

this way, Brown and Brightman carefully place Nelson's descriptions in ethnographic and folkloric perspective. They also add a comprehensive bibliography, and their index is superb.

Two additional essays by Native American scholars round out the volume. Stan Cuthand reacts to Nelson's text and places it in relationship to contemporary Cree oral tradition. Cuthand also reflects on the current implications of texts such as Nelson's which record an earlier way of life: "Today there are many elders who are trying to bring back Indian religion and who want to emphasize the harmony of man and nature. Nelson's text shows a starker reality." Writing in a related vein, Emma Larocque balances the ethnocentric flaws of the text and its factual failings against its usefulness. She reminds readers also that Nelson's journal is an important document because it reveals the tenacious hold civilization-savagery has always had. These two essayists suggest the overall significance of the book in presenting an invaluable glimpse into past Algonquian culture and in fueling the ongoing process of native cultural adaptation.

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Joseph Bruchac, ed. *Survival This Way: Interviews with American Indian Poets*. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1987) 363 pp., \$28.95.

It is risky for an editor to compose a book of twenty-one interviews, each being centered in the same type of questions: What started you writing? Who were your models? What role does your tradition play in your work? How do you relate to mainstream poetry? The amazing result of reading this book is the recognition that it is neither repetitious nor dull, but highly informative and a pleasure to read. The reason for this outcome lies not only in the poetic sensibility, literary knowledge, and psychological skill of the interviewer, but in the quality of the poets selected and the wide spread of their tribal affiliations, mixed cultural traditions, and educational as well as personal backgrounds.

While Bruchac excels as interviewer, his preface and his bibliography are too sparse. The preface lacks a more thorough portrayal of the background from which these writers are emerging and a rationale for the selection of the writers interviewed. Was, for example, Leslie Silko not included because her poetry is so much a part of her fiction? (She is mentioned in several of the interviews as an important influence on poets.)

The bibliography could have included works that do not deal exclusively with poetry, e.g., Rayna Green's anthology, *That's What She Said* (1984) or the collection of critical essays edited by Bo Scholer, *Coyote Was Here* (1984) to which Bruchac himself has contributed. The inclusion of critical studies on the oral tradition would have been helpful. The book also lacks an index of names.

But these are minor flaws. The work is well organized with pithy headlines for each interview and short introductions describing the locale and situation as well as some important features of the poets and their work. The poem which each writer selected as a starting point for the interview connects critical discussion and poetic word.

Nine of the authors interviewed are women, and repeatedly the male poets comment on the strong women's voices. Overall, what transcends gender, class, tribal affiliation, and stylistic preference is the unifying force of myth and spirituality, of a grounding in specific places and kinship structures, and of close ties to all elements of the natural world.

The most interesting comments center on the difference between western "self-expression" and American Indian communal expression in poetry, on the humor and the containment of anger and bitterness in American Indian writing, and on the role of great teachers or friends, white as well as Native American, who helped young poets find their voice publicly. The book reveals the richness of American Indian poetry that is largely untapped by a mainstream readership. This is not a poetry of "mere" survival. "We are going beyond survival," asserts Simon Ortiz. "There is meaning beyond mere breathing and walking . . . The act of living is art." American poetry, often separating life and art, can learn a lesson here. As Carter Revard says, "I'd like to see American Indian writing be a standard for this country."

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