

## “There Are No More Words to the Story”

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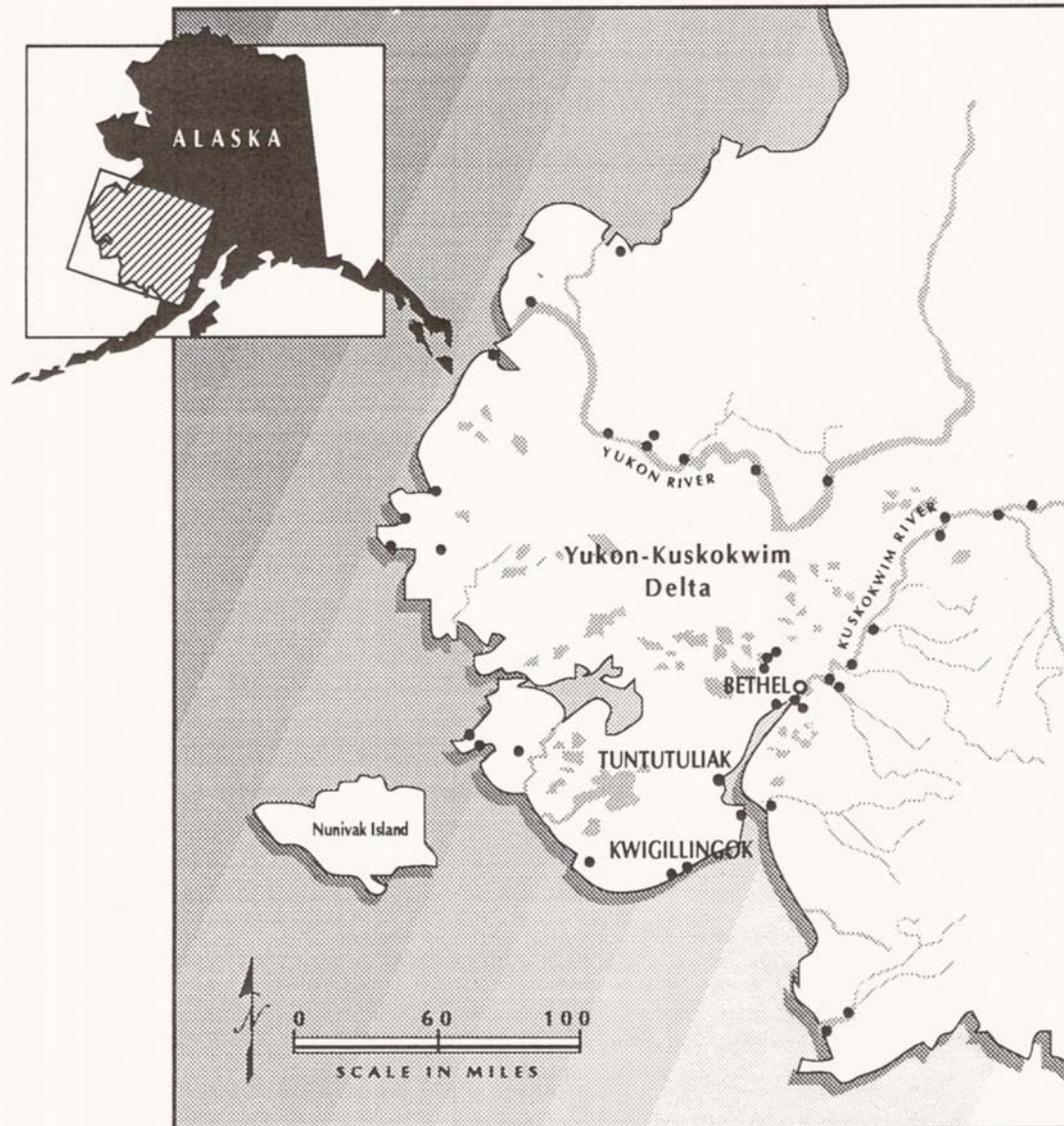
The following *quliraq*<sup>1</sup> was told by Phillip Charlie of Tuntuliak,<sup>2</sup> a small community near the mouth of the Kuskokwim River in southwest Alaska, one of more than fifty Alaska Native communities in the region. About 15,000 people in this area speak Yupik, which is related to the language spoken by other Inuit<sup>3</sup> in Alaska, Canada, and Greenland. Phillip Charlie was about 70 years old when he told this tale for a popular series broadcast throughout the region over KYUK radio in Bethel, the regional center. He had just told another story that was similar in some respects, and it took him a moment to disentangle the two. The narratives were recorded by Dorothy Cyril Dahl. This series was broadcast in the Yupik language, and the tapes were not edited in any way. During the early 1980s, at least five years later, we transcribed and translated many of the audiotapes of stories that had been collected by institutions such as KYUK. We have retranscribed and retranslated the story for this article.

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<sup>1</sup> A *quliraq* is a traditional story said to have taken place long ago. The category subsumes the folklorist's genres of folktale and myth. Yupik tellers would classify what English speakers call legends, memorates, news reports, and anecdotes in a second category, that of the *qanemciq*. This latter category includes more recent stories of events that are generally attributable to named individuals. Some tales do not fall clearly into one or the other genre; it is not a rigid system of categorization.

<sup>2</sup> This form is the common Anglicized spelling of the Yupik name, *Tuntutuli/Tuntutuliar*, literally, “having many caribou.” Caribou herds no longer frequent the area, but were once commonly hunted.

<sup>3</sup> Inuit is a cover designation accepted for political purposes by the indigenous peoples of the Far North in Canada, Alaska, and Greenland. Inuit means “people” in the languages spoken in most of these areas; the analogous term in southwestern Alaska is *yuut*, and the local self-designation is Yup'ik (pl. Yupiit: “real people”). The apostrophe, generally left out when writing in English, indicates the gemination (doubling) of the /p/. Other Inuit languages form a dialect chain across the North, but Yupik is actually a separate language, as is Aleut, the other member of the Eskimo-Aleut language family.



The lower Kuskokwim River village of Tuntutuliak, home of Phillip Charlie. Also identified are Kwigillingok, Elsie Mather's home village (which Charlie used to visit as a lay preacher), and Bethel, the regional center of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta and Mather's current home. Phyllis Morrow currently lives in the interior community of Fairbanks (not shown), some five-hundred air miles from Bethel. Map credit: Penny Panlener.

### About the Transcription

Yupik prosody entails a complex interplay between intonation contours, pause groups, content, and affect.<sup>4</sup> The general contours of the oral performance are preserved in the following transcription, which is best read aloud. The line breaks broadly correspond to pause groups (usually also characterized by recognizable pitch contours), with single, double, and triple spaces indicating progressively longer pauses. Triple spacing also tends to correspond to larger narrative shifts such as a change in setting or action within the story. Readers should note that Yupik pauses are longer than those that most English speakers are accustomed to hearing.

Except where it would interfere with easy comprehension, the translation corresponds line-by-line with the Yupik transcription. In addition, since the syntactic order of a typical Yupik word is roughly the reverse of an English sentence (with suffixes indicating person, case, number, and various modifications of meaning following a stem), details may be presented in a different order than is customary in English narratives, but this order often serves to heighten drama or anticipation. Cohesion may also be provided by the repetition of a stem with a different grammatical ending in the following line. Where possible, these rhetorical devices are mirrored in the translation.

Other conventions used are as follows:

indentation	indicates continuation of a line; no break
!	marks the beginning of an emphasized line or phrase
a-a-all	vowel extension as intensifier
‘caribou’	word was spoken in English
<i>qangiar</i>	Yupik word defined within the narrative; also used for some essential cultural concepts that are not easily glossed, e.g., <i>nukalpiaq</i> ; these words are explained in notes

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<sup>4</sup> For a detailed discussion of prosodic phrasing, pause phrasing, syntactic constituency, and adverbial-particle phrasing in Yupik narrative, see Woodbury 1987.



