

○ THE SPIRITS OF GREENLAND AND THE FRIEND OF THE EMPEROR

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This article is a critical reworking of a previous reading of the religious situation in Greenland through the Gospel of John and may at ground level be seen as an exercise in comparisons. The article focuses on two postcolonial identities: biblical scholar Musa W. Dube from Botswana and Manguaq Berthelsen, a New Age shamanic individual in Greenland. Through a close reading of Musa W. Dube's article on Johannine Christology I will point to difficulties in this reading which relate to problematic identity issues within a postcolonial context. Likewise Manguaq Berthelsen's efforts to deal with the Greenlandic church seem to highlight some of the same problems, namely whose authority to draw on when beginning to speak in your own voice.

This article is a discussion of several of the methodological problems encountered in presenting a paper at the Bible and Critical Theory Seminar in Perth, 2005. My endeavour there was a reading of John, as propounded by Musa W. Dube in her article 'Savior of the World but not of this World: A Post-Colonial Reading of the Spatial Construction in John' (Dube 1998: 118–135), placed alongside the religious situation in contemporary Greenland. After a recapitulation of the paper, I will focus on two major issues, namely the construction of two postcolonial identities: Musa Dube and Manguaq Berthelsen, which reconfigure some of the points of the paper.

The gist of the paper was as follows:

Dube reads John with particular emphasis on the empire. This emphasis is not specifically connected with the actual imperial texts in the gospel, but on the empire as backdrop for the entire text. Dube argues that the empire is the catalyst that fuels the competition between the Jewish groups (disciples of Jesus and disciples of Moses) given that colonised peoples have various ways of reacting against their oppressor and these various ways are also reflected in their internal power struggles (Dube 1998: 128). The gospel's construction of Jesus may be seen as imperial ideology, since it uses the language of the empire to represent Jesus. This is particular to the prologue and the subordination of the Jewish tradition (through Nicodemus, Moses, Abraham and Jacob) that follows from the *logos* ideology and the high Christology of the gospel. I briefly elaborated her reading, that John i) foregrounds the function of Moses and Abraham who only serve to highlight the Johannine Jesus after being stripped of any independent significance, and ii) points fingers at the Jews in the gospel narrative as the ones who conform to imperial strategy by presenting them as the emperor's advocates (19, 12–15). While I didn't explore the claim that John was an imperialising text, I fully agreed with Dube's reading of the Johannine Jesus as constructed and veiled in imperial robes with the Jewish tradition serving only to imply his magnitude, while at the same time, the Jews are cast in a collaborative role, siding with the emperor in order to nail Jesus because of his opposition to the existing power structures. The reason I applauded this reading of John was because I recognised some of the strategies from the religious situation in Greenland, or should I say my reading of the situation in contemporary Greenland? Here, the Inuit bishop (we could see her as the Jews in the Johannine narrative) is struggling with

a shaman, Manguaq Berthelsen (as the Johannine Jesus), who claims to be fulfilling Moses' mission: to lead her people to their correct spiritual identity, which the church at present certainly is not fulfilling, since she sees the church as a misunderstanding of God's will. The imperial context is Greenland's former status as a Danish colony, a status that was repealed by the law in 1953 which made Greenland part of the Danish kingdom with the same status as every other part of Denmark.¹ In 1979 Greenland was placed under limited home rule, which means that Greenland is still under Danish constitutional law where the judicial system, law enforcement, foreign affairs and defence are concerned, but domestic matters are solely in the hands of the Greenlanders.² So although Greenland no longer has the status of a colony, the presence of Denmark is there, and continues to control vital parts of the society, education and government.

