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Go Your Own Way

Changing perspectives in the contemporary Indigenous literary works of Michelle Good and Niviaq Korneliussen

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This paper includes fictional descriptions and mentions of suicide, violence, sexual violence, and self-harm.

Abstract

This thesis argues that the contemporary literary works by Cree writer Michelle Good and Greenlandic writer Niviaq Korneliussen indicate an evolution in the way we perceive and interpret Indigenous literature. These novels tell stories with complex and dynamic characters whose free-flowing and direct narratives elevate the level of individuality. Built into this argument is the central position which the novels portray characters relationship to places, following an expanded view of the very concept of *place*. Contributing to the argument lies the belief that the narrative structures and language use challenge the traditions in Indigenous literature, daring to go their own way. While certain elements appear inspired and influenced by traditional Indigenous writing, the way in which these novels are written calls for a revisitation of how we understand Indigenous literature in a global literary context.

While not replicating the traditional style of Indigenous writing, these novels express Indigenousness in a modern world, dealing largely with issues relevant for our contemporary time where a focus on reconciliation and resurgence of Indigenous-non-Indigenous relations is systematically and institutionally investigated and discussed in the wake of several countries' reconciliation processes. For their respective regions and demographics, the two authors problematise the issues surrounding contemporary Indigenousness in interaction with the increasingly global society surrounding them. Urban communities and places are given a central role in the characters' lives, and the characters are given individual life goals which identifies them as individuals.

By insisting on the truth, Indigenous writers are contributing an invaluable service in clearing the way for substantive reconciliation.

- Michelle Good

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1 Introduction

This thesis is an analysis of two different contemporary ways of telling Indigenous stories. Cree writer Michelle Good contextualises the residential school trauma in *Five Little Indians* which the reconciliation process in Canada aims to understand and reconcile with. Meanwhile, Greenlandic writer Niviaq Korneliussen writes narratives of young Greenlanders in an increasingly urban culture. In an ever-more dynamic world, the notion of Indigenousness continues to adapt to a changing social and global context. This enables experimentation in style and ways of writing. Indigenous literature can be identified by certain markers, but how we define those markers and what we interpret as Indigenousness reflects the position which we grant Indigenous literature in the global literary field. This thesis is a deep dive into two different authors who could fit into the paradigm of a modern Indigenous writer. These two authors come from two different Indigenous groups and their respective literary contexts. However, they are at a glance similar in some of their ways of writing. Through their traits in narrative structures and storytelling mechanisms, the contemporary Indigenous literary works of Michelle Good and Niviaq Korneliussen tell stories of a dynamic connection to *place* and personal identity, expanding on some of the trends in Indigenous literature and breaking with others. This thesis will consider Good's novel *Five Little Indians*, and Korneliussen's novels *Last Night in Nuuk* (original title *Homo Sapienne*) and *Blomsterdalen*.

Indigenous literature is increasingly prevalent in the global literary discourse as more attention is brought to it. While establishing its own place within the world of literature, Indigenous literature is still identifiable by its own style and themes. As Michelle Good notes in her collected works of conversations about Indigenous life in Canada, *Truth Telling*, Indigenous writers are following in the lines of tradition when they express themselves on their own terms within their epistemology (149). Through the three contemporary novels chosen for this thesis, I aim to highlight how they are identifiable as Indigenous literature through elements of tradition. Equally, they are expressions of an evolution of how to use these elements, such as narrative structures and language use, to elevate and expand the genre of Indigenous literature.

As Niviaq Korneliussen won the Nordic Council's literature prize in 2021 for her novel *Blomsterdalen*, Indigenous literature was placed along its Nordic literary contemporaries. Greenlandic literature is for many an unexplored aspect of Nordic literature. Korneliussen's

literature is making headway as a representation of a new generation of expression in Greenlandic arts and puts pen to paper on the modern experience of a highly dynamic Greenlandic society. The effort to include Korneliussen in addition to Michelle Good in this thesis is aimed to highlight that trends in Indigenous literature might be more comprehensive and *pan-tribal* than what a singular work might indicate.

Recent years have provided breakthrough developments in colonial-Indigenous relations in North American and Arctic regions. The Truth and Reconciliation reports in both Canada, Greenland and the arctic regions of the Nordic countries are sign of an effort towards making systematic change in the way which history is remembered and how Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations are to be handled. Contemporary attempts at reconciliation are bringing positive change but are not wholly transformative (Tully 96). There is little to view the reconciliation processes as some kind of end goal which has been reached. However, they should be attributed the position as a major breakthrough. In *Truth Telling* Michelle Good calls it a "watershed moment in Canadian history" and puts the emphasis on the importance of truth at the forefront of her discussion (1). The novels considered in this thesis are written in Indigenous societies at the start of systematic reconciliation processes. These processes are signs of a change in focus by the countries at the oppressing side of history towards a more inclusive and understanding relationship between their respective nation and the Indigenous populations therein.

Literature holds an important position in the process of reconciliation. An understanding of First Nations peoples true experience is a key step for non-Indigenous people's engagement in this process, according to Michelle Good (*Truth Telling* 4). Her emphasis on the factor of experience is one which is recognisable in contemporary Indigenous literature. In the chosen literary works the primary focus is on individual experiences. Good's novel is a key example of how a literary work can open up for conversation and understanding, bridging a gap between truth and the lack of knowledge. It has been claimed that for Canadians to learn about history and the legacy of the Indigenous survivors' experiences, they have to learn it in a way which changes both mind and heart (quoted in Regan 219). Accessibility of truth through mediums such as literature are assisting in this process. This becomes especially important at a time when increased attention is given to the subject through the reconciliation processes in several countries.

There is a certain limitation to the reconciliation process. Borrows and Tully speak of reconciliation in combination with resurgence and claim that they should be used in unison. They describe resurgence as "Indigenous peoples exercising powers of self-determination outside of state structures and paradigms" (4). A key reason given by Borrows and Tully for speaking of reconciliation *and* resurgence is to avoid the more polarising elements of separatist resurgence, as they are of the opinion that establishing a friend-enemy relationship closes more doors than it opens (6-7, emphasis added). Bridging the gap between ignorance and understanding, reconciliation and resurgence work is established through truth telling. I opened this thesis with a statement by Michelle Good, as she claims: "By insisting on the truth, Indigenous writers are contributing an invaluable service in clearing the way for substantive reconciliation" (*Truth Telling*, 155). Literature has a role to play in telling truth on its own terms. Therefore, the decision to write about contemporary Indigenous literature in societies where reconciliation work is well underway is timely at this "watershed" moment in history.

All culture is dynamic, and these recent works of literature in the Canadian and Greenlandic Indigenous literary field indicate an increased focus on diversity and individuality. Personal life journeys within the framework of the Indigenous experience are at the heart of these stories. As the perspective on diversity is expanded to include new realities and life journeys the literature indicates an extended view on what Indigenous identity is and could be. The contemporary literature dismisses the idea of primitivity and minority status in their own homes through the portrayal of a dynamic and adapting contemporary society. Central to these novels is the way the authors portray Indigenous communities as dynamic and highly complex groups of people, filled with a range of different identities and personalities. Opposing the binary thinking that creates an "us vs. them" way of thinking, these novels tell stories of how people are complex and contain multitudes. As literary critic Sam McKegney noted, "Heroes aren't always heroic, abusers don't just abuse, and victims are never victims only" (5). Each character tells their own story, on their own terms. As an example, we are introduced to narratives in *Last Night in Nuuk* which eventually gives us an inside and outside of the characters personalities through multiple perspectives on each character, including their own.

When dealing with residential school literature, it is important to establish what role one attributes to the residential schools themselves. The residential school practice in Canada is a dark piece of Canadian colonial history, and recognising this is a primary subject in the

move towards resurgence and reconciliation in contemporary Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canada. The residential school practice was a systematically designed institution designed to sever Indigenous children from their culture (McKegney 5). The recognition of the foundation of residential school as a method in the assimilation and removal of the Indigenous population of Canada is necessary in dealing with residential school narratives. However, as Sam McKegney has mentioned, we should not attribute all social problems in Indigenous communities as a result of residential schooling, as it would be to "diminish the complexity of colonial history, isolating residential school as an autonomous intervention whose effects can be readily divorced from those of broader colonial imposition" (33). For Indigenous literature to actualise this element, there is a need for stories to embrace the broader Indigenous experience, while still acknowledging the residential school role in individual's personal stories. Embracing residential school experiences in the larger colonial context acknowledges the broader brutality of colonialism, not allowing residential schools to be the sole image of colonial oppression.

Michelle Good's 2020 novel *Five Little Indians* tells the story of five Indigenous children who are forced away from their homes and into a residential school in British Columbia, Canada. The five children, Kenny, Howie, Lucy, Clara and Maisie, go through the experience of residential school oppression before leaving the school in different ways. Some escape, while others finish their time at the school before they are sent to Vancouver to fend for themselves. Through narratives told by each character, the reader is left with an impression of five different aspect of the Indigenous experience in 20th century Canada. By interacting with each other and trying to find a personal identity, these characters portray different ways of belonging, adapting and changing in a highly dynamic portrayal of personal journeys and battles.

We are initially introduced to Kenny, who escapes the residential school at an early age to return to his mother, who has turned to alcoholism. He maintains a lifelong relationship with another of the characters, Lucy. Kenny never stays in one place for long and struggles to have any permanent and stable relation with Lucy and their daughter Kendra. Maisie is a character which I will devote quite a lot of attention to in this thesis. There are multiple elements of her story which encourages analysis, from narrative style to themes in her story. She is one of the older children and is the first to finish her time at the school before being sent alone to Vancouver. She has a relationship with Jim, who was taken to the United States by his parents to avoid being sent to a residential school. Lucy is sent to Vancouver and is

taken care of initially by Maisie. Lucy ends up living the rest of her life in the city. Clara's story is mainly followed through her adult life, where she has a resurgence of her Indigenous identity in her meeting with the elder Mariah. She eventually ends up playing a key role in the reconciliation process which the novel concludes with. Howie is the final character of the novel. Originally from Saskatchewan, he is not meant to attend the residential school in British Columbia but is taken by the authorities when visiting his aunt and forced to attend the residential school. He eventually ends up in prison before meeting Clara following his release. The two of them eventually get together as a couple.

Niviaq Korneliussen's 2014 debut novel *Last Night in Nuuk* is made up of four parallel perspectives of gender, sex and identity in Greenland's major city, Nuuk. Centered around the events of a night out partying, characters Fia, Arnaq, Inuk and Sara all tell their personal stories of personal identities. This highly modern portrayal of Greenland's capital city sheds light on a generation of Greenlanders who have highly different ways of belonging to their hometown and identities. The novel is made up of very different narrative styles, each individual to the narrating character. As they interact with each other, the understanding of the depth of their identities becomes clearer. Notably, it is the only novel of the three chosen ones which has any secondary literature specifically dedicated to it, likely due to it being the oldest of the three.

Korneliussen's other novel, *Blomsterdalen,* published in 2020, is a dark novel about a mentally struggling individual who is moving from Greenland to Denmark to start her studies. As she tries to make sense of her own actions and identity, the main character describes multiple family relations and emotional relationship to people and places. Focused on the issue of suicide in Greenland, the novel is structured as a countdown, counting towards the eventual implied suicide of its main character and narrator, whom we do not get to know the name of. The novel is set over the period of a semester, with flashbacks to major events of in the main characters life shedding light on her sexuality and identity. Touching on several elements of the contemporary Greenlandic experience and relevant issues, the novel is a tough, at times graphic, description of a fatal struggle with personal identity, relationships and belonging.

This thesis will work out of a theoretical framework through the discussion of what constitutes Indigenous literature and its position in the scholarly field of literary criticism. It is necessary for this thesis to establish this theoretical framework to work with the chosen

literary works from a position of understanding and respect. Equally important is the task of positioning contemporary Indigenous literature in relation to the scholarly field of literature as a whole, as well as its position in global literature. A focus on the theoretical framework continues this introductory chapter, followed by a relevant, but brief, view of Indigenous literary history. Lastly, I will make some clarifications related to the relevant terminology and context.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

Though discussing two separate areas and different Indigenous groups, there are clear similarities between both authors and their literary themes and methods. The critical field of Indigenous studies is largely umbrella studies which reach across several areas and cultures. This is not an overgeneralisation of individual Indigenous groups, but rather an acknowledgement of the fact that firstly, there are similarities in literature and culture across Indigenous groups, especially in an increasingly connected modern world. Secondly, individual Indigenous groups rarely possess enough produced material to be able to rely on a separate critical theory entirely devoted to the specific group or culture. Ideally this thesis would be dealing primarily with Cree and Inuit critical theory due to the cultural belonging of the authors, but in a literary field where that does not exist to a sufficient extent, we rely on the more overreaching elements of *Indigenous critical theory* to support arguments and analysis. Elements such as the translation of oral traditions into written literature is key to both authors literary traditions. In general, the issue of *translation* is one which is discussed and explained across all Indigenous literary theory.

As this thesis deals with what has to be considered quite recent literature, the scholarly work on the authors and their novels is severely limited. To compensate for this lack of scholarly opinions on the matter, the theoretical groundwork is established to position these novels in the Indigenous literary discourse. While navigating Indigenous literary theory, my focus has been on three different aspects. The first aspect is the broadest, as it focuses on recognising general trends and literary devices in Indigenous literature, contemporary and past. This includes elements such as the use of language, narratives and orality. The focus on this will be given its own chapter. A primary focus is given to the aspect of narratives as an element of Indigenous literature which appears to be evolved in both authors works. The

second aspect has to do with the connection to *place*. As this is one of my primary areas of focus, it has an emphasised focus on theory. Much of the theory is a direct response to Craig Womack's *Red Stick Theory*. Following in a discussion of this, an inclusion of the scholarly work on Indigenous writer Louise Erdrich is included as an example and reference point for the following chapters. The third and final focus is on what I will refer to as *residential school narratives*. Mainly relevant for Michelle Good's novel, the large body of scholarly work on literature dealing with residential school oppression is an important contribution to contextualising contemporary Indigenous literature. With Good's novel so heavily focused on the residential school experience of its characters, the inclusion of theory on the subject is a given.