Tuntutuliak, Alaska, taken around 1975. Aerial photograph by James H. Barker.

alikti!/aling!	untranslated exclamations (meaning is readily glossed from context)
[    ]	tape unclear
21.	“verses” are numbered for ease of matching transcription with translation, and for reference in following discussion
ellipsis	indicates hesitation or false start
parentheses	indicate parenthetical comments by narrator

### *Quliraq*

Told by Phillip Charlie

Translated by Elsie P. Mather and Phyllis Morrow

1. I think it is ‘August 20’ today.  
Yaa.  
I’m going to tell a tale for my *qangiar* here,  
who came and asked me to tell one,  
here in Tuntutuliar in my house.
2. My Yupik name is Kunuin.  
I’ve always been called that.  
And this, my name . . .  
Now my name is Phillip Charlie, Sr.
3. I’m from Tuntutuliar.  
We originally lived in Qinaq.  
Then we ‘moved’ to Tuntutuli.  
We ‘moved’ to Tuntutuli in ‘1945.’
4. That is all  
I will explain.
5. This then,  
the start [    ] before I tell the tale.

6. You who are listening, listen to this tale.
7. This one here, she is  
Maarraaq's grandchild,  
this one here who came to fetch a tale.  
She is a niece to me.  
That's who she is.  
'KYUK' sent her here to fetch a tale.
8. She is the grandchild of our father's brother Maarraaq.
9. So now I'm explaining this about her.  
Now,  
her father and I were small boys together, grew up together.
10. At the time we were growing up,  
it seems like this land was a good place to be.  
There was nothing so bad that we couldn't endure it.  
We suffered—  
But even though we suffered things didn't get really bad.  
That is all.
11. This time  
I am going to tell a tale,  
the first of the tales.<sup>5</sup>  
It is an authentic tale; I'm not making it up.  
It is one I heard  
from those two old men.
12. It was in Qinaq when one of them  
called the other,  
"Arenqillraa,<sup>6</sup>  
my side here, where I hurt myself, would you place  
your hands on it sometime?"<sup>7</sup>  
And the other replied,  
"Then, would you tell a tale?  
Would you tell the first of the tales?"

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<sup>5</sup> Meaning one of the oldest tales.

<sup>6</sup> This is a common term of address used in a specific relationship unknown to us. With the wide extension of kinship-like ties in Yupik society, there are numerous names that partners of various types (especially cross-cousins) have for each other.

<sup>7</sup> Some people could heal by this method.

He said yes, he would  
tell the first of the tales.

13. And then I thought, "I'll probably sleep.  
I'll probably sleep through it all."<sup>8</sup>

14. So then,  
that  
man . . .  
no . . .  
A man and his wife  
were living.  
They were living.

15. Maybe I'm telling it wrong.  
I'm not telling it right, wait.

16. Yes, now.

17. Then that man . . .  
A man and his wife, yes, this time . . .

18. A man and his wife were living.

19. They went on making their living,  
and the ocean was within their sight.

20. That earlier part was not right.  
I was afraid I got it mixed up  
with another story.

21. A man and his wife went about their living.

22. And that man,  
since they were close to the ocean,  
would bring in young bearded seals in the springtime,  
and would hunt the seals also in the fall.  
They never went without them.

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<sup>8</sup> In the men's house, where adult men and boys older than six or so lived, boys often fell asleep while stories were being told. Since the men's houses were discontinued about forty years ago, today men sometimes do not know the endings of stories because they did not hear them as adults when they would have been able to stay awake to the end.

23. And also,  
when cold weather came,  
deer,  
those real deer.

24. Those of you listening will know the real deer, the  
‘caribou.’<sup>9</sup>  
That’s what they were.  
They say those were  
the only kind of deer around here.  
‘Caribou.’  
There were no other kind.

25. And so  
that couple lived there always in their place,  
and they didn’t know any other people.

26. And then,  
one time  
that man  
went down early in the morning.  
He got to the water and traveled all the way out to the sea.  
But the seals  
were nowhere to be seen!

27. Finally, when the sun was nearly setting  
he caught a seal,  
and then came back.

28. As soon as he reached the shore,  
he went on home.  
When he got home,  
he said to his wife, “Aling!  
I am very tired after paddling all day.”  
(The ocean was within their sight.)  
“Would you go and get my kayak  
and the seal I caught?”

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<sup>9</sup> Reindeer were at one time introduced into the area to encourage pastoralism. The Yupik word *tuntu* refers to either reindeer or caribou, so he clarified by using the English word.

29. It was daylight.

30. And so,  
that woman left.

31. The man stayed there after she left,  
since she also left behind a pot of food she  
    had started cooking,  
back when they used clay pots for cooking,  
    not the kind of pots we call *egatet*.<sup>10</sup>

32. And this . . .  
The sun was almost setting now.  
He'd go out to look  
but there was nothing down there.

33. And then the sun started to set.

34. And so, becoming alarmed,  
he went toward the ocean.

35. When he got down there  
he found that his kayak—  
!his kayak was not there.  
!And there was no one there.

36. Then he saw footprints, !where someone had been running.  
“Aling! Why didn't she go toward the house?  
Why didn't she run toward the house  
screaming?”

37. But he could see on the ground that the woman  
    had fled from her pursuer.  
Someone came by water,  
paddling,  
got out and took her.

38. Someone caught her and took her away.

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<sup>10</sup> *Egatet* (literally, “devices for cooking”) is a term generally applicable to all kinds of cooking pots, but a more specific term can be used to designate the older clay pots.

39. So then, the poor man went back up.  
And when he came into the house  
he was overcome with remorse.  
“I gave in to my exhaustion.  
My exhaustion got the better of me  
and now I’m going through what was bound to happen.”
40. And the poor thing cried there beside his wife’s place.  
That grown man cried.
41. And now his kayak was gone, too.
42. So, he stayed there all that spring,  
because he didn’t have a kayak, and since he had enough food.
43. So then, when the ice went out of his river,  
he took his old kayak—  
the kayak his wife used for picking berries—  
and patched it up.
44. He smeared it with oil.  
He oiled it.  
He also patched the places where the water  
might seep through.
45. When it was fixed he got himself ready  
by putting food into his *keviraugaq*.  
(A *keviraugaq* is a food bag taken on trips. It  
is an *aikarraq*,  
*keviraugaq*.)  
He filled it with dried fish and other dried meat.
46. And then he said,  
“I am just not going to be here by myself.  
I’m going to head toward somewhere where I  
might find something.”
47. So then, when he reached the mouth  
of his river,

their river<sup>11</sup>

he said,

“I wonder which way—  
to the left or to the right—  
would lead me more quickly to other people,  
if there are any people.

48. Aa, I’ll go this way toward my right.”

49. !He went on, traveling by the ocean.

50. And so when the time came  
he went to sleep after having his evening meal.  
It was in the spring,  
when nights are not very dark.

51. When he woke up in the morning  
he went on again all day.

52. And again when night came, he slept again.

53. And then the next day when he was  
traveling along the shore,  
he began to see places where people had been chopping wood.  
He saw signs that people had been there.

54. Well then, what does he do now!

55. He kept on going.

56. So then, when the sun was getting low,  
on the third day,  
he suddenly came to a river.  
!The grass there was a-a-all flattened out.  
It was toward early fall.

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<sup>11</sup> The grammatical order of the Yupik and a parenthetical reminder that the river was now ice-free makes the first three lines slightly awkward to render in English. A translation closer to the original would be: “So then, his river / their river, / when he reached the mouth of it, because it had already broken up.”

Falltime was not far away.  
There were many old roasting sticks there,  
back then when people always roasted their food  
over the fire.

57. He stayed and slept.

58. He woke up from his sleep, startled,  
and heard two people talking, upriver from him.  
“Alikti!  
Someone has already traveled down this river!”

59. Then the other one said to him,  
“Aling! Look how strange this kayak is!  
This kayak here  
doesn't seem to be from our river.  
It is different.”

60. So,  
he peeked and saw two men  
coming downriver paddling two kayaks.

61. When they reached the shore where he was  
parked, they were talking  
(down there by the cutbank).  
“Is someone there?”  
He answered, “Yes, there is someone here. Someone's here.”

62. So they came ashore, pulling their kayaks up to the shore.

63. The two of them were very friendly to the man,  
and they ate their morning meal together.  
They ate a meal of whatever food they had instead of  
drinking tea.

64. So then, when they had had their fill,  
the man asked him,  
he asked them,  
“So, have either of you  
happened to hear anything unusual lately?”

