

Uanga ('I'): Journey of Raven and the Revival of the Spirit of Whale

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ABSTRACT:

'Uanga ("I"): Journey of Raven and the Revival of the Spirit of Whale' is a critical autobiographical essay. In this essay, I negotiate and reflect on my own coming to voice as a Danish-Inuit artist-researcher. It is a sustained meditation on how the (post-)colonial relations between Denmark and Greenland are entangled in my lived experiences as a mixed-race woman. The essay introduces the scholarly contentions (and possibilities) in decolonizing, mixed-race and Indigenous research by critically engaging with my personal conflicts and considerations. By writing 'the voiceless', I also engage the fragmentation and divisions that characterize the (post-)colonial world. It is my intent to build and create 'living memory', as a way of pressuring (neo)colonial narratives and pave way for new.

It is told that Raven once saw a whale playing in the waves. He got very curious. So he flew into the mouth and hopped deep into the whale. In the dark, he heard a drum beat and soon he saw a beautiful woman dancing and singing by a fire. In love, he wished to be with her. The woman told him he was welcome

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to be her guest, but she made him promise not to take her away. Once she fell asleep, Raven could not resist. He flew out of the whale with the sleeping woman. But the woman shrank and disappeared. As Raven reached the sea-shore, he found the dead body of the whale. Raven realized he had taken the heart and soul of the whale. He sat down and cried for weeks. Then he danced and sang. From this day, he promised to remind all existence about the life-giving spirits inside of every living being and share Whale's gifts of song and dance. (Ancient Inuit tale).

Our greatest disappointments and painful experiences – if we can make meaning of them – can lead us toward becoming more of who we are. Or they can remain meaningless. The 'Coatlicue' [explained as e.g. 'consuming internal whirlwinds'] state can be a way station or it can be a way of life. (Anzaldua 1987: 46).

My *ningiju* (grandmother) gave birth to my mother in a Danish hospital in Aalborg in the north of Jutland. She was alone. The midwife did not have time to attend *ningiju* because another woman was giving birth. My grandfather was seldom home; he was a sailor and would be away for up to a year at a time. He did not see my mother before she was six months old. The year was 1956, three years after Greenland was annexed as a Danish county². *Ningiju* had then lived in Denmark for six years. A contest, issued by the Danish priest in her childhood village in Greenland, had changed her course of life. As she received the best results in the contest, she was sent to a boarding school further north in Greenland

² As the United Nations pressured for decolonisation of the European colonies in the post-war period, Greenland's colonial status was formally abolished in 1953. Instead, Greenland was annexed as a Danish county. Notably, there was a referendum on the annexation in Denmark, but not in Greenland (Petersen 1995: 120). Some even began to refer to Greenland as 'North Denmark' and Denmark as 'South Denmark' (Thomsen 1998: 40).

at the age of fourteen. There, she studied for two years with about thirty other young Inuit. From here, the route was laid out for her: she was sent to Nuuk for two years of college and then to Denmark to complete a nursery school teacher's education. Likely, the Greenlandic ('post'-)colonial administration had expected *ningiju* would return to Greenland to become one of the young educated spearheads of a new westernized nation. This project 'failed'. *Ningiju* met my grandfather and stayed in Denmark. For many years, she was a housewife tending their home and four children, only returning to her childhood village in the summer vacations.

With the intention of integrating her children fully into Danish society, *ningiju* did not speak Greenlandic to them. Yet, they did not avoid the bullying in school for being 'bastards', 'mongrels', 'fridge Indians' or '*krakemut* Indians'.³ After a few years out of school, my mother entered teacher's college in 1980 in another Danish city – a year after Greenland's Home Rule was established⁴. At this time, my *ningiju* had grown bitter with her and her children's experiences of racism towards Greenlanders in Denmark, and had developed a likening for beer. Meanwhile, the summer vacations in Greenland became fewer towards the end of the 1970s – perhaps because my mother and her sister had experienced acts of anger towards them. The Greenlandic nationalist movement and an awakened Inuit political awareness brought a greater emphasis on ethnic distinctiveness (Dahl 1986; Graugaard 2008: 15-16). As a result, my mother and her siblings experienced that speaking Danish and being 'half-breed' in Greenland were looked down upon. In 1980, my mother visited my great-grandmother in Greenland for her eightieth birthday, and did not return to Greenland until decades later.

