Smilla's Sense of Snow Study Guide

Smilla's Sense of Snow by Peter Høeg

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Introduction

Published in Denmark as *Froken Smillas fornemmelse for sne* in 1992, and appearing in translation as *Smilla's Sense of Snow* in the United States and as *Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow* in England in 1993, Peter Høeg's novel quickly moved to the top of the bestseller lists in Europe and the United States. Although Høeg had enjoyed modest commercial and critical success in Denmark with his earlier book *Forestilling om det tyvende arhun-drede* (1988), published as *The History of Danish Dreams* in 1995 in the United States, it was his third novel that rocketed Høeg into the international limelight. The book has been published in more than thirty countries, was named the 1993 book of the year by both *Time* and *Entertainment Weekly*, spent twenty-six weeks on the *New York Times* best-seller list, and was made into a film by Danish director Bille August in 1997. In addition to this remarkable popular success, the novel has won favor among literary critics, who note Høeg's careful attention to setting and culture. As Thomas Satterlee notes, "In many of his novels Høeg explores Danish society by deliberately including characters from a wide range of social classes." *Smilla's Sense of Snow* is notable for its treatment of Danish culture, Greenlandic culture, and the inevitable clash of values brought about by the shift from a colonial to postcolonial relationship between the two. In addition, Høeg examines that strange land of the person caught between cultures in the characters of Smilla and Isaiah. Finally, Høeg plays with conventions and expectations in his use and subversion of the murder mystery/suspense novel genre. *Smilla's Sense of Snow* is a complicated and rich novel, a fast-paced thriller, a love story, an anthropological exploration, and a philosophical treatise all in one book. Høeg's accomplishment with this novel has moved him to the top of the list of Danish writers publishing at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Author Biography

Peter Høeg was born in Copenhagen, Denmark, on May 17, 1957. His father was a lawyer and his mother a classical philologist. Høeg worked as an actor, dancer, drama teacher, and sailor before turning to writing in 1988. Høeg has also traveled extensively throughout the world, most notably in Africa. His wife, Akinyi, is Kenyan, and Høeg and his family visit Africa frequently.

Høeg's first novel *Forestilling om det tyvende arhundrede* was published in Denmark in 1988. Translated as *The History of Danish Dreams*, the book was published in English in 1995. Critics praised the debut novel highly. However, it was not until the publication of his third novel, *Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne*, that Høeg became known internationally. Published simultaneously in 1993 as *Smilla's Sense of Snow* by Farrar, Straus and Giroux in the United States and as *Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow* in England, the novel immediately won outstanding reviews from critics and readers alike. Tiina Nunnally, the translator of the American version and the primary translator of the English version, along with the pseudonymous "F. David," also won high praise from reviewers for her brilliant rendering of the Danish novel into English. She received an award from the American Translators Association for her translation of the novel. Both *Time* and *Entertainment Weekly* selected *Smilla's Sense of Snow* as their best novel of the year. In 1997, director Bille August released his film rendition of the novel. The novel also won a 1992 Glass Key award from the Crime Writers of Scandinavia. Since its publication, *Smilla's Sense of Snow* has been translated into seventeen languages, testifying to its worldwide appeal.

Høeg's other works include *Tales of the Night*, a collection of short stories, first published in Danish in 1990 and in English in 1997. *Borderliners*, a novel, was published in Denmark in 1993 and in the United States and England in 1994. Finally, *The Woman and the Ape*, a novel, was published in Denmark, the United States, and England in 1996. Høeg established a foundation with the profits from this book to aid women and children in third world countries. At present, Høeg lives in Copenhagen with his wife and two children.

Plot Summary

The City: Part 1

Smilla's Sense of Snow opens in Copenhagen, Denmark, "the city" alluded to in the section title. The very short first chapter locates the scene in a Greenlanders' cemetery during the funeral for Isaiah, a young Inuit boy, killed by falling from the roof of a warehouse. The chapter also introduces the reader to the first-person narrator, Smilla, as well as to Isaiah's mother, Juliane, and the mechanic, later identified as Peter Føjl. Although the chapter is just a little over two pages long, it closes with an important insight for Smilla, an insight that sustains her through the rest of the novel: "All along I must have had a comprehensive pact with Isaiah not to leave him in the lurch, never, not even now."

The story turns in the next chapters to a series of flashbacks. In the first, Smilla recounts returning late one December afternoon to the White Palace, the apartment complex where she, Isaiah, Juliane, and Føjl live, to find Isaiah dead on the ground and police all over the scene. Føjl, the first person to find him, is also there, crying. Although the police call Isaiah's fall an accident, Smilla believes it to be foul play for two important reasons: first, Isaiah was terrified of heights and would never have been on the roof except to escape from someone intent on doing him harm; and second, when Smilla reads the footprints in the snow, she knows he has jumped off the roof, not fallen, for some unknown reason, most probably to escape from someone or something that frightened him badly.

In another set of flashbacks, Smilla tells of meeting Isaiah about a year and a half earlier and of their developing love for each other. Isaiah often turned to both Smilla and to Føjl when Juliane was drunk and unable to care for him. Through these flashbacks, the reader comes to understand the bond between Smilla and the child and to understand her dogged determination to find out what really happened to him.

During this opening section, Smilla begins her investigation into Isaiah's death, talking to the police; to Ravn, an investigator; to Jeanne Pierre Lagermann, the forensic expert who first examines Isaiah's body; and to Johannes Loyen, the powerful director of the Institute for Arctic Medicine. These meetings do nothing to ease Smilla's suspicions about the boy's death. After going through Juliane's papers, she discovers a link between Isaiah and the Cryolite Corporation of Denmark, a firm that both mines and explores Greenland. Isaiah's father was killed during an expedition to Greenland with the Cryolite Corporation, and the company has granted a widow's pension to Juliane.

In the first part of the novel, the reader is also introduced to Peter Moritz Jaspersen, Smilla's father, a very wealthy anesthesiologist and golfer. Smilla and Moritz have a deeply troubled relationship; however, Moritz supports Smilla financially and gathers the information for which she asks him, about Loyen, Tørk, and the Cryolite Corporation.

The meeting with Moritz also pushes Smilla to recall her childhood in Greenland and her mother, Ane, a hunter who is now dead.

The reader discovers that Smilla is an expert glaciologist, someone who can read ice and snow better than nearly any other person on the planet. Although she has never finished any advanced degrees, she has published on the subject and is regarded garded as the foremost expert on ice. She also has an uncanny ability to navigate her way through non-navigable conditions in the Arctic.

A final important event of the opening chapters is the growing relationship between Smilla and Føjl. Although neither truly trusts the other, they begin an affair that leads to Smilla falling in love with Føjl.

The City: Part 2

The tension tightens in part two as Smilla follows leads to Loyen; David Ving, an accountant and lawyer who seems to be threatening Juliane in some way; and to Andreas Fine Licht, an expert in Eskimo culture and dialect. All three seem to have some connection to the mysterious expedition to Greenland in 1966 that ended in explosions killing eight people and then a second expedition in 1991 that resulted in Isaiah's father's death. In addition, all three seem to have some connection to yet another expedition being mounted. Føjl also learns that Isaiah was picked up every month by Ving to be examined at a hospital. Smilla discovers the name of Tørk Hiijd. Smilla goes to Licht in order to have a tape she finds in Isaiah's hiding place translated. Licht lives on a boat where The Arctic Museum is housed. Smilla leaves the tape with Licht but returns to the boat when she receives a call from Licht to come at once. She finds Licht murdered just before the boat explodes, and someone tries to kill her. Smilla barely escapes with her life.

The City: Part 3

In the last part of the first section of the novel, more pieces fall into place. Smilla connects Loyen to a conference on "Neocatastrophism." As Moritz explains to her, neocatastrophism is a scientific debate over how great natural catastrophes have affected the evolution of the earth. In addition, she discovers that during the expeditions to Greenland, the divers did not die of botulism as reported by the Cryolite Corporation. Rather, they died from a worm found in the water surrounding a meteorite, a worm that is normally only found in the tropics but that generally does not cause the death of its host. In addition, with help from Føjl's friend, Birgo Lander, she identifies the ship being outfitted for the next secret expedition to Greenland. Lander introduces her to the captain and arranges for her to travel with the expedition as a stewardess. She narrowly misses being picked up by the police at her father's home, but he helps her escape and delivers her to Lander, who takes her to the ship, the *Kronos*.

The Sea: Part 1

All of the action of the second section of the novel takes place on ship. Smilla meets a variety of dangerous characters, including Jakkelsen, the captain's brother, who is also a heroin addict, and Verlaine, the first mate from some unknown tropical location. She also discovers that there are three mysterious passengers on board who are directing the mission, much to Captain Lukas's displeasure. While on the ship, Smilla continues her investigation, sometimes at great risk to her own safety. She eventually learns that Tørk is one of the secret passengers on board. The trip becomes ever more dangerous as she discovers that the *Kronos* is being used to smuggle drugs by Verlaine. Smilla tries to leave the ship when it stops for refueling and supplies; she is stopped, however, when she finds Jakkelson lying dead at the station platform. She also notes with shock that a new passenger is coming on board; the passenger is none other than Føjl. Although she is uncertain about his loyalty, Smilla returns to the ship because, as she says, "One of the few people who make life worth living is on board the *Kronos*."

However, Smilla's trust is misplaced. Føjl hands her over to Tørk, who says she is under arrest and orders Verlaine to lock her in her cabin. As the section closes, Smilla reveals that she knows she is not under arrest but will be killed: "Verlaine is the one who locks the door.... There is something honest about his silence. It tells me that this isn't a cell and I haven't been arrested. This is the beginning of the conclusion, which will happen sometime soon."

The Ice

The last section is the shortest of the book and takes place at Isla Gela Alta, the site of the subterranean cavern, housing the mysterious meteorite. Smilla has learned that Føjl is preparing to dive into the lake to begin preparations for removing the meteorite. She also knows that he will die if he does so. Smilla escapes the ship and races to the location of the work, where Tørk greets her as if he knew she would come. When the conclusion comes, it comes quickly: Lukas shoots Verlaine with a harpoon as Verlaine is about to kill Smilla. Smilla discovers, finally, that Tørk was the one on the roof when Isaiah died and that he pursued him in order to wrest the tape from him. Lukas aims the harpoon at Tørk, but Tørk blows his arm off. Føjl turns on Tørk, who kicks him to the ground. Tørk begins to run for the ship. The book ends with Smilla tracking Tørk, herding him out on to thinner and thinner ice. As Smilla says in the last five words of the book: "There will be no resolution."

"The City," Part 1, Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4

"The City," Part 1, Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4 Summary

Smilla's Sense of Snow is Peter Hoeg's novel of mystery and intrigue set during the 1990s in Denmark and Greenland. The protagonist, Smilla Jaspersen, extends herself beyond her solitary existence to investigate the murder of a neighbor boy whom she has befriended. Smilla's quest for the truth leads her to explore both physical and emotional places long encased in ice.

As the story begins, Smilla Qaavigaaq Jaspersen watches the big snowflakes fall in the cemetery at the funeral for Isaiah Christensen, a young boy who had lived in her apartment building. Smilla narrates the story from her perspective and transitions back and forth between the present and the past when situations remind her of her own childhood, of which the first seven years were spent in Greenland.

As Smilla watches Juliane, Isaiah's mother, collapse in grief, Smilla realizes an internal connection with the boy and vows not to let him down, especially now.

Smilla recalls the fateful night that Isaiah died and remembers her arrival home at the apartment building, called the White Palace for its austere presence in this frigid city. Smilla is a neighbor to Juliane and Isaiah and a mechanic named Fojl. As Smilla approaches the building, she can see some police activity and Isaiah's dead body lying on the ground by the building.

The police try to prevent Smilla from approaching but she is drawn to the site because it is clear that the boy has either fallen or jumped off the roof. This raises Smilla's suspicions. Smilla knows of Isaiah's intense fear of heights and the huge improbability that he would have been on the roof of the building of his own volition.

Smilla can also tell from Isaiah's footprints in the snow that he has jumped to escape something or someone who meant him harm. Fojl is the one who had discovered Isaiah's body. Fojl's tears make Smilla uncomfortable and she is happy to retreat to the solitude of her apartment.

In another flashback, Smilla describes how she became so attached to Isaiah who lived in the White Palace with his mother, Juliane, who is an alcoholic. Isaiah approached Smilla on the steps one day wearing only a pair of underpants and asked her to read him a story. Smilla realized that Juliane does not care for the child properly because of her alcoholism. Smilla takes Isaiah into her life to nurture. Isaiah's complete vulnerability is surpassed by his insight and survival skills and Smilla can sense a kindred spirit in her new companion.

It is this connection with Isaiah, which began a year and a half ago, which drives Smilla to find out what really happened to the boy -- what could have caused such a terrible death. Smilla phones the police department and speaks briefly with one of the

detectives she remembers from the death scene; a rigid, arrogant man she nicknames "The Toenail." Not receiving much cooperation, Smilla's next stop is the Institute of Arctic Medicine where all autopsies of Greenland natives are conducted. A doctor named Johannes Loyen informs Smilla that it is obvious that Isaiah jumped from the roof because there were no other footprints on the roof and no other signs of trauma or struggle on the boy's body. Smilla leaves the office even more intent on continuing her mission for the truth.

"The City," Part 1, Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4 Analysis

The author establishes the purpose of the plot line for Smilla's fervor in the very short first chapter where she vows; "All along I must have had a comprehensive pact with Isaiah not to leave him in the lurch, never, not even now." Smilla's strong suspicions of foul play form the basis on which the story will extend and take her places she cannot begin to imagine at this point. Using the literary device of flashbacks, the author allows the reader to understand Smilla's relationship with Isaiah, which ultimately forms Smilla's motivations during the course of the novel.

As the story progresses, Smilla's personality reveals that she is a loner, partly because of a childhood spent in the vast expanse of Greenland but also from the emotional wounds left from sparring parents. Smilla has a strong tenacity for solving problems as her mathematics and scientific profession can attest, and she is driven by her personal feelings to take on this challenge to discover the cause of Isaiah's death..

"The City," Part 1, Chapters 5 and 6

"The City," Part 1, Chapters 5 and 6 Summary

A few days after Isaiah's funeral, Smilla visits Juliane and discovers some paperwork documenting the death of Juliane's husband, Norsaq, during an expedition in Greenland a few years ago while employed by a company called the Cryolite Corporation. Juliane believes that Norsaq died from something he ate but she never explored the issue to determine the exact cause. Juliane feels the same defeated attitude about Isaiah's death as well.

Later that day, Smilla calls The Toenail at the police station to inquire about the status of the investigation into Isaiah's death. The Toenail has determined the death to be an accident but Smilla does not believe the decision and writes to the Attorney General to file a complaint.

A few days later, Smilla visits her father, Moritz, a wealthy physician renowned for his prowess in anesthesiology. Moritz is also known for his golfing skills and is one of Europe's top two hundred golfers. Smilla's visit is clouded by the presence of Moritz' sullen girlfriend, Benja, a ballet dancer thirteen years younger than Smilla.

Smilla allows her father to talk about his life but the conversation is strained. Smilla and her father had been estranged during Smilla's childhood when she lived with her mother, Ane, in Greenland. Moritz and Ane met when he came to Greenland to study and conduct scientific experiments. The couple parts when Smilla is three years old and Smilla remains in Greenland with her mother, who dies in a kayak accident four years later.

Smilla remembers the purpose of her visit and asks Moritz about Johannes Loyen. Moritz tells Smilla that Loyen founded the Institute for Arctic Medicine and is obsessively driven to become the best research physician in the world. Smilla senses Moritz' slight jealousy of Loyen and ends the visit with her father, accepting his regular check for her personal financial support.

"The City," Part 1, Chapters 5 and 6 Analysis

The author provides some information on Smilla's background so that the reader can begin to understand Smilla's internal conflicts. Smilla's resentment about her father leaving her at a young age clearly has not been erased over all these years and Smilla resents the fact that she needs her father's financial support, which keeps her linked to him now. The author also provides the contrast in Smilla's parents; her mother is a natural hunter in Greenland and her father is a Danish physician. Smilla inherits her mother's natural instincts about the earth as well as her father's proclivity toward science and mathematics. Unfortunately, Smilla's troubled childhood leaves her feeling

vulnerable and unable to resolve personal issues and move forward even now at the age of thirty.

"The City," Part 1, Chapters 7, 8, and 9

"The City," Part 1, Chapters 7, 8, and 9 Summary

The next day, Smilla encounters a man named Ravn, who is conducting an investigation of Isaiah's death at the White Palace. Ravn introduces himself as an investigator for the district attorney and states that he is following up on Smilla's letter of complaint. Smilla shares her interpretation of Isaiah's foot tracks left in the snow and Ravn considers her observations carefully. Ravn is impressed by Smilla's innate ability to read the variances in snow. When Ravn asks Smilla to withdraw her complaint during his investigation to avoid disturbance, Smilla senses that Ravn is attempting to conceal something deeper.

Despite the frigid December weather, Smilla walks through Copenhagen to find the ghostly structures that once housed the Cryolite Corporation of Denmark. As Smilla walks around the abandoned buildings, she recalls reading that the cryolite deposits in Greenland were exhausted in the 1960s so the company was forced to change direction. Smilla had seen the name Elsa Lubing in the company information in Juliane's papers and retrieves information about Mrs. Lubing from some workmen at the site.

Upon returning home, Smilla encounters Fojl, whom Smilla refers to as The Mechanic. Smilla follows Fojl to a workshop in the basement of the White Palace where Fojl used to play with Isaiah when Juliane was drunk or not at home. Fojl shares Smilla's love for the boy and Smilla remembers the times she, too, cared for Isaiah, sometimes all night when he had been abandoned by his mother.

The next morning, Smilla phones the Cryolite Company and learns that since the company is being dissolved; all documents are sealed until their disposition can be legally determined. Smilla is not happy with this information and phones the district attorney's office only to learn from a secretary that Ravn is not an investigator but actually works in the fraud division. Smilla's disgust for bureaucracy and her grief for Isaiah overwhelm her and she collapses in tears as a Brahms violin concerto plays in the background.

Very early the next morning Smilla rises to take a bus to the home of a man named Jean Pierre Lagermann who is the forensic medicine expert who examined Isaiah's body. Lagermann shares with Smilla that, during his autopsy of Isaiah, he discovered a tiny perforation in Isaiah's rain pants when he held the pants up to the light. Lagermann then inspects Isaiah's body and determines that someone has taken a muscle biopsy of Isaiah's leg at the scene of the accident. There is nothing more that Lagermann can tell Smilla so she leaves. She then notices a man sleeping in a parked Volvo on the street in front of the home.

Smilla's next stop is Elsa Lubing's apartment where she pushes a letter through the mail slot in Elsa's door. Almost immediately the door opens, revealing Elsa, a statuesque middle-aged woman dressed elegantly in a long white dress. Elsa remembers the letter

that had been written to Juliane about her husband's death and recalls meeting Isaiah after the distribution of his father's pension. Smilla shares the news about Isaiah's death and Elsa begins to relate the circumstances of her former employment at the Cryolite Corporation.

Smilla learns that Elsa had risen quickly to a high position in the financial department at Cryolite and serves as a consultant since her retirement from the company a year ago. Elsa obviously enjoys power and knowledge in her position and will not agree to let Smilla read the documents from the Greenland expedition in 1991 when Juliane's husband died. However, after hearing more about Isaiah's death, Elsa tells Smilla where the documents are kept. Not wanting to be implicated in any crime, Elsa turns her back as Smilla takes the building's key from a rack and leaves the apartment.

