

very modern facts, this time the presence of an atomic research station in the Highlands of Scotland. Older boys and girls should try a very intriguing new work of science fiction, *The Lord's Pink Ocean*. From these books to *Geordie* and *Digby* is an easy transition, and so over the bridge into the world of adult reading. Building such a bridge for adolescent readers constitutes a great achievement.

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Indian Tales Retold

GILLIAN THOMAS

Coyote the Trickster, Gail Robinson and Douglas Hill. Illust. Graham McCallum. Chatto and Windus, 1975. 124 pp. \$6.65 cloth.

Son of Raven, Son of Deer, George Clutesi. Gray's Publishing Ltd. (Sidney, B. C.), 1967. 126 pp. \$4.75 cloth.

Potlatch, George Clutesi. Gray's Publishing, 1969. 188 pp. cloth.

Tales from the Longhouse, Indian Children of British Columbia. Gray's Publishing, 1973. 112 pp. cloth.

In *The Folktale* Stith Thompson describes the trickster figure which is so common in the lore of North American Indians as appearing in one of three roles, "the beneficent Culture Hero, the clever deceiver or the numbskill", and points out that these three types are often interwoven within the same story. It is this complex character which Gail Robinson and Douglas Hill introduce to young readers in *Coyote the Trickster*. Coyote, like the other animals which appear in North American Indian lore, is very different from the figures representing moral qualities which we know from the European animal fables in the tradition inherited from Aesop. The coyote, like other trickster figures, does not wear a simple moral emblematic mask, but may be a teacher and healer at the same time as a buffoon or a deceiver. This runs against the mainstream of our culture which identifies medicine or teaching with seriousness, sobriety, even pomposity, but never deception and buffoonery. Readers and reviewers of Carlos Castaneda's popular account of his apprenticeship to a Yacqui Indian shaman in *The Teachings of Don Juan* and its sequels were constantly disturbed by the way in which Don Juan tricked Carlos into knowledge and wondered whether the Indian teacher was really "genuine" or "sincere". Such a question makes nonsense to a person who has been brought up in a culture with a strong shamanistic tradition and its accompanying

trickster lore. In this way, the tales re-told by Robinson and Hill introduce readers not only to new stories but also to a whole new mode of perception. Coyote, like the fox of European tradition, may be so intent on deceiving others that he outsmarts himself, or he may appear as an almost Christ-like figure harrowing the underworld in an attempt to bring back the souls of the dead. For adult readers familiar with the trickster motif, there is a missing dimension in this collection in that Robinson and Hill have quite appropriately omitted the tales which show Coyote in his role as an unregenerate lecher, since such a concept seems too sophisticated for a young audience already struggling with the profound complexities of the trickster's nature. This collection, sharply focussed as it is on a single motif, would be a valuable addition to an individual's or to an institution's library which already contains the very few more general collections of Indian folklore currently available.

In the face of such a scarcity of well-written and authentic books of North American Indian lore and culture, a few words may be said here of the fine work in this field by Gray's Publishing, a tiny publishing house which is based in Sidney, Vancouver Island. As early as 1967, Gray's took the imaginative leap of publishing George Clutesi's *Son of Raven, Son of Deer*, a fascinating attempt at conveying through print and illustrations the subtle fables which the Tse-Shaht people used to educate their children. Two years later they published *Potlatch*, a striking visual and verbal account of what has been called "one of the loveliest social events of the Indian people". More recently, Gray's has produced *Tales from the Longhouse*, a collection of stories which Indian children from various schools on Vancouver Island had collected from their families and friends. This volume, like the *Foxfire* books which sprang from one teacher's frustration in trying to teach "literature" to high school students alienated both from their school and the rural community in which they lived, contains much which is suggestive for teachers who try to use folklore as a means of helping students develop a clearer sense of their own cultural context. Evidently the first invitation extended to the Indian school students on Vancouver Island to record their people's lore, resulted only in a hodge-podge of television and movie stereotypes which bore almost no relation to the real experiences of West Coast Indians. Gradually, however, the students began to search the memories of their parents and their grandparents rather than the seductive two dimensional images of the global village and produced the often moving record of a vanishing world which this book represents.

The very authenticity of the collection gives it a fragmentary quality which some readers will find unsatisfactory but which most will find preferable to bland media clichés.

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