughters a seal, to the point that she starts giving signs of a nervous breakdown (Mondrup 2013: 112-114). Justine, on the other hand, does her best to impress the Greenlanders – as if she wanted to suggest that she is actually trying to integrate or, at least, showing respect for Greenlandic culture. According to my reading, however, she does not succeed in fully detaching herself from the petty Danish couple and their behavior.

³⁷⁰ «Bjørk’s father knows that Jakob’s father has resigned prematurely from the fish factory, he’s not friends anymore with those in charge. – And now he has thrown away everything he had in his hands. – But isn’t he the director? Bjørk asks, – the one in charge? This is obviously not the case; the factory is owned by completely different people, and now there is no boss to keep an eye on things being done in the right way, that’s not good; the factory cannot simply close. Bjørk’s father is even thinking of working down there. – Not to pill shrimps, then, he laughs, – as the director. He is tired of working at the municipality, there are always problems, even if you are employed to do a certain thing, you constantly have to do a thousand others because people don’t come to work

This passage clearly shows that Bjørk is not aware of the dynamics at the fish factory: she is convinced that Jakob's father, who has resigned prematurely, must have been in charge of the place – probably because he is a Dane. There might be, then, an intuitive association between 'Danishness' and the access to more prestigious positions. Her father, however, informs the girl of the fact that, if he wanted to give up his job at the municipality, he would work at the factory as director rather than common worker – which was probably the case of Jakob's father. As an adult, he is familiar with class difference within the community of the Danish *udsendte*. The reader learns what Bjørk's father does for a living in the section of the novel revolving around Knut, analyzed in chapter 3. The boy views his father as a walking contradiction because of his 'feral' qualities coexisting along with his respectable office job at the municipality:

Når hans far ikke er fanger og går rundt i kamikker og bukser med blodpletter på, ser han anderledes ud; man skulle næsten tro at han var ligesom Renés far, en helt almindelig mand i almindeligt tøj. Så arbejder han på kommunen i den afdeling som sørger for bygningerne i byen, skolen og sygehuset, vejene, skrald; han er næsten en anden slags menneske. Og alligevel er han den samme.³⁷¹ (Mondrup 2014: 107)

It is interesting to note that his father's administrative job is, at least from Knut's perspective, irreconcilable with the man's «instinct of a killer» (Mondrup 2014: 121). As known, bestiality – to be intended as closeness to a 'state of nature' – is stereotypically associated to 'Greenlandicness' in Danish literary fiction about Greenland, perhaps with the exception of *expeditionslitteratur*. Another Danish stereotype draws on the direct correlation between postcolonial Greenland and social disadvantage. The ethnic element is also somewhat related considering that, according to this thought, Greenland has been enduring systemic problems (alcoholism, domestic violence, high suicide rate) since the passage from a traditional to a more 'modern' society, concurrently with the formal decolonization in 1953. «In most of these representations», according to Thisted (2012: 281), «the Greenlanders are depicted as caught within the so-called “fatal impact” or “pure or poor” syndrome, assumed to be “lost in translation” between tradition and modernity, always assumed to be the victims of modernity rather than producers of it”». In the aforementioned extract from *Godhavn*, however, the

or because there is simply no one else to do that. – I'm good at doing many things, he says and sighs, – but I have to like it», my translation.

³⁷¹ «When his father is not hunting and walking around in his *kamik* and bloodstained pants, he looks different. One would almost think he was like René's father, a completely ordinary man in ordinary clothes. Then he works at the municipality in the department that takes care of the buildings in the city, the school and the hospital, the roads, garbage; he is almost a different kind of person. And yet he is the same», my translation.

prejudice regarding the incompatibility between ‘Greenlandicness’ and ‘civilization’ is twisted, since that same stereotypical contradiction is embodied by a Danish character trying to conform to ‘Greenlandicness’ rather than by a Greenlander. In the case of Knut’s father, Greenlandic identity is rather *performed* than owned, and the employment of a similar non-essentialist conception of identity also leads to the reversal of a class-related trope: his job at the municipality does not suit him because he is a ‘savage’, not a Greenlander. There lacks an equation between these two attributes. On the other hand, however, it could be argued that the novel, as happens in the case of *Tabita* (and *Vittu*), does not offer a varied representation of Greenlanders in terms of social strata.

4.3 Narratives on Social Vulnerability: Interferences between ‘Ethnicity’ and ‘Class’ in *Tabita*

Class-related matters emerge more clearly in Mondrup’s *Tabita* – perhaps also due to the fact that the narration unfolds mostly through the points of view of adult characters, be they Danish or Greenlandic. The dichotomy ‘Danishness’ vs. ‘Greenlandicness’ is arguably paralleled with an opposition between material wealth and indigence – respectively embodied by the Danish and the Greenlandic characters in the novel. This direct association could be considered another specific form of ‘class-blindness’, since it does not take into consideration grey areas – such as, for instance, wealthy (or at least middle-class) Greenlanders. Abelone, a *kiffaq* and a single mother, finds her counterpart in Eva and Berthel, whose advantage in terms of economic wealth contributes to leading to *Tabita* and *Vitus*’ adoption. The children’s biological mother, as observed in chapter 3, is neither part of a nuclear family – a social micro-structure associated with middle-class values (see Stoler 1995) – nor can offer her children a better life because of her modest income and scarce culture. The promise of a ‘social ascent’, then, has a direct influence on *Tabita* and *Vitus*’ fate. It is impossible not to think again about Charlotta’s consideration, in *Sultekunstnerinde*, according to which «the future is undoubtedly and undeniably Danish» (Inuk 2004: 68). In *Tabita*, the linguistic component also plays a major role, although the focus is not on the repartition between Danish and Greenlandic classes; the two native children must undergo a forced ‘linguistic passing’ (see chapter 2) in order to be accepted by their new family and within the Danish environment. In this case, accessing better life conditions is accompanied by a form of cultural violence – which, albeit more subtle, is also present in the Greenlandic school system. There is a clear repartition, then, between

oppositional categories, much more than in the two novels that have been considered so far, since a similar contrast is also to be found with regard of class. It is worth wondering whether this partition somewhat echoes the expectations of the generalist Danish reader approaching a work set in Greenland. As stressed throughout the whole dissertation, the modernization policies introduced between the *ligestilling* and Home Rule indirectly triggered several social problems – and, with them, stereotypes on Danish side. These preconceptions, as highlighted by Tekke Terpstra, have often been fueled by the presence of socially disadvantaged Greenlanders on Danish soil (2015: 5-6). In this regard, works like *Tabita* probably contribute to the sedimentation of these beliefs – not dissimilarly to what happens in relation to ethnicity: the reader expects a literary encounter with ‘Greenlandicness’ and social disease, and he finds it. Hauge had stressed a similar phenomenon with regard to *Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne*’s notorious passage on the Greenlandic words for ‘snow’, even though he concentrates on the irony of the operation led by Høeg (see *supra*, p. 112).

In *Tabita*, the class component is also present in the affair between Abelone and Berthel, whose unequal power dynamics are also influenced by ethnicity and gender, as already observed. Being a *kiffaq*, a housekeeper, Abelone is somewhat part of Eva and Berthel’s private life, although as a beholder, and fills the same domestic spaces as their Danish employers. In this regard, it is interesting to consider the paragraph describing the moment in which Abelone gives birth to Vitus, during her duty «i handelsbestyrerens hus», «in the trade manager’s house» (Mondrup 2020: 20):

Med fødderne fladt i badeværelsesgulvet griber hun fat i badekarret og behersker den stigende pressetrang, nu sker det, det, der skal ske, i dette rum, i handelsbestyrerens hus, hvor hun er kiffaq. En sær fryd fylder hende ved tanken, en lyst, som ikke har med pressetrang at gøre, men med trangen til at fylde dette hus, ligesom hendes underliv fyldes ud af noget stort og varmt, noget større end hensynet til fornuft og orden: barnet, som udvider hende til bristepunktet og trykker mod hendes ryggrad som for at sprænge hende indefra. [...]

Abelone kigger forskrækket op på fru Eva, som står i døren med frakken på og ser lige så forskrækket ned på hende.

«Berthel, skynd dig og kom!»

Et øjeblik efter dukker handelsbestyreren op.

«Jeg sagde jo, der var noget galt. Nej, kig den anden vej. Jeg tror, Abi har født midt på gulvet.»

Abelone forsøger at komme op på knæ, men hendes ben giver efter, og hun ryger på enden.

Hr. Berthel skubber sin kone til side.

«Det var da et aparte sted at føde, Abelone. Kunne du ikke have tænkt dig at hente jordemoderen, ja, undskyld, det kan jo være farligt.»

Fru Eva kigger frem over hans skulder.

«Måske skulle vi hente hende nu?»

«Det er der ikke tid til.»
 «Hun kan da ikke sidde sådan dér.»
 «Det var ikke meningen,» siger Abelone svømmelt. «Undskyld.»
 «Hvad siger hun?»
 «Hun siger undskyld.»
 Hr. Berthel sukker og klapper Abelone på hovedet.
 «Du skal ikke undskylde. Du havde vel ikke planlagt at gøre det her.»³⁷² (Mondrup 2020: 20-21)

Class-related matters emerge in this paragraph on a variety of levels: Abelone's subdued position can already be grasped from the fear caused by the act of giving birth, a deeply intimate act usually testified to only by the closest relatives, in the foreign house *par excellence*, which belongs to her employers. Although they display benevolence and understanding, Eva and Berthel come across as slightly condescending – and this is especially true with regard to the former, whose visible shock is caused by the image of Abelone lying on the floor. The bourgeois domestic quiet is disturbed for several reasons: someone else's sexuality and corporeity enter a respectable middle-class home. The alienness is even more palpable if we consider that Abelone is also a Greenlander belonging to the lowest social stratum. Furthermore, as the reader finds out later in the narration, the new-born Vitus has been conceived by the housekeeper and her employer, who have been having an affair for some time; in the light of this information, Berthel's comments («Det var da et aparte sted at føde») acquire an evident hypocritical quality. It is also interesting to note that Abelone seems to consider Vitus's birth in terms of a spatial 'expansion': «A strange joy fills her at the thought, a desire that has nothing to do with the urge to push, but with the urge to fill this house». Along with the contractions, Abelone experiences a strong desire to 'fill up the house', a metaphor that can also bear some significance in relation to discourses on class: it is possible that she views her

³⁷² «With her feet pressing on the bathroom floor, she grabs the bathtub and controls the rising urge to push, now what happens, what has to happen, happens in this room, in the house of the trade manager, where she is *kiffaq*. A strange joy fills her at the thought, a desire that has nothing to do with the urge to push, but with the urge to fill this house, just as her abdomen is filled with something big and warm, something bigger than consideration for reason and order: the child, who is expanding her to breaking point and pushing against her spine as if to burst her from within. [...] Abelone looks up in shock at Mrs. Eva, who is standing in the doorway with her coat on and looks down at her just as startled. "Berthel, hurry up and come!" A moment later the trade manager appears. "I said there was something wrong. No, look the other way. I think Abi gave birth in the middle of the floor." Abelone tries to get up on her knees, but her legs give way, and she ends up falling. Mr. Berthel pushes his wife aside. "It is a peculiar place to give birth, Abelone. Didn't you think to tell the midwife, yes, sorry, it could be dangerous." Mrs. Eva looks forward over his shoulder. "Perhaps we should fetch her up now?" "There is no time for that." "She can't stay there like that." "I didn't mean to," Abelone says, giddily. "Sorry." "What's she saying?" "She says sorry." Mr. Berthel sighs and pats Abelone on the head. "No need to not apologize. I guess you didn't plan to do it here.", my translation.

relationship with Berthel, as well as its concrete outcome, as a means to gain access to better material conditions – perhaps even ‘usurping’ his wife, Eva.

