NORTHERN VOICES TELLING HISTORIES OF DANISH (POST)COLONIALISM

by

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BA, The University of Copenhagen, 2002

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Programme in Comparative Literature)

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

June 2004

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Title of Thesis: Northern Voices Telling Histories of Danish (Post)Colonialism

Degree: Master of Art
Year: 2004

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Abstract

Within postcolonial theoretical debates of former imperial nations Denmark is rarely mentioned. This thesis examines three novels that represent the colonial legacy of Danish colonisation in the Faroe Islands, Iceland, and Greenland: *Barbara* by Faroese-Danish Jørgen-Frantz Jacobsen, *The Prowler* by Icelandic-Danish-Canadian Kristjana Gunnars, and *Smilla's Sense of Snow* by Danish Peter Høeg. Frantz Fanon argues in *Black Skin, White Masks* that colonisation leads to an inferiority complex in the colonised as they are forced to internalise the norms and values of the colonisers. While Fanon’s claim stems from his race based theory, he argues that such psychological inferiority can be the consequence for any colonised people. Further, Fanon suggests that Whiteness as a concept is perceived as a marker of cultural demeanour and financial capability, that is, Whiteness is as much a class divider as a racial one. The novels unveil how material reality, language, colonial discourse, and, in the case of *Smilla's Sense of Snow*, race work together to strengthen the divide between coloniser and colonised and thus feed internalisation. Holding these novels up against history and the cultural importance of written traditions, this thesis displays how the Danish history of colonialism has had detrimental, yet drastically different, effects for Iceland, the Faroe Islands, and Greenland and continue to have so for the latter two.
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Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Laura Moss, Steven Taubeneck, and Marie Linnet for letting me persuade you to be part of this project and for your patience and advice. Especially to my supervisor Laura Moss, who shaped my two years in Canada with inspiration, challenge, and imagination. Thank you Taiwo Adetunji Osinubi for daily encouragement.

In other parts of the world, my gratitude extends to Bodil Cold-Ravnkilde, Kjeld Larsen, Peter Jensen, Margit Glomm, Gerda Jensen, and Hedda Sodemann for your support forthcoming in many forms; to Stine Eisen and Rosa Borg for your constant cheering; and to Darren MacDonald for all your questions.
Introductions

Is Denmark still a colonial power? Was there ever a Danish empire? How does literature related to Denmark address these questions? How do these questions differ from those in discussions of, say, the British empire? Why is Denmark's colonialist past seldom referred to when debating the current strained relations to new immigrants? While growing up in Denmark, I never heard these questions, let alone any answers. Studying comparative literature and being especially interested in Europe's colonialist history and its consequences, these questions were honed for me with the study of so-called postcolonial literature. Applying a literary colonial discourse analysis at Denmark makes it clear that Denmark has a colonial history, and yet has not begun to look at this history critically. *Barbara* (*Barbara*, 1938) by Jørgen Frantz Jacobsen, *The Prowler* (1989) by Kristjana Gunnars, and *Smilla's Sense of Snow* (*Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne*, 1992) by Peter Høeg are all novels that deal with Denmark's colonialist history. As representative texts, they will provide the ground for my examination of the Faroe Islands, Iceland, and Greenland – all colonised by Denmark but (de)colonised at differing times.

In *Colonial Desire* Robert Young asks whether we can assume “that colonial discourse operates identically not only across all space but also throughout time? In short, can there be a general theoretical matrix that is able to provide an all-encompassing framework for the analysis of each singular colonial instance?” (164-5). One way of looking for an answer to Young's question is to take the supposed theoretical matrix and employ it to a different area, rather than to the most common (British or French) colonies. Another way is to take that matrix and apply it simultaneously along a continuum of time and a variety of spaces; along different colonial instances.
This thesis does not, as it can not, encompass all Danish colonies in its geographical scope. The three areas selected are close to Denmark, to each other, and hence all part of a 'Northern identity' and of Scandinavia. Furthermore, the Faroe Islands and Greenland are still effected in constitution by colonisation and Iceland, not having a national armed force but having the US-operated Keflavik air base and having been subjugated by Denmark, England and the USA in turn in the twentieth century, can similarly be said to have a still visible colonial history.

To analyse examples of literature dealing with the Faroe Islands, Iceland, and Greenland, I will work with Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (*Peau noire, masques blancs*, 1952) and the notion of internalisation – Fanon’s argument that the colonised individuals are forced to hold a psychologically detrimental view of themselves. With internalisation as a hypothesis for my analyses, I will attempt to shed some light on what is (post)colonial about the conditions of the characters and events in the novels, against the backdrop of the historical events that will be outlined in the next chapter. How can the effects of colonialism be seen in the language of the texts (of characters, author, and perhaps even other voices within the text) and in the basic physical factors oppression brings? In what ways are Denmark, the Faroe Islands, Iceland, and Greenland (post)colonial?

Several terms within postcolonial thinking are constantly shifting and will require definition as I move along. However, ironically, no term is as slippery and laced with pitfalls as 'postcolonial' itself. Firstly, “[r]ather than simply being the writing which ‘came after’ empire, postcolonial literature is that which critically scrutinizes the colonial relationship” (Elleke Boehmer 3) – it stages the effects of colonialism on individuals, cultures and, more often than not, on nations.
Secondly, postcolonialism as a theoretical matrix is used to analyse power relations in culture; nationalism; official history; individual history (including sexual relations); history of science; institutions (including education); race and ethnicity; the canon; and languages.¹ As a theoretical label, the term has long been debated for several reasons (see, for instance, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, Linda Hutcheon, Laura Moss, Ella Shohat, and Stephen Slemon). The problems of implied linear temporality inherent in the prefix ‘post’ are exposed when working with the Faroe Islands and Greenland – still ‘under Danish crown.’² Another question necessary to address is that of the universal versus the local (see Homi Bhabha, Benita Parry, and Young). There is a danger of universalising with postcolonialism, of throwing the sensitive cases of, for instance, Canadian First Nations onto the same shelf as Rom people, Palestinians, or Inuit, of equating all groups as the same singular colonised subjects. There are similarities and they can be strategically employed, yet it is critical that the spatial, temporal, material, and individual differences are kept right in front of the reading eyes.

The third part of a definition of the postcolonial is a brief description of the postcolonial literary reading strategy. By using Fanon and later scholars of postcolonialism such as Tzvetan Todorov, Anna Rutherford and Kirsten Holst-Petersen, Sangeeta Ray, Diana Brydon, Linda Hutcheon, Enoch Padolsky, Prem Poddar and Cheralyn Mealor, Edward Said, Ashcroft et al., and Young on different colonial instances I will, in the words of Ashcroft et al., “draw deliberate attention to the profound and inescapable effects of colonization on literary production” (Post-Colonial 192). As they further explain, it is a “deconstructive reading ... which

¹ The issues listed are close to, yet not identical to, those Laura Moss provides in Is Canada Postcolonial p. 4.
demonstrates the extent to which the text contradicts its underlying assumptions" (Post-Colonial 192). In the three novels in question, such assumptions range from the positivity of science; equality as inherent in nationalism; hybridity as solution; to explanations automatically bringing justice. This reading will unsettle assumptions stemming from a colonialist history – in the novels and in the way they are read.

In *Is Canada Postcolonial?* Laura Moss observes: “Although a great deal has been written about postcolonialism – as a chronological marker, a global condition, a geographical category, and a literary reading strategy – over the past fifteen years, until very recently surprisingly little has specifically addressed the position of Canada and Canadian culture” (2). Why has next to nothing been written on the position of Denmark and Danish literature? Realising that postcolonialism springs from studies of English literatures does not stop me from thinking that its central issues and the reading strategy it applies would yield an insightful and prolific outcome when employed elsewhere. Thus, working with Fanon and later critics of colonial literature, my methodology will be the above termed postcolonial literary reading strategy. Postcolonialism as chronological marker is not the focus here, as I work with a continuum of time and as the Faroe Islands and Greenland are yet to become independent, whereas Iceland is an independent nation. Similarly, postcolonialism as a geographical category will only be touched upon to highlight the differences in the material conditions of the countries. Finally, postcolonialism as a global condition will not be discussed here. Firstly, for the reason of the above mentioned dangers of universalising; secondly, because the political, geographical, cultural, and historical factors are different in the four countries; and thirdly, it is a point of this thesis that Denmark has not yet reached the state of critically scrutinising its own colonialist past without thinking in binary oppositions. In so far as I focus on literary representations
of the consequences of colonialism, I will apply the postcolonial reading strategy
mainly to postcolonialism as the various cultural, political, and thereby individual
effects on Denmark, the Faroe Islands, Iceland, and Greenland.

Working with Fanon’s notion of internalisation in a context of Northern literature,
one again has to be wary of universalising, as Fanon’s writing is strongly rooted in his
own time and place. *Black Skin, White Masks* was written as a direct response to the
racism Fanon experienced in France and in French colonies. The thrust of his
argument, however, lies in the way the internalisation of a negative self-image is
unavoidable for the colonised, as colonial institutions and cultural codes work to
strengthen the divide between coloniser and colonised. It is this theory of
internalisation and its traumatic effects that I will work with, to ask whether or not
internalisation is always connected with skin colour. Can internalisation be seen in
colonial situations where both sides of the divide have white skin, as for instance in
Iceland? If internalisation can be found in fictions from the Northern hemisphere, it
can be argued that it is a sign of the detrimental effects of any colonialism. Even when
there are no physical signifiers to act as grounds for racism, other signifiers will be
created to uphold the oppositional binary necessary for the dialectic relation of
coloniser to colonised.

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon’s argument of internalisation revolves around
the history of racial discourse as it focuses on skin colour and how metaphors of
black/dark are associated with danger and the negative as opposed to white/light as
pure and positive. Consequently, Fanon analyses the power inherent in language.
Initially it is the speech act, and the notion that “to speak is to exist absolutely for the

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3 I do not, by any stretch, argue or interpret that colour is the definitive mode of imperial exploitation, nor that the
power relations discussed here are fixed by physical facts alone (one has only to remember the atrocities committed
to the Sámi people in Scandinavia and Russia to concede).
other” (17) that Fanon is referring to, but then the language in question becomes that of culture; the discourse of acculturation. Fanon asserts that “[t]o speak ... means above all to assume a culture” (17) and that “[m]astery of language affords remarkable power” (18). The black person “will be proportionately whiter – that is, he will come closer to being a real human being – in direct ratio to his mastery of the French language” (18). In this passage, it is evident that Fanon is not only referring to language, but to the discourse of acculturation; “The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country’s cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness” (18). There are, however, several themes at play in the quotations – Fanon shows us interrelated aspects of the problems of racism.

First, Whiteness and Blackness are not two isolated concepts; they imply one another and there is a continuum between them.⁴ Here Fanon is not referring to the then-named ‘science of hybridisation’ – what percentage of which ‘colour’ of blood in a body – but to the culturally determined scale of how close an individual is to the centre of a specific culture. Secondly, Fanon shows which culture is normative. Mastery of French language makes one a real human being, turns the individual whiter and elevates her or him. Thirdly, Fanon points to the power invested in the binary of White/Black. The colonised is at the low end of a power scale but making her- or himself the master of language amplifies power. To become White is to gain power, to raise oneself above the bottom. Finally, Fanon points to the power inherent

⁴ In my writing, capitalising ‘white’ and ‘black’ will refer to them as metaphorical concepts, whereas normal spelling will refer to actual skin colour. Not arguing for essentialism, I do, however, read Fanon to not only discuss the signifiers of a colonial scale of power, but also to address concretely the direct and raw realities of racism – and thereby of skin colour.
in cultural expressions. The power scale Fanon thus describes, is what my analysis will disclose and question when looking at cultural expressions in the three novels.

Fanon discusses the entire cultural demeanour of the colonised. Commenting on the change in the one who has actually gone to the 'mother country' and come back, he mentions clothes, furniture and forms of social intercourse as examples of how the returned will mimic the coloniser. Mimicry as a menace to the colonial power has become crucial for Bhabha's description of colonial discourse as ambiguous. In each of the present novels there is a character that mimics the colonisers, and thereby becomes estranged from the native community and a threat to the coloniser. Such a character not only draws attention to the power relation between coloniser and colonised, but to the disruptive potential in such an almost parodic figure, as s/he will be, as Bhabha says, "almost the same but not quite" (86). In Black Skin, White Masks it is with the mimicry that the central theme of a psychological complex in the colonised enters the text. Fanon narrates several shocking stories of trauma from literature and from his experiences as a psychoanalyst. The inferiority complex is a result of a double process, primarily economic and subsequently "the internalization – or, better, the epidermalization – of this inferiority" (11). For, "the fact that the newly returned Negro adopts a language different from that of the group into which he was born is evidence of a dislocation, a separation" (25). The black individual trying to rise over the other black individual shows that s/he has in fact internalised the structure of colonisation. It is the mimicry and the 'Whitening' desired by his fellows that outrages Fanon, as he personally experienced its futility and deleterious effects.

The formative realisation begins in the body. The body, in Fanon's race based theory, is primarily a site for representation and signification of difference. For a black person in the white world, awareness of the body is "solely a negating activity" (110),
Fanon explains. A mind that has been raised on White language, White literature, White values, White norms and, above all, white race prejudice, will see the world through White eyes. Consequently, below “the corporal schema” (111), which Fanon points out to be the nexus of realisation, lies “a historico-racial schema” (111) that equally furnishes the psychological complex. The bodies and the selves they represent were created not by the black person, but by the white “who had woven [Blackness] out of a thousand details, anecdotes, stories” (111). Thus internalisation creates a split between the physical experience of self and the experience of the differing cultural values attached to different physicalities. A split between two or more perceived realities is visible in each of the protagonists I scrutinise here. Faroese Barbara is marked by a split between her own actions and the world around her, illustrated by the distance between her and all discourse within the plot. Yet the reader never gets Barbara’s own viewpoint and she is thereby woven out of details and stories related by the other characters, by the author, and later by literary critics. This second split shows how the characters have internalised the norms of the colonisers; how the author cannot fully grasp the metaphor of the nation he is creating – perhaps because he was of mixed background; and how criticism of Barbara has failed to address the split within Barbara as possible resistance. The protagonist of The Prowler relates how the hard post-colonial times still showed a split within the children of Iceland – especially when they were exposed to prejudice in Denmark. Further, she exemplifies how such a identity split causes distance to any sense of belonging. Last, in Smilla’s Sense of Snow, Smilla embodies the split, Fanon tried to negotiate. Her life seems to be nothing but a struggle to reconcile her double background and the value conflict inherent in it, and her body is symbolically wounded in the attempt. None of these three characters has an identity which can be easily explained, and their bodies often
represent "solely a negating activity" of trying to come to terms with unmatchable differences.

Central to Fanon's argument is that internalisation of the negative self-image is unavoidable for the colonised, as language, religion, law and other factors of colonialism constantly reiterate it. My thesis is that internalisation can also be found, albeit grounded in signifiers other than visual and chromatic, in Northern colonies, as I believe internalisation to be a central psychological reasoning and effect of colonialism.

Through considerations of the theoretical, geographical, historical and cultural issues discussed above, I have chosen Barbara, The Prowler, and Smilla’s Sense of Snow as representative texts. Realising how severely the views on colonialism change with perspective, the focal points of my analysis are further constructed to represent three perspectives: inside, outside, and beyond the colony and/or the colonial discourse. The perspective of the inside is that of the coloniser's, be it government agents, scientists, priests, or others in position of colonial power, here it is that of a citizen of Denmark. Further, inside is the perspective from within the centre of power, in this case Copenhagen. Encircling that centre, and outside the country's geographical borders, is the periphery forming the colonies. Consequently, the perspective from the outside is that of the colonised, for instance a citizen of the Faroe Islands. Moving beyond such binaries presents a possibly postcolonial perspective. The perspective of beyond belongs to the one who has migrated away from a (former)

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5 The term 'citizen' is problematic, as it implies an autonomous nation. None of the three colonies in question can, at the time they are described in these texts, be said to be autonomous, as they are colonised. However, terms such as 'inhabitant' or 'resident' do not apply either, as the protagonist of The Prowler writes from the perspective of living in another nation. The term 'native' would be explosive, as the protagonist of Smilla’s Sense of Snow can hardly be said to be a native of Denmark, where she lives. Finally, the otherwise politically correct term 'descendent of' cannot cover either The Prowler or Smilla’s Sense of Snow, as both protagonists are of mixed descent.
colonised nation, for instance a citizen of any of the (former) Danish colonies that moved to another country, perhaps as a consequence of colonisation. Engaging in analysis of (colonial) discourses – the expressed social knowledge, the system of statements outlining and constantly reproducing what is believed to be true in a society, the consensus of common goals – each perspective can reveal what lies behind the words of the other perspectives.

Setting up three novels as representing three colonial instances and three perspectives on colonialism is intended to uncover some signs of the effects colonial history has had in this area. To employ these three perspectives it is necessary to look at why decolonisation has been proceeding differently in the three countries, and I do so through Todorov’s thesis that the stronger a literary tradition a community has, the better can it withstand the erasing effects of invasion and colonisation. Scrutinising the cultural history of the countries in question held up against Danish imperialism in the area, I argue that the difference in relation to language, oral traditions, and written literature is one of the reasons why the recent histories of the Faroe Islands, Iceland, and Greenland varies a great deal. The perspectives of inside, outside, and beyond the colony and/or the colonial discourse will be tools to look at how the novels negotiate this history and, for The Prowler and Smilla’s Sense of Snow, the process of decolonisation.

Barbara is not directly autobiographical, yet the story is based on fictionalised facts: Jacobsen was of mixed Danish/Faroe descent and wrote Barbara, his only novel, as a monument of his love for the Faroese Estrid Bannister. Barbara represents the perspective of the colonised, that of a citizen of a colonised country. Barbara, a Faroese character, spends all her time trying to attain a relationship to a Danish man with the highest possible powers in the community. This gendered power relation
shows her, in the term of Rutherford and Holst-Petersen, as ‘doubly colonised’. As has been shown by scholars such as McClintock, Ray, Rutherford, and Holst-Petersen, there is an underlying and often hidden connection between the imagined nation and the female body in literature.6 Barbara is the sexual centre of a historical romance taking place in the eighteenth century, in a plot where the metaphorical connection between her, nature, and the land of her country, is opposed to the men coming from Denmark, bringing religion, education and judicial structure. Reading Barbara as a metaphor for the nation makes it possible to understand the novel as Jacobsen writing anticolonialist resistance, since she is never contained in language or meaning.

Keeping Jacobsen’s close ties with the coloniser in mind (he studied and worked in Copenhagen and wrote in Danish), I will in my analysis look for internalisation in both the characters and the narration to consider how they might be effected by colonisation. The focus will be the colonial, as Barbara was written in, and depicts, a time when the Faroe Islands were still dominated by Danish clergy, bureaucrats and moral norms. This perspective – the outside – will tell us about the immediate reactions and conflicts arising from colonisation.

The Prowler represents the ‘possibly postcolonial.’ The Prowler is an autobiographical novel written by an Icelandic author of mixed Icelandic and Danish descent, now living in Canada. Gunnars, in other words, has written The Prowler from the perspective of beyond. The postcolonial position the narrator epitomises by choosing to live in a third country is one of retrospect, and the questions that can be

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6 In En-Gendering India, Sangeeta Ray argues that there is a “use of the ubiquitous trope of nation-as-woman in all nationalist discourses” (3), showing how this trope has been utilised by both imperialist and nationalist literary discourses surrounding India. Woman as metaphor for the landscape and consequently for the nation can be seen in countless examples. In Ireland, for instance in Yeat’s 1902 Kathleen Ni Houlihan, or in the ever shifting face of Marianne, the symbol of France. An interesting example of the metaphorical connection between the nation and the female body in the context of Danish relations to its ‘dependencies,’ is that queen Margrethe often wears the Faroese national costume when she visits the Faroe Islands and Inuit clothing when she goes to Greenland.
raised in such a position are helpful when looking at narratives taking place within the still colonised space. Gunnars emphasises the experience of fragmentation that result from being uprooted many times, and thus gives several clues of the psychological consequences of colonisation. Gunnars shows the power Denmark has asserted over its Northern colonies: “The border between Iceland and Denmark is very visible. It is all water, and to cross over it becomes necessary to sail for ten days. In the beginning of the twentieth century, most of the food, the books and the medicine were still on the Danish side” (152). Gunnars remembers being called ‘white Inuit’ in Danish schools. This term has spawned new arguments in the debate about hybridisation versus purity of culture (Hutcheon/Brydon/Padolsky), and the questions and arguments of this debate are useful for a discussion of Northern (post)colonial literature. Further, both the perspective and the form of *The Prowler* are open in a way that could be promising for a debate of postcolonialism in Denmark, as it has been in Canada.