My father moved away from his hometown at an early age, tired with the mentality of the 'petit bourgeoisie' and the Christian values imbued in western Jutland, Denmark. In 1980, he entered teacher's college, where he met my mother. Three years later, my brother was born and then came I. As I grew up, my father read many bedtime stories for me, but the only stories I remember are the Inuit stories my mother told me. These were stories about

³ Derogatory terms. In Danish: 'bastarder', 'gadekryds', 'køleskabsindianere' and '*Krakemut*-indianere'

⁴ With the establishment of the Home Rule in 1979, Greenland gained executive and legislative authority for self-governance in a number of domestic areas (Graugaard 2008: 46).

the almighty sea woman and *Maliina* the Sun, shamans and spirit helpers. Yet, she never told me of Raven, the creator of the world and the daredevil trickster. In 2009, Greenland gained Self-Government. The same year, a good friend of mine told me that I was a shapeshifter. Hurt and ashamed, I aligned it with something that was evil or forbidden, and I felt the presence of a voiceless depth in my body. I began asking *ningiju* many questions about her life. In 2011, I started writing '*Inua*', a theatre script based on my *ningiju*'s memories. I started digging for story, digging for medicine (Anderson 2011: 3), to find words to express the voiceless depth where mixed feelings of joy and shame and hurt and pride were hiding, but ever-present. The more I dug up of my grandmother's story, the more the voicelessness unearthed itself. This is the first time I write the voiceless. It is not meant as a peeling off of layers that leaves us naked and exposed, but a moving into those whirlwinds where we can 'become more of who we are' (Anzaldua 1987: 46) in a process of making meaning. It is a move towards Jacqui Alexander's call for intentionally remembering, surrendering my voiceless depth to the building of living memory (Alexander 2005: 278). A metamorphosis of sorts, like a butterfly *becoming* through the painful experience of shapeshifting. Raven was a shapeshifter.

Shortly after I had turned fourteen, my parents threw a party for me to celebrate my youth. To my paternal grandparents' great disappointment and disapproval, I had refused to be confirmed in the Protestant church which was, at that time and in my local community, a given tradition. My parents supported my decision and instead of my christening, they invited our families and friends for a day of food and music. I silently imagined this celebration to be a rite of passage, symbolizing my entrance into (some form of) adulthood. Somehow, I connected this party to my mother's words, two years earlier, on the day of my first Moon: 'Had it been in the old days in Greenland, we would have had a great feast to celebrate your new stage in life'.

Family parties always reminded me of the different cultures of my mother's and my father's families. I was still a child when I started despising the conformity, the

*'lejlighedssange'*⁵ and underlying notions of *'Grundtvigiansk'*⁶ enlightenment culture on which our family gatherings with my paternal grandparents were built. To me, time with my maternal family was free, loving and playful and we could do as we pleased – in contrast to the tightness of the white shirt and belt my brother was forced to wear when we gathered with my paternal family. For reasons I did not discover before I grew older, my brother and I felt alienated at our paternal family gatherings, and I was often angered that my father's family thought (it seemed to me) that the world looked like them and revolved around them – and that I was part 'of that' and viewed the world the same way they did. When we were with my paternal family, we were plain Danes, and no one seemed to acknowledge – or even notice – that my mother, brother and I also had an Inuit heritage and did not feel quite at home (or at ease) in this setting. It took me years to learn how to navigate the shifts between my 'half-breed' family and my 'white' Danish family, as well as establishing a loving and personal relation to my paternal grandparents. First now, I realize that my relation to my paternal family is analogous to my relation to the dominant Danish society, and I was fighting an intuitive battle for my maternal ancestors not to be absorbed and forgotten by the white washing of Danish common culture.

