LITERARY GEOGRAPHIES

Nice Ice: An Eco-postmodern Exploration of Tanya Tagaq's *Split Tooth*

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Abstract:
In this paper, I approach Tanya Tagaq's Arctic novel *Split Tooth* (2018) from the perspective of postmodern ecocriticism. I analyze the form and content of the novel in order to explore the repercussions that postmodernism and ecocriticism have exerted on it. While highlighting some of the hierarchal dualisms in the novel, I examine the techniques that the novelist employs to critique and delegitimize the dominant orders of hierarchy. I also investigate the impacts of globalization and global warming on the Arctic as represented in *Split Tooth* and study how the novel provides readers with an opportunity to ponder on the constantly shifting and mutating ecosystems of the circumpolar geospheres.

Keywords: Tanya Tagaq; *Split Tooth*; Arctic; postmodern ecocriticism; global warming; climate change; interconnectedness; Inuit.

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Introduction

Arctic ecosystems are undergoing environmental alterations and potentially irreparable damages that will reverberate throughout the world. The climatological changes, which also pose a threat to biodiversity, have raised serious concerns among environmentalists, conservationists, and cultural activists about the future of the Arctic. Hence, during the last two decades, several Arctic-oriented documentaries, art works, fiction books, and notes have represented the Arctic in ways that speak to these climatological uncertainties

and geopolitical instabilities that they entail. These cultural works provide an overview of the consequences of climate change and emblematize efforts to transform our mentalities before the catastrophic Arctic transformation occurs. In parallel, Indigenous authors, filmmakers, and artists have offered inside mediations of the circumpolar biospheres and remediated some of their own cultures, hi|stories, and narratives in their cultural products.

As a Canadian Inuk singer, songwriter, visual artist, and novelist from Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, Canada, Tanya Tagaq (born May 5, 1975) displays environmental responsibility toward the Arctic in her literary and artistic works. Her novel, entitled *Split Tooth* (2018), which has received the Indigenous Voices Awards of Canada, encapsulates the daily life of an Inuit community in Cambridge Bay and offers a first-hand reportage of the landscape. Narrated 'in a powerful first-person narrative focalized by a young girl in a northern community' (Beard 2019: 315), the minimalist novel alternates between the protagonist's childhood scenes and her troubled adolescence. It portrays the growth of the main unnamed character[1] from the time she is a fifth grader in 1975 to the time that she loses her twins, and in between, it depicts her studies in the residential school, her unsuccessful suicide attempt, her employment in the Northern Store, and her failed marriage. *Split Tooth* features a multigenre mosaic built out of the juxtaposition of fiction and memoir, poetry and prose, picture and text, and the inclusion of picture, prose, and poem within the novel turns the narrative into a hybrid pictorial prose-poetry.

In this article, I approach Tagaq's *Split Tooth* from the perspective of postmodern ecocriticism. While highlighting some of the hierarchal dualisms as represented in the novel, I examine the techniques that the novelist employs to critique and delegitimize the dominant orders of hierarchy. In particular, I show how the novelist erects and erases boundaries between human and nonhuman and makes her text a space of identification and alliance between human and other-than-human. To this end, a postmodern ecocritical approach is employed to question hierarchical systems such as the subordinate positions of the nonhuman as the "other" and to offer multiperspectival approaches that probe into the problematic relationships between the human and the nonhuman. I also investigate the impacts of globalization and global warming on the Arctic as represented in *Split Tooth* and study how the novel provides readers with an opportunity to ponder on the constantly shifting and mutating ecosystems of the circumpolar biospheres, while exposing human centeredness and sovereignty to decide over it. As I discuss, Tagaq's text shares Indigenous peoples' narratives with readers, and it is inside such actual encounters with the Arctic inhabitants that some of its readers' insights toward represented essentialist knowledge of the Arctic are challenged.