*Smilla’s Sense of Snow* takes us inside, to the centre of Danish colonisation: Copenhagen. Høeg tells a story of the hunt for explanations, carried out by Smilla, whose father was a Danish doctor and whose mother was an Inuit hunter. *Smilla* ironically represents by its Danish author the perspective of the coloniser. Smilla is a citizen of Denmark, of a colonising country, but was born to an indigenous woman, on colonised ground. What defines the novel’s status? Author or protagonist? The combination of Høeg’s perspective from the inside and Smilla’s familiarity with the perspective from both inside and outside power and the centre will reveal something about Denmark’s colonial status and thus the novel is defined as a work from the inside in this context. The Danish male author has taken the risky step of giving the voice of narration to a female Greenlandic protagonist, which raises the question of appropriation: how does Høeg, belonging to the dominant culture, take over pieces of
the culture he describes as dominated, thus incorporating it as part of the dominant culture yet again? Conversely, appropriation is also central when examining the way Høeg has Smilla take over both language and cultural signifiers of the dominant culture to resist exactly that dominance. Smilla was relocated to Denmark early in her life and from the beginning encounters “the classic Danish persecution of those who are different” (Høeg 87) but reacts with a peculiar mix of extreme violence and by occupational success. This combined with the several disparate voices in the text – science, travelogue, memory, linguistics, and detective story – could be a sign of an author deliberately trying to rewrite History. If Høeg is doing so in order to point to a (post)colonial conflict within Danish history, past and present, does he succeed?

Reading *Smilla* with a postcolonial reading strategy, it becomes clear that the novel does indeed question Denmark's colonialist history. Yet it does so on a basis of appropriating the voice of the other, in a way that does not unsettle the inside/outside binary of colonialism.

To the best of my knowledge, *Barbara* has not yet been read directly as a novel of resistance. Though Barbara’s position as doubly colonised is troublesome for such a reading, it is nevertheless a crucial reading to open up when looking at the strained relations between the Faroe Islands and Denmark. Perhaps it is telling for Denmark’s part of this relation that such a reading has not been undertaken. *Barbara* adheres to a binary view of inside/outside the centre as does many interpretations of it. This binary is unsettled in *The Prowler*, written beyond, and looking back from a place of multiplicity. Although the fragmentation, openness, and multiplicity presented in *The Prowler* are not only positive, but tinged with pain, I believe it represents a possibility of meeting in between, of reconciliation. It opens up a space for a democratic negotiation of the past and present effects of colonialism, a space where not only the
official story is heard. I argue that the readings of *Barbara* and the writing of *Smilla* are signs that Denmark’s relations to the Faroe Islands and Greenland are that of a coloniser’s still. Until the telling of colonialism moves to a place of multiplicity, as in *The Prowler*, beyond a binary of who is inside and outside the colonial centre of Copenhagen, there will be no meeting in between. Perhaps this state of things is logical, considering that Iceland is the only country of the three that is an independent republic and that *The Prowler* was written from the third space, that Canada in this context represents. Yet literature and literary criticism have before shown themselves to have disruptive qualities – would it not be an imaginative place from where to begin the necessary change? Instead, Denmark at the moment seems to be left, by these literary representations, as a place where Danes and others do not mix – and if they do, as in *Smilla’s Sense of Snow*, it has only negative consequences.
Histories

History must be the background for questions raised within the matrix of postcolonial discussion. As it is for the questions raised in the following chapters, this chapter is an overview of the parts of Denmark's history related to colonialism. When looking at the representations of (post)colonialism in *Barbara, Smilla's Sense of Snow,* and *The Prowler,* it is clear that although the history of settlement and colonisation in each of the countries have several similarities, the differences in the process of decolonisation are extreme. Such a comparison will have to consider geography, economy, and culture. The cultural developments of the Faroe Islands, Iceland, and Greenland differs in terms of language and literary traditions which could be one of the reasons why their status is so different today. In *Imagined Communities,* Benedict Anderson shows how nationalism is intrinsically linked to written traditions such as the novel and the newspaper. Nationalism is often one of the driving forces of anti-colonialist struggles. Consequently, one can ask: is the initial lack of a written tradition in the Faroe Islands and Greenland one of the reasons why they are still not independent nations?

Even before emblems of modernism such as the newspaper and commonly available books came to be so important for defining a community, written traditions often served to reinforce tradition and secure survival. In *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other* from 1984, Tzvetan Todorov traces the importance of communication skills for the fate of the aboriginals of Mexico. According to Todorov, the main advantage that the Spanish had over the Indians, as he terms them, was the written language, not the obvious superiority of horses, weapons, armour, will to power, or the invisible superiority of being naturalised bearers of deadly diseases. Thus Todorov, as many have before and after him, asserts that language is power:
“Did the Spaniards defeat the Indians by means of signs?” is the question Todorov raises.

The decisive difference between Spanish and Indian communication is writing. For although the Aztec and the Mayans did have calendars, maps, and other sources on paper, their tradition of learning and of communication was mainly oral. "Masters in the art of ritual discourse, the Indians are inadequate in a situation requiring improvisation, and this is precisely the situation of the conquest" (Todorov 87). Thus “Western civilization has conquered, among other reasons, because of its superiority in human communication” (Todorov 251). Due to this “superiority,” Western countries had a major advantage from the beginning of colonisation in the Americas.

Further, Todorov compares the Mayans, the Aztec, and the Incas in terms of their communication traditions. In this comparison of communicative modes and consequent regard of the foreign enemy, Todorov finds a gradation in how the three groups responded. According to Todorov, the Mayans had the “rudiments of phonetic writing”, their leaders were chosen for their ability to interpret figurative expressions, and since they had already been invaded, they were sceptical of Spanish rhetoric from the beginning (78-83). The Aztec used ink and paper, as did the Mayans, but to draw pictograms, which were only intelligible through the ritual discourse accompanying them; their leaders were chosen for eloquence in speech; and the Aztec initially believed the Spanish to be gods (Todorov 78-80). Of the three groups, the Incas had the weakest communication tradition and believed firmly that the Spanish were gods (80). Thus Todorov shows how there was a direct link between communicative technologies and the way these Indians regarded the Spanish. Whether one believes the newcomers to be gods or enemies obviously effects how one receives them and what position one takes. There are great differences between the conquest of Mexico
and the colonisation in the North Atlantic – in terms of geography, culture, time, and degree of violence and fatality. Yet they are both examples of how imperialism effects everyone, but effects different people differently. Perhaps Todorov’s thesis regarding the vital importance of a written language applies to the situation of the Faroe Islands, Iceland, and Greenland as well?

The European history of imperialism – which Edward Said defines as “the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory” (8) – is what begun in 1492. From imperialism sprung colonialism. Generally, when discussing colonialism represented in literature, it is the colonialism that began in the seventeenth, but expanded rapidly in the nineteenth century with actual settlements in distant areas that is referred to, “the exploitation ... of resources, and the attempt to govern the indigenous inhabitants of occupied lands” (Elleke Boehmer 2). Which term can be used for the Vikings? Not ‘imperialism,’ as there was no metropolitan centre or single, central power. Not ‘colonialism,’ for although the Danish Vikings did form settlements in England and France these settlements did not answer to a single, central power at home. Although Danish kings conquered England and Norway and even gained some control in Sweden, Denmark did not at the time manage to establish a lasting empire. Usually the term applied is ‘conquests.’ These conquests, these ongoing raids on distant shores can be seen as a beginning of later Danish imperialism.

Already in Nordic mythology an aggressive stance to the other can be seen: the Nordic creation myth is a feast of violence; shaping the land out of shattered body parts; and drawing of borders. Even though this mythology was gradually left behind
as Denmark became Christian in the eleventh century,¹ the conquering continued: at different times, Denmark has ruled over Estonia² (1219-1346); Norway (1380-1814); Sweden (1397-1523); Iceland (1380-1944); Greenland (1721-); The Faeroe Islands (1380-); Tranquebar (1620-1815) in Southern India; Serampore (1755-1845) in Eastern India; the Nicobar Islands (1784-1868); the Gold Coast (1658-1850); several islands in the West Indies (1733-1917); and attempted colonisation in Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Sierra Leone and Ghana.³ Denmark has a colonial history indeed. How has this history effected the Faroe Islands, Iceland, Greenland, and their literature, respectively?

Until 1380

The early histories of the Faroe Islands, Føroyar, and Iceland, Lydhveldidh Island, resemble each other in many ways. The Irish author Dicuil’s observations are the earliest known written source⁴ and if this source is to be trusted, the Faroe Islands were discovered and inhabited by Irish hermits around 700. According to Anthony Jackson, Dicuil writes around 825, when the Irish were forced to evacuate “because of Norse pirates” (qtd. in Jackson 22). The first mentioning of Iceland also stems from Dicuil, who writes about the uninhabited 'Thule,' which a monk told him about, where midnight was so bright that “a man could do whatever he wished as though the sun was there, even remove lice from his shirt” (qtd. in Gunnar Karlsson 9). Landnámabók or the Book of Settlements has differing versions of how Iceland was actually discovered but it appears as if the Norse in 870 settled in Reykjavik. In the period from

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¹ The mythology of the Vikings has never been left entirely, though, which is an important trace to study, when looking at names and place names in Danish literature and everyday life.

² According to the legend, the Danish flag Dannebrog fell down from the sky during the conquering of Estonia.

³ Dates as stated in Glyn Jones, Klavs Randsborg, Richard Tomasson, Anthony Jackson, and Kenneth Zysk.

⁴ The Greek geographer Pytheas claimed to have reached ‘Thule’ around 330-300 BCE, but his accounts of exploration are lost (Jackson, 20).
800 to 1300-1400 the Norse (*norrøne*) language was spoken similarly in all areas populated by Norwegian colonisers, writes Jógván Isaksen (*Færøsk* 23). Both the Faroe Islands and Iceland were settled by the Norse, but both also quickly developed their own distinct culture, as their language and literature show.

Iceland became the location of the world’s oldest legislative assembly, *Altinget*, which was established in 930.\(^5\) "Iceland ... housed for centuries a Christian, literate society which had no prince of any kind and no unified executive power. Iceland thus offers a rare example of a society that tried to preserve law and order without a ruler" (21), Karlsson comments in *Iceland’s 1100 Years: History of a Marginal Society*. Several Icelandic sagas mention that Christianity arrived around the year 1000 in the two lands. According to John West, the right of Norwegian kings to collect tribute was conceded around 1035 (6). Both facts mark the beginning of loss of complete independence. Similarly, in the period before 1035, the period of Faroese total independence, the legislative body and high court was the *Alting* that met every summer in Torshavn. After 1035 the Faroese *Alting* was turned into a part of the king’s courts, known as a *Lagting*. However, the Faroe Islands retained their law of land and labour regulations, *Seydabraevid* (*The Sheep Letter*), which was drawn up in 1298 (West 7). The isolation of the Faroe Islands due to geography and trade regulations created a population with no natural immunity, vulnerable to epidemics (West 8). Diseases combined with the requirements of *Seydabraevid* for a man to attain a certain status before he was allowed to marry meant that the population remained constant for centuries, explains Jonathan Wylie (36). Although it is just one part of the reason for the isolation, imperialism did restrict the development of the Faroe Islands from the beginning.

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\(^5\) It was, however, ‘democratic’ in the sense that it gave every *man* a vote – and only every *free* man.
In the 1260s Norway was the strongest power in Scandinavia and aimed to annex all lands that were originally settled by Norse Vikings. In 1262, the Icelandic Alting made a treaty wherein they agreed to pay tax to the Norwegian kings and to “yield to them their country and agree to become their subjects.” The Icelanders remained an autonomous entity apart from Norway and the treaty would only last as long as the Norwegian crown protected Iceland. Yet this was the beginning of colonial status for Iceland, which had been independent for over 300 years.

The literary history of the Faroe Islands is as quickly told as its early history. That is, if one only considers written literature, for here is the principal difference between the history of the Faroe Islands and that of Iceland. Where Icelanders have a long and great tradition of written literature, the Faroese have an equally long oral tradition. In his 1927 article “Nogle Ord om den færøske Dans” (“Some Words Concerning the Faroese Dance”), Jørgen-Frantz Jacobsen points out that the folkdance of the islands can be traced back to the tradition of kaededans (ring dance or chain dance) from the middle ages but has only been kept alive in the Faroese tradition (Matras 55). Since the lay is central, and the dance its accompaniment, Jacobsen explains that the totality of the Faroese dance is “more a literary happening than it is a choreographic” (Matras 56). Originally accompanied by music, the Faroese version of ring dance is used to stress the words of folksongs or epic lays. Jacobsen describes the dance as a unique example of “the communal spirit of the Middle Ages” (Matras 56) as it is an expression of the feelings aroused in the listeners/dancers. Understood in that way, the Faroese dance is a part of Faroese literary history and thereby of its national history. Apart from the sung lays, there are the spoken lays

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6 Translated by Jón Jóhannesson, qtd. in Karlsson 83.
7 The translations of Jacobsen’s essays, articles, and letters are all my own, unless otherwise stated.
the reciting of those would take place on farms in the long winter evenings. In his essay “Folket” (“The People”), Jacobsen explains how the form of the legends was rigorously guarded against changes as was the content against new inventions (Jacobsen 50). The lays were collected, transcribed, and **Corpus Carminum Færoensium** contains about 70,000 verses which shows the richness of the tradition. Spoken or sung, the lays embody a national tradition of the Faroe Islands. Yet the tradition was only partly written down, and further, there are only a few other written documents, such as *Seydabraevid*, in early Faroese.

The literary history of Iceland is unique in that it flourished earlier than in other European countries. ‘Saga’ means narrative in old Norse and modern Icelandic; it refers to both the body of prose narratives that is a foundational part of the Scandinavian canon and the historical sources of Iceland. The close ties with Norway and the strong culture of literacy made Icelanders both court poets and historiographers of Norway. Again and again, scholars mention the strong tradition of literacy and literature (Daisy Neijmann, David Arnason, Kirsten Wolf), and Kristjana Gunnars names it “the Icelandic tradition of book-worshipping” (Neuman and Kamboureli 149). From very early on, writing was central to the Icelandic culture. Iceland, in the context of Todorov’s thesis of the importance of a written tradition, was at an advantage.

Conversely, as in the Faroe Islands, literature in Greenland, *Kalaallit Nunaat*, is both very young and very old: young when one compares it to other European written traditions but old when considering the ancient oral tradition. As was normal in a hunting culture, the Inuit people had no alphabet or sign system, their stories being handed down orally, relates Kirsten Thisted (55). The Inuit inhabiting Greenland came to Northwest Greenland from Siberia more than 4000 years ago, moving in waves of
migration over the Bering Strait, over the area that is now Canada, and over the Arctic Archipelago, writes Sanjay Chaturvedi (53). The Greenlandic language, Kalaallit Oqaasii, is a version (termed Inupik) of the Inuit, and, according to Svend Kolte, no connection with any other language has been established (Gulløv, Jensen, and Lorentzen 86). Thus language studies and archaeology show that after settling, the Inuit remained the sole inhabitants of Greenland for three millennia. The Inuit culture is distinct and even older than the Faroese and Icelandic. Yet when thinking in terms of Todorov’s stress on the significance of a written culture, the Inuit, who had no written tradition, could have been at a disadvantage in terms of preserving their identity, from the moment others arrived in Greenland.

The first European settlement in Greenland started when Erik the Red sailed from Iceland and established two colonies in 985 (Chaturvedi 53). The reason why it is necessary to trace the history of the first Norse settlement in Greenland in this context, is that the faith and fate of the settlers became the excuse for renewed colonisation centuries later. According to both The Saga of the Greenlanders and Erik the Red’s Saga, Erik chose the name Greenland as a means to attract settlers. The early Middle Ages in the Norse settlements in Greenland were marked by the Norwegian king's eagerness to get the settlers to pay tax and the settlers' reluctance to heed any outside authority. In 1261 three Norwegians returned to Norway and reported that the Greenlanders agreed to pay compensation to the Norwegian king for murder, whether the victim was Norwegian or Greenlander. Kirsten Seaver argues that this is taken to mean that the Norse Greenlanders partly surrendered their sovereignty to Norway (73). What is sure, is that Norway became the religious administrator of

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8 The intense explorations of the years around 1000 also led the Norse Leif Erikson to travel further west and discover the coast of what is now Canada (Seaver 20-24).
Greenland and gradually also took over the administration of trade. As in the Faroe Islands and Iceland, the community in Greenland lost complete independence. In 1302 king Hakon banned foreigners from trading north of Bergen, to Iceland, or to “any other tribute paying country” (Seaver 77). However well the settlement did, it was still utterly dependent on trade. The bishop in Bergen, who “was directly involved in colonial affairs, because colonial trade and the collection of tithes and taxes ... passed through his hands” (Seaver 78) came under still stronger financial pressure from king and pope. It became more difficult to make the hazardous and time-consuming journey worth while for king, pope, and traders, and consequently more difficult to get clergy interested in going to the increasingly isolated settlement. In 1367 the last recorded royal ship to Greenland left, arriving in 1368 with the last bishop to actually take up residence there (Seaver 140). The “growing Norwegian indifference to the needs of the Atlantic colonies” (Seaver 69) severely changed the fate of the settlement. What initially was a thriving settlement was slowly decimated and eventually disappeared completely.

From 1380 to Medio Eighteenth Century

The fourteenth century entailed massive changes in Scandinavia; the greatest consequence for the three countries was the union of Norway and Denmark in 1380. Consequently, the Faroe Islands and Iceland found themselves under Danish crown and were slowly turned into a Danish province. This fact combined with Denmark’s lesser concern with the North Atlantic empire founded by Norway and the total negligence of Greenland meant that Iceland was suddenly a marginal society and much further away from the governing powers.
In the Faroe Islands, the reformation starting around 1535 meant that the extensive lands owned by the church passed into the hands of the crown, giving enormous powers to the bailiff (West 9). Ironically, the linguistic revolution of the reformation, so important to other Scandinavian countries, had no impact on the Faroese, as the language of the church merely changed from Latin to the equally foreign Danish. From the reformation on, Danes penned church, administrative, and law documents, and the written language became Danish. Consequently, a split of great consequence appeared; the language of the colonisers was the language of God – Faroese simply that of the uneducated. Another closing off of the possibilities for modernisation of the islands came with the establishment of a trade monopoly that included fixed prices (Wylie 66-67). Thus Danish colonisation effected Faroese language, culture, and economy in a way that began the isolation of the Faroe Islands.

Similarly, Icelandic trade ended with a Danish monopoly in the late 1540s. This isolated Iceland as they were excluded from the growth in trade that characterised the beginning of modernisation in Europe. As Karlsson writes, “the Icelandic trade played a considerable part in making Denmark a commercial power able to participate in the European grab for colonies” (142). Further, raids by pirates in the 1620s proved how meaningless a Danish defence was (Karlsson 143-144). By now the consequences of being ruled by a distant power were clear. Yet if there was any talk of returning to independence in the Faroe Islands and Iceland, it must have been hushed as neither land had military powers.

In Greenland, the late Middle Ages saw the Norse settlement disappear. One reason is that the weather got colder (Seaver 115). Another is that the possession of the settlement went to the Danish Queen Margrethe I in 1397, making the distance to the administrative centre even greater. But the settlement – or perhaps the taxes it yielded
was not forgotten. H.R. Rink the geographer, geologist, manager and inspector in mid-nineteenth century Greenland, writes in *Danish Greenland* that from 1579 to 1671, Danish kings sent out several ships to try and relocate the Norse settlement in Greenland (29-33). He continues, relating that the natives brought back, the “human specimens ... exhibited, ... measured and examined,” the “strange people ... bore no resemblance at all to the reputed ancient settlers” (Rink 32). Apart from showing that the Norse were not there anymore, the language Rink applies in this quotation is telling of colonial prejudice in its arrogance. In 1721, Hans Egede (1686-1758) founded a trading company and a Lutheran mission in Greenland. He initially went there in search of the Norse settlers too, but once he realised the futility of the project, he directed his missionary zeal towards the Inuit instead. Hans Egede marks the beginning of official Danish colonisation of the Greenlandic Inuit. According to the Danish historian Finn Gad, the Danish king issued a charter in support of Egede, for trade between Greenland and Bergen, wherein he names Greenland “our land” (41). In 1776 Denmark assumed a trading monopoly over Greenland in a royal decree formulating the colonisation as constitutional (Gad 381-2). Thus the establishment of, and later search for, a Norse settlement in Greenland eventually came to mean the complete colonisation of the Inuit.

Greenland’s place as being part of the Arctic geographically, culturally, and mythically has led to a position of absolute marginality. For even though “it can be argued that the Arctic became a feature in the new national self-understanding of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden” (Bravo and Sörlin 7) around the *fin de siècle* of the nineteenth century, the Arctic utilised in this way was a reconfigured one. Whereas Iceland and the Faroe Islands were perceived to be culturally alike and their myths a part of the grand narrative of Scandinavian identity, the extremely different
geographical reality and cultural history of Kalaalit had to be retold in order to fit into the Danish mythology and ideology.