The Greenlandic church has also undergone several instances of withdrawal from the Danish National Lutheran Church of which it is part. Until 1993 Greenland was a part of the diocese of Copenhagen. In 1993 Greenland was made a separate diocese with its own bishop appointed by the Danish state, a status still valid today.³ Nevertheless, should one have had an eye on the web pages of the Danish and the Greenlandic church within the last year one would have noticed the significant changes which have taken place. From November 2004 to August 2005 the web pages have undergone three transformations. If one had enquired into Greenland's religious life on the website of Greenland's home rule department before 1st April,⁴ one was immediately re-directed to the home page of the Danish National Lutheran Church, where Greenland was presented as the 11th diocese under the management of the bishop, Sofie Petersen. In June, it was changed, so that the Greenlandic church had its own home page, and was thus separated from the home page of the Danish church.⁵ The Danish church's home page did state, however, that the Danish church consists of 12 dioceses if one also counts Greenland and the Faroe Islands.⁶ In August the last sign of dependence was airbrushed from the homepage of the Danish church, which apparently now consists of 10 dioceses, no ifs. These changes have taken place despite the fact that nothing has changed since 1993, but one might suspect that the Greenlandic church's centenary in 2005 had something to do with these restructurings. Despite these efforts to prove the contrary, the connection is still there, and this is exactly what Manguaq Berthelsen taps into by presenting the Greenlandic church as imitating Denmark. She herself employs various Christian themes in her construction of an authentic Greenlandic identity, which includes Abraham and Moses as her guiding spirits and her ability to travel 'out there' and speak with God, discerning the true purpose of the divine will, which naturally is different from the interpretation provided by the Greenlandic church. My paper argued that in refiguring several elements in Christianity and mapping them out in a Greenlandic scenery under the control of one of the Inuit spirits, Berthelsen shifts the hierarchical structures and thereby controls Christianity and so the coloniser in the realm of the spirits. At the same time she accuses the bishop of enacting the Danish will, and merely making Greenland into an inferior copy of Denmark.

The final point of the paper was that placed in a Greenlandic context, and through the comparisons highlighted, John is made to speak against the church of which it is a founding text in that the similarities between the oppositional position of Manguaq Berthelsen and the Johannine Jesus were stronger than the similarities between Jesus and the bishop, while at the same time pointing to the problematic and manifold reactions to the imperial power and its institutions.

So much for the paper. Now I would like to dive into a more thorough investigation of the background of Dube and Berthelsen.

PROBLEMS ABOUNDING...

I will treat two major problems. The first relates to Dube's article and the presuppositions there. This leads into the second problem, the presentation of Berthelsen, which fosters numerous questions on opposition, interdependence and religion.

But first, Dube. The problem was that I took a one-sided approach to Dube's article. I focussed solely on her reading of John, without taking into account the steps she took to present this reading. So first I would like to ask how Dube came to characterise John's ideology as a colonising text? According to Dube, the term 'colonising' defines texts that exhibit values which authorise dominion, reformation and supersessionism (Dube 1998: 118, n. 1). By reading John next to several Western canonical texts Dube wishes to decolonise John's portrayal of Jesus' divinity and his place of origin, to the extent that they express colonising ideology. Dube then reads her own text with these Western texts to contest, subvert and decolonise the master's text by not giving it full attention, and thereby resisting its power. From Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* she extracts the notion of the larger-than-life protagonist: Kurtz, the master coloniser with a humanity that borders on the divine because of the words used to describe him: invoke and exalted. That space becomes the area of operation is seen in the way Kurtz is described as kicked free of the earth, with nothing above or below him. This freedom from the earth is characterised as being above the limitations of boundaries, whilst legitimising a claim over the earth, i.e. Africa, and by extension all other non-European places (122–123).

In Virgil's *Aeneid*, characterised as the founding mythology of the Roman empire, she notes that the divine promise in book 1 constructs Aeneas as exalted to heaven and by extension the Romans are above boundaries in space and time, and are characterised as masters of the world (Dube 1998: 123).

In the *Aeneid* and *Heart of Darkness* she notices the same procedure in map-drawing: colonising agents and their races befriend divinity and imagine all spaces of the earth to be universally accessible to them (Dube 1998:123). This is then read alongside the construction of Jesus as the Logos in the beginning of John's prologue, where Jesus is also placed above and beyond geographical spaces yet laying claim to all these spaces, hence the title 'Savior of the World but not of this World'.

