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# Raven and the Tide: A Tlingit Narrative

Told by Emma Marks

Transcribed in Tlingit and translated into

English by Nora Marks Dauenhauer

Edited and annotated by Nora Marks

Dauenhauer and Richard Dauenhauer

This story, which we are calling “Raven and the Tide,” was recorded by Nora Marks Dauenhauer from her mother, Emma Marks, in fall 1972 at the family home in Juneau. Other family members were present, including Nora’s father, Willie Marks, who enters into critical discussion at two points. Emma Marks, born in 1913, first heard this story growing up on the Italo River, a remote area between Dry Bay and Yakutat. For a full biography of Emma, see our *Haa Kusteeyí, Our Culture: Tlingit Life Stories* (1994, 378–406).

Like the other texts and translations at the heart of our forthcoming volume of Tlingit Raven Stories (volume 4 of our series, *Classics of Tlingit Oral Literature*, with the University of Washington Press), “Raven and the Tide” has been in progress for many years. The Tlingit-language tape was first transcribed in 1972–1973 as a project of the Alaska Native Language Center of the University of Alaska-Fairbanks. It was proofread by colleagues (including Jeff Leer) and prepared in camera-ready format, but remained unpublished. Later, under sponsorship of Sealaska Heritage Foundation, with funding in part from the State of Alaska and the National Endowment for the Humanities, we were able to resume work on the project. In January 1984 the Tlingit text was entered into the computer, a new technology that had emerged in the intervening years. In May 1984 the text was translated into English for the first time, and the story was distributed in a limited, photocopied, field-test edition of Raven stories used in a summer session at the University of Alaska Southeast-Juneau.

Our original plan had been to publish our Raven volume first in the series with the University of Washington Press, but the field-test experience

with students of all ages from Tlingit and Euro-American backgrounds persuaded us to hold off and put Raven later in the series. We found that Tlingit humor (abundant in the Raven stories) was extremely hard for both Euro-American students and younger to middle-aged students of Tlingit ancestry to understand and appreciate. Accordingly, in volumes 1 and 2 of the series (1987, 1990) we instead featured clan crest stories and ceremonial oratory. These are genres whose tragedy and intricately contextualized ritual are more obviously complicated at the surface level than the humor of Raven stories, yet the texts in volumes 1 and 2 ultimately proved far more accessible to readers and easier for them to understand. This puzzling property of humor suggests that even though tragedy and comedy are experienced universally, even when their literary expressions are equally culturally contextualized, the expression of comedy is somehow more culture specific and more enigmatic to outsiders than tragedy. During the summer 1984 field test with Raven we ourselves were laughing until the tears came, but many of our students just sat, finding the stories more puzzling than amusing. The more we tried to explain, the more our explanations spoiled the joke. Barre Toelken has also noted the deep cultural matrix of humor. In a narrative describing his own long struggle to understand, even incompletely, the intricacies of a Blackfoot joke, Toelken says, "What my Indian friends understood and relished in a few moments took me over four years to understand. Yet it was only one joke" (1996, 246).

So yet again we set the Raven book aside and did not resume work on it for another decade. The introduction to volume 4 of our *Classics* series will address not only issues of humor but also some complex sociolinguistic dimensions of Raven narratives and their performance. These involve conceptions and misconceptions of what Raven is and is not. (He is a trickster, transformer, and culture hero; he is not a deity.) With the increasing atmosphere of political correctness, some people are now afraid to laugh, fearing it will show disrespect. This is surely true for cultural outsiders but is also true for persons of Tlingit heritage. To the extent that people mistakenly preconceive Raven as a deity in the Judeo-Christian sense, it becomes increasingly difficult to appreciate the humor. Others are embarrassed by Raven's lust, gluttony, and scatological tactics. Our field-test experience in the mid-1980s encouraged us to look at new ways of translating funny stories into English. These are described below, in the notes following the text of "Raven and the Tide."

Raven and the Tide  
told by  
Emma Marks  
translated by Nora Marks Dauenhauer

Geesh Daax̄ Woogoodi Yéil  
Seigeigée  
x̄'édáx̄ sh kalneek  
transcribed by Nora Marks Dauenhauer