"The City," Part 1, Chapters 7, 8, and 9 Analysis

The author uses much descriptive language throughout the book and in many instances uses references to weather and nature to help explain Smilla's moods and feelings. For example, Smilla recalls her sense of confidence as a small child being on the lead dog sled in a hunting expedition. "For some time we've noticed that fog is on the way, but when it comes, it comes suddenly, like a collective blindness. Even the dogs huddle together. But for me there really isn't any fog. There is a wild, bright feeling of elation, because I know with absolute certainty which way we should go." These same instincts now drive Smilla to pursue her investigation into Isaiah's death even though bureaucracy and deceit fog her in.

The author uses a similar description to describe the tenacity of Smilla and Lagermann when describing the cactuses in Lagermann's home greenhouse. "There's something obstinate about cactuses. The sun tries to hold them down, the desert wind wants to hold them down, and the drought, and the night frost. Yet they thrive. They bristle, they retreat behind a thick shell. And they don't budge an inch." The cactuses exhibit the same characteristics as Smilla and Lagermann who both relentlessly pursue truth. The author also uses irony by alluding to Smilla and Lagermann as desert plants growing in a greenhouse in Denmark in December.

"The City," Part 1, Chapters 10 and 11

"The City," Part 1, Chapters 10 and 11 Summary

The next night Smilla breaks into the building where the Cryolite Corporation financial records are stored and finds the report she needs, only after placing a call to Elsa Lubing. Smilla reads about the Cryolite expedition from Denmark to Gela Alta in the summer of 1991 and sees Norsaq's name listed as one of five fatalities. Suddenly Smilla hears the noise of someone stealthily moving toward her in the dark, and the sound of bookcases crashing to the floor announces the unexpected arrival of Fojl.

When Fojl recovers from his run-in with the bookcase, he drives Smilla back to the apartment building and invites her in for espresso. Fojl admits that he had followed Smilla to the Cryolite building because he is concerned for her safety. Fojl also tells Smilla about the night that he discovers Isaiah cowering in fear in the basement of the apartment building, holding a knife in his hand. Smilla's instincts about Isaiah's footprints in the snow, combined with the memory of Isaiah's terror, lead Fojl to believe that Smilla could be in danger. While Fojl makes omelets, Smilla talks about her meetings with Loyen, Lagermann, and the muscle biopsy taken from Isaiah's leg and then leaves a portion of the Cryolite report for Fojl to read.

The next morning, Fojl and Smilla, arrive at the cemetery for Isaiah's funeral. Smilla is approached by Ravn and taken to Police Headquarters. Ravn reads the dossier he has prepared on Smilla that reveals her expertise in the field of ice and glacial science. The file also contains information about Smilla's history of sporadic employment, lack of family ties, and alienation from many social organizations. Ravn subtly threatens Smilla with imprisonment if she does not stop her investigation and Smilla leaves the office considering Ravn's threat.

"The City," Part 1, Chapters 10 and 11 Analysis

The author shares more information about Smilla in flashbacks and in Ravn's dossier, which helps the reader understand her complex nature. Smilla's innate nature lies with the Inuit people in her native Greenland but she lives in cosmopolitan Copenhagen where she has a long history of not being able to fit in. Smilla's Inuit nature provides the skills to navigate through snow and fog while her Danish heritage gives her mathematical and scientific skills. Although not formally trained, Smilla is renowned as an expert in ice and glacier sciences and has led 12 expeditions to Greenland. Ravn is a study of human nature and knows that incarceration to someone like Smilla, who has Inuit blood, would be the same as death, so highly valued is the ability to live in the expanse of open land.

"The City," Part 2, Chapters 1, 2, and 3

"The City," Part 2, Chapters 1, 2, and 3 Summary

The next morning is Christmas Eve and Smilla sulks in her grief and ineffectiveness in dealing with the bureaucracy surrounding Isaiah's death. The somber mood in Smilla's apartment is broken when the mechanic arrives bearing the Cryolite report noting a second expedition to Greenland in 1966 after the one in which Juliane's husband died. The roster of participants includes an old friend of Fojl's, Andreas Fine Licht, and another familiar name, Johannes Loyen, the director of the Institute of Arctic Medicine.

Fojl invites Smilla to his apartment for dinner; they discuss the case, and Smilla reveals her fear of being jailed. After an explanation of her claustrophobia due to her Inuit heritage, Fojl asks to kiss Smilla but she demurs. Fojl produces a model of a ship with the inscription "Arctic Museum. The S.S. *Johannes Thomsen* of the Cryolite Corporation of Denmark. Scale: 1:50." Fojl had found the model in Isaiah's room, and reveals to Smilla that an address on the side of the box holding the ship to be the law office of Hammer & Ving. Fojl knows from Juliane that someone from the law firm routinely picked up Isaiah in a car but Juliane is too frightened to say any more.

The next morning Smilla looks through a cigar box containing some of Isaiah's mementos and discovers an audiocassette tape of a man's voice. Smilla can discern that the man is from Greenland but does not understand his words because he speaks in East Greenlandic, a dialect Smilla does not know. Smilla remembers the times that she would play music for Isaiah and how he would fall asleep in her apartment, content and secure. Lost in her memories, Smilla is startled back to reality by the sound of laughing and jazz music coming from Isaiah's tape, still spinning in the player. Smilla goes downstairs to Fojl's apartment and wakes him to tell him that she plans to continue with the investigation.

Two days later Smilla visits Elsa Lubing and Elsa shares information about an incident in 1966 where she was forced to enter a large sum of money into the accounts at Cryolite without any itemization. Elsa confirms that the money corresponds with the second Greenland expedition that Smilla has discovered. Elsa also reveals that the Cryolite Company continued to make expeditions to Greenland even after the supply of cryolite was exhausted.

Elsa continues by saying that she retired from the Cryolite Corporation in 1992 and that the day before she left, she was asked to enter another huge sum into the accounts with no documentation. Elsa discovered that the amount was for the charter of a huge ship for another expedition to Greenland. Elsa found this questionable because the expedition was planned for only eight men to gather some gem stone samples. The huge ship chartered was much too large for a trip of this scope. Elsa believes that someone chartered the ship to retrieve something discovered during the expedition in 1966. Before Smilla leaves, Elsa tells her that the finance director at Cryolite

Corporation is a man named David Ving who has his own law firm as well: Hammer & Ving.

That evening, Smilla visits Fojl and he instructs her in the art of telephone tapping and advises her to use caution in all her communications from this point. Smilla shares the information she has gleaned from Elsa Lubing and when Smilla cannot tell him who actually paid for the Cryolite expedition, she and Fojl go across the street to a phone booth to call Elsa, who tells Smilla that a company called Geoinform made the payment of 450,000 kroner.

The next morning Smilla rises early and walks to the harbor where she encounters Fojl who has been milling about the dock. Smilla and Fojl decide to return to the White Palace where Fojl can fix breakfast. As they approach the apartment building they stop suddenly when they see Juliane being threatened by a professionally dressed man. Smilla and Fojl get into Fojl's car and follow the man to an office building, which they discover is the office of attorneys Hammer & Ving.

Posing as janitorial inspectors, Smilla and Fojl enter Ving's office. Ving pays no attention to the intrusion until Smilla comments on a painting of a ship. Ving's interest is alerted when Smilla remarks that she has an interest in ships chartered for expeditions to Greenland, especially the two ships chartered for expeditions to Gela Alta in 1966 and 1991. Ving remains silent and motionless in his chair and watches as Smilla and Fojl leave the office.

Smilla and Fojl part, and agree to meet later that night. When Smilla arrives home, she receives a letter from her father with information about Johannes Loyen and Loyen's work in Greenland. Smilla reads some of Loyen's medical works and notes some press clippings, one from 1939, showing a young Loyen with a ship's crew in some harbor.

Smilla decides to have Isaiah's audio tape of the Greenlandic man further identified and calls the Institute for Eskimology which refers her to an expert located in the South Harbor area of Copenhagen. Smilla locates the berth at the eerily quiet Svajer Wharf and boards a newly renovated sailing ship where she meets the curator, who is also a Greenlander. The curator is able to quickly discern that the man speaking on the tape is in his mid-forties and has grown up in an area called Angmagsalik.

After a few more seconds of listening, the curator can tell that the man on the tape is describing a sled journey across ice. In the background, the noises from prop planes and a restaurant can be heard and the curator asserts that the man was at Thule Air Base when the tape was made. The curator is also able to identify a jazz musician playing in the background. Smilla is suitably impressed by his prowess and pays him the hefty sum of five thousand kroners. Before Smilla leaves, the curator informs her that he is blind. Smilla cautions him about getting more security for himself and his treasures. As Smilla exits the ship, she notices a sign designating the ship as The Arctic Museum and recalls the name from Isaiah's model ship. The curator's business card states his name as Andreas Fine Licht, Ph.D. Professor of Eskimo Languages and Culture.

"The City," Part 2, Chapters 1, 2, and 3 Analysis

Hoeg uses the analogy of the Three Wise Men seeking the newborn Christ child at Christmas as Smilla ponders her fate and responsibility to Isaiah on Christmas night. Smilla understands the same drive to find a goal, led by nothing more than intuition and an energy force. Smilla reasons, "So what if I've never had a child of my own. I enjoy the sea and the ice without continually feeling cheated out of Creation. A child who is born is something to seek out, something to search for, a star, a northern light, a column of energy in the universe. And a child who dies - that's an abomination." It is not necessarily a religious motivation that drives Smilla to investigate Isaiah's death but more her own spirituality and innate hunting nature that will not allow her to rest.

The author uses the literary devices of foreshadowing and sarcasm in Smilla's experience with Andreas Licht. Smilla is pleased to have Licht's help in translating the tape but is appalled by his exorbitant charge for the service: "Mr. Curator, you should be careful. At your age, with all the money you have on you. Surrounded by these treasures. On a ship that's screaming like an open bank vault. South Harbor is crawling with crooks. You know the world is full of people unscrupulously striving to obtain the possessions of their fellow human beings." Licht instantly understands Smilla's sarcasm but says nothing. There is also foreshadowing in Smilla's statement as harm does come to Licht on the ship later in the story.

"The City," Part 2, Chapters 4 and 5

"The City," Part 2, Chapters 4 and 5 Summary

Later that day, Smilla and Fojl meet with a woman named Benedicte Clahn, who had worked as a translator on the first Cryolite Corporation expedition to Greenland. Benedicte remembers translating documents for Loyen but cannot provide much more information. Later, in Fojl's apartment, Smilla summarizes the input so far and determines that Loyen must have engaged Ving in his plans for the Greenland expeditions and that Ving is able to use the Cryolite Corporation as a cover for the real purpose of their partnership.

Smilla continues to speculate that something must have gone wrong in the first expedition and that Loyen and Ving tried again twenty-five years later, this time with greater outside financial support. Unfortunately, the second expedition is also doomed and people are killed including Isaiah's father.

Fojl reveals to Smilla that he has talked to Juliane and learned that Isaiah was examined each month at the hospital and Juliane received fifteen hundred kroner each time. Isaiah was always picked up in a car and Juliane was not allowed to accompany him. Fojl falls silent, thinking about Isaiah's experiences and the grief he feels for the lost boy.

The next morning Smilla arrives at the Trade Commission to investigate the Geoinform Company Elsa Lubing had told her about and discovers the names Katya Claussen, Ralf Seidenfaden, and Tork Hviid as company officials. Smilla spends the afternoon walking and thinking and upon returning home receives a phone call from Andreas Licht instructing her to come see him immediately. When Smilla arrives at Licht's boat, there are no lights and Licht sits motionless in his chair, his ears filled with cotton balls. Smilla moves closer to Licht and realizes that he has been tied to his chair and, although his body is warm, he no longer has a pulse.

Suddenly an explosion rocks the boat. Smilla is able to get back to deck, jump overboard, and swim in the freezing water back to the dock. Fortunately, Smilla had left Fojl a note identifying her whereabouts and he is waiting in his car on the dock to rescue her. Smilla spends the night at Fojl's apartment and they make love for the first time the next morning.

"The City," Part 2, Chapters 4 and 5 Analysis

Smilla's instincts and her background of hunting as a child in Greenland drive so much of her life. In order for her to think properly, she walks through Deer Park for several hours, following the tracks of a deer in the new snow. Hoeg wants the reader to understand Smilla's need to connect with nature in order to feel grounded and know how to proceed. Hoeg uses this scene to show Smilla's impeccable sense of tracking in

the snow and its symbolism for the events that lie ahead in her investigation as she moves closer to the resolution.

During this period of investigation, Smilla not only begins to uncover facts which will help in the resolution of Isaiah's death but also personal feelings and emotions which have lain dormant for so long. Isaiah had begun to melt the ice around Smilla's heart frozen by loss and longing, and now Fojl has managed to warm Smilla with support and tenderness and she rediscovers feelings she had buried for so long.

"The City," Part 3, Chapters 1, 2, and 3

"The City," Part 3, Chapters 1, 2, and 3 Summary

On New Year's Day Smilla speaks to her father who explains a concept called Neocatastrophism, which holds that the earth developed at different paces creating the environments for natural disasters. Later that day, Smilla meets Lagermann again at his home to get information on Andreas Licht's death and learns that Licht had been tortured before he was killed on his boat that night. Smilla shares everything she has learned in her investigation and asks Lagermann to help her but he hesitates for fear of losing his position. Finally, Lagermann relents, and tells Smilla that he will look into the forensic reports related to the two Greenland expeditions. Fojl waits for Smilla outside and before Smilla leaves, Lagermann tells both of them that it was Loyen who had taken the biopsy of Isaiah's leg in the examiner's office. Fojl offers up the idea that it must have been Ving who notified Loyen of Isaiah's death.

That night Smilla and Fojl spend the evening together and Fojl shares with Smilla his idea that whoever initiated the Greenland expeditions must be getting ready to go again. All the events stemming from Isaiah's death point to clues that there is activity and preparations underway for a spring voyage. Smilla thinks that someone new must be driving the plan because the original team of Loyen and Ving are too old, and Licht is now dead. Fojl mentions that he has a friend who knows about ships. Smilla would like to know more but she dissolves in Fojl's embrace.

A few days later, Fojl takes Smilla to meet his friend Birgo Lander, the owner and director of a huge shipping corporation. Lander's diminutive size surprises Smilla who expects someone burly and loud to run a company like this. Lander explains the methods of chartering cargo ships and agrees to help Smilla uncover who may be preparing a ship and crew for sailing to Greenland. Smilla and Fojl drive to the wharf after leaving Lander's office and discover a docked ship called *Kronos.* A call to Lander confirms that the *Kronos* is registered to a woman named Katja Claussen whom Smilla remembers as listed on the Geoinform corporate roster.

Later that night, Smilla and Fojl are in Fojl's apartment when a call comes in from Lander requesting that Smilla and Fojl meet him tonight. Smilla and Fojl return to Smilla's apartment so that she can change clothes and are surprised to find Ravn sitting in the dark. Ravn has come to tell Smilla that he has been removed from the case and advises her that she will probably be called in for questioning again soon because her number was stored in Andreas Licht's phone, which was discovered after the explosion on the boat.

Smilla asks Ravn if he knows Tork Hviid but Ravn does not respond. Ravn suggests that Smilla call him from a phone booth if she ever needs to talk and then leaves the apartment. After Ravn goes, Smilla produces Ravn's wallet, which she took when she hugged him goodbye. Fojl is surprised to see photos of Isaiah's footprints in the snow,

Smilla in front of Elsa Lubing's building, and Fojl in his younger days in the military. There is also a photo of a man in a tropical location, which Smilla retains because she knows it must be Tork Hviid.

"The City," Part 3, Chapters 1, 2, and 3 Analysis

Hoeg uses contrast to show the icy extremes in Smilla's life as compared to other people who adapt to society and conventions more easily than Smilla can.. For example, when Smilla visits Lagermann's home, she encounters many children in a very busy household so vastly different from her own. "In the living room there is flour everywhere. Three children are kneading dough right on the hardwood floor. In the kitchen, their mother is greasing cookie sheets. On the kitchen table, a little girl is kneading something that looks like pastry dough. Now she's trying to knead an egg yolk into it. With her hands and feet." This scene not only shows contrast to Smilla's life but must also fuel her drive in her investigation into the death of a child who will never know these simple pleasures.

The author also presents contrast in the character of Birgo Lander who is so different from Smilla's intensity. "Behind the desk... sits a boy who looks fourteen at most, newly confirmed, his sandy-colored hair plastered down, and freckles on his nose. When he speaks, it's in a thin, light alto, full of dignity. 'I know what you want to say, honey. You want to say: Where's your father, little boy, because he's the one we've come to talk to. But you're mistaken. I'll be thirty-three next month. If a child molester accidentally happened to kill me, there would be 25 million kroner for my wife and my three kids after the business was sold.'" Not only is Lander physically different from the other characters in the book, his wry sarcastic humor is a welcome relief from the intensity of Smilla and the people with whom she has been interacting.

"The City," Part 3, Chapters 4, 5, and 6

"The City," Part 3, Chapters 4, 5, and 6 Summary

Smilla and Fojl attend a formal event at a casino hosted by Lander, who explains the wealthy clientele who frequent his parties. As they mingle among the guests, Lander tells Smilla that he owes his life to Fojl and is willing to help Smilla as a favor to Fojl. Lander introduces Smilla and Fojl to Sigmund Lukas, the captain of the *Kronos,* who reports that an man and a woman have hired him to take the ship to Greenland. Lukas has hired all his crew but still needs a stewardess, and Smilla signs on for the job.

When Smilla returns to her apartment, Lander phones her. Smilla rushes out to his car where they have sex. Afterwards, Lander drives Smilla to Moritz' home where, the next morning, Smilla meets with her father and his invited guest, Lagermann. The trio examines the archived x-rays of a man named Marius Hoeg who died during the first Cryolite Corporation expedition to Greenland in 1966.

Lagermann compares this x-ray to that of one of the men who died in the 1991 expedition and finds an identical white line in the upper torso area which Moritz identifies as a Guinea worm, a vicious tropical parasite. Lagermann claims that both men died as a result of parasitic toxins. The next day, with Moritz' help, Smilla evades the police who have come to Moritz' home to arrest her. Moritz drives Smilla to the Skovshoved Water Ski Club where Lander waits to take Smilla to the *Kronos.* Lander explains his indebtedness to Fojl who once saved Lander in a diving accident when the two men served in the Navy Seals. Before leaving her at the ship, Lander attempts to convince Smilla to remain with him, but she boards the *Kronos* to continue her investigation.

"The City," Part 3, Chapters 4, 5, and 6 Analysis

Hoeg uses the literary device of foreshadowing when Lander explains his gambling problem as a parasite. "That parasite, it's the gambling bug, honey. One of the most voracious creatures in the world." Very soon, Smilla will learn about Lagermann's theory that the men killed at Gela Alta succumbed to parasitic toxins, not explosions or fires as reported.

Hoeg utilizes much descriptive language throughout the book and in this chapter employs anthropomorphism when he describes a slot machine in Lander's casino. "Like a metallic vomiting, the robot emits a stream of coins with a spitting clink that goes on and on behind me." Anthropomorphism means that the author assigns human characteristics to an inanimate object to provide some creative interest.

"The Sea," Part 1, Chapters 1, 2, and 3

"The Sea," Part 1, Chapters 1, 2, and 3 Summary

As Smilla adapts to her cramped quarters aboard the *Kronos,* she senses someone outside her door and opens it quickly to find a man named Jakkelsen, Captain Lukas' younger brother. Jakkelsen tells Smilla that Lukas wants to see her and then makes sexual overtures which Smilla rebuffs. When presented to Lukas, Smilla is introduced to First Mate Sonne who acclimates Smilla to the ship and tells her that representatives from the shipping company are on board and that Smilla is not to interrupt them unless they request something.

