UINIGUMASUITTUQ: THE PAN-ARCTIC SEA WOMAN TRADITION AS A SOURCE OF LAW AND LITERARY THEORY

by

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ABSTRACT

Although the pan-Inuit unikkaaqtuaq (story) of the origin of the Sea Woman is quite well-known among anthropologists, folklorists, and Religious Studies scholars, to date very little attention has been given to either the broader Sedna tradition, or its individual performances, as serious, canonical *literature*. This thesis thus endeavours to offer a literary reading of Alexina Kublu's "Uinigumasuittuq: She who never wants to get married" as both an exemplary work of Inuit verbal art and as a living source of law and literary theory.

The structure of my thesis is as follows: the Introduction and Methodology chapters clarify in detail the philosophical and methodological underpinnings of my approach, while the bulk of the remainder of my thesis is a close reading of Kublu's own 'performance' of the story, followed by a Conclusion. The close reading itself is divided into three chapters, each roughly corresponding to the three narrative divisions within the story —herein referred to as The Dog Husband, The Storm Bird, and The Creation of the Sea Mammals— all of which are preceded by the respective sections of Kublu's text, each of which is itself quoted in full. The chapter entitled "Unikkaaqtuat Poetics" describes the manner in which Kublu's own highly contextualized performance of the text functions as a source of meta-literary critical theory, speaking as it does to issues of translation and presentation, oral-literary conventions and themes, and characterization and paradox. The chapter entitled "Kinship and Community Governance," while continuing to pay close attention to the aesthetics of Kublu's text, goes on to describe the manner in which twentieth-century colonialist incursions into Inuit physical and intellectual life sought to undermine the longstanding kinship structures that provided the foundation of traditional law and governance in traditional Inuit society, and suggests that, given this context, Kublu's own performance of the tale functions as a life-giving act of 'decolonial love.' The chapter entitled "Uinigumasuittuq and Violence Against Women" describes the manner in which Kublu's text

speaks powerfully to the pressing issue of violence against Indigenous women and girls in Canada. Although the brutal act of gender-based violence at the heart of the Sedna story is frequently 'softened' or rewritten in other contemporary versions of the tale, most likely to stave off concerns that the tale somehow endorses violence against women, I argue that, on the contrary, this deeply disturbing, climactic act of violence —as well as the devastating consequences attending to this act of violence— actually warn *against* violence and mistreatment. Finally, in the Conclusion, I suggest some possible ways in which Canadian readers and auditors might respond to the Sea Woman story.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

There exists across the Arctic a special myth, a story that in its multitudinous forms epitomizes the very wellspring of Inuit fears – and our awe of the elements. It is a myth that is fun and ferocious, that joins the past with the present, that can elicit primal dread even in today's jaded times.

This is the story of Nuliajuk, or Niviaqsi, the woman below the waves. She is not a goddess, but rather a special creature of fear and tragedy. – Rachel Qitsualik, "The Problem with Sedna"

1. The Sea Woman

I was first introduced to the Sedna story in Iqaluit, Nunavut in the fall of 2006. My husband and I had only just completed our undergraduate degrees the previous spring and had only just moved to Iqaluit in August to begin what was ultimately to be several years of living and working in Nunavut. At a local craft fair, I purchased a bilingual (that is, Inuktitut/English) set of audio recordings, a collection of traditional Inuit stories that had recently been produced by CBC Radio North, entitled *Inuit Unikkaaqtuangit*/*Inuit Legends Volumes 1 & 2*. Back at our apartment, my husband and I, eager to learn more about our host culture, listened to these various stories, including one entitled "Nuliajuk: The story of Sedna, the Sea Goddess,"[1] a contemporary adaptation of what I eventually would learn is perhaps the most famous, and certainly amongst the most widespread, of all the unikkaaqtuat (traditional Inuit stories; sing. unikkaaqtuaq) (Angmaalik et al 152; see also Qitsualik, "Problem" n.p.).

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[1] The word 'goddess' is a bit of a misnomer here, as can be seen from Qitsualik's comment above. As Daniel Merkur explains, although certain prominent metaphysical beings have been described by Western observers as 'gods' or 'goddesses,' the Inuit themselves "have no term corresponding precisely to 'deity' or 'god'" (37). Merkur quotes Knud Rasmussen here:

> The idea of a God, or group of gods, is altogether alien to their minds. They know only powers or personifications of natural forces, acting upon human life in various ways, and affecting all that lives through fair and foul weather, disease, and perils of all kinds. These powers are not evil … but they are nevertheless dangerous owing to their unmerciful severity where men fail to live in accordance with the wise rules of life decreed by their forefathers. (29)

Of course, as the story has increasingly left its culture of origin to circulate as World Literature, the term 'goddess' has been frequently used as a descriptor for the Sea Woman.

The *Inuit Unikkaaqtuangit* radio dramas were produced in 2002 and 2003, only a few years after the creation of Nunavut, but they arise from a much older oral-literary tradition that reaches far back to ancient times. The loosely related collection of themes (in Alfred Lord's sense of the word)[2] comprising the Sedna narrative, for example, are almost certainly several hundreds —if not several thousands— of years old. In the most well-known variants of the story, including "Nuliajuk: The story of Sedna, the Sea Goddess," there is a beautiful young woman who initially shuns all suitors and eventually finds herself married to a dog and/or a bird. After a series of events, the young woman and her father end up in a qajaq together and, crucially, the father ends up throwing her overboard and then cutting off her fingers and/or hands as she attempts to grasp onto the boat. The young woman's severed fingers are then transformed into the various sea mammals, and the young woman herself sinks below the waves to become the terrifying inua (indweller, owner) of the sea and guardian of the marine mammals.

There are, of course, innumerable variations on these basic themes, but whatever form it takes, the story can always be recognized as arising from the same set of pan-arctic narrative traditions. Thanks in part to the efforts of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century ethnographers such as Franz Boas and Knud Rasmussen (himself a Greenlandic Inuk), the various traditions associated with the fearsome Sea Woman have long since ceased to be an obscure 'text' of a marginal oral-literary tradition. For better or for worse, the so-called Sedna story has been re-circulated, re-adapted and re-mediated well outside its culture of origin and now exists in highly varied forms all along the textual continuum. Inuk author and critic Rachel Qitsualik, for example, notes the "incredibly imaginative versions, twists, and alternative endings that different peoples have used in this tale" from ancient to modern times ("Problem" n.p.).

[2] See *The Singer of Tales*, 6-7. 'Themes' is used here to refer to a story's building blocks, those separate episodes or events that are imaginatively woven together to form a longer narrative.

Along with the unikkaaqtuaq of Atanarjuat, which itself became famous worldwide as a result of the highly successful 2003 motion picture of the same name, the Sea Woman narratives are amongst the most famous of the unikkaaqtuat and have been discussed extensively amongst non-Inuit ethnographers, folklorists, myth theorists, and Religious Studies scholars for the better part of a century.

The text I have chosen to read for my Master's thesis, "Uinigumasuittuq: She who never wants to get married," was composed by Alexina Kublu, a well-known educator, storyteller, and former Language Commissioner of Nunavut. It is a contemporary retelling of the Sea Woman story, particularly as it is known in the Iglulik region, and particularly as it has taken shape within her own extended family. Kublu's own 'performance'[3] of the tale was first published in a 1996 book entitled *Introduction to Oral Traditions*, which, as we shall see, was the result of a multi-year Oral Traditions project based out of Nunavut Arctic College (NAC). Her text has been translated line-by-line from the Inuktitut into both English and French; it has also been reproduced in its entirety and analysed in detail by anthropologists Frédéric Laugrand and Jarich Oosten (themselves co-facilitators with Kublu during the NAC Oral Traditions Program) in at least two additional publications, namely, *The Sea Woman: Sedna in Inuit Shamanism and Art in the Eastern Arctic* (35-38) and *Inuit Shamanism and Christianity: Transitions and Transformations in the Twentieth Century* (153-155). The text can also be found in its entirety online, along with all other materials produced as a result of the Oral Traditions project, at tradition-orale.ca.

[3] As I will explain in greater detail in Chapter 3, following the American folklorist Richard Bauman, I am using the word 'performance' here in a very broad sense, denoting a particular "way of speaking" – or indeed, writing – "and its attendant phenomena" (291). Drawing in part from speech-act theory, in Bauman's view "[p]erformance … is a unifying thread tying together the marked, segregated esthetic genres and other spheres of verbal behaviour into a general unified conception as a way of speaking" (291).

I have chosen to focus on Kublu's Uinigumasuittuq for three main reasons. First, as we shall see, in combining the three narrative themes of the Dog Husband, the Storm Bird, and the Creation of the Sea Mammals, it is quite representative of the Sedna story as it exists in the Eastern Canadian Arctic, and especially the Baffin Island (Qikiqtaaluk) and Iglulik regions with which I am most familiar. Second, given that this particular performance has been made publically available in at least three separate academic publications and a website, and for this reason is quite well-known within scholarly circles, it serves as an ideal metonymic touchstone for a discussion of the broader Sea Woman tradition(s). Third, and most importantly, Kublu's Uinigumasuittuq is a self-consciously *literary* performance, that is, it is a carefully crafted and aesthetically compelling example of Inuit *verbal art.* Although Kublu's method of delivery, namely, a carefully prepared audio recording, differs somewhat from traditional times when storytelling tended to happen more spontaneously (Angmaalik et al 151-152), it is nevertheless one of the best available examples of an unikkaaqtuaq *as an unikkaaqtuaq*, as opposed to a story description, an ethnographic artefact, or a catalogue of archetypes. To my knowledge there are very few, if any, sustained *literary* analyses of Kublu's text, or indeed any studies of the Sedna story more generally, as a *living* site of collective meaning-making.

This is the gap that I hope to help fill. Although I do, of course, draw heavily upon the insights of ethnographers, Religious Studies scholars, and so on throughout my thesis, my first intention here is to offer a *literary reading* of Uinigumasuittuq as a *living source of law* in the broadest possible sense, aiming to provide a rich description of: the manner in which the performance, as verbal art, functions as a source of meta-literary critical theory; the manner in which it operates within a context of kinship and community governance; and finally, the manner in which it speaks to the pressing issue of violence against women. In my Introduction, I will argue that Kublu's Uinigumasuittuq, as well as the larger Sea Woman tradition from which it

arises, ought to be considered as serious, canonical literature, and I will clarify the critical philosophies informing my —admittedly incomplete— reading(s) of the text. The following chapter will focus on methodology, discussing the unikkaaqtuat genre in detail, describing the manner in which the unikkaaqtuat give rise to law, and outlining my plan of approach. The next three chapters constitute my close reading of the primary text and provide a sustained discussion of its themes. Finally, the Conclusion will attempt to weave together the various threads of my close reading and reiterate their significance in terms of law.

2. Positionality and Audience

In considering how the text operates as a source of traditional Inuit law, I have been very much aware that I am approaching this topic as a cultural outsider, specifically, as a Qallunaaq, a non-Inuit white Anglophone Canadian who is very much "embedded in Canadian colonial histories which have occluded" and marginalized those very legal systems and insights which I am endeavouring to uncover (see Groft & Johnson 3). My thesis will no doubt reflect this reality and is intended as *complementary* to Inuit discourse on the subject. Nothing I say is meant to replace commentary by cultural insiders; I quite agree with Noel McDermott that any Inuit literary theory possessing "any credibility must emanate from the thinking of the Inuit themselves" (McDermott, "Unikkaaqtuat" 299) and that "the only people who can comprehensively access the world encompassed by unikkaaqtuat are those who have been raised in the culture, speak the language, and are familiar with the traditional stories and their conventions" (271). I am therefore positioning myself here not as an expert but as a *student* of Inuit language and culture, someone who is endeavouring to approach this topic "in the spirit of humility and openness, dialogue, and community building" (Groft & Johnson 3). My thesis argues that the unikkaaqtuaq of Sedna/Uinigumasuittuq is reflective of Inuit legal orders, orders that are themselves grounded in

relational principles, and that these legal orders also govern Inuit literary criticism.[4] In advancing this argument, my approach here is itself intended to embody principles that are reflective of the legal orders arising from the text(s), namely, dialogism, reciprocity, and, as I will explain further below, conciliation.

Thus, although this reading of Uinigumasuittuq is of course my own, I have tried throughout to prioritize Inuit voices and perspectives, both "as a response to their erasure," and because, here and elsewhere, cultural insiders will always possess a unique "potential for special insight" (Womack, "Theorizing" 406-407). I have also tried to avoid "attempting to speak with the authority of cultural insiders" (Warrior 311) and tried to make a point of noting those things which are clearly beyond my ken. I do hope, however, that in acknowledging the limits to my understanding and the possibility of error I have not so much distanced myself from the scholarly enterprise of cultivating expertise and authoritative knowledge as I have opened up the door to "sharing and learning with" —as opposed to *about*— "others" (Nguyen cited in Womack, "Theorizing" 395), In short, I hope that my thesis will contribute meaningfully to the conversations of which it is a part (see also Napoleon 2).

As this is a Master's thesis, its first audience is necessarily a scholarly one, and in particular my supervisors and examining committee. However, there are also two other important

[4] Following Val Napoleon's definition in *Thinking About Indigenous Legal Orders*, I am using the term 'legal order(s)' to refer broadly to "law that is embedded in social, political, economic, and spiritual institutions" (2). According to Napoleon, 'legal orders' can be understood as distinct from 'legal systems,' which "describe state-centered legal systems in which law is managed by legal professionals that are separate from other social and political institutions" (2), and which is often associated with power, punishment, hierarchy, and bureaucracy" (1). In this framework, "Indigenous law is part of and derives from an Indigenous legal order" (2); it is both a "collaborative process – something that groups of people do together" (4) and a kind of 'language of interaction' "that is necessary for people's social behaviour to be meaningful and predictable" (8).

audiences: Inuit, and non-Inuit Canadians.[5] Thus, in attempting to privilege Inuit viewpoints I am not only employing what I believe are best practices in terms of critical methodology, I am also endeavouring to speak in a manner that is meaningful and relevant to the living human communities out of which the text arises and within which it finds its fullest meaning. The Sedna story has long fascinated me, and I have made a point to speak of it as befits a complex creation narrative of its stature and significance; although, again, as a non-Inuk cultural outsider, it is not at all clear to me that I have anything especially illuminating to say *to* Inuit regarding this "most famous of Inuit stories," I do hope that I have managed to treat the story first and foremost as serious *literature*, as opposed to what Craig Womack (Muskogee Creek) refers to as "coffee table books of myths and legends" or "complicated narratives turned into kiddie stories" (*Red* 62).

3. Canonical Texts, Canonical Literatures

It is my view that the Sedna story generally, and Kublu's Uinigumasuittuq in particular, ought to be read and discussed as canonical literary texts, not only for Inuit but for the whole of Canada and North America and perhaps even the world. There are several good reasons for taking up this (admittedly minority) viewpoint. First, when taken together, the closely related traditions pertaining to the Sea Woman cover what is truly a massive geographical region (Nunavut alone is approximately the same size as Western Europe), stretching from the Eastern tip of Asia all the

[5] The terminology is a bit tricky here, but what I mean to say is that *my imagined audience includes Inuit, as well as all people, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, currently residing in those territories claimed as belonging to the modern-day nation-state of Canada*. It is necessary to clarify this because, although most Inuit living in Canada generally consider themselves to be "proud Inuit and also proud Canadians" and "First Canadians, Canadians first," (ITK n.p.), many First Nations and Métis communities take issue with the phrases "Indigenous Canadians" (because they reject the label "Canadians" as a imposed, colonialist identity marker) and "non-Indigenous Canadians" (because it implies that there are, in fact, "Indigenous Canadians") (see Vowel 14-22). Indigenous people who reject the label "Indigenous Canadian" would argue that the two identities are in fact mutually exclusive, or that their Indigenous identity is ontologically prior to and prevailing over, any colonially-imposed, non-Indigenous identity. Finally, there are many people currently residing in Canada who consider themselves 'Indigenous' to other areas (21). Thus, throughout my thesis I have tried to avoid these kinds of terms.

way to Greenland. By this criterion alone it is as much a part of World Literature (in a Damroschian sense) as is, say, the Bible or the *Ramayana*. Second, as far as concerns the domain of National Literature(s), there are some basic ontological issues that need to be cleared up. No so-called 'Canadian Literature' is complete without a discussion of Indigenous Literature (Womack, "Book-Length" 79), just as no so-called 'Canadian History' is complete without a discussion of the Indigenous nations that "once owned and governed Canada" (see Borrows, *Drawing out Law*, 55). 'National' literatures —as opposed to diasporic literatures— must somehow be connected to a certain place, a land, a geography. Given that most Canadians are relative newcomers here, unless we want to limit ourselves to talking about various outposts of the European literary canon ('just across the pond,' as it were), we must acknowledge not only the existence but the *centrality* of Indigenous literary traditions.

This is especially true for traditional oral 'texts' such as the Sedna story, which was performed, circulated, and interpreted in North America long before the arrival of the European settlers, which exists in various forms across the circumpolar North, and which could easily be said to 'belong' to both or either of the geographical regions corresponding to modern-day Canada and Greenland (see also Womack, "Book-Length" 86). Indigenous Literature must also be understood as distinct from those texts considered within the purview of Postcolonial literary theory (see King, "Godzilla" 11-12), in that, while "Postcolonial" continues to make reference to the ever-present legacy of empire, even as it endeavours to cast off its yoke, "Indigenous" evokes "the political realities of cultures 'growing naturally' from the land itself" (Acoose 221).[6] As

[6] The United Nations definition of Indigenous peoples is instructive here:

> Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of

Womack so memorably puts it in *Red on Red*, "tribal literatures are not some branch waiting to be grafted onto the main trunk. Tribal literatures are the tree, the oldest literature in the Americas, the most American of American literatures. We are the canon" (6-7).

4. Indigenous Literature as a Practice of Sovereignty

Of course, to say that traditional Indigenous texts are *canonical* is not to say they are *identical* to non-Indigenous/Canadian texts, canonical or otherwise. What we are talking about here is not only a distinct *ontology* or catalogue of literary genres and conventions (see Martin, "Sovereign" 20-21) but also a distinct *phenomenology* of literary experience. That is to say, the various Indigenous literary histories that have unfolded across pre-settlement Canada are phylogenetically unrelated to the European literary histories informing the settler-Canadian canon (see Howell 67). Canadians of settler ancestry may soon discover, upon reading traditional Indigenous texts, that these texts are not addressed to them and that they operate well outside their usual frames of reference. As Keavy Martin points out in "The Sovereign Obscurity of Inuit Literature," Inuit Literature, in both its 'traditional' and contemporary forms, typically "[prioritizes] a local, Inuktitut-speaking audience" (26). This is true even when, as is the case with Kublu's Uinigumasuittuq, these texts also circulate within the domain of World Literature and, as David Damrosch puts it, "treat themes of broad interest in striking, if often mysterious, language" (289). This so-called "preservation of difference" (see Jacobs 14, 100), far from indicating a narrow-minded parochialism or head-in-the-sand (snow?) isolationism, is best understood as a practice of *sovereignty* in the face of settler-colonial and globalizing incursions into Inuit physical and cultural experience.

> their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal system. (Secretariat 2)

In “Teaching Native Autobiographies as Acts of Narrative Resistance,” Laura Beard defines sovereignty as first and foremost “the right of a people to carry out its own affairs, in its own way, on its own territory” (119). This notion of inherent —as opposed to merely reactive— physical and cultural sovereignty, “over and above the many settler-colonial threats to Indigeneity, has been a primary component of any and all discussion of Indigenous literature from at least the 1970s onwards. Womack, for example, argues that “one of the primary vehicles for imagined” —as well as ‘real’— “sovereignty is oral and written literature and its attendant criticism. Stories provide key opportunities for community members to present images of themselves on their own terms, another powerful form of sovereignty” (“Theorizing” 362). Likewise, according to Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee), Indigenous literatures “assert a consciousness of land and ancestry, of community and kinship ties, of traditions and ceremonies, of survival and presence outside the colonialist death narratives” (159).

And it is not just the stories, but also their attendant criticism and interpretation, that express Indigenous sovereignty. From an Indigenous nationalist perspective (see for example *Red on Red*, *Reasoning Together*) “Native literary criticism is criticism authored by Native people” (95), and as such, it addresses the specific concerns of non-Native critics only peripherally. Part of what this means for non-Indigenous students such as myself is that, while our Indigenous colleagues are often quite open to the possibility that these discourses “can not only be understood, but can also be constructed by, those non-Natives who choose to become culturally literate in their field of specialty” (Roppolo 306), it is not generally a priority of theirs to provide us with detailed explanations and procedures for interpreting Indigenous texts. In other words, it is up to Canadians to become ‘unsettled,’ in the field of the literary as well as in other aspects of their lives.

As Womack observes, “any literature, minority or not,” must “have some element of universalism, a point of recognition that can speak across cultures to the human condition” (“Book-Length” 15). Obviously, given that I am writing a thesis on this topic, I *do* think it is possible —perhaps even necessary— for Canadians of settler ancestry to read and enjoy Indigenous texts responsibly and as a means of becoming, as it were, ‘unsettled,’ so long as they are honest about who they are and where they stand vis-à-vis said texts. It is a commonplace in most Liberal Arts departments, as well as amongst Indigenous literary critics, that “non-Indian readers of Native literature … need to encounter cultures of difference” (Womack, *Red* 195). However, it is also important to go a step further and flesh out what, exactly, this ‘encountering cultures of difference’ actually entails, lest this ostensibly noble sentiment be misunderstood as an invitation to take a kind of mental holiday in an exotic intellectual space (see Damrosch 5, 284), rather than, as we shall see, an intellectually demanding endeavour with very real moral valences. P. Jane Hafen (Pueblo), for example, is unequivocal in stating that “Native cultures, nations, languages, and theories must be centered to be understood and interpreted” and that “learned theories can become extensions of subordination and colonization when hearts of indigenousness are ignored” (64).

This ‘fleshing out,’ moreover, is not a one-off event but rather an ongoing practice of attunement to the ever-changing realities of the living communities within whose jurisdictions these cultural activities fall. As Christopher Teuton (Cherokee) argues in “Theorizing American Indian Literature: Applying Oral Concepts to Written Traditions,” “[t]heory arises out of the *dialectical relationship* among artists, arts, critics, and Native communities” (209, emphasis mine); thus, the subject and the object of Native theory is not theory itself but rather “Native experience” and “Native community” (209). It is this kind of intentional centring and re-centring of the community that must always be the aim of Indigenous literary criticism, especially given

that, as Damrosch puts it "[o]ur sophisticated critical methods and refined sensitivity have not yet sufficed to keep up from falling into errors and abuses that were common a hundred and even a thousand years ago" (36).

5. Angusugjuk Nanuillu / Angusugjuk and the Polar Bears

Defined broadly, 'theory' can be understood as the strategies people use to describe and reflect upon their experiences, including their experiences of art (see Womack, "Theorizing" 391). Particularly in an Indigenous context, one of the many functions of stories is to provide opportunities for reflection upon human experience. Part of what this means for students of Indigenous Literature is that "traditional oral stories can be read as theories and … used as theoretical templates" (Teuton, "Applying" 194). One particularly helpful example of the manner in which stories themselves serve as "the birthplace of theory" (Womack "Book-Length" 7) is Keavy Martin's reading of Thomas Kusugaq's 1950 retelling of "Angusugjuk and the Polar Bears" to Alex Spalding, a Qallunaaq who lived and worked in Naujaat (then Repulse Bay) for several years, even becoming fluent in Inuktitut before eventually returning to southern Canada to pursue a PhD in English Romanticism. The story was recorded —to be precise, copied down "verbatim" (Kusugaq & Spalding, *Eight* v)— by Spalding in the winter of 1950 and was eventually translated word-by-word and morpheme-by-morpheme into English and published in a 1979 National Museums of Canada booklet entitled *Eight Inuit Myths / Inuit Unipkaaqtuat Pingasuniarvinilit*. Kusugaq and Spalding also collaborated on other projects, including an Inuktitut dictionary.

The main points of the story are as follows: a "very great hunter" named Angusugjuk (literally, "great man" (Spalding 1; see also Martin, *Stories* 51; 146) arrives home one day to find a mysterious woman "crouching in his place on the snow bench" (12). This mysterious woman

agrees to become his wife but exhibits strange behaviour, eating nothing but fat. One day, after she departs to the floe edge after a quarrel with her mother-in-law, Angusugjuk follows her tracks, "one of which was that of a polar bear, the other of a human," and when he finally catches up, he observes her "lying on her back and rolling in the snow" (12). The two of them journey away together to visit her relatives, the wife swimming through the open ocean and Angusugjuk riding "piggy-back." As they draw near, the bear-wife warns her husband against the "fierce menacing bears" that inhabit her village and advises him on how to protect himself. Once they arrive, Angusugjuk meets her parents, who we are told are the "chiefs [isumatait/isumataujait] of the bear village there" (12). No sooner has he settled in with his in-laws than he is challenged to a series of three contests by a particularly antagonistic camp companion. On the advice of his wife's mother, Angusugjuk declines the diving-for-jellyfish contest —"because they are extremely ticklish" (13)— but accepts the rock-lifting and seal-hunting challenges. By carefully following his mother-in-law's detailed instructions, Angusugjuk manages to successfully evade his would-be attackers and complete the tasks set out for him. The story ends with Angusugjuk's "pleasant surprise" in discovering that "the little black thing" he had been "carrying in his mouth" upon completing the final task is actually a seal, "which his wife place[s] up on the meat bench" (14).

In *Stories in a New Skin: Approaches to Inuit Literature,* Martin reads this particular tale as a kind of "parable" for cultural outsiders who wish to be responsible readers and critics of Inuit literary texts (50). In many ways, Angusugjuk "demonstrates an ideal learning experience" (56). Finding himself in an unfamiliar land with only his bear-wife and parents-in-law for guidance, Angusugjuk "display[s] … humility and awareness in new surroundings and … listens closely to the advice of local people" (50). "[A]lthough he struggles at times, and occasionally misses obvious things" (50) —most notably, that his new wife is not human but a nanuq, a polar

bear— Angusugjuk does not give up but rather persists tenaciously in the tasks set before him (see also McDermott, "Unikkaaqtuat" 293). In so doing, he strikes an exemplary balance between "listen[ing] attentively to [his] elders' advice" and "work[ing] actively to learn and understand it" (Martin, *Stories* 56), thereby transforming his mother-in-law's seemingly perplexing words "into his own action and experience" and "see[ing] for himself that her instructions were sound" (50).

Angusugjuk is behaving here not only as an ideal student and reader but also an ideal ningauk, or son-in-law, expressing faith in his new family members and respect for the isumatait of his strange new home. (I will return to this idea of 'ningauk' in Chapter 5.) His efforts are rewarded; by the end of the story Angusugjuk has acquired the skills and knowledge necessary for survival in the bear-village, he has proved himself able to provide his new family with food, and, perhaps most importantly, he has begun to "[build] relationships of trust, of mutual responsibility and mutual respect" (58). For would-be readers and critics entering the strange new world of Inuit Literature, then, Angusugjuk's story serves as a reminder "to listen carefully, to be adaptive, and to show respect for local ways of being" (51), for, in so doing, "we may eventually surprise ourselves with how much we have learned" (58).

6. Isuma, Literary Theory, and the Limits of Objective Knowledge

Diving even deeper into the implicit theories of aesthetic judgment and intellectual development embedded within this story, we can say that undergirding and informing Angusugjuk's "ideal learning experience" is the Inuit concept of isuma, which Kusugaq and Spalding translate as "thought, sense, intelligence, feeling, inspiration, or imagination" (*Inuktitut* 32-33) and which carries with it notions of maturity and emotional self-control. In "Living Inuit Governance in Nunavut," Jackie Price explains that "[t]he word 'isuma' represents the strength and discipline of an individual's emotions and mind" (134).

In his doctoral dissertation entitled "Unikkaaqtuat: Traditional Inuit Stories," Noel McDermott affirms that "[a]n understanding of the concept of *isuma* may be useful to the reader who comes new to the study of Inuit literature and to *unipkaaqtuat* in particular" (290). The root 'isuma' can function as both a noun and as a verb and is used in a number of contexts. In Kusugaq's story, for example, the terms used to describe the wife's parents' position of leadership within their community are isumatait and isumataujut, which can be glossed as 'the ones in charge' or the 'ones with isuma,' the 'ones who display isuma' (see *Stories 57*). As Martin observes, "the social protocols built around the concept of isuma strike a delicate balance between personal autonomy and heeding the advice of those in a position to offer it" (56). Thus, "Kusugaq's story advocates a reading practice that results in isuma: the self-reliance, maturity, and intellectual competence that results in having listened carefully to one's elders" (57).

We will come back to the concept of isuma in the chapters that follow. For now it is enough to say that isuma is most emphatically not "narrow conformity and blind obedience to authority" (McDermott, "Inuktitut" 289) but rather *a practice of individual judgment and self-governance within a broader context of collective responsibility*. Such a practice encourages individuals to sharpen their observational skills, cultivate a sense of mindfulness, and use the advice of the elders "to exercise their full individual potential" (290). But even so, insofar as it requires a hermeneutics of trust and respect as opposed to skepticism and scrutiny, this particular style of reading understandably may raise eyebrows amongst non-Inuit "academic readers [who] have become adapted to scholarly practices that insist we be unfailingly critical: that we see through discursive constructs and flesh out the latent ideologies in everything" (Martin, *Stories* 50). As Susan Sontag puts it, this "modern style of interpretation excavates, and as it excavates, destroys; it digs 'behind' the text, to find a sub-text which is the true one (Sontag 4).

If we take Angusugjuk seriously, however, we can see that a hermeneutics of suspicion

may not be especially germane to traditional Inuit oral texts. There are at least three main reasons for why this is so. First, if one is a non-Inuk cultural outsider such as myself and/or is reading the text from a non-specialist 'World Literature' standpoint, then it is quite likely that one simply does not possess the necessary expertise —linguistic, cultural, and so on— to be able to 'decode' or 'deconstruct' much of anything. Second —and this cannot be emphasized enough— given than we are discussing tales and texts from a literary tradition that is phylogenetically distinct from the so-called Western tradition (including the Comparative Literature tradition of which I am a part), there is a very real way in which fashionable 'Eurowestern' critical practices may not be particularly relevant outside their own, highly contextualized domain (see Damrosch 4-5). Third —and this is a political as well as a methodological consideration— insofar as certain 'modern' critical practices routinely employ an almost forensic kind of single-minded detachment, scrutiny, and, indeed, 'excavation,' they can hinder art's experiential valences, betraying (ironically enough) a covert desire for power-over or mastery-of the so-called 'object' of study (see Sontag 5).

In general, most 'modern' subjects do not like to acknowledge any limits to their knowledge (see Jacobs 21-26, Beard 124-127). As W.H. Auden puts it:

> … in our culture, we have all accepted the notion that the right to know is absolute and unlimited. The gossip column is one side of the medal; the cobalt bomb is the other. We are quite prepared to admit that, while food and sex are good in themselves, an uncontrolled pursuit of either is not, but it is difficult for us to believe that intellectual curiosity is a desire like any other, and to realize that correct knowledge and truth are not identical. To apply a categorical imperative to knowing, so that, instead of asking, "What can I know?" we ask, "What, at this moment, am I meant to know?" —to entertain the possibility that the only knowledge which can be true for us is the knowledge we can live up to— that seems to all of us crazy and almost immoral." (qtd. in Jacobs 21)

However, it is this very distinction between relationally-embedded, context-specific "correct knowledge," on the one hand, and objective "truth," on the other, which is so fundamental to

Indigenous intellectual traditions, including isuma, which, as we will see, tend to emphasize personal "response-ability" (Blaeser 54, 64) and the unfolding of meaning over time (see Beard 126; Lightning 217-218; Johnson 46) over a once-and-for-all quest for total understanding. Particularly in a colonial context, acknowledging the possibility of error keeps non-Indigenous scholars such as myself open-minded, reminds us of our obligation to avoid reproducing patterns of imperial domination in our work, and functions as a useful inoculation against what Mikhail Bahktin describes as "semiotic totalitarianism," that is, "the attempt to impose meaning from outside by means of authoritative discourse" (cited in Jacobs 54).

