



Homo sapienne

Niviaq Korneliusen

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Nå, Niviaq Korneliussen 1990-imi Nuuk-mi inunngorpoq, maannalu siullermeertumik saqqummersitsinerani, atuakkiortoq isumalluarnartoq saqqummerluni. Taamaattumik kikkut tamat, kalaallit qallunaallu, arnaqatiminnik anguteqatiminnillu atoqateqarneq ajortut aamma arnaqatiminnik anguteqatiminnilluunniit atoqateqartartut, inuusuttut utoqqaallu, uanngaanniit aallartiinnarsinnaapput – HOMO sapienne-ip quppernerani siullermiit.

Mette Moestrup oqaluttualiap siulequtaani

Fia, Inuk, Arnaq, Ivinnguaq aamma Sara. Inuusuttut tallimat, Nuummi pissutsit allanngorneri, kinaassuseq asanninnerlu pillugit oqaluttuaat tallimat imminnut ataatsimoortillugit.

Homo sapienne Details

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From Reader Review *Homo sapienne* for online ebook

Dan says

Whoever thought that *Crimson and Clover* hearing *Crimson and Clover* pop up on a '60s oldies radio station would immediately bring me back to *Last Night in Nuuk*? But there it is: a well-executed and highly memorable novel, even more rewarding and interesting when reread.

@Tommyjamesandtheshondells to score *Last Night in Nuuk* on screen??? #crimsonandclover #overandover

Niviaq Korneliussen's *Last Night in Nuuk* isn't your average LGBTQIA youth novel to burst out of Greenland. Nanortalik's own Korneliussen provides an always fascinating, occasionally confusing polyvocal novel told through five apparently 20-somethings living in Nuuk. Korneliussen animates Fia, Inuk, Arnaq, Ivik, and Sara through their utterly believable and sometimes discomfiting first person voices. We hear their voices through stream of consciousness, emojis, texts, Facebook DMs, hashtags, and emails, all perfectly replicating today's communication. Korneliussen convinces us of her characters' struggles with romance, sexual identify, and navigation of day to day existence and friendship. The believability of the five voices in *Last Night in Nuuk* comes at a cost: even this reader—rarely squeamish when confronting fictional characters—might have preferred knowing less of, for example, the details of Arnaq's hangover. And some of the voices—especially those of Fia, Inuk, and Ivik—sound most consistently distinct to me.

#NowIdonthardlyknowher and #ButIthinkIcouldloveher accurately describe Fia's and Ivik's emerging identities. Here's Fia describing her frustrations with Peter, her roommate and lover: *"I give up and go into my room, log on to Facebook, would like to tag Peter and write: does anyone want this man who never grumbles and never glances at anybody else, I'm tired of my life, my back hurts because I always sit hunched over, he loves me so much that I want something evil to take possession of my body so that I can knife him, four years to prison, rehabilitation, a new life, maybe a more exciting life. . ."* Here's Fia again soon after: *"WHAT? My own thoughts frighten me. I don't want to kiss her! What am I thinking of? I know my boundaries. My boundary stops here. Why the hell would I want to kiss a woman? Listen, you're not into women! I tell myself."* And here's Ivinnguaq recognizing herself as a man, Ivik: *"My sould finds solace in my body. Now that my body has finally found the answer, my soul is no longer in doubt. I was born again when I was twenty-three years old. I was born as Ivik."*

Reading *Last Night in Nuuk* brings to mind Sally Rooney's Booker 2018 long-listed *Normal People* and Anna Burns 2018 Booker-winning *Milkman*. All three novels deal with teens and 20-somethings struggling to learn about their own and their friends' identities, all deal with romance and sex, and all convey social claustrophobia. *Last Night in Nuuk*, like *Milkman*, layers in concerns about nationality and culture. Here's Inuk's e-mail to his sister Fia, after he's fled to Denmark: *"What it really means to be a Greenlander: You're a Greenlander when you're an alcoholic. You're a Greenlander when you beat your partner. You're a Greenlander when you abuse children. You're a Greenlander when you were neglected as a child. You're a Greenlander when you feel self-pity. You're a Greenlander when you suffer from self-loathing. You're a Greenlander when you're fall of anger. You're a Greenlander when you're a liar."* And then here's Inuk a week later, still in Denmark: *"Greenland is not my home. I feel sorry for the Greenlanders. I'm ashamed of being a Greenlander. But I'm a Greenlander. I can't laugh with the Danes. I don't find them funny. I can't keep up a conversation with the Danes. I find it boring. I can't act like the Danes. I'm unable to imitate them. I can't share Danish values. I don't respect them. I'll never look like the Danes. I can't become blond or fair-skinned. I can't be a Dane among Danes. I'm not a Dane. I can't live in Denmark. Denmark is not my country. Where is home? / If home isn't n Greenland, if home isn't here, where is my home? /Lost."* And

