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INUIT AUTOBIOGRAPHY: CHALLENGING THE STEREOTYPES

by

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In border zones, all our academic preconceptions about cultural, linguistic, or stylistic norms are constantly being put to the test by creative practices that make visible and set off the processes of adaptation, appropriation, and contestation governing the construction of identity in colonial and postcolonial contexts.

Françoise Lionnet

Postcolonial Representations

Dedicated to the memory of Susan Brooks.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the works of eight Inuit autobiographers who write from contact zones and at sites of métissage between the years 1894 and 1993. The case studies presented investigate how these writers respond to stereotypical ideas of Inuit people and how they write against such stereotypes in some cases, comply with them in others, or employ them for their own uses. My project studies the effects of hybridity on the self-fashioning of the Inuit autobiographical self, and how that self adjusts to changing material and ideological circumstances in order to survive. Founded upon the argument that the site of métissage is one of contact, and often conflict, of cultural expressions, this dissertation focuses on the ways in which Inuit autobiographers (and, on occasion, white editors/collaborators), by exploring and adapting to these conflicting ideologies, bring new perspectives to those life writings hitherto relegated to the margins of the Western autobiographical canon.

The introduction situates Inuit autobiography in relation to perceived characteristics of Western autobiography and of North American Aboriginal life stories and locates Inuit life writings in areas of cultural crossovers. The first chapter explores the influence of métissage on the writings of Lydia Campbell, Margaret Baikie, and Elizabeth Goudie, women of Inuit heritage who lived in central Labrador during times of great cultural change. The second chapter investigates the collaborative autobiography of a woman of mixed ancestry, Anauta (Sarah Elizabeth Ford), and American author, Heluiz Chandler Washburne. The third chapter examines another collaborative work, *Thrasher: Skid Row Eskimo* (1976), written by an incarcerated Inuk, Anthony Apakark Thrasher, and two journalists, Alan Mettrick and Gerard Deagle. The fourth chapter situates Alice

French and Minnie Aodla Freeman as speakers from the contact zone of the South and as translators of Inuit ways for both their own people and for outsiders. The fifth chapter centers on the work of Alootook Ipellie, whose unconventional text nevertheless continues to uphold ancient traditions while adapting to modern times. The conclusion investigates the reception of Inuit autobiographies in contemporary Canadian societies, both North and South, and points to future directions in Inuit life writing.

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Introduction

> The Eskimo makes his and her appearance with a smile. Imposed on the stereotypical background of impossible terrain and intolerable weather is an eternally happy, optimistic little figure; a round, furry and cuddly human with a pet name; a man or woman who amazes and delights our European representatives with innocent simplicity. (Brody, *Living Arctic* 19)

Inuit have lived with such representations as that described by ethnographer Hugh Brody since the time of contact with southerners. A reluctance to critique such comfortable myths may explain why Inuit life stories are only now beginning to become more widely known outside the North. Canada's southern societies picture northern peoples in a certain light; sociologist Marybelle Mitchell points out that Inuit remain important "as guardians of Canadian arctic sovereignty and as a nationalist symbol in a country seeking to promote the romance of the original peoples living in harmony with nature" (*From Talking* 390). In many ways, the Inuit have become icons of the Canadian North, and, having become as much, find themselves relentlessly burdened by southerners' insistence that they represent all that is cherished. Meanwhile, their life stories counteract this iconicity; instead, Inuit present themselves as individuals struggling against stereotypes that lock them into such potentially harmful imagery and entrap them in categories such as the "colourful" and the exotic.

The last few decades have seen a proliferation of Inuit life writings and some

greater notice has been paid them, especially by critics like Robin McGrath, Renée Hulan, Penny Petrone, and Michael Kennedy. Against this background of heightening interest, Inuit, recognizing that their cultures were being eroded, have begun to take matters into their own hands. Mitchell states that

> [i]n the late seventies and early eighties Inuit began to recognize their plight and to resist in small but meaningful ways, attempting to recapture past practices: living off the land; reclaiming old campsites; reverting to Inuit names; . . . setting up museums; recording elders' memories; attempting to repatriate artefacts, reviving dogteams and other precontact practices; and placing new emphasis on the retention of Inuktitut. (331)

Inuit have also been recording their own memories, and autobiographical writings form an important part of this recuperation and reinvention of Inuit identities.

The Inuit perspective has only begun to be explored. In her dissertation, *Canadian Inuit Literature: The Development of a Tradition*, Robin McGrath has surveyed Inuit autobiographies up to 1984. She states that "of 783 works published by Inuit prior to 1981, more than one quarter can be identified as primarily reminiscent or autobiographical" ("Circumventing" 224). McGrath indicates that many of these life writings, produced after 1880, were written at the request of representatives of outside agencies, such as missionaries, art collectors, and anthropologists (*Canadian* 84). Inuit have also offered their life stories to recall dying traditions or to give warnings to the young. Numerous artists have contributed details of their lives to accompany prints,

photographs, or drawings. McGrath adds that autobiography is such a popular genre among the Inuit because it is one of the first forms of written literature to emerge in newly literate societies and contact-cultures; the easiest subject for a new writer to attempt is "that which he or she knows best"; moreover, life writings seem to multiply in times of upheaval ("Circumventing" 223).

Inuit life stories do not fit seamlessly into the Western canon of autobiography, or into the category of Native American autobiography, as it has been delineated to this point. Numerous critics have outlined the history of the autobiographical genre and have pointed to its identification as a Western mode of representation based on the idea of a unified self. The general path of the genre has often been traced from Augustine through Rousseau to Newman and down to the present day.[1] The assumption has frequently been that the (usually masculine) "I" that emerges along this path is a "universal human subject," one that is "rational, agentive, unitary" (Smith and Watson, *De/Colonizing* xvii). In the past, little notice was taken of female autobiographers in the traditional canon, and even less of those authors writing from the margins of autobiographical discourse.[2]

However, in recent years, autobiographical writings have elicited more and more commentary and criticism; questions continue to arise about the nature of autobiography itself. As Paul John Eakin points out, "most readers naturally assume that all autobiographies are based on the verifiable facts of a life history, and it is this referential dimension, imperfectly understood, that has checked the development of a poetics of autobiography" (3). A poetics based on a multifaceted subjectivity variously intersected by and under the influence of such factors as gender, race, and geographical location is

indeed developing; autobiography reveals itself as much more complex than was first imagined. Timothy Dow Adams, for example, refers to the "generic ambiguities" of the genre (ix). He asserts that "autobiography cannot really be defined" (2). James Olney also warns of "the impossibility of making any prescriptive definition for autobiography or placing any generic limitations on it at all" ("Some Versions" 237).

Amidst the burgeoning interest in autobiography, critics warn of the dangers of ready generalizations and categorizing within the genre.[3] Some theorists have alluded to the problems of essentialism which plague autobiography that emanates from the margins of Western societies, and warn that such writings run the risk of becoming embroiled in identity politics. Biddy Martin asserts that "challenges to the erasure of difference in the name of another identity . . . limit the potential for subversion and critique by recontaining the discursive/institutional operations of 'differences' in discrete categories of individuals" (79).

A danger exists in naming universal attributes of particular groups of autobiographies, and it is also hazardous to prescriptively separate "male" life writings from "female." Domna Stanton calls into question preconceived ideas of Western autobiography and genderic differences based on a "preselected corpus of male autobiographies and a preestablished set of common traits" (11). Smith and Watson state that

> all of the features once claimed as hallmarks of women's autobiography--nonlinear narrative, fragmented textuality, relationality, the authority of experience--have been challenged as

> gender essentialism, from within feminist theory . . . and from outside it. (*Women* 40)

Against a background of controversy, then, I concern myself in this dissertation with particular case studies of Inuit autobiographical writings from the years 1894 to 1993. I place on view the authors' own voices through interviews where possible, and present their responses to critics. This project continues the study of an expanding body of Inuit life writings, and proceeds with the work of identifying the ways in which Inuit autobiographers represent themselves in areas of cultural transferences and interactions. It examines how their works, influenced by differing ideologies at such sites and refusing to follow predictable trajectories, evade and elide tidy boundaries. In referring to the works examined here as "Inuit autobiography," I do not intend to generalize or essentialize. One could say that "Inuit autobiography" is a label for political use and a lever in identity politics, but, as this dissertation will show, not all Inuit writers see their texts as political, even though others may designate them as such. This project demonstrates, though, that, despite this disavowal of a political dimension, Inuit autobiographers' works do contribute to a political agency that may help deal with modern-day difficulties.

I situate my readings of these Inuit life writings in the context of changing ideological conditions in "contact zones." Mary Louise Pratt refers to "autoethnographic representations," in which "subjugated subjects engage, and seek to engage, the metropolis's constructions of those it subjugates" in order to construct "self-affirmations designed for reception in the metropolis" (*Imperial* 143). She sees such representations as a "very widespread phenomenon of the contact zone" (9), that zone being "an attempt to

invoke the spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect" (7). The autobiographies studied in this dissertation are not primarily designed for a southern, metropolitan audience; they are also meant for a readership of others in the societies from which they emerge. Nonetheless, they do contradict southern misconceptions about northern cultures, and they rebel against subjugation by testifying to its consequences for those forced to adapt to drastically altered circumstances; at the same time, they underline the importance of Inuit cultures and of the writers' own autobiographical performances.

The texts studied here do emanate from "contact zones"; moreover, this project also locates Inuit life writing as issuing from what Mauritian theorist Françoise Lionnet would term "sites of métissage." Lionnet refers to these "border zones" of culture, where a hybrid language and continual heteroglossia resist dominant ideologies, and where societies intermingle and exchange ideas (*Postcolonial* 6). She also describes areas of métissage as open and empowering spaces, where differences are respected and multiplicity celebrated (*Autobiographical* 5). Ideas about "authenticity" are questioned at such sites, which produce cultural mixes and influence the creation of multifaceted identities. Transculturation shapes the discourse of Inuit autobiographers. Although their texts may appear simple and straightforward, they are actually complicated and layered for the reader informed about the many conflicting forces that may exist simultaneously at the site of métissage. The writers speak from a situation of hybridity, often, but not always, influenced by the orality of their societies.

Some may not see this interconnection of cultures in a positive light. Linda J.

Krumholz elaborates on Pratt's description of autoethnography, and concludes that "Pratt emphasizes the perilous and indeterminate nature of the reception of texts in the contact zone" (90). But individuals, willing to risk the danger of being misunderstood, persist in presenting written texts from that zone. Pratt does grant some agency to minority groups in such areas; she asserts that subjugated peoples do control "to varying extents" what they take and use of the materials transmitted to them from the metropolis (*Imperial* 6).

My dissertation suggests that contact zone and site of métissage are sometimes more complementary than might be expected, and that negative connotations associated with writing from a contact zone may be outweighed at times by the positive aspects of producing life writings at a site of métissage. Lionnet emphasizes the subversive power of métissage (*Autobiographical* 12) and its emancipatory potential (248). The autobiographer confronted by disparaging opinions may become more motivated to take up the practice of métissage to represent the autobiographical self more clearly or to render a Native autobiographical identity in a more favorable light. Partial collaboration with the dominant society may result in the dissemination of new information and the overturning of stereotypes. On the other hand, the site of métissage may not always be as open to positive influences as Lionnet suggests, and the Inuit autobiographer may not be able to refute the stereotypical ideas of the dominant culture. However, what Pratt refers to as "appropriation of the idioms of the conqueror" (*Imperial* 7), common to autoethnography emanating from the contact zone, may not signal capitulation for Inuit authors, but rather may provide an opportunity for translating for outsiders the ways of their different Native cultures. Inuit autobiographers present themselves to both northern

and southern audiences; at the same time, they attempt to balance the differing influences of the contested sites from which they communicate.

Writing, then, in the midst of transitions and transformations, Inuit authors establish their individual subject positions and survive by partial adaptation to contemporary, mixed societies. As I shall discuss in specific detail in later chapters, the narratives examined here resist easy categorization and labelling, edging as some of them do into other genres and areas. Numerous Inuit texts may be classed as what Sidonie Smith calls "autobiographical manifestoes" (*Subjectivity* 157), in which the authors speak of and for a group and address concerns for the future. Some Inuit life stories also border on testimonio, which John Beverley denotes as signifying "the need for a general social change," projecting "an urgency to communicate" and depicting "a struggle for survival" (Beverley 14, 23). Intruding into these other territories, Inuit life writings demonstrate fluid subject positions, hybridity, and adaptability, making for difficulties in determining their attributes; parameters put in place tend to slip.

Robin McGrath, has explored Inuit autobiography and offers two major characteristics: first, that it frequently contains traditional stories or legends, often inserted abruptly, and, second, that the authors exert great control of form and style, perhaps because they "find it easier to be intimate on the printed page than in person" (*Canadian* 91-92). McGrath has also focussed closely on Inuit women's life writings, listing many of their traits.

In her "Circumventing the Taboos: Inuit Women's Autobiographies,"[4] McGrath has noted differences between Inuit male and female self-representations. She reports that

twice as many Inuit autobiographies are written by men as by women. She also states that Inuit men "tend to pattern their autobiographies upon already established narrative structures borrowed from the epic tradition," while Inuit women seem to observe a taboo against drawing attention to their adult selves and confine their life writings to memories of pre-adolescence, or else do not write about themselves until they near old age; she adds that Inuit women often fictionalize their lives ("Circumventing" 224). My own work points to the fact that such sharp gender-based delineations in writing may not be so easily justified now. Although Inuit women were indeed traditionally trained to be patient, humble, and self-contained, Marion Jackson, one of the editors of the recent book, *Inuit Women Artists: Voices From Cape Dorset* (1994), states that "modern Inuit women are no longer culturally bound to defer quietly and patiently while their interests are interpreted and represented by others" (38). A changing culture alters boundaries. A new assertiveness on the part of both male and female writers is reflected in the works of autobiographers like Alice French, Anthony Apakark Thrasher, and Minnie Aodla Freeman, who refuse to remain stereotypical, passive, and uncomplaining Inuit "types." As I shall demonstrate in this dissertation, since 1984, other Inuit life writings have appeared which contradict some of McGrath's premises, as well as those of other academics. For instance, the oral tradition has little influence in Alice French's *The Restless Nomad* (1992). Both French and Freeman take issue with some of the characteristics attributed to them as Inuit women autobiographers. Voices such as theirs may affront and confuse critics; on first examination, their texts may induce a kind of cultural vertigo in the reader who is accustomed to southern societal norms.

Here the work of Shirley Neuman proves helpful in deciphering the autobiographical text. Neuman promotes a poetics of differences in dealing with the autobiographical subject who "exists at particular and changing intersections of race, nationality, religion, education, profession, class, language, gender, sexuality, a specific historical moment, and a host of material conditions" ("Poetics" 224). Each Inuk author comes to her/his work from a different perspective, viewing an Inuit heritage differently; each speaks from a unique subject position at a site of multiple influences and cultural crossovers. The writers I examine share geographical locations of childhoods in the North of Canada; all share some Inuit heritage. However, a number of them lived or live in the South and interpret their experiences from positions of transculturation and disenfranchisement. My interest lies in demonstrating the vexed subject positions of all eight Inuit writers brought under consideration by this dissertation.

Where possible, I conducted interviews with the Inuit authors, and my own positioning in relation to them may have influenced their responses. It was not my intention to contaminate the interviewing situation, but I presented myself as a mixed-blood academic with some Inuit heritage and some knowledge of Inuit cultures. In describing my own background, I hoped to put the interviewees at ease and to encourage an atmosphere of openness. My questions centered around the production of their autobiographical texts and the repercussions of writing about the self. I also presented to them the comments of others on their works, and asked them to respond to those comments. The main purpose of the interviews was to provide a means by which Inuit writers could express themselves and could counter misunderstandings about them as

authors and as members of Inuit societies.

Inuit autobiographers contrast the misinterpretations of their cultures with actual descriptions of their ways of life. In order to defeat the stereotypes, they must find some common ground or a state of in-betweenness to aid in translation for those unversed in Inuit cultural mores. Pratt asserts that "autoethnography involves partial collaboration" with the mores and idioms of the dominant culture (*Imperial* 7). Some Inuit writers adopt the dominant language, English, in which to communicate, but they manipulate the language to their own purposes. For some of the autobiographers discussed here, English is their "mother tongue," while, for others, it is not. The use of English is an act of interpretation, for these authors are trying to show what it means to express an identity often misunderstood by others. Hertha Dawn Wong asks,

> How, then, does a Native American express a genuine sense of self when that self is mediated by the language of a member of the dominant culture? How does one construct and maintain an identity in a hostile world? Is the act of expressing one's self in the language and forms of the 'enemy' an attempt at communication, an indication of negotiation, or an act of capitulation? (*Sending* 5)

In Inuit autobiography can be found both attempts at communication and indications of negotiation, but hardly "act[s] of capitulation." Rather, it reveals a mode of adjustment designed to facilitate understanding and ensure survival. As this dissertation seeks to demonstrate, Inuit attempt to reach both northern and southern audiences; most view their writing in English as an effort to translate for outsiders the conditions of their lives. In

order to endure, they have adapted in some ways to the "Other," but they do not necessarily wish to discard their Inuit heritage and traditions along the way. Although Inuit autobiographies often affirm the remembrance of past customs, they do not advocate that their cultures stand still. Borrowing ideas and languages from other cultures and intermingling them with their own is yet another practical aspect of adaptation.

Hybridity of cultures leads to a hybrid self-fashioning. Critics of Native American autobiography now question the assumptions behind the idea of the Western, unified self, and trace the beginnings of autobiography along a different trajectory that includes previously marginalized Native voices. They go beyond the scope of an individualized "I" following a teleological path. Challenging conventional Western autobiography, Wong opens up spaces in the genre to include even painted tipis and buffalo robes as portraits of the lives of prominent American Indian chiefs (*Sending* 28). Other scholars point to the importance of a sense of community behind the Native American self, and posit an "I" mediated and shaped by the discourses of that community.

But is there an "authentic" Native or Inuk self to be discovered through the examination of life writings? Wong points out the problems behind the idea of "authenticity" (16); she refers to "the tendency to define 'authentic' indigenes as those linked to ancient tradition," and advocates a resistance to "stereotypical representations of nativity" ("First-Person" 171). Authenticity is not, however, necessarily equated with stereotypicality. This dissertation illustrates the hazards of searching for that "authentic" Inuit voice. In seeking the one voice that speaks for all, the critic may ignore certain other autobiographers. Inuit writers have their own distinct identities, influenced by different

cultural upbringings. The identification of a single Inuit voice as authentic may lead to misunderstandings. The changes taking place in Inuit societies and Inuit writing must be acknowledged; what might have been considered common characteristics of Inuit autobiography twenty years ago may not hold true in the present time. Younger Inuit are beginning to record stories of their lives, and their concerns (drug use, teenage pregnancies, suicides, alarming school leaving rates) may differ markedly from those expressed by older Inuit autobiographers.[5] The long-held image of Inuit living in remote areas, closely tied to a hunting and gathering culture, may be eroded with time. Although Brody presents the stereotype of the simple, passive Inuk, Inuit have also been associated with northern settings, primitive urges, and savagery.[6] Inuit writers present their own perspectives in contrast to idealized, romanticized, or detrimental imagery.

Theorists such as H. David Brumble have also criticized stereotyping of Native authors, and have pointed to some critics' misunderstandings of Aboriginal works.[7] American scholars have offered their own descriptions of Indian autobiographies; some of their findings prove pertinent to my dissertation. It is important to emphasize that aspects of Inuit autobiography differ markedly in some respects from the characteristics outlined for Native American writers, as designated by such scholars as Brumble and Krupat, who have examined American Indian autobiographical writings, but have not investigated many Inuit texts.[8]

A strong connection to community is often emphasized in the study of Native American autobiographies. Although Wong points out that even within a certain tribe of Native Americans "individuality abounded," she also asserts both that a Native American

sense of self is more inclusive than a Western concept of self (*Sending* 13), and that "traditional Native American self-conceptions . . . are defined by community and landscape" (15). She warns, though, against oversimplifying relations between self and community. Rather than the positing of binary oppositions such as Native relationality/Western autonomy, she advocates the examination of "multiple and diverse subject positions within both sets of culture groups" ("First-Person" 169). Krupat alludes to the "dialogic" models of the self presented by Native American autobiography; he adds that, in such autobiography, the self is not typically possessed of a unique and separate voice, but instead achieves a subject position in relation to a community of voices (*Voice* 133).[9]

The Native autobiographers studied here do hold connections to their homelands but also at times speak from a standpoint of alienation or in-betweenness, or purposely emphasize their own individuality, as does Alootook Ipellie, for example. Some, like Minnie Freeman and Alice French, have not lived in their Native communities for years, but maintain connections with them from sites in the South. Such a distancing from home weakens ties in some respects, but the act of remembering that is intrinsic in the autobiographical act strengthens those bonds again. The Native culture is not forgotten, but the autobiographer now filters his or her memories of it through disturbing or novel experiences that emphasize great dissimilarities in cultures. It is often these differences that Inuit writers want to describe, to clarify their own feelings when faced with almost overwhelming stereotypes. Inuit authors seek to project a distinctive identity, sometimes in conflict with traditional teachings of their culture; nevertheless, they may still hold

strongly to their roots in other ways.

Misinterpretations may ensue from sweeping generalizations about Native American texts. Detailed investigation of those by Inuit sometimes contradicts what critics have written, as I will discuss in later chapters. Krupat, for instance, defines the position of contemporary Native American writers: "all of them insist on the storytelling of the oral tradition as providing a context, as bearing on and influencing the writing of their novels, poems, stories, or autobiographies" (*Turn* 37). However, some of the Inuit writers studied here, such as Alice French, do not recall many traditional oral myths. Krupat refers to Brumble's assertion that childhood experiences do not figure strongly in Native American personal narrative (*Voice* 152). Again, French's writings challenge the accuracy/applicability of such broad statements. Inuit are beginning to write themselves into the discourse on Natives. In so doing, they raise new questions about the characteristics of Native autobiographies; the questions are not easily resolved. Inuit autobiography expands our understanding of Native life writings and demonstrates changes happening over the years in the ways in which Inuit view themselves and the worlds they inhabit.

Also problematizing the study of Aboriginal autobiography are issues of translation and hybridity that arise from collaborative works, with their implications for the autobiographical self. My dissertation explores eight Inuit autobiographies, two of which, *Land of the Good Shadows* and *Thrasher: Skid Row Eskimo*, are indeed collaborative efforts, although other examples brought under examination here have been written solely by the authors themselves, without the aid of amanuenses. Bicultural autobiographies

increase the intricacies around the construction of an autobiography from the contact zone. Krupat asserts that "cultural crosstalk persists" and that "even the apparently monologous Native autobiographer is likely to show his or her biculturalism" (*Voice* 133). He distinguishes Indian autobiographies from those autobiographies that have been written by "'civilized' or christianized Indians whose texts originate with them and . . . are not compositely produced" (*For Those* 31). He also differentiates between them and traditional Native American literature; the Indian autobiographies he describes have "no prior model in the collective practice of tribal cultures" (31). He regards them as constituted by the principle of "original bicultural composite composition" (31):

> Indian autobiographies are collaborative efforts, jointly produced by some white who translates, transcribes, compiles, edits, interprets, polishes, and ultimately determines the form of the text in writing, and by an Indian who is its subject and whose life becomes the content of the "autobiography" whose title may bear his name. (30)

Yet, even in such texts, the person of Aboriginal heritage may be heard, albeit amidst a thick mix of voices which trouble the subject position of the Inuk author. As I will discuss in later chapters of this dissertation, the idea of a unitary "I" becomes even more difficult to grasp in an investigation of these collaborative autobiographies.

Still more controversy surrounds the labelling of Aboriginal texts as "postcolonial." Krupat has emphasized that the term is a vexed one and perhaps incorrect when applied to Native American literatures (*Turn* 30); some argue that Native Americans still live in conditions of colonialism and subalternity. Others, though, see Inuit texts as

part of a corpus of postcolonial literature. As Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin state, postcolonial writing characteristically questions and subverts Western discourse (196). Further,

> [i]n terms of their own developing writing, . . . the position of groups such as the Maoris, Inuit, and Australian Aborigines is a special one because they are doubly marginalized--pushed to the psychic and political edge of societies which themselves have experienced the dilemma of colonial alienation. For this reason they demonstrate a capacity, far greater than that of white settler societies, to subvert received assumptions about literature. (Ashcroft *et al.* 144)

As Heather Henderson has delineated in critiquing the life story of Minnie Aodla Freeman, the surface simplicity of the Inuit text may imply passivity on the part of the author; however, a multilayered identity reveals itself, and the writer proceeds to criticize dangerous stereotypes around Inuit peoples and cultures (62). Yet the question remains as to how such criticism influences the audience, particularly Inuit themselves, and the future Inuit autobiographers in their midst. Some would suggest that the North has not yet fully emerged from the colonial era, and hence its peoples still do not have access to the means to change their lives and meaningfully resist the domination of outside forces. Robert Bone's *Geography of the Canadian North* (1992) states that Inuit have a high rate of functional illiteracy among Aboriginal peoples, at fifty-three per cent, and that "the percentage of high school and university graduates ranges [in the North] from a high of

50% for non-Natives to a low of 3% for Inuit" (198). He explains that in the Arctic, smaller communities did not have federal schools until the 1960s, and that only larger communities have high schools; in the past, the curriculum was also entirely in English, and many younger Inuit were unable to speak their mother tongue. My own research in the Mackenzie Delta in 1996 suggested that not many Inuvialuit had read the autobiographies of French and Thrasher, although they had heard of them.[10] The life writings I examine in this dissertation may become more influential with improved literacy skills and education in the North. The case studies presented here do chart a path of change. Some Inuit may indeed still be dealing with the stresses of colonialism, while some may live in areas where Inuit are taking more control over their own lives, and are truly emerging from a colonial status. New directions appear in Inuit autobiography while the North itself is in a state of transition; if McGrath is correct in stating that autobiographies flourish "during times of political, technological, or environmental upheaval" ("Circumventing" 223), then new examples of Inuit autobiography are bound to emerge. The autobiographies I examine in this dissertation prepare the pathway for new authors and provide new directions for viewing the shifting and complex interrelationships of Inuit and southern societies.

Chapter One of this dissertation begins with the investigation of the life writings of three part-Inuit women from central Labrador: Lydia Campbell (1818-1905), Margaret Baikie (1844-1940), and Elizabeth Goudie (1902-1982). All write from a site of métissage, where mixed cultures and traditions of Innu, Inuit, and settlers combine. Despite pressures to forsake Native ancestry and to assimilate, these women still

remember their Inuk ancestor, Susan Brooks, but perspectives change with each successive generation and the further erosion of ties with Natives. Chapter Two focusses on a collaborative life story written by American Heluiz Chandler Washburne and the mixed-blood Anauta (Sarah Elizabeth Ford [1888-1965]). Anauta was born on Baffin Island, later moved to Labrador and Newfoundland, and eventually the United States, where she travelled on the lecture circuit, celebrating and describing her Inuk identity. *Land of the Good Shadows* (1940) shows how a person speaking from a contact zone still strongly adheres to an Aboriginal identity, despite pressures to assimilate. Chapter Three explores the works of Anthony Apakark Thrasher (1937-1989), whose writings from a prison environment demonstrate a keen perception of stereotypes and a resistance to them. His *Thrasher: Skid Row Eskimo* (1976) is a collaborative work, written by him and two white journalists, Alan Mettrick and Gerard Deagle. It further illustrates the complications of such bicultural compositions. Chapter Four examines the writings of Minnie Aodla Freeman (b.1936) and Alice French (b.1930), two Inuit women who now speak from the South after childhoods spent in a changing North. Both women respond to the voices of theorists who have critiqued their works, and explain their own motivations in writing their life stories, as well as what they consider to be the consequences of their autobiographical acts. The final chapter studies the complicated subject position of Inuk writer Alootook Ipellie (b.1951). Ipellie forcefully insists on his own individuality and on fulfilling his creative urges, while still respecting and acknowledging an Inuit heritage, albeit from the contact zone of Ottawa, where he now lives, and from where he wrote his unconventional text, *Arctic Dreams and Nightmares* (1993).

Examinations of these works lead to questions about stereotypes of Inuit and of Native people in general. The existence of their autobiographies proves the persistence and ingenuity of those who must adapt to living in sites of métissage, and who hone and shape their cultures according to changing times and circumstances. Neither innocent, passive, nor simple, Inuit present themselves as individuals who resist denigration and categorization. Their works are not transparent recountings of life events; their texts in fact raise questions about the application of theories of métissage and demonstrate the complex subject positions of mixed-bloods as well as "pure" Inuit. Identities shift with succeeding generations and with differing sites; this dissertation seeks to explore the ways in which particular Inuit autobiographers represent their distinctive selves in the context of continuing transformation in their societies. Speaking from the contact zones, Inuit persevere, explaining their cultures, defying stereotypes, and still recalling an enduring and important Native heritage.

As the first chapter of this dissertation will show, the remembrance of this Native heritage persists for people of mixed ancestry, and strongly influences their life writings. However, entirely positive perceptions about the possibilities of openness at a site of métissage are called into question by the texts left behind by three mixed-blood Labradorian women. These works, deceptively simple in style, illustrate the complexities of life lived in a multicultural area, where contact zone and site of métissage overlap, where some ancient Inuit practices are discarded and others utilized for daily survival. Despite pressures to assimilate to a Eurocentric society, the writers studied here still remember an extraordinary Native ancestor and leave a legacy of memoirs testifying to

endurance and courage in difficult circumstances.

Notes

1. Brumble states that the history of Western autobiography spans some 4500 years, and adds that studies of American Indian autobiography show "taking place in [a] single lifetime developments that took millennia in the history of Western autobiography" (*American* 5-6).

2. For a comprehensive overview of the directions and history of the genre of autobiography, see Smith and Watson's introduction to their edition, *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader*. It should be noted that Smith and Watson's view of the canon is not widely shared.

3. Such statements do not prevent other theorists like John Beverley from sharply delineating autobiography from testimonio (22-23); Caren Kaplan also refers to "outlaw genres" such as resistance literature, prison memoirs, ethnography, and cultural autobiography, which infringe on and disturb the limits of the autobiographical genre (135).

4. This paper, originally presented as part of the Seventh Inuit Studies Conference at Fairbanks, Alaska, in 1990, has been reprinted with minor changes in *Undisciplined Women* (1997), eds. Pauline Greenhill and Diane Tye. 223-33.

5. See the autobiographical writings of Sandra Pikujak Katsak (b. 1973 in Iqaluit) in Wachowich's *Saqiyuq*.

6. See Gontran de Poncins's *Kabloona*, for example.

7. See Brumble's *American Indian Autobiography*, in which he denotes problems with Bataille and Sands' analysis of American Indian women's autobiography; he

refers to their checklist of characteristics of Native women's life writing as assuming "a Western aesthetic and Western literary conventions" (14).

8. In his *Annotated Bibliography*, Brumble lists and briefly describes a number of Inuit texts, including those of Thrasher, Nuligak, and Peter Pitseolak. In *American Indian Autobiography*, he also refers to the texts of some Inuit authors, including Freeman and Thrasher. In *The Turn to the Native*, Krupat makes passing reference to Thrasher in association with the mistreatment of Natives at residential schools (96).

9. See Wong, "First-Person Plural," for discussions of the term, "community," and of "the myth of a singular, unified, self-defining community" as it is still being perpetuated, sometimes as a strategy to resist colonial conditions (172-73).

10. I interviewed twenty-four people in Aklavik, Tuktoyaktuk, and Inuvik between 3 June and 13 June 1996. Twelve were Inuvialuit (as Inuit from the Mackenzie Delta area call themselves), three were Gwich'in (the northernmost Dene in Canada), and nine were outsiders who had moved there from the South. As both French and Thrasher were originally from the Delta area, I was interested in the reception of their particular texts.

Chapter One

Three Labrador Women: Complex Hybrid Identities[1]

> Racial and cultural "mixing" has always been a fact of reality, however fearfully unacknowledged, especially by the proponents of "racial purity." It is in large part because of the scientific racism of the nineteenth century that hybridization became coded as a negative category. At that time, science created the idea of the "pure race," an extremely fallacious and aberrant form of human classification, born of the West's monotheistic obsession with the "One" and the "Same." (Lionnet, *Autobiographical* 9)

Fascination with the "pure" Native in British and North American literature is certainly nothing new; neither is the common depiction of the Aboriginal as somehow both noble and depraved. For British writers of the late 1800s, the "vanishing Indian" proved a central theme (Moyles and Owram 169), and, although the Native was often pictured as savage and uncivilized in juvenile literature, on the general literary scene, a "dual imagery of violence and nobility co-existed comfortably" in depictions of the indigene (177). On our contemporary Canadian writing scene, the Native often serves as a foil for the sophisticated outsider. Allison Mitcham explains that many choose to focus on the "hinterland" because it provides an "exceptionally dramatic background for the age-old conflicts between the material and the spiritual . . . between primitive native and civilized intruder" (10). In narratives with the hinterland as setting, "primitive native" is

stereotyped: the Inuk is routinely depicted as a smiling symbol of innocent simplicity, cheerful, fatalistic, and conforming to a southern puritanical ideal, while the Indian appears as a malevolent and intelligent obstruction to the white man's progress (Brody *Living* 19). Such stereotypes typify prevalent views of Natives as one- or two-dimensional subjects, easily analyzed and categorized, lacking depth and complexity.

