

petence, but some by his hand). In the process, he becomes a legend of sorts. People who have never met him brag that they were friends, and a police officer named Calder sees Apata as a man who “has done something that many Black men would do, given the guts, given the motivation, given the anger.” What is odd, however, is that Apata never seems particularly courageous, motivated, or angry.

Thomas De Quincey has argued that in order for the depiction of murder to be other than coarse and vulgar, our sympathy—in the sense of comprehension, not approbation—must be not with the murdered person but with the murderer, who affords readers a glimpse into the hell that his passions have created. But Apata is a half-hearted murderer: he shoots a man in the knee and leaves him in the woods to die (or maybe not) and feels badly when policemen are killed during the pursuit. The novel suggests that life’s unfairness must be blamed for Apata’s actions. Because of this, Apata remains elusive, while some of the secondary characters are more compelling.

Bascom has a knack for vignettes. In a few pages he communicates the anguish of Gerald Tross, Apata’s best friend, when his father forces him to abandon his dreams and return to the family farm. Even more striking is a four-page sketch of Constable Boston who is transformed from ineffectual cuckold to a local hero as a result of his part in the Apata drama. When Corporal Stephens is strangled by a boa constrictor during the manhunt, the episode has added significance because of the knowledge that Stephens was Boston’s rival in both the Hoop Village police force and the bedroom. These character sketches as well as Bascom’s vibrant imagery, the touches of magic realism, and the innovative treatment of narrative structure must ultimately carry the novel, for Apata himself is rather prosaic, neither angel nor demon, but merely “a young man who put good brains to bad use.”

—Lucy Wilson
Loyola Marymount University

Beth Brant, ed. *A Gathering of Spirit: A Collection by North American Indian Women.* (Ithaca, NY: Firebrand Books, 1988) 238 pp., \$9.95 paper.

In *A Gathering of Spirit*, Beth Brant has collected poetry, short stories, letters, and essays written by Native American women, relating their experiences of life in Canada and in the United States. The participating women come from all walks of life. Included are such established authors and scholars as Paula Gunn Allen, Joy Harjo, and Bea Medicine as well as women in prisons, lesbians, and those who live their everyday life on

reservations or in urban centers. What unites these women are their experiences as Indian women.

Despite the variety of women, forms, styles, and topics, there are certain themes that emerge in the collection. All these women tell the reader what it is like to be a Native American and a woman in a society that shuns diversity and has abandoned its spiritual values. They talk about the difficulty of trying to fit together two different world views and the problems that arise from a failure to do so: alcoholism, drug abuse, violence, spiritual emptiness. The pain is real in this collection.

But *A Gathering of Spirit* is not just a book about pain; it is also a book about courage, pride, and survival. These women have come to a realization of their worth as Native Americans—and as women. They have a strong link to their past, the values and traditions of their ancestors. They have the power of the spirit. This book is a powerful statement on behalf of the Native American peoples. The Indians are *not* vanishing. On the contrary, they are just beginning to come forth as organizers, freedom fighters, feminists, and healers.

A Gathering of Spirit challenges non-Indian attitudes and images of Native American women—and it does so with an unprecedented power. The quality of the material included in the book is very uneven, but the sincerity and personalities that emerge from all the writings make up for artistic imperfection. Beth Brant has also included short notes on each of the contributors, helping the reader's orientation to the material. This is a commendable book for anyone interested in Native Americans and in women.

—Paivi H. Hoikkala
Arizona State University

Robert D. Bullard, ed. *In Search of the New South: The Black Urban Experience in the 1970s and the 1980s.* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1989) 203 pp., \$28.50.

This book is part of a growing list of published materials on the prospect and dilemma of black urban life in America. Drawing from the experiences of blacks in six Southern cities, *In Search of the New South* is essentially concerned with the status of blacks in the South between 1970 and 1980. While some qualitative changes have been noted, the book, as a whole, paints a bleak picture about the condition of blacks in the South. In fact, if one were to use the time-worn argument of the glass half-filled with water, it is clear that the authors have followed the half-empty glass approach.

Although the stated objective of the book is the examination of black life in six major cities in the South, what emerges are the author's