

But to give examples of what Stensland's annotations fail to do or fail to include is not to suggest that *Literature By and About the American Indian* is not a highly commendable work. It is certainly meritorious and deserving of high praise, for it goes further toward filling a desperate need than any other book of its kind. Within the limitations imposed by the form of an annotated bibliography, Stensland has accomplished a huge task. The bibliography cannot be exhaustive, and Stensland's decisions about what to include are generally sound. Moreover, the attenuated form of the annotations precludes in-depth analysis and documentation of weaknesses of the books annotated. At best, only brief evaluations can be made, and it is understandable that Stensland would err on the side of generosity toward the books in the absence of space to defend negative comments. What this review is really lamenting is the scarcity of books for young people that are both accurate in their presentation of Indians and excellent as literature and/or the lack of a book of critical criteria that could be applied by teachers, librarians, parents, or anyone interested in making evaluating text books, but there is, to this writer's knowledge, nothing comparable for use in evaluating literature. This need notwithstanding, one should not expect Stensland's bibliography to do a job that is outside its scope; one should be grateful for the enormous job it does. Young people's reading should be the richer for it.

Endnotes

- ¹ Richard Erdoes, *The Rain Dance People*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976, p. 269.
- ² Rupert Costo, "Books," *The Indian Historian*, 3, No. 1, Winter 1970, 60.
- ³ Walter Dyk, *Son of Old Man Hat*, New York: Harcourt, 1938, p. xiv.

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TATO LAVIERA, *LA CARRETA MADE A U-TURN*. PHOTOS BY DOMINIQUE. Gary, Indiana: Arte Publico Press, 1979, 74 pp. \$5.00 paper.

The title of this new book of poetry from New York's Latino Lower East Side refers to a drama, *La Carreta*, by one of Puerto Rico's most prestigious authors, René Marqués (1919-1979).¹ It is generally considered one of the supreme artistic expressions of the collective Puerto Rican experience. At the end of the play the emigrants decide to leave New York City in an attempt to maintain their integrity and identity, to till the earth in the hills of Puerto Rico.

Laviera's book may be viewed as both a social and a poetic document of a young Puerto Rican who was raised in New York, who

is staying on and has no intention to be crushed between two cultures. He is a regular and impressive recitator and musician in Miguel Algarín's "Nuyorican Poets' Cafe" and must be seen in the context of a largely orally based tradition. It is not by accident that a tribute to his spiritual father, the ghetto bard Jorge Brandon, concludes the book.

La Carreta Made a U-Turn consists of 42 poems and is divided into three sections: "Metropolis Dreams," "Loisaida Streets: Latinas Sing," and "El Arrabal: Nuevo Rumbón." About half of the poems use Spanish, ranging from street talk and Spanglish to traditional proverbial phrases and formal poetic speech; nine poems are written exclusively in Spanish.

Laviera is a sensitive and clear-sighted commentator on ghetto suffering, alienation and oppression without, for the most part, falling into the trap of sentimentalizing human tragedies. By avoiding an overtly narrow autobiographical stance in most of his poems, his work appears not, as the writings of some of his colleagues in the New York scene do, as a dead end (repeated over and over again) but as a very promising beginning.

He is aware of the dangers of drifting into a cultural no-man's land ("my graduation speech," 7) into self-abandonment, and into drug addiction ("even then he knew," 4, "angelito's eulogy in anger," 8-11). Another theme pervading the volume is a very conscious rejection of (white) Christianity ("excommunication gossip," 13-15, which is reminiscent of Miguel Piñero's style) and an embracing of the syncretistic Caribbean spiritualism/santería tradition, a fact which also becomes quite evident in his and M. Algarín's dance-drama "Olú Clemente" (*Revista Chicano-Riqueña*, VII, 1, invierno 1979, 151-72). Here we find it in a sprinkling of Yóruba/santería deities (Yemayá, Oba, Otún) through many poems, in the ambiguous "tumbao" (48-50), in "orchard beach y la virgen del carmen" (55-56), in the rather melodramatic "coreografía" (63-68), and above all in his "santa bárbara" (61-62), a powerful, high-pitched account of a "despojo" and the miraculous certitude of being touched by Santa Bárbara/Changó.

Laviera, who affirms his Afro-Caribbean identity with pride, sees in musical forms, instruments, sound and rhythms his strongest allies. The highly commercialized contemporary salsa music is put next to the genuine, old-style Puerto Rican plena and bomba, to bolero and cha-cha-cha. Music and dance, also both important elements in santería, become liberating, cleansing, cathartic forces in "palm tree in spanglish figurines" (35), in "the congas mujer" (36) and in "the new rumbón" (39-40): "congas congas / tecata's milk gets warmed / broken veins leave misery / hypedermic needles melt / from the voodoo curse / of the conga madness / the congas clean the gasses / in the air, the congas burn out / everything not natural to our people" (39).

The author is familiar with Puerto Rico's greatest Afro-Caribbean poet Luis Palés Matos, author of *Tutún de paso y grifería*,

and shows close parallels to some of that writer's well-known workings in "savorings from piñones to loiza" (45) and "moreno puertorriqueño (a three-way warning poem)" (46).

Numerous examples of social criticism and some brief but quite to the point political statements add to the complex texture of the collection. Unfortunately, the beauty of his central idea in "the last song of neruda," (19) is marred by its uneven, verbose handling. In "against muñoz pamphleteering," he writes "inside my ghetto i learned to understand / your short range visions of where you led us, / across the oceans where i talk about myself / in foreign languages... / your sense of / stars landed me in a / north temperate uprooted zone" (18).

The young Nuyorican's distance towards the island is evident in this book. He in no way figures Puerto Rico as a utopian tropical island paradise; and no escapist view of a Puerto Rican wholeness is found elsewhere. Instead, Laviera stays as a rule in his "territory," the Lower East Side (Loisaida) and less frequently Piñones, Puerto Rico, and preserves from the island culture those facets which he needs and can relate to. An excellent example of a contemporary use of folk traditions is found in his "canción para un parrandero" (52), his own version of a Christmas song, which along with a treacherous naiveté, reveals a powerful subversive undercurrent. The reader is spared a clean-cut ideological vision of the future.

In *La Carreta Made a U-Turn* there is a clear and refreshing note of affirmation, humaneness, joy and vigor in the face of poverty, alienation and oppression. Tato Laviera has produced a remarkably varied first book of poems and should be encouraged to go on.

Footnote

¹ There exists an English translation by Charles Pilditch: *The Occart*. New York: Charles Scribner, 1969, 155 pp.

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THOMAS A. CLARK, *BLACKS IN SUBURBS: A NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE*. New Brunswick, N.J.; Center for Urban Policy Research, Rutgers University, 1979. 126 pp., \$7.50 paper.

Blacks in Suburbs examines the process of black suburbanization on a national level. Although a book this short (111 pp., plus bibliography and index) necessarily provides a superficial treatment, it does explore some of the complexities of the suburbanization process among blacks. It not only looks at migration patterns of