FROM ORAL TRADITION TO RAP

Literatures of the Polar North

Karen Langgård
and Kirsten Thisted (eds)

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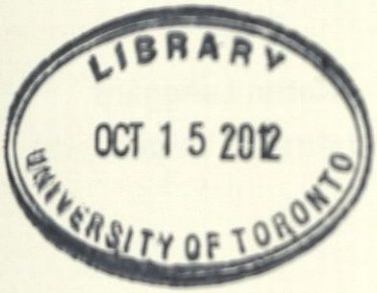

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Contents:

Kirsten Thisted

Greenlandic Oral Traditions: Collection, Reframing and Reinvention

Introduction

Today, any mention of oral story-telling traditions (*oqaluttuatoqqat*, "the old stories") and oral poetry (*inngerutit, pisit* etc., "songs and ballads") immediately sparks associations of "cultural heritage" and "national identity". Thus, in the literary history authored by the Greenlandic literary historian Christian Berthelsen, the oral traditions from the pre-Christian era are characterized under one as *siulitsinnit kingornussavut,* "the heritage from the ancestors" (Berthelsen 1994). Berthelsen does not devote many pages to this part of Greenlandic literary history. This does not, however, reflect any disrespect for the oral tradition. Berthelsen chose to focus on the written Greenlandic literature from 1900 on, yet he feels compelled to draw attention to the oral genres as a sort of beginning or basis. *Aallaqqaasiut,* "introduction, prologue, foreplay", he calls this section. In today's Greenland, the oral tradition is mostly perceived as something that belongs in the past, albeit a past that is held in high respect. As a consequence of the historic and social processes that took place throughout the 1900s, "the century of the nation-state", Greenland's past too has become political in the sense that it forms a common myth of origin, a fixed point as a common *beginning* in the history of the Greenlandic people. The perception of a Greenlandic nation is based on the Danish perception, which in turn is rooted in the Romantic (German) concept of the nation as a cultural and blood-based community.[1] The notion that collected and printed tradition may serve as a sort of tangible and preserved expression of the "national character" or intellectual culture, comparable to the hunting equipment, items of clothing and means of transportation that document the material aspect of the sealing and hunting culture, dates back to H.J. Rink in the mid-1800s. Christian Berthelsen demonstrates how various periods in modern literature have dealt with this past while basing the written literature on the import of European genres.

From a modern point of view, thus, the oral Greenlandic literature[2] reflects a genuinely *Greenlandic* tradition as well as a tradition that the Inuit of Greenland share with the other Inuit in Canada, Alaska and Siberia. Greenlanders often say that when they talk about "our ancestors", plural, they are referring to their fellow tribespeople to the west, but when they talk about "my ancestor", singular, they are referring to the European, usually a young, unmarried Dane, who came to Greenland and eventually settled there (Petersen 1991, 1992). Greenlanders typically cultivate their bonds with both cultures and thus flexibly position themselves in not just one but several imagined communities,

including both the national community of all Greenlanders, the transnational Inuit community, the similarly transnational community of the Nordic countries and several others, for example the community of indigenous peoples (Thisted 2010a).

This paper will revolve around the following points, which will be further elaborated and discussed below:

- Today we view Greenland as one country and often describe the traditions of Greenland as simply "Greenlandic". However, different areas of Greenland have experienced very different historical and economic circumstances. While Central West Greenland was colonized by the Danes during the 18th century, East Greenland and Thule in the farthest north-west were not colonized until the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This provided ethnographers with a welcome source in the form of a more or less "untouched" tradition.
- To a very large extent, the Greenlandic oral tradition has been written down by Greenlanders, beginning already in the first half of the 19th century. Thus, the development of literary techniques for transferring the oral form into writing was mainly achieved by the Greenlanders themselves. Knud Rasmussen, who is famous for his engaging and idiomatic representations of Inuit traditions, may have drawn inspiration from Danish writers, including Hans Christian Andersen, but he inherited the basics of his technique from Greenlandic writers such as Aron of Kangeq, Jâkuaraq Hugenius, and the East Greenlander Kârale Andreassen. A fairly large proportion of the collected material was published in the language of West Greenland beginning in the mid-19th century.
- Danish collectors were assisted by Greenlandic catechists who helped transcribe and translate the documents. From the late 19th century West Greenlanders collected examples of oral tradition in East Greenland. Likewise, the more isolated areas in North Greenland and South Greenland left an opportunity for Greenlandic intellectuals to follow in the footsteps of the Danes and carry out their own, independent collections. The collection of the oral tradition has thus contributed to the formation of a national consciousness in Greenland and to the formation of an intellectual and artistic elite, capable of managing and representing the past. The collection of tradition was embedded and rooted in colonization, but the involvement of the Greenlanders themselves later led to an erosion of boundaries between colonizer and colonized. However, new borders arose internally between the elite culture of Central West Greenland and the "originality" of the outer districts.
- Even in Central West Greenland, the oral tradition survived well into the 19th century, and certain types of stories with a basis in tradition are still being told today. The oral tradition has therefore been part of the modern writers' own background. Reframing the oral tradition in literary form has served to invoke a distinct Greenlandic ethnicity.
- As part of nation building, especially during the wave of anti-authoritarian, anti-imperialist views that preceded the introduction of Home Rule in 1979, a certain

reinvention of tradition has been taking place. Old practices such as *aasivik* (summer camp) and *uaajeerneq* (mask dance) have been revived within new contexts. Today such manifestations are recognized as symbolic expressions and often mentioned or performed with a certain ironic distance. At the same time, however, even the younger generations show great respect for their cultural heritage.

All three aspects: collection, reframing and reinvention of the Greenlandic oral tradition occurred as a direct result of the cultural encounter that unfolded within the framework of Danish colonization. Colonial Greenland thus constitutes a "contact zone" as defined by Mary Louise Pratt: "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination" (1996:4). Pratt uses the word "transculturation" to describe the process of cultural change that occurs within the contact zone. Pratt underscores that even though the subjugated people cannot control what emanates from the dominant culture, they nevertheless determine – to varying degrees – what they absorb into their own culture, and what they use it for (Pratt 1992:6). Still, the term "transculturation" seems to indicate not only that the subjugated shift toward the dominant culture, but also that this shift occurs exclusively as a result of pressure from the colonial power and at its initiative. This serves to maintain the colonizer's position as the active subject of history, while the colonized remains its passive object. I therefore prefer the term "Cultural translation" which Stuart Hall, Homi Bhabha, Robert J.C. Young and other scholars use to convey the same essential meaning: the translocation of cultural forms into new contexts and regimes of power.[3] Not only does this term capture the ongoing process of cultural negotiation far more adequately, it also provides a better context for understanding the choices and strategies that made the Greenlandic Inuit accept the hegemony of the colonial power – or, rather, accept it with a certain amount of resistance and reservation. Neither Christianity nor literacy nor other imported cultural features of the European genres have been seen as external or "alien"; they have all been annexed, creatively appropriated and incorporated as part of Greenlandic culture (Thisted 1990, 1992, 2002, Thisted in Gimpel and Thisted 2008, see also Karen Langgård's article on written literature and her references to her own work in this book). Similarly, Greenlandic literature – like (northern) Sami literature – serves as an obvious example that cultural influences or transfer does not necessarily or inevitably wipe out the language of the minority or the colonized but may in fact serve as a means of preserving and developing it (Thisted, forthcoming). Efforts to collect oral tradition have played no small role in this process.

Writing and empire

An important Nordic event in the 18th century was the colonization of Greenland. In 1721 **Hans Egede** (1686-1758) arrived in the archipelago off the west coast of Greenland and claimed the land in the name of the Danish-Norwegian state – much to the dismay of

the Dutch whalers who throughout the 17th century had gradually shifted their interests from Spitsbergen (Svalbard) to the Davis Strait and also achieved a kind of monopoly on bartering with the local Inuit. Colonization heralded a new era in Greenland Inuit history. While the whalers had only stayed in the area during spring and summer and never arrived with such regularity that the Inuit could count on them, the Danish-Norwegian traders and missionaries moved in and established large colonial systems that remained permanently staffed throughout the year. The new *naalagarsuit*, "big men who wished to be obeyed", were not simply engaged in trade but had other and much more radical intentions with their presence. Their goal was to make the Inuit abandon their faith and worldview as well as many of the rules and customs that they had previously lived by. Instead, they should learn to see themselves as Christians and as subjects under the supremacy of the Danish king.

Representing the Lutheran church, it was paramount to Hans Egede that the Greenlanders should be able to read the Bible in their own language as soon as possible, and thus a Greenlandic orthography had to be invented. In collaboration with Greenlanders who had converted to Christianity Hans Egede and later his son **Paul Egede** (1708-1789) initiated the long and challenging process of translating the Holy Scripture. This was a question of translating Christianity not only into another language but into a different culture, situated in an entirely different natural environment. The whole geography of the text was foreign: palm trees, vineyards, donkeys, sheep. Even more foreign were crucial Christian concepts such as 'sin', 'guilt' and 'grace', not to mention the metaphorical language. For example, how could the Greenlanders possibly understand the connotations of 'the lamb'? Of course the missionaries could use explanations and pictures[4], but still they had not only to create the necessary orthography to convert the spoken language to written text; in fact they had to create an entirely new language for conveying alien spiritual perceptions and novel structures of hierarchy and power. From an early stage, the missionaries were well aware that they should avoid creating a false "Danish-Greenlandic" language. Their aim was to create a translation that would seem salient and meaningful to the Greenlanders, and which would thus enable them truly to understand the content of the text. Certainly, their aim was to replace the Inuit belief systems with their own as well as inserting their own authority on behalf of the Danish state, as personified by the King. In many cases the old or original meanings of a word were simply taken over or "colonized" by new definitions, while in other cases loan words were introduced (Kleivan 1979a, Petersen 2001, Dickmeiss 2002). Paul Egede mentions that he has not been able to find Greenlandic words to help him translate words like 'God', 'crown', 'gold,' 'wine', 'tax', 'customs' and 'king' (Petterson 2007). Claiming the untranslatability of a word endows the word with special powers and is thus a common tool of cultural imperialism (Venuti 1992). It is therefore no coincidence that while Paul Egede could not find a Greenlandic word for 'God', he had no trouble finding a Greenlandic word for the opposite concept. In a Christian context *Toornaarsuk*, originally a helping spirit of the shaman, the *angakkoq* (Sonne 1986), was appointed to Satan himself; similarly, *Nuliajuk* or *Immap Ukua* or

Sassuma arnaa, the Mother of the Sea, became the "Devil's grandmother". Thus, the translation of the Bible can clearly be considered an act of cultural imperialism. Still, we need to remember that the missionaries actually believed what they were preaching and were convinced that by taking on the mission of converting the heathens they were actually saving them. The missionary endeavour rendered the lives of the missionaries uniquely meaningful and significant,[6] and their demeanour was probably convincing enough to win over the Greenlandic Inuit who appropriated both Christianity and the media in which it was communicated: text, images, hymns. Soon, conversion became an integrated part of the Greenlandic oral tradition, where Christ would interact with the Greenlanders directly, reducing the missionaries to mere messengers or go-betweens. Examples will be given below.

To disseminate Christianity among the Greenlanders, the missionaries trained and educated native teachers, the so-called catechists, who were later put in charge of schools and teaching and also served as a sort of deacons. The teaching in schools focused on religion but also had the effect of bringing literacy to the population. As a result, as early as the 1820s, many of the West Greenlanders were able to read, and at least some of them could also write.

The first collections of Greenlandic oral traditions. Peder Kragh and H.J. Rink

In diaries and reports from the early missionaries of the 18th century we find accounts of Greenlandic Inuit myths and tales. Although they are often reproduced to illustrate what the missionaries saw as the devilish paganism of the natives, we get a fairly good impression of some of the central myths in the Inuit oral tradition, which are recognizable when compared with later collections. However, the first real collection effort was carried out by the Danish missionary **Peder Kragh** (1793-1883), who in the 1820s collected stories in the Egedesminde district (Aasiaat) in North-West Greenland. Maybe the collection was more or less the result of a coincidence. By his own account, his main intention was to study the Greenlandic language. Kragh was a major authority on Greenlandic and translated a number of biblical and literary texts into Greenlandic. His ambition was to improve on the already existing grammars, and as a means of acquiring material for his linguistic analysis, he simply asked some Greenlanders to write down some old stories for him (Kragh 1875). The manuscripts are dated between 1823 and 1828. Since not all Greenlanders mastered the art of writing equally well, Kragh had his assistant, the catechist **Wittus Steenholdt** (1808-1862), transcribe the stories. At some point Kragh realized the importance of the material and decided to publish a selection of stories in Greenlandic with a parallel translation in Danish. However, he never made much progress on this project, and when he later heard of H.J. Rink's collection activities, he generously handed the entire material over to him.

H.J. Rink (1819-1893) was educated within the natural sciences. He first went to

Greenland in 1848 to carry out mineralogical/geological investigations of Greenland's resources. He is still mentioned as one of the fathers of modern glaciology, and his book *Greenland, Its People and Its Products* (Rink 1857, 1874) became very influential. In 1851 Rink was appointed a member of "Kommissionen for de grønlandske Anliggender" (Commission for Greenlandic Issues) established by the Danish government. He then moved into the administrative sector, and in 1853 he became the factor ("colony manager") of the Colony of Julianehaab in South Greenland. In 1855 he became a factor of the Colony of Godthaab, and later that year he became the Royal Inspector, the highest local authority, of South Greenland.

Rink did not renounce the colonization project per se, but he was highly critical stance of the Danish administration, which in his opinion had robbed the Greenlanders of their dignity and authority (Rink 1967 (1862)). Intellectually, Rink was deeply rooted in Danish National Romanticism, a movement that was based on German ideas, including Johann Gottfried von Herder's ideas about *volk* and *nation*.[7] Correspondingly, Rink considered the Greenlanders a people in its own right, and he was convinced that the Greenlanders too must possess a "folk culture". In connection with archaeological work that Rink had carried out in the Julianehaab area on the abandoned settlements of the ancient Norsemen who had inhabited the Southern part of Greenland in the Middle Ages, Rink had come across the story of the struggle between the Norsemen and the Inuit. However, neither Danes nor Greenlanders seemed to be able to offer any substantial information about the traditions of the Greenlanders. Still, Rink decided to give it one more try because, as he later wrote, "I could not imagine that this people, which is endowed with exactly the same talents as we, but for whom the rest of the world is like a closed book, should be completely devoid of any equivalent of what among other nations is known as history and poetry." (Rink 1866:1, my translation).

