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# Oral/Past Culture and Modern Technical Means in the Literature of the Twentieth Century in Greenland

KAREN LANGGÅRD

**ABSTRACT** *The present article takes as its starting point a short story from 2001 and relates it to the development of the Greenlandic literature in the twentieth century. The Greenlandic literature evolved around 1900 and mirrors the socio-political trends and the stages of nation building through the twentieth century. The overall tendencies of the century start with a striving towards more knowledge of and competence in European culture (including technical know-how) before 1950. Then a feeling of overwhelming impact from Danish culture followed during the Danification policy of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s and this resulted in a protest movement in the 1960s and 1970s and Home Rule from 1979. However, if we read the literature in details and supplement it with the contemporary newspapers a much more diverse picture of an appropriation process (i.e. a conscious adaptation of selective parts of the impact from outside) emerges. The present article focuses on how these sources give us glimpses of an ongoing debate already in the first half of the twentieth century i.e. in colonial times: the Greenlandic population was not just passively under colonial domination. The history of the twentieth century is the history about a fairly well functioning appropriation of technical means and cultural impact from outside up till 1950, and then – after three decades of heavy modernization and Danification – a process from 1979 on towards more and more agency in a “glocalized” Greenland.*

**KEY WORDS:** Appropriation, Glocalization, Literature Greenlandic, Newspapers Greenlandic, Oral/past culture, Technology Greenlandic

## A Glocalized<sup>1</sup> Modern Greenlandic Short Story

Greenlandic, *Kalallisut*, an Inuit language, is spoken by the majority in Greenland. It became a written language after colonization in 1721. Greenlandic written literature has developed since the last decades of the nineteenth century (Langgård, 2004b). Attitudes towards oral/past culture and modern technical means have changed over the decades of the twentieth century, and such tendencies are mirrored in the Greenlandic literature. To show the development in outline this paper will take a short story from 2001 as its starting point.

The Greenlandic author, Kelly Berthelsen, published a collection of essays and short stories in 2001, *Tarningup ilua* (The interior of the soul, Berthelsen,

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2001). It was nominated from Greenland for Nordisk Råds Litteraturpris 2003 (The literary prize from The Nordic Council).

Among the short stories, you find an imaginative short story on a meeting between the Greenlandic culture and the American one: “*NASA-p isertaasa isertugaanersaat*” (“NASA’s most secret secret”). The short story on its surface is just a small slapstick comedy, but read in a Greenlandic context there is more than that (Langgård, 2006). Before any further analysis, the story translated into English will be given:<sup>2</sup>

### “NASA’s Most Secret Secret”

Ever since my childhood I have been interested in space travel. So, I was very happy when the web became available and one could get information from it about the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration or NASA.

The other day when tired of my work I began to surf on the web. Of course I also visited NASA’s homepage. From the news headlines I found out that 25-year-old secrets had now been released. No doubt it would include exciting disclosures! I linked to the homepage. Among a lot of other information I found a link called “mysterious happenings”. We Greenlanders are always interested in weird things and ghosts and UFOs. Without a moment’s delay, I linked up.

Can you beat that?! Greenlanders were mentioned too!

When the astronauts began to travel to the moon, everybody followed the events closely. By then, some thought that there must be human beings living on the moon, others thought that there must be rivers, while some others thought that there must be huge ruins on the moon. However, it turned out that the moon was totally void – without any kind of life. But the secret kept secret ever since is the following one:

Shakrim Citsym Namahs, an Indian engineer who at that time designed and constructed a lunar landing vehicle, should also himself drive around on the moon. He started driving around. He wanted to get further around than Armstrong had. The landing vehicle is a one-man vehicle and in case of its breakdown, there was a replica of it left inside the lunar spaceship.

Meanwhile, the other astronauts were busying themselves making photos of the moon. They knew for sure that the one driving around down there could call them in case of problems. However, when he did not show up at the time agreed upon, the astronauts got worried and tried to contact him over the intercom. No answer. When he did not respond, they knew that something wrong must have happened. Exactly on the verge of achieving success, the Americans were headed for great loss of reputation.

