

Markoosie Patsauq. Edited and translated by Valerie Henitiuk and Marc-Antoine Mahieu. *Uumajursiutik unaatuinnamut / Hunter with Harpoon / Chasseur au harpon*. Montréal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2021, 334 p.

Trish Van Bolderen

Volume 35, Number 2, 2e semestre 2022

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1098961ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1098961ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Association canadienne de traductologie

ISSN

0835-8443 (print)

1708-2188 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Van Bolderen, T. (2022). Review of [Markoosie Patsauq. Edited and translated by Valerie Henitiuk and Marc-Antoine Mahieu. *Uumajursiutik unaatuinnamut / Hunter with Harpoon / Chasseur au harpon*. Montréal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2021, 334 p.] *TTR*, 35(2), 239–244.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1098961ar>

COMPTES RENDUS

Markoosie Patsauq. Edited and translated by Valerie Henitiuk and Marc-Antoine Mahieu. *Uumajursiutik unaatuinnamut / Hunter with Harpoon / Chasseur au harpon*. Montréal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2021, 334 p.¹

When quoting Inuit director and producer, Zacharias Kunuk, as saying “I learned there are different ways to tell the same story” (p. 260), Valerie Henitiuk and Marc-Antoine Mahieu capture the translation ethos that informs *Uumajursiutik unaatuinnamut / Hunter with Harpoon / Chasseur au harpon*. The story at the heart of this engaging and insightful publication is *Uumajursiutik unaatuinnamut*, the tale written in Inuktitut by Inuit author, activist, and bush pilot, Markoosie Patsauk (1941-2020), about a harrowing polar bear hunt on the tundra of what has come to be known as Nunavut. This “first long-form Indigenous fictional text ever published in Canada” (p. 164) initially appeared serially and in syllabics in *Inuktitut Magazine* between 1969 and 1970, and the tale has since been extensively circulated and translated, with the first interlingual rendering being an adaptation into English by Markoosie himself. That self-translation, *Harpoon of the Hunter* (1970), reached canonical status early on and remains the all-time bestseller for McGill-Queen's University Press. Yet, as Henitiuk and Mahieu make clear, it diverges significantly from its Inuktitut counterpart, a fact that would seem to stem less from the authorial liberties commonly associated with self-translation than from interventions by *Inuktitut Magazine's* editor, James H. McNeill, who

1. *TTR* citation convention has it that editors and translators are identified immediately after the source title. It is the opinion of the book reviewer that doing so in this instance, however, would constitute a misrepresentation of the publication's contents and underlying process. The ongoing dialogue between all three of the work's listed contributors can be heard throughout the book. Whereas Markoosie Patsauk's writerly voice is front and centre in the first half of the work (which consists of different versions of his literary tale), those of Valerie Henitiuk and Marc-Antoine Mahieu are especially prominent in the second half (which is devoted to academic material co-written by the two scholars). This citation therefore lists Henitiuk and Mahieu's names immediately after Markoosie's own to reflect the shared authorial space characterizing *Uumajursiutik unaatuinnamut / Hunter with Harpoon / Chasseur au harpon*.

is also the person who had asked Markoosie to produce the English version.

And herein lies the *raison d'être* of Henitiuk and Mahieu's endeavour: in keeping with the norms that generally prevail when self-translation moves from a minoritized language into a major one (see, for example, Whyte, 2002, p. 70), it is Markoosie's English-language text—i.e., the translation, rather than the original—that was consistently adopted as the stable source text for subsequent translations. This primacy of the English text has led to notable misunderstandings not only of the initial literary work but also of Inuit literature, language, and culture more broadly. As the editors rightly acknowledge, moreover, the author's signature on the 1970 text would have contributed greatly to precluding attempts to propose, or perhaps even imagine, alternative English translations. Thus, what *Uumajursiutik unaatuinnamut* / *Hunter with Harpoon* / *Chasseur au harpon* offers is “the first opportunity to read a rigorous translation—into any language—of Markoosie's *Uumajursiutik unaatuinnamut*” (p. 163), and to access an enlightened accompanying critical apparatus that is as nuanced as it is comprehensive.

