

year period of race relations in Malaysia in 111 pages is a monumental task, but one which the author has carried off with at least a measure of success.

There are extensive footnotes and references, a Subject Index, and a Name Index, but there is a total lack of maps or charts which would have been helpful to provide an understanding of the location and an overview of people and events. Everything considered, this is a book worth reading, especially for anyone unfamiliar with Malaysia and its history and who needs a concise and comprehensive overview.

— Foster Brown
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Jamake Highwater. *The Sun, He Dies.* (New York: The New American Library, Inc., 1980) 212 pp., \$2.95.

How do we ever own our history? How do we ever come to grips with our fairy tales of that history? How do we ever rationalize genocide? *The Sun, He Dies* makes us ask. Aztec Mexico is presented with its intricacies and intrigues, dreams and realities in this fictional piece based on folk history and historical documents. Nanuatzin, the “woodcutter,” is the invented character who ties the events together and presents this alternative view of history that we must face. In the “Afterward and Notes on Sources,” Highwater states, “History is always the account of events as seen and preserved by the dominant culture . . . *The Sun, He Dies* is an alternative vision of the same history.” It is a painful vision from two standpoints: one, to own the *greed*, not *grace*, which prompted Cortes, and two, to examine the conflicting personal state of Montezuma and his impact on Aztec life and history.

In the first case, the fairytale history, as we have read it in standard texts, generally views the spread of Christianity in a positive and portentous manner. The “heathens” are redeemed and live “happily ever after.” In reality, as this work suggests, the disease, destruction and death of a people is a more accurate version of events. The book graphically portrays the mass slaughter of the Aztecs and the single mindedness for gold which overrode all sensibility and humaneness of the conquerors.

They fell flat on their bellies and they
embraced the gold as if it were a woman.
They made love to the heaping treasure.

This strange behavior and the contradictory nature of the belief systems of the "new gods" leads to the conclusion that

. . . their magic has no pity. It makes only death.
It spills the precious food of the gods upon the ground.

This statement comes from the annals of a people often depicted as holding beating hearts to the sun! This novel forces us to look again at these people, to surrender our preconceived notions and expand our knowledge of the reality of conquest. It is a difficult and necessary journey.

The second point concerns Montezuma himself. Two perspectives bear closer examination, although neither is given resolution within the work. The first concerns the impact of two opposing forces on Montezuma symbolized by the warrior Huitzilopochtli and the gentle Quetzacoatl. In his own words,

The one fills my body with power while
the other fills me with love. I reach
out for both, but I can reach neither.

The conflict between these two natures is clear and concise in the work, but the only attempted resolution comes from Nanautzin:

His greatness was smothered. His head
was split in two and bespoke in two
voices and could not make up his mind,
for one part was contrary to the other
part.

This conflict may be part of the second unresolved issue, although no direct correlation is drawn or implied.

Once the Espanoles have landed and are the subject of numerous reports, the overriding reaction is one of waiting. Even after an envoy has come back with first hand knowledge of the power of Cortes, they still wait.

Must we wait for the world to end and do
nothing but moan and die?
"We must wait," Montezuma said in a dry
voice.
"For what do we wait, my Lord?"
"We must see . . . we must discover if these
strangers will leave us or if they will
stay. We must find out what they want . . ."

Even when it becomes obvious what they want, no action is taken—waiting is the existing and preferred condition. Why? It is unanswered. We can speculate and perhaps we should. Do we wait for the inevitable

changes in life? What is the process through which the new myth replaces the old myth? Is it the males who are the guardians of the old myth and consequently the ones who wait to see? The novel raises some interesting thoughts on how the gods do beckon us and how we respond, thoughts on how we change and perceive our realities.

The stones remember, and only men forget.
We have lost our little dreams and have
awakened together into a reality that
destroys us.

What could be more significant for us to contemplate in the 20th century?

Jamake Highwater, one of the most popular writers today, has given us a winner. Complete with maps, an appendix of Aztec names and pronunciations, and other resource materials, *The Sun, He Dies* has a place in not only the area of ethnic studies but in any subject that seeks to know the ultimate question—what is the nature of the human being?

— Mic Denfeld
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Jane Katz. *Artists in Exile: American Odyssey.* (New York: Stein & Day, 1983) xxiii, 304 pp., \$17.95.

The major accomplishment of this collection of first-person reminiscences and third-person authorial interjection is its presentation of an impressive collection of imported talents, all of whom suffer (often gladly) the intellectual and spiritual privations of the West in exchange for its relative economic and social largess. To paraphrase Churchill, democracy (read “capitalism”) is the worst form of government except for all the others. This book says this geometrically, with the lines and curves formed by the various interviews forming a final, however planular, shape.

The value of oppression in the artist's world is good food for thought. It is important to keep in mind that many of the various transplantations documented here are enamoured of the West even as a hayseed is enamoured of a Manhattan night. The grim realities in a neon shadow are shielded from these artists in exile, and perhaps because of this they retain an innocent faith in our systems, both of life and art.

Only in certain instances, as in Alexander Goudinov's reluctance to discuss the effect of his defection on his marriage, is an edge of ice forming on these placid people, like new winter fringing a summer lake.