65. And the two said,  
“Well,” (one of them said)  
“Well, you see  
this spring

when it was beginning to thaw,  
after it got warm,  
the *nukalpiaq*<sup>12</sup> of that village up there brought  
home a woman.”

66. And the man said,  
“Yes, she is the one,  
my wife.  
I gave in to my exhaustion  
and asked her to do what I should have done myself,  
and caused this to happen to us.  
Yes, she is the one.”

67. Then one of them said,  
“No!  
You should not try to get her back.  
If you try to get her back, you will only cause  
your own death.

68. But since she is your wife,  
you could go up there and take a look at her.”

69. And the man replied,  
and said he would not try to take her back right away.  
He said he would go with them later to see her.

70. So then, when it was time,  
and when the tide came in,  
he went upriver.

71. When they began to approach the place,  
there below a large house was a woman washing  
something in the river.  
The man looked at her a while  
!and saw that she was indeed his wife.

72. He had come upon her quite suddenly.

73. When she saw him,  
she smiled briefly  
and touched the rim of his kayak and said,  
“Oh! When did you get here?”

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<sup>12</sup> A *nukalpiaq* is a good hunter, a man in his prime whose abilities are respected. The man whose wife was abducted is also a *nukalpiaq*, and is later referred to as such.

And he said he had just now arrived.

74. And then that wife of his said to him,  
“I know you are my husband,  
and I have loved you all these years.  
But now  
you must not take me back.  
You are not going to try to take me back.  
I’m saying this only to save your life.  
But you could come  
here  
and we’ll see each other.  
We can at least look at each other.”

75. He said he was staying down at the mouth of the river,  
that he would stay there.

76. So then, he was glad to have seen her, and he went  
back downriver.

77. And then again,  
the next day, he went back upriver and saw her.

78. And then her new husband found out about him.

79. So then,  
that  
*nukalpiaq*,  
after the third time,  
maybe after the third visit,  
went back downriver.  
After he put up his kayak,  
and after eating his evening meal,  
he gave in to his sorrow  
and started weeping.  
The poor man sat there and wept,  
back when people lamented in sorrow.

80. “Oh! my wife—I know now  
that I cannot take her back with my own two hands.”

81. While he was lamenting,

he heard another sound along with his weeping,  
 and listened.  
 and there from beyond his kayak  
 !was a sound muffled by the earth.  
 There was something making noises.  
 It also sounded like something was snorting.

82. He scrambled back and listened  
 and found where it was coming from.  
 Then he used his paddle and scraped at the earth.  
 And there appeared a skull of a walrus!  
 It was an old walrus skull!

83. It was hard to tell how it had gotten there.  
 It was a whole skull.

84. So he pulled it out  
 !and brought it to the water and washed it.  
 !He washed it thoroughly  
 until not a trace of dirt was on it.

85. And then, when he got through washing  
 that bone,  
 after cleaning it completely,  
 he placed it down there on the shore side of his kayak  
     with its tusks touching the ground,  
 facing it toward the bank, and then went back up the shore.

86. It was starting to get dark,  
 and he started weeping again because he felt so sad.  
 “Oh! I feel so helpless about my wife.  
 What a *nukalpiaq* that man must be that no one can oppose him.  
 I see now that I can do nothing about my wife.”

87. So then . . .  
 The tide was starting to come in.

88. While he was again weeping,  
 he started to hear, along with his crying,  
 something,  
 as though someone was breathing heavily.  
 And he stopped to listen and heard,  
 “Toh,h,h,h!”  
 Loud snorting breaths

were coming from below the bank.

89. He got up quickly  
and saw over the bank  
!a hu-u-uge walrus  
with its tusks buried in the mud.  
!It was such a hu-u-uge walrus.

90. And then he said to it,  
“Kitaki!  
I am in great need of a helper now,  
since I have been in such a predicament.”

91. When the walrus did something and its mouth flew open  
the man thrust himself inside its mouth!

92. When he turned around  
and emerged partly through its head,  
he found himself looking out  
through the eyes of the walrus.

93. Aling, now he wasn't helpless anymore!

94. Then, kicking his kayak out of the way  
he slid backwards.

95. And so,  
he stayed there all night in the water.

96. So then, in the early morning,  
after sleeping all night,  
being wide awake,  
after sleeping since early evening,  
he woke up.  
And that *asveq*, that 'walrus,'  
allowed the tide to drift him up into the river.  
That one which he had cleaned now had a body.  
!the one he had cleaned.  
“Well then, I hope now that my body  
will be clean of all dirt.”

97. He moved on  
letting the water roll him over, and he would surface.  
That man was able to look around through the eyes  
of that walrus!

Incredible!!

98. So then, when the tide was high,  
!that huge walrus surfaced  
down there below the village.

99. !How that village stirred,  
when one of them saw it and called out “Walrus!”

100. And everywhere up there people ran  
to their kayaks  
!to chase that walrus.

101. The women also came down to the riverbank  
and took pieces of wood  
which they used like drumsticks  
to beat the water downriver of him.<sup>13</sup>

102. And since he was looking around through its eyes  
he could recognize that man over there.

103. His wife up there also came down to the riverbank  
and beat on the water.

104. !Those men quickly positioned themselves downriver  
from him.

105. !That hu-u-uge walrus which was surfacing  
was being faced by those men.  
So-o-o many arrows flew at him!

106. !But none pierced him.

107. And then after a time,  
before any of the arrows pierced him,  
that mammoth walrus suddenly disappeared under the water.

108. And it wasn't long after it submerged  
when the abductor's kayak  
(the husband of that woman)  
!suddenly capsized, just like that.

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<sup>13</sup> This action was intended to drive the walrus towards the hunters.

109. When the man tipped over,  
that great walrus plunged its tusks into the man's chest!  
!He smashed him down there at the bottom of the river,  
probably burying him.
110. Nothing else surfaced except for the man's overturned  
kayak!
111. The other men were still hunting it.
112. His wife [ ]—when he was all done  
he went over and heaved himself up to the beach  
below his wife,  
and yanked his wife by the arm  
!pulling her in with him.  
They say that walrus looked like a great ship when he  
moved about in the water.
113. And then he headed downriver!
114. And when he reached the mouth,  
he headed out to the ocean,  
!w-a-a-ay out.
115. Then it was time to do something about his wife.  
He came to an island which was never covered over by tides,  
and there he sat her down, and she became a rock.  
And he said to her,  
"You will stay here.  
On some days, future generations will see you here,  
here on this island."  
He told her that he was going back to his people,  
to the walruses.
116. It was from  
then on  
that he went on his way  
with nothing to trouble him.
117. "Well now,  
let all be well with me from now on."
118. That is the end.

119. There are no more words to the story.

## Yupik Text

Told by Phillip Charlie  
Transcribed by Elsie P. Mather

1. Unuamek August 20-iuyugnarquq.  
Yaa.  
Quliriqatartua uum wani qangiarama  
quliriyartuusqenganga  
wani Tuntutuliarmi maani enema iluani.
2. Atengqertua yugtun Kunuin.  
Nutem tuay Kunuingulua.  
Una-w' at'ma . . .  
nutaan atqa ciuqliq Phillip Charlie, Sr.
3. Tuntutuliarmiungulua.  
Ciuqlirmi Qinarmiungullruukut.  
Tuntutulimun-llu move-arluta.  
Tuntutulimun move-allruukut 1945.
4. Tua-i tuaten pitauq  
augna nalqigararuteka.
5. Tua-ll' waniwa una  
waniw' ayagnir [    ] qulirivailegma.
6. Niicugnilriani niicugnikiciu quliraq.
7. Una wani, imum wani  
Maarraam tutgarqaa,  
una waniwa quliramek aqvatellria.  
Wiinga usrukluku.  
Taunguuq tua-i,  
KYUK-m cakuyuikun tekilluni waniw' qulirassaagluni.
8. Maarraam tutgarqaa ataatalramta.
9. Tua-ll' tua waniwa nalqiga'artaqa kangiqluku.  
Tua-i waniw'  
tan'gaurluullruukuk ata'urlua-llu, anglillguteklunuk.

