

CHARLES UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of Communications Studies and Journalism

Department of Journalism

Master's Thesis

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Erica Bernsten Strange

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Now is the time:
Commemorative journalism and the rereading of
300 years of Danish-Greenlandic history

Master's Thesis

Author of the Thesis: Erica Bernsten Strange

Study programme: Erasmus Mundus Journalism, Media and Globalisation

Supervisor: prof. PhDr. Michal Dimitrov, Ph.D.

Year of the defence: 2024

Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on 30 July 2024

Erica Bernsten Strange

References

STRANGE, Erica Bernsten Strange. Now is the time: Commemorative journalism and the re-reading of 300 years of Danish-Greenlandic history. Praha, 2024. 94 p. Master's thesis (Mgr). Charles University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute of Communications Studies and Journalism, Department of Journalism. Supervisor prof. PhDr. Michal Dimitrov, Ph.D.

Length of the Thesis: 170,190 characters

Abstract

This diploma thesis examines the reconstruction of the Danish collective memory about Greenland in the wake of the 300-year commemoration of Denmark colonising Greenland, and in a time when this history is being questioned. Furthermore, it hypothesises that this construction will align more closely with Olick's (2013) concept of the politics of regret. After reviewing historical and current discourses around the Greenlandic-Danish relation, the study employs critical discourse analysis (CDA), supplemented by multimodal discourse analysis (MCDA) to dissect how the actions of Denmark as a coloniser are constructed in the commemorative TV documentary series *Historien om Grønland og Danmark* [The History of Greenland and Denmark] (2022) by the Danish public broadcaster DR and the subsequent media reviews of the series and which modes and discourses are used to shape the collective memory of Denmark as a colonising power. After analysing the material (231 minutes and 9 articles), this study concludes that the series and reviews reconstruct several connecting and contradicting discourses of Denmark's actions as a coloniser, resulting in a form of narrative hybridity, in-between challenging and reproducing old discourses. The study is contextualised and it is argued that the discourses' ambiguity is evident of a changing Danish self-perception of their actions as a coloniser, illustrating a re-reading in line with the on-going reconciliation process and the politics of regret.

Abstrakt

Tato diplomová práce zkoumá rekonstrukci dánské kolektivní paměti v souvislosti s Grónskem v návaznosti na třisetleté výročí jeho kolonizace Dánskem v době, kdy je tato historická zkušenost zpochybňována. Dále pak předkládá hypotézu, že tato konstrukce bude ve větším souladu s Olickovým (2013) konceptem politiky lítosti (the politics of regret). Po přehledu historických i současných diskurzů kolem grónsko-dánských vztahů studie aplikuje kritickou diskurzivní analýzu doplněnou o multimodální diskurzivní analýzu ve snaze zjistit, jakým způsobem je konstruováno počínání Dánska jakožto kolonizátora v televizní dokumentární sérii *Historien om Grønland og Danmark* [Historie Grónska a Dánska] (2022) dánské veřejnoprávní televize DR. Za účelem identifikace módů a diskurzů využívaných k utváření kolektivní paměti Dánska jako koloniální velmoci dále studie analyzuje recenze série v médiích. Na základě analýzy zkoumaného materiálu (231

minut a 9 článků) dochází studie k závěru, že dokumentární série a recenze na ni rekonstruují několik navazujících a protichůdných diskurzů dánského počínání v roli kolonizátora, což má za důsledek jistou formu narativní hybridity, která se pohybuje mezi zpochybněním a současnou reprodukcí zažitých diskurz. Kontextualizovaná studie dochází k závěru, že mnohoznačnost diskurzů poukazuje na proměňující se vnímání Dánska sebe samotného jako kolonizátora, což ilustruje nové chápání minulosti ruku v ruce s probíhajícím procesem smíření a politikou lítosti.

Keywords

Anniversary Journalism; Collective Memory; Commemorative Journalism; Documentary; Greenland; Denmark; Postcolonialism.

Klíčová slova

Žurnalistika výročí, kolektivní paměť, komemorativní žurnalistika, dokument, Grónsko, Dánsko, postkolonialismus

Název práce

Teď je načas: Komemorativní žurnalistika a reinterpretace 300 let dánsko-grónské historie

Acknowledgment

Thank you to my family for your continuous love and support in everything I do and for always believing in my abilities. Thank you to Tobias, my partner and best friend, for being my rock and biggest cheerleader whenever I have doubted myself, and, especially, for joining me on this wild journey to Prague. Thank you to the Mundus cohort for being such inspirational people. You have made these last two years of my life truly unforgettable. Finally, thank you to Michal Dimitrov for supervising me through this thesis process and for your valuable advice.

Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism FSV UK
Research proposal for Erasmus Mundus Journalism Diploma Thesis

TIDS PART TO BE FILLED BY STUDENT:

Student's surname and given name:
 Strange, Erica Bernsten

Start of studies for EMJ (in Aarhus)
 01.09.2022

Your faculty e-mail:
 27474940(a)fsv.cuni.cz

Study program/form of study:
 Erasmus Mundus Journalism, Media, and Globalisation

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Thesis title in English:
 "Now is the time": Commemorative journalism and the rereading of 300-years of Greenlandic-Danish history

Expected date of submission (semester, academic year)
 (Thesis must be submitted according to the Academic Calendar.)
 Summer, 2024 (defense in September)

Main research question (max. 250 characters):

How are the discourses of the actions of Denmark as a colonizer of Greenland constructed in the commemorative drama-documentary series „The History of Greenland and Denmark" by DR and in the subsequent debate in the broader Danish mainstream media?

Current state of research on the topic (max. 1800 characters):

Within media studies, commemorative journalism serves the purpose of remembering and celebrating the anniversary of a significant occurrence. There is a significant amount of research on media creating collective memory, emphasizing the genre's tendency to narrate consistent and reaffirming stories about a nation's shared past (Edy, 1999), but more studies also reveal a critical potential that contributes to the ongoing investigation of the past (Meyers, 2021).

Current studies on the Denmark-Greenlandic relationship points to two main discourses - one of a good colonizer, shaped by a unique Danish self-understanding referred to as "Nordic exceptionalism", and the other one painting Denmark as deliberately bad colonial power. While a few exceptions, the majority of these have focused on fictional media, while documentaries and mainstream media have been explored relatively less (Mortensen & Maegaard, 2019), despite the increased relevance of TV documentaries in today's streaming age.

To help bridge this gap, the author has previously carried out a short CDA of the commemorative TV documentary series *The History in Greenland and Denmark* (2022, April-May) for the course Journalism, Media, and Cultural Globalisation, revealing how the Danish public service broadcaster **DR** uses the event to create both reaffirming and critical discourses about the shared past. However, the pilot study proved the potential for further exploration of the media's role in reinterpreting and

shaping collective discourse and memory. As Yusufov and Meyers (2023) argue, journalism is always anchored within larger political and cultural context, and relatively less has been written about the role of journalism "in fuelling and framing the rereading the collective self-understanding" (Meyers, 2022) by exploring subsequent debates in the wider public sphere.

Expected theoretical framework (max. 1800 characters):

For the theoretical framework, the study will employ the notion of collective memory as a social construct referencing sociology, history, and journalism scholars (Halbwachs, 1992; Schwartz, 1982) and how it is used to serve certain needs and purposes in social identity-making and creating nation narratives (Zelizer, 1995, Meyers, 2021) and the mainstream media's influence on collective memory-making (Kligler-Vilenchik et al., 2014) and so position my research within the field of media memory (Neiger, 2020).

Commemorative journalism narrates socially significant past events while reading this past through the lenses of current convictions and perceptions (Kitch, 2002). Previous studies have emphasized the genre's tendency to narrate consistent and reaffirming stories about a nation's shared identity and past (Edy, 1999), but it also offers journalists the chance or incentive to re-examine the past (Zelizer, 2008; Meyers, 2021).

Within the constructivist understanding, Grierson (1966) defines the documentary genre as a "creative treatment of actuality" with its potential of constructing and recreating supposedly real events, regularly blurring the line between fiction and journalism (Rosello, 2022; Bateman, 2017). And similar to collective memory, documentaries "lend us the ability to see timely issues in need of attention" (Nichols, 2001) and adds new dimension to popular memory and social history.

To distinguish and expand upon previous research, the study will seek to dig beyond theories of post-colonialism and representation, and focus on how concepts of shame and regret is constructed in both the documentary and the subsequent media discourse, drawing upon Olick's concept of "Politics of Regret" (2013) and similar theories to further understand how Danish media and the wider public's sphere negotiate their collective memories and self-understanding.

Expected methodology, and methods for data gathering and analysis (max. 1800 characters):

In order to address the research question, the study will employ Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which provides a structure that can respond to how meaning is made and one can foreground the power relations upon which meaning is constructed language. In comparison to other methods, CDA requires the researcher to take a step back from the data and view it as a whole in the real world, and how it contributes to the issue at hand (Marchin, 2013).

Using Fairclough's three dimensions as the basis (text, discourse practice, social practice) as the basis of my research design, allows for a systematic analyse of the multimodal and linguistic choices and practices, and connect them to the wider socio-cultural context (Fairclough, 1995; Marchin, 2013). Inspired by the framework suggest by Yusufov and Meyers (2023), the case study will be examining the main memory narratives, protagonists of the narratives, and which voices were heard

and silenced; through a mix of quantitative coding scheme and qualitative analysis (with emphasis on the latter).

Following that, the subsequent discourses in the broader Danish mainstream media will be analysed in order to study the wider implications of the media on collective memory formation. Here, critical discourse analysis will also be employed to examine how the commemorative documentary is interpreted in the broader mediated public sphere, which discourses surface, and how the collective memory is shaped.

Expected research design (data to be analyzed, for example, the titles of analyzed newspapers and selected time period):

This research seeks to expand our knowledge about how collective memory is shaped through the discourses through a case study of the Danish TV-documentary „The History of Greenland and Denmark" and the subsequent debate in the broader Danish mainstream media. According to Cresswell et al. (2007) case studies offer the researcher an in-depth and contextual understanding about an issue. For it to be so, the selected case must be highly-pertinent to the phenomenon of study and help illustrate the issue at hand. I argue that due to its relatively high viewer numbers, DR's role as a public service media, and its commemorative potential can be viewed as potentially central in the circulation, production, and reproduction of the Danish-Greenlandic collective memory (Mortensen & Maegaard, 2019; Strange, 2023).

To tackle the second part of the research question, it is intended to sample articles from Danish mainstream media, incl. nationwide-distributed newspapers, online and print, representing both right-and-left editorial stands, posted in the time frame of the release of the documentary series and the following month (April 20 - June 30, 2022). This data will be gathered via the online newspaper database Infomedia providing access to all Danish medias with keywords "Historien om Grønland og Danmark" and "**DR**". All articles within this time frame that meet the criteria will be analysed.

Barcher, J. (2022, April 26). Mediekommentar: Egede var Grønland en god mand. *Kristeligt Dagblad*.

Bliidnikow, B. (2022, May 16). Serien om Grønland og Danmark er seriøs historiefremstilling. *Berlingske*. <https://www.berlingske.dk/kultur/nyheds-serie-om-groenland-og-danmark-er-serioes-historiefremstilling>

Hyllested, A. (2022, May 2). Død over søleme og ind med kontrolsamfundet: Historien om Grønland og Danmark fortsætter med at forarge. *Avisen Danmark*. <https://avisendanmark.dk/danmark/doed-over-saeleme-og-ind-med-kontrolsamfundet-historien-om-groenland-og-danmark-fortsætter-med-at-forarge>

Hyllested, A. (2022, April 25). Flov smag i munden: Danmark indtog Grønland med sygdomme og tidligere straffefanger. *Avisen Danmark*. <https://avisendanmark.dk/kultur/flov-smag-i-munden-danmark-indtog-groenland-med-sygdomme-og-tidligere-straffefanger>

Nikolajsen, L. (2022, May 16). 301 a.rs historie formidles effektivt, overskueligt og tank:evrekkende i ,Historien om Grønland og Danmark'. *Information*.

<https://www.information.dk/kultur/anmeldelse/2022/05/301-aars-historie-formidles-effektivt-overskueligt-tank:evaeckende-historien-groenland-danmark>

Lentz, M. (2022, May 14). Serie om Grønlands historie er vresentlig at vise danskerne- og grnmlrenderne. *Jyllands-Posten*.

Schmidt, G. M. (2022, May 4). Hvis vi fryser, sa ryster vi. Hvis vi bliver forladt i krerlighed, sager det ondt. *Politiken*.

Expected thesis structure (chapters and subchapters with brief description of their content):

Abstract

Introduction:

Overview of the phenomenon, the justification, the relevance and importance, the context, and lastly, the briefly overview of the outline

Literature review/theory:

- Defining the notion of collective memory as a social construct
- Defining commemorative journalism
- Documentaries as a medium
- Current research on discourses on Danish-Greenland relationship
- Defining research gap

Methodology:

- Research methods (CDA, Metajournalistic discourse)
- Dataset and data collection process
- Discussion of selected cases/data - relevance and potential shortcomings

Analysis and findings:

- Presenting the results (which discourses surfaced)

Discussion

- Discussion of findings
- Contextualisation
- Shortcomings
- Suggestions for further research

Conclusion

Literature

Appendices

Basic literature list (at least 5 most important works related to the topic and the method(s) of analysis; all works should be briefly characterized on 2-5 lines):

Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical Discourse Analysis: The critical study of language*. Longman.

- Fairclough is often credited for being the founder of Critical Discourse Analysis. In his seminal work from 1995, he explores how language is intertwined with power, ideology, and social structures, presenting a framework for analyzing discourse to uncover hidden meanings, power dynamics, and societal inequalities.

Machin, D. (2013). What is multimodal critical discourse studies? *Critical Discourse Studies*, 10(4), 347-355. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2013.813770>

- This article is a guide to understanding the function of multimodal critical discourse analysis, introducing both theory, practice and give example of how MCDA can be used to analyse a wide range of mediums and modes.

Mortensen, K. K., & Maegaard, M. (2019). Meeting the Greenlandic people-Mediated intersections of colonial power, race and sexuality. *Discourse, context & media*, 32.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2019.100348>

- Mortensen and Maegaard conduct a linguistic analysis of a Danish TV-documentary series from 2015 from Danish Radio and demonstrate how e.g., this production appears celebratory but simultaneously works to maintain the colonial bind between colonizer and the colonized.

Olick, J. K. (2013). *The Politics of Regret: On Collective Memory and Historical Responsibility*. (1st ed.). Taylor and Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203941478>

- Olick explores how societies remember and deal with their past, especially moments of conflict, trauma, or wrongdoing. The term "Politics of Regret" encapsulates the ways in which individuals and groups navigate the complex terrain of memory, guilt, and responsibility and how societies construct and negotiate their collective memories, often shaping the political and social landscape in the process.

Rosello, R. A. (2022). Why remember? Representations of the past in non-fiction films: fabrication, re-construction, and interpretation of the collective memory(s). *Studies in documentary film*, 16(1), 55-67. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17503280.2021.1877388>

- This article offers a reflection on how documentaries use visual discursive and narrative structures to create certain representations of history and the past, which is increasingly replacing traditional mediums of storytelling.

Yusufov, D., & Meyers, O. (2023). „Despite everything, love“: Commemorative journalism and the rereading of the critical rereading of the Israeli past. *Journalism*, 0(0), 1-19.

- In this article, the authors examined 18 commemorative supplements and special projects on Israel's 70th anniversary, published by Hebrew newspapers in 2018. By combining and comparing analysis across the 2018 supplements with historical supplements published since 1968, they detect major trends in the journalistic commemoration of the Israeli past and position 2018 commemorative journalism in this continuum.

Strange, E. B. (2023): Good or bad colonizer? Inbetween challenging and commemorating 300-years of Greenlandic-Danish history by Danish Radio. [Assignment for Aarhus University/Danish School of Media and Journalism I]

In an unpublished assignment for Aarhus University as part of this Master's, I conducted a CDA of the commemorative TV-documentary series „The History of Greenland and Denmark” which serves as the basis and catalyst for this extended research. The findings suggest a hybrid of discourses of Denmark's colonial actions in Greenland, inbetween challenging and commemorating.

Related theses and dissertations (list of B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. theses defended at Charles University or other academic institutions in the last five years):

Koll, I. J. (2022): Folkemord og frellesskab? En diskursanalyse af Sermitsiaq.AG's drekning af spiralsagen i 2022. [M.A. Dissertation, Roskilde University, Roskilde Universitet. RUC studenterrapporter.

(English: Genocide and community? A discourse analysis of Sermitsiaq.AG's coverage of the Coil Case in 2022).

Olsson, C. J., Hansen, L. R., & Asmussen, K. S. (2019):

Danmarks kolonitid stoppede aldrig - Et studie af neokoloniale representationer i det dansk-grønlandske forhold. [M.A. Dissertation, Roskilde Universitet]. RUC studenterrapporter.

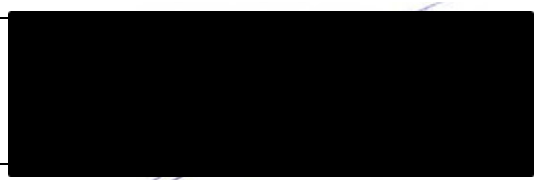
- (English: Denmark's colonial period never stopped - A study of neocolonial representations in the Danish-Greenlandic relationship.)

Serra, B. (2016). Imperial remains. A critical discourse analysis of a televised retelling of the Portugese colonial period. [Doctoral dissertation, London School of Economics]. Media@LSE MSc Dissertation Series.

Wang, S. (2017): Visualising China Through the Lens of the West: A Critical Discourse Analysis of British TV Documentaries on China. [PhD. Dissertation, Durham University]. EThOS: Electronic Theses Online Service.

Date / Signature of the student:

14/11-2023



THIS PART TO BE FILLED BY THE ACADEMIC SUPERVISOR:

I confirm that I have consulted this research proposal with the author and that the proposal is related to my field of expertise at the Faculty of Social Sciences.

I agree to be the Thesis supervisor.

....1

Surname and name of the supervisor

Date / Signature of the supervisor

Further recommendations related to the topic, structure and methods for analysis:

Further recommendations of literature related to the topic:

The research proposal has to be printed, signed and submitted to the FSV UK registry office (podatelna) in two copies, **by November 15**, addressed to the Program Coordinator. Accepted research proposals have to be picked up at the Program Coordinator's Office, Sandra Labova. The accepted research proposal needs to be included in the hard copy version of the submitted thesis.

RESEARCH PROPOSALS NEED TO BE APPROVED BY THE HEAD OF ERASMUS MUNDUS JOURNALISM PROGRAM.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
1 Theory and Literature.....	6
1.1. Theoretical Framework	6
1.2. Literature Review	9
1.2.1. Medium as Memory – Memory as Medium.....	9
1.2.1.1. Commemorative Journalism	10
1.2.1.2. Documentaries – A Visual Interpretation of Reality.....	11
1.2.2. Greenland in Danish Discourse	13
1.2.2.1. Good vs. Bad Coloniser	13
1.2.2.2. Mediating the “Other”	15
2 Methodology	17
2.1. Rationale of Research Object.....	17
2.1.1. The History of Greenland and Denmark.....	17
2.1.2. Press Material & Review Articles	18
2.2. Data Collection.....	20
2.3. Critical Discourse Analysis & Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis	23
2.4. Analytical Framework.....	26
3 Analysis.....	30
3.1. The Textual Analysis	30
3.1.1. Quantitative Analysis	32
3.1.2. Denmark as the Opposite of Greenland.....	34
3.1.3. Denmark in the Greenlandic Gaze.....	38
3.1.4. Denmark as the Repressive Mother.....	41
3.1.5. Denmark had the Best of Intentions	43
3.2. The Discursive Analysis.....	47
3.2.1. Production Process	47

3.2.2. Consumption Process	49
3.3. The Social Analysis.....	55
4 Discussion	59
Conclusion	68
Summary.....	70
List of references	73
List of appendices.....	85

Introduction

In 1721, Lutheran missionary Hans Egede from the then-joint kingdom of Denmark-Norway arrived on the shores of southwestern Greenland with the intention of Christianising the Inuit¹ (Volquardsen, 2023). During his 15 years in Greenland, Egede converted only a few Inuit to Christianity, many of whom later succumbed to a cholera pandemic. Nevertheless, he laid the groundwork for what would eventually become a new Danish colony, leaving behind a legacy still visible 300 years later with his statue towering over Greenland's capital city, Nuuk (Kočí & Baar, 2021; Volquardsen, 2023). Today, Greenland is an autonomous state within the Danish Realm,² yet the two countries remain bound by economic, political, and historical ties.³

To mark the 300th anniversary, the Danish public broadcaster Danmarks Radio (DR) launched several initiatives focusing on the shared history between the two countries, with the most prominent being the commemorative TV documentary series *Historien om Grønland og Danmark* [The History of Greenland and Denmark] (2022). Through this series, DR aimed to chronicle the past 300 years in four one-hour episodes, creating “a new starting point” from which the discussion and collective understanding of Denmark's role as a coloniser of Greenland could evolve (Gylstorff, 2022). Until this point, the dominant discourse shaping Danish self-perception cast Denmark as Greenland's benefactor, distinct from other more brutal colonial powers, a ‘good coloniser’ that had proudly helped Greenland become a modern society (Jensen, 2015; Loftsdóttir & Jensen, 2012; Maegaard & Mortensen, 2019; Thisted, 2014a, 2015, 2020).

However, the anniversary coincided with the global spread of public discussion on the injustices of colonialism and the rights of Indigenous people, ignited by the Black Lives Matter movement protests against systematic discrimination in the US (Kočí & Baar, 2021). In June 2020, the movement reached Greenland, where protesters covered the statue

¹ Inuit means “people” and has been used as a self-referential term by Indigenous populations in Greenland and Canada.

² In 1953, Greenland's status as a colony ended due to its inclusion as a district in Denmark. Greenland only became an autonomous state in 1979, with an extension in the form of the Self-Government Act in 2009. Today, Greenland is part of the Danish Realm together with Denmark and the Faroe Islands (Kočí & Baar, 2021; Volquardsen, 2023)

³ As per the Self-Government Act of 2009, Greenland has its own government, but it has to involve the Danish parliament in foreign policy, defence policy, and security policy decisions. Greenland has two seats in the Danish parliament. In addition, Greenland receives an annual block grant from Denmark of DKK 3.7 billion (EUR 500 million), which corresponds to 20 percent of Greenland's GDP (Volquardsen, 2023)

of Hans Egede with red paint and the word “decolonise” (Reuters, 2020; Kočí & Baar, 2021). Simultaneously, the Danish media began uncovering stories that demonstrated the less benevolent nature of former colonial administrative practices (Thisted, 2023). This included journalist Anne Katrine Hermansen’s book “Imperiets Børn” [Children of the Empire], published in June 2021, which reveals how Danish politicians misled Greenland into becoming a district in Denmark in 1953, thereby avoiding de facto decolonisation (Hermansen, 2021).