In the past, the mixed-blood was also seen as a shallow and ignoble version of the savage, and, perhaps because of that taint of corruption, white writers have never fully endorsed the concept of métissage. Earlier perceptions of mixed races contributed to such disapproval. In the 1800s, miscegenation was regarded negatively; in fact, the revulsion of nineteenth-century society for mixed marriages caused many scientists to view interracial mixing as "monstrosity, decadence, and deterioration" (Lionnet, *Autobiographical* 10). The typical literary characterization of the person of mixed heritage has been as an ignoble villain who represents a sullying of both Native and white. Terry Goldie's discussion demonstrates how frequently novelists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries centre on the male mixed-blood as a symbol of evil and violence (70, 106). As Lionnet points out, "the Anglo-American consciousness seems unable to accommodate miscegenation positively through language" (14). It is as though many white writers have implicitly privileged uncontaminated cultural expressions of a "pure" identity, rarely exploring the reasons behind certain portrayals of the person of mixed descent. But it seems self-evident that the comfortable duality between savage and civilized has always been interrupted by the presence of a person of mixed ancestry; clear waters are suddenly muddied.

Prompted by the rise of cultural relativism, more recent discussions of the mixed-

blood accept ambiguity and emphasize a postmodern condition in which there is no firm ground. The figure of the mixed-blood now questions facile stereotypes and contradicts simplistic binaries. Marginalization surrenders to an uneasy recognition and even fascination, and those previously silenced now openly offer their opinions. Chicano writer Gloria Anzaldúa refers to her hybrid race, a people living in "the Borderlands," in a shifting and uncomfortable area of identity which is nevertheless home; from that not-so-sheltering site emerges an "'alien' consciousness" (77). The mixed-blood discovers she must develop a "tolerance for ambiguity" and a "plural personality" (79). Lionnet renames "the Borderlands" the "site of métissage," a space affirming multiplicity and diversity, exuberance, and openness (5). Both Anzaldúa and Lionnet reflect a more recent viewpoint, embracing "untidy" overlappings of culture and fluctuating vistas of experience.

However, all this general theorizing about hybridity has not provided sufficient context for the analysis of the three texts examined in this chapter. The authors of these works neither exhibit the usual anxiety of white cultures over cultural in-betweenness nor write about a mixed heritage with any sense of jubilation. At the same time, they express no guilt at not being wholly "white" in their cultural orientation, yet they also feel no regret at leaving the wholly Native behind. These women do not view themselves as victims of imperial and colonial agents much more powerful than themselves. Although they sometimes put aside their Native past, they do recall it at their whim. The Métis is often positioned as a go-between, a translator who will bridge the gap between white and Native (246), but these Labrador women do not subscribe to such utopian thinking, nor

do they attempt to facilitate communication between Native and non-Native. They exhibit no inner turmoil concerning their identities, nor are they writing to create a plural self. Their narratives contest the old assumption that the site of métissage is undesirable and regrettable, a supposition invested with the ideology of racial purity. But they also refute the idea that métissage means an openness to plurality. Neither do they support the notion that the site of métissage is one of discomfort, fluctuation, or unrest.

There is an obvious disjunction between academic criticism's views of ethnicity and these works. Theorists Landry and MacLean write that

> [w]hen the native informant is *forced* to speak, when the native informant can speak and be understood, that is, it is of course most likely to be in the language of the imperialist. . . . Thus the native heard is a native mimic. The native-effect, as it tends to be received by imperialist audiences, is in fact a form of mimicry, and an effect of colonial hybridization. (201)

The women whose texts I examine reveal no awareness of being subjugated or reduced to puppetry. They do not judge themselves subordinate because of a Native heritage. In fact, the gender/maternal component overrides cultural/racial considerations at this particular site: the racial heritage of the Native may not be celebrated, but her feats of courage or endurance as a northern woman may indeed be lauded. The works of these Labradorian writers prove that the theory of métissage itself needs readjusting.

This chapter questions that theory as it examines texts of three mixed-blood women who call the hinterland home, and who are strongly influenced by certain

stereotypical views of the Native, particularly that of the "vanishing primitive."[2] These women's writings contrast with popular conceptions of the North and its peoples. Lydia Campbell (1818-1905), Margaret Baikie (1844-1940), and Elizabeth Goudie (1902-1982) lived in central Labrador, where homeland and frontier merged, Native and European lifestyles joined, and traditional gender-specific work roles overlapped. Their texts issue from an intersection of three cultures: the European, the Inuit, and the Innu.[3] Linda Warley points out that "the absence of easy certainties of ancestry, tradition, and history makes available a hybrid and contradictory postcolonial subject position that might be productive in that it permits self-fashioning" ("Locating"133). These women negotiate their own territory and contribute to the shaping of their own "people"; in fact, examination of their texts serves to underline the "sociocultural construction of race" (Lionnet, *Autobiographical* 29). Although their heritage includes Inuit ancestry, they do not boast of it. In some respects they conform to expectations about Inuit women, and, in others, they do not. They depart from Inuit tradition in their acceptance of imperialist Christian doctrine, with its push towards assimilation, but their acquiescence is certainly not total. The resistant pull of a Native heritage intervenes, and the Inuk is not completely discounted in their life writings, nor in the fashioning of their multifaceted identities.

From the 1700s, these three women's home region witnessed an engagement with difference and hybridity, becoming a complex meeting place of various cultures. Popular stereotypes do not necessarily hold at such a location, and the women whose texts are examined here selectively accept certain conventions and reject others. Their narratives themselves illustrate the sometimes confusing and contradictory mix of styles and themes

often characteristic of the practice of métissage (22). With each Labrador woman's situation, the ideological site shifts. Although that site could appear to encourage openness, this chapter illustrates that métissage can itself become a distorting lens, and, as a result, Inuit heritage is perceived differently by each generation. The texts examined here show that it is possible to self-colonize and self-efface, to reject a part of oneself, in order to achieve at least an illusion of stability. They also reveal the impossibility of finding any "pure" Labradorian in the text; attitudes and identities alter with each individual. A vision forms from the convergence of various viewpoints, but these life writings demonstrate that certain "blind spots," a kind of willed myopia, may result.

The "blind spots" occur in relation to Native ancestry, and, instead of celebrating this part of their background, these women's writings de-romanticize North and Native by tracing the evolution of a new mythology--that of the "pioneer" mixed-bloods of Labrador.[4] By the 1800s, Europeans were beginning to establish themselves permanently in Hamilton Inlet (Lake Melville). They borrowed technology from both Indians and Inuit of the central Labrador area:

> Imbued with a Protestant Work Ethic, the early settlers were eager to tap all possible resources and were not encumbered with a previous culture [*sic*] history tying them down to either a maritime or inland niche such as were the Eskimos and Indians. . . . It is likely that Indian and Eskimo cultural traits and practices were tried and adopted if proven successful but discarded if they were not practicable or if they violated a generalized set of English

Protestant values. (Zimmerly, *Cain's Land* 70, 85)

The settlers' hybrid culture exploited the Native informant, but ultimately rejected Native blood. As Carmen Lambert notes, a "mixed" race did not emerge in central Labrador, at least not in name; rather, the tendency was to identify oneself with the settlers as a group rather than with the Inuit (29-30).[5]

Campbell, Baikie, and Goudie witness this ascendancy of the settler in the region. Born and raised in the Labrador wilds, neither Natives nor outsiders, the mixed-bloods inhabit a land of hardship and tragedy but also of community and a shared Christian spirituality. Circumstances dictate the kinds of jobs done, and men and women join in their efforts to render trapping and hunting an economic success. For them, Labrador is neither outpost nor refuge, but home and workplace.

Material Factors Intervene

Campbell's, Baikie's, and Goudie's narratives are dominated by practical concerns, as are many autobiographies by female pioneers. And, like other writings by working women, their texts emphasize "literal, factual details" (Hampsten 21). The Labradorian women are more inclined to itemize the products of nature than to romanticize its beauty. In point of fact, they had little leisure to dwell on appearances; they were too preoccupied with the business of surviving. They rarely sentimentalize the land or their own roles in it.

Material factors strongly impacted on the lives of the women studied here; in particular, it must be remembered that they were part of a working class group, often

struggling against poverty and hardship, yet deeming themselves superior in race and class to their Native contemporaries. The settlers' Protestant work ethic was strongly linked to a Christianity which aligned itself with British imperialism; it neither superseded economic interests nor discouraged further encroachment by settlers on Native trapping grounds.[6] In fact, given that Natives were seen as not conforming to the pioneer work ethic, the settlers likely felt justified in this encroachment. Their felt superiority lessened any sense of guilt and contributed to an economic advantage.

They also saw the practicality of taking Inuit wives who would prove valuable helpmeets in day-to-day chores. Underlining the advantages of such a choice, Zimmerly emphasizes the women's talents as seamstresses and the usefulness of adopted Inuit tools:

> These skills and implements such as the ulu or crescent-shaped Eskimo woman's knife, its use in scraping seal skins, the kamutik (Eskimo dog-sled), harpoon for taking seals at their breathing holes on the ice and the tailored pullover fur-trimmed Eskimo parka (called Dickie by the settlers)--all these and more have survived to the present day even though the custom of taking Eskimo wives was discontinued over a hundred years ago. This latter was due in part to the dwindling number of available Eskimo women, but this in turn may have been caused by disease, northern migration and the debilitating effects of alcohol. . . . Also, the mere fact that the white settlers were reducing the number of eligible Eskimo women through intermarriage may have been an important factor in the

> decline of the Eskimo population in Hamilton Inlet. (*Cain's Land* 72)

Inadvertently, then, the whites actually contributed to the near disappearance of Inuit in the area, even though this was not their overt intention. They merely sought to improve their own chances of survival. All the same, marriage to mixed-bloods was likely deemed more acceptable than marriage to pure Inuit, once more mixed-blood women became available. Having acquired the necessary skills of their Native forebears, the settlers proceeded to leave the Native behind.

Their pragmatism went hand in hand with a pronounced Protestant Christian outlook. As Clifford Geertz points out, a set of religious beliefs shapes a society's actions:

> The tracing of the social and psychological role of religion . . . is a matter of understanding how it is that men's notions, however implicit, of the 'really real' and the dispositions these notions induce in them, color their sense of the reasonable, the practical, the humane, and the moral. ("Religion" 124)

Although these mixed-bloods' religious convictions did not necessarily encourage empathy for the Native, they fuelled the settlers' domineering tendencies and pushed them to persist through difficult times. The memoirs of Campbell and her descendants demonstrate a strong Christian faith that helped them withstand the hardships of northern living. Much of their sense of well-being derives from trusting in a Maker, the Christian God, who knew best how to guide their lives and whose invisible presence provided great comfort, and a good part of their pride springs from a Protestant Christian work ethic: a satisfaction taken

in raising the children and putting meat on the table. Struggling with difficult daily chores brought fulfilment in jobs well done and meant resistance to ungodly idleness or sloth.

Campbell's, Baikie's, and Goudie's writings do not merely bear witness to a solid Christian faith. They could also be considered autobiographies/ethnographies, for while they tell of each woman's life, they record the decline of the Native in central Labrador. Each text presents "salvage" ethnography, the record of a dying people, the "vanishing primitive" (Clifford, "Allegory" 112). This is particularly true of Lydia Campbell's work, less so of the texts of her descendants, who were more concerned with recording the daily happenings around them, than with Natives incidentally forming part of that context. James Clifford writes that even the best ethnographies are "systems, or economies, of truth" ("Introduction" 7), and Michael Fischer asserts that "ethnicity is reinvented and reinterpreted in each generation by each individual" (195).

The three narratives examined here center on the reinvention of a people, with a certain romanticization of Natives yielding to increased fear and aloofness. With each successive narrative, with each new generation of mixed-bloods, the Native becomes more estranged and alienated. In fact, Baikie and Goudie describe the Innu as threats to the security of their families. All three women witness a stabilizing tendency, a triumph of imperialism and colonialism represented by a halt of cultural interchange with Natives and a shaping of a hierarchy dominated by the mixed-blood settlers. In fact, these Labradorian authors choose to conform to the ways of their white, male relatives in many respects. Yet, they do not completely lose themselves in the identity of the male "other" nor do they always yield to the opinions and ideas of their male partners or relatives. These women do

not exhibit awareness of a process of assimilation, with its pressures to either conform or resist. The complexity of these texts reveals a counteractive resistance, a pulling against the tide of romanticism as well as a partial capitulation to it. Such conflicting attitudes to Native ancestry render theories of métissage much more complicated than has been suggested, as further chapters of this dissertation will demonstrate.

The Memory of Susan Brooks

Despite the pressure to discard Native heritage, stubborn memories of an Inuk ancestor persist. All three writers consider Susan Brooks a figure worthy of mention--an Inuk orphan christened by her English husband--who was the mother of Lydia Campbell, the grandmother of Margaret Baikie, and the great-great-grandmother of Elizabeth Goudie. All might have been strongly influenced by her in their perceptions of women's powers and accomplishments. They single out that ancestor as somehow separate from other Natives.

They do not overtly connect themselves with her "race," and, indeed, the writings of these part-Inuit women certainly differ from characteristics outlined previously by McGrath concerning Inuit women's autobiography.[7] In earlier autobiographical writings, according to McGrath, Inuit women were reluctant to focus attention on themselves as adults and often did not write autobiographically until they were elders (McGrath 224).[8]

The texts discussed here demonstrate an agency and self-esteem which appears uncommon, or at least veiled, in the tradition of Inuit women's life writings. As McGrath states,

> Works by Inuit women . . . seem to be almost entirely childhood memoirs, and even those women who have achieved fairly high status within the newly formed settlements have not written about themselves in the way men have. According to Inuit women, it is proper to recall the "learning years," to show themselves as children or young girls who make mistakes and accept correction, but it is improper to boast or attract attention as adults. For women to draw attention to themselves overtly is to invite ridicule. (225)

McGrath adds that Inuit men writing autobiographically often use elements of narratives of the two main epic heroes, Kaujjarjuk and Kiviok, the former a mistreated orphan who overcomes his difficulties and the latter an adventurous, strong hunter (224).[9] However, the life writings discussed here recall the mental and physical fortitude of an Inuk woman. All three narratives point to a shared sense of solidarity and pride in women's achievements. All refer to their maternal ancestor, and, although they laud the "fatherland" of the male settler, they also hearken back to a Native "motherland." Inuit women's autobiographies usually had no set pattern to follow; still, Susan Brooks's descendants modelled their lives after hers in many respects, even though they held themselves aloof from her race. Landry and MacLean suggest that the imperialist project "silences the native speaker while constituting her as a native informant, a potential source of knowledge/power for the imperialist subject" (200). Yet Susan Brooks as Native informant is not summarily used and rejected; she is, in fact, admired by her descendants. They seem to consider her part of a community of Labrador women, a community capable

of ignoring or transcending racial distinction. These Labrador women's writings contain many references to mother figures and to their child-rearing duties, as well as many tasks usually handled by men in traditional Inuit societies. Their texts celebrate the hardy northern female epitomized by their ancestral matriarch, whose image seems to hover in the background of their narratives, occasionally achieving sharp focus, then blurring and fading away.

Lydia Campbell's *Sketches of Labrador Life*

Lydia Campbell,[10] the daughter of Susan Brooks, wrote her *Sketches of Labrador Life* (1894-95) as a favour to a Church of England missionary, Reverend Arthur C. Waghorne. He had been in the habit of exchanging clothing and literature for the skin and bead work of women in Labrador and asked the seventy-five-year-old Campbell to write him some account of her life and ways, much as missionaries to the Arctic asked Inuit to write their life stories (McGrath 223). Waghorne professed he had done little to alter her memoirs, except to correct some spelling errors.[11] He presented them to the Newfoundland newspaper, *The Evening Herald*, with a brief introduction, in which he commented on the "pathetic beauty and interest" of her difficult, yet surprisingly contented, existence (3 Dec. 1894).[12] McGrath describes her writing as "the earliest autobiographical work by an Inuk to be published in Canada" (226), but, strictly speaking, Lydia Campbell was a mixed-blood, a "halfbreed" with an English father and an Inuk mother. This was also not the first version of her autobiography. As she states, "I had my life wrote down and gave it to Rev. A.A. Hadams, but he lost it. So, good friend, if it goes

wrong, correct it for me please" (Campbell 10). Her notebook entries were reissued in booklet form by the Labrador periodical *Them Days*[13] in 1980 and 1984.

At the time of Campbell's writing, the power of the Inuit in her area (then called Hamilton Inlet, now called Lake Melville) had severely declined. They had lived there from 1600 A.D. on, but, in the early 1700s, trading with Europeans flourished, with Inuit bartering for manufactured goods and alcohol (Jordan 179-80). In the last half of the eighteenth century, the Labrador Inuit culture changed more and more as European activity increased. The Inuit population began to dwindle because of diseases, such as the smallpox brought back by Caubvick, an Inuk girl whom George Cartwright had taken to England (Zimmerly, *Cain's Land* 111). Hostilities with Indians may also have resulted in deaths.

Against this decline, Campbell's work reflects a dual perspective of the Native; in fact, she was faced with such conflict from an early age. Her father, a British sealer, was one of the first Englishmen to teach Labrador children how to read (Zimmerly, *Cain's Land* 76); Ambrose Brooks's literacy signalled a definite distancing from the Native. Religion also brought increased separation, for Brooks had been partially raised by a minister and felt compelled to teach his children to sing hymns and to pray. Campbell learned to write English by looking over her father's shoulder, even as she learned Inuktitut from her mother (77). Campbell had internalized some of the norms of imperialism from her father, too, for he took her on his knee and told her that his home was a better country (Campbell 7). He also interpreted some of his wife's Inuit customs as heathen practices, often instructing his three daughters not to allow their mother to eat

raw meat during his absence. When young Campbell told her father that her mother had been eating caribou fat, he beat his wife with a rope until she cried.[14]

Campbell, then, acted as overseer of her mother's cultural practices. In effect she betrays or subverts a part of her own heritage in order to align herself with European patriarchal domination, but hers is not an entirely successful type of internal colonization. She also appears unaware of any act of betrayal on her part. Daniel Coleman describes how immigrants to Canada may separate themselves from their racial and cultural pasts in a masculine drive "to define the self by severance from the other" (68). The stories of Campbell and her descendants prove that this drive is confined neither to males nor to immigrants. However, despite indoctrination, Campbell is unable wholly to escape her Native heritage; she remains attached to her mother.

Campbell's hybrid self is difficult to label, and her persona appears mercurial and inconsistent. Although she begins her narrative in a rather self-deprecatory fashion--"You must please excuse my writing and spelling, for I have never been to school"--she soon asserts her identity and authority, and continues to do so throughout the *Sketches*: ". . . if you wish to know who I am, I am old Lydia Campbell, formerly Lydia Brooks, then Blake, after Blake, now Campbell" (Campbell 1). Indeed, Campbell then offers a statement echoed often: "So you see, ups and downs has been my life all through, and now I am what I am" (1).

There is considerable pride invested in this apparently changeable identity, although she does not openly boast of her mixed ancestry. She soon refers to her Inuk mother, an ill-treated orphan who escaped her Native companions near Rigolet, some of

whom were in the habit of cutting and bleeding the hands of Susan and her siblings, in the belief that this would cure the sick.[15] Campbell's mother escaped one autumn with just an ulu (Inuit knife) as a weapon. Appropriating Susan Brooks's tale to Biblical storytelling traditions, Campbell imposes a rather incongruous context when describing her mother's journey. In a typically unusual conflation, her daughter refers to her as an heroic, Christian figure:

> . . . she went along shore, crossing rivers on drift sticks and wading in shalow water, crossing points, throu woods, meeting bears, no gun no axe, no fire works, but lye down under juniper tree and spruce tree. Who does it represent in the Bible. She had to travel all the way--70 miles--on foot. (7 Dec. 1894)

Emerging at Mulligan River, she was spotted by two Frenchmen, who brought her to their trading post and treated her well for several months, while she "did their things, and how did she pick and gather berries in the fall, for the winter, how she drest and reflen [*sic*] and tap their boots" (7 Dec. 1894). But in the spring, she was taken by Ambrose Brooks, who had come to Labrador to escape press gangs in his own country and to find a better life for himself (Campbell 8). For practical reasons, Brooks decided on an Inuk wife: ". . . and as there was no other kind of women to marrie hear, the few English men each took a wife of the sort, and they never sorry that they took them for they was great workers, and so it came to pass that I was one of the youngsters of them" (7 Dec. 1894). Thus Lydia Campbell names herself as the offspring of a mixed marriage: her identity hinges unmistakably on a double ancestry.

She seems to have spent a happy childhood in the Hamilton Inlet area, passing much of the time at Mulligan, but her later life was not so secure. She witnessed and survived many tragedies: "I has been bereaved of my first husband and four of his children" (2). She makes few references to that first husband, William Blake, except to say that his family withheld the money he left her (7). Arminius Young, a Methodist missionary acquainted with Campbell, alleged that she was forced into marrying Blake when she was actually in love with another man.[16] After Blake's death, she married an Orcadian cooper named Daniel Campbell. Their apparently happy union lasted more than fifty years and produced eight children. Campbell's reticence about her first marriage and the loss of her loved ones may derive from the Inuit notion that good girls "don't make scenes or complain openly about mistreatment" (McGrath 228).

However, Campbell does not necessarily conform to stereotypical ideas about Inuit women, for she tends to depict herself as a rather forthright and forceful person; moreover, her writing cannot be readily categorized. Her style is typical of the site of métissage, which, according to Lionnet, encourages diversity and allows "plural selves to speak from within the straightjackets [*sic*] of borrowed discourses" (19). Yet Lionnet's theory implies a characteristic openness which is not necessarily followed at this particular site, even though Campbell obviously does not suppress memories of her Native ancestry. Walls between Native and mixed-blood do not automatically collapse; barriers still exist.

Nevertheless, Campbell tends to connect conflicting ideologies, particularly those surrounding Christianity and what she deemed Native superstition. Her writing combines anecdotes about Inuit and Innu legends, adventure stories, and tales of the exploits of

northern women, interspersed with pious religious comments in which she often pities the poor, uncivilized Natives. Moreover, she reveals a nostalgia for the Native of the past. Commenting on the Innu, she writes: "Well, I know it is a pretty sight to see a lot of birch canoes shining red in the sunshine. I have seen them paddling along, I have, men steering, the women paddling and the children singing or chatting. . . . where are they now?" (29). Similarly, the Inuit are remembered fondly: "It was pretty to see them at that time. I do not know when I saw the last seal skin tent, the few that is left is living in wooden houses, and I seen one kiak this summer, only one now!" (30). But, despite her separation from her Inuit ancestors, her memoirs are generally highly suggestive of Inuit oral myths and legends, with their humour, violence, excitement, superstition, and often unhappy endings.[17] She had likely heard many such tales from her mother and from the Inuk woman with whom she lived in her teenage years for a time after Susan Brooks's death in 1830, when Campbell was twelve or thirteen years old.[18] McGrath writes that "Inuit women do not use myths and legends to structure their autobiographies" (224); however, Campbell proves an exception. Again, as Roberta Buchanan points out, she may have been instructed by Waghorne to include instances of local superstition ("Country" 290). She includes the Inuit notion of the earth's beginnings, their story of the origin of whites as pups sent out to sea (18),[19] and their explanation for thunder--a dried sealskin rattling in the clouds (18-19).

But Christianity usually underlies even her unhappiest tales: on the one hand, religion is seen as the means of salvation for all, while, on the other, it is strongly correlated with fear and damnation. Campbell refers to her "silliness" in her younger years

(21), a theme which McGrath sees as common to many female Inuit autobiographers, who depict themselves as erring and being corrected as young girls (225).[20] Lydia Campbell, however, equates that silliness with "wrong" notions of Christianity, for she proceeds to tell of baptising her unconscious three-week-old baby after it rolled off a bed. She remembers "having no better thought that when a little child died, that his or her soul would be lost (as many are thinking yet) unless they was christened" (21). The "right" notions of Christianity, though, provide solace through many unhappy times:

> Mother died saying the Lord's Prayer and my dear old father died singing a hymn, with, Oh Lord remember me, at the end of every verse. So died my poor parents, I hope to meet them in a better world. . . . Far from any other habitation, only 5 of us, but the Lord was with us. (24)

Strongly influenced by her father's conservative Christian morality, Campbell is situated at a point of shifting loyalties. Such a position is often viewed negatively; Dee Horne points out that if Natives internalize settlers' negative assessments of them, the result is a shame cycle which ends in alienation and facilitates assimilation (*Contemporary* 113-14). Further, Horne describes a "colonial mimic" as one who identifies with the aggressor at the expense of alienation from her own community and culture (11). Such concepts prove problematic when applied to Campbell or her mother, for Campbell was clearly not ashamed of Susan Brooks, nor does she express humiliation at her Inuit lineage. It is possible that she did not really perceive her mother as Native; rather, Brooks had become affiliated with the settler culture, and was no longer deemed a representative

of the Inuit. Alienated as an orphan, she had willingly left her original community, and might have fared better with the settlers than with her own people.

Campbell displays affection for both parents; she reveres her "dear mother" (24) but looks askance at her race. To Campbell, Labrador Natives less fortunate than Susan Brooks, not "saved" by Christianity, appear neither romantic nor heroic. She observes them from behind a formidable barrier, not just because of their refusal of religion, but because of their poverty. She describes them as formerly picturesque and proud people, but believes that they have sadly deteriorated under the influence of immoral white men. She often interrupts her personal narrative to comment upon her Inuit ancestors, their habits, their odd superstitions, and their sorry state:

> In that time the Eskimos was very plentiful all along the shore and islands, but now there is only about 6 or 7 families now, since I remember . . . but where are they now? The poor souls had no religion whatever, besides the rum bottle and biscuits and butter, more shame to the white people that sold them rum and tobacco--that wretched weed. How tall and pretty the first race of Eskimo was, and so lively. When I first remember to have seen them but they have dwindled down so small with the cursed drink and tobacco smoking. . . . Now they are few and small, half-starved and possibly naked. . . . (11)

The Innu (the Indians of Labrador), too, are seen as diminished, "killed with drink, the dirty tobacco and strong tea" (29). She comments on their past kindness to her family

and their later corruption by whites, but she concludes her discussion of them on a curious note that may refer to the arrival of Roman Catholic missionaries who ministered to the Innu:[21] "Poor despised Indians, the traders selling them rum and the foolish people buying all they could, and they getting lost, falling overboard, losing bodies and souls . . . but that has changed now" (32).

Adding historical background as well as moral commentary, Campbell reports on the internal separation amongst the Inuit, with the exposure of some to the outside world. Taking the role of distant observer, she records that a number of Inuit in the Rigolet area had attended the World's Fair in the United States.[22] When they return, "all can talk english and dress like the people of another country. They has the picture of the World Fair in different forms" (30).

Although Campbell might have felt a closer affiliation with these "civilized" Inuit, her writing further reveals her separation from traditional Inuit society, which usually divided work along gender lines, with "a strong sense of what is appropriate behavior for each sex" (McGrath 225).[23] Campbell was quite accustomed to doing what were traditionally considered men's jobs. Addressing the reader directly as "my dear friend," she proceeds to tell of her own hardihood:

> So after breakfast, I, old Lydia Campbell, 75 years old, I puts on my outdoor clothes, takes my game bag and axe and matches . . . and off I goes over across the bay, over ice and snow for about 2 miles and more, gets 3 rabbits some days out of 20 or more rabbit snares all my own chopping down. . . . And you say, well done old

> woman. (9)

She is quick to follow this self-acclaim with the qualification that such strenuous activities are typical of life in Eskimaux Bay[24] and the acknowledgement that her eyesight is rapidly failing her. But, uncharacteristically for Inuit women, comments of self-praise continue to surface throughout. She sees her relationship with the men of her family as one of equality, and does not hesitate to describe a joke she plays upon them. The incident that particularly amuses her concerns the time when she shot a caribou while her husband and son were away. After they return, having killed two "deer" themselves, she surreptitiously puts her animal's heart with the other two:

> I said what 3 deer hearts is this? They looked foolish like. They said some Mountaineers must have brought it hear. I said no Indians has been hear. They asked each other who killed it. I said I killed it today. Then we all had a good laugh over it. (4)

Her references to the well-known Hudson's Bay Company trader, Donald Smith,[25] demonstrate a certain disdain for title and privilege amongst men:

> I have been cook for that great Sir D. D. Smith that is in Canada now, at that time he was at Rigolet post (H.B.C.), a chief trader only. Now what is he so great? He was seen last winter by one of the women of this bay. She went up to Canada and came back this summer. He is grey-headed and bended, that is Sir D.D. Smith. (22-23).

Instead of revering "great men," Campbell proclaims the resilience of the female

trapper/hunter. She admiringly describes her eighty-year-old sister Hannah, "fighting with a wolverine, a strong animal the size of a good dog, she had neither gun nor axe, but a little stout stick, yet she killed it after a long battle" (6).

In her overt praise of women, Campbell departs from what have been seen as the practices of Inuit women's life writings, but she retains the Inuit sense of practicality. Economic considerations intervene in what first appears a standard romantic description of the northern landscape. In the next paragraph, after praising Mulligan's natural beauty, with the "birches looking so high and steatly" and the "snow glistening," she exhorts her readers to charity:

> If I have interested any of you at all, my dear readers, pitty me and do send me a few yards of something for a skirt to keep my poor old tattered clothes from tearing in the woods and pulling me down with my snow shoes in deep snow. (7 Dec. 1894)

References to poverty and clothing continue to surface, sometimes in the midst of a list of items or accomplishments. Buchanan alludes to the fact that it was customary for women in Labrador to be paid for their work with clothes rather than money ("'Country'" 293). In a later section, dated 17 Dec. 1894, Campbell enumerates all the things she is taking to go berry-picking in May, including "a thimble and needle, in case of old clothes being tore in the bushes."

Lydia Campbell's memoirs, then, combine the mythical and the practical, presenting a kaleidoscopic narrative that aptly reflects the shifting and conflicting areas of her own background. Her writing includes many elements of Inuit autobiography, with its

witnessing of profound cultural change. But it also combines British imperialist doctrine with Native beliefs. Campbell steadfastly refuses to align herself with the Inuit "race." She also tailors her writing to the interests of an imagined outside non-Native audience and sprinkles her text with stories of tragedy and superstition, as well as information about inhabitants of central Labrador. Throughout, she forcefully asserts the accomplishments of women in the North.

Margaret Baikie's *Labrador Memories*

Campbell's daughter, Margaret (Campbell) Baikie, appears to have been highly influenced by her mother's style of writing. Born 6 May 1844 to Daniel and Lydia Campbell, she was raised in Mulligan. In 1918, when she was seventy-four years old, she produced her own memoirs, covering the years 1846 to 1918. Although she writes *Labrador Memories* in a more literary style and a less exuberant tone than her mother's in *Sketches of Labrador Life*, her work nevertheless contains a similar mixture of tragic events, hunting exploits, and tributes to various women. In 1976, a copy of her memoirs was given to the periodical *Them Days* by her niece, Flora Baikie and was published that year as the booklet, *Labrador Memories: Reflections at Mulligan*.

By the time that Baikie writes, the mixed-blood settlers had ceased intermarriage with Inuit and had increasingly encroached on the trapping grounds of the Innu of the area (Zimmerly, *Cain's Land* 146). Skills learned from Natives were still highly valued, as Baikie notes: "My father did not know much about trapping. My mother used to go with him to set the traps" (2). The trapping grounds were of great importance, and Baikie

refers to settlers' habitual use patterns: "They were going up to Grand Lake trapping. They did quite well with fur--that is martens, foxes, minks and lynx. It was some time in February before we saw them again. They stayed a week and then went back in to see their traps again" (43-44).

Baikie concentrates on her mixed-blood relatives and generally takes a more distant view of Natives. She does not dwell long on Natives' corruption by the white man's alcohol, nor does she see them as lost to Christianity. The indigenes she depicts seem to fit into one of two categories: either they are fearsome, unwanted intruders or they are helpless unfortunates, orphaned by disease or some other tragedy. Baikie and her husband actually keep Native helpers and servants, often destitute young people with whom they sympathized, like the Inuit youngsters Peggie and Adam or the Naskapi orphan, Mary Magellen (Baikie 45, 53, 57). William Ikey, an Inuk youth, also stayed with them for four or five years. The Baikies' own children attended his wedding, with two of their daughters-in-law as bridesmaids, for, as Baikie emphasizes, "Willie looked to us as his own people" (60).[26] For all this, Natives are usually seen as "other"; Inuit are regarded more favourably than Innu, but are still deemed different from the mixed-bloods.