10. Camek tamatum nalliini anglillmegni  
 tuarpiaq nunam qainga nunanirqellruuq.  
 Nangteqnarqelriartaunani arcaqalriamek,  
 nangtequraa—  
 nanteqnginanemteni tuay ilalqertaunata.  
 Tuay tuaten pitauq.

11. Tua-ll' nutaan  
 waniw' quliriqatartua  
 quliraat ciuqliatnek,  
 iqluyugnaunanii quliramek.  
 Niicugnillemmek-wa  
 awkugnek angullualleraagnek.

12. Qinarmi, aipaan pia  
 tuqlurluku,  
 "Arenqillraa,  
 man'a tang ingluka navemcatelqa caavekumiaraqtaqaqiu."  
 Tua-ll' ciunran kiugartaa,  
 "Kitak qulirikina  
 quliraat ciuqliatnek."  
 Aa-gguq, piciquq-gguq  
 quliraat ciuliatnek.

13. Tua-i umyuaratequa, "Qavarciqua-llu.  
 Qavarciqua-ll' iquklisvianun."

14. Tua-ll'tua-i  
 tauna  
 angun tauna . . .  
 qang'a . . .  
 Taukuk nulirqelriik  
 yuullinilriik.  
 Yuullinilriik tua-i.

15. Iqlulliunga.  
 Iqluqatartua una wani uitaqaqaa ataki.

16. Yaa, nutaan.

17. Tua-ll' tauna angun . . .  
 Nulirqelriik, ii-i nutaan.

18. Nulirqelriik yuulliniuk.
19. Tua-i yuungnaqu'urlutek  
una-i imarpik alaunani.
20. Augna pillrunrituq  
kipullgutnayuklukek piciatun piyuklua piunga,  
allamun quliramun.
21. Nulirqelriik yuungnaquralliniuk.
22. Tua-i angun tauna  
qasqicami unaken imarpigmek  
taguquriaqelliniuq maklaarneq iqukvami  
uksuarmi-llu maliqluni.  
Tua-i piutaicuunatek.
23. Cali-llu  
kumlangaqan pavaken  
tuntunek  
imkunek tuntupianek.
24. Tuntupiat, niicugniriim elitaqniarai, caribou.  
Tamakuugut.  
Mat'um kiingita  
nunamta tuntukellrullinii.  
Caribou.  
Allamek tuntutaunani.
25. Tua-i  
tuantara'arqellinilriik nunarramegni.  
Yugmek-llu nallulutek.
26. Tua-ll' tua-i  
cat iliitni atam  
unuakuarmi atrarluni  
angun tauna.  
Imarpigmun ekluni ketmurcaaqellinilriim,  
qayuwa ciin imkut unguvalriit  
tangrruqeryunripakartat.
27. Atam tuay akerta qertunrirluku

pitlinilria.

Tua-i pirraarluni taggliniluni.

28. Egman tua-i

tagngami taggliniluni.

Tua-i tekicamiu nuliani

pillinia, “Aling,

tua-i tang taqsuqelrianga ernerpak anguarpakaama.”

(Una-i meq alaitelaan.)

“Angu atak tua-i qayaqa aqvau,

pitaqa-wa.”

29. Erenriqsaunani tanqigcenani.

30. Tua-ll’ tua-i

tayima tuay ayaglun’ taun’ arnaq.

31. Atam tuay kinguani tauna uirua,

kenirluni-llu pillruan egan manirraarluku.

Egatngunrilnguq-llu qikunek egatengqetullermeggni.

32. Man’a tang . . .

Akerta tang ing’ ava-i patgutqatal.’

Anluni meciknauryaaqnauraa

un’a tua cataunani.

33. Aren tua-i imna akerta tevirtuq.

34. Tua-i arenqaliqercami

atralliniluni.

35. Atraami

qayani tekitellinia

!qayartaunani.

!Yugtaunani.

36. Maa-i tuay makut tumet !aqvaquallret.

“Aling, kitak kelutmun tungiinun enem,

enemek tungiinun aqevli

aaraluni.”

37. Maa-i-gguq tua qimagayaaqellinilria taun’ arnaq

mat’um kanaken kana-i merkun yuuluni

anguarluni

tua-i tayim' teguluku.

38. Teguluku ayautelliniluku.

39. Tua-i tageurlurluni  
eneminun itrami tua-i arenqiatuq  
qessanayugtuq,  
"Taqsuqniteklua,  
taqsuqniteklua-am tua-i waniwa  
atu'urkaqngamku atuqeka tua-i."

40. Qiiyaurulliniluni tuay caniaraani,  
qiaurlurluni taun' angulvall'er.

41. Tua-i qayaunani-llu.

42. Tua-i up'nerkarpak uitalliniluni.  
Qayailami tuay, neqkaitenrilami tua-i.

43. Tua-i un'a kuini cupngan  
atam qayallni imna—  
aiparmi taum iqvarcuutek'lallra—  
!umerqellinikii.

44. Tua-i uqumek apiterrluku.  
Uqurruku.  
Unkut-llu usgui imangvigkai-w' tuay umciqluki.

45. Upingarian tua uptelliniluni neqkanek  
kevirauteani imirluku,  
(Kevirauteaq taquarviuguq.  
Aa tuay, aikarraq-wa tuay,  
kevirauteaq.)  
neqerrlugnek, canek-wa tuay kemegnek piciatun.

46. Tua-i qanlliniuq,  
"Tua-i kiiqapigma uitangaitua tua-i.  
Kemyukek'ma tungiinun ayagciqua."

47. Tua-i kuini,  
kuigtek,  
pailliarcamiu cupellruan ak'a,

qanlliniuq,  
 “Natatmun waniwa  
 naliagnegun carumitmun tallirpitmun ayakuma  
 nerinitsiyaagpek’ nii yugmun,  
 yugnun tekiniarcia yugtangerqan.

48. Aa, tua-i ukatmun pilii tallirpitmun.

49. !Cenilliniluni imarpigkun.

50. Tua-i pinariami  
 qavaqcaaralliniluni tuay atakutaararraarluni,  
 up’ nerkami waten,  
 unuguami.

51. Tupiimi unuakuan  
 tuamtell’ ernerpak.

52. Unuan-llu qavarluni cali.

53. Tuallitua unuaquan ayagluni  
 cenakun pinginanermini  
 yuut tang makunek muragiuqallritnek tangerqalangelria,  
 yullialleruarnek.

54. Tuallitua piciquartuq!

55. Tua-i ayagluni tua.

56. Atam tua akerta una avavarluku,  
 pingayuagni erenret,  
 kuigem painganun tekiartellinilria.  
 !Cakneq-lli tua-i elivumaluni.  
 Uksuaryartumi-ll’ piami,  
 uksuaryartuurcami.  
 Ik’ iki-gguq paingani maniarutellret.  
 Maniarturatullermeggni.

57. Tua-i tuavet qavarluni.

58. Qavainanermi ayuqucini qunglullaga'rcan uigartelliniuq,  
qanerturalriik amkuk kiatiinek.

“Alikti!

Ak'a-lli tanem cetulriartangellrullinivaa!”

59. Tuallu aipaan am'um pillinia,  
“Aling, qayami-ll' uumi tangnerranaqvaa!  
Qayaq tang una  
pikegkumiutaunricugnarqelria.  
Tangnerranarquq.”

60. Tua-i  
igvaussaakarlukek piak maa-i  
cetulriik qayak malruk anguurturlutek.

61. Tua-i cama-i ketairamegnegu qanertuk,  
(ekvigaam ekvicuaraam aciani)  
“Yuuguq-qaa?”  
Kiulliniak, “Aren, yuulira-w' tuay waniwa. Yuuguq.”

62. Tag'llinilutek tuay qayatek qukaqmikarluku.

63. Tua-i taukuk ilaliurluku tekitegken arenqiataak.  
Nerliluteng-llu.  
Makyutarluteng yuurqeryugnaunateng tua-i neqallernek  
neqalleruarnek.

64. Tua-ll' tua-i kainriqerrluteng  
taum wani angutem aptellinia,  
aptelliniak,  
“Waqaa tuay ukuuk  
camek tua-i alangruksaitutek tua-i?”