The astronauts in the spaceship informed Houston, that the one sent down to the moon’s surface did not respond to their calls even though they could see from the instruments that nothing was wrong with the vehicle. Houston without delay ordered that it should be checked using the standby landing vehicle.

Since there were only three of them and one of them was already on the moon, only one would be able to leave for the moon in the standby vessel and

he was quite anxious! Something must have happened, but what? Would the astronaut have suffocated due to a hole in his spacesuit? Or would it simply be due to a breakdown of the intercom? Many thoughts occurred to him.

Just before landing on the moon, he caught sight of the other landing vehicle down below. It had stopped, and its driver stood beside it distressed. He landed, jumped out and approached him. When he got close to him, Namahs said not a word, did nothing but stared towards the moon's horizon. When he reached him and touched him, he collapsed and fainted.

The rescuer had no choice. He lifted the poor fellow, squeezed him with great difficulty into his own standby vehicle and brought him immediately up to the mother ship, as they had to, to avoid running out of oxygen.

Bringing him inside they tried to wake him up dabbing his face with some cold stuff, and finally he awoke. The second he regained consciousness and saw his companions, he started bawling, uttering repeatedly nothing but one single word: "Man, man, man." His companions just did not understand him at all. No, not in their wildest dreams did they suppose that there might be other human beings here up on the remote moon. In the middle of their attempts to calm down the poor confused fellow, they heard a knocking on the ship. They looked out and saw a man that peered into the spaceship grinning from ear to ear, who pointed inside and made motions as if he requesting a cup of coffee.

Couldn't be more spooky. A ghost for sure. Of those who weren't already unconscious, one of them now fainted. The remaining one, a tough guy, rubbed his eyes and when he perceived that the apparition he saw was real enough, guided him toward the entrance.

When he opened the inner door to the man already on his way in, he gasped: no spacesuit on. No, he did not wear anything but diverse furs around his hips and bird wings under his arms.

He began to interrogate him. Who are you? Where do you come from? The man in front of him did not understand whatsoever, but pointed down to the Earth. Ah, he soon understood that the place pointed to was in fact, Greenland. A Greenlandic shaman it was who had scared him to death, a shaman who with the help from his helping spirits had gone to the moon, noticed a weird gadget and, exhilarated, felt like enjoying a cup of coffee.

This affair was kept totally secret. The main characters (being good Christians) didn't want to admit at all the existence of shamans. However, it is a true story, and everybody can now find it on the web.

### **A First Reading of the Story**

This story is the Greenlandic version of the theme "indigenous peoples' shamans have always had the competence to travel in time and space, long before the modern technologies were developed". In the short story a Greenlandic shaman shows up during an American moon landing just dressed in furs and bird wings. Moon travels have always fallen within the normal competence of skilled Greenlandic shamans. The shaman seriously scares the astronauts although he only asks for a cup of coffee, one of the

favorite drinks in Greenland ever since colonization. The narrator finds the information about all this on NASA's website under "mystic happenings" among secrets only released after 25 years. He names jokingly the most prominent astronaut in the story a name, Shakrim Citsym Namahs, that – when reversed – is "mystic shaman", and he expects his Greenlandic readers to realize this joke in English. "Mystic shaman" – exactly what a modern astronaut is from the perspective of the Greenlandic shaman. In Greenland, shamans belong to a distant oral culture, where stories were proved by having been told through generations, claimed to have been repeated "verbatim". However, as coffee has become part of Greenlandic culture since colonial times, likewise in this story today's "proof" is that data have been found on the web! The narrative seems to be told from the American perspective but changes gradually in its values to a Greenlandic one: The Greenlandic moon travel technique is well established, while the Western one is the new, but rather complicated way of doing things – of course told by the narrator with a twinkle in his eye. In general the Greenlanders are seen as the ones who know how to cope in an unimpressed manner with new phenomena and take pleasure in them: in the past: the coffee, in the present time: the Internet, and in fiction: the technique of the others. The story travels freely both in space and in time.

The first mission came to West Greenland in 1721, and through the next 150 years slowly but surely the Christian faith became dominant in West Greenland. After that West Greenlanders participated in the Christianizing of East Greenland and shortly afterwards of the Thule area at the beginning of the twentieth century. Although this means a certain overlap between the period of active shamans and that of coffee drinking, it is rather the case, that three or even four periods meet in this story on the moon: the pre-colonial time of the shaman with shamanistic moon travels, the time of the colonial Greenlander with his luxurious consumption of coffee, and the modern time with American moon travels – all framed by the global time of the present Greenland.