The reshaping happened gradually through religion and science. Michael Harbsmeier, in his essay “Bodies and Voices from Ultima Thule: Inuit Explorations of the Kablunat from Christian IV to Knud Rasmussen,” traces the middle period of the transfiguration. Harbsmeier argues, that even though Knud Rasmussen’s (1879-1933) popular legend is that of a conscious achiever of equal participation of Danes and Greenlanders in the explorations, Rasmussen can in fact be seen to merely continue a Danish tradition of staging the native. This unfortunate tradition is what Harbsmeier terms “the staging of individual “Skraelinger” ... and “Inuit” as icons, signs, and voices of what was at first Royal and imperial, and later also entertaining and scientific, Danish and European superiority, sovereignty, and authority” (36). What initially was violent kidnapping on behalf of the Danish king became a process signifying the coloniser’s powers, but gradually also the submittance of the colonised as they appeared before the royalty. In 1636 it was thus decreed by the king for expeditions to “export home to Us ... a couple of young native persons of the country ... whom one could teach the fear of God, language, and the art of writing for the sake of both countries’ salvation and long-term welfare” (Harbsmeier 39, quotes Bertelsen’s Grønlænderne i Danmark). The stories of those brought to Denmark involves kidnapping, violence, killings, attempts of fleeing leading to death, death of what appears to be various epidemics, and those few who made the return to Greenland bringing fatal epidemics to their kin. Of one group, for instance, the librarian and mathematician Adam Olearius wrote that, “others remained ... for up to 12 years, but they were always sad, finally grieving themselves to death one after the other” (qtd. in Harbsmeier 45). They belonged to those captured in the seventeenth and early
eighteenth century that could not communicate by any other means than sign language.

The first shift in the transformation of the Danish view of ‘their natives’ happened with language. Hans Egede and his sons taught Danish in their missions. Whereas the first groups of Inuit arriving in Copenhagen were made to perform, the second were there to speak. The first of the Danish speaking group was Pooq and Qiperoq, who came to Copenhagen in 1724 (Harbsmeier 49). The story of Pooq is especially interesting, as Poul Egede used it as a part of his Greenlandic-Danish-Latin dictionary. Almost a hundred years later, in 1857, Pooq’s story became the basis of the first publication in Greenlandic (Harbsmeier 62). Although told through the voice of the coloniser, Pooq’s story is the first Inuit narrative of travel to Copenhagen and thus marks a shift in the discourse. Initially Pooq’s voice was importantly an Inuit voice heard in the so far entirely Danish narrative of the relation between Denmark and Greenland. Later its publication marked a beginning of a written Greenlandic tradition.

Finn Lynge, a native Greenlandic philosopher and priest, wrote The Relevance of native Culture to Northern Development: The Greenlandic Case in 1976 to summarise the impacts of the Danish colonisation on Greenland. Lynge stresses that the Danish deliberate policy of isolating Greenland succeeded in preserving the language and the hunting culture of the Inuit. Further, Lynge argues that even though, “Hans Egede and his sons, as well as the secular colonizers and the traders who followed in their trail [brought] with them from their homelands little or no appreciation of a need to respect native culture” (14), the colonisation was “extraordinarily benign, at no time involving oppression or bloodshed” (14). That it is termed ‘extraordinary’ that the colonisation of Greenland was ‘benign’ seems a tragic irony. Finn Lynge does, however,
list the ways in which Danish colonisation did effect the existing Inuit culture: in terms of religion, the "religious objective of the colonial power -- extermination of the Eskimo religion -- has been successful" (15); in terms of the judicial system, as the traditional drum song contests deciding who would 'win' on account of audience approval disappeared; and in terms of language. For although the Inuit did not have a written literature, they had a rich oral tradition. Lynge writes that the drum songs and dances were “mistaken” by the colonisers for being of religious nature, and they “accordingly ordered them to be suppressed” (15). The prohibition remained in effect for centuries, practically exterminating the tradition. That the beliefs, judicial system, and traditional culture of the Inuit were effected in such an extreme and detrimental manner has had noticeable effects on their consequent history. An oral tradition is easier to disturb or erase than a written one, and the Inuit were forced to try to incorporate their oral tradition into a written one. Further, because the written tradition was brought to them initially through the words of the Bible, their oral tales had to 'compete' with grand narratives and fierce believers as well. This period of Greenlandic history, when seen alongside Todorov's thoughts on communication, might serve to partly explain the dire cultural and social difficulties Greenland still suffers. The changes Lynge describes can consequently be part of the explanation as to why Greenland still seems so far away from independence today.

Until the Second World War

The end of the Napoleonic wars, the 1814 Treaty of Kiel, placed Norway on Swedish hands, yet allowed Denmark to keep the Faroese Islands, Iceland, and Greenland. In the time around this event, the Faroe Islands was in a period of stagnancy. The population was small at the time depicted in *Barbara* and it was sharply divided into
classes. The Danish clergy and administrative personnel formed an upper class with easy access to food. They were also the only ones in that period who all married and had more than two children per couple (Wylie 76). The higher middle class was made up of the farmers with their own land, a class which varied little in number between 1584 and 1884 (Wylie 74). The lower class consisted of hired hands who rarely married. In the grip of colonialism, the Faroe Islands remained stagnant for three centuries.

When change finally reached the Faroe Islands, it happened slowly at first and then as an explosion. In 1816 the Lagting's constitutive powers were abolished and the islands turned into a Danish amt, or county. Now a colony in every way, the Faroese could have remained what is called a medieval society (Jacobsen, Wylie) for even longer, but a slight growth in population put pressure on the situation. Two factors furthered the change: fishing and trade. Commercial fishing was developed in the 1830s (Wylie 87) and allowed the population growth to continue. The trade monopoly was abolished in 1856 and as Jacobsen describes it in his 1925 article “Danskheden på Færøerne” (“Danishness on the Faroe Islands”), it was “pure culture shock” and “a meeting between medieval and modern times” (Matras 16). What did the shock bring to the culture?

Modernisation finally getting to the Faroe Islands could have meant the complete loss of their language. However, the change Romanticism brought seems to have helped save Faroese. According to Malan Marnersdóttir, Jens Christian Svabo gathered research material for a thesis on the Faroese Islands in the years 1781-82 (116). Part of his research was transcribing songs and legends in Faroese. Svabo believed it impossible to return to the Faroese language, for him it was a matter of science gathering as much material as possible before the sources died out. Svabo was
wrong, as Isaksen points out (Færøsk 24): Scandinavia was on the verge of the Romantic Movement with its interest in the historical past and languages. Collecting folksongs and legends was difficult, as there was no written language to use, but this problem was solved by V.U. Hammershaimb who in 1846 shaped what became the written Faroese language.

The beginning of modern literature is generally thought to be when the Faroese community of university students in Copenhagen in 1876 wrote songs of nationalistic sentiment (Isaksen Færøsk 32). Although connected to the folksongs, these songs constituted a modern understanding of literature as resistance and reconstruction (Isaksen Færøsk 32). In 1901 a newspaper was founded and even though it was initially published in Danish, Tingakrossur eventually turned to Faroese. The paper ran literary sequels and one of them was in 1909 printed as the first Faroese novel.

Apart from the split between written and oral traditions, the other divide in the definition of Faroese literature is that of language. Here Jacobsen, who wrote entirely in Danish, is a central example. Neither William Heinesen nor Jacobsen was traditionally included when literary history of Faroese literature was written. This was probably because they both wrote in Danish, which is not what a nation building culture wants. Writing in the language of the coloniser is contrary to the importance of a national culture, as the coming nation needs to take (back) control of language and representation. Leaving Heinesen and Jacobsen out in this manner is understandable and yet unfortunate, especially in the case of Jacobsen, who devoted his life to spreading knowledge of the Faroese: “I, both Faroese and foreigner, have found an organic task in telling the foreigners about the Faroe Islands and I hope that I in this
manner serve my country according to ability” (qtd. in Isaksen Livets 86). Yet precisely because Jacobsen was of mixed heritage, he could posit a threat to the newfound nationalism. Discussions of hybridity, as by Homi Bhabha, Diana Brydon, and Enoch Padolsky amongst others, often forget the dangers for a small, colonised, or economically weak language group of being ‘swallowed’ by the ‘stronger’ language. The language debate in the Faroe Islands is long, contested, and a favourite subject of Jacobsen. At his time Danish was still the official language of the Faroese and, obviously, he wanted that changed. In several articles, he exemplifies the absurdity of the situation with ‘grotesquely’ translated place names (Matras 13-14), enforced ‘danification’ of personal names, and the fact that, unknown to the Danish public, the Faroese teachers actually taught the Faroese children in Faroese (Matras 162)!

Jacobsen used the language debate to air his opinions on the status of the Faroese Islands as a part of Denmark. Again and again he stresses that although constitutionally a part of Denmark, the Faroese form their own nation, have their own, distinct culture, and reckon the Danes are as much foreigners as anybody else not from there. Faroese became the official language in 1938, the year Jacobsen died. By then, the Faroese had their own language again and it brought with it the important elements of a national newspaper and novels written in Faroese. Such elements of a written tradition are vital, as Todorov shows in Conquest of America, to defend a culture against imperialism. Now all seemed in place for the beginning nationalism to develop.

Over the same period, the change from isolation and passive subjugation in Iceland had a disastrous beginning in the eighteenth century. An epidemic killed a

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9 However, the status of Heinesen and Jacobsen is starting to change, as Marnersdóttir explains (58) with reference to a new literary history, written for grammar school.
quarter of the population in 1707-9, in the 1750s there was famine, and in 1783 lava floods and poisonous smoke from eruptions, and a harsh winter led to more calamities (Karlsson 177-181). Again it was proven how little difference the Danish crown made, as help from Denmark was too little and too late. This view seems to have been the beginning of a freedom movement in Iceland, which gained limited Home Rule in 1874.

Famine as a consequence of eruptions and, arguably, of the Danish trade monopoly, caused 20% of the population to emigrate at the end of the nineteenth century, chiefly to North America. Notably, the strong Icelandic literary tradition continued with the Icelandic immigration to Canada, which began in 1873 (Neijmann, “Icelandic-Canadian” 245). Apart from the Icelandic literary tradition perhaps being a reason for their ‘early’ independence, the Icelandic settlement in Canada is interesting in this context, as it could be seen as Kristjana Gunnars’ literary homeland. In an otherwise judgmental and belittling speech, Lord Dufferin, the governor-general of Canada, in 1875 says to the new immigrants: “In fact, I have not entered a single hut or cottage in the settlement which did not contain, no matter how bare the walls, or scanty the furniture, a library of twenty or thirty volumes, and I am informed that there is scarcely a child amongst you that cannot read or write” (qtd. in Arnason 15). This was apparently not common in the rough settlement days of Canada and shows the strong upkeeping of culture through literature. Icelandic-Canadian writers are not completely obscure, W.D. Valgardson, for instance, was well received and well read in Canada and Laura Goodman Salvesen’s Vikingheart was an immense success. Thus the Icelandic-Canadian community exemplifies that the Icelandic literary tradition was strong enough to be carried over great distances and to grow in new ground.

Back in Iceland change began; for instance an Icelandic university was founded in 1911. Finally, World War II and the consequent lack of communication with Denmark
proved that Iceland could do without the colonial administration. Gunnars explains, sarcastically, that during the war "people woke up to find they were occupied by the British. This was to preemt the possible arrival of the Germans" (*The Prowler* 45).\(^\text{10}\)

The Icelanders used the vacuum of war, the absence of any contact with a Danish state occupied by Germany to declare their complete independence in 1944 by the creation of a republic. However, although Iceland today is not a colony, the American military presence problematises their status of independence. "Then just as suddenly the British were gone, and people woke up to find they were occupied by the Americans" (45), Gunnars says and continues, "[s]ince then, every year Icelandic communists have marched the fifty kilometres from Reykjavik to the American base in Keflavik. Everywhere there where slogans: *Away with the Basel!*" (46). When speaking of the postcolonial simply as a chronological marker, Iceland is postcolonial historically and constitutionally, yet the Keflavik airbase marks the Icelandic map in a way that makes it difficult to say that it is so geographically and politically. Iceland has no regular armed forces, yet the US-operated Icelandic Defense Force (IDF) have their headquarters at Keflavik. Apart from marking the map of Iceland with its military presence and thus blurring the geographical independence of the republic, the USA is by the IDF directly involved in Icelandic politics. The strategic position of the base at Keflavik in the North Atlantic seems to be the explanation for the American presence. Consequently, Iceland is still effected by imperial politics. Still, Iceland achieved what the Faroe Islands had just recently started to move towards and from there on the histories of the two countries are obviously very different.

In Greenland, things happened even slower than in the Faroe Islands in this period. The written literature of Greenland began with colonisation, as Hans Egede

\(^{10}\) References to *The Prowler* are to the numbers of each fragment.
and his followers started to teach the written word of the Bible to the Inuit. As a result all Inuit could read and write in the middle of the eighteenth century, some time before the Danes, claims Kolte (Gulløv, Jensen, and Lorentzen 86). Further, according to Thisted, between 1858 and 1868, H.J. Rink collected transcribed oral tales of which most were written down by Inuit (Gulløv, Jensen, and Lorentzen 59). This was the opening of a Greenlandic written tradition. The first texts in Greenlandic that were not directly connected with the traditional orature were hymns and national poems. Then followed the first novel in 1914. The Greenlanders were now in possession of the coloniser’s weapon; a written literature.

From 1944 to 2004

In Jacobsen’s several articles discussing the colonial status of the Faroe Islands, one aspect touched upon is the economic (Nordiske kroniker and Den yderste kyst). Through explanations of the political parties in the islands, he shows how it can be seen to be the Faroese themselves that were the reason for their continuing status as Danish dependency. The major reason for this is the Faroese fear that they cannot stand on their own feet financially, especially since the economy of the islands is dependent on the unstable industry of fishing. In 1948 the Faroese gained Home Rule and have since then been debating if, when, and how to become completely independent. The economic fear is apparently still determining the Faroese voter’s choice, as they chose a social democrat for lagmand (chief magistrate, in the words of Barbara) in the recent election (20th of January 2004).11 He leads a coalition with

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11 The film Rugged Road to Independence by Ulla Boje Rasmussen shows how the then Danish Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen did nothing to soothe this fear. The beginning negotiations for independence slowly breaks down as the Faroese government tries to convince Nyrup Rasmussen of the necessity of a period of economic transition in order to get the Faroese people’s support. Nyrup Rasmussen keeps repeating that it can be no longer than 4 years—not enough to put the question of independence to a vote. Thus the unwillingness of the Danish prime minister to compromise stops the negotiations and the pending independence is, once again, conveniently forgotten in Denmark.
conservatives, who are in favour of continuing the union with Denmark – not one to put independence at the top of the political agenda.

Writing of modern Greenland, Thisted describes the first novelists as politically engaged and their novels to be partly or fully taking place in the future (Gullov, Jensen, and Lorentzen 63). This could be read as a sign of hope. However, the literary focus changed around 1953 – the year Greenland went from the status of colony to a status as Denmark’s northernmost amt or county. Thereafter, the past was of central importance as industrialisation and centralisation threatened the Inuit tradition. Perhaps Greenlandic literature became a possible rescue of the stories and myths of the Inuit and thereby of a part of Greenlandic identity. But was it too late?

As Jørgen Fleischer explains, it was expected by Greenlanders that their changed status would lead to an equal treatment of Inuit and Danes, yet the extreme changes of the period only led to further cultural estrangement (Gullov, Jensen, and Lorentzen 209). A concrete example of this can be found in architecture. The idea from the Greenland Commission (grønlandsudvalget or, as their work became known; G-60) was that since Greenlanders were now the northernmost Danes, not the colonised Inuit, they should lead a life equal to anyone else in Denmark. Four cities were constructed and people were encouraged to move there, into high rise buildings. It seems absurd that people live vertically on top of each other in a landscape so horizontally immense. Education, trade, religion, laws, and administration were to move from Danish to Greenlandic hands. Ironically, the centralisation and industrialisation were dependent upon a kind of workforce that was non-existent in Greenland; so more Danes had to be called for. The so-called birthplace criterion meant that everyone not born in Greenland got better wages, lower rents, and better
severance conditions than local employees did. This was to attract the Danish workers and the regulation was not completely abandoned until 1991. So much for equality. Further, the consequent uprooting, cultural shock, and dire social situation frustrated and disappointed Greenlanders. Finally, when Denmark in 1972 entered EU, the thought of a separate government was launched, as the Greenlanders did not want to be part of EU.

In 1979 Home Rule was introduced. According to Thisted, existentialism, political resistance, and identity negotiation prevailed in Greenlandic literature around this time (67). A main character common for the novels of the period is the useless hunter as in Hans Lynge's Seqajuk from 1976. Such a character is a clear sign of how the traditional hunting culture now appeared futile. A hunter in the city is an oxymoron the Greenlanders could not yet reconcile. The character can be seen up to this day, for instance in the 1997 film Lysets hjerte / Heart of Light. Identity negotiation is still a theme in Greenlandic literature today, as can be detected in the poems of Jessie Kleemann, who in her 1997 Taallat.Digte.Poems draws on Inuit culture, incorporating it in hypermodern writing of the meeting between individuals.

As can be seen from this comparison, the Faroe Islands, Iceland, and Greenland have distinct and different histories. Yet two aspects – geography and economy – draw out some initial parallels. Firstly, all three countries are islands, this has meant a geographical isolation from the colonial centre. Secondly, the imposed trade bans, which compounded the political isolation, and the demanded taxes crippled development from the beginning. This led to stagnation and difficult economic conditions – the beginning of internalisation in Frantz Fanon’s terms. Geography,

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however, has had effects on the Inuit, which does not parallel the other countries. The Inuit, living in the Arctic; being close to the North Pole and to the American continent, and thereby to the hunt for the Northwest Passage; and living on such an immense, 'unexplored' island has had severe effects in terms of being exposed to colonial encounters. Altogether, the colonial histories of these countries have been intensified because of their vulnerable placement.

The greatest difference between the countries appears to be the cultural. After going through parts of the literary history of the Faroe Islands, Iceland, and Greenland, it is clear that one can compare the development to that suggested by Todorov. Iceland, the cradle of Northern European literary traditions, has from settlement had strong written traditions and high literacy. Iceland is today the only of the three that is an independent nation. The Faroe Islands, settled by the same people as Iceland, also developed a strong narrative of community, yet it was mostly oral. The Faroe Islands has less social problems than Greenland and seem to be the closest to complete independence. Greenland, populated by Inuit with a rich tradition of storytelling had no alphabet or tradition of writing when confronted with colonisation. Greenland is today facing massive problems of homicide, suicide, alcoholism, unemployment, and depression. Greenland still has some way to go before they can realistically become independent. Thus the cultural and linguistic history of the Faroe Islands, Iceland, and Greenland have directly effected their response to colonialism, which is an important part of the history to remember when reading literature from these countries. The histories – geographic, economic, and cultural – is therefore the frame for the readings of Faroese-Danish Barbara, Icelandic-Danish-Canadian The Prowler, and Danish (Greenlandic) Smilla's Sense of Snow.
Barbara – Spoken, not Speaking

The voices leading up to – and blending into – Jørgen-Frantz Jacobsen’s novel Barbara are many and confusing. The confusion continues into the narration as every character tries to determine what Barbara is. The novel was written in the 1930s and takes place in the 1760s; periods where the Faroe Islands were formally a colony of Denmark. In that colonial context and in connection with the many interpretations of the character Barbara as representing nature, it seems straightforward to argue that Barbara can be read as a metaphor for the colonised Faroe Islands. The character internalises the consequences of colonisation, becomes a symbol of what is outside the colonial centre, and thereby of what is defined and approved by the colonial power. In such a way, Barbara can be read as a part of Jacobsen’s writings about the unbalanced situation of the Faroe Islands – a country under Danish sovereignty for over 600 years – and of his quest to tell the world, especially the Danes, about it. However, I will question the validity of woman as metaphor for nationalism and the resistance to colonialism that Jacobsen was an active part of. Barbara as a nation-building novel succeeds because of the metaphor of Barbara, with whom we feel sympathy at the end. At the same time, however, it fails as a novel of resistance in the way it keeps the woman outside language, using her being and body simply as a metaphor that comes too close to what Sangeeta Ray calls “nationalism’s repressive and homogenizing relationship to gender” (4). The binaries that Fanon in Black Skin, White Masks shows lead to the internalisation of the inferiority complex are inherent in nationalism. It is still a matter of ‘us’ and ‘them.’ These binaries are what need deconstruction and by intersecting nature and nation in the female body as a metaphor opposed to the colonising men, Jacobsen ultimately keeps his beloved Faroe Islands on the outside, captured there with a silenced woman.
Jacobsen was born in 1900 in Torshavn, the capital of the Faroe Islands. His father was of mixed Faroese-Swedish-Danish descent, born in Copenhagen and Danish speaking. His mother was Faroese; Jacobsen and his siblings spoke Faroese with her and amongst themselves. The parents spoke Danish to each other and the children would speak Danish to their father (*Det dyrebare liv* 8). Jacobsen, in other words, grew up bilingual and his double background shaped his life and œuvre – he named himself a ‘national hermaphrodite’ in a letter to Christian Matras (qtd. in Jógván Isaksen *Livets 86*). In 1916 he went to Denmark to study, first at Sorø Akademi (a private boarding school) and then history and French at Copenhagen University. Jacobsen was diagnosed with tuberculosis in 1922, consequently his studies and his carrier as a journalist were slowed down (*Det dyrebare liv* 21). In 1938 he died in a sanatorium in Denmark. Glyn Jones in his 1988 article “Duality and dualism: Jørgen-Frantz Jacobsen (1900-1938) reassessed” stresses that Jacobsen’s “importance in subsequent literary and cultural developments in the Faroe Islands should not be under-estimated” (137). Jacobsen played an important part in the struggle for recognition of the national language and in the beginnings of a national written literature.