Very early the next morning Smilla meets First Mate Verlaine who issues Smilla's work clothes and dismisses her to begin work cleaning the mess hall. Smilla introduces herself to Urs, the ship's cook known for his gourmet meals perfected during his restaurant days in Geneva. During the rest of the day, Smilla continues to learn the infrastructure of the ship under the guise of tending to her cleaning. Jakkelsen periodically harasses Smilla who freezes him with silence, only adding to the intrigue.

During the middle of Smilla's first night on board, she is awakened by Lukas' voice on the intercom in her quarters, ordering coffee served on the bridge. Smilla catches a brief look at the passengers but is intercepted by Verlaine before she can get a proper look at them. On the way back to her cabin, Smilla notices that Jakkelsen's door is ajar and she enters his quarters and finds him sleeping, which allows her time to look at his forearms covered in needle marks.

"The Sea," Part 1, Chapters 1, 2, and 3 Analysis

The setting of the story now transitions to the *Kronos* where Smilla will escalate her efforts to find some truth about Isaiah's death. Ironically, Smilla is uncomfortable being on the water; her preference is for its frozen characteristics that she expertly reads. This symbolizes Smilla's discomfort in her new surroundings and her slightly diminished senses and instincts. The water as the setting instead of the frozen city of Copenhagen also symbolizes that Smilla is getting warmer to final resolution of the investigation.

"The Sea," Part 1, Chapters 4, 5, and 6

"The Sea," Part 1, Chapters 4, 5, and 6 Summary

One night as Smilla serves dinner to the mystery guests on board, she recognizes a woman who had spoken to Andreas Licht at Isaiah's funeral. Smilla speculates that the woman had tried to warn Licht that he was in imminent danger but, unfortunately, he did not heed any of the warnings given. Smilla also hears someone ask for Tork and she now knows that the famous ice scientist Tork Hviid is on board.

One night while the crew watches a movie, Smilla sneaks into Jakkelsen's room and discovers heroin hidden in a boxed chess set. Jakkelsen catches Smilla in his quarters and nearly knocks her unconscious with a metal pipe as the two struggle. Smilla manages to retrieve the heroin and uses it as a bribe to force Jakkelsen to show her the cargo hold of the ship, which is relatively empty. Jakkelsen speculates that the ship is bound for Greenland to pick up a load of drugs, the only possibility he can see for chartering such an expensive ship.

The next morning, Lukas summons Smilla to bring coffee to the deck and advises her that he has agreed not to use the phone on board but is willing to make an exception for her should she think it necessary. It occurs to Smilla that Lukas thinks she is an undercover police officer planted on the ship to report the suspicious activities. Smilla capitalizes on Lukas' perception of her purpose and asks where the ship is headed. Lukas knows only that they will stop at Vestland in the middle of the ocean and resents the fact that the expedition's organizers have kept him uninformed about the details.

Smilla returns to her duties and yet finds time to explore the engine room with Jakkelsen's help. Smilla uncovers huge skids of railroad ties, ladders, tents, climbing hammers, ice screws, and many other items related to setting up camp in a frozen environment. As Smilla continues to explore the dark, cavernous area with her flashlight, she is suddenly seized, wrapped in fire blankets, and carried toward the platform lining the bottom of the ship's hull.

Smilla, who has a screwdriver in her pocket, jams it forcefully through the cloth and into one of the two men carrying her. The men drop Smilla, kick her, and drag her upstairs where they dump her into a room where Jakkelsen is also being held.

"The Sea," Part 1, Chapters 4, 5, and 6 Analysis

One of the most important literary devices that Hoeg uses in the novel is the use of authentic dialects for the characters. Smilla, in particular, uses many terms from her childhood in Greenland and they are interwoven with her thoughts as illustrated by this example. "To travel you have to have a home to leave and come back to. Otherwise you're a refugee, an exile, a qivittoq. At this very moment in North Greenland they're all

huddling in the huts in Qaanaaq." Smilla's Greenlandic heritage is such a part of her that she still thinks in terms of her childhood language.

Hoeg also enjoys playing with the English language for the reader's benefit. For example, by naming the expedition ship, *Kronos,* Hoeg implies that the mission is a mercenary one as indicated by the play on the word "krone" which is the Danish form of currency used in Denmark and Greenland.

"The Sea," Part 1, Chapters 7, 8, and 9

"The Sea," Part 1, Chapters 7, 8, and 9 Summary

Smilla is interrogated by Captain Lukas, Tork, and Verlaine and warned to stick to her duties. Later that night, Jakkelsen reveals to Smilla that he has investigated the front cargo hold of the ship and discovered that it is specially built to allow for control of air, temperature, and humidity, which leads him to believe that the expedition is headed to pick up cargo that is alive.

Jakkelsen helps Smilla hide in a dumbwaiter so that she can rise to the upper deck and attempt to glean information without being seen by other workers on the ship. Smilla discovers a laboratory complete with both aquatic and chemical materials but returns to her quarters quickly to avoid discovery. Smilla intends to sleep to allow her body to recover from her harrowing experience but an order from Lukas soon finds her on deck with Verlaine chopping away at the ice encasing the *Kronos* in the fog. Smilla mentions Andreas Licht's death and can tell by Verlaine's reaction that he had been involved. Verlaine threatens Smilla and informs her that the *Kronos* will not be docking at Godthab as originally planned but to a floating dock twenty miles from land where Smilla can be murdered and no one will know.

"The Sea," Part 1, Chapters 7, 8, and 9 Analysis

Hoeg weaves Artic mythology and fables into the story and in this chapter writes "Even the raven started out in human form, and he fumbled blindly, and his actions were haphazard until it was revealed to him who he was and what his purpose was." This is an important reminder for Smilla at this juncture, who considers that the investigation into Isaiah's death may be her purpose. Up to this point in her life, Smilla has struggled to fit her Greenlandic heritage and personality into her life in Denmark but she will soon understand and find fulfillment extending from the tragedy of Isaiah's death.

"The Sea," Part 2, Chapters 1, 2, and 3

"The Sea," Part 2, Chapters 1, 2, and 3 Summary

Smilla returns to her duties under the watchful eyes of the other crewmembers and is encouraged when Jakkelsen informs her that the *Kronos* will be stopping in Godthab to refuel. Smilla knows that she can go ashore because she is technically not a hired crewmember and she plans her escape. When the *Kronos* docks, Smilla runs down the gangway onto the pier and sees the shadowy figure of Jakkelsen stumbling as a dark figure runs in the opposite direction. When Smilla reaches Jakkelsen she realizes that he has overdosed. Deciding that she cannot help his destructive behavior, she returns to the ship.

After the *Kronos* leaves the dock, Smilla begins her investigation again and discovers Jakkelsen's dead body inside a metal case. In another room, Smilla finds a copy of the Cryolite Corporation's report on the Gela Alta expedition in 1991, complete with X-rays and photographs of the terrain. One photograph in particular holds Smilla's attention and she struggles to understand the image of a lake inside an ice cave unlike any she has ever seen before. Smilla also notices that the man in the picture is Isaiah's father.

Smilla is surprised and pleased to learn that Fojl is now on board the ship and they spend the night together in Smilla's quarters. The next morning, Lukas gathers the crew to introduce Fojl and to announce that Jakkelsen has deserted. After the meeting, Smilla is attacked by Verlaine and another crewmember named Hansen but manages to escape to the captain's office only to find Tork in Lukas' place.

Tork challenges Smilla on her intentions aboard the ship and declares that she must be looking for something. Smilla tells Tork about Isaiah and the events that have led her to this place and asserts that the *Kronos* is headed to pick up something extremely large. Tork does not affirm Smilla's conjecture and leaves her standing alone on the deck. Smilla returns to her quarters and soon Fojl's voice interrupts on the intercom asking her to meet him at the sick bay in fifteen minutes. When Smilla reaches the sick bay, she meets not Fojl but Tork and Verlaine who arrests her and leaves Smilla locked inside the room.

"The Sea," Part 2, Chapters 1, 2, and 3 Analysis

Smilla reaches the climax in her investigation during her conversation with Tork on the deck of the *Kronos*. "Out on the platform I suddenly know that he was up on the roof with Isaiah. That he saw him jump. This certainty comes to me like a vision, still without details, but absolutely unshakable. At that moment, across time and space, I share Isaiah's terror; at that moment I'm up on the roof too." Smilla now understands that Tork is the one who threatened Isaiah to the point that he would jump off the roof of the apartment building. Now Smilla only needs to determine Tork's motives.

"The Ice," Chapters 1, 2, and 3

"The Ice," Chapters 1, 2, and 3 Summary

When Smilla awakens the next morning, she can tell by the ship's sounds and movements that the *Kronos* is breaking into ice. Fojl releases Smilla from the sick bay and they head to the ship's cargo bay and discover a large refrigeration unit containing a huge amount of mayam, the substance at the halfway point between raw opium and heroin. Tork had revealed to Smilla that the mayam is Verlaine's compensation for his participation in the expedition.

A short while later, Fojl reveals to Smilla that the objective of the expedition is to pick up a huge meteorite wedged into the side of a cliff. Tork has told Fojl that there are diamonds and other valuable substances embedded in the meteorite. Fojl also tells Smilla that Isaiah had accompanied his father on the 1991 expedition but was sent home when he ran away from the ship docked in port one day. Fojl reveals that Tork knew that Isaiah had taken a cassette tape from the ship that revealed the location of the glacier they were searching for at the time.

Smilla asserts that it had been Ving who planted Fojl at the White Palace to maintain surveillance of Juliane and Isaiah but Fojl tells her that he had been living at the White Palace and Ving moved Juliane and Isaiah into the building. Fojl is not proud of his part in the tragedy and tells Smilla that he agreed to watch Isaiah because he had been unemployed and needed the money that Tork offered. Fojl continues and tells Smilla that the men who died in the 1991 explosion were killed by a parasite, not an explosion, and Loyen wanted to determine if Isaiah had been infected. A discovery such as this would be a huge boost to Loyen's scientific career.

Smilla manages to escape from the ship and encounters Tork waiting at the glacier work site where he shows Smilla a Petri dish containing the parasites extracted from the water surrounding the meteorite. The parasite grows in most living forms with the exception of human beings and Loyen had wanted to prove an experiment using a human specimen, believing that Isaiah may have been a carrier. The crude biopsy of Isaiah's leg was Loyen's only method of preserving the integrity of his experiment.

Tork forces Smilla to accompany him as they descend sixty-five feet in a tunnel in the meteorite where the lake is quite visible. Preparations are underway for Fojl to dive into the lake to retrieve the parasite and Tork forces Smilla into a dead end area of the glacier. Verlaine soon approaches Smilla and she knows he has come to kill her but Lukas enters the area and shoots and kills Verlaine with a harpoon gun. Lukas reloads the gun but Tork shoots Lukas' arm off before Lukas has a chance to shoot Tork. Fojl attacks Tork who escapes and heads back to the *Kronos* with Smilla in pursuit. Tork runs on the ice until his strength is gone and Smilla muses about his imminent icy death as he floats further out to sea. Smilla thinks about what to tell the others about what has

happened but has no explanation because "it's only the things you don't understand that you can resolve. There will be no resolution."

"The Ice," Chapters 1, 2, and 3 Analysis

Smilla has reached the end of the investigation into Isaiah's death, and even though she knows the facts, is rightfully perplexed by unnecessary tragedy. The expedition has been a personal one as well as Smilla extends her own boundaries for a cause other than her own needs and she reaches a point of self-understanding in the middle of the complex mystery. Ironically, it is Smilla's sense of snow and ice which perplex other people but which leads her to the end of the investigation and to a place of greater personal discovery.

Characters

Isaiah Christensen

Although Isaiah is dead as the novel opens, all events of the story circulate around him. The reader comes to know Isaiah through flashbacks narrated by Smilla and Føjl, who calls the child "the Baron." Isaiah is a young Greenlandic child living with his mother in the White Palace apartments in Copenhagen. He is deathly afraid of heights. He is old beyond his years and turns to Smilla and Føjl when his mother is too drunk to care for him. In Isaiah, Smilla sees a younger version of herself, a transplanted Greenlander ill at ease in Danish culture. There is a mystery surrounding Isaiah as well; Smilla learns after his death that powerful men from the Cryolite Corporation and the Arctic Medicine Institute were studying Isaiah and his response to a dangerous parasite that killed his father while diving in Greenland. Indeed, it is Smilla's relationship to Isaiah that leads her to risk her own life in order to understand the boy's death.

Juliane Christensen

Juliane Christensen is Isaiah's mother, a widowed, alcoholic Greenlander living in the White Palace in Copenhagen. Smilla discovers after Isaiah's death that Juliane's living expenses are covered by the Cryolite Corporation, the company for whom her husband was working at the time of his death.

Peter Føjl

Føjl, also referred to throughout the book as "the mechanic," is a large, bear-like man who lives in the same apartment complex with Smilla and Isaiah. He, too, has established a special relationship with Isaiah. Indeed, he is the one who first discovers Isaiah's body. He is a mysterious man, someone who has a variety of talents one would not expect to find in a simple mechanic. In addition, his tastes in food and wine suggest that he has lived outside of Denmark. As he and Smilla begin to cautiously work together to unravel the mystery of Isaiah's death, Føjl and Smilla fall in love, in spite of the fact that neither really trusts the other. Føjl introduces Smilla to Lander, who gets her on board the *Kronos*. Føjl then disappears, only to resurface in Greenland as the fourth secret passenger on the boat. As it turns out, Føjl has been hired by Ving from the very beginning to keep an eye on Isaiah, Juliane, and Smilla. He is also an expert diver, having been a member of an elite Danish navy undercover team similar to the Navy Seals. Tørk has hired him to dive for the meteorite. It is difficult for the reader to truly judge Føjl's loyalties: on the one hand, he was truly devoted to Isaiah, and later to Smilla; on the other, he is greedy and willing to work for those who have murdered Isaiah. This paradox is not resolved by the end of the book.

Tørk Hviid

Tørk, the son of a Danish musician who mistreated him, grows up to be a brilliant scientist of ice and snow. It is he who has discovered a meteorite in a lake on a Greenlandic island and who has attempted to remove the meteorite on at least two previous occasions. He is the mastermind behind Isaiah's death and the current expedition to Greenland. A ruthless man, he is, nonetheless, very attractive to Smilla, even as he plots her death.

Jakkelsen

Lukas's younger brother, Jakkelsen is also a drug addict shipping on the *Kronos* in an attempt by his brother to straighten him out. He takes an interest in Smilla. However, once he discovers a load of drugs on board the ship, his days are numbered. He is murdered when the ship stops at the *Greenland Star* for offshore refueling and restocking.

Ane Jaspersen

Ane is Smilla's mother who dies when Smilla is just seven years old. She is a native Greenland hunter. For Smilla's first seven years, she travels with her mother on hunts. Ane is the great love of Moritz Jaspersen's life. Although she has been dead for many years at the opening of the novel, Smilla flashes back to her mother many times as she considers the differences between Greenlandic and Danish culture.

Jørgen Moritz Jaspersen

Generally referred to as "Moritz," Smilla's father is an extraordinarily wealthy physician and golfer. He met Ane when in Greenland to do research, and fell passionately in love with her. The marriage broke up after four years, but Moritz sent for Smilla after the death of her mother. At the time of the novel, Moritz is married to a ballet dancer thirteen years younger than Smilla. His relationship with his daughter is troubled and ambiguous.

Smilla Qaavigaaq Jaspersen

Smilla Jaspersen is the main character of *Smilla's Sense of Snow*, a thirty-year-old woman living in Denmark, the daughter of a Greenlandic hunter woman and a Danish doctor. Smilla is a solitary, brilliant woman who lives in an apartment complex called the White Palace. A loner, Smilla nevertheless befriends a young Greenlandic boy named Isaiah, caring for him when his alcoholic mother is unable to do so. When Smilla returns to her apartment complex one day to find Isaiah's crumpled body on the pavement, evidently the victim of an accident, Smilla vows to find out what really happened to the

boy. She suspects foul play, and her investigation of what turns out to be murder forms the plot of the novel. Smilla is a particularly interesting character. Throughout the novel, she recalls her childhood in Greenland before her mother's death, commenting on the differences between the Inuit culture of her mother and the western, Danish culture of her father. She also reveals the trauma of being brought to Denmark at age seven and placed in boarding schools. Smilla is cynical, rebellious, and brilliant. An expert on ice and snow, she has taken a number of expeditions to Greenland for research. However, her disdain for European culture and her own eccentricities prevented her from finishing an advanced degree, although she has published frequently on the subjects of ice and snow. Indeed, Smilla is recognized by the scientific community as one of the top experts in glacial morphology and ice in the world. In addition, Smilla has a perfect sense of direction. She is able to navigate through fog, ice, and snow without losing her direction. As the first person narrator of the novel, Smilla reveals her love of mathematics, her knowledge of philosophy and physics, and her view of the history of the troubled relationship between Denmark and Greenland. Smilla is at times a paradox, both rough and vulnerable. Through determination and will, she winds her way into the heart of the mystery, placing herself in grave danger, keeping her promise to Isaiah "not to leave him in the lurch, never, not even now."

Jean Pierre Lagermann

Lagermann is a forensic medicine expert who first examines Isaiah's body. He reveals to Smilla that a muscle biopsy has been removed from the body sometime after the child's death.

Birgo Lander

Birgo Lander is a friend of Føjl who owns and directs a shipping firm. He helps Smilla identify the vessel being outfitted for the expedition to Greenland, and he later helps her make contact with Captain Lukas who hires her as a stewardess. Lander also delivers Smilla to the *Kronos*.

Andres Fine Licht

The blind curator of the Arctic Museum, Licht is a professor of Eskimo languages and cultures. Smilla takes him the tape recording she finds in Isaiah's box, and he interprets it for her. A native Greenlander, he is also the person who spoke at Isaiah's funeral. Licht is murdered on the ship housing the Arctic Museum, after summoning Smilla who nearly dies in the resulting fire. Smilla later learns that Licht was one of the members of the previous expedition to Greenland.

Johannes Loyen

Loyen is the powerful director of the Institute of Arctic Medicine. He performs autopsies of all Greenlandic deaths in Denmark and consequently autopsied Isaiah's body. His interest in Isaiah is deeper than it first appears, however. He is researching the deadly parasite found in the ocean water off Greenland that killed Isaiah's father and that remains inactive in Isaiah's body. He is part of the expedition team that goes to Greenland under deep secrecy to investigate the meteor and the parasite.

Elsa Lübing

Elsa Lübing is the chief accountant of the Cryolite Corporation of Denmark. When Smilla goes through Juliane's papers, she finds a letter from Elsa expressing sympathy over the death of Isaiah's father and informing Juliane that she will be receiving a stipend from the company. When Smilla contacts Elsa, she learns valuable information about the previous two expeditions to Greenland. Elsa is highly religious, and she shares this information because she is concerned about the ethics and morality of the current state of affairs in the Cryolite Corporation.

Sigmund Lukas

Lukas is the captain of the *Kronos*, the ship chartered by Loyen and Tørk for the current expedition to Greenland to try to extricate the meteorite at Gela Alta. A good captain, he is also a compulsive gambler. He thus takes the job because of the money it will bring him, although he is fearful of the purpose of the job and dislikes the secrecy of those who have hired him. He allows Smilla to ship out on *Kronos* disguised as a stewardess.

Ravn

A man who presents himself as an investigator for the district attorney, Ravn actually works in the fraud division. His involvement in the case becomes more complicated when it is revealed that his daughter was involved with the Cryolite Corporation of Denmark and has died in a manner suspiciously like that of Isaiah.

Urs

Urs is the cook on the *Kronos*. He has served time for smuggling, and Smilla uses this information to force more information from him about the *Kronos*.

