

# Afro-Swedish and Ojibwe-Canadian Trauma Life Writings: Storms from Paradise, Reasons for Walking, and the Opening of Planetary Circles of Conversation<sup>1</sup>

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ABSTRACT: Following Spivak’s model of “crossing borders” and “planetary”, this article compares two trauma life writings: Wab Kinew’s *The Reason You Walk* and Johannes Anyuru’s *En storm kom från paradiset* [*A Storm Blew in from Paradise*]. They negotiate transcultural identity construction and the intergenerational impact of colonialism, drawing respectively on Jewish philosophy of history, decolonization theory, and Indigenous Anishinaabe and Blackfoot worldviews. Deconstructing Eurowestern linear thinking, they reflect on the power of the moment and ongoing relational reciprocity. In this way, they embrace equity, diversity, and inclusion, and encourage planetary, transcultural, and decolonizing circles of conversation.

RÉSUMÉ: En suivant le modèle de Spivak de “franchissement des frontières” et de “planéarité”, cet article compare deux écrits de vie traumatique : *The Reason You Walk* de Wab Kinew et *En storm kom från paradiset* [*Du paradis souffle une tempête*] de Johannes Anyuru. Ils négocient la construction d’identité transculturelle et l’impact intergénérationnel du colonialisme, se référant respectivement à la philosophie juive de l’histoire et à la théorie de la décolonisation ainsi qu’aux conceptions du monde Autochtones, Anishinaabe et Blackfoot. En déconstruisant la pensée linéaire occidentale, ils réfléchissent au pouvoir du moment et celui de la réciprocité relationnelle continue. De cette manière, ils adoptent l’équité, la diversité et l’inclusion, et encouragent des cercles de conversation décolonisants, transculturels, et planétaires.

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## Introduction

**G**iven the humanitarian challenges of our time, it is more important than ever to engage in conversations across all forms of physical, mental, and imaginary boundaries. This engagement seems critical when it comes to listening to and understanding those whose voices are in danger of being silenced by dominant cultures. Reading, analyzing, and reflectively interpreting literary texts can help us participate in conversations that foster deeper mutual understanding. It can assist us in critically reflecting and revising our thinking and actions. In *Death of a Discipline*, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak regrets “the lack of communication within and among the immense heterogeneity of the subaltern cultures of the world” (16) and advocates embracing minority texts in comparative literary studies (cf. 9-10, 15-16, 20). She also refers to the absence of Indigenous literature in comparative literature as a scandal she herself confesses to being caught within (81). Since comparative literature, per definition, must always cross borders, Spivak also calls attention to the fact that borders are easier to cross from the metropolises than from the peripheries (16). Chadwick Allen takes up Spivak’s term “scandal” in his argumentation for Trans-Indigenous literary studies, points out its “connotations of offensive behavior and moral disgrace” (381) as well as refers to Spivak’s explicit acknowledgement of “comparative literature’s lack of interest in Indigenous objects of study, methodologies, or contexts” (380). Allen goes even further:

The real scandal of comparative literature is not its celebrated practitioners’ ignorance of Indigenous ‘orality’, with the implied excuse of a lack of available training in Indigenous languages and oral traditions. The real scandal lies in these practitioners’ complicity in the broader suppression of the rigorous study of Indigenous literatures written not only in Indigenous languages and sign systems but also in languages central to the dominant academy, including the languages central to comparative literature. The real scandal is not personal but institutional and colonial. It is the unquestioned centrality of the Indigenous-settler binary, the unquestioned legitimacy of the settler nation-state to the practice of literary scholarship. (381)

While Allen focuses on Indigenous Literature from Canada, the US, South America, Australia, New Zealand, Polynesia, Hawaii, Taiwan, Oceania, Siberia, and Scandinavia (382, 384-85), he does not explicitly mention writing by

Indigenous people from Africa. If one follows Spivak's aforementioned definition, however, African, African migrant, and African diasporic writing should also be an integral part of a comparative literature that claims to make the considerable heterogeneity of subaltern cultures visible. This seems to be even more important since Allen advocates for an inclusive and holistic approach. Spivak too suggests a holistic concept in which "presumed collectivities cross borders under the auspices of a Comparative Literature supplemented by Area Studies" attempting to "imagine themselves ... as planetary rather than continental, global, or worldly" (72). In this concept of planetarity, comparative literary studies are neither restricted by national borders nor linguistic demarcations. While globalization erases cultural differences through universal economics, planetarity honours alterity, transculturality, difference, diversity, and relationality which constitute the dynamics of the planet (cf. 72-73; 84-85; 93; 95). Consequently, "Literaturwissenschaft als die Ironie der Globalisierung ist auf konkrete ethische und politische Fragestellungen fokussiert, die von 'multicultural empires' [sic] oder 'para-state collectivities' aufgeworfen werden" [literary studies as the irony of globalization focuses on ethical and political questions which are posed by 'multicultural empires' [sic] or 'para-state collectivities'] (Kreienbrock 168; my translation).

In this contribution, I aim to respond to Spivak's call by promoting communication between heterogeneous subaltern cultures. I intentionally include minority texts by an Indigenous and a migrant author in comparative literature. Rather than crossing the border from the metropole of a literary text created by an author rooted in Eurowestern cultures, I intend to serve as a link to bring two minority texts into dialogue. By decentering myself—a white, female, German literary and cultural studies scholar from a Eurowestern cultural context with a background in Scandinavian Studies—I humbly wish to facilitate the minority texts' border crossing from their peripheric points of view. Thereby, I aim at centering the texts and their authors. Following the ideas of transculturality and planetarity, I compare texts that originate from ethnically different writers, culturally contrasting communities, and geographically distant areas but cover similar themes, addressing challenges that come with decolonization processes. Despite the differences, both writers can be considered members of subaltern cultures. As a literary analyst, I function as the point of passing through, the transcultural lens with "a critical perspective that sees cultures as relational webs and acknowledges the transitory, confluent, and mutually transforming nature of cultures" (Dagnino 130). Even though I am non-Indigenous and do not belong to any of the two writers' cultural communities, I meet an ethical obligation both texts seem to bring to their readers—and even so to their literary analysts—to serve as the point of confluence: Viewed as trauma fiction (Whitehead), both texts

readjust the relationship between themselves and their readers by making reading—and even more analyzing—an ethical practice. Based on Anne Whitehead’s suggestions, the ethical obligation of the reader as well as the literary scholar is to listen carefully to the story, “to attend to a voice which is not fully known or knowable, and to bear witness” (8). Similar to a mental health practitioner, Whitehead’s considerations suggest that the literary scholar has the ethical responsibility of returning the story to the authors and to their larger readership who are also bearing witness (cf. 8).

In reading and analyzing both texts, I pursue the question: What do these texts and the comparative approach of planetarity teach us? After some information on the authors (section 2) and introducing concepts of identity as a framework for both texts (section 3), I discuss the texts’ genre and their narrative composition in greater detail (section 4). These sections are followed by the text analysis, in which I explore the authors’ concepts of history, identity, and intergenerational relationships (section 5). Finally, I sum up the conclusions (section 6).

## Authors

The authors I chose for this transcultural exploration are Wab Kinew<sup>2</sup> and Johannes Anyuru. The well-known hip-hop musician, broadcaster, journalist, university administrator, and politician Wab Kinew, born in Kenora, Ontario in 1981, is of both settler Canadian and First Nations ancestry. Proud of his Ojibwe<sup>3</sup> heritage, he has been serving as an NDP politician and member of the provincial Legislative Assembly of Manitoba since 2016 to raise awareness for colonialism-caused intergenerational trauma and bring forward reconciliation (cf. Welch).

Johannes Anyuru was born in Sweden in 1978. An award-winning writer (Norstedts) and a “politisk och poetisk författare” [a political and poetic author] (Wiman 192; my translation) of European Swedish and Indigenous Ugandan Langi descentance, he thematizes the living conditions of Black migrants, descendants of Black migrants, and Muslims in Sweden, simultaneously raising awareness of intergenerationally traumatizing experiences of refugees from former African colonies as well as the aftermath of colonialism in Africa.