Like Lydia Campbell, Margaret Baikie reports on the Native from the point of view of distanced observer; she, too, gives examples of Inuit who leave the Labrador area, but not to attend the World's Fair. Instead, they are duped into accompanying Newfoundland governor Hugh Palliser on a trip to England:

> Captain [Palliser] came to Rigolet on a schooner. Queen Victoria had wished to see Eskimos from Labrador. So he made the old man

> drunk and got two women and a little boy on board and carried them to England, where they stayed all winter. They did not like living in England. . . . I remember seeing a very pretty dickie, a present from the Queen to the woman. (51-52)[27]

Although she gives this instance of deception by whites, she offers no similar example involving Innu. She does not equate Innu with Inuit as a once-great culture sadly corrupted, as did Campbell. Instead, Baikie's view of them approaches the prevalent nineteenth-century literary stereotype of the malevolent and cunning Indian. She reiterates her fear of them on numerous occasions and states clearly: "The greatest thing that I dreaded was the Naskaupi Indians for they were not to be trusted" (45). She depicts them begging for flour and tobacco (45) and comments that she and her husband often saved them from starvation (54). She appears not to connect the mixed-bloods' encroachment on trapping and hunting areas with the destitution of these people.[28]

She obviously feels admiration for her part-Native mother, whose stories she sometimes repeats, but her culturally assigned identity is not that of Campbell's generation; ideologies have shifted at the site of métissage. However, Margaret Baikie inherits Lydia Campbell's penchant for singular and macabre tales, and, like her mother's anecdotes, her account retains the flavour of Inuit myth, with its violence, animal stories, and often sad conclusions. One such tale describes the discovery of a drowned man, with Baikie's dogs trying to eat his leg (21). In another, a young boy is attacked and killed by huskies (58). Some of Campbell's stories are also retold by her daughter, such as that of the deer's heart (10-11).

Baikie relates no Native legends, but she often recounts hunting exploits; such tales formed a great part of the body of Inuit myth, and the successful hunter was lauded by all. Baikie, though, acknowledges the domination of the settlers, and the adventures of her mixed-blood relatives comprise a good part of her narrative. She offers blow-by-blow descriptions throughout:

> The wolf fell back over, he had a bullet through his sides, right through. John sang out, "He's dead." The wolf jumped up and stood looking at Tom. He had to load his gun, then take his cap box out of his pocket. The cover was hard to open. Then he fired but the wolf was going at a gallop, a string of blood was all along the ice. (Baikie 15)

She takes joy in enumerating the results of the men's expeditions:

> It was two does and a stag. Then he had to get them ashore and skin them. They were very fat. Deer are always fat in the fall. The day before he had killed five geese. So they were having plenty of fresh meat. The partridges and rabbit were very plenty now. (24-25)

However, she seldom dwells on her own exploits: "I used to go hunting around the lake and somedays I would kill seventeen [partridges], sometimes more, and get rabbits in my snares" (40). Baikie shows a particular fascination with yarns about hunting bears and wolves. But some of these melodramatic adventures are succeeded by little cameos of childhood delights, such as a romantic description of life in Mulligan (27-28) or a story of

keeping baby foxes as pets: "She untied her shawl, oh, such pretty foxes, their eyes were like cats [*sic*] eyes, looking so hard. We made a nest for them in a box and we had to catch mice for them, or get meat. . . . They were such nice little things" (29). As in her mother's text, such unusual juxtapositions appear frequently. These are the contradictions inherent in the narrative picture of métissage, where the unexpected emerges suddenly, in contrast to what has gone before. Lionnet describes how a complex lineage influences writing (*Autobiographical* 19) and how a different dialogue occurs because of "noise" or "interferences between contradictory strategies" (23). But "strategies" may not be an appropriate word to apply to Baikie's text, which emerges more as a kind of stream-of-consciousness, in keeping with the precepts of orality.

The saga of Susan Brooks is also revived, but in greater detail; moreover, in the typical slippage of the oral tradition,[29] it proves a different version from Campbell's. In Baikie's account, her grandmother escapes the other Inuit because "they were talking about killing her for they said it was her who was giving them bad luck" (49). A kinder couple takes her to the mainland, where they leave her an ulu and a small piece of meat. Dressed all in sealskin, Susan begins her journey, encountering dangers along the way: "One day she saw a large black bear coming along the shore right for her. She took her ulu in her hand, the only weapon she had to face anything with and she went behind a large rock and the bear passed on" (50). Arriving at Mulligan River, she begins constructing a raft when two Englishmen sight her and rescue her:

> A while after my grandfather got married to her. She learned to speak a little English, but she was ashamed, she thought she could

> not talk it right. There were no ministers near them so the best learned Englishmen were the ones to marry them. Nearly all the Eskimo girls were getting married to the Englishmen. My grandfather was going to be married so he bought my grandmother a cotton dress. She was ashamed to put it on so she wore a white cloth dickie and white and black pants and sealskin boots. She never wore a dress. (50-51)

In this description, shame translates into both a sense of inadequacy and a refusal of select customs of the white culture. Horne writes that "in their assimilation projects, settlers attempt to sever social bonds within and between American Indian communities so that patterns of affiliation are replaced by ones of servile filiation" (*Contemporary* 115). Susan Brooks seems to follow another path, still adhering to some Native practices despite outside pressure to conform. She does not completely reject her Inuit traditions, but instead accepts the fact that, in some respects, she cannot assimilate. Buchanan argues that Susan Brooks "was not totally dominated and acculturated" and that she preferred her more practical Inuit garb; her granddaughter stated that she never wore dresses, "even though wearing trousers was taboo in the white Christian society of her day" ("'Country'" 294). Buchanan also contends that the refusal of the dress may have been "an act of rebellion on the part of Lydia Campbell's mother, an effort to resist domination or assimilation into the culture of her white husband" ("Autobiography" 72). An element of shyness may also have entered into the situation, or a feeling that she was not really one of the whites and would not pretend to be.

Baikie does not attempt to explore the reasons for her grandmother's actions; instead, she focusses on her mother, who receives much more attention in her text. Baikie describes outings with Campbell (3) and mentions her fluency in Inuktitut (7). She attests to her mother's affection for her father, which is proven by the family's walking some twenty miles to North West River where Daniel Campbell worked temporarily as a cooper for the Hudson's Bay Company: "Mother said she got lonesome for Father so she had to go and see him" (32). With the family reunited at Grand Lake, Baikie recounts another example of Campbell's assertiveness: "Mother didn't like Grand Lake so that spring we left and went back to our old house at Mulligan River" (41).

Less direct and forward, Baikie seldom indulges in self-praise, although she does describe her own good deeds. She does not set out on a path of deliberate self-aggrandizement, but she does refer to events important to her. Women's concerns take their place alongside men's, and occasionally her own sentiments surface. Although she duly admires the successful hunter, she places as much value on the Christian humanitarian. She and her husband take in and care for others' children (as did her mother) and generally help the needy. She mentions a widow and her daughter who stayed with them one fall (53), and she describes her ward Mary Magellen as "a nice girl, always ready to do what I would ask her" (57).

As Christian faith aided her mother, so it helps pull Baikie through difficult times. She mentions her mother's comforting a dying woman: "Mother was talking to her of a better home where we all hoped to go someday and then we all sang a hymn" (21). Baikie also describes the Christian rituals of her home life, with her father reading a Bible chapter

to them and saying a prayer before they went to bed: "it was always his way" (28). She turns to religion during bouts of illness, when she prays that God "would rise me up out of my sickness" (52). She also tells of bereavement and of the comfort she derives from her religious faith at such times: "My little baby got a cold on teething. . . . I found it so hard to part with him. I was sitting alongside of him holding his little hand. I sang 'Safe in the arms of Jesus' and at the last verse he was gone" (57).

Aligning herself with her mother's Christian belief, she nevertheless retains little of Campbell's nostalgia concerning Natives. She pays tribute to her mother as well as her grandmother, but her own relation to the Native is quite different, and her text differs significantly from Campbell's in its depiction of the Innu. With dilution of Inuit blood has come a change of vision; the unreliable site of métissage has again altered with time and circumstances. Her writing signals the new hegemony in central Labrador and the elevation in status of the mixed-blood pioneer.[30] Salvage ethnography carries a new meaning here, for her work praises the accomplishments of the settlers and advances their cause, even while it evokes images of a diminishing Native presence; it records a change in the hierarchy of peoples in the central Labrador area. Baikie's memoirs bear witness to the strength of northern women, but that strength is now bolstered by a growing new "race."

Elizabeth Goudie's *Woman of Labrador*

Elizabeth Goudie's book, *Woman of Labrador*[31] (originally published in 1973), continues this trend. Goudie,[32] a granddaughter of Lydia Campbell's sister, Hannah, decided to write her life story to inform her own grandchildren about pioneer living in

Labrador (Zimmerly, "Introduction" vi). She was strongly encouraged in this project by her nephew, Hector Blake (Hector Blake). At the age of seventy-one, and with a fourth-grade education, Goudie recorded her story in school notebooks. This narrative was edited for publication with an introduction by anthropologist David Zimmerly, who observed that the original work had somewhat illogical dates and no punctuation; he attempted "to keep the writing simple, something she definitely was not" (Zimmerly, E-mail). Zimmerly presents Goudie's book in the context of historical change in Labrador; he describes it as an unique tale; not only "the first book written about the Labrador woman, it is also the first written by a native-born, Labrador woman" ("Introduction" v). And it is a book, not a booklet, as are Campbell's and Baikie's writings. *Woman of Labrador* adopts a linear order; it is divided into four sections, each introduced by fragments of Labrador pioneer songs, and is further organized into chapters with their own titles and sections. However, these segments contain reminiscences told in the episodic style that is common to the oral tradition.

Goudie's narrative surges ahead of Campbell's and Baikie's, moving more strongly towards the veneration of the mixed-bloods. With its author yet another generation removed from the Inuit, its content demonstrates much less influence of their story-telling traditions and concentrates more on the lives of Goudie and her family. Containing far less sensationalism and melodrama, its descriptions of violent or tragic incidents are much more subdued. Goudie makes no references to superstition or legend. She offers many more personal revelations than do the other two women and, rather than concentrating only on tales of her youth, much of Goudie's story centres on her adult life. That life is

depicted as one of tribulation, personal tragedy, and fear of privation.

Goudie begins her work with an assertion of her lineage, with homage paid to that Inuk ancestor, Susan Brooks, in yet another interpretation of her story:

> In approximately the year 1806, our great-great-grandmother, who was an Eskimo orphan, ran away from down [*sic*] Rigolet Eskimos. The Eskimos there thought she had an evil spirit because her family died and they were going to cut her finger and bleed the bad blood out. She was afraid and ran away and came up (west) on the north side of Hamilton Inlet. There were no people living between Rigolet and North West River then, but a man named Brooks was tending his salmon nets on Pearl River, about twenty miles from North West River, and he saw her off in the distance. He went and picked her up. She could not speak English so he took her to North West River and got another Eskimo who spoke English to talk to her. She lived with a family in North West River and later Brooks married her, but not until he taught her enough English to say the Lord's Prayer. When he married her she was between fourteen and fifteen years old. (Goudie 23)

This passage, besides offering proof of Brooks's early indoctrination into Christianity,[33] also indicates Goudie's very different relation to the Native. Her account does not dwell on Biblical-style heroics, as does Campbell's, nor on attributes of courage and endurance, as does Baikie's. Her narration is much less romanticized, more distant, to the point, and

abrupt than that of either of her predecessors. Brooks is no longer raised to mythical or legendary status in this matter-of-fact excerpt, delivered with the spare emotion characteristic of this writer. Perhaps, with the passage of time, her relation sees her as somewhat less significant, though still worthy of mention; Goudie may feel more removed from the Native than do Campbell and Baikie.

She leaves Susan Brooks suspended in memory, and proceeds to recount events of her own childhood, emphasizing the difficulties of northern existence and the interplay of male and female roles in the North. Born in the little community of Mud Lake, she was sent out to work from the age of fourteen. Her life entailed considerable toil and she often describes it as "hard." As in the times of Campbell and Baikie, jobs were not restricted by gender. Still a child, Goudie "had to do girls' work and boys' work too" (26) and "life was pretty rugged for a girl in Labrador" (35). Labouring outdoors meant constant interference from the plagues of mosquitoes and blackflies of the Labrador summer, which she describes as dangerous to babies and as sometimes fatal for husky pups (62-63).

Goudie continues to de-romanticize the North as she depicts her adult life. At the age of eighteen, she married trapper Jim Goudie. More than once she speaks of the main disadvantage of being a trapper's wife, being alone for three months while her husband trapped in the Labrador interior: "I used to be left alone when he was away in the country. It was the most dreadful thing being a trapper's wife, as we would not hear from them from the time they would go away until they would return again" (45).

The occasional monotony of her existence sometimes grows oppressive, but she persists: "This condition of life was getting pretty boring, but I had to stick with it" (62).

Despite this periodic boredom, Goudie expresses an overall contentment with "something about that life that is hard to put into words" and with each day bringing "something to make you happy" (51). Still, "to be a trapper's wife and keep up with all the chores you have to work from six in the morning to nine at night" (68).

Like Campbell and Baikie, she champions the stoicism and inventiveness of the industrious Labrador woman, showing a quality that likely stems from the settler motif, which encouraged a sense of pride in accomplishing difficult tasks in the face of adversity. An aunt of hers, whom she does not name, is one example of the endurance of this matriarchy. Unable to nurse her children, she instead boiled flour for four hours and made a pap from it: "She raised eight children like that until they were ten months old. . . . Some of them grew up to be old men and women. When put to the test we could always manage" (71). Yet Goudie's aunt also spent most of her life "half-starving and poorly clothed" (71).

According to Elizabeth Goudie, such women readily assumed "second place," as, on the surface, Inuit women appeared to do. The custom prevailed that the man ruled the home (76). Apparently, such a tradition was not always obeyed by Goudie's forebears; yet Goudie attests that "women accepted this and thought nothing about it" (76). However, her writing belies any sense of inferiority. She clearly respected her husband and considered him a hard-working, kind man (180).

He had certainly faced many dangers and weathered stressful times, as had she. Throughout the course of their lives, they see one child badly burned and later succumb to sickness (96, 100); they lose their seventh baby to whooping cough (127). Jim Goudie and

his oldest son nearly freeze to death (121); Goudie himself almost dies of bloodpoisoning (124). At one point they are so poor they must move in with her parents (111); her great fear, death by starvation, nearly comes to pass (131). All these events are recounted in a matter-of-fact manner, with few embellishments, but with a sincere and spare expression of emotion. Goudie demonstrates an acceptance of God's will and likely saw the events of her life as not much more difficult than the lives of many Labrador pioneers. She ascribes no blame to one or another culture for the difficulties she faced, and thus seems more generous than representatives of many cultures could be. Her stoicism and strength align with what Buchanan sees as "heroic images of strong, self-reliant women" in the life writings of Goudie and her relatives ("Autobiography" 67).

The Goudies' powerlessness in the face of nature, illness, and poverty is offset by strong Christian beliefs. Like Campbell and Baikie, Goudie was bolstered by her Christian faith. From one life-threatening situation to another, "with the help of God we got through" (Goudie 127). Her parents always emphasized spirituality, ensuring that the Bible was read daily, and that Sunday was set aside as a day when no work was done (28). Goudie sees this strict Christian upbringing as shaping the attitudes of the settlers:

> Perhaps they went to the extreme a little, yet I think a lot of their rules helped us along the way. Our parents were always reminding us to be honest and truthful and kind to others. So I think these were some of the things that helped us to be contented with one another and with what we had which wasn't very much, compared with what we have today. (28-29).

Buchanan states that both foremothers and forefathers are important to Goudie, Baikie, and Campbell, "as opposed to the patriarchal view of history in which foremothers are regarded as irrelevant and marginal, and often consigned to oblivion" ("Autobiography" 73). Goudie here ascribes credit to her forebears and their religious teachings. Throughout her life, she herself continued to be active in the United Church.

As in the texts of Campbell and Baikie, so in Goudie's, religious beliefs do not necessarily lead to romanticization of the landscape or empathy for the Native. Yet beauty is appreciated in such rare comments as this:

> I would go outside after supper when I was alone and take a long look at the beautiful northern lights dancing across the sky in their beautiful shades of light yellow, purple and orange. This was all I had for entertainment but I loved it. (90-91)

As with Goudie's predecessors, such narrative moments occur infrequently.

Instead, a large part of Goudie's life story concerns itself with worries and concerns, and one prevailing source of distress is the Innu, whom she both assists and fears. She observes Natives distantly, as through a telescope. Innu are particularly removed, even though her first chapter states that her husband was part-Indian and that her children took pride in their "Indian and Scotch blood" (24). Goudie takes a benevolent view of the Inuit, although she cannot understand their language, but she regards the Innu as dangerous. As a young mother, she is disconcerted by the appearance of a family of starving Innu who arrive while her husband is away from home. Although she takes them in, she constantly worries that her own children will contract diseases "because a lot of

Indians at that time were infected with tuberculosis" (83). Goudie also describes an incident when Innu, angry at infringement by others on the trapping grounds, held a gun to trapper Arch Goudie's head, stole his food, and burned his tilt (188).

She later finds herself in the odd situation of being mistaken for a Native herself. Sent out to St. John's, Newfoundland, for an operation, she spends a cold night in the hospital because the staff, thinking she is from Fort Chimo, assume she is unaccustomed to warmth. A padre also arrives and tries to speak Inuktitut to her. Goudie might have been offended at what she would have considered a definite error. She and her brother-in-law were certainly amused at the incident and ascribed it to city dwellers' ignorance of Labrador and its people (172).

Such ignorance prompts Elizabeth Goudie to narrate her life and to explain the identity of the mixed-blood settlers, those "essential" Labradorians, a hardy breed anchored to the site of their territory. The collective social identity of the settlers has by now become stronger and serves to empower the last section of Goudie's book, which amounts to what Sidonie Smith would call an "autobiographical manifesto": a text by a woman who pursues self-consciously political autobiographical acts and who issues calls for new subjects. Such a manifesto serves to appropriate or contest sovereignty, to perform publicly, to speak for a group, and to speak to the future (Smith, *Subjectivity* 157-60). Goudie becomes a champion of the settlers, who have supplanted the Native and declared their agency over the land; she relegates the Inuit and Innu to past glories and views them with a wary eye. Above all, Goudie underlines the importance of the settler-trappers and of her own existence: "I would like to live to see this writing of our life and

the life of the Labrador trappers published" (Goudie 194). Like Lydia Campbell, she also celebrates the power of women. She reiterates the prominent role of the trapper's wife, a combination of hunter, trapper, nurse, doctor, and mother. She declares, "I am not ashamed of it because that kind of life fit our country at that time. There was no other way out. I will go anywhere and be proud to talk about it" (197). The final section of her book at last affords Goudie the opportunity to romanticize her "country." She concludes with an emphasis on her connection to the land and her deep emotional reaction to the changes caused by the encroachment of industry.[34] When she exhorts the people of her land not to forsake agency, to "take pride in Labrador" (197), and treat it with respect, she likely does include Natives under the title, "Labradorians,"[35] but the symbolic trapper family seems to predominate.

Fashioning Identity

The narratives of Goudie and her predecessors testify to the advancement of a northern people's romantic vision, even as they marginalize and de-romanticize the Native. They demonstrate that the troubling site(s) of métissage cannot be explored naively, for the ideological kaleidoscope/telescope may effectively narrow one's vision and blur the periphery. Just as a sudden winter storm causes drifting and obliterates the view, so too the mental terrain shifts and reshapes itself; heightened emotions result in a "snowing up" of the lens. Campbell, Baikie, and Goudie cannot utterly deny their Native heritage, but they turn different gazes upon it and at times avert their eyes altogether. Each takes her own sighting on the northland; each articulates her ideas with clarity and sincerity. Each

narrative represents a shift of focus, with the Native increasingly relegated to the margins of a new society. Examining these texts demonstrates how one's own outlook may be shaped, how a land may be "reborn," one "race" created, and another nearly forgotten. However, these narratives do not consciously, actively erase another culture; rather, they foreground what is happening in each woman's life as the Native is distanced with each generation.

The settlers of central Labrador never consciously sought to destroy the Native inhabitants, but their attitudes nonetheless contributed to the Natives' near-demise. Campbell, Baikie, and Goudie were part of that settler community, a group that gradually pushed aside their Native connections to form different and separate selves. Teresa Ebert states that we "need to realize the historicity of identities, particularly of gender, sexuality and race, and their relation to labor processes" (16). These three Labrador women were hard-working individuals whose tasks were practically mapped out for them from birth. Subject to the discourses of colonialism and imperialism, they took the practical route of sometimes eliding that part of them--their Native ancestry--regarded by some as unacceptable.

However, Smith states that women become "agents of resisting memory" (*Subjectivity* 22). Furthermore, complex and contradictory subject positions result when culturally-marginalized peoples enter into language through autobiography (62). The voice of the Native still echoes in these texts; Susan Brooks has not disappeared from these women's cultural remembrances. Some of the content common to hunter-gatherer cultures also endures, and the episodic style common to oral traditions persists. Memory--the

stubborn recollection of a Native heritage--pulls against hegemonizing tendencies. These narratives prove the complexity of the site of métissage, for their acceptance of assimilation is certainly not seamless. Yet there are no clearcut answers to the problems raised by the practices of a hybrid culture. Although Lionnet maintains that métissage entails an attempt to "establish nonhierarchical connections" and "encourage lateral relations"(7), examination of these works demonstrates that this process may not necessarily be so positive. Optimistic voices proclaiming the plurality and openness of "Borderlands" or a "site of métissage" may seem irrelevant here. On the other hand, recovery of the "histories" of these women may open up a space to reveal a "sheltering site [that does not enclose] us within facile oppositional practices" (5). That site may also allow the re-embracing of a previously distanced Native heritage. Contrary to common expectations, the Inuit voice persists and endures, like the people themselves. Ironically, the texts of these descendants of Susan Brooks, while accepting and promoting settler society, balance assimilationist tendencies with striking particulars of an Inuk woman's life story. These embedded autobiographical details emphasize the enduring power of this unusual individual, whose change of allegiance nevertheless fails to diminish the memory of a struggling Inuit culture. Against the persuasive and prevailing influence of conventional images of the Native, Campbell, Baikie, and Goudie do not completely assimilate to their settler "race." They do not totally submit to the dictates of imperialism or colonialism. Regardless of how they generally perceive Natives, they pay tribute to a Native ancestor, and their own texts are themselves reflective of competing ideologies. They must acknowledge that Susan Brooks remains a part of their history, for her resilient

image glances off stereotypes and alters all other perspectives at the site(s) of métissage.

The following chapter also demonstrates the strength of the memory of a Native heritage and poses its own questions on the theory of métissage, especially in relation to collaborative writing projects involving Native and non-Native authors. Sarah Elizabeth Ford consciously foregrounds her Native connections despite being placed in foreign environments. Rather than relegating this Aboriginal heritage to the past, she celebrates it and employs it to survive in a very different culture. Her life story brings a different slant to theories of subjectivity in a contact zone; it demonstrates the adaptation which enables the continuance of yet another complex hybrid identity. It also raises questions about the provenance of a bicultural text which emphasizes positive stereotypes of Inuit and resolutely denies any negative aspects of Inuit societies.

Notes

1. A shorter version of this chapter has been published. Blake 1996. *Essays on Canadian Writing*. 59: 164-81. Bibliographic information on Lydia Campbell's *Sketches* has been changed and updated. I thank Roberta Buchanan for the particulars in her paper, "'Country Ways.'"

2. For details on the British view of the vanishing Native, see Moyles and Owram, 167-85.

3. Inuit as well as Innu (Montagnais and Naskapi Indians) hunted in the central Labrador area before the arrival of Europeans in the late 1700s. Innu in particular hunted and trapped in the Labrador interior. See Zimmerly, *Cain's Land*. The tendency, though, was for Europeans to borrow from both Native cultures, while the Innu did not mix much with the Inuit. In fact, hostilities between Montagnais and Inuit erupted in the 1700s. See Jordan 181.

4. In central Labrador, the term "pioneer" usually refers to the earlier generations of mixed-bloods residing in the area. They also refer to themselves as "settlers." See Goudie.

5. Lambert writes:

> . . . les mariages mixtes n'ont pas brisé, ni meme affaibli, ce clivage ethnique. . . . En fait, les unions mixtes n'ont jamais conduit à la naissance d'un groupe intermédiaire, c'est-à-dire à un groupe métissé d'existence et de catégorisation. . . . Il y'eut, semble-t-il, une certaine tendance a s'identifier au groupe des Settlers plutot

> qu'aux Inuit. . . . Les Settlers, contrairement aux Inuit, valorisent la propriété privée et l'épargne individuelle aux dépens du partage des ressources et des biens de consommation. (29-30)

6. Conflict arose at times between mixed-bloods and Innu in the central Labrador area after encroachment by mixed-bloods on traditional Innu hunting and trapping grounds. See Zimmerly, *Cain's Land* 202-03.

7. All page references to McGrath in this chapter are taken from her "Circumventing the Taboos: Inuit Women's Autobiographies."

8. This is not the case with Inuit women's autobiography now, as Alice French's *The Restless Nomad* demonstrates. It is also possible that in the past, younger Inuit women were too busy to devote time to writing.

9. Kiviok is often featured as the male hunter/hero of Inuit legend. See "Kiviuq" in Spalding 51-66 and Rasmussen, *The Netsilik Eskimos* 523-24 and *Observations* 97-99. In *Observations* 96-97 and 106-07, Rasmussen also refers to tales of homeless boys, Kavjagzuk and Ahataq, each of whom overcame adversity. In *The People of the Polar North*, Rasmussen records other tales of orphans who triumph despite mistreatment (198-204).

10. Anne Hart, in an entry prepared for the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (1994), reports that in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, the building which houses the periodical magazine, *Them Days*, is named in Campbell's memory (114). The magazine was founded by Doris Saunders, a great-great granddaughter of Lydia Campbell.

11. In his introduction to Campbell's work, Waghorne states that he presents it as she wrote it herself, "except that I have here and there omitted a sentence or two of no particular interest, for the sake of brevity, and venture to give a little punctuation, for the sake of rendering her narrative clearer" (3 Dec. 1894).

12. The publication of Lydia Campbell's memoirs in book form in 1980 and the 1984 reprint omit numerous sections of the original manuscript, published as excerpts in the *Evening Herald* in 1894 and 1895. Because transcripts, kindly sent to me by Robin McGrath and Leslie Baikie, of Campbell's original manuscript from the *Evening Herald*, are unpaginated, references herein are to dates of entries. One date of entry may actually include various headings with different dates therein; for example, the newspaper entry for 3 Dec. 1894 includes an entry by Campbell dated 25 Dec. 1893. No changes to Campbell's spelling and grammar have been introduced in the quotations. I supply page numbers rather than dates for those passages that appear in the 1980 edition and 1984 reprint. The microfilms of Lydia Campbell's original text in the *Evening Herald* can be found in the Centre for Newfoundland Studies at the Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University, St. John's, Newfoundland.

13. *Them Days*, a quarterly periodical published in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, documents the early days and old ways of Labrador. Its editor, Doris Saunders, states that, unbeknownst to her, when Campbell's memoirs were received by *Them Days* in 1980, four of their thirteen sections were missing. See Buchanan, "Country" 304, for additional bibliographical information. According to Saunders,

the next printing will include the whole text, with additional accompanying photographs (Saunders).

14. See the account of Flora Baikie (Campbell's granddaughter).

15. For more information on the customary treatment of Inuit orphans, see Guemple.

16. See Young 16-18.

17. Inuit myths have often been bowdlerized by white translators and reissued as children's stories. For additional information on this bowdlerization and on Inuit myths in general, see McGrath's "Monster Figures and Unhappy Endings in Inuit Literature." For examples, see Nungak and Arima.

18. She relates a typical tragic anecdote, this one concerning her old Inuk companion:

> . . . she was married to one of the first Englishmen that visited this country, but as the Eskimaux was not civilized at that time, her half-brothers killed him while crossing from Double Mer through the woods. . . . When they got half way across the neck, they killed him. And the other man was left with his wife and this poor man's wife and her poor little boy. (Campbell 23-24)

19. Campbell refers to the time of a great flood, when the one Inuit family that survived took some little white pups and sent them out to sea, where they drifted to some islands and became white people. The usual version of the myth tells of an Inuk girl mating with a dog, being sent to an island and bearing pups. She sends some of them off in boats made from the soles of her boots. These become white

men. See Rasmussen, *Polar* 104-05.

20. This theme is not restricted to Inuit women, as Bernard Irqugaqtuk's life writings demonstrate.

21. See Zimmerly, *Cain's Land* 146.

22. This is probably a reference to the 1893 Chicago Exposition, which a number of Labrador Inuit attended. Some returned destitute and with contagious illnesses. See "Expositions and Epidemics."

23. According to Kjellstrom,

> among the duties of a wife were to prepare and sew clothes, cook food and, chiefly, have charge of eventual children. . . . A woman could, it is true, catch certain animals and even fish, but a number of hunting activities were considered unsuitable for women, as it was thought that some animals would have been offended if they had been hunted by women. (33)

24. This is the old name for the Lake Melville area of Labrador. Campbell lived much of the time in a tiny settlement called Mulligan, located about twenty-five kilometres northeast of North West River.

25. In 1848 Smith was assigned as assistant to the chief trader at the Hudson's Bay Company post in North West River. He stayed for twenty-one years and later became Lord Strathcona and governor of the Hudson's Bay Company. See

Zimmerly, *Cain's Land* 96-97 and Preston.

26. See Young 100-02 for further details of Ikey's marriage plans.

27. This appears to be a reference to the Inuk woman Mikak, who was taken to England in 1769. She visited the King and the Dowager Princess Augusta. The princess took a liking to her, giving her a fine jacket ("dickie") and other items which she brought back to the Rigolet area. See Taylor for a very different version of Baikie's narrative.

28. Zimmerly writes that by 1900, "the Indians were complaining to the Hudson's Bay Company that the settlers were encroaching on their hunting grounds and several incidents occurred. The settlers, however, emerged victorious in their westward quest for more trapping grounds" (*Cain's Land* 146). In the 1930s, the Indians, who were more often in danger of starving, sometimes stole supplies from the settlers' tilts (203).

29. See Cruikshank for details on the oral tradition.

30. Zimmerly points to the "decided class boundaries" that had developed in the central Labrador area: "In terms of a hierarchy of relative power, the Indians were at the bottom followed in close order by the Eskimos, then the settlers and finally the H.B.C. officials and others from the 'outside' world" (*Cain's Land* 161-62).

31. The original handwritten manuscript of Goudie's book is held on file at the Centre for Newfoundland Studies Archives of the Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University, St. John's, Newfoundland. Perusal of the two notebooks reveals the extent of Zimmerly's editing, as the anecdotes of Labrador life, presented in a

rather fragmentary fashion in the notebooks, were sorted into orderly segments, and excerpts from Labrador songs were introduced at the heads of the four sections. The many spelling and grammatical errors were excised.

32. Elizabeth Goudie was well known and respected in central Labrador. As Buchanan states, she received an honorary doctorate from Memorial University of Newfoundland in 1975 "in acknowledgement of her contribution to the cultural history of Newfoundland"; a government building in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador, was named after her in 1980, and a ballad, "Woman of Labrador," told of her accomplishments in living off the land ("Autobiography" 67).

33. See also Young: "Brooks' wife became a Christian, and when she died left the grand testimony behind that she was going to be with Christ" (14). He attests, too, to the piety of Lydia Campbell, who yearned for a minister to visit her at her deathbed (151).

34. More change had occurred in the Hamilton Inlet region from 1942 to 1972 than in all the previous 166 years of European occupation (Zimmerly, *Cain's Land* 229).

35. For additional information on the identities of Labradorians, see the Master's thesis of Richard Budgell.

Chapter Two

Sarah Elizabeth Ford (Anauta): "Autobiography in the Third Person"

> The division of labor between two people (at least) reveals the multiplicity of authorities implied in the work of autobiographical writing, as in all writing. Far from imitating the unity of the authentic autobiography, it emphasizes its indirect and calculated character. . . . By relatively isolating the roles, the collaborative autobiography calls into question again the belief in a unity that underlies, in the autobiographical genre, the notion of author and that of person. (Lejeune 188)

Theorist Philippe Lejeune has referred to the difficulties and perplexities of the "autobiographical contract" (125-27); no longer can we be assured that some tacit agreement exists between author and reader that the "truth" about a life is being revealed. The "contract" becomes even more nebulous with a collaborative life story, itself subversive of prescriptive ideas about autobiography. When the life involved is that of a Native, and the amanuensis is non-Native, even more complications arise. Arnold Krupat calls collaborative North American Indian autobiography "original bicultural composite composition" (*For Those* 31), in order to allude to the "doubling" of both the Native's and the non-Native collaborator's different cultural codes. Further, he describes an imbalance of power in early American Indian autobiographies, with the outsider or non-Native collaborator predominating (33-34). Carole Boyce Davies adds that "affiliations or

disjunctions of gender, class, nationality, language, and shared politics seem to be the primary facilitators of, or interferences in, the collaborative life story telling process":

> at the point of writing, then, the dominant-subordinate relationships are enforced and the editor becomes a detached, sometimes clinical, orderer or even exploiter of the life stories for anthropological ends, research data, raw material, or the like. Writing another person's life can become an act of power and control. (12, 13)

Davies writes that she is guided by an approach, though, that "asserts that the storyteller often exercises control of the narrative" (7-8). Krupat also points out that "an Indian autobiography could be achieved by no white alone" and that reciprocity between the collaborators had to be acknowledged (*For Those* 52). But it is also possible that the informant may take advantage of the perceived naiveté of his or her amanuensis; perhaps, too, it may be to the collaborator's advantage to portray the Native as more naive and primitive than he or she really is. The Native informant may not necessarily be victimized, and may even overcompensate for negative attitudes towards Natives by promoting stereotypes of nobility and honour. Certain perceived ideas about Natives may also serve to promote a particular philosophy of life that is either known, or thought, to appeal to the audience.