Such dynamics were not uncommon in the decades following Greenland’s formal decolonization, and have also been thematized, as already mentioned, in literary (Danish and Greenlandic) fiction. Abelone’s possible hopes for a better future, however, only concretize in the case of her children, whose ambiguous adoption is considered an act of benevolence in spite of the implicit violence entailed in such an operation: «Jeg kan ikke fortælle dig, hvor mange børn jeg har set gå til. Vi bygger børnehjem og gør ved, men det er endeløst. Der er så mange børn, Eva, som ikke har noget sted at bo»³⁷³ (Mondrup 2020: 113). This rhetoric of self-absolution, although it overlaps with the idea of the ‘white savior’, also encompasses a subtext pertaining to class: the nurse, Louise, who pronounces the aforementioned quote in an attempt to persuade Eva to adopt Tabita and Vitus without remorse, pathetically insists on the alleged poverty and social disease faced by most Greenlandic children. There seems to be an equation, then, between these conditions and ‘Greenlandicness’ as a whole. Nonetheless, a more attentive reading could lead us to the conclusion that Louise is consciously making a simplification. The woman, in fact, has acquired a significant knowledge regarding Greenlandic society and its intrinsic diversity during her many years outside of Denmark: «Frk. Louise har været mange år i Grønland, tidligere på sygehuset i Julianehåb, men er flyttet til Upernavik af årsager, hun ikke selv taler om. Hun har været i forhold med en af de lokale dernede, og det endte ulykkeligt, ved hr. Berthel. «En grønlænder?» «En grønlænder, ja. Vist en politiker, i hvert fald ikke en helt almindelig mand»³⁷⁴ (Mondrup 2020: 99-100). Allegedly, she has had a relationship with a man pertaining to the Greenlandic elite, otherwise not mentioned in the novel. This configuration is mostly unknown in *dansk grønlandslitteratur*, as seen in chapter 3. Relationships between Danish men and Greenlandic women, particularly common «during the years of high Danish presence in Greenland (1970-95)» (Terpstra 2015: 78) constitute the most thematized type of mixed liaison in *dansk grønlandslitteratur*. Sven Holm and Kim Leine, for instance, both focused on the triangulation ‘Danish men’/‘Greenlandic men’/‘(Greenlandic) women’ – *de facto* overlooking the category of Danish women and the possible romantic interactions with Greenlandic men. In *Tabita*, this subtext is only briefly mentioned and does not lead to further

³⁷³ «I can’t tell you how many ruined kids I’ve seen. We build institutions for children, and we take care of them, but it’s an endless story. There are so many children, Eva, who don’t have a place to stay», my translation.

³⁷⁴ «Ms. Louise has been in Greenland for many years, previously at the hospital in Julianehåb, but has moved to Upernavik for reasons she does not talk about. She has been in a relationship with one of the locals down there, and it ended unhappily, according to Mr. Berthel. “A Greenlander?” “A Greenlandic, yes. Apparently, a politician, not an ordinary man, anyways”», my translation.

reflections on the matter nor on the fact that a (Danish) nurse has had a relationship with a (Greenlandic) politician – whose gap in terms of class difference is self-evident.

Mondrup is rather more interested in drawing an evident contrast between Abelone, on the one side, and Eva and Berthel, on the other. In the section of the novel revolving around Tabita and Vitus's mother, Abelone is perfectly aware of her inferior condition in terms of material wealth and power – and this awareness finds its expression, for instance, in the ever-occurring use of the appellatives «hr.» and «fru» («mr.» and «mrs.») respectively with regard to Berthel and Eva. In a scene of *Tabita*, Abelone rests on the Danish couple's sofa, and dreams of detaching from 'Greenlandicness' and everything that comes with it – which arguably suggests a desire to profit from the same privileges belonging to Berthel and Eva:

Abelone ligger på hr. Berthels sofa med hænderne foldet over sin bløde mave. Egentlig bør hun sætte sig op og bringe sig i orden. Men lige nu vil hun være en lydig kiffaq og lystre fru Eva, og fruena har sagt, hun skal hvile sig. Desuden har hun det behageligt. Hun har ikke ligget på sofaen før, men hun har siddet der sammen med hr. Berthel, når han lægger kabale eller laver regnskab. Når hun stiller kaffen ind til ham, og han rykker til side og siger: «Sæt dig. Mon du kender disse varer? Det er ikke bare kaffe og tobak som i gamle dage, men luksusvarer.»

[...]

Abelone er så mæt, hun er så varm. Hun sender en tanke hjem til Rosine, og hvad ville hun ikke tænke, hvis hun så hende ligge her? Hun ville ikke tro sine egne øjne. Hun ville blive forarget og skræmt over, at Abelone turde tro, det overhovedet var muligt at ligge sådan i en danskers hjem på en danskers fuldstændig umagelige højryggede sofa. Hun ville frygte den straf, hendes datter gjorde sig fortjent til, og grue for, at ulykken skulle gribe om sig, at den skulle falde tilbage på Rosine selv. Men snart efter ville hun blive fascineret og bemærke, at Abelone, hendes Abi, var som en dansker, noget, der heller aldrig vil kunne lade sig gøre, men som ikke desto mindre lod sig gøre lige nu, og nu, hvor det var sådan, var det måske alligevel temmelig godt.³⁷⁵ (Mondrup 2020: 40-42)

Abelone is here occupying a space usually precluded to her – and she does so solicited by Eva, who gave her exceptional permission to sit there and rest, i.e., to behave like a mistress rather than a *kiffaq*. Berthel, the trade manager, entertains the woman by mentioning what kinds of

³⁷⁵ «Abelone is lying on Mr. Berthel's couch with her hands folded over her soft stomach. As a matter of fact, she should sit up and sort herself out. But right now she wants to be an obedient kiffaq and please Mrs. Eva, and Mrs. has said she must rest. Besides, she is comfortable. She has not lain on the sofa before, but she has sat there with Mr. Berthel when he plays solitaire or does the accounts. When she sets the coffee for him, and he moves aside and says: "Sit. Do you know these items? It's not just coffee and tobacco like in the old days, but luxury goods". [...] Abelone is so full, she is so hot. She sends a thought home to Rosine, and what wouldn't she think if she saw her lying here? She wouldn't believe her eyes. She would be outraged and horrified that Abelone dared to believe that it was even possible to lie like that in a Dane's home on a Dane's completely impractical high-back sofa. She would fear the punishment her daughter deserved, and dread that misfortune should overtake her, that it should fall back on Rosine herself. But soon after she would be fascinated and notice that Abelone, her Abi, was like a Dane, something that would never be possible either, but was nevertheless possible right now, and now that it was like this, maybe it was pretty good after all», my translation.

goods are imported from Denmark: he treats her as an equal, the social barriers between them are temporarily non-existent. However, both are aware of the fact that they are playing a game, a mere simulation of factual reality. An aspect that strikes the reader is the *de facto* equation between (material) lifestyle and ethnic identity. Rosine, if she saw Abelone, would reproach her daughter because she is behaving like a Dane: «Hun ville blive forarget og skræmt over, at Abelone turde tro, det overhovedet var muligt at ligge sådan i en danskers hjem på en danskers fuldstændig umagelige højryggede sofa». Based on this quote, however, we can conclude that the boundaries broken by Abelone are more class-related than ethnic: she ‘invades’ the Danish trade manager’s house (and even his sofa), almost dethroning his wife. This aspiration for a social ascent is but a fantasy, and this becomes clear when we learn of Abelone and Berthel’s affair, which leads to nowhere.

As specified earlier, Tabita’s social position and possibilities somewhat meet the expectations of the generalist Danish reader fantasizing about Greenland. Danish preconceptions regarding social conditions in Greenland, however, are also briefly thematized in the section of the novel revolving around Tabita and Vitus’s upbringing in Denmark – which may indicate that Mondrup is aware of the simplification operated. This awareness emerges, for instance, in a scene including Eva and her sister Ingrid, who attempts to make hypothesis with regard to the children’s biological parents:

«Han er da så usædvanligt sød,» siger Ingrid. «Og sikke lys han er. Man skulle tro, dine børn havde forskellige mødre.»
 «Mange af dem ser sådan ud.»
 «Det forestiller man sig ikke.»
 «Det ligger i deres gener. Man siger, det er på grund af hvalfangerne. De har muntret sig med grønlænderpigerne og har sået deres sæd.»
 «Det burde de holde sig for gode til, pigerne altså. Gør de stadig sådan noget?»
 «Det er mest arbejdsmændene, de løber efter nu. De forkæler pigerne med øl og cigaretter, og så kommer der små børn ud i den anden ende. Vi kalder dem barakpiger.»
 «Er deres mor sådan én?»
 «Ja, man er jo ikke glad for at indrømme det.»
 «Det er der ingen skam i. Børnene er jo altid uskyldige.»³⁷⁶ (Mondrup 2020: 152)

³⁷⁶ «“He’s so exceptionally sweet,” Ingrid says. “And look at how light he is. You would think your children had different mothers.” “Many of them look like that.” “You wouldn’t think that.” “It’s in their genes. They say it’s because of the whalers. They have entertained themselves with the Greenlandic girls and have sown their seed.” “They should think better of themselves, those girls. Do they still do that sort of thing?” “It’s mostly the workers they’re after now. They spoil the girls with beers and cigarettes, and then small children come out at the other end. We call them barrack girls.” “Is their mother like that?” “Yes, I’m not happy to admit it.” “There’s no shame in that. Children are always innocent.”», my translation.

Ingrid, who has never set foot on Greenlandic soil, hypothesizes that Tabita and Vitus's mother might belong to a socially disadvantaged group, i.e., that of Greenlandic women or girls who sleep with Danish men with the implicit aim to gain material benefits from them. According to the information reported by Eva, these underclass girls – indigent and unmannered – entertain utilitarian relationships with European men also belonging to lower classes, such as whale hunters and craftsmen. The idea that a Greenlandic woman might have an affair with a more influential man, such as Berthel, is categorically excluded by Eva, who does not even take it into consideration. In the light of this observation, the passage where Eva confronts her husband with regard to the liaison to Abalone acquires a new significance: the repulsion experienced by Berthel during the intercourses with his *kiffaq* could also be traced back (Mondrup 2020: 214) to the shame deriving from the idea that, in doing so, he has 'lowered' himself. Furthermore, it should be noted that the blame for the birth of illegitimate children falls on the Greenlandic mothers rather than on the Danish men who impregnated them – often with the lure of more or less immediate compensations. The unequal power dynamics between these groups are completely ignored by the two women, absorbed in their self-understanding of superiority and respectability. As mentioned extensively in chapter 3, sexuality also plays a part with regard to the latter, since the middle-class institution of the nuclear family aims at 'controlling' the intimate sphere in accordance with non-written rules – which concern, among other things, monogamy, or conceiving children within marriage. In this sense, illegitimate children such as Tabita and Vitus are utterly alien to *bourgeois* norms, and their adoption could be regarded as an attempt to 'incorporate' them into society. Parallel to the children's 'danification', then, the reader assists to their insertion in a (Danish) middle-class context. Furthermore, it could be argued, the tendency to normativity pertaining to Eva and Berthel's *Weltanschauung* strongly contrasts with a stereotyped vision of Greenlandic society, regardless of the modernization policies implemented: rules and regulations are at the basis of life in Denmark, whereas Greenland and Greenlanders still do not seem to have detached from an alleged 'state of nature'. This *topos* – which, broadly speaking, can also be applied to discourses on class – is certainly not new to *dansk grønlandslitteratur* and to Mondrup's fiction about Greenland. One need only remember Jesper's considerations on 'freedom' in Greenland, in the novel *Store Malene* (Mondrup 2013: 37-38, see *supra*, p. 124). Therefore, in this case – although, as seen, her literary texts are not immune to a certain degree of essentialism – Mondrup uses literature to criticize Danish preconceptions on Greenlandic society.

4.4 Rigid Hierarchies and their Overcoming: 'Class-Passings' and Grey Areas in Leine's Trilogy about Colonial Greenland

While in novels like *Tabita* and *Store Malene* there is an evident demarcation between 'Danishness' and 'Greenlandicness' and, at the same time, upper and lower class, Kim Leine's trilogy about colonial Greenland – formed by the books *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden*, *Rød mand/Sort mand*, and *Efter åndemaneren* – offers a more varied picture. As in the case of ethnicity (and gender), the author also focuses on 'grey areas' rather than on irreducible binarisms. The complexity characterizing the colonies is introduced, for instance, through the figures of Greenlandic *kateketer* («catechists»), such as Bertel Jensen from *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden*, or Hanseraaq from *Efter åndemaneren*.

A more precise idea of the hierarchization characterizing life in the colonies is given in the former novel, shortly after the figure of Bertel makes his first appearance. Here, the reader is confronted with all the different social strata constituting the small society all the characters live in:

Sammen med Bertel står han uden for missionshuset og ser mandskabet komme gående nede fra havnen; smeden, den nye bødker og tømrer der ankom med en hvalfanger i sommer, betjentene, handelsforvalteren, alle med huen i hånden til ære for madam Kragstedt, kolonibestyrerens kone, der står i døren til kolonihuset og tager imod, bleg og stiv. De standser på trappen, bukker dybt for madammen, modtager et kort nik til svar og går indenfor. Falck får ondt af hende. Han ved at Kragstedt insisterer på at hun opretholder rollen som koloniens førstedame, og han ved at hun ville gøre hvad som helst for at slippe for den.

Efter det danske mandskab kommer de grønlandske betjente og kiffakker. De stiller sig med huerne i hånden nede for trappen. Sammen med sin tjenestepige går madam Kragstedt ned til dem og øser lidt grød op til dem. De slynger maden i sig, så bukker de ydmygt og trækker sig tilbage. De to kvinder forsvinder ind i huset igen. Falck ser døren lukke sig bag madammen. Han synker sit mundvand.³⁷⁷ (Leine 2021a [2012]: 128-129)

³⁷⁷ «Together with Bertel he stands outside the Mission house and observes the crew come walking up from the harbour: the smith, the new cooper and carpenter, who came with a whaling ship in the summer, the constables, the Trader's overseer, all cap in hand to honour Madame Kragstedt, the colony manager's wife, who stands, pale and stiff, in the doorway to bid them welcome. They stand on the step and bow deeply, receive a curt nod in return and step inside. Falck feels sorry for the Madame. He knows Kragstedt insists she maintain the role of first lady of the colony, and he knows that she would do almost anything to escape it. After the Danish men come the Greenlandic constables and servants. They stand likewise clutching their caps, though below the step. With her maid, Madame Kragstedt steps down to them and spoons up small portions of porridge into bowls. They devour, then bow humbly and retreat. The two women retire into the house again. Falck sees the door close behind the Madame» (Leine 2015: 130-131).