The boundaries in my family relations became visible at my 'youth party'. Upon arrival, my paternal grandparents gifted me the bible with the words 'we still thought you could make use of it'. It was a contrast to the necklace with a white bone pendant of a polar bear that *ningiju* had brought for me. The presence of my *ningiju*, Inuk grandmother, and 'half-breed' aunt and uncles often had the effect of discomfort, or even silence, upon my paternal family. Something else and unfamiliar was present and visible. During dinner, my *ningiju* stood up by the help of her cane and spoke her vision: When I was born, she had told the universe that her new granddaughter would grow up and become a self-determining woman: 'That is why you are who you are', she ended. I knew it was her way of approving my decision of not getting confirmed, and to remind me she was part of me. Over the years, I have felt her words as strengthening and at times, a shamanic curse. I have searched for

⁵ Danish tradition of singing songs that are specially written for a given celebration (e.g. wedding, birthday, confirmation). The songs' lyrics are written to be sung on the melody of a traditional or popular song.

⁶ N.F. S. Grundtvig was a Danish pastor, author, politician etc. He was very influential in the formation of modern Danish national consciousness.

definitions and practices of ‘self-determination’ to find my way into and back to her words. As I write this, I see how the question of self-determination and the (post-)colonial relations between Denmark and Greenland are entangled in my experiences as a mixed-race woman. It is tied to my story, and the fact that I am now writing it.

The frustration I felt (and often still feel), as a child and youth learning to navigate between two cultures, is something like *la mestiza*’s dilemma that Gloria Anzaldua describes: ‘The ambivalence from the clash of voices results in mental and emotional states of perplexity. [...]. In a constant state of mental nepantlism, an Aztec word meaning torn between ways, *la mestiza* is a product of the transfer of cultural and spiritual values of one group to another. [...] the *mestiza* faces the dilemma of the mixed breed: which collectivity does the daughter of a darkskinned mother listen to?’ (Anzaldua 1987: 78). But my dilemma inhabits yet another dilemma: that of the second-generation *mestiza*. My darkskinned mother’s collectivity, as the ‘illegitimate’ children of colonialism, is also struggling with the dilemma Anzaldua describes. I share my perplexity and ambivalence with my mother and her siblings. However, where my mother has undergone ‘a struggle of flesh, a struggle of borders’ (Anzaldua 1987: 78), my ancestry is not engraved in my skin and flesh. As her blond-and-blue-eyed daughter, I struggle to keep the culture of my ancestry alive in a colonial culture that is busy with homogenizing the populations in Denmark and with forgetting its intimately exploitative relationship with its Greenlandic colony (Graugaard 2008; Hansen, F. & Nielsen, T.O 2006; Lynge 2006; Petersen 1995). When the ‘evidence’ of Denmark’s colonial offspring is washed away with the whitening of flesh, how do we keep our personal histories alive as an act of resistance? In my experience as a second-generation *mestiza* this is a complicated act, for I do not cross the borders easily even though they exist within. The dilemma then appears: from where can and *should* I act?

The repercussions of these dilemmas are reflected in the ways I have entered the anti-colonial struggles in my adult life. Through my academic endeavours with critical thought, postcolonial theories and popular education (e.g. Fanon 1963; Freire 2000; Kane 2001; Leys 1977; Mayo 1999; Said 1979), I became highly aware and hyper-sensitive to the urging need of any researcher to acknowledge her privileges. And so I have spent many hours

musing on how to account for my privileges of being ‘Qallunaq’ (Inuktitut word for ‘Danish’ or ‘white’) from an educated family, growing up in the welfare state of Denmark. And this I mused on, even though I knew I was not only Qallunaq, I was also Inuk carrying an Inuit name. I was also Naja: *Little sister to older brother*. But as a result of the dilemma of the second-generation *mestiza* I left it at home, unarticulated and unclaimed. Not because of a lack of pride, but because I felt my privileges disallowed me to claim a connection to my ancestry in Greenland. I thought that acknowledging and criticizing the colonial atrocities of my Danish ancestors was the only part I could play in the decolonizing process. My part was to face the Danish colonizer in myself and voice the publicly repressed colonial history, as I wished the rest of the Danish population would do. I urged the need to articulate a ‘pedagogy for the oppressor’ along the lines of Derek Rasmussen’s (2002). In a (post-)colonial world of either/or, oppressor/oppressed, Qallunaq/Inuk, I had to position myself in a place from which I (thought I) could act.