The Indigenous literary field finds itself in a constant pull between an emphasis on the traditional or embracing a belonging in global literature. Influence from the "western" literary scene has led to discussions of whether there is a need for a separate Indigenous literary theory or whether it could be positioned in relation to the global literary scene. The latter is increasingly relevant as an increasing amount of works are either translated or written in majority languages. Indigenous literary critic Craig Womack introduced his seminal *Red Stick Theory* at the turn of the century. It is based in a belief that rather than looking toward the outside, working from within the nation is a legitimate way of examining literature (Womack 12). Womack's theory has been described as an attempt at creating a theoretical discourse to allow Indigenous people to decolonize themselves, rather than creating an Indigenous canonical inclusion (Pulitano 79). Womack's theory is a significant contribution to the scholarly discussion and calls for a self-determined Indigenous theory on terms which are relevant for its own literature. It is an indication of a movement towards an established theory for Indigenous literature. Much of the discussion concerns the literary scene in North America, though it is highly relevant for the Greenlandic aspect of this thesis as well.

Womack emphasises the fact that if Native critics are "theoryless", it comes from not looking *enough* at its own culture, rather than the opposite (13). It is obvious that Womack believes that there exists an indigenous literary discourse, or at least the possibility of one. Womack ties his discussion to a key element of the discussion that revolves around indigenous critical studies: the relationship between orality and literacy in culture and literature. Womack argues that the barrier between the historically significant oral traditions and the more recent history of written stories should be seen as complements to each other, rather than viewing written texts as a Western contamination of Indigenous oral traditions

(15-16). Again, the focus is on Indigenous culture utilizing the tools available to them, and not the tools *contaminating* the culture. However, Womack goes on to criticise "recent trends" in Indigenous literature as they erase tribe and place from the story. He claims the omission of the landscape which gave birth to the narratives cannot be afforded (194-195). The rejection of Indigenous literature which omits the explicit Indigenousness from the basis of the story is a problematic one, and one which restrains natural literary and cultural development.

Literary critic Elvira Pulitano argues that there is no such thing as an authentic Native American theory in the way there is a Western critical discourse. She claims that the very existence of it would not be legitimate as it is a product of both Western and Indigenous cultural traditions (189). She argues against certain conclusions that critics like Womack come to. Specifically, she critiques the fact that a separatist or nationalist perspective, as introduced by Womack, could limit "Native studies" in a way that doesn't allow it to evolve (62). Additionally, she adds to her argument by acknowledging that a Native American theory based on Indigenous categories have to consider the cultural contact and interactions of the past 500 years as it these elements are already interacting in the Native discourse (61). In line with Pulitano's arguments, I aim to utilise Native critical theory in a way which recognises evolution and progress in the Indigenous literary field. The main emphasised argument in this thesis, introduced by Pulitano, is an evolution of the developments in Indigenous literature which earlier theories fail to accurately recognise. A development of literature naturally demands an inclusion of more recent and relevant literature to work together with established theoretical groundwork.

It is logical to operate with a theoretical groundwork which positions Indigenous literary works in a position of its own, within the fractured framework of what we can call an Indigenous critical theory. However, it appears worthwhile to position it in relation to western literary traditions and global literature. Pulitano argues that if what she describes as *Native American literature* has a position in the discourse of American and world literature its theory has to be viewed in the context of global theory (191), a notion which I strongly agree with. Positioning Indigenous literature in relation to the global literary discourse does not mean devaluing its distinctiveness and characteristics, but rather the opposite as it is given legitimacy. More important than distancing this literature from the global theory is to position it within it by recognising what sets it apart and characterises it. Michelle Good emphasises this as she refers to contemporary Indigenous writers as contributors to a nationwide

reconciliation in the Canadian context through the creation of an own space in the literary world (*Truth Telling* 154-55). That "own space" is defined through the characteristics which create a separate Indigenous literary framework, though it is viewed in its interaction and contact with global literature.

The concept of *place* is discussed thoroughly in this thesis as an element which makes these novels remarkable within the confines of Indigenous literature. Largely based on scholar Paula Anca Farca, the notion of *place* as an important aspect of characters identity and journeys is emphasised greatly in its own chapter. Farca's important work *Identity in Place* deals with the postcolonial interaction Indigenous people have between themselves and locations (Farca 1). Situating the concept of *place* in this relationship is instrumental in how Farca relates the literary works she examines with the notion of Indigenousness. She offers a nuanced and evolved perspective on how contemporary female Indigenous writers use this concept through their own methods. For the purpose of this thesis, Farca's work establishes a solid foundation of how I understand the use and importance of *place*.

As well as contributing to this thesis through her novel *Five Little Indians*, Cree author Michelle Good serves as a voice in the conversation of literature, history and culture in Indigenous Canada through her book *Truth Telling*. She describes the Western literary traditions as an "ill-fitting shoe" (150), a statement which further adds to the argument that there is a necessity for an Indigenous literary theory. She specifies her argument by highlighting the fact that Western literature is contextualised in a way which the non-Indigenous reader can take for granted. Furthermore, a cognitive dissonance occurs when the same person is reading an Indigenous work (150-51). In a literary discussion where we give importance to this argument, there is a need to establish what kind of theory the discussion is based on. Approaching this as a non-Indigenous reader, the issue of a theoretical groundwork which reflects legitimate and well-founded conversations is necessary to maintain a reasonable argument.

Literary critic Sam McKegney's *Magic Weapons* is a thorough and comprehensive review of the literary history and recurring themes in Indigenous literature dealing with the experiences and aftermath of residential schools. These institutions have had lasting effects on Indigenous communities in Canada. McKegney builds on several significant works in the Canadian Indigenous literary scene and how they could be positioned in an Indigenous literary theory. The contribution this work has for this thesis is a foundation and recognition

of the importance literature concerning residential school history and aftermaths have in the Canadian Indigenous literary discourse. Making the argument for the residential schools' regrettable position in Indigenous literature, he claims they have marked the context of which First Nations writers write from, even so if the works do not speak explicitly of residential school experiences (11). We identify these characteristics of Indigenous literature as necessary context to better understand the foundation of it, yet it is important to distinguish context and style. Much of the Indigenous literature is affected by institutional assimilation, but we have to consider that First Nations writers are writing on their own terms and in their own style. McKegney provides the framework from which I analyse residential school context, which further allows for analysis of interactions with literary and narrative style.

Literary theorist Amelia Katanski writes further about the boarding school experience reflected in Indigenous literature in her work *Learning to Write Indian*. She purposefully introduces her works in relation to Womack's *Red on Red* by prefacing that while his approach is highly relevant for her work, his work has a more specific view of Creek literature, while she embraces a pan-tribal point of view (Katanski xii). The view of Indigenous literature in this thesis as *pan-tribal* allows for comparison across tribal borders and boundaries. A pan-tribal view is an ideological tool which could be utilised to "forget Europe" (quoted in Pulitano 94). This is not a dismissal of the fact that certain trends in Western literary tradition could be recognised in Indigenous literature, but rather the implication that we should not assume it. Attributing quality and validity to Indigenous literature while approaching it with a pan-tribal view, we have to consider that trends can be present in several areas of Indigenous literature without making the assumption that it is there due to Western literary influence. The *pan-tribal* approach to Indigenous literature is embraced in this thesis as well, allowing for the comparison between Good and Korneliussen across Indigenous belonging. Katanski draws lines between the influence of boarding school narratives and the more general description of Indigenous literature.

> In their representations of the boarding-school experience, moreover, these writers – from the 1880s to the present – generate a repertoire of shared ancestral, hybrid, or Western representational forms, connecting intertextuality to form a significant part of the discourse of "American Indian Literature." (Katanski 12)

Katanski establishes the boarding school experiences as a significant element in the development of Indigenous literature. Clearly building on elements of Womack, she writes of

an Indigenous literature embracing Western literary tradition on their own terms. In her own words, Katanski comes to a conclusion that boarding school narratives are a central part of what it means to write "Indian", whether it is to protect tribal sovereignty or to ease the pain of an individual survivor (221). Together with McKegney, she serves as an established theoretical background giving value to the literature which *Five Little Indians* is a product and member of.

The reception of Niviaq Korneliussen as a recognised author outside the borders of Greenland indicates both the existence and quality of contemporary literature from the island. However, its position in the scholarly literary debate is limited. "Inuit literature as an academic discipline is still plagued by the impression that it has not yet arrived, or reached its golden age, because long works of fiction still make up a fairly small percentage of its corpus" (Martin 25). A comment from the New Yorker that *Last Night in Nuuk* is "strikingly modern" is a further testament to this misconception (Gee). A seemingly more accurate portrayal would be to acknowledge that an Inuit literary scene certainly exists, but that its reflection in the global literary discourse is rapidly increasing. This thesis builds on the strong belief that an Inuit literary scene naturally exists and existed previous to Korneliussen's writing.

The question of legitimacy in Indigenous literature has been heavily debated. The question of what one can call Indigenous literature will vary depending on which critical theorist one chooses to agree with. Critic and author Leslie Marmon Silko was among the strongest voices calling for a definition of writers which could legitimately call their works Indigenous writing. In her opinion, Indigenous literature should reclaim the traditions of oral narrative and community. She emphasises the importance of orality as necessary in a Native American identity (quoted in Parker & Kaiser 151-52). These beliefs of a strict format for what can and cannot be considered legitimate Indigenous literature, while well-intentioned, could inevitably end up limiting the evolution of the field more than it strengthens it. This call for such clear boundaries and rules for Indigenous literature is built on the thoughts displayed in, among others, Womack's *Red on Red*, calling for a separatist Indigenous literary theory. This effort in being independent from western literary traditions overlooks the fact that the implementation of elements of these traditions are increasingly incorporated in authors writing.

1.2 Relevant Literary History

Indigenous literary history is a broad field consisting of literature from all around the world. This subsection makes the discusses the relevant developments in the Indigenous literary discourse of North America, with the inclusion of Greenland and Inuit literature.

In an effort to embrace the elements of contemporary Indigenous literature which incorporate methods discernible as influenced by, or similar to, trends in global literature I will embrace certain aspects of more general western literary theory. The inclusion of this is solely based on previous connections made in comparison between Cixious' feminist theory and other Indigenous authors. Specifically, Hélène Cixous' *The Laugh of the Medusa* is a solid foundation for a discussion of the independent writing displayed by both Good and Korneliussen. The way in which Cixous describes the role of female writers is strikingly similar to how Indigenous authors have been kept in the dark in the literary discourse, sometimes even by their own peers. Cixous' call for the woman to "write for her self" (Cixous 1873) is easily transferred to Indigenous literature. The decision to include Cixous in this conversation builds on Parker and Kaiser's discussion of the elements of narrative and community in Louise Erdrich's writing, where they compare Erdrich with Cixous' l'écriture feminine. According to them, Erdrich's literary works, similar to l'ecriture feminine, "express a creative desire to release language and characters from their incarceration in the limited and identitarian categories of patriarchal and colonizing structures" (167). This is not to suggest that Indigenous literature exists in a deterministic relationship with Western literary tradition, rather the opposite. Within Indigenous literature, both Michelle Good and Niviaq Korneliussen could be discussed for their writing on sexuality, gender and femininity.

Furthermore, Erdrich's writing indicates a change in style where the theories of critics such as Paula Gunn Allen are challenged. Where Allen argued for a single worldview among Indigenous people as an ineradicable essence, Erdrich opens up for variations and individuality among individuals of the same community (Parker & Kaiser 154). Additionally, the scholarly work on her writing is extensive when it comes to the focus on different personal stories and narratives. Her writing leads to different answers for different characters in how they define home and traditions (Farca 23). These elements make Erdrich a reference point which I will refer to as a reference point and sign of an evolution in Indigenous literature A major evolution in Indigenous literature, the example of Erdrich is an indication

of increased experimentation within this broad genre as Indigenous literature breaks out of perceived boundaries.

Critique of legitimacy has occurred in the Indigenous scholarly discussion. Silko's statement that Erdrich's writing is somehow not legitimate as an Indigenous work comes from her opinion that Erdrich's background as "half-Indian" makes her drawn more towards postmodernism and away from Indigenous traditions (quoted in Parker & Kaiser 151-52). The primary reason for bringing up Silko's critique of Erdrich is to draw the parallel between my argument and her opinion on Erdrich's writing and clarify the point of view taken in this thesis. The exclusion of diversity is so central to especially Korneliussen's writing that the scholarly discussion prior to the turn of the millennia seems symptomatic of certain trends in the Indigenous literary discourse. Erdrich countered the critique through her writing, contradicting Silko's notion that a "shared or communal experience" cannot exist in a postmodern style (Parker & Kaiser 152). Korneliussen is following along the lines of Erdrich, where her writing is challenging earlier established Indigenous literary theorists.

Positioning Indigenous literature requires the acknowledgement and recognition of the fact that Indigenous literature is a broad and generalising term. The connotations to the genre have changed over time. Scholar Emma LaRocque has previously mentioned how Indigenous literature has been perceived only as folktales or children's stories, even in scholarly communities (quoted in Lacombe 207-08). Although a solid amount of scholarly work has been attributed to examining an Indigenous literature which can serve multiple literary roles, I believe attention to the contemporary works sheds light on how Indigenous literature continues to evolve and expand on the foundation which has been established in the modern interaction with global and western literature. The impression that Indigenous literature is somehow lesser is one which I aim to counteract by highlighting the depth of themes and traditions displayed in the novels I have selected.

1.3 Clarifications of Terminology and Context

The terminology used in this thesis is a reflection of the language used in the primary and secondary resources that are referenced. Any use of derogatory or outdated terminology of Indigenous people is only used when quoting directly from primary or secondary sources. Though *Indigenous* is used as a general umbrella term to include both the Canadian and the

Greenlandic context, it is in no way intentioned as an overgeneralisation of the individuality of Indigenous groups. In increasingly changing and urbanising societies, the issue of representation and terminology is relevant. Many young Greenlanders have issues with the definition of "Indigenous peoples" as the terms connection to nature and authenticity locks them to identities which doesn't reflect their actual lives (Thisted 25-26). Rather than excluding Greenlandic literature from the discussion of Indigenous literature, I aim to include Korneliussen's works as an example of how Indigenous literature is engaging in this very discussion itself.