In light of this, one might conjecture about the impact such stories and shifts in the social context could have on a commemorative documentary series produced by a national broadcasting channel. As Martin Breum (2022), a Danish journalist specialising in Greenland, has stated regarding the initiation of new discussions on this relationship: “(...) now is the time.” Building on this premise, the thesis will answer the research question:

RQ: How are the discourses of the actions of Denmark as a coloniser of Greenland constructed in the commemorative drama-documentary series *Historien om Grønland og Danmark* [The History of Greenland and Denmark] by DR and in the subsequent debate in the broader Danish mainstream media?

Media is a “major stabiliser” and transmitter of collective memory; through media, “memory takes on a material form” (Doolan, 2021, p. 20). As Connerton (1989) argues “to study the social formation of memory is to study those acts of transfer that make remembering in common possible” (p. 39). Due to its social, historical, and institutional authority, journalism works as a “memory agent,” dissecting what people consume and thus what they remember together (Kitch, 2008). Hence, how the media interprets the past could ultimately influence how a social group or society remembers its collective past. However, collective memory is never constant and singular, instead, it is a continuous and plural process (Neiger, Meyers, & Zandberg, 2011), in the sense that it evolves with social, cultural, and political changes. In other words, interpretations of the past simultaneously are shaped by the present, and the present is shaped by the past (Neiger et al., 2011). In this way, collective memory is a social construct (Halbwachs, 1992), and representations of the past through the media are never objective or substitutes for the past itself (Ankersmit, 2012).

Nonetheless, memory plays a significant part in journalists' work in different forms. One form of journalism that necessitates memory is *commemorative journalism*, also known as anniversary journalism (Zelizer, 2008), functioning as the "tangible public presentation" of collective memory (Vinitzky-Seroussi, 2002). Previous studies of commemorative journalism emphasise the genre's tendency "to narrate consistent and reaffirming stories" (Meyers, 2021, p. 1683) about a group or nation's shared past (Edy, 1999) but it has also been illustrated to have critical potential that contributes to the ongoing investigation of the past (Meyers, 2021). In this regard, commemoration has the ability to change the hegemonic narratives and draw attention to historical and contemporary injustices and power dynamics, particularly when commemorating so-called difficult pasts (Vinitzky-Seroussi, 2002). In his study of how Germany dealt with the memories of World War II, Olick (2013) asks the question: "What happens when an organisation - small or large, social movement, or nation-state - cannot tell such stories in an unproblematic fashion" (p. 5). Facing a difficult past, he argues, social groups may adopt what he refers to as *the politics of regret*. Following this notion, nations will apologise and openly express regret for wrongs committed in the past, including colonialism. However, as stated, in the case of the Danish colonisation of Greenland, this discourse has not been widely adopted in public discussion (Andersen, 2013). It leads to the following hypothesis:

H: The discourses constructed in the TV documentary series *The History of Greenland and Denmark* and the subsequent media reviews will reflect a Danish self-perception that is less proud of their actions as a coloniser in Greenland, and instead reveal a shift towards the politics of regret.

As such the study examines how the Danish public service broadcaster DR, one of the most influential media outlets in Denmark (Breum, 2022; Mortensen & Maegaard, 2019), uses the commemorative event to reconstruct the collective memory of Denmark's actions as a coloniser in Greenland, at a point in time when the historical relationship is questioned.⁴ Furthermore, the study goes beyond the documentary series by exploring the

⁴ It is important to note that the present research is an evolution of an unpublished, curricular assignment that was carried out by the author in 2023 for the course Journalism, Media, and Cultural Globalisation at Aarhus University. The paper was a critical discourse analysis of the aforementioned documentary series. Due to

processes and intentions behind its construction by analysing interviews with the director and producer, and how this reconstruction is interpreted by media reviewers in Danish mainstream media.

To map this construction, the study employs critical discourse analysis (CDA) as the primary method, with elements from multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) acting as the supplementary method. CDA's particular attention to the social conditions that influence the emergence of discourses and vice versa, and the underlying expressions of power, makes it an effective tool for exploring postcolonial relations (Fairclough, 1995; Janks, 2006; van Dijk, 2015), while MCDA's attention to how multiple modes, verbal and visual, operate together to construct discourse and meaning is suitable for studying multimodal forms of communications, such as documentaries (Bateman, 2017; Machin, 2013). Using Fairclough's three-dimensional approach (1995) and the suggested commemorative framework by Yusufov and Meyers (2023), the thesis explores the documentary series' "textual", discursive, and social dimensions by examining interviews with the documentary's producer and director and media reviews from Danish mainstream media, and finally placing the evident discourses in the wider sociocultural context at the time of release.

The thesis contributes to the scholarly investigation of collective memory formation and commemoration of the Danish-Greenlandic relationship in the documentary genre. Most research on the relationship centres on works of fiction, including literature and film (Thisted, 2003, 2015, 2023; Jensen, 2015). But it is not strictly limited to these genres, with examples of newspaper and mainstream media (Bjørk, 2008; McLisky, 2017; Møller & Larsen, 2022), as well as parliamentary discussions (Benson & Frech, 2023; Gad, 2008) evident in the research corpus. While there are a few exceptions, the role of documentaries and TV in this relationship has rarely been subject to research. However, the focus has primarily extended to representations of Greenlanders to the Danish audience (Mortensen & Maegaard, 2018, 2019). This is despite the fact that documentaries and visual media are prevalent ways for collective memory to take shape (Roselló, 2022). Similarly, whereas scholars have examined the connection between media and collective

being well received by the examiners and obtaining the highest possible grade and after thorough discussion with former and current supervisor, it was decided that the thesis would significantly expand the scope of the research by enlarging both the theoretical and methodological framework and the data analysed. When applicable to the current research, the paper is cited as Strange, 2023.

memory (Edy, 1999; Meyers, 2021; Yusufov & Meyers, 2023; Wodak & de Cillia, 2007; Zelizer, 1992, 1995, 1997, 2008), investigations into its connection to television and the documentary genre remain relatively less explored (Roselló, 2022; Serra, 2017; Wang, 2017). Returning to the Danish-Greenlandic context, with 300 years of shared history, the colonial relationship and the Danish self-perception have been studied over the years (Gad, 2008; Jensen, 2015, 2019; Kladakis, 2014, Thisted, 2003, 2015, 2023), yet considering media's role in constructing and reconstructing social memory, research on its influence in shaping collective memory and how this influence shifts according to social context remains limited (Yusufov & Meyers, 2023). Particularly during a “major anniversary year” when attention is increased (Keith, 2012) and it becomes harder to remain silent (Olick, 2013). Ultimately, the goal is to contribute to the ongoing critical examination of Denmark's colonial past in Greenland (Benson & Frech, 2023; Jensen, 2012) and its enduring impact on the present relationship (Thisted, 2020).

The thesis is organised into five main sections. *Theory and literature*, firstly, provide a critical overview of the primary concepts of collective memory and the politics of regret, laying the theoretical framework. Secondly, the literature review addresses relevant studies on the interconnection between memory and media, documentary, and the discourses surrounding the Danish-Greenlandic relationship. After this, the *Methodology* addresses the selection of the objects of study and the data collection process. Furthermore, it clarifies the analytical approach of critical discourse analysis (CDA) and multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) and how it is employed through the analytical framework. Next, the *Analysis* presents the key findings, and, lastly, the significance of the findings is discussed in the context of the literature, research question, and hypothesis, including implications and limitations of the findings in the *Discussion*, before closing the thesis with a *Conclusion*.

1. Theory and Literature

This chapter explores the theoretical link between collective memory, commemoration, discourse, the politics of regret, documentary, and journalism within the Danish-Greenlandic postcolonial context. The chapter is divided into two segments, consisting of the theoretical framework, providing an overview of the theory of collective memory and the associated concept of the politics of regret, while the second part comprises the literature review.

1.1 Theoretical framework

Collective memory, first conceptualised by sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1992),⁵ is defined as a reconstruction of the past, linked to the identity formation of a social group or nation-state (Halbwachs, 1992; Schwartz, 1982). While memory in a physical sense is connected to an individual's mind, the concept of “collective memory borrows and metaphorically uses it to refer to a socially agreed version of the past” (Neiger, 2020, p. 2). Following this Durkheimian approach, whether we think of ourselves as free individuals, our worldview is deeply connected to the social groups that bring us up: the family, class, gender, and nation-state. Memory and identity are entangled because “the core meaning of any individual or group identity, namely a sense of sameness over time and space, is sustained by remembering.” (Gillis, 1996, p. 3). Thus, how national groups represent their history and remember this is fundamental to how they define themselves and their self-perception. According to Halbwachs (1992), “no memory is possible outside frameworks used by people living in society to determine and retrieve their recollections” (p. 43). Collective memory is, as such, not something we simply ‘have.’ Collective memory is not a static image frozen in time. Instead, it changes, fades, adapts, or evolves with the group. Consequently, collective memory uses “ancient facts according to the beliefs and spiritual needs of the present” (Halbwachs, 1992, p. 7).

Halbwachs’ seminal work has undergone thorough examination throughout the years as his concept of collective memory continues to be developed immensely across a wide spectrum of academic fields from sociology and history to politics and media across even more social and national contexts (Erll, 2011; Neiger, 2020; Olick, 2013; Tileaga, 2008). Due to its wide applicability, the term of collective memory has also been criticised for being

⁵ The concept was originally coined in Halbwachs’ book *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*, published in 1925. The first comprehensive English translation of his work was published in 1992 by Lewis A. Coser, which the author references.

“poorly understood in contemporary academic discourse” (Wertsch & Roediger, 2008, p. 318) and for not paying enough attention to the problem of reception in regard to how these memories are actually collectively accepted (Kansteiner, 2002). Others have criticised Halbwachs for overseeing the implications of collective memory to uses and abuses of power and domination. In his critique, Kansteiner (2002) argues that Halbwachs’ concept overlooks how different pasts can be pitted against each other as established within the politics of memory. In this notion, certain “dominant” and “dominated” memories exist together (Doolan, 2021), meaning that within the “collective” of collective memory there are different social groups or subgroups that may hold certain memories that fall outside of the dominant memory. If these “counter-memories” gain enough attention and following, the foreseen unity of memory “becomes a site of dispute” (Doolan, 2021, p. 17) and, consequently, a conflict of power. This makes collective memory “unstable, fragile, and frequently a source of contention” (Doolan, 2021, p. 16), due to how its “selected to be remembered by a respective community, to advance its goals and serve its self-perception” (Meyers, 2021, p. 1684), which only presents a partial presentation of the past in “an ever-changing formation over time and space” (Zelizer, 1995). “As social, temporal, and local contexts change, dimensions of remembering are constantly charged with new meanings” (Yusufov & Meyers, 2023, p. 3). In this sense, collective memory is far removed from historical authenticity, stressing its constructionist function and subjectivity to manipulation or other types of influence.

Such influences, illustrating how collective memory can be charged with new meanings and feelings, are the notion of the politics of regret. The term, originally coined by Jeffrey Olick (2013) in his research on the politics of memory in post-war Germany, refers to “a variety of practices with which many contemporary societies confront toxic legacies of the past” (p. 122) and encapsulates how individuals and groups navigate the complex terrain of memory, guilt, and responsibility (Toth, 2015). It is often linked to political and official apologies from state leaders, remembrance days, and reparations to victims, among others, in which they acknowledge their role in problematic past events (Mihai & Thaler, 2014). A phenomenon that scholars argue has become more common in recent decades, calling the present the ‘age of apology’ (Olick, 2013; Toth, 2015; Vitnitzky-Seroussi, 2002) or ‘apology mania’ (Mihai & Thaler, 2014). According to Olick, society is experiencing a profound memory crisis, where, instead of using memory to strengthen senses of nationalism and patriotism, the decline of nation-states,

replaces the old as a new type of self-legitimation (Olick, 2013).

Over time, the concept has garnered the attention of many scholars. Such explorations include the rhetoric of public apologies, the psychological impact on its receivers, the moral implications of remembering past wrongs, and more, according to Toth's (2015) study of the phenomenon. However, the concept has also been criticised for its breadth, ignoring other forms of interactions with difficult pasts. In his criticism of Olick's concept, Toth (2015) proposes a different interpretation of the politics of regret as a form of mythical thinking, adopting Bell's (2006) understanding, which conceptualises the politics of regret as "highly simplified narratives ascribing fixed and coherent meanings to selected events, people, and places, real or imaginary. They are easily intelligible and transmissible and help constitute or bolster particular visions of self, society, and world" (Bell, 2006, as cited by Toth, 2015, pp. 553-54). Toth's interpretation of the politics of regret as 'mythical' aligns with the notion of collective memory elucidated earlier. In this sense, the politics of regret is a reconstruction of meaning and collective memory, or as Toth argues a "part of a mythscape" in which "various myths of the collective are forged and challenged" (p. 556). To simplify, this study primarily refers to the politics of regret as a type of discourse that can shape collective memory in line with the applied analytical framework of CDA and MCDA. However, applying the notion that various discourses and collective memories can challenge each other and coexist.

When analysing the discourses of the past, it is also important to note what is missing from these representations (Vinitzky-Seroussi & Teeger, 2010), the people, voices, events, and narratives that were not remembered. Anderson (1983) referred to this as the practice of "remember/forget" in his seminal work on imagined communities - the remembering of one thing, meant forgetting the other. In other words, memory is "constructed around its own blind spots and silences" (Brink, 2000, p. 37, as cited by Vinitzky-Seroussi & Teeger, 2010). Erll even claimed that "forgetting is the rule and remembering the exception" (2011, p. 8). However, "forgetting" as a concept has oftentimes been criticised for being imprecise and misleading (Doolan, 2021) as individuals, not entire societies can forget. Instead, Doolan (2021) argues that the term "unremembering" draws attention to how certain memories can be concealed or kept silenced from the population who never remembered (p. 20) as "being silent and forgetting, are not necessarily the same thing (...) On the contrary, silence can hold memory, even when hiding it" (pp. 18-19). While certain memories become part of our collective memory,

others are silenced. This can be seen as a deliberate act, where those in power dictate what should be remembered or forgotten about the past. Similarly, silence itself is unstable, and unpredictable, and can manifest in different ways; overtly by its complete absence or covertly by being veiled by much mnemonic talk (Vinitzky-Seroussi & Teeger, 2010). Similar to Doolan, Stoler (2016) argues, in her study of French colonialism, that “forgetting and amnesia is more than misleading terms.” (p. 128), instead replaces them with the new term ‘aphasia’ to describe the difficulty of expressing and comprehending. ‘Colonial aphasia’ is thus how we as a society may have access to knowledge about colonialism, but we have difficulty connecting these particular events of the past with events of the present.

1.2 Literature review

The literature review is structured into two segments. *Medium as Memory - Memory as Medium* explores the current strand of research on the interconnection between memory, media, commemoration, and documentaries. *Greenland in Danish Discourse* examines the existing literature on Danish-Greenlandic historical and existing discourses and explores associated concepts of postcolonialism and representation.

1.2.1. Medium as Memory – Memory as Medium

Olick (2013) argues that there are three ways in which collective memory changes. Firstly, when social actors deliberately change or maintain an image of the past. Secondly, when the culture itself changes and thus the image of the past changes with it. And thirdly, when the media that encodes the images of the past changes (Doolan, 2021). As such, one of the most common ways for memory to take form is through the media (Edy, 1999) because as Neiger (2020) put it “for memory to be collective it needs to be manifested and socially shared, and thus ought to be mediated” (p. 1). In other words, collective memory cannot exist without “public articulation” through communicative channels (Neiger et al., 2011).

Similarly to how collective memory is socially constructed, media and its products are also constructed. Considering this, it is significant to understand “who this construction serves and who has the power to construct collective memory” (Neiger, 2020, p. 5). This aspect of collective memory stresses its socio-political force (p. 5). Thus, the media has been surmised as an effective instrument in creating representations of the past (Edy, 1999)

and due to its frequency and availability, has been shown to influence what and how we remember certain events or processes, both on a collective and individual level (Kligler-Vilenchik, Tsfat, & Meyers, 2014), especially when the event is not experienced by first hand but passed down generations (Lang & Lang, 1989) as in the case of historical events. In this sense, collective memory is ultimately a mediated phenomenon that exists through public articulations and various expressions of language. In the words of Erll (2011): “the medium is the memory” (p. 115).

1.2.1.1. Commemorative journalism

If the media is the memory, then journalists take the role of memory agents who shape how people remember mediated events and ascribe meaning to them (Zelizer, 1995). When selecting which facts, information and images are significant and conveying their meaning to an audience, journalists function as “an interpretive community, a group that authenticates itself through its use of narratives and collective memory” (Zelizer, 1992, p. 9). The role of journalists as the authors of ‘history’s first draft’ is largely agreed upon (Edy, 1999), but journalists' work on memory is also a deeply integrated part of the practice and form itself. According to Zelizer (2008), memory is incorporated into journalism in three main ways; when it necessitates memory, when it invites memory, and when it indulges memory. One common use of form that necessitates memory is commemorative journalism, a practice that makes the past the journalistic piece’s main subject (Edy, 1999; Zelizer, 2008). The purpose of commemorative journalism is connected to remembering and celebrating the anniversary of a significant occurrence (Edy, 1999; Kitch, 2002). As Britten (2013, as cited by Yusuf & Meyers, 2023) argues, journalism appears to function “as an agent that shapes cultural identity, rather than a mere conveyor of information” (p. 5). Hence, commemoration as a device is a “socially organised means of directing public attention toward an event as somehow focal or formative in collective experience” (White, 1997, p. 71). Thus, commemoration is neither an absolute nor context-free version of the past. What specific occurrences are selected to be commemorated and how it is remembered is closely associated with events of the present and who gets to tell it.

There exists a significant amount of research on the media’s role in commemoration, emphasising the genre’s tendency “to narrate consistent and reaffirming stories” (Meyers, 2021, p. 1683) about a nation’s shared past (Edy, 1999). Or as Ricoeur (2004) argued, when “national self-love” is at stake, self-criticism will be lacking (p. 79). But more studies

also reveal that hegemonic discourses will be accompanied by competing narratives, showcasing what Meyers (2021) calls commemorative journalism's 'critical potential.' These narratives, he argues, contribute to the media's ongoing investigation of the past, especially when it comes to how the media commemorates difficult pasts (Tileaga, 2008; Vinitzky-Seroussi, 2002; Wagner-Pacifi & Schwartz, 1991; Wodak & De Cillia, 2007). As noted by Olick (2007), "round number anniversaries make it hard for politicians to remain silent 'or at least make their silence loud'" (p. 105, as cited by Andersen, 2013, p. 59). Moreover, research has highlighted the instability of collective memory, including how commemoration also reflects when social-political contexts interfere and reverse its critical trajectory (Yusufov & Meyers, 2023).

1.2.1.2. Documentaries – a visual interpretation of reality

The media has a vital role in shaping collective memory, particularly through the creation of images (Kansteiner, 2002). Historically, the written word, through newspapers and books, was the primary medium for societies to remember. Or to use the words of Connerton (1996) what is written down acts as "a will to be remembered" (as cited by Doolan, 2021, p. 20). 56). One such visual document that can be argued to necessitate memory, is the historical documentary genre. According to Ebbrecht (2007), many European countries' public broadcasting outputs have since the 1960s featured historical documentaries and are still today gaining importance with the rising competition between public service television and transnational streaming services (Bruun & Bille, 2022).

The documentary genre has traditionally been perceived as merely conveying information and simply a reflection of reality, just as the word 'documentary' deriving from 'document', referring to "reliable data that can serve as proof of something" (Catala, 2010, as cited by Roselló, 2022, p. 58). However, it is generally agreed upon that the genre, rather than being an "objective trace of the truth" (Roselló, 2022, p. 58) is more of a "creative treatment of actuality" (Grierson, 1965), with its long tradition of using discursive and narrative structures "aimed at making the knowledge they contain 'seem true'" (Roselló, 2022, p. 56). The power of documentaries simultaneously derives from the privileged status of images and "their exceptional ability to close, and even obliterate, the gap between first-hand experience and secondary witnessing" (Kansteiner, 2002, p. 191), and from its privileged role as a piece of journalism which "gives them a unique authority in telling the story of the past. That authority may make for more powerful emotional connections on the part of the audience" (Edy, 1999, p. 73). The ability to strongly connect with the audience has meant that documentaries have often been a key tool

of propaganda historically (Roselló, 2022). This is due to historical documentaries being “more than a source of information; they also entertain and move viewers.” (Pajala, 2017, p. 272). Consequently, what modes and affective qualities the documentarists employ in their historical depictions “may enable different ways of relating to the past than ‘official’ history” (Pajala, 2017, p. 272). This has become increasingly relevant due to changes of the documentary genre itself. From originally consisting mainly of archival footage for illustrative purposes of a dominating narrator referred to as ‘explanatory television,’ the historical television documentary today has turned to ‘visually narrative television’ (Ebbrecht, 2007, p. 36) that uses reconstructions as part of its main narrative modes. Hence, drama-documentaries (also called docudramas) construct and recreate supposedly real events, e.g., by employing dramatised re-enactments and dialogue, and thus regularly blurring the line between fiction and journalism (Bateman, 2017). According to Ebbrecht (2007), this allows drama-documentaries to combine “the desire to believe in the truth of representation” and “the desire to see how historic events” have taken place, while simultaneously fulfilling “the desire to fit national or personal versions of history to officially remembered history by offering a framework for interpreting and reconstructing historic events in the viewer’s mind” (p. 40).

In this regard, the form and the visual and narrative modes utilised by the documentary have implications for the perception and understanding of history, and therefore for how historical events enter into the collective memory. The images’ evocative power and the interpretation provided through words combined “act as signposts, directing people who remember to preferred meanings by the fastest route,” according to Zelizer (1998, as cited by Kansteiner, 2002, p. 191). Following this notion, “documentaries lend us the ability to see timely issues in need of attention” (Nichols, 2001, p. 2). As such, what is deemed a timely issue or worthy of our attention is part of a process closely tied to that of the agent of memory, the journalist, which “is always anchored within larger political and cultural contexts” (Yusufov & Meyers, 2023, p. 2). Hence, documentaries are always shaped by current and past discourses, similar to collective memory, while utilising their role as authoritative storytellers of the past.

With the increased saturation of history in the media and especially audiovisual content (Ebbrecht, 2007; Pajala 2017; Roselló, 2022), research into how history is narrated and the overall role of television in constructing collective memory has grown (Pajala, 2017). Despite this, with a few exceptions, most explorations of the media’s depictions of the

Danish-Greenlandic relationship have focused on fiction (Thisted, 2015), while documentaries and mainstream news media's representation have been explored less (Mortensen & Maegaard, 2018, 2019).

