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IGLUMI ISUMATAIT
A REINTERPRETATION OF THE POSITION OF INUIT WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

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IGLUMI ISUMATAIT
A reinterpretation of the position of Inuit women

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This thesis is a subjective exploration of the images of Inuit women in narrative texts about Inuit. The intention in writing this thesis is to open up a space in which inquisitive dialogue is encouraged regarding the generally accepted position of Inuit women. Inuit women have been portrayed in many contradictory images. These images can be seen as an oppressive force that presently confine Inuit women who once held a highly important decision-making role in Inuit society. The reinterpretation of the descriptions of Inuit women provides a deeper understanding of the position of Inuit women in Inuit society. This thesis questions the uncritical acceptance of texts and encourages the emergence of the "active" reader by reading against the grain of the text.

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I thank my grandmother, Rachel Uyarasuk. ᖁᔾᔭᓇᒦᒃ ᐃᑲᔪᖅᑲᑦᑕᖅᓯᒪᒐᕕᖕᒐ. ᓇᒡᓕᒋᕙᒋᑦ.

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Dedicated to Anaana Unuk (August 8, 1942 – March 3, 1997)

This thesis is dedicated to Kunuk

I often remember you, I long for you, I love you.
Kunuk, I thank you for giving me an understanding that nobody has an absolute ability.
By remembering this, you help me when I feel to give up.

I am really happy that you are now male. Now I can be a mother as you have been a mother to me.

Thank you, from your daughter, from you mother, from Aluki.

Taima

INTRODUCTION

We do not write in order to be understood.
We write in order to understand.
C. Day Lewis

The motivation behind writing this thesis and the burning to begin to understand a little bit more about how Inuit women are perceived in Inuit society has conquered the overwhelming feeling that seeped through my body when thoughts of writing this thesis began to materialize. It was not until I was studying at the university level that I began to consciously learn many interesting things about the Inuit. I read that Inuit practiced wife exchange and that Inuit practiced female infanticide[1]. I read that Inuit women were dirty and could not or did not make decisions. I read that Inuit women could bring on bad omens. Juxtaposed against all this type of reading and new learning was my growing comfort at openly questioning what I read. I questioned how the anthropologist Jean L. Briggs was able to describe and explain all the emotional patterns of the Utkuhikhalingmiut whom she spent seventeen months with between June 1963 and March 1965. (1970) Oh! How I wished to have the confidence, as Briggs, to be able to state that this was the way it was in Inuit society. I could not believe what was written about Inuit with such apparent certainty. I had many questions about the validity of what was written. To me it seemed so different from the Inuit I knew. As I write this, I realize that there are and always will be many uncertainties and questions left unanswered. William E. Taylor Jr., then the Director of the National Museum of Man in Ottawa, wrote about Diamond Jenness. "Thus began the Canadian career of Canada's most distinguished

anthropologist and one of the world's most respected Eskimologist" (1977:v). Unlike Diamond Jenness, no one knows me to be an anthropologist nor an Eskimologist, let alone a respected or distinguished one. Both Briggs and Jenness are examples of people who are generally accepted and acknowledged as 'experts' by the mainstream population. The written works of people like Briggs and Jenness are still read today. Their recognized experiences as anthropologists, by the mainstream population, has validated what they write about – specific to this thesis – what they write about Inuit. These people are still recognized as authorities in the areas of the arctic and Inuit.

During my first year in the Masters program I was overwhelmed by a great burden, self-imposed or otherwise, in validating my position as the author of this thesis. Questions of identity played a significant role during this emotionally dynamic year. On the one hand, I felt that people were expecting some important insightful piece of work because I am an Inuk and, possibly more importantly, because I am an Inuk woman. On the other hand, I felt that I had to prove that I was still Inuk, because, unlike the traditionally expected and accepted image of a typical Inuk woman, I was going through this Western institution of 'higher learning'. To say the least, it has been a dilemma: a very challenging one.

As I attempt to write this thesis, I have been haunted by and continue to be haunted by these constructions of identity. Constructions of being an Inuk

[1] One of the first books I read was Netsilik Eskimo by the anthropologist Asen Balikci (1970).

woman writing about Inuit women with the imagined, self-imposed expectations that come along as an oversized piece of baggage. Also, constructions of being an Inuk woman who is becoming less Inuk by going to school and attempting to write this thesis. It is through time and remembering the words of many different people who have touched and shaped my thoughts that I am able to continue.

My aunt and son[2], to whom this thesis is dedicated: explained to me, a week before she died, that none of us have pijunarni; an absolute ability or absolute control, an absolute ability to have everything exactly how you wished it could be. Nothing is perfect. Although there are some people who put on airs and think that they have the absolute ability to know, there are others who realize that they don't have, nor will they ever have, the absolute ability to know and to understand. We all end up dying. We all cry and laugh. People can easily put on airs and feel themselves to be more important or special, believing that they are more superior or intelligent, but in the end we are all the same and these feelings and attitudes of superiority are irrelevant. We are not in control.

Similar to the notion that we do not have absolute ability, my mother recently reminded me that this thesis would capture my thoughts and my feelings of the moment and that later, whether it is five minutes later or days or years later, my thoughts and feelings would most likely be different. All I can expect of myself at

[2] I realize that non-Inuit may become confused by this phrase. Here, I use Brody's explanation: "When an Inuit [sic] baby is a few days old it is given an *atiq*. This *atiq*, usually translated as name, constitutes an essence or soul (though we must imagine away the Christian connotations

this time is to write about my thoughts and feelings at this time. The future has a paralyzing effect on writing in the present, assuming of course that whatever I would write in the future would be relatively 'better' than what I would write now. I am afraid to write now because I know my thoughts will change tomorrow. After all, I cannot know what I would have written tomorrow, if I am still in today.

My father, as I was growing up, often stated loudly that schoolwork was not important. This attitude towards schoolwork and particularly papers has removed many burdens from me; after all, this is just a paper! It is so easy to have this thesis engulf my life. It is so easy to get wrapped up in theory and the sequence of the text. I have to remember how insignificant this thesis is to my daily life as it sneaks up into and creeps on all aspects of my life. This thesis cannot be my life. I still have to wake up every day and do my daily activities with three small children, a husband, a nephew, and six siblings.

It is these memories, thoughts, and advice that dance in my head and energize my fingers to continue in their monotonous job of pressing the keys on the keyboard to make these shapes of meaning to the reader. I am energized to get this thesis done so that there is no chance of it engulfing my life. Furthermore, and more importantly, I hope that the reader is able to take some meaning out of this thesis.

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of these terms in order to translate with accuracy). This 'soul', is an old relative who has died, frequently a grandparent or great-uncle or aunt. (1987:137)

Being an Inuk woman, in some people's eyes, may give me some authority to write on the matter I hope to explore in this thesis, namely, the position of Inuit women in Inuit societies as depicted in a selection of narrative texts about Inuit. Professor Said, in *Orientalism*, acknowledges that he has not read all the important works that are perceived to be important to the area of Oriental study. Similarly I must clearly state that I have not read all the documents written about Inuit nor am I able to claim that I have attempted to read all the documents. Rather, I have looked over a random selection of books that have, as a collection, left me, as the reader, a general impression of Inuit women. Although these texts have a great temporal range having been written many years apart, it is my opinion that despite this lapsed period the treatment of Inuit women in these texts has not had a significant shift. Inuit women continue to be portrayed in a subordinate position to Inuit men. This impression of Inuit women is different from the perception of Inuit women I held. This of course has led me to question the disparity between my own views about Inuit women and this generally accepted impression of Inuit women that I have been left with after reading through the narrative texts. It is through this thesis that I am venturing to open up some space to question the general perception of Inuit women.

As I shared my thoughts about writing this paper at the academic level, I often felt a suffocating expectation from some people about the outcome of my writings. I had the impression that there was an expectation that my thesis would be significant enough that it would be an important and recognized piece of work.

Although it is an important piece of work for me, I struggled with the imagined pressure of being an Inuk woman writing about Inuit women. I attempted to explain, often unsuccessfully, that I would not necessarily write a 'better' paper on Inuit women because I was an Inuk woman. I was often left feeling frustrated that I could not clearly articulate my concerns. My feelings of frustration are invoked when I read poetry by Chrystos. I recall the poem, "I AM NOT YOUR PRINCESS", where Chrystos writes,

> Don't assume I know every other Native Activist
> in the world personally That I even know names of all the tribes
> or pronounce names I've never heard
> or that I'm expert at the peyote stitch (1988:66)

This expectation of the all-knowing Aboriginal person is often a very exhausting burden to find oneself in.

On one level this expectation can be quite annoying, and on another level it can be manipulated with other motives in mind. Vizenor writes about Aboriginal people who use the typically expected and accepted image of Aboriginal people to serve a purpose. He writes about the different poses of tribal radicals of the American Indian Movement as he compares them to "the romantic pictorial images in old photographs taken by Edward Curtis for a white audience" (1984:130). He goes on to say that,

> [t]he radicals never seem to smile, an incautious throwback to the stoical tribal visage of slower camera shutters and film speeds. The new radicals frown, even grimace at cameras, and claim the

> atrocities endured by all tribal cultures in first person pronouns. (1984:130)

Describing Dennis Banks, one of the tribal radicals, Vizenor writes, "Dennis Banks was dressed in secular vestments. He wore beads, bones, leathers, ribbons, and a cultural frown, for his appearance in court. . ." (1984:124) Dennis Banks, although he was a "mixedblood Anishinabe from Leech Lake Reservation in Minnesota" (1984:131), felt that he had to wear the beads, bones, leathers, and ribbons in order to portray the image of an Aboriginal person. In contrast to Dennis Banks, Vizenor describes Simon Howard: "Howard wore a bowling jacket and a floral print porkpie fishing hat, cocked back on his head, in contrast to the new pantribal vestments worn by the militants" (1984:131). In addition to the contrast in appearance, Vizenor points out that Dennis Banks did not live on a reserve and was not an elected official, as was Simon Howard. Not only was Simon Howard an elected official he was also " . . .born on the reservation; he lived there all his life" (1984:131). These contrasting portraits can be viewed as an indication of the different levels of self-confidence. On the one hand, Dennis Banks feels that he must validate his identity by fitting into a fixed expectation from a non-Aboriginal general population. On the other hand, Simon Howard does not feel the need to validate his own identity by fitting into constructed expectations of what an Aboriginal person should look like.

Having compared examples of Aboriginal people who have or have not felt the need to have a particular appearance in order to be recognized as an Aboriginal

person, we are going to look at an example of a non-Aboriginal person who portrays the image of an Aboriginal person. The most well known example is that of Archie Belaney. Archie Belaney was an Englishman who dressed up as an "Indian" and was known, nationally and internationally, as Grey Owl. Francis describes his appearance: "Dressed in a buckskin jacket and mocassins, his black hair hanging in two long braids, he appeared to his audiences to be the personification of the North American Indian" (1992:131). He also spoke in the expected and accepted way of an "Indian". Francis points out that Archie Belaney had "realized that his descriptions of life in the backwoods would be taken more seriously if they seemed to be written from a Native Perspective" (1992:136). Belaney used the generally accepted image to serve a purpose. Although Archie Belaney was not an Aboriginal person, he was viewed by the public to be an Aboriginal person and what he wrote was assumed to be written by an Aboriginal person.

This example of Grey Owl reminds me of the notion of Raban's *Soft City* that David Harvey talks a bit about in, *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Soft city, we are told, is when one is in total control of one's identity by choosing what traits to emphasize and what ones not to. Harvey writes, "[T]hat the city was more like a theatre, a series of stages upon which individuals could work their own distinctive magic while performing a multiplicity of roles" (1989:3-5). Harvey goes on to write about Cindy Sherman's photographs of herself. In each photograph she appears to be a totally different person, a new mask for her to don upon the 'series of

stages' of the city. This freedom to choose one's identity, although at times desirable, is limited by traits that are out of one's control. James Clifford describes some aspects of the Mashpee identity during a court trial the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribal Council, Inc. were involved in during August of 1976. He explains how "[b]ehavioural assimilation might include American Indians adopting Western clothing: in this domain Mashpee have adopted many traits." (1988:319) Though appearance can be manipulated with different attire and ornaments, as Dennis Banks and Cindy Sherman illustrate, Clifford acknowledges that there are other traits that cannot be as easily altered. He writes about the Mashpee: "[I]n court they were not helped by the fact that few of them looked strongly 'Indian'. Some could pass for a black, others for white." (1988:285) The Mashpee are not alone. Russell Means, who was on trial with Dennis Banks, explained how when he had short hair he had been mistaken for a "Chicano, for an Arab, a Hawaiian, a Pakistanian, everything but an American Indian" (Vizenor, 1984:126).

The example of Archie Belaney as Grey Owl compared to the Mashpee who did not look strongly 'Indian' illustrate that there is often an expectation that a person is more 'authentic' if she or he is seen to fit into a generally accepted stereotypical image. Following the same stream of thought, I would argue that Archie Belaney was probably perceived to speak with a higher level of authority because he was assumed to be one of the 'other'. Grey Owl was well aware of this and manipulated it to its full potential. Despite this general expectation, one cannot claim generally that members of a particular category of people would all

express themselves in the same particular way. Krupat discusses these constructions as he, accurately, I would argue, explains that, "In the same way, to be Indian – whatever the (vexed) criteria for Indianness might be – provides no guarantee of any particular journalistic or scholarly or critical perspective or expertise" (1996:4). Similarly, one cannot expect an Inuk writer to be a guarantee of any particular journalistic, scholarly, or critical perspective or expertise. This cannot be emphasized enough. I dread the potential misperception of readers interpreting my text as generally representing the thoughts of all Inuit women. It is not my intention in this thesis to represent the viewpoints of Inuit women (I will leave that up to Pauktuutit, Inuit Women's Association[3]): rather, it is my attempt to understand my own thoughts on what has been written about Inuit women.

In addition to pointing out that my thesis is not necessarily more accurate because it is written by an Inuk woman, I emphasize that I am not out to deconstruct the perceived, and generally accepted, image of the Inuk woman and render it useless, but, rather, I am attempting to open up a space for speculation. This thesis is all about speculation: my speculation on Inuit women. The intention is not, as Krupat puts it, "to be "right" as to present the clearest and most detailed accounting I can for *my* views" (1996:xii: my emphasis). In my opinion, this is most effectively explained by Chrystos when she writes about bannock making. She writes,

[3] Pauktuutit is the National Inuit Women's Association that represents all Canadian Inuit women at the national level. It was established in 1984. Pauktuutit's mandate is to foster a greater awareness of the needs of Inuit women and to encourage their participation in community,

> 1 cup flour, spoon of salt, spoon of baking powder, liquid to hold
> Remember this is only *my* recipe There are many others
> (1988:67: my emphasis)

In a sense, this is my recipe to better understand the role of Inuit women. I will present a clear and detailed account of my perspective.

As I struggled with my own issues about how I could convince the general audience I was not speaking for Inuit women about Inuit women, I was simultaneously confronted with many doubts about my own identity as an Inuk. One of the professors in my first year in the Masters program questioned whether or not I was really still an Inuk, having completed a BA program and continuing in an MA program in a Western institution of 'higher learning'. This question planted a seed of doubt within me. I was devastated. I began to seriously question my identity as an Inuk and I continue to grapple with my identity.

