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# Blame, Shame, and Atonement: Greenlandic Responses to Racialized Discourses about Greenlanders and Danes

Kirsten Thisted

**Abstract:** Outside Greenland, many believe that the Greenlandic name for Greenland means "Land of the People." However, the Greenlandic word for human being or person is *inuk* (plural: *inuit*), and Greenland is called *Kalaallit Nunaat* not *Inuit Nunaat*. *Kalaallit* is the West Greenlandic term for modern-day Greenlanders who trace their ancestry along two lines: to the Inuit in the West and the Scandinavians in the East. During the first half of the twentieth century, this mixed ancestry was an important argument for the Greenlandic claim for recognition and equality. This article examines a literary source, Pavia Petersen's 1944 novel, *Niuvertorutsip pania* (The outpost manager's daughter). The novel's female protagonist, who is of mixed ancestry, is staged as a national symbol for modern Greenland, a country that appropriates European culture while remaining Greenlandic. After the end of the colonial period, the Inuit legacy and Greenlanders' status as an Indigenous people became important drivers of the Greenlandic claim for independence. In present-day Greenlandic film and literature, Danes are often left out of the story entirely, delegitimizing much of society's genetic and cultural legacy. Naturally, this poses a problem for the Greenlanders who not only number Europeans among their remote ancestors but also live with a dual identity, with one Danish and one Greenlandic parent. This article illustrates that the notion of "mixed-breed" or "half" Greenlanders is currently regarded with such ambivalent feelings because it accentuates unresolved tensions among the ethnic groups, including the continued dominance of the outdated (colonial) affective economies in Danish-Greenlandic relations.

**Keywords:** Greenland, literary history, affective economies, postcoloniality, "mixed" identities

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## Introduction

An odd creature, neither human nor animal, writhes across the stage in the play *Sarfartuut/Strømsteder* (Turbulent currents).[1] The creature morphs into and out of a variety of characters: an alcoholic Greenlandic woman; a nice suburban Danish lady, who is (mistakenly) convinced that she has no prejudice toward Greenlanders; a young woman, the daughter of a Danish father and a Greenlandic mother, whose voices address her from video monitors hanging as portraits on the wall. The creature is a *tupilak*, a sort of avenging animal that Greenlanders traditionally used to work black magic on their enemies. Today, the *tupilak* has become a symbol of unresolved tensions between Danes and Greenlanders. "We are all *tupilaks*," sings the young rapper Josef Tarrak Petrussen in the video "Tupilak," which went viral in 2016.[2] Danes show racism toward Greenlanders, and Greenlanders' anger becomes a self-destructive hatred, Petrussen explained in an interview.[3] Caught up in the conflict are the many Greenlanders who are of mixed descent and who may even use Danish as their first language.

The so-called mixed Greenlanders find themselves in an ambiguous position in a postcolonial showdown. Greenland was a Danish colony from 1721 to 1953, when it was integrated into Denmark as the country's northernmost county. In 1979, the Home Rule Act was implemented, followed by the Act

on Greenland Self-Government in 2009. The latter recognizes Greenlanders as a people pursuant to international law. This gives them the right to secede from the current commonwealth (*Rigsfællesskabet*, the Community of the Realm) with Denmark and the Faroe Islands when and if they want. Today, the vast majority of the Greenlandic population agrees that Greenland should form its own state, as soon as a viable economy is established, making independence feasible. A (small) minority wants to preserve and further develop Greenland's relationship with the commonwealth. Most Greenlanders agree, however, that Greenland must preserve some form of partnership with Denmark.

Initially, the colonial administration kept a strict eye on who was Danish, who was Greenlandic, and who was of "mixed blood."[4] Over time, however, the genealogy became so complicated that it was impossible to keep straight and those with mixed blood, the so-called *akuttat* (singular: *akutaq*; person/persons with blond hair), simply became Greenlanders.[5] Today, virtually all Greenlanders have both Inuit and European ancestry. In fact, the nation perceives itself as a mix of Inuit and European heritage. Outside Greenland, it is generally believed that the Greenlandic name for Greenland means "Land of the People"; however, the Greenlandic word for human being or person is *inuk* (plural: *inuit*), and the name of Greenland is not *Inuit Nunaat* but *Kalaallit Nunaat. Kalaallit* is the West Greenlandic term for modern-day Greenlanders who trace their ancestry to two sources: to the Inuit to the West and the Scandinavians to the East. When Greenlanders speak of "our ancestors" in the plural, they refer to the Inuit (called "Eskimos" earlier by outsiders). When they speak of the ancestor who gave the family its surname, they refer to a European, usually a Dane, who came to Greenland, married a local woman, and started a family.[6] Danes and Greenlanders have continued to mix. Consequently, it is difficult to draw a sharp distinction between the ethnic categories, which are not always discernible from appearance, language, or "culture." Nevertheless, the distinction is zealously upheld by Greenlanders, as their status as a people is crucial for their ability, eventually, to claim the right to secede from Denmark and form an independent state.

This article will apply a historical perspective on the mixed Greenlander, who during the first half of the twentieth century became a national symbol for the new and "awakened" population, which the Greenlandic elite at the time hoped would populate a future, modern Greenland. For Denmark, Greenland's incorporation into the kingdom was a handy solution to a delicate matter, as Denmark, in connection with the United Nations' confrontation with colonialism after the Second World War, was forced to take a stand on Greenland's legal status.[7] Denmark did not consider itself a colonial power in line with "brutal" powers, such as England, France, and Belgium. Nevertheless, Greenland ended up on the list of "non-self-governing territories."

