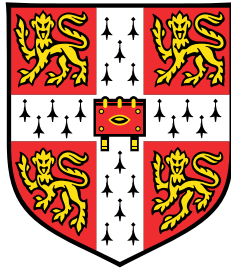


Storied Icebergs: Floating Formations of Decolonial Knowledge Production About the Canadian North



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Declaration

I hereby declare that except where specific reference is made to the work of others, the contents of this dissertation are original and have not been submitted in whole or in part for consideration for any other degree or qualification in this, or any other university. This dissertation is my own work and contains nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration with others, except as specified in the text and Acknowledgements. This dissertation contains fewer than 20,000 words excluding bibliography, footnotes, and figure captions.

Eva Crowson

June 2021

Acknowledgements

The contours of an iceberg are tricky to judge simply by looking at the portion which is visible above the water line. Representing around one-tenth of the total volume, what we can see above the water is nothing compared to what lies below. This dissertation, as but the tip of the iceberg, gains its buoyancy only through its underwater mass of love, support, and generosity.

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To the Scott Polar Research Institute, I feel so honoured to have been part of the family, albeit virtually. From photo competitions to virtual coffee, I want to express my gratitude to you all for creating such a vibrant sense of community in a year of isolation. To my fellow MPhil students, after nine months of pandemic-induced confusion, anxiety, and upset, I wanted to say congrats for making it through - I am so proud of what we have managed to achieve. I would also like to say thank you to Frankie and Eleanor in the Polar Library, whose enthusiasm and encouragement has been much appreciated – you're both amazing!

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My close friends in Tkaronto, Carlton King and Little Brown Bear, have provided me with an unending source of happiness and light in a world of darkness; thank you both for showing me how to look after myself. To my family – mum, dad, and Zoe – thank you for keeping me grounded, and thanks mum for reading yet another 20 000 words of my work! Also thank you so much to my partner, Brandon, who reminds me of the importance of laughter, hugs, and chocolate.

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Abstract

Keywords: story, colonialism, decolonisation, Canadian North, Inuit

Storied Icebergs seeks to understand how, in the context of story(telling), Qallunaat knowledge production about the Canadian North might be decolonised. Inspired by Tiffany Lethabo King's *The Black Shoals* (2019), this dissertation uses the iceberg as a critical terrain upon which to both interrogate the coloniality of Qallunaat knowledge production and comprehend the decolonial possibilities of story(telling). Inuit hi/stories are positioned as storied icebergs that are capable of slowing, disrupting, and transcending the hegemonic order of knowledge production. *Storied Icebergs* is divided into two sections. The first section addresses the disruptive potential of the storied icebergs hermeneutic. As impediments to plain sailing, storied icebergs can slow and interrupt the normative movement of the vessel of colonial knowledge production about the Canadian North. This argument is substantiated through a pointed focus on the ways in which Inuit hi/stories of Sir John Franklin's fatal disaster have repeatedly ruptured the dominant narrative of his demise. Storied icebergs can throw Qallunaat thinking overboard; they can force Qallunaat to contend with epistemologies that exceed (settler) colonialism. In this sense, storied icebergs index possibilities for radical transformation. The second section builds on this to argue that storied icebergs do more than disrupt, they are themselves floating formations of decolonial knowledge production Canadian North. Through a poetics of storied icebergs, this section shows how storied expressions of Inuit reclamation and resurgence can reorient Qallunaat knowledge systems towards modes of thought beyond coloniality. Fundamentally, *Storied Icebergs* seeks to contribute to restor(y)ing epistemic relations between Qallunaat, Inuit, and the Canadian North in pursuit of a decolonial future.

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Preface

Whilst I feel incredibly fortunate to have been able to call the Scott Polar Research Institute (SPRI) my intellectual neighbour for my undergraduate degree in the Department of Geography and my intellectual home this past year, I find it difficult to walk through the building without feeling somewhat unsettled. Founded in 1920 at the behest of Frank Debenham and in memorial to Captain Robert Scott, there is no doubt that SPRI is an incredibly prestigious institution; throughout the building, SPRI's academic and scientific heritage is palpable. Yet, as I watched the statue of Edward Colston topple into Bristol's Harbour last summer, I became increasingly uncomfortable with SPRI's rather unscrutinised colonial inheritance - I began to see the Institute in a new light.

In the museum's entrance, looking upwards to MacDonald Gill's hand-painted cartographic representation of the North Pole, encircled with the names of various explorers (1934), I recall reading that this same artist was commissioned to produce drawings in celebration of the British Empire's reach. Passing through the museum itself, I am greeted by an abundance of items retrieved from the polar expeditions of white, British men. Upon making my way into the lecture theatre, I sit down to find myself beside the skin of a polar bear stretched across the wall as some sort of trophy. At each of these points, I am reminded not only of SPRI's imperial genetics, but of the colonial lens through which we in the West imagine the Arctic. As I began to meditate on this further, I started to notice just how embedded this imaginary is in wider society. And, just like many academics, I found the focus of this dissertation very close by.

When I told my friends and family that I was doing an MPhil in Polar Studies, it surprised me how many of them immediately assumed that I would be going to the "North Pole" aboard an icebreaker to go and find some polar bears. This intrigued me. Probing further into why they thought that is what I would be doing given the course was only nine months, many alluded to their association of the polar with hands-on exploration, adventure, and danger, citing Amundsen and Scott (amongst others) to justify their points. Nobody seemed

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to recognise the worryingly imperial overtones of such perspectives, and I suppose I don't blame them.

Thinking back to my own childhood, I recall one of my favourite stories being Harry Horse's (1993) picture book, *The Last Polar Bears*. In it, an intrepid grandfather, accompanied by his little dog and equipped with a golf trolley, sets sail on an expedition to find the few remaining polar bears of the melting North Pole. Upon reaching a small town called Walrus, the pair encounter wolves, penguins (I know, penguins in the Arctic!), and seagulls before finally chancing upon the polar bears. As much as I loved this book, it illustrates the ways in which we in the West are conditioned to imagine the North as an uninhabitable, unpeopled, scary site of adventure. As I argue in this dissertation, this imaginary, produced and reproduced through story, is rooted in the logics of colonialism, and, vis-à-vis the climate crisis, the need to decolonise this imaginary is only becoming more urgent.

“Stories travel like meteors. Hurling from some distant imagination and then landing in a place completely unknown to them. They dent the ground upon which they fall. They wield invisible energies”

Himali Singh Soin

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction



Fig. 1.1 *The Icebergs* by Frederic Edwin Church (1861) (Harvey, 2013)

Icebergs are curious figures. Materially, as neither land nor sea, they are liminal and unsteady phenomena. Imaginatively, they have played a pivotal role in stabilising colonial imaginaries of the Canadian North as an altogether bleak and barren space. Since the nineteenth century, European artists and authors have repeatedly depicted icebergs as metonyms for the hostile, empty North that was being documented by polar explorers at the time. No longer Romantically imagined as an undiscovered paradise or Hyperborean myth, the North was

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now known to be a simultaneously magnificent and maleficent place (Spufford, 1996); it was ‘somehow vaster, more mysterious, more terrible than anywhere else... almost supernatural... sometimes stunningly beautiful, sometimes terrifying, often both’ (Loomis, 1977: 96). Encoded in this notion were the geographical expectations and colonial intentions of polar exploration. The artistic and literary aesthetic that germinated (the Arctic sublime) affirmed the heroism of the polar explorers who battled these dangerous conditions and glorified the expansionary impulse of imperialism (Kjeldaas, 2017; Weiskel, 1976). Painting in this context, Frederic Edwin Church’s famous landscape (Fig.1.1) is instructive in demonstrating the ways in which icebergs were recruited as kaleidoscopes of spectacle, science, and colonialism. At first glance, Church’s painting seems unremarkable. But, look again. Notice the way our eyes are forced to slow down as they move over the central iceberg. Its presence is authoritative. It looms over the wreckage below, imploring us to perceive the ship’s remnants as confirmation of the bravery of the explorers who lost their lives in its shadow. However, icebergs have a curious ability to flip over without warning. As a consequence of their irregular shapes, icebergs will roll in the water under the force of gravity to find a stable position (Ornes, 2012). In *Storied Icebergs*, I want to flip the iceberg. If we overturn its colonial associations, what decolonial possibilities does thinking with icebergs make possible?

As glaciological formations, icebergs are large masses of freshwater ice that have broken away from a glacier or ice shelf into the ocean in an event known as calving. As a process, icebergs are the accumulation, compression, and recrystallisation of seasonal snowfall over a protracted period of time (Bigg, 2015). Once calved, these amphibious giants move slowly through the ocean, unyielding and immense. The vast majority of an iceberg lies below the waterline - only the tip of the iceberg is visible to the naked eye (Potter, 2016); for early explorers navigating polar waters between the sixteenth and early twentieth centuries, this meant that icebergs were often imperceptible until they were dangerously close. Nautical journals and logs from the earliest polar voyages document the anxiety that icebergs instilled in the crew. Prior to the fatal sinking of the RMS *Titanic* in 1912, a comprehensive scientific methodology for iceberg detection and monitoring did not exist and vessels were ill-equipped to negotiate icy waters. Before the invention of airborne radar or satellite technologies, the monitoring of iceberg calving and movement was almost impossible. For captains and deck crews alike, the perils of icebergs were such that ships could be forced to reroute, turn around, or end the voyage entirely. If not, vessels could incur irreparable, even fatal, damage (Bigg, 2015). Even today, despite advances in surveillance technologies, icebergs (especially bergy

bits and growlers¹) continue to pose a navigational conundrum. As they drift across the sea, icebergs melt, move, and break apart in errant, unpredictable ways; inherently shifty, icebergs remain a danger to seafarers. It is in this capacity to inhibit movement as usual that I believe the iceberg offers a particularly generative analytic for thinking through and towards decolonisation in the Canadian North.

Drawing inspiration from Tiffany Lethabo King's *The Black Shoals* (2019), I posit that icebergs, like shoals, are sites wherein normative velocity and movement are hindered. Icebergs force adjustment and reorientation; to navigate their implacability, one must find new vectors, new rhythms, and new approaches. In this vein, *Storied Icebergs* interprets Inuit hi/stories² as icebergs, capable of slowing and rerouting the vessel³ of colonial knowledge production about the Canadian North.

1.2 Contextualising this Research

1.2.1 Colonial Geographies of the Canadian North

In the Canadian North, (settler) colonialism's violent 'dispossession and occupation of Indigenous lands... establishment and maintenance of economic and political domination, and... production and promulgation of knowledge and ideas' have naturalised 'uneven, hierarchical, exploitative relations' (Cameron, 2015: 17) between Inuit⁴, Qallunaat, and the nuna⁵ itself.

Throughout this dissertation, I use the specifically Eastern Nunavut terms Qallunaat (plural) and Qallunaaq (singular) to refer to a distinct non-Inuit subjectivity defined in relation to Inuit. Although the term Qallunaat (which is spelled differently in other dialects) is widely understood by non-Inuit to mean "white person", this is not precisely what it means in Inuktitut, and therefore this is not what I use it to mean. Qallunaat is a relational subject position (hence the capitalisation) denoting non-Inuit, and it is not primarily concerned with

¹Scientific terms for small fragments of floating ice that have disintegrated from larger icebergs.

²I use hi/stories to reflect the intimate relationship between history and story(telling).

³The metaphor of the vessel comes in and out of focus in this dissertation to support the storied iceberg framework. The im/mobility of the figurative vessel offers a compelling way of conceptualising colonial knowledge production about the Canadian North (See Section 2.2).

⁴As a term "Inuit" refers collectively to the Indigenous peoples inhabiting the Arctic regions of Canada, Alaska (Iñupiat), and Greenland. However, it is important to recognise that between communities there is considerable heterogeneity in language, practice, epistemology, and cosmology.

⁵I do not capitalise or italicise Inuktitut vocabulary. I do not provide the English translation directly alongside and instead demand that the reader engage in the labour of translation by going to the glossary (Smith, 2012). This is a conscious act of decolonial refusal that aims to prohibit the Othering of Inuktitut as a language and the recentring of English.

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skin colour (Cameron, 2015): Qallunaat does ‘not mean white man – there is no meaning in it at all pertaining to colour or white or man’ (Freeman, 2015: 86). Rather, the meaning of Qallunaat is malleable, relationally constituted through Inuit languages, values, histories, and ways of being. For instance, for Inuk author Minnie Freeman, Qallunaat is associated with being materialistic and avaricious, whilst for prominent Inuk artist Alootook Ipellie, Qallunaat refers to non-Inuit’s appetite for exploiting resources. Essentially, to be Qallunaat means to be in tension with what it means to be inummarik – a real Inuk (Cameron, 2015). Yet, at issue in this dissertation is not the way in which Inuit understand Qallunaat – this has been repeatedly and eloquently articulated by Inuit for years. Rather, this dissertation is concerned with the decolonial relations that might emerge if we are able to recognise ourselves as Qallunaat⁶ and name what this has, does, and should authorise. To understand these relations, it is important to recognise that (settler) colonialism unfolded differently in the North compared to the rest of what is now called Canada.

Although Qallunaat whalers, traders, missionaries, and explorers (amongst others) had invaded and exploited Inuit lands, bodies, practices, and epistemologies for centuries, it was not until the mid-twentieth century that Inuit experienced intensive state intervention. Historically, the Inuit have been perceived as separate from other First Nations peoples across Canada – they were never made to sign historical treaties or to live on reserves (Ipellie, 1992). Yet, this is not to diminish the extremely paternalistic and racialised ways in which Qallunaat engaged with Inuit; from residential schools, forced relocation, and Christianisation to the shooting of sled dogs and eradication of cultural practices, Inuit have suffered immensely under (settler) colonialism (Kublu, Laugrand, and Oosten, 1999). Today, there remain perceptible differences in articulations of colonialism in the North. Chief of these is the common misconception that, following a series of land claim agreements between the state and the Inuit, colonial relations have somehow been resolved. Instead, the institutions borne from these agreements have ostensibly fortified colonial relations through the implementation of property and governance regimes which permit capitalist resource extraction (Cameron, 2015). Despite this, it would be another colonial conceit to conclude that (settler) colonialism demarcates the contemporary existence of Inuit; although colonialism remains present and nefarious in the Canadian North, Inuit ways of knowing and being persist and even thrive. Evidently, the Canadian North is a deeply relational place. It has been constituted both by histories of imperialism, capitalism, and racialisation, as well as by the cultural, ecological,

⁶Despite the cosmopolitan array of non-Inuit the term Qallunaat encompasses, I focus specifically on British identity as I am myself British.

and economic practices of Inuit and other Indigenous peoples. Arguably, this entangled configuration can be made legible through story.

1.2.2 Storying the Canadian North

The stories we tell and the stories we are told can ‘shape consciousness and shape choices’ (Garrouette and Westcott, 2013: 67). In a sense, stories behave like living beings; they function as powerful forces that influence how we perceive and experience the world (Frank, 2010). That stories can reach outside of the imagination and shape reality is compelling. It prompts the question: what can stories do? What imaginative and material effects and affects can they have? Inevitably, the answer depends on what narratives the stories move within. If stories are retold in narratives abound with representational assumptions, they can evoke mythical realities that foreclose our ability to empathise with other ways of being in the world. Alternatively, stories can be called forth in ways that (re)create and restore the world. In the context of the so-called Canadian North, this multiplicity of story is magnified because the Canadian North is an intensely storied place; it is as much an idea as it is a geographical location (Davidson, 2005). And if, as Sherill Grace (2001) suggests, the Canadian North is a fundamentally created, discursive formation then it transpires that we have ‘to be careful with the stories’ we tell and ‘watch out for the stories’ (King, 2003: 10) that we are told about it.