Raven went to her first,

A x̄ánt s'é uwagút,

to the Little Elder Who Sits on the Tide.		Yax Kis' Shukawdzinugu Shaanákw'w xánt.	
What was it she said to him?		Wáa sá kwshí ash yawwíkaa?	
She didn't think he could do it.		A yeet ash yaawawóok.	
That's why he tried	5	Ách áwé akaawa.aakw	5
to get a sea urchin.		wé néés' ayawudlaagí.	
When he went down along the bull kelp		Wé geesh daax yéi gútji	
he'd keep popping back up.		aax kéi usht'áax'ch.	
After how many tries		Wáa yoo kwdayáa sáwé dé	
he finally made it.	10	ayaawadlaak.	10
Then he took it		Áwé tle aan woogoot	
to that place		tle aadé	
beside her.		a xánde.	
That Little Elder		Wé Shaanákw'w	
was sleeping close to the fire.	15	wé gánt uwatáa.	15
Maybe it was Raven who got		Ch'a hóoch gíwé ayaawadlaak	
the sea urchin		wé néés'	
when he went down along the bull kelp.		yá geesh daax yéi woogútji.	
After this		Átx áwé	
he got the sea urchin.	20	ayanadláak wé néés'.	20
That's when he went back		Aagáa áwé áa kux wudigút	
to the Little Elder Who Sits on the Tide.		a xán wé Yax Kis' Shukawdzinugu	
		Shaanákw'w.	
She's sleeping close to the fire.		Gánt áwé uwatáa.	
The fire		Tleikdé áwé yanax yéi yadutáanch	
is usually made	25	awan.ádi	25
with a side-piece of wood.		yá x'aan.	
But putting it		Yáanáx aa ku.as	
on the other side, though,		tle yú	
it's like a white man's		dleit káa aayí	
fireplace,	30	áx' shóox adu.ak yé yáx	30
there's no shield from the heat.		tlél a yinaa háadi koostí.	
But on one side		Tleiknáx ku.a áwé	
Tlingits put a side-piece of wood there.		awan.ádi áa yéi ndu.eich.	
She's sleeping beside the barrier log.		Áwé yáat áwé át tá.	
So he goes up to her	35	Wé a xánde nagútch	35
to the Woman Who Sits on the Tide.		wé Kis' Yax Shuyakawdzinugu.	
Maybe she's the one who orders the low		Du x'akáax' gíwé yéi naléin.	
tide.			
When he comes in by her he's already		A xáni neil góot áwé de aawaxáa	
eaten		wé néés'.	
the sea urchin.		Tle a shóotx	
Quickly he lifts the barrier log	40	tle yáadáx áwé kei ayaawatán.	40
from her side.		Tle a shóonáx ayaawataan.	
He places it on his side of the fire.		"Aaaaa! Néés' gei héenák'u	
"Brrrr! Droplets of juice from the sea		xat sawli.át!"	
urchin shell		yóo áwé yanakéich.	
have chilled me!"		De a x'éix áwé aawanóok.	
is what Raven is saying.	45	De du jeewú á wé néés'.	45
He's already needling her.			
He already has the sea urchin shell in his			
hand.			

While he's doing this she asks him, "When was the low tide you ate the raw sea urchin on?" Maybe that's what it's called. That's why, that's why he grabs that Little Elder.	50	Ch'u yéi adaaneiyí áwé de yéi ash yawsikaa, "Goot'agáan sá woolaayi léin áwé a kát iyat'ék'w?" Yéi gíwé duwasáakw wé át. Ách áwé ách áwé tle aax aawasháat wé káa shaanákw.	50
He starts bouncing that sea urchin, that sea urchin shell all along her butt. Then he rubs it around on her butt. "The tide might go down, Raven," she's yelling and she's yelling at him.	60	Even then what did he call him—the one he sent out to check? Maybe it's Xashak'ák'w. "Run down there to see, to see if the tide, is going out." Then he's satisfied how low the tide is. Finally, when everything is dried up, Raven is satisfied.	60
Then they start rendering grease. Maybe this Xashak'ák'w is his nephew.	75	Aatx áwé has aawadák'w. Du kéilk'ix gíwé wusitee wé Xashak'ák'w.	75
What sort of being was his nephew? Xashak'ák'w is what he named him. Maybe he gave names to everything then because later we'd be giving names to people.	80	Daa sáwé du kéilk'ix wusitee? Xashak'ák'w yóo áwé ayasáakw. Daa sá tle a yax saa teeyín yá kaa yáa saa gaxdusaaguch gíwé.	80
He's rendering all sorts of sea life. The tide went out on all kinds of things. Whatever was at the bottom of the sea was drained out dry. Meanwhile Xashak'ák'w is putting up all kinds of food. They're rendering bentwood boxes full, bentwood boxes full. Meanwhile, Raven is stringing up the little cods together through gill and mouth.	90	Ldakát át áwé adáakw. Ldakát át xootx kux wudiláa. Daa sáyá héen taak.ádi tle a xoot kawlikúx. Xashak'ák'w ku.a áwé ldakát yánde yaa akanalgéin. Lákdíx', lákdíx' adáakw. Hú ku.a áwé s'áax' áwé ax'akla.eesh Yéil.	90
He's rendering grease into their stomachs. When he's satisfied he's got enough, he stops. But his nephew is still putting up food.	95	Áwé aawadák'w a yoowú tóode. Du tóogaa yakunagéi áwé tle tle ajeewanák. Wé du kéilk' ku.a áwé kúnax yánde yaa at kanalgéin.	95

