

Power, Knowledge, and *Nanook*;  
The Relationships between Colonialism and Representation portrayed in *Nanook of the North*

by

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## Abstract

*Nanook of the North* is a classic 1922 film by director Robert Flaherty, and despite its age and through its significance to popular culture has remained relevant. But whom does this film represent? The film represents a vanishing culture that has been completely constructed and manipulated by Flaherty, a taxidermy that lives in the space called 'North'. Through the construction of props and costumes in *Nanook of the North* the western white (European) male justified their place in society by creating a primitive other. The question becomes how did Flaherty create justification for social status? Why did Flaherty do this? Finally what was occurring, spatially and temporally, to allow a film like this to be so successful? These questions are answered by exploring the 'what's there?', 'why there?', 'why then', and 'why care' of Flaherty's *Nanook of the North*.

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## Chapter One - Introduction

When one thinks of north, where does one think of? Do they think of the arctic, the north of whichever country they are living in, or north of their city? North is a very subjective space, as everyone will have a different opinion as to what is north. Why then would one use such a subjective and almost confusing term to describe a specific spatial in a film? Whose north is it? In the title of the film *Nanook of the North*, whose north is being described? When one disseminates knowledge one must think about ‘whose knowledge?’, ‘what kind of knowledge?’, ‘for what purpose?’, ‘why is it relevant knowledge?’, and ‘what is being discriminated against?’ (Koster 1995). With these questions one can see the power structures revealed (Koster 1995). In other words what is there, why there, and why care can help uncover power structures, which have the ability to move around temporally and spatially. Exhibits and displays have the ability to move around temporally and spatially (Kotser 1995), which historically prove to be accessible to the public and therefore powerful. How knowledge is treated leads to a relationship of values, and exhibits are part of the network that places knowledge (Grandmont 1995). Exhibits are either ‘not here’ or ‘not now’, either way it is not the world that the western white European male lives in, but the world of the other. *Nanook of the North* is presented as not here, and not now. One needs to question why these constructs were produced, and who benefits from them.

Europeans, that is white western Europeans or people of white western European decent, perceived themselves to be the rational, civilised elite of the worlds people, therefore non-Europeans then must be irrational (Classen & Howes 2006). This is part of the Empire of Sight; Europeans are using the visual to justify colonialism as well as secure their place in the hierarchy. Truth is made, not found, and the ‘Truth’ was used as justification of domination based on

differences between humans, which was seen as natural (Haraway 1991). Exhibits, museums, and displays are seen as reputable ‘truth factories’ where a ‘Truth’ is constructed, produced, and marketed for the public through a representation. The taxidermy of the other, that is the manipulated person being positioned and manipulated into being different than the white western European, is collected and positioned to present as collected ‘Truth’. Collecting is a form of conquest and collected artefacts are material signs of victory over the place of origin (Classen & Howes 2006). One must question who is the knowing subject (Code 1991); in the case of the knowledge produced about primitivism and social status of the white western European within *Nanook of the North* the knowing subject is the white western (European) male who fancies themselves to be the ‘rational’ objective observer and thinker. That is the ‘North’ that is being described in the title, the north through the position of the white western (European) male.

It is important to understand the circumstances of the knower, or the collector of knowledge (Code 1991). One often sees ‘x knows y’ but rarely does one question who x is (Code 1991). Actors in the construction of culture are ‘us’ but also ‘them’ (Haraway 2004), but rarely do some seem to take into account that the other might construct and the white western European male is not the only knower. We need to question who is the knower, or the knowledge collector, and why are they saying what they are saying. What is being said in *Nanook of the North*? Why is this being said? What is there?

Hierarchisation of ‘race’ is a crossover from the ideas of class; ‘race’ is class in an international setting, it was developed as an attempt to extend and naturalise the reach of the powerful across the world (Bolton 2008). A way a coloniser can extend and manipulate the world around them is through technology; technology allows a coloniser to extend their reach and manipulate the environment in spaces around the world (Case 2010). Technology such as ships, the printing press, photographs, and, quite importantly, film has the ability to extend ones reach

across the world. It has the ability to extend the reach of one's power.

*Nanook of the North* is a work of science fiction. It stars a cyborg, which is a hybrid of technology and organism. Displays demonstrate separateness from the viewer (on one side of the glass) over the visual, displaced world (behind the glass) (Gillam 2001). Cyborgs have many functions, but the way the cyborg functions in *Nanook of the North* is a reconfiguring function; this is a posthuman creature, that is existing in a state beyond human, that is similar to but different than humans (Gray, Mentor, & Figueroa-Sarriera 1995). Keeping this in mind, I would say Nanook is not human; he is a reconfiguration of reality into science fiction, into an imagined 'North'. He is a creature that lives only in the world of film, and this creature has evolved differently than the species that the viewer is. The Nanook Creature in the film has evolved in its depiction to adapt to the harsh 'North' environment that the viewer, being a human, has not evolved to withstand. As a human, the viewer is out of place in the 'North', while the Nanook Creature, as a non/posthuman character in the film, has. The Nanook cyborg, or the other cyborg, is designed to be placed behind the glass, spatially separate from the collector. By exploring the cyborg one observe the production of humanness through machines (Downey, Dumit, & Williams 1995).

Films and visual dominance shared common politics through distance, but also fuelled the passion for the picturesque (Rony 1996). The passion for the picturesque was also part of the visual empire that dominated exhibits, shows, and films throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century and into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The question that must be asked is how has the relationship between colonialism and representation created a glass display around the Nanook Creature that separates him (and the other) from 'us'? Why has the cyborg been designed in the way it was, and placed in the designed imagined North? Themes that are clear in the film are establishing difference through distance, establishing difference through visual aesthetics, a vanishing culture, and the power over

hierarchy through established differences in social reality. To know something is to have power over it. To know is to produce for the learner (the viewer, the audience) and to design the reality in which an object (or individual) exists. It creates the cyborg in social reality, a piece of taxidermy frozen temporally and spatially in a science fiction setting which is taught as 'Truth'. Through colonialism, the creation of the other, and the display and representation of the other in exhibitions and human zoos a situation was created where the public wanted to see the exotic and strange other. These trends in popular culture led to Flaherty's success; Flaherty created a new cyborg species in his film in a science fiction constructed. The danger of this is that it is presented as reality to the audience, rather than science fiction. It is a story being sold as truth.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this thesis is to explore how Flaherty, within the historical context, manipulated the visual, the spatial, and the temporal to create a film that has lasted in the imagination of the audience through its colonial representations.

## **Objectives**

The objectives of this thesis are to explore how the visual, the creation of the 'North', and the creation of time are used to create the colonial representation of the Ungava Inuit in *Nanook of the North*. These are the main points in the chapters 'what's there?', 'why there?', and 'why then?'.

1) The visual: the first objective is to explore the clothing, props, and creation of the cyborg.

2) The creation of the 'North': the second objective summarises the idea of 'North' as an inaccessible place to the audience.

3) The creation of time: the third objective examines how in the film Flaherty creates a separate time for the other that is temporally distant from the time of the audience of the film.

## **Definitions**

‘Cyborg’ refers to something that is half constructed, half ‘organic’, or half made and half constructed. There is more detail about this in Chapter three.

The term ‘other cyborg’ is used to describe Nanook and people who have been put on display. It is used to describe a cyborg, one who is half born half made, but also is the other.

‘Nanook Creature’ is used throughout the thesis to describe the culture and creature that Flaherty has created in the film. It is used to determine a difference between the real, the actor and the Ungava Inuit for example, and the fake culture that Flaherty has created.

The chapter titles ‘what’s there’, ‘why there’, and ‘why care’ come from the class Geography of Culture and Inequality, taught by William Norton. These were the three questions he thought would be a good starting point for exploring any geographical problem.

## **Rationale**

This topic is important to examine because since the films release in 1922 it has been praised by its audience and taught in schools. It is important to examine how it was made, and why was it was made that way. Its legacy has been carried on because of the rich portrait Flaherty has painted, but it is essential to question if this portrait is authentic, and if it is teaching the colonial attitudes to generations since its release.

## Parameters

It was decided when writing on the authenticity, to focus on the clothing because that was what the literature available discussed, but also due to access to the collections at the Manitoba Museum. Further studies could examine the use of traditional tools represented in the film. Although in the beginning some literature was read on facial expression, the idea of further exploration and also looking into the stereotype of the 'smiling Eskimo' was sidelined. This could have fit into the visual objective, but perhaps could be an aspect for future studies on the topic.

## The Film

*Nanook of the North* was filmed in Inukjuak, Quebec in 1921. The Revillon Freres trading company, who had interest in the fur trade in the area, sponsored Flaherty's film. The film was a homage to Flaherty's imaged vanishing culture, and a propaganda film for the Revillon Freres company. The film depicts Nanook and his family living their life in, as the film shows, a harsh and dangerous environment. There is a seal hunt, a staple to arctic films at the time, as well as a demonstration of igloo building, and moments representing true (European) family values.

The film came out at the intersection of the decline of the human zoo and the rise of cinema. While the ideas and entertainment value of the human zoo was still popular among the masses, people were more interested in seeing the new technology of film. *Nanook of the North* caters to both the lust to see the exotic other and experiencing the new technological wonder of the time.

A postcolonial and postmodern feminist perspective is used to deconstruct the film. Arguable, although the film shows Nanook and his family, it is really more about Flaherty and the audience. The film is centred around their imagination, rather than the Ungava Inuit. The idea

that the other is created through language, the visual, and 'science' is present in the deconstruction and throughout the thesis.

## **Chapter Two- Methods and Methodology**

### **I) Methodology**

In this thesis I apply a postcolonial and postmodern feminism approach. Postmodern feminism takes the stance that representation is a function of language, which is said to reveal what is assumed to be true about women (Bulter 1999), but in this thesis I look at the representation of the other. The subject, the other, is produced and restrained by structures of power, and constructed in a way that the construction is perceived as legitimate (Bulter 1999). Postmodern feminism looks at how it is assumed that one must conform to an identity, which one assumes also exists spatially and temporally (Bulter 1999). The other (or women) is differentiated from the white European male by an assumed universality of the other, creating a dangerous binary (Bulter 1999); that is 'us' and 'them'. Postmodern feminism also questions how is representation/identity given, and how and where does the construction (of gender) take place (Bulter 1999). Determinism is inscribed onto bodies, using visual differences to make the body a passive recipient of culture (Bulter 1999). When a culture constructs gender (in the case of this thesis, the other) it seems that the gender (or in the this case, the other) is determined as if it were biology and destiny (Bulter 1999).

Another perspective I use is a postcolonial feminist perspective. This perspective looks at how writings often produce and represent a 'Third World Woman', or in the case of this thesis a 'primitive other', an image that is constructed through western discourse (Mohanty 2003). The image of the other is constructed through assumptions of privilege and ethnocentric universality, which also assumes that women (or the other) is a coherent group that has the same desires, regardless of the individuals class, ethnicity, 'race', etc. (Mohanty 2003). By combining these two perspectives a rich and valuable deconstruction of the film is accomplished.

By using a qualitative methodology, and specifically content analysis, I was able to draw on other disciplines and use an overall intersectional philosophy. I was able to look at the writings of Donna Haraway and others who often work within the discipline of cyborg anthropology/cyborg feminism. I also read and drew on many works from history, anthropology, film studies, women's studies, and museum studies. By using an intersectional approach I was able to explore a wide range of positionalities and ideas rather than one subject position of a problem. By adding interdisciplinary knowledge onto geographic knowledge I was able to get a wider view of my objectives in different contexts and spaces.

I feel by doing an intersectional content analysis I am able to intersect positionalities from geography, anthropology, museum studies, etc., placing my thesis at the intersection of these positionalities to get a thesis that is well rounded.

Content analysis was used to examine the film *Nanook of the North*, museum artefacts, and related literature. Literature from many difference contexts and disciplines were used to get a historical context as well as an accurate account of life in Inukjuak in the 1920s. This method revealed inauthenticity within the film, and provided a rich historical context leading up to the films creation.

