

KALAALLISUT: ESKIMO-ALEUT

A shaman's definition of poetry (recorded by Knud Rasmussen)

ORPINGALIK ON POETRY:

Conversation with Orpingalik, a Netsilik shaman, recorded in Kalaallisut by Knud Rasmussen, a polar explorer and anthropologist. (cited in *Eskimuut inngerutaat, tivaasaat, pitsiaat, eqqarsaatersuutaat, pinnguaataat titartagaallu*, published by Tuukkaq Theater, 1979)

TRANSCRIPTION OF KALAALLISUT TEXT: Paragraphs (§) and sentences (1)–(8) as in the original.

- Line 1 in standard Kalaallisut orthography
- Line 2 underlying forms of morphemes in standard Kalaallisut orthography minus allophonic variants ([o], [e], [f] of /u/, /i/, /v/).

ENGLISH GLOSSES (by M. Bittner 12/26/2009):

- inflectional morphemes in small caps (e.g. 'DEC')
 - *centering*: \top = topic, \perp = background
 - *mood*:
 - matrix: DEC_{iv} = intr. declarative (fact abt \top), DEC_{tv} = transitive declarative (fact abt $\langle \top, \perp \rangle$)
 - dependent: ELA = elaborating, FCT = factual (bck. fact), HAB = habitual (bck. habit)
 - *case*:
 - direct: ABS = absolutive (unmarked, iv-sub. or tv-obj.), ERG = ergative (tv-sub. or rn-poss.)
 - oblique: ABL = ablative (source), DAT = dative (goal), EQU = equative (standard, 'like _'),
LOC = locative, MOD = modalis (modifier), VIA = vialis (path)
 - *number & person*: P(L) = plural, S(G) = singular, 1 = 1st, 2 = 2nd, 3 _{\top} = \top -third, 3 _{\perp} = \perp -third
- derivational morphemes in lower case (e.g. 'not')
 - n = noun-forming aff, cn = common noun-forming aff, rn = relational noun-forming aff
 - v = verb-forming aff, iv = intransitive verb-forming aff, tv = transitive verb-forming aff
 - exp = expect(ed) (v-to-v), exp_{n\|n} = expected (n-to-n)
 - prc = process (v-to-v), prf = perfect (v-to-v), simult = simultaneously (v-to-v)
 - ins = instrument (iv-to-cn), obj = object (tv-to-n)
 - pssv = passive (tv-to-iv)

ENGLISH TRANSLATION (by M. Bittner 12/26/2009):

§1 (1) Songs are thoughts that stream out with the breath when a man is moved to the core by a mighty power and ordinary speech no longer suffices.

§2 (2) A man gets caught up in a storm like an ice-floe driven by the current. (3) His thoughts moved by a mighty current, he suddenly feels joy or feels sorrow. (4) Like a breaking wave, his thoughts can overwhelm him, making him breathless and making his heart beat hard. (5) Something akin to thaw will melt him to the core and keep him from freezing up again. (6) When that happens we, who already feel exceedingly small, feel smaller still and lack the courage to speak. (7) But the words we need will then stream out by themselves.

§3 (8) When the words we need stream out by themselves a new song is born.

KALAALLISUT ORIGINAL

§1(1) *Inngirutit* *tassa* *eqqarsaatit* *anersaartornikkut* *aniatitat*
inngir-ut-t *tassa* *iqqarsar-ut-t* *anirsaar-tur-niq-kut* *ani-at-tit-taq-t*
 sing-ins-PL that think-ins-PL breathe-prc-n-SG.VIA exit-simult-cause-obj-PL
 Songs are thoughts that stream out with the breath...

inuup *pissaanermi* *ilungerneqarluni*
inuk-p *pissaaniq-mit* *ilu-ngir-niqar-llu-ni*
 man-SG.ERG [great.power-SG.ABL core-rob-pssv-ELA_T-3S_T]
 ...when a man is moved to the core by a mighty power and ...
 (...*lit.* when a man, moved to the core by a great power, ...)

oqaluinnarneq *naammagiunnaaraangagu.*
uqaluk-innar-niq *naammagi-junnaar-gaang-a-gu*
 speak-just-n.SG find.sufficient-no.longer-HAB₁-3S₁-3S
 ...ordinary speech no longer suffices.
 ... no longer finds ordinary speech sufficient.)

