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in Canadian Culture**

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- 2) History of First Nations and Inuits
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Riendeau, Roger E. A Brief History of Canada. Toronto: Facts on File, 2007.
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INTRODUCTION

Although First Nations and Inuit peoples unambiguously represent the original inhabitants of Canada, their position and overall perception in Canadian society is sometimes unclear, and this is also reflected in Canadian cinematography and literature. Basically, directors and writers focus either on the way of life of these Natives as it was hundreds of years ago or on various clashes of cultures between the Natives and Canadian white population. The main aim of this diploma thesis is thus the analysis of selected Canadian films, documents and poems on which the distinct perception of these Natives is clearly demonstrated.

Canadian culture, cinematography and poetry in particular, is generally less known than the culture of its Southern neighbor, namely the United States, however, it does not necessarily mean that Canadian culture is not valuable, worth watching or even worth reading. On the contrary, Canadian cinematography and poetry is distinct from that of the American production which might be conditioned not only by the fact that Canada mingles English culture, French culture and importantly the culture of Canadian First Nations and Inuit peoples but also by its overall different approach to it. Canada does not have the Hollywood for the production of films, or a great number of distinct publication houses in case of literature but it is much more difficult for Canadian directors and poets to succeed, and this is even tougher for the Canadian Natives.

Nevertheless, this diploma thesis does not aim at the Canadian culture as such but its theme is much more narrowed as it concerns the depiction of the Native inhabitants of Canada in different pieces of art produced by Canadian Aboriginal authors (with one exception that cannot be omitted). These Natives include First Nations and Inuit peoples as the original representatives of Canadian Aboriginals, and the exception is represented by an American director.

The diploma thesis consists of four main chapters and a great number of sections and subsections contributing to a deeper but clearer analysis at the same time. The first part of the diploma thesis is rather theoretical as it focuses on the general division of Canadian Aboriginals among Métis, Inuit and Indians, and subsequently it clearly differentiates between First Nations and Inuit, as these two

terms are sometimes erroneously interpreted in literature. Since the diploma thesis primarily aims at the Canadian Natives, it is crucial to know the difference between the terms.

Nonetheless, beginning with chapter 2 the diploma thesis becomes more practical, forming thus the core of the whole thesis that is a depiction as well as a description of First Nations and Inuit in Canadian culture. The second chapter and third chapters focus on the films and documents, while the last chapter deals with the collection of poetry.

The second chapter aims at the films that are supposed to depict a traditional way of life of the Inuit including *Nanook of the North* (1922) by Robert Flaherty and *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner* (2001) by Zacharias Kunuk. Both films are analyzed according to critical approaches to literature including historical criticism and biographical criticism as well as with the help of other secondary sources. At the very beginning, directors of both films as well as some of the production circumstances are briefly introduced, and the films are mutually compared to each other at the end of the first chapter.

The third chapter analyzes a document, which aims at various clashes of cultures between the Canadian Aboriginals and the Canadian population of European origin. The analyzed document represents *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* (1993) directed by Alanis Obomsawin and again the analysis itself is based on autobiographical criticism, historical criticism and on other secondary sources supporting the arguments.

Finally, the fourth chapter focuses on something a little bit different than the previous chapters being poetry. Marilyn Dumont, a Canadian poet of Métis origin, was chosen for the analysis and her collection of poetry titled *A Really Good Brown Girl* (1996) represents the model work for the thorough analysis. At the beginning of this chapter there is a brief summary of Canadian Aboriginal literature and then the analysis moves to the introduction of personality of Marilyn Dumont and to the analysis of her first collection of poetry where various themes are discussed. The analysis is thus again based on both autobiographical and historical criticism.

At the very end of the diploma thesis there is a final conclusion commenting on results which were achieved through the analysis followed by a bibliography of used sources and annotations.

1 HISTORY OF FIRST NATIONS AND INUIT

1.1 Indians vs. Inuit vs. Métis

Indians, Inuit and Métis represent Canadian Native inhabitants that are collectively called Aboriginal peoples.¹ Although no one can exactly date when the first Aboriginals arrived,² they have a very similar history especially that of the struggle with non-Aboriginal Canadians since their arrival.³ The competing struggle as well as the clashes of different cultures then became one of the most common themes occurring in Canadian Native cinematography and literature which will be discussed in the third and fourth chapters in detail.

In the census of 2001, “Aboriginal population of Canada stood at 1.3 million, or 3 per cent of the overall population.”⁴ It is no surprise that another common feature of these Natives is their historically subordinate status in Canada in comparison with the non-Aboriginal Canadians. Despite the obvious existence of them, Inuit and Métis were specifically mentioned in an amendment to Canadian Constitution for the first time in 1981, which was finally adopted on April 17, 1982⁵ that unambiguously refers to their inferior position in Canada: “Historically, Indian, Métis, and Inuit nations were pushed to the lowest rungs and the margins of Canadian society by institutionalized racism and discrimination that made it very difficult for them to participate in mainstream society.”⁶ Put another way, the Native Canadians were not equal to the European colonizers dominating the Canadian government so although Inuit and Métis were mentioned in Canadian Constitution for the first time not before 1980s, it became an important step forward. Canadian government thus officially accepted existence and presence of these two nations in Canada. Regarding

¹ J. Anthony Long and Katherine Beaty Chiste, “Aboriginal Policy and Politics: The Charlottetown Accord and Beyond,” in *Canada: The State of the Federation 1993*, ed. Ronald L. Watts et al. (Kingston: Institute of Intergovernmental Relations, 1993): 172.

² Trevor W. Harrison and John W. Friesen, *Canadian Society in the Twenty-First Century: An Historical Sociological Approach*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 2015), 227.

³ Alan C. Cairns, *Citizens Plus: Aboriginal Peoples and the Canadian State* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000), 39.

⁴ George Melnyk, *One Hundred Years of Canadian Cinema* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004): 262.

⁵ Harrison and Friesen, *Canadian Society*, 279-280.

⁶ Linda M. Gerber, “Education, Employment, and Income Polarization among Aboriginal Men and Women in Canada,” *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 46 (2014): 123.

Indians, however, the situation was a little bit more complicated which is described in the section below.

1.2 First Nations

Strangely enough, the term “First Nations” was coined by the Aboriginals themselves “establishing historical priority, from which positive consequences are expected to follow.”⁷ In other words, this term was created artificially to serve the purpose of dominance over the other Natives living in Canada, and “places them in terms of status on a level with the two ‘founding’ British and French peoples.”⁸ As a result, they might participate in the politics where they were taken equally with non-Aboriginal Canadians originally represented by the European colonizers.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the term “First Nations” was not common until 1976 when it was used for the first time by the National Indian Brotherhood but in this case it referred only to Status Indians.⁹ To explain the term “Status Indians”, politically there were two kinds of Indians in Canada, namely Status Indians and non-Status Indians. The only difference between them was that the Aboriginals who stood in a line on the census became Status Indians by law.¹⁰ Otherwise they were entitled as non-Status Indians and had generally minor impact. Still, both Status Indians and non-Status Indians represent the Canadian Aboriginals in essence but they are only Status-Indians who are commonly referred to as First Nations. To make it more difficult, there are also the Inuit and the Métis registered as Status-Indians in Canada, however, the term First Nations does not take them into consideration.¹¹

Nonetheless, this division between Status and non-Status Indians is not that important for the following analysis so the neutral term “First Nations” or even more general term “the Natives” will be used interchangeably in the rest of the thesis instead.

⁷ Cairns, *Citizens Plus*, 32.

⁸ Cairns, *Citizens Plus*, 28.

⁹ Gerber, “Education, Employment, and Income Polarization,” 143.

¹⁰ Harrison and Friesen, *Canadian Society*, 280.

¹¹ Gerber, “Education, Employment, and Income Polarization,” 142-143.

1.3 Inuit Peoples

As stated above, Inuit represent the Native people of Canada, however, their history is very specific and distinctive. Speaking the language of Inuktitut, Inuit originally lived in the Arctic regions which is the reason why they are “historically known as Eskimos, an Algonquian word roughly meaning ‘eaters of raw meat.’”¹² Such a term is closely connected with their eating habits that involve hunting caribou, seals, whales and fishing.¹³ Put differently, they were always fully dependent on animals which is quite understandable because there were not any other possibilities what to eat in these inhospitable Arctic regions. Nevertheless, they did not hunt only for food, but they also utilized animal’s skin, bones and ivory for making clothes, shoes, tents, arrows or even for the construction of kayaks. Moreover, a fat from the whales and seals was used for lighting.¹⁴ According to this, Inuit people were preoccupied with hunting practices that became an integral part of their life but also the only possible way how to survive in this wild region.

On the contrary, to live in such a remote and inhospitable area has also its advantages concerning especially the possibility or rather an impossibility of attacks by various enemies. Regarding the history of Inuit peoples, towards the end of the 19th century they were still relatively independent from the colonizers which was definitely caused by the fact that Arctic regions were not so easily accessible.¹⁵

Nevertheless, the situation changed rapidly at the beginning of the 20th century which was connected with the development of the fur market “because traders rewarded those who met their demands, many Inuit altered their hunting practices and became reliant on European goods.”¹⁶ In short, the fur trade between the Inuit and Europeans became one of the first milestones that influenced and disrupted Inuit traditional way of life. Strangely enough, it was just the collapse of this fur trade after WWII that had even worse consequences for a great number of the Inuit than the

¹² Roger E. Riendeau, *A Brief History of Canada*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Facts on File, 2007), 15.

¹³ Andrew D. Emhardt, “Climate Change and the Inuit: Bringing an Effective Human Rights Claim to the United Nations,” *Indiana International & Comparative Law Review* 24 (2014): 522.

¹⁴ Riendeau, *A Brief History of Canada*, 16.

¹⁵ Shari Huhndorf, “‘Atanarjuat, the Fast Runner’: Culture, History, and Politics in Inuit Media,” *American Anthropologist* 105 (2003): 823.

¹⁶ Huhndorf, “‘Atanarjuat, the Fast Runner’, 823.

establishment itself as they became economically dependent on the Canadian government which was followed by the overall oppression of Inuit peoples.¹⁷ This oppression continued until 1981, which was already discussed in the first section, when Inuit people were mentioned in the Canadian constitution and thus guaranteed freedom from oppression and exploitation.

Moreover, the prospect of better times occurred on April 1, 1999 when Canada's newest territory Nunavut was established and where the government system "blends Inuit principles with Canadian parliamentary democracy."¹⁸ This became another milestone for Inuit because they officially not only participated in the government but governed this 350,000 square kilometer territory in fact.¹⁹ Not accidentally, in the same year and even in the same month the filmmakers started shooting of *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner* in order to "contribute to larger projects of cultural, artistic, and social revitalization in Igloolik."²⁰ This film, together with other carefully selected films and document concerning Aboriginal's tranquil way of life as well as the political struggle with the Canadian government will be subsequently described in rest of the diploma thesis in detail.

¹⁷ Huhndorf, "'Atanarjuat, the Fast Runner', 823.

¹⁸ Michelle H. Raheja, "Reading Nanook's Smile: Visual Sovereignty, Indigenous Revisions of Ethnography, and 'Atanarjuat (The Fast Runner)," *American Quarterly* 59 (2007): 1166.

¹⁹ Russell Meeuf, "Critical Localism, Ethical Cosmopolitanism and *Atanarjuat*," *Third Text* 21 (2007): 735.

²⁰ Sophie McCall, "'I Can Only Sing This Song to Someone Who Understands It': Community Filmmaking and the Politics of Partial Translation in *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner*," *Essays on Canadian Writing* 83 (2004): 20.

2 FILMS DESCRIBING FIRST NATIONS AND INUIT

2.1. *Nanook of the North* (1922)

It seems impossible to begin with the depiction of Canadian Native people in the film or rather in the document without mentioning the docudrama *Nanook of the North*,²¹ which was directed by “an amateur white filmmaker formally trained as a mining specialist,”²² namely Robert J. Flaherty in 1922. The document is often considered as a predecessor to Zacharias Kunuk’s *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner* (2001), however, it focuses on the life of Eskimos,²³ which is the former term for Inuit as already discussed in chapter 1.

