

# Time-Diffraction Stories:

## Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit* and Temporal Sovereignty in *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen* and *Split Tooth*

SARAH BEST

Within the contemporary Western context, progress and development are typically associated with the forward motion of time, the linear movement from past to future. While most settlers take this unilinear temporal framework for granted, its assumed universality becomes problematic when it results in the silencing and erasure of those who do not subscribe to such normative frameworks—those who have other ways of conceptualizing time and memory. In particular, Indigenous communities in North America are often excluded from these linear metanarratives of modern progress, as their maintenance of traditional ways of being and knowing are associated with a static past or bygone eras within the popular imagination. As such, Indigenous peoples within the West have typically been expected to either assimilate into dominant cultural and temporal frameworks, or be left behind by the forward march of progress. However, as many Indigenous peoples know, tradition is itself inherently modern, and the divisions colonial settlers attempt to enforce between past, present and future are not as definitive as one might assume. Likewise, the indeterminate nature of time is also recognized in critical and philosophical posthumanism, relatively new academic fields whose emerging theories of temporality overlap with Indigenous concepts of time in that they are post-dualistic and post-anthropocentric. Along with Indigenous temporalities, posthuman understandings of time undo problematic traditional/modern binaries and undermine the privileged position attributed to human beings in time and space—particularly the privileging of *certain kinds of humans* (white, male, Euro-Western, Christian) on which Enlightenment humanism’s notion of rational Man is built.

In this article, I engage specifically with two Inuit texts that challenge the universality of settler progress by exploring different ways of being in and moving through time: Igloodik Isuma Productions Inc.’s *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen* (2006), which is the final film in the *Atanarjuat (The Fast Runner)* trilogy, and Tanya Tagaq’s written work *Split Tooth* (2018). Centring on themes of shamanism and animistic cosmologies, these texts foreground Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit*, or Inuit traditional knowledge, as a means of learning to live (and die) in a world composed of diverse human and more-than-human agencies. Drawing from scholarship in Indigenous studies as well as posthumanism and its related field of new materialism, this article examines how both of these texts can be considered to be what the posthumanist scholar Karen Barad (2017b) calls “time-diffraction stories,” as they upset colonial settler understandings of space and time in their deconstruc-

tion of some of the hierarchical oppositions on which Western modernity rests, including the queering of binaries like traditional/modern, human/nonhuman, linear/non-linear, absence/presence and material/spiritual. Insofar as the temporal is linked with the material, the spatial, and the spiritual within Indigenous ontologies, the challenge *Journals* and *Split Tooth* pose to settler temporal domination is also a challenge to the colonial mastery of Inuit bodies, lands, and spirits. Temporal sovereignty is fundamentally intertwined with bodily and spatial sovereignty, and the embodied remembering that Isuma and Tagaq foster in their texts allows for the colonial past to be re-enacted and re-written in the present, so that cultural healing and resurgence may occur through a *continuity with* rather than a *severing from* the past. By encouraging dialogue between *Qaujimaqatugangit* and posthumanist theories of temporality, material agency and embodiment, I attempt to show how *Journals* and *Split Tooth* assert an Inuit temporal sovereignty that ultimately counters and moves beyond settler heteropatriarchal structures and the ongoing colonial violence they enact.

### Posthumanism and Indigenous Knowledges

Inuit *Qaujimaqatugangit* is defined by Inuit literature studies scholar Keavy Martin as “what the Inuit have known for a very long time” and “the Inuit way of doing things: the past, present and future knowledge, experience and values of Inuit Society” (Martin 2012, 3). This traditional knowledge includes interconnected relationships with the land and its many human and nonhuman inhabitants, deeply rooted connections with ancestors and other spiritual beings, and ethical attitudes based on principles of humility, community, and reciprocity. Other-than-human beings such as animals, spirits, and features of the landscape are considered to be persons in their own right, who act in accordance with their own will and agency. As harsh Arctic conditions mean that the Inuit traditionally relied on animals in order to survive, treating them with respect is of utmost importance—a respect made evident in Isuma’s *Journals* through the various taboos the community strives to uphold. Moreover, the fundamental interconnectedness of humans and other-than-humans is further emphasized in Tagaq’s *Split Tooth*, especially through the Inuit concept of *sila*. *Sila* is generally taken to mean wind, sky, or weather, but also refers to one’s breath or soul, indicating how life is intimately tied to the environment (Martin 2012; Merkur 1983). Although never named explicitly in Tagaq’s work, this concept is woven throughout the text in the often-reoccurring phrase “Ice in Lung,” which captures the profound, embodied relationship between human beings and the icy tundra on which they live. Humans breathe in the more-than-human environment, just as it too breathes them in and out.

The way in which Inuit wisdom is both embodied and embedded in the earth can be understood through Yellowknives Dene thinker Glen Coulthard’s (2014) concept of “grounded normativity”—ethical frameworks that are created through place-based practices and associated knowledges. Building on Coulthard’s theory, Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Simpson explains that grounded normativity is a “process-centered” mode of living, where Indigenous ways of life come from deep-

ly rooted connections to place, where “place includes land and waters, plants and animals, and the spirit world—a peopled cosmos of influencing powers” (2017, 22). Within the Inuit context, the frozen tundra of the Arctic and the multiplicity of relations contained within it are foundational to *Qaujimagatuqangit*.

As some scholars have pointed out (Anderson 2020; Rosiek, Snyder & Pratt 2020; Sundberg 2014), there is an overlap between Indigenous knowledges and posthumanist theory, which is also interested in inhuman/nonhuman relationships and relational subjectivity. Thus, while my central focus is on Inuit and other Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies in this article, I also look to posthumanism and its related discourse of new materialism as additional theoretical frameworks for unpacking *Journals* and *Split Tooth*, as such theories can offer a generative foundation for analysis when put into dialogue with Indigenous studies.

Critical or philosophical posthumanism is a multidisciplinary theory arising from the reaction against Enlightenment humanism’s contention that the human individual is a bounded, rational subject separate from the surrounding environment. According to the philosopher Francesca Ferrando (2019), posthumanist theory is “post-dualistic” and “post-anthropocentric” in that it destabilizes the many normative binaries central to Western modernity, such as those of self/other, human/nonhuman, and nature/culture, among others, and strives to remove human beings from the ontological centre so that they may be reinserted into a wider meshwork of being. Rosi Braidotti defines the posthuman subject “within an eco-philosophy of multiple belongings, as a relational subject constituted in and by multiplicity,” and “as embodied and embedded, interconnected with the human and non-human communities” (Braidotti 2013, 49). Similarly, within the context of new materialism, a feminist theory grounded in the rejection of any ontological separation between humans and the surrounding material world, the boundaries between subject and object, discursive and material, mind and body are revealed to be false, and any “transcendental grounds” for human consciousness are rejected (Braidotti 2013, 66), as the human beings are but one kind of actor within a vast network of vibrant material agency (see also Bennett 2010).

Insofar as posthumanism and new materialism counter modern assumptions that the bounded human subject stands apart from and above the world, these relatively recent theories appear to share a common philosophy with aspects of Indigenous knowledges. Like posthumanism, Indigenous knowledges “provide a long-tested alternative to Western humanism” as they are rooted in “more-than-human” philosophies that recognize humanity as necessarily continuous with and inseparable from the natural world (Bignall, Hemming & Rigney 2016, 457). However, there are also many notable differences between Indigenous traditional knowledges and Western posthumanism, and potential issues arise when aligning the two frameworks. Notably, the introduction of posthumanism into discussions of Indigenous ontologies risks the failure to take Indigenous knowledges seriously in their own right as a means of living with and relating to nonhuman agencies that existed millennia prior to posthumanism’s inception (Bignall, Hemming & Rigney 2016, 457). Francesca Ferrando describes posthumanism as a “transhistor-

ical attitude” that is not limited to the recent academic movement (2019, 22), but this understanding disregards the fact that Indigenous cultures never subscribed to humanist worldviews to begin with, and risks erasing the particularities of Indigenous thought in the interest of a universalizing framework.