The compulsion to "make quick and easy sense of the unruly text" (Martin, *Stories* 59) is indicative of not only a kind of scholarly 'panic' when faced with an unfamiliar textual tradition, but also, as David Garneau observes, a kind of "scopophilia, a drive to look, but also by an urge to penetrate, to traverse, to know, to translate, to own and exploit" (23), which in a colonial context, is functionally indistinguishable from the desire 'to settle' —a point to which I shall return. However, rarely is it observed that this purportedly Eurowestern preference for "a particular type of critical thinking" and concomitant reluctance to, as D.H. Lawrence puts it "trust the tale" (qtd. in Sontag 6), may also conceal an underlying fear of vulnerability, of looking foolish or ignorant in one's attempts to gain knowledge (see Jacobs 87-88) —a fear which, I would note, the highly agonistic milieu of the academy does not do much to assuage. However, in my view, acknowledging the limits to one's own understanding is nothing to mourn; rather, it is an inescapable part of being human. There are, moreover, certain ways in which recognizing one's outsidedness can actually be *productive* of certain kinds of understanding (see Jacobs 59-63, 95-99, 119; Beard 126, 130), if only in that a premature sense of 'having arrived' or 'having learned all there is to know' in one's field of expertise may limit one's ability to learn and grow and will almost certainly limit one's access to the relational goods that are embedded in living

knowledge systems (Jacobs 81). One can only imagine, for example, how things would have turned out for Angusugjuk if he had refused the advice of his wife and parents-in-law and insisted upon doing the tasks his own way!

Insofar as it requires admitting the incompleteness of one's own knowledge, and even one's own expertise, a genuine willingness to learn always involves some degree of vulnerability —but again, it is precisely this vulnerability which allows for the establishment of trust and empathy between individuals and communities (see Womack, "Theorizing" 394-395). In this way, allowing for "the possibility of error" —something almost anathemic to Liberal Arts scholarship— "becomes a means of sharing and learning with others" (395).

7. Etymological "Amateurism": The Hermeneutics of "Love"

To be sure, "the first step in reading unipkaaqtuat" such as the Sedna story "is to have a clear sense of where —and to whom— they belong in the world" (Martin, *Stories* 45). Indigenous texts, as we have seen, do not exactly belong to Canadians and are not generally concerned with addressing the concerns of an outside audience. But Canadians can still read and enjoy them in a responsible manner, receiving the gift of their otherness, that is, their sovereign *being* (see Jacobs 63; see also Sontag 9), without striving to exhume, deconstruct or otherwise 'domesticate' them. Following Alan Jacobs's approach, outlined in *A Theology of Reading: The Hermeneutics of Love*, my personal stance is to be an 'amateur' in an etymological sense, seeking amity/amitié with the text by means of cultivating a practice of receptive attentiveness. I believe 'love' is a good, relational metaphor here, not so much love in the sense of amour (romantic, sexual love) or even naglik- (nurturance) —both of which would be highly problematic stances for a non-

Indigenous, settler-Canadian such as myself to adopt[7]— but rather love in the sense of amitié, seeking friendship and/or conciliation (see Garneau 31-37) with the texts, respecting their boundaries and learning to appreciate and understand them for their own sakes, and on their own terms (see Jacobs 18). Indeed, far from giving rise to a kind of detached dilettantism, the kind of attentive pleasure generated by hermeneutical 'amateurism' is, in actual fact, epistemologically enabling (see Nguyen cited in Womack, "Theorizing" 394). As Bakhtin puts it, "lovelessness, indifference, will never be able to generate sufficient attention to slow down and linger intently over an object, to hold and sculpt every detail and particular in it, however minute" (qtd. in Jacobs 53).

The main point here is that mature love, in all senses of the word, is deeply ethical and always involves vulnerability and risk. It is undermined equally by attempts to control or dominate the 'beloved' as well as by attempts to merge with the 'beloved' in a manner that fails to take into account the otherness of the 'beloved' to oneself and the otherness of oneself to the 'beloved.' Moreover, as Womack argues, bringing 'love' into one's critical work need not be "hopelessly naïve" ("Theorizing" 397). A hermeneutics of 'love' motivates readers and auditors to return to the stories again and again. Moreover, when it is "critically, engaged [and] rooted in

[7] Although Briggs describes the ethic of care expressed by naglik- (love, pity) as a "central value" and "major criterion of human goodness" (323), she also observed amongst her adoptive Utkurmiut family that the verb carries with it a certain amount of ambivalence on account of "the conflict between nurturant (naklik-) feelings and behaviour on the one hand and the value placed on self-sufficiency and independence on the other hand" (324). In general, naglik- is used to affectionately talk down to people – it is how parents relate to their children and it is the word used by Inuit to describe how the Christian God relates to creation. Taken outside the affective closeness of the family space – and especially in a colonial context – it is not hard to imagine how this stance of protective nurturance would be a problematic stance for Qallunaat to adopt. It is therefore best left to the domain of what David Garneau refers to as "Irreconcilable Spaces of Aboriginality." Denoting, amongst other things, the capacity for mature judgment, isuma seems to hold more promise for non-Indigenous critics. Specifically, isuma could help temper the deeply emotional ethic of care implied by naglik- such that this ethic of care will respect the sovereignty of both text and community and will not become a form of patronizing fondness.

historical, cultural and legal particulars" (ibid) it also gives rise to a kind of 'ethic of care' or sense of moral responsibility vis-à-vis these living works of art. If one takes seriously the ethical dimension of Indigenous literature, it makes sense try to think of Indigenous stories as uniquely human activities that establish and define relationships between individuals and communities — including government-to-government relations (see Womack, "Book-Length" 37)— rather than merely as objects and commodities to be traded in a depersonalized marketplace (see Jacobs 78). Part of what this means is recognizing texts for what they are (or, at least for what their communities say they are) and reading them in ways that do not deprive them of human significance. The aesthetic goal of my thesis, then, is to produce something resembling what Sontag had in mind when she proposed "acts of criticism which … supply a really accurate, sharp, loving description of the appearance of the work of art" (9) —and this even while I endeavour to discuss Uinigumasuittuq as a source of law.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

The story, in all its variations, is perhaps the most favourite of Inuit. Every different Inuit group has had its own version, and although folklorists like to gab about its etiological significance (you know, the origin of the sea mammals and all), the real factor that has kept this tale alive throughout the ages is sheer fun. Basically, it's a combination horror-adventure story, and its real value lies in entertainment. – Rachel Qitsualik, "Problem"

1. Stories as Social Activities

In "Doing things with words: Putting performance on the page," J. Edward Chamberlin observes that "the urge to tell stories and sing songs, like language itself, is a defining quality of human societies —a boundary marker between the human and the nonhuman, and between different societies. These stories and songs may display differing attitudes towards everything from personal identity to social property" (74). Much of the contemporary scholarship regarding the social functions of storytelling within Indigenous communities focuses specifically on the manner in which the stories "[erase] any distinction between life and story" and "[provide] pivotal philosophical, literary and social frameworks essential for providing young and not-so-young people with ways of thinking about how to live life appropriately" (Cruikshank 100). According to anthropologist and oral traditions scholar Julie Cruikshank, storytelling always "contributes to larger social processes … it makes the world rather than merely referring at second hand to disconnected facts 'about' the world. Stories … are about coming to grips with personal meanings of broadly shared knowledge and converting those meanings to social ends" (114).

Traditional Indigenous stories such as the unikkaaqtuat occur across the textual continuum in a variety of different oral, textual, and audio/visual media. They exist in a dialectical relationship with the living cultural systems responsible for their ongoing circulation, adaptation, remediation, and interpretation (see Teuton, *Deep Waters* 36). This particular chapter

will provide background information on the unikkaaqtuat genre as a specific type of situated human activity and will explain this project's methodology in more detail. Drawing upon Christopher Teuton's *Deep Waters: The Textual Continuum in American Indian Literature* and David Garneau's "Imaginary Spaces of Conciliation and Reconciliation: Art, Curation, and Healing," I will describe the complex interplay between the oral, graphic, and critical impulses within Indigenous North American oral-literary texts as well as the manner in which they can be said to function within Indigenous versus non-Indigenous/generalist audiences. I also will discuss the circumstances surrounding the composition and recording of Kublu's text, the idea of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit as a kind of phenomenological knowledge system, and the manner in which the unikkaaqtuat provide the foundation of traditional law. Finally, I will give a detailed outline of the rest of my thesis and explain why I have chosen to organize it as I did.

2. The Unikkaaqtuat Genre

I am certainly not the first person to discuss traditional Inuit stories as a source of law. In 1995, Susan Inuaraq (also spelled Enuaraq) gave a conference presentation at the Sorbonne entitled "Traditional Justice Among the Inuit" in which she argued that both "[t]he legends [unikkaaqtuat] and the powers of the elders and the shamans were intertwined together to form a very unique system of justice" (261). More recently, in 2015, legal scholars Lori Groft and Rebecca Johnson published "Journeying North: Reflections on Inuit Stories as Law," focusing on the unikkaaqtuat of the Western Arctic, and in particular the Inupiaq story *The Wife Killer*. "Journeying North" was a joint project of the University of Victoria, The Indigenous Bar Association, The Law Foundation of Ontario, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada. In it, Groft and Johnson argue that Indigenous stories such as the unikkaaqtuat "are one way of recording information in order to guide future thinking about legal problems.

Stories contain details regarding legal responses, principles, decision-making, procedures, obligations and rights" (2-3; see also Napoleon 14).

The word 'unikkaaqtuat' (dialectical var. unipkaaqtuat; sing. unikkaaqtuaq), has been variously translated as: "myths and legends" (McDermott, "Introduction" 11), "classic tales" (Martin, Stories, 9) or simply "traditional Inuit stories" (McDermott, "Unikkaaqtuat"). As McDermott explains, the term 'unikkaaqtuat' "refers specifically to those stories which have been handed down," mostly in oral format, "through the generations and comprise a body of stories many of which are well known to Inuit from Alaska to Greenland" ("Unikkaaqtuat" 1, see note), and which, not unlike the Bible and Classical mythology in the West, have for many generations comprised a foundational component of Inuit artistic and intellectual life. Unikkaaqtuat are distinct from 'unikkaat' (sing. unikkaaq), "modern stories" (Angmaalik et al 213) or "stor[ies] of recent origin" (Ekho et al 136; see also Martin, *Stories* 42-43), as well as 'inuusirmingnik unikkaat,' "stories from experience or life history," that is autobiography (Martin 9).[8]

As we will see in Chapter 4, although they are performed and enjoyed by community members across the life span, unikkaaqtuat also comprise an important part of Inuit children's moral and intellectual education, particularly the cultivation of isuma. Pelagie Owlijoot explains, "[t]here is a moral to these legends that individuals have to figure out for themselves and gets them thinking. Traditionally, stories were told to amuse listeners, pass on ancestral history, provide lessons in moral conduct, communicate spirituality, and explain the existence of objects in nature" (qtd. in McDermott, "Unikkaaqtuat" xxiv); in the words of Igloolik elder Emile Imaruittuq, "they made each of us think, made us think hard" (299). Indeed, the notion of isuma is crucial for grasping the manner in which oral-literary traditions such as the unikkaaqtuat give

[8] For a more detailed parsing of the term, see Martin, *Stories* 42-43.

rise to both individual and communitarian meanings within the context of Inuit culture. In "Writing voices speaking: Native authors and an oral aesthetic," Kimberly Blaeser argues that a great deal of what her non-Indigenous students find to be so 'different' about Indigenous literature, aside from the fact that they are cultural outsiders who understandably have difficulty accessing some of the more culturally-specific content, "has to do with style of presentation and demands made on the reader" (64-65). In Blaeser's view, this characteristic encouraging of "a response-able way of reading, an imaginative, interactive, participatory creation of story" (65) should be understood as the persistence of an 'oral aesthetic.' This 'response-ability' is both intellectual and moral; it involves "[learning] our role in story and … carrying that role into daily life" (64).

The unikkaaqtuat, then, serve as a kind of didactic literature, and as is the case with Kublu's Uinigumasuittuq, they frequently reflect Inuit-specific responses to contemporary concerns. McDermott notes that these "[s]tories were told for entertainment but they also had a teaching function and were often directed at an individual or to expose and to correct behaviours that were considered unacceptable to the group" (280). This, however, should not be taken to mean that the stories' messages are necessarily transparent or obvious or that they can easily be discerned; oral traditions are often deliberately opaque, metonymic, and enigmatic, prompting deep reflection and creative meaning-making on the part of the auditor (see Napoleon 6-7). McDermott observes that unikkaaqtuat "are often told to a mixed audience of females and males, young and old, children and adults and each listener takes what meaning he or she can from the same story … the wise critic will, therefore, avoid making the mistake that Inuit children would not make, assuming that they understand the many meanings of the story and the reasons for its telling" (McDermott, "Unikkaaqtuat" 280).

There is thus a built-in creative flexibility to the unikkaaqtuat genre with respect to both form (performance) and meaning (interpretation). The innovation that arises from this flexibility can serve a wide range of purposes; Inuit storytellers will make strategic adjustments based on audience composition and community requirements, balancing, on the one hand the parameters of tradition, and, on the other, the demands of the present moment. As Groft and Johnson point out, this built-in flexibility or "indeterminacy … makes possible debate, discussion, argument, critique, application and reasoning regarding the legal principles and practices derived from them" (12). However, this "indeterminacy of meaning does not mean that 'anything goes' in terms of interpreting stories … the meanings given to the stories … must resonate with the experiences and histories of people in the communities" (17). As regards the unikkaaqtuat, it is the interrelationships between text and text and between text and community, as much as it is the verbal structure of the 'text' itself, which generate authoritative meanings. There is thus a sort of interpretive field, or, as Chamberlin puts it, a kind of "consensus (or conspiracy) of sympathetic understandings," which emerges as "communities establish certain criteria for passing judgment" (88), and whose ultimate point of reference is the shared life of the community itself.

As Peter Nabokov explains, "rather than being closed systems of fixed symbols, if myths are to remain relevant and recited they must be susceptible to internal tinkerings and updatings" (qtd. in Teuton, "Applying" 197; see also Napoleon 3-4, 17-18). Thus, although certain variants of the Sedna story may be deemed more authoritative than others, it would be a category mistake to look for an urtext. At the same time, however, there can be said to be "a more or less stable core" (Lord, "Characteristics" 64), which is somewhat difficult to define but which is comprised, at least in part, of the conventions of the genre and the expectations of the audience who, more likely than not, already know the story quite well and may be familiar with several of its variants.

Albert Bates Lord, the famous twentieth-century scholar of oral epic poetry, was one of the first Western scholars to differentiate between the "general idea of the story … and that of a particular performance or text" (*Singer of Tales* 100). Innovation is indeed part of tradition, but it is the tradition itself as well as the immediate context that generates and gives meaning to innovation (Chamberlain 88). So although the possibilities for innovation are seemingly endless, there may be only so much a particular tradition can bend before it changes its shape entirely and becomes something completely different. The well-known author and storyteller Michael Kusugak (himself the son of Thomas Kusugaq) puts it thusly: "the thing about Inuit storytelling ... is that it is very important that you stick to the storyline, because the storyline is what gets the message across" (qtd. in McDermott, "Unikkaaqtuat" 279). In a living textual tradition, this 'more or less stable core" must be malleable enough to maintain contact with an ever-changing present yet cohesive enough to serve as a durable point of reference (see Lord, "Characteristics" 63).

3. Oral Literature and the Textual Continuum

In *Reasoning Together*, Womack argues that, at least as far as Indigenous Studies is concerned, the notion of 'orature' is best understood not so much as a narrowly-defined species of live verbal performance or 'mythical' genre but rather a "broader, dynamic complex of interrelationships" ("Book-Length" 53). One of the best descriptions of the social functions of the different modes of signification within Indigenous literary traditions is Christopher Teuton's 2010 book, *Deep Waters: The Textual Continuum in American Indian Literature*. In *Deep Waters*, Teuton deconstructs the notion of a fixed oral-literate binary, arguing instead that Indigenous Literature is characterized by a dynamic interplay between what he terms the oral, graphic, and critical impulses (xv). In his view, a familiarity with how traditional verbal art forms such as the

unikkaaqtuat function across the textual continuum is vital when approaching texts such as Kublu's Uinigumasuittuq. According to Teuton, the oral impulse "emphasizes a relational and experiential engagement with the world through sound-based forms of communication"; it is "the impulse communities and individuals feel as the need to create and maintain knowledge in relatively direct response to one another and to a rapidly changing world" (31). The graphic impulse, in contrast, "expresses the cultural desire for the cultural recording of cultural knowledge in formats that will allow for recollection and study" (31). Graphic discourses, moreover, are not limited to writing systems; they need not refer directly to human speech as such, and they may manifest themselves in a variety of visual forms, including textile designs, pictographs, or inuksuit (sing. inuksuk), to name a few. Finally, there is the critical impulse, the "mediating, balancing force in Native American cultural expression" (33) that "arises out of a context of community consciousness" and generates a much-needed "tension within the textual continuum that keeps the system supple and responsive to the changing needs of community" (34). In Teuton's view, critical discourses are understood to be "the life force of cultural production and survivance" (36); they "appear in every format: an authoritative oral story may be counteracted with another oral story or with a graphic text; a graphic text may be undercut by another graphic text or by an oral story" (35)

Teuton's ideas are highly relevant to the Sedna story, which is a classic of the Inuit oral tradition but which also enjoys a complex existence outside of the domain of 'orature': in visual art, in audio recordings, in written literary texts, in the ethnographic record, in online collections, in academic scholarship, and in ritual performance (see for example Laugrand and Oosten's *The Sea Woman*). The text that I have chosen to anchor my own discussion of the story is itself a paradigmatic example of the manner in which a traditional text crosses discursive boundaries and is embedded in family and community relationships. Kublu's Uinigumasuittuq is a highly literary

—and highly literate— text that emerges from the domain of Inuit oral tradition and that easily lends itself to live performance, while also making explicit reference to extra-textual phenomena such as ceremony and community life.

The so-called Sea Woman, the powerful spirit being often referred to as Sedna, here referred to as Uinigumasuittuq (and then Takannaaluk) is, to varying degrees, an important cultural figure across Inuit Nunaat.[9] Kublu's own performance of the well-known unikkaaqtuaq of the origin of Takannaaluk, the sea mammals, and various other non-Inuit beings arises from a larger set of traditions, namely, a distinctive grouping of three closely related stories which exist across the circumpolar North, from Siberia and the Bering Strait to Greenland, particularly but not exclusively amongst the coast-dwelling Inuit, and often but not always pertaining to the Sea Woman (Merkur 125; see also Laugrand & Oosten, *Inuit Shamanism and Christianity* 152).

In his 1991 book-length study, entitled *Powers Which We Do Not Know: The Gods and Spirits of the Inuit*, Religious Studies scholar Daniel Merkur identifies these three constituent narrative traditions as "The Dog Husband," "The Storm Bird," and "The Creation of the Sea Mammals" (125). Although there are other stories about the Sea Woman within the unikkaaqtuat corpus (see for example Groft & Johnson 9, Angutinngurniq et al 168-170), it is these three tale-types in particular which seem to have possessed enough of an underlying mutual congruence that Inuit storytellers from various regions have combined and recombined them in a number of

[9] The Inuit inua (owner or indweller, sometimes, as we have seen, incorrectly glossed as 'goddess') of the sea goes by many different names across the Inuit homeland, and is often called differently pre- and post-transformation. The term "Sedna" or "Sanna" is a Southeast Baffin circumlocution meaning "the one down there" (Christopher 14; Qitsualik cited in Laugrand & Oosten, *Shamanism* 148). It was first recorded and published by Franz Boas in 1888 and is probably the most well-known of her names. Other appellations include, but are certainly not limited to: the Asiatic Nulirahak, "the big woman" (Christopher, *Kappianaqtut* 15); the Nattilik Nuliajuk, "the ever-copulating one" (Thalbitzer qtd. in Martin, "Rescuing" 189) and Kavna, "the one down there" (Christopher 15); the Iglulik Uinigumasuittuq, "she doesn't ever want to have a husband" and Takannaaluk, "the horrible one down there"; and the North Greenlandic Nerrivik, "the food dish" (14-15).

creative ways. Depending on how the story is told and what elements it includes, there is also a natural correspondence with certain other unikkaaqtuat from the canon, including "Pretend Husbands" (see McDermott, *Unikkaaqtuat* 137, 210-214), and in some cases the well-known tale of Kaugjagjuk, the abused orphan. In the Qikiqtaaluk and especially the Iglulik region from which Kublu comes, the three tale-types identified by Merkur and others have been synthesized into a dramatic creation saga that not only explains the origin of the Sea Woman, the marine mammals, and certain other beings, but also establishes a certain kind of moral universe and sets up a complex system of relationships between the human community, the wildlife, and the landscape itself. It is this network of relationships and its attendant entitlements and obligations that form the basis of traditional law (see Price 130-134; see also Napoleon 15).

Kublu herself learned the story from her father, who told it to her when she was a child (Angmaalik et al 151). Although her version is 'traditional' in the sense that it is representative of tale as it is told in the Iglulik (and, to a lesser extent, the Baffin) regions, it is also very much her own. Kublu's performance of Uinigumasuittuq was recorded in 1996 as part of a six-week course on oral traditions at Nunavut Arctic College (NAC) in Iqaluit (then still part of the Northwest Territories, now the capital of Nunavut). Kublu, along with non-Inuit anthropologists Frédéric Laugrand and Jarich Oosten from Laval University and Leiden University, respectively, was one of the course facilitators. During the course, a number of unikkaaqtuat were recorded and transcribed in Inuktitut and subsequently translated into English and French. They were then published in *Introduction to Oral Traditions*, which includes several of the students' essays as well as ethnographic commentary and transcriptions of the interviews that took place.

The Oral Traditions course was itself part of a larger multi-year project on Inuit oral traditions that brought together Inuit elders from across Nunavut, students from the NAC Inuit Studies program, and several well-known Inuit Studies scholars, such as Jean Briggs and Bernard

Saladin d'Anglure, for the purpose of "[contributing] to the preservation of the knowledge [of the elders] and the styles and modes of thinking implied in it" (v). According to *Introduction to Oral Traditions*, the project was designed to "develop the skills of the students in interviewing, transcribing, and writing essays" (v). It ultimately resulted in the *Interviewing Inuit Elders* series of books, which were published in Inuktitut, English, and French, and which cover a variety of topics related to traditional life, including personal histories, law and governance, health and wellbeing, childrearing practices, and cosmology and shamanism. A similar follow-up project resulted in the *Inuit Perspectives on the 20th Century* series of books, which dealt with the transition to Christianity, land and survival skills, dreams, and restorative justice.[10]

As a course facilitator and a highly experienced interpreter-translator, Kublu would have been heavily involved with the translating and editing of her stories prior to their publication. So, with respect to Uinigumasuittuq in particular, we have a highly localized and family-specific version of a pan-Inuit oral text that is performed in the Inuit language for a presumably mixed audience of elders, students, and non-Inuit scholars, the vast majority of whom would be quite familiar with some form or other of the story. However, because the text is addressing an outsider as well as an insider audience, it also incorporates explicit commentary into the narrative —as can be seen, for example, when Kublu describes how "whenever a shaman went to Takannaaluk by going to the sea-floor, he was said to nakka-" (161)— something of a departure from the more

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[10] In order, the complete list is: *Introduction to Oral Traditions*, *Perspectives on Traditional Law*, *Childrearing Practices*, Pers*pectives on Traditional Health*, *Cosmology and Shamanism*, *The Transition to Christianity*, *Travelling and Surviving on Our Land*, *Dreams and Dream Interpretation*, and *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit: Shamanism and Reintegrating Wrongdoers into the Community*. These books are all available in Inuktitut, English, and French and are a veritable treasure trove of life histories and traditional knowledge. As Martin argues, the "Interviewing Inuit Elders series provide an important critical context not only for the study of Inuit literature, but also for the broader pursuit of 'responsible, ethical, and Indigenous-centered criticisms'" ("Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit" 186). They are all available in their entirety, along with helpful summaries and additional materials, at tradition-orale.ca.

'metonymic' and 'minimalist' delivery styles common to oral performances in which the storyteller can safely assume that audience members possesses enough cultural knowledge and context to be able to understand the story for themselves without the aid of explanatory remarks (Womack, *Red* 100; see also McDermott, "Unikkaaqtuat"). Kublu's text, then, exists simultaneously as oral performance, as audio recording, as Inuktitut written narrative, as English and French literary translation, as educational material, and as self-reflexive, meta-literary critical theory. Moreover, in integrating the critical impulse within the textual 'event' itself (Teuton, *Deep* 36), it serves as "a form of practical intervention in our conventional understanding of society —its ideas, values and institutions" (Mohanty qtd. in Teuton, *Deep* 35).

4. Uinigumasuittuq as a Sovereign Display Territory

In a recent article entitled "Imaginary Spaces of Conciliation and Reconciliation," Métis scholar and artist David Garneau argues that "[e]very culture circulates around a set of objects and spaces that are beyond property and trade. They are the national treasures, sacred sites and texts, symbols that are a community's gravitational centre" (25). These "objects and spaces," however, frequently become the target of what Garneau terms the "colonial gaze" (35), which "refus[es] the living, relational value of these entities" (25) and seeks to turn them into marketable commodities or "artifacts to be catalogued and stored or displayed" (23; 25-26; see also Jacobs 78). In response to these intrusions into their physical and cultural territories, "Indigenous cultures have since contact devised ingenious ways to protect their sacred things from appropriation through the use of screen objects," which "resemble the sacred things they imitate but do not include their animation" and therefore "give nothing essential away" (26). Again, this is an important part of sovereignty; there simply are some "Indigenous intellectual spaces that exist apart from a non-Indigenous gaze and interlocution" (26). Cultural outsiders such as myself,

then, may do well to bear in mind that, although Indigenous artists and storytellers may make certain important stories such as the Sedna narrative available to general audiences, it is quite likely that we may never know all there is to know about them.

Moreover, insofar as it "is constrained by non-Indigenous narratives of healing and closure" (23) and implicitly posits a kind of idealized (and fictional) prelapsarian state of "harmonious national origin" (31), Garneau largely rejects "the sanctioned performance of Reconciliation" as "foundationally distorted" (23). As an alternative to the current Reconciliation narrative, he proposes "reframing the contemporary dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people as one of *conciliation* rather than reconciliation" (24, emphasis in the original). Regarding the decolonial functions of Indigenous art specifically, Garneau distinguishes between "Irreconcilable Spaces of Aboriginality," wherein Indigenous identity and nationhood are "expressed without settler attendance" (27) and which "signal to non-Indigenous spectators the fact that intellectual activity is occurring without their knowledge," (26-27) and "Aboriginal Sovereign Display Territories," which are "open to any respectful person" (35) and in which non-Indigenous guests may "have a sense of the real without violating it" (36). Of course, the fact that a particular space is in some degree available to non-Indigenous visitors does not necessarily that mean it exists *for* them; nevertheless, there is the possibility that such spaces could function as a site of conciliation (35), a point to which I will return in my Conclusion. So, "[w]hile the core of Indigeneity is incompletely available to non-Native people, those who come to spaces of conciliation not to repair" —or indeed, educate— "'Indians' but to heal themselves, who come not as colonizers but with a conciliatory attitude to learn and share as equals, may be transformed" (39).

From what I can tell, all publicly available versions of the Sedna story, including Kublu's Uinigumasuittuq here, are, to varying degrees, Aboriginal Sovereign Display Territories.

Presumably the Sea Woman tradition will continue, as it has for has for centuries, to circulate within Inuit-only Irreconcilable Spaces of Aboriginality, but these are by definition unavailable to me and thus are not part of my project. Garneau's schema is quite useful is describing the manner in which these kinds of traditional Indigenous texts function in different contexts, and across the so-called textual continuum, but I would like to add one caveat: a respected storyteller such as Kublu may make certain adjustments to the text's narrative structure or modify her style of delivery for a particular situation or a particular audience without in any way compromising the purported 'integrity' or 'authenticity' of her performance. This is an extremely important point to bear in mind, and it is one to which we shall return. Especially given the highly sensitive content of the Sedna story (forced marriage, bestiality, violence against women, etc.), contemporary Inuit storytellers may choose to adjust or refer obliquely to certain details as a strategy of keeping the uninitiated at a distance from the tradition. This is quite different from non-Inuit people's appropriation of the text for their own, completely unrelated purposes, and it is here where cultural outsiders can begin to make value judgments about 'purity' or 'authenticity' (see for example Stott 200).

5. IQ as Phenomenological Knowledge

Worthy of note here is that it was precisely around the time of Kublu's 'performance' of these stories, the period just prior to the establishment of Nunavut, that Inuit traditional knowledge, or Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ), was beginning to become an important political issue (see Aupilaarjuk et al 1-2; Angutinngurniq et al 3-4, 202-204; Kappianaq et al 10). The term Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit can be glossed as "what Inuit have known for a very long time" or "the Inuit way of doings things: the past, present, and future knowledge, experience, and values of Inuit society" ("First Annual Report" qtd. in Martin, *Stories* 3). IQ, as it is often colloquially called,

has been adopted by the Government of Nunavut and enshrined in eight guiding principles or societal values: innuqatigiitsiarniq, which involves "respecting others, relationships and caring for people"; tunnganarniq, "fostering good spirit by being open, welcoming and inclusive"; pijitsirniq, the "concept of serving"; aajiiqatigiingniq, "consensus decision making"; pilimmaksarniq, the "concept of skills and knowledge acquisition"; piliriqatigiingniq, "working together for a common cause"; qanuqtuurniq, "being innovative and resourceful in seeking solutions"; and avatittingnik kamatsiarniq, "respect and care for the land, animals and the environment" ("Guidelines for Working with Inuit Elders" 8-10).

A detailed description of these principles is beyond the scope of this thesis. The main point here is that IQ is better understood as a *way of being* reflective of a relational understanding of human behaviour, rather than a fixed code of behaviour based on moral absolutes; the eight principles articulated are not eight 'commandments,' and as such they are quite different from blanket imperatives such as "thou shalt not commit adultery."[11] Particularly in *Shamanism and Reintegration of Wrongdoers into the Community*, the elders emphasize the importance of getting IQ right as a dynamic and relationally-focused way of being in the world as opposed to an esoteric code or fossilized set of instructions. As Mariano Aupilaarjuk explains: "if the politicians and the bureaucrats only rely on what they put on paper, they are going to be making mistakes … Inuit traditional knowledge is limitless" (qtd. in Angutinngurniq et al 202-203).

Insofar as they offer creative space for renegotiating these Inuit-centered ways of being in the world, unikkaaqtuat such as the Sedna story are themselves part of these larger processes of

[11] Another helpful Inuit term is 'Inuktitut,' which is of course the name for the Inuit language in the Kivalliq and Qikiqtaaluk regions of Nunavut but which is more precisely translated as "like the Inuit, in the manner of the Inuit, according to Inuit custom or habit, [or] as the Inuit do" (Kusugaq & Spalding, *Inuktitut* 27), and which likewise demonstrates the manner in which attempts to 'pin down' or 'fix' these more phenomenological systems of knowledge in a manner more appropriate to the so-called 'pure sciences' would mischaracterize and suppress their "dynamic nature" (see Hunt 29).

passing down traditional knowledge, including traditional legal knowledge. In "Traditional Justice Among the Inuit," Susan Inuaraq (herself a graduate of the NAC Oral Traditions program), begins by recounting her own version of the Sedna story. Drawing an explicit link between the story and traditional law and governance, Inuaraq argues that "[t]his particular myth shows that in the Inuit Society myths are useful in the sense that they give an explanation for the unexplainable. As well, tales set out rules for society" (256). In terms of law, creation narratives in particular have a deeply felt importance to the communities to which they belong; thus, "discussion of traditional law begins with a discussion of the origin of the cosmic order of the world" (Aupilaarjuk et al, *Perspectives* 3). All origin myths, whether they be the 'creation' of Canada, the Biblical creation cycles, or the numerous unikkaaqtuat connected to Sedna, enable us to make and remake our worlds, to establish and re-establish parameters, relationships, and obligations (Teuton, *Deep* xii-xiii). Inviting continuous (re)interpretation by means of "evocative metaphors and symbolism," they are inexhaustible "source[s] of reflection on the responsibilities of being" (xiii).

6. Unikkaaqtuat as Law

Of course, as Womack is careful to emphasize, although it provides a kind of intellectual foundation for Indigenous theories and legal orders, the oral tradition is not "a transparent set of interpretational principles and a standard for living … it requires an analytical engagement, the work of criticism, interpretation, and especially, historicization that occurs in response to storytelling" ("Book-Length" 41; see also Napoleon 6-8, 18). As Groft and Johnson explain, what Inuit storytelling traditions provide is a kind of intellectual "scaffolding," a self-reflexive "'framework of intelligibility' for making sense of the stories" themselves (17; see also Napoleon 3), as well as their 'extratextual' content —that is, the legal, ritual, and cultural matter that is not

addressed explicitly but is nevertheless embedded within them. This is why it is so important that the unikkaaqtuat be examined not in isolation but rather in relation to one another and to the living culture in which they are produced (see Oosten, "Violent" 117; see also Borrows, *Drawing* 219-220).

