

everyday interaction and presentation of self are cases in point. For these reasons, *Indian & White* can be recommended as a textbook for theory, social psychology and ethnic relations courses. Students will learn something about theory in operation and something about Canadian society.

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Medicine Boy and Other Cree Tales, by Eleanor Brass, illustrations by Henry Nanooch. Glenbow-Alberta Institute, Calgary, 1979. 64 pp. \$4.95, cloth.

During a discussion about the increasing number of fiction and non-fiction publications of Indian material, Maria Campbell, author of *Halfbreed*, recently said to me, "We need to know about ourselves." We were talking about *story*, the traditional Indian way of preserving culture and religion, of imparting a lesson in manners and morals, and of explaining origins.

Medicine Boy and Other Cree Tales is representative of the current attempt to not only preserve the old stories and legends but also to convey to both Indians and non-Indians important knowledge of the Cree language, culture, and religion. If it is true that the myths and legends of all people emanate from the collective unconscious of mankind, and if it follows that all legends are simply different versions of the same stories then perhaps myth or story is the means by which we may break through that century-old cultural barrier: the story is the meeting place of understanding. On this level, *Medicine Boys* succeeds. Both Indian and non-Indian readers of this collection will find, through the symbol and archetype, a closer understanding of themselves. However, as an attempt to make the transition from the oral tradition to the written word, *Medicine Boy*, like all other similar works put out by cultural agencies and major publishing firms, fails. The problem, of course, is one of language.

Language contains culture. It erupts out of the landscape of the region and is found in a people's way of living. There are four main Cree dialects which have evolved according to the sounds of season and place. For example, the sounds heard on the prairie differ from those heard in the northern bush country of what is now Saskatchewan or the muskeg areas of Manitoba. In Cree, the names of animals and birds approximate the sounds made by them. Place names emerge from historic or legendary events that happened there. Cree is much like the Germanic languages, suffixes and prefixes are attached to a root stem (which always contains a cultural or religious significance) to form one

extended thought. Consequently a Cree speaker thinks first in pictures, then speaks in sentences, rather than words. For example, in *Medicine Boy*, some of the stories deal with one or more *Mēmēkwasowak* (spelled May-may-quay-she-wuk in the book), who are legendary little people, tricksters, not unlike the Irish leprechaun. The Cree word, *Mēmēkwasowak*, has for the Cree speaker an immediate corresponding image of little people, who sometimes have no noses, who once left arrow heads and spear points on the plains. In the northern areas, the image is of the tricksters who hid in caves or in the rapid waters of the Churchill River system. These little folk took great delight in overturning canoes, and during the fur trading days offerings of cloth and tobacco were left beneath petroglyphs carved on rocks all along the river which was known to the Crees as *Misinipi* (Big Water). Today, the little people are still found on reserves, and Cree grandmothers still attribute the loss of sewing needles, for example, to the mysterious little people. Eleanor Brass makes careful use of Cree names in her book, which is part of its cultural strength.

Medicine Boy, then, is not a book of legends translated from the Cree. With the exception of several Cree turns-of-phrase, it is very much a record of myths, written in what I call the "third person primitive" style of writing. The word "primitive," as I use it here, is in no way reflective of anything Indian or aboriginal. I use it to describe any style of writing that is stiff and formal. It is usually an objective voice, one that lacks a strong narrative drive and is most often employed by academics and journalists and white historians. This review, for instance, is also written in the "third person primitive" style. In *Medicine Boy*, the general narrative and the words and phrases contained within it exemplify the non-Indian thought pattern rather than that of the Indian. This, of course, makes the collection more accessible to the non-Indian reader and the non-Cree-speaker. The redeeming features, which are also the strengths of the book, are the elements of story, character, culture and religion which are specifically Cree.

What I miss in this collection and in all works that I have read to date is the traditional voice of the Indian story-teller, the old grandmother or grandfather. I am not concerned about whether the story-teller speaks in his/her first language (with available translation or interpretation into English) or in English. I am seeking that same sense of a personal and distinctive voice that I want to hear in any good piece of writing, be it fiction or non-fiction. In all fairness, I must make the point clear that this transition from the oral to the written is new to the Indian people, and is made to meet demands of editors and non-Indian readers. However, I think that the future holds a literary renaissance insofar as these new writers will listen to the voices of the people and reproduce them in black-and-white. Great literary works created by our first people will then be found on the prairie.

The twenty-two stories in this collection are interspersed with short explanations of cultural figures such as the little people and *Wesakachak*, the trickster. The first legend, "Medicine Boy," begins appropriately well. The Old Woman, the grandmother, the traditional story-teller, is sitting in front of her lodge telling a story to her granddaughter. In this instance, the woman's name is *Pimosais*, Little Flyer, but she is representative of all old grandmothers and grandfathers.