Verlaine

First mate of the *Kronos*, Verlaine is also a drug smuggler working in cooperation with Tørk. It is he who murders Jakkelsen and tries repeatedly to murder Smilla.

David Ving

Ving is the lawyer and CPA who works with Loyen and Tørk in their coverup of the earlier expedition and the death of Isaiah's father. Ving picks up Isaiah periodically to take him for medical checkups with Loyen. In addition, Ving is the one who has arranged Juliane and Isaiah's housing and stipend. He is also the one who has hired Føjl to keep an eye on them and, by extension, Smilla.

Themes

Mathematics

Mathematics may seem like an unlikely theme for a book that is about the murder of a young child and the dangerous path the narrator must take to discover the motives of those responsible for the murder. Yet *Smilla's Sense of Snow* is nothing if not unpredictable. Smilla finds in mathematics the certainty and stability she lacks in herself. She says, "I'm not perfect. I think more highly of snow and ice than love. It's easier for me to be interested in mathematics than to have affection for my fellow human beings." In addition, when Smilla first meets Isaiah, she reads to him from Euclid's *Elements*. Smilla says, "There is the feeling that always comes over me at the mere thought of that book: veneration. The knowledge that it is the foundation, the boundary. That if you work your way backwards, past Lobachevsky and Newton and as far back as you can go, you end up at Euclid." Smilla's two great skills are reading snow and direction, two geometrically determined skills. The crystalline structure of a snowflake can be mathematically determined and predicted with absolute regularity in spite of its infinite variety. In addition, navigation requires an intuitive sense of vectors and angles. Tellingly, Smilla's "soul brother" is Newton, not Einstein. Newton's notion of "Absolute Space" is necessary for Smilla's navigation of the world. When she ventures out into the Einsteinian paradoxes of time and space, she loses her orientation. Out on the ice, which she knows so well, the novel ends unresolved as Smilla flings herself after the villain, leaving foundation and mathematics behind.

Colonialism

One of Høeg's major concerns in *Smilla's Sense of Snow* is the relationship between Denmark and its former colony Greenland. Through Smilla, Høeg recounts the history of this relationship, beginning first in the eighteenth century when the Royal Greenland Trading Company set up a highly protective system of trade with Greenland. As such, the raw materials of the island became the sole property of Denmark, and Greenland became a colony.

The notion of "colonialism," however, is tied up with much more than the history of one nation claiming another as a colony. Rather, it is an exploration of the effects of this relationship on both the colonizer and the colonized. In *Smilla's Sense of Snow*, the days of Greenland as a colony have passed; at the time of the writing of the novel, Greenland was under Home Rule. However, two centuries of colonial exploitation, as well as the two decades of "modernization" that occurred in the 1950s and 1960s, have changed the way that both Greenlanders and Danes think and live.

Smilla informs the reader that in 1964, "The old blatantly colonial policy for Greenland was abandoned.... Making room for the policies of the sixties—the educating of Northern Danes to equal rights." Ironically, the "education" of the Greenlanders took

place in Danish, and during the "modernization" large-scale relocation of people from small settlements to larger cities took place. It was also during this period that the Greenlandic language suffered significant destruction. Because so much of cultural identity is tied up with language, the surest way a colonizer can destroy a culture is to limit the use of the native language and insist on the use of the colonizer's language. As Smilla notes, "All money in Greenland is attached to the Danish language and culture. Those who master Danish get the lucrative positions. The others can languish in the filet factories or in unemployment lines. In a culture that has a murder rate comparable to a war zone."

Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to understand colonization as an unambiguously negative event. Indeed, it is the paradox of colonialism that renders any understanding of the situation so very difficult. As Smilla herself reports, "The problem with trying to hate the colonization of Greenland ther fish nor fowl, neither Inuit nor Dane, she struggles to understand both sides of her heritage.

Alienation

Perhaps the most profoundly felt theme running through *Smilla's Sense of Snow* is that of alienation. When a people, or a person, lose(s) a sense of meaning in life or a separation from that which has formerly nurtured them, the result is both a cultural and personal sense of alienation. In many ways, Smilla exemplifies both. Clearly, Smilla is alienated both from her father and Danish society. She often pulls her telephone from its jack and disconnects her doorbell so that she does not have to interact with others in Copenhagen. The root of this alienation is in her forcible transfer from Greenland to Copenhagen after the death of her mother. That she runs away more times than she can remember between the ages of seven and twelve speaks to this deeply felt sense of cultural isolation. By the time she is an adult, Smilla has resigned herself to living at least partially within Danish culture: "I no longer make an effort to keep Europe or Denmark at a distance. Neither do I plead with them to stay. In some way they are part of my destiny. They come and go in my life. I have given up doing anything about it." However, this is the voice of resignation, not integration; even as an adult, Smilla remains alienated from and unable to find meaning in Denmark or Europe.

Smilla's alienation from the culture of her father, however, is not the most distressing alienation in the book. Much earlier, as a small child living with her mother in Greenland, she experiences an even deeper form of alienation. She recalls a hunting and fishing trip she took with her mother and her inability to kill the birds she had trapped:

The year after—the year before she disappeared—I began to feel nauseated when I went fishing. I was then about six years old. Not old enough to speculate about the reason. But old enough to understand that it was a feeling of alienation toward nature. That some part of it was no longer accessible to me in the natural way that it had been before.

It is this alienation that is truly tragic: Smilla cannot find a place to stand in either Inuit or Danish culture.

On a personal level, however, alienation serves as a defense mechanism for Smilla. Because she keeps everyone at a distance, claiming no people or place as her home, she is able to protect herself from being hurt. Tellingly, her affair with Føjl both awakens her and frightens her. Love, after all, is the cure for all alienation; yet it is the beloved who has the power to wreak the most damage. Likewise, her greatest fear of Tørk is not that he might kill her but that he knows her: "It's the realization that he knew who I was from the very beginning that is so excruciating. Not since my childhood have I felt so strongly in someone else's power." Thus, both knowing and being known occupy the dangerous flip side to the emptiness of alienation and provoke one of the driving questions of the book: is it better to live numbly, without meaning, in a state of alienation, or to live painfully, in the fear that meaning will disappear once found?

Style

Genre

The term "genre" refers to the category of a given literary work in either form or content. In terms of content, certain genres carry with them certain conventions. For example, detective fiction requires both a crime and someone trying to solve the crime. Thus, while a book such as *Smilla's Sense of Snow* is clearly generically a novel, it does not easily fall into any one generic category in terms of content and convention. Indeed, it is almost as if Høeg is playing with the notion of genre itself in his creation of this novel.

The story opens with the trappings of a murder mystery: a death under mysterious circumstances, a protagonist with the information and motive she needs to begin an investigation, a multitude of clues, and a cast of interesting and diverse characters. At the same time, the novel is also of the "thriller/suspense" genre. Because neither Smilla nor the reader has enough information at any one time to solve the case, she is constantly in danger. She cannot know whom to trust. The novel is also a love story, with the unlikely pair of Smilla and Føjl filling the roles of the lovers. The novel is at once tender and tough. Readers who are familiar with conventional love stories expect the relationship between the two to redeem both of them. Høeg dashes this expectation by revealing near the end of the book that Føjl has been collaborating with the villains. Nevertheless, he still appears to love Smilla, and Smilla perhaps continues to love him.

Less obviously, the novel is also a philosophical essay on the nature of mathematics, physics, and metaphysics. Through her ruminations, Smilla reveals that she is engaged in a quest for meaning, looking to philosophy and science to provide her with the answers her experience does not. The novel also functions as both a history and an indictment of Danish colonial policy in Greenland. It is the story of a disenfranchised "other" in the shape of Smilla, a woman who cannot find a place to belong in either culture of her heritage. The book clearly abhors the effects of Western technological capitalism on the environment and the people of the Arctic. The novel then morphs once again and becomes a science fiction thriller, a novel about a strange, alien meteorite and potentially lethal life forms that have killed before and will kill again.

By the end of the novel, Høeg has deliberately destroyed all generic expectations of the reader. For some, these generic twists and turns are both troubling and confusing, as critical comments indicate. However, Høeg's refusal to allow his novel to be generically classified mirrors Smilla's refusal to be classified by ethnicity, gender, or age. As a result, Høeg has produced a postmodern novel that continually slips its boundaries, just as Smilla slips hers.

Setting

Perhaps the most striking feature of *Smilla's Sense of Snow* is its setting. From the deep cold of the Danish winter in the opening scene to the last desperate skate across the ice in Greenland, Høeg uses precise and concrete language to evoke a sense of coldness, ice, and snow, which mirrors Smilla's sense of isolation and alienation.

Specifically, Høeg chooses three separate settings for his novel. The first is the city of Copenhagen, Denmark. For Smilla, the Danish winter is colder than anything she experiences in Greenland. The coldness of urban life also affects her deeply; she lives in an impersonal apartment building called "The White Palace," a place where people can live side by side and never know each other's names. For the transplanted Greenlanders, Copenhagen is a kind of prison, a place where they endure social and physical coldness.

The second section of the book takes place on the open ocean of the North Atlantic. For Smilla, this setting is even more dangerous and frightening than Copenhagen. Ironically, she does not like the sea, although she has grown up with people whose livelihoods come from the sea. The *Kronos*, the ship that transports Smilla from Europe to Greenland, becomes the site of transition for Smilla, a place where she drops her fancy clothes and the veneer of civilization and takes on the clothing of the survivor. In many ways, Smilla loses her footing while she nearly loses her life on the ship; she is much more comfortable with ice than water. For Smilla, the ice is a known and predictable quantity, the crystals shaped into regular and mathematically identifiable crystals. The sea, on the other hand, is always moving, always unpredictable. Likewise, although Smilla has learned how to deal with the Danes in Copenhagen, when she finds herself on the *Kronos*, she discovers that the people aboard are as unpredictable and as dangerous as the ocean itself.

The last section of the novel takes place on the ice of Greenland. Again, Høeg evokes the bitter cold and the alien strangeness of the frozen land. Smilla, however, finds herself on surer footing here. Not only does she have the scientific knowledge of snow and ice that she has learned in Europe, she has the intuitive knowledge of her upbringing. In the final desperate scene, it is Smilla's familiarity with the setting that promises her survival:

The ice has its own nocturnal hospitality. I have no flashlight now, but I'm running as if it were a level road. Without difficulty, with confidence. My *kamiks* grip the snow in a different way than his boots do.

In the end, it is the setting itself that appears about to kill Tørk: "His strength is about to give out. If you haven't grown up in this landscape, it uses up your strength." The novel ends on the ice, in the dark, without resolution. And at the end, it is the evocation of the story's setting that continues to resonate with the reader long after the closing paragraph.

Historical Context

Understanding the cultural and historical relationship between Greenland and Denmark is essential for an understanding of *Smilla's Sense of Snow*. Although Denmark had granted Greenland Home Rule in 1979, a decade before Høeg began writing his novel, the events leading to this political decision as well as the aftermath of the Home Rule act deeply inform the events of the novel.

People have lived on the island of Greenland for about four thousand years. The first Europeans reached Greenland about 985 CE, when Norwegians settled in two farming colonies. For unknown reasons, these colonies died out. Speculation among scientists suggests that disease or climatic catastrophe may have caused the demise of the Norwegian colonies, a tantalizing link to Høeg's concept of "neocatastrophism." Indeed, Høeg's use of a giant meteorite as a plot device hints at the possibility of climatic change, while his creation of a fatal parasitic worm suggests that this might have been the cause of the failure of Europeans to sustain life on Greenland. Certainly, Høeg seems to be suggesting that contemporary Europeans ought to take care with what they are willing to unleash on the rest of the world.

There is evidence that the early Europeans had contact with the Inuit people as early as the first settlements. In the sixteenth century, explorers and whalers regularly visited Greenland and had dealings with the Inuit. However, permanent contact was not established until the eighteenth century when Hans Egede traveled to the west coast of Greenland, trying to find the earlier settlements. A Danish-Norwegian priest, Egede acted as both missionary and trader. He and his missionaries learned Inuit and succeeded in converting the indigenous people to Christianity. In 1776, the Danish government established the Royal Greenland Trade Company to control trade with Greenland. For two hundred years, Denmark exerted colonial rule of Greenland, keeping the island both isolated and protected.

Ironically, the abolishment of the colonial relationship in the early 1950s damaged Inuit culture perhaps more than colonization itself. Smilla comments on this period frequently; during the 1950s and 1960s, Greenlanders were considered "Northern Danes" and, as such, beneficiaries of social reform and modernization in the areas of health, education, and welfare. While this led to opportunities for many Greenlanders, it also damaged the language, since "Northern Danes" were expected to learn Danish in school and conduct their affairs in Danish. Many Inuit were forced to leave their traditional homes and ways of life in the Danish effort to move them into the twentieth century.

In *Smilla's Sense of Snow*, the reader learns that Smilla was a member of the Young Greenlander's Council, a group in Denmark comprised of Greenlandic students and dedicated to Home Rule for Greenland. As a result of pressure from this and other radical groups, Denmark established a Home Rule Commission in 1975, and by 1979 Home Rule had been established. Remarkably, the Greenlandic Inuit were the first Inuit people to rule themselves around the world after the advent of colonialism. Smilla herself sees that Danish involvement in Inuit life is neither clearly good nor evil.

Although the introduction of Western technology into Greenland destroyed much of the traditional way of life for the Inuit, as well as destroying many Inuit through disease and alcoholism, the material conditions of the Inuit have improved. Høeg gives Smilla these words to express the paradox:

The problem with trying to hate the colonization of Greenland with a pure hatred is that, no matter what you may detest about it, the colonization irrefutably improved the material needs of an existence that was one of the most difficult in the world.

Høeg succeeds, then, in initiating the reader into the complexities of the colonial relationship and clearly leads the reader to consider the fate of other polar people across the world. Thus, without historical and cultural background information, the reader loses some of the richness of *Smilla's Sense of Snow* as a postcolonial novel.

Critical Overview

Smilla's Sense of Snow met with both critical and popular praise upon its publication in Danish in 1992 and in English in 1993. In addition to being on many bestseller lists, the novel was reviewed in all major newspapers and magazines in the United States. Most critics hail the book as one of the most important novels to emerge at the end of the twentieth century. Indeed, reviewers commonly compare Høeg to such major writers as John Le Carré, Martin Cruz Smith, Graham Greene, and even Joseph Conrad. While critics agree generally that the novel is of exceptional quality, they nonetheless find that quality in different places. For some, the success of the novel rests in Høeg's construction of the character of Smilla. For others, the plot itself drives the novel. For still other reviewers, the political ramifications of the relationship between Denmark and Greenland are at the core of the book. And for another group of critics, the postmodern characteristics of the novel make it a book worth studying.

Pearl Bell, writing in *Partisan Review*, for example, praises the characterization of Smilla, calling her "truculent, ferociously opinionated, erudite, disorganized, [and a] strangely beguiling woman." Likewise, Lesley Hazelton in the *Seattle Times* writes this of Smilla:

Bravo Smilla: tough and vulnerable, intelligent and emotional, rational and impulsive, she's her own person, a full person. This Danish writer scarcely takes a false step in creating a multifaceted, believable, brave woman—an amazing achievement when you consider how confused and alienated most American male writers are about women.

Those critics who focus on the plot of the novel include Brad Leithauser in the *New Republic* who writes that Høeg handles "with great deftness" the task of creating a plot for a thriller with "artistic freshness." Richard Eder, writing in the *Los Angeles Times Book Review*, calls "the sinuous turns of [Høeg's] story deeply engrossing," although Eder is not fully satisfied with the book's ending, suggesting that it does not quite make sense. Robert Nathan in the *New York Times Book Review* also praises *Smilla* for both its suspense and "exploration of the heart."

Perhaps the largest group of critics are fascinated by the postcolonial themes of the book and the way Høeg depicts relationships between the Danes and the Greenlanders. Julian Loose in the *London Review of Books* suggests that "what lifts *Miss Smilla* above the ordinary is Høeg's sense of how mixed motives have grotesquely deformed the unequal relationship of Denmark and Greenland." Novelist Jane Smiley, in a review appearing in the *Washington Post*, points to the "broader political issues, especially the meanings of borders and boundaries between countries and cultures" in Høeg's evocation of the postcolonial relationship between Denmark and Greenland. Likewise, William A. Henry writes in *People* that *Smilla* is "at a deeper level . . . about cultural collisions between the industrial world and more primal places that have fallen under Western sway." Finally, in an interesting review in the *Montreal Gazette*, Merilyn Simonds likens the misunderstandings between the Danes and the Greenlanders to the misunderstandings between Canadians and Inuits living in Canada.

Although some critics find fault with the novel because they have a difficult time classifying it generically, others find this generic fluidity to be a strength, as well as being indicative of postmodern literature. Hans Henrik Møller in an excellent article appearing in *Scandinavian Studies*, for example, identifies Høeg's work as a "pastiche," or a collection of "leftovers." In this, he argues, Høeg's work is bound both to "the literary past" as well to "post-modern écriture." Likewise, Jim McCue, reviewing the book for the *Times Literary Supplement*, applauds Høeg for the books indeterminacy: "Melodrama and slapstick, epic journey and social indictment: the book proudly declines to limit itself."

It is likely that *Smilla's Sense of Snow* will continue to generate critical interest. As a generic hybrid and as an example of postmodernity, the novel elicits a different response with each reading. The wide critical understanding of the book speaks both to its importance as well as its multidimensionality.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3
- Critical Essay #4
- Critical Essay #5
- Critical Essay #6

Critical Essay #1

Henningfeld is a professor of English literature and composition who has written widely for educational and academic publishers. In this essay, Henningfeld considers Smilla's Sense of Snow *as a postmodern epic.*

In an article for *Scandinavian Studies*, Hans Henrik Møller considers Peter Høeg's work, arguing that it is a "pastiche." According to the writer, pastiche comes from the Italian word for leftovers recombined into a pie. He argues that "pastiche is a radical illustration of the precept that there is nothing new under the sun." Certainly, *Smilla's Sense of Snow* fits this description: part suspense thriller, part philosophical treatise, part science fiction story, part psychological study, part postcolonial political novel, the novel does not slip easily into classification. Møller further argues, "Pastiche binds Peter Høeg's writing to the literary past: his books and stories are replete with traces of Karen Blixen, Joseph Conrad and other great and well known authors. It links his growing oeuvre to postmodern écriture. . . . Pastiche is, moreover an exploration of time and the act of storytelling, of refinding and renewal." Again, *Smilla's Sense of Snow* provides a perfect illustration for these notions. This essay, then, will demonstrate the way that Høeg connects to his literary past through his use of the epic heroic journey and how he manipulates and subverts the journey of the hero in his creation of a postmodern pastiche.

Certainly, one of the most foundational and familiar of all storytelling in Western culture is the epic quest. *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad* provide classic examples of the genre, and *Gawain and the Green Knight* is a well-known early English example. Indeed, the genre is so fundamental to the Western understanding of literature that many writers, including Carl Jung, Joseph Campbell, and Northrup Frye, have identified archetypal characters and structural patterns that function across cultures. To review briefly, the hero is both brave and wise and often the child of an unusual birth. This hero may not recognize himself as a hero (the classic hero is always male) but, through his reluctant acceptance of a challenge, he undertakes a quest that proves his mettle. On this quest, he encounters helpers, tricksters, and figures of evil. Often, his quest requires travel under difficult circumstances. Many attempts are made on his life. Often, the hero is in quest of some valuable and/or mysterious object or is in search of his father. There is always some sort of psychological and physical movement, and the hero often experiences a symbolic death/ rebirth experience.