*Barbara* was very popular, selling over 200,000 copies in Denmark (Fisker et al. 105), which is a lot for a country of just over 5 millions. Further, it has been translated to almost twenty languages (Jones 141). Jacobsen was a prolific writer, and apart from *Barbara*, all his writings were essayistic in style. Three collections of his essays have been published, a guide book to the Faroe Islands is still in print, and a collection of his letters to his best friend and cousin, the widely known Faroese author William Heinesen, *Det dyrebare Liv (Precious Life)* was published in 1958. The historical, cultural, and the political aspects of Faroese reality are central in
Jacobsen's writings. As an example, the satiric lay (*nídvisen*) is found in *Barbara* (105-106/121-122) where the farmers are in town for the setting of *Alting* and use rumours to construct a new ballad over a traditional one in order to ridicule Gabriel. Jacobsen grounds the narrative in the Faroese cultural tradition by using this especially Faroese event as a narrative tool. In doing so, he demonstrates awareness of Faroese cultural traditions and of the importance of those for nation-building. As Jacobsen was a declared separatist, the issues of nationalism were fundamental for him.

Similarly, Jacobsen took the main thread in the plot of *Barbara* from the legend of *Illa-Beinta*, or evil Beinta (Isaksen *Færøsk* 78). Beinta was a real person, her name was Bente Kristine Broberg and she lived from 1668 to 1752 (*Færøsk* 78-79). The story of Beinta/Bente/Barbara tells the story of a Danish priest coming to the Faroe Islands, who – despite several warnings – marries a woman already twice widowed after priests. After brief happiness trouble wash over the two. The legend of *Illa-Beinta* is contested by one voice, that of Hans Nicláí Niclassen, whose great-grandmother was a maid for Bente. Niclassen wrote down his great-grandmother's version of the story, which only had positive words about Bente, explaining that the only reason people did not like Bente was that she was so beautiful and successfully married 3 times (Isaksen *Livets* 18). From its beginning, the legend of Bente was unstable and thus ripe for reinterpretation.

The legend has not only inspired Jacobsen; two other rewrites of it occurred before *Barbara*. The first is *Herr Peder Arrheboe* by Emil Bruun, written in Danish and published in 1893. According to John Mogensen, Bruun was a priest in the Faroe Islands in the 1890s (Fisker et al. 45) which was where he gathered information and

1 Throughout this chapter, references to *Barbara* are first to the Danish edition, then to the English.
inspiration for the novel and where it was published. The second is *Beinta* by Hans Andreas Djurhuus, written in Faroese and published in 1927. According to Isaksen, Jacobsen and Djurhuus were friends so it is likely that Jacobsen read *Beinta* (*Livets 73*). What these two novels have in common is at the same time what separates them from *Barbara* – they tell the whole story of Bente and Peder’s lives. Jacobsen’s novel *Barbara* ends when Barbara’s lover leaves the Faeroe Islands, what happens after – with Barbara, with Poul, and with their marriage – is left for the reader to guess. This makes the ending Jacobsen wanted important as it deviates from his sources. Further, the ending is interesting as it – and the possible morals it implies – have been subject to intense debate. Yet what is vital for a discussion of *Barbara* in the context of (post)colonialism, is the openness of the ending as it is. Firstly, if Barbara is a metaphor of the Faroe Islands, the destiny Jacobsen had in mind for her will say something about his thoughts of the Faroe Islands in the future. Secondly, all the voices blending into the literary history of *Barbara* reminds us that there is always more than one version of any story – a crucial thing to remember when looking at literature as an expression of history. Finally, the many endings to the legend of Bente show what an unstable figure this character is. That Bente/Barbara is unstable, without many points to fix her to any firm meaning, is one of the clearest signs of Jacobsen placing this character in opposition to the colonial power and thus necessary to keep in mind when scrutinising *Barbara* as a novel of resistance. In order to look more closely at *Barbara*’s ending it is necessary to look at a few more voices within the text.

Apart from the several voices leading up to *Barbara* – the actual Bente, the legend of *Illy-Beinta*, the defending words of Bente’s maid, that of Bruun retelling her as Benthe, and that of Djurhuus retelling her in *Beinta* – there are voices blending into
Jacobsen’s writing process as well. The woman who was inspiration for the character of Barbara, Estrid Bannister Good, had a glamorous and international life as described in the biography Estrid by Else Cederborg. She was born in Denmark in 1904 of mixed Danish and Faroese descent (Cederborg 17-19). In 1921 Estrid and her sister accompanied their mother to visit the Faroe Islands. In Torshavn they met their cousin William Heinesen and his cousin Jørgen-Frantz Jacobsen. Jacobsen fell in love with Estrid, according to his cousin a love that never ended, but came and went and towards the end of Jacobsen’s life became a ‘typhoon’ (Det dyrebare liv 71). Once in a while, Estrid visited Denmark where she would meet Jacobsen, and often help him during his disease. Explanatory fragments of Jacobsen’s description of his feelings towards his Barbara, as he most often called Estrid, are to be found in Det dyrebare liv. “La belle et la bête. Verdensdamen og færingen” (“Beauty and the beast. The worldly lady and the Faroese”, 72) Jacobsen writes in 1934. And later in the same year, “she has a hell of a genius for the inspirational love” (83). Estrid knew she was the model for Barbara; she read and critically commented on the slowly progressing work (Det dyrebare liv 97). The voice of Estrid mingled with the other voices telling Barbara and her oscillating relationship with its author can only have added to the instability of Barbara.

Several people read and commented on the novel during its creation. According to Bjarne Nielsen Brovst, the manuscript was scattered when Jacobsen died (188). Dr. phil. Christian Matras, another Faroese friend of Jacobsen, gathered the manuscript and sent it to Gyldendal. It was not published, however, until Heinesen had rewritten it. The major problem was that Jacobsen never finished the manuscript. In the literary criticism surrounding Barbara there are several opinions as to what the ending should have been. F.J Billeskov Jansen ends his essay on Barbara by fully quoting three
letters Jacobsen sent to the journalist Peter Stavnstrup, one of the last Jacobsen sent his manuscript to for criticism. In these letters, Jacobsen writes that he has planned the novel to have 20 chapters (Jansen 114). In that case, *Barbara* is three chapters short. What still needs to be written, Jacobsen tells Stavnstrup, is “Barbara’s disaster (the student flees - that is already half written) Hr. Poul’s agonies and dismissal, and the reunion of the two under highly non-amorous forms” (Jansen 114). If that was the plan, *Barbara* would have been more closely related to the former retellings of Bente’s life, and thus closer to the Faroese traditional legend.

However, Hanne Flohr Sørensen firmly argues against this possibility. In later letters to Heinesen and Matras, who were Jacobsen’s close friends and part of the process from the beginning, Jacobsen never mentioned this ending. Shortly after Jacobsen’s death, Heinesen tells Matras that he did not know what ending Jacobsen had in mind (Sørensen 179). Further, Sørensen quotes a patient at the sanatorium where Jacobsen spent his last months who writes that the ending Jacobsen told him was that everyone, including Poul, was to turn their backs on Barbara (Sørensen 180). What Sørensen argues is that these mentioned endings are just possibilities, that no one can actually know what the novel would have looked like, had Jacobsen lived to finish it. William Heinesen became the last voice in the writing of *Barbara*. He did not write a new ending, his corrections were mainly stylistic. Until Heinesen’s entire correspondence becomes public, there is no knowing as to how much he changed. Apparently he was surprised at how little work the manuscript needed, writing to Matras in 1939 that it was worked through (Sørensen 181). Sørensen critiques the critics Billeskov Jansen and Kristian Mørk for entirely basing their readings of *Barbara* on the Stavnstrup letter ending, and Mogensen and the director Nils Malmros, in the anthology about the making of the movie *Barbara*, for giving that
ending too much plausibility. If one is to respect Jacobsen’s actual work it seems inevitable to agree with Sørensen. The text is there to be read and most readers have no idea about the nature of either beginning or end of the creation process. Yet even if one chooses to focus on the actual text of the book called Barbara, the voices leading up to it, blending into it, and those trying to destabilise its ending inevitably add to its pages. The many different stories thus weaving in and out of Barbara gives it an openness which, apart from corresponding to the ‘unfinished’ life of Jacobsen who died so young, corresponds to the unknown future of the Faroe Islands at a time when nationalism and modernity where new concepts that could lead in the direction away from dependent status. Barbara, importantly, does not end with Barbara getting to Copenhagen as she desires, she has to return and face her people and, hopefully, reconcile. Yet that is only a hope. It is hard to ignore former rewrites of Bente’s life that ended in misery. Thus Barbara’s ending – and thereby the ‘meaning’ of Barbara – is left unstable and unsettled, necessarily opposing finalised interpretation of Meaning.

However, the quest for meaning does not stop. Frequently, Barbara is read as a metaphor for nature, and it is easy to do so. She is the sun (12/16). She is often connected with the colour green, a colour of both ‘ocean’ and ‘land.’ She is dressed in green (124/144) and her eyes are repeatedly described as green (e.g. 39/47, 43/50, 190/221). In some instances, the descriptions of Barbara’s eyes even explicitly refer to the ocean (190/221, 207/241). The same invocations of water are found in her “glittering” (38/45) voice and the way it is “brimming over with ardour and expectation” (147/127). Finally, Andreas explicitly names Barbara: “You are a water nymph, said Andreas. An oceanid!” (206/240). With this naming, Andreas puts a seal on Barbara’s metaphorical link with nature. Her body is tied not only to an abstract
concept of ‘nature,’ but to Faroese nature, as the ocean is of vast importance as
nurturer and definer of islands.

If Barbara is the ocean, the men are the boats. Poul “was used to going under full
sail” (43/51), but the controlling of the boat changes after the union with Barbara: “He
felt as though he was a paperboat that had been launched to sail in a stream”
(143/165). The same goes for Andreas, who is a “wreck which, far from sight of land
and without a compass, tossed on the wild ocean” (163/189). With shifting luck
(“Fortuna” 8/11), the Danish men come to the land of the Faroese, sailing over the
ocean, bringing new pieces of Barbara’s destiny (Fortuna 143/166). Yet, as both luck
and destiny, the ocean is treacherous and uncontrollable. As a boat is not in control of
the ocean, the men are not in control of Barbara. Apart from illustrating the instability
of Barbara, the fact that there is no total control also initiates a suspicion that
Jacobsen wants to unsettle the power relation between coloniser and colonised.

Boats have a major importance for islands, especially in colonial times. In The
Prowler, Kristjana Gunnars describes how the ocean marks the divide between
coloniser and colonised, between those who have “the food, the books and the
medicine” (152) and those who have to wait for the boat to bring it. Similarly, in
Barbara the boats bring staple foods to be sold in the Royal store, while they take
away the produce of the islands in return. Further, what the boats significantly bring
is news from inside the colonial centre. The Faroe Islands were not only geographically
removed from the centre of the colonial power in Copenhagen. By geography, the
imposed Danish trade monopoly, and the historical time of Barbara combined, the
islands were outside and every new event or invention would come on a boat like
Fortuna. And in Barbara news comes in the shape of men.
With the Danish Bailie August Harme comes the law. “His voice was pompous, friendly enough but always didactic in tone, always knowing” (27, my italics). Although the Bailie is a minor figure in the plot, he is established – and ridiculed – as the centre of the Danish administration. Similarly ridiculed are the figures of trade. The Danish Company Manager of the Royal Stores, Commandant Otto Hjørring – “red dress coat, with sword, mustachios, pigtail and everything” (47/56) – does not do much for the plot either but does function as a sign of the Danish control of trade. Gabriel has a bigger part to play in the plot of Barbara. Born on the islands, he was not brought in by the boat, but as the shopkeeper he is in daily control of what is brought. He mimics the ways of the Danes, using his position to elevate himself over the other Faroese and thereby symbolises the power invested in the divide between those who control food and other necessities and those who are at the mercy of that control. As a mimick man, the keeper of the goods is “monarch over all his customers” (9/13) and works hard to strengthen the divide by distancing himself from “the common people” (“almuen”, 108/124). Gabriel has completely internalised the inferiority complex and his colonised mind is filled with plots and plans about hierarchies and control.

Poul comes straight from Copenhagen and is meant to “bring new strength to the priesthood in Faroe” (34/41). With the other priests he embodies the religion that was central to Danish colonialism in the Faroe Islands, Iceland, and Greenland. With the other Danes Poul also represents the Danish language brought to the colonies primarily through Christianity. As discussed in “Histories,” the Danish language created a divide within the Faroese society that almost led to the extinction of Faroese, which would have had serious effects for Faroese nation-building. Jacobsen does not pass up the possibility of pointing out that divide, “here on home ground among the common Faroe folk, the lighter-syllabled language broke the harmony. It grated on
him a little, as an instrument would, playing off key” (47/56) he writes in the words of the Judge.

Finally, with the second coming of Fortuna, science arrives in the shape of Andreas. According to Isaksen, the scientist Jens Christian Svabo, the man who collected data on the islands in 1781-82, inspired Jacobsen in the creation of Andreas (Livets 38). He brings as a gift for his uncle the Judge a “new and much discussed book” (151/174) by Francois Quesnay. According to Mørk, Quesnay (1694-1774) was an influential economist who argued that nature – and the utilisation of it – must be the basis of a national economy (30). That Andreas is influenced by Quesnay can be seen when he, in conversation with his aunt Armgaard (157/182), introduces the idea of bringing potatoes to the Faroe Islands. Further, he is there to “report of the land’s nature, its flora and fauna, its inhabitants and its economy” (146/169). Andreas is Faroese, nephew of the Wenzel brothers, but he returns on a mission for the Danish king. Thus Andreas becomes another mimick man, as he takes upon him the scientific reporting and naming of the colonisers. As an informant he is not satisfied with reporting, though, he also wants to change the land by bringing new crops. Andreas is thereby double faced; he desires to help his own people, but does so with the methods and language of the colonisers. Initially, one can read this as the disruptive side to mimicry, where it becomes a menace to the colonisers and presents an opening for change for the colonised. When Andreas betrays Barbara though, and flees back to Copenhagen, he abides the norms and values of the colonisers and the threat he could posit subsides.

When Jacobsen in so many ways created the plot of Barbara as a reproduction of the legend as told orally and in the two earlier novels, one consequently asks, why did he change the historical time of the story? To consider this is revealing, as the male
characters of *Barbara* are not only constructed to carry a certain colonial function, but also to represent different discourses of the time. Jacobsen moved the historical setting of his novel to the 1760s. Isaksen argues convincingly that the change was done to move well into the Enlightenment, as figures like Rousseau and Voltaire are important for the philosophising of the character of the Judge (*Livets 47*). The famous Danish playwright Ludvig Holberg (1684-1754) is also necessary for the physical description of the Judge and for the telling play within a play “Jeppe paa Bjerget” (Jeppe on the Mountain) that Andreas instigates the performance of in Torshavn. Finally the German Pietism which, according to Isaksen, did not rise in Denmark until the 1730s, is crucial for the understanding of Poul (*Livets 47*).

It is as if Jacobsen has constructed each central male figure in *Barbara* as a symbol of a certain period, its philosophy, or effects. Jacobsen himself relates that Poul is a figure of the Baroque (qtd. in Elbrend-Bek 86), ambitious and vain, yet is at the same time the carrier of Pietism, the belief in a personal and direct relation to one’s faith – in such a character, conflict is bound to arise. The Judge is the rational figure of the Enlightenment. Andreas, by his position as a scientist, is also related to the Enlightenment, but whereas the Judge exhibits the philosophical aspects, his nephew is portrayed more comically and without much sympathy. Perhaps this stems from the fact that Jacobsen was extremely fond of the philosophers of the Enlightenment (*Det dyrebare liv*), yet at the same time insisted that speculation alone could not fuel an existence. He writes to Heinesen that, “concerning speculative philosophy; it is almost as uninviting to me as is Inner Mission” (Fisker et al. 112).

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2 This can be seen from the fact that the French ships visiting Torshavn in the chapter “World” comes back from the Seven Years War in America (65/76), which took place between 1756 and 1763. Further, Heinesen mentions in the introduction that the story takes place during the time of Frederik V (7), that is between 1746 and 1766.

3 *Indre Mission*, Inner Mission or Home Mission, is a creationist, evangelist movement in Danish Christianity, known for its unrelenting believers and right wing politics.
This offers a possible explanation as to why the two Enlightenment characters do not appear as sympathetic in *Barbara*.

Samuel Mikkelsen, the Chief Magistrate, represents the calm, quiet wit of the old tradition of the Faroe Islands, whereas Gabriel, the Clerk of the Royal Stores, is set up as raw materialism and greed. These two figures can further be read as early signs of a coming Faroese modernisation, where the divide between country and city people widened with traditional Faroese culture bound up in the country and changes happening in Torshavn. Samuel Mikkelsen represents the traditional people of the countryside. Gabriel, with his position in the city where the colonial administration is centred, is the mimick man, who in his attempts to become just like the colonisers posits a threat to both locals, in his lack of loyalty, and to Danes, as he exposes the absurdity of their position. Finally the priests, especially Pastor Wenzel Heyde, are in the two chapters "Farewell, World, Farewell" and "At a Diocesan Meeting" shown to be more interested in worldly matters than in what they preach, and thereby symbolise conflict between word and action. Whereas Gabriel goes directly after position and gold, the priests hide their colonial greed for position, gold, and land in a flourish of religious discourse.

None of these men are left unimpressed by Barbara. Each and every statement they make about her, show how the men place Barbara in opposition to themselves, to what they believe to be good and right. "Everything changed in a moment" (12/16) it is told when she enters the scene in the first chapter. The entire second chapter is a dialogue between most of these men (and the women who, apart from Armgard, "had nothing to say" 21/26) trying to decide what Barbara is. Is she "not a good wife" (24/29), as Samuel Mikkelsen says; the woman breaking traditions? Is she so after attention that when she does not get it, "she is ready to be jealous of God in Heaven"
(26/31), as the Judge has it? That is, the woman, childlike, not understanding the nature of her position? Is she “a dangerous woman” (30/36), as the Bailie states; the woman as temptress? Is she one from whose actions “Christian folk must stand aloof” (30/36), as Pastor Wenzel preaches; the woman as the carrier of sin? Or is she, short and simple, “downright lecherous” as the Company Manager declares (“bundliderlig” 31/37); the woman as unable to control her own nature? Most of the characters present have an explanation for Barbara’s behaviour: it is merely because she “is like a child” (27/33), explains Samuel Mikkelsen. It is because “she forgets damned quickly” (30/36), as the Judge concedes. It is only “a woman’s nature” (31/37), as Anna Sophia says to the Judge’s approval. In other words, they perceive her respectively as innocent, thoughtless, and as a representation of female nature.

Presented against the (new) ways of life brought by men coming off the Danish ships, Barbara is a sharp contrast. She is outside every discourse of colonial control mentioned above, whether it is law, trade, religion, language, or science. Barbara has trouble with language in general; she cannot spell, not even the word ‘Jesus’ (91/105). Throughout the novel her utterances are either only through gestures, tonations, or facial expressions, or the utterances are modified, even changed thereby. Jacobsen repeatedly describes her eyes, her voice, her breathing, the way she holds her head, and the way she moves. Jacobsen does not let Barbara speak. When any character surrounding her enters a discourse connected to the colonial control Barbara is lost, as when Poul talks to her about religion in the chapter “Coloured Stones,” or when Andreas starts talking about his research project (151/174). In a setting where discourse – whether of religion, science, or colonial administration – is key to understanding the position of every character, Barbara is set up as the extreme other by her silence. Furthering her position as other is the way Barbara is connected with
Faroese traditions – she is excellent at dance, fishing, and carrying turf but cannot understand the news brought by the men.

As the narration is seldom done from Barbara’s perspective, the reader ‘reads’ her through the eyes of those surrounding her and, as seen in the discussion of her in the second chapter analysed above, they do not agree on who she is. The men, however, do note what she is not, and try to contain her in language as a negation of their own values. For Poul it is crucial that she is a sinner and that “her Christianity would hardly stand under a theological scrutiny” (94/108). For the philosopher Judge it is essential that Barbara is not intelligent (210/244). For every other character around her (omitting her loyal friend Suzanne) it is of the greatest importance that Barbara does not act as they do, that is, as they would like her to. Apart from referring to the constant negotiation of power and position inherent in colonialism, the way Barbara is told from without and as a negation of the common norms in a society dominated by male Danes, shows her as doubly colonised. If it is critical for Denmark that its colonial subjects act according to Danish discourse, it is vital that the female subjects do so. For ‘woman’ as the symbolic site of the nation has to be as pure, well-guarded, and comprehensible as the envisioned nation. Barbara is colonised together with the other Faroese and doubly colonised as her (beautiful) body is ‘colonised’ or laid out to be the site of symbols necessary to constant renegotiations and reconfirmations of national identity. Therefore, the Danes and those dependent on them have to understand Barbara in order to know how to control her. But where Barbara in light of Danish colonialism (her marriage to Danish priests) is a symbolic site of a Danish identity, for Jacobsen, in light of his nationalistic anticolonial sentiment, Barbara is placed in opposition in order to embody the Faroese identity and resistance.
Seeing that Barbara is told with constant allusions to nature and in opposition to the men bringing religion, law, and science to a land of people dependent on farming and fishing, earth and ocean, one can read her as a metaphor of the colonised nation of the Faroe Islands. The men try to determine what she is, how she can be contained in language, just as Andreas and the Judge work on describing the islands for the Danish king to know how to rule and utilise the land. As the men talk and talk, however, Barbara is silent or speaking through her body, she is placed outside language, just as the Faroe Islands were placed – by colonial status, geography, and trade ban combined – on the outside of the Danish empire. At the same time, Barbara's social position is determined by her connection to the men. Firstly, she is the daughter of the late Judge, subsequently she becomes the wife of three priests so that where she lives, what she eats, and who she socialises with is determined by these connections. The determining family relations allude to the situation of the Faroe Islands being determined by who governs them and in what way. As a metaphor for the islands and their colonised status, it is telling that Barbara's greatest wish is to come to Copenhagen (208-209/243). The ones powerless in their position of outside want to move to the inside, to the centre, where the power is placed.