Polar Binaries Interconnected

As Serpil Oppermann notes, 'One of the major characteristics of ecocentric postmodern thought is the deep questioning of all hierarchical systems which basically privilege the concept of domination' (2006: 116). This element of postmodern ecocritical discourse is perceived in *Split Tooth*, wherein the novelist converges and critiques a number of dominant orders of hierarchy such as high and low discourses, wilderness and civilization, primitivism and urbanity, tradition and modernity, human and nonhuman. For instance, in

treating the role of human agency, Tagaq subverts the human and nonhuman dualism. To dissolve the hierarchical oppositions between human and natural world, she emphasizes the ties that exist between them and seeks for unity with nonhuman, so much that she thinks of a polar bear as a lover. As she writes,

> One bear grows large and swims beside me […]. He has given me his corporality. […] I mount his back and ride him. My thighs squeeze him and pulse with a tingling light. We are *lovers*. We are *married*. […] My skin melts where there is contact with *my lover*. […] *He is I, his skin is my skin*. Our flesh grows together. His face is my pussy […]. My legs sprout white fur that spreads all over me. I can feel every hair form inside of me and poke through tough bearskin. My whole body absorbs him and *we become a new being*. (Tagaq 2018: 72, emphases added)

Her marriage to the polar bear stands for her unity with other species and deconstructs any orders of hierarchy between her and the bear. Hence, as Daniel Heath Justice suggests, the ecological interconnection of the protagonist 'with the other-than-human-world, […] simultaneously remind[s] us that we matter to the world, but that we're not the centre of that world' (Justice 2018: 77). He goes on: 'For Indigenous writers who honour older notions of other-than-human-kinship, however, the boundaries between the human and the other-than-human are more permeable, the relationship more complicated, often fraught, and always less certain of human superiority' (91). Accordingly, the protagonist interacts with the bear as an equal partner and not as a wild beast. With her inclination to have a relationship with a bear, the main character crosses the boundaries between herself and an animal and shows that she prefers wholeness to dualism, so much that they become one. In this light, the writer offers a re-evaluation of the ways humans would engage with nonhumans, and their eco-sexual engagement, per se, introduces another platform of kinship and affinity with animals.

In a similar vein, the protagonist and a fox ally in the novel. As she narrates, 'It was a fox! As he came closer I realized that he was huge, man sized. My fear was overridden by his maleness, by his grace. I could see every hair on him, white and perfect. The wind blew around him and his black eyes spoke to me, "Let me in." […] My flesh was softened, my will blinded' (Tagaq 2018: 56). Later, she addresses the fox as such: 'I see you, Fox. […] You are penetrating my body and changing my flesh with your eyes. Beckoning. You want me to Become with you' (80). Like the polar bear, the fox is described as a handsome, robust masculine figure walking like a man on his two legs in an illustration (58) and is allowed to penetrate her body and become one with her. Their alliance demonstrates that their bodies are in the mode of fluid process. Melissa Nelson describes such encounters as 'messy, visceral, eco-erotic boundary-crossing entanglement of difference that can engender empathy and kinship and a lived environmental ethic' (2017: 234). These scenes in the novel create queer moments for readers, while undermining ideological boundaries between humans and animals. Hence, with her eco-erotic encounters with the polar bear and the fox, the narrator subverts the acceptable set of social and cultural norms and immutability of boundaries regarding the human-animal positions. Through dehierarchizing defined dualisms and categories between human and nonhuman, the

protagonist establishes an ecological community with the nonhuman inhabitants of the landscape around herself. In other words, Tagaq's alliance with animals deconstructs the established hierarchies between species – based on the grand narrative of human superiority, envisioning human as privileged and superordinate – and reconstructs a connection between nonhuman and human.

By the same token, in her short movie *Tungijug* (2009) and album *Animism* (2014), Tagaq also manifests eco-connections between humans and animals and 'formulate[s] a world comprised of broad ecological relationships rather than *de facto* categories' (Boerchers 2019: 23). To show her kinship to animals in both *Animism* and *Tungijug*, she first appears as a hybrid human-wolf figure and then fully turns into a wolf, chasing and hunting a reindeer, and after falling into a lake, she metamorphosizes into a seal. As Tagaq notes in an interview, 'sometimes I can take animal behaviours and apply them to humans, and it makes a little more sense psychologically […]. Humanity has made a really huge error in thinking we're above everything' (Ghomeshi 2014). In this light, Tagaq dissolves the borderline between the distinct categories of nature and culture, human and nonhuman, and shows that 'the boundaries between species are flexible and fluid' (Martin 2016: 451). To further demonstrate her affinity with the natural world, she uses mimicry of environment sounds, human voices, and animal sounds mixed with music in *Animism* and *Tungijug*.

