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*Published in:*  
KULT - Postkolonial Temaserie

*Publication date:*  
2016

*Document Version*  
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

*Citation for published version (APA):*  
Jensen, L. (2016). Approaching a Postcolonial Arctic. KULT - Postkolonial Temaserie, 14, 49-65.

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# Approaching a Postcolonial Arctic

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## ABSTRACT:

This article explores different postcolonially configured approaches to the Arctic. It begins by considering the Arctic as a region, an entity, and how the customary political science informed approaches are delimited by their focus on understanding the Arctic as a region at the service of the contemporary neoliberal order. It moves on to explore how different parts of the Arctic are inscribed in a number of sub-Arctic nation-state binds, focusing mainly on Canada and Denmark. The article argues that the postcolonial can be understood as a prism or a methodology that asks pivotal questions to all approaches to the Arctic. Yet the postcolonial itself is characterised by limitations, not least in this context its lack of interest in the Arctic, and its bias towards conventional forms of representation in art. The article points to the need to develop a more integrated critique of colonial and neo-colonial presences in the Arctic before moving on to consider artworks about the Arctic that arguably through their transgressive forms pushes at the boundaries of geopolitical, geohistorical and geoaesthetic approaches.

The Arctic is heating up. Not only physically due to climate change, but also as a region regarded as ripe for outside intervention in the age of late capitalism, or high neoliberalism. Much of the recent attention stems from the perception of the Arctic's potential for future resource extraction (Ryall, Schimanski and Wærp 2010; Keskitalo 2004; Sale and Potapov 2010; Huggan and Jensen 2016). This perception is caused by a number of interconnected factors: the intensifying neoliberal hunt for the planet's remaining mineral and oil resources, global warming that is making the Arctic more accessible for resource extraction and shipping – all of which contribute to a renewed interest in establishing territorial claims to the Arctic seabed. The political focus has raised concerns that the region could be facing militarisation once again, as was the case during the Second World War and the Cold War. Disentangling these issues requires engagement with a complexity, ranging from

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technical discussions over the nature and evolution of climate change to geopolitical interconnections between resource extraction in ‘remote’ areas and the current neoliberal globalisation order. A critical analysis of how political agency works for the peoples inhabiting the Arctic is a central but often overlooked component of these issues. Definitions of sovereignty in an emerging postcolonial era in the Arctic are especially important. This article seeks to identify productive ways of engaging this complexity: first, by exploring different ways of conceptualising the Arctic as a region; secondly, by looking at selective nation-based accounts of the Arctic; and thirdly, by discussing how postcolonially informed art offer a critique of Eurocentric approaches to the Arctic. It works from the premise that postcolonialism as a theoretically informed approach and methodology is especially useful, as it challenges disciplinary boundaries in the social sciences and humanities that have for a long time defined and limited approaches to the Arctic’s complexity. As an interdisciplinary approach, postcolonialism is well-positioned to capture how political, economic and cultural agency, and environmental concerns are interlinked and cannot be disconnected from the particular forms of colonialism that continue to define also the contemporary Arctic. Yet postcolonialism has not evolved as a critique of Eurocentric patterns of domination in the Arctic. Indeed, none of the major figures who pioneered postcolonial theory (Ashcroft, Tiffin and Griffiths 1989; Bhabha 1994; Said 1978, 1993; Spivak 1988) awarded the Arctic region much, if any, attention. This represents a serious oversight (even if specific postcolonialists cannot be accused of specific neglects given the sizeable proportion of the globe occupied by former colonies), and a long overdue project for critical Arctic studies scholars to engage. As Stuart Hall would remind us, however, postcolonialism without contextualisation is unacceptable to a field committed to the articulation of situated anticolonial resistance and postcolonial intervention: ‘groundedness of theory’ is a must (Said 1991 and 1994; Jensen 2014a). While such an enterprise is necessarily beyond the scope of a single article, I will, in this article, establish some of the parameters of a postcolonial Arctic critique and discuss it more specifically in relation to two artistic works on the Arctic, whose very different engagements with different parts of the Arctic (Canada and Greenland) reveal interesting overlaps in their conceptualisations of the Arctic.