The two figures observing this parade, Morten Falck and Bertel Jensen, are also subject to an internal hierarchization, the former being a priest and the latter a mere catechist; together, they are representatives of the spiritual authority in the colony, and they assist at the gathering of other members of the community, each bearing a specific status. New Danish labor force is welcomed at the harbor, along with agents and administrators, and they are all received by the highest temporal authority in the colony: Kragstedt and his wife. It should be noted that the expression used with regard to the woman's positioning («hun opretholder rollen som koloniens førstedame») explicitly refers to a performative quality of the class-related element; this small detail, which somewhat echoes non-essentialist discourses concerning ethnicity made in the novel, suggests the idea of a relatively non-rigid society, whose boundaries can be challenged, at least on an individual level. The Danish «mandskab» is followed by Greenlandic servants, who are also welcomed by Mrs. Kragstedt and her own *kiffaq*. The two women, including the wife of the governor, serve food to all of them, thus showing respect to their guests and putting themselves in a subdued position – at least for the duration of this formal event. Ethnicity, it can be argued, also plays a role with regard to the hierarchization presented in this scene, and its 'reversal'.

A similar twist can also be detected in the relationship between the priest and the catechist. Although there subsists a clear demarcation between them in terms of power and privileges, the 'master-servant' dialectic at the foundation of their interactions presents some peculiar aspects.³⁷⁸ Firstly, it should be noted that Bertel's peculiar positioning as *blanding* is somewhat reduplicated by his (arguably 'hybrid') status: he belongs to the clergy, and thus has

³⁷⁸ A 'master-servant' dialectic can also be identified with regard to the relationship between *Store Malene's* Justine and Joorut: the two get to know each other in a private context, during a pub crawl, and have an intimate encounter thereafter. Given the circumstance of their first meeting, the two interact as equals. During their intercourse, however, Justine's predatory and overriding attitude starts emerging. The photographer, it could be further observed, starts chasing Joorut by profiting from his job. The man is a taxi driver, and is therefore expected to turn up every time a client contacts him. Justine's strategy to keep having contact with him is summoning his taxi: «Taxacentralens nummer står på telefonbogens omslag. Hun ringer til nummeret og siger at hun gerne vil have en vogn, og at det er Joorut der skal komme. Pigen i den anden ende lyder desorienteret, – hvem Joorut? spørger hun. Justine kan ikke forklare det nærmere, i stedet forsøger hun at beskrive Jooruts bil. Endelig forstår pigen» (Mondrup 2013: 95). Hiring Joorut, albeit for the sole duration of the taxi ride, equates to the establishment of a master-slave dialectic. Throughout the narration, the man progressively becomes aware of his subdued position and, towards the end of the novel, even confronts Justine about the matter: «I tænker kun på at have det sjovt, siger han, – der er altid problemer med jer, kan I ikke bare lade mig være i fred, og hvorfor ringer du hele tiden, der er jo andre taxaer i byen, hvorfor tror du jeg hele tiden vil være sammen med dig?» (Mondrup 2013: 135). The unequal power relationship between Joorut, Justine, and Mette further unfolds in this sense: by purchasing his services, the two Danish women exert a certain degree of control over him also on a material level – let alone the sexual dimension, ever-present in the novel.

access to means and educational possibilities otherwise precluded to ordinary Greenlanders, but cannot ascend to the position of priest.

This two-fold ‘hybridity’ finds its expression, among other things, in the use of both the Greenlandic and the Danish language, according to the circumstance. The catechist thus arguably acts as a figurative glue between those two dimensions, as emerges in the following extract:

Der er kommet folk til andagt, ser han da han kommer ud fra køkkenet sammen med Bertel. De fleste grønlandere og blandinger ved kolonien der er døbt, er mødt op, omkring en snes mennesker som Falck nærer en slags ulykkelig og ængstelig ømhed for. Ulykkelig, da deres indstilling til koloniens præst i bedste fald synes at være mild overbærenhed. Ængstelig, da han i alle årene har været mere afhængig af dem, end de af ham, og dette er en ubalance der hurtigt kan forrykkes yderligere i hans disfavør, og er blevet det. Ud over koloniens indfødte er der nogle fremmede som han ikke har set før, ifølge Bertel er de gæster fra den sydlige del af distriktet.

[...] Salig Poul Egede opfordrede ham i sin tid til hurtigt at blive så dygtig til sproget at han kunne forrette andagten på grønlandsk. Det var så sandelig også hans hensigt. Men da han kom til landet og gjorde brug af det han havde lært på seminaret, forstod ingen et kvæk af hvad han sagde, eller der opstod bizarre, burleske og højst pinlige misforståelser, hvor menigheden kom i en slags oprør af brølende og hulkende latter. Siden har han brugt tolk, det vil sige Bertel.

Han ved godt at kateketen ikke nøjes med at oversætte det han siger, men tit broderer videre på det efter sit eget hoved, og tager sig store friheder. I det hele taget aner han intet om hvordan hans prædiken tager sig ud for tilhørerne i dens tolkede version, og dermed hvordan han selv kommer til at tage sig ud. Dette er en af utallige ting der er kommet uden for hans kontrol.³⁷⁹ (Leine 2021a [2012]: 131-132)

The paragraph explicitly mentions an «imbalance» between the priest Morten Falck and «the majority of Greenlanders and mixtures of the colony who are christened», which is paradoxical if we consider their respective positioning in the society of the colony. The Dane admires the natives, but his fondness is «unhappy and fearful», adjectives that would tendentially be used

³⁷⁹ «People have arrived for prayers, he sees, as he leaves the kitchen with Bertel. The majority of Greenlanders and mixtures of the colony who are christened have come, perhaps a score of people for whom Falck harbours an oddly unhappy and fearful fondness. Unhappy, because their attitude to the colony’s pastor at best would seem to be mild indulgence. Fearful, because in his years here he has been more dependent on them than they on him, an imbalance that may quickly be further tipped in his disfavour, as indeed would seem to have happened. In addition to the colony’s natives are some outsiders wholly unfamiliar to him. According to Bertel they are visitors from the southern part of the district. [...]. “The blessed Poul Egede urged him to quickly become skilled in the language so as to be able to hold his services in Greenlandic. It was indeed his intention. But when he arrived in the country and made use of what he had learned at the seminary, no one understood but a croak of what he uttered, or else bizarre and highly embarrassing misunderstandings occurred, befitting some burlesque, whereby the congregation were brought into commotions of roaring and unstoppable laughter. Since then he has employed an interpreter, which is to say Bertel. “He knows the catechist cannot content himself with merely translating the words, but often elaborates as he sees fit, taking great liberties in the process. Everything considered, he has no idea of how his sermons are received in their translated form, nor of what effect he has on the congregation by virtue of his own person. It is one of countless matters over which he no longer has control» (Leine 2015: 133-134).

to describe how a subaltern feels towards a superior. As these two attributes are explained more thoroughly, this first impression is confirmed: the natives treat Morten with «indulgence», thus delegitimizing his role as priest, and the man relies more on them than they do on him – an expression that explicitly addresses this same reversed hierarchy. Furthermore it should be noted that in postcolonial Greenland, as reminded earlier, fluency in the Danish language is usually linked to a higher number of educational and working possibilities (see Terpstra 2015), and bilingualism thus also has a significance with regard to social status, as well as ethnic identity. It could be argued that Bertel's bilingualism, at least on the basis of what the reader understands from this paragraph, serves a similar function, although with a twist. The ability to shift from Danish to Greenlandic enables the catechist not only to translate Morten's words, but to adapt them to his own sensibility and to that of the natives, «taking great liberties in the process». Morten, who is supposed to be the spiritual guide of the colony, is thus somewhat disempowered. While this 'dismantling' of the standard social order occurs on a micro-level, the storyline concerning the two Greenlandic prophets Habakuk and Magdalena could arguably be considered an example of a similar deconstruction on broader scale (see Petersson 2015). Thisted, in her article about Kim Leine's *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden*, seems to suggest an analogous interpretation:

Hos Leine er det imidlertid de koloniserede selv, der har taget de fremmedes ord om næstekærlighed for pålydende og forsøger at realisere noget af det i deres egen fortolkning. Derfor bliver det en slags "lysets hjerte", der afslører sig inde i fjorden. Hvor meget Leines udlægning har på sig, og om Maria Magdalenas vision er tænkelig som udtryk for grønlændernes hedeste drømme ved den tid, er i høj grad åbent for diskussion. Resultatet på bundlinjen er imidlertid, at der er belæg i kilderne for at påstå, at grønlænderne foranstaltede deres egen lille revolution: I den forstand at de gjorde et forsøg på at tage ansvaret for både deres tro og deres samfund tilbage fra danskerne. At det netop skete omkring 1789, året for den franske revolution, er en tilfældighed, som det er oplagt at udnytte litterært. Selv om materialet måske dermed får en drejning, som det ikke helt kan bære, hvis man ser på det med faghistoriske briller, udgør episoden uomtvisteligt et fikspunkt i denne tidlige periode af den dansk-grønlandske historie.³⁸⁰ (Thisted 2015: 110-111)

³⁸⁰ «In Leine's book, however, it is the colonized subjects themselves who have taken the outsiders' words about brotherly love at face value and sought to make them a reality by their own interpretation. What the fjord holds is therefore, in a sense, a "heart of light". The aptness of Leine's interpretation and whether Maria Magdalene's vision is a conceivable image of the Greenlanders' true yearnings at the time is highly debatable. However, the sources do lend some support to the claim that the Greenlanders staged their own little revolution, in the sense that they made an attempt to reclaim responsibility for their own belief system and their community from the Danes. That this occurred around 1789, the year of the French revolution, is the sort of coincidence that is a gift to any novelist. Even if this takes the material in a direction that strains it beyond what a strictly historical analysis would support, the incident is indisputably a crucial event in this early period of Danish-Greenlandic history» (Thisted 2016: 159).

According to the scholar, the Christian message spread by the colonists is here applied by the ‘heathens’ rather than by the Danes who imported it. The peculiarities characterizing the fjord’s community have a certain significance with regard to the representation of ethnic identity, but the narrated events can also be read in relation to ‘class’. Thisted explicitly uses the expression «revolution» to refer to the actions performed by Habakuk and Magdalena – which hints at the idea of an irreversible change within society. This development envisages, at least in the two prophets’ plans, equality with the society of the colony: the practices linked to Habakuk and Magdalena’s syncretic religion thus count as an attempt to «tage ansvaret for [...] deres samfund tilbage fra danskerne». The *ligestilling* wished for by the couple – somewhat anticipating Greenland’s plans for autonomy and independence from the Kingdom of Denmark – aims at the coexistence of Danish and Greenlandic settlements, without the necessity to introduce a hierarchization between the two.

The dimension of ‘class’, as suggested by Dybdal and Grønlund in their *Bygder og barakkerne. Arbejdspladsen som konfliktzone i dansk grønlandslitteratur*, also emerges significantly in the second novel pertaining to Leine’s trilogy on colonial Greenland. Here, the scholars view the colony of Godthåb as «én stor arbejdsplads, der står i kontrast til det omkringværende samfund»³⁸¹ (2020: 44). The (spatial) structure of the colony itself complies with a precise social order: «Mens de indfødte fortrænges til periferien, opfører kolonisatorerne både missionsstue, mandskabshus, bageri og smedje, og de indleder en hverdag centreret om arbejde»³⁸² (*Ibidem*). Power relations in *Rød mand/Sort man* are also addressed in Anita Soós’s *Grønlands apostel i kampen mod Abraham Grønlænder – Ofringsnarrativer i Kim Leines roman Rød mand/Sort mand* (2021; *Greenland’s Apostle in The Fight Against Abraham Greenland – Sacrification Narratives in Kim Leine’s Novel Red Man/Black Man*). The scholar suggests that the introduction of Christianity, as expected, also plays a role in shaping Greenlandic society: «Koloniseringen og indførelsen af kristendommen kobles sammen og det er den kristne religion, som Egede og hans to unge missionærkolleger anvender til at overbevise de indfødte om kolonisatorernes overlegenhed: missioneringstanken forvandles til undertrykkelsesretorik»³⁸³ (Soós 2021: 55). Also in this second case, the established authority

³⁸¹ «one large workplace that stands in contrast to the surrounding society», my translation.