As regards unikkaaqtuat as a source of law, then, what is required here is not so much an ontology but rather a phenomenology of Inuit legal principles.[12] Keeping this basic insight in mind, I would like to outline three basic principles that inform and underlie my reading of Kublu's Uinigumasuittuq. First, traditional law is about relationships. Inuit law embodies, regulates, and mediates the relationships and responsibilities that exist between humans, non-humans and the land (see Price 127-134; see also Napoleon 3-4, 7,14). At least since the publication of *Perspectives on Traditional Law* in 1999 (itself the second of the *Interviewing Inuit Elders* volumes), most academic discussions of traditional Inuit law have begun with a discussion of the terms maligait, piqujait, and tirigusuusiit. These terms refer, respectively, to "what had to be followed, done or not done in Inuit culture," and are best understood as "embedded in social and cosmic relationships" (Aupilaarjuk et al, *Perspectives* 1, 3).

Maligaq, for example, is frequently translated as "Canadian law," but according to Kusugaq and Spalding, what the verb stem malik- actually signifies is 'to follow' or 'to obey,' someone or something (51; see also Aupilaarjuk et al, *Perspectives* 2), demonstrating that maligait, maligaksait, and so on are in fact *relational* terms. As Price puts it, "[m]aligait are rules that govern Inuit in their *relationships* within the metaphysical world" (131, emphasis mine). Likewise, although piqujaq can be translated as "Inuit customary law" and is "used as a general concept pertaining to the obligation to respect rules within Inuit society" (Therrien qtd. in

[12] I am echoing David Damrosch's phraseology here, but I am especially indebted to Daniel Fried in helping to articulate this distinction.

Aupilaarjuk et al, *Perspectives* 1), the "back translation" of piqujaq/piqujaujuq is actually that "'which is asked to be done (by somebody)' and its implicit meaning is "which is asked by an *authorized person* to be done" (Aupilaarjuk et al, *Perspectives* 1, emphasis mine; see also Kusugaq & Spalding, *Inuktitut* 94). Again it is the quality of the relationship that is emphasized here: "people will comply with what *those they respec*t ask from them" (Aupilaarjuk et al, *Perspectives* 2, emphasis mine).

The term tirigusuusiit historically has been somewhat imprecisely rendered as 'taboos' or 'superstitions' but in actuality it "refer[s] to the observance of specific rules, usually with respect to game" (2). These rules played an important part in Inuit society before the introduction of Christianity (2); Aupilaarjuk et al note that "[t]he notion of tirigusuusiit is closely associated to that of pittailiniq, refraining from doing what is not allowed" (2), which themselves were generally followed to avoid offending the game animals and the many inua which populated the physical and spiritual landscapes. Sedna, for example, was especially feared for her power to withhold the sea mammals from human communities who did not observe the many tirigusuusiit and pittailiniq pertaining to her domains of interest, namely, hunting, reproduction, and death (see Merkur 97-125). Because the Inuit social world encompasses not only humans but also wildlife, land, and weather, "a clear distinction between ritual and social rules cannot be maintained. In fact, ritual rules such as the tirigusuusiit tend to take precedence over general social principles of correct behaviour" (2) —if only because they too are understood to govern relationships between real, sentient beings and entities.

This brings me to my second basic principle: traditional law is grounded in the body and in the environment. In a very basic way, it is the interactions of the body with other bodies and with the surrounding world that is the source of all law and all moral feeling. In "Theorizing American Indian Experience," Womack cites Terry Eagleton in describing the manner in which

being embodied serves as a foundation for ethical (and therefore legal) thought:

> It is because of the body, not … because of Enlightenment abstraction, that we can speak of morality as universal. The material body is what we share most significantly with the whole of the rest of our species … our material bodies are such that they are, indeed must be, in principle feeling compassion for any others of their kind. It is on this capacity for fellow-feeling that moral values are founded; and this is based in turn on our material dependency on each other. (371)

For this reason, I will pay special attention to the affective or experiential aspects of Kublu's text, assuming that the various sensations evoked by her performance of the tale have real epistemic and juridical value, that they ignite within readers and auditors a kind of heightened awareness that is particularly conducive to making moral judgments, and, moreover, that such moral judgments can be put to use in the so-called real world (Womack, "Theorizing" 394-395); see also Borrows, *Drawing* 219-220).

In *Freedom and Indigenous Constitutionalism*, John Borrows describes the Anishinaabe notion of akinoomaagewin, which he glosses as "physical philosophy" (10), and which can be translated literally as "to point towards and take direction from" "the earth" (95, 221 n.46). According to Borrows, "physical philosophy is inductive and derives conclusions from experience, observation, and discussion (10-11). In this way, "the earth is a profound resource for legal reasoning" (95). In "Living Inuit Governance in Nunavut," Price likewise explains that "[t]he relationship between the physical and conceptual experience is … central to Inuit being. Inuit as Indigenous peoples understand the fluidity between these two spaces, and it is this fluidity that guides individual and collective logic while also inspiring the practices of Indigenous pedagogy, spirituality, and political systems" (127). Thus, significant "[k]nowledge exists within the rhythms and realities of the land. This knowledge has also influenced and inspired Inuit political systems, or Inuit governance" (130) —which themselves are reflective of a kind of symbiotic moral order, or, as Sam McKegney puts it, an "ecosystemic territoriality" (194).

And finally, the third basic principle informing my reading of Uinigumasuittuq as a source of law is that traditional stories such as the unikkaaqtuat provide opportunity for reflection on the many relationships and interrelationships that define and delineate human existence, as well as the implications of human agency within the context of these interrelationships (see Borrows, *Drawing* 27, 63, 107-108, 212). This is especially true with respect to stories with disturbing or culturally sensitive content (i.e. forced marriage, violence against women; see Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer 8). As Borrows argues, traditional stories are a particularly compelling source of law and theory for the reason that they engage both our reason (isuma) *and* our emotions. As the Elder explains to the assembly in *Drawing Out Law*:

> Learning's not complete if you don't address the whole person. In the old days, we used to weave lessons from the natural world into our teachings. Our leaders would expand our understanding by telling stories. They understood that stories could appropriately combine reason and emotion when they correlated with each other. We need more true stories to help us make sound decisions. That's where our real law resides. (212)

Likewise, in "Theorizing American Indian Experience," Womack cites Minh T. Nguyen approvingly when she states that "emotions are intimately connected to our beliefs and judgments" (394). This is because, in general, human beings access their so-called cognitive domain not in isolation from but *by means of* their so-called affective domain.[13] Nguyen puts it thusly: "we attain objectivity not by disregarding … or disavowing our emotions and values but by interrogating their epistemic character to assess the relevant insights they might provide. It is interested inquiry, then, that allows us to perceive and interpret our reality more accurately" (qtd. in Womack, "Theorizing" 394, emphasis in the original). This is why stories are so important; they have the ability to tap into the full range of human experience and for that reason have the

[13] I am indebted to John A. Nychka (Personal Communication) for this particular turn of phrase.

power to move (or not move) us into action (see also King, *The Truth About Stories* 26-28; 162-165).

Of course, the phenomenon of extracting legal principles from carefully constructed narratives is by no means peculiar to Indigenous cultures. The Canadian Common Law tradition —itself inherited from the much-older English Common Law tradition, and in particular the case briefing method popularized by the (rather unfortunately named) American legal scholar Christopher Columbus Langdell in the 1800s— are themselves specialized forms of storytelling that incorporate the oral, graphic, and critical impulse into their very structure (see Groft & Johnson 11-12). Not only do they "contain details regarding legal responses, principles, decision-making, procedures, obligations and rights," they also they "provide the intellectual architecture for arguing, reasoning, and problem-solving" (Groft & Johnson 3). Like case law, traditional stories are an "important source of precedent" (Groft & Johnson 2), a highly efficient use of human intelligence reflective of "the human desire not to reargue issues that were settled in the past" (Morgan 145). At the same time, however, there is a certain built-in flexibility that makes space for a range of possible interpretations (Groft & Johnson 17; see also Borrows, *Drawing* 212). Finally, both the stories themselves and the legal principles articulated therein must continually be cross-referenced, interpreted, and updated if they are to remain relevant in the face of cultural change (see Teuton, *Deep* xvii; see also Napoleon 4, 17-18).

7. Outline of Close Reading

I have briefly outlined above the general context within which Alexina Kublu's 'performance' of "Uinigumasuittuq: She who never wants to get married" was recorded, translated, and published. I have also briefly described the larger unikkaaqtuat tradition out of which the text emerges and within which it operates. My reading of Uinigumasuittuq as a source of law will make use of the

three tale-types identified by Merkur as a rough means of organizing the different parts of my thesis. That is, I will discuss the story in three parts, reading these three narrative divisions, as it were, of Kublu's performance against various 'layers' or dimensions of the text to uncover its implications in terms of guiding interpretation of traditional Inuit texts, of demonstrating the importance of practicing love and community in the face of colonialist attacks on traditional family relationships and community-based systems of governance, and finally, of providing insights for addressing the problem of violence against women —at the local, national, and global levels.

However, although this is the general structure I have chosen for my thesis, and although undoubtedly it would be fascinating, from the perspective of historical ethnography and folkloristics, to trace how the various versions of this unikkaaqtuaq may have emerged and evolved over time across Inuit Nunaat, I also want to emphasize that, for all intents and purposes, the text we are presented with constitutes a unified narrative. Kublu herself makes no mention of any tale-types and states in the preface that she has "always heard this myth told in the complete form" (152). So, while I have chosen, for the purposes of overall structure and thematic emphasis, to divide Kublu's text into three 'movements,' each of which are quoted in full before each of my subsequent chapters, I will also endeavour throughout to describe the manner in which it functions as a cohesive whole.

As a means of describing the manner in which Uinigumasuittuq works as a source of traditional law, I have identified three 'layers' or dimensions of Kublu's text. Again, this tripartite division is not intended as an authoritative or definitive description of the story but rather as one possible way of talking about how the text functions within its many contexts. The first 'layer' includes Kublu's performance of the story itself, including the Roman Inuktitut text and the French and English translations. Drawing upon Bauman's "Verbal Art as Performance"

and keeping in mind the importance of approaching Indigenous Literature *as art* as opposed to merely ethnographic artefact, I argue in the chapter immediately following The Dog Husband excerpt that Kublu's 'performance,' and particularly through the manner in which it is framed for her immediate audience and then presented to the reader in both Inuktitut and English (and French), has much to tell us about how texts such as hers ought to be read.

The second 'layer' emphasizes the manner in which the story functions as a part of family and community life, especially in terms of reinforcing kinship bonds and providing intellectual models for community-based systems of law and governance. In the chapter immediately following The Storm Bird excerpt, then, I draw attention to the dramatic contrast between the highly dysfunctional relationship between Uinigumasuittuq and her father, and the nurturing and spiritually rich affective environment that Kublu describes as having provided the backdrop to her first learning the unikkaaqtuaq from her father before having been separated from him at the age of six (!) when she travelled to Montreal for an extended hospital stay (Angmaalik et al 151).[14] I also describe here how the machinations of colonialism have deliberately sought to dismantle these bonds of kinship and, in doing so, have undermined the basis of community-based justice and traditional moral education.

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[14] Possibly for tuberculosis treatment. As Keavy Martin, Julie Rak, and Norma Dunning explain in the "Afterword" to Mini Aodla Freeman's *Life Among the Qallunaat*:

> Another major factor in mid-twentieth-century Inuit life … was the epidemic of infectious pulmonary tuberculosis (commonly called TB). While "TB had been rampant in Inuit communities for decades, following the Second World War, the federal government began to address this issue by removing tuberculosis patients to southern sanatoriums. By 1957, a staggering 10 percent of eastern Arctic Inuit had been sent to the completely alien environments of southern medical facilities. (269)

Albeit well-intentioned, the "heavy-handed and paternalistic" manner in which this program was carried out often had devastating consequences for individuals and families (see for example Freeman 183-202; see also Briggs 133-134).

And finally, the third 'layer' describes the manner in which, in an Inuit context, the infamous Creation of the Sea Mammals episode provides an important warning against mistreatment of vulnerable community members. Although the highly disturbing narrative climax in which Uinigumasuittuq's father cuts of her fingers with his hunting knife is frequently softened or explained away when the unikkaaqtuaq is presented to an outsider audience, reflecting an underlying "anxiety about the cruel ending of Sedna's story" (Martin 191), and possibly a desire to reassure Inuit and non-Inuit alike that violence against women is not an integral part of traditional Inuit culture, I argue that the our emotional reactions of anxiety and horror regarding the Sea Woman's fate, here and elsewhere, should be taken as evidence that the story is doing its work in us. Drawing upon the epistemologically enabling power of our affective responses to the story, I discuss how the text offers important insights into the global problem of domestic violence.

As regards my decision to intersperse whole sections of Kublu's 'performance' with my own analysis (as opposed to including the entire primary text as a preface or appendix), this is intended, in a manner befitting the oral tradition, to break down somewhat the artificial generic distinctions between story and commentary and, following Christopher Teuton's schematic, to illustrate in a tangible way the dynamic interplay of the oral, graphic and critical impulses. Mirroring Uinigumasuittuq's own descent to the ocean floor, this particular structure is also intended to invite deeper and deeper reflection, from reflections on genre and aesthetics, to kinship and governance, and finally, to violence against women and its consequences.

UINIGUMASUITTUQ: SHE WHO NEVER WANTS TO GET MARRIED

Alexina Kublu

[1.][15] **arnaqtaqalauqsimavuq uinillualiraluarmat nulianiktuqtauvaktumik.**
There was once a woman of marriageable age who was frequently wooed.

[2.] **nulianiktuqtulimaaraaluit narrugivak&unigit.**
She rejected all the suitors.

[3.] **tikittuqarivuq suluvvautalingmik qajaqtuqtumik tuktunik annuraaqsimalluni**
Then there arrived a man with his hair in a forehead topknot, a qajaqer, wearing caribou clothing.

[4.] **sunauvva pangniq, ammailaak taanna narrugijaugilluni**.
As it turned out, he was a bull caribou, and once again this one too was rejected.

[5.] **taimanna nulianiktuqtauvassuujaq&uni uinigumasuittuluaraaluungmat**
So, because she was wooed for a long time but never wanted to get married,

[6.] **uinigumasuittuuniraqtauliq&uni.**
they started calling her "She who never wants to get married."

[7.] **ataatangata ninngautigamiuk uinigumasuittuuninganik**
Her father became angry with her because of her unwillingness to get married

[8.] **qimmirminik uitaaquliq&uniuk qikiqtaliarutillunigiglu.**
and told her to take her dog as a husband, taking them off to an island.

[9.] **qimmiriik qikiqtamiissuujaliq&utik,**
The woman and the dog were on the island for a long time.

[10.] **niqairutijaraangamik qimmini nangmiuttiq&uniuk ataataminut niqiisuqtippakpaa.**
Whenever they were out of food, she put a pack on her dog and sent it to get food from her father.

[11.] **qangannguqtilluguarnaqsingailiq&uni. qimmirlakulungnik irniuq&uni.**
A long time went past; then the woman became pregnant, and gave birth to little pups.

[12.] **qimminga niqiisurajuksiluarmat ataatanga qajaqtuq&uni takujaqtu&&upuq**
Because the dog was now coming so often to get meat, her father came by qajaq to see

[13.] **qanuimmat niqiirujjalualiriaksanginnik.**
why they ran out of meat so often.

[14.] **qimmirlarasakulungnit unamajuktunit niuvviuqtaulluni.**
He was greeted by all the fawning little pups.

[15] Line numbers (indicated in square brackets) have been added here for the purpose of facilitating discussion of the work.

[15.] **qimmirlangnik irngutaqarnirminik qaujigami ninngaktummarialuugilluni.**
When he discovered he had pups for grandchildren he became very angry.

[16.] **qimmiq nangmausiqsimalluni niqiisurmingmat**
When the dog, with a pack on its back, was fetching food again

[17.] **nangmautaa ujaqqanik ilulliqsuq&uniuk.**
he filled its pack with rocks.

[18.] **qimmiq qikiqtamut utiqpallialiraluaq&uni**
As the dog, was slowly returning to the island,

[19.] **aqtuqsaluamut qitiqparaluaq&uni sanngiilivallialirami**
he only got as far as the middle before he gradually lost strength because of the heaviness he felt.

[20.] **asuilaak**
And so

[21.] **kivivuq.**
he sank.

[22.] **panialu qiturngangillu pijiksaqarunniirmata**
Because his daughter and her children no longer had a provider,

[23.] **ittuup agjaqsivvigivaliq&unigit nangminiq niqimik.**
the old man himself then started to bring food to them.

[24.] **aggilirmingmat paniata qiturngarasani uqautillunigit, "ataatattiaqsi nunalippat**
His daughter told her many children, "When your grandfather comes ashore,

[25.] **unamajunnguaqsiqturlusiuk qajanga kingmaarilaurniaqpasiuk**
pretend to fawn all over him and chew his qajaq to pieces

[26.] **apailaukalla&&armasi."**
because he made you fatherless."

[27.] **asuilaak ittunga tikimmingmat irngutarasangita**
Well, then when their grandfather arrived, his many grandchildren

[28.] **niuvviuriaraangamijjuk unamajukpakkamijjuk unamajulirivaat.**
once again fawned over him, because it was their habit to fawn over him whenever they greeted him.

[29.] **unamajuksinnaq&utik qajanganik alupajuksimallutik kingmaliramik**
They fawned over him, licking at his qajaq and then chewing away at it

[30.] **atuqtuksaujunniiqtippaat.**
until they had made it unfit for use.

[31.] **panialu qiturngangillu pijiksaqarunniirmata ittunga qajaqarunniirami**
Because their grandfather no longer had a qajaq,

[32.] **qikiqtamisiuqataujariaqaliq&uni angunasugiarutiksaqarunniiq&unilu.**
he had to spend time with them on the island. He also had no hunting equipment.

[33.] **qimmirlakuluit angiglivalliallutik**
The little pups were gradually getting bigger

[34.] **kaaqattaqtukuluungmata anaanangatta aullaqtinnasusivait.**
and because the poor things often got hungry their mother prepared to send them off.

[35.] **pingasuingullutik pingasuuttaq&utik aullarviginiaqtanginnut uqautivait**
Dividing them into three groups of three, she told them about their destinations,

[36.] **qanuiliuqattarniarajariaksaillu uqaujjuq&unigit.**
and she impressed on them what they would have to do.

[37.] **aullaqtirngautaujani taununga nigiup miksaanut aullaquvait**
She told the first group she sent away to head down towards the south.

[38.] **pisiksilijatuinnaq&utik. taakkua iqqilinnguq&utik.**
They had only bows and arrows, and these became Indians.

[39.] **aullaqtimmijani atungavinirmik umialiqtippait uqautillunigit**
She made a boat out of an old boot-sole for the next ones she sent away, telling them,

[40.] **“umiarjuakkuurlusi utirumaarivusi.” taakkua qallunaannguq&utik.**
“You will come back by ship.” These ones became qallunaat.

[41.] **taakkua kingulliqpaat aullanngikkaluarlutik**
The last ones were not told to go away; however,

[42.] **inungnut takuksauvanngituinnaquvait. taakkua ijiranguq&utik.**
she told them simply that they should be unseen by people. These became ijirait (the unseen people who show up as caribou).

(Angmaalik et al., *Introduction* 153-156)

CHAPTER 3: UNIKKAAQTUAT POETICS

1. Context and Framing

This first section of the narrative, the so-called Dog Husband story, is the tale-type which enjoys the widest geographical distribution across the circumpolar North. It is found in variant forms from Siberia to Greenland, not only amongst Eskimo-Aleut-speaking peoples but also amongst non-Inuit First Nations and Alaska Native groups such as the Tłı̨chǫ (Merkur 126; see also Girard 49-50). In most cases this creation story is not about the Sea Woman per se but is rather a separate narrative detailing how different races of human and non-human beings came to be.

Daniel Merkur proposes three stages of development for the tale: "an archaic, Alaska distribution," which accounts for the tale's presence in non-Inuit Indigenous populations; "the development of [an] Iñupiaq oicotype, with its characteristic grievance-revenge pattern" (127), which is found across Inuit Nunaat and which is consistent with "recent and rapid diffusion" of the Thule migration, which took place sometime after 1000 C.E.; and finally, the association of the tale with the Sea Woman in the Qikiqtaaluk region of Nunavut, which generally results in the joining of the Dog Husband story to the Storm Bird and Creation of the Sea Mammals narratives (126-127).

This first section of my close reading of Uinigumasuittuq focuses on the action/event Kublu's 1996 'performance' of the story and particularly the manner in which her text is presented to readers in a line-by-line English translation of the Roman Inuktitut 'original.' Drawing upon Richard Bauman's "Verbal Art as Performance," I will endeavour to show how certain features of the text itself function to guide us through this complex, multipart narrative and, in doing so, enable us to perceive its significance in terms of both law and aesthetics. Inuit-specific concepts of isuma and naglingniq will also be discussed in terms of their relevance to the story.

In Introduction to Oral Traditions, Kublu's text is placed in the "Stories" section near the end of the book, immediately following the student-authored "Essays" section which itself follows the "Life Stories" section of extended interviews which make up the vast majority of the book, and immediately preceding the 'Glossary' of Inuktitut terms. There is much that could be said here, both about the generic divisions identified by the authors and the manner in which they are arranged in sequence. For the purposes of this chapter, I wish only to draw attention to the fact that the book follows a typical Euro-Canadian ethnographic model that —as its authors were undoubtedly aware themselves— may not perfectly align with Inuit epistemological categories. In the "Introduction" to the book proper, Kublu, Laugrand, and Oosten state that "[a] story is still a privileged means of conveying knowledge in Inuit society, and these stories therefore constitute an excellent ending for this book" (12), drawing attention to an interesting tension between the "still" and the "privileged" which, on the one hand, highlights the fact that the unikkaaqtuat are operating in a different epistemic mode than, say, introductions or critical essays, but which, on the other hand reflects the conflicting value systems informing how these genres are created and valued.

The text proper, as befits this "most well known of all Inuit stories" (152), is the first of the eleven stories included in this section and is immediately preceded by a short preface, written by Kublu herself, which functions to frame the subsequent narratives as a species of communicative phenomenon (see Bauman 291-294) distinct from the analytical essays and transcribed interviews that come before them, providing context and preparing the reader to respond appropriately. In the preface, Kublu explains that these stories were "passed down by Inuit from one generation to another" (151) before being "collected" by herself and two other students during the first year of a collaboration with Jarich Oosten of Leiden University. Kublu tells us that she first "received" her stories from her father, "Michael Kupaaq Piutgattuk E5-456

(1925-1996)," who "was raised by his grandparents Augustine Ittuksaarjuat and Monica Ataguttaaluk," and who "learned the stories that he told to his own children as a child from his grandfather" (151).[16, 17] Kupaaq himself was a skilled storyteller and a collaborator of the well-known anthropologist Bernard Saladin d'Anglure, recording several unikkaaqtuat with him which were subsequently transcribed by Kublu's sister and brother-in-law, and whose "unaltered forms," we are told, "might be available through the department of anthropology at Laval University" (151). At the closing of her preface, Kublu writes: "I express my gratitude to my father in this publication. I hope that I let him be aware of my gratitude in some way, however minute, while he was alive" (152).[18]

Uinigumasuittuq, then, is firmly embedded within the context of Kublu's own family life, as well as within the *Interviewing Inuit Elders* project. Kublu also positions her text within the broader context of her home community, Igloolik, as well as Inuit cultural life generally, stating that, while the "Sea Goddess" narrative is "known throughout the Inuit world," it is the

[16] "E5-456" was Kupaaq's government-issued disc number or 'Eskimo number.' As will be explained in greater detail in the following chapter, during the 1940s – 1970s, the Canadian government, largely for administrative convenience, assigned small, numbered discs resembling dog-tags to all Inuit living within its territories. The "E" signifies that Kupaaq lived to the east of Gjoa Haven, the "5" identifies his home community as Igloolik, and the "456" is his personal identification number.

[17] Monica Ataguttaaluk (d. 1948), described by Knud Rasmussen as "first lady" of the Fury and Hecla straits and later nicknamed "Queen of Igloolik" by local Qallunaat is herself a fascinating historical figure. Ataguttaaluk is famous for having survived a terrible starvation in the spring of 1905, during which she was forced to eat her dogs and then the already-dead bodies of her first husband and children before being rescued. After her convalescence she married a prominent local hunter, went on to have more children, and become a respected regional leader in her own right. She has numerous descendants, Kublu included, and is highly respected on account of the hardships she endured. The high school in Igloolik is named in her honour (Harper, "Taissumani: July 16, 1948").

[18] Kupaaq himself died during the preliminary course on oral traditions that Kublu was co-facilitating with Laugrand and Oosten, a circumstance which necessitated her leaving the course a week early (Angmaalik et al, *Introduction* 2).

Iglulingmiut in particular who "lay claim to the island that she was sent to with her dog" (152).[19] According to Kublu, "originally, at the time of the story, Puqtuniq was a small island. The water receded, and Puqtuniq became a hill on the island of Qikiqtaarjuk. Today, after the water has further receded, even the island of Qikiqtaarjuk has become part of the main island of Iglulik" (152). Moreover, although there is considerable variation across Inuit Nunaat with respect to the species of sea mammals that originate from Sedna's severed fingers, and while "the origin of this myth is in the Iglulik area which is known to be rich in the walrus hunting traditions," Kublu explains that she does "not include the walrus among the sea mammals created from her fingers" for the reason that, at least according to the regional tradition in which she is operating, "the creation of the walrus occurs in another story (not told here), that of the myth of "*Aakulugjuusi* and *Uummaarniittuq*" the first people" (152). In this way, we are invited to see how the story is inextricably caught up, as it were, in the literary, topographical, and social histories of the Iglulik region.

Thus even before we encounter the text proper, Kublu's preface sets up for us the complex network of relationships within which her own story finds its meanings. First, there are the intra- and intercultural family, community, and regional dynamics within which she herself first learned and then composed and recorded the story. Second, there is the relationship between unikkaaqtuat as a community-based Inuit cultural practice and unikkaaqtuat as ethnographic artefacts studied by Western academics such as d'Anglure, Laugrand, and Oosten. Third, there is the relationship of Kublu's performance to the many other versions of the Sedna narrative that exist across Inuit Nunaat as well as to the many other tales from the unikkaaqtuat canon. Finally,

[19] The Inuktitut suffix –miut (singular –miuq) refers to the people or inhabitants of a certain place. Nattilingmiut refers to Inuit from the Nattilik (Netsilik) region in the central Canadian arctic; Iglulingmiut refers to Inuit from the Iglulik region, and so on. 'Igloolik' refers to the municipality of Igloolik, within the larger Iglulik region.

there is the relationship of the past to the present and to the future, a relationship which becomes particularly apparent when one considers that Kublu is recording the story at the very end of the second millennium, only three years after the signing of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement in 1993 and just three years prior to the creation of Nunavut Territory in 1999 —an event very much looming in the background of all volumes of the *Interviewing Inuit Elders* and *Inuit Perspectives on the 20th Century* series of books.

Closely linked to this complex network of inter-relationships are the text's many audiences, each of whom will, depending upon their positionality and their familiarity with Inuit language and culture, experience the story quite differently. Although I have already stated that I understand the text to be an Aboriginal Sovereign Display Territory as opposed to an Irreconcilable Space of Aboriginality, I think it is useful to keep Garneau's distinctions in mind here, since there seems to be a kind of continuum of Indigenous and non-Indigenous audience types that can be indentified as within the performance's purview. Kublu explains that she "first wrote these stories to satisfy a course requirement while working on [her] Bachelor of Education degree; that was the deciding factor in the selection of these particular stories and hence was the first influence" (151). So there is the university course instructor who read Kublu's first written versions as well as the Inuit children for whom these stories were presumably being prepared. Kublu also states here that "I am an Inuktitut language teacher; that influences any retelling that I do" (151), indicating that her text is at least partially intended to serve as a tool for those learning the Inuit language.

It is somewhat unclear, based on the information provided in the preface, whether Kublu gave an actual live performance of her stories at any point during the Oral Traditions course, whether she privately recorded and then transcribed and translated them, or whether she simply

proofed them for publication along with the interviews.[20] But whatever the case, given that the course was a driving impetus behind the story's publication, there is a very real sense in which the Inuit Studies students, elders and co-facilitators constitute her primary audience. Both the young adult students taking the course and the elders participating in the interviews came from across the Central and Eastern Canadian Arctic. Kublu's co-facilitators, Frédéric Laugrand and Jarich Oosten had both worked previously in the North as anthropologists, and the guest lecturers, which included Susan Sammons, Noel McDermott, and Kenn Harper, had all had extensive experience living and working in the North. That is to say, all the individuals involved in organizing the course and preparing the book manuscript for publication, if not in fact cultural insiders themselves, would definitely have been functional in the Inuit language and, moreover, would already have been quite familiar with one version or another of the Sedna story.

Beyond the parameters of the Oral Traditions course itself, there is also a broader audience of readers from across Nunavut and Inuit Nunaat. Those interested Inuit and non-Inuit cultural initiates who make up this secondary audience, depending upon where they live and their particular circumstances, will possess varying degrees of proficiency in East Arctic Inuktitut and may prefer to access the text in Inuktitut, French, or English. And finally, there is the tertiary audience, the outsider cohort to which I belong, consisting of various non-Inuit students,

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[20] In *Inuit Shamanism and Christianity*, another work which draws heavily upon the *Interviewing Inuit Elders* and *Inuit Perspectives on the 20th Century* sets of interviews, Laugrand and Oosten specify that Kublu in fact "recorded" the story (153). There is also this rather humorous exchange between elder Hervé Paniaq and an Inuit Studies student documented in *Introduction to Oral Traditions* which suggests that the stories were recorded outside of class time (though, of course, this need not prevented there having been others present and/or having listed to the recording afterwards):

> [Student] ***Can you tell us a story that you have heard?***
> Paniaq: Yes, are we also here for that?
> [Student] ***The reason why we are here is to leave words behind for our descendants.***
> Paniaq: There is one person (Alexina) who can tell a story now. She taped one today and two the other day. If we start story-telling now, the day is going to be too short. (52-53)

scholars, and interested laypersons who may possess some familiarity with the Inuit language but who probably will require the English or French translations as a way into the text. This outsider audience reads and enjoys the text for a variety of reasons but lacks the lived experience of unikkaaqtuat as a cultural practice that would enable one to *experience* Kublu's text according to the parameters of the genre and to access the full range of relational 'goods' made available through her performance (see Jacobs 81).

In delineating these different audiences, I am drawing not only upon Garneau's "Imaginary Spaces of Conciliation and Reconciliation" but also upon American folklorist Richard Bauman's well-known article, "Verbal Art as Performance," which argues for an understanding of performance as a distinct "species of human communication, a way of speaking" (291) or a culturally conventionalized kind of "situated behaviour, situated within and rendered meaningful with reference to relevant contexts" (298). According to Bauman, 'performance' implies a dual sense of "artistic action" and "artistic event" in which a performer "[assumes] responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative competence" (293) and in which the act of communication is —amongst other things— "marked as available for the enhancement of experience, through the present enjoyment of the intrinsic qualities of the act of expression itself" (Bauman 293). Such an understanding of performance is similar to, but not quite the same as formalist approaches to verbal art in which "the artful, aesthetic of an utterance [or text] resides in the way in which language is used in the construction of the textual item" (292), or which classify literary forms according to specific genre (i.e. lyric poetry, epic, novel or pisiit, iviutiit, sakausiit, for example) (294).[21]

[21] Pisiit, iviutiit, and sakausiit refer to specific genres of Inuit songs. According to Emile Imaruittuq: "[t]here are three types of traditional songs; pisiit, or qilaujjarusiit, which are pisiit sung with a drum; and iviutiit, which were songs used to embarrass people, to make fun of them, to make fun of their weaknesses. They created songs to make fun of others. There are also sakausiit, songs used by angakkuit.

An understanding of Uinigumasuittuq first of all as *situated* performance sheds light on the function of Kublu's preface as a deliberate framing technique, a means of 'keying,' as it were, the communicative domain of performance, even as the 'text' itself assumes an "apparent fixity" or "abstraction" from performance when placed on the printed page (Bauman 304). From a verbal-art-as-performance standpoint, there is no firm distinction between the text proper and the culturally conventionalized metacommunicative messages that provide readers and auditors with "instructions or aids in [their] attempt to understand the messages included within the frame" (295). To borrow Christopher Teuton's terminology, performance provides an analytical context which richly describes the interplay of the oral, graphic, and critical impulses by, in Bauman's words, "focus[ing] on the very source of the empirical relationship between art and society" (304).