Of course positioning myself as a through-and-through ‘ally’ eventually caught up with me. My deep-felt need to voice the silenced stories of colonialism stemmed from my own relation to Greenland, and the colonial legacies in my own family. I began realizing that the stories my *ningiju* has shared with me throughout my childhood was not only of a distant Inuit land and generation; They were part of me. When I felt hurt by Danish racism towards Greenlanders, it was not only ‘on behalf’ of my mother’s family; I also felt it as an assault on my very being. My positioning in the decolonization process started to crack. It dawned on me when I, performing at the Ode’min Giizis Indigenous Theatre Festival in 2010 in Peterborough (Canada), met a fellow Inuit Greenlander and firstly, presented myself as Danish. As we talked and our relations unravelled, she took offense to my self-representation. I was told that I had to account for my Inuit ancestry, and I had to show pride in it! I was surprised and embarrassed; my good intentions of alliance faded. Instead, I realized that they had fed into the reproduction of the colonial repression of Inuit identity.

When I entered my masters research⁷, I searched for ways in which to revive and reclaim Inuit ways of knowing and being, as part of re-visioning Danish-Greenlandic relations and as part of the political process of defining Inuit self-determination. I started utilizing my experience in theatre and performing arts to create sites for this reclamation and revitalization that I had realized was an essential part of decolonization. I began storytelling Inuit creation stories, and I returned to my *ningiju* and her lived stories as a source of knowledge. Indigenous perspectives, and the need for articulating and forming research frameworks that are grounded in the reality of Indigenous lived experiences, surfaced as an alternative (e.g. Atleo 2008; Kovach 2009; Smith 1999; Wilson 2008) and meaningful entrance to (or way out of?) my struggle against colonial constructs. I began connecting the relations between Indigenous knowledge, arts-based inquiry, and participatory research in that these fields share a dedication to calling upon other ways of knowing, being and doing. In the words of Susan Finley, such an approach makes ‘a rather audacious challenge to the dominant, entrenched academic community and its claims to scientific ways of knowing’ (Finley 2008: 72). And so I explored storytelling and performance as a way to create sites of Inuit self-determination.

Despite my new focus on Indigenous ways of knowing and doing, I again faced the *second-generation mestiza* struggles of positioning when I moved to Greenland, as part of my ‘field experience’. I had carefully planned out a participatory research framework in which community members in Nuuk could offer perspectives on self-determination and Inuit knowledge through storytelling and theatre. When my plans fell through, and I was left with no participants and teaching work at Greenland’s National Theatre with pre-described tasks and little room for exploration, new questions surfaced. I began asking myself: what was in fact the motif of my participatory work *in the field*? Even though, I had doubts about the outcome and the use of my fieldwork, I had continued looking for participants. In short, I was busy ‘getting out in the field’! Why? It seems to me now that I felt pressured to legitimize my research by making it ‘participatory’ and ‘communal’. I felt that my research was highly indebted to my Inuit ancestors, and thus, I better make sure that anything I

⁷ I studied in the Environmental Studies Department at York University (Toronto, Canada) where I completed my Masters. For more information on the program: <http://fes.yorku.ca>

‘academize’ and ‘intellectualize’ was in participation with our land and our people. The words of Evelyn Steinhauser were ringing in my ears: ‘An Indigenous paradigm comes from the fundamental belief that knowledge is shared with all creation. [...] You are answerable to *all* your relations when you are doing research’ (Steinhauser qt. in Wilson 2008: 56-57). But how could I live up to this as a mixed-race woman, who had grown up in the colonizing Kingdom? Had my dream about reclaiming, reviving and re-enacting Inuit knowledge become a pressure to ‘live up to’ a prescribed (or pre-imagined) concept of Indigeneity and Indigenous research? Did I need participatory fieldwork to make my research ‘Inuit enough’, to make it answerable to all my relations?