Self-invention enters the mix, along with issues of authority and control. Questions of referentiality, problematic in the autobiographical genre in general, become even more pronounced in the text discussed in this chapter. Although the reader of a collaborative autobiography may expect the writer to respect the speaker, retaining as much of her oral

performance as possible, the writer may adapt and change what was uttered to suit her own ideas of market demands and the perceived rules of the genre (Lejeune 189). The complexity of autobiography deepens, too, for artifice is involved: *Land of the Good Shadows*, the narrative under discussion in this chapter, tends towards the melodramatic adventure novel even as it claims to present a genuine life story, that of a Native who remains untainted by the pressures of so-called "civilization."

Aside from questions of genre, the work raises issues concerning identity and authority. A joint effort of an American children's book writer, Heluiz Chandler Washburne, and a Baffin Island mixed-blood, Anauta, *Land of the Good Shadows* (1940)[1] could be categorized as what Lejeune calls "autobiography in the third person" (31); although Anauta (Sarah Elizabeth Ford) supposedly worked very closely with Washburne on the book, it refers to her not in the first person, but as "Anauta," except for a final section entitled "The End of My Story By Anauta Herself." According to Lejeune, the use of the third person brings out the "inescapable duality of the grammatical 'person'" (33). But "duality" may not suffice to describe the complexities of this work. Some questions may never be answered. Just how contrived is the autobiography? Does the book constitute an appropriation of Sarah Elizabeth Ford's life story, an instance of exploitation of the subject? Or does the subject exploit her amanuensis? What were the purposes behind the work? Was it meant to satisfy the curiosity of the public about exotic cultures? Was Washburne necessary to lend authenticity to Anauta's voice?

The identity of the non-Native collaborator impacts strongly on the text, for she is hardly an objective editor. And, as Davies points out, "clearly, the ideological orientation

of the editor is a critical issue in collaborative storytelling" (14). Heluiz Chandler Washburne was born in Cincinnati, Ohio on 25 January 1892. She had written numerous books for children, working in travel, geography, fiction, and popular science, before her collaboration with Anauta. She interested herself in "bringing to children a sympathetic understanding of life in other countries" (*Who* 1483). Her husband was a school superintendent, lecturer, and author of many educational articles.

According to Washburne's introduction following the table of contents, it was her husband who first met Anauta during a trip to Michigan in 1936, when she was lecturing to schoolchildren in Dowagiac (*Land* xiii). He booked her for talks in his own school system in Winnetka, Illinois, and Anauta came to the Washburnes' home a few weeks later. After speaking to enthusiastic audiences in the area for two or three days, she proved popular enough to be invited to neighbouring communities, and she returned to stay again, this time for several weeks, with the Washburne family. Heluiz Washburne writes that

> [n]ot long before, I had gone through much of the available literature on Eskimos for a story article I was writing for *Britannica Junior*. I had found nothing about the Eskimos of Baffin Island, the land from which Anauta had come; and now I realized, from what Anauta had told me, that here were a people much less touched by white man's culture than were the Eskimos of Alaska, Labrador, and Greenland. "Yes, surely," I told her, "your story should be written." (xiv)

Later, Anauta was to choose her to help do just that.[2] It took a year to get the notes

down; then the three thick typewritten books had to be sorted into chronological order (xiv). Anauta was strongly involved in the editing process, according to Washburne. Over a period of four years, the manuscript was reread, revised, and retyped repeatedly (xvi).

But this was not, at least for Washburne, an emotionless undertaking, for she unashamedly endorses the idea of the "noble savage," as exemplified by Anauta. Doubtless *Land of the Good Shadows* is organized to present Inuit in a certain "authentic" and honourable light, properly praised and promoted by prestigious non-Natives. Preceding the written text is a photo of Sarah Elizabeth Ford in full Inuit costume, just as she appeared during her lecture tours in the United States.[3] Following the title page is a foreword by Sir Wilfred Grenfell, who recommends *Land of the Good Shadows* as a true story, not only true, but unique "in the fact that no one other than Anauta has ever been in the position to write a personal record of such a kind, and probably never will be again" (v). Moreover, he underlines and approves of what he sees as its inherent philosophy,

> [s]howing how true it is that we humans may be bereft of almost all that wealth can ever obtain, even in times of peace, and yet be as happy and often better off with the very simplest assets life has to offer--so long as we are really living and not merely existing. (v)

He proceeds to praise the gentleness, peacefulness, and merriment of "these little people," "these 'little northern neighbors,'" the Inuit (vi). From the start, then, certain conventional ideas are reinforced. Although the Inuit are referred to in terms of diminutives and stereotypes, their attitude to life is heartily sanctioned.

The actual autobiography proves to be highly dramatic, and often melodramatic,

beginning with the birth of Anauta in the midst of a raging blizzard, with giant icebergs crashing together in the background. On the night of her birth, a strong young hunter by the name of Anauta dies, and his mother, Oomiálik, becomes her guardian; she is then named after the deceased son. She is brought up like a boy, in the belief that the dead man's spirit resides in her. The book then traces her childhood and her teenage years, her marriage to William Ford and the birth of three daughters, the tragic death of her first husband, her subsequent travels to Newfoundland and then with two of her daughters to the United States, her second marriage to Harry Blackmore, and her life as a lecturer.

Her daughter Mary Buckner confirms some of the details of her mother's life, that Anauta "was born at Chekettaluk on the northern tip of Baffin Island in 1888" and that "she had English parents (her mother was part Eskimo) but she was raised also by Oomiálik, mother of the dead hunter Anauta whose name Mother inherited. Anauta was raised to hunt like a man as she bore a man's name" (Letter 1996). Anauta's later life took her to Indiana where she married for the second time and subsequently was divorced after two infant deaths and the raising of one surviving daughter.[4] She went on the lecture circuit and died in Ashland, Kansas on 13 January 1965 (Buckner, *Descendants* 139). Buckner reports that

> [s]he was a very cheery person and found something to laugh about in most situations. She died in Kansas while on a lecture tour. Her heart just gave out--she didn't suffer. She is buried in Indianapolis, Jan. 13, 1965. She would have laughed at her burial as well. We suffered 12 inches of snow and couldn't get to the cemetery. We needed a dog sled. We all thought

Mother was playing a joke on us in Heaven. (Letter 1996)

The book which emerged from her lecture tours achieved little financial success[5] and seems hardly known today. Katherine Woods responded to it with a very favourable review for the *New York Times Book Review*, citing Anauta's "singular combination of naiveté and adaptability" and remarking upon the text's "detailed narrative picture of Eskimo life" (6). The book is taken at face value, with little criticism of the events reported (perhaps a mark of the American public's own naiveté concerning Inuit life), just an admission that "if [Inuit] life is a bit idealized in her memories, that is natural enough" (6).

Robin McGrath touches on *Land of the Good Shadows* in "Circumventing the Taboos." She refers to Anauta as "Lizzie Ford Blackmore of Ford Harbour" and states (perhaps erroneously) that she was twice widowed and at least three times married:

> . . . Anauta seemed to have a penchant for wandering, and after travelling all along the Arctic coast and the southern shore of Newfoundland with her various husbands, she moved to the States where, like Pauline Johnson and Grey Owl, she made her living as an exotic on the lecture circuit. Dressed in caribou clothing, she gave inspirational talks to church groups. Two more books followed, *Wild Like the Foxes* (Blackmore 1956) and *Children of the Blizzard* (Washburne 1960),[6] but they tell us little about Anauta's adult life. They focus, instead, on the lives of her parents and on her childhood in Labrador. (227)

Deeper exploration of Anauta's life story reveals many greater complexities; the

text presents the Inuit as a homogeneous people, while at the same time it refutes many commonly held notions about them. *Land of the Good Shadows* elevates Inuit to mythical status as a noble, fastidious, and honourable race. Anauta takes characteristics which may have applied to her particular group of mixed-bloods and superimposes them on the entire Inuit society. Many generalizations are made concerning Inuit: Eskimos do not cheat (*Land* 30); an Eskimo does not hold anger from one day to the next (37); Eskimos are naturally quick to observe and anxious to learn (54); teasing is a part of Eskimo nature (87); there is no intimacy between the sexes amongst the young, and boldness is taboo (96);[7] modesty is highly esteemed by Eskimos (139); they eat no oil or fat (297);[8] they do not trade wives (297);[9] Inuit women are still independent after marriage (310). Inuit are obviously idealized throughout the text, perhaps to meet an American audience's need for romanticized stories, to reinforce the image of the "noble savage," or simply to reflect Anauta's concern to present Inuit in just such a light. Everywhere in the book, the Inuk is referred to in terms of superlatives; the characters are almost without exception larger than life. Yet in the midst of all this melodrama come authentic snatches of Inuit syllabics (212-15), as well as directions on how to carry out numerous tasks of the Inuit, like making a snowhouse (17-18) and hunting seals (20-22).

The authentic and the questionable combine in a puzzling narrative that seems to contradict factual details of Anauta's life. According to Washburne, sources were confirmed during the writing of the book, and it seems that Anauta then suddenly discovered that her mother was not a "pure" Inuk: "Englishmen had come over to the Labrador, learned the language, and married Anauta's Eskimo great-grandmother and her

half-Eskimo grandmother. They apparently settled into the Eskimo way of life, so that the children were brought up speaking only Eskimo, following Eskimo customs, living as Eskimos live" (xv).[10] Alea (Harriet), Anauta's "gentle little Eskimo mother" (4) of the text, is actually a mixed-blood. It also appears that as an adult, Anauta was not accustomed to European-style clothing (244-45), yet the Ford family genealogy contains photographs depicting her in just such apparel as a young girl of about ten, and at the time of her first marriage, as well as when she was later widowed (Buckner, *Descendants* 37, 43, 46, 95). Her disregard for dates and numbers is cited more than once in the autobiography; as Washburne states in her foreword, there was some difficulty in sorting the notes for the book "because in her country the people kept no track of time. There was no calendar, no record of birthdays, no counting of the passage of years" (*Land* xiv). Further, "she had no idea of the passage of time, for in her own land there was no naming of days, no division of weeks and months, no counting of years or celebrating of birthdays" (249). The text also states that "she still does not know her own age or the exact ages and birthdays of her children" (318). However, the Ford genealogy lists Anauta's date of birth as 5 February 1888 (Buckner, *Descendants* 139), the date of her first marriage as 22 April 1906 (39), and the date of the death of her first husband as 18 August 1913 (39); it also gives the years of birth of her children (39, 139). In fact, her first husband, who worked for the Hudson's Bay Company at its George River post, kept a journal, and the entry for 11 January 1910 states that "Mrs. Ford gave birth to a daughter today" (41).[11]

Anauta's husband died tragically while on a canoe trip, duck-hunting off Cape

Wolstenholme with a companion. *Land of the Good Shadows* includes a photograph of a memorial to William Ford and C.G.T. Shepherd, drowned on 18 August 1913, "erected by their friends in the Hudson's Bay Company's Service" (facing 234). Anauta witnessed their deaths, and, although she saw no sharks, the book mentions the possibility that the men were pulled down by one (*Land* 230-31). This is cited as fact in her later lecture tours.[12]

Anauta is portrayed in *Land of the Good Shadows* as quite naive in the ways of outside civilization, even after her arrival in the United States. Yet, for seven years after her husband's death, she ran a hotel in Twillingate, Newfoundland (Buckner, *Descendants* 47). Of this career, no mention is made in *Land of the Good Shadows*.[13] She is described in the autobiography as having a very limited English vocabulary in 1913 (*Land* 248), yet the Ford genealogy quotes a newspaper article in which she and her brothers are said to have been brought up speaking English as fluently as Inuktitut (Buckner, *Descendants* 120). According to this article (120),[14] she received her education in Newfoundland, then returned to Baffin Island and married. Her first husband was also educated in Newfoundland, in Twillingate and St. John's (45). *Land of the Good Shadows* does not offer this information. As a widow in Twillingate, Anauta met her future mother-in-law, Mrs. Blackmore, and the Ford genealogy reports that she followed her to Indianapolis: "In 1919 [Harry Blackmore] brought his mother back to Indianapolis. Widow Sarah Elizabeth Ford was a neighbour of Mrs. Blackmore and followed her to Indiana in 1920. She and Harry were married 27 April 1920" (135-36). However, *Land of the Good Shadows* depicts Anauta and her daughters as simply travelling for the sake of wanderlust and of

choosing Indiana on a whim and the advice of a ticket salesman:

> Anauta walked over to the ticket window. "If you were going some place," she asked him earnestly, "where would you go?" At that he smiled. "Why, I'd go to Indianapolis, Indiana. That's my home," he said. "I'd go there tomorrow if I had a chance." "All right," Anauta said. "Give me tickets for there." (*Land* 268-69)[15]

Her later encounter with Mrs. Blackmore and her son in the same apartment building in which she stays is depicted as sheer coincidence (273). In later lecture tours, she was to refer to the chance decision to go to Indianapolis, based on the statement of the ticket agent.

Some of the other tales in *Land of the Good Shadows* seem highly melodramatic. One such story concerns an Indian trapper who perishes in the cold, a crucifix frozen to his lips (125); another tells of a man sleeping between two men, yet being dragged away and killed by a wolf (196). Still another describes the demise of Cawley, a doctor who had fled north to escape the law after accidentally killing his mother, wife, and children with a new medicine he had invented: he dies clutching the newspaper that tells of his crime (174). On another occasion, Anauta cuts off the frozen fingers and toes of a minister she calls "Man of Love," after he deliberately loses himself in the cold to provide material for a book he wants to write (220). Such wildly sensational stereotyping of the frontier as the proper setting for implausible and otherwise extreme behaviour probably gratified readers back at the "centre" of "civilization."

However, such snatches of stories, reminiscent of the oral tradition, appear in the

midst of a linearly and chronologically arranged text. *Land of the Good Shadows* is divided into three sections, "Childhood," "Wife and Widow," and "Anauta Looks At Our World." A last chapter, "Is This Civilization?", examines the problems in American society. The final section by Washburne and Anauta is entitled "Anauta Today," and serves to reinforce the stereotypes of Inuit promoted throughout the book. It includes an admiring final description:

> Anauta has the virtues of her people--courage, helpfulness, humor, absolute dependability, resourcefulness, straightforward honesty, the ability to work long and hard, and those complementary attributes, the enjoyment of sociability and a love of solitude. . . . They form the pattern of the Eskimo's social development and from infancy every child is educated to adjust to this pattern. (319)

Following this chapter appears a section, the title of which, "The End of My Story By Anauta Herself," suggests a separation from the remainder of the book, yet it is told in the same style as the rest. Here Anauta reiterates the strong ties that bind her to her people:

> As for me, someday, perhaps, when I am no longer needed here, I shall return to the land of my birth. Then, if my hand has not lost its skill, I shall spear fish and birds, set traps, harpoon the seal from the edge of the ice, follow the caribou to their feeding grounds. . . . And when the time comes for the long sleep I shall be content knowing that I have come home to my people in the Shadows. (322)

These heartfelt allusions to authentic Inuit life appear throughout. In fact, the collaborators seem to feel a need to attest often to the authenticity of the text. After Anauta's chapter appears a postscript including letters from a Hudson's Bay Company official praising Anauta's father for his pleasant personality and his loyalty to the company, and other letters, including one from "Minnie," the daughter whom she left behind in Newfoundland, concerning the death of her brother, Salumo.[16] Then come the syllabics of the Baffin Island Eskimo alphabet and a glossary of Inuktitut terms used in the book. Such documents underscore the value, importance, and "truth"--hence the authority--of the whole autobiographical text.

Examination of genealogy and autobiography still leaves this reader unconvinced; Sarah Elizabeth Ford remains a character of mystery and intrigue. She demonstrates the validity of Lejeune's statements: "How can we think that in autobiography it is the lived life that produces the text, when it is the text that produces the life!. . . Telling the truth about the self, constituting the self as complete subject--it is a fantasy" (131). How much of Anauta's persona was invented and how much real? Was she sincere or just a very clever performer? A practical woman who needed to make her living, she must have known how to please and attract audiences. Did she purposely portray herself and her people as more primitive and "uncivilized" than she and they really were, in order to draw more followers on her lecture circuit? Or was this the work of storyteller Washburne?[17] What resulted was the invention of an ideal society, but a practical bent may have motivated the collaborators: the stories could bring money and enhance interest in Anauta's lecture tours.

The contradictions continue in the advertising pamphlet, *Anauta*, and newspaper articles that reported on those tours. She was cleverly marketed by an advertising agency, which produced a large brochure depicting her in a coloured photograph in Native dress, hand uplifted towards the bright northern lights.[18] Inside the cover is a brief biography detailing her proficiency in tasks performed by the Inuit, like sewing and hunting, and telling of the tragedy of her husband's death and her subsequent travels in Canada and the United States. It ends with a reference to her ruling ideology: "Any small portion of this amazing life, as presented by ANAUTA [*sic*], gives an audience a narrative of breath-taking interest--full of thought and opening a new 'Philosophy of Life'" (*Anauta*). A four-paragraph quotation from a newspaper article, "Eskimo Speaker Amuses Chautauqua Audience," follows; it emphasizes her sense of humour and depicts her being "besieged by individuals from her audience who were eager to know more." Below this article appear appellations, given her by "enthusiastic committees," including "the White Seal of the Frozen Wastes," "the Humorist From Baffin-Land," and "A Brilliant Star of the Northern Lights." The next page begins with another description of her, in which she agrees with the explorer Stefansson that the people of the far North are the happiest people on earth. She is also described as "a close friend of Dr. Grenfell." The writer mentions that she "has a strain of English in her blood." The brochure proceeds to cite sixteen headlines about Anauta from various American newspapers of the 1940s. The last two pages offer twenty-eight one-paragraph quotations from various clubs, schools, colleges, town halls, and universities concerning her success and charm as a speaker. One such example quotes Clyde E. Wildman, president of Depauw University, Greencastle, Indiana, who wrote on 3

November 1941 that "'Anauta' delighted a large audience; her lecture was perfectly timed. The main thing which the faculty and students commented about was her philosophy of life. Her influence on the college was wholesome."

Obviously, Americans were very interested in Anauta as a speaker; the reasons for this popularity may have been numerous and diverse. Perhaps she answered a need for a return to basic values after the war years. Her simple philosophy of life proved very appealing to her audiences. Indeed, as David Shi explains,

> [t]he pastoral urge, the agrarian myth, the Adamic identity, the noble savage, the Jacksonian persuasion, and the image of the New World garden have been recurring themes in American thought, themes that have frequently intersected with the ideal of simplicity. (7)

Not many Americans actually put such ideals into practice, and the notion of a "New World garden" far away in the frozen Arctic may have been appealing not just because of its ideals of sharing, community, and anti-materialism, but also because of its safe distance from American society.

Anauta lectured to a variety of audiences in the United States: school children, church congregations, women's clubs, university students, radio listeners, Kiwanis clubs, and Masonic lodges. The *Cincinnati Times-Star* described her as "a little Eskimo woman gayly clad in her Native costume." The writer elaborated:

> Anauta's coat of bear skin was covered with bright beads. Her deer-skin trousers and leather shoes were worn with the fur on the inside and around her head she wore an ermine band. Copper pennies dangling from her coat

jingled merrily as she walked. ("Eskimo Puzzled")

Her topics usually included details of her life in the North and references to her book, *Land of the Good Shadows*.

She particularly interested herself in refuting false notions about Inuit: "She enjoyed especially, she said, debunking accepted 'truths' about her people--that they 'never take a bath from the day they're born till the day they die,' that they eat raw meat, that they enter their 'ice houses on hands and knees'" ("Eskimo Woman" 24). She often emphasized that her people did not eat fats ("Baffin" 2, "Woman's" 3), reiterating that it was "not true that Eskimos eat oily blubber--we eat the meat--not the blubber--eat the meat after it is 'cooked' by being frozen several days" ("Eskimo Puzzled"). She decried her audiences' ignorance and said on at least one occasion that she resented being called a "blubber eater," reminding Americans that "when I see you eat so much butter, I think you are blubber eaters" ("Anyone" 7). She added more information for the board of directors of the Town Club in Buffalo, stressing that Inuit ate meat that was naturally salted "by the animals licking the ice" and that it was frost-dried for three days after killing and needed no cooking ("Real"). She also stated that Eskimos lived in igloos built of snow and not ice ("Baffin" 2, "Eskimo Puzzled") and that they never had colds, that in fact there was no sickness, as germs could not survive in the cold climate ("Baffin"). She also asserted that Eskimos did not rub noses as a sign of affection ("Eskimo Puzzled").[19] She described their sharing attitudes, their belief in a Good and Bad Spirit, and their absolute abhorrence of murder and theft ("Eskimo Puzzled").[20]

In detailing her own life, she affirmed that her age was unknown, as were the date

of her husband's death and the dates of birth of her three daughters ("Clocks" 1); ages were not recorded ("Baffin"). She described events detailed in her autobiography, mentioning again the coincidence of the ticket agent who inspired her to go to Indiana ("Anyone") and her arrival in Newfoundland after her first husband's death with no knowledge of the English language or American customs ("Eskimo To Speak," "Eskimo Woman" 24, Lasher). Her first husband was described as a victim of a shark ("Anyone").[21]

The power of her personality was duly noted by the press: "She captivated her audience, holding their attention throughout her lecture with the charm of her personality and with quick, descriptive gestures that added much to her words" ("Eskimo Woman" 13). She did not hesitate, however, to criticize American society, and the newspapers seemed to enjoy reporting her rebukes of urban Americans, as when she told her audience of club women in Vincennes, Indiana that she sympathized with them: "'I feel sorry for you people,' she said, laughing with the quick, charming wit of her warm personality. 'You spend too long in one place. You clean wallpaper, wash woodwork and paint, you do curtains--oh my, oh my!'" (Eskimo Woman" 24). In Athens, Ohio, Anauta lectured on the frantic pace of "civilized" life:

> "Americans hurry too much," said small energetic Anauta, an Eskimo who has been lecturing to Athens groups this week. "They hurry even when they have no place to go or nothing to do. And the women--their lives are so futile; they live merely to be entertained and then to die, always they must be going to their bridge club, to a lecture, or to some other place to be amused, never do most of

> them make themselves necessary to the people around them outside of perhaps their own family." (Lasher)

Some of her female audience in Chicago were moved to jealousy: "Women attending a luncheon of the Executives' club in the Sherman hotel yesterday sighed with envy as they heard described to them a land where no woman has to clean house and where a woman may fib about her age all she wants, with no one to prove her wrong" ("Addressing").

In her lectures, Anauta also described Inuit as "a kindly people" who could not understand "how the so-called civilized peoples can slay each other by the tens of thousands in a world war" ("Eskimo Puzzled"). In Ohio she lectured once more on the perils of civilized life, but did admit to some advantages of living in urban America: "Your electric lights and your religion are wonderful things, however. The story of Jesus is the one thing I would like to take back to my people. Otherwise they are far better off without 'civilization'" (Lasher). She stressed her people's innocence and peacefulness, and offered her brother as an example of their pleasant nature. She gave details of his request that she send him a mirror. When she asked him why,

> he wrote me, "Why, Anauta, I thought you would know. Laughter is good. Now I can look into the looking glass and laugh any old time I want to." "That is why," Anauta said, "my brother broke up the looking glass into small pieces. He wanted everybody at home to laugh, too." ("Eskimo Woman" 24)[22]

Following her lectures, Anauta often answered questions and signed autographs ("Eskimo Woman" 24).

Despite her English heritage, she was obviously determined to portray herself as an authentic Inuk. Were Anauta's Inuit a race unto themselves? Reference is made in *Land of the Good Shadows* to an old Inuk named Peter, who helped care for the orphaned child of William Ford's hunting companion: "Minnie formed a great attachment to him, preferring this ugly black Eskimo to all others" (*Land* 238). Was this description of an "ugly black Eskimo" a reflection of Washburne's biases and a sign that Anauta was more acceptable because she looked more like a white woman than a Native?[23] Were this reflection of bias and this portrayal of her tacitly agreed to by Anauta? Were the lighter-skinned mixed-bloods more acceptable and "real" in the collaborators' eyes? Are the Inuit whom Anauta describes actually her own close-knit group of mixed-bloods, seen as superior to other full-blood Inuit? The book refers to the different kind of Inuit of Nachvak, Labrador, darker-skinned and strangely clothed, all unable to read or write: "this seemed strange, for in her homeland a person would be ashamed to have his child grow up and be so ignorant" (118-19). In his George River post journal, her first husband, William Ford, makes numerous references to "Huskies" (Buckner, *Descendants* 41-42).[24] He seems not to clearly allude to dogs, but may refer to Inuit; if so, this reference suggests a separation between him and them. In fact, he appears not to have had any Inuit blood (8, 11).[25]

It seems evident that Washburne portrayed Anauta as much more the primitive, noble, naive savage than she really was. Although it is impossible to say how much Anauta figured in the writing, Anauta's daughter asserts that her mother likely strongly influenced the text (Buckner, Letter 1997). The stereotype of the exotic and unsophisticated Native may have catered to the tastes of the American public of the 1940s, but the contradictions

in that stereotype also interest the reader. It appears that Anauta wished to portray herself as naive with respect to the unpleasant aspects of civilization, but as wiser with respect to the simple, sensible life. Whether she was advised to do so in part by her marketing company or whether she chose to represent herself in this manner is difficult to determine. Her daughter refers to her pleasing nature:

> She seemed to be happiest when she would dress in her Eskimo suit and entertain a crowd of people. She seemed to know just what to say whether it was a room full of male Elks or small children. She never disappointed the program chairmen responsible for her appearance. She didn't reflect a hard life--she was always smiles. (Buckner, Letter 1997)

Certainly, details included by Anauta in her lectures accord with those found in *Land of the Good Shadows.* She likely instinctively knew what the public wanted and expected. Perhaps the lecturer also began to or felt obliged to live up to the story and persona of the book. However, it is also possible that she had been raised on Inuit myths by Oomiálik and wanted others to enjoy stories as much as she did. Whether her tales were true or not, her audiences seemed inspired and pleased. "Truth" in autobiography is, after all, nebulous. How important is the "autobiographical contract" when the autobiographer deems illusion more important than facts? If anything, Anauta's lectures and text show how easily the genre may be manipulated and how credulous its audience may be.

Where, then, does autobiography end and fiction begin? Paul John Eakin believes that memory and imagination have become so closely entwined in autobiography that they

are scarcely distinguishable (6). In *Land of the Good Shadows*, narration in the third person adds to a fictional atmosphere. Further, it was not just the American collaborator who controlled the portrayal of the complicated "self"; Sarah Elizabeth Ford's imagination definitely influenced that depiction. Her "self" was invented to sell an autobiography and to amuse a gullible audience. There is no doubt that she was a very aware and intelligent collaborator who manipulated stereotypes to serve her own ends. In doing so, she also manipulated the autobiographical text, inclining it towards the novel. *Land of the Good Shadows* strongly supports Eakin's argument that

> [a]utobiographical truth is not a fixed but an evolving content in an intricate process of self-discovery and self-creation, and, further, . . . the self that is the center of all autobiographical narrative is necessarily a fictive structure. (3)

The book and the attitudes voiced in her lectures dramatically present an ongoing métissage. Anauta, a person caught between cultures, nevertheless found herself a living in the contact zone, despite its difficulties and sometimes negative connotations, so that by the late 1940s she no longer felt caught but comfortable. However intricate her story is for researchers, its complexity attests to one person's successful exploitation of métissage. It seems that Anauta did not set out to defy the dismal social identity awaiting those of mixed blood in North America, but that her life does attest to just such a defiance. She belies and defeats the prescriptive rules of the dominant culture and presents the person of Native heritage in a very positive light. Her life and her text offer extreme evidence at the positive end of the spectrum, and testify to the intelligence and creativity of a person who

refuses to be assimilated and insists on lauding an Aboriginal identity.

This forceful championing of a Native identity is carried on in yet another collaborative work, *Thrasher: Skid Row Eskimo* (1976), by Anthony Apakark Thrasher and journalists Gerard Deagle and Alan Mettrick. Thrasher, like Anauta, experienced life in the contact zone, but his experiences proved negative and eventually landed him in prison. He speaks from a situation of incarceration, still refusing to forget his people in the North and the place from which he came. His voice is filtered through the editing of two others; hence, issues of collaboration play a strong role in his book, as they do in *Land of the Good Shadows*.

Notes

1. The "good shadows" in the title alludes to the Northern lights, explained in the text as having been placed in the sky to help the Inuit (28).

2. Anauta's daughter by her second marriage, Mary Buckner, writes that

> Mother met Mrs. Washburne in Chicago while on a lecture tour. Mrs. Washburn [*sic*] had written some children's books. She encouraged Mother to put her life story in print and promised to help her arrange chapters and find a publisher. Mother wrote the stories and Mrs. Washburne put it in book form. Mrs. Washburne couldn't write about the North as she had no knowledge of Inuit life. Mother did two books later by herself as she learned the technique. *Children of the Blizzard* and *Wild Like The Foxes* can still be ordered special edition. . . . (Letter 1996)

3. Mary Buckner states that Anauta was popular as a lecturer: "in the 1940s-1960s she traveled the nation bringing laughter to school groups, clubs and churches" (Letter 1996). I note that my reliance on Buckner's view could be contested, she being a daughter of Anauta and not Anauta herself. However, for the purposes of this argument, Buckner's recollections are being regarded as accurate and offered in good faith.

4. In February 1997 Buckner wrote to the author as follows:

> I would say mother had a hard life both in the North and in Indiana.

> The North had its hardships but so did Indiana. After my birth she lost two infant daughters--one to pneumonia and one to a smallpox shot. She worked for a time in a factory that made batteries. This was during the depression when times were tough for everyone.

5. Mary Buckner reports that "the reception of 'Land of the Good Shadows' wasn't a financial success as another Eskimo book was released at the same time. The market wasn't large enough for two Eskimo books" (Letter 1996).

6. My research indicates a different date of publication for *Children of the Blizzard* (1952), which lists Heluiz Washburne and Anauta as its authors. In its introduction, Washburne states that "most of the things that happened to Salumo in this book really happened to Anauta" and that Anauta had related to her many of the stories that appeared in it (6). *Wild Like The Foxes* (1956), told in a similar style, lists Anauta as the only author.

7. Kjellstrom's *Eskimo Marriage* points out that there is conflicting information regarding sexual practices among the "Eskimos" and states that "the more probable truth of the matter, in general, is that sexual inexperience has by no means been anything in the nature of a demand in connection with marriage, and it has been neither expected nor appreciated" (24). In referring to initial heterosexual contacts, Kjellstrom reports that children saw the sex act performed at an early age and often tried to imitate their elders: "coitus was practised during puberty, and sometimes even before puberty" (25). Rasmussen also refers to boys and girls among the Netsilingmiut of the Boothia Peninsula "lying together" as early as age

ten or twelve (*Netsilik* 197).

8. The common practice among the Polar and Hudson Bay Inuit of eating blubber and fat as well as meat is mentioned by Peter Freuchen in his *Book of the Eskimos* (98). Rasmussen mentions the consumption of blubber by the Netsilingmiut as well (*Netsilik* 45).

9. Freuchen refers to the ancient practice of spousal exchange and states that "the Eskimos' rather free sexual mores are based on the necessities of their way of life as well as on their point of view concerning marriage" (57). Statements of Baffin Island Inuit concerning their relations with American and Scottish whalers also contradict Anauta's statements. In *When The Whalers Were Up North* (1989), Dorothy Eber points out that numerous Inuit on Baffin Island have white whaler ancestors. Rasmussen describes the rules of wife exchange among the Netsilik Inuit (*Netsilik* 195).

10. According to *Descendants of John Ford, Kingsbridge, Devon,* the Ford family genealogy compiled by Mary Buckner, the father of Anauta was George Ford, the son of John Ford of Devon, England, and John Ford's second wife, Mary Ann Summers, of Cupids, Newfoundland (v). Anauta's mother (born at Davis Inlet, Labrador) was Harriet Merryfield, daughter of Elizabeth Lane of Zoar, Labrador and of Thomas Merryfield of Devonshire, England (95, 98). A photograph in the family genealogy shows George and Harriet Ford and their family (including Anauta as a young girl of perhaps ten), all in proper English dress; the photo was apparently taken in St. John's, Newfoundland (95).

11. This was Harriet Lavinia Ford. A second daughter, Dorothy Jean Ford, was born in 1912, and a third, Wilhelmina Watson Ford, was born in 1914, after her father's death (Buckner *Descendants* 39).

12. See "Anyone" and "Clocks."

13. Buckner writes that "after Mother began lecturing she wanted to appear to be more Eskimo than she was so she glossed over her English background. Probably why she didn't mention the Ford hotel" (Letter 1997).

14. The excerpted newspaper article, entitled "Lady of the Snows: Story of a Dream and Romance," by Mildred Schoen, gives no newspaper title, nor date and place of publication. Mary Buckner has no knowledge that her mother went to school (Letter 1996).