In Indian societies, the essential role of the grandparent was to teach lessons in behaviour and survival to the young. This was always done in the form of a story. A grandmother would warn a child of the danger of eating poison mushrooms or horseplant by telling the child a story about someone who did eat it and the evil or misfortune that befell him. Story-telling, however, was reserved for the winter months when there was plenty of pemmican stored in skin bags, when family life was centered on the inside fireplaces of the lodges, when they were waiting for spring to return. It was then that the important lessons in survival, behaviour, culture and religion were taught by the elders. Often, the story-teller was also the Leader-of-all-ceremonies. He was called *Apiskwapatawak*, which means "Tie-in-a-bundle." His name was symptomatic of the role he fulfilled at Sundances (making announcements) but was also symbolic of the bonds he strengthened through the act of story-telling. He always began his speech or story by saying, "I am a poor man, a humble man, but I will try to speak to you." The story was then prefaced by the phrase *Asa* or *Iska* which means: this happened a long time ago. Although it has never been the Indian way to categorize things in the European sense of definitions, every good story-teller identified his story for his listeners. *Kicacimowina* were the real stories about true events that happened to real people. *Ahtayokewin* were the legends or myths. *Ahtayokanak* were the legendary characters: the Cree *Wesakachak*, the Coyote who appears in the stories of the Montana Salish, or *Napi* who is Old Man to the Blackfoot. In the oral tradition, plot is secondary to the interpretation of lessons, although the story is made as exciting as possible by the use of sign language and often by an acting-out or pantomime of the story.

The stories and legends told by Eleanor Brass meet all requirements of Indian tales. "Why Crows are Black," "The Lumpy Trunked Tree," "*Wapoose* the Rabbit," "*Moostoos* and the Weasel," "*Ayekis* the Frog" and "Origins of the Moon" are all etiological tales which explain the mysteries of creation, the beginnings of natural objects, or the origins of customs. Some of the stories are concerned with great feats or deeds performed by individuals within the Cree society which brought both honour and prosperity to the heroes and their people. The importance of dream and its inherent prophecy of things to come is emphasized in many stories. Dream is the medium, the link between the world of the spirits and the earthly world. For the believer, there is no separation, and it is through dream that the vision of a good life

appears. The dreamspirit gives direction to life, and it is sometimes referred to as the tutelary spirit. No good anthology of Indian tales is complete without *Wesakachak* stories, and Eleanor Brass, through the legendary trickster, shows us how not to behave.

Wesuketchuk is the linguistic or phonetic spelling of the name, but the word is a composite of two words: *atchak* meaning spirit, and *wisak* meaning wise and tricky. *Wesuketchuk* or *Wesakachak* is then the wise and tricky spirit. His father was *Otsekatak*, the Big Dipper, and his mother was *Okinanisk*, who represents three stars from the Belt of Orion. *Wesakachak* stories fulfill many needs. They explain the mysterious, demonstrate what happens when instinct is unchecked, give an object lesson in how to laugh at oneself or how not to behave, or present a symbol of moral values. *Wesakachak* himself is the legendary helper in the mythology who has supernatural powers. Often he illustrates the recurring theme in Indian stories of the boy saviour who rescues his people from misfortune. He is the symbol or archetype of the instinctual, irrational, non-socialized, and undirected element in mankind. Every man has a trickster, his unconscious, and it is necessary for him and for his society that it be controlled. *Wesakachak*, then, is a mythological figure whose adventures contain a lesson for all. It is said by Cree elders that *Wesakachak* left this earth, but his return is expected. Long ago, before Europeans came to this land, *Wesakachak* slid down a long clay hill and disappeared into the earth. The marks of his buttocks are said to be still visible on the Sweetgrass Reserve in Saskatchewan, although I have heard another version that the hill of his disappearance is in southern Alberta.

There are three *Wesakachak* stories in *Medicine Boy*. "*Wesuketchuk* and the Fox" tells the story of what happens when someone refuses to share with others. The fox will always be hunted for his pelt because he tricked *Wesakachak* into thinking he was lame, then ate all the roasted meat; survival on the prairie was determined in ancient times by the willingness of all to share food, clothing, and shelter. In "The Lumpy Trunked Tree," *Wesakachak* again overcomes the threat of starvation by playing tricks on a herd of buffalo and a flock of birds, but the lesson contained within the story is that it is wrong to be deceitful. "*Wesuketchuk* and the Bear" is a humorous story of how to overcome fear.