1.2.2. Greenland in Danish Discourse

1.2.2.1. Good vs. Bad Coloniser

According to studies of Greenland's representation in the Danish discourse, including, but not exclusively, in literature (Thisted), film (Jensen, 2015), historical documents (Rud, 2017), parliamentary discussions (Benson & Frech, 2023; Gad, 2008), and newspapers (Bjørk, 2008; McLisky, 2017), several discourses have existed historically regarding how Denmark sees itself as a nation in its relationship to Greenland. However, many of them can be argued to share certain similarities in terms of how they all contribute to the collective image of Denmark as "a good coloniser" or "benevolent coloniser." (Jensen, 2015, 2019; Hermansen, 2021; Loftsdóttir & Jensen, 2012; Thisted, 2014a, 2015, 2017). Overall, within this discourse, Denmark is primarily depicted as the protective "mother nation" that takes care of Greenland, the "child," until it one day is deemed "mature" enough to become independent. This "mother/child-relationship" between the two countries can be traced back to historical documents and literature by Danish explorers and authors in the 1800s (Andersen, 2010; Thisted, 2003), but has been continuously present in public discourse during the modernisation period in the 1950-60s (Thomsen, 1998), and more recently, Greenland has been conceptualised as a "teenager" that still needs the grown-up, hence, Denmark's continuous authority (Gad, 2008). The leading Danish scholar on Greenlandic representations in literature, Kirsten Thisted (2014a), explains the discourse as follows:

Gently as possible, Denmark has brought Greenland into modernity with its pertaining to enlightenment and the creation of society. Greenlanders have been included in the administration as they gradually developed and became "mature" enough to partake in the decision-making. (...) In this narrative, love and mutual respect are the feelings ascribed to the relationship. (p. 3)

Following this notion, Denmark has taken it upon itself to help "raise" Greenland to achieve its ultimate goal of independence. Always acting out of goodwill and intentions. This paternalistic discourse is a common feature in nation-states' efforts to legitimise colonialism, often referred to as the "white man's burden" to "civilise" the non-white "Other" (Thisted,

2003, 2015, 2020). However, whereas other former colonisers have implemented critical scrutiny and accepted their role in driving these racist actions forward (Andersen, 2013), Denmark has historically refused this notion as they perceived the relationship with Greenland as Thisted (2020) states “one of close bonds and consent” (p. 109). A notable example is the Danish historian Thorkild Østergaard, who contends that Denmark cannot be classified as a colonial power (Thisted, 2014, 2023). This unique Danish self-understanding of being exempt from traditional power regimes is often referred to as *Nordic exceptionalism* by scholars of postcolonialism (Jensen, 2019; Loftsdóttir & Jensen, 2012). Another studied example of this type of exceptionalism is Denmark’s participation in the global slave trade in the 1700s, shipping more than 100,000 people from Africa, primarily Ghana, to the Danish West Indies, known today as the Virgin Islands. In this case, it was not until recently that this topic garnered criticism from the general Danish public (Andersen, 2013; Blaagaard, 2011; Olwig, 2003; Thisted, 2008). Similarly, the colonisation of Greenland has mostly been constructed as “an act of humane support” (Mortensen & Maegaard, 2019, p. 2), and selflessness for bringing welfare and modernity to this harsh and cold land (Thisted, 2023) - a discourse that aligns better with the narrative “of peaceful benevolence” (Adler-Nissen & Gad, 2014, p. 4).

Against the narrative of the good coloniser, there is a narrative of an imperialistic coloniser and a relationship that was and continues to be marked by fundamental inequality, lifted by a growing proportion of research critically engaging with Denmark’s colonial past (Gissel, 2023; Höhlund & Burnett, 2019). While not an unexplored topic within academia (Blaagaard, 2010; Gad, 2008, 2013; Jensen, 2012, 2015, 2019; Rud, 2017; Thisted, 2014ab, 2015), Greenland has still received comparatively less attention than the aforementioned case of the Virgin Islands, due to the dominance of the discourse of Greenland being “project shared between the coloniser and the colonised” (Thisted, 2020, p. 109). Despite claims that Denmark never colonised Greenland, there is now broad consensus among scholars and historians that the relationship is inherently “post-colonial.” According to Rud (2017), the Danish-Greenlandic relationship is “deeply marked by the legacy of colonialism” (p. 1) and shaped by a continuous power imbalance. Furthermore, the Danish self-perception as a uniquely benevolent coloniser has been criticised for hindering the emergence of critical discourses (Loftsdóttir & Jensen, 2012) and the establishment of a politics of regret (Andersen, 2013, p. 58). This “amnesia, repression, benevolence, exceptionalism, and

blindness discourse,” as Jensen (2019, p. 14) calls it, persists as the common narrative defining Denmark’s colonial history and current post-colonial present.

Other researchers have pointed out the contrast between the critical engagement of Danish academia and the general Danish public discourse (Benson & Frech, 2023; Thisted; 2020). However, the narrative of Denmark as a “bad coloniser” has been slowly emerging (Thisted, 2015). A recent study demonstrates that two Danish fiction novels from 2020 and 2021⁶ “invite the readers to participate in a collective work of remembrance that challenges the established narrative about the relationship” (Thisted, 2023, p. 182), reflecting that Denmark may be entering a new stage in its collective memory of Greenland. But even within this largely negative discourse, Kladakis (2012) argues that the shame that this discourse articulates tends to position the Danish people as worthy and honourable because they are doing the mora right thing – a nation-building strategy to reconcile the Danish nation (p. 39). Similarly, in her study of how Australia utilises shame when dealing with the oppression of Aboriginals, Ahmed (2005) argues that “shame becomes not only a mode of recognition of injustices committed against others, but also a form of nation building”, and shame allows the Australians, in this case, to “assert our identity as a nation.” (p. 103). Consequently, the enduring power imbalances and dominant discourses remain intact.

1.2.2.2. Mediating the „Other“

While the two narratives may seem like each other’s opposites, they share the notion that it is Denmark and Danish actors who are at the centre, mostly limiting Greenlanders to side characters, a general “Other,” creating an uneven power relation with Denmark as superior to Greenland (Mortensen & Maegaard, 2019; Jensen, 2015; Thisted, 2003; Said, 1979). The phenomenon of the “Other” was originally coined by Edward W. Said in his famous work *Orientalism* from 1979. He studied how representation of the ‘Orient’ has been used by the West to mould an image of the region that would justify the West’s colonial and imperialist actions. Although Said’s *Orientalism* is focused on Islam and the Middle East region, concepts such as the “Other” have been applied to various studies of postcolonialism and representation in the media that do not share the same geography (Jensen, 2015; Thisted, 2003). In the context of this study, the term *Eskimo-orientalism* was introduced by Fienup-Riordan in 1995.⁷

⁶ The novels are: Astrid Saalbach *Der hvor du ikke vil hen* (2021) and Iben Mondrup’s *Tabita* (2020).

She argued that similarly to Western representations of the East, the Inuit people (in this case Alaskan Eskimos) are portrayed as a homogenous simple, almost childlike group. According to Mortensen & Maegaard (2019), “The idea of Inuit or Greenlanders as originally closer to nature, and to a more true and pure world” (p. 4) has similarly been persistent through past and modern representations (Bjørst, 2008; Sandbye, 2016; Thisted, 2003). However, Danish scholar of postcolonialism Jensen (2015) criticises Fienup-Riordian’s variation for being simply misleading and counter-functional to the study of representation: “Arctic Orientalism like Orientalism itself is simultaneously a Western mirror, but also a far more specifically defined national-imperial mirror.” (p. 141). Instead, he argues that it would be better served to understand the Danish-Greenlandic context within the discourse of modernisation, which accordingly describes everything outside of Europe as ‘traditional,’ ‘static,’ and ‘prehistoric.’ Greenlanders are mostly represented as passive receivers of Danish welfare, against Danes as active givers (p. 146). In this passive representation of the Greenlanders, they become bystanders in their own country, quiet and almost invisible (Jensen, 2015). Similarly to the notion that there is no remembering without forgetting, representation also comprises non-representation: the act of silencing or excluding certain voices from the dominant narratives. Despite the growing amount of research on Greenland in Danish discourse, Greenlandic representation, and lack of the same in journalism have only been sparsely studied, predominantly focusing on works of fiction (Jensen, 2015; Thisted, 2003, 2015, 2023). However, some studies suggest that Greenlandic sources and topics are underrepresented in the mainstream media, and when they occur, they are often portrayed in stereotypical manners (Bjørst, 2008; Knudsen, Bjørn, Carlsson, Rosing, & Suri, 2021; Jørndrup, 2022). Similarly, research on the commemoration of Greenlandic-Danish relations is almost absent. However, a Danish Master’s thesis from 2022 explores the media coverage across a selection of Danish newspapers during the 300th commemoration and concludes that the coverage was sparse and Greenlandic sources almost absent (Larsen & Møller, 2022).⁸ However, this research was conducted before DR’s documentary series was released. As such,

⁷ The term Eskimo carries pejorative connotations. Therefore, this thesis will use the term most commonly used in Danish studies *Arctic Orientalism* instead.

⁸ As mentioned before, the object of this study, the TV documentary *Historien om Grønland og Danmark* was not released before April-May 2022 due to production delays and is thus not a part of the analysis of Larsen & Møller’s thesis. However, they do mention the documentary in their discussion on page 71-72.

due to DR's role in the Danish media landscape, as will be further explored in the Methodology section of this study, a vital piece of commemorative journalism is still to be uncovered.

To sum up, despite a growing amount of research dealing with discourses surrounding the Danish-Greenlandic relationship and representation reveal postcolonial remains, the literature highlights the necessity for further critical analysis of the contemporary Danish-Greenlandic relationship, particularly within the framework of collective memory and commemorative journalism. Because if collective memory never really is static, but instead travels as social, temporal, and local contexts change (Erlil, 2011; Yusufov & Meyers, 2023), the Danish confrontation with its self-image and reckoning with its colonial past remain unfinished (Benson & Frech, 2023; Jensen, 2012).

2. Methodology

This research seeks to expand our knowledge about how discourses shape collective memory through the media. It employs critical discourse analysis (CDA) and multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) to examine the Danish TV documentary *Historien om Grønland og Danmark* and the subsequent review articles from Danish mainstream media along the political spectrum. The following chapter presents the methodology, incl. the selection of the research objects, the analytical methods employed and their applicability to the research, and the data collection to ensure the transparency and credibility of the study.

2.1. Rationale of research object

2.1.1. The History of Greenland and Denmark

The TV documentary in four parts was produced and broadcast by the Danish public broadcaster Danmarks Radio (DR) in 2022 on their main TV channel DR1 at prime time. The documentary attracted a substantial audience, with over 600.000 viewers tuning into watch the first episode out of the country's total population of 5.8 million (Breum, 2022). Furthermore, the programme was also aired in Greenland on their official public broadcast Kalaallit Nunaata Radioa (KNR),⁹ in addition to being available for streaming online via

⁹ It has not been possible to find comparable viewing numbers for KNR.

their video-on-demand service, dr.dk/tv,¹⁰ making the final viewing numbers potentially way larger (Strange, 2023). On that note, according to Bruun and Bille (2022), in the changing media landscape where foreign streaming services challenge public service television, television documentaries are given large priority in their efforts to maintain mainstream audiences. Additionally, as the public broadcaster and due to its relatively high numbers of viewers, “DR can be considered as having an authoritative position in the Danish media landscape” (Mortensen & Maegaard, 2019, p. 3) Noticeably, DR, in contrast to its commercial counterparts, is required by Danish law to produce content concerning Greenland and to “bring Danes together around common starting points in Danish culture, society, and history”, according to its public service media contract (DR’s public service kontrakt, 2022, p. 1). Or as Breum (2022) puts it:

There do not exist other institutions in this Kingdom that with the same power can deliver messages to the Danes that will be heard and per definition, because it is from DR, is accepted as trustworthy and close to the truth.

In other words, given DR’s role as a public service media and as Denmark’s main public broadcasting channel, and its relatively large audience base, the documentary series can be viewed as “potentially central in the circulation, production, and reproduction” (Mortensen & Maegaard, 2019, p. 5) of the Danish-Greenlandic collective memory. Additionally, anniversaries are one of the occasions that offer journalists the chance or incentive to re-examine the past (Edy, 1999; Meyers, 2021; Zelizer, 2008), and the documentary thus positions itself as an example of how to commemorate and understand the past relationship with today’s eyes, which including the other factors, makes the TV documentary a highly pertinent case to study (Strange, 2023).

2.1.2. Press material and review articles

In addition to the documentary series, three interviews and six review articles from Danish elite newspapers and mainstream media outlets published before, during, and following the release of *Historien om Grønland og Danmark* have been selected for analysis. There are two main reasons for adding this to the body of analysis: 1) to expand the framework of the thesis author’s previous analysis, which focused exclusively on the documentary series (Strange, 2023) and 2) to further explore the documentary series’

¹⁰ To be precise, the documentary has been unavailable for streaming on dr.dk/tv from November 2023 to May 2024 due to licensing rights. Instead, the documentary has been accessed via mediestream.dk, the Danish Royal Library’s digital media server, for this research.

implications in the discursive dimension, which is a crucial element to conducting critical discourse analysis and what mainly sets it apart from other qualitative analysis tools (van Dijk, 2015; Reynolds, 2019).¹¹

Moreover, the focus on review articles diverges from the typical centring on discourse strategies and the politics of regret employed by state officials and authorities, specifically national governments through state apologies (Mihai & Thaler, 2014; Olick, 2013; Vinitzky-Serrossi, 2002). Instead, the study turns its attention to the responses of cultural media commentators by analysing *how* they construct discourses to the documentary's depiction of Denmark's action as a coloniser in Greenland. These review articles fall within the umbrella term "cultural journalism" and more specifically "cultural critique" - a genre of journalism noted to be relatively neglected within media scholarship and lacking precise definitions, despite its significance to both traditional mainstream media as well as alternative digital media (Kristensen & From, 2015; Kristensen, 2019). Furthermore, Kristensen & From (2015) note that "the review has been a constitutive genre of cultural journalism" (p. 3) and is regarded as an important genre, especially within elite newspapers, for cultural legitimisation processes (Janssen & Verboord, 2015). The aim of these reviews varies "from providing a detailed, expert-based cultural evaluation to appraising or commenting on a cultural product in the media" (Kristensen, 2019, p. 6). Media reviews also differ from traditional news reporting, e.g. critical thinkers and media scholars often write them in addition to professionally trained journalists and they often adhere to a more subjective and analytical tone (Kristensen & From, 2015; Kristensen, 2019). These reviews, as such, function as "cultural intermediates between the artwork and the audience" (Yaren & Hazir, 2020, p. 612). It can thus be argued that the sampled reviews due to their wide distribution via Danish elite newspapers and mainstream media and their cultural legitimacy and function as intermediates give them power in how the audience interprets the cultural product (Janssen & Verboord, 2015), in this case, the documentary series and the subsequent collective, social, and historical discourses that it constructs.

Finally, press material, including interviews with the director and producers of the documentary series have been collected, according to Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional approach. The aim is to examine their intentions, and the messages they seek to convey through the narrative, their explanations for certain choices, and ultimately how they

¹¹ Concepts such as the social dimension and critical discourse analysis will be further explained in the following segments 3.2 and 3.3.

influence the construction of the discourse.

2.2. Data collection

The interviews and review articles were selected using purposive sampling to identify and choose particularly “information-rich cases” relevant to the research (Patton, 1990; Schreier, 2018). According to Reynolds (2019), collecting representative samples is not typical within CDA research as the method requires in-depth reading. Instead, she argues, researchers should “purposefully select stories to describe *critical discourse moments*, which according to Reynolds (2019) are “time periods during which knowledge about a specific topic appears to be growing or changing” (p. 57). As the analysis deals with the discourses generated by the documentary series *Historien om Grønland og Danmark*, it makes sense to limit the sampling time frame according to the documentary release as this is the ‘moment’ the topic will gain more attention. Accordingly, the data was collected via the Danish online newspaper database Infomedia.dk providing access to all Danish media outlets, using their advanced data search. This allowed the author to specify the search to exclusively give results with the keywords “Historien om Grønland og Danmark” in this exact order, within the specified time frame (April 20 - June 30, 22) that comprises the week leading up to the release of the documentary series and a month after its conclusion.¹² This gave a total of 179 results.

To narrow the sample, the author manually filtered the articles, according to media outlets, and whether it can be deemed an “information-rich case” (Patton, 1990, p. 181). Therefore, articles only briefly mentioning *Historien om Grønland og Danmark* were dismissed for the study as they do not properly engage with the documentary series and the present research.¹³

The articles would have to fit the genre of media review as defined in the previous chapter or be interviews that could inform the production process. Since the advanced search function did not allow for such specifications, the author would scan each article for words such as “review,” “media commentary,” “opinion,” and “debate,” as well as the inclusion of stylistic choices such as using personal narration and clearly expressing an opinion. The

¹² Gylstoff (2020) is selected as an exception to this time criteria as it provides important information regarding the vision of the documentary series. This was collected via DR.dk’s search engine.

¹³ E.g., one article focuses on a plot from Episode 1 where certain Danish citizens were forcibly married and subsequently sent to Greenland. This sequence is then compared to the TV programme *Married at First Sight*. In this regard, the article does not deal with the historical relationship between Greenland and Denmark.

words “interview” and “press material” guided the purposeful sampling for the production process. To remove such repetitions from the research corpus¹⁴, the author would select according to which media outlet they were published in as per their standing as mainstream and quality media in Denmark and their subsequent ability to shape public discourse (Barroso, 2020; Bruun-Hansen, 2021). The chosen media outlets cover the spectrum of political editorial stands within Danish society, targeting different types of voters across political parties (Schröder, Blach-Ørsten, & Eberholst, 2018). However, Schröder et al. (2018) highlight that most of the Danish journalistic coverage adheres to journalistic values of objectivity and nuance, and mostly does not reflect the outlets’ editorial stands. No current research has been found on how media reviews reflect the editorial stand of their respective outlets, but due to their subjective nature, one could conjecture certain differences. For example, some of these reviews are explicitly accompanied by disclaimers, e.g. “This is an opinion piece: The piece is an expression of the writer's position (...)” (Lentz, 2022), any differences between outlets could thereby be random. With this in mind, hypothesising differences between outlets is not the main objective of this study, but rather contributing to a general picture of how Denmark as a coloniser in Greenland is constructed in the Danish media at the time of the documentary’s release, as per the research question.

From this, the sample was narrowed down to nine articles. As with any qualitative study, the size depends on the purpose of the study (Patton, 1990). Since the analysis already comprises the documentary series, a smaller sample size will allow the author to elaborate on the discursive elements and the details essential to qualitative research (Mason, 2002).

The sampled media review articles (number of articles), including approximate political affiliation¹⁵:

- Avisen Danmark (2): undisclosed
- Berlingske (1): centre-right
- Information (1): centre-left
- Jyllands-Posten (1): centre-right
- Kristeligt Dagblad (1): independent evangelical

¹⁴ Some articles are frequented more than once in the database due to being published both online and in print as well as featuring in different outlets due to shared publishing rights within media conglomerates.

¹⁵ These editorial lines are based on Nielbo et al. (2022)’s table 1: Danish newspaper data. It is important to note that the newspapers do not have direct affiliation with political parties and that the alignment reflects either their own classifications, political affiliation of their readership, and in general loosely defined.

The sampled interviews with director and producers, including appr. political affiliation:

- DR (2): public service
- Politiken (1): centre-left

Berlingske, *Jyllands-Posten*, and *Politiken* are considered to be Denmark’s three legacy newspapers. Analysing and comparing these outlets is a common approach to Danish media research, incl. research on the Greenland-Denmark relationship (Farver, 2010), as they are three of the most widely-distributed daily newspapers in the country. Following the established approach, but expanding the breadth of the sample to represent a more plural media landscape, reviews from *Avisen Danmark*, *Information*, and *Kristeligt Dagblad* were selected. The sample does not include the two media outlets with the largest circulation in Denmark, *Ekstra Bladet* and *BT* (Bruun-Hansen, 2021). But neither appeared in the database search and after manually checking *Ekstra Bladet* and *BT*’s digital archives with the keywords, there still appeared no article/review about the documentary series. Interviews conducted by *DR* journalists have been selected since *DR* is the distributor and producer of the documentary series and analysing the differences in their focus and discourses can contribute to the overall of *DR*’s ambition with the documentary in the first place.

Table 1.

Review articles and interviews used in the discursive analysis.

Media (author)	Article headline	English headline	Date published
Avisen Danmark (Hyllested)	Flov smag i munden: Danmark indtog Grønland med sygdomme og tidligere straffefanger.	Bad taste in mouth: Denmark took over Greenland with illnesses and previous convicts.	April 25, 2022
Avisen Danmark (Hyllested)	Død over sælerne og ind med kontrolsamfundet: Historien om Grønland og Danmark fortsætter med at forarge.	Death to the seals and in with “Big Brother society”: The History of Greenland and Denmark continues to cause outrage.	May 2, 2022
Berlingske (Blüdnikow)	Serien om Grønland og Danmark er seriøst historieformidling.	The series about Greenland and Denmark is serious history dissemination.	May 16, 2022

DR (Gerdes)	Grønlandsk instruktør: 'Jeg håber, DR-serie vil være en inspiration for de yngre grønlandske generationer'	Greenlandic director: 'I hope that the DR series will inspire the younger Greenlandic generations.'	April 21, 2022
DR (Gylstorff)	DR producerer nye serie om Grønlands og Danmarks fælles historie	DR produces new series about Greenland and Denmark's common history.	Nov 23, 2020
DR (Gylstorff)	Tema på DR: Historien om Grønland og Danmark	Focus on DR: The history of Greenland and Denmark.	April 8, 2022
Information (Nikolajsen)	301 års historie formidles effektivt, overskueligt og tankevækkende i ,Historien om Grønland og Danmark.	301 years of history told effectively, clearly, and thought-provokingly in "The History of Greenland and Denmark.	May 16, 2022
Jyllands-Posten (Lentz)	Serie om Grønlands historie er væsentlig at vise danskerne – og grønlænderne	Series about Greenland's history is significant to show Danes - and Greenlanders.	May 14, 2022
Kristeligt Dagblad (Bacher)	Mediekommentar: Egede var i Grønland en god mand.	Media commentary: Egede was a good man in Greenland.	April 26, 2022
Politiken (Schmidt)	Hvis vi fryser, så ryster vi. Hvis vi bliver forladt i kærlighed, så gør det ondt.	If we freeze, we shake. If we are left in love, it hurts.	May 4, 2022

2.3. Critical Discourse Analysis & Multimodal Discourse Analysis

The primary analytical method chosen to dissect the documentary series and the review articles is critical discourse analysis (CDA), with multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) acting as the supplementary method to examine multimodal elements relevant to the discourses. According to Fairclough (1995), discourse refers to the use of language, including any spoken, written, or visual expression, as a form of social practice. Therefore, central to both methods is the focus on the social context, the use and dynamics of power and power relations, and the way they are enacted, reproduced, and resisted (Bateman, 2017; Fairclough, 1995; Machin, 2013; van Dijk, 1991; 2015), and they both provide a structure that can respond to different questions of *how* Denmark's actions as a coloniser in Greenland is constructed. CDA research commonly focuses on representations of power dynamics, or lack of the same, including how class, gender, ethnicity, race, language, or world region are constructed in various forms of expression (van Dijk, 1998, p.

