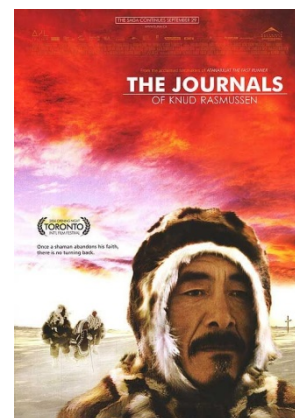
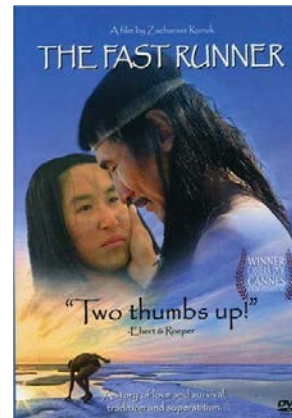


Analyzing Representations of National Identity and Alterity in Fiction and Film

Episode 2: Filmic Representations of Inuit Identity: The Fast Runner Trilogy

Dr. Stephan-Alexander Ditze
Gastreferent Universität Bremen



Overview of the learning unit

Episode 1:

A Structuralist Approach to Literary Imagology

Episode 2:

Filmic Representations of Inuit Identity: *The Fast Runner Trilogy*

Episode 3:

Interview with the lecturer

Learning target of the episode

You will be able to analyze and describe...

Learning target 1:

...literary and filmic representations of national and cultural identity and alterity by applying a structuralist model.

Learning target 2:

...filmic manifestations of Western hetero-images of the Inuit.

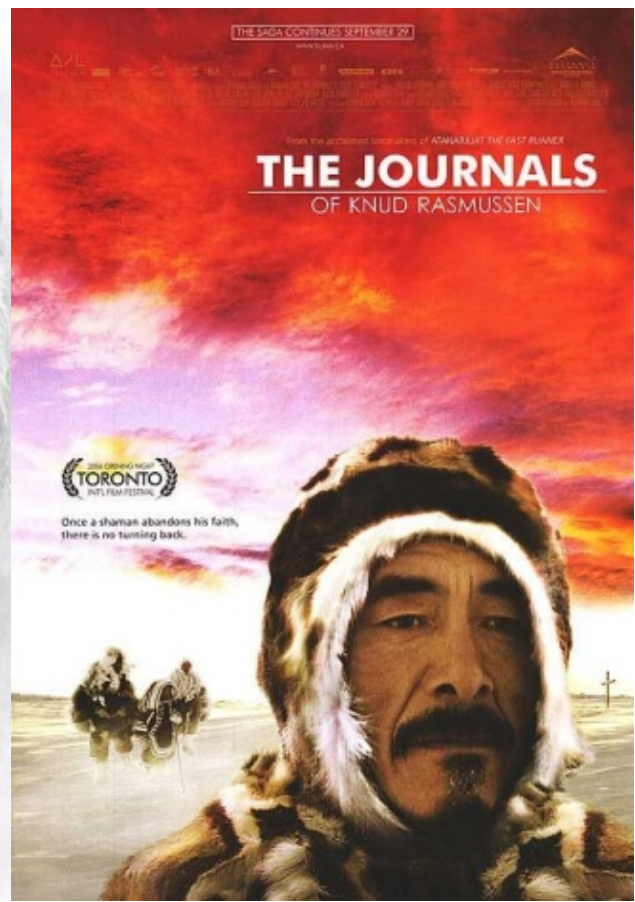
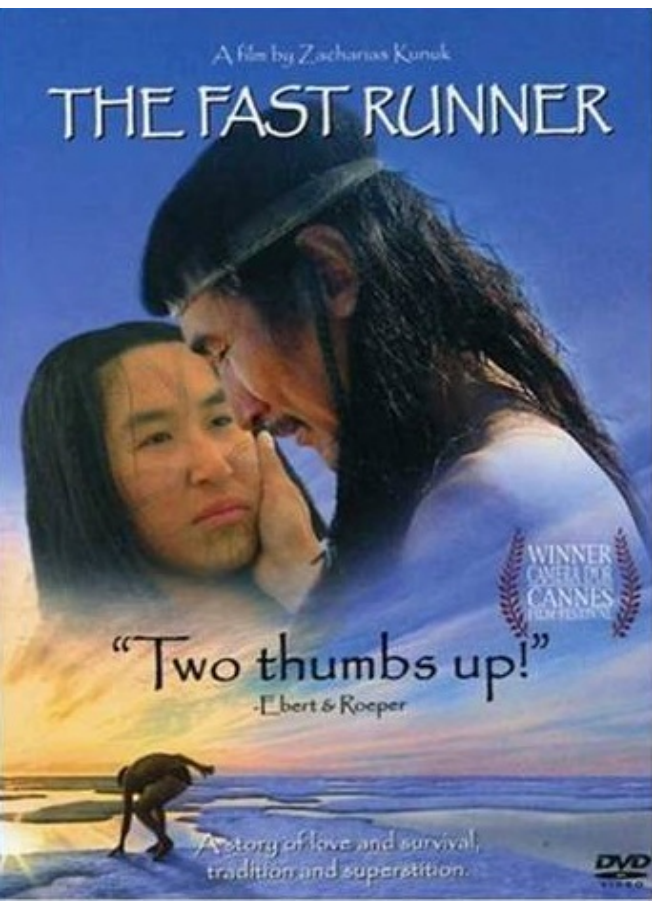
Learning target 3:

...auto-images of pre-contact Inuit identity.

Learning target 4:

...Inuit hetero-images of Western culture.

Films



Contents

1. Learning about foreign cultures in the EFL classroom
2. The Making of *The Fast Runner Trilogy*
3. Imagology: registering literary and filmic representations of (cultural) identity and alterity
4. “Rousseauing” the Inuit: Robert J. Flaherty’s hetero-image of the Inuit as noble savages in *Nanook of the North* (1922)
5. Re-building Inuit identity: pre-contact Inuit culture in the *Atanarjuat, the Fast Runner*
6. Inuit hetero-images of Western culture: *Before Tomorrow* and *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen*

1. Learning about foreign cultures the EFL classroom

- Cultural Studies' approach to dealing with films in a(n) (E)FL learning environment
- Texts (including fiction and film) are...
 - carriers of cultural meaning and
 - systems of generating cultural meaning (cf. Nünning/Surkamp 2006: 36)
 - not necessarily one-to-one reflections of cultural reality
 - but representations of cultural identity
- Aim: enhancing cultural literacy via film literacy by...
 - training students to read films as textual representations of cultural identity
 - promoting cultural self-awareness via comparative film analysis
 - empowering learners to explore the underlying assumptions that guide their culture-specific modes of perceiving other cultures