That these texts share colonising ideologies rests on several presuppositions that must be followed in order to accept the understanding of John presented in this article. The basic presupposition is that all three texts are colonising texts. Very well then, are there other ways of understanding these texts, which aren't represented in the article? At the very least, the status of *Heart of Darkness*'s stance towards colonialism is ambiguous (Sarvan 1988; Singh 1988). And in literary studies the issue is far from resolved.⁷

The Bible is several times mentioned as the having 'exerted more cultural influence on the West than any single document' (Dube 1998:118; 130; 132). No objections here; but there is a step from the Bible to the Gospel of John. And the reason for choosing John is rather vague: 'Missionary diaries have shown that John is the most influential text' (132), Dube asserts, without any references. I would contest the ease with which this is put forward and taken for granted.

In the same volume, R. J. Sugirtharajah points to Matthew 28:19 as being the most influential missionary text in the colonial period (Sugirtharajah 1998: 95). Before this, various texts were used by various missionaries, and of the 8 examples he lists, only two are from John: 3:16 in the patristic period and 10:10 was a favourite with the Social Gospellers (96). Dube's analysis involves empire and coloniser as very generic categories and thereby begs the question of John's role in empire building on a just as general level. Translations of John's Gospel would be a good place to clarify this point. I give three examples from missions in a catholic society (the Philippines), a mixed (Australia), and a protestant society (Greenland). During the Spanish mission in the Tagalog society, the first texts to be translated were catechisms, for example the *Doctrina Christiana* (Rafael 1993: 38) and prayers (60–62) from 1593. In Australia, Threlkeld, who was one of the first to translate the New Testament into aboriginal language, began with Luke, continued with Mark and never finished Matthew (Boer 2001: 169). Finally the translation into Greenlandic began with Mark (Wilhjelm 2001: 118). From these three representative examples, the claim is less convincing, because from the above-mentioned instances John as a whole doesn't seem to have been as central as Dube wishes it to be: that a colonising ideology may be successfully extracted from the text does not necessarily mean that this has been the main use of the text.

The *Aeneid* is characterised as 'the principal secular book of the Western World' (Dube 1998: 118) and an epic written to mythologise the rise of the Roman Empire (122). Of all Dube's pre-suppositions, this is the one that gives me least grief. Could this be the text through which she reads the rest? Yes and no. It is the text that is most pro-imperial and so colours the two other texts' ambiguities. But the text that guides all of these three is Dube's own text, which is presented in two scenes: Scene One, which is a description of the I arriving in Great Britain, the heart of the empire (in *italicised writing*), and reflections on the contradictions between the depiction and perception of lands and continents (the commentary on the actual experience is set in normal writing). Scene Two is a dialogue between the I and I's son, Aluta, about his unwillingness to admit that they are from Africa, since he is made fun of. Instead he wants to be an African American (also in *italicised writing*). The following commentary (in normal writing) interprets the dialogue for us: he is depicted as a strange ethnic category that he does not wish to belong to. He is African, as seen with Western eyes (someone who eats boars), but would rather be seen with different eyes, which means a redrawing of the maps that depict him. The common feature of these two texts is made evident in the following paragraph, which concerns map-drawing as manipulation. In this case the I and I's son have both been imposed with other people's maps as a way of understanding the world and their place in it. This paragraph also serves as the transition between the I and the impersonal voice of (biblical) scholarship.⁸ The reader must however bear in mind that 'The stories of my life and the quotations from secular texts will highlight the construction of colonizing lands and agents' (118). But there is something else in these texts that defies the interpretation requested by Dube. The first text tells us about the I's arrival in England to go to college in Durham. I is the only black student, and rumour arises that the I is an African princess. These points suggest that the I comes from a certain privileged position, that entails the financial and emotional surplus to send a family member to England to study. That the rumour of royalty should arise also suggests that the equipment of the I was not of poor and ragged quality. It seems, then, that the representation of victimisation offered is but one of several possibilities.

As the above discussion shows, we are less involved in highlighting than constructing a decolonising intertextuality. Behind it all lurks Dube's autobiography, a narrative which foregrounds the colonised subject. This governs the interpretation of the *Aeneid*, *Heart of Darkness* and John by locking them into an imperial agenda and thereby performing the interpretation through the lens of autobiography.⁹

With this more thorough examination of Dube and this autobiographical element of control in mind, I would now like to move on to Greenland and have another look at Manguaq Berthelsen and her construction of Greenlandic Christianity. First I will summarise a televised feature (*Blurring the Boundaries*), thereafter critically engage it in two steps (*Constructing Shamanism and Deconstructing Manguaq Berthelsen*) and finally sum up the content of her religious constellation (I speak of what I know and bear witness to what I have seen).