In the winter of 1856-57 Rink was on leave in Denmark. Upon his return to Greenland he brought with him a small printing press and an even smaller lithographic press.[8] Rink knew that the Greenlanders were eager to have new and more varied reading matters in addition to the – given the conditions actually rather diverse selection of – publications and handwritten manuscripts that were in circulation in Greenland at that time.[9] In an "invitation" dated April 22 1858 Rink called for all such writings that might "entertain and instruct". At the top of this list was a call for "Greenlandic legends or poetic works, as these may still be kept by the inhabitants of certain localities in Greenland, either by oral story-telling or song."

Scarcely had Rink issued this invitation before the stories began to arrive from even the farthest corners of Danish West Greenland (at that time, this included the west coast up to Upernavik in the north) – and they kept on coming! Rink concluded:

> Due to the deep chasm between the natives and the Europeans in this country, a certain duality is prevalent among the former, inasmuch as their bearing in the presence of the Europeans is reserved, constrained and to a certain extent pretented, whereas

> that which constitutes the major ingredient of their conversation during their own gatherings and which in particular serves them as entertainment during the long winter nights usually seems to be a closed book to the Europeans – even to those who have spent most of their lives among them. (Rink 1871:III, my translation)

Rink even had an explanation for why the Greenlanders had previously not been too eager to share information with him: They simply were not used to Europeans wanting to hear their opinion: "The most difficult problem, however, is making people understand that one really wants to know, and unfortunately this is not the only situation in which one encounters this obstacle in Greenland." (op.cit.)

The collection of oral tradition was but one of the activities that Rink initiated together with a group of likeminded Europeans, assisted by educated Greenlanders. Rink's printing house issued a number of educational and entertaining works, including an illustrated selection of the stories that had resulted from his invitation, published in four small volumes: *kaladlit oKalluktualliait/Grönlandske Folkesagn,* 1859-1863. Starting in 1861 Rink also published the Greenlandic periodical *Atuagagdliutit.* These initiatives may be seen as a sort of spiritual and intellectual support for another initiative by Rink and his partners in this endeavour: the founding of the so-called *forstanderskaber* (superintendencies), a kind of local councils with the aim of giving back to the leading sealers, whalers and hunters at least some of the power and authority they had lost as a consequence of colonization. Some have argued that Rink's projects paved the way for a romanticized view of the sealing, hunting and whaling trade, where the image of the ideal or "genuine" Greenlander is cemented as that of the "free sealer" (whaler, hunter) (Thomsen 1998). Similarly, the superintendencies are seen as a form of *governmentality*, which precisely by including the Greenlanders eased the way for the colonial administration (Rud 2010).

Nevertheless, these initiatives did give the Greenlanders influence, education and increased self-awareness and thus held the potential not only for the fortification of colonialism but also, in the longer term, for its abolition. *Atuagagdliutit* opened a window to the world, cf. Rink's assumption that the alleged underdevelopment of the Greenlanders in fact stemmed from isolation and a lack of information. *Atuagagdliutit* took its readers on a virtual visit to Denmark through the young Greenlander **Lars Møller** (1842-1926), whom Rink in 1861-62 had sent to Copenhagen to be trained as a printer and a lithographer. In a brilliant move, Møller has his portrayal of the city revolve around the hotel, a meeting place for travellers from all over the world where a multitude of languages is heard. Here, there is always something happening, something new to experience, but this international meeting place is also the scene of a level of inequality, excessive consumption and debauchery that Møller wants to warn against, lest it be imported to Greenland (Thisted 2007). Thus, while it is true that the Greenlandic stories turned their gaze inward, toward the Greenlanders' own past, with its many articles, reports and illustrations from the outside world, *Atuagagdliutit* also offered a very cosmopolitan perspective. This aspect was further strengthened by the translated novels and short stories that let

the readers cross the oceans with *Robinson Crusoe*,[10] experience Oriental adventures in *Oberon* or *Arabian Nights*,[11] or visit the Middle East with *Ben Hur*.[12] True, a novel like Robinson Crusoe does convey a Eurocentric view of the world – but who is to say that the Greenlandic readers necessarily identified with Friday? He does not make his appearance until relatively late in the story, and the readers had every opportunity to identify with the young, disobedient hero who prefers to heed his own desire for adventure rather than his obligations to his parents.[13] While the Greenlandic story-telling tradition was being translated to text and print media, the European novels were translated in the opposite direction and unfolded in an entirely new arena as part of the oral Greenlandic tradition. Maxims from the translated novels became Greenlandic expressions, and well into the 20th century some people were able to orally perform large sections of a work such as *Oberon* (Thisted in Gimpel and Thisted 2007:193). Thus, for a long time oral story-telling and written literature were not separate but existed in mutually related circuits.

In 1874 Lars Møller took over as editor from Chief Catechist **Rasmus Berthelsen** (1827-1901), who had been in charge of *Atugagdliutit* since its inception while also contributing text, illustrations and translations. Berthelsen was also the one who patiently, every other night for several winters in a row, worked with H.J. Rink to help him make out and decipher the many incoming stories. Thus, while the *Atuagagdliutit* initiative was almost instantly handed over to the Greenlanders themselves, Rink became more and more absorbed by the oral story material that also became part of the research effort to map the Eskimo trails and the relations between the Greenlandic and Canadian Inuit that was to occupy him for the rest of his life (Rink 1887-91).

Aron of Kangeq

Without comparison, the most important person for H.J. Rink's collections was **Aron of Kangeq** (1822-69). Kangeq was a small settlement in the archipelago west of Nuuk,[14] close to the spot where Hans Egede had first landed in 1721. In the nineteenth century, Kangeq was part of the German parish. In 1733 the Moravian Brethren had arrived in Godthaab, sent by the Danish king to help Hans Egede establish and secure the mission. The two missions, however, disagreed on just about everything – spiritual as well as material issues – and their relationship vacillated between open warfare and polite distance until the Moravian Mission left Greenland in 1900. Still, the Moravian Brethren had a significant impact on Greenlandic language and culture, and many of their hymns are still in the current hymn book. **Samuel Kleinschmidt** (1814-1886) invented the modern standard West Greenlandic orthography (Kleinschmidt 1851, 1871). Kleinschmidt was born in Greenland and spoke the language fluently. While the earlier grammars had been based on Latin, Kleinschmidt based his work on the structures that were inherent to the Greenlandic language.[15] Rink and Kleinschmidt maintained close contact, and in 1859 Kleinschmidt left the Moravian mission to become a teacher at *Ilinniarfissuaq*, the catechist training college, which was run by the Danes.[16] It was Kleinschmidt who

knew Aron and facilitated the contact between Rink and Aron. Aron was a catechist in the Moravian mission, as was his father, and his father before him. However, at the time being a catechist was only a part-time job, and it did not pay very well. The catechists were expected to provide for themselves as hunters. But Aron suffered from tuberculosis, as did his father and many other hunters in the district. The census of 1859 reveals that during that year just one hunter provided alone for the seventeen people of Aron's household. Kleinschmidt had discovered his artistic talent, and since Aron was in desperate need of money, Kleinschmidt had secured him some occasional work as an engraver. As soon as Rink learned that Aron was able to draw pictures, he sent his first requests for illustrations to accompany the old legends. Soon Aron was engaged as the main illustrator of the project, even illustrating some of the stories from Kragh's collection. More than 400 of Aron's sketches and water colours are preserved in the archives today in addition to a large number of woodcuts. Aron also wrote many stories in addition to rewriting and improving on stories written by others. Sixty stories carrying Aron's signature are preserved. We do not know to what extent Aron was used to performing orally.[17] But we do know that he had a very special talent for transforming the oral story into written form. Rink's collections provide excellent material for studying Aron's manuscripts in comparison with the work of other writers and also for comparing his written representations with another very important material: **Hintrik**'s (1819-1877) repertoire, which was dictated to Rink during the first months of 1867.

When Rink initiated the collection he knew little, if any, Greenlandic. However, Rasmus Berthelsen must have been an excellent teacher. Rink's notes in the margins of the manuscripts clearly indicate his progress. As Rink became increasingly familiar with the material he became increasingly frustrated with waiting passively for stories to be sent to him. He was well aware that the best oral performers were not necessarily the best writers, and in early January 1867 Rink began to cooperate directly with selected storytellers from the Nuuk area. Soon he singled out Hintrik, who also belonged to the Moravian Mission. During the next few months, Hintrik told Rink 61 stories, and the resulting 385 closely written folio pages offer an opportunity to study the repertoire of a renowned oral storyteller.[18] The following year Aron was busy illustrating Hintrik's stories and also helped him write down additional stories. A few stories written in Hintrik's own hand were among the mailings to Rink, but these representations are clearly much less detailed and rather dull compared to the texts taken down from the oral performances. The same applies to the first stories in Rink's manuscript from 1867. The first stories are rather poor representations, but as Rink and Hintrik got better acquainted, and as Rink developed a shorthand system that allowed him to speed up the process the representations become fuller and richer. One of the first stories Hintrik told Rink was about a person called Kannassuaq. Later Hintrik forgets that he has already told this story and begins to tell it once more. Unfortunately, Rink recognizes the story after the introduction and the first scene and breaks the performance off. However, this first part of the story is actually longer in the second version than the entire story in the first recorded version!

Whenever Kaassassuk grew a new tooth, they would pull it out, so that he could not eat so much! Aron of Kangeq ca. 1860.

What is so fascinating about Aron is his keen sense of what it takes to make the stories come alive in writing. Aron was aware that he could not let the stories unfold endlessly with details and digressions, as one could in an oral performance. On the other hand, the story withers and dies if it is too pared-down. This is evident in many of the other submissions, where the opening paragraphs may be quite interesting, but soon the writer tires or loses his or her grasp of the story.[19] Plot alone does not suffice. There has to be enough description for us to envision the story and enough dialogue for us to *experience* the story. Aron clearly attempted to *tell* the story as he committed it to paper, preserving the register and the communicative economy of the oral narrative[20] but in the tightest possible version considering the limited resources and sparse conditions. Paper and ink were luxury items at the time, even for a catechist, and conditions in the crowded, cramped and poorly lit homes were not ideal for this type of pursuit.

Just as Aron's skills as a pictorial artist develop during the 10 years that he works for Rink, so do his writing skills. In the beginning, all of Aron's characters speak in the same way, since Aron is keen on writing correctly in accordance with Samuel Kleinschmidt's orthography. Later Aron must have realized that spelling mistakes are acceptable provided that they are deliberate. Thus, in the later stories Aron's characters speak with all sorts of deviations from standard pronunciation: One person has a lisp, another has a stutter, and various dialects are represented, mimicking the dramatic performance of the oral storyteller who would make sure to give each of the characters his or her own voice.

At the beginning of the story, the storyteller will establish an imaginary "stage" in front of him and her. A few sentences suffice for outlining the background and setting,

as in this example, the opening paragraphs in Aron's version of the story of "Kunuk, the orphan boy":

> *AngajorKaerútut sule merdlertúngûvdlutik, angutínguit mardluk najánguartik pingajoralugo najugaKartut igdlumik angisûmik, sisamanik igalâlingmik. Táuko Kunúkut audlamik ikiûngneK saperamik, kisinane ima pissarât: Káinat tikikângata sârKutai majûgtardlugit, imertariardlutigdlo.*
>
> They had lost their parents when they were very young children, the two boys, who were now living with their sister, all three of them in a big house with four windows. Since this was the only way Kunuk and his siblings could help, they were given one specific task: When the kayaks returned, it was their duty to bring up the weapons and to fetch water. (Rink 1859:92, my translation).

From this short introduction, an audience fluent in the tradition will be able to place the story in a specific category and make competent guesses about what is to follow. The introduction also sets the stage with the sea out front, the beach where the children are watching for the kayaks and above the beach, the big house where they all live. Some distance away there will be a river or a lake where the children go to fetch water. Once the stage is set, and the main characters have been placed upon it, the characters are put in motion, and the description changes from panoramic to scenic. This shift is always marked, in this case with the phrase *Ilaanniaassiit:* "One day when as usual":

> *Iláiniâsît Káinat tikerugtutdlartut Kunuk imertarlune autdlarpoK, imermut pigame, ermutse Kagdlutileriardlugo kînarpagssuit tarrai kisîsa takuvai.*
>
> One day when as usual all the kayaks were on their way, Kunuk went off to fetch water. When he reached the river and was just about to begin drawing water from it, he suddenly saw the reflection of a lot of faces!

From the moment the action is initiated, the characters will be caught in the storyteller's spotlight, so that we know exactly where they are on the imaginary stage, until the scene is closed, and a new scene is opened. In the following text we follow Kunuk back and forth, from the river to the house where he tries to warn his companions about the faces; they do not believe him, however, and send him back to the river. Each time the faces have moved closer. Back and forth he goes, as we follow, and this creates the illusion that the time it takes for the action to unfold is identical to the time it takes to tell it. All this is lost in Rink's Danish translations (Rink 1859, 1866), and the loss is even greater in the English version (Rink 1997 (1875)), where the stories are reduced to mere summaries. Rink found the oral style redundant and irrelevant when the stories were being communicated in print (Rink 1866:4). Even after having worked with the oral storytel—

lers, he was still far more interested in *what* was being told, than *how* it was being told. Unfortunately the Danish and English versions therefore often also fail to relate *why* the story was being told. Importantly, the point of the story lay not only in the plot but equally in the interaction between the narrator/narrative and the audience. Due to the dramatic narrative style the audience became immersed in the shared experience of *eleos* and *fobos* that is the very essence of drama, cf. Aristoteles on *katharsis* in Greek tragedy.[21]

Only six of Aron's manuscripts were printed in *kaladlit oKalluktualliait/Grönlandske Folkesagn*. But they were important, well-loved stories: Kunuk, Kaassassuk, Aqissiaq, The Norsemen, Sungersuusaq, The Best Friends. When the four small booklets of folk tales had been read to shreds, Aron's stories were reprinted in *Atuagagdliutit*, and although Aron's version had originally been but one among many others, his eventually became the standard version. The vast collection of manuscripts and pictures disappeared from Greenland when Rink left the country in 1868 and took everything with him. That Rink had been successful with his project to imbue the Greenlanders with awareness and pride about their own heritage is evident, however, from a short article by Lars Møller in *Atuagagdliutit* in 1877, where he proudly and enthusiastically describes how the Greenlandic stories are now being translated into many different languages, earning Greenland a name around the world. In closing, the article encourages people to collect more stories that hold enough truth value that they should not be forgotten but deserve to be printed and brought into the light, "so that they may form a beneficial basis for a positive development of our country" (*...nunavtinilo ilerKûleriartorumârtunut najorKutauvdlutigdlo ineriartûtauvdluarKajarmata*).[22] The article reflects precisely the confidence and self-awareness that Rink had hoped to arouse in the Greenlanders when he began his collection. However, it also indicates how the tradition was being met with new expectations of being edifying, not in relation to the premises in place at the time when the tradition had developed but rather in relation to a later, Christian and National Romantic perspective. A certain adaptation may already have begun to affect parts of the material collected by Rink, not least Aron's versions. I will return to this in a later section of this article, discussing the "reframing" of tradition.