The story describes the encounter as a fact, as would be normal in magic realism. However, seen from the perspectives of Greenlandic tradition and Greenlandic literature, this feature has a deeper background, too. Important works of Greenlandic fiction thematized the paganism of the ancestors. The former faith and its spirits were seen as real, but as wrong. The oral tradition from the regions Christianized most recently tells the same story about the transition period there.

In the process of nation building through the twentieth century it became important to draw on the Inuit roots of the Greenlandic culture, but this was difficult as far as the spiritual part was concerned. Several strategies were used. One of them was to describe the spiritual part of the past culture very little. Another was to let some of the forefathers, in the written fiction, find new values very much like the Christian ones in ethics and morality (For references and details see Langgård, forthcoming). Nowadays in a secular Greenlandic culture the Greenlandic shaman is reified<sup>3</sup> as part of the culture of the forefathers and is one of the symbols of the ethnic-national identity.

The shaman figure functions as part of the demarcation to the significant Others, namely the Danes in present time where the distance between the Greenlandic and the Danish-European culture is narrower than it was in former times. The shaman figure belongs to the past and for most Greenlanders to a very distant past, but is thanks to the reification a natural part of the collective recollection of the past.

The short story about the moon travel is a humorous presentation of Greenlandic culture in transition between traditional past and globalized present perceived from the local, namely in this instance the Greenlandic local point of view – a story about a glocalised Greenland.

### **The Old Travel Techniques and the Modern Ones – and the Attitudes to Them**

The present article is not a general introduction to Greenlandic literature. However, to estimate the short story, it is worth while to put it into perspective by drawing in the changes in discourse that have taken place in the twentieth century in Greenland (Concerning Greenlandic literature, for an introduction in Greenlandic, Chr. Berthelsen, 1995, in Danish, Langgård, 2003, in English Langgård, 2004b). To sketch out the development in socio-political discourse and attitudes, the paper will compare Berthelsen's short story with one of the first songs in the written Greenlandic literature. In the last decades of the nineteenth century the Greenlanders wrote hymns, and then, after the turn of the century, they appropriated the other European genres. The first edition of a Greenlandic songbook (Petersen, 1908) was published in 1908. It contained ethnic-national songs, songs debating socio-political issues and some religious lyrics. One of the authors was Henrik Lund (1875–1948). He did not use the colonial imperialistic discourse. To Lund Denmark was not the mother country. Greenland was the parent of the Greenlanders. He did not include the Danes and the colonial power in his lyrics, in contrast to his contemporary, Jonathan Petersen (1881–1961). But this attitude of his did not entail resistance to appropriation of competences from abroad (Langgård, 1998 and 2004a).

In 1910 Henrik Lund composed one of the few songs in the Greenlandic songbook that incorporated the pagan past (first published in Petersen (Ed.) 1913, song no. 76). In the song called *Motooritoqaaq* (The old engine) the appearance of motor boats in Greenlandic waters makes the poet think of the old stories about kayakers: In the old days kayakers would ride with high speed by using the double paddle as rudder and magic songs as machine power. The stanzas of the song tell the story about a kayaker doing this in colonial times. Last stanza goes as follows (KL rough translation):

Well, those were the engines of the old kind  
Those were the ones that were highly esteemed among the forefathers  
But the younger generation of today is going to replace  
the old ones with new existing ones:  
those Europeans have completed  
what Greenlanders since long invented.