Both authors had a rebellious youth. In their thirties, however, they settled into their careers, finding ways of searching for modes of expressing identity, an authentic voice, and places to speak from. Their autobiographical texts *The Reason You Walk* (Kinew) and *En storm kom från paradiset* (Anyuru 2012), translated into English as *A Storm Blew in from Paradise* (Anyuru 2015a),<sup>4</sup> ponder the relationships with their respective fathers as well as consider the impacts of traumatizing historical events and developments on individual fates, especially the long-term effects of colonialism.

## Reframing History and Identity from a Transcultural Perspective

Writing autobiographical texts and searching for identity, both authors appear as “transcultural writers” in the sense that they are determined “to make a home of any place the self inhabits” (Brancato 245, quoted in Dagnino 133). As “culturally and physically mobile writers[, they] tend to acquire an identity mode and express cultural sensibilities that distance them from the traditional categories of the migrant/exile/diasporic/postcolonial writers that have dominated the critical discourse of the second half of the twentieth century” (Dagnino 133).

In their introductory chapter to *Negotiating Identities in Nordic Migrant Narratives*, Bjørghild Kjelsvik, Pia Lane, and Annika Bøstein Myhr apply a constructivist understanding of identity as created in interaction while also emphasizing the relevance of culture for both individual and collective identity (3). In light of postcolonial theory, they also acknowledge the fact of the unequal distribution of discursive power (3). As oral, written, and material narratives negotiate identity and belonging, they may also challenge, subvert, and rewrite discourses of dominant cultures and national identities (cf. 8). “Contemporary views” conceptualize identity “not ... as fixed and stable, but rather as multiple, fluid and dynamic, and ... as both shaping and being shaped by cultural expressions and discourses of power” (7, with reference to Lanza). Similar to identity, also “contemporary discussions on and definitions of culture tend to highlight the interactional, acquired, relativistic and contextualized aspects of culture” (11, with reference to Hylland Eriksen and Hall 2008). Referring to Homi Bhabha’s third space as a metaphor for the dynamics of identity negotiations, Kjelsvik, Lane, and Myhr see the potential of narratives in becoming contact zones that can open up ways of exploring pointing beyond the dichotomies of identities and alterities (18). From a sociocultural linguistic perspective, Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall describe identity as a “discursive construct that emerges in interaction” (587, quoted in Lanza and Golden 113) and, therefore, requires the consideration of space and time as semiotic resources that augment the analysis of identity construction in narratives centering on agency (Lanza and Golden 115). In Anyuru’s and Kinew’s autobiographical writings, these aspects are present in that identity is connected to history and places. This can be taken into account by investigating the spatially and temporally connotated as well as imagined interactions of the narrating and narrated self with individual human beings, cultures, historical events, other texts, and artifacts as represented in the respective texts.

When considering autobiographical texts of postcolonial writers, Linda Anderson suggests following Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy in that “the lack [i.e.

the absence, my explanation] of an essentialized identity does not rule out the possibility of constructing a place from which to speak” (107-108). Similarly, Hall’s definition of “‘arbitrary closures,’ [i.e.] points at which the infinite flux of differences is brought to a halt temporarily as a condition of speech” (Hall 1987, 45 quoted in Anderson 108), as well as Gilroy’s suggestion to “reorientate theories of identity ‘toward contingency, indeterminacy, and conflict’” (Gilroy 128, quoted in Anderson 108) lead to the notion that “‘commemoration’ ... does not refer to some unchanging core of memory but to the continual act of reprocessing and modifying it in the present” (Anderson 108). Thereby, the process of autobiographically inspired writing can serve as “the position from which we speak or write—the positions of *enunciation*” (Hall 1990, 222, original emphasis). In this way, autobiographical writing as a literary genre becomes a means of reframing history and identity by an agency that speaks from chronotopes (cf. Kjelsvik, Lane, and Myhr 14-16, with reference to Bakhtin 84 and Silverstein 6).

In Anishinaabe identity construction, the concept of story plays a central role, in a “culturally and linguistically rooted understanding of story” including “*debwewin*—truth ... in a sense that is contextual and personal” (Pitawanakwat 372, original emphasis). Identity is constructed, evolved, and upheld through stories, as stories offer a sense of cultural identity. The latter thought is based on Gerald Vizenor’s argumentation that cultural identity rather than political power forms the basis for the sovereignty of a(n Indigenous) group or nation (Doerfler, Sinclair, and Stark xxi-xxii and xxv-xxvi). Other than in Nordic migrants’ identity construction, legal aspects of citizenship have secondary importance in Anishinaabe identity and identity construction. Rather, intergenerational and relational components such as language, i.e. Anishinaabemowin, and story are vital. Anishinaabe scholar Niigaanwewidam<sup>5</sup> James Sinclair suggests following Leech Lake Anishinaabe and Dakota critic Scott Richard Lyons who argues that “Indigenous identity ... is always changing, in flux, and being remade, reinvented, reconstructed. This doesn’t mean that tradition, ceremonies, and certain sets of principles and values don’t carry weight, but that certain parts are negotiable and move over time” (Sinclair 2013b, 86). According to Lyons, this kind of fluid, dynamic, negotiating identity creation is “itself Anishinaabeg” (Sinclair 2013b, 86). “Identity questions”, Anishinaabe scholar Brock Pitawanakwat points out, are “at the core of Anishinaabeg Studies” (364). Pitawanakwat illustrates this statement by referring to Basil Johnston who “links story as the cultural core of Anishinaabeg and an expression of our [i.e. Anishinaabeg, my explanation] relationship to the land” (Pitawanakwat 365). Johnston creates this link in an effort of language (re-)vitalization in connection with identity construction, which are inextricably intertwined with understanding Anishinaabeg worldview, ontology, epistemology, and philosophy. Basil Johnston also emphasizes the

topicality of selflessness, relationality, and sharing in Anishinaabe identity and identity construction (interview with Basil Johnston by Brock Pitawanakwat, quoted in Pitawanakwat 365). Therefore, building an Anishinaabe identity also means facing Eurowestern concepts of identity. Anishinaabe identity construction is also Anishinaabeg cultural resurgence.

Despite nuanced differences between the complex concepts of Nordic migrant and Indigenous identity and identity construction, both share fluidity and dynamics as common features. If narratives as mentioned by Kjelsvik, Lane, and Myhr as well as stories as put forward by Pitawanakwat, Sinclair (2013b), and Doerfler, Sinclair, and Stark mean personal accounts of temporally, spatially, and socially contextualized experiences, then possible similarities between Nordic migrant and Indigenous identity and identity construction become obvious: Texts can not only represent the real world by words, symbols, and metaphors but also depict quests for individual and collective identity and, thereby, create new identity realities.

## Reflections on the Genre: Trauma Life Writing

Anyuru's and Kinew's search for identity is rooted in trauma. Both *The Reason You Walk* and *A Storm Blew in from Paradise* can therefore be seen as trauma life writings. However, neither text has yet been given this genre designation: The respective publishers announced *The Reason You Walk* as a "Memoir" (Penguin Random House Publishers) and simply called *A Storm Blew in from Paradise* "roman" [novel] (Anyuru 2012, Frontcover; my translation). A more detailed discussion of the two genre terms concerning narrative composition and content is indicated since such an unambiguous genre classification could easily obscure the complexity of the two texts.

Generally considered inferior to autobiographies (Lahusen 628, cf. also Anderson 113), the term "memoir" is used with "radical instability" (Lahusen 628). Nevertheless, Lahusen points out three common features that characterize memoirs: The concept of the author as the bearer of a social role, their successful socialization within a certain field—mostly politics—, as well as the problems historically significant events represent for the individual (628-29). For Kinew and his *The Reason You Walk* these criteria undoubtedly apply.