65. Tua-ll' taukuk qanertuk,  
“Tangerrluku, (aipaa qanlliuq)  
tangerrluku,  
up'nerkaq  
urugyungqerluku  
urunerturiluku  
pikegkut nunat nukalpiarat tekiutellrulria arnamek.”

66. Tua-i pilliniuq,  
“Tua-i-wa taungullinilria,  
aipaqa.  
Tua-i wii taqsuqniteklua  
ellimerluku tamaatmun catmun ayalriakuk waniwa.

Tua-ingulliniuq.”

67. Taum tua-i aipaan pillinia,  
 “Agu!  
 tua-i tegungnaqsaqunaku.  
 Tegungnaqkuvgu tua-i elpenek taugaam unguvan ayemqauciiqan.

68. Tua-i aipaqan  
 itrarluten tangvalarniaran tua-i.”

69. Tua-i pillinia,  
 tegungnaqngaitaa-gguq egmian.  
 Waniku-gguq itraqagnek maligglukek tangerrarturciqaa.

70. Tua-i pinariami  
 ulngan  
 itralliniluni.

71. Tekicartuaralliniut  
 yaa-i enerpallraam ketiini arnaq ingna camek kuigmun  
 eruriuralria.  
 Maaten tang tangvaurallinia, aren,  
 !nulirra ingna.

72. Tua-i egmilruluni tekiartelliniluku.

73. Tangerqaamiu  
 quuyurniqerluni  
 waniw’ paingakun ayapqerluk’ pillinia,  
 “Waq’ qangvaq tekicit?”  
 Nutaan-gguq waniw’ tekitsuq.

74. Tua-ll’ tuay taum nulirran pillinia,  
 “Tua-i waniwa uiksaaqamken  
 imumirpak kenekluten.  
 Taugaam waniwa  
 teguciqenritarpenga,  
 tuay tegungnaqciqenritarpenga.  
 Unguvaaraan elpet pitekluku waten mat’umek piamken.  
 Tua-i maavet  
 tailuten  
 tangvautelarciqukuk,  
 tangvautelarniartukuk.”

75. Kuigem-gguq paingani uani uitauq,

uitaurciquq.

76. Tua-i tangvalnguamiu cetulliniluni.

77. Tua-i  
unuaquan tuamtell' asgurlun' tangvalliniluku.

78. Taum-llu tua-i uilingutiin nallunrirluku.

79. Tua-i atam,  
tauna  
nukalpiaq,  
pingayuagni,  
pingayuagni pilliuq,  
anelraami,  
qayani tua-i mayurqaarluku  
atakutaarraarluni,  
tua-i ayaniicullni maliggluku,  
qiiyaurtura' urlulliniuq.  
Qiaurlulliniuq qiaqcaaurulliniuq  
yuut qiaurlutullratni.

80. "Arenqialnguq tua-i aipaqa  
tegusciigatlinilria unatetgun."

81. Atam tua-i qiaqcaarainanrani  
ca imna man'a qiallan camek avunga'rcan  
murilkartelliniuq,  
qayaan pamaken kelulirneranek ca imna  
!eviungruyagaluni qalrialria.  
Qalrialalria.  
Tuar-llu-gguq qutullagalalria.

82. Taq'errluni tagluni niicugniqallinia  
waniwa waken uum nalliinek pilria.  
Anguarutminek kalguurluku marayaq  
alailliniuq !asevrem asvekuyuum qamiqurra!  
Qamiqullra!

83. Cam-llu nalliini tuavet elgartellrullinia.  
Qamiquq tua tamalkuq.

84. Tua-i nuggluku  
!atraulluku mermun erulliniluku.  
!Erunqegcaarluku.  
Tua-i camek iqairulluku.
85. Tua-i-llu taqngamiu  
enerrlainaq,  
erunqegcaarraarluku  
kanavet qayami ketiinun tamlura'arrluku  
kelutmun caugarrluku unitaa mayurluni.
86. Tua-i tan'geraaraan  
qiaqcaararlulliniluni tua-i ayaniitellni maliggluku.  
“Arenqialnguq aipaqa.  
Anglill' tua-i nukalpiarullinivaa cayunaunani.  
Tua-i waniwa qaill' pisciigatlinilria.”
87. Tuallitua . . .  
Un'a-llu ulqaarluni.
88. Qiaqcaarainanrani-am  
qiallra man'a  
camek imumek  
anernerrliqelriamek  
tap'nga'rcan niicugniqalliniuq,  
“Toh,h,h,h!”  
Camaken ekvigaam acianek  
aneryillagallinil'.
89. Maaten mak'arrluni  
uyangartellinia  
!asvekayak!  
Ciklarcessimaluk' qamiquni.  
!Asevpakayall'er!
90. Tua-ll' tua pillinia,  
“Kitaki!  
Waniwa tua-i camek ikayurtekarramnek kepqua!  
Arenqiapakaama.”
91. Qaill' piqalria aitaqercan qanranun  
puukcautellinilria!
92. Mumigarrluni

qamiqurranun pugluni  
kiartelliniuq,  
asevrem iik aturlukek.

93. Aling, aa kalivqinanripakar!

94. Qayani tuckerluku  
kingupialliniluni.

95. Tua-i tamaani  
unupak mermenani tua-i.

96. Atam tua unuakuarmi,  
unupak tua qavarraarluni,  
qavarniicugnaunani,  
iquggaaraanek ayagluku atakumek  
qavarraarluni tupiimi,  
ulqaarmun itruqu'ur cetlinil' taun' asveq.  
Walrus.  
Imna carrillra temengluni.  
!Carrillra  
"Kitak tua temka man' carriuskili,  
carrinqeggiluni pikili."

97. Arenqiatuq tua-i atam  
akagecequ'urluni pug'aqluni.  
Iigkenkun taum angun kiarqurlun' asevrem!  
Ngaren!!

98. Atam tua-i, taukut tua-i . . .  
ulerpaurcan, ketiitni,  
!asvekayak piinanratni pug'araralliniuq.

99. !Arenqiapaa-ll' imkuni nunani  
pawkut iliita tangrramiu qayagpalliniuq !asveq-gguq.

100. Tua-a aqvaqulriarurtellinilun' paugna,  
qayameggnun,  
!asviuqatarluteng.

101. Arnat tuaten paugna cenamun atrarluteng  
muragnek  
meq kaugluku qasiarluku  
uataurluki ugkut.

102. Imna-ll' tua-i yaa-i  
iigken'gun kiarcami elitaqu'urluku.
103. Nulirra-llu pia-i cenamun atrarlun' meq kaugluku.
104. !Uataiqallinikiit atam tuay tamakut angutet.
105. !Asvekayak pug'ara'arluni  
caulara'arqiit.  
Ik'iki-gguq pitegcautet!
106. !Kakiksaunaku.
107. Atam tuay caqerluni  
kakivailgatni, aa,  
asvekayak im' tayima kip'allinil'.
108. Kip'akarluni  
imna arnam uinga  
(imum allanrem uinga)  
!paluartelliniluni qaill' piqarraarpek'nani.
109. Asvekayim paluarcan  
qat'gaikun cikelvagluk' camani!  
!Kuigem terr'ani passilliniluku.  
Elauulluku-w' pillikii.
110. Tua-i ca pugevkenan' qayaa taugaam palungqaqerluni!
111. Ukut-wa tua puggsualriit.
112. Nuliani [ ] caarkairucami  
nuliami ketiinun ugiyaqaarluni  
nuliani teguqerluk' talliakun  
!ek'arulluku.  
Tuarpiaq-gguq sun'aq ketmun ceqcillakayanermini  
nutaan taun' asveq.
113. Cetulliniluni!
114. Imarpigmun-llu anngami  
ketmurtelliniluni

!camavet tua-i.

115. Pinariamiu tua taun' nuliani  
 natmun-llu qikertamun tuavet qaingiyuilkiinun  
 qiuruluku aqumtelliniluku qanrulluku,  
 "Tuantelkina kitak tua-i,  
 kinguliraat tayim' ertem iliin' tanglarciqaatgen tuani.  
 Qikertami."  
 Ellii tuay waniw' ilaminun ayakatarniluni.  
 Asvernun.