Content analysis is a method used to determine the meaning, purpose, or effect of a certain text. This is done by evaluating details and deconstructing the text. Content analyses of popular culture artefacts have been effectively used in writings such as *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle* (1996) by Fatimah Tobing Rony and *When the Other is me: Native Resistance Discourse 1850 -1990* (2010) by Emma LaRocque. After reading these works I thought a content analysis would be the best method to reach my objectives and answer my initial questions.

## II) Methods

Through content analysis I could deconstruct and determine the meaning and purpose of the representations in *Nanook of the North*.

The questions I asked were:

- 1) Whose knowledge is being represented?
- 2) Why is this persons the knowledge being represented?
- 3) What is the historical context of the film which lead to the creation of the knowledge?
- 4) How were my objectives manipulated to get this final result?

I began by watching the film, making notes on which aspects I thought were odd or interesting and needed further exploration. Then I examined the literature for further information on points I had made while watching, for example the authenticity of the visual aspects such as clothing. I reviewed more literature to either double check questions or elaborate on research points. This also allowed me to use an intersectional and interdisciplinary positionality within my research.

I then examined the museum artefacts, which elaborated on the inauthenticity and allowed me to get a closer look at the space and community the film was set in.

After viewing the film, analysing it, reading and referring to the literature and museum artefacts I reviewed my notes and began to catalogue them into three objectives; what's there, why there, and why then. I did this by going through and colour-coding my notes, each objective had a different colour (blue for why there, green for why then, and pink for what's there). This gave me a clear picture of what belongs in which section,

This analysis of the film, literature, and museum artefacts raised several questions and themes:

- 1) How has the relationship between colonialism and representation created a glass display around the Nanook Creature that separates him (and the other) from 'us'?

2) Why has the cyborg been designed in the way it was, and placed in the designed imagined North?

These questions lead to the themes:

I) difference through distance,

II) establishing difference through visual aesthetics,

III) a vanishing culture, and

IV) the power over hierarchy through established differences in social reality.

### **Chapter Three - What's There? Establishing the North, Establishing the Cyborg**

The goal of this chapter is to explore the visual, as in the aesthetics, aestheticisation, and visual aids within the film, and why it is the important first step in creating the colonial drama *Nanook of the North*. The visual includes the creation and manipulation of the costumes, props, and the actors, or cyborgs. The creation of these elements help one understand the culture that Flaherty created within his film.

#### **I) Constructing the North**

The filming location of *Nanook of the North* was Inukjuak, Quebec is located along the east coast of the Hudson Bay and the coast of Ungava Bay, and is in the area in which the Ungava group of Inuit live. The first meeting between Ungava Inuit and Europeans was when Henry Hudson arrived on Digges Island in 1610 (Oakes & Riewe 1995). Trade began in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and the Hudson's Bay Company established its first fur-trading post on the east coast of the Hudson Bay in 1750 (Oakes & Riewe 1995). The fur trade in the area gave Robert Flaherty the opportunity to eventually make the film *Nanook of the North*; in 1903 Revillon Freres, the company that sponsored the film, established a trading post in the area (Oakes & Riewe 1995; McGrath 2006). Flaherty pitched the idea of the film in 1920 to Captain Thierry Mallet of the Revillon Freres (McGrath 2006). Flaherty had gone to the area in 1910 looking for iron ore (McGrath 2006), and then photographed the landscape and locals.

Through his photography Flaherty went to get lengths to suggest 'innocence' among those he photographed, and many of these photographs had political connotations (James 1983). Flaherty's photographs were studio-style portraits; they were not candid, and they were distant from the poverty stricken situations that the people in the area were suffering through at the time

(James 1983). For Flaherty it was all about the aestheticisation; unlike other photographers at the time, Flaherty wanted pretty subjects and avoided revealing their true condition (James 1983). The idea of aestheticisation also was present in his film; Maggie Nujarluktuk was cast as Nanook's wife, Nyla, based completely on her looks (McGrath 2006). Flaherty gave the Ungava people an oppressive makeover through his early photography and his film.

Although the Ungava people were going through a period of poverty they did not give up; the Ungava Inuit wore mostly caribou and sealskin clothing until the late 1800s when the caribou population vanished until about 1950 (Oakes 1989; McGrath 2006). This was due to a fluctuation in the vegetation, which had often occurred in the area and clearly has a large impact on the Inuit life (Oakes & Riewe 1995). They then turned to the eider duck to make bird skin clothing, which became a symbol of the Ungava Inuit (Oakes 1989). The eider is hunted around October and November, due to their down being thicker as well as having stronger skin (Oakes 1989). They are also hunted at this time because they are in moult, therefore resting on the ground (Issenman 1997). The male is snowy white above and black below, while the female is a rich brown colour and is more lightweight (Issenman 1997). This historical and biological fact is important to note when looking at the Nanook Creature's costume. The colour, length, and style of his clothing matters because it is an indicator of whether it is a costume that the Nanook Creature was given to wear, or something that Allakariallak would wear in his everyday life. Men's parkas in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century had round hoods that came close to their face with even edges, went to the thigh, and had a slit up the front (Issenman 1997). Sealskin boots were worn on the eastern shores of the Hudson Bay and were used for hunting or fishing in wet conditions (Oakes & Riewe 1995; Issenman 1997).

Women wore sealskin amauti with a tail in the front and back, and also had a band of beading from one shoulder to the other (Issenman 1997; Oakes & Riewe 1995). The tails on the

front and back of the parka for men and women were characteristic of the area (Oakes & Riewe 1995). Children wore sealskin or eider duck parkas and trousers (Oakes 1989; Issenman 1997).

The authenticity of the visual aspects of the film has come into question, and this includes whether the clothing worn in the film were costumes or actual characteristic and authentic clothing to the region. The Nanook Creature was given polar bear skin trousers, which would not have been wore by the Ungava. After examining a parka and figurines from Inukjuak (a later parka from 1959, but the style is the same) from the Manitoba Museum it is quite clear that the parka the Nanook Creature was wearing is not authentic (Table 1);

*Table 1. Museum Parka vs. Nanook Creature Parka.*

<u>Museum Samples</u>	<u>1922 Film Version</u>
No fur cuffs/trim	Fur along cuffs/trim
Pointed hood	Rounded hood
Tight to face	Looser around face
Looser fit, noticeably in sleeves, hips	Very tight fit

The parka has fur cuff, which the museum artefacts did not have. The Nanook Creature’s parka was also rather tight, whilst the museum parka was looser fitting. Most importantly the hood was rounded on the Nanook Creature’s parka, but the Ungava Inuit have a distinct point on their hoods. The Nanook Creature’s parka appears to be inauthentic, being yet another falsified aspect of the film. The Nyla Creature’s coat did in fact have the characteristic tails of the region,

but did not have the pointed hood. Her parka might not be temporally authentic; a more European style with a skirt-like bottom was more popular among Ungava woman in Inukjuak at the time.

Nothing can truly be reproduced, unless of course it is cloned (Haraway 2004). *Nanook of the North* is not a clone of society in Inukjuak, nor is it a reproduction of life. The intended audience of the film was never meant to be the people of Inukjuak, and in fact removed history from the space of Inukjuak to imply the myth of the primitive people of the 'North' (Rony 1996). However, the people of Inukjuak were not removed from the making of the film itself; many people from the town turned up to audition for the film, as well as working as camera operators and crew members (McGrath 2006). Instead it is an assemblage spatially, temporally, and of people that exist in the imagination. This is of course assembled in the science fiction imagined space called 'North'. Costumes and props were part of this assemblage meant to represent 'Truth'; Allakariallak and his friends were asked to build half of an igloo that would be used as a prop for the film, allowing for easier filming 'indoors' (McGrath 2006).

Members of the Inukjuak community appreciate the film as a record of their ancestors and land, but find many of the scenes, especially the seal-hunt, to be laughable (Rony 1996). The locals think that many scenes were doctored and set up by Flaherty to fit the perception that the western imagination had of their space (Rony 1996). Flaherty felt as if he were capturing a disappearing world while it was still possible (McGrath 2006).

The film was a massive success; it was released on June 11<sup>th</sup> 1922 in New York City, but soon moved to London and Paris (McGrath 2006). The film eventually grossed US\$251,000 (McGrath 2006). Other studios began to capitalise on the popularity of the film, and soon many Inuit themed films were produced including *Justice of the Far North* (1926), *Frozen Justice* (1929), *Igloo* (1932), and *Eskimo* (1933) (Aleiss 2005). The popularity of the film produced a Nanookmania craze; advertisers began to use Allakariallak's face to sell products (McGrath

2006). One of these products, which became very popular in Germany and the United States, was Eskimo Pie ice cream (Aleiss 2005; Fienup-Riodran 1990). Nanook was also the inspiration of the Broadway Frank Zappa song 'Don't Eat the Yellow Snow Suite' in the 1970s(Ivakniv 2013). The film has become a pop culture phenomenon that is being kept alive through its relevance in pop culture, through songs for example, but also its supposed educational relevance in the classroom and relevance in academia. Robert Flaherty continued to make films. Some of his films, *Moana: A Romance of the Golden Age* (1926) set in Samoa and *Man of Aran* (1934) set on Irelands Aran Islands continued with the theme of reinventing a culture to represent an exotic past (Williams 2002). *Man of Aran* went on to win Best Foreign Film at the Venice Film Festival, and Flaherty went on to be nominated for several more awards through out his career, including the BAFTA and Academy Award (Williams 2002; Kuhn N/D). Of course, all of this went unbeknownst to Allakariallak and Maggie, who continued their lives as usual. The winter of 1923 was particularly brutal for Inukjuak, and Allakariallak soon passed away (McGrath 2006). While Allakariallak died the Nanook Creature lived, and continues to live on. The Nanook Creature, the other, or taxidermy do not live within a landscape, but rather within a mindscape.

## **II) Setting the Stage**

The sense of sight is linked with scientific practice; in the 19th century there was a rise in the Empire of Sight where wealthy capitalist core nations showcased cultural capital and domination over other regions of people (Classen & Howes 2006; Montpetit 1995). Through early cabinet of curiosities, that is a collection of exotic artefacts collected and displayed, the white western European male was elevated. Soon classification became a growing concern, and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century this led to the development of hierarchical divisions of humans into 'naturally' unequal 'races' (Bolton 2008). Representations have to do with how others see

members of a group and their place and rights (Dyer 1993); this determines who is in and out of place. How we are seen determines how we are treated, but we also threat others based on how we see them (Dyer 1993). Displays question the representations and creation of human difference; in other worlds representations are presentations (Bolton 2003; Dyer 1993).

The visual, what we see and how we perceive it, is extremely important, especially in representation; the most visually pleasing objects (human or non-human) are typically put on display (Classen & Howes 2006). In the visual empire displays are designed to justify the white western male's position of status (Montpetit 1995). There was no original context, or at least it was removed in its new representation, and the evolutionary scale had Victorian England as the pinnacle of human achievement (Classen & Howes 2006). The display built up and elevated the white western male through the visual, and hierarchies of 'race' began to be seen as an aesthetic expression (Bolton 2008). If there is nothing for the audience to look at then the object (human or not) will be cast into obscurity (Classen & Howes 2006). This is as Classen & Howes put it, our Empire of Sight, where objects are colonised by the gaze (2006). Originally the visual aspect of an object was not the most important or meaningful (Classen & Howes 2006), but in changing hands, in moving into a new space, there is no meaning beyond the visual.

Social meaning and senses are forgotten when it is removed from its original culture setting and is given a new meaning within the visual empire of the collector (Classen & Howes 2006). The knower, or the collector, is assumed to be male, adult, reasonably affluent, educated, and high status with acceptable accomplishments and property (Code 1991). The white western European male can feign an intimate knowledge of other cultures by putting on a certain imagined cultures clothing; adding to an imagined visual affinity with the culture. This fuelled the European fascination of 'going native', but the European values, underneath the clothing and

props, were still intact (Classen & Howes 2006). The white western European male is the one with power, and power has the ability to produce knowledge (Foucault 1980).