For Greenland, its incorporation into the Danish Kingdom was the fulfillment of a wish that the Greenlandic elite had long been nurturing but that so far had been a mere utopia.[8] Greenlanders wanted Greenland to develop commercially, and they wanted better schooling, more reading materials, and education in the Danish language, seen as the gateway to the world. At the time, obtaining equal rights as Danish citizens was the most realistic way to achieve this goal.[9] Incorporation, however, became a disappointment, as Greenlanders did not achieve recognition as equal citizens. Moreover, the national idea has its own inertia: development toward an independent state is seen as a "natural," irreversible outcome. A people must have their own state if they are to enjoy proper recognition in the world community, hence

the calls for home rule and self-government. Nevertheless, incorporation into Denmark did result in the establishment of a welfare society in accordance with the Scandinavian model, which today is widely considered to be part of the DNA of Greenlandic society.

The article examines a major work in Greenlandic literature: Pavia Petersen's (1904–43) novel *Niuvertorutsip pania* (The outpost manager's daughter), published posthumously in 1944. The colonial era is not really part of present-day historical consciousness, and younger generations may have difficulty understanding the thinking of the Greenlanders of the past.[10] Seen from a twenty-first-century point of view, the far-sighted Greenlandic politicians who fought for Greenlanders' integration into the world community as an independent, educated, and modern people are often reduced to the embodiment of the "assimilation phase" on the colonized people's path to revolution and freedom.[11] The author's use of the (educational) novel (*Bildungsroman*), originally a European genre, lends support to that line of interpretation. By the time of the novel's publication, however, European genres had long since been taken over by Greenlanders, who filled them with Greenlandic content and also, in some cases, mixed in features from their own oral tradition. As the analysis will demonstrate, Greenlandic intellectuals of the first half of the twentieth century in many ways had a revolutionary outlook. It is worth experiencing that time through such primary sources as Petersen's novel, as they lay the foundation for the present. The Greenland of today was shaped by the decisions made by the Greenlandic elite during the first half of the twentieth century to transform the Greenlandic hunter into a modern subject with Danish citizenship and a Greenlandic identity.

The literary text was chosen because it deals with topics, such as discrimination and racism, that are painful and hence tend to be concealed. Discrimination is often associated with shame, because it reflects negatively on one's core identity. Discrimination is not aimed at acts that the person is responsible for but at who others assume the person to be. The advantage of the literary text is that under the cover of fiction an author can discuss topics that are otherwise difficult to address, even if hidden between the lines. A candid, direct manuscript, for example, could never have made it to print in Greenland. Subtle literary devices, an effect of censorship and self-censorship in the Danish colony, were able to capture both Danish racism and Greenlandic compliance and submissiveness

## Setting the Scene

*Niuvertorutsip pania* begins in 1879 and ends on New Year's Eve in 1899, at the threshold of the new century. This was a period marked by changes that pulled Greenlanders into the modern world (with printed books and magazines and the formation of the first local community councils), just as the transition to the new century symbolized hope for the future. Setting the scene in the past softened the book's critique of authorities and management but also invited the reader to consider how many of the problems had actually been solved.

The opening scene of the novel introduces a small settlement that appears, at first glance, quite idyllic, with low Greenlandic houses nestled in giant snow drifts, sheltered from the storm. Inside, however, the mood is far from cozy, and there is scant learning in the small classroom set in a corner of a church attic. The children sputter and cough, sick from living in cold, drafty houses; the lighting is

miserable; the stove is spewing smoke; and when the catechist opens the door to air out the room, the cold pours in, turning the mist from the students' breath into a thick layer of frost on their slates, making their slate pencils slip on the frozen surface. The students breathe on the slates to thaw them, but when they wipe off the frost, they erase what they had already written and have to start over. Soon, the catechist gives up and dismisses the class.

Later in the day, the catechist is back in the classroom, meeting with the most successful of the local hunters, Peele. The two men are preparing for a local council meeting. When Peele's daughter, Anna, brings them coffee, during an intermezzo, Petersen offers a first glimpse into the conflict that is brewing. Anna is no beauty, but she is comely, and above all she is clean and conscientious. This is evidenced by skillfully made clothes, testimony to her ability to sew clothing that does not let in even the smallest drop of water. Anna would thus make a perfect wife for a seal hunter. Peele, however, has higher ambitions for his daughter. Peele has a partially European appearance, with a touch of blue in his eyes, and when the conversation turns to the old outpost manager, who is of ill health and keen to return to Denmark, Peele teases his daughter by singing the song her family used to sing to her when she was a child.[12] The song's lyrics state that, as the youngest child in the family and the only girl, Anna is so dearly loved that she should not marry just any man but only a "mighty Dane."[13] Peele is on good terms with the Danes in the colony and is keen to strengthen these connections through his daughter. However, Anna is fond of Ole, the younger brother of the catechist's wife.

Ole makes his appearance in the next scene, as Peele and the catechist leave the church. The local men are gathered outside, among them Ole, the young firebrand; he is well-spoken and quick to point out the unfairness of the current system, and many of the others would like to see him on the local council. That is impossible, however: not only is Ole too young, but also only the best seal hunters are admitted to the council. Ole's poor hunting skills are the result of a tragedy. Two serious hunting accidents have left Ole's father, the highly accomplished hunter Sem, known as "Old Sem," with just one eye and one arm. His impairment has prevented him from teaching Ole to hunt. Old Sem hopes to see Ole marry into Peele's family. If Ole can go out with the seasoned hunters, he will soon pick up the needed skills. Enter now, however, the new outpost manager, Jørgen Jørgensen.

Jørgensen comes from a long line of sailors and has spent twenty years sailing the oceans and seeing the world. At thirty-four years of age, Jørgensen is much older than twenty-year-old Ole and Anna, who is even younger. But Jørgensen has his savings, his experience, and especially his social standing as a Dane. No one is waiting for him back in Denmark, and he has come to Greenland to stay. Jørgensen is highly critical of colonialism. He has seen foreign supremacy ruin communities around the world. Jørgensen is particularly appalled at how colonizers have taken power away from Indigenous peoples and made them subservient, often by deceiving them or plying them with alcohol. Europeans act kind and affable, pretending to have people's best interests at heart, all the while letting the alcohol do their work for them, as Jørgensen sees it.