### **Postcolonialism and the Arctic**

Postcolonialism has yet to develop a specific approach to the Arctic, though a number of scholars have explored how colonial representations from other parts of the world can be adapted to theorise

the history and power structures of the region. This includes discussions of Edward Said's foundational postcolonial text *Orientalism* by Fienup-Riordan (1995), Keskitalo (2004), Thisted (2002), Ryall, Schimanski and Wærp (2010) and Jensen (2015). Postcolonial approaches to representation can be employed to reveal how the Arctic has historically been constructed to serve imperial interests of states that have imposed their sovereignty on the Arctic (Canada, the US, Russia, Denmark, Norway, Finland, and Sweden). Yet, such approaches need to be qualified by the acknowledgement that postcolonialism's close affiliation with literary interpretation fails to address the many other forms of colonial and postcolonial resistance to outside domination that are a de facto part of the region's history. More specifically so in relation to the Arctic where anticolonial and postcolonial literature is but one of several forms of resistance. While this restriction clearly applies to all 'postcolonial regions' it is arguably specifically pertinent in relation to the thinly populated Arctic, where conventional postcolonial literature is thin on the ground. What is called for is broadly configured analysis that accommodates the diverse articulations of 'Arctic perspectives' from within, from literature and art generally, over local environmental organisations and formal and informal political groups. As such this extremely heterogeneous formation of articulations can be linked to Cultural Studies broad definition of 'text' - and be analysed accordingly.

In contrast to the current state of postcolonial Arctic studies, Latin American decolonisation studies articulate a rootedness in political movements' responses to colonial experiences that are more directly concerned with political agency, while these also remain alert to the neo-colonial system of international politics that is a formal outlet for political agency. Scholars of Latin American colonialism such as Dussel (1995), Quijano (2000) and Mignolo (2000) can be seen as connected to Said's tenets of postcolonialism through their shared interest in Wallerstein's world system theory (1974/2011), which demotes the nation-state as a primary unit of social analysis to promote transnational, macro-perspective, and multidisciplinary approaches. Within such a framework, how can Arctic peoples be understood to navigate their way toward higher degrees of political autonomy, including in ways that articulate political agency within contemporary neo-colonial systems that govern international relations? This question is especially important as such systems do not readily accommodate political autonomy/agency that insists on connecting it to an epistemological, human ecology, a region's integrity and planetary connectivity. Practical – but not pragmatic – concerns of such epistemologies are paramount: one only needs to consider that among the early victims of climate change will be island nation peoples whose sovereignty will quite

literally be washed away from under their feet. Within this context, the independent archipelagos of Kiribati and Tuvalu in the Pacific Ocean and the Maldives in the Indian Ocean have used climate change forums to stage their plight, but also to demand on behalf of the planetary ecology that sustainable ways of human interaction with the environment become an integral part of the global political governance (Stratford, Farbotko and Lazarus 2013; Farbotko and Lazarus 2012).

Similarly, autonomy and political agency for Arctic peoples cannot be divorced from the threat to the survival of postcolonial nation-states elsewhere. The paradox for peoples in the Arctic is twofold: The resource extraction of fossil fuels and rare earth minerals that can work as circumscribed political leverage for political autonomy in the region, threatens the survival and livelihood of peoples in parts of the global south, while undermining Arctic ways of life based on hunting, fishing and other forms of environmentally sustainable and traditional forms of resource extraction. While it is important to acknowledge that life in the Arctic has been dramatically impacted by colonialism, capitalism and modernity, it is equally important to recognise the ways in which more local tradition defined ways of life continue. The large-scale extraction of resources furthermore requires the surrender of control over territory to transnational companies with, in many cases, deeply compromised environmental track records (see Jensen 2014b) and as such extraction industries represent a new – or renewed - form of colonial intrusion (Huggan and Jensen 2016). To this needs to be added the disconcerting fact that extraction causes greenhouse gas emissions, which, when originating in the Arctic tend not to be initiated *by* Arctic indigenous peoples, nor does revenue generated from such extraction necessarily, let alone primarily, benefit the development of their societies. For example, the 2013 Greenlandic general election was fought over the best way to ensure that some of the assumed windfall from the resource extraction industries would remain in Greenland. The debate revealed a deep scepticism over the ability of any Greenlandic government to ensure profits were not simply siphoned off to tax havens, which shows a clear political awareness of how the neoliberal global order operates. If – and it is a big ‘if’ - benefits nonetheless fall to the locals, as royalties and taxes generated by the extraction industries, such benefits are still reaped inside a global economic order that has historically led to the exploitation of the global south to which the Arctic peoples - despite the apparent geopolitical paradox - have historically belonged (A.N. 2013).