It is well established that story has done, and continues to do, significant ideological and practical harm in legitimising material and imaginative Qallunaat claims to the Canadian North. In Western imaginations, the Canadian North is the product of the accretion of popular myths and testimonies; for many, the North remains a phantasmagoria of mystery, horror, and excitement (McCorristine, 2018). From the familiar stories of the North as deadly, barren, masculine, and mysterious to the stereotypical and often racist representations of “Eskimos,” “Indians”, the RCMP, white male romantics, adventurers, explorers’ (Grace, 2001: 17)⁷, the stories that Qallunaat practise have constructed a North ripe for colonisation. The stories that ground Qallunaat understandings of North are not just harmful because of their representational potency, but also due to their influence over the material conditions of life in the North. Stories are not solely imaginative devices (Cameron, 2015). Indeed, contemporary Qallunaat claims to northern lands and resources are underwritten by technocratic, essentialist, and ultimately, colonial storyings of the North; Inuit ontologies and epistemologies continue to be

⁷At times throughout this dissertation the racist anachronisms “Eskimo” or “Esquimaux” are utilised as opposed to Inuit (or “Indian” as opposed to First Nations/Métis, Indigenous, or Native). This is either within a quote or to keep with the vernacular of the historical period in discussion. To acknowledge the distance between these words and their historical contexts I have used quotation marks (Igloliorte, 2006).

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understood as sources of data and Inuit themselves are frequently positioned as simply “local” informants (Ibid.). Such renderings “flatten” the complexity and multidimensionality of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) - that which ‘Inuit have known for a long time’, or more specifically, ‘the Inuit way of doing things: the past, present, and future knowledge, experience, and values of Inuit society’ (Martin, 2012: 3). Although excellent work has been done to examine the ways in which colonial relations shape(d) the production and dissemination of Qallunaat stories about the Canadian North, these discussions tend to engender a problematic division of labour.

In studies that address the Inuit as colonised, Inuit accounts fall from view as there tends to be an overemphasis on the role of Qallunaat stories in naturalising colonial claims. Equally, contemporary colonial relations are relatively unexplored in the growing body of Indigenous writing concerning the importance of story(telling) to Native cultures (See Justice, 2018; Womack, 1999; Warrior, 1995; 2005); within such scholarship, the role of story in cultural knowledges and practices is – rightly – centred. Whilst there are notable exceptions, from Julie Cruikshank’s writings on the narrative interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledges in the contemporary Canadian North and similar works by scholars including: Emilie Cameron, Ann Fienup-Riordan, and Keavy Martin, to the insightful research of Inuit scholars such as Janet Tamalik McGrath and Looee Okalik, insufficient consideration has been given to the ways in which story might contribute to the decolonisation of Qallunaat knowledge production about the Canadian North. However, probing this gap is dangerous. It risks reinscribing Qallunaat as the focus of decolonial dynamics and ignoring the epistemological significance of story(telling) to Inuit.

1.2.3 Story in the Canadian North

It has been well-established by Inuit elders and scholars alike that Inuit, like many other Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island⁸, have been telling stories since time immemorial (Martin, 2012). Throughout Inuit history, story(telling) has always been inextricably connected to the form and content of Inuit lived experiences; stories have long been vital to the transmission and preservation of Inuit epistemologies, cultures, and identities (Nungak, 2004). Prior to colonial contact, IQ was negotiated, articulated, and disseminated through the collaborative management of an intellectual body of stories (Martin, 2012). In contrast to Qallunaat, Inuit perceived knowledge production as a community-based practice of investigation, reflection, and revision:

⁸For many Native Americans, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, Turtle Island is used to refer to the continent known in English as North America.

‘The idea that knowledge should be objective and true has a long history in the West. . . . In Inuit society, we are dealing with a completely different tradition of knowledge. All knowledge is social by nature and the idea of objectified true knowledge holds little attraction or fascination.’

(Kublu, Laugrand, and Oosten, 1999: 8-9)

Individual community members were often encouraged to contribute their own experiences and stories to shape their bodies of knowledge and build a “communal truth” (Teuton, 2008). This open-ended epistemological practice relied heavily on the relational contexts of the oral. Oftentimes, the full meaning of a story could only be accessed through the experience of listening carefully, only then could you ‘pick up what you need’ (Patterk Qtd. in van Deusen, 2009: 349). During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this oral story(telling) practice was violently condemned by Qallunaat missionaries. Although ethnographic accounts transcribing Inuit orature had existed for centuries, it was not until the arrival of Christian missionaries that Inuit were “introduced” to alphabetic and syllabic⁹ writing systems (McGrath, 1983). Whilst it is important not to dismiss writing as solely a colonial imposition – Inuit story(telling) had always taken place via diverse oral and inscribed forms – there is little doubt that missionary activity forced Inuit to move from orality into prescribed forms of literacy (Henitiuk, 2016). This transition was deeply embedded in the “civilising” mission of the colonisers who believed that a culture without written literature was ‘less than fully human, certainly. . . less “civilised”’ (Justice, 2018: 19). Within this context, story(telling) was mobilised by the Qallunaat as a means of dispossessing the Inuit; singular stories depicting Inuit oral traditions as “primitive” were presented as epistemological truths. However, the “introduction” of literacy did not signal the passing of orality; the notion of a linear trajectory from the oral to the written word is a colonial fallacy. Despite (settler) colonialism’s systematic suppression of Inuit oral traditions, Inuit story(telling) has persevered. The intra and inter-generational sharing of stories over time has built an extensive archive of knowledge that reflects the truths of Inuit survival. Despite being inheritors of painful colonial legacies, Inuit stories are potent reminders that their histories are far more than tragedy and suffering. As Inuk elder Rita Nashook insists: ‘Inuit culture is oral and we keep knowledge in our minds. Even without text, our culture is full of wisdom’ (Qtd. in Martin, 2012: 1).

⁹Inuit communities in Nunavut and Nunavik use a system of syllabics originally created for the Ojibwa language by Christian missionary, James Evans. In 1840, Evans adapted this system to the Cree, and within forty years, the Bible was translated into Inuktitut using this syllabic system adapted to Inuit (Henitiuk, 2016).

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That is not to say that Inuit do not transcribe their hi/stories. Contemporary Inuit story(telling) manifests in a variety of formats, including but not limited to: art, spoken word poetry, fiction, film, and music. Although the mediums for story(telling) might have changed over time, “modern” Inuit stories are still conceptualised and mobilised from within Inuit onto-epistemologies¹⁰. Thus, it is unsurprising that communities across Inuit Nunangat are re/turning to story(telling) to locate openings through which to ‘escape the gaze and the cage of the Empire’ (Simpson, 2011: 34). Contemporary Inuit story(telling) is connecting Inuit with their ‘sacred memory’ (Alfred, 2005: 131) - that is, their ancestral and collective inheritances – whilst also providing the languages, tactics, and frames of reference necessary for self-determination and resurgence. This is what makes story(telling) so pertinent to decolonisation; story(telling) ‘is at its core decolonising, because it is a process of remembering, visioning, and creating a just reality’ (Simpson, 2011: 33).

1.2.4 Defining Decolonisation

I am hesitant to use the word decolonisation in this work because I am mindful of the ways in which the term is often uncritically adopted by “liberal-minded” Qallunaat. The term is frequently mobilised by Qallunaat as a metaphor or ‘move to innocence’ (Tuck and Yang, 2012) that does little beyond assuaging colonial guilt, and moves ‘too quickly towards a reconciliation or resolution that is not mine to claim’ (Cameron, 2015: 28). To avoid this, it is imperative that I take time to articulate what I understand decolonisation to mean. In the emerging field of Decolonial Studies, decolonisation is often framed as a dislocation from colonial thought and power - concepts such as “epistemic disobedience” (Mignolo, 2011) and “de-linking” (Mignolo, 2007) come to mind here. Whilst important, such conceptualisations place too much emphasis on the mind (Thiong’o, 1986) at the expense of thinking about the land and the body. As a number of anti-colonial scholars have cautioned, to pursue the decolonisation of the mind alone would be to sacrifice perhaps the most transformative aspect of the decolonial project: land.

‘Theory removed from the land, removed from practice, and detached from the contexts that give it form and content propose a decolonizing strategy that risks

¹⁰This is not to imply that Indigenous knowledges only travel in (oral) story(telling) as an essentialised view would have it. IQ is expressed through many other forms and mediums.

*metaphorizing its constitutive ground. Land and place must remain at the center of decolonial thought and practice*¹¹

(Martineau and Ritskes, 2014: II)

For Indigenous peoples specifically, the (re)centring of Indigenous lands, communities, and cultures is often what energises the decolonial struggle (Ibid.). The revitalisation of Indigenous nationhood is paramount to the realisation of what Moten and Harney (2013) call a “wild beyond”. That is, a space irrecoverable to colonial logics; a space which invites a shared movement away from the ‘enclosures of colonial modernity’ (Martineau and Ritskes, 2014: III) and away from a standpoint where coloniality is allowed to make sense. For Qallunaat like myself, our decolonial task in this shared movement away from coloniality involves making space for the “wild beyond”. For us, decolonisation demands that we sabotage colonial systems of knowledge and power, that we locate and disable continuing colonial practices and claims (Cameron, 2015). Central to the destabilisation of colonialism is the reconstitution and renarration of spaces like the Canadian North. It transpires that if Qallunaat took stories seriously, we ‘would be required to confront the inherent injustice in’ our ‘claim of any rights or authority over Indigenous peoples [in Inuit Nunangat] and to their unconquered and unceded territory’ (Mack, 2011: 287). In this dissertation, I use storied icebergs as a way of impelling Qallunaat to reconceptualise their epistemic relationship to the Canadian North.

1.3 Thinking With Icebergs

1.3.1 Research Aims

Ultimately, this dissertation asks the question: in the context of story(telling), how might Qallunaat knowledge production about the Canadian North be decolonised? Specifically, *Storied Icebergs* is concerned with the changes that Inuit hi/stories demand of Qallunaat knowledge systems which continue to imagine the Canadian North through a (settler) colonial lens. The capacity of icebergs to disrupt the momentum and direction of vessels serves as

¹¹This iteration of decolonisation has been critiqued by scholars in Black Studies who take issue with Indigenous-centred articulations of settler colonial spatiality. For instance, Garba and Sorentino (2020) argue that, too often, notions of decolonisation collapse the triad settler-slave-native triad into a settler-native dyad. When the metaphorical and material are separated and emphasis is placed on the physicality of the land, the entangled relationship between slavery and settler colonialism falls from view. This forecloses meaningful analyses of slavery (Ibid.). Nevertheless, land remains central to Indigenous struggles for decolonisation because land is oftentimes their “source of knowledge” (Simpson, 2017: 172).

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this dissertation's organising metaphor and theoretical terrain. Positioning Inuit hi/stories as icebergs functions as a hermeneutic and mode of critiquing the colonality of Qallunaat knowledge production about the Canadian North. As sites whereupon normative movement cannot proceed, storied icebergs force Qallunaat to listen long and carefully to utterances of a Canadian North beyond the colonial imagination. Through tracing where and how Inuit hi/stories rupture, reorient, and reroute the vessel of colonial knowledge production about the Canadian North, *Storied Icebergs* drags our thinking overboard to demonstrate the decolonising possibilities of story(telling).

1.3.2 Theorising Icebergs

Just as literal icebergs are formed through the accumulation and pressurisation of layers of snowfall, storied icebergs are assembled through the compaction of specific theoretical contributions. The genesis of this dissertation's storied iceberg analytic emerges through a coalescence of: Polar Humanities, Black Diaspora Studies, and Native Studies.

In the realm of Polar Humanities, *Storied Icebergs* aims to build on the work of a number of scholars who are engaging Indigenous epistemologies to reinterpret the imaginative, material, and cultural role of ice. Where once the Academy conceptualised ice as neutral, mechanical, and disembodied, work by scholars such as Bravo (2010) on the social ontology of sea ice in Inuit cultures and Cruickshank (2005) on Indigenous understandings of glaciers as sentient and animate, has revealed ice to be an important actor in knowledge production about the Arctic. This has been reaffirmed in creative works by thinkers such as MacLennan (2019), who artistically muses on the materiality and im/mobility of the icebreaker as a means of connecting the destructive impulse of capitalism, climate change, and a melting Arctic. Similarly, Leslie (2016) asks whether ice, as a dialectic between the frozen and the fluid, could provide the basis for a transformative mode of analysis. In seeking to advance this body of work and expand horizons beyond disciplinary boundaries, I draw on conceptual traditions already established in Black Diaspora Studies.

Since the late twentieth century, Black Diaspora scholars have been theorising Black life, aesthetics, and decolonial resistance through imbricating the material and the metaphorical (McKittrick, 2006). From Édouard Glissant's (1989) "archipelagic thought" to Paul Gilroy's (1993) "Black Atlantic", the ocean has repeatedly crested in Black Diaspora Studies as an analytical space of transit and motion, capable of disturbing the ostensibly 'smooth flow of continental thought' (King, 2019: 5) stemming from Europe. By animating the iceberg as a theoretical and methodological site, I am taking inspiration from a number of scholars

writing with these ideas, most notably, Kamau Braithwaite's *Tidaletics* (2018) and Tiffany Lethabo King's *The Black Shoals* (2019). Braithwaite's tidaletics help him document his poetic mediations on answering the question: what is the Caribbean? In a similar way, use the iceberg to assist with my storied meditations on the question: what is the Canadian North? Like Braithwaite's tidaletics, the iceberg serves as a form of what McKittrick (2016) terms Glissant's "poetics of landscape". For McKittrick, the "poetics of landscape" is a challenge to normative, colonial geographical traditions which privilege maps, charts, and statistics. A "poetics of landscape", she argues, draws attention to the ways in which language – or in Braithwaite's case poetry – can reveal the 'unchartered', and at times, invisible geographies that are always being made, remade, or unmade by the colonised (Ibid: 3).

For King (2019), the Black shoals function as part of the "unchartered" geographies of everyday Black life; foregrounding the shoal as an analytical and geographical site allows King to rupture the dominant knowledge systems that foreclose Black and Indigenous relations past, present, and future. I hope to use the iceberg in a similar way to interrupt the normative epistemic channels that perpetuate colonial imaginaries of the Canadian North and foreclose the possibility of harmonious Inuit-Qallunaat relations.

Thinking with icebergs also engages the burgeoning body of scholarship concerning Native mobilities and migrations, which is challenging colonial notions of Indigeneity as fixed in time and space (See Diaz and Kauanui, 2001; Daigle, 2018). As that which is neither land nor water, the iceberg answers the call for forms of analysis that decentre colonial spatial registers which continue to disaggregate space into land and water (Aikau et al., 2015). The iceberg positions 'land and water as always connected' (Ibid: 95), opening up analytical possibilities of contact, encounter, and transformation.

1.3.3 Methodological Icebergs

In grappling with the capacity of Inuit hi/stories to decolonise Qallunaat knowledge production about the Canadian North, *Storied Icebergs* gains its buoyancy through engaging Inuit and Qallunaat stories. Inevitably, this dissertation cannot be comprehensive in its discussion of Inuit or Qallunaat storytelling forms or practices. So, I have selected the stories not only for their social, political, and literary resonance, but also for their capacity to articulate the hermeneutical possibilities of storied icebergs.

