

canoe, or listening at a keyhole. Variety is the keynote to the illustrations of twentieth century children, and there is often a move to simplicity, in, for example, the line drawings of Hugh Lofting or Garth Williams. The twentieth century also corrupts in its own style, by using the sales appeal of innocence in advertisements for soap or cream cake, but many illustrators add to our understanding of childhood by showing us their private visions, such as the dream forest of Maurice Sendak or the graceful and spontaneous seascape of Edward Ardizzone. It is a pleasure to see, at the end of the book and on the cover, a painting by Canadian illustrator Heather Cooper, which combines the untouched simplicity of the small child with the beauty and complexity of the child's daydreams. As a survey of children's illustrators, this book has limitations, since it cannot include, for example, Beatrice Potter, who rarely painted human figures; but the intention of the collection is to show us the changing concept of the child, and in this it succeeds well.

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Amerindians in History

OLIVE PATRICIA DICKASON

The Iron People, Terry Leeder. Illus. by Deborah Drew-Brook. Toronto, Dundurn Press, 1979. 64 pp. \$2.95 paper. ISBN 0-919670-35-0.

Mistress Molly, the Brown Lady, Helen Caister Robinson. Illus. Toronto and Charlottetown, Dundurn Press, 1980. 160 pp. \$6.95 paper. ISBN 0-919670-49-0.

Crowfoot, Carlotta Hacker. Illus. Toronto, Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1977. 64 pp. \$2.95 paper. ISBN 0-88902-238-0.

Chief Joseph and his People, William Rayner. Illus. Toronto, Collins, 1979 (first printed in Great Britain). 79 pp., \$15.95 hardcover. ISBN 0-00-195124-6.

Tom Longboat, Bruce Kidd. Illus. Toronto, Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1980. 64 pp. \$2.75 paper. ISBN 0-88902-680-7.

These five works about Amerindians are all historically based, in varying degrees; two of them, *The Iron People* and *Mistress Molly*, are historical fiction, although they do not stray far from the known record. The other three are biographies, popularized for the young reader. In all five books, the Amerindians concerned are easily recognizable to Canadians; the most exotic is Nez Percé Chief Joseph, who once hoped to take refuge in Canada. The authors of both of the fictionalized works seek to compensate for inadequacies in their material by trying to tell their stories from the Amerindian point of view. I say "by trying" because the results are missing in at least one dimension, leading to stylizations, not without charm, but lending a marionette quality to the stories.

This is particularly true for Terry Leeder's *The Iron People*, which begins in 1609, when the French and the Huron first met, and concludes with the dispersal of the latter 40 years later. Although Leeder picks his way carefully through the record, he occasionally runs afoul of historical accuracy. Thus he has Champlain conversing with his Huron hosts, even though the Frenchman is not known to have learned an Indian language; during the siege of the Iroquois village, Champlain is made to suggest to his allies that they make large shields out of logs, when it is far more likely that the Huron were already doing so of their own accord, as this was an Amerindian war practice antedating the arrival of Europeans; and one could wonder if any Amerindian mother of the period would observe that her child was "good", as Atironta's wife does on the family's canoe trip to Québec. "Good" in that sense is a European concept, not an Amerindian one. Then there is the reference to Teanaustaye as one of the more "devout" of the Huron villages. True, it was the object of particular Jesuit attention; but, perhaps because of that, it was also a centre of opposition to the missionaries. Deborah Drew-Brook is to be commended for her illustrations, which in their stylization reflect something of the quality of the text. Her longhouses, however, come out considerably tidier than those in the reconstruction at Midland, Ontario.

Although Molly Brant (1736-1796), sister of the Mohawk war chief Joseph Brant and wife of Northern Indian Superintendent Sir William Johnson, lived in a later period and under circumstances which allowed for more documentation than is available for the Huron, there is still a dearth of information as far as she herself is concerned. This perhaps reflects historical conventions of the period, which recorded little of Amerindian personalities, particularly if they were women married to Europeans according to non-Christian rituals. This was true for Molly, even though she was recognized in her time as a key figure in maintaining the important British-Mohawk alliance.