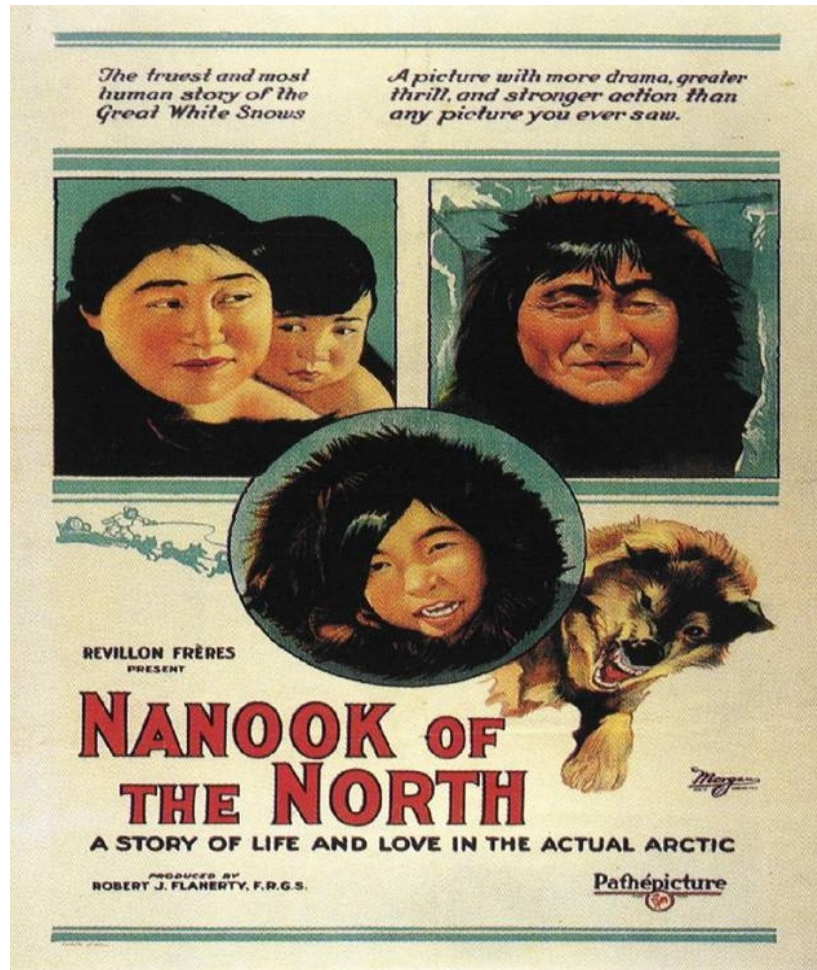
2. The Making of *The Fast Runner Trilogy*

- Parts/Sequels
 - *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner* (2001)
 - *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen* (2006)
 - *Before Tomorrow* (2008)
- Re-turning Inuit oral tradition into “their intellectual property” (Knopf 2008: 319) by...
 - an Inuit production company (Igloolik Isuma Productions)
 - a community-based approach to filmmaking
 - an authentic location (Nunavut)
 - hiring an (almost) all-Inuit cast
 - filming in Inuktitut (with subtitles)

