

Vine Deloria, Jr., ed. *A Sender of Words: Essays in Memory of John G. Neihardt*. (Salt Lake City: Howe Brothers, 1984) xi, 177 pp., \$15.95.

John Neihardt was like James Boswell: each man's genius—and it is a rare one—lay in recognizing, respecting and calling forth the greater genius of another. Neihardt's task was easier; he was nearly the sole arbiter of Black Elk's communication, with little to fear from comparison with other accounts, but also harder. He faced barriers in personal knowledge, tastes, values and language, as well as a public unprepared to accept his mentor's worth. This book pays tribute to Neihardt and appropriately is not a "balanced" appraisal but an appreciation of his best. However, despite claims for his creative oeuvre, it demonstrates that the Nebraska laureate's lasting contribution to American letters was his collaboration with Black Elk.

The book contains essays by fourteen authors of diverse background—letters, theater, anthropology, theology, history. The essays fall into three categories. Dee Brown, Bobby Bridger, Alvin Josephy and Frederick Manfred offer reminiscences of either Neihardt personally, or the effect of his works on the contributor's life and thought. Three more essays, by Helen Stauffer, Lucile F. Aly and Vine Deloria, Jr., present critical/interpretive examinations of Neihardt's early travel writing, short stories, and Western epic cycle. While scholarly and appreciative, these papers confirm the opinion (attacked by Josephy) that Neihardt was a minor writer. Even Deloria's sensitive exegesis of his treatment of nature and landscape finds Neihardt not much better than Margaret Mitchell.

The best papers deal with Neihardt's collaboration with Black Elk and his contribution to better understanding of American Indian life and letters. Peter Iverson assesses Neihardt's association with the BIA and his influence on John Collier, while Raymond J. DeMallie traces Neihardt's relationship with Black Elk and his family. In penetrating discussions of *Black Elk Speaks*, N. Scott Momaday, Roger Dunsmore and Gretchen Bataille reach beyond textual interpretation to suggest new directions for criticism generally. Momaday's essay is especially valuable for his analysis of the collaborative process and the transformation of oral to written literature.

The remaining two essays add little to understanding either Neihardt or Black Elk. Frank Waters offers a summary of Black Elk's vision with the expected comparison with Mayan and Eastern symbology. Carl J. Starkloff, S. J., raises but does not discuss the question of Black Elk's Catholicism; instead, with no sense of a pluralist audience, he dilates on the utility of various missionary self-presentations, with a presumption of Christianity's universal desirability that will offend many. This is particularly unfortunate, because scholars have evaded confronting the issue of Black Elk's Christianity, and have thus failed to address the

complexity and sophistication of his thinking: Starkloff's essay will not encourage better work.

The book's production is good, but some editor should have corrected problems with lie/lay, shone/shown and lead/led as well as miscellaneous spelling errors. The frontispiece is a good-gray-poet photo, and the book contains preface and editor's introduction, index, and a chronology of Neihardt's books.

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Raymond J. DeMallie. *The Sixth Grandfather: Black Elk's Teachings Given to John G. Neihardt*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984) xxix, 452 pp., \$19.95.

Although *Black Elk Speaks* was first published in 1932, it was not until the 1960s that the book gained widespread popularity and elicited the interest of serious scholars of literature, ethnology, and religion. DeMallie provides in this study a resource for further investigation of European influences on Lakota culture as well as the raw material for analysis of Neihardt's role in the final production of *Black Elk Speaks*.

In his childhood vision, Black Elk saw himself as the "sixth grandfather," the representative of the earth. As DeMallie points out, it was this vision that predestined Black Elk's role as a holy man for the Lakota people. Black Elk was born in December of 1863, and twenty-five years later, after he had traveled to Europe with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show and been exposed to influences beyond Lakota culture, he began studying Christianity. After his conversion in 1904, Black Elk no longer performed Lakota religious ceremonies. Yet, as the interviews from both 1931 and 1944 make clear, Black Elk never lost faith in the power of Lakota religious life. Black Elk was sixty-seven when John G. Neihardt came to Pine Ridge seeking an informant to tell him about Lakota ways. Black Elk saw Neihardt's appearance as his opportunity to share his sacred vision and to discuss his despair about the present condition of the Lakota people. Black Elk called Neihardt "talk maker" or "iyapi kage" which Neihardt interpreted as "word sender." Indeed, it was through Neihardt that Black Elk was able to send his words beyond Pine Ridge.

Neihardt originally planned to call the book "The Tree That Never Bloomed" in recognition of the holy man's sense that he had failed his vision and his people. Ultimately, however, Neihardt saw in the story a message for all people, and it was a message of hope rather than despair.

Speculation on Neihardt's role in the final product should be dispelled with this volume. DeMallie says, "The book is Black Elk's story as he