Fortunately, Danes are a different lot! After Jørgensen began in the Greenland trade he witnessed different conditions. Jørgensen is proud of the brand of colonialism that the Danes brought to Greenland. He is convinced that the Danes are not in Greenland to get rich. The Danish monopoly handles trade in the Greenlanders' best interest, with no thought for profit. Jørgensen thus represents the dominant Danish

discourse of the Danish rule as a particularly mild and compassionate form of colonialism—hardly to be called colonialism at all, since it is so thoroughly altruistic. However, Jørgensen's thinking clashes with Ole's criticism of the Royal Greenlandic Trading Department and the former outpost manager leaving Greenland with a considerable nest egg. In fact, Jørgensen quickly proves to be a highly ambivalent character.

Essentially, Jørgensen is a likeable person who wants to make a difference in Greenland. In many situations he voices the author's opinions. As a Dane, however, he has a highly asymmetric relationship with the Greenlanders, and even if he may not want to, he does take advantage of his position, thus shifting the balance of power in the community—not least in regard to intimate relationships.

## Affective Economies

Since Jørgensen plans to settle in Greenland for good, he has to have a wife. The most suitable candidate in the settlement is Anna, who works for him as a *kiffaq*, a position in between a housekeeper and a maid. Although the outcome is predictable, how the marriage comes about is notable! Jørgensen realizes that Anna and Ole have feelings for one another. As the only Dane in the settlement, he is lonely and does everything he can to get close to the shy young woman. Jørgensen offers to host Anna's birthday, which coincides with the men's return from reindeer hunting. There are cakes to be baked and coffee to be roasted for the festivities. The outpost manager dips into the shop's stock and gives Anna the perfect gift: a textile that all the women want but is not even for sale in the shop. Anna enjoys being the center of attention, showing off her precious possession, and playing the generous hostess.

In the evening, Jørgensen invites Anna's family to his house, in honor of her birthday. As the evening progresses, liquor and cigars come out, even though Jørgensen knows he is not allowed to serve spirits to the Greenlanders. During colonial times, spirits could only be served to Greenlanders on special occasions, such as local council meetings, but it seems natural for him to offer them a drink. As part of the conversation, Jørgensen casually lets slip that he intends to propose to Anna, and no one voices any objections, including the catechist, although he knows that his wife's family is hoping for a marriage between Anna and Ole.

Later, the festivities continue at Peele's, and now everyone is getting tipsy. Ole joins them. Since there is no spare glass for him, his drink is poured into one of the big mugs normally used for coffee. Jørgensen pours a generous measure. Then he takes Anna's hand, and Ole misreads the gesture. He thinks that Anna has already accepted Jørgensen's proposal, and in his drunken state and in the spirit of male bonding, he capitulates and acknowledges to Jørgensen that he cannot possibly compete. Ole depends on the outpost manager to hire him for odd jobs, and ideally, he would like the job of tending the outpost manager's seal nets. That job was intended for someone else but now it goes to Ole. And thus, Anna is engaged without Jørgensen ever formally proposing.

Ole is not without blame. He is far too quick to give up his rights and dignity, and his own father is the first to chastise him. However, just after Jørgensen praises the Danish colonizers' behavior, supposedly different from other Europeans, especially regarding the use of alcohol as a means to an end, Jørgensen is made out to be a hypocrite, and the story of the Danes' selfless, compassionate colonialism rings hollow.

Thus, the text rejects the prevailing narrative of Danish colonialism with its related affective economy. In the first half of the twentieth century, Greenlanders were constantly reminded that Denmark had acted as the loving "Mother Denmark," shouldering the obligation of caring for her Greenlandic children, helping them to develop into a more "mature" nation. This narrative is based on the notion of Danes' affection for Greenlanders. As Sara Ahmed, professor of cultural studies, has pointed out, emotions do not simply *exist*, they generate *effects* in the world. Moreover, emotions are similar to money in that they generate added value when they circulate.[14] With every telling of the story of the Danes' selfless behavior in Greenland, the notion of their affection for Greenlanders grew—along with the notion of the gratitude Greenlanders were expected to feel toward Danes, just as children were expected to feel respect and gratitude toward their parents. In this case, certain emotions thus serve to produce and perpetuate colonial legitimacy. By undermining the notion of the gratitude owed by Greenlanders and replacing it with resentment over Danish hypocrisy, Petersen's text undermines the legitimacy of Danish colonialism.

## Realizing "White Privilege"

The outpost manager celebrates his wedding, and on the same day Ole marries another girl, Eva. Anna's biggest regret seems to be that she has to acquiesce to her future husband's wish and give up wearing her hair in a bun on top of her head: the symbol of Greenlandic femininity. Her hair is parted, braided, and pinned to her head in the European style. However, she keeps the red ribbon that marks her status as an unmarried woman, replacing it with a blue one after the wedding ceremony, in accordance with Greenlandic tradition. Anna enjoys the status that comes with having a Danish husband and access to Danish goods, but she is still essentially Greenlandic.

Not so the daughter the couple have, after first suffering the loss of a son. Johanne is named after Jørgensen's late mother, so her given name is Danish. The locals pronounce it in Greenlandic, Ujuaanna, and give her the nickname Ujuaannaaraq, "little Johanne." Johanne/Ujuaannaaraq thus grows up with a dual identity. The novel alternates between the two names, depending on whether the surroundings are Danish or Greenlandic.

Postcolonial theory often refers to a key scene in the French Caribbean philosopher and psychiatrist Frantz Fanon's (1925–61) book *Black Skin, White Masks*. In the chapter "The Fact of Blackness," Fanon relates how he is cast into the role of "Negro," with all the discrimination and marginalization that the term implies. "Look, a Negro!... Mama, see the Negro. I'm frightened."[15] The White child is struck with horror and dread, and the Black man is never more than just who he is, the incarnation of everything that the Whites associate with the term "Negro."