Rink was far from the only European that Aron worked for. Throughout, he will have kept a European readership in mind as at least part of the intended audience. This is evident in his texts from the discreetly inserted hints to help outsiders follow the story. As when he not only notes that sweat begins to drip from a man's chin but spells out that this occurs because the man is angry. That sort of information would have been completely superfluous to a reader who is fluent in the tradition. Aron also had no doubts about the status of tradition as cultural capital. This is evident for example in the picture that he paints for the Rev. C. E. Janssen for use in training prospective missionaries. The painting depicts two women skinning a seal while women from other households are headed home with their share of the catch. In a text accompanying the painting Aron writes: "When they catch a harp seal, they distribute it among their fellows at the settlement, and even the blubber they share out for free, this is something everybody does. In order for

the *Kavdlunait*[23] to learn about the customs of the Greenlanders [I have painted this]."[24] The stories played a similar role in defining ethnic distinctions.

"Back in the not-really-old days" – cultural encounters and Christianity

Rink describes how the oral storytellers distinguished between two types of stories, the names of both derived from the stem *oqaq,* tongue. An *oqaluttuaq* (pl. *oqaluttuat)* is an old story, passed down from the ancestors, which goes back several generations. The individual storyteller must treat this collective narrative material with great care. An *oqaluttuaq* must be retold exactly as one heard it (Rink 1871:206ff.). Having been told so many times, the story will often have reached a relatively fixed form, and it will be full of puns and fixed stylistic patterns, which, in addition to sounding good also serve as aids for memory. Thus, the ancient tales have a distinctive rhythm, a particular "word melody". Overall, the story differs from ordinary speech by virtue of a certain, characteristic voice. This phenomenon has remained observable well into the 20th century and has also been documented in audio recordings and on film.[25]

An *oqalualaaq* (pl. *oqalualaarutit*) is a more recent story. It may relate to the storyteller's own personal experience or to what he or she has heard from others relating their experiences. Rink believed that a story could go back four or five generations before it stopped being an *oqalualaaq* and became an *oqaluttuaq.* In an *oqalualaaq* the form is freer, although to a large extent the newer stories rely on the same expressive idiom as the old stories. The title of *kaladlit oKalluktualliait/Grönlandske Folkesagn* features the added *–liaq*, marking something as manmade, constructed. Thus, the title means something like "stories that the Greenlanders have made up". Whether Rink himself came up with this phrase is doubtful. More likely, it came from Rasmus Berthelsen or perhaps Samuel Kleinschmidt. For generations the West Greenlanders had learned to look down on the oral storytelling material, in particular the old *oqaluttuat*, as fabrications and ravings in contrast to the biblical stories, which the church defined as the only source of truth. This is still evident in the modern-day distinction between *oqaluttuaq,* which refers to a fictitious story, and an *unikkaaq* (pl. *unikkaat*), which is the preferred term for events relating to the storyteller's own experience or real events. *Oqaluttualiaq* is the current term for the modern genres of novels and short stories. In a Greenlandic context these genres represented a breach with tradition, exactly because they are explicitly fictitious. That was not a concept that was in use in the old tradition, where the storyteller would insist that what he or she was relating had actually happened, even the stories dating back to the earliest times.

Thus, in a sense, colonization and the introduction of Christianity turned the terminology upside down, so that the oldest stories were now viewed as fabrications and ravings, while the more recent stories dealing with the time of contact and the conversion to Christianity were seen as relating to real-life events. These stories dealt with topics like encounters

with whalers, conflicts with various groups of Europeans (whalers, missionaries, traders), the conversion to Christianity, including internal conflicts between Greenlanders and pagans' killings of early Christians. At the time these types of stories often opened with some version of the phrase *itsaalluarsimanngitsoq*, "back in the not-really-old days".

Thus, the storytellers operated with a chronology where *itsaq*, "long ago", or even *itsarsuaq*, "very, very long ago" referred to the earliest days, back when the shaman, the *angakkoq*, was the supreme spiritual authority. The whaling era is often described with a lengthier phrase, for example "back when no one had been christened yet, and the white people were still strangers to them, when the whalers were the only white people that were seen occasionally".[26] *Itsaalluarsimanngitsoq* (*itsangajak, itsarsuunngitsoq*, "not that long ago") refers to the transition period when some had been christened, while others had not. Even at Rink's time, a conflict of interest is apparent between collectors and storytellers, where the former prefer hearing about the oldest times, while the storytellers are more focused on more recent stories.[27] Stories about *itsaalluarsimanngitsoq* were the first stories that Aron illustrated, and they make up an important part of the narrative material from the 20th century.

At Aron's time, the issue of the Greenlanders' conversion to Christianity had long since been determined. All the Inuit in West Greenland had been christened, and the Greenlandic landscape was transitioning into a *Christian* landscape.[28] However, people still had clear memories of a different time, and quite a number of heroes who had held on to their own beliefs to the end were recalled with respect.[29] The preferred hero among the Christian Greenlanders, however, was the invincible, stubborn pagan who long avoids the missionaries and refuses to be won over by the strangers' words and customs until he eventually converts, spurred on by personal promptings by God. One of the most famous of these stories is the tale of *Akamalik*, which appeared in the first volume of *kaladlit oKalluktualliait/Grönlandske Folkesagn*, illustrated by Aron with a woodcut showing Akamalik's christening in the Moravian church. Akamalik was not a good man; he had committed murder, and he tormented his wife because he was angry that she failed to bear him sons. In a dream, however, he was taken on a visit to the Christian heaven, where Christ himself lectured him about his appalling way of life and the need for him to convert. With its almost surreal narrative style this story remains compelling today, inviting attempts at interpretation. The story was written down by **Albrecht Beck** (1825-1884), a catechist in Holsteinsborg farther to the north. Beck wrote that he had heard the story as a child in 1835 from a man he calls "Little Tobias".

Another convert was *Imaneq;* he is the person most frequently referred to in other stories, as his story is used to date other events: this person was a contemporary of Imaneq's, or such and such happened around the time of Imaneq's conversion. The story about Imaneq was written down by **Kristian** (1831-1869), a cousin of Aron's who also came from Kangeq. Aron illustrated it with as many as five well-composed and carefully coloured drawings; the drawings did not, however, make it in when the story was printed in volume 3 of *kaladlit oKalluktualliait/Grönlandske Folkesagn*.[30]

Imaneq lived in Pituffik north of Nuuk. He was a very knowledgeable *angakkoq*. At some point he fell prey to overweening confidence. A young girl fell ill, and Imaneq knew what ailed her, but he kept putting off the séance because he was so certain of his own powers. When he finally summoned the spirits, he was too late, and the girl died. Afterwards, Imaneq helped bury her. Imaneq usually stayed well away from the dead as they expire some kind of fume which is an abomination to the spirits, but this time he took part in the burial and was even reckless enough to wear the same sealskin boots when he went out to sea with the other sealers after the end of the five days of mourning. His helping spirit, a huge merman, was furious and after having scolded him he split his kayak to pieces and tore Imaneq limb from limb while his fellow sealers looked on, powerless to intervene. When the group returned home and related what had happened, the bereaved did not mourn, because they knew that Imaneq (by magical means, at birth or as a young child) had become an *angerlartussiaq*, "someone who must return home". This meant that he would be able to return provided that he did so within the five-day mourning period. Imaneq then experienced all sorts of temptations and obstacles, which traditionally faced the *angerlartussiat*, and he also received the assistance that is traditionally available.

After this incident Imaneq continued to serve as a shaman, but his powers began to fail him. *Sunauvfa pingortitsissuata ingminut sâtinialeramiuk* ("It turned out it was his Maker who wanted him to convert to join Him!" Rink 1861:64). Eventually Imaneq had to abandon his role as a shaman altogether because a bright light kept blocking his path to the spirit world. He lay on the sleeping platform as if he were dead, and the villagers were about to stitch up the skin shrouds around him, but when rigor mortis failed to set in they decided to wait, and eventually Imaneq regained consciousness and told them about all the good and beautiful things he had learned and seen in Heaven. For a long time, Imaneq would lose consciousness when he was recalled to Heaven for further lessons and instructions. Eventually Imaneq ordered that four kayaks go to Nuuk to contact the missionaries. The kayakers were not too keen, as it was still early spring, and the waters were still filled with ice, but Imaneq ensured them that a path would be cleared for them. And indeed, it was: right off the coast there was only a narrow strip of open water, but as soon as they went out further, a crack opened up ahead of them in the ice, just wide enough for them to make it through. They paddled through the night and made it to Kangeq. When they were close to Nuuk, they split up so that two of the kayakers went to see the Danish congregation, while the other two contacted the German mission. However, it was only when they sang the hymns that Imaneq had learned in Heaven that the missionaries believed that they had really been sent by Imaneq. Later in spring, the entire family came to Nuuk, where they were christened. The christening is documented in the ledgers of the Herrnhut church, which also mention the incident of the four kayaks coming through the ice to Nuuk on 6 March 1768.

Thus, in the Greenlandic sources the conversion of the Greenlanders is not – as it is in the missionaries' accounts – the result of them seeing their own *angakkut* uncloaked

and demoted; on the contrary, the conversions happen on the command of the *angakkut*, whose authority thus is not undermined but rather transferred to the new belief system. In this manner, the Greenlanders attempt from the outset to enter into a direct relationship with Christianity where they not only *assume* but also *take possession of* the new faith. Additionally, this new myth is cast in a broad enough form to embrace both the competing churches without choosing sides in relation to their mutual disagreements (Thisted 1997a:77ff.)

The stories about Akamalik, Imaneq and similar stories where encounters with angels, the saved souls of the deceased, Jesus Christ, and even the Lord himself spur the protagonist on to soul-searching and conversion, should be seen as steps in the negotiation that took place within the stories in relation to the drastic changes that society underwent, not least based on the white colonizers' insistence on claiming power and authority. At the same time, however, the stories carefully document how the converts submit to the secular administration of the mission without discussion or reservations. Although naturally the missionaries appreciated conversions and genuine faith, they came down hard on so-called "false prophets" who formed their own churches with their own rules and regulations.[31] In this sense, these stories do not represent any dissent with the colonial power but rather an attempt at taking it down to a more human level, where negotiation is at least a possibility.

About the Norsemen and the art of dealing with *naalagarsuit*

Right from the beginning when Hans Egede first landed in Greenland, he asked the Inuit whether they knew what had happened to the Norsemen. According to Egede's 1729 description, the Greenlanders knew nothing that might shed light on the fate of the vanished Norsemen, but in the 1741 edition he claims that the Greenlanders confirmed the Old Norse stories, which stated that the Norsemen had been killed by the current Greenlanders' ancestors (Arneborg 1993:29). It is obvious that the stories about the Norsemen recycle material known from the Inuit stories about encounters with other foreigners (Holtved 1943, Kleivan 1982). Rink was aware of this, as he had received one version written down in the Uummannaq district in North Greenland, where the enemies were not Norsemen but *tornit,* inland dwellers, and another from Labrador, where the enemies were Indians. Arneborg therefore concludes that Egede planted the story about the contact and strife between the Inuit and the Norsemen in the Inuit's consciousness, and that the Inuit stories thus represent a 17th-century European perspective rather than medieval Inuit tradition. This, however, raises another question: How do we account not only for the willingness of the Inuit to accept the idea of their own ancestors as the exterminators of the present rulers' ancestors but also for the creative fantasy with which they added flesh and blood to the plot, and the eagerness with which they maintained these stories and passed them down from generation to generation?

The different variants of the story are summarized, and the overall discussion about

the narratives as sources of Greenlandic history is examined in Thisted 2001. Here I argue that the story should not be dismissed as mere recycling of old material, but that it should be seen instead as a story in its own right, even if it is composed of elements known from other stories. That was how oral composition worked anyway: the storyteller composing a storyline from available elements in his or her repertoire (Lord 1960, Foley 1995, Thisted 1994, Thisted 2001:276). The story about the annihilation of the Norsemen provides a setting in Greenlandic history for exactly the type of mythic event upon which many nations build the myth of their birth. I therefore submit the hypothesis that the annihilation of the Norsemen represents such an inescapable, mythological incident in which the Greenlanders stood together for the first time and came into being as a people (Thisted 2001:293). The story about the Inuit annihilating the Norsemen gives the Inuit a lead part in history rather than the role of victims. It is also in this sense that the motif has lived on in modern Greenlandic fiction.[32] Aron's version made its way into the earliest Greenlandic school textbooks and has also been reprinted in *Atuagagdliutit* and in later volumes of Greenlandic legends.

One of the many features that link the stories of the Norsemen to stories about the modern *qallunaat*[33] is the use of the word *naalagaq* (someone superior, the one in command, literally: the one who must be obeyed) to refer to the superiors among the Norsemen. When the stories tell of strong men, the term *pissarsuaq* (a strong man, a man of power) or *pingaartoq/pingaartorsuaq* (an important man, a man of influence) is usually used. In Aron's time the word *naalagaq* was closely linked to the colonization and denote the colonial administrative hierarchy within which someone was legally entitled to be the commander of others, while others were duty-bound to listen and obey (intransitive: *naalarnivoq* = listens, pays attention). Accordingly, *naalagaq* was used with reference to the inspector, Rink's official title. In the Bible it was the term for God, and the intensified plural form *naalagarsuit* meant "the high and mighty" or, in other words, the authorities. In contrast to the older term *ittoq* – the master of a household, often synonymous with *ittu*, the grandfather, the senior patriarchal authority figure who may have given up hunting but whose words are still heeded by his sons – the term *illup nalagaa* (master of the house) and *inoqutigiit naalagaat* (master of the family) were introduced to designate a hierarchical power structure and to extend the hierarchical authority beyond the private sphere. Thus, the system of colonial authorities and administrators would be seen as a natural extension of the family structures (i.e. *nunap naalagaa* = the governor). The relationship between the Greenlanders and the colonial powers is fundamentally based on an asymmetrical distribution of power where the foreigners occupy the position of those who must be obeyed, while the Greenlanders occupy the position of those who must obey. This distribution of power emerges as a central conflict in all stories concerning the cultural encounter.

