

which reduces to the following equations:

New = Better than Old

Modern = Capitalism = Good/Desirable Socio-Economic Structure

Socialism/Communism/Unionism = Bad/Undesirable

Socio-Economic Structure

Bodnar returns repeatedly to discussions of drunkenness among the Irish, to pejorative remarks on the drinking habits of Italians and of Catholics in general. He offers lurid reports of violence on immigrant picket lines, includes irrelevant citations of crime among Jews and Italians and a generally denigrating discussion of *unskilled* workers. In contrast, German Protestant immigrants are cited repeatedly as sterling examples of decorum, sobriety, industry, thrift—and material success.

Possibly, Bodnar's intention, in providing copious pejorative commentary, was merely to report remarks of journalists and other commentators. If so, he should have clarified his "objective" role. As he has chosen to present his remarks, it is difficult not to infer a negative, prejudiced attitude towards the immigrants that form the subject of his book.

As arriving immigrants discovered sadly, the "America, the promised land" was not the America they encountered. So it is with Bodnar's book. The new, insightful history of immigration promised us is not the text we encounter.

—Gloria Eive  
El Cerrito, CA

**Silvester Brito. *Red Cedar Warrior*. (Markleeville, CA: Jelm Mountain Press, 1987) 75 pp., \$9.95 paper.**

It easily took me  
four fierce years of  
watching and hunting  
in cold mountain wind  
before I heard  
your soft voice  
whisper to my DNA  
that you are  
my massacre blood sister.  
"Blood Relations"

It is easy for us to hear only the loud noises, the loud voices, the hollers, raucous cries. It is easy for us to pay attention only to the most bright and vivid images. It is easy to move fiercely, angrily, boisterously in response to acts upon us. It is easy enough to be dramatic in our sorrow, our pain, sadness. We easily do not hear the soft voices whispering. Yet, it is the

soft ones, the ones that speak to us intimately, we need to hear most for they are our own.

*Red Cedar Warrior*, the collection of poems by S. J. Brito, is very obvious in its depiction of trepidations against Native Americans, in its mourning for the loss of culture and traditions, and its expression of anger. We easily see the obvious signs of Native Americanism in most of the poems included in his book. The warrior could not be anything other than Native American, astride a pony, feathered and painted. There are the drums, the ceremonial life, the peyote prayers, the shamans, and such references. We easily see the images and hear the voices that most let us know of the poet's intent to share with us a Native American viewpoint. And why not? After all, Brito is a proud descendant of Comanches and Tarascans.

His poems are similar to the literary declamations offered for the past twenty years by most Native American poets and writers, including myself. And why not? We are proud Native Americans, Indians, American Indians, Indigenous Peoples, etc. Or Acomas, Cherokees, Choctaws, Mohawks, etc. We are expected to declaim ourselves, otherwise we are not proud, loyal, or relevant. If we are not so obvious or choose not to include the apparent symbols of our heritage, we are dismissed and disregarded. We are expected, in fact required, to be as colorful and vivid as our dance costumes, as loud as our drums, as brave and honorable and honest as the warrior astride his magnificent pony. If we are not obvious in our declamations, we are suspect—we've fallen away from our heritage, we've learned the white way too readily, and worst of all we are no longer real people and we, therefore, cannot be good poets and writers. We have to be "good Indians" in order to be recognized, for our work to be respected, and to receive fair and significant critical attention.

Obviously, as one of those writers and poets who has been offering such literary fare, I'm complaining. It's true, but I have to point it out as a central concern about the direction that Native American literature has been going and is presently headed. The voices we have are frequently only those we are expected to have, no more, no less. I'm getting impatient with the obvious, including my own, because we are being determined by forces that are not our own. The same old story and the same plaint for self-determination—and likely, even this brief observation will elicit a reaction that I am not grateful for my heritage as a Native American.

Actually, I want to bring to notice the soft voice that S. J. Brito has in most of his poems that is the most effective. It is the voice indeed of ritual and ceremony. It is the voice that offers the texture by which we can most appreciate his poems. It is a tone that is reflective, softly speaking and singing that evokes the emotion that is the substance of his book. The poet persona is variously sad, sardonic, awed, mournful, bitter; he is obviously concerned with not only making observations, i.e., being

objective; he is closely involved with his subject matter, his heritage. It is this tone that I refer to as “whispering” that we do not often hear; it is the voice that is most like our own because it comes from within. This is the voice that is determined by no one else but ourselves. It is the one we most often disregard, the one we most often forget. Unfortunately, because we hear mainly the most strident noises, we do not pay attention to this whispering from ourselves.

When Brito hears “your soft voice whisper,” in my favorite poem in the collection, it is his inner voice he is hearing. Native Americans and white Americans, in fact all Americans, have fiercely hunted and watched for signs that will help them and save them from the headlong race towards destruction of their society and natural environment. We tend to go towards the most obviously apparent, the most dramatic and loudly shrill. We do not hear our innermost meditations, our most deeply innate selves that is spoken in whispers of the common humanity. It is this voice that recognizes and relates “to my DNA” that tells us we are related as close as brothers and sisters. Native and white Americans are historically enjoined as victims and victimizers in such horrendous, obvious events as the massacres at Wounded Knee and Sand Creek, and, for others, as Jews and Aryan Nazis at Auschwitz, Americans and Vietnamese at My Lai, and countless other desecrations of our common humanity.

We are indeed fierce hunters of each other and, though we fiercely watch, we do not see what is also obvious, that we are brothers and sisters nonetheless. The poet that S.J. Brito is hears himself speaking quietly, and he shares with us the whispering, the inner voice, and for that we are to be glad and thankful.

—Simon J. Ortiz  
Acoma Pueblo, NM

**Vinson Brown, *Native Americans of the Pacific Coast*, 2nd edition. (Happy Camp, CA: Naturegraph, 1985) 272 pp., \$8.95 paper.**

In the introduction to *Native Americans of the Pacific Coast*, Vinson Brown presents many admirable ambitions for any scholar writing on human existence. Brown proclaims that he will attempt to make the first Americans “live” in the style of the 1500s to 1700s during the “days of old” and of “glory and independence.” He then proceeds to assert that, in order to accomplish this goal, antiquated concepts used to “justify” the conquest of tribal Peoples must be “put aside.” He urges us, “instead,” to be inquisitive and open so that we can “see and hear” what indigenous life was like before contact. Brown later in the introduction states his