

"rain" poem, "Haiku Au Surreal," combines a slightly modified haiku syllabic form, surreal images, and external and internal rhymes: "Drops of autumn rain / fall like petals of blue flame / through a painless window."

I hope that Oandasan will continue to give us fusions of his many backgrounds. Those who still think in terms of one-dimensional Indian stereotypes need to encounter Oandasan and other contemporary Indian poets in their collections and in the readily available anthologies of poetry mentioned in the essays in *Studies in American Indian Literature*, edited by Paula Gunn Allen (MLA, 1983), and in Andrew O. Wiget's article on contemporary Indian poetry in a forthcoming 1984 issue of *College English*.

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Joseph Owens. *Dread: The Rastafarians of Jamaica*. (Exeter, NH: Heinemann, Educational Books, Inc., 1982) xix, 282 pp., \$10.00.

Dread is an exploration of the thought world of the Rastafarian Brethren of Jamaica as synthesized by the author. Father Owens, a white American-born Jesuit priest, did several years of intensive visiting with and listening to Rasta thinkers in the slums of western Kingston, Jamaica; most contact was from 1970 to 1972. He originally met the Rastas while he was doing teaching and social work in the area, and he seems to have been accepted by many of them as a sympathetic listener. Through Owens, Rasta thought comes across as a form of revitalization movement based on a unique interpretation of the Christian scriptures. These scriptures are taken by the Brethren as the source of all important knowledge and are the beginning point for many of their arguments. (However, the Rastas assume that not all of the true scriptures are available, since some were suppressed by the white men, and all are subject to mistranslation from their original language, which the Rastas say is Amharic).

The focus of the book is on Rasta theology as systematized by the author, with his discussion supplemented by extensive quotations from tape-recorded interviews with more than sixty accessible, highly articulate black men, whom he identifies by name and location. The Rasta thinkers' positions are hammered out and articulated during long joint

discussions which are sometimes aided by the smoking of the sacred herb ganja (marijuana). Owens is careful to show the assumptions and the logical working-out of the Rasta thinking as a self-consistent scheme, and to keep the flavor of the Rasta thought-process, without critical commentary. He only occasionally comments on other interpretations of the scripture or reactions of other groups to the Rasta conclusions.

The logical working out of the Rasta position has led to many Rasta innovations in language, music, other social behavior, and to the Rastas' ability to thoroughly critique the failures of western civilization and the current Jamaican government. It has also led the Rastas to be disinterested in participating in Jamaican social, economic or political affairs. All of these behaviors have given rise to great discomfort among the government and other Jamaicans, including other Jamaicans from the same class as the majority of Rastas. The result has been friction between the Rastas and other elements of the society; the author finds the Rastas to be peaceful and non-racial in their approach, even though others have accused them of both violent behavior and of being biased against whites.

As befits his interests, the author has given a presentation of Rasta thought, supplemented by limited information on their social and economic behavior. This information comes from Jamaican Radio Service interviews with Rasta speakers and Jamaican newspaper articles on the Rastas, as well as scholarly books and articles on them. In addition, the sociological context of the Rastafarian movement is discussed in the book's Introduction by Rex Nettleford of the University of the West Indies' Kingston campus.

As an anthropologist, I applaud the author's thoughtful and considerate approach to his field work and immersion in the lives of the people, as well as his care to present their viewpoint. What I miss is more details on the social and economic matrix of their lives. Beyond learning that his informants are males with marginal incomes who have trouble getting and keeping jobs, I get no feeling at all for the kinds of marital settings they are creating, the organization of their domestic living situations, the kinds of jobs they have available and participate in, the ways in which they organize themselves as groups (and variations in these organizations), and other details. Without this kind of information, I find it difficult to judge how their theology fits into their overall lives and how it is affected by their lives, since I have usually found that thoughts and actions are mutually interdependent.

In short, *Dread* is an excellent source for information on the Rastafarian movement in Jamaica, with most of its effort devoted to laying out the structure of Rasta thought.

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