The Nanook Creature is purely visual; it is part of the visual empire of film. After all, film is (and in 1922 was completely) a visual activity. When an object is placed underneath glass we lose part of the knowledge acquisition through the loss of touch (Classen & Howes 2006); this also happens in film. We the viewer cannot touch, we have limited angles to view the object, and we are seeing the object through a certain position (the positionality of the collector as well as the position of the camera/exhibit).

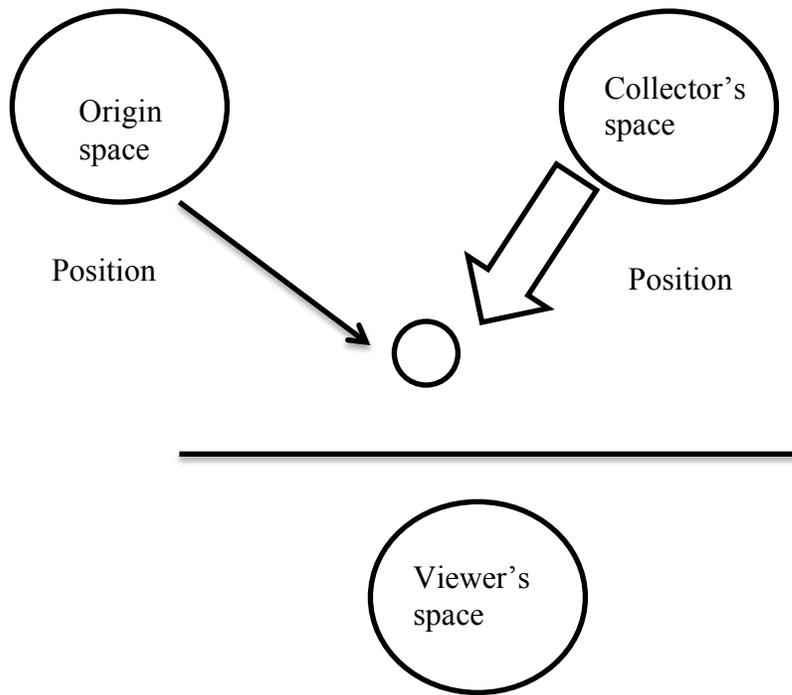
Knowledge is always found in particular places, but most effectively when it is a place that is accessible to the community, and the collector can extract knowledge from the visual (Montpetit 1995). When an object has been appropriated, the object's meaning is made to conform to a European set of values imposed by the collector (Classen & Howes 2006). The object had been manipulated at the mercy of one's subjectively poisoned view of an object. The Empire of Sight is a place in the people with wealth's ostentation and prestige (Montpetit 1995), it is the space of the collector. The collector has created a self-fulfilling identity through a meaningfully produced depiction of the other (Classen & Howes 2006). Collectors of the 19<sup>th</sup> century justified the appropriation of objects stating that they were rescuing the object from obscurity; the objects were thought to be better off with the knowledgeable white western male European scholar (Classen & Howes 2006). Objects (human and non-human) once appropriated must conform to the visual order of its new colonial home, being civilised into the Empire of Sight (Classen & Howes 2006). The collector is contributing to the vanishing culture but think they are saving it. By vanishing the culture, the collector can manipulate the way culture is depicted. The visual has many gazes, including the scientist gaze, a gaze in the name of science. This is also where science meets art in the form of film; *Nanook of the North* is art made in the name of science.

By being merely a visual object in the Empire of Sight it is rendered touchless, speechless, and smell-less (Classen & Howes 2006). In other words it is taxidermy. Part of the artefact dies, and only the visual aspect remains to be represented and perceived as the collector pleases. Taxidermy is a visual object and by being a visual object it is rendered touchless, speechless, and smell-less (Classen & Howes 2006). Taxidermy also implies death, which is ideal when representing a vanishing culture.

Humans can be cast in the role of subject or object depending on social relations (Gillam 2001). This role is cast in social reality, but also, as in any film or on any stage, is based on aesthetics. When looking at the National Museum in New York, Carl Akeley's taxidermy was a monument to the purity of nature; this is the art of taxidermy, or art meets science (Haraway 1989). Within dioramas one sees the production of performance (Haraway 1989). The diorama is a story where an actor is on the stage of 'nature', much like part of a Hollywood movie set (Haraway 1989). Taxidermy fulfills the fatal desire to represent, to be whole; it is a politics of reproduction (Haraway 1989). It is a way to hunt down the other (Haraway 1989), and then display the other as a trophy. Taxidermy is successful when it looks as if it were simply found that way (Haraway 1989) as an object frozen spatially and temporally, manipulated by the collector who now takes the role of taxidermist. It is more successful when it is thought to have more in common with what one would find in 'nature', in the space of the other. Nature is imagined to be without technology and taxidermy is stills from nature (Haraway 1989) making it the space of the other. The film stars taxidermy set up against the picturesque 'nature' in the space of the other.

What's there are several spaces working together to create knowledge in the space of the viewers mind (Figure 1).

*Figure 1. Space and knowledge relations.*



Between origin and exhibition is the production of knowledge through the positionality of the collector, which is then passed on into the space of the viewer. This is how the collector creates a new social reality through newly produced knowledge about a certain dominated culture. Zoos, museums, and exhibits are places where the routine of the visitor is based on the interaction between the active viewer with 'insensible' beings or inanimate objects (Gillam 2001). This means that the role of subject and object can never be reversed (Gillam 2001); one will always remain on the side of the glass they start off on (or are placed on). This relationship is a product of a specific set of historical, cultural, and economic determinants rather than common sense (Gillam 2001).

The construction of the other cyborg in exhibitions and in the film relied heavily on the *Empire of Sight*, and playing up visual cues that would mean the 'other' was very important. The

space that one was from matters as well as the group itself; there were certain criteria in selecting an ethnic group exhibition (Thode-Arora 2008). The criteria were: 1) the group must be different in some way, 2) the group must have particular physical characteristics, and 3) the group must have picturesque customs (Thode-Arora 2008). There were several ideals that collectors looked for in a group;

Ideal One - a group should be different and strange, but not too strange

Ideal Two - the ideal physical appearance was an anthropological type for their region, or simply 'genuine' looking types

Ideal Three - the performer did not speak an European language due to the fear of contact with the audience might lead to a revolt

Ideal Four – performers should be able to represent a 'family life' in a show, so often women and children were recruited to give a picture of a family (Thode-Arora 2008).

It was clear that much of these criteria and ideals are met in the film *Nanook of the North*:

- 1) The group is strange or different in a way that they would be out of place in western European society. They have different ideas on technology (portrayed as not using it) and in the film are seen having an affinity with animals
- 2) The Nanook Creature is (and Allakariallak is portrayed as) the 'smiling Eskimo' but also animal-like and closer to the environment, which are stereotypical features of his 'group'
- 3) The space in which the Nanook Creature and his family live is portrayed as 'North'; distant, strange, and dangerous. A place better suited for the dogs, but still picturesque. There are many shots of the arctic and the danger may add to its exoticness.

As the film is silent, we do not hear the Nanook Creature speak English (and he cannot communicate directly with the audience), and he merely performs a pantomime for the camera.

The text is not written through the Nanook Creature's perspective, but an unknown likely white (European) male. The only interaction the Nanook Creature has with the audience is when he smiles and looks directly at the camera, which is the ideal appearance of the 'smiling Eskimo' performer. Actors were cast as the Nanook Creature's family, creating an illusion of the ideal everyday family life.

It was essential to exhibit the other to demonstrate and legitimise difference, but also to represent the other as an inferior 'race', 'primitive', or 'savage' (Blanchard et al. 2008). With the emphasis on the visual people entered into an age where the world was divided into exhibited and spectators on different sides of the glass (Blanchard et al. 2008). There are inequalities built into the display of the dominated culture. This is also how the collector creates the cyborg.

### **III) Staging the Cyborg**

Not all people are free to exist as active, questioning subjects; the privileged white western European male was the only influence on the construction of class, gender, and 'race' (Gillam 2001). Technology plays a large role in regards to social relationships and factors; socially constructed identifiers, for example 'race' or gender, are products of social technologies (de Lauretis 1987). 'Race' or the idea of the other may merely be social constructions, but it has major implications on the material life of the individual (de Lauretis 1987) and on people around an individual. This is in part due to technologies that aid in the building of representations. Display becomes the product of an organism and modern western technology (film, taxidermy, ships, etc.). From the beginning the cyborg is a construction, and it is constructed as part natural

and part unnatural, part made and part born (Hayles 1995). The cyborg is a creature of social reality, which is lived through social relations (Haraway 1991). It is a creature that is either the combination of organic and machine, or the creation of a union between two separate organic systems (Gray, Mentor, & Figueroa-Sarriera 1995). This could be for example an organic system, such as a human, combined with a construction about said human, which is not organic, though it is thought to be. The Nanook Creature is the latter; he is a union between what exists and fiction. This is the coming together of fact and science fiction.

The body of the cyborg is one that is both its own agent with autonomy, but also subject to the power of another agent (Gonzalez 1995). The Nanook Creature is part the creature of Flaherty without his own agency, but also part Allakariallak, who had his own agency and brings that into the film. The film itself is all about the visual representation, the Empire of Sight, of the cyborg Nanook Creature. Visual representation of cyborgs is utopian or dystopian and reflects the contemporary state of being (Gonzalez 1995). The Nanook Creature is clearly a product of a dystopian thought, and therefore his space is such. His space, the 'North', is also a cyberorganism, as it is also part fact, part science fiction. The cyborgs also show the power of imagination invested in sciences and technology but also how it is constructed into culture (Downey, Dumit, & Williams 1995). The vanishing culture is a designed culture, it is imagined, and it is a work of science fiction. The boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion (Haraway 1991). Both are a creation of those who are given the power to create, and are a mixture of what they see, and what they want to see. One's imagination starts to become tangible when they are given the power to create science fiction.

A cyborg is a system of dying flesh (human) and undead circuits, or of living and artificial cells (Gray, Mentor, & Figueroa-Sarriera 1995). This is the Nanook Creature; he is dying flesh as a human, but also undead taxidermy in the science fiction representation of what

he is thought to be. The Nanook Creature is both living and artificial. In the case of taxidermy, including taxidermy in the film, one must look alive but the other must be perceived as dead (Rony 1996). The Nanook Creature is dead, or undead, because he is representing a vanished culture that in the eye of the viewer is dead or dying.

We often use the reproduction of self in the reflection of the other; we create a self-fulfilling identity through a meaningful depiction of the other (Haraway 1991; Classen & Howes 2006). Reality is built into a hierarchy where the inequalities of 'race' could be naturalised in functioning systems of exploitation (Haraway 1991). Those who call themselves scientists reconstruct reality with scientific knowledge across borders and spaces (Downey, Dumit, & Williams 1995). The cyborg represents that which otherwise can be represented (Gonzalez 1995). That which otherwise cannot be represented is the glory of modernity; the west could not have been represented in the body of the west, as it is better to represent the new in the body of the old (Hayles 1995). Making a story into reality creates a hierarchical division between collector and someone like the Nanook Creature, the idea of distance strengthens hierarchy. The Nanook Creature, in the cyborg body, aids the storyteller in bringing together myths and stories as tools, representations, and realities (Gray, Mentor, & Figueroa-Sarriera 1995; Haraway 1989). 'Specimen' (or the Nanook Creature) are a hybrid of machine and organism. *Nanook of the North* is a constructed visual story; it is a mixture of science fiction and reality. Science fiction elevates the western white male up into the hierarchy by building the 'other', or the 'Nanook Creature' cyborg in a lower exploited position.