18). In this case, the method is useful in finding out how the specific scenes in the documentary and the subsequent media reviews reproduce hegemonic discourses and subtle power relations, evident in broader social context. But also how power can be “questioned, challenged, contested, and resisted” (Pafford & Matusitz, 2017, p. 276). According to van Dijk (2015), CDA differs from other qualitative approaches, as is not as much a direction, but instead “aims to offer a different ‘mode’ or ‘perspective’” (p. 1) that critically stresses how discourse is a form of social practice, inherently shaping and shaped by the social structures (Machin & Mayr, 2012). In other words, CDA requires the researcher to distance themselves from the data to analyse the contextual circumstances influencing it and their impact on the data (Bateman, 2017). As established in the literature review, journalists, and the media function as agents of memory, and can thus be regarded as having a certain amount of power to influence how discourse and collective memory are being shaped (van Dijk, 2015). Following this notion, CDA does not only dissect the structures of power within the documentary series but also the structures of media discourse within society.

Since documentaries are constructed by both verbal and visual modes, the analysis adopts elements from MCDA as mentioned, to analyse language as both the dialogue and the audio-visuals as semantic entities (Machin, 2013). Like CDA, MCDA also claims that visual communication shapes and is shaped by society. According to Bateman (2017), non-verbal aspects of social interaction and communication, including visual and multimodal products, are appropriate targets for a new approach to CDA, as he explains:

Where certain topics or groups may in verbal texts be rendered invisible by suppression, in film certain kinds of characters, actions or locations may similarly be effaced by not showing them or by showing them in a particular light. (p. 612)

In particular, he points out, that documentaries with their aforementioned “truth claim” and their reconstruction of supposedly real events, groups, and power can effectively be studied through the lens of CDA. Several scholars have applied CDA to multimodal texts such as tv-series, talk shows, films, and documentaries (Pafford & Matusitz, 2017; Setiawan, 2018; Sharifi, Ansari, & Asadollahzadeh, 2017; Wang, 2017), before and after the introduction of multimodality to the field by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996). However, since language and visual modes are not entirely the same, treating them the same may not be the most effective approach to understanding their implications on meaning-making (Machin, 2013). By incorporating MCDA into the methodology, researchers gain the tools needed to

analyse how non-linguistic forms convey meaning and how various modes, beyond just individual visual elements, combine to form a comprehensive repertoire of “meaning potentials” (Marchin, 2013, p. 348). Similarly, Rose (2001) points to the importance of recognising “the inherent intentionality” (p. 20) when analysing visual imagery, and not dissociating the modes from their social context. Thereby, all modes in a documentary series contribute equally to the meaning-making (Kress, 2011, p. 38). In other words, the aim is not to exhaustively describe the meaning potential of each mode or instance of the verbal text nor to trace the exact semiotic connection between them, but to focus on how they combined construct and reconstruct current and historical power dynamics and hegemonic discourses concerning the social context. As mentioned before, MCDA acts as the supplementary method. Therefore, while the documentary series’ modes will be part of the “textual” analysis, only the modes relevant to the main analysis will be employed.

Critical discourse studies have become an increasingly important approach for journalism and media scholarship (Toolan, 1997; Reynolds, 2019). While CDA and MCDA may be particularly effective in dissecting underlying power dynamics and the social influences of language and media, both methods share certain weaknesses and limitations. Firstly, they do not offer adequate evidence on how media discourse influences readers and audiences opinion-making, behaviours, and discourse formation in society in general (Schneider, 2013). Adding other methods, such as interviews and focus groups, or in the case of this analysis, the analysis of subsequent media reviews could lessen this limitation (Fairclough, 1995, p. 31). Secondly, CDA has been criticised for being inherently subjective due to its reliance on the researcher’s interpretation and subjective assessment, leading to different interpretations of the same text (Wodak & Meyer, 2015). Van Dijk (2015) has objected to this criticism, arguing that no research is completely devoid of bias and that many scholars of CDA apply a certain amount of “critical self-awareness” in their research by explicitly acknowledging any political or personal affiliations to the research topic. Possible biases of this thesis’ author will be addressed in the discussion of the study’s limitations. It also raises the issue of reproducibility, thereby, raising concerns about the reliability of the findings. Creating a robust methodological framework can help validate findings and strengthen transparency of interpretation (Carvalho, 2008).

Being relatively new, MCDA faces certain criticisms and limitations. Many

linguistically oriented scholars have criticised the approach for lacking systematic attention to detailed structures of language (Machin, 2013). However, describing and revealing the meanings behind all different modes has been proven difficult due to the lack of clear boundaries between modes (Bateman, 2017; Machin, 2013). Yet, others argue that this concern of differentiation between modes “may result in little more than arbitrary findings and may itself not be necessary to make progress in our understanding of non-linguistic communication” (Machin, 2013, p. 349). To avoid such arbitrary findings, the current study will not systematically attend to the detailed structures of the documentary’s modes (Machin, 2013), but instead focus on how different modalities can work together to create certain discourses and power relations (Fairclough, 1995). Therefore, the analytical framework, as outlined in the subsequent chapter, attempts to examine the modes and the social context from the macro-level to decipher how the text and modes in the commemorative documentary series construct discourses and in turn shape collective memory at this critical discourse moment in Danish-Greenlandic history (Carvalho, 2008; Reynolds, 2019).

Furthermore, critics of CDA have argued that the applied analytical strategies ascribed to the method “are as diverse as the fields it emerged from” (Reynolds, 2019, p. 48), and that researchers have neither sufficiently defined discourse nor explained their coding methods (p. 52), while others suggest that this methodological diversity will eventually be overcome (Toolan, 1997). Similarly, MCDA’s lack of a standardised framework arguably results in varying methodologies and interpretations (Machin, 2013). To combat these methodological challenges, the study will systematically outline the employment of CDA and MCDA in the next chapter.

2.4. Analytical Framework

The study draws on Fairclough’s three-dimensional model (1995, 2001) as a guideline, consisting of three interrelated processes of analysis: textual, discursive, and social. This approach enables the analyst to study the interdependence between different types of levels of discourse (Janks, 2006); how the social context influences the discursive practice which influences the text, or how the text influences the social context which influences the discursive. In other words, the text is a social construct.

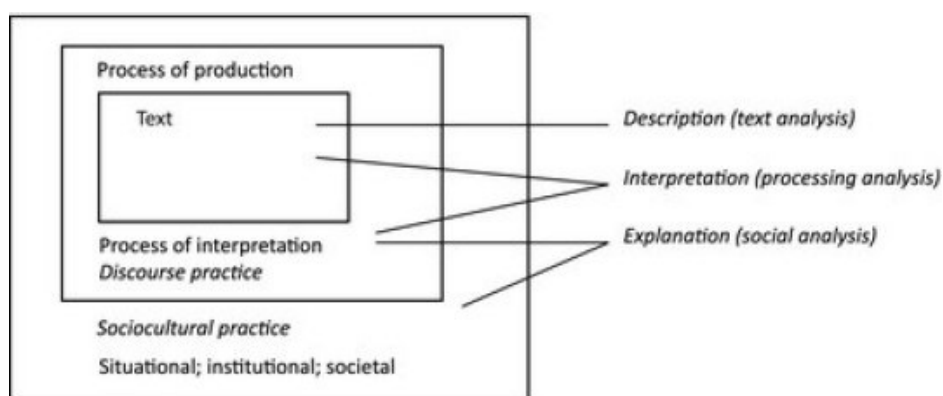


Figure 1 Fairclough's three dimensions (2001, p. 133).

Textual analysis typically means a linguistic analysis of, for instance, vocabulary, grammar, and textual structure (Fairclough, 1992; Setiawan, 2018). For this research, the text is adjusted according to MCDA to comprise the audiovisual modes of expression too (Machin, 2013). Discursive analysis examines the production, distribution, and consumption processes (Fairclough, 1995, 2001; Setiawan, 2018). However, due to the scope of the study, only production and consumption will be discussed in the analysis. Information on the production is derived from interviews with the director and producer. The consumption process will be acquired from the review articles which will be analysed more in-depth. Finally, the social analysis contextualises the discourses found in the two dimensions and examines how they are *recontextualised*, meaning how discourses gain new meanings with changes in the sociocultural context (Wodak & de Cillia, 2007). While the three dimensions will be addressed separately in the analysis, it is with an awareness of the interdependence between dimensions. Therefore, while analysing the data through, e.g. the “lens” of textual dimension, “the other lenses are essential to provide other perspectives” (Janks, 2006, p. 331).

Moreover, as recommended by Fairclough, the framework should be customised to the analysis (Fairclough, 1992), and since discourses can be considered a form of narrative, “consisting of a point of view, at least one character, and a plot” (Yusufov & Meyers, 2023, p. 5), the analysis also draws upon Yusufov & Meyers’ commemorative journalism framework (2023) of narrators and protagonists. By adding a quantitative coding scheme that codes the narrators and protagonists according to selected characteristics (Yusufov & Meyers, 2023), eventual patterns in which groups control the discourses and underlying power dynamics can be uncovered. This aligns with the objective of CDA; “to

locate underlying themes that may not be obvious at the superficial level” (Pafford & Matusitz, 2017, p. 278). In this regard, it is also important to identify which voices are heard and which are not, also established within the collective memory framework, because “power manifests not only in presences but more distinctly, in absences” (Soriano, David, & Atun, 2021, p. 2392).

All four episodes of the documentary series were transcribed. While transcribing, important non-verbal gestures like facial expressions, locations, time, modes, and images were also recorded. The series was watched more than five times from beginning to end.

Text dimension

1. The quantitative coding scheme will be applied to the documentary series, focusing on two narrative components – **Narrators**: identify the selection of expert sources in the documentary according to their ethno-nationality: Danish or Greenlandic. The aim is to answer the question of who is granted the authority to narrate the collective history (Appendix 1). **Protagonists**: identifying who are the protagonists who drive the plot forward. Similarly, who plays the supporting and the minor roles, and who is not heard? (Appendix 2).
2. The “text”, modes, and their affordances in the documentary series are qualitatively analysed. For this research, the **text** includes wording, metaphors, structural oppositions and/or similarities, dialogue, character descriptions and trajectories, and narrative structure. Furthermore, modes will be studied if relevant to the main analysis. **Modes** entail those specific to the drama-documentary genre: archival footage, interviews, music, voice-over commentary, and dramatised material (Pajala, 2017), as well more general visual content, composition, structural oppositions and/or similarities, their mise-en-scene, and narrative structure. Simultaneously, how the modes and language employed contribute to constructing discourses and memory are examined.

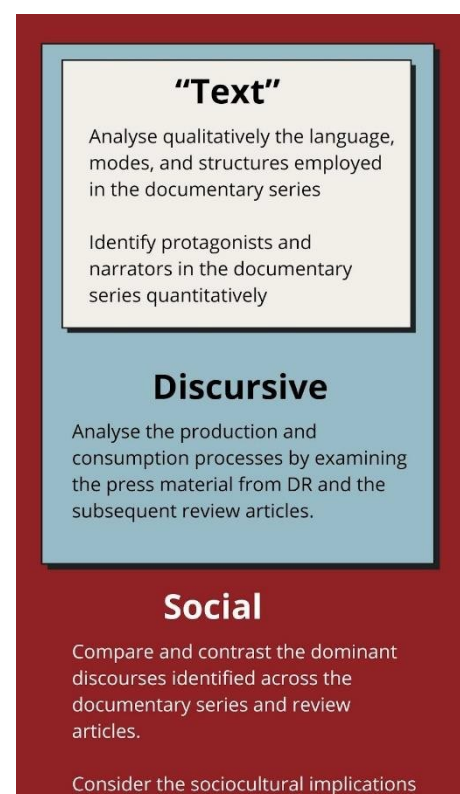


Figure 2 Analytical Framework by the author

3. The most **dominant discourses** identified in the documentary series are identified: what discourses are presented about Denmark's actions as a coloniser in Greenland in the documentary series, and which are excluded? How is power or its absence manifested explicitly and implicitly in these discourses?

Discursive dimension

4. **The production process** is analysed through the released press material collected from the Danish public broadcaster, *DR*, and the search database, to answer the following questions: What is the producer's aim with the documentary series? What topics are most prominent? Do they give any reasons for their choices regarding text, modes, narrators, and protagonists?
5. **The consumption process:** The text choices of the review articles are analysed: content, wording, metaphors, connotations, suppression, structural opposition/similarities. The most dominant discourses are identified in the review articles: what discourses are presented about Denmark's actions as a coloniser in Greenland in the documentary series, and which are excluded? How is power or its absence manifested explicitly and implicitly in these discourses?

Social dimension

6. Compare and contrast the **dominant discourses** identified across the textual and discursive dimensions, meaning the documentary series, the press material, and the review articles. Position them in wider sociocultural context. Consider the **recontextualisation** of discourses and memories surrounding the self-perception of Denmark as a coloniser in Greenland. What does this mean in terms of the politics of regret? Consider the sociocultural implications.

The analysis scheme provides a framework to explore representation, memory, and discursive construction within the context of the documentary series and review articles. By applying this framework systematically, the study provides insights into how certain discourses were constructed and shared during the 300th anniversary of Denmark's colonisation of Greenland in the media.

Based on this analytical framework, the subsequent chapter presents the research findings.

3. Analysis

This chapter presents the analysis of the documentary series, the press material, interviews, and review articles. As the chosen method is critical discourse analysis and multimodal critical discourse analysis, drawing on Fairclough's (1995, 2001) three-dimensional model as the guideline, the chapter is structured into chapters according to the dimensions; text, discursive, and social analysis. This organisation provides a deeper understanding of how the different dimensions of discursive construction work separately and influence each other. It is to be noted that the documentary series and the articles analysed are all originally in Danish.¹⁶ Therefore, any selected quotation will be provided in English, and translated by the researcher to the best of their capability.

3.1. The Textual Analysis

Following a brief overview of the documentary series' content and primary documentary modes, this subchapter is divided into five sections, with the first containing the quantitative part of the analysis and the remaining four sections containing the qualitative analysis of the documentary series, each subchapter presenting the four distinct, but connected discourses identified: *Denmark as the opposite of Greenland*, *Denmark in the Greenlandic Gaze*, *Denmark as the repressive mother*, and *Denmark had the best of intentions*. The identified discourses emerged based on their prevalence and recurrence within the documentary series.

The documentary series is divided into four episodes of 57-59 minutes. The first episode "Mødet" [The Meeting] chronicles Danish-Norwegian missionary priest Hans Egede from his initial attempts to persuade the Danish king to fund his mission to Greenland in 1719, to his departure from Greenland in 1736. The narrative also follows his family, a fictional Inuit family, and the first two Inuit to visit Denmark, Borq and Quiperoq. Episode 2 titled "Handlen" [The Trade] spans from 1776 to 1861, exploring how the trade was developed between Denmark and the newly established Greenlandic colonies. It examines the trade monopoly and its implications for the Inuit way of life and the Danish economy.

¹⁶ Some scenes and voice-over commentaries in the documentary are originally in Greenlandic. These passages are translated into English from the Danish subtitles, provided by DR.

The episode features various historical figures, including King Christian VII, colonial inspector Hinrich Rink, and Rasmus Berthelsen, a Greenlandic intellectual. The third episode “Et lukket land” [A Closed Country] begins in 1921 when Denmark formally claimed Greenland as a Danish colony and ends in 1959 when Greenland was incorporated as a formally equal district in Denmark. This episode focuses significantly on World War II, during which Nazi Germany occupied Denmark, severing Greenland’s administration from the Danish government and resulting in the arrival of the Americans to the island. Historical figures portrayed include Augo Lynge, a Greenlandic politician who became one of the first

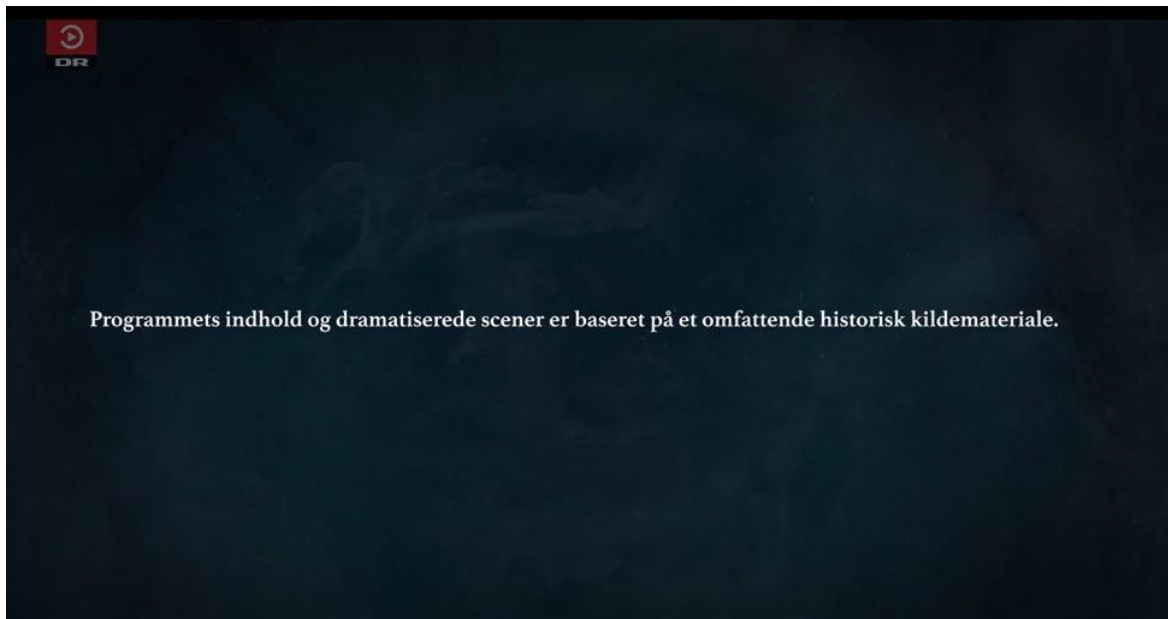


Image 1 Each episode begins displays the following: "The content and dramatised scenes of the programme are based on extensive historical sources and material"

Greenlanders in the Danish parliament, Knud Oldendow, president of the Greenland Administration, and Eske Bruun, governor of North Greenland. The fourth and final episode, “Det nye Grønland” [The New Greenland] covers the period from 1958 to 1979. It focuses on Denmark’s efforts to modernise Greenland according to the Danish welfare principles. Key figures include Danish economist Mogens Boserup, Greenlandic midwife and politician Elisabeth Johansen, and Kuupik Kleist, who was sent to Denmark for education in the 1960s and later became a prominent politician. The episode concludes with the establishment of Home Rule in 1979, granting Greenland its government and parliament (Volquardsen, 2021). The end title highlights significant events post-1979, including the adoption of the Self-Government Act 2009.¹⁷

¹⁷ This act recognises Greenlanders as a distinct people under international law, paving the way for the country's eventual independence.

Similar to other historical documentaries, *Historien om Grønland og Danmark* is characterised by various modes (Ebbrect, 2007; Pajala, 2017). To present historical events, it combines dramatic reconstructions involving actors and sets with remediations of archival material and contemporary scenes from historical sites. The series also features two omnipresent on-screen narrators who physically move around the dramatic reconstruction sets and the contemporary historical sites, supported by expert interviews. This combination of typical documentary-style modes and fictional modes aligns with the audience's desire for authenticity, inviting the viewer "to accept the argument that re-creation warrants, that what we see have 'really' happened in 'much this way'" (Ebbrect, 2007, p. 40). For instance, at the beginning of each episode, a single line of text is displayed: "The content and dramatised scenes of the programme are based on extensive historical sources and material," (e.g. Episode 1; 00:00-00:05). By stating that the content is based on extensive historical sources and material, the documentary addresses potential audience misgivings about the accuracy of the reconstruction scenes. Conversely, it establishes its own "claim to truth" (Roselló, 2022) by basing these dramatised re-enactments on the desire for authenticity as per the reference to the historical source material. In this way, the documentary series mitigates scepticism and potentially encourages the audience to accept the reconstructions as evidence, ultimately shaping images that can replace actual memories.

3.1.1. Quantitative Analysis

Protagonists

The quantitative coding of the protagonists, supporting roles, and minor roles in the documentary series (N=31) reveals that most of the protagonists are of Danish ethnicity, while Inuit/Greenlanders predominantly occupy supporting and minor roles (Appendix 1). According to Yusufov & Meyers (2023), the frequency with which social groups are featured in journalistic coverage "reflects their significance to the national community" and "enhances such groups' superior status" (pp. 6-7). This visual and verbal representation perpetuates previous discourses where Danes are cast as protagonists and Greenlanders as side characters (Jensen, 2015; Thisted, 2003). This contrast reinforces colonial power dynamics, continuing the 'othering' of Greenlanders as the 'passive objects of history' or 'passive witnesses,' thus further marginalising them in the narrative (Jensen, 2015; Thisted, 2003). Simultaneously, the deeper portrayal of the Danish characters reinforces their dominant status. Furthermore, Danish dominance solidifies hegemonic discourses, as Jensen

(2015) argues, “the silencing of Greenlanders removes the possibility of establishing a Greenlandic counter-narrative” (p. 145).

However, the coding scheme also reveals that the ratio of Inuit/Greenlandic and Danish protagonists becomes more equal with each episode. In Episode 1, no Inuit/Greenlandic characters drive the plot forward, while one Danish character (Hans Egede) does. Episode 2 features one Greenlandic protagonist (Rasmus Berthelsen) and three Danish (Høegh-Guldberg, Schimmelmann, Hinrich Rink). In Episode 3, there is one Inuit/Greenlandic (Augo Lyngé) and two Danish (Knud Oldendow, Eske Brun). Finally, in Episode 4, there are two protagonists: a Greenlandic (Elisabeth Johansen) and a Danish (Mogens Boserup). Through these episodes, Greenlanders gain more agency in their history, creating space for the emergence of counternarratives to the dominant Danish discourses, and displaying changing power dynamics.

The coding scheme reflects complex power relations but also offers new opportunities for Greenlandic voices and counternarratives.

Narrators (experts)

In this study, the narrator is defined as the expert source featured in the documentary series, categorised by ethnic-national identity. The coding scheme of selected expert sources (N=17) shows that only six are of Greenlandic background or speak Greenlandic, constituting less than half of the total number of experts featured across the four episodes (Appendix 2). Although there is no specific research on Greenlandic experts in media, minority experts are generally underrepresented, even in topics directly concerning them (Jørndrup, 2022; van Dijk, 1991). Studying expert selection in journalism is crucial for understanding power dynamics, as experts often shape public opinion and influence prevailing power structures (Mason, 2007). Essentially, who speaks and how much they speak determines which discourses emerge. While Greenlandic voices are present, they are still relatively fewer compared to Danish experts. The content and timing of their contributions also affect discourse formation. For instance, the final episode features five Greenlandic and three Danish experts, whereas the first episode includes only one Greenlandic and four Danish experts. In this regard, the frequency of Greenlandic narrators increases with each episode, indicating a growing agency in historical narration.