Over the centuries, conflicts between *Inuit* and *Qallunaat* have played an important role in the oral tradition (Thisted 2002a), but we have very few sources for these stories. On the one hand, people were aware that the old traditions were what the Europeans

were interested in, but on the other hand, of course, they were cautious about what sort of stories they would share with the Europeans. Stories about whalers were apparently considered appropriate, and a few individual stories dealing with conflicts with missionaries and traders have also been preserved, not least because Hintrik, who is mentioned above, told some of them to Rink, who wrote them down, although he never printed them. One of these stories dealt with *Miliortuaraq*.[34]

Miliortuaraq was a typical traditional hero, a small, fatherless boy who against all odds but thanks to his mother's resourcefulness and his own perseverance grew up to be a mighty hunter. On one occasion when Miliortuaraq was leaving the fiord where he lived to find a summer camp site, he set up camp at Noorliit, the Herrnhut Mission close to Nuuk. It was against the law for the unbaptized to mingle with the baptized, so the unbaptized Miliortuaraq chose a site on the outer perimeter to the north of the settlement. He had two dogs, and when a missionary discovered the dogs, he ran home for his rifle, with the intent of shooting them. He cocked his rifle and prepared to fire, but Miliortuaraq intervened and tried to explain that since the dogs were tied up, they did not pose a danger. He begged him not to shoot because he so loved his dogs. As the missionary did not want to fire on a man, he threw down his rifle and instead began to wrestle Miliortuaraq. Soon the two combatants were surrounded by a large crowd as was customary in Inuit tradition where the whole community would gather to watch such a contest between two powerful men. According to tradition the set-up of this conflict determines the result. The superior, hot-tempered *qallunaaq* loses to the small and modest yet powerful Miliortuaraq. On his own premises it is clearly Miliortuaraq who is in power: "*I* am not baptized," he ends up saying, "and if you take hold of me again, I will kill you!" The missionary surrendered, and Miliortuaraq did not give the incident any further thought. Then, however, one of the catechists came up to Miliortuaraq and asked him to come to the mission station. Miliortuaraq was reluctant to do this, as he had heard about the European custom of whipping people, and he was aware that the missionaries' territory would have other rules than the Inuit rules concerning man-to-man encounters. The catechist, however, assures Miliortuaraq that the missionary simply wants to make peace, and Miliortuaraq agrees to go there to meet him. When he enters, the missionary is sitting with his back turned, working on his papers. Thus, this leading hunter, undefeated in his own community, is left waiting for the other man's initiative, forced to wait patiently until he puts his papers down. Although Miliortuaraq did receive forgiveness (sic!) as well as tobacco and a piece of bread – both highly desirable European commodities at that time – he is diminished all the same. This humiliation is the price he has to pay to enter the premises of the mission and partake of the new way of life and the new goods the Europeans have to offer.

The narratives stage and probe this conflict but propose no solution to resolve it.[35] The foreigners and their goods were in the country, accompanied by power structures that demanded the submission of the Inuit. The Inuit have often been described as completely powerless in the face of colonization and totally unable to grasp its consequences. This characterization does not coincide with the image emerging from the Greenlanders'

Because Navarannaaq had destroyed the friendship they dragged her off while they kept asking her, "Navarannaaq, are you happy now?" She kept answering, "Indeed, I am happy!" Eventually, when her entrails dragged along the ground after her, she did not answer any more. Aron of Kangeq 1859.

own sources. In this representation, the Greenlanders clearly understood the conflict but chose what seemed most advantageous after weighing the pros and cons of the foreigners' presence.

Perhaps this also goes some way toward explaining the distinctly *tragic* mood that permeates the stories of the Norsemen. There is nothing proud or boastful about the Inuit's victory. On the contrary, the basic premise in all the stories about the Norsemen is that the two peoples lived in peace for a long time, but eventually the good relationship was ruined by misunderstandings or by the deceitful Navaranaaq. Navaranaaq is one of the elements recycled from the stories about *tornit* and Indians. In the Norsemen stories Navaranaaq was an Inuit girl who went to live with the Norsemen as a *kiffak,* a servant. For no reason that is made apparent she kept telling the Norsemen that the Inuit were planning an attack upon them, and the Inuit that the Norsemen were plotting against them. Aron rounds off his version of the story of the Norsemen by describing how after the annihilation of the Norsemen Navaranaaq was punished for her evil deeds – the conveyed understanding is that it would have been better if the two parties could have continued to live side by side.

Thus, in more recent times Navaranaaq has provided a powerful symbol of the painful conflicts and division sometimes resulting from the cultural mix – regardless of the creative attempts to absorb the European culture, which even in Aron's time was well on its way to being integrated as part of Greenlandic culture. It was Aron's dual access to the two cultures that made his art possible: As a hunter he had led the life to which the oral tradition was inseparably bound, while his life as a catechist with close ties to the Europeans in Nuuk enabled him to transfer the inherited tradition to the media of writing and pictorial art. Therefore, it is probably not surprising that he took such pains to be even-handed in his story about the Norsemen. As the conflicts escalate, both parties are guilty of wrongdoings, and as Aron relates the events, it is impossible to feel more sympathetic toward either side. Thus, the Norsemen not only symbolize a conflict with an external "Other", since even in Aron's time this "Other" had already become such an integrated part of oneself.

Knud Rasmussen

What H.J. Rink had to labour to acquire was given to **Knud Rasmussen** (1879-1933) from birth, and that includes both the language and the insight into the Greenlandic hunting culture. Rasmussen was born in Jakobshavn (Ilulissat) in North Greenland. Being the son of the Danish vicar, Knud Rasmussen was considered a Dane, but his great-grandmother was a native Greenlander, and unlike most Danes at the time, Knud Rasmussen's father spoke Greenlandic fluently. **Christian Rasmussen** (1846-1918) is still remembered and respected for his scholarly works about the Greenlandic language. Knud grew up bilingual, with a Greenlandic nanny and Greenlandic playmates, and in many ways he felt like a Greenlander. At the age of twelve he was sent to Denmark to receive an education, and to say that he did not make a great success out of his encounter with the Danish school system is putting it mildly. When he finally graduated, he had no idea what he wanted to do with his life, since academic studies were not an option. All he knew was that he wanted to do something extraordinary and creative. His interest turned to journalism, and he soon realized that he had to get back to the Arctic; not as a worker or administrator but as a writer and explorer. First he went to Lapland where he met and wrote about the Sami people. Then he managed to get to Greenland as a member of the "Danish Literary Expedition 1902-04" led by **Ludvig Mylius-Eriksen** (1872-1907). The expedition made its way to the isolated north-western corner of Greenland, which Rasmussen named Thule, a name that had been used in classical literature to describe a distant place located beyond the northern borders of the known world. He personally colonized the area[36] inasmuch as he ensured that Christianity was introduced, and he established a trading station, the profits from which were used not only to cover his own living expenses but also to finance the seven "Thule Expeditions" that were undertaken between 1912 and 1933. Rasmussen personally headed five of these expeditions.[37]

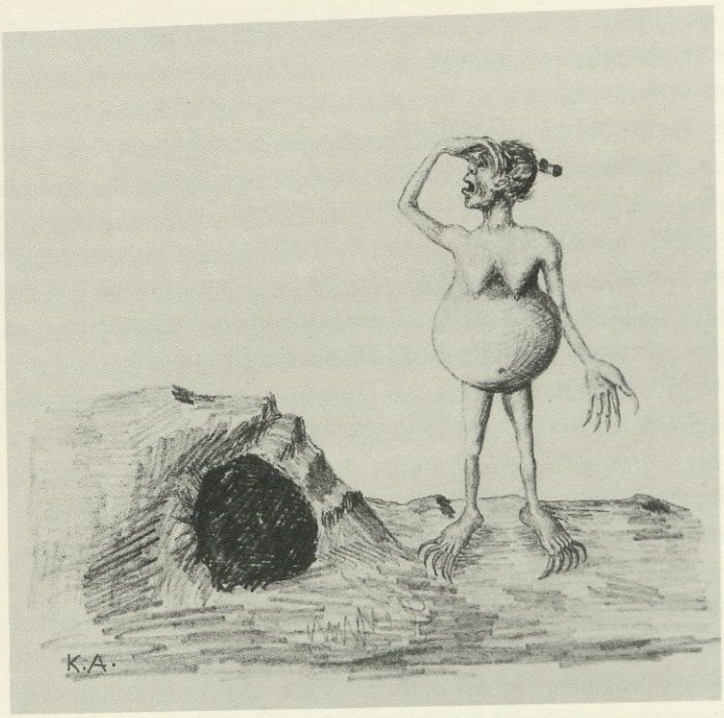
As a member of the "Danish Literary Expedition 1902-04" Rasmussen collected stories

in the Nuuk area. Here, as in Rink's time, the Greenlanders who had belonged to the Herrnhut church until 1900 made the best sources. However, Rasmussen's main interest was directed at the more isolated areas, which had been less exposed to the influence of the colonial power, and where the old traditions had therefore been better preserved. That was certainly the case for the relatively "untouched" area of Thule, which Rasmussen had even personally "discovered", so to speak.[38] East Greenland, however, was a sort of "wilderness". Hans Egede had been convinced that the Norse settlement "Østerbygden" had been situated in East Greenland,[39] and the Europeans had made many attempts at going there – but due to the field ice, this was not accomplished until **Gustav Holm**'s (1849-1940) "Womens' Boat (UmiaK) Expedition" in 1883-85. Rasmussen attempted to go there in 1904 but had to give up and settle for speaking with people who had recently entered South Greenland.[40] Not until 1919 did he reach Ammassalik on the 4th Thule Expedition. With *Myter og Sagn fra Grønland* (Myths and Tales From Greenland, vol. I-III 1921-25), Rasmussen thus covered all of Greenland, which was represented to the world as a coherent, common culture. Thus, the publication may be seen as a contributing factor in establishing a coherent Greenland under Danish sovereignty.[41]

Although the oral tradition was still alive in Rasmussen's time he predicted that the situation would change as it had in Europe, where it had eventually died out and given way to written literature.[42] At the time, the oral tradition was in retreat in central West Greenland, although the written culture had not yet advanced to a level where Rasmussen felt that there was sufficient basis for a publication in Greenlandic. Rasmussen writes,

> Probably there is in most settlements still some old man or woman who shortens the long winter nights with storytelling, but they are fewer and fewer – and not least for this reason one might think that the Greenlanders themselves will at some point go to the Danish Folklore Archives to draw on these sources of our knowledge about their old ancestors' history and illustrious achievements. (Rasmussen 1924:7, my translation).

Rasmussen had a contemporary perspective on the relationship between culture and civilization, and he was convinced that as a primitive people, the Eskimo were doomed to perish, even though from an internal perspective many aspects of their culture looked anything but primitive. As a people, however, he was not concerned about the Greenlanders, since he was convinced that they would be capable of making the transition to the modern world.[43] Knud Rasmussen introduced Darwin's concept of evolution in Greenlandic (Rasmussen 1912-13), he was a staunch supporter of *Grønlandsk Litteraturselskab* (the Greenlandic Literary Society), founded in 1908 with the purpose of securing the Greenlanders more reading material, and within a year of the publication of the first Greenlandic novel he had a Danish translation ready, keen to give Danish readers an insight into the development that was unfolding in Greenland (Storch 1915).[44] Thus, Rasmussen had no intention of hiding the fact that the Greenlanders were transitioning into modernity. Nevertheless,



Far away in the inland live these giant women we call Kûpajît. They have iron claws on their hands and feet, and they can dig caves even in the hardest rocks. Illustration from Myter og Sagn fra Grønland, Rasmussen 1921. Kârale Andreassen 1919.

he did, perhaps unintentionally, convey an image of the Greenlanders that was clearly outdated, at least as far as central West Greenland was concerned.

Rasmussen was of course familiar with H.J. Rink's collection. Both *kaladlit oKalluktuallialt/Grönlandske Folkesagn* and *Eskimoiske Eventyr og Sagn* were on the bookshelves in the vicarage in Jakobshavn, and indeed Rasmussen refers to Rink in his foreword. Rasmussen included Greenlanders in his work just as Rink had done, both by asking Greenlanders to transcribe their own repertoire and by arranging for skilled younger writers to make transcriptions for older storytellers. Rasmussen probably put out requests for manuscripts even during "The Danish Literary Expedition 1902-04"; at least his collections contain manuscripts dating all the way back to 1907 (Thisted 1994:18). Most of these manuscripts, however, date from 1919-21. Rasmussen read all the submitted manuscripts carefully and graded them in accordance with the grading system that was in use in the Danish school system at the time. Only the stories with the highest grades were edited with a view to translation and inclusion in *Myter og Sagn fra Grønland.* In Rasmussen's archives it is possible to follow the manuscripts as they undergo several stages of processing: being typed up; first, rough translation; edited translation ready for typesetting (Thisted 1994).

In 1918 Rasmussen was in Nuuk, and on this occasion he made arrangements with several individuals to act as scribes for the best of the local storytellers. One of these outstanding storytellers was **Isaaja Martinsen** (1846-1925), a son of Hintrik's who had worked for H.J. Rink. This storyteller, who was over 70 years old, was in fact himself

an excellent writer and quite capable of writing down long passages (Petersen 1987, Thisted 1994, Thisted 1994a). Another fine writer from the same environment in Nuuk was **Jâkuaraq Eugenius** (1863-1934), who was one of the most prolific providers of manuscripts for Rasmussen's collection. Eugenius also wrote other texts, including his own memoirs, which were printed as a serial in *Atuagagdliutit* in 1934-36. Eugenius realized that he represented a world that was disappearing, and that his life and experiences were therefore worthy of reproduction as a source of history. His time was also the time of storytelling, and thus recollections and legends are interwoven in his tale (Thisted 1994:92).

Even from East Greenland Rasmussen received a substantial and important material in writing. Although East Greenland had been colonized so relatively late, even in Rasmussen's time perceptions there were profoundly influenced by Christianity (Sonne 1988:27f.). One factor in this development was that the area had come into contact with Christians long before Gustav Holm's expedition, as groups from the east regularly rounded Cape Farewell to trade. Another factor was that the influence had been particularly rapid, not least because the mission was undertaken mainly by Greenlanders from West Greenland. One of the main sources of storytelling as it existed in East Greenland was **Kârale Andreassen** (1890-1934), a son of Mitsivarniánga, a great *angakkoq*. Kârale was originally called Sùgluitsoq and was expected to become an *angakkoq* himself, but he was baptized when he was eight years old. From his earliest childhood the gifted boy had the attention of the missionaries. First he was closely associated with **Henrik Lund** (1875-1948), the West Greenlandic hymn and song writer, who served as the catechist in Ammassalik for a number of years, then with the Rosing family, who had served as priests in East Greenland for generations (see further below). Throughout his life he also maintained close contacts with the resident Danes, not least the philologist **William Thalbitzer** (1873-1958), who spent the winter of 1905-06 in the area together with his wife, the sculptor **Ellen Locher Thalbitzer** (1883-1956). She gave Kârale drawing lessons, while her husband undertook a very extensive collection of Greenlandic stories, drum songs and traditions (Thalbitzer 1920, 1923, 1931). In 1910-14 Kârale Andreassen was a student at the seminary in Nuuk, where he completed his catechist training along with students from West Greenland – and where, of course, he had access to *kaladlit oKalluktualliait, Atuagagdliutit* and a wealth of other texts in the language of West Greenland. Once he returned to East Greenland he founded the settlement Kuummiut and spent the rest of his time transforming it into an ideal community, socializing people to fit the form of society he himself had experienced in Nuuk. At the same time he fully comprehended the national importance of collecting the old traditions. In a draft for an article written during a stay in Denmark in 1933-34,[45] he argues that the underdeveloped East Greenland, "the country's back" as it was called in West Greenland, has the capacity to stand its ground in relation to the rapidly developing, self-confident West Greenland, precisely thanks to its close ties to the past (Thisted 1994:195, the article draft is featured in Geertsen 1990:19).