In Chapter 2, I use the story of Sir John Franklin's disappearance as an organisational thread. I revisit this much-studied analytical site due to the recent resurgence in Qallunaat

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interest surrounding Franklin¹². The way in which the “mystery” of the HMS *Erebus* and *Terror* has managed to cling to Qallunaat knowledge production about the North means it provides a compelling case study; Franklin is uniquely positioned to connect temporalities, spatialities, and epistemologies in ways that might illuminate the decolonial significance of story(telling) in the Canadian North. Within this, I focus specifically on the ways in which Inuit hi/stories have managed to interrupt dominant Qallunaat hi/stories of the event.

In Chapter 3, I move away from the story of Franklin and turn towards a selection of Inuit stories. I have chosen texts by contemporary Inuit storytellers such as Taqralik Partridge and Asinnajaq to reflect the ways in which younger Inuit are using various creative forms to tell their stories. Additionally, I have tried to draw on Inuit storytellers with varying levels of visibility beyond Inuit Nunangat to recognise the fact that many Inuit do not and/or are not able to get their work published on a commercial scale. Importantly, this dissertation does not aim to, nor can it possibly, represent the full breadth of Inuit publications. Unfortunately absent are well-known works such as: Mitiarjuk Nappaaluk’s *Sanaaq*, Alooook Ipellie’s *Arctic Dreams and Nightmares*, Anthony Apakark Thrasher’s *Skid Row Eskimo*, and Tanya Tagaq’s *Split Tooth*. Noteworthy texts from other Indigenous peoples of the Arctic are also not discussed, although they would certainly make interesting points of comparison. I also note that my discussion of Inuit stories cannot possibly be comprehensive because not all stories are for all people; many Inuit stories provide other important cultural functions that I, as an outsider, cannot, and should not, know.

Finally, I want to acknowledge that, as much as I wanted to, I was unable to easily access most of the texts in Inuktitut. Within Inuit Nunangat there are a wide variety of languages, dialects, and orthographies. For this dissertation, I spent a short amount of time attempting to learn the basics of the South Qikiqtaaluk dialect (spoken amongst the communities of southern Baffin Island, including Iqaluit) in recognition of the nefarious ways in which the English language was mobilised as a tool of colonial assimilation throughout Canada. I want to emphasise that I do not take my ability to access language learning materials and resources for granted. Where I was able to access texts in Inuktitut, my understanding was inevitably partial and always incomplete. Whilst I would feel neither confident nor comfortable trying to convey the beauty and complexity of the language here - this work belongs to Inuktitut speaking Inuit – this beginner’s orientation to the language has informed my engagement with the stories and given me a deeper insight into the worldviews contained within them.

¹²For example, the televised adaptation of Dan Simmons’ (2007) semi-fictional, bestselling novel *The Terror* and the popular AMC television adaptation first aired in the US in 2018 and in the UK in early 2021.

1.3.4 Ethical Icebergs

Given the nature of this work, it is imperative that I approach the chosen stories through a decolonial lens. To insist on centring profoundly Eurocentric paradigms to the exclusion of alternative ways of knowing would reproduce the insidious epistemic 'arrogance, laziness, and close-mindedness' (Medina, 2013: 42) that this dissertation seeks to unsettle. Traditionally, the academic study of story has tended to overanalyse texts in search of "hidden" meanings, resulting in the imposition of ill-fitting categories on stories (Frank, 2010). Conventional literary analysis often perpetuates the 'arrogant assumptions' (Behar, 2003: 15) that Qallunaat continue to make about how we know, what we know, and who has the *de facto* authority to produce knowledge. This dissertation's methodological approach utilises the errant, unstable nature of iceberg to avoid the 'singular interpretations of truth, knowledge, and rights' (Figueroa, 2015b: 643) associated with colonialism. As an unmoored, untethered, and altogether shifty formation, the iceberg forces me to be more attentive to the ways in which numerous epistemologies can exist concurrently and more respectful of the need to embrace difference rather than assimilate or finalise it. Bearing this in mind, I have selected the following intellectual tools to engage with the texts in the hope that they will help soften my critical eye. These techniques enable me to read for, feel for, and listen for the epistemic presences within and beyond the Euro-western canon whilst also ensuring I remain in "good relation" (Justice, 2018) with the stories.

I Faithful Witnessing

Witnessing is a complex practice that raises questions not only of truth and experience, but also of the legitimacy of perception. Whilst I recognise that witnessing, especially when practiced as law, theology, and anthropology, is intimately linked to colonial voyeurism (Hartman, 1997) and the 'injustice of not hearing the "truths" of other ways of inhabiting the world' (Ahmed, 2003: 396), I retain the term because there is much at stake here. Ever wary of this colonial resonance, I turn to Lugones' (1987) theory of "faithful witnessing" as a way of opening myself to hearing a different sort of truth; faithful witnessing allows me to fulfil my responsibility as a Qallunaat researcher to witness toward decolonisation. Faithful witnessing constitutes a way of seeing that challenges dominant perspectives and singular master narratives (Figueroa, 2015a); it prompts us to remember 'the things we've learned to forget' (Dillard, 2012: 4). Mobilising this in my work requires me to find ways of being respectfully 'at ease' in 'multiple worlds' (Lugones, 1987: 12) that refuse the 'radical othering that often happens in social science research' (Ibid: 549). Part of this occurs

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through my endeavours to notice “what else has happened” in Qallunaat engagements with the Franklin expedition (McKittrick, 2014). In Chapter 2, wading through the dominant hi/story of the Franklin disaster, I pull, stretch, and connect Inuit voices together to probe for “other possibilities” (Ibid.) beyond colonial narratives.

II Reparative Reading

Concomitant to practicing faithful witnessing is reparative reading. As Sedgwick (2003) articulates, academic research is plagued by a paranoia which manifests itself in paranoid reading – that is, reading guided by academic protocols of critical distance, objectivity, competition, and hierarchy (Love, 2010). Paranoid reading, Sedgwick postulates, thus lies at the centre of Qallunaat epistemic arrogance. Contrastingly, the reparatively positioned reader surrenders the knowing, anxious disposition of paranoid reading, and opens themselves up to ‘multiplicity, surprise, rich divergence, consolation, creativity, and love’ (Love, 2010: 237). In Chapter 3, Inuit films, novels, and other mediums are primary sources. Using the principles of reparative reading, I assemble and rub together a number of diverse texts to show how Qallunaat can enact a different relationship to knowledge production about the Canadian North through relating deeply and lovingly to all that we do not know.

III Embracing ‘Not Knowing’

In an academic context, the researcher’s relationship to knowing and “not knowing” continues to retrench colonial understandings of knowledge as accessible, interpretable information. Within this framework, to possess knowledge indicates intellectual competence, whilst to “not know” is judged as failure (Cameron, 2015). If I am serious about pursuing a decolonising agenda, I must therefore embrace “not knowing”. Part of this means recognising that ‘not all things are meant for all people’ (Justice, 2018: 25); to insist otherwise would be to exercise a universalising colonial privilege that assumes entitlement to the knowledge of others (Ibid.). Inevitably then, there are necessary limits to the insights I can provide in this dissertation, especially when looking at Inuit stories. Acknowledging this is especially pertinent given the emphasis that Inuit place on the role of experience in knowledge production.

In Inuktitut, as Cameron (2015) notes and as I have come to learn from my own study of the language, there are many different ways to learn and to know, and there are many different ways of “not knowing”. I am drawn here to the verb *nalunaq*- which, as Rachel Qitsualik (2013) explains, considers ‘not knowing’ less as a limitation and more as a state of perplexity.

I find the concept of *nalunaruirumaaqtuq*¹³ - meaning ‘things come clear eventually, on their own’ (Aglukkaq Qtd. in McGrath, 2011: 310) - particularly helpful in reminding me that knowing and “not knowing” have implications; whilst there are some things I must know, and have a responsibility to learn, there are many things I do not know and should not know. I am reminded that there is no perfect or final knowledge; knowledge is relational, and this means ‘relating more respectfully, responsibly, attentively, and quietly to all that we do not know’ (Cameron, 2015: 35).

IV An Ethics of Decolonial Love

Doubts and questions spiral as I write this dissertation; concerns about perpetuating colonial voyeurism and exploitation collide with questions of how I can avoid assimilating difference into “something familiar” or reproducing Qallunaat arrogance. Can Qallunaat research/ers such as myself ever witness other ways of knowing and being in the world? Unfortunately, I can neither quell these concerns nor answer these questions – being able to sit with these feelings of inadequacy and shame are a crucial part of honest decolonial work as a white researcher. However, what I can do is situate myself in relation to this work, because ‘when we self-locate, we represent our own truth. . . .our own reality’ (Absolon and Willet, 2005: 110).

As a white, Qallunaat person born and raised in the former heart of empire and having never been to Inuit Nunangat, I recognise that I am very precariously positioned; I must take extra caution not to reproduce nefarious colonial legacies of Qallunaat research/ers exploiting Inuit (Smith, 2012). No doubt this is an uneasy space to occupy. My study is inevitably shaped by the colonial structures of knowledge production, yet, equally, it is neither possible nor ethical to learn about Qallunaat relations to North solely through Qallunaat epistemologies and theories. In seeking to get this balance right, I want to acknowledge that objectivity is a myth, and that my knowledge is inevitably partial, subjective, and limited (Ibid.). I am not claiming to know the North or the Inuit, nor am I claiming to represent or to study Inuit. My intention is to learn with and from Inuit, writing as an outsider, for other outsiders, about what it means to be a Qallunaat, and how we might better relate to the North through story.

To do this, I look to King’s (2019) assertion that the ethical orbits around mutual care. This is something I deeply believe in. As Elder Little Brown Bear told me during my time in Tkaronito in 2019, ‘people don’t care how much you know, they want to know how much

¹³This specific expression comes from the Nattilingmiut dialect, but the concept is expressed in similar ways across dialects (Cameron, 2015).

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you care'. Care guides my relationship to knowledge; care that is respectful, attentive, quiet, and humble. It is through care that I seek to enact an ethics of "decolonial love", which 'bears witness to the past while looking forward to a transformative and reparative future by unravelling coloniality' (Figueroa, 2015a: 44).

1.4 Chapter Outline

This dissertation divides itself into two sections. The first section – Chapter 2 - is concerned with the ways in which storied icebergs slow and interrupt the momentum of the vessel of colonial knowledge production about the Canadian North. In this chapter, I position the history of Qallunaat engagement with the disappearance of Sir John Franklin as the mainsail of the vessel of colonial knowledge production about the Canadian North. For centuries, tightly-scripted Qallunaat narratives of Franklin's demise have propelled this ship forward. By (re)reading the story of Franklin for "what else happened", Inuit hi/stories appear as icebergs that slow and interrupt momentum. In imagining this disruptive encounter, I index possibilities for rearrangement and reorientation. Storied icebergs force normative Qallunaat modes of thought overboard; navigating these icy masses demands that new routes be charted and epistemological adjustments made. Following this argument, in Chapter 3 I interpret storied forms of Inuit movement, experience, aesthetics, and resistance through a poetics of storied icebergs. Running my eye over the contours of these floating formations, I notice where and how Inuit hi/stories might reorient Qallunaat knowledge production about the North towards a decolonial future.

Chapter 2

Storied Icebergs Interrupting Plain Sailing

2.1 Introduction

Aboard the vessel of colonial knowledge production about the Canadian North, it is difficult to hear, locate, or recognise the voices of the colonised; the promise of a smooth, easy voyage relies on the silencing and erasure of Inuit onto-epistemologies. So, as the waves crash against the hull and the ship charts its linear course through history, the Inuit are denied the right to self-representation and made to suffer a ‘symbolic laryngectomy’ (Busia, 1989: 90) in colonial narratives. In this chapter, I want to throw the Qallunaat crew off-balance. As I established earlier, one of the greatest threats to maritime navigation was, and remains, the iceberg. In its capacity to slow and disrupt normative nautical movement, the iceberg demands reorganisation and reorientation. Following this, I argue that Inuit hi/stories – as storied icebergs – can decelerate and interrupt the momentum of the vessel of colonial knowledge production about the Canadian North.

2.2 Ship-Shaped Formations of Knowledge Production

The intimate relationship between knowledge production and maritime navigation has already been established by a number of geographical and historical scholars (See Connery, 2006; Featherstone, 2005; Mulligan, 2005; Ogborn, 2002, 2005). Yet, despite the analytical popularity of the nautical realm in scholarship, the figure of the ship is often only engaged tangentially (Hasty and Peters, 2012). I concur with the argument that ‘any account

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of... geographies of the sea necessarily involves thinking also about ships and spaces onboard ships' (Lambert et al., 2006: 580). As one of the 'most powerful artefacts produced by the hand of man' (Woodman, 2005: xi), seafaring vessels are rich sites of ideological and informational accumulation, especially in relation to colonialism. As scholars such as Sorrenson (1996) and Bravo (2006) have argued, maritime navigation was a key imperial technology; for centuries, sailing ships have been emblematic of the mercantile, military, scientific, and exploratory might of empire. If we understand the ship as 'a living, micro-cultural, micro-political system in motion' (Gilroy, 1993: 4), then the European square rigged sailing ships which carried polar explorers towards the Arctic were both figurative and material vectors of colonialism thrust into oceanic space. Given this, I posit that, in interrogating the coloniality of Qallunaat knowledge production about the Canadian North, it is productive and illuminating to use the figure of the vessel in conversation with the iceberg.

At the helm of this vessel of colonial knowledge production stands the enterprise of polar exploration. From the early voyages of Frobisher in the sixteenth century to the expeditions of Parry, Ross, and Franklin in the nineteenth century, the pursuit of a navigable route through the Northwest Passage has contributed to a distinctly (settler) colonial epistemological regime wherein to know the land and its peoples is to lay claim to it (Razack, 2011). Successive generations of "intrepid" polar explorers have been able to steer Qallunaat towards imagining¹ the North as an empty stage upon which imperial histories could be written (Craciun, 2016); the fatal expedition of Sir John Franklin looms particularly large in these cumulative histories. Correspondingly, if polar exploration is at the helm, then the story of Franklin operates as the mainsail of the vessel of colonial knowledge production about the Canadian North. Rigged on the main mast, the story of Franklin harnesses the wind to gather the vessel's velocity and momentum; although the Northwest Passage had been "discovered" and "mapped" by the close of the nineteenth century, Qallunaat have repeatedly returned to Franklin's iconic polar story to the extent that, supposedly, 'at the heart of every [Qallunaat] story about the Arctic stands John Franklin' (Lambert Qtd. in McKie and Thorpe, 2021). The rich literary and visual culture surrounding the fated expedition is testament to how Franklin drives the vessel of colonial knowledge production.

Franklin's first Arctic command was during the period between 1819-22, when he was selected to lead the Coppermine Expedition to chart the area from Tasiujarjuaq to the north

¹The use of imagine here is a reference to Said who understands geographical imaginaries to refer to the ways in which physical spaces are imagined and ascribed meaning, how knowledge about these spaces is produced, and consequently, what actions this knowledge authorises (Said, 1994). Here, the 'correctness of the representation' (Said, 1978: 29) is unimportant – it need not be factually accurate to be of significant imaginative and material consequence.