Much work needs to be done here, by people much more qualified than myself, in describing the various metacommunicative techniques which function to 'key' pisiit, unikkaaqtuat, and so on in an Inuit context. According to Bauman, these metacommunicative tools may include: appeals to tradition; special linguistic codes, such as esoteric or archaic language;[22, 23] special formulae that signal performance, such as "taimnaguuq," literally, "that one

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Those are the three different types of songs that I know" (qtd. in Aupilaarjuk et al, *Perspectives* 202; see also Martin, "Sovereign" 20-21).

[22] Interestingly, one important part of traditional shamanic training was instruction in the language of the tuurngait (helping spirits) (Aupilaarjuk et al, *Cosmology* 33). According to Victor Tungilik, "[t]here is the Inuktitut language and the English language. The tuurngait have their own language as well. They don't speak our language. They speak some words of our language but they have their own. Some are Inuktitut words, but some are not" (Tungilik et al, *Transition* 97). This esoteric language was an important means by which the angakkuit communicated with non-human spirit beings, and its use in speech frequently indicates a ritual speech act.

[23] In describing the literary "architecture" of the Kiviuq epic (another pan-Inuit unikkaaqtuaq), Kira Van Deusen observes that "[c]ertain phrases of the story are spoken in the same way by many tellers … some involve singing – either a full song or a chant" (329). According to Van Deusen, "these are the words and sounds that propel the action." Many use an archaic form of Inuktitut and/or "are expressed as imperatives

in the past (*taimna*) they say (*guuq*)" (McDermott, "Unikkaaqtuat" 266)[24] or perhaps the suffix 'lauqsima-, which indicates a generalized or indefinite past; figurative language and formal stylistic devices such as rhyme and parallelism (the latter of which Kublu uses to great effect, as we shall see); or paralinguistic patterns of voice and gesture that may accompany oral performances and/or their textual counterparts (i.e. line divisions, bold or italic fonts, etc.) (Bauman 295). Kublu's otherwise puzzling and seemingly overmodest disclaimer that, although she is an Inuktitut language teacher and "[knows] the mechanics of the language almost impeccably" she is "not what in Inuktitut is considered to be an "*uqamminiq*" someone who is linguistically nimble" (151), should also be understood in this way, as a sign of the literary. That is to say, even if it is true that Kublu does not consider herself to be a professional storyteller, the fact that she is bringing up the issue of competency at all tells us that we are to treat her performance *as if she were one*.

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or use a grammatical form that expresses strong desire … mov[ing] a person through time and space" and "provid[ing] a skeleton for the action" (330).

[24] Noel McDermott discusses taimnaguuq in detail in his doctoral dissertation. According to McDermott, "[t]he world that is conjured up by … taimnaguuq, which is itself a formula, is one that provides an entrance into a vital, coherent, and imaginative space for Inuit listeners" (267), and although the typical translation "long, long ago, they say," is technically correct, "on closer inspection the vagueness of the English phrase does not begin to represent the richness and precision that is suggested in the Inuktitut" (266). Specifically:

> The phrase, *taimnaguuq,* as noted above, is made up of two discrete parts, *taimna-* and *-guuq,* and each part provides clues to the listener about what is to follow. *Taimna* not only carries with it a reference to a particular person, but also signals to the listener that he or she lived in the distant past. The story about to be told is ancient, and belongs to a far-off time and space when strange beings, animals, and humans occupied the same world. The very phrase, *taimnaguuq*, alerts the listeners and causes them to anticipate with delight and apprehension the details of the story, one they have likely heard often before. The passive *guuq* (they say/it is said) provides further distance between the listener, the teller, and the incidents in the story. By using *guuq*, the narrator is telling his or her audience that what they are about to hear took place so long ago that she or he has no direct knowledge of the incidents, and therefore bears no responsibility for their veracity … The listener, therefore, may not accuse the teller of exaggeration or lying or distortion, for in a sense, the teller is merely the messenger. (266-267)

More than anything else, Kublu's preface sends the reader a clear signal that what follows belongs first of all to the domain of verbal art, and though it exists in the domain of scholarship as well, (it is, after all, published in a book of interviews in collaboration with Inuit Studies scholars) it exists there only in a secondary or derivate sense. This distinction has significant implications for students and scholars of traditional Indigenous texts. As Bauman points out, many of the so-called "oral literary texts" collected by Western ethnographers may not actually represent performance per se "but rather recordings of informants' abstracts, resumes, and reports of performances and performance forms" (292), which, while themselves interesting and useful resources, are not quite the same thing.[25] Indeed, it has often been the case that Eurowestern scholars of Indigenous texts have been guilty of focusing on what Raymond Williams terms "residual culture" (qtd. in Bauman 306), what folklorists and anthropologists have defined as "the traditional remnants of earlier periods" (Bauman 306) at the expense of the "emergent culture" in which "new meanings and values, new practices, new significances and experiences are continually being created" (Williams qtd. in Bauman 306). Kublu's Uinigumasuittuq is indeed a 'traditional' story whose roots can be traced back many generations, but it is also a *living* oral text that is recreated and reconstructed with each action/event of performance, ensuring its continued relevance and, if we are talking about law, its moral and legal valences.

2. Translation and Presentation

In *A Very Short Introduction to Literary Theory*, Jonathan Culler defines literary works as those works whose protocols for interpretation make use of the "hyper-protected cooperative principle" in which readers and auditors assume that the verbal artist's creative decisions or "complications of language ultimately have a communicative purpose" and thus endeavour to interpret these

[25] Of course, as we have seen with Garneau, this may be quite deliberate.

elements as serving "the interests of some further communicative goal" (127). Likewise from a performance perspective, form matters; although performance cannot be reduced to form, form is both constitutive of the performance itself and a major source of the pleasure it provides. Careful attention, then, should be paid not only to the context and the many metacommunicative cues embedded in the text, but also to the shape of the text itself.

First, given that many readers, both Inuit and non-Inuit alike, will be reading the text in French or English translation, some attention will have to be paid to the phenomenon of translation itself, for although this particular translated text would appear to be the outcome of a close collaboration between Kublu, Laugrand, Oosten, and a whole team of highly skilled Inuit and non-Inuit students and contributors (Angmaalik et al, v-vi), it is nevertheless unavoidable that something of the Inuktitut original will be lost. Complicating the usual problems attendant to the translation of literary works generally is the fact that the Inuit language is completely unrelated to any European language and possesses a radically different grammatical structure.[26] According to editor-translator Maurice Metayer, the Inuit "genius is entirely different from the Indo-European genius," in that one "word is often the equivalent of a whole French or English sentence" (qtd. in McDermott, *Unikkaaqtuat* 265); moreover, translation from Eskimo-Aleut to Indo-European idiom is further complicated for the reason that "everything (sentence structure) is backward" (qtd. in McDermott, *Unikkaaqtuat* 265).[27] Certainly Uinigumasuittuq must undergo a

[26] The Inuit language is a continuum of closely-related dialects (Inupiatun, Inuvialaktun, Inuinnaqtun, Inuktitut, Inuttut, Kalaallisut) that stretch from Greenland to the Bering Strait. It is a member of the Eskimo-Aleut language family along with the Yupik and Aleut languages found in Siberia and Western Alaska. It is phylogenetically separate from Indo-European languages and other Indigenous American languages, although certain lexical and grammatical similarities have long been observed between these languages and the Uralic (Finnish, Hungarian, Sami) and Altaic families (Turkish, Mongolian) (see Dorais, *The Language of the Inuit* 91-95)

[27] Or, alternatively, everything (sentence structure) is actually the right way, depending on one's frame of reference!

radical change if it is to be translated from the polysynthetic, agglutinative language of Inuktitut to the analytic, syntax-heavy languages of English and French —and this even before one considers the different cultural worlds evoked by these languages (McDermott, *Unikkaaqtuat* 265-66).

The English and French translations of Kublu's performance will of necessity be quite different from the Inuktitut 'original'; it is for this reason that Translation Studies scholars often emphasize that each act of translation is also an act of interpretation, and that in many respects translated literary works ought to be considered as new textual compositions (see for example the works of Henri Meschonnic). For example, translation into another language often entails a certain amount of contextualization or explanation that simply is not present in the original. This can be seen in the English and French translations of Uinigumasuittuq, both of which include in-text annotations, helpfully set apart in parenthesis, in addition to the actual translated text itself. One example of this is the translation given for "taakkua ijiranngu&utik" (literally "those ones ijirait-became-they"), which is rendered in English as "These became ijirait (the unseen people who show up as caribou)" and in French as "Ceux-là sont devenus les ijirait (les gens qu'on ne voit pas et qui se montrent sous la forme de caribous)" (Angmaalik et al, line 42).[28] Presumably, someone who can read the Inuktitut easily would already be quite familiar with the various non-human beings inhabiting the Inuit world and would not need this additional gloss.

As well as involving the production of a new text, the act of translation is also an act of interpretation, for the translator(s) must of necessity make decisions about both meaning and nuance. In Uinigumasuittuq this can be seen in the translation of the phrase "taimanngat ukpirniqtaalaunnginninginnit" (line 79) which, broken down into morphemes is something like

[28] Hereafter I will use line numbers only when referring to the primary text.

"it is like that-because belief-acquired-over time-actively-they did"[29] and which is helpfully given in English as "Since then, until *they acquired Christianity*" (emphasis mine). The French translation, on the other hand, is subtly different, rendering the phrase as "Depuis ce temps-là, jusqu'au jour où *ils sont devenus Chrétiens*" (emphasis mine), literally, "Since that time, until the day wherein *they became Christians*," which carries the implication that Inuit *became* something when they began to practice Christianity.[30] While this rendering of the phrase reflects well the Christian idea of being recreated or 'born from above' upon conversion, it may not reflect what is generally intended by the suffix -taa[q]-, which the Inuktitut Database glosses as denoting "acquisition; to get" (Inuktitut Computing, "Suffixes"), as in, "they acquired Christianity."[31] Moreover, the Inuktitut noun ukpirniq-, "belief, credence, faith" (Kusugaq & Spalding 181-82), is itself composed of the verb root ukpiq-, 'to believe something' (Inuktitut Computing, "Roots") and the suffix -niq, indicating the nominative form (i.e. 'belief'). While both ukpiq- and ukpirniq are frequently used with reference to the Christian religion (not unlike the English 'faith'), their more basic meanings are somewhat less denominational.

Ultimately, I do not think that the meaning of Uinigumasuittuq hinges on the subtleties of "they acquired Christianity" versus "ils sont devenus Chrétiens." Nevertheless, the case in point neatly illustrates the fact that literary translations, even they are when reviewed by a team of

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[29] Here and elsewhere I am grateful to Keavy Martin and Chris Trott for helping to parse certain key Inuktitut phrases. Any deficiencies that remain are mine alone. To further illustrate the complexities inherent in Inuktitut-to-English translation, Trott's own parsing of ukpirniqtaalaunnginninginnit is given as "ukpir - to believe (v.), niq - turns a verb into an abstract noun, ta[q] to take, -a- sustained over time, -lau[q] past tense, -nngi- negative, -nni- abstractive noun again, -nit accusative plural" (Personal Correspondence), which I have, rather clumsily, rendered into a slightly more idiomatic breakdown of the phrase.

[30] Another reason for this discrepancy likely has to do with the fact that the French translation is in fact a translation from the English, not the Inuktitut, and thus is a double translation.

[31] The suffix -taa[q]- may also possess a relational connotation, as in nutarataaq- (having/getting a baby) or nuliataaq- (getting married, acquiring a wife). Thus "they acquired Christianity/belief" may have the added dimension of "they began to have a relationship with Christianity/belief."

language experts, are not without their imprecisions and discrepancies. One important strength of the Uinigumasuittuq text, then —at least in terms of how it is presented to the reader in *Introduction to Oral Traditions*— is that it retains the original language by including a bolded Roman orthography transcription *within* the translated text itself, something which I have deliberately preserved in my thesis. This particular set-up accomplishes two important things. First, it makes the Inuit language text more accessible, not only to non-Inuit such as myself who are used to the Latin alphabet, but also to Inuit from dialect groups that do not use syllabics — such as the Inuvialuit of the Western Canadian Arctic or the Kalaallit of Greenland— or who for whatever reason prefer to access the text in English or French. Yet, at the same time, this bilingual accessibility as a structural feature of the text also functions as an invitation to look more closely at the Inuktitut original (Kublu is, after all, a language teacher!) and as a gentle but firm reminder of the importance of the Inuit language to the social practice of unikkaaqtuat.

The other major upshot of this line-by-line pairing of the Roman Inuktitut 'original' with a line-by-line English translation (and I think that this is not said enough about this style of presentation as opposed to others in which the translation is arranged in paragraphs) is that the text is effectively presented as a modern English poem, something which compels the reader to read it as such, even if in actual fact it is more like what someone from a Eurowestern literary tradition might describe as a prose narrative.[32] By reading the text 'as a poem' I mean that we are prompted to pay special attention to its 'literariness,' that is, the manner in which language is used for artistic effect, how the text looks and sounds, and how various literary conventions are put into play. To a certain extent the Inuit language lends itself to this kind of line-by-line poetic breakdown when translated into Indo-European idiom. In a very real sense, these English (and

[32] In the Inuktitut-only syllabics version, Kublu's text is broken down into short paragraphs. It is also arranged in paragraphs in Laugrand and Oosten's *Inuit Shamanism and Christianity* (153-155) and *The Sea Woman* 35-38.

French) ‘poems’ possess an Inuktitut base and reflect its complex polysynthetic structure —there are next to no line breaks occurring abruptly in mid-phrase, for example.

The end result of all this is that we are encouraged to read the text differently than we would an English prose narrative. First of all, because both languages are present at all times and seem almost to be engaged in a kind of call-and-response, we are encouraged to look at the original language and to become curious about how it compares to the translation. Second, we are guided away from the interpretive conventions attaching to realist novels, social-scientific descriptions, or media reports, and we are guided towards a focusing on the *poetics* of both the translation and the original. By ‘poetics’ I mean what the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as “the creative principles informing any literary, social or cultural construction, or the theoretical study of these; a theory of form” (“Poetics”). In the Western literary tradition, ‘poetics’ includes taking note of the text’s linguistic features: its rhythms and cadences, its sound patterns and repetitions, its grammatical and thematic parallelisms, its sharp contrasts and puzzling enigmas. It also entails a description of the various tropes, topoi, characterizations, and any other culturally-specific literary devices present. For our purposes, attention to form is more than simply aesthetic pleasure or literary erudition, for, at a very fundamental level, it is affect and sensation that make a work of art compelling and memorable. Thus, when reading for the legal principles embedded in such texts, a heightened awareness of the ‘hyper-protected cooperative principle’ would seem to be of especial importance.

3. Arnaqtaqalauqsimavuq …

So let us begin with the opening line: “arnaqtaqalauqsimavuq uinillualiraluarmat nulianiktuqtauvaktumik.” The English and French translations given here, “There was once a woman of marriageable age who was frequently wooed” and “Il était une fois une femme en âge

de se marier qui était souvent courtisée" echoes such well-known European storytelling formulae as "Once upon a time" or indeed "Il était une fois." In audiences familiar with such formulae this phrase both signals that the story proper has begun and evokes the experiential domain of storytelling itself. Although the Inuktitut "arnaqtaqalauqsimavuq," "there once was a woman" (literally "a woman-there-indefinite past-she") may not possess the same formulaic valence as expressions such as, for example, "taimnaguuq"; still, the indefinite past marker "-lauqsima-" (which is used only this once in the entire narrative), similarly places the narrative in an undefined or distant past. Whatever the case, the most important thing to note here with the opening of the story proper is that we are transported back, as Womack puts it in *Red on Red*, to "mythical beginnings" (91), which should not be understood as referencing an exclusively fictional domain of fantasy and fairy tales but rather something closer to what the creation stories of the Book of Genesis and the Gospel of John are evoking with their famous opening phrase "In the beginning." Kublu is thus reminding her audience "that the story's origins date back to that time when the culture's most important developments took place" —something which "increases rather than decreases the validity of the story" (91).

This being taken back, as it were, to mythical beginnings, prepares readers and auditors for everything else that follows. In line 2, we are told that this young woman "rejected all the suitors," something which, given that in traditional times marriages were almost always arranged by parents with little or no regard for individual desire (McDermott, "Introduction" 18) —and often in spite of clear protestations on the part of the wife-to-be (see for example Awa et al 36-42)— is itself another clue that we are operating outside the normal and the everyday.[33] The

[33] Marriage and sexual mores have changed dramatically over the last century. Although the elders tend to agree that arranged marriage was, on the whole, a good institution (Aupilaarjuk et al, *Perspectives* 43), there is extensive testimony —mostly from elder women, but also some elder men (see for example Victor Tungilik qtd. in Tungilik et al 58-59)— about the very real difficulties of arranged (and sometimes forced)

arrival and departure of the bull-caribou suitor, then, is not so much a dramatic lurch from the realm of the quotidian to the realm of the supernatural but rather an increasing in the *intensity* of the story (see Womack, *Red* 90). Next, there is a subtle introduction of what Womack terms "the communal point of view" (*Red* 90) in lines 5-6 when Kublu explains the origin of Uinigumasuittuq's name: "So, because she was wooed for a long time but never wanted to get married / they started calling her "She who never wants to get married [Uinigumasuittuq]".[34] It is true that the Inuktitut phrase "uinigumasuittuuniraqtauliq&uni" is probably a bit closer to the passive "she is now called Uinigumasuittuq" as opposed to the active "they started calling her Uinigumasuittuq," in which the "they" more directly references the Inuit community at large. Still, even an indirect allusion to how other community members (both then and now, it would seem) react to Uinigumasuittuq's reluctance to marry (namely, by giving her a nickname that draws attention to her peculiarities), functions to locate the story within the context of Inuit life generally as well as the unikkaaqtuat tradition specifically. However, the fact that we are never told the woman's *actual* name, her atiq —either here when she is Uinigumasuittuq or later when she is Takannaaluk (glossed as "the horrible one down there" (84))— effectively keeps her relational identity, that is, the place she occupies within a specific community and extended family, deliberately vague.[35]

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marriages in pre-settlement times. In *Saqiyuq*, Apphia Agalakti Awa recalls, "[m]y marriage, it isn't a nice story, it doesn't sound nice. I don't want people to be shocked. At first I didn't like my husband, I didn't like him at all" (36). See also Angmaalik et al 17-18; Aupilaarjuk et al, *Perspectives* 64-71, 75, 106; Ekho et al 26-30; Tungilik et al 22-24.

[34] 'Ui' means 'husband' in Inuktitut. Although Uinigumasuittuq is glossed here as "she who never wants to get married," a more precise translation would be "she who never wants to get a *husband*." This would tend to support the view that story addresses young women's anxieties regarding male sexuality specifically.

[35] Atiit will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter. For now, suffice it to say that the atiq (name or namesake) was a primarily a relational identity. According to Laugrand and Oosten, "[i]t was especially the name that made a human being a social person and distinguished him or her from animals

4. Characterization and Law

Besides, as we shall see, Uinigumasuittuq's two marriages, the important relationship here, the one driving the action and unifying the three tale-types, is the troubled relationship between father and daughter. The real action begins in lines 7-8, when we are told that Uinigumasuittuq's "father became angry [ninnga[q]-] with her because of her unwillingness to get married / and told her to take her dog as a husband, taking them off to an island." Particularly when reading this text from the perspective of law, certain questions present themselves here —and these in spite of the fact that we have been primed already for the supercharged reality of unikkaaqtuat. First of all, why exactly does the daughter persist so adamantly in her refusal to get a husband? Why does her father behave in such an unfatherly manner, forcing her to marry a dog, of all things? Why not select an eligible young man, someone who will be able to hunt for her and provide her with a good life, and simply insist (as, again, was not at all uncommon) that she marry him instead? Insofar as they address the context-specific intentions and motivations informing the two protagonists' seemingly baffling decisions, these kinds of questions —at least if they are to be answered in any sort of authoritative way— must ultimately be referred to Inuit community. Thus the observations that I offer up here and elsewhere are intended to be of a provisional nature only, requiring further discussion and clarification with knowledgeable cultural insiders (see Groft & Johnson 13).

In "Journeying North," Groft and Johnson explain the importance of attending to the "distinction between internal and 'intentional-state' understandings of people's actions" when

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and other beings that did not have names that defined their social identity" (127). In some regions (i.e. Nattilik territory) and in some versions of the story, the Sea Woman does possess an atiq (i.e. Nuliajuk) and there are individuals who carry her name (see for example Luke Nuliajuk qtd. in Aupilaarjuk et al, *Shamanism* 169). In other regions, Inuit seem to have preferred to use circumlocution when speaking of this mighty and feared spirit; thus there is Takannaaluk ("the terrible one down there"), Sanna/Sedna ("the one down there"), and numerous others (see Christopher, *Kappianaqtut* 14-15).

cultivating what they term ‘rich descriptions’ of traditional Indigenous texts (21). This distinction has significant implications for discussions of character as well as of law. As Groft and Johnson explain:

> Internal state understandings are common in settler society and Canadian law because of some taken-for- granted, individualistic, naturalistic ways of thinking. According to this perspective, an individual’s actions are understood as an expression of something ‘within’ them (for example, an expression of the ‘self’, or of ‘human nature’). In contrast, intentional state understandings lead to understanding people’s actions as founded on interconnection and communally shared principles or commitments. So, with respect to the stories, we might ask what intentional states, i.e. principles or commitments, inform peoples’ actions? (21).

In other words, we should not simply dismiss these characters as one-dimensional ‘types’ or exemplars of certain character traits. It is, of course, quite true that the daughter is unusually recalcitrant and that the father is, to put it mildly, a less-than-ideal parent. It is also quite true, as Rachel Qitsualik points out, that the story is “a great cautionary tale … a warning as to what can happen to those who are too picky” (“Problem” n.p.), but judicious critics will sense that there may be something more going on here. For cultural outsiders such as myself who have since childhood been inundated with European fairy tales and realist fiction, the challenge is to navigate between the dual extremes of, on the one hand, treating these two characters as if they were cartoon figures lacking any real complexity, and, on the other hand, treating them as if they had just stepped off the pages of *Middlemarch*. In short, following Groft and Johnson, readers should assume that the characters have reasons for choosing to behave as they do, but they should also avoid reading the story as if it were *primarily* an exposition of character.

The situation we have here at the outset of the story is complex, particularly when viewed from the perspective of law. It is undoubtedly accurate to say, as McDermott does in *Unikkaaqtuat: An Introduction to Inuit Myths and Legends*, that in pre-settlement times “a girl who refused to marry was … not simply exercising her own will but deliberately and

emphatically defying and rejecting the norms of Inuit society" ("Introduction" 18). However, any overly simplistic view of Uinigumasuittuq as some sort of deviant whose "behaviour threaten[s] the very existence of the group," which itself depends on the cooperation of the husband-wife dyad to ensure its survival (18), is complicated by the well-attested fact that many women (and some men) from the pre-settlement generation do, in fact, report having resisted their arranged marriages.[36] So if the Sedna unikkaaqtuaq is in fact a cautionary tale, it is also a therapeutic one, addressing what must have been one of the most anxiety-provoking events of a young woman's life.[37]

Another point —one that I will explore further in the next chapter, but that is worth mentioning here as well— is that, while the daughter's behaviour may not exactly be ideal, neither indeed is her father's. The specific term used here to describe the father's anger towards his daughter, the verb root "ninngaq-" —which is glossed as "to be annoyed or mad about something or someone" (Inuktitut Computing, "Roots") and which is often used in the context of losing one's temper (Kusugaq and Spalding, *Inuktitut* 70)— is far from being considered a desirable state of being. The late Inuit Studies scholar Jean Briggs, whose ethnography of the Central Arctic Utkuhikhalingmiut, *Never in Anger: Portrait of an Eskimo Family*, has quite

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[36] For example, Marie Tulimaaq: "[w]hen my husband came to fetch me and we were getting married my mother was scolding me, and I was crying. She said, 'Get dressed, put your parka and your kamiik on, and go with him.' She was scolding me. I had no choice but to follow him" (Aupilaarjuk et al, *Perspectives* 71).

[37] As Oosten and Laugrand observe, Inuaraq implicitly connects the Sea Woman story to the now-controversial and somewhat sensitive issue of arranged marriage, stating:

> In this situation as well the woman may not want to have the man as a husband. In fact from what I have heard most young women did not want to get married. I have personally spoken with women who did not want to get married, they have told me stories they can laugh about now but at the time of the marriage they were very unhappy they would even get to the point of being abusive. However the parents agreed and that was the way it was. A lot of people from these arranged marriages now compare themselves to those who were able to choose their spouses and looking at the divorce rate as it is today, they wonder if things are really better. (Inuaraq 259; see also *The Sea Woman* 49).

justifiably become an Inuit Studies classic, defines ninngaq- as either "to aggress physically against another" or "to feel or express hostility" (329) and emphasizes that, "among adults, there are no situations that justify *ningaq* feelings or behaviour, no people, Uktu or otherwise, toward whom it is permissible to express them" (333).

The expression of ninngaq- is also incompatible with the judicious exercise of isuma,' another Inuit concept which, as we have seen, is variously translated as thought, sense, intelligence, or feeling (Kusugaq & Spalding, Inuktitut 32-33), and which includes notions of reason, maturity, emotional self-control, personal responsibility, and voluntary compliance with social norms (McDermott, *Unikkaaqtuat* 288-293; see also Briggs 358-364, and Martin, *Stories* 55-57). Briggs' description of ninngaq- as implying, amongst other things, a highly objectionable state of poor temper and a lack of emotional control, also draws particular attention to its antisocial connotations. "Anger," she explains, "is incompatible with affection and nurturance, the highest values" (333); thus, "as a warm, protective, nurturant, even-tempered person represents the essence of goodness, so an unkind, bad-tempered person represents the opposite" (328).

Thus, even more than as a foil to isuma, ninngaq- can perhaps most helpfully be understood in contrast to naglik-, the verb root that is usually given for 'love' (dialectical variants: naklik-, nallik-; nominative form: nagliniq) and that encompasses a wide range of positive emotions, particularly nurturance and protectiveness (320-326). Briggs observes that naglik- "often occurs in opposition to terms expressing antisocial feelings and behaviour," including things such as "stinginess, greed, a reluctance to help or share with others, and expressions of bad temper" as in the generalized Utkurmiut term for antisocial behaviour, "naklingnangngittuq," which Briggs glosses as "not naklik," (323). Naglik-, then, is a "central value" for Inuit and "major criterion of human goodness" —particularly when expressed towards

vulnerable community members such as children, the sick or the elderly (323-324). Naglik- can also mean 'pity,' as in 'naglingnaktuq,' which can be glossed as "one who is loveable" or "one who is helpless or pitiable" (Kusugaq & Spalding, *Inuktitut* 60). It is the verb most frequently used to describe the love of a parent for their child and, by extension, the love of God for creation.

What all this means is that, as a parent, Uinigumasuittuq's father has an obligation to naglik-, to nurture and protect his daughter —indeed, it is this desire to ensure a good future for one's children that is presumably what underlies the practice of arranged marriage in the first place.[38] The father's actual behaviour, however, is the polar opposite of naglik-: he is irascible, demonstrating spectacularly poor judgment (isuma), and most emphatically not fulfilling his fatherly responsibilities —after all, the dog he forces his daughter to marry is unable to hunt for their family and must swim across the channel to beg food from him! Indeed, if as McDermott explains the unikkaaqtuat "had a teaching function and were often directed at an individual" or used "to expose and to correct behaviours that were considered unacceptable to the group" (*Unikkaaqtuat* 280), then it would seem that recalcitrant young women are not the only demographic singled out for particular attention.

5. The Animal Spouse

So it is not only the daughter's singularly uncooperative behaviour but also the father's apparent lack of isuma and naglingniq that sets the stage for the introduction of one of the unikkaaqtuat canon's most characteristic motifs: that of the animal spouse. As Martin observes in *Stories in a*

[38] See for example Apphia Awa: "I had no mother, and my father was afraid of me being an orphan, so he asked my husband's family if they would take me as their daughter-in-law. He knew that when he died I wouldn't be able to live alone, so he arranged a marriage for me. He arranged it out of love" (qtd. in Awa et al 37). Likewise Marie Tulimaaq: "[t]his was our parents way of ensuring that when they were no longer around, there would be someone to provide for us. This was why they had pre-arranged marriages" (qtd in Aupilaarjuk et al, *Perspectives* 65).

New Skin, these interspecies couplings are common feature of unikkaaqtuat, although readers and auditors familiar with the genre will observe that in most cases it is a man who takes on a non-human wife, as occurs for example with Angusugjuk and especially with Kiviuq (51; see also McDermott, "Introduction" 18). This motif is of course not unique to unikkaaqtuat; animal spouses exist in many literary traditions globally and possess a variety of culturally-specific meanings. In the Inuit oral tradition specifically, one can observe that these almost always temporary marriages with non-humans make frequent use of dramatic irony, are typically short-lived and rife with difficulties, and often hint at esoteric knowledge.[39] Such a marriage, then, is a clear signal of further complications to come.

There is a definite element of strangeness with the arrival of "a *qajaqer*, wearing caribou clothing" and sporting "his hair in a forehead topknot" (3, italics in the original), two obvious clues that the suitor in question is actually a pangniq, a bull-caribou, in disguise. We are told that "once again, this one too was rejected" (4), but it is not at all clear whether Uinigumasuittuq is aware of her suitor's nonhuman identity, or, if she is, whether this fact has any bearing on her decision to reject him along with all the others.[40] In terms of narrative structure, however, this brief (and seemingly unnecessary) episode actually serves to foreshadow the arrival of the Storm Bird in the second part of the story, whose appearance Kublu describes in parallel terms: "He was

[39] This is particularly evident in the Kiviuq cycle, where there seems to be a shamanic dimension to the hero's series of animal marriages, as if he were acquiring various tuurngait (helping spirits) as part of a shamanic journey (see Van Deusen 124-127; 244-245). In the case of Angusugjuk, although there are numerous clues that the new wife is actually a bear – she eats only fat, she rolls on her back in the snow, she is able to piggy-back her husband across the sea, etc.– the protagonist seems to be under some kind of spell, remaining confused about her identity and discovering her true nature only after passing a kind of elaborate trust exercise.

[40] In some variants there is a parade of suitors. See for example Rose Iqallijuq: "At first humans came to marry her but she declined their proposals. Afterwards, animals came by, and she also refused them. An *ugjuk* came in human form and then a caribou came in human form, but she refused them both. The *qaqulluq* came in human form arriving on a qajaq and wearing very silvery sealskin clothing" (qtd. in Aupilaarjuk et al, *Cosmology* 172).

dressed in sealskin, / he never took off his goggles and he never got out of his qajaq" (48-49). So the bird-man is dressed in sealskin instead of caribou (rather odd, considering that the sea mammals have not yet been created!), but he is still a qajaqer and there is definitely something weird about him. Kublu's deliberate echoing here of the caribou-man's prior courtship of Uinigumasuittuq serves to unify the two parts of the narrative —arguably even more so than her two successive marriages— and reflects the manner in which these two ostensibly separate tale-types have been creatively synthesized by the Iglulingmiut.

