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SIMON ORTIZ
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This Is Our Victory

Fightin': New and Selected Stories by Simon Ortiz. Thunder's Mouth Press, 1983. pp. 112. \$6.95 paper.

There is a quality of voice, a tone in all of the writings of Simon Ortiz which is hard to describe. Perhaps it is best to turn, instead, to his own words, such as these from his essay "Song, Poetry, and Language--Expression and Perception":

In the minds and views of the people who are singing it at my home or in a Navajo religious ceremony, or for whatever purpose the song is meant and used--whether it be for prayer, a dancing event, or as part of a story--the song does not break down. It is part of the complete voice of the person. Language, when it is regarded not only as expression but is realized as experience as well, works in and is of that manner. Language is perception of experience as well as expression.

There are nineteen short stories in Fightin', some of them very short indeed, little more than what might be called sketches or mood pieces because of their length and their seemingly loose structure. One story, in fact, is even titled "Loose." It would be easy for someone looking for a conventional "short story," to dismiss them. One might say that little or nothing seems to happen. In "Crossing" and "Men on the Moon," there is more

dramatic action in the dreams of the protagonists than in "real life." In "The Panther Waits," an old drunken Indian man shows a crumpled piece of paper to two brothers. In "3 Women," two sisters go to a laundromat. In the story with the most potential for dramatic action, "Kaiser and the War," an Indian man who speaks little English runs away from the draft-board and the Sheriff pursues him to the reservation. But even here it seems that not much occurs. The Sheriff never finds him; the man finally decides to join the Army, but is sent to prison instead when he surrenders. After years in prison he comes home wearing a gray suit given him by the prison. In other stories the "plot" can be, it seems, summed up in a few words. A father and a son bring home a kitten, a little girl looks at a goat which has a rope tied around its neck too tightly, two migrant workers go into town for a drink and one of them hears the wife of the Indian workers singing. In several of the pieces the protagonist is clearly Ortiz himself, and he describes in very simple and direct terms a brief conversation with another Indian in a bar, trying to write a story with a hangover, doing a reading at Glide Church, taking part in an Indian Culture day at a university. From these plot summaries, it may seem that these stories must be failures, dull and uninteresting to read.

Yet that is not so. Somehow, even in the shortest of these song/stories (for this is what I believe them to be, stories which have the structure, the intent, the magic of song), something trembles at the edges of our perceptions. There is power here.

But where does that power come from? To understand this we must turn back to those words quoted at the beginning of this essay, for each of the stories in Fightin' operates as a whole, as a vision which, when examined more closely, opens into a world, rather than delimiting. True, the events I have listed may lack drama in summary, but when experienced--as the stories help us to experience them--they reverberate, carry the reader into their reality.

Too, we must look at Ortiz's stories not in terms of classical Western literary tradition, but in another way, in, for lack of a better term, an "Indian" way. We must look at them as we would look at traditional Native American narratives, both in terms of their intent and the "time" which the story creates.

A word about "time." Though European and American writers are always conscious of time--winged chariots drawing nigh, et cetera--and talk about time as if it were a real thing, something which every living being and all of the physical world proceed along, like a train moving down a track toward a certain destination, there is no word for time and no conception of time as such in most Native American languages. Benjamin Lee Whorf's essay "An American Indian Model of the Universe" points out that one of the peoples of the southwest, (whose life-ways are quite similar to Ortiz's own Acoma people) the Hopi, do not see the world in terms of static three-dimensional space and kinetic one-dimensional uniformly moving and swiftly flowing time (breaking the realm of time neatly into past, present and

future). They see the universe in terms of two grand cosmic forms which might be roughly called (for there are no adequate words in English) "manifested and manifesting" or "objective and subjective." Those things which are coming into being, which might be seen as part of the present and an expectation of the future, both already exist and are affected by the things in the mind, "or, as the Hopi would prefer to say, in the HEART." Further, it isn't just the heart/mind of human beings, but the heart/mind of plants, animals and things.

In such a universe the events which have occurred (the "past") may be very close, even if they are a thousand "years" in the "past." They may, for some, still be going on today. (In Pumpkin Seed Point, Frank Waters' story about the period when he was working on The Book of the Hopi, White Deer Fredericks while visiting the site of a massacre of his people in 1700 caused by the Catholic "Slave Church" and its interferences in their lives, reacts, to the surprise of a visiting professor who happens to be Catholic, as if it had just occurred. "You people have set foot in Awatovi for the last time!" White Bear said. "You know what you did!")

In this Native American universe, if we may call it that, the subjective and objective worlds are not separate. In this universe dreams are as real as waking experience and prayers/song/stories can produce tangible effects in the physical world. If we look at a story such as "The Panther Waits" with this in mind, then its four-and-a-half pages begin to expand and encompass something vast and awesome. Let's look closer at that story, for

it is a fine example of the points I was just making and also exemplary of Simon Ortiz's ability to capture the rhythms of everyday speech among Indian people. Three Indian guys are talking and drinking, but if we listen closely from the very first words, if we hear not just the separate sentences but the heart-beat of the story, we begin very soon to realize that there is more than that. Listen:

Tahlequah is cold in November, and Sam, Billy, and Jay sat under a lusterless sun. They had been drinking all afternoon. Beer. Wine. They were talking, trying not to feel the cold.

Maybe we need another vision, Billy.

Ah, shoot, vision. I had one last night and it was pretty awful--got run over by a train and somebody stole my wife.

He he he. Have another beer Billy.

Maybe though, you know. It might work.

Forget it, huh. Cold beer vision, that's what I like.

No, Sam. I mean I've been thinking about that old man that used to be drunk all the time.

With tremendous economy, Ortiz has created a scene which is painfully familiar, part of the everyday experience of far too many Native American people. The response to hopelessness and four centuries of massacre, land grabbing, and racism is all too often to go on that kind of vision quest, one where the visions are seen through the bottom of an empty bottle. By the

things they have said in these first few lines we already know something about Billy, whose "vision" of being run over by a train and losing his wife is poignantly possible, has happened/is happening/will happen again; Sam, whose laughing responses are an even stronger evasion of it all; and Jay, who makes that first, piercing statement. "Maybe we need another vision Billy." So, if we have listened closely thus far, we know that his reference to the "old man that used to be drunk all the time" is the beginning of the story.

You know, even a joke can be used in the old-time story-telling way. In fact, a great many of the great story-tellers of today spend much of their time telling jokes. Stories, "way back then," served more than one purpose. A good story would entertain, entrance, involve the listener. But a good story also (and most importantly) carried a message--even more than carried it, made that message real to the hearer, made it a part of the hearer's life, made it possible just as a prayer makes something possible. I can't think of a single time when I've been told a joke by an Indian that that joke hasn't fitted into what was going on at the time. More than once, in fact, after being told one of those jokes I realize that I've been--gently, with humor and even concern--"put in my place," been made to think about the things I was doing or was trying to do. I've learned a lot from jokes and off-hand stories which seem at first to be out of context, but seldom are. It is that way with Jay's story, a story which Billy understands and which I think--perhaps because of his attempts to evade it--Sam also understands from his heart.

The old man who was drunk all the time pulls out a paper to show to Jay and his brother Taft, who drank too much but "always liked to talk to old guys." He does this after looking at the two brothers and seeing them "like he was seeing kind of far off and almost like we were strangers to him..."

It was just a old piece of paper, sort of brown and folded, soft lookin like he'd carried it a long time. Listen, he said and then he didn't say anything. And we said again, We gotta go soon, Harry.

Wait. Wait, he said, you just wait. It's time to be serious and sure.