116. Tua-i tuaken ayagluni  
 nutaan  
 ciunermikun ayagtuq nak'riluni.  
 Camek tua-i pinerrlugutaunani.

117. "Kitak tua-i  
 makut wani wiinga-llu qelapegutenka kitugikilit waken  
 ayagluteng."

118. Tua-i iquklituq.

119. Qaneryararkairutuq.

### Explanatory Notes

26-28 Hunters often refer to game animals indirectly. Although it is contextually clear that the man caught a seal, Phillip Charlie refers to the quarry as "living things; animals" in 26, or his "catch" (in 27 and 28).

45 *Aikarraq* is another word for these food bags.

47 "the mouth of their river"—The possessive ending customarily refers to a river or lake on which a group of people live, travel, and fish.

50-56 Time frame—He hunted seals along the coast in the early spring, when the ocean would have been ice-free although the river was still frozen. Later in the spring, he could travel on the river. Break-up of the river ice usually occurs around May. The shift to "it was almost falltime" is not explicable, and may have been an

error. It would probably be a mistake to assume that this shift is meant to indicate “mythic time,” given that narrators tend to point out unusual time shifts directly, such as when a person enters another world where the season is opposite to the one s/he has just left.

- 63-64 When strangers meet, or a visitor arrives in town, Yupiks are typically hospitable before business is broached.
- 79 The numbers four and five are culturally significant in Yupik society (as in most other Native American societies). It was on the fourth day of his travelling that he met the two men along the river, and the fourth day of his stay at the camp that he became a walrus.
- 84-85 Yupik listeners would be familiar with the obligation to clean improperly disposed bones. Proper disposal (depending on the situation and the species) might involve such things as keeping the bones of the animal together and placing them in a designated area, often a pond or river, so that the animal’s person-like spirit (*yua*) can rejoin others of its kind. Sometimes the skull must be faced in a prescribed direction (here, it seems to be placed so that the walrus can back into the water). Polishing the flesh off bones is also a way of showing respect to an animal by using it completely, as well as making it clean. Animals treated with respect can regenerate and allow the hunter to catch them again. *Carriuskili* suggests a double meaning of “cleaning” and “straightening out troubles.”
- 115 This reference is undoubtedly to a particular rock on a particular island. The collector did not ask which one it was, although this would have been an acceptable question.

### **The Collaborative Process**

We have collaborated on the representation of Yupik folklore and traditions on and off since the 1980s. The result is usually a co-authored piece with a unified voice. For this article, we wanted to highlight the collaborative process by including some of the dialogue between us. We now live several hundred miles apart, so our collaboration takes place by telephone, facsimile, and mail when we cannot sit at the same table. What follows is a joint commentary on Phillip Charlie’s *quliraq*, highlighted with

direct quotations from our correspondence and conversations. These are presented as “interludes” in the text, identified as either Elsie Mather’s (EM) or Phyllis Morrow’s (PM) voice. We also present our metaconversation about collaboration.

We found that this writing gave us an opportunity to discuss for the first time aspects of our relationship that we had both pondered. We also repeat here some of the insights gained from collaboration that we have discussed many times before, and that are addressed to the reader more than they are to each other. The “dialogue,” then, is not strictly between us—it is with you, in some sense the most problematic partners in this collaboration. “You” includes everyone who made comments on our work in the past, or whose comments on related topics we have heard or read. In our imaginations, you include perceptive critics with a deep level of understanding and a ready store of relevant personal experiences, and you include our own worst stereotypes of those who misconstrue, misappropriate, over-romanticize, and/or overanalyze Native Americans and their folklore. You include Yupik people, to whom we feel responsible and of whom we remain constantly conscious, whether or not you eventually read this article. To complicate this process even more, what we imagine you to be is also what we sometimes project onto each other. We collaborate as both our most eager and appreciative audiences, and as the alternately frustrated, misguided, and reluctant representatives of our respective cultures.

As reluctant cultural representatives, we have found that collaboration underscores a basic contrast between our traditions, which is also reflected to some extent in our personal intellectual styles. A Yupik generally grows up encouraged to reflect on the personal meaning of stories, but discouraged from detailed analysis and public explication. From this perspective, a preoccupation with hidden meanings and symbolism can lead to confusion precisely where Yupik oral tradition tries to avoid confusing or misleading the listener. Much of Western schooling and socialization, on the other hand, encourages probing, contending that addressing conflicting interpretations openly can illuminate subtle meanings and generally enrich an audience’s understanding. We acknowledge these as cultural differences that can be difficult to negotiate. As individuals, we also often delight in each other’s tradition; it is not a simple dichotomy. We both indulge in curious speculation; we both stop to wonder without drawing conclusions. Leaning towards each other’s traditions, we try to construct a middle ground where we can collaborate.

### Commentary on the Narrative

Kunuin's contextualization of the story was a common way to begin a narrative. He set himself, the recorder, the story, and the two men from whom he heard the story in a web of relationships—a network of people, places, and events. In effect, he made it clear that his story was a situated performance of a repeated tale, authentic and faithful to the way he had heard it. One effect of this kind of opening is to invoke the collective authority of many storytellers. Part of what makes this story a *quliraq* is the way it points towards a timeless past and many retellings, not towards any individual's experience or authority. He did not make it up; "it is truly a tale," and one of the "first of the tales."

"A man and his wife were living." Like so many Yupik *qulirat*, this one begins with an isolated couple, a minimal social pair, an incomplete group. This initial state of isolation is unstable. In some stories, the couple longs to have a child. In others, one of them goes off to find other people. If this were a grandparent-orphan grandchild pair, the orphan would soon have a benefactor—the great hunter in the village, possibly a marriageable young woman, perhaps a supernatural helper. Having been rejected by everyone, he would eventually prove himself indispensable to the community by providing them with game or shamanistic assistance. A woman who is abandoned or rejected might bring disaster on the entire village, such as an earthquake or a storm. In fact, the preceding story with which Kunuin at first confused this one begins with a man and wife living alone. The husband leaves her, and the eventual result of this abandonment is that the village to which he moves is destroyed by her actions. These structural parallels suggest one underlying theme that is so obvious to Yupik listeners that it seems almost unworthy of comment. While it is certainly not offered here as an explanation of the story, it will, perhaps, make the story more effective for a non-Yupik audience.

EM: Why do people want to reduce traditional stories to information, to some function? Isn't it enough that we hear and read them? They cause us to wonder about things, and sometimes they touch us briefly along the way, or we connect the information or idea into something we are doing at the moment. This is what the older people say a lot. They tell us to listen even when we don't understand, that later on we will make some meaning or that something that we had listened to before will touch us in some way. Understanding and knowing occur over one's lifetime. I am born into a culture that values certain things and ideas, but most of these I absorb during everyday experiences.

Storytelling is part of the action of living. I do not question it much. The phrases, the themes, or ideas expressed become a part of me, yet I do not understand half of what is said. But they are there. They are part of why I pick my berries or why I ask someone to have tea with me. Whenever my mother had the urge to pick on my head for lice or nits, she yanked me from whatever I was doing and proceeded. I rarely ever asked her to tell me stories. To quiet my protest at having my head picked on, my mother told me stories. The time was both pleasant and painful—a part of life.

Why would I want to spoil the repetition and telling of stories with questions? Why would I want to know what they mean? Is not the hearing and the comforting repetition enough? They brought comfort and added to my well-being even when (in my case) they added to my discomfort and annoyance. I really don't suppose my mother had grandiose ideas about instruction and knowledge as she told the stories. She just wanted me to be still so she could get rid of the little beasts while she had the pleasure of hunting for them.

This underlying assumption has to do with the individual's responsibility to the community and the community's responsibility towards each individual. Expressed in its simplest form, those who reject others end up ashamed and/or punished. In more subtle expressions of the theme, peoples' violations of the many Yupik rules for living end in lonely isolation or community tragedy. This interdependence includes non-humans as well, and the stories explore the costs of breaching the codes of behavior that create and reflect that interdependence, too.

