

The format of both paperbacks is suitable for easy reading at approximately a grade three level. The type is bold, clear and well-spaced. However, the only illustration in *Rory* is a crudely drawn black-and-white map in which both the words "Northwest" and "Territories" are misspelled. A more professionally executed map, with colour highlights to add interest, would have been welcome, as would some illustrations. *Cricket Christmas* is decorated with six black-and-white full-page drawings by Lucy Yarmowish. Colour would have brought some Christmas cheer to the work. Although the covers of both are coloured, there is too much black-and-white inside, and too little drama or entertainment to entice readers to these books.

Heather Kellerhals-Stewart has also written *Muktu, the Backward Muskox* and *She Shoots, She Scores!*.

Bibliography:

Arkin, Alan. *The Lemming Condition*. Harper, 1976. 58 pp.

Benchley, Nathaniel. *Kilroy and the Gull*. Harper, 1977. 118 pp.

Kellerhals-Stewart, Heather. *Muktu the Backward Muskox*. K.E. S. Ltd. Vancouver, 1975. 32 pp., paper.

Kellerhals-Stewart, Heather. *She Shoots, She Scores!* Canadian Women's Educational Press, 1975. 54 pp., paper.

White, E. B. *The Trumpet of the Swan*. Harper, 1970. 210 pp.

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A Tale about Northern Survival

ROBIN GEDALOF

A Journey of Many Sleeps, J. M. Scott. Chatto and Windus, 1975. 137 pp. \$7.25 hardcover.

A *Journey of Many Sleeps* is a story of an Inuit boy who loses his family and is subsequently carried off to the United States by an American do-gooder. His return to the Arctic a year later with members of the Society of Universal Citizenship is uneventful until their chartered plane crashes on its way south. The pilot dies and young Martluk is stranded in the bush with three very unstable adults. After various adventures, during which he finds his Inuit training to be emotionally and practically supportive, Martluk manages to save himself and the three adults.

On the whole, *A Journey of Many Sleeps* is a good adventure story, fast-paced and educational. Like hundreds of other protagonists in English literature Martluk is dropped in the middle of nowhere with only his own wits to rely on. The situation brings out the best and the worst in the survivors, and conflicts that are disguised in civilization are unmasked in the isolation of the northern spruce forests. The boy gets to act out the ultimate fantasy of not only showing up his teacher but also saving his life, and the adults are shaken out of their comfortable, middle-class lives and forced to face their own inadequacies.

The reader encounters problems of both form and content in the first part of the book. In attempting to provide a context for the plane crash and rescue, Scott produces a wealth of almost documentary detail about the settlement of Jubilee; however this distracts the reader's attention away from the central character without furthering the plot at all. The body of the book is concerned not so much with external reality as with the internal thoughts and emotions of the boy. Attempts to give a comprehensive picture of both the communities at Jubilee and at the Society of Universal Citizenship in Boston fail because there is simply too much information to be conveyed in too few words.

The author's inability to control the opening chapters is evident in his infelicitous sentence structure and grammar. In these important first pages, he begins sentences with conjunctions too frequently. Grammatical errors, such as "The whole Nicoldemus family were at home", are distracting. The sentences and paragraphs are often convoluted and clumsy, and while part of this may be an attempt to illustrate the difficulty of conveying attitudes inherent in one culture in the language of another, it is annoying to have to read the sentences several times in order to understand them. Fortunately, the prose becomes smoother and more accurate once the characters are launched on their adventure.

Scott is at his best when he is dealing with an entirely fictional situation. When describing the individuals who represent the corrupt south, he becomes heavily ironic, thereby imposing value judgements on the reader instead of allowing the comparisons he presents to speak for themselves. However, when the narrative primarily reflects the impressions of Martluk's mind, as is the case when the boy goes on the trap line and when he is down in the bush, Scott succeeds in revealing the thoughts and actions of a child who has had to reconcile two different and sometimes conflicting cultures. Whether the author captures the thought process of an Inuit child is debatable, for at the height of the crisis the images that sustain Martluk over the last, painful stretch of ground are primarily "Kabloonat" or White: a halo, a couplet of poetry and the steep and winding road to heaven. The fiction is not entirely implausible though, and it is possible to extrapolate from Martluk's experience to that of a Greek immigrant child in Toronto or an African child in Paris. The cultural friction which is described in such a confused way in the opening chapters gradually reveals itself as the story progresses, and the rather self-satisfied, preachy tone initially used to demonstrate the inadequacies of southern culture gives way to a more subtle, more Inuit, attitude in which white people are seen in sorrow rather than anger.

The central incident, in which the boy finds himself alone in the bush with a homicidal headmaster, a vegetarian spinster and a spineless youth worker, works extremely well. The adults develop from faceless caricatures into com-

prehensible, almost sympathetic people, and the author displays moments of grotesque intensity that make the people and the situation shockingly believable. For instance, when Martluk realizes that the headmaster has hidden food from the others, he calmly considers killing him, a traditional Inuit solution, but he rejects the idea since he has no knife. Later when the middle-aged spinster resolves to kill the same man, she threatens to bite his throat while he sleeps and then wash her mouth out so it will not affect her vegetarian principles. Both cultures respond to greed and tyranny in the same way, but the white way is tinged with madness as there is no longer room in a white civilization for the individual to administer justice.

Although Scott draws heavily upon his personal experience as an Arctic explorer to give authenticity to this story and to explore the mind of a young Inuit caught in the culture gap, this book is very much a work of fiction. Three years before the publication of *A Journey of Many Sleeps*, a very real boy from the Arctic coast went down in the bush in a tragic air accident. Unlike Martluk, he didn't know how to fish, he was frightened by the forest, and he had never built an open fire. Emotionally and practically unprepared to survive on the land, he died, for no apparent reason. The white adult with him survived, despite crippling injuries, because he was determined to. In the same year, the Inuit pilot and author Markoosie (*Harpoon of the Hunter*) published "Wings of Mercy" in five parts in *Inuktitut* magazine. In Markoosie's story, the boy survivor of the air crash is accompanied by two adults, Mann and Mannik. One is white and one is Inuit, and it takes the combined effort of the two to keep the boy alive. The message of co-operation between the two cultures is hammered home. Scott's tendency to paint most of the white people as intolerant, racist weaklings and the Inuit as patient, inarticulate heroes is neither desirable nor is it an accurate reflection of reality. The book is saved, though, by the skill with which he describes the physical adventure of the northland, and the sensitivity with which he describes a boy who has all the qualities deemed desirable in a child but who has a singular lack of aggression.

On balance, I would recommend the book to young readers. It is primarily a psychological exploration and it holds considerable potential for classroom discussion of the problems inherent in northern development and the difficulties of acculturation, yet the material is presented in the context of breathless adventure. Scott's ability to convey the tension and excitement of danger lends a pace to the narrative that will be appreciated. His description of a canoeing trip down an Arctic river swollen by the spring run-off is vivid, and the account of the air crash is marvellously gripping. If the author were just a little less prejudiced in his attitude towards Whites, this would be more than just a good book.

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