In addition to her eco-erotic encounters with animals, the narrator shows her affinity with other parts of the ecosystem and holds an intimate relationship with natural phenomena. As she declares, '[t]he Northern Lights have descended upon me during my spirit journey' (Tagaq 2018: 113). When the Lights enter her body, as she depicts, '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' (113-14). The encounter with the Lights, which shows her kinship with natural world, impregnate her, and later, she gives birth to twins. Keavy Martin believes that 'the narrator's greatest empowerment seems to occur when she is impregnated – violently – by the arqsarniit, the northern lights, while she does not identify this experience as rape' (2020: 160). Instead, this is a moment in which she blurs feelings of pain and pleasure, healing and torture. It is worth noting that almost all sexual encounters of the protagonist with humans as represented in the novel, either by force – such as sexual harassment her teachers do at school – or by choice – as in her unsuccessful marriage – cause distress to her. However, she feels relieved in her relations with the polar bear, fox and northern lights.

Despite her obsession with environmental protection, her deeds sometimes contradict her words. For instance, she describes assisting her father in hunting foxes as follows: 'There are too many foxes this year. […] My father and I go out with the handgun to kill some foxes. […] The foxes run. The foxes die' (Tagaq 2018: 50). To justify her act, she says, 'These foxes will die of starvation; better to put them out of their misery. These foxes will harm schoolchildren; better to put them out of their misery' (50). In this context, it is the narrator and her father who decide when to kill the foxes they diagnose as unfit. This is to say that through the administration of life and determination of death, humans

put themselves in a position to control the population of other species based on their own desire and benefit. Hence, the novel addresses the examination of human centeredness and power over the bodies of animals. Throughout the novel, the narrator frequently oscillates between the worlds of animality and humanity. Once she feels unity with foxes, and once she kills 'overabundant' foxes to govern their population. However, the main character later changes her mind toward foxes and concludes that a fox is beautiful, clean and strong and 'unburdened by all the falsehoods that humans subconsciously subscribe to' (80). Here, she no longer perceives nonhumans as the species of alterity, and human-animal hierarchical structure loses its meaning to her. Tagaq also blames humans for the destruction of nature when she writes, 'These humans will destroy the earth; better to put them out of their misery. Right now we are Earth Eaters' (50). She also adds, 'Humans have damned themselves and it has nothing to do with Satan, it has only to do with greed' (70). Tagaq rebukes those who destroy the very environment to which we are all interconnected and considers human greed as a factor for environmental degradation. This position aligns with postmodern ecocritical views, which advocate a mutual relation between human and nature and contest human superiority and anthropocentrism. Seen in this light, Tagaq fosters a cooperative process, which shifts attentions from the position of authority to the idea of relationality and interconnection between humans and the natural world.[2]

Nice Ice Cracked

As an environmental-oriented text, *Split Tooth* draws upon the impacts of global warming on the Arctic. The writer shows that, based on the ecological interconnectedness, changes in other parts of the world and their ecosystems affect the Arctic, and vice versa. The novelist reiterates her concerns about the climate change in an interview when she says, 'I'm concerned about the state of the planet and […] for humanity with the global prospects of climate change' (Beaulne-Steubing 2016). To highlight the rapid and dramatic impacts of climate change on the Arctic, Tagaq offers an illustration of melting cracked sea ice and polar ice caps in the novel and writes: 'The ocean is eating the ice, licking and chewing on it. Large cracks form in the floe […]. Humans cannot survive in the frigid water, even in spirit form (most times). The ice breaks into small pieces and I am plunged into the water [...]. I succumb' (2018: 72). She also repeats these phrases several times throughout the novel: 'Ice in lung, Ice on chest, Ice in heart, Ice will crack' (52), and to show the importance of preserving ice, she writes, 'Ice prevents decay' (46).

