Learn, teach, challenge : approaching indigenous literatures

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38

The Hunting and Harvesting of Inuit Literature

Keavy Martin

I put some words together,
I made a little song,
I took it home one evening,
Mysteriously wrapped, disguised.
Underneath my bed it went:
nobody was going to share it,
nobody was going to taste it!
I wanted it for me! me! me!
Secret, undivided! (quoted in Lowenstein 46)

This iviusiq—an embarrassing song meant to expose or correct bad behaviour—was recorded by Knud Rasmussen in Angmagssalik, Greenland, as it was sung to a man who had "been in the habit of fetching meat from his store during the night while other people in the house were asleep" (quoted in Lowenstein 46).[1] This particular composition fulfills its function—in this case, embarrassing a miserly person—while also telling its listeners something about the value and importance of songs themselves. The "little song" described here is being hidden and hoarded, restricted for personal use, rather than properly "tasted" by other members of the household. Songs, we learn, are a source of sustenance, and therefore a resource to be shared according to the community's protocols.

Although many Inuit stories and songs have much to teach about the dangers of hoarding, my interest here is in the poetic correlation of songs with food, or, more specifically, with meat. Rasmussen recorded this comparison

elsewhere, too: the song shared with him at the trading post at Naujaat (Repulse Bay) by the elder Ivaluardjuk features a hunter lying on the ice, where he sings as he waits for an animal to appear. Finally, he sings: "I seek and spy / something to sing of / The caribou with the spreading antlers!" (quoted in Rasmussen 18). The hunter—the singer—is thus seeking and finding two things simultaneously: both the animal that he is hunting and the subject of his song, something to sing about—and something to eat. The processes of hunting and song-making go hand-in-hand.

In this chapter, I consider the implications of understanding songs and stories, which can also be known as "literature" or "literary texts," as nourishment, as meat, or as animals to be hunted and harvested. This comparison might be challenging for some urban readers, many of whom are uncomfortable with the idea of killing a wild animal for food or fur. After all, southern grocery stores and malls make our reliance on animal products either conveniently abstract, or, in some cases, nonexistent. Hunting is thus often understood as something to be carried out only in the case of great necessity, because people have no other choice (as, for instance, in the Arctic, which does not support agriculture). Inuit hunting and harvesting is not carried out, however, only for survival; rather, it is part of a complex ethical system, a set of relationships between humans and animals that is often at odds with southern, or at least urban, sensibilities.

I suggest that the protocols of Inuit hunting and harvesting can provide valuable guidance in the pursuit of ethical ways of "consuming" Indigenous texts. While the language of "hunting" and of "feasting upon" texts will strike many as violent, particularly in light of historic and ongoing abuses of Indigenous intellectual culture by academics, I believe that an informed perspective on hunting reveals that the metaphorical "killing and eating" of texts need not be understood as violent so much as intimately interconnected and powerfully transformative. As we witness in the 2009 short film *Tungijuq*, the relationship between Inuit and animals relies on the generous *gift* of animal bodies and is perpetuated by the observance of particular laws. Likewise, the hunting and harvesting of Indigenous texts offers readers the opportunity to enter into reciprocal relationships—and to transform their scholarly practice accordingly.

"Denying Relationship"

Keeping in mind Deanna Reder's work on the significance of writing autobiographically, and also the reluctance of Inuit elders to speak about things that they have only heard about second-hand, I would like to begin with a brief story from my own experience. When I worked as an instructor with the Pangnirtung

Summer School in Nunavut, part of my job involved taking southern students out visiting. Having been a student of the program myself, I knew the hamlet's living rooms and kitchens to be crucibles for intense contemplation, as even the process of entering them involved, for southern students, major clashes of culture.[2] In these homes, there was almost always tea and palauga (bannock) available, and, sometimes, there would be a meal in progress. Our hosts would invite us to share whatever was available, but almost inevitably, the students would politely decline. There was something about *not* accepting food ("No, thanks—I just ate!") that made them feel more at ease. When we discussed their reasons for this later, they would say that they did not want to be a bother; they did not want to inconvenience their hosts; most of all, they did not want to be a drain on limited resources. In some cases, they were unsure or even squeamish about eating what was being offered: nattiminik uujuq (seal stew), quaq (frozen fish), or the coveted delicacy that is mattaaq (raw beluga skin).[3]