Instead of being solely defined as a "novel", the term "autobiographical novel" would fit *A Storm Blew in from Paradise* better, since this genre features "resemblances between author and protagonist ... not explicitly indicated in the text and ... merely presumed by the reader" (Missinne 467; cf. also Baldick 200-201; 252-53). Reviews and Anyuru's own statements in interviews confirm the autobiographical quality of *A Storm Blew in from Paradise* (cf. Bergström; Nilsson 25 September 2012; BBC World Service), allowing readers to actively respond to

the author's invitation to place an equal sign between author, first-person narrator, and character.

In addition to autobiographical accounts, the texts also provide detailed biographical information on the author-narrator-characters' respective fathers' lives. Therefore, I propose the term "life writing" in a broad sense for both texts, since the genre terms "memoir" and "(autobiographical) novel" mentioned above fall short.

As a concept, 'life writing' has been particularly productive for studies of autobiography and biography since it abolishes the distinction between these two genres and goes on to situate them in a wider continuum of all 'ego-documents' written or composed in various media about the lives of individuals and collectives ... (Banerjee 2019a, 336)

Life writing deals with "the reconstruction of the subjectivity and the agency of marginalized communities and individuals" (Banerjee 2019a, 336; cf. also Baldick 200-201). Like other marginalized groups and individuals, Anyuru's father, a former Ugandan fighter pilot who married (and divorced) a Swedish social worker and came to Sweden as a migrant, as well as Kinew's father, an Ojibwe residential school survivor and Chief in Canada, were nearly "'written out' by the historiography of the dominant culture" (Banerjee 2019a, 337). Similar to other marginalized individuals and communities in the "continuum of narratives of the self" (Banerjee 2019a, 337), they are given access to enter mainstream historiography with the help of their sons, committed to the dominant culture's collective memory on the written page (cf. Banerjee 2019a, 337). Life writing functions as an opportunity for transfer, paving the way for hitherto marginalized, ignored, or neglected topics, groups, and persons. To take up Spivak's terminology again, life writing makes it possible to enter the majority culture from the periphery. By opening up this denied access through writing, Anyuru and Kinew, as author-narrator-characters and real persons, clear the path for a deeper relationship with their respective fathers. At the same time, they allow the intergenerational colonial traumas, from which they suffer, to enter the public sphere as narratives. Readers and literary scholars are invited to practice trauma-sensitive listening and ethical reading, to approach the previously untold and partially untellable (cf. Whitehead 4 and 8).

From these considerations, I derive the above-mentioned genre term I favor for the two texts: trauma life writing. Shedding light on the texts' literary and narrative composition reveals remarkably similar but nevertheless different compositional features as they both include formal representations of trauma: In the novelistic prologue of *The Reason You Walk*, a first-person narrator describes his spiritual experience at the Sun Dance. After that, there is



an abrupt change of narrative perspective, as a seemingly omniscient third-person narrator tells the distressing story of an abused Ojibwe boy called Tobasonakwut at a Canadian residential school. As a young adult, Tobasonakwut becomes addicted to alcohol (Kinew 14-42). Only forty-three pages into the book, it is revealed that Tobasonakwut is Wab Kinew's father (43). Readers understand that the first-person narrator who in the novelistic prologue had given the account of his spiritual experience at the Sun Dance is equivalent to the author, Wab Kinew. From then on, the father's and son's respective lives are told chronologically by the first-person author-narrator-character Wab Kinew. Holding back information is a formal literary representation of the lack of information experienced by the author-narrator-character Kinew as well as the way memory works after trauma. As Anne Whitehead explains, literary representations of trauma meet the challenge of narrating the unnarratable by employing a collapse of temporality and chronology as well as narratives characterized by repetition and indirection (3-4). Although in both texts a son tells his father's life story and the father-son relationship, these can only be grasped vaguely, kaleidoscopically and episodically fragmented, with details emerging sharply from time to time. Ethically oriented and trauma-sensitive readers can try to arrange information together like puzzle pieces to form a multilayered textual diorama.

This also applies to Anyuru's text. *A Storm Blew in from Paradise* starts with a fragment: A third-person narrator describes a man lying in a train compartment between the seats, travelling, staring at the moon and the stars, and the landscape passing by. The reader is told that the man "minns inte historien" [doesn't remember history] (Anyuru 2012, 5; my translation).<sup>6</sup> After that, the third-person narrator introduces a man named P who is questioned and tortured by military authorities in Tanzania (Anyuru 2015a, 13-31). Not earlier than on page 82, a first-person narrator takes over and clarifies that P is his father (Anyuru 2015a, 82). This delay of information is similar to the one in Kinew's text and represents trauma as a "non-experience" accompanied by a "collapse of understanding" that causes "conventional epistemologies to falter" (Whitehead 5 with reference to Caruth 1995). In the following, the father's life is told in passages by an omniscient narrator as well as various narrative and speech representations, such as indirect thought report, also called psychonarration, and free indirect discourse (cf. McHale). Throughout the entire text, they alternate with passages told by a first-person narrator who seems to be identical to the author and the unnamed character of P's son.

Life writings can "encompass multiple forms and media of the inscription of the self" (Banerjee 2019a, 336). Both books contain photos that are implemented in different ways. While the 16 photos in *The Reason You Walk* give evidence for events told in the text and take on a particular significance in building a new, visible history and identity to overcome intergenerational and

inherited trauma (Kinew, photos added without pagination between pages 120 and 121), the 3 photos in *A Storm Blew in from Paradise* indifferently show an unidentified Black man in the high jump, presumably P. Moreover, the absence of information on the photos and the lack of explanations here is a way of representing the non-experience of trauma, resulting in a crisis in the relation of individual and collective history (Whitehead 5). At several points in the text, there are verbal descriptions of photos as well as of how P destroyed all photos that might have helped to reconstruct his life's story, especially those of his training as a Ugandan fighter pilot at the military academy in Athens, in order to give no evidence on his identity to military and police (Anyuru 2015a, 79-81, 207-208, 237). As a refugee caught in war and ethnic rivalries, he was living in a paradoxical, constant fear of survival as well as of death.

Both texts also address intergenerational, traumatic long-term consequences of colonialism in North America, Africa, and Europe, respectively, the latter being colonialism's point of origin. By viewing North America and Europe as immigration continents, they point to the fatal potential of postcolonial Eurocentrism to perpetuate and cement inequalities created by colonialism: While European migrants to North America are dominant culture "settlers," Africans migrating to Europe are minority culture "refugees." The two trauma life writings show how intergenerational traumas, identity crises, and individuals' struggles with (post)colonial political history are inscribed in father-son relationships. By retelling these *dolorous tales and pointing out their continuous presence*, both texts challenge people who act based on Eurowestern and Eurocentric modes of thinking as well as a dominant culture's epistemologies to critically question their worldviews. At the same time, both texts encourage allyship with disadvantaged minorities, with Black and Indigenous people who are affected by the aftermath of colonialism as well as feature minority individuals who unremittently work on resurgence, regaining strength, and a sense of identity.