#### **IV) What's There? The Visual**

This chapter's main objective is to explore the visual aspects of the film such as props, clothing, and the cyborg that create the empire of sight. Exhibits and museums were considered

high culture, and representations of 'race' or the other in the body of the cyborg were presented throughout history in the western high culture (de Laetis 1987). The exhibit was a cultural performance about another culture but also about oneself (Ames 1992). The cultural performance is created through 'knowledge' produced by the collector. Collections give the collector social distinction in the form of power, prestige, and status (Alexander 1979). The collection is a representation of a relationship or a construct of relations between the collector and the other cyborg (de Laetis 1987). This kind of social distinction can eventually turn into immortality for the collector (Alexander 1979), that is if their collection, whether of objects of knowledge, is in a place of distinction but also in the minds of people. In a sense, the immortality of collector creates a cyborg as well; their power isolates them from other human beings by being elevated by their status through the extension of self through the world with the aid of technology.

Technology and the cyborg are vehicles for colonialism; the coloniser is able to extend their reach through technology and manipulate environments across spaces. This is the coloniser cyborg. Taxidermy and cyborgs are the same thing, they both are at the intersection of organisms and machines. Human beings grow old and die, but constructions and machines are designed, manufactured, and assembled, hence they do not typically grow, but they can wear out as well as be dis- or reassembled into a new product (Hayles 1995). Unlike Allakariallak, the Nanook Creature will not grow old as he is frozen in an imagined and constructed temporal and spatial aspects. The actor was a cyborg reassembled in film and constructed into a new product to sell the idea of the other's primitivism and western superiority.

The colonised cyborg on the other hand is one that is part organic part constructed by imagined parts given to them by the coloniser. The colonised cyborg becomes taxidermy when put on display or framed within a photography or film; the cyborg is representing an imagined and fixed temporal and spatial aspect. In this space the taxidermy is manipulated by the collector.

The museum, zoo, exhibit, and film are all stages for the cultural performance (in which the actors are cyborgs) and the performative activities that are expected by certain people in these spaces. These new social spaces required a new social being, which was to be represented through an imaginary body (Gonzalez 1995), that is the body of the other. The new spatial aspect, or temporal aspect, of modernity was being visually represented through the imaginary body of the other, through the Nanook Creature. This aids in the casting the people within society in their roles, on the stage of in front or behind the glass and now we must put on a show, to prove our position. *Nanook of the North* may not have brought Flaherty immortality in the physical tangible sense, but it did in the way that the ideas are preserved in the human mind, in social reality. This visual knowledge is passed on through pop culture and through education.

## **Chapter Four - Why There? Placing Difference Through Space**

Chapter four builds on the idea of how the visual, what we see and how we perceive it, is staged by elaborating on differences through space. In this section the idea of 'North' will be investigated. Placing the visual in the imaged and constructed 'North' is the important second step Flaherty takes in creating his representation. This chapter will examine how the 'North' was created, what historical context made it happen, and why it was created.

### **I) Placing the Nanook Creature**

Space in the context of the film is very important; the film's space is where the idea of a 'vanishing culture' is located. *Nanook of the North* is the supposed study of a vanishing culture within the imagined space of 'North'; the text at the beginning of the film claims that the documentary is 'not staged, lived' (Flaherty 1922). The film is not lived, staged; many aspects of the film were staged through props, costumes, and new western film technology. The props and costumes help establish distance through constructed temporal and spatial aspects. One of the scenes that stands out as indicating difference is the dramatic seal hunt scene, which was in fact staged. This scene was one that was often included in the early travelogue films, and in *Nanook of the North* this scene is present as a fierce struggle with a seal, but actually is a group of men off-camera creating the fierce struggle by periodically tugging at the line (Rony 1994). Even the space that the film is set in is referred to as the 'North' rather than a specific location. The space is imagined. The 'North' has been a science fiction space that many have made assumptions about throughout time; the white western European male thought that lands that were not meant to be farmed seemed distant and beyond human use (Brody 2000). The white western European male also insisted that those who live in these spaces must be as wild and primitive as the land (Brody

2000). By naming the film 'Nanook of Quebec' it would have placed the other too close to the world 'we' live in. The 'North' sparked plenty of fantasy in the European imagination about the space and those who live there (Brody 2000). By simply calling this space 'North' it is rendered placeless; 'North' is representing a homogenised idea of a space that is distant from the urban centres of the colonial powers, and not accessible to the audiences.

The mentality that the film produces seems to emerge from early anthropology and the human zoos/exhibitions of the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Nanook Creature is displayed in the space of the film as if an object on display in a museum. Objects displayed in a museum are often a representation of something distant, either temporally or spatially. Much like one would see in a museum display, the Nanook Creature and his 'family' are posed doing 'traditional' activities for the camera (Rony 1994). The cyborg is not free from social constraints, and must still be seen performing 'traditional' roles that shall not be challenged in the visual empire and representation of the cyborg (Gonzales 1995). Technology creates distance in this display; a conceited, ethnocentric, and false view that indigenous people do not understand western technology is shown when the Nanook Creature is laughing at, then attempts to eat products representing the technological and modern western world, which also reassures the audience of the contrast between the 'less civilised' primitive and the civilised modern westerners with their technology (Rony 1994). As the Nanook Creature does not know (or as Allakariallak is depicted as not knowing) what this common technology is, he is not as 'sophisticated' or 'civilised' as 'us', not as evolved, nor fit to survive in 'our warm world' as the film puts it. The character of the Nanook Creature is designed to be out of place alongside technology, and alongside the audience.

## II) Placing Behind Glass

One way of looking at *Nanook of the North* is as if it is an object, an artefact on display at a museum. Non-western culture has gone through an aestheticisation since being displayed, which has led to the relativisation of western aesthetic standards as well as recontextualised production of material cultural items (Stocking Jr. 1987). The Nanook Creature is heavily aestheticised, showing a very picturesque space and a picturesque people. Objects are reconceptualised in the terms of the aesthetic in a western perspective (Stocking Jr. 1987). Museums confine other peoples' material cultures for study and interpretation by showing them behind glass display cases, or behind cameras and on a TV screen (Ames 1992; Stocking Jr. 1985). Culture is reconceptualised as a visual material culture, it becomes part of the Empire of Sight. The material objects are artefacts of the other whose similarity or difference is experienced by the viewers (on one side of the glass) (Stocking Jr. 1985). The film captures the visual object of the other in the imagined space of the other, places behind the glass of the camera. An object behind the glass is brought into a new world. Objects also have power over their viewers, but this is a power given to the object by their collector on a particular historical sociocultural setting in social reality (Stocking Jr. 1987). The museum itself is confined; they are historically situated (Ames 1992). Museums, and other spaces of representation and display, represent a historically situated idea in social reality. In the case of displaying the Nanook Creature imperialism, colonialism, and capitalism play a role.

The positionality of the collector (coloniser) often is present in the creation of displays, but the collector's positionality helps situate the displayed objects historically and within social reality. In looking at displays in this light one could say that museums (and displays of culture) are an artefact of society (Ames 1992). So why is the Nanook Creature and Allakariallak being placed there? Why is Flaherty placing the Nanook Creature behind glass, solidifying the

relationship with the Nanook Creature as ‘them’ and the viewer as ‘us’? ‘Under the glass’ is a space of the containment of truth, the containment of time, and the containment of views of society. The Nanook Creature is also contained, but behind the glass of the camera lens where his representation is contained. This is an unnatural space that is built by constructions and modern technology, but to the viewer it seems natural. In assigning a new meaning, its natural space is behind the glass. When an object or person is underneath the viewer on the hierarchy, when they are behind the glass, they are behind the viewer temporally, or at least that is what is projected to the audience. Technology is an artificial extension of the physical capabilities of humans (with power) through the manipulation of the world around us (Gillam 2001; Case 2010). Rather than a museum the Nanook Creature was placed on film, collected by the camera, and he was removed temporally by being displayed in the way he was, in a timeless and placeless interpretation that was designed in the imagination of Flaherty dangerously given the place name of ‘North’ and the temporal period of ‘primitive’.

The Empire of Sight and spaces of display depict the positionality of those who have power within a society. It helps clarify the constructions, such as who is deemed in and out of certain spaces, it helps place society, and it helps place difference. Some of the knowledge that was created through exhibitions and displays was that of the power and superiority of the white European male; scholars turned to collections for confirmation of Europeans heightened abilities over others as well as naturalising the white European male (Blanchard et al. 2008; Durbach 2008). These collections were collected with the intent of creating a certain kind of knowledge, one that heightens difference and justifies colonialism; these are subjective collections. The other was discovered, or rather constructed, through these collections, and now these collections helped scholars establish hierarchies and help people within the same social group understand them (Blanchard et al. 2008). Scholars needed these collections, but they also needed living subjects,

which left the scientist with two options: go to the field, or bring the subjects to the scientist (Blanchard et al. 2008).

Both of these options were possible through modern technology. Modern technology, many years later, also allowed for Allakariallak to be 'collected' and become the Nanook Creature, which one can say was collected as well; the Nanook Creature was collected through the lens of a camera and displayed in the cinema. Like the subjects of scientific study there is a separation between collector and collected, scientist and subject, coloniser and colonised.

New technology like photographs allow domestication, consumption, and possession but also allow one to keep their distance from the other (Edwards 2008). The other, defined as the racial, cultural, and moral other, from non-European 'races' was perceived as inferior and doomed to extinction (Edwards 2008). There is a clear relationship between colonialism and photography, a relationship grounded in power and inequality; photography often acted as propaganda to help support colonial practices (Edwards 2008). Photographers and filmmakers hold what they want us to see within a frame, therefore it is easy to focus our attention (Edwards 2008). By framing what the viewer sees their viewpoint is narrowed, limiting the viewer's interpretation. The glass in the camera creates a crucial distance that must be maintained and not blurred in order to keep constructed hierarchies in place. Photographs seduce the viewer into an imaginary space that would seem visually believable (Gonzalez 1995). The Nanook Creatures's homogenous 'North' is kept at a distance from the collector's world through technology, and through modern technology, the images of the Nanook Creature's 'North' render it placeless and timeless, but most importantly, distant. The mass production of photographs from the 1850s onwards created a visual economy (Edwards 2008). From the 1860s onward images of the other, which were seen as scientific and popular, began to circulate, and by the 1880s technological process in the introduction of the half-tone high-quality printing press as well as picture postcards

allowed photographs an even vaster circulation (Edwards 2008). A photograph can act as an assemblage of manufacturing of a representational artefact (Gonzalez 1995); *Nanook of the North* is an assemblage of 'real' parts, such as the landscape, as well as the mechanical and constructed (props, lighting, sets, etc.) put together and rearranged in a space, the partly manufactured 'North', to create an image that is fantasy.

The advancement in photography technology meant the naturalising of scientific ideas of 'race' and culture could reach high levels of popularity (Edwards 2008). 'Race' and racism now became part of popular culture. An objectified 'type' was represented in photographs; language of science emphasises the idea of 'type', which de-individualises and generalises the subject of the photo, which also leaves the other as an object (Edwards 2008).

The 'North' in the film went through a similar process; by simply calling it 'North' the space is de-individualised and generalised, one cannot place 'North' on a map. The Nanook Creature, and even Allakariallak himself are de-individualised and generalised as the 'smiling Eskimo' stereotype. We live in a visual world in which we are constantly judging, identifying, or not-identifying based off of visual aesthetics alone. There may be mere metres dividing the two, but there are two very distant spaces with a significant distance (within social reality) between the two. This is the geography of the glass display; one either occupies the space on one side or the other, and it is not possible to occupy both. The spaces represent a clear position on the hierarchy in social reality for an individual depending on which space they occupy (or are made to occupy).