3. Imagology: registering literary and filmic representations of (cultural) identity and alterity

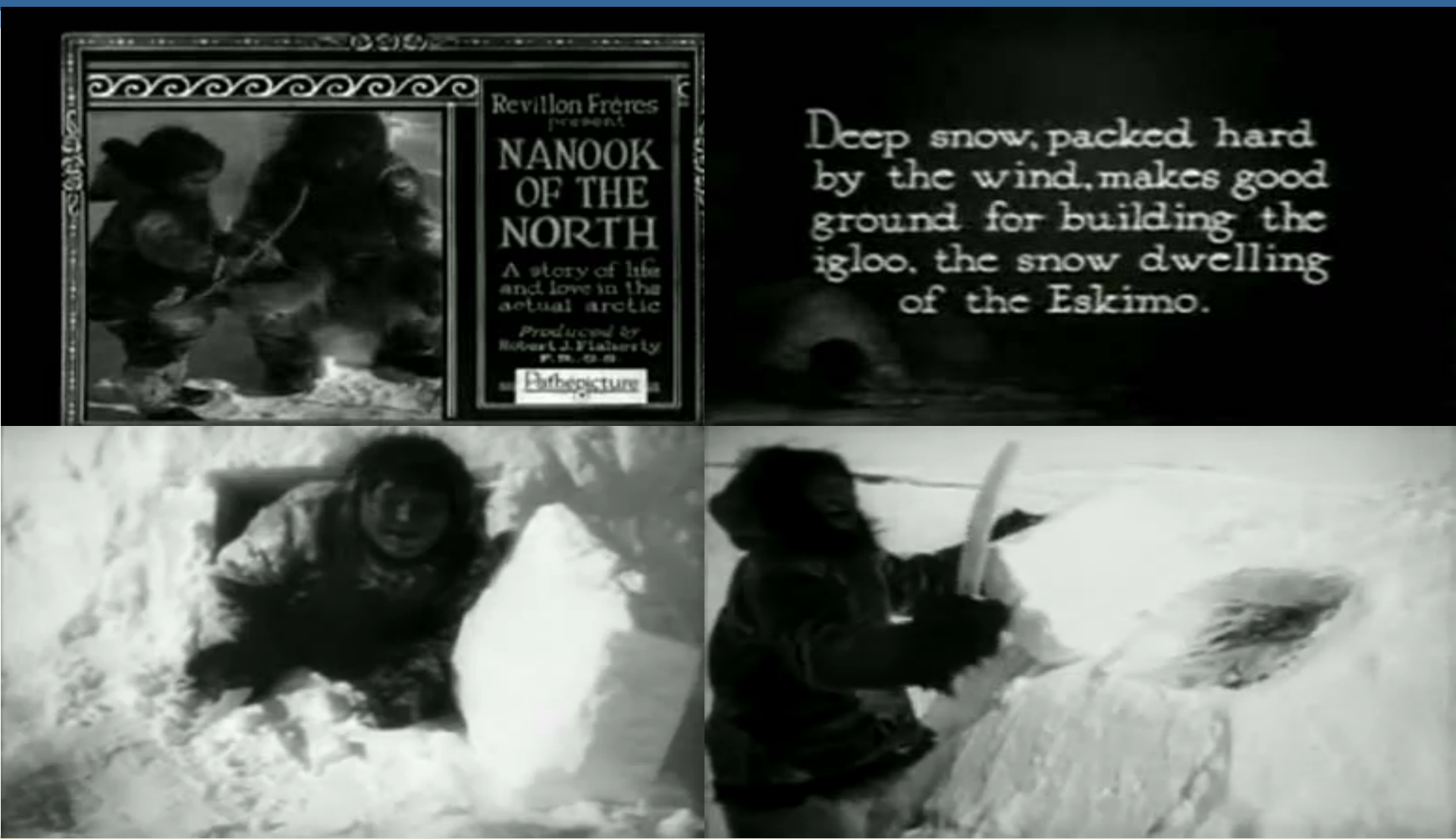
- Cultural Studies' approach to films
- Pluri-dimensional notion of culture held by cultural semiotics (Posner 1991)
 - Material culture (artifacts)
 - Social culture (institutions)
 - Mental culture (mentefacts)
- Notions of identity and alterity held by literary imagology
 - Auto-image
 - Hetero-image
 - Auto-stereotype
 - Hetero-stereotype

4. “Rousseauing” the Inuit:



Robert J. Flaherty's
hetero-image of the
Inuit as noble
savages in
*Nanook of the
North* (1922)

