

on the stand, read page 53 to know Vaillancourt's philosophy of authenticity. It's a book to read again.

The Eskimo Storyteller: Folktales from Noatak, Alaska. By Edwin S. Hall, Jr. Pp. 491, illustrations by Claire Fejes. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1975. \$18.50 Cloth

Reviewed by Peggy Martin

The Eskimo Storyteller is one of the largest collections of Northwest Alaskan folktales yet published, containing 190 stories. The folktales were related by two Noatak Eskimo storytellers in the village of Noatak, Alaska. Edwin S. Hall, Jr. collected the tales in 1965 while conducting anthropological fieldwork. His original intention was to survey all older tale-tellers in the community, thereby gaining access to the total store of tales. But when he discovered that the storytelling function was concentrated in two persons, he chose to study the extent of individual repertory instead. Although Hall does not claim to be a folklorist, he presents his work as data for trained analysis; he is aware of folklore methods and previous theoretical interpretations of Eskimo lore. Eskimo Storyteller is a preliminary investigation into the content and function of oral narrative.

Hall gives brief data on the Eskimo peoples of Northwest Alaska, the environment, subsistence and socio-cultural patterns, including descriptions of the aboriginal-historic-modern cultural progression. This provides a framework of cultural change for interpretation of the storytelling role and juxtaposition of past and present cultural and natural elements in the tales. Hall candidly discusses his own relationships with the tellers, whose roles as elderly members of the community, living off the support of relatives and friends, are those of entertainers and tradition-bearers. He details the circumstances of narration (performance), the personalities of his informants, the values presented to him, and his obligation to them. The tales themselves are divided into two sections, one for each teller, and each is preceded by an autobiographical sketch of the narrator. These show remarkable similarity to the form and interests of the folktales; emphases are on kinship inter-relationships, food gathering and loss, murder and accidental death, and numerous related and unrelated incidents.

No distinction is made between genres, on the basis that the Eskimos distinguish only "old," "old true," and "young" narratives, and these categories are variable according to teller and context. The folktales are presented in the form and style in which they were translated by native interpreters, with no significant changes made by the author. Each is followed by at least a partial listing of motifs as classified by Thompson (Motif-Index of Folk-Literature), reference(s) to other studies in which variants of the tale are found, and a brief explication of some aspects of the content. An "Index of Motifs" and a "General Index" at the end of the book aid in locating a particular folklore item or theme in the stories, but for most readers a consecutive reading of 330 pages of

narratives, even with the supplementary background information is likely to be long and monotonous.

The orientation of the chapter entitled "Analysis" is to discuss the importance of the folktale in Eskimo culture. Hall surveys several prominent categories of content, such as man/animal relationships, crime and punishment, rich men/poor men, and various kin relationships. He adds brief comments on his own content-context interpretations and on those of other specialists on Eskimo folklore. Most interpretation is left to the reader's own persuasion, and for this purpose Hall provides tabulated versions of his content analysis--inter-personal relations, magic, cannibalism, aggression, man/animal interchange, relationships with the supernatural, etc., as well as sources of the tales and correspondences found in other collections. He also speculates on the sociological and psychological functions of folktales in Eskimo culture, but these hypotheses are rather broad, optimistic, and poorly substantiated by evidence provided either by tellers or tales. He avoids commenting (perhaps wisely) on the preponderance of violence, revenge, destruction, and monsters in the tales, noted also by Stith Thompson in his introduction to Eskimo folklore in Tales of the North American Indians (1929).

Hall does succeed in meeting his own goals; The Eskimo Storyteller is a comprehensive, capable collection of tales. It is readable and pleasant, only occasionally dampened by humanistic sentiment which is not quite as real to the reader as to the author. The drawings by Claire Fejes are sometimes simplistic and superfluous, but often add to the surreal quality of the tales. Hall admits that his analysis is not complete, suggesting that each reader supply his own interpretations. He concludes by proposing that the greatest value of the collection is the light it sheds on the human condition. Yet I would question whether this is entirely true, for the messages of the tales are distinctly Eskimo and culturally unidentifiable to most non-Eskimo readers. Hall provides a fine starting point for research--the carefully outlined supplementary anthropological and folkloric data and the provision of autobiographical material on the narrators. But even so it is insufficient enough for full illumination of the shamanistic elements in the stories. The thorough analyst will need to extend his research to other available anthropological, psychological, and folklore studies on Northwest Alaska as well, in hopes of fully understanding the vivid character of Eskimo folklore.