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Reviews

Mat Hekid O Ju/When It Rains. Ofelia Zepeda, Ed. Tucson: Sun Tracks-University of Arizona Press, 1982. 82 pp. Cloth./Paper. \$8.95/\$4.50

For the Papago and Pima Indians of southern Arizona the words "thoughts" and "poetry" are synonymous. These Peoples have traditionally expressed their thoughts in song and ceremonial oratory in order to bring the rain that is crucial to their survival as a desert people. For Papagoes and Pimas, and other Indian Peoples as well, the spoken word has power and the oral tradition is the central way of preserving the power of language. As Ofelia Zepeda points out in her introduction to *When It Rains*, a collection of Papago/Pima poetry [the Papagoes and Pimas constitute two tribes having different languages that stem from the Uto-Aztecan linguistic stock, Ed.] with English translations, writing language is not the main means of preserving it, but rather "One other way that words can have power." (p. 3)

The poems in this book do indeed have power. They evoke a range of emotions from sorrow and mystery to humor and joy. They make vivid the landscape of desert, mountains, vast sky, stark cacti, subtle change of season and, most of all, rain. They immerse us momentarily in images of childhood and family relationships. They allow us to hear the rhythm of traditional song and the beat of contemporary Papago/Pima secular music.

This handsomely presented collection of poetry is the result of a Native American Language Institute on Papago/Pima language held in Albuquerque, New Mexico in 1980. Participants undertook to write "thoughts" in Papago/Pima, then translate them into English. As Zepeda writes, "Writing thoughts in our language gives a new choice . . . another way to express ourselves." (p. 9) In some cases the expressions are brief and elliptical:

Taş
S-ton
sikolk
tonoḍ
u:gk.

Sun
Hot
round
shiny
high.

They suggest a haiku [A Japanese genre, Ed.] model in their starkness and intensity. Others echo traditional forms of Papago oral song:

Da:m Ka:cim
S-cuhugam
'Ab 'o him
S-ba:bagi 'o 'ab him.
Huhu'u
'Andadhă
Kc n̄-n̄u:kut,
C n̄-ta:gio 'am tonolid.
Masad
'Ab cesajim,
mat 'am 'o 'i n̄-tonol.
Ko:s
Ko:sig 'aŋ ta:tk
S-'ap hab ta:hadag.
Tas
Kia'akoi'o
Pi g ab hu kia 'i be: g taş.

Sky
Night
here it comes,
it comes gradually.
Stars
there they are,
they watch over me.
Moon
she's coming up,
coming to light my way.
Sleep
I feel it.
it feels so good.
Sun
wait sun,
hold back the day.

While still others present moments of experience in contemporary poetical form:

Pi g 'an hu ta:tam
"Dakton g cemamagi!
n̄-hu'ul 'o hab kaij.
Kupt hab e-elid mant
'an o ta:t?
S-wepegi wu:pui
cew n̄e:n̄,
s-hiwk
Cemamagi, pi g an hu
n-miabadad.

Don't Touch
"Leave the horned toad alone!"
My grandmother said.
Does she think I want to
touch him?
Red eyes,
long tongue,
rough skin,
Horned toad, leave me
alone.

The poems in the collection are not thematically grouped but rather are ordered by the author in alphabetical sequence. While this structure in some way fragments the collection, it also provides fresh contrasts between traditional subjects like "Pima Song" and contemporary topics like "Chicken Scratch" and demonstrates the variety of experiences and ways of seeing the Papago/Pima world when many authors turn their "thoughts" to their language and culture. There is a dominating theme, however, which does give the variety cohesiveness and is most fully expressed by editor Ofelia Zepeda in her poem "Rain," one of the longest selections in the collection:

The sun has moved down that way a bit,
And yet it is so hot.
All movement has almost stopped.
A fly goes by so slowly,
 everything has slowed down.
My father is sitting there,
His head is tilted back and he's asleep.
My sister is lying over there, asleep.
The dog passed by, he is looking
 for shade,
 everything has slowed down.
And yet the clouds have slowly settled in.
 It's raining, it's raining!
My father jumps up
 "Run and cover my grain!"
 "Run and get the clothes on the line!"
Everything is now moving and alive.
My sister is up,
The dog is up,
 everything is now moving and alive.

The vitality of this poem is particularly strong. It moves from an almost comic lethargy to frantic activity, yet it captures an essential reverence for the magic of rain, its power to generate action, to confirm life. The effect of the language is potent; it lulls, then excites. While not all the poems in the collection possess such vigor of vision and expression, they are all economical and precise. They certainly suggest the potential for a growing body of indigenous poetry of value to readers in both languages.

The inclusion of a Papago/Pima pronunciation guide is a useful apparatus in the book. It allows the non-speaker at least to catch some sense of the sound of the poems in the Pima language by making the orthography accessible. Also of value is the "Afterword" by linguist Ken Hale of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He notes that the poems in the collection represent a new genre which "continues an *honorable tradition*." (p. 79) As a strong advocate of culture and linguistic pluralism, he sees the collection as a "demonstration of the promise which lies within the language" if it is "allowed to assume its role in Papago/Pima life." (p. 79) Like Zepeda he believes that literature is essential to literacy and that written literature expands literacy by "ensuring the fullest possible expression of the human intellectual capacity." (p. 79) To that might be added the fullest artistic and spiritual capacities.

This book fulfills two intentions. Its introduction and afterword make a strong case for both spoken and written literacy in all Indian languages. The body of poems demonstrates both the creative capacity and the linguistic abilities of its contributors. Perhaps more importantly it gives the reader a glimpse of double magic possible when thoughts are presented in two languages simultaneously—mystery and clarity.

When It Rains is the seventh volume in the Sun Tracks series of works on American Indian literatures, a series that has made significant contributions to the oral and written traditions of tribal Peoples in Arizona and throughout the country.

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The Navajo Nation. By Peter Iverson. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981. Contributions to Ethnic Studies Series, Vol. 3. 273 pp. Cloth. \$29.95 Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983. Paper. \$6.95

In 1969 the Navajo Tribal Council's Advisory Committee adopted a resolution calling for the official use of the term "Navajo Nation." The purpose of such a designation, according to the resolution, was that a "clear statement be made to remind Navajos and non-Navajos alike that both the Navajo People and Navajo lands are, in fact, separate and distinct."