Nevertheless, the majority of expert sources in *Historien om Grønland and Denmark* are predominantly Danish. This dominance reflects an imbalance of power rooted in the

historical relationship between the two countries, reinforcing this narrative.

3.1.2. Denmark as the Opposite of Greenland

When analysing the construction of Denmark's actions as a coloniser, a key discursive formation is the systematic difference in the representation of Denmark and Danish characters compared to Greenland and Inuit/Greenlandic characters. This portrayal is significant as Danish literature and media have historically used Greenland as a reflection of *the Other*, a *mirror* of what Danes *were not*, contrasting what Danes were not (Bjørst, 2008; Fienup-Riordian; Said, 1979; Thisted, 2003). In the documentary series, these structural oppositions leverage hegemonic discourses on the Greenland-Denmark relationship, yet their impact on the memory of Denmark's colonial actions is ambiguous. The narrative devices, plot lines, characteristics, and modes to construct this discourse, will be outlined below.

To commence, all four episodes contain the same opening sequence where the two hosts, Lars Mikkelsen from Denmark, and Nukâka Coster-Waldau from Greenland, summarise the aim of the documentary series in five, short sentences. Two of these are: "Our countries are far from similar, but we are a part of each other history" and "It is a story about two widely different people..." (see e.g., Ep. 1, 1:22-53). According to Fairclough (2010), opening parts are relevant, because they establish a convincing reality for the audience. In this regard, the opening sequence establishes a site of difference between the two groups - Danes and Greenlanders - "nudging" a certain expectation regarding this difference. This is noteworthy because it is not the first time a *DR* TV documentary series about Greenland has established certain dichotomies between Greenland and Denmark in its opening sequence (Mortensen & Maegaard, 2018). However, a key difference, according to Mortensen and Maegaard's analysis, is that in *Byen ved verdens ende* [The Outermost Town] released in 2015, Greenland and Denmark are not presented "as two different countries, but two parts of the same country - Denmark" (p. 12), although Greenland has been functioning as an autonomous state of Denmark for years. With this in mind, the hosts' use of structural opposition between Greenland and Denmark can be interpreted as a recognition of Greenland's autonomy with its own people, culture, and traditions, as Thisted (2003) notes "the assertion of difference can be used as a tool to make your voice heard" (p. 63). Even the title of the documentary series *Historien om Grønland og Danmark* suggests a narrative about two countries of equal value to the story.

Regarding the social context, this could ultimately illustrate the increased inclusion of Greenland in foreign policy and bilateral agreement between the two countries, and, as such, a move towards a more balanced representation (Benson & Frech, 2023, p. 3).

The stark differences between Greenland and Denmark become evident in the first episode's first scenes. Following the opening sequence, viewers meet a fictional Inuit family living on Greenland's west coast in 1721. The Greenlandic narrator, Nukâka Coster-Waldau, describes their life: "The Inuit live in small groups on the coastline. Life here is determined by the seasons, the weather, the landscape, and knowing where the good fishing grounds are" (Ep. 1; 2:54-3:04). Drone shots depict the vast, empty Greenlandic landscape, following the family as the son, Manu, receives an amulet by his mother, Aama (later given the Christian name Elisabeth by the Danish colonisers), to protect him on his first seal hunt. The host adds, "But it is not harmless to go hunting in the fragile kayaks" (Ep. 1; 4:16-21). The scene then abruptly cuts to the Danish narrator, Lars Mikkelsen, in a sunny, green garden, stating, "There is a long way from the Arctic regions to the well-groomed gardens in the king's Copenhagen" (Ep. 1, 5:28-33). This visual contrast is enhanced by the colour grading: Greenland is depicted in cool blue tones, creating a sense of mystery and drama, while Denmark is shown in warm tones, conveying coziness. The phrase "well-groomed gardens" acts as a metaphor, suggesting Denmark's cultivated and developed society, contrasting with Greenland's beautiful yet harsh nature, where life is 'fragile' like a kayak. These visual and verbal techniques sharply contrast Greenland and Denmark, portraying them as stark opposites

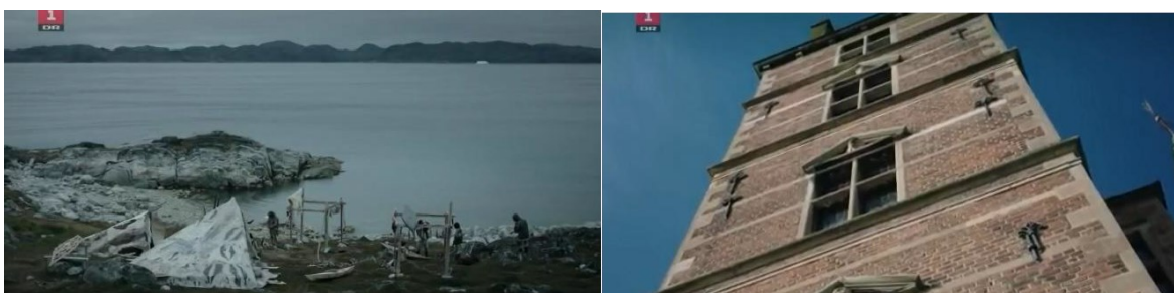


Image 2 and 3 The Inuit settlement in Greenland pre-colonisation and modernisation in muted colours vs the Danish modern buildings with bright colours.

(Wang, 2017). The voice-over commentary further emphasises the differences between safe Denmark and dangerous Greenland (Mortensen & Maegaard, 2019). This narrative aligns with the concept of 'Arctic orientalism' where Indigenous Arctic people are depicted as living in a lost "pure" world (Maegaard & Mortensen, 2018, p. 7).

The depiction of the nature-driven Inuit originates from historical descriptions,

photography, and film, which have historically been the primary means of conveying information about Greenland to a Danish audience (Sandbye, 2008; Thisted, 2003). With a few exceptions, these images are dominated by vast, wild, and icy landscapes, and populated by tough sealers and hunters, created by Arctic explorers and the colonial system (Bjørst, 2008; Sandbye, 2016). In this way, the documentary draws upon existing representations of Greenland, but instead of focusing solely on these hunters' toughness, and their "superhuman" abilities (Fienup-Riordian, 1995; Mortensen & Maegaard, 2019), the scene also shows that hunting was necessary to stay alive. They were also afraid and "fragile" humans living in a vastly different world from Denmark, making them more relatable to the Danish audience. Interestingly, Episode 3 reveals that the documentary series' producers are aware of these old narratives. In a scene set in a dark Danish cinema in the early 1930s, Danes are shown smoking and chatting while watching films about expeditions to Greenland. The narration goes as follows:

The images that reached Denmark at this time were of Inuit as these wild and strong, but exceptionally well-adapted nature-people who could survive on the furthest edge of the world and who could live in places you almost could not imagine living. How can they do that? As such, it is this kind of idea of the real Greenlander. One that can live this traditional way of life. (Ep. 3; 8:57-9:35).

This mode of meta voice-over commentary demonstrates an awareness that film can construct discourses and representations that do not necessarily align with reality. It offers the audience a more critical interpretation of the images presented to them, both up to this point and subsequently. However, the contrasting discourse prevails throughout the documentary series. The images of Denmark primarily depict the densely populated Copenhagen, emphasising its key historical institutions, including the main royal residence (Amalienborg), the parliament building (Christiansborg), and the seat of the Greenlandic Administration. These locations are recognisable to the Danish audience and are often associated with the country's national image as a beacon of democracy, evoking a sense of pride that aligns with the self-perception of Nordic exceptionalism (Loftsdóttir & Jensen, 2012).

In Episode 3, the expert Daniel Thorleifsen explains, while a reconstructed scene shows the Greenlandic teacher-turned-politician Augo Lynge walking around the Royal Library of Copenhagen, turning on the light and using a modern bathroom: "When Augo Lynge came to Denmark in 1921, the first thing he noticed was how wealthy it was compared

to Greenland (Ep. 3, 6:44-57) and “(...) that Danes were very clean and lived in big houses, and there was welfare with sanitary conditions. This showed how backward Greenland still was” (Ep. 3, 7:06-28). As Lyngø flushes the modern toilet in Copenhagen, the scene cuts to Greenland, where a woman bends forward to pour a bucket of urine on the ground. The host Coster-Waldau then explains: “At the beginning of the 1900s almost no houses have running water and electricity.” (Ep. 3, 7:25-53). Denmark is shown as this modern and cultural place, with words such as “clean,” “welfare,” “wealth,” and “sanitary” conveying positive connotations, while Greenland is described as “backwards,” carrying negative connotations. These characterisations are primarily presented through the mode of voice-over commentary from experts. According to Edy (1999), due to the expected objectivity of journalists, claims and interpretations of the past are often attributed to legitimate sources, including experts. Not only does the audience listen to the expert’s authoritative narration, but it is also supported and visualised through reconstructions, which combined create a strong impression on the viewer (Nichols, 2001).

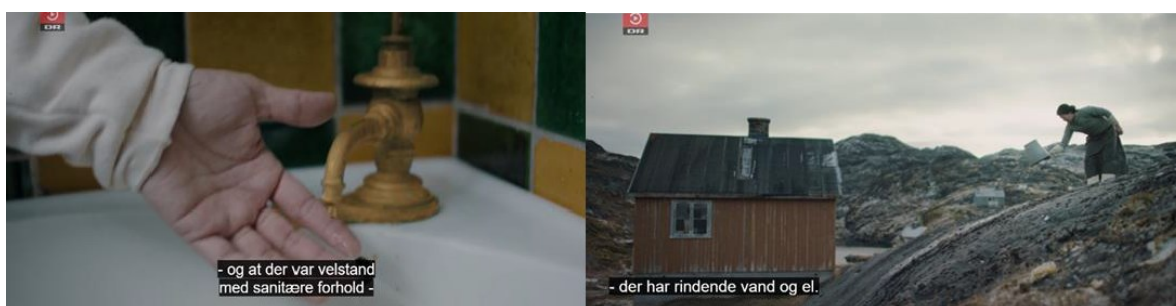


Image 4 and 5 In Episode 3, the series shows how different bathrooms are in the early 1900s in Denmark and Greenland, illustrating the vastly contrasting living conditions in the two countries.

While displays of difference do not necessarily equal evil, as per the postcolonial approach (Thisted, 2003; 2015), “othering” often asserts a “will to possess and control” (Said, 1979, p. 5). Whether or not the verbal and visual opposition intentionally “other” Greenlanders, they could work to reinforce the self-perception of Denmark as a superior civilisation. Moreover, the verbal and visual contrasts show the viewer how developed Denmark has been historically compared to Greenland, and this is further emphasised through the eyes of the characters. By emphasising how Inuit/Greenlandic characters see and experience the safety, opportunities, and structure offered in Denmark on their visits, the viewers also see what Greenland *was not*. For example, “In Denmark, Augo Lyngø discovers how big the difference is between life in Greenland and Denmark.” (Ep. 3, 5:14-16) or “In this way, Poq and Quiperoq were allowed to experience 1700-century Copenhagen with all

its buildings and many people. A contrast to the life they come from in Greenland (Ep. 1; 42:00-42:13). This, in turn, offers viewers an explanation as to why some Greenlanders were attracted to Danish and Western modern inventions and later the Danish state's promises regarding modernisation. The selection of these mis-en-mis scenes, contrasting life in Greenland and Denmark, also conforms to the historical modernisation discourse (Jensen, 2015). According to Nielsen (2016), the modernisation of Greenland refers to the Danish policies and efforts that transformed Greenland from small, isolated, hunter-gatherer settlements into modern, technology-driven, and globally-engaged cities over a few decades. While the discursive construction of differences between Denmark and Greenland may not be as drastic in its oppositions as the post-colonial concepts of 'Arctic orientalism' and 'Othering' (Fienup-Riordan, 1995; Said, 1979; Thisted, 2003), the discourse is still predominantly defined and articulated by Danes. This discourse emphasises the positive changes brought by Denmark through efforts to build literacy, a welfare system, and infrastructure. In other words, Denmark decides what is beneficial for Greenland (Jensen, 2017). In this respect, the documentary series follows the typical logic of commemorative journalism, creating a comfortable and reaffirming narrative that does not threaten the notion of Nordic exceptionalism or the benign, good coloniser narrative, and it does not engage with the politics of regret (Andersen, 2012; Olick, 2013).

3.1.3. Denmark in the Greenlandic Gaze

Another key discursive construction is the addition of a Greenlandic perspective. How the actions of Denmark as a coloniser in Greenland are constructed can depend on whose perspective the documentary takes - Danish or Greenlandic. Both perspectives are utilised in the documentary series, however, the use of Greenlandic perspectives is noteworthy. Similar to how Danish discourse has constructed Greenland as what they *are not*, collective history has been largely defined by a Danish perspective (Thisted, 2003).

Episode 1 illustrates how this construction takes place in the narrative structure. In the scene when the missionary priest Egede arrives on the shores of Greenland for the first time, the camera shifts between the missionary boat and the shoreline several times with particular emphasis on close-ups of the characters' faces. When the Danish missionaries and the Inuit are standing face to face, the camera shots shift between the two perspectives quickens, intensifying the situation. At this moment, Egede's young son asks his dad "Why do they look like that?" gazing at the Inuit (Ep. 1; 16:11-13). Then the camera pans out to a

mid-shot, giving the audience a full view of the Egede family and the Danish missionaries, replicating how the Inuit see them from their perspective. The camera then shifts towards the Inuit again as they gaze back. Aama, the Inuit woman, looks carefully at the newcomers and says: “Look at that dress! You cannot even see her legs. How can she even walk?” as the camera shifts over to her son, Manu, who similarly asks: “What is he wearing on his head? A snow hare?” This comment makes them laugh. Meanwhile, the Danish missionaries stand, unaware of the Inuit’s mockery and serious in their expressions (Ep 1; 6:32-51). The gaze, that has so often been in the position of the powerful white man, is returned. The otherwise intense tone becomes humorous and almost mocking in the depiction of the Danish colonisers. Consequently, irony offers a mode of critiquing the Danish colonisers (Pajala, 2017). Furthermore, the exposition of the mise-en-scene subverts expectations of the dominant Danish gaze and power balances between the coloniser and colonised (Maegaard & Mortensen, 2019). Through the gaze of the Greenlanders, Denmark is the “Other,” providing the Inuit a sense of agency, while downplaying the Danish superiority.



Image 6 and 7 In Episode 1, a scene reconstructs the meeting between the Danish colonisers and the Inuit, emphasising the Inuit’s returning gaze.

The enhancement of the Inuit/Greenlanders agency is further established throughout the episodes. As noted in the quantitative analysis, the frequency of Greenlandic protagonists increases as Greenland moves closer towards Home Rule. Although they are in minority, the Greenlandic protagonists; Augo Lynge, Rasmus Berthelsen, and Elisabeth Johansen are characterised as fully-fleshed and three-dimensional characters, each with their own set of ambitions and worries, qualities, and mistakes (Strange, 2023). For instance, in Episode 2, the Danish Hinrich Rink, the Danish colonial inspector in Greenland, and the Greenlandic teacher Rasmus Berthelsen, are depicted discussing and working together on the development of a new colonial system, and Rink is listening to Berthelsen’s opinions (Ep. 3; 47:30). By emphasising the Greenlandic characters’ active participation in the colonial

administration, the documentary series reveals a far more nuanced and complicated story about Danish-Greenlandic power relations, in which Greenlanders influenced their own history. Thereby, this story offers a new and more positive interpretation of history for Greenlanders, following what Thisted (2020) calls a more “positive identification model than the usual victimisation theme that young Greenlanders are justifiably fed up with” (p. 116). However, this narrative also risks repeating the notion of Nordic Exceptionalism, in which Danish colonisers acted with Greenlandic consent under a shared colonial project (Jensen & Loftsdóttir, 2012; Thisted, 2015). Since the defined discourses are non-exclusive, this construction also supports the next discourse to be elaborated.

The arguably most effective mode of expression employed in the documentary series to provide a Greenlandic perspective is the addition of Nukâka Coster-Waldau as the co-host. To add some context, *Historien om Grønland and Denmark* works as a kind of sequel to DR’s TV documentary series *Historien om Danmark* [The History of Denmark] broadcasted in 2017. Here, Lars Mikkelsen appears as the singular host, taking the Danish audience on a journey through Denmark’s thousand-year-old history, using a similar formula of modes, such as reconstructions, experts, archival footage, and more. By reproducing the formula, the producers create a familiar context that holds “specific viewer expectations of how the stories will be told” (Mortensen & Maegaard, 2019, p. 5). However, as Mortensen & Maegaard (2019) argue in their analysis of another DR documentary, having a Danish host would give the impression of traveling to Greenland and exploring “the edge and peep into the unfamiliar” (p. 5), which is a common trope in Danish depictions of Greenland because most of the first accounts of Greenland derives from Danish explorers, and has since become a frequently used narrative device in fiction as well (Thisted, 2003). Instead of reproducing this narrative structure in *Historien om Grønland og Danmark*, Coster-Waldau takes on the perspective of a Greenlander in Greenland, an insider. This mode attempts to present a balanced portrayal of the histories of both countries by incorporating perspectives from both sides. However, while the Greenlandic language is prominently featured through the speech of both experts and characters,¹⁸ Coster-Waldau communicates with the audience in Danish, not Greenlandic. This choice renders Danish the dominant language in the

¹⁸ There are three main dialects of Greenlandic. When using the term “Greenlandic language” in this thesis, the author is referring to Kalaallisut (West-Greenlandic), the official language of Greenland and the most commonly spoken (Rischel, 2023).

documentary series. Historically, Danish has been the language of the colonisers and the educated elite, viewed by many Greenlanders as “the gateway to the world” (Thisted, 2022, p. 198). In other words, Danish has been perceived as the language of power. Conversely, Greenlandic and many other minority languages have often been marginalised. By having both hosts, who jointly control the narrative, speak Danish, this asymmetrical power relation is re-established. This choice diminishes the potential impact of Coster-Waldau’s presence and narration in establishing a Greenlandic perspective.

3.1.4. Denmark as the Repressive Mother

It is also important to note that the documentary series does not only portray Denmark’s actions as a coloniser in a positive light. While this discourse shares certain similarities regarding how Danish and Greenlandic characters and society are depicted in “Denmark as the opposite of Greenland,” this is much more critical of Denmark’s role as a coloniser in Greenland. Nonetheless, as the analysis will reveal, this discourse can also be interpreted as ambiguous due to how it plays into historically dominant narratives. In this regard, the discourse is named “Denmark as the repressive mother,” inspired by the prevailing discourse of Denmark as the protective mother (Gad, 2008; Thisted, 2023).

Hans Egede is the most dominant figure in historical narratives about Denmark’s colonisation of Greenland (McLisky, 2017). This makes it noteworthy to analyse how his character is portrayed and recontextualised in the documentary series. Whereas Egede historically has been presented as “The Apostle of Greenland,” who despite difficulties with

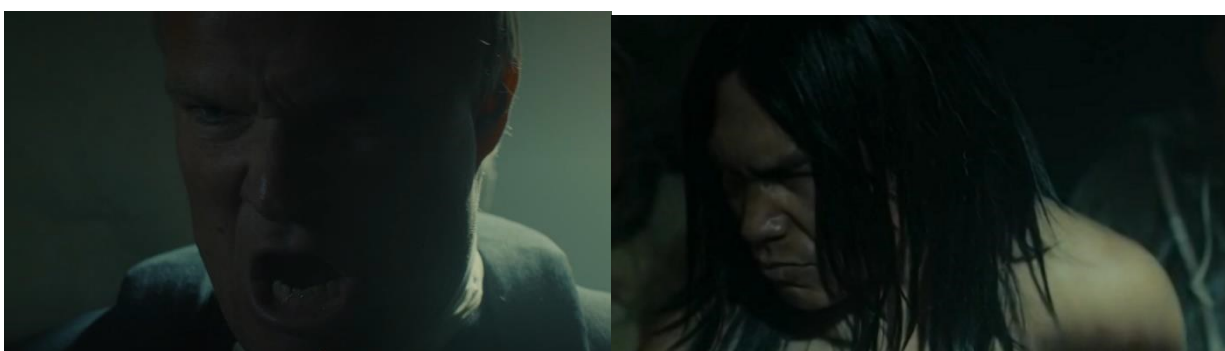


Image 8 and 9 In Episode 1, a reconstructed scene imagines Hans Egede bursting angrily into a religious ceremony and slapping the Inuit religious leader.

evangelising the “unfeeling,” “hard,” and “suspicious” Greenlanders, eventually succeeded in winning their trust through his “love, courage, and persistence” for the Inuit (McLisky, 2017, p. 538), Episode 1 presents Egede as less benevolent. In a reconstructed scene, the Inuit are engaged in a religious ceremony with their traditional spiritual leader, the *Angakut*,

when Egede bursts into their tent, shouting Bible verses (Ep. 1; 32:20-40). The lighting is dim, and the camera focuses closely on Egede's face as he slaps the Angakut in the face. Backlighting accentuates Egede's large, dominant stature, while his angry face is shrouded in darkness. In contrast, the Angakut's small, pained face is illuminated, highlighting the disparity in power. The rapid and intense music enhances the dramatic tension. A voice-over commentary from an expert provides context: "Hans Egede considered the Angakuts as fraudsters and this fraud needed to be fought. Therefore, he fought the Angakut by all means. And sometimes, and we must admit, he is big and strong, this happened through violence and threats." (Ep. 1; 32:42-58). This expert commentary, combined with visual reconstruction, implies collective guilt and regret over Egede's actions through the phrase "we must admit." The pronoun "we" likely refers to the Danes, acknowledging that Egede's success in converting the Greenlanders was not solely due to his good intentions but also through oppressive and dominant tactics. This scene is arguably the most critical depiction of Egede's role, constructing a discourse of Denmark as a "bad coloniser" (McLisky, 2017; Thisted, 2015). On one hand, it adds nuance to the often polarised discourse surrounding Egede's character, contributing to contemporary readings and re-readings of the colonial history between Greenland and Denmark. On the other hand, it reinforces the narrative of "the coloniser as the active subject of history" (Thisted, 2014b, p. 166), relegating the colonised to a passive, victimised role.