I have since come to know and understand that what I write in this thesis is very much about me. It is a process that I am using to begin to clarify my own thoughts on Inuit women. It has been stated that, "Many psychologists have recognized the "writing cure" as well as the "talking cure," and that "many professional writers would agree with Tennessee Williams that they write to stay sane" (Steinem, 1992:168). Some days I do not know whether or not writing this thesis is keeping me 'sane' because I have so many bad days, like TB, where I

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regional and national concerns in relation to social, cultural and economic development. (Pauktuutit, 1991: 7)

"cough & cough trying to get it out all that comes is blood & spit" (Chrystos, 1988:17). On other days I convince myself that it is doing me good in understanding my role and position as an Inuk woman. In *Revolution from Within: A Book of Self-Esteem*, Steinem relates how she came across a note that she had scribbled when she was still attending college. It read, "Most writers write to say something about other people – and it doesn't last. Good writers write to find out about themselves – and it lasts forever" (1992:6). I know that I am gaining confidence as an Inuk woman as I go through the process of writing this thesis.

Growing up knowing I had been born male[4] and living my life as a female and knowing that my brother was my father's favourite child, I often wondered if things would have been different if I had remained male. I was always attempting, unsuccessfully, to please my father, to show him, and to get him to acknowledge that I too, like my brother, was *ajungi*[5]. I did not have this need to prove myself towards my mother who always showed me how she saw and felt about me. There were occasions where I would walk into our house to find that my brothers were bickering. I could feel in the air that my father was not in good spirits. I could feel his anger when I walked into a room where he was present. Then, there would be the sudden shock of my father's foot hitting my back as I

[4] Briggs explains that, "Eastern Eskimos believe that an infant can change its sex from male to female at the moment of birth". (1974:297)

[5] Briggs explains the opposite of this - ayuq. She writes, "The word occurs also in contexts in which the source of difficulty is one's own lack of skill or knowledge. People said it when they tried and failed to repeat English words that I pronounced for them; and the fourteen-year-old Ukpik said it when he failed to perform successfully in the men's acrobatic games at Christmas time." (1970: 365)

stumbled, losing my balance, into a puddle of my own urine. I internalized this. I thought that my father did not like me. I tried extra hard to be an achiever in life. I wanted to prove to my father that I was *ajungi*. I thought it was because I was an underachiever and could not do anything right. I often wished that I was not the oldest; that I was not a girl. I wanted to reverse anything and everything so that I could get my father to notice me in a good way.

When I was sixteen years old, one year after we had been living in the south, my father came down for a visit. During this visit, he told me that I was no longer 'Aluki'. I was devastated. I wanted to run away so that I wouldn't have to see him again. I felt ashamed. In the summer of 1996, when I was working at Minister Irwin's[6] office as a summer student, I crossed paths with Bertha Blondin, a Dene Elder who lives in Yellowknife in the Northwest Territories. I spoke with her and cried with her. She advised me to speak to my father; to let him know that I was now my own person; that I was not going to let him control my emotions because I was not going to take anymore of his garbage. I was afraid. I overcame my fear and told him the next time he came down south to visit.

In my uncoordinated attempt to feel confident about who and what I am, I am encouraged and comforted by women like Rigoberta Menchú. Rigoberta Menchú explains how she uses the Spanish language as a tool of resistance to strengthen her identity as a Quiche woman. " Rigoberta learned the language of

[6] Ron Irwin was the Minister of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) at that time.

her oppressors in order to use it against them. For her, appropriating the Spanish language is an act which can change the course of history because it is the result of a decision: Spanish was a language which was forced upon her, but it has become a weapon in her struggle" (Burgos-Debray, 1984:xii). Rigoberta does not see learning the colonial language as, in any way, making her less Quiche than other Quiche who may not have learnt Spanish. Instead, she has made a conscious decision to use Spanish as a tool to change the course of history. In no way do I mean to imply that I have made a conscious decision (like Rigoberta) to attend university and am writing this thesis with the goal of changing the course of history. Instead, I validate that I am no less Inuk although I am in a MA program in a Western institution of 'higher learning'. I fully embrace the words of Hubert Amarualik when he says, "From the years past we were INUIT and we have not changed except that we have all the material conveniences which is different from the past. But we are still what we know ourselves to be and that is INUIT" (March 31, 1993:3).

Rather than attempting to change the course of history, the intention in writing this thesis is to open up a space in which inquisitive dialogue is encouraged regarding the positioning of Inuit women in texts about Inuit. I agree with E.E Evans-Pritchard, who writes in his preface to the reprinting of, *The Position of Women in Primitive Societies and other Essays in Social Anthropology* that, ". . .what was written is best left as it was written in the intellectual climate of the time" (1965:ii). By writing this, he was acknowledging that he would have liked to

be able to rewrite some of his essays but that because it was a reprint it didn't seem appropriate. Like Evans-Pritchard, I do not doubt coming across this thesis, in the future, and finding areas that I could rewrite. This could be viewed as the evolving nature of texts, and there does not seem to be any point in re-writing what has already been written. Instead, it seems more appropriate to take what has been written and critically question the text to help formulate our present ideas on the subject areas in question.

Here, I am reminded of Clifford's notion of "partial truth" as he writes about ethnographers and anthropologists writing about different cultures. He writes, "Ethnographic truths are thus inherently partial – committed and incomplete" (1986:7). In addition, Clifford acknowledges how the author has outside forces that help shape what the author produces. He writes, "[P]ower and history work through them, in ways their authors cannot fully control" (1986:7). Acknowledging that everything that is written is incomplete and shaped by history and power, it is a useless exercise to try to convince the reader that what I am about to write is more accurate or better in any sense. This thesis does in no way attempt to tell the truth as it is; instead, it acknowledges that each one must decide for herself or himself what fragment they are viewing. It is my view that it is up to the readers to formulate their own thoughts on this issue. I am articulating my own thoughts through this thesis and I do take full responsibility for the interpretations I offer in this thesis. I fully acknowledge and expect that there will be people who disagree with my perspectives, however I do believe that the written record and

how it portrays Inuit women must come to an accounting with its internal tensions and contradictions. As Trinh Minh-ha so eloquently puts it, "She says to unsay others so that others may unsay her and say: It's still not it" (1989:23). As the political climate changes and the author is exposed to different power structures and historical events, changing viewpoints will be expressed.

I am strongly drawn to Said's explanation of the Orient in contrast to the Occident as a parallel to ideas about the image of Inuit women. Like the 'Oriental', Inuit women are not asked directly to speak for themselves; instead, they are spoken for by the author. They are the passive objects within the text. There are even occasions when the men are sought for information and the women are ignored or overlooked. Knud Rasmussen writing about his information gathering amongst Inuit writes, "It suited our purpose well enough that the men were idle, as we had thus more opportunities of gathering the information we sought. In regard to all matters of everyday life they were willing enough to tell us all they knew" (1969:71-72). One notes that Rasmussen is collecting the information from the Inuit men about 'all matters of everyday life'. He unconsciously admits that he knows what information he is seeking. He observes visually that the women are busy with many activities. He describes what he sees the Inuit women doing but he does not allow the Inuit women to speak, from their perspective, about 'all matters of everyday life'.

While Rasmussen's assumptions speak to a gendered oppression, this oppression is often contradicted by beginning resistance. This resistance can be as minor and as passive, as beginning to provide a space in which the Inuk woman is encouraged and allowed some space in which she can speak about 'all matters of everyday life'. The woman then creates a space that is accepting of her thoughts and her ideas and her decisions. She is no longer in the shadow of the male orator; she is the orator. Like the conscious decision of Rigoberta to use Spanish, I encourage Inuit women to appropriate useful tools such as writing to use against the generally accepted images that are continually reaffirmed in texts about Inuit[7]. This could be a very effective, non-violent form of resistance.

I question the images and validate this questioning in my own mind by speaking with Inuit women and asking them about their views on the position of Inuit women in Inuit society. In addition, I have copies of interviews from the Eastern Arctic Research Centre in Igloolik, Nunavut that have already been transcribed and translated at the Centre[8]. These interviews have provided sufficient information for me to hold firmly my suspicions about the generally accepted positions of Inuit women.

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[7] I was surprised when I read Women and Men: Social Constructs of Gender written by Nancy Bonvillain (1995) that such a recent text continues to outline the images of Inuit women that I am questioning.

[8] I am thankful to John MacDonald who made it possible for me to get copies of the interviews. In addition, I would like to point out that the interviews from the Centre have a number preceded by the letters 'IE'. I understand that the 'IE' stands for Inuit Elder and the number is the number of the cassette.

The first chapter talks about the role of texts as an interpretation of the author. It is argued that all texts are an interpretation and as such are open to reinterpretations. The case is made that the narrative texts about Inuit are an interpretation of the author. These narrative texts can be read and reinterpreted. This reinterpretation can create or illustrate a new and important perspective.

The second chapter is a collage. It highlights the predominant images through which Inuit women are generally portrayed in the narrative texts that I have looked at. They are described in many contradictory positions. Inuit women are portrayed as being strong minded and they are portrayed as submissive. They are portrayed as naïve, opinionated, repulsively greasy, sexually appealing, as powerful medicine women and omens of bad luck. They are wives, daughters, mothers, equipment, and possessions. In short, Inuit women are constant components in Inuit society with varying and contradictory portrayals. It is hoped that this chapter will make the reader aware of some of the generally accepted images of Inuit women.

The third chapter provides a reinterpretation of the images of Inuit women. It is emphasized how the stereotypical images of Inuit women can be viewed as social constraints. These social constraints have been shaped without the influence of Inuit women and can be seen as an oppressive force for Inuit women today. It is pointed out that often the portrayal of Inuit women is parallel to the already held assumptions of the authors. Instead of accepting the images

portrayed, the reader is encouraged to scratch beneath the surface and read against the patriarchal grain of the text. It is not the intention of this chapter to communicate that the images in chapter II were not accurate portrayals of Inuit women; rather, the intention is to encourage the questioning and the reinterpretation of generally accepted images of Inuit women.

The conclusion reiterates the view that narrative texts about Inuit are open to reinterpretation. Often the images of Inuit women are seen in contradictory characters such as the stereotypical images of Native women as princesses and the opposing image of the squaw. Despite the portrayal of these negative images, the reader can read against the grain of the text and discover the great strength of Inuit women. Inuit women were a, highly regarded, significant component of Inuit society. In order to have a deeper understanding, many of these interesting areas require further study.

CHAPTER I

> But, leafing through the pages of recent historical works, I come upon claims that capture my curiosity and configurations of ideas that challenge my understanding.
> LaCapra, 1985:46

Texts can be understood as the product of interpretation; an interpretation of a space and time that the author attempts to archive into the collective memory by framing it through a particular lens. This lens, of course, is set to the particular needs, visions, and expectations of the author who, despite trying to have an objective appearance, displays, sometimes blatantly and other times not so blatantly, the biases and viewpoints that have been socially ingrained. In this thesis I attempt to demonstrate how the descriptions and the positioning of Inuit women, in narrative texts about Inuit, are one particular author's interpretation, amongst other possible interpretations. These interpretations can be taken and reinterpreted; looked at through a different facet that will also, no doubt, be reinterpreted as the spiral of interpretation continues. Minh-ha's observation, "She says to unsay others so that others may unsay her and say: It's still not it" (1989:23) it is very appropriate to this chapter. Likewise, Krupat's description and notion of 'partial' truths is instrumental in providing me with an approach to my own interpretations of the positioning of Inuit women in narrative texts about Inuit societies. This thesis is one small but significant facet through which the larger field of Inuit Studies can be looked at. It is one interpretation, out of a myriad of many possible interpretations, about the positioning of and the role of Inuit women as described in narrative texts about Inuit society.

It has been and continues to be widely understood and largely unquestioned that Inuit women have been subservient to Inuit men in traditional Inuit society. This understanding is usually taken for granted and is an underlying assumption in narratives texts that describe activities of Inuit women. It is my hope that this thesis will create an impetus where the underlying assumptions about Inuit women are openly questioned and reinterpreted. Kulchyski provides a very useful quote for this thesis when he recognizes that there is a very important question about the positioning of Inuit women in Inuit society. He writes, "There is an important and still debated question on the existence or degree of subservience of Inuit women to men." In his article Kulchyski focuses his gaze on Diamond Jenness. He writes,

> Jenness's diary offers a great deal of support to buttress the argument that Inuit culture involved a roughly egalitarian organization of gender roles, but most of this evidence is buried in the text and must be teased out by reading against the grain of the patriarchal assumptions that inform the narrative. (1993:39)

This excerpt provides, not only, strong support for the ideas behind my thesis which attempt to steer away from the sexist and patriarchal assumptions regarding the role of Inuit women but also it provides me with a very useful method in addressing the narrative texts that I have read about Inuit. The teasing out of the texts by reading against the grain of the patriarchal assumptions that underlie the narrative texts will be the most significant tool as I focus my gaze on the treatment of the position and role of Inuit women in relation to Inuit men in Inuit society.

One of the areas I have been concerned about as I work through this thesis is the production of 'new' knowledge. LaCapra points out that, "The stress on "grubbing in the archives" reinforces the idea that only the reporting and analysis of (preferably new) facts satisfy the conditions of strictly historical knowledge" (1985:92). Furthermore, he explains how often the critical readings of texts are not viewed to be as significant as archival research because, "[t]he revised interpretation or reading of already published materials, including the texts of important writers and intellectuals, does not make a significantly cognitive contribution to historiography, even when it is situated in the context of an attempt to rethink the relations of high, popular, and mass culture" (1985:92). It is my opinion, that the revised interpretation of texts does make a small but significant contribution to historiography especially when it is situated in the context of an attempt to rethink the relations of high, popular, and mass culture.

This thesis is about my own interpretations regarding the treatment of the position of Inuit women in relation to Inuit men in Inuit society. The generally accepted written interpretations of the positioning of Inuit women has questioned and challenged my understanding. This thesis attempts to reinterpret these interpretations of the position of Inuit women to fit into my own understanding of the role and position of Inuit women in Inuit society. Inuit women are not subservient to Inuit men but rather, both Inuit women and Inuit men together make up the complementary parts of a one whole. The relationship and

interaction between Inuit women and Inuit men can be symbolized as the wings of a bird[1]. In order for the bird to fly up high both wings must do their part; likewise, in an Inuit society, both women and men have to carry their own burden in order for the society to function smoothly and in a sense fly high.

In texts, the choice of words acts as a very critical and powerful signifier in the presentation of the position of Inuit women in Inuit societies. Bonvillain explains the power of language in framing a situation. She writes,

> The content of language itself may reflect and reinforce cultural constructs of gender by the way people and their activities are named or described. Language can be used both to enhance social status of people viewed positively or to trivialize, restrict, and demean members of negatively valued groups." (1995:10)

The author has the power to choose what adjectives will be used in describing an event or situation. Often this is without the consent or knowledge of the person being described.

By reading through Balikci's texts about the Netsilik Inuit one is struck by the comparisons he makes between Inuit women and Inuit men. He describes the activities of Inuit women. "While the hunters were sealing a great deal of visiting went on in camp. The large winter settlements united people who were separated the rest of the year, and were the ideal place for endless chatting and

[1] I was very pleased to hear Angaangaq Lyberth at the Kumik Lodge at the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) on Wednesday, May 10, 2000 explain the relationship of Inuit women and Inuit men with this same analogy.

gossip" (1970:79). On the following page he describes the activities of Inuit men. "Then came the men's turn to do some visiting. Informal gatherings took place here and there, all the events of the day were discussed, and plans for future hunts were worked out" (1970:80). It is interesting to note Balikci's choice of words when he describes basically the same activity of talking or communicating between two different groups of people. In the first group of people composed mainly of Inuit women Balikci refers to the form of communication as 'chatting and gossip'. Balikci adds the value-laden adjective of 'endless'. So, not only were the women chatting and gossiping which gives the impression that they were talking about irrelevant insignificant items but they were going on and on about it. On the other hand, when describing the form of communication amongst the second group of people which is mainly composed of Inuit men, Balikci uses the words 'discuss and plan'. These choices of words implies that the communication between the Inuit men was substantially more important compared to the conversations the Inuit women were described as having. In addition, when describing how people went about communicating he writes that the women were 'visiting' whereas the men were 'gathering'. These subtle choices of words create a significant difference in how the reader understands the texts.