While few people in Pangnirtung try overtly to correct the behaviour of qallunaat (white people, or southerners), I was grateful to a young friend who, one day, said quite directly to her southern visitors, "I find it very insulting when you don't eat with us!" She helped us to realize that refusing to eat was a way of remaining at a safe distance, without incurring obligation—it was, ultimately, a refusal to enter into a relationship with our hosts. Instead, we had to learn to take the risk of accepting, of participating, and of acquiring the responsibility to reciprocate for what had been shared with us. When a meal has been shared, after all, there is the possibility, even the requirement, of returning to that house, and maybe next time bringing along a bag of groceries or another offering—even a song.

Anthropologists have been writing for almost a century about the ways in which the exchanging of gifts creates and sustains relationships. As Marcel Mauss wrote in his classic 1925 *Essai sur le don*, "To refuse to give, or to fail to invite, is like refusing to accept—the equivalent of a declaration of war; it is a refusal of friendship and intercourse" (11).[4] The refusal of the gift is the rejection of the relationship—and this can be a dangerous act, leading to the breakdown of social relations. The Papaschase Cree scholar Dwayne Donald takes this further, pointing out in his University of Alberta lectures that, "colonization is the extended process of denying relationship." I understand this to mean that the process of colonization is characterized by and perhaps dependent on a series of refusals: the persistent refusal to acknowledge connection and also the refusal of the responsibilities that relatedness entails. These colonial denials may function on numerous different but interlocking levels, becoming blind to relationship between peoples ("Indigenous issues have nothing to do with me"), relationship of the past to the present ("get over it" or "it wasn't

me who put them in residential schools"), and especially relationship with the land ("the oil-sands industry provides us with jobs and revenue"). Arguably, these denials enable the settler-colonialist and capitalist state to function, as it imagines itself to be free of responsibility to Indigenous peoples, to the land, even to future generations—and therefore free to pursue with impunity its goals of exploiting this territory for its natural resources.

Is the reluctance of southern students to share the food of an Inuit host part of this same process? Is "polite" refusal ultimately a colonizing action? To be sure, most qallunaat students visiting Pangnirtung are strongly motivated by the desire *not* to be colonizers. Yet when this priority compels us to shy away from potentially complicated and entangling encounters, we may wind up rehearsing those individualist and separatist practices that ultimately feed the colonial process by liberating its agents from responsibility to others. The solution to this conundrum would be the flip-side of Donald's theorem: that *de*colonization might be understood as the extended process of acknowledging or honouring relationship. But what does that look like? And how might it be enacted within Indigenous literary studies?

Hunting Ethics

In order to unpack these questions, I turn now to a recent Inuit "text" (I use the term loosely): Igloolik Isuma Productions' 2009 short film *Tungijuq*.[5] "Tunngijuq" means "he, she, or it transforms" or "shapeshifts."[6] At the opening of this five-and-a-half-minute film, we meet actor and internationally renowned throat singer Tanya Tagaq playing a wolf in pursuit of a caribou. As the pack—rendered by computer animation—brings down their kill, we see Tagaq again, this time in the form of the dying prey. Then she lies naked on the ice, a large and bloody slab of caribou meat clutched to her breast like a newborn baby or a lover. Rolling to the floe edge and into the sea, she becomes a ringed seal swimming up to its breathing hole, where it is quickly and cleanly shot. Throughout these initial transformations, Tagaq's human body is apparent—even quite prominent—and so we see the hunted caribou not in its animal form, but as a *person*, bleeding, weakening, and dying. Here, there is no convenient dehumanization of the quarry; instead, the film seems to invite its human audience to imagine viscerally the caribou's suffering and surrender. At the end, Tagaq appears in the form of a human woman, seated with her husband next to the body of the ringed seal about to be butchered, caressing the opening in its belly and taking her first delicious bite of fresh, raw seal liver, before she looks directly into the camera with what I understand to be defiant pleasure.