§2(2) *Inuk* *aalassatsinneqartarpoq*
inuk *aalassag-tit-niqar-tar-pu-q*
 man.SG get.stormy-cause-pssv-habit-DEC_{iv}-3S
 A man gets caught up in a storm ...

sikutaq *sarfamit* *ingerlatinneqartoq* *assigalugu.*
sikutaq *sarfaq-mit* *ingirla-tit-niqar-tuq* *assigi-llu-gu*
 [icefloe.SG [current-SG.ABL travel-cause-pssv-cn.SG]] resemble-ELA_T-3S₁
 ... like [an icefloe [driven by the current]].

(3) *Eqqarsaatini* *pissaanerup* *sarfarnenit* *aalatinneqaraangata*
iqqarsar-ut-ni *pissaaniq-p* *sarfarni-a-nit* *aala-tit-niqar-gaang-ata*
 think-ins-3S_T.PL power-SG.ERG have.current-n-3S₁.SG.ABL move-cause-pssv-HAB₁-3P₁
 His thoughts moved by a mighty current...

nuannaalersarpoq *aliasulersarluniluunniit.*
nuannaar-lir-tar-pu-q *aliasuk-lir-tar-llu-ni=luunniit*
 happy-begin-habit-DEC_{iv}-3S sad-begin-habit-ELA_T-3S_T=or
 ...he suddenly feels joy or feels sorrow.

(4) *Eqqarsaataasa* *malik* *qaartoq* *assigalugu* *qaarsinnaavaat*
iqqarsar-ut-isa *malik* *qaar-tuq* *assigi-llu-gu* *qaar-sinnaa-pa-at*
 think-ins-3S₁.PL.ERG wave.SG break-cn.SG resemble-ELA_T-3S₁ break-can-DEC_{iv}-3P.3S
 Like a breaking wave, his thoughts can overwhelm him...

anertikkalersillugu *uummataalu* *tillirululersillugu.*
anirtikkar-lir-tit-llu-gu *uummat-a=lu* *tillir-rulug-lir-tit-llu-gu*
 breathless-begin-cause-ELA_T-3S₁ heart-3S₁.SG=and beat-violently-begin-cause-ELA_T-3S₁
 ...making him breathless and making his heart beat hard.

- (5) *Issangiatut ittup aassimatissavaa qeritsaaliorlugu.*
issangiaq-tut it-tuq-p aak-sima-tit-ssa-pa-a qiri-tsaaliur-llu-gu
 thaw-SG.EQU be-cn-SG.ERG melt-prf-cause-exp-DEC_{IV}-3S.3S frozen-prevent-ELA_T-3S_⊥
 Something akin to thaw will melt him to the core and keep him from freezing up again.
- (6) *Taama pisoqaraangat uagut ajukkuttooreersugut*
taama pisuq-qar-gaang-at uagut ajukkuk-kuttuur-riir-tu-gut
 thus event-have-HAB_⊥-3S_⊥ we feel.small-exceedingly-already-ELA_{IV}_⊥-1P
 When that happens, we, who already feel exceedingly small, ...
suli ajukkunnerulersarpugut
suli ajukkuk-niru-lir-tar-pu-gut
 still feel.small-er-begin-habit-DEC_{IV}-1P
 ...feel smaller still ...
oqariarnissatsinnnullu sapiutilersaluta.
uqar-riar-niq-ssaq-tsin.nut=lu sapiuti-lir-tar-llu-ta
 speak-start-n-exp_{n\l}-1P.DAT=and lack.courage-begin-habit-ELA_T-1P
 ...and lack the courage to speak.
- (7) *Kisianni oqaaserisariaqakkavut imminnik anialersussaapput.*
kisianni uqaasiq-gi-tariaqar-gaq-vut immi-nik ani-at-lir-tuq-ssaq-u-pu-t
 but word-tv-need-rn-1P.PL self-PL.MOD exit-simult-begin-exp_{n\l}-be-DEC_{IV}-3P
 But the words we need will then stream out by themselves.
- §3(8) *Oqaaserisariaqakkavut imminnik anialeraangata*
uqasiq-gi-tariaqar-gaq-vut immi-nniki ani-at-lir-gaang-ata
 word-tv-need-rn-1P.PL self-PL.MOD exit-simult-begin-HAB_⊥-3P_⊥
 When the words we need stream out by themselves...
inngerut nutaaq pingortarpoq.
inngir-ut nutaaq pi-ngur-tar-pu-q
 sing-ins.SG new.SG n-become-habit-DEC_{IV}-3S
 ...a new song is born.