By reading through narrative texts about Inuit societies the reader is often left with an uneasy feeling about the Inuit women as improper when they are portrayed in the texts in a decisive or autonomous position. Rasmussen

watching a football game being played comments that he, " was particularly surprised at the endurance of the women" (1908:232). This comment highlights Rasmussen's sexist view about the physical ability of women. He points out particularly that he was surprised that the women could endure participating in such a game. Many times throughout Rasmussen's texts he comments on the actions or inactions of Inuit women. He expresses his astonishment when Inuit women are capable of completing or participating in an activity he would not expect Inuit women to be capable of. He writes, "Bosun and I agreed that it was the first time in our lives a woman had given us food for our dogs" (1969:16). Rasmussen describes Meqo. He writes, "Meqo was a capital dog-driver, and wielded her long whip as well as any man." Furthermore, he comments how, "[I]n West Greenland you never see a woman drive, so I expressed my surprise; Maisanguaq laughed our with pride, and called out to her gaily to lash hard with her whip, it amused the white man, and Meqo swung her whip, and off we dashed, she leading" (1908:8). Not only is he providing great insight into his own views on what a proper woman should do and how a proper woman should behave, he is also providing lots of good material that can be looked at critically from a different vantage point, through a different facet. As speculation one can question whether or not Inuit, like Rasmussen, have taken note of a particular behaviour of the women as something going against the socially accepted and expected role of Inuit women. These descriptions can be interpreted to demonstrate a different portrayal of the position of Inuit women in Inuit societies

as compared to Inuit men's positions in Inuit societies – different to the widely accepted position of Inuit women.

The interpretations of the authors can be visually and literally demonstrated through the author's choice of words, which are tools in highlighting and pointing out the aspects that are more significant to the author. Minh-ha explains how, "Language also reveals its power through an insignificant slip of the pen, for no matter how one tries to subject it to control and reduce it to "pure" instrumentality, it always succeeds in giving an inkling of its irreducible governing status" (1989:58). The emphasis the author places on the descriptions of activities and scenes that the author observes begin to illustrate the viewpoints of the author. The author acts as the narrator of the setting while the actors have no voice of their own. The author is the voice for the voiceless actors of the text. Minh-ha explains that, "The anthropologist's pen smudges are by-products of a science of man in which the non-civilized man – the very element that permitted its founding – is excluded" (1989:57-58). Because the non-civilized people who are being described do not have the chance to describe themselves one can begin to question whether or not this form of description where the civilized author is writing about the non-civilized person is a form of oppression.

The non-civilized person often find herself or himself in a position where they are forced to conform to the ideas and expectations that are being fabricated by the all-knowing author. Typically after asking for information and obtaining

information about the people, the author then reinterprets the literal response before presenting it the reader. Frequently, as readers, we forget this. LaCapra expands this further. He writes, "Nor are we inclined to raise the more "rhetorical" question of how texts do what they do – how, for example, they may situate or frame what they "represent" or inscribe (social discourses, paradigms, generic conventions, stereotypes, and so forth.)" (1985:38). The representations provided through narrative texts can and are the basis for providing the general public with stereotypical images and generic conventions to fall back on. It is only through rethinking and reinterpreting already written texts that one can begin to shift the generally accepted stereotypes.

It would seem plausible that a person who is part of the culture would be in the best position to be writing about, interpreting and representing the people and culture they are a part of. Krupat discusses this idea, to some extent, in the context of critically writing about Native American Literature. He describes the difficulty encountered when raising the question about who should be able to write about and describe different cultures. He writes, "For Native critics, the impossible situation concerns the fact that when they speaks as insiders, they may be seen as lacking in academic "objectivity," yet when they speak "objectively, " from the outside, they may be seen as having abandoned their people or their experientially privileged position" (1996:13). Krupat is writing specifically about Native critics but I think we could easily stretch it to include all creators of text who find that they are in a difficult and draining situation. In

addition, Krupat explains how non-Aboriginal people writing critically, about texts written by Aboriginal peoples, find themselves in a very difficult position. A position where they are seen to be appropriating the knowledge of Aboriginal peoples or not representing them accurately or on the converse side that they are ignoring their existence. Krupat glosses this position authors find themselves in as the *double bind* where "you're damned if you do and damned if you don't" (1996:13).

In, "Foraging Band Societies", Women and Men: Cultural Constructs of Gender[2], the subservient position of Inuit women to Inuit men in the context of a 'traditional' Inuit society is described. It reads, "like the Inuit of Arctic Canada, men's labor contributes more direct survival necessities than does women's labor. Unequal productive pursuits validate men's domination of their wives in part by rendering women more dependent on men" (Bonvillain, 1995:6). Bonvillain does not explain how the activities of Inuit men contribute 'more directly' to the 'survival necessities' of Inuit as opposed to the 'more indirectly' (here, the reader assumes) contributions of Inuit women to the 'survival necessities' of Inuit. There is an underlying assumption that one can measure the importance or the degree of importance of one's contribution to the family specifically and to the community more generally. Interestingly, this information, once it is arrived at, is treated as evidence to highlight the subordinate position of

[2] In my opinion, a study should be undertaken about a term Bonvillain has used when describing some Inuit men and their social status. The term (or word) Umialik to me means, "a person with a boat", "person who owns a boat" but I suspect that Bonvillain was using the word to mean something much more significant.

Inuit women to Inuit men. As Briggs points out, "The question, "which is better (or more important), a good hunter or a good seamstress?" is meaningless in Eskimo: both are indispensable" (1974:288).

Another underlying assumption that is not so central to this thesis but one that would have significant implications on the understanding of Inuit society once it is explored more extensively is Bonvillain's use of the word 'survival'. Bonvillian is not the only person, and I would even purport to say that the majority of narrative texts about Inuit society do give the impression that Inuit lived in and continue to live in one of the harshest environments of the world. This, amongst other things, has been attributed as one of the main explanations of the constant struggle for survival. Balikci when describing the Netsilik Inuit writes that they, "were far from living in a land of plenty. The migratory life described in this chapter was a very harsh one, requiring tremendous adaptive abilities on the part of these people to stay alive at all" (1970:90). This understanding, more than likely, stems from the Darwinian notion of survival of the fittest and the hierarchical interpretations that place gathering and hunting societies at the lower rung of the widely accepted evolutionary stages. Stefansson writes, "Toward Christmas I became dissatisfied with my stay at Shingle Point, but for no other reason than that the Eskimos there were too sophisticated" (1927:103). This clearly demonstrates how the author comes to live with Inuit with already set assumptions of what to expect.

Rasmussen, describing the Inuit society as a whole and questioning the future of Inuit societies writes,

> One may often hear people who know nothing of the life of "savage" tribes suggest that these should be left to live in their own way and not have civilization forced upon them. My own experiences in these particular regions have convinced me that the white man, though bringing certain perils in his train does nevertheless introduce a gentler code, and in many ways lightens the struggle for existence. (1969:236)

Furthermore, he adds that, ". . .one must not judge these children of nature too harshly. They are, in fact, still in but an early stage of evolution as human beings. And we should bear in mind that life in these inhospitable regions, exposed to the cruelest conditions and ever on the verge of extermination is not conducive to excessive gentleness" (1969:236). It appears from these readings that woman is to man as Inuit are to non-Inuit.

This theoretical framing, which positions Inuit society at the lower end of the evolutionary ladder, can be understood as an oppressive force that continues to work against Inuit women specifically and Inuit society generally. Stefansson describing a boat trip writes, "Roxy now lived up to all the things I had heard about him as a wonderful sailor. He had to sit low at the tiller to do the steering, but his wife stood on a pile of bedding at the mast and chose the road, for she had more seacraft than I "(1927:86). Stefansson assumes that if he had more 'seacraft' then he would have been the one standing on top of the pile of bedding at the mast, but because he did not have the experience then the wife of Roxy -

who in passing, it should be noticed, does not have a name! – had to fulfill this role. Yet, Roxy was sitting low in the tiller steering while the wife was choosing the 'road'.

The anthropologist Marshall Sahlins has reinterpreted the fundamental ideas and assumptions about gathering and hunting societies and their apparent struggle for survival. By reading against the grain of the narrative texts, Sahlins is able to illustrate how gathering and hunting societies were the 'original affluent society'[3] (1972). The same descriptive passages, which can be understood to condemn 'non-civilized' societies, can be used to elevate the status of these societies. Minh-ha describes why 'natives' must learn to represent themselves as opposed to always being represented. She writes,

> Natives must be taught in order to be anti-colonialist and de-westernized; they are, indeed, in this world of inequity, the handicapped who cannot represent themselves and have to either be represented or learn how to represent themselves. Whatever the issue, they are entrapped in a circular dance where they always find themselves a pace behind the white saviors. (1989:59)

In my opinion the communication or articulation of self-representation is a very important requirement to reach a deeper more substantial understanding. When authors ask the 'non-civilized' informants to provide information, the author is in the position of control and she or he can easily be selective about what she or he

[3] More extensive study on the generally accepted assumptions that Inuit were struggling to survive would be, in my opinion, not only interesting but also very significant in beginning to shift the widely accepted views of Inuit society.

would prefer to inform the reader. Briggs takes the liberty to explain what Allaq really means by what she has said. Briggs writes,

> On one occasion I nonplussed Allaq by asking why it was that men "bossed" women and made all the daily decisions. Allaq, very resourceful when confronted with idiotic kapluna questions, was silent for only a minute, then said: "Because the Bible says that's the way it should be." Wanting to know whether the situation was rationalized in terms of women's inferiority, I prodded her, telling her that some kapluna men also boss their women because they believe that women have less *ihuma* (judgement or mind) than men. She assured me that this was not the case among Eskimos: "It's just because the Bible says women should obey men; that's the only reason." She did not, of course mean that in pre-Christian days women obeyed men less. She meant that it is the natural ordained order of things for men to boss women, and always has been." (1970:107)

It is quite clear that Allaq relates the position of Inuit women to the introduction of the Bible through missionaries and does not relate it to inherently low capabilities of women. It is interesting too that Briggs, as a female anthropologist, would be keen on pointing out to the reader that the 'natural ordained order of things' was really the explanation for men to boss women.

Rasmussen's reinterpretation and explanation of a story he describes in his text mirror Briggs' reinterpretation or explanation of Allaq's comments. After relaying a story, Rasmussen adds in brackets his interpretation of what the story meant. He writes,

> (The narrator has here omitted to note the moral of the story, assuming it to be known. The idea, however, is as follows:

> Pregnant women are not allowed to play with "bones". Such women are unclean and must not have anything to do with seal's bones. It was for this that the moon came and carried off this woman. From his house up above he then shows her, through a peephole, the dwellings of men, and points out all the impurity and filth that rises from a house where a woman has committed any breach of taboo. A woman who does so defiles the universe and frightens the animals away. This also is assumed to be generally known, and therefore not mentioned by the story-teller.)" (1976:86)

This bracketed interpretation of a story emphasizes Rasmussen's view on the low status of women. He describes women as unclean and relates the notion of impurity and filth to women. He explains how the animals get scared away and the universe takes offense specifically by pregnant women. By providing a clear-cut interpretation, Rasmussen does not leave any room for the reader to interpret the story. As I read excerpts such as these I try to diplomatically understand the thought processes behind such explanations. I do not understand the reasoning buried beneath such interpretations about what is really meant.

Not only did the missionaries actively sway changes in the belief and value systems of Inuit[4], but the new economic systems also provided impetus in the drastic shifts in society. According to Freuchen,

> Trapping foxes had been a woman's job until Knud and I arrived among the tribe. The men could fight walrus and bears, and could hunt seals, since it takes great skill and strength to kill them. But now that fox pelts represented actual value, the men competed with

[4] Leacock writes how, "At a conference on native Canadian and Inuit women, I was able to show that the Jesuits had worked hard to introduce the principle of male authority into a heretofore fully egalitarian society, and that subsequent events had conspired to reinforce this European value. (1981:32)

> their wives. The women, however, still had to procure skins for their own and their children's garments. (1958:100)

It appears that a level of competition was being introduced which had not been present in the past. I would suspect that specific research on the impact of the colonial period on Inuit society would highlight shifts in the way Inuit women were regarded.

Generally in the past it has been the men of the society that are questioned for information. Bonvillain explains some of the possible reasons why this would be so. She writes, "[t]hey usually asked for the opinions of men, partly because it was difficult for a foreign man to spend a great deal of time interacting with women, but also partly because these male investigators considered men's opinions to be more significant than the opinions of women" (1995:8). Rasmussen, who has done extensive work describing the practices of Inuit across Arctic America and Greenland, at one point, describes how the Inuit men appeared to be doing nothing as the Inuit women were actively attending to the needs of the household. He writes, "It suited our purpose well enough that the men were idle, as we had thus more opportunities of gathering the information we sought. In regard to all matters of everyday life they were willing enough to tell us all they knew" (1969:72). Rasmussen readily admits his contentedness about being able to speak to the Inuit men about 'all matters of everyday life.' Not only was it mainly men that were questioned for information but one must

keep in mind that the information would be interpreted to fit into the worldviews of the author.

The author not only makes interpretations about the roles and positions of Inuit women in Inuit societies for the reader but also the author can and does create a context where Inuit women have to behave differently because the author is present. Rasmussen describes one of these situations when he arrives into a camp. He writes,

> On one's arrival at a settlement in Danish West Greenland, it is usual for the young woman to help the newcomers off with their outdoor clothes. Now, for a moment, I forgot where I was, and as the Greenlandic custom is, stretched out my foot towards a young girl who was standing by my side, meaning her to pull off my outer boots. The girl grew embarrassed, and the men laughed. There was that winning bashfulness about her that throws attraction over all Nature's children; a pale blush shot across her cheek, like a ripple over a smooth mountain lake; she half turned away from me, and her black eyes looked uneasily out over the frozen sea.
> "What is thy name?"
> "Others will tell thee what my name is," she stammered.
> "Aininaq is her name," put in the bystanders, laughing.
> A jovial old paterfamilias then came up to her and said with gravity –
> "Do what the strange man asks thee!" And she stooped down at once and drew off my boots (1908:10)

In this passage we are told in a fairly lengthy manner how the presence of Rasmussen had an impact on and influenced how Aininaq behaved. It appears that Aininaq was not accustomed to the Greenlandic custom (and rightly so, she was not in Greenland!) that Rasmussen was accustomed to. This misunderstanding created an awkward moment where Aininaq became

embarrassed. Rasmussen in a very sexual manner (blatantly sexist!) describes the seconds following the awkward moment. The passage ends with Aininaq being forced to succumb to the male chauvinistic expectations of Rasmussen. The presence of Rasmussen created a shift in the behaviour of Aininaq. This is a very specific example of a specific situation. I would be so bold to suggest that similar to the shift in Aininaq's behaviour the behaviour of Inuit society has shifted due to the colonial period.

According to Eleanor Leacock, the Montagnais-Naskapi experienced a marked decline in the status of women during the colonial period. She writes, "Here, then, was a prime example of changes brought about in social organization and women's autonomy when an egalitarian society was transformed by colonization and the combined influence of missionaries and traders" (1981:4). Similarly, Emberley points out that, "A convincing argument can be made that relatively-speaking pre-contact Indian societies were less oppressive with regard to women than the European societies which subsequently sought to impose their own patterns of sex roles and values on Native societies" (1993:110). The shifts in the status and role of these women, I would argue, could be easily transferred to the Inuit society who had similar lifestyles to the Montagnais-Naskapi and other Native societies.