Even on first reflection, there are clearly a number of ways that *Smilla's Sense of Snow* draws on and uses the epic tradition. Smilla, the protagonist, is both brave and wise. Høeg provides ample evidence that she is a brilliant woman, allowing her to share in her own voice what she knows about life, about mathematics, and about ice. She is an expert in her field, and it is her knowledge of both navigation and ice that allows her to survive in an alien landscape. Certainly, she demonstrates her bravery many times throughout the novel. For example, although Smilla tells the reader directly that she is afraid of open ocean, she nevertheless boards the *Kronos*, a vessel filled with dangerous characters, in order to dig into the truth about Isaiah's death. Furthermore,

as the daughter of an Inuit and a European, Smilla's birth in Greenland and her subsequent removal to Denmark qualifies as an unusual background.

There are still other similarities. When Isaiah dies at the opening of the book, Smilla understands that she has an unspoken promise to fulfill: "All along I must have had a comprehensive pact with Isaiah not to leave him in the lurch, never, not even now." It is this pact that begins Smilla's quest through the labyrinth of the Cryolite Corporation of Denmark and finally leads her out to the open ocean and back to her homeland of Greenland. Like a quest hero, Smilla has helpers on her journey. Peter Føjl, the mechanic, provides her with care, information, and love. Jean Pierre Lagermann gives her information about Isaiah's autopsy and about the parasite. Lukas, the captain of the *Kronos*, also reluctantly helps her by allowing her to come on board the ship in the guise of a stewardess.

Smilla nearly dies when she goes to the Arctic Museum and a bomb explodes. She escapes by swimming underwater, a symbolic rebirth. When she emerges from the water, her resolve is firm: she will find the answers she seeks.

Tricksters also abound in the book. Moritz's wife, Benja, fills the role by calling the police on Smilla when she is at their house, causing Smilla to flee. Jakkelsen on the *Kronos* is also a trickster, someone who is not what he seems. After their initial encounter, however, Smilla and he reach an uneasy truce and a strange alliance.

For Smilla, the purpose of the quest is to understand why Isaiah was killed. This information is bound up in the quest for the strange meteorite that gives off heat in the Arctic north. Isaiah's death is inextricably connected to the meteorite that seems to be alive and to the parasite that kills its host. Indeed, the quest for information and the quest for the meteorite merge in the final pages of the book.

Finally, Smilla fights against forces of evil. Tørk, the grand villain, is bent on recovering the meteorite for fame and fortune, regardless of the havoc the accompanying parasite wreaks on the rest of the world. In the final climactic scene, Smilla confronts Tørk, as any good epic hero would do.

However, while it is possible to find the archetypal epic structures in the novel, closer inspection reveals that Høeg has played with these archetypes, just as he has played with generic conventions, to such an extent that he undermines the entire epic project, the triumph of the hero over evil.

In the first place, Høeg plays with conventions of gender. As noted earlier, the classic epic hero is always male, and often a male in search of his father. Although Smilla is a woman, she does not even fit easily into that role. Her area of expertise is a male-dominated field. She is aggressive and bold in sex and causes trouble everywhere she goes. Throughout the book, it seems clear that Smilla is in search not of her father but of her mother. Again, Høeg plays with notions of gender by creating Smilla's mother as an androgynous Inuit hunter, a woman who nurses her child at her breast while

demonstrating that her arms are as thick as a man's. It is her mother's knowledge and strength that Smilla emulates.

Høeg also creates a false helper for Smilla. Readers of epic literature expect a helper who will fight to the death for the hero. Føjl, Smilla's helper and lover, is not the helper of epic lore, but rather is a betrayer. He has collaborated with the forces of evil in order to help Tørk in his quest. Even here, however, the distinction is not clear. Føjl does not rest easily in the villain's camp; he was devoted to Isaiah and to Smilla, in spite of his duplicitousness. Moreover, Smilla does not seem to be able to reject the mechanic out of hand, even when she sees his betrayal.

Tørk, as the villain, also seems to blur in and out of focus. Smilla finds him breathtakingly handsome and finds herself attracted to him in spite of his murderous intentions. Høeg goes so far as to almost create Smilla's doppelganger, or double, in Tørk: a lonely, precocious child, looking for love, fame, and attention, just like Smilla, who runs away more times than she can count before she is twelve years old. In the final scene, the pair are both running across the ice, each on his or her path to salvation or destruction.

There are other, less obvious details as well. A common motif in the epic quest is the arming of the hero. *Gawain and the Green Knight* provides a well-known example as Gawain puts on his armor as he is about to leave on his search for the Green Knight. In *Smilla's Sense of Snow*, however, Høeg provides an ironic reversal. In Denmark, Smilla is always dressed extravagantly; indeed, her expensive, high-class clothing often allows her to do battle with the Danish establishment. On board the ship, however, as she prepares for what will be her final battle with Tørk, rather than going through an elaborate arming ritual, she takes off her clothing and examines her wounds:

Anyone interested in death would benefit from looking at me. I've taken off my bandages. There's no skin on my kneecaps. Between my hips there is a wide yellowish-blue patch of blood that has coagulated under the skin where Jakkelsen's marlinspike struck me. The palms of both hands have suppurating lesions that refuse to close. At the base of my skull I have a bruise like a gull's egg.... I've been modest enough to keep on my white socks so you can't see my swollen ankle.

It is the ending of the novel, however, that most undermines epic conventions. Most quest stories are of the out and back type. That is, the hero leaves on his quest, defeats evil, retrieves the item of value, and returns to tell his tale, a wiser and stronger man. Høeg both manipulates and subverts this form. The book closes with Smilla tracking Tørk across the snow, herding him onto thinner and thinner ice. Although Smilla knows some of the details of Isaiah's death, she still does not know the truth of it nor the truth of the mysterious meteorite, which will remain where it is, nor the truth of her lover, the mechanic. "Behind us the stone is still there, with its mystery and the questions it has raised. And the mechanic." She considers the story she will tell on her return. Unlike the triumphant tale of the returning hero, however, her tale is one that signifies nothing:

By choosing to end his book but not resolve it, Høeg demonstrates the postmodern condition, a condition that allows only pastiche, not epic, only ambiguity, not certainty. Although Smilla can read the ice, she cannot read the truth. As such, she is the postmodern hero, still struggling to find meaning in a darkening world of ice and snow.

Source: Diane Henningfeld, Critical Essay on *Smilla's Sense of Snow*, in *Novels for Students*, The Gale Group, 2003.

Critical Essay #2

In the following essay, Norseng explores Høeg's authorial motive in the denouement of Smilla's Sense of Snow*.* As *Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne* (*Smilla's Sense of Snow*) begins to end, if never to resolve itself, Smilla Qaavigaaq Jaspersen sets sail for an arctic sea far, far away. In that sea lies as island; on that island there is a glacial cathedral; in that cathedral there is a lake; in that lake there is a black stone; in that stone there is a worm. "Mennesker venter på denne sten. Deres tro og forventning vil gøre den virkelig. Vil gøre den levende, uanset hvordan det ellers forholder sig med den" ("People are waiting for this stone. Their belief and anticipation will make it real. They will make it alive regardless of the true nature of the stone." Tørk, the fictional, murderous plot maker is speaking to Smilla, near the finale, about the public he fully intends to exploit. Is the voice of his creator, Peter Høeg, an equally murderous plot maker, to be heard under Tørk's, albeit with a potentially different public in mind? Inevitably, it would seem, in a novel as self-consciously wrought as this one. Tørk speaks with utter cynicism about our need to believe in the sensational power of the stone. Does Høeg, a most sophisticated, cosmopolitan writer, speak with equal conviction about the need of his late twentieth-century reading public still to believe in the sensational power of the fiction? Does he taunt us, even as he entertains us, with the emptiness of the post-modern novel? Or does he strive to fill it up again? And if so, at what price? Does it become, like Tørk's stone, the commodity in which, in Walter Benjamin's words, "hell rages"? And again, if so, what is that "hell"?

A stone in a lake in an ice cave on an island in an arctic sea far, far away mimics an ancient riddle in Scandinavian folklore.

"Langt, langt borte i et vann ligger en øy," sa han; "på den øya står en kirke; i den kirken er en brønn,

i den brønnen svømmer en and; i den anda er et egg og i det egget□der er hjertet mitt, du."

("Far, far away in a lake lies an island," he said; "on that island there's a church; in that church there's a well, in that well swims a duck; in that duck there's an egg, and in that egg—that's where my heart is").

This is the riddle at the heart of the Norwegian folk tale, "Risen som ikke hadde noe hjertet på seg" (The Giant Who Had No Heart in Him). Askeladd must find the Giant's heart in order to bring his brothers and their brides, turned into stone by the Giant, back to life. What takes Smilla five hundred pages takes Askeladd two paragraphs in the Asbjørnsen and Moe tale. Finally holding the egg enveloping the Giant's heart in his hand, Askeladd squeezes. The Giant cries out in pain. "Klem én gang til" (Squeeze again), says Askeladd's helpful sidekick, the Wolf. The Giant begs for his life, agreeing to do whatever Askeladd wants. "Si at dersom han skaper om igjen de seks brødrene dine som han har gjort til stein, og brudene deres, skal han berge livet" (Say that if he

brings back your six brothers that he has turned into stone, and their wives, he'll save his life), says the Wolf. The Giant immediately turns stone back into flesh. "Klem nå sund egget" (Now crush the egg), says the Wolf. Without hesitation, Askeladd breaks the egg, and the Giant's heart bursts.

Is there a heart in this novel, and if there is, does Høeg break it? Without much ado, we can certainly say that he breaks the heart of any notion of "traditional" closure, quite literally and quite figuratively putting the worm in the stone of the ending, in keeping with post modernism's aesthetic of failure and fragmentation. And, indeed, the critic in us may thrill to Smilla's theoretical correctness. But the reader in us experiences, along with many others, a dismay as the novel disintegrates, as the philosophical, European detective fiction spins seemingly out of control into a Hollywood action-adventure script. Or as one reviewer wrote:.

Something peculiar happens to *Smilla's Sense of Snow* as it sails toward its denouement . . . (It) takes on the trappings of movies like *The Blob* (whose extraterrestrial predator, one recalls, was shipped to the Arctic), *The Thing* (whose monster preyed on the inhabitants of an Arctic station) and *Them* (which evoked a world threatened by genetic mutation).

"Byen" or "The City." Only a few hours after Smilla has gone on board the ship, less than a minute in fictional time, s/he muses:

Jeg har altid vaeret bange for havet . . . På det åbne hav findes der ingen landkending, der findes kun en amorf, kaotisk forskydning af retningsløse vand-masser, der tårner sig op og bryder og ruller, og hvis overflade igen brydes af subsystemer der interferer og danner hvirvler og forsvinder og opstår og tilsidst forgår sporløst . . . Jeg frygter (havet) fordi det vil fratage mig orienteringen, mit livs indre gyroskop, min vished om, hvad der er op og ned, min forbindelse med absolute space . . . Fra jeg for nogle timer siden er gået om bord, er nedbrydningen sat ind.

I've always been afraid of the sea . . . On the open sea there are no landmarks, there is only an amorphous, chaotic shifting of directionless masses of water that loom up and break and roll, and their surface is, in turn, broken by subsystems that interfere and form whirlpools and appear and disappear and finally vanish without a trace . . . I'm afraid of (the sea) because it will rob me of my orientation, the inner gyroscope of my life, my awareness of what is up and down, my connection to Absolute Space . . . The process of disintegration started the moment I came on board several hours ago.

Smilla's loss of connection is reflected everywhere in the fiction henceforward. Characters and events become increasingly anarchic, narrative rhythm grows fitful, suspense ebbs and flows, and the images of the fictional landscape lose both color and contour, until in the final scene a white fog of frost is descending, the heroine is losing sight of the villain, the villain is losing his bearings, the ice is thinning, the temperature is dropping, and an obliterating snow storm is coming, returning all, we might say, to the blank page. As if we have entered into some other, inchoate dimension, philosophically

as well as imagistically, we are left to ponder, after all this time, whether Smilla's words are pretentious or profound, empty or full of meaning.

Man kan ikke vinde over isen.

Bag os er stadig stenen, dens gåde, de spørgsmål den bar rejst. Og mekanikeren.

Et sted foran mig bliver den løbende skikkelse langsomt mørkere.

Fortael os, vil de komme og sige til mig. Så vi forstår og kan afslutte. De tager fejl. Det er kun det man ikke forstår, man kan afslutte. Det kommer ikke til nogen afgørelse.

You can't win against the ice.

Behind us the stone is still there, with its mystery and the questions it has raised. And the mechanic.

Somewhere ahead of me the running figure slowly grows darker.

Tell us, they'll say to me. So we will understand and be able to resolve things. They'll be mistaken. It's only the things you don't understand that you can resolve. There will be no resolution.

Does Høeg in the end, like some post-modern Askeladd, break our collective, bourgeois heart? Or has he hidden a heart elsewhere, as the Giant did twice before he was outwitted by the intrepid hero? It would certainly be in keeping with Høeg's fascination with the paradoxical that he play both roles. The folk tale that informs the final phase of the novel is, at least from one point of view, a tale of rebirth. Askeladd tricks the Giant into bringing his family of brothers back to life. Upon my first reading of Smilla the existential thriller, even the extraordinary heroine, even at times the devastating social critique, seemed like masks, Trojan horses, Askeladdian tricks that allowed Høeg to write what he indicated he was writing from the very beginning, a narrative of mourning, a tale of death, loss, and depression, and equally of those flashes of clarity, of white-hot purpose, of the keen sense of being on some right track, as one attempts to trick the Giant, to restore what has been lost, the one who has been lost, if only in another form.

Høeg concludes Smilla with his own riddle. "Det er kun det man ikke forstår, man kan afslutte. Det kommer ikke til nogen afgørelse" ("It is only the things you don't understand that you can resolve. There will be no resolution"). In other words, contrary to what we think we have just read, we have understood it all. I would suggest that the novel is, at heart, about the most common, and the most devastating, of human experiences, those sorrows of loss that potentially wean us too soon from this earth. At the risk of being Tørk's fool—and there could be worse fates—the one who would find meaning where there is none, I offer a reading of this novel as a tale of mourning and renewal.

Critical Essay #3

One could say that *Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne* is held in the embrace of a child. In the first narrative moments, barely acquainted with our guide, Smilla, we watch her catch sight of a small, dark shadow in the snow early on a December evening in Copenhagen. She runs toward it. The shadow is the corpse of the boy, Isaiah.

Esajas ligger med benene trukket op under sig, og med ansigtet ned i sneen og haenderne omkring hovedet, som skaermer han for den lille projektør der lyser på ham, som er sneen en rude gennem hvilken han har fået øje på noget dybt nede under jorden.

Isaiah is lying with his legs tucked up under him, with his face in the snow and his hands around his head, as if he were shielding himself from the little spotlight shining on him, as if the snow were a window through which he has caught sight of something deep inside the earth.

Nearly five hundred pages later, now all but a double of Smilla, we watch with her as Tørk, the murderer of Isaiah, runs out onto the thinner and thinner ice of the Greenlandic seas. She chases him, running parallel to him.

Han har mistet orienteringen. Han føres ud mod det åbne vand. Mod dér, hvor strømmen har udhulet isen, så den bliver tynd som en hinde, en fosterhinde, og under den er havet mørkt og salt som blod, og et an-sigt presser sig nedefra op mod ishinden, det er Esajas' ansigt, den endnu Ufødte Esajas.

He's lost his bearings. He's being led out toward open water. Toward the spot where the current has hollowed out the ice so it's as thin as a membrane, a fetal membrane. Underneath, the sea is dark and salty like blood, and a face is pressing up against the icy membrane from below; it's Isaiah's face, the as-yet-unborn Isaiah.

As if the text were the earth, Isaiah peers back at himself lying lifeless in the snow. How are we to read this fetal embrace? Is it a hole or a whole in a text that ends with the proclamation, "There will be no resolution"? Perhaps it is both, the ever-repeated cycle of meaninglessness and meaning, the failed and the possible, loss and recovery, Isaiah's sooting vision, the vision of newborns and of the extremely old, the gaze of our common humanity, connecting the beginning to the end like a beam of light, providing, one might say, the Absolute Space of the story, the thing for which we long, to which we cling, even as we search for it. In a review of *Smilla* for *The New Statesman* John Williams began by saying that "It's the corpse that defines a thriller." Isaiah as corpse is particularly poignant. The dead boy bears the name of the greatest of the prophets, who foretold of the coming of the Messiah. His was a prophecy of a paradoxical redemption, made manifest in both a suffering and a reigning Messiah. Does such a namesake have any meaning in a text as profane as this one? Smilla possibly casts doubt. Upon first

meeting Elsa Lübing, the novel's elegant, old-fashioned, religious recluse, Smilla remarks, "Jeg har mistet fornemmelsen for, hvordan man tackler troende europaeere" ("I have lost the sense of how to tackle a believing European"). But Miss Lübing, a former "bookkeeping" genius from another era, a woman of conscience, even if she has withdrawn to her windowed penthouse of white and cream, lends credence to the Bible as text. It is the wisdom by which she lives, providing her not only with the language through which she speaks in her daily life, but the secret code through which she and Smilla communicate. Miss Lübing, with her Bible, gives Smilla one of the first keys to unlocking the mystery of Isaiah's death. Her ancient text may also provide a key to the meaning of Høeg's text as well.

Høeg's Isaiah might be said to be both prophet and prophecy. He is a Christ child of sorts, at the center of an albeit highly corrupted nativity myth. Smilla, the quintessential, 1990s vierge moderne,2 in spirit if not in body, thinks of Isaiah as her child. The mechanic, Peter Føjl, plays the carpenter to her Virgin Mary. They are this novel's unholy family. Isaiah dies in December and is fictionally about to be reborn about three months later, roughly corresponding to the Christian feast of the Resurrection. Oddly for a story set in Copenhagen, the boy is often placed by Smilla in an environment of shimmering heat, as if he were in a desert, and he is usually described as being naked, save for the underpants he wears like a loin cloth. His body is pierced by a modern sword, a biopsy needle. And, like Christ, Isaiah turns the other cheek. When lashed out at, abused, hurt, he digs into what Smilla calls "sin naturs ubegraensede reserver" ("the unlimited reserves of his character"). "Tålmodig, tavs, agtpågivende vred han sig bort under de udstrakte haender, og gik sin vej. For, om muligt, at finde en anden løsning" ("Patient, silent, and watchful he would wrench himself away from the outstretched hands and go on his way. In order to find, if possible, some other solution").

Smilla herself sees Isaiah as a potential savior of her cultures, as a Greenlander who could in essence incorporate Denmark, change it to his own, take it backward or forward to something more integrated and whole. Using imagery as eclectic as her boyhero, she describes his response to her gift of a luxurious, white jacket. The resulting composite is of a hybrid phoenix.

Esajas var ved at lykkes. Han ville kunne vaere nået frem. Han ville kunne have optaget Danmark i sig, og transformeret det, og vaereblevet både-og.

Jeg fik syet en anorak til ham af hvid silke. Selve mønsteret havde passeret europaeerne. Min far havde engang fået det foraerende af maleren Gitz-Johansen. Han havde fået det i Nordgrønland, da han illustrerede det store standardvaerk om Grønlands fugle. Jeg gav Esajas den på, jeg friserede ham, og så løft-ede jeg ham op på toiletsaedet. Da han så sig selv i spejlet, skete det. Det tropiske tekstil, den grøn-landske andagt ved festdragten, den danske glaede ved luksus, alt. smeltede sammen. Måske betød det også noget, at jeg havde givet ham den.

Isaiah was on the verge of success. He could have gotten ahead. He would have been able to absorb Denmark and transform it and become both a Dane and a Greenlander.