As described in "Introductions," Fanon's theory of internalisation is not singularly rooted in skin colour as racism is constructed over a power continuum culturally determined by those who are at the centre of that power. In Black Skin, White Masks, Fanon shows which culture (and colour) is normative and thereby points to the power invested in the binary of white/black, or, I would argue, the binary of coloniser/colonised. This proposed argument is necessary in order to use the theory of internalisation on a novel like Barbara, as there are no obvious physical differences between Danish and Faroese people. Consequently the question remains whether
Fanon’s theory will apply if taken out of its time and space specific context of French colonies.

In *Barbara* every character is placed according to their relation to the centre in far away Copenhagen. As concentric circles, they revolve around social status determined by administrative, and thereby colonial, position. Power is invested in the binary of who has a position related to the Danish administration and who has not. Fanon explains how “it is understood that one is white above a certain financial level” (43) and this Whiteness comes with power, whether financial or administrative. When Fanon discusses the detrimental consequences of viewing the colonising culture as normative, he – like TzvetanTodorov – singles out language to be the immediate way to gain power. The characters of a higher social status in the social setting of *Barbara* are through their language, and the foreign words Jacobsen uses to describe them, set apart from the common Faroese. However, in the translation, this is not always carried over. The “sonore røst“ (32, my italics) of Suzanne Harme is translated as “her low voice“ (37), where ‘sonorous’ is a closer resemblance to a French word not commonly used in Danish. Poul says of the girl he happily left in Copenhagen, “hun plaguede ham... med sine sentiments” (35, my italics) – “she plagued him with... her sentimentality” (42, my italics) – and even though the meaning is clear, the fact that the English word ‘sentiments’ is a sign of Poul’s education is lost. The Bailie is offended that a French lieutenant dares “even caress” (79) a local girl – the same word was used in Danish, “endda caressere” (68), but, again, the signifying foreignness of the word in Danish is lost.

Where the Danes and the people connected to them speak the language of the coloniser, are described in foreign languages, and communicate mostly within their closed circle, Barbara communicates freely with everyone. Jacobsen goes to great
length to show how naturally she connects with the commoners, for instance in the scene where she helps carry turf (97/112). Through language and social position, it seems as if the Faroese have internalised their position as inferior, no one disrupts the power relations. While Barbara alone disrupts the hierarchy by her openness, she is importantly described as doing the opposite as everyone else and as desiring to move upwards. Fanon describes how the black individual trying to rise over the other black individual, shows that s/he has in fact internalised the structure of colonisation. Can the same not be said of the Faroese characters in Barbara? Gabriel, for instance, is marrying Suzanne, despite a complete lack of love and the fact that she is pregnant, because she is "the best match in the islands" (104/119) – she is the daughter of the most powerful man and she is Danish. However, it is not only in language and social positioning that this internalisation can be seen. As Fanon points out, internalisation of the inferiority complex can be seen in the entire cultural demeanour of the colonised and Barbara is abundant in examples of the Faroese striving to become like the Danes. "Kram er magt" (18), "Merchandise is power" (22) thinks Gabriel as Barbara and Suzanne happily dive into the foreign clothes he offers as erotic bait. The eagerness with which the women throw themselves at the merchandise corresponds with Barbara’s anxiety about whether she would be properly dressed if she were to go to Copenhagen (213/247). When Anna Sophia Wenzel indulges in sugared bread, a food reserved for those with connections to the Danes, she is "rød og hvid" (113), red and white, her colours showing her positional closeness to the Danish flag. In opposition, again, is Barbara. In Livets geniale relief, Isaksen, who does not question the interpretation of Barbara as nature but simply refers to it as a given, moves this reading to another level when he describes how she “seems to personify the Faroe Islands” (44, my translation). The scene Isaksen is referring to is when Torshavn is in
a state of chaos, fearing that the approaching ships might be pirates. George
Johnston’s translations have left out all the colours of Barbara’s appearance (74), so I
will translate: “Hun var i blåt kjoleliv, hvid og rød og med varme i stemmen” (63-64) –
“She was in a blue bodice, white and red with warmth in her voice”. The colours are
the colours of the Faroese flag. The connection between the female body and the
nation can hardly be more explicit, and yet again Barbara is put in opposition to those
surrounding her; her colours are those of the Faroe Islands as opposed to Wenzel’s
wife being red and white; she is not afraid of the newcomers; and she dares contradict
what the men in power say. Even if Barbara is striving for power as every other
colonised individual in this novel, it is crucial to keep this opposition in mind –
Barbara is not controlled.

A final example of the internalisation in the Faroese characters can be seen in the
way sex is utilised by Jacobsen to depict power relations. When the French arrive all
Faroese women are open and willing for sexual encounter. They go by their own will,
they do have agency, but they act as sleepwalkers. “Havnens kvinder vidste ikke mere
af sig selv” / “Havn’s women knew no more of themselves” (67, my translation), they
are “transported” in Johnston’s translation (78), transported to a place where the
foreigners posses immense powers and get access to the female bodies because the
women are outside that power. Sex is a way to get inside the power circle, if only for
one night. Apparently, no one knows that better than Barbara. In continuation of the
reading of Barbara as nature and nation, one can think of her as a femme fatale, a
siren singing to lure the men to her so that she can latch on to their powers. As with
any femme fatale, the men have to be careful – her first two husbands are already
dead, she destroys Poul, and Andreas has to cover up the truth (go against his ideals
of enlightenment) in order to escape. With the metaphor of Barbara as nature and
nation, *Barbara* becomes Jacobsen's story of how his country is colonised by men of foreign powers; steered by law, science, language, and religion from a distant inside; and fed, clothed, and possessed as a wife of an eighteenth century Danish priest. Crucially, though, it becomes Jacobsen’s story of how his country, in the shape of Barbara, resists. Barbara resists the language and the rules of the colonisers and their Faroese connections, she is not possessed, the men (of power) are possessed by her.

Jacobsen’s *Barbara* is a novel about the Faroe Islands as a colonised nation, a novel about how the Danish norms are dangerously close to being completely internalised by the Faroese, and it is a novel of resistance.

The interpretation of Barbara as a metaphor for nature and a femme fatale is the most popular in the history of literary criticism surrounding the novel. Examples from its reception show how closely the interpretations relate Barbara with nature, the uncultured, and the mythic, consequently situating her as severed from any 'meaningful' discourse. The author Tom Kristensen in his 1939 review described her as ‘demonic’, arguing that if she had been intelligent, she would have been ‘satanic’—in other words; Barbara is acceptable because she is a stupid demoness. For Isaksen, she is the male dream come true (*Livets* 88), for Billeskov Jansen she is “*la tigresse*” (101), for Mørk she is “the woman of myth, conquered by the man of Enlightenment” (25, my translation) and Mogensen calls her “the incarnated Faroese power of nature” (Fisker et al. 43, my translation). Heinesen writes that Barbara is “a piece of wild nature, ‘stupid’, unconscious, and innocent as an animal” (Fisker et al. 109, my translation) and even Jacobsen, in a letter to Heinesen, said that Barbara was poor, “she has one strength: her sex” (qtd. in Elbrønd-Bek 87, my translation). Barbara’s only strength is her natural/sexual personality – a strength that does not count for much in a society stagnated by a colonialism characterised by control and utilisation
of natural resources. In an ironic way the naming exercised by all these (male) critics is reminiscent of the scene in the second chapter where the (male) characters of *Barbara* are trying to decide what Barbara is.

Sørensen does not attempt to name Barbara. She shows how the reading of Barbara as nature typically leads to a Manichean binary, defined thus by Fanon: “Good-Evil, Beauty-Ugliness, White-Black: such are the characteristic pairings of the phenomenon that ... we shall call “manicheism delirium” (183) – a structural view where everything have to be fitted to either ‘good’ or ‘bad.’ The men symbolises culture and progression and Barbara as nature consequently becomes negatively valorised. Sørensen uses Cederborg’s biography *Estrid* as an example of such a structural reading, arguing that Cederborg reads *Barbara* as an expression of male contempt towards the female and the idea of nature as opposed to culture (175). While Cederborg’s interpretation does seem somewhat outdated and simplifying, Sørensen does not question Barbara’s status as metaphor:

In [Jørgen-Frantz Jacobsen’s and William Heinesen’s correspondence] they work precisely with nature and the alienation towards it that they believe to characterise modernity but that they do not themselves feel reasoning that it is because of their upbringing in the Faroe Islands in a time, which was distinguished by old and new at the same time, cyclical and linear thinking, nature and culture (Sørensen 175, my translation).

This complexity abides in *Barbara* too and does help to read it in a manner less structured by Manichean oppositions. It does not, however, disrupt the reading of the woman as nature and nation. A disruption is necessary when thinking of the consequences of Jacobsen’s anticolonial nationalism for women – his common assumption seems to be that equality is inherent in nationalism. Yet when the men represent the actions that are to liberate and modernise the nation and the woman is
merely a metaphor of that nation, can one then say that their position is equal? This question is important when reading Barbara as a resistance novel – especially when the female protagonist is silenced.

Jacobsen appropriates Barbara’s voice by not letting it be heard on its own and by writing her to be desired, named, and to be a metaphor rather than a character explained by her own words and actions. Barbara and the other women in the novel have agency but it is repeatedly shown as used only to attach the woman to the man. This brings us (back) to the ending of Barbara. In his adaptation of Barbara to the screen from 1997, the director Malmros lays yet another ending on top of the previous layerings of possible endings to the legend of Bente. The film Barbara has Barbara row alone after Fortuna and when she fails reaching it, she disappears into the fog. In Omkring Barbara, Malmros and his co-scriptwriter Mogensen state three reasons for this drastic choice. They believed that dramathurgically, Barbara’s setting after Fortuna was her own personal action. They thought the ending was an unresolved continuation, causing the story to flatten. Finally, since Malmros and Mogensen are sure that the existing ending is not the one intended by Jacobsen, they argue with the right to artistic freedom for "letting Barbara disappear into the fog and the nature she just as magically appeared from when Poul met not only the Faroese nature but also his destiny personified" (Fisker et al. 151, my translation). Ending the film Barbara with the woman being swallowed up by nature, with the oceanid returning to the ocean, makes the metaphor of Barbara as nature very literal. The ending ignores the fact that Barbara is dependent upon other Faroese, not only to get away with Fortuna, but also when she has to return to the community. The most extreme consequence of this interpretation, however, is that if one reads Barbara as nature – which Malmros and Mogensen repeatedly do – the ending is the end, the conquering of nature.
Culture, science, and law in the shape of men win over the woman. When looking at Jacobsen's writings as anticolonial and consequently at Barbara as resistance, such an ending destroys the symbolic value of Barbara's opposition.

In light of Jacobsen's silencing of Barbara and of the Malmros/Mogensen interpretation, Barbara as a character seems remarkably taken over, appropriated by other voices (those within and outside of the text), neatly explained and placed in oppositional relation to the men. The connection between nation-building and the novel often places a woman as metaphor for the land that needs to be appropriated or taken back. However, this position as metaphor simultaneously reifies the woman in the colonies as doubly colonised. In A Double Colonization, Kirsten Holst-Petersen and Anna Rutherford have collected essays that show how women, as individuals, as authors, and as fictional characters, through their placement outside the narrative of anticolonialism and through their position as metaphor, not action, have been colonised by both colonialism and a male traditional narrative. “An important aspect of feminist writing has been (a) recognizing that language itself has been colonized by the male experience, and (b) trying to find a language which can describe female experience adequately” (10), Holst-Petersen and Rutherford argue. Perhaps this explains why Barbara evades language, why it is so difficult to describe what she is – she was written from a male, nation-building perspective and is kept outside language.

Barbara works as a nation-building novel, written in resistance to the Danish rule over the Faroe Islands, because of Barbara being a metaphor for the land, people, and traditions of the Faroese. Yet at the same time it fails as a resistance novel precisely because Barbara is a metaphor only. This paradox is inherent within the text but is perhaps more easily detected seven decades after Jacobsen started writing it, as the time in between after all have revealed something about women's position within the
nation and within literature. Thus while *Barbara* when read in the light of emerging Faroese nationalism and anticolonial sentiments functions as a novel of resistance, it appears less promising when read today. It is as if Jacobsen questions and unsettles the discourse of imperialism at the expense of the woman and therefore does not leave all power relations behind. What Jacobsen shows all his male characters failing in, he himself succeeds at; Jacobsen controls Barbara in language, confines her to the position of metaphor and contains her being within silence. In *Barbara* Jacobsen gives voice to those who in their position of maleness and close proximity to the colonisers can speak a beginning voice of resistance – but speak still in the language of those inside.
Prowling for Other Voices

It is because the white Inuit do not murder that they are forgotten. They are the harmless people. The insignificant ones. There is no price on people of peace. It costs nothing to eliminate them.

The Prowler 129.

In Canada, Kristjana Gunnars’ oeuvre is perceived as Canadian (immigrant) literature and the author herself rejects any label of ethnicity (Janice Williamson 103). The importance of the Canadian label for the reception of her work is obvious, yet her focus on themes related to her background as Icelandic, as Danish, and as an immigrant seems to be the fabric of her work. Nordic mythology, Icelandic settlement in Canada, Icelandic-Canadian writers, and personal experience are the subject matter of six books of poetry, four books of short poetic prose, and several articles.¹ In The Prowler Gunnars weaves a story out of her life of migration. The threads in the story often come out of everyday details related to Iceland’s past as Danish colony. The Prowler takes off from the body, from the local, and from a remembrance of the pain colonisation brought to the Icelandic people, yet at the same time celebrates what comes out of mixing it all to create a new shape. Therefore hybridisation is important to analyse and here it will be done in the context of the Canadian debate on multiculturalism as exemplified with arguments by Linda Hutcheon, Diana Brydon, and Enoch Padolsky. The narrator of The Prowler, and Gunnars behind her, blends genres, histories, and personal stories to form a forum where those who were silenced by colonialism speak. Perhaps Gunnars succeeds in doing so because she has lived both inside and outside the centre of power and created The Prowler beyond that binary.
In “Histories” the importance of the Icelandic-Canadian community was discussed both as an indication of the Icelandic tradition of literature and as a possible literary homeland for Gunnars. Born in 1948 in Reykjavik to a Danish mother and an Icelandic father, Gunnars spent the first part of her childhood in Iceland, then lived between Denmark, Iceland and the USA, and finally became a landed immigrant in Canada in 1969. As did Jørgen-Frantz Jacobsen, Gunnars has insight into both the inside and the outside of the colonial power centre, but whereas Jacobsen stayed within the centre, Gunnars left both behind in favour of a country beyond the power binary in question. Does Gunnars belong in the Icelandic-Canadian group? If the Icelandic-Canadian group is defined as being any author descending from the Icelandic Diaspora, the answer will be positive. Yet if this group is instead defined as direct descendants of the settlers of New Iceland in Manitoba, the answer will be negative, as Gunnars immigrated to Canada generations later. Regardless, Gunnars’ concern with the experience of migration and Icelandic themes does connect her with early Icelandic-Canadian writers. In “Icelandic-Canadian Literature and Anglophone Minority Writing in Canada”, Daisy Neijmann holds, that Gunnars is “mostly concerned with the absence and loss involved in displacement and the grief generated by that experience” (250). The connection with this literary community can also be seen in the fact that Gunnars chose to make yet another attempt at translating Stephansson’s poems and that several of her many critical articles deal with Icelandic-Canadian literature in light of the debate of multiculturalism.

Kristjana Gunnars has also written a book on theory, edited a book of essays on Margaret Laurence, and translated poems by Stephan G. Stephansson.

These facts according to Travis M. Lane’s article on Gunnars in W.H. New (ed.) Dictionary of Literary Biography. Volume 60: Canadian Writers Since 1960.
An especially interesting article to look at by Gunnars in the context of multiculturalism and Icelandic-Canadian immigrants, is the 1986 “Laura Goodman Salverson’s confessions of a divided self.” Remarking on the persistent belief in personal identity inherent in the genre of autobiography, Gunnars argues that the immigrant experience shatters this coherence and leads to a split personality. “If identity is shaped by external circumstances, then it is not surprising that Salverson should posit a division in her sense of herself, since she was shaped by two cultures simultaneously” (Neuman and Kamboureli 151). Could this be Gunnars speaking not merely of Salverson but about herself? To solve the aesthetic problem arising from this knowledge of the impossible coherence of self demanded by the genre of autobiography, Gunnars posits the possibility that “the rules of aesthetics may have to be abandoned in favour of verity” (Neuman and Kamboureli 152). This argument is one of many clues to be found in Gunnars’ work leading up to The Prowler. For in this text most traditional rules of aesthetics and narration are indeed left behind. Not as in Günther Grass’ Die Blechtrommel (1959), where the narrator cannot be trusted— the narrator here is playing games and misleading the reader but not exactly lying.3 And not as in James Joyce’s Ulysses (1922) where one looks in vain for a plot or a period—a plot does emerge in The Prowler and there is normal punctuation even though pagination and chapters are left behind in favour of numbered fragments. It is in the circular, constant return to its starting point as text and in the complete refusal of a coherent narrative, that Gunnars breaks these rules. She wrote that abandonment of aesthetic rules was to be in favour of truth. Autobiography as a genre does not necessarily make a narrative more ‘true’, yet makes the reader look more closely at

3 Perhaps, curiously, this is due to the feeling of the narrator that she “did not have the proper Tin-drummish distance required for a story” (83) - she is too much inside the text to lie enough to make it a ‘story’.
factual details, at history, at what 'adds up' and what does not. It is as if Gunnars utilises the genre of autobiography to draw the reader in close, in order for the reader to scrutinise the stories as a detective prowling through the margins to find a key to the text. At the same time, however, Gunnars explodes the genre of autobiography into fragments that are sometimes contradictory, so that most fragments can take on new meaning when reading another. The fragmentation of autobiography could be a continuation of Gunnars' remarks on Salvarson, as Gunnars has been "shaped by" more than "two cultures simultaneously." Further, both the fragmentation and the circular returns of the text are negations of a finished history. By drawing the reader close to the text and then repeatedly exploding it, Gunnars rejects the notion that there is only one story or history. This genre experiment relates Gunnars to postcolonial literature, which critically scrutinises representations of history.

Judith Owens comments in "'Drawing / in': Wholeness and Dislocation in the Work of Kristjana Gunnars" that "Gunnars consistently denies the possibility that there can be a "story" of her life, yet she proceeds insistently to fashion one" (77). So what kind of verity does The Prowler produce? Does Gunnars deny the possibility of a story? Is it not the finished, written down, one version of the story, Gunnars objects to? She writes both "[i]t is a relief not to be writing a story" (3) and "I have been thinking that there is an actual beginning to this story" (166). Denying that it is a story the author is writing, paradoxically seems to give her the freedom to write it. Interestingly, Gunnars herself defines autobiography as "an attempt at constructing a self out of the bits and pieces of a life seen from the inside" whereas confessions "is an opposite attempt at dismantling the self that has been created from without, by others" (Neuman and Kamboureli 148). Perhaps by dismantling the self, its story, and the language that tells it, Gunnars ends up with the creation of another kind of self. The Prowler sees the
narrating self both from the inside; the actual bits of memory, and from the outside; the pieces of narrative that lead to the narrator's existence. The prowler is symbolically both author, text, and reader. Perhaps this is the experiment with verity; perhaps the only possible truth is this assemblage of perspectives. Three years before the publishing of *The Prowler*, Gunnars saw this genre as "the creation of a self that is as coherent as possible, a construction of an identity that will appear as a kind of biography of the self that wrote it" (Neuman and Kamboureli 148). Thus deconstructing an opposition between the 'inside' of autobiography and the 'without' of confession, Gunnars moves towards a genre that will 'create' and 'construct' identity, which further emphasises the instability of representation and language.

A pivotal characteristic of culture, especially Icelandic culture, is precisely language. As discussed in "Histories," Icelandic literary production has been substantial from the beginning. This aspect similarly characterises *The Prowler* in theme and in form. Thematically, language is crucial as the text is highly self-reflective, metafictive, and often referring to its own status as language. This marks, maybe even defines, the form of *The Prowler*. Yet before further discussion of form, it will be interesting to question whether it is only the theme of language that instigates the outstanding form or whether other themes and motifs in *The Prowler* lend themselves to this shape.