Raven lies down under each dripping stomach. He pokes a hole in the bottom. Grease dribbles into his mouth.		A shóox' áwé yan ustáaych wé at yoowú. A k'óol'náx áwé kunawálch. Du lakaadé áwé koolx'aasch.	
Eventually his own supply runs out. His own is all gone. He studies the situation.	100	Wáa nanée sáwé du jeet shoowaxíx du aayí. Du aayí du jeet shuxéex áwé. A daat wudzidádi.	100
How's he going to get his nephew's supply away from him? That's when Raven comes up with his nightmare idea.	105	Tsu wáa sá a jeetx ayakgwadlaagí wé du kéilk' aayí. Aagáa áwé ajun nuch.	105
He comes up with a bad dream. He's talking in his sleep. "Waa-waa-waa-waa!!!" So his nephew wakes him up.	110	Ajun nuch. Du taayí yoo x'atángi nuch. "Waa-waa-waa-waa!!!" Áwé kei ash sagitji nuch wé du kéilk'.	110
Then Raven tells him about his dream. "I dreamed warriors were attacking us. That's what I dreamed.	115	Áwé aan aklanik nuch du jóoni. "Yéi áwé axajun nuch xáa áwé haa káa wdinaak. Yóo áwé axajóon.	115
Then I was saying to you 'Xashak'ák'w!!! Run outside!!' My dreams never lie." That's what he says to him.	120	Áwé tle yéi iyanaxsakéich. 'Xashak'á-á-á-ák'w!!! Yux neesheex!!! Tlél da.ék ax jóoni." Yóo áwé yoo x'ayatánk.	120
Maybe this is just to trick his nephew. Raven's getting ready for something. He's gathering everything for the invasion, whatever there is—little pieces of dirt and cones, the ones from the forest, for warriors who'll attack them.	125	A gíwé de ayís. Yan uwanéi. Ldkát át áwé ayís ayawsiháa, daa sáyá—s'eex'í sáani tle hé s'óos'ani yá at gutóodáx wé xáa yís has du káa gaxdanaakt.	125
So he can steal the grease he gives him full directions. "When I begin to talk, the way I was imitating them," when he starts to talk like that, this nephew of his is to run outside.	130	Dé wé eix agatáawoot áwé tle yan ashukaawajáa. "Tle yóo yaa yanxakéini, yá aadé x'axatee yé." yáx yaa yanakéini áwé tle, yá du kéilk' yux nagasheexí.	130
He tells Xashak'ák'w to run outside then. "You're attacking! You're attacking us!" As expected, he's running through his dream again.	135	Yá Xashak'ák'w yux nagasheexít ayawuskaayí áwé tle. "Tle kei gaxyidanáak. Haa káa kei gaxyidanáak tle."	135
As he's finishing his dream	140	A yáx áwé du jóoni aklaneek tsu. Tle yánde yaa akanalnígi yáx áwé	140

they hear him		wuduwa.áx,	
telling this nephew of his		wé du kéilk'yéi ayawuskaayí	
to run outside.		yux nagashéex.	
Then he slams the door behind him.	150	Tle x'ét aawaxích a ítx'.	150
Meanwhile		Ch'a a t'éik áwé	
he starts gulping from the box.		yax yaa ayakanall'úx' wé daneit.	
But his nephew		Wé du kéilk' kwá	
is fighting with the cones		wé át du een kulagaaw	
outside.	155	wé gáanx'.	155
Raven's gulping down the grease		Wé ayawsihayí át	
his nephew had put up,		al'úx't áwé wé lákdi kaax eex	
in the container, the bentwood box.		wé daneitx'.	
Is there no end to his drinking?		Goodé sáyú adanáa noojín?	
How much he's drinking!	160	Tlax yéi adaná!	160
What's that he's saying?		Wáa sáwé yanakéich?	
"Wheeeeeee!!		"Aa-aa-aa-aa!!!	
I'm hitting someone through to the bone		Kaa s'aagí too <i>li</i> nxaat'óok."	
with my arrow,"			
is what he's saying.		Yú gíwé yanakéich.	
What's he talking about?	165	Wáa sáwé yanakéich?	165
There used to be tongs		Ganyal'át'ayi áwé kustée nach	
to cook with,		yá aan at gadus.eeyín,	
for lifting stones.		wé té.	
Is that what he was saying		Aa s'aagí too <i>li</i> .	
was somebody's bone cracking?	170	Daa sá kwshíwé yéi ayasáakw?	170
Inside the house		Neilx'	
that's what he's slamming together.		áwé x'éix ashaxeex.	
That's what's making the noise.		Áwé du.áxx.	
He's crashing around inside.		Ch'a wé neilnáx á wé át jeewaxeex.	
Here he's already	175	Héix' áwé de wé eix áwé de	175
gulped down the grease.		yax ayakawli'úx'.	
[Nora: He tried to make them believe he		[Keixwnéi: Kaa <i>t'óok</i> yóo áwé.	
was shooting arrows?			
Willie Marks: That he was breaking		Kéet Yaanaayí: Kaa s'aagí áwé yax yaa	
human bones.		ayanall'ix'.	
Yes.]		Aaá.]	
While he's still doing this	180	ch'u yéi kunoo <i>gú</i> áwé	180
his nephew comes rushing in and catches		hóoch'i aayí áwé ash káa néil wujixíx.	
him on the last container.			
"Are you at it again,		"Déi yéi gé keeshinóok gé,	
you shitty Raven?"		Yeil tl'éet'i?"	
They never called him		Tléil yéi guwanaák	
anything else.	185	yoo duseíxin.	185
So at this he shoves Raven		Tle a táade kát ash shakaawal'ix'	
into the bentwood box.		wé lákt.	
Then with him inside		Tle aan áwé ash een áwé	
he ties it up.		adaa wsi.áxw tle.	
So Raven asks him,	190	Aagáa áwé ax'eiwawóos'	190
"What are you using to tie me up with,		"Daa sá ách xat keesa.aaxw, kélk'?"	
nephew?			
That's not very strong,"		Luwat'éex'i át áwé."	