Indeed, while Indigenous scholars such as Kim TallBear (Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate) (2015), Zoe Todd (Métis/Otipemisiwak) (2016) and Vanessa Watts (Mohawk and Anishinaabe) (2013) contend that there is some overlap between Indigenous knowledges and posthumanism, a major issue within posthumanist theory is that Indigenous thinkers are perpetually excluded from academic discourse, and their ancient knowledge systems are rarely referenced or credited. Todd notes that these Euro-Western “discoveries” within posthumanism and its related disciplines are “actually things that Indigenous thinkers have known for millennia,” and that the failure to recognize this is merely another way in which Indigenous voices and bodies are erased from academia (Todd 2016, 8). Moreover, although posthumanism and similar approaches have the potential of working alongside Indigenous knowledges in that they are both concerned with more-than-human agency, Watts posits that the interpretation of Indigenous traditions through Western frameworks allows non-Indigenous peoples to “keep control over what agency is and how it is dispersed in the hands of humans” (Watts 2013, 26). The pervasive tendency within academia to filter Indigenous stories and knowledges through Western epistemologies and concepts is a major reason why scholars such as Vincent Clement (2019) take issue with the notion of the “postcolonial”—one must only look to the epistemic violence that arises from the silencing of Indigenous voices within the academy to see the perpetuation of colonialism within the present. The temporal implications of postcolonialism and the fallacy of colonialism as something that belongs only to the past has led certain scholars to turn their attention instead towards decolonization (Singh 2018) or what Simone Bignall terms the “excolonial” in referring to an always yet to come idyllic future community that has been able to “exit-from-colonialism” while nonetheless recognizing the formative role of colonizing processes in shaping its history (Bignall 2014, 342).

Furthermore, in addition to posthumanist scholars who neglect to account for Indigenous knowledges and contributions within academia, it is also important to note that certain theories and contributions that fall under the broad umbrella of “posthumanism” may clash with or exclude Indigenous ways of being and knowing. For instance, N. Katherine Hayles’s (2017) theory of “cognitive assemblages” that divides phenomena into the categories of “cognizers” and “non-cognizers” rejects Indigenous animistic perspectives that attribute agency and intentionality to environmental forces like wind, ice, or cold. Similarly, although Jane Bennett’s foundational theory of “vital materialism” appears on the surface to be compatible with Indigenous ontologies of relational subjectivity and interconnectivity, Bennett explicitly disregards the spiritual elements central to Indigenous philosophies, consciously setting her theory apart from animism (Bennett 2010; Sundberg 2014). Yet, not all posthumanist scholars exclude or overlook Indigenous knowledge systems in their work, and some—particularly those

involved with feminist approaches to posthumanism—make a concerted effort to centre Indigenous perspectives. Indeed, scholars such as Donna Haraway (2016, 2017), Rosi Braidotti (2022), and Karen Barad (2017b) incorporate Indigenous spiritualities as an integral part of their theories. Following the work of these posthumanist thinkers then, it is my intention here to demonstrate how posthumanist theory can work *with* and learn *from* Indigenous peoples and their knowledges, particularly Inuit *Qaujimaqatuqangit*, so that it may realize more of its decolonizing potential.

### Modern “Progress” and Temporal Violence in the Canadian North

Though set over fifty years apart, both Isuma Production’s *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen* and Tanya Tagaq’s *Split Tooth* address the importance of shamanistic traditions and cosmologies within Inuit society, not as relics of the pre-colonial past, but as ways of being and knowing that remain integral to Inuit culture and identity today. Based on events recorded by the Danish ethnographer Knud Rasmussen in the 1920s, *Journals* traces the decline of shamanism in Igloodik. The narrative centers on Avva (played by Pakak Innuksuk) and his daughter Apak (played by Leah Angutimarik), both of whom must ultimately give up their shamanic powers to survive in a changing world increasingly dominated by Christianity. Though Avva was known to Rasmussen as “the last shaman” in the Canadian North, this finality is challenged by Tagaq’s *Split Tooth*, which portrays a revitalization of shamanism and other traditional Inuit practices decades after the devastation their culture. Telling the story of a young girl growing up in the 1970s in what is now Nunavut, *Split Tooth* centres on the unnamed narrator’s discovery of her shamanic powers, and goes to show that Inuit traditions continue to survive the devastation colonizers enacted on Indigenous communities and lands through the oppression of their knowledges.

In both *Journals* and *Split Tooth*, an explicit link is established between the “civilizational matrix” of settler colonialism, capitalism and Christianity (Braidotti 2022), and the relentless forward motion of modern progress, which for colonizers is thought to be inhibited by traditional cultures like that of the Inuit. In *Journals*, Apak’s ex-boyfriend Nuqallaq (played by Natar Ungalaaq) explains to Avva that he and many other Inuit in the area have chosen to follow the way of the colonizers, adopting their technologies, customs, and religion. Nuqallaq says to Avva: “Elder, you follow our ancestors’ way. This is beautiful, I respect it. But I’ve chosen to see which way the Whites are going.” This sense that colonial settlers sought to replace traditional Inuit ways of living with the ideals of Western modernity is echoed in *Split Tooth*, as the narrator reflects on the devastating loss of her culture and language. Ruminating on the way many people no longer speak Inuktitut, the Inuit language, she notes that “Residential schools have beaten the Inuktitut out of this town in the name of progress, in the name of decency. Everyone wanted to move forward. Move forward with God, with money, with white skin and without the shaman’s way” (2018, 50).

Shamanism is one such traditional Inuit practice that was long seen as an obstacle to modern progress. Since initial contact in the late 19th and early 20th cen-

turies, colonizers have used methods like the dispossession of Inuit bodies and lands along with forced conversions to Christianity and assimilation into Western culture as “civilizing” incentives necessary to bring Indigenous communities into the fold of modernity (Oosten, Frédéric and Remie 2006). As Simpson (2017) notes, these so-called “civilizing” forces of colonialism and Christianity constitute a direct attack on Indigenous grounded normativity, as they attempt to sever the connections between Indigenous bodies and their lands, tearing apart the political systems and knowledges that are rooted in these relationships. This assault on Indigenous ways of life is what Simpson calls “expansive dispossession”—the ongoing seizure of Indigenous lands and erasure of Indigenous bodies as a means of marginalizing the political systems housed within them (41). Because of this expansive dispossession, many came to see Indigenous peoples and nations as relics of the past, irrelevant to contemporary society.

From the Euro-Western settler perspective, Indigenous cultures and peoples have often been thought to be on the edge of vanishing, or else “out of time” altogether. Mark Rifkin (2017) contends that this static understanding of Indigeneity puts them in a “double bind;” in order to be incorporated into settler notions of modernity Indigenous peoples have long been expected to abandon their traditions and assimilate into Western culture. This for Rifkin creates a problematic binary between modernity and tradition, wherein the colonizer’s “progress” builds “on top of” Indigenous peoples, forcing them into either integration or obliteration (2017, 7). This traditional/modern binary resonates with Thomas King’s (Cherokee) (2012) concept of “Dead Indians” (settler ideas of what Indigenous peoples *should be*) versus “Live Indians” (who they *actually are*), as it is often the case that in order for Indigenous cultures to be considered “authentic,” they must situate themselves within a static and unchanging imagined past, fitting into stereotypical Native tropes perpetuated by settlers to limit Indigenous self-determination.