most important of all, where *Last Night in Nuuk* stands apart from *Normal People* and *Milkman* is putting LGBTQIA youth, their struggles, their romances, and their lives at the epicenter of her novel.

Last Night in Nuuk may appear to be a novel that can be read quickly, but this would do it a disservice. Niviaq Korneliussen gives us a lot to ponder and unpack, and her *Last Night in Nuuk* demands a thoughtful reading and rereading. It's a novel that deserves to be widely reviewed and widely read, and to attract the same attention lavished on *Normal People* and *Milkman* and largely denied Olumide Popoola's *When We Speak of Nothing* and Sjórn's *Moonstone: The Boy Who Never Was*.

I would like to thank Black Cat New York/Grove Atlantic and NetGalley for providing me with an e-copy in exchange for an honest review.

Shawn Mooney says

I'm too old for this novel, whose prose and characters read like YA to me. Bailed halfway through.

Calzean says

An interesting and rarely seen insight into the nightlife, loves and partying in modern day Greenlanders. Told by a handful of narrators using techniques that include emojis I found the telling of sexual awakening and various relationships to be very well done by an author of quite some talent.

Blair says

Originally published as *Homo Sapienne* and translated as *Crimson* (UK) and *Last Night in Nuuk* (US), this novel has been a surprise breakthrough hit for debut author Niviaq Korneliussen. In an interview, the author says the original text mixes Greenlandic with flecks of Danish and English; the UK publisher's blurb states she also translated it into Danish herself. (Whether the English translation is from the Greenlandic or Danish version isn't stated in the review copy I read.) The story follows a number of characters in Nuuk, the capital of Greenland, as they explore their identities.

First we meet Fia, whose fierce and striking voice makes for a bracing opening chapter. In a furious stream of thoughts – sentences often running on for pages – she gives an account of her boredom with boyfriend Peter (*dry kisses stiffening like desiccated fish*), an unsatisfying one-night stand with a stranger, and the explosive lust that ensues when she meets beautiful Sara at a party. I loved Fia's chapter: it's furiously alive even when she succumbs to morbid thoughts.

Death has begun to appear in my dreams, and I'm petrified. Murder. Death of the soul. A shrivelled corpse. Suicide. Death has begun to visit me, and I'm petrified. Mass murder. A failed suicide attempt. Envious of the dead. I've begun to walk hand in hand with it, and I'm petrified. I make up my mind because death won't leave my mind. There has always been something missing here.

Joan Jett and the Blackhearts' cover of 'Crimson and Clover' gives the book its title: it's Fia's favourite song, and becomes emblematic of her desire to be with Sara.

One of the most illuminating voices belongs to Inuk, Fia's brother, whose narrative serves to contextualise some of the others. Inuk is caught up in his own crisis of identity: he sees Greenland as a prison from which he must escape; he wants to support his sister but struggles with the news of her new relationship – at times hatefully parroting homophobic phrases he has, presumably, heard elsewhere – and, unable to believe Fia knows what she's doing, he suspects Arnaq's corrupting influence is responsible. Inuk's story mirrors Fia's in that he must endure a kind of death – *life has killed me* – before he is able to accept himself. This theme of rebirth is woven through the novel.

Arnaq threatens to become the villain of the piece – a free-spirited party animal who brings the others together and drives them apart, a whirlwind who seduces and spills secrets because she thinks it's funny – and when we see another side to her, it's heartbreaking.

Embarrassment. My thoughts fall to the ground, blown away by the wind. Disappear. Nothing left. Autopilot. My brain has switched off. Autopilot is switched on. The shame stops. Autopilot takes over. All feeling dies. My body walks on... Autopilot when I give. Autopilot when it's over. Autopilot when I've sinned. Autopilot when I'm sober. Autopilot forever.