## **Circles of Conversation: Comparative Text Analysis**

### ***Defining History and the Significance of the Books' Titles***

A life-long refugee, P feels like a helpless victim of history and never comes to terms with his desperate situation. He often blames himself for returning to Africa, following a job offer as a pilot for crop dusters in Zambia after a short escape to Greece and Italy (cf. Anyuru 2015a, 98, 102). From Zambia, P is deported to Tanzania and forced to join a guerilla camp. He finally flees to Kenya and marries a Swedish sociologist and social worker. Severely traumatized, he moves with his wife to Sweden. Anyuru frames his father's experience by

paraphrasing Jewish philosopher Walter Benjamin's definition of history, eponymous to *A Storm Blew in from Paradise*:

Historiens ängel är enligt historiefilosofen Walter Benjamin en man som med uppspärrad mun stirrar på något utanför bilden, något som han skräckslaget ryggar undan ifrån. Han är vänd mot det förflutna och där vi ser kedjor av händelser, där vi ser historien, ser han bara en pågående katastrof som staplar vrakspillror framför hans fötter, i en driva som växer och växer mot himlen. Han vill stanna och väcka de döda. Han vill göra helt det som har blivit sönderslaget. Men en storm blåser från paradiset och har fångats av hans vingar och hindrar honom från att sluta dem, och tvingar honom att ständigt backa in i framtiden. Stormen, skriver Benjamin, är framsteget. (Anyuru 2012, 176)

[The angel of history, according to historical philosopher Walter Benjamin, is a man who stares at something outside the picture with mouth agape, something he is recoiling from in fear. 'His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet,' in a pile that grows and grows toward the sky. 'The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed to pieces. But a storm is blowing from Paradise, and has got caught in his wings with such a violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned.' The storm, Benjamin writes, is progress.] (Anyuru 2015a, 179-80)

Benjamin's final fragment *Über den Begriff der Geschichte* (1974), translated into English as *Theses on the Philosophy of History* (2007), was written during his flight from Nazi Germany just before he committed suicide in Spain in 1940. Anyuru cites this work extensively.<sup>7</sup> It is based on the painting *Angelus Novus* by Paul Klee (1920) that Benjamin bought in 1921. In referring to Benjamin, Anyuru inscribes himself and his father in the discourse of Holocaust victims and victims of history at large, minorities caught in the inevitable storm of progress, unable to maneuver life sovereignly and autonomously. In Anyuru's and P's view, "den koloniserade världen är en tudelad värld" ["the colonized world is a world divided in two"] (Anyuru 2012, 241; Anyuru 2015a, 245), the world of the privileged and the deprived, the latter confronted with unforeseeable futures. Benjamin criticizes causality-oriented Historicism and non-teleological history

writing. Combining Marxist material history with Messianism, he defines the material history writer as one who is conscious of the experiences that come with the past and able to use them for a unique new perspective in the moment of peril. He clarifies the moment of peril as minority people's becoming a tool of the ruling class. Benjamin rejects conformism in history writing. He demands "die Geschichte gegen den Strich zu bürsten" ["to brush history against the grain"] (Benjamin 1974, 697; Benjamin 2007, 257). To Benjamin, the history writer's major task is to kindle a spark of hope in the past (Benjamin 1974, 695; Benjamin 2007, 255), pointing at a redemptive future. Much like Anderson's proposal that life writing is a "continual act of reprocessing and modifying ... [memory] in the present" (108), Benjamin's materialistic historian

erfaßt die Konstellation, in die seine eigene Epoche mit einer ganz bestimmten früheren getreten ist. Er begründet so einen Begriff der Gegenwart als der 'Jetztzeit', in welche Splitter der messianischen eingesprengt sind. (Benjamin 1974, 704)

[grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one. Thus he establishes a conception of the present as the 'time of the now' which is shot through with chips of Messianic time.] (Benjamin 2007, 263)]

By abandoning the linearity and causality of history, Benjamin's history writer summons the power "das Kontinuum der Geschichte aufzusprengen" ["to blast open the continuum of history"] (Benjamin 1974, 702; Benjamin 2007, 262) in order to redeem mankind from history and its causality. Benjamin's philosophy of redemption leads Anyuru to a denial of history's existence in favor of emphasizing the power of the single moment, i.e. of every single moment:

Jag är inte av historiens material, om jag kommer ur historien kommer jag i varje ögonblick ur den som när man vandrar upp ur dyningen och skakar av sig kölden, havet, saltet. (Anyuru 2012, 79)

Jag vill inte komma ur historien utan ur livet. Jag vill att vinden hade med sig oss från ingenstans och att vi är på väg till ett annat ingenstans. ... Det finns ingen historia. Jag kommer bara härifrån. (Anyuru 2012, 176)

[I'm not made of the material of history; if I come out of history I come out of it at every moment the way you come up from the swell and shake off the cold, the sea, the salt.] (Anyuru 2015a, 83)

[I don't want to arise out of history but out of life [English translation of this sentence by J.E.]. I want the wind to have brought us out of nowhere, and I wish that we were on our way to another nowhere. ... There is no history. I just come from here.] (Anyuru 2015a, 180)<sup>8</sup>

Following Benjamin's fierce appeal to jump at the opportunity of the "time of the now," Anyuru writes against a negative, victimizing, and inescapable history. Instead, the chance of renewal dwells within "Here and Now," between various "Nowheres" and "Non-Nows". However, he seems hesitant and skeptical: "... jag vill börja om fast jag vetnu att man inte kan" ["... I want to start over even though I know now that you can't"] (Anyuru 2012, 246; Anyuru 2015a, 250).

Kinew chooses a different way to define history. He relies on traditional Ojibwe philosophy and epistemology, quoting the eponymous Anishinaabe travelling song "I am the reason you walk" (Kinew 59). This song—like Benjamin's definition—focuses on progress and inevitable changes in life. However, instead of a fierce appeal caused by devastating experiences, the traditional Anishinaabe song conveys comfort. It has

four layers of meaning to the words 'I am the reason you walk,' delivered as though it is God speaking to you. ...

I am the reason you walk. I created you so that you might walk this earth.

I am the reason you walk. I gave you motivation so you would continue to walk even when the path became difficult, even seemingly impossible.

I am the reason you walk. I animated you with that driving force called love, which compelled you to help others who had forgotten they were brothers and sisters to take steps back toward one another.

And now, my son, as that journey comes to an end, I am the reason you walk, for I am calling you home. Walk home to me on that everlasting road. (Kinew 252)

In this song, history is a meaningful way, in spite of what it has in store for an individual. Even the so-called "end of life" is a meaningful, infinite journey home on an everlasting road. A human being is active and able to walk. Life is even maneuverable beyond death because it becomes narratable. Kinew focuses on life as a journey and a story being told. History, the textualized path of life, and story-telling seem to blur. For Kinew, living and narrating life in its temporal, spatial, and social relations is a way of freeing oneself from the power

of the majority culture (cf. also Pitawanakwat 365; Sinclair 2013b, 86; Banerjee 2019b, 130). On his path of life, Kinew walks away from colonialism and its traumatic aftermath, evading it by walking-narrating his and his father's story. When telling about his Anishinaabeg grandparents Waabanakwad and Nenagiizhigok who were relocated from their traditional lands and suffered diaspora, trauma, and the loss of their traditional culture, Kinew admits, that "colonization is not a good backdrop to family life," but quickly adds "yet both parents loved their children with all their hearts" and gives examples for this parental love (Kinew 11). In telling and sharing his story, Kinew draws on values inherent in Ojibwe culture, working on a balanced view and a healing journey. While extensively reporting on systemic racism and the failures in the relationship between settler Canadians and Indigenous people, Kinew is not oblivious to small steps of reconciliation, for example, the federal government's apology to survivors of residential schools in 2008. He also engages in correctly representing reconciliation efforts and reconciliation terminology in the media (Kinew 82-88). Although Leanne Betasamosake Simpson and Edna Manitowabi point out that unilateral storytelling as in printed books "loses some of its transformative power" (282), they also emphasize that, for Nishinaabeg people, storytelling

becomes a lens through which we can envision our way out of cognitive imperialism, where we can create models and mirrors where none existed, and where we can experience the spaces of freedom and justice. Storytelling becomes a space where we can escape the gaze and the cage of the empire ... (281)

Every Nishnaabeg has our own personal stories or narratives that communicate their personal truths, learning, histories, and insights. (281)

Unlike Anyuru, Kinew looks at history not exclusively in a negative and depressing way and retells his own, his father's, and his family's story in an empowering way. Despite history's devastating effects on his father and himself, Kinew is eager to create a positive future-oriented narrative. In honouring his father's testimony to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as well as referring to the responsibility every generation has to the next one, he emphasizes the hope that Indigenous and non-Indigenous people will build a better future together (Kinew 268). Anyuru, by contrast, seems to have lost hope that it will be possible to inscribe chips of a messianic time into the now, ring a change in the current situation, or reach future improvement. Instead, he asserts that he, other migrants, and children of migrants hate Sweden because no one has ever extended a hand to them (Anyuru 2015a, 220).

