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the woman was withholding her taxes until the municipality cleaned it up. Her fellow quilters provided strong moral support, suggestions, and encouragement, and it was clear this was not the first time they had done so. In the public sphere, though, I'm sure this dispute had a more restrained tone. I can't help wondering if Rayside's closing commentary on the passiveness and quiescence of Alexandria would have been the same had he had entree into such informal social scenes.

In fact, the final chapter, "Fragmentation and Community", is perhaps the least successful, again because of difficulty with the issue of conflict. Rayside comments that "like other small towns, Alexandria is a highly fragmented society, but it remains more cohesive than larger cities" (p. 299). There is a kind of evolutionary inevitability in statements like "Alexandria has retained some distinctiveness from urban life, even while its economic, political, and social relationships have come to approximate urban patterns more than at any time in the past" (p. 300) which seem to obfuscate Rayside's assertion that fragmentation that has always been part of communities. I'm not sure he hasn't bought the community's vision of itself, which associates fragmentation and conflict with modernity.

Perhaps anthropologists and folklorists would have treated Rayside's material differently, and perhaps their works on Ontario and on communities would have significantly contributed to his understanding of the phenomena. However, *A Small Town* is a fine book, and well worth attention beyond the author's own discipline.

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At a time when writers and academics alike are being forced to consider how ethical it is to appropriate the voices of minority people, it takes a certain courage for non-natives to publish works which purport to offer the public the native viewpoint. The Lubicon protest against the Glenbow Museum exhibition of "The Spirit Sings", public attacks on white editors by native writers such as Lee Maracle and Jeanette Armstrong, the refusal of native actors to endorse or perform in films like "Black Robe", have all made those who work with native material understandably and properly cautious. Recent events at Oka and in B.C. have made it clear that Canadian Indians and Inuit have voices and are prepared to use them, and white writers appropriate at their own risk. One way around this difficult problem is to tap into the current popularity of oral histories, but for the folklorist or ethnographer, oral histories present almost as many problems as they solve.

Three recent works by established Canadian authors provide a good sample of what these problems are. Dorothy Eber's *When the Whalers Were Up North*, Rudy Wiebe's *Playing Dead* and Stephen Hume's *Ghost Camps* all deal primarily with native people, and they all use oral histories collected from natives to add authority to the facts and opinions expressed by the authors. It is obvious that each of these writers has a special affection for native culture, each feels he or she has to some extent been given a mandate to write about the native community, but not all succeed in accurately presenting the voice of the native to the rest of the country. In an ideal world, natives would present their own views, or at least their own book reviews, but we are yet to achieve that happy condition, so we must approach all writers using native material with critical faculties alert.

Every detail of Dorothy Harley Eber's new book, *When the Whalers Were Up North* reveals the care with which the text has been prepared; the index, the notes, the lists of informants and interpreters, the titles and dates on the illustration, all bespeak a careful mind at work. Even the cover illustration, which shows Osochiak Pudlat's colourful drawing of Inuit hunters superimposed over a photograph of Captain George Comer and the crew of the Era, is an accurate reflection of what is to be found inside; vivid Inuit images anchored on a background of more formal, non-native history. However, *When the Whalers Were Up North* is positive proof that meticulous documentation, a determined refusal to "rewrite" the native voice, and a rigid adherence to academic honesty does not necessarily result in a dull book. Like the cover, the content is attractive, informative, lively and displays an artistic shaping that repays repeated perusal.

When the Whalers Were Up North tells the story of the nineteenth and early twentieth century American and British whale-fishers, but it tells it from the point of view of the Inuit of Baffin Island whose lives were so drastically changed by the presence of these whalers and their ships. It describes the social and sexual interaction that took place between the disparate cultures, outlines the trade practices that made the commercial whaling industry possible, and documents the specific Inuit individuals who participated in this remarkable period of northern development. The text, illustrated with dozens of photographs, drawings, prints and sketches, draws on the oral memoirs of fifty-two Eastern Artic elders and forty-three interpreters. The book pieces together accounts of the founding of Kekerten whaling station in Cumberland Sound, and the famous case of C. A. Williams v. Jonathan Bourne, in which an oral contract between Captain John Orrin Spicer of New Bedford and Johnnibo of Singaijaq was tested in a Boston courtroom. It also describes the wreck of the *Seduisante* and the last voyage of the *Active*.

