

“Singing of what they no longer are”?: The Role of Traditional Inuit Myth and Legend in Contemporary Inuit Narrative and Visual Art

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... the non-physical part of our culture—our attitude towards life, our respect for nature, our realization that others will follow who deserve the respect and concern of present generations—are deeply entrenched within ourselves.

(John Amagoalik, “Will the Inuit
Disappear from the Face of this Earth?”)

The mere mention of the words Eskimo or Inuit in southern Canada immediately invokes two images in the listener’s mind: a photograph of a smiling Eskimo and a soapstone sculpture. Indeed, the culture of Inuit Canada has become synonymous with sculpture for many Canadians and the many tourists who visit our country. But what is the real cultural value of Inuit art to the Inuit themselves? Is it merely an economic activity, a way to make the money required to purchase the white man’s goods that have infiltrated Inuit life? Or, is there another, more intrinsic value, one that we might be able to link to the traditions of pre-contact Inuit culture, specifically its traditional myths and legends? A clue may be found in a consideration of the fact that there is no Inuktitut word for art. *Sananguatavut*, the word that has been adopted to express the idea of art, is literally translated as, George Swinton tells us, “a little likeness-reality we have achieved” (“Contemporary Canadian Eskimo Sculpture” 38). The key here is the inextricable connection made between art object and reality through the experience of the individual Inuk artist. Further, the first person plural pronoun “we,” in this translation, points to the community-oriented outlook of the Inuit, a factor which will figure in the link between the Inuit past and contemporary art. James Houston has put forward two possible explanations for the lack of a word for art. First, he suggests that the Inuit “thought of the whole *act* of living in harmony with nature as their art” (“To find life in the stone” 52, my emphasis). Again as in the Inuktitut word, there is a link established between art and the lived experience. Second, in the introduction to *Arts of the Eskimo: Prints*, Houston explains that for the Inuit “the human being is the work of art. He or she is able to release from stone and transfer to paper

subtle animal and human forms that seem to possess the very breath of life" (7). Houston is, of course, referring specifically to print making, but it is not unreasonable to extend his comments to include all Inuit art. Consequently, we see that the art itself participates in the lived reality of the artist and becomes a part of that life. We can conclude that art is a matter of living for the Inuit, a connection between artists and the world around them, and that the material or physical object, in turn, represents a part of that world. Such a definition can be equally applied to the role of myth and legend in traditional Inuit life: the stories represent a part of the Inuit understanding of the world around them.

In much contemporary Inuit art (both visual and literary), the traditional myth or legend is used as subject matter. Given the adoption of white values and understanding by the Inuit, critics minimize the significance of incorporated legend or myth. It is seen as merely a way to preserve an understanding of the world that no longer is viable. In this vein, George Swinton speaks of the tragedy and irony of an art "made by people singing of what they no longer are, . . . at its worst it reflects an actual stage of ethnic agony and death, at its best it speaks in a greater degree of what was than what is" ("Contemporary" 42). Likewise, Nelson Graburn suggests that traditional mythology is degraded when transposed into an artistic form; it is frozen, reduced from imagination to material reality, and results in the isolation of both the artist and the audience ("Man, Beast, and Transformation" 204-205). But surely such conclusions fail to consider the inherent link between life and what we call "art" for the Inuit. Traditional Inuit myth and legend when incorporated into contemporary narrative and visual art works as it always has, as a way for the Inuit to represent and understand the world around them, and not as merely the reclamation of a lost past.

The story of Sedna (or the Sea Goddess) and the Legend of Lumak (or the Blind Boy) are central to the mythological basis of traditional Inuit belief across the Arctic. The myths vary slightly from region to region, but the core story remains important to traditional Inuit survival and to their understanding of their world or environment. These myths have survived the pre-literate stage of Inuit life through the tradition of orature. They were passed from generation to generation to convey the shared history of the people and to provide a framework of order for the natural world. The ephemeral nature of orature takes nothing away from the lasting value of these stories. As Robin McGrath notes, the "voice [of the storyteller or poet] transcends individual personality and becomes something that is as concrete to its hearers as a book is to its readers" (12). The myth or legend becomes a part of the listeners lived experience, a part of their memory and their life. In the person of the storyteller is the conjunction of the individual and the communal Inuk.