Leacock describes the status of women in egalitarian societies. She writes, "[t]heir status was not as literal "equals" of men (a point that has caused much

confusion), but as what they were – female persons, with their own rights, duties, and responsibilities, which were complementary to and in no way secondary to those of men" (1981:152). Inuit women had autonomy over their own lives. Inuit men had autonomy over their own lives. Inuit women and Inuit men together formed a family - a community - where there was mutual respect for the autonomy of each individual. Each individual – women and men – had to ensure that the needs and expectations of the family and community were being met. By working together in a complementary fashion Inuit couples were able to be the wings of the bird and fly high. High indeed, if they were part of an 'original affluent society'.

In my opinion, these portrayals of the position of Inuit women found in the narrative texts about Inuit society illustrate the social expectations of the authors. The authors are in the position of choosing whom they get the information from. Furthermore, they are in the position of interpreting what is really meant by the informants. This thesis is a reinterpretation of narrative texts about Inuit and their treatment of the position and role of Inuit women. Inuit women are often treated as subservient shadows of Inuit men who are portrayed as more dominant and prominent in Inuit society. The idea that Inuit women are significantly indispensable to the social fabric of Inuit society is often downplayed and the notion that Inuit women could be and are autonomous individuals in relation to Inuit men must be reemphasized. The expectation is that the reader will remain passive and accept the descriptions. I strongly encourage an active reader to

question why Allaq could not have meant what she said. It is important that questions about the position of Inuit women are raised. The wing must be regained.

CHAPTER II

> She must *learn* to paint her world
> with colors chosen more often
> than not by men for men to suit
> their realities.
>
> Mihn-ha, 1989: 27

The intention of this chapter is to outline the predominant positions in which Inuit women are portrayed in narrative texts about Inuit. This chapter will attempt to describe these positions in all their contradictions. Inuit women are portrayed as being strong minded and they are portrayed as submissive. They are portrayed as naively content women who do not realize that they are the drudge of men. They are seen as decision-makers and they are seen to follow orders. Simultaneously, Inuit women can be repulsively greasy and sexually appealing. They are powerful medicine women and omens of bad luck. Inuit women are seen lurking in the shadows of Inuit men. Inuit women are portrayed as characters that one loves to hate. They are highly appreciated and greatly demeaned. They are wives, daughters, mothers, equipment, and possessions. Inuit women are acknowledged as indispensable components of Inuit society.

There are a number of occasions where we come across the character of a strong, often opinionated, old woman. This woman usually has some influence in the decision-making activities of the Inuit family. As Balikci explains, "[f]requently an older woman spoke with conviction, and people listened to her." (1970:149) This old woman character is reenacted in the first scene of the movie *Qamaq*

(Stone House)[1] where the old woman is directing the camp on where it would be most appropriate to build the qamaq (stone house). Rasmussen relays a conversation he had with David. David is a grown man who lives with his mother-in-law. David explains to Rasmussen, "I am an old man now, with grown-up children but I have not yet succeeded in being master in my own house. My mother-in-law rules us all. She gets all that I fish, catch, or hunt, and it is her business to spend the money; but she is a sensible woman, and we are all well served under her rule." (1908:233) It is not explicitly outlined but it sounds like a matrilineal family arrangement.[2] Furthermore, David's mother-in-law (whom we're not given a name for) is in control of the distribution of the food items.[3] There was another occasion described in which Knud Rasmussen comes across a strong old woman. According to Freuchen, "the old woman told us [Rasmussen and Freuchen] that she had made up her mind to go with us [Rasmussen and Freuchen]" (1958:82). Furthermore, this old woman reportedly said, "You who are new to this land need an experienced woman's protection!" (1958:82). The old woman (who we're not given a name for) did not ask for permission but instead, she asserted some authority and 'told' Rasmussen and Freuchen that she would be joining them on their trip. She further explained how beneficial she would be on the trip because she was 'experienced' and could give them some 'protection'. This inadvertently places Rasmussen and Freuchen

[1] This is the third episode of the Nunavut (Our Land) series produced by the Igloolik Isuma Productions Inc. (1995)
[2] David explains how he is an old man now. It is interesting to point this out. Many of the written work about matrilineal families often explain that the family set up is only until the wife gets a bit older. Often it is explained that the woman may need the support from their family because they usually get married when they are fairly young.
[3] This will be discussed and expanded upon in the next chapter.

in the position where they are dependent on the old woman for her experience and for her protection.

The next day when they were about to head home the old woman "climbed on Knud's sledge and refused to get off, sitting upon and smashing his [Knud's] camera. When he [Knud] seemed perturbed over this she immediately took the offensive and scolded him for fooling around with things when he could not bear the weight of an old and half-starved woman."(1958:82) It is interesting to note Freuchen's observation in the reaction of Rasmussen towards the old woman. In this situation he may have been 'perturbed' by the action of the old woman in smashing his camera or in the inaction of the old woman in refusing to get off his sled. Rasmussen's attitude towards old women specifically and Inuit generally is highlighted in his fairly lengthy description of Suzanne.

> Old Suzanne moved about clad only in her chemise, which was in rags and very black. Where the chemise failed to cover her, the office was performed by absolute dirt. As I sat eating the rotten fish, which was spread out on an unappetising floor, the horrible filth of which is indescribable, and conversed with my lively hostess, it did seem to me for a moment, perhaps because I was over-tired, that work among primitive peoples is not all pleasure. You have to live with those whom you wish to describe. If they are swine, you must live with them in their swinery. During the restricted stay that one makes while travelling, there is no time to introduce reform. If you began to upbraid them with their way of living, they would be offended at once and draw back, and you would have no opportunity of regaining their goodwill. (1908:338)

It appears that Rasmussen did not want to introduce 'reform' in the fear that he would not 'regain goodwill' from the Inuit. One can only speculate what he

included in his category of 'goodwill'. It would seem appropriate to presume that information in order for him to be able to 'describe' Inuit was included in this 'goodwill'. This expectation of losing the goodwill of the people may partly explain why he, although 'perturbed' did not attempt to 'reform' the old woman who refused to get off his sled. It is quite apparent in the excerpt about Suzanne that Rasmussen believes himself and his society to be "better off", possibly even more advanced, than the Inuit. There is no indication in this excerpt that Inuit do enjoy eating, as he writes, 'rotten'[4] fish. Rasmussen in writing this excerpt has chosen relatively strong descriptive words such as 'absolute' dirt and 'horrible' filth, which he summarizes as being 'indescribable'. The reader is left with the feeling of pity towards the person who, in order to access the information, through goodwill, and be able to describe the people has to live with them in their 'swinery'. They person is sacrificing themselves by attempting to complete work amongst primitive people which is not all pleasure. Could Rasmussen have thought that work amongst primitive people was going to be or was meant to be all pleasure? This is left for speculation.

The image of Suzanne as a lively hostess is drowned out by the image of filth. This image of filth is not limited to the older female characters found in texts about Inuit. Instead there appears to be a general acceptance that Inuit women are dirty. Often this perception of dirt brings with it notions of bad luck for the whole society. The notions of bad luck or bad omen are often brought back to

[4] Many Inuit now when speaking English about fish, seal, caribou, and walrus that one could say is 'rotten' prefer to and regularly use the words 'aged' or 'fermented'.

and blamed on the dirty women. "A freshly killed seal was never to be laid on the dirty igloo floor." writes Balikci, "This was because the animal soul would be offended by resting on a place where women had been walking". (1970:218) It is strongly suggested that the igloo floor is dirty because women had been walking across it. Could the 'unappetising floor' at Suzanne's place be traced back to Suzanne having walked across it?

Similarly, Rasmussen explains how Inuit arranged to eat a feast of trout ". . in the usual manner with the women eating in one group and the men in another" (1967:73). He justifies this seating arrangement by explaining that Inuit women and Inuit men never eat together because "eating with the women might bring bad luck to the hunters." (1967:73) It sounds as though the women are to blame if the men were unable to catch any animals. At another point Rasmussen points out the time when Inuit women were especially unclean. He writes, "Women during the menstrual period are especially unclean in relation to all animals hunted, and may thus expose the entire community to the greatest danger and disaster if they endeavour to conceal their impurity. (1976:98) It is concluded that a hunter when unable to catch an animal could probably bring it back to the woman who had concealed her impurity. This sounds like a great burden on the women. If as described above a freshly killed seal's soul would be offended that a woman had walked across the floor the seal was to be laid on, it could be presumed that an animal soul would be offended if a woman actually killed the animal. However Briggs assures us that, "There are exceptions to this rule too"

and she explains that the, "Eskimos are pragmatic people. There is nothing holy to them about the sexual division of labor; neither is there, in their view, anything inherent in the nature of either sex that makes it incapable of doing some of the jobs that the other sex ordinarily does." (1970:270) Similarly, Jenness describes how, "younger women, who were as well versed as the men in the peculiar habits of the seal, often went out with the hunters to escape the monotonous care of clothes and blubber". (1928:93) It appears that both sexes are inherently capable of accomplishing the tasks that have been assigned to different genders. Sealskins and the preparation of sealskins has often been a task for women. Balikci describes an interesting process of scraping the hair off the sealskin. He writes, "Sealskins to be used for waterproof summer boots required very careful scraping of the hair. To do this, a woman spread the cold, wet skin over her bare thigh and went to work with a sharp ulu" (1970:11). The scraping of the hair off the sealskin is a fairly common practice. I was however intrigued by the concept of placing the 'wet skin over the bare thigh' in order to scrape the fur off!

Later, Jenness comments on the tasks of the genders when he described how when "Icehouse wanted to cook, Ikpuck, forgetting the pride of a hunter, would fill her bag with dryads and bring her water from the lake. No eye but mine saw his undignified conduct, and I was one of the family" (1928:142). Ikpuck having 'forgotten the pride of a hunter' according to Jenness was able to accomplish 'undignified' tasks. Jenness has subtly judged Ikpuck for doing tasks Jenness believes to be strictly tasks for women – tasks that should be accomplished by

Icehouse. Similarly, Rowley indicates his views on the task of softening sealskin and more specifically sealskin boots.

> The best way to soften the square flipper sealskin for sewing or after it had got wet and been dried was to chew it, a task that fell to the women for those lucky enough to have wives. A measure of the diligence of a woman was said to be the extent to which her teeth had been worn down through caring for her family. Unfortunately, we were all male and rarely enjoyed the comfort of soft boots. (1996:20)

Here we are told of the task of chewing sealskin boots, a task often accomplished by a woman, in order to soften them. A superficial look at the excerpt gives the impression that it was the woman and only the woman who would soften the sealskin because we are told that Rowley rarely enjoyed the comfort of soft boots. On the other hand we can read that this particular task fell to the women for those lucky enough to have wives. It could be said that those men unlucky enough not to have a wife may have had to soften their own boots by chewing them as women did. Indeed, it was only the men who had forgotten their pride that would stoop so low to complete such undignified tasks.

To further expand on Briggs' notion that there was nothing holy about the division of labour amongst the sexes in Inuit society we can look at one of Rasmussen's descriptions of a woman called Katiaja. The character of Katiaja is similar to the old woman character on Rasmussen's sled in the sense that they are both strong characters that are able to dominate the situation. Rasmussen describes Katiaja:

> Katiaja, the murderess, was an extraordinary woman. She was tall and handsome, with a light-coloured skin. She had the strength of a man and went out hunting while she was still unmarried, like the men. She generally had more dogs than they had.
> I remember so plainly how one winter morning she went out hunting seal before it was light. The day had hardly dawned before she drove back with a huge bearded seal on her sledge. The men were hardly astir by then; and this huge seal (weighing from 600 to 700 lbs.) she had dragged up on the ice herself. She could row a kayak, too, and hunt with the harpoon; she was even more successful than the men. Yes, she was a remarkable woman, and an entertaining companion and amusing to be with, - but dangerous. (1908: 295)

The description and treatment of Katiaja is quite different from the description and treatment of Suzanne. Rasmussen displays a lot of respect for Katiaja, who he not only describes with more masculine adjectives such as 'handsome' but compares her success in activities to those of men. The impression left with the reader is that Katiaja is a relatively unique woman who is capable of accomplishing tasks that are usually reserved for men. Katiaja is as strong as a man, she hunts like a man, she had more dogs than a man, and she was more successful than a man. The respect that he shows for Katiaja is not displayed in his description of Suzanne whom he indirectly refers to as 'swine'. It is interesting to note that the reader is made aware that Katiaja is a murderess. In my opinion, this reference to being a murderess gives the description of Katiaja a strong twist of negativity. Whether this was a conscious decision or not is left for speculation. Rasmussen ends his paragraph by emphasizing that Katiaja is 'dangerous' although he does not expand on this.

This element of caution is quite apparent in the descriptions of Inuit women who are often described as fundamentally bad. These women have been described as creating great social challenges amongst Inuit in a camp or within a family setting. Writing about some of the causes of possible challenges in a social setting Balikci, explains that, "Certain persons, particularly women, were naturally of a more jealous nature than others". (1970:175) Balikci further explains how this jealousy could cause a confrontation when the arrangements for a spousal exchange were being made. This confrontation would however end with the desires of the male satisfied. "[W]hen a strong jealousy expressed by the wife of the man who had proposed the exchange led to a flat refusal to enter such an arrangement," Balikci writes that, "the recalcitrant wife was nearly always given a good thrashing by her husband and things proceeded according to his will." (1970:141). It appears that the woman feels that there is a freedom and, one could presume, potential agreement that she voices her disagreement. However, it is made clear that the physical outburst of the man annuls the concerns of the woman and renders it void. This gives the impression that the inequality generally accepted to be a part of Inuit society is related to the differences in physical strength as if Inuit did not have any social constraints.

The preceding description of the woman who voices her disagreement is followed in contrast by the image of the woman who unquestioningly followed the orders and desires of the male characters. This can be seen in Freuchen's description of the behaviour of Navarana.

> Finally one evening when she [Navarana] came, Arnanguaq [Navarana's girlfriend] was absent, and I told her that she had better stay with me. She looked at me a moment and then remarked simply.
> "I am unable to make any decisions, being merely a weak little girl. It is for you to decide that".
> But her eyes were eloquent and spoke the language every girl knows regardless of race or clime.
> I only asked her to move from the opposite side of the room over to mine – that was all the wedding necessary in this land of the innocents.
> The next evening my little wife asked me to come down to the shore with her so that we could talk alone without a roof over us. She said that she had spent the day in speculation, and she had decided, now that she was married to a white man, to use one of her other names. She had been too frightened, however, to change her name without consulting me.
> I agreed that she should take another name and from then on she was known as "Navarana" over all Greenland. (1958:95-96)

Here, Freuchen makes the decision that Navarana stay with him. Navarana being a merely weak little girl was unable to make any decisions but simultaneously moved over to his side of the room. Sometime before the next day Navarana had decided to change her name and initiated a conversation with Freuchen about her desires. It is clear that Freuchen believed and felt that he was in control of the relationship. He may even have felt that Navarana belonged to him.

According to Balikci, "For a Netsilik man his wife was his most valuable possession." (1970:161) It is interesting that Balikci would choose to use the word 'possession' to describe the woman in relation to the man. There are descriptions where it is indicated that women were often purchased relegating

them to the status of commodities. Rasmussen describes how, "The woman may have been purchased for a sledge, or a kayak; perhaps for a bit of iron and a few rusty nails. . ." (1969:231). He does not stop there but expands by stating that despite having been purchased, the woman, "is by no means regarded as a chattel without feelings" (1969:231). According to Rasmussen, "Theoretically, the husband has the right to deal with her as he pleases; her very life is in his hands," (1969:231). He expands this further by stating that although the man has total authority over the woman, "she is not ill-treated in the slightest degree." (1969:231) Balikci would probably disagree unless of course a 'good thrashing' was not viewed as 'ill-treatment'. Instead, all due to the good naturedness and willingness of the man, "She has her own position in the home," (1969:231) This position in the home "is marked not merely by freedom and liveliness of manner, but also by some authority, especially among the older women." (1969:231) It is interesting to note how Rasmussen reiterates the notion that especially old women may have exercised some authority which may be seen to imply that younger women did not exercise any authority.