Hunting, fishing, building igloos: material culture in *Nanook of the North*

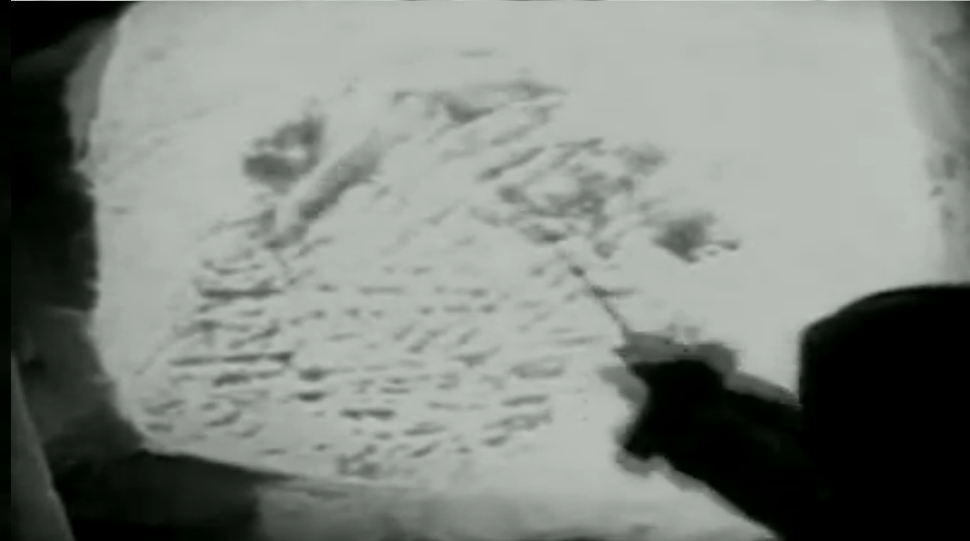


One income, two wives, a kid and a family dog: social culture in *Nanook of the North*

Rubbing noses—
the Eskimo's kiss.



From the inside Nyla
cleans her brand-new
ice window.



“Allee...Nyla...Cunayou...and Comock”: Nanook’s nuclear, yet polygamous family



“...the most cheerful people in all the world – the fearless, lovable, happy-go-lucky Eskimo”: mental culture in *Nanook of the North*

The sterility of the soil and the rigor of the climate no other race could survive; yet here, utterly dependent upon animal life, which is their sole source of food, live the most cheerful people in all the world – the fearless, lovable, happy-go-lucky Eskimo.

This picture concerns the life of one Nanook (The Bear), his family and little band of followers, 'Itivimuits' of Hopewell Sound, Northern Ungava, through whose kindness, faithfulness and patience this film was made.

Nanook's hunt for the year, apart from fox, seal and walrus, numbered seven great polar bears, which in hand to hand encounters he killed with nothing more formidable than his harpoon.

Synopsis: Inuit cultural alterity in *Nanook of the North*

- Inuit material culture
 - exotically impressive, yet uniform
 - archaic compared to Western civilization
- Inuit social culture
 - idealized and cast in the mold of the Western-style nuclear family
 - exception: polygamy
 - prelapsarian harmony
- Inuit mental culture
 - noble savages representing heroic values
 - no transcendental dimension

5. Re-building Inuit identity: pre-contact Inuit culture in *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner*



“Since your clothes are different...”



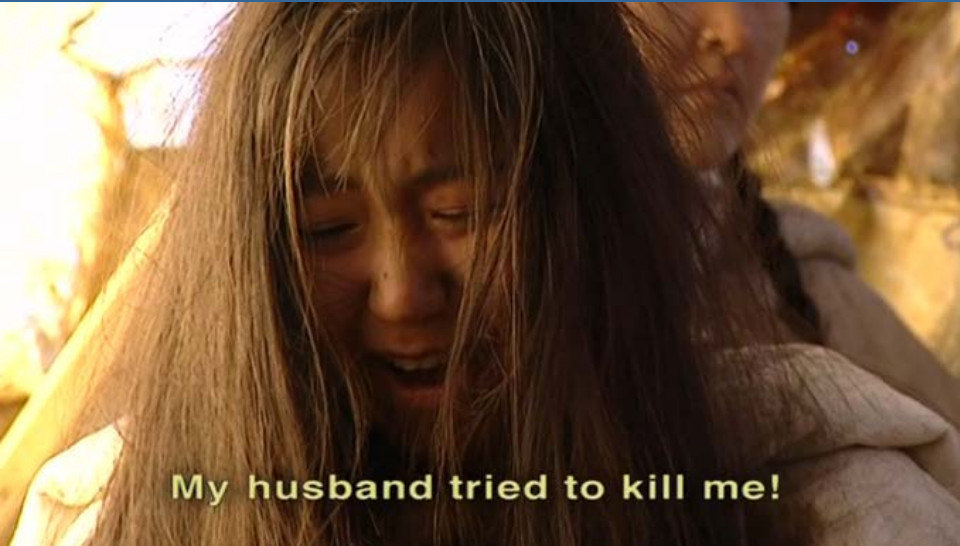
Love rectangle: Atanarjuat's courtship, Oki's jealousy, granny's masterminding, Atuat's choice