Across Inuit societies in general, including Yupik society, the actual consequence of a social breach was commonly isolation (ostracism, or in severe cases, abandonment—which in the Arctic meant death). The simple threat or fear of isolation most certainly helped to keep people from transgressing, as well. The oral tradition subtly reflects these pervasive truths about Yupik society: that transgressors may be rejected, abandoned, or permanently separated.<sup>14</sup>

In this story, it is a very small breach that leads to the couple's separation. The man says, "I gave in to my exhaustion / and asked her to do what I should have done myself, and caused / this to happen to us." The

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<sup>14</sup> In *qulirat*, those who are rejected (especially if they are innocent) may bring shame or disaster to all. Some dramatic or emotional tension in the lore seems to derive from a basic discomfort with the fact that it is not always easy to take care of everybody (e.g., supporting orphans or infants whose mothers die in childbirth) but that neglecting those who have done no wrong is a terrible thing to do.

man is left behind, with neither wife nor kayak, an impossible way to survive. Ironically, it is his wife's kayak, old and patched, that he resorts to using. Since animals selectively choose hunters with well-maintained equipment, this is indeed a pitifully inappropriate kayak for a *nukalpiaq*. He goes to look for other people, hoping to find his wife. The woman is abducted and becomes part of a community. She is no longer alone, but the situation is still arguably unstable, because the initial breach has not been resolved. In the end, they are transformed, separated both from other humans and from each other.

PM: This narrative seems to include a powerful message about the difficulties of living up to moral standards and the fear of what can happen in a single moment of human frailty. At the same time, it is a reminder that right behavior results in some restoration of relationships. It is when he cleans the walrus, showing it all proper respect, that help comes to the man. Maybe the man succeeds in repairing his relationship with the game world by dealing properly with the walrus (having failed to show due respect to the seal he had caught). The walrus helps him take revenge against the abductor, and incorporates him into the community of walruses: "he was now going to return to his people, / to the walruses." So, in the end, he finds his people "with nothing to trouble his well-being," while his wife remains a visible reminder to future generations of their story.

EM: The part of the story I like best is when the walrus comes to his aid. It's when the man reaches the very bottom that something unexplainable happens. It makes me think of rebirth or redemption happening when a person loses hope. The powerful players, the supernatural entities, seem to be provoked. By his pitiful condition? It may or may not be because he performed what was then the very ordinary act of cleaning the walrus skull. Phillip Charlie gives the sense of how unusual it would be for a *nukalpiaq* to lament like this, and perhaps the words to his lament (was it originally a song? so often songs have this kind of power) made something happen. On the other hand, there is the Yupik belief that things just happen with no explanation.

PM: Cleaning the walrus skull in a sense prepares the walrus for rebirth—and the man's transformation occurs simultaneously. When I read this story to a university class, one Yupik student commented that you have to be careful what you wish. The story does seem to resonate with that Yupik care with words, the idea that words may make things real.

EM: I have also always heard that when someone does something bad to you, you should not try to take revenge. Eventually that person will get his punishment. I think this part appeals to the Native hearers of this story. It is not enough for the man to get his wife back by his own strength. What the abductor did is so cruel and unacceptable that the only fitting punishment is by some unnatural means, a "punisher" more fearsome than a mere man.

PM: When I read the story, a student also questioned how the abductor could be so formidable. From your comments, I think that he symbolizes an insurmountable problem. I found it interesting (although not surprising) that non-Yupik students were also disturbed because they couldn't figure out a "moral" to the story, and because the couple didn't "live happily ever after."

EM: The ending to the story disturbed me once until I realized that it is not about resolving some conflict then "living happily ever after." To reach the state of "nothing to trouble his well-being" seemed to require some transformation. There is a sense of permanence afterwards, a feeling that they went to their rightful place, where they belong.

PM: We should bring that out. The idea of transformation is at the same time disturbing and satisfying. It's disturbing because the man's actions set something irreversible in motion, but in its inevitability and naturalness in the context of Yupik stories and beliefs, it feels appropriate.

## On Collaboration

The term "collaborative," these days, is often used to cloak a standard researcher-informant relationship in politically correct garb. For us, collaboration is a process that ideally involves both of us in judgements and decisions at all stages of work. This method seems to us the only possible way to walk the shaky tightrope between two traditions. It is no guarantee that we will maintain our balance, that the result will be an ethical and credible translation or commentary, but without it the chances of failing are enormous. In the process there are numerous forces to balance.

The first has to do with what each of us notices in the text, performance, and context. This process keeps us in constant motion as we try on each other's perspectives, reading and rereading a text. We each provide a variety of insights, and offer numerous tentative comments, many of which ultimately fall by the wayside, and some of which become foundations for our writing.

One obvious perspective that the "insider" brings is a sense of the life of the lore, from the pain of picking head lice that went along with the pleasure of hearing stories to evocations of the storyteller's voice in other times and places:

EM: My appreciation of Phillip Charlie's speaking goes back a long way. He used to come to Kwigillingok as a lay pastor, and in his loud, forceful way of speaking, seemed to move people. He had a way with words; he always seemed so enthusiastic, no matter what he said. He made ordinary words sound artistic. What I did not know was that he was interested in old

stories that express the Yupik worldview, and this interest makes him even more interesting to me. Many Yupik pastors do not want to have anything to do with these things.

For the “insider,” then, collaboration invites an exploration of personal associations, and by extension, situated meanings of the story. Clearly, a Yupik collaborator may also be sensitive to cultural patterns and details that the outsider would not notice, but the reverse is also true.

PM: I tend to notice and get excited about connections with other Inuit stories, and I contribute ideas that come from studying folklore and cultural anthropology, interwoven with my thoughts from living in Yupik places over the years. I’m also the one who looks at the whole process of collaboration as a “discourse.”

Throughout these discussions, we discover that anything that makes one read and re-read a story, listen and re-listen to a tape, is worthwhile. Each of us mulls over thoughts that would not otherwise have occurred to us. We appreciate the specific contributions that derive from our personal and educational backgrounds: we both like to read, observe, and talk. Although we are both involved in all phases of the work, we bow to each other’s expertise in certain areas.

The process of translation, for example, is one in which our strengths are often complementary, particularly because sensitivity to connotative meanings is highly culture-dependent. For example, in Phillip Charlie’s story at lines 35-36, Morrow at first thought that the storyteller left open the possibility that the wife did not strongly resist her abduction. If this had been the case, then the woman’s failure to act appropriately would have paralleled the husband’s failure to bring up the seal. Mather pointed out, however, that the Yupik in line 36 implied that the husband’s question in line 35 was rhetorical. An adjustment in the translation of line 36 made it clearer in English that the hunter was convinced that his wife had been forcibly abducted.

The situation was reversed in our discussions of line 74. Here, Morrow rejected an early English gloss of “*tangvautelarcikuk*, / *tangvautelarniartukuk*,” on the grounds that “seeing each other,” although true to the Yupik, had a euphemistic sexual meaning in English. This confusion was aggravated a few lines later by the translation of line 78 as “and then her new husband found out what was going on.” Mather was convinced when Morrow confirmed that listeners invariably giggled at these points when she read the piece out loud. We subsequently left one part of line 74 as “we’ll see each other,” but adjusted the other to read “we can at

least *look at* each other.” The translation of line 78 was changed to “and then her new husband found out *about him*.”

In each case, we were able to preserve the Yupik sense while averting a misinterpretation. Obviously, a reader’s understanding of Charlie’s story would be very different if the wife cooperated with (or at least did not sufficiently resist) abduction, and/or if the abductor had found out that his (stolen) wife was having sexual relations with her (former) husband! Either of these problems might have escaped the notice of a single translator; here, two cultural and linguistic backgrounds proved to be better than one.

Although our strengths can, in situations like these, balance each other, dividing the labor according to each individual’s expertise can also threaten to unbalance the collaboration.

PM: Because my Yupik will never approach my collaborator’s native fluency, I trust her with the final transcription decisions. At the same time, I feel uncomfortable when she entrusts the final editing of an entire article to me, trusting my judgement of the academic context. I worry that I may reframe her thoughts or subsume her voice and that she will not tell me.

Imbalances of this sort may be delicate to redress:

PM: I am more than willing to listen to criticisms, and I want to have any of my ideas that seem out of line with truth or cultural preference questioned. That places a tremendous burden on you, as Native collaborator, in two ways. First, you are cast in the role of representative of your culture, and second, you have the unpleasant task of telling me if you think I’m wrong.