### **The Arctic as a Postcolonial Region**

To speak of the politically and socio-culturally heterogeneous Arctic as *a* region is an approach with important conceptual limitations. Northern coastal Alaska, Arctic Canada, Greenland, the Norwegian Arctic islands, northernmost Sweden, and the coastal areas of Russia facing the Arctic Ocean are firmly inside the customary definition of the Arctic region as the area north of the Arctic Circle. Yet so are areas in Northern Scandinavia that are milder than regions in the sub-Arctic. This has led to an alternative model where the criteria for belonging to the Arctic region is the warmest average temperature of the warmest month of the year has to be below 10 °C. Other definitions include broader parts of the sub-Arctic in the definition of the Arctic region (adding northern Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland and more extensive parts of Alaska and northern Canada, and Russia). Ultimately, the Arctic remains the sole region in the world primarily defined by its climate (for a long and ultimately unresolved discussion about the definition and extent of the Arctic see Nuttall and Callaghan 2000, xxix-xxxii). It is also the only region in the world (outside the unpopulated Antarctic) that has no locally rooted sovereignty, that is, the territorially defined right of an 'Arctic' state to rule exclusively over its own lands and seas (if the sub-Arctic is included, Iceland would be an obvious exception).

In postcolonial terms, the Arctic region is the political-social-historical product of colonialism, including Iceland as a former Danish colony. Yet, colonialism also needs to be differentiated as a term that either describes imperial domination from a distance or direct conquest and settlement. Colonisation in the Arctic in fact predates what Mignolo (2000) and Dussel (1995) have discussed as the first (colonial) modernity. Viking settlements of Iceland and southern Greenland are different from the conquest modernity initiated by da Gama and Columbus several centuries later, which constitutes the beginning of thinking and planning globally and of creating a nexus between colonialism, modernity and capitalism. Vikings thus create problems for narratives of colonialism, as the Vikings disappeared from Greenland before the age of European discoveries. Finally, Viking settlements in Greenland are the only white/European settlements in the Arctic enabled by an unusually warm period that allowed agricultural development in southern Greenland.

European colonialism during the first and second modernities inscribed local resources and local populations into colonial administrations that shared many features, which also obtained in the Arctic. One of these features is the presence of Christian missionaries. Where colonial administrations turned local indigenous peoples into colonial subjects servicing the economic needs of the colonisers, missionary activities are better described as a colonial system (Nikolaev 2011;

Petterson 2014) for undermining and suppressing local human ecologies.<sup>2</sup> One characteristic feature of Arctic colonialism was the high degree of dependency on the local community to support the slim colonial administrations, which suffered from extremely unreliable connections to the metropolitan centres. The isolation of colonial outposts made administrators locally omnipotent. It also made isolation from the colonial subjects impossible. The matrix of the many colonial outposts scattered throughout the Arctic constitutes a complex historical reality problematising generalisations across the region and comparisons with other colonial situations. To enter further into this Arctic matrix thus requires that the broad concepts of colonialism and postcolonialism give way to more localised histories and contemporary realities that are products of a specific nexus between colonial periphery and metropolitan centre. Such a colonial matrix also produces postcolonial specificities.