What is so significant on this document is the fact that “*Nanook of the North* begins by using conventions adopted by later documentary filmmakers and, therefore, has been classified as the first documentary ever made.”²⁴ In other words, *Nanook of the North* can be considered not only as the predecessor to *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner*, but as a pioneer of Canadian documentary and film production in general.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to stress that it still significantly differs from contemporary documents as it involves only “a series of linked episodes”²⁵ each of which is presented by the form of intertitles that “serve to introduce, rather than explain, what the viewer will see in the sequence that ensues.”²⁶ However, such a method is essential for silent documents otherwise the viewer would not understand what is the document about. Interestingly, the method which Flaherty used in his document is sometimes compared with Edward Curtis’s film *In the Land of the Head-Hunters* (1914) depicting Indians of Vancouver Island, however, Flaherty’s document attracted wider audiences.²⁷

²¹ Melnyk, *One Hundred Years*, 52.

²² Raheja, “Reading Nanook’s Smile,” 1159.

²³ Melnyk, *One Hundred Years*, 260.

²⁴ Sue Matheson, “The ‘True Spirit’ of Eating Raw Meat: London, Nietzsche, and Rousseau in Robert Flaherty’s *Nanook of the North* (1922),” *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 39 (2011): 13.

²⁵ Alan Marcus, “*Nanook of the North* as Primal Drama,” *Visual Anthropology* 19 (2006): 203.

²⁶ Anna Grimshaw, “Who Has the Last Laugh? *Nanook of the North* and Some New Thoughts on an Old Classic,” *Visual Anthropology* 27 (2014): 427.

²⁷ Marcus, “*Nanook of the North*,” 202.

2.1.1 Production Circumstances

Production circumstances of *Nanook of the North* disclose why the overall analysis of this document will not be as extensive as in case of *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner*. The main reason is the fact that the document was made by an American director, and it was primarily aimed at American audiences.²⁸ It means that Flaherty filmed what he knew the American audiences want to see and are willing to believe which explains why he departed from reality: “*Nanook of the North* deals in fiction, not fact. Quite simply, this movie is romance, not realism. Seen a century later, its depictions of life in the north now appear to be too far removed from reality to be taken seriously as historical representation.”²⁹ The whole document is thus a fiction which cannot be taken so seriously. It was supposed to entertain the audiences, not to teach them about the history and the life of the Inuit.

Another reason for filming fiction rather than reality was the fact that before filming *Nanook of the North* Flaherty had already tried to make something similar, but the result did not fulfill his expectations so when he destroyed the negative by accident he decided to make a document in a totally different manner: “he was going to ensure that his ‘drama of primitive life’ was sufficiently dramatic, as well as offering memorable scenes of an exotic land and its people.”³⁰ According to these two reasons Flaherty decided to make his new document completely differently which is briefly discussed below.

2.1.2 A Deliberate Fake

As already stated, Robert Flaherty arranged his *Nanook of the North* according to the taste of the audiences in various details. At first, cast of characters was selected very carefully where he “deliberately chose ideal types on the basis of physical appearance and even created artificial families to act before the camera.”³¹ Not only did Flaherty arrange the families, but he also nicknamed the individual characters so from Alakariallak in reality became Nanook in the document with the meaning of the

²⁸ Matheson, “The ‘True Spirit’,” 13.

²⁹ Matheson, “The ‘True Spirit’,” 18.

³⁰ Marcus, “*Nanook of the North*,” 203.

³¹ William T. Murphy, “Flaherty, Robert,” *St. James Film Directors Encyclopedia* (December 1998): 171, *Film & Television Literature Index with Full Text*, EBSCOhost (accessed April 9, 2016).

“bear”.³² Such a label was intentional because Nanook wears pants made of polar bear during the whole document, although Eskimos did not use them at all in this area.³³ Although these are only slight changes, there are lots of other fakes in the document.

Sue Matheson in her article demonstrates some other fakes she noticed in *Nanook of the North*. At the very beginning of the document, it is stated that “this picture concerns the life of one Nanook (The Bear), his family and little band of followers, ‘Itivimuits’ of Hopewell Sound.”³⁴ Nonetheless, Matheson objects that such a group of Inuit never existed and “Flaherty simply made up the name.”³⁵ Since there is an apparent inconsistency in the first minutes of the document, it is more than probable that others will follow.

Sophie McCall in her extended work describes another misinterpretation of reality. In the document there is almost a ten-minute-long sequence depicting walrus hunt which is finally killed by harpoons.³⁶ Nonetheless, she argues such a hunting style “had not been practiced for years in the area since guns had become available.”³⁷ The whole scene of a brutal killing of walrus was thus arranged only for the audiences.

Finally, Anna Grimshaw focuses on the behavior of individual characters during the filming and she concludes that “in the way Flaherty positions his camera and how subjects engage it as they go about their tasks, it is clear that Arctic life is being created for the purpose of filming.”³⁸ On the basis of these inconsistencies and critical commentaries, there is no point in continuing the analysis of *Nanook of the North* as it does not depict the Inuit, or Eskimos way of life as it was which is the main aim of this diploma thesis. Nevertheless, at the very end of the analysis of *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner* there is a section comparing both films because there

³² Marcus, “*Nanook of the North*,” 205.

³³ Marcus, “*Nanook of the North*,” 205.

³⁴ Robert J. Flaherty, *Nanook of the North*, filmed 1922, YouTube video, 3:28, posted by “All Classic Video,” December 12, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m4kOIZMqso0>.

³⁵ Matheson, “The ‘True Spirit’,” 13.

³⁶ Flaherty, *Nanook of the North*, 25:10.

³⁷ McCall, “‘I Can Only Sing This Song’,” 32.

³⁸ Grimshaw, “Who Has the Last Laugh?” 428.

are still some parallels and a great number of disparities between them encouraging to do so.

2.2 *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner* (2001)

Atanarjuat, originally without the subtitle *The Fast Runner*, which was added to the title of the film by American distributor³⁹ but it is more common under this American version, is one of the most important films not only in Canadian Native cinema production but in Canadian cinematography in general for many different reasons. Most importantly, it became the first feature film directed by Inuit, namely Zacharias Kunuk in 2001, and using an Inuit language Inuktitut exclusively.⁴⁰

Although *Nanook of the North* depicted Canadian Native people as well, it was directed by American director for American audiences whilst *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner* has both Inuit director and the whole Inuit crew with the aim of the depiction of reality: “*Atanarjuat*, unlike *Nanook*, draws attention to its own status as a dramatic re-creation of events and circumstances one thousand years ago.”⁴¹ Thanks to this, the analysis of *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner* will be more complex than was the analysis of *Nanook of the North* in previous section.

The analysis of the film cannot begin differently than with its overall evaluation. In this regard, the film was successful not only at the audiences but also at various international film festivals that definitely underlines its great significance:

The film had garnered the Caméra d’Or or first-feature-film award at Cannes in 2001, the first time that award had ever been won by a Canadian. The film went on to win other awards, including the Prix du Public at the Montreal International Festival of New Cinema and New Media, best Canadian feature at the Toronto International Film Festival, and the best picture and best director at the Genesis.⁴²

In short, *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner* became the blockbuster that was not common in the Canadian cinema production so far, and it “became the highest grossing film in Canada for 2001, earning \$3.7 million in North America, and nearly \$3 million

³⁹ Melnyk, *One Hundred Years*, 271.

⁴⁰ Meeuf, “Critical Localism,” 733.

⁴¹ Matheson, “The ‘True Spirit,’” 35.

⁴² Melnyk, *One Hundred Years*, 260.

internationally.”⁴³ As George Melnyk rightly argues in his introduction to *Great Canadian Film Directors* (2007): “Canadian cinema has come of global age.”⁴⁴ According to these facts, it is no wonder that *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner* was chosen as a model film for the description of Inuit way of life because, as the origin of the director as well as the language suggest, the film focuses first and only on Inuit peoples.

Before proceeding to the analysis of the film itself, the short introduction to the director and to the production circumstances will be briefly discussed serving for a better understanding of the whole film.

2.2.1 A Brief Acquaintance with Zacharias Kunuk

It was already stated that Zacharias Kunuk has an Inuit origin, however, he does significantly differ from his predecessors as he was the first member of the family having a permanent home, which was in the community of Igloolik, and knowing how to read, write and most importantly how to make films.⁴⁵ In other words, Zacharias Kunuk became something like a pioneer of modern way of life not only for his family and friends but also for the next generations. What is important to note, however, is the fact that he did not forget Inuit traditional lifestyle which is apparent in his films and documents. Before *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner*, he directed “*Inuit dramas such as Qaggiq (Gathering Place, 1989) and Nunaqpa (Going Inland, 1990) and documentaries like Arvik (Bowhead, 1998) and Nipi (Voice, 1999).*”⁴⁶

Interestingly, although Kunuk did not study film at university, he was interested in filmmaking. He worked as a soapstone carver and on one of his work-related trips to Montreal in 1981 he bought a video camera⁴⁷ which was the very beginning of his career as a director. Only nine years later, “along with screenwriter Paul Apak Angilirq, actor Paul Qulitalik, and cinematographer Norman Cohn, he co-

⁴³ Lucas Bessire, “Talking Back to Primitivism: Divided Audiences, Collective Desires,” *American Anthropologist* 105 (2003): 832.

⁴⁴ George Melnyk, introduction to *Great Canadian Film Directors*, ed. George Melnyk (Alberta: University of Alberta Press, 2007): xi.

⁴⁵ S.F.Said, “Northern Exposure,” *Sight & Sound* 12 (2002): 22.

⁴⁶ Kimberly Chun, “Storytelling in the Arctic Circle: An Interview with Zacharias Kunuk,” *Cineaste* 28 (2002): 21.

⁴⁷ Jerry White, “Zach Kunuk and Inuit Filmmaking,” in *Great Canadian Film Directors*, ed. George Melnyk (Alberta: University of Alberta Press, 2007): 348.

founded Igloolik Isuma Productions, the first Inuit independent production company.⁴⁸ This was a significant milestone for the whole Inuit population because by founding their own production company the main concern became a presentation and the defense of Inuit culture, language, history and traditions, in short “indigenous advocacy.”⁴⁹

Two more important facts are connected with Igloolik Isuma Productions. *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner* became the first feature film ever produced by this company,⁵⁰ and its realization brought job opportunities for a great number of Inuit resulting in a lowering of unemployment since “more than 100 Igloolik Inuit, from the young to the elderly, were employed as actors, hairdressers, and technicians as well as costume makers, language experts, and hunters who provided food, bringing more than \$1.5 million into a local economy that suffers from a 60 percent unemployment rate.”⁵¹ All in all, the fact that Kunuk co-founded the company which enhanced the region’s economy by working on his masterpiece became a great achievement that Michelle Raheja summarizes as follows: “making a commercially successful film that foregrounds Inuit epistemes and simultaneously accomplishes collective social justice off-screen by providing job training.”⁵² Zacharias Kunuk thus became a famous personality for both Inuit people and a cinema audience.

2.2.2 Production Circumstances

The best way how to understand what inspired Zacharias Kunuk to make this film is to ask the director himself. In one of the interviews, *Cineaste*, the film magazine, asked Zacharias Kunuk what actually induced him to make the film like that? To this question Kunuk answered: “Well, it’s an old story that’s been passed down from generation to generation, and when we first heard it, we were kids living off the land. *Atanarjuat* is just one of the stories that parents were telling to their children as a bedtime story.”⁵³ In other words, *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner* is not only the

⁴⁸ Huhndorf, “‘Atanarjuat, the Fast Runner’, 823.

⁴⁹ Faye Ginsburg, “*Atanarjuat* Off-Screen: From ‘Media Reservations’ to the World Stage,” *American Anthropologist* 105 (2003): 827.

⁵⁰ Huhndorf, “‘Atanarjuat, the Fast Runner’, 824.

⁵¹ Ginsburg, “*Atanarjuat* Off-Screen,” 828.