The storyteller makes the myth his own, by relating the story in terms of his understanding and yet, the story is the community's story, a part of their shared history. The Inuit listening, moreover, take the story in and pass it on to others, widening the circle of identification through myth.

The Sedna myth is central to Inuit understanding of their relationship with the animals they hunt for food and clothing, and can be seen working both to convey tribal history and to explain the natural environment. The myth can be summarized from the version Franz Boas provides us with in *The Central Eskimo*:¹

A young girl named Sedna lived with her father on an isolated island. When she came of age, Sedna was courted by many young men, but only a fulmar disguised as a man could win her heart. The fulmar, after promising Sedna a beautiful home, returned with her to his home which did not live up to her expectations. It was dirty and she was forced to live on fish. After a year, Sedna's father rescued her from the fulmar. When they were fleeing, the fulmar attacked the boat and the sea swelled in angry empathy for the bird. In order to save himself, Sedna's father threw her overboard, but Sedna held onto the edge of the boat. Sedna's father, again in order to save himself, cut off her fingers as she clung to the side. As Sedna's fingers fell into the ocean they became the seals, walruses, and whales the Inuit hunt, and when she descended into the ocean, Sedna herself became the goddess of the sea (175-176).²

In further accounts of the myth, we learn how, in her anger at her father for the pain he causes her, Sedna curses the Inuit and restricts their access to the animals when they break associated taboos. The mammals created in this myth are essential to Inuit survival in the Arctic; without the food, vitamins, clothing, and warmth from the rendered fat they provide the Inuit would die. Sedna is an emblem of survival for the Inuit. The beginning of the narrative, in its depiction of Sedna living with her father, speaks to the perception of the myth as history, an event that took place in the distant past yet experienced by the Inuit. This myth can also come within the scope of what we would call a morality tale or parable as a warning to young women about the need to choose a husband from their community. Sedna made herself susceptible to danger by refusing the attentions of the young men. The Lumak legend, likewise, is a morality tale and a creation story:

A young boy named Lumak, who was blind, lived with his mother and sister. Because of her son's blindness, the mother mistreated the boy, giving him little to eat and insufficient clothes to warm him. His sister tried to make up for their mother's cruelty, but had to keep her kindness hidden. One day a polar bear entered their home and the young boy killed the bear with the help of his sister. The mother lied to her son, however, saying he had missed the bear and kept its food and clothing to herself. One day a loon came along and took pity on

Lumak. It took him to a lake and three times dived to the bottom with the boy in tow. With each dive, Lumak's eyesight improved until it was completely restored on the third dive. Upon returning to his home, the boy found the bear skin and realized that he had killed the bear. In his anger, Lumak decided to revenge himself on his mother. While hunting beluga, he used her body as an anchor to hold his line. He then harpooned a large whale and allowed it to drag his mother into the sea. As the whale surfaced she called out his name—"Lumak, Lumak." Lumak ignored his mother's cries and she became transformed into a narwhal with her braid forming the whale's tusk.³ (Boas 217-218)

In the legend of Lumak we see the importance of communal relations for Inuit survival. The boy is dependent upon his family and neighbours, as are all Inuit, and this is not a relationship to be taken lightly nor abused. The mother acts only for the individual, and the lack of attention to the family ultimately leads to death. Thus, we can see the Sedna and Lumak stories provide the Inuit with an understanding of how the animals they depend on were created, remind them of the reasons for their communal style of living, and warn them of the consequences of inappropriate behaviour.