2.2 Ship-Shaped Formations of Knowledge Production

coast of Canada as part of the British Admiralty's wider efforts to map the Northwest Passage. Despite the fact that the expedition was a failure, plagued by bad luck and poor planning, Franklin's bestselling account of the voyage – *Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of the Polar Seas* (1823) – established him as one of Britain's most notable naval heroes. The *Narrative* is a revised version of the expedition report Franklin submitted to the Admiralty upon his return to England, and was published as a means of supplementing his naval income. The plot unfolds chronologically: time is indicated primarily through calendar dates and Franklin's meticulous measurements of longitude and latitude are documented in the section headings and appendices. In this sense, Franklin's book is but a continuation of the publication of dry maritime narratives during this period (Hill, 2008). Yet, such was the extent of the British readership's investment in the genre of polar exploration that 'stories, more than specimens or scientific observations, constituted the real currency of Arctic exploration' (Robinson, 2006: 6).



Fig. 2.1 These plates are from an edition of Franklin's *Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea* in the Grenville Collection, and depict a number of explorers making camp on purportedly "barren grounds" (Harvey, 2013)

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Despite being beyond the physical reach of most, the Canadian North was believed to be universally accessible as an imaginative space for the British public. Throughout the eighteenth century, maritime narratives had started to crosspollinate with travel fiction, animating the contact zone of the “novel and the sea” (Cohen, 2010). By the nineteenth century, the public appetite for first-person intrepid adventure was such that official naval expedition reports were being modified for popular consumption and circulated through print and new media (Craciun, 2016). Consequently, accounts of previous polar expeditions such as John Barrow’s *Chronological History of the Arctic Regions* (1818) and Robert Southey’s *The Life of Nelson* (1813) had already established the North as a bleak, unforgiving space upon which the heroic character of European explorers could be defined and cultivated in relation to empire (Southey, 2005 [1813]; Hill, 2007). Although in *Narrative of a Journey* Franklin appears to perpetuate this rhetoric of the North as desolate and inhospitable (Fig.2.1), rich, descriptive detail of the landscape as in the work of Barrow and Southey is rare. In the absence of lengthy narrative passages, and testament to the power of representations like Southey’s, readers were all too happy to transplant Franklin’s experiences onto the white emptiness they already associated with North. Thus, Franklin’s sparse representations of North were able to gain a life of their own in the ‘rich seams of aesthetic, literary, visual, and spectacular forms’ (Spufford, 1996: 46). In many ways, Franklin’s formative text occupied an epistemic threshold in how the British public perceived the Canadian North; the way in which *Narrative of a Journey* was co-opted by story functioned to concretise the role of Arctic exploration in the imperial ideology and assert Franklin as one of the nation’s most revered polar explorers. However, if possessing the power to story the land and prevent ‘other narratives from forming and emerging’ (Said, 1993: xiii) legitimises a colonial epistemological tradition, then it is Franklin’s final voyage that is most salient.

In 1844, Sir John Franklin was given a mandate by the Admiralty to map the remaining unnavigated sections of the Northwest Passage. In 1845, Franklin and 129 men departed from England aboard the HMS *Erebus* and HMS *Terror* (Hill, 2008) and never returned. After being spotted by European whalers waiting for favourable conditions to cross from Qikiqt Aluk into Tallurutiup Imanga, what is known about the fate of the expedition beyond this point is the product of 150 years of search expeditions, scientific investigations, and (eventually) Inuit testimonies. Unsurprisingly, the disappearance of *Erebus* and *Terror* sparked intense public interest and, in 1848, the first official search for the missing expedition left, paving the way for over a decade of relentless searching. Although several search expeditions recovered an abundance of material objects originating from the *Erebus* and *Terror* and recorded Inuit testimonies detailing potential sightings of Franklin’s crew, the only textual evidence to be

2.3 Storied Icebergs Inhibiting Normative Movement

retrieved was the two-part *Victory Point Note* (Craciun, 2016). Discovered in a cairn on the northwestern coast of Qikiqtaq in 1859, the *Victory Point Note* confirmed that Franklin and his men had spent the winter of 1845-46 on Iluvialuit, before setting off the following summer only to become trapped in ice just off of Qikiqtaq. According to the note, the ‘H.M. ships *Terror* and *Erebus* were deserted on the 22nd April’ and ‘Sir John Franklin died on the 11th June 1847’ (Cyriax, 1958: 186). In the context of an increasingly formalised relationship between explorer and publisher, the lack of primary documents meant that a linear, intelligible account of Franklin’s journey could not be established (McCorristine, 2018); the absence of legible written material recovered from Franklin’s expedition was considered to be synonymous with the absence of a secure “history” (Craciun, 2016).

From an imperial perspective, historical events that lack conclusive physical evidence can easily be infiltrated by fiction such that what is written about the event often counts more than the event itself (Craciun, 2016); the “facts” of history can be marshalled into narrative arcs in ways that influence the selection, circulation, and representation of historical materials (Thiess, 2018). Indeed, history itself ‘is fiction. Not the events, but the telling of them. . . History, as the word itself implies, always tells a story’ (Evans, 2014: 47). Consequently, it is those who ‘were lost from/went looking for/wrote about/built performances around the *Erebus* and *Terror*’ (Stiles, 2017: 521) that have provided the authoritative voice on the story of Franklin. The ostensible mystery of Franklin’s disappearance has been anthologised in plays, music, and poetry, memorialised in non-fiction and fiction, commemorated on canvas and screen, and, ultimately, reproduced across generations of Qallunaat in our imaginaries of North. Even today, Franklin remains ‘a haunting presence’ (Atwood, 1995: 10); his story ‘lives in our [Qallunaat] continuing, insistent demand for answers, our rapacious need to uncover and possess, our transgressive, objectifying gaze, our continued search for the Northwest Passage to origins and truth’ (Grace, 1995: 7). For centuries then, the Qallunaat vernacular of Franklin has propelled the vessel of colonial knowledge production about the North forward. This makes Franklin a particularly compelling case study for theorising the disruptive capacity of Inuit hi/stories.

2.3 Storied Icebergs Inhibiting Normative Movement

Although Inuit have been telling Qallunaat explorers stories about sightings of Franklin’s crew since the earliest search expeditions, their oral hi/stories have been repeatedly discredited such that:

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‘The element most frequently missing in most attempts to make sense of... [Franklin’s disappearance]... is the perspective of the Inuit – not simply those of the past but those of the present as well – in whose backyard all kinds of crazy Qallunaat persist in looking, year after year, for something that their ancestors lost long ago and that may never really be completely found.’

(Potter, 2016: 199)

For centuries, misreadings and missed readings of Franklin’s disappearance have diverted the vessel of colonial knowledge production’s attention away from the violence of (settler) colonialism and the lived experiences of the Inuit. However, if the ocean is a social space ‘where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other’ (Pratt, 1992: 7), then what can be observed by looking before, after, and around the figure of the vessel? In what follows, I (re)read the chronological history of Qallunaat engagement with the story of Franklin for “what else happened” (McKittrick, 2006). Casting an eye towards the horizon, I position Inuit hi/stories as storied icebergs. Even at a distance, the presence of storied icebergs poses a navigational threat to the vessel of colonial knowledge production; they are capable of inhibiting normative movement and forcing directional and rhythmical adjustment. In seeking to exemplify this, I trace where and how storied icebergs, as sites of epistemic encounter, contact, and friction, have been able to rupture dominant flows of thought about Franklin and therefore slow the normative movement of the vessel of colonial knowledge production about the Canadian North.

2.3.1 Sites of Encounter

As early as 1850, traces of Franklin’s fated expedition were being found by search parties. However, it was not until 1854, after six years of searching, that Dr. John Rae first encountered Inuit with oral testimonies and artifacts from the HMS *Erebus* and *Terror*. Whilst surveying an area of land for the Hudson’s Bay Company, Rae met an Inuk from Kugaaruk who told him that they had heard from other Inuit that a group of around forty Qallunaat men died from starvation near the Great Fish (Back) River, and that the men had succumbed to cannibalism (Craciun, 2014). With the help of his translator, William Ouligbuck, Rae was able to corroborate this story through independently interviewing a number of other Inuit over the following two months (McGoogan, 2002). Alongside these interviews, Rae purchased a number of objects from the Inuit which he believed to be relics of the Franklin expedition including: initialled silverware, gold watch cases, and buttons (Neel, 2020). Convinced that he had solved the mystery of Franklin’s disappearance, Rae and his party returned to

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England to present these findings to the British Admiralty. A visual inventory of the artifacts was published (Fig.2.2) alongside Rae's written report in the *Illustrated London News* (ILN) which told of 'the mutilated state of many of the corpses' as evidence of the fact that 'our wretched countrymen had been driven to the last resource – cannibalism – as a means of prolonging existence' (Rae, 1854).



Fig. 2.2 Image of “the Franklin relics” bought by Rae from the Inuit (ILN 4th Nov, 1854: 433 Qtd. in Craciun, 2014)

However, this information was not well received by the British public. Given that the *Erebus* and *Terror*'s provisions would have run out six years ago, it was generally accepted that the members of Franklin's expedition would not be found alive. Yet, the public were

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wholly unprepared for Rae's grisly allegation of cannibalism which not only tarnished the sacred memory of Sir John Franklin but 'undermined the deepest foundations of the colonial enterprise: the unshakeable conviction of absolute superiority' (McGoogan, 2002: 234). Supposedly, the sanctity of the British Empire could only be preserved if the distinction between the "savage" and "civilised" was upheld, as this provided the moral justification for colonisation; to conflate the British polar explorer with the "cannibalistic" Indigenous peoples he was supposed to conquer was to subvert the foundations of empire (Nayder, 2012). By implicating Franklin and his crew members in cannibalism, Rae contravened a taboo that colonial authorities and popular figures had sought to uphold for decades (Craciun, 2014).

While many admonished Rae's assertions, it was Lady Jane Franklin that led the crusade. Indeed, traces of her patriotic agenda are visible in the engravings of Rae's "relics" (Fig.2.2). The print, which was authorised by Lady Franklin and the Admiralty, is crowned by a medallion portrait of Sir John Franklin and bordered by his Badge of the Knight's Grand Cross of the Royal Hanoverian Guelphic Order, neither of which were actually included in the relics (Craciun, 2014). Ostensibly, the heraldic crests, scientific apparatus, and naval insignia have been included to embellish the *ILN* composition; in an apparent attempt to repudiate Rae's accusations, these visual cues emphasise the unassailable morality and nobility of the expedition. To further delegitimise Rae and convince the British public that the Inuit were untrustworthy, Lady Franklin enlisted the help of author Charles Dickens. Writing in response to Rae, Dickens devoted a total of seven articles in his periodical *Household Words* to disavowing the association between Franklin and cannibalism. Dismissing Inuit oral testimonies as 'the wild tales' and 'vague babble' of 'a herd of savages' (Dickens, 1854: 363; 365), Dickens' defence of the explorers largely relied on invalidating the Inuit accounts relayed by Rae. What is interesting here is not that Dickens sought to ridicule the character of Rae's witnesses, nor that his depictions of the Inuit were racist – Indigenous peoples were generally perceived as "savages" in colonial literature (Nayder, 2012). Rather, it is the fact that this particular framing departs from Dickens' usual representations of the Inuit. Prior to Rae's report, Dickens' had published idealised portraits of the Inuit as 'loving children of the north' (Morley, 1851: 70), presenting them as an exception to the "noble savage" trope that was applied to other Indigenous peoples:

'While, everywhere else, intercourse with ships had demoralised, more or less, untutored tribes dwelling on sea coasts, the Esquimaux that see only our northern navigators have learnt no new crimes. They are a quiet, amiable race; on amiable terms with visitors whose manners are invariably kind.'

(Morley, 1854: 241)

2.3 Storied Icebergs Inhibiting Normative Movement

Dickens' perception of the Inuit was suddenly inverted following the publication of Rae's account. The Inuit were no longer "amiable", but 'covetous, treacherous, and cruel' just like 'every savage' (Dickens, 1854: 362). This portrait of the Inuit was reified by Dickens in his *Household Words* article, *The Lost Arctic Voyagers*. In this, Dickens rescripts Rae's report to present Franklin's crew members as martyrs who were 'set upon and slain by the Esquimaux' (Ibid.), despite the fact that Rae's report had explicitly stated that there was no reason to believe that violence had occurred between Franklin's men and the Inuit (Rae Qtd. in Simmonds, 1875). Seemingly, without any hard evidence with which to discredit Rae and preserve the idealised image of polar exploration, Dickens resorted to not only 'arguing that Inuit were mistaken or lying, but also implying that believing these stories was akin to savagery' (Davis-Fisch, 2012: 143).

The Inuit hi/stories gathered by Rae constituted a site of epistemic encounter in Victorian Britain. The Rae-Dickens dispute that unfolded under the public eye challenged what Qallunaat thought they knew not only about polar exploration, but about empire, masculinity, and the Inuit. The accusation of cannibalism brought the storied iceberg into the purview of the vessel of colonial knowledge production about the Canadian North; this initial epistemic encounter "momentarily dislodged" normative flows of thought about the Franklin disaster and slowed the momentum of the vessel. However, this was indeed only "momentary". Dickens' relentless defamation of Rae climaxed with the release of *The Frozen Deep* in 1856. The melodramatic play, co-authored by Dickens, collapsed fiction and reality to reconfigure Franklin's disaster as a tale of noble sacrifice and manly courage. By emphatically denying the accusations of cannibalism, the play became a 'font of public mourning' and 'surrogate' for 'the missing Franklin' (Davis-Fisch, 2012: 186; 187). Consequently, Dickens was able to legitimise his own 'vision as the "true" version of what happened' (Davis-Fisch, 2012: 192) to Franklin; the rhetorical power of Dickens' work was able to discredit the early oral testimonies of the Inuit almost single-handedly.

2.3.2 Sites of Contact

It was not until the latter part of the twentieth century that the popular myth of Franklin as the brave polar explorer who made the ultimate sacrifice in the name of imperial discovery started to unravel (Atwood, 1995). Tracing the shift in Qallunaat literary treatments of Franklin's disaster demonstrates the ways in which Inuit hi/stories, as sites of epistemic contact, prevented Qallunaat from narrating the story of Franklin as a linear, stable tale of colonial expansion and heroism.

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Where once Franklin's story provided a conduit through which Qallunaat authors could produce an heteropatriarchal, barren, and racialised northern landscape, authors during the late-1900s increasingly started to challenge this paradigm. Perhaps the earliest literary attempt by a Qallunaat to undermine the dominant Franklin narrative was the poet Gwendolyn MacEwen's verse play, *Terror and Erebus*. Initially broadcast on CBC in 1965, MacEwen's play reframed Franklin's demise as a consequence of 'hubris, poor preparation and technological inadequacies, endemic to the Admiralty's Eurocentric approach to exploration' (Craciun, 2012: 3). Written in the four voices of: John Franklin, Francis Crozier, Knud Rasmussen, and Qaqortingneq, the main body of the play is narrated by Franklin and Crozier, and traces the historical expedition relatively closely: the three years trapped in the ice, the crew's sickness, Franklin's death, and the overland march south in search of the mainland. However, what distinguishes MacEwen's play from other literary works is the way in which she demythologises the polar explorer's colonial worldview by locating Inuit knowledge at the centre of literary experience (Hulan, 2018).

