Master's thesis

NTNU
Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Faculty of Humanities
Department of Art and Media Studies

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How a Turntable Breaks the Silence

Female Indigeneity in an Emerging Northern Indigenous Feminist Cinema

Master's thesis in Film Studies
Supervisor: Julia Leyda
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Abstract

The four female-helmed feature films *Sami Blood* (Kernell 2016), *Anori (*Jørgensen 2018), *The Body Remembers When the World Broke Open* (Hepburn and Tailfeathers 2019), and *Restless River* (Cousineau and Ivalu 2019) are forerunners in an emerging northern indigenous feminist fiction cinema, which this thesis seek to spotlight. Through a comparative, transnational film analysis guided by intersectionality and feminist post-colonial concepts, this thesis explores contemporary northern gender and indigeneity as articulated in these films. Thus, the text contributes to academic research on indigenous feminism, northern indigenous feature films, and the intersectionality of female indigeneity in the North as presented in contemporary cinema. Shaped as standout cinematic *joiks*/songs, the films constitute a storytelling practice that meshes indigenous oral traditions with documentarian as well as fictional cinematic conventions. This form enables them to foreground important aspects of what it means to be an indigenous woman in the North today, including how the female indigenous body is a site of physical and psychological violence, and point to the potential of multiple, more variegated, and malleable indigenous identities in the present-future.

Sammendrag

Denne masteroppgaven retter søkelyset mot en voksende bølge av nordlig, feministisk fiksjonsfilm, frontet av de fire filmene *Sameblod* (Kernell 2016), *Anori (*Jørgensen 2018), *The Body Remembers When the World Broke Open* (Hepburn og Tailfeathers 2019) og *Restless River* (Cousineau og Ivalu 2019). I en transnasjonal, komparativ filmanalyse, inspirert av interseksjonalitet og andre feministiske og post-koloniale konsepter, undersøker jeg kjønn og nordlig innfødthet slik det uttrykkes i disse filmene. Oppgaven bidrar til akademiske felter innenfor kjønns-, urfolks- og filmstudier ved å løfte fram urfolksfeminisme, nordlig urfolksfilm og representasjoner av kjønnet urfolksidentitet i samtidsfilm. Komponert som filmatiske joiker/sanger, skaper filmene en særegen stil som fletter orale urfolkstradisjoner med dokumentariske, men også fiksjonelle, vestlige filmkonvensjoner. Gjennom denne formen for narrasjon og estetikk framhever filmene hva det betyr å være kvinne og urfolk fra Nord i dag, at den kvinnelige urfolkskroppen er åsted for fysisk og psykisk vold, og hvilket potensial som finnes for mer mangfoldige og formbare urfolksidentiteter nå og i framtiden.

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To all of you who have broadened my scope and deepened my knowledge of the world of cinema, contributed to my film studies and this master thesis, or offered any kind of practical assistance along the way: Thank you!

I would particularly like to extend my appreciation towards my employer, Tromsø International Film Festival, and to its founders, volunteers, partners, filmmakers, and not least my dear colleagues that work hard to enlighten the dark season in our city above the Arctic circle with outstanding international art films. A special shout out to former festival director Martha Otte, for programming so many of them, including some of the films analyzed here, and for inspiration, insight, and sage guidance.

On one of those dark festival days of the Polar Night, I met my supervisor Professor Julia Leyda for the first time. Julia has greatly contributed to the enjoyable and academically evolving experience of writing the thesis has been. Her shared passion for the topic and the selected films, profound and broad research knowledge, and writing skills have continuously pushed me forward. The confidence she has in my academic abilities has motivated and reassured me, and raised the bar. Ilona Hongisto, co-supervisor for a semester, offered valuable contributions. So did staff and fellow students at the Department of Art and Media Studies at NTNU.

Thanks to the films and filmmakers treated in the analysis, working on this thesis has been interesting, challenging, at times frustrating, and always rewarding. I look forward to seeing what comes next for all of them.

On a personal note, my gratitude goes to my sister Marit Aure and my brother-in-law Svein Bergvik. I admire their academic achievements at UiT The Arctic University of Norway. But above all (to me) they are the most caring, practical, and sociable of people, who have supplied preferred company, sound advice, and a solid support system. To my baby girls, my constant motivation, Tilde, and Anna: Love & thanks – now let's go play!

Tromsø, May 18th, 2023.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

An unprecedented development is taking place in the world of films just now, as previously unheard voices are raising themselves: With the Sámi/Swedish film *Sami Blood* (Amanda Kernell 2016) as the front runner, audiences may be witnessing a wave of feature films directed by indigenous women from the North. In 2019, two full-length feature films from northern indigenous female filmmakers hit the screen. My first encounter with *Restless River* (Marie-Hélène Cousineau and Madeline Ivalu 2019) and *The Body Remembers When The World Broke Open* (Hepburn and Tailfeathers 2019), was at Tromsø International Film Festival in January 2020. I had followed Amanda Kernell's work from when the "prequel" short film *Stoerre Varie* (2015)[1] was in progress, through the successful journey of her feature debut *Sami Blood*. These three films, diverse and related at the same time, made strong impressions. They called on me to look for more films from northern indigenous women and to explore which stories these filmmakers foreground.

Breaking the silence

There is a striking lack of dramatic features by indigenous filmmakers. By 2015, an estimate said somewhere close to one hundred worldwide (Pearson and Knabe 2015a). The subset of northern indigenous filmmaking is young; the first Sámi feature film premiered in 1987 (*Pathfinder*, Nils Gaup), and the first Inuit film came 14 years later (*Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner*, Zacharias Kunuk and Norman Kohn 2001). There is no official register of northern indigenous films. Looking at Sámi features, there is a total of six films[2], spanning the 36 years since *Pathfinder*[3]. Sámi film is here understood as by a Sámi filmmaker, shot in Sápmi (i.e., northern parts of Finland, Norway, Russia, and Sweden), wherein Sámi language and themes play a natural part in the story. A corresponding understanding will apply for Inuit or other indigenous peoples' films treated in this text, although with some exceptions which will be noted. This definition is more specific than the most common ones, which advocate a predominantly affiliation with Sámi identity (Mecsei 2018), but for instance, will count films in non-Sámi language or with a non-Sámi director as Sámi.

Again, with the Sámi as an example, five of the six features were by male directors. *Sami Blood* is to date the only feature film by a female director. The underrepresentation of women prevails, even though there's a new generation indigenous women making films: Canada is seeing relatively high numbers of indigenous films made by women (Mayer 2015). About 70 percent of all Sámi films, i.e., shorts and documentaries, are made by female filmmakers (Mecsei 2018). These women's stories simply have not reached the big screen and feature-length fiction format yet.

[1] This short film is the prologue and epilogue to *Sami Blood*, included in the final feature film.

[2] *Pathfinder* (Nils Gaup, 1987), *Minister of State* (Paul-Anders Simma, 1997), *Bazõ* (Lars Göran Pettersson, 2003), *The Kautokeino Rebellion* (Nils Gaup, 2008), *Sami Blood* (Amanda Kernell, 2016) and *Let the River Flow* (Ole Giæver, 2023).

[3] In spring 2019 I researched public financing possibilities for feature films by Sámi female directors as part of my master's degree in film studies at NTNU. Small segments of that unpublished paper regarding the status and history of Sámi filmmaking are reframed in this thesis.

In the last seven years, however, pioneer directors have released a handful of films that can be categorized as "Twenty-first century Indigenous feminist cinema", intersecting Third Cinema, auto-ethnographic filmmaking, and feminist film" (Mayer 2015, 8). *Sami Blood* is considered a success, in terms of critical acclaim, a long festival journey, awards, and audience numbers. In 2018, *Anori* by Greenlandic Inuit writer and director Pipaluk K. Jørgensen premiered as the first ever Greenlandic feature film directed by a woman. The year after, two films directed by female filmmakers from Indigenous Canada emerged, the before-mentioned *Restless River* and *The Body Remembers When The World Broke Open*. This was Cousineau and Ivalu's third feature film, following *Before Tomorrow* (2008) and *Uvanga* (2013), which in this context are considered outliers or precursors to the chosen films. The absence of fictional stories told through film contributes to the silence that characterizes female indigeneity in the North. Colonialism has obscured indigenous peoples' expressions of history and identity, particularly that of women, (e.g. Vanstone 2015; Lawrence 2003; Pirie 2015; Blackmore 2015; L.T. Smith 2012), to the extent that the most common form of racism towards this group is invisibility (Langton 1993). Linda Tuhiwai Smith argues that the silence is further amplified in the aftermath of traumatic events (2012, 147).

Since the storytellers, in this case, depict female characters and gendered violence and sexism, but also relations to family and home, motherhood, child-rearing, and the passing on of language, traditions, and culture, the analysis will highlight women's concerns and rights. There is a pressing need to address these matters, which tend to be ignored, postponed, or even forbidden by the majority as well as within the minority, compelling women to simultaneously fight against intra-group and in-group oppression (Kuokkanen 2015) and multiple layers of silence: While indigenous peoples have been silenced by the colonizers, indigenous cultures can also be characterized by silence, especially towards social problems and in suppressing women's voices (Kuokkanen 2015). Current indigenous filmmakers demonstrate a will to challenge the legacy of silence, as well as of violence (Blackmore 2015). This text argues that the northern indigenous female filmmakers it centers on have done just that: Through these films, Inuit, Sámi, and First Nation women speak up for themselves to a global audience.

Research question and aim of the thesis

This thesis will analyze *Sami Blood, Restless River, The Body Remembers When The World Broke Open,* and *Anori*, all feature films directed by indigenous women with indigenous women as lead characters. At the outset, I am interested in the kind of stories the films present, whose point of view they assume, what are these characters' challenges and how they approach them. The analysis will emphasize how four recent feature films by northern indigenous female directors portray, thematically, aesthetically, and by characterization, their indigenous women lead characters. The readings will raise other questions, like how the films deal with racism and whiteness, colonialism, urbanization, social change, and modern media technology. The films describe the variegated ways these concepts continue to influence female indigeneity, while all the time projecting the impact of the colonial past-present and ongoing decolonizing processes through the storylines and mise-en-scènes. Thus, to form a research question, this thesis will analyze how gender and indigeneity in the North are represented on the big screen when indigenous women are doing the storytelling.

Viewing academic texts also as statements (Rommetveit and With 2008) the ambition is to turn the spotlight to contemporary indigenous cinematic storytelling from the North, particularly female indigenous filmmakers' messages and their artistic expression. Primarily, the thesis contributes to film studies, specifically to the research on indigenous feminist films, northern indigenous films, and representations of female indigeneity in the North. As the overview of existing literature will demonstrate, there is a research lacuna regarding the intersection of northern indigeneity and feminism in film, which this thesis will address and seek to lessen. Moreover, the analysis, inspired by feminist and indigenous theorizations, will aim to add to these academic fields extending the influence of feminism on indigenous studies and vice versa.

Having introduced the project, including the main research question and the purpose of the thesis, the chapter will now map out the geography and demographics of the Indigenous North. The main section of the chapter will describe the methodological and theoretical basis of scholarship, from different regions of the world and academic fields, that the arguments of this analysis will build on and extend. An overview of the existing literature on the topic will be followed by positioning myself as a researcher in this field. Then a discussion of the film selection will follow. The aim of such a comprehensive approach to the introduction is to make more room for discussion in the body chapters of the thesis. But first, I will define what I intend with Indigenous Arctic or North, where the four films are set.

What, where and whose is the Indigenous North?

In accordance with the perception of the Arctic conveyed by leading film scholars on the matter (MacKenzie and Stenport 2015b; Kaganovsky, MacKenzie, and Stenport 2019b; Hart 2021), this thesis views the North as heterogenous and transnational in terms of nation-states, peoples, languages and cultures. The Arctic/North challenges cartographical, geopolitical, and climatological definitions[4], adhering more to discursive understandings. As such, the Arctic is often portrayed as desolate, majestic, and hostile, with (indigenous) inhabitants that are frozen in tradition and time (e.g. Rony 1996; Fienup-Riordan 2015; Kaganovsky, MacKenzie, and Stenport 2019b; MacKenzie and Stenport 2015b; Pearson and Knabe 2015b). This imagery is increasingly challenged, giving room to modernity that confronts and coexists with tradition. Thus, the Arctic becomes diverse, even divergent. It is not one place, but rather many "which span enormous areas and several countries" (Bjerknes 2021, 13). Neither is it isolated or discursively remote, but rather "a profound part of a global system of representational interchange" (MacKenzie and Stenport 2015b, 3).

[4] I.e., 66+ degrees North, the eight nation-states with full membership in the Arctic Council: Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the USA, or any location in northern latitudes where the average daily summer temperature does not exceed 10 degrees Celsius (50 degrees Fahrenheit).

Figure 1: Map of indigenous peoples of the Arctic by language families (Arctic Council and UiT 2019)

The Indigenous Arctic is made up of territories that have been, and mostly still are, colonized either by their inclusion in the colonizing states[5] or through structures that remain in place despite decolonizing efforts (Knobblock and Kuokkanen 2015; Kuokkanen 2015, 2006a; Olsen 2016a). Indigenous Arctic refers in this context to areas and peoples where the common denominators are that they are indigenous[6] situated within the Arctic region. Estimations are that 10 percent of the population in the Arctic are indigenous, from more than forty distinct groups (Figure 1)[7]. Alaskan Natives, Sámi, Inuit, and Samoyedic peoples (Russia) are the largest populations – each comprising more specifically named peoples. The Arctic is however not a neutral term nor one that its inhabitants use commonly. Sámi, for instance, refers to their land as Sápmi, a territory that includes parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. Sápmi, according to pioneer Sámi scholar Alf Isak Keskitalo, is "the general concrete and abstract concept referring to our people, land, and spirit - in our own language" (1976). "Inuit" often refers to

[5] The Sámi lived in Sápmi long before the creation of the nation-states in the same area, Greenland is a constituent country in the Kingdom of Denmark, while Inuit in the North American continent are part of Aboriginal peoples that live within the borders of the state of Canada.

[6] For a discussion of the term «indigenous», see the theory section.

[7] See Arctic Center of University of Lapland, Finland, https://www.arcticcentre.org/EN/arcticregion/Arctic-Indigenous-Peoples (retrieved June 27th 2020).

indigenous peoples in northern Alaska, Canada, Greenland, and Siberia, connected by a common language and "relational world-view, spirituality, and cultural traditions" (Montgomery-Andersen 2021, 83) even though this use of the term Inuit conceals the fact that Alaska is the homeland for Inupiaq, Yupik, Alutiiq and many other peoples (Fienup-Riordan 2015). This brief discussion has shown, as will the selection and analysis of the films in this thesis, that transnationality and hybridity challenge and complicate geographical or cartographical definitions of the Arctic, or even the North. One can also argue that the idea of mapping indigenous land is colonial in itself, without (positive) worth to indigenous peoples (L.T. Smith 2012), that "the Arctic" is an outsider construction (Körber, MacKenzie, and Stenport 2017) or that positioning Arctic cinema as a "region" maintains a national narrative which is again to marginalize its inhabitants (MacKenzie and Stenport 2015b). Furthermore, while variegated and contested, "the Arctic" connotates more fixed boundaries, while "the North" remains more flexible as a category: In this context, the North comprises yet reaches beyond the Arctic borders. Northern refer, in this thesis, to Canadian and Greenlandic Inuit, Sámi in Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia, but also Kainai, Blackfoot, and Kwakwaka'wakw First Nation peoples of Canada as portrayed in *The Body*. The Indigenous North is a multifaceted, multinational, divergent discourse connected to land, people, spirit, and language across an extensive area.

Existing literature and research lacuna

Scholarship on contemporary, northern indigenous cinema remains sparse (MacKenzie and Stenport 2015a; Kääpä 2015; Sand 2022), and research on films by indigenous women is underrepresented (Mayer 2015; MacKenzie and Stenport 2016b). Hence, when examining feature films by northern female directors, there is a lacuna that limited filmography can only partly explain. Looking at the directors and films selected in this thesis, there are a couple of articles or book chapters regarding Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers' earlier shorts and documentaries, and *Before Tomorrow* by Cousineau and Ivalu, (Kendall 2018; Morton and Sirove 2015; Bertrand 2013; Chisholm 2016; MacKenzie and Stenport 2016b; Mayer 2015). Torjer A. Olsen (2018) employs *Sami Blood* as a case study when arguing in favor of an intersectional feminist approach to indigenous studies (see methodology section). Kernell's film has also been discussed in the academic field of education (Kokkola, Palo, and Manderstedt 2019). In an article on racism in *Sami Blood*, Stine Sand argues that the film contributes to contemporary reconciliation processes by offering a Sámi perspective on the colonial past, and racist practices (2022).

Among prominent works on indigenous film in general are Corinn Columpar's *Unsettling Sights: The Fourth World on Film* (2010), Wendy Gay Pearson and Susan Knabe's anthology *Reverse Shots: Indigenous Film and Media in an International Context* (2015b), and Ella Shohat and Robert Stam's *Unthinking Eurocentrism* (2014). Writing from an Australian aboriginal position, Marcia Langton has central contributions (1994, 1998, 1993). Columpar's book includes an analysis of *Atanarjuat* and briefly mentions *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen* (Norman Cohn and Zacharias Kunuk, 2006) and *Before Tomorrow* in its afterword. In *Reverse Shots*, Erin Morton and Tanya Sirove discuss the female, Canadian Inuit filmmaking collective Arnait from a production studies perspective. Cousineau and Ivalu, who directed one of the films examined in this thesis, co-founded Arnait. *Reverse Shots* includes chapters by Kerstin Knopf and Wendy Gay Pearson respectively, on *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen*, and a comparative analysis of *Atanarjuat*, *Pathfinder,* and the Maori *Ten Canoes*, thus highlighting a transnational (and

in part northern) indigenous, yet male filmmaking. More attention is paid to *Atanarjuat* and other works by northern male indigenous filmmakers (Bohr 2015; Bredin 2015; Mecsei 2015; Knopf 2015; Ginsburg 2003; Raheja 2010; Pearson 2015; Raheja 2007; Siebert 2006; Kääpä 2015). A handful of female indigenous filmmakers, worldwide, have observed academic interest, notably aboriginal Tracey Moffatt, and First Nations filmmakers Loretta Todd, Alanis Obomsawin, and Shelley Niro (see for example Vanstone (2015); Pirie (2015); Knabe (2015), all chapters of *Reverse Shots*). As for the Arctic region, works by Liselotte Wajstedt (Fish 2017, 2018a, 2018b, 2021; MacKenzie and Stenport 2016b; Mecsei 2019; Moffat 2018), and Alethea Arnaquq-Baril (Burelle 2020; Wolfe 2019; Vanstone and Winston 2019) stand out when it comes to academic attention. All the above filmmakers have mainly worked with documentary, short and experimental films.

Three titles are of particular interest when exploring the cinema of the Arctic. First, Anna Westerståhl Stenport and Scott MacKenzie's extensive and influential scholarships on films from the Arctic region include the anthology *Films on Ice. Cinemas of the Arctic* (MacKenzie and Stenport 2015b). Here, they coin the rubric "Arctic Cinema", in which they place historical and contemporary films, made in and about the Arctic, by "insiders" or "outsiders", and in all kinds of genres and film traditions (see also theoretical concepts). With Lilya Kaganovsky, MacKenzie and Stenport co-edited *Arctic Cinemas and the Documentary Ethos* (2019b), which delivers an exhaustive overview from *Nanook of the North* (Robert J. Flaherty, 1922) via *The Inconvenient Truth* (Davis Guggenheim, 2006) to the Isuma and Arnait collectives in Nunavut, Canada. The collection pays attention to feminist and indigenous films that counter the dominant patriarchal, heteronormative, and white colonial imagery of Arctic documentary cinema. The editors aim to demonstrate the centrality of Arctic documentary to the history and theory of documentarian cinema while examining the ethos – beliefs, values, and ideologies – pertaining to northern documentaries. The third title, *Arctic Cinemas: Essays on Polar Spaces and the Popular Imagination* (Hart 2021), conveys more recent contributions, including indigenous perspectives, as well as discussions of feminist ecocriticism, masculinity, and queerness. As edited collections, these volumes assume a comprehensive scope ranging from the silent era, exploration films, and ethnographic documentaries, via Hollywood productions to contemporary Arctic indigenous filmmaking, and gain from different authors' variegated areas of expertise. Contrary, this thesis requires a restricted inquiry and tight grouping of films, which also allows more focus on northern, female indigenous filmmakers.

Female indigeneity is not a main concern of either of these volumes, yet all offer interesting insights to the analysis of gender and indigenous identity as articulated in the films in this thesis. Although the focus here is on feature films, discussions of documentaries are relevant to representations of northern indigeneity in fiction: Following the above-mentioned scholars, this thesis will argue that documentaries exert an important influence on fiction films, especially regarding northern indigenous peoples. Hence, literature on the documentary genre in and about the Indigenous North and specific works by northern female indigenous filmmakers is valuable. As MacKenzie and Stenport argue, accounts of the Arctic and the ensuing scholarship are often framed within a nationality that marginalizes films that are characterized by a profound transnationality. The three highlighted books foreground their transnational approach as collections. However, each chapter and analysis focus on films from the same nation-state or indigenous nation separately. The transnationality of northern films thus remains

understudied. To summarize, existing scholarship place emphasis on the history of cinema about or in the Arctic, documentaries, and films made by non-indigenous male filmmakers, separated by nation. This project centers on four contemporary features by and about indigenous women of the North in a comparative, transnational analysis.

Methodological approaches

Feminist post-colonial film analysis

The research question will be investigated through qualitative analysis of the four films, placing this thesis in an established methodological film studies tradition. Film analysis is an idiographic, systematic, thorough interpretation, making use of existing academic theories and research to deepen our understanding of (certain aspects) of a film (Bakøy 2008; Østbye et al. 2013). The close-readings will lean on feminist and post-colonial film analytical traditions (McDonald 2016; Bakøy and Moseng 2008; Stam 2000), and on a basis of intersectionality (Lykke 2014; Olsen 2018; Gullikstad, Flemmen, and Berg 2010). The analysis is interdisciplinary: The films are "sites where multiple bodies of knowledge intersect" (Columpar 2002, 25), as the presentation of relevant theoretical concepts will confirm. For a more detailed description of the steps involved in the process of film analysis, to which this work mostly adhere, see Bakøy and Moseng (2008), Østbye et al. (2013), and Rose (2016). Traces of cognitive (Buckland 2009; Stam 2000; Bordwell 1985, 2008) or narrative (Engelstad and Lothe 2008), thematic (Rommetveit and With 2008), stylistic or aesthetical (Bordwell, Thompson, and Smith 2017; Birkvad 2008), and other subcategories of film analysis will also be visible in the text.

The analysis is comparative and transnational. It will examine the research objects separately, although sometimes juxtapose them to look for common traits regarding gender and indigeneity. The films are expressively transnational, involving characters, locations, actors, companies, funding entities, etc. from multiple indigenous and non-indigenous nations. Other transnational aspects of the analysis have to do with how indigenous peoples like the Sámi and Inuit transcend the geopolitical borders of nation-states, and that there are similarities between different northern indigenous peoples. For one, they all share a colonial past-present. There is a proximity between procedure and theory in text analysis (Østbye et al. 2013, 62). Thus, positions from feminist, post-colonial, decolonial, and indigenous studies will inspire the methodological and theoretical approaches to the analysis. Intersectionality is one such position. Introducing this concept in the methodology section serves to pinnacle the fact that «gender» cannot be separated from other terms of identity and other power relationships.

The intersectionality of female indigeneity

As we will see as soon as we go into the films, the way gender and indigeneity overlap, complement, and enhance each other are crucial to understanding the lead characters. The representations of gendered indigeneity intersect with yet other categories, such as race, class, age, religion, and nation, to name the most important. Thus, intersectionality is a relevant concept as a methodological basis and theoretical framework for this analysis. Intersectionality looks at the above-mentioned categories, and more, as parts of a matrix (Collins 1990; Olsen 2018) of intersecting and interacting terms of identity. This approach is concerned with the mechanisms and correlations that come into play when "people belonging to certain coincident categories did not have the same rights,

protection, and privileges as others" (Berg, Flemmen, and Gullikstad 2010, 4). The classic metaphor, employed when Kimberlé Crenshaw originally coined the concept, is that of the intersection where gender crosses Racism Street, Colonialism Avenue, and Patriarchy Road (1989). From an indigenous studies position, Olsen adds that «indigeneity also meets/crosses Modernization Boulevard, Privilege Alley, Religion Road, and Rue du Langue» (2018, 186). Indigenous feminism further investigates how colonialism, race, whiteness, sexual orientation, patriarchy, nation, and even economic globalization impact present gender relations, social realities, and racialization experienced by indigenous women (Dankertsen 2019; Knobblock and Kuokkanen 2015; Kuokkanen 2008). Building on Anne-Jorunn Berg et al (2010) and Olsen (2018), intersectionality is useful to this thesis in at least three ways: In exploring how relations of difference between the flexible categories «woman» and «indigenous» may lead to multiple marginalizations. Secondly, to challenge the priority that feminist (film) studies may otherwise give to gender relations, just like indigenous studies might do with indigeneity. Third and last; intersectionality highlights differences within a group as well as between groups, thus revealing the complexity of identity construction and power relations and challenging the simplistic "us" versus "them" categories.

There are calls for a more frequent implementation of intersectional approaches in academic research from feminist, post-colonial, and indigenous angles. Intersectionality is especially valuable concerning transnational analyses (Stam 2019), feminist indigenous issues and identity constructions (Kuokkanen 2015, 2008, 2012; see also Olsen 2018; Olsen 2016a) and counter-cinemas (Columpar 2002, 33), the complex and contradictory nature of sexual assaults in general (Projansky 2001; Benson-Allott 2020) and violence against indigenous women in particular (Kuokkanen 2008, 218). This thesis ventures to answer these calls. Other thinkers within indigenous and/or film studies may be concerned with intersecting forms of oppression, while not categorizing the framework as "intersectionality" or exploring them further (e.g. as referenced in this thesis, Mecsei 2015; Pearson and Knabe 2015a; MacKenzie and Stenport 2016b; Dankertsen 2019, 2020; L.T. Smith 2012; Pirie 2015; Knabe 2015). Indigenous culture is increasingly understood as relational and interconnected, linked to traditional holism as well as the modern term intersectionality (Olsen 2018). Indigenous (feminist) filmmaking should be studied accordingly: Through a holistic and interdisciplinary approach (Shohat and Stam 2014, 250; Kendall 2018) that may build resistance against "simplistic conflations and representations of fixed identities" (Knabe 2015, 84). Critics may claim that intersectionality is a Western notion. The affinity with indigenous interconnectedness, argues Olsen, is activated only if intersectionality implies a power-critical program wherein "indigenous perspectives and voices are starting points and points of reference" (2018, 190). In such instances, intersectionality becomes a way of describing the nature of indigenous identity.

Researching the margins from outside

Intersectionality and indigenous studies are both about looking from the margins (Olsen 2018). In humanities, the margin is a metaphor for «understanding social inequality, oppression, disadvantage, and power» applied in theorizing marginalization and resistance (L.T. Smith 2012, 204; see also Shohat and Stam 2014). To choose the margins is to research issues about marginalized and vulnerable people in order to produce «research knowledge that documents social injustice, that recovers subjugated knowledge, that helps create spaces for the voices of the silenced […], and that

challenges racism, colonialism, and oppression» (L.T. Smith 2012, 198). The notion of the margin is linked to the concept of insider-outsider. Yet a researcher within an indigenous studies context can choose the margins without being an insider to the research subject, albeit needing to clarify their intentions as to the politics and strategic goals (L.T. Smith 2012).[8] As a non-indigenous white settler woman living in Tromsø/Romssa (the municipality with the largest Sámi population in Norway and an official Sámi language policy), and collaborating with Sámi filmmakers, institutions, and audiences through my work in Tromsø International Film Festival, I sympathize with indigenous struggles of decolonization and self-determination. I recognize the history of excluding indigenous peoples from the end credits of research as well as films, albeit being subjects of and active participants in the process. Acknowledging my shortcomings facing specific indigenous notions (such as *joik*), and the risk of misguided focus and interpretations stemming from the outsider position[9] (L.T. Smith 2012; Berg-Nordlie, Dankertsen, and Winsvold 2022b; Gaski 1999), I commit to looking from the margins while analyzing these films.

Theoretical concepts

Northern indigeneity has been represented in film since the birth of cinema, as a subject of visual exploration and a sort of commemoration (Pearson and Knabe 2015a). The rich history of ethnographic accounts, polar expedition films, early documentaries, and melodramatic features that dominate early Arctic cinema from the 1890s and onwards (MacKenzie and Stenport 2015a), is evidence thereof. Indigenous filmmaking today is still linked to this historical imagery, in complex and often complicated ways. Framing this thesis within relevant theoretical concepts thus starts here, at the beginning of the relationship between northern indigenous peoples and cinema. Considering the history of representations of northern indigeneity in film, and the example of *Nanook*, is necessary to examine how the past impacts the present in/through the contemporary films discussed in this thesis. That discussion connects to central notions drawing on post-colonial and decolonial theories, and indigenous studies, which I will present. These include race and whiteness, indigenous identity and authenticity, counterstories, representational sovereignty, and cinematic memory work. An exposition on the male, ethnographic and colonial gaze bridges over to a reflection on indigenous feminism and introduction of certain feminist perspectives that are prominent in the analysis. The section then moves on to conceptualize contemporary northern indigenous filmmaking and show how it is marked by transnationality and interconnectedness (introduced in the methodology section), the echo of doc ethos, and a specific northern, indigenous, feminist storytelling and aesthetics. Concepts that work as main pillars of the foundation of the analysis, sustaining central arguments that run throughout the thesis, will be prioritized, while smaller but still important bricks in the basis will be mentioned but not necessarily elaborated. Yet other theoretical perspectives and valuable research contributions, mostly related to specific images in a more limited manner, may appear during the discussion. In the latter category is the gramophone pattern, traced back to *Nanook*, the links between a past-present female northern indigeneity and topics like family, motherhood, child-rearing, and educational systems, as well as *joik*, throat games/singing, and other musical tropes.

