

DIE ANFÄNGE DES GRÖNLÄNDISCHEN ROMANS. NATION, IDENTITÄT UND SUBALTERNARTIKULATION IN EINER ARKTISCHEN KOLONIE [THE BEGINNINGS OF THE GREENLANDIC NOVEL. NATION, IDENTITY AND SUBALTERN ARTICULATION IN AN ARCTIC COLONY]. Ebbe Volquardsen. 2011. Marburg: Tectum. 191 p, softcover. ISBN 978-3-8288-2812-4. 24,90€

Ebbe Volquardsen's monograph constitutes the first scientific work on Greenlandic literature published in German. In three main chapters, he describes the situation of the first Greenlandic novels, published between 1914 and 1938.

In an introduction he defines his *corpus* as literature in Greenlandic language written by Greenlanders during the colonial period. The book only deals with the Danish translations of these Greenlandic works, which is why one of the five Greenlandic novels from the colonial period is not available to him, since this has never been translated from Greenlandic. The different types of translation tools (concerning translation work for the academic context or for a Danish-speaking audience), and the different time intervals between original and translation create different standards of approaches to translations. In this regard, Volquardsen stresses the need for contextualisation and therefore uses cultural studies' methods for his analysis, an approach which corresponds very well to the need to observe the subject against its cultural and historical backdrop. It is less of an aesthetic analysis of literature but rather a discursive positioning of this literature in its political and cultural environment in the first half of the 20th century in Greenland.

Accordingly, the chapter on 'discourse and context' ['Diskurs und Kontext'] takes a lot of space in which Volquardsen starts with Denmark's self-image of Denmark as a 'humane' colonial power. It is important to highlight that he does not attempt to verify this claim, but rather to examine the effects of this self-assessment on the relationship between colonised and colonisers.

Volquardsen traces the development of an educated elite in Greenland due to the occurrence of catechists' seminars in the 19th century utilising post-colonial theories, especially Homi K. Bhabha's theory of hybridity (Bhabha 2004). As Bhabha describes his concepts of hybridity and a 'third space' as having the potential to subvert the power relation in a colonial context, Volquardsen searches for these spaces when examining the structure of catechists' education. In these seminars, Greenlanders were taught by other Greenlanders under Danish supervision and they constituted the only place in which higher education could be obtained. As the main reason for the early emerging Greenlandic texts, Volquardsen sees the importance of proselytisation in Greenland. The goal of Hans Egede, founding father of Greenland's capital Nuuk, of coming to Greenland in 1721 was Christianisation enabling the established mission to gain such importance in comparison with trade posts, which was unusual at the time. To the 'success' of Christianity in Greenland, also contributed the fact that the missionaries soon learned the Greenlandic language. The Bible and other religious texts were transferred rapidly into Greenlandic. The literacy of the population grew fast.

The emergence of a Danish-Greenlandic layer in 19th-century Greenland led to Volquardsen's assessment also of Greenlandic authors of the early 20th century, most of them former catechists, who published their works. To avoid possible censorship, they had learned the ability to hide their criticism of the colonial power in their texts.

The questions why the following novels played an important role for an emerging Greenlandic national consciousness, and what role this consciousness could have played are described in the subsequent two chapters dealing with the novels themselves.

In the chapter 'From workers among compatriots: literary glimpses of the future of the Greenlandic nation' ['Von Arbeitern unter Landsleuten: Literarische Blicke in die Zukunft der grönländischen Nation'], he analyses the first Greenlandic novel *The dream of a Greenlander* [*En grønlanders drøm*] by Mathias Storch from 1914 and Augo Lynges *Three hundred years later* [*Trehundrede år efter . . .*] from 1931. Both of these two works paint a picture of a possible future of Greenland. Storch for example, who was a Greenlandic minister, finishes his novel with the dream of his protagonist. This dream shows an imagined Greenland in 2105, in which Greenlanders are able to govern their own country. The novel focuses on problems and shortcomings Greenlandic society would have to deal with at that time. Lynges novel (A. Lynges was the first Greenlandic representative in the Danish Parliament) is set in its entirety in 2021 (300 years after the arrival of Hans Egede in Greenland). In Volquardsen's assessment the book negates a delineation of Greenland from Denmark while highlighting a hybrid society as a utopia. Volquardsen contextualises the position of the authors Storch and Lynges in Greenlandic society and classifies them as much more prominent than their literary writings might suggest. Both were, due to their social standing and their political careers, less interested in a fundamental critique of the Danish influence in Greenland. Rather Volquardsen wants to show how both novels expect an equality of Greenland as a nation in the future, when the learning process from Denmark has yielded sufficient knowledge.

Quite different are the two novels that Volquardsen discusses in the chapter 'The reinvention of tradition: essentialisation of culture or confident supplement?' [Die Neuerfindung der Tradition: Essentialisierung der Kultur oder selbstbewusstes Supplement?]. Frederik Nielsen's novel *Tuumarsi* [*Tuumarsi. Roman om en vestgrønlandsk fangerfamilie*] from 1934 takes a historical famine in a Greenlandic settlement in 1856 as a starting point. His main character is the sealer Tuumarsi who manages, after some fateful steps, to unite his two purposes in life: his life as a sealer and his Christian faith. Hans Lynges *The will of the invisible* [*Den usynliges vilje*] from 1938 is the only of these novels which takes place before the arrival of Christianity in Greenland. The characters practice shamanism and suffer the consequences of vendetta. At the same time the novel offers space to Christian values and morals in a pre-Christian time to detect and identify a former Greenlandic civilisation to contradict stereotypes of savages. Volquardsen argues that neither Nielsen nor H. Lynges paint a pure nostalgia of former Greenland. They can rather be understood as responses to the earlier novels of Storch and A. Lynges who made the Inuit culture seem regressive.

Volquardsen underlines in his monograph that nation building and identity constitute the most important themes of early

Greenlandic literature while approaching it using Bhabha's ideas of a 'third space' and hybridity.

In his chapter about 'discourse and context' he succeeds particularly impressively to show the emergence of Greenlandic literature under Danish colonial rule. He submits the first extensive work in German which deals with early production of Greenlandic culture. Unfortunately, as Volquardsen remarks himself, the analysis of literary texts occurs only at the content level due to translation problems. Here, an additional literary aesthetic consideration would have been desirable. In any case, Volquardsen's book outlines an important contribution to the debate on Greenlandic culture and art and their ways of production.

Especially the chapter 'discourse and context' is very informative and helpful when considering Greenland's development while handling a vast historical background. However, the analysis of the novels lacks an aesthetic angle and it could have benefitted from using the potential of aesthetics as a form of criticism. This could be lost in translation as this does not seem

to be of all Danish translators' interest to take over aesthetic aspects of the Greenlandic language.

I highly recommend this work to readers capable of reading German who are interested in Greenlandic politics and culture production. They will find a very well written, informative and pioneering work that follows the traces of the first Greenlandic novels. (Christina Just, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Nordeuropa-Institut, Unter den Linden 6, 10099 Berlin, Germany (christina.just@hotmail.de)).

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