In 'Ice as a Literary Motif,' Susi K. Frank asks, 'Why is ice so important as a literary motif in this context?' Then, she responds that 'Ice kills […] by transforming living matter into ice, but at the same time ice preserves living matter. Therefore, ice could on the one hand be developed as a metaphor of death […] and, on the other hand, it could be enacted as a means of overcoming death' (Frank 2018: 19). Thus, ice and its preservation in the Arctic stands for continuity of life. In this climate, even though '"cold" as a cultural idea has been surrounded with negative connotations,' '[c]old matters,' and '[t]he importance of snow, ice and cold has never been more obvious than now when almost every newspaper contains articles about the effects of global warming and melting glaciers'

(Hansson and Norberg 2009: 7). Hansson and Norberg argue that 'as snow, ice, and cold become more and more desirable, it seems logical to expect that the ideas clustering around these phenomena should become more positive as well' (21). This is to say that ice, which has always had negative connotations and symbolized death or a static state, conserves life and dynamism in the case of the Arctic. This signifies the fluidity of the Arctic and the notions associated to it.

In parallel to presenting the impacts of climate change on the Arctic, Tagaq draws upon some of the main factors affecting climate of the Arctic. For example, she states, 'The sun is setting and the sky is crisscrossed with *airplanes*, each leaving plumes of thick grey sickness' (Tagaq 2018: 52, emphasis added). This shows that airplanes have not left the airspace of the Arctic untouched, either, polluting the air with their carbon footprint. The narrator also shows how technology that has found its way to the Arctic, too, has affected their lives. As she writes, 'There is a small bog on the tundra about three minutes outside of town. The bog is littered with pieces of plywood blown by the fierce Arctic winds from various construction sites. […] Chasing a few pieces of plywood that have been carried off by the High Arctic winds is not a good reason to put down your tools' (21). The use of plywood in building construction both signifies industrial activities in the region and shows how Indigenous peoples are taking distance from traditional ways of building their resorts and settlements. Hence, the pure nature is devoured by industry and modernity, and climate change is accelerated with the capitalist globalization of industry. Based on this, all our decisions and actions – good and bad, political and social, cultural and scientific – ultimately affect even the farthest regions and their inhabitants.

In this climate, Tagaq, who has a feeling of interconnectedness with the Arctic and broadly the earth, blames all of us for the current environmental crisis when she asks: 'We look upon the scarred earth with pity / What have we done to her? / Isn't it she who has given her minerals […] / Give[n] us life? / Perhaps she looks upon us not with the love of a mother' (28). The questions clearly show how we as children have mistreated and exploited our mother Earth, and how as an object under man's sovereignty we have decided over it and its resources as an exploitable object with our centeredness. However, as in the following passage, Tagaq believes that we are the earth, and in fact, we have mistreated ourselves:

> We ARE the land, same molecules, and same atoms.
> The land is our salvation. Save Our Souls.
> The land is our salvation. Breathe. Fuck. Feel. […]
> Ice will crack, blood will flow. Sun in Ice.
> Ice in lung […]
> Ice in lung. (52, bold letters in original)

Like interconnectedness with other species, in this poem the writer establishes an environmental unity with the land, which contains the same molecules and atoms as us. 'This vision,' as Oppermann (2014) observes, 'brings postmodernism into alliance with materialisms and material ecocriticism' (25). As Oppermann discusses, 'the postmodern discussions on the basic units of nature, such as atoms and molecules, as well as nature's

individual units, such as rocks and minerals, conceived as material entities with varying degrees of agency, for example, are implicated in material ecocriticism's reflections on matter's creativity' (21). Like establishing linkages among different components within the ecosystem, Tagaq parodies other literary works in her novel, using their forms, genres, titles, and allusions to recontextualize former forms of representation and reveal her own obsessions with them. Thus, her book is inherently intertextual and interconnects with other texts.[3] For example, the quoted poem is similar in form and content to the first poem of Walt Whitman's *Song of Myself* (1855), which uses and appeals for an urgent action: 'Save Our Souls,' because the land, which is our salvation, is in danger. Through the employment of anaphora, the narrator repeats some statements such as 'the land is our salvation' and 'ice in lung,' and in-between, she warns us again that 'ice will crack' and causes pains, just like a split tooth.