Cyborgs occupy these spaces, half what they actually are as a human, the other half what they have been designed through social reality and others. In *Nanook of the North* the viewer is sitting on the same side of the glass as Flaherty (the collector). The space of the object on display has all original meaning taken away, and now there is no meaning beyond the visual or the meaning assigned to them by the collector. There is room for meaning to be interpreted by the

viewers on the other side of the glass, but the collector often guides the interpretations. The collector, of course, governs both spaces and aids in the design of the relationship in social reality by making decisions on how things are displayed. Lighting, labels, props, and colour can produce the relationships in the space creating a colonial diorama. The creation of the other through these elements, and the idea of otherness was rationalised through ‘race’ by science; to display the other was a visual display of western modernity and greatness (Blanchard et al. 2008).

By the 20<sup>th</sup> century there were fewer travelling shows, the ‘native villages’ become so elaborate that it was easier to have a permanent exhibit, like the one that opened in the Tierpark in Hamburg in 1907 by Carl Hagenbeck (Thode-Arora 2008). Carl Hagenbeck created ‘natural scenes’ with elaborate backdrops for the staging of the other and imaginary constructs (Deroo 2008; Thode-Arora 2008). Heinrich Umlauff, Hagenbeck’s nephew and a dealer of ethnographic objects, helped create large backdrops representing well-known (and stereotypical) scenes for the shows (Thode-Arora 2008). During the first World War ethnic shows came to an end, but a few did come back in the 1920s, although by this time cinema had taken over in entertainment and the new silent films could transport audiences to exotic locations (Thode-Arora 2008). During the War and afterwards it became impossible to recruit from colonies of other states, so film also become more particle (Thode-Arora 2008). Film added the colonial gaze of the viewer; in the cinema the audience could now see the other in their exotic ‘natural habitat’.

### **III) Placing in a Zoo**

Human zoos always included an exhibition, performance, education, and dominance (Blanchard et al. 2008). One would also see these elements in *Nanook of the North*. Human zoos contributed to the production of knowledge about distant lands in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Blanchard et al. 2008). The human zoo was made up of exoticism and knowledge as well as fantasy and

nationality, which together made up a story about the unknown (Blanchard et al. 2008). The curiosity for fantasy developed into the science fiction we see in *Nanook of the North*. Here science fiction clearly is the distant and strange; in this era there was an interest in discovering the distant and strange, but also an interest in the other (Blanchard et al. 2008).

During the Victorian and Edwardian eras exhibitions represented a reworking of the national and imperial identities that were borderless; they shaped cultural and social order within social reality (Hoffenberg 2001). Collectors of curious objects wanted an understanding of the object itself, but also wanted to create a system of hierarchies (Blanchard et al. 2008). There was a great importance given to the meaning the collector gives the object rather than the original meaning. The collection of meaningful objects helps place the collector into the hierarchy. There was an influence of colonialism on the idea of difference; discoveries and colonial conquests consumed and sparked human curiosity (Blanchard et al. 2008). Soon there was a desire to see a 'live specimen' in their 'natural environment' (Blanchard et al. 2008; Deroo 2008); in other words their distant land, their other space. This was possible due to technological advancements and the rise of colonialism. When it came to studying the other, human's skeletons and artefacts only could go so far, but scientists needed and wanted to see live specimens (Blanchard et al. 2008).

In this period the public wanted to see 'varieties of mankind', and the public treated these displays the same as they would a display of a wild animal or artefact (Durbach 2008). One can see the displays in the same place as well as environment as animals and artefacts, implying a similarity; therefore these displays produce the same type of knowledge (Durbach 2008). Technological advancements in ship making allowed for longer voyages, and soon the 'specimen' were brought back to colonial centres. There were several links to the other and the animal kingdom; a large number of the recruiting agents for exhibitions were animal trappers and

trainers, and Carl Hagenbecks links to animal trade made it easier for him to recruit from colonies (Thode-Arora 2008).

Carl Hagenbeck showed the first racial themed show in Hamburg in 1874. The show included six Lapps (Sami) and about 30 reindeer (Blanchard et al. 2008). These types of shows were labelled as ‘anthropozological exhibition’ and people would go gape and stare at the exoticism under the gaze of knowledge (Blanchard et al. 2008), and under the gaze of science, as well as colonialism. Hagenbeck reconstructed scenes of ‘exotic life’ where the audience could see the displayed play their ‘natural role’ (Deroo 2008). Charles Rau of the Smithsonian suggested exhibitions of the same kind of the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition with an intent to display the ‘extremely low level of our distant ancestors’ as well as the degree of evolution of western society compared to ‘primitive society’ (Blanchard et al. 2008).

The displays were complex spaces where science meets art, and where people who were different were put on display (Blanchard et al. 2008); this is a colonial diorama. These spaces were where one could go look at difference and exotic, but it is okay since you are being educated. In these types of displays the other was representing spatial difference, but this type of exhibition is not new; in ancient Egypt ‘dwarves’ from Sudanese territories were exhibited, and in the Roman Empire conquered ‘barbarians’ and ‘savages’ were exhibited with an underlining message of superiority (Blanchard et al. 2008). This is similar to *Nanook of the North*; there is a desire to display the conquered or vanishing culture (vanishing because they have been conquered), and often it has a superiority message, survival of the fittest. We (the conqueror, coloniser, collector) will continue to exist temporally whilst they (the conquered, colonised, collected) will vanish, so come take a look while it lasts. The development of a passion for difference was a strong way to create the other, which was done through staging and the production of knowledge. Now that technology allowed scientists to have subjects brought to

them there was a larger desire to collect and display ‘races’ (Blanchard et al. 2008). The separation between scientist and subject soon became the separation between spectator and spectacle.

London became the capital of ‘exotic shows’ with exhibitions of many cultural groups, including Inuit in 1824 (Blanchard et al. 2008). Events in major colonial and core urban centres such as London promoted imperialism and nationalism; exhibitions promoted the external commonwealth and internal nationalism by representing England, subject colonies (eg. India), and settler colonies (eg. Canada) (Hoffenberg 2001). Displays produced the idealised relationships between groups within the nation and within the Empire; they painted the picture of an ideal imagined political community for everyone to see and the visitors experiences helped promote the imagined relationships across the Empires borders (Hoffenberg 2001). Exhibitions, in other words, promoted imagined spaces with imagined relationships and communities, much like the Nanook Creature’s space being designed to promote a certain idea. Exhibitions defined borders of a community, deciding what is in and out of place.

Some exhibitions blurred borders of two separate communities and brought them together in one space; the Crystal Palace in London, due to cheaper displays, was a place where the elite and working class met (Qureshi 2011). Dioramas were beginning to be used at this point and their human models were the primary attraction (Qureshi 2011). These models were white plaster casts with painted eyes, hair, jewellery etc. added to give the impression of a life-like appearance (Qureshi 2011). After the Great Exhibition in London a Natural History Department was established, and in this newly established department ‘fauna’ was displayed through 13 life-sized groups of ‘savages’ (Stocking Jr. 1987). The groups were displayed with or near animals from the geographical area from which the ‘savage’ was from, for example the Eskimos (Inuit) were placed across from a polar bear (Stocking Jr. 1987). Again ‘savages’ are being compared to and

displayed with animals. The exhibitions represented the idea of science versus art by being venues of socially constructed, mediated, and consumed knowledge (Hoffenberg 2001). Art and science are being constructed and by constructing the other in a colonial fashion, the definition could justify their representation.

Scholars and showmen brought the idea of normalisation of the natural world to light in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Blanchard et al. 2008; Durbach 2008). Ethnic shows became very popular, and in the 1890s they began to make a decent profit (Thode-Arora 2008). Due to the financial success ethnic shows collectors and showmen were able to get people from all over the colonial world (Thode-Arora 2008). The visual world was put on display, or the Empire of Sight, transforming it into a spectacle, science lesson, and demonstration, but above all a justification of colonial and racial hierarchies (Blanchard et al. 2008). The rationalisation of a produced racial hierarchy was transposed into the popular shows, which often featured the now constructed 'savage' (Blanchard et al. 2008). To display suggested inferior status and therefore the object or the other is colonisable, justifying the display (Blanchard et al. 2008). Exhibitions justified colonial exploits; great European powers supported their colonial choices through popular exhibitions (Blanchard et al. 2008).

The exhibitions declared mastery over the other and other 'races' who could be brought under colonial rule or made to disappear (Blanchard et al. 2008). In Britain in the 1850s the 'ethnology' scientific framework looked to study dark-skinned, non-European, 'uncivilised' people, or the non-European non-western non-white non-male, which is being painted as the other (Stocking Jr. 1987). People such as James Cowles Prichard desperately wanted to design the 'dark-skinned savages' as a separate species of human, especially in the context of (the justification of) slavery as well as the growing technological superiority of European civilisation, which revolutionised contact around the world (Stocking Jr. 1987).

Although laws had to do with the colonial powers rather than the people who were being collected there were rules for recruiting people for ethnic shows. When a showman wanted to collect in another countries colonial territory, one must obtain permission from that territories colonial administration (Thode-Arora 2008). To exhibit difference was to reinforce self-justified arguments concerning policies overseas, or in other words, displays of difference rationalised and commercialised (Blanchard et al. 2008). The idea that space (the core colonial power) has ownership over another space (periphery, colonial territory); the collection of people only occurred in owned, occupied spaces and one must get permission from the owner before one could borrow or take things from ‘their’ space.

With the help of colonial expansion and progress made in filming techniques operators were able to move from the zoo and exhibitions to film ‘on location’ at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Deroo 2008). Once again technology aided the ability to represent and construct the other, although this time rather than bringing the other to the collector, the collector could bring their technology to the other for audiences to view at home and marvel in modernity. Much like earlier expeditions in colonised areas, filming brought exploration and exploitation to areas of conquest (Deroo 2008). Cinema had a ‘civilising mission’; the colonised nation was to recognise the extent of the power of their coloniser (Deroo 2008).

In the human-zoo-meets-cinema type films the ‘native’ is seen as a ‘natural actor’ who will not need to rehearse and everything they are doing is spontaneous in the eyes of the audience (Deroo 2008). The camera is simply (supposedly) framing the other’s everyday life. Distance plays a large role in films; distance creates difference and strangeness but also allows the view to travel in time. Through writing and props we the viewer can travel through the ages to see (the interpretation) of the world years ago. The film is not called ‘Nanook of Quebec’ because that would make it seem closer, spatially and temporally, but also more civilised, which is not what

the audience wants to see. 'The North' is depicted as a homogenous region that seems distant, dangerous, and strange. By merely calling the space 'North' it adds physical space and distance between 'us' and 'them', although the distance is constructed. The temporal construct is important here; by implying that where the Nanook Creature lives is physically distant from 'here', it is also temporally distant.

The strangeness and danger of the Nanook Creature's world is so spatially and temporally distant in this produced reality that it is out of place in 'our' space and time. The title of the film has a big impact on the audience, as it places the Nanook Creature in a homogenised distant time and space. Exhibitions produced a lasting legacy out of which *Nanook of the North* was created. The Nanook Creature is a passive display; labels give meaning to his actions, which are done within a context explained to the audience (or recontextualised for them), and created by a director/collector.

#### **IV) Why There? The Creation of the North**

The objective of this chapter is to explore the creation of the 'North' and establish its importance in relation to the film. The 'there' is two very distinct spaces; Inukjuak, the space in which Allakariallak lived, and the 'North', the space in which the Nanook Creature lives. Only one of these spaces is presented in the film *Nanook of the North*, and that is the science fiction imagined 'North', rather than Inukjuak, the real tangible space that actually exists on a map. In this sense, the 'why there' is quite simple; it is easy to create and place an imagined people within an imagined space. The 'North' exists as the collector Flaherty wanted it to exist, it functions how he wanted it to function, and that is a space in which the Nanook Creature, as the other, easily could be placed in the eyes of the western viewer. This place must be distant, as the other

never would live so close to the viewer as Quebec. Creating an imagined space that is distant because it is imagined and physically cannot be reached by the viewer, the other and the Nanook Creature are from the ultimate exotic science fiction space. This space, the dystopian 'North', is so inaccessible, so distant that the viewer never possibly could be in that space physically, but certainly mentally, because it only exists in their imagination.