As a result of the importance of translation, some acknowledgements have to made concerning the novels discussed in this thesis. As Monique Mojica and Ric Knowles define translation in an Indigenous context as and its importance:

> One of the tasks of First Nations theatre artists… *is* translation, broadly understood: translation between cultures and world views; translation between the unseen and the material worlds; translation between interior and exterior realities; translations between languages and discourses, including the values and ideologies they embody; and translation of the ways in which First Nations people navigate identity.
> (quoted in Episkenew 174)

Though related to theatre here, the definition of Indigenous artists as translators is highly applicable to authors as well, and I intend to use it as such. The notion that all storytelling becomes an act of translation is one which sits in the middle of the debate of Indigenous critical theory. Both of Niviaq Korneliussen's novels are originally written in two versions: one in Greenlandic and one in Danish. In the case of *Last Night in Nuuk* (original title *Homo Sapienne*), it is translated into English. The Danish version is used as a reference, highlighting certain elements of language and translation which proves important. For *Blomsterdalen,* I have used the Norwegian translation from Danish as the primary source for quotations. In the spirit of thoroughness, I have used the official Danish publication of the novel as a reference to avoid misinterpretations in the Norwegian translation. These are all official translations, but the role of translation has to be addressed. Michelle Good's novel is written in English, which is a subject which will be discussed on its own, but it doesn't require the same attention on translation as Korneliussen's novels.

These novels are more concerned with the identity and personalities of the characters than the greater circumstances which surround them. By focusing inward, the stories are

glimpses into specific understandings of what Indigenous identity *could* be, through the eyes of the characters. I am emphasising the word *could* here to keep a focus on the fact that these stories are the authors understanding of Indigenousness and personal stories. Niviaq Korneliussen's image of Greenlandic society is *her* image of it. In the effort of not generalising entire groups or societies, this thesis is almost solely focusing on the authors literary descriptions of individuals and communities. However, while there is an emphasis on not viewing these novels as the complete truth, it is representative of *a* view. These stories come from somewhere and have to be treated as one of possibly multiple views of the specific communities and societies. To contextualise this, I will briefly highlight the literary works of Mi'kmaq poet Rita Joe, whose writing and opinions of residential schools differs highly from the likes of Michelle Good. Joe wrote of a positive experience in the residential schools, focusing on positive events and relationships gained (quoted in McKegney 127). Understanding and acknowledging that individual stories are exactly that; individual, is key to viewing Indigenous literature as increasingly dynamic and evolving.

2 The Concept of *Place*

The red line through the chosen novels is the importance of *place*. Farca defines places in an Indigenous context as "social and cultural constructions that regenerate themselves as a result of their inhabitants' active participation" (1). While this notion of place can be used in other social contexts, I would argue that the chosen literature emphasises the importance that place holds in Indigenous literary tradition. However, there are very clear differences in how the two authors chose to utilise the place in their storytelling. Drawing comparison between the contemporary and traditional literature, I aim to paint a picture of relevant evolution in Indigenous literature towards the tendencies prevalent in the chosen literary works.

The concept of place is destined to change throughout time. I build on the concept that place identities are created by individuals. Following that belief, it is natural that different individuals will affect place identities in different ways, and thereby create different narratives connected to these places. Critics have noted that this concept of place identities make places user determined, polysemic, and unstable through time (Ashworth & Graham 3). To reflect the division between the identities which places can possess within themselves, this chapter is structured to give examples and analysis of these different place identities. The different identities highlighted in this chapter are the most prevalent ones thematically, as well as they are symptomatic of the evolution of the chapter.

The connection between places and identities is implied in Farca's forementioned definition of the concept of place. The dynamic aspect of place identities is important to emphasise when analysing contemporary ways of portraying places in Indigenous literature as both the places themselves, as well as the individual's relationship to them, is destined to change over time. The fact that an increasing number of critics are choosing to focus on how Indigenous communities and the definition of *place* is changing is recognisable in the chosen literary works. By looking into both Korneliussen and Good's way of writing I will draw out examples of different ways of telling contemporary Indigenous stories in light of the emphasis of *place*. While acknowledging and emphasising the more recent ways of describing places, it is in no way meant as a direct devaluation of traditional storytelling mechanisms.

There are multiple genres of Indigenous literature who may all choose to portray the connection to place differently. While Korneliussen's novels are groundbreaking in their style, an aspect which will be discussed thoroughly later on, Good's novel can be positioned

within the framework of residential school narratives. In this context of residential school narratives, Sam McKegney has noted that these narratives, telling stories from *within*, has redefined "what it means to inhabit an Indigenous identity 'within' disparate contemporary Indigenous communities" (182). McKegney defines the literary body he works with as "literary narratives by residential school survivors and others affected by its legacy", a piece of literature he views as "profoundly understudied" (18). Michelle Good's work falls into the category of those affected by residential school narratives, expressing herself through fictional, yet highly valuable narratives.

The sense of portraying different relationships to places and what characters end up calling home is not a completely new trend in Indigenous literature. Louise Erdrich has previously used a large number of characters to describe different relationships to home and tradition through identity crisis and various experiences (Farca 23-24). The inclusion of Louise Erdrich in this thesis is an effort to highlight that the development of Indigenous literature is not sudden or breaking with conventionality to an extreme extent. Rather, it is clearly a natural and gradual development of the reach of Indigenous literature. Erdrich pushed boundaries of identity, patriarchal power, and normative sexuality (Parker & Kaiser 153). This emphasis on Erdrich is meant to indicate that the dynamic aspect of identity in Indigenous literature has developed into the aspect visible in Good and Korneliussen's works. Erdrich was more interested in locating the oppression of Native Americans in the induvial characters experiences than she was in make universal generalisations to characterise an entire population (Parker & Kaiser 154). Similarly, Good's focus on individual truths and paths for her characters continue this trend in Indigenous literature. Each character's highly individual relation to place is symptomatic of the emphasis on individuality. One aspect is naturally the relationship to the residential school itself, though it is not a primary focus of this thesis, as the characters are quite unanimous in their depiction of it as a place of physical, psychological and sexual abuse. The focus of this thesis is more interested in the places that the different characters end up having some kind of significant connection to outside of the premise, though not the influence, of the residential school.

There are reasons for viewing the evolution of Indigenous literature as exactly that: evolving. The connection to people and place is bound to change within the Indigenous context. It has done before, and it probably will in the future. Novels such as Good and Korneliussen's are images into the current Indigenous experience, mirrored by the literary traditions of old, the community context of today, and the aims for tomorrow. Through his

discussion of a Native American Renaissance in the 1980s, Kenneth Lincoln contextualised Indigenous literature in a way which both highlights the development, and the traditions present within it.

> "Being Indian, then, may mean adjusting the definition to the tribal reality at hand, rather than living nostalgically in a mythic past. People move from one place to another, or conversely, live in areas that change as other cultures move in. Human time, place, and culture are carried through cyclic evolutions that never stand still."
> (Lincoln 187)

This mirrors the more recent theories and viewpoints of Farca, Ashworth and Graham who argue for a dynamic understanding of *place* and the people within the term. This thesis merely attempts to emphasise how these specific novels are possible expressions of an evolution in literature, as suggested and expected by the likes of Lincoln. The following subchapters are a reflection of how the chosen literature deals with the connection to place, and how the way which place identities are used and described are indicative of a dynamic context. From places of revitalisation to death and refuge, an increasing perspective of place identities reflect the changing way in which we define and understand Indigenous and personal identity.

2.1 Revitalisation

Following in the belief that place identities are created and develop through the people connected to it, people are also highly affected through the influence of places. Farca has noted that character's change, reinterpret their personal and national history, and establish links with the past through their return to real or imagined places (167). Such is the case for Clara and Howie in *Five Little Indians*. Howie's return to his native Saskatchewan is a return to place in the more traditional sense of reconnecting with one's former home. Originally displaced as he is taken to the residential school, he is disconnected from his heritage and identity at an early age. His return to the place he originally has a strong connection to is therefore a significant and important example of a personal journey. However, still in this story, the focus on the support of people is clear. Howie's eventual satisfaction is a combination of two factors. The first being the place he has a strong connection, and the second being his relationship with Clara. As he mentions when introduced to the possibility that she will come to visit him at his new home: "For the first time since coming back to

Saskatchewan, Howie started to feel alive and purposeful" (*Five Little Indians* 275). His return *back* to Saskatchewan connects him with his heritage and past, while his relation to Clara gives meaning and purpose for his present and future. This concept of places and people working in tandem is a clear factor in Good's storytelling.

Places of Indigenous revitalisation give an added element to Indigenous literature, lifting the importance of people and places above their plain existence. Farca writes about the Australian novel *Caprice: A Stockman's Daughter*, a novel in which an assimilated Indigenous woman who has lost touch with her Aboriginal identity has her relationship to it rekindled as she returns to the place of her ancestors. Farca goes on to claim that Aboriginality is part of the identity of Indigenous people even though they have lost contact with their culture, and that returning to their homeland could be the factor which reignites their interest in their ancestry (113). In *Five Little Indians*, Clara has an experience which could be described as similar as she visits Mariah, an elderly woman with a cabin she calls a healing place:

> Mariah looked Clara straight in the eye. "Remember, this is a place of healing. I am your family now and this place is yours forever. When things get tough, remember the medicine and never forget, you will always have your angels."
> (*Five Little Indians* 203)

Describing the place through its personal importance which it could have on Clara elevates its importance from the mere position as a hideout or place for physical treatment. The connotation of the existence of angels, however spiritual the mention may be, connects the place with heritage and emotions. It is a *place* firstly, and a physical location lastly. Mariah and her lodge play the role as Clara's *place*. When asked if she prays her response is a blatant refusal of the notion that praying has any effect. Mariah's response to this is stating "there is something here for you to learn" (193), positioning the *place* as a somewhere which can reignite Clara's relationship to her ancestry and act as a decisive factor in the *resurgence* of her Indigenous identity.

Korneliussen's second novel deals with the element of revitalisation in the meeting with place. The very title *Blomsterdalen* is the Danish translation of the Greenlandic title *Naasuliardarpi*, meaning the Flower Valley. It refers to a specific place of great importance to the main character of the novel. The character, who gradually moves closer to the edge of her own demise, has an immediate connection to this place as she sees it for the first time. Her

acknowledgement after seeing Naasuliardarpi for the first time indicates her immediate connection to *place*:

> I thought I had seen it all, but now I have. (…) I fill my lungs completely with a single inhale, and it feels as if I never need to breathe again. The absolute best thing that could happen in my life, is happening here and now.
> (*Blomsterdalen* 126, my translation)

The awakening that Naasuliardarpi appears to have for the main character is almost spiritual. She is calmed by the mountains and the landscape. The clear connection she feels to this place indicates her belonging to it. Later on, she meets an old man from the area who knew her grandmother. She has an immediate connection to him, indicating that both the people and the place has some importance to her. Naturally, the place's role as her girlfriend's hometown holds some importance, but I would argue that her own personal connection is of more significance.

Naasuliardarpi role as a place has a hybrid identity. It is recognisable in the theory that places and people mutually shape one another, a trend recognisable not only historically, but also in contemporary culture (quoted in Farca, 12). The plastic flowers which give name to Naasuliardarpi are a great example of this mutual relationship between place and people. *Blomsterdalen*'s main character calls it a "limbo place", which she defines as "the place where you exist when you're dead, but haven't moved on, wherever you're heading" (127-28). It becomes clear that the main characters relationship to the place is through a connection to her spiritual self, exploring the belief of something outside of life itself.

Among the many reasons that a place becomes important for Indigenous characters, family is the one most prominent in Korneliussen's writing. Ojibwe author Louise Erdrich wrote that she believes place, in a tribal point of view, becomes enlivened by a sense of group and family history (quoted in Hafen 157). The passages in the novel where the main character is in conversation with the older man telling her of her own family's history is representative of such a connection to a place. The conversations role as an initator for her interaction with the Flower Valley, leading to when she connects the place to her own family history: "Just then it becomes apparent to me that the mountains are exactly as they were that time when aanaa walked her, that aanaa watched exactly the same view as I am watching now" (*Blomsterdalen* 192, my translation). There is a sense of this belonging in the emotions and thoughts which fill *Blomsterdalen*'s main characters head when introduced to a place she

didn't previously know she had a strong connection to. Korneliussen does well to offer breadcrumbs of evidence of her connection to this place through her emotional view of Naasuliardarpi, as well as her encounter with the old man at the hospital. These examples point us towards the understanding that this place has some significance for who she is. While the full picture is never painted, we are given a sense that she is inkling towards a feeling of belonging, before then being pulled away from it in the meeting with the realities of the modern society, responsibilities, and her own actions.

As she only views it from a distance, the main character ends up telling her girlfriend Maliina that "I would like to be buried in the Flower Valley" (*Blomsterdalen* 204, my translation). Her longing towards Naasuliardarpi is the closest she comes to finding actual peace with herself. While she is drawn towards it, Maliina pulls her away and claims she can "look at Naasuliardarpi later" (127, my translation). It is this distance between hope and reality which the main character deals with. While longing towards the most positive element of her identity, the *place* which she immediately has a connection to, she is pulled back into the negative aspects of that same identity as they search for a reason and understanding of Guuju's death. The natural conclusion for the main character is that her dying is what's needed to be able to reach such a place as Naasuliardarpi.

Places of revitalisation act as the more traditional representations of place in these novels. The connection to them through ways such as family or a connection to a culture which has been repressed represent how these different characters are able to recognise that they have a connection to actual places. For the main character in *Blomsterdalen,* this place is physical. Her connection to it is tangible, represented through her walking though it. In *Five Little Indians*, Clara's connection to place is largely dealing with the expanded vision of *place* as less of a physical location, but more of a place which can reignite something within her as she makes sense of herself and her identity. The key difference I want to highlight between these two stories is the outcome of the encounter which a place of revitalisation. For Clara, the place saves her and makes her more secure of herself. This cannot be said for the main character in *Blomsterdalen*. The main part, which is absent for her, but present for Clara, is guidance. Clara is guided and assisted by Mariah, a character who acts as an extension of the place itself. Mariah's role as a mediator between place and receiver shows how people help people. Clara is dependent on Mariah initially. The main character in *Blomsterdalen* has to try to make sense of her connection to Naasuliardarpi but is unable to do so. Perhaps missing is her grandmother's guidance.