*The Prowler* is told from a place of retrospect. Retrospect constitutes the spectrum of the text, as Gunnars is looking back both temporally and spatially, from a later time and from another place. Again the text curls in on itself and comments on its own status. In fragment number 17, the perspective of the narrator is discussed directly. Is "the person telling these stories" (17) the girl in Denmark, the older girl in Iceland or the young woman living in Oregon? The motifs of perspective are ample in *The Prowler*
there is the puzzle being pieced together by one person in daytime, another by night (107), and there are the manipulative political perspectives: "Reading Morgunbladid, the Icelandic daily, I saw the population of the island was being reassured. The American Base, it said, is not a nuclear base. Some months later in Canada I happened upon an American military map. Iceland, it showed, is a nuclear base" (30). As a reader of this text, one is never allowed to settle on one meaning, into one perspective. In Barbara there are two positions within the narrative, that of both Danish and Faroese, apparently both adhering to the power structure of colonialism, and that of Barbara, metaphorically placed outside structure and discourse. In The Prowler, there are multiple positions as the perspective shifts in time, place, and social placement. The changing, slippery perspectives join together with Gunnars' unsettling genre experiments in her scrutinising of the representations of history.

The unstable perspective also seems to point towards the narrator's lifelong status as exile. The boat between Iceland and Denmark is so well known to the girl that it effects her experience of physical reality: "It was natural that the floor should tilt in different directions. That curtains should extend themselves horizontally. ... I resented land when it appeared. I did not want to come near those masses of stone, where people paraded in streets with small paper flags on flimsy sticks" (106). This moving space in between her two countries of origin becomes 'natural' and nationalism, often inherent in belonging to one place only, is ridiculed. Daniel Coleman in "Gender, Narrative, and Desire in The Prowler" notes how the narrator "finds it impossible to identify whole-heartedly with any nationality, preferring instead to be at sea where national and cultural demarcations do not apply" (22). Adding the time the narrator lived in the USA and the author's perspective of writing from a life as a landed immigrant in Canada, the motifs of perspective grow into a theme of cultural exile, of
dislocation. In “Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals,” Edward Said comments on the mental dislocation following the geographical relocation:

The exile ... exists in a median state, neither completely at one with the new setting nor fully disencumbered of the old, beset with half-involvements and half-detachments, nostalgic and sentimental on one level, an adept mimic or a secret outcast on another. Being skilled at survival becomes the main imperative, with the danger of getting too comfortable and secure constituting a threat that is constantly to be guarded against (Bayoumi and Rubin 370-1).

In the quotation from The Prowler above, Gunnars uses the spatial setting of the boat to gesture towards such a median state. The narrating voice in the text is tinged with sentimentality for the nature of Iceland and at the same time shows how she was an outcast there too. It is explained in fragment number 145 how young Icelandic men in the 1940s still had to go to Denmark to get higher education and often married there. The narrator's father is a scientist and his Danish wife came with him to Iceland. This double background means double exclusion. The Icelandic children call the girl “a monarchist, a Dane ... King-rag!” and the Danish children call her “white Inuit, a shark-eater. The Icelander,” with equal contempt (16). She is rejected from both sides, forced into the median space.

Canadian critics and reviewers (Christina Gheorge, Poul Hjartarson, John Lent, and Owens) have drawn attention to the salient traumatic themes of absence, estrangement, and dislocation in Gunnars' work and how those themes are growing out of the immigrant's perspective. However, since The Prowler repeatedly returns to the narrator's childhood and youth in Iceland and Denmark these perspectives need examining as well. Even though the text as a whole is told from the perspective beyond, it is working hard to get itself and the reader to imagine the past. Perhaps by shifting the focus from that of the Canadian history of immigration to that of the
permanent state of psychological and cultural exile, which can, in Gunnars’ story, be traced back to Iceland’s history as colonised, the themes of estrangement and dislocation will not only give new explanations to the aesthetics of *The Prowler*, but also to its constantly shifting perspective.

In the article “Staring into Snow: Subjectivity and Design in Kristjana Gunnars’ *The Prowler,*” Lent calls the text “a deconstructed *bildungsroman*” (109). Even though *The Prowler* is generically more than a novel – despite the insistence of the title page on being ‘a novel’ – this idea is interesting because it brings the psychological developments of the narrator to the fore. “The voice of the powerless is what intrigued me,” Gunnars says about her influences when writing *The Prowler* (Gheorge 51). The oppression and powerlessness experienced by Icelanders leave many traces in the text and informs it thematically and formally. In “Icelandic-Canadian Literature” Daisy Neijmann observes how:

*The Prowler* sets out to avoid all boundaries, restrictions, and conventions, literary, linguistic, and cultural. It explodes cultural ideologies and myths, refusing to be bound by limiting definitions and power games. ... In this text, it is the powerless who acquire a voice ... language is used to decolonize and deconstruct, as an enabling vehicle (251).

Perhaps the form of *The Prowler* has as much to do with the explosion of ideologies, with the power games, and with language as an enabling vehicle, as it has to do with the metatheme of language previously discussed. Perhaps the postcolonial theme of identity negotiation in the process of decolonisation shapes the form of *The Prowler* as much as the postmodern theme of language. Or perhaps all these aspects are set up to work together, to prowl the consequences of oppression. For all form, metastory, and ambiguities aside, *The Prowler* does give voice to a story of oppression: the oppression of the Icelanders.
The term Gunnars uses for ethnic Icelanders is *white Inuit*. This term is interesting when reading *The Prowler* in the context of Iceland’s colonial history. It empathises that Icelanders are *white* – historically and ethnically separate from Inuit people and privileged when placed in the power hierarchy of *Black Skin, White Masks* – yet connected to the Inuit in terms of spatial (Arctic) and temporal (colonised) context. The oppression of the white Inuit is described in *The Prowler* in a way that shows how such oppression gets physically internalised, how it becomes embodiment of history. Ian Adam in “Illywhacker and The Prowler: Settler Society Response to Ideas of History” notes how the anorexia of the narrator’s sister “becomes a powerful trope for the material scarcity in which the population must struggle to live” (3). Anorexia is a complex psychosomatic disease and it is difficult to speak about the reasons for the concrete example. However, it can indeed be read as a trope for scarcity when read in relation to the mother’s reaction to her daughter:

> We scrape around in this mud for hours whenever a bit of summer appears to grow a few turnips. We wait for weeks until the herring and cod and haddock come by here so they can be fished out. We pay the price of a house for a few imported Danish apples. Children go about with bleeding gums and adults watch their bones go crooked. And you, she said to my sister, you refuse to eat! (36)

The provocation brings out the hardship the mother feels and gives the reader a glimpse of the physical realities of a nation still struggling to find its feet economically after centuries of subjugation. Coleman comments that the sister’s “suffering parallels the dis-ease of a country that can never determine its own direction, having been colonized by Denmark, then Britain, and finally the United States” (21). However, it is not only in the sister that we can detect the struggling or the embodiment of oppression and resistance. The narrator does not have enough clothes to keep warm (10), she is hungry enough to consider eating “the unappetizing strings of seaweed”(8).
and when a rare lemon appeared in her home she was "thirstily devouring the juice, the meat, the rind, everything but the seeds" (8). In a wider historical picture, it is important to note that this is taking place in the 1950s when Iceland was formally independent, and thus cannot be read singularly as a direct effect of Danish colonisation. However, the general development of Iceland was slowed down by the Danish trade monopoly and it took decades before Iceland became economically stable. As Gunnars writes, The Prowler is not "the story of a starving nation" (9) and she further problematises the easy approach by noting how much meat there was (9) and how the Icelanders during centuries of starving still refused to eat the plentiful mussels (39). There are no direct accusations, yet the fact that there was no fruit and vegetables is mentioned throughout the text. Malnutrition and hunger are common and lead to a guilt-ridden scene where the narrator eats all of the tomatoes her mother bought with hard saved money (48).

Further, the narrator worries about diseases, not only her sister's unnamed protest-disease, but the tuberculosis, leprosy, scurvy, and polio that still haunted the Icelanders. She asks the high school principal why Iceland is the only place in Northern Europe where there is still leprosy, and the answer - "this, Ármann explained, pointing to the ground, is where other countries dumped their lepers" (41) - shows the physical impact on the Icelanders' marginal position. Later, unspoken questions further show the narrator's awareness; she wonders why there were no Icelandic dances and why there was such a long history of starvation (44). This awareness of the effect Danish colonisation had on Iceland seems to have been common amongst the other students too. In a silent protest, they form a boycott of Danish lessons leading the Danish teacher to give up and leave the classroom (82).
Finally, the oppression of the Icelanders through Danish colonisation left a trace of invisible death. In school, the girl is taught how the Danish trade monopoly prevented Icelanders to leave or to trade and how that led to starvation and decrease in population. The narrator makes the connection between the small, isolated population and the physical degeneracy inherent in the family of her friend Sigrún. When the father dies, leaving Sigrún as the last survivor, she calls for the narrator to comfort her. “It is possible, I thought as we held on to each other on that floor, that even this has political roots” (126). Gunnars shows throughout The Prowler how such political roots effect all aspects of the colonised. By relating the starvation, bullying, and even death connected to Iceland’s colonised past, through the narrator’s experiences and by unfolding the resultant sadness, Gunnars forces the reader to connect the political and the personal.

The anorexia, the starvation, the ancient diseases, the degeneracy, and the constant worrying of a little girl are all examples of embodied history. They are examples of Gunnars showing in The Prowler how the actual, physical existence of the Icelanders where effected in a negative way by Danish colonisation. Through these examples, one can see that daily facts of life such as clothing, food, and sound family relations were threatened, even luxuries. Adding to that, they are examples of how the life of Icelanders was effected in the long run too: Cultural expressions, schooling, and general health in the 1950s were something that had to be regained and recreated. Yet can they be seen as examples of internalisation in Frantz Fanon’s terms? When the fragments of the plot take place in Iceland, it does not seem so. “It was not a country where complaints were heard. We steeled ourselves. We clamped our mouths shut” (157) Gunnars remembers. It seems as if the newly gained independence of Iceland gives the people described in The Prowler the strength of resistance. The boycott of the
Danish lessons is an example of this – refusing to acknowledge any need for the language of the former controlling power shows a fight against internalisation. The colonial setting of *Barbara* allowed no such resistance – although Jacobsen worked in his own resistance to the domination of Danish in the Faroe Islands, and Barbara was symbolically unable to spell, there are no examples of anybody refusing to speak Danish. Comparing *The Prowler* to *Barbara* in the light of resistance to Danish shows how the decolonisation of Iceland was well underway. Fanon’s words from *Black Skin, White Masks*, “[m]astery of language affords remarkable power” (18) have a different ring in the case of post-independence Iceland, as the youngest generation refuses to attempt that mastery.

The inferiority complex of the colonised, however, is a result of a double process, where the fight over cultural expressions is just a ‘side effect.’ The process is primarily economic and then psychological, the actual internalisation of the inferiority complex. Even though Iceland had gained independence, the economic situation was still chaotic and oppressive, partly because of the process of decolonisation. *The Prowler* bears evidence of this in the mentioned examples of hardship and in the descriptions of the emergence of slum in Reykjavik. In *The Empire Writes Back*, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin argues that there are several thematic parallels in postcolonial literature across the world. One of them is “the construction or demolition of houses or buildings in post-colonial locations” thought to be an “evocative figure for the problematic of post-colonial identity” (27). This is not the case in *The Prowler* – in this text the second instance of invasion (by the British) leaves empty barracks surrounding Reykjavik. The economic problems of the new republic lead people from the countryside to move into these “sorry places, where rats were frequently seen dashing from one iron-clad shack to another” (78). The slum seems to be the opposite of what Ashcroft, Griffiths, and
Tiffin are referring to – not the building of something new, but the sadly necessary take-over of the remnants of the colonisers. Gunnars describes how this take-over changed a fundamental phenomenon in Icelandic history: “The white Inuit had no experience of slums before this. They did not know what had come upon them. Whatever it was, barrack dwellers became the social outcasts of the world’s first classless society” (78). Thus the first part of the process of internalisation is still existent in the Iceland of The Prowler. If the barracks does not match the thematic parallel pointed out by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, the displacement they resulted in matches another: dislocation, where a indigenous population is “placed into a hierarchy that sets their culture aside ... in favour of the values and practices of the colonizing culture” (Key Concepts 75). Such dislocation is exemplified by the barracks. They changed the face of Reykjavik, altered the Icelandic social structure, and even seeped into the language as these changes are reflected in the term ‘barrack dwellers.’

As Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin point out, the “dialectic of place and displacement is always a feature of postcolonial societies” (Empire 9) and this, then, is an example of the possibly postcolonial state of Iceland described in The Prowler.

Where the first part of the process of internalisation was still existent in Iceland, the second part of the making of the inferiority complex described by Fanon as “internalization – or, better, ... epidermalization – of this inferiority” (11) is where the text shows a change. There is no inferiority depicted in the Icelanders towards Danes, British or Americans. On the contrary, all three are shown to be colonisers and there are examples of resistance to them, as the boycott of the Danish lessons and the marches against the American Keflavik Airbase.

Further, the Icelanders are shown to be taking over their own nation in a literal, geographical sense. “Work in the school-gardens” (26) is one slogan of the narrator's
childhood. The children plant, nourish, and bring home “vegetables to an unundernourished nation” (26), thus metaphorically reshaping the land under their feet and using it to build the nation. Another slogan is: “Let us clothe the land” (10). The narrator’s sister works for the Forestry Service “digging in the dirt, making space for another undersized tree” (70). Even though this similarly is an example of the Icelanders actively engaging in the reshaping of their geographical and economical reality, it is more ambiguous than the first. The narrator feels bitterly that she needs clothes more than the land does, seemingly questioning the project of nation building over that of the simple nourishment of the individual. The trees planted are “imported from Alaska and northern Norway” (70) and ‘undersized’, perhaps warning against continuing intrusion from the outside, perhaps too insignificant to really change anything. Finally, the narrator watches her sister’s “swollen hands, fingers, so disproportionately large on her tiny frame. They were blue with cold. There were open sores that did not heal” (70). The sister’s body here again becomes a trope for the unstable reality of Iceland in The Prowler. The hands working to decolonise and reconstruct the land are larger than the body, they suffer the cold of the land, and they will not heal. Even if there is a change away from a colonised mind/body/land, away from the internalisation of an imposed inferiority, it is still a new and painful process. This takes us back to Fanon and his words about the body being the site where the formation of the inferiority complex takes place through an enforced, painful and “negating activity” (110). Even though the situation of Iceland at the time Gunnars describes it did not lead directly to the internalisation of a negative self-image because language, religion, and law no longer worked to create a divide between coloniser and colonised, neither the body nor the mind are yet free in The Prowler.
There are major differences between the worlds described by Fanon and Gunnars. Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* is founded on skin colour as the visible marker of difference, as the divider between coloniser and colonised. *The Prowler* is about the white Inuit. Fanon addresses French colonisation and realities in the Antilles, France, and Algeria, whereas Gunnars writes about Danish colonisation of Iceland. However, both describe a world divided into coloniser and (formerly) colonised. The similarities and the detrimental consequences for the colonised become more evident when one looks at the parts of *The Prowler* that take place in Denmark. For even though there is no difference in skin colour between Danes and Icelanders, no one is in doubt about who is who – there are other signifiers that separate. Fanon writes to examine the consequences for the coloured individual in a society that renders her or him abnormal and an object of disdain, yet the position outside normality is applied to the Icelandic children in Denmark as well. Fanon describes how the outcry “[l]ook, a Negro!” (109) dislocates, distorts, and fixes him into objecthood. When the Icelandic children are named and ridiculed a similar effect takes place – they are fixed into a position subjugated to the norms of the (former) coloniser.

One night in Rungsted, Denmark, the narrator and her sister are left alone in their home, trying to sleep, but are scared by a prowler that they have been warned about. Perhaps he is trying to break into the house as he climbs the balcony. But the narrator dryly comments that there is nothing to prowl for, for a Danish prowler – “nothing in these rooms for a thief to aspire to own. A few tedious objects from the Arctic ... . Schoolbooks in another language. Two white Inuit girls” (56). Gunnars is rhetorically asking who in that world would want to own objects from the Arctic? Schoolbooks in an Other language? White Inuit girls? Thus re-emphasising where the cultural value is placed. Importantly, it is the narrator relating where the value abides,
and the identity negotiation taking place within a confrontation with Danish society thereby exemplifies how the Icelanders in Denmark still internalise the inferiority complex.

The gap of cultural difference is further emphasised when the narrator experiences the relative opulence of Danish life. In her mother's country there is "a great deal of food" and "a great deal of music" (64), things she has related as missing in Iceland. It is in Danish school that the narrator sees the total divide. "The white Inuit girls were not liked because they had packs of dried fish in their rooms and they did not lift their feet properly. The rumour was that they were too lazy to lift their feet" (65). If there is no physical difference, those in power will invent another marker of difference to uphold the gap needed for the power structure to stand. Gunnars explicates how important such divides are inside the Danish society too, describing a 'caste system' among the Danish girls, based on the monetary capacities of the girls' families and whether they come from the city or the countryside, that is, based on class. This "Lord-of-the-flies type of sociology" (67), that Smilla in Smilla's Sense of Snow is also exposed to more than a decade later, carries a lesson: "That privileges were not dispensed equally" (67). Thus the experience and culture of a class society – of power relations – are universalised by the Danish girls to incorporate the foreigners into a subgroup. That culture becomes the norm used to place and judge the Icelanders back into their internalisation of inferiority, as they do not object: "They bunched up together in the dining room, in the gym, in the halls, and only made friends with each other. They talked about going home again and thought the Danish girls were effete" (65). Once again, though, there are no easy answers in Gunnars' text. For the narrator herself goes free of the division and was placed in the highest of the Danish 'castes.' By being familiar with both groups, the narrator "acquired an overview of the situation
which enabled [her] to act as an advisor on things about which the headmaster and his teachers remained in the dark” (67). The position of double exclusion, then, is also one of double inclusion and such an overview allows Gunnars to let all sides be heard. The text gives hints that the narrator is Russian, this and the fact that she once appeared on American television are reasons for her social placement, creating an exotisiced and – because of the Cold War – mutually exclusive ‘excuse’ for letting the narrator inside. Yet the double position can as well be read as a metaphor for two entwined facts; that she is of mixed descent and that she remains outside in the telling of the story, telling it from the perspective of beyond, from a life in Canada.

In her article “The White Inuit Speaks: Contamination as Literary Strategy” Brydon develops contamination as a device in literature and theory to highlight the positive effects of mixing – be it parentage, cultures, or genres. About the Icelanders in The Prowler, she states: “As “White Inuit” their identity is already hybrid, privileged by race and underprivileged by location” (198). The reasons for the hybridity of the term ‘white Inuit’ used here by Brydon are highly problematic. Firstly, even if Gunnars is of mixed Icelandic-Danish descent, it is too grand a claim that the identity of Icelanders is hybrid. Iceland has been one of the most isolated nations in Europe for centuries and thereby historically, culturally, and even genetically an unmixed, ‘uncontaminated’ population. Secondly, it is difficult to see what is meant by ‘privileged by race’ when singled out like this. Obviously white people have privileged themselves through European history but does that actually privilege them? Is ‘race’ not a term proven both wrong and dangerous? And does such a statement not simply reify a colonial viewpoint of power binaries? Thirdly, being ‘underprivileged by location’ sets up another location as better, more privileged. It is hard to imagine Icelanders agree with this: Gunnars fits in fragments of sentimental praise of Icelandic nature; Icelandic-
Canadian writers such as W.D. Valgardson stress the importance of the mythic praise of the Icelandic landscape in the sagas as constant inspiration (New 355); Icelandic authors such as Nobel Prize winner Halldór Laxness (1902-1998) employ the physical location of Icelanders as allusions to their strong independence as people and as literary characters; and even the Icelandic singer and composer Björk in her contemporary lyrics always returns to the defining Icelandic landscape in her use of imagery from glaciers, volcanoes, and ocean. However, if one takes only the words, Brydon does have a point. The term ‘white Inuit’ connects Icelanders equally with their ‘white’ historical origins as settlers from Norway and with their closeness to the Inuit in terms of geographical placement and a history of being colonised. The hybridity inherent in the naming Gunnars chooses can be seen to point towards an author who “vigorously dispute[s] any residual faith in the possibility of cultural authenticity” (Brydon 201), and acknowledges hybridity as a creative possibility.

Brydon’s article is in part a reply to Hutcheon’s article “Circling the Downspouts of Empire,” where Hutcheon via a discussion of the uses of irony in the postcolonial and the postmodern respectively, defies the notion of anything being culturally ‘pure.’ “[T]he entire post-colonial project usually posits precisely the impossibility of ... identity ever being “uncontaminated”: just as the word post-colonialism holds within it its own “contamination” by colonialism, so too does the culture itself and its various artistic manifestations, in Canada as elsewhere” (183). Such contamination is evident in The Prowler, where the narrator gathers strength from outside influences of literature, language, and people; the empowering possibilities of mixing or combining is shown metaphorically when the narrator in the day adds pieces to a puzzle laid out

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4 Although it might appear as if this continuos praise could be instances of Icelanders subverting what the Danes considered privileges, such a claim would make a central theme of Icelandic literary tradition a pure construct of resistance and thus only let it exist in dialectical relation to the colonial power.
at night by an unknown prowler: “We had a joint project at which we took shifts. The project was to clarify the picture. To make the patterns emerge out of a random set” (108). This metaphor comes close to the happy Canadian term of the cultural mosaic and does carry with it a promise of the pieces impregnating or contaminating each other with new inspiration.