A similar scene occurs in *Niuvertorutsip pania*, although the perspective is the reverse. Ujuaannaaraq grows up with the other local children, never giving any thought that her father is Danish, although his accent might be slightly odd. However, one spring day, when the snow buntings have just returned, and the now almost six-year-old girl storms in to tell her parents the news, her father says that like the buntings, he has come from across the sea, from another country, called Denmark. Suddenly, Ujuaannaaraq realizes why she is more spoiled and stands above the other children, and she instantly embraces this role. Equipped with a lunch box full of bread, a treat that Greenlanders can only acquire in

the shop, she holds court among the children, who are playing house on the beach. To the boys she becomes the coveted prize that only the strongest and most skilled among the future hunters can hope to claim.

Just as Peele had ambitions for Anna, Jørgensen has no intention of seeing his daughter become the wife of a seal hunter in a Greenlandic settlement. For now, Ujuaannaaraq gets to enjoy her childhood—and her power. Naturally, Ujuaannaaraq has the finest and prettiest doll in the settlement, but she is not content, as the doll does not cry or fall asleep, like the younger siblings the other girls carry around with them. She wants a baby sister for her birthday, but Jørgensen and Anna are unable to have any more children. Jørgensen comes up with a plan; in his assistant Ole's rickety house, the couple keeps on having babies.

Jørgensen sends for Ole. Ole has been out to sea all day in his kayak, tending the outpost manager's seal nets. It is late evening before he returns with a heavy catch. Nevertheless, he cleans up immediately and puts on his best clothes to go to the much grander Danish house. Ole is invited in and asked to sit down, and it is clear to him that Jørgensen has something important to discuss. He thinks he had better comply, whatever the manager asks. As always, he is concerned, because he depends on the outpost manager for his livelihood. He is especially relieved not to have to face Anna, his former sweetheart. It is only when Jørgensen sees him sitting there, smiling and subservient, that it occurs to him how tired Ole must be after a long day's work. Jørgensen is embarrassed that he has not at least arranged to have a cup of coffee ready for him—and Anna has long since gone to bed. He has to offer him something—once again, he brings out the liquor bottle and cigars. Soon, Ole has agreed to let Johanne have Ole and Eva's newborn daughter as her birthday present and to forever keep it a secret that the child is not her own baby sister. "Jørgensen was so happy about this promise that he kept filling his guest's glass and let him recover properly from his toil. His spirits thoroughly lifted, Ole eventually left, after first pouring out many words of gratitude."[16]

## Ugly Feelings

The most interesting aspect of this pivotal scene is perhaps the way it is told. As a reader, one is almost desperate to witness how Ole, again and again, complies and lets Jørgensen take everything away from him. His defeat gets under the reader's skin; and at the same time, his passivity is so provoking that one feels like giving Ole the smacking that he should have given the self-righteous Dane long ago. With this technique the writer manages to engage his reader much more directly in the story than if Ole had actually stood up for himself. Literary scholar Philip Fisher calls this technique "volunteered passion." According to Fisher, there are two primary ways for literary texts to generate an emotional response in a reader. One is sympathy/empathy: I feel like the other or with the other.[17] Another is the less common technique of an absence of emotion. The text creates a gap that invites the reader to bring in the missing fear, grief, shame, or anger.[18] Petersen uses this latter technique in his description of Ole.

The scenes have some similarity to Nella Larsen's novel *Quicksand* from 1928, as analyzed by Shianne Ngai, professor of English.[19] Larsen (1891–1964) grew up in Chicago as the daughter of a Danish mother and a Black father with roots in what was then the Danish West Indies. In her youth, she spent some time in Denmark, a background that she shares with the protagonist of her novel, Helga Crane. Like

Ole, Helga is characterized by a mind-boggling lack of indignation and reaction to some of the severe incidents of discrimination that she experiences throughout the novel. And like Ole, Helga dreams of another life than the one that is laid out for her, but she is stuck, powerless to change her external conditions. This underlying sense of powerlessness is felt by both Helga and Ole. It would be reasonable, in both Helga's and Ole's cases and, in particular, in relation to Ole's father, Old Sem, to analyze how this powerlessness leads to what we would now characterize as depression. However, Ngai is not interested in understanding Helga's psyche. Instead, she demonstrates how Larsen's use of what Ngai calls "ugly feelings" engages the reader.

Ugly feelings are ignoble feelings: feelings that are considered morally dubious and unjustified. Because they are feelings that one ought to not have, they are associated with unease: "an unpleasurable feeling *about* the feeling," such as feeling ashamed about feeling envious. This gives the ugly feelings a potential to produce a sense of ironic detachment—a position where one is compelled to adopt an analytical view of oneself—which the more admirable, worthy, or approved feelings do not have.[20] In Helga's case, anger would be the expected and approved feeling, but instead she displays vague irritation that may be directed equally at clunky china in a restaurant as at racist and discriminatory behavior. Ngai points out how this leads to irritation in the reader: we are irritated with Helga, but at the same time we are compelled to reflect on what is really going on in these situations and on Helga's fundamentally impossible position. Hence, according to Ngai, Larsen's novel goes far deeper than twentieth-century sentimental civil rights novels.

Based on her analyses, Ngai concludes that the ugly feelings deal especially with defining or diagnosing states of passivity.[21] Ugly feelings are thus perfect for analyzing a situation such as Helga's: the mixed-race woman who is caught in the middle, between White and Black racism, and an equally prominent male dominance and women's oppression. This level of subtlety was far from possible within the Harlem Renaissance, which was the leading progressive environment in Larsen's time. Ugly feelings are similarly ideal for analyzing a setting such as colonial-era Greenland, framed by a narrative of consensus between the Danes and Greenlanders. In Petersen's work, the predominant ugly feeling is envy, which takes hold of Old Sem.