³⁸² «While the natives are displaced in the periphery, the colonizers build both a mission room, a house for the staff, a bakery and a forge, and they introduce an everyday life centered on work», my translation.

³⁸³ «Colonization and the introduction of Christianity are connected to one another, and it is the Christian religion that Egede and his two young missionary colleagues use to convince the natives of the superiority of the colonizers: missionary thought is transformed into a rhetoric of oppression», my translation.

is threatened from the inside – more precisely by Aappaluttoq, whose faith and actions could be regarded as an act of ‘resistance’: «Egedes Grønlandsbillede er en bekræftelse på den koloniale diskurs, som Aappaluttoqs modfortælling stilles op mod. Den grønlandske åndemaner er godt klar over, at de kristne missionsforsøg ikke fører til de indfødtes integration, men til deres religiøse og politiske undertrykkelse, derfor udløser de stærk modstand hos ham og intuitivt også hos hans folk»³⁸⁴ (56). It should be noted, furthermore, that – as in the case of Habakuk and Magdalena – the solution promoted by Aappaluttoq is not paganism, but rather a ‘syncretic’ solution that favors «en gensidig accept af og forståelse af hinandens kultur»³⁸⁵ (57). Soós agrees in identifying in *Profeterne*’s Bertel a realization of Aappaluttoq’s «forsoningspotentiale», thanks to the fact that the catechist holds on to his Greenlandic identity and, parallelly, enters the protestant clergy (57).

Some observations regarding ‘class’ can be made starting from the group of people who embark on the Greenlandic mission together with Hans Egede and his family. Among them, the (future) governor Pors stands out for his plans of *grandeur*. Dybdal associates the man’s fantasies with the conception of Greenland as a *tabula rasa*:

Et lignende potentiale ser den nyudnævnte guvernør Pors, der stolt forklarer sin frille og husholderske, at “jeg skal selv være en slags konge, forstår I. Konge af Grønland! Det kan I fortælle jeres børnebørn” (s. 36). For Pors og de øvrige højtstående er Grønland en modsætning til Danmark og Norge. Det er en Orient (Said) forbundet med eksotisme og eventyr.³⁸⁶ (Dybdal 2021: 118)

It should also be noted that the man, thanks to the fact that he is moving to Greenland, has access to a more privileged position in terms of material wealth and authority. In his own words, Pors is the «King of Greenland» – a role that he could never fill in his motherland, not being a member of the royal family. It could thus be argued that the hierarchy at the basis of Danish society is discarded in Greenland, where the same rules and regulations regarding society as a whole do not apply – to the point that a government servant has the same power of a king. A *de facto* equation between the two figures and their authority is also suggested by the fact that

³⁸⁴ «Egede’s image of Greenland is a confirmation of the colonial discourse against which Aappaluttoq’s counter-narrative is pitted. The Greenlandic spirit man is well aware that the Christian mission attempts do not lead to the integration of the natives, but to their religious and political oppression, therefore they trigger strong resistance in him and intuitively also in his people», my translation.

³⁸⁵ «The mutual acceptance and understanding of each other’s culture», my translation.

³⁸⁶ «A similar potential is seen by the newly appointed governor Pors, who proudly explains to his flirt and housekeeper that “I have to be a kind of king myself, you understand. King of Greenland! You will tell your grandchildren” [...]. For Pors and the other senior officials, Greenland contraposes to Denmark and Norway. It is an Orient (Said) associated with exoticism and adventure», my translation.

the Danish toponyms proposed for the colony are inspired, as it is often the case, from the name of the king, Frederick IV, *and* from the name of the governor: «Ved at foreslå eponymerne Porsminde (efter guvernøren), Frederiksten mv. (efter kongen) og Godthåb (efter skibet, Egede ankom med) investerer kolonisterne noget af dem selv og deres hjemland i de ellers fremmede omgivelser»³⁸⁷ (Dybdal 2021: 119). As Dybdal points out, however, the colonists' dreams and hopes collide with life in Greenland, and «de forestillede slotte og garnisoner bliver i realiteten iskolde huse og endnu værre mandskabsrum»³⁸⁸ (*Ibidem*).

Regardless of the promises encompassed in the Danish imagery about Greenland, the internal hierarchy characterizing life in the colony of Godthåb is quite steady from its establishment, as it can easily be understood from the following passage – where the three main ‘overseas’ authorities meet to arrange administrative matters:

Koloniråd. Næste dag. Egedes stue. De har været inde på fastlandet og bestemt sig for placeringen af kolonien. Landorph, Egede og Pors, tredelingen af magten, sidder for bordenden. Miltzov og Lange sidder ved siden af hinanden længere nede. Egede harper på at missionen er det vigtigste. Handelen og det militære er der for at tjene den. Dette har jeg personligt talt med kongen om, siger han.

Jeg har også talt med kong Frederik, siger Pors, for et par måneder siden faktisk. Han udtrykte klart og tydeligt et ønske om at der etableres en sund og rentabel handel. [...]

Nej, missionen kommer først, protesterer Egede. Det kan der ikke være diskussion om. De indfødte skal kristnes, derefter skal de gamle nordmænd på østsiden af landet findes og reformeres til den evangeliske tro.

Dette projekt er større end nogen af jer kan forestille jer, siger Pors alvorligt. Det handler om noget ganske andet end at kristne nogle vilde. Og uden handelen kan vi jo ikke gennemføre disse ting. Handelen må absolut komme først, ligesom et menneskes kødelige ernæring må komme foran alt andet.³⁸⁹ (Leine 2019b [2018]: 84-85)

Trade, spiritual and military power constitute a «holy trinity» of equally essential dimensions within a colonial society. The union of these dimensions could be described, using Walter

³⁸⁷ «By proposing the eponyms Porsminde (after the governor), Frederiksten etc. (after the king) and Godthåb (after the ship that Egede arrived with) the colonists invest something of themselves and their homeland in the otherwise foreign surroundings», my translation.

³⁸⁸ «The imagined castles and garrisons actually become icy houses and even worse crew quarters», my translation.

³⁸⁹ «A meeting of the colony council, the next day in Egede's rooms. They have been onto the mainland and decided on the placement of the colony. Landorph, Egede and Pors, this triumvirate of power, sit at the head of the table. Miltzov and Lange are seated next to each other further down. Egede harps on about the Mission being the important thing. The Trade and the military are there to serve it. I have spoken personally with the King on the matter, he says./I too have spoken with King Frederik, says Pors, only a couple of months ago as it happens. He expressed very clearly that he wishes a healthy and profitable Trade to be established. [...] /No, the Mission must come first, Egede protests. There can be no discussion. The natives are to be Christianized, whereafter the old Norsemen on the eastern side of the land are to be found and reformed into the Lutheran faith./This project is greater than any of you can fathom, says Pors earnestly. It concerns something quite apart from Christianizing a few savages. And without the Trade we cannot achieve any of these matters. The Trade absolutely must come first, just as a man's bodily nourishment must come before all else.» (Leine 2022: 81-82).

Mignolo's terminology, as the one side of «colonial matrix of power» (2011: XVIII). The scholar uses this expression to address the twofold nature of the colonial expansion, which is celebrated for having brought «progress, development, growth», but has also led to a number of often silenced or overlooked problems, such as «poverty, misery, inequities, injustices, corruption, commodification, and dispensability of human life» (*Ibidem*). At the same time, Mignolo stresses the indissoluble coupling between colonialism and capitalism, which brought to the «transformation from a polycentric and noncapitalist world before 1500 to a monocentric and capitalist world order from 1500 to 2000» (3). On this same subject, Acheraïou argues – in a more *tranchant* fashion – that «colonization was the result of aggressive capitalistic expansionism sustained by a political will and a supremacist nationalist ideology» (2011: 141). In the light of these observations, the partition of powers represented in the aforementioned paragraph acquires new significance. The *mission civilisatrice* favored along with the conversion to Christianity and the plans regarding trade expansion are complementary elements of the same project, regardless of the friction between secular and spiritual authority – which Pors addresses with arguments that somewhat echo Brecht's notorious quote according to which «Erst kommt das Fressen, dann kommt die Moral» (2015: 66). As the scene clearly illustrates, decisional power only lies in Danish hands, and it is the Danes – as anticipated before – that in that same occasion come up with suggestions regarding the name of colony. Toponyms, as observed by Dybdal, constitute an evident marker of this phenomenon: «I navngivningen bliver det tydeligt, at rådet tager ejerskab over kolonien – simpelthen ved at 'døbe' den»³⁹⁰ (2021: 119). A similar observation, although in a poem, had been made by Sven Holm, who, in his *Grønlands historie eller danskernes historie på Grønland*, describes the Danish appropriation of Greenland through toponyms, and the later Greenlandic reappropriation of those same places: «Så begyndte landets mennesker at tale/hen over ordet Grønland lagde de deres eget navn/Kalatdlit-Nunat [...] / hen over Egedesminde lagde de Ausiait / det er Edderkopperne / hen over Jakobshavn lagde de Ilulissat/det er Isfjeldene / og saaledes begravede de Hans Egede og Jakob Severin»³⁹¹ (Holm 1978).

In spite of the rigid hierarchy of the colony, a few members of the Danish community in Godthåb stand out. That is the case, unsurprisingly, of Frederik Christian – Aappaluttoq's

³⁹⁰ «During the search for a name it becomes clear, that the Council takes possession of the colony – simply by 'baptizing' it», my translation.

³⁹¹ «Then the people of the land began to speak/instead of the word Greenland they chose their own name / Kalatdlit-Nunat [...] / instead of Egedesminde they chose Ausiait/that is the Spiders/instead of Jakobshavn they chose Ilulissat / that is the Ice Mountains / and thus they buried Hans Egede and Jakob Severin», my translation.

biological son, who has been raised among Danes by Hans Egede himself, as if he were one of his own children. The boy is thus the first *'blanding'* of Leine's trilogy, if we consider the chronological unfolding of events narrated in the three novels: even though the boy is unequivocally of Greenlandic descent, he can be regarded as a cultural crossover. Frederik Christian's positioning as a 'stranger' both towards 'Danishness' and 'Greenlandicness', as it usually happens in those cases, causes a certain discomfort in the boy, who is mockingly called «Tvekongen»³⁹² (Leine 2019b [2018]: 98) because of his name. Not dissimilarly to *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden*'s Bertel and *Efter Åndemaneren*'s Hanseraaq, Frederik Christian enacts the role of linguistic mediator between the mission and the natives – a role that, as observed earlier – allows him to 'overtake' the priest, his superior. Along with him, there are other figures in the novel who do not perfectly fit into the generally overlapping binarisms 'Greenlandicness' vs. 'Danishness' and 'upper' vs. 'lower class', such as Jomfru Titia, Pors' housekeeper. A first element that marks her uniqueness is her gender. As reminded throughout the dissertation, colonial expeditions were mostly a manly enterprise, and the presence of female colonists is tendentially an exception. This is the case of Hans Egede's wife and daughters, but also of Sise and Titia, respectively a needlewoman and a *husholderske* – a role that, in the works that have been examined so far (*Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden* and *Tabita*, for instance) is tendentially occupied by Greenlandic *kiffaqs*. Her status, as well as her Catholic education and her disinhibited sexual behavior, make a pariah within the colony, and she feels she does not belong there. The following dialogue is quite explicit in this regard:

Hvorfor kan du ikke bare være glad?
 Jeg ved det ikke. Jeg forsøger hele tiden, men jeg er ikke ligesom dig, Sise. Jeg er mere ligesom Frederik Christian.
 Den indfødte dreng?
 Vi er jo begge en slags blandinger. Vi kan ikke finde ud af at være glade.
 Det forstår jeg ikke. Man kan da bare være glad. Hvorfor er det så svært?
 Jeg kommer aldrig væk herfra, siger Titia. Jeg kommer aldrig væk herfra. Jeg kommer aldrig væk herfra.³⁹³ (Leine 2019b [2018]: 160-161)

Frederik Christian and Jomfru Titia are both subject to a two-fold disadvantage: the former is still viewed as a Greenlander by the colonists – and substantially as a Dane by his fellow

³⁹² «Two-Kings» (Leine 2022: 97).

³⁹³ «Why can't you just be happy? I don't know. I try all the time, but I'm not like you, Sise. I'm more like Frederik Christian. The native boy? We're both mongrels of a kind. We can't really ever be happy. I don't understand that. A person can just be happy. What's so difficult about it? I shall never get away from here, says Titia. I shall never get away from here. I shall never get away from here» (Leine 2022: 165).