Rasmussen does not completely conceal his cooperation with the Greenlandic scribes.[46] Nevertheless, his foreword does leave the impression that the collections have taken place in a direct encounter between himself as a representative of the written culture and the Greenlanders as representatives of the oral culture. *Myter og Sagn fra Grønland* opens with the following words:

> In extension of the existing collections of Eskimo legends, the present book initiates the publishing of Greenlandic myths and legends that I have collected and written down from the old storytellers' own presentation during my travels in Greenland. Since I began my work along the west coast of Greenland in 1902, I have managed to obtain rich collections, not only from the Cape York district where I spent the most time, but also from practically all the districts from Upernivik to Julianehaab. (Rasmussen 1921: Foreword, my translation).

Here Rasmussen positions himself as part of the contemporary folklore trend. While the first generations of folklorists rarely left their desks, the Danish folklorist **Evald Tang Kristensen** (1843-1929)[47] famously travelled the length and breadth of the country by foot to meet the storytellers. Similarly, Franz Boas' stay on Baffin Island in 1883-84 was one of the first professional ethnographic/ethnological field studies. The image of the storytelling Greenlander definitely conjures up a different impression than that of the writing Greenlander, and well into the 20th century this image prevailed over any other images of modern Greenland. To Rasmussen, however, the Greenlanders' transition to modernity was a given fact, so that was not the aspect that he was seeking to document in his collections. Like Rink, Rasmussen was convinced that the contemporary generation of storytellers may have added a certain "veneer" to their stories, but otherwise they were seen to speak directly from the Eskimo past, at least with regard to the old legends that had been passed down for generations. It was this "untouched original character"[48] that Rasmussen wished to convey. Therefore he focused even more than Rink had done on the oldest, pre-Christian material and also carefully left out the storytellers' reflections and comments on the stories. Similarly, European expressions, objects and other elements that might shatter the illusion about the stories as a window into "the soul of a primitive people"[49] were carefully eliminated prior to publication (for examples, see Thisted 1994).

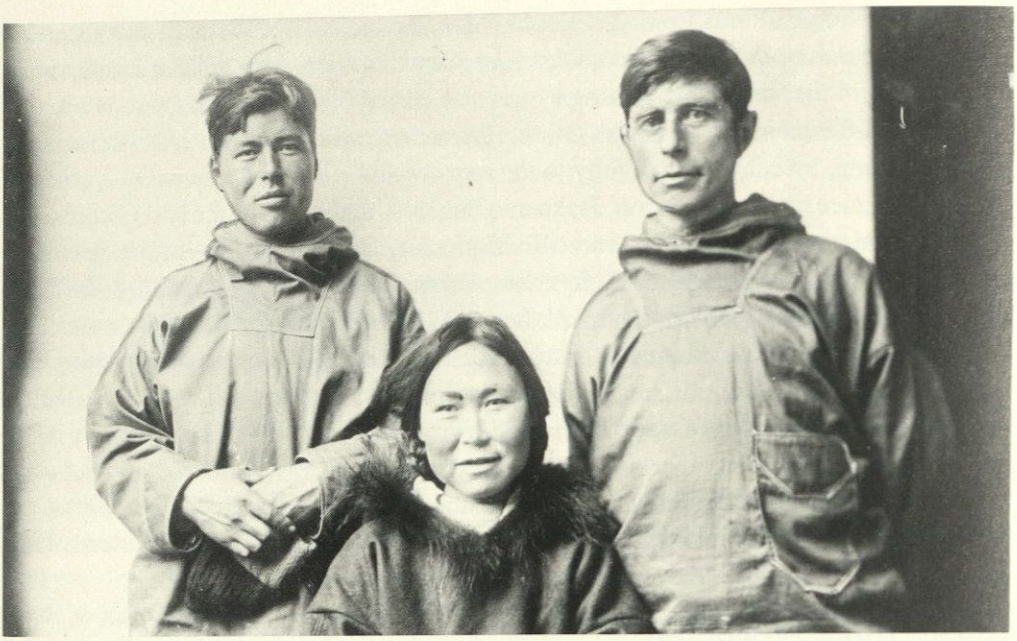
It may seem surprising that the Greenlandic tradition has such a uniform stylistic expression in Rasmussen's reproduction. From north to south, from east to west, from storyteller to storyteller, the voice remains more or less the same. Even when there are slight variations in style, for example when Rasmussen relates material from Thule, the difference is not nearly as pronounced as it is in the work of **Erik Holtved** (1899-1981), who used dictation and phonographic recording and reproduced the stories in phonetic writing (Holtved 1951). Interestingly, this is because Rasmussen did not perceive himself as someone standing outside tradition but instead saw himself as part of it: "... my principle in this effort has been to never reproduce a story until I had learned and retold it myself."[50] Rasmussen's approach

to the storytelling tradition, however, was based on the tradition of West Greenland, and it was the style used by the scribes from West Greenland that formed the basis of Rasmussen's own transfer of the stories into writing.[51]

In a very different manner than Rink, thus, Rasmussen managed to make his stories *come alive* in writing, by adhering carefully to the *register* and *communicative economy* of the oral performance, in line with Aron, Jaakuaraq Eugenius and others of the best Greenlandic writers. Rasmussen's translations were also inspired by Danish authors who had drawn on oral traditions in their literary works, for example **Hans Christian Andersen** (1805-1875), **St. St. Blicher** (1782-1848) and **Johs. V. Jensen** (1873-1950). However, Rasmussen was also very careful to avoid creating translations that were too close to the style and language of Hans Christian Andersen. The manuscripts reveal that the first version of a translation often bears many imprints of Andersen's use of imagery, a feature that is toned down in the final version, which is ready for typesetting (Thisted 1994:122ff.) Rasmussen did not want to place the Greenlandic tradition within the same category as fairytales for children but instead wanted to enable it to find its own unique expression, also in its Danish incarnation.

The 5th Thule Expedition

Although all of Rasmussen's expeditions were important in their own right, he clearly saw the 5th Thule Expedition as the culmination of his life's achievements – not least the second part of the expedition where Rasmussen left the other scientists behind in Canada and crossed Arctic America, going all the way to the Bering Strait, together with two Inuit from Thule, **KâvigarsuaK MiteK** (1900-1978) and **ArnarulúnguaK** (1896-1933).[52] It was the fulfilment of a dream he claimed he had had already as a child, to go in search of the tribespeople of the Greenlanders. As such, the expedition to America constituted a continuation of the original project of reopening the sledge road to Thule. Indeed, his encounter with the Inuit in Canada in 1921 is described as a repetition of his encounter with the Inuit in Thule in 1902 (Wentzel 1990:84). At the time of the 5th Thule Expedition the links between the Inuit in Greenland and America were a well-known fact. Knud Rasmussen was convinced that the 5th Thule Expedition had proven the thesis of **H.P Steensby** (1875-1920) correct. Steensby believed that the Inuit originally had lived at the great lakes in northern Canada, from where they had spread out and adapted to living by the sea. This theory has later been disproved by both ethnographers and archaeologists, but that is of lesser consequence today. What is more important is that with the 5th Thule Expedition Knud Rasmussen added flesh and blood to the scientific account of the Inuit's consanguinity. The story about Rasmussen's sledge journey became the vehicle of the great narrative about the Inuit's migrations and the connectedness of all Inuit.[53] In Rasmussen's accounts of meeting upon meeting with "alien tribes" or "new people", the sense of astonishment, alienation and *difference* that normally characterizes travelogues or expedition reports is almost immediately replaced by familiarity and *recognition*. Throughout their journey Knud Rasmussen, MiteK and ArnarulúnguaK



KâvigarsuaK MiteK, ArnarulúnguaK og Knud Rasmussen fotograferet i Alaska 1924

were able to communicate almost effortlessly – at least until they encountered the Yupik dialect spoken in parts of Alaska and Siberia. Even here, however, there were so many similarities, both linguistically and culturally, that Rasmussen could justify accentuating the oneness of the Inuit culture – rather than the differences that were used to differentiate the Inuit into subgroups.

It has been argued that the Inuit themselves had no such notion of a common culture, let alone any clear knowledge about the extent and demarcation of this culture, and that it is therefore more aptly characterized as Knud Rasmussen's own construction.[54] True enough, it seems that the Inuit were just as afraid of the *killinermiut,* the people living to the west of them, even if these were Inuit, as they were of the Indians.[55] Rasmussen does not deny this fact. But he makes the point that if they want to, the Inuit can speak with and understand each other because they share a common language and common basic norms and ideas. From this grand narrative about the Inuit's shared culture rose a sense of connectedness, an imagined community of all Inuit, which since the 1970s has come to manifest itself as a political power and a transnational alternative to the colonial national states with organizations like the ICC (Inuit Circumpolar Council).

Whenever Rasmussen argued in favour of his expedition in a Danish context, he presented it as a Danish national project. Rasmussen knew that this was the argument that would secure him the funding he needed – just as he knew that it was as a Danish national hero and on the international stage of geography and folklore he was to gain honour and

recognition. However, in a long-term perspective the 5th Thule Expedition also had a Greenlandic aim as seen from Rasmussen's point of view. The results of this expedition would enable the Greenlanders to place their own culture within a larger context and trace their historical roots all the way back to a distant prehistoric past. As a whole, the descriptions of traditions and ways of life, religion and oral traditions, together with all the collected items and the archaeological evidence would erect a memorial to the culture of the Inuit: "a people not only one in race and language but also in their form of culture; a witness in itself to the strength and endurance and wild beauty of human life" (Rasmussen 1927:386). These words are addressed to the Europeans, commanding their understanding and respect for the Inuit culture. But they are also addressed to the Inuit, inspiring them to take pride in their own origin.

The expedition generated huge publicity in Denmark, and naturally, part of this excitement also reached Greenland. Rasmussen also made sure to have the expedition reports published in Greenlandic; unfortunately, he only managed to publish the first half before his death (Rasmussen 1928).[56] Some Greenlanders were also able to read the books and the related articles in Danish, and there are many stories about the pride that this generated.[57] With works such as *Festens Gave* (1929, trans.: *The Eagle's Gift, Alaska Eskimo Tales,* 1932) and *Snehyttens Sange* (1930, trans.: *Eskimo Poems from Canada and Greenland,* 1973) traditions from other parts of the Arctic were incorporated into the Greenlandic cultural legacy. Knud Rasmussen's importance for Greenlandic literary history, however, is not limited to his collections of oral culture. He was also a huge source of inspiration for the literary expression in the subsequent literature. Greenlandic writers have drawn on topics addressed by Knud Rasmussen but have also drawn inspiration from the literary style in his travelogues. This applies to writer **Hans Lynge** (1906-1988), for example, whose novel *Erssíngitsup piumasâ* (1938) is based on one of Rasmussen's stories from the 5th Thule Expedition about the obligation of two brothers to avenge their father in accordance with ancient Eskimo law. Lynge places his novel in the Eskimo past, but the language of the novel is not that of the storytelling tradition. Instead, it is strongly influenced by Rasmussen, not least in its descriptions of nature. Generations of Greenlandic writers have acknowledged the literary inspiration from Rasmussen, among them **Otto Rosing** (1896-1965) who write in his obituary for Rasmussen, "He has embellished, enriched and renewed our language" (Rosing 1934:64).[58]

Thus, different generations of writers have taken different things from Rasmussen's oeuvre. For the early generations, to whom development and progress were essential, Rasmussen's presentation of Darwin's theory of evolution was particularly important. In the Utopian novel *Ukiut 300-ngornerat,* 1931, where the plot unfolds in 2021, revolving around the preparations for the 300th anniversary for Hans Egede's arrival, the Greenlandic politician **Augo Lynge** (1899-1959) has his characters read aloud from a book that might well be Rasmussen's previously mentioned introduction to the theory of evolution.[59] Rasmussen's *Myter og Sagn fra Grønland*, however, he places on a dusty shelf in the bookcase of a sentimental woman (Thisted 1990, 2002). Whether that is where the book is to be found

in 2021 obviously remains to be seen. However, it did not take long for Rasmussen's prediction to come true about Greenlanders looking to the archives in Copenhagen with a view to publishing his and other texts from the previous collections in Greenlandic (Lynge 1978 (1938), Lund 1972, H.C. Petersen 1981, Soby in collaboration with Sandgreen 1981-82). The 5th Thule Expedition served as the direct source of inspiration for **Frederik Nielsen**'s (1905-1991) important novel about the history of the Greenlandic people (Nielsen 1970, Langgård 1992, Thisted 1992) and for many other literary and other cultural initiatives, some of which will be addressed in the following.

Greenlandic collectors

As described, the Greenlanders were involved in collecting oral tradition, not only as informants but also as assistants (making fair copies and translating) and as scribes for one another. In some cases, the collection relies on the interpreter's role as a mediator. That is the case with Gustav Holm's so called "Women's boat (*umiaq*) expedition" to East Greenland in 1883-85. The storytellers were invited to visit the expedition's wintering residence; here the interpreter **Johan Petersen** (1867-1957) would translate the stories, sentence by sentence, for Gustav Holm, who wrote the stories down in Danish. Holm's description (1888, foreword) gives the impression of a tedious and somewhat formal situation. It is of course a terrible shame that Holm did not leave more of the work to Petersen and let him visit the storytellers on his own. Johan Petersen was born and raised on the west coast, slightly north of Cape Farewell, and living among the immigrated East Greenlanders had familiarized him with the dialect and given him considerable insight into the traditions of East Greenland. Johan Petersen wrote down and later published his own impressions from the expedition, and the catechist **Johannes Hansen** (1837-1911), who went along as a boatman, also kept a diary (published by W. Thalbitzer 1933). These independent Greenlandic reports were quite commonplace and added a Greenlandic angle to the expeditions and also generated partial Greenlandic ownership. That was also the case with the previously mentioned Jakob Olsen, who is the author of an independent chapter in Knud Rasmussen's Danish book about the 5th Thule Expedition (Rasmussen 1925:382ff.), and who also published his own book about the expedition in Greenlandic: *akilinerminulerssârutit*, 1927.