⁵² Raheja, “Reading Nanook’s Smile,” 1166.

⁵³ Chun, “Storytelling in the Arctic Circle,” 21.

fictional film based on an invented story but it is rather a legend or a tale generally known among Inuit peoples for ages. Interestingly, Zacharias Kunuk is not the only one who heard this story which is obvious from his next answer in the interview:

CINEASTE. *Did the screenwriter, Paul Apak Angilirq, initially come to you with the idea and screenplay?*

KUNUK. The story was always there. Paul's job was to collect it from seven elders who told the same story. Each storyteller would slightly add something, so Paul got the basic story, and then he went to work. ... We started working on this project in 1994-95, developing it and writing the script.⁵⁴

In short, Kunuk has the story in mind since his childhood, when he probably would not even think of making a film out of it. Nevertheless, the modern times brought a new technology and from children's bedtime story became one of the most successful films ever produced in Canadian cinematography that Kunuk obviously did not expect. He described the purpose of the film as simply as this: "We will show Inuit and non-Inuit how we lived, how our ancestors survived through the healing power of community and how Inuit art can endure for another 1000 years."⁵⁵ How Kunuk's aim was achieved will be discussed in the following sections right after answering the last important question that is about Kunuk's possible influence of *Nanook of the North* which was discussed in different articles several times. In one of the lecture Kunuk gave he answered: "Yes, I have been asked this question a lot of times. Robert Flaherty did his documentary about 500 miles south of our community. ... *I am really glad he did record that culture at the time.* We are doing ours further north."⁵⁶ Although Kunuk himself neither admits the influence of this film on him nor he disapproves it so it is up to the audience to get a sense of it. Nevertheless, the necessary comparison of these two films will be made in the last section of the analysis as indicated.

⁵⁴ Chun, "Storytelling in the Arctic Circle," 22.

⁵⁵ Ginsburg, "Atanarjuat Off-Screen," 828.

⁵⁶ Arnold Krupat, "Atanarjuat, the Fast Runner and Its Audiences," *Critical Inquiry* 33 (2007): 619.

2.2.3 Summary of the Plot

Primarily, the film focuses on the relationships between two Inuit families. At the very beginning, Kumaglak, the camp leader is killed by his son Sauri who thus became a new leader and weakens the influence of his brother, Tulimaq. Tulimaq has two sons namely Amaqjuaq, the older one called the Strong One and the main character of the whole film Atanarjuat, nicknamed the Fast Runner. When Amaqjuaq is seduced by Atanarjuat's second wife Puja, the daughter of Sauri, she is expelled from the camp and thus the rivalry between two families is reinforced as they had already had some minor disputes before regarding Atanarjuat's first wife Atuat. As a result, the whole situation leads to the killing of Amagjuaq by Puja's brother Oki and his two friends Pakak and Puttiulaq. In order to survive, Atanarjuat has to set out on a journey through the frozen Arctic land naked and barefoot which became one of the most famous and most memorable scenes of the whole film that will be described in the following section.

Nevertheless, Atanarjuat is able to survive all of these sufferings thanks to the great care of Qulitalik, Sauri's uncle, and his family where he stays until a full recovery. Finally, he returns to his home camp in Igloodik and resolves a bitter dispute with the murders of his brother. Oki, Puja, Puttiulaq and Pakak are then banished from the whole family forever by Oki and Puja's grandmother Panikpak, the sister of Qulitalik, which is the worst possible but the only effective punishment for them. The evil is thus expelled from the camp and Inuit community may continue to live their life in peace again as a unity.⁵⁷

2.2.4 Authenticity

According to the description of the plot above, *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner* might give a false impression of a mediocre film with a typical Hollywood happy end. Importantly, the director himself strongly rejects any connection of his film with Hollywood: "Our legend is a *universal story: about love, jealousy, murder, revenge,*

⁵⁷ Zacharias Kunuk, *Atanarjuat, the Fast Runner*, filmed 2001, Isuma video, 2:41:10, posted by Zacharias Kunuk 31 December, 2009, <http://www.isuma.tv/isuma-productions/atanarjuat-the-fast-runner>.

forgiveness—the same for everybody everywhere. Not like Hollywood films. *It was shot, acted, edited in our own style. Everything is authentic.* The audiences really get the story.”⁵⁸ According to Kunuk, *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner* exceeds Hollywood films especially for its authenticity.

Moreover, the fact that *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner* is completely different is underlined not only by its unusually long duration for almost three hours but also by the usage of Inuit language Inuktitut exclusively where the English subtitles, not dubbing are supplied for its non-Inuit world audience.⁵⁹ These seemingly insignificant factors thus create a highly authentic atmosphere of a slowly passing way of life in one Inuit community.

2.2.5 Igloolik

The first obvious question concerning the film is that of its setting. Inuit peoples originally inhabited a distant Arctic regions of Canada, which is described in chapter 1, so the setting of the whole film is probably there. The viewer learns this for sure in the second half when Qulitalik mentions the place of Igloolik⁶⁰ in connection with his nephew Sauri and his sister Panikpak⁶¹ for the first time, which is later repeated by Atanarjuat who desires to come back there as his state of health as well as the weather conditions are finally good for the journey home:

QULITALIK. How’s the ice now?

ATANARJUAT. It has thickened up. Solid enough to cross all the way. I think I could get to Igloolik now. I’m tired of waiting.⁶²

Despite his better health, Atanarjuat had to postpone the journey until the ice is thick enough in order to reach home camp safely which reflects not only the extreme climatic conditions in this regions but especially “the proper relationship between humanity and the earth: one which requires respect, resourcefulness and inexhaustible

⁵⁸ Krupat, “*Atanarjuat, the Fast Runner*,” 620.

⁵⁹ Jeff Himpele, “Introduction,” *American Anthropologist* 105 (2003): 820.

⁶⁰ Kunuk, *Atanarjuat*, 1:48:46.

⁶¹ Kunuk, *Atanarjuat*, 1:48:41.

⁶² Kunuk, *Atanarjuat*, 2:03:22-2:03:45.

patience.”⁶³ In spite of the severity and harshness of living there, the inhabitants have to conform to these conditions otherwise they do not have the slightest chance to survive in this region.

It was already mentioned that the most memorable scene of the whole film occurs when Atanarjuat has to run through the frozen ice barefoot in order to escape his three persecutors trying to kill him,⁶⁴ and which also depicts his involuntary bath in one of the puddle full of icily cold water.⁶⁵ With reference to the setting of this scene, “on the website, viewers can trace Atanarjuat’s thirty-seven-kilometre run across the sea ice of the Hecla Strait from Igloolik to Tern Island (referred to as Sioraq in the film).”⁶⁶ In other words, the setting of the film is highly specific that cannot be said about the time, though.⁶⁷

2.2.6 Timelessness

With reference to the time, however, the answer does not seem to be that obvious as in case of the setting because there are no certain clues in the film suggesting when exactly the story takes place. The only obvious thing is that of the cycle of the seasons during the year where the film obviously begins in winter, then the middle part takes place in spring and summer, which begins with Atanarjuat’s return from hunting on the kayak⁶⁸ and providing the audience the long shots of the surrounding landscape with blossoming flowers and singing of the local birds.⁶⁹ The film ends in winter again which starts when Atanarjuat practices with the dog team⁷⁰ in order to prepare himself for the journey home that is the only possible and the only usable vehicle in this inhospitable region.

However, there are no other hints regarding the time of the film which seems to be director’s intention—to record the Inuit life as it was hundred years ago, unspoiled by the European colonizers destroying their traditional culture, habits and

⁶³ Said, “Northern Exposure,” 23.

⁶⁴ Kunuk, *Atanarjuat*, 1:29:25-1:37:57.

⁶⁵ Kunuk, *Atanarjuat*, 1:35:01.

⁶⁶ McCall, ““I Can Only Sing This Song’,” 39.

⁶⁷ McCall, ““I Can Only Sing This Song’,” 39.

⁶⁸ Kunuk, *Atanarjuat*, 46:43.

⁶⁹ Kunuk, *Atanarjuat*, 1:54:43-1:54:26.

⁷⁰ Kunuk, *Atanarjuat*, 2:00:31.

ordinary life. As Arnold Krupat observes: “the film represents a Northern world in which *nothing* European exists: no machines, no electric or telephone lines, nothing—and where no European person, name, or word exists.”⁷¹ In other words, the film might reflect either the period before the arrival of the European colonizers and intruders or how it would look like if the Europeans did not invade Inuit peoples at all⁷² so it might be considered as timeless.⁷³ It might take place anytime.

However, after the film proper there is a dedication of the film to Amelia Angilirq (1957-200) and to Paul Apak Angilirq (1954-1998),⁷⁴ and subsequently the credits roll are enriched by the authentic shots from the filming where the audiences can observe that the film was produced with the help of modern equipment.⁷⁵ The meaning of this is, according to Michelle Raheja, the only one: “to imagine *Atanarjuat* as a narrative film produced by a vibrant contemporary Inuit community, not a documentary on the mythic past or footage from a bygone era.”⁷⁶ Put another way, on the basis of Michelle Raheja, the whole film is a fiction which does not reflect the ancient time of life of the Inuit.

On the other hand, Russell Meeuf’s interpretation of the final scenes is slightly different by “insisting upon the contemporary and dynamic nature of traditional Inuit culture and denying the ‘vanishing Indian’ myth.”⁷⁷ According to Meeuf, the film is supposed to encourage Inuit culture in contemporary Canada and to show that Inuit people have not died out. Moreover, the fact that “Kunuk has been working on a sequel in which the arrival of White men is presented from the Inuit perspective”⁷⁸ refers to Kunuk’s intention to depict both periods before and after the arrival of colonizers that has, on the contrary to Raheja’s observation, something to do with Inuit’s real history. To sum up, despite various interpretations, it is again up to the audiences to make sense out of it.

⁷¹ Krupat, “*Atanarjuat, the Fast Runner*,” 611.

⁷² Krupat, “*Atanarjuat, the Fast Runner*,” 611.

⁷³ Bessire, “Talking Back to Primitivism,” 834.

⁷⁴ Kunuk, *Atanarjuat*, 2:43:36.

⁷⁵ Kunuk, *Atanarjuat*, 2:43:58.

⁷⁶ Raheja, “Reading Nanook’s Smile,” 1179.

⁷⁷ Meeuf, “Critical Localism,” 743.

⁷⁸ Melnyk, *One Hundred Years*, 261.

2.2.7 Hunting Practices and Eating Habits

It was already stated that Inuit peoples were preoccupied with hunting which was the only way how to survive in the wild region. This is also described in the film where both the hunting and especially eating habits of Inuit are depicted in detail. At the very beginning, the spectator observes the results of a successful seal-hunting⁷⁹ that are utilized not only for meat but their fat is used as an oil for lighting.⁸⁰ Another scene depicts how Oki hunts rabbit without usage of any weapons,⁸¹ and an intended hunt for walrus and caribou is a subject of conversation between Atanarjuat, Amaqjuat and their father Tulimaq.⁸²

As described in chapter 1, Inuit are historically known as Eskimos with the meaning of the eaters of raw meat. Such a meaning is explicitly shown in the film where not only adults eat raw meat,⁸³ but also a small child is fed with it by the mother.⁸⁴ It is important to note, however, that raw meat is not the only option in Inuit diet as they also consume boiled eggs⁸⁵ or roots of the plant during spring and summer.⁸⁶ Moreover, also the fish are dried⁸⁷ diversifying thus their highly monotonous diet dependent mainly on hunting, fishing and gathering.⁸⁸

2.2.8 Primitivism and Simplicity

During the whole film the audience can observe various instances of primitive behavior and simplicity of Inuit way of life. Moreover, primitivism was also one of the central theme of reviews in popular press after the release of the film, as Lucas Bessire demonstrates in his article “Talking Back to Primitivism: Divides Audiences, Collective Desires.”⁸⁹ Nonetheless, primitive tendencies regard not only clothes of individual characters, but it concerns various aspects of Inuit life such as dwellings

⁷⁹ Kunuk, *Atanarjuat*, 10:00-10:45.