Another tangible example of how the documentary depicts a "difficult past" is evident in Episode 3. In a poignant scene, following the official incorporation of Greenland as part of Denmark in 1953, the camera cuts to the large celebrations in Nuuk where the Greenlandic politician Augo Lynge is speaking to a visibly cheerful crowd. The expert provides the context: "When you read the sources from this time, and when you see the pictures from the celebration of the new constitution, and now Greenland is no longer a colony, there is no doubt that there has been a feeling of a new beginning. Some sort of belief that we have reset history now" (Ep. 3; 51:45-59). Firstly, the expert emphasises the documentary's claim to truth by referencing historical documents. Secondly, it establishes the notion that the Greenlandic people were positive about the prospect of becoming an "equal part of Denmark" (Jensen, 2012). On the stage, Augo Lynge concludes his speech by declaring to the crowd, "200 years of colonialism is over!." At this moment, the host, Coster-Waldau, interrupts and addresses the camera directly with a serious tone: "At the same time

as Augo Lunge is having his speech in Nuuk, have 27 families, 1000 kilometres up north in Thule, left their home.” (Ep. 3; 52:26-53:20). The expert then explains, through archival clips depicting the Thule citizens’ forced removal from their settlements: “The Danish side represented the move as voluntary. Even though the Greenlandic people asked Denmark for help for their situation. That is not entirely what happened. It cannot be explained away that it was a forced displacement.” The scene immediately cuts back to Nuuk, showing a close-up of the spectators’ faces as Augo Lyngé says, “We have trust in Denmark and in the fact that they always wish us the best.” (Ep. 3; 53:20-54:22). This juxtaposition between Lyngé’s hopeful speech and the forced displacement of the Thule citizens exposes Danish hypocrisy. By highlighting the systematic opposition between the Greenlanders’ expressions of hope, gratitude, and trust and the reality of hidden agendas, the documentary series reveals the dissonance in Denmark’s prevailing discourse as a protective mother nation. The narrative structure, choice of words, authoritative expert commentary, dramatic interruptions, and shifts in music and tone collectively dismantle the myth of Danish benevolence. Furthermore, the series demonstrates that despite Greenlanders becoming official Danish citizens, Denmark has often not recognised Greenlanders as equals, evidenced by its ability to forcibly relocate them while masking it as a voluntary and benevolent act. This scene thus critiques and deconstructs the notion of Danish protection, revealing a repressive underlying nature.

Overall, this discourse offers a more critical reading of Denmark’s role as a coloniser in Greenland by highlighting colonisation’s negative implications on not just the traditional way of living in Greenland, but also how Danish self-perception as a protective mother of Greenland often resulted in disregard of their wishes.

3.1.5. Denmark had the best of intentions

The most consistent and dominant discourse to emerge from the analysis is the construction of “Denmark had the best of intentions,” often appearing within the other discourses. Just as Denmark saw itself as the well-meaning mother of Greenland, it has historically justified its actions as a coloniser using the expression “I den bedste mening” [with the best of intentions] (Bryld, 2010; Farver, 2010; Jensen, 2015).¹⁹ This expression is closely connected to the Danish self-perception as a humane colonial power that only acted

¹⁹ The expression “I den bedste mening” is also the title of Tina Bryld, a Danish social worker’s, book that documents about “The Experiment”, in which 22 Greenlandic children were forcibly removed from their homes and re-educated in Denmark in order to “Danify” them.

in the interest of Greenland (Farver, 2010). While the phrasing is never explicitly expressed in the documentary series, it constructs a discourse much more subtle.

One of the prevalent narrative structures that facilitates this construction is the depiction of each Danish protagonist. The visual and narrative portrayal of their actions and purported good intentions cultivates a specific discourse. Li & Lee (2013, as cited by Yusufov & Meyers, 2023) observe that:

Anniversary journalism often utilises personalised histories of individuals in order to promote wide-reaching messages; such strategic and particular uses of the past are often organised around a plot structure, creating ‘Ideological packages.’ (p. 12)

As evident example of such an “ideological package” is Episode 1’s protagonist, Hans Egede. Historically, Egede has been praised and revered for his “strength and forbearance” towards the Greenlandic people (McLisky, 2017, p. 537). This narrative is largely drawn from Egede’s diary, which details his early missionary efforts (McLisky, 2017, p. 536). This narrative choice is also repeated in Episode 1. Episode 1 of the documentary series repeats this narrative choice by incorporating Egede’s diary excerpts to illustrate his sacrifices in converting the Inuit. Egede’s diary entries reveal his belief that the Inuit needed God: “Who will not see it as his duty to shine God’s light to those who have been turned off this long” (Ep. 1; 6:58-7:02), and “So here are the people, for some reason, I have taken on so much trouble. At first glance, they look miserable. For what is more miserable than not knowing God?” (Ep. 1; 17:46-59). These subjective diary excerpts offer insight into Egede’s inner thoughts and beliefs in addition to serving as “evidence” to support the documentary’s factual claims.

As the episode progresses, Egede’s quest turns to tragedy. A smallpox epidemic devastates the settlement, leaving only a few hundred Inuit survivors. The documentary shows Egede comforting the dying Inuit woman, Aama, now renamed Elisabeth in her Christian faith. This scene contrasts the earlier portrayal of Egede as cold and violent. As she lies dying, Elisabeth asks Egede: “Is it true that I will meet my daughter again in heaven?” to which he replies affirmatively. She asks again: “Do you promise that?” and he responds, “Should we pray together?” (Ep. 1; 53:50-54:20). This is followed by another diary excerpt: “It is my fault that these poor people have fallen into this misfortune. I came to this country to save them. But it became their downfall and corruption” (Ep. 1; 55:22-34). The episode concludes with Egede leaving Greenland, defeated and hopeless after the death of his wife and thousands of Inuit, which the

narrator explaining that Egede believed God had abandoned him (Ep. 1, 55:30-56:00).



Image 10 In Episode 1, the Danish coloniser Hans Egede is also depicted offering relief for a dying Inuit.

The narrative constructs Egede as the personification of Danish colonisation, believing his action were in the best interest of the Inuit, using Christianity as a comfort: “They need me, Gertrud!” he exclaims to his wife (Ep. 1; 9:50-52). This notion of need reflects the idea of the white man’s burden to Christianise (Thisted, 2003). Pajala (2017) notes that drama documentaries invoke “melodrama as a mode of narration” to move “its viewers emotionally by focusing on the struggles and sufferings of its protagonists” (p. 280). Thus, this ideological package connects individual experiences to the collective sphere (Yusufov & Meyers, 2023, p. 12). By expressing shame for his role in the tragedy, Egede’s deeply imperialistic vision is almost justified by his well-meaning intentions. Despite the mostly negative connotation of shame, asserting shame on a collective, national level is different. According to Ahmed (2004):

National shame can be a mechanism for reconciliation as self-reconciliation, in which the ‘wrong’ that is committed provides the grounds for claiming a national identity, for restoring a pride that is threatened in the moment of recognition, and then regained in the capacity to bear witness. (p. 109)

Egede’s trajectory illustrates the notion of the “misguided benevolent Danish attitude of wanting the best for the Greenlanders” (Jensen, 2015, p. 150), aligning with the logic of commemorative journalism (Edy, 1999; Kitch, 2008). However, Egede is not the only

character whose trajectory follows this structure. Hinrich Rink, initially focused on improving the Danish whale trade, shifts priorities upon witnessing a starving Greenlander (Ep. 2, 42:22-44:00). Expert commentary simultaneously explains Rink's desire for Denmark to help Greenlanders regain control and agency to improve their lives. Similarly, in Episode 3, the president of the Greenlandic Administration in Denmark, Knud Oldendow, opposes the introduction of petroleum lamps to preserve Greenlandic traditional culture (Ep. 3, 14:40-15:00). Eske Bruun, governor of North Greenland, aims to protect Greenlandic women from American soldiers (Ep. 3, 29:26), and in the fourth episode, the economist Mogens Boserup advocates for modernising Greenland to improve living standards and make it equal to Denmark (Ep. 4, 5:40-6:10). These protagonists personify Denmark's actions, reflecting what were believed to be well-intentioned efforts for Greenland's benefit. Their narrative trajectories are juxtaposed with the reactions and impacts on the the Greenlanders/Inuit, highlighting the disparity between Danish intentions and actual outcomes. By emphasising their beliefs and selecting these historical figures as protagonists, the documentary constructs a narrative that fosters audience identification with these characters and their goals, underlining that despite not achieving their aims, they did it with the best of intentions (Strange, 2023).

In continuation of this discourse, an underlying strategy emerges that justifies actions as necessary, despite their negative consequences. This strategy allows the Danes to praise the advance of "civilisation" as unavoidable, while simultaneously mourning the loss of cultural diversity (Thisted, 2015). This duality is evident on a textual level, such as when the hosts explain why Eske Bruun prohibited Greenlanders from interacting with American soldiers during WWII: "The Greenlanders are, in his eyes, vulnerable, and need protection" (Ep. 3, 29:26.) The phrasing "in his eyes" is noteworthy for the sense of distance it creates between Eske Bruun's beliefs and actions and the narrator's perspective, which serves as a proxy for *DR*'s voice, and the distance absolves Danish society from its colonial responsibility (Maegaard & Mortensen, 2019). This narration further exemplifies the role of Denmark as a "mother nation" and protector (Gad, 2008; Thisted, 2015) and reinforces the discourse that Greenlanders and Danes are fundamentally different peoples. For instance, the second Greenlandic protagonist featured in Episode 3, Augo Lynge, returns to Godthåb "with a dream of another society - a society with the same opportunities as Denmark and freedom decide one's life (Ep. 3, 11.00). Augo Lynge embodies an

an expressed desire from Greenland to change for the “better,” with Denmark as the ideal where freedom abounds. This notion is reiterated by the narrators describing the “typical” Greenlandic life to the audience: “(...), in many ways you live freely. But it is also a life with limitations” (Ep. 4, 3:20), suggesting that, despite the appearance of freedom, Greenland has always needed development and protection.

3.2. Discursive Analysis

3.2.1. Production Process

The documentary series is produced by the Danish public broadcasting channel, *DR*, and directed by Inuk Silis Høegh. Høegh is a Greenlandic-Latvian film director and co-founder of the Greenlandic-based production company *Ánorák Film* (Grønlund, 2024),²⁰ and arguably one of Greenland’s most prominent and celebrated directors with more than 30 years of film and documentary work behind him (Gerdes, 2022; Schmidt, 2022). In interviews with the director, he emphasises his intention to integrate a Greenlandic perspective into the documentary series. According to Høegh, he is “the representation of the Greenlandic perspective” (Schmidt, 2022) and feels an immense “responsibility for the Greenlandic people” (Gerdes, 2022). His aim is to create a documentary that resonates authentically with the Greenlandic people, rather than perpetuating the trend of outsiders depicting Greenland “with the best of intentions of creating movies about Greenland and Greenlanders” (Schmidt, 2022). Høegh’s remarks highlight the historical imbalance in Greenlandic representation within the film and documentary industry. By foregrounding his minority ethnicity, he underscores the sociocultural and historical motivations behind his participation in the series, thereby illustrating the constructivist nature of documentary media (Ebbrecht, 2007; Nichols, 2001). His choice of words, “with best of intentions,” can be interpreted in two ways: acknowledging the genuine intentions of Danish and Western documentarists or critiquing the often misguided results of their effort, which have led to distorted portrayals of Greenland. Returning to the textual dimension, the Greenlandic perspective is one of the key discursive constructions, as evidenced by the focus on Egede’s role in Episode 1. Høegh critiques the initial emphasis on Egede’s character, noting that

²⁰ Høegh is named the main director in the documentary series’ credits and the only one who’s been interviewed. However, other Danish directors have been in charge of shooting the scenes in Denmark.

historical narratives have predominantly been framed from a Danish perspective (Schmidt, 2022):

Before it was even worse, if you can say it like that (...). Before this, the series focused a lot on God's perspective. And this can of course be explained by the fact that this is where many written sources begin. Simultaneously, it also illustrates that history has been mainly seen from a Danish perspective.

Certain sources encompass more privilege and power than others related to what sources are available. Reusing dominant sources often results in the reproduction of the same discourses that they embed. Thereby, illustrating the underlying power imbalances of historical sources and how they continue to shape remembrance and memory, despite intentions to create a more balanced representation. Henrik Bo Nielsen, *DR*'s leader of Culture, Children, and Youth, and one of the producers of the documentary series, also emphasises the importance of incorporating both Greenlandic and Danish perspectives: "It is our ambition to include both Greenlandic and Danish experts, comprehensive source material, hosts with a Greenlandic and Danish background, and historical personalities which can contribute to more nuances and new perspectives on the history" (Gylstorff, 2020). Moreover, he stated that he wanted the documentary series to contribute to the ongoing discussion about "cultural differences, repression, independence, economic dependence, and foreign affairs (...). This is one of the important and good reasons to tell this history" (Gylstorff, 2020). As such, he acknowledges the importance of media in shaping public discussion around a topic.

However, Høegh notes certain limitations by the production team, such as the decision for the Greenlandic host Coster-Waldau to narrate in Danish rather than in Greenlandic. This choice was made to accommodate the predominantly Danish-speaking audience, despite the presence of Greenlandic-speaking experts and characters requiring subtitles, which Høegh suggests creates a "filter" for the audience. He underlines that he "as a director, of course, is interested in having as many viewers as possible" (Schmidt, 2022). This decision reflects broader representational strategies where Danish is prioritised as the primary language, while Greenlandic is viewed as the secondary, "other" language.

Furthermore, Høegh's responsibility for directing the scenes filmed in Greenland is also emphasised in the interviews (Gerdes, 2022; Schmidt, 2022). However, it is not mentioned who was responsible for directing the scenes shot in Denmark, and according to the sampling, there were no results that did not include Høegh and Nielsen as the representatives of the series' production. This is noteworthy as it illustrates the influence of

the press material and interviews on creating certain expectations and perceptions of the product. The emphasis on Høegh's "Greenlandicness" and the omission of the predominantly Danish production team (see e.g., Ep. 4; 56:52-57:36) shape public expectations and perceptions of the documentary series. The focus on diversity and minority representation resonates in a society increasingly critical of misrepresentation (Alvi, 2020).

How the director and producer talk about the documentary series demonstrate a specific view of the common history and intentions regarding its impression on the audience. Even though they claim that they want to show the story from a more nuanced, Greenlandic perspective, the interviews illustrate certain challenges such as historical source material and audience engagement influence its discursive construction (see Dimension 1: Protagonists, Narrators, Denmark as seen from a Greenlandic perspective). Furthermore, the producer claims an ambition to create a nuanced depiction where distinctions between victims and heroes might not always be clear-cut. Yet in doing so, he constructs a discourse about Denmark's role as a coloniser in Greenland that is not inherently 'good' or 'bad', but still reproduces the discourse Denmark had the best of intentions. They claim that the documentary series is only "a take on history" and that "the series is not a definitive truth, but an opportunity for us all to get a common and new starting point from which to debate" (Gylstorff, 2022), DR's role as the public broadcasting channel is undoubtedly one of the most powerful agents of collective memory in Denmark (Breum, 2022; Mortensen & Maegaard, 2019).

3.2.2. Consumption Process

When analysing the sample, several elements such as the reviewer's ethnicity and their relationship to Greenland were listed in the table (Appendix 3). Notably, none of the seven reviewers who have signed the articles were Greenlandic; all were born in Denmark. One reviewer, however, discloses a significant connection to Greenland, having lived and taught there for many years (Lentz, 2022). In *Jyllands-Posten*, Lentz discusses the documentary series' impact on teaching both Greenlandic and Danish audiences about Greenland, drawing on his extensive knowledge of the country and his observations of the Danish presence in Greenland. In contrast, the other reviewers did not display any connection to Greenland. Three of the five reviewers are professional media commentators or cultural journalists who review a wide range of film, TV, and cultural products (Blüdnikow; 2022; Hyllested, 2022ab; Nikolajsen; 2022). The remaining two reviewers

work as a priest and a teacher, respectively (Bacher, 2022; Lentz, 2022). This composition highlights a potential gap in the representation of Greenlandic perspectives among the reviewers of the documentary series.

All the review articles acknowledge Denmark as a colonial power in Greenland (Bacher, 2022; Blüdnikow, 2022; Hyllested, 2022; Lentz, 2022; Nikolajsen, 2022), either by directly employing the term “colonial power” in reference to Denmark or indirectly by labelling Greenland a colony. This recognition, as explored in the literature review, has sparked debate among scholars because it diverges from the dominant discourse of Nordic exceptionalism and benevolence (Loftsdóttir & Jensen, 2012; Thisted, 2015). The acknowledgment of Denmark’s colonial role is significant as it indicates a potential shift towards accepting responsibility for past actions. This sense of responsibility is further established through the descriptions of Danish colonial authority. For instance, the headline “tough colonial masters” illustrates how Knud Oldendow from the Greenlandic Administration restricted Greenlanders’ access to certain modern inventions. Other examples, such as “The injustices Denmark was to blame for” (Nikolajsen, 2022), draw a direct connection between Denmark, injustices, and blame. Similarly, the phrase “refined invention of the Danish colonial power (Hyllested, 2022b) portrays Denmark as a meticulous and cunning colonial power exerting control over its Greenlandic subjects. Terms like “demolish” and “assault by our ancestors” (Hyllested, 2022a) further imply that Denmark’s colonial actions were destructive and imperialistic. These wordings construct a discourse of Denmark as an oppressive colonial power, which is also evident in the textual analysis (see Dimension 1: Denmark as the repressive mother). Cultural media reviewers function as “cultural intermediates between the artwork and the audience” (Yaren & Hazir, 2020, p. 612), and their interpretations and cultural legitimacy (Janssen & Verboord, 2015) reinforce the documentary’s portrayal of this discourse. Additionally, they exemplify the notion of the politics of regret, where confronting the “toxic legacies of the past” takes precedence over national pride (Olick, 2013).

Moreover, the notion of the politics of regret is also established through utterings of shame, blame, and certain feelings of embarrassment (Hyllested, 2022ab; Lentz, 2022; Nikolajsen, 2022). This is most apparent in *Avisen Danmark*’s article “Flov smag i munden: Danmark indtog Grønland med sygdomme og tidligere straffefanger”, which translates to “Bad taste in mouth: Denmark overtook Greenland with illnesses and previous prisoners” (Hyllested, 2022a). By employing an idiom used to express feelings

of regret and remorse in the first sentence, the centrality of these affective emotions in the reviewer's consumption of the documentary series is conveyed to the reader. The Danish word *flor* is particularly used to express embarrassment. Likewise, the reviewer uses other similes and idioms to express emotions of shame, regret, and remorse, which have negative connotations. These include "stomach pains," "lies heavy on your consciousness," "burden," and "bitter taste" (Hyllested, 2022a). By employing these metaphors, the reviewer conjures images imbued with specific emotional connotations, thereby fostering a predominantly negative recollection of a difficult past.

Notably, the expression of embarrassment in this context is striking because it is not necessarily caused by "the acknowledgment of wrongdoing but by the exposure of a certain behaviour" (Linebaugh, 2022, p. 736). This sense of exposure is similar to Ahmed's (2005) notion of shame: "Shame feels like an exposure - another sees what I have done that is bad and hence shameful" (p. 103). The implication is not that the past colonial actions referenced by the reviewer are inherently wrong. Rather, it is the broader awareness of these practices that might invite negative judgment, leading to undesired ramifications such as challenges to self-perception and national pride. In contrast to the other examples, utterings of regret are pressingly absent from the *Kristeligt Dagblad* review article "Egede was Greenland a good man" (Bacher, 2022). In this review, Jesper Bacher, a priest and regular media commentator at the newspaper, focuses on Egede's missionary work as an act of kindness. Using expressions such as "happiness," "help," and "thank God" with largely positive connotations concerning Denmark's colonial role, he stresses the role of the benevolent coloniser and the historical discourses surrounding Egede. He further emphasises this reading: "Hans Egede was, of course, a child of his time with its mistakes and defects, and this was not hidden. But Hans Egede's willingness to make sacrifices, his stubbornness, and love for the Greenlandic people was as light as day." In one sentence, he employs several words with positive connotations, such as "willingness," "stubbornness," and "love" to elicit Egede's character in a favourable light, aligning with the historical narrative of Egede (McLisky, 2017). Simultaneously, he acknowledges and mitigates any connotations of blame and critical discourse by referring to Egede's actions as "mistakes" and "defects" and describing him as a "child of his time." These latter expressions suggest that we cannot entirely blame Egede for actions we now perceive as morally wrong. Likewise, *Avisen Danmark*'s reviewer, Hyllested (2022a), refers to Egede as "a product of his time" in this

paragraph:

(...) try to understand that he was a product of his time and the beliefs, knowledge, and ignorance of the time. You cannot wrap the past in the values and morals of the present. That is why we do not get rid of burdensome pasts just by knocking down statues.

Knocking down statues is a reference to the many statues of colonists that were toppled in the aftermath of the #BlackLivesMatter protests across the world (New York Times, 2020). This plays into the critique of what Bacher calls “identity political times,” often referred to as woke culture, and the subsequent critical re-reading of past actions according to beliefs and sensibilities of the present. Since collective memory is constantly charged with new meanings (Erll, 2011; Yusufov & Meyers, 2023) and one of the prevalent ways for collective memory to change is when culture itself changes (Doolan, 2021; Olick, 2013), it is logical that Hans Egede as the main architect of Greenland’s colonisation is constructed more critically. However, the notion of “the past is in the past” (Gilles, 2023, p. 112) conveys to the reader that holding past actions accountable is unreasonable. Furthermore, this implies an attempt to control the discourse and shield it from further scrutiny by silencing counter-narratives and critical re-readings. In this manner, the challenging narrative of Denmark as the “repressive mother” is replaced by a more comforting discourse, framing past wrongdoings as mistakes made “with the best of intentions” (see Dimension 1: Denmark had the best of intentions).

Reproductions of this discourse from the documentary series are also evident across the other reviews. Particularly when Hans Egede’s character and choices are referenced (Bacher, 2022; Blüdnikow, 2022; Hyllested, 2022ab; Lentz, 2022; Nikolajsen, 2022). This focus on Egede is predominantly emphasised in Bacher (2022), who writes the following:

When a lot of Greenlanders converted to Christianity, it was, as it was told by Kirstine Eiby Møller, an archaeologist at Greenland’s National Museum and Archive: “Because there were lesser taboos and a God that forgives you.” There was not much mercy in the old spirit religion.

As a priest, Bacher’s interpretation of the documentary series is influenced by his work. The review demonstrates his aim of constructing a positive image of Christianity and Denmark’s missionary work in Greenland. Furthermore, it illustrates how the documentary’s mode of expert narration can be used and abused to construct a specific discourse, narrative, or myth (Toth, 2015). By using the expert’s quote, Bacher borrows authority to legitimise his

argument that Christianity was not forced upon the Greenlanders but was peacefully adopted due to the ideologies and benefits it presented. This interpretation of Episode 1 is also evident in other articles. For instance, in *Jyllands-Posten*, Lentz (2022) uses the same example and similarly borrows expert authority:

The series' experts tell in a nuanced way why the Inuit actually listened to Hans Egede's Christian stories. They did that because they lived in a time with high mortality, and therefore, let themselves Christianise to revisit their loved ones in qilak (heaven).