Tagaq has good reason to be provocative. This film appeared in the same year that then governor general Michaëlle Jean sparked a media frenzy by

taking a bite of raw seal heart at a community feast in Rankin Inlet. Canadian news services emphatically described Jean as having "gobbled" a "dripping chunk" of meat and then wiping the blood from her fingers (Potter; Panetta). Reactions from animal rights groups evoked the language of barbarism even more strongly; in the words of Dan Mathews, senior vice president of media campaigns of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), "It amazes us that a Canadian official would indulge [in] such blood lust. It sounds like she's trying to give Canadians an even more Neanderthal image around the world than they already have" (quoted in Potter). A media climate in which a ceremonial public figure's participation at a community feast sparks such sensationalist and racist statements is strongly in need of some correction; this is the climate in which *Tungijuq* invites its viewers to a feast at the floe edge. Had Jean been eating a piece of steak, it's unlikely that her dinner would have made headlines. Strangely, the consumption of raw organ meat from a seal is not understood as being equivalent—or as better, given that any other kind of food would have to be flown in from thousands of kilometres away, like the majority of Nunavut's vastly overpriced groceries.

The hunting of seals in Canada, whether for food or for fur, has long been a subject of controversy. In the late 1960s, the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) began using images of the commercial Atlantic seal hunt to sway public opinion against the sealing industry, which had been a major coastal economy for centuries. In the 1970s, Greenpeace joined the campaign, as did celebrities such as the French actress Brigitte Bardot, who helped to skyrocket the issue to international attention by snuggling up to white-coated harp seal pups for the cameras. These efforts resulted in the 1983 ban by the European Economic Commission on importing Canadian whitecoat seal products. Although the ban targeted only whitecoats (that is, harp seals less than twelve days old, harvested in the Atlantic commercial hunt), and therefore exempted the Inuit seal hunt (which primarily focuses on adult ringed seals), the result of the ban was the near-total collapse of the market for seal products. The impact on Inuit communities, which had only very recently been moved off the land and into permanent settlements, where they were required to adjust to a different economic model and to try to find sources of income, was nothing short of devastating: "The Government of the Northwest Territories estimated that 18 of 20 Inuit villages in the N.W.T. lost 60 per cent of total annual community income," although the statistics were worse in some places ("Anti-Sealing").[7]

Although greatly diminished, both the commercial Atlantic and the Inuit seal hunts have continued, as have the protests. With celebrities like Pamela Anderson and Paul McCartney working with PETA to sway public opinion against the hunt of such "cute" animals, Inuit have had to launch their own rhetorical campaigns. In 2006, Inuit students Tommy Akulukjuk and Corenna

Nayulia cuddled up to a baby cow to create a poster with the slogan "Save the Baby Veal; Avoid Cultural Prejudice." Current Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami president Terry Audla has tried to redirect animal-rights activists' attention to the problems of the beef, pork, and poultry industries, which typically raise and slaughter animals in close captivity, with the liberal use of hormones and antibiotics, but away from the cameras. And Inuit scholars and spokespeople like Aaju Peter have pointed out that the limited and sometimes only source of income from seal hunting allows Inuit families to go to the store to buy milk or coffee—at exorbitant prices—and also to buy the fuel and ammunition that allows them to keep hunting (Peter 7). In other words, seal hunting not only provides income and sustenance, it also maintains the hugely important cultural aspects of harvesting animals, which allow families to work together to acquire and to share healthy and delicious traditional food as a continuation of ancient practices, despite several decades of attempted assimilation.