I had an anorak made for him out of white silk. Even the pattern had been passed down by Europeans. The painter Gitz-Johansen once gave it to my father. He had gotten it in North Greenland, when he was illustrating his great reference work on the birds of Greenland. I put the anorak on Isaiah, combed his hair, and then I lifted him up onto the toilet seat. When he saw himself in the mirror, that's when it happened. The tropical fabric, the Greenlandic respect for fine clothes, the Danish joy in luxury all merged together. Maybe it also meant something that I had given it to him.

The notion of Isaiah being on the verge of success seems blasphemous in a narrative in which he is the ultimate victim of late twentieth century, western culture, a culture of greed, power, and disregard for life. The child of the System's pawns, he is witness to his father's death by explosives and his mother's by alcohol. His body is infected with parasites and his hearing damaged by modern drugs. But as the Biblical Isaiah's Messiah was both sufferer and redeemer, so too is Smilla's young Isaiah both victim and savior, both hollowed out and whole.

How H(ø)eg hates this middle class, whose own children are a Third World, to be colonized, "civilized" and serfed. In his suspicion of science, technology and the very idea of progress, he belongs to a long tradition of those antirationalists who've gone swimming Against the Current . . . But H(ø)eg's distinctive contribution to this literature of disenchantment, of subversive subjectivity, is his brilliant focus on the lost child—coveted, abused, eroticized, missing, homeless, inner, emblematic, mode of production, consumer and commodity, Little Mermaid and Ugly Duckling—the orphan in the burning world. No wonder he needed Smilla . . . Smilla on her sleigh, who has fled us through dreaming ice to a Winter Palace.

Smilla may have fled. Nevertheless, these lost children lie like an endless chain of corpses on the landscape of *Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne*. Like Isaiah they fall from the structures, through the fissures, not only through the corrupted world reflected through the narrative but through the narrative itself, through those expert discourses—economic, scientific, medical, philosophical, aesthetic—that are the building blocks of the fiction.

The novel is really a novel of nothing but children, their adult masks bleeding off like actor's paint, crooks, criminals, and good citizens alike, bleeding into children before Smilla's and our very eyes. Of the dead, to name just a few: Closest to Smilla is her younger brother, who committed suicide when he was forced to transform himself from hunter to dock sweeper, this younger brother, mentioned in an aside here and an aside there, more important in the narrative than he seems, connected somehow to Isaiah through the memory of the shimmering heat of a hot, arctic summer. And there is the investigative detective Ravn's daughter, pushed from another roof, also by Tørk, symbolic of all the children of any class who are forced by violence from the structures of power. Smilla's last communication to the "outside" world is to Ravn about his daughter, and the revenge she takes in the end is certainly in her name as well as Isaiah's. Of the living-dead: There is Benja, the lithe, emotionally stunted, thumbsucking darling of the Royal Ballet and Smilla's abusive doctor/father. There is Landers, the perpetually drunk casino owner whom Smilla calls "En affaldsbarn, en der altid har haft

svaert ved at begå sig, og egentlig heller ikke har haft lyst til at laere det" ("A throwaway child, someone who has always had a hard time dealing with the world and hasn't actually wanted to learn how"). No one is exempt, not even the artists, perhaps most particularly not the artists. The murderer, Tørk Hviid, is himself a crucified child, the son of a "great" composer. As a mutual acquaintance condemningly writes to Smilla's father:

Drengen gik for lud og koldt vand. Huller i tøjet, rødøjet, fik aldrig en cykel, blev pryglet i den lokale proletarskole fordi han var for svag af sult til at forsvare sig. Fordi hans far skulle vaere stor kunst-ner. I har alle svigtet jeres børn. Og der skal en gam-mel svans som mig til at fortaelle jer det.

The boy was totally neglected. Holes in his clothes, red-eyed, never had a bicycle, was beaten at the local proletarian school because he was too weak from hunger to defend himself. Because (his father) was supposed to be a great artist. You've all betrayed your children. And it takes an old queen like me to tell you.

There is also Jakkelsen, the Kronos Captain's drug-addicted younger brother, whom Smilla calls the "sick child." He literally becomes the corpse in the cargo of the ship that takes Smilla to that (w)hole in the ice where she potentially wrecks her revenge on Tørk. Backing Smilla up like some farcical, glacial warrior, Jakkelsen's protective, yet impotent brother, the Captain, steps up behind her, harpoon gun in hand, pointed at Tørk. "Du skal blive gjort ansvarlig" ("You must be held responsible"), he says, just before his arm is shot off. And, of course, there is Smilla, the protagonist, the Greenlandic/Danish hybrid child, whose desires to sink back into her own childhood from the ice-encrusted present continually wash over her like waters, sometimes troubled, sometimes calm, from a sea of memories, even as she pursues the murderer of her beloved child, Isaiah.

Wounded children killing wounded children, wounded children avenging wounded children is the underlying modus operandi of *Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne*. In a novel more nakedly about the abused child in contemporary society, *De måske egnede* (1993), the novel that followed *Smilla*, Høeg quotes the god of modern physics who publicly mourned the death of his own childhood, at the same time as he consigned his infant daughter to a similar fate.

Da Einstein er blevet verdensberømt, og journalister spørger til hans opvaekst, refererer han flere gange selv til den som "liget af min barndom," "The corpse of my childhood".

Han siger at han sigter til den hårde, indskraenkende borgerlighed der omgav ham.

"The corpse of my childhood."

When Einstein has become world famous, and journalists ask about his youth, he himself refers to it several times as "the corpse of my childhood."

He says he is referring to the strict, inhibiting bourgeois mentality that surrounded him.

It is clear from his letters to Mileva Maric that his scientific theories are developed in protest against this bourgeois mentality . . . At the same time, the inhibition he protested against in his work, the narrowmindedness, is what causes him and Mileva Maric to give away their eight-month-old daughter.

"The corpse of my childhood."

How do we reverse the unending spiral of child corpses? At the heart of much of what Høeg writes is the question, "Can we do it differently?" Those who try, like the boy-murderer, August, in De måske egnede, who ends his own life rather than perpetuate the murderous cycle in which he is caught, are Høeg's twentieth-century, martyred heroes, his messiahs. In the end, as Smilla confronts Tørk on the ice, she recasts herself in the image of Isaiah.

Det er is der er under mig, jeg er på vej hen over isen, imod ham, som Esajas var på vej vaek fra ham. Det er som om jeg er Esajas. Men nu på vej tilbage. For at gøre noget om. For at prøve, om der skulle findes en anden mulighed.

There is ice under my feet. I'm on my way across the ice toward him, just as Isaiah was heading away from him. It's as if I am Isaiah. But on his way back now. To do something differently. To see whether there might be an alternative.

The recast Isaiah, the Smilla/Isaiah, would save the child. But which child?

Critical Essay #4

Preliminarily it must be said that it is the dead child who saves the living, for to bring Isaiah back seems to mean bringing Smilla back, Smilla whose dark love affair with melancholy is far more seductive than her love affair with the mechanic. Death often startles us into living. Isaiah's death sharpens Smilla's senses, like a cup of the mechanic's scalding, tropical tea. She says herself that she has been set free.

Esajas' død er en uregelmaessighed, en spraengning der har fremkaldt en spalte. Den spalte har sluppet mig fri. For en kort tid, uden at jeg kan forklare hvor-dan, er jeg kommet i bevaegelse, er jeg blevet et skøj-tende fremmedlegeme oven på isen. in motion, I have become a foreign body skating on top of the ice.

The death of one child becomes the lifeline of the other.

One can speak of Smilla in this way only, of course, if one can assume that a traditional notion of character has gone into the making of Smilla. Instinctively as readers we seem to believe in her as "real." Brad Leithauser wrote in his review in

The New Republic:

At the outset of her tale I was aware that Smilla—as a European, an Eskimo and a woman—stood at three removes from a reader such as myself. All the more striking, then, was the speed with which the sense of distance from her vanished—the speed of arriving on intimate terms with her. And she accomplishes this without being at all forthcoming. She is a taciturn soul. We read nearly 100 pages before we discover that her passion for snow and ice derives not merely from experience but from scholarship. She is a glaciologist, with articles to her credit like "Statistics on Glacial Graphology" and "Mathematical Models for Brine Drainage from Seawater Ice." We believe in this heroine partly because her reticence in no way feels coy. It seems, rather, like the wariness of somebody who, having grown up surrounded by dangers, instinctively seeks to keep predators at bay.

Leithauser's observation touches only the tip of the iceberg. Reticence is Smilla's emotional veneer. Underneath she is a chronically lonely soul, subject to bouts of depression which she records, as only the true melancholic can, with irresistible allure, provoking our desire to follow her into her dark spaces. Depression, I would suggest, is the crack in the personality of this uncommon heroine that allows us, most likely so different from her in most ways, to identify so intuitively with her. Melancholy is, in a sense, our common bond.

For Smilla it seems tantamount to a lost love. Rather than fend it off, she courts it and embraces it with a determined abandon. Momentarily defeated in her search for Isaiah's murderer, she gives herself up to depression with these fighting words:.

Man kan forsøge at daekke over en depression på forskellige måder. Man kan høre Bachs orgelvaerker i Frelserkirken. Man kan laegge en bane højt humør i pulverform ud på et lommespejl med et barberblad, og tage den ind med et sugerør. Man kan råbe om hjaelp. For eksempel i telefonen, så man har sikret sig, hvem der hører det.

Det er den europaeiske vej. At håbe på, at man kan handle sig ud af problemerne.

Isaiah's death is an irregularity, an eruption that produced a fissure. That fissure has set me free. For a brief time, and I can't explain how, I have been set

Jeg tager den grønlandske vej. Den består i at gå ind i det sorte humør. At laegge sit nederlag under mikroskopet og dvaele ved synet.

Når det er rigtig galt—som nu—så ser jeg en sort tunnel foran mig. Den går jeg hen til. Jeg laegger mit paene tøj fra mig, mit undertøj, min sikkerhedshjelm og mit danske pas, og så går jeg ind i mørket.

Jeg véd der kommer et tog. Et blyforet damploko-motiv, der transporterer Strontium 90. Jeg går det i møde.

Det kan jeg gøre, fordi jeg er 37 år gammel. Jeg véd, at inde i tunnelen, inde under hjulene, nede mellem svellerne er der et lille punkt af lys.

You can try to cover up depression in various ways. You can listen to Bach's compositions for the organ in Our Saviour's Church. You can arrange a line of good cheer in powder form on a pocket mirror with a razor blade and ingest it with a straw. You can call for help. For instance, by telephone, so that you know who's listening.

That's the European method. Hoping to work your way out of problems through action.

I take the Greenlandic way. It consists of submerging yourself in the dark mood. Putting your defeat under a microscope and dwelling on the sight.

I know that a train is coming. A lead-lined steam locomotive transporting strontium 90. I go to meet it.

It's possible for me to do this because I'm thirty-seven years old. I know that inside the tunnel, underneath the wheels, down between the ties, there is a little spot of light.

Høeg has taken great pains to give his Smilla a psychologically provocative past, both in the broad sweeps of ancestry and family history and the smaller, more secretive movements of the "soul." During this particular dark mood, literally locked up in her Copenhagen apartment, she consciously evokes a memory that makes her black tunnel even blacker. It is the memory of her second attempt, at the age of twelve, to return to Greenland from Denmark, where her father had forcibly brought her after her mother's death six years prior. She remembers a frantic, winter flight northward, trying to reach Frederikshavn, and from there Oslo, and then Nuuk. First she hitchhikes, then she

steals a motorcycle, skids, crashes on lake ice, tears her jacket, breaks her wrist bones, and lands in the hospital, where her father comes to retrieve her. Walking to the car she breaks away, he chases after her and catches her, and she turns on him, her right hand in a cast, her left hand hiding a scalpel that she had stolen from the emergency room. She gashes the palm of his hand. They circle around each other, both ready to strike, when Moritz suddenly straightens up and says, "Du ligner din mor . . . " ("You're just like your mother . . . "). And he starts to cry.

This scene, which begins Part Two of "The City," is key to the novel, an allegory of the greater narrative in which present and past play to and against each other in a drama that stays the same the more it changes. The paradigm of the wandering, violent journey northward, leaving Smilla bloodied but unbowed, is unmistakable. Embedded in it are the complex of forces that compel her to flee, be it to the expanse of the Arctic or to a small, dark room in Copenhagen. Her depression of the present, brought on by her momentary failure to uncover Isaiah's murderer and hence to recover Isaiah, is deeply anchored in the past, in her attempts to return to Greenland, both in body and in spirit, to the home of her mother.

John Bowlby, in his introduction to *Loss: Sadness and Depression* (1980), the third and final volume of his classic study on mourning, *Attachment and Loss*, noted that "bereave" stems from the same root as "rob." Building on earlier studies by Darwin and Strand, he assumed that the attempt of the bereft one to recover what has been lost is instinctive. " . . . a mourner is repeatedly seized, whether he knows it or not, by an urge to call for, to search for and to recover the lost person and . . . not infrequently he acts in accordance with that urge." In Loss he developed his theories of successful versus thwarted mourning, concentrating, in particular, on children who have lost a parent, either through death or separation. The mourning of children would, he contended, reveal the paradigm for adult mourning, which, he further contended, was often founded in childhood. If a child is allowed to/is able to suffer through grief in all its stages, s/he will recover from the loss, will recover what Darwin called "elasticity of mind," but if grieving is thwarted, s/he will be doomed to a repetitive, if disguised search for the dead beloved. Bowlby established an intimate connection between a recent and an earlier loss.

A probable explanation of the tendency for a recent loss to activate or reactivate grieving for a loss sustained earlier is that, when a person loses the figure to whom he is currently attached, it is natural for him to turn for comfort to an earlier attachment figure. If, however, the latter, for example a parent, is dead the pain of the earlier loss will be felt afresh (or possibly for the first time). Mourning the earlier loss therefore follows.

I would suggest that Smilla's search for Isaiah can be interpreted as a repetition of a "life-long," if disguised search for her lost mother. Smilla herself is keenly aware of the need in others to try to hold on to the dead beloved, even if that other is the father she so scorns. In ruminating about her flight toward Greenland, away from Denmark, she recognizes, as both a past and present truth, her father's need to keep her close in order to keep her mother, if only in memory, alive.

Til Danmark havde han hentet mig, fordi jeg var det eneste der kunne minde ham om, hvad han havde mistet. Mennesker der er forelskede, de tilbeder et fotografi. De ligger på knae for et tørklaede. De foretager en rejse for at se på en husmur. Hvad som helst der kan puste til de gløder, der både varmer og forbraender dem.

Med Mortiz var det vaerre. Han var håbløst forelsket i en, hvis molekyler var suget ud i den store tomhed. Hans kaerlighed havde opgivet håbet. Men den havde klamret sig til erindringen. Jeg var den erindring.

He had brought me to Denmark because I was the only thing that could remind him of what he had lost. People in love worship a photograph. They fall on their knees before a scarf. They make a journey to look at the wall of a building. Whatever can ignite the coals that both warm and sear them.

With Moritz it was much worse. He was hopelessly in love with someone whose molecules had been sucked out into the vast emptiness. His love had given up hope. But it had latched on to memory. I was that memory.

The thing that Smilla understands so well about her father, in fact the thing that allows her to understand her father at all, is the thing that drives her with equal ferocity, the need to recover someone who also for Smilla, with even more insidious consequences, was "suget ud i den store tomhed" ("sucked out into the vast emptiness"). What Moritz tries to do through his daughter, Smilla tries to do through her chosen son, Isaiah. After her failed flight at the age of twelve, she never again tried to escape, that is, until Isaiah was murdered. Her return to Greenland may be far more compulsive than the detective novel alone would allow. Smilla as the avenger of the dead child on one level of the narrative, is herself the thwarted child mourner on another.

Smilla was seven years old when her mother disappeared in the Greenlandic seas. The only race of her was her kayak, which, according to Smilla, led her Inuit kin to conclude that "det havde vaereten hvalros" ("it must have been a walrus"). There were no further details. Now in her thirty-seventh year, Smilla seems to have made peace with her mother's unknown demise as yet another hard, but natural fact of a hard life. But as so often with Smilla, things are not what they seem. In the context of telling of her mother's disappearance, Smilla detachedly cites two fascinating facts from her seemingly endless list of fascinating facts. First, in Danish waters, compared to Greenlandic waters, due to the warmer temperature, the processes of decomposition cause fermentation of the stomach, giving "selvmordere fornyet opdrift" ("suicides renewed buoyancy"), and causing them to wash up on shore. Second, walruses are unpredictable. They can be transformed from the most sensitive of fish to the most ferocious killers.

Med de to kindtaender kan de slå en skibsside af faergecement ind. Jeg har engang set fangerne holde en torsk hen til en hvalros de havde fanget levende. Den smalede laeberne til en lille kyssemund, og så sugede den fiskens kød direkte af knoglerne.

With their two tusks they can stave in the side of a ship made of ferrocement. I once saw hunters holding a cod up to a walrus that they had captured alive. The walrus puckered up his lips as for a kiss and then sucked the meat right off the bones of the fish.

These bits of knowledge are potentially interesting in and of themselves, as are so many of Smilla's multifarious observations. But we should not be folled. For surely they have a more provocative function in this story of Ane Qaavigaaq's demise. They devilize the unknown waters of her grave. They suggest that Smilla has entertained fantasies of a most violent death, or perhaps even worse for Smilla, a death by her mother's own hand, fantasies that Smilla can only allow herself to express through the detached formula of scientific facts. For the mourning child, Bowlby stressed, it is essential that the child be made aware of two things, "first that the dead parent will never return and secondly that his body is buried in the ground or burned to ashes." Smilla, denied certainty, even of this elementary kind, has lived for thirty years with disembodied ruminations of suicide, dead animals, and lethal walruses, a symptom of what Bowlby called "disordered mourning." Her image of the walrus's kiss of death reveals a truth she cannot see, a fear she cannot feel. It explains her rage with her beloved Isaiah, when she finds him running across the disintegrating ice in Copenhagen harbor. " . . . (jeg) slog . . . ham. Slaget var vel—som vold nu kan vaere det—et destillat af mine føleser for ham. Han holdt sig lige akkurat oprejst." (" . . . I hit him. The blow was probably a distillation of my feelings for him, the way violence sometimes is. He barely managed to stay on his feet"). A love more powerful even than her love for Isaiah was distilled in that single blow. For hove could Smilla tolerate even the thought of another loss to the sea?

Smilla does not disguise the centrality of her mother in her life. To the contrary, through memory and fantasy she has created an icon, an androgenous, Inuit god, earth mother and hunter, an almighty presence between whose legs she once lay, at whose breast she once nursed. The image is of a divinity in whose body the fluids of life, milk and blood, flow eternally.

Hun kysser mig aldrig, og hun rører sjaeldent ved mig. Men i øjeblikke af stor fortrolighed lader hun mig drikke den maelk, der bliver ved med at vaere der, bag huden, som blodet altid er der. Hun spreder sine ben, så jeg kan gå ind imellem dem. Sore de an-dre fangere går hun i bukser af bjørneskind, som kun garves nødtørftigt. Hun elsker asker, spiser den un-dertiden direkte ud af bålet, og hun har smurt sig under øjnene meed den. I denne duft af braendt kul og bjørneskind går jeg ind til brystet, der er lysende hvidt, med en stor, sart rosa areola. Der drikker jeg så immuk, min mors maelk.

She never kisses me, and she seldom touches me. But at moments of great intimacy, she lets me drink from the milk that is always there, beneath her skin, just as her blood is. She spreads her legs so I can come between them. Like the other hunters she wears pants made of bearskin, given only a rudimentary tanning. She loves ashes, sometimes eating them straight from the fire, and she has smeared some underneath her eyes. In

this aroma of burned coal and bearskin, I go to her breast, which is brilliantly white, with a big, delicate rose aureole. There I drink immuk, my mother's milk.

