

POETRY CORNER

featuring

OLD WISE ONE
for Wallack Pyawasit
INDIAN POWER DRUM
HOLY PLACES
INFRA RED RIFLES
COMPLEX EDUCATION

by

SILVESTER J. BRITO
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MILWAUKEE

OLD WISE ONE

for Wallace Pyawasit

Old Wise One
Chief they would call you
in the days of coup
and all medicines were active.

We have sat by
fires of life
and through your voice
I learned. Spirit magic.

Old wise one
in your face appears
moons of medicine ways
and the bodies it worked upon.

In fields we have prayed
to forces of life
and they responded
in the peoples' power.

Old wise one
I fear losing you soon,
with a voice of spirits
and eyes that grow mellow.

INDIAN POWER DRUM*

Power drum,
your colors tell
man is a thought
from the creator's magic.
Your medicine reminds us
miracles are devine.
Your signs advise
in power forms to call upon.
Mystic drum,
we know your spirit
to bring out good, or
invent the bad.

*This is a drum which I have known, and used
in current Menomine traditional rituals.

--S. J. Brito

HOLY PLACES

Faces I have seen
in the waves
of grandmother fire.

Blessed I have felt
in the cedar
of sacred places.

Spirits I have sensed
in the breath
of holy pipes.

Voices I have heard
in the streams
of the rainbow trail.

INFRA RED RIFLES

The time must have been
seven past the death hour
inbetween the barbwire eyes
and Nixon's war carriers.

A bullet flaired
seeking out a fleating feather
but infra red rifles
could not see
blood they were draining.

Food was cut off
to savage warriors
who dared declare
a state of life crises.

Impounded today
are religious leaders
to be spanked
by federal fear.

COMPLEX EDUCATION

In a complex education
they washed our hair
with Kerosene, and
I learned degradation.

I tried out for
the leading role
and they awarded me
the drugstore Indian.

The coach played
with my emotions
to teach us
fair sportsmanship.

The theory professor
stressed the purity
of Western composition
and the trite forms
of our tradition.

And finally,
L & S praised
our acculturation
in war bonnets
of black tassel.