Tagaq's global warming rhetoric opens our eyes to the threats of climate change for the whole planet. According to Daniel J. Philippon (2014: 401), 'contemporary writers have shown that they still have a vital role to play in addressing the challenges of sustainability, including the pressing concern of climate change.'[4] They also 'modify our sense of temporal continuity' (403) and remind us that the continuity of life for humans and other beings might be in question. By the same token, as a contemporary author, Tagaq consciously commits herself to highlight uncertain possibilities caused by the ambitious and destructive desires of humans. For instance, she shares her worries with readers about the disappearance of permafrost, which has fatal consequences for all beings. As she writes: 'Global warming will release the deeper smells and coax stories out of the permafrost. Who knows what memories lie deep in the ice? Who knows what curses? Earth's whispers released back into the atmosphere can only wreak havoc' (Tagaq 2018: 13). Renee Hulan believes that 'with climate change, the dominant image of the Arctic as a land of permanent ice and snow is being replaced by new images of melting, endangered Arctic. As it melts, the Arctic is increasingly seen as a victim of the excess of wasteful, industrial modern life' (2017: 87). Thus, the preservation of permafrost stands for the survival of the Arctic.

The permafrost also stands for old archives of Inuit ancestry, which carry numerous memories and hi/stories of all those who had come before. Tagaq, who feels interconnected with her ancestors, praises 'the majesty of [her] ancestors, and give[s] thanks to the opportunity to witness them' (46). Later, she adds, 'We are reverberations of our Ancestors and songs of our present selves. […] We always live alongside the dead. […] We are not individuals but a great accumulation of all that lived before. They are with us. They lift us. We will lift them later' (93). Despite this, she sometimes challenges her ancestors and defies some of their customs and conventions such as arranged marriage. Along with her predecessors, she sees her future generations in the Northern Lights: 'I see Ancestors and future children; the young ones are just developing and preparing their spirits for the next rotation of Earth Journey' (46). To save the mother Earth and its future children, Tagaq then invites all to accept the invitation of the earth: 'The Earth calls us back into her / The Earth welcomes us into / her bosom' (61). This is to invite human beings to reset their minds and cultures toward the earth and its rich biodiversity. It is worth noting that throughout the novel the narrator eschews both desperate pessimism and mindless optimism about the Arctic and its future, and she presents an ambivalent

sense of hope and fear, and accordingly, she ends the novel with the phrase: 'start again' (134).

Locavorism Credibility Undermined

In *Split Tooth*, Tagaq draws upon tourism as another factor, which catalyzes climate change in the Arctic. As 'a form of territorial conquest,' (Borm 2017: 167), the tourism industry is associated with people travelling to the Arctic for leisure or business purposes, and it requires infrastructure such as the hotel industry, the transport industry, and related services to both attract tourists and keep them happy. The construction of roads, railways, and airports, which facilitates the transportation of tourists, not only paves the way for the exploitation of the natural resources of the region but also catalyzes its environmental degradation. Hence, known as a tourist attraction and destination, either for recreation, discovery, or investment, the Arctic experiences further destruction. In this way, tourism, which weighs heavily on the Arctic, increases the degradation rate of the region's nature. Moreover, as shown in the novel, the interconnection between natives and visitors distorts the closed patterns of native communities and affects their lifestyles, ideologies, and traditions.

To further show the interconnected web of relations between the Arctic and other parts of the world, the author touches upon globalization with its increasing interdependence of world economies and cultures. For instance, as the story reads: 'The Resolute Bay Co-op always had a particular smell. […] The aisles seemed so long to our small bodies. After intense negotiation of what to buy, we left with two giant plastic bags of junk food. Cokes, M&M's, salt and vinegar potato chips, the weird pink popcorn with an elephant on the package, Popeye cigarettes, and […] a bottle of Flintstones vitamins' (Tagaq 2018: 24). The description of junk food and globally well-known chain stores appears in some other Arctic novels. Like Tagaq's *Split Tooth*, M. J. McGrath's *White Heat* (2011) and Murray Lee's *Compass* (2022) portray the prevalence of such convenience stores and junk food outlets such as Co-ops, Walmarts, etc. in several northern towns in the Arctic. The presence of such 'transnational exchanges […] reflects the reality that Inuit are as interconnected to global communities and phenomena as any other people' (Boerchers 2019: 41). No doubt, distance from local food production and transportation of products to those local areas increase carbon footprint. Thus, the fast growth of Western food corporations and their integration into the Arctic market puts the local food industry and locavorism under risk. As *White Heat*, *Compass*, and *Split Tooth* show, the facias and front signs of such well-known markets, which create a sense of familiarity and modernity, reveal their integration into local societies even in the Circumpolar North.