Soon, however, the Greenlanders also began to take on the role as independent collectors. In East Greenland the West Greenlanders encountered their own past in the flesh, so to speak, and their descriptions are characterized by equal parts fascination and horror (Thisted 1994). In fact, East Greenland appears to have been an intense place; there were stories about absolutely horrendous events occurring even in contemporary generations, and Knud Rasmussen's perception of the Eskimos as "noble savages" suffered several hard blows in the encounter with the stories of East Greenland (Sonne 1988). East Greenland therefore has gained a reputation as a sort of "Wild East" in Greenland, unlike Thule, which was better able to accommodate romantic notions of the "noble savage"

(Langgård 2010 (1999)). Just as the Danes had represented the West Greenlanders, the West Greenlanders assumed the power of representation in relation to the Greenlanders from the outlying districts. Thus, while the boundary between colonized and colonizer was being eroded as far as the educated West Greenlanders were concerned, new ethnic and social boundaries sprung up internally within the Greenlandic population.

After a brief period where there was a Danish missionary in Ammassalik, the West Greenlandic missionary **Christian Rosing** (1866-1944) arrived there in August 1904. Within the year he had completed a description of the East Greenlanders, *tunuamiut*, and a large collection of amulets with related explanations. He sent both of these to Knud Rasmussen's father, who had the Greenlandic manuscript published (Rosing 1906).[60] Thus, when Rasmussen created his famous collection of amulets among the *Netsilimmiut* during the 5th Thule Expedition[61], this collection is partly a reflection of a Greenlandic model. This illustrates that the influence between Danish and Greenlandic is far from one-directional; it goes both ways. Christian Rosing served in Ammassalik until 1922. He was succeeded by his sons **Peter Rosing** (1892-1965), who served 1922-34, and **Otto Rosing** (1896-1965), who served 1934-40. The latter published *angakôrtaligssuit* (The people with the great shamans), originally published in two volumes in 1957-61.[62] The material here is based on Otto Rosings' own notes, supplemented with texts by Kârale Andreassen handed over to Peter Rosing (Emil Rosing 1990:7, Otto Rosing 1957, foreword). Much of the material has later been published in Danish by **Jens Rosing** (1925-2008), supplemented with his own memoirs and new collections carried out in 1961 (Jens Rosing 1960, 1963, 1970, 1993). Similarly, **Otto Sandgreen** (1914-1999), who was the vicar in Ammassalik in 1959-63,[63] collected a substantial material, published in *Isse issimik kigutdlo kigúmik* (An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, 1967).[64] In 1972 Sandgreen published the shaman **Georg Qûpersimân**'s (1889-1973) independent story about his shaman training and his conversion to the Christian faith: *taimane gûtimik nalussûgama* (When I was still a heathen / when I had no knowledge of God, republished with new orthography in 1999). Sandgreen personally translated the book into Danish with the title *Min eskimoiske fortid* (My Eskimo Past, 1982), which far better conveys the fascination with the past that Qûpersimân actually insists on having put behind him. Similarly, the West Greenlandic vicar **Amandus Petrussen** (1927-1993) edited and published **Inûterssuaq Uvdloriaq**'s (1906-1986) story about the last immigration from Canada to Thule (Uvdloriaq 1976).[65]

Unfortunately, the original source material for many of these collections appears to have been lost, and in some cases it seems difficult to determine what influence the collectors and the publishers had on the outcome. A more scientific approach was applied by the aforementioned writer and artist Hans Lynge. Lynge carried out extensive travels and collection efforts in large portions of West Greenland in 1946-49, and he noted that the oral tradition was far from dead. In 1952 he concentrated on Qullorsuaq in the southern part of Melville Bay, the northernmost settlement before Thule, and this part of the collection was published in the scientific journal *Meddelelser om Grønland /*

Monographs on Greenland 1955. Here too, the style is inspired by Knud Rasmussen, with vivid descriptions of the author's own arrival in the remote settlements, his encounters with the local residents, and considerations about the relationship of past, present and future. This section of the text is in Danish, while the collected material is presented in both Danish and Greenlandic. Some of the stories are represented word by word in the spoken dialect, in phonetic writing, with help and guidance from the linguist William Thalbitzer (see above), who in the meantime had been appointed the first professor of eskimology at the University of Copenhagen.[66] Lynge later published the collection in a Greenlandic edition, which proved very popular: *inugpât imalunît inuit imáináungitsut* (Lynge 1967, republished with new orthography in 1991).

From 1957 to 1969 the aforementioned Frederik Nielsen was head of the "Greenlandic Broadcasting Corporation",[67] and a few of the radio broadcasts with storytellers from the Nuuk area that he recorded in the late 1950s have been preserved to this day. These broadcasts were tremendously popular and came to shape an entire generation's perception of oral narratives (see Grove 1995, 2000). Only with the advent of modern recording equipment was it possible to document the oral tradition without the slow and laborious process of dictation and transcription.[68] In the 1960s **Mâliâraq Vebæk** (born 1917) also recorded a large number of songs and stories in South Greenland. This material has been preserved, and parts of it published in Greenlandic and Danish (Vebæk 1983, 2001, 2006). However, it was the advent of film and video that made it possible also to document the storyteller's body language and facial expressions, which form such an essential part of the oral performance. With the film *Eqqaamavara/I remember* from 2002 **Karen Littauer** (born 1965) documents once again that the oral tradition is still alive, even in a place like Ilulissat, which is in no way "remote". Today it is especially *unikkaat,* the stories relating the storyteller's own experiences, and various types of ghost stories that are told.[69] All the storytellers relied on elements from the storytelling tradition, and of course this tradition is also reflected in the wealth of stories from the old days that have been broadcast over the years on Greenlandic radio and television. However, in Littauer's collections only a few storytellers in the "outlying districts" were able to tell the old traditional stories in the highly codified language and particular rhythm that they are associated with (Thisted 2002a). Littauer is not a Greenlander but relied on her Greenlandic director's assistant **Pauline Lumholt** (born 1945). With regard to this collaboration the same comment applies as did to the cooperation between Gustav Holm and Johan Petersen more than 100 years earlier: It would have been good if the assistant had been given a freer hand.[70] Nevertheless, Littauer's material is tremendously important, and much more of this material should be made available to the public.

Reframing tradition

Any effort to write down oral tradition involves reframing. The medium is different, it is no longer a performance, and even if an attempt can be made to preserve the original

performance arena in a virtual manner, the interaction with the audience is irrevocably lost. In Greenland, the colonial situation added yet another facet, where the written form was introduced as part of a comprehensive cultural transformation process. This process not only entails the introduction of new themes such as Christianity and conflicts with white people; the ancient stories were also adapted to match the needs of a new era. These changes can be observed in a progression from Aron's writings, through the subsequent generations, and into the written literature. One possible explanation is that the new versions emerge during the writing process, which offers different conditions for composition than the oral performance. When the stories are committed to paper, the authors may suddenly notice gaps and inconsistencies that might have gone unnoticed when the story was performed orally.

> Táukuninga agdlagtitdlunga, sumik ilisimáussutigssamik ajorssangârtunga, mássa itsaK sujulivut nalussorssûvdlutigdlo, iliornernik agdlagtoKángitdluínarmata; tamána pivdlugo isumaKarnarpoK: kinguaisa uniorsimassumigdlûnît ilassarsimassumigdlûnît oKalugtuarissarât Kavdlunaitsiât nungutitaunerat.
>
> In writing all of this, I sorely lacked proper sources, as our ancestors in the old days were ignorant and did not write anything down whatsoever. Therefore one may be of the opinion that their descendents may easily have distorted or exaggerated the story of the annihilation of the Norsemen. (Rink 1860:22, my translation)

With this conciliatory comment in relation to a not uncontroversial topic Aron concludes his story about the Norsemen, at the same time demonstrating how he has internalized the perception of the written form as superior to the oral. Writing is fact; oral presentation is, if not fiction then closely associated with it, as recollection leaves room for the imagination.[71] Aron nevertheless attempts to piece together both this and other stories to provide the many different versions and partial narratives, each pointing in different directions, with some degree of coherence and completeness. However, Aron not only strives to convey tradition as completely as possible; he also strives to render it as acceptable as possible as judged from his own point of view as a Christian. Thus, already in the written reproduction of the oral tradition, the ground is laid for the editing of the past that became such a widespread phenomenon in the later Greenlandic literature. As has been demonstrated, nations and collective identities are not based exclusively on memory and recollection but just as much on forgetting and the repression of memories (Renan 1992(1882), Lowenthal 1985, Wertsch 2002), and thus, it is a selected and edited past that is reflected in the Greenlandic literature (Thisted 1992, 2005a, 2006a).

One of the essential criteria for the missionaries' rejection of the Inuit's previous life style was the tradition of revenge,[72] which was considered primitive and barbarian. Christianity deserves credit for bringing forgiveness to Greenland – on this the missionaries and the Greenlandic stories agree. At the same time, however, the stories celebrate the

image of the non-vindictive hero who, in contrast to the murderer, only kills in order to strike down incorrigible elements. In Aron's writing the little Kunuk, whom we met in a previous section, becomes this type of cult hero, who never resorts to the same bestial methods as his enemies but only uses violence exactly to the extent that is required to defeat the evil forces that have seized power in society. Instead of killing the villain, Kunuk throws him down before the audience and shames him verbally, thus releasing the people from the grip of fear and oppression that the tyrant had on them. It is not possible to prove that it was Aron who created this version, but it does stand out in contrast to all the other collected versions.[73] More than 100 years later, in his novel *Qooqa* (1971) **Ole Brandt** (1918-1981) associates this brand of hero with another of the motifs in oral tradition: that of the early Christian converts who chose to abandon their ancestral customs of hate and revenge and forgive one another.[74] In Brandt's novel, Qooqa is the one who brought peace and reconciliation to the Kangaatsiaq area in North Greenland – but here the development actually *precedes* Christianity.[75] The appropriation of Christianity as an integrated part of indigenous Inuit history and conditions has here been taken one step further, as compared to the written versions of the story telling traditions of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.[76]

A similar phenomenon can be observed in the story of little orphan Kaassassuk, who is mistreated terribly by the others in his community and therefore goes to *Pissaap Inua*, The Master of the Force, for help. After acquiring tremendous physical strength, Kaassassuk inflicts terrible vengeance on his neighbours, and in many versions that is where the story ends. Other versions have him continuing his killing spree – clearly there was a whole cycle of stories where Kaassassuk rains down terror on his surroundings. The story would have been told as a warning against ostracizing anyone, showing what horrors might be the outcome. However, Aron composes a different plot, where Kaassassuk is eventually bested by a tiny, modest man, whose strength far exceeds Kaassassuk's own strength. This encounter finally teaches Kaassassuk humility, and subsequently he only uses his strength for the good of society. Thus, Aron's version and, not least, Jâkuaraq Eugenius' later version, cast the story as a tale of individuation, where in the course of the plot the protagonist grows and gains greater self-insight. In this version the hero is closer to the modern subject, and eventually this became the standard version of the story about Kaassassuk (Thisted 1994:150-206, Larsen 2008).

Which aspects of the storytelling tradition are prioritized, and which are rejected becomes quite evident when one compares Aron with **Jens Kreutzmann** (1828-1899), who also wrote down and illustrated a large number of stories for H.J. Rink. Kreutzmann lived in Kangaamiut by Maniitsoq north of Nuuk. He was an excellent hunter and also the trade manager. Unlike Aron, thus, Kreutzmann was not associated with the mission, and that may have given him greater latitude to include some of the aspects of the storytelling tradition that Aron left out, such as grotesque pranks and incidents that served no other purpose than making the audience laugh, risqué stories, including gangbangs, and the mention of other acts and body parts that were not usually addressed in writing.

The men used to measure their strength against each other. When all the other muscles were tested, they tied two pieces of wood cut to the size of little bullets to either end of a strap and sucked them up into the rectum and pulled ... and pulled ... until one of them had to give up. Jens Kreutzmann 1860.

Kreutzmann's stories also refute the oft repeated Danish prejudice that the Greenlanders are unfamiliar with sarcasm and irony. Kreutzmann's characters are quite capable of delivering sarcastic comments, and Kreutzmann often gives his stories an ironic note and generally includes raucous merrymaking. While in Aron's rendition, the girl who married a worm eventually learns from her mistakes and settles down – after her brothers have killed both her husband and their child – in Kreutzmann's story instead she fakes submission only to return to the wilderness with a new little worm that will grow big and handsome![77] Aron and Kreutzmann knew each other, and at least to some extent they drew on the same tradition. Nevertheless, they come up with different versions of the past.

With his sense of burlesque, Kreutzmann represents everything that the fathers of the Greenlandic literature were keen to weed out, and which in the first Greenlandic novel appears childish and embarrassing and as something that maintains the people in their inferior position, unable to take responsibility for their own affairs (Storch 1914, Thisted 1990, 2002, 2005). Apparently, this rather elitist perception was not undisputed at the time. In the draft for a novel **Gerth Lyberth** (1867-1929), who also submitted legends and tales to Knud Rasmussen[78], argues that the silly and off-colour stories that people enjoyed so

much should be given a place within the new socially edifying literature that was being developed.[79] Lyberth's text is an incredibly interesting, early attempt at integrating the oral tradition within the framework of a literary text (see Thisted 2002:188ff). However, it was not published until 1981.[80] Subsequent literature does include elements of humour, but because literary works were mainly written by people with links to church, school, education and high culture and predominantly served the purpose of nation-building, burlesque and grotesque qualities remained marginalized in Greenlandic literature until the latter years of the 20th century (Thisted 1994b).[81]