BLURRING THE BOUNDARIES

Two years ago the Danish national television broadcast company did a feature on Manguaq Berthelsen, which is what I will be referring to here.¹⁰ The programme presents her as being the representative of Inuit spirits over against the holy spirit, which is represented by the bishop. The holy spirit as presented by the bishop seemingly has been the suppressing force. But the struggle is far from being that simple. Just when one thinks that the lines are clearly drawn, the bishop reluctantly acknowledges the presence of the indigenous spirits while emphatically denying and ridiculing their power. This move may be seen as political on several levels: as an attempt to hold on to an indigenous identity, in fear of pushing away the more nationalistically inclined church members; or as an expression of the power structure she belongs to, namely the Danish constitutional law, wherein tolerance towards other religions is graciously granted, and thus would make her liable should she wish to censor their legitimacy within the Greenlandic society.

As if this wasn't enough to blur the boundaries, Manguaq Berthelsen suddenly does not deny Greenland's Christian heritage. In opposition to several nationalistic people in Greenland, who see Christianity as a colonial remnant that must be exorcised, she integrates it.

This is precisely what causes the church as well as the extreme nationalists to eye her with scepticism. She integrates Christianity instead of bypassing it as a colonial tumour, which could also be seen as a political move – riding on the coattails of the immense popularity of the church. Manguaq Berthelsen sees herself as a devout Christian, in direct contact with God, and with a correct understanding of the divine nature and purpose (more explicitly the origin of evil). At the same time she sees herself along the same lines as the indigenous shamans, since they work with the same spirits. One of them is Pissaap Inua (Lord of Power), who has become the incarnation of Greenlandic nationalistic hope. This spirit is explicitly labelled as her friend. As helping spirits Manguaq also has Abraham and Moses – the person who led his people to the promised land, which is how she sees herself and her mission: leading the people of Greenland to their correct spiritual identity, which at the moment is being suppressed by The Danish National Lutheran Church. So Moses and Abraham assist Manguaq in her purpose, which does pull them away from their more traditional context.

The retaliatory rhetoric of the church in regard to Manguaq is very interesting, first because (as I argued in my original paper) it shared similarities with the above mentioned power struggle in John, but also because it denotes a power struggle within the Greenlandic society that also

blurs the boundaries. First of all she is called mad, and then we have the bishop's pointed statement that Manguaq Berthelsen makes herself equal to God. Finally she is labelled a witch, an epithet which connotes incorrect religious practice associated with pagan worship.¹¹

CONSTRUCTING SHAMANISM

My second problem is that I did not sufficiently take into account that in the television feature, Manguaq Berthelsen is a portrait, put together by someone else. So Berthelsen is moulded and formed in a special way, which could be expressions of someone else's ideas and interpretations. Indeed, Jan Witzel, the producer and interviewer, is very dominant in the show, both as the reporter, the interviewer and as a 'client' of Manguaq which I will return to later. So maybe it is time to see what he wishes her to be.

How is Manguaq Berthelsen portrayed in the show? The feature is presented in eight smaller sections interlaid with snippets of interviews with the bishop, Sofie Petersen, and seven Greenlanders with their views on the value of the spirit world. All of them have very favourable things to say about the spirit world and its importance for the Greenlandic community. As a spokesperson for the church, there is only the bishop. The producer does refer to the clergy's opinions on Manguaq Berthelsen, but in vague and general terms. Not only does this leave Sofie Petersen and her authority isolated, but creates the impression that the church is something distant and strange and completely unfit for Greenlandic society. Indeed the show finishes with a young musician, Mads Lumholt, saying: 'No one can monopolise the truth, no one has patent on that "our god is the only god"', that is evident, people know that this is how it is'.