As in her previous books of oral history, *Pictures Out of My Life* and *People From Our Side*, Eber is careful not only to acknowledge all her informants and sources, she also outlines the process by which she worked. She describes her use of historic photos to stimulate discussion, and explains how one informant would send her on to interview another, and she makes it clear that language was, of course, a particular issue in this case:

> Generally two interpreters, often young relatives of informants, worked on an interview. For my talks with Joe Curley, for instance, my principal interpreter during a week of interviews was one of his grand-daughters, Madelaine Napayok Anderson ("At school, English was my favourite; I like a proper past participle"). Then, to make sure nothing had been missed and nuances were correctly understood, the interview tapes were reinterpreted by Joe Curley's daughter Rosie Aggark, at the time a member of the Northwest Territories Interpreters' Corps.

In this way, Eber not only establishes her interpreter's credentials, she humanizes the two women who were her intermediaries. We also learn more about Joe Curley by learning that his daughter is now a professional business woman and his grand-daughter has a fondness for good grammar.

Eber is always sensitive to the difference between material that originates on paper and that which has its genesis in the spoken word. In *People From Our Side*, she integrated Peter Pitseolak's oral history into his already existing manuscript by using italic script to distinguish the two. That distinction is rather harder to maintain in *When the Whalers Were Up North*, where she is providing the textual matrix herself and using written sources from both the native and non-native community, as well as dozens of oral transcriptions. Given Eber's passion for documentation, this book could easily have degenerated into a nightmare of footnotes and explanations. Fortunately, she maintains a casually familiar tone in the text, describing how people looked or what they were doing

as they talked to her, and saves the speculative, corroborative and contradictory additions for the copious notes at the back. The occasional reader who is already closely familiar with the contact history of the Hudson Bay and Baffin area may find themself constantly flipping to the back of the book, but the vast majority of readers will be greatly relieved that this lively and well-paced narrative has not been overburdened with peripheral detail and even more unfamiliar or unpronounceable names.

It is interesting to note that the only other attempt that has been made to deal with the subject of Inuit/whaler contact from an Inuit perspective is the beautiful Inuit language film "Whaling in Cumberland Sound" by the late Aimo Nookiguak. It was Eber's research that revived Inuit elders' interest in the whaling era and led to the film being made. Nookiguak's film is a vote of confidence in Eber's methodology, drawing as it does on the archival photographs and informants she originally located.

Unlike Dorothy Eber, who although not entirely absent from the text tends to fade into a general background of "audience", Rudy Wiebe is very much front and centre in *Playing Dead; A Contemplation Concerning the Artic. Playing Dead*, like *Whalers*, is an exploration of cross-cultural contact in the north — English, French, Métis, Yellowknife, Dogrib, Inuvialuit, all met and clashed in the Western Arctic at various times — but *Whalers* looks at the things in history that were ignored while *Playing Dead* looks at things that were hidden. The secrets that non-native travellers tried so vainly to keep, the murder, cannibalism, suicide and cohabitation that inevitable resulted from a sudden influx of European males into relatively isolated native societies, become the subjects of Wiebe's research and meditation. Eber tries to give us a new perspective, a new way of looking at events in history, but she downplays the differences between native and non-natives so that her informants seem as human, as familiar as country cousins we see only once or twice a year. Wiebe doesn't dehumanize his informants, but he certainly reminds us that we are not like them, that they see, understand and express things in a language we can never fully comprehend. He doesn't channel the words of his informants invisibly towards his readers; instead he constantly reminds us that as an intermediary he changes and is changed by these words. It is the process of his own mind working that he is attempting to convey.

Playing Dead comprises three long essays which look at one of the early Franklin expeditions, at the death of the so-called mad trapper Albert Johnson, and at Inuit/non-Inuit relations. Along the way, Wiebe touches on dozens of other stories and myths from the Canadian Arctic. *Playing Dead* uses five primary types of source material — the formal published documents of early writers and explorers, the personal journals of the explorers upon which the published accounts were based, translations of transcribed oral histories of native people, published works by native writers, and finally the oral histories Wiebe

heard himself. This last body of material is a little hard to describe. Wiebe didn't set out with a tape recorder or arm himself with multiple interpreters as Eber did; he first made himself thoroughly familiar with the print and manuscript material that was available and then simply went and listened. In some ways, Wiebe's own material is oral history not because he recorded it but because he told it to an audience at Trinity College and only later shaped it specifically for publication.