The same critical and detached look at the ancestors and Greenlandic culture that Aron reveals in the comment quoted above is found with many of the other transcribers too; it forms a point of departure for much of the Greenlandic literature, including for example the aforementioned novel by Hans Lynge, who with inspiration from Knud Rasmussen wanted to demonstrate that the ancestors may have led a hard life and upheld certain cruel laws, but that they were far from bereft of spirituality or notions that went beyond death and material issues, and that the Greenlandic culture possessed the necessary strength and capacity for healing its own trauma (Petersen 1980, 2010, Thisted 1990a). As the Greenlandic literature is mainly written in the mother tongue – in a country where Greenlandic, despite the dominance of Danish in many areas, remained the spoken language and, to a large extent, also the language of education– the Greenlandic literature is not imbued with the sense of dislocation and displacement that characterizes the literature of so many other post-colonial cultures.[82] Nevertheless, Greenland was de facto colonized, and the relationship between Denmark and Greenland was unequivocally embedded in a basic European narrative about the superiority of the European civilization over other races and cultures. The Danes wanted the Greenlanders to develop and be "elevated" culturally, raised up in the colonizers' own image. At the same time, they were keen to avoid turning the Greenlanders into mere "copies" of the Danes – at all costs, their "character" should be preserved. In other words, the Greenlanders were trapped in a classic colonial situation, where they were called upon to resemble the colonizers enough that they would be manageable – but not so much that they became their equals: what Homi Bhabha has called "a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite."[83] In the Greenlandic literature the writers produced counter images to the paradox established by the Danes, who on the one hand required the Greenlanders to develop but on the other hand considered the educated Greenlander culturally "inauthentic" and "divided" (Thisted 2005). The fact that the sun is (virtually) always shining in modern Greenlandic stories about the old days (Berthelsen 1988), and that people appear as model citizens with regard to cleanliness, order and punctuality, not to mention their protestant work ethic, is not merely a reflection of a nostalgic yearning for the past in a general sense; it is also a counter-discourse to the internally contradictory Danish narrative. The Danish narrative is present as an underlying voice in Greenlandic literature: a voice that one may argue and negotiate with, but which it is clearly impossible to ignore (Thisted 2005a). The device that is used to deconstruct

the relationship between the European and the Greenlandic can best be described as a form of *mimicry*. This term is used here with reference to the post-colonial theorist Homi Bhabha's famous and groundbreaking effort to introduce theoretical concepts to capture the creativity with which the colonized appropriate the paradigms of the colonial power while simultaneously destabilizing its supremacy because it can never quite be determined whether the mimicry is merely mimicry, or whether it also involves an element of *mockery* (Bhabha 1994). In the Greenlandic texts, the apparently unquestioning internalization of Danish norms has a particular twist: By representing values such as industriousness, order and leadership (values that the Danes claimed the Greenlanders were lacking) as naturalized elements of the Greenlandic background the authors in fact undermine the argument for the necessity of Danish leadership. This makes the seemingly "innocent" stories about the good old days highly relevant statements in the political debate as part of Greenlandic decolonization (Thisted 2005a). As Karen Langgård has demonstrated so convincingly in her analysis of the Greenlandic newspaper debate about Greenlandic identity in the early 20th century, the Greenlanders embraced the colonial metaphor about the Greenlanders as "children" of a Danish "mother nation" – but they took the metaphor on face value in the sense that children in fact eventually grow up and move into the world on their own! (Langgård 2003)

An excellent example of the oral tradition developing and finding its way into the written literature is found in Jensen 2009. The article deals with *uiarnerit,* "those who sailed around Cape Farewell", cf. above about Greenlanders from East Greenland travelling to West Greenland. As described earlier, in 1904 Knud Rasmussen spoke with people who had recently moved from East Greenland, and to whom the stories were still what Jensen calls "experienced memories". These people told stories about murders and violence, including wives tormented by their husbands, widows who no longer had a husband or relatives to support them, and children who were shut out from the group and sent into the freezing cold because they had become a burden to society. Because of the dramatic, non-Christian content these stories were to some extent taboo and were only told when the children were asleep. Over the next generations, as the stories had become "communicated memories" the content changed. A key person in the stories was the East Greenlander Aaddaaridaad who had been one of Rasmussen's main informants in 1904. He told Rasmussen many myths and legends and also willingly talked about his own shaman training. After the World War II, the story about Aaddaaridaad had become very popular. The story would relate all the old information about his life with the spirits, but there was now an added story about how he became a Christian. In spite of pressure from his family, he was unwilling to move to West Greenland. Then his wife fell seriously ill, and Aaddaaridaad went into the wilderness to seek help from his helping spirits. Instead, he met Jesus in a vision, and on his return, his wife had miraculously recovered. Although his helping spirits tried to persuade him not to go, Aaddaaridaad and all the members of his family left and settled in West Greenland (Vebæk 2006). That was also the version of the story that was being told by the end of the century when Lange collected stories and

information in the Cape Farewell area (Lange 1991, quoted in Jensen 2009). However, the Christian vision does not occur in any of Rasmussen's publications, nor is there any mention of it in his notes (Jensen 2009:240). It seems reasonable to assume that this version was inspired by the West Greenlandic stories discussed above.[84]

Finally, Jensen describes how the stories about the historical person Aaddaaridaad turned into fiction in the novel *Angakkok Papik*, 1952. The author was **Kristen Poulsen** (1910-1951) who came from the Nuuk area in central West Greenland but served as a catechist in the Cape Farewell area in 1935-1939. He had met with Aaddaaridaad, and the book is dedicated to him. The story about the main character Papik who kills several people before meeting Jesus in a vision and converting to Christianity is central in the book. To this, the author adds a wealth of ethnographic material about the hunter's life, religion etc., and thus the story turns into a general description of life in the original Inuit society. Killings and pagan witchcraft are not excluded, but he generally depicts people as good and "unspoiled". In cases where in the oral traditions orphans were killed, sent out into the freezing cold or simply abandoned, in Poulsen's fiction the women show mercy or what may be seen as Christian charity. "Thus the story was used in creating a common identity for the population in Greenland as Inuit and as the people with roots in an old well-functioning culture, which was based on Greenlandic conditions, i.e. nation-building." (Jensen 2009:242). Jensen mentions that time was not "ripe" for the novel in the 1950s and 60s, as this period was dominated by the desire for rapid modernization and the achievements of western standards in Greenland. Another reason might be that the time was not yet ripe for the West Greenlanders to embrace the traditions of East Greenland as part of their own identity. For example, Otto Rosing's novel *Taseralik* from 1955 also dealt with the past, but by placing his novel in central West Greenland around the mid-1850s Rosing chose a past that was more easily cast as the "good old days": a time when everybody had long since converted to Christianity but still lived in the old hunters' and sealers' culture (Thisted 2005a:199; 2006a:72ff.). This was the time when the Greenlanders still went on exchange visits between north and south in women's boats – a topic that was extremely relevant in West Greenland at the time. The colonial division of central West Greenland into north and south persisted until well after World War II, and the novel contributed to the dismantling of the notion of "North Greenlanders" and "South Greenlanders".[85] Greenland's colonial status ended formally in 1953.

As Jensen writes, *Angakkoq Papik* had a renaissance in the 1970s. Here the dream that Kârale had had in the early 1930s came true: The people in West Greenland discovered the traditions of East Greenland, and the East Greenlandic drum dance actually became quite trendy. W. Thalbitzer's texts became a source of information about the old East Greenlandic mask dance, *uajeerneq*, which became a key element in the unique form of performance art that was developed by the Tuukkaq theatre.[86] The modern mask dance represents a radical reframing, maybe even a reinvention, of tradition. The same is true of the political summer rallies, called *aasivik*, which drew from the tradition described in *Taseralik*.[87] The crucial point, however, is not how "true" these traditions are in relation

to an ethnographic past but rather how true they are in relation to the needs they met in a contemporary context as part of the decolonization and the political reinforcement of the home rule, which was introduced in 1979.

A world of translation

It is 1 August 2010 in Tivoli Gardens, Copenhagen. Since 1976, August 1 has been Greenland Day in Tivoli. *Tivolimi takuss'*, "Let's meet in Tivoli", as the travel ads have it. If one finds a good deal, a long weekend in Denmark can be cheaper than domestic travel within Greenland – and it offers a chance to meet up with friends and acquaintances from around this huge country. The event is concluded with a big concert on "Plænen", Tivoli's large outdoor venue. The main attraction this year is Nanook, one of Greenland's hottest bands right now.[88] The darkness is finally beginning to settle on the twilit Scandinavian midsummer's night when Nanook is announced. Nanook's logo, a roaring polar bear, covers the entire back wall of the stage. But so far, the stage is empty. Now, a tiny little woman enters and walks up to the edge of stage. She has grey hair, cut very short. She just stands there, silent, eyes closed, in deep concentration. The silence and concentration spreads to the crowd, even among the bewildered tourists who are wondering what all these "Japanese people" are doing in Tivoli! Then she raises her drum and begins her song. Sometimes, it can be awkward and out of place when a drum dancer appears at some event, completely out of context. But this is different. The moment is magical. Far too soon, it is over. The little woman walks off stage, unnoticed, unaccompanied by any applause, as her song has already been taken over by the band, which is now taking it down a different track altogether.[89] Nevertheless, the song has provided a unique frame for Nanook's performance and their lyrics, and the song itself has been reframed in relation to the tradition it springs from. What we just witnessed is the sort of boundary-transcending act that post-feminism, post-colonialism and urban theory (bell hooks 1984, Homi Bhabha 1994, Edward W. Soja 1996) have sought to capture with the term "third space". Third space is characterized as a transformative space: a space of possibility where new interpretations can arise. "How newness enters the world", as Homi Bhabha calls his essay about cultural translation.

Nothing that is transferred to a new context, be it writing, ideas or people, preserve their previous identity. This is due to the "bit" that is always left over in the process of translation, the element of resistance or untranslatability which means that the translated version is never a true replica of the original but always contains a disturbing element of something added/altered/rephrased (Benjamin 2002 (1923), Bhabha 1994). In this game, the key is to be involved in setting the conditions, to translate rather than being translated. Greenlanders have been translated, but they have also translated themselves and each other. Even in very inequitable power relations the process is never completely one-sided, and the Danes have not remained unaffected – nor have the West Greenlanders remained unaffected by their encounter with the East Greenlanders and other Inuit.

Based on a collaboration between the National Museum of Denmark and the Greenlandic artist Nuka Godtfredsen the pre-history of Greenland is coming alive as a series of graphic novels. The first volume, Tutineq siulleq/The First Steps ,was published in 2009.

Everywhere in modern Greenlandic culture – song lyrics, rap, pictorial art, film, blogs, and contemporary Greenlandic literature – one sees how tradition has been preserved as a sounding board that offers the young a reference point for their own identity as well as an inexhaustible source of artistic inspiration.[90] The young people are not turning to tradition in order to find shelter from a globalized world. On the contrary. They turn to tradition in order to fashion their own contribution in a world where local culture still constitutes a substantial cultural capital.

Translation involves losses as well as gains. In Greenland many mourn the loss of the old culture and all the values that were "lost in translation". On the plus side, they note that they have managed to use the ideologies of the colonial rulers to build their own nation, break free from their isolation and carve out a role for themselves in the modern world. The collection, reframing, and reinvention of tradition have been an important part of this process, and the legacy that is managed and negotiated here does not appear to have outplayed its role.

Notes

1. In contrast to the politically defined nation concept of the Age of Enlightenment, the "French" model.
2. I use the term "oral literature" despite its inherent oxymoronic character, which has been repeatedly documented in scientific literary. However, the term does make some sense here, as it pertains to written versions of oral tradition as it was captured and reproduced in writing at a given time and in a given form.
3. In the following, the word "translation" is therefore used with a variety of meanings: in the concrete sense, as transference from one language to another; in a wider sense, as transformation from one medium to another; and in the broadest sense, as transference of knowledge, ideas and worldview – and even in the sense that people may need or want to translate themselves from one identity to another.
4. According to Kathrine and Thorkild Kjærgaard 2008 it was neither the spoken word nor the hymns, which play a very important part in the Greenlanders' own stories of conversion, but rather *pictures* that played the most important role in explaining Christianity to the Greenlanders. That question is not to be solved here – perhaps the three media quite simply supported one another.
5. Paul Egede 1988 (1788): 142. One of Paul Egede's main partners in this endeavour was the Greenlandic woman **Arnarsaq** (born circa 1716), who in 1740 went with him to Copenhagen where she spent the winter before returning to Greenland. Here she continued to assist the mission for many years to come.
6. Petterson 2007 has an intriguing analysis of how Paul Egede views himself in the role of Paul the Apostle.
7. Not to be confused with the modern concept of the nation state. Herder was talking about cultural communities, not political communities, Spencer 1997.
8. For details about this important event in Greenlandic history, see Oldendow 1959, Meldgaard 1982, Thisted 1999.
9. Frandsen 1999.
10. Featured in 1862 issues, second installment in 1864-65 issues. This and all other texts translated into Greenlandic were more or less abbreviated and more or less revised editions.
11. *Oberon* was featured in 1863 issues, *Arabian Nights* in 1874-75.
12. Featured 1901-02.
13. A theme that was in fact addressed in the first novel ever written in Greenlandic: **Mathias Storch** (1883-1957) *SingnagtugaK*, "The dream" 1914, Thisted 1990, 2005, see also Karen Langgård's article in this book.
14. Nuuk is the Greenlandic name for Godthaab. Today the Greenlandic names are the official ones.
15. *Kalaallisut*, Greenlandic, belongs to the Inuit/Yupik/Aleut languages and is polysynthetic in structure.
16. About *Ilinniarfissuaq*, Samuel Kleinschmidt and the national catechists, see Wilhjelm 1997, 2002, 2008; see also Thuesen 1988, 2007.
17. After his death Aron himself became a topic in the oral tradition. He is never mentioned as a storyteller but always remembered for his writings and paintings – as well as for his skills as a hunter and kayaker. Thisted 2001a:179.
18. The whole manuscript is published by Thisted and Thorning 1996. It is debated in Thisted's afterword and in Thisted 2001a. These and the other manuscripts in Rink's collections are kept at The Royal Library in Copenhagen. The main collection of pictures was returned from the Danish National Museum to Greenland's National Museum in 1982. A smaller portion of the images are located in Oslo, see Kaalund 1997, Thisted 1999.