Yet, as contemporary Inuit texts like *Journals* and *Split Tooth* demonstrate, the Western notion that “tradition” and “modernity” are necessarily antithetical to one another does not hold true within most Indigenous knowledge systems, where it is understood that linear, forward motion is not the only way of progressing. The assumed universality of Euro-Western Enlightenment temporal frameworks constituted by “homogenous” or “empty” clock time (Benjamin 2006 [1940]) seems to suggest that we are “all in a single time, on a single trajectory” governed by social and capitalist development and growth. This does not necessarily apply to non-Western cultures. Within many Indigenous traditions, the past is not static and time is not always linear. In placing an emphasis on temporality itself, *Journals* and *Split Tooth* demonstrate how for the Inuit, time is dynamic, multiplicitous and unruly, while past and future are always alive within the present. As Tagaq writes:

Time has a way of eternally looping us in the same configurations. Like fruit flies, we are unable to register the patterns. Just because we are the crest of the wave does not mean the ocean does not exist. What has been before will be again. We are reverberations of our Ancestors and songs of

our present selves. (Tagaq 2018, 121)

Throughout both *Journals* and *Split Tooth*, linear and non-linear temporalities are in constant dialogue with one another—sometimes in conflict, and sometimes in harmony. Both narratives take on a circular shape rather than a linear one; In *Split Tooth*, the circularity is apparent in the final two words of the text: “Start again” (Tagaq 2018, 189). In *Journals*, the opening scene depicting a young Apak and members of her community is narrated by an older woman we soon learn is also Apak (now Usarak), reflecting on her past from much later in her life: “I am called Usarak, though I was named Apak when I was a young woman, during the time of the story I am telling you now.” Such circular narrative techniques are characteristic of Inuit oral traditions, where there is no distinct beginning middle or end as “the entire story is always already being enacted” (Huebener 2015, 182). While linear progressions of time are associated with the Greek concept of *chronos*, where now marks the divide between past and future, Inuit may be more often understood in terms of *aion*, or non-linear, eternal, “mythical” time—a “time-before-time,” or a time out of time (Braidotti 2014; Kilbourn 2020, 204).

It is the attempted erasure of these diverse understandings of time in favour of a universalized notion of Enlightenment-derived Western progress that results in what may be called “temporal discrimination” (Huebener 2015) or “temporal violence” (Preston 2020), as the flow of time is used as a means of controlling Indigenous bodies and eliminating their ways of life. Through temporal discrimination and violence, the effects of colonization are ongoing, as the universalizing impulse of settler models of time can “serve, even unintentionally, to legitimize the subjugation of non-white races” (Huebener 2015, 207). This temporal violence, then, plays a role in the ongoing expansive dispossession of Inuit and other Indigenous peoples in North America, as it sets the terms of modernity while continually attempting to locate Indigenous bodies, knowledges, and political systems outside of its bounds.

Simpson (2017) posits that Indigenous peoples continually refuse this dispossession, as they recognize that their power does not come from possession, but rather is derived from the deep reciprocal relationships with bodies, lands, spirits and ancestors (43). Isuma’s *Journals* and Tagaq’s *Split Tooth* resist dispossession as they refuse to be confined within the temporal frameworks enforced by settler colonialism, thus expressing a temporal sovereignty that is necessarily connected to the reclaiming of Indigenous bodies and lands, and the Inuit *Qaujimaqatuqangit* rooted within them. Notably posthumanist theories of time can play a helpful interpretative role here, as like many Indigenous knowledges, they recognize that “homogeneous clock time” or linear progress is but one temporal rhythm among many. Posthumanism challenges the settler colonial notion that time only flows in one chronological direction from past to future. Instead, posthumanist thinkers ask how we might understand time and history as “multiple and simultaneous, ambivalent, fragmented, ephemeral, discontinuous and dissonant,” while “registering the posthuman reality that diverse entities live diverse histories that travel impossible lines of time” (Bignall and Braidotti 2019, 9). By inserting audiences within Inuit worlds, *Journals* and *Split Tooth* encourage us to actively

notice these different temporal flows so that we may begin to decolonize how we think about time.

### *Qanuqtuurniq* and Temporal Fluidity in *Split Tooth* and *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen*

When interpreted through a posthumanist framework, *Journals* and *Split Tooth* can be read as what new materialist scholar Karen Barad (2017b) calls “time-diffraction stories.” Time-diffraction stories for Barad are narratives that demonstrate how different times and histories (including those not-yet-realized) co-exist with all other possible times. Here, pasts, presents, and futures converge in ways that challenge the temporal expectations of Western modernity, disrupting normative settler conceptions of time (Barad 2017b, 68). Developing out of quantum field theory (QFT) and drawing explicitly from Indigenous understandings of time and space, time-diffraction stories pose a direct challenge to Newtonian models of reality that are linear, deterministic, and progressivist. Indeed, working from a posthumanist methodology of diffraction that recognizes the importance of difference without relying on opposition, Barad employs the concept of “agential realism” to explain how space, time, and matter are inseparable, as particular entities only come into being through their specific material entanglements, or “intra-actions” (see Barad 2007). Using the concept of “*spacetime-mattering*,” Barad explains how experiments in quantum physics provide evidence for “temporal diffraction”—just as particles can be indeterminate in space, they can also have a *temporal indeterminacy*, existing in different times. In other words, various times may be *superpositioned* onto one another, as temporalities are always entangled in specific and generative ways. As such, QFT and agential realism remake being and time together:

No longer an independent parameter relentlessly marching forward in the future, time is no longer continuous or one. *Time is diffracted, imploded/exploded in on itself: each moment made up of a superposition, a combination, of all moments* (differently weighed and combined in their specific material entanglements). (Barad 2017a, G112)

*Journals* and *Split Tooth* therefore can be understood as time-diffraction stories in that they reveal how past, present and future are always already entangled with one another, undoing settler models of universal linear time.

Tagaq’s *Split Tooth* is part memoir, part imaginative fiction, comprising a fragmented compilation of poetry, prose, art and myth that interweaves personal stories (*inuusirmingnik unikkaat*) with traditional Inuit stories (*unikkaaqtuat*). Though the parts of the text generally tell a fairly linear story of the narrator’s youth, in various dream-like sequences her story becomes intertwined with the temporal indeterminacy of these *unikkaaqtuat*. For instance, a telling of the traditional story of the Sea Goddess Sedna brings readers back to a time before Christianity: a “time when the land was our Lord, and we were her servants” (Tagaq 2108, 85), while a rendition of the Inuit creation story featuring a fox and raven, which returns us to a “time-before-time” when humans and animals lived as equals. The linearity of the text is transformed as it is interwoven with these other levels of



storytelling, demonstrating how contemporary Inuit lives are inextricably entangled with the eternal time (*aion*) of the pre-colonial past.

Furthermore, the audiobook version of *Split Tooth* is read by Tagaq herself, featuring her own throat singing performances between each chapter. Here, the oral inspiration of the story is clear, these performances adding an element of traditional Inuit culture that cannot be found within the written version alone. Yet, the written rendition of *Split Tooth* includes a number of spare-line drawings throughout (illustrated by Jamie Hernandez), visually illustrating certain parts of the story in a style reminiscent of Inuit *Scrimshaw*, where storytellers would use images carved onto tusks or whale bones to assist in the telling of their tales. None of the chapters are numbered, and most lack titles. Each chapter is separated by a poem, which are not always obviously connected to the main plot. Though the prose tells the narrator's story of growing up in Nunavut, this linearity is challenged by the poems, which often seem to be written by an older, wiser individual, who seems years beyond the narrator. In one poem the writer's daughter is mentioned, where in others, she reflects back on her youth: "We didn't know we would spend the rest of our lives running/ Or we would have slowed down" (73). These poems thus pull readers out of the text's chronology, leaving them with a sense of temporal indeterminacy.