2.2 Refuge

For certain characters, especially those who feel like they have to hide or struggle with their identity, some places act as refuge for them. This refuge could be both temporary and permanent, but most relevant for this thesis is *why* they seek some form of personal refuge, and what role the places are then attributed. For certain contexts it becomes just as relevant to look at which places they are seeking refuge away from.

In *Blomsterdalen*, the main characters sexuality is from an early age connected to a specific place. She, together with her homosexual friend Angutivik, escape to a cave she knows of in the mountains by her hometown. Serving as the closet for them to be honest about their identity to each other, it highlights how Korneliussen views the lack of openness about sexuality and identity in the community. When asked if she is afraid if her personal belongings in the cave will be stolen, she answers "No, no one ever comes here, they don't know about the cave, or they're afraid of it" (*Blomsterdalen* 87, my translation). This statement is a very visible analogy to how Korneliussen appears to describe the Greenlandic society. Although it is a bleak description, she portrays the community which she knows herself as afraid of the cave, the very representation of how who she is. Later on, Angutivik takes his own life in the cave. It is a clear indication of Korneliussen's intent that he dies in the one place he was honest about his identity and sexuality. Never escaping the cave, it serves as the place in which he was closeted.

The secrecy and lack of conversation about difficult subjects is highly problematised in *Blomsterdalen*. In line with Korneliussen's explicit and direct way of discussing various subjects, it becomes quite clear which elements of contemporary Greenland she criticises. The very connection between the story of Angutivik, the main character and the cave and the more general aspect of secrecy in queer communities is clear. The cave itself could be viewed as a queer safe space. Pascar et.al talk of how queer safety is often imagined as the spaces in which diversity may be explored and practiced (8). Inferred in this belief is the individual's belief that the aspect of diversity cannot be explored outside the safe space. When letting truths which existed within the safe space by revealing Angutivik's sexuality to a friend of hers, the main character evidently reveals to herself that her own truth would not survive getting known in the same way. The safe space is broken, and the character continues to struggle in her navigation of sexuality and identity in what she doesn't believe is a safe space.

Similar to how Vancouver is important for the characters in *Five Little Indians*, the larger cities in Denmark are sought after by several characters in Korneliussen's novels. They serve as unlikely centres for the Indigenous characters, and they are often located there due to displacement or the search for opportunities. Although I will be getting into the specific role of urban places in the following subchapter, its position as a place of refuge is relevant to include here. In *Last Night in Nuuk*, Inuk is the character which goes through the most explicit and striking internal process as he deals with his sexuality being exposed publicly, described to us through his messages to his best friend Arnaq and his sister Fia. I chose to include the discussion off Inuk as a character in this chapter due to his own reflections of identity being closely related to the issue of *place*. He feels pushed away from Greenland, and initially drawn towards Denmark, defining himself as a "refugee" (42). The historical power relation between Greenland and Denmark is clearly visible through Inuk's personal struggle. Unable to be at easy within Greenland, he believes Denmark is the natural alternative. Ultimately, Inuk struggles with the fact that neither place feels like home.

> Where is home?
>
> If home isn't in Greenland, if home isn't here, where is my home?
>
> Lost
>
> *Last Night in Nuuk* 59

By referring to "here" as Denmark, Inuk comes to the realisation that he believes his identity is in conflict with both places he believed he could belong to. The attempt at belonging to either leads Inuk to describe a feeling of being lost, seemingly searching for a third place. Rather than creating this third space, the novel shifts its focus to make the story of Inuk a story of diversity in the contemporary Greenland. The story of Inuk denies the *in-between* in an effort to introduce the non-normative as the normative constitutive Other (Lubowicka 45).

As evolving and vibrant as Korneliussen is portraying part of urban life in Greenland, the novel is far from being void of the portrayal of being homosexual as abnormal. The shame of homosexuality is an important element in keeping characters from acknowledging their sexuality or traveling abroad. Oxfeldt argues that the portrayal of shame in *Last Night in Nuuk* is closely related to the very relevant feeling of shame for simply being Greenlandic (71). The connection between characters feelings of shame because of their sexuality and their nationality is equally important in *Blomsterdalen*, Korneliussen's more recent novel. The

main character, who is kept nameless throughout the novel, struggles to orientate herself between her many elements of identity. When interacting flirtingly with a woman in Aarhus these elements of shame and identity collision becomes apparent:

> "You're really bad at dancing," she laughs.
>
> "That doesn't mean I'm bad at sex," I say without hesitation.
>
> "You Greenlanders are some wild creatures," she laughs and turns around.
>
> "I'm not Greenlandic," I say, but she doesn't hear me.
>
> (*Blomsterdalen* 91, my translation)

This denial of Greenlandic identity comes following her frequent experiences of being blunt in her way of speaking and feeling alienated from the Danish society she is trying to interact with. She feels her Greenlandic background is what makes her interact clumsily with Danes. When faces with this apparent confirmation of herself as a "wild creature" because of her background, she is quick to deny her national identity.

2.3 Urban Places

The embrace of urban communities and places is a relatively new development in Indigenous literature. The increasing importance of urban areas in Indigenous people deserves attention in the recognition of contemporary Indigenous literature (Farca 169). Vancouver is embraced by several characters in *Five Little Indians* as it becomes their community. A key strength in *Five Little Indians* and *Last Night in Nuuk* is its focus one the perspective of different characters relationship to these urban communities and places. The various perspectives offer a diverse and complex picture of how different people have different goals and backgrounds.

Greenland as a place has a complex sense of identity where Danish influence through colonialism has greatly influenced both local and global views of the island. This position between an arctic Indigenous belonging to tradition, and a colonial relationship to Denmark puts Greenlandic identity in a dynamic relationship to place. Kirsten Thisted notes that the contemporary Arctic, including Greenland, has to be considered in a context of global community in a way which is completely different and more unpredictable than earlier (23). Naturally, this change is noticeable in arts and literature. Recent Greenlandic literature has

focused on denying the victimisation, as exemplified by Korneliussen, who embraces the importance of individuality and largely disconnects Greenland from strong colonial ties. This evolution focuses on identifying the Greenlandic with the global, severing the post-colonial ties with Denmark. This development is spearheaded by young Greenlanders (quoted in Lubowicka 42). Korneliussen is, through her writing, positioning herself at the forefront of this development.

The position in which especially Greenland finds itself in is one where it has ties to one country, while at the same time positioning itself through an identity globally. The literature is symbolic of how this is unfolding. Lubowicka writes about a belief in the Danish literary discourse that every Greenlandic literary work has to deal with the post-colonial relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. Rather than agreeing with such a statement, she refers to the character Inuk in *Last Night in Nuuk*, who states "Enough of this post-colonial shit" as a way of saying that Greenlanders are agents in their own life (Lubowicka 45). She doesn't clearly state it, but it appears as if Korneliussen is attempting to use her characters as images of different people going their own way in the Greenlandic society, both internally and globally. Additionally, although the underlying tone in Korneliussen's novels is different to that of Michelle Good's story, they do share similarities in how they portray certain characters as independent from the colonial-dependent stories of old. They tell new stories from different personal perspectives.

To an increasing extent, Indigenous writers have had to focus on the urban places as well as the traditionally important ones. However, they are also exploring what *places* are and what they mean. It is particularly in this sense that the two authors offer contrasting imagery. While Korneliussen in *Last Night in Nuuk* looks at *place* in the sense portrayed earlier, as dynamic construction, dependent on the setting of the characters and often denying conventionality. Michelle Good uses the sense of the *place* in a way which recognises some traditional elements in Indigenousness. Culturally important places are used as identity revivers for some of the characters in *Five Little Indians*. Where the novel starts to break away from tradition is in the sense of creating *places* that break the boundaries of the former way of defining it.

The striking description of place and identity in Korneliussen's literary work fits into the direction which critic Paula Anca Franca believes Indigenous literature might be heading. She is of the opinion that Indigenous writers will be enriching the genre of Indigenous

literature through “more funky” stories which tackle place and identity in new ways (171). I would argue that Korneliussen’s novels fit nicely into this description. The depiction of Nuuk as a vibrant and urban community in *Last Night in Nuuk* symbolises a different aspect of modern Greenlandic society than the stereotypical image. Korneliussen even refers to how the place Nuuk is changing in the novel. As Fia and Sara move out of a bar to go home together, a striking description of Nuuk takes place.

> Through a crowd of people, making a beeline for a taxi, towards Qinngorput, a new area of Nuuk, our hands touching, my heart’s racing, it hurts, sexual attraction, animal behaviour, survival, silence on the way in, awkward opening the door, have you brought your keys, she passes me, touching my body with hers.
> (*Last Night in Nuuk* 27)

Firstly, the “crowd of people” is in stark contrast to the image of Greenland, a country of few people and small towns. The mention of a new area of Nuuk, somewhat explicitly, hint at a place which is changing. As they move towards it, they symbolise how they are expanding the boundaries of the place. It is evolving, and they are moving towards and together with it. Nuuk’s role as a place of importance serves as a parallel to the characters. Interestingly, Fia’s mention of “animal behaviour” gives some connection to the humanness and natural element of the whole segment. It gives some validity to the societal evolution as natural. This combination of the natural factor of human attraction with the image of a new area of the place is the very notion of what Korneliussen tries to illustrate. As Lubowicka also notes, this depiction of the characters is in opposition to the belief that Greenland is a monocultural society (45). The characters are not creating a new place outside of Greenland, but are rather offering a different image of what Greenland is. Elisabeth Oxfeldt claims that “the Danes seem to be installed as the Other from which the Greenlandic subject must disassociate,” and that Denmark’s role in the novel is that of a sidetrack “where the Greenlandic subject is lost both to Greenland and to him/herself” (73).

The story of Maisie offers a perspective of the most depressing outcome of residential school trauma. Conflicted between a feeling of belonging and one of restlessness, Maisie contemplates her relationship with Vancouver as she introduces it to Lucy:

> Lucy sat on the single seat across from us and looked out the window, her face a picture of wonderment at the city sights. I smiled, thinking of my first days in the city, remembering how it had been so frightening and awesome at once. I nudged Jimmy.

> "Was I like that when I first got here?"
>
> "You were just like that." He put his arm around my shoulder and squeezed. "Like an old woman and a little kid at the same time."
>
> (*Five Little Indians* 67)

The comparison of a Lucy in "wonderment" and herself gives us an insight into Maisie's first impressions of Vancouver. Jimmy's portrayal of her as both an old woman and a little kid is a striking and telling description of her. This description is sweet at first, but implicitly underlines by the fact that she was in many ways too young to be put in that situation and had to prematurely adapt to her new life. There is little left of the "awesome" impression of the city life in the story of Maisie which we are presented. A partial explanation for this lies in the very nature of the city. Scholars have described cities as masculine places favouring men. In those lines, when contemporary Indigenous writers place female characters in a city, they struggle to find personal openings in a masculine space (Farca 58-59). Maisie as a character fit into this description. Jimmy fits into the city more than she does. She is consistently used and abused by men in more powerful positions in the city, dependent on their resources. Eventually she runs out of options and openings.

By contrast to Maisie, Lucy manages to adapt to the city. The main difference between Maisie and Lucy is that the latter has a communal support from other characters. Maisie supported her initially and paved the way so that Lucy wasn't overwhelmed at her first meeting with the metropole. Clara continued to support her as she adapted to the urban ige. She continues to take more control of her own life, exemplified by the fact that she takes control of her own hair, and grows it past her shoulders. Symbolically it represents her independence and freedom as she makes decisions for herself, not limited by her trauma or surroundings. On the contrary, her surroundings inspire her as she recognises the aspect of freedom the "hippie girls" represent in the urban landscape (*Five Little Indians* 95). Lucy remains a valid symbol of a person of Indigenous origin who finds their own way, ultimately concluding with the fact that Vancouver is her home. Storytelling which embraces the ability for characters to use their free will, even if it is to stay in a place they were involuntarily sent to, is expanding the diversity inclusion in Indigenous literature.

Lucy's acknowledgement of the fact that Vancouver has become a place she calls home is an indication of how Indigenous literature is portraying its characters as capable and willing to fit in where they want to. Michelle Good speaks of a belief that Indigenous suffering is

connected to a belief that they have failed to adapt to the modern world, a belief she opposes (*Truth Telling* 151). Lucy is certainly an example of this, adapting well on in the city, with help from the friends which support her when she is settling in. Her relationship with Kenny, as well as his sporadic visits, further supports her in finding her place. She tells him during one of his visits: "This is a happier house when you're here" (*Five Little Indians* 207). Again, the interaction with other people is the key to establishing lasting and meaningful relationships to places. The adaptation to an urban place develops out of something as traditional as love.

2.4 The Role of Community

While the sense of *place* often refers to physical places or internalised processes, the novels are portraying another element of place. The inclusion of community is one which connects place and people. The community creates importance to a place in interaction with the people it is created by and for. Highlighting how institutionalised community functions as an extension of place, I will focus on the adorably named Friendship Centre in *Five Little Indians*. According to Episkenew, Indigenous literature engages is a process of conscientisation which leads to way of writing which imagines an optimistic future for Indigenous communities, beyond mere survival (76). Elements of this is prevalent especially in Good's writing. The hopeful future for characters such as Clara and Howie at the end of the novel indicates this notion of Indigenous literature. In Michelle Good's own words, Indigenous literature is clearing the way for a restoration of Indigenous peoples to a place of wellness and prosperity (*Truth Telling* 148). I would argue that this is exemplified through the focus on community support and scaffolding from other people.