Raven advises him.		Áa ashukaawajáa,	
“But there is something,		“Áwu á,	
there is something, nephew,	195	áwu kélk’	195
that our uncles used to tie each other with,		haa káak háš ách wooch kas.aaxu át,”	
he says.		yú.á.	
Then he ties him		Tle áwé ách ash kawsi.áxw	
like he said,		ash x’ayáx	
like Raven told him to do.	200	chush x’ayáx.	200
[Nora: What was that?		[Kéixwnéi: Daa sá wé?	
What did he call it?		Wáa sáwé aawasáa?	
Willie Marks: Maybe old bark. Red cedar		Kéet Yaanaayi: Lyaani gíwé, laax daayi	
bark?		áwé?	
Ferns on a point, isn’t that what he called		X’aa lukaléet’ yóo gíwé aa uwasáa?	
it?			
What did he call it?]	205	Wáa sáwé aawasáa?]	205
So just like that,		De yéi áwé	
that’s how he did it.		a yáx áwé.	
He throws Raven down		Shaa shakéetx áwé	
from the top of the mountain.		daak ash wusigíx’.	
While the box is falling	210	Ch’a wéix yei nasxíxi áwé	210
the strings break around him.		du een a daax yawlik’úts.	
Then he flies up out of it.		Tle a yíkdáx kei wdikín.	
Caaaaaaw!!!		Gáaaa!!!	
Maybe that’s how it happened. I guess		Yéi gíwé. Hóoch’gíwé	
that’s all			
I know about it.	215	aadé xwsikuwu yé.	215

### Textual Notes

*Title.* English titles to this story are variously “Raven and the Tide,” “Raven and the Tide Woman,” and “Raven and the Tide Controller.” The Tlingit title is *Geesh Daax Woogoodi Yéil*, literally “Raven Who Went Down Along the Bull Kelp,” referring to the episode that usually triggers the sequence here.

Line 1. *Raven went to her first.* Like most Tlingit Raven stories, this one is highly contextualized—right from the start. Grammatical gender is not indicated in Tlingit, and Tlingit narrative style prefers pronouns over nouns. Literally, the first line is: “he/she/it went to him/her/it first” or “third-singular subject went to third-singular object first.” The listener needs to know who’s who. The second line confirms who is going to whom: someone is going to the Little Elder Who Sits on the Tide—literally, on the end of the surface of it, according to the series of grammatical prefixes in Tlingit. Although much other information is economically conveyed, still no genders are indicated. Only by context and tradition do we know that the subject is Raven and the object is the Tide-Woman or Tide-Lady. As with other stories in Tlingit oral tradition, you know it’s a Raven story because you’ve heard it before. Because the storyteller knows you’ve heard it before, he or she can make certain cultural assumptions that are reflected in style. We may predict



that a story told by a Tlingit narrator in English to an outside audience would have more explicit references and fewer implicit ones. James Ruppert provides illustration for this idea from Deg Hit'an Athabaskan performance, discussing the concept of the "implied listener" and the relationship of audience to performance and the specific outcome as "text," with examples of performance in Athabaskan and English (1995, 123–35; 227–39).

Barre Toelken discusses this dimension of folklore—a story culturally embedded in a range of connotations that are familiar to insiders but overlooked or bewildering to outsiders. He notes that beliefs and attitudes underlying coyote stories (trickster cousins to the Tlingit Raven stories) "are so strong that the story as a narrative stands only as a tangible marker of cultural details far more complex than any single story itself could possibly show" (1996, 208). In any oral-traditional text, there is more going on than meets the eye. Trickster stories (like tragedies such as Oedipus or Macbeth) are usually violations of social relationships and responsibilities, cultural expectations and ethical standards, but are couched in comedy which, as noted above, is highly contextualized culturally. Traditional stories remain popular and powerful because they operate on different levels of meaning at the same time. One level is more literal and textual, the other more cultural and contextual. Toelken emphasizes that in the folkloric process, structure is but one mechanism for transmitting connotative meaning; the audience supplies the rest. He reminds us that listeners within the tradition are familiar with multiple layers of meaning, and this makes it possible for them to understand and appreciate the stories by supplying contextual information not made explicit in the text. Toelken calls this a "double structure" and notes that it

is a prominent feature of Northwest Indian myths and that our appreciation of that fact can help us to derive even fuller meaning from the grand myth achievements of the American Indian. . . . I think it is of the utmost importance to recognize that the story would seldom have had an unknowing, naive audience. Not only would the typical listener have heard the particular tale many times, . . . but the listener would have been familiar with the same formulas, attitudes, motifs, numbers, sequences, colors, characters, and other expressive narrative features from innumerable other tales.