One attempt to describe the nexus of an Arctic colonial (and postcolonial) periphery and a metropolitan centre is Sherrill Grace's *Canada and the Idea of North*. Grace writes the Canadian Far North/Arctic into a broader national Canadian history, which, she argues, is simultaneously haunted and enticed by the idea of the North as central to the country's national imaginary. The book is unique in that it seeks to establish the role of the Arctic as central to a nation whose population centres are at the southern extremity of the country. Grace shows how national identity is an imaginary that can be disconnected from the country's demographic centres. Yet, while Grace redefines the centrality of north to the Canadian national imaginary, her book constitutes yet another inscription of the north into a southern metropolitan defined nationalism. Because the gaze remains national it is unable to deliver a postcolonial gaze towards Canada's Far North as a region seeking autonomous political development in opposition to national southern Canadian projections. One could conceivably pursue the same argument in relation to other parts of the Arctic, which have also served as repositories of southern nationalist projections. A border case example (because its Arctic credentials depends on which definition of the Arctic is applied) is Katarina Schough's *Hyperboré: Föreställningen om Sveriges plats i världen* (2008). It analyses how geography in the history of the Swedish academy has produced the ultimate north in Sweden as a testing ground for male prowess, and as a domestic Swedish frontier of ultimate northernness and whiteness. Her argument is not dissimilar to Grace's, even if Schough is more preoccupied with how a particular

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<sup>2</sup> 'Human ecology' is a term fraught with competing disciplinary definitions. For a useful discussion of approaches to the question of environmentalism and human ecology, see the introduction to DeLoughrey and Handley 2011. Their preference of the term 'postcolonial ecologies' is persuasively argued, but the anchoring of 'ecology' in analysis of postcolonial literature makes it too circumscribed for my purposes here.

academic discipline projected a nationalist image which made its way into a wider nationalist self-perception.

### **Reading Greenland through the postcolonial lens**

Greenland represents an interesting case that quickly challenges the ideas of projection and totalising national-imperial inscriptions of the colonial periphery. Danish perceptions of Greenland are not central to the Danish imaginary, even if it has its own pronounced historical affiliation in select parts of the Danish establishment as well as amongst specific segments of the Danish population with emotional attachment to Greenland. Greenland has its own domestic projections of its ‘Arcticness’. Danish colonialism (or the second colonisation, the Viking settlers constitute the first) in Greenland began with the Danish-Norwegian priest, Hans Egede who arrived in 1721, backed by the king and merchants from Bergen, thus revealing from the beginning the integrated economic, proselytising and administrative control underpinning Danish colonialism in Greenland (Petterson 2014). Nearly 250 years of colonialism and more than 60 years as a formal part of *Rigsfællesskabet*<sup>3</sup> cannot be summarised here. However, for the benefit of identifying a specific Danish-Greenlandic colonial and postcolonial sphere, it is useful to briefly dwell on the relationship’s history, which can be divided into extended periods. The early colonial phase was characterised by missionary-driven activities (after Hans Egede, the Moravian Brothers mission established in 1733 became a major centre for the Danish presence in Greenland), while the economic benefits to those Scandinavian investors who had sponsored Egede’s project never materialised. A more formalised Danish colonial presence in the nineteenth century led to the gradual build-up of an administrative colonial apparatus that sought to develop the colonial outposts in Greenland in such a way that they would provide profits for Denmark. Fur trade, whaling and mining were economic activities which Denmark sought to expand in Greenland. Various forms of anticolonial protests in Greenland are as old as Danish colonialism in Greenland, and became orchestrated into more organised forms of protests as a local informal system of consultative political representation was adopted. Greenlanders of course also cooperated with Danes and the Danish administration, in other words they sought to maximise their influence on their own

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<sup>3</sup> I prefer the non-translatable term for the Kingdom of Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands, because I find the customary translations, The Danish Realm and the Danish Commonwealth, inadequate if not downright misleading. They relate to either a Danish exclusivity in conceptualisation or refer to a similar conceptualisation elsewhere – The (British) Commonwealth – whose historical and contemporary reality is completely different.



situation in a variety of ways that need to be understood in the context of Danish coercive strategies. To label these strategies as coercive is not to accuse the Danish presence as ‘evil’, but to underline the nature of colonialism – also when it is Danish colonialism – also when it is directed at Greenlanders.