But does the all-powerful maternal image conceal a treachery? Smilla's tale of intimate attachment to her mother is contained within a tale of destruction and death. As with the memory of her mother's disappearance, Smilla diverts attention from the actual love object in her mind's eye, not this time through smart, scientific facts, but through her mother's own anecdotal wisdom about the ebb and flow of life in the Arctic. Two years before Ane Qaavigaaq died, Smilla was hunting with her for narwhals and white-breasted auk. Among her mother's kill was a female narwhal and her angel-white pup, not yet born. Smilla herself caught three auk in a flock of black, white-breasted females on their way to their young with worms in a pouch in their beaks. She had them in her net, and she knew how to kill them by pressing on their hearts. She had done it before, but this time she balked.

Og så ser jeg nu alligevel pludselig deres øjne som tunneler, for enden af hvilke ungerne venter, og disse ungers øjne er igen tunneler, og for enden af dem er narhvalungen, hvis blik igen fører ind og bort. Lige så langsomt vender jeg ketcheren, og med en kort ek-splosion af støj stiger fuglene til vejrs.

And yet I suddenly see their eyes as tunnels, at the end of which their young are waiting, and the babies' eyes are in turn tunnels, at the end of which is the narwhal pup, whose gaze in turn leads inward and away. Ever so slowly I turn over the net, and with a great explosion of sound, the birds rise into the air.

Seeing her daughter's distress, as if, Smilla recounts, she were seeing her for the first time, Ane, in essence, introduced Smilla to the notion of paradox. Sitting beside her, she said simply, " . . . jeg har båret dig i amaat . . . Alligevel . . . er jeg staerk som en mand" ("I have carried you in amaat . . . And yet, . . . I am as strong as a man"). And then she drew Smilla into her legs and to her breast, comforting her in her generous, fleshy, androgenous way. Later she spoke of the greater paradox of life and death, trying to explain, Smilla says, why one month 3,000 narwhals are gathered in the fjord and the next month they are dead, trapped in the ice. Smilla understood what her mother was trying to tell her, she recounts, "Men det aendrede intet" ("(T)hat didn't change a thing"). The year before her mother's death—Smilla would have been six—she began to feel nauseated when she went fishing.

Clearly, Smilla interprets the memory as her initiation into modern consciousness, the moment forever after which she would harbor "en fremmedhed over for naturen" ("a feeling of alienation toward nature") because it was no longer accessible to her "på den selvfølgelige måde den havde vaeret tidligere" ("in the natural way that it had been before"). "Måske er jeg allered dér begyndt at ønske at forstå isen. At ville forstå er at prøve at generobre noget vi har mistet" ("Perhaps I had even then begun to want to understand the ice. To want to understand is an attempt to recapture something we have lost"). But as Smilla has reconstructed the memory, its real heart is about maternal loss. As that small child Smilla saw herself in the baby birds, whose mothers would

never return. She was the narwhal pup, robbed of its own mother, even as it too was robbed of its life. Smilla's image of the dark tunnel of depression, which she enters, stripped of illusion, as an adult, she already saw as a little girl in the eyes of the baby birds, at the tunnel's end an abandoned child.

Bowlby believed that disordered mourning revealed itself primarily in two variants of behavior, in the one extreme, chronic mourning, and in the other, Smilla's way, a prolonged absence of conscious grieving. "Adults who show prolonged absence of conscious grieving are commonly self-sufficient people, proud of their independence and self-control, scornful of sentiment; tears they regard as a weakness." Smilla is nothing if not in control. Even when she is not, she is looking like she is. She is a character endowed with encyclopedic knowledge, which she imparts with authority and seductive charm. As readers we must become as adept as she is at reading between the lines, decoding the messages, ferreting out the truth in the fissures that suddenly crack open. She is also a character defined by radical self-sufficiency. The very trait that makes her a contemporary, fictional wonder, the perfect heroine for the action-adventure film, is for Smilla as a character in a narrative of mourning, the mask that reveals the true face. Most critically effected, Bowlby maintained, is the mourner's "capacity to make and maintain love relationships (which becomes) more or less seriously impaired or, if already impaired, (is) left more impaired than it was before." By this measure Smilla makes a profound leap toward love when at the end she emotionally embraces the mechanic as part of her future and at the same as part of her return. He is, significantly, waiting "behind" her.

Høeg, in creating Smilla's past, has destined her for grieving. For she has been drubbed by the shattering, sudden, unresolved disappearances of all of her most beloved, her mother by drowning, her brother by suicide, compounded by Isaiah by murder. But Isaiah has left tracks, and for Smilla this seems to make all the difference as the mourning process is compulsively set in motion.

Critical Essay #5

It would seem that Høeg has been compelled to create not only a character but also a narrative that is, at the very least, illuminated by a theory of mourning, possibly even driven by it. The child Isaiah, Greenlandic, gynandrous, mysteriously gone, is the perfect spark to ignite Smilla's memories both of her mother and of herself as a child, her memories of attachment and, in the same breath, loss, and thus to initiate the search, never completed, to find the mother never truly mourned. At the same time, the very structure of the narrative loosely resembles the four phases of mourning isolated by Bowlby: "numbing," "yearning and searching," "disorganization and despair," and "a greater or lesser degree of reorganization." Smilla seems to be in a phase of numbness as the novel begins, manifest in her rabid self-reliance, her fear of attachment (with, of course, the exception of Isaiah, who may have fooled her because he was "only" a child), and her embrace of the scientific guise, at the same time as she fears it, like the walrus's puckered kiss. The second phase, "yearning and searching," could be the subtitle for "The City," as Smilla begins a series of multi-layered, interconnected, volatile investigations into the murder of the boy, the reluctant love affair with the mechanic, and the memories of the past.

Intermittent hope, repeated disappointment, weeping, anger, accusation, and ingratitude are all features of the second phase of mourning, and are to be understood as expressions of the strong urge to find and recover the lost person. Nevertheless, underlying these strong emotions, which erupt episodically and seem so perplexing, there is likely to coexist deep and pervasive sadness, a response to a recognition that reunion is at best improbable.

Once Smilla leaves land and sets out to sea, both she and the narrative begin to lose their bearings. Smilla's feeling for Absolute Space fails her. Isaiah seems almost forgotten. The mechanic disappears. The target of the investigation seems to shift from a murdered boy to a secret cargo. Bowlby's formulation of the third phase of mourning, "disorganization and despair," may shed critical light on this (often criticized) section of the novel, in which Smilla finds herself quite literally walking and crawling through every inch of the ship, including the dumb waiter, trying, at astounding physical risk, as it turns out, to open locked doors to discover what might be on the other side. "For mourning to have a favourable outcome," Bowlby observed:.

It appears to be necessary for a bereaved person to endure (a) buffeting of emotion. Only if he can tolerate the pining, the more or less conscious searching, the seemingly endless examination of how and why the loss occurred, and anger at anyone who might have been responsible . . . can he come gradually to recognize and accept that the loss is in truth permanent and that his life must be shaped anew.

He cited the English writer, C. S. Lewis, who wrote of his own, overwhelming grief in terms that, when applied to Høeg's narrative, capture the confusion of the section called "The Sea."

C. S. Lewis (1961) has described the frustrations not only of feeling but of thought and action that grieving entails. In a diary entry after the loss of his wife, H, he writes: "I think I am beginning to understand why grief feels like suspense. It comes from the frustration of so many impulses that had become habitual. Thought after thought, feeling after feeling, action after action, had H for their object. Now their target is gone. I keep on, through habit, fitting an arrow to the string; then I remember and I have to lay the bow down. So many roads lead through to H. I set out on one of them. But now there's an impassable frontier-post across it. So many roads once; now so many culs-de-sac"

Smilla wears her bruised emotions on her body like contemporary body art. As Brad Leithauser described her in her near final phase:

. . . near the close of the book, we glimpse her with her clothes off as she steps into a shower: "There's no skin on my kneecaps. Between my hips there is a wide yellowish-blue patch that has coagulated under the skin where Jakkelsen's marlin spike struck me. The palms of both my hands have suppurating lesions that refuse to close. At the base of my skull I have a bruise like a gull's egg . . . ."

This is a partial list of wounds. Still to come is the breaking of her nose. The mysterious struggle she is engaged in, against an amorphous circle of thugs and aristocrats, is savage. She might as well be battling one of the bears that she used to come upon in the far north . . . Actually, she might be better off with the polar bear. At least she would know who her enemy was and why it wanted her dead.

Leithauser drew no conclusion about the enemy. I speculate that it is the despair of loss, that her wounds and bruises are comic (action-adventure) representations of emotional lacerations she must endure in order to return, if you will, to the house of her mother to enter the final phase of mourning, "a greater or lesser degree of reorganization," as apt, if bland, a description as there could be of the conclusion of *Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne*. Smilla herself, toward the end of "The Sea," tells us, as Høeg so often (and, at times, so pedantically) has her do, precisely what is going to happen. She has fled the ship and stumbled into the body of another dead boy, when she suddenly recognizes the mechanic as the fourth passenger.

Da jeg genkender ham forstår jeg, at jeg bliver nødt til at gå tilbage til Kronos.

C. S. Lewis (1961) has described the frustrations not only of feeling but of thought and action that grievder er mellem os. Det er noget større. Måske er det kaerligheden.

When I recognize him, I realize that I'll have to return to the Kronos.

"Not because it suddenly doesn't matter whether I live or die, but because the problem has been taken out of my hands. It no longer has to do with Isaiah alone. Or with me. Or with the mechanic. Or even with what there is between us. It's something much bigger. Maybe it's love.

Smilla returns to her passage through time, at the end, at the edge of the waters that took her mother, embracing for the future both the fetal image of Isaiah and the waiting mechanic, allowing her nemesis, Tørk Hviid, to flee onto the treacherous ice, off the page, and into oblivion.

In elaborating on the phase of "yearning and searching," Bowlby quoted Colin Murray Parks as saying:.

Although we tend to think of searching in terms of the motor act of restless movement towards possible locations of the lost object, (searching) also has perceptual and ideational components . . . Signs of the object can be identified only by reference to memories of the object as it was. Searching the external world for signs of the object therefore includes the establishment of an internal perceptual "set" derived from previous experiences of the object.

In terms of motor action, Høeg has Smilla quite literally get on board a ship that will carry her back to the place of her birth and her deepest loss, and he is not shy with his symbolism. The ship is named Kronos, the classical god of time, associated with change, with melancholy, and with death. In his fine introduction to *Melancholy Dialectics* (1993), his book on the play of mourning in the works of Walter Benjamin, Max Pensky traced the transition of what he calls "the role of melancholia in Western culture" from medical to theological and ethical discourses. The eventual kinship to Kronos is striking.

The original medical texts of late antiquity . . . become associated with astrological bodies and properties. Melancholia becomes connected with Saturn, the cold, dark, and slow planet, and thence the correspondence, Saturn-melancholia, with Chronos, the classical god of time, who is now transfigured into the god of sadness and morbidity, of delay . . . thus the association of melancholy with Saturn, and Saturn with the god Chronos, Chronos with time and universal death . . . "

But Høeg seems to love nothing more than the dialectical, and thus, at the same time as Smilla sails in a ship marked by time, birth imagery abounds: an enclosed vessel, a blind passage through maternal waters, the waiting fetal image. None of this is subtle.

More nuanced, however, is what Bowlby/ Parks called the "perceptual and ideational components," or, the external "signs" of the internalized object "as it was." Isaiah is, of course, the most conspicuous sign, but then there is the mechanic. Is Føjl to be read as the English "foil" or the Danish "feel"? Both have connotations. For is he not the perfect, maternal surrogate? (He even shares his own creator's Christian name.) Like Smilla's mother, he is large of body and androgynous of spirit, strong and protective. Like her, too, he is primarily non-verbal, a stutterer, who, nevertheless, is the only one who can cajole Smilla out of her depression. He gives her nourishment, like mother's milk in adult guise, tropical tea and thick espresso, and he takes her between his legs. Time and again, as if she cannot help herself, Smilla connects the mechanic to her childhood. He cooks for her, and she is "mindet om måltidets rituelle betydning. At jeg husker barndommens forening af samvaerets højtidelighed og de store smagsoplevelser . . .

Fornemmelsen af, at stort set all i livet er til for at blive delt" ("reminded of the ritual significance of meals. In my childhood I remember associating the solemnity of companionship with great gustatory experiences . . . The feeling that practically everything in life is meant to be shared"). He sleeps with her and she is reminded of a parental kiss. "Munden og naesen vibrerer blødt, som om han dufter til en blomst. Eller skal til at kysse et barn" ("His mouth and nose vibrate gently, as if he were sniffing at a flower. Or were about to kiss a child"). But the mechanic, like Smilla's mother, is also potentially treacherous, a man of secrets who is not necessarily what he seems to be. Most dangerously, he is a man who can mysteriously disappear, as he does, just as Smilla is about to set sail for Greenland. As a "sign" he must be nearly irresistible to her. At the same time he seems to signal a change in her fortune in the narrative of mourning. For when, in the penultimate section, he returns to the Kronos as the fourth passenger, he in effect reverses the series of (three) shattering, mysterious disappearances Smilla has suffered by mysteriously reappearing, significantly in a shower of warm water.

But the most seductive "sign" of all for Smilla is her beloved snow. Smilla authoritatively announces early on, "Jeg synes bedre om sne og is end om kaerligheden" ("I think more highly of snow and ice than love"). Equally authoritatively Høeg cautioned readers not to trust her. "She should not be relied on, because she's hidding her sensitivity and feelings under a rough surface" (Lyall). Both statements are misleading, for it is not so much a matter of snow versus love, but of snow as Smilla's disguised obsession with the loss of love. Smilla herself makes the connection, if she disguises the nature of the loss, when, at the end of her reminiscence about her mother's intimate embrace, she muses, "Måske er jeg allerede dér begyndt at ønske at forstå isen. At ville forstå er at prøve at generobre noget vi har mistet" ("Perhaps I had even then begun to want to understand the ice. To want to understand is an attempt to recapture something we have lost").

Smilla is, she says, "panisk" ("panic-stricken") at the prospect of loving the mechanic, for fear it won't last.

Dér på hans gulv, ved siden af hans seng, kan jeg høre noget. Det kommer inde fra mig selv, og det er en klynken. Det er frygten for, at det der er givet mig, ikke skal vare ved. Det er lyden af alle de ulykkelige kaerlighedshistorier jeg aldrig har villet lytte til. Nu lyder det, som om jeg selv rummer dem alle.

Standing there on his floor, next to his bed, I can hear something. It's coming from inside me, and it's a whimper. It's the fear that what has been given to me won't last. It's the sound of all the unhappy love stories I've never wanted to listen to. Now it sounds as if they're all contained within me.

In her study on melancholy, Soleil Noris: *Depression et melancholie* (1987) (Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia (1989)), Julia Kristeva wrote early on:

Le désenchantement, fût-il cruel, que je subis ici et maintenant semble entrer en résonance, à l'examen, avec des traumas anciens dont je m'aperçois que je n'ai jamais su faire le deuil. Je peux trouver ainsi des antécédents de mon effondrement actuel dans une perte, une mort ou un deuil, de quelqu'un on de quelque chose, que j'ai jadis aimés. La disparition de cet être indispensable continue de me priver de la part la plus valable de moimême: je la vis comme une blessure ou une privation, pour découvrir, toutefois, que ma peine n'est que l'ajournement de la haine ou du désir d'emprise que je nourris pour celui ou pour celle qui m'ont trahie ou abandonnée. Ma dépression me signale que je ne sais pas perdre; peut-être ai-je pas su trouver un contrepartie valable à la perte. Il s'ensuit que toute perte entraine la perte de mon être—et de l'Être lui-même.

The disenchantment that I experience here and now, cruel as it may be, appears, under scrutiny, to awaken echoes of old traumas, to which I realize I have never been able to resign myself. I can thus discover antecedents to my current breakdown in a loss, death, or grief over someone or something that I once loved. The disappearance of that essential being continues to deprive me of what is most worthwhile in me; I live it as a wound or deprivation, discovering just the same that my grief is but the deferment of the hatred or desire for ascendency that I nurture with respect to the one who betrayed or abandoned me. My depression points to my not knowing how to lose—I have perhaps been unable to find a valid compensation for the loss? It follows that any loss entails the loss of my being—and of Being itself.

Smilla, afraid to lose, has practiced, she says, the art of renouncing, "det eneste i denne verden der er vaerd at laere" ("the only thing in the world that is worth learning"). Her passion, her yearning for love and for beauty, she has channeled into the study of snow and ice, for in her mind they are the substance of permanence. Ice is the opponent of the sea. "(D)en daekker vandet og gør det fast, sikkert, farbart, overskueligt" ("(I)t covers the water and makes it solid, safe, negotiable, manageable"). The sea robs Smilla, as we know, of her sense of Absolute Space. She experiences the loss as actual physical disintegration.

Langsomt vil denne forvirring arbejde sig ind i mit balancesystems vaeskekar og opløse min stedsans, den vil kaempe sig ud i mine celler og forskyde deres saltkoncentration og dermed nervesystemets led-ningsevne, og efterlade mig døv, blind og hjaelpeløs

. . . Fra jeg for nogle timer siden er gâet ombord, er nedbrydningen sat ind. Det koger allerede i mine ører, i mine slimhinder sker der underlige, umotiverede vaeskeskred.

. . . this confusion will work its way into the chambers of my inner ear and destroy my sense of orientation; it will fight its way into my cells and displace their salt concentrations and the conductivity of my nervous system as well, leaving me deaf, blind, and helpless . . . The process of disintegration started the moment I came on board several hours ago. There's a boiling in my ears, a strange, internal displacement of fluids.

This is the experience of dissolving, of dying, and it is brought on by the very sea that took her mother.

For Smilla snow is the substance that preserves form, like Isaiah's tracks. It is the substance of connection, associated in her mind with winter, her mother's favorite season, and the visiting of others. "Vinteren var en tid til samvaer, ikke til jordens undergang" ("Winter was a time for community, not for the end of the world"). Snow is the substance of certainty. It is the substance of perfection. Like all who mourn, Smilla longs for something that can contain the essence of what is lost, Keats's Grecian urn, Dinesen's blue vase. Smilla has found it in her ability to imagine snow. "I den ydre verden vil der aldrig eksistere en fuldendt dannet snekrystal. Men i vores bevidsthed ligger denglitrende og lydefri viden om den perfekte is" ("In the external world a perfectly formed snow crystal would never exist. But in our consciousness lies the glittering and flawless knowledge of perfect ice"). Smilla seems to find in the ice all that she longs for, life, wildness, beauty, change, and eternal permanence. Nearing Greenland, she describes in the most sensuous terms the creation of the ice cover:

Det er skabt i skønhed. En oktoberdag er temperaturen faldet 30 grader celcius på fire timer, og havet er blevet stille som et spejl. Det venter på at gengive et skabelsesunder. Skyerne og havet glider nu samme i et forhaeng af grå, fed silke. Vandet bliver tyktflydende og ganske let rødligt, som en likør på vilde baer. En blå tåge af frostrøg gøar sig fri af vandoverfladen, og driver hen over vandspejlet. Så størkner vandet. Op af det mørke hav traekker kulden nu en rosenhave, et hvidt taeppe af lsblomster, dannet af salte og frosne vanddråber. De vil måske leve fire timer, måske to dage.

It was created in beauty. One October day the temperature drops 50 degrees in four hours, and the sea is as motionless as a mirror. It's waiting to reflect a wonder of creation. The clouds and the sea glide together in a curtain of heavy gray silk. The water grows viscous and tinged with pink, like a liqueur of wild berries. A blue fog of frost smoke detaches itself from the surface of the water and drifts across the mirror. Then the water solidifies. Up out of the dark sea the cold now pulls a rose garden, a white blanket of ice blossoms formed from the salt and frozen drops of water. That may last for four hours or two days.