EM: What is accurate information? Accurate for whom? Even if an explanation is not wrong, it is not always complete.

I find myself fluctuating between wanting to discourage some of your conclusions and at the same time wanting to follow the Yupik way of respecting what others have to say. The Yupik expression for tolerating what is questionable is the saying that “what is true will prevail.”

PM: And that is a burden for me, too, because I can’t always know when you are leery of some of my conclusions. I do think that there are wrong interpretations. At least there are objectionable ones. You are often critical of commentators who perpetuate stereotypes and misconceptions, too, at the same time that you are open to multiple viewpoints.

EM: I do have problems with interpretations of the Yupiks made by outsiders. I am also uncomfortable with making interpretations. I like the idea of people making meaning of life in their own terms.

The most difficult issues in our collaboration lie here: collaboration creates a working space for the recognition of cultural difference, but it is merely a staging area for a more honest and self-aware interaction than that

represented by the old researcher-informant dichotomy, not a solution. In this constructed space, for example, a Yupik collaborator becomes both researcher and informant.<sup>15</sup> As researcher, she becomes curious to ask inappropriate questions, and knows that older cultural contexts need explication for current audiences (both local and distant). The culture bearers make and convey meaning in the context of certain cultural expectations and implicit understandings. When we need to explicate these, we are often in the position of emphasizing that which culture-bearers intentionally do *not* explicate. In short, interpretive writing invites an authoritative stance that is at odds with Yupik cultural knowledge and preferences.

EM: The Yupiks know and feel that the world is experienced in different levels. There is much to wonder about. To learn to live comfortably in these multiple levels is being Yupik. The world speaks to us, for one, in and by our feelings. It does not articulate clearly, but we make inferences and leave it at that. I feel strongly that interpretations should be very limited, leaving the information in the stories open. We are on shaky ground when we presume to know what the message is for the Native hearers. The most respected conveyors of Yupik knowledge are those who express things that listeners already know in artful or different ways, offering new expressions of older concepts.

Since many in our audience do not share this implicit frame, the question is how much explanation to offer. We agree that it is important to limit explanatory notes and to state openly that they are incomplete. We also point out that these notes are addressed to non-Yupiks, and to those younger Yupiks who may be out of touch with narrative traditions. We restrict ourselves primarily to explaining aspects of the motifs, themes, and general cultural setting that are clearly necessary for readers to understand. Beyond this goal, defining the limits and topics of discussion is not easy. In the Western academic tradition, authors are expected to contribute original, individually “owned” insights. For the academic member of a collaborative team, this expectation creates a certain pressure towards high-risk interpretations; that is, going out on an intellectual limb to say something new, or at least to express oneself in a new way. In the Yupik tradition, the ideas most valued are those that have been said by others and that carry the benefit and unique perspective supplied by the speaker’s own experience. When a Yupik speaker has something innovative to say, he or she refers to

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<sup>15</sup> For an extended discussion of cultural differences in our collaboration, see Morrow 1995.

the authority of oft-repeated wisdom. Using the academic style with a Yupik audience may sound presumptuous; using the Yupik style with an academic audience may cause an idea to be overlooked. Obviously, these divergent cultural preferences make it difficult to write a unified collaborative commentary. At the same time, providing a metacommentary on the difference does not solve the problem, since, again, an explicit discussion of such differences is unwelcome to many Yupik members of the audience.

PM: My nine year old son came home from school today and told me a story he had made up. For this assignment, he said, each child in the class had to create a “legend.” The teacher had posted a chart, with columns conveniently pre-labelled—they included categories such as “trickster” and “human-animal transformation.” Each third-grade folklorist was then to match appropriate motifs or character types with those he had “invented.” The effective point, I suppose, was to demonstrate to each child that she bears a considerable folk tradition. But there was something less conscious going on here. Despite the fact that these narratives looked more like folktales (as I found myself ironically explaining), my son was insistent that they were legends. The situation seemed typically Western or “Anglo”: what was consistently highlighted was genre, individual invention, categorization, and analysis.

I juxtapose this anecdote with some of my earliest experiences learning about Yupik preferences. I remember, for example, practicing grammatical patterns with the help of a tutor. I was translating a series of words with third person absolute endings: “He goes; she speaks; it is big,” I intoned. “How do you know it’s a ‘he’?” snapped my tutor. She could be a difficult person to get along with, and this pickiness seemed the last straw in a degenerating teacher-student relationship. “Because it’s awkward to say ‘he, she, or it’ every single time,” I replied, wondering why I had to tell her again that I knew gender is not grammatically marked in Yupik.

Some years later, my absolutes no longer in question, I began collaborative efforts to write language-learning materials and to transcribe and translate Yupik folklore. By this time, my main concern was to “get it right.” I understood the resentment that came with seeing poor translations in print, accompanied by inaccurate commentary. Now, however, another problem emerged. The non-Yupik writers on the team wanted to include sociolinguistic information, an area not considered in the existing teaching grammar. The Yupik members of the group supported the idea, but were uncomfortable with most of the sociolinguistic observations that were made. “No, it’s not wrong,” one person said. “In fact, it’s very accurate. It’s just that we’re not sure we want people to know about it.” Again, I thought I understood. Inaccurate information was harmful, but accurate information could be, too, since it violated the protective boundary between insider and

outsider. In the past, outsiders had done a lot of harm with what they had learned, suppressing a variety of customs.

The final anecdote is a current one. We recently prepared a story for publication; meant for a general audience, the introduction carefully explained some of its cultural context. The well-known story tells about a woman who returned from the afterlife and told people how to “improve” their ceremonies for the dead (Morrow and Mather 1994). We explained something about the historic ceremony for the dead and the naming customs that perpetuate relationships among the living and dead. We also wrote about a metaphoric value of the story, its reminder that people should not remain aloof to the needs of others. I thought that this time the problem was solved. Someone passed on to me the comments of one Yupik reader, however, who said he wished that he had not read it. He thought he’d rather not know why his people did the things they did.

Reflecting on these incidents, I find myself facing a serious dilemma with respect to “the work of interpretation,” as Tedlock calls it (1983). The three interactions can be seen as progressive steps towards an impasse. Each demonstrates a basic distress associated with specifying meaning. The grammar lesson overtly recognizes a Whorfian distinction between Yupik, where gender is contextually implicit, and English, where speakers have to specify gender even when they can not know which gender to specify. My teacher’s annoyance was not with my lack of grammatical knowledge, but with my ignorance of a cultural preference for expressing the ambiguous as ambiguous. The second interaction underscores the dangers of making generalizations that may become truths. It is related to the first interaction in that both represent an untoward blending of the descriptive and the prescriptive (for in some ways, saying makes it so). Such tendencies can be related to the protection of cultural boundaries, but the third incident suggests a more inclusive understanding.

The third incident is the most problematic of all, for here a work was produced collaboratively, with an awareness of cultural differences between the collaborators, and of the need to write in ways informative to non-Native readers while accurate and acceptable to Native readers. In fact, the piece described some of the cultural differences I have just mentioned. Yet, the response of that Yupik reader was not “I do not want you outsiders to know why we do things,” but “I do not want to know why we do these things ourselves.”

And so we limit our discussion, aware that readers who know nothing whatsoever about Yupik culture may respond by imposing their own explications, founded in misinformation and stereotypes. While suggesting one explanation rather than another results in a kind of harm, providing none may result in another. Phillip Charlie offered explanations in this story that he must have thought necessary for a contemporary Bethel-area radio audience. Because he addressed his story to unseen listeners, he

provided one level of decontextualization, moving the oral performance from an immediate and interactive context to a delayed and distant one. What he chose to explain were practices and items related to material culture and subsistence—the presence of caribou in the area, the use of clay cooking pots and foodbags for dried meat and fish, and so on. He seemed to be comfortable at stopping when “there are no more words to the story.” In transmitting stories in a print medium, in another language, to another audience, we are never as sure when to stop.

Perhaps the best we can hope for is that truths will prevail. If the Yupik reader feels that we have already said too much, and the non-Yupik reader is hungry to know more, then we have left you with the tension that we feel. It is an honest compromise; we satisfy our consciences and leave the rest of the meaning-making up to you. Perhaps this exchange is the ultimate in collaboration.

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