15. See "Anyone." Also, Mary Buckner elaborates in her 1997 letter to the author:

> I've never quite known how my mother and father managed a courtship. But I am sure they knew each other in Twillingate. The Ford hotel and the Blackmore house were neighbors. My father said he went to school with William Ford, mother's first husband. When my father went back to Twillingate to pick up his mother and take her to Indiana, he must have persuaded mother to come to Indiana later. Mother liked the story of buying a long ticket which just happened to be Indiana. It always got a laugh. I would say that some of her stories probably did happen to other people

she had known.

16. Wilhelmina was born in 1914. She was left behind with relatives in St. John's, Newfoundland, when her mother and two older sisters went to the United States.

17. Mary Buckner adds:

> Yes I would say mother had a strong say in the writing of the book. And yes she would show herself to be more Native than she was. And she would have a right to feel that way. As I understand it she was brought up by Oomiàlik, mother of the hunter that died. So she really lived in two worlds--English when she was with her parents and Eskimo when with Oomiàlik. Her mother was part Eskimo also so she learned the language and customs well. Mr. Steffanson [*sic*] used mother to translate Eskimo passages for him in his works. (Letter 1997)

18. The brochure, kindly provided by Mary Buckner, gives no indication of author, page numbers, or date of publication.

19. Freuchen also refers to rubbing noses and states that "the custom was of no particular significance, other than olfactory," although he later qualifies this remark by stating that noses were perhaps important in a sensual way (87-88). Rasmussen observed nose-rubbing by the winner of an Inuit game; he "kissed all the women one by one, placing his arms round their necks and nuzzling violently at their noses" (*Netsilik* 83).

20. Rasmussen refers to numerous incidents of murder (*Netsilik* 54, 205) among the Netsilik and to theft from strangers, although stealing from fellow countrymen was apparently very rare (200). Freuchen refers to both murder and theft among some Inuit (114, 125).

21. The author of "Clocks," the article in the *Columbus (Ohio) Dispatch*, stated, however, that her husband's and friend's "doom was sealed by greedy whales" (6).

22. In studio photographs in the Ford family genealogy, Anauta's two brothers appear attired in sophisticated and proper English dress both as boys and later as adults (Buckner, *Descendants* 95, 109-10, 112, 117).

23. Photos of Anauta show her distinctly Caucasian features, although she did have olive skin and dark hair.

24. On 31 May 1911, Ford refers to a boat: "Got 'Lily' in ballast and will be ready to start tomorrow for the Huskies." By 5 August there was "no sign of 'Lily' coming up with the Huskies." On 9 October, "Eskimoes [were] still here and unable to leave. . . . All employed attending to Huskies." On 25 December, "Christmas Day. Huskies left this morning" (qtd. in Buckner, *Descendants* 41-42).

25. William Ford was the offspring of John Ford of Kingsbridge, England and Lavinia Learning, who was born in Cartwright, Labrador and whose parents were from Leamington, England and Carbonear, Newfoundland (Buckner, *Descendants* 8).

Chapter Three

Warning from the Contact Zone: Tony Thrasher, Skid Row Eskimo

> When I was in Spy Hill, I spent most of my days and nights in my cell, putting my thoughts down on paper. My lawyer, William Stilwell, told me: "Recall everything you can, Tony." It was something to do to pass the time, and it was also a way of educating myself. And I thought that maybe some day my writing would be read by Eskimo children and they would know what to watch out for, so they wouldn't end up like me, in a white man's cage. (*Thrasher: Skid Row Eskimo* 132)

People living in "contact zones" usually encounter "conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict" (Pratt, *Imperial* 6). Some of these people turn to writing, expressing feelings of victimization as they relate their life stories. Caught in situations of turmoil, they must adopt new strategies for survival in societies in transition, for life in such communities entails hybridity, fluctuation, and an interchange of ideas. Some writers strive for a cultural mixing, through which they may attempt to reclaim identities threatened by the pressures of living in a contact zone. Autobiographers caught in the middle of these exchanges may have to negotiate amongst stereotypes and counter them in creative ways, embracing some generalizations and refuting others. In so doing, they implicitly or perhaps even explicitly question accepted rules of the traditional canon of autobiography and instead establish their own standards.

This chapter explores how Anthony Apakark Thrasher (1937-1989) constructs himself as a victimized, but still powerful, individual who ensures imaginative survival in difficult conditions. It also examines how others influenced his self-representations. He remains an autobiographical rebel who retains agency from a position of relative powerlessness. His work demonstrates that life writings cannot be easily labelled and categorized; it also offers a different perspective for examining the autobiographies of marginalized people. Such writers, fully cognizant of the stereotypes often assigned to them, may choose to uphold positive conventions while refuting the negative.

Thrasher, an Inuk from the Western Arctic, produced his life writings in the particular context of western Canadian prison cells. Prisoners are generally left with few choices and little autonomy: in the penitentiary, the individual is to be classified, tamed, corrected, and normalized (Foucault 191). Thrasher, however, seems to resist any easy categorization amongst the incarcerated or the oppressed. He disconcertingly escapes being pigeonholed. Instead, he writes as one who possesses agency, even the power to change others' lives as well as his own.

On 21 July 1937, Anthony Thrasher was born in Paulatuk, Northwest Territories. He and his twenty-one siblings were raised by parents with drinking problems, his mother dying of alcohol poisoning when he was very young, and his father and stepmother imbibing alcohol frequently as he grew older. When he was six, Thrasher was sent to a Roman Catholic boarding school in Aklavik. He attended this institution until he was fourteen, suffering occasional physical abuse at the hands of the nuns. While still a teenager, he was forced to run four miles in winter without boots to avoid a beating from

his drunken parents, who later drove him from home for good. After holding various odd jobs, including reindeer herding, he travelled to Edmonton in 1957 to train as a diesel mechanic for the Distant Early Warning Line. Left without money or baggage, he and his Inuit companions wound up on Edmonton's skid row. There Thrasher began a long bout with alcohol, although in 1965 he managed to quit for a year.

But on 6 November 1969, in Calgary, he apparently killed Charles Ratkovitch when both were intoxicated. Witnesses had seen Thrasher helping the older man reach his apartment. Once inside, Ratkovitch suffered bruising, fractured ribs and nose, laceration of the small bowel, and extensive liver injury, all evidence of being beaten and stomped. Thrasher was arrested later that day for drinking in a public place. Police found that he carried two wallets, one of them Ratkovitch's, and that he also had in his possession the keys to Ratkovitch's apartment. Thrasher alleged that he could not remember having beaten the man.

So began a case centering around an exotic and foreign culture, with Thrasher its exemplar, for good or ill. Lawyer and judge perceived him as a representative of the Inuit "race,"and Thrasher himself appeared to encourage such romanticization. His innocence and freedom, or his guilt and incarceration, might depend on his adherence to certain stereotypical views of the Inuit. Instead of regarding him as an individual, outsiders saw him as a symbol.

Remanded since the late fall of 1969, arrested and sober by necessity, he decided to record his life story, as well as his thoughts on Inuit and their predicaments in modern times. There was little else to do while awaiting trial. When his lawyer, William Stilwell,

discovered that his client was taking this initiative, he encouraged him to preserve the writings; Thrasher then sent them to Stilwell in periodic installments. The lawyer had his secretary type up the manuscript just as Thrasher wrote it.

Stilwell was to quote from these writings at the murder trial: he likely did so in order to elicit sympathy for Thrasher, to show the harm alcohol had done him, and to illustrate the cultural distance that existed between Inuit society and that of outsiders. In this respect, Stilwell's argument was similar to that invoked at the trials in 1917 of Inuit Sinnisiak and Uluksuk, who were accused of murdering two Roman Catholic priests. Their lawyer, James E. Wallbridge, stated that the Inuk should be considered primitive and child-like, ignorant of white man's civilization, and that he "should be judged not by white man's standards, but by the standards of his own people" (Moyles, *British* 53).[1] At the Thrasher trial, Mr. Justice Riley seemed to take such an argument into account, but he nevertheless sentenced the defendant to fifteen years in the penitentiary.

But Thrasher's case did not end with his sentencing. His trial attracted the attention of *Calgary Herald* journalist Gerard Deagle, who attended the proceedings, heard his testimony and excerpts from his writings, and became interested in working with him on his life story. *Toronto Star* reporter Alan Mettrick, a friend of Deagle, also decided to assist in this collaboration. They followed his subsequent appeal, set in motion on 3 April 1970, a few days after sentence was passed. As a result of this appeal, Thrasher's sentence was reduced to seven years for manslaughter. His collaborators, their interest piqued by Thrasher's writing, then began working with him to produce *Thrasher: Skid Row Eskimo*.

The Finished Text

Thrasher's base manuscript was to be shaped by the two journalists into the collaborative text published in 1976 in clothcover as *Thrasher: Skid Row Eskimo*, and later the same year in paperback as *The Three Lives of Thrasher*. Dolphin and McCarthy's 1982 article in *Alberta Report* claims that "most of the Eskimo's evocative language and imagery was preserved" in what were nevertheless termed "crudely written" memoirs (30). Unpleasant details of his later life and sexually explicit descriptions of homosexuals in prison emerge, as do graphic depictions of prison violence, including a riot of the inmates of Prince Albert Penitentiary. The self that appears is grounded in the material conditions of jail and poverty. Thrasher's existence is inseparable from the life of the outcast and prisoner. As the title seems to promise, the focus is on alcohol and its ravaging of the Native.

In his brief analysis of *Thrasher*: *Skid Row Eskimo*, Brumble gives his opinion on the editorializing of the text:

> One suspects that their editorial hand was quite heavy on Thrasher's earlier efforts, lighter on the later material, which he wrote while he was educating himself in the prison school. There is no indication as to which parts of this autobiography were written when, other than internal evidence which seems to suggest that Thrasher wrote his account of his prison years late. Deagle and Mettrick supplemented the written record with their own tape recordings of his recollections. The result is an extraordinary book.

> . . . This is one of the very good autobiographies. (*Annotated* 138-39)

Collaboration is a common phenomenon in areas of métissage,[2] and collaborators sometimes bow to stereotypes in fashioning another's writings. Thrasher's published work is itself an example of hybridity, of what one might call "autobiography by committee." His "autobiographical truth" is not just of his own making; because it evolves under the auspices of two white journalists, with their own ideas of what the Native self should be, it further complicates our view of his character. As Inuk, Thrasher was expected to conform to certain norms.

The two journalists draw on the common conventional ideas of the Native in Canadian literature, as keeper of nature and tradition, close to the land and steeped in mystery. They rely heavily on the notion of the noble indigene, closely aligned with nature, threatened by the encroachment of white society and technology.[3] As Terry Goldie puts it, the "noble savage," no ordinary individual, proves more than just a product of nature; he is elevated above the general race (31). Indeed, the journalists' foreword, in the romanticizing trend of Thrasher's legal defense, transforms him into an exemplary figure: "In the prime of his life he became a symbol of something new that was happening in the far north, a crutch for a niggardly white conscience" (*Thrasher* viii). It also places him in the context of Inuit myth: "Thrasher's antecedents go far back into the haunting antiquity of Eskimo mythology. He is descended from medicine men" (x). Mettrick and Deagle honour Thrasher's words by describing their own scepticism, apparently later overcome after a thorough check of the details of his story. They characterize their task as one of

collating the manuscript into a narrative and then to "authenticate that narrative as thoroughly as possible and expand it" (x).

They reference the truth-value of a "diary" and then the truth-value of journalistic research. There seems to be an implicit necessity for non-Native, non-convict, non-alcoholic approval in order to validate Thrasher's autobiography. The actual details of the book's expansion are difficult to determine. Perhaps Mettrick and Deagle had their own ideas of what would appeal to the public, from their experience in their own particular medium. Deagle interviewed Thrasher extensively in his cell and obtained there the details of various parts of the published book. Prison occurrences, as well as descriptions of life and acquaintances on skid row, flesh out the collaborative work. Legends of the oral tradition are contrasted with life in jail and on the streets; the romantic past and the gritty present are juxtaposed and contrasted.

Thrasher: Skid Row Eskimo is notable for its incongruencies of style and oddities of structure. Earthy colloquialisms often combine with an airy pathos: "I see us starving while others get rich from the oil and mineral resources, crushed by the emerging giant like a page out of Eskimo mythology" (154). In this passage, the heedless white culture pulverizes the helpless Inuit. Thrasher's collaborators help recreate him as a romanticized Inuk "type," a symbolic survivor of a deteriorating culture, victimized by a rapacious Other.

Although Mettrick and Deagle might have promoted their own political agenda, to show the Native as the prey of outsiders' greed and corruption, Thrasher also promoted his. He may well have played upon his audience's sympathies in an opportunistic way.

Collaboration often involves mixed motives, but the subject may speak against appropriation; "collaboration does not necessarily mean capitulation" (Goldman 183-84). Thrasher's own voice may emerge in *Thrasher: Skid Row Eskimo*. Emphasizing loss of agency, as in the manuscript, the foreword presents him as a scapegoat, a casualty of alcoholism and alienation; by beginning and ending identically--"We have been silent too long" (*Thrasher* xi, 164)--the text reifies both Thrasher's status as victim and his status as soothsayer on whose wise insights Inuit salvation might be established, so that his demise will not have been in vain. He identifies himself as an "easy target," a marginalized figure imprisoned like an animal in a foreign environment. But he continually refers to myth and history to elevate himself and his people, if not to transcend his squalor. Such references, common in the printed book, serve as a temporary escape from the place of incarceration or suffering, and boost the self-esteem so lowered by prison surroundings. The depiction of a dead man, his skull split open on the pavement of skid row, is followed by a lyrical description of an old-time Inuit family living off the land (*Thrasher* 101); as Thrasher writes, "The deeper I got into Skid Row and liquor, the more I would dream of the North" (102). The North becomes a haven, but not a utopia without pitfalls. The challenges of battling the elements render the individual hardier and stronger, no longer a victim, but one whose awareness of environment and cultural identity aids survival. Yet this is as illusory as Thrasher's dreams, for the profoundly dominant direction of the book's plot is downward.

Thrasher's motives for composing his life story may have been mixed. He seemed to possess a genuine hope of bettering the lot of his people, but a desire for redemption

may also have influenced his writing. Robin McGrath attributes to Thrasher's work an effort to win acceptance from the Inuit community, to absolve himself of the crimes he committed (*Canadian* 90). McGrath does not agree that Thrasher murdered no one. She did not delve further into the intricacies of his work, but summarily registered her disapproval of it:

> Written by Tony Thrasher while he was serving a jail sentence for killing a man in a Calgary bar, *Thrasher* is a horrifying portrait of cultural disturbance. The author recalls drunken sprees with obvious relish, makes some dreadfully racist remarks about blacks and Indians, and shows little inclination to take responsibility for his anti-social behavior. The most appalling thing about the book is that you come away from it with a certain reluctant affection for the man. (89-90)

Thrasher, then, if one can accept McGrath's response as widely representative, did not behave the way Inuit "should." No ideal Inuk, he disturbs the homogeneity of all "Others." He did not always adhere to the expectations of readers and critics, but this audience was accustomed to depictions of Inuit issuing from the pens of outsiders, not from Inuit themselves. Alternatively pictured as child-like, primitive, or inherently violent,[4] Inuit seemed to possess no voices of their own. Rarely have Canadian authors considered in any depth the opinions and identities of Inuit; when they do, stereotypical notions of a smiling, passive, acquiescent race usually prevail, as ethnographer Hugh Brody, one of the exceptions, points out in *Living Arctic* (19).

A Complex Identity

Thrasher's voice comes as a shock to readers accustomed to conventionally passive Inuit characters, for he tends to disrupt and question outsiders' conceptions of the Native. He acts as the canny Native informant, explaining the Inuit to ignorant outsiders, reporting from Edmonton's skid row, and then prison. And, as is common in such contact zones, the "autoethnographer" represents himself in an act that involves some collaboration with, and adoption of, the idioms of the conqueror or colonizer (Pratt, *Imperial* 7). Thrasher identifies himself as victim instead of accused, attempting to right injustice through his testimony as one who has suffered directly from the ills of southern civilization. Dealing with cultural shock and necessary adaptations, he then proceeds to confront the negotiations required in an area of métissage.

Acting as both ethnographer and explorer in a southern society, he recounts his story from a particular area of conflict, as well as of compromise and dialogue. Thrasher reports on a different culture, but hardly from the point of view of the disinterested outsider. Clifford Geertz enumerates the many factors acting on the ethnographer: the "self," landscape, isolation, the local population, the memory of home, the passions, and a sense of vocation (*Works* 77). There is an increasing tendency to nervousness about that "self" in ethnographic writing, along with a sense that ethnography is more and more a "work of art and imagination" (135). Autobiography and ethnographic account tend to merge and overlap. James Clifford refers to the fieldwork account "yielding to autobiography and self-portrait" (Clifford and Marcus 14) and to ethnography as a kind of "performance" (98). That once-lauded idea of scientific detachment is now overshadowed

by the idea of the fieldworker's self intervening openly in the ethnographic experience.[5] Thrasher does not suppress his emotions; he seems to follow these recent trends in anthropology which suggest that the ethnographer cannot help his own involvement and should acknowledge it. Thrasher also practices some form of "salvage ethnography" in which he captures the traditions of a supposedly vanishing culture (that of the Inuit). In addition, he embodies what Mary Louise Pratt calls the "naive informant turned hustler"; he becomes a representative of "the indigenous people who, specifically through the ethnographic content, have acquired a vested interest in westernization and a concrete day-to-day link with the larger structures of exploitation" ("Fieldwork" 44). He reports on the southerners' ways only to criticize them for their detrimental effect on Inuit.

As explorer, he describes himself, Kiviok-like, as a wanderer, one curious about new ways and interested in knowledge. However, instead of attaining glory and enhanced self-esteem in his adventures, he courts disaster due to lack of education about southern society. His is not the thrusting gaze Terry Goldie ascribes to explorers' narratives (15); Thrasher does not try to possess the outside culture, whereas Goldie states that white explorers sought indigenization (42). Instead, Thrasher seeks a point of comfort, an adaptation. Whereas explorers of the North usually imposed their own points of view on the native, Thrasher must align his attitudes with southern mores and change his behaviour if he is to survive. He particularly emphasizes the ill effects of alcohol on a people unaware of its dangers.[6] Addressing himself to both Native and non-Native interlocutors, he describes the adjustments involved in a hybrid culture, and warns Inuit of the dangers: "You can never tell who you'll meet on Skid Row, or what they're up to. They see a

simple Eskimo who knows nothing of frame-up artists, bookies, loan sharks, crooked ticket-sellers, bootleggers, pimps, prostitutes, queers, muggers, and they prey on you" (*Thrasher* 96-7).

In some ways he still resists the colonizer's rules. In adopting this position of resistance, he does fit into the expected norms for skid row residents. Hugh Brody refers to the distinctive subculture of skid row, with its "colonially exploited groups" (*Indians* 3) and a "conspicuous disregard for the dominant mores of Canadian society [that] solidifies the community" (19). Furthermore, the majority of Indian criminals are inebriated when they commit crimes (22). The rebellion of Thrasher, like that of many skid row residents, represents a "more or less complete indifference to the strictures of puritanism in the larger society," with no great desire for economic security or advancement (Brody 25, 30). Perhaps it is this different lifestyle that contributes to the problems the reader encounters in trying to pin down his character. The repeated difficulties of understanding his contradictory persona/personae suggest a need to consider them as forming a skid row enclave in the midst of a traditional canon that would have silenced him in the past.

Indeed, Thrasher furthers the idea of what Neuman calls a "poetics of differences," a system that opposes itself to static and romanticized conceptions of the Native. But at the same time he embraces a political essentialism that promotes a homogenized view of his people. Neuman points out that the autobiographical self is to some extent passive and constructed by discourse, but that it also may assume agency. Thrasher, by operating from a series of positions, instances what Neuman identifies in autobiography as "a complex, multiple, layered subject; not only constructed by differences but able to choose, inscribe,

and make a difference" ("Poetics" 225). Or so he would have us believe.

As will be seen, past theorists of Native autobiography seem to oppose such a multiple subjectivity, instead embracing the idea of communality; in this configuration, the individual is viewed as responsible to and strongly connected with his or her community. Arnold Krupat, who concentrates on American Indian autobiography and focuses little attention on Inuit life stories, writes that egocentric individualism was never legitimated by Native cultures; uniqueness was not privileged (*For Those* 29-30). This generality may not necessarily hold true for Inuit societies, where the best hunter is often lauded in myth, and the *isumataaq*, or informal leader of a group, was usually the best at procuring food (Mitchell, *From Talking* 35). Thrasher's is a narrative of a "hero's" life, of one who has suffered persecution but who nevertheless continues to revere and uphold his "race."

Thrasher does follow the conventions of Native autobiography in numerous respects. Paula Gunn Allen writes that much Native American writing is imbued with a "pervasive sense of uneasiness, of having been shut out or disenfranchised, of anger at circumstances that have resulted in overt or covert alienation from the basic source of one's consciousness . . . though its expression is often disguised by historically justified anger and culturally supported romanticizing of the old ways" (129). Allen generalizes in some respects about Native cultures; she tends to mythologize Native women and their power in the past (266). However, Warley points to the heterogeneity of Aboriginal peoples; she asserts that there have always been differences among Native groups, languages, and cultures, but that the "discourse of Aboriginality has sought to minimize those differences in order to mount a politics of resistance based on unity" ("Locating"

64). Thrasher is an individual who definitely rails against his marginalization in both Native and non-Native societies, but he also expresses his anger against the injustice he perceives perpetrated against his people. He embraces difference and yet purports to conform to Inuit ways.

He does demonstrate the clear influence of Inuit legend which is not uncommon in Inuit autobiography. He romanticizes old customs, with his frequent references to ancient tales: "The first of my people came on the ice, blown by the wind, brought by the magic of the Northern Lights and the North Wind" (*Thrasher* 153). His writing also encompasses violence, scatology, and sexuality so often sanitized by white editors of Inuit myth (McGrath, "Figures" 57). As has been stated earlier in this dissertation, according to McGrath, Inuit men often base their narratives on legends of two major Inuit epic heroes, Kaujjarjuk and Kiviok.[7] The Kaujjarjuk myth involves a poor orphan who gains strength after humiliation and eventually takes revenge on his tormentors. The Kiviok myths revolve around a strong, womanizing, wandering hunter-hero who is both daring and boastful. McGrath sees such works as Bob Cockney's *I, Nuligak* and Peter Pitseolak's *People From Our Side* as paralleling the adventures of one or the other of these heroes ("Circumventing" 224).

Thrasher's works, however, seem to be patterned on both Kaujjarjuk and Kiviok. Humiliated by his alcoholism and jailed many times before 1970, Thrasher uses his writings to re-invent himself and to regain self-esteem. He transforms himself from a Kaujjarjuk to a Kiviok. Abused by others, bullied at school, he nevertheless comes to excel at physical tasks like woodcutting and is a successful hunter. He often refers to his hunting

prowess and his success with women, to his physical strength and his travels. His writings are to him a source of pride, a sign of talent and intelligence, a triumph over the conditions from which he writes. In the autobiography, he introduces myths and legends that his father and grandfather told him, as well as the adventures of "real" Inuit living in the North.

Aside from referring to Inuit myth, his works conform to conventions of Inuit autobiography in forming testimonials to upheaval. Inuit autobiographers also commonly refute stereotypical ideas about the Inuit and the North. Thrasher, like Minnie Aodla Freeman and Alice French, addresses himself to white readers, trying to increase outsiders' understanding of Inuit ways of life and thus their comprehension of the disorienting effects of the contact zone upon Inuit. Thrasher also follows the perceived patterns of Inuit autobiography in his continual efforts to tie his identity to that of a communal Inuit society.

But Thrasher also rebukes that society for its acquiescence and urges change: he repeats, "[w]e have been silent too long" (*Thrasher* 164). He dares to criticize his own people; such a gesture is unusual in a communal culture. He ignores "ilira," that feeling of awe and intimidation often felt by Inuit in the presence of powerful outsiders (Brody, *Living* 217); instead, he willingly offers his opinions. With this constant juxtaposing of the individual and communal, we see no real "truth," but many performances, and, after we read his work, many questions remain.

Far from subordinating his individual views to those of a communal culture, Thrasher leaves many traces of a flamboyant personality. He displays energy, vitality, and

humour in the midst of sordid conditions. Constantly asserting himself, transforming himself into a martyr, he tells of his dream visions and his waking aspirations. But he is no indigene mystically outside of time; time is crucial to him, as with other prisoners counting away the duration of their sentences.

He remained marginalized until the end, "othered" by both whites and Inuit. *Thrasher: Skid Row Eskimo* did not receive much critical attention, perhaps because, as Ioan Davies comments, prison writing in Canada forms a backwater, largely ignored in favour of prison writings from other countries (7). A solitary review by Colin Ross in the *Canadian Book Review Annual* for 1976 reads as follows:

> This is a good book. Thrasher's original diary has been worked on by two journalists, and they have done their job well. Only occasionally does white, southern sentiment creep in. For the most part it reads convincingly like the unadulterated Thrasher. I can say that with some authority, since his sister used to make phone calls from my shack in Inuvik. (82)

Once more an outsider expresses the need to find a "pure" Inuk, not under the influence of the "other." The remark about the sister simplifies the character of the Native, rendering him readily definable and accessible. Such simplistic comments serve to dismiss Thrasher and rob him of agency and complexity.

Whether or not Thrasher ever read this review or any other about his book is unknown. He continued his drinking after he gained freedom from his last prison sentence, and eventually was found lying in a parking lot in downtown Edmonton in July, 1989. He died two days later; no foul play was suspected. Only his acquaintances on skid row and

the workers who knew him at the hostels he frequented seemed to accept him. About forty of these friends, many weeping, filed past his coffin after his funeral. Dennis Barker, a worker at Urban Manor, the hostel where Thrasher lived for the last years of his life, commented, "[h]e was always full of wit--he could keep you laughing for hours if he was in the mood. . . . I dearly loved that big bear." Yet Thrasher left the walls of Urban Manor full of holes which he had punched in frustration. Hostel director Paul Neville summarized the Inuk's life: "He wanted to reach out for people, but society didn't seem to reach out to him" (Kent).

This statement seems aptly to describe Thrasher's existence, his never quite successful attempts to communicate, his frustration at being unable to convince others of his innocence, and his efforts to transform himself through written language into a larger-than-life figure. When perusing Thrasher's works, one may wonder if they reflect what is commonly seen in post-colonial societies as the "cultural denigration, the conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model," in a "dialectic of place and displacement" (Ashcroft *et al* 9). Thrasher uses that idea of conscious oppression to present a wronged self, drained of agency, though heroically battling harmful stereotypes. *Alberta Report* (1982) states, "Although Mr. Stilwell thinks it's time perhaps Mr. Thrasher accepted some responsibility for his actions, Mr. Thrasher continues to view himself as a victim" (Dolphin and McCarthy 32).

To place himself in a better light, he chooses advantageous ideologies, embracing what outsiders would deem the foreign and exotic aspects of his culture and disavowing

the label of "primitive savage." Neither pure natural man nor passive colonised subject, he instead contradicts both positive and negative depictions of the Inuit. Somehow he is both collaborator and resister, opportunist and dissenter. Marginalized and dislocated in Canadian society by his race and his incarceration, Thrasher strains against imposed boundaries. He refuses to be bracketed, reinventing himself and his culture to suit other ideologies and ideals.

Writing of, but no longer from, the North, he offers little stability as he weaves himself around stereotypes, skirts Inuit mythology, and emerges from the collaborative situation. The "real" Thrasher remains just out of reach. His works illustrate Eakin's assertion that autobiographical truth is not static (17) and "in making the text the autobiographer constructs a self that would not otherwise exist" (26). However, Thrasher hardly subscribes to Eakin's model of autobiography; the identity he presents often seems a fluctuating composite, a combination of an ethnographic as well as autobiographical self. Thrasher absorbs some of the alien, outside culture at the same time as he espouses the authority of his Inuit background; hence, he gives up some of that "pure" Inuit identity even as he upholds his heritage and attempts to claim an ethnographic selfhood as part of a disappearing people whose culture he wishes to salvage.

Seen through the filters of his various autobiographical performances as writer, alcoholic, Inuk spokesman, and possible murderer, he remains a difficult subject. Yet his works speak to racism and oppression as much as to a criminal's motivations. Alluding to stereotypes of Inuit in order to label him proves fruitless; he transcends conventional conceptions of cultural identity and endures instead as a complex self, one whose unusual

and compelling life writings preserve a troubling and extraordinary identity. His writings cumulatively adumbrate in most agonizing fashion a body and mind imprisoned between two cultures. That space is prison or skid row or (perhaps) residential school. Here Pratt's "radically asymmetrical relations of power" (*Imperial* 7) common to the contact zone are clearly demonstrated, and Thrasher cannot emerge unscathed. The negative aspects of existence here outweigh the possibilities for improvement or empowerment; the balancing act required of the writer located at the overlapping of contact zone and site of métissage is not achieved. Métissage, in this case at least, is terrifying.

Thrasher attempts to translate his experiences from a frightening foreign environment, as do numerous Inuit autobiographers. Minnie Aodla Freeman and Alice French, the writers whose works are examined in the next chapter, also endeavour to facilitate understanding of their experiences as Inuit in situations of métissage. They too speak from the contact zone, for they also eventually left their homes in the North to enter very different surroundings. Their experiences proved not as harrowing as Thrasher's, but nevertheless they still experienced culture shock. Through personal interviews and their autobiographical texts, they, like Thrasher, wish to explain the ways of Inuit societies and to warn young Inuit of the dangers of the outside world.

Notes

1. See Moyles's *British Law and Arctic Men* for full particulars of the 1917 trials, the first murder trials of Inuit under white man's law. See also MacLaren and Laframboise (261) for additional references to the trials of Uluksuk and Sinnisiak. They also refer to the trial of other Inuit, Tatamagana and Aligoomiak, arrested for the murders of an R.C.M.P. officer and a white trader. Although "a reprieve was sought on the grounds that Inuit were insufficiently familiar with 'the laws of civilization'" (245), the men were executed at Herschel Island on 1 February 1924; they were the first Inuit executed for murder under Canadian law.
2. See Brumble, who states that, of more than six hundred published Indian autobiographical narratives, some forty-three per cent were collected and edited by anthropologists and forty per cent edited by other Anglos (*American* 72).
3. See Moyles and Owram for details about the primitive savage/dignified nobleman dichotomy, especially as the idea applied to Canadian Indians viewed from the British perspective.
4. See, for example, the novels of Yves Thériault and the Robert Flaherty film, *Nanook of the North*.
5. See, for example, Margaret Blackman and Florence Edenshaw Davidson's *During My Time* and Blackman's *Sadie Brower Neakok: An Inupiaq Woman*, in which Blackman as ethnographer purposely explains her own feelings and biases and her reasons for intervening in the texts.
6. He follows other Inuit voices which have, since at least Campbell's diary in 1894,

documented the deterioration of their customary ways under the influence of alcohol. Thrasher typifies a more recent trend to Inuit written assertion of agency in the struggle with alcohol. His book precedes a special issue of the magazine *Inuit Today*, entitled *Alcoholism: A Northern Dilemma*, published in 1978.

7. For more information on Kiviok and Kaujjarjuk, see McGrath's *Canadian Inuit Literature*, 71-72.

Chapter Four

Translating Life Writings: Minnie Aodla Freeman and Alice French

> Different texts from different locales require us to develop different theories and practices of reading, what we might call 'stand-point' reading practices. Such practices call all of us, positioned specifically in our own locales, both to engage the autobiographical practices of colonial subjects and to critique our own points of observation. (Smith and Watson, *De/Colonizing* xxviii)

> We do not sit with each other long enough to understand each other. We do not educate each other enough to understand each other's cultures. (Freeman, "Dear Leaders" 188)

Readings of some academic criticism of Native women's autobiographies leave impressions of these women as following certain established patterns of writing, or adhering to certain political beliefs. However, with changing times and in situations of métissage, such impressions may not necessarily be correct, for numerous critics, although not well-informed concerning Inuit cultures, choose not to consult Inuit writers. Instead, they speak for them as if granted an intuitive knowledge of their opinions, in effect, skewing the images of the autobiographers. It appears problematic for some theorists to reach beyond such depictions. The temptation is to categorize, rather than to explore the

individual woman's life and works; it is admittedly difficult to work without some attempt to find commonalities. Additionally, because Inuit women's works do not readily fit into the academic canon, scholars have grouped and marginalized them with others of Native background. Yet, in the general theorizing concerning the genre of autobiography, gaps and differences in the writing and among writers frequently occur.[1] Such differences also manifest themselves in Inuit women's life writing. But there seems a discomfort in dealing with texts from an unfamiliar culture, and the discrepancies are sometimes glossed over or dismissed too quickly.