### ***Identity and Intergenerational Relationship***

Both Anyuru and Kinew narrate processes of how to construct identity in the course of life, and, thereby, prove that Nordic migrant and Indigenous identity and identity construction are fluid and dynamic, as explained above.

After having experienced racism in his youth and as a young adult, resulting in violence, drug abuse, anger, and time in jail (Kinew 54-55, 64-69), Kinew roots himself in traditional Ojibwe as well as other Indigenous and Native American spirituality, for example, the Blackfoot Sun Dance. To Kinew, the annual Sun Dance is one of the most important identity-constructing events. As a Sun Dancer, Kinew learns humility and thankfulness while he gradually becomes a responsible human being within his community. He also has a powerful Sun Dance vision, in which he experiences all-relatedness:

There was no more *you*, there was no more *me*. There was no more *Indian*, there was no more *white*. There was no more *woman*, there was no more *man*. ... All that remained was unified. ... “We are all related.” In that sacred place, we are all together, and we are all the same. No thoughts. No words. No ego. Only emotion, prayer, and love. (Kinew 180, original emphasis)

Another deep well of identity to Kinew is journalism, writing, and broadcasting for renowned corporations such as CBC and Al Jazeera in various countries (Kinew 98, 108-11; Welch). Also, participating in an environmentalist protest in Mexico in solidarity with other Indigenous people shapes Kinew’s identity (Kinew 101-107).

It is remarkable that for both Anyuru and Kinew, hip-hop lyrics and music served as a starting point in their identity quest as well as their careers. Anyuru wrote the Preface to an edited version of angry texts by the Swedish-Latin-American immigrant hip-hop band The Latin Kings, proclaiming their literary and cultural value within a Swedish context (Anyuru 2004). By provocatively setting The Latin Kings “side by side with one of the most recognized and canonical authors of Swedish modernist poetry: Göran Sonnevi” (Behschnitt 2013, 182), Anyuru makes an “effort to augment the band’s symbolic capital and to situate them in the canon of Swedish culture” (Behschnitt 2013, 182). Anyuru, in Sweden enthusiastically welcomed as a so-called “representative of second-generation immigrants,” has acquired a discursive position and enough “symbolic capital” to challenge traditional notions of Swedish identity and Swedish national heritage (Behschnitt 2013, 182). With his suburb literature, he expresses a decisive will to inscribe immigrant writers in Swedish mainstream literary discourse, resulting in a shift of borders and renewal of the literary

canon (cf. Behschnitt 2007, 311-13; Behschnitt 2008, 37-39; Behschnitt 2013, 184-85). In prior works, Anyuru has established strong intertextual links to “renowned and symbolically charged texts of the Western Canon” (Behschnitt 2013, 182; cf. also Behschnitt and Nilsson 2013, 13), appropriating them for his own purposes and thereby undermining mainstream literary discourses. In *A Storm Blew in from Paradise*, however, Anyuru develops a new strategy and implements intertexts written by other minority authors like Jewish philosopher Walter Benjamin or Black activist, psychologist, and politician Frantz Fanon, declaring as well as seeking solidarity with other marginalized individuals who found themselves in the position of victims of history. With this measure, Anyuru puts himself in a discourse of initially unheard, but later on widely recognized and respected minority voices. This strategy can also be read as a statement about how he wants to be perceived by his readers, as he refuses any tendency of exoticizing, othering, ethnicizing, or racializing his text based on the problematic discursive constructions of the second-generation immigrant writer and the label of second-generation immigrant literature (cf. Nilsson 2013, 41; 46-47; 60-61). By explicitly being different and having a Black migrant background, Anyuru heads out to move his marginalized position of cultural alterity into the centre of Swedish identity (cf. Behschnitt 2007, 312), similar to Black Jamaican cultural theorist Stuart Hall who—living in the United Kingdom as a professor of sociology—realized that his sense of identity “always depended on the fact of being a *migrant*, on the *difference* from the rest of you. So one of the fascinating things about this discussion is to find myself centered at last” (Hall 1987, 44, original emphasis). Hall discovered that in the views of white Europeans he as well as other Black people came to be the representatives of the dispersed and fragmented feeling of the postmodern age. In contrast to native white Europeans or white people of European descent, Black people were able to centre themselves because of their migranhood (Hall 1987, 44) as well as “living with, living through difference” (Hall 1987, 45). Anyuru, by contrast, experiences considerable difficulties in his search for identity and belonging. The strategies discovered by Hall in the 1980s seem to be dysfunctional in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In *A Storm Blew in from Paradise*, Anyuru metaphorically expresses his identity crisis: “Jag tänker att jag är ett träd med rötterna uppryckta” [“I think about how I am a tree with its roots pulled up”] (Anyuru 2012, 81; Anyuru 2015a, 84). Though Hall suggests ethnicity may be an alternative to nation-based identity (Hall 1987, 45-46), it does not prove helpful to Anyuru and his identity journey.

Jag har läst langis historia denna vinter. Enligt en historieskrivning utgör de den yttersta utlöparen av en migrationsström som utgick från abessinska riket på sextonhundratalet: folkgrupperna acholi i norra Uganda och



luo i Kenya, båda språkligt besläktade med langi, skulle då vara delar av samma folkvandring, kvarlämnade spår av en bortglömd exodus. Andra berättelser är oförenliga med denna. En version av historien hävdar att langi var herdar från Sudan som redan under trettonhundratalet slog sig ner bland de mer centraliserade och hierarkiskt organiserade bantukungadömena kring Victoriasjön och där tillskansade sig en plats i den rigida samhällsordningen genom att hävda att de kunde kontrollera regn, fruktbarhet och besatt övernaturliga krafter. (Anyuru 2012, 78)

[I've been reading the history of the Langi this winter. According to one historiography, they are the last offshoot of a migration stream that came from the Ethiopian empire in the seventeenth century: the Acholi people in northern Uganda and the Luo in Kenya, both linguistically related to the Langi, would then be part of the same migration, traces of a forgotten exodus. Other reports are incompatible with this. One version of the story claims that the Langi were shepherds from Sudan who settled among the more centralized and hierarchically organized Bantu kingdoms around Lake Victoria as early as the fourteenth century, and who appropriated a place in the rigid social order by claiming that they possessed supernatural powers and could control rain and fertility.] (Anyuru 2015a, 82)

In contrast to the upheld, revived, and recreated Ojibway as well as other Native American traditions referred to in Kinew's *The Reason you Walk*, there is no living cultural history, no proven record of Langi identity as a people that could provide a notion of belonging or give inspiration to Anyuru's identity construction (cf. also Anyuru 2015a, 202-203). Anyuru paraphrases the history of the Langi, his father's ethnic group, in a prosaic way, leaving the Langi as a marginal note, a negligible addendum of minor relevance in his and his father's history, wiped away with a factual closing statement:

Pappa vet egentligen bara en sak om sitt folks ursprung: att han och hans familj brukade kalla sig själva för niloter, vilket betydde att de en gång hade passerat Nilens källor i östra Sudan. (Anyuru 2012, 78-79)

[Dad really only knows one thing about the origin of his people: that he and his family called themselves Nilotic, which meant

that they had once crossed the source of the Nile in eastern Sudan.] (Anyuru 2015a, 82)

The African Langi identity fails Anyuru as it failed his father, there is not even “an imaginary coherence on the experience of dispersal and fragmentation, which is the history of all enforced diasporas” that would suggest the “unity of the black [sic] people whom colonization and slavery distributed across the African diaspora”, as Hall claims (Hall 1990, 224). However, applying the aforementioned view on Nordic migrants’ and Indigenous Anishinaabeg identity as fluid and dynamic recognizes the fact that individuals are continuously “in the making” and opens up new perspectives. In this sense “cultural identity,” as Hall puts it,

is a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as ‘being’. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power.” (Hall 1990, 225)

Like his father who was originally raised as a catholic, Anyuru searches for meaning, converts to Islam, and gains a sense of belonging in a Swedish Muslim community (cf. Anyuru 2015a, 123, 245-46). However, this makes him a member of a minority group in a twofold way: a Black Muslim among white, mostly Lutheran Swedes. This exposes him to potential discrimination by the majority. Similar to Kinew who experienced harassment in being choked by a school teacher (Kinew 54-55), racism is also part of Anyuru’s life.

