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is created as a malevolent spirit who has been endowed with great power. In the process of creating spirits, the Great Spirit accidentally joins one spirit's legs to its torso backwards. The error is corrected, but the rejoining of the legs leaves the spirit walking with a limp, and this spirit becomes the evildoer. Radin relates the story but does not explain that the evildoer myth is an illustration of how evil should be balanced. (In that balancing process, evil is placated but not destroyed.) He misses this point completely; instead, the process of interpreting the Winnebago medicine rite becomes an exercise in symbol management motivated by the historic struggle between native and white concepts of reality and its overt message of social control through the decline of a supposedly inferior Winnebago culture and the rise of an imported, superior, Western civilization. This raises questions about the rightness of colonial thought versus the traditional Winnebago worldview. Just whose reality is the valid one?

Kinship is a major factor that serves as one of the bonding elements in Winnebago culture, where ancestors and life are sacred. It is to those strong beliefs in kinship that we can attribute the persistent human spirit of the Winnebago throughout the genocidal era. Thus the struggle between the Winnebago and white society over the definition of reality provides a parallel approach to understanding ecological reality in the Western world.

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**Raven's Light.** By Susan Hand Shetterly. New York: Atheneum, 1991. 28 pages. \$13.95 cloth.

*Raven's Light*, a story from the Northwest Coast people, could easily be dismissed as "just another pretty face" among children's books. However, both the content and the form compel its reading. This slick production should go a long way toward promoting the inclusion of Native American stories and storytelling within their legitimate domain—American literature.

Shetterly's retelling includes the story of creation as well as Raven's gift of the sun to his creations. As such, the story bears kinship to a whole slew of other folk stories, both Native American and foreign. In this retelling, the earth is created by Raven as he wings through darkness, carrying a stone. As he tires, the stone

slips from his beak, falling into the water. As Raven sleeps on the sea, the stone grows into mountains, valleys, and plateaus.

This theme of the earth being created from or in water is, of course, common. In the Diné creation story, for instance, Begochidi creates mountains, insects, and weather from the darkness of the First World. Through the creation of and subsequent destruction of the Second and Third Worlds, he finds himself in the Fourth World on an island surrounded by water. The existence of water prior to the creation of land is likewise noted in Onandaga, Lakota, Huron, and some Yuman creation stories.

This Northwest Coast version of creation also shares certain similarities with that recorded by another well-known tribal group—the ancient Hebrews—in Genesis 1:2 (King James translation):

And the earth was without form, and void, and darkness *was* upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

Additionally, from the *Old Norse Eddas* we learn that Aesir raised the body of Ymer, the frost giant, out of the sea (or mists, in some translations) and made Midgard (or Middengard, in Old English), the earth. Moreover, this sequence of events coincides with the current scientific view. Therefore, most North American readers should enjoy instant affinity with this retelling.

After describing the creation of not only the earth but all the creatures on it, the remainder of the story deals with Raven's stealing of the sun. In this version, Raven becomes a cedar frond and enters the body of White Feather in order to steal the sun from the Kingdom of the Day, where it hangs in a basket. This story somewhat resembles a Muskogee/Creek tale of Grandmother Spider, who spun a sack from her webbing, captured the sun, and brought it to earth, where buzzard then took it to the sky. A similar theme can also be seen in the Diné story of Coyote's stealing fire from the fire god and giving it to the people.

Ravens abound as characters in literature, although they seem to enjoy a somewhat ambivalent image, sometimes even within the same culture. In the Old Testament, for instance, ravens are generally seen as carrion eaters and, hence, unclean. Thus, in the story of the flood, the raven did not return, because it could survive on rotting corpses. Despite this, however, we read in 1 Kings 17:1–6 of Elijah being miraculously fed by ravens as he hid from King Ahab, an image much more in keeping with the one

found in Old Norse mythology, where Odin keeps a raven to observe and report the activities of people and giants. However, in Old English poetry, ravens are part of the *beast of battle* motif, as seen in "The Battle of Maldon" and "The Battle of Brunnaburh" and, therefore, become messengers of woe and death, a literary image employed by Buffy St. Marie in her song "My County Tis of Thee You're Dying." Of course, Aesop effectively used a crow (raven's cousin) to symbolize cleverness in his fables. While in real life these slick, fat, charming black birds seem to exude a human-like awareness, apparently ravens as characters do not hold universal appeal.

In Northwest Coast culture, Raven is one of the First People. Many groups relate the existence of *People* prior to *people* as we know them today. For example, in Norse, Teutonic, and Greek mythology, giants and gods were both created before people. In southwestern Amerindian stories, which include the creation of three previous worlds—an idea not unlike that found in Norse and Teutonic myths—often each world was populated with its own people. Additionally, many stories that originated in North America, including the folklore of Appalachia and the South, contain the notion of people and animals talking to one another. In fact, the universally accepted idea of animals talking may well account for the continued success of such productions as Walt Disney's *Robin Hood*.

Moreover, Raven can be classified as a trickster. As such, his character shares certain commonalities with other famous North American tricksters, such as Coyote in southwestern stories, Iktomi in Lakota stories, and Brer Rabbit in southern stories. As a trickster, Raven uses his ability to change shapes and to persuade in order to steal the sun from the Kingdom of the Day. Unfortunately, both these abilities have a somewhat negative connotation in mainstream American society, due to values inherited from Europe. For instance, in Old Norse mythology, only Loki, generally viewed as an evil god, has the ability to change shapes. He also fills the role of trickster. However, trick-playing was viewed as cowardly by these Germanic warrior tribes; truthfulness, fair play, and open challenge to the enemy marked the valued behavior of these groups. These are the values extolled in Arthurian legends, for example, where only witches, wizards, and enchanted beings play tricks. Likewise in medieval European literature, where shape-changing is associated with magic, hence the devil and the evil or beastly side of humankind.

While some of that stigma has been lost, Raven's cleverness may still be misunderstood by a certain segment of the population who forbid the reading of any fairy tales because they are not true. Additionally, the ability to change shapes or disguise oneself is held in low esteem, as is evident in the phrase "a wolf in sheep's clothing." However, unlike other tricksters, Raven is basically benevolent and uses his cleverness primarily to benefit people.

While the main character of this book is male, the female characters that play supporting roles are treated with dignity. White Feather, the daughter of the Great Chief of the Kingdom of the Day, successfully defends her son's (i. e., Raven's) appearance and behavior both publicly and privately to her father. Indeed, the public scene between White Feather and her father is roughly analogous to that of Queen Wealhthow and King Hrothgar in *Beowulf*. And in the end, it is a little girl who accepts Raven's gift of light, thereby saving us from lifetimes of darkness.

Shetterly's literary style makes *Raven's Light* an excellent means for stimulating children's acquisition of literary language. Shetterly chooses not to write down to younger readers but to give them rich images through meaningful language, including a wide variety of sentence structures and image-provoking verbs such as *plunked*, *calmed*, *whooshed*, and *guffawed*. Additionally, she effectively uses the traditional Native American poetic device, syntactic repetition, thereby preserving some of the original rhetorical integrity of the story. The illustrations are esthetically pleasing and enhance the reader's ability to understand the meaning of the text.

*Raven's Light* appeals to people of various ages and cultural backgrounds, and its literary qualities lend themselves to reading aloud. Additionally, the many universal elements of the story demand the book's inclusion in mainstream literature circles. Until now, traditional Native American stories have been primarily regarded as interesting sidelines for anthropologists and linguists and have been relegated to publication by small presses. *Raven's Light* brings such stories to their rightful place: center stage for the children of North America—all of them.

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