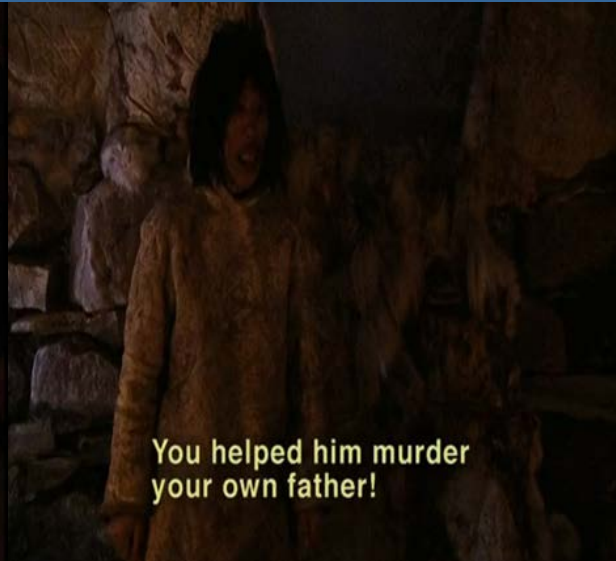
Economically functionalized polygamy



Puja's deception



Bi-generational patricide: Sauri's murder of Kumaglak and Oki's murder of Sauri



Tulimaq's harassment



Amanqjuaq's assassination, Atanarjuat's run and Atuat's rape



Ostracism of Oki's gang



Mistreating others...

...committing murders...

...telling lies...

This has to stop now!

You will have to leave us now...

...and never come back!

Helping spirits, evil spells, exorcism, and sex with *ijirait*: manifestations of shamanism in pre-contact Inuit mental culture



Synopsis: Inuit pre-contact cultural identity in *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner*

- Deconstruction of reductionist Rousseauic image of the noble savage portrayed by early Western ethnography
- Multi-faceted culture based on the entire scope of complexities typical of the *conditio humana*
- Inuit material culture
 - sophisticated
 - versatile
- Inuit social culture
 - economically rationalized polygamy
 - physical and psychological violence
 - murder
 - harassment
 - jealousy
 - deception
 - rape
 - ostracism

Synopsis: Inuit pre-contact cultural identity in *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner*

- Inuit mental culture
 - coexistence of good and evil
 - permeable realities: human and spiritual spheres
 - central role of shamanism
- The ‘discourse’ of cultural emancipation
 - re-approximation of oral tradition through film
 - non-mainstream staging conventions
 - long stretches of monologue and dialogue
 - sparse use of soundtrack
 - identical representation of human and transcendental spheres

Implications for EFL Practice

- Film literacy: studying mainstream/mass culture films via studying non-mainstream films
- Cultural literacy
 - genuine inside view into Inuit cultural identity
 - re-assessment of hetero-stereotypes shaped by Western ethnography
 - perturbation of empiricist concepts of reality
 - alternative historiography of post-contact times
 - *Before Tomorrow*
 - *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen*

