

by the various forms of maverick publishing.

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The Delights of Texture: Cleaver's Colourful Mixed-Media Effects

PATRICIA MORLEY

The Loon's Necklace, retold by William Toye. Pictures by Elizabeth Cleaver. Oxford University Press, 1977. 24 pp. \$5.95. ISBN 0-19-540278-2.

The Fire Stealer, retold by William Toye. Pictures by Elizabeth Cleaver. Oxford University Press. 24 pp. \$6.95 bds. ISBN 19-5403215.

Elizabeth Cleaver and William Toye make a great team. Toye's simple but suggestive text touches on pain, fear, humour, bravado, fantasy and joy. Cleaver's paintings remain stamped on the inner eye after one shuts the book's covers. Story and drawings are comfortable together, natural partners.

Cleaver's colours are both bold and subtle, but her textural effects are particularly remarkable. One thinks of the super-realism of contemporary Maritime painters like Pratt and Forrestall. A patch of fur draws the testing finger, irresistibly; surely a bit of fur has been pasted on, here? Birchbark is also rendered super-realistically, with fine detail.

This technique co-exists with the wet-wash effect of traditional watercolour, and with woodcut effects. In *The Loon's Necklace*, there is a large owl, and a man's face, close up, in woodcut technique. A night scene of a hut, beautifully stippled, resembles wood covered with moss or lichens, and contrasts dramatically with the flat bright washes on the human figures in the doorway. These visual techniques reinforce the moods created by the narrative.

Both stories have a youthful hero, but *The Loon's Necklace* sets both old and young in heroic roles. A young boy helps his blind father to kill a bear, but is unable to deal with the sinister malevolence of a hag who forbids him to tell his father the good news. The magical intervention of a loon (aided

by the father's will to *trust* and to *try*) restores the man's sight. The loon is rewarded by a necklace whose shells become the bird's beautiful white markings. The hag, defeated, becomes an owl, to annoy the family by screeching. Her cloak, covered with totemic markings, contrasts with the family's plain robes and adds a note of awe, even terror, to a story with a happy ending.

The Fire Stealer is the story of a young Indian boy who steals fire to aid and comfort his people. Magical elements, including the boy's ability to take what shape he chooses, will delight young readers. The book has the feeling of fire throughout, starting with its frontispiece, a fiery red-orange finely veined with yellow. Autumn foliage reflects the fire's colours and reminds the youth of his triumph.

The Fire Stealer has been taken from the Ojibway legends of northern Ontario, in the tradition of the Great Trickster. *The Loon's Necklace*, a Tsimshian legend from the West Coast, was made into a short film released in 1950. Cleaver's rich and beautiful collages have justly earned her work many prizes.

Patricia Morley teaches Canadian literature and Women's Studies at Concordia University, Montreal. She is the author of six books, and of many articles and reviews on Canadian, Commonwealth, and children's literature.



Attempted Flights of Fantasy

FRAN ASHDOWN

Willie Won't Fly, Jim Quixley. Illus. by Clarence Barnes. Borealis Press, 1978. 51 pp. \$4.95 paper.

The Mouse Who Came to Dinner, Kenneth Radu. Illus. by Diane Radu. Borealis Press, 1978. 49 pp. \$3.95 paper.

Martin's Starwars, Joan Lyngseth. Illus. by Steven Collier. Borealis Press, 1978. 69 pp. \$4.95 paper.

Neophyte authors of children's fiction have a predilection for the fantasy genre. Perhaps the appeal of creating a brand-new world, whose boundaries and characters need not be as severely limited as in realistic fiction, is too attractive to resist. Unfortunately, many of these initial attempts are