Rasmussen in another account describes women as part of man's equipment. He writes about the Polar Eskimos:

> Among the Polar Eskimos there are more men than women, and the young seal-catcher, therefore, must make haste if he wishes to secure the most essential item of his equipment. How else will he get the skins of the animals he hunts, dressed and who would make and care for his clothes? And warm, well-made clothes are a necessity for a successful provider in those regions. And, too, she

> will give him children, whom he may expect to fill his manly heart with paternal happiness, and secure his old age from want. Women mean all this. That they are indispensable to the maintenance of the social fabric they know quite well; and they are proud of it. (1908:63)

In this description it is acknowledged how important the woman is to Inuit society but the stronger impression left for the reader is that of a woman who does not make decisions and is very much present as the man's helper. However, Rasmussen notes that the Inuit women are proud to be indispensable to the maintenance of the social fabric. He could be questioned as to why Inuit women would be proud of being indispensable to Inuit men when as Balikci explains, "Women did not hunt, they were not self sufficient, and they were less independent than men" (1970:151). Balikci does not however, explain his method of measurement when he compares Inuit women and Inuit men and how he concluded that Inuit women were not as self sufficient as Inuit men. I am reminded of Katiaja who Rasmussen had compared to and described to be even more successful than the men.

In addition to being relatively dependent on the man, Inuit women were often expected to accomplish many tasks for the benefit of the family while the man seemingly did nothing. Balikci comments, "Frequently the people took walks around the camp, the women to gather heather, the men just to look around." (1970:36) One is left with the impression that women had a more strenuous life compared to that of a man. This could explain Jenness' comment about Inuit women who often went out hunting in order to "escape the monotonous care of

clothes and blubber." (1928:93) It appears from Jenness's comment that Inuit women lead a monotonous life unless they 'escaped' to the more exciting life of the male hunter. Following the same strand of thought, Rasmussen explains,

> A superficial consideration of the position of women in Eskimo society might induce one mistakenly to believe that she leads exclusively a cowed and unhappy existence. If you refer to the legends, which record the experiences of many generations, you find that no small number of them begin with relating how "once there was a woman, who – as is you know customary – was badly treated by her husband, and so one day she ran away to the hills." And, living amongst them, you see for yourself that cruel blows are not infrequent. But certainly no one would be more astonished than she herself, if any one came to the Eskimo woman and pitied her; for her body is strong and healthy, her heart light, and her mind well-balanced; and so life seems to her worth living, and admirably and sensibly arranged. She herself has no consciousness whatever of being man's drudge. (1908:62)

It appears that Rasmussen's main message is that although the woman is really in the position of and is treated as 'man's drudge' she, being so ignorant, does not take any notice and mistakenly believes that life is 'sensibly' arranged. Being merely a little girl the Inuk woman is naively content because her body is strong and healthy, her heart is light, and her mind is well-balanced. Evans-Pritchard expands on this view of the simplified simple-minded woman character when he writes,

> The primitive woman has no choice, and, given the duties that go with marriage, is therefore seldom able to take much part in public life. But if she can be regarded as being at a disadvantage in this respect from our point of view, she does not regard herself as being at a disadvantage, and she does not envy her menfolk what we describe as their privileges. She does not desire, in this respect,

> things to be other than they are; and it would greatly puzzle her if she knew that in our society many women are unmarried and childless. (1965:45)

Not only does he repeat the notions of the contentedness invoked by Rasmussen but also he expands the discussion by advising the reader how 'puzzled' the woman would be to find other women who were childless and single. Being so ignorantly naïve the woman is more able to ignore all the atrocities she faces as a woman in the Inuit society. Inuit society has been recorded to have a common practice of female infanticide. Briggs explains how there is a generally accepted view that male children were valued higher than those female children in hunting societies generally and in Inuit societies specifically. She writes, "The logic of this belief, of course, is that a boy grows up to be a hunter – a provider – whereas a girl is only a drain on her parents' household until she marries and moves away to be useful to her husband's household." (1974:266-267) The assumption behind this general belief however is that the daughter will be moving to the husband's camp. We may be reminded here of David's conversation with Rasmussen where he as a grown man was being influenced by his mother-in-law.

With regards to female infanticide we are informed, by Balikci, who decided when to kill a baby. He writes, "The decision to kill a child could be made by the mother, the father, the grandfather, or the widowed grandmother"(1970:149). He expands to state however that it was, "Most frequently the father [who] made the fatal decision"(1970:149). So, we initially are told that there are a number of

people who can make the decision to kill a child, and we will notice that it does not specifically describe it to be only female children. Later we are left with the impression that it is usually the father who makes the decision. The general impression left with the reader is that the man makes the important decisions within the family.

There appears to be a common position where Inuit women find themselves relegated to the shadows of the men. Often they are mentioned as the wife, or the daughter. Rasmussen describes a family setting. He writes:

> Aua was the undisputed master of the establishment, everyone and everything being at his command, and the general tone of the house was set by the cordial, jesting manner in which he and his wife addressed each other and ordered the others about. (1976:46)

In this excerpt it is Aua who takes the prominent role while the female character takes the side role of being the 'wife'. It appears that Aua's wife is also ordering people around but the impression left with the reader is that Aua is ordering people around. Similarly, Rasmussen describes a little bit about singing in Inuit society. He writes, "Singing is indeed prevalent among these people. They go about singing all day, or humming to themselves. The women sing not only their husbands' songs but have songs of their own as well. Orpingalik taught me one that belonged to his wife" (1969:164). Although we are told that women sing songs as well, as the reader, we see them in the shadow of Orpingalik who is singing a song that belongs to his nameless wife.

Similar to this strand of thought Balikci explains that Inuit women when wearing amulets, "did not wear their amulets for their own benefit, but to help the children they would bear"(1970:202). Women often were not seen to look out for themselves but rather to look out for the benefit of the male players in their society. In this particular quotation, Balikci writes that women wear the amulets for the benefit of the 'children' and does not specify whether these are female or male children.[5] However, it could be argued that there was no need to specify whether they were female children or male children because the female children would most likely not exist since they would be killed at birth. This coincides with the general image that is portrayed of Inuit families. Rasmussen describing a scene when Inuit are about to set up camp, comments that, "Men gave orders, women shrieked and children cried" (1908:233).

Indeed, it is quite often accepted that Inuit men practiced wife-exchange. Jenness writing about the woman and man partnerships explains that, "Either party could dissolve the union at will, and husbands even exchanged wives temporarily, for the Eskimo ranked friendship above chastity, and indeed held the latter in little esteem"(1977:420). In this statement there appears to be some

[5] There are a number of texts where it is specified that the amulets are for the benefit of future hunters. Rasmussen writes, "Women rarely wear amulets for their own protection, because the Eskimos feel that it is the men, not the women, who lead the most dangerous lives. Little girls at five or six start to wear amulets to protect the sons they will have someday, for the older an amulet is, the more powerful it becomes" (1967:60). Also, he writes, "Women rarely wear amulets on their own account. The Eskimo idea is that it is the man and not the woman who has to fight the battle of life, and consequently, one finds little girls of five or six years old wearing amulets for the protection of the sons they hope to bear – for the longer an amulet has been worn, the greater is its power" (1969:184).

recognition that either the woman or the man could decide to end the partnership. However, it appears that it is only the man who can decide to exchange his partner with another man. The motivational drive behind exchanging a partner appears to be that of friendship because, as it is well known and accepted, Inuit do not view chastity to be that important. Jenness explained how a particular woman had openly "traded husbands for a few days in order to visit her relatives; and there were times when men seemed to exchange wives without even that excuse" (1928:53). It appears that a woman could exchange partners to visit relatives and a man could exchange his wife because he wanted to. Bonvillain in writing about the practice of wife-exchange amongst Inuit writes, "Spouse exchange reflects male dominance because it turns women into commodities to be manipulated by men in order to further their own social goals" (1995:30). Balikci describes the practice of wife-exchange:

> The wives were usually consulted as to whether they would be willing to have the other man. Generally they agreed. Or a man could conceive an intense desire for a particular woman, propose and obtain an agreement for an exchange from her husband. In this situation there were cases when a strong jealousy expressed by the wife of the man who had proposed the exchange led to a flat refusal to enter such an arrangement, though in such cases the recalcitrant wife was nearly always given a good thrashing by her husband and things proceeded according to his will. It was always assumed that the wife should comply with her husband's will. There were also situations when the wife-exchange process was arranged by the wives themselves.
> . . . In case two wives wanted to exchange husbands, no direct proposition was made, but the possibility was gently suggested with the hope that the husbands would agree, while thinking themselves masters of the situation. (1970:141)

As the readers of this text we are left with the impression that women did not have any means of expressing their own preferences or views on the situation. Bonvillain writes, " Women's frequently noted lack of resistance to spouse exchange may also reflect their realization that opposition is futile or their fear that they may be beaten if they were to protest" (1995:30). If they did protest they would be beaten up and things would go through as planned by the man anyway. Furthermore, if the woman had the desire to enter into a wife-exchange, it would be up to her to subtly convince her husband without letting him know that he wasn't making the decision. This of course, falls into the notion of the man being in control and the woman being unable to make decisions. The portrayal of women in these situations could be seen to be a very negative one[6]. In essence, the woman can be viewed as a sexual object. The woman is used by men, for manly pleasure, without the consent of women and when men feel it is the appropriate time and place. Women have no autonomy in these areas. This is quite apparently what the authors who write about Inuit assume to be the case.

The physical attractiveness of Inuit women has often been commented on whereas the physical appearance of Inuit men is often ignored or superficially mentioned. Rasmussen when describing Katiaja described her as 'tall' and 'handsome', with 'light-coloured skin'. This is often done unconsciously in the making of the text. Rowley describing an activity he was involved in while he was in the arctic writes, "I had been back only a day from this trip when I went away again, this time to go fishing with Kavavau, his wife, his oldest daughter

[6] The practice of wife-exchange will be further discussed in the following chapter.

Nipisa, a pretty girl who later became Ernie's wife and two sons, Napatsi in his early teens, and Takto who was about four" (1996:133). There are a number of elements that can be extracted from this quotation. Women are related back to the male figure so we know there is a 'wife' but we do not know her name although we are made aware of the name of the man, Kavavau. In addition to this we are made aware that Nipisa the daughter of Kavavau (the man) and his wife, is a pretty girl who became the wife of Ernie, a man. Indeed, we are told about the sons of Kavavau and his wife, Napatsi and Takto. All we are told about Napatsi and Takto are their ages but we are not informed about whether or not they too were 'pretty'. Similarly, Freuchen describing Navarana writes how, "her eyes were eloquent and spoke the language every girl knows regardless of race or clime" (1958:95-96). Jenness describes how he met the daughter of an elderly man he visited near the mouth of Tree River. She transformed before his eyes from a greasy dirty Inuk woman like Suzanne to an attractive young Inuk woman. He wrote,

> There his daughter, a young woman about twenty years of age, was skillfully flensing a freshly killed seal. Her greasy clothes, dishevelled hair, gory arms, and face besmirched with blood and blubber from the tit-bits she slipped into her mouth, made a somewhat unattractive picture to our European eyes, though the Eskimos thought it charmingly homelike. But as soon as she finished her task she washed with snow, dried her face and hands with a ptarmigan skin, braided her hair, and changed into a neat suit of brown caribou fur adorned with red and white insertion. In this new setting she shone with quite a different radiance; for her face, though almost circular, was so regular, and her complexion so fresh and clear, that even the bled tattoo lines with which all the Eskimo women in this country marred their faces only added piquancy to her charms. (1928: 214-215)

This nameless daughter of an elderly man transformed from an unattractive picture to one where she shone with radiance! I wonder out loud whether or not Suzanne went through this transformation too.

Briefly I have outlined the predominant images of Inuit women. Again, one can compare the apparent contradictions found in these descriptions. Here, I write 'apparent' because it is my view that despite appearing to be contradictory images they are both very similar in their ways of confining Inuit women in stereotypical expectations that they must conform to. In the following chapter I attempt to further tease out some of these descriptions of Inuit women.

CHAPTER III

> That's the nice thing about Inuktitut language. We have no gender. I've always liked that about Inuktitut language. It's not genderized.
>
> Ruby Arngna'naaq, 2000

The intention of this chapter is to illustrate how one can look through a different lens to begin to move away from the typically accepted perceptions of Inuit women. Similar to the technique Kulchyski has utilized, I tease out some of the excerpts outlined in chapter II and provide a reinterpretation of the position and role of Inuit women. Some of the predominant images of Inuit women found in narrative texts about Inuit were outlined in chapter II. These images of women could be seen to range from a relatively negative image to a relatively positive image. On the one hand Suzanne (Rasmussen, 1908:338) is portrayed as a repulsive dirty character – almost bestial – and on the other hand Katiaja (Rasmussen, 1908:295) is portrayed as a successful hunter - in manly terms - to the point where she is apparently seen to be dangerous. There is a great contrast in description between these two characters.

Chrystos has a wonderful poem; I AM NOT YOUR PRINCESS. She has a seemingly simple yet very powerful phrase in this poem. It reads,

> See that to pity me or to adore me
> are the same (1988:67)

Despite the apparent range of images, I would argue that the images of Inuit women, whether they are seen to be relatively positive or relatively negative can actually be seen to be the same oppressive ethnocentric force that renders the voicelessness of Inuit women and elevates the importance of the interpretations of the authors. Furthermore I would point out that the portrayals of Inuit women provide socially constructed documentation which in turn creates a generally expected and accepted position of Inuit women. The expectation is that Inuit women are found in the shadows of men; that Inuit women are treated as possessions or commodities of Inuit men; that Inuit women when seen as strong characters are seen as offensive; that Inuit women must speak with conviction to be heard; that Inuit women are dirty and create bad energy that can negatively affect all Inuit society. In short, Inuit women are confined in generally accepted constructions that they have not had any opportunity to influence. Addressing the voicelessness of colonized people, Maracle writes,

"The result of being colonized is the internalization of the need to remain invisible. The colonizers erase you, not easily, but with shame and brutality. Eventually you want to stay that way" (1996:8). It is my opinion that this thesis can play a small part in contributing to the beginning process of breaking down the confining constructions Inuit women are confronted with.

In chapter II we see many instances where Inuit women are described as being in relatively subservient positions to Inuit men. The texts, which are used to illustrate how Inuit women are in a relatively lower position to Inuit men in a

hierarchical societal structure, can, I would argue, be used as effectively to show how Inuit women have autonomous roles similar to that of Inuit men in Inuit society.

Despite my beliefs that it would depend on the particular situation one found herself or himself in, many of the texts about Inuit emphasize the patriarchal make-up of the family. Rasmussen describing a family setting writes,

> It was the first time I had visited so large a household, and I was much impressed by the patriarchal aspect of the whole. Aua was unquestioned master in his own house, ordering the comings and goings and doings of all, but he and his wife addressed each other and the rest with the greatest kindness, and not a little fun; an atmosphere of genial good humor was evident throughout. (1969: 22-23)

Rasmussen explains that he was 'impressed' by the patriarchal aspect of the family setting. He writes how Aua was the master in his own house and we see his wife in the shadow as they address each other and the rest in kindness. In another excerpt describing Aua, Rasmussen writes,

> Aua was the undisputed master of the establishment, everyone and everything being at his command, and the general tone of the house was set by the cordial, jesting manner in which he and his wife addressed each other and ordered the others about. (1976: 46)

Aua's wife is still seen in the shadow. In both excerpts Aua is the central figure. In the second description there is a slight hint that Aua's wife may be involved in

the 'ordering' of the others about. It appears that the woman and the man are content as they address each other and the rest in a 'cordial' and 'jesting' manner. It seems to me that they may have a good relationship where the woman can do the things that she must do and the man can do the things that he must do.