⁸⁰ Kunuk, *Atanarjuat*, 2:10:26.

⁸¹ Kunuk, *Atanarjuat*, 2:14:00.

⁸² Kunuk, *Atanarjuat*, 49:02-49:20.

⁸³ Kunuk, *Atanarjuat*, 2:30:09.

⁸⁴ Kunuk, *Atanarjuat*, 1:05:59.

⁸⁵ Kunuk, *Atanarjuat*, 1:48:06.

⁸⁶ Kunuk, *Atanarjuat*, 1:54:05.

⁸⁷ Kunuk, *Atanarjuat*, 1:52:36.

⁸⁸ Emhardt, “Climate Change and the Inuit,” 522.

⁸⁹ Bessire, “Talking Back to Primitivism,” 834.

where in one shot Atanarjuat with his two wives Atuat and Puja, and Amaqjuaq with his wife are depicted lying next to each other in the small tent.⁹⁰ However, this scene continues with Puja's seduction of Amaqjuaq which may be also viewed as "both voyeuristic pleasure and an amoral reading of Inuit sexual relations (which is to say, lacking any of the familiar signposts of morally-guided behaviour),⁹¹ and thus may be considered primitive as well.

In different scene the saliva is used instead of the lubrication for the sledge⁹² which again refers to a very simplistic but effective behavior at the same time. Moreover, the usage of a primitive weapons as well as the overall simple strategy of killing is nicely depicted in the scene of the murder of Atanarjuat's brother Amaqjuat in which three men holding the instruments with sharp points spears the tent trying to kill the sleeping brothers.⁹³

2.2.9 Comparison of *Nanook of the North* (1922) with *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner* (2001)

Although it might appear strange to compare two films with the interval of release of almost ninety years, there are some features occurring in both films as well as many dissimilarities. Moreover, the question about a possible influence of *Nanook of the North* on Zacharias Kunuk and his *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner* was already discussed so the following comparison may further clarify it.

Regarding the differences, Tom Crosbie in his article argues that especially the overall narrative form is distinct in both films.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, this is quite obvious because *Nanook of the North* represents the silent documentary where each scene is introduced by intertitles whilst *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner* is almost three hours long feature film.

However, Crosbie continues that "as Flaherty inscribes Nanook's ultimate tragedy on the 'impossible' arctic landscape before the film begins, so Kunuk has

⁹⁰ Kunuk, *Atanarjuat*, 1:08:42.

⁹¹ Tom Crosbie, "Critical Historiography in *Atanarjuat The Fast Runner* and *Ten Canoes*," *Journal of New Zealand* 24 (2007): 142.

⁹² Kunuk, *Atanarjuat*, 02:46.

⁹³ Kunuk, *Atanarjuat*, 1:28:40.

⁹⁴ Crosbie, "Critical Historiography," 135.

inscribed the arctic as a place that functions through the individual's sacrifices for the group."⁹⁵ That is particularly true because *Nanook of the North* begins with the intertitles: "The mysterious Barren Lands — desolate, boulder-strewn, wind-swept — illimitable spaces which top the world"⁹⁶ and ends with a very similar manner: "The shrill piping of the wind, the rasp and hiss of driving snow, the mournful wolf howls of Nanook's master dog typify the melancholy of the North,"⁹⁷ where Flaherty is completely free to describe such a setting that fully corresponds to the main idea of the document that is the struggle of the man with nature.⁹⁸ On the other hand, in *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner* the individual characters conform to the weather conditions in order to survive that is apparent in various scenes. For example, Atanarjuat cannot return to his family until the ice is thick enough, as was already discussed during the analysis of the film. In short, these two films differ in the description of environment and its impact on individual characters.

Another disparity concerns the depiction of colonialism or a general interaction with white man. In case of *Nanook of the North*, the intertitles reveal that "Nanook comes to prepare for the summer journey down river to the trade post of the white man"⁹⁹ and then directly describes "landing at the white man's 'big igloo' — the trading post"¹⁰⁰ which clearly illustrates Nanook's interaction with colonizers. Moreover, one of the most memorable scenes from the whole documents depicts how "the trader entertains and attempts to explain the principle of the gramophone — how the white man 'cans' his voice"¹⁰¹ which is again connected with colonizers and their usage of modern technologies. However, there are no similar scenes in *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner* which "disavows colonial incursions"¹⁰² in forms of both traders and Western technology.

Finally, to answer the question why is *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner* so frequently compared with *Nanook of the North* Tom Crosbie answers as follows:

⁹⁵ Crosbie, "Critical Historiography," 147-148.

⁹⁶ Flaherty, *Nanook of the North*, 2:26.

⁹⁷ Flaherty, *Nanook of the North*, 1:13:55.

⁹⁸ McCall, "'I Can Only Sing This Song'," 29.

⁹⁹ Flaherty, *Nanook of the North*, 4:56.

¹⁰⁰ Flaherty, *Nanook of the North*, 9:15.

¹⁰¹ Flaherty, *Nanook of the North*, 12:35.

¹⁰² McCall, "'I Can Only Sing This Song'," 36.

“Like the titular Nanook, he too lives in igloos, has two wives, and uses apparently primitive tools.”¹⁰³ Nevertheless, these are only minor aspects similar in both films because they themselves represent something different. *Nanook of the North* mediates the audience a fictional story about Inuit way of life in order to capture their attention whilst *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner* tries to reinterpret Inuit culture as they lived hundreds of years ago. It is particularly interesting then that both films were well-received internationally after their release.¹⁰⁴ In short, each film found that kind of audiences which accepted the film and appreciated the endeavor of the directors regardless of its authenticity.

¹⁰³ Crosbie, “Critical Historiography,” 141.

¹⁰⁴ McCall, “‘I Can Only Sing This Song’,” 37.

3 CLASHES OF CULTURE IN CANADIAN DOCUMENTARY

As briefly described, Canadian Aboriginal history is closely connected to various conflicts and injustice which was often completely kept hidden from public knowledge. However, one of the most useful way how to highlight such unknown unlawful events and bring wider audience to them is to make a film or rather a document out of them which was the way chosen by number of Canadian directors especially in the past three decades.¹⁰⁵

In connection to this, it is important to mention that the key medium for Canadian documentary production became the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) which helped release great number of documents produced by different activists and Canadian Native social reformers.¹⁰⁶ Without the existence of the NFB, it would be much more difficult for Canadian Native documentarists to produce any kind of documentary as the NFB promoted the Natives by giving them the place to speak for the first time in history.¹⁰⁷

Significantly, one of the most influential documentarists in Canadian history became without any doubt Alanis Obomsawin whose life and very famous document *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* (1993) will be described in the following sections in detail.

3.1 *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* (1993)

3.1.1 Brief Acquaintance with Alanis Obomsawin

To understand why Alanis Obomsawin chose the career as Canadian documentarist, it is important to become acquainted with her childhood and adulthood which influenced her decision to a certain degree.

¹⁰⁵ Randolph Lewis, *Alanis Obomsawin: The Vision of a Native Filmmaker* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 172.

¹⁰⁶ Bruno Cornellier, "The Thing About Obomsawin's Indianness: Indigenous Reality and the Burden of Education at the National Film Board of Canada," *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 21 (2012): 3.

¹⁰⁷ Cornellier, "The Thing About Obomsawin's Indianness," 9.

Strangely enough, Alanis Obomsawin was not born in Canada as it might seem, but in the United States and only then she moved to Canada.¹⁰⁸ At first her family settled to the Odonak Reserve where she learned the culture of her people, the Aboriginal Abenaki. Nevertheless, the second removal of her family was much more difficult for Obomsawin as her family moved to “Trois-Rivières, a small town 75 miles northeast of Montreal, where Obomsawin was the only native child and had to endure cultural isolation and racial discrimination—experiences that had a profound effect on her later filmmaking.”¹⁰⁹ In other words, growing up between non-Natives might be seen as a very significant milestone in the life of Obomsawin and it is no surprise that her later documents focus on the events remarkably similar to those she personally experienced at an early age.

Regarding another milestone, it is particularly important to mention the year 1967 which is the year when Alanis Obomsawin began her cooperation with Canada’s National Film Board (NFB)¹¹⁰ that actually started her promising career as a Canadian documentarist and, what is more, “as a native, she was a pioneering figure in the NFB studios.”¹¹¹ In other words, thanks to this this relationship she built very good reputation and became inspiration for other Natives.

Later, one more significant thing aroused from already established connection between Obomsawin and NFB which is the promotion and distribution of various projects by the NFB on which she decided to work on.¹¹² It means that Obomsawin was not as financially dependent as other documentarists were, and the NFB help her also with the distribution.

Importantly, one of the projects which drew attention of Obomsawin is already mentioned document *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* which is the first out of four documents focusing on various circumstances around the incident at Kanehsatake, Quebec collectively released by the NFB under the title *Oka: Behind*

¹⁰⁸ Melnyk, *One Hundred Years*, 181.

¹⁰⁹ David E. Salamie, *St. James Women Filmmakers Encyclopedia: Women on the Other Side of the Camera*, ed. Amy L. Unterburger. (Boston: Visible Ink Press, 1999), 313.

¹¹⁰ Salamie, *St. James Women Filmmakers*, 313.

¹¹¹ Miléna Santoro, “The Rise of First Nations’ Fiction Films: Shelley Niro, Jeff Barnaby, and Yves Sioui Durand,” *American Review of Canadian Studies* 43 (2013): 268.

¹¹² Lewis, *Alanis Obomsawin*, 174.

the Barricades. The other documents include *Spudwrench: Kahnawake Man, My Name is Kahentiosta*, and finally *Acts of Defiance*.¹¹³ What also connects all of these documents is a narrative form consisting of “carefully woven together interview segments, excerpts from news broadcasts, and much very dramatic raw footage”¹¹⁴ creating thus very remarkable documents. Nevertheless, it is just the first document *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* which was chosen for the subsequent analysis below.

3.1.2 The History and the Description of the Conflict

It was already mentioned that Obomsawin’s documents are based on historical events involving especially Canadian Natives and *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* is no exception. Nonetheless, in order to understand the document, it is necessary to learn something about the history of the conflict which became generally known as “the Oka Crisis.”¹¹⁵

Not surprisingly, the conflict involved two rival populations in Canada including the Canadian Natives namely the Mohawks on one side and the Canadian army on the other side struggling for the land previously belonging to the Mohawks.¹¹⁶ The whole conflict has its roots in the 18th century and can be briefly described as follows: “For more than two hundred years, Mohawks in the town of Kanehsatake had endured the expansion of the adjacent town, Oka, whose largely white population kept spreading into lands that the Mohawks considered their rightful property.”¹¹⁷ Although the conflict started already in the 18th century, it was not as critical as it became towards the end of the 20th century when the situation got worse with the proposal for the expansion of the golf course across the ancestral burial area of the Mohawks known as the “The Pines” in the summer of 1990 which was historically considered as the land belonging to Canadian Aboriginals.¹¹⁸ These

¹¹³ Julia D. Harrison, “Oka: Behind the Barricades: Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance: Spudwrench: Kahnawake Man: My Name is Kahentiosta: Acts of Defiance,” *American Anthropological Association* 102 (2000): 159.

¹¹⁴ Harrison, “Oka: Behind the Barricades,” 160.

¹¹⁵ Harrison and Friesen, *Canadian Society*, 282.

¹¹⁶ Melnyk, *One Hundred Years*, 181.

¹¹⁷ Lewis, *Alanis Obomsawin*, 88.

¹¹⁸ Harrison, “Oka: Behind the Barricades,” 160.

events led to peaceful protests of the Mohawk community in the form of the blockades of “the road running through their reserve onto the Mercier Bridge, a major traffic artery for Montreal commuters”¹¹⁹ at first. However, except for the growing anger of non-Natives who began to experience “the Oka Crisis” on their own by the blockades,¹²⁰ the barricades did not change anything at all so the Mohawks “turned to more aggressive forms of dissent, culminating in their decision to arm themselves and take up defensive positions on the disputed land.”¹²¹ However, they had a little chance to succeed and finally they had to surrender.¹²² On the whole, the conflict lasted for unbelievable eleven weeks and became the longest armed standoff in the history of North America.¹²³

What was crucial on the whole situation, however, was the fact that Alanis Obomsawin not only witnessed the conflict but she decided to be present behind the barricades on the side of Mohawks where she documented all of the events from the beginning to the end creating thus one of the most remarkable and authentic documents in Canadian Aboriginal history.