Greenlanders – and therefore cannot fully integrate into the Danish elite, despite his upbringing within Egede’s family. Titia, on the other hand, is both a woman and a servant, and it is hardly surprising that she manages to establish a ‘connection’ with Aappaluttoq, who represents the values and mentality that the mission is trying to erase. Her Catholic faith – at least in the eyes of Hans Egede and other inhabitants of the colony – can be arguably equated to a form of paganism – the same faith that characterizes the natives before their conversion. The woman thus ‘contravenes’ one of the main markers of Danish identity, and finds herself closer to Frederik Christian rather than her compatriots. The association between Catholicism and paganism is explicitly addressed multiple times throughout the novel: in one of his monologues, Aappaluttoq concludes that «vi grønlændere er en slags katolikker. Men præsten Egede fatter ikke det her. Derfor må vi være uvenner og fjender»³⁹⁴ (Leine 2019b [2018]: 74). In other passages, Jomfru Titia is defined as a «heks», a «witch» (Leine 2019b [2018]: 157) – and therefore a sort of Danish female counterpart to the shaman Aappaluttoq. Although the gender- and religion-related elements play perhaps a bigger role in her marginalization within the community of Godthåb, her subsided condition might also contribute to the phenomenon.

The following novel in Leine’s trilogy, *Efter åndemaneren*, also presents a few characters that come across – to use a simplifying term – as *blandinger*, such as Hanseraaq, Julius Krabbe, and Jens Hansen. Their vicissitudes also offer cause for reflection as to the representation of class. During his stay in Denmark, Jens undergoes a ‘social ascent’: not only he is the first Greenlander to be enrolled in the faculty of theology, he also finds himself inserted in an elite of intellectuals, among whom Herman Bang stands out. The entity of the change in his lifestyle and frequentations can be grasped from the explicative scene in which he joins a party in Frederiksberg. There, he is introduced to Holger Drachmann, J.P. Jacobsen, and Amalie Skram:

Schmidt præsenterer Jens for gruppen der har samlet sig omkring Bang. Fru Skram er en dystert udseende kvinde med mørkt hår og en bitter trækning i mundvigen. Hendes mand, Erik, er skaldet, men har et kraftigt fuldskæg der i Jens’ øjne får ham til at ligne en tysk kejser. Der er en tykvommet, skævbenet mand ved navn Schandorph, der ser fordrukken ud, og ved siden af ham en ung splejset fyr med hektiske røde pletter i ansigtet og en kæmpe stor butterfly ved navn Gjellerup. Endnu en norsk digter, Garborg, har hvalrosoverskæg, et manisk blik og en frisure der ser ud som om han selv har klippet den.

³⁹⁴ «we Greenlanders are a kind of Catholics. Egede, however, cannot fathom this at all. Therefore can only be enemies» (Leine 2022: 70). The ever-recurring parallelism between Catholics and Greenlandic heathens could perhaps be interpreted as yet another attempt to discard ‘Greenlandicness’ and its markers from the usual binarism with ‘Danishness’. A similar operation had been made by Leine, as observed earlier, with regard to *Kalak* and *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden*.

Endelig er udenrigsministeren, Rosenørn-Lehn, til stede, en ældre mand med et kæmpeskæg og en fugtig, hængende underlæbe. [...] Jens bliver opmærksom på noget ministeren siger: Vi har nok meget at lade os belære om af de folkeslag vi har bebyrdet med vores tilstedeværelse og til tider undertrykkelse, men jeg synes dog at netop i Grønland har vi meget vi kan rose os af som kolonimagt.³⁹⁵ (Leine 2021b: 217)

Not only the boy is surrounded by notorious Danish and Norwegian intellectuals, he is also involved in discourses regarding Denmark's actions towards Greenland as if he were a Dane himself. It could be argued that Jens manages to integrate in this 'high-brow' circle because, despite being a sort of 'curiosity', he does not look that different from his fellows – as his new Danish acquaintances promptly point out: «Du ser da ikke særlig grønlandsk ud, min ven? Du er jo nærmest leverpostejsfarvet som os andre»³⁹⁶ (Leine 2021b: 214). Jens' newly acquired social position is then arguably accepted because he is not perceived as a stranger among Danes, at least if one only considers his physical appearance – which may imply a racist bias towards Greenlanders on Danish side; apart from this former aspect, Jens also distinguishes himself for his education. It is ironic, therefore, that the governor implicitly regards the boy as the perfect product of the Danish colonial enterprise in Greenland: as far as he can understand from that first encounter, the boy is as 'civilized' as a Dane, and *this* is the result one should be proud of.

Efter åndemaneren also thematizes the relationship between ethnicity/race and the access to better working possibilities on Greenlandic soil. A key figure in this regard is that of Julius Krabbe, whom I have defined as a *blanding* because of his impossibility to fully assimilate both to 'Greenlandicness' and 'Danishness'. The man, in fact, comes across as a 'hybrid' throughout the whole novel: Greenlanders refer to him as «the Dane», but Krabbe, paradoxically, has never set foot on Danish soil. Nonetheless, his looks clearly betray his partly Danish descent, as he has red hair and pale freckled skin; this comes as no surprise, since his grandfather was the catechist Bertel, son of the Danish priest Oxbøl, and his grandmother also had a mixed background. Krabbe, aware of the discrimination faced by Greenlanders in terms of loan, takes advantage of his appearance, and actively attempts to pass for a 'real' Dane:

³⁹⁵ «Schmidt introduces Jens to the group that has gathered around Bang. Mrs. Skram is a somber-looking woman with dark hair and a bitter twitch at the corner of her mouth. Her husband, Erik, is bald, but has a thick beard that, in Jens' eyes, makes him look like a German emperor. There is a fat, crooked-legged man named Schandorph who looks drunk, and next to him a young, scrawny guy with hectic red spots on his face and a giant bow tie, he's called Gjellerup. Another Norwegian poet, Garborg, has a walrus moustache, a manic stare and a haircut that looks like he cut it himself. Lastly, there is the foreign minister, Rosenørn-Lehn, an elderly man with a huge beard and a moist, drooping lower lip. [...] Jens pays attention to something the minister is saying: "We probably have a lot to learn from the peoples we have burdened with our presence and sometimes with our oppression, but I think that in Greenland we have a lot to be proud of as a colonial power», my translation.

³⁹⁶ «You don't look very Greenlandic, do you, my friend? You're almost liver-pate-colored like the rest of us», my translation.

Mændene var nogle svin, han selv ikke mindst. Han tænker ikke gerne tilbage på den tid. Der var mange danskere ansat ved minen. Grønlænderne havde underordnede stillinger og holdt sig for sig selv. Det var det røde hår og den lyse fregnede hud samt en portion frækhed der gjorde ham til ingeniør, intet andet. Alle betragtede ham som dansker. Og det var han måske også, selv om han aldrig havde sat en fod i Danmark. [...] Dengang opdagede han for første gang at han skammede sig over hvad han var. Måske havde han altid skammet sig inderst inde. Men nu blev det nødvendigt for ham at skjule den grønlandske del af sig selv for at blive ved med at tjene den samme løn. Og med det røde hår og den blege hud var der ingen der stillede spørgsmål ved det. Han opførte sig ligesom sine danske kammerater ved minen, drak og horede løs. Det var et mandesamfund, og der blev ikke talt om følelser. Der blev talt om sten, malm, årer, mineraler og om de skader og gener arbejdet påførte dem, de fortalte om forskellige lejligheder hvor de havde været sensationelt fulde, om nævekampe og ulykker, og en sjælden gang talte de måske om et sted de længtes efter, nogle bakker, en bøgeskov, fjerne tabte landskaber som de vidste at de aldrig ville se igen. Nu og da var der en der hængte eller skød sig.³⁹⁷ (Leine 2021b: 60-61)

In the aforementioned paragraph – which somewhat echoes the description of Kim’s ‘reverse-passing’ (see Volquardsen 2014a) in *Kalak* – the interference between ‘ethnicity’, ‘class’, and ‘gender’ is particularly evident. On the one hand, Krabbe acquires behaviors characterizing his Danish colleagues, and starts drinking in great quantities and being promiscuous – as one can easily imagine, the expression «hore løs» is more likely referred to the company of Greenlandic women than their Danish counterparts. His ‘passing’, then, also implies the adoption of gender-specific conducts that mark the difference between Danish and Greenlandic men. The superior position of Danish men is constantly restated through the ‘conquest’ of native women, which somewhat echoes the rhetoric of colonial expansion as a whole (see Gwynne & Poon 2012: XXV). Furthermore, the environment of the mine is evidently defined by «hypermasculinity» (2020: 39) – a term that has already been used by Dybdal and Grønlund with regard to Jørgen Liljensøe’s *Barakkerne* and, in particular, with the eponymous barracks where Danish craftsmen drink excessively and sleep with Greenlandic *havnepiger*. These same conditions seem to be mirrored in *Efter åndemaneren*, where the mine can also be arguably viewed as a

³⁹⁷ «The men were pigs, not least himself. He doesn’t like to think back to that time. There were many Danes employed at the mine. The Greenlanders had subordinate positions and stay on their own. It was the red hair, the fair freckled skin and a dose of insolence that made him an engineer, nothing else. Everyone thought of him as a Dane. And maybe he was, even though he had never set foot in Denmark. [...] It was then that he realized for the first time that he was ashamed of what he was. Perhaps he had always been ashamed deep down. But now it became necessary for him to hide the Greenlandic part of himself in order to keep earning the same salary. And with his red hair and pale skin, no one questioned it. He behaved just like his Danish comrades at the mine, drinking and whoring. It was a society of men, and emotions weren’t on the table. They talked about rocks, ore, veins, minerals, and the damage and inconvenience the work caused them, they talked about various occasions when they had been sensationally drunk, about fist fights and accidents, and on rare occasions they might talk about a place they longed for, some hills, a beech forest, distant lost landscapes that they knew they would never see again. Every now and then someone would hang themselves or shoot themselves», my translation.

«symbol på konflikt i romanen, hvor sociale skel mellem danskere og grønlandere udstilles»³⁹⁸ (*Ibidem*).

During the colonial age, the consumption of alcohol also constituted a status-marker, since it was not generally allowed for Greenlanders to indulge in drinking – whereas Danes had the authorization to do so, regardless of their social position. In her *Alkoholens historie i Grønland – en historie om påbud, forbud og forskelsbehandling* (2012; *A History of Alcohol in Greenland – a History of Obligations, Prohibitions, and Discrimination*), Bodil Karlshøj Poulsen stresses that alcohol «was reserved for use of those in power», at least until Greenland acquired the status of *amt*, in 1953 (173). The fact that Krabbe parties and gets drunk with his ‘fellow’ Danes, then, is less neutral than it may sound. This same theme is addressed various times throughout Leine’s trilogy of historical novels: for instance, the consumption of great quantities of alcohol is one of the elements that contribute to Jens’ ‘danification’ during his stay in Copenhagen – and alcohol also constitutes a clear boundary between Bertel and all his dining companions during a key scene of *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden*, featured in the chapter *Et måltid* (*A Meal*).

In *Efter åndemaneren*, the relationship between Greenlanders and alcohol is also thematized in ethnicity-related terms. In Copenhagen, in fact, Jens has easily access to beer – a drink that, in the version that he had tried in Greenland, was usually brewed by his aunt Oline (Leine 2021b: 145). While it was forbidden for Greenlanders to purchase alcohol from the Royal Greenland Trade Department (although with a few exceptions), homebrewing in Greenlandic households became quite common in the 20th century (Poulsen 2012: 175). The fact that the Greenlandic boy revels in drinking alcohol causes concern among some Danes, not least in minister Skeel:

De har vel ikke givet ham alkohol at drikke? [...] De må endelig ikke give ham alkohol. [...] De kan ikke tåle det. Det er videnskabeligt bevist. De er jo for børn at regne. Rene af hjertet, men barnlige, uskyldige vilde. Vores forpligtelse over for disse stakkels primitive mennesker, og det er også kongens udtrykkelige hensigt som han har meddelt mig ved flere lejligheder, er at behandle dem så nænsomt som muligt og ikke udsætte dem for de laster og udsvævelser de risikerer at møde hernede.³⁹⁹ (Leine 2021b: 159)

³⁹⁸ «Symbol for the conflict represented in the novel, where the demarcation between Danes and Greenlanders is represented», my translation.

³⁹⁹ «You haven’t given him any alcohol, have you? [...] Please don’t give him alcohol. [...] They can’t tolerate it. It’s scientifically proven. They’re like children. Pure of heart, but childish, innocent savages. Our obligation to these poor primitive people – which is also the king’s explicit intention, as he has told me on several occasions – is to treat them as gently as possible and not expose them to the vices and debauchery they risk encountering down here», my translation.

These observations are made by an agent of the Danish State, who could be viewed as an embodiment of authority and, at the same time, of official public discourses regarding Denmark's role in Greenland. The restrictions concerning alcohol consumption among Greenlanders – which, being a form of discrimination, generate an evident status-difference – are here justified on the basis of well-known arguments that can be traced back to the idea of Greenlanders as child-like *naturmennesker*. This belief is in accordance with Poulsen's observations: «Alkoholhistorien i Grønland er præget af forbud, restriktioner og forskelsbehandling, idet ikke alle, hverken dengang eller nu, blev anset for at være i stand til selv at kunne regulere deres drikkevaner»⁴⁰⁰ (2012: 174). As a matter of fact, this prejudice describes Jens' fall in Copenhagen, where he is somewhat 'corrupted' by civilization, and does not only indulge in drinking, but also in the use of cocaine.