Similarly, this temporal indeterminacy can also be seen in *Journals* as pasts, presents, and futures, are woven together in order to claim temporal sovereignty. An example of how different times are superpositioned onto one another can be seen during the depiction of a traditional celebration in *qaggiq*—a communal igloo meant for ceremonies and gatherings. Here, Avva, his community, and Rasmussen (played by Jens Jørn Spottag) and his companions are all singing a traditional Inuit "*ayaya* song" (see Martin 2012), as Nuqallaq dances and plays the *qilaut*, a traditional drum made from caribou skin stretched over a wooden frame. The scene is soon overlaid with the voice of Orulu (played by Neeve Irngaut), Apak's mother, describing her worst memory: a time of famine years ago, when her son had just been born. As she tells this story, the camera focuses on Orulu in the *qaggiq*, singing along with the others. We then hear Rasmussen's voice asking: "And what was the happiest thing you can remember?" Orulu begins to describe how she was welcomed so warmly back to Iglulik by her community after she was married, and the scene changes: switching to a slow-motion shot of various members of Avva's community walking around outside in the sunlit snowy landscape, a sled-dog running between them. The singing from the *qaggiq* continues, "superpositioned" onto the scene along with Orulu's storytelling. The scene briefly shifts again, showing Orulu in an igloo with Rasmussen, crying and wiping away tears in her eyes, before switching back to sunlit memory. Orulu says: "I am overwhelmed by knowing I have had a happy life. Today I have been a child again. By remembering my youth I relive it." The film then cuts back to the *qaggiq*, as another performance begins.

This portion of *Journals* depicts the convergence of multiple timelines, as different moments in time become entangled in ways that complicate temporal linearity. The diegetic present enacted through the *qaggiq* scene is overlaid first with

Orulu's stories. It is unclear when Orulu's interview with Rasmussen takes place in relation to the *qaggiq*, just as it is not made evident whether the shot taken outside is meant to have been in the past or future. Here, "[t]he diffraction pattern, in this case, is a manifestation of different times bleeding through one another" (Barad 2018, 219-220). Like in *Split Tooth*, Isuma's film demonstrates the temporal indeterminacy of Inuit lifeworlds, as past, present and future become indistinguishable from one another. Far from empty or unilinear, the indeterminacy of time in both *Journals* and *Split Tooth* further resonates with Anishinaabe author Grace Dillon's concept of "Native slipstream," which she uses to describe how in many Indigenous stories present "pasts, presents, and futures that flow together like currents in a navigable stream," disrupting settler expectations and challenging normative concepts of temporality (Dillon 2012, 10).

As a film based on the ethnographic writings of Knud Rasmussen, *Journals* also centres on the historical archive—albeit one that is radically transformed by Inuit communities in the present. Characters throughout the film are dressed in traditional Inuit clothing made from animal skins such as caribou and seal, and the cast and crew went to great lengths to ensure that everything from the way characters spoke and laughed to details like the *kakinniit* (facial tattoos) accurately reflected archival records. The camera often centres on characters for extended periods of time as they engage in the everyday practices integral to traditional Inuit ways of life, such as a scene focused on Nuqallaq's hands as he fixes the ropes on his dog sled. Russell Kilbourn (2020) posits that this film technique is important for conveying ethnographically important details, as well as creating moments of cultural continuity and remembering within the community. Considering the way that Indigenous cultures often emphasize observation as a key method for skill acquisition, films like *Journals* are becoming an important way of passing down this cultural knowledge to future generations (Tulugarjuk et al. 2021). If one wants to learn how to properly tie the ropes on a dog sled or how to prepare a *qulliq* (the traditional lamp fuelled by whale blubber), they can look to Isuma's films to do so.

The process of creating the ethnographic archive is also explored in the film, seen in the interviews Rasmussen conducts with Orulu and other characters, as well as in a scene depicting one of Rasmussen's companions, Therkel Mathiasen (played by Jakob Cedergren) sketching an illustration of an Inuit tool in his notebook. This moment can be contrasted with a number of other instances in the film where Inuit actors are depicted actually using these traditional tools. For instance, near the beginning of the film as Avva and his family are gathered around a fire chatting in untranslated Inuktitut, Apak is cutting up pieces of meat using an *ulu*, a multi-purpose knife with a semi-circular blade traditionally used by Inuit women. While Mathiasen's drawing is representative of an archival past frozen in history, reflecting Rasmussen's desire to record elements of Inuit culture before it was lost within encroaching modernity (Kambourelis, 2018), the use of traditional tools and participation in traditional practices like cooking meat, building igloos and making clothing from animal furs subverts this static understanding of the past. Sylvie Jasen (2013) contends that it "activates" the past

through its re-enactment, as the actors and members of the Inuit community involved in the film's creation “perform traditional songs, competition games, and ordinary daily tasks” (Jasen 2013, 7), using knowledge from elders to relearn and relive traditional ways of being and dwelling in the Arctic. Similarly, VK Preston notes that through the emphasis of “relived” traditional practices, Isuma creates a rupture in colonial epistemologies and temporalities, reconfiguring the meaning of “progress,” “history” and “time” as linear concepts (Preston 2020, 161). The filmmakers thus counter colonial attempts at the control or expansive dispossession of Inuit cultures as they revitalize traditional practices, rituals, songs and dances. In other words, it is the “*doing* of Inuit practices” through such contemporary performances “that reconfigure epistemic violence and avow cultural and political resurgence” (Preston 156).

As the cast and crew of *Journals* participate in a decolonized re-enactment of Rasmussen's ethnographic journals, the present is interwoven with past and carried on into the future through its digital recording. These transformations of the archive *in* the present and *for* the present are important, as Barad contends that archives do not show the “bare facts of history, but rather a record of erasures”—erasures of histories of colonial violence, and the voices of those affected by it (Barad 2017b, 75). Yet these erasures are never complete, just as the past itself remains open to transformation, playing an important role in the world's ongoing becoming. From a posthumanist perspective, temporal diffraction not only challenges the concept of linear time, but also what it means to record history. Seeing as the disruption of chronological time fundamentally challenges humanist ideas of bounded, rational subjects, demonstrating instead how human beings are dispersed across time and space, defying wholeness or individuation, it becomes impossible to record histories in the traditional sense, as the past is never fixed or static, and human beings (as well as the more-than-human) are never determinate within it (Murriss and Kohan 2021, 589). By breaking free of the settler-imposed constraints of unilinear time and traditional/modern binaries, texts like *Journals* and *Split Tooth* establish an Inuit temporal sovereignty that is crucial to the community's cultural and spiritual resurgence. In so doing, they disrupt Euro-Western humanistic assumptions that “progress” is necessary to the condition of modern humanity, and as time-diffraction stories they demonstrate how for the Inuit, as for many Indigenous peoples across North America, tradition is fundamentally modern (Martin 2012).

### **Material Hauntings and Eco-Erotics: The Assertion of Inuit Presence and Bodily Sovereignty**

Inextricably tied up with Indigenous temporal sovereignty is bodily sovereignty—a material form of empowerment that stems from the rejection of settler-imposed temporal frameworks that attempt to control and erase Indigenous bodies and voices. Isuma's *Journals* and Tagaq's *Split Tooth* both grapple with these attempted erasures of Indigenous bodies (particularly women's bodies) enforced through the heteropatriarchal and “chrononormative” systems of modernity, ultimately refusing to remain contained within them. In emphasizing the sexual

agency of Indigenous women, and indeed through exploring non-normative sexual encounters with the other-than-human world, *Journals* and *Split Tooth* challenge the stratified ordering of oppositions like presence/absence, material/spiritual, and living/dying. In so doing, they effectively subvert the racial and gender hierarchies onto which these categories are mapped.