When commenting on the relationship between the couple Icehouse[1] and Ikpuck, Jenness describes how Ikpuck would, 'forgetting the pride of a hunter' help Icehouse in tasks that had to be done around the house. (1928:142) I question why Jenness would explain the actions of Ikpuck in helping out Icehouse, his wife as a sign that Ikpuck was 'forgetting the pride of a hunter'. This implies that Inuit men were not expected to, nor was it acceptable when, and if, Inuit men helped out Inuit women in the tasks that they had to accomplish. This implies that there was a strict division of labour between the sexes. If there was a recognized strict division of labour, I would argue further that this view may be reversed to explain and justify that Inuit women were not expected to, nor was it acceptable if, they assisted their husbands. Not only am very disappointed to think that these views could be acceptable, but I am not convinced that there was a strict division of

[1] I am convinced that a deeper examination of the character Icehouse, as discussed in Jenness's, The People of the Twilight, would uncover an example of a strong Inuk woman. Here, I provide some examples of descriptions of Icehouse. Jenness writes about Icehouse, "Ikpuck's wife was a comely matron, weighing something under 200 pounds, who rejoiced in the possession of two names, Liver and Icehouse. Both seemed rather misleading; she was really neither choleric nor frigid, but a jolly high-spirited old lady with the warmest heart imaginable, and a tongue more prone to gossip than was strictly advisable" (1928: 58-59). In addition, Jenness writes, The stony ridges cut to pieces my light sealskin boots, intended only for soft snow, and Icehouse, who had tried to patch them each evening, finally rebelled. "Stop hunting for a time," she said. "Your boots are wrecked beyond repair, and caribou will be scarce until the warmer weather comes and the mosquitoes drive them near our camps. Stop hunting, and I will make you new boots with

labour. I would read the actions of Ikpuck in helping Icehouse as something that could and should make Ikpuck prouder. Not only is he able to accomplish the tasks as a hunter but he is able to do other things to help his wife and his family.

Like Ikpuck, Inuit women too were able and often did assist their husbands with their tasks. Uyarasuk explains how Inuit women also did tasks to help their male partners. She says,

> ᐊᖏᓐᓇᐅᑉ ᐃᓕᓴᖅ ᐅᒪᔨᕐᐳᖅᑕᐅᖅᑕᕐᓚᒋᑦ ᐊᐅᓕᕐᒪᖅᑕᐅᓕᐅᖏᓐᓄᑦ
> ᐅᑉᓗᒥ ᐊᖅᑭᖏᕐᓚᒥ ᑕᒪᑯᓂᖅ ᒥᖏᕐᓂᐊᖅᑎᑐᒃ ᓴᓇᒃᓴᒥᓂᒃᓱ
> ᓴᓇᕐᒃᑉᓕᒃᑲᓐᓄᑦ. ᐊᐸᒪᓗ ᐅᒪᔨᕐᐳᖅᑐᓄᑦ ᐃᑲᔨᓂᐊᖅᑭᖏᕐᓚᒃ
> ᐊᐅᓕᖏᕐᒪᖅᑕᖏᓐᓄᑎ. ᑕᐃᒪᐃᑐᓕᐅᖅᑐᔪ. ᖁᕕᐊᓇᓂᓗᓱ.
>
> (ᐊᐃᓂᓕ 8, 1997)
>
> And some women, if they would go hunt for animals, would return home after being away from the camp during the day and work on the sewing of items that they would have to get done. Also, if they would have to assist the people looking for animals they would accompany them on trips away from the camp. That's the way we were. Also, it was a time of happiness.
>
> (April 8, 1997: my translation)

It is clear to me that there was not a strict division of labour, I suspect this attitude towards a man accomplishing a task that has been viewed in Western societies as a task that befalls women may be the author's view that has been projected onto the 'primitive peoples' that are being looked at.

Freuchen explains how Rasmussen did not like to sew. He writes, "He hated sewing for himself, but there was no one to do it for him, and I made fun of the

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stouter soles for the summer months" (1928:131). It is my opinion, that Icehouse is a strong female character worth more of an extensive study.

picture he made sitting there with needle and torn garments slung over his knee. He took his revenge on me by using for patches the great blue handkerchiefs my mother had sent me" (1958:125). Freuchen makes the comment that there was no one to do it for him. I suspect that he means, when he explains that there was 'no one to do it for him', that there were no women to do it for him. Rasmussen writes that, "One of the most important things a wife does is to take care of the family's clothing. A grown man is helpless if he has no one to make and take care of his clothes. . . . " (1967:28). This statement also explains why Rowley would comment that it was the women who would soften the sealskin boots, "for those lucky enough to have wives" (1996:20) and further explain that they "rarely enjoyed the comfort of soft boots" (1996:20). Rowley's choice of word 'rarely' explains that sometimes they did have soft boots. One raises the question whether or not a woman softened them or whether or not Rowley ever stooped so low – forgetting his manly pride - to soften them himself. According to Freuchen, Rasmussen had ordered some women to sew a new outfit for the old woman he took on a trip with them. Freuchen writes, "We took her along back to the Settlement, where Knud ordered all the women to sew her a new dress. . . "(1958:82). Similarly, I speculate whether or not Rowley could have ordered some Inuit women to soften his boots.

I emphasize and reiterate that these negative attitudes towards sewing and other tasks loosely labeled as 'female' tasks were most likely personal attitudes of the authors. I would argue that amongst Inuit the acceptance was much more fluid

about who could and did accomplish certain tasks. Furthermore, I would suggest that it depended more on the skill level as opposed to the gender. Innuksuk describes how he could recognize the stitches of his brother-in-law. It reads,

> The stitches were not those of my brother-in-law. When my footwear needed repairs, especially when my re-enforcement sole need [sic] re-attaching he use [sic] to sew them back on, and made upper part of a hood, I knew his stitches as I spend [sic] a lot of time with him in our walks. (December 6, 1989:10)

This excerpt illustrates how men could complete 'female' tasks. Obviously, Innuksuk's brother-in-law spent some time sewing – enough time that Innuksuk could recognize his stitch. Not only could men complete 'female' tasks but similarly women could complete 'male' tasks. Pewatok[2] explains how women would go out hunting.

> Sometimes the women would go out hunting with the men if there wasn't enough people to cover all the seal holes, and they even had harpoons. They were able to help the husbands with the hunt. (November 14, 1986:10)

Women were capable and went out hunting to the extent that they owned hunting equipment (ie: harpoon). These are just two examples of women and men participating in completing certain tasks. In my opinion, there were generally accepted divisions of labour between Inuit women and Inuit men but these divisions of labour were not adhered to in a strict sense. Depending on the

[2] Note that the person cited as Pewatoq is the same person as the one cited as Piugaattuk. There has been a different spelling in the last name. Often there are many different spellings of Inuit names.

needs of the day, skill and ability of a person, people accomplished the necessary tasks.

Similarly, I would argue that the make up of the residential patterns depended solely on the needs of the day. It is often assumed that Inuit were patriarchal in nature. It is interesting to point out that David's household was matriarchal in nature. Balikci explains how there was another way of organizing the living arrangements. He writes, "One important alternative was for two brothers-in-law, married to two sisters to reside together. . . ." (1970:114). He further expands on this explanation by writing how, "The core of such a residential unit was not the two sisters, but rather the two affinally related men. They were the providers and collaborators and they hunted and shared together" (1970:114). It seems quite absurd, in my opinion, that the core of such a residential unit would be explained to be composed of the two affinally related men and not the two sisters. In my opinion, there is no need to recognize who makes up the 'core' of the residential unit but I find it is very interesting to look at the interpretation of the author regarding the make up of the living arrangements. Balikci comments on the make up of the residential unit. He writes, "Whether a wife lived with her husband's relatives, as was normally the case, or whether occasionally a husband joined his wife's camp, the system incorporated the individual into the extended family, relating specifically to other affairs of the same generation living in the kinship unit" (1970:100). Balikci explains how sometimes the man moves to the woman's family and how sometimes the woman moves to the man's

family. As he explains this system, he emphasizes that it is usually the case that the woman moves to the man's family. I would suggest that there was no set system of when and where people should be moving. David lived with his mother-in-law. In short, they would look at the specific situation and then decide what would be done. Often the man would move to the woman's family and as often the woman would move to the man's family depending on the specific needs of the time.

Inuit women are shown in many descriptions as being in charge of deciding how to share out the food products. This when reflected upon indicates to what extent Inuit women held power in their families and communities. We are reminded of David's mother-in-law. David relays how his mother-in-law has control over the distribution of all the food items that David brings back from the hunts. In addition, she is in charge of spending the money as she sees fit. This responsibility and decision-making are her responsibilities although David is now an old man with grown-up children. It appears that she behaved as the head of the household and made decisions for the household (Rasmussen, 1908:223). The apparent acceptance of this autonomous behaviour may possibly be credited to her age. Balikci explains how "frequently an older woman spoke with conviction, and people listened to her" (1970:149). Having said this, one can speculate on whether or not David's mother-in-law always spoke with 'conviction'. One is left with an impression that it is only when a woman speaks with conviction that she is listened to. Also, it appears that mentioning that they

were older women makes the justification of people listening to women. It is interesting to note that Rasmussen when describing his encounter with Suzanne writes 'Old Suzanne'. Suzanne provided Rasmussen with some fish to eat and was a lively hostess. She conversed with her guest and a case could be argued that she behaved in an appropriate manner as a hostess. (1908:338) Rasmussen however in relaying the situation emphasized a different aspect of the situation. By looking at it from a different point of view we can see that Suzanne could easily have been portrayed as a very attentive hostess making sure that the visitor felt comfortable and well received. It could be argued that Suzanne was the person in control of the situation and provided Rasmussen with a choice piece of meat. It would have been very interesting to know what 'Old Suzanne' was conversing about. Instead, as readers, we are left with the impression that what she was saying was not important enough that we hear about it only in passing. Rasmussen does not recognize the significance of Suzanne's position as hostess. The sharing out of food is a very important task that must not be underestimated. The individual, responsible for the distribution is in a relatively significant position that all members of the family and parts of the community rely on.

Another strand of thought or value that came across in the excerpt about Suzanne is Rasmussen's view about 'primitive peoples'. He explains that during the 'restricted stay' with 'primitive peoples' 'there is no time to introduce reform' (1908:338). I would argue, however that any time spent with 'primitive peoples'

introduces some reform. People often behave differently when there is someone else present. As we will recall, Aininaq, under the direction of some of her relatives, had to conform to Rasmussen's expectation that Aininaq would pull off his boots. In the end Aininaq did pull off his boots. (1908:10) The presence of Rasmussen and the impact he had on the behaviour of the people he was staying with was not limited to this occasion. At another time, Rasmussen describes how he had an impact on the behaviour of Meqo. He had voiced his astonishment to see a woman with a dog whip to Maisanguaq. "Maisanguaq laughed out with pride, and called out to her gaily to lash hard with her whip, it amused the white man, and Meqo swung her whip, and off we dashed, she leading" (1908:8). The reader is left with the impression that the male character Maisanguaq is in control of the situation. He is feeling proud and gives instructions to Meqo 'to lash hard with her whip' because 'it amused the white man'. The description that Meqo is leading is said in passing.

The notion of the lead person who decides what path to take, I would argue, is a very powerful position that does not get sufficient attention in many of the texts about Inuit. Stefansson describes how Roxy proves himself to be a wonderful sailor. He writes, "He had to sit low at the tiller to do the steering, but his wife stood on a pile of bedding at the mast and chose the road, for she had more seacraft than I" (1927:86). Although Stefansson is attributing this description to how wonderful a sailor Roxy is, it seems to me that it illustrates how Roxy's wife is the leader of the trip. In the description of Roxy's wife standing on top of the

skins in order to choose the path Roxy should be steering Roxy's wife can be seen to clearly indicate the amount of power Roxy's wife actually held in deciding where the boat would be heading. We get the impression that if Stefansson had had some experience that he probably would have been the one choosing the path. Similarly, Balikci explains how a dog-team procession followed. He writes, "The wives usually led the dogs, walking in front of them at a distance of five or ten yards, turning frequently and shouting the signal cries. Sometimes, however, the women had to join the men in dragging the sledges" (1970:56). It is interesting to note in this image that it was the women who were leading as the men helped drag the sledges with the dogs. This does not coincide with the notion that Inuit women were drudges of Inuit men. The women were deciding which path would be the most appropriate. They were deciding which path to take and shouting back the signal cries to the rest of the procession. It appears that Inuit women had a lot of decision-making power about where the camp should be headed and where the camp should be set up.

I think it is fair to say that there is information that illustrates that Inuit women were able to make decisions and follow through with them. Navarana who Freuchen records as having said, "I am unable to make any decisions, being merely a weak little girl. It is for you to decide that" (1958:96) in response to his proposition that she become his wife, is further recorded (in the same paragraph) to have 'decided' to use one of her other names. Navarana is portrayed as being and is shown to self-identify as being 'merely a weak little girl' that cannot make

any decisions on her own. Despite this portrayal, Navarana is shown to have made a decision. Before she began to implement the decision she had made about changing her name she went to her new husband to 'consult' with him. In my opinion, the choice of the word 'consult' gives the whole act of communicating between the woman and the man a feeling of a business transaction. According to Freuchen, Navarana had been 'too frightened' to change her name without already having spoken to him about it. I question this justification. It seems to me that Navarana was behaving as a wife. A woman and a man when married communicate, not out of fear but out of understanding and respect since they are now dependent on each other. It would seem to me that a man in the same situation would also 'consult' with his wife about changing his name. Would this latter behaviour be out of fear? The last sentence of the excerpt about Navarana reads, "I agreed that she should take another name and from then on she was known as "Navarana" over all Greenland" (1958:96). This last sentence makes it sound like Freuchen was in control. It was only after he agreed that the whole of Greenland knew her as Navarana.

It has been suggested that Inuit women were seen to be dirty. Rasmussen cites the practice of Inuit women and Inuit men eating separately as evidence that Inuit women may bring bad luck to Inuit hunters. He writes, "Later there was a feast of trout, arranged in the usual manner with the women eating in one group and the men in another. They never eat together; eating with the women might bring bad luck to the hunters" (1967:73). It could possibly be said too that it was the

woman to blame if the hunters were unable to catch any animals. Looking at this notion from another standpoint, one could be convinced that Inuit women held lots of power over the well being of Inuit society. Rasmussen further explains how Inuit women were seen to be very unclean and impure during their menstrual period. He writes, "The worst offence against taboo which any woman can commit is concealment of menstruation or abortion. Women during the menstrual period are especially unclean in relation to all animals hunted, and may thus expose the entire community to the greatest danger and disaster if they endeavour to conceal their impurity" (1976:98). At this time, we are told Inuit women had to be very careful so that they would not adversely affect the camp.