It is a popular misconception that art came to the Arctic with James Houston in the middle of this century. Although it is true in regard to contemporary soapstone sculpture and prints, there has always been an inherent artistic quality to traditional Inuit life and work.⁴ This artistic quality can be linked to the Inuit mythical understanding of their world. McGrath suggests that art is an integral part of each Inuk's survival:

in traditional Inuit society, every person was a singer, and to some extent a poet, just as every person was a craftsman, and to some extent an artist. It was necessary to work on language just as it was necessary to work on skins or ivory, in order to produce the requirements of life. . . . [I]n Inuit culture you had to sing and compose in order to catch a seal, break a fever, obtain justice, control the universe. (44)

It is the Inuit respect for the natural world in which they reside that contributes to their artistic relation to it. The instruments with which they hunted and worked the skins were often decorated with a depiction of the very animals killed. A failure to decorate a harpoon or to sing a ritual poem could be fatal to a community, because the spirit of the animal (and possibly Sedna herself) would be offended and would not allow any of its brethren to be found and killed by the Inuit, resulting in starvation (Larmour 11). Moreover, when we look deep into the Inuit past, into the prehistoric Pre-Dorset and Thule cultures, we find carvings, amulets and small sculptures of the "magico-religious . . . shamanism, . . . an art inextricably fused to a religion through which Dorset men knew the unknown" (Taylor 27) which prefigure today's art. Nelda Swinton reminds us that in the recent past of the Inuit,

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"the sea goddess and other powerful spirits were never represented in an amulet or any other material form, as this would be seen as an attempt to capture the almighty spirit's soul" (6). Today's art work is permissible because it is just that, an art form, not a representation of the spirit itself. Mythological belief provides the artistic framework for traditional Inuit activities. And, although the contemporary Inuit have moved away from these beliefs and this mode of understanding the world, they have not forgotten them.

With the invasion of the white man into the Arctic has come an imposition of white values and organization on the Inuit. As Inuit children's education is primarily in English, the Inuktitut language is disappearing, as is the art of the traditional storyteller. But the storyteller does survive in the last half of the twentieth century, merely in a new form: that of the artist or author.⁵ Artists like Davidialuk and Alootook Ipellie draw upon the traditional stories in their sculpture, prints and short stories.⁶ Critics of Inuit art and literature alike, when assessing the use of tradition, frequently fall back on the notion of the Inuit's life and art as primitive, a "nature- or life-oriented aesthetics . . . of a *mythic* world view that . . . establishes in the aura of everyday subjects the primal contest of an animate universe" (Hoffman 390, emphasis in original). Indeed, myth is central to the Inuit, but myth does not suggest primitivism; it is merely an understanding of the world that differs from Western European ideas.

The other charge often levelled at the myth in Inuit art is that of attempting to preserve a lost past, almost as if the subject matter is incidental to the artists in their perceived reclamation project. Even George Swinton, after his many years travelling in the Arctic and collecting Inuit art, suggests that the art is "a means of cultural and ethnic self-affirmation . . . a fundamental necessity if the contemporary Eskimo is to survive as 'Eskimo'" (*Sculpture of the Inuit* 24-25).⁷ Within the context of Inuit life, however, these myths still have a resonance with the people: they are still connected to this past. So, if we remove the labels of primitive and preservation from the art, how are we to assess the role of myth in Inuit art? Swinton is correct when he notes that it is "undoubtedly wrong to speak of 'Eskimo art' . . . as if this were one single, unified, ethnic art form when, in fact, regional, local, and highly individual characteristics are so dominant" ("Contemporary" 37). Thus, by looking at some specific examples of the use of the Sedna myth and the Lumak legend by Davidialuk, Ipellie, Aipili Qumaluk and Juanisi Kuanana (all of whom except Ipellie are from the Ungava region of Arctic Quebec)⁸ we will see that seldom do the artists take on the whole myth; in fact, often only one event or feature is highlighted. This key event allows the artists to communicate knowledge or understanding of the new world in which the Inuit live within the frameworks of old stories and beliefs, a touchstone, as it were, for

their audience.

Before turning to the specific artists and their work, a consideration of the audience or consumer of Inuit art is in order. For whom is the art created? The "tourist" sculpture is definitely created for a primarily white audience; but some artists are working for themselves, to "find the life in the stone" in Houston's words. The differentiation between these audiences does not negate the viability of the mythical framework. The white population is aware of Inuit myth, and possibly that is exactly what they are looking for in their "authentic" piece of the Arctic. As McGrath notes, Inuit mythology is much more widely available in English translations and storybooks than in Inuktitut (116).

