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flap implies that Geronimo is profiled, but he is not (he *is* mentioned on page 108). Overall, however, this book is a treasure of wonderfully revealing anecdotes. As Vine Deloria, Jr., says in his foreword, *Brave Are My People* is "an incarnational history of the past five hundred years."

Bruce E. Johansen
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A Coyote Reader. By William Bright. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993. 202 pages. \$30.00 cloth; \$13.00 paper.

Coyote, the Trickster of Native American oral tradition, is a character of such rich anarchy, humor, contradiction, and "undifferentiated human consciousness" (Jung) that nontraditional academics, writers, and artists seem best able to deal with him successfully. As poet Gary Snyder wrote in his seminal 1971 essay, "The Incredible Survival of Coyote," "the trickster is a delightful literary conceit but an unpredictable Ally—dangerous and very potent." Scholar William Bright is well aware of these pitfalls. But like the wise old trapper who knows his quarry is an exceptionally wary survivor, he persistently kept on the trail as much out of respect as out of hope of capture. His book *A Coyote Reader* is the quite valuable, if flawed, result.

An accomplished and widely published linguist and anthropologist, Bright first became aware of Coyote the mythic character during his earliest anthropological fieldwork in 1949 among the Karuk of Northern California and Southern Oregon. While in the army in 1954, he realized that "Coyote was not only a mythic figure but also my favorite literary character . . ." (p. xv). He embarked on a quest to "tell the world about him."

Since then, throughout a distinguished academic career, Bright has published widely, including studies of Karuk Coyote stories, and other works in academic journals on this and many other subjects, leading up to his editorship of the new, four-volume *Oxford International Encyclopedia of Linguistics*. (He also serves on the editorial board of this journal.)

With the public interest in American Indian literatures rising during the 1970s, Bright solicited a distinguished array of Coyote materials through the ethnopoetic journal *Alcheringa* but found the project elusive: "Old Man Coyote had not yet authorized me

to write a book." Only in 1991 was he able to unlock his files and his scholarly mind enough to complete the project.

A Coyote Reader represents the virtues and vices of Bright's committed but halting process. It is both inspired and pedantic, scholarly and general, flowing and disjointed, timely and dated.

Bright's conception is enriching. He sets out to explore the nature of Coyote not only as mythic trickster in the Native American oral tradition but also as the mammal *canas larans*, ranging around the North American continent, and the inspiration they both have become for a new generation of Anglophone writers and thinkers. He wants not only to capture the literary trickster but to discover why Coyote the animal was chosen as his symbolic representation by so many Western and Southwestern tribes.

Bright's overview of Coyote in English literature and the mythic background is comprehensive and informative. He reminds the reader that in Western native storytelling tradition, animals were not alien from humans but powerful, god-like antecedents: the First People. They should not be confused with today's humorous but one-dimensional cartoon renditions, such as Wile E. Coyote of the Roadrunner cartoons.

Continuity is one of Bright's most valuable contributions. To my knowledge, this is the only anthology covering the entire chronological canon from traditional oral literature, as represented in Old Man Coyote tales, to modern poetry inspired by the Trickster spirit. In addition to traditional stories from the Karuk, Paiute, Chinook, Apache, Hopi, and other tribes, Bright includes wonderful modern work by both native and nonnative writers such as Leslie Silko, Wendy Rose, Peter Blue Cloud, and Peter Coyote. Bright knows this (mostly Western) territory well.

Unfortunately, Bright's analytic, scholarly side compelled him to parse the "undifferentiated" mythic trickster into component parts, or chapters: wanderer, bricoleur (from Levi-Strauss), glutton, lecher, thief, cheat, outlaw, spoiler, loser, clown, pragmatist, horny old man, and survivor. Each such chapter includes fine traditional oral stories, many recorded and translated from the Karuk by Bright himself, most others reworked by Bright into more readable texts. But Coyote does not fit such narrow categories at all well, and soon Bright is tripping over himself with redundancies. In addition, each chapter ends with a brief discussion of *canas latrans* behavior that seems forced. Bright would have served the reader better by dealing with the interesting question

of the behavioral relationship of the mythic to the physical Coyote in a separate chapter.