## Chapter Five - Why Then? Placing Difference Through Time

Chapter five examines the creation of time, and how this third step, when put together with the creation of the 'North' and the visual, brings together the representation of the culture that was born in Flaherty's imagination. The element of time places the Nanook Creature and the representation of the Ungava Inuit in a place within the imagination of the audience, a place that they believed existed.

### **I) The Construction of Time**

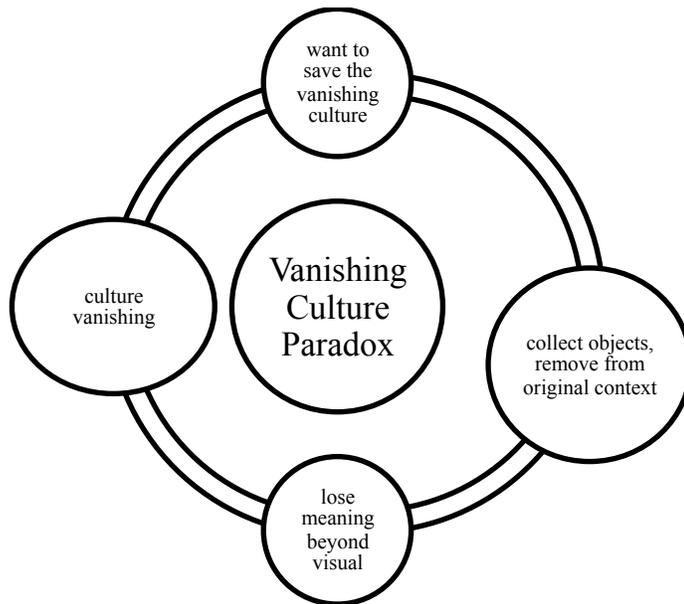
Time is a construction that was produced around science and real spaces, so why not construct a temporal period in which one can be placed in a different time? Or a era that implies that one is the other? When one looks at the *Nanook of the North* and temporal constructions, the idea of a vanishing culture is very prominent and important. The narration states 'from the smell of flesh and blood comes the bloodlust of the wolf – his forebear' (Flaherty 1922). As the viewer there is the question of to whom the narrator is referring, the Nanook Creature or the dogs (Rony 1994). This is how temporal distance is created; this is an inaccurate way of bridging the distance between humans and the missing link. What is evident in the film is the texts tendency to reference the Inuit and the animals in a similar distancing tone. The dogs and the Nanook Creature are eating raw seal meat and are depicted as in the same place, which differs from earlier in the film at the trading post when the Nanook Creature meets the Ravillon Frères trader, the sponsor of the film, who was out of place with the Nanook Creature due to his ownership of modern technology (Rony 1994). *Nanook of the North* is a film meant for 'us', the audience, in 'our world' rather than the Nanook Creature ('them') in his world (the 'North'). The narration states that 'a few primitive tools and hunting tools, it's all they have and all they need' in a land

that is much different from 'our warmer world' (Flaherty 1922). This produced the romanticised story of a vanishing culture that is fiction, but told as Truth.

The Inuit are represented as an object that should be studied like an artefact, object of the natural world, or an object of science that needs to be dissected before it goes extinct like so many other species of animal creates temporal distance. By designing the Nanook Creature as 'primitive' distance is produced through the connection between non-human animals. The film emphasises the use of tools, there is a focus on spears, knives, etc. The narrator then suggests that this is the life 'we' are not familiar with (Flaherty 1922). Colonial beliefs treat the colonised as inferior with their image placed in the past, which is used to justify inequality (Brody 2000). The idea of emphasising temporal difference is not original to the film, and in fact was used in displaying the other in human zoos.

At the point in time when human zoos were popular, the late 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the idea of a vanishing culture was popularised through exhibitions and displays. Although it is important to note that this notion was in fact a paradox; one wanted to save the vanishing culture so they would collect objects, rendering the object meaningless once it was removed from its original context, which then lead to the culture itself vanishing.

Figure 2. The Vanishing Culture Paradox.



An example of the paradox would be Ishi; Ishi was thought to be the last Native American to have lived a ‘traditional’ life (Jacknis 2008). He was taken to the University of California Museum of Anthropology where he lived for four and a half years (Jacknis 2008). He was popular because he was part of a ‘vanishing culture’, as he was the ‘last of the Yahi’ (Jacknis 2008). As a result of his popularity Ishi was subject to many photographs and staged images where he was dressed up in skin clothing that was in fact unknown to the Yahi (Jacknis 2008). This was a fictitious representation of a made-up and imagined vanishing culture that people wanted to see. Much like the Nanook Creature, Ishi was staged doing ‘traditional activities’ of a past culture such as hunting, which he in fact did not do (Jacknis 2008), it was staged much like the hunting scenes of *Nanook of the North*. Ishi never would have lived that way in 1914 (Jacknis 2008), much like Allakariallak never would have lived the way depicted in the film in 1922. This was a case of trying to preserve (an imagined) vanishing culture, the taxidermy of the dying and dead. Ishi and the Nanook Creature are taxidermy, a constructed object being manipulated to

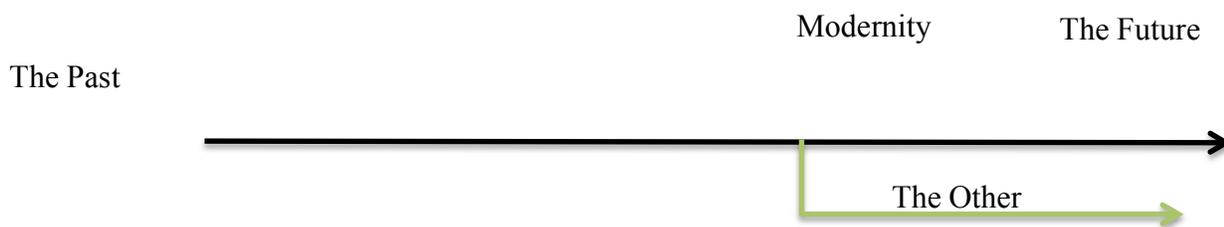
display a dead culture, but also like taxidermy, it is often manipulated to represent an event or convey an emotion that does not exist. The anthropologist and the photographer were attempting to create an authentic condition, a vanished state, through photography (Jacknis 2008). His body was put on display, and after his death his brain was given to the museum, then it went to the Smithsonian (Jacknis 2008). Later in 1961 Theodora Kroeber wrote a book about Ishi, titled *Ishi in Two Worlds*, which sparked an 'Ishi revival' (Jacknis 2008). The title is reminiscent of the narration in *Nanook of the North*, which seems to indicate that there is 'our world' and 'his world' and that one would belong in one and be out of place in the other. The book was in fact mostly fiction, making up his life before 1911 (Jacknis 2008). There is a clear affinity between the story of the Nanook and Ishi Creatures; both had their culture recreated to represent a western-promoting, western-centric, and conceded view of the vanishing culture. The Nanook Creature is taxidermy frozen temporally, he is repositioned by a hunter/collector/taxidermist.

The era of expansion saw the construction of a socially imagined other, the scientific theorisation of the 'hierarchy of races', and the production of a fast growing colonial empire (Blanchard et al. 2008). Most encountered the other in the exhibition and zoo spaces, and later in the cinema (Blanchard et al. 2008). These spaces were located in urban centres, therefore easily accessible, but films were even more accessible, eventually including spaces outside the urban centre. Of course the other displayed in these spaces was a staged other. They were staged for the audience representing a certain temporal period; one which has passed, and which is vanishing or vanished, which those in the west has already passed. A time, of course, that is constructed and is part of an alternate timeline that was 'scientifically proven' but also exists in the imagination of the collector.

Showing the other alongside the marvels of technology was thought to have proven western modernity and therefore western success. Modernity is not on the same side of the glass

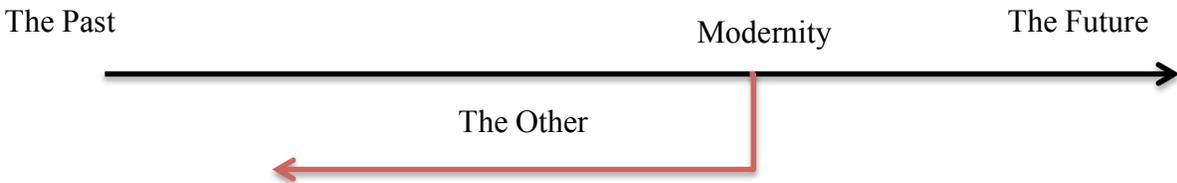
as the other. To step from one side of the glass to the other is to step through time from our propagandically produced modern time to the others alternate (also produced) imagined time, which is lower on the hierarchy and older than the time of the scientific, technologically advanced Victorian. The cyborg, the other, lives in the alternate ‘older’ lower timeline the collector has created (Figure 1). Villages of exhibited colonial people reflected the while western European male’s control over history (MacKenzie 2008) but also over the representation of time.

*Figure 3. The other timeline one.*



In this diagram the other is in an alternate other time, and is heading towards the future and (western style) modernity at a slower pace. Of course, this notion is completely constructed by the collector and sold as Truth. Another way one can look at the alternate other timeline is as if the other is (constructed to be) going backwards temporally, thus being pushed further away from modernity. The other is being pushed away from us through representations, rather than being slower in the other version of the timeline (Figure 4); the collector placed the other further back, farther away temporally from themselves.

Figure 4. The other timeline two.



The Nanook Creature seems to fit into the second timeline; the actor himself lives in a temporally modern period, but as the character Nanook Creature he is being pushed temporally backwards to an alternate place, the 'North', and time that is separate from the timeline the westerners are on. He is being pushed out of modern times to represent an imagined other as a part of a vanishing culture that itself was produced in the mind of Flaherty.

The other has been represented as a different species as well; Anatomist Robert Knox, one of the most notorious racists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, proposed that there were physiological differences between ethnic groups, therefore he believed that humans should be divided into multiple species (Qureshi 2011).

'Race is everything: literature, science, art, in a word, civilisation depend upon it' Knox (From Qureshi 2011).

This racism could possibly have characterised the late Victorian era (Qureshi 2011); society went into the age of film with strong ideas about people, hierarchies, and 'race'. In the Georgian, Regency, and (especially) Victorian eras this was accessible, cheap, and popular entertainment that made a profit. With new modern technology these era's entertainment and ideas can be reproduced. *Nanook of the North* itself has a great emphasis on 'race', difference, and 'primitivism', with a notion of superiority displayed through creation of cyborg/taxidermy

Nanook Creature. Another theme that appears in *Nanook of the North* was environmental determinism; that is the differences between people due to environmental factors (Qureshi 2011). Of course the Nanook Creature would be different from those in New York or London when his environment is constructed.

Photography was a technological advancement that projected the image of the other. The photograph is an object that is reproduced spatially and temporally (Edwards 2008). Photos can push the other further into the alternate timeline through staging of an imagined vanished culture; the camera lens also acts like the display case. Where one would view a photograph is a site of consumption, which is fundamental in visually creating the other (Edwards 2008). The positionality of the photographer is important in how the photograph itself is viewed; images have the potential to become 'science' when the people behind the lens are collected by a certain person (Edwards 2008), for example an anthropologist in regards to Ishi. Photography had a scientific agenda; a search for 'realism' created an image designed with assumptions about racial and cultural hierarchies (Edwards 2008). By using photography and later cinema to introduce the 'uncivilised' world to a population hungry to see the other, one is speeding up the rate at which a (perceived) culture is vanishing (Deroo 2008). By capturing the other on film or in a photograph, and it was seen as important to capture what is about to disappear, the other is being tamed into modernity (Deroo 2008). This again is a paradox; one wants to capture the vanishing on film before it is too late, but by filming the collector is introducing modernity, thus vanishing the culture.