The old man is more than a drunk, just as Ortiz's story is more than just another anecdote about Indian guys getting drunk--seeking visions that begin and end in alcohol. The story is about something older, a link to more powerful, harder visions like those seen by Tecumseh (whose name means "The Panther in Waiting") and his brother in the early 1800's when they tried to unite all Indian people against the onrush of destructive western civilization. The message of the story is that such visions are still available, carried at all times by the most unlikely people. Further, such visions are more needed now than before. And the story ends with Billy having heard and understood, just as Taft, now dead in a car wreck, understood and could see the lines on that crumpled paper which charted the travels of Tecumseh and his brother to many Indian

nations, to: "Alabama, Canada, Kentucky, Georgia, all those states now on the map." Billy repeats Jay's first words, "Maybe we need another vision."

Fightin' is an important book. It should establish Simon Ortiz even more firmly as the most accomplished Native American voice in contemporary literature. Such stories as "The Panther Waits," "Kaiser and the War," "Men on the Moon" (which I first heard Simon read in 1973 in Steven's Point, Wisconsin) and "Woman Singing" are truly minor classics which may be studied in future years as examples of a writer with a uniquely "Indian" voice managing to bring into western literature an eloquently realized worldview previously ignored or misunderstood. This is not to downgrade the considerable accomplishments of such significant writers as Momaday or Welch or Silko, but I feel that Ortiz's voice is less influenced by western literary tradition than theirs, his structures less familiar to a western reader. What is wonderful about them, is that a western reader can gain so much from an Ortiz story or poem while that story or poem is also immediately recognized by a Native American reader as being of them as well as for them.

Ortiz does not limit himself to stories written about Indian people or told from an Indian perspective. He is interested in the common human connections to earth and each other. In many ways, in fact, Ortiz is like Richard Wright, an ethnic writer whose vision is grounded in the folkways of his people but whose political perspective reaches far beyond the barriers of race and culture. Like Wright, he sees the link between the poor and the

minorities. Unlike Wright, however, he does not find the answer in political equality or a new social system. The changes that Ortiz's stories want to work are much deeper than that, much more dangerous and revolutionary, for they aim not just at the body and the mind, but also the soul and the heart. "Hiding, West of Here," for example, is in the voice of a white miner who observes by accident two Indian men conducting a ceremony on a mountain. We believe in the voice and the eyes of that man and the connection he feels to the Indians is neither forced nor romantic--only necessary.

"To Change in a Good Way" helps us to see that necessity, that possibility of relationships which heal rather than more deeply wound. It brings white and Indian characters together in a way I've seldom seen. It presents a situation both more common and more complex than the white versus red conflict played upon by politicians of both races and in thousands of movies and novels. Bill and Ida are two ordinary middle-class people from Oklahoma working for Kerr McGee out west. They are not Indians. Pete and Mary, their two best friends, are Laguna. When Bill's brother Slick is killed in Viet Nam Pete and Ida come to see them:

Peter took a white corn ear and the cornhusk bundle out of the paper bag he carried and showed them to Bill. He said, This is just a corn, Bill, Indian corn. The people call it Kasheshi. Just a dried ear of corn. You can take it with you or you can keep it here. You can plant it. It's to know that life will keep on. Just

like Slick will be planted again. He'll be like that, like seed planted, like corn seed, the Indian corn. But you and Ida, your life will grow on...You and Ida are not Indian, but it doesn't make any difference. It's for all of us, this kind of way, with corn and this, Bill. You take these sticks and feathers and you put them someplace that you think might be good, maybe to change life in a good way, that you think Slick would be helping us with.

After Pete and Mary leave, Bill holds the corn and the husk bundle in his hand, thinking about it all. When they come back from the funeral and he goes back to work in the mines, he takes the husk bundle with him and places it behind a slab of rock deep in the mine.

Well, Bill thought, Slick, you was a good boy, kind of wild, but good. I got this here Indian thing, feathers and sticks, and at home we got the corn by your picture...Well, I'll leave this here by the rock. Pete said he didn't know all the right Indian things to do anymore but somehow I believe they're more righter than we've ever been led to believe. And now I'm trying too.

So you can help us now, Slick. We need it, all the help we can get, even if it's just so much as holding up the roof of this mine that the damn company don't put enough bolts and timbers in, Bill said. Then he stepped back and left.

Fightin' is not a perfect book. I'm sorry, for one, that it isn't larger, that it doesn't include other of Ortiz' past stories that seem to belong with these. I'm also, on the other hand, sorry not to see more new work, for a number of these have already appeared in other books. As a collection of "New and Selected Stories" I would have liked the selection to have been broader, the new work more predominant. A writer of Ortiz's stature deserves more space. Still, I have not read another book of short stories which I've liked better, or been more moved by in recent years. And we can look forward to future collections of work by a writer who continues to grow, continues to struggle, a struggle that isn't easy. As Ortiz says on the dedication page:

We are faced with small and large battles, some we know are battles, some we are unsure about. But we struggle in every case. Only by fightin', often fightin' back, do we maintain a necessary vital force; this is our victory.

And as song and story, as reminder and lesson, Fightin' is just that--our victory.

Joseph Bruchac
Greenfield Center

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From Sand Creek by Simon J. Ortiz. NY:
Thunder's Mouth Press. 1981. 93 pp. \$4.95.

In his 1976 collection, Going for the Rain, Simon Ortiz described his odyssey across America in search of native symbols and messages: "Sometimes the travelling is hazardous; sometimes [a man] finds meaning and sometimes he is destitute. But he continues; he must. His travelling is a prayer as well, and he must keep on." This ongoing search has been extended to the byroads of history in from Sand Creek (1981), which examines the physical, mental, and moral conditions faced by some Native American veterans of the Vietnam war, at a governmental hospital in Fort Lyons, Colorado, in 1974. Ironically, the institution is quite near the grassy landscape of Sand Creek, where Coloradan troops under the command of the mad Colonel Chivington systematically massacred and mutilated one-hundred-thirty-three peaceful Cheyennes and Arapahoes (mainly women and children) in 1864. Ortiz uses this conjunction of history to draw lines of connection and commemoration between two different yet similar war time atrocities, Sand Creek and My Lai, and the larger sequences of events they continue to represent. The poems, however, are also a tribute to a culture that refuses to die. The "warriors" languishing in the dayroom are after all survivors, and they represent the same culture that the Nineteenth-century troops thought they had destroyed.

The book features an alternating set of utterances: left hand pages present brief, mostly prose statements of facts relevant to the twin narratives, while the poetic developments of these core images expand on the right hand pages. Since there are no titles, one could read the entire book of verse as one long

poem, set off by the counterpoint of the prose. This system of alternations between poetry and prose, constriction and expansion of voice, 1864 and 1974, creates a diastolic rhythm, one perfectly suited to the overarching image of the book's concluding metaphor, "this heart/which is our America."

Despite the despair that inevitably threads its way through the parallel stories, the book opens and closes with affirmative, hopeful statements. By beginning, "This America/has been a burden/of steel and mad death,/but, look now, there are flowers/and new grass/and a spring wind/rising from Sand Creek," Ortiz accomplishes several purposes: first, the dual referent "This America" points both to the scene of 1864 and to the present day, as does the "burden of steel" (sabres and rifles then, skyscrapers and death-dealing technology now), and "mad death" encompasses both Sand Creek and My Lai, Chivington and Calley. More importantly, however, the reader is assured from the outset that this will be more than an indictment in the spirit of the Jeremiad, it will be prophecy as well, of the restoration of the Covenant between God and man, and man and nature. Thus the "Spring wind," which on the last page reappears as a dream that "shall have a name," "wealthy with love/and compassion" that has risen "in this heart/which is our America."

Inside this frame of hope, however, is a twin image of horror, death, despair and apathy. The men in the wards are triple pariahs: Indians, Viet Vets, and disabled. Toby, one of the sickest, "looks after his shadow" for proof that he exists. Like many characters

in this drama, he is mute, a frequent motif in recent Native American fiction: "His frozen tongue/is frantic/with prayer."