Fortunately and necessarily, Indigenous scholars are beginning to articulate and practice Indigenous research paradigms that grow out of and honour Indigenous perspectives and worldviews (Atleo 2008; Kovach 2009 & 2010; Smith 1999; Wilson 2008). Margaret Kovach writes: ‘If a researcher chooses to use an Indigenous methodological framework, the methods chosen should make sense from an Indigenous knowledges perspective’ (Kovach 2010: 41). Even though this statement makes perfect theoretical sense and contributes to the necessary act of ‘calling upon other ways of knowing’, it also reflects an inherent complication for the mixed-race researcher, like myself – as well as for the young Inuk researcher having grown up in a colonized territory in which the traditional ways of knowing have been invaded from many angles, throughout centuries (educational institutions, government structures etc). For we do not have easy access to this knowledge and ‘claiming’ it can be, in my own experience, severely complicated through the mechanisms of colonization. Kovach acknowledges the need for a decolonizing lens within Indigenous research paradigms, as well as the importance of identifying one’s self-location based on individual experience. (Kovach 2009: 76, 110-112). However, her ‘self-location’ is placed within the Indigenous communities only: ‘Within Indigenous research, self-location means cultural identification, and it manifests itself in various ways. Indigenous researchers will situate themselves as being of an Indigenous group, be it tribal, urban, or otherwise. (...) For many Indigenous people, this act is intuitive, launched immediately through the protocol of introductions. It shows respect to the ancestors and allows community to locate us’ (Kovach

2009: 110). Then, where do we locate ourselves, when the act of self-location is not intuitive, and our cultural identification is complex and not immediately ‘launched through the protocol’? Furthermore, claiming a certain ‘worldview’ or locating ourselves within one certain group quickly become essentializing. If it is claimed, in opposition to another, it can split us apart, between worldviews and in our internal landscapes.

I am led to ask myself, then, how do we, as part of an inter-mixed, inter-cultural generation, (re)claim Indigenous knowledge? If Indigenous knowledge is perceived as a static body of knowledge (often belonging to a pre-colonized past), it may neglect the experiences Indigenous peoples have forcefully gained by surviving colonization. A monolithic approach to ‘knowledge’ and ‘Indigeneity’ in Greenland (and Denmark) may instead disintegrate us and force upon categories of ‘Inuk’ and ‘Qallunaq’, implying expectations very few can ‘fulfil’. It may force us back into the dichotomies birthed out of the colonial history of ethnic stratification in Greenland (see Bjørst 2008; Dorais 1996; Kleivan 1969; Lyng 2008; Oosten and Remie 1999), and leave the younger generations paralyzed and without home. For example, one of my students during my ‘field experience’ in Nuuk shared with me his frustration with his lack of traditional knowledge, because ‘our culture was *cut* two-hundred years ago’. The mixed-race youth, Bjørst has interviewed, furthermore express the personal crises of ‘neither’ being accepted as Inuk (in Greenland) nor as a Dane (in Denmark) (Bjørst 2008: 38).

Critical theories of race and mixed-race, hybridization or transculturation have not made their way into the Greenlandic political reality or Denmark-Greenland relations. Postcolonial theories or the movement to reclaiming Indigenous perspectives are just now beginning to gain voice in Greenland, in e.g. the growing research environment at the University of Greenland. However, the Greenlandic populations in Denmark continue to be a stigmatized (as was crystalized in the case of Daniel⁸) and an over-looked minority (Togeb 2004), and this is perhaps only challenged by the last few years’ geopolitical interest in the

⁸ Daniel was a Danish-Greenlandic homeless man, who died on the street by alcohol poisoning in the Fall 2014. Despite several attempts from bystanders to call for help, the ambulance did not arrive before Daniel had passed on. The police had asked one of the women, who called for help, if the person was Greenlandic (Duus 2014, October 7; Trier 2014, December 21).