The representation of the Inuk woman's voice by the critics and by the woman herself leads to the question of what exactly constitutes "authentic" Inuit women's autobiography, as this chapter delineates. Sara Suleri points out that

> the claim to authenticity--only a black can speak for a black; only a postcolonial subcontinental feminist can adequately represent the lived experience of that culture--points to the great difficulty posited by the 'authenticity' of female racial voices in the great game that claims to be the first narrative of what the ethnically constructed woman is deemed to want. (760)

The writings and remarks of Inuit autobiographers Minnie Aodla Freeman and Alice French demonstrate the difficulties of translating "authentic" Inuit works for outsiders; they also attest to the pitfalls of prescriptive notions about Inuit women and their writings. Although Freeman and French appear as translators or interpreters of and for their cultures, they do not always adhere strictly to communal ideas, as Natives have

been reputed to do;[2] in their works, we observe the individual wrested from the oral community, still linked to it, but continuing to express her own distinctive needs and opinions. The reader may ask: are the autobiographical voices of Minnie Aodla Freeman and Alice French really those of "genuine" Inuit? Perhaps the admission that there is likely no such person as the "true" Inuk is difficult to grasp. The tendency to see Inuit as unchanging and silent icons of the North may blind the audience to what are very distinct differences among individuals.[3] And when authors speak from sites of métissage, as has been demonstrated in earlier chapters of this dissertation, ready generalizations often prove deficient. The differing strategies of adaptation frequently accompanying a mixture of cultures make it difficult to establish patterns. What may appear to the critic as politically motivated texts, even verging on testimonio, may not seem so to the individual Inuk writer. John Beverley notes that "the situation of narration in testimonio has to involve an urgency to communicate, a problem of repression, poverty, subalternity, imprisonment, struggle for survival, and so on, implicated in the act of narration itself' (14).[4] The struggle for survival is often emphasized in Inuit autobiographies, either in battle with the elements of nature or in enduring the cultural shock frequently experienced in times of transition or situations of métissage. However, the Inuk writer may define "political" in a different way, and, given the opportunity, may question a scholar's opinions about the purposes behind an autobiographical work.

Much of my chapter centres on taped interviews with Minnie Freeman and Alice French, and it must be remembered that the interview process itself may be biased by my manner of questioning and the interview situations. As Gwen D. Reimer comments on her

interviews with twenty-five Inuit women in Pangnirtung in 1992, "[i]n retrospect, if I had done things differently, would I now know things differently?" (78). She adds, "[l]ooking back on my situation, I realize again how limited is the researcher's view of the 'Other's' life and culture" (97). Freeman and French are responding directly both to questions concerning the influence of the autobiographical enterprise on their images of self and to requests by me to react to the writings of various critics. The interviews cited here involve retrospective comments from the Inuit autobiographers themselves, responding after the fact to criticisms of their works, in particular to the academic discussion of Robin McGrath, especially concerning Inuit women's autobiography.

McGrath has travelled widely in the North and has written extensively and impressively on Inuit texts. Her dissertation on Inuit literature, as well as her writings on Inuit mythology and poetry, stand as important landmarks in the study of Inuit writings. However, I would question some of her statements about Inuit autobiography, especially Inuit women's life writings. It is possible that the direction of Inuit women's autobiography is changing with time; it is also likely that increased consultation with Inuit women writers would reveal different points of view. All-encompassing statements do not seem warranted or tenable in situations of cultural change. Both French and Freeman implicitly dispute some of McGrath's assertions concerning Inuit women's life stories. McGrath's statements in her essay, "Circumventing the Taboos: Inuit Women's Autobiographies," do not necessarily apply to French's later work, *The Restless Nomad* (1992), which seems to signal a new trend in Inuit women's life writings. McGrath stated that Inuit women tend to observe a taboo against drawing attention to themselves as

adults and that they frequently fictionalize their lives ("Circumventing" 224). Neither French nor Freeman appear to be self-effacing autobiographers, seldom revealing their innermost thoughts, saving their writing until old age. French, in particular, does not confine her memoirs to childhood incidents, and proceeds to describe her depression as a young married woman, the trials of married life, and her subsequent divorce and new marriage. McGrath also declares that Inuit women did not write about themselves in the way men have: "to draw attention to themselves overtly is to invite ridicule" (225). At least after she had published her later work, French's view did not align with McGrath's:

> I don't think so. A lot of the women that I knew growing up--the women were the mainstay in Inuit society in the Delta and I couldn't tell you that they were shy . . . in any way to put forward their ideas. My grandmother--she was the head of our house, you know.[5]

French warns against generalizations about Inuit women: "I think it depends on the individual you know. . . . We all have our own way of writing" (Interview).

McGrath also refers to the tendency of Inuit men to include traditional stories with their reminiscences, but adds that ". . . Inuit women do not use myths and legends to structure their autobiographies" (224). Although, in *My Name is Masak* (91), French refers to one legend about shamans told by her father, and briefly mentions traditional ceremonies for the dead in *The Restless Nomad* (142), she includes no other digressions in her second book. As she states, she does not remember many oral narratives: "I did not commit to memory as I should have the many stories and legends that the older people had

told us by word of mouth, because I thought we would always have them. I have often regretted my carelessness in taking them for granted" (*Nomad* 136).

Minnie Freeman, too, has responded to McGrath's analysis of Inuit women's autobiography. She agrees that Inuit women are "culturally brought up not to be outward as women; it's always been that way"; however, she believes that Inuit women are more outspoken today and that since the 1960s there has been a change in their attitude. Freeman also maintains that she has not fictionalized her life; in fact, she declares, "I wish mine *was* made up." She adds, "All we Inuit women who are writing about the North, the weather, the snow and all these things, might be [the] same, but our experiences are very different from one woman to another."[6]

These writers with their differing cultural backgrounds seem to have partially escaped the confines of tradition, although they do acknowledge its importance. Freeman refers to the quiet respect shown to elders; French alludes to obeying the aged. Freeman avows, ". . . as an Inuk brought up with very deep traditional values, I found it very hard to take the lead, especially as I have been raised never to speak out knowledgeably in front of elders" ("Introduction" 16). Alice French concurs: "Most Inuit girls are taught to listen to their elders and not to question them. Even at home I never questioned my elders, like my grandmother; I would never speak back to her"; however, she sees young people today as much more forward in expressing their opinions (Interview).

It is clear that Inuit writers, while agreeing on some points, do not necessarily agree with each other on the purposes of Inuit autobiography, or in their outlook on Inuit cultures. There are obvious dissimilarities between Freeman and French. The two writers

have met each other and conversed. In a 1997 interview, Alice French spoke of Minnie Freeman:

> [Minnie Freeman and I] don't have sort of long enough time to sort of talk about everything, but we kind of touch on things, but most of all I think what we touch on is the difference between our two cultures. You know, she's from the east and I'm from the west and we compare a lot because I think she's like me; I like to know what the other Inuit do in different parts of Canada, how do they live, what do they hunt, and how do they make their clothing because even in our clothing [we] are different, you know. (Interview)

Freeman and French assert and establish their identities through their writing, in texts that strongly resist labelling. As the introduction to this dissertation asserted, the autobiographical self is affected by multiple and changing factors and circumstances, and métissage may encourage a fluid identity. The influences on the Inuk self are no different, but such complexity is often not taken into account. Inuit societies vary across the Arctic. Even in the sometimes strict circumstances of upbringings with clear rules and taboos, in times of cultural upheaval, these rules may be defied or forgotten. And they vary with each Inuit culture. Moreover, through contact with southern ways, individuals' behaviours and perceptions have changed and continue to change. It may be convenient to speculate about their autobiographical personae as representing Inuit culture, but, in the long run, such generalizations may prove facile. One could argue, though, that both French and Freeman are truly representative in that Inuit do speak from contact zones today. French and

Freeman refer to customary ways of life, but each must leave traditional environments and adapt to different, non-Inuit conditions; such conditions differ with the individual. This chapter proceeds to examine the emerging new directions of Inuit women's life writings, the diverse influences on the "selves" of Minnie Freeman and Alice French, and their stances as Inuit women autobiographers as represented in their texts and in interviews.

Minnie Aodla Freeman

Born on the Cape Hope Islands of James Bay in 1936, Minnie Freeman grew up with the customary ways of her people; her grandfather, Weetaltuk, was a highly respected elder and leader of his group. After losing their mother at an early age, Minnie and her brother were raised by their grandparents and father. As a young child, she was taken to St. Thomas Anglican boarding school at Moose Factory. She writes, "with one hundred and ninety-nine Indian children I was the only Inuk child, for a total of two hundred girls. I was learning two languages at the same time, one with three different dialects" (*Life* 104). Later afflicted by tuberculosis, she was sent to hospital at Fort George and there learned the basics of nursing skills, with the sisters at the hospital encouraging her to become a nurse and to help her people. Instead, at the age of twenty, she went to Ottawa as a translator for the federal government; she interpreted for many Inuit who were sick in hospitals at the time. Her book, *Life Among the Qallunaat* (1978),[7] describes her life up to this age and her experiences in adjusting to southern ways.[8]

Life Among The Qallunaat was considered for the Governor-General's Award. It was written in three months. Although its more than four hundred pages were edited to

two hundred and fifty-nine, Freeman was not perturbed; she assumed she could always use the rest in some other writing. The autobiography has been translated into three languages: German, Greenlandic, and French. It has received considerable usage in the Canadian school system in the North. Reviewer Jan Roseneder, in the *Canadian Book Review Annual, 1978*, seems to commend its pedagogical qualities when she writes, "[t]he matter-of-fact accounts of her own experiences will help many who read this book to realize what has happened and still is happening when Native cultures are overwhelmed by the white man's government, religions and industries" (32).

Although Freeman reacted to her autobiography's success with a certain amount of pride, her recalling her grandmother's saying, "if you produce anything good, don't get your head big," sharply qualified any resulting egotism. She later regretted not more forcefully promoting her material, and questioned her own actions because "in writing . . . it's like dog eat dog in the South" (Interview). In her text and in her life, she acknowledges the problems of adaptation involved when two cultures meet. She often faced the dilemma of trying to find a path between her traditional Inuit society and the demands of a southern lifestyle.

The foreword of her autobiography refers to the turmoil amongst Inuit during her youth. Alex Stevenson, former Administrator of the Arctic, writes of the "difficulties and misunderstandings" Freeman faced in southern Canada. He terms her book "enchanting" and lauds Freeman for having "made a fine contribution to Canadiana, helping . . . to bring about a better understanding of Canada's multi-cultural society" (*Life* 11).[9] It is questionable how much understanding the author or her book has actually received

outside the North, as further critical assessments in this chapter will illustrate.

Freeman opens with a quandary in translation: how to define "qallunaat." Are they "people who pamper their eyebrows" or "powerful, avaricious, of materialistic habit, people who tamper with nature" (n.p.) ? A translator herself, a mediator between her society and southern Canada, she points out the difficulties of interpretation. Some matters remain uncertain and imprecise; although she attempts to convey the story of her early life, it is impossible for the reader to grasp fully the conditions under which she lived. As Eakin asserts, autobiography is a complex genre whose referential basis is unstable (186); further, the process of self-discovery is inextricably entwined with self-invention (55). Add to this the additional complications of writing from a foreign culture and in a second language, and the complexities of autobiography deepen.

The actual life story commences with a contrast between white and Inuit views of weather:

> Whenever a white person meets me for the first time he or she will always ask, "How do you like the weather?" The weather is something I am very aware of, just as I am aware of many things which the qallunaat, the white people, take for granted. Surely people in the South must have more interesting questions than "How do you like the weather?" (*Life* 17)

After this critical beginning, she proceeds, in what will become a familiar pattern throughout the book, to ask many questions of the outsider. Using an elevator for the first time in Ottawa in 1957, she asks herself: "Will I have to do the same thing later? What will

I say to make it go, or what will I think? Shall I just push a button like she did?" (19). Such questions interspersed in episodic descriptions of events contribute to a mood of disorientation throughout *Life Among the Qallunaat*; through her details of cultural conflict, that mood grows stronger. The text constantly juxtaposes Inuit and qallunaat ways, comparing and contrasting, with Freeman revealing her confusion and sadness. Feeling caught between two lives, she establishes an Inuk self who wavers, making efforts to adapt, and then remaining loyal in some ways to the culture in which she was raised. Such fluctuation may not be unusual for narratives written at a site of métissage.

And such narratives may be judged unsympathetically by outsiders to the culture. According to Heather Henderson, Minnie Freeman's writing has been perceived as "naive" and "artless" (62); Henderson herself does not agree. She states that "Freeman's deceptively simple style belies her narrative sophistication and concern with language" (61). Misconceptions about Freeman's writing may result from a lack of understanding of the oral tradition and its influences or from ignorance of the difficulties sometimes involved in writing in a second language. In reality, Freeman effectively conveys the discomfort she experiences in a different environment and culture. The fragmentary nature of her writing is common to the oral tradition[10] and fits the shifting pattern of un-ease that her life seemed to take. Academic "translation" often proves deficient for such a text; it is not knowledgeable enough to make an informed analysis. There is a tendency, then, to stereotype Native women's writings as uniformly uncomplicated texts.

The inclination to view Freeman as naive is reinforced by events that occur in her life. She is soon positioned as a representative of the Inuit, viewed with a mix of derision

and fascination, and exploited by the white culture. Freeman becomes complicit, albeit unwittingly at times, as when she is tricked into collaborating with consumerism and the mass media which employ her in selling soft drinks:

> Seeing my picture on the back of Pure Spring Ginger Ale trucks made me feel uneasy. My feelings were hurt, especially when girls I knew would come to me and say, "Who do you think you are? Why did they pick you? Why does it have to be an Eskimo?" . . . I decided that I would rather keep my friends than have my picture behind a truck, so I refused the next time I was asked to advertise. The man who talked to me about it told me that I should do it to make extra money. I started to cry; it seemed he did not care for my feelings. (*Life* 41-42)

Later, she is duped into selling savings bonds:

> I did not know; I was not informed why my picture was taken, least of all for whom. . . . We began to turn the pages. Sure enough, there I was, big as life, holding the savings bonds against my chest and looking at the carving with a big smile. (65)

To southern eyes, Freeman had become an icon,[11] a static picture of the Inuit who could be employed for others' interests. By her seeming passivity and acquiescence, she may have contributed to this kind of iconicity, but sometimes such complicity may be a necessary step in learning the ways of another society and discovering how to avoid pitfalls and still maintain one's sanity. Hers begins as a compliance without understanding.

She describes herself as a stranger in her own country and soon forms an opinion of the qallunaat as sad, worried, and hurried (21).

She concludes that it is impossible to escape her own background. She states in an article in *Compass*, "I do not think it is totally possible to change physically from the culture you come from. . . . To me it proves that we can never really leave our physical culture, even if we adopt many methods and systems from one another" ("How" 26-27). For her, adaptation has its limits. Again, this mood of disorientation may be natural for narratives about betweenness and translation. There are limits to adaptation that vary with each Inuk writer; a barrier to compliance with other societies' rules means that the author may return to ways of her own culture, resulting in a mix of behaviours and a combination of customs. The familiar to both Inuit and southern audiences is replaced, sometimes ensuing in a feeling of disorientation, of an inability to find solid ground.

Nonetheless, Freeman is determined to try to communicate with the South, for its sake and for the sake of future Inuit. She believes writing should be more important to Inuit today

> [b]ecause a lot of our old people that have all the traditional stories, not only stories but also a history of their land and hunting . . . not just nice things, but tragic stories, too . . . like people losing their legs from frostbite . . . are not written. Nobody can describe them but Inuit. (Interview)

She expresses a hope that there will be more Inuit writers in the future to save their culture "from being totally buried in another." She also believes that Inuit autobiographies

may help in healing her people.

Alice French

Alice French holds that same point of view. She was born in 1930 on Baillie Island in the Northwest Territories, her father and mother Alaskan Eskimos, her paternal grandfather a Laplander. In 1934 French's family moved to Cambridge Bay; three years later, her mother contracted tuberculosis and died shortly thereafter in All Saints Anglican Hospital in Aklavik. Meanwhile, French and her brother, Danny, were taken to a residential school in that same settlement. French was to spend most of the next seven years at the school before being once more returned to her own people, after having lost much of her Native language and having missed out on teachings of traditional ways and skills. Later she wrote about these experiences in *My Name Is Masak* (1976), designed for her children and concerning the formation of her identity, as well as delineating the conflicts between the traditional Inuvialuit world and the society of the residential school. She sets established beliefs and customs against the rituals of an institutional setting, where Inuvialuktun was not spoken.

French reports no difficulty in getting the book published; it received little editing (Interview). *My Name Is Masak* received some critical attention, much more, in fact, than has her second autobiographical text, *The Restless Nomad* (1992).[12] Barbara Fingerote describes the first book as "very enjoyable and informative"; however, an implicit criticism of French for being complacent is discernible in her remark that the author shows an acceptance of the situation in which Inuit find themselves today, "but the reader is not so

easily convinced that modern ways should have been imposed on the people of the North." In her short review, Fingerote does not elaborate on this comment; however, she demonstrates a nostalgia for the old Inuit traditions: "The lifestyle described is fascinating and one wishes that it could have been maintained" (86). Such romanticism may be widespread amongst outsiders, but impractical for those actually living the lifestyle to which she refers. A review by Joan Sadler describes the events of *My Name Is Masak* with an emphasis on cultural displacement, with French's "difficulties adjusting back and forth between traditional Eskimo ways and life at an Anglican school." "When Mrs. French was 14," Sadler continues, "she left school for good to return to her family and their way of life, but years later she again suffered a culture shock"--during a visit to a large city, Vancouver, in 1958, to accompany an Inuit art exhibition. Three years later, while travelling with her second husband, who was transferred from Cambridge Bay to Ottawa, she experienced another "drastic change in lifestyle" (29).

The author is depicted as a proud Inuvialuk, concerned about the future and worried that old ways of life will be forgotten. Sadler reiterates French's concerns about Inuit today:

> Mrs. French says Eskimos should organize and pool their money in the scholarship fund to send some of the brighter children south to be educated as doctors, lawyers or teachers. They could then return and work for a few years--at least--to repay the people for their educations. (29)

French herself has received many favourable comments from those who are familiar with

her first book. She remarks that numerous people in Inuvik have read it.[13]

My Name Is Masak begins by telling of French's background and describing the taboos of her people surrounding pregnancy and childbirth. Traditional customs receive equal weight with the rituals of the school where she soon finds herself. Her times away from there, spent with her family in traditional hunting, fishing, and gathering, provide opportunities for the writer to convey the beauty of nature. These descriptions of life on the land appear frequently in the text, as when French tells of the coming of spring:

> In the spring, the Mackenzie Delta was beautiful. It was a land of muskeg, rivers, lakes and trees. It had mountains and hills on some parts of it. "Amauligaqs"--the snowbirds--came first in the spring. It was a joy to see them after a season with few birds. It signalled that spring was on the way. The ptarmigan fed on the pussy-willow buds and we children gathered young willow leaves to eat. We stripped the bark off the branches and sucked them; the juice tasted sweet and good. (44-45)

Against these passages about times of freedom, French delivers tales of boarding school life, not always unhappy, but nonetheless serious because they tell of the imposition of discipline and conformity:

> I was luckier than some of my girl friends, because I had learned English from my father. We had not been allowed to speak our Native tongue since coming to school and it was hard on some of my friends. If we were caught speaking in Eskimo we were

> punished. This was a frustrating but effective system. (37)

French addresses remarks by Robin McGrath, who notes that French's first book contains no hint of the abuse reported by other Natives in All Saints Residence; she speculates that perhaps French did not suffer "from the interracial feuding, the chronic lack of food, the beatings and sexual abuse reported by other girls and boys in the residence, but surely she must have seen some of it" ("Circumventing" 228). McGrath surmises that, "in a published autobiography, some things may be just too public, perhaps. Good little Inuit girls don't make scenes or complain too openly about mistreatment" (228).

French counters:

> Probably it was a little tame but you have to remember I was writing it not to be as a published book, just to show my children what we took in school, what it was like, and I suppose she's right; maybe they were painful memories that I had to work through but didn't write down. I went through like we got strapped for speaking our language and things, but maybe I don't know, maybe we didn't have quite the same things that I heard since coming from people down here at boarding schools. Most of us were strapped and made to stand in corners, that sort of thing, but I've never really heard of great abuse. Maybe I just didn't hear; I don't know. (Interview)

The more striking parts of the autobiographical text concern French's grandmother

Susie, who often criticized the ten-year-old for not performing traditional chores properly or for not sewing well. Susie imposed her will on the family time and time again:

> My grandmother was most bull-headed when she wanted to be. No one dared oppose her when she decided on the course of action to take next. All of us, including her married sons and daughters who lived with her, had a healthy respect for her temper. She was a remarkable woman and kept the family together until her death. (63)

Perhaps this woman's example inspired French to exert her own strength of will in writing the texts that she has, for the second autobiographical work was to prove difficult and taxing.

However, the reception of *My Name Is Masak* inspired her to continue, as she stated when I interviewed her in January 1997:

> I had an awful lot of comments from people saying when are you writing your second book? What happened after you left school? and I thought, well, now that I've started, I might as well do the other book. It was also sort of a therapeutic book for me because I had to get rid of a lot of things from the past, from boarding school and from going back home, a lot of heartaches because at that time it seemed nobody really wanted me; the school said, now we've educated you, it's time to go home. There's no more for you. I went home and found that I was no longer able to live like the Inuit

> did. I didn't know my language and I didn't know how to work with skins or sew or anything. So it really caused a lot of problems for me because I didn't know quite where I fitted anymore. Yes, I found that [first book therapeutic] too because I could go back into--I could visualize the boarding school and how it was and work through some of the things that had really . . . given us all a heartache . . . like sort of being denied our language and being made to feel that we weren't quite up to what I suppose the white people thought people should be like, that we weren't good enough, we were children, and so it really was a good thing for me to do this.

The Restless Nomad (1992), the continuation of *My Name Is Masak*, addresses, then, a situation of displacement even as it provided necessary healing for its writer. It also chronicles an eventful existence in which French bears four children, suffers through a bout of severe depression, and ends her first marriage through divorce; it then follows her life after she meets Irish Mountie Dominick French in Cambridge Bay in 1958, marries him, moves out of the North in 1961, and bears three more children. Alongside these aspects of her personal life, the book deals with the problems of adjustment and of adaptation to a changing world, as well as a growing rebellion against labelling and conformity. French reveals her difficulties and selectivity in shaping her autobiography:

> It didn't come easily. It took me about three years I guess of--I did a lot of my books longhand--and it--there was a lot of turmoil

> inside me you know because I could remember certain things and I had to kind of try and sift through a lot of things that weren't relevant you know in putting down my final drafts, kind of things that--and they were all sort of personal things, not to do with other people, but how I felt, you know, I suppose a lot of anger that I had to resolve and it wouldn't make sense to put it on paper because it really doesn't concern other people. . . . Probably if I wanted a really sensational book, but then that would be only sensational and not a book that would help others understand what Inuit people were like. . . . I want them to understand who we are, how we live, and that sort of thing, and not the sensational parts that there are always going to be. . . . I think that a writer that writes an autobiography will tell you that . . . there are a lot of things that you leave out because it doesn't do anybody any good. (Interview)

A review by Kerry Abel describes *The Restless Nomad* as a "charming" book, "suffused with a refreshing openness and honesty" (2029-30). Abel states that "the author successfully communicates the dilemmas and anxieties faced by her generation as it tried to come to terms with . . . changes, but she never portrays herself as a victim" (2029). Indeed, French depicts herself as a person with mounting agency and hope.

The Restless Nomad, like *My Name Is Masak*, tells of the continuing pressure at school to comply with rules imposed by others. French writes, "[w]e all looked alike with the same uniforms and the same haircuts, and I was sure that unless I was looked at full

face I could not be distinguished from anyone else" (*Nomad* 5). From her years of fluctuating between two cultures, she concludes:

> Each group of people has their rules and way of life that are best suited to their own environment. They should be allowed to keep that heritage and not be told it is not the right way of life. Both cultures should be used as a means of growth for both nationalities so that they may better understand each other. (13)

She reiterates her feeling of powerlessness as a child, but the second book traces her struggle to regain control over her own life: "I had never been allowed to think for myself: first it was the school and then it was my grandmother who made all my decisions for me" (51). She confesses to errors along the way:

> I could not criticize this lack of keeping our language as I was also guilty. I spoke only in English to my children and never thought of the importance of teaching them about our rich culture. I neglected to realize that in a short time we would be trying to undo what we had let happen. Now, in some of our northern schools, we teach our children their mother tongue. (136)

French proceeds to express her feelings about autobiography and how the writing of her books has altered her own life:

> I think [writing has changed me]. . . . I used to be very reluctant to talk about myself and about what went on in my life as a young person, but since I've written my books it comes easier because I

> find that people are more understanding than I thought they would be, you know, that I wasn't complaining but that I was just stating facts in some cases when I did write something. . . . I'm glad that I wrote them and . . . I'm mostly glad because my children can then read them and then come to me with questions about what it was like . . . and they can understand now also why their mother was the way she was . . . before I started writing, so it's done an awful lot for my family and me. (Interview)

French sees the purposes of autobiographical writing as increasing self-esteem and understanding, as well as promoting healing:

> I think it's really good for the Inuit to write. Other artists that do come up become then a source for younger people to sort of look to. Role models, maybe, is the better word. Then they can say, oh, okay, so that's how it was done then. Now I can understand how, why, my grandmother is the way she is; it's because it wasn't done the way we do it now, but the way they used to do it. . . . Then they can understand the two cultural differences and it makes for better relationships. . . . Yes, they do have a healing purpose, yes, maybe mostly healing because a lot of the young people sort of dismiss the old ways, the old stories and everything as something that they didn't need, no longer need, and so it made the older people think, you know, well, I'm not quite good enough to be teaching my

> children. I think the younger people need to look to their past to be who they are now, you know, they need that healing process between the two gaps. (Interview)

For Alice French, autobiography means recuperation from loss and the shaping of a new, healthier identity, a type of positive self-fashioning:

> . . . when you lose your culture, there's nothing that can make you feel proud of who you are, of what you are. But when you have your culture back, then you can stand up and say, hey, I'm who I am. . . . I no longer have to try and be this person that I was told I was supposed to be because of going to school and that sort of thing. But I can say, no, I've got my Inuitness back, I can be that person but I can also learn from this other culture and be a whole new different person. (Interview)

Out of autobiography, good can issue for the community, as the autobiographer rediscovers herself and promotes Inuit pride. Although every autobiography is unique, it might still speak to a whole group's experience with a common psychological or sociological occurrence, such as being nomadic, or being between cultures. The autobiography may be powerful in galvanizing a community's experience, and in encouraging others with similar experiences to write their own life stories. For French, at least, the autobiographical act helped her to understand and employ the practice of métissage and to reevaluate her own Inuit heritage.

"Political" writings?

But is the new self that emerges from autobiography a "politically concerned" Inuk? Those outside the culture seem to think so, but non-Native theorists and critics sometimes judge the Native society in terms of their own particular values.[14] Alternatively, to suit certain political ends, Inuit women may be represented as conveniently supporting the academic's arguments. Critics tend to position Native women as representatives of an oppositional movement or participants in a fight for a greater cause. Arun Mukherjee points out that "much critical theory continues to be churned out in Canada that is premised on notions of Canada's duality and remains profoundly oblivious to Aboriginal and racial minority voices" (429). Those critics who do pay attention to Native works sometimes apply Eurocentric standards in their analysis of Native literature. Guy Lanoue, in a review essay of a special issue of *Canadian Literature* on Native writers and Canadian writing (1990), refers to many of the poems contained therein, including two by Alootook Ipellie, as having "no more going for them than a mishmash of sprung rhythms and haphazard verse and stanza structure coupled to indifferent, clichéd, and nostalgic 'Native' imagery" (296). He praises one of Daniel David Moses's poems, though, for its "fluid interplay of trochic and iambic rhythms" (297). As more critics and reviewers emerge on the literary scene, differing evaluations result; Mukherjee asserts that Native writers, "by writing from the specificity of their community's experience, . . . have called into question the universalist stance adopted by white Canadian writers" (437). She invests Aboriginal women with strategies of resistance, but this, too, is a generalization; there are further issues involved. The critic's own opinions intrude even here, possibly giving the Native

work a purpose the author did not intend.

Labelling such authors' texts as resistance literature is indeed tempting. Seen from the outsider's standpoint, but not necessarily from the Inuk writer's, the work may seem ideologically coloured. Perhaps the definition of "political" is a troubled one. As Eakin states, "[*i*]*ntention* becomes the decisive consideration in dealing with both the generation and reception of autobiographical texts" (20, my emphasis). Political effects have been attributed to Minnie Freeman, whose *Life Among the Qallunaat* has received some attention from academics. Henderson underlines the book's "truly radical re-evaluation of self" (61); Freeman's writing is seen as "the route Freeman follows to help the self-effacing Inuit preserve their vanishing way of life" (62). The latter statement seems borne out by Freeman herself, but not the further declaration that she is a "true citizen of neither [culture]" (62). Henderson also describes her as "moving beyond the personal to the public and political" (65), and refers to Freeman's autobiography as "a form of political activism" (66). This chapter demonstrates that the accuracy of such statements may be questionable, as Freeman proceeds to refute them in a later interview.

Julia Emberley also attributes political intentions to Freeman when she describes *Life Among The Qallunaat* as an "Inuit feminist" book (165). She asserts that Freeman's roommate, who disparages her for not wearing a gift of babydoll pyjamas (*Life* 58-60), is an imaginary marxist-feminist critic. Emberley proceeds to admit the problems of interpreting this Native text, as well as her own discomfort with "Freeman's moralism" (168), but she nevertheless assigns *Life Among the Qallunaat* a feminist voice. Her statements seem incongruous in light of Freeman's comments regarding Inuit women

artists of Cape Dorset: "Despite the sudden introduction of new ways, the Inuit women have remained the kind of people their traditional culture trained them to be: patient, polite, giving, and always pleasant to see, with smiles on their faces" ("Introduction" 14). Freeman adds, "one of the important qualities required of a woman is the ability to be patient and to work without ever complaining" ("Traditional" 249).

In my interview with her in February 1997, Freeman described herself as undoubtedly apolitical; she also sees herself as very much a citizen of both white and Inuit societies because, as a translator, "you're doing service for both cultures." When asked to comment on Henderson's depiction of her as a "spokeswoman protesting injustice" (Henderson 65), Freeman denied that there was any political angle to her autobiography: "All my grandparents were leaders of our communities and I used to think as I was growing up, why are people wasting their time? So it has never had any intention--you know--the book to be political at all." When asked if she was speaking out against injustice to Inuit, she responded, "No, my culture says . . . you do not speak out of how you're treated because things like that are looked after by somebody else." Her main purpose in writing *Life Among The Qallunaat* was to keep memories from dying out: "We need to put it on paper for our future children, for Inuit by Inuit" (Interview).

McGrath describes *Life Among The Qallunaat* as "in many ways a ruthless indictment of white culture"; she adds that Freeman clearly transmits the bitterness of young Inuit and frankly describes sexual harrassment that Native girls sometimes suffered. However, McGrath believes that Freeman directs all of her criticism "outward, away from her own culture" ("Circumventing" 228-29).

Indeed, Freeman's writing, an unusual combination of passivity and rebellion, sometimes points accusingly at white society, even as she herself glances back and forth between North and South. Although she denies that she has political motives, she nonetheless soundly criticizes the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development for its governing of her people:

> I do not know of anything that has been done for the comfort of the Inuit in the South. The department has taken families out of the North to employ as translators. Before coming out, the family had no training whatsoever or any kind of preparation on how to survive in the South--though they do not forget to tell the Inuit what time to come in to work, where to sign their names in their black books and how to fill out an income tax form. There are no homes made available to couples who have children. There is no program for them to follow to find out where, how and what kind of living quarters are suitable, where and how to shop for groceries, what kind of entertainment is available to them, where to go when one of them becomes ill. They are expected to know all this for themselves as soon as they step off the plane. (*Life* 63)

This criticism is not veiled, but neither does it automatically position Freeman as being in opposition to the qallunaat. As Stephen Slemon underlines, resistance is often complicit in the apparatus it seeks to transgress (37). In communicating with the dominant society, Freeman and French must in some ways cooperate with it in order to be understood at all.

The Inuk author (writing and publishing in English) may then transgress the teachings of her own society in spite of herself. What seems a contradictory attitude may be a means of survival, a kind of adroit adaptation to changing times. It may be controversial to label Inuit women autobiographers as "colonial subjects,"[15] but Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson's commentary seems apt: "Yet even if the colonial subject does mime certain traditional patterns, she does so with a difference. She thus exposes their gaps and incongruities, wrenches their meanings, calls their authority into question, for 'illegitimate' speakers have a way of exposing the instability of forms" (*De/Colonizing* xx). Smith and Watson warn that "the power of cultural forms to recolonize peoples cannot be underestimated," and suggest that "the relationship of the colonial subject to autobiographical inscription is indeed troubled" (xxi).