[8] For elaborations on insider/outsider debates, see Olsen (2016b), Smith (2012) and Bjerknes (2021).
[9] Other risks pertain to insider researchers, equally stressed in the literature (e.g. L.T. Smith 2012; Berg-Nordlie, Dankertsen, and Winsvold 2022b).

Past and present: History of representation

The stereotypical portrayals of indigeneity in film are well documented. Regarding the Sámi in Norway, for instance, Sand (2015) argues that there's a dominant discourse that reinforces well-known stereotypes of the north and of the Sámi people, thus reproducing ethnicization, othering, and conflict. Film has, MacKenzie and Stenport (2015b, 2019) argue, been central to the very definition and defining processes of the Arctic. Pictures of the cold, vast, white, and seemingly hostile landscapes dominated the screen, and ancient traditions and lifestyles were depicted, sometimes staged, without necessarily being accurate. The native peoples of the Arctic were exoticized and othered as villains, mystical or noble savages, in either demonizing or romanticizing representations (Kääpä 2015; Mecsei 2015), culturally less developed, and intellectually inferior to the colonizers. Films of the North elided diversity and presented frozen images of nature, but also culture and people. Arctic cinematic conventions, like the exotic other, the polar explorer (white, male, polar heroism), and "voice-of-God"-narration, were established (MacKenzie and Stenport 2015a). Although shifting from depicting conquest and preservation to portraying the North and its inhabitants as endangered, volatile, and in need of protection, the outsider perspective persisted (MacKenzie and Stenport 2015a). So has the frozen visualization, in contrast to the diverse and ever-changing reality, of the Arctic region (Pearson and Knabe 2015b; MacKenzie and Stenport 2015b; Kaganovsky, MacKenzie, and Stenport 2019b).

The single most well-known film to exemplify the above is the iconic *Nanook of the North*. Largely seen as the world's first documentary, Flaherty used acting and re-creation to depict a culture for preservation. Less recognized, perhaps, is how the Inuit contributed to *Nanook*, as actors, film workers, and advisors, illustrating the influence of indigenous peoples on early non-indigenous filmmakers, particularly regarding collaborative processes, resistance, and indigenous agency (Knopf 2015; Raheja 2007; Ginsburg 2003; Pearson and Knabe 2015a). *Nanook* is the urtext upon which all images of Eskimos as well as films made in and about the Arctic in general build, (Kaganovsky, MacKenzie, and Stenport 2019a; Fienup-Riordan 2015). Moreover, it remains the touchstone of all films within, as well as academic works on the documentary genre (Ginsburg 2003; Kaganovsky, MacKenzie, and Stenport 2019a; MacKenzie and Stenport 2015a). Acknowledging that *Nanook*, in an equally established manner, is understood in terms like "fake documentary", "re-enactment", "hybrid", "ethno-fiction", "semi-ethnographic" or plain fiction in its misrepresentations of Inuit, (e.g. Rony 1996; Fienup-Riordan 2015; Kaganovsky, MacKenzie, and Stenport 2019a; MacKenzie and Stenport 2015a; Pearson and Knabe 2015a; Chisholm 2016), I will still refer to *Nanook* as a documentary. The diverse descriptions of the cinematic nature of *Nanook* testify to the film's (and the documentarian field's) relevance for several topics in this thesis: The iconography and stereotypical misrepresentations of northern indigeneity, the centrality, and complexity of authenticity in regard to indigenous identity and representational sovereignty, the conflicted relationship between indigenous peoples and ethnography, anthropology, and research in general, and *Nanook*'s/documentaries' influence on northern indigenous storytelling and aesthetics. Specifically, Flaherty introduces a gramophone, an apparatus of media technology that changed society, to the Inuit in his famous film. This thesis takes that scene as a cue to discuss encounters with white settlers and modernization, in particular indigenous peoples' relationship to media technology. Such a discussion encompasses several sub-topics, like how technology both advances and limits indigenous film (Pearson and Knabe 2015a) and how northern

indigenous (Inuit) women in particular have appropriated modern media technology (MacKenzie and Stenport 2016a).

Based on the above, I will argue that we should not interpret contemporary films based on events in a pre-colonial or colonializing era, like *Sami Blood* and *Restless River,* as solely historical. Vice versa, indigenous films depicting present days lives, like *The Body Remembers When the World Broke Open* and *Anori,* may need to be analyzed in relation to the past to be fully understood. The notions of past and present should be considered from an indigenous point of view, within a relational framework, and as dynamic, scalar categories. The next sections will address the concepts of colonialism, decolonization, counterstories, visual sovereignty, and cinematic memory work.

Films as decolonizing counterstories

The four films in this analysis all deal with the past and how it affects the present. One hypothesis is that the selected films are counterstories to the dominating imagery of female, northern indigeneity, exercising representational sovereignty and memory work in their efforts to indigenize popular media representations and contributing to ongoing decolonizing processes. The objective of this section is to define key terms and provide a theoretical basis for the analysis of how the films articulate such ideas.

One particularly important part of the past that continues to impact the present for northern indigenous peoples, is colonialism. "[C]olonialism is but one expression of imperialism", while imperialism encompasses Western/European economic expansion, subjugation of 'others', dissemination of ideology, and discourse (L.T. Smith 2012, 22). In the selected films, colonialism is encountered on many levels (Olsen 2018). Classic colonialism, the occupation of territories with the objective to exploit the colonies' resources, may be described as an event. Settler colonialism, on the other hand, is mainly about structures that seek to destroy the colonized, as part of obtaining and remaining in control of land (Berg-Nordlie, Dankertsen, and Winsvold 2022b). The latter could be attained through variations of genocide, physical, discursive, linguistic, etc., "through erasure of their culture, language, institutions, policies, knowledge, religion, ontology, and even history" (2022b, 9). This thesis understands colonialism – even in this so-called post-colonial era – in terms of a past-present. It builds on post-colonial and indigenous studies that foreground the ongoing effects of colonialism and still present colonial structures, ideas, and practices. Such scholars often prefer to talk about decolonization (e.g. Shohat and Stam 2014; Olsen 2018; L.T. Smith 2012; Blackmore 2015; Bjerknes 2021). While some indigenous scholars may completely discard the academic post-colonial field (L.T. Smith 2012, 14), this thesis concurs with those who, like Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Rauna Kuokkanen, recognize that "the importance of 'postcolonial' lies in its critical analysis and deconstruction of colonial discourses, practices, and relations of power. Hence, it does not suggest that colonialism belongs to the past" (Kuokkanen 2006b, 3). To decolonize is to deconstruct and reshape our (colonial) understanding of indigenous identity (Lawrence 2003). It is also a possible way out of colonialism, "a long-term process involving the bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic and psychological divesting of colonial power" (L.T. Smith 2012, 101). Linking the past and the present can thus be a decolonizing device, just as storytelling can be a player in the decolonization process (Vanstone 2015; L.T. Smith 2012).

Examples of northern indigenous decolonizing films are *Pathfinder*, *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner*, and *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen* (Pearson 2015; Knopf 2015). These films, as a growing number of Fourth Cinema productions all over the world, may be viewed as counterstories; opposing to the stories told up until then. Counterstories epitomize the enunciation of subjecthood and the talking back by indigenous filmmakers, who then, in Meghan Pirie's view, become warriors who fight for territories, and dignity and bring layers of cultural memory to life (Pirie 2015; Knabe 2015). Ernie Blackmore and Susan Knabe are among the scholars who share similar ideas, of counter-narratives as storytelling by indigenous filmmakers that disrupt conventional categories and confining stereotypes and negotiate the ways their stories are rendered invisible (Blackmore 2015; Knabe 2015; Langton 1994, 1993). Counterstories, self-representation, and agency may empower indigenous peoples, work as an anti-colonialist deconstruction of existing discourses and redefine indigeneity (Blackmore 2015). Counterstories are about revisioning, re-presenting, reclaiming, and retelling. And about resistance. As such, they are also political storytelling or acts (Vanstone 2015; Pirie 2015). Visual sovereignty, as coined by Michelle Raheja (2007, 2010), is to assert control over images of indigeneity. It refers to the multiple means indigenous filmmakers employ to challenge conventionalized norms of domination through image language and acts of controlling the camera (Kääpä 2015; Moffat 2018; Mayer 2015). In an Arctic context, this is exemplified by *Pathfinder* and *Atanarjuat* (Pearson 2015, 168). Visual sovereignty "confronts the spectator with the history of caricaturing and assumptions involved in representations of the other whilst also centralizing the involvement and complicity of Inuit and Sámi» (Kääpä 2015, 50). Building on Raheja, Pamela Wilson (2016, cited in Moffat 2018), suggests an expansion of the concept to encompass elements beyond visuality, specified as "representational sovereignty". In the context of this thesis, representational sovereignty points to narrative structure, temporality, and auditive aspects like the *joik*. To assert indigenous control of the camera is to reverse the shot (Pearson and Knabe 2015b). Turning the lens around this way means a total shift of perspective so that the placement of the "self" and the "other" is also reversed (Knopf 2015).

Screen memories and memory work

This thesis addresses how the indigenous filmmakers of four recent feature films reclaim aspects of indigenous culture and perform memory work, either pertaining to native peoples or shared with white settlers such as colonial history (Ginsburg 2003; Bredin 2015; Sand 2022; Bohr 2015; MacKenzie and Stenport 2016b, 2019). Whether in outspoken or more obscure manners, all four films create and mediate what Faye D. Ginsburg calls "screen memories". The term refers to how indigenous peoples use media technology to «recuperate their collective stories and histories – some of them traumatic» (2003, 40). These memories are important building blocks in indigenizing media and may be pre-colonial such as the ancient legend retold in *Anori*, from colonizing times such as *Sami Blood* and *Restless River,* or "post-colonial". Retelling these stories and histories means reshaping them. The cultural memory is still there, yet re-signified. Screen memories are related to repercussions of colonial structures in that they oppose the erasure of the very same stories and histories executed by the dominant culture and "to 'talk back' to structures of power and state that have denied their rights, subjectivity, and citizenship for over two hundred years" (2003, 51). Screen memories are thus a means to connect to earlier generations, also when reminiscing historical and intergenerational trauma – concepts that the concluding chapter will elaborate. The remembering of indigenous peoples, argues Smith (2012), relates to a corporeal

connection and reaction to a painful past, in the sense that «re-membering» re-connects bodies with place and experience. Cree poet-scholar Billy-Ray Belcourt expresses the painful embodiment of remembering in his essay *The Body Remembers When the World Broke Open*, giving name to the film by Tailfeathers and Hepburn. He says that "memory stalks the present, turning bodies into faulty containers for affect such that life becomes a catch-22 where ongoingness taxes" (2017, n.p.). The collective memory is moreover often destroyed and requires arduous work to be restored, since «communities were systematically ripped apart, children were removed for adoption, and extended families separated across different reserves and national boundaries. In these experiences, the obliteration of memory was a deliberate strategy of oppression» (L.T. Smith 2012, 147). Obliteration, unconsciously or consciously, was also a means of survival, although sometimes obtained through substance abuse or acts of violence and self-destruction requiring healing and transformation to follow memory work (L.T. Smith 2012). Counterstories, visual and representational sovereignty, screen memories, and other forms of cinematic and corporeal memory work are distinct yet interrelated terms that, separately and combined, conceptualize contemporary indigenous cinemas, including the films analyzed in this thesis, participation in current decolonizing efforts.

Whiteness, race, and racism

One result of colonialism, according to Pearson and Knabe, is the creation of "non-Indigenous people inside Indigenous skin" (2015a, 4). Their statement points to two different discourses which the selected films also speak to; internalization and whiteness. Internalization, or colonization of the mind, has been and still is an effect of Eurocentrism and of colonization and its inherent assimilation and deculturalization policies. Research as well as the films in this thesis document how stereotypes, inferiority, and even violence, often based on the patriarchal, sexist, and/or racist Western gaze, are internalized by northern indigenous women, men, and institutions (e.g. Sand 2015, 2022; Olsen 2018; Kuokkanen 2015, 2000, 2006a, 2006b, 2012, 2003; Stam 2019; Mecsei 2015, 2019; L.T. Smith 2012; Berg-Nordlie, Dankertsen, and Winsvold 2022b; Lawrence 2003). The assumption of supremacy of the non-indigenous over the indigenous can be debated based on a discourse of whiteness. Whiteness, according to Shohat and Stam, is to «veil» as white patriarchal through a falsely universal language, hence normalizing the power of white masculinity (2014, 220). The hegemonic normativity of whiteness may be silent and invisible (Stam 2019, 115). Columpar describes how the established iconography of race posited an insuperable difference between white and non-white, wherein whiteness became synonymous with modernity, progress, and civilization, while non-white was primitive and inferior. Whiteness then legitimized imperialist expansion, enslavement, and a whole range of politically and personally invasive acts (Columpar 2002, 34-37). The racial taxonomy that is quite literally played out in *Sami Blood* demonstrates how race as corporeality was adopted by science and turned into a hierarchy of whiteness (Berg-Nordlie, Dankertsen, and Winsvold 2022b; Columpar 2002; Dankertsen 2019; Dankertsen and Kristiansen 2021). The scene is also an example of racist dehumanization, (Columpar 2002, 2010; Shohat and Stam 2014; Sand 2022; L.T. Smith 2012). Anthropology, whiteness, and colonialism are thoroughly implicated in each other (Columpar 2002). Furthermore, as biological racism, anthropology, and colonialism were grounded in visuality and the scopic regime of race and whiteness, «cinema was complicit in these regimes from […] its birth» (Columpar 2002, 34; see also Shohat and Stam 2014). While often adopting the habit of making whiteness visible, indigenous films may reveal the "normalizing and

hierarchizing" privilege of white people to assume that race is endemic only to non-white (Pearson and Knabe 2015a, 23). These aspects are relevant to the indigenous relationship with science and anthropology, looking relations, and gendered violence. The construction and deconstruction of indigenous and non-indigenous identities and the powerplays between different characters in the films in this thesis, even between indigenous characters such as strangers Rosie and Áila in *The Body* or sisters Elle-Marja and Njenna in *Sami Blood*, also activate the hierarchy of whiteness.

The negotiations of whiteness and indigeneity in the films here analyzed rely on a premise pointed out by Olsen: "Whiteness or non-whiteness, indigeneity, or non-indigeneity, and even men and women, are not binaries. There are spaces in between" (2018, 194). Such in-between spaces create a particular and persistent discourse of whiteness in connection to Sáminess (Gaski 1993; Kuokkanen 2003, 2006a; Dankertsen 2019; Dankertsen and Kristiansen 2021; Berg-Nordlie, Dankertsen, and Winsvold 2022b; Sand 2022). The Sámi example accentuates the relativity of whiteness, prompting Sámi scholar Harald Gaski to dub Sámi "the white Indians of Scandinavia" (1993). Sámi peoples may be judged non-white when juxtaposed to the dominant Nordic or Russian populations, but white when assessed from a North American aboriginal stand. Assimilation to the dominant culture, and inclusion in the system of general welfare, may have further re-coded Sámi as white in the eyes of others. On the other hand, racialization and racism prevail also regarding Sámi, although often silenced or disguised. The next paragraphs will tap into the notion «indigenous».

Identity, indigeneity, and authenticity

Indigenous peoples resist one, fixed definition (Kuokkanen 2000). However, the often cited ILO (International Labor Organization) Convention 169 "On Indigenous and Tribal Peoples" declare peoples as «indigenous» if they self-define as such, and if they, «after settling in their current homeland, were subjugated by a state dominated by another ethnos, that incorporated their lands and population» (Berg-Nordlie, Dankertsen, and Winsvold 2022b, 5). There is thus a historical implication coherent in indigeneity. Specifically, «indigenous» is framed by colonialism, both on an official, general level as in the ILO definition, and on a more personal, individual level: «Being Indigenous is a result of having experienced colonialism» (Berg-Nordlie, Dankertsen, and Winsvold 2022b, 8; see also, L.T. Smith 2012, 21). Belcourt also links indigenous identity to the colonial past present as well as to trauma, as treated in the selected films. In his words, «[t]o be Indigenous is also to be hurt on the way out, if the 'way out' is crowded by the past's razor sharp edges» (2017). If «indigenous» is not fixed, it must be flexible and variegated, which in turn entails that indigeneity is not merely about being, but also about becoming. Linking back to the concepts of whiteness and intersectionality, to be Sámi is not primarily about skin color, rather needs to be assessed in how race converges with colonialism, class, and state politics and economics (Dankertsen and Kristiansen 2021). In addition, cultural identities reflect race, class, education, region, religion, gender, and other categories relevant to individuals (Dankertsen 2022; Olsen 2018), for instance rurality/urbanity (Berg-Nordlie, Dankertsen, and Winsvold 2022c; Nyseth and Pedersen 2014). The films in this analysis exhibit examples of such constructions and negotiations of indigenous identity, examined intersectionally. Identifying and discussing identity markers within the narrative such as language, traditional dresses, and artworks, is part of this analysis. This thesis, in its reading of gendered representations of northern indigeneity, needs to be attentive to the

complexity of categories like «female/feminine», «male/masculine» and «indigenous». Furthermore, the films prove how the term "indigenous identity" may be problematic per se, as it can lead to misguided perceptions of who is a "real indigenous" person (L.T. Smith 2012; Columpar 2002; Dankertsen 2019, 2022, 2016; Berg-Nordlie, Dankertsen, and Winsvold 2022b; Andersen 2022). This aspect is important to consider while assessing how the films express female, northern indigeneity. In this context, the concept of authenticity is relevant.

Debates on indigenous identity, purity, and authenticity have a tendency to "marginalize those who speak for, or in support of, indigenous issues" and "silencing and making invisible the presence of other groups within the indigenous society like women, the urban non-status tribal person and those whose ancestry or 'blood quantum' is 'too white'" (L.T. Smith 2012, 76). Specifically, related to the films in my analysis, there is a complex relationship between urban indigeneity and authenticity and between contemporaneity and authentic indigeneity. "The specific associations that Indigeneity has in relation to rurality and 'authenticity' causes urban Indigeneity to be perceived as somewhat 'out of place' and even controversial", argue Mikkel Berg-Nordlie et al (2022b, 11). In the same book, Chris Andersen demonstrates how "dominant society relegates Indigeneity to the status of being a remnant of the past and as such contemporary urban Indigeneity literally becomes a conceptual impossibility" (Andersen 2022, 221). Blackmore, writing from an Aboriginal point of view, examines how recent indigenous films question today's demand for so-called authenticity. He points to how authenticity has been understood as or mixed up with "pre-colonial", thus disregarding urban, modern indigenous lifestyles, and requiring indigenous peoples to perform rather than live (Blackmore 2015, 62). When we put all of this together, it makes for a model of indigeneity that is impossible to measure up to (Berg-Nordlie, Dankertsen, and Winsvold 2022b). Such false notions of "authenticity" overlook and deny changes in indigenous societies and create an anticipation of indigenous peoples and their practices as taxidermic. Hence, urban, contemporary indigeneity is labeled "inauthentic" (Kuokkanen 2000; Berg-Nordlie, Dankertsen, and Winsvold 2022b, 13; 2022a; Dankertsen 2022, 2016; Bertrand 2013; Sand 2022). Furthermore, relating this supposed inability to evolve to ethnicity, authenticity becomes a racist notion (Kuokkanen 2000).

The male, ethnographic, and colonial gaze

Extending the discourses on whiteness and the nature or representations of indigeneity, I will now look at objectification and spectatorship. These concepts also run through the four films and consequently across the body chapters of this thesis. Specifically, the analysis examines ways the films engage and sometimes challenge various cinematic gazes, separately and intersectionally. As a theoretical concept (or rather concepts), the gaze pertains to feminist, postcolonial, and indigenous studies. Laura Mulvey introduced the idea of the male gaze and the three looks of cinema into the emerging field of feminist film studies in 1975. In her essay *Visual Pleasures and Narrative Cinema* (with the modifications made in her own afterthoughts published in 1989), she explained how this gaze is dominant in three ways: First, in the story, where most protagonists are male who look upon the female supportive characters as sexual objects. Secondly, through the camera which captures the women in a similar, sexualized manner, and, as the third and last look, in that the audience (regardless of gender) already shares or is likely to adopt this way of looking at the actions unfolding on the screen. Man owns the controlling gaze, while woman is the image, most often with looks designed to make a

visually strong and erotically attractive impression («to-be-looked-at-ness») (Mulvey 1975, 1989). There is continuous debate on specific aspects of Mulvey's foundational article, regarding her use of psychoanalysis, her alleged assumptions that women are without agency and viewers without resistance towards the film medium, and the lack of consideration for queer perspectives in her analysis. Nevertheless, it unarguably stands as an academic landmark and still carries an enormous influence on how scholars analyze films from a feminist perspective, especially concerning concepts of spectatorship and objectification. While most of the critique of Mulvey's elaborations is beyond the scope of this thesis, there is a need for a more comprehensive conceptualization of the look of the camera, the characters on screen, and the audience regarding the four films' treatment of race and indigeneity.

Several feminist scholars have extended the concept of the male gaze into the realm of racial and ethnic representations in film, as summarized and expanded by Columpar (2002; see also L.T. Smith 2012). She argues, and this thesis is in concurrence, that the male gaze as an analytical tool needs to be complemented by and sometimes intersect with the colonial and ethnographic gaze. These gazes, applied analytically, may reveal differentiating processes tied to whiteness as well as (indigenous) authenticity. Colonial, ethnographic, imperial (and other similarly named) gazes still structure most narrative films, and "systematically empowers white culture and reduces indigenous bodies to static icons of difference», Columpar posits (2002, 38-39). The colonial gaze, more than the other versions, can furthermore be said to consider nation as well as race. The notions of ethnographic and colonial gazes continue to offer additional complexity, nuance, and profundity to the discourse on spectatorship, co-existing, challenging, and/or converging with the male gaze. In the event of the three gazes conjuring, they reveal/construct a predominant «viewing position in which the Western, white, male identity is normative" (2002, 40). Theorizing, thereby acknowledging the existence of these concepts, has "created a space for analyses of visual culture that are feminist and postcolonial in nature and have restored to critical visibility women of color» (2002, 26). Knopf demonstrates how the colonial gaze meets and is reversed by the post-colonial gaze in *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen* – an indigenous recount of an ethnographic expedition (2015, 129), similar to how *Atanarjuat* resists and returns that same gaze (Dickinson 2007 cited in Bohr 2015; see also Raheja 2007; MacKenzie and Stenport 2015a; Shohat and Stam 2014). This thesis will profit from this analytical space in examining how the selected features engage and challenge certain cinematic gazes.

Indigenous feminism

The above section shows how a feminist concept like the male gaze may be applied and altered to be relevant for studies of matters regarding indigenous peoples. This thesis ascribes to a critical feminist studies perspective in the analysis of gendered representations of indigeneity. Before briefly presenting some feminist concepts that will be central to the selected films, I will attach a few reflections on feminism in relation to indigenous studies.

Feminism has been contested amongst indigenous scholars, artists, and other critics as a Western construct unsuited for indigenous and decolonial contexts (Olsen 2018; Lawrence 2003; Shohat and Stam 2014). The main problem is that (Western) feminism evaluates gender in indigenous populations according to the Euro-American framework and gender constructs (Kendall 2018). These are based on assumed norms of whiteness,

masculinity, and heterosexuality, with a substantial blind spot towards the marginalization caused by Western research methods (Pirie 2015, 250; see also Olsen 2018). In line with how indigenous theorists commonly call for substituting colonial notions with indigenous ones (e.g. Kuokkanen 2000), some feminist scholars thus suggest applying indigenous rather than colonialist terms and concepts of gender roles when analyzing indigenous femininity (Kendall 2018; L.T. Smith 2012; Olsen 2018). Yet, most indigenous feminist scholars still rely on general feminist notions, as it would be difficult, even unnecessary, to bypass all established, albeit originally Western theoretical perspectives (2018; 2012). Another solution, available also to non-indigenous sympathizing writers such as myself, is to describe in detail what is attributed to the applied terms, as the *meaning* remains more important than the framework itself (Olsen 2018). However, a basis of knowledge of indigenous feminism should still be in place before venturing into analyses like the present one. Rather than being concerned with the clash between indigenous and feminist issues (Kuokkanen 2015, 2012; Olsen 2018) this thesis positions itself within an academic tradition that focuses on how indigenous and feminist concerns intersect (Knobblock and Kuokkanen 2015; Green 2020; L.T. Smith 2012; Olsen 2018, 2016a): Indigenous feminism converges a critical examination of racism and colonialism, struggles for decolonization and self-determination, and gender equality and social justice inside or outside indigenous contexts (Knobblock and Kuokkanen 2015, 275-277; Olsen 2016a). Hence, questions regarding indigenous language, the collective dimension of self-determination, and reindeer herding laws may be seen as feminist issues within the framework of indigenous feminism, while mainstream feminism may not recognize them as such (Knobblock and Kuokkanen 2015, 278-279). Feminism has potentially strong decolonizing powers (Kuokkanen 2007; Dankertsen and Kristiansen 2021), as decolonial feminism speaks from an indigenous position of colonial difference (Tlostanova et al. 2019, cited in Bjerknes 2021).

The ways gender roles in indigenous societies may differ from yet also be influenced by Western norms, are relevant to discussions on boarding schools, forced adoptions, marginalization of women in regard to high rates of gendered violence, and the consequences of broken family units on the passing on of indigenous culture and values, to mention some topics treated in the selected films. The effects of colonization and the ensuing adoption of Western patriarchal systems have been detrimental to gender relations, family structures, child-rearing, and division of labor. As a result, indigenous women, Inuit, and Sámi included, lost their economic, political, and sexual autonomy, their status and visibility also in regard to their livelihood or else their subsistence altogether. Instead, the settler's system placed women in the home (Kuokkanen 2006b, 2009; L.T. Smith 2012; Kendall 2018; see also Olsen 2016a; Fish 2017; Bjerknes 2021). For Sámi women gender equality and women's self-determination are inherent to the system of the *siida*, a Sámi structure of (reindeer herding) families and communities (Kuokkanen 2009; Mecsei 2019). On the other hand, indigenous feminists dismantle some myths about female indigeneity, such as how all Sámi women are strong, Sámi (pre-colonial/traditional) societies are matriarchal and marked by stronger gender equality than dominant cultures (i.e., indigenous women are stronger than indigenous men, thus invulnerable and never in need in of support) (Kuokkanen 2006b; Dankertsen and Kristiansen 2021; see also Bjerknes 2021).

While feminist perspectives, indigenous and Western, permeate the thesis, two concepts (or clusters of concepts) may need a brief introduction. First, as chapters 2 and 3 will discuss, there is the concept of home as belonging and site of identity construction, and

of safety and/or risk. The arguments in the analysis regarding home and geographical space build on academic works by Mona Domosh and Joni Seager (2001), and Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling (2006). The main assumptions are that space is gendered, and home has become almost inseparably associated with women and femininity, that "spatial organizations and relations help shape human dramas", and that "gender is an important interpretive lens for human relationships to and perceptions of built and natural environments" (Domosh and Seager 2001, xxi). Moreover, as city and culture are gendered masculine while countryside and nature are feminine, the colonizer is literally and discursively a white (heterosexual) male and the colonized land is a female virgin whom man may penetrate and conquer (2001, 67). Not even home, that personal, "feminine" space, is universally equal to privacy and safety for women (2001, 34). *The Body* makes this point especially evident, and the analysis will demonstrate how the film's rape narrative intoxicates the home sphere for one of the protagonists. Rape culture and films' representations of gendered violence are examined in chapter 3. This part of the analysis builds on the history of rape narratives traced by Sarah Projansky (2001), and on works by Caetlin Benson-Allott (2020), Julia Havas and Tanya Horeck (Havas and Horeck 2021; Horeck 2013). Stories about rape are cinematically omnipresent (Havas and Horeck 2021), and thus naturalized. Still, «rape is always a problem of representation, just as the problem of representation is constantly revealed through the issue of rape» (Horeck 2013, 7). The literature on such representations investigates how they form tropes or stereotypes and position men and women in a patriarchal culture. It also often discusses whether representations are «positive» or not, tied to or elicit fascination of rape as a sensational spectacle, and if and how this will affect the way we look at both representations of and real-life rape (Horeck 2013). The analysis will apply these perspectives to the way these female, northern indigenous filmmakers narrate rape and gendered violence in the four recent films. As the heading of this particular part of the thesis (*The body as battlefield*) suggests, the arguments are also governed by a perception of the body as "a politicized site of racialized reproduction, cultural continuity, indoctrination, and corporeal resistance" (Pirie 2015).