The community in *Five Little Indians* has a very defined role through the Friendship Centre, a place for Indigenous people offering help in various ways. It acts as a more institutionalised sort of community and the eventual meeting point for several characters. McKegney notes that Indigenous authors redefine what it means to be part of an Indigenous community as they engage in empowerment of communities and the individuals within (55). The Friendship Centre serves as a valid, though simplified, example of the empowerment of Indigenous communities. It connects several characters as a means of reconciliation and progress. Kenny and Lucy's daughter Kendra gives an example as she talks with her dad

about their strained relationship: “I was at the Friendship Centre. I’ve been volunteering there, helping Clara. She told me I shouldn’t be so mean to you. She told me some other stuff too.” (*Five Little Indians* 252). It is revealed that Kendra learns of Kenny’s background and childhood through her time at the Friendship Centre. It fulfils its role as a communicator of the trauma which characters such as Kenny struggle to tell themselves. This way, it supports people of the community in a way which in needed, but difficult for themselves. For Kenny and Kendra, it plays the role of a third point of view, bridging the gap between Kenny’s trauma and Kendra’s anger at being abandoned by her father.

In the connection between personal and place identities, characters are able to fulfil community and societal roles in a strengthened position. Specifically speaking of First Nations women, Farca notes the tendency in Indigenous literature where they as urban characters are involved in political activists through their new homes (Farca 168). While this I never a focal point of any of the novels, it is present, especially in *Five Little Indians*, as a sign of self-control and authority in the urban setting. The political activism and ability to take the larger fights are sprung out of the community that evolves around the Friendship Centre and the increasingly permanent residents of Vancouver. Characters such as Clara are growing into a role within the community where they can support the others, also in a political way.

Even though there are signs of activism and a direct confrontation with the past, *Five Little Indians* paints a picture of certain characters who are unable to fully participate in such action. Lucy as a character differs heavily from Clara in some important ways. While Clara is finding herself in the traditions and Mariah’s lodge, Lucy finds her place in the city despite her challenges when she arrives. Initially embraced by Maisie, she is then left to fend for herself after Maisie’s death. Her connection to place has overcome many a challenge already, leading her to be vary of shaking things up. When asked by Kenny to participate with her story in a lawsuit against the residential school practices, her immediate response is: “I don’t know, Kenny. Why pick at the scab?” (*Five Little Indians* 253). Seemingly, Lucy’s reluctancy to engage in the lawsuit is connected to two different elements. The first being her own way of doing things, always looking forward and doing the best she can with the resources she has. Lucy looks less back on things which were, as exemplified earlier in her reluctancy to talk about Maisie after her death. Secondly, even though her relationship with Kenny is far from ideal, she seems afraid to shake him up more than necessary. Her life in Vancouver has been a combination of establishing a home in a physical place, as well as creating a sense of

place which could serve as a home for both her and Kenny. The residential school experience is not a finished chapter for Lucy, but rather one she doesn't want to revisit. The Friendship Centre acts as the foundation that creates the opportunity to move forward with the lawsuit, establishing a sense of security in community. Again, the large focus in these novels is on the importance of supporting communities and people, scaffolding progress and the adaptation to new life situations.

2.5 Death

More tragic than places of refuge, some places end up having devastating roles for the characters. I will briefly shed light on the few instances of places having an air of death surrounding them. This includes the most tragic of depictions of character stories, as some of these characters end up taking their own lives. With the emphasis on *place* present in these novels, the physical or mental places which the characters are located at the time of their suicide is a significant acknowledgement in the discussion of place.

For Maisie the city could be explained as a place where she ultimately couldn't cope. Her relationship to the city is centred around her experience of being used by the people in it, as well as her adaptation to this different life. As Farca notes, the perspective of struggling finding the connection to place in contemporary, often urban communities, is not an implication of defeat (167). *Five Little Indians* offers different perspectives of personal struggle with heritage reconnection. Perhaps struggling to adapt the most, Kenny and Maisie become two symbols of tragedy in the wake of their experiences at the boarding school. Similar for the both of them is the struggle to create lasting and supporting relationships. Maisie's demise is a tragic end to the story of a lonely and hardened individual. Her story contrasts the mood of the rest of the novel. While other characters find various degrees of happiness and self-realisation, Maise stands out as the most chilling consequence of their shared experience. While Vancouver became a place which Lucy would eventually call home, Maisie takes her own life in the city and ends her narration: "I looked, one last time, at the skyline" (78). The image of the skyline is depressing and could be read as a final vision of what killed her. Constantly in argument or confrontation with almost every person she interacts with, Maisie's experiences at the boarding school are reflected in her way of trying

to cope. Destined to continue to rely on people who do not care about her, Maisie struggles to connect to any place.

Similar to Lucy, Kenny has tried to move on from the residential school experience. However, in contrast to his significant other, Kenny is unable to fully put it behind him, forcing him into restlessness and seeking refuge from almost every situation and place. I've argued that Kenny's story is not a story of failure, but of the overcoming of oppression, and I will reiterate this in the context of his final battle with the residential school experience and oppression. McKegney has noted that residential school narratives symbolise the failure of the residential school system more than its brutality (182). Kenny manages to have a meaningful relationship with Lucy, his childhood love from the school, despite the efforts of the school to hinder it. He is able to escape the school, despite them trying to repeatedly stop him. He is even able to tell his story and have his opposition to the residential school practice heard in a formal setting. Even though it ends up breaking him down, he is an impactful example of the failure of residential schools. Additionally, the fact that his final thoughts return to his mother and his heritage adds weight to not only the failure of the residential school, but the resilience of Kenny as a representation of resilience and survival, even in death.

The unnamed main character in *Blomsterdalen* ends up taking her own life in Copenhagen. She ends up here after attempting to find places of refuge, among them a failed attempt at escaping to Canada. Ultimately, the character appears lost and desperate in Copenhagen, a place where she doesn't feel at home. Her being drawn away from where she does not feel like she belongs, among her family in Western Greenland, the escape to Denmark does not have the effect she hopes. It is the one place where she spirals further down. A part of the explanation could be found in the fact that she is lacking the support of other people. Similar to the aforementioned characters in the subchapter, death and suicide occurs in the loneliest settings where support from others is totally absent. Eventually, her thoughts return to her actual connection to place, as she reminisces about the many suicides mentioned through the frequent countdown in the novel, claiming the date when she takes her own life is "My number" (*Blomsterdalen* 280, my translation). Similar to Kenny, she returns to thoughts of her real home, though they are filled with a sense of melancholy and tragedy.

To understand why the characters in Korneliussen's novels express themselves as they do, a view into their personal and mental struggles proves relevant. The main character in *Blomsterdalen* is quite clearly struggling with a lack of self-love and anxiety. Korneliussen

creates a connection between the characters childhood fear of being honest and her insecurity about her own identity to the anxiety she is experienced at her older age. As she expresses her desire to be buried in Naasuliardarpi, it is easy to draw a connection to the death of Angutivik in the cave. The place she has a connection to becomes an expression of security connected to place. These places that are supposed to have positive connotations to them, as the previously mentioned "safe-spaces" becomes places connected to death.

2.6 Internalised Processes

There is a new trend in Indigenous literature where places are portrayed as internalised processes, rather than just physical locations (Farca 2). Good explores this notion of place for some characters and portrays these internalised processes as both complex and sometimes unfulfilling. Kenny is the most obvious example, as he wanders from one location to the other, never being able to settle down. The one *place* which appears to be stable in his life is the connection he has to people, specifically Lucy. When returning to Lucy and their daughter Kendra, Lucy asks whether he is going to stay for a while. He responds: "Of course. I missed my best girls" (*Five Little Indians* 205), a statement which we as readers are led to believe through getting to know him. Though he always ends up leaving, the stable connection he has throughout his life, always returning to eventually, is the people he has a close connection to. The connection he has to Lucy is important. Equally important is the analysis of why he struggles to stay for a longer period of time, despite his close connection.

Kenny's restlessness is an example of someone who cannot fully engage with that internalised process, constantly trying to escape his trauma. As a character, he is recognisable as an example used by Louise Erdrich where characters who leave their community struggle to adapt when they return (Farca 24). To understand Kenny's reluctancy to settle down we have to view his story as a whole, from our introduction to him as a young child until his tragic death. Our first introduction to him as a character is as he escapes the residential school. Portrayed as a positive, there are elements in this part of his story which could be traced in his later story. My argument is that Kenny struggles with situations where people are dependent on him, with the moment he escapes, but simultaneously leaves his classmates behind, as the starting point. As he is contemplating his earlier attempt at escape, the note from Lucy stating

"Yor brave" (5) serves as the first sign of Kenny's attempt to have meaningful relationships. His reluctancy to leave others behind is apparent as he is about to leave the residential school:

> He thought of Howie, small and bloodied. He thought of Lucy, shorn and scabby. He thought of Wilfred, alone in the dorm without him. He thought of that big cop who'd dragged him back to the school the last time – the one who wouldn't believe him about what Brother was doing. He thought of his mom. A long, low sob fell out of him and the tears flowed. He felt like he was crumbling. He steadied himself, placing his hands on his knees.
> (*Five Little Indians* 8)

The division within Kenny, and his inability to please every person he cares about is clear. The situation he is put in, as a child, is a hopeless one. It ultimately comes down to the factor of the treatment at the residential school. It is the reason why he is there in the first place, and why he wants to leave.

The relationship which we attribute between residential schools and the survivors is not a deterministic relationship. Painting a picture of survivors as social constructs includes the fact that we portray them as void of free will and personal control (McKegney 33). Kenny's life is clearly heavily influenced by his experience and treatment at the residential school, but that should not be all which we attribute to him. Kenny manages to be together with Lucy and have a child, despite his trauma. As he passes into a version of an afterlife, we follow his reflections of his own life. Through visions of his mother, he is connected to the village he grew up in one last time. As the place he originally escaped to get to, he is reminded of his identity one last time. In this memory, his mother, in line with trends in the contemporary literature, connects his original home with the people that exist there: "Son, just look at the village. Look at your home. See how plentiful it is. Look at the smiles and feel the peacefulness here" (*Five Little Indians* 258). Although it in no way paints a complete picture of the village, the memory of his mother is reminding him of elements of his identity. If we are to analyse his final thoughts as representative of his identity, then the inclusion of this place that always remained important to him emphasises the connection between identity and place.

The children who grew up in the boarding school are relocated to Vancouver by the missionaries when their time at the school is done. Lost and alone, they make the place their own. Lucy sums it up perfectly when asked if she wants to move to a different house than the apartment which she has lived in, sporadically with Kenny: "This is my home. I will stay here

with him" (269). Her connection to the place it rooted in her connection to the then deceased Kenny. And while it is not like this for every character, Lucy feels like she belongs to a place due to her connection to the people she has shared it with.

Kenny is a character constantly searching for a sense of security within himself. His initial escape from the residential school is hailed as a success by his fellow classmates. Lucy holds Kenny to the highest of standards, claiming he was "the one we believed in" (101). Yet, his life turns out to have its fair share of significant issues, mainly dealing with alcohol. The restlessness of his childhood appears to follow him for the rest of his life as he constantly flees every situation where he doesn't feel completely free. That is not to say that he is not free when with Lucy, but he seems to have lost the ability to let himself be dependent on someone or let someone depend on him. Nevertheless, his story is neither one of failure, but rather of more limited success. Reading Kenny's story as less of a failure but more as a survival story follows along the lines of Sam McKegney's belief that we should be careful not to give residential schools a more perverse sense of success than what they actually achieved (48). McKegney's belief builds on the fact that we should not attribute all parts of Indigenous peoples lives as caused by residential schools. This would entail that we give residential schools a position where they succeeded in the assimilation. Parts of Kenny's story is due to the oppression of the residential school upbringing, but his story should rather be read as one of resilience and overcoming trauma.

The connection between interaction and places creates an identity for both place and characters. The characters in Louise Erdrich's writing are embracing their identity through a dialogic of exchange and interchange (Parker & Kaiser 162-63), a trait recognisable in *Five Little Indians* and *Last Night in Nuuk*. Kenny and Lucy's relationship is a character and identity building relationship with inevitably creates a place identity for Lucy. Their relationship consistently serves as an example of how different people in similar settings could be. Kenny doesn't have the same connection with Vancouver as Lucy ends up having. His previously mentioned visions of his mother in his transition to an afterlife is the clearest indication we get of what Kenny inevitably feels most connected to.

3 Literary choices

This chapter deals with the literary and narrative choices which the two authors have used in their novels. While the connection to *place* indicates a clear trend of modernity in the novels, this is equally visible in the narrative choices and literary structure. This chapter will initially address the narrative choices of all three novels, highlighting how each of them are representative of unconventional ways of structuring narratives in the context of Indigenous literary development. Followingly, I will look closely at the way in which these novels are written. While this is a large category, I will aim to highlight the ways in which language is used to reflect trends in speaking and thinking, as well as a portrayal of specific structure choices.

These novels demand an attention to truth, in the belief that knowledge of truth will lead to a wish for change. Episkenew claims that Indigenous literature seeks to repair the damage of colonialism on Indigenous communities by inspiring readers to seek social justice through social change (75). Michelle Good builds on this notion herself, as she claims that not only is Indigenous action through literature important, but literature's fostering of non-Indigenous understanding serves as a prerequisite to change (*Truth Telling* 155). I believe this notion lies behind the literary choices of *Five Little Indians*. The novel appears approachable for a wide audience through its multiple narratives and perspectives, carefully mapping out a wide number of stories of Indigenous community and heritage, as well as colonial oppression and the residential school experience.

Expression in Indigenous literature is highly varied. These novels appear accessible to the non-Indigenous reader, but simultaneously different from its Western literary counterparts. Michelle Good, in her work *Truth Telling: Seven Conversations about Indigenous Life in Canada*, discusses the way in which Indigenous writers choose to express themselves in literature. She claims Indigenous writers have their own way; void of any formula other than what she calls a telling-it-like-it-is formula. Furthermore, she claims Indigenous writers are pressing against "the strictures of the Western storytelling formula" (155). Residential school narratives and experiences are the very example of how this is done in practice as it builds on an experience void from the reality of Western literature. Katanski claims that through being forced to write in the English language, Indigenous residential school students transformed the use of the language through their narratives, creating much of what is "the American Indian literary tradition". She goes on to establish the residential school experiences as central

to the subtext throughout twentieth century Indigenous literature, as all were affected by it in some way (9). This is a subtext clearly visible in *Five Little Indians*, a novel building on the collective memory of residential school oppression, indicating that the influence and importance of the collective memory of residential school oppression continues into the twenty first century as well.