Ortiz moves freely between the poles of Sand Creek and the aftermath of Vietnam, reaching into the grab-bag of American history for guest appearances by Andrew Jackson, Cotton Mather, Kit Carson, and Walt Whitman, in an effort to sort out the role the American Dream played in both these sorry scenarios. He reminds us of the sod houses erected by the original settlers, dwellings for the dream as well; windowless, low in stature, they signified the moral blindness that accompanied the pioneers' "fierce" determination to follow the "axioms and the dream called America./Cotton Mather was no fool." Thus the presence of a vision blocks real vision, leading first to those like Andrew Jackson, "ruminating, savoring/fresh Indian blood," and then to less, but no less terrible avatars of destruction, who have now been largely forgotten.

The 1864 massacre occurred, ironically, during Cheyenne Autumn, which is "rich with smell, the earth settling into a harvest, and one could feel like a deep story." Perverse-ly, people are harvested; one last magpie is seen nodding "an ancient/bitter nod." He seems determined "to freeze," and thereby is destined to join the vanishing buffalo, which are used by Ortiz as a metaphor for the tribes, for "the flashing steel came upon [the] bone and flesh" in both cases. By drawing and extending this connection, Ortiz reminds us that this is no merely local pattern, but one that has characterized the rapacity of Western man everywhere, for "Buffalo ghosts/hurdle away" in Europe, Africa, and Asia too.

As Ortiz begins to plumb the dimensions of historical catastrophe, he equates his newfound knowledge with the unwelcomed/inappropriate change of summer into winter. The "abrupt" winter sun and his attendant "clumsy" clouds "lurch," "blunt and sad;" throughout the narrative the buffeted, thinning clouds are compared to the "Indians being driven West/being driven into extinction;" the clouds are also "Ghosts, Indian-like/still driven/towards Oklahoma."

The ghost-like survivors of Vietnam, however, find comfort and strength in the land. Sitting on a ridge, two of them sing as they look out on the "endless plains and low hills ...to the west of them rose the Rockies. Land and sky; flowers and generations" (they have flowers in their hats, as opposed to Chivington's 1864 troops, who we now know decorated their cavalry bonnets with the sexual organs of murdered Indian women). These modern-day warriors sing as they look out, in tones curiously like crying, for they "did not know now/they were patriots." They are patriots in two senses; in the ordinary sense, their service to their country should have garnered praise, but hasn't; moreover, their return to the generative quality of the land makes them patriots in a truer sense, both in the Indian way and in what Ortiz hopes will become the new American way.

These quiet scenes are prelude to stringent analyses of the horrific consequences of the more traditionally "patriotic" American impulse toward expansion and mastery. "Conquest reached Nevada: a warrior chief was assassinated by the cavalry, cut into stewing pieces,

fed to other chiefs, and a treaty was signed. That'll show 'em. Ask the Paiutes." The mocking understatement of this brief sketch is made indelible by finding that it comes from actual history. Stan Hoig's The Sand Creek Massacre (1961), which no doubt provided Ortiz with much material, amply documents the horrors that the poem offers glimpses of, and also painstakingly explains the events that led up to the raid. Floods, locusts, and bad weather had devastated Coloradan settlers, and hysterical reports in the Denver papers of Indian attacks across the country had created a mood of terror and paranoia, permitting the demagogic governor, John Evans, to raise Chivington's marauding troops as a bid for more power and publicity in an election year. Ortiz understands how desperate farmers felt: "Dreams/thinned/and split/can only produce/these bones."

If only they had found comfort in the land instead of in killing. Again and again, Ortiz punctuates his narrative with hymns of praise for the earth and the elements, explaining the power of the corn, which is both "ancient and young; it is the seed, food and symbol of a constantly developing and revolutionary people." Men must develop along with the corn: "Whisper for rain./Don't fret./Warriors will keep alive in the blood." The settlers were blind to this power, however, for "Violence is even/beautiful," so much so that "A senator/did not need to hawk/Biblical phrases," as was the case with the Vietnamese war; no, for the settlers of the Nineteenth-century, "It was/all ordained and certain." Indeed, written documents of the time are full of statements like a Major Downing's, who said that the skirmishes

between Indians and U.S. troops preceding the massacre were the start of a war "which must result in exterminating them [the Indians]."

Modern sensibilities are more relaxed; the maimed Viet Vets are permitted to go into the town of La Junta. They are not dangerous anymore, and the townspeople know it; besides, the hospital staff have prudently sedated the men via "little paper cups/so full of knowledge." Still, the Vets are marked by violence, so much so that the town's young toughs leave them alone: "We are glazed/with war./They can smell the sour/and the glisten/of our sweat." These walking wounded have more in common with the heirs of the settlers than one might think, for the pioneers and their children became

bitter
Wasted.
Spots appeared on their lungs.
Marrow dried
in their bones.
They ranted
Pointless utterances.
Truth did not speak for them.
It is a wonder
they even made it to California.
But of course,
they did,
and they named it success.
Conquest.
Destiny.
Frontiers ended for them
and a dread settled upon them
and became remorseless
nameless
namelessness.

Later, we find that because the settlers' "plans" become separated from their memory, the country they cross lies "beyond memory," therefore causing them to fail to "match the land;" "star light fractured;" the original dream of America becomes distorted, "unpredictable." Moreover, as merchants, they separated the Indians from star-moored destinies, tempting them with guns and whiskey, attractions so strong that even Black Kettle (the chief who vainly raised an American flag for protection that day at Sand Creek) succumbed.

This sort of intertwining and repetitive technique is integral to the entire piece, for Ortiz is concerned with demonstrating how both Indians and Anglos lost their way through the treachery of their leaders: "Who stole the hearts and minds [a phrase we have come to identify with the Vietnamese War] of the humble hard-working folk until they too became moralistic and self-righteous: senators, bishops, presidents, missionaries, corporation presidents?"

This in turn leads to an indictment of the "Swedes, Germans,/Mennonites, Dutch,/Irish, escaping/Europe...They should have eaten/whole buffalo...They shouldn't have listened/to those strange preachers./The Congress. Cotton Mather./On their way west." Once again, Ortiz locates the poison of the American mind at the very beginning of Indian/White relationships, with Cotton Mather's typological dream of conquest and its subsequent transformation into the secular pronouncements of a greedy Congress, which set up a homestead act that was sure to turn the victimized immigrants into

predators themselves, and finally, into "complex liars. And thieves."

In a thematically linked poetic set, Ortiz describes being accused of shoplifting by a Salvation Army clerk: "I couldn't have stole anything;/my life was stolen already." This personal event parallels Kit Carson catching the Indians with his lies--Carson, who supposedly loved Indians, yet betrayed them, and killed them. The image of the Salvation Army is apt, for the policies of the U.S. government, preaching deliverance, hands the Indians its leavings, in terms of arid land and worn-out platitudes.

Ortiz occasionally pushes his margins to encompass even larger themes, saying there is a revolution going on that is "economic, political, and social. Look to the horizon and listen." Men who can't sleep in the hospital that "speaks/for Africa, Saigon, Sand Creek." A brotherhood of Imperialism's victims, a brotherhood of rebels huddles around campfires in the hills of the world, while "Mercenaries gamble/for odds" like the soldiers around the feet of the martyred Christ. In a global sense, the world's "Indians" "stalk beyond the dike/carefully measure the distance/count their bullets."

This too, however, is tempered; there are, after all, many kinds of "bullets." Nez, an inmate, confessing that he probably killed some Vietnamese, wants to vandalize the ironically named "Kit Carson Chapel" at Ft. Lyons, and become a "warrior," but is stopped by W., a Sioux, whose restraint is applauded by the narrator: W's "soft fire" is a "love that's

reasonable,/we're people, not like them." Ortiz follows this by a blast at the Western scholars, who have always built up barriers against emotion. "No wonder there is such fear of women, children, blood and anger: control them." Scholars, by leaching away anger and sensate joy, make Western man cold, systematic, and therefore capable of murder.