Despite these explanations, I would argue that they were limited to the beliefs of the authors. Inuit did not view women as dirty. I would argue that Inuit did not view the menstrual cycle in any negative way. Uyarasuk responds when asked how Inuit viewed women, when they had begun the menstrual cycle,

ᐱᓕᕐᓂᐅᐃᓇᐅᓂᖅᓱᓂ. ᐊᕐᓇᐅᑉ ᐃᓕᕐᓂᕆᖏᓐᓄᑦ. ᑕᐃᒪᐃᐅᐃᓇᕐᓂᖅᓱᓂᒃ.
ᑭᓯᐊᓂ ᓄᑕᖅᐳᓂᕐᖓ ᑭᓯᐊᓂ ᐊᐅᓗᖅᑕᓕᕐᒍ. ᐅᐃᖅᑲᓇᕐᓯᕐᔪ. ᐃᒪᓇ.

(ᐊᐃᑎᑦ 7, 1997)

That it's just the way things are. That it is the way women are. That's all. That's just the way it is. But that they are no longer a child that is why they have begun the menstrual cycle. They are now able to have a husband. In this way.

(April 7, 1997: my translation)

In my opinion, and I reiterate, it is the views of the authors that have influenced the portrayals of Inuit women. Inuit did not view Inuit women as unclean during the menstrual cycle rather, it was viewed as a natural course of life for girls turning into women. Steinem explains how thought processes and belief systems come about. She writes,

> . . . .If all women and various races of men were said by religion to have no souls, for instance, you could be pretty sure that science would soon discover they were "less evolved" as well. The theory came first, and evidence in its support was mustered afterward – not necessarily in a dishonest way, but as a result of selective vision. (1992:132)

As such, I would argue that there was a generally accepted theory that explained that women were subordinate to men which further justified describing women in these expected positions. Similarly I would argue that there are some practices that have been generally accepted as practices limited to female Inuit that were not necessarily limited to a particular gender.

It may have been more acceptable to the authors that there would be only female infanticide and wife-exchange. It is my opinion that these practices were not limited to solely the female population. Balikci's chapter, *Female Infanticide and Marriage*[3], attempts to illustrate how infanticide was practiced on female children

[3] Here, it is interesting to note one of Balikci's citation to support the practice of female infanticide. He writes, "Twenty years later Rasmussen carried out a detailed survey of this custom among the Netsilik Eskimos living at Malerualik on King William Island: "I asked all the women how many children they had borne and how many girls they had put out of the way. I went into every single tent and spoke with every one of them" (1931:140)" (1970:148). I point out that Rasmussen asked the women how many 'girls they had put out of the way' and there is no indication as to whether or not he asked if boys too were ever 'put out of the way'.

more frequently than male children. He writes, "Many travelers in the Arctic have noted the prevalence of infanticide among Eskimo groups. Although the rate of infanticide varied with locale, it is clear that girls were more frequently killed than boys" (1970:147). Although it is clear to Balikci that 'girls were more frequently killed than boys' it is still unclear to me. I am not convinced. Boas talks about how people died but he does not mention infanticide although he mentions abortion. (1964:18) Whatever the reasons may be behind the practice of infanticide[4], I would argue that this practice was not specifically geared to females. Balikci writes, "The decision to kill a child could be made by the mother, the father, the grandfather, or the widowed grandmother." (1970:149) Here, it is clearly unlimited to the practice of both female and male infanticide. Balikci does not specify the gender of the child nor does he limit his statement to one gender.

Similarly, I would argue that the practice often cited and commonly accepted as a practice of wife exchange in Inuit society is not limited to the exchange of female partners. Balikci when describing the practice of wife exchange writes,

> The wives were usually consulted as to whether they would be willing to have the other man. Generally they agreed. Or a man could conceive an intense desire for a particular woman, propose and obtain an agreement for an exchange from her husband. In this situation there were cases when a strong jealousy expressed by the wife of the man who had proposed the exchange led to a flat refusal to enter such an arrangement, though in such cases the recalcitrant wife was nearly always given a good thrashing by her husband and things proceeded according to his will. It was always

[4] I would suggest that future study on this may be useful in better understanding the reasons behind practicing infanticide in Inuit society. Also, in my opinion, it would be very interesting to know the frequency of the practice.

> assumed that the wife should comply with her husband's will. There were also situations when the wife-exchange process was arranged by the wives themselves.
> . . . In case two wives wanted to exchange husbands, no direct proposition was made, but the possibility was gently suggested with the hope that the husbands would agree, while thinking themselves masters of the situation. (1970:141)

Clearly this description can and is used to illustrate how Inuit practiced wife exchange. A more critical look at the excerpt illustrates a subtle but visible contradiction. We are told that there 'were situations when the wife-exchange process was arranged by the wives themselves'. The wives, one could presume, were arranging for a husband-exchange. During this exchange sometimes the women changed dwellings and sometimes men changed dwellings. Although Balikci terms it wife-exchange it would appear to be more appropriate to term it spousal-exchange. Both the man and the woman would be exchanged in such a transaction.

In addition, it can be pointed out that both polygamy and polyandry were practiced in Inuit society. It is interesting to note how Balikci views the polygynous and polyandrous relationships. He comments how, "While polygynous marriages were relatively stable and provoked little resentment and jealousy, such was not the case with some polyandrous alignments. It seems that co-husbands were frequently jealous of each other concerning sexual prerogatives and had difficulties in concealing their sentiments" (1970:157). I find this to be very interesting. Once again, we are made aware of the bias of the

author towards the dominant male figure. Piugaattuk describes how Inuit practiced polygynous and polyandrous relationships:

> If there was a single woman and she wanted a husband who already had a wife. . . like one person. . . one man could have two wives when there were plenty of women around. . . or vice versa. When there was a lack of men. . .no.. . when there was a lack of women and plenty of men around, then a woman could have two husbands." (November 4,1986:6)

In my view if, on occasion, Inuit women could have two husbands and Inuit men could have two wives it would seem, to my train of thinking, plausible that Inuit women could exchange husbands and Inuit men could exchange wives.

It is interesting to point out the manner in which Balikci describes the situation when a woman wanted to exchange husbands. Apparently no direct proposition would be made; rather, there were subtle hints made to the husband so that the husband would then decide to exchange wives. The husband would be in control and would make the decision. It appears to be very similar to the way Navarana behaved with Freuchen. In addition, it should be emphasized that there were occasions where a woman did not want an exchange to occur. This action in itself, I would argue, illustrates to some extent the autonomy of the woman. She is in a position where she can voice her own decision and desire. According to Balikci, it was in such cases that the woman was 'nearly always' given a 'good thrashing' which was then followed by the implementation of the man's will. The reader is left with a sense of hopelessness and helplessness for the woman who

finds herself in this situation. I would emphasize that Balikci writes that this would 'nearly always' be the situation. As such, it would not always be the way it turned out. In passing, it is interesting to note that the woman would get a 'good' thrashing as opposed to a 'bad' one. Also, I would speculate on how Balikci would know that this is 'nearly always' the way things turned out[5]. Furthermore, I would reiterate that the woman felt that she could speak out about not wanting the arrangement to go through. Bonvillain explains how people often do not speak out because they know that things will go on regardless of what they say. She writes. "Women's frequently noted lack of resistance to spouse exchange may also reflect their realization that opposition is futile or their fear that they may be beaten if they were to protest" (1995:30). In Inuit society however there must have been a sense of hope held by the women, or a realization that opposition is not futile. that would give Inuit women the incentive to assert and make known their own desires known.

Inuit women apparently did not own any songs nor were they expected to sing. One could easily accept this as yet another example of how Inuit women were subordinate to Inuit men. Rasmussen writes how,

[5] I would encourage a study into the fieldnotes of Balikci to illustrate what he actually observed happening as opposed to what he knew or heard about Inuit from other sources. I suspect that there may be a similar finding to Rollason's study on the journal of Samuel Hearne. I suspect that Balikci has obtained much of his information from the writings of Rasmussen. It is interesting to note that Balikci has written, "Nesilik women also had souls, though little is ever mentioned about them" (1970:198.) After spending some time on the subject of 'souls' Balikci mentions the lack of information about the presence of the souls of Netsilik women but he does not elaborate any further on the souls of Netsilik women.

> Women do not as a rule sing their own song. No woman is expected to sing unless expressly invited by an angakoq. As a rule, they sing songs made by the men. Should it happen, however, that a woman feels a spirit impelling her to sing, she may step forth from the chorus and follow her own inspiration. Among the women here, only two were thus favored by the spirits: one was Igjugarjuk's first wife, Kivkarjuk, now dethroned, and the other Akjartoq, the mother of Kinalik. (1969:93)

Rasmussen tells us how women do not as a 'rule' sing their own songs. He further explains how occasionally this 'rule' can be broken so that a woman who is inspired to sing can sing her own song. We are led to believe that it is quite out of the ordinary if a woman begins to sing or if a woman made a song. Rasmussen in another book explains how a woman made a song. He writes, "His wife made songs, too, which not all Eskimo women did. She was sorrowful over the fate of their son Igsivalitak, who had murdered a hunting companion in a fit of temper and now lived as an outlaw in the mountains around Pelly Bay." (1967:15) He accounts the woman's song writing to the loss of a son who had run away and was living as an outlaw after murdering a hunting companion. One is left with the impression that it is at dire straits that a woman can make a song. At another point, Rasmussen mentions how Orpingalik had taught him a song that belonged to his wife. (1969:164) One can question how Orpingalik's wife had a song being a woman.

Also, one can question why Orpingalik's wife did not teach Rasmussen the song herself. This may be accounted for by the attitude Rasmussen had when he did stay with Inuit. In a lengthy excerpt Rasmussen writes about his observations of

Inuit women and Inuit men. He explains how he gets the information he is looking for. He writes,

> The men were leading a life of idleness just at present, but the women were busy; we were indeed astonished at the amount of work which fell to their share. It was the women who went out gathering fuel, often from a considerable distance, which meant heavy toiling through the swampy soil; they had also to skin and cut up all the caribou brought in, and attend to the fires and the cooking. Their hard life had set its mark upon them; it was not always age but often simply toil, that had wrinkled their faces; their eyes were often red and rheumy from the smoke of the fires, their hands coarse and filthy, with long, coarse nails. Their womanly charm had been sacrificed on the altar of domestic utility; none the less, they were always happy and contented with a ready laugh in return for any jest or kindly word.
> It suited our purpose well enough that the men were idle, as we had thus more opportunities of gathering the information we sought. In regard to all matters of everyday life they were willing enough to tell us all they knew. (1969:71-72)

Orpingalik probably taught Rasmussen his wife's song because Rasmussen asked him to tell him about 'all matters of everyday life'. One could assume that Rasmussen did not ask directly Orpingalik's wife if she had any songs herself. Instead, we are left with the impression that Orpingalik and many other men were asked to speak for all Inuit – women and men. Furthermore, we are left with the impression that Inuit women lived a hard life and that their 'womanly charm had been sacrificed on the alter of domestic utility'. Despite this, the women were portrayed as happy and content, oblivious to the hardships they were meant to have faced. I would argue that Inuit women did not necessarily, as is often generally accepted, live a hard life.

Instead I would argue that Inuit society as a whole lived a life relatively similar to the notion of the 'original affluent society' outlined by Sahlins. He writes, "The world's most primitive people have few possessions, but they are not poor. Poverty is not a certain small amount of goods, nor is it just a relation between means and ends; above all it is a relation between people. Poverty is a social status. As such it is the invention of civilization. (1972:37). Uyarasuk explains her understanding of the Inuit way of life and it is strikingly similar to the notions communicated in Sahlin's excerpt.

ᐅᕐᔪᓂ ᐃᓄᓕᕐᒃᓱᒃᑐᑦ, ᐊᒃᓱᕐᓂᖅ ᐊᒃᓱᕐᓂᖅᑐᐃᓐᓂᐅᓕᕐᑕᐅᕐᒃᑕᕐᒪᑦ ᐃᑦᓯᒻᒥᓄᑦ. ᐃᑦᓯᕐᓴᓱᓯᑕᐅᖏᑎᑎᒍᓯᑦ ᐊᑐᖅᓄᑎᒍᑦ ᐊᒃᓱᕐᓂᖅᑐᑎᒍᓐᓄᑦᓯᐊᕐᒪᖓᑦ ᐃᓱᒪᓕᑕᐅᑎᒋᐊᕐᓵᓚᐅᖅ. ᒪᓂᐅᓕᕐᑐᖅ ᐊᒃᓱᕐᓂᖅᑐᑦ ᐊᒃᓱᕐᒃᑕᕐᑐᐃᓐᓂᒃᓯᐃᓐᓄᑦ ᐃᓄᐃᑦ ᐃᒪᒃ ᑐᑭᓯᐅᓱᒪᓕᕐᓂᑐᖅ. ᓱᓂᐅᓪ ᐊᒃᓱᕐᒃᑕᑕᓂᐅᕐᓂᖅᒪᑕ ᑕᐃᑯᐊᐊᖏᓐᓇᖅᑐᑦ. (ᐊᐃᓗᓕ 8, 1997)

But about our old life, sometimes some people say that our old life had been a struggle. It was our way of living and we used it so we never thought about it as a struggle. Nowadays, it is beginning to be understood that it had been a struggle. We did not realize it but apparently our ancestors had struggled.

(April 8, 1997; my translation)

I would argue that Inuit women were happy. They valued themselves as autonomous individuals in a society that recognized and respected their autonomy. Furthermore, they were valued by the society for all the important responsibilities and duties that they fulfilled within the society. Explaining the importance of the role and position of Inuit women, Jenness writes,

> Women had a well-recognized position, less inferior to men's than among any Indian tribe except perhaps the Iroquoians; but whereas Iroquoian women derived their higher status mainly from the

> economic importance of their cornfields, Eskimo women owed their position largely to the indispensability of expert seamstresses for making the tailored clothing necessary to withstand an Arctic climate. (1977:420)

In my opinion, there was no significant reason why Inuit society generally and Inuit women in particular would not be content with their lives. Women had a well-defined role in Inuit society which when necessary was fluid. Uyarasuk explains,

> ᐊᐃᒍᑦ ᑕᓐ ᐃᓕᒪᑕᐅᓪᓚᑦ ᑕᒪᔨᓄᓪᑲ ᐅᒪᔪᖏᐅᖅᓂᖏᑦ ᒪᔨᓄᓪᑲ.
> ᓂᖅᑭᑲᖅᑲᕆᔨᐊᓗᐊᖅᑲᓂᖏᑦ ᐃᓕᒪᑕᐅᓪᓚᑦ. ᐊᓐᒪᑕᐅᓐ ᓄᓕᐊᓪᑲ, ᐃᓐᐅᑎᒋᔭᖅ
> ᑕᑯᐊ, ᐊᓐᓄᖏᑲᓄᑦ ᓴᓐᓗᐊᖅᑲᑐᓄᑦ ᐊᓐᒪ ᐃᓕᒪᑕᐅᕐᓕᑕᐅᖏᑦᑐ
> ᒪᑲᔨᑐᑎᓴᒥᓂᓪᓂ. ᑕᑯᐊ ᐊᓐᓴᕐᑲᒃᑐᖅ ᑕᓐ ᐊᒃᑐᑦ ᐃᓕᒪᑕᐅᓗᑕᓐᓄᓂᓪᓂ.
>
> (ᐊᐃᓚᓕ 8, 1997)
>
> The man is the decision-maker for things that have to do with the hunt for animals. They are the decision-maker about means to have meat. Also, the wife, the couple is the eldest couple, would be the decision-maker about the production of clothes to those that are younger. This couple is the eldest and the man is the main decision-maker.
>
> (April 8, 1997: my translation)

Uyarasuk explains how the woman is a decision-maker in the areas of her tasks and the man is a decision-maker in the areas of his tasks. She concludes by explaining that the man is the main decision-maker. Further on she explains how if a man did not agree that something should continue then the wife would not continue. Similarly, if a woman did not believe something should continue than the man would ensure that it did not. These were ways in which both Inuit women and Inuit women behaved in order to ensure that the marriage continued in a smooth manner. Both Inuit women and Inuit men were indispensable to the

social fabric. In order for Inuit men to be able to hunt for animals to provide for food for the family, they required warm clothing which were produced generally by Inuit women. In order for Inuit women to be able to produce warm clothing Inuit women required that Inuit men went out hunting. There was a relationship of dependability. According to Freuchen, Navarana expressed to Freuchen how happy she felt that he had treated her as an equal. He writes, "Then she took my hand in hers and told me how happy she had been in having a husband who would talk with her as an equal. And finally she said that she was very sleepy." (1958:199) That, Freuchen has even mentioned this and noted this gives an impression that it was unexpected that Navarana was especially thankful that she would be treated as an equal when she would not expect to be treated in such a way if she had married an Inuk man. This assumption is further illustrated by Van Kirk when she writes, "In the traders' view, the Indian women were motivated in this regard because they could see that they would be better off with the Europeans. Most traders believed that the condition of women in Indian society was deplorable" (1980:79-80). Again, I reiterate that these views are interpretations of the authors.