Arctic and hunt for oil revenues in Greenland. The relations between Denmark and Greenland are still, largely, defined by the colonial institutional setup, and left unchallenged by the lack of intellectual and anti-colonial critiques on ‘both sides’. In this context, the ‘post-colonial’ reality looks a lot like the colonial reality; in this reality, ‘Indigeneity’ becomes based on the demarcation between worldviews and/or a static image of ‘the Inuk’ (Graugaard 2008: 22-25). I dare to say that the national elections in Greenland in March 2013 – which resulted in a governmental shift back to Siumut⁹, mandated by the new nationalist, ethno-centric ‘Partii Inuit’¹⁰ - is a ‘reaction (...) limited by, and dependent on, what it is reacting against’ (Anzaldúa 1987: 78) similar to the ‘mortal combat’ between oppressor and oppressed that Anzaldúa describes (Anzaldúa 1987: 78). In such a political landscape, it arguably becomes difficult for the diversified young generation of Greenlanders to (re)claim knowledge of the Indigenous experience. The ‘Quiet Diversity’ that Hardenberg portrays in her photo gallery in 2005 (Hardenberg 2005) may not have gained a strong foothold in the common Greenlandic conceptualizations of Indigeneity and Indigenous experiences. From Inuit Ataqatigiit’s¹¹ (IA) four years in government, with a youth party advocating a ‘we have space for everyone’ approach in 2008 (own translation, Kleeman 2008), it seems to me that we have re-entered the mortal combat of ‘opposing riverbanks’ (Anzaldúa 1987: 78). In political realities that are shaped by colonial structures and defined by reactions against them, how can we embody Indigeneity in other ways that allows us to honour Indigenous perspectives and identities without splitting us apart, and without losing our voice and legitimacy in the process?

As I reflect on my journey today, I realize that I did not consider my own personal explorations and performance creations ‘enough’ to inform my research questions. I could not consider myself ‘communal’ enough, ‘Indigenous’ enough, or ‘artistic’ enough to count for anything of final research value. Why? I was still struggling to find a place to be in the

⁹ Siumut is the current governing party. On a political scale, Siumut’s political stand can be aligned with the Danish Social Democratic party. Their politics are arguably also marked by conservative standpoints.

¹⁰ Partii Inuit is a new nationalist ethno-centric party. The party’s main case is language policies. They have for example advocated that Danish should be prohibited in parliament – whereas it is currently possible to use both Danish and Greenland.

¹¹ Inuit Ataqatigiit (IA) was the governing party from 2009-2013. On a political scale, IA’s political stand can be aligned with the Danish Socialist People’s party.

colonial landscape of dualistic thinking. In my quest of being, I had journeyed in a dialectic between Qallunaq and Inuk. But I was not at home in either. The problem of placing oneself in an equation of oppositional dualisms, became clear to me during my teaching work at the National Theatre School in Nuuk where they operated with a so-called ‘no-Danish-speaking zone’. In consequence, I was asked to teach in English (as I do not speak Greenlandic) even though the majority of students spoke better Danish than English. I felt that such rigorous attempt of avoiding to speak the colonizing language (by speaking a different, but not necessary less colonizing language) in effect upheld and reinforced the colonial divisions. In some way, the rule became colonizing in itself as the act of speaking Greenlandic became depended on an act of ‘not speaking Danish’, and thereby lost its own inherent value. This example reflects, in many ways, the problem in my own anti-colonial struggle and in the Greenlandic political landscape at large. It resonates with Alexander’s reflection on colonization and justice work, premised in negation:

To [the] process of fragmentation we gave the name colonization, usually understood as a set of exploitative practices in political, ideological and aesthetic terms, but also linked in minute ways to dualistic and hierarchical thinking: divisions among mind, body, spirit; between sacred and secular, male and female, heterosexual and homosexual; in class divisions; and in divisions between the erotic and the Divine. We saw its operation, as well, in creating singular thinking: the mistaken notion that only one kind of justice work could lead to freedom. [...]. Such thinking always premised in negation, often translated into singular explanations for oppression (Alexander 2005: 281).

In a similar way, I had (by navigating in a world of polarities) reinforced the fragmentation that I tried to make myself free of – a fragmentation I even did not think I was legitimated to feel. Finding no place where I fit in the dialectic of Qallunaq and Inuk, I could only define myself in terms of negation: I was *not* colonizer, and I was *not* colonized. The luring danger of dissolving into nothingness, had urged me to find participants to fill in the gaps and to give answers to my questions. As this plan fell through and life took a different turn, my research dissolved and perhaps, I did too.