An Indigenous Cinema still in the making

In the last decades, there has been a movement from an apparently indexical, taxidermic, or even zombie-like and broadly stereotypical representation of indigenous peoples, to an emerging self-representational filmmaking (Pearson and Knabe 2015a), also in the Indigenous North (Knopf 2015; MacKenzie and Stenport 2015a; Bredin 2015; Morton and Sirove 2015; Mecsei 2018). MacKenzie and Stenport, with the concept Arctic Cinema (2015a), seek to highlight how various forms of filmmaking interrelate and create a complex and diverse visual, cultural, and ideological cinematic counter-representation of the region (2015a, 1). Fourth Cinema, as coined by Barry Barclay, explicitly foregrounds feature-length art cinema by indigenous filmmakers (2003), recognizing the political and historical in indigenous filmmaking (Pearson and Knabe 2015a). One characteristic of Fourth or Indigenous Cinema that is central to this project, is what Barclay describes as "an outlook outside the national outlook", as indigenous cultures persist within the modern nation-state and at the same time exist pre- and beyond the notion of nation-states (2003). In that this thesis conducts a transnational analysis, it draws from theorizations of transnationality of Arctic and Indigenous Cinema (MacKenzie and Stenport 2015b; Hart 2021; Pearson and Knabe 2015a; Kääpä 2015; Mecsei 2018; Kaganovsky, MacKenzie, and Stenport 2019b). Indigenous, Arctic film production transcends national borders in an array of diverse ways, regarding stories,

production, and funding. This dual existence beyond but still within the nation-states creates dilemmas of marginalization and dependence versus sovereignty (MacKenzie and Stenport 2015a; Kääpä 2015). On this basis, I understand northern, indigenous cinema as globally integrated and profoundly interconnected, and transnational.

Similar to the films here analyzed, many recent indigenous films juxtapose contemporary life and traditional culture in ways that assert indigenous self-representation and question existing historical narratives about indigeneity. Some of these films opt for a revisionist approach, re-enacting old myths and pre-colonial events, or encounters between indigenous peoples and white settlers. Others place their stories in the present, yet seen from the point of view of "those who most intimately bear the coloniality of the world" (Belcourt 2017, n.p.). Notably, virtually all indigenous films reflect the ways in which the colonial past and still-colonial present affect the lives and stories of indigenous people, in a way that intertwines the past, present, and future (Pearson and Knabe 2015a; Vanstone 2015). This applies to the trajectory of representations of (female) northern indigeneity on film, as well as to the long-term effects of colonization and settler policies, and how recent films by members of Sámi, Inuit, or other northern indigenous peoples express these histories. It is also seen in choices (although depending on access to funding and other resources) of genre and in the aesthetical approach regardless of genre, as the analysis will show. Shohat and Stam (2014) argue that awareness of the effects of a Eurocentric legacy is indispensable for understanding contemporary media representations, providing a profound and specific understanding of the effects of colonialism and the still present colonial (and Euro-centrist) thinking. Shohat and Stam argue that we should discuss issues of multiculturalism, colonialism, and race in terms of relationality (2014, 2003). Such a position is reflected in MacKenzie and Stenport's depiction of how various filmmaking practices, historical and contemporary included, interrelate (2015a) and to the domination of the documentary as described in the following.

The documentary ethos

Within Indigenous Cinema, the northernmost branches included, documentaries, shorts, and experimental films flourish (Pearson and Knabe 2015a; MacKenzie and Stenport 2015a; Kaganovsky, MacKenzie, and Stenport 2019a). In a global indigenous context, the documentary genre grew tremendously from the 1960s to today. Looking closer at Sámi film production, the 30-plus years since the release of *Pathfinder*, a period which also saw the establishment of funding entities like the International Sámi Film Institute (ISFI, 2007), there's been a prominent increase in shorts and documentaries (Mecsei 2018). Factors such as a relatively easy production process compared to feature-length fiction films (fewer requirements of equipment, technology, skills, industrial apparatus, and money), and a lack of theatre systems that promotes video production or television initiatives, create a circle where the influence of documentaries in terms of models of artistic inspiration, access to funding, and possibilities of distribution reinforces the domination of documentary over fiction film. Obviously, the vast production of ethnographies and other documentaries in the Arctic from the 1890s until today, with different degrees of involvement by the local inhabitants, is a legacy that has deeply affected indigenous peoples', including filmmakers, relationship with the medium, their choice of genre and their film's aesthetics (Kaganovsky, MacKenzie, and Stenport 2019a; MacKenzie and Stenport 2015a; Pearson and Knabe 2015a). On the struggles to get funding for *Atanarjuat*, Cousineau commented that "at worst [Inuit producers] are silenced, and at best, they once again reproduce the production models that are

tolerated (low-budget […], especially documentaries)" (Morton and Sirove 2015, 204). On the other hand, indigenous fiction features seem to be gaining ground: Pearson and Knabe calculate that global production is growing from a handful to a dozen a year (2015a). Documentaries are the decisive component in the construction of an Arctic imagery, and representations of northern indigeneity are closely linked to documentary films (Kaganovsky, MacKenzie, and Stenport 2019a). What is more, the documentary ethos, i.e., "an undergirding set of beliefs, practices, and ideologies", has been employed to justify imperialist acts and to codify and *other* indigenous peoples. Recent feminist documentaries offer "a gender-reflexive ethos that challenges the dominant patriarchal and hetero-normative representations of the Arctic" (Kaganovsky, MacKenzie, and Stenport 2019a, 2-3).

A specific storytelling practice?

Documentaries about, for, or by indigenous peoples interconnect with today's filmmaking practices to the extent that it has come to be seen as a characteristic of indigenous filmmaking even aesthetically (MacKenzie and Stenport 2015a). Thus, the distinction between fiction and documentaries in an indigenous context is being decomposed (Mayer 2015; Bohr 2015; see also Bordwell, Thompson, and Smith 2017). Obviously, there is a broad diversity in aesthetic approaches, as well as ideologies and cultural or political positions within indigenous filmmaking (Pearson and Knabe 2015a). Nevertheless, the literature emphasizes interesting similarities, differentiating indigenous from non-indigenous films. These are related to oral storytelling, narrative conventions, cultural aesthetics, and political positions that are specific to indigenous peoples, but also, again, the absence of cinematic theatres in most indigenous cultures, and the historical dominance and impact of the documentary (Pearson and Knabe 2015a). "Filmmaking comes into its own in the hands of the colonized", concludes Blackmore (2015, 62). In re-appropriating the ethnographic films that shaped indigenous identity to indigenes and non-indigenes alike, documentary or hybrid style is commonly used; the hybridity or documentary aesthetic itself being a recurring characteristic trait of some indigenous filmmakers (Morton and Sirove 2015; Vanstone 2015; Pearson and Knabe 2015a; Mecsei 2019; Bohr 2015). Just like storytelling and performance are key to indigenous auto-ethnographic films (Mayer 2015). Raheja describes how indigenous films' aesthetics manifest themselves in an "attendant focus on particular geographical space, discrete cultural practices, notions of temporality that do not delink the past from the present or future, and spiritual traditions" (2010). Such reclamation of land, culture, and representation is what she frames as "visual sovereignty" (2010, 2007). An alternative take on temporality and narrative structure, for example referring to a circle or continuum, is also highlighted by Gail Vanstone. Moreover, Vanstone suggests that indigenous filmmakers have their own language of color, rhythm, light, and word that is guided by historical relationships with land and territories (2015). This view resonates with the definition of Arctic Art Cinema as engaging with "Arctic climate, locations, light, and representational history […] in ways that narratively, aesthetically and thematically challenge established Arctic cinema conventions […] emphasizing realistic settings, […] complex characters, and employ narrative ambiguity" (MacKenzie and Stenport 2015a). For examples of how these stylistic attributes are employed in contemporary Arctic indigenous feature film (though predominantly by male directors Gaup, Kunuk, Cohn, and Simma), see Bredin (2015); Bohr (2015); Knopf (2015); Kääpä (2015); Pearson (2015); Mecsei (2015).

Several feminist film scholars emphasize the vital part indigenous women play as storytellers, keepers and transmitters of culture and how they are part of a larger feminist oral history and reclamation of female indigeneity (Kendall 2018; Vanstone 2015). Both Mackenzie and Stenport, and Monica Mecsei, highlight how hybridity, post-memory, and trauma are central components of contemporary documentaries from Sámi feminist filmmakers as this analysis will show they are for the fiction film counterparts. Female filmmakers from the Indigenous North contribute personal biographies of women, often attached to the (by Western notions) privatized and invisible sphere of home and family (Kuokkanen 2006b; Mecsei 2019) and turn them into visible, public, and political acts of storytelling (Pirie 2015; Vanstone 2015). Mecsei (2019) argues that northern indigenous feminist filmmakers are especially devoted to interconnecting the individual, family, community, and official memory of past as well as present. These filmmakers are part of a feminist fiction feature cinema that centers on indigenous women's voices, perspectives, spaces, and histories (Mayer 2015). Hence, they challenge colonial representations of indigenous women, as well as male normativity (MacKenzie and Stenport 2016a), and offer counterstories to the male-dominated (Mecsei 2019) – and white-dominated – film history about and by northern indigenous peoples.

Film selection

Steered by the research question, the criteria for the selection of films are that they are directed or co-directed by northern indigenous women. The research is further delimited to full-length fictional, narrative films. Without degrading other formats, feature film matters because it often gets the most expansive distribution, media, and audience attention, and persuasively shapes, strengthens and communicates national and personal identity (Pearson and Knabe 2015a; MacKenzie and Stenport 2015a; Columpar 2002). As recent films are apt to examine what film can tell us about northern indigeneity today, I limited the selection to films from 2016-2021. The four chosen works constitute the complete production of northern indigenous feature films directed by women in this period. The selected films are *Sami Blood*, *The Body Remembers When the World Broke Open*, *Restless River,* and *Anori*. Three more films meet the criteria but for the time limit: *Before Tomorrow* (Cousineau and Ivalu 2008), *Uvanga* (Cousineau and Ivalu 2013), and Slash/Back (Innuksuk 2022)[10]. To include them would have presented an opportunity to say something about developments over a decade. Within the limits of a master thesis, analyzing more than four films would however risk lessening the possibility to go beyond the surface. *The Body* is set in Vancouver, a Canadian city that can be seen as northern, although not arctic. Still, the film was selected for the *Films from the North* program, presenting films from the circumpolar North[11] at Tromsø International Film Festival[12]. Given Tailfeathers' and one of the main character's (partly) Sámi identity[13] and the fact

[10] The Canadian Inuit YA feature *Slash/Back* by Nyla Innuksuk premiered in May 2022. The principal part of the analyses for this thesis was carried out in 2021. Although this film would have added interesting arguments, it was necessary to keep the original selection criteria. Another noteworthy Canadian First Nation film, *Night Raiders* (Danis Goulet, 2021), does not have the necessary northern links, although it starred Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers (see also chapter 5).

[11] i.e. Northern Norway, Sweden, Finland, Russia, USA/Alaska, Canada, Greenland and Iceland, see https://www.tiff.no/en/industry/register-film/film-fra-nord-filmbransje/guidelines (accessed 05.03.2022).

[12] In August 2022, I was appointed Program Director of Films from the North at Tromsø IFF. I was not involved in the programming of the four selected features. Films screened in 2023, such as *Slash/Back*, and *Unborn Biru*, to name two films mentioned in this thesis, were part of the first film program I curated.

[13] Tailfeather is, through her mother, member of the Blackfoot tribe from the Blood Reserve. Blackfoot are part of the Indigenous First Nation peoples in Canada. Her father is Sámi from the Norwegian part of Sápmi.

that ISFI[14] co-financed it, the film was admitted into the program. *The Body* addresses the supposed whiteness and geopolitical affiliation of the Blackfoot/Sámi character played by Tailfeathers. Hence, it refers to the complex transnationality of the Indigenous North and the challenges of defining who appertain to categories like Arctic, Northern, or Sámi, in itself a reason to include it in this thesis. The films represent Sámi, Greenlandic Inuit, and Canadian Inuit and First Nation peoples, and entail thematic, aesthetic, geographic, national, cultural, linguistic, and cinematic diversity.

The structure of the thesis

This introductory chapter has presented my master thesis project, including the research question, background, definitions of key terms and the aims the thesis aspires to obtain. It has clarified the methodological approach, specifically the concept of intersectionality, the position from which I will analyze the selected films. The principal theoretical perspectives to inspire the analysis have been outlined. The main body of the thesis is the analysis of four contemporary films directed by northern indigenous women, and how they portray female indigeneity in the North. This part is divided into three chapters. Honoring the films and the most central images in relation to the research question, each chapter builds on a key scene that speaks to important aspects of the films and forms a point of reference for other arguments of the analysis. Reflecting the intersectional approach as well as the circularity of indigenous storytelling, the entire examination will spin out from the decisive turntable scene in *The Body Remembers When the World Broke Open*. This sequence is the core of chapter 2 and will resound throughout the entire text, resonating with discussions of the female, indigenous body as a battlefield (chapter 3) and northern indigenous women turning traditional storytelling into contemporary cinema (chapter 4). The conclusion draws together references, made throughout previous chapters, to the transgenerational nature of trauma thematized by the films. It then summarizes important arguments from the analysis and points to possible further research. The appendix contains a synopsis, and positioning within the directors' filmography, of each film.

[14] https://isfi.no/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/IsfiPresentasjonNY.pdf (accessed 05.03.2022)

Analysis: Four northern indigenous feminist features

Chapter 2: Turning the tables

A significant scene almost 40 minutes into *The Body Remembers When the World Broke Open* centers on a turntable. The segment is an interlude, offering the main characters Rosie and Áila, and the audience space and time to take a breath between the flight from Rosie's abusive boyfriend and the journey to a safe house. It is contemplative and intimate in that it features the only piece of recorded musical soundtrack in the film, played almost at its full length, while the camera rests closely upon Rosie to record her every reaction. An intimacy is also played out between Rosie and Áila, as the following close reading will show. At the same time, the short five minutes duration of the scene crystallizes several of the film's most principal issues. In this chapter, the turntable scene is used to discuss how gender and indigeneity are articulated through themes of motherhood, colonial education, class and privilege, urbanity and rurality, race and whiteness, safety or risk related to space/home, and differentiating processes based on white settler technology. The turntable, and the scene where it takes center stage, touch onto all these topics, which again are linked to other images in the four features. All sections in this chapter will somehow call back to the turntable. Moreover, the turntable carries the capacity of turning the tables on all the above-mentioned accounts. The record player communicates and brokers indigeneity, social status, and femininity. These parameters, in addition to age, education, living situations, and social relations, impact the force ratio in the relationship between the two leads. The women share an indigenous, individual, female identity. Still, they struggle to maintain their agency even in their interactions with each other, as with the outside world. The power relations in this accidental alliance are constantly flipping, and the "turning tables" is happening all the time, starting with the turntable scene.

When the turntable is introduced in *The Body*, we as viewers have accompanied Rosie on the bus home, and Áila to a gynecologic exam. As Áila steps back out into the busy streets of East Vancouver, she passes Rosie, barefoot, bruised, and frozen on the curb, in the pouring rain. Rosie's boyfriend shouts from across the intersection. Áila asks if Rosie needs help, then, without getting an answer, starts walking towards her house with Rosie in tow. After reluctantly accepting dry clothes, a bagel, tea, and a bit of canny conversation, Rosie sits on the couch. Áila walks out of the frame to call a safe house, passing a record player. Rosie roams around the living room observing details of the space before she approaches the turntable (Figure 2), smiling softly:

> Rosie: My grandmother, she used to listen to this.
> *She puts on the headphones and opens the cabinet.*
> Áila (off-screen): Do you know how to work one of those?
> Rosie: Mm, I think so.
> *Rosie puts on the record already placed on the turntable. While she, and we as viewers, hear Joni Mitchell sing "Little Green", Áila makes another call. Rosie sits down, visibly touched by the music. The phone conversation fades as the music gets louder. After a while, Rosie places the headphones on her belly.*
> Áila (still off camera): Do you think they like it?
> Rosie: Uhmm.

Áila: How can you tell?
Rosie: Dunno… I just can, I guess.
Áila: How does it feel to be pregnant?
Rosie: Do you wanna feel?
Áila re-enters the picture, kneels on the floor, and stretches her hand towards Rosie, who pilots it onto her belly. It is a soft-spoken and intimate moment, camera close to Áila's smile. When her phone rings, Áila pulls her hand back.

Figure 2: Rosie by the turntable, remembering her grandmother, in The Body Remembers When the World Broke Open.

The turntable power play; class, urbanity, and whiteness

As a device for communication, the turntable, in this scene, mediates multiple messages. For one, in the urban contemporary setting of *The Body,* a record player is a hipster, retro artifact. It is something Rosie, in a less privileged financial position, might not be expected to own. The prop's placing in the mise-en-scène underlines the atmosphere in Aila's light, spacious living room, in contrast to the dark-lit, crowded apartment where Rosie lives and where the TV is the centerpiece. Thus, the turntable communicates class and positions the two women in very different social strata (Joyce and Wilkie 2008). Evidence of this class divide lies also in the prejudiced comment by Áila, questioning Rosie's ability to operate the device. A closer look at the homes of Áila and Rosie will deepen the understanding of their private spheres and living conditions. The mise-en-scène of the apartments and specifically the turntable, provide a way to talk about identity, class, race, and their positions within the indigenous community, in society at large, and between two women in a random encounter.

Figure 3: The kitchen/living room at Rosie's place.

The film introduces Rosie as she is going to apartment no 409 in a big building complex. Walking through a dim, narrow hallway, she enters the living room (Figure 3). There is a kitchenette on one wall and a window on the opposite. The small space is filled with a tiny kitchen table, a big, blue leather sofa with the back decorated with teddy bears, a sofa table, a lit tube TV with photo albums underneath it, a climbing frame for cats, some green plants, and curtains with flower print. The boyfriend's mother, whose apartment this is, sits in a recliner, watching a tablet. After getting her mother-in-law a coke, Rosie sits down, plays with nail polish, and glances at a funny video that the other woman shares. All the time, she is listening to escalating angry sounds from her boyfriend in the adjacent bedroom.

Surrounding the turntable in Áila's apartment (Figure 4), upstairs in an old wooden building under renovation, are big windows and a balcony with a view of the neighborhood. There is a grey sofa, lounge chairs, a dining space, and a kitchen area with fresh fruit on the bench. The space is naturally lit, and lush plants accompany the sleek, mostly wooden, and vintage 1960's style furniture that adds a vibe of Scandinavian design. On one of the teak sideboards, is a Mac next to a vase with fresh flowers, a greeting card, and some framed photographs. We see neat piles of books both in the bedroom and living room, where titles such as "Treaty 7" and "Last standing woman"[15] can be made out.

[15] Treaty 7 may refer to *The True Spirit and Original Intent of Treaty 7*, which gathered the collective memory of Elders, reviewed previous scholarship about the treaty, and reconstructed the context before and after the treatment (Miller 1998). Treaty 7, contested and controversial, was the last of the Numbered Treaties between the Dominion of Canada and the Plains First Nations, signed on 22 September 1877 (Tesar 2019). «Last standing woman» (1997) is a novel by Indian-rights activist and former vice-presidential candidate Winona LaDuke: https://www.publishersweekly.com/978-0-89658-278-1 (accessed 27.03.2022).

Figure 4: Rosie in Áila's apartment, in the lounge zone of the living space. The turntable is on the right.

The concept of home is so close-knit with definitions of womanhood and the construction of female identity that the appearance of a woman's home "resonates as a marker of [her] so-called inner character" (Domosh and Seager 2001, 8). We often think that home is about belonging (Blunt and Dowling 2006). Áila's place speaks of indigeneity, political, feminist, and cultural awareness, and affectionate relationships with family and friends. It situates Áila as a modern, privileged woman with significant cultural, intellectual, and social capital. Where Rosie is staying, there are no visible signs of her living there. The space positions her, by association with the boyfriend and his mother, as unsophisticated and unprivileged. There is no room, literally or metaphorically, for Rosie in her mother-in-law's apartment. She does not seem at ease at Áila's place either. The dialogue confirms this lack of affinity: She is not close to her older half-sister; she does not want to go back to her grandparents at the reservation and her parents go unmentioned. Áila keeps encouraging Rosie to go somewhere else than back to her boyfriend, but from Rosie's perspective, there is nowhere to go. This out-of-place-ness as expressed in the mise-en-scène and in the dialogue between the two women, resonates with how colonialism has interfered with indigenous peoples' connection to land and space. Confiscation, annexation, and redistribution of land, set up of reserves and reservations with their limitations, destruction of traditional economies, relocation programs or even forced displacement, are measures employed by colonists to estrange indigenous peoples from their land, language, culture, and their indigenous identity. Hence creating push-pull effects which reinforce indigenous urbanization (e.g. L.T. Smith 2012; Berg-Nordlie, Dankertsen, and Winsvold 2022c; Shohat and Stam 2014).

Both spaces are urban city apartments situated in Vancouver. And although objects such as a turntable or other media technology are not foreign to more rural households, in this context they represent urban (or even modern or colonial) values, appropriated and integrated in Áila's urban indigeneity. Indigeneity has generally been thought of in terms of a place-based distinctiveness, discursively linking "indigeneity" to "rural", and

"urbanity" to "assimilation" (Nyseth and Pedersen 2014; Berg-Nordlie, Dankertsen, and Winsvold 2022c). Thus, "urban" and «indigenous» are positioned as mutually exclusive to the extent that «everyone knows […] that cities are places where Indigenous people go to live and where Indigenous cultures go to die» (Andersen 2022, 220). These deeply rooted stereotypes about what indigeneity is, who indigenous peoples are, and where they belong, exist in the dominant as well as the indigenous culture, regardless of research showing that "indigeneity survives, adopts and innovates in cities" (Nyseth and Pedersen 2014, 133). This discussion touches on the concept of authenticity which will be elaborated in chapter 4. Urban indigenous residents fight back against these supposedly incomparable categories by negotiating past, present, and future, and use the freedom and space the city offer to experiment with diverse and innovative expressions of Sámi identity (Nyseth and Pedersen 2014; Dankertsen 2022; Andersen 2022). The majority, especially older generations who originate from places where assimilation has been particularly strong and for various reasons lost their language, reserve their indigenous identity mostly for the private sphere (Nyseth and Pedersen 2014).

I argue that the dimensions rural–urban should be included in the intersectionality applied to understand how the protagonists of the chosen films formulate indigeneity and gender. Considering how nature and the countryside generally are gendered as female/feminine spaces, and culture and the city are gendered as male/masculine (Domosh and Seager 2001), another layer is added to the analysis. Both Áila and Rosie in *The Body*, not unlike Christina in *Sami Blood,* have moved from (more) rural reserves, reservations, or villages to a non-indigenous-dominated city. In different ways, the lead characters of *The Body* express their recollections of those places through the film's dialogue and mise-en-scène as screen memories (Ginsburg 2003). While Áila is in another room, Rosie looks around, letting her finger linger on the "*Last standing woman*" book cover. Upon Áila's return, Rosie asks: "So, where are you from, then?" Áila answers that she is from the Blood Reserve in Alberta, with Blackfoot mother and Sámi dad. Rosie asks whether the Sámi are native, then follows up: "Are you into white guys or something?", referring to a photo strip with Ben, Áila's boyfriend. Upon learning that he too is First Nation, Rosie responds: "I guess everybody's native these days, huh". The comment invokes the concept of whiteness first in how it, as Robert Stam notes, normatively implies that "either everyone is ethnic or no one is" (2019, 115). Second, the line of questioning by Rosie on the ethnic identity of Áila recalls the specific discussion of race in regard to Sámi – the "white Indians of Scandinavia" (Gaski 1993). Áila's artifacts and the dialogue on the origins of Áila and Rosie thus prolong the importance of affiliation to a non-urban homeland, as well as the discourse of whiteness, in the construction of indigenous identity, even in the city (Nyseth and Pedersen 2014). They also connect a more rural past to an urban presence and future.

Furthermore, the literature at display, some of it by indigenous scholars (Saito 2019), points to the sometimes contradictory and always complicated relationship between indigenous knowledge and imperial education (L.T. Smith 2012), a topic I will return to in a later section. Here, we briefly pause at the intersection of urbanity and the colonial school system: The lead character Elle-Marja/Christina in *Sami Blood* had to reject her indigeneity and rural life to continue her education, a basic right she as a Sámi was denied. She couldn't be both Sámi and Swedish (Kokkola, Palo, and Manderstedt 2019), i.e. urban. Not until she, as an old woman, return to her rural, Sámi village, is there a possibility that she can regain and reshape her Sámi identity. Her story aligns with a narrative of loss and recovery that resonates more with adults than young indigenes

(Andersen 2022). Christina hid her Sáminess in the city, while Rosie and Áila make indigeneity a central topic of their conversation evoking a sense of pride and confidence, and a space for being publicly indigenous in their own way. Education is important in revitalizing indigenous identity and as a feasible way out of the "out-of-placeness" some, particularly young people as Rosie, experience. In simultaneously sustaining a rural and urban indigeneity, though, young indigenes may construct multilocal identities which in turn may become another "way out" (Nyseth and Pedersen 2014; Dankertsen 2022).

The artist Anori, in the film by the same name, leads a lifestyle marked by urbanity; cultural traits referred to as "urban" (Berg-Nordlie, Dankertsen, and Winsvold 2022b), although in the smaller, rural-morphed-urban (Andersen 2022, 229) indigenous-dominated Nuuk, capital of Greenland[16]. She promotes her version of urban, female indigeneity, in Greenland and in New York, the quintessence of urbanity. Each of the characters in the film selection express, or suppress, their personal urban indigenous identity in their own fashion. Much in the same way that indigeneity is connected to place, as in rurality, urban indigeneity is influenced by the place wherein it is constructed and vice versa (Andersen 2022; Nyseth and Pedersen 2014). Being indigenous in Vancouver is different from being indigenous in Uppsala or New York. Looking at urbanity, indigeneity, gender, education, class, religion, age, homes, and in-group indigenous variations intersectionally, underscore the heterogeneity and complexity of urban indigenous life. Furthermore, there's again a dimension of time intertwined with(in) urban indigeneity, as pointed out by Berg-Nordlie, Dankertsen and Winsvold: "Being a Sámi in the city involves just as much a negotiation and imagination of the future of both one's [own] future and Sápmi's future, as a continuation of the past." (2022b, 13-14).

Home as sanctuary or battleground

Anticipating a discussion of the female protagonists' body as battlefield (see next chapter), home is not merely about identity and belonging; it is also about security and danger as a potential site of (gendered) violence. The taken-for-granted meaning of home as a refuge is not universal, Domosh and Seager note: Violence against women is primarily perpetrated in the personal sphere of home, so that "[f]or many women, home is a battleground, not a sanctuary" (2001, 34). While Áila's place symbolizes safety, Rosie's is related to risk. Áila takes the protection of her home for granted, as her instinct when she sees Rosie out in the rain is to bring her there. Getting Rosie off the street, the «spatial expression of patriarchy» as Gill Valentine calls it (referenced in Domosh and Seager 2001, 100), away from the threatening boyfriend and into the secure, feminine space of Áila's home seems imperative. On the other hand, once the "violence spills out into the street", it becomes everybody's problem (Debruge 2019, n.p.).

The buildup to the assault in *Restless River* is set in the masculine-gendered space of the movie hall, while Elle-Marja in *Sami Blood* is brutalized at school and on her way to the dormitory. These are examples of public places that women fear, and that are depicted as more dangerous to women than they are. In *Anori*, "home" is temporarily shifted to the private and expectedly safe space of Anori's hotel room, where she gets violated. To Rosie, her current home represents an imminent risk of violence for herself and the child she is bearing. Conceding this fact may be why she feels the need to affirm that she will

[16] According to Britannica, Nuuk had approximately 14 500 inhabitants as of 2005: https://www.britannica.com/place/Nuuk (accessed 30.03.2022).

not let anything happen to her baby. Similarly, leaving the safe house to return to the boyfriend does not necessarily mean she is not aware of the peril that choice represents. Violence against women in the household – or the threat of it – is a common method used to keep women, indigenous and non-indigenous alike, confined to a house and a relationship: It "keep[s] women in a state of spatial uncertainty and geographic disadvantage; many women feel as though they live under a virtual time and space curfew". Their fears are in some cases legitimate, as breaking this virtual curfew, or trying or threatening to, is the single most dangerous and potentially deadly choice a woman in a violent relationship can make (Domosh and Seager 2001, 117). Rosie instinctively knows this. She expresses that she has a time limit to get back before she gets into too deep problems explaining where she had been. One a more general level, the violence itself keeps her tied to the relationship.

Motherhood and denied indigenous futurity

The turntable also connects and unites. It becomes a medium of female communication as the two women share a moment of identification and closeness through the voice and words of a third woman (Joni Mitchell). We can clearly hear the lyrics of "Little Green", the song Mitchell wrote about a daughter she gave up for adoption when she herself was a young, poor artist[17]. It speaks of sorrow and shame, but also of maternal love and wishing a happy ending for her child. The symbolism weighs even heavier when considering that Mitchell too may have Sámi roots.[18] The affective scenario created by the turntable's reproduction of the Mitchell song show how technology is capable of bringing strangers together and inducing intimacy, even though the same technology initially creates tension between the characters in *The Body*. The theme of motherhood, articulated in the song, is one where the women's lives intersect: In the film's prologue Áila's pregnancy test came back negative, while Rosie's pregnancy is approaching term. Motherhood is moreover a locus of power. As such, it is used to test, interrupt, and alter the dynamics between the women, established in the opening sequence as one stronger more resourceful woman helping a weaker, victimized sister in need. In this specific scene the topic of motherhood enables them, spurred by the piece of music, to touch and get touched physically as well as emotionally. A shot of both leads in the same frame (Figure 5) underlines the communal experience of this fragile moment of power balance. Throughout the film, the power dynamics and perception of who needs help is continually shifting. In the turntable scene, the table is turned in the sense that Rosie has the answers and guides Áila, who is intimidated as well as moved and curious, to feel her baby. Hence, the scene is about physicality and embodiment, not only in terms of the actual touching of hands and Rosie's pregnant belly, but even the gestation of life that leads to motherhood – which in this film is linked to feminine/feminist indigeneity and the colonial past-present. The women in all four selected films embody various interrelated colonial experiences and/or indigenous knowledge, to the extent that the body becomes a site of colonization or a battlefield as I will explore in chapter 3.