It is difficult to determine whether or not these Inuit women see themselves as colonized subjects within Canada. They are unreserved in expressing their feelings concerning their status as Canadian citizens. Reacting to Mukherjee's remarks that Native people often do not feel themselves true citizens of Canada, and that "such alienation from a national entity called Canada and from 'Canadians' is quite commonplace in the writings of Aboriginal and racial minority Canadian women" (424), Freeman explains:

> Myself, I've never questioned that for myself but . . . when you really think about it, we the Inuit people and Indians who were the first people here in Canada, they're [*sic*] treated like second-class citizens, you know. My grandmother used to say, "the strange bully always takes over," . . . country, little group, family group,

> everywhere. I think that's what [*sic*] we ended up, in that kind of situation. . . . I think we need to do a lot of educating before that ever really changes because ignorance makes a lot of prejudice. (Interview)

French seems to agree:

> I think we think we're Canadians, but I think sometimes we're sort of made to feel that we're not quite a part. We're kind of a separate kind of people. I'm not sure; I'll probably have a lot of people contradicting that, but sometimes--we are Canadian and we think of ourselves as Canadian--but sometimes the culture is taken as something else, you know, and we must always sort of fit into this nice little mold that people think what Canadians are like, you know, must fit into that pattern and sometimes they have a problem with that one when we actually don't fit into it. I think they did try and fit us into a little pattern that . . . did an awful lot of harm which is just now being rectified. . . . Like I said in my book, if we Inuit had brought kids from outside and brought them into our homes when they were little, taught them our culture, our language, and said that's the best, you know, and forget the other, and then when they became teenagers and . . . you couldn't teach them anymore, you said, we, really, we need her space so we'll send her back to where she came from and we sent you back and your people would

> say, well, you know, you're just not quite a part of us anymore. You don't know our language, our customs; you know, you can't do that with people. (Interview)

Whether or not the authors intend to criticize the Canadian government, their texts do verge on testimonio, veer towards resistance literature, and embrace some of the characteristics of autobiographical manifestos. Despite disclaimers by their authors, the writing of such works may still be deemed an act of protest. Freeman and French tell of years away from home and family in residential schools where Inuit traditions and languages were suppressed, then of the pressures of southern society with its very different expectations and quite stereotypical notions of Inuit. These women do not hide their criticism of that southern society. Freeman denies speaking for her group, yet she expresses the wrongs done to Inuit since contact with the South. Both Freeman and French never returned permanently to their Inuit cultures; both also married outside their societies. These factors must be weighed for both writers. For Freeman, particularly, there may be some discomfort in speaking for a group. However, French does not hide her opinions. Her attitude is straightforward in explaining the causes of displacement and difficulties among Inuit today. She criticizes the welfare system upon which many of her people became dependent:

> The biggest mistake the people outside ever made was sending men from the south, like welfare officers, to give away money for nothing. Family allowances were not heard of until these men came north. We helped one another when times were hard and lived

> without social welfare, and then we heard through the radio that one could go out and get something for nothing, instead of working for it. (*Nomad* 68-69)

French expresses the hope that her writing will somehow ameliorate difficult situations and explicate Inuit feelings:

> We, in the western Arctic, by the time I was born, were already semi-integrated into the different missionary ideas of Christianity, one of which was the idea that our language was unacceptable. We were not allowed to speak it anywhere, be it inside the school or on the schoolgrounds and if we were caught, we were punished. So, we learned to become ashamed of it and that divided us from our families. I often wondered, as now, how many families, especially children, suffered and became broken in spirit because of the foreign teachings imposed upon us. This was always in the back of my mind as I wrote and I hoped that somehow my writing would help others to better understand us. (178)

To reach such a point of comprehension seems difficult, for cultural barriers sometimes impede the reader. Reaching for a definition of Inuit women's autobiography is also troublesome and complicated. The texts studied in this chapter edge into the areas of other genres, troubling the waters and raising questions about the purposes of autobiography. Generalizations do not seem applicable, as each Inuk woman's self is not easily defined. That self is accustomed to adapting and changing for the sake of survival.

The "authentic" Inuk woman autobiographer is ephemeral, then, and she is also acutely self-conscious, even as the published autobiography renders her substantial and her voice assertive and public. Yet traditional teachings may have urged her in the opposite direction--towards a quiet strength and an acquiescence to elders' opinions. Slemon quotes Jenny Sharpe, arguing that "literary resistance is necessarily in a place of ambivalence: between systems, between discursive worlds, implicit and complicit in both of them" (37). Both Freeman and French write from a place of in-betweenness, an ambiguous and ill-defined territory.

The fact remains that Freeman and French have often felt themselves the objects of scrutiny, under the gaze of a different society, as well as their own. A mediator between cultures becomes a centre of attention and criticism and develops her own defenses. When directly questioned about her motives, she can, however, be outspoken. Now that Freeman and French are grandmothers and elders themselves, others may listen to their voices, and their texts may now receive the respect accorded their positions in Inuit society. Their autobiographical writings may be seen as self-defensive texts, countering exploitation and misunderstanding, but whether or not they can be seen as actively resistant is another matter. Both women are keenly aware of the importance of writing for communication, but it is doubtful that they, and Minnie Freeman in particular, wish to be identified with any kind of resistance movement.

The autobiographical texts of these Inuit women veer in different directions while converging at some junctures. Inuit autobiography also seems to fluctuate; it now seems to point towards a new assertiveness and more direct criticism of majoritarian culture on

the part of its authors. The works of Inuit women authors like Minnie Freeman and Alice French comprise an important heritage for future Inuit writers. Fuelled by such texts as *Life Among The Qallunaat*, *My Name Is Masak*, and *The Restless Nomad*, new elements of Inuit life writing will arise, along with new adaptations, new circumstances, and individual and distinctive new "selves."

Indeed, these texts seem to have paved the way for different kinds of Inuit life writing, heading in experimental directions. One such work is examined in the following chapter. Holding with tradition in some ways, but breaking with what have been the accepted conventions of Inuit autobiography, Alootook Ipellie brings a distinctive hybrid text into the public domain. He, too, wishes to promote healing through his writing and to help Aboriginal people and others understand the situation of Inuit in today's changing world. At times overtly critical of Western society's norms, but adapting them in some ways to Inuit culture, Ipellie creates a new image of the Inuk autobiographer surviving in the contact zone.

Notes

1. As Neuman illustrates, different poetics of autobiography centred around different categories, such as "Native" and "woman," nevertheless "contain within themselves both their own exclusions and their own erasures of difference" ("Autobiography" 219).

2. See Krupat, who writes:

> In Native American autobiography the self most typically is not constituted by the achievement of a distinctive, special voice that separates it from others, but, rather, by the achievement of a particular placement in relation to the many voices without which it could not exist. (*Voice* 133)

3. See again Brody's *Living Arctic*, in which he discusses fixed ideas about northern peoples; he states that they have had to endure despite constant stereotyping of them as a people (xv).

4. Beverley defines testimonio as

> a novel or novella-length narrative in book or pamphlet (that is, printed as opposed to acoustic) form, told in the first-person by a narrator who is also the real protagonist or witness of the events he or she recounts, and whose unit of narration is usually a "life" or a significant life experience. (12-13)

5. This quotation and others by Alice French noted throughout this chapter are taken from an interview with Dale Blake in January 1997.

6. This comment and other quotations from Minnie Freeman throughout this chapter are taken from an interview with Dale Blake in February 1997.

7. "Qallunaat" is the Inuktitut term commonly used to describe white people.

8. Since then, she has written numerous articles and a play, and has worked in producing eight films, all on Inuit culture, for the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation. She has also co-edited *Inuit Women Artists: Voices From Cape Dorset* (1994), and has published articles (either short stories or poems) in from fifteen to twenty books. In February 1997 she was under contract to the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs to write a book on the Inuit history of Hudson and James bays.

9. Stevenson was writing at a time when, beginning in 1970, multiculturalism was in the vanguard in Canadian federal ideology.

10. See Ong, who describes the episodic structure as quite common in the oral tradition, and the only wholly natural way of "imagining and handling lengthy narrative" (144).

11. Jeanne Perreault explores this tendency to iconize Native women, specifically Linda Griffiths's making Maria Campbell "into an icon, an inverse image of Griffiths's needs" (25).

12. French reports that she received a great number of calls to go to various schools in Manitoba to speak about her first book. She reports that it is used in the schools and in some universities as a source book. Numerous copies have been sold to schools in the North. French travelled to various parts of Canada, including Toronto and Edmonton, to promote *My Name Is Masak*. She has done little

publicizing of *The Restless Nomad.* She is considering writing a third autobiographical text, concerning her life in Ireland and subsequent return to Canada (Interview).

13. My research in June 1996 in Aklavik, Inuvik, and Tuktoyaktuk suggests that, although interviewees had heard of Alice French's texts, few seemed to have read them, the emphasis in the Inuvialuit culture being on oral, rather than written, stories.

14. See again Brumble's evaluation of Bataille and Sands in his *American Indian Autobiography.* He describes the two theorists as "typical . . . of those who want their Indian literature to come to them in Western clothing" (15).

15. Warley discusses the problems of labelling Native texts "postcolonial" and refers to the social problems of Aboriginal peoples which are connected to their present colonization. She states that "from the perspective of Aboriginal people, the colonial period is not over, for they have won neither political nor economic independence" ("Reviewing" 61-62).

Chapter Five

Alootook Ipellie: Inuk Autobiographer-Adventurer

> . . . no definition can outwit the modern author, no solid distinction can or ought to be made between confession, autobiographical novel, mock autobiography, or autobiography, even though we can sometimes isolate nearly pure specimens of each. (Adams, *Telling* 7)

> Man explores the universe continually for laws and forms not of his own making, but what, in the end, he always finds is his own face: a sort of ubiquitous, inescapable man-in-the-moon which, if he will, he can recognize as his own mirror-image. (Olney, *Metaphors* 4)

An adventurous new voice in Inuit autobiography has emerged in the personage of Alootook Ipellie, the most prolific Inuit writer in Canada today. Ipellie has always been forthright in his work, despite his apparent shyness as a person.[1] Michael Kennedy attests, though, that

> . . . [f]or well over two decades, the imaginative creations of Alootook Ipellie have been largely overlooked by Canadians living outside the Arctic. . . . The forty-five year old writer-artist remains largely unknown among most Canadians despite his impressive body of work. ("Southern" 348)

However, many Canadians are indeed acquainted with Ipellie's artistic and literary output; he seems to have sought and found his audience among already established northern readerships, as this chapter will demonstrate. He also has attracted a certain following in the South. At first glance, that southern audience may deem Ipellie too bold and unusual, too different from the stereotypical label of an Inuk as stoic and uncomplaining. Nevertheless, interest is growing in his accomplishments, as outsiders adapt and modify their ways of thinking about northerners in a time when Inuit seek empowerment through self-government. Ipellie is one of many Inuit voices speaking out, demanding to be heard.

He was born in 1951 in a hunting camp on Baffin Island, and moved off the land and into Iqaluit when he was four. He remained there until he reached the age for junior high school. He then spent grades seven and eight, as well as two years of vocational school, in Ottawa. Ipellie made a brief return to Iqaluit, proceeded to Yellowknife to study, and then returned to Ottawa to further his education; in 1973, he was hired as a translator and typist for the Inuktitut section of *Inuit Monthly* (349). At this point, he began drawing one-box cartoons; in 1974, his "Ice Box" cartoon series started in *Inuit Monthly*. His poetry was published as early as 1971, and, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, his illustrations, poems, and non-fiction articles appeared in such periodicals as *The Beaver*, *North*, *Inuit Monthly* (later *Inuit Today*), *Imukshuk*, and *Nunatsiaq News* (351). From 1979 to 1982 he was the editor of *Inuit Today*. His work has been featured, too, in such anthologies as Robin Gedalof and Alootook Ipellie's *Paper Stays Put* (1980), *Northern Voices: Inuit Writing in English*, edited by Penny Petrone (1988), and Moses and Goldie's *Anthology of Canadian Native Literature in English* (1992). Ipellie also

wrote and edited the newsletter for the Land Claims section of Inuit Tapirisat of Canada in the 1980s (Gedalof, "Alootook" 283). From 1989 to 1993, he was project co-ordinator of the Baffin Writers' Project, which combined the efforts of northern and southern writers (Alia 59). He has also edited two issues of *Kivioq: Inuit Fiction Magazine* (1990 and 1992). His art has been presented in Canada, Norway, and Greenland. During an Inuit Circumpolar Conference in Greenland in 1989, he exhibited a series of pen and ink drawings. He created forty such drawings, twenty of which became the basis for his latest text, *Arctic Dreams and Nightmares* (1993).[2]

Ipellie explains the impetus behind his text:

> Actually . . . I was planning to do an exhibition of my drawings one year in, well, wherever a gallery would take them, and so what happened was that someone I know was asking me to do an exhibit of "Springtime in the Arctic" with the title, eh, so I started doing those drawings for the exhibit, and it took me like a few weeks before I got really bored with it, bored with the subject. So I decided to drop that and decided just to go ahead and do whatever I wanted to do, do my own thing, so I planned to create about fifty pieces at that time and it took me about close to two years, I think, to finish forty of them. I had been thinking about maybe doing stories to these drawings and I didn't plan to do a book in the beginning, and then a friend of mine who is the publisher at Theytus was in Ottawa one year, and I asked him to come over to my studio

> and see my work, and I told him I'd been thinking about doing stories to these drawings. Maybe we could think about, you know, publishing it in a book. So nothing happened. He went away, back to B.C., and then about a year later I got a call from him: we want to go ahead with your idea about the book. So he gave me a deadline, so I started writing all the stories from that day, and it seemed like the stories were writing themselves. I had been working on the drawings for so long, and so I would sit there at my computer in my studio and pick one of the pieces from the forty in the group at random, and I would just prop it up against the wall beside the computer and start writing a story about that image. (Interview)

Ipellie received financial help from the person who urged him to do the "Springtime in the Arctic" exhibit, as well as friends from Nuuk, Greenland; he also obtained a grant from the Canada Council to complete his work (Interview). The resulting book signals new generical and procedural directions in Inuit life writings, and is a clear departure from that genre as it has been established to this point. The text consists of an autobiographical introduction, followed by drawings and stories. Although it is not unusual for Inuit art and life writings to be combined,[3] for the artist to offer his own autobiographical details without the aid of an amanuensis is rare in books linking Inuit art and life stories.

Ipellie demonstrates that a combination of art forms and traditions from different

cultures can be both energizing and empowering. He transcends marginalization, communicating to audiences in the North and the South, and identifies himself as the product of both regions. Rather than allowing the experience of one world to overshadow or discount the experience of the other, he insists on fashioning a third world, an empowering space that allows him a creative freedom. This act is not purely one of escapism, although that theme does figure in his artistry to some degree. Ipellie explains that his work since 1973 as a translator and his attendance at many meetings of Inuit Tapirisat of Canada were difficult and stressful, as I.T.C. tried to explain to Inuit what a government is and does. He attempted to mirror what was happening through his cartooning and editorials. Ipellie does indeed consider his voice a political one, but eventually he wanted to concentrate on his literary output instead:

> Well, I think there was a point where I ended up wanting to begin my own work without any connection to the politics of Inuit at that time. I was sort of trying to get away from that process that I had been deeply involved in for so many years. I wanted to break out of that and do my own work so I think in a way, it was sort of a transition for my work. (Interview)

Nonetheless, Ipellie seems to have been predisposed, through his lived experience in two cultures, to an artistry that mediated between and sought out dual perspectives, and, as in the cartoon's word and image, even dual forms. Despite his desire to temporarily evade the political, politics and creativity are inescapably intertwined in his artistic production. Ipellie is well aware of the importance of the individual voice, aware of

the differing influences on his subject position, and of the need to retain a fluidity in his writing. He opens himself up to external forces; thus his attempt to control or evade his political leanings is not quite successful. His satirical bent still pulls him towards taking stances on behalf of the Inuit community. His response to happenings amongst that community is more humorous than angry.

Ipellie fully realizes that his work impacts upon others, particularly Inuit populations. His main impetus is to make comprehensible to his own people and to outsiders the situation of Inuit. His desire to let his imagination flow is not impeded by his position at a site of métissage, but rather allows him to take advantage of that site to test boundaries and enter a world of imaginative exploration. Ipellie remains a mediator, well aware of others' expectations of him as Inuk writer and artist, and willing to confound these expectations in his own and his people's interests. His text and drawings allow him to create a dual perspective from which he can understand his own identity, and the identity of his people in the late twentieth century. He asserts that Inuit have to be flexible, "and part of that flexibility is adapting to change and that's what happened and I'm part of it" (Interview).

Ipellie translates events from the perspective of a transmutable shaman character. In *Arctic Dreams and Nightmares*, this literary shaman figure has the power to work for his people, to influence occurrences in the North, and to effect changes in attitudes in the South. He bears some resemblance to the Trickster figure, which holds an important place in North American Indian literature.[4] No equivalent trickster predominates in Inuit mythology, but perhaps the closest personage is Kiviok, the hero-hunter whose tales of

adventures and misadventures have been widely spread throughout the Inuit oral tradition. Ipellie seems to have modelled his shaman identity on such a hero, one who performs magical deeds of strength and transformation. The comic character is the catalyst that allows Ipellie to forcefully project his own dreams and visions. His versatility and malleability are communicated through cartoonish humour in his drawings and text; he portrays himself as a superhero, able to borrow from both the modern and ancient, neither of them sufficient in themselves. He had previously developed a shaman persona in the Nunavut land claims newsletter that he edited in the 1980s: "I ended up with this character who was a shaman, and in a lot of the strips, he would change into images of animals in order to . . . go about his business helping Inuit to achieve Nunavut territory. That was the purpose of that cartoon character" (Interview).

Ipellie chooses what seems to be a less stressful way to tackle political problems. He adapts this shaman self to a new format, and, in so doing, he sees a way of using existing conditions, of combining strategies for living and for maintaining a complex, in-between identity. His use of humour permits the examination of problems from oblique angles and also exploits, juxtaposes, and even celebrates contrary points of view.

Why has Ipellie had such a fascination with cartoons, and why does he allow the cartoon genre to influence his art in *Arctic Dreams and Nightmares*? Perhaps he sees the audience response as facilitating the communication of his messages. He comments on the significance of this genre:

> I am, while pursuing other professions, a little-known Inuk cartoonist, in possession of a slightly warped mind like so many of

> my colleagues. It is for this reason that I am often saddened by the thought that there aren't more people like us in this world. God was not very kind to humanity for creating so few cartoonists among a sea of blockheads overpopulating this planet. Shame. Shame. You and I know we will never tire of being entertained by social satirists, who are among the best interpreters of this world-wide human tragicomedy. ("Thirsty" 96)

Inuit, in particular, are attracted to cartoons. McGrath points to the "supportive and encouraging role" which comic-strip art has played for Inuit artists, storytellers, and writers ("Influence" 4); she attests to the popularity of comic books in the North since the 1930s, and to their high visibility in northern households (5). She refers to Ipellie's cartoons as reflecting an "idealized and stylized view" of northern life: "Igloos sprout TV antennas, dog teams and skidoos hold equal sway" (7). Ipellie achieves a startling combination of old and new through his art that may not be attained in traditional sculpture or prints; still, the mixture may not be so surprising when one realizes the strategies of adaptation undertaken by Inuit in a changing world in which old and new ways combine. In fact, his artistry is an apt reflection of the practice of métissage. It is also appropriate that Ipellie chooses a form of art that is popular. Geipel asserts that "like verbal slang, [cartoons] tend to rely for their impact on spontaneity, playfulness, popular imagery and often deliberate vulgarity . . . " (9). He adds that

> . . . [c]artoons provide a most suitable outlet for man's healthy and irresistable urge to poke fun at his fellows, his institutions--and

> himself. They are a potent weapon of ridicule, ideal for deflating the pompous and the overbearing, exposing injustice and deriding hypocrisy. (9-10)

Geipel also points out that "the most memorable cartoons are invariably produced during periods of social stress" (10). Inuit have only recently emerged from a time of great cultural upheaval. Ipellie markets his work as much to them as to non-Inuit audiences.

This chapter, then, explores how the humorist and satirist, Alootook Ipellie, presents himself to a diverse audience. Artwork produced in the contact zone is sometimes misunderstood by the dominant culture, but Ipellie remains open to a practice of métissage to persevere in explaining himself and his work to others, and to fight against the subjugation of his people. This Inuk artist emerges as a crossover personality, well versed in the ways of Inuit and also accustomed to the South. I examine how Ipellie's work fits in the autobiographical genre and the general area of Inuit art; I then proceed to analyse his stories in the light of his subject position as a unique artist positioned between two cultures. He embraces a double perspective, just as he projects a double persona in *Arctic Dreams and Nightmares*, looking back towards Inuit customary ways and forward to the place of Inuit in Canada today and in the future.

Ipellie and the Genre of Autobiography

Ipellie, working alone, reinvents himself as a disembodied subject, freed from the limitations of mortality and the physical self. At the same time, he speaks for his people against colonization and disempowerment. The "colonized" is individualized in his work,

which veers in unexpected directions and challenges preconceptions of subjugated people as anonymous and amorphous. As Smith and Watson point out, "powering and defining centers, margins, boundaries, and grounds of action in the West, traditional 'autobiography' has been implicated in a specific notion of 'selfhood'" (*De/Colonizing* xvii). Ipellie explodes this notion, leaving the reader to wonder where "reality" begins to merge with fantasy.

In *Arctic Dreams and Nightmares*, Ipellie employs his self-portraits, both in art and writing, to inject his own personality into a world conjoining Inuit myth and modern-day storytelling. Some might argue that his work does not really constitute autobiography; however, distinctions between fiction and fact have become blurred, causing various theorists to argue on the merits of "truth" in the genre. Eakin writes that "it is worth noting [that] that practice of writing the self tends to lead autobiographers . . . to understand the self they sought to express as necessarily a product of self-invention" (190). And, as Timothy Dow Adams notes of autobiography,

> [t]his form of writing, which may or may not be a genre, possesses a peculiar kind of truth through a narrative composed of the author's metaphors of self that attempt to reconcile the individual events of a lifetime by using a combination of memory and imagination--all performed in a unique act that partakes of a therapeutic fiction making, rooted in what really happened, and judged both by the standards of truth and falsity and by the standards of success as an artistic creation. (3)

Ipellie acknowledges the healing power of his art against the background of colonization of the North, the residential school experience, and the relocation of Inuit families to the high Arctic:

> What I have always written about in my articles and essays was that we needed to go through that process, the healing process, of reclaiming our traditions and heritage and also to retain what we can about our traditions. It's the same thing, the same feeling we have in all the circumpolar communities, like Alaska and Greenland, northern Canada, but slowly in Siberia also, because they are just coming out of this Soviet system that held them like in a cocoon for so long, for centuries, and I think we have the same feeling all over, like in Native communities of Canada, you know, that [*sic*] the feeling that we have to reclaim our own traditions and so on. And it's the same thing with Inuit, and I am also hopeful that things like Nunavut, like creating Nunavut, will accelerate that process of healing. But it'll take a long time, and it's the same thing in Greenland with their home rule government, which has been around since about '79 or so and here we are. I suppose we will have to be hopeful about that. (Interview)

Ipellie emphasizes the reclaiming of Inuit identity. Through fiction, he reaches a different kind of truth, one that history fails to expose and articulate. The autobiographical site can indeed enable a process of healthy transition and an increase in healing powers.

Smith and Watson emphasize the many possibilities of such a site:

> On the one hand, the very taking-up-of-the-autobiographical transports the colonial subject into the territory of the 'universal' subject and thus promises a culturally empowered subjectivity. Participation in, through re/presentation of, privileged narratives can secure cultural recognition for the subject. On the other hand, entry into the territory of traditional autobiography implicates the speaker in a potentially recuperative performance, one that might reproduce and re/present the colonizer's figure in negation. (*De/Colonizing* xix)

Referring to Ipellie as "colonial subject" proves problematic; he seems poised on the cusp between colonial and postcolonial, as do Inuit as a people. He performs his autobiographical act in both traditional and unconventional forms of the genre, balancing both as he balances two cultures; he emphasizes adaptation, not assimilation. Reclaiming a people's heritage does not contradict this idea for Ipellie. The heritage provides the groundwork for successful adjustment, not leaving the past behind, but building on it to give a firm base for exploration outwards. This direction does not mean adhering slavishly to the dictates of yesteryear, but taking what is useful and valued and adding on to it. He celebrates another outlook, another point of view not sanctioned by the centre, yet valorized by his culture. He mirrors an "authentic" self with an imagined one, and perhaps as much can be learned about the "real" Ipellie through that fantasized self, that metaphorical identity, as through the actual details of his life. In other words, Ipellie is not

confined by boundaries in the genres of either autobiography or Inuit art; although he begins his text with an autobiographical introduction, his opinions are also expressed through his satirical and ironic handling of his own self-made myths, grounded in the customs of Inuit legend but filtered through a modern consciousness. He asserts that he aims his work at an audience of both northern and southern cultures: "'I attempt to focus on the problems of the world and the reality of events that are happening in the Arctic. By doing that I am speaking to both sides at the same time'" (Kennedy, "Alootook" 161).

His combination of art forms and traditions from different cultures does not represent surrender on Ipellie's part, but rather grants him an artistic license and energy. His creation of his own in-between world and his location of himself at a site of métissage only affirms the strength of such a site and the potential consequences of holding a dual perspective on life.

Context of Inuit Art Production

Ipellie's is a forceful persona, breaking with past traditions in which Inuit artists have been deemed incapable of critiquing their own works of art; their autobiographical voices were often ignored. In her Master's thesis on the drawings of Pitseolak Ashoona, Christine Lalonde writes that Inuit artists were seen as "anonymous" producers of art, and that Inuit art was "initially seen as the exotic expression of the so-called 'primitive'" (x). She adds that a persistent colonial attitude caused Inuit artists to be viewed as "a homogeneous group without individual style or development" (2). Janet Berlo, professor of Art History at the University of Rochester, also writes that drawing for money "negates

the art form's validity" in the eyes of many in the visual arts field: "This economic motivation is thought to suggest a lack of creativity which then leads to the assumption that no individual self-expression is involved and, in circular fashion, no need to identify the artist ("Autobiographical" 6-7).

Conflicts and comments about Inuit art originally arose with the setting up of the Canadian Eskimo Arts Council (1961-1989).[5] In 1961, a member of the C.E.A. Committee, Evan Turner (director of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts), commented that "the intrinsic value of Eskimo art was its naive quality" (qtd. in Gustavison 14). In 1962, the committee inspected the 1961 collection from Cape Dorset, approving fifty-nine of seventy-five prints; some of those eliminated were deemed to possess "a most unfortunate cuteness which might even be described as a comic strip element" (14).[6] In May 1962, Turner, as chairman, expressed concern that changes in income would affect the artwork and that Inuit were "not sufficiently sophisticated to make maturely . . . decision[s]" involving sale and production of their art (16). In 1963, the committee expressed to Arthur Laing, then minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources, that "Eskimo art is essentially a primitive art, and . . . the Eskimo society could not be a competent judge of the aesthetic quality of its own art" (22). The Inuit voice was absent; instead, Inuit were reduced to standardized "types."[7]

In 1967, there emerged a change in Council policy: a new direction towards promoting individual artists arose.[8] But in 1978, Council members again stressed that each community's prints should be seen as "a collection and not as individual works by individual artists" (54). Still, in 1981, Council urged the Igutak Group "to produce a

catalogue, with as much information about the artists as possible, not just as a permanent record of the collection but also as 'a good selling device'" (63).

Amidst these disagreements about the marketing of Inuit art, and the beginnings of strengthening autobiographical voices to accompany it, a new exhibition opened in October 1994 and continued until March 1996 at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Ottawa. It was accompanied by the book, *Inuit Women Artists: Voices From Cape Dorset* (1994). This text contains autobiographical writings from nine female Inuit artists, along with photos depicting them and their prints, drawings, and sculptures. Although some critics were angered by the artists' own participation in the exhibition, Marybelle Mitchell commented that the curator, Odette Leroux, "was patient and humble enough to involve the artists in the project from its beginning in late 1990"; she added that Leroux "also established a new collaborative model for Inuit art exhibitions" ("A New Model" 3). However, Norman Zepp, former curator of Inuit art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, was incensed by what he saw as the exhibition's mixture of uneven and immature art with productions of a much better quality. He criticized Leroux for deliberately allowing the artists to influence her decisions, and he stated that "artists are not the best judges of their works" (Conlogue C17).

Berlo responded to these comments: "At the risk of further unhinging the conservative individuals in our field, I would argue that perhaps the exhibition itself was not daring enough, in that it did not mirror the book in foregrounding the voices of the artists themselves" ("An Exhibition" 34). She stated that it was commonplace in art galleries in Europe and North America to consult a living artist concerning his or her

retrospective exhibit (35). She concluded that "indeed, this show must have seriously destabilized the old, colonialist, male-expert model of the museum curator and art critic as the final arbiter of taste, if these howls of protest were any indication" (36).

Ipellie's Position

Despite such controversy over the agency of individual artists, the autobiographical "self" is gaining importance in the production of Inuit art books, and, in future, Ipellie's work may prompt more voices that are unmediated by editors or outsiders. Inuit artists have in the past collaborated with others to produce texts combining art and autobiographical details.[9] However, Ipellie informs the reader of his own opinions; he creates the written text himself, without outside intervention.

As a striking individual, then, Ipellie enters a field fraught with controversy. He does not regard himself as isolated in his work, yet he affirms his uniqueness:

> When you're an artist, you want to interpret your own individuality, your own type of work, to the world, and I have tried very hard, not tried hard, but otherwise consciously just to do, not to be influenced by other artists' work over the years, so I always tried hard to do my own thing. (Interview)

Ipellie boldly confronts northern and southern societies with his own views, offering visual and written discourse that embodies a fusion of the modern and the ancestral. He proclaims himself a powerful creator, and emphasizes the independent stance of the artist through his autobiographical preface and his stories and drawings.

Lacking sufficient background in Inuit ways, some in his audience may not appreciate the nuances of Ipellie's humour and the rich tradition upon which he draws. His work may offend those people, unaccustomed to the content of Inuit myths, who regard it as too bawdy and sexual. Paul Gessell remarks on the criticism of some that Ipellie "was portraying women in a sexist way," as in one drawing in which an Inuk hunter carries off a bare-breasted stripper; Gessell adds that "the humor is best appreciated by someone from the North and somewhat perplexing for those from other cultures" (D5). Ipellie admits that some of his drawings "offended a few feminists" but he adds, "I had scores of people who came to me, hand extended, with perfect Cheshire cat grins, which made my many a day" ("Thirsty" 99). For a certain audience, though, there is something disturbing in the drawings and stories, something that may be viewed as "eccentric" and bizarre. In other words, Ipellie's text may be too unconventional for some readers to accept.[10] Ipellie comments on such reactions:

> Well, as a writer, as an artist, if your work is not going to affect anyone, what's the purpose of doing it? And I think you have to make people think about these things and I think in many ways I tried my best to do that, but it took me a long time to learn how to hopefully affect the thinking of other Inuit or people who were connected with the so-called other side, the government or people who administered Inuit in Native communities and so on. But there was [*sic*] just wide gaps between the two peoples and I didn't plan to do the kind of work that I ended up doing. . . . I suppose in the

> end I ended up trying very hard to make both sides understand each other better. . . . Quite by accident. (Interview)

But not all of his audience seems to understand. As Renée Hulan argues, "to the extent that the romantic nationalist representation of the North establishes expectations in the audience and overpowers other voices, it conditions the reception of work by Inuit writers and artists such as Alootook Ipellie" (1). Some may shy away from texts that contradict comfortable stereotypes about Inuit. A fascination with an insular and fanciful northland and a tendency in southerners to venture there on a quest for self-fulfillment and self-exploration render the Inuit as romantic icons, part of an unchanging and exotic location. Ipellie's hybrid creations do not shut out the modern world; they unabashedly show Inuit taking advantage of technology and questioning conventional ideas about them, even while cherishing some ancient traditions.

Ipellie, though, cannot escape a different kind of iconization by his own people. He acknowledges that he has attained a recognition and a reputation; he has heard many comments on his work in both Ottawa and the North. He describes his surprise at some of the reactions to his art: ". . . I mean, people I've never met before--I was surprised about a year ago. This woman comes up to me and says, 'You're my personal icon'" (Interview). Ipellie's influence is strong among Inuit, and Hulan underlines the significance of the therapeutic aspects of his work, which stresses the theme of cultural survival; she acknowledges, however, that non-Inuit may not experience these healing elements in the same way as Inuit (9). Non-Inuit may need further information and education about the North and Inuit in order to fully appreciate his text. Meanwhile, for Inuit in particular, his

autobiographical performances are important and point to a different mode of resistance.

Ipellie's situation of in-betweenness may also explain the conflicting reactions of his readers. In an introduction to his interview with Kennedy (1996), Ipellie's poem, "Walking Both Sides of an Invisible Border," is cited. Ipellie refers to the barrier between Inuit and other cultures, and he sees himself as "'walking in two different worlds/Trying my best to make sense of two opposing cultures which are unable to integrate'" (Kennedy, "Alootook" 156). He concludes the poem with this question: "'When will the invisible border cease to be'" (156).

Combatting alienation, Ipellie tries to communicate across this border by frankly presenting himself and his opinions, clearly signalling that he is establishing an autobiographical persona through both his writing and his art. In his text, creative writing and autobiography overlap and complement each other. The first section gives autobiographical details, while the second section presents stories and artwork. The tales and drawings mirror the self of the autobiographical beginning, for the autobiographical performance is enhanced by the creative imagination; both are inextricably interwoven in Ipellie's work. Positioning himself as omniscient shaman, Ipellie displays his political views, his concerns for Inuit society, and his love for Inuit culture. To derive a fuller appreciation of his work, the reader must take into account the particulars of his life. Clearly, the creative artist constitutes a great part of Ipellie's "self"; artistry shapes his existence. As he says, in any kind of work one does, be it drawing or story, some of one's own experiences or views about life get written. Ipellie grew up on the land but has lived much of his life in southern areas; he is influenced to include aspects of both cultures, and

his work has changed because of that (Interview).