The first 160 pages of the book present us with what are effectively four new versions of Markoosie's narrative, beginning with two distinct variants of the Inuktitut text. The first of these, expressed in syllabics, closely resembles the initial serialized publication. As usefully detailed in Appendix E (pp. 297–312), however, this text has been remastered, in consultation with the author, to correct lingering errors and to enhance readability, by reflecting contemporary spelling conventions and numerous other, largely typographical amendments. The second Inuktitut text is Mahieu's Romanized transliteration of the story, which serves to facilitate access to the original work for readers of Inuktitut who are not also literate in syllabics. Subsequently, we encounter the new English version (*Hunter with Harpoon*) and a new translation into French (*Chasseur au harpon*). Henitiuk and Mahieu produced each of these texts in light of the original 73-page handwritten manuscript in Inuktitut and with direct guidance from Markoosie. Individually and as a textual quartet, these literary works are designed to breathe fresh life into Markoosie's original story and to enable, if not encourage, intertextual cross-referencing, as most concretely evidenced by the discreet numbering in the margins which identifies the corresponding manuscript pages.

The priority given to the Inuktitut texts here is deliberate and serves objectives that are at once pragmatic, symbolic, and ethical. Alive to Canada's shameful ongoing history of distorting and silencing Indigenous voices, the central role that translation has played in the colonial project, and the limitations of their own settler-scholar gaze, the editors/translators "have sought to minimize the risk of simply contributing to a further 'speaking-for,' instead privileging Markoosie's own reflections on his authorship as well as his life experiences" (p. 168). The commitment to hearing from Markoosie and other Indigenous voices is evident throughout the book. Yet it is most immediately and compellingly enacted in the book's opener—the preface by Markoosie (pp. xiii-xvii). Consisting of transcribed passages in English from a 2017 statement recorded when Mahieu visited the author in his Inukjuak (Quebec) home, these pages are meaningfully complemented by Appendix A (pp. 265-273), where readers will find the passages articulated in the languages in which they were originally uttered, predominantly in Inuktitut. Through Markoosie's first-hand account, we learn details about his personal and professional life, and we gain insights into not only his achievements, struggles, perceptions, and expectations but also, albeit more obliquely, some of the larger sociopolitical events, agents, and structures framing his experiences.

The critical discussion that follows the literary texts is, in a sense, a deep dive into themes and issues raised in the preface, all of which contribute to our increasing appreciation of Markoosie, his work, and the broader context that brought *Uumajursiutik unaatuinnamut* / *Hunter with Harpoon* / *Chasseur au harpon* into being. **Chapter 1** ("Untangling the Lines: A Critical Framing," pp. 161-171) sets out the book's rationale, objectives, and contents, as well as its conceptual, contextual, methodological, and ethical scaffolding. The editors also articulate the book's fundamental argument: "that Markoosie's text has been misclassified and treated as a lesser work of literature based at least in part on changes that were introduced into the [1970 English] adaptation" (p. 168).

Chapter 2 ("Inuit Orature and Literature," pp. 172-178) provides a critical survey of Inuit storytelling traditions, underscores the exceptional status of *Uumajursiutik unaatuinnamut* as a literary piece that is about the Inuit, expressed in writing and produced by an Inuk in Inuktitut, and elaborates on discrepancies between the title of the original text and those associated with previous English

and French versions. We are also reminded here of the oral origins of *Uumajursiutik unaatuinnamut*, as explained by Markoosie in his preface: “This story, I had made it up, but I had heard it many times” told by a number of family members (p. xiv). **Chapter 3** (“Reception of the 1970 English Adaptation, Titled *Harpoon of the Hunter*,” pp. 179-183) details the overwhelming success of the 1970 English text and the varying responses to the publication. However, its reception commonly betrayed expectations about the so-called authenticity of the Inuit writing. As *Harpoon of the Hunter* was typically marketed as children’s literature, other responses often revolved around whether or not the story was appropriate for younger audiences. This chapter also sheds light on the mediating role played by James H. McNeill, who was himself a children’s writer.

Chapter 4 (“Markoosie’s Life and Its Intersections with the Broader Inuit Experience,” pp. 184-204) locates Markoosie not only in space and time but also squarely within sociopolitical contexts that recurringly subjected Inuit to inhumane treatment. Events addressed here include the government-led initiatives of residential schooling, of renaming Inuit people, of forcing them into permanent settlements (thereby devastating their semi-nomadic way of life) and of subsequently relocating Inuit to the High Arctic. Such events also include the tuberculosis epidemic which, due to extreme neglect by the Canadian government, disproportionately affected Inuit, including Markoosie, who nearly died before overcoming the illness more than two years after its onset. The genealogical chart and the timeline found in Appendices B and C, respectively, help to flesh out these biographical and sociological accounts. **Chapter 5** (“Inuit qaujimajatuqangit,” pp. 205-208) provides insights into the principles of *Inuit qaujimajatuqangit* (aka IQ), which designates the traditional Inuit knowledge that is meant to enable both individual human development and community welfare. Using IQ principles as a critical lens through which to understand *Uumajursiutik unaatuinnamut*, Henitiuk and Mahieu reflect on the relationship between resilience and the culturally defined notions of survival and suicide.