Visions of bubbling blood of Sand Creek develop out of the above sequence. In some amazing lines, Ortiz speculates on the psyches of the killers: "Indeed,/they must have felt/ they should get on their knees/and drink the red rare blood./drink to replenish/their own vivid loss./their helpless hands/were like sieves." Concurrently, the transformation of the victims into natural streams constitutes a denial of death: "The blood poured unto the plains, steaming like breath on winter mornings; the breath rose into the clouds and became the rain and replenishment."

Some of this vapor has coalesced into the memories of the veterans. The tunes Dusty plays on the piano before the day's movie begins (the staff's attempt to infuse white dreams) summon up tears, as he remembers the "bullets and aches" of the war. Such juxtaposed passages suggest that Chivington's victims occupy an exalted position, in their transmogrification into land, sky, clouds, then rains, and that they become manifest once again through the blood of warriors like Dusty, whose tears of grief and memory are one with the vapor of their "clouds."

Dusty and the other men, are in fact lucky; the vets play casino one night with a "numb"

World War II Vet. "The old man knew he would not win./He was as fortunate as all of us." Although the Indians have "lost" in the white man's terms, to "win" is really to lose, to be sundered away from the land and the people. Of more use are the right sort of dreams, which are "lifelines and roadways" when used properly, but when they become self-righteous, as with the pioneers of the American brass in Vietman, the dream of the dreamers "burned forests/and scarred futures./Hot steam poured/ from red frantic mouths," leading to the "slaughter" of the future.

In this sequence Ortiz firmly locates the seeds of Vietnam in the bitter harvests of American Indian massacres, and underscores it by painting a picture of the settlers' first meeting with Chief Black Kettle:

He swept his hand
all about them.
The vista of the mountains
was at his shoulder.
The rivers
run from the sky.
Stone soothes every ache.
Dirt feeds us.
Spirit is nutrition.
Like a soul, the land
was open to them, like a child's heart.
There is no paradise,
but it would have gently and willingly
and lovingly given them food and air...
If they had only acknowledged
even their smallest conceit.

Black Kettle's white counterpart is Walt Whitman, whose example Ortiz uses at several

junctures, most tellingly in the moving preface, which resembles the preface of Leaves of Grass in intent and tone. Like Whitman, Ortiz declares his desire to share his words, to analyze himself as "an American, which is hemispheric, a U.S. citizen, which is national, and as an Indian, which is spiritual and human...it is painful and frightening, as it should be, because I, as a poet, American and Indian, want my passionate love to be shared." He also expresses his hope that all of us will learn from each other: "We must. We are all with and within each other." This stance is recalled near the end of the poem(s), when Ortiz mourns the fact that Whitman, who spoke for the pioneers, died too soon, his message forgotten; one feels that Ortiz, like Whitman, is interested in binding up the wounds of yet another "Civil" war, and like Black Kettle, is standing on a promontory, sweeping panoramas and words before us, frantic to send us back to the regeneration of the land and each other. "I know there is a world/peopled with love" he states; but then he forces us, as Whitman did during the Civil War, to "look at me and the hospital/where stricken men and broken boys/are mortared and sealed/into its defensive walls. O look, now."

How are we, Indians and the rest, to break through these walls? Through anger that is "honest and healthy," through love that causes revolutions, and afterwards, "eyes will become kind and deep, and the bones of the nation will mend..."

The last sequences of poems returns to the original assertion that America has been a burden of steel and mad death, naming welders,

scientists, and soldiers as forerunners of the "skilled butchers" of aerospace engineers and physicists: all have "cold flashing brilliance/and knives," all have "struck aside "the sacred dawn," all have "splattered blood/along their mad progress;/they claimed the earth/and stole hearts and tongues/from buffalo and men..." Their victims are personified in Billy, whose war-shattered mind has made him into a shadow; Ortiz reminds us that the men who made the war and victims like Billy are even now looking, with their "technical minds...towards Asia, Africa,/The Mideast, Brazil." Billy, meanwhile, sits in the dayroom, "beauty/in his American face/but the dread implanted/by the explosive/ in Asia denies it." As inanimate as the sofa he sits on, "He has become the American,/vengeful and a wasteland/of fortunes, for now." And yet, Billy too, Ortiz insists, still dreams, and so does America, and America is still "something precious in the memory in blood and cells which insists on story, poetry, song, life, life." The Jeremiad of from Sand Creek thus ends on a note of hope; Billy and all of us will find a name for our dream, and the dream shall "rise/in this heart/which is our America."

John Lowe
Saint Mary's College

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Simon J. Ortiz. A Good Journey. Ill. Aaron Yava. Tucson, AZ: Sun Tracks and Univ. of Ariz. Press. 1984. pp. 165. pb. \$8.95.

We can be grateful to the University of Arizona Press for republishing a book acclaimed by

scholars and critics at its first appearance in 1977 and out of print since. Now again available in a handsome volume illustrated with pen-and-ink line drawings by Aaron Yava, Simon J. Ortiz's A Good Journey is a very good journey indeed.

In the preface, Ortiz reveals that his purpose is to capture onto the page the power of storytelling, of the oral word, to transform the energy that is language into vision and knowledge "which engenders and affirms the substance and motion of one's life." His use of "engenders" is curious, for one would customarily think that the opposite would be true: that the poet's life would give rise to his poetry. However, by this paradox, Ortiz completes a circle, a sacred hoop, for it is his life that engenders the poetry and, in turn, the poetry "engenders and affirms" his life and the lives of all American Indians.

A Good Journey is autobiographical in source, but is far from limited for this quality, for the poems range geographically from Maine to California, emotionally from whimsy to outrage, linguistically from direct denotative statements to resonant symbols and metaphors. Ortiz speaks with many voices revealing the varied facets of his background and the different moods of his personality--lapsed Catholic, satiric contemporary American, tender father and lover; and most prominently--proud, humorous, tragic, angry Indian.

At times the different voices are in conflict, as expressed in the "Shuddering" section of "A San Diego Poem: January-February 1973," when the poet feels disoriented and

voiceless aboard a plane coming into Los Angeles International Airport:

Where am I? I recall the institutional
prayers
of my Catholic youth but don't dare recite
them.
The prayers of my native selfhood
have been strangled in my throat.

His best poems, however, inextricably combine all his voices, as in "How to make a good chili stew--" where the colloquial language of the mundane rises to spiritual heights as the cooking lesson becomes a lesson in living.

Though technological labyrinths created by the white man may temporarily disorient and unvoice him, the condition of fatherhood is a centering source of some of his most eloquent, most affective poems. In this series, Ortiz beautifully expresses his awe over the miracle of birth, and his deep and tender love for his children. In "Speaking" he inevitably speaks for his son, introducing him to the larger world--the trees, crickets, ants--and then wonderfully finds the tables turned when he discovers that the infant has a language of his own even more consonant with nature than his father's:

My son murmurs infant words,
speaking, small laughter
bubbles from him.
Tree leaves tremble.
They listen to this boy
speaking for me.

In "This Magical Thing" he again reverses expectations by showing his indebtedness to his

child, admitting that it is he, the father, who, in loving his son, is growing. After the depth of emotion, the tenderness and love, of these poems, it is painful to read "Places We Have Been" in which the poet leaves wife and son behind to travel with a white woman, later finding it strange that he, an Acoma Indian, is helping her father, a Pilgrim descendent, clear underbrush in Maine where there are no longer the slightest traces of Indians left, and admitting frankly "I got lost a lot that year." For those from multicultural backgrounds, it is difficult to remain centered.