While Ole never seems to get a grip on his feelings or to feel anything at all, other than subservience, bitterness takes root in Old Sem. Old Sem is furious because his household is a mess, and even if he may realize that he is not being completely fair, he directs all his anger at Jørgensen's family. Old Sem keeps his dark thoughts to himself, isolating himself from the community, and as anger grows inside him, it becomes an all-consuming hatred that can only be quenched by the complete destruction of the other family. In the past, Old Sem might have carved a *tupilak*, an avenging monster as described in the opening of this article, to be turned against the other family. Old Sem has lost his Christian faith, and at times it seems as if something is stirring in the dark corner under his sleeping platform, something ominous, from pre-Christian times. For a while it appears as if Old Sem might succeed in visiting misfortune on the other family. During the summer hunt, the hunters happen upon a whale carcass. No one is starving, and everyone knows that eating the tainted meat may be dangerous. Nevertheless, they do consume it, and many people die, including Peele's grandson, a promising young hunter. Also, Lise, Ujuaannaaraq's gift sister, is not the baby sister Ujuaannaaraq had hoped for. Old Sem might have his wish: seeing Lise bring

division and misfortune to the otherwise harmonious family, in particular the spoiled and self-confident Johanne.

Old Sem offers the reader a figure capable of channeling and legitimizing the reader's own ugly feelings regarding the strongly asymmetrical balance of power between the two ethnic groups in Greenlandic society. It is almost impossible not to identify with Old Sem's anger and frustration over the self-righteous Danes, who think they are entitled to take what they want and at the same time believe they are doing the Greenlanders a great service. As Ngai has suggested, the ignoble feeling of envy thus opens the door to an analytical perspective on the Danish narrative of Danish exceptionalism regarding colonialism, which in turn leads to a diagnosis of Danish rule as abusive and hypocritical. On the other hand, envy is not a particularly productive feeling. Nothing but hatred and further grief and destruction comes out of it, according to the novel. The plot of the novel, therefore, lets Johanne go through a terrible ordeal, so that she can eventually end up as a reconciliation figure who can unite, rather than divide, society.

## Undermining the Family Metaphor

As Old Sem is increasingly swallowed up by his dark thoughts, Ujuaannaaraq too is being drawn away from Christianity. Ujuaannaaraq's father does not want her to go to school in the settlement; he wants his daughter to get an education that is not concerned only with the hereafter but also with the mundane world. The only place for Ujuaannaaraq to acquire the fundamentals of such an education is in the colony—not from the priest but from the well-educated wife of the factor (manager of the colony). Thus, for Anna the hair bun was only the first innocent sacrifice she had to make to marry the Danish man. Now, she has to let go of her daughter. Fortunately for Anna the girl's departure is delayed for a year. During that year Anna strives to instill in her daughter all the virtues she believes are essential to a Greenlandic woman: cleanliness, conscientiousness, and cooking and sewing skills. Anna also has her daughter join the Greenlanders camping during the summer to foster her love of Greenlandic nature. Anna emphasizes Christianity, as manifested in prayer and in the slow, meditative hymn singing that was a Greenlandic characteristic, especially in the settlements. When Ujuaannaaraq turns eight, however, she moves to the colony and only returns home during the summer holidays.

Naturally, Jørgensen acts with the best intentions, wishing for a better future for his daughter. As Jørgensen spends more time in Greenland, he realizes that Greenland is not the model colony he originally considered it to be. Danish supremacy over Greenland is pacifying Greenlanders, placing them in the same position as the other colonized peoples he refers to in the opening of the book:

> Until Greenlanders acknowledge that they are isolated in their own country without contact with other people in the world or with us Danes, they can neither know the nature of the dangers nor how to change things for the better. In their ignorance they are content with the state of affairs in their tiny little world, and this complacency lulls them into perpetual lethargy. It is dangerous if such a state continues generation after generation, as it will then take root in the nation, which makes it highly resistant to change.[22]

The problem is that Jørgensen's plans for his daughter are not necessarily to Greenland's benefit either. Ujuaannaaraq not only acquires knowledge and culture under the factor's wife's tutelage but also becomes increasingly Danish. Although she is distraught when she first arrives in the colony, she soon settles in and learns that Danish opens a new world to her. The Danish home has a large collection of books and a piano, which Ujuaannaaraq learns to play. The family is not very religious, but they do love music and song, and Ujuaannaaraq gradually replaces religion with poetry. When she visits during the summer, she finds that the settlement has shrunk somehow; Ujuaannaaraq is turning into Johanne, and she wants to explore the big wide world. She wants to accompany the factor's family to Denmark.

Back in the settlement, Anna clearly realizes that she is losing her daughter and is convinced that without religion Ujuaannaaraq has lost the most crucial aspect of life. Anna prays to God for guidance and receives it in the form of the biggest sacrifice the Danish connection has yet demanded of her. Anna falls terminally ill. Ujuaannaaraq is called home and misses the trip to Denmark. In the tragedy, however, she recovers her faith—and her Greenlandic identity.

The events also affect Old Sem. Ever since her early childhood, Ujuaannaaraq has had a curious affinity for the strange, old injured man. Old Sem makes no attempt to hide his ill will, and Johanne clearly senses the darkness that is threatening to overpower him. Nevertheless, she patiently brings him little presents. Although she does not understand what it is that she is personally required to atone with Old Sem, she takes on the task of reconciling him with the community. Had Ujuaannaaraq left, Old Sem would have lost everything. His granddaughter Lise, along with everyone else, would have viewed him with contempt. Lise's future, too, would have been uncertain if Ujuaannaaraq had left. Now that Ujuaannaaraq has chosen to stay, everything turns out for the best.

After an intensely dramatic scene where Lise reveals to Ujuaannaaraq that she is not her biological sister, Lise storms off to be with her real mother. Fed up with the girl, Jørgensen would prefer to let her go. On her deathbed, however, Anna makes the girls promise to remain sisters, a promise Ujuaannaaraq intends to keep. Finally, Ole stiffens his spine and speaks with Jørgensen, man to man, without subservience or any thought of personal gain. Lise's paternity is finally acknowledged. When Lise was baptized, young Ujuaannaaraq had not noticed that her new sister was not given the last name of Jørgensen. Jørgensen, apparently, had never intended for Lise to be recognized as his daughter. Although Jørgensen is, in principle, in favor of education and progress for Greenlanders, he never considered arranging for Lise to have the same access to education as Ujuaannaaraq.