De säger ord om mitt krulliga hår, om min kropp, om min hud, de skrattar och deras skratt hör till det här landet, till radhusen, till träden. (Anyuru 2012, 213)

I händerna och under fötterna är jag vit och de andra retar mig för det också, de säger att jag stod på alla fyra när Gud målade mig. Men Gud har mig kär. (Anyuru 2012, 215)

[They say things about my kinky hair, about my body, about my skin; they laugh and their laughter belongs to this country, to the terrace houses, to the trees.] (Anyuru 2015a, 217)

[I'm white on my hands and under my feet, and the others tease me about that, too; they say I was standing on all fours when God painted me. But God loves me.] (Anyuru 2015a, 218)

Framing racism with the lasting power of colonialism, Anyuru sharpens his sense of identity and strength of judgement by critically pondering socialist confusion in postcolonial Africa while reading Frantz Fanon.

*Jordens fördömda* ... Fanon ... skrev underbara böcker om svart hud och vita masker, om att befria sig från historien genom att riskera sitt liv. Tanzania, liksom Zambia och många andra länder, hämtade kombinationen av nationalism och socialism från Fanons tankevärld. Boken fick mig att känna att jag kunde lita på livet, att historien skulle bära mig någonstans. (Anyuru 2012, 79-80, original emphasis)

[*The Wretched of the Earth* ... Fanon ... wrote wonderful books about black [sic] skin and white masks, about freeing oneself from history by risking one's own life. Tanzania, like Zambia and many other countries, drew its combination of nationalism and socialism from Fanon's ideology. The book made me feel like I could depend on life, that history would take me somewhere.] (Anyuru 2015a, 83, original emphasis)<sup>9</sup>

Like Kinew, Anyuru turns to writing as a source of identity construction. What is more, *A Storm Blew in from Paradise* is a collaboration between Anyuru and his father who is actively involved in the book project.

Han frågar mig ibland hur det går med boken. En gång ... läste jag upp ett stycke. Det handlade om att flyga och han rättade någon teknisk detalj som hade att göra med aerodynamik. (Anyuru 2012, 120-21)

[He asks me sometimes how things are going with the book. Once ... I read a part aloud for him. It was about flying, and he corrected some technical detail that had to do with aerodynamics.] (Anyuru 2015a, 124)

An autobiographic manuscript obviously written by his father is randomly quoted, and Anyuru is deeply moved by feelings of compassion for his father's unfortunate life (Anyuru 2015a, 84, 178). In doing the project together, father and son gain some mutual understanding but never seem to reach each other

in a deeper sense. They both seem to be caught within the continuity and discontinuity of identity, reflecting an unchangeable past and an origin that is beyond reach while erring and searching for new and different meanings in the present and the future (cf. Hall 1990, 226-30).

Kinew, too, launched a project with his late father which brought the two men closer together and literally fostered mutual understanding:

... My father and I had begun to work on a database of Anishinaabe verbs. ... Initially we thought our work could be published as a book. However, after some thought, I decided that an app would reach a broader audience ... My ability to speak Anishinaabemowin improved dramatically. (Kinew 195-96)

This project is not only about the revitalization of the Ojibwe language, Anishinaabemowin. Pitawanakwat (366 et passim) showed how language (re-)vitalization, identity construction, and Anishinaabeg worldview are strongly interconnected. In Anishinaabe philosophy and epistemology as understood and presented by Kinew, language is one of several bundles *Gizhe Manido*, i.e. the Great Mystery or Creator, instilled in human beings. Sinclair gives the following definition:

Language is much like an exchange, a trade or ... a treaty. ... A treaty—from an Anishinaabeg point of view anyway—is a living arrangement that must be re-visited consistently and continually. It is a set of terms that must be re-conceived and re-created every time it is returned to. A treaty is not a one-time exchange, alliance, or sale but a living and ongoing relationship—renewed by a shared set of rights and responsibilities. ... Every word therefore represents a constantly forming relationship, with every instance of language providing a site for exchange, identity creation, and community. ... Combined to form expressions like stories, songs, and speeches, words are signs of specific relationships. (Sinclair 2013a, 7-8)

With the powerful bundle of language, Anishinaabeg people form and uphold relationships which are key to Anishinaabeg identity and identity construction. In creating a database of Anishinaabeg words and revitalizing their Indigenous language, Kinew and his father not only engage in an important linguistic project together. They revisit and renew their relationship as father and son, a relationship that was difficult from the beginning because of *Tobasonakwut*'s

trauma and its intergenerational influence on his children. Wab Kinew knows about this basic tenet of Anishinaabe worldview: As Sinclair points out, Kinew created his hip-hop lyrics based on the way how Anishinaabeg people “communicate with animate beings like water, air, the wind, the four directions, animals, plants, rocks, and other entities... . . . By listening and watching ... and then producing action and movement, a song is produced” (Sinclair 2013a, 8-9). As an example, Sinclair quotes Kinew’s hip-hop song *Live by the Drum*:

There’s rhythm in the water, / from where my life comes. /  
 There’s power in the air, / we live by the drum.  
 Red man live by the drum. / Yellow man live by the drum. /  
 Black man live by the drum. / White man live by the drum.  
 Where I am from / we say the lake is a drum / when you paddle  
 in the night / you can hear the beat hum.  
 Some time ago / rhyme and flow, / always phenomenal, / we  
 lost that rhythm / now it is time to find it yo.  
 (quoted in Sinclair 2013a, 9, emphasis cleared)

The “listening and watching” Sinclair refers to, are continuing creative, communicative, and relational processes based on phenomena perceptible by the senses or through immediate experience, intimate study, observation of, and interaction with all beings, the elements, plants, and animals as well as phenomena as wind rustling in leaves, birds flapping their wings in a certain way for ascending and descending in the air. This, however, is not only an Anishinaabe tenet but is also found in other Indigenous worldviews: As Blackfoot academic Dr. Leroy Little Bear pointed out in a lecture held at the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences’ Big Thinking Series at the University of Calgary, Alberta, in 2016, Goetheanism is a form of Western thinking that gets close to the Indigenous concept of “all my relations” (Little Bear 32:40), in Anishinaabemowin called “nindinawemaganidog” (Sinclair 2013a, 104). According to Little Bear, the phenomenology in Johann Wolfgang Goethe’s worldview is a Western concept quite comparable to Indigenous concepts and ways of living. “Goethe’s science ... did challenge the principles of the Age of Reason. ... He had a spiritual approach to science. For him, the observed and the observer interacted. Goethe’s science was about wholeness, integration ...” (Little Bear, slides presented at 27:49, cf. also 30:00). When I—a native speaker of German—listened to Dr. Little Bear’s presentation, Goethe’s poem *Epirrhema* immediately came to my mind. For people situated in a Western, especially in a German context, *Epirrhema* reflects a relational concept of all beings, as well as the reciprocity of the observer and the observed, similar to an Indigenous one. The poem, therefore, can help understand nindinawemaganidog as practiced, experienced, and described by Kinew:

## EPIRRHEMA

Müset im Naturbetrachten  
 Immer eins wie alles achten;  
 Nichts ist drinnen, nichts ist draußen:  
 Denn was innen das ist außen.  
 So ergreifet ohne Säumnis  
 Heilig öffentlich Geheimnis.