Tanya Tagaq's erotic depiction of the hunting and eating of seal meat thus offers a wonderful twist on the tradition of busty blonde bombshells cuddling up enticingly to seals on the ice. Again, the film makes no attempt to downplay or conceal the violence or gore of the hunt, but rather lingers on the sensuousness of the animals' bodies, even as they are butchered. We are invited to witness Tagaq's passionate embrace with the tuttuminik ("former caribou," or caribou meat) and to contemplate the intimate, almost vulva-shaped incision that reveals the delicious organs of the seal. For years, graphic images of hunting have been the worst enemy of hunters, as they are taken out of context and used to shock and provoke urban audiences into moral outrage and political action. The film thus takes a major risk in using this explicit imagery, particularly in combination with sexuality, that other provocateur. Given the reaction of the mainstream media to Michaëlle Jean's single bite of seal heart, how do the filmmakers imagine audiences will respond to this image? As Tagaq lifts her gaze and slowly savours her mouthful, she seems to dare her viewers to respond using the language of "savagery," "barbarism," or "bloodlust." This feast is not a process in which she is engaging unawares or even out of necessity; rather, this is a conscious, deliberate, and, perhaps most importantly, pleasurable act, one carried out without moral conflict or shame.

The reason why *Tungijuq* represents the hunt so honestly, so unashamedly, is because it has nothing to hide. *Inuit hunting is ethical.* Although its appearance has changed somewhat with the adoption of rifles, engines, and Christianity, it is still embedded within an ancient tradition of relations between humans and animals. The maintaining of this relationship is of the utmost importance to Inuit, whose survival has depended on it for thousands of years. As the Amitturmiutaq Inuit elder Ivaluardjuk said famously to Knud Rasmussen, "The greatest peril of life lies in the fact that human food consists

entirely of souls. All the creatures that we have to kill and eat . . . have souls, like we have, souls that do not perish with the body, and which must therefore be propitiated lest they should revenge themselves on us for taking away their bodies" (quoted in Rasmussen 56).

George Wenzel explains that, "Inuit relate to animals not as dominators, managers, or even stewards of wildlife . . . but as co-residents who share the same conceptual ideology" (62). Instead of being poor, hapless victims of the cruelty and cunning of Man, animals are known to be silatujuq ("intelligent") and also keenly "aware of the thoughts, speech, and actions of hunters" (Wenzel 138). They therefore make the conscious, deliberate, and generous decision to share their bodies with worthy hunters; the human recipients of this generosity are then required to be generous themselves, sharing the meat with others (Wenzel 63).

Elders warn, furthermore, that should animals be treated disrespectfully—if they are made to suffer, if they are boasted about, if they are quarrelled over, or if a hunter is stingy about sharing meat—there will be repercussions. "We were told to be fearful of something bad happening to us if we abused wildlife," Mariano Aupilaarjuk explains. "We were told to take good care of our wildlife and our land" (Aupilaarjuk et al. 33). In fact, from the perspective of many Inuit elders, the actions of wildlife biologists and conservationists (in particular, tranquilizing, tagging, collaring, and helicopter monitoring) *interfere with and torment* intelligent animals, thereby endangering not only the animal but also the relationship between animals and humans. In the 2010 Isuma documentary *Qapirangajuq: Inuit Knowledge and Climate Change*, elder Rita Nashook of Iqaluit speaks powerfully to the southern policymakers who place restrictions on Inuit hunting in the name of animal protection: "I'm a protector of animals," she says, "a real animal rights activist! When animals are mistreated, I'm reminded of my late grandmother's teaching: 'Unless you're going to kill an animal, do not cause it harm.' . . . Wildlife biologists are the ones endangering wildlife! Then they suspect Inuit overharvesting as the cause. We are told, 'You must not touch protected animals.' Inuit do not endanger animals, nor do they cause needless suffering. We love our animals."[8]