Ujuaannaaraq responds to this news with indignation, just as she was once puzzled why a boy her age in the colony, who also had a Greenlandic mother and a Danish father, was not allowed to join the otherwise kindly factor's wife's class. His mother was "only a *kiffaq*" and he was born out of wedlock, so naturally, he could not be treated as if he were Danish![23] The novel undermines the Danish narrative of the loving "Mother Denmark." Petersen demonstrates that Greenlanders are not recognized as Denmark's true children but merely tolerated as "foster children," without being naturalized and thus attaining the same rights as their Danish "siblings." Likewise, Danes refuse to acknowledge paternity even if they are the biological fathers of new generations of Greenlanders.

## Un-shaming the Greenlandic Body

Some might argue that the novel deflates as it turns increasingly toward religion near the end, which may be related to the author's own terminal illness of tuberculosis when writing the book. The ugly feelings disappear, replaced by nobler feelings of forgiveness and reconciliation, enabling a happy ending. It might also be viewed as overly conservative to deprive the heroine of the opportunity to go to Denmark, clearly with the intention of preventing her from "crossing over" in terms of her identity. In fact, this could be seen as supporting the old, traditionalist policy of the Danish rulers based on the argument that Greenlanders should avoid the influence of civilization and luxury, as that would render them incapable of handling the tough conditions in their own country. In the internal logic of the text, however, abandoning her dream of Denmark is exactly what makes Johanne/Ujuaannaaraq a collective Greenlandic symbol: a national heroine.

Ujuaannaaraq brings progress to the settlement and willingly shares everything she has learned. She not only introduces knitting and horticulture but also literature and music. Now that they see how far Ujuaannaaraq has developed in her education, the men of the settlement for the first time begin to take a real interest in their children's education. In a central scene, the men talk about how Ujuaannaaraq could never have come this far if she had stayed behind in the settlement with the well-intentioned but poorly educated catechist—even despite her partial Danish ancestry. The men shake off the lethargy Jørgensen speaks of and begin to get involved and stand up for themselves. Similarly, the scene underscores that it is not race and ancestry but available conditions and opportunities that determine a person's abilities and potential. Thus, the plot promotes the notion of mixed-race individuals as the trailblazers of modern Greenland; however, it also contradicts the fundamentally racist premise that the ancestors were on a lower racial level.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, Danish authorities clearly understood that the old hunting culture could not continue unchanged. Seals were insufficient to feed the population, and blubber was no longer a viable source of lighting. Trade in these products was becoming unprofitable. Other professions were needed, and fishing seemed the most obvious option. The authorities were therefore willing to give in to Greenlandic pressure for better education and a gradual opening of the country, which had hitherto been hermetically sealed off to all outsiders—officially to protect the vulnerable "primitives" from extinction in the encounter with more evolved races, unofficially to preserve Danish supremacy. Major problems were foreseen in this process, in which Greenlanders, in accordance with evolutionary theory—in vogue at the time—were supposed to transform from a Stone Age people to modern subjects in a flash: a development that had taken Europeans several thousand years, as formulated here by the famous Danish polar explorer Knud Rasmussen:

> There is no choice: the future life of any people of nature depends solely on its potential for development under new conditions; to move forward, they must by necessity step over the dead bodies of their own race. The key, therefore, is to prepare these peoples of nature, in their character and temperament, as merciful and gentle a death as possible.... Only through such a metamorphosis will they be able to pass through the door that leads to new times.[24]

Born in Greenland, with a Greenlandic grandmother, and fluent in Greenlandic, Rasmussen played an important role as a cultural mediator between Denmark and Greenland. Collecting the Inuit oral tradition, he introduced Europeans to the precolonial Inuit culture and Greenlanders to European evolutionary thinking, for instance, through translation of Waldemar Dreyer's 1898 book, *Naturfolkenes liv* (The lives of natural people). For Rasmussen, modern development was not only a benefit but also a huge loss for the Inuit. Rasmussen was a great admirer of Inuit culture. However, once the White civilization pressed forward, there was no turning back, according to Rasmussen, lest Greenlanders suffered a similar fate to the American Indians, locked in their reserves, "eagerly visited by curious tourists, extras in 'an ethnographic-zoological garden for people.'"[25] In Rasmussen's view, the future belonged to the mixed race that had emerged in the cultural encounter and that was equipped to form the vanguard in the transition from a people of nature to a civilized people.

Not everyone shared Rasmussen's positive view of the Inuit culture. For example, the doctor Alfred Berthelsen (1877–1950), who spent many years in Greenland and authored many important scientific publications, saw close similarities between the "psychopathic type" of the Aryan race and the Eskimo race in general. According to Berthelsen, both displayed such traits as "impulsivity," "promiscuity," "suggestibility," and "fickleness." Psychopathy within the Aryan race was, in his view, "a legacy from a more primitive human type." Berthelsen attributed the apparent reduction in the prevalence of certain mental disorders in Greenland at the time to interracial mixing:

> Aryan individuals generally take in their stride events that excite Eskimos to extreme reactions, and to greater or lesser degrees this self-restraint is seen in Aryan-Eskimo progeny. It is hardly the wisdom teeth alone that ... are more rarely absent in mixed-race than in pure Eskimo individuals.[26]

Thus, Berthelsen too saw racial mixing as the path forward for the Greenlandic people.

Petersen's book is written from a different perspective. The hunters who testify to the results of the good education that Ujuaannaaraq received are not primitive Stone Age people. Ujuaannaaraq's achievements also have nothing to do with her racial background. However, because her father is White, he is able to provide his daughter with a proper education. While the racial discourse shames the non-White body, which is considered inferior by definition, Petersen blames the Danish regime for not living up to its own lofty words about its mission in Greenland. Shame is thus shifted from the Greenlandic to the Danish position. From a gender perspective, the Ujuaannaaraq/Johanne figure is far from revolutionary; Ujuaannaaraq/Johanne is a female role model encompassing female virtues of kindness and gentleness, virtues also evident in colonial rule.[27] From the perspective of the debate on ethnicity, nation, and emotion, Ujuaannaaraq/Johanne is presented as the symbol of a new, self-confident Greenlandic identity: a personification of the modern Greenlandic nation.