. . . Thus, while the modern intellectual *reader* of a myth text might certainly register it as a linear story, the native *auditor* could hardly avoid applying the "second half" of the well-known story to the "first half" while the story was being told. . . . (1996, 252)

All of this offers profound implications not only for aesthetics and appreciation, but for theory and practice of editing and translating.

To give readers in translation an even break, we have introduced nouns and gender where they are implied or understood in Tlingit. This is a Raven

story, but the explicit noun *Raven* does not appear until line 59. In fact, *Raven* appears only three times in the 215 lines of the story: lines 59 and 183 directly address Raven, and line 90 refers to Raven. This stylistic preference for pronouns over nouns is also characteristic of Koyukon Athabaskan and perhaps other Native American traditions. How do you know it's a Raven story? You just do. We should note that knowledge of this cultural context is very weak among younger generations of ethnic Tlingits. To make the translation more accessible and less alien and bewildering, we have inserted nouns sparingly. There is no intended confusion in the original, so we feel it is legitimate to help out readers in translation.

Line 3, *What was it she said to him?* Two things are noteworthy in this line. First, as noted above, Tlingit pronouns are not marked for gender. They are, however, marked for other indications not marked in English, such as inclusive or exclusive, aforementioned or new character, and the like. Tlingit listeners will know who is talking to whom. Second, line 3 has the first appearance of a feature characteristic of the oral style of Emma Marks and many other Tlingit storytellers. Throughout the story, readers will notice the adverb "maybe" or rhetorical phrases such as "what was" this or that. These translate Tlingit words such as *kwshí* and *gúwé*. Such stylistic distancing from the material is typical of much Native American storytelling and should not be taken as literal uncertainty or a sign of incompetence or lack of knowledge. It is more of a "ritual uncertainty." In Alaska, the Eskimo languages have a bound morpheme that expresses this concept, and Athabaskan languages use words similar to Tlingit, expressing "I guess" or "they say." Such locutions perform a delicate twofold function, simultaneously distancing the storyteller from and bonding him or her to the story and the tradition behind it. Such phrases make it clear that the storyteller is not presenting him or herself as a "know-it-all." He or she is saying, "This is not mine; I didn't just make it up." At the same time, such phrases also establish the storyteller as a receiver of material from a reliable source and as a transmitter of the canonical tradition. Such phrases are at the same time a combination of self-effacement of the individual and reaffirmation of the group tradition, a cultural value.

Barre Toelken explains this well in his introduction to a Navajo Coyote story.

Phrases like "they say" or "it is said," which may seem redundant in English, are a way for the Navajo narrator to remind his audience constantly that the story and its details derive not from his own cleverness but from the Navajo culture, from the shared heritage of family, neighbors, and friends. Rather than giving the effect of a fresh entertainment by a gifted storyteller, this stylistic element functions as proverbs do for Euro-Americans, producing an aura of cultural authority: I'm not telling you this; the whole culture is

telling you. Moreover, [the storyteller] reduces the potential egotism of his position by making it clear that there are details he does not himself understand. (1994, 592–3)

We think that such phrases may also function to draw listeners and readers deeper into the story by inviting them to use their imagination in considering the events of the story more fully.

Line 4. *She didn't think he could do it.* We join the Raven cycle in progress, with Raven's motives already set in motion, although the storyteller remains vague on the specifics. Raven, always hungry and given to gluttony, is presumably lusting after the culinary goodies that abound on the beaches in Southeast Alaska when the tide goes out. But the woman who controls the tides is not about to let the tide out for him. Typical of other characters in the origin stories in the Raven cycle, she is hoarding a natural resource that Raven will eventually use trickery to obtain for himself—and, coincidentally, for the rest of the animals (and people). We gather that at some point she refused Raven's request and challenged him to get a sea urchin by himself, the hard way, by walking down to the bottom of the sea on kelp.

Lines 6 and 7. *sea urchin . . . bull kelp.* Sea urchin and bull kelp are both commonly found on beaches in Tlingit country, especially on the outer coast. Bull kelp (*Nereocystis luetkeana*), also called ribbon kelp, is so named because the main stem of the plant, when washed up on the beach, resembles a bullwhip. Kelp are the largest species of seaweed. The long stem, called a stipe, is anchored at the bottom of the sea and with a hollow bulb near the top, from which bunches of blades or ribbons grow upward. This species of kelp grows more than a foot a day in the summer months, and the stem may reach over a hundred feet in length. The Latin name for the plant seems to be in honor of the Russian scientist Fedor (Friedrich) Litke (Luetke), whose reports from his 1826–1829 voyage around the world on the *Seniavin* laid the foundation for oceanographic studies in Russia (Aleksiev 1996, 141–42). His assignment was to describe the coasts in detail, and subsequent expedition reports include prolific information on algae. He visited Sitka and commented in his writings on the character of Raven. He also described bull kelp in detail, noting that Postels and Rupricht, naturalists on the expedition, “called it *Nereocystis Luetkeana*” and that the Russian colonists called it “sea otter cabbage” because of its popularity as a resting spot for sea otters (Litke 1987, 152). Kelp beds are the habitat of sea urchins and sea otters. Bull kelp is the preferred food of the sea urchin, and sea urchins are the preferred food of sea otters.

