

Africa, and apparently was enthusiastically received. But Ngugi has made a difficult choice, one many African writers, like Armah, are deliberating. In choosing to write for his own people in their own tongue, is he risking losing the Western readership once so admiring of his works?

Certainly, Ngugi's medium is difficult, but not necessarily impossible. Gabriel Garcia Marquez in his *The Autumn of a Patriarch* (1975) has more successfully argued a similar populist message using similar techniques: a fictionalized geographic setting common to other novels, a backward time view, political diatribe with heavy irony and Rabelasian exaggeration. Marquez, however, has produced a major work. In *The Devil on the Cross*, Ngugi has not.

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**William Oandasan. *A Branch of California Redwood*. Native American Series, No. 4. (Los Angeles: American Indian Studies Center, UCLA, 1980) x, 62 pp., \$5.00.**

One of the best ways to introduce readers to the diversity of Indian literatures (and, by implication, Indian experiences) is to expose them to poetry written in English by Indians. One-dimensional stereotypes about Nobel Savages simply cannot withstand the rich variety of a literature that extends at least back to the 19th-century attempts of a few Indian poets—such as William Wilson (Anishinabe), Emily Pauline Johnson (Mohawk), and Alexander Posey (Creek)—to imitate and modify English language poetic models up through the recent poems of hundreds of Indian writers whose backgrounds and poetic inclinations reflect numerous tribal, reservation, and urban experiences, as well as literary influences ranging from tribal chants and Japanese syllabic verse to 20th-century experiments with open verse and typography.

William Oandasan's *A Branch of California Redwood* is a good case in point. As Kenneth Lincoln's brief but informative foreword reveals, Oandasan's ancestral landscapes include two very different coastal regions: his father's Filipino shores and his mother's Yuki (Ukono'm) homeland in California "where he was raised." He was also influenced by his wife's Laguna Pueblo heritage and his experiences as a railroad worker and a fine arts student in Chicago. (Since the publication of his collection, he has become the editor of the *American Indian Culture and Explorations in Sights and Sounds*. No. 4 (Summer 1984)

*Research Journal*). His literary heritage includes knowledge of his mother's tribal literature and the poetry of Simon Ortiz (Acoma Pueblo) and of many non-Indian and non-American (particularly Japanese) literatures.

Many of these experiential and literary influences find their ways into this brief collection. The opening poem, "New Day," fuses ancient chant rhythms with the visual impact of modern open verse. Section I, "Round Valley Songs," condenses Yuki landscapes, stories, and personal associations into brief, four-line poems. The "Moving Inland" section offers a variety of open verse forms, rural and urban scenes, and tones ranging from the gentle awe of a translated French love poem ("Le Jardin") to the brutal protest of a murder ("Farmington, NM"). The strong influence of Japanese poetry, especially tanka and haiku, surfaces in the short, imagistic poems of the third, "Syrenyu," section, which lead into the surrealism of the closing poem, "The Marvelous Blue Frog."

In spite of the echoes that help to unify this collection—for example, the chanted "blue" of the opening and the blueness of the frog's ending—and the general movement from traditional/personal associations (I) to a mixing of several forms and landscapes (II) to a series of tight sense impressions (III), readers should not expect the organic unities and therapeutic movement of a collection such as Simon Ortiz's *Going for the Rain*. There simply is not enough "material" in Oandasan's gathering to allow for the buildup of sustained unity and development. Moreover, some of the attempts to fuse different forms and images are not successful. The heavy chant rhymes ("blue, blue / fresh as new dew . . .") presented in the isolated open verse lines of the opening poem sound more like fragments of nursery rhymes than the solemn excitement of traditional chants, and several of the powerful images in the "Moving Inland" poems are undercut or overshadowed by unoriginal images (particularly in the urban scenes) or less powerful images, as when the hawk "shits" on a drunkard after this strong and stark glimpse: "His hand snags a piece of tissue / Floating in the gutter."

In the short poems of sections I and III, however, Oandasan often achieves moving fusions of the tribal and personal, Indian and non-Indian. Sometimes these blendings are very private. But the simplicity of the language and Oandasan's ability to see through the immediate experience without diminishing its concreteness and importance allow readers access to this personal world: "homes sleeps 1,000 miles northwest / but when I palm the green jade / found in the stream east of Aunt Mary's / smells of redwood surface again." In other less personal poems Oandasan sometimes selects one of his "Indian" landscapes or a topic frequently associated with Indians and captures a feeling or image utilizing a mixture of non-Indian poetic forms. For instance, his

"rain" poem, "Haiku Au Surreal," combines a slightly modified haiku syllabic form, surreal images, and external and internal rhymes: "Drops of autumn rain / fall like petals of blue flame / through a painless window."

I hope that Oandasan will continue to give us fusions of his many backgrounds. Those who still think in terms of one-dimensional Indian stereotypes need to encounter Oandasan and other contemporary Indian poets in their collections and in the readily available anthologies of poetry mentioned in the essays in *Studies in American Indian Literature*, edited by Paula Gunn Allen (MLA, 1983), and in Andrew O. Wiget's article on contemporary Indian poetry in a forthcoming 1984 issue of *College English*.

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**Joseph Owens. *Dread: The Rastafarians of Jamaica*. (Exeter, NH: Heinemann, Educational Books, Inc., 1982) xix, 282 pp., \$10.00.**

*Dread* is an exploration of the thought world of the Rastafarian Brethren of Jamaica as synthesized by the author. Father Owens, a white American-born Jesuit priest, did several years of intensive visiting with and listening to Rasta thinkers in the slums of western Kingston, Jamaica; most contact was from 1970 to 1972. He originally met the Rastas while he was doing teaching and social work in the area, and he seems to have been accepted by many of them as a sympathetic listener. Through Owens, Rasta thought comes across as a form of revitalization movement based on a unique interpretation of the Christian scriptures. These scriptures are taken by the Brethren as the source of all important knowledge and are the beginning point for many of their arguments. (However, the Rastas assume that not all of the true scriptures are available, since some were suppressed by the white men, and all are subject to mistranslation from their original language, which the Rastas say is Amharic).

The focus of the book is on Rasta theology as systematized by the author, with his discussion supplemented by extensive quotations from tape-recorded interviews with more than sixty accessible, highly articulate black men, whom he identifies by name and location. The Rasta thinkers' positions are hammered out and articulated during long joint