It seems that Manguaq Berthelsen is to be seen in opposition to the church. This is based on the structuring of the show. Manguaq is filmed at home, with all kinds of paraphernalia in the background, sitting comfortably in her chair and answering very serenely to the questions. Sofie Petersen is filmed in the church with the alter and the crucifix in the background, less comfortable with the situation and appears to be less consistent and less articulate. Manguaq speaks of spirits, Sofie Petersen about the holy spirit; Manguaq Berthelsen speaks of Greenland finding its own spiritual identity so as not to be a Danish copy, Sofie Petersen of the Greenlandic people *having* an identity as Christians. The comments on Manguaq also tell us how to understand her:

1. Through comments by the bishop and the producer we learn how the church reacts to Manguaq Berthelsen: Jan Witzel tells us that the church eyes her neo-shamanic efforts with fear, that a church official has named her a witch, and the bishop comments that the worst thing is making oneself equal to God.
2. Through the interview Manguaq affirms that she may be compared to the great and deceased Greenlandic shamans.
3. Her parents were told about her and her arrival in a revelation and since she was a baby she knew that she was alternately gifted.
4. Finally Manguaq is presented as a healer. She describes how the spirits work through her, and then goes on to straighten out Jan Witzel's energy, which is slightly crooked.

In her study of Shamanism, Merete Demant Jakobsen (1999) analyses the traditional Greenlandic shaman, the *angakkok*, and compares this role with contemporary neo-shamanic

figures and ideals.¹² Unfortunately this study is before Manguaq Berthelsen stepped out, and so chapter 5: The Revival of Shamanism in other Cultures begins:

As far as I have been able to discover there is no real attempt to revive the shamanic tradition in Greenland. The Christian churches are very well attended and interest in the old traditions of the forefathers is expressed through art and literature (Jakobsen 1999: 208).

I would like to elaborate on some of her points in relation to Manguaq Berthelsen and to sketch the characteristics connected with Greenlandic shamans, to see which of these Manguaq reappropriates.

Jakobsen distinguishes between two approaches to shamanism: one that universalises and one that takes the social function of shamanism into account. The first approach is connected with Mircea Eliade and his followers. The second is represented by S. M. Shirokogoroff and his followers, to which Jakobsen belongs (Jakobsen 1999: 4–5). These approaches are also distinct in their view on the relationship to the spirits. Eliade and co. saw the relationship as one of co-operation, whereas Shirokogoroff, Jakobsen and others see the shaman as a master of spirits, since this is necessary for social control and status (7). This is also what Knud Rasmussen, the Danish arctic explorer, expresses in his analysis of the *angakkoq*: ‘Not everybody can become an *angakok* as it is not everybody that the spirits will serve’ (Rasmussen, as translated by and quoted in Jakobsen 1999: 114).

Apart from the connection between mastery and social recognition the features that I am interested in are as follows:

1. Which spirits did the Inuit shamans work with?
2. When was the apprenticeship initiated?
3. What are the shaman’s healing powers?
4. On what does the shaman’s authority rest?

The chief spirits that the shamans connected with were mother of the sea, the Moon spirit and *Toornaarsuk*. The accounts of these spirits and their functions differ tremendously from settlement to settlement. The following very general characteristics may give an idea of the overall function in their life of a Greenlandic community. The mother of the sea lives as may be expected in the sea and so controls the animals there, which are a crucial part of the hunting community’s survival. The Moon spirit has influence on weather, fertility and taboo (Jakobsen 1999: 66). Finally the *Toornaarsuk* is the most varied.¹³ Translated as the Great spirit, it is not possible to find a unified picture of this spirit or its function (68). In several accounts it does seem to be a special helper of the *angakkoq*, but not an essentially good or evil spirit (68). The reason for these muddled accounts appears to be due to the missionaries in West Greenland, especially the Egede family who made this spirit into a more prominent unified being than generally assumed, in order to demonise it and to create a concept that was viable in describing the devil (69). Indeed *Toornaarsuk* was used to translate ‘devil’ in the earliest translations of the bible into Greenlandic (Kleivan 1979: 177). None of these spirits are mentioned by Manguaq Berthelsen. Certainly the spirits in touch with the animals and fertility carry less weight in a modern Greenlandic society. And so evoking these spirits would make less sense and relate less to contemporary