While his contemporary voice speaks easily of "xerox copies," "Julia Childs," "Fasten Seat Belt Signs," "cable TV," and the "Ten O'clock News," the most dominant and powerful voice in the collection is that of the traditional Indian, who recounts with pride and humor the antics of Coyote, trickster and survivor; who is brother to birds, animals, insects. In pride, he peoples the land with myth and story and is the contemporary of spirits millions of years old:

I can see it, the red and brown monoliths
reaching for God, the ocean dried up
just a couple of million years ago,
the fish are still squiggling in solid
rock,
the footprints of gods are still fresh.

In sorrow, he identifies with drunken Indians, hopeless and bereft of purpose, powerless and dispossessed, in such poems as "And the Land is Just as Dry" and "Time to Kill in Gallup," and mourns the dead Blue Jay, Gold Finch, Flicker and Squirrel along the side of the highway in whose fate he sees the fate of his people.

One of the most successful poems is "Vision Shadows," a prophetic warning brought by wind and eagle. At one with all life, the poet speaks for them of the effects of the callous acts of those who have disassociated themselves from nature, who see it only as something to be conquered or exploited. The poem ends with these stanzas:

Poisonous fumes cross our sacred paths.
The wind is still.
O Blue Sky, O Mountain, O Spirit, O
what has stopped?

Eagles tumble dumbly into shadows
that swallow them with dull thuds.
The sage can't breathe.
Jackrabbit is lonely and alone
with eagle gone.

It is painful, aiiee, without visions
to soothe dry whimpers
or repair the flight of eagle, our own
brother.

The repetition of the "O" vowel from the first stanza to the second in "lonely," "alone," and "gone" stresses the poet's mourning, which changes in the last stanza to a cry of distress and pain in the more constricted vowel sounds of "aiiee," echoed again in "eagle." With the accumulation of concrete details, "Vision Shadows" sounds the warning that the same spirit of greed that forced the Indian onto desert reservations is rapidly making an inhabitable desert of our entire planet. Here the Indian's tragic vision finds powerful expression in the spare and resonant language

of a highly skilled contemporary poet and thus becomes the voice of us all.

Amy Ling
Rutgers University

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Simon J. Ortiz. Fight Back: For the Sake of the People; for the Sake of the Land. INAD Literary Journal. Vol. 1. No. 1. Illus. by Maurus Chino. 1980. pb. 75 pp. \$6.95.

The 1680 All Indian Pueblo Revolt was notable, as Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz notes in her preface to this volume, for both its character and consciousness. Mestizos, mulattoes, Mexican Indians, Navajos, and Apaches fought together under Pueblo leadership; moreover, these freedom fighters rebelled specifically and primarily against their exploitation as forced labor by the "Spanish officials, clergy, and ranchers." Written "In commemoration of the Pueblo Revolt and 1680 and our warrior Grandmothers and Grandfathers," Fight Back takes the 1680 Revolt as the beginning of Indian workers' struggle against their exploitation as workers, a struggle which today continues in the uranium mines of the Southwest. Combining autobiography, history, and storytelling, poetry and prose, Ortiz portrays as he seeks to inspire the continuation of this struggle against the economic, social, and political forces which threaten the survival of the people and the land; he wants to make of every reader one of the "we" in the "Mid-America Prayer" with which Fight Back begins:

We acknowledge ourselves
to be in a relationship that is responsible
and proper, that is loving and compassionate,
for the sake of the land and all people.

But this crucial fight can only take place among an enlightened people, a people who, like the freedom fighters in the 1680 Pueblo Revolt, know who they are and why they are fighting. Such knowledge, Ortiz knows, is hard to come by: "Thorough knowledge was what was always required to live by for Indian people; since the Mericano, knowledge has been kept in some hidden place and has been used as controlling power." The necessary "thorough knowledge" is precisely what Ortiz provides in Fight Back.

Many of these poems dramatize the movement from confusion to clarity, and in doing so reveal the dangers of ignorance and the power that knowledge brings. The narrator of "My First Hard Core," a young Indian uranium worker, recalls the insults posed as questions thrown at him by his first "hard core" fellow worker, Herb:

Hey chief, how come
you all out here don't have names
like regular Indians supposed to.

But Herb's questions assaulted more than the narrator's identity:

Remember, just like Goldwater is a Jew
even if his name sounds Indian,
Kennedy is a rich commie sympathizer.
Who you voting for, chief?

Caught between the "chief" imposed on him and his identity as "Simon Martinez," a young, Indian uranium worker, the narrator cannot answer Herb; he cannot define himself nor can he identify his loyalties:

...I didn't know how to answer him then.
I just felt powerless to answer.
I just said I didn't know.

But Ortiz does know; he can draw the connections between the oppression of Indians and the oppression of all workers, between "chief" and "Hard Core," connections that forge identity as they define loyalties:

During that organizing time,
and during that strike in 1961
that jail full of Indians sure came
in handy.

The jailer would even call in sick for you
and tell you which mines were hiring
Indians.

Ortiz is at his best in the poems that dramatize a moment of connection and enlightenment, and one of the best of these is "Crazy Gook Indians." Narrated by Danny, who, with his friend Emmett, "got back from Vietnam/and went to work in the mines," "Crazy Gook Indians" tells how the sound of blasting in the mines set Emmett off one afternoon:

He picked up that drill
like it was an M-60
and tried to defend us against
the shift boss who'd been in the Marines
too.

Danny "got Emmett quieted down," but later heard the boss

...laughing
with the superintendent
about the crazy gook Indians
on his shift.

Like all of Ortiz's story-poems, this is a story with a point; Danny's realignment of his identity and his loyalties, "I guess I should have let my partner/defend us against that Marine," further clarifies the relationships between Indians as workers and Indians as oppressed people as it reveals the true enemy.

The individual poems, masterful pieces of story-telling in themselves, attain their full significance only when read as stories within the larger story Ortiz is telling, the story of the relationship between the native workers and the land of the Southwest. Ortiz begins this story with a poem that represents the misrepresentation of the relationship that remains a stock item of "popular" knowledge today:

"It Was That Indian"

Martinez
from over by Bluewater
was the one who discovered uranium
west of Grants.

...
He brought that green stone
into town one afternoon in 1953...

And, the poem goes on to say, since "it was that Indian who started that boom," it is the Indians themselves who are responsible for

...chemical poisons flowing into the
streams
from the processing mills, carwrecks on
Highway 53,
lack of housing in Grants,
cave-ins at Section 33,
non-union support,
high cost of living
and uranium radiation causing cancer.

But, as each of the poems further redefines the relationship between the Indians, their fellow workers, the mines, and the land, Martinez too is redefined, first as victim rather than as cause of the boom, and finally, in the concluding prose piece, "No More Sacrifices," as a worker capable of "fighting back" rather than as victim sacrificed, along with his land, to the interests of capital. "No More Sacrifices" re-tells the story of the discovery of uranium, and in doing so provides the "thorough knowledge" essential to a successful "fight back":

No, it was not that Navajo man who discovered uranium. It was the U.S. government and the economic and military interests which would make the enormous profits and hold the world at frightened bay which made that discovery in a colonized area.

Fight Back should be read by everyone who believes, with Ortiz, that "Only when the people of this nation, not just Indian people, fight for what is just and good for all life, will we know life and its continuance;" more importantly, it should be read by those who have not come to this realization, for Ortiz's

beautiful and impassioned poetry, and his lucid and inspiring prose, may just succeed in making them join forces with the struggle against "those who are bent on destruction of land and people," a struggle Ortiz believes "We will win. We will win."

Beth Langan
Columbia University

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Simon Ortiz. A Poem Is a Journey. Bourbon-
nais, Pteranodon Chapbook.