This love for and even intimacy with animals is strongly apparent in *Tungijuq*. As Tagaq transforms from wolf, to caribou, to seal, and ultimately back into the form of a human woman, she seems to be saying, "I am these animals; they are me."[9] Like the old tale of Arnaqtaaqtuq ("he gets a woman/mother"), the story of the soul of a miscarried child who is reborn in many different animal bodies before returning to a human mother again, *Tungijuq* affirms the parallel and deeply interconnected personhood of animal beings.[10] The boundaries between species, here, are flexible and fluid; rather than existing in separate spheres, these different peoples rely deeply on one another. The

death of one being moves swiftly into the life of another; in this way, the film pursues a procreative theme accentuated by its persistent sexual and reproductive imagery.[11] Tagaq plunges naked into the dark waters and floats foetus-like in a cloud of blood before swimming, now in a seal-body, toward yet another incarnation. The image of the breathing-hole passageway is then echoed in the visceral opening of the seal's belly—another portal through which life passes. The blood, gore, and suffering that colour the screen are, I would argue, not markers of violence so much as emblems of birth. The renewal of life, the film reminds us, is reliant upon the bodies of others, and those bodies are always transformed in the process.

So what of those who decline to participate in this cycle of transformation and renewal by refusing the gift of animal bodies? Inuit tradition, with its respect for each person's intellectual autonomy, would calmly allow vegetarians go about their business. But as for those who interfere in Inuit life based on the assumption of inhabiting a higher moral ground? I question their morality. Humans who attempt to remain wholly non-reliant upon animals (and who urge others to do likewise) can boast of only very distant relationships with animals, and they cannot possess the same commitment to long-term and sustainable animal wellbeing that is maintained by hunters. By retreating to the safety of perceived separateness, anti-hunting activists forget not only the colonial nature but also the broader consequences of their actions, which would compel northerners to rely almost exclusively on food imported from thousands of miles away and on clothing made from synthetic, petroleum-based fibres—all while stripping hunting communities of sustainable livelihoods and thus opening the door to thoroughly *un*sustainable resource-development projects, which pose tremendous risks to animal habitat.

In *Tungijuq*, we glimpse a world in balance, as humans and animals participate knowingly in an ancient partnership. The pleasure evinced by Tagaq is the pleasure of living well and living ethically, with gratitude for the continued abundance of the animals and the assurance that they provide of Inuit cultural survival. In sharing this series of feasts with viewers worldwide, the filmmakers invite us to relate better to Inuit lands and communities—and to the animals, too. In this way, the film provides an entryway into the cycles of kinship and responsibility that have existed in the Arctic for thousands of years.

Reading Ethics

I offer this recounting of the seal hunt controversy—and by controversy, I mean the damage inflicted by misinformed and near-sighted southerners—as a kind of reciprocity for the gift of *Tungijuq*, just as I wear my sealskin clothing proudly and speak about it to whomever will listen. I hope that this speaking

and sharing will, even if infinitesimally, improve the ways in which other qallunaat relate to Inuit communities. But I also need to say, here, that the above account of Inuit hunting, and of the relationship between humans and animals, only skims the surface of a very deep pool. While I have eaten seal many times, I have only been on a handful of seal hunts; in other words, my knowledge of this subject is primarily second-hand. While this is acceptable in an academic context, in an Inuit context it means that I don't know very much at all.[12] But something that I *do* have experience with, something that I therefore feel more entitled to speak about, is the reading of literary texts. I want to come back around, then, to the idea with which I opened: that literary texts are animal-like, or meat-like, and that the ethics of Inuit hunting can guide us in our reading practice.