Freuet euch des wahren Scheins,  
 Euch des ernstesten Spieles:  
 Kein Lebendiges ist ein Eins,  
 Immer ist's ein Vieles.  
 (Eibl 498)

## [EPIRRHEMA

Take in nature-meditation,  
 Each and all in contemplation,  
 Naught is inside, naught is out,  
 For the inside is without.  
 Thus shall comprehended be  
 Holy open mystery.

Truth of semblance pleasure giveth.  
 So doth serious play.  
 Merely one, there's naught that liveth  
 'Tis a manifold alway.  
 (Carus 259)<sup>10</sup>

The father-and-son Anishinaabemowin project is more than just revitalizing and preserving a language under threat. It is building identity by relations with humans as well as more-than-humans. Similarly, the writing of *The Reason You Walk* is more than just putting a life writing down on paper. "For Kinew, to live by the drum is to embody the language one receives from the land and produce language from this exchange. It is to signify the relationships one partakes in" (Sinclair 2013a, 10). In contrast to Anyuru who contextualizes his search for identity and meaning in history due to the lack of Langi tradition with texts by Walter Benjamin and Frantz Fanon, Kinew has the opportunity of getting reconnected with Indigenous and especially Ojibwe traditional philosophy and epistemology. Kinew also regains a sense of being part of an interconnected

community with a collective identity Anishinaabeg people uphold despite the imposition of nation-state borders (cf. Sinclair 2013a, 30). Nindinawemaganidog is

an affirmation of the rights and responsibilities one shares with all relations ... It is a sign of recognition, a recommitment to this relationship, and an understanding of the roles and duties within an agreement to relate. This also reminds Anishinaabeg and others that they also share responsibilities of enawendiwin [i.e. strands connecting all parts of creation, cf. Sinclair 2013a, 105-109], inviting them to take part in forming a healthy system of nindinawemaganidog. (Sinclair 2013a, 107)

The “shape, meaning, and purpose” of nindinawemaganidog, Sinclair explains, is “waawiyeyaag (translated to ‘it is round’ or ‘circularity’)” (Sinclair 2013a, 107), implying the flux, the dynamic relatedness of everything in order to go on forever on a journey, continuing to seek and find a healthy, harmonious balance between all relations, actions, events, words, and everything that exists in the world. Kinew and his father share this tradition in a deeper sense because the language as well as the life writing project have a spiritual dimension: Language is the means to establish and maintain balance, harmony, and reciprocity in all relations. The relationship between Kinew and his father Tobasonakwut is restored and healed as are their roles, responsibilities, their respective place within the community, and their connection to all relations.

As the relationships deepen, each terminally ill father leaves a legacy to his son. A part of the legacy left to Anyuru, on the one hand, is heavily influenced by P’s experience as a refugee.

Pappa brukade säga att jag måste vara beredd på att fly från mitt land, att jag måste ha en internationell utbildning, att jag måste vara beredd att när som helst resa mig upp och lämna allt. (Anyuru 2012, 121-22)

[Dad used to say that I had to be prepared to flee my country, that I had to get an international education, that I had to be prepared to get up at any moment and leave it all behind.] (Anyuru 2015a, 125)

On the other hand, P also tries to comfort his son:

‘Vi vet att döden inte är slutet’, säger han och vrider sakta sitt ansikte mot mig. ‘Var inte ledsen. Det är det här som är livet.’ Jag kramar hans hand, mjukt, och reser mig sedan upp och lämnar honom. (Anyuru 2012, 175)

[‘We know that death is not the end,’ he says, slowly turning his face to me. ‘Don’t be sad. This is what life is.’ I squeeze his hand gently, and then I stand up and leave him.] (Anyuru 2015a, 178-79)

In contrast to P’s exclusively personal message, Tobasonakwut’s legacy rather makes the personal political: “‘Share our ceremonies with these business people,’ he said. ‘Let them see the beauty of our ways. Help them understand who we are’” (Kinew 200).

Significant for the texts’ general attitude towards history and identity are the passages that describe the fathers’ deaths. P is dying in hospital, connected to tubes and machines, nearly forgotten by his family except for his two sons, the author-narrator-character Anyuru and his brother:

Han dör med öppna ögon en januaridag. Jag och min bror står på varsin sida av sängen. ... Där är kroppen. Den har en syrgasmask på sig. ... Här är kroppen. Den är av glömska. ... Det är överkligt att denna kropp ligger här under landstingets blå och vita sjukhuslakan, i gråljuset som faller in över maskinerna och slangarna ... Här är kroppen, skulpterad ur döden, här ligger den i en säng. Denna kropp som kommer ur hans liv ... den hade sin historia, den kom ur ett liv som kunde ha varit ett annat liv. Men en storm kom ... från paradiset. Stormen var livet. (Anyuru 2012, 246-47)

[He dies with his eyes open one January day. My brother and I are standing on either side of the bed. ... There is his body. It has an oxygen mask on. ... Here is the body. It is made of oblivion. ... It is surreal that this body is lying here under the blue-and-white county hospital sheets, in the grey light that falls in across the machines and the tubes ... Here is the body, sculpted from death; here it lies in a bed. This body that comes from his life ... it had its history, it came out of a life that could have been a different life. But a storm blew in ... from paradise. The storm was life.] (Anyuru 2015a, 251-52)



Very differently, Tobasonakwut dies at home among many family members who have been caring for him until he passed away:

He lay on his back. He was still. Shawon sat at his side holding his hand. Mom's face bore a look of anguish. Lisa jumped onto the bed beside him and leaned on his chest, her ear pressed against his sternum, searching for any sign of life. There was nothing left. She sat up and shook her head slowly, pursing her lips. 'Noooooo,' my mother wailed. That cry was likely the worst sound I have ever heard in my life. She cried only once, however. She remembered his words. She composed herself. Tears welled in Shawon's, Lisa's, and my mother's eyes. Jesse joined us in the room. ... What's left behind? All that remains in the end is love. The love he had for us. The love we still have for him. (Kinew 248-49)

Unlike P, Tobasonakwut completed a healing journey leading to peace and forgiveness. Anyuru attributes his father's failing mental and physical health to what he had to go through as a refugee. P's whole life, as well as his illness, is a source of sadness and disorientation. Kinew, by contrast, does not attribute his father's failing health to anything. Tobasonakwut's terminal illness brings the supportive family's strong solidarity and love to light.

## Conclusion

*A Storm Blew in from Paradise* and *The Reason You Walk* invite heterogeneous cultures to communicate: majority cultures as well as subaltern cultures. Including the texts in comparative literary studies (Spivak 16) contrastively reveals how they express and deal with the complex legacy of colonialism. A planetary gaze respects the texts' alterities, diversities, and differences as much as it uncovers similarities as well as communicable transcultural relations that may function as a point of departure for further border-crossing conversations. According to Spivak, literature can not only be our object of investigation but also our teacher (23). In this sense, I return to answering my initial question: What do these texts and the comparative approach of planetarity teach us?

Both texts can be read as narrative and storied representations of Anyuru's and Kinew's respective identity quests, as they perform North American Indigenous and Northern European migrant identity creation in its individual and collective manifestations. Readers gain insight into processes of identity construction within the respective self's life, their specific cultural, spatial, temporal, and social contexts as well as their environments, with "identity"

defined as a becoming (cf. Hall 2012, 4) and consisting of fluid, dynamic, negotiable and non-negotiable components (cf. Doerfler, Sinclair, and Stark; Pitawanakwat; Sinclair 2013b). In the process of becoming, Kinew and Anyuru negotiate ethical, historical, and political questions, which inevitably converge in their as well as their fathers' individual and personal life. Both autobiographical, postcolonial trauma life writings serve the author-narrator-characters and their fathers to emancipate and distance themselves from the dominant cultures' prescriptions in order to create their own signification (cf. Banerjee 2019b, 130). At the same time, the texts become contact zones, conducting explorations beyond the dichotomies of identities and alterities (cf. Kjelsvik, Lane, and Myhr 18). Inscribing their personal trauma which was sparked by the historical trauma and the complex aftermath of colonialism, Anyuru's and Kinew's texts invite readers and literary scholars alike to practice trauma-sensitive and ethical reading by entering into the hitherto untold and partially untellable (cf. Whitehead 4 and 8). Anyuru's writing pushes a border in a European context as much as Kinew's does in a North American one: Unique in their cultural "in-betweenness", both provoke in-depth reflections on the historical legacy of colonization that calls members of dominant cultures to action. Both texts invite us to communicate across borders and co-create a better future.