[17] See full lyrics at https://jonimitchell.com/music/song.cfm?id=146 (accessed 11.03.2022)

[18] Tailfeathers explains how they became the first to license the song: "We were listening to the Blue Album one day […] and […] "Little Green" came on and sent chills up our spine because we realized it is so fitting for the film. […] Joni Mitchell is also part Sami, and she was born in Fort McLeod, Alberta, which is in Blackfoot Territory where I'm also from, and my mother's a big Joni Mitchell fan, so I grew up listening to Joni." (Saito 2019) Mitchell's family passed down unconfirmed stories of Sámi ancestry along with Norwegian and Swedish immigrant histories: https://jonimitchell.com/library/view.cfm?id=2113 (accessed 22.03.2022).

Figure 5: Rosie lets Áila feel her baby belly, while Joni Mitchell's «Little Green» is playing on the turntable.

Several plot developments show Rosie's apparent discomfort with the power imbalances, prompting acts of resistance as she stands up for herself and, consequently, embarrasses Áila. For instance, Rosie steals money and pills from Áila. This act gives her the upper hand in more than one way: She knows something Áila does not, and she demonstrates the power to take something from the supposedly superior woman. She also gets to come to Áila's rescue when the more privileged woman, taking for granted that she is the one paying the taxi fare, cannot find her money. Rosie humiliates Áila while demonstrating the agency to make good or bad choices. A melodrama Rosie just made up for the taxi driver, of them being orphan sisters and that she is helping Áila go to rehab and get treatment for her drinking problems, enhances Áila's embarrassment and Rosie's authority. In this way, Rosie turns their designated positions upside-down. They flip back again, though, after Rosie asks the taxi driver to make a quick stop and steps out to secretly sell the pills she took. Áila misreads the transaction and believes Rosie is using drugs, resulting in a confrontation. During their argument Áila threatens to leave, thus reclaiming the dominant position in their relationship, at the same time revealing prejudiced conceptions of Rosie's character. Examples of this kind of power play, engaging race, class, gender, age, and more, are flooding throughout the film. The notion of motherhood ultimately reconciles them and installs equality: Towards the end of the film, Áila says to Rosie that the latter will become a good mother. Coming from a superior, well-intended position, the comment can be interpreted either as condescending or recognizing. Rosie returns the compliments, however, and engages in a form of mother-daughter exchange asking Áila "are you mad at me" (for choosing to go home). The senior of the pair says "no", and goes along with the maternal role, asking if Rosie needs bus fare and other substitute ways of expressing concern and care. Or this means the original force ratio between them is restored. Overall, their identities and relationship are fluctuant, and complex, depending on point of view and context.

Shared, through listening to the turntable playing "Little Green", are also the specified connotations the matter of adoption evokes. Already emotionally charged to all audiences, the young, female, indigenous point of view assumed in *The Body* adds to and even alters the meaning of Joni Mitchell's words, the song's function in the story, and how it conveys gendered indigenous identity. For many indigenous peoples, including Sámi, Inuit, and Canadian First Nations communities such as Blackfoot (Áila) and Kwakwaka'wakw (Rosie), this is related to "stolen children" as in "forced adoption and dehumanizing child welfare practices [that] were carried out in many indigenous contexts" (L.T. Smith 2012, 149). The colonists institutionalized racist policies through various other praxes including sterilization and enforced attendance in residential schools (Kokkola, Palo, and Manderstedt 2019), turning parenting into futurity denied. Sometimes and somewhere these practices were called assimilation, many thought about them in terms of solving the "indigenous problem", while others openly declared the goal of extinction (L.T. Smith 2012). Bearing such extinction discourses in mind, the significance of Rosie's unborn child and the themes of pregnancy and motherhood in all four films becomes clearer. Giving birth is to bring a new member of indigenous peoples into the world.[19] It is also to live under the constant threat of having your baby taken away. When Rosie says, "no one will take my baby", she knows this is a real possibility. To an indigenous audience, this may be more obvious than to non-indigenous, which is the way the filmmakers intended it (Saito 2019) (see chapter 4). Rosie refers to her grandmother with whom she stayed in her childhood and to her own case worker from whom she is now "free". Such unembellished facts of Rosie's story are sparsely sprinkled throughout the film, leaving the viewer to patch them together and fill out the gaps. Despite typically not having direct role models to shape her parenting after, Rosie is all about protecting and caring for her child. At the safe house, she asks for the bathroom only to sit down and softly sing a lullaby to her baby. Cree and Salish artist Fawn Wood performs the lullaby, called "Mommy's Little Guy"[20], during the final shots and end credits of the film. The lyrics go "Do you know I love you so and mummy will never let you go? / To the stars and the sky / You'll always be mommy's little guy".[21]

While Rosie is expecting a child with her violent boyfriend, Elsa in *Restless River* becomes pregnant when an American soldier rapes her. The film's narrative actively silences this fact, exemplified when the white woman running the local store asks who "the lucky father" is. Elsa looks down and the shop lady reacts with an all-implied "oh, I'm sorry". When Elsa's boy Jimmy is born, they stay with her parents, grandparents, and siblings, whom all help look after him while Elsa is at work. As the years pass, she mostly lives alone with her son, and more than once declares that she is happy bringing him up on her own. According to the separation of spheres that is typical in Western societies, family life is tied to the feminine space of home (Domosh and Seager 2001). The close reading of Rosie's and Áila's homes exhibited how the private sphere also serves to identify women. In *Restless River*, Elsa shifts homes within and to the perimeters of her community times, corresponding to and caused by important life events and various roles as daughter, mother, wife, employee, and member of her society and church. The

[19] Women are commonly perceived, particularly but not exclusively in dominant nationalisms, as «Mothers of the nation». Similarly, in emerging nationalist movements to which the decolonizing efforts of many indigenous peoples may be aligned, women are assigned the role of bearers of children (and the community's memory work) (Domosh and Seager 2001).

[20] From Fawn Woods album album "Iskwewak – Songs of Indigenous Womanhood".

[21] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5v5ndmyM144 (accessed 12.04.2022)

diverse dwellings also reflect her relationship to, and the constant negotiation between, indigenous and white settler lifestyles and values. Moreover, the film displays how Elsa's maternity and parenting are subject to the impact of colonialism. Elsa is pulled and pushed between Inuit traditions and white settler standards. Her mother, while laughing at Elsa trying to give a screaming Jimmy a bath the Western way, takes exception to all the "fancy baby-care stuff". The mocking maternal guidance is proof of an indigenous family unit and parental role models that remains intact. The same goes for Anori, where we see family and friends celebrate her mother's birthday, and her dad giving a warm speech that addresses both wife and daughter. All four films emphasize the relationships between the protagonists and their mothers, and the protagonists' own motherhood, ranging from the absence of Rosie's mom which Rosie seems determined to rectify regarding her unborn child, via Elle-Marja's rebellion against hers and emotional distance to her son, and the way Elsa, with the support of her own mother nurtures Jimmy, who nevertheless leaves her and his community as soon as he can. The latter mother-son's rather harmonious situation while Jimmy was still a young boy, was however also threatened, as the next section will address.

Genocide in residential schools

The white police officer, Mister Beaulieu, comes out to the camp where Elsa and Jimmy are living on the land with Isaki. The mission is to persuade Elsa to send Jimmy to school, meaning that either her son alone or both would need to move. Colonial education in Canada, and in particular the Indian residential school program governed by the Department of Indian Affairs and administered by churches well into the 1980s and 1990s (Canada 2015a), were effective tools of colonization (Haig-Brown 2006; L.T. Smith 2012; Kuokkanen 2003). When Elsa refuses, saying she schools him herself, the officer makes it clear that he will take the boy by force. Elsa resists at first but does move back to the village, only to experience her son being miserable in school.

In *Sami Blood*, set on the Swedish side of Sápmi, the Sámi territory transcending four nation-states, Elle-Marja and her sister Njenna are sent to boarding school along with other Sámi children. Their experiences related to the colonial education system are central to *Sami Blood*'s narrative. Again, with the turntable, Áila's urban indigenous dwellings, and the discussions of motherhood, lost generations, class, whiteness, and urbanization that spin out of that scene as starting point, *Sami Blood* discusses the consequences of colonial education to indigenous girls. The events at the nomad[22] school are described in a historically correct manner insofar as "the prohibition to speak any other language than Swedish […] and the poor quality of residential schools" (Kokkola, Palo, and Manderstedt 2019, 10). In Canadian residential schools, children died in large numbers (Kuokkanen 2003); unmarked graves on former school grounds are still being detected (Canada 2015a). The effects of boarding schools for indigenous children were nothing short of cultural, discursive genocide (Pearson and Knabe 2015b; Canada 2015b; Raheja 2007). Albeit in less brutal ways, Sweden (and the other Nordic countries) also used education and the social welfare system in general to ensure swift assimilation and deculturation by/and suppressing Sámi culture and languages (Fish 2017; Kuokkanen 2003, 2009; Pearson and Knabe 2015a). The effects, as Kuokkanen notes, of boarding

[22] Nomad schools were, in the Scandinavian context, a specific Swedish way to separate nomadic reindeer herding «real» Sámi from other Sámi through the educational system: While the first group would get a lesser degree of education not allowing them full rights in the Swedish society, the second group were integrated in the ordinary school to be assimilated as Swedes (Sand 2022, 4).

schools in the Nordic nation-states occupying Sámi territory were largely the same as in Canada. These include "cultural intrusion, conflicts and confusion between cultures and values" resulting in "low self-esteem, alienation from one's cultural background, and difficulties in integrating and adapting in society, whether one's own or the dominant", but also various strategies of survival and resistance (2003, 698, 707).

The very first scene (Figure 6) from the school the sisters in *Sami Blood* attended, shows a classroom full of Sámi children in their *gákti* (traditional dresses) lined up, all ages together. The teacher Christina walks among the desk rows, ruler in hand, singling out pupils to recite a song, printed in the 1937 Swedish psalm book: "A young, poor child am I, yet I am happy just the same. I know my Father, good and dear, for the little ones will tend" (my translation)[23]. Njenna whispers anxiously to her older sister, afraid the teacher can tell that she does not know the text by heart and will smack her with the ruler. The few Sámi words do not escape Christina, who angrily tells them to only speak Swedish and then beats both girls' hands. Elle-Marja is next and recites flawlessly. The prize for this accomplishment is to greet the distinguished guests from Uppsala, a visit the children await with great anticipation. Knowing how that visit played out (see chapter 3), and the repercussions it had on Elle-Marja's life, her eagerness to perform is heartbreaking. Christina is important as a role model for Elle-Marja, who wants to get her teacher's praise. Through a string of as-ifs, Elle-Marja is testing how Swedish she can become, and how to become a Swedish woman. When caught looking in through the window of Christina's house, the teacher invites Elle-Marja to visit this new world. Another time she is secretly trying on one of Christina's dresses. And finally, one night, Elle-Marja sneaks away to a dance where she presents herself as Christina Lajler, her teacher's name as if trying on the ideal Swedishness she represents (Olsen 2018, 192). The ultimate defeat for Elle-Marja is therefor when her teacher rebuffs her. First, her back is ferociously scourged for attending that dance, a humiliation that fuels Elle-Marja's dreams of going to Uppsala to continue her education. She asks Christina to write a recommendation, which she refuses. Instead, the teacher tells her honor student that, as Sámi, her place is with her family and that she does not have the knowledge required to study and never will because her Sámi brain is not adept. The curriculum in schools for indigenous peoples has consistently been designed to inhibit further education.

[23] Christina Charlotta Lindholm wrote this psalm in 1872, see https://psalmbok.fi/psalm-393-ett-litet-fattigt-barn-jag-ar/ (accessed 24.03.2022)

Figure 6: Sámi children (Njenna and Elle-Marja in center) reciting psalms at the Swedish nomad school.

As Kuokkanen demonstrates, opposition within residential schools varied "from 'passive resistance' to running away, practicing cultural customs in secret, maintaining aspects of traditional social organization […], rebellions, and even complete rejection" (2003, 699). In Elle-Marja's school, we see pupils trying to be unseen and unheard, but also the girls hiding out to speak Sámi and *joik* while braiding each other's hair. Njenna is resisting by ignoring the bans on her language and cultural customs. Her senior, Elle-Marja, seems to be adjusting better than everybody else, and maybe that makes her run away: The ultimate act of agency is abandoning her Sáminess. By continuation, the Swedish state achieves the genocidal purpose, cultural, linguistic, or discursive, of the residential schools for Sámi. The only way Elle-Marja could pursue the path that the state put her on in the first place, was to pass as Swedish (Kokkola, Palo, and Manderstedt 2019). This kind of mobility is not easy, feminist geographers Domosh and Seager remind us: Moving across space requires surpassing systems of control, privilege, hierarchy, and of gender, class, and race (2001, 113). In Elle-Marja's case, all of these hurdles are stacked up against her, making her out of place and "wrong" in the city in almost every possible way. In overcoming these obstacles, she demonstrates enormous amounts of courage, resourcefulness, and resistance. In *Sami Blood*, education is a way out, although in a different manner than in the discussion of urban indigeneity. Education means escaping harassment and inferiority, but it is also a goal that Elle-Marja is forced to leave her Sáminess for, and itself a site of harassment and inferiority (Mayer 2015). *Sami Blood* portrays mistreatments, discrimination, and assimilation policies inflicted upon individuals and Sámi as a people during the 1930s, specifically through the educational system, and Sámi reactions and resistance to those policies. The contemporary frame story demonstrates the dramatic long-term consequences colonial education has for the protagonist, her son, and granddaughter, and those she left behind. *Sami Blood* educates the audience about the colonial past-present while recuperating indigenous knowledge. As such, all three films discussed in relation to colonial educational systems in this section, work as counterstories to white people's knowledge of indigenous knowledge.

The gramophone pattern and the role of technology

The turntable in *The Body* is about knowledge, encounters between white and indigenous peoples, and the ways colonialism intertwines the past, present, and future in yet another sense. Particularly, the turntable is a technological device that reflects the history of (mis)representing indigenous peoples by linking *The Body* to the influential classic *Nanook of the North*. A notoriously famous segment in Robert Flaherty's film introduces a gramophone [24]. From the white settler's point of view, it represented advanced technology that signaled modernization. Nanook, played by Flaherty's friend Allakariallak, was supposedly amazed by and foreign to the invention, putting the record to his mouth as to taste or eat it. Numerous accounts have later shown that Allakariallak definitely knew how to operate the gramophone (Ginsburg 2003, 39)[25] as indigenous peoples in general "have been entangled with technology from the beginning" (Shohat and Stam 2014, 415). Nevertheless, the "gramophone pattern" wherein the visual motif of the gramophone as "an iconic figure used to introduce 'civilization' to the 'primitive'" while constructing an opposition between indigenous and non-indigenous, has been reproduced and reshaped since (Damiens 2021, 24). Activating the gramophone pattern, the turntable scene sets the record straight and rebuts Flaherty's premise. The way *The Body* plays out the trope acknowledges the various functions and categories represented by the turntable and allows the characters agency as to how to engage with them. Hence, the turntable continues to negotiate indigeneity and ethnicity. In this setting, both indigenes master the record player, yet it belongs to the "whiter" and more privileged of the pair. Áila asking if Rosie knows how to work the device catches on to discussions of race, and class, and illuminates the division between the women as discussed in chapter 2, as well as between colonist and colonized.

All four films make use of the motif of imported, Western technology in indigenous communities as an image of the civilized versus the primitive. In *Sami Blood*, young Christina crashes her love interest Niklas' birthday party. A girl demands to turn off the gramophone so that Christina can *joik*[26] to them (the recurring motif of *joik* will be explored in chapter 4). In the modern time-set *Anori,* technology is everywhere and always mastered by Inuit. Set in the 1940s and '50s, *Restless River* features imported technological inventions as equivalents to the gramophone. This film shows how Canadian Inuit were exposed to white Western culture through the media technology of cinema. It situates Elsa in relation to, not isolated from, the technological apparatus of cinema (Bohr 2015). Western cinematic narratives are so familiar to her, they seem internalized: Her daydreams take on the form of Hollywood classics, imaginary projected onto the ceiling of her family's home (Figure 7). Her mother teasingly complains about this attraction to a foreign, fictional world.

[24] See the theory section for a presentation of *Nanook of the North* in relation to the films in this thesis.
[25] Ginsburg references Tobing Rony (1996) for an early exploration of the gramophone scene. See also Siebert (2006); Raheja (2007); Fienup-Riordan (2015); Kaganovsky, MacKenzie, and Stenport (2019); Damiens (2021).
[26] The traditional Sámi music genre, a style of vocalization, often used to remember people, animals, places or events and to construct a sense of community (Rice, Porter, and Goertzen 2017).

Figure 7: A Hollywood classic projected as a fantasy of Elsa onto her own retina or the ceiling of the family home. Her mother comments on the peril of Elsa becoming «a flat image».

Elsa's relationship with cinema changes after one dramatic, life-changing theater visit. On the screen, a white couple is quarreling, the man violently grabbing the woman by the arm and threatening her with a knife. The Inuit in the audience react with jaw-dropping astonishment and shout at the actors. One might read this as the Flahertian gramophone scene all over again. Instead, inspired by Raheja's alternative interpretation of Nanook's smile as an act of visual sovereignty (2007), I suggest that the audience's behavior is an adequate response to the action on screen, not the screen technology. Meanwhile, the American soldier with whom Elsa has exchanged looks in passing now signals to meet her outside. Elsa giggles at her girlfriends and steps out. Then the atmosphere quickly shifts, and the man forces himself onto her. (See next chapter for a discussion of this scene.) We never see Elsa go watch a movie again. The scene thus presents cinema as something alien to the Inuit community, which solicits fascination but also danger and division within the community. Yet the scene also demonstrates indigenous peoples' appropriation of technology. It reclaims cinema as a medium that can exercise survivance (Vizenor 2008), in showing a community that resists the colonial worldview while appreciating cinematic storytelling.

Retracing the gramophone pattern through Soviet Arctic films, Caroline Damiens identifies films in which white colonists introduce the phonograph or other technological inventions to male indigenous representatives. The gender bias passes unnoticed in her text. Referring to the turntable, Rosie in *The Body* comments that her grandmother "used to work one of these". For indigenous peoples, technological ability is not necessarily gendered (in the same way) as for white settlers (see also Ginsburg 2003). This demonstrates how the turntable scene and the gramophone pattern in all four films need to be understood intersectionally, counting in class, indigeneity, whiteness, age, urbanity, and gender, through time and place. Contemporary northern indigenous filmmakers embrace the technology of film and merge it with ancient stories of their

culture to examine both past and present (Fish 2017, 11, 248-49). They even apply the colonial media technology of cinema to address the way the same technology constructs (certain perceptions of) female indigeneity. Hence, the gramophone pattern is adapted, recoded, and rejected. Still, the turntable transmits an echo of the documentary ethos so defining for Arctic films (Kaganovsky, MacKenzie, and Stenport 2019b). This aspect will be explored in chapter 4.

Chapter 3: The body as battlefield

Rosie in *The Body*, all beat up, plugs in the headphones, and listens to the sad, still soothing words of Joni Mitchell in Áila's apartment. The technology of the turntable and the music become means to let her body and mind disconnect from her abusive relationship for a moment. However, the despairing facts of the situation, re-accounted by Áila in muffled off-screen phone conversations with various safe houses, surface through the tones of "Little Green". The four works analyzed in this thesis all deal with trauma of violence and abuse. In *The Body*, the verbal and physical attacks on Rosie by her boyfriend are the core of the story, and the plot is whether she can become free of him or not. A rape scene early in *Restless River* changes the trajectory of the protagonist Elsa's life. *Sami Blood* features two key scenes that depict the protagonist's exposure to psychological and physical violation; the examination by the State Institute of Racial Biology[27] and the following confrontation with local Swedish boys. Finally, *Anori* represents a rape narrative[28] where the female lead is sexually assaulted by a man she believed to be a friend. This chapter will examine these aspects of the films. The rape scene in *Restless River* will serve as the focal point of this part of the analysis, while shots and scenes from the other films will be included when they reinforce, reshape, or contradict the arguments in the discussion that follows. All the way, the account of the exploitation of Rosie will run through the chapter, directly or more like the subdued layer of the turntable scene's soundtrack in *The Body*. What all the images included in this chapter contribute, are perspectives on gendered violence, sexuality, spectatorship, and objectification, and the impact of the colonial past-present and transgenerational trauma on northern indigenous women today, sometimes directly inscribed on or otherwise affecting their bodily existence. The women's experiences of physical and mental abuse must be seen intersectionally, inflected by their gendered, racialized, and classed positions within interlocking relations of power. The subsequent sections will argue that the above notions, especially racism, and whiteness, are embedded into expressions of indigeneity and gender as embodied by the female protagonists. They become battlefields for sexism, racism, colonialism, and decolonial struggles.

Early on in *Restless River*, we see Elsa going to the community movie hall with her friends. She exchanges a quick and timidly flirtatious look in passing with an American soldier. Not long after, Elsa is back to watch another film. This time, the audience interacts in a specific way towards a gendered violent incident described on screen, as discussed in the previous chapter. Now, to analyze the meanings and functions of the rape narrative in *Restless River*, this is where we re-enter the scene (Figure 8):

> *The American soldier stands next to the screen and the white, violent man on it, facing and watching Elsa instead of the film. We witness a silent dialogue between the two before Elsa gets up and follows his lead. Outside, the next shots show a deserted dirt road and Elsa walking towards the forest. Suddenly, the soldier jumps onto the path.*

[27] The world's first state institute for racial biology opened in Uppsala in 1922. Kokkola et al explain: "The Institute's first director, Herman Lundborg (1868–1943), was fascinated by the peoples of the north, especially the Sámi, and documented their racial features. This involved photographing people naked and taking measurements of their facial features. This so-called 'research' formed the base from which policies, including forced sterilization and the suppression of minority languages, were developed.» (2019, 3).

[28] I follow a broad definition of «rape narrative» employed by Projansky (2001), which include all representations of rape, threats of or attempts of rape, or any other sexual assault and abuse.

Soldier: Don't go away. Please.
Elsa does not answer, looking anxiously at him.
Soldier, with a little smile: Don't be scared.
The camera zooms in on his face as his gaze turns cold. Next shot is of the sky and treetops wavering in the wind. Then, the camera catches, from afar, Elsa on the ground face down with the soldier on top. She tries to break free, but he is too strong. Cut to an image of him buttoning his pants back on, pulling a money bill out of his pocket to give to Elsa.
Soldier: Here, take this.
Elsa runs, away from him.
Soldier, shouting after her: Hey! What's your name?
Elsa has run to the river. Images of her crying with her eyes closed intercut with flashes of the rape, as the soldier attacked and pushed her down, her hand clenching the moss. The camera rises, gliding over the landscape in a wide crane or drone shot.

Re-presenting, revising, and rejecting rape narratives

In relation to the gramophone pattern, the previous chapter argued that this segment demonstrates how the Inuit community in *Restless River* exercises survivance through simultaneous expressions of familiarity and friction facing the screen. There are multiple other meanings to explore, even before Elsa leaves the cinema. The film within the film shows a moment of gendered violence among white characters, with Elsa and the rest of the Inuit audience sympathizing with the woman under assault. The locals see the white man as a villain who hurts the female character. The images in the mise en abyme activate the extensive history of misogynistic violence in cinema. With the words of Columpar, it is

> *clear that film is not a window onto the world, nor has its use historically been ideologically neutral; rather it is a signifying system with its own representational legacies, established tropes, industrial constraints, and political baggage. In particular, as that which has, more often than not, consolidated, initiated, or perpetuated various stereotypes as well as an economy that privileges a white, male perspective, dominant cinema is profoundly implicated in both sexist and racist practice. (2002, 26)*

The images of the film screened the night Elsa got raped visualize stereotyping and subordination of women by men. Part of the colonization process has been to utilize cinema to install white, Western values in the minds of the colonized (Ginsburg 2003). As Projansky affirms, "depictions of rape are a pervasive part of this culture, embedded in all of its complex media forms, entrenched in the landscape of visual imagery" (2001, 2). Whether distorted or accurate, cinematic images of Western societies' attitudes towards gendered violence were thus imported and communicated through the big screen in the movie hall in Kuujjaq, Nunavut, as in colonized communities in other places, at other times. Among the ways in which rape narratives have defined, structured, transformed, justified, perpetuated, produced, and resisted the social world and complex phenomena as race, class, gender, and nation, are also how they have sanctioned and sustained colonialism, defined nations, and «produce[d] masculine spectatorial pleasure predicated on illicit (violent) sexuality and culturally sanctioned racism» (Projansky 2001, 7). Beyond being gendered, the narratives of abuse in the selected films are inflicted by race

and specifically indigeneity, but also class, age, or other factors. Hence, we need to look at violence intersectionally. Particularly, we need to add extra considerations concerning the way indigeneity influences specific instances of physical or mental abuse. Projansky's survey of cinematic rape narratives reveals that "there is simply not one way that rape intersects with gender, class, race, nation or feminism" (2001, 61). The most striking is the pervasiveness, versatility, and diversity of rape representations in film. Yet, there are some consistencies, of which the most persistent perpetuate even contemporary representations of rape culture[29]. The following section will look at how the films engage with the most relevant (to this thesis) rape narratives.

Figure 8: Elsa and the Inuit audience watching a Western film in the movie hall, while the American soldier watches them.

First, rape, through rape culture in tv and film, is understood and conveyed as a white (most often also young and fitting the film stereotype of "beautiful") woman's issue, privileging white victims as well as perpetrators, leaving no room for the stories of women of color, let alone queers (Benson-Allott 2020; Havas and Horeck 2021; Projansky 2001). Some theorists of rape in film have also engaged with how the prevailing whiteness of rape representations intersects with racialization and racism, while others have theorized primarily about white-centered texts and (presumptive) white or unmarked audiences. Benson-Allott is one of the scholars who acknowledge the fact that rape is not only gendered, adding perspectives of blackness and queerness (2020). Projansky (2001) foregrounds a few exceptions to the dominant representation of rape victims as white women: Some US Westerns depict a white man raping an indigenous woman, only to have the indigenous community violently attack the white settlers as revenge. In this narrative, there is one, single white villain, but entire indigenous peoples who are violent by nature. Other films depict racialized men as villains, and white women travelers as their victims, as a way to justify imperialism. Yet

[29] Defined as «a term that refers to how patriarchal culture normalizes and rationalizes sexual violence» (Havas and Horeck 2021, 547).

other films present white women colonialists as attracted to the violent, foreign man, in which cases the films nevertheless depend on categories of race and nation to demonstrate that this sexual desire is dangerous for the woman. In her reading of *Duel in the Sun* (1946), Projansky argues that native American women are portrayed as provocative and innately excessive in their sexuality, thus placing race as the reason for pervasive sexual violence in these indigenous women's lives. A consistent rape trope is to relegate the rape itself and the women's experience of it to a narrative device and/or prop, focusing instead on the male characters. Films also often punish women for or with being raped and conform them to (white) heteronormative family life (Projansky 2001). Most victims of sexual, gendered violence in European or American films are defined by their assaults, as "victims qua victims" (Benson-Allott 2020, 101; see also Projansky 2001; Havas and Horeck 2021). Moreover, sexual violence has vigorously been viewed as individualistic and private, at least until relatively recent times (Havas and Horeck 2021). In conclusion, most films do not take a feminist or race-neutral approach to the representation or response to rape.

The films in this selection are exempt from these conventions, and oppose Projansky's lists of common rape narratives: They do not adhere to the rape/rescue/romance-trajectory, gendered assaults are not implicit in the films, even if the visual representations may be evasive, the women are not folded into the supposed safety of the heteronormative marriage/family, the gendered violence is not displaced or exported but faced in their own geographical space. And perhaps most importantly, the women and their experiences are not reduced to props, narrative motors, or auxiliaries to male characters (Projansky 2001, 63). Although the villagers do not openly talk about the rape that impregnated Elsa in *Restless River*, they contribute to raising her son. The film itself, like all the films in my selection, speaks very publicly about how rape is not merely individual and personal, but rather a structural and collective problem, affecting the extended family, entire communities, and even strangers on the streets as in *The Body*. When combined, the four films make a strong statement to address gendered violence against indigenous women.

Hence, the mise en abyme in *Restless River* has several functions and meanings, and re-presenting the history of gendered violence on film is one of them. The specific images foreshadow and constitute a backdrop against which the assault on Elsa will play out. The film within the film suggests a certain behavior of Elsa and the soldier, building on the cinematic tropes of rape culture. This includes the way the soldier tries to turn the abuse into a financial transaction and the way Elsa keeps silent about what happened. Even calling the soldier's action by its true name, rape, may be blocked by rape tropes claiming only (a certain kind of) white women get raped. Yet, the segment also allows *Restless River* to comment on the same aspects that the mise en abyme conceives. It exposes the actions of the white man in the film within the film, and by extension the white American soldier, in their true nature and condemns them. The history of gendered violence and whiteness in films is called out, and the racist, sexist elements of the Western worldview are revealed. While the typical film about the Arctic has been told by white male outsiders, this film is seen through the eyes of an Inuk woman. It conveys Elsa's experiences as a girl turning woman in a time when she and her homeland are colonized and face major change. She also observes the white settlers and their impact on her community. In this scene, Elsa and the other Inuit in the audience study the characters on the screen who represent both the Western world and values, and film history, in its prevailing whiteness. Pointing its camera to the screen within the film,

Restless River is turning the tables regarding who is telling the story, from what perspective, and about whom. The film positions the Inuit as superiors and the white settlers as primitives, opposite to the default representations discussed in the previous chapter, and which we will see examples of when considering indigenous identity in the next chapter. Again, there is a link to the other films in the selection, since they are all told by "insiders" from the perspective of indigenous women. They present individual life stories tied to collective experiences of, and are (in some ways) analog to, the impact of imperialism and colonial past-present. As argued above, *Restless River*, through reversing the shot and projecting the film within the film, talks back to the history of rape narratives. The next paragraphs will examine some of these aspects more in-depth.