The ice is endlessly transformed, even as it remains, always, what it is: hexagonal crystals dissolve into new hexagons, to become frazil ice and grease ice and pancake ice and then hiku (permanent ice) and ice floes, blue and black floes, and white glacier ice, ad infinitum.

But, of course, snow is as impermanent as life, the quintessence of impermanence. Touched by the human hand it disappears, as suddenly and completely as Smilla's mother. Only in Smilla's mind is it a constant. Even in its physical construction it is made up of wholes and holes, as illusive a substance as Smilla could have found for her passion, and thus, in essence, the perfect "sign" for her mother, both in her presence and her absence. It is the substance in which she is both to be lost and to be found. Yet,

as long as Smilla continues to romanticize snow, she can avoid facing the loss that it hides. She need never lose again.

Kristeva, in her work on mourning, has said that it is the escalating number of signs that is the mourner's true "sign." In summarizing Kristeva's contribution to the literature of mourning, Max Pensky wrote:

It is this very proliferation of signs that draws the melancholic's attention, both as the exact schematic representation of the sites of the melancholic's loss and as the only possible medium in which the Thing could be glimpsed. The chaotic mass of symbolic signification—of names—"means" the loss of meaning. It therefore signifies in a double motion. For the melancholic who is able to recover from the paralytic, illogic thrall of loss—who can sublimate it—meaning translates into the continually frustrated fascination with the rifts and discontinuties that remain in the proliferation of signs.

In this light Isaiah's murder is, indeed, the moment that sets Smilla free. For it gives her justification to begin the search, to open up her frozen focus to look for signs of her lost beloved quite literally everywhere, and, as the detective, to explore to the point of obsession, "the rifts and discontinuities" in the case of "the murdered child." At the end Smilla stands on the ice, surrounded by the signs of Isaiah, the mechanic, and the snow, in the landscape of her mother's death, with the possibility of the child—the Smilla/Isaiah—being reborn. And in a Kristevan sense, meaning is reasserted as Smilla poeticizes the ever-expanding rift in the landscape as the white frost of fog hovers overhead and Tørk, driven by her into the distance, disappears on the bluish white ice, destined to be sucked under by the waters running darkly underneath. Smilla has taken her mother up into herself. Like her, she has become the hunter, in the name of the children avenging the deaths of all of those who have been sacrificed.

Critical Essay #6

To return to the questions provoked by the old folk tale riddle that underlies Høeg's text—is there a heart and does Høeg break it or not?—my answer is only too obvious. In my reading, *Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne* is a sentimental narrative about the mourning of the child, a narrative told with a broken heart that the writer attempts to heal. "Min mors forfaedre ville have undret sig over, at universets nøgler for en af deres efterkommere skulle vise sig at vaere skriftlig" ("My mother's forefathers would have been astounded that the key to the universe for one of their descendants would turn out to be in written form"), Smilla/Høeg says. S/he does not seem, to borrow Leithauser's word, to be being "coy." Yet the narrative fact remains that that meteorite, with its deadly worms, lies waiting at the end, just as surely as the mechanic. Smilla, as usual, tells us so herself. "Bag os erstadig stenen, dens gåde, de spørgsmål den har rejst/Og mekanikeren." ("Behind us the stone is still there, with its mystery and the questions it has raised. And the mechanic"). What questions has it raised? we might ask. One certainly is, is this whole tale a showstopping, post-modern pastiche? Another critic, with another bent, could use that worm-filled stone to turn my reading back upon itself. In the short time the stone is present in the text, its meanings shift like sand, particularly as Tørk deconstructs it for Smilla on their walk toward it. It is Inuit myth, science-fiction vision, scientific discovery-of-the-century, ancient source of life, capitalist commodity, waiting plague, narrative signifier, narrative joke, depending on who exploits it. Smilla takes her own turns with it. On first hearing about it from the mechanic, she remarks, "Je håber inderligt, det er et nummer" ("I sincerely hope that it's a hoax"), and later on with Tørk:

Pludselig er det heller ikke for mig vigtig om den lever. Pludselig er den et symbol. Omkring den udkrystalliseres i dette øjeblik den vestlige naturvi-denskabs holdning til verden omkring den. Beregnetheden, hadet, håbet, frygten, forsøget på at in-strumentalisere. Og over alt andet, staerkere end nogen følelse for noget levende: pengebegaeret.

(Suddenly whether the stone is alive or not is no longer important to me, either. Suddenly it has become a symbol. At this moment it becomes the crystallization of the attitude of Western science toward the world. Calculation, hatred, hope, fear, the attempt to measure everything. And above all else, stronger than any empathy for living things: the desire for money.)

In conclusion I would offer my own interpretation of the black stone as yet another "sign" in the narrative of mourning, bearing, of course, in mind the villain's words, "Det er ikke vigtig, hvordan tingene virkelig forholder sig. Det vigtige er, hvad mennesker tror" ("The true reality of things is not important. What's important is what people believe").

"The Giant Who Had No Heart In Him" is only one of many texts, literary and non, that seem to play in the narrative shadows of *Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne*. They are as numerous as readers who have read them, text by Andersen, Benjamin, Conrad,

Dinesen, Foucoult, Girard, etc. Yet one that leaps to mind more spontaneously than others is Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, the ultimate nineteenth-century critique of a society that gives privilege to the world of science to the exclusion of the world of feeling. At its heart too lies a murdered child, the young boy, William, Dr. Frankenstein's youngest brother, who is the Creature's first victim. The Creature is more literally the young scientist's creation, but Tørk is equally Smilla's double, an arid, white shadow who stalks her, a disembodied voice who talks to her from the other end of the phone, her pursuer as equally as she is his. Their bond is mutually acknowledged.

(Smilla:) Det er tanken om, at han fra begyndelsen har vidst hvem jeg er, der er ulidelig. Jeg husker ikke, siden jeg var barn, i så høj grad at have følt mig i et andet menneskes vold.

It's the realization that he knew who I was from the very beginning that is so excruciating. Not since my childhood have I felt so strongly in someone else's power.

(Tørk:) Du bluffer vidunderligt, siger han.—Jeg ville langt hellere sidde oppe i tønden og høre på at du lyver, end gå rundt blandt alle disse middelmådige sandheder.

You're a spectacular bluffer . . . I'd much rather sit up in the crow's nest listening to your lies than walk around among all these mediocre truths.

(Smilla:) Vi er forbundet red en navlestreng, som mor og barn.

We're connected by an umbilical cord, like mother and child.

Tørk is the frigid mind, the deadened child who, like the deeply wounded Creature, will kill until he is overcome and driven out.

The finale *Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne*, Smilla's pursuit of Tørk across the ice and into the distance, has its antecedent in the narrative frame of Frankenstein. The crew of the earlier, fictional ship, temporarily locked in the glacial waters of the Arctic, first spots the Creature fleeing toward the North Pole. As told by the young scholar/explorer:

. . . a strange sight suddenly attracted our attention, and diverted our solicitude from our own situations. We perceived a low carriage, fixed on a sledge and drawn by dogs, pass on towards the north, at the distance of half a mile; a being which had the shape of a man, but apparently of gigantic stature, sat in the sledge, and guided the dogs. We watched the rapid progress of the traveler with our telescopes until he was lost among the distant equalities of the ice.

In the morning they discover his pursuer, the "melancholy and despairing" Dr. Frankenstein in parallel chase.

The novel ends with the horrified, young explorer bearing witness to the Creature's agonized leave-taking of his creator and tormentor, the dead Dr. Frankenstein, and his painful exit from the narrative:

"But soon," he cried, with sad and solemn enthusiasm, "I shall die, and what I now feel be no longer felt. Soon these burning miseries will be extinct. I shall ascend my funeral pile triumphantly, and exult in the agony of the torturing flames. The light of that conflagration will fade away; my ashes will be swept into the sea by the winds. My spirit will sleep in peace; or if it thinks, it will not surely think thus. Farewell."

He sprung from the cabin window, as he said this, upon the ice-raft which lay close to the vessel. He was soon borne away by the waves, and lost in darkness and distance.

Høeg, reversing the "European" (here Tørk) and "the savage inhabitant" (here Smilla), collapses the chase into the final scene.

Han ser mig, eller måske set han bare at der står en skikkelse, så søager han ud på isen. Jeg følger ham i en retning der er parallel med hans. Han ser, hvem jeg er. Han maerker at han ikke har overskud til at nå mig . . . Han søger for langt mod højre. Da han in-stinktivt retter op, ligger skibet 200 meter bag os. Han har mistet orienteringen. Han føres ud mod det øbne vand. Mod dér, hvor strømmen har udhulet isen, så den bliver tynd som en hinde, en fosterhinde . . . Måske vil isen om et øjeblik give efter under ham. Han vil måske føle det som en lettelse, at det kolde vand gør ham vaegtløs og suger ham ned . . . Eller han skifter i stedet retning og søger igen mod højre, ud over isen. Inat vil temperaturen falde yderligere, og der vil komme snestorm. Han vil kun leve et par timer. På et tidspunkt vil han standse op, og kulden vil forvandle ham, som en istap, en frossen skal lukket om et akkurat flydende liv, indtil også pulsen stilner, og han bliver ét med landskabet . . . Et sted foran mig bliver den løbende skikkelse langsomt mørkere.

Then he sees me, or maybe he merely sees a figure, and he heads out onto the ice. I take a path parallel to his. He sees that it's me. He realizes that he doesn't have the strength to reach me . . . He parallel to his. He sees that it's me. He realizes that he doesn't have the strength to reach me . . . He heads too far to the right. When he instinctively corrects his course, the ship is two hundred yards behind us. He's lost his bearings. He's being led out toward open water. Toward the spot where the current has hollowed out the ice so it's as thin as a membrane . . . Maybe in a moment the ice will give way beneath him. Maybe it will seem a relief to have the cold water make him weightless and suck him downward . . . Or maybe he will change direction and head to the right again, across the ice. He'll only survive a couple of hours. At some point he will stop, and the cold will transform him; like a stalactite, a frozen shell will close around a barely fluid life until even this pulse stops and he becomes one with the landscape . . . Somewhere ahead of me the running figure slowly grows darker.

The death metaphor has been changed from fire to ice, but that Høeg's ending is a deliberate narrative doubling of Shelly's—with a significant twist—calls attention to itself.

Both *Frankenstein* and *Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne* are novels of paradises lost, but, metaphorically speaking, Dr. Frankenstein and the Creature flee into a pristine, arctic landscape, only to corrupt it with their footsteps and their corpses. Smilla and Tørk arrive at, one might say, the same place, but it is long since a fallen world, both inner and extratextually. Tørk and his men have been here before. Isaiah has witnessed his father's destruction here at the hands of the powers of greed. But, too, the Doctor and his Creature fled here, already in 1818. And what they brought with them, and what lies buried with them, is despair. Creator and experiment, they are the precursors of the dark side of the modern, scientific age, where feeling has been sacrificed on the altar of disembodied data. They share the guilt for the symbolic dead child, vying even for the measure of their grief. The Creature parts from the dead Frankenstein with the words, "Blasted as thou were, my agony was still superior to thine; for the bitter sting of remorse will not cease to rankle in my wounds until death shall close them forever." But Frankenstein's earlier words still hang in the air:

But I, the true murderer, felt the never-dying worm alive in my bosom, which allowed of no hope or consolation . . . Anguish and despair had penetrated into the core of my head; I bore a hell within me which nothing could extinguish.

If only by literary association, might not the mysterious, black stone be the solidification of the Creature's ashes, and might not the worms in the stone be the descendents of "the never-dying worm" in Frankenstein's blasted heart? But in her own narrative Smilla, the hunter/child, is still alive to challenge them. Høeg seems to have been determined to go back, "For at gøre noget om. For at prøve, om der skulle findes en anden mulighed" ("To do something differently. To see whether there might be an alternative"), if only by sheer authorial will.

Adaptations

Smilla's Sense of Snow was adapted into a film in 1997 by Twentieth Century Fox. The film was directed by Bille August and starred Julia Ormond as Smilla, Gabriel Byrne as Føjl, and Richard Harris as Moritz. The film is available in both video and DVD formats.

The soundtrack to the film *Smilla's Sense of Snow* was released on CD by Elektra/Asylum in March of 1997.

An abridged version of *Smilla's Sense of Snow*, read by Rebecca Pidgeon, was released by Harper Collins in August 1993 as an audiobook.

A reading group guide for *Smilla's Sense of Snow* is available at www.randomhouse.com/resources/bookgroup/smillassense_bgc.html (last accessed October 2002) along with an interview with the author, discussion questions, an author biography, and links to other sites.

Another reading group guide for *Smilla's Sense of Snow* is available at www.readinggroupguides.com/guides/smillas_sense_of_snow.asp (last accessed October 2002), including interviews, biography, questions, and links.

Topics for Further Study

Read a short history of the Danish colonization of Greenland in an encyclopedia or another source. Imagine the story of the colonization told from the viewpoint of an Inuit. How do you think the accounts would differ?

Watch the film version of *Smilla's Sense of Snow* and note how director Bille August chooses to portray the story. What are some of the ways the film conveys the main themes of the novel? Does the film seem "true" to the novel, or are there inexplicable changes?

Read *Polar Star* by Martin Cruz Smith, a murder mystery that takes place on a fishing boat near the Arctic Circle. What similarities and differences can you find between the two books?

In what ways do the needs and concerns of Inuit people both clash and coincide with environmental issues? For example, the Inuit traditionally hunt whales, many species of which are endangered. Ought indigenous people be able to follow their traditional ways of living? Or do the needs of the environment outweigh the needs of the culture? How have nations such as Canada and Russia handled this question?

Smilla's mother, although dead for many years, continues to play an important role in Smilla's life. How has Ane influenced her daughter over the years? How do you think Smilla will come to terms with her mixed heritage?

Reread the book, noting all references to mathematics, physics, and philosophy. Look up the names of each mathematician and philosopher and learn something about their ideas. How do these allusions contribute to your understanding of Smilla as a character?

Further Study

Caufield, Richard A., "The Kalaallit of West Greenland," in *Endangered Peoples of the Arctic: Struggles to Survive and Thrive*, edited by Milton Freeman, Greenwood Press, 2000.

Caulfield presents a readable history of the Inuit peoples of Greenland, from historical past into the twenty-first century.

Nuttal, Mark, "Greenland: Emergence of an Inuit Homeland," in *Polar Peoples: Self-Determination & Development*, edited by Minority Rights Group, Minority Rights Publications, 1994.

Nuttall's chapter in this longer overview of polar peoples offers the reader a concise history of Danish colonization of Greenland as well as prospects for the future.

Satterlee, Thomas, "Peter Høeg," in *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Vol. 214: *Twentieth-Century Danish Writers*, edited by Marianne Stecher-Hansen, The Gale Group, 1999, pp. 178-187.

Satterlee provides an excellent introduction to Peter Høeg's work for the student who wants to know more about the writer.

Schaffer, Rachel, "Smilla's Sense of Gender Identity," in *Clues: A Journal of Detection*, Vol. 19, No. 1, Spring-Summer 1998, pp. 47-60.

In a readable critical article, Schaffer applies feminist theory to the novel.

Bibliography

Bell, Pearl, "Fiction Chronicle," in *Partisan Review*, Vol. LXI, No. 1, Winter 1994, pp. 80-95.

Eder, Richard, Review of *Smilla's Sense of Snow*, in *Los Angeles Times Book Review*, September 26, 1993, pp. 3, 11.

Hazleton, Lesley, Review of *Smilla's Sense of Snow*, in the *Seattle Times*, October 3, 1993, p. F2.

Henry, William, III, Review of *Smilla's Sense of Snow*, in *People Weekly*, Vol. 40, No. 14, 1993, p. 32-34.

Kennedy, Thomas E., and Frank Hugus, Introduction, in *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, Vol. 15, No. 1, Spring 1995, pp. 7-10.

Leithauser, Brad, Review of *Smilla's Sense of Snow*, in *New Republic*, Vol. 209, No. 18, November 1, 1992, p. 39.

Loose, Julian, Review of *Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow*, in *London Review of Books*, Vol. 16, No. 9, May 12, 1994, p. 27.

McCue, John, Review of *Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow*, in *Times Literary Supplement*, No. 4720, September 17, 1993, p. 20.

Meyer, Michael, Review of *Smilla's Sense of Snow*, in *New York Review of Books*, Vol. XL, No. 19, November 18, 1993, p. 41.

Møller, Hans Henrik, "Peter Høeg or The Sense of Writing," in *Scandinavian Studies*, Vol. 69, Winter 1997, pp. 29-51.

Nathan, Robert, Review of *Smilla's Sense of Snow*, in *New York Times Book Review*, September 26, 1993, p. 12.

Norseng, Mary Kay, "A House of Mourning: *Frøken Smillas Fornemmelse for Sne*," in *Scandinavian Studies*, Vol. 69, No. 1, Winter 1997, pp. 52-83.

Satterlee, Thomas, "Peter Høeg," in *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Vol. 214: *Twentieth-Century Danish Writers*, edited by Marianne Stecher-Hansen, The Gale Group, 1999, pp. 178-87.

Schaffer, Rachel, "Smilla's Sense of Gender Identity," in *Clues: A Journal of Detection*, Vol. 19, No. 1, Spring-Summer 1998, pp. 47-60.

Shapiro, Laura, Review of *Smilla's Sense of Snow*, in *Newsweek*, Vol. 122, No. 10, September 6, 1993, p. 54.

Simonds, Merilyn, Review of *Smilla's Sense of Snow*, in the *Montreal Gazette*, December 11, 1993, p. 12.

Smiley, Jane, Review of *Smilla's Sense of Snow*, in *Washington Post Book World*, October 24, 1993, pp. 1, 11.

Whiteside, Shaun, Review of *Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow*, in *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, Vol. 149, No. 19, November 7, 1993, p. 29.

Williams, John, Review of *Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow*, in *New Statesman and Society*, Vol. 6, No. 268, September 3,1993, p. 41.

Copyright Information

This Premium Study Guide is an offprint from *Novels for Students*.

Project Editor
David Galens

Editorial
Sara Constantakis, Elizabeth A. Cranston, Kristen A. Dorsch, Anne Marie Hacht, Madeline S. Harris, Arlene Johnson, Michelle Kazensky, Ira Mark Milne, Polly Rapp, Pam Revitzer, Mary Ruby, Kathy Sauer, Jennifer Smith, Daniel Toronto, Carol Ullmann

Research
Michelle Campbell, Nicodemus Ford, Sarah Genik, Tamara C. Nott, Tracie Richardson

Data Capture
Beverly Jendrowski

Permissions
Mary Ann Bahr, Margaret Chamberlain, Kim Davis, Debra Freitas, Lori Hines, Jackie Jones, Jacqueline Key, Shalice Shah-Caldwell

Imaging and Multimedia
Randy Bassett, Dean Dauphinais, Robert Duncan, Leitha Etheridge-Sims, Mary Grimes, Lezlie Light, Jeffrey Matlock, Dan Newell, Dave Oblender, Christine O'Bryan, Kelly A. Quin, Luke Rademacher, Robyn V. Young

Product Design
Michelle DiMercurio, Pamela A. E. Galbreath, Michael Logusz

Manufacturing
Stacy Melson

For more information, contact
The Gale Group, Inc
27500 Drake Rd.
Farmington Hills, MI 48334-3535
Or you can visit our Internet site at
http://www.gale.com

Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by NfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

NfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from NfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Novels for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

Editor, Novels for Students
Gale Group
27500 Drake Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535