Understood within the context of grounded normativity and expansive dispossession, the erasure of Indigenous bodies and their forced separation from ancestral lands is part of an ongoing colonial project to erase the political orders housed within those bodies and the various material and spiritual relationships they imply (Simpson 2017). In particular, Simpson (2017) highlights the fact that Indigenous women's bodies are at particular risk for this kind of colonial erasure, as they are often the culture bearers within their communities, thereby embodying traditional knowledges and political structures in special ways. As such, settler colonialism is tied to a long history of gender and sexual violence against Indigenous women, whose sexual autonomy and agency presented a threat to colonizers. In other words, as Ashley Noel Mack and Tiara Na'puti (Chamoru) (2019) put it, gender violence *is* colonial violence. They write that “[g]ender violence is/was used to violently impose gender on Indigenous bodies, and gender dichotomization is/was a central strategy of colonial conquest and control” (350). Prior to colonization, most Indigenous peoples in North America did not adhere to strict gender binaries or heteronormativity, which are Western constructions used as a means of bodily control. In particular, Simpson notes how Christianity and its notions of guilt and shame were used to contain Indigenous women's bodies in attempt to limit the threat they presented to colonial power (2017, 107).

Evidence of the intergenerational trauma within the Inuit community as a result of this heteropatriarchal violence can be seen throughout *Split Tooth*, as the narrator describes various instances of sexual assault, both against her and other female characters. Contemplating the “Blind Faith” imposed by Christianity, *Split Tooth's* narrator notes that “Christians seem to love Shame: shame on your body, your soul, your actions and inactions. Put a cork in all your holes and choke on the light of God” (2018, 77). As a coping mechanism for the abuse, the narrator describes going to “the faceless place” during these moments of violence, dissociating from her body and from material reality, culminating in an attempt to take her own life at the end of the text.

By enforcing strict gender binaries and bodily norms that target Indigenous women's sexual agency, Christianity and settler colonialism also participate in the perpetuation of temporal violence. Normative prescriptions of linear time and the relentless forward march of progress have long played a role in settler—particularly Christian—attempts to dominate “unruly” racialized and gendered bodies, those that have been at times considered less-than-human by Enlightenment humanism's standards. Here, the queer feminist theorist Elizabeth Freeman's (2010) notion of “chrononormativity” is helpful, as it demonstrates how time is used as a means of organizing and manipulating human bodies in the interest of attaining maximum capital production. As Freeman writes, chrononormativity describes how societal “manipulations of time convert historically spe-

cific regimes of asymmetrical power into seemingly ordinary bodily tempos and routines, which in turn organize the value and meaning of time” (2010, 3). For Freeman, there is a direct link between the homogeneous, linear time of modernity and normative gender binaries and configurations of “correct” sexuality, as these constraints play a role in creating “productive” bodies. It is especially significant, then, that *Journals* and *Split Tooth* both feature female Inuit protagonists who have what, to Western audiences, appear to be exceptionally strange and even impossible sexual experiences with not only the more-than-human, but the not-quite-living as well. These sexual encounters give rise to decidedly non-normative gender and sexual expressions that challenge the linearity and binaries of chrononormative modernity.

In rejecting the racial and gender hierarchies associated with settler modernity, *Journals* queers the binaries of presence/absence, material/spiritual and living/dying foundational to heteropatriarchal notions of linear time. The porous boundaries between life and death are most evident in *Journals* in various dream-like moments where Apak uses her shamanic abilities to cross the boundary of the spirit world. Everything is white in these scenes, including Apak’s face, of which viewers get close-up shots as she appears to be engaging in sexual activities with someone who remains off-screen, but who we learn is the spirit of her dead ex-husband. Interestingly, the throat singing (*katajjaq*) that accompanies Apak’s sex scenes are pieces composed and performed by Tanya Tagaq, similar to those in the audiobook version of her text. Traditionally a game of endurance played by two women, Inuit throat singing is a physically strenuous art form that calls attention to the gendered body (Nattiez 1999).

In these boundary-crossing moments, Apak clearly receives real physical pleasure from the spectral touch of her late husband, dissolving any strict separations between material and spiritual realms. Inuit understandings of presence and absence can thus work alongside posthuman frameworks of time that recognize how “the dying is within the living within the dying” (Barad 2017a, G112). Indeed, both Inuit and posthumanist notions of life and death as fundamentally fluid challenge unilinear notions of settler time while dismantling hierarchical dichotomies of presence/absence, being/nonbeing, as well as material/spiritual. As Murris and Kohan put it, “[o]ur relationship with the dead and the not-yet-there, that what is not visible, but still ‘there’ and ‘not there,’ both spatially and temporally, is an undoing of the Western metaphysics of presence” (2021, 593).

Significantly, this challenge to the humanistic emphasis on presence further highlights *Journals*’ decolonial potential because it complicates settler notions of the “colonial void.” Drawing striking parallels between the void or vacuum in the Newtonian model of the universe, where its emptiness is understood as a mere container for presence, and the way that colonizers have always been concerned with the “discovery” and occupation of supposedly “empty” lands (*terra nullius*), Barad (2017b) posits that Indigenous life has typically been seen as a kind of “voided” absence by settlers. This absence can be seen especially in Canadian settler ghost stories, where Indigenous specters often serve to reproduce the “disappearing Indians” trope, writing out “the bodies and voices of living, politically

active Indigenous peoples” (Cameron 2008, 388). However, stories like *Journals* and *Split Tooth* provide a direct counter to this disappearance, as they feature highly material spiritual beings who are *re-embodied*, rather than disembodied, asserting their absence through their presence. Indeed, the Indigenous femininity and sexuality explored in *Journals* resonates with Zakiyyah Iman Jackson’s notion that black women are made out to exist in some kind of void or “black hole,” somewhere between the visible and the invisible, in a paradoxical state of being ever-present, yet continually absent (Jackson 2018, 633). Here, she reminds us that while black holes appear to be empty, this is not the case—in reality, nothing is never actually nothing, and the voiding of black femininity is a “paradoxically dense yet voided im/materiality” (622). In other words, racialized and gendered bodies are inescapably material, despite ongoing attempts to erase them from narratives of Western modernity.

Like Apak, Tagaq’s narrator also has a number of incredible sexual encounter with the more-than-human throughout *Split Tooth*, including with spirits of the dead. The Northern Lights play a prominent role in Tagaq’s narrative, as they do in many Inuit oral traditions, as they are understood to be the souls of both the dead and the not yet born, demonstrating how death is not simply an ending, but also a new beginning. During the narrator’s first encounter with the Northern Lights, she recounts how “[t]he lights begin to blur, and I swear they are calling me backwards/forwards in Time, back to a time before I was born and where I will return to after I die” (Tagaq 56). The slash between “backwards/forwards” indicates here that there is no true separation between these two states—time is not unidirectional, but rather loops back in on itself, so that movement either way results in the arrival at the same place.

Throughout the text, the narrator’s encounters with the Northern Lights are highly embodied, visceral, and sexual. In one instance, “Light leaves Time and takes on physical form” (113) as the Lights penetrate the narrator’s body, making her feel as though she is being split in two:

The slitting continues down my belly, lighting up my liver and excavating my bladder. An impossible column of green light simultaneously impales my vagina and anus. My clit explodes and I am split in two from head to toe as the light from my throat joins the light in my womb and begins to make a giant fluid figure eight in my Body. (Tagaq 114)

When she returns home, she discovers a glowing, larvae-like substance leaving her body through her vagina. It is soon revealed that the narrator is pregnant, not with children from any human partner, but from the Northern Lights. Since the aurora borealis is made up of the spirits of the dead and those not yet born, she becomes pregnant with her own ancestors, both past and future. “My elders are in my tummy” (133), Tagaq’s narrator states, “[t]hrough my babies I wordlessly speak with the past” (139).