## Ethnicity and the Nation

When Jørgensen came to Greenland he shared the Kiplingesque belief that Greenlandic and Danish are such different cultures that even if the two meet, they can never mix. Greenlandic and Danish

are like water and oil, he thought; you can put them into the same bucket but that will not make them one. Throughout the novel he maintains that Danish and Greenlandic cultures are ultimately at war with each other, as they are within his own daughter. In a sense, his wife agrees with him, although she pulls in the opposite direction. When Ujuaannaaraq is brought back to the settlement, Jørgensen fears that everything he has fought for in his daughter's upbringing may be lost. One day, as the two of them are sitting together, he asks his daughter the impossible question:

> "Johanne, you told me that your faith in God is the most important legacy you have from your mother. But you have also spoken of how much you have benefited from going away to educate yourself. We could call this the legacy from your father.... So I ask you: if you had to choose between the two, and you were told that you could only have one, either the legacy from your mother or the legacy from your father, which would you choose?"
> Ujuaannaaraq sat silent for a long time, then she suddenly smiled and said, "These two are both so important to a person that if you only have one and lack the other, you would have to go through life with a limp. Hence, human beings are given these two as their legacy to be able to live happily here on earth. And I, who have been so fortunate as to receive both, is so rich and happy, and I would not give up either. I find them both equally important and I will strive to develop them both."[28]

Ujuaannaaraq thus rejects the basic premise of the choice her father presents. She is confident that she can integrate European aspects into her identity while remaining Greenlandic, in stark contrast to the prevailing discourse in Danish fictional literature, where the integration process virtually always falters. In book after book, Danish writers portrayed the racially mixed Greenlander torn between two cultures, either choosing to revert to being purely Greenlandic or tragically perishing if they failed to integrate after encountering civilization.[29] While the Danish literary view of the cultural encounter is thus predominantly tragic, Petersen's book has a far more positive tone. The author ends the book with the father and daughter drinking a toast "to Denmark's and Greenland's continued coexistence and to the hope that they may become even closer in the coming century."[30] Thus, the book joins the choir of Greenlandic voices during the first half of the twentieth century that called for development, education, a broad outlook, and greater equality with the Danes, not for Greenlanders to stop being Greenlanders but for them to become modern Greenlanders.

This means, however, that ethnicity remains the category that defines society. The difference between Danish and Greenlandic was the key line of demarcation between people in Greenlandic society, a condition that is reflected in the novel. Not only do the two parties speak different languages, but they also have different backgrounds and conditions. The Danes in particular—even the most sympathetic and well intentioned among them—insist that the line should not be crossed. At least, that is how it appears from a Greenlandic point of view, as it is presented in the novel. When the category of ethnicity comes into play, class distinctions are blurred. The novel is conscious of the fact that Jørgensen is not part of the powerful class among Danes. Still, both he and everybody else feel that he has more in common with all the other Danes than with any of the Greenlanders, even when he marries into the community. Greenlanders

automatically constitute a subordinate class in relation to Danes, regardless what status, education, and other qualities an individual might possess. Only those of mixed ancestry are able to cross the line, and only under the right conditions. Children of "mixed race" have to live as Greenlanders if they are "illegitimate," while part of the reason why Ujuaannaaraq is welcomed so readily in Danish circles is because she is pleasant and bright and, not least, looks European. Over and over again, the Danes mention how much she resembles her father. No one ever mentions that she looks like her mother.

On that basis, it is no wonder that the notion of a Greenlandic nation stems from the notion of the people as an ethnic, cultural community. Greenlanders were introduced to the national concept of Danes, whose nation is based on a similar mindset, a legacy from German Romanticism. Petersen's novel was written as part of the Greenlandic elite's nation-building project, based on the Danish model.[31] In her study of Latin American nation-building romantic novels from the nineteenth century, Doris Sommer, professor of Romance languages and literatures, argues that the erotic should be read as political. Who falls in love with whom and, especially, who is allowed to marry and raise a family with whom become representative of the nation concept: which population groups and which social classes make up the nation's legitimate foundation.[32] Here, it is worth noting that the Dane in Petersen's novel is never fully incorporated into the Greenlandic people but remains an outsider. Only through his Greenlandic offspring does the Dane become relevant in the Greenlandic national narrative. This imagining has consequences for how ethnicity is viewed and managed in Greenlandic society today.

## "Half and Half"

The opening of Greenland after the Second World War led to a significant increase in the number of Danes who came to Greenland, many of them Danish craftsmen who went on to have children with Greenlandic women. Gradually, it also became more and more common for Danish women to form relationships with Greenlandic men. Nevertheless, Danes have remained outsiders in Greenland, particularly because they rarely learn the language. While the Danish character Jørgensen does play a key role in *Niuvertorutsip pania*, Danes are either relegated to minor supporting roles or are completely left out of modern Greenlandic literature and film. Naturally, this reflects a long-term Greenlandic ambition of leaving the union with Denmark and the Faroe Islands to establish an independent state, but it also diminishes the Danes' continued presence in post-self-government Greenland.[33] Danes live in Greenland, where they often occupy key positions in society, making the Danish language important.[34] And Greenlanders live in Denmark, where they often find themselves in vulnerable positions at the bottom of the social hierarchy, and where the Greenlandic language has absolutely no position at all. Danish-Greenlandic relations are still embedded in the affective economies that Petersen dissected in his novel.