Ortiz' 1981 A Poem Is a Journey, though a slight effort in terms of its length, is in itself a profound poetic journey representative of Ortiz' continued efforts to make sense of the various aspects of multi-ethnic America, to find his place as a Native American within that culture, as well as to find his own poetic voice and place within a poetic tradition. In the first part of this long poem, "Several summers ago, I spent most of a day at Tsaile Lake," Ortiz leaves American consumer civilization, where "stick-on American flags" are glued on windshields, looking back, "only once," in order to journey to where "the edge of the mountain/is like no edge anywhere." In the mountains he finds a Navajo Vietnam veteran fishing with his sons, an Anglo family camping, the father suspicious, "Across the back window ...a deer rifle." (Ortiz wants to tell him, "I'm not a stranger.") Finally leaving people behind, the poet/persona meets the marks of animals in the woods: like a mountain lion he says, "I leave my pawprints." Aware always of the limits of his communion with nature, Ortiz

notices "a man's footprints/of several days before," and seems to accept "Horses feet away/ from me/like heartbeats."

At the end of the second section, Ortiz asserts that "Stories are stones./Don't tell me they aren't." In this section nature itself speaks to the poet, blue spruce boughs telling him their name, "Hakaakah." There are no bears in the mountains for this poet,

But there are stories,
Always stories.
There is plenty of sign.

And, by the end of the poem, Ortiz has regained his belief in, if not the correspondence of, nature and language, at least the correspondence of nature and its markings--markings after all, being all (and everything) the poet has to offer. In the last stanzas of the poem, Ortiz expresses the power of the poet to create the correspondence he has earlier found so sadly missing:

I dream
Of new born colts
Soon, soon
they will
be wild shadows
racing.

They will be
horse running dreams.

Horse running dreams, whether or not we can lay bets on them, are of value in themselves as the conjurings of a poet whose questioning of

nature and the poetic vision itself is worth as much as the new born colts of which he dreams.

Mary Dearborn

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Songs From This Earth on Turtle's Back: Contemporary American Indian Poetry. Ed. Joseph Bruchac. The Greenfield Review Press, R.D. #1, Box 80, Greenfield Center, NY 12833. pp. xiv + 294. Photographs. pk. \$9.95.

Songs From This Earth on Turtle's Back celebrates the diversity of American Indian poetry and culture. From the compacted lyricism of Ray A. Young Bear's work to Leslie Silko's fluid yet formally shaped "Story From Bear Country," and Gerry Vizenor's intricately lashed, direct yet enigmatic constructions, the poetry comes from every direction and school of writing and is cross-fertilized by as many tribal and mixed-blood backgrounds.

Some, like Wendy Rose and Paula Gunn Allen, draw on both literary and personal experience. Allen's "Pocahontus to her English Husband, John Rolfe," is convincing and bitterly haunting, as is the plaintive and terrible voice of "Julia," once billed as the ugliest woman in the world, in a poem by Wendy Rose.

If there is one thing that much of this poetry has in common, it is a sense of humor. The humor sneaks up on the reader in "Harlem Montana: Just Off the Reservation," by James Welch. The last few lines of the poem tell a very long tragi-comic tale. The "little uncle" in Lucy Tapahonso's "Hills Brother's Coffee," is familiar, a man with a gentle sense of play. "Sure You Can Ask Me a Personal Question," by Diane Burns, has an ironic, very readable toughness characteristic of most of the work she has included in this book. Simon Ortiz' poem, "A New Story," and "Indian Guys at the

Bar," have the ring and authenticity and craziness of real life. The humor is survival humor, a capability, as Ortiz says in "Survival This Way" to "gauge our distance by stories." The humor is the measure of the distance and the dislocation of Native Americans from mainstream culture.

A transformed rage inhabits Philip Yellowhawk Minthorn's poetry. His writing is poetic in the traditional sense of being unparaphraseable, yet perfectly lucid. "From Which War" is a poem to live with. In this poem, all wars in history exist simultaneously in the mind of the poet whose only response to the shattering vision is "to kiss myself until I'm totally dead, totally believable," because "the skin I've crawled into is a blinding sadness." At times, as in the last line of "From Which War," he goes a step too far and becomes a shade too literal. But Minthorn is a poet to watch for. His writing leaps off the page and hits hard.

Words can help illuminate the darkest corners of our experiences, give it back to us, make it legible so it belongs to us. The poetry of Raymond A. Young Bear does this. His "poem for viet nam" falls down the page, hallucinatory and real, managing to understate terror and, in that way, make it all the more frightening. In ten lines, "One Chip of Human Bone" says all there is to say about boozing, a subject that every Indian writer deals with, like it or not. Young Bear's "the last dream" is a beautiful and all-encompassing poem, a poem of forgiveness of Indians for Indians, of the security younger Indians take knowing their old people are there to hand them on into the unknown of death. Even violent death, in this

poem, becomes muted. Although no less terrible for the individual, the suffering is presided over by a being of profoundest peace.

This poetry collection, beginning with a poem about the Grandmother of all life and ending with a poem about the Grandfather of all dreams, is a rich and varied introduction to the work of contemporary Native American writers. In the opening poem, Paula Gunn Allen describes the first wondrous Grandmother "weaving the strands/of her body, her pain, her vision/into creation." After Grandmother, says Allen, humanity weaves the blankets she has created into "tales of life." After that, still, comes the poet who attempts to mend the tears, the holes, the unanswerable questions we must ask of creation, with a pattern of words.

Allen's is a humble and most elegant description of the poet's work.

Louise Erdrich

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Raymond Wilson. Ohiyesa: Charles Eastman, Santee Sioux. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983.

Calling Eastman "The foremost educated Indian in the United States," Professor Raymond Wilson, of the history faculty at Fort Hays State University in Kansas, has contributed a valuable study of this remarkable Santee Sioux.

Born in 1858 near what is now Redwood Falls, Minnesota, Charles Eastman, or Hakadah, as he was first called, was thus four years old when

the Sioux Uprising of 1862 occurred. His great-grandfather on his mother's side was Chief Cloudman, whose village stood six miles from Fort Snelling, where he had led his followers into a farming experiment. Eastman was also the grandson of Seth Eastman, a topographical engineer in the army, and a well-known white artist who painted Indian life around Fort Snelling.

As a result of the Uprising, Hakadah, whose mother had died, and whose name had been changed to Ohiyesa, fled with his grandmother and uncle across North Dakota into Manitoba. His father, Many Lightnings, was taken prisoner with those whom were later executed in the mass hanging at Mankato on December 26, 1862. Fortunately, however, Many Lightnings was among those who President Lincoln absolved from the guilt of killing white settlers. After being converted to Christianity and taking the name Jacob Eastman, he was sent with other Santees to the newly-founded Santee Reservation in Nebraska, from which he later led a group of his tribesmen to homestead at Flandreau, South Dakota. When his homestead was established, he set out in search of his younger son.

So it was that after seventeen years of life in the tribe, hunting and fishing, hating every white American male, Ohiyesa was, as he said, "hauled from my savage life into a life unknown to me hitherto." Through the encouragement of his father and the missionaries Alfred Riggs and John Williamson, Ohiyesa became Charles Eastman and began his journey "on the white man's way": Santee Normal School, Beloit Academy, Knox Academy, Dartmouth College, and Boston University Medical School.

After seventeen years of very successful schooling and adjustment to white society, Charles was committed to helping his people as a doctor, "the most useful civilizer among the force of government officers placed on any Indian Reservation." He was sent to the Pine Ridge Reservation, where he met his future wife, Elaine Goodale, a supervisor of Sioux education in the two Dakotas, and a Yankee girl who was committed to the assimilation of all Indians into white society. The time was 1890, and on December 29, the terrible confrontation between the United States Cavalry and the Indians of Chief Big Foot's band occurred, the massacre at Wounded Knee. Shortly after this in June 1891 Charles and Elaine were married at a much-publicized wedding in New York City.