Despite these similarities, Anyuru and Kinew apply different strategies as well as imply different needs and goals: While *The Reason You Walk* can be read as a decolonizing text, a cultural and political rebirth concerning Indigenous to non-Indigenous relationships in North America (cf. Bell 588-90), *A Storm Blew in from Paradise* rather displays the current struggles of African migrants and refugees in Northern Europe as still unsolved long-term effects of the colonization of Africa. Anyuru repeatedly implicitly blames societal circumstances in the land of immigration, Sweden, for failing his and his father's search for identity and integration. His words seem rather subaltern than "part of the epistemological spectrum which the hegemonic culture can hear" (Banerjee 2019b, 132).

While Kinew confidently inhabits transcultural space as well as relishes an Indigenous, Ojibwe-rooted, hybrid cultural identity and comfortably moves in a third space between cultures, Anyuru still seems to be looking for a suitable space. Neither connected to a traditional Langi heritage nor sustainably rooted in a Swedish migrant environment and the Muslim community he converts to, he turns to philosophical texts by Benjamin and Fanon that provide him with thoughts and concepts that might prove helpful.

The titles of both texts seem to be significant for these different approaches: For Anyuru, a storm blowing in from paradise is an obstacle that must first be overcome to find reasons for walking. For Kinew, a storm blowing in from paradise is all the more a reason for walking.

However, both texts subvert the Eurowestern thinking of linearity and causality. They unmask a linear worldview as anachronistic in terms of constructing an identity within an irreversibly colonially affected, transcultural world that calls upon us all, especially those of us who are members of the dominant cultures, to apply a respectful planetary gaze. Anyuru's and Kinew's trauma life writings demonstrate how individual and collective identities of certain minority groups, i.e. Nordic migrants from Africa and Indigenous Ojibwe in Canada, respectively, can be constructed within the fluidity and dynamics of a biography intergenerationally and traumatically influenced by colonialism as well as a life experience entangled in complicated historical contexts. While Anyuru clings to Benjamin's "time of the now", the single moment that blasts history's causality and leads into future freedom, Kinew focuses on the Anishinaabe worldview of all-relatedness, reciprocal relationships, and an infinite everlasting road home, the reciprocity and circularity of balance, harmony, healing, and forgiveness.

As Kjelsvik, Lane, and Myhr point out, "narratives and life stories of minorities, both Indigenous and of migrant origin, also contribute to shaping representations of nation states and giving new connotations to the notion of citizenship" (12). It might be the power of what Spivak calls "enabling violation", the possibility of communication without a language barrier between people from countries colonized by the same power in previous centuries (17), that also can help members of Eurowestern, dominant cultures to self-reflect and improve planet-wide decolonizing processes: If we, i.e. the descendants of the colonial powers, feel violated by being made to feel ashamed of the presence of the more subtle colonial actions today, this may also enable us to finally communicate about how to put an end to these actions. Both texts provide suggestions of how to ameliorate our living together by thinking in complex, multidirectional, and socio-spatio-temporal relations rather than in linear deductions as well as realizing the yet undiscovered and invaluable power of change inherent in every single moment and situation at hand. By proposing the time of the now and infinite, circular, reciprocal relationality as two alternatives to Eurowestern epistemologies, these texts call for revising static thinking of linearity as well as cause and effect. They establish a new basis for communication at eye level and transcultural, planetary circles of conversation.

#### NOTES

1. This article is based on a presentation given on June 4, 2019, at the 38th Annual Meeting of the Association for the Advancement of Scandinavian Studies in

Canada during the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences 2019 at the University of British Columbia's Point Grey Campus in Vancouver, BC, Canada. During this Congress, on June 2, 2019, a racial and discriminatory incident took place on the UBC Campus, involving Shelby McPhee, a Black graduate student and member of the Black Canadian Studies Association (BCSA), two white congress attendees, the campus police, and the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police). The Black Canadian Studies Association (BCSA) released several open letters and statements following the incident. The statements can be accessed on the BCSA homepage (BCSA). The incident in 2019 and the pandemic occurring in the following year of 2020 raised discussions about equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization within the Federation of the Humanities and Social Sciences and many of their member associations, as for example the Association for the Advancement of Scandinavian Studies in Canada (AASSC), the Indigenous Literary Studies Association (ILSA), and the Black Canadian Studies Association (BCSA), resulting in various action-takings and many associations' refusal to join the 2021 digital congress, among them also AASSC, ILSA, and BCSA. Concerning Black and Indigenous people, it is evident, that there is still much work to do to further equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization, even more so when environmental, pandemic, and climate change issues that reinforce social injustices are taken into account. I would like this article to be understood as a humble, reflective contribution to the many unresolved, multifaceted, intertwined challenges of our time, with a special focus on the concerns of Black and Indigenous people.

2. Shortened for Wabanakwut Kinew.
3. The terms Ojibwe, also written Ojibwa or Ojibway, Anishinaabe, Nishinaabe (singular), and Anishinaabeg, Nishinaabeg (plural) are variants (cf. Hele). They are used equally or interchangeably by writers who self-identify as Ojibwe / Anishinaabe (cf. Kinew *passim*; Doerfler, Sinclair, and Stark xvii; Simpson and Manitowabe). In the present article, I use the terms the publications I quote from are using.
4. Concerning Anyuru's text: From here on, I refer to the English translation as in-text quotation except for when I quote passages verbally. There I first give the quote in Swedish, followed by the quote of the English translation. Anyuru's book is also available in French (Anyuru 2015b) as well as German translation (Anyuru 2015c).
5. Different spellings of the name can be found: Niigonwedom as well as Niigaanwewidam. Both are treated equally in this article and used as they occur on the respective publications.
6. Rachel Willson-Broyles suggests "doesn't remember his story" (Anyuru 2015a, 9) in her English translation. Although this might be understood as the translator's poetic licence, I consider it important to translate "historien" exactly as "history" with regard to the text negotiating the relation between history and the impact of historical events on individual identity as well as on an individual's life story which is implied by "his story".

7. Concerning Benjamin's text: I refer to the German text, followed by a reference to the English translation. Anyuru quotes a Swedish translation of Walter Benjamin's text but does not provide a source.
8. In the English edition, translator Rachel Willson-Broyles chose to translate the first sentence of this quotation, in Swedish "Jag vill inte komma ur historien utan ur livet", as "I don't want to escape history but life" (Anyuru 2015a, 180). This translation does not fit well into the philosophical framework, the logical context, and the concept of history and life Anyuru presents in his text. Obviously, Anyuru wants to escape history and replace it with life in every single moment. In this, he follows Walter Benjamin's philosophy of history. Therefore, I decided to deviate from Willson-Broyle's translation in this case and translate the sentence rather as "I don't want to arise out of history but out of life". My decision is supported by Emmanuel Curtil's metaphorical French translation "Je ne veux pas être le fruit de l'histoire, j'aimerais être le fruit de la vie." (Anyuru 2015b, 211) and Paul Berf's German translation "Ich will nicht aus der Geschichte kommen, sondern aus dem Leben" (Anyuru 2015c, 202).
9. Here, Anyuru explicitly refers to the titles of Fanon 2021a and 2021b, translated into Swedish.
10. Carus' translation is more accurate than later ones as for example those by Hamburger (71) or Whaley (126).

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