Far from immaterial then, ancestral spirits are highly embodied, their material presence undeniable as they cross the boundaries between physical and spiritual, living and dead, past and present. Both in and out of time, there are no “disappearing Indians” here, as spectres are solidified, and flesh and spirit inter-

twine. Linear, physical time converges with the circularity of spiritual time, as neither can exist without the other. Again, spirit and matter, past and present, absence and presence converge, and ghosts are *re-embodied* rather than disembodied. Unlike the hauntings in settler-composed ghost stories, Barad contends that: “Hauntings are not immaterial,” rather, they “are an ineliminable feature of existing material conditions” (Barad 2017a, G107).

Tagaq’s text falls into the category of what Cherokee scholar Daniel Heath Justice (2018) calls “Indigenous Wonderworks”—wondrous, imaginative and speculative stories that contend with phenomena outside the bounds of the everyday. Wonderworks for Justice are about that which is “other and otherwise,” reminding us that “other worlds exist; other realities abide alongside and within our own” (Justice 153). In addition to her encounters with the Northern Lights, *Split Tooth*’s narrator also has a number of strange and non-normative sexual encounters with other nonhuman and animal beings, such as in a dream where she performs oral sex on a “man sized” fox. This passage is quite sexually explicit, detailing the sexual pleasure felt by both participants, but is also highly spiritual, as the mutual penetration of their bodies gives rise to a profound spiritual experience for the narrator (Tagaq 2018, 70).

Anishinaabe/Métis scholar Melissa Nelson (2017) refers to these types of stories as Indigenous “eco-eroticism”—a form of traditional storytelling in many Indigenous cultures where humans are interpenetrated with the more-than-human environment, often involving women falling in love or having sexual relationships with animals or other natural phenomena, like stars (or the Northern Lights). Nelson notes that these stories are not necessarily meant to be taken literally, but rather are meant to express deep love and kinship with the environment, and to highlight the non-hierarchical relationships that exist between humans and more-than-humans. In describing the “visceral ontologies of intimacy” in eco-erotics, Nelson uses new materialist scholar Stacy Alaimo’s concept of “trans-corporeality,” a posthumanist theory that recognizes how “the environment’ is not located somewhere out there, but is always the very substance of ourselves” (Alaimo 2010, 4). Trans-corporeality for Alaimo gives rise to an interconnected understanding of the world that “marks a profound shift in subjectivity” (20) as the humanist illusion of the bounded self gives way to a posthumanist understanding of the self as porous, fluid and multiplicitous. Moreover, Nelson highlights the fact that eco-erotics are involved in decolonizing processes, as they undo human exceptionalism and challenge modern heteropatriarchal structures. She writes that:

After centuries of oppression, expressing the joy and diversity of our Native sexualities is truly an anticolonial, liberating act. Questioning the internalized authoritarianism that denies and demonizes our psychospiritual and animal closeness to ‘nature’ is a decolonial and revolutionary act of survival. (Nelson 2017, 235)

This decolonizing aspect of Indigenous eco-eroticism is foundational to *Split Tooth*, as the narrator’s dream-like non-normative sexual encounters with not only the Northern Lights, but also animals like the fox and a polar bear, refuse to

be contained within the chrononormativity of Western modernity, overcoming the years of bodily shame and guilt enforced by Christianity.

Significantly, in *Posthuman Feminism*, Braidotti (2022) draws explicit parallels between forms of Indigenous sexuality that refuse normative settler paradigms rooted in heteronormativity and the gender binary and a posthumanist approach to bodies (human and otherwise) and their sexual natures. From a posthuman feminist perspective, sexuality is something that cannot be contained by binary modes of thinking and is always multiplicitous and relational. Furthermore, Braidotti highlights the way that Indigenous knowledges and stories can help us in recognizing our shared “animalness,” fostering an ethics of love, care, solidarity and respect for the material world (Braidotti 2022, 207). In both *Split Tooth* and *Journals*, the non-normative sexual experiences depicted not only foreground Indigenous women’s sexual agency, but they also demonstrate how in a trans-corporeal world, human bodily autonomy is inextricably tied up with that of the more-than-human, emphasizing non-hierarchical relationships and the importance of reciprocity. In what can be seen as a posthumanist fashion then, Tagaq and Isuma’s texts move beyond the heteropatriarchal, chrononormative, and anthropocentric boundaries of settler colonialism, asserting a bodily sovereignty that is inextricably connected to spatial and temporal sovereignty.

### **Cryotemporalities and Inuit Spatio-Temporal Sovereignty**

Much like Indigenous bodies, Native ancestral lands also continue to suffer from ongoing temporal violence, as settler visions of progress contribute to the ravaging and destruction of the environment. Within the matrix of colonialism, capitalism, and Christianity, wild nature has historically been connected with unruly femininity, both presenting a threat to (Protestant) modernity’s linearity, order and reason (Jackson 2018; Watts 2013). Like Indigenous bodies, particularly those of Indigenous women, expansive dispossession and erasures continue to marginalize Indigenous lands and the various more-than-human entities that inhabit them, as the colonial void is filled with not only human “others,” but nonhuman others as well (Barad 2017b). Yet these erasures are never final, as the material traces of their histories are a part of the world’s continued becoming. Although the stories told in both Isuma’s *Journals* and Tagaq’s *Split Tooth* demonstrate the ways in which humanistic and Christian unilinear temporal frameworks continue to sever Inuit connections with the land, they also challenge these narratives of decline and loss by again demonstrating that settler-imposed chronological time is not the only temporal rhythm that matters, and progress is not the only way forward. In posthumanist terms, they encourage audiences to slow down and recognize the diverse temporal rhythms that make up planetary existence, revealing its various assemblages in which humans are only a part. Like posthumanism’s understanding of subjectivity, the Inuit worldview recognizes that the self is porous, fluid, and multiplicitous, co-constitutive with the environment, and spatially and temporally open to ongoing reconfigurations. Both posthumanism and Inuit *Qaujimaqatunqangit* therefore work to radically de-center the human in time and space, as human temporalities are always implicated in more-than-hu-



man pasts, presents and futures.

In contrast to Euro-Western assumptions proclaiming the unilinear nature of time, Indigenous temporalities are not limited to a single uni-directional path, but recognize a multiplicity of temporalities, each interwoven with different locations. Drawing from Daniel R. Wildcat's (Muscogee Nation) (2005) work, Barad (2017b) notes that Indigenous traditions resist universalizing or homogenous notions of history and time, as there is no single understanding of "progress" upheld within them, no one way forward. Rather, there are many potential ways of moving through the world, each uniquely tied to various landscapes, as "[t]he experiences of time and history are shaped by places" (Barad 2017b, 60). Both Tagaq's *Split Tooth* and Isuma's *Journals* highlight the temporal agency of the Northern land in their work, as the rhythms of the weather and seasons assert themselves in these texts, taking over the flow of narrative and production.

In *Split Tooth*, seasonal changes have considerable impact on the narrator and other characters in the story, influencing their experiences and emotional states. Summer and Winter are described as forever engaged in battle with one another, framed as an ongoing struggle between light and dark, movement and stillness, and life and death. In Nunavut, where summer brings twenty-four hours of sunlight and the depths of winter mean never-ending darkness, time is experienced differently than other parts of the world, as though "Everyone's clocks tick sideways" (Tagaq 2018, 129). In the spring and summer months, as the sun and life return to Nunavut, the characters in *Split Tooth* are described as being alive, vibrant, and mischievous. "As children in spring, we have the run of the town" (7), the narrator states. In summer, the narrator describes joining her friends in a "celebration of freedom, electricity, and curiosity" (11). The land and summer sun that warms it are seen as life-giving forces, as "The Land soaks up all negativity" (131), giving people the strength they need to survive in the North and empowering the main character: "The sun can rise, and so can I" (122).