As in the moon travel story written by Kelly Berthelsen, the Greenlanders in Henrik Lund's song too are the first ones to invent efficient transport techniques. However, the difference is that for Henrik Lund the invention is completed through the European boats. This point of view is not adopted by Kelly Berthelsen. At the time of Henrik Lund, Greenland was still a "closed" country. Soon after colonization in 1721 the rule was established that no one was allowed to go to Greenland without personal permission from the Danish authorities – and through this the Greenlandic population was protected, but also isolated from the world outside Greenland. The country was closed to outsiders, but the elite among the Greenlanders worked hard to appropriate those elements of the European civilization that they thought would be steps in the right direction for Greenland. Greenland nowadays has been an open country since the mid-twentieth century and Home Rule was established in 1979. All new technologies will reach the country, sometimes even before they reach Denmark. In Kelly Berthelsen's moon travel story, spacesuits and a spaceship are not seen as improving the competences behind the accomplishments of the Greenlandic shaman tradition. On the contrary, the story underlines that the shaman moves around freely, while the astronauts have to pay constant attention to their oxygen supplies.

Between Henrik Lund in the first half of the twentieth century and Kelly Berthelsen now, Greenland has gone through the ethnic-national mobilization for Home Rule which by the way also used protest songs to get the message through to the population of Greenland and to the Danes. While Greenlandic literature before and after this period is written in Greenlandic and thought of as a means of internal debate etc., the protest songs would have Danish translations – and some of them were even conceived in Danish first.<sup>4</sup> One of the many LPs with protest songs had as its title *The Flying Kayak* (AASIVIK 79, 1979). Another example from the period is a novel written by the Greenlandic author Hans Anthon Lynge (Lynge, 1982). It describes a local community waiting for Home Rule. Seen from a postcolonial point of view it is interesting because it turns upside down the old stigmatizing of the colonized as ignorant and incompetent: Throughout the novel the author lets a Dane make the whole community shake their heads. The Dane does not know how to start his small boat, and when at last he gets it started he is endangering both himself and the two children who are with him. The Danish-European technology has been appropriated by Greenlanders, and they can manage it contrarily to the Dane.

The overall tendencies of the twentieth century in Greenland start with a striving towards more knowledge of and competence in European culture (including technical know-how) before 1950. Then a feeling of overwhelming impact from Danish culture followed during the Danification policy of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s and this resulted in a nationalistic protest movement in the 1960s and 1970s and Home Rule from 1979. During the last decade of the century a more pragmatic attitude prevailed (an attitude which might once more evolve into more nationalism mobilizing for more autonomy). The attitudes towards technique seen through the literature mirror in this way the change of attitudes in the Greenlanders' ongoing encounter with the Others.

**“Mimic Men” versus Appropriation of Cultural Impact from Outside**

The idea of appropriation has been mentioned several times. This paper will describe in a little more detail how appropriation took place in the first decades of the twentieth century, to put into perspective what happened later on. At the beginning of the twentieth century ethnicity and identity were issues debated in Greenland, as can be seen in the Greenlandic newspapers of the time, *Atuagagdliutit* and *AvangnâmioK* (abbreviated At. and Av. in the following references) (Langgård, 1998). Several reasons lay behind it, among these a change in economic activities (adding commercial fishing and sheep herding to seal-hunting), but most certainly also the fact that the impacts of the cultural encounter for a 200-year long period was very keenly realized by the population. As mentioned, Christianity had become the one and only religious frame of life in West Greenland. Apart from that, any impact from outside was constantly evaluated. As the examples below will show, some elements from outside were long since integrated as part of the Greenlandic culture – and even used to describe elements that one would think of as homebred and therefore better known.

In an article a catechist wrote about the fact that parents encumber the teaching when they put their children to school without ABD (as ABC was called in Greenland). He underpinned it as would be expected by saying: “Because to learn to read without an ABD is like to learn to kayak without a kayak” (Kåle in At., 1917, 18: 136). However, a seal-hunter wrote in another article about how important it was to work hard in order that children and young persons could be trained in kayaking – and he underpinned his point of view by saying: “To learn how to kayak takes as much training as it takes to learn how to write with a pencil” (Adolfsen in At., 1909/10: 146). A very reactionary response (from a hunter) to new subjects taught in school nevertheless shows transculturation, since the recommendations are that besides a book with prayers, the schoolchildren need to be taught hunting in school, and that this teaching should be based on a manual of hunting (Nielsen in Av., 1917: 20). Likewise a catechist who was against large-scale fishery would recommend the hunters to listen to the European knowledge of the vet concerning the spread of rabies infection from foxes to sledge dogs (Magnussen in At., 1907/08: 24) – indigenous knowledge and Western knowledge should be integrated, as one would say today. Likewise, Greenlandic authors described the Greenlandic nature by comparison with elements that had been appropriated from outside: the fjord with all its reflections of the mountains is sublime like an oil painting (Henrik Lund in Petersen, 1934, no. 32). The sound of nature is like a polyphonic song (Henrik Lund in Petersen, 1913, no. 17) – and later Nielsen (Nielsen in Petersen, 1934, no. 105 = Nielsen 1943: 36–37) who in a song would compare it to The Danish Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, relying on a wider horizon than most from his time; nonetheless the song “Panna qilassuaq” (The sky up there) was very popular and it still is).