The Wounded Knee confrontation started Charles' growing disillusionment with white society. Charges between the Eastmans and Captain George LeRoy Brown, the acting Indian agent at Pine Ridge, led to Charles' having to resign his position. Attempts to set up a medical practice in St. Paul, Minnesota, failed because of a shortage of funds. Work as an Indian Secretary of the Y.M.C.A. was very successful, but it was not what he was trained to do. His work with his brother, John, to settle Santee claims which grew out of the Uprising led to factionalization within the tribe and unpleasant incidents. A period as a government physician at Crow Creek Reservation in South Dakota ended with a sordid accusation of an affair with a female superintendent of Grace Boarding School, where Charles attended sick children. His work with Hamlin Garland to rename American Indians so that land could more

easily be passed on to heirs was satisfying to him until a shortage of money forced Elaine to move east to Amherst, and the long trips to see his family led to charges of not earning his salary. At the same time his growing reputation as a writer and lecturer led officials to fear negligence toward the project. As one of the founders of the society of American Indians, Eastman became disappointed in the purposes of the organization as stated by the other members. Finally, his attempts to run a camp for girls with Elaine and his family near Munsonville, New Hampshire, were at first successful, but later, when an employee became pregnant and threatened him with a patrimony suit, he left the camp and his wife in 1921. His favorite daughter, Irene, who had often appeared with him as a singer when he lectured, had died as a result of the influenza epidemic in 1918. So he lived out his life in loneliness at a cabin on Lake Superior at Desbarts, Ontario, but given refuge from the severe winters by his son, Ohiyesa II, who lived in Detroit. He was honored during these years both in America and abroad for his writing and his lectures, but in his life he returned more and more to Indian habits.

In spite of the disillusionment and tragedies of becoming an acculturated Indian, Charles Eastman remains one of the most influential Indian reformers of his time. His writings remain the best examples of work by an Indian who lived the tribal life and later mastered English well enough to tell of another life.

Professor Wilson's work is a fine example of historical research. He has put together

evidence from government documents, theses and dissertations, letters from friends and coworkers of Eastman, interviews, book, newspaper, and journal articles. He has contributed much to understanding this complex man, and presented extensive historical background in the history of the Sioux, the Sioux Uprising, the Ghost Dance, and the Dawes Act. A collection of Eastman family pictures contributes to the attractiveness of the book.

The author might be criticized more for what he has left out than for what he has included. Perhaps it remains for someone of a more literary bent to present Charles Eastman, the man and his tragedy. Much more information exists in Eastman's two autobiographies about his early life, especially in Indian Boyhood, which contrasts vividly with what he became, and which makes his accomplishment much more awesome. Much more could be said about the human emotions at Wounded Knee--the young man caught up in Christmas and wedding preparations suddenly finding himself working night and day doctoring both American soldiers and Sioux tribesmen. The growing rifts between Charles and Elaine based upon differences in beliefs, perceptions, and lifestyles could be investigated further through their writings and letters, in spite of Elaine's controversial editorial work on Charles writings. Finally, very human word pictures exist in material which Wilson used: the picture given by his neighbor at Desbarts, Ontario, Dr. Malcolm Wallace, President of the University College of the University of Toronto of Charles standing in a canoe wrapped in a red blanket, watching the sun slip behind the horizon, and the story told by Charles' neice, Grace Moore, when Charles

asked her to bring her mother and grandmother to meet him in the park at Morton, Minnesota, which was one of the battlegrounds of the Uprising. Charles reminisced about the Indian side of the story and grandmother Nancy McClure told about the white side. The work on Charles Eastman has a worthy beginning in Professor Wilson's book.

Anna Stensland
University of Minnesota

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Columbus Day: Poems, Drawings, and Stories about American Life and Death in the Nineteen-Seventies by Jimmie Durham. Minneapolis: West End Press. 1983. Woodcuts and drawings by the author. \$ 4.50.

The subtitle of Jimmie Durham's Columbus Day does not sufficiently describe the formal variety and historical breadth of Durham's first book. Columbus Day includes poems celebrating the exploits of 19th and 20th century Indian heroes, political poems, texts of presentations Durham made to the United Nations and Congressional committees--even some brief lessons in Durham's native language, Cherokee. Interspersed among these materials are Durham's own ink drawings and woodcuts, some illustrative, others simply providing a visual break from the intensity of the poetry and prose.

These varied materials reflect Durham's diverse experiences, which he outlines in his introduction to Columbus Day and in prose passages throughout the book. In the fifties and sixties Durham was a political activist for

the Indian movement in the American southwest. Then, after deciding the situation of the American Indian was "hopeless," he left for Europe in the late sixties with no intention of returning to the U.S. But the incidents at Wounded Knee, Durham says, "demanded a new commitment from every American Indian." He returned to the U.S. in 1973, and since then has continued his political activities--and written a book of poems.

In his introduction, Durham acknowledges the difficulty of reconciling his political goals with his desire to write "serious poetry." But in Columbus Day, he proves this can be done. What stands out in this book are its lyric poems, and what gives those lyrics their power is their note of urgency--Rilke called it "necessity"--which clearly is inspired by Durham's deeply felt political concerns.

The technique Durham uses to give his lyrics their political edge is what might be called his "double vision"; he is acutely aware of his position as a foreigner in mainstream America, and uses this perspective to critically examine that society and his position in it. A short poem titled "My spine or something remembers home" shows this double vision at work on a small, domestic scale. The poet is drinking coffee in his New York City apartment when a package of gardener's seeds falls off the table. He tells us that:

...in the dry rustle of seeds against paper
Just that short space of time between table
and floor
I heard a rattlesnake
And my feet jumped away from the sound...

It is a small moment, but one nicely rendered.

More often, Durham uses his double vision to reveal essential differences between American Indian and Western world-views. "Teachings of My Grandmother" is an example of such a poem; in it Durham contrasts science and its methods of fact-finding with the intuitive wisdom of the tribe. The poet's talent for irony is evident in the lines:

In a magazine too expensive to buy I read
about
How, with scientific devices of great
complexity,
U.S. scientists have discovered that if a
rat
Is placed in a cage in which it has
previously
Been given an electrical shock, it starts
crying.

I told my grandmother about that and she
said,
"We probably knew that would be true."

"The Ultimate Injured Party," the longest and most ambitious poem in the book, is also one of the best. The poem dramatizes the situation of an oppressed minority narrator who falls in love with someone who has not experienced such oppression. "The ultimate injured party" both envies the woman's situation, and is angered and oppressed by his envy. The harsh diction and twisting syntax of lines like these complement the complex psychological truth they contain:

...But in his rage he struck
Terribly and constantly at her
self-confidence
And possibility to live in strength among
the alien
Stones which oppressed him, and that shamed
him,
Which made him hate that he had to make
complicit
Deals of adjusting his rage in solidarity
with his
Own need for love from a woman of the
oppressor's
Structure, which shamed him.

While the political and historical poems in Columbus Day are often interesting, the book turns on lines like these. They show Durham capable of making his political themes concrete by showing the relationship between public oppression and private grief. Durham's lyrics are at the heart of the book and his talent as a poet.

Claire Rossini
Columbia University

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Wounds Beneath the Flesh: 15 Native American Poets, edited by Maurice Kenny. Preface by Karl Kroeber. Ill. Benedict, Jemison, Kahiones, Jaune Quick to See Smith. Blue Cloud Quarterly Press: Marvin, S.D. 1983. \$4.00.

I approached this brief collection with specific and possibly unfair expectations. I hoped that Wounds Beneath the Flesh would be an excellent introduction to contemporary Indian

poetry written in English for basic Indian Literature courses or even for general surveys of American literature. Many of the other good collections -- Carriers of the Dream Wheel (1975), Voices of the Rainbow (1975), The Remembered Earth (1979), Songs from the Earth on Turtle's Back (1983)--are too long or too expensive for beginning courses that attempt to cover oral as well as written literatures. Wounds Beneath the Earth is short, inexpensive, prefaced and introduced by a respected scholar and a talented poet, and published by a praiseworthy press whose chapbooks have been a significant outlet and encouragement for creative Indian poets. So my hopes were high.

