Warts and all it's a communal and individual celebration. I personally prefer poems like the Indian poem, translated by the writer -- "The cahon walcon ni naton we jah" (age 13) -- and poems like "Mon Reve." It is in the section fronted by a photograph of a young black, head in hands, sitting at a desk in an empty school room:

Alice au pays des merveilles
Courant l'été
Dans les grand près
Pour attraper le grand soleil
Qui court au-dessus des nuages . . .
C'est ça, mon rêve de fillette!

Expression of Montreal's Youth is, even with all my reservations, a very good anthology of poems by children. At the very least it holds its own in the company of *The Voice of the Children* and *Wishes, Lies and Dreams*. The outrage, the love, the yearning for community and the pain in these poems are expressed by children who are alive to feelings, thoughts and language. Since books like this are liable to get trapped in their immediate localities, I don't know what is going on from Victoria to Charlottetown. But this book proves that, however great the effort, in or out of the schools, children can and should be allowed the chance to speak to each other and to us.

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Wit, Energy, and Magic

PATRICIA MORLEY

Tales from the Igloo, edited and translated by Father Maurice Metayer. Foreword by Al Purdy. Illustrated by Agnes Nanagak. Hurtig, 1972. 127 pp. $4.95 cloth.

This is a beautiful book, a puzzling, provoking, vital book. Both stories and illustrations pulse with a magical kind of energy. For children whose only previous exposure to the Inuit has been stories of igloo life written by non-Eskimos, it will be a breath of fresh air. Northern air.

Tales from the Igloo consists of twenty-two tales from the oral traditions of a group of Inuit people known to ethnologists as the Copper Eskimos. Their settlements are found along the shores of the Arctic Ocean and on the islands immediately north of the mainland. The tales have been edited and translated by Maurice Metayer, an Oblate priest

who has served in the Canadian Arctic since 1939. Father Metayer is the author of numerous books and articles on Eskimo mythology and linguistics, including *I,Nuligak*, the autobiography of a Canadian Eskimo. He describes how, until relatively recently, the Inuit relied solely upon oral transmission of their history and traditions; and conjures up for us, very movingly, the setting in which such tales would stir the imagination of the listeners:

> Most often it was at night in the igloo, during the long winter evenings, that the old storytellers passed on legends of the past to the younger people. With a few taps of a stick one of the women extinguished the greater part of the wick of the stone lamp. A few flames still danced but gave little illumination. In this uncertain light the dome and the walls of the igloo became vague forms, dissolving the confines of the igloo as if the darkness of the night had entered. . . . No one was asleep in the igloo but each was on the verge of dreams. The voice of the storyteller rekindled the flames of the past while the present disappeared. It was the age of the ancestors that became reality and one relived the lives of heroes and performed heroic feats. Everyone grasped some significance in the story, everyone understood to the extent of his own fears and hopes.

The stories have been taped, and analyzed to obtain a translation in both French and English which respects "the smallest detail of Inuit thought." This reviewer is not in a position to question the translator's accuracy. However the strangeness and beauty of many of the stories suggest the authenticity which Father Metayer claims for them.

The trickster, a staple figure in tales the world over, dominates one group of tales, including "Kajortoq, the Red Fox," "Kajortoq and the Crow," and "The Deceitful Raven." Kajortoq lives by his wits, using them to lure bigger animals to their death so that their carcasses furnish his larder. The crow escapes, by asking Kajortoq where the wind is coming from. As the fox opens her mouth to ask if the bird is crazy, it flies away: the trickster tricked. The raven lures an entire settlement to camp beneath an overhanging cliff, then dances on the snow to precipitate an avalanche. The raven waits eagerly for spring, at which time he can "amuse" himself by emptying the eyesockets of those who had innocently followed his directions: "For the entire spring he remained below the cliff, without fear of his provisions running out." These tales furnish some ironic and indirect advice against gullibility.

Another group afford a northern version of the classic theme, Poor Boy Makes Good. In "The Orphan and the Bears," a young boy proves his courage and wins a place in the community by killing a group of bear-men: "Many times the boy had heard stories of these beasts who lived in igloos like people and who could take off their outer skins whenever they were inside their own homes. When they were out hunting the bear-men wore their skins and were very very dangerous." Orphan Kautaluk is given, by "the Great Spirit that watches over the earth," a gift of strength which enables him to provide the community with a feast of bearmeat, and to frighten those who have been cruel to him. A third outcast, Taligvak, becomes a powerful shaman and saves

his people from starvation: "They ate until they were gorged, but they were not able to finish the contents of poor Taligvak's magic plate."