In every story told by Brass, the archetype or symbol of man's inner and outer worlds is immediately recognizable. The buffalo, the bear, the snake, the wolf ultimately become the unifying elements that join the world of the spirits to the earth. They are contained within man and are also outside of him. The world view of the Indian people is one which unifies, rather than separates, all things under the sun. Because of this, the symbol often takes on a dreamlike or mythological or spiritual form and meaning. It is emphasized and illustrated in the beautiful drawings by Henry Nanooch. His story-paintings are often

impressionistic like those of the Manitoba Indian School of Artists, Jackson Beardy and Odjig, in which the symbol becomes a metaphor for the state of being of both ancient and modern Indians. The strength of Nanooch's work, however, is in his ability to blend images, so that the Indian belief in the unity of the earth and sky is evident in every drawing.

Medicine Boy is a unique collection of legends because it contains two stories that are subtly directed towards non-Indians. "Saskatoons and the Serpent" is a story that shows Indian children and adults why they must not "be greedy to the extent of neglecting their responsibilities," but "Abandoned" carries a message of greater impact. In the latter story, a non-Indian child was abandoned by her mother at a modern-day exhibition. The child, Hortense, was raised by a Cree mother in all the traditions of the first people of the prairie. As an adult she again meets her real mother at the exhibition, but chooses to remain a Cree. In Cree societies, no one was ever so unworthy as to deserve abandonment. It was "unpardonable according to tribal laws." Consequently, Hortense chooses to stay with the Crees. "No, Mother," she says, "you are my real mother and my family will never be abandoned by me." The second story, which held the greatest significance as well as the greatest delight for me, was "Little Mooniasquaiw." The name is derived from two words: *moonias*, which was the original term used for white men who came to this land and did not know how to live well on the prairie, and which is now used in prairie pubs to mean "dumb whiteman"; and *iskwew*, which means woman.

Mooniasquaiw was a small black and white dog with a white spot covering one eye and ear; her name meant Little White Woman, for she had fussy habits which made her appear proud and haughty. She reminded her owner of some white women she had met.

"Little *Mooniasquaiw*" belonged to Nokoom, the woman who was grandmother to all. The dog was much loved by everyone, but she had a bad habit of chasing cranes. The cranes, *peesquas*, were "sacred birds which the Crees believed were brothers and sisters of the thunderbirds. They were not to be hurt or killed. . . ." But one day the dog caught and killed one. *Peeyaso* was the thunderbird who brought lightning and thunder, and the death of the lesser spirits of the cranes was avenged: the dog was struck and killed by lightning. The metaphor or symbol of the dog called *Mooniasquaiw* goes beyond the humorous if we are able to see how the non-Indian way of constantly going against the laws of God, the Creator, and upsetting the balance of nature is represented by the death of the crane at the hand of the lovable but uncontrollable *Mooniasquaiw*.

Long before the Europeans came to Canada, there was a vital and strong pre-recorded literature of the prairie. The stories and legends are now appearing in print and are therefore available to all. However,

I believe that this is only the beginning, and that soon we will see an explosion of this ancient and true Canadian literature in the written form. *Medicine Boy and Other Cree Tales* by Eleanor Brass, and illustrated by Henry Nanooch, is one of the beginnings. We are learning about ourselves.

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Explorations in Prairie Justice Research contains three "state of the art" reviews commissioned by the Prairie Justice Research Consortium. These were to be used in conjunction with the First Prairie Justice Workshop held in Regina in March, 1979. The articles, in the order of their appearance in the volume, are "The Mentally Disordered Offender in the Prairie Region," by J. S. Wormith, "Policing in the Prairies," by Stuart Johnson, and "Natives and Justice: A Topic Requiring Research Priority?" by Melanie Lauth.

The concept of compiling state of the art reviews of selected topics in Canadian criminal justice is a welcome development in a field where much of the material which has been produced remains hidden away in government documents and in unpublished manuscripts. In addition, it is clear that the papers in this volume were beneficial to the workshop and to those in attendance. There is, however, considerable variation in the thoroughness of the three reviews and the extent to which they consider the literature within the context of the prairie region.

Perhaps Wormith senses the enormity of his task when he states in the opening sentence of "The Mentally Disordered Offender in the Prairie Region" that "It is difficult to decide where one might begin considering the mentally disordered offender." In fact, the title of this paper suggests such a wide range of issues, many of which are only vaguely related, that the author can be forgiven when the discussion becomes disjointed, and, at times, confused. Wormith begins his article by noting that the criminal justice system in Canada has failed to provide for the needs of the mentally disordered offender. He attributes this neglect to jurisdictional problems, the lack of appropriate classification procedures, and the inadequacy of facilities. Further hindrances to the development of policies and programs for the mentally disordered offender have been the controversy over the reliability of psychiatric diagnoses, the validity of such constructs as