Most readers would agree that texts are "nourishing" in some sense. They feed us emotionally, intellectually—and for literary critics, they actually do put food on our tables. Many of us likely also feel that texts have a life or spirit of their own, whether they owe that to their author/community of origin or whether it is something that they possess in their own right. As the Cherokee scholar Daniel Heath Justice reminds us, "our literatures, like our various peoples, are *alive*" (28). This attitude is reflected in most criticism of Indigenous literatures, which has had to continually confront the complicated ethics of its own relationship to the text. Settler critic Sam McKegney points out the anxiety that these high ethical stakes can produce in non-Indigenous readers, who, in hopes of not replicating colonial aggressions in their critical practice, often retreat into what he calls "strategies for ethical disengagement" (*Magic* 39). Yet like the vegetarians or "animal rights" activists who prefer to remain at a safe distance, critical dis-engagers risk perpetuating subtler kinds of violence that result from shirking relationships, such as ignoring Indigenous literatures and the transformative potential that they contain altogether.[13] McKegney asserts instead the need for ethical *engagement* with Indigenous texts: "I apologize for any weaknesses that might emerge in my analysis," he writes, "but I don't apologize for analyzing" (Magic 44).

To be sure, we might pose some questions about what exactly analysis is, where the practice comes from, what baggage it carries, and what kind of relationship it establishes between reader and text. Etymologically, an analysis is an "action of loosing or releasing, [a] fact of dissolving, [a] resolution of a problem" ("analysis"); it takes apart, however reverently, what has been lovingly put together. I always recall Susan Sontag's startling image of the critic *excavating* the artwork, which, she says, cannot survive the process.[14] For writers, this dissection, this dismantling, this "jotting and prodding" can feel like an imposition, or even an annexation, as the Métis poet Gregory Scofield writes in his haunting poem "The Dissertation" (8).[15] But what if we were to think of

analysis as a kind of *butchering*, not in a horror-movie sense, and without the colloquial connotations of "really wrecking something," but rather in the sense portrayed by *Tungijuq*: as a reverent, celebratory, and communal (both collective and connective) activity carried out in preparation for a feast? How might this change the relationship that is established with the text, with its author, and with its place of origin?

"Butchering" and then "feasting upon" texts—these metaphors may sound a bit disturbing to some (why is our language for the eating of meat so heavy with grim connotation?). Non-Indigenous peoples, after all, have being carving up and consuming Indigenous cultures for decades, whether it is the sacred objects that linger in museums, the faux-Navajo fashion items adorning our students, or the snippets of Indigenous texts cited in the articles and books of settler academics. The Métis artist and scholar David Garneau notes:

> The colonial attitude is characterized not only by scopophilia, a drive to look, but also by an urge to penetrate, to traverse, to know, to translate, to own and exploit. The attitude assumes that everything should be accessible to those with the means and will to access them; everything is ultimately comprehensible, a potential commodity, resource, or salvage. The academic branch of the enterprise collects and analyzes the experiences and things of others; it transforms story into text and objects-in-relation into artifacts to be catalogued and stored or displayed. (23)

In order to try to separate myself from this habit of consumption, then, in order to undertake a different kind of practice, I need to come to the table not seeking to take possession and to profit, but rather to enter into and acknowledge relationship. I need to seek ways of *being in relation to* that do not lapse into assimilation or appropriation, those twin addictions of empire.

In seeking this relational state of working and of being, I am fortunate to have many examples to follow. Daniel Heath Justice has long reminded his students to think not so much about their *rights* as readers of Indigenous literature, but rather about their *responsibilities*. The larger Indigenous literary nationalist community, meanwhile, has for decades advocated for improved, informed, and invested relations between readers of Indigenous texts and the nations from which these texts originate. More recently, Sam McKegney has called for "relationships of reciprocal responsibility" between readers and Indigenous texts: "we should seek," he writes, "to honour the words of Indigenous poets by responding to cues to criticism within the poetry itself, using those cues to form rigorous albeit non-definitive understandings, and striving to extend the poetry's capacity to engender positive change" ("Writer-Reader" 47, 52). Into

this already vibrant conversation, I want to bring two principles drawn from the ethical practice of Inuit hunting. These are ideas that have profoundly influenced my teaching over the past several years, and I hope that they will provide others involved in the same work with some food for thought.