Worse, Bright's analytic framework forces him to edit some tales in ways that violate their clarity and integrity. For example, he cuts up a wonderful Karuk tale—really a long cycle—into pieces to fit each of his categories. It would have been much more effective to print the long cycle by itself to give all the melded flavors of the character and the narrative. That was anthropologist Paul Radin's approach in *The Trickster* (1956), where he included the entire Winnebago Trickster cycle, with commentary placed around it.

This concern for organization is not a quibble but a serious flaw in this otherwise useful work. Bright was well aware of the problem he faced. He quotes approvingly Barre Toelken's Navajo informant, Yellowman, who "sees Coyote as an important entity in his religious views precisely because he is *not* (emphasis added) ordered . . ." (p. 100). Yet Bright walks wide-eyed into the trap of trying to impose order on Coyote, a fruitless and distracting task. Again, a superior approach might have been to group the traditional and contemporary stories, perhaps chronologically, so that general readers could learn to appreciate the evolutionary survival of the mythic and physical Coyote the way Bright did.

A dilemma that confronts anyone wishing to transfer traditional oral material to the page is the manner of presentation. Bright chooses a "measured verse" format, forthrightly recognizing its limitations but believing that it respects the delivery of the tale more fairly, especially the often relentless parallelism. His approach results in intelligent and highly readable versions that certainly are superior to the concrete poetic approach of Jerome Rothenberg and others.

However, I am not convinced this approach is better than the simple story paragraphing used in most anthologies, including Barry Lopez's collection of native trickster stories, *Giving Birth to Thunder, Sleeping with his Daughter: Coyote Builds North America* (1977). Bright's renderings frankly look like poetry on the page, not like stories. They read well but no better than more traditional paragraphing, and they take up space he clearly could have used.

For example, Bright adapts a delightful Kahtlamet Chinook tale, after Boas, in which Coyote and Badger hang out together and trick other animals into coming too close, and Badger farts on them, killing them. Unfortunately, Bright elides apparently re-

petitive or wandering passages, which are part of the joy of Coyote tales and of the native oral tradition.

In the last chapters, Bright drops his academic persona. As a result, his language soars, honoring the simultaneous past, present, and future manifestations of both the mythic and biological critter. When he allows himself, Bright can think, write, and harmonize—even howl—with the poets he so clearly admires. He wisely gives substantial space to the poets themselves, including reprinting the entire text of Snyder's essay "The Incredible Survival of Coyote."

Bright's list of references is extremely useful, the most comprehensive to date. Still, several modern native and nonnative writers are missing. Most notable is Gerald Vizenor, Ojibwa author (and professor at the University of California, Berkeley), whose many novels and essays explore and embody the Woodland Trickster spirit. Also, Bright notes that contemporary native groups tell new Coyote stories; that is true, and I wish he had included some. Among non-Indian scholars, Conrad Heyers's enthusiastic endorsement of the Trickster myth in *The Comic Vision and the Christian Faith* (1981) should be added.

For a further general introduction to Coyote in all his guises, Lopez's anthology is readable and more comprehensive; deAngulo's reimagined *Indian Tales* are the most highly readable story composites; J. Frank Dobie's *The Voice of the Coyote* includes Mexican and Texan folklore and field notes; *Coyote's Journal* collects modern Coyote-inspired writers; sympathetic biologist Hope Ryden's *God's Dog* describes her extensive field observations of *canas latrans*; while modern artist Harry Fonseca (Maidu) visually captures the Coyote spirit. Finally, Paul Radin's classic *The Trickster*, on the Winnebago Trickster cycle, with commentaries by Karl Kerenyi and Jung, remains invaluable.

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The Creek Indians. By Ellen Scordata. New York: Chelsea House Publications, 1993. 80 pages. \$12.95 paper.

The publication of *The Creek Indians* no doubt is the result of renewed interest by the majority culture in its indigenous peoples, one of the by-products of increased visibility during the recent quincentennial. It is an historically accurate and well-written text.