What Brydon reacts against, however, is the notion of the implication of the postcolonial in what it challenges. Hutcheon writes that postcolonial art “confronts the amnesia of colonialism through the memory of post-colonialism” but that “the contesting is done from within the dominant discourse” (182) and argues that the “post-colonial is therefore as implicated in that which it challenges as is the post-modern” (183). Brydon critiques Hutcheon from several angles, one being that of multiplicity, from where she argues that there is no singular postcolonial voice or meaning (194). On one hand, The Prowler may confirm this, as it is not written ‘from within the dominant discourse,’ which would in this case be Danish and Denmark. It is written in English, from within Canada, a perspective and a place beyond the postcolonial state of present Iceland. On the other hand, it is not written in Icelandic either, and with English growing as a global power language, one could say that it is written from an implicated language position – especially since Iceland was invaded by English speaking nations after Denmark. However, that does not defy that there is more than one postcolonial voice. This furthers Brydon to argue against Hutcheon that Canada has indeed experienced contamination, which within a ‘split racial context’ leads to new creativity and erases old myths, using The Prowler as example.

The Prowler is now a Canadian text, returned to the focus of the Canadian history of immigration. Until now I have mainly treated it in the context of Iceland-Denmark, yet for Brydon the text is an example of postcolonial Canada (which one can still
question actually exists) and its 'pluri-ethnicity.' I am not arguing that *The Prowler* is not a Canadian text, it is written by a woman who has lived and worked in Canada for decades, it is written in English, and published by a Canadian publisher. It is just curious that Brydon uses this text to argue for 'contamination' or hybridity without paying much attention to the specific, local, Icelandic/Danish context, putting the weight on 'Canadian' in 'Canadian-Icelandic' and thus blurring the 'Icelandic.'

On this problem of fitting the text to the theory, Padolsky launches his reaction to the Hutcheon/Brydon dispute and his critique of universalising tendencies within postcolonial theory. "The appropriation debate ... is ... not about an attempt to resist "hybridity" in favour of "authenticity" but an attempt, first, to take back control of the cultural agenda from other, more dominant, hands, and secondly, to preserve, develop and nourish a sense of community identity" (20). *The Prowler* in no way resists hybridity, on the contrary there are several examples of its positive possibilities within both form and content of the text. It does, however, point towards a danger of appropriation inherent in the hybridising aftermath of colonialism, where the strongest voice is heard. Gunnars points out that "politics is determined by diet. That is, those who eat best win" (155) and shows how there is a strategic importance in remembering what came before, remembering where you come from, so as to not have your voice swallowed by those who eat better than you. Padolsky argues against the idea that strategic celebration of pain, remembering of national resistance, and reconstruction from the point of view of both individual (body) and of group, necessarily equals belief in cultural purity or authenticity. *The Prowler* takes off from the body, from the local, and from a remembrance of the pain colonisation brought to the Icelandic people, yet at the same time celebrates what comes out of mixing, blending, setting the pieces of the puzzle anew. This balance between hybridisation
and appropriation is important to analyse when reading (post)colonial texts and the characters described, as will be shown when Smilla enters this discussion.

In *The Prowler*, Gunnars experiments with genre and perspective to open a space from where to confront colonial history and to multiply the questions. The openness and multiplicity presented in *The Prowler* are achieved through experiments but also through remembering the pain and the concrete hardship colonialism brought. Memory and multiplicity then, represent a possibility of meeting in between in order to negotiate history and reconciliation.

Through retrospect, Gunnars stresses that there is not one voice, not one History – that an assemblage of voices telling histories is a constructive way of scrutinising colonial history. In *Barbara*, many voices blend into the text as well, destabilising the narrative, yet they were all ordered according to the power structure of Danish colonisation and, crucially, Barbara, the only exception, is a silenced character. Further, the reception of the novel has neglected to read Barbara’s position as resistance to colonialism. Gunnars employs memory and multiplicity to raise critical questions regarding the material effects of colonialism, whereas such questions are next to invisible in *Barbara*. These different perspectives exemplify how the Faroe Islands of *Barbara* where under colonial rule and the Faroese dangerously close to complete internalisation of the inferiority complex springing from such a position – and how *The Prowler*, in comparison, becomes a postcolonial text, depicting decolonisation freely as it is written in between and beyond the binary perspectives of those present in *Barbara*. The narrator of *The Prowler* seems content to have given voice to those who did not eat better, to those silenced by another language. “I imagine a story that allows all speakers to speak at once, claiming that none of the versions is exactly a lie” (68), she tells with one of those voices, leaving us prowling for the others.
**Smilla – Running Between**

Greenland was the last of the Danish colonies to obtain Home Rule. Although *Smilla’s Sense of Snow* is not a Greenlandic novel, it deals explicitly with the consequences of Danish colonisation in Greenland. Its author, Peter Høeg, opens a discussion of these consequences and at the same time tries to unsettle some of the myths of the Danish scientists and their role in the Arctic. While this certainly makes the novel postcolonial, a central problematic in considering it thus is that Høeg offers no future, makes no gesture towards filling the gaps created by his unsettling narrative. Postcolonialism stages critical scrutinising of representations of colonial history and of power binaries from colonialism not yet left behind. Hopefully, such an undertaking is done to point out prejudice and injustice in a postcolonial society. Yet in *Smilla*, every Greenlander is an alcoholic or is killed, and at the end Smilla herself is apparently disappearing. To posit a future is not a requirement for a postcolonial novel, yet it is difficult to imagine one that changes power binaries when the voices of the (formerly) colonised merely disappear, leaving only the Danes on the stage.

Moreover, although Høeg experiments with several different genres, as Gunnars does in *The Prowler*, they do not blend to create a new form, but remain separate. While such an uneasy composition might be an outward representation of the unease Smilla feels about her mixed background, the remaining seperateness of genres parallels her inability to merge the two sides – Inuit and Danish – within herself. Smilla, importantly, is not silenced as is Barbara. Yet the way Høeg makes her perspective palatable and the complete lack of any possible future leaves the reader looking in vain for the consequential effect of Smilla’s hardship, as the binaries Høeg critiques are left standing.
As outlined in "Histories," Greenland has a cultural history that is different from the rest of Scandinavia and differs in its geographical reality as well. The explorations and historical representations of the Arctic have played a large part in the colonial history of Greenland. Michael T. Bravo and Sverker Sörlin argue in their *Narrating the Arctic*: "The images of the region as a desolate place, a pristine natural laboratory for the field sciences, or alternatively, as a place of evolutionary survival for hunting societies have a longevity, if not an accuracy, that is as persistent as those so aptly identified by Edward Said for the Orient nearly 25 years ago" (vii). These mythical images have had devastating consequences for the inhabitants of the Arctic and some of those consequences are what Høeg uncovers in *Smilla's Sense of Snow*. Bravo and Sörlin want to change the fact that “[i]ntellectual positions with the potential to examine critically western practices from outside – for example, postcolonialism or subaltern studies – are noticeable by their absence from the history of science" (5). Although such ‘positions’ are being taken in research of other former colonised regions, it is surprising how the myths of the North and those who explored and exploited it are generally left standing. Bravo and Sörlin claim: “Writings that challenge the historiographical status quo are exceptional: for instance, feminist critiques of Arctic exploration, literary critiques of heroic hagiography, and the use of oral histories to reconstruct Inuit views on scientific practice” (5). As the history of Arctic exploration is centred around men that are celebrated as heroes in literature, place names, and other signifiers such as images on postal stamps, the challenge proposed has the potential of revealing whether and why this celebration is necessary. Although they here seem to gloss over such challenges raised in Canada by, for instance, Sherrill E. Grace, Aritha van Herk, John Moss, and Rudy Wiebe, Bravo and
Sørlin do point to a literary gap on the 'other side of North.' Peter Høeg begins all of it – to challenge the status quo, to criticise the exploration from a feminist viewpoint, and to unsettle the hagiography of the scientist of the arctic.

Whereas the relation to Denmark is a prominent theme in Greenlandic literature, the theme of Denmark's relation to Greenland is next to absent in Danish literature. Høeg's *Froken Smillas fornemmelse for sne* is the salient exception. Rosinante published it in 1992 and in 1993 American Farrar, Straus & Giroux published it as *Smilla's Sense of Snow*. It has been published in almost all European languages, in Chinese, Hebrew, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Turkish, and in Greenlandic (translated by Carla Rosing Olsen to *Niviarsiaq Smilla apullu*). In 1997 the best seller was adapted to a Hollywood production, directed by Danish director Bille August, starring Julia Ormond as Smilla, Gabriel Byrne as the mechanic and Vanessa Redgrave as Elsa Lübning.

One can ask why the novel became so extremely popular – something that rarely happens to a novel written in a language as little read as Danish. Apart from the fact that Høeg had already proven his literary talents with several novels (*Forestillinger om det tyvende århundrede* was even in 1992 translated to the German *Vorstellung vom zwanzigsten Jahrhundert*) the popularity of *Smilla* might have to do with its genre. Most reviewers and readers of the text have named it a thriller or a detective novel, which despite the several other genres within it could be said to be the overarching genre of the novel. Smilla suspects something is wrong when her six year old friend Isaiah falls off the roof of the building they live in and sets out on a hunt for the explanation. As a reader following that hunt, one is thrown from pure mathematics to

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1 Their work can be exemplified by the following titles: Grace: *Canada and the Idea of North*, van Herk: *Tent Peg*, Moss: *Enduring Dreams: An Exploration of Arctic Landscape*, and Wiebe: *Playing Dead: A Contemplation Concerning the Arctic*. 
orchids, from poetic descriptions of ice formation to complex descriptions of the dimensions of a ship. Yet as Smilla unravels the story of Isaiah's death things do not become clearer, on the contrary the plethora of characters and the movement from Copenhagen unto a mysterious boat heading towards the unknown makes for a complex story line. The plot of the novel does have most of the genre characteristics which define a detective novel – the unexplained, sudden death; the main character taking on the role of the detective; the metropolis setting; the truly evil character; and technical explanations of how situations and objects work. In Scandinavia, the thriller is slightly different from both that of the American suspense and that of the British informative, as the Scandinavian version is often highly political and addresses topics of present day society. Consequently, Smilla may be read in relation to popular writers such as Henning Mankell and Sjöwall & Wahlöö. Another related genre is the femikrimi; novels with female detectives, often written by female authors such as Norwegian Kim Småge and her heroine sergeant Anne-kin Halvorsen or Swedish Liza Marklund and her heroine journalist Annika Bengtzon. As the detective novel always have been popular and have had a renaissance in postmodern Scandinavia, Smilla is easily accessed as such. Finally, page after page of almost encyclopaedic technical details about ice, boats, and mathematics are reminiscent of popular writers such as Herman Melville or Jules Verne. By utilising these genres, Høeg achieves several effects; he sets up Smilla as detective in the Danish capital and thereby empowers her, making the reader suspicious of every other character; and his use of technical explanations allows him to engage directly with the sciences that he criticises. Popularising the novel in this way, his political message reaches more people.

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2 For discussion of the political and moral aspects of Scandinavian thrillers versus those of other countries, see Bo Tao Michaëlis' 2001 article "Scandinavian Crime Novels: Too Much Angst and not enough Entertainment."
However, there are several other genres staged in *Smilla* as well, which are not traditionally thought of as popular or easily accessible. One, remotely related to the writings of Jules Verne, is that of travelogue or exploration. The literature of exploration, importantly, carries the colonial theme within it. Bravo and Sörlin comment in *Narrating the Arctic*: “In Denmark Knud Rasmussen was not only the national polar hero, he was also the leading chronicler of previous attempts, Danish or other, to reach Ultima Thule” (7). In chronicles of exploration, scientific and nationalistic discourses often blend to shape an imperial narrative. This genre is the one Høeg uses as a backdrop for and explanation of the characters in *Smilla* that are scientists, the ones clearly inspired by Denmark’s history of colonialism. Hviid, Tørk, and Loyen evoke Danish explorers such as Peter Freuchen, Knud Rasmussen, and Mylius Erichsen, yet might easily be read into a general history of the exploration of the North. Smilla’s father’s life in Greenland, for instance, could be a reference to the many explorers that ended up staying (such as Vilhjalmur Stefansson).

The scientists of the novel again open up other genres – pathology, cartography, and geology among others. By adding Smilla’s ‘own’ scientific genre of glaciology, there is a carnivalesque and postmodern compilation of high and low genres within *Smilla*. There is the language of the Bible – as in Elsa Lübing’s quotations and the name Isaiah – alongside Nordic mythology (as in the name of the first boat and operation *Niflheim*), Greek (*Kronos*), and Inuit (as in the big dog Aajumaaq terrifying the disintegrating Smilla on page 263). Nothing seems coincidental in *Smilla*; Høeg uses any genre, mythology, or discourse to add to the political mixture of the narrative. Ideally, such a carnival of diverse voices will lead to merging or to a form of ‘contamination,’ as suggested by Diana Brydon. This kind of impregnating hybridity or meeting in a place between does take place between Smilla and Isaiah. She reads him
pure mathematics as a night story and he makes her play in the snow as when she was a child – they open up for the 'genre' the other brings. Yet Isaiah is killed and we see no other examples of communication between the 'genres' in the different characters. As in *Barbara*, most male characters in *Smilla* represent a certain science or worldview, yet there is more competition than communication between them. What has the potential of becoming a conversation between extremely separate 'genres' or voices remains a compilation from where Smilla takes only the facts she needs for clues in her hunt.

There is a sense of unreliability in *Smilla's Sense of Snow*. Because Smilla becomes the detective, the reader questions every other character and their motives. Furthering this insecurity is the fact that not all the voices mixed into the text can be trusted. When Smilla sets about her quest for the truth of what happened to Isaiah, one of her first leads is the Cryolite Corporation of Denmark. Cryolite mining was very profitable in Greenland until the ores were exhausted, as Høeg describes. The abundance of facts that Høeg via Smilla unravels about this part of Denmark's relation to Greenland has the appearance of careful research and factuality. This narratological effect will work well on the Danish reader, who might recognise some names of institutions, and even better on the international reader who will potentially take the apparent factuality to lead directly to 'truth.' However, it is exactly at this early point in the novel that fact and fiction start to merge. In the beginning of chapter 10, Isaiah's funeral makes Smilla remember her childhood in Qaanaaq, she recalls how her mother, although a traditional hunter in a kayak, was untraditional because she was a female hunter and used whatever she could of European supply. Ethnographers, Smilla thinks, have shrouded the past of Northern Greenland in dreams of innocence. "A dream that the Inuit will continue to be the bowlegged, drum-dancing, legend-
telling, widely smiling exhibition images that the first explorers thought they were meeting south of Qaanaaq at the turn of the century” (76). This mentioning of Qaanaaq in context of the turn of the century adds to the descriptions of Smilla’s childhood in North Greenland in chapter 6, creating the perfect narrative of innocence continuing endlessly backwards into history. Yet this vision is as fictional as the dream of the ethnographers. Qaanaaq was established in 1953 when the American and the Danish governments agreed that the Thule Airbase needed to be expanded and that the local population had to be moved a hundred kilometres further north. Without mentioning the ongoing court case between the original inhabitants of the area and the Danish government, Høeg still manages to question the official version of history. The way Høeg does this is reminiscent of what Linda Hutcheon in *The Canadian Postmodern* coined ‘historiographic metafiction.’ Through its play with History, factuality, and what is perceived to be ‘true,’ historiographic metafiction interrogates the absolute version of the past, highlighting the ideological implications of historical representation. For Hutcheon, historiographic metafiction is marked by a meeting between “fictionalizing” and history (*Canadian* 168) and this fits Høeg’s writing well, as he fictionalises sciences implicated in the Danish colonial history.

Further unsettling official, linear History, the novel takes place in 1993, yet was published in 1992. On page 360 there is a listing of some of the most blatant disturbances of History that Høeg creates. Greenland did rightly withdraw from the Common Market in 1985. Interestingly, there is an entire sentence missing from the

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3 Jean Malaurie’s 1955 *Les derniers rois de Thule (The Last Kings of Thule, 1956)* is often cited as a good description of the tragedy of the Thule Inuit. The book is, however, intensely crammed with disappointed descriptions of the “half-breeds” that are not truly “Eskimo”, with constant measurements of the appearance of the native – typically their “Mongolian” faces or their “large behinds”, and with an admiration of the “true primitives” based on the fact that if you trust them, “you will be surprised to find that they will not stint trouble or even their lives for you” (209). Malaurie is typecasting the Inuit, lamenting not so much the way they are treated as the fact that they will not remain essential innocent primitives; thus adding to the static ‘exhibition images’ Smilla perceives. It is, as Smilla says “a study in unconscious prejudices” (193).
Doubleday Canada version at this point. In the Danish it continues, "genforhandlingen november 92 og genindtrædelsen 1. Januar 93, den største udenrigspolitiske kovending nogensinde, er lige bag os" (338) – "the renegotiations in November 92 and re-entrance on January 1st 93, the biggest U-turn in foreign policy ever, is right behind us." One cannot help but wonder whether this sentence was deleted because the translator thought Høeg had been sloppy with his research or because of a banal mistake. In the original, however, Høeg completely rewrites History, as Greenland in fact remains outside the EU. The last example of Høeg creating metafictional historiography to be mentioned here can be seen on the map placed as frontispiece in the North American edition. In the Davis Strait, north of Nuuk, there is a star, marking the position of Gela Alta – the island that Smilla and the entire novel is headed towards. The island Gela Alta does not exist. Again, Høeg fictionalises science, here cartography, and unsettles the reader’s belief in what s/he knows to be ‘true.’ We look at a map that is not correct and are forced to think about which parts of the knowledge of Greenland we have are in fact ‘correct.’ This deconstruction of an official discourse of Greenland is where Høeg lets his political message come raging forth. The further into the plot Smilla runs, the more of these fractures appear in the ice she runs upon. The forced existence of prejudices and lies alongside scientific discourses claiming an absolute ‘truth’ is what Høeg unveils and tears at as it is a fundamental part of the history of Danish colonialism. As Gunnars does in *The Prowler*, Høeg encircles the discrepancies in order to critically engage colonial history.

The play between fact and fiction, the choice of the overarching thriller genre, the intermingling of several genres, the sharp irony in Smilla’s voice, and the aesthetic reflection of the effects of modernism Høeg undertakes, could be reason enough to call the novel postmodern. But is it postcolonial? This is subject to much debate amongst
Scandinavian critics. The Swedish critic Sara Danius named *Smilla* postcolonial in her reviews, but has been contradicted. Bo Jansson, Swedish but living in Denmark, argues in his “En postmoderne undergangsvision” published in the Danish literary journal *Spring*, that “the novel is not so much about a real death in Copenhagen that must be exposed or about postcolonial conditions and current relations between Denmark and Greenland” (145). Rather, Jansson continues, “it’s a metafictive narrative about the relation between reality and fiction” (145). It is hard to see why such a division is necessary and, indeed, how it is possible. When reading a novel with a main character of partly Inuit descent, who works hard to expose the death of a Greenlandic child killed by Danish scientists, it seems impossible to avoid looking at relations between Danes and Greenlanders. Further, when the novel is taking place in, and in between, Copenhagen and institutions handling the relations between Denmark and Greenland, it seems impossible to completely overlook the postcolonial aspect.

Another argument against *Smilla* as postcolonial narrative is the fact that the action never takes place in Greenland, as Ola Larssmo argues (qtd. in Poddar and Mealor 162). More than half the novel takes place in Copenhagen, Greenland exists only in Smilla’s memory, and she only sets foot on the fictional *Greenland Star* oil platform, floating off the coast of Nuuk. Yet as Poddar and Mealor argue in their groundbreaking article “Danish Imperial Fantasies”:

[I]t is precisely Høeg’s positioning of ... Smilla, a postcolonial migrant, in the metropolitan centre that raises the issue of the trans-cultural third space inhabited by postcolonial migrants and diasporas, and enables a critique of Danish Imperialism and the narrative constructions of Danish national identity (162).
Not only can Smilla’s body be read as the metaphor of the present Greenland (her mother the Inuit, her father the Danish scientist) her entire demeanour clashes with what Høeg perceives to be quintessentially Greenlandic and Danish, respectively. Smilla is racially invisible; she is surprised when Isaiah recognises her as Greenlandic (14). She loves science and luxury – facts that are described through naming European scientists and brand names. Smilla also loves solitude and ice – facts that are explained in a context of her nomadic family and the physical reality of her Greenlandic childhood. In this way, Høeg’s protagonist embodies the contradictions of the trans-cultural third space Poddar and Mealor write about, referring to Homi Bhabha’s idea of the third space described in *The Location of Culture*. By placing Smilla in Copenhagen, that trans-cultural space is underlined, outlined in a way that is most definitely postcolonial. Høeg draws attention to the history of colonisation present in the heart of Copenhagen and to the effect it still has on Greenlanders. Yet while it is clear that he is critical both of Danish colonial history and of common prejudices against Greenlanders in Copenhagen, it remains unclear whether Høeg sees the possible positive directions one can go in such a space – as theorised by Bhabha or as proposed by Gunnars.