The characters in *Crimson* are always partying and drinking – because they're lost, or because there's nothing else to do? (I thought it was interesting that many of them drink to excess on an eye-wateringly regular basis, but drugs are hardly ever mentioned. Is this emblematic of these characters' social scene or of Greenlandic culture as a whole?) 'Nuuk is big when there's actually someone you want to bump into', says Sara, but in reality Nuuk is stiflingly small – a capital city with a smaller population than the suburban town I grew up in.

The island has run out of oxygen. The island is swollen. The island is rotten.

There's something magical about the texture of *Crimson*, the way it evokes its setting so effortlessly and without cliché, the way it achieves depth of characterisation in short chapters, trimmed of all superfluous detail. It plumbs the darkest depths of its characters' despair but comes up sparkling, fresh, renewed. I thought this book was both electrifying and moving, and since I finished it, I've found myself thinking about it on a regular basis.

I received an advance review copy of Crimson from the publisher through NetGalley.

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Roman Clodia says

This is a very short (the description says 200pp. but it took less than 2 hours to read: text messages and white space on the page) quasi stream-of-consciousness novel that has a modern sensibility: youth, drinking, restlessness, depression, love, most of all sexual identities. Perhaps it feels fresher in Greenland than it does in London where this kind of urban angst with hook-ups, gay and/or trans characters has an established

place: does anyone turn their head at a young woman ditching her boring boyfriend and falling in love with a beautiful woman anymore?

At the risk of sounding annoying, this just isn't that edgy... That said, it captures a sense of frenetic confused youth, of possibilities and excitement. I'd have liked to have had a more grounded sense of Greenland - this could have been set in any university city with a pulsing student youth population.

Definitely worth reading for the buzz but I'm a bit on the shelf with this one.

Thanks to Virago for an ARC via NetGalley

Eric Anderson says

No doubt Niviaq Korneliussen's debut novel will catch many people's eye for the novelty that its young author is from Greenland, but its real appeal and power resides in its diversity of assertive young voices. The narrative follows five different characters whose romantic and familial entanglements with each other produce moments of self-revelation and big life changes over a night of drinking and partying in the city of Nuuk, Greenland's capital. "Crimson" is heavily inflected with Greenlandic and Danish language, references and culture, but its themes of young adults trying to come to terms with their gender and sexuality have a much more global outlook. The characters communicate with each other through Facebook and SMS text messages, sum up their moods in hashtags and search Google for answers to life's questions. These are young people you could meet anywhere in the world. I found it poignant how the characters corner themselves into moments of intense self-reflection through these intensely private and confessional forms of electronic communication. In this virtual space they gradually sift through ways of being to discover who they really are and what they really want. By relating their different points of view in a finely-orchestrated succession, Korneliussen builds an engaging story with many revelations and forms a picture of a modern generation in microcosm.

Read my full review of *Crimson* by Niviaq Korneliussen on LonesomeReader

Paula Bardell-Hedley says

"The island has run out of oxygen. The island is swollen. The island is rotten. The island has taken my beloved from me. The island is a Greenlander. It's the fault of the Greenlander."

When one thinks of Greenland, the mental image is likely to be of a remote Arctic landscape shaped by glaciers, or perhaps one of a lonely Inuit hunter dressed in caribou skin clothing driving a dog sledge through icy winds. Indeed, this vast non-continental island with mountainous icebergs has the world's sparsest population with only the occasional village of colourfully painted wooden cottages dotted along its west coast. There are, however, a handful of large urban areas, including Nuuk, the capital city, with its apartment blocks, industrial buildings and avant-garde architecture.

It is here, author Niviaq Korneliussen has set her tale of love, lust, despondency and queer life. At weekends her wild, narcissistic young Greenlanders hook up with friends, meet lovers and indulge in one-night stands. They become drunk in downtown bars, get stoned at house parties, and generally desensitize themselves

from overwhelming emotional issues – probably not so very different from young people the world over.