To constitute Greenland as a postcolonial site could begin with tracing the anticolonial voices through colonial archives and Greenlandic voices in the colonial media: the earliest newspaper in Greenlandic, *Atuagagdliutit/Grønlandsposten*, was started by the Danish colonial administrator, Hinrich Rink, in 1861 (see Jensen 2012b, Marquardt 2009), while other newspapers emerged in the early twentieth century. The narration of emergent postcolonial Greenland could continue with the opening of Greenland to other outside influences than the Danish, during the German occupation of Denmark which led to the arrival of American troops in Greenland during the Second World War. After the war the Danish government realised there was no possibility of returning to a policy of Greenlandic isolation. A far more direct presence was the only way to ensure Greenland would remain Danish, and any alternative to this was unthinkable (Jensen 2012a, 2012b). This led to the modernisation plans known as G50 and G60 and the Greenlandic inclusion into Denmark (along with the Faroe Islands). The carefully orchestrated Danish policy in the UN is instructive in understanding the colonialist mentality underpinning the Danish presence in Greenland. Instead of paving the way for a Greenlandic future of self-determination as stipulated by the Charter of the UN’s Chapter XI on decolonisation of the world’s remaining colonies, Denmark annexed its remaining colonies. Annexation also ensured Greenlandic democratic representation in the Danish parliament providing Greenland with a formal representative voice in the metropolitan centre – which it used. In Greenland, the modernisation programs were largely implemented with Greenlanders as bystanders - reluctant or enthusiastic - rather than as the result of a dialogue between the Danish ‘postcolonial’ administration in Greenland and the Greenlanders themselves. The point here is not that Greenlanders did not deal with the Danish modernisation process, but that the Danish form of colonial absolutist administrative rule not only continued, but was, as Dahl (1986) has pointed out, intensified (see also Jensen 2012b).

The sizeable Danish investment and intervention in Greenland after the Second World War can be described as a neo-colonial move similar to the broader Western intervention in the global south<sup>4</sup> through the development aid project launched by Truman in his inaugural speech as President in

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<sup>4</sup> See Harhoff’s (1987) review of *Arktisk selvstyre*, where he points out that Dahl’s book is the first critical political theory approach to understand the unfolding of Greenlandic political parties.

1949 (Escobar 1995). Critiques of development aid from post-development studies (Escobar 1995; Ferguson 1999) have read development as a Western project to ensure continuing dominance in the global south. These critiques have a well-established history. As with postcolonial studies, these approaches have not addressed the particularities of the Arctic, since this region has remained within the colonially controlled periphery of the global north. Greenlandic protests against being sidelined in the grand-scale modernisation plans and recognition of the subsequent disillusionment when these plans failed to deliver a locally rooted ‘modern’ identity, are in fact reminiscent of the disillusionment of Zambian copper-belt workers that Ferguson discusses in *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt* (1999). In Greenland, the lack of influence led to more organised political groups focusing on the Greenlandic sense of being second-class citizens in their own country. The impetus to change these groups into formal political parties came with the Danish accession to the European Communities (EC). Greenland had voted against this move. Greenlandic anxiety over the future of its fishing industry snowballed into a call for political autonomy, which again resulted in the Home Rule Act of 1979. 30 years later home rule was replaced with self-government.

The above is a relatively conventional historical outline detailing pivotal moments in Greenland’s evolution from colony to self-government with an emphasis on Greenlandic agency. In contrast, Danish accounts of the development of the Greenlandic-Danish relationship have - with a few critical exceptions in the 1970s and 1980s (see Jensen 2012b) – tended to neglect anticolonial Greenlandic agency in favour of a narrative emphasising the Danish ex-colonial power as a benevolent helicopter-parent empire. Yet the benevolent and the critical accounts both situate the postcolonial question inside a political-science oriented narrative that conceives of the postcolonial as a very concrete process of achieving political autonomy, where national emancipation and the achievement of statehood is the ultimate goal of a nation-building process. This narrative has been popular with the Greenlandic political establishment, including recent former Greenlandic premiers, Aleqa Hammond (Siumut, or the Greenlandic Labour Party) and Kupsiik Kleist (IA, a party to the left of Siumut). But a constrained reading of postcolonialism as merely a frame for describing the political process toward independence is epistemologically and contextually limiting. Doing so places Greenland alongside African and Asian nations in the 1950s and 1960s as those countries sought political independence from European colonial powers who were determined to prevent such autonomy. Greenland’s decolonisation process takes place against a history that has seen the euphoria leading up to the 1955 Bandung conference replaced by disillusion over the lack of