Sea urchins (*Strongylocentrotus*) are echinodermata, with spines for protection and tube feet for locomotion. They may reach three to five inches across. Three varieties are found in Alaska: red (*franciscanus*), green (*drobachiensis*), and purple (*purpuratus*). The red are the largest and inhabit

the deepest pools, downward from the low-tide line. Sea urchin caviar is favored as a delicacy by humans as well as by Raven. The technical, standard reference is Ricketts et al., *Between Pacific Tides* (1994, 98, 238, 286, 446). For a popular habitat-focused study, see O'Clair et al., *The Nature of Southeast Alaska* (1997, 63, 86, 151). A popular booklet with the perspective of eating is Furlong and Pill, *Edible? Incredible!* (1973, 38–39, 54–55).

Line 16. *Maybe it was Raven who got / the sea urchin.* Raven kept bobbing back up. In some accounts, he tricks mink into diving for him. The main point is that he now has a sea urchin, eats it, and keeps the shell to carry out the events of the next episode. The sea urchin is an important image in the story.

Line 23. *She's sleeping close to the fire.* The most difficult problem we face in translating Tlingit texts is that Tlingit has grammatical aspects with no equivalent in English, and the time focus of English is not always equivalent or relevant in Tlingit. Information that is important in Tlingit cannot always be matched in English, and the English choices often enforce categories of thought not present in the Tlingit original. Another feature of English style affects humor. Present tense is often used in English for telling jokes and funny stories. "So he goes up to him and says," and so on. We have caught ourselves and our colleagues telling Raven stories in this way. The question arose: Why not translate Raven stories into the English present, precisely to convey the meta-message that this is a funny story: "He went up to him and said" is more formal or neutral. Likewise, *then* seems a more formal conjunction than *so*.

As an experiment here, we have translated lines 1–22 using English past forms. These lines serve as background or prelude to the central episode in the first part of the narrative. At line 23, Raven is ready for the main action, and we switch to English present, even where Tlingit may have a perfective or other form. In the present story, the Tlingit occasional ("he would say") is common. In English this is awkward, because it implies action over a period of time rather than ongoing action at one moment. We hope that our choice will convey the humor, action, immediacy, and audience involvement that this device creates in colloquial narratives in English. We are still analyzing the range of tense and aspect used in Raven stories when told in Tlingit and English, and we hope to work out a consistent match eventually.

Lines 24–42. Fire images. The imagery in this section of the story relies on Tlingit styles of building a fire. The fire is built up against a log, which is called side-log (*awan.ádi*) in Tlingit. If you want warmth, you can sleep on the side without the log. If you want a heat barrier, you can sleep with the log between you and the fire. Sometimes two logs are employed, a larger and a smaller, with the fire in between. Contrast is implied to the Anglo, "Boy-Scout approved" method of fire building using a tipi-type arrangement of sticks

and without a backup log and explicit to a conventional fireplace with the barrier at the back. The grammar of lines 40–42 is ambiguous, but we understand that she is comfortable beyond the heat shield and Raven removes it to increase the heat and force her to move.

Line 36. In Tlingit, the elements of the personal name are reversed here.

Line 46. *He's already needling her.* Raven is trying psychological warfare and minor annoyances to make her angry enough to move, thereby releasing the tide. He starts taunting her and making her uncomfortable. Here he is verbally “rubbing it in.”

Lines 56–58. Bouncing and rubbing the sea urchin. Here he is literally rubbing it in. Sea urchins have a spiny shell. First Raven pricks and stabs her, then rubs the spines in. These lines raise a technical problem in translating. English syntax forces the verb into the same line with the repetition of “sea urchin,” creating an extra-long line, in contrast to the rhythm of the original. We decided to split the Tlingit repetition over two lines in English.

Line 59. *“The tide might go down, Raven.”* This is a danger warning—stop it or else. Tide Woman’s language suggests that she doesn’t know what Raven is up to, that Raven wants the tide to run out. But this is precisely what Raven has in mind. His plan is to cause her such psychological and physical discomfort that she can no longer bear to sit on the tide. If her bottom is sore, she won’t be able to sit on the tide, and if she moves or stands up the tide will go out, exactly what Raven wants and what she doesn’t want.

Line 63. *the one he sent out.* In all published versions of the story, Raven sends someone down to the tideline to report on how far out the tide has gone. In Swanton’s Sitka version from 1904, told by Deikeenaak’w, he sends Mink to report (Swanton [1909] 1970, 9–10). In Swanton’s Wrangell version, told by Katishan, an Eagle checks the tide (120–21). However, variation is to be expected and savored, rather than suspected. Barre Toelken emphasizes that variation is not synonymous with error but is the very life of folklore (1996, 43–44).