Its edgy characters include Fia who splits with her long-term boyfriend and becomes infatuated with Sara – although, the latter is really in love with Ivik who struggles with gender dysphoria. There's Inuk, who almost loses his sanity questioning what it means to be a Greenlander and Arnaq, a manipulative, bisexual partygoer with a troubled past. We experience the same events, in turn, from the perspective of each person.

Crimson may sound amusing, but it isn't. Quite the reverse: it is dispiriting and joyless, its protagonists resentful and discontented with their claustrophobic lives, but it is also a fearless work of modern literature. A sort of Greenlandic *Trainspotting* for the 21st century, but without the humour. *The Guardian* named it one of its top ten modern Nordic fiction books, and I can appreciate its reasons for doing so. While it may be self-absorbed, it is also original, inventive and touchingly courageous.

Korneliussen was born in Nuuk, South Greenland in 1990 and studied Psychology at Aarhus University in Denmark before spending a year in California as an exchange student. She started writing in 2013 and won many writing competitions in her homeland, where this novel was first published under the title of *HOMO sapienne*. She translated it herself from Greenlandic to Danish.

Many thanks to Virago for providing an advance review copy of this title.

Oriana says

I grabbed this along with a slew of other proofs at the Strand recently. I didn't know anything about the book or the author, but when I got home I realized that I'd gotten a half-dozen different books by and about a youngish woman living in or hailing from a country I don't know very much about. So apparently that's my Big Mood right now.

This was... cool. It was fine. It's very young and very of-the-moment. It follows five early-twentysomethings over a few days of their lives in Greenland. There's a lot of sex and sexual awakening and sexual discovery, and also a lot of longing, angst, despair, infighting, drunkenness, regret, and triumph. Plus a good amount of queerness, gender dysphoria, infidelity, narcissism, navel-gazing—pretty much what you'd expect from a group of just-post-college youths finding their way.

So, fine. The writing style is full of motion. There are a lot of hashtags, journal entries, and text chains. Everything has that sense of self-importance, because at that age everything *is* drastically important, whether it's kissing this girl or having this drink or ending this friendship *right the fuck now*. I guess I'd expected it to feel different because it takes place in Nuuk, because Greenland is so wildly outside of my cultural knowledge, but it just felt like kids being kids, and I am almost forty and therefore as old as the hills, and this kind of thing just doesn't really hold my attention so much anymore.

Sarah says

It seems I'm an outlier on this one. For me, *Last Night in Nuuk* was confusing (the characters all had the same voice), quite superficial, had little character development and was just not all that compelling.

Thank you Netgalley and Grove Atlantic for the advance copy, which was provided in exchange for an honest review.

Lou says

Crimson, Niviaq Korneliussen's first novella to be translated into English from its original Greenlandic, follows five LGBT twentysomethings living in the city of Nuuk and their journey towards understanding their identity. The key themes the author explores are those of gender, sexuality and relationships. For a very short novel, it packs a powerful punch and is a refreshing take on coming-of-age. Each chapter is told from a different character's perspective, and as well as the normal narrative there are text messages and Facebook posts interspersed throughout. It perfectly captures the confusion and opportunity of youth and of trying to find yourself as a person.

This is an emotive and heartfelt novella, but I would have liked the Greenlandic scenery to be more prevalent as it was not really focused on that much. I feel if you are setting a book in somewhere remote, icy and beautiful, you need to make the most of that. This is not a comfortable read, but I think the author has achieved what she set out to. Some of what is explored is likely to have come from Korneliussen's own experiences of growing up as a gay woman. Honest, brave and authentic, this is a quirky work with many important messages hidden throughout it.

Many thanks to Virago for an ARC. I was not required to post a review, and all thoughts and opinions expressed are my own.

Rebecca says

(DNF @ 7%) I was keen to try this because Greenland has been one of my surprise reading themes this year in both travel books and novels, but this was definitely not for me. I didn't get far enough into the story to comment on it, but what I did read was drenched in sex talk, with f***ing appearing in pretty much every sentence. One line I liked: "Dry kisses stiffening like desiccated fish."

Elyse Walters says

"What it really means to be a Greenlander:

You're a Greenlander when you're an alcoholic. You're a Greenlander when you beat your partner. You're a Greenlander when you abuse children. You're a

Greenlander when you were neglected as a child. You're in Greenlander when you feel self-pity. You're in Greenlander when you suffer from self loathing. You're a Greenlander when you're full of anger. You're in Greenlander when you're a liar. You're a Greenlander when you're full of yourself. You're a Greenlander when you're stupid. You're in Greenlander when you're evil. You're a Greenlander when you're queer".