In the Eurowestern tradition, the male animal spouse (think *Beauty and the Beast*, *Iron Heinrich*) is often understood to represent female anxiety about arranged marriage and sexual initiation (see for example Tatar, "Beauty and the Beast" 25-32, 139; Darnton 280-291). Given what numerous Inuit elders have said about their own experiences with arranged marriage, such an interpretation certainly seems plausible. Such a reading of the Dog Husband episode becomes even more probable when one considers that, in the Inuit symbolic universe, 'dog' can signify 'penis' (see Merkur 129, Oosten, "Violent" 121, 124, 128, Laugrand & Oosten, *Inuit Shamanism* 105), with the (male) hunter and his dog seen as "[constituting] a physical whole" (Laugrand & Oosten, *Hunters* 172).[41] The Dog Husband does seem to be bit of an outlier, even as far as animal spouses go. Although in other versions of the Sedna story he is described in terms similar to the

[41] Possibly the most striking example of this is found in the unikkaaqtuaq of Aakulukjuusi and Uumaarniittuq mentioned by Kublu in her preface. According to a version collected by Franz Boas circa 1900, human children had originally been found in the snow and begin to gestate in the normal way only after the tarniq (soul) of an infant manages to climb up Uumaarnittuq's leg and into her womb. After the child has been born, it describes its experience in utero thus: "there I was in a small house. Every night when you cohabited, a dog would come in and vomit food for me to make me grow. Finally I longed to get outside; and when I got out, I wanted to speak, but all I could do was cry" (qtd. in Laugrand & Oosten, *Inuit Shamanism* 105).

caribou- and bird-men, appearing as a man or shape-shifting between forms, here, he is never anything other than her dog.[42]

But again, why a *dog*? It is precisely these kinds of questions that can be resolved satisfactorily only through consultation with knowledgeable cultural insiders. Of course —and Culler's hyper-protected cooperative principle notwithstanding— it is quite possible that there is nothing particularly significant about marriage with a dog; indeed, given that this first part of the story is several hundreds, if not thousands of years old, the Dog Husband has likely meant many things to many people. In exploring this question, it is important to keep in mind here that Inuit cosmology is governed by relationships rather than essentialist distinctions and that the divisions between humans, animals, and the various non-human spirit beings are permeable and fluid as opposed to absolute and fixed (see Laugrand & Oosten, *Inuit Shamanism* 256).[43]

For the purposes of law, then, marriage and reproduction with non-humans should probably be seen as belonging to the ontological domains of the 'not normal' and 'not recommended' (see for example Aupilaarjuk et al, *Cosmology* 68-69) as opposed to the 'not possible' and 'purely symbolic.'[44] When one student was asked, at the end of the NAC Inuit Studies course that resulted in the *Interviewing Inuit Elders: Cosmology and Shamanism*

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[42] Although this is not the case in Kublu's text, there are at least some variants in which the dog that the young woman is told to marry is the father's own dog, which hints at child sexual abuse and a grave violation of the incest (as well as, obviously, the bestiality) taboo (see Rasmussen cited in Oosten, "Violent Words" 122; see also Kennedy 214 and Kolinská 77). Such a reading would seem to be confirmed by Inuk author and artist Arlooktook Ipellie's 1993 short story, "Summit with Sedna, the Mother of the Sea Beast," a creative reimagining of Sedna as an woman who is unable to reach orgasm as a result of having been sexually abused by her father as a child (Ipellie 39).

[43] All sentient beings were understood to possess a soul, a tarniq, which survived physical death and could be reborn in a different form, as in the unikkaaqtuaq of Arnaqtaaqtuq, in which "a rejected fetus reincarnated time and again in different beings, such as dogs, seals, and caribou, until it was finally reborn as a human being" (Laugrand & Oosten, *Inuit Shamanism* 114)

[44] Indeed, the fact that the boundaries between human and non-humans are so tenuous may be the reason for why bestiality is understood to be such a grave prohibition – it threatens to dissolve the relational distinctions and identities that define the Inuit universe.

collection of interviews, whether she found it difficult to imagine things such as talking animals, ijirait, tarriassuit (invisible shadow people) or taking a dog for a husband, she replied:

> Not really. I believe in tarriassuit. I don't know about ijirait because I've never really heard much about them. But I do believe in tarriassuit. I also believe that animals can talk. When I was growing up, I was always told that animals could talk a long time ago. They could talk just like humans. I didn't find it strange that Sedna had a dog for a husband because in Inuit stories all sorts of things could turn into human-form, such as the ijirait, which could turn into humans or into caribou. So, for someone to laugh at this and say, "No way," it's kind of like telling an Inuk that you're stupid. So, whether I find it strange or not, I believe that people believe this and I believe this too. (qtd. in *Cosmology and Shamanism* 238)

Another student similarly answered: "No. It was not hard for me to imagine that. I think it was very possible, especially when Inuit had a closer relationship with the land" (242).

6. Paradox and Law

The extent to whether the young woman's marriage to a dog reflects some kind of underlying anxiety regarding male sexuality, or whether it simply depicts a taboo sexual liaison with a non-human, would seem to warrant further investigation. Still, it does not seem to be the real crux of the story, which, from beginning to end, turns on what can only be described as a highly dysfunctional relationship between the Sea Woman and her father. In Kublu's text, Uinigumasuittuq's father first forces her to marry her dog, and then, in a spectacularly egregious display of bad temper, murders his son-in-law by filling his dog-pack with rocks instead of food when he swims across the channel to fetch provisions for his wife and children. The reason given here for the father's puzzling, antisocial actions is again linked to ninngaq-: "when he discovered he had pups for grandchildren he became very angry [ninngaktummarialuugilluni]" (15); there is also an implicit suggestion that he is annoyed with his son-in-law's "coming so often to get meat" after the pups have arrived (12). But again, *why* is he so angry? Surely all this is his own doing — after all, he is the one who arranged his daughter's marriage to a non-human animal— perhaps he

regrets his earlier rashness. Certainly, the fact that she has to send her Dog Husband, who apparently is unable to provide for the family himself, to fetch food from her father demonstrates that he did a pretty poor job in selecting a mate for her. But still, it is not at all clear how making his daughter a widow will make things any better.

The more we look closely at what is happening here, the more questions emerge, questions which defy easy explanation. For example: what exactly is the father's motivation for killing his son-in-law? If he dislikes having puppies for grandchildren, why does he not try to get rid of *them* instead? He does not seem to be particularly bothered by the dog's coming to get provisions until after the puppies are born and the family's meat consumption increases, but, practically speaking, the only thing that changes after he has succeeded in murdering his son-in-law is that now he must bring them their food himself (22-23). If anything, he is considerably inconvenienced by the dog's death!

The father's propensity to act rashly, to regret his rash decisions, and then make even more rash decisions, seems to be something of a character trait for him. But although the daughter garners considerably more sympathy from us, it must be noted that she is none too practical-minded herself, as can be seen when she instructs her puppy-children to chew their grandfather's "qajaq to pieces / because he made you fatherless" (25-26). Indeed, while her desire for revenge is certainly understandable, the act of revenge itself is needlessly destructive and self-defeating; after all, she still needs someone to hunt for her! In terms of plot and character development, Uinigumasuittuq's actions here set her up as someone who may be a bit prone to ninngaq- herself, and who certainly will not hesitate to retaliate against those who injure her — incidentally two of the Sea Woman's defining characteristics. Even so, the most immediate consequence of her destroying her father's means of transportation is that the lot of them are all now effectively trapped on the island together with no way of obtaining food.

My motivation in pointing out all these puzzles and inconsistencies, here and elsewhere, is not to criticize or deconstruct Kublu's text, but rather to show how the narrative's very structure compels us to reflection, consultation, and discussion. Indeed, as Kimberly Roppolo (Cherokee, Choctaw, Creek) observes, one important "difference" regarding Indigenous versus non-Indigenous styles of argumentation "is the valuing of, as opposed to the need to resolve definitively, paradox in the argument"; thus "confusion *can be* a positive value, it is the nexus of growth, as it makes people think for themselves" (307, author's emphasis). In articulating the many ways in which unikkaaqtuat provide the foundation for traditional law, Groft and Johnson make a similar observation:

> [The stories] invite the listener to consider the problems presented in the stories, and the responses to these problems. The stories often contain contradictions that invite the listener to try to make sense of them. Listeners can consider whether or not they agree with the actions taken by the characters in the story, and they can take a stance with respect to the characters actions and the outcome. The indeterminacy of Inuit stories also makes possible debate, discussion, argument, critique, application and reasoning regarding the legal principles and practices derived from them. (11-12)

Thus while "it is certainly the case that stories may contain seemingly strange happenings, especially to those who are non-Inuit, or to those new to the Inuit stories," if we assume at the outset "that Indigenous peoples are reasonable and reasoning people, and that stories are ways of recording information and tools for thinking, then the seemingly strange aspects must somehow make sense"; indeed, "the listener is forced to consider how this might be so" (12)

7. Poetics and Law

But of course, not only do stories encourage thought, they also encourage emotion. In this particular text, the Dog Husband's death by drowning is described with a muted poignancy that is underscored both by Kublu's sparse, matter-of-fact phrasing and by the strategic manner in which

the words are set on the page —a kind of formal mirroring of the exhausted, heavy-laden dog slowly slipping beneath the waves:

> [18] **qimmiq qikiqtamut utiqpallialiraluaq&uni**
> As the dog, was slowly returning to the island,
>
> [19] **aqtuqsaluamut qitiqparaluaq&uni sanngiilivallialirami**
> he only got as far as the middle before he gradually lost strength because of the heaviness he felt.
>
> [20] **asuilaak**
> And so
>
> [21] **kivivuq.**
> he sank.

Once again we are reminded that the text is performance and are invited not only to analyse but also to experience it as such.[45] We are invited to notice, for example, that the verb root used here to describe the Dog Husband's death, kivi-, "to sink in the water" (Inuktitut Computing, "Roots"), is the same one used later to describe the daughter's death in the third part of the story: "arnaq kivigami imaup iqqanganirmiutauliq&uni (When the woman sank, she became a dweller of the sea floor)" (73). Formally, this parallel depiction of the two murders serves to unify further the tripartite narrative by emphasizing the father's moral culpability for both deaths and by foreshadowing his eventual fate in Takannaaluk's undersea abode as the post-mortem tormentor of his fellow moral reprobates. The destructive acts committed by the father, then, are to be understood *and to be experienced* as grave moral violations with terrible consequences; any moral high ground that he may have occupied on account of his having to deal with a stubborn

[45] The effect is quite different when the are lines rendered in paragraph form with the Inuktitut omitted, as is the case in Laugrand and Oosten's *Inuit Shamanism and Christianity*: "As the dog was slowly returning to the island, he only got as far as the middle before he gradually lost strength because of the heaviness he felt. And so he sank" (153).

and unruly daughter is wholly lost when he murders, first his son-in-law, and then, what is worse, his own daughter.

Another poignant episode inviting close stylistic analysis is the creation story found at the end of the Dog Husband tale, which explains the origin of various non-Inuit human and human-like beings, and which can be compared with the other, even more famous origin story in the Creation of the Sea Mammals episode. As already noted, this episode is precipitated by puppies' destruction of the father's qajaq, an event whose main consequence is that now the entire family is stranded on the island without a provider. And so, because "The little pups were gradually getting bigger / and because the poor things often got hungry their mother prepared to send them off" (33-34), "dividing them into three groups of three … [telling] them about their destinations … and [impressing] upon them what they would have to do (35-36):

> [37] **aullaqtirngautaujani taununga nigiup miksaanut aullaquvait**
> She told the first group she sent away to head down towards the south.
>
> [38] **pisiksilijatuinnaq&utik. taakkua iqqilinnguq&utik.**
> They had only bows and arrows, and these became Indians.
>
> [39] **aullaqtimmijani atungavinirmik umialiqtippait uqautillunigit**
> She made a boat out of an old boot-sole for the next ones she sent away, telling them,
>
> [40] **"umiarjuakkuurlusi utirumaarivusi." taakkua qallunaannguq&utik.**
> "You will come back by ship." These ones became qallunaat.
>
> [41] **taakkua kingulliqpaat aullanngikkaluarlutik**
> The last ones were not told to go away; however,
>
> [42] **inungnut takuksauvanngituinnaquvait. taakkua ijiranguq&utik.**
> she told them simply that they should be unseen by people. These became ijirait (the unseen people who show up as caribou).

Even those lacking much familiarity with the Inuit language can perceive here Kublu's use of parallelism and repetition. The demonstrative "taakkua" (those ones), for example, occurs four times in this passage, effectively marking off each separate act of creation; likewise, the parallel

phrasing of "iqqilinnguq&utik" (iqqiliq-become-they), "qallunaannguq&utik" (qallunaaq-become-they), and "ijiranguq&utik" (ijiraq-become-they), endows the event with a kind of ritualistic, melancholic finality. Readers and auditors awakened thus to the affective experience of story may discern a sense of ancient distance, an absolute rupture between then and now.

The effect is somewhat different in the Creation of the Sea Mammals episode, which is given in the third part of the story immediately following the father's throwing Uinigumasuittuq overboard:

> [69] **pania suuqaimma qajanganik pakiniksilluni.**
> Naturally his daughter grabbed hold of his qajaq.
>
> [70] **iputiminut anaulituinnalauraluaq&uniuk savingminut aggangit ulammaaliqpait**
> He hit her with his paddle, and (when that didn't work) he chopped off her fingers.
>
> [71] **nakapalliajut imaanuaraangamik imarmiutannguqpalliallutik.**
> As the parts that were chopped off fell into the water, they became the sea-mammals.
>
> [72] **nattiqtaqaliq&unilu ugjuktaqaliq&unilu, qilalugaqtaqaliq&unilu.**
> There now were seals, and square-flippers, and beluga.

Here, as opposed to a solemn, ritualistic sending-off, we have an act of horrific violence whose shocking brutality stands in stark contrast to the matter-of-fact, almost clinical, manner in which it is reported. As before, there is a list given of the various marine species created from Uinigumasuittuq's mutilated hands, a list whose formulaic repetition of complete phrases: "nattiqtaqaliq&unilu ugjuktaqaliq&unilu, qilalugaqtaqaliq&unilu" ("ring seal-have-now-they-and, square flipper seal-have-now-they-and, beluga-have-now-they-and") —although somewhat obscured by the more elliptical English (and French) translations— again functions to endow the primordial event with a feeling of solemn definitiveness.

8. Conclusion: Law and Relationality

In terms of cosmology, we can tentatively observe that Uinigumasuittuq's first set of children, the litter of pups, establishes an ancestral link between the Inuit, First Nations, Qallunaat, and ijirait communities, whereas the second set, the ones borne of her mutilated finger-joints, establishes a link between the Inuit community and the marine mammals. The story thus provides a kind of overarching genealogy for the many human and non-human beings that inhabit the Inuit world. As I will discuss in greater detail in the following chapter, it is this complex network of kinship relationships that provides the foundation for law in an Inuit context.[46] Interestingly, given that the sea-dwellers are emanations of Uinigumasuittuq's actual body, there is a sense in which these particular species of wildlife are actually more fully 'inuk,' that is, more fully human, than their older half-siblings, who seem to be half-human, half-canine.[47] But at any rate, given the that the

[46] In looking at other versions of the story, there is a certain amount of variation regarding the exact inventory of human and non-human races that are said to descend from the woman and the Dog Husband, which can include: the Qallunaat, (Caucasians, generally Anglophone whites); the Allait or Itqitlit (non-Inuit First Nations such as the Cree or Dene); the ijirait, the inugarulligait (dwarves); the Tuniit (the Inuit term for the Dorset culture, a Paleo-Eskimo people who lived in the Inuit homeland prior to the Thule migration); and even the Inuit themselves (see Laugrand & Oosten, *Inuit Shamanism* 170-171). Some versions may also contain additional information about the nature and behaviour of these non-Inuit races, particularly Qallunaat and Iqqilit, demonstrating the manner in which oral narrative functions to preserve diverse types of cultural lore as well as accommodate and interpret new information and experiences. For example, a Nattilingmiut variant states that the woman who married a dog "chose the most horrible among them, those that were half man and half dog … and made them sail over to the mainland … [making] magic over them and … [shouting] that they were always to be at enmity with people … this is how the Itqitlit became wicked people, and there has always been enmity between them and the Inuit" (qtd. in Laugrand & Oosten, *Inuit Shamanism* 171). According to Rasmussen's informant Kuvdliutsuq, the Qallunaat ancestors were placed by Nuliajuk in a leaky boat requiring constant bailing, which explains "the peculiarity of white men who are always in a hurry and have much to do" (qtd. in Grant 200).

[47] Likewise, and as Kublu herself mentions in the preface, there is also considerable variation in terms of the marine species originating from Sedna's severed fingers. Kublu, who is from Igloolik, identifies the animal species as ring seals, bearded seals, and belugas, but omits walruses and narwhals for the reason that their origins are accounted for in other Iglulingmiut creation stories (Angmaalik et al 152). Other regions list salmon, walrus, baleen whales, narwhals, and even polar bears as the emanations of her "rhizomatic" body (Kolinská 74; see also Merkur 133). Sharks are also within her sway of command,

Inuit cultural landscape more closely resembles an ever-shifting network of relationships than a rigidly defined 'Great Chain of Being,' the important thing to keep in mind here is that all of Uinigumasuittuq's children, to some extent at least, are seen as belonging to the Inuit universe and are therefore subject to the responsibilities and obligations implied therein.

Non-Inuit cultural outsiders such as myself may be rather surprised to find themselves featured in an Inuit creation story, to learn that not only has their ancestry been traced all the way back to the Sea Woman and her dog, but also that they share this unique pedigree with both the Dene and the ijirait —and, what is more, that they are half-siblings of the seals and belugas.[48] What the inclusion of Qallunaat and Iqqilit in Kublu's text signifies in terms of law is, as befits the open-ended oral-traditional aesthetic, not set in stone. But without a doubt, whatever meaning we derive from this must be inextricably linked to this complex network of relationships and moral obligations that define the Inuit cosmos. Qallunaat such as myself may not be members of the Inuit community as such, but we are all nevertheless part of the same world and subject to the laws (as it were) of nature (see Napoleon 6-7). Besides showing respect for land and wildlife, all those who aspire, as Borrows puts it, to "live well in the world" (*Drawing* 16, 198), will comport themselves with an attitude of kindness, helpfulness, humility, and even-temperedness. They will exercise isuma by demonstrating mature judgment and conforming voluntarily to social norms, and they will naglik- their loved ones and vulnerable members of their communities.

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although they are commonly understood to somehow originate from her urine pot, which explains their characteristic flavour (Laugrand & Oosten, *Hunters* 315).

[48] According to Merkur, given that the Qallunaat motif was already present in Greenland during in the eighteenth century and "has been recorded as far west as Port Clarence, Alaska," it is possible that it may have referred to "a lost race or perhaps a class of spirits" before being modified after contact with Europeans (128), thus exemplifying the manner in which a living oral tradition must continually update itself to remain relevant, or, as Alfred Lord famously puts it "the songs and stories from the past serve the goals of the present for the sake of the future" ("Characteristics" 63).

What this means for literary analysis —that is, for reading and writing well in the world— is for critics such as myself to endeavour to connect with verbal art forms on the terms of their culturally-defined relationships with the society from which they arise. This may mean acknowledging that certain parts of the text are enigmatic or difficult. This involves watching and listening for metacommunicative cues that enable readers and auditors —both individually and as part of larger audiences or communities— to respond to texts and performances in ways appropriate to their implicit and explicit goals and functions. This involves endeavouring to become mindful of history and context, to pay attention to both form and content, and to encounter these stories on both an intellectual and experiential level. All of this is needed for a reading of Uinigumasuittuq as a source of law.

UINIGUMASUITTUQ [cont.]

[43.] **ataatagiik piqatituariilirillutik.**
Once again the father and daughter were alone

[44.] **ammailaak arnaq nulianiktuqtauvakkannilirilluni.**
and once again the woman was often courted,

[45.] **suli narruvak&uni nuliaqtaarumajuugaluanik.**
but she still rejected those who wanted her as a wife.

[46.] **tikittuqa&&aqpuq angijuttiavaaluuqquujilluni**
Then there arrived someone who appeared to be nicely big;

[47.] **arnaullu angutittiavaaluuqquujigigilluniuk.**
the woman also thought that he seemed to be handsome.

[48.] **qisingnik annuraaqsimalluni**
He was dressed in sealskin,

[49.] **iggaanginnaq&unilu qajarminillu niulaurani.**
he never took off his goggles and he never got out of his *qajaq*.

[50.] **angutittiavauqquujininganugguuq uinigumasuittuup narruginngirulutainnaqpaa.**
Because he seemed to be handsome, so they say, the one-who-never-wanted-to-marry finally did not reject him.

[51.] **asuilaak nuliaqtaarijaujumatillugu angirulutainnarmat aullarujjauvuq.**
And so, when she at last agreed to be taken as a wife, she was taken away.

[52.] **aullaqsimaqsaliqtillugik qikiqtalinnamik uitaarijaa quijaqturumaliqpuq.**
After they had been gone for a while and they got to an island, her new husband wanted to urinate.

[53.] **niupalaagaajjungmat niurlaalungik naittullaaluuk;**
When he finally got around to getting out, his ugly tiny legs were disgustingly short;

[54.] **amma iggaipalaagaajjungmat ijingik amikinnikumut auppatut!**
and when at last he bothered to take off his goggles, his lidless eyes ... how red!

[55.] **sunauvvauna uitaarulua qaqulluruluk.**
So there he was, her awful new husband, a wretched fulmar.

[56.] **arnaq kamairrisimalluni uitaaruluni uqautivaa “usiummalu angijuttiavaaluujutit”.**
The woman, in shock, said to her new husband, “But I thought you were a fine big fellow.”

[57.] **qaqulluruluguuq inngiqsilluni, “ikurrattiakka ahahahahaha,**
So then, they say, the ugly fulmar started to sing, “My beautiful pin tail feathers, ahahahahaha,

[58.] **ijaujaarjuakaa ahahahahaha.”**
my grand goggles, ahahahahaha.”

[59.] **sunauvvauna papingminik ikurraqsimannirami angijuttiavauqquujijuviniq.**
And so, because he had been propped up by his tail feathers, he had looked to her eyes as if he was a fine big fellow.

[60.] **uinigumasuittuuniku qaqullungmik uiqassuujaliq&luni**
Because of her unwillingness to get married, she now had a fulmar husband, for a long time,

[61.] **kipinngullakpak&unilu, ugguaqtualuugalualiq&unilu**
and she was extremely lonely, and very regretful

[62.] **narrutuluaqpalaurnirminik nuliaqtaarumavalauqtuugaluanik.**
of her pickiness in refusing all those who had come courting.

[63.] **qanganngukallaktillugu ataatanga niurrulluni paningminik takujaqtuq&uni.**
After a fairly long time, her father came all the way to visit his daughter.

[64.] **pimmatuktauttianngittuqsiarigamiuk aullarutinasuliqpaa.**
Because he found her to be neglected, he tried to arrange for her to leave.

[65.] **ungavaqparaluaq&utik qaqulluruluk angirrarami,**
When they had gone some distance, the fulmar arrived home,

[66.] **nuliani aullarujjaujuqsiarigamiuk maliksaq&luni.**
and realizing his wife had been taken, he followed.

[67.] **anngutivalliajunniirami anuuraaliqtitaalugilluniuk taakkuak ataatagiik maliksiuqtualuuliq&utik.**
Because he couldn’t catch up, he made a great wind, and the father and daughter were caught by huge waves.

[68.] **kinnguniatuinnaliramik ittuup panini singi&&uniuk imaanut.**
Because they were inevitably going to capsize, the old man threw his daughter into the water.

(Angmaalik et al., *Introduction* 157-159)

CHAPTER 4: KINSHIP AND COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE

1. Background and Context

In this second section of the story, wherein "once again the father and daughter [are] alone" together and "once again the woman [is] often courted" but "[rejects] those who [want] her as a wife" (43-45), there is a sense in which the tale seems to be restarting itself. This second time around, as it were, the questions that emerge are both similar and different. Why, for example, does the young woman persist in resisting marriage? Her reluctance cannot be attributed to shyness or sexual inexperience in this instance, for, in Kublu's text at least, she has already been both wife and mother. What then, are her reasons? Is it because she is overwhelmed with grief and/or rage following the murder of her first husband and subsequent separation from her dog-children? Perhaps she just simply has no desire to be remarried —no desire, that is, until the arrival of the Storm Bird.

Whereas the Dog Husband is an ancient tradition found across arctic America and Siberia (Laugrand & Oosten, *Inuit Shamanism* 375), the so-called Storm Bird tale-type appears to be a more recent innovation limited in distribution to eastern Canada and Greenland (156; see also Merkur 130). Except amongst certain of the Nattilingmiut, the woman in the story is almost always identified as the Sea Woman and the tale-type almost always serves as a preface the Creation of the Sea Mammals episode —though it only appears to have been combined with the Dog Husband narrative in the Iglulik and Qikiqtaaluk regions. Rarely, and as far as I can tell only in these regions, the Dog Husband may replace the Storm Bird as a preface to the Creation of the Sea Mammals episode.[49] Certainly the fact that both tale-types feature a young woman who

[49] See for example George Agiaq Kappianaq: "In one story she had a dog for a husband and in another story she had a fulmar for a husband" (qtd. in Kappianaq et al 79). See also Lucassie Nutaraaluk's telling of the story in Aupilaarjuk et al, *Perspectives* 188-189 and Susan Inuaraq's in "Traditional Law Among the Inuit" 9255-256).

initially resists marriage only to end up marrying an animal suggests a natural correspondence between the two tale-types; thus, depending on the logic of the narrative and the needs of the community, they may remain separate, be joined together, or be substituted one for the other. As I will explain in greater detail in the following chapter, the Storm Bird narrative also evokes the unikkaaqtuaq of the three young girls and the Pretend Husbands, especially insofar as it suggests to us the tantalizing possibility of an alternate ending. It is this kind of intricate, multidimensional 'layering' of the traditional oral text which provides it with its characteristic adaptability and relevance over time and space.

Kublu's own performance of the tale is a paradigmatic example of the manner in which the individual artistic genius —the so-called first 'layer' that that I have identified— is simultaneously *constituted by* and *constitutive of* the many other familial and regional traditions —the so-called second 'layer'— out of which the text emerges (see also Lord, "Characteristics" 62). As we have seen, Kublu's Uinigumasuittuq is a unique artistic creation making strategic use of formulaic language and stylistic devices to structure the Inuktitut 'original' while also employing various other metacommunicative techniques, such as line breaks and bolded typeface, to guide interpretation of the line-by-line English translation. At the same time, however, the text is quite reflective of how this particular unikkaaqtuaq has taken shape in the Iglulik region and has been handed down to her by her father. Uinigumasuittuq is a story about family relationships, and as I have outlined above, the many events surrounding its composition, performance, and publication are themselves very much a family and a community affair. Thus, Kublu's decision to compose, record, and preface her story in such a way that she is consciously participating in the creative traditions of her home community constitutes a purposeful activation of the various familial, regional and pan-Inuit kinship networks in which both she and the

unikkaaqtuaq are situated, and a deliberate appeal to the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit contained therein.

In the preface, Kublu indirectly suggests a way in which the three tale-types associated with the origin of the Sea Woman could have been brought together by her predecessors when she describes how she herself performed a similar synthesis on the five stories included in her own "Aningagiik: Brother and Sister Legends" group of tales.[50] Describing her own creative process, Kublu explains: "When I was putting together "*Aningagiik*" I finally realized that all those snippets of stories of Aningagiik that I had heard were sagas of the same brother and sister pair and therefore put it together as I did" (151). Similar syntheses seem to have taken place with other stories from the unikkaaqtuat tradition, such as the Kiviuq cycle, which likewise exists in variant forms across Inuit Nunaat and likewise incorporates various tale-types into its overall structure (see Van Deusen 336). This subsuming of a range of related stories into a larger narrative framework is characteristic of orally-derived texts cross-culturally (the Hebrew Bible and *The One Thousand and One Nights* being two obvious examples), a phenomenon which speaks to the fluid and intertextual nature of these traditional stories, the depth and richness of the teachings embedded therein, and finally the manner in which both the stories and the teachings are, in a phenomenological sense, 'always already' emerging and re-emerging from the living culture in which they are performed.

This second section of my reading of Uinigumasuittuq as a source of law, while continuing to make note of the various literary features which function to guide readers and auditors through Kublu's performance, will focus on kinship and affective relationships. In

[50] The five stories are, in order: "Aninganga qaqsaurmut tautuliqtitaq: Brother receives sight from a loon," "Arnaksangak tuugaalinnguqtuq: Their stepmother becomes a narwhal," "Kukilingiattiaraaluit: The ones with long nails," "Itiqanngittut: The ones without anuses," and finally "Aningagiik taqqirlu siqininnguqtuuk: Brother and sister become the sun and the moon."

looking at the young woman's predicament as the unhappy wife/captive of the Storm Bird and the father's inability/unwillingness to rescue her from this marriage, we will see how the complex networks of love, belonging, and accountability that provide the basis for law and governance in an Inuit context are conspicuous in their absence. We will also examine the Canadian government's attempts to suppress the Inuit kinship systems by means of coerced renaming and residential schooling. Finally, drawing upon the work of Indigenous artist-scholars Billy-Ray Belcourt (Cree) and Leanne Simpson (Nishnaabeg), I will suggest that Kublu's own performance of the story, insofar as it is a continuation of the traditional practice of unikkaaqtuat within families and communities, can be understood as an act of decolonial love, a tool for the reactivation of those very relationships and lifeways that the Canadian settler state sought to extinguish.

2. Uinigumasuittuq's Desire

As is the case with the Dog Husband, the Storm Bird tale-type revolves around both the ill-fated marriage between a young woman and an animal and the less-than-exemplary actions taken by her father in response to that marriage. In this second section of the story, however, considerably more attention is given to the sexual and emotional dynamics between bird-husband and human-wife. The animal spouse motif reappears with the arrival of the Storm Bird, but this time the young woman consents, and even *desires*, to marry the strange visitor. After, presumably, another parade of would-be husbands has come and gone, a new suitor arrives, "someone who appeared to be nicely big [angijuttiavaaluuqquujilluni]" (36). We are told that "the woman also thought that he seemed to be handsome [angutittiavaaluuqquujigigilluniuk]" (46-47) and that "[b]ecause he seemed to be handsome, so they say [angutittiavauqquujininganugguuq], the one-who-never-wanted-to-marry [uinigumasuittuup] finally did not reject him" (50).

Again there is a subtle resurfacing here of the communal point of view with the -guuq suffix (the same one found in 'taimnaguuq') indicating reported discourse (Inuktitut Computing, "Suffixes"), a kind of formal reminder of the unikkaaqtuat genre that functions both to place the story within community history and to raise a flag that something significant —significant enough to have been passed along from generation to generation at least— is now occurring within the narrative. Apparently, the young woman's sudden passion for her seemingly handsome suitor overpowers her judgment, causing her to ignore his strange behaviours of "never [taking] off his goggles and never [getting] out of his *qajaq*" (49) for the entire duration of their (admittedly short) courtship. Although amongst other versions of the tale, there is considerable variation in terms of how much she is actually deceived by the bird-man before agreeing to elope, in Kublu's text there are definite red flags that something is not right —and in any case the marriage quickly turns sour. So while Uinigumasuittuq remains blissfully —or perhaps willfully— unaware of the danger hanging over her head, readers and auditors will discern these warning signs, and a feeling of suspense will be generated as the audience anticipates both the inevitable uncovering of Uinigumasuittuq's deception and the horrifying disaster that follows.

Crucially, it is only after her new husband has taken her away and there is no longer any possibility of escape that Uinigumasuittuq discovers she has been tricked. In contrast to the preceding scene, which emphasizes the young woman's nascent sexual desire with repeated references to the bird-man's supposed tall stature and attractiveness, this passage emphasizes her sudden revulsion:

> [52] **aullaqsimaqsaliqtillugik qikiqtalinnamik uitaarijaa quijaqturumaliqpuq.**
> After they had been gone for a while and they got to an island, her new husband wanted to urinate.
>
> [53] **niupalaagaajjungmat niurlaalungik naittullaaluuk;**
> When he finally got around to getting out, his ugly tiny legs were disgustingly short;

[54] **amma iggaipalaagaajjungmat ijingik amikinnikumut auppatut!**
and when at last he bothered to take off his goggles, his lidless eyes ... how red!

[55] **sunauvvauna uitaarulua qaqulluruluk.**
So there he was, her awful new husband, a wretched fulmar.

[56] **arnaq kamairrisimalluni uitaaruluni uqautivaa "usiummalu angijuttiavaaluujutit".**
The woman, in shock, said to her new husband, "But I thought you were a fine big fellow."

[57] **qaqulluruluguuq inngiqsilluni, "ikurrattiakka ahahahahaha,**
So then, they say, the ugly fulmar started to sing, "My beautiful pin tail feathers, ahahahahaha,

[58] **ijaujaarjuakaa ahahahahaha."**
my grand goggles, ahahahahaha."

[59] **sunauvvauna papingminik ikurraqsimannirami angijuttiavauqquujijuviniq.**
And so, because he had been propped up by his tail feathers, he had looked to her eyes as if he was a fine big fellow.

By this point, course, it is too late for Uinigumasuittuq to change her mind, and what began — from her point of view at least— as a passionate elopement, has now devolved into an out-and-out bride-kidnapping. The Storm Bird's gleeful outburst upon the uncovering of his means of deception ("ikurrattiakka ahahahahaha … ijaujaarjuakaa ahahahahaha" —perhaps a kind of onomatopoeic sea-bird call)[51] exists in quite similar forms across the region and seems to be an important part of the tale's formulaic and thematic backbone (see for example Rose Iqallijuq qtd. in Aupilaarjuk et al, *Cosmology* 172), providing as it does a linguistic touchstone to emphasize the bird-man's gleeful treachery from telling to telling. The -guuq suffix also reappears in line 57, likewise evoking the communal and meta-traditional points of view at this critical juncture of the story.

[51] I am indebted to Laura Beard here for the observation that the Storm Bird's laughter imitates a birdcall.