Davidialuk's felt pen and coloured pencil drawing, *Half Woman / Half Fish*,⁹ combines the tradition of the storyteller with that of the artist. The story of the picture is written in syllabics at the bottom, smartly counteracting anyone who would charge that Inuit art is only produced for white consumption. Only another Inuk could read and understand the story. Is the message or idea of the drawing then available only to a select audience? Not necessarily; a white audience would understand the sea goddess as a mermaid. Also, reproductions of the print include the text both in syllabics and in translation. The white audience, although distanced from the myth, is not excluded from it. The syllabics are translated as following:

The man is pushing the seamaiden with a tree branch and asking her whether she has a husband. She says she has, and that she even has children. He asks whether she has a house of her own. "Oh yes," she said, "we have a house under water." The seamaiden asked the man whether there was anything he wanted, but he said he didn't know what he wanted. She said, "I am going to give you gun, a sewing machine and a gramophone." The next day the man returned. The gun, the sewing machine and the gramophone were there! (Driscoll 24)¹⁰

Davidialuk departs completely from the original Sedna myth and depicts a contemporary encounter with the sea goddess. His drawing also reflects the effect of Western European ideas on Inuit myth. Nelda Swinton notes that originally Sedna was not half fish and that it is the exposure to white ideas of the mermaid which has brought about this transition (15). Davidialuk's work is an interpolation into the idea of Sedna providing the bounty of the sea for the Inuit's survival. Here, the relationship is mutual. The Inuk hunter is assisting or providing a service for Sedna by helping her return to the sea. Sedna, in turn, rewards the hunter. In contemporary times, Sedna does not provide the animals for food and clothing but rather the material goods that allow the Inuk to support himself: a gun for hunting, a sewing machine to make clothes, and a gramophone, possibly to entertain the hunter

on long winter nights. The sense of wonder and awe associated with the hunter's questions to Sedna and the arrival of the goods suggest that there are still parts of the natural world that are unexplainable. Moreover, the wonder hearkens back to the mythological belief and suggest that there is more to the world than the material goods needed for survival, that there is still a place for traditional understanding. Davidialuk uses the framework of Sedna as a provider both to illustrate the Inuit's new dependence on material goods and to call into question that very dependence.

Aipili Qumaluk's black stone sculpture *Sedna*¹¹ depicts the sea maiden herself. It is a single, striking image, with an expressive directness. The sleek stone activates our perception of Sedna and we see her gliding through the ocean of her world. The interaction between the viewer and the sculpture addresses Graburn's objection that the myth is "frozen" in representation. Clearly, this Sedna is not frozen, but moves fluidly in and out of our space and our imagination. Notably, Qumaluk's *Sedna* is very human. Her face and head are incised with human markings, she has a well developed torso and human arms and hands. The lower part of her body does not become fish-like, but rather just tapers off. Graburn, in his introduction to *Ethnic and Tourist Arts*, classifies sculpture like Qumaluk's as "commercial fine art . . . because although . . . made with eventual sale in mind, [it] adhere[s] to culturally embedded aesthetic and formal standards" (5-6). A very true statement, no doubt, but it fails to address why the cultural aesthetic of myth is used. Any meaning we attach to the sculpture risks imposing meaning on the art and the artist from outside; however, if we extend Michael Kennedy's idea of Sedna acting as a touchstone for the Inuit to their survival in the past (198), then we can suggest she is invoked here because the survival of the Inuit as a people, let alone as a culture, is threatened in the present. The survival motif is highlighted by the inclusion of fingers on Sedna's hand. Nelda Swinton notes that Sedna is often depicted with fingers, despite the fact that hers were cut off, to remind the Inuit of the sea mammals that were created from her, sea mammals essential for Inuit survival (14). Indeed, Penny Petrone's *Northern Voices: Inuit Writing in English* includes a large number of essays and articles concerning the future of the Inuit.¹² Qumaluk's *Sedna* can be seen as a wake-up call to the survival instinct in the Inuit.