In contrast, during the winter months described throughout the text an aura of stillness and sadness descends upon the characters. Tagaq's writing changes during these dark times, a lack of exclamation points reflecting the loss of youthful joy experienced by the characters in spring and summer. Working a monotonous job stocking shelves at the general store in the winter, the narrator's tone is devoid of excitement, reflecting the overall state of the community during this time:

Death and Life walk together. Someone is found frozen by Cape Cockburn. Someone committed suicide. Someone is pregnant. Merry Christmas. Happy Halloween. Sock the seasons watch the deaths. (Tagaq 88)

The land, now covered with snow and ice, is seen as a harsh, destructive force. During these winter months, the agency of the icy weather is emphasized, growing stronger and more overpowering as that of human characters seems to diminish. It is within the fall and winter that most of the text's scenes detailing sexual violence occur, and when the narrator reflects most on the guilt and shame that Christianity has brought. Although this sense of disempowerment changes after the narrator is impregnated by the Northern Lights, an event that imbues her

with bodily autonomy and a sense of cultural sovereignty as her attachment to the land (and therefore to tradition) is solidified, the frigid weather and dark days clearly have a significant impact on her psychospiritual state.

In the Canadian North, the frozen landscape contains within it a sense of slowness, as time seems to crawl to a near stop. The land's slow pace is not only reflected in Isuma and Tagaq's creative works, but woven into the very fabric of their production, demonstrating how these texts are not made by humans alone, but are rather profoundly shaped by their more-than-human environments. In describing the temporalities of the Arctic landscape, Preston employs the concept of "ice times" or *cryotemporalities*, which are "assemblages of climate feeling and measurement (of past, present, and future)" that include ecological shifts and crises such as global warming (Preston 2020, 145). These cryotemporalities for Preston are characterized by their non-linearity and unpredictability, and though influenced by human activity, can never fully be contained by it. "Born of reckoning with melting and sinking worlds," Preston writes, "ice times teach through situated knowledges and epistemologies as they transform global futures" (145). This Arctic-time can be seen especially in the audiobook version of *Split Tooth*, as Tagaq often narrates her work at a very slow pace, drawing out each sentence and carefully enunciating each word, often leaving long pauses between phrases. Like the rhythmic freezing and thawing of the Arctic landscape, her narration rhythmically flows between slower and quicker paces, particularly in her reading of passages describing the environment.

In a similar fashion, *Journals* incorporates many long takes that slowly pan across the northern landscape and the people within it as they walk through the wind and snow. These long, drawn out scenes of characters slowly trudging through the snow, making their way towards and away from the camera, as well as the many long takes involving characters talking to one another in Inuktitut or engaging in various traditional practices and skills are what many Western viewers deem the "boring parts" of Isuma's films (Raheja 2007). Yet while maybe "boring" to some, Michelle Raheja (2007) contends that these are especially significant aspects of the film, as they give rise to an Inuit epistemology rooted in this slowing of time. Raheja goes on to posit that through this slow pace, Isuma "take the non-Inuit audience hostage," forcing them to take on an Inuit perspective wherein they must be more aware of the surrounding environment (Raheja 2007, 1178). Moreover, Raheja writes that "[t]he slowness of the sequencing [in Isuma's films] matches the patience one must have to hunt on the ice, wait for hours at a sea hole, traverse long distances on foot or in a dogsled, or battle more than five hundred years of colonialism" (2007, 1178).

The numerous long, drawn out takes in *Journals*, as well as its minimalistic style mean that the film could be classified as an example of "slow cinema"—a cinematic style that contrasts with the fast-pace of most popular contemporary films (Tiago 2016b). In addition to the long takes, Isuma also use slow-motion shots throughout *Journals* to decelerate the film's temporal flow even further. Notably, this use of slow-motion first appears when Avva is explaining to Rasmussen how he developed his shamanic powers, and about why the Inuit follow

certain taboos. As Avva sits with Rasmussen in his igloo, telling him about his spirit helpers (*tuurngait*)—powerful entities of the land, sea or sky that can take a variety of human and nonhuman forms to assist shamans—the scene cuts to a slow-motion shot of Inuit community members preparing a dog sled. As Avva continues speaking to Rasmussen, the scene switches back to the two of them speaking, then shifts to a long, drawn out shot of three figures walking towards the camera, their feet crunching in the snow as the wind howls. As Avva begins to describe the reasoning behind his culture’s taboos, the scene cuts to another slow-motion shot of various members of his community outside, talking, laughing, and playing. Avva’s voice overlays this moment, as he explains:

You too cannot answer why life is the way it is. All our customs come from life and turn towards life. We can’t explain anything, but you can see for yourself. We know a taboo was broken when we suffer from bad weather, or from the Great Woman who rules over all the sea mammals [...] We follow our ancestors’ rules because they work. They protect us so we can live without worry, even if our customs are different from yours.

As he speaks, the shot focuses on certain characters, including Apak, holding up her thick caribou-skin hood and shifting her weight from one foot to another, the movement of her body slowed considerably. The camera then focuses on a group of children and adults playing a slowed game of jump-rope, as Avva continues: “Our greatest danger, is that the animals we kill for food and clothes have souls like ours. We have to satisfy them so they won’t take revenge against us for using their bodies.”

Here, the cryotemporalities of the Arctic assert themselves onto the film, as place-based knowledges and traditions are connected to its temporal flow. The use of slow-motion and this and other subsequent scenes can be understood as the icy land and its other-than-human inhabitants momentarily taking control of the film’s pace, forcing viewers to acknowledge their rhythms. As Avva discusses the importance of maintaining respect for and reciprocity with the land, including the animals, ancestors, and other spirits that inhabit it, this more-than-human agency refuses to be ignored. Indeed, Tiago de Luca (2016b) notes that slow cinema is one way filmmakers can centre more-than-human agency, and slow-motion can play a part in this. Similarly, the use of slow-motion in the shots of the Inuit community going about their daily lives as Orulu tells Rasmussen about the experiences of her youth (in a scene described earlier in this article) further establishes a deep connection between the slow temporal rhythm of the land and memory. As Watts (2013) notes, for many Indigenous peoples, memory is not only communal, but deeply embodied and embedded in place (see also Kilbourn 2020).

In the final scene of *Journals*, after the first segment of the film’s credits, we see a widescreen shot of the Arctic landscape, with a group of people far off in the distance, riding a dogsled through the snow. The camera begins to slowly move in, getting incrementally closer to them, only to start zooming back out before we are able to get any indication of who they might be. As the shot zooms out, it does so in slow-motion, gradually moving further away from the subjects until they

are just specks in the distance. This use of slow-motion as the camera starts to zoom out can again be read as ice-times taking control of the shot, the film giving itself over to the temporal agency of the arctic land. As Luca (2016a) posits, the use of long shots in slow cinema can be used as a means of decentering human agency. This refusal to adhere to the anthropocentrism of most cinema is precisely what this scene does, pulling viewers away from the people shown on-screen before any kind of identity can be attributed to them. By showing humans alongside their sled dogs, moving towards a community in the distance surrounded by the vast whiteness of the landscape, the composition of the shot emphasizes an Inuit worldview where there is no hierarchy between humans and other-than-humans, as the boundaries between them are always porous and fluid.