Indigenous narratives are highly diverse. When reading residential school narratives, Sam McKegney notes that we should read residential school autobiographies as a representation of the individual authors experience (135). Similarly, we should read Indigenous fiction as either individual representations of a perception of community and culture, or entirely as works of fiction. Indigenous literature should not force political or historical analysis merely through its existence but do so if the content demands it. Such is the case for both Good and Korneliussen's novels. Following in McKegney's notion of how to read residential school narratives, a literary work is never read as an accurate description of an entire community or Indigenous group, but solely as the specific authors way of describing it. Both these authors utilise different characters in an effort to describe the diversity within perception of identity of the self, the community and *place*.

Dealing with different aspects of writing, this chapter is divided into three distinct subsections, which each deal with their own aspect of language and narratives. The use of multiple perspectives in both *Five Little Indians* and *Last Night in Nuuk* opens a window into exploration of different characters points of view in a similar community and situation. I will go into how different narrative choices for different characters is used to highlight issues and personal journeys, while also telling a lot of how these characters are sometimes limited or strengthened through their narrative. The various characters offer an understanding of community formed by a dynamic view of individuality. Through these various narratives we are offered an image into what different characters chose to share, and perhaps as important, what they chose not to.

The case of orality has been prevalent in most discussions of an Indigenous literary discourse. Incorporating orality in literature is discussed by scholars as a challenge, but crucially as an identifier of modern Indigenous literature. The chosen literary works incorporate oral traditions in their own way, where the appearance of orality is used as a storytelling mechanism of itself. There is no set way to "write Indigenous". However, there are certain elements in Indigenous literature which has defined and characterised it

previously. In his seminal work on a "Native American Renaissance", Kenneth Lincoln wrote that the values and perceptions in older oral literature underlies the contemporary "Indian" writing (41). While Lincoln wrote of Indigenous literature in the 1980s, we can transfer large parts of his theoretical foundation in the literature of the 2010s and 2020s. Korneliussen and Good's style is building on the premise that Indigenous literature is built upon: its oral traditions. The main change that these authors represent is how they choose to include the orality.

Lastly, I will touch on the aspect of how language is used directly in the novels. There are aspects of the literature which deals directly with the position and use of multiple languages. As English and Danish serves as a majority language in a minority setting, their position in the literature is by default an element which should be discussed. The authors are also exploring, to different extents, the role which majority language has in a minority context. Language use coincides with narratives and individuality, as well as with the assimilation context which hangs as an umbrella over the context of both authors.

3.1 Narratives

With the exception of *Blomsterdalen*, we follow the novels through the point of view of several different characters. The way the narratives are structured sheds light on different aspects of Indigenousness and identity. Importantly, both authors utilise different structured narratives for different characters. This further emphasises the focus on portraying a dynamic society with a broad view of a plethora personal identity. Given the way these multiple narratives offer different views of personal identity, I will bring attention to how these narratives are instrumental in highlighting the complex and dynamic worlds which these Indigenous characters navigate. While *Five Little Indians* revisit most characters at several points in their life, *Last Night in Nuuk* takes a different approach. With all five narratives centred around the same day, we are offered one narrative at a time, eventually piecing together the perspectives. I will be offering an analysis of some of the characters narratives to show how these three novels are experimenting with narrative style.

The choice to portray Maisie through a first-person narrative sets her story apart from the rest. Her need to be independent as the first person to finish her time at the residential school is a solid reasoning for her narrative being so strikingly different. She speaks for

herself because she is left by herself. The fact that her life ends before any other character is independent enough to truly understand her or tell her story is a reason for this as well. In conversation, Lucy and Clara touch on the subject of Maisie on the day exactly two years after her death. At the mention of this, no words are spoken between them: "The girls walked in silence, finding no words" (93). This underlines the fact that Maisie's story could only be spoken by Maisie herself. Its validity is important. The explicit and gruesome details of her life are important to the weight of the novel, but it has to be described by Maisie herself. Lucy was never in a state of mind to listen to Maisie and her issue, and Maisie doesn't appear to want to burden Lucy with her own problems. The attempt at supporting Lucy in this place which she knows better is more important for her.

The effect of previous shame creates expressions of regret and trauma in character's narratives. Episkenew discusses the lasting effects of abuse on individuals as a result of the residential school experiences. According to her, children felt a strong sense of anger because of the continued abuse, but through repressing their emotions, as well as having no outlet for anger, they suffered from "intense shame" (51). Maisie becomes Michelle Good's prime example of this individual development. Through her personal reflections, Maisie expresses her feelings of shame connected to the residential school abuse.

> I used to have to clean Father's rooms too. He stopped picking me when I started fighting. That's when he chose Lucy. I knew she remembered that day on the playground too, but neither of us ever spoke of it.
> (*Five Little Indians* 60)

The mutual knowledge of abuse that is left unspoken indicates a lasting effect of the experiences. This reluctancy to speak about trauma is in line with tendencies in Indigenous communities in the wake of residential schools. In the aftermath of residential school sexual abuse, victims were kept silent through a "feeling of terror" (Episkenew 52). Michelle Good mainly portrays this delicate subject through the point of view of Maisie. The residential school abuse which she received is contextualised through her later actions and behaviour in life, positioning her in a deterministic relationship to the abuse she received. Rather than expressing her trauma to people close to her, such as her boyfriend, she seeks out a similar experience of abuse and shame among strangers. Her being the only one to speak from a first-person narrative adds to the weight of this very personal and detailed story.

Maisie's story is more explicit in its description of events than the other stories in the novel. It serves as a glimpse into the darkest and most depressing image of any character in Good's novel, depicting substance abuse, sexual abuse and violence as destructive for Maisie. As a character, she is perhaps the one which resembles a Niviaq Korneliussen character the most. The daily abuse is described by Maisie more directly than any other character. While offering a glimpse into the horrible reality of both the residential school experience and its aftermath, Maisie also portrays the emotional damage and suffering of these experiences on a personal level. The sexual abuse she received at the residential school follows her as both a trauma and, in her words, a necessity:

> "Say it," I told him again. "Say it or I never will come here again."
> "Slut. Savage. Filth. Stupid. Cunt. Whore. Slut. Savage."
> These were Father's words. They took the rhythm of his thrusts. And I couldn't breathe without this. I didn't exist without this.
> (*Five Little Indians* 63)

Her search in Vancouver among strangers for the same abuse she received at the residential school, as depicted in this excerpt, follows Maisie's belief that she is worth no more than what the Father at the residential school claimed. The statement that she cannot "exist without this" is a tragic acknowledgement contextualising the lasting effects of abuse through trauma.

Maisie's intentional search for sexual abuse later in life is clearly connected to her experiences at the residential school. Excerpts such as the ones above indicate how Maisie is put in an impossible position because of abuse. I read her later actions as her way of dealing with her feeling of shame. Her anger through fighting against the Father led to the suffering of others, which explains Maisie's way of dealing with her shame later on. The sought out sexual abuse later on could serve as a way of punishing herself for a mistaken feeling of responsibility for her fellow classmates. Tackling the ending of her story deals with the question of how to read her suicide. While the main theme of the novel is the self-determination and free will of characters who are able to rise above the horrible trauma of their residential school upbringing, I do not think Maisie's suicide should be read this way. Her suicide is the most tragic event in *Five Little Indians,* indicating the stark reality of the darkest and most tragic consequences of abuse and the lack of community support. Maisie is the contrast to the other characters stories, and I do not think a glorification of her suicide as free will is in line with the notion of survival.

The literary choice to make Maisie's story significantly shorter than the other characters stories is indicates a theme in Good's writing. The character who is clearest and the most direct is silenced by the trauma she suffered, the *feeling of terror*, when she ultimately takes her own life. While we revisit several characters several times, we are only spending one chapter with Maisie. A symbol of oppression, she is left alone, unable to continue fighting for herself. Her function within the novel is primarily showing us Good's emphasis on the support people give each other, and how a community can assist those who have none. She is initially left alone in Vancouver, as a guinea pig fending for herself in an unknown environment. Though on her own initially, she is the deciding factor for helping Lucy adapt to the city when she is sent away from the residential school. When Lucy arrives, Maisie is helping her adapt in every way she can:

> "So, do you have anything else to wear other than those Indian School clothes?" I knew she didn't. "Come on, lets get you dolled up." I lent her my new bell-bottom jeans, but she said no to my best Stones T-shirt. She didn't like the tongue.
> (*Five Little Indians* 55)

The fact that Maisie knows Lucy doesn't have any other clothes refers to her own experience of arriving empty handed from the residential school. She has been through it herself and can assist Lucy the way she wishes she herself was assisted. Referring to the tongue logo of the rock band The Rolling Stones, Maisie offers a light-hearted but pointed description of how she herself has evolved from being a kid just sent from the residential school to being increasingly integrated into a new way of life. As she hands her clothes over to Lucy, she is more directly giving her the experiences she herself has accrued since she arrived in Vancouver.

3.1.1 Identity Loss

Though solely written from the same perspective, there is reason to consider Korneliussen narrative choices in *Blomsterdalen*. Primarily, I will deal with the way the narrative choices are connected to the fact that our narrator and main character remains nameless throughout the novel. Her lack of a personal identity as she is not given a name is emphasised by herself towards the end of the novel.

> 2. What my name is? I don't have any name, I'm just a number.

(*Blomsterdalen* 276, my translation)

The quote introduces us to the fact that the main character knows our question as readers, but that she has purposefully withheld the information. The number *2* at the start of the quote is one of the final numbers in a 45 number long countdown of description of people who have committed suicide, briefly described with age, gender and how they took their own life. Once it reaches the number 30, it changes into a short story of reactions and feelings connected to suicide in the Greenlandic society. By eventually referring to herself as just a number, the main character is placing herself into the same countdown of nameless people. Ultimately, this description of those who have committed suicide not by name speaks of an unwillingness to connect actions to personality.

The interruptions which occur at the few moments where she is about to reveal her own identity through introducing herself by name indicates the lack of control she herself has over her own role in society, as well as her notion of being overlooked and forgotten. Somehow she doesn't belong, and thematically her name is made obsolete. There are also instances where her personality, in the form of a name, is implied, but purposefully held back:

"What does it mean?" she asks.
"What does what mean?" I ask.
"Your name! What does it mean? It sounds so exotic!"
"Eh, I don't know…" I say, "what does yours mean?"
(*Blomsterdalen* 262, my translation)

The main character defines herself as insignificant in the greater context as she is surprised that anyone would care about what her name means. The awkward conversations that occur in the novel, such as the excerpt above, further indicate a character insecure about her own belonging or personal identity. In a way, the people talking with her are more interested in aspects of her personality than what she herself is.

Greenlandic characters who fail to identify with their own heritage is a theme which Korneliussen has explored earlier. In Korneliussen's debut short story, San Fransisco, the main character travels to the United States in what appears to be a haze. When asked who she is and where she is from, her is unaware of the answer herself and guesses: "I'm Changi Peng Pong from Japan!" (*San Fransisco* 27). Again, Korneliussen portrays a character who is at a loss with her own identity. The fact that the character in this instance is lost as to where she is

from as well follows along the lines of Korneliussen's focus on characters rejecting or having issues with their national and cultural identities. Connecting this back to the more modern perception among young Greenlanders that the label of *Indigenous* is a misrepresentation of their identity due to its misconceived connection to primitivity, the characters denial of their true identity becomes a way of criticising of distancing themselves from their heritage and identity. Episkenew has drawn lines to other Indigenous works, where characters are choosing to discard their Indigenous identity as they view it as a deficit, and that they view "Indigenous people critically and as a source of embarrassment" (141). Similarly, the characters of Korneliussen deny their heritage and Indigenous identity at times, believing they can deny the existence of it.

The imagined and expressed loss of a personal identity is a trait visible among several characters in these novels. In *Five Little Indians,* Maisie reflects on her own individuality. Initially appearing as a strong character in control of her situation, we are quickly turned to view her as struggling heavily. Her seemingly caring and tolerant boyfriend Jimmy becomes a symbol of identity loss for her:

> I stood in front of my vanity mirror, wrapped in my towel, in my bunny slippers. I reached for my jewellery box, opened it and pulled out my penknife. I let the towel drop and drew the knife along the flesh two inches below my collarbone. The blood pearled pretty red against my brown skin and rolled over the row of scars below this latest drawing. I looked at my face, clean of makeup, clean of pain. Then, I could see Jimmy's girl.
> (*Five Little Indians* 64)

Struggling to disconnect what appears to be a stable and meaningful relationship from the abuse and shame she grapples with personally, Maisie goes to extreme lengths, compared to the other characters in the novel, to punish herself. Refusing to be honest to Jimmy about her issues and abuse, she harms herself as a way of making herself worthy of Jimmy in the moment. There is no indication of her trying to create a stable identity for herself, with or without support of the people around her.

3.1.2 Ways of Speaking

The language used in Korneliussen's novels is strikingly direct and boundaryless. Lincoln claimed that Indigenous literature placed words as roots to continue tribal origins

(45). In the case of both Good and Korneliussen there is an argument to be made that this element is present, but perhaps more strikingly is the inclusion of language which differs so heavily from what you would find in traditional Indigenous literature. In her conversation with a lady in a public shower, *Blomsterdalen*'s main character is in both interaction and though using descriptions which are incredibly direct:

> "You have to take off all your clothes when you're cleaning yourself," she says.
>
> "I'm cleaning myself everywhere," I say and let my hand slide into my shorts.
>
> "That right there, that won't work. You have to take off all your clothes, it's a rule," she says.
>
> "Is it because you really want to see me naked?" I ask, and smile rudely at her.
>
> She opens her mouth to say something, but there is no sound. Her ass looks like the ass of an elephant, and I want to scrub it with a coarse sponge between her stomach rolls.
>
> "Remember to clean between the stomach rolls," I tell her, "before bacteria evolve to insects within."
>
> She looks back in deep disgust and starts running, so her entire body looks like a large vanilla pudding.
>
> (*Blomsterdalen* 255-56, my translation)

The entire sequence tells of a boundaryless style of writing, where the characters unfiltered thoughts are not only expressed in her narrative, but also in conversation with other characters. The main character herself has lost the filter for what she thinks, as well as the filter keeping her from saying the same things. As a character, she is outspoken from an early point in the novel, but progresses into the one displayed in the sequence above. The confrontational and rude attitude offers a striking view of identity in conflict with itself.