The aforementioned dining scene featured in *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden*, in the chapter *Et måltid (A Meal)*, offers different inputs as to class-related matters. The premises alone are quite significative in that regard, since the catechist Bertel, of mixed background, is exceptionally invited to join the elite of the colony at Kragsted's place. To get there, Morten and his catechist pass by the houses where the natives live – which evidently constitute the 'periphery' of the colony: «De kommer forbi hedningenes fælleshuse og en hel del mindre tørvehuse. Der er mennesker overalt, børn, kvinder, mænd, alle er optaget med et eller andet som sikkert må forekomme præsten fremmedartet og uforståeligt»⁴⁰¹ (Leine 2021a [2012]: 196). During this short tour, Morten has a first encounter with the natives' everyday life – whose uses, at least according to the external narrator, must be «incomprehensible» to him. There is also a short mention of their main occupation, hunting and fishing: «Han [Bertel] forklarer ham om de indfødtes kajakker og både og fangstudstyr, hvordan deres huse er indrettet, hvordan de tilbereder deres mad. Falck er meget interesseret»⁴⁰² (*Ibidem*). This description could be read in the light of Søren Rud's observations regarding the natives' role in the economy of the Greenlandic colonies. According to the scholar, in fact, the Greenlanders' hunting abilities were

⁴⁰⁰ «The history of alcohol in Greenland is characterized by prohibitions, restrictions, and discrimination, since not all [Greenlanders] – at that time or now – were considered capable of regulating their drinking habits», my translation.

⁴⁰¹ «They come by the communal dwelling house of the heathens. There are people everywhere, children, women, men, all are occupied by some or another task that must seem to the priest to be strange and incomprehensible» (Leine 2015: 203).

⁴⁰² «Bertel explains to him about the natives' kayaks and boats and hunting equipment, the particulars of their houses and how they are arranged inside, the ways in which they prepare their food. Falck is all ears» (Leine 2015: 203).

an essential resource for the colony since its «financial success [...] had come to depend on a supply of fur and blubber “produced” by the Greenlandic hunters» (2017a: 36). The status of Greenlandic traditional hunters could be therefore traced back to that of a ‘working class’ *ante litteram*. This hypothesis can be investigated with the support of Quijano’s theories regarding the indissoluble link between coloniality and capitalism:

During European colonial world domination, the distribution of work of the entire world capitalist system, between salaried, independent peasants, independent merchants, and slaves and serfs, was organized basically following the same ‘racial’ lines of global social classification, with all the implications for the processes of nationalization of societies and states, and for the formation of nation-states, citizenship, democracy and so on, around the world. (Quijano 2007: 171)

The racial element, according to Quijano, also has a certain significance with regard to the distribution of roles within the «world capitalist system». This interference emerges in the internal hierarchization of a (post)colonial society, where there is a certain degree of overlapping between ‘ethnicity’ and ‘class’. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the most marginalized group described in *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden* is constituted by Greenlandic labour force. It should be borne in mind, however, that Leine’s representation of the Greenlandic colonial society is the result of his «forsøg på godt og grundigt at blande det dokumentariske og det fiktive sammen til en ny sandhed» (Leine 2021b: 735) rather than an objective depiction. Therefore, the overlapping between his fiction and Quijano’s theories is arguably a tangible proof of the author’s engagement in anticolonial discourses.

Berthel, as anticipated, somewhat constitutes a joining link both between the categories ‘Greenlandicness’ vs. ‘Danishness’ and upper and lower class. The ambiguity of his position is stated clearly as he enters Kragstedt’s house. Madame Kragstedt is not sure whether she should welcome him along with the priest and seems to imply that they have never really had a conversation although they live in the same community: «Madammen tøver et øjeblik, så lyser hun op. Ja, det er jo min stuepige Sofies husbond, så vi er da stødt ind i hinanden nu og da. Det kan dårligt undgås på så lille et sted. Hun ser lidt usikkert fra Falck til Bertel. Ønsker magisteren at hans kateket sidder med til bords?»⁴⁰³ (Leine 2021a [2012]: 197). Already this question indicates a rigid hierarchic structure between Danes and Greenlanders, now disturbed by

⁴⁰³ «The Madame hesitates for a moment, before her face lights up in a smile. Why yes, of course, my maid Sofie’s husband, we have indeed bumped into each other now and then. It can hardly be avoided in such a little place as this. She glances uncertainly from Falck to Bertel. Does the Magister wish for his catechist to join us at the table?» (Leine 2015: 204-205).

Falck's intercession. Bertel, at a first glance, adopts behaviors that allow him to conform to the rest of the company. For example, he is embarrassed by the presence of his wife, who works in the same house as a *kiffaq*, a maid. At the same time, however, he is visibly uncomfortable among the Danes sitting next to him, and does not dare drink alcohol like they do – even though he is offered the possibility to do so. The discourses the men are engaging in are mostly baffling to Bertel, and his uneasiness is also expressed through disgust, as this paragraph shows:

De sætter sig ned. Der bliver stillet glas frem, styrmanden skænker op i det ene, men da han skal fylde det andet glas, rækker en hånd ud og griber ham om håndleddet. Det er Kragstedts hånd. Brændevinen er forbeholdt det danske mandskab, siger han. Loven forbyder udskænkning til de indfødte uden for mærkedagene. Styrmanden propper flasken til og stiller den væk. Kunne han tænke sig et glas øl? spørger madam Kragstedt venligt. Hellere et glas vand, tak, siger han. Han kan mærke han er varm i kinderne. Der bliver stillet et glas og en vandkaraffel foran ham. Han skænker op til sig selv og drikker en slurk, han hører ikke meget af hvad der bliver talt om, sidder og kigger på sin kone der ligger på alle fire og tørrer suppe op af gulvet. Så får han øje på hr. Falcks paryk som han har lagt ved siden af tallerkenen. Det går op for ham at den er helt levende af lus. Et fad med kød, ærter og kål bliver langet over bordet. Han løfter lidt af det ned på tallerkenen og begynder at spise. Flere af de andre middagsgæster har taget deres parykker af og lagt dem i uordentlige bunker ved siden af tallerkenen. Alle er fulde af lus. Bertel kan ikke tage øjnene fra dem. Han skovler maden indenbords uden at smage på den. Til venstre for ham sidder smeden. Han taler med koloniens kok der sidder over for ham. Bertel forstår ikke så meget af hvad de siger [...].⁴⁰⁴ (Leine 2021a [2012]: 198-199)

It is interesting to note that, once again, Leine subtly twists tropes regarding 'Danishness' and 'Greenlandicness'. The wigs the Danish men are wearing – which could arguably be seen as a tangible symbol of their superior social condition – are here represented as consumed by lice. The trope of the 'uncivilized' lifestyle characterizing Greenlandic people, which in various Danish representations also concerns hygiene practices (or, rather, their absence), is here reversed. The *blinding* Bertel observes his tablemates with repulsion as they remove their wigs and place it next the food, which he eats hesitantly. The apparent *ligestilling* favored by this

⁴⁰⁴ «They seat themselves. Drinking glasses are put out before them. The mate fills the first of them, but as he is about to fill the second a hand extends to grip his wrist. Kragstedt's hand. The aquavit is for the Danish crew only, he says. The law forbids the provision of spirits to the natives on all but the flag days./The mate puts the cork back in and removes the bottle. /Would he care for a glass of beer? Madame Kragstedt enquires kindly./Rather a glass of water, he says. He feels the warmth rise in his cheeks. A glass and a jug are put out in front of him. He pours himself a glass and drinks a mouthful. He hears little of what is said, but sits and watches his wife on her knees wiping up soup from the floor. Then he is distracted by Falck's wig, which he has placed on the table next to his plate. He sees that it is teeming with lice. A dish of meat, peas and cabbage is handed across the table. He takes some and puts it on to his own plate and begins to eat./Several of the other "Several of the other dinner guests have likewise removed their wigs and deposited them untidily next to their plates. All are ridden with lice. Bertel cannot take his eyes away. He shovels the food into his mouth without tasting it. To his left sits the smith, in conversation with the colony's cook, who is sat opposite him. Bertel grasps little of what they say [...]"» (Leine 2015: 205-206).

circumstance, however, is soon disturbed by the Danes' comments: the benevolence of the Danish rule in Greenland is a recurring topic, and Kragstedt stresses this aspect stating that its generosity can already be grasped by the fact that a native is sitting at their table and sharing their food. His wife and the other guests further affirm this viewpoint, advancing the most recurring arguments of Danish exceptionalism: «Hvor kan de prise sig lykkelige for at det ikke er hollænderne eller englænderne der hersker her i landet, siger madam Kragstedt. Det er korrekt, min kære, siger købmanden. Så ville der have været andre boller på suppen og ikke så meget *laissez-faire*»⁴⁰⁵ (Leine 2021a [2012]: 200). The impossibility to overcome the rigid hierarchy characterizing the colony is also clarified by the lines concluding the dialogue between the characters: once Kragstedt finds out that Bertel is in possession of thirty fox skins, he decides that that should be the compensation for the soup bowl broken by the catechist's wife. As a result from having sat at their same table, Bertel is thus robbed of his rightful property. Therefore, it could be argued that the power imbalance characterizing the relationship between him and the administrators of the colony (or their wives, as that is the case of Madame Kragstedt) remains unaltered – and that any attempt to create a breach of 'hybridity' between the two opposing poles is prone to failure. This conclusion somewhat echoes the aforementioned words of Amar Acheraïou (2011: 121-123), according to whom the focus on race and ethnicity tends to overshadow class-related matters, since the prevailing discourses on (post)coloniality draw on hybridity – a notion that is hardly applicable to the evident dichotomy between bourgeois and working class or between global poor and global rich.

This *status quo*, however, is disturbed by the presence of the prophets of the eternal fjord, Habakuk and Maria Magdalene – already mentioned during the scene of the dinner as a matter of public relevance:

Man siger de trækker tilhængere til sig, siger købmanden. Det er ikke sundt for Handelen hvis for mange mennesker klumper sig sammen på et sted, især ikke hvis det er langt væk fra kolonien. [...]
 Men vil det ikke også gå ud over fangsten at for mange samler sig på det samme sted? spørger Valløe.
 Jo, det er det jeg siger, siger Kragstedt.⁴⁰⁶ (Leine 2021a: 199)

⁴⁰⁵ «They should certainly consider themselves lucky that the Dutch or the English do not rule the country, says Madame Kragstedt. So very true, my dear, says the Trader. That would be a different kettle of fish entirely, none of your *laissez-faire*» (Leine 2015: 207).

⁴⁰⁶ «I've heard say they're attracting followers, says the Trader. It's not healthy for the Trade if too many people lump themselves together in one place, especially if it's far from the colony. [...] Won't it affect the hunting if too many people gather in one place? Valløe asks. That's what I mean, Kragstedt replies» (Leine 2015: 207).

The community of the Eternal Fjord threatens life in the colony on two levels. The Danish secular and spiritual power are both menaced by the activities favored by Habakuk and Maria Magdalena, whose syncretic interpretation of the Christian religion offers a valid alternative to the message spread by the Mission (see *supra*, pp. 267-268). Furthermore, as the aforementioned passage illustrates, the activities of the community risk undermining one of the pillars of the colonies' economy, namely hunting. Since traditional hunting practices performed by Greenlanders were a valuable resource for the Trade Department, the relocation of natives could be viewed as a significant problem. Given these premises, it could also be argued that the values embodied by the Danish presence in Greenland *in toto* were at stake: in this regard, it is worth reprising Thisted's observations concerning Habakuk and Maria Magdalena's «little revolution» (see *supra*, p. 267), which casually occurred around 1789, the year of the French revolution (*Ibidem*). This event is mentioned a couple of times in *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden*, as if to establish an implicit parallelism with the narrated events – which also revolve around an attempt to overthrow the *status quo* in colonial Greenland. Morten Falck first learns of this groundbreaking development in a newspaper, one year after its carrying out: «Der er en omtale af det foregående års uro i Paris. Han har læst på forskud, noget han ellers ikke plejer at gøre, og læser vantro, halvt opstemt, halvt skrækslagen, om forfølgelsen af kongefamilien, annekeringen af kirkens ejendomme, stormen på Bastillen»⁴⁰⁷ (Leine 2021a [2012]: 309). Also in this case, authority is represented by the union of secular and spiritual power, both threatened by the ideals of *égalité*, *liberté*, *fraternité* prompted by the Revolution. It is interesting to note that, whereas this movement may spread to Denmark – at least according to the words of the Danish characters – Greenland is generally considered 'safe': «Det er usikre tider, siger Støvring. Det er ikke til at vide hvad der vil ske. Jeg anbefaler dig, magister, hurtigst muligt at vende tilbage til Grønland. Det synes at være det sikreste sted for en europæer for tiden»⁴⁰⁸ (Leine 2021a [2012]: 488). This consideration alone suggests that Habakuk and Maria Magdalena's attempt has substantially remained isolated – and that Greenland is still governed in accordance with the values of the '*ancient regime*', whose influence would cast its shadow until the late 1970s, with the introduction of Home Rule.