Wiebe begins by bringing us into the north with him, travelling out of the Arctic Ocean up into the Hornaday River with an Inuit trapper. The trip inland becomes Wiebe's metaphor for the intellectual exploration he is conducting :

> Edward Reuben...told me we were going to the river, though my eyes told me nothing.....I saw only angry water, the kind of immediate particularity of long swell and sharp, vicious waves breaking against the thin edge of the boat which chill you very deeply, a "zero at the bone" though you know you are perfectly warm and dry and, apparently, safe....The waves and shoals looked the same, the fog which destroyed not only perspective but eliminated all horizon seemed exactly the same; but then a gradual rift of sunlight revealed upthrust land. The water was not salty. (p. 11)

The confusion of perspective Wiebe experiences from travelling upriver into the interior rather than downriver to the sea is a reminder that we are going to be looking at familiar information from a new angle. This new angle is reinforced by the "south/north" map at the front of the book, a map that, like the ones found in Inuit textbooks and classrooms, puts Ellesmere Island and the north pole at the bottom of the page and Winnipeg and Edmonton at the top.

One of the popular legends Rudy Wiebe examines in *Playing Dead* is that of Sir John Franklin's overland expedition to the Coppermine River — the men were reduced to eating first their boots and leather trousers and then one of their companions. Murder and madness followed, and the only person to come out of the fiasco with any dignity was the Copper Indian Akaitcho. Wiebe goes back over the details of the journey and questions, among other things, how relations between Hood and Back affected the outcome of the trip. The two men had previously fought a duel over Green Stockings, daughter of the Yellowknife guide Keskarrah. Hood painted Green Stockings' portrait, but nowwhere in his diaries does he even mention her name, although she bore him a child who was later rumored to have gone to his family in England. On the Coppermine trip, Hood was murdered by Michel Terohaute, who was himself in turn shot by Richardson, while Back pressed ahead to look for help at Fort Providence. The rivalry and hostility between Hood and Back, which Wiebe examines with some care, has never been considered as a factor in the outcome of the expedition, and the facts surrounding the duel have generally been supressed or ignored.

Wiebe is as interested in why secrets are allowed, as in what those secrets are. The general resistance that the people of Aklavik voiced a researcher

attempted to exhume the body of the man called Albert Johnson, to solve once and for all the secret of his identity, is seen by Wiebe as a natural mark of respect for one who deliberately denies his place in society. For the Loucheux, according to Wiebe;

> oral storytelling, so refined and perfected by millenia of practice, is the very affirmation of their non-aloneness, and anyone who can hide (his name) goes beyond secret into engima, that is, into intentional and impenetrable obscurity. There is then no story to tell and the original people of the Canadian Arctic....find such a refusal of story especially strange, disturbing, puzzling as only an oral, communal people can. But they respect it. Leave him alone. The story is there but there is no story to tell. (p. 67)

The Loucheux initially refuse to talk to Wiebe about Johnson, but eventually he discovers that if he is patient enough, the stories will emerge — "all I have to do is be there and wait long enough". Albert Johnson, the ultimate outsider, reaffirms our own status as insiders, as members of society; he has more power as a legendary figure than he ever had in real life.

Ghost Camps; Memory and Myth on Canada's Frontier, by Stephen Hume, is not so much an examination of myth as it is a perpetuation of it. In a series of 17 short essays, Hume examines the often tragic events that punctuate the lives of ordinary people; a cave-in at a coal mine, the loss of a fishing trawler in a storm, the triumph of a war-vet who defies city hall to plant marigolds on the boulevard in front of his home. Like Wiebe, Hume uses stories from the north, native culture, pioneer life, and the social history of the Canadian west, to illuminate events both past and present, but there the similarity ends. Hume is neither the writer nor the researcher that Wiebe is, and in his hands oral history degenerates into idle gossip and trite, emotional button-pushing.

Hume's opening essay, in which he discussed the relocation of Quebec Inuit to Grise Fiord, begins with a description of a discussion he had with the Inuit elder Atuat, "the woman who carried a man's name". Atuat spoke no English, and the conservation was carried on through an interpreter, her young grandniece, but the grandiose sentence structure and the larger-than-life content simply does not ring true. Hume tells us little about the young interpreter, not even her name, so we know only that she was "pretty" and was "too little for breasts of her own," a description I find mildly offensive. I gave the book to someone who knew Atuat and who speaks fluent Inukitut, indicated a passage, and asked if Atuat might have said such a thing. The reponse was that "she might have thought it, she might even have said it in Inukitut, but there's no way a ten year old translated it". Hume claims that Atuat defied traditional Inuit gender roles, and appears to support that by referring to her as "the woman who carried a man's name", but Inuit names are not gender specific, nor is it all unusual for female infants to be named after deceased male friends or relatives, or for male infants to be called after females.