In the first decades of the twentieth century, newly imported elements and – under changed conditions – also formerly integrated elements would be



discussed, as is seen in the newspapers. Greenlanders who bought more European goods than they could afford were severely criticized as “mimic men” who aped the Danes /Europeans, and irresponsible persons (for references, see Langgård, 2004a). The use of firearms was debated. According to some, they should only be used when hunting certain species under certain circumstances otherwise the old traditional weapons should be used. A seal-hunter wrote in the newspaper that fowling piece guns should not be used, on the other hand he asked his fellow Greenlanders to set up a budget for their hunting economy – a nice example of conscious attitudes towards possible choices (Adolfsen in At., 1911/12: 49ff.).

When the colonial power started a large-scale fishery, and when in the same years the Greenlanders were hearing about the Danish dealing with the Virgin Islands (the islands were sold in December 1917 to the USA and *AvangnâmioK* (1917: 78–79) pictured the sale through two pictures: one with the Danish flag, the other with the American one), some Greenlanders would advocate against becoming too dependent on the Danes. One of the strategies advocated to keep to seal-hunting using the traditional weapons, and return to the culture before transculturation of European material culture (Thorning in Av., 1917:26ff.). What comes to the surface in this discussion is the barrier that Greenlanders envisaged towards the world outside Greenland: they could not themselves establish commerce because they did not have competence in Atlantic shipping.

When the opening of the country became part of the debate in the 1920s and 1930s, the awareness of lack of sufficient competences can be felt in many articles – and the Greenlandic elite would demand even more urgently a further commitment of the colonial power and the Greenlandic population to an increase in educational level. One of the most prominent articles was written by the Greenlandic author, Pavia Petersen (At., 1930/31: 153ff.): The Chinese had had to realize that their old culture had been surpassed by the Europeans’ culture while living in a closed country behind The Great Wall. Most Greenlanders would like to ask the Europeans to leave and would like to live with their old customs and without any foreign language competence living behind the Greenlandic version of a Great Wall. But according to Petersen, if the Greenlanders want Greenland to be theirs in the future they will have to learn from the Europeans and change.

Before the discussion of the opening of the country, the general attitude towards cultural impact (not only the impacts of technical means and material culture) from outside seemed to have been that it should be debated, a deliberate appropriation should take place, and that anyway it was possible to cope with it and take agency over the process. The process was seen as a development of Greenlandic culture. But a future opening of the country was seen as a threat towards the culture. Although the Greenlandic population or at least most of its opinion leaders around 1950 wanted the opening of the country and the modernization, history showed that the worried views expressed previously in the newspaper articles were right. The decades of accelerating modernization after 1950 envisaged serious problems – and this

development created the protest movement which eventually created Home Rule in 1979.

### **Urbanization – and Greenlandic Literature**

Since the beginning of colonization Greenland has seen a concentration of the population. It was slow in the first centuries, but produced a subsistence problem when highest as it was in the congregations under the Moravian Brethren in the southern part of West Greenland (Marquardt, 2002). The twentieth century saw an increased concentration already before the Second World War, but especially after it when the country was opened up and the modernization accelerated (for figures see Statistics Greenland: [www.statgreen.gl](http://www.statgreen.gl)).

In the closed country with its limited contact with the world outside Greenland, the authors of the two first Greenlandic novels would in their visions see urbanization as a means to required development in the future. Mathias Storch (1883–1957) described in his protagonist's dream a future capital of Greenland, but in the rest of the book includes the divide between the colonies (towns) and the villages in his description (Storch, 1914). Augo Lynge (1899–1959), in his vision of a future Greenland of 2021, would describe the landscape under cultivation for sheep herding (which started in 1917) and the telegraph poles as wonderful, and the modern city with all kinds of shops as the ideal, while the few remaining hunting settlements form the loser element of the population. Modern techniques including flying and radio were integrated parts in his vision (Lynge, 1931).