material and political progress (Prashad 2007). If the political process of achieving independence represents the postcolonial condition, how does one account for the enormous difference between small nations like Greenland on the road to political autonomy in the second decade of the twenty-first century, and much larger nations achieving independence in the era of decolonisation of the late 1940s to mid-1960s? Achille Mbembe's *On the Postcolony* (2001) reveals the epistemological limitations offered by conventional political science conceptualisations of political emancipation as he explores and dissects the continued patterns of abuse derived from and redeveloped in the wake of colonialism. Political science approaches all too often reads postcoloniality as a largely descriptive term of colonies achieving statehood, though as Chandra notes 'the response' toward postcolonialism by 'the overwhelming majority of the discipline has been ignorant, scornful, or both' (2013: 483). Mbembe's book highlights how the real battles to achieve political and economic independence do not disappear once statehood is granted. He also moves the question of the postcolonial outside the realm of literature, and diagnoses the postcolony as a frozen condition, where the national imaginary is haunted and shaped by the ghost of colonialism. This reading has profound implications outside the sub-Saharan Africa he analyses.

The postcolony can also be identified in Asia, the Pacific and Latin America, and may or may not be a *future* condition of independent Arctic nations. As such, Mbembe's approach can help inform the status of a future autonomous Arctic, yet cannot stand alone as an analytical prism for exploring the contemporary Arctic. The question is what other epistemologically grounded postcolonial approaches might work better in the Arctic. Artistic representations can be seen as one such way of understanding how the colonial periphery is inscribed into the metropolitan culture's subjugation and subjectivisation (following Foucault) of the colonial subject. Such a space operates as a launching pad for an anticolonial critique that undermines the coloniser's gaze in the process of articulating a far more broadly founded agency than the instrumentally defined perspectives offered by conventional political science.

### **Archiving the Arctic**

Within the Arctic, artistic responses tend to be framed by 'nation' concerns. Greenlandic art deals with Greenland (or the Greenlandic-Danish relation), Canadian Arctic 'texts' deal with the experience governed by either the sense of being peripheral to a nation centred in the Canadian

south, or the search for expressing ideas and interests reflecting the Canadian Arctic as a world onto itself. The concluding parts of this article seeks to suggest alternatives to this approach by exploring ‘artworks’ framed both by Arctic experience and its shaping postcolonial relations.

Similar to Sherrill Grace’s *Canada and the Idea of North*, Martha Baillie’s novel, *The Search for Heinrich Schlögel*, rotates around the idea of (far) north. Although a sizeable part is devoted to the German town and the family relations there of the protagonist, it is Heinrich’s backpacker adventure into the Weasel River area on Baffin Island that creates the pivotal moment for the plot – and delivers the story of the novel. Parallels can be drawn between this part of the novel and other Canadian literature preoccupied with the notion of landscape as not merely a stage, but an active force that influences and at times determines the life of humans. Margaret Atwood’s short story ‘The Age of Lead’ (1992) is one immediate reference point that invites comparison because of its juxtaposition of a contemporary Canadian life connected and disconnected from the far north/the Arctic in time and space. In Atwood’s short story, it is the expedition of the 1980s which uncovered the remains of the first victims of the ill-prepared and even worse executed fatal third Franklin expedition in the 1840s that still works as a measuring tape for imperial self-delusion leading to disaster in the encounter with a colonial Canadian Arctic sublime. Martha Baillie’s hallucinatory protagonist encounters a number of figures on his short two-week expedition in 1980s Arctic Canada – most notably his German family members and the early British Canadian Arctic explorer, Samuel Hearne. These encounters represent pivotal moments on his journey, or possibly imaginary re-enactments of determining aspects of the characters’ lives. The Arctic void (understood as a people-less landscape) becomes a limitless repository for the imagination, because the landscape in itself, rather than operating as a catalyser, becomes a detailed but ultimately ‘unreferenced’ scene/ry that defies conventional forms of experience. This operates in marked contrast to the typical imperial, white male’s cartographic gaze that uses the landscape as an empty object on which endless projections of imperial design are superimposed, such as that of Samuel Hearne.

