

most exciting, innovative period in the BIA's entire history . . . ." This conclusion rescues Forbes from any charge that he simply could not be objective about the Nixon administration.

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**Phillip Foss, ed. *The Clouds Threw This Light: Contemporary Native American Poetry*. (Santa Fe: Institute of American Indian Arts Press, 1983) 351 pp., \$10.00.**

This is a collection of contemporary American Indian poetry in which the total effort is a result of the *poets* making the decisions about content rather than the editor. Foss provided the writers with the opportunity to select their own "best" or "favorite" for inclusion, avoiding perhaps the negative response that artists sometimes have to editors who choose the "wrong" poems! It is interesting to see the choices some made; at times I wished for a discerning editor, but the variety of material provided a cross-section of poetry being written today by American Indians.

Seventy-seven poets are included, resulting in a broad representation of format, style, and subject matter. Well-established poets such as Joseph Bruchac, N. Scott Momaday, Paula Gunn Allen, and Gerald Vizenor as well as younger poets such as Mary Goose, Geraldine Keams, and Roberta Hill Whiteman have poems in the volume. The anthology is massive in size and length, and a bargain for the reader who wishes a diverse sampling of these contemporary poets. My only complaint is that the poets are identified only by tribal affiliation. Brief biographical sketches would have been useful, particularly for those poets who are new to many readers.

It is impossible to do justice to the content of this volume, so these comments will be general and, of necessity, superficial. The range of emotions contained within the collection extends from wistfulness to hope to anger as the poets respond to their individual and tribal past, present, and future. A few specific examples will have to suffice. Some of the poems are decidedly personal and the reader enters into the private world of the writer. In "The Place" Ramson Lomatewama writes:

There is a place  
hidden from most eyes.  
I think of it often  
for it is a part of me

my soul

my existence.

For this place  
that I dream of  
is my cornfield  
where life abounds  
and makes known to me  
that life  
is good (151).

In "Trading Post—Winslow, Arizona" Terri Mayette Wilkins writes of tourists, their lack of understanding, and their impact on the People:

they buy history in a blanket,  
family traditions in a squash blossom necklace,  
and the old lady walks home  
with two bags of flour (332).

In "For the Children" Lila Bird looks to the future hopefully as she writes of Indian youth:

I understand why the power in your life  
is all we will ever need (40).

Foss has performed a tremendous service both to the poets and to those anxious to read contemporary poetry. The Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe has long nurtured the creative talents of American Indian people, and this volume is yet another example of the Institute's philosophy of supporting traditional arts while encouraging experimentation with style and form. All of these writers draw on the stories and songs of their cultures, using contemporary poetic structures to transform the materials.

As with most good poetry, these poems can be read on several levels. Mary Goose, in "Interlude," writes, "We all know the way back." Although she is speaking in the poem of returning home with her dogs, the reader knows that the "way back" involves more than a physical journey. Although some of the journeys are painful—an example is the poetry of Bruce King—most of the writers express their links with the culture, a culture which they know of from grandmothers and other relatives and one which they intend to pass on to their children.

—Gretchen Bataille  
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