Pavia Petersen (1904–1943) described among other things the divide between colonies and villages – and saw appropriation of habits and knowledge from outside as necessary, including vegetable gardens (Petersen, 1944). Later in the protest songs the modern apartment blocks of the city were the symbol of the fatal influences on the population from the imposed cultural development (e.g. SUME's song "Illoqarfittaarsuaq", 1976).

Moses Olsen, the instigator of protest songs, himself wrote only in Greenlandic for internal mobilization. In his works, the modernization of the towns deprives the Greenlanders of energy for agency, the bulldozer's demolition of the grass field where the children used to play symbolizes the callousness of the Others, namely the Danes (1970: 131–136). The strength to regain agency is to be found in the ethnic roots that are still echoing out there among the mountains of Greenland in the wilderness (Olsen, 1969: 77–116). Now the modern city is part of the Greenlandic culture, but simultaneously some express a longing to move away from it. There are social problems in the towns, but also in the more traditional villages. While those living in the villages would like to have the modern comforts, some of the city dwellers feel nostalgia for the simple more "authentic" life in the village, but almost none of them would be willing to move permanently to a village. For example, as a consequence of this, schoolteachers now if going to East Greenland or to other places felt to be too outlying will get a free journey back home per year and a financial compensation after three years (very much what Danish

teachers got before the establishment of Home Rule) (for details see [www.ilisimatusarfik.gl](http://www.ilisimatusarfik.gl) link: løn og ansættelser – gældende aftaler) The Greenlandic songwriter Ole Kristiansen (1966–) has a song with a music video about being in the city among people that are as if in a zoo, but he also signals that these are the conditions for modern urban Greenlanders (Kristiansen, 1988+undated) (For an outline on attitudes towards nature – and cultivation of it and urbanization, Langgård, 2000).

### **Attitudes after the Establishment of Home Rule – and Globalization**

Before the opening of the country the Greenlanders managed the impact from outside through internal debate – and through appropriation of new elements. This was possible because the country was closed. On the other hand many felt that the closure of the country has kept development on an all too low level. Later, during the protest period, the Greenlanders responded to the lack of agency and to the identity crises they felt with vehement accusations against the Danes for having handled Greenland in an oppressive way and in a culturally imperialistic way. The ideology became to try to find the Inuit roots and develop a true and authentic Greenlandic culture. Ever since this period there has been a gap between ideology and practice – a gap between, on the one hand, the ideology of “authentic” Greenlandic identity and the nostalgic longing back to the noble way of Inuit past, and on the other hand, the practices of their daily life in a glocalized setting. However, recent years have seen more and more a return to the way of taking responsibility and agency as was seen a hundred years ago, but now with much more competence and much more political power. Of course, the old discourse from the period of mobilization for Home Rule will still be used by some – including in many cases the political manipulation of the population. But during recent years the use of pragmatic arguments is increasing at the expense of the ideological ones.

### **Concluding Remarks on Greenlandic Literature and Glocalization**

In terms of technical means and urbanization Greenland has gone through a development in the twentieth century: from careful appropriation of European culture through protest and intense abrogation to increasing glocalization. Kelly Berthelsen's short story reflects this development. He emphasizes the great heritage from the great forefathers, but with a twinkle in his eye – and within a frame where Greenlanders would not dream of living without access to the Internet. His writings in general (e.g. the rest of Berthelsen, 2001) see him criticize his fellow Greenlanders for not being aware enough of their ethnic-national identity and especially of their language, thereby stressing that it is their own responsibility to make a future Greenland to be proud of. He describes a lot of social problems as social problems – without drawing in the demarcation with Danish culture, that is the situation is not bad because of the Danes and the former colonization, or because they are similar to Danish social problems. He describes them as the responsibility

of the population itself – it is the population and not least its politicians who should take agency and do something about it. But in all this Greenland is seen as part of the global world, namely his argumentation does not refer to the idea of the authentic Greenlandic culture versus the world outside Greenland.