Restless River, as well as the other three selected films, do not compromise the integrity of their protagonists. Due to careful camera positioning and framing, loyalty to the point of view of the female, indigenous protagonists, thorough work on empathy structure, absence of on-screen nudity, and other choices concerning the mise-en-scène and the editing, they establish their protagonists as something else and more than victims (Benson-Allott 2020; Projansky 2001; Havas and Horeck 2021). In the case of Rosie in *The Body,* a short segment ensures that the abuse is not the first/only thing defining her: In the prologue, she is helping a young mother on the bus. In Anori's case, the assault takes place near the end of the film. Being female- and survivor-centric, the films actively de-center masculinities (Benson-Allott 2020), white or indigenous. In part, they achieve this through conscious and careful depictions, if any, of the abusive acts. The boyfriend in *The Body* is never on camera and the directors "deny audiences the sadistic thrill of watching Rosie's boyfriend beat her up on screen" as one reviewer put it (Debruge 2019). In fact, the boyfriend's threatening bellowing on the street, the marks on Rosie's body, and her abstemious account are the only verifications of the unarguably abusive relationship she is in. This way the film «avoids the trap of sexualizing or eroticizing the male criminal» (Havas and Horeck 2021, 576). Although more explicit, the other films avoid this trap or trope too. In *Anori*, the violence is played out very differently in the mythical storyline versus the contemporary re-interpretation, representing respectively an indigenous and a Western version of the film's conflict between good and evil: In the last instance, the sexual nature of Malik's assault on Anori is salient, designed to further subdue his victim and weaken her ability to fight back. The legend part of the narrative portrays instead a fight between the two, both fully dressed, the woman jumping the man and dealing out blows, although she once again loses (Figure 9). Projansky points to the paradox, a "representational conundrum", that while advocating against rape the very act of describing it will reinforce rape culture (Projansky 2001, 19; Havas and Horeck 2021, 562). Opting *not* to describe any sexual violence, *The Body* runs the "risk of contributing to a long-standing 'absent presence' in social narratives that sidestep addressing women's experiences of rape" (Projansky 2001, 19). Another risk of frugal or non-existing representations of rape is that audiences may not see the story as one of sexual abuse at all. To paraphrase Havas and Horeck's analysis of TV comedy series *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* (Netflix, 2015-2019), I argue that *The Body*, the film in this selection which takes this approach to its most extreme, inverts the cultural fascination with representing gendered violence through posing the problem of how to not represent gendered violence visually while narrativizing gendered violence (2021, 563; see also Horeck 2013).

Figure 9: The girl/woman in the myth fights «evil», but is overpowered in the end, sacrificing herself for the «good».

The four films concentrate their energy on female survivors and how the abuse affects them. Most of the perpetrators, from the American soldier to the Swedish scientists and schoolboys, become invisible, even though their actions leave lasting wounds. Similarly, and unlike most rape narratives, *The Body*, *Restless River,* and *Sami Blood* abstain from offering the malefactors any "redeeming qualities or psychological layering" (Havas and Horeck 2021, 556). Elsa's rapist, Rosie's boyfriend, the visiting "researchers" and the local boys in *Sami Blood*, all lack backstory. There are no shift in perspective to the (mostly male) violators that might otherwise relativize, explain or excuse their actions (Havas and Horeck 2021) or render the offenders sympathetic, attractive or their culprits less crushing. They do not get to present their version, not even in *Anori* where the point of view alternates between the three main characters. The plot unfolds through play with temporality, perspective, and a double storyline, where the offender starts off more sympathetic and becomes more mischievous as the story circles on. The films in this thesis substitute sensationalized depictions of sexualized, gendered violence with a more sensitive and self-conscious approach (Benson-Allott 2020). They deflect the dilemma of perpetuating rape discursively while wanting to challenge conventional rape narratives and end rape. They also revise or reject the traditional tropes of rape culture (Benson-Allott 2020; Havas and Horeck 2021; Projansky 2001; Horeck 2013) as represented by the mise en abyme in *Restless River*.

Spectatorship, objectification, and the gaze in the selected films

While Elsa watches the violence on screen, the soldier is looking at her. This image unmistakably evinces the concept of the male gaze and the three looks of cinema (Mulvey 1975, 1989), but also the ethnographic and colonial gaze (Columpar 2002; Shohat and Stam 2014; L.T. Smith 2012). The four selected films engage with complex identifications of cinema spectatorship along lines of gender but also race, as this part of the analysis will discuss. In the scene at the community movie hall in *Restless River*, the film within the film manifests the male gaze, which the soldier projects onto Elsa, adding

to it the ethnographic and the colonial gaze. The soldier and indirectly the settler state he represents thus objectifies Elsa as woman, indigenous, and subject to conquer. (Not all male settlers in this film are portrayed in the same way: The policeman and the priest, more invested in the community, exercise the colonial gaze but not particularly the male gaze.) The eye of the camera in *Restless River* engages the male, ethnographic, and colonial gazes in a way that exposes them for what they are. The Inuit audience at the cinema refuses to «participate in the pleasures offered by dominant cinema» (Columpar 2002, 29). The scene demonstrates the explanatory force of the male, ethnographic and colonial gaze. However, it also dismantles, at least in this instance, the original theory of the power that the male gaze exerts on camera, characters, and audience of fiction films, and destabilizes Mulvey's postulate that the male gaze structures the audience to assume a masculinized look.

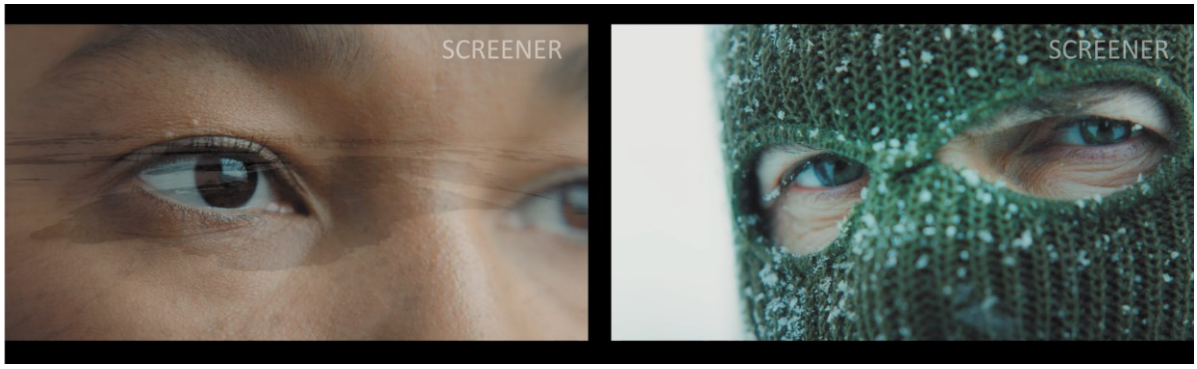

Figure 10: Extreme close-up of Elsa's eyes superimposed by Inuit landscape, juxtaposed with anonymous American soldier looking straight into Elsa's observing eye as the camera lens later in the film.

Through conscious choices of points of view, the films analyzed in this thesis challenge the concepts of the gendered and/or racialized gaze in more ways. Directors Cousineau and Ivalu of *Restless River*, and director of photography Edith Labbé, have scripted and shot the story from the perspective of the female Inuit protagonist. Already in the first image, an extreme close-up of Elsa's eyes (Figure 10), the film establishes the gaze through which the story will be told. The opening shot also comments on the male, ethnographic, and colonial gaze later expressed by the soldier and the mise en abyme at the movie hall. Another act of looking that cites and returns the gaze of the soldier, occurs when the due date of the baby is closing in (Figure 11). Elsa stops as American soldiers march by her and stand with a strong posture, looking for the man who made her pregnant. The soldiers wear balaclavas, making the eyes their only visible feature, once again shown in extreme close-ups (Figure 10). The uniformed white men look alike, still, no one matches the eyes of the soldier that attacked Elsa. Albeit not finding her rapist, she makes sure they see her. Thus, *Restless* reverses the male, ethnographic gaze whilst silently commenting on the notion of whiteness.

Figure 11: Elsa returns the male, colonial gaze of the American soldiers, as she looks for her rapist.

In *Anori,* the male characters Inuk (representing good) and Malik (evil) repeatedly look at and desire the lead character. Being represented on a stage is inherent to her artistic career. Still, her performances and the men watching her underscore a to-be-looked-at-ness (Figure 12). Their acts of looking are overtly sexualized. The storyline positions Anori as the center of attention for both men and the rivalry between them. Involuntarily, she causes Inuk to almost die at the hands of Malik. Inuk is only rescued at the last minute, when (because?) Malik murders Anori. While represented as the passive party in this triangular drama, we may see her last action as the ultimate evidence of agency, and of love. It may also be viewed as in congruity with Mulvey's psychoanalytically based argument on how strong women need to be punished as a way out of the threat of castration that her mere presence posits for the man. The result is nevertheless that both lose (her), although Malik most, since he never gains Anori's affection. The film engages the male gaze, albeit reshaped and with a different result. The ethnographic or colonial gazes are not visible in *Anori*, nor in *The Body*. The latter even avoids the male gaze, through strategic camerawork and storytelling that the next chapter will reveal.

Figure 12: «The girl» in the Greenlandic myth storyline, played by Nukaka Coster Waldau who also plays the lead of Anori.

Sexual humiliation, and Elle-Marja and Elsa as Pocahontas

The arguments regarding the male, ethnographic, and colonial gaze, objectification, and the corporeal invasions observed in *Restless River* may be extended to central scenes in *Sami Blood*. Scientists and local Swedish boys attack Elle-Marja's body in ways that are clearly sexually humiliating. These scenes recall the trope of Pocahontas, which can also be retraced in *Restless River*. This section will look closer at this trope and various forms of sexual humiliation and objectification, starting with *Sami Blood*.

In the previous chapter, we saw how the Sámi children at the nomad school awaited the visit of prominent guests from Uppsala. It turns out that it is a delegation from the Swedish State Institute of Racial Biology, and the children are without warning, much less consent, turned into objects of research. They are examined within the supposed safety, professionalism, and ethics of the educational context. However, the indigenous children are not allowed an active part in research and knowledge building, which has been a typical trait all over the world (L.T. Smith 2012). Expected to set a good example, Elle-Marja is first; undressed to her underwear, her cranium, and the distance between the eyes are measured. Columpar uses warfare terminology to describe the affective relationship between science and indigenous peoples, fitting all too well to how the "scientists" in this scene "came armed with their mechanical apparatuses" (2002, 34). The researchers not only touch Elle-Marja without asking permission or respecting her objections; the leader physically forces her underwear out of her hands and her arms behind her head so she is fully exposed to the "chronophotographic gun" (2002, 36; see also Shohat and Stam 2014, 106) that blasts onto her body. The flash, enhanced by camera position, sound, and light, goes off like a gunshot (Figure 13). The other children watch in terror, knowing they are next.

Figure 13: Elle-Marja stripped and photo-gunned by the scientists of the State Institute of Racial Biology.

The ethnographic and colonial gaze cast a long shadow over the mise-en-scène of this scene. The children are on display, and Elle-Marja is singled out and put on a podium so everyone can get a better look, while the other "scientists", the teacher and the film's audience are watching. The Swedish boys who constantly bully the Sámi children, are peeping gleefully in through the window on a mortified Elle-Marja. The angle and framing keep her nudity hidden and integrity intact in confronts of the film's spectator, but not within the narrative. We observe the actions and their effects through alternating close-ups, wide shots, and various framings. The sequence demonstrates the corporeality of differentiating processes steered by the ethnographic gaze and research in general, as attacks against Elle-Marja. Although there are significant differences between sexual assault and a racial examination, this scene evokes the image of the body as battlefield, similar to the rape scene in *Restless River*. Looking at this scene intersectionally: As traumatizing as this experience is for all the children, it affects the girls, and in particular an adolescent on the brink of exploring her new body and sexuality, like Elle-Marja, in a specific and significant way. The staring boys' acts of looking emphasize the sexual humiliation of the scene. From their literally outside position, they represent the male, ethnographic, and colonial gaze which in this scene constructs a specific object of sight, the essence of the triple gaze: Namely the image of Pocahontas.

As the resourceful leader of the Sámi school children, Elle-Marja shares traits with one of the most well-known and persistent stereotypes of indigenous women. The real-life Pocahontas was (as opposed to the classic cinematic trope and the famous Disney interpretation), «a young woman whose agency and skilled contribution were recognized by her nation as central to its encounter with the ferocious colonizers" (Mayer 2015, 12)[30]. She "is moved away from independent, daring interactions with the natural world,

[30] Mayer refers to *Pocahontas: Medicine Woman, Spy, Entrepreneur, Diplomat* by Paula Gunn Allen.

and her repudiation of settler society, toward social assimilation" (2015, 6) as well as normative femininity. This is not unlike the journey Elle-Marja embarks on to become Swedish, substituting the knife she skillfully employed to mark the calves and kill a reindeer of her own herd (and threaten the Swedish bullying boys) with lipstick. The way Pocahontas is "figured in […] colonial imaginary as both sacrificial virgin and seductress" and also how the historical figure was seen as a cultural intermediary (Mayer 2015, 2, 11) attempting to form a bridge between races (Shohat and Stam 2014, 160), may however resemble Elsa more than Elle-Marja. Similar to both these characters, the story of Pocahontas can be read as one of survival, though ruling out the notion of romance to instead emphasize elements as rape and cultural destruction. In this interpretation, Pocahontas' child by the white settler John Smith points to readings of racial mixing as either a triumph for Westernizing narratives or a strategy of survival (Shohat and Stam 2014, 44). Mayer argues that the stereotyping «continues in contemporary mainstream cinema, both reflecting and perpetuating the lived experience of gendered colonial violence against indigenous women» (2015, 2). She refers to online activist Elissa Washuta who on her blog claims there is an «insistence that the image of Pocahontas at the end of a gun barrel is wholesome, while every day, more and more indigenous women die while we are told that this is not a phenomenon, not a problem, nothing more than crime." (Cited in Mayer 2015, 3). *Sami Blood* positions Elle-Marja as Pocahontas at the end of the gun here being the "scientist"'s camera, while *Restless River* juxtaposes Elsa with Pocahontas in that a white man sexually abuses and impregnates her. The films activate and alter the cinematic trope of The Celluloid Maiden, who, as Pocahontas, aligns herself (helps, enables, or falls in love) with the white, male colonizer and dies consequently. While death may be replaced with other trauma, like rape or (just) rejection, the trope's racist and colonialist implications are not erased (M. Elise Marubbio referenced in Mayer 2015). The film within the film reinforces the weight of the trope of the Celluloid Maiden in Elsa's story. Pocahontas, the historical person, and the trope, becomes an intermediary between the fictional characters and the real-world (in- and out-group) violence that the films thematize.

However, *Restless River* and *Sami Blood* pose critical revisions of the Pocahontas/Celluloid Maiden trope through various more significant strategies: The films foreground their indigenous, female protagonists as active, agential, and complex, underpinning the counter images and representational sovereignty that their insider position, paired with intentional indigenous storytelling techniques, ensures. *Restless River* does not embellish or try to hide the fact that the American soldier abuses Elsa. The relationship between Christina and the Swedish upper-middle-class Niklas in *Sami Blood* is more ambiguously portrayed, yet nowhere near the story of Pocahontas and John Smith which is repeatedly represented as reciprocally romantic, while in reality, he was a grown, powerful white man and Pocahontas a 12-year-old indigenous girl (Mayer 2015)[31]. Finally, *Restless River* and *Sami Blood* end in ways that reshape the trope. Elsa has negotiated her new existence between assimilation and resistance. Elle-Marja/Christina may be re-approaching the Sámi community.

[31] Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers, co-director of *The Body Remembers When the World Broke Open,* stages a showdown with the trope of Pocahontas in *A Red Girl's Reasoning* (2012) where the fierce heroine proclaims that « […] white boys have been having their way with Indian girls since contact. Forget what Disney tells you: Pocahontas was 12 when she met John Smith. It's pretty little lies like this that hide the ugly truth» (Mayer 2015, 3).

Dehumanizing indigenous women

Patterns of dehumanization run through the films in this analysis, as exemplified already. The films show how commodification, animalization, and other forms of dehumanization of indigenous women permeate every level of society, individually and collectively, across space and time. Moreover, they demonstrate how resistance cinema can counter and invalidate these narratives. Rosie in *The Body* is beaten by her boyfriend. Before the American soldier attacks Elsa in *Restless River*, he tells her to not be afraid, like calming an animal upon taking it to the slaughterhouse. Then he forces her face down on the ground. As he rapes her, she clenches the moss (Figure 14) while the camera zooms out and gets lifted to capture the entire scene of the crime and the surrounding landscape, creating an out-of-body effect. As a final act of the assault, he offers her money and thereby attempts to reduce her to a commodity. This act also dovetails with the myth of indigenous women's sexual availability, and the colonial images of indigenous women as sacrificial victims and/or sex objects (Mayer 2015). A myth targeting women all over the world suggests it wouldn't be rape if she was (turned into) a prostitute. In *Sami Blood*, dehumanization takes place in the abusive "scientific" examination and the violence by village boys. This section will examine how the films overturn moments of dehumanization and develop these scenes into sites of resistance.

Figure 14: Elsa clenching the moss during the rape scene of Restless River.

The "scientists" who performed craniometry and observations of the indigenous children in *Sami Blood*, instrumentalized them into research objects (Olsen 2018; Kokkola, Palo, and Manderstedt 2019; Sand 2022). As such, the scene exhibits the dehumanizing aspect of the ethnographic gaze, recalling how it in the history of film has positioned the Western viewers as «*ersatz* scientists» (Columpar 2002, 37). The film reminds us how research converged with visual media technologies in confirming and communicating categories of us and them, facilitating racial iconography (Columpar 2002, 35). To these "scientists", indigenous individuals are equated to plants, minerals, or animals. The examination; biological measurements (Figure 15), physical checkup, and documentation of their naked bodies, deprived the Sámi girls of their human nature and transformed

them into specimens. Female indigenous nudity, displayed as non-human, is another trope originating from *Nanook of the North* (Siebert 2006). The lead "scientist" checks Elle-Marja's teeth stating they are "intact". The onlookers, including the boys outside the window, form a circle, trapping her. Hence, the sequence engages the trope of animalization, like the examples from *Restless River* and *The Body* in the paragraph above. According to Shohat and Stam, animalizing is a key colonialist trope (2014, 137-138). It is rooted in colonialist and racist rhetoric which again is rooted in Western views of religion, race, class, and gender, and employs zoological terms to describe indigenous peoples. Animalizing is part of a broader discourse of naturalization and dehumanization (i.e., reducing indigenous peoples to body and biology as opposed to mind and culture) (Shohat and Stam 2014; L.T. Smith 2012). These terms are so deeply embedded in descriptions of indigenous women, that they have become almost permanent images (L.T. Smith 2012, 9). Not unlike the way Elle-Marja will get marked in the scene following the racial exam.

Figure 15: A white male performs craniometry on Elle-Marja in the classroom-turned-research lab, ignoring her questions, with the other children as observers.

On her way from the inspection, Elle-Marja must pass the boys who just saw her naked. Every day the Sámi children are, as Lydia Kokkola, Annbritt Palo and Lena Manderstedt describe it, "herded past the village boys" (2019, 9) who throw derogatory comments after them. This time, they shout: "There goes the circus animal!". Elle-Marja draws her father's knife on them and demands they take back their words. But she's overpowered, pushed to the ground and one of the boys cuts a notch in her ear, like branding a reindeer calf (Kokkola, Palo, and Manderstedt 2019; Sand 2022) (Figure 16). The image recalls an earlier scene, where Elle-Marja brands one of her reindeer calves as is the Sámi practice. Now, she throws a verbal punch towards the Swedish boys: "You're just as much a Lapp[32] as me", invoking discourses of whiteness, inclusion, and exclusion

[32] Lapp was previously preferred for the Sámi population in Sweden but is now largely seen as derogatory (Árnadóttir 2017; Kokkola, Palo, and Manderstedt 2019).

based on blood quantum related to the Sámi peoples, to which the film's title also refers. However, the brutal actions of the boys have left a permanent physical and mental mark. The scene thus prolongs and deepens the degrading animalization at the biological exam. As Sand also notes in her analysis of how *Sami Blood* deals with racism and the colonial past, "the situation resembles an animal enclosure, where Elle-Marja is treated like an animal that needs to be 'tackled' by a human. It is a violent expression of power and how the colonizer may treat the colonized as [if] they have no feelings" (2022, 10). Furthermore, Sand points to how the boy complains that his hands are now dirty. This comment echoes the constant calls to the Sámi children that they stink, a notion Elle-Marja internalizes as she repeatedly tries to wash off the alleged smell and persuades her sister to do the same.

Figure 16: Elle-Marja gets ear branded by Swedish boys.

The discourse of whiteness perpetuates the sequence, most outspokenly voiced by the female "scientist" inspecting the Sámi children lined up to welcome the delegation (Figure 17). She observes them one by one, touching their *gákti*, hair and skin while commenting on what beautiful dresses they have, how fair their skin and hair are, "and not even that coarse!", astonished that some are blonder than herself. The racial examination is thus a political and personal invasive act against the Sámi girls, intended to substantiate the alleged difference between white and nonwhite bodies based on a corporeal racial taxonomy. This differentiation, partly constructed and continuously confirmed within the scopic regime, fed both colonialist politics and anthropological practice (Columpar 2002, 34). In Shohat and Stam's words: "A mania of classification, measurement, and ranking – expressed in such pseudo-sciences as phrenology and craniometry" whose resulting discourses were epistemologically mediated by dominant cinema and made palpable to audiences (2014, 91-93). Ironically, the woman "scientist" herself notes the unreliability of the "science". *Sami Blood* portrays and at the same time undermines this racist pseudo-science through the Swedish woman's observations of the blonde girl.

Figure 17: A white woman inspects and comments on the, in her pseudo-science, unexpected whiteness of Sámi children.

The researchers' methods also paved the way for and justified the racist violence at the hands of the village boys, who witnessed the systemic racism and learned from the state representatives, Sand argues (2022, 11). These key sequences violently express the imbalanced power relations and the objectification, as naturalized, dehumanized, racialized, sexualized, and/or commodified, through the ethnographic, colonial, and male gaze. The writer-director Amanda Kernell does not, however, uncritically reproduce familiar tropes. Instead, she exposes them and explores how the racist, colonialist, and sexist discourses in which they engage affect her characters. Thus, the sequences offer critical revisions and reversals of colonialist cinematic tropes as well as white settler policies towards the Sámi in the 1930s, some of which live on today. The scenes talk back to the discourse of dehumanization of indigenous women, as do all the films: Each in their own way, Rosie, Elsa, Anori, and Elle-Marja show resilience and refuse to be/stay reduced to animals, commodities, research objects, or sex objects. Elle-Marja manages to get the education she dreams of after she flees the violent racism and sexism that perpetuated life in nomad school. Elsa rejects the pocket money, and status as commodity or prostitute, then raises her boy on her own. Whether staying or leaving, all four demonstrate resourcefulness, pride, strength, and agency.

Violent expressions of the impact of colonial conquest

The readings so far in this chapter have shown how the female, indigenous body is a battlefield discursively and literally. Yet, the body can be viewed as site of battle also allegorically. I will argue that the acts of gendered violence in *The Body*, *Sami Blood,* and *Restless River* are allegories of or linked to colonialism. When Elsa is raped, her body is turned into a site of colonialization upon which the wounds of the colonial past-present are inflicted. Aligning the American soldier with the white protagonist in the film within the film sways us to see the soldier in relation to the emblematic white man of Western

cinema, who in turn equals the (again, white male) colonist and settler. The soldier stationed in post-war Kuujjuaq assaults one of the women in his host community. This act of war against her body is reminiscent of how colonists used physical rape of native women as a weapon against indigenous peoples and to promote what they saw as cultural and national development (Projansky 2001). Furthermore, his hollow gesture of financial compensation resonates with the historical ways indigenous communities lost land and sovereignty.

Despite that the rape sequence sets in motion everything in Elsa's life and the film's story, the soldier remains an anonymous subsidiary character: He has no name, no background, and is absent for most of the film. This lack of setup makes the stranger more of a symbol than a person. What he embodies, is imperialism itself. Backing this assumption Domosh and Seager demonstrate, in their book *Putting Women in Place* (2001), how native peoples are often figured as female or feminine, while the conqueror is a white, heterosexual man. Furthermore, they remind us that conquest of land often contains sexually loaded assumptions (e.g. "penetrating virgin landscape", "The New World yielding her virginity", "opening her lap to the conquering" etc.) about how the exotic other, that is indigenous peoples, are submissive to the masculine West (see also Shohat and Stam 2014). This mindset was predominant in white colonialist states, and especially in their male representatives. In the case of European settlers in the American West, for instance, men saw the American West as a virgin land, ready to be raped and exploited (Annette Kolodny, referenced in Domosh and Seager 2001).[33] Thus, the scene in *Restless River* where the white Western man forces himself onto the female, Inuit woman, may be a metaphor for imperial conquest; colonialism compared to rape (Shohat and Stam 2014, 160). As such, it speaks to what Benson-Allott claims to be a key theme in academic analyses of rape narratives: "[T]he rape's and rapist's symbolic narrative function as stand-in for patriarchal systems of oppression […] fulfil[ling] a fundamental role in storytelling traditions» (2020, 554). Gendered violence, in all its forms, has been employed as a tool of colonization in past and present (Kuokkanen 2015), and the impact of imperialism and colonialism has contributed to the devastating degree to which indigenous women still are victims of violence. Highlighting the physical, cultural, and psychological embodied Eurocentrism, Shohat and Stam state that the "racialized body has been subjected […] to rape, branding, lynching, whipping, stun-gunning and other kinds of physical abuse but also to the cultural erasure entailed in esthetic stigmatization". The statement points to racist acts of overlooking and stereotyping indigenous peoples, as well as feminist minority films which counter this kind of "psychic violence" (2014, 323).

Speaking up against in-group gendered violence

So far, the analysis has focused on the films' references to misogynistic violence which white (mostly) males inflict upon indigenous women. However, the films' centering on indigenous women's experiences of violence also allude to the high rate of domestic abuse within contemporary Inuit communities, not unlike the rape scene in *Atanarjuat* as analyzed by Marco Bohr (2015). Nunavut has the highest crime rate in Canada as a result of elevated levels of domestic violence (Loukacheva 2007: 100, referenced in Bohr 2015). Nationwide, 1500 indigenous women in Canada were missing and murdered by

[33] Kolodny's research of white women settler's or traveler's writings from the imperial peak period show how the female view differed greatly (though not more accurate) from the male in that women primarily saw the land of conquest as masterless (Domosh and Seager 2001).

2015 (Knobblock and Kuokkanen 2015). This grim reality is shared across the northern indigenous peoples as well as globally (Knobblock and Kuokkanen 2015; Kuokkanen 2015), to the extent that "violence and family abuse became entrenched in communities which had no hope" (L.T. Smith 2012, 147). Violence and homicide rates are high for Inuit also in Greenland, where most perpetrators are men and the violence against women is mostly of the domestic kind (Curtis et al. 2002). Research points towards overrepresentation and chronic underreporting of gendered violence within the Sámi communities as well (Kuokkanen 2015). The following paragraphs will look closer at mechanisms that cause, enable and/or reinforce the in-community gendered violence encountered in *The Body* and *Anori*.

As argued above, the history of rape narratives, stereotypes and tropes, objectification, and dehumanizing, racist attitudes are expressions of, and entrenched in, colonialist ideas. The colonial past-present thus continues to preserve a rape culture that turns indigenous women into victims-becoming-survivors of gendered violence. While these aspects are relevant as to how white men exploit indigenous women, they also impact in-group gendered violence. Sámi scholar Rauna Kuokkanen, professor of indigenous studies at the University of Toronto, has published comparative, transnational research on gendered violence in indigenous communities in Canada and Sápmi (2015). She reaffirms that the repercussions of the history of colonization continue to manifest themselves, especially in indigenous women (see also Kuokkanen 2012). Kuokkanen (2015) highlights how the fight for self-determination can be framed as a hindrance to indigenous women's issues and safety by the way it justifies accusations of disloyal, divisive acts by women who speak out about gendered violence. Male leadership largely views self-determination as a collective struggle and demands unity to prevail[34]. Thus, any appeal to an outside authority, like the police, may be a threat to autonomy. By extension, there is a (legitimate) fear that acknowledging in-group violence against women will further stigmatize indigenous peoples. In fighting for self-determination, authenticity and affiliation have become central. A negative side effect is that aboriginal women in Canada who "marry out" or voice concerns about violence will be deemed unauthentic and therefore exiled. For the Sámi, Christianity may contribute to subordinate and impede women from speaking out. In the wake of colonialism's policies and institutions, notably residential schools and stolen children, northern indigenous peoples also face challenges related to unemployment, poverty, housing problems, and substance abuse which make women more vulnerable to violence. While these realities are more prevalent in Canada than in Sápmi, the internalization of colonial norms has depoliticized and normalized gendered violence in all these communities (Kuokkanen 2015, 281) on individual, collective, political, and institutional levels. Naturalization of racist and misogynistic violence – physical, sexual, psychological or structural – silences and discriminates against women, and creates cycles of abuse (Kuokkanen 2015; see also Sand 2022).

Yet, scholars warn against a presupposition that colonialism is the exclusive cause or equivalent to gendered violence within indigenous peoples. "Sexual violence, carried out by indigenous men against women of their own community, must also be understood and explained within the frames of those communities", argues Olsen (2018, 191).