Korneliussen's novels are free flowing and groundbreaking novels in the Indigenous and Greenlandic literary scene. Yet, some of the themes are recognizable as similar to those previously written about in Greenlandic literature. Scholar Ebbe Volquardsen mentions Mâliâreq Vebæk's literature as one which has dealt with emotions such as guilt, and of struggles to communicate in a society dealing with substance abuse and suicide (408-09). Korneliussen's writing, especially Blomsterdalen deals with this in a way which leaves nothing off the table. There is no apparent limit to how far Korneliussen dares to bring her narrators descriptions or thoughts.

The way which the characters speak in Korneliussen's novels appears modern and oral at its core, refusing boundaries as the characters speak openly about their sexuality and mental issues. Michelle Good is more traditional and *vanilla* in her style of writing, avoiding the most explicit ways of speaking. Some of it may be attributed to the time which the story is set in. With the setting having a more formal feel to it in *Five Litte Indians* it is all the more impactful when more informal language and descriptions is used. In conversation with Maisie about the residential school, Lucy talks of the Sister at the school: "Yeah, and she was stomping out of the dorm all high and mighty with her old baggy bloomers sticking out" (*Five Little Indians* 50). This description serves as an example of Lucy starting to gain her independence by taking control of her own language and description of the Sister. It indicates the sense of freedom of speech and opinion she has gained after meeting Maisie again. As Sam McKegney noted, these stories "scream [the] failure" of the residential schools attempt at "suffocating" Indigenous culture and identity (182). The fact that they can speak to each other like this speaks to this failure, as well as to the strength of the integrity of characters such as Lucy.

3.1.3 Global Identities

Both Good and Korneliussen bridge the gap between the different worlds the characters navigate by playing around with global popular culture in their narratives. From names to symbolic details, the novels place relevant elements of a dynamic and interactive society at the forefront of the characters daily lives. As all people, Indigenous people have varied articulations of identity. As theorist Stephanie Nohelani Teves notes, if Indigenous people internalise one-dimensional versions of themselves, they keep communities demobilised and motionless (483). By invoking the hybrid and dynamic, both authors engage in narratives which create increasingly complex and varied personalities for several characters.

As each narrative begins in *Last Night in Nuuk,* we are given the name of the character whose narrative we will follow along with the title of a song. These songs include those by contemporary popular artist such as Rihanna, P!nk, and the Foo Fighters, as confirmed in the novel (*Homo Sapienne* 174). Each song is connected to the characters as their narrative's soundtrack. By clarifying which songs, Korneliussen wants the reader to connect to each character, the authors intention to make us listen to the songs in relation to the characters is

clear. Their themes and style represent different moods and adds a personal depth to each character. In the spirit of avoiding the description of Indigenous characters as one-dimensional, the novel adds an optional extended view of the characters identities by including another dimension to their stories.

In connection to her previous novel, *Blomsterdalen* is another example of how Korneliussen invokes details of a globally inspired identity for her characters. Connecting emotions to songs or popular culture is present in this novel as well as the main character reflects on scenarios: "I become irritated by her voice, in the same way I get irritated by James Blunt and Sam Smith when I've heard many of their songs in a row" (*Blomsterdalen* 133, my translation). Through her analogy, Korneliussen connects a recognisable feeling of specific artist voices to the personal emotions which the main character has towards Maliina. By drawing on these celebrities from Western popular culture, the main characters dynamic personality is highlighted. Her reference points largely drawing on culture from outside of Greenland reveals the fact that for Greenlanders, this culture is not outside. The mention of a local Greenlandic band playing a Taylor Swift cover at a concert (*Blomsterdalen* 157) is another example of how Korneliussen introduces us to a different perception of Greenland. Further exemplifying the relationship in which Korneliussen portrays contemporary Greenland, the main character mentions how she heard that "East Greenland lies at least twenty years behind us" (*Blomsterdalen* 118, my translation), symbolised through an East Greenlander listening to a song which was popular twenty years ago.

Though the characters in *Five Little Indians* are in a different colonial context than the Greenlandic ones, the aspect of global or western influence is present in the novel. I have previously mentioned the *Rolling Stones* t-shirt which Maisie offered to Lucy as a symbol of Maisie's partial adaptation to the new social context she lives in. However, to indicate that the fact that such examples are not reflections of subjection or loss of one's own identity I will shed light on a similar example. The novel's arguably most successful character, most in touch with their own identity at the conclusion of the novel, is Clara. Along with hr during her time of identity revitalisation, she is accompanied by her dog. The dog is named John Lennon, a reference to the legendary member of *The Beatles*. John Lennon, in the form of the dog, has a strong importance to Clara personally. However, when visiting Mariah, she is given the message that the dog should stay outside. It is not that the dog, a representation of the connection Clara has to an identity outside of explicit Indigenousness, is unwelcome. The

notion is rather that he has no real significance to play in Clara's identity revitalisation, mirroring what she has and what she has lost.

3.2 Orality

> Native American stories are told and retold as essential to the very fabric of identity and value; the unassailable truths by which people live. People are the stories they tell.
> (Gill 10).

I chose to let Sam Gill have the first words of this subsection to define orality's position in Indigenous culture and literature immediately. Oral storytelling positions itself at the forefront of Indigenous literary tradition and cannot be overlooked in a paper dealing with the evolution of tradition and style in Indigenous literature. Lincoln claims that "Native American literature (…) is literature *and* culture in translation" (25), further noting that "the values and perceptions in older oral literatures underlie contemporary Indian writing" (41). By defining oral literature as literature, Indigenous literary history is given a legitimacy which does not have to be positioned within the confines of Western literary tradition. The recognition of literature as more than published written works is necessary in the recognition of an Indigenous literary history. Womack has noted that oral traditions in Indigenous literature are central to the development of a "Native literary theory" (67), emphasising the position it has in Indigenous literary tradition. It is elements such as orality which has caused authors and critics to define Indigenous literature by different parameters. As Good notes, Indigenous expression through art is done in Indigenous people's own terms and epistemology (*Truth Telling* 149). Naturally, such an element of Indigenous literature has to adapt to what appears to be a literary scene expanding and developing.

As Indigenous literature navigates and evolves itself in a changing global literary scene, its distinctiveness is kept in the elements that define the genre. Literary theorist Thomas King is of the opinion that no matter which literary method is used, "its turtles all the way down" (quoted in Lacombe 210), a reference to Indigenousness being represented by the turtle as a symbol. By this, he is inferring that there is no end to Indigenous creation, embracing evolution and change. Adding to this argument, Korneliussen and Good's writing shows that even though it varies heavily from the more traditional elements of Indigenous writing, it is still rooted in some of the same literary and cultural traditions. Perhaps no

literary device is as prevalent and important historically in Indigenous literature as the use of orality. Womack is of the opinion that oral traditions would generate a vital approach when examining Indigenous literature (66-67). Following in that line, a segment on orality in Good and Korneliussen's novels proves not only worthwhile, but necessary in a legitimate analysis of them as Indigenous literary works.

The portrayal of orality in *Five Little Indians* is a window into the importance it holds in Indigenous culture and literature. While oral storytelling occurs frequently, its true depth and importance is most clearly visible in the view of cultural revitalisation. The character representing this revitalisation in its most direct and uninterrupted way is Clara, who spends time with the elder Mariah at her lodge. Mariah serves as the representative of a different generation than the five children, and for Clara as the clearest example of the culture which she regains her connection to. Although the location itself serves some purpose, the focus in this subchapter is entirely focused on the conversational healing and development between Clara and Mariah. The latter appears as quite direct and abrupt in conversation, symbolising a visible disconnect between the two characters at the beginning of their relationship. Mariah then proves to be the voice of reason and revitalisation as she contextualises the cultural disconnect for both Clara and the reader:

> "Clara, the separation between us and all who have come before us, that long line of ancestors, is nothing more than perception. Our teachings, the sweat and other ceremonies, they show us how to open our spirits so we can perceive and be open to the guidance of the ancients. You are so filled with rage. It will eat you alive, child. That is not our way."
> (*Five Little Indians* 193)

Mariah offers this explanation to Clara as an invitation to the first substantial conversation between the two. Bridging the gap between Clara's disconnection from her heritage is reminiscent of the belief in *survivance*, an element emphasised by Good as stronger than mere *survival* (*Truth Telling* 152). The cultural connection is alive, even when characters such as Clara have lost it. It is at this point that the aspect of orality is formalised on in *Five Little Indians*.

Although it is not written out, the real aspect and importance of oral storytelling is emphasised by Good as an important element in character's cultural revitalisation. In conversation with Mariah, Clara is invited to tell her personal story at the lodge. Though that event is never told directly, its presence is implied by the author. At the occurrence of such

major developments in the novel, the story moves rapidly to a later point in time, as if to imply that the major event of being honest and open about one's personal story is a development which makes the time skip justified as a natural progression. Clara later reflects on her own experience of regaining contact with herself:

> There are no English words to describe how one woman walked into that lodge and another walked out. All Clara knew was that it took her back. Back to the birch grove and the angel songs. Back to who she was before Sister Mary, before the school, before they tried to beat her into a little brown white girl.
> (*Five Little Indians* 199)

Perhaps aiming at a broader audience of non-Indigenous readers, Good is consistent in her emphasis on the importance and effect of culturally important aspects of Indigenousness. Having Clara herself tell of the personal effects of engaging in conversation and storytelling at the lodge is the novel's clearest example of both the importance of oral storytelling *and* the importance of place.

The second occurrence of oral storytelling in *Five Little Indians* that I wish to shed light on how Clara herself, following her revitalisation, is the one continuing to assist other characters through the ways which she learnt at the lodge. Through her meeting with Howie, Clara facilitates his speaking of personal truth. The novel here emphasises the very nature of personal oral storytelling.

> The fact that this was a personal conversation, not one ordered by the court, freed them both, and an air of relaxation settled around them.
> (*Five Little Indians* 228)

This mention of the way which the storytelling is contextualised builds on the notion of *speaking on one's own terms*, an element which has been thoroughly mentioned throughout the supporting literature. The *air of relaxation* is in the most basic terms an acknowledgement of how the low stakes and safe setting which the two have been able to establish facilitates for truth and remembrance. Clara is able to serve as the facilitator for Howie which Mariah and the lodge was for her. We leave their conversation when Clara begins her telling of Mariah, as Howie facilitates listening by claiming "I got all night" (244). Again, we leave the story at a time when another character has reached a major personal milestone, connected to the ability to share stories of importance with each other. As readers, we are well aware of the story

being told. The only apparent reason for the mention of these conversations taking place is the emphasis that oral storytelling occurs.

Five Little Indians emphasis on oral storytelling is parallelled with characters who are able to find themselves. Oral storytelling and its significance does not occur in the instances where characters are lost. The story of the loneliest and most tragic of characters, Maisie, is void of the importance of storytelling. This trait of her character is continuously connected to her being and memory, with the characters failing to talk about her. Her story is not told by anyone else than herself, and the importance of personal stories being carried on in oral literature is lost to the other characters. Though orality is not the key element of Maisie's story, the lack of its presence is worthy of mention as I move into a more in-depth analysis of her narrative in the next subsection.

While it doesn't disconnect itself from Indigenousness, Niviaq Korneliussen's novels are tackling identity and culture differently than authors such as Michelle Good. Aspects such as orality are consequentially approached differently as well. Set in a different point in time, and in a different generation than *Five Little Indians*, both *Last Night in Nuuk* and *Blomsterdalen* engage in oral storytelling in a language and narrative style with less boundaries. Initially, the striking narrative choices in Inuk's story in *Last Night in Nuuk* shed light on how orality exists in text message form. His messages serve as his form of oral storytelling to the people close to him. Lubowicka writes of Inuk as a character which she believes to be the most mysterious of the characters in the novel (44), a belief which I do not share. Through his storytelling in the form of the text messages, we are present through the development and revitalisation process which he undertakes in a time of personal crisis:

> I feel that it's time.
>
> As it's time, the sun is setting.
> As it's time, I discover that my life, *inuuneq*, is about to end.
> As it's time, I discover that my life, *inuuneq*, my human self, has disappeared.
> But when it's time, *inuk*, man, emerges.
> *inuk* says:
> Find a home for yourself if you're homesick.
> Don't give up when you can' find your way.
> Look in the mirror if you're about to give up.
> Find yourself as you look in the mirror.
> You'll find your home when you find yourself: go in.

(*Last Night in Nuuk* 70)

The use of the character's name being the same as the Greenlandic word for *man* offers a perspective on his story which connects his heritage and personal identity. Not capitalised, the use of the *inuk* as emerging to speak truth to a lost soul is symbolic of Inuk finding comfort and belonging to his Greenlandic identity. He himself is suddenly more in touch with the identity which existed within him from the beginning. Though in his own somewhat unconventional style, Inuk is telling us about his own personal story and feelings through what appears to be a highly personal story. Although he doesn't speak orally to Fia or Arnaq, the text messages have an oral aspect. I would argue that Inuk's messages represent a form of storytelling which we can attribute much of the same qualities as oral storytelling. I interpret the texting element of interaction as existing in an area between speaking and writing.

The use of this modern form of oral storytelling is a statement in itself. Lubowicka states that the novel does not build on local storytelling traditions in form or language but looks further out into the world in what she refers to as a cosmopolitical nationalism (52-53). Though this statement holds a truth within itself, I would argue that it fails to acknowledge the high prevalence of revitalisation which presents itself through Inuk's storytelling. I think the excerpt in the previous paragraph is a fair representation of the fact that the local belonging and storytelling traditions are visible in the way Inuk tells his story, and key to understanding his own personal journey told through the text messages. Though debatably whether it qualifies as oral storytelling, I would argue that the specific example of Inuk is oral storytelling through a text message medium. My reason for claiming this comes from the fact that we have a defined presence of a listener and an interaction through these messages. There is an audience, and it is not directly us as readers, but rather his sister Fia and best friend Arnaq. We are merely viewers of the conversation which takes place between them, and the story that Inuk tells them as they respond to him.