Insisting on my ancestry, unearthing the voiceless depth of internal borderlands, and remembering the colonial relations that I embody, is indeed *dangerous memory* (Alexander 2005). The journey of coming to build ‘an archaeology of living memory’ (Alexander 2005: 278), required of me the painful realization that I am a child of colonialism, birthed out of and into a destructive and violent neo-colonial world in which Inuit ways of life are threatened by the new faces of imperialism: ‘development’, ‘resource extraction’, ‘capital profit’ etc. And I could not revive the soul of Whale because I was the product of the act that led Raven to destroy her. Locked in the interface between the pieces of a broken heart (broken by the ‘fragmentation we gave the name colonialism’), the greatest enemy I could fight was myself. ‘What we have devised as an oppositional politic has been necessary, but it will never sustain us, for while it may give us some temporary gains (which become more ephemeral the greater the threat, which is not a reason not to fight), it can never ultimately feed that deep place within us: that space of the erotic, that space of the Soul, that space of the Divine’ (Alexander 2005: 282). And so I dissolved. It is perhaps here, in the moments of dissolving, that I enter a new process of making meaning of painful experiences; where moving into ‘the consuming internal whirlwinds’ can become a way of life rather than a way station. It is perhaps then, we leave the colonial landscapes of oppositions, so ‘the split between the two mortal combatants somehow heal(s) so that we are on both shores at once and, at once, see through serpent and eagle eyes’ (Anzaldúa 1987: 78-79) – and at once, through Whale and Raven eyes.

Becoming a mother, my responsibility of embracing the dynamisms of mixed-race experiences, as a way of life, both deepens and brings forward new perspectives. My daughter was still in my womb when the first people began asking: ‘So what *is* she? Half Anishinaabe, a quarter Danish, part Inuk?’ I continue to insist: ‘She is all of it, and she is everything; she is a whole person’. Certain that my children will face some of the same challenges in their mixed-race experiences growing up (and perhaps many more), I am not insisting on a neo-liberal move ‘beyond’ race¹² – for in a world that is compartmentalized

¹² This is also in acknowledgement of the constructed nature of ‘race’, approaching ‘racial formation’ as a sociohistorical process. Here, it is important to note that critical mixed-race studies accentuate ‘the mutability of race’ in order to examine the systemic injustices grounded in racialization and social stratification based on race (Daniel, Kina, Dariotis & Fojas 2014: 8)

and racialized at its core of its functioning, a moving ‘beyond’ can imply a silent acceptance of the violence that rise out of neo-colonial divisions. My insistence on my daughter’s wholeness is a different implication. It implicates myself as her mother, her relatives, her friends and her relations at large. It implicates a different relation to lineage and ancestry and Indigeneity, for I – through our relation – am forever connected to her Anishinaabe roots and must embrace it as part of me too. This was clear to me when my father said: ‘I am not just Danish. I have a wife and children who are Inuit too’. Perhaps in this way we *become more of who we are* when we, upon dissolving, embrace our relations as a part of the *becoming* our expansive selves, our lineage (which is in this way, no longer, top-down), and our embodied memory. The experiences within mixed-race lives articulate the destruction when our inherent ‘relationality’ as living beings is suppressed. The experiences within mixed-race lives put to test Indigenous researchers’ assertion that knowledge (and everything else) is relational. And exactly this insight in Indigenous perspectives challenges the fragmented world(s). I approach the building of living memory as my assertion of my relations, intentionally re-membering through the eyes of the imperiled soul of Whale and transgressive Raven. A year before my *ningiju* Atsa Louise passed on, she said to me: ‘You must tell these stories to your children and grandchildren – if you re-member them’. In my life and work as an academic, artist, and mother, I continue to re-member: ‘all the time, as a way of never forgetting, building an archaeology of living memory, which has less to do with living in the past, invoking a past, or excising it and more to do with our relationship to Time and its purpose’ (Alexander 2005: 278).

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