Davidialuk's stone-cut print *Lumak*¹³ captures a number of components of the Lumak legend within a single pictorial frame. Lumak appears to be sitting inside his home, and there are two shapes in the stone that suggests whales connected to a line and the conclusion of the legend. The primary focus is on the boy Lumak himself, with his wide, staring eyes open and looking out as if he sees beyond the frame (some versions of the myth reveal that the loon rewarded Lumak with a heightened sense of perception). But

it is the isolation of Lumak that is communicated to the viewer, and even though the print depicts him with sight, we also sense the fear of blind Lumak. By depicting Lumak staring so intently out of the picture, Davidialuk implicates the viewer in his fate and the fate of his mother. This implication of the viewer can be extended to the community as a whole—it is involved in Lumak's story.¹⁴ Davidialuk is highlighting and communicating the communal nature of Inuit life and the need for a generosity of spirit among people. As we noted of the myth itself, individualism is antithetical to the Inuit way of life. The disembodied smiling face, left-centre of the print, is, presumably, Lumak's sister and is emblematic of the generous, communal, spirit. When Davidialuk includes this same legend in a narrative of his life, *La Parole changée en pierre* (see excerpt in Petrone 217-223), he is interested in a different event in the legend. It is the creation aspect of the story he highlights because it is related when he first sees a beluga whale, the whale Lumak harpooned.¹⁵

Although depicting a different part of the Lumak legend, Juanisi Kuanana's *Lumak Legend: Women pulled by whale*¹⁶ works very similarly to Davidialuk's print. Most interesting here is the abstract nature of the sculpture. Neither the old woman, apart from her head, nor the whale are representational. The abstract quality of Kuanana's work can be viewed as symbolic of the ambiguous quality of the contemporary Inuit's relationship to nature. The land and its animals are still integral to the Inuit's survival in the Arctic, but the imposition of white values and new technology problematise that relationship. Snowmobiles can take the Inuit farther in a day than a dogs led team, but the Arctic environment is more punishing on the machine than the sled. One might want to relate the abstract nature of the sculpture to a questioning of Inuit identity: who are we? how do we reconcile past tradition with modern reality? I am aware that once again I risk imposing meaning onto the sculpture and the artist. As there is no interview with Kuanana, we cannot know his intention; however, my reading in Inuit mythology and lifestyle results in such a reading of the stone. Art is not only about the relationship between the artist and the artistic object; it is also about the relationship between the audience and the work and, by extension, the artist. These questions I see posed in Kuanana's work (and the other artists included here) are questions that much of humanity is facing in the last decades of this century.

Alootook Ipellie's *Arctic Dreams and Nightmares* is a collection of short stories with accompanying original pen ink drawings. Ipellie notes the connection between his art and myth in the introduction of his text. Not only does he relate "being someone with a fabled past" (x) to his attempt as an adult to identify the meaning of life, but he also observes that the Inuit

"adapt their imagination and their story-telling tradition to suit . . . modern conditions and artistic purposes" (xv - xvi). In "Summit With Sedna, the Mother of Sea Beasts," we can see each of these motives at work. Ipellie does not draw upon the creation myth to develop this story, but rather interacts with the ritual or shamanistic quality of Sedna. The story is based on the tradition of a shaman's journey to Sedna's home in the ocean in order to atone for the broken taboos of the Inuit community and to convince her to release the sea mammals for the Inuit to hunt. In "Summit With Sedna," however, Ipellie translates the original issue of broken ritual taboos into a very late twentieth-century issue, sexual harassment, and further links it to the disappearance of the Inuit: Sedna perpetrates "a sexual misconduct that had the potential to wipe out the Inuit nation from the face of the earth" (36, emphasis in original). The key here is the conflation of modern problems with traditional views. Tradition still has its place in Inuit belief as a framework for understanding, but it must also be ready to make space for the new reality. In his use of the Sedna myth, alleging sexual abuse on the part of Sedna's father. Even more interesting, Ipellie interpolates Western European myths into a traditional Inuit one. The monster created by the shamans to face Sedna is named Frankenstein, clearly invoking both Mary Shelley's novel and the Hollywood stereotype. The use of this myth is particularly appropriate given the Arctic setting of the framing chapters of *Frankenstein*. By joining Inuit and Western European myth, Ipellie is recognizing the influence of other belief systems and myths on the Inuit. These myths are now also a part of the Inuit imagination. His primary interest is, however, the adaptation of old beliefs to new realities. Thus, we learn that the shaman, in preparing to deal with Sedna, must "come up with a new technique that might change the course of [their] misfortune" (37). An integral part of this new reality, moreover, is a new relationship with tradition. No longer will the Inuit submit to and try to appease Sedna, now they want "to try and make her submit to [their] demands" (38). If we extend Ipellie's reasoning outward to consider the survival of the Inuit as a whole, we can see him calling for concerted action on the part of the Inuit and a willingness to stand up for themselves. They cannot merely accept their fate; they need to work toward submitting the changes in their world to their own will. Indeed, the moral that closes the story points to Ipellie's interest in creating it:

It was the first time in the history of the Arctic Kingdom that *all of the shamans had worked together* to avert a certain threat of extinction of its people from the face of the Earth. From this day on, the Inuit were assured of survival as a vibrant force in what was oft-times inhospitable Arctic world. (42, my emphasis)

The survival of the Inuit people is inextricably linked to their communal life-

style. They must work together to adapt to and accept the changes in their world, and to adapt the changes to fit their own way of life. The drawing which accompanies the text is consistent with Ipellie's adapting old truths to the new reality developed in the narrative. Although Sedna is alone in the illustration, it is the interaction between the shaman and Sedna which is highlighted. Her outstretched arms are a figure of supplication: she is submitting to his will. The eyes on her webbed hands can be linked to the monster who subdues her, whose "eyes . . . were streaked with crimson and glowing like gold" (41). This is a mythic, fantastic Sedna yet one who is under the control of the shaman/artist. Ipellie brings together the intimate nature of Sedna's traditional role in the survival of the Inuit with a new understanding of the place for her in the contemporary Inuit world.

Both Robin McGrath and Nelson Graburn suggest that Inuit art may be seen as a half-way point or stepping stone between the pre-literate orature tradition and a new literary tradition yet to develop fully (McGrath 16; Graburn "Man, Beast" 207). It would be more correct, however, to see the contemporary art as a translation of both the teller and the tale from an old tradition to a new. The storytellers of the past, whose tools were their voice and their memory and whose canvas was their listener's imagination, have become the visual artists of the present, whose tools are their imagination and their memory and whose canvas is the stone. The audience's imagination still comes equally into play in the present as it has in the past; although each carving or print tells a story, it does so in a cryptic way. The viewer must round out the story and look for the meaning. A dialogue takes place between the artist and the audience: a dialogue separated by time and space, but one which uses myth to communicate an understanding of the world. The message conveyed may be "often confused and nebulous" (McGrath 79), but this is still a developing tradition, one under attack from the modern world and the Western European view of life. Earlier this century, the Canadian government produced a number of handbooks designed to give directions to the Inuit as they were invaded with ideas from southern Canada. The best of these handbooks was *Quajivaallirutissas*, which can be translated as "something that will let you know more" (McGrath 31). Perhaps we can join this term to *sananguatavut* to express the Inuit idea of art: a medium which both provides a little likeness-reality and lets us know a little more about the world.