Notably, the seasonal time and ice-times explored throughout both *Journals* and *Split Tooth* can be starkly contrasted with what may be called the “Great Acceleration” of the Anthropocene—our current geological epoch in which the earth has been radically and permanently altered by human actions. The Anthropocene is inherently connected to the temporal linearity of modern progress, leaving a trail of death and destruction in its wake as “[d]eep histories tumble in unruly graves that are bulldozed into gardens of Progress” (Gan, Tsing, Seanson, Bubandt 2017, G6). As Anna Tsing writes, “[p]rogress is a forward march, drawing other kinds of time into its rhythms. Without that driving beat, we might notice other temporal patterns” (Tsing 2015, 21). In order to recognize these diverse temporal rhythms “in the shadow of the Anthropocene’s ‘anthropo-’,” Tsing contends that “we must reorient our attention,” and participate in an “art of noticing” the infinite multispecies assemblages and multiple temporalities that, while sometimes including the human, also extend far beyond its typical boundaries” (22). Like posthumanist approaches to time that emphasize these multiple temporalities, texts like *Journals* and *Split Tooth* also encourage audiences to slow down and notice temporal rhythms that exist beyond (and existed well before) the anxious pace of capitalist modernity. Indeed, the multiple temporalities and acts of noticing in Isuma and Tagaq’s work are themselves political acts of resistance, as they reject the goal-directed behaviours enforced by ideologies of industrial and technological advancement. Processes of decolonization not only involve the liberation and recognition of Indigenous bodies and knowledges, but also of their lands and their spirits—all of which are inextricably connected through grounded normativity. As such, in their centering of more-than-human temporal rhythms such as the Arctic’s cryotemporalities, *Journals* and *Split Tooth* reject the universality of anthropocentric and Eurocentric progressive notions of time, in so doing asserting an Inuit spatio-temporal sovereignty crucial for cultural survival and resurgence.

## Conclusions

As time-diffraction stories, Isuma’s *Journals* and Tanya Tagaq’s *Split Tooth* highlight the embodied and embedded nature of Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit*, involving what Karen Barad refers to as “re-membering” through the “bodily act of returning” (2017b, 84). Here, a material and spiritual engagement with the past

is a crucial step in the healing of colonial trauma. Likewise, Mohawk and Anishinaabe scholar Vanessa Watts posits that Indigenous peoples have a certain responsibility to remember traditional knowledges rooted in bodies and ancestral lands in order to counter the effects of “colonial amnesia” that have caused some members of Native communities to forget the Old Ways of listening to and speaking with the land. “This is not a question of “going backwards,” she writes, “for this implies there is a static place to return to” (Watts 2013, 32). But as time has never been linear to begin with, re-membling for Indigenous communities is not about going back to a past frozen in history, “but rather a material reconfiguration of spacetime-mattering in ways that attempt to do justice for the devastation wrought and to produce new openings, new possible histories” so that “time-beings may find a way to endure” (Barad 2017b, 76). This process of tracing and re-enacting colonial pasts within time-diffraction stories is often uncomfortable, even painful, as collective traumas are experienced deep within the body. This pain can be seen in Avva’s tearful goodbye to his spirit helpers, and especially in *Split Tooth*’s narrator’s attempt to take her own life.

Yet the suffering endured by these characters is not for nothing, as the re-tracing of these traumatic histories is not simply a return to the past, but also an opportunity for the past to be re-written within the context of the present and for the future. In *Split Tooth*, the narrator ultimately survives her suicide attempt, noting: “I woke up already hurting, and have been hurting ever since” (2018, 187). As a shaman tasked with a responsibility for the wellbeing of the community, she takes on the suffering of her people and their lands in order to release them from the cycles of abuse perpetuated by colonialism. Indeed, as much as *Journals* is about endings, it also encompasses its own form of continuity. At the end of the film, Avva is forced to choose between starving, or consuming meat forbidden to shamans, an act that is thought to cost them of their powers. Knowing that he must take part in a Christian conversion ceremony in order to survive, the end of the film depicts Avva saying goodbye to his spirit helpers, whose heart-breaking sobs follow them as they walk off into the distance. It is important to note, however, that while Avva moves off-screen before the credits start to run, his three spirit helpers never disappear completely. They are still there at the end of the film, perhaps waiting to be found by a new generation of Inuit. Despite the tremendous pain and suffering the characters in *Journals* and *Split Tooth* face as a result of temporal violence, the core narrative these texts portray is not one of victimization, but rather, of *survival* (Vizenor 2009), as their creators speak out from the colonial void, laying claim to the sovereignty and self-representation they have long been denied.

Throughout this article, I have attempted to highlight various similarities between Inuit ontological-epistemological frameworks and critical posthumanism (and the related theory of new materialism). Both understand human subjectivity to be temporally indeterminate, as well as embodied and embedded in the world. Inuit and posthuman identities and selves alike can be seen as relational and multiplicitous, diffractively dispersed throughout space and time. *Journals* and *Split Tooth* demonstrate that time does not simply flow in a unilinear direc-

tion—modern progress and *chronos* are not the only relevant temporal rhythms. Inuit time, like posthumanist understandings of temporality, deconstruct various binaries on which modernity and Enlightenment humanism are founded, such as traditional/modern, human/nonhuman, linear/non-linear, spatial/temporal, presence/absence and material/spiritual—oppositional hierarchies that have long been used for temporal discrimination and settler domination of Indigenous bodies and lands. Moreover, in foregrounding Inuit *Qaujimaqatuqangit*, Isuma and Tagaq’s texts fundamentally challenge the notion that time is human-centric, revealing a multiplicity of temporal flows that extend beyond human frameworks to include the rhythms of the earth, as well as those of the ancestors and other spirits. Time is shown in this sense to be fundamentally *posthuman*—post-dualistic and post-anthropocentric in its infinite configurations.

While Indigenous and non-Indigenous thinkers contend that posthumanism and new materialism could be powerful tools for countering Eurocentrism (Anderson 2020; Rosiek, Snyder & Pratt 2020; Sundberg 2014; Todd 2016), and could potentially play an important role in bridging the gap between Indigenous knowledges and the Western academy (Rigby 2014), in order to realize this potential such scholarship must prioritize Indigenous ways of being and knowing—including the spiritual dimensions central to their cosmologies. Indeed, if the goals of this theoretical field include taking into account those who have previously been left out of definitions of the “human” as Francesca Ferrando (2019) suggests, those working under the umbrella of posthumanism must not only recognize the historical erasures of marginalized peoples, but must also work with and through these erasures and their entanglements, giving voice to those who continue to be silenced by colonial systems. While scholars such as Simone Bignall, Steve Hemming and Daryle Rigney (Ngarrindjeri) note that a greater appreciation of Indigenous knowledges in the Western academy (and society in general) can lead to productive alliances, they stress that “alliance does not require assimilation—and indeed, properly resists it” (2016, 474).

Reflecting on how posthumanism can contribute further to Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination, Julia Sundberg contends that embodied movement may be especially key to decolonized knowledge-making. She writes that “[a]s we humans move, work, play, and narrate with a multiplicity of beings in place, we enact historically contingent and radically distinct worlds/ontologies” (Sundberg 2014, 39). In learning to “walk with” others, Sundberg notes, we can engage in a form of “participatory reciprocity” and contribute to the development of a “multiepistemic literacy” crucial to the political and social goals of posthumanism. Isuma’s *Journals* in particular provides many long, drawn out takes of people walking through the Arctic landscape, their movements and engagements with their material environments embodying a specific Inuit ontology. The film thus provides ample opportunities for non-Inuit viewers to participate in practices of “walking with” these Inuit characters—opportunities to learn from them, developing new forms of knowledge through an openness and willingness to engage with difference differently.

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