Danes still consider themselves, if not racially, then surely culturally, superior to Greenlanders. The discourse on Greenlanders as an Indigenous people perpetuates the view of Greenlanders as primitive or, at least, alien to and thus struggling with the transition to modernity. The Danish perception has a certain schizophrenic quality: on the one hand, it involves regrets for having severed Greenlanders from their original culture, and on the other hand, it implies an expectation of gratitude for assistance in modernization and for the financial subsidies Greenland has received over the years. Only in recent years

has there been some recognition of the value that Greenland has contributed to Denmark, not least in the form of Denmark's position as an Arctic player in international politics. Thus, in Danish discourse, Greenlanders are still positioned in the role of the primitive Other by which Danes measure their own modernity. And in Greenlandic discourse, Danes are positioned as the postcolonial, powerful, and oppressive Other by which Greenlanders measure their "Greenlandicness"—all of which naturally becomes a problem for Greenlanders who not only have remote European ancestry but, like Ujuaannaaraq/Johanne, also live with a dual identity because one parent is Danish and the other Greenlandic.

Suspicion between different ethnic groups is not reserved for the present or for the opposition between Danes and Greenlanders. With them from Canada, the Inuit brought the story of the Inuit woman Navarana/Navaranaaq who was friends with both the Inuit and Native Americans but ended up pitting the two groups against each other. In Greenland, the plot was reused in the story of the Inuit's encounter with Norsemen, a confrontation that also ended violently. Since then, Navaranaaq has been a central figure in Greenlandic literature, just as the figure has been used as a metaphor for the problems between Danish and Greenlandic in the Greenlandic-language debate. Most often, the figure signals division, grief, and tragedy. In political discourse, the word "Navaranism" has been used to denote a populistic, radical version of Greenlandic nationalism, which excludes Danish-speaking Greenlanders from participation in political life.[35]

As in Petersen's time, today's mixed Greenlandic identity is in many ways a privileged position: it is much easier for a bilingual or Danish-speaking Greenlander to get a higher education, for example. At the same time, however, the mixed Greenlander's identity, loyalty, and feeling of belonging is also constantly being questioned, particularly if he or she does not master the Greenlandic language to perfection. Even bilingual Greenlanders are placed in an outside position, "betwixt and between." Although this in-between position, admittedly, holds a creative potential, it is also painful.[36] "I am half Danish and half Greenlander. When I am in Denmark, I'm considered Greenlandic, and when I'm in Greenland, I am considered Danish," says the film director Aka Hansen (born 1987) in her short art film/documentary *Half&Half* from 2015. In the film she asks why she is always told that she does not look like a proper Greenlander. "Is it possible to look 'like a Dane'? What does a real Greenlander look like?" Finally, she asks whether it is even possible to be half Danish and half Greenlandic. The outside world thus meets Hansen with the same prejudices and confronts her with the same impossible choices that Jørgensen presents his daughter with in the seventy-five-year-old novel.

## Notes

[1] *Sarfartuut/Strømsteder*, Teater FreezeProductions and Nunatta Isiginnaartitsisarfia, the National Theater of Greenland, Teater Grob, Copenhagen, May 2013.

[2] Petrussen, "Tupilak." The video is on Facebook. Or see the lyrics in Greenlandic and in English in Thisted, "Der er en tupilak i rummet."

[3] Petrussen, interview by Nanoq Media, "Rap mod systemet."

[4] Seiding, "Intermarriage in Colonial Greenland," 12.

[5] Rasmussen, "Genealogier og social stratifikation," 101.

[6] Petersen, "Role of Research," 22.

[7] Beukel, Jensen, and Rytter, *Phasing Out the Colonial Status of Greenland*, 67ff., 167ff.; Andersen and Thisted, "'Whatever a Colony Is.'"
[8] Thisted, "'Place in the Sun,'" 329ff.
[9] Heinrich, "Appendix 12," 425–41.
[10] Saammaateqatigiinnissamut Isumalioqatigiissitaq / Forsoningskommissionen, *Qanga Pisut Paasivagut*, 15. For instance, the Greenlandic Reconciliation Commission, 2014–17, focused on clarifying Greenlandic history but concentrated on the time after 1950.
[11] Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 159. Fanon's three "phases" are assimilation, resistance, and combat.
[12] In the past, it was common for newborns to be given such an individual song.
[13] Petersen, *Niuvertorutsip pania*, 8. All translations by author.
[14] Ahmed, *Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 4.
[15] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 111–12.
[16] Petersen, *Niuvertorutsip pania*, 56.
[17] Fisher, *Vehement* Passions, 144. Philosophically, there is often a distinction between sympathy and empathy. In empathy, you do not necessarily feel *like* the other but *with* the other, able to share an experience, viewed from the other's perspective, while maintaining your own perspective. Both are contained under Fisher's first category.
[18] Ibid., 143.
[19] Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, 174–208.
[20] Ibid., 10.
[21] Ibid., 22.
[22] Petersen, *Niuvertorutsip pania*, 88.
[23] Ibid., 97.
[24] Rasmussen, "Tanker om Grønlænderne," 19.
[25] Ibid., 20.
[26] Berthelsen, *Grønlandsk medicinsk Statistik og Nosografi*, 180.
[27] Cf. Anne McClintock's concept of "the cult of domesticity" and its role in the implementation of the colonial project, *Imperial Leather*, 14–15.
[28] Petersen, *Niuvertorutsip pania*, 174–75.
[29] Thisted, "Danske Grønlandsfiktioner," 32–67.
[30] Petersen, *Niuvertorutsip pania*, 176.
[31] Thisted, "Greenlandic Oral Traditions," 63.
[32] Sommer, *Foundational Fictions.* The novels Sommer studies are written in recently formed nation-states. A Greenlandic nation-state was far from being formed during the 1940s, but the island of Greenland was seen as a single entity, as it is today, and a national consciousness had been forming (especially in West Greenland) for decades.
[33] Gad, "Greenland," esp. 100.
[34] Hussain, "Journalistik i små samfund."
[35] Pedersen, "Kulturel revitalisering," 55.
[36] As, for instance, argued by Homi K. Bhabha, introducing the concept "third space." See Bhabha, "How Newness Enters the World," 212–35.

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