Scientists saw film as very important especially in the production of the racialised other; Félix-Louis Regnault saw film as true scientific inspiration. He thought film allowed scientist to be armchair academics (Rony 1996). Regnault thought that film was ideal for the positivist and perfect for the study of 'race'; the other could be recorded and movement could easily be studied

(Rony 1996). Film gives the scientist the power to cheat death; one can record the vanishing culture and observe them at their leisure (Rony 1996). The scientist can remain distant, which is associated with being objective, and was very important in seeking 'Truth' in science. In film one can see from many angles yet still remain at a distance (Rony 1996). The radicalised cyborg body portrayed on film robs a group or individual of agency as well as complexity (Rony 1996); one is no longer an individual, robbed of all their individual characteristics and have no power in their own representation. Film creates taxidermy in this way; the subject can cheat death by becoming frozen temporally, which is ideal for the armchair scientist to study.

## **II) The Power of Time**

Not only was the constructed vanished culture important, but also the vanquished culture. In the early Greek and Roman museums certain objects were valued for their perceived aesthetic, historic, religious, or even magical importance (Alexander 1979). Romans would display the booty of their conquests, objects appropriated from their places of origin by people of power (Alexander 1979). Social prestige of an individual was enhanced by the ability to possess objects that were from a distant land; the possession of wealth and the wielding of power are closely linked, leading to the ability to direct and influence the actions from within and outside a social group (Gillam 2001). Having the power to dispose of an object is much more important than making, acquiring, and displaying an object (Gillam 2001). The owner has the power to display and destroy (Gillam 2001); it is a reminder that one has the power to destroy an object, the power to make a human or object go extinct, and give those objects meaning which often represents a certain agenda. This is essential to the exercising of power but especially for the accumulation, display, and destruction of objects in human societies (Gillam 2001). Collections are a reflection

of power gained for, as well as from, religion and war. A collector could gain an object as booty from a culture vanquished due to war, or to promote religion (or an object taken in the name of religion). Objects associated with war were especially important; the booty of war were often seen as sacred, as they were regarded as collected and earned through a superhuman effort (Gillam 2001).

During the Renaissance there was an expansion of scholarly activity, growth in the middle class, and exploration which contributed to the accumulation of treasures and souvenirs of the other (Ames 1992). During this time the idea that human society was declining since creation was justification for collecting certain objects, collecting so that humans could improve themselves through the recreation of an (vanished) ancient culture (Gillam 2001). It was a popular theme in Renaissance art; art demonstrated the recreation of the past (Gillam 2001). Technology was also flourishing during the Renaissance; the invention of the printing press lead to education being more accessible due to the spread of educational materials in vernacular language (Ames 1992). This increased the importance of the middle class and the importance of knowledge to the middle class (Ames 1992). Treasures were being accumulated, collections were growing, and the public is more informed and knowledgeable.

Collecting and displaying is a common when creating positioned knowledge; one collects in a position of or seeking power. As the collector one wants to place oneself higher on the hierarchy in social reality while placing the collected (object or person) lower. The other was viewed as closer pathologically and physically to the authentic 'man' (Rony 1996). Imperialism was legitimised through anthropology by 'scientifically proving the inferiority of the other', thus pushing the other down the evolutionary hierarchy (Rony 1996). As the collector and science are pushing the other back on the timeline (Figure 5), it also pushes the other down the hierarchy (Figure 6).

Figure 5. The other timeline two.

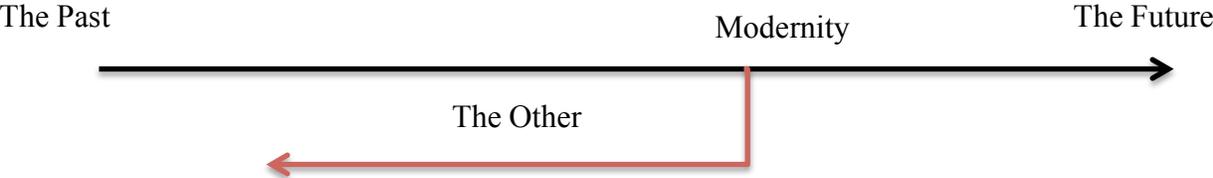
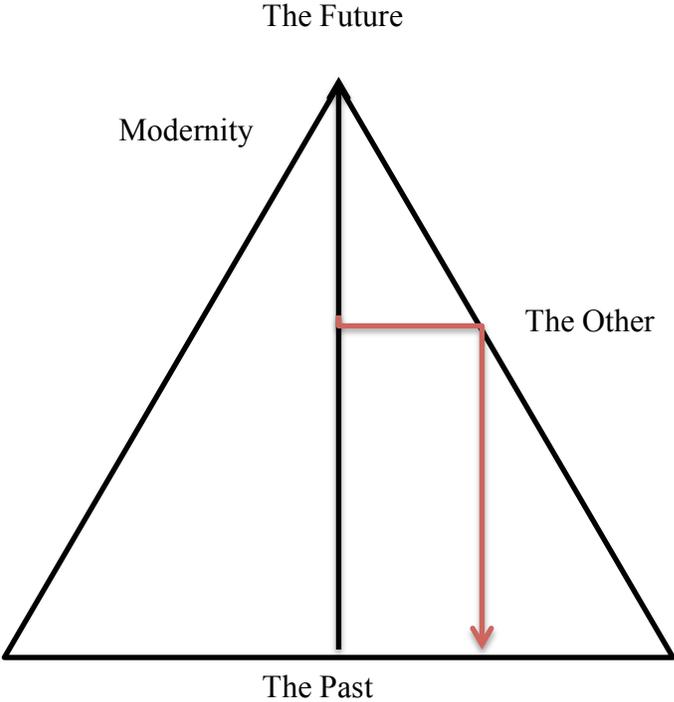


Figure 6. The hierarchy and the timeline.



The collector is the collector/producer/creator of knowledge, and knowledge is being collected/produced/created for a reason (justification of colonialism) but must be interesting to the public for it be successful knowledge. The epistemologies of the collector, the one with power, are important; knowledge is being created to be entertaining, not truthful or scientific, and

it should be displayed in a way where it appears to be the 'Truth'. Art is now a science, and science is entertainment.

*Nanook of the North* is an example of the success of entertainment based knowledge, being produced then sold as 'Truth'. It is the display of the power of collectors and their imagination in a place of education and truth; the museum, the documentary, and exhibition. These spaces are perceived to be reputable, so the knowledge displayed is perceived as the right knowledge that is objective and unpositioned, so it must be the 'Truth'. People expected collections to be meaningful, and the audience expected that collections would present and interpret the world through good values, appropriate representations, and a view of social reality they held to be true (Ames 1992). The collector in this way has power; the viewer puts trust in the Truth from the collections. The *Nanook Creature* is a product of this thought process; the film is not about the object and its original meaning, but the visual interpretation of the actors and the viewers place in social reality. Those who have power and wealth dictated the views, values, and representations within a collections display (Ames 1992). The more power one has the better ability they have to collect knowledge, they have more opportunity to produce and display said knowledge, and they have a better chance to elevate themselves in the social reality hierarchy.

The Empire of Sight and spaces of representation reflect the society that sustains it, and the collection displays an approved view of reality that is under the glass, so under control (Ames 1992). The emphasis of museum collections and displays are on the beautiful and curious, the Empire of Sight, and collecting such objects seems to be a human instinct, possibly stemming from the desire for physical security, social distinction, the pursuit of knowledge, and also a wish to achieve a kind of immortality (Alexander 1979; Gillam 2001). The desire to collect and preserve objects, just like the desire to collect and preserve power is aided by the display. Collections are collected in a subjective manner, collected with an agenda (of power), and

collected wanting to produce a certain kind of knowledge, often under the guise of ‘the glory of God’.

Relics that were appropriated by the elite were meant to be displayed to support the faith (Gillam 2001). Churches were filled with sacred objects and were safer to visit (and more accessible) than the Holy land itself, which became unsafe during the conquests (Gillam 2001). There was an increase in church income in urban centres, which allowed churches to have more lavish and elaborate displays (Gillam 2001). The contents of the church treasury reinforced the faith as well as supplied information and knowledge about history (Gillam 2001).

History has repeated itself (Table 2);

*Table 2. Repetition in history.*

	<u>Middle Ages</u>	<u>18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century</u>
<u>Interest in distant item</u>	Religious relics	‘Primitive’ culture
<u>Money and the city</u>	More income to see and buy relics	More people to spend money on displays
<u>Power</u>	Church has more power, relics associated with power (kings)	Colonial and imperial power over collected
<u>War and distance</u>	Difficult to travel due to the crusades	Difficult to travel due to Napoleonic wars
<u>Distance (through display)</u>	Distance between ‘us’ from God	Distance between ‘us’ from the other

The collectors of the Middle Ages and the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries had an agenda; in the Middle Ages collectors collected relics that one associated with religion, and therefore gain power through association. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries objects were collected from cultures associated with the ‘primitive’ other, they gained power through social Darwinism, colonialism, and imperialism. Collectors preferred to acquire knowledge through their own interpretation of an object rather than interaction with their physical surroundings, a theme that persisted through the Renaissance onward (Gillam 2001). Knowledge through interpretation allows the collector, the one with the power, to produce and create knowledge, or help produce and create knowledge, associated with an object, specimen, and/or culture. Later faith motivated show managers to save lost souls; many displays of foreign peoples had underpinnings from missionary projects (Qureshi 2011). Starting from 310 CE the power of religion was used as a justification for collecting, in this case attempting to ‘save souls’ of the ‘primitive’. Using the excuse of ‘missionary intentions’ seemed to justify human importation and display (Qureshi 2011).

The representation of power in collection is quite clear:

The Power of our Religion (from 310 CE onwards) → The Power of our Class (from late 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards) → The Power of our ‘Race’ (from mid 19<sup>th</sup> century onward).

### **III) The Colonisation of Time**

Colonial shows with racial hierarchical subjects became very popular. Shows were so popular in London that there was a spike in the development of transport such as railway to make the shows more accessible to tourists (Qureshi 2011). The exhibition of foreign people in London goes back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, but by the 19<sup>th</sup> century the shows had gone through a dramatic

change in scale and nature (Qureshi 2011). The Napoleonic Wars caused difficulty for people to travel abroad, hence encouraging an increase of the internal tourist market (Qureshi 2011).

London was truly a centre of technology and modernity; London was the centre of entertainment, transport, trade, communication, and industry (Qureshi 2011), but it also was the core colonial centre of the British Empire. The colonial administration at this time insisted that ‘savage’ societies were dangerous because their way of life was ‘wrong’, hence they lacked the skills of the white western European male, therefore cannot be trusted (Brody 2000). This was used as justification to colonise and display in urban centres such as London. The Great Exhibition of 1851 at the Crystal Palace shows the peak of the scale of exhibits (Qureshi 2011). The exhibit was designed with the message that not all men have advanced at the same pace as the white western European male, and that the other has not arrived at the point of western civilisation (Stocking Jr. 1987). Education and knowledge were woven into the shows; shows started with a lecture, followed by a performance, and printed materials describing the ‘manners and customs’ of those exhibited (Qureshi 2011).

As accessibility to collections increased the amount of scholarly work decreased; classification of collections changed from serving the interest of the scientists/collector to serving the interest of the public (Ames 1992; Qureshi 2011). In *Nanook of the North*; the expectations of the collector shape the film, in a way Flaherty is shaping the culture to his imagined expectations and selling it as ‘Truth’ and authentic. This is science versus art, and science versus fantasy; the creation of science fiction.

Collecting difference was popularised during the era of expansion by promoting hierarchical, racist, and social Darwinistic arguments about people (Blanchard et al. 2008; Qureshi 2011).

Showcases of humans allowed western viewers to visually inspect ‘savages’ or ‘primitives’ (Corbey 2008). Human exhibitions displayed progress; through science and imperial conquest but

also the progress and triumph of what was seen as higher ‘races’ over lower ones (Corbey 2008). What was on display was idealised and romanticised; it was science fiction. Exhibits with the justification of science, categorised peoples, ‘races’, cultures, and species but also ordered them and were ordered behind the civilised Christians (Corbey 2008; Rony 1994).