6. Inuit hetero-images of Western culture:

Before Tomorrow

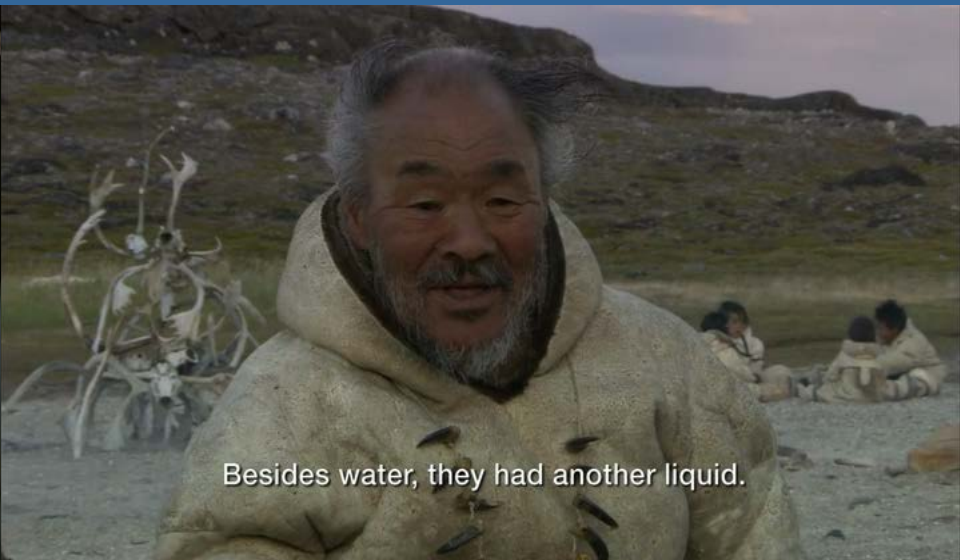
and

The Journals of Knud Rasmussen

Knives, needles and liquor: Inuit encounters with Western material culture



They even had needles of the same material.



Besides water, they had another liquid.



After drinking they really wanted
to be with our women.



We tried to drink it
but it tasted awful!