The play is bounded by the commentary of Greenlandic-Danish explorer, Rasmussen, and an addendum by his Inuit informant Qaqortingneq who, three-hundred years later, are trying to make sense of Franklin's failures. Writing from the perspective that the Inuit witnesses encountered by the likes of Rae and McClintock knew the truth about the Franklin expedition, MacEwen ensures that the Inuit character Qaqortingneq emerges as the play's authoritative voice. To do this, MacEwen recruits Rasmussen to critically orient the audience to Franklin's imperial hubris and to provide a point of access to Inuit testimony. MacEwen visibly draws on Rasmussen's unique historical position as somebody 'deeply embedded in the colonial system' (Thisted, 2010: 78) yet strongly critical of the Danish colonial administration to animate his character's role as the play's 'cultural interpreter' (Ibid: 63). This is abundantly clear at the beginning of the play, when Rasmussen's character despairs at Franklin's over-reliance on colonial technologies, lamenting:

*'You carried all maps within you;
Land masses moved in relation to
you—
As though you created the Passage
By willing it to be.
Ah Franklin!
To follow you one does not need geography.'*

(MacEwen, 1988: 42)

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In this excerpt, MacEwen uses a free verse structure; this mimics the ballad rhythm often used in Victorian narrative poetry written by polar explorers who turned to poetry to escape the emotional confines of scientific reports (Hulan, 2015). MacEwen's ironic rendering of the ballad form simultaneously recalls and ridicules the Victorian tradition of glorifying polar exploration. The colonial belief in the superiority of (white) men over the environment is undermined by Rasmussen's claim that to follow Franklin, 'one does not need geography'. Further contemplating Franklin's stubborn reliance on colonial technologies, Rasmussen rebukes the crew members for not using 'those wooden slits' that 'the Eskimos wore' (MacEwen, 1988: 49-50) to protect them from the blinding reflection caused by sunlight on snow. Rasmussen invokes "snow blindness" to illustrate the figurative blindness of Franklin, who is unable to see the inefficacy of colonial polar equipment relative to that of the Inuit. Seemingly, MacEwen uses Rasmussen, who himself was known for adopting Inuit technologies during expeditions, to frame IQ as an alternative way of knowing. Ultimately though, the "validity" of IQ as an epistemology is established by Qaqortingneq; after all, he is the only one who knows what actually happened to Franklin and the ships:

*'I remember the day
When our fathers found a ship.
They were hunting seals
And it was spring
And the snow melted around
The holes where the seals breathed.'*

(MacEwen, 1988: 55)

MacEwen's interpretation of Rasmussen's historical writings, especially those of the Fifth Thule Expedition, heavily informed her characterisation of Qaqortingneq (Hulan, 2015). Although there is reason to critique the use of Rasmussen's texts as source material, it is not the accuracy of these documents so much as MacEwen's use of them that is significant here. In the play, Qaqortingneq's character is largely consistent with the Qaqortingneq of Rasmussen's reports; notably though, when Qaqortingneq speaks, he uses none of the language or rhythmic patterns of speech that Franklin, Crozier, or even Rasmussen use (Atwood, 1995). This linguistic and rhythmic shift is intentional, and helps MacEwen position Qaqortingneq as the dependable voice of the play. Subsequently, the Qallunaat audience is invited to perceive the Franklin disaster through a different knowledge system to their own. Qaqortingneq's oral hi/story becomes a site of epistemic contact wherein IQ and Qallunaat knowledge systems are able to tentatively explore one another's contours. In

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doing so, dominant flows of thought about Franklin are “ruptured” and the vessel of colonial knowledge production about the Canadian North loses momentum.

MacEwen’s multivocal re-examination of the Franklin expedition spearheaded a much broader shift in Qallunaat attitudes towards Inuit, Franklin, and the Canadian North. In the same decade that saw the creation of Nunavut (1999), literary works such as Aritha van Herk’s geografictione *Places Far from Ellesmere* (1990) and Margaret Atwood’s *Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature* (1995) began to test the limits of colonial knowledge production about the Canadian North. A number of authors writing in this tradition used the story of Franklin as a means of critiquing the imperial hubris of Qallunaat explorers and drawing attention to Indigenous knowledges. Particularly notable in this regard is Rudy Wiebe’s historical fiction novel *A Discovery of Strangers* (1994), but other works include: Margaret Atwood’s *The Age of Lead* (1991) and Mordecai Richler’s *Solomon Gursky Was Here* (1989). And this is only to name novels. During the late-twentieth century, a number of non-fiction texts were published which approached Inuit hi/stories as valuable sources of information regarding the mystery of Franklin; for instance, David Woodman’s *Unravelling the Franklin Mystery: Inuit Testimony* (1991) and his second novel *Strangers Among Us* (1995). To some extent, Woodman was pioneering in his decision to proceed ‘from the assumption that all Inuit stories concerning white men should have a discoverable factual basis’ (1991: 6). Nonetheless, that Woodman reminds the reader that some of these stories might be ‘garbled versions of the truth’ or ‘downright lies’ speaks to the fact that Qallunaat scepticism surrounding the ‘folk history’ and ‘verbally conveyed traditions’ (1991: 37) of the Inuit remained traceable.

2.3.3 Sites of Friction

Against this protracted tradition of Qallunaat disbelief in Inuit oral hi/stories, it is somewhat ironic that Inuit communities were absolutely crucial to the discoveries of the wrecked HMS *Erebus* and *Terror* in 2014 and 2016 respectively (Fig.2.3). That both ships were found precisely where Inuit hi/stories had consistently placed them revealed that ‘much has been surmised, but it is Inuit who have told most of what is known of the expedition’s tragic history’ (Eber, 2008: 73). Chronologically tracing the two discoveries demonstrates the ways in which Inuit hi/stories, in both cases, functioned as a productive site of epistemological friction; that is to say, the discoveries of the HMS *Erebus* and *Terror* were made possible only through the chafing together of Qallunaat scientific knowledge and IQ. Qallunaat distrust of Inuit hi/stories regarding Franklin is no longer justifiable, if it ever was.

2.3 Storied Icebergs Inhibiting Normative Movement

Lost and found

Deep in the Canadian Arctic, Franklin's ships were trapped in sea ice for 19 months. Survivors set out on foot but were never heard from again. Archaeologists hope the sunken ships, located in 2014 and 2016, will yield answers.



Fig. 2.3 A cartographic visualisation of the route and discovery sites of the HMS *Erebus* and *Terror* (Smith, 2019)

The twenty-first century search for Franklin was instituted in 2008 by former Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper as part of a wider political agenda to (re)assert Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic (Hulan, 2018). The governmental agency Parks Canada was tasked with leading the searches, which began in earnest with the survey of a stretch of seabed by the Canadian Hydrographic Service; this confirmed that ships could safely access the area where the *Erebus* and *Terror* had last been in 1848 (Lincoln, 2017). From 2010 onwards, hydrographers were joined each summer by the Government of Nunavut, the Canadian Navy, Coast Guard, and Ice Service amongst others to search for the wreckages. Looking in detail at the discourse surrounding these early searches, it appears that members of the team hoped to make amends for the way in which 'Franklin snubbed the Inuit' (Grenier Qtd. in Edward, 2010: 33). Indeed, in promotional material published by Parks Canada in 2010, the involvement of the Government of Nunavut and Inuit communities was emphasised; ostensibly, it was 'widely accepted that Inuit oral history and research could hold the key to unlock the discovery of HMS *Erebus* and *Terror*' (Hulan, 2018: 9). Emphasising the significance of Inuit hi/stories to finding the vessels allowed these hi/stories to operate as a site of epistemological friction between Qallunaat science and IQ. As the former CEO of Parks Canada confirmed, 'from the outset, the objective was to use both Inuit oral history and

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Canada's best technology to search for the shipwrecks' (Latourelle Qtd. in Parks Canada, 2019). Ultimately, this chafing of knowledge systems was responsible for the discovery of the HMS *Erebus* in 2014.

Over 150 years after the Inuit first gave their testimonies to Dr. John Rae, the wrecked HMS *Erebus* was found precisely where late Inuit oral historian Louie Kamookak declared Inuit hi/stories had always told it to be (Potter, 2018). Kamookak was central to the find, having spent almost thirty years gathering oral hi/stories passed down through generations of Netsilik Inuit about Franklin and cross-referencing them with the logbooks of Qallunaat explorers to build a theory as to the location of Franklin's ships (Ibid.). Subsequent sonar searches in the area confirmed Kamookak's hypothesis, and by the end of 2014, Parks Canada hydrographers had created a three-dimensional rendering of the intact shipwreck in its entirety (Lincoln, 2017). Fundamentally, although Qallunaat science was able to picture and explore the wreckage, it was Inuit knowledge that had located the ship. Yet, acknowledgement of the crucial contributions made by the Inuit was entirely absent from the Prime Minister's televised press conference announcing the discovery (Hulan, 2018). Instead, the Government of Canada (GOC) latched onto the geopolitical leverage offered by the find, heralding it as proof of the nation's Arctic sovereignty. The emergent narrative associated with the discovery of *Erebus* recycled the nationalist rhetoric of northern sovereignty predicated on a northern heritage – a rhetoric which the GOC previously relied upon to justify the High Arctic Relocations² and produce the North as a barren, empty space (Ibid.). This idea of "Canada-as-North" has been thoroughly scrutinised for its colonial under and overtones (See Grace, 2001; Grant, 1990; Hulan, 2002). Needless to say, its resurfacing in 2014 elicited deep dissatisfaction amongst many Inuit communities.

Comparatively, there was a marked difference in the GOC's handling of the discovery of HMS *Terror*; the GOC's announcement on September 12th 2016 that the *Terror* had been found was careful to emphasise the important role played by Inuit hi/stories. Although it is perhaps premature to conclusively say whether this signalled a broader shift in the GOC's approach to the Arctic, the acknowledgement 'the ship's watery grave was pinpointed not by the latest technology or archaeological theories, but thanks to [Adrian] Schimnowski's yearlong efforts to build inroads with northern communities' (Sorensen, 2016) was significant. Similar to the discovery of the *Erebus* two years prior, the *Terror's* location was pinpointed by

²Between 1953 and 1955, ninety-two Inuit were made to relocate 1500km further North by the Canadian government. Under the auspices of state welfare programmes, these Inuit were used as 'human flagpoles' (Tester and Kulchyski, 1994: 114) in what was marketed by the state as a "pioneer experiment" (Wakeham, 2014). However, this occurred in the context of pre-Cold War tensions and US encroachment into northern lands. Subsequently, it is widely acknowledged that this was nothing less than a violent, two-pronged attempt to co-opt the Inuit into the nation state and assert validate Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic.

Inuit oral hi/story and the wreckage was found through the epistemological rubbing together of science and IQ. In 2009, a local Inuk from Uqsuqtuuq, Sammy Kogvik, was on a fishing trip with his companion, James Klungnatuk, when he noticed a wooden pole protruding from the ice. Figuring it ‘might be one of the boats that they’ve been looking for so many years’ (Kogvik Qtd. in Sorensen, 2016), the pair stopped to take a photo. However, for fear of being disbelieved after losing the camera, the two men kept the story to themselves. It was not until Kogvik met Adrian Schimnowski, a trusted figure amongst local Inuit, that he recalled the incident. Although Schimnowski ‘didn’t necessarily know where to look’, he knew ‘when to listen and that, seemingly, made all the difference’ (Sorensen, 2016); Kogvik’s hi/story, combined with side-scan sonar technology and an underwater camera, led to the discovery of the wrecked vessel early on the 3rd of September, 2016.

Evidently, both the 2014 and 2016 discoveries have demonstrated that Qallunaat disregard of Inuit oral hi/stories is unjustifiable; to insist otherwise is to perpetuate the fallacious hierarchisation of knowledge systems upon which (settler) colonialism relied, and continues to rely. Through tracing the ways in which Inuit hi/stories, as sites of epistemic encounter, contact, and friction, have been able to rupture Qallunaat flows of thought about Franklin, I have indexed the capacity of storied icebergs to inhibit the normative movement of the vessel of colonial knowledge production about the Canadian North. Yet, all this is not to say that Inuit hi/stories exist only to slow and disrupt the vessel’s movement, or that they are inherently factually correct. To reach this conclusion would be to stray worryingly close to reducing Inuit perspectives to an “alternative” version of events, which would uphold (settler) colonial relations.

2.4 Storied Icebergs Beyond Disruption

It is all too common in studies of colonial relations for the hi/stories of “the colonised” to be perceived as “counter-narratives” or “stories from the margins” (Cameron, 2015). Whilst this conceptualisation can advance specific aims in specific scenarios, more often than not it offers an incredibly narrow and problematic framework through which to understand non-white subjectivities (Ibid.). Labelling Inuit hi/stories as “counter-narratives” would reproduce the paternalistic conceit that “counter-stories” represent the entirety of Inuit responses to coloniality. It would also demand that Inuit articulate themselves in prescribed modes that are legible to the coloniser, which would reinforce colonial subjectivities and allow Qallunaat to maintain narrative control. Thus, theorising Inuit hi/stories through the iceberg is also a refusal of the conventional “counter-narrative” framework. Thinking with the iceberg, in

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all its slipperiness and liminality, requires a different mode of relation beyond the coloniser-colonised binary; the iceberg redirects our attention towards ways of being and knowing that are external to (settler) colonialism. In this sense, not only has the iceberg allowed me to consider the ways in which Inuit hi/stories have disrupted normative epistemic flows of thought about Franklin, but it has also drawn my attention to the ways in which Inuit refuse, ignore, and forget about the story of Franklin.

As someone who is unfamiliar with Inuit values and practices, I am not authorised to delve into how Inuit story their own histories. To understand some of the ways in which Inuit have storied historical encounters with explorers, Dorothy Eber's *Encounters on the Passage* (2008), is particularly helpful. In this, the oral historian presents a number of stories about Qallunaat 'strangers intruding on the Inuit lands' (Ibid: xvii) that have been told to her by Inuit. The stories, collected across various trips to Nunavut over a period of twelve years, go some way to illuminating the ways in which the Franklin expedition has been framed within Inuit oral traditions. For instance, Inuk Cathy Towtongie recalls a story about Franklin's men told to her as a child by her grandmother, Kanyuk Bruce:

'They were walking inland, walking the mainland – the nunamariq – "the real land." They were a raggedy bunch and their clothing was not well made. Their skins were black and the meat above their teeth was gone; their eyes were gaunt. Were they tuurngait – spirits – or what?'

(Towtongie Qtd. in Eber, 2008: xi)

That this was nothing more than a scary 'bedtime story' (Ibid.) for Towtongie illustrates one of the ways in which the Franklin story simply does not matter to the Inuit. As Eber elucidates, whilst some Nunavummiut have retained Franklin hi/stories, the "canon" of Inuit oral history does not give Franklin centre stage – far from it. In fact, as a group of Inuit elders from around Ikaluktutiak tell Eber, although Qallunaat shipwrecks figured in many of the stories told to them during their childhood, they now wish they could remember more because 'little did they know it was going to be something big' (Pamioyok Qtd. in Eber, 2008: 85). This is an important reminder that Franklin's fatal expedition is far more than a Qallunaat story, and that there is much to learn from how it is (not) told. By being attentive to the ways in which Inuit hi/stories have moved away from the story of Franklin, Qallunaat can start to 'learn not only the shape of our influence and claims and inheritances but also the limits of those claims and all the ways in which we do not matter and do not know' (Cameron, 2015: 173). In this sense, storied icebergs can do more than decelerate and interrupt the normative movement of the vessel of colonial knowledge production about the Canadian

North. Storied icebergs also force our thinking overboard and into the chaotic unknown of the ocean; they demand radical readjustment, reorientation, and transformation.