3.1.3 Authenticity

Despite already connected with *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner*, the expression of “authenticity” can be aptly used also for the description of *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* as well, albeit in a different manner. This is quite obvious because *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner* represents the feature film while *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* belongs to the section of documents where the authenticity is somehow presupposed but still it is interesting to compare these two kinds of “authenticities” in both cinematic forms.

Regarding *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner*, the authenticity includes carefully and intentionally prepared situations in order to reconstruct the reality as it was hundreds of years ago that is revealed with the closing credits and the shots on the

¹¹⁹ Penny Van Toorn, “Aboriginal Writing,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Canadian Literature*, ed. Eva-Marie Kröller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 39.

¹²⁰ Gail Guthrie Valaskakis, *Indian Country: Essays on Contemporary Native Culture* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2005), 37.

¹²¹ Lewis, *Alanis Obomsawin*, 89.

¹²² Toorn, “Aboriginal Writing,” 39.

¹²³ Cornellier, “The Thing About Obomsawin’s Indianness,” 8.

director, the film crew and preparations of individual scenes from the film as all of which was described in previous chapter.

Nonetheless, in case of *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* the authenticity is achieved by the depiction of present situation with the help of camera in the hands of Alanis Obomsawin. In other words, the feature of authenticity is significantly strengthened by the presence of Obomsawin at the heart of the battle field. The fact that Obomsawin occurred on the side of the Natives, and the overall impact of documentary is analyzed by Bruno Cornellier in his article “The Thing About Obomsawin’s Indianness: Indigenous Reality and the Burden of Education at the National Film Board of Canada” in which he states that thanks to this inside view Obomsawin promotes the minority of Mohawks by giving the voice to them.¹²⁴ This long-lasting injustice against the Natives is thus finally heard and seen by the outer world.

Randolph Lewis, the author of the book *Alanis Obomsawin: The Vision of a Native Filmmaker* points to the presence of Obomsawin and her camera at the battle field as well but he focuses on different aspects. At first he argues that Alanis Obomsawin brought international attention to this conflict and secondly he guesses that the presence of the camera itself moderated the behavior of army and prevented from even greater violence.¹²⁵ The second point Lewis made might be true, however, it cannot be applied to all participants in the conflict because there are violent scenes in the document as well.

Finally, the authenticity of the document is completed by the fact that Alanis Obomsawin not only wrote and directed it but also produced, and narrated it all by herself.¹²⁶ She thus did not have to rely on anybody else but herself which was possible thanks to her connection with the NFB.

3.1.4 Oppression and Persecution

The main aim of *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* is quite obvious—to show injustice towards the Canadian Aboriginal minority and as the title of the document

¹²⁴ Cornellier, “The Thing About Obomsawin’s Indianness,” 11.

¹²⁵ Lewis, *Alanis Obomsawin*, 118.

¹²⁶ Melnyk, *One Hundred Years*, 182.

betrays to highlight 270 years of their resistance including both moderate ways at the beginning and more radical behavior towards the end.¹²⁷

At first, it is interesting to compare the number of people involved in the conflict on both sides. The small number of Mohawks behind the barricades is mentioned towards the end of the document: “There were never more than thirty warriors here in TC. And one spiritual leader, one traditional chief, nineteen women and seven children.”¹²⁸ Although the real number of Canadian soldiers on the other side of the conflict is not mentioned in the document at all, Penny Van Toorn specifies this number in her article where she reveals that in total 2,500 Canadian soldiers were sent there.¹²⁹ Although the Aboriginal Mohawks were evidently in a minority, this still did not moderate the aggressive behavior of the Canadian army.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that the document is not typically black and white but “it depicts violence on all sides”¹³⁰ which means that also the Natives are depicted in violent situations in their behavior against the Canadian army. This might be seen in the scene when one of Mohawk’s warrior struggles with the soldier of Canadian army on which Obomsawin comments that “he is having a hard time controlling himself.”¹³¹ Knowing the history of the conflict, however, such behavior is excusable at least in part.

On the other hand, the behavior of soldiers on the side of Canadian army is still more brutal in comparison with the behavior of the Mohawks. In one of the most brutal scene of the whole document the Mohawk warrior named Spudwrench, who also occurs in Obomsawin’s next document bearing the name *Spudwrench: Kahnawake Man*, is severely beaten for he dozed off in the bunker at night and was attacked by the Canadian army patrol. It took several hours of negotiations to take him to the hospital.¹³² Fortunately, the audiences do not have to witness the beating scene itself but to see the results on Spudwrench’s body is quite enough to realize

¹²⁷ Lewis, *Alanis Obomsawin*, 98.

¹²⁸ Alanis Obomsawin, *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance*, filmed 1933, NFB video, 105:52, https://www.nfb.ca/film/kanehsatake_270_years_of_resistance/.

¹²⁹ Toorn, “Aboriginal Writing,” 39.

¹³⁰ Lewis, *Alanis Obomsawin*, 101.

¹³¹ Obomsawin, *Kanehsatake*, 67:01.

¹³² Obomsawin, *Kanehsatake*, 70:25.

how the Mohawks are oppressed even physically by the presence of the Canadian army.¹³³

In addition to this, the scene when the Mohawk warriors finally decide to exit the Pines and cross the barricade to the other side, which might be considered as the climax of the document, is highly emotive as well because it is full of violence and it very clearly depicts the animalistic behavior of the members of Canadian army.¹³⁴ Unfortunately, neither women nor children are saved from the fierce anger of the soldiers as it is apparent from the authentic shots and the interviews of the people who were really there.¹³⁵ Especially thanks to these scenes there is a warning at the very beginning of the document: “This film contains scenes of violence. Viewer discretion is advised.”¹³⁶

3.1.5 Suppression of Democracy

Although the violent behavior accompanies the whole document, Alanis Obomsawin focuses also on other significant issue which is the suppression of democracy that is questioned in the document many times. In one scene the Mohawk describes the situation of Aboriginals as follows: “This is our country, our home and Native Land, it says. But now they are putting up warriors from my people, we can’t go, we can’t do as we like. We gotta be careful how we talk or who we talk to in this country even in regards to our spirituality.”¹³⁷ Then the Native inhabitant continues in very similar manner when he is denied access to his friends: “I am guaranteed the freedom of movement anywhere within Canada and they said I can’t go in there to meet up my people and that’s ridiculous. This is not Russia, this is not Nazis’ Germany, this is Canada.”¹³⁸ Sadly enough, they both question some of the basic principles of democracy such as the freedom of movement or freedom of speech that are supposed to be guaranteed to all Canadians without any exception. As the document reveals, they are not, though.

¹³³ Lewis, *Alanis Obomsawin*, 106.

¹³⁴ Lewis, *Alanis Obomsawin*, 107.

¹³⁵ Obomsawin, *Kanehsatake*, 108:50.

¹³⁶ Obomsawin, *Kanehsatake*, 00:00.

¹³⁷ Obomsawin, *Kanehsatake*, 88:05.

¹³⁸ Obomsawin, *Kanehsatake*, 88:32.

In another scene the Mohawk is ordered to move his car under the meaningless threat of arrest:

POLICE OFFICER. If you don't move your car I will put you in arrest.

MOHAWK. You're gonna arrest me that I live here? ... Who do you work for? Canada or somebody else?¹³⁹

From individual scenes it is apparent that the principles of democracy are unnecessarily suppressed, however, the Natives actually cannot do anything effective against it. Although they are Canadian as well as the army on the other side, the Natives are in minority which is their weakest point.

In short, the conflict is not among equals, but there are superiors on one side and subordinates on the other and it is quite obvious who stands on which side in this conflict.¹⁴⁰

3.1.6 Restriction on Delivery of Food and Medicine

The fact that there are two unequal parties in the conflict is strengthened with regard to the delivery of food and medicine to the side of minority. This issue is mentioned in the document many times as the food and medicine represent the basic need to both parties, however, it is fully controlled by the Canadian army resulting thus in a very limited distribution to the other side.¹⁴¹

Nevertheless, as Obomsawin clearly exemplifies this hard fact is presented completely differently in the Canadian media. In one scene there is the Canadian politician stating in the presence of the reporters with cameras: "There is free circulation of food on both sides."¹⁴² However, in next scene Obomsawin explains and exemplifies with help of authentic shots how it became more and more difficult to bring food and medication to the side of minority because the volunteers have to

¹³⁹ Obomsawin, *Kanehsatake*, 95:32.

¹⁴⁰ Audrea Lim, "Borderlands and Paradises: Suburbs, Cities and *Alanis Obomsawin*," *Antigonish Review* 162 (2010): 92.

¹⁴¹ Lim, "Borderlands and Paradises," 91.

¹⁴² Obomsawin, *Kanehsatake*, 16:19.

argue with the police every time they come.¹⁴³ In addition to this, they have to wait before every item is checked and then they are turned away.¹⁴⁴ Again, this is presented entirely differently by the Canadian government as one of its members asserts in the immediately following scene: “There will be no restrictions in terms of the delivery of food. It has never been the policy of this government to do that and we want to clarify this once and for all.”¹⁴⁵

Unfortunately, the situation does not improve in the course of time but it gets worse, and “the chance of bringing food across the lake is much reduced”¹⁴⁶ which is caused by the boats of the Canadian army patrolling the lake. Nonetheless, this is again completely denied by the army officer claiming in one of the following interviews that “we’ve never stopped the flow of food or medical supplies.”¹⁴⁷

To sum up, these two different points of view brings the audience to the question about whom to believe? To the statements of various politicians or to the authentic shots made by Obomsawin who was really there? Again, it is up to the audience to decide. Obomsawin does not want to persuade, but she only shows what she witnessed without censorship and misinterpretation.

3.1.7 Overall Reception and Purpose of the Document

Surprisingly, but very similar to *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner* and *Nanook of the North* in fact also *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* was well received internationally and won a great number of different awards worldwide: “The film did well on British and Japanese television, won eighteen awards around the globe, and held the spotlight at major festivals such as Sundance”¹⁴⁸ referring thus to its undoubtedly unique qualities.

Although *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* became the best Canadian feature at the Toronto International Film Festival¹⁴⁹ for Canadian audiences this document might be particularly disturbing as it reveals the bloody history of Canada

¹⁴³ Obomsawin, *Kanehsatake*, 16:25.

¹⁴⁴ Obomsawin, *Kanehsatake*, 16:52.

¹⁴⁵ Obomsawin, *Kanehsatake*, 17:05.

¹⁴⁶ Obomsawin, *Kanehsatake*, 69:10.

¹⁴⁷ Obomsawin, *Kanehsatake*, 83:55.

¹⁴⁸ Lewis, *Alanis Obomsawin*, 109.

¹⁴⁹ Melnyk, *One Hundred Years*, 182.

in relation to its Aboriginal inhabitants with which many Canadians do not have to be necessarily acquainted with.¹⁵⁰ In this respect the document might serve among other things as a great educational tool which was probably Obomsawin's intention as Randolph Lewis argue in one chapter of his book: "Through her documentaries, Obomsawin attempts to inscribe the historical onto the contemporary, reminding us that the past has special relevance for Natives, that it remains alive in ways that are politically and socially significant."¹⁵¹ This can be particularly applied to *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance*. Although it takes place in the early nineties, the whole document is based on the conflict from the past—on the historical struggle among the Natives and Canadians for the land, and Obomsawin does not want this conflict to be forgotten.

¹⁵⁰ Harrison, "Oka: Behind the Barricades," 160.

¹⁵¹ Lewis, *Alanis Obomsawin*, 139.