"Our nation, she who is ancient; go to the mountain and never come back".

Author Niviaq Korneliussen, is only 28 years old. She's from Greenland. She's written a thought-provoking - engaging stylistic stream-of-consciousness contemporary story about young adults - coming-of-age-presumably in their 20's.

Personally, my 'early 20's' were much more confusing & painful, 'coming-of-age' so to speak - growing years - than the early pre-teen years. I also think 'this-age-group' is harder to portray authentically. I marveled at Korneliussen's clear-eyed and heartbreaking complex depiction of the fierce, flawed, characters.

Niviaq Korneliussen's new voice shows ambition, and honesty. Each page of this thin book about self-identity- sexuality- desires - despair - and lust- is blunt,...tackling issues about fear, blame, betrayal, forgiveness, and acceptance.

We are taken into their inner lives. We look at what divides them from one another and how they come to know themselves.

The young folks we follow are Fia, Arnaq, Inuk, Sara, and Ivik,.

The very 'beginning' of this book - we 'immediately' observe the brilliance- raw-edged relatable prose. We first meet Fia (although she is narrating - we don't instantly know her name), but we soon learn she has been living with Peter for three years. This first chapter is so gut-real-truthful- and powerful - I'd find it hard to believe if not every person on the planet (if they told the truth), hadn't at some point in their own lives experienced the inner feelings of *Fia*. (and they are not comfortable feelings).

Fia is tired of her life. She is tired of Peter. They have lived together for three years. He's a gentleman- kind- never grumbles - (wishing if he did grumble life might be more exciting). Fia much rather spend time on Facebook than kiss Peter. Fia's inner monologue made me LAUGH....(of course it's not funny that she wants to fucking knife him).... but since we sense she's not really going to....as readers - we are treated to a little comic-wonderful-sarcastic-prose. WE GET IT.....Fia's life is more dull than a butter life! Who hasn't ever been there? Who wouldn't want to pull your hair out? As a young vivacious- rambunctious- hot-sex-starved- 20-something year old, 'DULL' is the kiss of death!

Fia leaves Peter.

"Then, just like that, I was free".

"But the word 'free' didn't bring 'relief'". NOT entirely the end of Peter.....

And the story continues.....

Arnaq is Fia's friend. Fia is staying at her place for awhile since having left Peter.

Arnaq has plenty of her own troubles - big time party girl - and was once best friends with Fia's younger brother - Inuk.

Inuk is forced to leave Greenland after a political scandal implicated him.

SARA.....oh SARA.....she is every girl's heart-throb! Laugh with me - as I'm telling you only tidbits now....

But Sara 'does' become Fia's girl crush. It's Fia's first experience of dying to kiss a girl. No real problem we say - right? Sara is a lesbian- so why not? Well.....Sara is loyal. She has a girlfriend named Ivik.

There may be doubts of Sara & Ivik's relationship later.....

AND NO.....this is NOT a soap opera these are normal 20 year old's who happen to live in Nuuk....the Capital of Greenland.

This book might not be for everyone - but I thought it was TERRIFIC! It's FRESH...with dialogue that made me laugh - but also feel anger at the same time.

Sometimes men are a dick!

Sometimes - fucking strangers felt like the only solace -

Sometimes fucking a 'sausage' is a night of horror that makes you puke.

Sometimes - life is just awkward - embarrassing- and confusing -

Sometimes life is beautiful
Sometimes it's morning - and reality hits you in the face
Sometimes you've been unfaithful in your head.
Sometimes your FAVORITE SONG COMES ON.... 'Crimson and Clover' by Joan Jett and the Blackhearts.
Sometimes your body is struggling to survive- fighting to breathe - being smothered.
Sometimes you're scared. Your comfort zone has been fulfilled, but you don't know what to do.
Sometimes it makes one crazy being from Greenland.
Sometimes.... "life has many challenges, but love's small miracles will always win".

An extraordinary debut(my first time reading a book by an author from GREENLAND). I had fun googling the area Nuuk.