Line 72. *Raven is satisfied.* He’s satisfied with the low tide. At this point we have inserted a space in the text to separate the next episode into which the narrative flows. In some other versions of the cycle, the two episodes are more widely separated and the second is sometimes called “Raven Tricks his Partner.” The two versions collected by Swanton in 1904 differ in their placement of the episodes in relation to each other and to the overall sequence of events in the cycle. Boas suggested that there is no fixed order of episodes in the Raven cycle ([1916] 1970, 571). Sequences of stories tend to cluster together as subgroups or sub-sequences. Along with the classic study by Boas, Goodchild’s *Raven Tales: Traditional Stories of Native Peoples* (1991) offers a comprehensive survey of Raven stories. We will have more to say about the Raven canon and the order of episodes in our forthcoming volume. As to

content, two kinds of stories—origin stories and trickster stories—overlap in the Tlingit Raven cycle. In the origin stories, Raven’s trickery coincidentally benefits others. He doesn’t really create much (if anything) new, but he transforms the world from what it was to the form in which we know it today—here, by giving us the changes of the tide. In the trickster episodes, Raven’s gluttony benefits no one but himself (as when he steals the grease).

The central cultural point of the story is that when the tide goes out, the intertidal zone is rich in food. There is a Tlingit saying, “When the tide goes out, the table is set.” People harvest seafood exposed on rocks or trapped in shallow tide pools. In some versions of this story, the entire ocean is virtually drained and all kinds of fish and whales are explicitly mentioned as being stranded. One popular folk etymology of the ethnonym *Tlingit* is *Lein-git*, Tide People. There are two high and two low tides each day, measured in feet and varying rhythmically in extremes. “Minus-tides” are especially valued because the tide ebbs below the average low tide line, exposing beach not normally accessible.

Line 73. *Then*. The Tlingit is *aatx*, meaning “from this time,” “from this place,” or “from there.” We translate it as “then.”

Line 73. *rendering grease*. They are turning animal fat into oil, popularly called grease. Today, the most popular kinds are hooligan oil (from the eulachon, a smelt-like fish) and seal oil. The traditional trade route to the interior along which the coastal people traded for inland products was called the grease trail. The most common modern method is frying the fat and straining off the oil.

Line 75. *his nephew*. In Swanton’s Wrangell version, Raven is the nephew of *Xashak’ák’w* (Swanton, 120–21).

Line 76. *What sort of being was his nephew?* In the Raven cycle, Raven has different relatives of various species. For example, he steals fresh water from his brother-in-law, Petrel. Regardless of species, Raven is always manipulating the kinship system and always deceiving and betraying those whom he should nurture, protect, and support. Tlingit social structure is matrilineal. A person marries into the opposite moiety, and children follow the mother’s line. Children are therefore traditionally not of the same clan and moiety as their father. Accordingly, men receive training and inherit from their mother’s brother. In this episode, Raven is violating the traditional channel of tutoring, training, and cultural transmission, which is from maternal uncle to nephew.

Lines 78–79. Naming. We take this as alluding to a covenant on naming.

Lines 85–88. Putting up food. Fat is rendered into oil which is stored in boxes. Bentwood boxes are a prominent feature of northwest coast material culture. Wood is scored and steamed so that three corners can be made from one long piece, and the two ends joined to form a square. In one of the best-known episodes of the Raven cycle, the Rich Man at the Head of the

Nass River is hoarding the sun, moon, stars, and daylight in bentwood boxes in his house.

Line 90. Stringing cod. The sequence of verb prefixes indicates stringing small, roundish objects through the mouth. The line passes through the gills and mouth and on to the next fish. Smaller fish such as hooligan are strung in this manner and hung in the smokehouse.

Lines 91–92. *grease / into their stomachs*. In traditional technology before the introduction of bottles, oil was stored in fish stomachs this way.

Line 105. *studies*. In Tlingit, *wudzidádi*, “he studied.” The verb is interesting, because it is a loan word from English. Once borrowed, it was divided according to the rules of Tlingit morphology. *Study* is perceived in Tlingit as s-tudy; the verb stem is *-dádi*, from “-tudy,” and the *s* is treated as the Tlingit s-classifier. Classifiers are characteristic of Tlingit, Eyak, and the Athabaskan languages (including Navajo). Tlingit has four basic classifiers, each of which has four predictable grammatical forms, depending on what is being said. The *d* form of the s-classifier is *dzi*. In *wu-dzi-dádi*, *wu-* indicates the perfective, *dzi* is the appropriate form of the classifier, and *-dádi* is the verb stem.

Lines 110–25. The entire dream sequence is Raven’s elaborate plot to trick his nephew by creating a plausible scenario for getting him out of the house. His boldfaced lie in line 124, “My dreams never lie,” is amusing in light of his true personality. The Tlingit word for “liar” is *k’a-li-yéil*, the stem of which is “raven” (*yéil*); literally, “to raven somebody.”

