

hopes she will be challenged to develop commensurate rigor of thought.

—Helen Jaskoski

California State University, Fullerton

Jennifer S. H. Brown and Robert Brightman. “*The Orders of the Dreamed*”: *George Nelson on Cree and Northern Ojibwa Religion and Myth, 1823*. (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1988) xii, 226 pp., \$24.95.

This text addresses the complex challenge of comprehending religious otherness. Brown and Brightman present a previously unpublished 1823 letter journal of fur trader George Nelson in which he reflects on his struggle to understand the Cree and Ojibwa people he knew at first hand. While he constantly wondered at the strangeness of Algonquian religion, he also expressed his admiration as frequently. The Cree and the Ojibwa were thoroughly religious and, paradoxical as it seemed to Nelson, he did admit that their religion worked.

Nelson’s musings comprise the most thorough account of Algonquian mythology and religious practices written in the nineteenth century. His sketch of Algonquian religion summarizes key myths, surveys the great persons of the Algonquian cosmos, and presents eye-witness accounts of the shaking tent and other rituals. Nelson appreciated the central importance of dreaming and vision questing to Algonquian religion. Using these techniques, Algonquians acquired access to the great others of myth, both those who had human welfare at heart and those like the windigo monster who embodied the antithesis of religious values. These details have special ethnographical and historical value because Nelson’s account makes it possible to take some measure of Algonquian religion midway between the seventeenth century *Jesuit Relations* and the ethnographies of the twentieth.

The book is also an excellent example of how primary documents ought to be published. Brown and Brightman’s introduction examines Nelson’s life and letters, his career and contact with various Indian groups and, most importantly, his intellectual and religious struggle to make sense of Algonquian religion. Similarly, they append a glossary of the *dramatic personae* of myth and ritual and thus make Nelson’s text more accessible. As important as Nelson’s text itself, the authors’ essay on “Northern Algonquian Religious and Mythic Themes and Personages” stands as an extremely useful overview of current knowledge of these traditions. In

this way, Brown and Brightman carefully place Nelson's descriptions in ethnographic and folkloric perspective. They also add a comprehensive bibliography, and their index is superb.

Two additional essays by Native American scholars round out the volume. Stan Cuthand reacts to Nelson's text and places it in relationship to contemporary Cree oral tradition. Cuthand also reflects on the current implications of texts such as Nelson's which record an earlier way of life: "Today there are many elders who are trying to bring back Indian religion and who want to emphasize the harmony of man and nature. Nelson's text shows a starker reality." Writing in a related vein, Emma Larocque balances the ethnocentric flaws of the text and its factual failings against its usefulness. She reminds readers also that Nelson's journal is an important document because it reveals the tenacious hold civilization-savagery has always had. These two essayists suggest the overall significance of the book in presenting an invaluable glimpse into past Algonquian culture and in fueling the ongoing process of native cultural adaptation.

—Kenneth M. Morrison
Arizona State University

Joseph Bruchac, ed. *Survival This Way: Interviews with American Indian Poets*. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1987) 363 pp., \$28.95.

It is risky for an editor to compose a book of twenty-one interviews, each being centered in the same type of questions: What started you writing? Who were your models? What role does your tradition play in your work? How do you relate to mainstream poetry? The amazing result of reading this book is the recognition that it is neither repetitious nor dull, but highly informative and a pleasure to read. The reason for this outcome lies not only in the poetic sensibility, literary knowledge, and psychological skill of the interviewer, but in the quality of the poets selected and the wide spread of their tribal affiliations, mixed cultural traditions, and educational as well as personal backgrounds.

While Bruchac excels as interviewer, his preface and his bibliography are too sparse. The preface lacks a more thorough portrayal of the background from which these writers are emerging and a rationale for the selection of the writers interviewed. Was, for example, Leslie Silko not included because her poetry is so much a part of her fiction? (She is mentioned in several of the interviews as an important influence on poets.)