Exhibits had the message that the other belonged in ‘the other space’ and ‘the other time’; those who created the exhibits used social Darwinism and applied it to entertainment (MacKenzie 2008). The visual living taxidermy (or cyborgs) represented racial stereotypes; they illustrated social Darwinism established in the popular mind of the viewer, but also showed the control of the world expressed through the human form (MacKenzie 2008). Taxidermy was a social Darwinistic object set temporally, but staged in a certain way to represent an idea about a person and about a time. When combined with colonial propaganda, which was the focus of many exhibits, the social impact of the shows was quite large (Blanchard et al. 2008; MacKenzie 2008). Shows displayed the power of presentation over the other, and colonialism required that the other be dominated, and tamed, then represented (Blanchard et al. 2008). Imperial themed exhibits combined entertainment, education, trade fairs, and also technological innovations (MacKenzie 2008).

During the last third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century shows became the products of media and science; the shows link to colonial conquests popularised racism, which appeared more frequently in the press at the time (Blanchard et al. 2008). This also meant that the knowledge of the other was reinforced by positivism, social Darwinism, and racism (Blanchard et al. 2008).

Charles Darwin stated that physical and mental characteristics can lead to advantages and disadvantages for individuals in the struggle for survival, and these traits lead to new species evolving and others being eliminated (Dickens 2008). Human beings are cultural animals with social and political institutions, ethics, and religion that is all linked to our evolutionary

development (Dickens 2008). This is the meeting of social reality and evolutionary development; some might suggest that human social organisation itself is an organism that undergoes change (Dickens 2008). This leads to the problem with social Darwinism; it over simplifies people's biological behaviours (Dickens 2008). Some used social Darwinistic ideas to justify the making of an ordered society (Dickens 2008). Social Darwinism was used to justify certain behaviour, but also as a tool of oppression; it was used as a tool against (relatively) powerless people, but also to justify racism and sexism (Dickens 2008). Social Darwinism led to some thinking that some humans/'races' had not developed to the same point as the white western European male, but also there was a second notion that some 'races' were version of an earlier less developed species (Dickens 2008).

During the period of conquest humans became an object of science with the scientific idea of naturalising the human being, which influenced how the other was displayed (Boëtsch & Ardagna 2008; Rony 1996). The Empire of Sight now comes into play; this highlighted the importance of the observable and heightened the objectives to study the 'races' of the ancient and modern worlds (Boëtsch & Ardagna 2008). 'Race' was an important construct that guided the biological community; 'race', nation, and imperialism were the main desire in displaying difference (Rony 1996). The popularity of imperial exhibits grew as the 19<sup>th</sup> century progressed; at the Great Exhibition in 1851 only 520 of the 14,000 exhibits were colonial, while in 1886 the exhibitions became almost entirely about the Empire (MacKenzie 2008).

By the 1880s hundreds had been displaced from their homelands and moved into 'native villages', being transformed into professional 'savages' (Qureshi 2011). Props and clothing helped display constructed human development, it helped define human variety while artefacts designed the notion of people's technological capabilities (Qureshi 2011). If the costumes did not

meet the viewers perceived stereotype of a culture, the display was dismissed as inauthentic (Qureshi 2011). The power of the collector is proven more powerful in the name of science.

‘These are civilised men who steal and murder and torture and pray and say “science”’ Minik Wallace (From Rony 1996).

Europeans were seen, or rather constructed, as the most civilised and modern, while the other was a pathological counterpoint to Europeans for example sub-Saharan Africans and Australian Aborigines were thought to be missing links’ between the civilised man and the animal kingdom (Rony 1996; Gillam 2001). History was a race, and those who did not vanquish would be vanquished (Rony 1996). Film could inscribe ‘race’ through human difference on the form of a body and would be displayed as evidence of the race of history (Rony 1996). When one uses a body for racial message, it is emphasising the cyborg; ‘race’ is a socially constructed part of the cyborg, the organic aspect being the body itself. The cyborg is constructed as being racially and therefore temporally distant from the viewer. Temporal and spatial aspects of the film are constructed, showing the ability to bend time and reshape space, but also reality. Displaying a ‘primitive’ cyborg in film is bending time (Case 2010). The filmmaker is bending time and space to show distance, rather than closeness (which is what one sees with forms of technology, i.e. globalisation). New species are being born around technology (Case 2010). The collector/coloniser is also a new species; using technological extension of their body to manipulate and control the environment. Tools of the new cyborg are a physical modification of self, but also an extension of mental self through space (Case 2010). One can, through technology, bend time and space to get closer to other spaces in the world (Case 2010).

Due to the increase in ship technology Europeans were without rival from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries (Adas 1989). Europeans could explore, trade, and conquer anywhere in the world (Adas 1989). Machines and technology have made the world smaller and more accessible for the white western European male through colonialism; technology is allowing cyborgs to extend their technological reach to alter the environment through colonialism. One can be connected to everything, and machines can help people connect to each other (Case 2010). Colonialism is an example of this. The ‘primitive’ cyborg was created through the increase in ship and travel technology, the spread of knowledge allowed by the invention of the printing press, representation of the other elaborate dioramas, the increase of industrialisation, capitalism, photography, and, of course, film. The western white male Europeans were the ones observing, describing, and interpreting the world, as well as the ‘natives’ reactions to European technology that includes loads of speculation (Adas 1989). Technology is a source of power that one can exert over others, especially those who do not live in such a technologically advanced society; this sets the powerful Europeans and the specimen apart (Adas 1989).

#### **IV) Why Then? The Creation of Time**

The objective of this chapter is to look at the creation of time in the film and how the temporal setting builds on the visual and the concept of ‘North’. One cannot speak about the new except in the relation to the old (Hayles 1995). Showing off western modernity is more effective when it is seen in the same glimpse as the other, which is presented as old and further back on the timeline than the western white European male.

The people of Inukjuak had been exposed to technology before the filming of *Nanook of the North*, they were aware of what it was, they were in fact not trying to eat it, as the Nanook

Creature is shown attempting to do. Not only were many of the camera operators were Inuit, but the locals contributed to all aspects of filmmaking, although this is not to say that the film was in any way collaborative (Rony 1996). The other cyborg, or the Nanook Creature, is not living at the same point temporally as the viewer. This is the most important notion when studying ‘why then’; by creating the other cyborg as old, and in a different timeline, the collector is creating distance, and because of this distance, as we can see from Figure 6, the other is being pushed not only further back temporally, but further down the hierarchy. ‘We’ are new because ‘we’ are not the same as old. The cyborg in this sense also becomes the historical record of changes in human perception (Gonzales 1995). When ‘race’, distance, time, and the other became important to Europeans, this reflected in the creation of the Nanook Creature and similar cyborgs.

These representations assign a position within a class, but also a position compared to other classes, making this not a representation of an individual, but a relation (de Lauretis 1987). The Nanook Creature is a representation of a relation, and by calling the other ‘old’ the relationship is playing out temporally as well as spatially. The Nanook Creature, unlike Allakariallak, is not an individual, but rather a reference to the imagined ‘North’ space in the new timeline. Nanook is the name of the taxidermy and the relationship he represents when behind glass and back through time. Distance establishing difference, and difference establishing distance is the ‘why then’ of the question at hand.

## Chapter Six- Why Care?

Why should we care? We should care because if we obey the knowledge that is being taught, then we are consenting and cooperating with that knowledge (Arendt 2003). The coloniser is going to spaces and judging the other, and those at home believe this to be the Truth. How can we judge a person (or a group) if we have not been in the same position (Arendt 2003)? Without having been in the place of the coloniser or the colonised, how can one say that the judgment of either group is justified? How can we say the coloniser is right or wrong unless we have witnessed the same thing our selves? Western society was (and in a way, today still is) giving the coloniser the right to judge the other, but is this a judgement we can truly make? If we have a responsibility of judgement, then we are doing it wrong. We are passing the responsibility on to the group (the collector/coloniser) with power, those who will make a positioned judgement to keep their power, and put the other into a time and place where they have less power. The collector is judging people as 'not us', or as the other, and they were given the responsibility to represent the other, but they did not judge the other in a just and responsible way.

We are also ignoring 'common sense'; how can anyone judge according to common sense as they only contemplate the object from the point of view of the knowledge collector (Arendt 2003)? The more peoples' positions one can make present in their thought and hence take into account their judgement, the more representative it will be (Arendt 2003). By ignoring the way the Nanook Creature has been constructed, we are consenting to and obeying the knowledge produced. Also the Nanook Creature's representation is not common sense, it only takes the individual (Flaherty) into account in the judgement, therefore it is not representative of society. Now the collector is also the judge, and the judge's relation to power and height in society made it so some did not question the judgement of the other, but we should question it now. We should

care because we should question the judgements of our society, especially when we did not make the judgement ourselves.

There was a fear of being excluded, of falling to the 'other side'. This is why people cared about exhibits and the social implications of their representations; the viewer obeyed them because they wanted to be included. Perhaps by being included in a group one can secure oneself a higher place on the hierarchy. To be a non-participator in the knowledge and activity would be, in the mind of the viewer/obeyer, to exclude a person and potentially be sent to the 'other side' on the other side of the glass. If you are not in, you are out. There is a danger to being out; at the time of the film or exhibitions (arguably even now) one would see the colonised and would rather be the coloniser. If one obeys they are in, they are on the side of power, according to propaganda. Propaganda and displays built up the side of in, whilst out is primitive, out is dangerous, out is under the shadow of in, out is 'North'. The world of out was one of science fiction, although both spaces were imagined.

We need to care about how the knowledge was produced, collected, and judged. We should also care about the state of the cyborg and taxidermy. They are in fact not the same thing; the difference between the cyborg and taxidermy is that the cyborg is free to move around, whilst taxidermy is frozen representing a certain time and, arguably, a certain space. Taxidermy is a cyborg on film, or on display. So it can be concluded that the Nanook Creature is taxidermy, a cyborg on film represents a frozen and bounded time and space. Taxidermy quite simply is a cyborg bounded in a certain time and space. 'Why there' and 'why then' are important because this is the time and space that the Nanook Creature has been bounded to, even if it is an imagined work of science fiction. This is why we should care. We should care because the bounded taxidermy Nanook Creature has been created through an imagined judgement that we ourselves did not make, hence we should not obey. It is easy as the viewer to forget that the actor is human,

but as the Nanook Creature he is a cyborg/taxidermy, so only part human. One cannot reduce the cyborg to either human or construction, for the cyborg contains both within (Hayles 1995).

Allakariallak died, but the Nanook Creature, or at least the constructed aspects of its life, live on in stereotypes and within the mind of the viewer. Certain things are characterised as new because they are not the same as old (Hayles 1995). This is somewhat paradoxical; by creating the Nanook Creature he is not growing, he is produced, he is the posthuman. As a posthuman he is more advanced than the mere human viewer, he is more modern, more evolved, and further ahead on the timeline. Flaherty did not create or capture a vanishing culture, but rather created a new, futuristic, posthuman culture that has no need for records, films, or modern technology.

When looking at what the film created (the Nanook Creature) rather than Allakariallak himself, Flaherty did the exact opposite of what he set out to do; rather than recreating and reassembling a culture, or creating an imagined vanishing culture, he created a new posthuman creature that will live forever as a representation, as opposed to dying, like it was suppose to do. In this sense, Flaherty failed. The Nanook Creature cannot die, but perhaps we can reconfigure and reassemble the construction to be less oppressive, to be less of a science fiction. The glass display that the Nanook Creature has been put behind is what has created the bounded taxidermy science fiction persona that has divided us and them because we often do not question where the knowledge and judgement that created the taxidermy behind the glass came from. It was designed in such a way to elevate those with power, so those with power and influence to judge would not question it.

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