This passage underscores the tendency of narrating and reaffirming stories about the past when confronted with a difficult past, particularly within the Danish historical discourse of a gentle and generous coloniser. Given the discomfort associated with acknowledging wrongdoing and the subsequent negative emotions of shame, guilt, blame, and regret (Ahmed, 2005), the narrative of peaceful missionary work offers comfort. This comforting discourse is particularly appealing to the reviewer, a Danish teacher in Greenland, who can justify his role as part of the ongoing and contentious presence of an educated Danish workforce in a former colony, along with the associated sociocultural implications of inequality, imperialism, and present-day social issues. Other reviews similarly demonstrate the tendency to frame Denmark's actions as well-intentioned. For instance, in *Avisen Danmark*, Hyllested (2022b) writes: "It was also intending to strengthen the self-help culture and self-respect because it was the perception that the Greenlandic culture was dying." Likewise, in *Jyllands-Posten*, Lentz (2022) states: "The saviour Hans Egede admits that he, despite his good intentions, was the cause of the fall of the Inuit, because the smallpox virus had sneaked onboard one of his supply ships." The reviewer's choice of wording directly reflects this "with best of intentions" discourse. Moreover, this is evident in the *Berlingske* review, where Blüdnikow (2022) writes the following about the series:

It depicts the cases from both sides and does not just depict the Danes as evil colonisers, on the contrary, most of the Danes had good intentions, but their decisions and actions did not always lead to anything good.

In this regard, the reviewer creates an oppositional structure between discriminatory colonial actions and good intentions, mirroring the narrative throughout the documentary series that "even manifestly harmful policies were developed with good intentions" (Gilles, 2023). This approach leads to ambiguous interpretations of the documentary series and the history it disseminates. For instance, *Information's* reviewer, Nikaoljzen (2022) writes:

“Standing at a traffic light approximately 75 years later, I wonder if the patronising perceptions of the Greenlandic people were an expression of naivety or cynicism.” By making her doubts visible and explicitly marking different arguments with contrastive conjunctions, Nikolajsen underscores the complexity of the topics presented in the documentary. Rather than using cultural legitimacy to shape a subjective discourse that portrays Denmark’s role as coloniser in a one-sidedly negative or positive light, she positions herself as an intermediary in the review, creating a space for self-reflection among Danish readers. In this regard, the producers and directors aim to create a “nuanced” depiction that avoids casting specific groups or characters as either victims or heroes is achieved (see Dimension 2: production process).

Less significant findings in the analysis of the review articles pertain to how the reviewers reproduce oppositional structures between Greenland and Denmark, as well as the integration of the Greenlandic perspective. For instance, *Avisen Danmark*’s reviewer reproduces some of the stereotypical representations: “In Inuit life, nature defined the course of life,” “Beautiful, but harsh Greenland”, and “original nature people” (Hyllested, 2022ab). Noteworthy her conclusion of the second episode: “It a tough existence, and therefore, it is not that weird that more Inuit sought out the Western lifestyle - an easier existence - when they had the opportunity” (Hyllested, 2022b). Similar to the documentary series, the dichotomy between “tough” and “easier” perpetuates the portrayal of Western innovations as positive and safe alternatives to the contrastingly dangerous and “fragile” life of the Inuit (see Dimension 1: Denmark as the opposite of Greenland). Moreover, this discourse reinforces the notion of the well-intentioned Danish coloniser who provided the Greenlanders with the “opportunity” to live an “easier existence,” while simultaneously entrenching a power imbalance that positions the Western/Danish lifestyle as superior.

Regarding the Greenlandic perspective (see Dimension 1: Denmark in the Greenlandic Gaze), two reviewers comment on this discursive construction but with different levels of criticism (Blüdnikow, 2022; Nikolajsen, 2022). In *Berlingske*, Blüdnikow (2022) primarily criticises the documentary series for not including enough Greenlandic characters in its production: “I miss more Greenlandic personal destinies that could have dramatised the material more. We see a lot of Danish officials and King Christian VII, but surprisingly little of the Greenlandic people.” This aligns with the findings from the quantitative analysis, which reveal that the majority of protagonists are Danish, while

supporting and minor characters are predominantly Greenlandic. It also underscores a heightened awareness of the power of representation in cultural products and the power imbalances they depict, a concern that is also evident in the director's ambitions for the series. On the contrary, in *Information*, the reviewer primarily praises the inclusion of Greenlandic characters, "(...) one of its pros for me was the representation of historical Greenlandic icons that I did not know about" (Nikolajsen, 2022). However, she also notes that the Greenlandic host speaks Danish and not Greenlandic: "Nukâka Coster-Waldau, who (in Danish) acts as the narrator (...)." The parenthesis implies that the reviewer is critical of this narrative choice. Hyllested (2022a) also praises the Greenlandic experts in her article: "Moreover, several historical experts from both Denmark and Greenland - and in both Danish and Greenlandic" (Hyllested, 2022a).

Overall, the different discourses detected in the documentary series are all present across the six review articles. In this regard, the media reviewers operate as an "interpretative community" (Zelizer, 1992) and "cultural intermediates" (Yaren & Hazir, 2020) that select, omit, and construct which discourses from the documentary they wish to convey to the wider public (Kristensen & From, 2015). Simultaneously, they also illustrate the consumption of the documentary's constructed discourses, and how meaning-making 'travels' through their interpretation (Erll, 2011). While some of the documentary's discourses 'travel' and are reproduced by the reviewer, others are more critically assessed or omitted. As such, the reviews illustrate how certain historical discourses are constructed, reconstructed, and recontextualised through new mediations, and ultimately, showcase the ongoing formation of Danish collective memory.

3.3. Social Analysis

In the final dimension of Fairclough's model (2001), the analysis firstly situates the documentary series within the sociocultural context and discussions surrounding the anniversary of Denmark's colonisation of Greenland and the relationship (Setiawan, 2018). Secondly, the identified discourses "textual" and discursive analysis are compared and contrasted in the sociocultural context to examine whether they challenge or reproduce hegemonic discourses. Several points of social, cultural, political, and historical context are relevant to the study. However, due to the scope of the analysis, it is essential to concentrate on aspects that align with the theoretical framework of collective memory and the politics of

regret. Consequently, the analysis will focus on recent historical events related to the Danish-Greenland reconciliation process and the public discourses surrounding it.

As noted in the introduction, during the commemoration of the Danish colonisation of Greenland in 2021, discussions on the rights of Indigenous people and Europe's colonial past and political present were taking place across the globe. In the context of Greenland and Denmark, this culminated with the painting of Egede's statue in Nuuk in June 2020 (Kočí & Baar, 2021). Despite this, the Danish media coverage of the 300th anniversary of the colonisation was relatively sparse (Larsen & Møller, 2022). Partly due to the Covid-19 production delays that resulted in the postponement of *The History of Greenland & Denmark* and other productions from *DR* (Gylstorff, 2022). Nonetheless, the first episode of the documentary series aired on *DR* and was released for streaming on April 24, 2022. As established through the literature review, Danish discourses remained relatively consistent in its representation of Denmark as a benevolent coloniser (Gad, 2008; Jensen, 2012, 2015; Thisted, 2003, 2015).

However, discussions of how to deal with the colonial past are not entirely new and two formal public apologies from Denmark to Greenland have been given. The first apology was given in 1999 in response to the forceful relocations of citizens from Thule in 1953. According to Gissel (2023), the apology was given reluctantly and only after financial pressure from an organisation of Greenlandic hunters. In 2004, psychiatrist Fatuma Ali who had spent significant time in Greenland and Denmark, held the first seminar on reconciliation. According to Thisted (2017), this initiative was, however, "met with objections against the perceived comparison between the brutal apartheid regime in South Africa and the non-violent Danish administration" (p. 235). While Canada, New Zealand, and Australia embraced reconciliation processes and issued public apologies over the following decade (Mihai & Thaler, 2014), Danish politicians persistently denied the need for an official apology or reconciliation for past wrongs (Gissel, 2023; Thisted, 2014b, 2017). According to then-Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen (2001-09), "Denmark and the Danes have not the least to feel ashamed about in Greenland, rather the opposite" (Ritzau, 2008, as cited in Gissel, 2023).

In 2013, three years after the enforcement of the Greenlandic Self Government Act, then-head of the Greenlandic government Aleqa Hammond (2013-14) requested establishing

a Greenlandic Reconciliation Commission. But then-Danish Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt (2011-15) denied the request. According to Thorning-Schmidt, the call for a reconciliation process was solely articulated in Greenland and was thus not considered a priority for Denmark (Thisted, 2014b, p. 162). Despite Denmark's reluctance, Hammond proceeded with the commission albeit without Denmark's involvement. The Greenlandic reconciliation process was short-lived and faced criticism from both Greenland and Denmark, including from experts and the broader public (Gissel, 2023). Thorkild Kjærgaard (2014, as cited in Gissel, 2023), an avid defender of Denmark's benevolence narrative, argued that Denmark had "nothing to regret, nothing to apologise for, and nothing to reconcile" (p. 117). To accept the politics of regret, would require, strictly speaking, Denmark to take responsibility for their colonial past and their historical present, and effectively constitute an abandonment of the Nordic exceptionalism/benevolent coloniser/mother nation discourses that have shaped Danish collective memory. It was not until 2020 that Denmark issued its second official apology for a specific government policy, widely known as "the experiment", in which 22 Greenlandic children were removed from their families in Greenland in order to Danify them in Denmark (Bryld, 1998). Since the 1990s, successive Danish governments had refrained from issuing apologies, maintaining that "the policy was done with the best intentions and in an era governed by different norms and values" (Gissel, 2023). Many other harmful policies remain officially unacknowledged; in this context, the two public apologies are exceptions rather than indicative of a broader implementation of the politics of regret.

Nevertheless, since the release of the documentary series, several significant sociocultural implications have emerged. In May 2022, the podcast documentary *Spiralkampagnen* [The Coil Campaign] was released, revealing that approximately half of the female population in Greenland had contraceptive coils (IUDs) inserted during the 1960s and 70s, often without their consent or prior knowledge (Pilegaard & Klint, 2022). This is relevant because the case has garnered significant media attention both in Denmark and internationally (Jung, 2022) and has prompted calls for transitional justice from across the political spectrum in Denmark (Nielsen, 2022). In March 2024, nearly 150 Greenlandic women announced their intention to sue the Danish state for the policy, demanding compensation, and recognition of their sufferings (Bryant, 2024). Furthermore, in June 2022, Denmark and Greenland initiated an agreed bilateral historical inquiry into the relationship between Greenland and Denmark (Rud, 2022). Recent changes in the sociocultural sphere

suggest a shift in Danish self-perception and a move toward the politics of regret. However, in the textual and discursive dimensions, there is no clear-cut expression of the politics of regret. Instead, the presence of both connecting and contrasting discourses creates a certain “schizophrenic quality,” as Thisted (2023) describes:

involves regrets for having severed Greenlanders from their traditions and culture and for previous discriminatory practices, and on the other hand, it implies an expectation of gratitude for assisting in modernisation and for the financial subsidies Greenland has received over the years. (p. 210):

Situating the documentary series, the interviews with the producer and director, and the subsequent media reviews within the sociocultural context of the narratives about the reconciliation process, the discourses reveal a “hybridity” (Janks, 2006), “mythscape,” (Toth, 2015), or “multivocality” where several ambiguous conflicting narratives co-exist in the same space (Vinitzky-Seroussi, 2002). While most texts are hybrids, hybridity can be seen as indicative of values in transition, according to Janks (2006). In this context, despite the dominant discourses across various outlets focusing on good intentions, the challenge extends beyond Danish self-perception. It also questions the ability to sustain the Danish Realm and its ongoing economic, political, and cultural presence in Greenland.

For the last few years, the Danish-Greenlandic relationship has been increasingly criticised and scrutinised by different social actors. Despite gaining Self-Rule in 2009, Greenland’s pursuit of greater equality and self-determination persists (Jacobsen, 2019). Additionally, questions regarding equality and power dynamics in foreign policy are gaining increased attention due to Greenland’s growing strategic importance in the Arctic and international relations, as well as its potential for critical mineral resources essential for the green transition (Gad, 2013; El Rrami, Ramsbæk, & Heiredal, 2021; Jacobsen, 2021). Particularly, Trump’s suggestion to buy Greenland from Denmark in August 2019 sparked controversy around Greenland’s autonomy (Pengelly, 2019). Considering these recent socio-political developments, the increased Danish participation in reconciliation practices can be recontextualised as an application of the politics of regret. This shift illuminates the possibility that the Danish government previously avoided reconciliation efforts out of concern for disrupting Danish–Greenland relations and triggering further demands for Greenlandic independence and de facto decolonisation (Gissel, 2023). Such developments could potentially alter the longstanding colonial power balance, favouring Greenland and diminishing Denmark’s status as an Arctic powerhouse. Consequently, this not only

challenges the Danish self-image as a benevolent coloniser but also undermines the global empire Denmark has built up over the centuries and its associated self-perception (Jensen, 2012; Thisted, 2008). In this context, the politics of regret may serve as a new form of self-legitimation (Olick, 2013), allowing the 300-year relationship between the two countries to persist.

4. Discussion

This thesis explored the construction of collective memory in the commemorative documentary series *Historien om Grønland og Danmark* from 2022 by the Danish public broadcasting service, *Danish Radio (DR)*, and in the subsequent review articles from the Danish mainstream media. Using critical discourse analysis (CDA) as the primary method, supplemented by multimodal discourse analysis (MCDA), the study analysed how the media constructed different discourses about Denmark's actions as a coloniser during the 300th commemoration of Denmark's colonisation of Greenland. Furthermore, it hypothesised that the collective Danish self-perception would move from one characterised by discourses of pride and benevolence to one more connected to Olick's (2013) concept of the politics of regret due to changes in the contemporary social context.

Some of the study's findings are consistent with prior research on commemorative journalism, showcasing the genre's tendency to narrate consistent and confirming discourses of the past that aim to bolster the nation's self-image and enhance social cohesion (Edy, 1999; Keith, 2010; Kitch, 2022). For instance, this is reflected in the findings from the quantitative coding scheme, informed by Yusufov & Meyers' (2023) commemorative framework, which reveals that the majority of both protagonists and narrators are Danish, while Greenlanders frequent more often as minor or secondary characters. The dominance of the Danish social group enhances the groups' superior status while marginalising Greenlanders in the documentary series' overarching narrative to passive (Jensen, 2015), corroborating with Yusufov & Meyers' (2023) *logic of commemoration*. Moreover, the textual analysis of the documentary series and the discursive analysis of interviews with the producer and director and in the subsequent media reviews showcase how largely comforting historical and current discourses continue to be reproduced, consistent with prior research conducted by Gad (2008), Jensen (2012, 2015), Mortensen & Maegaard (2018, 2019), and Thisted (2003, 2014, 2015). This is evident in the discursive pattern of visual and verbal

contrasting between Greenlanders and Danes, which employment constructs the Greenlanders as the “Other,” a typical feature of ‘Arctic Orientalism’ and historical representations in Danish literature (Fienup-Riordan, 1995; Said, 1979; Thisted, 2003). Owing to Fairclough (1995) and critical discourse scholars’ notion that language is inherently a tool of power, such a mechanism reinforces an imbalance of power in favour of the dominant majority (van Dijk, 1998). However, the most dominant discourse to emerge from the analysis is the construction of “Denmark had the best of intentions.” Relating the discourse to the literature shows that the prominent discourses of peaceful benevolence, exceptionalism, and protecting the mother nation are substantially prevalent in how Denmark’s acts as a coloniser are depicted in the documentary series (Gad, 2008; Jensen, 2015; Loftsdóttir & Jensen, 2012; Thisted, 2015). Moreover, the employment of Fairclough’s (1995, 2001) three-dimensional discourse model, allowed for further analysis that elucidated how discourse transcends mediation. The findings from the discursive analysis of the consumption process reveal that the mainstream media’s reproduction of a largely affirming discourse underscores a deficiency in critical self-reflection regarding Denmark’s role as a coloniser when national “self-love” is at stake (Doolan, 2021; Ricoeur, 2004). This highlights the impact of collective memory on group identity, which is maintained through selective remembrance of certain narratives and discourses that evolve over time and across contexts (Gillis, 1996; Halbwachs, 1992). This discourse was notably prevalent in *Kristelig Dagblad*, where the reviewer’s background as a priest likely influenced his perspective on Hans Egede’s missionary work (Bacher, 2022). Similar patterns are observable across the other reviews, which frequently emphasise “good intentions” (Blüdnikow, 2022; Hyllested, 2022b; Lentz, 2022).

Despite the collective memory of Denmark as a predominantly peaceful coloniser, the analysis of the documentary series also aligns with other studies revealing the critical potential of commemorative journalism and how media through the construction of competing discourses can shape a more critical rereading of a group or nation’s collective memory (Meyers, 2021). This is reflected in the addition of Greenlandic perspectives, protagonists, and sources in the documentary series. Furthermore, this narrative construction is reinforced by the director’s expressed objectives in the interview material within the discursive dimension. Although Greenlandic voices remain a minority, there is an increased agency illustrated in their representations, allowing for a portrayal that challenges the

dominant narrative and introduces a more critical perspective on the collective past. The most prominent critical discourse identified in the textual analysis is the portrayal of “Denmark as the repressive mother,” which frames the actions and injustices committed by Danish colonisers and governments as self-serving rather than protective of the Greenlandic people (Gilles, 2023; Thisted, 2014). This critical discourse also permeates subsequent media reviews, illustrating its influence across various dimensions (Fairclough, 1995). On the grounds of Halbwachs’ (1992) notion that collective memory of the past is a social construct, shaped to align with the beliefs of the present, it is unsurprising that the textual and discursive analysis showcases more critical representations of colonialism and attempts to create a more balanced representation. Given the increasing scrutiny of colonialism and the demand for greater diversity in media and film, particularly in the wake of the #BlackLivesMatter-movement (Kočí & Baar, 2021) and during this “age of apology” (Mihai & Thaler, 2014; Olick, 2013; Toth, 2015; Vinitzky-Seroussi, 2002), the relatively minor presence of the critical discourse compared to the dominant narrative of “Denmark with the best of intentions” subverts the expectations outlined by Olick’s (2013) concept of the politics of regret.

Recontextualising the findings from the first two dimensions within the context of the reconciliation process and current public discussions in the social dimension reveals new insights. The social analysis highlights how Denmark has persistently avoided publicly apologising for past wrongs or engaging in a bilateral reconciliation process. Instead, Denmark employs discourses that emphasise its benevolence and dismiss historical accountability as a waste of time (Gilles, 2023; Thisted, 2014). Additionally, the analysis points to recent shifts in Danish-Greenlandic power dynamics and public discourse (Gad, 2013; Jacobsen, 2019; Rud, 2021), which may indicate a move toward the politics of regret. This emerging discourse could represent a new form of self-legitimation for Denmark as it confronts the challenges posed by its previous self-perception as a benevolent coloniser and its current role in Greenlandic society (Olick, 2013).

However, considering the textual, discursive, and social dimensions, the analysis may present another answer. It reveals several interconnected, opposing, and internally ambiguous discourses at play at once. The discourses do not directly challenge the old narratives of Greenland and Denmark relationship, but they are not clear-cut reproductions either. The persistence of reaffirming discourses underscores the ongoing endurance of

Denmark's self-perception regarding its role as a coloniser in Greenland and the associated power dynamics. This illuminates how meanings are continuously constructed, reconstructed, and circulated through documentaries, media reviews, and public discussions, even when there are efforts to dismantle these hegemonic discourses (Kladakis, 2014; Mortensen & Maegaard, 2019). This is particularly evident in the analysis of the interviews with the producer and director, which illustrate how these discourses persists. Precisely by virtue of its ambiguity and lack of definitive conclusions, the analysis of *Historien om Grønland og Danmark* and the subsequent media reviews potentially illustrates new conditions for the collective memory of Danish-Greenlandic history. It is essential how the focus is being shifted from the one-sidedly depicting either the Danish over the Greenlandic viewpoint, or the good vs bad coloniser narrative into a description of the shared colonial "mythscape" (Toth, 2015), in which power, dreams, and intentions are connected, and both discourses of shame, the politics of regret, and pride can coexist. In this regard, it also illustrates Vinizky-Serrousi's (2002) definition of a "multivocal commemoration" as "a shared text that carries diverse meanings and thus can be joined by groups with different interpretations of the same past" (p. 31). In this way, it can be argued that the series and its reviewers use the commemorative event to facilitate a more critical examination of which historical perspectives should inform the contemporary processing of the shared Danish-Greenlandic memory during a period of reconciliation. This approach reveals a transitional shift in values and remembrance (Janks, 2006).

Regarding the thesis hypothesis, which posits that this construction would illustrate a transition from collective pride to the politics of regret, the findings do not provide conclusive evidence to support this hypothesis. However, elements of the politics of regret are present across the dimensions of analysis. Whether these elements represent a new form of national self-legitimation, as suggested in the social analysis, or reflect Denmark's readiness to confront its historical wrongs as part of an ongoing reconciliation process, remains open to interpretation and warrants further scholarly investigation.

Furthermore, the findings offer insights into visual and multimodal representations of the Danish-Greenlandic relationship. Documentaries hold a distinctive power due to their unique capability to imitate reality and create emotions through different modes (Ebbrecht, 2007; Nichols, 2001; Pajala, 2017; Roselló, 2022). As Grierson (1965) suitably highlighted when defining the genre as a "creative treatment of actuality" (pp. 6-7), documentaries are a

social construct, in which the historical reality is something to be created and never objective (Ankersmit, 2012). The application of MCDA supports this notion, as condensing 300 years of history into four one-hour episodes is inherently limited by time constraints and narrative objectives. Consequently, analysing how the various visual and narrative modes are employed to reproduce hegemonic discourses and subtle power relations, or what Machin (2013) terms “repertoire of meaning-potentials,” enhances our understanding of how Denmark’s colonial actions are constructed in the documentary series. The language and images chosen, the sources and protagonists selected, the narration structured, and the information presented are all influenced by the sociocultural context and the actors who create it (Bateman, 2017). This is particularly noticeable in the interviews in the production process. Director Høegh discusses how the scarcity of historical Greenlandic sources has contributed to a distorted historical narrative. He also expresses his goal of incorporating more Greenlandic perspectives to challenge the hegemonic and Danish-centric history-writing. Findings from the second dimension reinforce the idea that discourse is shaped by deliberate intentions rather than emerging in a timeless vacuum. In this sense, both journalistic discourse and collective memory are influenced by and, in turn, influence past and present narratives (Neiger, 2020). Furthermore, documentaries are inherently subjective and open to diverse interpretations like images and text. Collective memory is not simply interpreting information at face value; it entails recontextualization, as meanings and interpretations evolve across generations, cultures, and media (Wodak & De Cillia, 2007).