Humes's attitude to his informants seems to be unremittingly romantic, colouring his perceptions of events in a way that is both simplistic and unhelpful. He appears to accept at face value Smauel Hearne's claim that the Indian chief Matonabbee hanged himself in grief when Hearne was forced to surrender Fort Prince of Wales to Le Peruse in 1782, yet Richard Glover's 1958 edition of *A Journey to the Northern Ocean* makes it quite clear that Hearne himself recorded in his diaries that Matonabbee actually died of smallpox some years earlier. Hume also extends his perpetuation of the sterotyped Indian victim to modern times. He tells us, for instance, that in Alberta "a Cree girl, graduating from college, is faced with a major choice: whether to take a boring job in a windowless basement as a government clerk or to go home to material poverty and 'ride my dad's horses and feel the wind'." (p. 50) My various encounters with Indian women, horses and universities, has convinced me that young natives from materially impoverished families are as unlikely to own horses or go to university as their non-native neighbours. Further, if such a young woman made it through the educational system and into a job with the civil service, she would definitely not end up as a filing clerk. As one native civil servant put it, "she'd go straight to the top".

Ghost Camps has been widely and favourable reviewed; Lawrence Jackman, writing in *Canadian Geographic*, called the work "magnificent" and marvelled that many of the essays appeared first in daily newspapers, but my own reaction ranged from mild enjoyment to irritation to outrage. Since I have at least a passing familiarity with many of the events and people Hume's essays discuss (my copy of the book now carries the scars of my reaction to his casual errors and distortions), it is only fair to consider at least one essay discussing an event with which I am completely unfamiliar. His piece on the Edmonton tornado of 1987, "End of the World Time", concerns itself with the destructive force of nature, but it uses the local newspaper, the *Edmonton Journal*, as a focus. Hume was working for the *Journal* at the time and he discusses the problems he faced trying to get the paper onto the stands despite damaged machinery, traumatized reporters and malfunctioning communications.

Obviously it is not fair to expect total objectivity from a man who has been through a severe, unexpected tornado, even if he is a news reporter. Yet, parts of "End of the World Time" read more like a Hollywood B script than like a thoughful, sober reflection on 24 hours of turmoil and grief. We are told that hours after the tornado struck, the bodies of the victims "still littered the ground in the worst hit areas" (p. 11). Litter, be it straw or leaves or just garbage, usually covers a substantial portion of the ground, yet in the entire city, there were only a total of 27 deaths. Three bodies might seem like a hundred to a shocked observor, but this is supposed to be a true account by a trained journalist with literary aspirations. The people who donned green garbage bags in the rain to sift through the wreckage of their homes are referred to as "refugees" —

despite the reality that they were no longer in danger, were not fleeing from anything, and were, in fact, refusing to leave the trailer parks and suburbs they called home to take the accomodation provided by a concerned and benevolent government. Hume's rhetoric is inflated, the tone is forced, and worst of all the story of how Hume got the paper out, the part of the tornado story he knew best from experience is dull and whiney. Hume calls the tornado "the greatest civil disaster in Canadian history"; I don't know if he is measuring the loss of human life or the loss of property, but I can suggest at least a half a dozen disasters from my own province of Newfoundland alone that I think were worse. I lived in Edmonton for years after the tornado and never once heard anyone make even a passing reference to the event.

Hume tells a good story, but he demands a passive, unthinking, uncritical audience. Unlike Eber, who used oral history to fill out and correct the history written by non-Inuit, and unlike Wiebe, who uses it to bring us closer to understanding our reactions to events we will never know the truth about, Hume wastes what he has heard. He tells stories that, if analyzed or even just told differently, could say a good deal about our society both past and present, but he doesn't even warn his readers that his version of events might be incorrect or biased in any way.

Like Farley Mowat, Stephen Hume is more concerned with being entertaining and politically correct than he is with being accurate or analytical. Eber tries to be accurate, Wiebe tries to be analytical, and both are ultimately more entertaining and more ethical than Hume. Perhaps if Hume had not tried so hard to sell us on the Cree girl galloping off into the sunset, or the hardy bush pilot flying off to an appointment with destiny, we might have found these people more believable. Perhaps if he had asked himself, or us, why the journalists who covered the Edmonton tornado found it necessary to adopt the language and imagery of war-torn Afghanistan or El Salvador to describe the quite genuine grief and trauma of a natural disaster, we might have learned something. We might have learned, as we do from Eber and Wiebe, how history is shaped not by access to the facts, but despite access to them.

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