Shake hands and prostitution: hetero-images of Western social culture



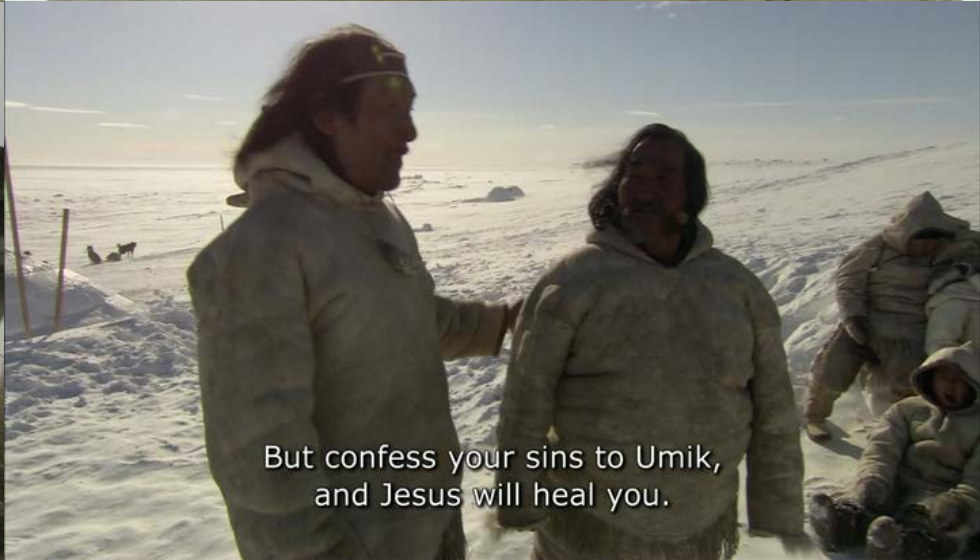
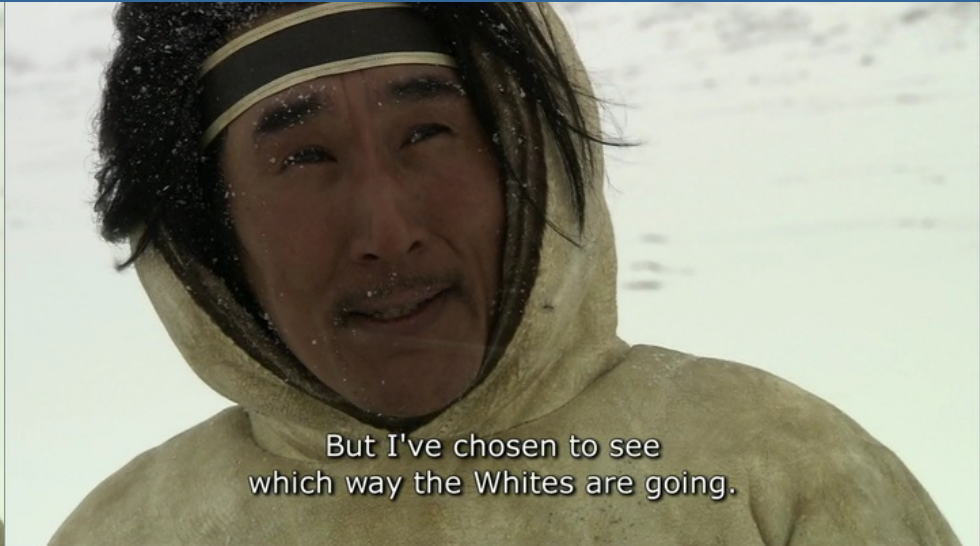
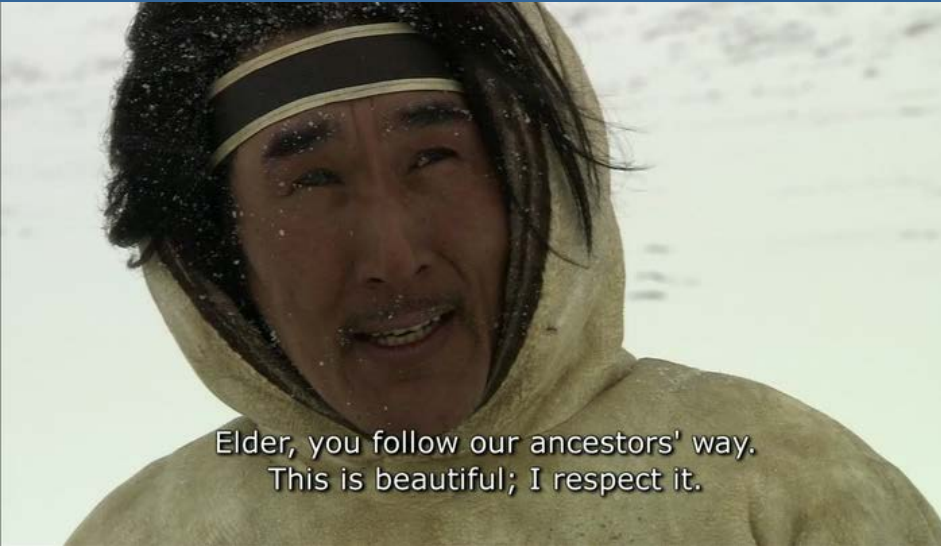
The collateral damage of Western cultural encounters



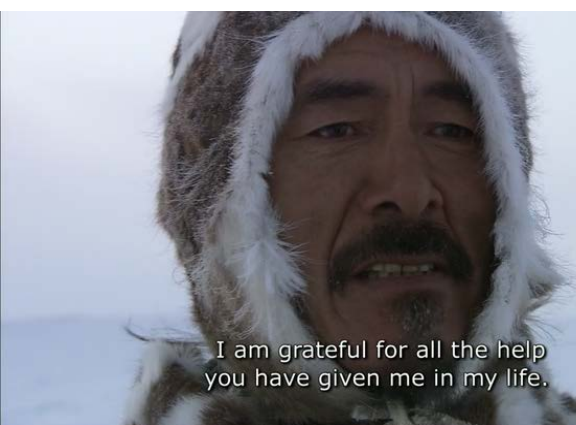
“We follow our ancestors’ rules because they work” versus “Here we’re all home with Jesus”: the clash of mental cultures



“Do not drum and sing Satan’s songs that tempt Inuit to burn in Hell forever.”



The decline of shamanism



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