4 PERSECUTION OF THE MÉTIS AS DEPICTED IN THE POETRY OF MARILYN DUMONT

4.1 *A Really Good Brown Girl* (1996)

4.1.1 Aboriginal Writings with the Focus on Poetry

As in case of oral tradition, also the written word played a very important role in the culture of the Aboriginals over the centuries. In order to preserve the stories told orally among the members of Aboriginal community, the first publishing house owned by the Native and named Theytus Books was established¹⁵² which significantly helped with the production of Aboriginal literature in Canada. It is valid to say that Aboriginal writing is even today heavily influenced by oral tradition of their ancestors,¹⁵³ which originally consisted of “the oral arts of narrative, song, oratory, and prayer,”¹⁵⁴ thus indicating how prominent position the oral tradition still has in the culture of Aboriginal peoples.

Broadly speaking, poetry has not always been as notable as it is today in Canada because “in 1832 Canada was first and foremost a land without poetry. It was not until more than thirty years later that Edward Hartley Dewart (1828-1903) would publish the first anthology of Canadian poetry, *Selections from Canadian Poets* (1864).”¹⁵⁵ Although Dewart listed a great number of Canadian poets in his anthology, no Aboriginal poet was mentioned here at all. However, only a few decades later Aboriginal women poet named Emily Pauline Johnson published her first collection of poetry entitled *The White Wampum* (1895) and became the most famous women writer. Unfortunately, this was one of very few achievements of Aboriginal writing in this period and almost nothing else was published in Canada by 1960s.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² Toorn, “Aboriginal Writing,” 22-24.

¹⁵³ Toorn, “Aboriginal Writing,” 24.

¹⁵⁴ Toorn, “Aboriginal Writing,” 26.

¹⁵⁵ David Staines, “Poetry,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Canadian Literature*, ed. Eva-Marie Kröller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 135.

¹⁵⁶ Toorn, “Aboriginal Writing,” 30-31.

However, the situation significantly changed with the beginning of the 1970s which “saw the emergence of several anthologies and collections of Native poetry and stories.”¹⁵⁷ This was a very important milestone for Aboriginal writing in general which has gained prominence and began to occupy a better position in Canadian literature since this time. Significantly, the poetess Marilyn Dumont is a great example of that.

4.1.2 Personality of Marilyn Dumont

Marilyn Dumont represents a leading Canadian Aboriginal poetess. It is necessary to mention Dumont’s family background as “she is a descendant of Gabriel Dumont (1837-1906), an important political leader of the Métis people”¹⁵⁸ and it seems that Dumont decided to follow the steps of her father because she also openly identifies herself as the Métis.¹⁵⁹ Marilyn graduated from the University of British Columbia and became “a writer-in-residence at different universities”¹⁶⁰ which was the beginning of her writing career.

From the point of view of literature, she has published three famous collections of poetry so far all of which were awarded different prizes:

Dumont’s first collection of poetry, *A Really Good Brown Girl* (1996), won the Gerald Lampert Award for best first book of Canadian poetry. Her second book, *Green Girl Dreams Mountains* (2001), won both the Alberta Book Award for poetry and the Writer’s Guild of Alberta Stephan G. Stephansson Award for poetry, and her third collection, *That Tongue Belonging*, was awarded both the 2007 Anskohk Aboriginal Poetry Book of the Year and the McNally Robinson Aboriginal Book of the Year.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ Toorn, “Aboriginal Writing,” 35.

¹⁵⁸ Laura Beard, “Playing Indian in the Works of Rebecca Belmore, Marilyn Dumont, and Ray Young Bear,” *American Indian Quarterly* 38 (2014): 503.

¹⁵⁹ Jennifer Andrews, “Irony, Métis Style: Reading the Poetry of Marilyn Dumont and Gregory Scofield,” *Canadian Poetry* 50 (2002): 8.

¹⁶⁰ Jennifer Andrews, “‘Among the Word Animals’: A Conversation with Marilyn Dumont,” *Studies in Canadian Literature* 29 (2004): 146.

¹⁶¹ Beard, “Playing Indian,” 499.

According to the number of various awards Dumont received for her collections of poetry it is obvious that she represents an important personality of the Canadian Native poetry, and it is just her first collection of poetry *A Really Good Brown Girl* which will be thoroughly analyzed in the following sections.

4.1.3 Form and Influences on Marilyn Dumont's Poetry

Generally speaking, the poetry of Marilyn Dumont may be considered as highly experimental in terms of form, which is very obvious in the first two collections of poetry in various ways such as “the minimal use of punctuation and capitalization” or “Dumont’s use of white space within and between the poems.”¹⁶² In addition to this, Marilyn Dumont frequently uses also other literary devices in her poems including “the alliterative, enjambed lines and prose rhythm patterns, the strong, assured poetic voice, the artfully crafted figurative language, and the tough, clear images.”¹⁶³ All of these devices are supposed to help the reader understand the message hidden between the lines of the poems.

On the other hand, the individual themes and motifs do not vary so much in Dumont’s poetry. *A Really Good Brown Girl* itself is divided into four main sections but one of the most apparent theme is the depiction of history of her people which Dumont explains in the interview with Jennifer Andrews:

JA. What place does history have in your poems? Are you writing back to official versions of history or do you see your poems as creating new histories?
 MD. I think it’s certainly writing back to the history that I learned, but it is also a way of creating a new history too. The interesting thing about stories is that we think we write story based on something that’s happened in our past — it is a process of recollection. But it’s interesting what happens, because when we write stories we create worlds.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Cara DeHaan, ““Exorcising a lot of shame”: Transformation and Affective Experience in Marilyn Dumont’s *green girl dreams Mountains*,” *Studies in Canadian Literature* 34 (2009): 238.

¹⁶³ Renée Hulan, “Things Made Beautiful,” *Canadian Literature* 180 (2004): 129.

¹⁶⁴ Andrews, ““Among the Word Animals,”” 147.

By this Dumont proves that her poems are based on actual historical events to a certain degree, but there is something new she adds into her poems and this makes her poetry so unique and distinct from other poets and poetess.

Additionally, Dumont reveals one more thing influencing her writing and they are female writers. To the questions: “Which poets influence your writing? ... Are you reading other Native poets? Other female poets?” asked by Andrews in the interview Dumont answers: “Yes, I would say mostly other female poets. ... Basically, with any woman poet that I don’t know I’ll pick it up and look through her work. I find that I always want to know more.”¹⁶⁵ In short, it is not only the cultural and political history of the Métis, but also other female poets that influence the poetry of Marilyn Dumont. In this diploma both themes will be further analyzed and mutually compared below.

4.1.4 Persecution of the Métis

The study of the poems cannot begin differently in *A Really Good Brown Girl* than with the theme so obvious that is the persecution of the Canadian Natives or more precisely of the Métis as the title of the chapter indicates. This central theme is apparent throughout the whole collection of poetry and it was already discussed that it can be accounted for the fact that Marilyn Dumont herself of Métis origin learned and even experienced some of these mistreatments on her own which she later described in her collection of poetry. Nevertheless, except for injustice to the Métis Dumont focuses also on other issues closely related which will be subsequently analyzed as well.

To begin with, in Dumont’s frequently discussed poem “Letter to Sir John A. Macdonald,” which belongs to the third section of the collection collectively named *White Noise*, she focuses on various issues related to Métis identity. At first the poem points to uncertain origin of the Métis which is apparent from the first line to the final line: “Dear John: I’m still here and halfbreed, / ... and it’s funny we’re still here and callin ourselves halfbreed.”¹⁶⁶ By this Dumont probably wants to stress the historical

¹⁶⁵ Andrews, ““Among the Word Animals,”” 150.

¹⁶⁶ Marilyn Dumont, *A Really Good Brown Girl* (London: Brick Books), 52.

perception of the Métis in Canada as they were not treated as the Aboriginal Peoples until 1982¹⁶⁷ and thus their origin was questioned many times. Primarily, she applies the term “halfbreed” only to herself which is obvious in the first line but at the end of the poem she uses the same term for the whole population of the Métis. Additionally, it is also important to stress the declaration “still here” which in connection with “halfbreed” refers to “their survival as a strong and distinctive population.”¹⁶⁸ This is strengthened by the last line of the first stanza ending with “we’re still here and Metis”¹⁶⁹ as well as by the beginning of the second stanza which starts with the same words. According to this, Marilyn Dumont is not afraid of extinction of her people at all, but conversely, she is very proud to be of Métis origin herself that she expresses openly in the poem.

Regarding the title of the poem, it is necessary to mention the name of John A. Macdonald who was the Canadian Prime Minister known for his “claim that the railroad would unify Canada.”¹⁷⁰ Dumont strongly denies and satirizes such an idea that is apparent from the following lines:

that railway you wanted so badly,
there was talk a year ago
of shutting it down
and part of it was shut down
the dayliner at least,¹⁷¹

Dumont stresses that although Macdonald’s idea about the railway construction was a big deal at that time, now it is slowly but progressively shutting down. Nevertheless, the real reason why Dumont completely rejects the construction is a real purpose which stands behind the project that is the justification for the displacement of the

¹⁶⁷ Andrews, “Irony, Métis Style,” 12.

¹⁶⁸ Andrews, “Irony, Métis Style,” 11.

¹⁶⁹ Dumont, *Good Girl*, 52.

¹⁷⁰ Toorn, “Aboriginal Writing,” 41.

¹⁷¹ Dumont, *Good Girl*, 52.

Métis people.¹⁷² This becomes obvious from the following lines of the first stanza of the poem:

‘from sea to shining sea,’
and you know, John,
after all that shuffling us around to suit the settlers,
we’re still here and Metis.¹⁷³

Métis People were removed ‘from sea to shining sea’ in order to yield to Canadians and it was expected “that the Métis would disappear.”¹⁷⁴ However, such ideas were not fulfilled because Métis people did not give up, struggled for their rights, and a current presence in Canada might be seen as the result of their resistance. All of these cannot be summarized better than by the declaration of “we’re still here” occurring in the poem in three different lines, and everybody, not only Macdonald, should be aware of this undeniable fact.

In short, there is not only one issue discussed in this poem. On one hand there is the historical displacement of the Métis mentioned implicitly in the poem but on the other the resistance and ability to survive this injustice and mistreatment represent the hope for a better future of Métis people in Canada because they are still there as suggested in the poem.

The similar themes of persecution and resistance also occur in the poem named “The Devil’s Language” which is included in the third section as in case of the “Letter to Sir John A. Macdonald.” The reason why this poem belongs to the section titled *White Noise* is obvious from the very beginning of the poem:

I have since reconsidered Eliot
and the Great White way of writing English
standard that is
the great white way

¹⁷² Andrews, “Irony, Métis Style,” 15.

¹⁷³ Dumont, *Good Girl*, 52.

¹⁷⁴ Andrews, “Irony, Métis Style,” 15.

has measured, judged and assesses me all my life
 by its
 lily white words
 its picket fence sentences
 and manicured paragraphs¹⁷⁵

In this short passage Marilyn Dumont points to the word connections including “white” in different situations and stresses how she herself has been influenced by “the Great White way of writing English” through all her life and how it is necessary to use just this prescribed literary “standard” with its “lily white words” in Canada. It is obvious that she tries to make fun out of it. Significantly, the mentioned “standard” might exceed its usage also to other areas such as the race or gender¹⁷⁶ and the meaning of these lines is thus much deeper than it might seem.

Consequently, the poem continues in a different manner in which it describes the circumstances of violating the white writing standard:

one wrong sound and you’re shelved in the Native Literature section
 resistance writing
 a mad Indian
 unpredictable
 on the war path
 native ethnic protest
 the Great White way could silence us all
 if we let it¹⁷⁷

Dumont warns the Métis audience that only “one wrong sound” suffices to become labelled “a mad Indian” which does not have a place in Canadian literature driven by “the Great White way” at all. Put differently, the poetry written by the Natives is not treated equally to the poetry of white Canadians, and the Native literature as such is

¹⁷⁵ Dumont, *Good Girl*, 54.

¹⁷⁶ Beard, “Playing Indian,” 502.