⁴⁰⁷ «There is a piece on the previous year's disturbances in Paris. He has read on ahead, which is not his custom, and has absorbed in disbelief, partially excited, partially horrified, reports of the persecution of the royal family, the annexation of church property, the storming of the Bastille» (Leine 2015: 327).

⁴⁰⁸ «These are uncertain times, Støvring says. Who knows what may happen? I recommend, Magister, that you return to Greenland as quickly as possible. It would seem to be the safest place for a European at present» (Leine 2015: 522).

Another element entailing a subversive quality – although on a much smaller scale – that is tackled both in *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden* and *Efter åndemaneren* is the question of mixed marriages, which also sheds a light on hierarchization processes intersecting with the dimension of gender. In the former novel, this aspect is thematized with reference to the story of Dorph, whose union with a native is not recognized by the Danish law. Morten Falck, after learning of the circumstances, promises to offer his help regardless of an initial hesitation:

Jeg lever i synd, siger Dorph. Falck ser at hans mund begynder at skælve af ophidselse. Hvor længe skal mine børn være horeunger? Hvor længe skal folkene have lov til at kalde min elskede kone for bødkerens frille?
[...] Hvad skulle jeg gøre?
I kunne vie os.
Hm, siger Falck utilpas. Hvor gerne jeg end vil hjælpe dig, så er det næppe vejen frem at sætte sig op mod myndighederne.
Har I ikke pligt til at velsigne et samliv hvor der allerede er født fire børn? siger bødkeren opfarende.
Nej, det er ikke min pligt. Jeg må minde dig om, bødker, at du selv af egen vilje tog dig en indfødt kvinde som kæreste i sin tid, selv om du så vidt jeg har hørt, både fik læst og påskrevet af magister Krogh. Men du ville ikke høre.
Det var kærlighed, siger Dorph og falder ned som et lam.
Det kan du jo kalde det, og jeg er ikke i tvivl om at du elsker din kvinde. Men du lod dig dengang styre af din liderlighed, og det betaler du nu for. Et blik på bødkeren får ham til at fortryde at han har talt hårdt til ham. Snart kommer der skib, siger han udglattende, så må vi se om der er et kongebrev til dig.
Ægteskabet er indstiftet af Herren, siger Dorph, ikke af en galhovedet konge.
Men godkendt af staten, siger Falck formanende. De to udgør en helhed, det må du ikke glemme. Bødkeren er sunket sammen, han stirrer ned i jorden.
Jeg giver dig mit løfte, Dorph, på at du ikke skal forblive ugift. Det er en synd og en skam, jeg skal gøre hvad jeg kan for at hjælpe dig.⁴⁰⁹ (Leine 2021a [2012]: 288-289)

The union of political and religious authority is restated through Morten Falck's words, which, at least in a first moment, align with official colonial discourses: there is no solution to the cooper's problem, who is asked to accept his own compromised position, as well as that of his

⁴⁰⁹ «I live in sin, says Dorph. Falck sees the man's lips begin to tremble with rage. How long must my children live as bastards? How long must people be allowed to call my beloved wife the cooper's mistress? [...] Such as what? He could marry us. Hm, says Falck, somewhat uneasily. However much I wish to help you, going against the authorities is hardly the way. Is it not the pastor's duty to bless a man and woman's cohabitation that has given four children to the world? the cooper says irascibly. No, it most certainly is not. I would remind you, Dorph, that it was entirely of your own free will that you took a native woman to be your partner, despite, as far as I am informed, having been warned against it by Magister Krogh. You chose to turn a deaf ear. It was love, says Dorph, and submits like a lamb. You might call it that and I am in no doubt that such love is genuine. But at the time you allowed yourself to be governed by your lust and now you are paying the price. A glance at the cooper makes him regret that he has spoken harshly to him. A ship will come soon, he says in a more conciliatory tone. Then we shall see if it brings a marriage licence with it. Marriage is instituted by God, says Dorph, not by a mad king. Yet subject to the authorization of State, Falck rejoins with a wagging finger. Do not forget that the two parts make up the whole. The cooper's shoulders sag. He stares at the ground. I give you my word, Dorph, that you shall not remain unmarried. Your plight is most unsatisfactory and I shall do what I can to help you» (Leine 2015: 304-305)

wife. Both of them, due to the fact that they do not comply with the social rules established in the society of the colony – based on middle-class Christian values and, at the same time, on racial criteria – come across as pariahs: Dorph, by virtue of this choice, inevitably undergoes a social ‘descent’, and the same applies to his children, who are not even recognized as such. His wife, besides being native, is also judged on the basis of the role associated with her gender: due to the impossibility to officialize her relationship to Dorph, she is not viewed as part of the colony, but merely as a «mistress». The woman is therefore marginalized on a variety of levels, and does not succeed in a ‘class-passing’ – quite the contrary. The couple manage to overcome this *impasse* later in the novel, thanks to the intervention of Mrs. Kragstedt, who intercedes for them and witnesses to their marriage – thus contravening the rules and regulations embodied by her husband, who happens to be the highest authority in the colony. The ending of the cooper’s story, however, is tragic, since he is deprived of his position and his goods as a result to the decision to marry the mother of his children, and therefore ends his own life. A counternarrative, in this sense, is offered by the community of the Eternal Fjord, where Morten Falck is wed to a native, Lydia, «på god kristen vis og uden bespotteligt gækkespil»⁴¹⁰ (Leine 2021a [2012]: 393). A parallelism between the two episodes confirms that the society created by Habakuk and Maria Magdalena is grounded on different principles than those of the colony: official religious authority is ‘downsized’, so to say («Jeg er vis på, at Vorherre godkender denne ægtevielse, selvom den ikke er foregået med en ordineret klerk som mellemmand»,⁴¹¹ Leine 2021a: 394), and Morten and Lydia can marry as equals, regardless of their status and ethnic background.

The theme of mixed marriages is also briefly mentioned in *Efter åndemaneren*, set shortly before the 20th century. Here, *udstedsbestyrer* Adam Bjerg wishes to marry Sara in order to grant her child some degree of social recognition:

De, hr. Bjerg, er dansk, og De, frøken Sara, er grønlænderinde, selv om jeg er bekendt med at Deres farfar var danskeren Hans Jakob Hansen. Dermed er De ikke en «undersåt» i ordets juridiske betydning, idet De ikke er underkastet de samme regler og love som gælder for borgere i Danmark. Det medfører visse fordele, men også nogle ulemper, blandt andet den at indgåelse af ægteskab mellem jer to fordrer en særlig tilladelse, det vil sige et kongebrev. [...] Skaarup smiler. Aldrig betegner i dette tilfælde en periode der endnu ikke er udløbet. Nogle venter stadig forhåbningsfuldt, mens andre har givet op.
Hvad betyder det?
Det betyder at de bare bor sammen uden at være gift.

⁴¹⁰ «without the inclusion of any blasphemous antics» (Leine 2015: 420).

⁴¹¹ «I am certain the Lord acknowledges this marriage, even though its ceremony was not performed by a member of the ordained clergy» (Leine 2015: 420).

Hvad skal vi så gøre?

Lad være med at gifte jer, siger Skaarup. Lev sammen, elsk hinanden, modtag min personlige lykønskning. Men kirkens officielle velsignelse skal I ikke sætte næsen op efter.⁴¹² (Leine 2021b: 475-476)

Official rules and regulations still do not allow the union of a Danish man and a Greenlandic woman, but Skaarup's viewpoint on the matter seems to be more indulgent and disillusioned than that of *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden*'s Kragstedt. Living together as an unmarried couple, in Skaarup's words, does not equate to living in sin, it is just the most practical and viable solution. Although there has not been a shift in terms of legislation, there is a demonstration of a more open mentality in this regard. Therefore, it could be argued that things are slowly changing in spite of the anachronistic laws still echoing colonial discourses that draw on a rigid demarcation between Danes and Greenlanders.

4.5 Concluding Remarks

The gap addressed by Amar Acheraïou as to the significance of 'class' in postcolonial studies can also be identified in the specific case of scholarly literature revolving around *dansk grønlandslitteratur* – although a few exceptions can be found, for instance in contributions by Risak (1973), Thisted (2011a), and Dybdal & Grønlund (2020). Only Risak, however, offers a systematic investigation on the matter. Acheraïou's critique of the general tendency of postcolonial studies to focus on Bhabha's notions of 'hybridity' and 'third space', have been here somewhat mitigated in order to offer an analysis that is coherent with the other chapters of the dissertation, where these same notions play a considerable role. This approach is supported by the decision to consider 'class' more in relation to 'ethnicity' and 'gender' than as an independent category. My primary interest has been to verify whether it is possible to find recurring narratives about 'class' in some of the novels pertaining to my corpus – namely Lotte Inuk's *Sultekunstnerinde*, Iben Mondrup's *Godhavn* and *Tabita*, and Kim Leine's trilogy about colonial Greenland. The works of fiction that I have taken into consideration belong either to

⁴¹² «You, Mr. Bjerg, are Danish, and you, Miss Sara, are Greenlandic, although I am aware that your grandfather was the Dane Hans Jakob Hansen. Thus, you are not a "subject" in the legal sense of the word, as you are not subject to the same rules and laws that apply to citizens of Denmark. This has certain advantages, but also some disadvantages, including the fact that a marriage between the two of you requires special permission, i.e. a royal letter. [...] Skaarup smiles. In this case, 'never' denotes a period of time that has not yet expired. Some are still waiting hopefully, while others have given up. What does that mean? It means they are just living together without being married. What should we do? Don't get married, says Skaarup. Live together, love each other, receive my personal congratulations. But don't look for the official blessing of the church», my translation.

autofiction or to the historical genre. This element might contribute to explain some of the results obtained: it comes as no surprise, for example, that *Sultekunstnerinde* and *Godhavn* – where the points of view presented belong to children who do not have a class conscience, feature a certain degree of what I have called ‘class-blindness’. In these cases, there is a competition between the dimensions of ‘ethnicity’ and ‘class’ at the expense of the latter. Although differences in terms of material wealth are acknowledged by the characters of the two novels, their existence is not problematized. Using Erik Olin Wright’s terminology, it could be argued that the material conditions of the families appearing in *Sultekunstnerinde* and *Godhavn* are not necessarily correlated to the single attributes of the individuals taken into consideration. ‘Class-blindness’ is also to be found in *Tabita*, according to my analysis. In this case, the feature belongs perhaps more to the narrative structure of the novel than to the single points of view of the characters. There is a clear demarcation, in fact, between ‘Greenlandicness’/‘Danishness’, on the one side, and upper/lower class on the other. The resulting image is that of a monolithic society, where ‘Greenlandicness’ is equated with material disadvantage and social disease – perhaps matching the expectations of the Danish generalist reader who has no direct knowledge of Greenland and is exposed to ever-lasting prejudices regarding the former Arctic colony. Leine’s trilogy, in this sense, offers an element of novelty: the colonial societies he describes (Sukkertoppen, Godthåb, and Sydprøven) are both varied and, at least to a certain degree, permeable. The *blandinger* characters appearing in the three novels – Bertel, Hanseraaq, Jens etc. – contribute to challenging the hierarchy characterizing those societies and their values, although on a more individual level. The matter is different in the case of the community of the Eternal Fjord, which, in its own small way, attempts to dismantle that same structure in the name of a more equal society. Therefore, it could be argued, the ‘Greenlandic’ production of these three contemporary writers clearly presents an attempt to overcome the rigid binarisms that tend to characterize *dansk grønlandslitteratur* as a genre, and the process occurs on a variety of levels that overlap, intertwine and dialogue with one another.

CONCLUSIONS

Greenland – a hot topic in Danish public debates out of different reasons, including global warming, geopolitical matters, and discourses on decoloniality – still unsurprisingly elicits literary fiction from Danish writers. Straddling a variety of genres, this literary production has experienced a visible quantitative increase over the past two decades. Among these, the historical novel and autofictional/realistic narrations seem to be the most frequent formulas through which Danish writers attempt new understandings of Denmark and Greenland's common history, or reflect on their own positioning as Danes approaching postcolonial Greenland – not only as authors of fiction but, in many cases, also as migrants. In addition, genre literature concerning the Greenlandic context has also been generally productive: the so-called «Arctic noir» has been flourishing for the last 10-15 years. The same cannot be argued, on the other hand, in relation to speculative fiction regarding Greenland, which remains substantially unexplored by Danish authors, albeit with a few exceptions.

The three writers that I considered in my dissertation – all of whom have developed a peculiar relationship to Greenland by virtue of their experience as migrants on the island – are representative of the aforementioned genres: both Leine and Mondrup have written novels that can be traced back either to the historical novel or the autofictional/realistic narration, and have even experimented with the possibilities offered by speculative fiction, as is the case of *De søvnløse* and *Kraftværk*. Lotte Inuk, conversely, has only extensively dealt with Greenland in her autofictional book *Sultekunstnerinde*, generally referred to as a young adult novel. In the present work, I overlooked Leine and Mondrup's dystopian/speculative writings to delve into the other two literary modalities.