However, Helen Caister Robinson, the author of *Mistress Molly*, is able to draw upon her researches for her biography of Joseph Brant to take valiant advantage of what material is available. A touching picture emerges of the slow erosion of Mohawk control over their own affairs even as they render invaluable service to the British cause during the American War of Independence. As no portrait of Molly is known to exist, the work is illustrated with one of Sir William.

Of the biographies which deal with western chiefs in the face of advancing white settlement, *Crowfoot* and *Chief Joseph*, it is the latter which is the better presented and so has the greater emotional impact. The stories in both cases are poignant: two men find themselves in the unenviable roles of presiding over the deaths of their people's way of life. Crowfoot (c. 1830-1890), of Alberta's Blackfoot Confederacy, manages to make his choice of non-violence prevail; Joseph (d. 1904) does not, and ends up in a fight that can only be lost, forcing him at last to utter his famous line, "I will fight no more forever." William Rayner's taut style contributes to the power of Chief Joseph's story, in spite of lapses into preachiness of dubious value on such subjects as torturing and scalping. Carlotta Hacker, for her part, does not master her tendency towards the didactic as she describes Crowfoot's actions, weakening a tale which is naturally full of drama. Also, she is not entirely familiar with her material; for instance, she does not seem to know that the Gros Ventre are an Algonkian-speaking people, and appears to believe that the Blackfoot were haunted by hunger and knew no leisure before the advent of the horse. Also, better editing would have been a help.

Perhaps it was the 1963 action of the Iroquois Confederacy's Council Fire in naming him Honorary Warrior and Runner of Messages that inspired Olympic runner Bruce Kidd to write *Tom Longboat* (1887-1949). Now a teacher of physical education at the University of Toronto, Kidd has an immense admiration for the phenomenal Onondaga marathoner who set the sports world agog during the early decades of this century. It is a bittersweet tale of adulation which became mired in racial preconceptions. Although Kidd is more at home in the arena than on the reserve, his professional appreciation of the qualities which made Tom Longboat one of Canada's greatest athletes, and his sympathy for the marathoner's social and business handicaps, give this biography substance and bite. According to Kidd, the demise of native athletics in Canada is directly tied to the deterioration of native communities, particularly after the 1930's. But he is hopeful that given the right conditions, native athletes could once more rise to the top.

In balance, each of these five works weighs on the positive side, and

can be recommended for young persons' libraries.

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Tall Tale Retold

S.D. NEILL

Paul Bunyan: Superhero of the Lumberjacks, John D. Robins. Edited by Edith Fowke. Illus. by Norm Drew. Toronto, N.C. Press Limited, 1980. 112 pages. ISBN 0-919601-13-8.

Although the tales of Baron Munchausen were common in our home, I have never, myself, had a "hankerin'" to tell tall tales – until I read these versions of Paul Bunyan stories by John Robins. Paul Bunyan yarns have tended to bore me, but Robins' language is full of life and is as real as you'll get on the printed page (with the cusswords omitted).

I have never worked in the bush, but I did work with men who came out of the camps in the summer to build and repair the roads at the Lakehead. The grammar and swing of the sentences in these stories felt familiar and comfortable – so much so that I read the book at a sitting and felt as if the words were mine. I thought, "I can tell these tales with this language and be right at home."

Of course, all northerners tell stories of cold winters (mainly because they are true), so "The Winter of the Blue Snow" is typical of tall tales laid in the Algoma country north of The Soo. This one begins:

I've heerd some of you bellyachin' about this bein' a hard winter. That just makes me bust out laughin', that does. Why you aint never saw no real winter yet, an' you aint never goin' to. This old earth couldn't stand another one.

John Robins was an English professor at the University of Toronto until his death in 1952. I can imagine him telling versions of the blue snow to his colleagues. I've told some true anecdotes of the kind in ordinary conversation.