In Baillie’s novel what happens, in contrast to such classic imperial designs, is a postcolonial engagement through dream-like sequences that produce in condensed form re-enactments of colonial brutality, to a lesser extent specific to the region through which Heinrich meanders. The broad range of colonial abuse revisited includes sexual abuse of First Nation children by missionaries/priests, oppression of indigenous languages in the school system (though this is an actual memory by Sarah, who puts up Heinrich after his return from his expedition) – and the

recounting of certain violent episodes from Samuel Hearne's expedition across Arctic Canada. While most of the brutal colonial experiences of First Nation children remain small glimpses provoking a reader's presumed wider knowledge of the history of abuses in the Canadian Arctic, Samuel Hearne himself becomes a figure in the novel that Heinrich spends time with – and confronts with the violence Hearne not only bore witness to, but also operated as a conduit for. This leap of the imagination in the novel is enabled through a collapse of temporality that is never resolved by the protagonist, but one that is both imaginary and real. Not only is temporality's linearity broken, perhaps with an implicit reference to the established tradition of doing so in magic realism (from Gabriel Garcia Marquez to José Saramago), the encounter between Hearne and Heinrich is also shifted out of the areas which Hearne traversed to the area crossed by Heinrich. Yet, even if the encounter with Hearne is the most developed sequence of the Arctic part of the novel, it remains a limited aspect of the novel, and naming it as the novel's core (or to use a Bakhtinian term, a chronotope) would easily lead to over-interpretation. Instead, I would like to suggest that the novel plays with a number of intertextualities, some of them already mentioned above (others would include the Canadian favourite notion of the trickster, and the visiting of the north as an intimidating/ominous presence on the south, a theme which also haunts Atwood's short story, as well as Mordecai Richler's 1980s classic novel, *Solomon Gursky Was Here*). Collectively, they form a patchwork of relations to the Arctic in southern Canadians' imaginings (as Grace also suggests in the *Idea of the North*) that are precisely characterised by their provisional nature rather than any determined relations. Clearly, part of the urge to avoid overt determination stems from the long history of southern Canadian projections, something which Grace identifies yet inevitably ends up reproducing at moments in her account of Canadians' relations to the Arctic/far north. Baillie's novel offers no definitive ideas about north, about the Arctic, or about First Nations peoples. She offers perhaps a series of vignettes that all represent glimpses of Canadian Arctic spaces and histories – from the juxtapositioning of hopeful backpackers travelling to the far north with the archetypal white male explorer, to the rapid transition that has informed the inhabited parts of the Arctic between Heinrich's entrance into the Canadian Arctic and his return two weeks/three decades later.

Moving from Martha Baillie's partially Arctic based novel to Greenlandic-Danish artist Pia Arke's deliberate entanglement in another part of the postcolonial Arctic – Greenland – and not least her native Scoresbysund (Ittoqqortoormiit) in East Greenland requires some contextualisation as the nature of their work is extremely different. What connects them, at least for me, is their mutual

obsession with the Arctic ‘archive’. Archive here understood in the broad sense, to a limited extent informed by Ann Laura Stoler’s notion of the ‘colonial archive’, discussed in her book, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (2010). My hesitation in fully embracing Stoler’s notion here is because there is much more to both Baillie and Arke’s ideas of Arctic archive than that produced through coloniality of an archival practice. In a keynote address Baillie gave at a conference in 2015,<sup>5</sup> she spoke about ‘core sample’ as a way of addressing how she has conducted her work around *The Search for Heinrich Schlägel*. There is here a construction of a continuously, and possibly spiralling out of control archive, around the novel that is simultaneously real, because it is there but also imaginary in so far as it provides ‘evidence’ around a fictional character portrayed in a fictional account. This archive is constructed around a patchwork collection of items, which do not collectively manifest the completion of a jigsaw puzzle, but rather represent a collection of extracted material, each of them rich in their interpretative potential, but never providing a determining account. Metaphorically, this corresponds to the history of the Arctic as an archive, colonial and otherwise, that is made up of a number of forays into the Arctic, each of which constitute samples of what the Arctic is, but also reveal the sporadic nature of engagement with the enormity that is the Arctic. This enormity is literal of course in terms of its geographical sprawl but also in terms of the range of raw material it houses for interpretation from history to the more literal forms of core samples; ice cores, minerals etc. This heterogeneous collective archive makes the Arctic ripe for a continued obsession by the non-Arctic world that has access to the Arctic through the arbitrary evolutionary history of political sovereignty.