The cautionary dimension of the story identified by Qitsualik above is particularly evident here when we are explicitly told that "Because of her unwillingness to get married [uinigumasuittuuniku], she now had a fulmar husband, for a long time / and she was extremely lonely, and very regretful / of her pickiness in refusing all those who had come courting" (60-62). That the young woman's misery and social isolation constitute some kind of poetic justice for her earlier pickiness may strike modern readers unfamiliar with the tale as unnecessarily harsh, not to mention somewhat inaccurate —after all, it could be argued that she is in this predicament not because she was too picky but because she was not picky *enough*! However, as Martin observes in her discussion of the Sedna narrative, these kinds of rigid, knee-jerk judgments and interpretations may not reflect the story's intended meaning —assuming there is such a thing— as much as they "[reflect] the seemingly unavoidable need on the part of the audience to distill the complexities of an unfamiliar or unsettling text down to a set of easily-understood principles" (189).

It is quite true, as Qitsualik observes, that the tale warns against pickiness and teaches (amongst other things) that, "as bad as you think things are, it can always get worse —somehow, a very Inuktitut lesson" ("Problem" n.p.). It is also probably quite true that most contemporary audiences would very much sympathize with, rather than shake their heads at, a strong-minded female character who resists arranged marriage. For the purposes of this chapter, however, the point to which I would like to draw attention is not so much that the disobedient, overly fastidious daughter 'got what she deserved,' or that young women should 'beware seductive qajaqers' but, more broadly, that she is trapped in an unhappy marriage, far from home and far from the support (such that it is) of her kin and of the larger community. Married to a sea-bird, Uiniguamasuittuq is completely cut off from human society and completely unable to activate the kinds of support networks which could conceivably intervene on her behalf. This is a quite

different state of affairs from her earlier marriage, and also probably quite unlike most traditional marriages (see for example Niutaq 139-140; 142-143).

3. 'Doubly Listening'

In looking at this larger context, it is essential to keep in mind that Kublu herself first learned the story from her own much-loved father when she was a young girl. Unikkaaqtuat were, and still are, very much a part of 'family time' in traditional Inuit culture. Elder Mariano Aupilaarjuk fondly recalls this aspect of storytelling: "I would picture what [my mother] was telling me with my eyes closed. Then I would fall asleep … I used to love it when my mother was telling me a story" (qtd. in McDermott, "Unikkaaqtuat" 19). Likewise in *Perspectives on Traditional Law,* Lucassie Nutaraaluk recounts: "My uncle was not reluctant at all to tell me these stories, especially when we were out hunting and sleeping overnight on the land. He would tell a lot of these stories to me because I was a child. I was a small boy, and to pass time he used to tell me a lot of stories" (Aupilaarjuk et al 195). As McDermott observes:

> What emerges from these descriptions is a picture of close family relationships with children and adults brought together by the comforting imaginative power of stories … For many Inuit children this was a routine that they experienced every day without realising they were cementing their family ties through the intimacy of the setting while learning their history and culture through listening to *unikkaaqtuat.* ("Unikkaaqtuat" 295).

It is first and foremost in imagining its embeddedness in a culturally-specific, linguistically-coded web of affective kinship bonds, I believe, which will enable critics to understand how the story operates as a source of law, even as it contains troubling, politically incorrect elements, and even as its characters frequently behave in confusing and unpleasant ways. Certainly, Kublu's description of the warm, loving relationship that existed between herself and her own father stands in sharp contrast with Uinigumasuittuq's own extremely dysfunctional and disorganized attachments. As McDermott argues, although readers who "lack the explanation or exegesis of

knowledgeable contemporary Inuit" may take away from the unikkaaqtuat "a world full of cruelty, murder, and chaos," nevertheless, if they accept "the premise that these stories had two main purposes, to entertain and to teach" —and this within the context of a closely-knit family and community life— "then it is possible to begin to understand that there is a consistently implied message throughout," namely, that "behind all the chaos, violence, and gratuitous cruelty the stories point to what the norm is and ought to be" ("Introduction" 22-23).

We are given a brief glimpse of this 'norm' when, "after a fairly long time" (63), the father decides to visit his unhappy daughter and, perhaps for the first time in the story, demonstrates a genuine concern for her welfare: "[b]ecause he found her to be neglected [pimmatuktauttianngittuqsiarigamiuk], he tried to arrange for her to leave" (64). Particularly for cultural outsiders such as myself, it is hard to know exactly what the father is feeling here, though protectiveness, empathy, remorse, outrage, or even exasperation would all seem intelligible in this situation. From the perspective of law, however, the salient point is that Uinigumasuittuq is being "neglected."[52] The world evoked by this story is hardly a feminist utopia, but her husband nevertheless has certain obligations and is failing to uphold them —so much so that his father-in-law, of all people, recognizes a need to remove her from the marriage.

Unfortunately for Uinigumasuittuq, this long-overdue fatherly concern proves to be short-lived. When the "fulmar arrive[s] home" and "realize[s] that his wife ha[s] been taken," he

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[52] The Inuktitut here (pimmatuktauttianngittuqsiarigamiuk) is difficult to render into English. According to Chris Trott:

> This is a real bugger of a term. pi- meaningless root that allows you to get at the meaning of the suffixes, -mma- to sustain something over time, -tuk third person in this case one who, -tau- passive voice, -tiak well, good, -nngit- negative, -tuq- third person one who, -siar- to search after, -ri- have (transitive), -gamiuk because he/her. Take off the last part -siarigamik – which refers to the father finding out her condition. The first part is really "the one who was not well sustained over time" i.e. neglected! (Personal Correspondence)

immediately gives chase and whips up a tempest that threatens to upset the boat (65-67). So, "because they were inevitably going to capsize, the old man [throws] his daughter into the water" (68). Consultation with cultural insiders would be particularly useful in understanding more fully the father's confusing and contradictory behaviour, although it can certainly be observed that this devastating act of betrayal, motivated, it seems, by sheer panic as well as a self-interested desire to propitiate the Storm Bird, effectively reverses and wipes out the father's prior brief surge of paternal nurturance. Moreover, if what he is seeking to accomplish is to save his own life by getting rid of his daughter, we can see that his actions here do not really accomplish much in the long run, since he drowns himself shortly thereafter.

Clearly, there is much going on in this episode that suggests a need for further unpacking. In "Journeying North," Groft and Johnson emphasize the importance of conferring with Inuit communities to gain insight into the more puzzling and disturbing aspects of the unikkaaqtuat (15). They also discuss the importance of what they term "doubly listening" in order to understand "the complexities of peoples' experiences and lives in the stories" and to hear the "stories within the stories" (21):

> To imbue an experience with significance, a person must contrast that experience against a background of other experiences they've had. Thus it is in the contrasting of experiences through description that meaning-making is possible. This means that every description of life is a 'double description'. On the other side of every description of life is *whatever that experience is being distinguished from*. This is absent but implicit and we can listen for it in the stories. (22, emphasis mine)

Following this line of reasoning with respect to Uinigumasuittuq, we can say that part of the reason the woman is so unhappy living with the Storm Bird is that on some level she knows that things could and should be different for her (see Groft & Johnson 27). Her father, flawed as he is, must similarly possess relevant knowledge and experience which enables him to recognize first, that his daughter's marriage is not a good one, and second, that he has some sort of responsibility

to act. Likewise, his final, wretched act of suicide, carried out "because he was so regretful of the things he had done" (75) indicates that "the old man" is well aware that he could have, and should have, acted differently.

This is more than simply teaching by negative example. From the perspective of law, the practice of "doubly listening" is an important strategy for ensuring that the voices and experiences of all community members are included in the discussion (22). It provides an important corrective, for example, to the tendency in Canadian Aboriginal rights jurisprudence to assume that male experience is normative and to focus almost exclusively "on practices that were historically undertaken by men (such as hunting and fishing)," to the extent that Indigenous "women have been almost completely erased" from the written legal record (22; see also Napoleon 18; Borrows, *Freedom*, 201). As will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, this erasure of female Aboriginal experience from laws pertaining to Aboriginal people has not only rendered Indigenous women uniquely vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, but also arguably has deprived them of access to traditional supports and legal protections that would have been available to them through —for example— their social positions within various kinship networks. Listening carefully for "the stories within the stories" is an important first step in undoing this erasure.

4. Kinship and Traditional Law

Keeping in mind that the unikkaaqtuat are a central component of traditional life and an important expression of nurturance (naglik-) and emotional closeness between family members, "doubly listening" will also enable critics to perceive that one of the many messages that a young girl will receive when her father tells her the Sedna story (assuming her close family relationships are healthy and intact) is, paradoxically, reassurance: *I would never do this to you. You are safe.*

You are loved.[53] In fact, I would argue that much, if not all, of the story's disciplinary and therapeutic functions must be understood against the very basic fact that, not only in pre-settlement Inuit culture but all across the world, humans not only teach and are taught but love and are loved through the sharing of stories. It is, after all, much easier to encourage people to adhere to social norms and to face bravely the challenges of life when they know that they are held secure in a network of love and belonging. A young woman may be compelled into an arranged marriage, it is true, but she can at least be assured that her husband will be a respectable person of her parents' own choosing, someone who will be able to provide her with a good life and who will be answerable to the larger community in terms of his behaviour as a husband and father (see for example Niutaq 126-127, 141-142, 151, 160-161).

In pre-settlement times, this closely-woven network of affective family relationships embraced a person from birth and seemed to function quite well to prevent wrongdoing from occurring, since well-integrated community members have a vested interest in the health of the group and do not generally seek to cause problems (see for example Mangitak Kellypalik in Niutaq 42). It also facilitated effective intervention when problems did arise, since community members had to answer for any wrongdoing not to a nameless functionary of the criminal justice system but rather to those very people who were most affected by their behaviour. It is for these reasons that lived participation in community-based kinship structures —as opposed to allegiance to the statutes of an abstract, disembodied nation-state— always provides the foundation for law and governance in a traditional Indigenous context (see Napoleon 6, 15-16). In a conference

[53] And this perhaps even when the daughter in question knew to expect an arranged marriage shortly after menarche. In making the Sea Woman's father out to be such a hyperbolically bad parent – marrying his daughter to a dog and later murdering her – the child is reassured that the circumstances surrounding her own marriage will, the very least, be better than Sedna's. As Qitsualik reminds us, "as bad as you think things are, it can always get worse" ("Problem, n.p).

presentation entitled "Anger, Resentment, & Love: Fuelling Resurgent Struggle," Leanne Simpson explains the relational structure of Indigenous self-governance as follows:

> Indigenous collective self-recognition is a core place-based practice, it's a core living concept of Dene and Nishnaabeg grounded normativity … It is a core part of our political systems because they are rooted in our bodies and our bodies are not just informed by but created and maintained by complex coded networked relationships of deep reciprocity. Our bodies only exist in relation to non-linear constructions of time, space, and place which are continually rebirthed through the practice and often coded recognition of obligations and responsibilities within a nest of diversity, freedom, consent, non-interference and a generated, proportional, emergence and deep reciprocity. (n.p.)

Likewise, in "Living Inuit Governance in Nunavut," Jackie Price explains that "relationships are the foundational structure of Inuit governance" and "the central relationship is the family" (132). This is true with respect to both intra- and inter-community affairs; as Price puts it, "[t]he authority of the land is central to the function of Inuit governance. To exist alongside this authority, Inuit organized themselves within a structure of relationships in order to share experience and knowledge" (134). Thus, insofar that Indigenous kinship systems constitute a kind of "ecosystemic territoriality," an "interdependency of the human" as well as "the other-than-human in specific geographical spaces" (McKegney, 212 n.3), kinship regulates not only human behaviour and intergovernmental affairs but also sovereignty and land rights.

According to Price, "Inuit … understood that the land belongs to no one, as it was free to be respectfully used by all people. This requires all actions, whether individual or collective, to be accounted for" (130). Of course, the very existence of these deeply-entrenched, land-based systems of knowledge, relationships, and law, poses a powerful existential threat to the settler state, confounding as it does the imperialist logic upon which it is built and from which it derives its legitimacy. Thus, the undoing of these "foundational structures in Inuit governance" (130) was the primary aim of the Canadian colonial project which throughout the twentieth century sought to assert authority over Inuit bodies and communities by "suppressing embodied experiences of

land and kinship" (McKegney 205; see also Simpson, "Anger" n.p.). This was done through a multi-pronged social engineering campaign of coerced renaming, resettlement, and reeducation (residential schooling), which rose to a frenzied peak in the period between 1940 and 1970 and which was closely associated with the Canadian (and American) government's anxiety to establish authority over its arctic territories during the Cold War (see Alia, *Names, Numbers and Northern Policy* 34; *Names and Nunavut* 51-55).

5. New Names, New Schools

The embodied kinships of land, family, and community constitute perhaps the biggest challenge to the fictive kinship of empire (see Simpson, "Anger" n.p.). Thus one major strategy in the Canadian government's colonization of its arctic territories involved interference in Inuit kinship structures as they were made manifest in the traditional Inuit naming system. As Laugrand and Oosten observe, "the word *atiq* means 'name' as well as 'namesake'"(*Inuit Shamanism* 126) and is first and foremost a "relational identity" that "play[s] a central part in maintaining the continuity of society, connecting the Inuit to their deceased namesakes" (127) as well as to the personal histories and networks of relationships carried by their namesakes (130). Unlike the Biblical and European names introduced by Christian missionaries and the surnames imposed by the Canadian government, atiit are neither gender-specific nor patrilineal —a female child can be given a man's name and vice versa, and the namesake can come from either the mother's or the father's relations. Moreover, and although it is true that a single person can carry numerous names, in the past Inuit generally avoided addressing one another by their proper names, using instead the complex kinship terminology that existed to define almost every imaginable relationship that could exist amongst an extended family (127). People would 'tuq&urausiq' one another "by a kinship term, through a name-sake relationship, or an invented term" (Aupilaarjuk

et al, *Perspectives*, 31 n.3) as a means of expressing affection and continually reinforcing their socially-defined relatedness to one another —as well as, by extension, the many rights and obligations that this relatedness entails.

In the Canadian context, the first colonial intervention into this complex naming system coincided with the arrival of Christian missionaries during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For the most part, the introduction of baptismal names, in and of itself, does not seem to have caused Inuit any major difficulties, probably "because they were added to an individual's accumulated given names in a manner not entirely inconsistent with Inuit tradition" (Alia, *Names, Numbers and Northern Policy* 23).[54] What caused considerably more commotion, however, was the territorial government's decision to assign surnames to all Inuit in 1969-1970. 'Project Surname,' as the program was called, was intended to replace the Canadian government's various earlier efforts to keep track of Inuit, particularly the infamous Eskimo-number discs whose use immediately preceded Project Surname (33).

Again, at bottom, these programs of administrative surveillance reflect Canadian anxieties regarding Arctic sovereignty. They became especially pronounced during the Cold War and coincided with the gradual replacement of seasonal hunting camps with permanent settlements across the arctic, something which greatly restricted Inuit mobility and greatly undermined their traditional livelihood. (The high arctic relocations and much-lamented killing off of the sled dogs also took place during this period.) Project Surname, then, must be understood as part and parcel of the colonial government's larger regime of conquest and assimilation. It was a deliberate

[54] In *Shamanism and Reintegration of Wrongdoers into the Community*, Mariano Aupilaarjuk states, "I am named after an angakkuq who was a very powerful person. I am also named after the Virgin Mary who was a very powerful person also" (84). See Laugrand and Oosten's *Inuit Shamanism and Christianity* for a detailed study of the impacts of Christianity on Inuit communities. The introduction of baptismal names were probably one of the least problematic aspect of missionary work.

dismantling both of Indigenous kinship structures and of the place-based forms of sovereignty and self-governance implied therein; what it amounted to was the imposition of a class-based, patriarchal Qallunaat nomenclature onto a completely unrelated naming system for the sole purpose of administrative convenience, that is, for bringing Inuit under the surveillance and control of the state (Alia, *Names and Nunavut* 59-60).[55] As Simpson observes, "the state requires the heteronormative nuclear family as a site to teach, maintain and practice the hierarchical relations that are needed to reproduce settler colonialism and capitalism" ("Anger" n.p.).

As with the many other colonial interventions to which they have been subjected, Inuit simultaneously resisted and accommodated this new naming system. In spite of efforts to dismantle Inuit principles of kinship, inheritance, and gender —such as compelling women to take their husband's names, for example (see Alia, *Names, Numbers and Northern Policy* 54, 80, 82)— the traditional naming system has generally persisted alongside Euro-Canadian surnaming (see Alia, *Names and Nunavut*; Laugrand & Oosten, *Inuit Shamanism* 129-132). Far more detrimental to Inuit family and community life was the marked increase in Inuit children who

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[55] For example, the 1971 program summary cites:

> …a total lack of understanding among the Eskimo people, about the legal, social and moral aspects of names … 'Family,' or surname, under which all members of a family are identified is unknown. Legal usage, ownership of property under a family name is impossible … Marriage customs have never developed in the sense of the 'western civilized ethic,' as the family unit had no common name tying it together. Adoption of children has presented extreme difficulty. (GNWT qtd. in Alia, *Names, Numbers and Northern Policy* 75)

Major D.L. McKeand of the Department of the Interior likewise writes: "Our knowledge of native health, aspirations, education and other particulars so necessary to the administration of their affairs depend ... on vital statistics and identification" (qtd. in Alia, *Names, Numbers and Northern Policy* 35).

Of course, the idea that adoption of children presents extreme difficulty in the absence of a surname is laughable to anyone with the faintest understanding of the role of adoption in Inuit culture (see for example Pauktuutiit, *The Inuit Way* 20). It is perhaps the most the most telling of these statements, reflecting a deep-seated discomfort with the idea of Indigenous peoples' defining their own family and community relationships without reference to the colonial powers' preferred methods of assigning individuals to social groups based on patrilineal inheritance.

attended residential schools during this period, something which resulted in almost an entire generation of Inuit being removed from their families for extended periods of time to be raised by what was, in effect, a genocidal institution.[56] This widespread disruption of not only linguistic and residentiary continuity but also traditional family relationships and community-based systems of governance, created a highly vulnerable student population. Abuse was rampant at these institutions, and the fact that children were often miles away from home and cut off from their primary support systems both exacerbated what was already a traumatic situation and enabled perpetrators to abuse their victims with impunity. Even when they are "predominantly enlightened and caring" (McDermott, "Unikkaaqtuat" 307), as may have been the case at the Churchill Vocational Centre,[57] the fact remains that teachers simply cannot love and support their students in the same way that family members can love and support each other. For many Indigenous people, the residential school experience was comparable to being orphaned —or, indeed, abducted and held prisoner by abusive strangers.

6. Conclusion: Kinship and Decolonial Love

I am not arguing here for the existence of a pristine past. As is the case with any other human society in existence, Inuit have always had to deal with stress, trauma, and conflict from time to time. As Elder Mangitak Kellypalik explains, "[t]here is no such thing as never-ending happiness.

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[56] See for example, Duncan Campbell Scott's infamous 1920 statement:

> I want to get rid of the Indian problem. I do not think as a matter of fact, that this country ought to continually protect a class of people who are able to stand alone. That is my whole point. Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question, and no Indian department, that is the whole object of this Bill. (qtd. in Rheault 3)

[57] As McDermott points out, the Churchill Vocational Centre would end up being a meeting place for future Inuit leaders including: John Amagoalik, Jack Anawak, James Arvaluk, Peter Irniq, Meeka Kilabuk, Paul Quassa, and Zebedee Nungak ("Unikkaaqtuat" 307). Still, it is important to acknowledge that abuse did occur there as well, if perhaps at a lesser rate.

Sometimes families and communities go through difficult times" (qtd. in Niutaq 43; see also Napoleon 12). Without a doubt, traditional camp life could be difficult and dangerous. Mistreatment and bad behaviour exist universally, hence the wide range of culturally-specific mechanisms that also exist for addressing them. Death, grief, and tragedy are all unavoidable aspects of human life; it is an undeniable fact that all of our relationships will one day come to an end, and that all of us will one day experience the gut-wrenching and seemingly unbearable pain of loss. Ultimately, it is the love and the support of our close relationships —that is, our kin— which sustains us through these dark times and enables us to cope with trauma when it occurs.

What makes Uinigumasuittuq's situation so grave, then, is not simply that she has been tricked into a bad marriage, but, crucially, that she has been separated from her father (as much as we may not like him, he is, nevertheless, her family) and entirely cut off from community support. In the same way, the real devastation wrought by the Canadian colonial regime lies not only in the many stresses, traumas, and losses that Indigenous peoples were made to endure, terrible as these indeed were, but also, and especially, in the deliberate disruption of family and community life. This pulling of the rug out from under their feet, as it were, effectively dismantled Indigenous people's ecosystemic power structures, undermined their most effective means of coping with the stresses, traumas, and losses inflicted upon them, and significantly weakened their longstanding mechanisms for addressing social problems (see Napoleon 10-12).

In his remarks to the Fall 2011 class of the University of Windsor, Justice Murray Sinclair (Ojibway), chair of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission argued that "the greatest damage from the [residential] schools is not the damaged relationship with non-Aboriginal people or Canadian society, or the government or the churches … but the damage done … to the relationships within … [survivors'] families"; thus "reconciliation within the families of survivors is the cornerstone for all other discussions about reconciliation" (qtd. in McKegney

207). Both directly and indirectly, Canadian colonial social engineering undermined and in many cases poisoned kinship relationships, by separating children from their parents and mandating the replacement of pre-existing, lived expressions of family and gender with the heteronormative nuclear family (Simpson, "Anger" n.p.). As a result, Indigenous women now experience alarmingly high rates of intimate partner violence (Borrows, *Freedom* 184), and all too often, children have been robbed of their fundamental right to a safe home and to the kinds of beautiful, loving, and culturally rich experiences described in Kublu's preface.

It is precisely for these reasons that kinship traditions and affective relationships constitute perhaps the most important location for decolonial resistance (see Justice 164) —hence the current emphasis on 'decolonial love' by Indigenous scholar-artists such as Billy-Ray Belcourt and Leanne Simpson. From what I understand, 'decolonial love' refers to the healing power of good relationships harnessed for the purposes of personal and community liberation; it recognizes that, in a context of ongoing oppression, sometimes the most radical thing community members can do is naglik- each other, within families, within intimate relationships, within communities. As Belcourt puts it, "that love contains a reparative force of sorts is symptomatic of a social world that produces Indigenous bodies as bodies that bear the likeness of colonial contagions and infections, ones that do their dirtiest work in the domain of the affective itself" (3); "[d]ecolonial love therefore promises not only to chip away at the corporeal and emotional toll of settler colonialism as such, but also to gestate a wider set of worlds and ontologies, ones that we cannot know in advance, but ones that might make life into something more than a taxing state of survival" (4).

The widespread of use of unikkaaqtuat to teach and guide behaviour as well as to affirm and strengthen kinship bonds is a topic that comes up again and again in the *Interviewing Inuit Elders* and *Inuit Perspectives on the 20th Century* series of books. In *Perspectives on Traditional*

Law, Lucassie Nutaraaluk states “My parents used to be very open to me because they loved me dearly. Children that were not really loved rarely heard the old tales and stories. Today, there are too many things to be pre-occupied with so people don’t listen to traditional stories. I was loved dearly by my parents and by my immediate relatives” (104). Given this context, Kublu’s performance of Uinigumasuittuq can be read as an act of decolonial love, gently returning Indigenous families and communities “to the physical realm of the participatory” (Justice 151).

Originally prepared for Inuit schoolchildren, Kublu’s text functions as a kind of testimony not only to the significance of the unikkaaqtuaq itself but of everything that exists around it, and in particular the warm, nurturing relationships that belong to Inuit children by right and that constitute the ecosystemic foundation of their moral and intellectual education. As any parent or educator knows well, telling stories to children is an intrinsically pleasurable and rewarding experience; in an Indigenous context, it is also a deeply political act which makes manifest “the capacity of embodied actions to self-consciously reintegrate minds and bodies and to foster emotional” —not to mention linguistic and intellectual— “literacy” (McKegney 208; Johnson 45-48). In this way, unikkaaqtuat, when performed by Inuit for Inuit, away from the settler gaze (which, again, is not the case here), can create “irreconcilable spaces of Aboriginality” that, as Simpson puts it, “reproduce, amplify and celebrate Indigeneity” (“Anger” n.p.). When performed and circulated within wider audiences, as is the case here, they can operate as “Indigenous sovereign display territories” in which cultural outsiders, although they cannot access the “community’s gravitational centre” (Garneau 25), are nevertheless invited to “become unsettled” (29).

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines ‘kinship’ as “the recognized ties of relationship, by descent, marriage, or ritual, that form the basis of social organization” and ‘kinship system’ as “the system of relationships traditionally accepted in a culture and the rights and obligations

which they involve." According to Daniel Heath Justice, kinship is first and foremost something that people *do*; it is "best thought of as a verb rather than a noun" (150). Moreover, insofar as this "tribal web of … rights and responsibilities" links not only "the People" but also, crucially, "the land, and the cosmos together in an ongoing and dynamic system of mutually affecting relationships" (151), the practice of kinship is also a strong testament to Indigenous sovereignties past *and* present. Although the machinations of empire sought to dismantle kinship as a means of depriving Indigenous peoples of sovereignty, emphasizing instead "a code of assimilative patriotism that places … the militant history of the nation above the specific geographic, genealogical and spiritual histories of peoples" (151), Indigenous communities have nevertheless persisted, often by means of those very relationships (familial, tribal, linguistic, spiritual) which the colonial state was so to eager to undermine.

Kublu's Uinigumasuittuq, then, is an expression of decolonial love and a witness to the perseverance of personal, familial, and communal identities in the face of "colonialist death narratives" (Justice 159). Unikkaaqtuat have always been an important part of the socialization of children, the reinforcement of affective bonds between community members, the modelling of prosocial (or antisocial) relationships, and the articulation of legal and moral values through both positive and negative examples. They are also an important part of the Inuktitut curriculum, aiding as they do in the development of intellectual, linguistic, and socio-emotional competency —to use an Inuktitut word, isuma.

According to Emile Imaruittuq, although "[unikkaaqtuat] didn't necessarily make someone live a better life," they nevertheless "made each one of us think, made us think hard. For example, the story of Kaugjagjuk tries to make you think. The mistreated child would make you think, as would the story of the grizzly bear" (qtd. in Aupilaarjuk et al, *Perspectives* 179). McDermott likewise explains that these traditional "stories contain essential teachings, which

allow Inuit to make wise choices" ("Unikkaaqtuat" 301). This is done by promoting an ideal synthesis of emotion and reason that addresses the totality of a person's being (Borrows, *Drawing* 212). On the level of the family, the unikkaaqtuat's therapeutic, cautionary, and disciplinary functions are mediated through an affective environment of love and belonging; on the level of the community —that is, the family writ large— they serve to remind people of their rights and obligations vis-à-vis each other, the land, and the spirit world. If we take seriously Groft and Johnson's directive to "doubly listen" for the "stories within the stories," we can perceive how Uinigumasuittuq's dysfunctional attachments to her father and husband would be read against community members experiential knowledge of "what the norm is and ought to be" in terms of family and spousal relationships. As the following chapter will discuss in greater detail, it is precisely in accessing these kinds of deep-seated, epistemologically enabling, emotional dimensions of the story that its intrinsic power to impact lives and to speak to contemporary concerns is most strongly made manifest.

UINIGUMASUITTUQ [cont.]

[69.] **pania suuqaimma qajanganik pakiniksilluni.**
Naturally his daughter grabbed hold of his *qajaq.*

[70.] **iputiminut anaulituinnalauraluaq&uniuk savingminut aggangit ulammaaliqpait**
He hit her with his paddle, and (when that didn't work) he chopped off her fingers.

[71.] **nakapalliajut imaanuaraangamik imarmiutannguqpalliallutik.**
As the parts that were chopped off fell into the water, they became the sea-mammals.

[72.] **nattiqtaqaliq&unilu ugjuktaqaliq&unilu, qilalugaqtaqaliq&unilu.**
There now were seals, and square-flippers, and beluga.

[73.] **arnaq kivigami imaup iqqanganirmiutauliq&uni.**
When the woman sank, she became a dweller of the sea floor.

[74.] **ataataa angirraqsimaliraluaq&uni atuqpaksimajaminik**
Even though when her father got home

[75.] **ugguarutiqaqpalliatuinnalirami nanurautiminut immusiq&uni**
he was so regretful of the things he had done that, wrapping himself in his bearskin,

[76.] **ulinnirmuarami ulujjauttiliq&uni.**
he went to the tide-edge and waited to be engulfed.

[77.] **taakkua pingasut imaup iqqanganiittuinnauliq&utik**
These three are now on the sea floor,

[78.] **uinigumasuittuvinirlu ataatangalu qimmingalu**
the woman who was Uinigumasuittuq, her father and her dog.

[79.] **taimanngat ukpirniqtaalaunnginninginnit**
Since then, until they acquired Christianity,

[80.] **tuqujut inuttiavaunninngittaraangata takannaaluup ataataaluata**
whenever people who had not lived well died, they found themselves

[81.] **nanurautialuata iluanunii&&utik qinukkaqsimajaalugilauqtillunigit**
inside the horrible bearskin belonging to the nasty father of that ghastly person down there, where he made them go through agonies

[82.] **kisiani ullurmiunuarunnaqsitainnaqpaktuviniit**
until finally they were able to go to the land of the Ullurmiut, the people of the day.

[83.] **qanuiliurluqattarningit angijualuujaraangata akuniuniqsauvak&utik**
Whenever they had done many evil things, they stayed (there) longer.

[84.] **arnarli takannaaluulajauvaktuq aggaqannginirminut**
But because the woman whom they called Takannaaluk (the horrible one down there) had no fingers

[85.] **illairunnangimmat nujangit ilaqqajualuuliqpak&utik.**
she wasn't able to (use a) comb, and so her hair became tangled.

[86.] **ilaqqalualiraangat imarmiuttat nujanginni nigaviqqaliqpak&utik.**
Whenever her hair got tangled, sea-mammals became entangled in it.

[87.] **nigaviqqajualuuliraangamik puijunnaillivak&utik puijunnaillijaraangata**
Whenever they became entangled, they could no longer surface, and whenever they could no longer surface

[88.] **inuit anngutaqarunnaillijaraangamik kaaktualuliqpak&utik.**
people became hungry, no longer able to catch (the sea-mammals).

[89.] **mauliqpakkaluaq&utik kisuttuqarunnaillissuujaqsimaliraangata**
Whenever they couldn't catch anything for a long time at the seal breathing-holes,

[90.] **angakkurmik nakkaajuqariaqaliqpak&uni.**
a shaman would have to go down to the bottom of the sea.

[91.] **angakkuq takannaaluliaq&uni imaup iqqanganunngaujaraangat nakkaaniraqtauvalaurmat**
Whenever a shaman went to Takannaaluk by going to the sea-floor, he was said to *"nakkaa-"*.

[92.] **taqanaqtualuuninganut angakkuit nakkaajumattiaqpangninngittut**
Because it was so tiring, the shamans were often reluctant to *"nakkaa-"*.

[93.] **nakkaaniaraangamik inuluktaat kati&&lutik iglumut atausirmut.**
Whenever they were about to *"nakkaa-"* all the people would gather in one iglu.

[94.] **angakkuq mattaaq&uni qilaksuqtaulluni amiup taluliarisimajuup**
The bare-chested shaman was tied up, and put behind

[95.] **ungataanuaqtaulluni qulliillu qattiqtaullutik.**
a blind made of skin, while the seal-oil lamps were extinguished.

[96.] **angakkuq inngiq&uni imaanut aqqaqpallianinganut nipinga ungasiksivallialluni.**
The singing shaman would slowly descend to the bottom of the sea as his voice gradually would become distant.

[97.] **angakkuq imaup iqqanganiiliraangami takannaalungmik illaiqsivak&uni**
When the shaman would get to the sea-bed, he would comb Takannaaluk's hair.

[98.] **kisiani illaiqtaujaraangat puijunnaqsikkannitainaqpak&utik imarmiuttat.**
Only when her hair was combed would the sea-mammals be able to surface once again.