19. The introduction to a story was carefully rehearsed and usually fairly fixed, while the rest of the story, even the ending, might vary so substantially that the versions in fact were entirely different stories.
20. Foley 1995 constructs a theory capable of explaining not only the powerful act of oral tradition, but also how and why the "word-power" that originates in oral performance may survive in written texts. The three legs of Foley's "theoretical tripod" consist of the *performance arena,* where participants do not speak in the unmarked idiom of everyday discourse but in a dedicated *register* that performer as well as audience speak fluently, allowing the verbal transaction to proceed with a unique *communicative economy* that cannot be imitated outside the performance tradition, but can be proven to survive in oral-derived and even sometimes in literary texts.
21. For a description of the oral tradition as part of Inuit socialisation see Thisted 1994:154ff.
22. *Atuagagdliutit* 1877 No. 3, 1877, p. 47-48, quoted in Thisted 1994:16, 1999:85-6.
23. Danes or Europeans.
24. My translation. The Royal Library, Copenhagen. The picture is reproduced in Thisted 2001:205.
25. Frederik Nielsen, see further below, Niels Gran see Thisted 1994:58f, 2002a:50ff., Littauer 2002.
26. The introduction to Jens Kreutzmann's story about "The man who was invisible to the white people", Thisted 1997:95ff.
27. The storytellers were well aware of the preferences of the Europeans, and at Rink's time they were also aware that they had to keep the tradition "pure" from foreign influence. In Kragh's collection European stories are included among the Inuit stories, and for example, among all the other strange creatures with whom the Inuit shared the world, one meets a crocodile living under an iceberg. This never happens in Aron's time. There may be anachronisms like a cooking pot "rattling" as it tumbles (pots were made of soapstone before the arrival of the Europeans) – but no crocodiles! European stories only appear in a form where they have been totally adapted into the Inuit tradition. Thisted 1998:210. This, however, does not mean that stories that appear to be "very, very old" are not influenced by the cultural encounter. Sonne 1990 is a classic study of the influence from Christianity on Inuit myth.
28. Kjærgaard 2010: 86-90
29. Like the great Ulaajuk. At the time, people were very eager to discuss the end of the world, but Ulaajuk said that while all the believers would rush about and make crazy, he would climb to the top of Kingittorsuaq, a mountain near Nuuk, and enjoy a hearty laugh. However, Aron did not have the heart to let him fall into eternal torment, so in Aron's version of the story he lets Ulaajuk repent just before his death, Thisted 1999:320.
30. For Aron's drawings to be duplicated they had to be converted into woodcuts or lithographs. Aron was an excellent woodcutter, but few of his illustrations were converted and duplicated. In Greenland, people knew that Rink had taken a large collection with him when he left. Lars Møller had copied some of the illustrations and they were later printed and sold. The bulk of it, however, remained unknown until the 1960s, when they were rediscovered at the Danish National Museum and put on display (Knuth 1960, Kaalund 1983). Lars Møller Lund published some of Aron's manuscripts in 1972. In Thisted 1999 and Thisted & Thorning & Grove 1999 the material has been published and re-translated in its entirety, with texts and illustrations combined according with Aron's original material.
31. The most famous is the so called Habakuk movement, but there were several others which were all fiercely fought by the mission (Kleivan 1986, Lidegaard 1986, Thisted 1997, 1997a)

32. Among the most important works including the motif of the Norsemen are: **Hans Lynge** (1906-1988): *Navaranaaq* (drama, 1942); **Ulloriannguaq Kristiansen** (1927-1998) *Nunassarsiaq* (A Land to be Taken, 1954); **Villads Villadsen** (1916-2006): *Nalusuunerup taarnerani* (In the Darkness of Heathenism, lyrical epic, 1965); **Frederik Nielsen** (1905-91): *Ilissi tassa nunassarsi* (Yours This Land Shall Be, novel 1970); **Jessie Kleemann** (born 1959): *Navarannaaq sinnattumini* (Navaranaaq in a Dreamtime, performance/theater together with **Elisabeth Heilmann**, 1994); **Mâliâraq Vebæk** (born 1917): *Navarannaq og de andre*, collection of essays about the history of the Greenlandic women, 1996); Villads Villadsen/**Hans A. Hansen** (1925-1998, music)/The Silamiut Theater: *Qasapip ullua kingulleq* (The Last Day of Qasapi, drama/performance premiered in 2000) .
33. In Aron's day, the term *qallunaat* (sing. *qallunaaq*) was used about Europeans in general, while the term *qallunaatsiaat* was used about the Norsemen. This term seems to have entered the language at a rather late date, perhaps just around this time. Aron uses the word *qallunaatsiaat* in the first and closing sections of the story, but elsewhere he uses *qallunaaq/qallunaat.* Further, in a letter describing his work on the collection, Rink writes that he had to point out to Aron that when he depicted the Norsemen, he had to give them different attire from that worn by contemporary Europeans. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that in writing his story, Aron was envisioning the kind of Europeans he knew from his own time.
34. Thisted and Thorning 1996:245ff; Thisted 1999: 463ff.
35. See also the story about Matiinarsuaq and his daughters, Thisted and Thorning 1996:241ff.,Thisted 1999:460. Matiinarsuaq was another great hunter who did not want to convert to Christianity. Whenever he came to Nuuk the missionaries would pester him and try to persuade him to convert. Matiinarsuaq got angry and stayed away from the colony, living alone with his family some distance away. However, although they lived in such isolation, Matiinarsuaq's two adult daughters heard about all the fun people were having in Nuuk. One day when their father was away hunting, they decided to leave and take part in the Easter celebrations. Their mother was horrified. What would their father say? But her words fell on deaf ears. "What do we experience here? Nothing!" With these words the daughters left – and in the long run their father's love for them was greater than his anger, and that summer he moved to Nuuk, and the whole family was baptized. Matiinarsuaq later had a vision of two deceased Greenlanders bringing him a message about the blissful state of the baptized dead, and it is probably because of this vision that his name is remembered, and his story told. But it is the first part of the story that offers a glimpse into the everyday discussions sparked by the cultural encounter. There is a slightly longer summary of the story in English in Thisted 2001a:193f.
36. The Danish government was not interested in being seen too openly to expand its territories at this point in time. The Danish state was about to sell the unprofitable Virgin Islands, then known as the Danish West Indies, to the USA, and the Danish administration was worried about offending the Americans. Everything therefore had to be carried out on the basis of private ventures.
37. For an overview of the expeditions and writings of Knud Rasmussen, see the articles and the bibliography in *Etudes/Inuit Studies* Vol. 12, 1988.
38. Although **Robert E. Peary** (1856.1920) had spent long periods of time there he had not carried out any missionary work or attempted to colonize the place.
39. It had not. "Østerbygden" is the name of the southernmost settlement in the fiords behind Qaqortoq, while "Vesterbygden" is the northernmost settlement in the fiords behind Nuuk.

40. People regularly went to the west coast to trade, and some of them stayed and even travelled farther north along the west coast of Greenland. This was true in particular of the Greenlanders who joined the Hernhut church (Gulløv 1983, 1997, Sonne 2001). Aron, Hintrik and the other storytellers from Kangeq were southerners, and their family sagas formed part of their repertoire.
41. And thus as an indirect argument in the conflict with Norway about the claim to North-East Greenland, which was settled in Denmark's favour at the Permanent Court of International Justice in the Hague in 1933.
42. In Denmark, for example, the smallholders and eventually the cripples and old wives were the last to keep the oral storytelling tradition alive that had previously characterized the collective village community, see references to Evald Tang Kristensen below.
43. For a longer discussion of this point of view, see Thisted 2006.
44. Cf. also the discussion of the book in Rasmussen 1920, see Thisted 2006.
45. At the time, all communication between East and West Greenland went via Denmark, so Kârale Andreassen had been there before. On his way home from his stay at the seminary he wintered with Knud Rasmussen's parents. His stay in 1933-34 took place in connection with the recording of voices for Knud Rasmussen's ethnographic feature film documentary *Pâlos Brudefærd* (Pâlo's Bridal Quest), directed by Friedrich Dalsheim, premiered 1934. He died of pneumonia two months after Rasmussen's death. Thus, none of them ever saw the finished film.
46. In the foreword to *Myter og Sagn fra Grønland* vol. 1 he mentions Kârale Andreassen's work not only as an illustrator but also in writing down the legends. Here he also mentions that some of the material from Godthaab had been written down in 1919 (Rasmussen 1924:5). However, he offers no details about this work, so the reader might well get the impression that he wrote down the stories himself. To avoid misunderstanding: Rasmussen wrote much of the material for *Myter og Sagn fra Grønland* down directly from oral dictation - but far from all of it.
47. About Evald Tang Kristensen, see http://folklorehandbook.blogspot.com/2010/04/danish-folklore-evald-tang-kristensen.html
48. In Danish: "uberørte Oprindelighed", see e.g. Rasmussen 1921:2.
49. In Danish: "et Naturfolks Sjæl", see e.g. Rasmussen 1921:3. The Danish term *Naturfolk* (people of nature, people in harmony with nature) was imported from German: *Naturvolk*.
50. Rasmussen 1905:175, my translation. The statement is repeated in Rasmussen 1929b:251, where Rasmussen explains how he collected stories in Canada together with **Jakob Olsen** (1890-1936) from West Greenland, see Thisted 2009:257.
51. Rasmussen does not mention Aron but points to the old version in *kaladlit oKalluktualliait/Grönlandske Folkesagn,* which he claims to have used rather than his own notes, Rasmussen 1924:5. This is not entirely true; Rasmussen undoubtedly grew up with Aron's version, but the text in *Myter og Sagn fra Grønland* relies on a version that was written by Jâkuaraq Eugenius – who was, however, strongly inspired by Aron; Thisted 1994:91-106).
52. Rasmussen's account of the journey, *Across Arctic America,* 1927, is an abbreviated version of Rasmussen 1925-26. The scientific results of the expedition were published in *Report of the Fifth Thule Expedition* Vol. VII-IX 1929-1932, Sonne 1988a.

53. For a more detailed discussion of these points and a review of Rasmussen's role as "cultural translator", see Thisted 2010.
54. Pedersen 1998. The various "tribes" and their names are also constructions. For example, the people referred to as "Caribou Eskimos" did not have a collective identity or a collective name for themselves (Burch 1988:82).
55. For example Rasmussen 1926:85.
56. For a study of the Greenlandic version of the expedition report, see Langgård 2008.
57. See e.g. Thisted 2004:102.
58. See also Olsen 1996.
59. Rasmussen 1912-13 is an edited version of W. Dreyer: *Naturfolkenes Liv* (The Life of Naturvolk, people of nature), 1898.
60. A book about the amulet collection was published by Emil Rosing 1994. About Christian Rosing's work in East Greenland and the diary he kept there, see also Wilhjelm 2008:411ff.
61. About this collection as an expression of Rasmussen's capacity for intercultural negotiation, see Thisted 2010.
62. Reprinted 1990 with photos taken by W. Thalbitzer in 1905-06 and **Robert Gessain** (1907-1986) in 1934-35.
63. Otto Sandgreen had previously served as a vicar in Thule from 1938 to 1944, and he spent a total of nine years in East Greenland, as he also served as a vicar in Ittoqqortoormiit/Scoresby Sound, the northernmost settlement in East Greenland, founded in 1925.
64. In Danish and with notes and foreword by Sonne, Sandgreen 1987.
65. See also Mary-Rousselière 2002 (1980), R. Petersen 2000.
66. In 1920 the University of Copenhagen established a permanent lecture position for Thalbitzer in "Greenlandic (Eskimo) language and culture". About the use of similar methods during the 5th Thule Expedition and Knud Rasmussen's reservations toward this form of collection, see Thisted 2009:257f.
67. The first four radio stations, in Qeqertarsuaq, Qaqortoq, Nuuk and Angmassalik, were established in 1925. From 1934 Godthåb Radio did broadcasts, especially lectures, twice a week in the winter months, and in 1942 "Greenlandic Broadcasting Corporation" was established, see http://www.knr.gl.
68. In fact, Holtved had made recordings on lacquer discs in 1937, but the discs were highly susceptible to frost and had to be replaced every four minutes. In the recordings it is clear that the best storytellers knew exactly when to pause. The lacquer discs and, even more, the wax cylinders that they replaced, were better suited for recording drum songs. Others have also used audio recording in their collections, including collectors from other countries, e.g. **Christian Leden** and **Paul-Émile Victor**, see Hauser 2003, 2010.
69. The Greenlandic literature and media researcher Birgit Kleist Pedersen has studied this genre and the interest in imported thriller movies in Greenland, Pedersen 2002, 2008.
70. See Thisted 2009a about the recordings and the editing of the film, including the differences that arose between the perceptions of the storytellers and the film producers. See also Thisted 2008.
71. In later years it has become a highly contentious – and eventually disproved – point of view that historical documentation based on written sources can avoid the vagaries of narrativity and thus subjectivity (White 1987). But that is a different topic.

72. Which might have been exaggerated in relation to the real extent, Sonne 1982
73. Thisted 1994:60-106 reviews the different versions in Rink's collection, including the way that Aron seamlessly incorporates the moral into the plot, compared with his father's version where the moral seems added on, an extraneous comment from the narrator.
74. As for instance the ending of "The family Saga of Singajik", Rasmussen 1924:353f. The original version is at The Royal library in Copenhagen, NKS 3536, 4. Kapsel, læg 22-23. This story was one of the stories Hintrik told to Rink in 1867 and which was later told in a much extended version by his son Isaaja Martinsen in connection with Rasmussen's collections, Thisted 1994a, 2001a.
75. Brandt was drawing on the oral tradition of the Kangaatsiaq area, but no research has been conducted to establish which parts of the novel were based on this oral tradition, and which on Brandt's own fiction. The novel was originally written for radio broadcasting. (Brandt 1971, Thisted 1992, 2002).
76. Similarly, the Canadian film *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner* (Kunuk/Isuma Productions 2001) differs from the sources in Knud Rasmussen's collections, cf. also the interview with Professor Bernard Saladin D'Anglure on the marketing DVD. A moral based on revenge simply makes no sense in a modern context, and a certain form of translation in terms of logic and moral is therefore required if the stories are to have any appeal to a modern audience, Thisted 2008.
77. Kreutzmann's stories were published in Danish in Thisted 1997 and with new Greenlandic orthography in Thisted and Grove 1997. The story of the worm is featured p. 203ff in both editions.
78. The manuscript written for Knud Rasmussen is dated 1924, published in facsimile 1979.
79. That other peoples enjoyed in similar stories was confirmed for the Greenlanders for example by the illustrated *Molbohistorier*, humorous stories about stupid peasants in a particular region of Denmark, which were printed in Atuagagdliutit in 1865. Kleivan 1979b.
80. Lyberth began working on this text in 1915 but did not finish it until after 1924. The novel is published by H.C. Petersen.
81. With her collection of poems *Taallat: niviugak aalakoortoq allallu* (The inebriated fly and other poems, 1988) **Mariane Petersen** (born 1937) introduced this form of humour and sexual content into the written literature. In 1993, Mariane Petersen was the first Greenlandic woman to be nominated for Nordic Council's Literature Prize.
82. About language policy in Greenland see Langgaard 2003a.
83. An essentially racist position, which fittingly rimes with "almost the same but not *white*", Bhabha 1994:86.
84. The aspect concerning incensed helping spirits trying to prevent baptism does not occur in West Greenland but is quite common both in East Greenland and Thule, see Thisted 2002a.
85. The Danish authorities had fought the abolition of the north-south division tooth and nail exactly because they were worried that a united West Greenland would generate separatist movements as was the case in the Faroes (Sørensen 1983, Thisted 2005a:197)
86. An Inuit or Indigenous Peoples' theatre established in Denmark in the 1970s, with the Greenlandic offshoot *Silamiut* founded in Nuuk in 1984. To get an impression of the theatre, see John Houston's film *Nuliajuk*, 2001.
87. The political *aasiviit* began in 1976 and continued for 20 years, Dahl 2005, Sonne 2008. Today the term is used more loosely about all sorts of summer reunions.
88. Please visit http://www.myspace.com/nanooksite

89. The artist was the previously mentioned Pauline Lumholt, who for 30 years has taught drum dance and struggled to keep the tradition alive. The song she performed was an old *anersaat* from East Greenland, an "exhaling song", where one sings out one's emotions. There is a beautiful story behind the song – and behind Lumholt's choice of this particular song for this particular situation – but in a sense, all of that is beside the point. Few among the audience had this information, and it was not necessary anyway. The song spoke for itself. In the following days the web was abuzz with blog entries and FaceBook entries where Greenlanders, including very young people, described their experience in identical terms to mine.
90. See e.g. **Katti Frederiksen**'s poem at the end of Karen Langgård's article in this book. As I see it, this is exactly the point that the poem expresses.

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