It is my contention that Tagaq's accounts of Inuit life in the novel shatter the age-old imaginations of some readers, who know the circumpolar spheres via its mediated representations and still think of the circumpolar geospheres as untrodden deserts. Here, the image of the consumer-driven society in the increasing economic globalization also challenges those who think that the Indigenous peoples still have merely their own food supply. They might also be surprised to read that Indigenous groups purchase junk products of worldwide well-known brands from department stores, simply because they

still think of the Arctic communities as close to nature, leading a primitive life. Tagaq's environmentally concerned novel, which offers a dynamic view of the Circumpolar North, provides readers with alternative visions based on inside insights of the Arctic. The novelist's mininarratives, which are in some cases in contrast with its age-old established metanarratives, coloring the region with primitive simplicity, immobility, and stillness, subverts the authenticity of hegemonic images of the Arctic. With her accounts, Tagaq creates indeterminacy and incredulity toward dominant stereotypes and assumptions of the Arctic and sets the stage for developing readers' awareness of the far North. She shows that the Arctic postulates heterogeneity, and it is a landscape with a kaleidoscopic identity. To this end, her narratives localize knowledge from the perspectives of local Arctic inhabitants and in cases dismantle the essentialist conception of Arctic identity imposed upon it for ages. She 'forground[s] Inuit experiences, stories, strategies, and discourses and advocate[s] for environmental issues through the interconnections inherent to Inuit worldviews' (Boerchers 2019: 3).

The author shows that even the Inuit's cultural production has been affected by globalization. For instance, the protagonist mentions that listening to 'Born to Be Alive,' a song by Patrick Pierre Hernandez who had a worldwide hit with this song in 1979, deeply moves her: 'Sleep has left me because "Born to Be Alive" is blasting in the living room. My feet hit the floor and the carpet feels extra pilly on my soles' (80). The song's reaching to the farthest reaches of the earth 'testifies to transnational presences in the Arctic and their impact on its inhabitants' (Boerchers 2019: 35) and shows that even the Arctic has not been left untouched in the globalized world, and its residents have been culturally interconnected with other parts of the world. As such, the novel questions 'the fallacy of an undisturbed Arctic landscape' and 'undermines the common stereotype of the Arctic' (Hansson and Ryall 2017: 2) as a '"premodern" space, uninhabited by urbanized peoples' (Smith 2001: 3). Her portrayals of the Arctic as a dynamic and constantly changing process and its inhabitants' daily lives contest the dominant pictures, presenting it as a monotonous and uneventful environment. Rather, the vast and changing landscapes of the Arctic and the diversity of its geographies, cultures and languages offer us collective accounts of the circumpolar geospheres and allow us to approach the Arctic from plural perspectives. *Split Tooth* indicates ways of becoming and fosters a cooperative learning process, which shifts attentions from the position of authority to the idea of relationality. Based on this, the analyses of the novel via postmodern ecocriticism are polysemic and multivocal, showing that there is not one single Arctic or 'Arctic of being' but plurality of Arctics or '*Arctics of becoming*.' Accordingly, the representations of the Arctic are not fixed and static but fluid and constantly in flux.