Copenhagen was the centre of Danish imperialism. It was from Copenhagen that successive kings sent out explorers, priests, merchants and other representatives to take over Iceland, the Faroe Islands, Greenland and the other areas colonised by Denmark. Copenhagen was the centre from where royalty, money, administration, trade, church and science emanated. Copenhagen is still the physical location of most of these institutions and remains the political centre of power over much of the everyday reality of the Faroe Islands and Greenland. The Danish National Archives, the National Museum’s Ethnographic Section, the Royal Library, various institutes for
polar research, and the Department of Eskimology at University of Copenhagen have all been part of the exploration of Greenland in the name of the Danish crown and all still contain and process information concerning Greenland. When Smilla moves around within and in between these institutions, Høeg gives her agency and power by letting her remap Copenhagen according to its colonial history.

Science is a tool of colonialism. Mapping, testing, measuring, classifying, and exploring is a form of possession, as it names, processes, and retells the land. Smilla's father, along with many other Danish scientists, “came to Greenland because this hospitable land has always been the site of scientific experiments” (37). The Greenland Høeg is writing about is the processed result of science that is dovetailed with colonial administration. While it is true that the plot of Smilla never takes the reader to ‘real’ Greenland, it does contain enough scientists, scientific facts, and talk of maps and locations to show that Høeg is revealing how science possesses by reshaping and renaming. Høeg discloses how scientific and administrative discourses have been retelling Greenland. He uses Smilla to retell Denmark. The Greenland in Smilla is a remake, the pure mythical Thule, not the ‘real’ Greenland. The fictionality of Greenland is no coincidence and therefore no argument for the novel not being postcolonial, as Ola Larssmo claimed. Rather, it is a sign of Høeg unveiling the Danish reshaping of Greenland and Greenlanders that was discussed in “Histories” as a part of Denmark’s way of fitting Greenland into a Danish narrative of nation. Thus Smilla takes on exactly one of the defining traits of a postcolonial novel; that of critically scrutinising the representations of colonial history.

It is not only the Smilla appearing on the pages of the novel that can be seen as retelling Danish colonialism in Greenland. Her entire life seems to be constructed to retell colonialism and its effects. If Høeg is telling colonialism through Smilla’s life, the
simple question of whether that life is successful becomes paramount, as she then represents a part of a postcolonial future. Regardless of what angle one chooses to observe Smilla from, she seems to be double. On one hand, Smilla Qaavigaaq Jaspersen has studied glacial morphology, statistics, and mathematics. She has been on numerous expeditions in the Arctic as scientist, navigator, and as a renowned specialist on ice, and her articles have been widely published (99). On the other hand, she never finished her degree, she has been excluded from the Danish Glaciology Society, and she is unemployed (100-1). Smilla dresses like the rich upper class her father belongs to. She has good communication skills (as evidenced when she manipulates several different people to volunteer information), and is highly intelligent. Still, she is alone. Apart from her relationship with Isaiah, it does not seem like she lets anybody in – even when she gets closer to the mechanic Peter, and feels like asking him questions, she stops herself (195). Smilla loves this solitude, feeling about it “as some people feel about the blessing of the church” (11). Her isolation and violence make her seem cold, cold as the ice she adores. Yet the way she feels “a yearning to participate, to take part”, her suicidal tendencies (54), and the overwhelming love she developed as a surrogate mother for Isaiah, even buying his diapers (25), shows the opposite side – the strongly emotional. Professionally, socially, and emotionally Smilla has two disparate sides. The transcultural space Smilla inhabits does not blend those disparate sides in her, they remain like oil and water and not even when she is shaken violently do they fuse into each other.

The opposite extremes in Smilla appear to reflect her two very different parents and her childhood having been cut in two when she was moved from Greenland to Denmark. “I usually tell myself that I’ve lost my cultural identity for good” (135), Smilla thinks. But Høeg is creating an identity for her, neither Inuit nor Danish but
“pampered Greenlander” (135). She is “merely speaking a watered-down form of [her] mother tongue” (274), she dresses in a mix of European luxury and signifiers of Greenland, and she realises that she is one part of “those whose primary view of the world is that it must be transformed” (317) because she is a mapmaker. But this duality is an uneasy one. Said’s notion of the exile – “nostalgic and sentimental on one level, an adept mimic or a secret outcast on another” (Bayoumi and Rubin 370) can be read alongside The Prowler as a promise of a wider vision. But when reading Smilla’s Sense of Snow, Said’s words sound more like a warning when he continues: “Being skilled at survival becomes the main imperative, with the danger of getting too comfortable and secure constituting a threat that is constantly to be guarded against” (Bayoumi and Rubin 370-1). Perhaps this has to do with the notion of identity within the text. Poddar and Mealor argue that Høeg adheres to a view of identity as pure and stable, thus making his construction of Smilla as a hybrid impossible: “The recovery of a true identity is precisely what Smilla spends so much of her energies trying to achieve and is also, as she is well aware, the source of her frustrations as a hybrid” (177). That Smilla cannot function as a hybrid in the sense of merging the two cultures, as an interlocutor, might be valid in light of her uneasy double identity. But is that because Høeg’s view of identity is essentialist, and perhaps even lamenting the loss of the mythical image of the pure Inuit, as Poddar and Mealor argue?

To answer this question, it is instructive to look at the boat as chronotope in Barbara, The Prowler, and Smilla’s Sense of Snow chronologically. As chronotope, which Mikhail Bakhtin terms the connecting of time and space made possible in literature, a boat represents both a travelling place which transgresses national boundaries, and a snapshot of a specific time by who and what it brings. In Barbara, the boat brought men embodying colonial control with law, trade, religion, language,
and science. It was a one way transport from inside the colonial centre to outside, to the periphery. Barbara, symbolising the colonised nation, never got to set foot on the ship. The time and space of the boat in *Barbara* was that of complete control, of a monologue. Moving forward to *The Prowler*, time has changed, as the boat sails both ways, carrying the narrator both ways with it. The time is changed, albeit not to dialogue, it is a back and forth moving, symbolising a slow disruption, a decolonisation. Furthermore, the boat here carries the narrator, and the space in between is naturalised as a beginning of the narrator's status as migrant, as creating a space beyond colonialism. Importantly, the last pages of *The Prowler* describe the boat as containing parents "enriched by their contact with the outside world" (199) as a clear message of hope. *Barbara* was written when the Faroe Islands were still a colony, depicting a time where the colonial control was even tighter than when it was written, and *The Prowler* was written over 40 years after Iceland became independent, looking back upon a process of change. Although published last of the three, *Smilla* does not fit at the end when seen in a context of decolonisation. The boat as chronotope here is Kronos; "a field of dangers" (409) for Smilla and for everyone else aboard. Kronos - time - is a space containing violence, death, and fear sailing towards Greenland. There is no real connection as in the other novels, Kronos does not harbour in Greenland but sails towards a non-existent island enclosing a mysterious stone, the most fictional part of the fiction. Such a threatening and unstable chronotope is fitting for a novel dealing with the relation between Denmark and Greenland, as Greenland is the one of Denmark's colonies which achieved Home Rule last, the one furthest away from independence, and the one whose inhabitants live through the most dire consequences of a failed decolonisation.
Just as Kronos is a fitting metaphorical misconnection, Smilla as two parts jarring against each other in an uneasy whole is telling the reader of the reality many Greenlanders face. Smilla’s hunt for an identity, as well as for Isaiah’s killer, is not necessarily a sign of Høeg believing in fixed identity. Rather, it can be read as part of his political anticolonialist message, his direct addressing of the uneasy relation between Greenlanders and Danes. Smilla will have to depend on her survival skills to develop an identity in a society that views most Greenlanders as failures, as depicted in the social reality of the White Palace where Smilla lives:

The whole thing ... makes a cheap and flimsy impression, but there’s nothing trivial about the rent, which is so high that the only ones who can afford to live here are people like Juliane, whom the state is supporting; the mechanic, who had to take what he could get; and those living on the edge, like myself (6).

Although Høeg’s political sarcasm is evident in this description, the translation has left out the extreme of it: The nickname of the place in *Froken Smillas fornemmelse for sne* is “Det hvide Snit” (13) – the Danish nickname for lobotomy. Thus a critique of passifying tendencies within the Danish social system is a part of Høeg’s examination of the reality for Greenlanders in Denmark and the consequent anticolonial message.

Høeg rewrites and unsettles official history and the hagiographies of Arctic scientists in *Smilla*. Thereby he succeeds in pointing to the colonial history of Denmark in Greenland. As he cannot write about such history and its actual physical consequences from Greenland without appropriating the colonised’s perspective, he has apparently chosen to write from Denmark to show the part of the history still happening in Copenhagen. When looking at the Greenlandic characters in Smilla’s Copenhagen, Frantz Fanon’s theory of internalisation explains the extremes of their behaviour. There is no in between, no ‘normal’ Greenlandic character. Smilla is
racially invisible, Isaiah is killed, his mother is the alcoholic Danes believes all Greenlanders to be, and Andreas Fine Licht is as hollow as the fiberglass Inuit outside his office. Fine Licht has transgressed his past, has mastered the language and culture of the colonisers perfectly and thereby moved to the centre. As he has completely internalised the values and norms of the colonisers, Fine Licht is the extreme example of Fanon’s inferiority complex and of Bhabha’s mimick man. Hybridity in Smilla does not have the creative possibility suggested by Diana Brydon of ‘contamination.’ This, however, does not necessarily prove that Høeg still believes in cultural authenticity – it could as well be a way to draw the reader’s attention to the extreme difficulty Greenlanders have coming to a place of a new cultural identity. If there is a problem in Høeg’s narrative relating to postcolonial identity, it lies rather in the appropriation of Smilla’s point of view.

Høeg has taken the risky step of writing from a Greenlandic woman’s perspective. Obviously, as a writer of fiction, he is able to imagine a woman’s perspective or the perspective of a Greenlander. Smilla is not passive, or silenced as is Barbara, although she could be seen as a metaphor for Greenlanders. As fictional characters, Smilla and Barbara have several similarities; they are women on the outside of colonial power, created by male authors belonging to the literati (Høeg studied comparative literature at Copenhagen University), writing in Danish and thus related to the inside of the power centre. The characters differ in terms of their education, as Smilla is a scientist and Barbara cannot even spell, yet Smilla never finished her studies and have been excluded from the academic circles. Both characters are thus set up as lacking in the kind of knowledge endorsed by official Denmark. Still, they both take what they want, especially sexually, and where Barbara uses that to get inside the position of power, Smilla can by her mixed background pervade the inside easily because she knows the
cultural codes, and is by her profession related to the colonial history in the Arctic. In the context of colonial history though, it is their status as metaphors that is most striking; Barbara for the colonised nation of the Faroe Islands and Smilla as the postcolonial hybrid. Yet how does Høeg make Smilla accessible to his readers? She is a scientist, she is extremely violent, she is the hunter or detective and she is the active part of the sexual relation with the mechanic. In “Fiction and Reality in Smilla’s Sense of Snow,” Annelies van Hees argues that these character traits are signs of Høeg achieving the last of his possible goals – to criticise from a (post)feminist viewpoint. The traditionally male character traits could also be a way of making the character understandable or palatable. If it were unambiguous that Høeg wrote in a postmodern, postcolonial, and postfeminist language, would it not have been a sign of contamination similar to that which Diana Brydon suggests is new creativity in The Prowler? Would it not have been more of an explosion of myths and prejudices if Smilla had been an assemblage of voices, instead of two mutually exclusive voices, living within a polyphony of voices? Why has the collage of genres and styles in Smilla’ Sense of Snow not moved inside Smilla? As Enoch Padolsky writes, the appropriation debate is not only about hybridity against authenticity – it is importantly about taking “back control of the cultural agenda from other, more dominant hands, and secondly, to preserve, develop and nourish a sense of community identity” (20). Although Høeg remarkably gives voice to the Greenlanders, he does so by means of mixing traditional European literary strategies, but not to a new blend. Thus, the cultural agenda is perhaps still with the dominant people. This is a consequence of the staging of the Greenlandic characters, the appropriation of the protagonist’s perspective, and of the way the novel ends. Such a reading is unfortunately strengthened in Bille August’s
adaptation, as it stages an actress who is not Inuk playing Smilla, and emphasises the elements of thriller and action over the political.

Further, there is no sense what so ever of a development of community in the novel. This could be Høeg pointing to the disquieting relations between Greenlanders and Danes. But does such portrayal have to leave out any hope for the Greenlandic community? Isaiah, who “was on the verge of success” (76) is killed, so is Fine Licht, leaving both the old and the new ways to decolonisation blocked off. At the end of the novel, the only Greenlanders left are Juliane, looking for hope at the bottom of the bottles, and – possibly – Smilla.

Smilla, although hunting Tørk across the ice, runs parallel with him into the fog, towards the thin ice. This is how the novel ends – an ending that ironically is of close resemblance to the one Malmros gave the film *Barbara*; the woman disappearing into nature. But where *Barbara* the novel ends with Barbara having to return and face her community, we hear nothing of Smilla’s possible return. “There will be no resolution” are the last words. Not only does Høeg not offer an assemblage of voices to tell a future or retell the past, as Gunnars does in *The Prowler*, he does not give an opening to reconciliation as there is, after all, in *Barbara*. Smilla as crossing back and forth over the border of the perspective from the inside and the outside, does not create anything in between. That the two perspectives exist within her as separate and antagonistic does not open up the possibility of a perspective beyond colonialism. Rather, Smilla dissolves into the fog of a fictional island on the absolute margin of the (post)colonial map – Høeg lets this creation of painful, or even impossible hybridity run back to the outside.
Conclusion

_Petite, Aggressive European nation dares fly its flag over Hans Island._
_National Post, March 2004_

Denmark has an ongoing colonial history. There used to be a Danish empire. One could, in jest, ask whether 'Danish Imperial Fantasies' (as Mealor and Poddar term it in one of the few articles looking at Danish literature in this context) are completely over when reading the recent newspaper quotation above. The front page carried this headline and a picture showing the Danish flag on the bare rocks of Hans Island as a reaction to Danish military planting it on Canadian ground. One could also, polemically, claim that Denmark is the only European country that still has an empire larger than its home territory. Yet that would disregard the Home Rule governments of the Faroe Islands and Greenland. Still, Denmark's colonial history is a part of the everyday reality for the people of these countries, as Denmark decides their foreign policy. The political climate of the Faroe Islands is often debated in Danish media, as is that of Greenland, although that tends to be put forward mostly in connection with the enormous social problems many Greenlanders face both at home and in Denmark. It is very rare, however, that the debates posit Denmark as having a role of responsibility in the explanation for the political unrest in the two nations. The Faroese should be grateful for the yearly financing; they cannot control their own economy' and 'we have to aid the poor Greenlanders, they cannot help it that they have a hard time adjusting' – crudely put, these sentiments nonetheless sum up an average view on the so-called Danish dependencies. What is not addressed often enough is that Denmark 'received' these countries when Denmark 'took over' Norway, that the 'right' to them was established in a deal sealing off a major European war, and that making oneself a ruler over another people is not a defensible act – this last fact is often forgotten in its crucial but simple decisiveness.
Apart from offering the potential to shed more light on Denmark’s relations with the Faroe Islands, Iceland, Greenland, and other former colonies, questions raised in regards to Denmark’s imperial tendencies could be useful in a wider understanding of the strained relationship between many Danes and the refugees and immigrants living in Denmark. It is possible that knowledge of the concrete effects Denmark has had on its former colonies combined with a discussion of the gigantic and fatal consequences modernity as founded on colonialism has led to, might lead to greater tolerance and a more nuanced debate.

"I believe," writes Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks*, “that the fact of the juxtaposition of the white and black races has created a massive psychoexistential complex” (12). Although he never looses sight of the many and terrible consequences of prejudice based on racial discourses, when Fanon undertaking an analysis of the complex, ‘white’ and ‘black’ take on a more metaphorical meaning. “I am not unaware that the same behaviour patterns obtain in every race that has been subjected to colonization” (25), he writes and goes on to show how Whiteness is something one gains “above a certain financial level” (43). The juxtaposition between White and Black partly turns into an opposition between coloniser and colonised and this, proves Fanon, is the basis of the Manichean binary used to justify the oppression inherent in colonisation. Of the inferiority complex resultant from colonial oppression, Fanon states, “I hope by analysing it to destroy it” (12). While Fanon did not succeed in destroying it, he did lay down a means to keep attacking the structure of the complex. By analysing language and cultural demeanour of both coloniser and colonised, one can detect and expose the internalisation of the inferiority complex and when it is exposed, instead of being implied as ‘natural,’ it is weakened.
Another, related, way to see the enormous powers of language and cultural expression is offered by Tzvetan Todorov. In “Histories,” I argued that one can use Todorov’s concept of a written tradition as guarding a cultural tradition better against invasion and therefore against annihilation, to explain the extremely different situations of the Faroe Islands, Iceland, and Greenland today. Cultural tradition (or destruction thereof) and representations of historical factors leading to the differing situations of the three countries are central to *Barbara, The Prowler,* and *Smilla’s Sense of Snow.* In such a way, each of the novels can be read as postcolonial – as critically scrutinising the colonial relationship. Each of the texts contain characters that have completely internalised the colonial power binary. All three texts also depict cultural imperialism in a way that appears strategic and critical. Perhaps, in answer to Robert Young’s examination of a postcolonial theoretical matrix, parts of the colonial discourse do operate similarly across space and time. Yet even if there is a general postcolonial theoretical framework that can be applied along many colonial instances, any answers can only be extracted by considering the similarities through the local differences: The places where these authors leave the discussion of colonialism’s impacts are very different.

Jørgen-Frantz Jacobsen in *Barbara* leaves this discussion with one foot in each camp – both inside and outside. Although his life project was one of proving how the Faroe Islands are a distinct nation with a history, language, and culture separate from the Danish, he never rejected Denmark or the Danish language. This, perhaps, is one reason why *Barbara,* although ridiculing the Danish administers in Torshavn, never stages any open confrontations between Faroese and Danes. Still, Jacobsen did write a novel of resistance to the Danish colonialism. As his protagonist is set up as a metaphor for the Faroe Islands and in opposition to the (Danish) norms and values of
the other characters, who in different ways have internalised those norms, the lack of balance in the situation is tangible. Barbara becomes the embodiment of resistance. Yet this is another reason why Jacobsen, when read today, cannot be said to be 'on the side' of those outside. By silencing Barbara and appropriating her body as metaphor, Jacobsen confines Barbara to a position of metaphor only. His assumption, it appears, was that nationalism entails equality for all. But his own text warns against such assumptions, as the woman-as-metaphor cannot take up an equal position to the man bringing the change, as she is just that – metaphor – and he is everything else – action and active language.

Language is open for everyone in The Prowler. Gunnars’ description of power relations between Denmark and Iceland is a telling voice in a discussion of the power Denmark has asserted over its Northern colonies. Writing beyond the power binaries Jacobsen depicted, yet still addressing them directly, Gunnars creates a space where all stories can be heard. This postcolonial space beyond might not be the transcultural space or a place of fusion and hybridity. As there is no linear plot in The Prowler and as each fragment has the possibility of changing meaning later, the voices are interwoven. Yet, at the same time, they remain fragments, separate, only brought together by the covers of the book. It is an assemblage of voices, each to be heard on its own and in connection with others.

In The Prowler, the first part of the process of internalisation is seen in the material consequences of colonisation, yet the second part, the psychological building of an inferiority complex is mainly seen when the narration takes place in Denmark. Thus The Prowler exhibits a clear change away from the inferiority complex inherent in the structure of colonialism. Still, Gunnars also remembers the pain of the decolonisation process and of how to negotiate the myths created about the Icelanders.
Smilla’s *Sense of Snow* similarly depicts the Greenlanders as part of a cultural myth of the North. Yet even though the novel critically attacks the myth of science as purely positive and shows how science is implicated in colonialism, Høeg leaves another myth standing – that of the drunk Greenlander: the only Greenlander we are sure is still alive at the end of the novel is the alcoholic Juliane. Even if Smilla survives and returns to Copenhagen, Høeg has only shown that she is a survivor, not that she can or will ever reconcile the two sides within her. Where both *Barbara* and *The Prowler* relate to other voices, *Smilla*, although containing many different genres, does not illustrate Smilla to relate to anybody else than Isaiah who is dead before the novel even starts. The novel has the possibility of leading to an understanding of the many and deep-felt conflicts Denmark has with immigrants and of why so many Greenlanders end up in a self-destructive invisibility from life in Denmark and Greenland. Yet one yearns for just a tiny sign that such understanding is possible. As we leave *Smilla’s Sense of Snow*, we might understand the two sides embodied by Smilla better, but they have not mixed or even moved closer outside of her metaphorical body. Thus while *Smilla’s Sense of Snow* is the novel published last of the three, it remains the one carrying the fewest possibilities and the least of hope for a meeting in between. The only one who is in between is Smilla and her sorrow, and the way she is repeatedly beaten up, does not leave much room for her to engage in anything else than survival. Perhaps Høeg could avoid offering any future for his protagonist as he, as opposed to Jacobsen and Gunnars, is not of mixed descent.

Perhaps being a cultural hermaphrodite or speaking in many voices at once prepares the ground for reconciliation. Perhaps more voices need to imagine both sides in order to move beyond – move to a place where the many voices can all be heard.
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