issues such as nationalism and freedom. Then who is Pissaap Inua? Translated ‘Lord of Power’, he is part of the mythology of modern Greenland. He was the helping spirit of Kaassassuk, an orphan, who was bullied by society until he was empowered by Pissaap Inua and returned to the settlement and killed everyone except his fosterparents. Only when Kaassassuk’s immense strength was matched did he settle down. The legend is about getting to know oneself and being able to reconcile one with oneself and one’s surroundings (Thisted 1999a: 55–56 and Thisted 1999b: 44). Incidentally a statue of Kaassassuk and Pissaap Inua made by the Greenlandic artist, Simon Kristoffersen, has a very prominent place in front of the Homerule building in Nuuk which certainly does foreground the nationalistic interpretation of this legend.

Apprenticeship was usually initiated from childhood. Some supernatural feature would let the child understand that he or she had special gifts (Jakobsen 1999: 61). Manguaq Berthelsen does trump this card by being called before this, even before birth.

Healing powers were not restricted to the *angakkoq* alone (Jakobsen 1999: 93). Other people in the community could heal illnesses or ailments. The *angakkoq*’s healing, as described by a Danish scientist investigating the East coast,¹⁴ was a case of the helping spirits telling the *angakkoq* the reason for the illness, whether the soul is hurt or stolen. The *angakkoq* then travels to the lower world to retrieve or mend it (Holm, as translated by and quoted in Jakobsen 1999: 92). This is far from Manguaq’s straightening of Jan Witzel’s crooked energy.

The *angakkoq*’s authority in relation to his practice is justified through myths and the traditions in the given society (Jakobsen 1999: 6). The *angakkoq* is the preserver of cosmos through insight in upholding of the myths and traditions that go back to the forefathers’ customs and taboos. This skill rests upon his or her ability to master spirits and this ability in turn gives *angakkoq* the social acknowledgement. This is where Manguaq Berthelsen’s case becomes interesting, because she does draw upon a mythological-historical source of authority to solidify her own, and mentions helping spirits, but these are not from the mother of the sea, the Moon spirit or *Toornaarsuk*. The source is God and the helping spirits Abraham and Moses.

DECONSTRUCTING MANGUAQ BERTHELSEN

So this could be where the programme’s presentation of Manguaq becomes less fixed. I mentioned above that there seemed to be an opposition between Manguaq and the bishop. However, there also seems to be some likenesses between the two, and I am not talking about the fact that they are both wearing denim shirts. Because when Sofie Petersen is talking about the Greenlandic people as having a Christian identity, this also includes Manguaq Berthelsen. And this slips in to the portrait from time to time. Through the interview Manguaq presents herself as a Christian, with direct access to the will of God. She explains that although she wouldn’t go as far as to claim that she was born to do it, her parents did learn about her and her arrival in a revelation and since she was a baby Manguaq knew that she was alternately gifted. Furthermore, Abraham and Moses are named as some of the spirits she works with. It is hardly necessary to point out the Christ-like aspects of this staging: the revelatory proclamation of her arrival and her immediate access to God; her guiding spirits, which include Moses and Abraham; and her healing powers. To add a final touch to it all, should we have missed it, the bishop’s statement about making herself equal to God supports these allegations.

Manguaq's role in this programme is to tell us about her career, how it began and what the meaning of it is. It is a portrait of her and her wishes to reform Greenlandic identity and so we are presented with a very condensed autobiography that relates to these issues. What should be of interest to us is her earnest explanation of her supernatural powers and their source, in other words the divine revelation of her arrival. This autobiographical element is cast in Christ-like language and so lends the ultimate authority to her reformation project, within a Christian context.

I SPEAK OF WHAT I KNOW AND BEAR WITNESS TO WHAT I HAVE SEEN

But what is this project? In the Perth paper I argued that her aim was to reconfigure the hierarchical structures and thereby place the realm of the spirits above Christianity. This way, Christianity was controlled by the Greenlandic spirits. But if this were the case, why would the authority marker be mapped out in Christological terms?¹⁵

A closer look at the elements of her religious programme could answer this question.¹⁶ From the above sketch it would seem that she connects Christianity with Inuit religion. But there are also several elements that creep in which have no (previous) place in either.