Kelly Berthelsen is not alone in this. New lyrics take the same way. For instance, Ole Kristiansen uses nature, features from Greenlandic nature, in his metaphorical language, but he freely includes for example satellites when wondering over what modern times with time pressure do to people: did time pressure change human relationships? The third stanza of his song “Inuit” (People) (Kristiansen, 2004) is as follows:

If we look up and out, – then the stars  
 Then if we look to the east, – some satellites  
 If we look inside, – then our thoughts  
 Can periodic hatred<sup>5</sup> dominate such intimate places

The Greenlandic expression Kristiansen uses for satellite is created as is usual for many neologisms by using an affix meaning “something that is like”, satellites are “pieces of something which is like a moon”: *qaammataasamer-ngit*. The word will not appear as something foreign. The more lexicalized term is “a kind of/a model moon”: *qaammataasiaq*.

In a another song – about a troublesome relationship – Ole Kristiansen’s protagonist wonders whether to perform some magic – the Greenlandic word he uses is *angakkuarsaarpoq* which has its background in the word for shaman *angakkoq*, but means “to conjure” in general. The ethnic roots are still there in the language too, but are incorporated in a glocalized contemporary way of living.

As shown above, Greenlandic literature has been used as means in Greenlandic nation-building for a century, focusing on its issues very often from an ethnical-national perspective. Even though new, more glocalized attitudes have been seen to a higher degree in other kinds of media such as visual arts and drama, Greenlandic fiction lags a little behind in this. Further, concerning fiction most Greenlanders seem to think in the ethnic-national discourse and therefore still expect the literature to go on focusing on issues from an explicit ethnic-national perspective. As citizens of Greenland they would think this way still. However, most of them would have other preferences as individual readers. As readers they seem to need a more diversified literature. There seems thus to be a mismatch between their expectations as *citizens of Greenland* and as *readers* (Langgård, 2004c). Testimony literary works and thrilling stories have prevailed for a decade now, and have opened up for more detailed descriptions of feelings. Apart from being useful and necessary in modern Greenlandic society this tendency might become the basis too for a new development of other genres, more open and glocalized, instead of closed (in the sense of being first and foremost focused on nation-building) and conservative ethnic-national in their approach to Greenland and the world outside Greenland. A developing of new genres is one way to break new grounds for Greenlandic literature and

thereby to a higher degree meet the needs of the readers. Another way to satisfy the readers is like the one followed by “NASA’s most secret secret”, when the author renews the genre by putting the ethnic-national perspective into a global frame with a twinkle in his eyes: ‘Greenlanders are online.’

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The article is based on a paper presented at the 15th Inuit Studies Conference, Paris, 24–29 October 2006. Glocalization (combining *globalization* and *localization*) is here used in the broad sense, to cover how the impact of *global* cultural trends is seen as partly opposed by *local* tendencies, and how the globalized present is perceived from the local. Glocalization is not used to denote local losers not participating in the globalized world, as Zygmunt Bauman used the term (Bauman, 1989), neither as it was used originally in Japan for marketing.
- <sup>2</sup> Transl. by Karen Langgård from the Greenlandic “NASA-p isertaasa isertugaanersaat” in Berthelsen 2001. The translation was made for “ARCUS Conference (Arctic Research Consortium US)”, Washington DC, 19 May 2005 and for “The Greenland Festival”, Smithsonian Institute, Washington DC, 20–22 May 2005, as part of an exposition made by professors and students from the Department of Language, Literature and Media, Ilisimatusarfik University of Greenland.
- <sup>3</sup> That is objectified, frozen in content and through this made objects that can be used as symbols (Eriksen, 2002: 71).
- <sup>4</sup> However some of the Greenlandic CDs now have English translations in their inner cover to promote the CDs outside Greenland too. Furthermore, during the last decades a sizable proportion of Greenlandic literature has been translated into Danish, partly to serve the small group of Danish-speaking Greenlanders, partly to cater to the market of Danish readers who have become interested in Greenland and its culture.
- <sup>5</sup> The translation on the inner cover has “hairy”. The Greenlandic wording is equivalent to “bits of hatred”.

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