He begins his autobiographical introduction as he begins some of his "myths," in a traditional setting, telling how he was "born in a hunting camp on the shores of Baffin Island" (*Arctic* vi) and how, up to the age of four, he led a semi-nomadic life with his family, living off the land. He was sent away from Iqaluit in 1967 to obtain more education, but he states that he "eventually became a cultural cast-off" (vii).[11] Against the advice of his counsellors at the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, Ipellie decided to pursue a career in art. He then became a drifter, unable to fit into school life. Hearkening back to his elders' teachings that "patience was a human virtue" (viii), Ipellie equates the determination needed to track and hunt animals to his persistence in his drive to further his career. He asserts his own importance and agency by pronouncing himself a "privileged artist," useful and entertaining to mankind. He contests his previous marginalization and emphasizes his own worth: "I believe what I produce is my way of contributing to humanity's quest for the meaning of life" (x).

In the autobiographical introduction, Ipellie speaks to his own experiences of feeling marginalized at school and dismissed by art critics, and he does not hesitate in answering back, establishing himself as a rebel, a nonconformist, and a spokesperson for other Inuit. In his creative output he aims "to try to make this world and other people's lives a little more bearable" (xiii). He sees himself as a mediator "translating the failures and accomplishments of a distinct culture caught in an unpredictable cultural transition" (xiii). He underlines the resilience of Inuit societies, and explains that Inuit are so artistically inclined because of their backgrounds in manual work. Admitting that he has

faced a lack of interest from the Eskimo Arts Council and the Inuit Art Section of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, Ipellie then proceeds to outline his accomplishments and to explain again the impetus behind his stories:

> Some of the stories the drawings inspired are true in a sense they happened in my dreams and nightmares. Other stories were inspired by people and events surrounding my daily life. Still other stories and drawings came to me inspired by my ancestors' extraordinary gift for inventing myths, stories, and legends. So, this book has become, quite by accident, a smorgasbord of stories and events, modern or traditional, true or imagined. (xix)

Hope McLean refers to Ipellie as creating "his own unique form of literature" (44). She adds,

> [t]he cross between comic book and Inuk is one Ipellie has been pursuing for some time. He writes and illustrates a comic strip featuring the adventures of a flying avenging shamanic superhero that appears in the Inuit press. Now, Ipellie takes his superhero a step up the literary ladder, where he emerges transformed into Alootook Ipellie's alter ego. (44)

However, *Arctic Dreams and Nightmares* does not always meet with approval from critics. Peter Millard asserts that Ipellie's "command of English is not quite up to his vision," and that some of his language is awkward and jolting, reading "like a bad translation" (41). The implication is that Ipellie is not sufficiently sophisticated in the

English language usage to communicate properly with the audience. It may be, though, that Ipellie simply does not wish to conform and instead expresses himself in his own unique way, in a kind of in-between dialect that may not necessarily please the ear of the audience accustomed to standardized English.

Drew Hayden Taylor describes *Arctic Dreams and Nightmares* as "an amazing jump into the fluid and colourful mind of a man whose culture and personal life is in transition" (38). Taylor pronounces some of the stories quite humorous, while "others are quite frightening." He cautions Ipellie's readers: "Be warned this book is not for the squeamish. The stories within its covers abound in sex, violence, and sometimes sexual mutilation. At least half of the tales deal in some capacity with subject matter that may strain more puritan tastes" (38).

Ipellie's voice may at times be brutally outspoken, even audacious, for he claims the power to transform reality, even as he uses the text to critique southern society and uphold values from the Inuit past. *Arctic Dreams and Nightmares* becomes what Dee Horne refers to as a "creative hybrid text"; she writes of creating a new discourse, one that alters the relationship between settlers and Natives, resulting in collaboration rather than opposition ("To Know" 256). She states that such "creative hybridization is not assimilation--one culture dominating and taking over another culture--but the recognition of the interaction between cultures" (258). Ipellie takes elements of popular culture and combines them with legendary exploits from the Inuit storytelling tradition. He transforms his subject position as a helpless castout into that of a character capable of adaptation, but refusing to be overwhelmed by the teachings of another culture. Ipellie positions himself as

a time traveller, an observer, and sometimes a participant in his stories. He combines odd comic book imagery, current idioms, and the magic of the shaman. He is a satirist, always reaching for new heights and new experiences. Throughout, he emphasizes his own agency and his identity.

Ipellie's Text

His unconventionality is signalled by the format of *Arctic Dreams and Nightmares*. Ipellie's arresting cover for his book depicts an inverse portrait of himself, contrasted with a photographic image of him on the back cover. The photo shows him lying down with his hair streaming out around him as he stares at the camera lens. The drawing on the front cover (reprinted later in the text) shows him tattooed and yellow-eyed, his palms held out and ten small demonic heads protruding from his fingertips. Front and back portraits form a fitting framework and commentary on the contents of the book. Although the first section is a conventional autobiographical introduction, it is immediately followed by a fantasized and fragmented life journey of Ipellie transformed into shaman, able to transcend time dimensions. He revealed to Kennedy that his "family has a background of shamans over generations" ("Alootook" 162). In effect, presenting a caricature of himself, Ipellie turns himself inside out to explore his fantasies.

Ipellie's drawings form an integral part of the text, aiming for what Yang regards as a chief purpose of the genre: "Autobiography enacts self by recasting one's own images from the past and transmits memories and ideas from the present and even future through imagery reconstruction" (122). Ipellie empowers himself through his pictorial

representations as well as his writing. The drawings in the text force the reader to focus on Ipellie; they draw further attention to Ipellie the shaman, another metaphor of self which offers a close-up view, an intimate side of his personality that he rarely reveals outside his work.

The artwork is visibly influenced by the cartoon genre, but Ipellie attests that he did not plan the pictures in the way they turned out: "Usually they end up interpreting themselves, beginning to end. And it happened the same way, I found, with the stories. . . . If you're going to try and control the final image, I mean, it's not going to come out the way it should" (Interview). In other words, the artist allows his imagination to "free flow" and waits for the results.

Satiric mockery seems to come naturally to Ipellie; through this device, he establishes an identity that consists of the marriage of an inner and outer self, an observer and a participant, the self pulled in different directions at a site of hybridity. As a child, Ipellie was asked to go to church every Sunday, but, once in Ottawa, he ceased this activity and became an atheist (Interview). This rejection of the Christian faith figures largely in many of his tales, as in the first story of his text, "Self-Portrait: Inverse Ten Commandments" (2-9), in which he depicts himself propelled from his igloo into an inverse hell, Hell's Garden of Nede, in contrast to the Biblical Garden of Eden. He awakens to confront a devilish incarnation of himself; this other self extends his hands, on the ends of which are squealing little faces, with eyes and tongues protruding from them. In the grip of terror, Ipellie remembers that a "so-called Christian minister" had told him that if he remained "good-humoured" towards others, he would surely reach Heaven (6).

Instead, he is in Hell, and he learns that the ten screaming heads represent the Inverse Ten Commandments; they begin to shout at him, "Thou Shalt! Thou Shalt! Thou Shalt!" (6). Ipellie reasons that since God could make man in His own image, Satan could have done the same; therefore, Ipellie faces his own image as the Satan of Hell. Cannibal-like, the fingers of this Satan attack him, and he is spattered in blood. Ipellie knees the Satanic image in the crotch, and it disappears; he later realizes that he had gone through time and space to visit the dark side of himself, and to liberate his soul from its Satan incarnate. He returns Satan's blows and revels in a physicality and violence that allow him, paradoxically, to escape physical and spiritual limitations. Thus, in superhero fashion, Ipellie prepares the reader for triumph over the horrific underside of the human psyche. He frees himself from his body and previous life; through his imagination, he reinvents his existence. He refuses to conform to others' ideals and to follow orders imposed upon him from outside forces. As he writes, "[i]t felt so wonderful to finally be a free spirit" (15). Throughout this and other stories he implies that Christianity chains the self and that he must escape its strictures. He also borrows imagery and words from another time and philosophy and reworks them from his own vantage point, illustrating a type of bricolage common to contact zones. He demonstrates, too, a rebellion against the metanarratives of the dominant society and implies that Inuit can free and heal themselves by fighting back and leaving behind the pain of past cultural turmoil.

Another story that satirizes Christianity, "I, Crucified" (20-25), includes a comically horrific self-portrait. Ipellie the shaman is suspended on a whalebone cross in a snowy landscape, arrows in his hands and a harpoon through his feet, a knife protruding

from his ribs, and a tundra wolf chewing on his side. He wears a crown of thorns; in the background, two other crucified people are visible in the distance. Creating a hybrid and unusual image, Ipellie again combines Christian stories and a traditional Inuit setting to depict his own "middle zone." A stereotypical primitive northern setting is ironically associated with the Biblical tale of the crucifixion. He explains in the story that he has been crucified because of the animosity of other shamans, less powerful and influential than he. He had been tricked by another shaman, Tusujuarluk ("Envious"), into participating in an experiment of pooling the resources and spiritual powers of the shamans in order to attempt a journey to the Milky Way. Instead, the other shamans crucify him. Twisting the stories of Christianity to suit his own purposes, Ipellie tells how he is resurrected one thousand years later as a new physical being on Earth. Establishing a mocking juxtaposition of himself and Christ, Ipellie creates a disembodied "I," able to venture beyond the bounds of mortality. He reminds the reader of the importance of the traditional shaman, but still demonstrates that the shaman's magic could be used for ill as well as good. He does not gloss over happenings of the past, but reveals them so as to benefit from their lessons. His critical voice is not silenced when he revives memories of ancient ways; he does not necessarily romanticize the past, even as he satirizes the beliefs of others. However, against criticism of the violence of some Inuit myths,[12] Ipellie portrays the violence inherent in Christian tales, again taking a situation and turning it around for his audience.

In "Trying To Get To Heaven," yet another story with a religious element, a group of Inuit are tossing a "distinguished looking, older man" in a sealskin blanket (*Arctic* 70).

Ipellie, in his usual position as curious observer, believes that this signifies a celebration. Considering that others have remarked on the surrealism of his work, his comment seems doubly ironic: "It seemed a little surreal to be watching this man being tossed way beyond the clouds" (71).[13] Just as he interposes himself into a traditional setting, he interjects cartoonish contemporary idiom by asking another watcher, "'What's up, Doc?'" (72). He is told that shaman Qilaliaq ("Going to Heaven") is indeed trying to reach Heaven. Ipellie laughs hysterically at the suggestion, but then remembers a fellow shaman, Tookeetooq ("Stupid"), who built a huge igloo with an open top:

> And to make sure that it would be easier for him to ascend to Heaven, he discarded all his clothing. There he was, stark naked, balls and penis thrashing about as he leaped higher and higher. He kept at it for a long time. In the end, he collapsed from exhaustion. Being a mere mortal, Tookeetooq was also a total failure. (73-74)

The reader may be forgiven for assuming that Ipellie recalls a story told by Peter Pitseolak of the "first religious time," 1901, in the Cape Dorset area. Pitseolak refers to an Inuk named Keegak ("the messenger") and a time when people "were so mixed up they overdid their religion" (Pitseolak and Eber 40).[14] The Inuit travelled to Tooneen, a place near Cape Dorset, and built a giant igloo with no roof so that they could use it as a church and still see the heavens. Describing Keegak's actions, Pitseolak writes: "Once he danced naked. . . . His male organs were swinging all over the place. . . . Then he said, 'I am going to Heaven! I am going up; I am going up'" (41). Because he became too cold,

Keegak ceased this exercise; Pitseolak comments, "'His penis had goose pimples'" (41).

In fact, Ipellie adapted his modern myth, not from Pitseolak's, but from another tale, another interpretation of what was apparently a true story, told by an Inuk from a different community, a story that Ipellie originally illustrated for his collaborative work, *Paper Stays Put.* Ipellie drew the shaman stark naked, so that readers were looking at him jumping in the air from below. Because the publishers were afraid children might see this image, it was omitted from the text (Interview).

Ipellie adapts apparently real-life occurrences to his tale, but adds his own mocking voice and places himself in a triumphant position at the end. Ipellie and his dogs are put in the blanket toss; they exuberantly reach Heaven and never descend back to Earth. Again, Ipellie establishes a hybrid identity as he comments on the mixture of Christianity and shamanism and ridicules the teachings and corruptions of Christian ways, as well as the naiveté of those who are too easily fooled by the suggestions of others. In doing so, he implies that not all sites of métissage are productive and positive; those who mixed traditional shamanism with Christianity sometimes caused suffering for themselves and others in their communities. Ipellie, however, seems to have found the right combination of identities and autobiographical performances, for he shows himself catapulting beyond mundane reality. What he seems to suggest is that neither the priest nor the traditional shaman is all-powerful or all-knowing; he then takes attributes of both and melds them into his own hero-shaman figure.[15] He is not averse to censuring his own people for mistakes of the past, but his mode of communication renders the disapproval less harsh.

Not only does Ipellie criticize Christianity, but also he introduces characteristics of

Inuit myth--blood, violence, sexuality, horror--in his drawings and tales, but he interweaves them with modern twists and turns. It is not uncommon for Inuit legends to describe humans and animals interacting. As McGrath explains,

> [b]east fables . . . tend to be of two types; stories of animal spouses and stories of how animals acquired certain physical characteristics. Stories of animal spouses usually involve a man or sometimes a woman falling in love with a person who is actually an eider duck or a fox or some such creature in human form. (*Canadian* 73)[16]

Ipellie follows this trend, trying, as he says, to "put a modern twist to these legends and see what happens," and to interpret ancient stories himself, instead of leaving them just the way they were traditionally told in the communities (Interview). Alia writes of Ipellie's images in *Arctic Dreams and Nightmares*: "A few, such as 'The Woman Who Married A Goose,' portray ancient Inuit legends" (59). In the accompanying story (*Arctic* 170-74), Ipellie is out collecting goose eggs with his family in early spring. He becomes again the inquisitive onlooker as he sees what appears to be a naked woman struggling with a goose. To him, it sounds as if she is orgasming: "At least that's how I made it out to be since I had often heard the same sounds coming from my own wife when we made love" (172). After the goose leaves, Ipellie approaches the woman and coaxes her to explain who she is. Oiqangi ("Without a husband") had met a castoff from the flock, Nuliaqangi ("Without a wife") who speaks Inuktitut. They became intimate, and Oiqangi gave birth to chicks every spring. Ipellie observes that "it was a little surreal listening to Oiqangi" (174),

but that it made perfect sense that she and the goose had gotten together, since neither had a mate. Ipellie includes a drawing depicting two women head to head, one with a goose's head and neck protruding from her vagina, the other with goose wings emerging from her sides.

This blending of animal and person is certainly not unusual in Inuit myths; neither is the idea of a human mating with an animal. Ipellie's story may offend some because of its sexual content. However, as McGrath points out, "Eskimo myths and legends have been frequently misinterpreted by non-Inuit who find them simplistic, pointless, violent, scatalogical, bawdy, repetitive or boring" (*Canadian* 73). Ipellie ignores such disapproval, altering the legend with his own intrusion, bringing to it a comic cast and implying that salvation is found through adaptation and evolution. He re-works the characters of Inuit tales and shows that the old stories are still of value and still entertaining for today's audiences, particularly when he adds his own dialogue and artwork that modernize the anecdote and bring new perspectives to the narrative. He often contrasts and combines gravity with humour: "'In the cartoons and in the stories, humour has been a big part of my work from the very beginning. But there has always been the underlying message about our people and the changes that were happening to us. I use humour because it attracts the minds of readers'" (Kennedy, "Alootook" 160). Because of the humour, the strong contrast between old and new in Ipellie's work seems a less jarring mix.

Ipellie also recalls Inuit traditional tales of marriage between animal and human. In doing so, he underlines the importance of these legends and of the connection of Inuit to the animal world. He upholds a pride in the old ways even as he brings a different

perspective to them. He sees no need to forget or denigrate ancient tales and customs. The legends do not disappear, but instead evolve into present-day forms, interspersed with contemporary comic dialogue.The broad basis of Inuit cultures is not lost, but redeemed and rejuvenated through his artistry.

Ipellie reaffirms his connection to his people by presenting political issues pertaining to their livelihood. He juxtaposes comedy and politics in "After Brigitte Bardot" (104-13) to speak against outside interference in traditional Inuit hunting practices. As he says, he wished to convey a certain message of protest, and to "have a little fun with Brigitte Bardot" at the same time (Interview). The tale begins, as so often in his stories, in an outdoor northern setting, with people and dog teams gathered around their seal hunting camp. Ipellie confesses, "'I've never lost that pull to the land'" (Kennedy, "Alootook" 157). Modern-day technology intrudes: crowds of video cameramen, still photographers, and reporters emerge from a large group. They converge around Brigitte Bardot, who is campaigning against the hunting of baby seals. Ipellie asks an onlooker to explain what is happening. He responds,

> "I'm not exactly sure, but it may have something to do with her being an animal freak and feeling the need to identify herself as the saviour of all animal species on earth. Who knows, maybe it's just a publicity stunt. She hasn't exactly been seen on the silver screen lately." (*Arctic* 106)

After Bardot leaves, Ipellie is unable to sell his quota of seals because of a ban imposed by the European Economic Community Parliament. He reacts: "The bitch! How

could she do this to us?!" (110). Ipellie denounces animal rights activists: "They have dormant mindsets that can only see through the eyes of the animal beings" (112). In the drawing that accompanies the story, he envisions Bardot as metamorphosing into a harp seal, but with a Christian cross around her neck and a bracelet around one flipper (112). Animals often reverse places with humans in Inuit tales, but Bardot seems to have already switched roles and is seen through the eyes of the baby seal. The image may be influenced by the violence of some Inuit legends, but Ipellie changes positions and puts an animal in the role of hunter: a baby harp seal is about to club open the skull of an Inuk escorting the transformed Bardot. Ipellie explains:

> "Some of the images came about because I was affected by events like Brigitte Bardot going to Newfoundland and protesting against the seal hunt. It affected our people, not only in Canada, but in Greenland. I went up to Greenland and visited a tannery after the European Community refused importation of seal pelts. It was sad for our people. I used that story ["After Brigitte Bardot"] to get the message across. I used clippings of the event in Newfoundland and took them up to the Arctic where the Inuit could be close to her, even though Brigitte Bardot wasn't up there. I wanted to tell her what we thought about what she did to our people." (Kennedy, "Alootook" 162)

Once again, Ipellie combines a kind of macabre comedy with the seriousness of his message. Everyday realities impinge on that humour and tinge it with sadness. Still, Ipellie

can avenge himself and his people in his imagination, by transforming Bardot through public mockery. He dismantles the stereotypes, calling into question usual images of the seal hunt, putting the animal in a position of power in the drawing, dressing the Inuk in unusual clothing, suit and tie and mukluks. Political commentary emerges once again, with the Inuk who befriends Bardot in the drawing becoming a strange hybrid figure, doomed to death. Again, hybridity is not always positive with Ipellie. Bardot may never see his story or drawing, but, for Inuit, the healing power of humour emerges again in his treatment of her cause. Ipellie is no passive Native; he shows by his example that other Inuit, too, can speak out against injustice and not remain silent or cowed.

Through such tales and drawings, then, Ipellie is transformed into a super-self, jumping into the past, altering and influencing it. He is both self-aggrandizing and self-caricaturing. His comedy and satire expedite his effort to adapt to a world that retains Inuit cultural values, but values that have been infiltrated by modern-day dialect and technology. Through *Arctic Dreams and Nightmares*, Ipellie demonstrates the ability to reach beyond marginalization and to comment, mockingly or seriously, on events of the past, present, and future. By imaginatively refiguring himself as omnipotent shaman, he grants himself agency and creates an inverse "I," a "man-in-the-moon" who is part human, part supernatural being. His is on an "ego trip" of a different kind, celebrating a malleable character who still retains his "Inuitness."

Hulan contends that Ipellie's work "resists the description of Canadian northern consciousness by demonstrating the complexity of cultural identity" (16). Certainly Ipellie sometimes deromanticizes the North; at other times, he reveres it, referring to its pristine

qualities, endangered by invasion from the outside world. His translation of that North may draw many different reactions, but indifference is not one of them. As McGrath notes, "Inuit authors [like Ipellie] are offering their readers the most important and lasting social principles of their culture: tolerance, patience, courage, and the healing power of self-criticism approached with a sense of humour" (*Canadian* 111). Ipellie resists being stereotyped, and he brings the strong sense of an individual personality to Inuit life writings; his is not a one-dimensional, predictable character. He illustrates that the writer living at a site of métissage must be aware of changing conditions and open to fluctuation in life. He preaches a kind of endurance, and, because he renders situations amusing, his message is not tiresome; his treatment of Inuit culture is not overly didactic in tone, and hence attracts a larger audience than it otherwise might. Ipellie feels he has become a role model for Inuit, but that he has had to earn that part over time (Interview). He affirms that his work has often been plagiarized by young Inuit copying or tracing his drawings and attaching their own names to his poetry (Kennedy, "Alootook" 162). He adds,

> I've had people just copying a lot of my work, in other publications and so on. One day I was looking at this Yellowknife newspaper and this ad in the paper for a tapestry exhibit by an artist in Yellowknife, and she had just used one of my cartoon images of this Inuit mother and child, mother dancing with a caribou. I mean this is the image from my cartoon. Well, I didn't do anything about it. . . . It was sort of a compliment. I could have done something about it, but never did and even like many years ago now, the

> government of the Northwest Territories in Yellowknife--they had a Christmas message ad in the paper, and someone had traced some of my drawings for that Christmas message without my knowledge. (Interview)

Despite attracting such a following, Ipellie himself has faced considerable difficulties and obstacles; he has endured a difficult healing process in recent years. Having lost all his personal papers, equipment, and belongings three years ago, he is only now returning to that state of mind in which he can work on a project. He has completed a short novel, to which he intends to return later, and expects a book of poetry to be published in two years. Once he obtains a computer, he says he will resume writing (Interview).

Given the scope of his artistic achievement, Ipellie may produce still more controversial texts in the near future. Belying the sophistication of the artist, drawing on icons of popular culture, his work demonstrates another way of presenting life stories and art, in a dramatized and farcical fashion that may not sit well with those versed in the idea of a unitary "self" in autobiography. However, a message is transmitted through his work: an appeal to others to understand the Inuit and their situation of métissage. He demonstrates that the artist in the contact zone may not necessarily be silenced or overpowered. The confronting of stereotypes may increase the impetus to translate one's self and one's art for others, and may lead to positive consequences. The attention received in the contact zone may bolster the writer's self-esteem and result in more creative output, more interweaving of forms at the site of métissage. Other Inuit artists

and writers may follow his lead, showing the creative approaches that may be taken when the subject occupies an invisible borderland from which he or she endeavours to communicate. Ipellie's work offers proof that Inuit voices emerging from diverse contact zones may take life writings in new and surprising directions, expanding the limits of the autobiographical genre even as they strain against the imposed strictures of romanticism. Above all, *Arctic Dreams and Nightmares* presents Inuk as individual and suggests the triumph of creativity over stereotyping. Not necessarily bowing to the perceived rules of Native autobiography, at times veering away from the idea of a communal self, Ipellie's work emphasizes individuality, nonconformity, and, as he says, "doing his own thing." His artistic personae emerge from an intellect striving to escape creative limitations and, at the same time, to establish a new identity in a changing world. Constant readjustment is necessary to meet the demands of a society in transition. Showing that such multiple facets of the self are necessary to accommodate change, Ipellie tests the flexibility of the genre of autobiography. The mutations of the autobiographical text reflect a multiple and fluid self-image, one that points to further and different personalities developing through Inuit autobiography even as new political voices emerge from the North. These new voices may overturn previous conceptions of Native autobiography, and open new pathways to the understanding of the identities of Inuit in the new millennium.

Notes

1. In a 1980 interview with Ipellie, Robin Gedalof (McGrath), describes how "quiet and reserved" he was in person, but adds that, "according to Ipellie, if he weren't so quiet in life, he could never have been so outspoken in his work" ("Alootook" 283).

2. I am indebted to Michael P. J. Kennedy and Robin McGrath for their articles containing autobiographical information on Ipellie.

3. See Igloliorte, Kenojuak (Blodgett), and Ashoona, for example.

4. See Wiget for additional information on the Trickster.

5. For additional information on the beginnings of Inuit printmaking, and the tendency "to group Inuit graphic works as examples of collective cultural expression" (22), see Marion Jackson, "Personal."

6. See McGrath, "The Influence," for more information on the impact of cartoons on Inuit art.

7. See Peter Geller's dissertation, in which he describes a similar outlook on Inuit through photographic representations: "Less important than the identity of the men and women pictured, and the particular circumstances of their individual lives, was their display as representatives of their race, as anonymous and ideal cultural types" (173).

8. More information on Baker Lake prints was desired by the Council in 1970-- "signatures of the artists, translations in English, print title, edition numbers, date, and identification number as well as the Baker Lake chop mark" (Gustavison 38).

In the 1972 print review meeting, Council was urged to include an Inuk member (42), and the council was also being pressured by Tagak Curley, President of Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, to do so.

9. Prominent artists like Armand Tagoona, Kenojuak, and Pitseolak Ashoona have worked with others in providing details of their lives to accompany their drawings and prints.

10. I base these comments on the remarks of some of my students in Labrador in 1998 when I included Ipellie's text on the syllabus for a course on North American Aboriginal literature.

11. For more autobiographical details, see Ipellie, "Frobisher Bay Childhood" and "My Story."

12. See McGrath's "Monster Figures" for a counter criticism of this reaction of southern audiences to Inuit myths.

13. Robin McGrath observes that "there are indications that Alootook Ipellie's rather surreal approach to modern Inuit life has the potential to influence future writers" (*Canadian* 83). Ipellie comments that some people who had read his *Arctic Dreams and Nightmares* asked him what drug he was on while he was doing the drawings, to which he replied, "I was on a natural high" (Interview).

14. See Shelagh Grant's description of religious fanaticism among the Inuit in a special issue of *Études/Inuit/Studies* on shamanism, Christianity, and possession. See also Carol Brice-Bennett's description of religious mania among Inuit in Labrador in *Our Footprints Are Everywhere*.

15. See Rasmussen, *The Netsilik Eskimos*, for more information on shamans. Rasmussen visited the Netsilingmiut in the Boothia Peninsula area as part of the Fifth Thule Expedition (1921-24); he reported that these Inuit "are very emphatic in pointing out that they no longer have great shamans among them" (295). Nevertheless, his visits to the Caribou Eskimos of the interior revealed that, though some were sceptical, others did feel that the traditional shamans were still powerful and inspired by "the guiding spirits of the universe" (*Observations* 60).

16. See Spalding's "Kiviuq," for example, which tells of an Inuk marrying a fox. See also Rasmussen's *The Netsilik Eskimos* (121-22), which reports a legend of a girl marrying her father's dog.

Conclusion

Having presented these case studies, I now direct the reader to the difficulties in pinpointing the audience for Inuit autobiography. Those Inuit who do read memoirs often encounter them in serialized form in periodicals such as *Inuit Today*, which contain a large number of autobiographical essays and extracts from diaries (McGrath, *Canadian* 91). Other Canadians familiar with Inuit life stories may have originally been interested in artwork, or may have located the books in train stations or airports. This trend seems to be changing with some increased interest in Native literature at the university level, and, as the introduction to this thesis stated, with more scholars examining Inuit texts. New Inuit texts are continuing to appear, such as *Remembering the Years of My Life* (1999), recounted by Labrador elder Paulus Maggo and edited by Carol Brice-Bennett, and *Saqiyuq: Stories from the Lives of Three Inuit Women* (1999), told by three Baffin Island women and edited by Nancy Wachowich.

Inuit autobiographies may have a growing influence in northern school and college systems. Bone has pointed to the limited number of Native role models as a factor in poor school performance in the North (199). Although the value of such models could be questioned, powerful exemplary figures are offered through Inuit self-representations, and Inuit life stories may become part of all northern school curricula, as indeed they do form part of the programme of Inuit Studies in some parts of the North. Some Inuit autobiographies offer role models, and some authors, such as Minnie Freeman and Alice French, speak directly to issues of education. Students in Lake Harbour on Baffin Island reportedly have shown an excellent and dynamic response to Inuit life writings, for they

understand the context of such works (Baillargeon). Those texts, like *Thrasher: Skid Row Eskimo*,[1] which have gone out of print, may in future be reissued and discussed in university classrooms. The inclusion of Inuit works in course curricula would critique stereotypical and romanticizing misconceptions of Canada's North and its inhabitants. Inuit voices increase in importance in light of recent land claims proposals, demands for compensation for resettlement, and the creation of Nunavut.

This dissertation provides a gateway for the entrance of Inuit autobiography into the canons of Canadian and Native literature. Krupat refers to his sense of a call to polyphony, which he understands as "urging the refusal of imperial domination, and so of the West's claim legitimately to speak for all the Rest" (*Voice* 17). Inuit voices have now been added to those of autobiographers speaking from the margins, and they offer their own critiques of dominant Western societies. Such writers change the public perceptions of Inuit and the North. They also trace new directions in autobiography in general, broadening the parameters of Native life writing and questioning long held assumptions. Krupat urges the inclusion of Indian texts in the canon of American literature, "not only to propose an addition but a reevaluation of what 'American literature' means" (98). In the same manner, Inuit autobiographies prompt us to analyse further the corpus of Canadian literature. They foreground the perspectives of Inuit themselves, rather than stereotypical representations written by outsiders. They also reflect new developments in viewpoints of Inuit even as they continue to exist at sites of métissage, these sites themselves altering with the progress of time.

Mitchell has analyzed the changes in Inuit life in the Arctic; she notes that extended

families have been absorbed into communities (*From Talking* 271). She further states that northern co-operatives have

> [f]ostered the ascendancy of the individual, competitive ethic or dynamic over the cooperative/communal to the point . . . where we can begin to talk about a class structure in which some Inuit who own and control unprecedented wealth and resources are in the position of directing the fortunes of other Inuit, in spite of a structure that purports to support equality. (299)

However, she adds that Inuit have not yet managed to overcome the domination of non-Inuit managers of northern co-operative federations (317), but that they resist this domination in three ways: "nonconfrontational," through preserving language and traditions; "confrontational," by protesting publicly; and by "politically organized resistance," in land claims negotiations and pan-Eskimo movements (413).

Inuit autobiography encompasses all three modes of resistance, as it challenges the authority of outsiders and emphasizes the influence of Inuit communities and the significance of remembering Inuit traditions. Linda Warley writes of the healing aspects of reinhabiting the past. She sees remembering as a political act, a means of "affirming cultural survival and facilitating political self-determination" ("Locating" 74-75). Pragmatism, strength, adaptation, and endurance in the midst of trauma and transition remain dominant themes of Inuit life writings. While memories of ancient customs continue to be important, Inuit societies have altered to accommodate change and to ensure successful reconciliation of old ways and new. The positive possibilities of Inuit

autobiography are significant. The actual writing of the text may prove therapeutic for its author, as Alice French has stated, and the work may also impact on Inuit society in general.

As Inuit autobiographers bear witness to suffering, they help alleviate some of the pain caused by the repercussions of outside influences on their lives. Because of feelings of powerlessness, Inuit once acquiesced in new education and administration policies introduced by whites, policies that had profound effects on their families and communities. Now, however, Inuit no longer remain passive and uncomplaining; through their life stories and public expression by other means and media, they speak out and assert themselves. They call for empathy and understanding, and for a dismantling of stereotypes. In doing so they may go against traditional customs of their communities, even as these customs are being altered as Inuit strive for self-government and political strength. By their example, Inuit autobiographers, whether they intend to or not, provide examples of self-empowerment and foster pride in Inuit cultures.

However, as the life writings of Campbell, Baikie, and Goudie show, identity formation at sites of métissage proves complicated and subject to varying influences. At some sites, factors of colonialism and imperialism intervene, and Inuit traditions may diminish in significance, although they do not, in these cases, fade out entirely. Even though early Labrador works may have tended towards endorsement of assimilation, Inuit life skills necessarily remained important.

The drive for survival underlies all the texts examined in this dissertation. In contemporary Inuit life writings, this force means adaptation to modern lifeways, but not a

renunciation of customs and traditions. In fact, such traditions regain their importance through Inuit texts, which appeal to Inuit pride in a unique culture. Inuit autobiography charts a course of change and innovation; it demonstrates a refutation of stereotypes and celebrates identities previously marginalized in the West and even in the genre of Native autobiography. It serves also to emphasize the fluid boundaries of the autobiographical genre and to challenge narrow perspectives on what actually constitutes an autobiography. For these reasons, it is of profound importance to continue a study of emergent Inuit life writings, to examine them in the light of recent happenings in the North, and to subject them to the careful scrutiny of academic criticism.

Often, however, the views of Inuit authors are represented by outsiders or critics who have not actually consulted with these autobiographers. Of course, in some cases, interviewing is not possible, but such consultation may lead to additional needed information, surprising differences of opinion, and conflicting views about the characteristics, purposes, and direction of Inuit autobiography, as this dissertation demonstrates. Above all, it is crucial to confer with Inuit authors themselves if feasible and to facilitate a free expression of their own voices amidst the controversy and mystery that surrounds the genre of autobiography.

Notes

1. I have been informed that a west coast filmmaker is now interested in making a movie based on the book, *Thrasher: Skid Row Eskimo*.

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