We begin with her visits to her spiritual helpers that provide her with information about the will of God. Then she is asked if she can be a good Christian while communicating with spirits. This she affirms and then laughs. After a several comments about spirits and interviews with a couple of younger Greenlandic soul searchers she is asked whether one may compare her to the indigenous shamans. This too she sedately confirms, seeing that it is the same spirits they work with, for example Pissaap Inua, a very strong spirit. This then prompts the interviewer to prod her to tell about the spirits she works with. The first one mentioned is Abraham whom she calls the father of all, and indeed marvels at the idea of having the father of all with her. Then comes the narrative of meeting Moses, who came to her in his small basket floating upon waters, and stood before her a grown man. Thus biblical material is recast in a spiritual journey with access to spirits. When she explains how they contact her, she says that they flow through her crown chakra, and mentions a day when she had put her halo on crooked, so that her friend had to straighten it out for her. Then Jan Witzel asks her if the spirits will tell her something about him, even though he is Danish. She talks about his pale blue energy, and says that he is to be a messenger. The energy is just a little crooked and needs to be straightened, which she does upon request. She says that there is an enormous energy at his heart chakra, and that he has been Greenlandic in a previous incarnation.

Now crown chakra, heart chakra and reincarnation are not elements of an indigenous Greenlandic religion, nor is it connected with traditional shamanism. Neither is straightening of energies or halos. These concepts are part of a New Age discourse, that here is intermingled with Christian elements (God, Moses and Abraham) and Inuit religion (Pissaap Inua). Of her three guiding spirits only one is of Greenlandic origin. This does question the epithet shaman, which the programme readily gives her as well as the link with the shamans of the past, which she happily submits herself to.¹⁷ The real authority behind her is the Christianity she opposes. And the final result of her religious programme is very far from the shamanism with which she is seen in continuation.

FORGET JESUS

Where in Perth I saw the primary comparison between John's Jesus and the reconfiguring of Jewish power structures and Manguaq Berthelsen and the reconfiguring of Christian power structures, I would now like to shift my comparison from John's Jesus and Manguaq Berthelsen to Musa Dube and Manguaq Berthelsen. In rereading the Perth paper and its background texts, it seems that Dube and Berthelsen begin to show increasing similarities which I hadn't noticed before. Manguaq Berthelsen is dependant on the authority of the institution she is attacking. In her New Age constellation she foregrounds the nationalistic hope in opposition to the Danish Lutheran church, but draws upon an autobiographical reappropriation of church mythology to give social authority to her position, not to mention the Danish national television as a mode of distribution of her message.

In Dube's case she employs a victimised colonised identity to subvert readings she has been taught as a privileged colonised subject. She uses an autobiographical postcolonial identity to subvert and contest the authority that has gotten her to the position from where she can speak. This part of the postcolonial experience slips into the colonised's narrative. The reason that the postcolonial I can marvel at the dissonance between Great Britain as an ideology and Great Britain as a small dark and gloomy country is because the I went there, and went there to go to college. The British college would reassure the reader that the training and the foundation are in place for the following interpretation.

This shows that the autobiographical elements *highlighted* are highlighted for a special reason, namely to give supreme authority to certain points they are drawn in to support. Confused?

In questioning the hows, I hope I haven't shaken the foundation of the whys. The efforts of Musa Dube and Manguaq Berthelsen must be seen in light of transforming paradigms of power and representation. They are unable to escape the 'traditional' power structures to gain authority for new constellations; this shows the difficulty of gaining one's own authority to speak from when one is attempting to shed the authoritative structures of imperial history. Nevertheless, the agendas of both women are very important, and the issues raised must not be overlooked or dismissed.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Danmarks Riges Grundlov af 5 juni 1953.
- 2 Lov om Grønlands Hjemmestyre lov nr. 577 af 29 November 1978.
- 3 Loven om Grønlands Kirke af 6 maj 1993.
- 4 <http://www.nanoq.gl/> accessed on 10 November 2004.
- 5 <<http://www.nanoq.gl/kirke>> accessed on 25 June 2005. (No longer available.)
- 6 <http://www.folkekirken.dk/> accessed on 23 August 2005.
- 7 See Patrick Brantlinger's discussion of Heart of Darkness in his epilogue to *Rule of Darkness. British Literature and Imperialism, 1830–1914*, where he highlights Conrad's ambiguous relationship with empire and imperialism, his love-hate relationship with Kurtz, and discusses racism with Achebe, schizophrenic purpose with Jameson and heroism with Trilling (Brantlinger 1988: 255–274)
- 8 In his *Reading with a passion*, Jeffrey L. Staley (1995) explores the 'intrusion' of the I in biblical scholarship, although the examples he cites show that the scholars who do include autobiographical