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End Notes

1. It is important to remember that in the English versions of the myths, as recorded by explorers, anthropologists and ethnologists, we are distanced at least one step from the authenticity of these stories. They have been translated away from their original language, and certainly some of the myth will be lost in the very act of translation. In addition, we do not know how faithful to the original these version we have are.
2. Rasmussen provides a similar version of the myth in the *Intellectual Culture of the Iglulik Eskimo* (63-66) and Michael P.J. Kennedy provides a study of the Sedna myth across the Arctic and over time in the "The Sea Goddess Sedna: An Enduring Pan-Arctic Legend from Traditional Orature to the New Narrative of the Late Twentieth Century," forthcoming in *Echoing Silence: Essays on Arctic Narrative*, Ed. John Moss. As previously noted there are a number of versions of this myth, some of which include a dog husband instead of the fulmar, or Sedna as an orphaned widow who is a burden on her community and thus expelled from a boat as the people travel to a new home. It is this last variation that is found in the Ungava region of Arctic Quebec (see Turner 97-98).
3. Rasmussen relates a similar tale (77-79), but it is the grandmother who abuses the child rather than his mother. This tale also often leads into a creation myth for the sun and moon. Lumak, without his sister realizing who it is, has intimate relations with her. Once she finds out, the two race out into the night with torches. Lumak's torch is extinguished when he falls. The two are then taken up into the heavens, and the sister with her torch becomes the sun, and Lumak the moon (Rasmussen 81; Petrone 14-16). Interestingly, Turner's version of the tale in Ungava relates only the creation of the sun and moon portion of the story (102).
4. I do not want to downplay the significance of Houston's role in contemporary Inuit art. The arts that have developed today are a direct result of his efforts in the Arctic. It would be interesting to speculate, however, on how contemporary Inuit art might have developed without his (or any white man's) assistance.
5. The relationship between artist and storyteller is writ large in Nungak and Arima's *eskimo stories—unikkaatuat*, the result of a project in which the artists create a number of sculptures to illustrate the events of a story (primarily from Inuit myth) which they narrate.
6. Inuit artists and authors are not the only ones to draw on Inuit mythology. Other writers who use the Arctic as a backdrop for their story often invoke myth, presumable to "authenticate" their story (see, for example, James Houston's use of the Sedna myth in *The White Dawn*). Interestingly, Barry Lopez fails to include the Lumak legend in the chapter of *Arctic Dreams* that looks at the narwhal; instead, he discusses the unicorn. Also, many of the myths have been used as the basis for children's stories, a book often collecting a number of creation myths.

7. See also Hoffman 383 and Larmour 15.
8. The choice of these artists is a subjective one which allowed me to narrow my focus on Inuit art to a manageable sample. The art of the Ungava peninsula with its attention to the natural shape of the stone and the roughness associated with the medium highlights the transformation aspect of the myths I am interested in. Alooook Ipellie provides a unique opportunity to look at both literary and visual art in a single figure.
9. Davidialuk's *Half Woman / Half Fish* can be found on page 10 of *Inuit Myths, Legends and Songs*, Ed. Bernadette Driscoll (Winnipeg: The Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1982).
10. A carving and story by Alaasuaq in Nungak and Arima (52-53) illustrates this same event.
11. Qumaluk's *Sedna* can be found on page 68 of *Arctic Vision: Art of the Canadian Inuit, a travelling exhibition*, Barbara Lipton (Ottawa: Canadian Arctic Producers, 1984).
12. See for example John Amagoalik's essay from which the epigraph for this paper was chosen.
13. Davidialuk's *Lumak* can be found on page 128 of *Arts of the Eskimo: Prints*, Ed. Ernest Roch (Montreal: Signum Press, 1974).
14. I am drawing here on art critic John Berger's distinction of the nude/naked antinomy in visual art. The naked woman (for example Titian's *Venus of Urbino*) is depicted for the spectator or owner of the work, and the observer is the protagonist. In contrast, the nude woman (for example Manet's *Olympia*) is depicted for herself; it is her will and her intention that is paramount and the observers cannot deceive themselves into believing she exists for them. The subject is the protagonist and the viewer is involved in her story (45-64). Davidialuk's *Lumak* fits within this latter category.
15. McGrath notes the propensity of Inuit authors to include myth and legend in autobiography, and she attributes it to a need for organizing frameworks (91). McGrath demonstrates how Nuligak, in *I, Nuligak*, draws heavily on the orphan boy myth to organize and explain his own childhood. Conversely, when Peter Pitseolak uses the Sedna myth in *People From Our Side*, he notes "it's probably not true but it's a story" (94).
16. Kuanana's *Lumak Legend* can be found on page 68 of the *Swinton Collection of Inuit Art: Winnipeg Art Gallery September 13–November 3, 1997*, Darlene Wight and Winnipeg Art Gallery (Winnipeg: The Gallery, 1987).

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