The assumption and portrayal that Inuit women were subordinate to Inuit men can be explained through the understanding of the different spheres of activity – personal and public. Although Inuit women were identified and respected as decision makers within Inuit society Amgna'naaq explains a subtle difference that

could easily cause confusion for outsiders coming up to describe the lifestyles of Inuit. It reads,

> The women in our group were equal deciders. But not necessarily publicly. The public execu. . . execution of that decision was often left up to the man - unless he's one of those very quiet ones and then the woman happened to be like me. They carried out the decision and things went on. (April 24, 2000)

This could easily create a misunderstanding between people who do not see the other side where Inuit women were making decisions. In Pauktuutit's publication, Arnait: The views of Inuit Women on Contemporary Issues, Beatrice Watts explaining the role of Inuit women: "The Inuit woman [sic] was the head of the household and made all decisions on the running of the home. This included the training of her daughters and daughters-in-law. Traditionally, the sense of community was family and extended family, so Inuit women extended their role as head of the household into the community" (1991:10). The decisions Inuit women made had an impact on their households directly which had an impact on their community. Often, as explained by Arngna'naaq, it was the man who publicly executed the decisions. Along with the bias of male informants, this social behaviour would explain why outsiders would see only the 'male' character as the central figure. This further explains Uyarasuk's comments about both the woman being a decision maker and the man being a decision-maker but the man being the main decision maker.

There is a strong and convincing argument that Inuit women were an important component of Inuit society with decision-making responsibilities and duties. The images of Inuit women portrayed in narrative texts about Inuit, I would argue, have provided an oppressive force for Inuit women today. Inuit women, today, find themselves in a position where they are expected to behave in a socially subservient position in relation to Inuit men. Maracle writes, "Locked in your white-skinned privilege and blinded by your arrogance, you call on me to forget the past and be like you" (1996:85). Similar to the negative impact experienced by Huron women as described by Anderson (1991), I strongly suspect that the position of Inuit women in Inuit society has declined since the first encounters with whalers, missionaries, RCMP, and government officials. Maracle writes about the colonial process, "The appropriation of knowledge, its distortion and, in some cases, its destruction, were vital to the colonial process" (1996: 89). This process has been extremely rapid and yet it has been extremely drastic. Anderson explains how in less then thirty years there had been a very drastic shift in the behaviour of Huron women. She writes, "By the mid-1640s, not more than three decades after the French first arrived among them, many women had already been subdued, rendered docile and obedient" (1991:4). I am reminded of Allaq's response, which was reinterpreted by Briggs and retold as insignificant, when questioned why Inuit women allowed Inuit men to 'boss them around. She responded, "Because the Bible says that's the way it should be." (1970:107) Briggs, "prodded her, telling her that some kapluna men also boss their women because they believe that women have less *ihuma* (judgement or mind) than

men. She [ie:Allaq] assured me that this was not the case among Eskimos: "It's just because the Bible says women should obey men; that's the only reason." (1970:107) I strongly believe that further study in this area would be beneficial to the deeper understanding of the position of Inuit women presently.

I am convinced that Inuit viewed Inuit women and Inuit men as very important components of Inuit society. Both were indispensable. One was not more indispensable than the other. Both made important decisions to ensure the smooth continuation of their lifestyles. Again, I reiterate, Inuit women and Inuit men can be symbolized as wings of a bird. Both wings need to communicate and work in a complementary fashion to make decisions in order to fly.

CONCLUSION

> *Literally*, she blabs and cackles and is well known as Ms. Tittle-tattle, always willing to sell off for a song what she has stolen (overheard) from man. *Figuratively*, she goes unheard (even when she yells and especially when she "shrills," as they put it) and remains as dumb as a fish.
>
> Minh-ha,1989:20

The writing of this thesis has been a very personal process. It has demanded a great deal of patience – patience from myself and from my family. Not only have I gained a deeper understanding of the position of Inuit women but also I have recognized a great pride in being an Inuk woman. My personal interest in the position of Inuit women has fueled my desire to write about the images of Inuit women found in various narrative texts about Inuit. I am intrigued by the apparent contradictions of the images of Inuit women. Similar to many of the stereotypical images of First Nation's women, Inuit women have often been portrayed in seemingly contradictory images. Describing the opposing images of First Nation's women, Francis writes,

> Of course, not all the stereotypes of Indian women were this positive. Opposed to the princess there was the squaw, a derogatory epithet widely applied to Native women by non-Natives. In all ways the squaw was the opposite of the princess, an anti-Pocahontas. Where the princess was beautiful, the squaw was ugly, even deformed. Where the princess was virtuous, the squaw was debased, immoral, a sexual convenience. Where the princess was proud, the squaw lived a squalid life of servile toil, mistreated by men (1992:121-122).

Similarly, Inuit women have been portrayed as filthy - almost bestial - beings alongside the images of the strong, pretty and competent individuals. On the one hand we have images of Suzanne (Rasmussen, 1908:338) who like the image of the squaw is ugly and lived a squalid life surrounded by filth; and, on the other hand we have Katiaja (Rasmussen, 1908:295) who similar to the image of the princess is beautiful, virtuous, and proud. Although these images appear to be contradictory I am convinced that they have a similar impact on how Inuit women are viewed. These images are not necessarily how Inuit women would describe themselves. Chrystos writes in her poem that the manner of looking at someone is just the same. She writes, "See that to pity me or to adore me are the same" (1985:67). The images, whether they are like the princess character or the squaw character, confine Inuit women in generally expected and accepted social constraints which are often difficult to break away from.

Such social constraints are created and Inuit women have not necessarily had the voice to influence the shaping of the images. As such, Inuit women are now faced with fitting into a set of already defined social constraints created without their influence. Minh-ha explains the irony of this. She writes, "The anthropologist's pen smudges are by-products of a science of man in which the non-civilized man – the very element that permitted its founding – is excluded "(1989:57-58). In addition, LaCapra explains further how we, as readers, accept what we read. He writes, "Nor are we inclined to raise the more "rhetorical" question of how texts do what they do – how, for example, they may situate or

frame what they "represent" or inscribe (social discourses, paradigms, generic conventions, stereotypes, and so forth.)" (1985:38). It is these unquestioned representations that create stereotypical images for the general public.

Albers points out that uncritically accepting the images portrayed strengthens and continues the stereotypical images. She writes, "Without a balanced and well-integrated treatment of the position of females in American Indian societies, textbooks and other publications destined for general audiences indirectly perpetuate the popular stereotypes from which the public interprets the "reality" and "authority" of women's lives" (1989:149). These generally accepted stereotypical images of Inuit women are social constructs that confine Inuit women today.

I would argue that the position of Inuit women has been adversely impacted upon by the colonial period. The presence of other people influences the behaviour of individuals. As described by Rasmussen, Aininaq behaved differently with the presence of Rasmussen. He writes,

> On one's arrival at a settlement in Danish West Greenland, it is usual for the young woman to help the newcomers off with their outdoor clothes. Now, for a moment, I forgot where I was, and as the Greenlandic custom is, stretched out my foot towards a young girl who was standing by my side, meaning her to pull off my outer boots. The girl grew embarrassed, and the men laughed. There was that winning bashfulness about her that throws attraction over all Nature's children; a pale blush shot across her cheek, like a ripple over a smooth mountain lake; she half turned away from me, and her black eyes looked uneasily out over the frozen sea.

> "What is thy name?"
> "Others will tell thee what my name is," she stammered.
> "Aininaq is her name," put in the bystanders, laughing.
> A jovial old paterfamilias then came up to her and said with gravity –
> "Do what the strange man asks thee!" And she stooped down at once and drew off my boots. (1908:10)

I would point out that this shift in behaviour occurred when there was only Rasmussen present. I suspect that the shift would be more profound with the influx of many people. Emberley writes, "A convincing argument can be made that relatively-speaking pre-contact Indian societies were less oppressive with regard to women than the European societies which subsequently sought to impose their own patterns of sex roles and values on Native societies" (1993:110). The imposition of these sex roles and values have had a detrimental impact on Inuit women specifically and Inuit society generally.

In this thesis I have attempted to illustrate that the texts describing Inuit are but one possible interpretation. In these texts, I would argue, the reader is left with the impression that Inuit women are seen and treated in a position of subservience in Inuit society. The interpretations, in my opinion, are a misinterpretation. I argue that a critical look at the treatment of Inuit women provides a different, more interesting, portrayal of Inuit women. I encourage readers to read against the patriarchal grain. By doing so, the reader is struck by the stark difference in viewing the position of Inuit women. It is apparent that it is not, as is often explained, wife exchange but rather spousal exchange. Likewise, instead of the practice of female infanticide it is infanticide. These practices are

not limited to a specific sex. There are many more examples and I look forward to reading texts where these different viewpoints are addressed and expanded upon.

Not only can one see the different viewpoint of the position of Inuit women but more generally one is struck by the assumption that Inuit were living in one of the harshest environments on earth. This assumption has often lead to the conclusion that Inuit lived a harsh life, struggling to survive. Boas explains how Inuit are forced to eat mainly meat products. He writes, "As the inhospitable country does not produce the vegetation to an extent sufficient to sustain life in its human inhabitants, they are forced to depend entirely upon animal food: (1964:11). Here, the assumption is that Inuit would prefer to eat vegetation. Like Sahlins, I would argue that Inuit were not necessarily struggling to survive. Inuit lived a life similar to the lifestyle of Sahlin's 'original affluent society'. Sahlins explains that, "an affluent society is one in which all the people's material wants are easily satisfied" (1972:1). In my opinion, there is lots of information that could convincingly support the notion that Inuit could easily satisfy their material wants.[1]

I have tried to show throughout this thesis that the descriptions of Inuit women are one of many other interpretations that can be understood about the position of Inuit women. One can, as is often the case, accept uncritically that Inuit

[1] I would encourage a more extensive study into this notion of Inuit as an 'original affluent society'.

women have a lower position in relation to that of Inuit men, or one can, and I would encourage that one does, read the writings and actively question the texts. Often when open inquiry is utilized one finds that there is another layer that can be understood about the position of Inuit women in Inuit society. It is, I would argue, often the case that Inuit women are placed in a position similar to the women of the society the author is from. I suspect that the interpretation of the position and role of Inuit women in Inuit society has been largely misunderstood. I would encourage all readers to actively question the sources of information about Inuit.

The reinterpretation of the texts about Inuit and the treatment of Inuit women has brought me to a firm suspicion that Inuit women were autonomous individuals who made significant decisions that affected themselves and other members of the family and community. Furthermore, I suspect that the decisions that Inuit women made were viewed to be as important as the decisions made by Inuit men. I would argue that Inuit women would be treated in a certain way depending on their skill level and decision-making reputation as opposed to their gender. It seems apparent, to me, that Inuit would focus more attention on an individual and their abilities. Hubert Amarualik explains how girls learned the different skills that they would need as productive and competent women:

> As the girls started to handle needlework their mother would tell them what to do or any other chores that were expected of a woman the girls were told what to do. The girls use to work with needles as part of their games at the time when there were hardly

> any imported goods to depend on. The girls would make clothing for the wooden dolls which would cover everything that a person had to wear on a daily bases. These were the types of things that would eventually teach the child to make clothing for everyday use. They were able to master these things as there was nothing else for them to make or do. There were also those that were not properly trained so they were looked at as someone that was not able. A woman runs the household from time immemorial so all the chores would have to learned by the girls. (March 20, 1992:5)

It is interesting to note that there were some girls that 'were not properly trained'. These girls would be looked at as 'someone who was not able'. There is no value-laden adjective accompanying the explanation that she 'was not able'.

Brody explains how in an egalitarian society, such as Inuit society, individualism is accepted and respected. He writes, "There is a connection between the personal or intuitive processing of information and egalitarian individualism. Each person must decide for him- or herself" (1987:123). Each person had to make decisions for herself or for himself. Leacock expands on this notion where people were respected for their own decisions. She writes, "Their status was not as literal "equals" of men (a point that has caused much confusion), but as what they were – female persons, with their own rights, duties, and responsibilities, which were complementary to and in no way secondary to those of men" (981:152). As such, both Inuit women and Inuit men were connected and complementary in their relationship to the household and community.

The intention of this thesis has not been to illustrate that Inuit women were more important than Inuit men nor has it been to illustrate that Inuit women were more

dominant than Inuit men; rather, it has highlighted the equal but different notion between Inuit women and Inuit men. I find it useful to visualize a bird. Both Inuit women and Inuit men comprise a wing of the bird. In order for the household or community to continue smoothly both wings must coordinate their activities and communicate them.

Inuit women, in my opinion, have not had a significant presence in narrative texts. Instead, they are often seen in the shadows of Inuit men who are often portrayed as the central figure. Furthermore, Inuit men are recorded to be the 'informants' sought out by the authors. Rasmussen writes, "It suited our purpose well enough that the men were idle, as we had thus more opportunities of gathering the information we sought. In regard to all matters of everyday life they were willing enough to tell us all they knew" (1969:72). In addition, when Inuit women are recorded to say anything they are rendered silent. Briggs writes about Allaq. "She did not, of course mean that in pre-Christian days women obeyed men less. She meant that it is the natural ordained order of things for men to boss women, and always has been" (1970:107).

It is my opinion that the perception and acceptance of the lower subservient position of Inuit women in Inuit society has played an oppressive force that Inuit women today find themselves confronted with. Not only is this image held by the general population but it has and continues to be internalized by many Inuit. Albers explains how, "Among other things, American Indian women must combat

ideologies of male domination which have been a fundamental feature of the colonizing society that rules them and which have penetrated their own worldviews through the teachings of missionaries, educators, and the media"(1989:147-148). It is, in my opinion, imperative that Inuit women are recognized in their rightful position as significant decision-makers within Inuit society. Allaq's explanation that the Bible has informed Inuit women to obey their husbands does hold some truth (Briggs, 1970:107). Briggs misinterpretation of Allaq's words has had a negative impact on the treatment of Inuit women.

It is my belief that it is important to encourage opportunities in which Inuit women are given the opportunity to regain their voice. Steinem explains the difficulty in changing old habits. She writes,

> Only becoming conscious of old and unchosen patterns allows us to change them, and even so, change, no matter how much for the better, still feels cold and lonely at first – as if we were out there on the edge of the inverse with the wind whistling past our ears – because it doesn't feel like home. Old patterns, no matter how negative and painful they may be, have an incredible magnetic power – because they *do* feel like home. (1992:38)

Despite the cold and lonely feeling, Inuit must consciously acknowledge unchosen patterns and change them. It is up to both wings to regain the balance.

CΔL

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