elements believe that there is a distinction between their selves and their scholarship, which Dube on the surface does not. She explicitly states that her texts must be read with the other texts, and so blurs the boundaries of canon, western, biblical or otherwise. The conscious use of autobiography in scholarship is explored by Stephen Moore, who noted in the early 90s that the most provocative work in this field was done by the colonised female subject (Moore 1995: 34).

9 I am not sure whether this is conscious or not. In other words, how aware is Dube of the extent to which her autobiographical narrative controls the other readings? It certainly brings to mind Staley's warning: 'But Borg's autobiography should be read as carefully as the rest of the book. As literary critics are quick to note, the rhetorical power of autobiography ... lies precisely in its apparent openness and candor. And the openness and candor often efface a more covert purpose' (Staley 1995: 122–123).

10 *Åndernes Grønland*, produced by Jan Witzel 2003.

11 This is naturally a power question. The Christian missionaries named the *angakkoq* as a 'witchmaster' or *Hexe Mester*, thereby establishing a similarity between the *angakkoq*, the spirits, the witch and the devil (Jakobsen 1999: 95). This is pressing the Greenlandic power structures into European-Christian terminology. In Greenlandic tradition there is however also a concept that covers people of illegitimate and harmful practice: *ilisiitsoq*. The penalty was death. Hans Egede Saabye, the grandson of Hans Egede, tells that in his area of mission in West Greenland, there were instances of Christian converts being killed as *ilisiitsut* (pl.) (96). The term *ilisiitsoq* covers both healer and destroyer and is usually a wise old woman or man who has healing powers, which will make them prosper. Should they however cause harm and attract the community's aggressions, then they will be killed (98). The *angakkoq* has the power to determine who is an *ilisiitsoq* and the death is usually quite violent, including eating of the deceased's heart to prevent her or him haunting the community (p. 97). A precise analysis of the multilayered meanings of the *ilisiitsoq* may be found in Thisted (1999b: 525) and Kleivan and Sonne (1985: 22–23).

12 Jakobsen's study combines Greenlandic shamanism with modern shamanism, which makes it very relevant to this article. However Greenlandic shamanism has been a central feature in the work of Petersen (1990), Petersen (1996), Kleivan (1996) as well as in the collaborative venture of Kleivan and Sonne (1985), all pieces of valuable work, which must not be neglected.

13 In her article 'Toornaarsuk, an historical Proteus', Birgitte Sonne (1986) has given a thorough discussion of the concept of the *Toornaarsuk* and the history of its interpretation, which does the complexity of the *Toornaarsuk* more justice than the sketchy comments available here.

14 Practices on the east and west coast were, and are, very different, which is very clear in the travel tales brought back from either shore by scientists and missionaries. Whereas the mission on the west coast of Greenland began in the middle of the 18th century, the Christianising of the East Coast did not begin until the late 19th century (Jakobsen 1999: 52).

15 I thank Deborah Bird Rose for pointing me in this direction through a few accurate questions.

16 The following paragraph developed through a discussion of the programme, which I showed in a course in Postcolonialism and Minority Studies at Copenhagen University, where I was invited to give a lecture by Dr. Kirsten Thisted, whose insights into Greenlandic indigenous religion has been extremely helpful in coming to these points.

17 One of the points in Jakobsen's monograph is that the concept 'shaman' has collapsed in that it has been broadened so as to encompass every attempt to contact the spirit world. The word has moved from shaman in an 'original context' to include 'weekend soul searchers' (Jakobsen 1999: 3).

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