BOLD ...& HONEST are words that keep coming to me when I think of what Niviaq created. It's also scathingly funny at times. A poignant - observant rude awakening- of self- discovery. Life happens in Greenland!

Thank You Netgalley, Grove Atlantic, and Niviaq Korneliussen - I look forward to reading more novels from you.

Carolyn says

I want to commend the author for her talent and originality in writing a genre-defying book which is difficult to categorize. Nordic literature usually presents us with mystery and brutal crime. This book puts a modern urban spin on the emotions and thoughts of 5 young people during a night of drinking and partying. Told in interesting modern prose which is gritty, bold and edgy, they experience the pain of self-discovery and self-doubt and start the process of transformation into the sort of people they are meant to be.

We are shown the shame which LGBT young people may experience while coming to terms with relationships and their sexual and gender identity. Living in the small, urban centre of Nuuk (Greenland's capital; population 17,000) they feel the claustrophobia and also some homophobia inherent in a confined, isolated city where everyone knows the other inhabitants.

We share their fears, anger, depression, and their yearning for loving relationships through streams of consciousness, text messages and email. It took some time and effort to figure out whose thoughts and emotions were being shared. I wished that the various characters' streams of consciousness were more clearly identified and marked, in order to more readily know whose inner voices and thoughts I was reading. As a result, the story didn't flow smoothly for me.

Fia has left her kind boyfriend, Peter, after a three year relationship. She was becoming bored and repulsed by him. She strong feelings of desire for the beautiful Sara and feels it is love at first sight. Fia is presently staying with the bisexual Arnak who is an alcoholic, jobless, intent on partying, getting drunk and picking up either a male or female. Arnak was abused as a child, and her economic instability is common among the youth.

Sara lives with Ivik who secretly plans a gender transformation from female to male.

Inuk is Fia's younger brother he was best friends with Arnak until she outed his possible homosexual affair with a politician. Feeling betrayed, he fled to Denmark. We follow his communication with sister, Fia,

through emails and text messages.

The style of writing (stream of consciousness) allowed us to share the conflicts and struggles of the characters, but I felt a lack of connection. Perhaps this was because I was sometimes slow to grasp whose voice and inner thoughts I was experiencing. I also did not feel a strong sense of location. These young people could be situated in almost any urban area.

Unlike most familiar Nordic writing, this book is remarkable as it puts a young, modern spin on life in Nuuk, the conflicts and desires in the life of a group of young people. I wish to thank NetGalley and Grove Atlantic for the ARC in return for an honest review.

Meike says

28-year-old Greenlandic writer Niviaq Korneliussen is beating the odds: Hailing from a country with a population of around 56,000 which is still hugely influenced by the literary traditions of its former colonial power, Denmark, Korneliussen managed to cause quite a stir with her original writing that shows new paths for Greenlandic literature. Originally published in 2014, her debut novel "Last Night in Nuuk" (US) / "Crimson" (UK) (then titled "HOMO sapienne") was nominated for a Politiken literary award and the Nordic Council Literature Prize, and Sjón just recently included Korneliussen's short story "San Francisco", which features one of the book's protagonists, in his anthology of Nordic fiction, *The Dark Blue Winter Overcoat & Other Stories from the North*.

"Last Night in Nuuk" tells the story of five young Greenlanders struggling with their sexual and gender identity in modern-day Nuuk. Korneliussen masterfully moves between different perspectives as well as between time frames: The events of the title-giving night assume different meanings as the author starts to extrapolate. All of the protagonists have very distinct voices, and the text includes Greenlandic and Danish expressions that young people use (no worries, they are explained in the text). Turning away from traditional themes and tropes, the characters party, drink and have sex, they try to come to terms with their parents (who have been even more influenced by the Danish colonial rule), and they communicate with text messages and via postings on social media.

This is a fascinating book, and Korneliussen clearly has the potential to produce some first class literary fiction in the future. There is no doubt that she knows how to write relevant books full of sparkling language. We need more writers who find words like these:

"It was an honour to hold your heart, but my hands are all bloody, so you'd better take it or I'm gonna have to drop this sticky heart of yours."

Watch out for this writer.

Camille Ammoun says

Belle lecture, la traduction de ce roman trilingue est un tour de force.