(Angmaalik et al, *Introduction* 159-163)

CHAPTER 5: UINIGUMASUITTUQ AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

1. Background and Context

This final episode of the story, describing the creation of various marine animals from the severed fingers of a woman attempting to grasp onto a boat, has a somewhat irregular distribution across the Arctic. According to Merkur, the tale-type is found in those areas of Asia and North America immediately adjacent to the Bering Strait but is almost entirely absent in Alaska and the Western Arctic until reappearing in the unikkaaqtuat canons of East-central Canada to West Greenland (Merkur 132).[58] In the Eastern Arctic, the unikkaaqtuaq is (as far as I know) always an aetiology for the Sea Woman and is always closely connected to a distinctive shamanic complex which, while there is a certain amount of variation across the region, is always generally along the lines of what Kublu describes in the concluding lines of her own performance, with the woman, the father, and the dog all living together under the ocean, enforcing with unwavering severity the many maligait (customary laws, things to be followed) and tirigusuusiit (rules pertaining to ritual prohibitions), and directing the activities of the sea mammals.[59]

There is a certain amount of variation in terms of the lead-up to the tragic climax; in the Eastern Arctic, as we have seen, the tale-type almost always follows that of the Storm Bird, which itself provides both an explanation for how the Sea Woman comes to be thrown overboard and a natural segue to the Creation of the Sea Mammals episode. However, there is also a well-

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[58] Merkur speculates that the role of the Raven in the creation stories of the northwest precluded the development of a strong Sea Woman tradition in these regions (101).

[59] When this shamanic complex is in place, there are often other stories featuring the Sea Woman, her various living companions (which can include a screaming baby, a sculpin husband, etc.), and their interactions with the human community, such as the unikkaaqtuaq in which Anaqti enters Nuliajuk's undersea abode and compels her to reconstruct a human skeleton before emerging from the water (see Nuliajuk and Angutinngurniq qtd. in Angutinnguirniq, *Shamanism* 168-170; see also McDermott, "Unikkaaqtuat" 137-139). The important thing to note is that the story is never simply a stand-alone narrative but is always part of a much-larger ritual and cosmological system.

known Nattilik version in which the mistreated orphan girl Nuliajuk is cruelly pushed off a raft as her village is moving camp (Rasmussen qtd. in Christopher 27) —something which emphasizes the manner in which she is "mistreated and sacrificed for selfish reasons" (Christopher 21)[60]— as well as a Polar Inuit variant in which the Sea Woman is an unmanageable child who not only refuses to get married but also attempts to cannibalize her parents, an extenuating circumstance which functions to excuse somewhat her subsequent mutilation and murder (Laugrand & Oosten, *The Sea Woman* 71; see also Cotterel). But whatever the series of events leading up to the Creation of the Sea Mammals episode, the central incident is always more or less the same: a gruesome assault on the young woman's fingers (or hands), which results both in the creation of the marine mammals and her subsequent transformation into the terrifying Sea Woman. It is this theme of violence that I wish to explore in my final chapter.

Throughout my thesis I have attempted to demonstrate the manner in which Kublu's performance of Uinigumasuittuq, in addition to being an exemplary work of Inuit verbal art, can function as a source of law, specifically, by providing metacommunicative signposts to guide readers and auditors through the complexities of the narrative, and by providing opportunities for reflection and discussion regarding the ethical and legal principles embedded therein. Continuing this general strategy of intertwining literary and socio-historical analysis, I will now endeavour to draw upon the legal valences of the text by reading the violence inflicted upon the Sea Woman's body as speaking to the ongoing crisis of violence against Indigenous women and girls in Canada, a widespread, systemic problem stemming largely from historical and ongoing colonial

[60] Mistreatment of vulnerable community members is a frequent theme in the world of the unikkaaqtuat and almost always ends in disaster. Mistreated orphans in particular frequently "[grow] up to be … difficult and dangerous person[s]" (McDermott, "Introduction" 17) who "[exact] fearsome revenge on the tormentors (16-17). Thus, the fact that there is a variant in which the fearsome Sea Woman is an abused orphan girl is strong evidence that, far from endorsing violence of any kind, the story actually warns against abuse.

violence against Indigenous bodies and communities. This colonial violence, as we have just seen, is patriarchal as well as genocidal. It deliberately seeks to undermine family and community life as a means of bringing Indigenous peoples under the surveillance and control of the nation-state, and, in doing so, it puts vulnerable community members (women, children, elders etc.) at increased risk of exploitation and abuse. To be sure, violence against women was not unheard-of in pre-colonial times; indeed, the many unikkaaqtuat which describe —and more importantly, *warn against*— the abuse and neglect of women and children would seem to suggest that these problems are not exactly new (Groft & Johnson 8). What does seem to be new, however, are the alarmingly high *rates* of women and girls currently reporting physical and sexual violence in the Territories, something which can only be understood fully within the larger context of conquest and colonization (Borrows, *Freedom* 188, 204; see also Napoleon 17-18).

2. Esoteric Versus Exoteric Adaptations of the Sedna Story

Given the very real problem of domestic violence in northern and Indigenous communities, Indigenous political activists are frequently invested with the double burden of, on the one hand, advocating for their families and communities in the face of colonialist attacks, and, on the other hand, reassuring community members and cultural outsiders alike that violence against women and children is not a defining feature of 'traditional' life. As Qitsualik explains, "[t]he raping and assaulting of women is not part of traditional Inuit culture. Such events have occurred, but that does not make them a 'tradition' any more than bank robberies are a tradition in Toronto" ("Matter" n.p.).

It is for these kinds of reasons that unikkaaqtuat such as the Kiviuq epic or the Sedna narrative, both of which feature particularly grisly examples of gender-based violence,[61] seem to generate a certain anxiety amongst contemporary readers and auditors —particularly when they move outside the context of the Inuit community and begin to circulate within the highly politicized, market-driven domains of World Literature and the Academy. This is especially true with respect to Sedna, in which the father's cruel murder of his daughter is frequently edited or creatively interpreted when the text is presented for cultural outsiders (see Martin, "Rescuing" 190-192).

Of course, this careful self-censoring, or strategic withholding of certain sensitive details from naïve or intellectually unsophisticated readers and listeners-in, is not exactly a new practice for Inuit. According to Herve Paniaq, in traditional times "[t]hey would tell younger people stories if they thought they could handle it. If they thought they wouldn't be able to handle it, they would avoid telling them a certain story and just give them the information" (qtd. in McDermott, "Unikkaaqtuat "33). Thus, even before the so-called "colonial gaze" became a major

[61] In the Kiviuq cycle of stories, the eponymous hero, upon discovering that his two wives are secretly copulating with a disembodied lake penis, exacts his revenge first, by cutting up the offending member and serving it to his wives as food, and second, by brutally murdering them. The first wife is forced to sit on a pile of maggots, which invade her orifices and slowly consume her entrails, whereas the second wife is knifed to death (see Van Deusen 203-223). In her book-length study of Kivuq, Van Deusen observes that it is non-Inuit audience members who tend to be most disturbed by these "brutal and premeditated" (210) wife-killings, perhaps because such horrific actions on the part of the hero come as a shock to Euro-westerners who, "consciously or unconsciously, want a happy ending," who "expect the good guy to be unfailingly good" (227), and who may therefore worry that the story normalizes or excuses Kiviuq's behaviour, simply because he is the central character. Inuit audiences, by contrast, generally "aren't worried about the story encouraging a man to murder his wife," although they too "may be concerned about the violence and work to find solutions" (227), reflecting the manner in which these kinds of stories have become increasingly contentious in modern times (213). For our purposes, the important thing to emphasize here is that, like the Sedna narrative, the disturbing events described in Kiviuq cycles should not be taken as constituting in any way an *endorsement* of violence against women. Inuit elders seem to be quite adamant about this, even if they elsewhere express admiration for Kiviuq; when, for example Van Deusen flat-out asks elder Henry Evaluardjuk, "Wasn't it wrong of Kiviuq to murder his wives?" Evaluarjuk replies sadly "Of course it was wrong. Very wrong" (qtd. in Van Deusen 212-213)

concern, Inuit storytellers would modify the content, delivery, and interpretation of unikkaaqtuat as befitted the needs and abilities of their audience members.

2.a. Uinigumasuittuq: She who never wants to get married

Alexina Kublu's Uinigumasuittuq, as we have seen, is addressed primarily to an audience of cultural insiders and initiates, the vast majority of whom presumably may be trusted not to misread this unikkaaqtuaq as some kind of normative description of Inuit family life. Accordingly, Kublu does not diminish the horror of the attack, reporting matter-of-factly that "[her father] hit her with his paddle, and (when that didn't work) he chopped off her fingers" (lines 69-70). The fallout from this murder is similarly grim; we are told that, after Uinigumasuittuq arrives on the sea floor, she is shortly joined by her father who is "so regretful of the things he had done that, wrapping himself in his bearskin, / he went to the tide-edge and waited to be engulfed (lines 75-76). The text itself frequently calls attention to the 'horribleness' of the whole situation, as for example in lines 77-82:

> [77] **taakkua pingasut imaup iqqanganiittuinnauliq&utik**
> These three are now on the sea floor,
>
> [78] **uinigumasuittuvinirlu ataatangalu qimmingalu**
> the woman who was Uinigumasuittuq, her father and her dog.
>
> [79] **taimanngat ukpirniqtaalaunnginninginnit**
> Since then, until they acquired Christianity,
>
> [80] **tuqujut inuttiavaunninngittaraangata takannaaluup ataataaluata**
> whenever people who had not lived well died, they found themselves
>
> [81] **nanurautialuata iluanunii&&utik qinukkaqsimajaalugilauqtillunigit**
> inside the *horrible bearskin* belonging to the *nasty father* of that *ghastly person*
> down there, where he made them go through *agonies*
>
> [82] **kisiani ullurmiunuarunnaqsitainnaqpaktuviniit**
> until finally they were able to go to the land of the Ullurmiut, the people of the day. (emphasis mine)

Here the epithetic parallelism of the English and French translations (horrible bearskin, nasty father, ghastly person / horrible peau d'ours, méchant père, effroyable personne) nicely reflects the triple repetition of the -aalu[k] suffix ("BIG, possibly bad" (Chris Trott, Personal Communication)), i.e. nanurautialu[k]-, ataataalu[k]-, takannaalu[k]-) in the Inuktitut original. From the point of view of verbal art as performance, this descriptive crescendo functions to call attention to the tale's implicit warning against "not [living] well" (line 80). That is to say, nothing about this situation is good: not for Takannaaluk, who is permanently maimed and disheveled on account of her being unable to use a comb (84-86); nor for the father, who is forever condemned to dwell with the daughter and son-in-law who he so shamefully murdered; nor for the wrongdoers and taboo-breakers who are tortured after death in his 'horrible bearskin'; nor for the human community, which is threatened with starvation and death whenever the wildlife becomes entangled in Takannaaluk's hair (86-88); nor, finally, for the angakkuit (shamans) who from time to time must undertake a dangerous and exhausting journey (nakkaaniq)[62] beneath the sea to re-establish correct relations with her (89-96).

As befits a traditional oral text that lies at the very heart of Inuit spirituality and law, Kublu's Uinigumasuittuq concludes with a detailed description of the nakkaaniq ritual. The text ends as follows: "When the shaman would get to the sea-bed, he would comb Takannaaluk's hair. / Only when her hair was combed would the sea-mammals be able to surface once again" (97-98). When reading the text as a source of law, and especially considering the many outrages that have been wrought upon the Sea Woman, it is worthwhile to note that the angakkuq's main task here is to comb (and in some traditions clean and/or braid) Takannaaluk's hair, a deeply

[62] According to Rose Iqallijuq, the verb nakkaa- "is related to the term nakkaqtuq, which means to sink down" (Aupilaarjuk et al, *Cosmology* 172-173). The ritual journey Kublu describes was undertaken by angakkuit across the Central and Eastern Arctic and seems to have been remarkably similar across this vast region (see Merkur 110-121).

intimate and humanizing act which, while it can hardly make up for the many wrongdoings committed against her, is perhaps at least a small step towards mitigating the harms she has incurred —namely, her inability to groom herself.

From the perspective of law, the ongoing need to ritually comb Takannaaluk's hair from time to time speaks to the fragility of human relationships, the near-impossibility of repairing these relationships once trust has been broken, and the importance of cultivating an ethic of care within families and communities. It should be quite clear by now that deviant behaviours such as abuse, murder, and suicide are most emphatically *not* condoned by the Sedna story, here or elsewhere; rather they are presented as terrible tragedies with terrible consequences. Human beings do not exist in isolation; relationships are a two-way street, whether they be between humans, animals, spirits, or land. Thus, if the human community would like for the much-wronged, easily-angered Takannaaluk to provide them with food and sustenance, then they must all commit to taking care of her and, by extension, each other.

2.b. *The Inuit Way*

Kublu's text, then, does not attempt to sugarcoat the devastating violence at the heart of the Sedna story; in that respect it remains quite close to older variants. The episode is rendered somewhat differently by Pauktuutit, the "national representative organization of Inuit women in Canada" (Pauktuutit, "National Voice" n.p). According to their website, Pauktuutit "fosters greater awareness of the needs of Inuit women, advocates for equality and social improvements, and encourages their participation in the community, regional and national life of Canada" (ibid). In 1989, Pauktuutit published a booklet entitled *The Inuit Way: A Guide to Inuit Culture*, which was "widely acclaimed as the single best resource to introduce Inuit culture to others and has been cited in such important resources as the 1996 Final Report of the Royal Commission on

Aboriginal Peoples" (2). In 2006, Pauktuutit published a second, updated edition of *The Inuit Way*, in which the authors explain their purpose as follows:

> Early in our mandate we recognized that a significant cultural gap existed between Inuit and non-Inuit in the Canadian Arctic. It had become apparent that non-Inuit were encountering challenges in some of their interactions with Inuit, challenges that have as their basis a lack of understanding and familiarity with our culture. Pauktuutit decided that a broader understanding of and empathy for Inuit culture would turn challenges into opportunities and enhance more positive interaction between members of both cultures. (1)

So although the booklet is published in a bilingual Inuktitut/English format, it is nevertheless "aimed at (and likely consumed by) a primarily non-Inuit readership" (Martin, "Rescuing" 192), that is, cultural outsiders or newcomers to the North who require a crash course in Inuit culture if they are to avoid what the authors so euphemistically describe as "challenges." Keeping with its "extremely careful representation of Inuit life and tradition" (Martin, "Rescuing" 192), Pauktuutit renders the Sea Woman story as follows:

> According to one version of this legend, Sedna was a beautiful Inuit girl who was pressured into marriage by her father. Unknown to Sedna, her husband was actually a raven who fed her fish and kept her in a nest on an island far away from her family. Her father, who missed Sedna terribly, went in his kayak to rescue her but the raven, with his special powers, called up a storm. The father panicked and pushed Sedna into the cold water. As she clung to the kayak, her frozen fingers and hands *were broken off* and fell into the sea where they became seals, whales and other sea mammals. Sedna could no longer struggle and sank into the water where she became a goddess of the sea. (4, emphasis mine)

Here Sedna's father is presented in a much more favourable light, missing his daughter 'terribly' and going after her for the express purpose of rescuing her from the raven. The father's violence is also significantly diminished, as is, by extension, his moral culpability —hence the murder (or, more precisely, accidental homicide) at the centre of the story is not followed by the "overwhelming remorse" and subsequent suicide that occurs in other variants. As Martin observes, "[the father's] 'panic' in pushing his daughter overboard differs markedly from the deliberate actions of the earlier versions" and he does not seem to bear any "direct responsibility

for the mutilation of Sedna's hands," which is described using the passive voice, and which seems to occur at least partly because her fingers are frozen and brittle from the arctic cold (192). Sedna, then, is not "a victim of violence so much as of circumstance" (192).

In addition to *telling* the story in a way that downplays the betrayal and violence at the core of earlier versions, Pauktuutit also *interprets* the text creatively to emphasize that such horrors are not, in fact, condoned by Inuit culture. Specifically, the authors explain that "[t]he legend of Sedna … contains epic struggles that reflect the challenges and tensions that exist within a culture" and "provides insight into how Inuit culture values the family and children very highly, and yet due to the challenging environment in which they exist, are sometimes forced to make difficult decisions. The overpowering role of nature is always evident, as is the presence of sometimes malevolent forces" (4). As is the case throughout *The Inuit Way*, Pauktuutit is operating here in the mode of cultural gatekeeper, providing a kind of "screen version" of an important spiritual tradition and seeking to "govern the interpretation of a controversial story" (Martin, "Rescuing" 195) from those who perhaps "wouldn't be able to handle it." In this way, culturally naïve and potentially damaging readings of the Sedna unikkaaqtuaq as somehow endorsing violence against women are preemptively dealt with and disqualified from serious conversation.

2.c. Nuliajuk: the Story of Sedna, the Sea Goddess

A similar dynamic seems to have been at work in 2002, when CBC Radio North produced a dramatized recording of the Sedna unikkaaqtuaq entitled "Nuliajuk: the story of Sedna, the Sea Goddess." This performance of the tale took place in Iqaluit as part of the first installation of CBC Aboriginal's 'Legends Project,' a government-funded initiative which sought to "record, archive and then produce, as radio dramas, the traditional oral stories of Canada's Inuit and First

Nations" ("The History of the Legends Project" n.p.). These audio performances were broadcast across the country on the long-running CBC Radio One *Ideas*, *Sunday Showcase,* and *Tapestry* programs, and were eventually made available for purchase as bilingual (and in some cases trilingual) compact disk complications (n.p.). All of the tales included in the *Inuit Unikkaaqtuangit*/*Inuit Legends* series were performed by an entirely Inuit cast in collaboration with a production team who "[worked] hard to keep the productions true to their cultural origins in tone and accuracy" (ibid), while also endeavouring to reinterpret the unikkaaqtuat such as the Sedna story in a manner that is both sensitive to contemporary concerns and accessible to a diverse Canadian audience.

For example, in CBC's version of the tale, there is much more of an effort to provide some kind of explanation for Nuliajuk's otherwise puzzling refusal to marry; when her father, (here given a name, Nuatuq), gently admonishes her to "choose a husband soon … before people think you're fickle and chase the young man away," Nuliajuk replies, "Nope. Not until I find the man I have seen in my dreams, father. Until then, I am perfectly content not to marry" (*Inuit Unikkaaqtuangit* Vol. 1). In this way, Nuliajuk's wish to remain single is not so much adolescent petulance as it is romantic idealism and believing in her dreams —character traits that, if anything, will rather endear her to Canadians who have been raised on a steady diet of romantic individualism. In a similar way, her subsequent elopement with the raven-man is not so much a disastrous lapse of judgment or a kidnapping than it is a kind of preordained unfolding of fate. Furthermore, although Nuliajuk has a dog (here named Qirniq) as a beloved pet, she is at no point forced to marry him (and all that this may or may not imply). Thus, when Nuatuq tells her, half-jokingly, "Listen to me. Soon I will have to marry you to one of my dogs!" the morally ambiguous Dog Husband motif is cleverly repackaged and reinterpreted as an expression of exasperation ultimately stemming from parental concern.

As is the case with Pauktuutit, there is considerable emphasis placed on the more positive, nurturant aspects of the father-daughter relationship. After the raven has taken Nuliajuk away to the "Island of Birds," Nuatuq misses his daughter terribly and intuitively senses that something is wrong. Moreover, although he remains the effective agent of his daughter's death in this version, actively throwing her overboard and "chop[ping] at her fingers" (*Inuit Unikkaaqtuangit* Vol. 1), this too is framed in a manner that mitigates his moral culpability. When waves threaten to capsize the boat, Nuliajuk's father cries out in despair: "I have offended the great spirits of the sea! Please forgive me, my daughter! They are calling you back, and I must make peace with them. I am afraid, my daughter, I am so afraid! Oh my daughter, I have no choice, no choice! I have to throw you into the sea —yes, into the sea! Please forgive me" (*Inuit Unikkaaqtuangit* Vol. 1). This subtle shifting of responsibility from the father's own cowardice and cruelty to the mysterious workings of providence is particularly evident when the newly fingerless Nuliajuk (after having journeyed to the "Sea Mountain" on the advice of a couple of water spirits who inexplicably appear), suddenly exclaims: "Ah! Now, I understand! Now I see my destiny! I have been chosen by the great spirits to fill the oceans with the sea mammals! I have created the seals, the walruses, the narwhals, the whales, and all the other great sea animals for all Inuit" (*Inuit Unikkaaqtuangit* Vol. 1). Thus, against all odds, Nuliajuk is rescued from tragedy and anxious Canadian audiences are given a happy ending.

3. "A message more fitting for our times"?

These relatively recent retellings of the tale exemplify the manner in which the unikkaaqtuat, as living traditions, continue to be readapted and remediated across the textual continuum to meet the changing needs of their communities of origin. A parallel could be drawn here with respect to the 2001 motion picture adaptation of Atanarjuat. When film producer Zacharias Kunuk was

questioned about Isuma Productions' decision to completely change the traditional ending of the Atanarjuat story —wherein the eponymous hero carefully plots his revenge and then bludgeons his brother's murderers to death— opting instead for a less violent resolution of the conflict, he explained that "[e]very generation has their version. *It was a message more fitting for our times*. Killing people doesn't solve anything" (qtd. in Shubow 1, emphasis mine). Likewise for Sedna, as Martin points out, "at present, the threat of starvation due to breaches in protocol may be less pressing for communities" than the "problem of domestic violence, symptomatic of the dire impacts of colonial intervention into Inuit life" ("Rescuing" 196). Certainly, market forces are not absent here —the film arguably would not have been as commercially successful if it had ended with its eponymous hero bashing in his enemies' skulls and establishing himself the new village authority. But then again, market forces are only one of the many, many changes to which Inuit have had to adapt over the centuries.

It is of course quite true, as Craig Womack observes, that traditional stories are often whitewashed of 'offensive' (i.e. overtly violent, sexual, or political) content and/or marketed to children;[63] it is also true that there exists a tendency on the part of mass-market English-language publishing and entertainment companies to downplay commercially risky themes such as gender-based violence in an effort to reach a wider audience.[64] Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to

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[63] Although particularly problematic when undertaken by settler cultures for the purposes of assimilating Indigenous texts into pre-existing Eurowestern frameworks, it must be said that the phenomenon of 'whitewashing' oral-traditional texts is certainly not unique to traditional Inuit stories. Perhaps the most famous Western example of this is the nineteenth-century German folklorists Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm's collection and transformation of violent and bawdy European folk traditions into their heavily-edited *Nursery and Household Tales* (1812), each subsequent edition (1819, 1837, 1840, 1843, 1850, 1857) increasingly whitewashed of offensive (i.e. sexual) content in an obvious effort to appeal to the emerging nineteenth-century, largely bourgeois, children's literature market (see Tatar, "Sex and Violence: The Hard Core of Fairy Tales").

[64] My go-to recent example of this collective reluctance to address the issue of gender-based violence as reflected in the global literary market is manner in which the titles to Steig Larsson's popular *Millennium*

view these innovations as arising *solely* from a desire to appeal to the literary tastes of cultural outsiders. Making strategic changes —even drastic ones— is all part and parcel of the oral tradition; indeed, it is this inherent flexibility of the oral tradition that has allowed the unikkaaqtuat to persist over time and enabled them to operate as sources of law in spite of the massive social upheavals of the past 150 years —or, indeed, the last 1000 years.

Finally, and especially given Paniaq's remarks about withholding certain stories from individuals deemed unable to "handle" them properly, it would seem that these newer, 'softer' spins on the Sedna narrative are, in part, a means of keeping the uninitiated at a distance. As Garneau observes, this holding back of certain community goods by cultural gatekeepers such as Pauktutiit is an act of political and intellectual sovereignty best understood as part of a larger strategy of resistance to colonialist incursions on Inuit material and intellectual life. In the case of Sedna, this strategic withholding of information does not seem to be absolute, for anyone who wants to learn more about her is certainly not *prevented* from doing so. Dilettantes, however, are given Sedna lite —presumably Inuit have better things to do with their time than constantly have to explain that "the raping and assaulting of women is not part of traditional Inuit culture" (Qitsualik, "Matter" n.p.) and that they too, dearly love their children.

4. Sedna and the Problem of Violence Against Women

To be sure, Inuit have the right to manage their cultural materials as they see fit; this is by no means a new practice, and colonization is not the *only* factor influencing this process. Still,

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series of crime thrillers have been changed to meet the perceived needs of each linguistic literary market. The Swedish title of the first book is *Män som hatar kvinnor*, literally, "men who hate women." In French, the title is given as *Les Hommes qui n'aimaient pas les femmes* ("men who don't like women"). In English, thanks no doubt to the marketing geniuses in America and the UK, the book is known as *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo*. Presumably it is more palatable to an Anglophone audience to fetishize part of a potentially subversive heroine's body than it is to acknowledge that misogyny exists —even if, indeed, the problem of misogyny is the book's stated theme!

having examined these three texts, one is nevertheless prompted to ask why, exactly, it is that Inuit seem to have felt compelled to make these editorial changes. It cannot be merely the story's violence. Violence, even shocking violence, is a common feature of orally-derived texts across the world and is by no means unique to the unikkaaqtuat tradition. Generally speaking, mythology —if indeed there is such a thing— does not express a literary realist view; presumably most Westerners do not read texts such as Hesiod's *Theogyny*, for example, as some kind of ethnographic description of Greek family life.

As Qitsualik puts it, "[t]here are many Inuktitut stories involving violence against women. But is this the same as condoning it? … Does the European tale of Bluebeard, then, mean that southern men should kill wife after wife and lock their bodies in a secret room?" ("Matter" n.p.). Indeed, there seems to be a kind of double standard in play here, indicative more of a lazy ethnocentrism than a real inability to interpret these kinds of texts correctly. But even more than this cultural naïveté, I would argue that there exists in North America a widespread, collective reluctance to name and, more importantly, to own the problem of violence against women. This is especially true when, as is the case with Indigenous women, this violence is part and parcel of a larger system of oppression, one that implicates certain individuals more than others. Probably it is not particularly pleasant for men, as a group, to acknowledge their statistical propensity to assault and abuse women in patriarchal societies; neither is it particularly pleasant for women to recognize that they are, statistically speaking, at a higher risk of certain types of violence, and, moreover, that this violence frequently occurs within the ostensibly safe contexts of their families and intimate relationships. In the same way, settler-Canadians such as myself probably do not particularly enjoy having to acknowledge our ongoing complicity in the state-sponsored program of conquest and cultural genocide that has, in no small measure, given rise to modern Canada. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and National Inquiry into Missing and

Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) notwithstanding, I would argue that there is a deep-seated, existential dread amongst many Canadians of settler ancestry of having to face up to the ugly reality of the harms done to Indigenous peoples generally —and Indigenous women specifically— in the establishment of the Canadian nation-state. Nothing about any of this is much fun, for anyone involved; it is much easier, emotionally speaking, for the beneficiaries of patriarchy and settler-colonialism, if not to downright deny that these problems exist, to avoid, minimize, intellectualize, or otherwise 'soften' the full impact of this unpleasant —and unjust— state of affairs.

In the case of Sedna, it would seem that this collective reluctance to acknowledge and to address these larger structures of misogyny and colonialist violence constitutes a kind of epistemological barrier to a full, experiential understanding of the more 'esoteric' variants of the story. This is because, at least as it is 'traditionally' told, the story is *supposed* to make us uncomfortable. As Susan Sontag reminds us, "[r]eal art has the capacity to make us nervous" (5). All stories —indeed all works of art— are experiential to some degree; in Kublu's Uinigumasuittuq, the fact that we feel suspense and dismay at the events leading up to the Sea Woman's murder and transformation is proof that the story is doing its work in us. In a very broad sense, the Sedna story is therapeutic for the community as a whole, addressing as it does the deepest anxieties of Inuit life, both personal and collective (see Kolinská 71-72); by definition it would not be therapeutic if it did not engage audience members emotionally. For our purposes, I would argue that the horror readers and auditors feel with respect to Uinigumasuittuq's death and subsequent transformation into the fearless, fingerless Takannaaluk is, in a very real way, central to the manner in which the story functions as law.

5. Ecosystemic Sovereignty, Ecosystemic Reciprocity

More than anything else, it is the audience's affective, intellectual, and visceral experiences of the story that connect ancient tradition to contemporary life. From the perspective of verbal art as performance, the concluding lines of the story detailing Takannaaluk's underwater abode, the propensity of the marine mammals to become trapped in her hair, and the elaborate nakkaa-ritual, are not so much an addendum or ethnographic postscript than they are that final part of the performance in which story and reality merge as the audience is guided back to the present moment. That is to say, the aetiologies recounted in Uinigumasuittuq are not simply part of a distant, 'mythical' past but continue to have an effect in the world, even now, when the territory of Nunavut has become a political reality and the angakkuit no longer travel regularly to soothe and pacify the Sea Woman. For, as George Agiaq Kappianaq puts it, "[e]ven though we have become Christians, the land hasn't changed" (qtd. in Kappianaq et al, *Travelling* 80).

Both here in Uinigumasuittuq and elsewhere in the tradition, it is the Sea Woman's total control over the postlapsarian human community's food supply —almost always after having been "mistreated and sacrificed for selfish reasons" (Christopher, *Kappianaqtut* 21)— that is the key to understanding her story. According to Knud Rasmussen's Nattilik informant Nâlungiaq, "Nuliajuk, the sea spirit … gives seals to mankind, it is true," but she "would much rather that mankind, from whom she once received no pity when she lived on earth, perished too" (qtd. in Christopher, *Kappianaqtut* 29).[65]

Takannaaluk, then, is a far cry from a Disney princess. As Qitsualik explains, "she is not a goddess, but rather a special creature of fear and tragedy" ("Problem"). In pre-settlement times this "powerful figure" was "a feared and moody tyrant" (Christopher, *Kappianaqtut* 16). For a hunting-based society such as the Inuit, the disappearance of the seals and other sea mammals

[65] Significantly, this is referring to the variant in which Nuliajuk is a mistreated orphan.

which made up the majority of their diet was, quite literally, a matter of life and death, and it is by no means surprising that this most dreaded of misfortunes be traced back to some kind of primordial break or rupture in the interconnectedness of being. As Martin puts it:

> The sea-woman's ability to withhold the animals means starvation and a slow death for the people; this devastating power, and this monumental ill-temper, are a direct consequence of horrific actions of the father (and perhaps also of the bird-husband). The story thus posits an explanation for the brutality of famine, and reminds the inhabitants of a highly-interconnected cultural landscape of the wide-reaching consequences of their actions ("Rescuing" 193).

In particular, the notion that evildoers will somehow be 'paid back' is a foundational tenet of traditional Inuit law and, as Martin indicates, is closely linked to the complex network of relationships and obligations that characterise Inuit cosmology. In *Childrearing Practices*, Naqi Ekho explains:

> We knew that eventually we would be paid back for our wrongdoing. This is what my mother told me would happen if I knowingly did something wrong. Once we did something wrong, we always felt dreadful and sorry for doing it. We always took care of each other because of this … Our mothers always said we had to take care of everyone and look out for each other, even if they were handicapped. (102)

In Kublu's Uinigumasuittuq, the father's final acts of violence against his daughter (and then, ultimately, himself), are merely the latest in a whole series of ill-considered actions, and given that, here and elsewhere, he has so egregiously violated the duty of care owed to his child, his ultimate punishment (namely, death by suicide and post-mortem internment on the sea floor with his two murder victims as a kind of avenging demon) is fittingly brutal. The reverse is also true: in versions created for public (that, is, non-Inuit) education and consumption, the violence is diminished and attempts are made to present the father in a somewhat more favourable light, not because his actions are in any way forgivable, but precisely *because they are not*.

So whether she be a neglected orphan, as in the Nattilik region, or an abused wife and daughter, as in the Iglulik region, it this essential teaching: that actions have consequences and

that mistreatment invites retribution, which must always be seen as central to the Sea Woman story. This is law at its most basic: when fundamental moral obligations (to share, to nurture, to protect) are neglected, when important relationships (human, animal, ecological) are violated, then the well-ordered, positive reciprocity that characterizes all healthy societies will collapse into a chaos of negative reciprocity that threatens the survival of the entire community.[66] Far from exhibiting a blasé or a permissive attitude towards violence against women, it is hard to imagine a stronger warning against mistreatment and abuse.