The significance of a symbolic elder assisting in a revitalisation process occurs in *Blomsterdalen*, in a way which is similar to that of Clara and Mariah in *Five Little Indians*. While visiting her girlfriend Maliina, the main character recognises a connection to an older gentleman hospitalised at the local hospital. The man's memory of meeting the main characters grandmother has an impact on the main character as she tries to make sense of her feelings towards the place. The conversation between them represents the time when the main

character is the most receptable and curious about other people's stories and opinions. The man tells the main character about her grandmother:

> "We were all after her in summer, even the Americans were crazy for her. She visited elders and learnt East Greenlandic. All the children in the town followed her everywhere, because she always told funny stories we hadn't heard before. She climbed mountains and went for long walks in the Flower Valley," he says and points towards the window.
> (*Blomsterdalen* 188, my translation)

In itself, the old man's tale is an example of oral storytelling which is largely absent from the main characters consciousness. Offering a parallel to her own connection to the Flower Valley, the story of her grandmother touches on several aspects of identity which she herself is trying to make sense of. Simultaneously, the description of her grandmother as talkative and inclusive sheds light on how oral storytelling is a culturally important aspect for several generations.

The description the old man offers of her grandmother is somewhat different to the main characters personal experience of talking with her. In *Blomsterdalen,* there exists a clear distinction of what the other characters are comfortable telling stories or having a conversation about. As the main character herself says about her grandmother: "I have no idea when she wants me to talk and when she wants me to shut up" (*Blomsterdalen* 12, my translation). Appearing to struggle to connect with her own family through what could be read as a mutual impatience for each other's ways of expression, the ability to talk with each other properly is lacking for the main character. This clear disconnect between different generations hints at issues connected to identity, where some of the *old ways* are not compatible with certain younger people. As in Good's novel, Korneliussen is including the aspect of orality through the lack of its existence.

3.3 Language

The use of language in these contemporary literary works are visible elements of a change in storytelling mechanisms. Korneliussen's novels are the ones which includes alternative use of language the most. Set in a time period where Greenland's position in the global society introduces language and culture influence, both of her novels deal with elements such as code-switching and alternative language. Drawing attention to both of them,

they tell a story of language use which is assisting in progressing Indigenous literature into new styles and influences. Good's novel falls into a different category as it both deals with a different period of time, as well as the fact that its vocal point of focus is different from that of Korneliussen. While Good is seemingly trying to contextualise the residential school experiences with contemporary debates and understanding of Indigenous life in Canada, Korneliussen is more focused on the present issues for a new generation of global Greenlanders. However, there are parallels in how the characters in *Five Little Indians* sporadically take control of their language choices as an expression of free will and identity which is similar to that of Korneliussen's characters. It has to be acknowledged that the language aspect is at the forefront of Korneliussen's novel, but less prevalent in *Five Little Indians*. Korneliussen even goes as far as including a glossary at the end of *Last Night in Nuuk* (175-76) to fill the reader in on necessary pieces of language variation. Followingly, the main focus of this brief, but highly relevant chapter, mainly deals with her writing.

An element of Korneliussen's writing which is literally lost in translation is the element of code-switching. Originally written in both Danish and Greenlandic, *Last Night in Nuuk* is consistently switching to English to emphasise personal characteristics. This is where Korneliussen's writing stands out as explicitly challenging traditional literary norms. It is perhaps this very visible change in style from tradition which led a critic to describe the novel as "strikingly modern" (Gee). The description of it as such is perhaps connected to a common belief that Greenlanders are mainly hunters in small communities, failing to recognise the increasingly urbanised society that places like Nuuk are becoming. Oxfeldt description of *Last Night in Nuuk* as "fresh and innovative in a Greenlandic context" (71) is a more fair and accurate description of Korneliussen's literary style.

To highlight the code-switching element, I will be including a reference from *Last Night in Nuuk*, as well as its Danish origin *Homo Sapienne* to retain this element of writing. While it does provide an example of how translations sometimes change literary choices, this excerpt is included to highlight how codeswitching is an important part of how Korneliussen chooses to write.

> Og bag Fia dukker *the one and only* option of all options op.
> Mit hjerte begynder at slå hardt. Jeg føler alkoholens virkninger. Oh, min puls stiger. Oh, ask and I shall receive!
> (*Homo Sapienne* 84)

> Behind Fia, *the one and only* option of all options appears.
> My heart begins to beat hard. I can feel the booze and my pulse is rising. Oh, ask and I shall receive!
> (*Last Night in Nuuk* 87-88)

Arnaq, the character providing the narration, frequently code-switches in both conversation and thought. She is a prime example of how Korneliussen portrays characters with increasingly global identities. As she portrays them in the Greenlandic context, she is creating the connection between generational changes in the communities and the importance of global participation and interaction. Especially interesting is the fact that the code-switching occurs primarily with the inclusion of English. Although there are examples of code-switching between Danish and Greenlandic in Korneliussen's novels, the code-switching between the spoken language of the characters and English is much more prevalent. I acknowledge here the fact that certain aspects might be overlooked as I am using the Danish, Norwegian and English versions of Korneliussen's novels, and not the Greenlandic ones. However, as the Danish translation is done by Korneliussen herself, whether the narratives are written in Danish or Greenlandic seem not to have too much of an impact, as the key element of language is likely retained.

Though an undergraduate study, Bruno Santic's work on code-switching in Louise Erdrich's writing provides a scholarly view on the subject. The example of Erdrich continues to provide an example of how these elements of writing in Indigenous literature have an origin in earlier literary development. In the general discussion of code-switching, Santic notes:

> Choosing to use the literary understanding of code-switching, as one that focuses on intent rather than just behavior, becomes an incredibly powerful tool for many multilingual and multicultural writers choosing to portray the realities behind their identities.
> (Santic 77)

Characters such as Arnaq are examples of how authors use code-switching to portray an added layer of identity within the framework of the Indigenous community. There is no doubt that Korneliussen's characters are multilingual and exist within an increasingly dynamic urban community. While not focusing too heavily on multilingualism, it is a clear example of how the definition of Indigenous identity is expanded, especially in the Greenlandic context.

The use of modern expressions in an oral and expressive narration highlights the more dynamic aspect of these characters individual personalities.

The use of any other language than English rarely occurs in *Five Little Indians*, but it is highly impactful and significant when used. Interestingly, Good is not emphasising the existence or use of other languages more than a handful of times throughout the novel. Perhaps catering to a broader audience or deeming the inclusion of this element unnecessary for the context of her novel, Good has obviously chosen to limit the inclusion of language discussion and variety. Followingly, the language and code-switching aspect of Good's novel is difficult to draw to many examples from. However, the few times when it is used, it is all the more relevant to address it. When Howie, as a young child is rescued by his mother from the residential school, his mother's initial words are "*Napaysis, napaysis*" (*Five Little Indians* 243), the Cree word for small child. A statement of rescue and personal belonging, Howie's mother symbolises the meaning of his rescue from the residential school as a return to his roots. Taking life back into his own power, the language of his identity is emphasised as a way of returning to home.

As with Howie and his mother, there are instances in *Five Little Indians* where the characters' identity and free will is portrayed through the use of language and narratives. At the residential school, the characters individuality and identity are represented in various ways. I choose to shed light on their use of language in interaction with each other. The contrast between Lucy handing Kenny a note saying "Yor brave" (5) and the sign around his neck later stating that "I am a runaway" (6) indicates their own control of the language and actions as opposed to the residential school's treatment of them. Lucy's note is an indication of how, even in a strict residential school setting, she is taking the English language and making it her own. In two simple words she is able to portray both the residential school oppression and her youth innocence. Language choice and "speaking for yourself" becomes a tool for characters in search for individuality as they partially deny and stand against oppression.

4 Conclusion

I chose to give this thesis the title “Go Your Own Way” for two reasons. Firstly, it is a mirror of Korneliussen’s use of song titles as headings for her chapters in *Last Night in Nuuk*, in my case referencing the famous Fleetwood Mac song. Secondly, it serves as a summary of the stories that these novels tell. The emphasis on individuality and the multiple directions a life can take, these characters, at their best, are able to go their own way. The methods the characters choose to take their “way” is diverse, speaking to the complexity of humans and experiences.

While Indigenous literature is sure to have its specific identifiers, the contemporary works of Michelle Good and Niviaq Korneliussen expand the boundaries of conventions as they attribute new styles of narrative styles and language, and new perspectives on concepts. How these authors choose to incorporate the concept of *place* opens up for a deeper connection between places and individuals own connection to it, as well as the connection to themselves and people close to them. Each character embraces connections to people and places in their way. To make it possible for individuals to have this expanded view of connections, the novels indicate that their characters live in societies where their personal goals and directions are dynamic and inherently different.

This paper displays how the sense of place can be seen from multiple perspectives. The way in which the city of Vancouver could be such a devastating place which ultimately becomes a city where a character like Maisie doesn’t manage to cope, but at a later point become a home for Lucy speaks of a focus on individuals as representatives for themselves primarily. The portrayal of the five children in Michelle Good’s novel brings in the multiple perspectives of individuals who have a shared experience, and to an extent a similar foundation for their life after the residential school. Yet, their narratives are full of contrasting emotions, interpretations and life goals. Following the importance of places is the element of inter-personal support. The characters who have support from either a community or an individual manage way better than those who do not. Again, the contrast between Maisie and Lucy is apparent.

For the most part, the underlying tone of Korneliussen’s novels is darker than that of *Five Little Indians*. Portraying characters who repeatedly do not reach their goals or accept speaks to the more difficult aspects of the modern Greenlandic context that she portrays.

Going deep into the mental state and personal struggles of several characters, her novels are descriptions of young Greenlanders who push the boundaries of what they define themselves as, as well as the role of their home. *Last Night in Nuuk* is written in a way where the very location could be any Nordic, perhaps European, capital city. The portrayal of it as vibrant and modern, as exemplified in the novel itself, contrasts some of the descriptions and perceptions a new generation of Greenlanders are contesting and challenging.

In a Canadian society where an increasing number of tragic truths are discovered, *Five Little Indians* could well be read as stories which were never heard. The multiple narratives take the fact that similar experiences may affect people in different ways into account. By depicting stability, love and support as pillars of well-functioning human beings, these characters are symbols of different ways to take control of your own life. From reconnecting with heritage to choosing and unconventional way of belonging to urban places, the novel shines a light of individuality and alternative directions in life. In a more direct manner and modern setting, *Last Night in Nuuk* and *Blomsterdalen* tell stories that expand on this notion, portraying characters who disconnect themselves from conventionality and cultural belonging. Often, the Greenlandic characters end up finding their disconnection to be ill-advised or rushed. Eventually, the novels appear to be carrying the message of proceeding with caution, keeping in touch with oneself. At the same time, Korneliussen embraces changing perspectives and both personal and cultural progression. An acknowledgement of issues in contemporary Greenland sits at the forefront of the stories she writes, focusing on a new generation of Greenlanders and looking into the future. Less important are the colonial ties to Denmark and more present are the daily struggles of increasingly global members of urban communities. Contextualising Greenland through a new lens, Korneliussen becomes an important voice for a new generation.

These narratives display a free-flowing style, which expands the boundaries of how we perceive the style of Indigenous literature. I have pointed to the example of Louise Erdrich multiple time to portray how these narratives stem from somewhere. However, these novels represent a way of writing narratives which expands on the way in which the Indigenous literary development has been moving. The description of someone looking like a “vanilla pudding” when they run is certainly not reminiscent of traditional styles of writing narratives in Indigenous novels and stories. Examples like this highlight how far Indigenous literature has come when it comes to narrative styles, expanding on the foundation that the literary traditions have laid out, and challenging both its own literary style, as well as the global styles

and markers. Creating its own way in increasingly diverse ways, contemporary Indigenous literature appears to be continuing to surprise and demand evolution.

I have highlighted how Louise Erdrich was criticised for a lack of legitimacy as a way of devaluing her experimentation of style. When concluding this thesis, I would be remiss not to claim that the same should not be done to either Michelle Good or Niviaq Korneliussen. Through this in-depth analysis of their literary works, it is clear to me that these authors are representative of a daring experimentation of ways in which Indigenous narratives and themes are tackled. Embracing the belief that Indigenous literature is in a continual development where "more funky" stories, as they were called by Farca earlier, are brought to light allows us to acknowledge the past and reconcile with it, while also letting Indigenous individuality and representation have its resurgence in increasingly unconventional ways.

If reconciliation is to maintain its momentum and impact, the inclusion of the contemporary production of art and literature must be understood in its correct terms. The fact that Indigenous literature has been interpreted as less valuable, or mainly children's stories or folk tales, even in scholarly terms, indicates that the acknowledgement of its quality and range still has room for improvement. The work with reconciliation and resurgence should be an ongoing effort which recognises not only history and the status quo but embraces and acknowledges the continued production and evolution by Indigenous authors. Included in this acknowledgement lies the reasons why these works exist. Niviaq Korneliussen writes to and on behalf of a new generation of Greenlanders. Other voices will likely follow in her path, but she represents an important development of Greenlandic representation. Michelle Good voices both the known *and* unknown realities of residential school oppression to a contemporary audience. It is not a novel belonging in the 1990s, it belongs in a time of reconciliation, speaking to an audience of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous readers.

Turning our attention to how Indigenous literature is adapting to the changing landscape, in which their characters must adapt to allows for a deeper understanding of the contemporary context of Indigenousness, we should acknowledge the position which Indigenous arts finds itself in. We speak of resurgence and revitalisation, and in the context of Indigenous literature, we could maybe also be speaking of a reinterpretation. The reinterpretation should spring out of the need for viewing Indigenous literature in an interacting perspective between traditions and progression. I am hopeful that this discussion provides relevant and inspiring in this time of reconciliation in several parts of the world,

especially in my native Norway and the other Nordic countries. This thesis does not go deep enough to make claims for a substantial claim to a general pan-tribal trend in Indigenous literature, but that these novels are possible indications that Indigenous literature is challenging how we define the term and which narratives and styles we attribute it.

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