The novels presenting the characteristics of the autofictional/realistic narration are Leine's *Kalak*, Inuk's *Sultekunstnerinde*, and Mondrup's *Godhavn*. To a limited extent, at least according to Volquardsen (2014a), Mondrup's *Store Malene* also features some autofictional traits, and it was therefore taken into account along with the other three books. All of them are concerned with the definition of the protagonists' identity – either torn between 'Greenlandicness' and 'Danishness' or, at least, questioned by the cultural encounter with the Other. The other novels pertaining to my corpus – Kim Leine's trilogy on colonial Greenland (2012-2021) and Mondrup's *Tabita* and *Vittu* – fall under the category of the historical novel, although with some variations. In fact, while Mondrup's works tend to adhere to a verisimilar representation of post-colonial Greenland, historical events are accompanied by drifts towards

magical realism in Kim Leine's *Rød mand/Sort mand* and *Efter åndemaneren*. This aspect, however, has not played a crucial role in my analysis, which is more concerned with the narratives and understandings of the common history of Denmark and Greenland portrayed in the texts.

The research questions guiding my study are directly linked to the choice of limiting it to the two aforementioned genres. One of my main interests was to verify whether the authors' direct knowledge of the Greenlandic postcolonial context – as conveyed through their autofictional works – resulted in new literary discourses regarding the complex society they describe, not necessarily aligning with Danish stereotypes. In focusing on this aspect, I build on the presupposition that challenging long-lasting preconceptions on 'Greenlandicness' occurs on a number of levels – all of them concerned with identity, be it ethnic, gender-, or class-related. Delving into the genre of the historical novel, on the other hand, elicited considerations on whether these works, drafted in the last 10-15 years, attempt to dismantle the Danish rhetoric of self-absolution by aligning with the current *Zeitgeist*, characterized by a progressively stronger interest for decolonization-related discourses, such as the urge to acknowledge Denmark's responsibilities vis-à-vis Greenland in an attempt for reconciliation.

To answer these questions, I have adopted an 'intersectional' approach. The contraposition between the opposing dimensions of 'Danishness' and 'Greenlandicness', which is tendentially the core focus of studies regarding this kind of literature, is only at the center of the first thematic chapter of my dissertation. The analysis has been further enriched by a continuous dialogue between discourses on ethnic identity and other categories of social difference, namely gender and class. The interplay between them – or, rather, the «interference», to use an expression from Ingunn Moser's studies, which I refer to throughout the present work – emerges in chapters 3 and 4, where new considerations on gender and class add up to what has been previously explained. The three analyses, thus, do not count as discrete and incommunicable units, but are strongly tied to one another.

Four novels were scrutinized in chapter 2, concerning the concept of ethnicity. Three of them can be traced back to the autofictional/realistic modality, namely *Kalak*, *Store Malene*, and *Sultekunstnerinde*. Only one of the historical novels pertaining to the corpus was analyzed with reference to this specific subject, Mondrup's *Tabita*, whose close relationship to factual reality is stressed by the writer herself in the paratext (see *supra*, p. 151). Ethnicity was investigated by linking notions and theorizations stemming from anthropology to considerations on *dansk grønlandslitteratur* as a genre, i.e., on some of its founding tropes.

Three significant literary motifs viewed as identity-markers for ‘Greenlandicness’ were isolated: first, the ever-recurring association between Greenlandic culture and a close contact to nature, extensively attested in Danish fictional representations of Greenland and Greenlanders. Fluency in Greenlandic and the consumption of what is perceived to be traditional Greenlandic food also appear to be decisive elements to determine ‘authentic Greenlandicness’ in the novels. Interestingly, in *Tabita* – despite the book’s evident anticolonial intent – these aspects are represented through modalities still leaning towards essentialism (and the consequent dichotomy ‘Danishness’ vs. ‘Greenlandicness’). This is also the case of *Store Malene*, more explicitly problematizing (and mocking) the risks of this mindset, in its characterization of Mette and Jesper. *Kalak* and *Sultekunstnerinde*, on the other hand, contribute to the shaping of alternative narratives in this regard, perhaps by virtue of their strong autofictional component – which is likely to have implied a reflection on the Danish protagonists’ positioning as migrants in the Greenlandic postcolonial context. Both Kim and Charlotta, in fact, perceive themselves as torn between two identities, and their sense of not-belonging causes a certain degree of discomfort, if not pain. Kim, despite his background, manages to integrate into the local society as a *kalak* – a behavior viewed with condescendence by the narrator/author, when recalling his own story – and Charlotta clearly comes across as a ‘hybrid’ between ‘Danishness’ and ‘Greenlandicness’, and finds her own dimension in an undecidedness between the two. This instability, however, might play a role with regard to the two characters’ existential irresoluteness, which manifests itself in substance abuse, in the case of Kim, and in an eating disorder, in the case of Charlotta.

The dimension of gender, introduced in chapter 3, adds up to the considerations made in the previous section of the dissertation. Similarly to what happens with ethnicity, discourses on gender can deviate towards essentialism, thus engendering narratives grounded upon the dichotomy of oppositional categories, such as ‘man’ vs. ‘woman’, ‘feminine’ vs. ‘masculine’. If, besides gender identity, we also insert sexual preferences in the matrix, it is possible to identify a demarcation between ‘heterosexuality’ and ‘homosexuality’/‘queerness’. All these categorizations, as happens with ‘Danishness’ and ‘Greenlandicness’, presuppose a power imbalance resulting in an implicit hierarchization. Challenging these prefixed ‘boxes’ and straying towards ‘hybridity’ therefore arguably implies a rethinking of the *status quo*. As anticipated, (literary) discourses on ethnicity and gender may support and reinforce one another or, conversely, generate contradictions. My analysis shows that two tendencies are to be found in this regard: the aforementioned *status quo* is either presented as such and problematized –

as, for instance, in the case of *Tabita* – or twisted and overturned. Different strategies are employed for this purpose: the characteristics associated with ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ in a patriarchal system are sometimes subverted, and this is particularly evident, for instance, in the case of most Danish women depicted by Mondrup, such as *Store Malene*’s Justine and Mette, and *Godhavn*’s Hilde. All of them present ‘predatory’ qualities and actively challenge gender hierarchies since they come across as ‘objectifying’ rather than as objects of desire. Agency is thus on the side of these women, who exert it in relation to their Danish – but more often Greenlandic – male counterparts. When ethnicity enters the equation, objectification practices drift towards fetishization. These dynamics tendentially occur through the Danish male gaze, represented in its ‘standard’ manifestation by *Tabita*’s Berthel; in *Godhavn* – but, even more evidently so – in *Store Malene*, (problematic) agency is conversely feminine. A deviation from a colonial and patriarchal logic can also be obtained by ‘queering’ the pre-established categories through which reality is understood or represented. In some of the novels investigated, in fact, the idea of a ‘third space’ – echoing that of a hybrid dimension between ‘Greenlandicness’ and ‘Danishness’ – also concerns gender. Such an approach emerges in *Sultekunstnerinde* and, more covertly, in Kim Leine’s trilogy. ‘Greenlandicness’, in the case of *Sultekunstnerinde*’s Charlotta, is a condition oscillating between a «desire to be» and a «desire for», and a similar indecision is replicated with regard to her gender identity/sexual orientation. The girl, in fact, does not seem to find a fixed position among the various possibilities. For instance, she comes across as androgynous, and her interest in her best friend, Malou, acquires an ambiguous quality, which may hint at a romantic connotation. In *Profeterne i Evighedsfjorden*, on the other hand, the figure of the hermaphrodite can be viewed as a sort of *mise en abyme* of the identity-related discourses permeating the whole novel. Also *Efteråndemanneren*’s Jens, one of the many *blandinger* featured in Leine’s trilogy, presents an ‘indefiniteness’ that emerges both in the ethnic and the sexual dimension. The parallelism between these two categories is implied in the words pronounced by the character of Herman Bang: «Men blandinger er der vist mange af, ikke? [...] Det er vi alle som en» (Leine 2021b: 399). Alternative understandings of ‘Greenlandicness’ vs. ‘Danishness’ and, at the same time, gender-related discourses have also been analyzed with a focus on (violent) sexual behaviors. During my investigation, I have delved into incest as a literary motif, bearing in mind that within the Danish public discourse this practice is often associated with discourses on Greenland’s social vulnerability. In the novels belonging to my corpus, this peculiar form of violence, however, is detached from Greenlandic lower-class environments, and is even more

often perpetrated by Danish characters, even in *bourgeois* contexts beyond any suspicion, as happens in *Tabita* and *Vittu*.

Class, as a category of analysis, constituted a theoretical challenge. Contrary to what happens with ethnicity and gender, the idea of ‘deconstruction’ is hardly applicable to this dimension. According to Amar Acheraïou, even in today’s globalized world, class is still evidently tied to a polarizing conception. Nonetheless, my investigation started from the assumption that, in the Danish-Greenlandic postcolonial context, the dichotomy between ‘Danishness’ and ‘Greenlandicness’ often overlaps with that between upper and lower class. The systematical intersection between the two categories allows, at least on a theoretical level, to appreciate a more varied picture; nonetheless, upper-class Greenlanders and lower-class Danes may not necessarily be at the center of a work pertaining to *dansk grønlandslitteratur*. I refer to these two specific categories as ‘grey areas’ – despite the fact that there still is an evident double-axis polarization – with the ambition to verify whether these novels offer narratives aligning with the stereotypical discourses on Greenland’s social (and material) disadvantage, or emancipate from these preconceptions, contributing to the Danish public debate. The dimension of gender was also taken into consideration, bearing in mind that narratives on the chosen identity-generating categories may «sustain and reinforce each other» (Lykke 2010: 84). I refer to the characters’ inability to grasp the complexity of the society they inhabit – or to the author’s decision not to represent it – as ‘class-blindness’, evident in *Sultekunstnerinde*’s Charlotta and *Godhavn*’s Bjørk, both characterized by a substantially naïve gaze on the matter. Charlotta is not immune to the fascination exerted by a more modest lifestyle, which she romanticizes and regards as ‘bohemian’, whereas Bjørk, conceives the society she is a part of is as grounded upon ethnic rather than class-related criteria. Both girls admire (visible) representations of ‘Greenlandicness’, and tend to attribute value to this immaterial asset rather than material wealth. The label of ‘class-blindness’ has also been used with regard to *Tabita* – this time employed to describe Mondrup’s approach to the subject rather than the characters’ perspectives on Greenlandic society. The aforementioned ‘grey areas’ do not seem to take up space in the novel, where ‘Greenlandicness’ is substantially equated with social disadvantage, in a strong contraposition with ‘Danishness’. Considering these presuppositions, Abalone’s affair with Berthel can be viewed as an attempt to break free from this dichotomy, as well as to gain access to the privileges granted to him and his wife. On the other hand, liminal figures – also with reference to class – are arguably at the core of Kim Leine’s trilogy. Here, the writer offers a more nuanced and less monolithic view of the colonial society, concentrating, in

particular, on the agency exerted by Greenlanders and *blandinger* – who often question, be it covertly or not, Danish authority.

A joint and systematic analysis of the representation of ethnicity, gender, and class within a selection of novels by Kim Leine, Iben Mondrup, and Lotte Inuk offers new insights into their production, as well as into its social and historical context. An element of novelty presented by my work is the insertion of class-related discourses into the discussion of a genre – *dansk grønlandslitteratur* – so far characterized by a certain degree of ‘class-blindness’, as most scholarly research dealing with it. Also according to the results of my inquiry, however, the most ‘productive’ categories of social difference in the works that I have considered, remain those of ethnicity and gender. While it certainly does not come as a surprise that the ‘Greenlandic’ novels by Leine, Mondrup, and Inuk feature ethnic identity as a primary aspect of interest – considering that *dansk grønlandslitteratur* often elicits reflections on a Danish reader’s self-understanding – the often striking parallelisms to the gender-related dimension may be unexpected. ‘Ethnicity’ and ‘gender’ are often deconstructed and recombined in Leine, Mondrup, and Inuk’s ‘Greenlandic’ production’, although a tendency to essentialism can still be detected. This is the case, for instance, of *Tabita* and *Kalak* – despite the fact that the latter novel’s problematic aspects are partly mitigated by the possibilities granted by autofiction. Discourses on gender/sexuality emerging from my corpus tendentially reinforce ‘alternative’ narrations regarding ‘Danishness’ and ‘Greenlandicness’, while the matter is more complicated in the case of class. Given the impossibility to conceive this category but in oppositional terms, the detachment from Danish stereotypical preconceptions on Greenland occurs through other modalities – for example by offering a layered depiction of this (post)colonial society, which does not necessarily draw from the association between ‘Greenlandicness’ and socioeconomic vulnerability.

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