[34] This perception of self-determination is not shared by all. For many women, «self-determination is not only something collective but […] includes women's individual autonomy and self-determination over their own bodies and reproduction, and the right to be free from violence» (Knobblock and Kuokkanen 2015, 276).

Kuokkanen (2015) and the Danish anthropologist Bo Wegner Sørensen (2001), writing about violence against women in Greenland, share several points of critique of external, historical explanations. For one, in presupposing that traditional and modern lifestyles are incompatible, these frameworks victimize indigenous peoples and tend to make men the greater victims in a hierarchy of subordination, thus denying agency and condoning and/or excusing their violent behavior. They also seem to agree on how reluctance and ambivalence toward gendered violence by public institutions enable a continuation of violent practices in the private sphere. Kuokkanen's concerns about the tendency to exaggeratedly externalize explanations of internal gendered violence extend to future generations, and she argues that factoring in in-community mechanisms is needed to break the cycle (2015). Their analyses part, though, when Sørensen discards any structural-functionalist explanatory framework. Following his argument, gendered violence among Inuit is about concepts of power, control, discipline, and maintaining gender-based boundaries, and men's entitlements. He concludes: «Men's violence against women in Greenland is basically not different from men's violence elsewhere" (2001, 840). Hence, the attack on Anori can be viewed as an attempt to control and discipline her, even to kill the personality Malik was attracted to in the first place (Sørensen 2001) since she rejected his sexual approaches. However, the way Sørensen downplays social change and rapid modernization, and barely mentions colonization as a factor, represents a risk to overlook specific characteristics and consequences of the kind of transition that many indigenous communities go through. Settler states' policies which relocate people with force, and deprive them of their livelihood, land, language, culture, and even children, are not mere modernization. Actor-oriented motivations are important to consider as rationalizations of men's choice to violate, however, they do not suffice to substantiate the relatively higher rates of gendered violence in for instance Inuit communities.

Kuokkanen (2015) lists internal conditions which govern the way in-group gendered oppression is addressed, explained, sanctioned, and/or condoned in northern indigenous communities: For instance, Sámi, as well as Canadian aboriginal women who report abuse, are met with blame, shame, betrayal or other sanctions instead of expertise and confidentiality. Traditional Sámi child-rearing has taught girls to take responsibility for both their own and the boys' behavior, while boys have learned that a "no" is not necessarily a "no". Even the notion of Sámi women as strong may lead to enhanced vulnerability; they should not be receptive to violence in the first place, and, or in need of any outside help to cope with it. However, colonialism is continuously brought back into the deliberation. For instance, Christian gender frames may be long and well incorporated in Sámi societies, to the extent that the boundaries between Sámi tradition and Christian norms are blurry, still, they are imported along with imperialism. Traditional values and practices work together with internalized colonial and patriarchal norms within indigenous communities, and the settler government bodies, in subordinating, marginalizing, and exposing indigenous women to risk. Thus, it seems difficult if not impossible to bypass colonialism when accounting for gendered violence against indigenous women in the North. Or in Belcourt's words: "Indigenous bodies […] absorb colonial trauma" (2017).

The selected films prioritize women's experiences and subordinate the male perpetrators' motivations and eventual victimization. And while there are references to historical, external as well as internal structural causality, the films sustain men's social agency and responsibility for their oppressive acts. In *Anori,* the aggressor Malik (meaning "storm",

Figure 18), symbolizes evil in the myth interwoven in the contemporary story. Eventually, his issues with violence are uncovered, although not further explained. *The Body*, on the other hand, speaks to all the complex challenges that indigenous communities are facing as discussed above. Rosie, her boyfriend, and his mother are living in a housing project, and their work situation is unclear, but their relative poverty is evident, for instance when Rosie sells pills that she stole from Áila, dovetailing with the stranglehold that substance abuse has on indigenous individuals and societies in Canada. As the next chapter will show, the conversation between Áila and Rosie circles around authenticity and ethnicity, alluding to the importance of in-group indigenous acceptance. Whether out of general wariness, bad experiences with authorities, or a choice to support the in-group unity, *The Body* demonstrates Rosie's hesitancy to seek support from safe houses and certainly the police. Asking her family to assist her is out of the question, because of broken family units and of fear of shaming in the reservation, that she will be seen as "one of those girls". Rosie shows signs of internalization of the violence, as she is reluctant to acknowledge the abusive reality of her relationship and tends to excuse his behavior and make herself co-culprit. Although related to violence executed by outsiders, Elle-Marja in *Sami Blood* internalizes the racism she is exposed to, to the extent that she thinks herself smelly and dirty, and the soldier in *Restless River*, referring to the images of gendered violence in the film within the film, attempts to naturalize the abuse he is about to subject Elsa to. Abused women in general often display denial and defensiveness, although the films specify the uniquely complex situation for indigenous women. Moreover, Rosie's choices echo the unwillingness of indigenous leadership to deal with gendered violence.

Figure 18: Malik demonstrating internal conflict related to the sexualized assault he commits against Anori in the hotel.

A joint result of the external and internal explications is that while male leaders' (and laymen's) responses are reluctant, refuse, or fail to recognize and respond to the problem, women are being curfewed and muzzled. Overall, an immense silence encloses

the subject of the gendered oppression of indigenous women. This section has explicated the dangers of the rape-as-allegory convention: If it relegates the woman's body to merely a symbol of the native community, it no longer has the same level of protection when the attacker/abuser is not white but an insider. Furthermore, anyone trying to raise awareness of gendered violence in northern indigenous societies will have to deal with a widespread reluctance to accept and address the situation, which is a "forbidden subject" (2015, 271). Contemporary, indigenous female filmmakers break that silence, as this thesis demonstrates.[35]

[35] Sámi female filmmakers have in recent years given voice to abused women through short and documentary films. Noteworthy titles include *The Silence in Sápmi* (Liselotte Wajstedt Norway/Sweden/Sápmi, 2021), *The Tongues* (*Njuokčamat*, Marja Bål Nango and Ingir Bål, Norway/Sápmi, 2019), and *Boso mu ruovttoluotta – breathe me back to life* (Sunna Nousuniemi, Finland/Sápmi, 2021).

Chapter 4: Film as joik

As we witnessed in the turntable scene in *The Body*, the record player reminded Rosie of happy childhood moments with her grandmother. In *Sami Blood*, Christina, her son, and granddaughter listen to a modernized *joik,* telling a significantly more acidic story, transmitted through the car stereo as a substitute for the turntable. Thus, the turntable is a device of communication for and across generations. As an appliance that activates the sense of hearing, it also enters an oral tradition. Cross-generational orality is a characteristic that the turntable shares with indigenous culture, although the latter has an immensely longer and richer history. Representing indigeneity, *joik* constitutes a contrariety to the gramophone from *Nanook of the North*. For indigenous peoples, music, song, and dance are often important channels for passing down knowledge. Moreover, it creates unity in and between their communities, like between the two women of different indigenous heritage in *The Body*. This is true not least for the Sámi *joik*, which is a main motif in *Sami Blood*. In this film, as well as in *Restless River*, *Anori,* and *The Body*, indigenous music works as a trope of its own charged with a multitude of connotations worthy of a closer examination.

In this chapter, keeping the turntable scene at the core of the analysis, the circles will ripple a bit further. Extending on the significance of music in the films introduced in chapter 2, I will examine the *joik* motif as it appears throughout *Sami Blood*. Links to musical pieces in the other films, like a First Nation lullaby performed in *The Body*, Inuit throat singing in *Restless River,* and contemporary Inuit pop music in *Anori* enter into the mix. The aim is to show how this variety of music creates a dialogical space wherein the films can discuss different identity markers (including *joik*), languages, and other characteristics of indigenous storytelling. In continuation, the analysis will look at how the selected works articulate authenticity. The scenes, storylines, and mise-en-scène in which the musical pieces appear express indigeneity and gender in specific ways which contribute to the construction of counterstories: They turn the tables on the stereotypical representations of northern indigenous women.

The previous chapter briefly visited the scene in *Sami Blood* where Elle-Marja, "converted" into Christina and newly arrived in the Swedish city of Uppsala, performs a hesitant *joik* as the exotic entertainment of a party. This is one episode in a narrative of *joik*, starting with the prologue when the old Christina goes north with her son and granddaughter for her sister's funeral (Figure 19):

> *Christina is in the passenger seat of a car, looking out the window away from the driver. Sámi music is coming from the car stereo.*
> Christina's son, driving (off-screen): Listen. Sanna and I bought this for you. It's from where you come from.
> *The words Stoerre Varie (The Great Northern Mountain) are joiked. Camera shifts to the hands of Sanna in the backseat, playing with the petals of a red rose, then zooms out to see her in her black dress, looking silently ahead. Christina shakes her head.*
> Christina: I have no business there, with those people.
> *Focus again from the front, capturing mother and son in the frame.*
> The son: Do you understand what she sings?
> Christina: I don't like it. It's so screamy. And they steel, and they lie. And they, well they whine.
> *Christina looks out the window again, and the scene ends.*

Figure 19: Christina is lamenting on the joik her son is playing on the car stereo.

Shortly after, the film shifts to the 1930s. Young Elle-Marja and her little sister Njenna are on their way to another year at the Swedish nomad school. Njenna is crying, and Elle-Marja comforts her by *joiking* The Great Northern Mountain. If you can *joik* it, it will feel as if you are at home, she says. The *joik* turns into friendly teasing. Abruptly, Elle-Marja warns her sister to never *joik* in school. Later, the girls at school gather in the dormitory. Njenna *joik* to mock Elle-Marja's Swedish ways (Figure 20), making everyone laugh. Elle-Marja/Christina's running out on her own joik at the party in Uppsala symbols the final parting with everything Sámi (Figure 21):

Figure 20: Njenna teases Elle-Marja's Swedish ways through joik, while Elle-Marja smilingly asks her to stop.

Christina shows up at Niklas' house, uninvited, where he is celebrating his birthday. A friend of his lets her in. There's champagne, canapés, and jazz on the gramophone.
Niklas' friend: Aren't you the one from Lapland? The one Niklas met there? Then you could *joik*… yodel…
Karin (another friend, laughing): *Joik*.
First friend (laughing): *Joik*…! For us? That would be fantastic.
Elle-Marja shakes her head, clearly uncomfortable.
First friend: I have never heard one.
Karin: No, neither have I.
First friend: Ellen and I study anthropology, so we're going to do our field work up there. It can be a birthday present to Niklas. A birthday *joik*. Niklas? You would like a birthday *joik*, wouldn't you?
Elle-Marja looks at Niklas, all eyes are on her.
Niklas (hesitating): Well… yes, yes.
First friend to a boy at the table: Would you stop the music?
Elle-Marja succumbs, stands up, and starts joiking wordlessly and almost whispering. The more the other guests look down or away, the more uncertain she becomes, before stopping. Met by more silence, she hurries out of the house.

Figure 21: Elle-Marja/Christina joiks in front of Niklas' friends at his birthday party.

Joik as remembering and becoming indigenous

Joik is a traditional Sámi unaccompanied singing style of scales and vocalizations. Often lyrics mix with vocal sounds and melody resembling or referencing the objects evoked in the *joik* – who or what is *joiked* – drawing on metaphorical imagery that transcends time, people, and landscapes. *Joik* is a way to remember persons, animals, places, or events, communicate one's innermost feelings, and construct a sense of unity within a group, reinforcing the individual's sense of identity as a member of a family or community (Rice, Porter, and Goertzen 2017; Moffat 2018; Gaski 1999; Fish 2017). There are strong political implications inherent to *joik*, tied to colonialization and decolonizing efforts: First, it "has been representative of the encroachment and abuse that the Sami people

have suffered at the hands of outsiders" (Fish 2017, 238), and second, the "adaptability of *joiking* allows for the continuous reinterpretation of Sámi identities in the face of colonial oppression" (Moffat 2018, 56). The key term here is to allow for, something Christina does not seem to do. Willingly, though, *joik* has the capacity to bridge past and present through its transcending potential. Fish emphasizes how *joik* conveys the spiritual aspect of Sámi epistemology and identity. Referring to Hugh Beach, saying that *joik* is rooted in the shamanistic past, she argues that *joik* was also a means to become or to remember by becoming. This notion derives from the practice where shamans might transpose their spirits into the shape of an animal, or travel to far-off places, opening themselves to the subject through *joik* (2017, 247; see also Moffat 2018). These aspects of *joik* are relevant as the four selected films use *joik*, or other pieces of indigenous music, to express indigenous inheritance which individuals have passed, and will continue to pass, down. Being constantly in transition, these traditions can help reconnect to or reshape contemporary indigenous identities.

"You can [*j*]*oik* a longing", states filmmaker and multi-artist Liselotte Wajstedt in her voice-over in the documentary *Sami Daughter Joik* (2007). There are interesting comparisons to be made between Wajstedt's first-person feminist experimental film (MacKenzie and Stenport 2016b; Mecsei 2019; Moffat 2018; Fish 2017) and the selected features, especially *Sami Blood*. *Sami Blood* resembles the preceding documentary in that the frame story is a road trip from an urban non-indigenous place to a rural Sámi space. They are also both about loss and recovery of indigeneity, although *Sami Daughter Joik*'s standpoint is one where indigeneity was repressed a generation or two ago, whereas we are witnessing this process unfold in *Sami Blood*. Another significant difference is that Wajstedt is actively searching for a Sámi identity, while it remains unclear whether the character of Christina will reconcile with hers. The two films share the *joik* motif. Wajstedt proposes that *joik* may go beyond a cinematic trope, stating that "my film is a *joik*". Thus *joik* becomes cinema, or what MacKenzie and Stenport coin as cinematic *joik* (2016b). According to them, *Sami Daughter Joik* turns "the oral tradition of *joiking* into a documentary mode […] perform[ing] the effort and ethos of transcultural memory work", by conveying "knowledge, culture, tradition and interconnectedness" (MacKenzie and Stenport 2016b, 175; see also Kendall 2018). Oral traditions are central in Sámi and other indigenous cultures (MacKenzie and Stenport 2016b; Pearson and Knabe 2015b; MacKenzie and Stenport 2015b; Bohr 2015). Film itself, although visual, share similarities with oral storytelling as "a medium that conveys conscious and unconscious access to time, place, subjectivity, and myth" (Fish 2017, 237-238). Orality thus interconnects the turntable, *joik* and other indigenous singing styles, and film. Hence, film is a fitting format for indigenous storytelling, and *joik* a fitting metaphor for film, relating cultural knowledge and oral history to the sharing of a story through the screen (Knopf 2015; Bohr 2015). The first Inuit feature, *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* (2001) is another parallel, self-referentially making singing a potent metaphor for narrative cinema through a shaman's opening line (Bohr 2015, 88): "I can only sing this song to someone who understands it".

I will suggest that *Sami Blood* too is a *joik*. *Joik* is a distinct sign of Sáminess, just as *Sami Blood*'s identity as a film is distinctly Sámi. It also fits the definition of *joik*, being about remembering, communicating deeply hidden feelings in Christina as well as the feelings of the writer-director, and possibly reinstalling Elle-Marja/Christina's sense of community. At the same time, the film reinforces or establishes the individual viewer's relation to his or her eventual indigenous identity. Specifically, *Sami Blood* is *joiking* Elle-

Marja as a heroine facing fervent attacks towards her female indigeneity in the face of colonialism. Furthermore, Kernell, as the director-artist, *joiks* a possible indigenous future even for the individuals and generations who lost connection to their indigeneity due to colonialism and who seek such reconciliation (L.T. Smith 2012). *The Body*, *Restless River,* and *Anori* may all be interpreted as cinematic equivalents to *joik*, throat singing, or First Nations lullabies, being carriers of indigenous identities and performing transcultural memory work by passing on indigenous knowledge, culture, tradition, and connectedness.

All four films share with *joik* a subtle use of double meaning. *Joik* will typically ”communicate at two levels at the same time, so that one type of message was conveyed to Sámi audience and quite another to outsiders”, adding an extra potential – or internal code – in the text (Gaski 1999, 8). These films contain elements that hold different meanings depending on the audience's knowledge. An abundance of indigenous identity markers, use of native languages, myths, traditionally rooted musical pieces, indigenous knowledge, and storytelling techniques in the selected films attest to this argument. The expressions of indigeneity and gender in the mise-en-scène in for instance Áila’s home are plentiful, as the close-reading in chapter 2 testify, though largely go unexplained. Co-director of *The Body*, Kathleen Hepburn, confirms that they wrote the film to an indigenous audience and that they “didn’t want to be explaining what it means to be an indigenous woman to indigenous women. We just wanted to show life as it is” (Saito 2019). *Sami Blood* director Kernell concurs: “[…] as one Sámi woman in the test audience put it: ‘two different films, one that only the Sámi will understand and one for everyone else.’ I think that’s good. It doesn’t bother me if some people don’t exactly understand all the details” (Wahllöf 2016). These affirmations echo the words of the shaman in *Atanarjuat*.

Sami Blood uses *joik* as a narrative device to drive or trace Elle-Marja’s journey: From an innocent child with a solid Sámi status to the much older Christina who ardently writes off *joik* as “whining” yet finds herself accompanied by *joik* for her sister’s burial. The grown-up son makes an effort to connect through the music to a (hybrid) Sámi identity he maybe never knew he had. *Joik* is here analog to identifying and being identified as Sámi. At first, when Elle-Marja herself *joiks*, it is inherent to her Sáminess. At this point, she is determined to return to reindeer herding as soon as school finishes. As the depths of the negative connotations towards Sámi in the Swedish majority community are uncovered, the adolescent Elle-Marja becomes increasingly more ambivalent towards *joik* and other Sámi traditions or objects, and to Sámi identity overall. As a consequence, it is imperative to discard *joik* along with everything else Sámi to fit in the Swedish society. *Sami Daughter Joik* spells out the repression of *joik* in a way that can assist in the analysis of the *joik* trope in *Sami Blood*: Wajstedt’s aunt calls it “howling” (Fish 2017, 247). Her aunt and her grandmother bring up how, once Sámi peoples had been voluntarily or forcefully Christianized, to *joik* was considered a sin. “Only drunks *joik*”, her grandmother says. MacKenzie and Stenport remind us that this stereotype masks a trauma: “Only when drunk could a core aspect of Sámi culture be expressed. When sober, that cultural form of expression needed to be suppressed” (2016b, 175). Elle-Marja/Christina in *Sami Blood* experienced such perceptions, and being asked to *joik* at a birthday bash plays right into this derogatory discernment.

At that party, the gramophone is stopped to have Elle-Marja/Christina perform, recalling how the gramophone patterns construct the categories of civilized (Western/colonist)

versus primitive (native/colonized). Pushing her to perform, the girls expose Christina's Sámi ethnicity and exotism through the *joik* as their ethnographic gaze pins her down (Columpar 2002). Acknowledging that gender, sex, and racial identifiers have geographical correlates, it is evident that Elle-Marja is "the 'wrong' body" in "the 'wrong' place" (Domosh and Seager 2001, 111). As the audience we are at this moment aligned with Christina, having all our sympathy placed with her (M. Smith 1994). The narration has educated us about Sámi culture and Swedish colonialism. Hence, the humiliation of the situation makes us cringe. The Swedish girls' choice of study adds to the uncomfortable feeling of the scene by recalling the complicated history that indigenous peoples have with science, including in film. For Christina, colliding with research is a very real and recent experience, as we saw in chapter 3. Anthropology, among indigenous peoples often viewed as the essence of everything that is bad about research, set out as a science based on racially differentiating indigenous "them" from the "us" of the white Westerner (Columpar 2002, 35-36; L.T. Smith 2012, 70). To be admitted at the table with "us", like Christina at the party, impels her, as part of "them", to reduce herself and appropriate the Swedish youths' manners (Minh-Ha 2009, 67). In highlighting education and anthropology, the scene engages the concept of whiteness and feeds into Elle-Marja/Christina's efforts to unmark herself and pass as white: She needs to occupy that white space to be admitted into the colonial educational system.

Kernell both critiques and recuperates the research field of anthropology, as she herself has made an auto-ethnographic film (Sand 2022). At the same time, the four chosen films are opposites to the classical ethnographic film which «denies the anthropological subject historical agency, individual voice, and psychological complexity, […] reduces him/her to a racial 'type'» and constructs ahistorical images (Columpar 2002, 36). Instead, this scene is yet an example of how *Sami Blood* turns the tables, narrating the story from the position of the indigenous minority, for indigenous audiences. Viewed intersectionally, the point of view is that of a young Sámi, rural just becoming urban, less-educated, less-privileged woman who is purposeful, resourceful, and courageous. The four films appeal to the audience's identification and allow their protagonists to be complex agents exceeding any stereotype. By simultaneously resisting and complying with the conventions of ethnographic film, these features are textbook examples of visual sovereignty (Raheja 2010, 2007).

While Elle-Marja still *joiked*, she, like the other Sámi girls and particularly her sister Njenna, employed *joik* as a means of survival and resistance at the residential school. But always in secret, so the matron or the teacher would not, even corporally, punish them. The colonizers tried to make Sámi children unlearn *joiking*, sometime succeeding as with Elle-Marja, while strengthening the tie for others. Njenna does not listen to her older sister's advice and insists on *joiking* and speaking in Sámi at school even though it results in constantly sore hands from the teacher's whip. In the epilogue, the priest affirms that Njenna kept *joiking* all her life: "To *joik* became her means of surviving, finding strength… A means to get away and to come home". That practice started out as a child that had to stay a long way and time apart from her mother, dealing with the death of her father and the loss of her sister. The girls *joiked* to give one another courage, a pause, or a laugh. And they *joiked* their place of heart, so as not to forget it or to recall the feeling of home as a refuge (Domosh and Seager 2001). *Sami Blood* functions similarly to a *joik,* expressing the complexities of identity, longing, belonging, ambivalence, pain, past and present, as well as place. And as *joik*, *Sami Blood* is a counterstory and an expression of survivance.

The identity of a lullaby and throat singing

Joik has correlations to singing and storytelling in Native American communities. Today, both are traditional performative acts as well as modern artwork, used to validate and affirm identities as indigenous communities (Gaski 1999, 15). In *The Body*, recalling how the sisters in *Sami Blood joiked* their home while at boarding school, the lullaby sung by Rosie to her unborn baby evokes a sense of belonging for the two of them, a safe space outside the perimeters of the abusive boyfriend. "Mommy's Little Guy", the lullaby first mentioned in connection to motherhood in chapter 2, is written and performed by Fawn Wood. She is Cree and Salish, peoples of Canada's First Nations as is the Kwakwaka'wakw, to whom Rosie appertain. The song describes maternal love in relation to natural elements; reaching the sky and the stars. It is a consolation, an assurance of continuous care and bonds of identity that reach way beyond the film's mother-child-relation. The lullaby, repeated as a motif and on which note the film literally ends, provides solace to its characters and audience.

Also, Rosie's singing anticipates her unborn son's arrival to this world. Giving a *joik* to a person was traditionally like a naming process, linking the individual to the collective (Gaski 1999, 16). In *Anori*, the protagonist is a singer-songwriter who in a concert performs a song of her own name. She explains to the audience in front of the stage – and the screen – how Anori means wind in the Greenlandic language Kalaallisut. Anori's singing center stages her as an urban, independent, creative woman who travels to perform but has her home base in the Greenlandic capital. She is a storyteller who employs her voice, indigenous language, and musicality to connect to people, in particular her fellow Inuit. The soundtrack of *Anori* includes tracks of throat singing, which is not Greenlandic, but rather a tradition performed among the Inuit of Canada, the Ainu of the island of Sakhalin, and the Chukchi of Russian Siberia (Nattiez 1999). The use of this genre in the Greenlandic Inuit film *Anori* and the Canadian Inuit film *Restless River* shows the transnationality and trans-indigeneity of contemporary Fourth Cinema as well as the Arctic region. Throat singing is a game more than a song, performed only by women. Usually, two women face each other in friendly contest engaging skills associated with endurance, virtuosity, and aesthetics. According to ethnomusicologist Jean-Jacques Nattiez (1999), the throat-game of the Canadian Inuit, katajjaq, consists of a pattern of voiced and voiceless sounds and a particular rhythm and intonation. Sometimes the sounds derive from words or names, or in other ways evoke, imitate, or name persons, animals, or landscapes close to the performer's heart. Deciphering a throat game requires imaginative and intellectual powers in the listener. The functions of the game vary: To entertain, keep babies quiet, as breathing exercises in preparation for bad weather, or imitations of the cracking of the northern lights or a way of playing with them (Nattiez 1999, 400-404). Moreover, Nattiez proposes that throat singing stands for a gendered division of labor in that the women employed throat-games to influence the spirits of ancestors, animals, or elements of nature, which in turn would create the optimal conditions for hunting. His hypothesis is that "women have been participating on equal footing with men in the survival of the community. Female throat-games would be a kind of survival music" (1999, 405). This perception adds a strong symbolism to *Anori* and *Restless River*. Both films can be viewed, following the supposition that *Sami Blood* is a *joik*, as cinematic and feminist survival throat songs. The following paragraphs will move from how the films make use of or may be seen as *joiks*/throat songs/lullabies, to how they incorporate other markers of indigeneity and gender.

Towards modernized iconographies

An identity marker connects a subject to a position that carries a certain ethos or that can be ascribed to one (Kaganovsky, MacKenzie, and Stenport 2019b, 14). Repeated as visual (or sonic) representations, certain stereotypical identity markers construct an iconography (Mecsei 2015). Such iconographies, shaped by outsiders in colonial or so-called post-colonial times, exist for all the indigenous peoples portrayed in the films in this thesis. Mecsei (2015) chronicles the traditional reindeer herding culture that Elle-Marja/Christina comes from, with its characteristic *gákti*, *lávvo*, reindeer, and knives, and vast, untouched, snowy landscapes, as the basis for Sámi iconography. However, cultural identity markers are not fixed, but rather described, deployed, and perceived diversely depending on the personal, historical, geographical, or otherwise positioned point of view. Thus, Sámi iconography and cinema participate in a negotiating field (Mecsei 2015, 75). I will place *joik* within this iconography. In *Sami Blood* that same iconography is transferred into authentic self-representation. The imagery thus challenges the stereotypes that the same images represent in a colonial context (Mecsei 2015, 76-77). Mecsei remarks that the milestone film *Pathfinder* used Sámi iconography, but infused the images with positivity (2015, 77). *Sami Blood* resembles the revivalist, realistic films that largely dominate Sámi cinema (MacKenzie and Stenport 2016b) with *Pathfinder* as the forerunner. As such, the visual representations of Sáminess in *Sami Blood* are similar to Gaup's Sámi films. Although instead of saturated with positivity, they seem soaked in complex and often contradictory connotations that engage every nuance between positive and negative, and that varies greatly according to the point of view, as we saw in the case of *joiking*. This is a common trajectory for marginalized groups: First comes the demand for "positive images". When that is (partially) achieved, there can be a turn, for some coming from the "burden of representation" (Shohat and Stam 2014, 182; Sand 2022), towards more ambivalent images untainted by the fear of confirming ugly stereotypes. Whether aligning with or abstaining from the established iconography, a contemporary insider position has the capacity to reshape the tropes.

Throughout *Sami Blood,* the Sámi characters use the traditional, colorful, and symbolically decorated dress *gákti* (Swedish: *kolt)*, a very visible way to tell who is Sámi (Fish 2017, 243). To pass as Swedish, Elle-Marja must replace the *gákti* with Western clothes. On more than one occasion she tries on Swedish women's dresses, and when she arrives at Uppsala central station, she burns her *gákti* on the railroad tracks. Silencing her *joik*, setting fire to the *gákti*, selling her late father's silver belt, changing her name and giving up her reindeer, and even killing one of them in anger when her mother refuses to sell the animals, are examples of how the film deploys Sámi iconography to show the transition from Sámi to Swedish (see also Kokkola, Palo, and Manderstedt (2019). Although, as it turns out, her younger sister keeps Elle-Marja's reindeer and continues to brand new calves with her ear-markings. According to Swedish law at the time, reindeer husbandry secured a status as "real" Sámi: "[E]ven today, reindeer husbandry requires membership in a Sámi community" (Kokkola, Palo, and Manderstedt 2019, 48). This way Njenna guarded Christina's indigenous identity. The two sisters' different versions of Sáminess illustrate, as Olsen notes, the existence, and possibilities of several choices and positions between an indigenous and non-indigenous identity (2018, 192). The notion of "true" Sámi points ahead to a discussion of authenticity. There is, however, one identity marker that Christina can disguise but never undo. The cut inflicted on her ear, which Elle-Marja/Christina has been tugging her hair over ever since. Still, it remains a reminder of her indigeneity, and of the violence enacted by individuals, the school system, and society on the Sámi population.

The silence surrounding everything Sámi in the life of the grown-up Christina in *Sami Blood* is contrasted in *The Body*, where indigeneity is spoken as much as shown. The protagonists' exchanges on race, whiteness, and indigenous affiliations, are central to their otherwise rather sparse conversation. Where Rosie is staying, there are no visible Kwakwaka'wakw identity markers. In Áila's home, as shown in chapter 2, there are several signs of her Sámi and Blackfoot heritage. Books about indigenous issues and/or by native writers, indigenous art, and accessories, signal her ancestry as well as her efforts to maintain that indigenous identity and social awareness while living in the city. Indigeneity is, through encounters with settler communities but also through the inevitable change that all cultures and communities experience over the course of time, shifting. By consequence, so are the identity markers that communicate that particular indigeneity. This is true for all four films in this thesis. *Restless River* and *Sami Blood* juxtapose indigenous identity markers with stereotypical images of white settlers, including physical attributes as tall, blond, and blue-eyed, which make both groups stand out more on screen. The exaggeration of physical and cultural differences central to the differentiating process of "us" and "them" evident in most aspects of imperialism (e.g. Domosh and Seager 2001) is thus reversed in these films. For *Restless River* and *Anori*, the Inuit identity markers are omnipresent and emphasized only when polarized to white settler identity indicators. For example, in the 1940's it was common to carry children in an "amauti", a parka with a pocket below the hood to keep the baby safe and warm and let the mother have her hands free. Elsa in *Restless River* uses one of these, but she also buys a lined coverall (for warmth) and a playpen (for safety). The protagonist of *Anori* fuses an Inuit necklace and seal skin boots with skinny jeans, a knitted sweater, and a scarf with fur trimmings. These two films portray indigenous majority communities; hence the indigenous identity markers play a different role than in the other two films. The four selected films combine indigenous identity markers with non-indigenous items constructing multiple, modern, and malleable ways of being, becoming, and communicating female indigeneity.