Line 127. *getting ready*. Raven is up to something. He’s setting his nephew up.

Lines 130–34. Dirt, cones. Raven is arranging the cones and hunks of dirt as if they were warriors attacking. He would be using cones of Sitka spruce and hemlock. Scale and perspective are interesting. In Raven stories, our image is always shifting between that of bird and human. If the nephew is a small bird or animal, the cones would appear as a formidable enemy in terms of size.

Lines 137–45. Through use of dialog and shifting of grammatical subject pronouns, the storyteller is able to begin with Raven’s instructions and “fade into” the actual fake attack.

Lines 143–44 are directed at the imaginary enemy.

Line 163. *bone . . . arrow*. The verb in Tlingit is to shoot with bow and arrow, to hit with an arrow. The image is puzzling. Even the storyteller herself asks rhetorically in line 165, “What’s he talking about?” In lines 177–78 the fieldworker confirms her understanding of the image, and a listener, Willie Marks, husband of Emma and father of Nora, enters the discussion. Basically, Raven is trying to make it sound as though he’s doing heroic battle with the enemy invaders inside the house by shouting and making noise. The Tlingit is literally “bone-hole.” We have loosened the translation here.

Lines 166–68. *tongs . . . cooking . . . stones*. Prior to the arrival of metal pots on the Northwest coast, people boiled things in water-tight baskets made of grass, cedar bark, or spruce roots. Rocks were heated on a fire and dropped into the basket using tongs that could be several feet long. Raven is using the tongs for his sound effects, making it sound as though he's hitting or cracking bones with his arrows.

Lines 183–85. *shitty Raven*. The storyteller is a pious, church-going woman. She emphasizes that she's not making this up or saying it on her own, but these are the very same words originally used to insult Raven. Insulting people, animals, and natural features and forces is of course a major breach of protocol in Tlingit. So the storyteller is distancing herself in this regard as well. As for the characters, Raven is always violating the norms of the society, and the nephew does so here, too, through insult and retaliation.

Lines 195–96. *nephew*. As noted above, Raven is exploiting and violating the traditional channels of tutoring and transmission of knowledge and tradition from uncle to nephew. The passage is a parody of tradition. As always, Raven is a negative example. This scene is reminiscent of trickster stories around the world, for example, Br'er Rabbit and the briar patch.

Lines 201–4. Rope discussion. Willie Marks suggests that the rope might have been made of red cedar bark. Emma continues her narrative, suggesting fern or grass. In traditional technology, rope was made of cedar bark, grass or straw, fern, or sinew. The term Emma uses is *x'aa lukaléet'*, “ferns that grow on a point.”

Lines 212–13. Raven flies away with his “caw.” This ending is typical for an episode in the Raven cycle. Raven always survives the cliff-hanger and flies on or walks further down the beach to his next exploit. The episodes typically begin *in medias res* and are definitely “to be continued.”

Lines 214–15. *Maybe that's how it happened. / I guess that's all I know about it*. This is a conventional ending in Tlingit and other Native American storytelling traditions. Such endings should not be taken literally as suggesting incompetence or a lack of knowledge. This usually is, in fact, all there is to the story; the ending is formulaic. Melville Jacobs, an early collector and scholar of Northwest coast oral literature to whom all of us owe an enduring debt, seems to have taken his storyteller, Mrs. Howard, literally. Puzzled, Jacobs notes that her stories are perfect in every other way (1959, 223). Dell Hymes, revisiting the Jacobs texts, has two versions of a story that ends “Now I remember only that far.” He discusses at length what he calls “definite indefiniteness” (1981, 303–4, 333–34), especially as a stylistic convention for closing a narrative (1981, 279, 312, 315, 322ff, esp. 325–26). Ron and Suzanne Scollon note this as a closing formula in Chipewyan and Cree. It appears in English, even if the rest of the story is in Chipewyan or Cree, as a regular frame and formula for closing a narrative performance, not the narrative itself, which ends with the Chipewyan or Cree: “Just to there I tell



it” (1979, 25–26; Ronald Scollon, personal communication, 3 July 1997). Such endings are also found in Haida stories from Alaska; Charles Natkong and Richard Dauenhauer are at work on a volume of these stories.

### Note

We are pleased and honored to contribute to this volume for Barre Toelken. We are just two of the many folklorists who have been influenced by this person and his work, and we are happy for the opportunity to express our gratitude. As friend, colleague, mentor, and advocate, but probably most of all as teacher and inspiration at long distance for over thirty years, Barre has influenced the shape and direction of our work. We especially note his *Dynamics of Folklore* (1979, 2nd ed. 1996) and the ongoing lessons of the Yellowman essays (1969, 1976, 1982b, 1987, 1994). Without Barre’s work, ours wouldn’t be what it is. In lieu of an essay or article, our contribution here is a selection from our work in progress, a set of Tlingit text, English translation, and annotations for a book of Tlingit Raven stories forthcoming as volume 4 of our University of Washington Press series, *Classics of Tlingit Oral Literature*.