

The collection primarily aims at the recovery of historical material, and it is organized accordingly. Along the way it addresses questions that might well have merited some foregrounding, central as they are to the project of redefinition, and open as their discussion still is. Among these there is the question of legitimation, authenticity, and value, which is discussed, for instance, by Lauter in terms of experience and voice and with the implication that the works of ethnic writers serve purposes of cultural survival: "What is involved in literary history is survival." This implies questions regarding the nature of history and the problematic relevance of the past to the present. Wiget, for instance, argues entirely in terms of the integrity of the "other" (here: the American Indian) tradition, so that the proper reading of a text proceeds by a reconstruction from within that tradition. Textual meaning is here entirely based in the other culture, viewed holistically. This may have something to do with the fact that he deals in traditional texts primarily, but elsewhere the question does arise in how far the traditional element (the ethnic element) used in a modern anglophone text is still the same and contains its traditional aspects. Or, to put it differently: The question arises how intercultural such texts are.

This problem, which I believe to be *the* issue of coming discussions, is once again not foregrounded by the volume, which can, it seems to me, fairly be described as placing itself more or less firmly within the confines of a separatist (though not a militantly separatist) multiculturalism.

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Kathleen Mullen Sands, ed. *Circle of Motion: Arizona Anthology of Contemporary American Indian Literature*. (Tempe: Arizona Historical Foundation, 1990), xviii, 165 pp., \$21.95 cloth; \$15.95 paper.

The subtitle of this collection raises a question: Is it wise to mix various genres and also authors from very different tribes and then to limit this mixture by the arbitrary geographical borders of a state?

A careful study of the book will answer this question positively. There are Arizona bonds between the American Indian authors represented that are distinct, from the mysterious past of the Anasazi, petroglyphs on cliff walls, and Gila monsters, to ruthless mining methods in today's Black Mesa valleys and to the problems of school children and veterans from Arizona's thirty-two reservations. Above all, Arizona's desert landscape with its mountains, canyons, and rivers permeates the collection.

Kathleen Mullen Sands explains in her preface that many of the contributors are from tribes outside the state, but all of them have experienced "the Arizona tribal life in the Arizona landscape." That means we can find here well-known authors like Joseph Bruchac, Maurice Kenny, Lance Henson, Joy Harjo, and Mary TallMountain whom we do not "naturally" connect with Arizona. The

volume is unique in adding to these a majority of authors never published before (twenty-three of thirty-four), two of them as young as thirteen and sixteen years old. Since anthologies frequently feature reprints, the reader is pleasantly surprised to find here exclusively new works.

The bulk of the book contains poetry and short stories, with five essays inserted between the two sections. Readers who expect “essays” to be of the academic literary-critical type will be disappointed. Instead, they are open-ended narratives about childhood experiences, the nature of coyote stories or kachina spirits, and an interpretation of modern-day destructive mining in terms of the evil giants of Navajo mythology.

“Circle of Motion,” a quotation from the “Eagle Poem” by Joy Harjo, connotes the intricate merging of tradition and change characteristic of American Indian life today. “The writers . . . live in many cultures—traditional, contemporary tribal, mainstream American, urban, rural—often simultaneously.” The poems range from the rhythmic prayers of Avis Archambault to the political satires of Geri Keams and the moving evocations of spiritual epiphanies by R. T. Smith. Among the short stories, Leonard G. Butler’s “The Trip to the Trading Post” stands out as an exceptionally sensitive portrayal of a child’s desires and fears, whereas Jack D. Forbes’s “Loretta” is confusing in its introductory daydream of “perfect” Navajo women which will puzzle feminists. Irvin Morris’s “The Snake of Light” is a striking portrayal of the causes of reservation alcoholism.

This volume proves that American Indian literature has some distinct features: 1) A nuance of silence. Important things remain unsaid. “All poets understand the final uselessness of words”; 2) A merging of people, animals, and landscape. Enduring humans, desert pigs, coyotes, cacti, and mountains are sometimes indistinguishable; and 3) The clear voice of the narrator or poet, contradicting all postmodern phenomena of the disappearing subject. The book deserves a better binding, but it is beautifully illustrated by Adrian Hendricks. The footnoting of some unfamiliar words is missing (e.g., “chimichanga,” “pheromones,” and some Navajo expressions). These are small flaws in an excellent work.

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Leslie Marmon Silko. *Almanac of the Dead.* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991) 736 pp, \$25.00 cloth.

For Leslie Marmon Silko aficionados, the “novel” may surprise them. Highly successful as a short story writer and the creator of the unusually spiritual novel *Ceremony*, Silko writes a tome, Dickensian in length and in the number of its *dramatis personae*.

It has been called a “mosaic,” as one writer classified it, a “weaving of ideas and lives.” It is a sprawling work—one that really comprises a number of