¹⁷⁷ Dumont, *Good Girl*, 54.

generally considered as inferior,¹⁷⁸ and “shelved in the Native Literature section” as Dumont implies.

So again, what the poem explicitly reveals is not completely the same as what it actually means. However, in this case the message is quite clear as it points to “the *ongoing* process of cutting Native and Métis peoples off from their mother tongues and those who speak them.”¹⁷⁹ In other words, speaking the language of your peoples actually means the speaking the devil’s language which is considered as something primitive in modern Canada:

as if speaking the devil’s language is
talking back
back(words)
back to your mother’s sound, your mother’s tongue, your mother’s language
back to that clearing in the bush
in the tall black spruce¹⁸⁰

Although speaking “the devil’s language” is entirely natural for the Métis, because it is their native language, for the rest of the population in Canada it is perceived as something like going “back(words)” in the evolution, or even “back to that clearing in the bush,” and this is the reason why the Métis involuntarily leave their mother language in favor of English as Marilyn Dumont describes in this poem.

With reference to this, however, it is not always easy for Métis population to speak English properly which is also mentioned in the poem in a negative way: “syntactic laws: use the wrong order or / register and you’re a dumb Indian / dumb, drunk or violent.”¹⁸¹ So again, although the Métis try to comply with the demands of the Canadian non-native population, it seems to be impossible to oblige, and they are

¹⁷⁸ Renée Hulan, “Cultural Contexts for the Reception of Marilyn Dumont’s *A Really Good Brown Girl*,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 35 (2000): 86.

¹⁷⁹ Toorn, “Aboriginal Writing,” 41.

¹⁸⁰ Dumont, *Good Girl*, 55.

¹⁸¹ Dumont, *Good Girl*, 54.

labeled as “dumb, drunk or violent” which clearly describes their difficult situation in Canadian society.

Nevertheless, in order to finish the analysis of “the Devil’s Language” in more optimistic way, it is necessary to focus on the lines following the analysis in previous paragraph:

my father doesn’t read or write
 the King’s English says he’s
 dumb but he speaks Cree
 how many of you speak Cree?
 correct Cree not correct English
 grammatically correct Cree
 is there one?¹⁸²

Susan Gingell in her article “When X Equals Zero: The Politics of Voice in Indigenous Women’s Poetry in Canada” thoroughly analyses among other poems also this one and she suggests that these lines, which closes the first part, actually contribute to the reverse meaning of the title of the poem in a way that “the Devil’s Language” might be English as well. Gingell focuses especially on the final line ending with the question “is there one?” and she asks whether there is at least one person who can speak Cree, which is the language of the Métis, or whether there is grammatically correct Cree?¹⁸³ By doing so she brings Cree to the foreground which is an entirely new idea that enables the reader to reconsider the poem in a completely different way. Métis language is thus not seen as inferior to English for the first time.

4.1.5 Violence against Métis Women and Gender Expectations

It was already mentioned that Marilyn Dumont was influenced by the number of female poets and also the female figures frequently occur in her poems. Nonetheless, such a depiction is negative in most cases as she describes different forms of violence

¹⁸² Dumont, *Good Girl*, 54.

¹⁸³ Susan Gingell, “When X Equals Zero: The Politics of Voice in Indigenous Women’s Poetry in Canada,” *English Studies in Canada* 24 (1998), 447-448.

against defenseless women which is actually connected with the previous theme of persecution of the Métis, but somewhat limited.

Primarily, a typical example of this kind of poems represents “Helen Betty Osborne” which belongs to the first section named *Squaw Poems* and focuses on a real woman with a tragic fate. However, in order to understand the poem, it is necessary to be briefly acquainted with the personality and especially with the fate of Helen Betty Osborne.

Briefly, Helen Betty Osborne was an Indigenous woman who was “accosted by four non-Indigenous men, beaten, sexually assaulted, taken to a cabin, and stabbed to death”¹⁸⁴ while walking home from a dance. Although this violent incident happened already in the 1970s, it is still generally known among the Canadian Natives and the poem written by Marilyn Dumont exemplifies this. Nevertheless, it is valid to say that Dumont does not want to focus only on Helen Betty Osborne herself which is apparent from the first lines of the poem where Dumont names the potential candidates at whom the poem might be aimed at:

Betty, if I set out to write this poem about you
it might turn out instead
to be about me
or any one of
my female relatives¹⁸⁵

By admitting that the poem, which was originally addressed to Helen Betty Osborne, might be about Dumont herself or even about the members of her family, Dumont wants to warn the Indigenous audience that this might actually happen to any other Native women.¹⁸⁶ This unambiguously indicates that what happened was not an accident or an isolated case but such horrible things really happened in Canada at least in those days.

¹⁸⁴ Beard, “Playing Indian,” 500.

¹⁸⁵ Dumont, *Good Girl*, 20.

¹⁸⁶ Beard, “Playing Indian,” 500.

In addition to this, the poem intensifies in its final lines which end in: “it might be about the ‘townsfolk’ (gentle word) / townsfolk who ‘believed native girls were easy’ / and ‘less likely to complain if a sexual proposition led to violence.’¹⁸⁷ According to these lines, there was a general assumption among non-Native Canadians that the Native girls were more easily accessible in terms of sexual services and afraid to complain about any sexual violence happening to them. Obviously, this is not true, but it clearly reflects the situation around the 1970s when Helen Betty Osborne was attacked, sexually abused and killed. In other words, by writing about her “is to confront the ugly realities of violence against Indigenous women”¹⁸⁸ that really happened in Canada, and Dumont wants the reader to know about it and never forget such things.

To conclude, Marianne Mays in her review of *A Really Good Brown Girl* uses the words “powerful and poignant poem”¹⁸⁹ while describing “Helen Betty Osborne”. Its “poignancy” is reflected not only in the sober tone of the poem but also in the description of an unenviable situation of Canadian Native women resulting from the colonialism as suggested by Mays.¹⁹⁰ So although this poem focuses primarily on the Native women, it undoubtedly contributes to the theme of persecution of the Métis defined at the beginning of this chapter.

The last analyzed poem is titled “Blue Ribbon Children” and belongs to the same section as the previous one indicating that the theme should be very similar. This appears to be true because the poem begins with the traditional description of women according to their duties:

I was supposed
to be married, a wife
who cooked
large pots of potatoes,
chunks of steaming meat and

¹⁸⁷ Dumont, *Good Girl*, 20.

¹⁸⁸ Beard, “Playing Indian,” 500.

¹⁸⁹ Marianne Mays, *A Really Good Brown Girl/Talking to the Diaspora*, *Herizons* 29 (2016), 43.

¹⁹⁰ Mays, *A Really Good Brown Girl*, 43.

slabs of brown crusty bannock. I was supposed
 to prepare meals
 for a man who returned
 every night like
 homing pigeon¹⁹¹

According to these lines, Dumont describes women as if from traditional men's point of view who view their wives as their housewives taking care of households and preparing meal for them. In other words, the poem "lays out a certain set of gendered expectations¹⁹²" which every woman should fulfil.

Nevertheless, except for cleaning and cooking, there are other duties expected from women, namely to have and raise children:

[...] I was supposed
 to balance children like
 bags of flour on my hip,
 lift them in and out of
 bathtubs, lather them
 like butterballs, pack them safely
 away in bed, then stuff them
 into patched clothes for morning, ...¹⁹³

Traditionally, women are supposed to have children about whom they have to take care of without any help of men. They are always women who are supposed to bath, dress and feed the children which corresponds to the so called "gender expectations" as labelled by Laura Beard. It is not apparent whether the poem is about Marilyn Dumont or not, but it is obvious that she exactly knows what the traditional expectations from a society are. By writing about them Dumont wants to question such expectations at least.

¹⁹¹ Dumont, *Good Girl*, 20.

¹⁹² Beard, "Playing Indian," 501.

¹⁹³ Dumont, *Good Girl*, 20.

To sum up the final chapter of the diploma thesis, the poetry of Marilyn Dumont primarily focuses on the oppression of the Canadian Natives which is apparent from the analysis of the poems. However, the role and position of women in society also play a very important role for her as some of the poems deal with women's issues including sexuality and gender expectations. She questions the traditional model of society where women have to take care of children, husband and household contributing thus to the modern view of the world.

CONCLUSION

Although the diploma thesis deals with the theme not so frequently discussed and for many people completely unknown, which is actually the reason why it was chosen for further analysis, the theme of the depiction of First Nations and Inuit peoples in different forms of art produced by both Native and non-Native Canadians is supposed to help the reader understand how First Nations and Inuit peoples are generally perceived and how they view themselves in films and literary works. The main aim of the diploma thesis is thus the thorough analysis of selected films, documents and a number of poems with the help of critical approaches such as biographical and historical criticism, and a number of secondary sources. Finally, a mutual comparison between the individual works determines what the common features are.

As in case of the American Indians, also the Canadian Natives had to struggle for land, for their rights and most importantly for freedom with non-Aboriginal Canadians since the 18th century. Some of the rights were not achieved before the end of the 20th century which answers to the question why the themes of persecution and a constant struggle for better conditions represent one of the most common themes in Canadian Aboriginal documents and literature.

On the other hand, the distinct history of Inuit peoples and especially their ability to survive the extreme weather conditions prevailing in the inhospitable Arctic regions aroused attention also of the non-Native people providing thus another frequent theme for number of films. Then these two most common themes represent the starting point for the rest of the analysis.

Generally, the analysis in the second chapter was centered on the depiction of the Inuit as they lived in the Arctic regions hundreds of years ago. The model films chosen for the analysis were Robert Flaherty's docudrama *Nanook of the North* (1922) and Zacharias Kunuk's *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner* (2001). Although both films focus on the similar theme, their adaptations significantly differ from one another. Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* cannot be regarded as a truthful source of information about the culture of the Inuit because he deliberately changed some of the realities in order to satisfy the needs of the audience. Surprisingly or not, this really

worked and the film was awarded different prizes and positively accepted at the audience, though it is labelled as a “deliberate fake” in the diploma thesis.

Zacharias Kunuk’s highly acclaimed film *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner* became a great success at distinct international festivals as well, however, its production is different from the *Nanook of the North*. The greatest difference between these two films is the question of the audience at which the directors focus on. Since Robert Flaherty has an American origin, he wanted to satisfy primarily the American audience for price of the authenticity of the film whilst Zacharias Kunuk focuses primarily on the Inuit audience as he himself of Inuit ancestry tries to depict the realities as it really happened in the history. The fact that the film is spoken in Inuktitut, the language of the Inuit, and they are the English subtitles which are added to the film refers to both its aim at the Inuit audience and the endeavor to promote the Inuit culture worldwide. This is strengthened by the depiction of various details from Inuit way of life such as the hunting practices or eating habits which correspond to the historical realities that are not truthfully described in Flaherty’s film. Significantly, Kunuk does not want to somehow exaggerate the acts of Inuit peoples but it clearly shows the primitivism of that time and a slowly passing way of life in one small Inuit community situated somewhere in the Arctic region.

The final comparison of both film reveals that Robert Flaherty made his film primarily for the satisfaction of his audience and the question of authenticity did not play an important role for him, while Zacharis Kunuk was rather interested in the promotion and introduction to the Inuit way of life.

The third chapter was devoted to the analysis of Alanis Obomsawin’s document *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* (1993) which depicts the circumstances and progression of the conflict among the Natives and the Canadian army in Kanehsatake, Quebec. The analysis might be seen as a continuation of the previous chapter in a sense that it goes further and it describes what the Canadian Natives had to face with the arrival of the European colonizers. The tranquil way of life was disrupted once and for all and the continuing struggle for land and rights can be seen as the main purpose of the life of Canadian First Nations and Inuit in the 19th and 20th century.

Although *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* focuses on a single event, it may be considered as a model example of what was the situation of the Canadian Natives yet in the 1990s because the film also deals with the reasons leading to this stand-off. The authentic shots unambiguously describe the suppression of democracy, restriction on the delivery of food or even the limited distribution of the medicine and many people interviewed in the document ask the question about how it is really possible that such things happen in Canada in the end of the 20th century? No one is able to answer the question, though.