Lost in translation? Indigenous spoken and cinematic languages

The dialogue in *Anori, Sami Blood,* and *Restless River* is predominantly in Inuktitut or Sámi, respectively. Language is a, maybe *the*, main marker of ethnic identity, (Kokkola, Palo, and Manderstedt 2019; Fish 2017; Mecsei 2015; Kuokkanen 2006a). A powerful tool of colonization, language policies in colonial states all over the world have been so effective that we may speak of a linguistic genocide (Skutnabb-Kangas and Dunbar 2010) [36]. The colonial educational systems were particularly designed to destroy indigenous languages and suppress native cultures (L.T. Smith 2012; Fish 2017). The use of local languages hence becomes a way to exercise resistance and contribute to decolonizing the mind (Kokkola, Palo, and Manderstedt 2019). Interpreted as cinematic *joiks*, or the equivalent depending on affiliation, told from outspoken indigenous perspectives and using native languages (except for *The Body*, which I will discuss soon) and actors, all four films are expressions of indigenization (Olsen 2018).

[36] Estimates say that 3,000 indigenous languages will be extinct by the end of the twenty-first century. In Canada, most indigenous languages could be categorized as being on the verge of extinction (L.T. Smith 2012, 149). The ten Sámi languages are considered endangered by UNESCO. Topping the list is South Sámi (used in *Sami Blood)*, which is spoken by just over 500 people in Norway and Sweden https://site.uit.no/sagastallamin/the-sami-languages/ (accessed 19.04.2022)

A *joik* can only be given in Sámi, and throat games are inextricably tied to Inuit languages. However, as mentioned, indigenous language is lost for many. Without it "the individual can be so well assimilated that even their children may not know their ethnic background" (Kokkola, Palo, and Manderstedt 2019, 6). In *Sami Blood*, Christina pretends not to understand Sámi anymore, although she whispers her final apology in her native language. Her son knows a few words, with which he stutteringly appeals to her to reconcile with her family. Again, Wajstedt's *Sami Daughter Joik* is the documentarian equivalent of Kernell's fiction. The self-reflexive documentary thematizes loss and recovery of language as a pivotal part of indigeneity. Wajstedt's mother says "I was called a Lappish bastard, so I had no desire teaching my children Sámi" (Fish 2017, 242). MacKenzie and Stenport underscore how Wajstedt's attempt to learn the language as an adult is not simply a personal journey, but "a collective one, as it reflects the loss of language by Wajstedt's generation as Sámi parents chose Swedish enculturation for their children, in the process denying them one of their mother tongues and their connection to, or even knowledge of, their Sámi identity" (2016b, 175). These parallels between the auto-ethnographic documentary *Sami Daughter Joik* and the feature *Sami Blood*, exemplify the connections between genres and how contemporary northern indigenous filmmakers engages with representations of indigeneity, intersectionally. Furthermore, they contribute to authenticating the fiction of *Sami Blood*.

The First Nation lullaby in *The Body* is in English – the language of the settlers. However, what this film lacks in terms of articulating authenticity and indigeneity through indigenous dialogue, it recuperates by means of very outspoken indigenous cinematic storytelling. On a practical note, English is a shared language for Áila (whose native languages would be Sámi and Siksikáí'powahsin (for the Blackfoot/Kainai peoples) and Rosie (Kwakʾwala, spoken by Kwakwakaʾwakw peoples). Paradoxically, the colonial language is often the lingua franca of indigenous peoples who either have been denied learning their language, have had their languages killed, or live in indigenous communities and/or urban centers with a large number of indigenous languages spoken (Berg-Nordlie, Dankertsen, and Winsvold 2022c). Characters in *Anori*, *Restless River,* and *Sami Blood* seem to shift effortlessly between indigenous and colonial languages. The twist in *Restless* is that Elsa's son Jimmy, with the absent American father and Inuit mother, answers back to his mom in English after he finds out that she has been lying to him about his paternal origin. Elsa is not foreign to a small but significant verbal revolt herself: She speaks Inuktitut to the policeman's children, a language their parents do not master. Similarly, the girls in the Sámi nomad school secretly use their outlawed language. These are acts of verbal resistance. The selected films deliberately juxtapose spoken indigenous and settler languages with their appropriated cinematic vocabulary. The mentioned landmark Inuit film *Atanarjuat* focuses specifically on indigenous oral traditions, as it cinematically retells a legend orally passed down through generations. It re-presents the myth using indigenous language as well as storytelling techniques, combined with Western technology and in a play with conventional languages of cinema (Bohr 2015). Recalling the problematic frozen indexicality of film, especially in the early representations of Arctic indigeneity, Bohr argues that to cinematically fix an oral tradition which in its nature is shifting, poses a dilemma. So too does the translation of such oral traditions, as the legend of Atanarjuat and in *Anori*, from indigenous to colonial languages, either spoken or as subtitles, and in the form of global art cinema. *Anori* re-tells the legend on two levels: First, in the frame story, artistically expressed as magical cinema (Bohr 2015) close to the way it probably has been orally passed down from mother to daughter. Secondly, the myth functions as a metaphor for the main story, told

in a more realistic and conventional cinematic language. The four features, even *Restless River* which is based on a *book* by a non-indigenous writer, lean on oral traditions and other traits of indigenous storytelling. The remainder of the chapter will look closer at such characteristics.

Echo of the documentary ethos

Indexicality, that is the report between reality and cinema as brought up above, points to (early) documentary and ethnographic cinema. The turntable scene in *The Body,* and the adjoining gramophone pattern pursued in chapter 2, approximate these contemporary fiction films to *Nanook of the North*. This film is broadly viewed as the first documentary in history. As demonstrated in the theory section, the documentary genre has and still today dominates Arctic indigenous filmmaking, as far as its cinematic conventions are integrated with indigenous storytelling in films, regardless of genre. In this context, *Nanook*'s mixing and challenging of genres and the notion of authenticity speak to the inter-relationality of contemporary indigenous filmmaking. The following sections will trace the documentarian influence on the narrative and aesthetics of the selected films.

Starting once more with the turntable scene in *The Body*, there are traces of documentary aesthetics: The natural lighting is one. All sounds are also apparently naturally present in the location or created by the characters. Joni Mitchell's singing is diegetic. We alternately hear it muffled through the headphones, engineered to make it sound like we are wearing the headphones or amplified into a surrounding soundtrack. This mix conveys the intensity of the music in Rosie's experience. It also demonstrates a break away from the documentary style which enhances the realism in the rest of the scene (and the entire film) and reminds the viewer that this is fiction. Another trait often associated with documentaries is immediacy (Wahlberg 2008). The extremely long takes in *The Body* – there are very few cuts at all and the entire turntable scene is unedited – create a feeling of real-time (Bordwell, Thompson, and Smith 2017) which again is a way to render the film "factual". The shot on location[37], video-style aesthetics add to this impression (Bohr 2015). Similarly, the documentary genre involves "real people as themselves" (Nichols 2017; Kuhn and Westwell 2020). In indigenous feature filmmaking, this translates to the common use of non-professional or first-time actors (Bohr 2015). This is the case for Violet Nelson (Rosie in *The Body*), Lene Cecilie and Mia Sparrok (sisters who play Elle-Marja and Njenna in *Sami Blood*), and their grandmother, who plays their onscreen *áhkku*/grandmother. While it is *not* the case for *Restless River* lead Malaya Qaunirq Chapman, the Isuma and Arnait collectives to which the directors belong, are known to use non-professional local actors (Bredin 2015).

Using indigenous first-time actors is one way of constructing authenticity, a core value in documentary filmmaking. All four films foreground authenticity, in this context "cultural and historical accuracy" (Knopf 2015). Even though fictional, the accounts of residential schools and race biology in *Sami Blood*, as well as the building of an American air base in Fort Chimo, now named Kuujjuaq, and the moving of the Hudson Bay Company's outpost and the families settled around it in *Restless*, relate to actual phenomena and events. The historical fiction film genre too is about "truth" (Bordwell, Thompson, and Smith 2017, 353). The ear branding scene in *Sami Blood* is based on a real-life experience that an older Sámi man shared with the writer-director as she researched her film, and the

[37] For an interesting contribution on location in relation to indigenous collaboration and authenticity, see Grønlund (2022).

name-calling the kids in the film observe has happened to the child actors (Buder 2017). Authenticity lay also in careful recounts of routines and rituals. Such examples are *joiking* and reindeer calf earmarking, the Inuit hospitality act of serving tea, and the mask dance performed at a dinner party. *Sami Blood* helmer Amanda Kernell has explained how she meticulously arranged every detail, the responsibility of "getting everything right" weighing on her, and how she thinks of her film as a hybrid between reality and fiction (Laestadius 2016; Buder 2017). Adhering to cultural revivalist or revisionist narratives (Shohat and Stam 2014; Stam 2019)*, Sami Blood* "operates on an assumption of authenticity mobilized by evoking mythology and history central to Sámi culture" which is communicated, just like in Gaup's *Pathfinder* and *The Kautokeino Rebellion*, through personal indigenous affiliation, and the choice of Sámi actors, language and shooting locations (Mecsei 2015, 77). The way *Sami Blood* documents how the State Institute for Racial Biology measured and photographed Sámi pupils adds a meta-perspective to the feature film's documentarian qualities. That scene echoes how early cinema itself was a scientific method aimed at documentation, but also an efficacious way of visualizing and inscribing race onto indigenous bodies (Columpar 2002). Staging historical events and imitating previous film accounts of or engagement in "research" and "documentation" is, again, to turn the tables and affirm representational sovereignty.

Yet, authenticity is not only applicable to recounts of the past, traditions, or items rooted in pre-colonial times (Blackmore 2015) that may resemble the taxidermic tendency in early documentaries from the Indigenous Arctic. Nor is it necessarily linked to (rural) places. As Andersen reminds us, "there is no single way to be 'authentically' Indigenous" (2022, 219). In the urban contemporary set *The Body,* the cinematic vocabulary of documentary, down to the hyper-realistic improvisational feel of the dialogue, enhances the film's credibility. In *Anori*, authenticity is in the blend of the traditional and the modern (cf. Nyseth and Pedersen 2014) and the attention to detail in depicting present-day indigenous life. The character Anori wears seal fur boots to her skinny jeans, creates and performs pop songs with elements of drum dance, the first form of Greenlandic music, and enjoys a glass of red wine just as much as any traditional dish. The taxidermy of the early films from the Arctic is replaced with a more flexible indigenous identity in accordance with the various ways of being Inuit today. Contrary, the more static, traditional Sámi iconography employed in *Sami Blood*, albeit told from a contemporary insider's position, is not disrupted until the very last shot (Mecsei 2015): Christina, looking at the Sámi getting ready to brand the reindeer calves, observe them "using traditional tools (a lasso and knife) alongside helicopters, motorbikes, and all-terrain vehicles", wearing *gákti* and practical sports- or workwear. The scene demonstrates "how the Sámi have modernized without relinquishing all their traditions", and opens possibilities to combine Swedish and Sámi identities (Kokkola, Palo, and Manderstedt 2019, 49). These final images both comply with and oppose the narrative of loss and recovery of identity. This trope permeates the film, through dominant images in the iconography, and exposes a hierarchy wherein individuals may be marked as less «authentic» or «real» (Andersen 2022, 231; Nyseth and Pedersen 2014).

The echo of the documentary ethos is resounding in the contemporary set *Anori* too, through the use of voiceover in the frame story. A typical trait of the Arctic documentary was the voice-of-God narrator (MacKenzie and Stenport 2015a), implicitly male. Here, the voice of Anori (with short interferences of the male leads Malik and Inuk), retells the ancient Inuit myth. Fish, writing about Sámi first-person documentaries, describes how contemporary northern indigenous filmmakers "present alternative ways of knowing and

interpreting Sami experience from inside and outside, […] to create subjectivities in which they figure as storytellers with shamanic inklings" (Fish 2017, 248). Contemporary indigenous female voices in film are reclaiming traditional roles of storytellers (Kendall 2018). As such a filmmaker, Jørgensen incorporates this storyteller practice through the protagonist's voiceover, and in the film on a general level as the Inuit insider perspective ensures authenticity as argued in the previous paragraph. Moreover, the film reaffirms how different filmmaking practices within Arctic cinema today interrelate: Documentary and fiction genres, as well as indigenous oral storytelling traditions and Western cinematic conventions, are meshed. The fact that the storyline of *The Body* builds on an encounter Tailfeathers once had with a young woman and now re-enacts in a fictional adaption, adds to the perception of this film as a form of self-ethnographic documentary. As stories about indigenous women, told by indigenous women, the four films, despite being vastly different, are self-ethnographic. The six directors in the selection, save Kernell, have extensive experience with documentaries. Moreover, they have all been subject to the documentary dominance in the construction of northern indigenous images – a legacy influencing choice of genre as well as aesthetics (Kaganovsky, MacKenzie, and Stenport 2019b). Just as the gramophone pattern in the four films, reversed and reshaped, exposes how the female, indigenous characters claim white settler technological inventions, we here see how the female, indigenous directors make use of technology, the cinematic language and in particular the legacy of the northern ethnographic documentary, to make it their own.

Other traits of female indigenous storytelling

Incontestably, the selected films assume the female, indigenous point of view through their protagonists Rosie, Áila (*The Body*), Elsa (*Restless*), Elle-Marja/Christina (*Sami Blood*), and Anori. The camera follows their every move and every event in the narrative is filtered through their eyes. *The Body* is uncompromising in this regard. A handheld camera and long takes (Bohr 2015) in sometimes very small spaces like a staircase, a crowded bus (Figure 22), a living room, or a taxi, compel cinematographer Norm Li to choose his framing carefully. The result is that the spectator mostly sees the story unfold through the facial expressions of one of the two leads. More than a practical consequence of the production choices, the film deliberately foregrounds Áila and Rosie, relegating white (mostly male) people. When Áila is at the gynecologist, the camera rests upon her face (Figure 22). We can hear the nurse and the doctor, and see glimpses of white uniforms, but the examination and the test results given to her are visualized by Áila's subtle reactions. As mentioned in the previous chapter, we never see Rosie's boyfriend (nor Áila's, for that sake) only hear his minacious shouting. The narrative effect is that this is Rosie's and Áila's story, no one else's. It is also a political statement about who gets screen time. Acknowledging that power is related to visuality, controlled by either the male, ethnographic, or colonial gaze, visibility in film and elsewhere matters (Columpar 2002). *The Body* manages to omit these ways of looking through the strategy of leaving men literally out of the picture, focusing on the female indigenous characters as complex, active, and strong agents instead of objects which offer the spectator sexually voyeuristic pleasures of looking. This is not to say that the two women are not also portrayed as passive, objectified, sexualized, and victimized, but rather that these traits are temporarily exiled to an existence off-screen. Assigning almost exclusive screen time for the five female protagonists, the analyzed films are restoring indigenous

women's visibility and "talking back[38] against the systemic marginalization […] rooted firmly at the intersection between racism and sexism" (Pirie 2015, 247).

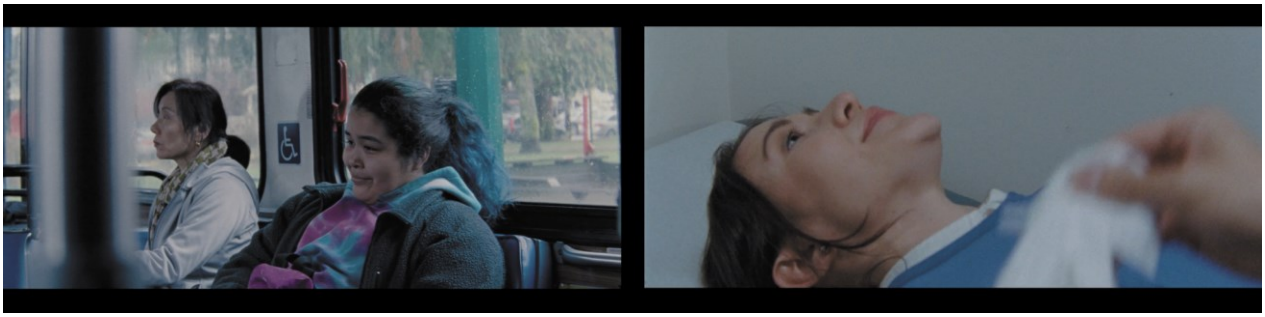

Figure 22: In The Body, the camera centers the protagonists and excludes other people from the picture. Rosie (left picture) smiles to herself at a situation outside the frame, while Áila is offered a tissue from the nurse at the gynecology exam.

The (almost) single take of *The Body* is a radical choice that influences the aesthetics and narrative of the film in more ways than reproducing the (sense of) real-time. The lack of editing contributes to a pace that allows pauses; halts in conversation, the time it takes to eat a bagel, wait for a taxi, or for the other person to speak. Such long takes are the visual equivalent of a pause in oral storytelling (Bohr 2015, 90), as is the use of silence in all four films, making them carefully paced as typical for other northern indigenous films (Bohr 2015; MacKenzie and Stenport 2015a; Knopf 2015). Being obvious in *The Body,* this trait is retraced although in lesser degrees in the other three features. Another aesthetical characteristic is the lack of set-ups and explanations. The storyline of *The Body* leaves the audience to rely on the limited conversation between the two characters, although who knows to decode, the meticulously designed home spaces provide a lot of information. Tailfeathers expands: "In so many ways, we worked hard to keep it real and to not play into any need to spell it out for our audience." (Saito 2019). In *Restless River* the story is told over a considerably larger timespan, and chronologically, still, the setup for some of the major events in Elsa's life may seem minimal. The way she suddenly decides to move out of the village and to Isaki's camp, initiating a relationship with him, is one example. Even in *Sami Blood*, the other film closest to Western cinematic conventions, we do not get an explanation as to the death of the father, to mention one instance. Likewise, the inclination to emphasize open endings or other forms of "narrative ambiguity" (MacKenzie and Stenport 2015a, 13), manifests itself in *The Body* and *Sami Blood*. "We'd leave it where we leave it", Tailfeathers says (Sullivan 2019). In *Anori*, on the contrary, the end is very final, although far from the Hollywood happy end convention. *Anori* also offers the most exhaustive explanations. However, the background of each character is left out, although small bits are revealed along with the plot, through the use of a circular narrative time, revisiting the same scenes in different versions. Mixing an ancient myth with a contemporary story, going back and forth between the two storylines and time periods, adds multiple layers of meaning. This cyclic structure typical for indigenous storytelling, seen in *Atanarjuat* and Cousineau and Ivalu's first feature *Before Tomorrow* (Kääpä 2015; Vanstone 2015; Raheja 2007; Bertrand 2013), is connecting past, present, and future, as well as northern indigenous storytelling with white settler cinema. The real-time technique of *The Body*, as discussed, and the extensive use of flashbacks in *Sami Blood,* are other ways to play with temporality that reminisce traditional indigenous oral storytelling. This chapter has shown how

[38] A reference to bell hook's *Talking Back* (1989).

documentarian genre specifics and established northern indigenous iconography and identity markers are re-appropriated, revised, combined with, and deployed, as a distinct cinematic language of the Indigenous North, turning these feminist contemporary feature films into cinematic indigenous songs.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Trauma that transcends time and space

As the previous chapters have shown, imagery that indicates how the characters are affected by crucial, cross-generational cultural trauma (Pearson and Knabe 2015a; Mecsei 2019) runs throughout all the films. The scope and profundity of such trauma translate into a capacity to transcend time and space, through generations and over great distances. This is not least seen in the scene of the turntable in *The Body*, which we will soon revisit one last time. Traumas inflicted upon indigenous peoples in general and, in the context of this thesis, women in particular, are grounded in experiences across a wide range of areas and topics, some of which the films exemplify. Hence, the conclusion of this thesis will, expanding on previous discussions threaded through the analysis, discuss the relationship between past trauma and present-time personal sufferings as articulated by the selected films. The chapter will continue with an outline of the main arguments produced by the analysis of the four features. Before wrapping up how the thesis can contribute to film studies, I will suggest some topics for future research derived from the selected films and filmmakers.

The pregnant, battered Rosie listening to the Joni Mitchell track about giving a daughter up for adoption, through the device that Rosie's beloved grandmother was so fond of (Figure 2), shows how it is all connected: Potentially losing her baby to child services and the fear of how staying in or leaving the violent relationship will affect the baby, is linked to a similar loss in the song, some other place and time, but also to her absent mother, and the way *she* again was lost to *her* mother. The films analyzed in this thesis deal with traumas linked to gendered, sexual, and racist violence. They thematize residential schools, child services and adoption practices, and loss of home, language, traditions, family, and loved ones. And finally, the films discuss the tension and potential trauma of social and cultural changes in indigenous societies, affecting peoples' relations to land and other resources, their livelihood and financial situation, and cultural (and religious) practices These aspects engage with one another intersectionally, so that being marginalized by some parameters may lead to further exposure in other areas. For many, the damages are irreversible, or else will not be rectified or recuperated for decades. "[..T]he trauma of sexual assault always exceeds the event», as Benson-Allott notes (2020). Retrieving an unlearned language requires resources. Trauma is not easily left behind, even if the person it affected travels far geographically and/or socially, as we have seen in the cases of Elle-Marja in *Sami Blood,* and Áila and Rosie in *The Body*. Furthermore, it can be passed down in lineage, individually or collectively. Thus, these traumas affect the lives of individuals as well as entire groups and peoples, crossing nationalities and generations.

Not all traumatizing acts affecting indigenous women and men are linked to colonialization. Individual motivations and in-group structural conditions can *complement* external approaches (Kuokkanen 2015; Olsen 2018). However, these films foreground how events tied to the history of colonialism and assimilation policies may be related to broken family units, underprivileged economic situations, substance abuse, gendered oppression, and existential conflicts regarding indigenous identity and culture of today. The narratives of *Restless River* and *Sami Blood* explicitly demonstrate the long-lasting impact of such suffering. These two films are in part historical dramas, set during times of intensive assimilation endeavors by the settler nation-states (Canada and Sweden).

Both films approach historical wrongdoings from a contemporary position by narrating the original trauma, aiming to confront and heal that trauma (Chang, Donohoe and White 2010 referenced in Pearson and Knabe 2015a, 11). Notably, for Elle-Marja/Christina in *Sami Blood*, events in her past never seize to haunt her, until she as an old woman may finally find a way to reconcile. Her experiences contribute to her decision to leave her old life and Sáminess, and her scars affect herself and generations to come: The abuse she suffered stemmed from a colonizing process that had a long-lasting effect on Elle-Marja/Christina and tainted her relationship with her son and granddaughter. They, in turn, became total strangers to Sápmi, denied Sámi identity, language, and culture, as well as inclusion in their extended family. The very first shot of the film shows elderly Christina in profile, smoking on her balcony while her son is calling her to hurry up. We get a glimpse of the scarred ear. Before leaving, she tugs her hair over it, disguising the last apparent sign of her Sáminess, and the trauma of her past. These images show how trauma colors the characters' present behavior (Benson-Allott 2020), either by tugging one's hair or keeping distance from their own family, trying on a different persona, being unsettled and distrustful, etc., like we witness of Elle-Marja, Rosie in *The Body*, and Elsa in *Restless River*. True to the film's title, Elsa is restless after the soldier raped her. She constantly shifts houses and occupations and tries out more traditional and more Western lifestyles, before finally finding her way not too far, figuratively and literally, from home. Still, the trauma persists and is passed on to her son, Jimmy. The truth about his father weighs in on his relationship with and rebellion against his mother, and ultimately on his decision to leave home.

The Body and *Anori*, as contemporary set films, do not explicitly verbalize the conjunction with colonialism. Instead "it is a source of subtextual power" as Sophie Monks Kaufman notes regarding *The Body* (2020). This film forms a strong statement of the intergenerational and interconnected relationships between indigenous people(s) and trauma. For Rosie, her unborn baby is already affected by his or her father's abuse, although it remains to be seen exactly how and to what degree Rosie's multiple traumas will be passed on. Details in the mise-en-scène link Rosie's fresh and future wounds to the past. Yet the most forceful assertion of the filmmakers' intended message of the impact of the past-present lay in the intertextuality of the film's title, borrowed from Belcourt's essay of the same name (2017):

> *[…W]e are not done mourning the 'world-shattering' magnitude of settler invasion and its attendant crime scenes of all sorts, and that this kind of loss yields affects that reverberate into the near future by way of the body's 'critical receptivity'; that is, the ease with which we can be undone and displaced by others. […] We might not get the big decolonial world we want, as it takes everything we have to adjust to the unruly vibrations of the past-present. (Belcourt 2017)*

The vibrations Belcourt writes about resonate throughout the film, not least in the turntable scene. The film links settler colonialism to present-day harrowing experiences of indigenous women. Co-director Hepburn says, "[f]or Indigenous people, the present is still so affected by the fracturing of the past, that even to get through the day-to-day, you're battling all this structural violence and oppression." (Sullivan 2019). However, the directors challenge the victim narrative that so often frames indigenous women, which may be at stake when activating the explanatory framework linked to colonialism. In

Tailfeathers' words: "We're trapped within the confines of the trauma from that history and the ongoing reality of settler colonialism. But this film is an act of resistance, a means of speaking to the sovereignty of the body for Indigenous women" (Sullivan 2019). The films in this analysis use screen memories of traumatic events as visible evidence (Ginsburg 2003, 51) that trauma is also systemic and impacted by the colonial past-present. Furthermore, the analysis has demonstrated how the films show that trauma can be part of an inheritance, whether rooted in the colonial structures and practices or not, affecting through generations.

Turning the tables on female indigeneity

Spinning out from a single scene in *The Body Remembers When the World Broke Open*, this thesis has carried out a transnational, comparative analysis of four recent female-helmed northern indigenous feature films. The key scene revolves around a turntable and a few precarious exchanges between the protagonists Rosie and Áila. It touches on an array of themes, tropes, and stylistics through which the films articulate female Sámi, Inuit, and First Nations indigeneity. Guided by feminist and post-colonial/decolonial analytical traditions and the concept of intersectionality, the close-readings of this particular segment, and various scenes and shots linked in from all four films, resulted in three main arguments: First, the turntable mediates the films' discussions of what it means to be a northern indigenous woman today, through notions of home, motherhood and child-rearing, education and media technology. Second, the films expose how the female indigenous body is a battlefield where various kinds of assaults and abuse are committed. And last, the selected films are cinematic *joiks* (or the nation-specific equivalent), communicating culture, identity, memory, and indigenous storytelling conventions and aesthetics. On all the above accounts, the four films are constantly turning the tables on representations of female indigeneity in the North today.

The turntable transmits multiple messages within the scene where it takes center stage, and resonates throughout the four films analyzed in this thesis. It communicates and negotiates indigeneity, whiteness and nation, social status and class, femininity, and urbanity, and interconnects past, present, and future. Starting with Áila's apartment in *The Body*, where the turntable resides, the selected films offer various takes on the concept of home and belonging. The turntable scene also vocalizes motherhood, childrearing, past-present-future, and colonial structures, and links them to contemporary, female, northern indigeneity. Through the turntable, the films further juxtapose "traditional" and "modern" spaces and practices, and call attention to indigeneity in the transition between rurality and urbanity. This play with spatiality and temporality across the four films speaks to the prevailing presumption that the appropriate place to be indigenous is in remote, rural places, and the appropriate time to be indigenous is in the past. The films try to beat these seemingly incomparable categories by questioning whether, and in what ways, time and space may be interconnected and transcended, and by potentially reinventing what it means to be indigenous. Thus, time and space must be added to the complex intersectionality needed to grasp the representations of gender and indigeneity in these films. In line with how the selected features are conscious of the variegated ways in which violence against women intersects with gender, racism, whiteness and indigeneity, class, and nation, an intersectional approach has proved useful for this analysis.

The turntable reflects the history of (mis-)representations of indigenous peoples as epitomized by the gramophone pattern (Damiens 2021) created in *Nanook of the North.* Moreover, the films here discussed use the motif of imported Western modern technology. Yet, they turn the tables also on this account, reshaping the trope to confirm indigenous peoples' appropriation and reclamation of media technology as a site of resistance. To this end, the films analyzed are critical contributions. The women in all four films embody interrelated colonial experiences and indigenous knowledge, expressed as screen memories (Ginsburg 2003). These are either re-enacted as in *Restless River* and *Sami Blood*, re-told and re-interpreted as the myth in *Anori,* or alluded to as through the turntable and other symbolic details of the mise-en-scène as in *The Body*. On all accounts brought forward by the analyses of the turntable scene, the films are committed to showing how victims turn into survivors (Benson-Allott 2020) and to challenge established power dynamics, stereotypes, tropes, and misrepresentations of indigenous women of the North. Thus, the central melody of Áila's record player is not about loss and recovery, but rather about reclaiming, reshaping, and reinventing a contemporary northern female indigeneity.