2.5 Conclusion

All too often, the ways in which Qallunaat have represented, and continue to represent, the Canadian North efface Inuit bodies and epistemologies. In seeking to disavow the epistemic violence embedded in how Qallunaat narrate the North, this chapter introduced an alternative, nautical mode of approaching the hi/story of polar exploration. Fundamentally, this chapter argued that positioning Inuit hi/stories as storied icebergs impedes the plain sailing of the vessel of colonial knowledge production about the Canadian North. This argument was made by noticing where and how these storied icebergs have been able to disrupt normative movement in the specific case study of Franklin's disappearance. Since the mid-nineteenth century, Inuit hi/stories of the Franklin disaster have denied Qallunaat the ability to produce a stable, linear hi/story of the event; more than this, Inuit hi/stories have impelled Qallunaat to interact with knowledge systems beyond their own in ways that denaturalise and exceed (settler) colonial frameworks. In this sense, the chapter concluded that storied icebergs can provide more than interruption; they reveal the unapparent hi/stories of the world and force Qallunaat thinking overboard.

Chapter 3

Floating Formations of Decolonial Knowledge Production

3.1 Introduction

Plunged into the ocean, Qallunaat must contend with the materiality of storied icebergs from a different perspective. Storied icebergs, as untethered imbrications of physical and metaphorical space (McKittrick, 2006), index possibilities for epistemic reorientation and rearrangement. As vantage points that exist outside of normative geographical co-ordinates, storied icebergs offer a radical, three-dimensional analytic for conceptualising a Canadian North beyond coloniality.

In moving towards this way of theorising the decolonial potentiality of story(telling), I am necessarily folded into discussions of Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty. Sovereignty is a concept that is crucial to decolonisation (See Alfred, 1999; Coulthard, 2014; Simpson, 2011). Although, as a term, sovereignty is deeply embedded in Western articulations of nationhood, in spite of its problematic etymology and associations with European political philosophy, sovereignty also operates as an important placeholder for the ‘vast number of ways that Native people have for tens of thousands of years conceived of their relations to human, non-human animals, the land, ecology’ (Raheja, 2015: 27). Indigenous conceptualisations of sovereignty are plural, diverse, and always and irrevocably differentiated from normative understandings of the term. Far from being ‘an abstract political concept’, Native sovereignty is ‘an intimate lived concept’ (Simpson, 2015: 22) that is configured around an axis of relationality (King, 2019). As many Inuit have asserted, this notion of relationality is intrinsic to IQ; the core values that guide Inuit are: responsibility, respect, sharing, and reciprocity (McGrath, 2011). Thus, it is unsurprising that Inuit story(telling) exhibits a

‘relationality that exists underneath the wounds of coloniality’ (Shilliam, 2015: 13). In light of this, contemporary Inuit stories could ‘have much to teach the Western world about the establishment of relationships within and between peoples and the natural world that are profoundly non-imperialist’ (Coulthard, 2007: 456). In this chapter, I look at how this sense of relationality is enacted upon storied icebergs to produce floating formations of decolonial knowledge production about the Canadian North. Can storied icebergs, as extraterritorial sites of relationality, reorient Qallunaat knowledge systems towards new vocabularies and grammars beyond coloniality?

3.1.1 A Poetics of Storied Icebergs

In exploring this question, I draw inspiration from McKittrick’s reinterpretation of Glissant’s “poetics of landscape”. According to Glissant, a “poetics of landscape” draws attention to the narrative ways in which space and place are theorised, felt, and understood; McKittrick uses this as a way of allowing Black women to ‘critique the boundaries of transatlantic slavery, rewrite national narratives, respatialize feminism, and develop new pathways across traditional geographic arrangements’ (McKittrick, 2006: xxiii). Through a poetics of storied icebergs then, I hope to make space for Inuit to critique normative categories of gender and sexuality, overhaul Cartesian binaries between human and non-human beings, collapse colonial notions of time-space, and, ultimately, provide a portal into radical, decolonial forms of epistemic consciousness. To do this, I theorise storied icebergs as floating formations of decolonial knowledge production about the Canadian North through interpreting contemporary storied forms of Inuit movement, experience, aesthetics, and resistance through the physical characteristics of the iceberg.

3.2 Theorising Floating Formations of Decolonial Knowledge Production

3.2.1 Storied Icebergs of Desire

Despite being perceived as characteristically white, icebergs can exhibit a spectrum of different colours. From radiant shades of blue and green to murkier tones of grey and yellow, icebergs come in myriad hues and multicolour patterns. The colour of an iceberg is determined by the way it interacts with light. Extrapolating from basic physics, a “pure” iceberg devoid of contaminants should appear blue because it is capable of absorbing longer

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wavelengths of visible light (red and yellow) more effectively than shorter wavelengths (blue) (Wright, 2018). The only reason that icebergs appear white is because they are usually covered in a layer of densely packed snow which reflects all wavelengths in equal measure; the actual colour of an iceberg is obscured from view.

Like the snow that covers an iceberg, colonial knowledge production has long concealed the Canadian North's "true" colour from popular view; normative categories of gender have delimited Qallunaat imaginaries of North and obfuscated Inuit desirous relations. In this section, I seek to understand how storied icebergs might reorient Qallunaat knowledge production towards a Canadian North beyond heteropatriarchy¹.

Power, gender, and sexuality are intimately entwined with the landscapes of colonial encounter (Finley, 2011; Smith, 2010); (settler) colonialism itself requires heteropatriarchy to 'naturalise hierarchies and unequal gender relations' (Finley, 2011: 34). The Canadian North has long functioned as a palimpsest upon which generations of Qallunaat explorers could write a heteropatriarchal fantasy. Polar explorers were the 'epitome of manliness' (Bloom, 1993: 6) and the North an all-male space of conquest (Hill, 2008). The landscape's hostility provided the ultimate mythic space upon which Qallunaat men could, in surviving desolation and danger, become heroes. Yet, the reification of an authoritative masculinity also necessitated the subjugation of all other genders and sexualities.

In colonial literature, it is not uncommon for women to exist at the margins of "civilised" order (Busia, 1989); the "feminine" often becomes a symbol of what ought to be transcended in the pursuit of masculinity. Qallunaat authors have repeatedly framed Northern lands, bodies, and subjectivities as rubrics of femininity to sanction access to power. The Native, female body in particular has frequently functioned to connect and cohere the dynamics of colonial heteropatriarchy. Indigenous women were often conflated with sexualised colonial narratives of land such that the "conquest" of their bodies was coterminous with territorial conquest (Green, 1975). Through the colonial gaze of the male polar explorer, the Canadian North was often perceived as a conquerable *terra nullius* by virtue of its virginal "femaleness" (Grace, 2001). Maintaining this colonial fiction necessitated the literal and ideological policing of Inuit sexuality. Since the mid-1900s, Inuit bodies have been regulated through a spectrum of colonial violence; successive decades of enforced Christianisation via residential schools and increased missionary activity have slowly eroded Inuit forms of partnership and desire (Sanader, 2019; Finley, 2011). Some of the most pernicious effects of colonial

¹Heteropatriarchy is a term commonly used in feminist theory to refer to the socio-political system in which cisgender, heterosexual males possess authority over all other gender identities and sexual orientations.

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heteropatriarchy have been reserved for Inuit women. Like many Indigenous women across Turtle Island, Inuit women were racialised, gendered, and (hetero)sexualised as penetrable in (settler) colonial discourses to justify conquest (Finley, 2011). Within the colonial-Christian imaginary, Inuit women were: ‘offensive but titillating; censured but studied; ubiquitous but rendered invisible’ (Vorano, 2008: 22). The legacies of this (settler) colonial myopia remain perceptible today in the systematic silencing of Inuit women’s stories. However, this must not be taken to mean that they are voiceless. Just as we catch glimpses of an iceberg’s vivid blueness and hues of green, Inuit women’s stories, too, can penetrate the veil of whiteness.

Turning towards forms of communication that are not necessarily legible to Qallunaat reveals that, for Inuit women, stories are ‘not always, or even necessarily, a speech act: ‘we women signify: we have many modes of (re)dress’ (Busia, 1989: 104). It is not just voices that tell stories, but bodies too. Following this, the erotic is an especially generative way in which to enter into conversations about a North beyond heteropatriarchy; lingering with and in the erotic compels us to think about gender and sexual relations in the Canadian North on different terms. This is because the erotic provides:

‘The power which comes from sharing deeply any pursuit with another person. The sharing of joy, whether physical, emotional, psychic, or intellectual, forms a bridge between the sharers which can be the bases for understanding much of what is not shared between them, and lessens the threat of their difference.’

(Lorde, 1978: 90)

As a ‘measure between the beginnings of the sense of self and the chaos of our strongest feelings’ (Lorde, 1984: 87) the erotic is a space of immense transformative potential. Poised in-between order and disorder, the erotic has the potential to radically disorient through forcing us to consider different perspectives and knowledges (King, 2019). Stories, as “felt” forms of knowledge, are particularly effective at harnessing the erotic (Belcourt, 2019). Thus, it is perhaps unsurprising that Inuit storytellers - particularly women – are imagining the erotic as a space of decolonial possibility.

The work of the late Inuk artist, Annie Pootoogook, is especially notable in this regard. Pootoogook was renowned for her narrative realism; a visual storyteller, she depicted everyday Inuit existence in the Canadian North (Sanader, 2019). Her portrayals of quiet moments of love and pleasure were often in playful defiance of paternalistic Qallunaat assumptions about the Canadian North and its inhabitants. This is particularly perceptible in Pootoogook’s erotic pieces, including *Composition (Man Approaching Woman)* (Fig.3.1) and *Woman at Her*

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Mirror (Playboy Pose) (Fig.3.2) which directly challenge the heteropatriarchal objectification of Inuit women.



Fig. 3.1 Ink drawing by Inuk artist Annie Pootoogook entitled *Composition (Man Approaching Woman)*(2002) (*Sanader, 2019*)

In *Composition*, Pootoogook portrays bodies having - and ostensibly enjoying - sex with overwhelming and unapologetic clarity. To me, the erotic encounter and its afterlife in the viewer's imagination offer a decolonial optic through which to rethink categories of gender and sexuality in the Canadian North. Here, the sexual energy is important to examine. Whilst a normative reading of Figure 3.1 might argue that it depicts a heteropatriarchal fantasy, I read the woman's sock-clad feet raised in anticipation and the tilting back of her body as signifiers of a North beyond heteropatriarchy. Reflecting on the couple's exchange of mutual pleasure, I perceive Pootoogook's North as one in which Inuit women can define and embrace their sexuality on their own terms. This North is certainly perceptible in Figure 3.2, which depicts an Inuk woman wearing only a pair of red heels, sitting at her vanity and, ostensibly, taking pleasure in tracing the contours of her unclothed body in the mirror.



Fig. 3.2 Pencil and ink drawing by Inuk artist Annie Pootoogook entitled *Woman at Her Mirror (Playboy Pose)* (2003) (Sanader, 2019)

Perhaps more striking than this woman's nakedness is her "playboy pose". Presumably deliberately, Pootoogook has positioned the *Woman at Her Mirror* side-on to deny the viewer complete access to the woman's naked body – we are allowed to see her bare skin but not consume it. By presenting her in this way, Pootoogook appears to strategically disidentify with the 'Pocahontas Perplex' (Green, 1975); she unsettles the colonial male gaze which has, historically, portrayed lone female, Indigenous bodies as passive and/or sexual objects (Sanader, 2019). That the *Woman at Her Mirror* is able to find pleasure in herself constitutes a subversion of the (settler) colonial systems that would seek to police her body and her desire. Pootoogook uses the erotic in her narrative drawings to invite the Qallunaat viewer to perceive a North beyond heteropatriarchal relations.

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Nevertheless, I am cautious not to ruminate extensively on Pootoogook's work without reflecting on the fact that she remains one of only a handful of Inuit artists to engage themes of lust, desire, and intimacy. As Inuk filmmaker Alethea Arnaquq-Baril explains in the film *Two Hard Things, Two Soft Things* (2016), the relative silence surrounding issues of gender, sexuality, and desire in many Inuit communities persists largely because colonial heteropatriarchy has been internalised and institutionalised throughout the Canadian North to such an extent that:

'We find ourselves despising our bodies and sexualities, unable to speak of our own erotic lives and desires... we see dominant culture's concepts of the erotic and know they have nothing to do with our... bodies, often causing us to dissociate from our erotic selves or assimilate dominant culture's concepts into our lives.'

(Driskill, 2004: 54-55)

This is something that Arnaquq-Baril directly contends with in her Inuktitut-language film *Aviliaq: Entwined* (2014). Set in the 1950s, Arnaquq-Baril's fifteen minute romance film tells the story of two Inuit women, Ulluriaq and Viivi, navigating their desire for one another against the enforcement of Christian standards of monogamy and heteronormativity. Both of the woman are pressured into marrying men: under the watchful eye of RCMP officers, Viivi marries her childhood friend Pitsiulaaq and Ulluriaq gets engaged to an Inuk man named Johnny at her mother's behest. However, desperate to remain lovers, Ulluriaq and Viivi convince Pitsiulaaq to take Ulluriaq as a second wife, recalling the "the old days" prior to colonisation where Inuit could have polyamorous relationships. Committed to becoming mutual lovers-friends, yet aware that their partnership is forbidden under relations of conquest, the three try to escape from their community. During their attempt to flee, they are intercepted by the RCMP who had been tipped off by Johnny after he saw the three of them together. The final scene features a distraught Ulluriaq being taken away by Johnny as she screams for Viivi.

Reading Arnaquq-Baril's film normatively, it is clear that she is commenting on the violent ways in which (settler) colonialism has undermined Inuit desirous relations both externally and internally. Although this is a valid and important interpretation, I (re)read *Aviliaq* for evidence of the decolonial possibilities engendered by the erotic. Seemingly, Arnaquq-Baril uses the erotic to probe the bounds of colonial heteropatriarchy and to feel her way through the suppressed histories and realities of Inuit desire. Through the erotic, she invites the viewer – Qallunaaq or not - to imagine a North wherein masculinity is non-normative. For instance, it is after Ulluriaq and Viivi make love in Pitsiulaaq's tent that

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they begin to meditate on the polygamous/polyamorous possibilities in Inuit culture prior to colonisation. To me, Ulluriaq and Viivi's relationship evokes an eros that is removed from the normative binds of 'love, marriage, and conjugal union in Western humanism' (King, 2019: 145). This points to what Driskill might call a "sovereign erotic". That is:

'A return to and/or continuance of the complex realities of gender and sexuality that are ever-present in both the human and more-than-human world, but erased and hidden by colonial cultures.'

(Driskill, 2004: 56-57)

Perceiving Ulluriaq and Viivi's love through the prism of the sovereign erotic invites us to imagine what desire can mean, and has always meant, in the Canadian North. In their rejection of settler colonial structures of desire, Ulluriaq, Viivi, and Pitsiulaaq demonstrate how bodies in love can cultivate meaningful relations which transcend difference. Thus, erotic stories are important sites of epistemological decolonisation; the realm of the sexual invites an unmooring that can penetrate the Canadian North's veil of whiteness. Storied icebergs of desire, as floating formations of decolonial knowledge production, can force Qallunaat to consider other ways of relating to the North beyond the colonial frame of heteropatriarchy.

3.2.2 Storied Icebergs of Kinship

Under conditions of colonial encounter, the Canadian North has repeatedly been figured through two lenses: as a sublime, picturesque space to be revered or as an empty "wilderness" to be charted, discovered, and ultimately, overcome (Grace, 2001). The narrative tropes which frame polar exploration align more closely with the latter, though both served to distance Qallunaat from the violence of colonisation through functioning as visual technologies of disavowal. Perceiving the North's barrenness as something to be transcended not only legitimised colonial heteropatriarchy, but also affirmed the shift in Western ontologies of the "human" (Baldwin et al., 2011). Framed within this landscape aesthetic, the North has been made intelligible to Qallunaat as a space upon which the European "Great Divide" – the dichotomy between man and nature – could be reified.