Like Zacharis Kunuk's film, also the document directed by Alanis Obomsawin wants to point to the real existence of the Canadian Aboriginals with the main focus on the depiction of some of the difficulties the Canadian Aboriginals have to struggle even in recent history.

Although the final analysis focuses on a literary work, it resembles to the previous analysis because again it points to the persecution of the Canadian Natives as expressed in a poetry. The model poetess represents Marilyn Dumont with her collection of poetry named *A Really Good Brown Girl* (1996).

It was discussed that the individual poems are written in different forms and using various literary devices, however, the themes do not vary that much. One of the most prevailing themes is the persecution of the Métis that occurs in great number of poems. It was argued that the legacy of colonization was one of the main reasons for subsequent persecution of the Canadian Natives as they were involuntarily removed from their land and that was the beginning of their long lasting conflict. Marilyn Dumont depicts all of these injustice in various poems, but it is necessary to stress that she adds the features of hopes for better future of the Métis in terms of their resistance so the poems do not have to be interpreted only negatively.

Interestingly, Dumont also dedicates some of her poems to women because she considers them as a source of inspiration. She mainly focuses on two themes. Primarily it is the suffering of the Aboriginal women representing the objects of many attacks and sexual harassment. Nevertheless, she also deals with the traditional roles women are supposed to fulfil such as having children and taking care of the household which she criticized.

To conclude, the Canadian Natives are depicted variously in different works of art. It is their distinct history that attracts the attention of directors, however, the documentarists focus rather on the events and conflicts connected with the suppression of democracy or their struggles for the confiscated land. This theme frequently occurs also in the literary works because it represents an integral part of the history of the Canadian Natives that should not be forgotten.

RESUMÉ

Diplomová práce s názvem "Původní obyvatelé v kanadské kultuře" se zabývá tématem, které je pro mnohé zcela neznámé, což byl taky jeden z faktorů při výběru. Díky tomu by tato diplomová práce měla přiblížit, jak jsou původní obyvatelé Kanady vyobrazeni v různých filmových či literárních dílech, jehož autoři jsou převážně sami tito původní obyvatelé, avšak rozbor se zabývá i dílem od amerického autora, jehož dokumentární film nelze opomenout. Hlavním tématem celé práce je tedy analýza vybraných filmů, dokumentů a básní a následné vzájemné srovnání s důrazem na sjednocovací prvky, které jednotlivá díla spojují. Coby podpůrné zdroje pro rozbor sloužily především kritické přístupy a to biografický či historický spolu s množstvím sekundárních zdrojů.

Stejně jako američtí Indiáni tak i původní obyvatelé Kanady museli od počátku 18. století bojovat o své území, práva a především o svobodu s nepůvodními obyvateli Kanady. Ještě na konci 20. století nebyla těmto původním obyvatelům deklarována všechna práva, což je taky jedním z hlavních důvodů, proč jsou témata utlačování, vykořisťování či neustálého boje za svobodu často vyobrazována v různých literárních dílech a ve filmech původních autorů.

Dalším oblíbeným tématem je historie Inuitů a jejich schopnost přežít v drsných podmínkách, které panují v arktických oblastech. Vyobrazení tradičního života těchto obyvatel se tak stalo dalším hojně se vyskytujícím tématem filmů, které spolu s tématem utlačování tvoří základ pro následný rozbor a završují tak první kapitulu.

Následující kapitola se už zabývá samotným rozbohem druhého tématu, tedy životem Inuitů, nebo přesněji jak tomu bylo před příchodem kolonizátorů. Jako předlohy k rozboru posloužily dva filmy, jmenovitě dokumentární drama amerického režiséra Roberta Flahertyho *Nanook of the North* (1922), který byl v České republice distribuován pod názvem *Nanook – člověk primitivní* a film Zachariase Kunuka *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner* (2001), který u nás promítali v kinech pod názvem *Rychlý běžec*. Oba filmy se zabývají stejným tématem, avšak jejich zpracování se značně liší. V případě *Nanooka – člověka primitivního* se nejedná o přesnou interpretaci života Inuitů, neboť některé skutečnosti byly změněny tak, aby se film

zalíbil publiku. To se také stalo a *Nanook – člověk primitivní* byl velice kladně hodnocen, ikdyž v této diplomové práci nese označení jako ”záměrný podvrh.“

Stejný úspěch jako v případě *Nanooka – člověka primitivního* zaznamenal i celovečerní debut Zachariase Kunuka *Rychlý běžec*. Navíc byl tento film oceněn na různých mezinárodních festivalech, což je skvělý úspěch pro inuitského režiséra. Nutno ovšem podotknout, že oba filmy se významně liší. Jak již bylo uvedeno, dokument Roberta Flahertyho se primárně zaměřuje na americké publikum, čemuž podlehl i scénář a celkové zpracování dokumentu, který neodpovídá skutečností ze života Inuitů. Na druhou stranu Zacharias Kunuk chtěl primárně přiblížit život svých předchůdců za polárním kruhem přesně tak, jak tomu bylo před stovkami let. Zároveň se jedná o první film natočený v jazyce Inuitů s anglickými titulky, což rovněž svědčí o snaze přilákat pozornost nejenom svých lidí, ale zároveň i přiblížit kulturu Inuitů širšímu publiku. K tomu dopomohlo zachycení různých detailů z běžného života Inuitů, jako je například lov nebo obstarávání potravy, které v případě tohoto filmu přesně odpovídají historickým skutečnostem. Kunuk ovšem nechtěl nic zveličovat, pouze poukázal na to, jak to fungovalo v inuitské komunitě před příchodem kolonizátorů z Evropy.

Na konci této kapitoly se nachází závěrečné srovnání obou filmů, které jasně poukazuje na to, že pro Roberta Flahertyho nebyla otázka autentičnosti filmu nijak zásadní, ale jeho primární zájem bylo uspokojit publikum. V případě filmu Zachariase Kunuka se ovšem jednalo o obeznámení mezinárodního publika se způsobem života Inuitů za polárním kruhem.

Třetí kapitola je věnována rozboru dokumentu *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* od dokumentaristky Alanis Obomsawin, který u nás bohužel nebyl v distribuci. Dokument zachycuje okolnosti, které vedly ke konfliktu mezi kanadskými původními obyvateli a kanadskou policií v Kanehsatake, Quebec. Samotný rozbor dokumentu může být vnímán jako pokračování předešlé analýzy s tím rozdílem, že dokument poukazuje na to, čemu museli původní obyvatelé Kanady čelit s příchodem kolonizátorů. Poklidný způsob života byl jednou provždy narušen a neustálý boj o území byl každodenní součástí jejich životů v 19. a 20. století.

Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance se sice primárně zaměřuje na jeden ozbrojený konflikt z 90. let, ale protože objasňuje i příčiny jeho vzniku, byl vybrán coby modelový příklad pro celou kapitolu. Autentické záběry v dokumentu jasně dokazují, že došlo k potlačení demokracie a základních lidských práv a svobod, omezení zásobování a dokonce i léků pro bojovníky, kteří se nacházeli na druhé straně barikády. Svědci tohoto konfliktu polemizují nad tím, jak je možné, že se takové věci dějí v tak civilizované zemi jako je Kanada, a to koncem 20. století? Odpověď jim ale bohužel nikdo není schopen poskytnout.

Co spojuje filmy Zachariase Kunuka a Alanis Obomsawin je především snaha o zviditelnění minority žijící v Kanadě. Obomsawin se navíc ve svém dokumentu snaží poukázat také na skutečnosti, s čím vším se původní obyvatelé museli vypořádat ještě v nedávné minulosti.

Stejně jako v předešlé kapitole, tak i závěrečný rozbor se zaměřuje na úděl a nezáviděníhodné postavení původních obyvatel Kanady, avšak tentokrát k analýze posloužila sbírka básní *A Really Good Brown Girl* (1996) od významné kanadské básnířky Marilyn Dumontové. Na základě rozboru bylo zjištěno, že jednotlivé básně Dumontové jsou velice originální co se formy a použitých básnických prostředků týče, avšak témata se převážně vztahují na neblahý úděl kanadského původního obyvatelstva. Značná část viny je připisována kolonizátorům, kteří vytlačili původní obyvatele z jejich území, což je považováno za počátek jejich konfliktu. Dumontová nezapomíná připomenout tyto události v nejedné básni, avšak z jejího díla je patrná i určitá naděje vedoucí ke zlepšení celé situace, neboť pokud původní obyvatelé nevymřeli doteď, hovoří to o jejich odolnosti překonat všechna možná příkoří i v budoucnosti.

V úvodu čtvrté kapitoly bylo zmíněno, že pro Dumontovou představují velkou inspiraci ženské spisovatelky. Ve svých básních se pak k ženám vrací a poukazuje na těžkou úlohu původních obyvatel, které se mnohokrát nejsou schopny ubránit sexuálnímu násilí, a proto jsou častým terčem napadání a sexuálních útoků. Jiným tématem, kterým se ve svých básních zabývá, jsou jistá genderová očekávání, která jsou stále patrná v dnešní společnosti. Dumontová poukazuje na to, že ženy jsou stále

pokládány za hospodyně, které se starají o domácnost, děti i manžela, což ona sama ovšem odmítá a řadí se tak k moderním a pokrokovým básničkám.

Z rozboru učiněného v této diplomové práci vyplývá, že původní obyvatelé Kanady jsou vyobrazováni odlišně v různých literárních a filmových dílech. Specifická historie Inuitů sice upoutala pozornost nejednoho filmaře, avšak dokumentaristé se spíše zaměřují na konflikty a situace, v nichž dochází k potlačení demokracie a základních lidských práv a svobod původních obyvatel Kanady. Takové téma je typické také pro literární tvorbu, což ovšem není překvapivé, neboť utlačování a křivda byla a je úzce spjata se životem původních obyvatel Kanady a na to by se nemělo zapomínat.

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Abstract

The main aim of this diploma thesis is to present and analyze how First Nations and Inuit peoples are depicted in different works of arts produced by Canadian authors. This was achieved with the help of films, documents and number of poems. Selected films include Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* (1922), Zacharias Kunuk's *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner* (2001) and Alanis Obomsawin's document *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* (1993), and regarding the poetry Marilyn Dumont's collection of poetry *A Really Good Brown Girl* (1996) was analyzed. On the basis of a thorough analysis it was ascertained that two most frequently occurring themes represent the depiction distinct history of the Inuit, but this applies especially for the film industry, however, documents and poems focuses rather on the themes of persecution and suppression of democracy of the Canadian Natives which form an essential part of the history of First Nations and Inuit.

Key words: Canadian film, Zacharias Kunuk, *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner*, Canadian document, Alanis Obomsawin, *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance*, Canadian poetry, Marilyn Dumont, *A Really Good Brown Girl*.

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Abstrakt

Cílem bakalářské práce je představit a analyzovat, jak jsou původní obyvatelé Kanady vyobrazeni v různých uměleckých dílech kanadských autorů. Samotný rozbor byl provedený na základě filmů, dokumentů a básní. Mezi vybrané filmy patří dokumentární drama Roberta Flahertyho *Nanook of the North* (*Nanook – člověk primitivní*), film Zachariase Kunuka *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner* (*Rychlý běžec*) a dokument Alanis Obomsawin *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance*. K rozboru básní pak posloužila sbírka Marilyn Dumontové *A Really Good Brown Girl*. Z výsledků analýzy vyplývá, že mezi dvě nejčastěji se vyskytující témata patří vyobrazení odlišné historie Inuitů, což je oblíbený námět mnoha filmů, avšak co se dokumentárních filmů a básní týče, tak ty se spíše zaměřují na témata perzekuce a potlačení základních lidských práv a svobod původních obyvatel Kanady, neboť toto téma tvoří nedílnou součást života původních obyvatel Kanady.

Klíčová slova: Kanadský film, Zacharias Kunuk, *Rychlý běžec*, kanadský dokument, Alanis Obomsawin, *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance*, kanadská poezie, Marilyn Dumont, *A Really Good Brown Girl*.