

Careful editing might have eliminated this problem by adopting metric units throughout the series, with or without the American equivalents being given in parentheses.

One could not quibble about these minor faults if the series had outstanding features to distract the reader, but such is not the case. This entire series could have been produced as a single volume, with the resulting book much improved by compactness and the use of colour. As it stands now, the books are priced at \$8.95 each, or almost \$54 for the set. A single volume of much higher quality could surely have been produced for a much smaller price, resulting in better sales and a greater exposure. It is difficult to conceive of many readers paying \$54 for the series, although individual volumes might easily fall into the price range acceptable to most people. Nonetheless, some of the volumes have only thirty pages, and nine dollars for a thirty-page, black-and-white, bound pamphlet seems somewhat steep.

One may well ask how this series could have been handled more imaginatively. It is difficult to come up with something innovative when previous writers and editors have explored the subject so thoroughly, and in some cases, so well. Perhaps a first-person style, written from the viewpoint of a young girl or boy in the group being considered, would have livened things up somewhat. Perhaps use of colour in the illustrations, and making more of them complete portrayals of some aspect of daily *life* (as opposed to views of artifacts) would have better exposed the reader to the realities of life in the precontact period. A less fragmented approach to both the material and spiritual cultures might have led youngsters to an understanding of the whole individual and how he or she shares in the humanity of modern Canada.

Taken altogether, the strengths of this series are outweighed by the weaknesses. It would be no small challenge to eliminate these weaknesses, and yet that is the task that would have to be taken in order to produce a series that was less of a catalogue and more of a living history.

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TROUBLESOME INDIAN TALES

The trouble with adventurers, Christie Harris. Illus. by Douglas Tait. McClelland and Stewart, 1982. 162 pp. \$12.95 cloth. ISBN 0-7710-4028-8.

At a conference in 1980, Christie Harris said that her recently published collection of Northwest Coast tales, *The trouble with princesses*, was her best book. Certainly, she had more reason for pride than an author's natural fondness for her latest work. In *The trouble with princesses*, Harris had performed rather

successfully the vital role of mediator between modern children and tales that, in their original form, would be quite alien to them. Harris had, that is, recognized that she could do more than rearrange and polish Indian tales to make them accessible to children. Her stroke of genius was her discovery that she could connect figures in the Indian tales to figures from familiar folktales without destroying the authentic flavour of the Indian tales. She did this by focusing on the figure of the Indian princess and by pointing out, in prefaces to each tale, how each Indian princess was similar to princesses in tales told by other cultures. Harris thus made her tales foreign and familiar.

Harris has now produced a work, *The trouble with adventurers, that is, as the title suggests, something of a sequel. Her aim in this collection is to show that "In the old days, adventure was almost the way of life." She pointedly connects these tales to familiar Old World characters ("Ulysses, Marco Polo, Sinbad the Sailor") yet stresses the exotic foreignness of the action by speaking of "adventurers whose tales made an awesome world even more awesome."*

Although Harris seems to be taking on the role of mediator between the world of familiar tales and that of the Northwest Coast tale, her book is significantly different from her earlier effort and, ultimately, less successful. Part of the difficulty is that she has taken considerable liberties with the definition of adventurer. Her preface implies that she will deal with figures of heroic stature who meet marvels in the course of their journeys. Some of her tales fit this pattern, but others do not. Two of the six tales are, for example, more accurately described as beast tales than as tales of adventure. The result is that the variety of stories weakens the focus on a significant figure and denies the promise of familiar concepts of adventure in exotic form.

This collection differs from the earlier one in more than its lack of focus on a clear type as central figure. Unlike those of the earlier tales, the prefaces to the individual tales do not here point out similarities to familiar tales. Harris may have felt that her statement in the general preface was sufficient, or she may have felt no Old World stories were similar or familiar enough for mention. Regardless of the reason, the absence of clear connections to other figures makes her statements about adventurers and their troubles seem generalizations about West Coast adventurers, not necessarily about all adventurers. The result is that her tales lose some of the universality of significance possessed by her princess stories.

The tales themselves fall into three groups: two are beast tales, three are legends involving some supernatural element, and one is an historical account. The beast tales are thematically out of place in the collection, but they are crisply told and entertaining. "How Raven gets Oolikan" is a *pourquoi* tale explaining the origin of the tiny fish vital to the Indians' survival. It is particularly notable because Harris successfully conveys the moral ambivalence of the trickster figure. "The reluctant adventures of Porcupine and Beaver" is an entertaining account of discomforts, not true adventures. Still, it comically teaches us

something about the Indians' code of hospitality and revenge.

The three legends more properly fit the theme announced in the preface. "The Bird of Good Luck" involves a variety of adventures in both the supernatural and the natural world. It traces the course of Asdiwal, son of the Bird of Good Luck, who survives the assassination attempts of jealous mortals and immortals. Ultimately, he himself becomes a Bird of Good Luck and leaves behind his body as a stone formation. "Revenge of the Wolf Prince," the story of a long feud between two clans, also provides genuine adventure. Particularly impressive is the account of a journey to the ends of the earth to get a magic arrow. Here, and in the account of the use of the arrow, Harris evokes the sense of awe that she speaks of in her preface. Unfortunately, she spoils some of her effort with occasional confusing awkwardness and excessive length. Still, this is the most distinguished story in the collection. In comparison, the remaining legend, "Ghost Canoe People," is more atmospheric than eventful. It is a mood piece, not an adventure tale of distinction.

Ironically, the one tale treating the genuine and verifiable adventure of a white man in the Indian world fits the author's purpose but fails because of her form. Harris retells "The true adventures of John Jewitt who was captured by the Indian whalers," in order to reveal Indian attitudes to the white fur traders and to show what befell one white youth looking for adventure. The content is interesting, but Harris makes the story too long and tries to force it into the mold of the other tales by using the repetition typical of folktales. The account thus becomes a bit tedious and artificial instead of gripping.

Although this collection lacks a meaningful arrangement of its tales and has a weak focus on the figure of the adventurer, it is not a bad book. *The trouble with adventurers* is generally entertaining because Harris understands that good stories begin whenever trouble starts.

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LE GRAND MANITOU: LES LÉGENDES ALGONQUINES POUR DE JEUNES LECTEURS

Glausgab, créateur du monde, Louis Landry. Editions Paulines, 1981. 101 pp. 4,95\$ broché. ISBN 2-89039-837-4; **Glausgab, le protecteur**, Louis Landry. Editions Paulines, 1981. 108 pp. 4,95\$. broché. ISBN 2-89039-838-2.

Dans ces deux volumes, dédiés à son grand-fils, Louis Landry a raconté l'histoire des aventures et pouvoirs surnaturels de Glausgab qui acquiert le titre du Maître de l'homme et de la bête. Créateur et protecteur, le Grand Manitou Algonquin est aussi un payayeur, un fumeur et un athlète formidable. Landry