Here is the first practice. The elder Emile Imaruittuq emphasizes in *Perspectives on Traditional Law* that the way that people *speak* about animals can have serious repercussions on the human-animal relationship. "There was a man who grumbled and said bad things about wildlife," he recounts. "Because of what he said, one lake was rapidly depleted of fish and today it is a very bad fishing place, even though it is a large lake which should have fish" (quoted in Aupilaarjuk et al. 39). It is not only mocking, boasting, or complaining about animals that is dangerous, however. Imaruittuq explains, "When we started dealing with land claims we had to talk a lot about wildlife. This created a lot of fear amongst the elders. They used to tell us not to quarrel about wildlife, because this was a very dangerous thing to do. . . . We should not quarrel about wildlife or it will take revenge on us" (38).

Words, we learn, have tremendous power; even the unwritten words referred to here carry intentions over great distances and can reverberate dangerously outside of our control. The *manner* of human speech, then, becomes very important in maintaining good relationships. And although most readers of Indigenous literature strive to speak respectfully about the texts with which they are engaged, they wouldn't think twice about *arguing* about them—occasionally in a combative sense and always in pursuit of persuasion. This Inuit piqujaq (customary law) has made me wonder about the pervasive academic practice of arguing, of seeking to persuade. Stepping outside of this rhetorical mode carries dangers for a scholarly reader/writer: it might carry away with it one's feeling of authority and purpose, and it might leave one's paper or presentation seeming weak and directionless. But this serves as a reminder that rhetorical traditions vary widely, and that scholars of Indigenous literatures might think more seriously about putting Indigenous rhetorical traditions into practice in their own conversations. Imaruittuq seems to remind his listeners of the importance of maintaining peaceful and respectful relations via the way that we speak to one another. How would this change the work that academics do? In my classes, I now ask my students to write at least one essay that purposefully departs from the thesis-proof format that they have jammed almost all of their ideas into since high school. While most find the exercise terrifying, the honesty, feeling, and personality that emerges in their work makes it worthwhile. While Imaruittuq notes that arguing was necessary when it came to negotiating the land claim—as it is, I think, when dealing with anti-hunting activists—I seek the courage and ability to pursue this rhetorical shift in my own writing.

The second law for hunters is just as crucial to the maintenance of good relationships with animals—and therefore, to the securing of good "harvests." This is the requirement, referenced at the beginning of this paper in "Song to a Miser," that the gift of animal bodies be not hoarded but rather shared among family and community. This profoundly anti-capitalist ethic has struck me deeply every time that I have travelled to Inuit territory, from the very first day that I was in Pangnirtung, when a person whom I had never met before gave me an entire Arctic char fresh from his net, simply because "it's for sharing." Many qallunaat working in the north, meanwhile, find this sharing, and the expectation of sharing, irritating, as they wonder why local people never seem to save (hoard) money, why they rely so heavily upon the generosity of their relatives, etc. These practices, after all, grate beautifully on cherished southern ideals of self-reliance and individualism, to which the academy is no stranger.

So, how might an ethic of sharing be put into practice in the work of literary critics? Many of us already share eagerly the "resource" of Indigenous literary texts, and teach and publish about those that have impacted us deeply, thus hopefully augmenting the flow of royalties back to the author. In my classes, I also encourage students not to hoard the nourishment that they have gained from reading, but instead to build further relationships by passing along what they have learned outside the class, whether from a blog, an anonymous leaflet left on the bus, or a particular friend/family member. At times, they have even had the opportunity to share their work—often a creative response—with the visiting author him- or herself. For the students, this raises the stakes of assignments considerably by allowing them to step outside of the usual, somewhat impoverished custom of spending their energies solely on the individualistic goal of acquiring course credit. Likewise, I am trying to implement my own responsibility to share these nourishing texts and the transformative ideas they contain, not only while accruing (profitable) publications, but also outside of the academic merit system, with my family and community. While these are mere baby steps within a crushingly neoliberal institution, they provide me with a chance to emulate the practice of community that I have so admired in Inuit territory.