I read the selected films as counterstories to white people's knowledge of indigenous knowledge. *Sami Blood*, *Restless* and *The Body*, engage with the analogy of education to demonstrate this point. In most northern indigenous communities, whether the nomad school in *Sami Blood*, the local, compulsory Canadian school in *Restless River*, or on the reserves and reservations Rosie and Áila in *The Body* originate from, schools were colonial institutions used as means for assimilation policies. As such, they proved effective to the extent of discursive, cultural, and/or physical genocide, linking these films to extinction discourses. Education is however also suggested, especially in *The Body* and *Sami Blood,* as a possible way out (Mayer 2015) of stereotyping, discrimination, and violence based on race and gender, and privilege. Colonial education may enable class mobility and female independence, empowerment, self-representation, self-determination, and sovereignty.

Strikingly, all four feature films directed by northern female indigenous filmmakers since 2016 deal with trauma of violence and abuse. Hence, the films include themselves in the extensive cinematic history of misogynistic violence as exemplified by the mise en abyme in *Restless River*. This history was imported to northern indigenous communities through colonialism, then it in turn sanctioned and sustained colonialization, male spectatorial pleasure, whiteness, dehumanization, and other racist and sexist practices as well as stereotypes of indigenous women (Projansky 2001; Columpar 2002; Ginsburg 2003; Mayer 2015). The analysis has demonstrated how northern indigenous women are subjected to acts of racialized, gendered, physical, or psychological violence, to the extent that their bodies become virtual battlefields. These four films take a feminist approach to representations of gendered violence, as well as to the response to it, centering femininities and indigeneity, and allowing female agency and empowerment (Projansky 2001). The films literally take experiences of marginalization, vulnerability, and exposure to gendered abuse, to the street, the cinema, a dirt road, or a school. Hence, the films force the problem to be publicly addressed, both within each fictional storyline and through the films as artistic expressions. They oblige the audience to engage (Sullivan 2019). While also sustaining male agency, the films indicate an explanatory framework that emphasizes how structural factors, whether external, in-group, historical, or contemporary, contribute to the high rates of gendered violence against indigenous women today. Unequivocally, these cinematic works convey a

message of how the impact of the colonial past-present takes part in turning the female indigenous body into a site of warfare. Gendered violence or other kinds of trauma embodied by indigenous women can transcend space and time, trans-generationally. *The Body*, *Restless,* and *Sami Blood*, also show how gendered abuse affects the collective as well as each of the films' protagonists individually. All four films position the indigenous female body as battleground literally, discursively, and allegorically. Consequentially, these features reshape and overturn conventional tropes of rape narratives and stereotypes of female indigeneity. They challenge complex identifications of cinema spectatorship and objectification, in ways that reverse, reject, or elide the male, ethnographic, and colonial gaze. Furthermore, they expose exotification, othering, commodification, animalization, and other racist and sexist practices. As a result, these films turn some of the most painful scenes into sites of resistance and present the female indigenous body also as site of survivance (Vizenor 2008).

The turntable is a communication device, which shares the traits of orality and transcendence across nations and generations with indigenous storytelling. The analysis has examined how *joik*, a First Nations lullaby, and Inuit throat singing games as employed in the films, represent and channel indigenous identity, knowledge and histories, unity, and interconnectedness. This variety of musical expressions in the films creates dialogical spaces which enable explorations of identity markers including but not limited to language, indigenous storytelling, and aesthetics, such as the traditional songs themselves, the echo of the documentary ethos, and the complex notion of authenticity. Furthermore, *joik* (again exemplifying all the mentioned traditional musical pieces) is a way of remembering, communicating one's innermost feelings, and reinforcing the individual and collective sense of identity, of becoming and belonging. Thus, as Elle-Marja/Christina suppressed the *joik*, she also rejected the complex connotations of the tradition and ultimately her indigenous identity at large. I have demonstrated how *joik* as a central motif and narrative device, is linked to the film's themes of indigenous identity and colonial deculturation, and resistance towards colonial suppressions and recuperation of Sámi identity and language. *Joik* is both oral storytelling, a cinematic trope, and a strong identity marker, with political implications tied to colonialization and decolonizing efforts, and with the capacity to bridge past, present, and future. Thus, the films apply elements of singing as part of their storytelling, as well as to express, reconnect to and reshape the indigenous identity of the female characters. The films are a cinematic, feminist survivance *joik*/lullaby/throat singing game. As such they are means of resistance, invoking their protagonists as heroines, not mere survivors in the face of colonial past-present, and an indigenous future.

The echo of the documentary ethos, symbolized by the turntable/gramophone, is still resounding in the Indigenous North (Kaganovsky, MacKenzie, and Stenport 2019b). The history of documentaries constitutes and carries with it imagery of northern indigenous peoples as primitives or (noble) savages, frozen in time and space, as portrayed by white male outsiders. While discourses of taxidermy, deculturation, and extinction (Pearson and Knabe 2015b) are historically tied to the genre, there is also a strong documentarian practice in northern indigenous societies. Significantly, a transnational wave of indigenous feminist documentarists has emerged to which directors Ivalu, Tailfeathers, and Jørgensen belong. In this thesis, the cohort is represented by Sámi filmmaker Liselotte Wajstedt, whose documentary *Sámi Daughter Joik* I have juxtaposed to Amanda Kernell's feature *Sami Blood*. This strand of directors re-appropriate the documentary format, often in first person and/or experimental form (Fish 2021, 2018a, 2018b, 2017;

Mecsei 2019; MacKenzie and Stenport 2016b) to express screen memories (Ginsburg 2003) and explore what it means to be a northern indigenous woman today. Their films are "not simply documentaries of the past, they are meditations on the influence of the traumatic, elided past's continuing echo in the present" (MacKenzie and Stenport 2016b, 180). Much like the the four fiction films here analyzed represent.

The documentary ethos is also expressed, in the selected features, as certain cinematic aesthetics and storytelling tropes. Such conventions are reshaped, opposed, or integrated with indigenous oral traditions in creating a distinct contemporary indigenous cinematic style. Prominently, the films employ on-location video-style cinematography, natural lighting, and mostly diegetic soundtrack, non-professional actors, narrator, lack of setup, narrative ambiguity, and cultural and historical accuracy through attention to detail. The films also play with temporality, including long takes, careful pacing, and the use of silence, or a circular approach to time with the use of repetitions, flashbacks, and time-lapse. In this way, they imitate real-time and pauses of live, verbal storytelling, while both transcending and connecting past and present. Furthermore, the efforts towards realism in *The Body* and the revivalism in the historical films *Restless River* and *Sami Blood* are all about "truth", in this case as these female northern indigenous filmmakers see it. Importantly, the point of view of all four films is uncompromisingly that of northern indigenous women. The female directors of these female-centered films talk back to the taxidermic documentary ethos and to any racist and sexist practice which renders indigenous women invisible, by saying: Look, we are still here, and this is our story and how we want to tell it.

This thesis aims to extend the literature on the emerging "indigenous-centric feminist fiction feature cinema" (Mayer 2015, 2), to include the Indigenous North. As for this particular branch of cinema, I will argue that the four films here analyzed are central. So are the careers of the female filmmakers behind them: They are building up a new body of work, collaborating with other indigenous artists, and breaking into popular genres and television in addition to making art films, shorts, and documentaries. After these feature films, Kernell premiered her subsequent Swedish feature *Charter* at Sundance Film Festival in 2020 and has a new Sámi feature in development. Tailfeathers went on to star in *Blood Quantum* and *Night Raiders* before releasing her documentary *Kímmapiiyipitssini: The Meaning of Empathy*, about the impacts of the substance use and overdose epidemic in her Kainai First Nations community. Ivalu voiced the shaman in *Angakuksajaujuq: The Shaman's Apprentice*, Zacharias Kunuk's short, animated adaption of a traditional Inuit story[39]. Jørgensen co-directed *Ivalu* with Ander Walter which achieved an Oscar nomination for best live action short film in 2023. Another feature, the Inuit Greenlandic and Canadian co-produced coming-of-age story *This Road of Mine,* is in development. Her debut *Anori* stands out from the other three films in this thesis in it being close to both thriller and tragedy, pointing forward to what may be next for indigenous storytelling. The recent Inuit youth adventure/Sci-Fi/horror *Slash/Back*, Sámi horror short *Unborn Biru*[40], as well as the upcoming Sámi feature debuts *I Love my*

[39] Arnait Video Productions terminated their work in 2021 after 30 years of production, see https://arnaitvideo.ca/ (accessed 02.03.2022).

[40] The Arctic Indigenous Film Fund (AIFF) has set up the project *Arctic Chills*, involving indigenous screenwriters from Alaska, Canada, Greenland, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia to produce an anthology of horror or supernatural films https://old.uarctic.org/shared-voices/shared-voices-magazine-2019/arctic-indigenous-films-in-the-spotlight/ (accessed 18.05.23). The *Arctic Chill* short *Unborn Biru* won the Tromsø Palm Award at Tromsø International Film Festival and went on to screen at Sundance in January 2023.

Guođoheaddji (crime directed by Marja Bål Nango), *Stolen* (Netflix thriller novel adaptation by Elle-Marja Eira), and Árru (musical by Elle Sofe Sara), undergird an orientation towards genre films. These films by women directors from the Indigenous North are answering a call for diversification of indigenous stories into comedies, indigiqueer two-spirit love stories, sci-fi, actions, and courtroom dramas[41].

In its effort to call attention to the emerging indigenous feminist fiction cinema in the North, this thesis seeks to contribute to the field of film studies, broadening the discipline's scope by producing new knowledge on female northern indigenous filmmaking. Furthermore, it aspires to add to indigenous studies, wherein feminist approaches such as intersectionality still is a road less traveled, and to feminist studies, which have been criticized for not including indigenous women's perspectives (Olsen 2018; Knobblock and Kuokkanen 2015). I foreground the need to expand further on how contemporary media and film's representations of rape culture affect and implicate indigenous societies, taking race more into account, alongside gender. Among the shared traits that run throughout the four films which this analysis has not prioritized, is the imagery of nature and landscape. Looking at the films through an ecofeminist lens, to observe what part natural elements and human/animal relationships play in the stories and mise-en-scène would provide interesting insights, even regarding the representation of gendered indigeneity. Moreover, there is more to explore concerning how female indigenous film production combines behind-the-camera-feminism with northern indigenous collectivity, transnationality, and cultural capital in the work process.

When combined as in this analysis, the four films form a group portrait of generations of indigenous women. By analyzing aspects of these films separately and comparatively, this thesis argues that the selected films offer a thorough description of and counternarrative to the impact of colonialism on the past-present and its consequential fragmentation (Dankertsen 2016; Sand 2022) on an individual and a collective level, transnationally and trans-generationally. Thus, the films are allegories of indigenous and colonial history. The way they puzzle the pieces back together, following an indigenous point of view claiming narrative sovereignty, they are part of ongoing decolonizing efforts. They foreground how the wounds inflicted upon the protagonists of the films are remembered by their bodies and continue to haunt them and potentially the next generations, but also how victims can become survivors of trauma (Benson-Allott 2020) and find possible ways out. Furthermore, they point to how racism, sexism, violence, and colonialism can be internalized, and how identity, memories, histories, safety, and sovereignty can be dismantled by mechanisms that overstep boundaries between generations and nation-states, as the world which broke open. Yet, the films offer moments of female indigenous resistance, recuperation, restoration, and reconciliation. These glimpses represent hope for the individual and the collective of the films' characters, that their worlds and bodies may heal, here and now or in some other place and time. By reversing the shot and turning the tables on the dominant cinematic representations of indigenous women, these recent female-directed features constitute counterstories. The victims-turned-survivor heroines of these films are portrayed as resilient, resourceful, and complex agents, envisioning more malleable, variegated, and modern images of northern female indigeneity in the present-future.

[41] Voiced, along other industry representatives (Boutsalis 2022), by First Nations actor Devery Jacobs (Toronto International Film Festival 2022) from hit TV series *Reservation Dogs*.

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FILMS

A Red Girl's Reasoning (Short) (Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers, 2012)
Angakuksajaujuq: The Shaman's Apprentice (Short) (Zacharias Kunuk, 2021)
Anori (Pipaluk K. Jørgensen, 2019)
Atanarjuat The fast Runner (Zacharias Kunuk, 2001)
Bázo (Lars Göran Pettersson, 2003)
Blood Quantum (Jeff Barnaby, 2019)
Boso mu ruovttoluotta – breathe me back to life (Sunna Nousuniemi, 2021)
Charter (Amanda Kernell, 2020)
Duel in the Sun (King Vidor, 1946)
Ivalu (Short) (Anders Walter and Pipaluk K. Jørgensen, 2022)
Kímmapiiyipitssini: The Meaning of Empathy (Doc) (Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers, 2021)
Let the River Flow (Ole Giæver, 2023)
Minister of State (Paul-Anders Simma, 1997)
Nanook of the North (Doc) (Robert J. Flaherty, 1922)
Night Raiders (Danis Goulet, 2021)
One Day in the Life of Noah Piaguttuk (Zacharias Kunuk, 2019)
Pathfinder (Nils Gaup, 1987)
Reservation Dogs (TV-series) (Sterlin Harjo and Taika Waititi, 2021-)
Restless River (Marie-Hélène Cousineau and Madeline Ivalu, 2018)
Sami Blood (Amanda Kernell, 2016)
Sami Daughter Jojk (Doc) (Liselotte Wajstedt, 2007)
Slash/Back (Nyla Innuksuk, 2022)
Stoerre Varie (Short) (Amanda Kernell, 2015)
Ten Canoes (Rolf de Heer and Peter Djigirr, 2006)
The Body Remembers When the World Broke Open (Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers and Kathleen Hepburn, 2018)
The Day Before Tomorrow (Marie-Hélène Cousineau and Madeline Ivalu, 2008)
The Journals of Knud Rasmussen (Norman Cohn and Zacharias Kunuk, 2006)
The Kautokeino Rebellion (Nils Gaup, 2008)
The Silence in Sápmi (Doc) (Liselotte Wajstedt, 2022)
The Tongues (Marja Bål Nango and Ingir Bål, 2019)
The Unconvenient Truth (Doc) (Davis Guggenheim, 2006)
Unborn Biru (Inga Elin Marakatt, 2023)
Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt (TV-series) (Robert Carlock and Tina Fey, 2015-2019)
Uvanga (Marie-Hélène Cousineau and Madeline Ivalu, 2023)

Appendix: Film presentations and synopsis

Sami Blood

Amanda Kernell is a Sámi/Swedish writer and director. After *Sámi Blood* she wrote and directed *Charter* (2020), and among her most notable short films are *I will always love you Kingen* (2017) and *Stoerre Varie* (2015). *Stoerre Varie* and *Sámi Blood* are her only films with Sámi lead characters and Sámi language. The latter premiered at the film festival in Venice, where Kernell won the Fedeora Award for Best Director of a Debut Film and continued on a long tour of the festival circuit. *Sámi Blood* is shot in Tärnaby-Hemavan, northern Sweden, and Uppsala and Stockholm, and part of the dialogue is in South Sami, which is spoken by just over five hundred people in Norway and Sweden[42].

The 78-year-old Elle-Marja, known only as Christina, reluctantly travels with her son and granddaughter from Stockholm to a Sámi village in Northern Sweden to attend the funeral of her younger sister Njenna. She refuses to greet her relatives and to stay at her deceased sister's house, and abruptly leaves the ceremony before its end.

We then go back in time, to the 14-year-old Elle-Marja who lives off reindeer husbandry, with her family. Together with her sister, she is sent to a residential school where only the Swedish language is allowed and all other tokens of Sámi culture, traditions, and everyday habits are banned. At one point, a group of scientists from the State Institute for Racial Biology comes to observe, measure and photograph the Sámi schoolchildren naked. Another time, some local Swedish boys call her racist names. Elle-Marja threatens them with her father's knife, but they get hold of it and mark her by chipping off the tip of the ear, just like a reindeer. Despite, or maybe because of all this, Elle-Marja is eager to master being Swedish. Once she sneaks out of school at night and goes to a dance, where she meets Uppsala upper-class kid Niklas and finally feels treated like an equal. Elle-Marja looks up to her teacher, Christina, and gets top grades. Still, as she asks Christina's recommendation for further studies, she is briskly told that, as a Sámi, she does not have the intellectual capacities. Elle-Marja runs off to Uppsala, re-invents herself as Christina and goes to all lengths to fit in and hide her Sámi roots. The humiliations seem never-ending, though, including the cold rejection by Niklas and his family and Christina/Elle-Marja being asked to joik at a party for the amusement of the other guests. Unable to pay the school tuition, she returns home to sell her share of the reindeer herd but ends up in a confrontation with the family she now despises for being Sámi. Her mother tells her to leave, then, without a word, hands her a valuable silver belt that used to belong to Elle-Marja's father.

The epilogue takes us back to the present. Christina has impulsively decided to climb a nearby mountain, familiar to her from childhood times. There, exhausted and in despair, she utters an apology to her late sister – in South Sámi.

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[42] See https://www.imdb.com/name/nm1840544/?ref_=ttfc_fc_dr1, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt5287168/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1 , https://no.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sameblod (14.02.2022)

Anori

Inuk writer, director, and producer Pipaluk Kreutzmann Jørgensen is based in Nuuk, Greenland. She started in theater before founding Karitas Production, producing, writing, and directing short, documentaries, features, and TV. She is now part of Polarama, while also involved in the Nuuk International Film Festival. Her filmography includes the Oscar-nominated short *Ivalu* (2022), and *The Ravens Storm* (doc short, 2013) and her second feature film is in development.[43] *Anori* is a drama with elements of a psychological thriller, set in Greenland and New York City. The main language is Inuktitut.

Breathtakingly beautiful and seemingly endless panoramas of the Greenlandic landscapes bring us to a couple, a woman and a man in white, light clothing in the whiteness of snow and ice. She is dancing like in a dream and telling the man a story she was told a long time ago by her mother. The myth is of a girl who only knew the good and believed goodness resides in nature. One day, though, she came to realize that the world also contains darkness. Now, the woman in the white dress is running in despair through a neon-lit city. The girl set out to fight off the dark and bring back the light.

This myth, with very bright, overexposed, beautiful shots of white vastness and the loving couple, contrasted by the crowded city streets towered by skyscrapers frames the modern-day love story of Anori and Inuk. The film starts with a dramatic accident at sea, where Inuk, an Arctic Commando Searcher, almost drowns and falls into a coma. He is flown to New York for treatment, accompanied by his colleague Malik. Anori, his artist fiancée with the name meaning "a quiet wind"[44], is alerted and hurries after him.

The film then goes back in time and recaptures how the two met at one of Anori's concerts and fell in love, up until the planning of their forthcoming wedding. These flashbacks are told from different perspectives, which sometimes overlap, complement, repeat themselves, or even differ; first from Anori's point of view, then Inuk's, and lastly, from Malik's. Shifting from the hospital bed and dark hotel room to the airy, dreamlike myth sequences and the flashbacks, the strong and pure love of Anori and Inuk are contrasted by the dark desire that Malik secretly nurtures for Anori and that ultimately drives him to sabotage Inuk's survival suit and to try to force himself upon Anori in the NYC hotel. The myth and the modern story are interwoven when Anori is determined, too, to bring back the light, to love Inuk back to life, and confront the evil actions of and darkness within Malik. But when Anori late one night gets a call from the hospital that Inuk is waking up, Malik declares his love and, when she refuses him, strangles her. The last scene shows Anori and Inuk, as the couple in the mythological frame story, walks away. She falls, while he keeps walking toward the light.

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[43] See https://www.imdb.com/title/tt10340820/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1, https://pro.festivalscope.com/director/pipaluk-kreutzmann-jorgensen and https://www.screendaily.com/news/arctic-indigenous-film-fund-awards-first-development-grants/5163464.article (all accessed 13.02.2022).

[44] According to Pipaluk Jørgensen's Director Statement. She also explains that Malik means "big storm": https://spark.adobe.com/page/2b9ZGNkvPihdf/ (accessed 22.02.2022)

Restless River

Madeline Ivalu is an Inuk producer, director, writer, actress, cultural advisor and musician based in Igloolik, Nunavut. She has a long-term collaboration with Canadian filmmaker Marie-Hélène Cousineau, and together they have also directed the feature films *Before Tomorrow* (2008) and *Uvanga* (2013). Ivalu also played the lead character in *Before Tomorrow*. Ivalu and Cousineau (among others) co-founded the Arnait Video Productions, a filmmaking and video collective composed of Inuit and non-Inuit women, in 1991. Ivalu recently gave voice to a main character in Zacharias Kunuk's animation short *Angakusajaujuq: The Shaman's Apprentice* (2021). *Restless River* is a drama based on the novel Windflower by Gabrielle Roy. It was shot in Kuujjuaq, Nunavik, Canada and premiered at Festival du nouveau cinema in Montreal, Canada, in 2019.[45]

Teenager Elsa lives in Kuujjuaq, a Hudson's Bay Company outpost at the mouth of the Koksoak River in Nunavik, Northern Quebec where American GIs are stationed. It is 1945, the Second World War is drawing towards an end and the troops are about to withdraw. Elsa and an American soldier exchange look when passing each other on the road. One day at the movies, the timid flirtation turns violent as the man rapes Elsa. She becomes pregnant and gives birth to a blond, blue-eyed boy whom she names Jimmy.

At first, Elsa and Jimmy stay with her parents, grandparents, and younger siblings. Trying to make a more independent life, Elsa takes a job as a housekeeper and babysitter for the Beaulieu's. She tests Western imported habits, to the extent that the white, English-speaking priest warns her against becoming too materialistic. She even adopts the police's wife's white ways in raising her son. Elsa's mother tries to instill more of the Inuit traditions in his upbringing. Yet, the father's cousin, Isaki, who lives on the land like the Inuit used to, condemns Elsa's parents as "slaves" of the white settlers.

When the Beaulieu's tell her that they will be moving back south, Elsa takes Jimmy to Isaki's camp, testing yet another lifestyle. Again, against her mother's advice. Jimmy seems to thrive going hunting, fishing, and gathering, and living alone with his mother and Isaki. They spend their evenings reading, writing, and listening to the radio and the occasional messages from passing pilots. This harmony is threatened when the police insist that Elsa bring Jimmy to school. They go further away for the winter, where "where the caribous are". But Jimmy gets serious pneumonia, and they return to get medical care. When he recovers, Isaki goes back to the camp, while Elsa and Jimmy stay.

Next, Jimmy is a teenager and in opposition to Elsa, trying out alcohol, skipping classes, and dreaming to go to aviation school. During a huge quarrel, the truth about his father is revealed. Jimmy vanishes, and when the police find out his whereabouts, he is in Montréal. Elsa sells off her stuff and leaves the home where she had lived with Jimmy to go to her late parents' old house. Living once again without all the commodities she had become accustomed to, she tells the priest that she is happy. On a sunny summer day by the river, a voice in Inuktitut interferes the signals on the fishermen's radio: It is Jimmy, flying over the land, saying hello to his "dear little mother" Elsa Kumachuck.

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[45] See https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0993082/?ref_=nmbio_bio_nm, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt10805028/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madeline_Ivalu, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Restless_River (all accessed 11.02.2022).

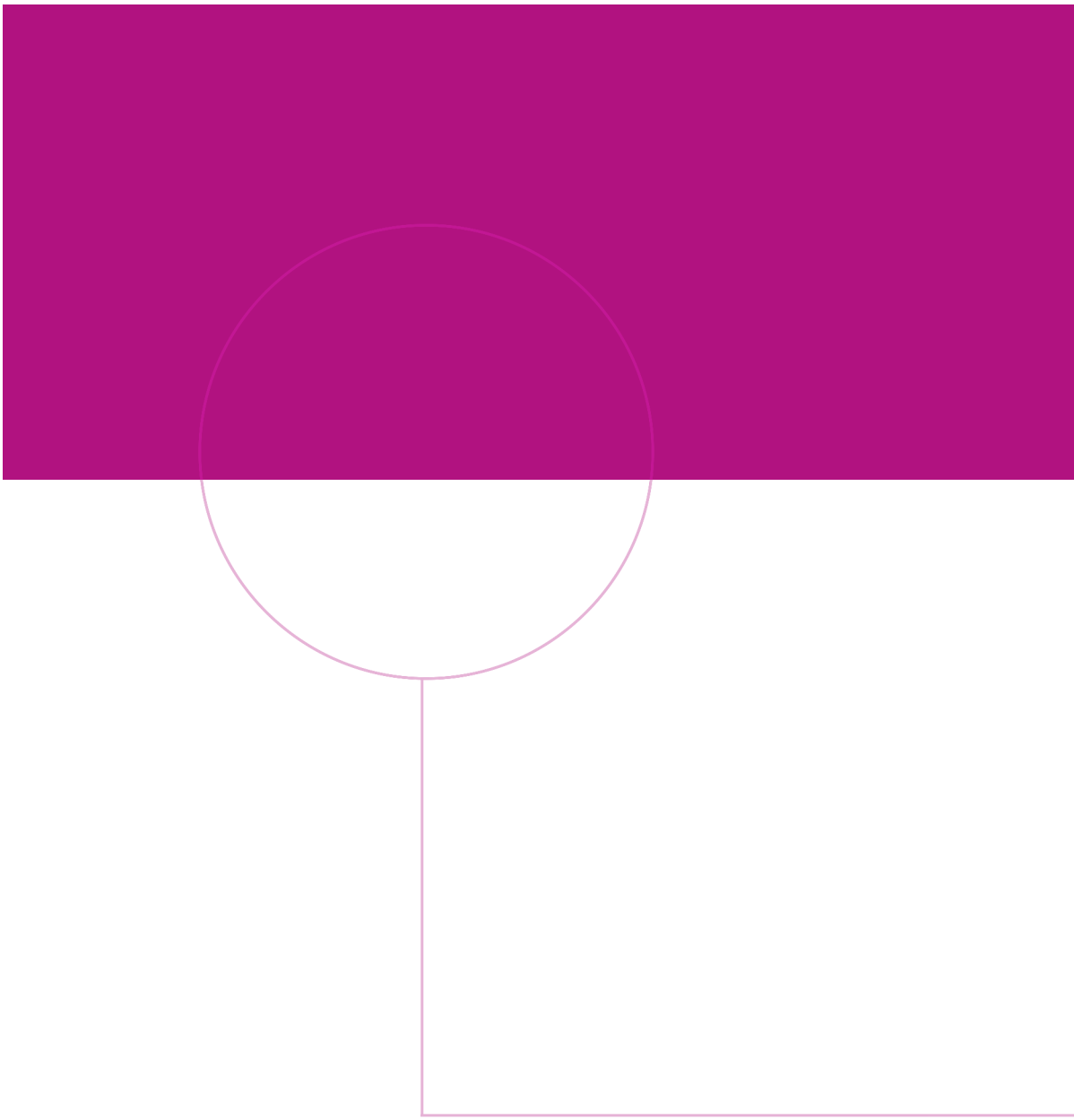
The Body Remembers When the World Broke Open

The Body Remembers When the World Broke Open is Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers' first feature film. Tailfeathers is a writer, director, producer, and actor, of a Blackfoot mother from the Kainai First Nation and a Sámi father from Norway. She is a graduate of Vancouver Film School's Acting Program and has a bachelor's degree in First Nations Studies and Women's and Gender Studies. Tailfeathers has made several shorts and documentaries, among them *Bloodline* (short, 2011), *Rebel* (doc short, 2014), *C'sna?M: The City Before The City* (doc, 2017) and *Kímmapiiyipitssini: The Meaning of Empathy* (doc, 2021). *The Body* is a Canadian/Norwegian drama shot in Vancouver, Canada, co-written and directed with Canadian director Kathleen Hepburn. The film premiered at the Berlinale in 2019 and was picked up for distribution by Ava duVernay's company ARRAY.[46]

In the film's pre-credit sequences, we first meet Rosie (19, played by Violet Nelson). She is going to her boyfriend's in the mother-in-law's apartment. On the way, she picks up a bunny that a child drops at the bus, smiles softly at him, and gently hums a lullaby while riding the bus and walking down the street. Once in the house, we only see a glimpse of the boyfriend's back through a doorway, but can hear him talking, increasingly agitated, on the phone until he angrily cries out "Rosie". In the second part of the prologue, we follow Áila (31, played by Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers) to a gynecologist appointment, where she's told her pregnancy test came back negative, then undergoes a gynecological exam and ultimately is left with a paper tissue, a pad for the bleeding and the doctor's advice: If you consider having a baby, I would do it now.

Back outside in the cold, pouring rain, Áila passes Rosie who is standing in a busy crossroads. Now, Rosie has no jacket, no shoes, her hoodie is ripped at the neck and her face is bruised and bloody. From the opposite corner, we can hear the boyfriend swearing and screaming, triggering car alarms. Áila stops to ask if Rosie is ok, then pulls her away. We follow them to Áila's airy, cozy apartment where Áila provides a rather reluctant and skeptical Rosie with dry clothes, tea, and bagels. Rosie, in return, steels pills and money. Áila makes some calls and finds a spot at a safe house for abused women. Rosie has so far resisted both police, and ambulance and says she does not want to go to any shelter, but still comes along. In the taxi, Rosie turns the table and makes up a tear-dripping story to the driver, of them, being orphan sisters, and that she is helping Áila go to rehab for her drinking problems. She also asks the taxi to make a quick stop, where she sells the pills she just took. This results in a confrontation in the taxi. At the safe house, Rosie tells her story, at least some bits of it, in her cautious, tacit manner. The staff, two women, explains the setup. In the end, though, Rosie decides to go home instead. When all efforts to convince her otherwise fail, Áila accompanies her back, waits a minute to see her off, then continues on in the taxi.

[46] See https://www.tiff.no/en/film/0228fd48-c3d4-4589-80b3-9c6633a68593 and https://www.imdb.com/name/nm2979684/?ref_=nmbio_bio_nm (both accessed 11.02.2022)



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