Seen from this perspective Pia Arke’s work occupies a particularly important position, because it works through a double displacement – the displacement of East Greenland, from the contemporary power centre of Greenland, West Greenland, and through the colonial legacy, manifested so clearly through the colonial archive and history of her native Scoresbysund. A displacement that ironically also constitutes a homecoming process in a way not unlike Heinrich’s young friend, Vicky, who travels to southern Canada to improve her Inuktiuk. Similarly, Heinrich’s hallucinatory but also real experiences can in Arke’s work be compared to her preoccupation with the notion of ‘Arctic hysteria’. Arke’s work is also an indictment of Danish colonial administrative practice in Greenland, but interestingly she uses that as a backdrop for negotiating her own homecoming to her Greenlandic identity. Antagonistic accounts of imperial domination and subjugation have a history

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<sup>5</sup> Keynote address given at the *New Narratives of the Postcolonial Arctic* conference held at Roskilde University/Bryggen, May 27-29, 2015.

of conceptualising this broad historical experience through the prism of an identitarian coming to terms with colonialism as personal narratives. What Arke's work achieves is the extremely difficult process of uncovering this history, which for obvious reasons has been repressed both in Greenland and in Denmark, but she also creates a counter-narrative of dis-alienation without losing sight of the oppression out of which it is produced. Part of this precision balancing act in Arke's work is enabled by a much broader conceptualisation of 'the archive' than 'merely' colonial or postcolonial legacy. In contrast to the production of an archive surrounding Baillie's novel, Arke's work in itself constitutes an archive of material collected in the posthumously published, *Tupilakosaurus* (2010). This work is in itself a loosely organised compilation of her art work and commentaries on her and her work by a number of friends in academia and the art world. In the preface to *Tupilakosaurus*, curators Tone Olaf Nielsen and Frederikke Hansen summarise Arke's oeuvre:

Arke embarked on an artistic journey into 'the colonial-historical, [...] mapmaking, time, memory, space, silence, identity and myth in pictures of and from Greenland,'... Mimicking the movements of the explorer, the colonist, the cartographer, and the ethnographer, she followed unacknowledged traces and forgotten poles of belonging between Denmark and Greenland... In some works, she intervened in the ethnographic archive and made its practises of collecting, classification, and documentation both the source and target for her work. In other works, she returned to the places in Greenland, where she spent her childhood, to recover some of the many stories and destinies that have been left out of official archives and history books. And in others still, she confronted Western preconceptions of so-called primitive art and Eskimo authenticity. (Hansen et al 2012: 9)

The summary captures the complexity of Arke's engagements and as such shows her work to be a space for new articulations of the Arctic through the paradoxical renegotiations of uncovered colonial pasts.

## **Conclusion**

In this article I have sought to first explore different epistemological approaches to the Arctic, inevitably however, always confined to parameters of nationhood, and tensions between 'Arcticness/Arcticity' and the Arctic as someone else's determined periphery. While this is inescapably part of the Arctic's colonial legacy, and neo-colonial or postcolonial continuity, its inhibiting influence on the Arctic as a site of its own imaginings is evident. The two 'samples' of contemporary art works illustrate the Arctic's continued importance as a repository of imaginings, which can of course take the form of postmodern escapisms, but which can also in Baillie and

Arke's work be seen as a space for contesting imaginings of the Arctic and its relations with its metropolitan cultures.

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