Many stories, however, do not fit familiar categories and may puzzle the average English-speaking reader. They are not "well-made" to our taste, they lack narrative shape and point. "The Owl and the Ptarmigan" is a brief, one-page tale which consists largely of two songs. Ukpik, the big Arctic owl, loves Aqilgieq, the little white ptarmigan. He kills Aqilgieq's husband and begins to woo her. The ptarmigan sings a song of ridicule, rejecting the owl as a sorry-looking suitor. Ukpik replies with a shorter song-insult and departs. The tale, then, consists simply of a comic slanging match, underlaid by the passions of love, hate, jealousy, scorn. "The Swan and the Crane" has a similar structure. In "The Wolf and the Owl," the bird and beast trade insults, and the owl eventually kills the entire wolf family. The killing is vindictive, illogical. Is the storyteller mocking the irrational behaviour of human beings, and pointing to the mischief that follows envy and boasting? If so, the moral is unstated. There is little overt didacticism in these tales. Because of the tenor of the opening exchange of insults (the owl greets the wolf by asking whether he has a skin disease, and why he comes to visit in such old rags), I read the tale as black comedy, Inuit style.

Several of the tales feature songs, the essential poetry of the Inuit people. Taligvak invokes the spirits' help through songs which celebrate the community's thankfulness for food: " 'This poor plate of nothing,/ It is full to overflowing . . ./ It is overflowing.' " Repetition, in both prose and songs, is an important stylistic device in these tales. Songs are used to express emotions of every kind: joy, fear, hate, jealousy, even the embarrassment of finding oneself short of provisions when guests are due. When the crane hears other cranes approaching, he sings, "I am short of everything and my boots are worn out." I like that line.

Surprising as it may seem, the stories include Inuit versions of the forbidden apple in Eden, and the miraculous feeding of a multitude. One of the longer tales, "The Ghost Hunter," features a young man, with a spirit bride, who is warned by his father-in-law not to kill one particular caribou and, later, the seals on one particular side of the island. He breaks the taboo and survives the ensuing troubles by virtue of his magic undershirt, made from the skin of his ancestors, and by appealing to his ancestor, " 'Grandmother, I am in great danger!' " His failure to observe the taboo angers his spirit family, whereupon the young man, magic garment in hand, leaps into a bowl of water and disappears.

Al Purdy's brief Foreword cites an interpretation from Father Metayer of one story's myth, where a beautiful girl becomes a skeleton through rejecting love and recovers her lost flesh by accepting it. Purdy then suggests that "the best way to listen to all these marvellous things--bear into man and man into bear--is for their own surface interest and for the marvels of a strange cold and warm country that is the Canadian northern backyard."

I agree. But the word "surface" could be misleading. The surface and the insides of these stories are really inseparable. In them, man inhabits a spiritual cosmos where all things are kin. The Eskimo can

conceive of man turning into a bear, or wolf, or of marrying one, because his mental furniture posits no great chasm between man and the natural world in which he lives.

The coloured drawings by Agnes Nanogak reinforce this vision. There is one per tale, occasionally two, and they are a delight. The illustrations for "The Magic Drum" show, first, a very worried young woman being led firmly away by two smiling bears; and second, a drum (which could also be a sun) edged in fins, tails, antlers, claws, leaves. Two human hands and a beating-stick complete the drum picture, an Inuit paradigm of the cosmos. The drawings are witty and amusing, sometimes fearsome (as in the one of the black raven and his victims), always well designed. Agnes Nanogak, a resident of Holman Island, is an artist with the Holman Island Cooperative.

Tales from the Igloo will enlarge the child's world, encouraging him to walk in a magical one which is both like and unlike his own, to feel the kinship of the natural world, and the aura of a spiritual one. Some of the stories, such as "The Blind Boy and the Loon," where cruelty and hypocrisy meet with a terrible fate, are strong meat, in emotional terms. But meat is preferable to pap, any day.

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