Whilst it is universally acknowledged that humans and non-humans differ, the binary classification established between the two in fifteenth century Europe is not shared by other cultures (Ingold, 1994). During this period, the lowly layperson was transformed into the "rational man" as part of the epistemic revolution of secular humanism (King, 2019).

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The “rational man”, or “Man1” as Wynter (2003) describes, came to know itself primarily through theorising a Cartesian separation between the human and the natural world. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this dichotomy seeped into the logics of imperial expansion. The task of discovering, rendering, and (re)mapping landscapes was entwined with the production and naturalisation of the heroic, male explorer as Man1 (King, 2019). Polar explorers such as Franklin have repeatedly been written in the likeness of Man1 as rational, reason-driven subjects figured in contrast to the ostensibly chaotic, untamed Arctic landscapes they encountered (Wynter, 2003). However, as Razack (2011) suggests, this notion of the Canadian North as a barren wilderness is almost entirely the invention of colonisers. The colonial capture, categorisation, and hierarchisation of Inuit bodies and non-human life forms must be called into question.

Inuit ways of being and knowing have always existed outside the conscriptions of liberal humanism; within Inuit onto-epistemologies ‘land and relations to land have always already been differently understood and enacted’ (Tuck and Yang, 2012: 7). In contrast to the fictional “Great Divide”, IQ emphasises the interdependence of human and non-human life forms; personhood is not restricted to humans and kinship extends across all states of being. This worldview is certainly perceptible within storied forms of Inuit expression. Pushing against the thresholds of the “Great Divide”, Inuit stories can overturn the colonial knowledge systems that narrowly inscribe Man1 as the apex of humanity; they index possibilities for other kinds of humanity which denaturalise the colonial notion of the North as barren. For Inuit, story(telling) ‘makes meaning of the relationships that define who we are and what our place is in the world’ (Justice, 2018: 75). In part, this is because story can reinforce the web of kinship relations that bind communities together (Simpson, 2011) - a more expansive imagination can elicit a greater capacity for empathy which is fundamental to building healthy relationships (Justice, 2018). Importantly, story(telling) can illustrate the fact that other beings besides humans have identities and emotions. Icebergs too can serve as a reminder that belonging is always relational and reciprocal:

As a mesoscale phenomenon, icebergs are large enough to both physically affect their environment and be affected by the surrounding ocean and air. In recent years, local and satellite studies have revealed icebergs to be components of complex ecosystems (Bigg, 2015). For instance, in the supraglacial system, there can be a range of microorganisms present, from diatoms to bacteria. This organic and terrigenous material is carried with icebergs when they calve into the ocean, and can subsequently act as the primary nutrient source for marine plankton growth (Vernet et al., 2011). Fascinatingly, this localised spurt in productivity can

have cumulative impacts on higher trophic levels. It has been observed that populations of sea birds have increased in the vicinity of icebergs, presumably exploiting the greater fishing opportunities that arise from increased phytoplankton and zooplankton populations (Ruhl et al., 2011). Whether or not this has caused a reaction in feeding patterns of larger marine mammals is still unknown. Regardless, it is well-established that these mammals use icebergs as resting platforms in-between hunts in both the Arctic and Antarctic (See Mathews and Pendleton, 2006; Burnham and Newton, 2011; Ribic et al., 1991).

To animate this poetics of storied icebergs, I turn to the work of Inuk poet Taqralik Partridge and Inuk throat singer Tanya Tagaq; I read their rhythmic reflections on Inuit onto-epistemologies as affirmations of a North beyond barrenness. Poetry is a particularly compelling storied medium of expression for those seeking to confront the violent effects of (settler) colonialism. For Indigenous peoples in particular, poetry can distil feelings of pain, rage, and defiance whilst also asserting contemporary Native physical, emotional, and onto-epistemological presence (Justice, 2018). This is certainly the case for Inuk-Scottish-Canadian multimedia poet Taqralik Partridge. Partridge characteristically blends performance, poetry, and storytelling to create rich, sensory imagery that foregrounds Inuit values, visions, and experiences. Her poem *Sea Woman* - included in her recently published debut anthology *curved against the hull of a peterhead*², (2020) - is particularly illustrative of her ability to weave Inuit ecological ontologies into the undulating rhythms of her poetic form and create a world wherein kinship is the fabric of existence. In *Sea Woman*, Partridge enlists the “traditional” Inuit story of the sea goddess Sedna to critique the careless havoc wreaked upon the environment by neoliberal industries. Through the leitmotif of the skyscraper, Partridge compares the power of ‘lowly water’ to capitalist ambition:

*‘To your own glory you would build yourself a monument
As high as the edge of the sky*

*But I, I bring the clouds to the ground
I, I, am always traveling down*

*In your mother’s womb I held you
Of your thirst I quenched you
In your hunger, you were fed*

²A type of fishing boat.

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*Through all your years I carry you
And when your days are over
I will take back your dead*

*I am lowly water
Poured out on the ground
I have no voice but what the wind gives me,
What the moon pulls out of me,
What the rush down, down, down
Into the earth can tell'*

(Partridge, 2020: 40-41)

In doing so, Partridge contests the epistemological foundation of the “Great Divide” – that man is all-powerful, and nature is submissive. Partridge insists on the formidability of ‘lowly water’, arguing that its power rests in its collective capacity to cause destruction:

*'The rain upon your face
The early morning dew
The sleet, the snow, the hail
The tide, the flood, the sneaking mouth
Of cracks climbed up in the ice
The mist lain heavy in the valley
My deepest sweetest wells
All these are me and I
Am them
From my fathoms to my swells'*

(Partridge, 2020: 40-41)

From ‘the sleet, the snow, the hail’ to ‘the rain upon your face’, water exists in numerous states which are tied together by the hydrological cycle. By emphasising this, Partridge points to a foundational Inuit onto-epistemological truth: all beings are deeply interconnected in the cycle of life. Icebergs too, as components of complex ecosystems, gesture to this; they are reminders that there are always a myriad of conversations happening around us in voices of every conceivable form and frequency. This relational worldview is encapsulated in a number of Inuktitut concepts, most notably in the notion that humans, animals, and even ‘technically inanimate objects’ (Tagaq Qtd. in CBC, 2014) have their own inua, and

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therefore possess ‘both immortal souls and awareness comparable to that of human persons’ (Fienup-Riordan Qtd. in Nuttall, 1998: 84). Recognising the cosmocentric - rather than anthropocentric - nature of Inuit onto-epistemologies means understanding that ‘we [Inuit] are the land and the land is us’ (Watt-Cloutier Qtd. in Salvini, 2007: 397). However, this also means acknowledging that a ‘poisoned Inuk child, a poisoned Arctic, and a poisoned planet are one and the same’ (Ibid.). As Partridge attests:

*I will take your effluent
I swallow your brackish waste
I will wash through your greed
Suck up your grief
Course through your desire*

*The slick of your industry I let rest upon my seas
Your tailings in my ponds
Your poisons in my streams
In my depths I harbour particles
Of every discarded treasure
You thought you could never live without’*

(Partridge, 2020: 40-41)

By positioning Sedna as the voice of the Earth, Partridge enacts the storied relationship between Inuit, nuna, and other non-human beings. Concomitantly, Partridge aligns herself with contemporary Inuit environmental activism which increasingly, and strategically, presents Inuit as embodiments or representatives of the Earth in a time of climate crisis (Watt-Cloutier, 2015). In light of this, Partridge’s poetry can be placed in conversation with the music of Tanya Tagaq, who, when producing songs, often imagines that her ‘whole body was the Earth’ (Tagaq Qtd. in Rogers, 2014).

Tanya "Tagaq" Gillis’ solo improvisational style of music is a unique, transcultural blend of Western sonic techniques and “traditional” katajjaq – a throat game that is usually practiced by two Inuit women standing face-to-face (Stévance, 2017). Her album *Retribution* (2016) is an auditory portrait of this planet hovering on the brink of collapse and is testament to Tagaq’s hope that her music might repair society’s ‘disconnect from nature’ (Green, 2016). In many ways, *Retribution* is Tagaq’s personal attempt to negotiate her embodied proximity to the contemporary climate crisis as an Inuk woman. This is especially perceptible in the track “Sulfur” as Tagaq draws comparisons between physical health and ecological

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devastation. The Earth is characterised as capable of experiencing the same visceral reactions to environmental destruction as Inuit themselves and Tagaq enlists her own body as the medium through which Qallunaat listeners might understand the planet's suffering. Her groans and grunts – as if she were choking or drowning – are layered over mechanical creaking noises which are produced by the rubbing together of viola strings (Boerchers, 2019). The musical texture this creates is disorienting and could be construed as the sound of the organic meeting inorganic – of the planet's sickness encountering the cause of the sickness. Tagaq's embodied musical practice, like Partridge's embodied poetic practice, is entrenched in reality, because Inuit 'live on the cutting edge of the climate emergency' (Tagaq, 2020) and resource overextraction.

Initially, Partridge and Tagaq's decision to equate their female bodies with the Earth seems to risk perpetuating colonial tropes that conflated Native female bodies with nature. However, that both of these women purposefully speak both for and as the land from within IQ is not an act of recolonisation, but of "grounded normativity"³ (Coulthard, 2014); their invocations of the relationality embedded in IQ overhaul Cartesian binaries between human and non-human beings. In this sense, just as icebergs enact important connections between trophic levels in a healthy ecosystem, storied icebergs of kinship enact 'important connections to land and community' (Goeman, 2013: 29). By extension, storied icebergs of kinship, as floating formations of decolonial knowledge production, force Qallunaat to rethink notions of the North as a barren wilderness.

3.2.3 Storied Icebergs of Speculation

The more Inuit tell stories, 'the more stories there are to tell, the more echoes that come up to the present' (Simpson, 2011: 105). In many ways, this notion of "echoes" of the past bubbling up from the depths of history to surface in the present is manifest glaciologically in the phenomenon of the bergy seltzer:

The esoteric term "bergy seltzer" is used among glaciologists to describe the continuous crackling, fizzing sound produced by icebergs as they melt (Bigg, 2015). A relatively understudied geophysical feature, the sound is believed to occur when compressed air bubbles within the ice come into contact with the ocean and get released. During the early formation

³"Grounded normativity" is an embodied decolonial method that can be defined as 'the modalities of Indigenous land-connected practices and longstanding experiential knowledge that inform and structure our ethical engagements with the world and our relationships with human and nonhuman others over time' (Coulthard, 2014: 13).

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of glacial ice, it is common for bubbles of air to become trapped between layers of snow-fall. Over time, these bubbles become compressed as the firn, and eventually ice, forms; consequently, the air that is contained within these bubbles can be more than 15000 years old.

Thinking with a poetics of storied icebergs, these air bubbles resemble the echoes that Simpson speaks of: the more an iceberg melts, the more intense the crackling sound becomes, and the more bubbles rise to the surface bringing air from the past into the present. Icebergs, like stories, contain vital expressions of temporal relations that can provide ‘unending connections to past, present, and future’ (Howe, 2013: 38). Story impacts how we situate the present day in relation to the past and to the possibilities of the future. For Indigenous peoples in particular, temporal experience is intimately entwined with, and contextualised by, story(telling). In light of this, it is pertinent to attend to the ways in which Inuit are using story(telling) to provide decolonial lines of flight away from the imposition of (settler) colonial temporalities by claiming “temporal sovereignty” (Rifkin, 2011).

To place this in context, it is important to understand that (settler) colonial claims to the Canadian North relied on the enactment of what Bruyneel (1997) calls “colonial time”. The spatial-temporal capture of Inuit bodies was an important facet of conquest; by fixing Inuit in time and space, colonisers could deny ‘the “active occupation” of shared time between Euro-North American society and the figure of the aboriginal’ (Wakeham, 2008:17-18). The construction of temporal boundaries between the purportedly “advancing” West and “static” Indigenous peoples was reified through the representation of the Inuit in prescribed and racist forms (Fabian, 2014; Grace, 2001). From depictions of ‘filthy, dishonest savages’ to ‘resourceful “children of nature”’ (Boucher, 2018: 61), the Inuit have long been framed as fundamentally pre-technological and primitive in (settler) colonial narratives. If Inuit existed ‘outside of the modern’ therefore ‘temporally fixed in an ahistorical past’ (Kuper Qtd. in Johnson, 2003: 220-21), colonial claims to proprietorship of the land could be authorised. Today, the colonial fallacy that Inuit identity cannot be “authentic” if it interacts with the present or the future persists; Inuit continue to be confined to a simulacrum of “pastness” – their existence is not only ‘separate from the present time but... out of place in the future’ (Cornum, 2015: 34). Storied icebergs of speculation can probe the limits of colonial knowledge production and collapse these imperial notions of time and space. To illustrate this, I turn to the ‘praxis of Indigenous futurisms’ (IF) (Dillon, 2012: 1).

The decolonising power of stories in the IF movement ‘stems from the connection created between the shaped historical understanding and living within the present’ (Wilson, 2005: 27). Broadly, IF refers to the growing movement of speculative creative work by Indigenous

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peoples which is imagining future realities beyond coloniality from the perspective of Indigenous histories, traditions, and epistemologies. Within the tradition of IF, Indigenous peoples are disavowing the fixed coordinates of “settler time” (Rifkin, 2017) to creatively contest ‘capitalism’s linear drive toward the future-oriented progress of Western colonial modernity’ (Martineau, 2015: 242). Rather than approaching time as standard measure of universal movement along a singular axis, IF conceives of time as plural and relational (Rifkin, 2017). As Chakrabarty (2000) explains, when Western temporal formations provide the only context for theorising time itself, “diverse life-worlds” are forced into this framework in ways that limit the possibilities for Indigenous self-determination. IF argues that there should not be, indeed there is not, one temporality that is implicitly or explicitly oriented solely around (settler) colonial needs. Instead, there are multiple temporal formations, each with their own rhythms and relations, that are ‘shaped by the existing inclinations, itineraries, and networks in which one is immersed, turning toward some things and away from others’ (Rifkin, 2017: 2). In this sense, the impulse to bring Indigenous ‘traditions to distant, future locations rather than abandoning them as relics’ (Cornum, 2015: 35) that characterises IF constitutes a collective and unapologetic refusal of linear Western temporal trajectories. Using the past as an armament to combat the confines of the colonial present, IF can consequently be thought/dreamt/imagined as decolonising horizons (Martineau, 2014). In light of this, I want to probe the ways in which Inuit story(telling) is engaging IF to trouble colonial time-space configurations and envision a decolonial North.

For a number of years now, Inuit have been depicting their interactions with Qallunaat in ‘speculative ways using futuristic imaginative concepts’ (Nixon, 2016). The work of Inuit artists Pudlo Pudlat and Shuvina Ashonna is often regarded as one of the earliest examples of IF (Ibid.). More recently, younger Inuit have been using the digital sphere to play with the decolonial possibilities. Specifically, Inuit are using the genre of IF to attend to Inuit conceptualisations of temporality that deviate from “settler time” and assert a “temporal sovereignty” that rebukes colonial stereotypes of the Inuit as pre-technological (Rifkin, 2017). The short film *Three Thousand* (2019), created by young Inuk filmmaker Asinnajaq/Isabella Weetaluktuk, is especially notable in this regard. In the film, Asinnajaq uses time as a modicum for Inuit self-determination; through asserting a specifically Inuit epistemological prerogative regarding the future, Asinnajaq directly challenges the “taxidermic” mentality of (settler) colonialism which erases Inuit presence and peddles a standard model of temporality (Rifkin, 2017).



