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A stereotype that deconstructs itself. Representations of Danes and Denmark in Joanna Chmielewska's crime novels

Bakgrund/Frågeställning

In 1994, Larry Wolff wrote his famous book *Inventing Eastern Europe*, where he made a point that the idea of the Iron Curtain is much older than the Curtain itself and, even after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Europe remains divided into the West (the new Occident) and the East (the new Orient). Eastern Europe, argued Wolff, is therefore perceived as a mysterious space, inaccessible maybe not physically, but also intellectually, and, at the same time, a space one did not feel obliged to examine closely, reflect over or concern oneself with too much. Modern researchers (among others S.I. Schab or A.E. Mrozewicz) have, in the past decade, analyzed how Eastern Europe is imagined, constructed and often exoticized in Scandinavian literature and film. The aim of my presentation is to try to answer a different question: how was Scandinavia "invented" in Polish prose, written at a time the Iron Curtain still physically divided Europe? In order to do so, I shall analyze three crime novels written by Joanna Chmielewska (1932–2013) and published in 1969 (*Krokodyl z Kraju Karoliny* [*The Crocodile from Caroline's Country*]), 1973 (*Lesio*) and 1974 (*Wszystko czerwone* [*All in Red*]). Chmielewska, a vastly popular Polish crime novelist, especially known for the creation of the so-called "ironic crime" sub-genre, often introduced depictions of Denmark and the country's inhabitants in her novels and used them to in order to demonstrate amusing contrasts between the Polish reality or Polish protagonists. My goal is to demonstrate that while Westerners constructed and exoticized the East, the Easterners did the very same thing to the West, only using different values and criteria in order to distinguish between "us" and "them". We should therefore perhaps start talking about "inventing Europe" or "inventing Europes" – where the West invents the East and the East invents the West, and xenostereotypes introduce and reinforce autostereotypes. And, perhaps, those stereotypes become sometimes so extreme that they are no longer sustainable and "collapse" under their own weight.

Metod och Resultat

Konklusion