

**Donald B. Smith. *Sacred Feathers: The Reverend Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby) and the Missisauga Indians.* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987) 372 pp., \$21.95.**

This excellent historical study will make a contribution in various fields: American Indian missions, Canadian history and Indian policy, history of Methodism, theory of acculturation, and—in terms of Peter Jones's wife—women's studies.

Smith has done research on the Missisaugas (an Ojibwa tribe) for nearly two decades. While the painstaking historical detail available in the notes of the book is likely to be bypassed by the average non-historian, Smith has been able to turn the actual text into an interesting biography of a bi-cultural leader. Whenever he fills historical lacunas with educated guesses, he carefully indicates the sources of his assumptions without appearing tedious.

Peter Jones (1802-1856) was the son of a white surveyor and a Missisauga woman. He grew up as an Indian in his mother's community on the northwestern shore of Lake Ontario. At the age of fourteen he joined his father who was then farming on the Grand River on the land of the Six Nations (Iroquois).

The two major events of his life were his conversion to Christianity at the age of twenty-one, which led him to becoming a Methodist missionary, and his marriage to a well-educated English woman, Eliza Fields. Although his missionary methods were influenced by the theological and cultural prejudices of his day, he never separated spiritual welfare from Indian rights: land, education, and political power. While strongly impressed with British life, he never promoted the total assimilation of Canadian Indians. He did pioneer work in translating biblical books and hymns into Ojibwa and was eager to pass on Ojibwa traditions to his sons. Through his help a band of Indians on the verge of extinction was able to build a model agricultural settlement west of present-day metropolitan Toronto and to assimilate without surrendering Indian identity. His Christianity, taken over from whites, was of course shaped by western imagery, but proved convincing to Indians because of his personal integrity. Although he became famous as a lecturer in England and Canada and met with many white dignitaries including Queen Victoria, he always upheld the value of Indian culture.

The author gives Jones's wife Eliza the extensive coverage she deserves. She gave up the comforts of a bourgeois English home to involve herself in the sufferings of an Indian band. Besides being a tireless worker for Indian welfare and a loving wife and mother of five sons, she was an artist and writer. She also collected and published her husband's manuscript notes for a history of the Ojibwas and assembled his diaries for publication.

The book is enriched by many historical photographs, some maps, three appendices, an index, and extensive notes. Smith himself expects

future studies of Jones by scholars who know Ojibwa and can judge Jones's translations. Perhaps an Ojibwa scholar would see the missionary more critically than Smith also in matters not relating to translation. But to the extent that a white person can enter a bi-cultural world, this is a valuable book.

—Kristin Herzog  
University of North Carolina

**Gary Soto. *The Elements of San Joaquin*. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977) 56 pp., \$5.95 paper.**

California's fertile San Joaquin Valley is the setting of this first published collection of poems by one of Chicano literature's leading voices [other books include *The Tale of Sunlight* (1978), *Father Is a Pillow Tied to a Broom* (1980), *Where Sparrows Work Hard* (1981), and *Black Hair* (1985)]. Thirty-eight poems comprise the three sections which take the reader through a series of disturbing images of the region. (Critic Bruce-Novoa has compared *Elements* with T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*). In the first poem, "San Fernando Road," migrants are described in the language of travail as men "Whose arms/Were bracelets/Of burns/And whose families/Were a pain/They could not/Shrug off." The odyssey ends with "Braly Street" where the past and the present come together in bleak images as the poetic voice views the empty lot where his home once stood: "When I come/To where our house was,/I come to seeds/And a sewer line tied off/Like an umbilical cord." Generative images of home and seeds are in unsettling discord with the metaphor of a sewer line as umbilicus. Other poems deal with rape, drowning babies, drunkenness, drugs, mental illness, hunger, and death.

As the title of the volume suggests, many poems are linked to rural agriculture. In "Field Poem," for example, the narrator looks back through the smashed window of a bus to see the fields ever awaiting the migratory Chicano farm workers: "I saw the leaves of cotton plants/Like small hands/Waving goodbye." By humanizing the image of the agricultural product, Soto imbues the scene with an unexpected pathos and beauty. In another migrant poem, "History," the narrator recalls his grandmother's journey from Mexico. It ends with a stanza characterizing all Chicano field workers: "From Taxco to San Joaquin,/ Delano to Westside,/The places/In which we all begin." In "Emilio" there is another type of journey, one in which an old man goes home to Mexico in his death dreams, returning to his young wife. Other poems in the collection deal with urban subjects, frequently portrayed in violent terms.