Fig. 3.3 At the beginning of *Three Thousand*, hazy archival footage is overlain and distorted by a reflective, glass-like aesthetic (Asinnajaq, 2019: 1:35)

In the first half of the film, Asinnajaq posits colonial landscapes and aesthetics as possible sites of Inuit reterritorialization, resurgence, and decolonisation by plunging her audience into a sublime imaginary universe. In the first half of the film, Asinnajaq posits colonial landscapes and aesthetics as possible sites of Inuit reterritorialization, resurgence, and decolonisation by plunging her audience into a sublime imaginary universe. Like the air bubbles that rise to the surface of an iceberg bringing “echoes” from the past into the present, Asinnajaq embeds archival footage from the National Film Board of Canada into her own animated story(telling) to parse the complex ethnographic representation of the Inuit. Whilst this might initially appear to reference a backwards motion away from decolonial futurities, the way in which Asinnajaq forces the footage to swim through abstract textures and colours is confirmation of her intention to build an IF vision from within the representational ruins of coloniality. Asinnajaq’s decision to overlay the recontextualised footage with Inuit throat-singing and icy aesthetics (Fig.3.3) is the initial manifestation of this intention. It allows her to “remix” (Cornum, 2015) the past to unsettle the linearity of (settler) colonial temporality and stage Inuit resurgence as the reclamation of representation.

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Fig. 3.4 At the end of *Three Thousand*, under the wispy greens of the aurora borealis, an Inuk father, daughter, and baby gaze upon the town and its centrepiece, the iglu (Asinnajaq, 2019: 11:43)

The transition from the first to the second half of the film is marked by footage of an Inuk elder weaving in her home. It is not coincidental that Asinnajaq chooses this as the film's site of spatial-temporal transformation, for it is here that the past, present, and future are woven together to make possible a decolonial "future in the present" (Tuck et al., 2014). The future that Asinnajaq envisions is introduced to the viewer through the eyes of a time-travelling Inuk father, daughter, and child (Fig.3.4); Inuit lands, identities, and histories are no longer definitively represented by the colonial gaze, instead, they become the purview of Inuit onto-epistemologies. The imagined landscape of Asinnajaq's Inuit future is resistant to linear reduction. As the viewer travels around the small town under the glow of the aurora borealis, the luminescent outlines of the community seem to radiate outwards from a large iglu. The iglu, as the ostensible source of the town's light and energy, symbolises the simultaneously ancient and futuristic impulse of IF. Through centring the iglu, Asinnajaq reiterates the fact that Inuit experiences of time and space exceed (settler) colonial impositions. *Three Thousand* constitutes an important expression of Inuit temporal relations, as, like the phenomenon of the bergy seltzer, it sounds the imbrication of numerous temporalities. Storied icebergs of speculation, as floating formations of decolonial knowledge production, compel Qallunaat to reimagine the North beyond colonial notions of space and time.

3.2.4 Fugitivity Below the Tip of the Storied Iceberg

Ice is able to float because the density of pure ice is around 920 kg/m³ whereas the density of seawater is around 1025 kg/m³. However, the relative proximity of the density values means that ice floats “low” in seawater. Consequently, only around one-tenth of the volume of an iceberg – the “tip” - is visible above the waterline; the majority of an iceberg’s volume is below the water. The contours of the underwater section of an iceberg are difficult to judge when observed from above the surface.

Just as the bulk of an iceberg’s mass is concealed beneath the waterline, most of the narrative meaning and context embedded within contemporary Inuit story(telling) is incomprehensible to a Qallunaaq such as myself.

Where previously (settler) colonialism has been characterised by an insistence on binary oppositions (i.e. coloniser/colonised, modern/traditional etc.), today there is a new language of empire. Across Turtle Island, contemporary narratives of recognition and reconciliation have been assimilated into an ‘emergent neocolonial regime of affective imperialism’ (Martineau, 2014: 55). Tropes of Indigenous inclusivity and apology define empire such that ‘contemporary colonialism works through rather than entirely against freedom’ (Coulthard, 2014: 156). Today, (settler) colonialism’s injunction is to expose, gain access to, and impose a regime of visibility upon Indigenous peoples and lands (Coulthard, 2014). Indigenous story(telling) can resist contemporary (settler) colonialism’s discursive enclosure by rupturing these regimes of representation and legibility. By denying these normative expectations, Indigenous peoples can usurp the colonial gaze and imagine a ‘trajectory into freedom’ (James, 2013: 124). That is to say, there is value for Indigenous peoples in refusing the capture of (settler) colonial visibility. When Indigenous peoples cipher their knowledge within the stories, they become illegible to colonial power and opaque to the practices of appropriation, translation, or destruction (Martineau and Ritskes, 2014). Admittedly, not all Indigenous stories exhibit this strategic illegibility; if they hide too much then there is a risk that this self-imposed invisibility inadvertently approves (settler) colonialism’s mandate. Consequently, there exists a spectrum of opacity, or fugitivity (Martineau, 2015), within Indigenous story(telling) that determines what knowledge can be safely shared and what must remain “hidden” from “outsiders”:

'The hidden meanings and subtly inscribed knowledge contained in our traditions of thought and speech and ceremony should never be presented facilely or made accessible to every gaze cast upon them.'

(Alfred, 2010)

Recognising this means acknowledging and embracing the inevitable incompleteness of the arguments I have made about the small selection of Inuit stories in the sections above. Inevitably, I have only been able to perceive the “tip of the storied iceberg” – but that is alright. In fact, it illustrates the decolonising potential of Inuit story(telling) as it reminds me that there are “irreconcilable spaces” (Garneau, 2016) of Indigeneity, or of “Inukness”, within which myself and other non-Indigenous peoples are simply not welcome. Being aware of these boundaries is a crucial tenet of decolonising Qallunaat knowledge production about the Canadian North.

3.3 Beyond Metaphor

In light of the effects of the contemporary climate crisis, it is important to examine the material resonances of the storied iceberg framework; as the climate continues to warm, this hermeneutic risks becoming unstable and unpredictable.

During the next century, it is likely that global iceberg flux will increase as a consequence of anthropogenic-induced climate change (Bigg, 2015). Already, as the atmosphere and ocean begin to warm, ice sheets, shelves, and floating glaciers are melting at an unprecedented rate. The result is that iceberg calving events are starting to become more frequent. Increasingly, icebergs are barometers of polar health.

Icebergs are frequently recruited as visual symbols of the natural environment's ongoing ruination. Within the aesthetics of climate change, elegiac images of melted ice caps and calving icebergs tumbling into the ocean contribute to a visual regime which Bennett (2020) aptly terms the “Anthropocene gaze”. A riff on Urry's (1992) famous conceptualisation of the “tourist gaze”, the “Anthropocene gaze” is concerned with the ways in which figures like the iceberg have become mediatised and commodified to fuel the phenomenon of “last chance tourism” (Dawson et al., 2011). As iconic images of climate change, icebergs have become souvenirs for “ruin-gazers” - those wanting to catch a glimpse of the Arctic before it “disappears”. Acknowledging the natural environment's ongoing ruination has

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significant implications on how we imagine place and perceive contemporary ecological realities. Importantly, visual regimes are also capable of shaping these realities; the aesthetics of climate change can either assist or endanger marginalised communities through the redistribution of political agency (Bennett, 2020). In the case of the Canadian North, depictions of fractured ice floes and unseasonal meltwater are often used to present Inuit communities as victims of the climate crisis; such attributions of vulnerability are problematic as they rely on colonial “systems of cognition” (Cameron, 2012).

In recent years, Qallunaat have come to recognise the right of the Inuit to “be cold” – to maintain their livelihoods according to their worldviews (Watt-Cloutier, 2015); this acknowledgement has been actioned in attempts to identify and mitigate Inuit vulnerability to climate change. However, the “vulnerability and adaptation” framework⁴ is not only failing to identify appropriate strategies to limit the impacts of climate change, it also reproduces distinctly (settler) colonial ways of knowing the North and its inhabitants (Cameron, 2012). At present, the framework governs the politics of climate change in the Canadian North by obscuring the persistence of (settler) colonial structures and confining Inuit to the realm of the “local” or “traditional” (Ibid.). Under the logics of (settler) colonialism, Indigeneity has long been conflated with spatial and intellectual confinement (Appadurai, 1988); in fact, this framing has historically been used to delegitimise the Inuit’s territorial and epistemic autonomy. The effects of this continue to manifest themselves today in the ‘disconnection of youngsters from the land’ and ‘intergenerational segregation’ (Ford et al., 2006: 155). Consequently, the “vulnerability and adaptation” framework does not attend to the complex ways in which the narrow notion of “local vulnerability” perpetuates colonial epistemic relations; it ignores the fact that the ‘adaptability of younger generations [of Inuit] to future climate change’ depends on the ‘strength of [IQ]’ (Ibid: 157). Ostensibly then, the storied iceberg is becoming an increasingly unstable hermeneutic vis-à-vis the climate crisis. Thus, the question becomes: will the decolonial capacity of the storied iceberg framework be threatened or enhanced by increased atmospheric and oceanic temperatures? Whilst the answer to this remains to be seen, the fact that climate change is intimately entwined with the structures of colonialism (Liboiron, 2021) means that, as temperatures rise, so do the expectations for decolonial futures. Perhaps, as more icebergs are calved into the warming oceans, there will be more opportunities for colonial knowledge production to be disrupted.

⁴Contemporary institutional efforts to identify and mitigate the “human dimensions” of climate change in the Canadian North aim to reduce Inuit and other local communities’ exposure to climate change risk. Often, this involves the calculation of indices of vulnerability and the development of adaptive strategies in relation to future climate change impacts (Cameron, 2012).

3.4 Conclusion

Storied icebergs are unruly formations that unsettle normative theoretical, geographical, and aesthetic paradigms; unmoored and untethered, they signal the presence of powerful epistemologies that exist, and have always existed, alongside Qallunaat knowledge systems. If storied icebergs can communicate in forms that exceed colonial comprehension, what decolonial realities might they make possible? In this chapter, storied icebergs indexed Inuit forms of relationality beyond coloniality. Through a poetics of storied icebergs, storied expressions of Inuit sexual, kinship, and temporal relations were positioned as floating formations of decolonial knowledge production about the Canadian North. Storied icebergs provided spaces whereupon Inuit kinetics, movements, and dimensions could reorient Qallunaat knowledge systems towards decolonial vocabularies and grammars with which to imagine the North.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

4.1 Restor(y)ing Relations

In this dissertation, my approach to the central research question ‘in the context of story(telling), how might Qallunaat knowledge production about the Canadian North be decolonised?’ was grounded in the development of a radical hermeneutic: storied icebergs. This dissertation was able to trace where and how Qallunaat knowledge systems could be reoriented towards decolonisation by attending to the ways in which Inuit hi/stories – as storied icebergs - interrupt, impede, and transgress the colonial ways in which Qallunaat imagine/d the Canadian North.

As a mode of critique, storied icebergs challenge the hegemonic order of knowledge production instantiated by colonialism; they force Qallunaat to pause and (re)consider how our knowledge about the Canadian North comes into formation. Approaching the North from this perspective means taking seriously the fact that colonial knowledge is produced through the active disavowal of other epistemologies. Since the first polar explorers reached the shores of Inuit Nunangat, Inuit bodies, ontologies, and cosmologies have been subject to physical and epistemic violence - subjugated by the vessel of colonial knowledge production about the Canadian North. Storied icebergs, as navigational conundrums and impediments to plain sailing, can slow and disrupt the normative momentum of the vessel. The story of Franklin’s disaster is especially helpful in exemplifying this argument. For centuries, Inuit hi/stories of Franklin have interrupted normative flows of thought about his demise and forced Qallunaat to wrestle with ways of knowing that exceed (settler) colonial ontologies. Following this, I have argued that storied icebergs can throw Qallunaat thinking overboard. Thus, the decolonial capacity of the storied iceberg hermeneutic extends further.

Conclusion

Storied icebergs are not just modes of critique, they are also praxis, process, and poetics; in their ability to disrupt and rupture, storied icebergs index possibilities for transformation. I have also argued that storied icebergs do not simply disrupt colonial ways of knowing, they are themselves floating formations of decolonial knowledge production about the Canadian North. Upon storied icebergs, the compassionate, intimate, and respectful epistemic relations that decolonisation demands can be forged. By attending to the materiality of storied icebergs, it becomes clear that storied expressions of Inuit reclamation, resistance, and resurgence can help reorient Qallunaat knowledge systems towards modes of thought beyond coloniality. Ultimately then, this dissertation offers less an answer to the main research question than a hermeneutic; a hermeneutic that, hopefully, can contribute to restor(y)ing respectful epistemic relations between Qallunaat, Inuit, and the Canadian North in pursuit of a decolonial future.

4.2 Limitations and Future Directions

I am all too aware that this work cannot possibly hope to have answered the research question in all its totality. And nor should it. This dissertation is necessarily but a small contribution to the radical research, activism, and action that needs to happen if we are serious about restor(y)ing epistemic relations between Qallunaat, Inuit, and the Canadian North.

Throughout this work, I have attempted to wrestle both with my whiteness and with the enduring coloniality of the academic tradition in which I am writing; my scholarly inheritance is such that I must continually reckon with the problematic continuities between the historical exploitation of Inuit epistemologies by (settler) colonisers and the contemporary interest in Inuit knowledges and experiences. This dissertation is not simply a plea to listen to or tell different stories - it would be naïve to think that this alone could overhaul the persistent dynamics of coloniality. Neither is it a claim to having “discovered” the decolonial potentialities of story(telling); I am well aware that Inuit have always recognised the transformative powers of story – indeed, they have been imagining, inventing, and performing stories since time immemorial. Rather, *Storied Icebergs* is an effort in ‘unpacking and laying bare the meanings and effects of colonialism’ from the perspective of a Qallunaat, in order to help ‘open up the physical and intellectual space’ (Turner, 2006: 30-31) for Inuit voices and hi/stories. Within this, I have reiterated the well-established capacity of story(telling) to incite positive change and, more radically, I have illustrated its often overlooked ability to bridge epistemic differences towards a decolonial Canadian North. The implications of this work are becoming increasingly significant in the context of the climate crisis, which is reinvigorating discussions about relationality and cooperation; as the planet

4.2 Limitations and Future Directions

gets hotter, it is becoming inescapably clear that Qallunaat and Inuit lives are sutured together. I wonder, in the context of the warming Canadian North, what utility the storied icebergs hermeneutic might have. Perhaps further research might ask: what generative possibilities might emerge if the storied icebergs hermeneutic is applied to knowledge production about climate change in the Canadian North?

Concluding with a reflection on icebergs returns to the way this dissertation began. In the same way that icebergs, upon calving, can produce incredibly far-reaching hydroacoustic and seismic signals, I hope that this dissertation might encourage others to think deeply, expansively, and compassionately about the relationship between story and decolonisation in the context of the Canadian North.

Glossary

Ikaluktutiak Known as Cambridge Bay in English (ITK, 2016).

Iluvialuit Known as Beechey Island in English.

inua Translates broadly to "inner person".

nuna Inuktitut term used to refer to the land.

Qikiqt Aluk Known as Baffin Bay in English (ITK, 2016).

Qikiqtaq Known as King William Island in English (Keith and Arviq, 2006).

Tallurutiup Imanga Known as Lancaster Sound in English (Sevunts, 2017).

Tasiujarjuaq Known as Hudson Bay in English (ITK, 2016).

Uqsuqtuuq Known as Gjoa Haven in English (ITK, 2016).

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