Similarly, while the findings from the consumption process of the analysis do not offer adequate evidence on how media discourse influences the audience (Schneider, 2013), it provides valuable insight into how media reviews as cultural intermediaries use their authority to legitimise a cultural product and provide new interpretations (Janssen & Verboord, 2015; Kristensen & From, 2015). Moreover, it offers exemplary insights into how certain discourses “travel” from one journalistic product to the other, similar to how Yusufov & Meyers (2023), employing Erll’s (2011) concept of “traveling memory” to describe how “journalistic commemorative memory “travels” through time and media outlets” (pp. 3-4).

In addition to its contributions to research, the current thesis is also subject to several limitations, which in turn highlight possibilities for further research. Firstly, employing critical discourse analysis (CDA) as the primary method and multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) as the supplementary method can limit conclusions due to the absence of

widely accepted methodological frameworks. The study addressed this issue by drawing on relevant research and integrating various methodological frameworks to develop an analysis scheme that effectively answers the research question regarding the construction of discourses. Despite efforts to combat these methodological challenges through the systematic application of CDA and MCDA, the lack of a well-defined and widely adopted framework complicates the task of comparing findings across different studies of CDA. Moreover, CDA's reliance on qualitative textual analysis introduces variability in interpretations and reduces transparency. The empirical limitations stemming from this could have been partially alleviated with a more meticulous coding scheme for identifying these discourses (Carvalho, 2008; Reynolds, 2019). Nevertheless, the methodological framework proposed in this study can serve as a foundation for future research exploring dimensions of discourse, including both verbal and visual representations, while addressing the limitations identified.

Secondly, the study concentrates on a single documentary series and its production and reception, which means that the findings are not necessarily generalisable but instead provide exemplary insights into a specific case at a particular “critical discourse moment” (Reynolds, 2019). Since collective memory is shaped by changing attitudes over time, only focusing on one anniversary year may not fully uncover the broader influence of the social context, despite the literature review addressed the historical and current discourses surrounding Greenland and Denmark. Future studies on the evolution of this historical relationship could incorporate the temporal dimension of collective memory, as seen in Meyers, 2021; Reynolds, 2019; Yusufov & Meyers, 2023. Additionally, examining changes in the frequency of Greenlandic protagonists and narrators over time would provide a valuable longitudinal perspective on this phenomenon. However, since the next comparably significant anniversary related to the colonisation of Greenland will not occur until 2121, and the most recent one was in 1921, a suggestion for further scholarly investigation would be to examine other historically significant dates. For instance, the implementation of Home Rule in 1979 or self-rule in 2009 would provide more frequent and contemporary opportunities to explore these issues. Furthermore, future studies should implement a larger corpus of media outlets for the analysis, since various types of media exert differing levels of influence and consequently possess varying degrees of ideological power (Couldry & Hepp, 2018). Especially, given the increased complexity of the media landscape – encompassing diverse formats, institutions, authority, digitalisation, new platforms, and

user-generated content, often referred to as “deep mediasation” (Couldry & Hepp, 2018) – this approach becomes particularly relevant. Similarly, considering the growing significance of social media in shaping visual and multimodal representations of collective memory (Rose, 2014) due to its transformative role in disseminating information to a wide audience and influencing perceptions of the past (Neiger, 2020), investigating the construction of the Greenlandic-Danish relationship during the 300th anniversary on these digital platforms could provide valuable insights for future research.

While Fairclough’s (1995, 2001) three-dimensional model provides several points of entry to study the phenomenon, it also limits the analysis in regards to an in-depth attention to the detailed structures of language, modes, and narrative choices in both the documentary series and the subsequent media reviews. Given the documentary genre’s “truth claim,” (Bateman, 2017; Nichols, 2001), further investigation into the audio-visual and narrative modes specific to this genre could elucidate the underlying meanings and power structures. Similarly, exploring how discourse is created and evaluated through media reviews could offer valuable insights into the role of cultural journalism in the meaning-making process and interpretation of the media product. While this study identifies the rhetorical tools used in the reviews to construct discourse, it does not fully address how these reviews function as intermediates or how political affiliations may influence their evaluations. This gap highlights the need for future research to combat these limitations and examine the impact of these factors on discourse construction (Janssen & Verboord, 2015; Kristensen & From, 2015). This limitation could potentially be mitigated by employing additional methods, including focus groups for study of consumption process or interviews with the producer and directors (Fairclough, 1995, p. 31). Furthermore, the social analysis provides the sociocultural context crucial to any study of CDA and MCDA (Fairclough, 1995; Marchin, 2013; van Dijk, 2015), however, it is far from providing a complete picture of the complex 300-year history and the influence of the current international climate and environmental challenges on the internal relationship between Greenland and Denmark. The historical intricacies of Danish colonialism, modernisation, and the specific policies, such as the trade monopoly, the forced relocations, and experiments, are relatively underexplored. These events are primarily employed as examples of the strategic discourses constructed in the series and the subsequent media reviews. To fully understand the role of these historical events in shaping collective memory, dedicated individual research projects would be necessary.

Considering how meanings can vary based on context and intended audience, it is important to clarify the author's stance as a researcher. The author highlights her Danish nationality and upbringing in a society that reproduces many of the discourses discussed in this thesis. Additionally, it is noteworthy that the author had not visited Greenland by the time of this thesis's publication. Such background may present the study with accusations regarding potential biases and subjective interpretations. Similarly, it is important to recognise that research on Greenland is still predominantly conducted by Danish researchers (Graugaard, 2020), which raises issues related to representation and colonial implications akin to those discussed in this thesis. In analysing how the documentary series constructs Danish self-perception as a coloniser in Greenland, the author aims to avoid portraying the "Other" and instead seeks to "reverse the gaze" (Graugaard, 2020, p. 38), by focusing on how the Danes perceive themselves. Additionally, as the author is not a specialist in Greenlandic history, this could lead to potential misinterpretations of specific historical events and may inadvertently limit a comprehensive understanding of the topic's complexities.

Lastly, it has proven challenging to convey the peculiarities of the Danish language, which contribute to the understanding and expression of the respective discourses in the documentary series and articles. While the author's translation aims to capture the meaning of certain words and phrases as accurately as possible, it is important to acknowledge that translations may still be prone to errors.

This study contributes to the scholarly investigation of the Danish-Greenlandic relationship and journalism, collective memory and documentaries, media reviews and discourses, and the potential of commemorative journalism and the politics of regret. Through the analytical framework, a conceivable contention between commemorative journalism and its critical potential for rereading the collective past and self-perception, influenced by changes in the social and cultural context, comes to the fore. Due to its limited scope as a study of one documentary series and its production and consumption, more research should be conducted to qualify the results and their impact on society. Nevertheless, it also raises new questions: How will a more critical rereading of the past influence the relationship between Greenland and Denmark? What future challenges and opportunities lie ahead for the two countries as the social, political, and economic environment continues to

evolve? Moreover, what role will the mainstream media and documentaries have in mediating collective memory in an increasingly complex and multifaceted media landscape? In the end, the study reveals the continuous potential for investigating the complex terrain of media in shaping the present and past.

Conclusion

More than 300 years after the first Danish settlers arrived on the shores of Greenland, the relationship, and the collective history between the two countries remain complex and disputed. According to Halbwachs (1992), collective memory is a reconstruction of the past, shaped by a community to serve their “beliefs and spiritual needs of the present” (p. 7). As such, collective memory is simultaneously fundamental to defining a group’s identity and self-perception, but also inherently “unstable, fragile, and frequently a source of contention” (Doolan, 2021, p. 16). Similarly, the Danish self-perception of their role as a coloniser in Greenland has been dominated by a hegemonic discourse that defines Denmark as uniquely benevolent, protecting, and motherly, and consequently well-intentioned. However, what happens as time and society advance, and new narratives and memories emerge that challenge this reaffirming discourse? Can Denmark preserve this fundamental collective memory in an ‘age of apology,’ where the ghosts of its colonial past increasingly haunt the present?

This thesis illuminates the types of discourses and underlying power relations that emerge during the commemoration of the 300th anniversary of Denmark’s colonisation of Greenland. Considering the significance of media as an “agent of memory” (Zelizer, 1992) and the increased importance of visual meditations to collective remembrance (Roselló, 2022), the author examined how *Historien om Grønland og Danmark*, a TV drama-documentary series produced by the Danish broadcasting service *Danish Radio (DR)* from 2022, and the subsequent media reviews, constructed Denmark’s actions as a coloniser in a time of commemoration. The study employed critical discourse analysis following Fairclough’s (1995, 2001) three-dimensional approach, supplemented by multimodal critical discourse analysis (Machin, 2013), and was informed by Yusufov & Meyers’ (2023) framework for commemorative journalism. The analytical framework allowed the author to examine the underlying discourses and power dynamics present in both visual and verbal modes of expression, such as wording, structural oppositions, archival footage, and narrative structure (Fairclough, 1995; Machin, 2013; Pajala, 2017) and enabled the perception of these choices as a social practice, simultaneously shaping and shaped by the society it is embedded in (van Dijk, 1998, 2015). Moreover, analysing text involves engaging with both production and consumption processes, as well as considering the text a product of its social context (Setiawan, 2018). Therefore, the three-dimensional approach offered a framework for

examining how this construction occurs on a textual, discursive, and social level, thereby revealing how hegemonic discourses are both reproduced and challenged.

The textual analysis of the documentary series pointed to four distinct, but interconnected discourses: *Denmark as the Opposite of Greenland*, *Denmark in the Greenlandic Gaze*, *Denmark as the Repressive Mother*, and *Denmark had the Best of Intentions*. While *Denmark as the Repressive Mother* and *Denmark in the Greenlandic Gaze* purports to change the discourses and represent a different and more empowered image of historical Greenlanders which is much more critical of Denmark's colonial role, *Denmark as the Opposite of Greenland* and *Denmark had the Best of Intentions* largely reproduce old discourses of benevolence and superiority. Some of these discourses contradict each other's meanings, while also presenting ambiguity in themselves. This notion is further reinforced by the findings from the discursive analysis. Whereas the production process showcases the ideologies and choices of the producer and director, the consumption process reveals how the discourses from the documentary series are both challenged and reproduced by media reviewers. Beyond this in the social analysis, the documentary is situated within the context of the Danish-Greenlandic reconciliation process and recent societal developments. Together the dimensions showcase a "hybridity" where several discourses and ideologies are at play at once during this commemoration, illustrating values in transition and a re-reading of the Danish collective memory and self-perception.

Furthermore, the author hypothesised that the analysis would reveal a move toward the politics of regret. While elements of the politics of regret are presented across the dimensions, whether these serve as a new form of self-legitimation or a re-reading in line with the ongoing reconciliation process between the two countries, the study opens up to further scholarly investigation.

These findings are a valuable contribution to prior research on collective memory, commemoration, the relationship between Greenland and Denmark, and the role of documentaries in constructing collective memory. Although the findings are limited in terms of generalisability, the results are still informative because of the illustrated hybridity. This hybridity, of being in-between challenging and reproducing old discourses, or in-between a re-reading defined by both politics of regret and affirming nation-building, suggests values in transition, different hegemonic memory than have been before, potentially highlighting that commemoration can work to create critically potential reconstructions and discourses.

This points to the need for future research to track the evolution of the discourse across various texts and formats over time. Such studies could begin to determine whether ambiguity and reinterpretation are prevalent or confined to specific genres or creators., e.g., DR having certain expectations as a public service medium and reach. Furthermore, with more media cases that were published after the documentary, it is not difficult to imagine that the discourses revealed in this article may already have changed or altered. So, further research might surface the construction of a new multivocal order of discourses, replacing the enduring hegemonic narratives.

Summary

Po více než třech stech let od příchodu prvních dánských osadníků na grónské území zůstávají vztahy mezi dvěma zeměmi a jejich kolektivní historie komplexní a disputované. Podle Halbwachse (1992) je kolektivní paměť rekonstrukcí minulosti tvarovanou komunitou za účelem uspokojení jejich „přesvědčení a duševních potřeb současnosti“ (s. 7). Kolektivní paměť je tedy současně základním kamenem pro definování skupinové identity a vnímání sebe sama, ale inherentně také „nestabilní, křehká a často zdrojem neshod“ (Doolan, 2021, s. 16) . V podobném ohledu bylo i dánské vnímání sebe sama jakožto kolonizátora v Grónsku dominantně ovlivněno hegemonickým diskurzem, který vymezuje Dánsko jako jedinečným způsobem benevolentní, ochránářské a přirozeně mateřské, a tedy i s dobrými úmysly. Co se ovšem stane s postupem času, když se společenským pokrokem vyplují na povrch nové narativy a vzpomínky, které tento potvrzující diskurz nabourají? Dokáže Dánsko zabránit rozpadnutí této fundamentální kolektivní paměti v „době omluv“, kde přízraky koloniální minulosti stále více narušují současnost?

Tato práce objasňuje typy diskurzů a mocenské vztahy, které jsou třisetletým výročím dánské kolonizace Grónska přenášeny do současnosti. S ohledem na význam médií coby „paměťového činitele“ (Zelizer, 1992) a rostoucí význam vizuální mediace pro kolektivní vzpomínání (Roselló, 2022) se autorka zabývá tím, jak televizní drama-dokument „The History of Greenland and Denmark“, produkovaný dánskou veřejnoprávní společností Danish Radio (DR), a jeho následné recenze v médiích konstruovaly počínání Dánska v roli kolonizátora v době historického připomínání této minulosti. Studie aplikovala kritickou diskuzivní analýzu založenou na Faircloughově (1992, 1995) trojrozměrném přístupu, doplněnou o multimodální diskurzivní analýzu (Machin, 2013) a inspirovanou rámcem

komemorativní žurnalistiky Yusufova a Meyerse (2023). Analytický rámec autorce poskytl možnost se zaměřit na zásadní diskurzy a silové dynamiky přítomné jak ve vizuálních, tak i verbálních vyjadřovacích prvcích, jako je volba slov, strukturální opozice, archivní záběry a narativní struktura (Fairclough, 1995; Machin, 2013; Pajala, 2017) a umožnil vnímání těchto rozhodnutí jakožto společenské praktiky, která současně ovlivňuje a je ovlivňována společností, v níž je obsažena (van Dijk, 1991). Mimo to se práce v průběhu analýzy textu zabývá procesy produkce a konzumace a vnímá je jako produkt vlastního sociálního kontextu (Setiawan, 2018). Trojrozměrný přístup tedy poskytl strukturu pro analýzu tohoto konstrukčního procesu na textuální, diskurzivní a společenské úrovni, čímž také ukázal, jak se reprodukují a zpochybňují hegemnické diskurzy.

Textuální analýza dokumentární série poukázala na čtyři odlišné, avšak vzájemně propojené diskurzy: *Dánsko jako protiklad Grónska*, *Dánsko pohledem Gróňanů*, *Dánsko jako represivní matka* a *Dánsko mělo ty nejlepší úmysly*. Zatímco *Dánsko jako represivní matka* a *Dánsko pohledem Gróňanů* usilují o proměnu diskurzů a zastupují jinou, silnější image historických Gróňanů, která je mnohem kritičtější vůči dánské koloniální roli, *Dánsko jako protiklad Grónska* a *Dánsko mělo ty nejlepší úmysly* do velké míry reprodukují staré diskurzy shovívavosti a nadřazenosti. Některé tyto diskurzy si významově protirečí, přičemž zároveň samy o sobě představují mnohoznačnost. Tuto představu dále posilují zjištění diskurzivní analýzy. Zatímco proces produkce poukázal na ideologii a rozhodnutí producenta a režiséra, proces konzumace odhalil, jak jsou diskurzy v dokumentární sérii zpochybňovány a reprodukovány recenzenty. Mimo to je v rámci sociální analýzy dokument situován v kontextu dánsko-grónského procesu smiřování a nedávného společenského vývoje. Společně prvky ukazují hybriditu tam, kde v průběhu tohoto výročí současně působí vícero diskurzů a ideologií, což vykresluje proměňující se hodnoty a reinterpretace dánské kolektivní paměti a sebevnímání.

Autorka dále hypotetizovala, že analýza odhalí posun směrem k politice lítosti. Ačkoliv jsou prvky politiky lítosti napříč dimenzemi přítomny, studie ponechává na dalším akademickém zkoumání, zdali slouží jako nová forma sebelegitimizace či reinterpretace v souladu s probíhajícím procesem smiřování.

Tato zjištění jsou hodnotným přínosem pro předchozí studie kolektivní paměti, připomínky,

a vztahu mezi Grónskem a Dánskem a uvažují nad rolí dokumentů v utváření paměti. Navzdory omezené zobecnitelnosti zjištění zůstávají výsledky informativní díky ilustrované hybriditě. Tato hybridita zpochybňování a reprodukce starých diskurzů či reinterpretace, ustanoveného politikou lítosti, a utvrzujícím budováním národa naznačuje působení ideologických sil s cílem vytvořit odlišnou hegemonickou paměť, než ty předchozí a zdůrazňuje, že připomínka může vytvářet rekonstrukce a diskurzy s kritickým potenciálem. Tím se nabízí podrobnější výzkum, který by sledoval vývoj diskurzu napříč texty a jinými formáty v určitém časovém období. Začít by mohl stanovením, zda jsou mnohoznačnost a rekonstrukce rozšířené, či spojené se specifickými žánry nebo producenty, např. vliv určitých očekávání v případě DR, coby média veřejné služby. Není rovněž náročné si představit, že s publikací dalších mediálních případů následující uvedení dokumentu se odhalené diskurzy v tomto článku mohly proměnit. Další zkoumání by tedy mohlo odkrýt vznik nové diskurzivní hegemonie, která nahrazuje staré narativy.

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List of Appendices

Appendix 1: List of protagonists for quantitative analysis (table)

Appendix 2: List of narrators/expert sources for quantitative analysis (table)

Appendix 3: List of review article authors (table)

Appendix 1: List of protagonists for quantitative analysis (table)

Protagonist:

Several scenes, several lines, significantly drives the plot forward. Greenlandic/Danish

Supporting roles:

few scenes, few lines, support/illustrate plots in storyline. Greenlandic / Danish

Minor roles:

few lines/few scenes, do not support storyline, mainly illustrative function. Greenlandic / Danish

Ep.	Name	Nationality	Role
1	Hans Egede	Danish-(Norwegian)	Main role
1	Gertrud Rask	Danish-(Norwegian)	Supporting role
1	Poul Egede	Danish-(Norwegian)	Supporting role
1	Frederik the 4th, King of Denmark and Norway	Danish	Supporting role
1	Manu	Greenlandic	Minor role
1	Ukalila	Greenlandic	Minor role
1	Aama/Elisabeth	Greenlandic	Supporting role
1	Unnamed Angakok/Necromancer	Greenlandic	Minor role
1	Poq (whaler)	Greenlandic	Supporting role
1	Qiperoq (whaler)	Greenlandic	Supporting role
2	Christian the 7 th , King of Denmark and Norway	Danish	Supporting role
2	Høegh-Guldberg	Danish	Main role
2	Schimmelmann	Danish	Main role
2	Møller (trader)	Danish	Minor role
2	Henrik Fly (trader)	Danish	Minor role

2	Manutooq (trader)	Greenlandic	Minor role
2	Kemiuna, later named Margrethe	Greenlandic	Minor role
2	Frederik the 6 th , King of Denmark	Danish	Supporting role
2	Rasmus Berthelsen	Greenlandic	Main role
2	Hinrich Rink	Danish	Main role
3	Christian the 10 th King of Denmark	Danish	Supporting role
3	Augo Lynge	Greenlandic	Main role
3	Thorvald Stauning	Danish	Supporting role
3	Knud Oldendow	Danish	Main role
3	Eske Brun	Danish	Main role
3	Hans Hedtoft	Danish	Supporting role
4	Unnamed woman	Greenlandic	Minor role
4	Samuel	Greenlandic	Minor role
4	Mogens Boserup	Danish	Main role
4	Kuupik Kleist	Greenlandic	Supporting role
4	Elisabeth Johansen	Greenlandic	Main role
4	Pikkita/Birgitte	Greenlandic	Minor role
4	Unnamed nurse	Danish	Minor role
4	Apolloraq Mogensen	Greenlandic	Supporting role
4	Margrethe the 2 nd , Queen of Denmark	Danish	Supporting role
4	Lars-Emil Johansen	Greenlandic	Supporting role

Results:

	Protagonists	Supporting roles	Minor roles	In total
Greenlandic	3	6	8	17
Danish	7	9	3	19

In total	10	15	17	36
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Appendix 2: List of narrators/expert sources for quantitative analysis (table)

Expert sources

Danish / Greenlandic

Episode Appearance	Name	Nationality	Language spoken	Expertise
1,2	Kirstine Eiby Møller	Danish	Danish	Archaeologist, Greenland National Museum
1,3,4	Daniel Thorleifsen	Greenlandic	Greenlandic	Historian/Director, Greenland National Museum
1	Hans Christian Gulløv	Danish	Danish	Archaeologist
1,2	Peter Andreas Toft	Danish	Danish	Historical Archaeologist, National Museum Denmark
1	Flemming Nielsen	Danish	Danish	Theologist, University of Greenland
2	Inge Høst Seiding	Danish	Danish	Historian/Institute Leader, University of Greenland
2,4	Vivi Noahsen	Greenlandic	Greenlandic	Archive Leader, Greenland National Museum
2	Søren Rud	Danish	Danish	Historian, Copenhagen University
2,3,4	Kirsten Thisted	Danish	Danish	Lecturer in Minority Studies, Copenhagen University
3,4	Jens Heinrich	Greenlandic	Danish	Historian
3,4	Sniff Andersen Nevø	Danish	Danish	Historian, Ph.D.
3	Ole Guldager	Danish	Danish	Museum Inspector, Narsarsuaq Museum

3	Iben Bjørnsson	Danish	Danish	Historian, Cold War Museum Stevnsfort
3	Erika Nielsen Baadh	Greenlandic	Danish	Culture and Society Historian
4	Einar Lund Jensen	Danish	Danish	Historian, National Museum Denmark
4	Kuupik Kleist	Greenlandic	Danish	Former Head of Naalakkersuisut, Greenland's National Government
4	Lars-Emil Johansen	Greenlandic	Danish	Former Head of Naalakkersuisut, Greenland's National Government

Danish experts: 11

Greenlandic experts: 6

Experts in total: 17

Appendix 3: List of review article authors (table)

Author	Newspaper	Ethnicity	Connection to Greenland	Profession	Approx. political affiliation
Bacher	Kristeligt Dagblad	Danish	No	Priest / Media commentator	Independent evangelical
Blüdnikow	Berlingske	Danish-Belarussian (Jewish heritage)	No	Historian / Journalist / Reviewer	Center-right
Hyllested	Avisen Danmark	Danish	No	Culture Editor	Non-disclosed
Lentz	Jyllands-Posten	Danish	Yes	Teacher in Greenland	Center-right
Nikolajsen	Information	Danish	No	Journalist / Reviewer	Center-left