

Baltic Islands as Literary Borderlands. Concepts of the Self and Identities in Scandinavian Literature

Islands cause uncertainty in European literary and cultural traditions: they can be imagined as destinations for either refuge or detention – or as in the case of the Robinsonade both –, as well as settings for fictional utopian or dystopian regimes, not to mention the iconic 'Fortunate Isles'. This ambivalence is closely connected to the westbound colonial expansion in the modern era and their 'discoveries', which stimulated the imagination back in Europe and was textual productive. Therefore, Literary Studies analyzed the topic of islands mainly focussing on venues in the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Ocean. Postcolonial criticism stated that those literary depictions and the geo- and ethnographical descriptions of those areas influenced one another, while depicting islands as location of the 'other' (Edmond/Smith 2003; Fletcher 2011). The PhD-Project aims to apply these insights to the Baltic Sea Region to further investigate the reciprocal relationship between fictional and factual texts. The alleged geographical closeness of these islands to the European literary public – at least those of the neighbouring countries – does not necessarily result in less imaginative potential, as e.g. recent historical research on the making of strong regional identities in the sense of imagined communities on the islands of the Baltic Sea Region shows (Holmén 2014). Therefore, a central question of the thesis is how notions of islands as 'ideal' spaces for 'self'/'other'-distinctions are transferred and remodelled by literary texts. Drawing on texts by August Strindberg, Martin Andersen Nexø and Tove Jansson and their representations of islands, a variety of subject-positions since the Modern Breakthrough at the turn of the 19th century in Scandinavia can be examined.

Further possible primary literature:

Hansen, Martin A. (1950): *Løgneren*.

Michaelis, Karin (1933): *Die grüne Insel. Buch für die Jugend*.

Sund, Lars (2007): *En lycklig liten ö*.

Works cited:

Edmond, Ron a. Vanessa Smith: "Editors' introduction", in Edmond/Smith.: *Islands in History and Representation*, London New York 2003, p. 1-18.

Fletcher, Lisa: "'... some distance to go': A Critical Survey of Island Studies", in *New Literature Review: Islands Special*, 2011, p. 17-34.

Holmén, Janne: „A small separate fatherland of our own. regional history writing and regional identity on islands in the Baltic Sea“, in: *Island Studies Journal*, Vol. 9, no 1, p. 135-154.