

## Culture



# Ulli STELTZER, *Inuit: The North in Transition*, Vancouver, Douglas and McIntyre Ltd., 1982. 216 pages, \$29.95

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géographie et ethnologie chaque fois qu'on le peut. Le fait de réunir des spécialistes de toutes ces disciplines en un séminaire a été dans ce cas des plus bénéfiques. Rien de rigide dans l'approche et dans les emprunts d'une spécialité à l'autre mais beaucoup de souplesse, d'intelligence et d'astuce appliquées à des situations concrètes. Le seul reproche que je formulerais est l'absence d'un glossaire bilingue français-anglais des termes métallurgiques; celui-ci aiderait beaucoup les chercheurs. L'occasion en était pourtant donnée par l'inclusion dans le volume d'un texte anglais sur l'extraction, mais ceci n'a pas été fait. De toute façon, c'est un reproche bien mineur pour un volume dont ne pourront se passer tous ceux qui s'intéressent à ces problèmes de métallurgie en Afrique.

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Ulli STELTZER, *Inuit: The North in Transition*, Vancouver, Douglas and McIntyre Ltd., 1982. 216 pages, \$29.95.

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This work consists of a series of 237 black and white photographs taken in 50 odd communities across the Canadian Arctic in the course of a year and a half of travel by a professional photographer. The text which accompanies the photos includes a brief introduction by the author together with a series of short commentaries by both native and non-native northerners, which are keyed to the photographs.

The plates and appended commentaries are organized into "chapters", six in all, by geographical region, and cover the entire north-south/east-west limits of the Canadian North. Virtually the complete range of activities and interests represented in the modern Arctic today are touched on, from the nostalgic images of sea mammal hunting and shamanic ritual performance to the most contemporary activities such as television production and drill rig operation. Technically, the plates are of exceptionally high quality, considering the demands the vagaries of Arctic weather make on modern photographic technology, and the problems concerning lighting and contrast which are to be overcome after the knack of making the cameras function has been mastered.

It is difficult to find a single word or phrase that will encompass the subject matters of all the photo-

graphs depicted in the book. The author has captured with her lens what seemed to have beauty and merit. Some images appear to be included for their textural quality, others for the mood they evoke, still others for their poignancy or humour. The German born creator of these images is, to judge from her choices, optimistic about life in the Arctic today: her camera overlooks much of the squalor and barrenness in the lives of contemporary native northerners. The communities her lenses inspect look altogether clean and orderly, the people scrubbed and well dressed, and so on: a picture rather different from that which comes in the mind's eye of anyone with long-term familiarity with the administrative towns of the last 20-odd years.

Each photograph is very helpfully captioned with the names of the people depicted and/or the location of the scene captured; and it is a relatively easy task therefore, to match the photographs to the short textual statements which fill the space between photographs. These statements too bear the names of the authors, all northerners, and, in appropriate cases, the names of those responsible for translating the statements into English. The commentaries vary in content from bits about the traditional cultural life dear to the narrators to comment on the dilemmas of modern living in the north. They portray, in a way that the photographs do not, many of the successes and disappointments of native peoples with the challenge presented to them by southern Canadians concerned to "bring the native people into the 20th Century", as John Diefenbaker once put it. It is these commentaries which, more than anything else in the book, tell us of the sophistication of many of today's Inuit. They have seen in this vehicle an opportunity to get across to Canadians an important message that seldom comes across in the conservative, and frequently nostalgic, southern press: that they are abundantly aware of the problems associated with the emerging North and anxious to take on all or most of the responsibility for dealing with them.

This overly pretty pictorial essay on the Arctic will make a good coffee table book for scholars anxious to portray themselves as Northern specialists to their friends. It is otherwise of little interest as ethnology since it contains no hard data and focuses on no central problem or issue. A reader anxious to perform a useful service for the native people depicted in this volume may wish to highlight some of the choicer bits of the Inuit's subtle message and post it off to his favorite MP—preferably a cabinet minister. The natives make it clear: it's time for the "promise" of the Canadian North to be kept!