Complemented by the references in Appendix D, **Chapter 6** (“Markoosie as Author,” pp. 209-219) summarizes the quantity and range of Markoosie’s publications as well as some of the circumstances shaping his writing process. It also offers insights into dialectal, demographic, and morphological features of Inuit

languages in Canada, and into the Inuktitut manuscript, including information about James H. McNeill's involvement in the Inuktitut original. Importantly, this chapter also clarifies that the use of the present tense in *Uumajursiutik unaatuinnamut* is distinctive of Markoosie's writing style, as opposed to reflecting a norm of Inuit storytelling. **Chapter 7** ("Translation from Inuktitut," pp. 220-223) addresses key questions related to interlingual translation in postcolonial contexts, paying special attention to the fact that no stable term for "translation" exists in Inuktitut.

Chapter 8 ("Translation Journey of Markoosie's text," pp. 224-255) traces the chronological transformations of Markoosie's text and examines each type of interlingual and intertextual transfer—self-translation, adaptation, relay/indirect translation, retranslation—as a conceptual premise and as the embodiment of politically charged activities that have real-world ramifications. This chapter also features a substantial close-reading analysis of the translation choices in the 1970 English-language text. It is unfortunate that the opportunity to discuss the phenomenon of collaborative translation has been missed here, in spite of the fascinating teamwork involved in so many stages of the overall *Uumajursiutik unaatuinnamut* project, and despite growing scholarship on the topic (for example, Cordingley and Frigau Manning, 2017). Finally, in **Chapter 9** ("A Renewed Relationship to Translation from the Inuktitut," pp. 256-260), against the backdrop of the persistently peripheralized status of Indigenous texts, Henitiuk and Mahieu frame their new translations in social justice terms—as restorative tools—and call for robust engagement among readers, asking them "to open themselves to a more Inuit world and worldview" (p. 260).

The value of *Uumajursiutik unaatuinnamut* / *Hunter with Harpoon* / *Chasseur au harpon* as a rich primary source for further research, new translations, and indeed activism cannot be overstated. Meanwhile, the book as a whole is a powerful illustration of the epistemological capacity of contemporary Translation Studies. Through their personal and scholarly ambition, eloquence, and integrity, Henitiuk, Mahieu, and Markoosie remind us here that translation is always the story at the heart of storytelling.

References

- Cordingley, Anthony and Céline Frigau Manning, eds. (2017). *Collaborative Translation: From the Renaissance to the Digital Age*. London, Bloomsbury.
- Whyte, Christopher (2002). "Against Self-Translation." *Translation and Literature*, 11, 1, pp. 64-71.

TRISH VAN BOLDEREN
INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR

Elizabeth Yeoman. *Exactly What I Said: Translating Words and Worlds*. Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Press, 2022, 276 p.

Dans *Exactly What I Said: Translating Words and Worlds*, l'universitaire, auteure et militante allochtone Elizabeth Yeoman, qui a pris sa retraite de la Memorial University, porte un regard sur dix ans de travail collaboratif avec Tshaukuesh Elizabeth Penashue, une aînée et militante écologiste innue du Labrador. Ensemble, elles ont œuvré à la traduction, en anglais, des journaux de Penashue, écrits initialement en innu-aimun, ce qui a mené à la publication, en 2019, de *Nitinikiau Innusi: I Keep the Land Alive*, paru aux presses de la University of Manitoba. Penashue y raconte notamment ses années de militantisme – dont sa lutte contre les essais militaires de l'OTAN sur le territoire innu –, ses marches annuelles dans le Nitassinan ainsi que le mode de vie ancestral des Innus. Dans *Exactly What I Said: Translating Words and Worlds*, Yeoman réfléchit, à partir de sa traduction de Penashue, à la traduction des œuvres d'auteurs autochtones et raconte l'expérience transformative qu'a représentée la rencontre de cette auteure innue et la traduction de ses mots. Les réflexions de Yeoman sont nourries par le travail d'écrivains autochtones, telles Joséphine Bacon (Innue) et Mitiarjuk Nappaaluk (Inuite), et par celui d'intellectuels à la fois autochtones, comme Adam Gaudry (Métis) et Chelsea Vowel (Métisse), et allochtones, telle Isabelle St-Amand.

Exactly What I Said: Translating Words and Worlds commence par donner la parole à Penashue : « I remember my mom and my dad, always walking in the winter with the toboggan. Every time I walk, I walk everything protect » (p. 1). Ainsi, au tout début de l'introduction, Yeoman s'efface au bénéfice de l'écrivaine innue qui est au centre de sa