6. Violence Against Women and Colonialism

In Canada, it is no secret that Indigenous women experience shockingly high rates of violence and abuse; it is also no secret that Canada has not adequately addressed this issue. According to Borrows:

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[66] As Jackie Price observes in "Living Inuit Governance in Nunavut," one major part of traditional Inuit law is confession and disclosure of wrongdoings (131-132); this aspect of governance is particularly apropos when considering the Sedna story, for the Sea Woman was widely understood to retaliate against the human community from time to time in response to the historical and ongoing offences committed against her, offences which needed to be ritually expunged. As Aupilaarjuk explains, if Inuit "didn't do what she wished, then we wouldn't be able to catch wildlife" (qtd. in Aupilaarjuk et al, *Cosmology* 89), either because the wrongdoings would cause the animals to become entangled in her hair, as is the case in Uinigumasuittuq, or for some other reason. Offences against the Sea Woman could be of a moral or a ritual nature; as noted above, there is no real distinction between the two in a cosmology "which recognizes the constant presence of spirits and respects the authority of spirits to challenge Inuit physical survival" (Price 131). According to Lucassie Nutaraaluk, Sedna was like a judge, and "[a]nyone breaking a pittailiniq [ritual prohibition], such as a woman not following the rules relating to kiniqtuq [menstrual or post-delivery bleeding], or someone stealing things would result in Sedna's ears being plugged" with caribou hair (Aupilaarjuk et al, 190). Repairing correct relations between the Sea Woman and the human community required that any hidden wrongdoings be confessed, often during a public ceremony in which the entire group reaffirmed its commitment to honoring and maintaining the tirigusunniq system (see for example Rasmussen qtd. in Aupilaarjuk et al, *Cosmology* 107-129). Shamanic intervention was sometimes necessary, yet, as Price points out, "it is important to recognize that an angakkuq could amend the spiritual upset only once a confession was made. An angakkuq did not just 'fix' the problem; an individual had to first admit their wrongdoing to the broader community" (132), and then, presumably, commit to modifying their behaviour. According to Tungilik "[w]hen people found out what it was that Nuliajuk didn't want done, then the wrong would be fixed. Once they found out the reason that made her angry, then it would be over and things would get better" (qtd. Tungilik et al 98).

> Indigenous women in Canada are beaten, sexually assaulted, and killed in shockingly high numbers. They experience violence at rates three times higher than other women. This violence is also extremely brutal in comparison to that experienced by the general population. They are five times more likely to be killed or to disappear as compared to non-Indigenous women. They also experience much higher rates of intimate partner violence than other women. Incarceration rates of Indigenous women are also greater than those of the general population of women due, in part, to their response to this violence. (84)

The situation is particularly bleak in the North. According to a 2011 Statistics Canada report, "[a]s is the case with violent crime overall, the Territories have consistently recorded the highest rates of police-reported violence against women," and "the rate of violent crime against women in Nunavut was nearly *13 times higher* than the rate for Canada" ("Violence Against Women" 2, emphasis mine).

In its 1993 "Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women," the United Nations defines violence against women as "[a]ny act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life" (qtd. in Joint International Law Program [JILP] 11). A kind of malignant outgrowth of other systems of oppression (namely, patriarchy, racism, and class distinctions), violence against women and girls is "one of the key means though which male control over women's agency and sexuality is maintained" (ii).

As Borrows observes, violence against women "arises not only from poor interpersonal relationships" but "is also connected to larger social structures of inequality that can be found in any society" (*Freedom* 188). In Canada, the alarmingly high rates of domestic violence and abuse reported in northern and Indigenous communities is intimately linked to "Canada's ongoing colonization of Indigenous lands and bodies" (188). This colonial dispossession is accomplished, as we have seen, by the deliberate disruption of family and community life via residential

schooling and forced resettlement, and the near erasure of longstanding land-based systems of governance via the blanket imposition of culturally inappropriate laws and policies such as the Indian Act and Project Surname. One of the many results of all this was the purposeful undermining of traditional gender relations —whatever they may have been— in favour of a Euro-Christian heteropatriarchy in which male authority was taken as a given. As Simpson puts it:

> Heteropatriarchy places cis-gender heterosexual men and their bodies, their politics and their ideas at the top of the social hierarchy. It then normalizes and replicates this hierarchy in all aspects of Indigenous societies, especially in our most intimate spaces – in ceremony, in our relationships, in our families. This is supported and maintained by the state through the Indian Act, Indian policy and the infiltration of Indigenous thoughts systems as a key mechanism to destroy the building blocks of Indigenous political systems and replaces them with the building blocks of state nationalism, capitalism and settler subjectivity. ("Anger" n.p.)

Of course, to say that Indigenous women generally, and Inuit women in particular, experience high rates of violence and abuse as a result of settler-colonial racism and misogyny is not to say that violence against women *never* occurred in these cultures historically. As Borrows points out, "[v]iolence against women has been deeply rooted in many societies throughout the ages" (*Freedom* 199), and although the specifics vary from situation to situation, it often occurs for strikingly similar reasons, reasons usually having to do with a desire for control over women's sexuality and self-determination (JILP ii).

Like many stories dealing with gender-based violence, Kublu's Uinigumasuittuq reflects this complex interplay between the global and the local. Even audiences completely unfamiliar with Inuit culture can observe that the circumstances surrounding said violence are depressingly predictable. In most versions of the tale, the young woman's murder is triggered by her father's attempts to remove her from a bad marriage and her estranged husband's rage on account of her leaving him (lines 65-67). This is no anomaly; all across the world, women are frequently

murdered by male family members and/or intimate partners (World Health Organization [WHO]). Moreover, by far the most dangerous time for women in abusive relationships is when they are in the process of leaving (Statistics Canada, *Measuring Violence Against Women* 38; WHO 4). Men who have been socialized to eschew vulnerability in exchange for becoming the unassailable, sexually dominant agents of a heteropatriarchy are arguably ill-prepared for emotionally intimate relationships, and, particularly when they have been conditioned to view women and children as property and status symbols rather than as fellow human beings (see McKegney 200-209), they often lack the psycho-social resources for dealing with the gut-wrenching emotional devastation of a breakup (see also Simpson, "Anger"). In extreme cases — and especially when social supports are lacking— these same men can become violent towards both themselves and the women who they believe to be the cause of their despair, as a means of "aveng[ing] their own feelings of sexual inadequacy" (Qisualik, "Matter" n.p.).

To be clear, there can never be any excuse for such sickening, vindictive behaviours; activists such as Qitsualik are unequivocal in their condemnation of male abusers of women who, "[i]n their wretchedness, their perverse need to scavenge any shred of power … use beatings and rape as tools of control" ("Matter" n.p.). Nevertheless, any strategy for reducing violence against women in the North is bound to fail if it does not address the root causes of this violence, namely, the widespread and highly gendered traumas of colonization and the conscription of both men and women into what McKegney has termed "a Western regime of misogyny" (200) in which masculinity is defined, in part, by the ability to exercise authority over women.

From what I can tell, Uinigumasuittuq does not encourage much sympathy either for the fulmar, whose violent response to his wife's disappearance is vindictive in the extreme, or for the father, whose cowardly betrayal of his daughter effectively makes him the accomplice of her abusive husband. As is the case with all acts of intimate partner violence, the bird-husband's

actions stem from a need for control rather than from love, and his excessive rage towards his estranged wife draws attention to the very real dangers women face when leaving bad relationships, particularly when their own support networks are inadequate, or, what is worse, complicit. The bird-man possesses none of the emotional depth that might render him somewhat more sympathetic (as seems to be the case, say, with Kiviuq). In terms of narrative development, his only real function is to trick the young woman into an unhappy marriage and to cause the storm that precipitates her murder. After his estranged wife has been thrown overboard, he therefore completely disappears from the story and (fortunately for her, at least) is noticeably absent from Takannaaluk's new household.

It bears repeating: colonial violence is patriarchal as well as genocidal. In Canada, men and women have been impacted differently by the machinations of colonization, and Indigenous women and girls have been rendered doubly vulnerable to abuse in a settler state (see for example Maracle 129-139). As far as I know, no one is arguing for the existence of a pre-contact feminist utopia. But it cannot be said enough: it is much harder to mistreat women and children with impunity when they are enmeshed in a network of loving and protective family and community members who have known them since infancy and who would not hesitate to intervene if needed. It is also much harder for gender-based violence to become entrenched in societies where women exercise real power in their communities, outside of and apart from the narrowly prescribed roles bequeathed to them by the Eurowestern heteropatriarchy. Given the settler state's implicit definition of humanity as white and male and its consequent failure to acknowledge or address the needs of women in establishing legal structures pertaining to Aboriginal peoples (Groft & Johnson 22; Napoleon 18; Borrows, *Freedom* 201), an argument could be made that the Canadian legal system has not only aided and abetted Indigenous women's subordination, but also failed to protect them (and their children) from the inevitable abuses arising from this subordination.

7. Pretend Husbands

If we frame our discussion of the text as an inquiry into the larger issue of violence against women, and, in particular, possible insights and strategies for addressing this problem, one lesson that seems to emerge here is that Uinigumasuittuq and her father act alone and not within the context of a larger, community-sponsored intervention. Given that social isolation is a frequent means by which abusers keep their victims trapped and dependent, it stands to reason that establishing broad-based, reliable, and easily accessible supports is an important means of working against gender-based violence. For, far from being inevitable, there is much in the Inuit tradition to suggest that Uinigumasuittuq's story did not have to end the way that it did. If we read the Sedna story in conversation with certain other stories from the unikkaaqtuat canon, particularly a closely-related tale referred to as either 'Pretend Husbands' or 'A Story of Three Girls,' it is quite clear that things could have turned out differently.

Pretend Husbands is an archetypal be-careful-what-you-wish-for story in which three (or sometimes four)[67] young girls who are playing house together outdoors carelessly remark that they would like to take, respectively, a rock, an eagle, and a bowhead whale for their husbands. The first of the girls simply turns into stone, either immediately or gradually over time. The second girl is snatched up by an eagle and taken away to his home atop some rocky cliffs overlooking the sea. The third girl is abducted by a bowhead whale and taken away to his home on the sea floor.

Like Uinigumasuittuq, both girls are separated from their families and held captive by their husbands. Unlike Uinigumasuittuq, however, these girls, with a combination of their own cleverness, and the help of some passing qajaqers (usually a group of male relatives who have set

[67] In the variant related by Mariano Aupilaarjuk, the fourth girl marries a sculpin, is taken out to sea, and becomes Nuliajuk. Her other husband or housemate is named Isarrataittuq, which according to Aupilaarjuk means "fingers that have been cut off" (qtd. in McDermott, "Unikkaaqtuat" 137)

out to look for them), ultimately manage to escape. The girl married to the eagle secretly collects caribou tendons to make a rope, and, when the time is right, signals her would-be rescuers, scales the cliff, and makes her escape. As is the case with the Storm Bird, the eagle husband initially pursues the rescue party, but here he either eventually gives up or is shot and killed by one of his wife's relatives.

The girl married to the bowhead whale likewise plans and prepares for her escape. When she is finally ready to leave, she sneaks outside her husband's house on the pretext that she needs to urinate, slips out of the leash to which she has been bound, and likewise escapes with a group of passing qajaqers. Once her husband realizes what has happened, he too chases after the rescuers, who do "everything they [can] to beat the whale," throwing various magical items of clothing at him to slow down his pursuit (Henry Isluanik qtd. in McDermott, "Unikkaaqtuat" 208). In most cases everyone manages to reach land, although in at least one version, the whale-husband, still lurking about near the shore, later overhears his ex-wife and mother-in-law speaking poorly of him and angrily turns the lot of them into stone (see McDermott, "Unikkaaqtuat" 206-214).[68]

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[68] According to Henry Isluanik's telling of the story, "[t]he mother of the girl who was married to the bowhead whale was an arrogant type of person and she said to her daughter, 'Is your vagina rotten now?' Her daughter answered her mother saying, 'Yes. It is rotten. It is rotten'" (qtd. in McDermott, "Unikkaaqtuat," 209). It is this insult, more than anything else, which causes the bowhead whale to say "I wish you all could turn into stone!" (ibid). Isluanik also includes here the song that was sung "as they were gradually transforming into rocks":

> Qaingaa qaititsi Uingatsii
> Come on over. I'll have you for a husband.
> Uinnai sinataujuvangnai sitingujaqpannaitsii
> I'm scared now the rock is sticking to me.
> Ujuraugnuumaa niputaangaa
> I'm turning into rock from the bottom to my upper body.
> Aggakka ujaranguqpuuk itigakka ujaranguqpuuk
> My hands are rocks now, my feet are rocks now
> Tagva tamamma ujaranngupunga
> Now I'm all rock. (209-210)

There is a great deal of crossover with Uinigumasuittuq here, particularly with respect to the young girls' ill-fated marriages to various non-humans, their internments in aeries/under the sea, and, finally, their various successful and unsuccessful attempts to escape their marriages by qajaq. Even the Inuit elders interviewed by Noel McDermott for his dissertation seem to be of varying opinions regarding the degree to which these two narrative traditions should be understood as entirely separate from each another (see McDermott, Unikkaaqtuat 137, 147, 206, 210). Certainly the existence of this closely-related unikkaaqtuaq at least raises the possibility that the Sea Woman's tragic fate was not, in fact, inevitable.

In Kublu's text, as we have seen, Uinigumasuittuq's support network is conspicuous in its absence, and her rescue party is understaffed and —to put it mildly— not up to the task. Furthermore, although the young woman is clearly unhappy in her marriage to the Storm Bird, the *decision* to run away is not so much hers as it is her father's. By contrast, in the Pretend Husbands tradition, most of the action seems to unfold within the context of a functional community life: there is not just one but three different girls playing house together and joking about their future husbands, and the two girls who are abducted are usually retrieved by a team of male relatives who, presumably, have been out looking for them since they disappeared. The actions of the rescue parties, moreover, are synchronized with and complementary to those of the girls themselves, who —particularly in the case of the girl abducted by the eagle— carefully plot out their escapes before asking for and receiving help from persons of their own choosing.

What Pretend Husbands seems to suggest, then, is that violence against women can most effectively be dealt with when the entire community —including the abused women themselves— are directly or indirectly involved in addressing it. While there is, of course, no hard and fast rule to be applied inflexibly to each and every instance of spousal violence, what we

can say is that, generally speaking, it is not a good idea to act unilaterally, without the full consent and the full cooperation of the abused woman herself. In the so-called 'real world,' domestic violence is always complicated and messy; indeed, it is for this very reason that it is so important to recognize that it does *not* occur in a social vacuum, and that interventions are most likely to be successful when they are broadly supported, by both men and women, at the familial, community, and governmental levels. Given the widespread and highly gendered damages and disenfranchisements wrought by the Canadian colonial machine, Indigenous women in particular "deserve and require protection at the highest levels of constitutional law as well as within the mundane details of everyday life" (Borrows, *Freedom* 197). Whatever their particular situation, women must be able to "engage political and legal powers and protections" (188) as needed, at all levels of social organization, and they must be able to hold their communities accountable for their safety and wellbeing.

Thus far, however, the "Canadian Parliament and provincial legislatures have not responded effectively to the nationwide crisis involving violence against Indigenous women" (Borrows, *Freedom* 190; see also 192). Partly driving this inaction, I believe, is a deep-seated compulsion on the part of Canadians to avoid looking at that which makes us uncomfortable. Just as Laura Beard has observed with respect to her non-Indigenous students' subtle unease during classroom discussions of white privilege, likewise there exists an "unconscious or not-quite conscious" (Beard 129) defensiveness and resistance within settler-Canadian society to acknowledging —and acting upon— its own complicity regarding Indigenous women's high rates of victimization. In "pain, pleasure, shame. Shame," McKegney argues that "the violent inoculation of shame" within Indigenous subjects was a "primary tool" in the "process of [colonial] social engineering" (198) in places such as residential schools; I would furthermore argue that, insofar that our natural empathy for other human beings can become "contaminated

with guilt and thereby repositioned within the onlooker" (198) —as denial, contempt, victim-blaming, fear etc.— that the morally and emotionally deadening effects of shame are very much at work within settler society as well. This not-so-subtle evasion of collective responsibility on the part of many settler-Canadians enables them to avoid *feeling* their place in this tragedy, and, of course, to forestall the inevitable call to action incumbent upon the *experience* of knowing that their privilege —indeed, their very existence— is predicated upon the literal theft and occupation of Indigenous lands and upon premeditated, systematic, cultural genocide.

150 years after Confederation, this is more than a little bit embarrassing. Canada desperately wants to view itself as a progressive, liberal, democracy, yet it continues to avoid recognizing Indigenous peoples, and especially Indigenous women, as kin, that is, as fully human, with all the moral implications that such a recognition would entail (see McKegney 207). Moreover, given that, as Justice argues, "[i]nvasion depended on the subjugation of indigenous women and their frequent positions of authority" (161; see also Simpson, "Anger" n.p.), "without recognizing the links between violence against Indigenous women and male-dominated colonial structures, Indigenous women will remain subject to staggeringly high levels of violence" (*Freedom* 188). What is needed, then, is nothing less a wholesale reimagining and redefining of the underlying relationship between Indigenous Canada and the Canadian nation-state.

8. Conclusion: Canada as Ningauk

The late Inuk elder Jose Kusugak invokes the relational underpinnings of traditional Inuit law when he describes the correct relationship between Inuit and the rest of Canada as the one implied by the Inuktitut word 'ningauk' (McDermott, "Unikkaaqtuat" 313). Ningauk is commonly translated as son/daughter-in-law but can also have the more specific denotations of "daughter's husband" or "man's sister's husband" (Kusugaq & Spalding, *Inuktitut* 69), or even

"brother's wife" or "husband's sister" (Dorais, *1000 Inuit Words* 207). That is to say, 'ningauk' refers to a person who has become a member of one's own family through marriage. According to Kusugak, the ningauk designation existed "to ensure that respective in-laws accept and love the one marrying into the family," treating them "with even greater regard than their son or daughter" (qtd. in McDermott, "Unikkaaqtuat" 313). It is a relationship which entails "cooperation, partnership, and sharing based on mutual respect" (McDermott, "Unikkaaqtuat" 314) and which, "like a marriage … requires constant work and attention in order to be successful" (Kusugak qtd. in McDermott, "Unikkaaqtuat" 313-314).

The kind of relationship implied by ningauk is unlike those implied by a one-time business transaction or legal ruling. When Kusugak states "We will always be Inuit and Canada is now our ningauk" (313), he is invoking a whole range of highly specific kinship obligations that persist over time and that require an underlying ethic of care built upon a foundation of collective accountability. Moreover, while he does not seem to object, in principle, to entering into a relationship with the nation-state of Canada, there are at least two important caveats for what this would mean. First, it is settler-Canadians, and not Inuit, who would be doing the 'marrying-in.' Inuit may be willing, as James Arvaluk puts it "to share our land and our resources" (qtd. in McDermott, "Unikkaaqtuat" 313) with newcomers who are willing to act in good faith, but it is *their* land and *their* resources (313). Any sort of exploitative, paternalistic relationship is out of the question. Second, given that ningaut, by definition, are now family members, this also means that they will be held accountable for the manner in which their individual actions contribute to the wellbeing of the collective. Mature and responsible adults who have entered into a relationship of "deep reciprocity" (see Simpson, "Anger" n.p.) must now comport themselves as such, exercising reason (isuma) and love (naglingniq) in equal measure, as appropriate, and settler-Canadians who wish to remain members of their new families must

commit to living and working in ways that minimize colonial violence. As McDermott puts it, "[i]f the settler society, which occupies and asserts control over the land-mass called Canada, is to set down roots in this place, it must be willing to share, and to acknowledge that they" —not unlike Angusugjuk— have a great deal to learn from and about" their in-laws (314).

The teachings embedded in the Sedna story are many, and it would probably be impossible for anyone, let alone a cultural outsider such as myself, to provide a definitive listing. Still, it should be evident by this point that a large part of what the story has to say —particularly in its more 'traditional,' less sugarcoated forms— is that human beings are, to varying degrees, inextricably bound to each other and to the world around them within a complex network of relational responsibility. Moreover, because the very structure of the cosmos is relational, mistreatment and abuse have devastating consequences, not only for the parties directly involved, but for the entire human (and non-human) community. Failing to recognize others as kin and/or failing to uphold the moral imperatives implied therein, amounts to nothing less than a sabotaging of the whole ecosystemic foundation upon which human moral existence can be said to be built.

When these truths are held in tension with the ongoing crisis of violence against Indigenous women and girls in Canada, we are reminded of how the health and wellbeing of Canadian society as a whole is inescapably linked to the health and wellbeing of all its constituent members and nations. It is a central, not a peripheral, matter. It should go without saying that the current state of affairs is a human rights travesty, one that should deeply concern all Canadians. At root, to abuse another human being is to deny their full humanity; likewise, to ignore or tolerate the abuse of an entire class of people is prejudice and discrimination of the worst kind. There is a fundamental need for the nation-state of Canada, at a very basic level, to

recognize Indigenous people, especially Indigenous women, as kin, and to take that kinship seriously.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Inuit legends and stories are not mere superstitious musings. What they contain is far richer and more profound than what a superficial glance can grasp. – Jaypetee Arnakak qtd. in McDermott, "Unikkaaqtuat" xxiv

Inuit have lived in the North for thousands of years and have amassed an extensive knowledge, much of which is expressed in story form, of how to live well in the world (see also Borrows, *Drawing* 4). In my view, the Sedna/Uinigumasuittuq story is a profound expression of the interconnectedness of being and the grave importance of living well in the world. In these "jaded times," as it were, educated Westerners might be tempted to smile indulgently at the notion of spirits or talking animals, and they might raise their eyebrows at the well-established Inuit principle that the natural world will retaliate if humans fail to treat the land and its inhabitants with respect. Yet, given the manner in which our planet is increasingly threatened by human activity, it would seem that these types of stories possess a kind of urgent truth that the modern narratives of scientific enlightenment and economic progress sorely lack.[69]

The various narrative and religious traditions associated with the fearsome Sea Woman can be found across the Inuit homeland, from the tip of Chukchi Peninsula and the Bering Strait to the East coast of Greenland, and it is quite likely that at least some parts of her origin story — such as the Dog Husband episode— originate in human prehistory. Although in many ways the

[69] As an interesting aside, Build Films' 2015 short film, "Tallurutiup Tariunga - Lancaster Sound," is an excellent example of how the Sea Woman tradition can be taken up to address political and ecological concerns. According to the production company's webpage:

> Based on a poem by Iqaluit artist Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory, the video retells part of the Inuit creation myth of Nuliajuk, goddess of the sea, in light of the profound changes facing local communities due to climate instability and industrial development. The script is narrated by Jeannie Arreak-Kullualik, of Pond Inlet, a community perched on the shore of Lancaster Sound. (n.p)

The video can be accessed online at https://www.buildfilms.ca.

unikkaaqtuaq of Sedna is a highly context-specific and 'local' story, it has long fascinated non-Inuit anthropologists, Religious Studies scholars, and myth theorists. There are probably many reasons for why Sedna's story has so captured the imagination of cultural outsiders such as myself, including the exoticism of the arctic landscape, the devastating violence of the central episode, the interesting contrasts and comparisons to creation texts from other cultures, and, not least, the enduring fascination with the fearsome, enigmatic spirit to whom the story refers.

Ironically, it is this devastating violence that is one of the first things to be 'edited out,' explained away, or otherwise 'softened' when the text is repurposed/reinterpreted for non-Inuit audiences, something that is reflective both of an ambivalence towards traditional stories which violate non-Inuit generic expectations (such as the desire for a happy ending) and, I would argue, of a deep-seated discomfort regarding the problem of violence against women —particularly Indigenous women. Kublu's Uinigumasuittuq, however, neither glosses over nor dwells upon the more disturbing elements of the tale, but rather makes space for readers and auditors to perceive the full horror of the events leading up to the Sea Woman's ultimate descent to the sea floor. In doing so, it subtly reminds its audience of the grim consequences of antisocial behaviour.

Kublu's Uinigumasuittuq is indeed a 'traditional' story whose roots can be traced back many generations, but it is also a living, breathing textual event that is recreated and reconstructed with each action/event of performance, ensuring its ongoing relevance and, if we are talking about law, its moral and legal valences. Insofar as it speaks to the political concerns and aspirations of the region (see Martin, "Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit" 195) while addressing a mixed audience of insiders and outsiders, it is, at least in part, an Aboriginal Sovereign Display Territory. However, insofar as it *prioritizes* an insider audience by affirming the story's ongoing importance despite the dramatic changes of the past century, it also an expression of decolonial

love, a statement of cultural continuity in the face of the traumas of colonization, and a life-giving act of community well-being.

As McDermott observes, unikkaaqtuat such as the Sedna story "were the first site for the articulation of laws, which guided and sustained Inuit for hundreds of years, before and after the appearance of others in their lands. The elders repeatedly refer to the teaching power of unikkaaqtuat and how they assisted Inuit in every aspect of life" ("Unikkaaqtuat" 314). Thus, in making these stories available, however they are retold, to a wider audience, Inuit are "extend[ing] an invitation to the settler populations of this land, to acknowledge where they are, and in whose house they are living" (314).

From the point of view of law, Uinigumasuittuq emphasizes that relationships, responsibilities, and obligations are not optional; they are an inescapable part of being human, the very foundation, the spiritual core, of all legal orders and ideas of justice. As Tol Foster (Muskogee Creek) puts it, relations are "the primary axis through which we can understand ourselves and each other" (277). In an Inuit context, Jackie Price reminds us that moral and spiritual authority "exists within an intrinsic spiritual network of relationships that guides Inuit existence" (131). This network, as we have seen, "includ[es] Inuit, the land, weather, and animals," and "any individual who disrespects maligait affects the spiritual balance of these relationships, challenging individual and community well-being" (131). Thus, "[r]especting maligait requires individuals to be constantly aware of their surroundings and actions, and, when necessary, to be critical of their own conduct" (131) as a means of upholding the well-being not only of themselves and their families but the larger community as well. There must be an ongoing effort to bring one's own behaviours into accord with the "rules that govern Inuit within the metaphysical world" (131).

In an Indigenous context, the idea of sovereignty is closely linked to "the dignified ability of [community] members to participate in the web of rights and responsibilities that make them a People" (Justice 166), demonstrating the impossibility of clearly distinguishing between religion and spirituality, law and governance, and national self-identity. Traditional Inuit law, then, is a human rights issue. Moreover, especially in a colonial context, these types of deeply moral, legal, and relational issues are thrown into sharp relief. All Canadians are implicated, whether they like it or not, in a historically, politically, and geographically complex web of relationship and obligation that existed long before we arrived on the scene and will continue to exist long after we are gone. As Womack argues, history means very little until we develop an "interactive" relationship with it; thus, "becoming participants in history … turning ourselves into characters in a story … is the moral responsibility of any human being who desires an ethical relationship with her past" ("Theorizing" 372) —or, for that matter, her present or her future. Recovering a relational orientation to the collective project of being in the world does not, of course, make everything suddenly become clear, but it is productive of a certain quality of receptive attentiveness.

Experiencing and re-experiencing certain key stories is an important means of reflecting upon these histories and ethical entanglements. Unlike other modes of communication, stories address the whole person: body, mind, and spirit (see Borrows, *Drawing* 212). Creation stories in particular function to "generate and reflect" Indigenous philosophy (see Morgan 129), literary theory, and legal principles. Recalling David Garneau's remarks about the role of Aboriginal Sovereign Display Territories in encouraging a "[s]haring in a discourse about histories, responsibility, and transformation among artworks and with other human beings" as "a corrective to the colonial desire for settlement" (39), I would argue that the profoundly 'unsettling' Sedna story —and particularly the version that I have chosen to focus on— has the potential to serve as

a means of becoming, as it were, 'unsettled.' As a contemporary retelling of one of the most 'canonical' North American texts, Kublu's Uinigumasuittuq invites readers and auditors to reflect upon their personal and collective histories, relationships, and concomitant moral obligations. So "[w]hile the core of Indigeneity is incompletely available to non-Native people, those who come to spaces of conciliation not to repair 'Indians'" by means of sweeping our ugly histories of conquest and forced assimilation under the proverbial carpet, but rather "to heal themselves, who come not as colonizers but with a conciliatory attitude to learn and share as equals, may be transformed" (Garneau 39).

So whether we are discussing the violence at the heart of the Sedna story or the ongoing crisis of violence against Indigenous women and girls, the most important question becomes: what is the appropriate *response* to said violence? As far as concerns Kublu's Uinigumasuittuq and the larger Sedna tradition, there are at least a few ways one could answer this question. First, it is important to emphasize that the story is not operating in a realist literary mode and is not meant to be taken as a normative depiction of Inuit family life any more than, say, the Sacrifice of Isaac is meant to be taken as a normative depiction of a Judeo-Christian picnic. However, there is also a more straightforward and 'natural' answer: the 'correct' response is, quite simply, to feel uncomfortable. Violence, unfortunately, is not an anomaly in our world, no matter how we may attempt to downplay its dark, menacing presence in our national histories, our politics, our families, or the stories that we create and/or consume to understand our world. Here and elsewhere, whenever we encounter victims of violence, the ethical response is to honour them: by acknowledging the reality of their suffering, by relating to them in a manner that recognizes their dignity, by bringing to light those larger structures of injustice which have given rise to their victimization, by critically reflecting upon our own complicity within these larger structures of injustice, and, finally, by working to dismantle them.

With this in mind, I would like to conclude by making a few observations about forgiveness, reconciliation, and conciliation. We have seen that there are at least some 'modern' adaptations of Sedna story, including the CBC radio drama discussed above, which, following the general trend of 'toning down' or 'softening' the brutality at the heart of the story, seem to raise the possibility that Sedna could ultimately forgive her father for his violence towards her (see also Stott 200). Although obviously, I cannot speak as an Aboriginal person, as a woman I have a serious aversion to the all-too-frequent suggestion that abused women should forgive and/or be reconciled with their abusers. To be clear, I do think that forgiveness, insofar as it "enable[s] [individuals] to manage the resentment and anger [they] are likely to feel in the wake of a wrongdoing" (Govier 45) and enables enemies to escape a never-ending cycle of vengeance and retribution, is, in general, a positive value. In practice, however —and particularly in cases of domestic violence— the injunction to forgive can be wielded as a kind of weapon against abuse victims, and 'forgiveness' itself is often confused with what, in my view, would more accurately be described as Stockholm Syndrome. Asking for forgiveness and expressing a desire to make amends with those whom one has harmed, though not without its own set of complexities, is generally a good thing, but it is always morally obnoxious for perpetrators to *demand* forgiveness and reconciliation —particularly when they persist in harmful and abusive behaviours.

When freely given, forgiveness can be a powerful response to violence, but forgiveness is cheapened when the enormity of the offence is not fully acknowledged and the harms incurring from the offence are minimized or ignored. Forgiveness is also not the same thing as reconciliation (or conciliation, for that matter) —it is quite easy to imagine scenarios in which you could have one without the other. Forgiveness may not lead to reconciliation, and there are certain scenarios in which full reconciliation is either impossible or undesirable; for example, "if a woman forgives a battering husband for his violent acts against her, that forgiveness does not

entail that she will, or should, reconcile with him to resume their marriage and domestic life" (Govier 64). And finally, forgiveness does not and indeed *cannot* ever undo the harms engendered by the offence, such as death or trauma, nor erase the consequences of one's actions, such as loss of trust or relationship. Thus, although the murderers are ultimately forgiven and their lives spared in the motion picture version of Atanarjuat, given that they have so poisoned community life with their persistent antisocial behaviour, they are nevertheless banished from the camp.

Again, this is not to say that a more forgiving Sedna could not be a compelling modern (re)adaptation of the tradition —after all, it works quite well in *Atanarjuat*. Ultimately, there are as many versions of the Sedna story as there are people who tell it, and, as befits an oral narrative of its scope and power, it is certain that this unikkaaqtuaq will continue to be retold, readapted, remediated, and reinterpreted in response to the diverse and ever-changing circumstances of the Inuit community, which may or may not require an increased emphasis on forgiveness, reconciliation, and/or conciliation. But what about a version in which the father consistently displays naglik- throughout? What about a version in which the young woman successfully manages to escape her abusive husband, as in the Pretend Husbands story? What about a version in which her father does not betray her? A version where one of them simply pulls out a gun and blasts the Storm Bird out of the sky? What about a version in which the whole community intervenes when her husband begins to mistreat her, compelling the bird man to be a better husband and sticking around to keep a close eye on him? What about a version in which he is a good husband or in which he simply allows her to leave when she is no longer happy in their marriage? What about a version in which she marries a bird-*woman*?

Clearly, there is a wide range of possibilities for future development. But whatever direction the tradition takes, it is quite clear that we should reject any interpretation of the story as

condoning violence against women. It is both a moral and an ecological truth that humans, animals, and environment do not exist in separate worlds but are deeply intertwined and interdependent —no one, ultimately, can act with impunity. Recalling Kimberly Blaeser's description of the oral-traditional aesthetic as one in which readers and auditors "have a response-ability and a responsibility to the telling" and are encouraged to "learn our role in story and are meant to carry that role into daily life" (64), it would seem that the ethical response to the Sedna unikkaaqtuat is to allow for the possibility that we could, and should, be changed by it. That is to say, those who have encountered and experienced the Uinigumasuittuq story can no longer claim ignorance; they have a 'response-ability' to behave appropriately within the pre-existing networks of land and kinship which characterizes Indigenous North America, recognizing that reconciliation and conciliation are not one-off events but an ongoing practice of self-reflexive humility and an ethic of care for others, human and non-human, seen and unseen.

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