

POETRY CORNER

featuring

NEO-PIONEERS: THE AMERICAN INDIAN
INDIAN SCHOLAR
SISTERS OF ALASKA
INDIAN MUSICIAN TODAY

by

SILVESTER J. BRITO
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MILWAUKEE

NEO-PIONEERS: THE AMERICAN INDIAN

Coming from a crowded and "vacant" land
They must make a new life
In a hostile territory
With wild Indian tales
Of broken spears
Scalped Rangers
And honorless treaties.

Theirs will not be the Weapons
Of their Predecessory Adversaries,
Where musket powdered balls
Overcame the hunters' arrows;
But theirs will be
The tools of the white man.

With pen of the scholar
They will carve
A new life
From the turmoil
Of the white social order:
That changing frontier
Of theirs and the scientific world.

In the siege of adversity,
They will rally
To the drumbeat
Of the city'
With its man-made suns
And the magical machines
Whose thirst is never quenched.

But behold
They will also owe their souls
To the Big Ben
Which tells men
When to 'wake, eat
And fight the battles
In a new arena
Of the worded courtroom.

INDIAN SCHOLAR

Oh God; it hurts
When your college professor
Tells you how little you know
Of your people's history.

Dear Lord it pains
When the white professor
Knows more about your religion
Than the spiritual elders.

Then, Great Spirit,
The hurt turns
To defiance
And a confusion of the soul.

So with hurt and shame
You drop out of college
Spending your lost days
Between two cultures.

Somebody help me
Tell me the truth Grandfather.
Does that professor know
More than you can remember!

SISTERS OF ALASKA

Women of Alaska
Healers of men
Creating new horizons
For your native ones.

Sisters of Alaska
Natives of the land
Bringing starlight notions
And refreshing moments.

Women of the Northern Lights
From frozen shores
Shedding drops of inspiration
Upon intrenched souls.

Eskimo and Indian
Sisters of the north
Finding and stimulating
Worn down brothers of the south.

Women of Alaska
With vitality of life
Bringing new ways
That were our old ways.

Women of Alaska
Messengers of a new day
You refresh our minds
With a beauty of our people.

Sisters of my life
Delighted with your presence
Bridging ancient ties
In a world of new adventure.

INDIAN MUSICIAN TODAY

There are thoughts I want to play
But I cannot express them
In the Western form
For the metal flute
Will not respond
To the sounds of the loon
Or a mystic light.

I cannot find the song
That tells where to laugh
Or how it hurts,
For the beat of a fawn
Is missing
By a silver lake.

So I cannot play
From that center to my soul,
For in the American mode
The old flutes of my people
Are long gone.