It is in that spirit that I offer this essay, both to my own community of academic readers and to the northern communities with whom, through the realities of climate change, of misguided bans on seal products, and of Canada's interest in Arctic sovereignty, to name only a few vectors, we are interconnected. I write in gratitude for the gift of Indigenous texts and stories, and for the transformations that they have brought about for me. To those who are unsure about reading Indigenous literatures, as I have often been, I say: go carefully, but heed also the words of Gregory Scofield: "Astâm, pî-miciso"—"come and eat" (126).

Instead of remaining safely (rudely, dangerously) at a distance, take the risk of entering into relationship. The results are truly transformative.

Notes

1. Iglulingmiutaq elder Emile Imaruittuq (albeit speaking a different dialect of Inuktitut than that spoken in southeastern Greenland) discusses the genre of the iviusiq, which Rasmussen referred to as "songs of derision," in *Perspectives on Traditional Law* (Aupilaarjuk et al. 208).
2. As the program's founder and director Peter Kulchyski notes, the only people who knock before entering a home in Pangnirtung are the social workers or the police; others simply open the door and walk in, thereby, Kulchyski argues, engaging in an "embodied deconstruction" of the cherished Western institution of private property (267).
3. Also spelled maktaaq. I default to using Pangnirtung dialect, which often "assimilates" double consonants for Inuktitut terms.
4. Mauss's original has "l'alliance et la communion," where the translator has "friendship and intercourse": "Refuser de donner, négliger d'inviter, comme refuser de prendre, équivaut à déclarer la guerre ; c'est refuser l'alliance et la communion" (18–19).
5. This film can be viewed online at www.isuma.tv/tungijuq/tungijuq720p.
6. Although the filmmakers use the spelling "Tungjiuq" to render their Inuktitut title into Roman orthography, "Tunngijuq" is the more direct transliteration of the syllabics. I am grateful to filmmaker Félix Lajeunesse and to Lucy Tulugarjuk for clarifying the meaning of this term for me.
7. This problem continues today. In 2014, the World Trade Organization upheld the European Union's 2009 ban on importing sealing products. Although this particular embargo included an exemption for "Inuit seal-products result[ing] from hunts conducted 'traditionally,' which contribute to the 'subsistence' of Inuit" (Peter, 4), it also resulted in a further dramatic drop in seal prices and the sale of *not one* of the eleven thousand available seal pelts at the 2009 fur auction in North Bay, Ontario. In other words, the exemption for Inuit hunters is not working.
8. Other elders and hunters interviewed in the film also point out that tampering or interfering with animals can endanger them. Simon Idlout (Resolute Bay) explains that helicopter noise can damage bears' sensitive hearing, while Nathaniel Kallak (Resolute Bay) says that putting radio collars on bears can prevent them from reaching their heads into seal breathing holes—and that starving collared bears have been seen by hunters.
9. Or, as Tagaq said in an interview on The National, "We're equal. We're all meat" ("Tanya Tagaq").
10. For a thorough discussion of the Arnaqtaaqtuq story, see Blaisel.
11. My thanks to Professor Christopher Trott, who first drew my attention to the reproductive imagery of the film.
12. As the late Pangnirtung elder Inuusiq Nashalik said of the qallunaat understanding of bears, they "only know them by what they read, and have never interacted with them. We know our wildlife intimately" (quoted in *Qapirangajuq*).

13. As McKegney writes, "I see the alternative of avoiding Native literary works and focusing even more attention on the cultural creations of the dominant society as contrary to the goal of respecting Native voice and forwarding the social and political objectives embedded in text; it again takes focus away, willingly failing to heed the creative voices of those who feel the impact of Canadian colonial oppression" (Magic 42).
14. "The modern style of interpretation excavates, and as it excavates, destroys" (Sontag 6).
15. "But then arrived the microscope / and she set to work, the academic, / prodding and jotting, / jotting and prodding. / She even annexed his speech, / the Indian words she was so drawn to" (Scofield 8).