Despite the readers' suppositions, the region is also represented in the novel as an urban civilized environment, confronted by the capitalist culture. The urbanity exposes itself when the narrator speaks about their streets and streetlights as well as their schools and modern educational systems even in the 1970s. In this light, the Arctic becomes a site of urbanity and modernity. This portrayal of the Arctic calls into question its misrepresentations merely as a 'snow-covered' place, 'an almost naked white landscape,' 'cold, empty, desolate and unpeopled' and 'devoid of life' (Hansson and Ryall 2017: 1). As Justice (2017: 48) notes in *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, the Indigenous 'wonderworks'

'remind us that there are other ways of being in the world than those we've been trained to accept as normal.' As he discusses, 'What Indigenous texts do is make visible what's so often unseen, and suggest a much more complicated perspective on what is too often grossly simplified in popular culture and mainstream media' (Justice 2017: 48). They provide readers with 'powerful, provocative, and often quite deliberately 'unsettling' visions,' which challenge the 'still-dominant stereotypes about Indigenous humanity' (48-9). Thus, what Tagaq writes is a way toward self-definition, emanating from within rather than without and offering transformative and alternative visions of the region from the perspectives of an insider.

To sum up, *Split Tooth* draws upon the current states of the Arctic and its aftermath and raises concerns about human attitudes toward the Arctic. The author shows that, just like capitalism, globalization, and consumerism, climate change has not left the Arctic untouched. Through its apocalyptic framing and proleptic narrative, the novel warns readers of the ecological risks to the Arctic. While representing the many-faceted wonders of the Arctic regions, the literary endeavor negotiates the importance of sustainability on the farthest reaches of the earth. In this climate, human beings have the chance to reset their minds and cultures toward the Arctic and its rich biodiversity. Tagaq demonstrates that in a world burdened with ecological crises, the discussions of human-nature interrelation in literature can signal a promising horizon of sustainability. Hence, in her environmentally concerned work, she invites readers to rethink the relations between human and nonhuman, and to this end, she destabilizes the age-old capsulations and classifications, ranking human higher than other-than-human. The ecological interconnection with animals questions the peripheral positions of nonhuman species and shows how the novelist makes her text a space of alliance between human and other-than-human, which is in line with postmodern ecocritical approach.

Notes

[1] Daniel Sack (2016: 650) believes that the use of unnamed characters delves into recordings of Indigenous peoples that have been anonymized in colonial archives, and in the wake of the forced relocations, including the Canadian government's eschewing on Inuit names, referring to individuals only by number issued on metal disks.'

[2] Like interconnecting humans and nonhumans, Tagaq juxtaposes several opposing extremes throughout the novel such as life and death, ice and sun, time and survival, winter and summer. These are the keywords which are repeated on almost every page of the novel and form the leitmotifs of the story. For instance, she combines the tedium of 'twenty-four-hour darkness' with the joy of 'twenty-four-hour sun' (Tagaq 2018: 74, 97) and inserts the opposing extremes of infinite day and endless night next to each other on one canvas. *Split Tooth* challenges the dominant image of the Arctic wherein only the 'dead winter' dominates (34). It is interesting to see that to show the boredom of the wintertime, the pace of the story becomes slow. As the narrator says, 'Cold wants to clean us up by sopping up our life and bringing us to his state. Cold wants to *halt* Time, *halt* our aging process, *halt* our movements, and *halt* our rot' (110, emphases added). However, during summertime

when the twenty-four-hour sun shines, time is *heated*, and the pace of the story becomes so fast that several events at different times happen quickly one after the other in a row. Thus, for different reasons in the story, '[time] is repeated, revised, slowed down, accelerated, halted, stretched and so on' (Ghasemi 2016: 20).

[3] For example, one of her prose-poems has a similar tone to Langston Hughes' (1951) poem 'Harlem.' As it reads, 'What happens to the energy once it leaves our body? Does it leave us or does it start vibrating at an unknown frequency? Does it cast itself into the wind and leave our vessels lonely? Do our spirits travel with the wind? Do our spirits retain our value and ascend into the Knowing or are we demoted when our bodies decay? Are we as worthy while we rot? How many layers of consciousness are there? Are we still giving? Is being inanimate really a lesser state?' (Tagaq 2018: 98).

[4] Like contemporary literature, films and documentaries also play a key part in addressing such challenges. For instance, The Kunuk's and Mauro's documentary, entitled *Qapirangajuq: Inuit Knowledge and Climate Change* (2010), includes several interviews with Inuit groups from different generations. The documentary clearly represents the Arctic peoples' anxiety and distress over climate change and its impacts upon their lives.

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