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Tricksters and Clam Siphons...

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tricksters and clam siphons . . .

In the May 1981 issue of *American Ethnologist*, two papers especially caught my attention. The first one, by Michael P. Carroll (*AE* 8:301–313, 1981), claims that my analyses of the trickster figure are invalid because I ignored that Hare plays the part of the trickster in the mythology of the Woodlands Indians. Were Dr. Carroll better acquainted with my work, he would have known that in 1978 I had published a paper devoted to Hare. In that paper I laid stress on the fact that the semantic position of Hare does not fully coincide with that of the trickster, something specialists of the Woodlands Indians—contrary to Dr. Carroll—have been aware of since long ago. I also offered an explanation accounting for both the special position of Hare and the choice of that particular animal to fill it.

In the second paper, a review of Marvin Harris's book *Cultural Materialism* (*AE* 8: 395–396, 1981), Robert McKinley highly commends this author's alleged refutation of a paper of mine on some aspects of Northwest Coast mythology. Before taking sides so abruptly, it would have been only fair on McKinley's part to give some consideration to my lengthy rejoinder (1976) which appeared in the same issue of *L'Homme* where, on my hearty recommendation, Harris's (1976) text was originally published. Exchanges of ideas, even of a polemical nature, would certainly be more fruitful should those launching them take the trouble to become informed about what the author they wish to refute has actually written on the topic.

references cited

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1976 Lévi-Strauss et la Palourde: Réponse à la Conférence Gildersleeve de 1972. *L'Homme* 16(2–3):5–22.
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- 1978 Une Préfiguration Anatomique de la Gémellité: Systèmes de Signes. In *Textes Réunis en Hommage à Germaine Dieterlen*. pp. 369–376. Paris: Hermann.

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I did indeed miss Professor Lévi-Strauss's 1978 article. He has been gracious enough to provide me with a copy, I have read it, and I still find no reason to change anything in my own article. The argument that he makes is quite different than the one he presented in his earlier analysis of North American trickster figures. Presumably he justifies this by arguing (see his comment above)

that the "semantic domain" of the character called Hare is quite different from that of the trickster, and makes reference to various (unspecified) "Woodland specialists" in support of this view. All I can say in return is that my reading of a variety of commentators on the trickster figure (whom I cited) led me to define a trickster as (1) a culture-hero, who (2) goes to elaborate lengths to gratify enormous desires for food and sex. Given this definition, it seemed obvious from simply reading the myths I analyzed that Raven (in the northwest), Coyote (in the southwest), Hare (among the Prairie-Siouan tribes), Nanabush (in the northeast) and Rabbit (in the southeast) are all tricksters. Treating them as a group—as I did in my analysis, and which Professor Lévi-Strauss does not do, in either his original article or in the one published in 1978—seemed, and seems, quite reasonable.

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Submitted 9 October 1981
Accepted 13 October 1981
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I must apologize to Professor Lévi-Strauss for any injustice done to his work in my review of Marvin Harris's book *Cultural Materialism*. My distress is compounded since I share with a great many others a very deep sense of intellectual debt to his works, a debt which is of the same unrepayable order as are those fabulous gifts of treasure so often released by those awesome beings of myth with whom Lévi-Strauss has made us so familiar, and over whose deeds he and Harris carried out their interesting debate of 1976. By way of reassurance, let me say that my evaluations, though much compressed within the space of the review, were not arrived at in the abrupt manner which Lévi-Strauss now charges. Nor was a complete refutation of his general approach to myth intended. Rather, in the single case at issue (the posited inversion between mountain goat horns and clam siphons), I felt that he had not stood by his usual and exemplary standard of keeping structural analysis consistent with the most minute details of the ethnographic situation. I will offer a fuller treatment and pose yet another solution at some future opportunity.

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rejoinder to Zuidema

Professor Zuidema's review of *The Meaning of Aphrodite* (*AE* 7:580–581, 1980) contains several errors. For example, the main characteristics of Aphrodite presented in the book are not the three