So high that I was bound to be disappointed in some ways. A few biographical-note pages, possibly modeled after the personal statements in Voices of the Rainbow, would have been very useful to teachers and students encountering these poets for the first time. In spite of Kenny's apology for having to exclude many fine poets, I was also surprised that three very significant poets--N. Scott Momaday, James Welch, and Ray A. Young Bear--were not included. (Possibly there were reprint problems. It's also true that these poet's works, as well as Kenny's poems, are quite available elsewhere. Welch and Young Bear even appeared in an earlier Blue Cloud Quarterly anthology. But it would have been very convenient to have these important poets included in this compact volume.) I also wish that Karl Kroeber and Kenny had been allotted a few more pages to further develop their ideas in the preface and introduction. Adding the biographical notes, the three poets, and a couple of pages to the prefatory material would have expanded the text

by approximately fourteen to sixteen pages and no doubt would have strained the staple binding process used by Blue Cloud Press and forced a slight increase in price. But, in my opinion, the advantages for classroom use would outweigh the technical and financial drawbacks and make an attractive and good collection into a very good college text.

Kenneth M. Roemer
University of Texas at Arlington

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Robert J. Conley. Adawosgi, Swimmer Wesley Snell: A Cherokee Memorial. Marvin, S.D.: Blue Cloud Quarterly, 1980. \$2.00.

This slender book of poems by Robert Conley is dedicated to Swimmer Snell, the author's deceased father-in-law. Conley contends that Snell, though not a politician or general, was a remarkable, even great person. The book proceeds with an attempt to confirm that premise. The poems advance in a very one-dimensional fashion, presenting the man through facts and incidents of his life, the sayings he left behind, the things he told his daughter, the author's wife, as well as the other children, and the author's feelings of closeness with Adawosgi, Swimmer Snell. This scattering appears to be the book's weakness, for the author tells us about things, but we are never made to feel them. We are never sufficiently close to the human spirit to separate Adawosgi from the scanty facts of his life. A prose account that interfaced culture, the personality and spirit of Swimmer Snell with that of his daughter and the author would have been

fascinating because the rich context surrounding the situation would have been given time to develop, resonate, and accentuate meaning. The spirit of the father-in-law could have emerged out of its context, superseding the bare-bones facts which pass for anecdotes, not at all charged with poetry.

The book starts in the air with the author distanced but respectful. The reader never gets any closer than that. The section containing some of Adawosgi's sayings is crisp, but when the reader turns to the stories about the children, the distance again defeats attempts to see the human beings, instead of names doing things. The ending seems to dull the work as sentiment creeps in to replace poetic power, and the book ends before the premise is confirmed, before anything really starts to congeal.

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University of New Mexico--Gallup

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Native Americans: Recommended Books for Children and Young Adults. Compiled by Kathleen Mulroy, Edited by Theresa A. Trucksis. Nola Regional Library System, 112 Commerce Street, Youngstown, Ohio 44503, 1983.

This is an excellent bibliography for those who are dealing with children in the tenth grade or earlier. The book's first section is a general listing of items not concentrating on a specific tribe or group; the longer section is subdivided according to cultural areas and tribes. The work includes a valuable page of

suggestions for developing a meaningful program about American Indians by Professor James P. Ronda.

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Kahiones. Visions in Ink: Drawings of Native Nations. Introduction by Jamake Highwater. Strawberry Press/Cambridge Graphic Arts, P. O. Box 451, Bowling Green Station, New York, N.Y. 10004, 1983.

This handsome and handsomely produced volume of more than fifty drawings by one of the best known Native American artist-illustrators is most remarkable for the variety of its visions, ranging from the fearful to gentle joyousness of domestic harmony. Kahiones' (John Fadden's) manner is realistic, but his economy of line assures symbolic simplification and regularly enlivens the naturalistic mode. He evokes not through obscurity but through quiet clarity. A lovely collection. Samples of Kahiones' work decorate this issue of SAIL.

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Notes

SAIL plans to begin shortly a series of commentaries and analyses of literary works in Native American languages and invites submissions of such material. When feasible, texts in the native language will be printed along with translations, though this will be possible only where transliteration uses normal typewriter characters with minimal diacritical marks. In most cases limitations of space preclude use of extended texts, but coherent segments of longer

works are welcome. Linguistic and cultural commentaries are appropriate, but of course our main interests are literary. Where length or complexity of reproduction make it impossible to reproduce the original language text, a full and clear statement of where such text is



available will be included. Address all inquiries and proposals to the editor.

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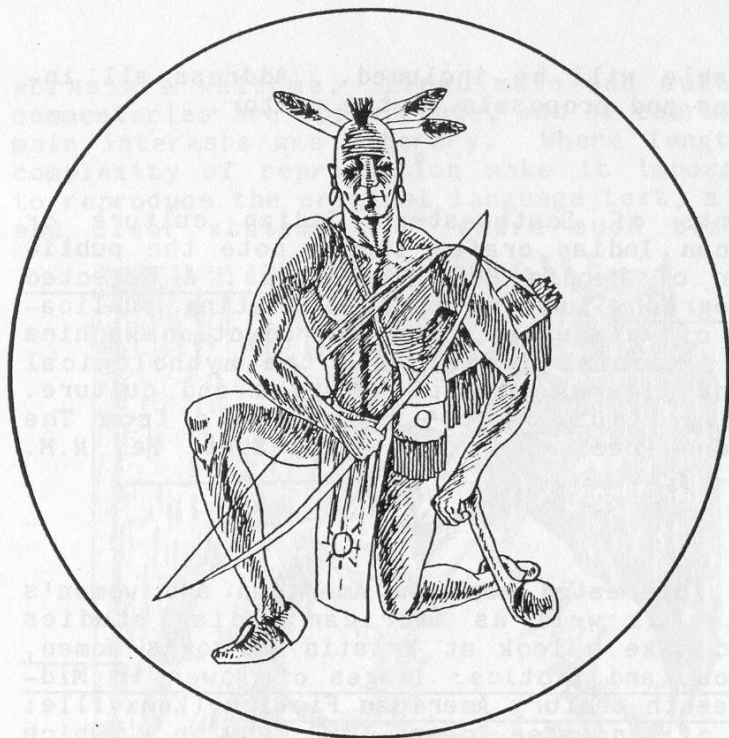
Students of Southwestern Indian culture or American Indian crafts should note the publication of Marcia Muth's Kachinas: A Selected Bibliography, which, besides listing publications of, discusses in an introduction kachina dolls, kachina dances, and the mythological kachina figures in Hopi religion and culture. 32 pp., illus., \$4.95. Available from The Sinstone Press, P.O. Box 2321, Santa Fe, N.M. 87504-2321.

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Those interested both in American and women's studies as well as American Indian studies should take a look at Kristin Herzog's Women, Ethnics, and Exotics: Images of Power in Mid-Nineteenth Century American Fiction (Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1983; 253 pp.), which has a fine chapter on Dekanawida's Iroquois epic.

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The American Native Press, 502 Stabler Hall, Univ. of Arkansas, Little Rock, AR 72204, carries much valuable information on periodicals, past and current, dealing with contemporary Indian and Native affairs, and with problems of and possibilities for access to such materials, ANP should be in every library.



Studies in American Indian Literatures, the Newsletter for the Association for the Study of Native American Literatures, is issued four times a year. Annual subscriptions are by the calendar year and are \$4.00. For back issues and special publications by SAIL contact the editor, 602 Philosophy Hall, Columbia University, New York, NY 10027, to whom contributions and subscriptions should be addressed. Advisory editorial board: Paula Gunn Allen, Gretchen Bataille, Joseph Bruchac, Vine Deloria, Jr., Larry Evers, Dell Hymes, Maurice Kenny, Robert Sayre.

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